**New Deal Neighbors, Oral Histories of Greenhills, Ohio**

Interviewee: Ann Brooks/Interviewer: Nate Cain

Location: Skype interview from Brooks’ home in Brignon, France to Nate Cain residence in Cincinnati; Follow-up interview due to sound recording failure on first interview / Interview date: 3/7/2018

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Nate Cain: Alright this is Nathaniel Cain doing a follow-up interview with Ms. Brooks. Ms. Brooks thank you again for agreeing to make me again

Ann Brooks: You're welcome

NC: Now returning to our questions, when did you move to Greenhills?

AB: In 1938, I believe it was, I believe it was- course, I was two years old. I believe it was in the late summer early fall.

NC: And how old were you then?

AB: I was two; going on two.

NC: And was there a reason why your family wanted to move to Greenhills?

AB: Remember this was the depths of the Depression so, of course, because it looked like a really good thing to do. Housing and living conditions were difficult. I think they've been living with my grandmother- my father's mother- and these, this new project- government project- really afforded opportunity for young people like my parents to have a place to live. A nice place

NC: Were there any particular features or amenities that attracted them the most to Greenhills or was it just the opportunity to find clean living?

AB: Well, it was hard for me to know exactly. You know, both of my parents are dead; have been dead for quite some time, but if you look at Greenhills there was room and the place that we first were in. Now I'm looking at it as an adult I mean there were two bedrooms, a kitchen, living room, utility room, there was a play area right outside the back There were sidewalks everywhere. All the utilities were underground the streets were all in- all with curves. Places to park with garages even if they were not attached to the place you were living in. They were right there. So, this was a planned village that in fact you don't even see in today's environment always. Where school- where you have school, you had a grocery, a supermarket, you had dentist and doctor office, you had drug store, so, and you can walk at anywhere even when we lived in an area in the B block, we still walked to school. So and there was a school, a comprehensive school. Grades kindergarten through twelve so yes, if I had been looking for a place today I would choose a place like that. They were lucky.

NC: What was their neighborhood like before they moved into Greenhills?

AB: Well, you know what, I don't know I think they were living in at my grandmother's I wouldn’t swear to that, but I think so and I'm pretty sure that was a case and my grandmother had a house on what’s now the university campus right now. It was a family house and on Scioto Street, so I don't think they exist anymore. I know the house does exist anymore cause the University bought the area but that's where they lived. Now that was not a bad place, but they are living with their mother in law, which in my case my mother with my father’s mother, my grandmother.

NC: Were there any features that Greenhills lacked, like I heard one case which there was only one house that had one working phone.

AB: Well I don’t think- I think, you know, getting a phone, in those days, was not easy and as I remember. This was later because I didn't know about- when I was two but when we came back, and I must have been about seven- seven or eight. In that case you had a party line, you. We did wait a fairly long while until you can even get phone service. I'm not sure that was a Greenhills problem, but I suspect that was a problem in general in that time frame.

NC: What activities in Greenhills did you participate in?

AB: Oh Golly. Well, everything. The school if you think about it is the center of the whole village at that time. And…you’d play baseball. You- in this case, it was school’s activities, you- at least we did- did all the school activities. Band, all those kinds of things. There was a library, a good library part of the Cincinnati Public Library and it happened to be housed in the school, so it was used as part of the school. There was a swimming pool that families could, you know, pay- what? I don’t know. $10 maybe for the whole family pass for the whole summer. Golly we roamed free in Greenhills. We rode our bikes everywhere. We hiked other places, and so we had a freedom that we don’t have for our children today.

NC: That’s a shame.

AB: Yeah, there were playgrounds and green space and since it was a planned village, so each sort of area had their own playground. We were- yeah it was right out the back door when we were first in Greenhills on Chalmers. When we went on A block, if you talk to anyone from Greenhills they all used the words: A block, B block, C block. Kind of a stub. In A block again, it was right out the back, so you can just go out and play. When we got to B block it was across the street in the center. We were on Burnham it was a horseshoe circle. And it was in the center and yep in that case, it was across the street. So, every place and lot of places you don't have to go very far across the street or out the back door to go to a well-planned playground with big swings and slide and sandbox and I don't know what those things are called- it goes around. I don't know what they're called and a teeter-totter I think. Yes, so, and they were big they were very strong. It wasn’t like this thing’s going to break down kind of thing. They were expensive really in today's environment I'm not sure you find them, and they were all over the village, so everybody had access to the playgrounds and stuff like that, so it was really nice

NC: What were the religious services like?

