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Cory's OND: A Town of Transition

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STORYTELLER: Cory Ivory

It was—for me—a very close neighborhood growing up. We would go to the neighborhood watering hole because my cousin lived next door; it was just down the street and I was always at my cousin's. The lady that owned it, Betty, she would always say, "You kids gonna come over and sit with me and have a Coke and a Reese's Cup?" So we would be like, "Mom, we're going next door." We would sit on our little bar stool and eat our Reese's Cup and have our small Coke from a bottle. We never realized it was a bar until later.

AS A KID, EVERY YEAR WE HAD OLD NORTH DAYTON DAY, AND WE HAD A PARADE DOWN THE STREET, RIGHT HERE. It started over Keowee Street, over the bridge, and we had it down Leo

OLD NORTH DAYTON



to the park. At the park we had rides—well the rides came later—but we had booths set up with music, and it was just fun. When we went trick or treating, for instance, we knew just about everybody’s house we went to. I mean, yeah, not everybody, but it was more so when my dad and mom were growing up, all the family names. It was like, “Oh, the Schwindermins live here. Oh, there’s the Kielbaso’s.” You know, you knew just about everybody, and our parents loved taking us trick or treating because they would stop by and see their friends.

I went to Chaminade Julianne (CJ) for high school. I felt like being from a neighborhood like this, where most of the kids go to Dayton Public Schools, going to a school where, you know, kids grew up with more money and stuff. I didn’t feel like I fit in. I was pretty miserable freshman and sophomore year—and looking back on it, I think I was being more judgmental than they were. I do not remember anyone being specifically mean to me.

I HAD A CHIP ON MY SHOULDER, LIKE I AM FROM DAYTON, I DO NOT NEED TO BE AROUND ALL THESE RICH BOYS AND GIRLS—THEY HAVE NOTHING IN COMMON WITH ME. Then, my junior year I was like, you gotta be here, so just enjoy it. Then, I started hanging out with two girls who were

actually from my neighborhood and more friendships grew from there, and I don’t know, I ended up enjoying it a lot more.

My best friends and I would go to the church. The church that is there, the Catholic church, is Saint Adalbert’s and it’s the Polish-speaking church, or, well, the Polish church. They had a festival every year, and we went there. They would have a polka band, and we would do the polka. And, one year, I remember, like, it rained and nobody was out there dancing except me and my best friends, Chrissy and Maureen, and they were out there dancing with me. There were some boys from the neighborhood that we got to get up and dance. **WE JUST SPENT THE WHOLE NIGHT DANCING IN THE RAIN; IT WAS SO MUCH FUN! I REMEMBER THAT WAS ONE OF OUR BEST EXPERIENCES.**

Now, none of that happens anymore. A lot of the Old North Dayton families are moving out, now, and I guess it is overrun by a lot of parents who aren’t raising their kids. I mean, you’ll have teenagers who are out causing havoc, and, you’d ask, “Where are their parents?” It’s just sad what it has become, but I have so many good memories of all the fun in this neighborhood.

My best friends’ parents were both members of the Polish Club, too. So, I got to hang

out with them at the Easter egg hunts and the Christmas parties and stuff. I remember playing pinball sometimes when we went to the bar part. When I turned 21, I became an official member. It has been pretty cool because, for me, the Polish Club is like a good meeting place for a lot of the people who moved out of the neighborhood. A lot of my family, especially my extended family, doesn’t live in Old North Dayton anymore but still come to the Polish Club.

The Polish Club is a good social place, like I said, to go see everybody. My cousin Paula at one point wanted me to move down to New York with her because she is an immigration lawyer there. Before I went back to nursing school, she was like, “Oh, we need secretaries and I can get you a job right now. Blah blah blah. Come up here and you can stay with me until you find a place.” And, I once again considered it. Everyone is like, “You just need to move.” I have always been like, “Nope, I just want to stay in Dayton.”

For a few years, I moved to Centerville, Ohio. Centerville feels like living on another planet for a while. I was living in a condo, and the condo association were like snooty. They had their little meetings, and they stuck their

nose up at everybody. **I HATED IT AT FIRST. I WAS LIKE, “THESE ARE A BUNCH OF ASSHOLES.”**

That’s why I didn’t want to move to Centerville. **LIKE MY NEIGHBORHOOD, YEAH, IT MIGHT BE GHETTO. YOU MIGHT SEE SOMEONE PULL A GUN ON SOMEBODY— I SAW THAT ONCE— BUT AT LEAST THEY DO NOT ACT, LIKE, ALL SNOOTY IF THEY SEE YOU.** But then, once again like the CJ (Chaminade Julianne) thing where my defenses are already up, once I got to know it and everything, I loved it. I loved where I lived, I loved the neighbors.

I am telling you, in our neighborhood, people around my age, are really proud of Old North Dayton. I see, like, lots of tattoos. Like, my best friends want the three of us to go get OND tattooed on us—that’s what we call it: OND. And, I’m like, yeah, I can’t do that. I just cannot see myself getting a tattoo.

I AM PROUD OF WHERE WE GREW UP — BUT I DON’T WANT IT TATTOOED.