AB: [laughs] Well in the beginning of course I was two, I don't remember those but when we came back when I was seven and that case we were having- I remember having- I may remember this from before we left Greenhills for a couple of years in what was called the community building, which school was there and in the auditorium of the school which also was a gymnasium they had church services so the Catholics had it 9:00 or whatever and the other the Protestant religions I think they combined. Maybe there were two different ones and they would have 11:00. I'm just picking numbers because I don't remember. Later, they built and I think the Presbyterians buildt a church and then the Catholics. First, it was a school where we had Church in the basement and then a Catholic Church. It was a separate Catholic church. So it all started out where everyone was in the community building. We even had movies in there.

NC: What films did you see?

AB: Oh, I can’t remember. It would be appropriate for kids, so you know scary movies that kids like, Donald Duck and things like that. Nothing dangerous.

NC: Like old fashioned Walt Disney?

AB: Oh yeah Walt Disney for sure. Golly it’s a shame my parents aren’t still alive. Perhaps somebody else remembers but I don't remember the various movies, but we did go to the movies there. And of course, it was hard because the auditorium- the gymnasium is flat, so and, you know, you have chairs, just regular folding chairs and a movie projector right behind you. Have a screen that was pulled down, so it was part of the school stuff and you just went to see the movies.

NC: What locations in Greenhills were most meaningful to you?

AB: Well to me first of all, the swimming pool.

NC: That’s the most common one.

AB: Well, you spent your summer there. Then, well I would guess the school. Also, the greenbelt around Greenhills. Because we would play in those woods and there was this whole belt, so you can play in those woods. The other thing is the fact that we had a police department, also a fire department, but it was a volunteer fire department, but they had all of those things. All the stuff that you need for a fire department, but they would blow this whistle that said people needed to show up at a certain place. The whistle the number of things it said, said well the fire or what they needed-fire people, needed to go to a certain area in Greenhills that tells them, you know that they’d go to work. I think at least I think my brother-in-law told me I think they might still have at least some fire department volunteers. Not a total volunteer fire department, maybe, and there were police. Not a whole lot. I remember the so-called Chief of Police was Johnny Baldwin who was the father of one of my classmates. So, you had- we were really safe in Greenhills. You really could roam free.

NC: What was your experience like in the Greenhills schools?

AB: It was very good, even though after the war, maybe even not quite after the war but close to the end of the war I remember my third-grade class so there were lots of kids. My third-grade class I think had fifty-four kids in it. That poor teacher having to manage fifty-four kids. They didn’t really do much like you see today. They really didn’t do very much, teacher’s assistants meaning you know volunteer teacher’s assistants, so I don’t remember much of that. We really did get a good education. The thing I like the best that probably got me to school was the band program where we had to take these aptitude tests when you were about in the fourth grade and then you are invited if they thought you had aptitude, you were invited to the music program and given an instrument and you know, someone teaching you. So, it was quite a thing, and, in fact, we had a really good band. It wasn’t great or enormous, but they were good, and we had a good band instructor. I mean, for heaven’s sake, he got his PhD in musicology and played for the Cincinnati Symphony, so you know, when you have something like that. We had lots of good teachers, I think.

NC: What was the name of the band?

AB: Just the Greenhills High School Band. We didn’t have any- yes, we were a marching band, but you have to go back a lot of years before all this stuff that you see here today. Yeah, we had a marching band, in fact, he had been- Dr Riley had been in the Air Force band during the war. So, we were treated really strictly. You know, we were going to march like this and it was going like that. No slouching around

NC: Did you have a favorite class?

AB: Favorite... that's hard to say. I’m thinking high school. An interesting thing happened when we were in the seventh and eighth grade. They put the kids that were in band that also did the music program. There was two classes of eighth graders. One class where the kids were in band because of the scheduling of stuff. Turned out that was an interesting thing that happened because that class also got enough together and there were enough kids doing band and singing and stuff that we put on in the eighth grade HMS Butterfly-no, Buttercup. The Gilbert and Sullivan opera, where we in fact, made the costumes. Kids made the costumes. The pianist that was accompanying us was one of our classmates. It really was a big hit. You know, eighth graders- I was trying to think if there were seventh graders but eighth graders doing that. So that was, you know, sort of a highlight that we were able to do things like that.

NC: Who were the people you interacted with the most in high school? Any friends?

AB: Oh yeah, you’re talking about- we all grew up together. I mean I’m thinking of Nancy Flint and Nancy Baldwin and Dick Higgins and, golly, can’t think of all the kids.  In addition, a group of us and we were lucky we were able to do this. You know the Cincinnati Symphony? In those days, I don’t think they do this anymore, in those days had Friday afternoon concerts so if you have a series of concerts, one every week you're going to play whatever. You’ve chosen what’s playing at the Cincinnati Symphony and they would have that on Friday afternoon and on Saturday night. So, we persuaded our school principal who, I think his last name is Young, that we- there were three or four of us- bought a season ticket sitting up in the peanut gallery up on the third level of Music Hall, which now I think Music Hall is removing that level and we would go down for the Friday afternoon. We’d take the bus, the Ohio Bus line bus, that would go from Greenhills and we go down from school because it started I think at 1:00. We were lucky because we saw all kinds of people who are still famous to people who know music. So, we were- it was interesting time. We were young. We were just in high School and we had done that the whole time and so that was an interesting thing plus the band program. Plus, normal stuff, I mean I suspect that the math teacher, I think his name was Mr. Miller. I eventually graduated from college in mathematics- with a major in mathematics and I have a Master’s degree in mathematics too. Probably because you know it seemed logical to me. He was a good teacher and I just moved on with all of that and you know you just got a good rounded high school education.

NC: Were there any groups of people that were most welcomed to Greenhills and those that were not so warmly welcomed?

AB: Not that I know of. You know other people may have another view, but I don't remember anyone like that. You know kids are kids. I mean you have friends but nothing that it says that the group isn't- We’re against that group I don't know remember any of that. To be honest, we were a very homogeneous population. Not only fairly, I suspect completely homogeneous in the population. Yes, they're different religions but we were white, all white. You didn't have a lot of elderly people in the beginning because they all were these young people coming into the village, young, you know, and they’re in their twenties and thirties maybe forties, but you cut down the number of people that are there that are in any other kind of age group, so it was a very homogeneous population.

NC: How well were the farm kids treated when they entered Greenhills?

AB: Well they would come in on the bus. We thought it was sort of neat to be able to do that and when it would snow of course they would get off when and we wouldn’t. Sometimes we would also get off if the snow was bad enough because people couldn't get in to get to work but you know, even we would go out and play. And I remember their last name was Burger or Becker maybe. There was a farm not very far. You could really ride your bike. It wasn’t really far away and go out and play at that farm. Play in the silo. You know, roam around that farm. If you look at it now it would seem like a big deal then, that it was a big farm. Well obviously, it wasn’t. I don’t know how big it was, but it wasn’t enormous, but you could do things. You know you could get out and play and so I don’t see anything with the difference with the kids.

NC: Was there any difference between what men and boys could do versus what women and girls could do like socially interacting with each other?

AB: That’s hard to put that in today’s context. You didn't of course, again this is how many years ago? Eighty? You didn't see many women with jobs outside the home. You know, you just didn't see it. Now men couldn't get jobs either and my mother was a nurse, but she had two small kids and also getting back and forth to the hospitals in Cincinnati would have been real problem because either you didn’t have a car or are you really couldn’t afford to do something like that. Women, of course, were working in the schools as teachers; women and men. Do I think there was really any real- well yeah. Girls couldn't play boys basketball which was true everywhere. Seems to me we didn't have co-educational baseball teams. The girls played softball. The boys played what we call hardball of course. You know but there were- the classes were still the same in high school. You know I don't think it was any different. It wasn’t a restrictive probably because they were young. These were young people. It probably wasn't as restrictive as you might see in other community where you have an older more settled population. Everybody was new.

NC: What was the relationship like between Greenhills and Cincinnati?

AB: You were breaking-you broke up.

NC: What was the relationship between Greenhills and Cincinnati? Was there any animosity between the two?

AB: I don’t think so. Cincinnati was the place to go. To the big department stores and to Music Hall and everyone had family somewhere else. Some of them had the whole family structure or pretty much the whole family structure. You know brothers and sisters or something living in Green Hills also with families. Well we were one. My mother’s brother and his family you know, my two cousins so- you had- you did get away, you know, because you had family outside, but you also probably have family there too like we did. Cincinnati, I don't- it was a fun. You know, it was a big deal if you went downtown so you take the bus and go downtown. I don't recall any I mean there are people in Cincinnati because you had lots of conservative people who thought that you shouldn't have housing for- and it’s no different than you find today especially in today’s political environment. “It’s not appropriate for the government to be involved in housing” for example in this instance. The fact that it put a bunch of people to work building the place. Plus, you know, it gave people a place to live. I’m sure just like there is today people who think that’s inappropriate

NC: How do you define the Greenhill residents politically? Were they New Deal Progressives or were they fairly conservative?

AB: I think they were both. I remember you know people adults having arguments, so I think they were both. I think it was a mixed environment. I mean I even remember when Roosevelt died, and you had, you know, just like you have idiots today who would say “oh wonderful. Gee let's clap,” so I don't think the political environment is any different than it is today, and I think it's a mixture of people who were far more conservative as to people who were brought in and were delighted with the New Deal.

NC: Greenhills was considered a planned community-

AB: Yup

NC: Yeah you mentioned this. Do you think it worked out the way the planners intended?

AB: Yeah, I do. Yeah, I do. It depends on what generation you want to talk about. What they have foreseen eighty years, no. But for those years from the 30s through I think my parents left in the 70s- through the 70s, I think was doing exactly what it was supposed to. Now people were able to buy their own homes after the war. I can't remember what year that was, but it was certainly before ‘75 which was when my parents left and retired. Probably in the early- well it was because I graduated from college in ‘57. So that was probably in the early 50s when we had the opportunity to buy our house and there was a lot of fuss about that, but it didn’t seem to change the village terribly in those years. After ‘75 and after my parents left, I really don’t know anything about Greenhills because I haven’t spent any time there.

NC: How did World War II impact the population?

AB: Oh, I mean it hit it very hard. You know a lot of people; a lot of men went off to war and some didn't come back. My uncle, we were always worried about- you always worried because they were gone, and you didn't know. The other thing is that we had rationing so that was a big deal. You know you had to find the ration coupons to have and then you had to say is there-even if you had the ration coupons- “is there any ‘sugar’” or things like that that were delicacies. If you wanted to make you know, have a special something for Christmas for example, you needed not only the ration coupons, you needed there to be a supply of it, so you’d line up. You send the kids; us- I was the oldest one- to go stand in line. Gasoline was rationed. Tires were rationed. We had victory gardens. You know, there was a whole thing with victory gardens. So, yeah, we were impacted by the war.

NC: How did the men returning to the Greenhills village after the war adapt to their peaceful surroundings? Were there any instances-

AB: Well, you know, now as a kid, you were talking to someone who was eight years old going on nine when the war ended so what happens is that you... all you know is, for example, is that my uncle. You did see him come back, thank heaven.  I don’t really know any difference. One of the things at least for him was that he was in the CVs which were the construction things, so he got even more experience. Other ones also went off to get more education on the GI Bill so everybody at least from a kid’s point of view seems like everyone moved on and were ready to tackle the next thing that’s happening.

NC: Which would be the Cold War?

AB: Yeah, the Cold War and yes, we did, yeah. And yes, tackling also the rebuilding. Here we came out of the war and the Depression and now all of a sudden, things are building. There are jobs. So, you know things are really booming really. New houses are being built. All kinds of stuff that’s happening and, of course, we got out of rationing in the United States fairly quickly. That didn’t happen overseas but that did happen in the United States. So, I think people were optimistic and ready to move on.  Whether there were problems with the returning soldiers, I’m sure there were, but not as I as an eight-year-old would have seen probably.

NC: Returning to the Cold War, was there any aura of fear or sense of political divisiveness within the village?

AB: I think there was more when I was getting into college. More political, and that was because of Eugene McCarthy- no not Eugene McCarthy. McCarthy. What the hell was his first name?

NC: Joe.

AB: Joe McCarthy, you’re right. And the Army-McCarthy hearings and that did polarize a lot of people but that was the later. That was- I was already in college, so it wasn't right after the war. It was almost ten years later.

NC: And when did you decide to leave Greenhills?

AB: Me or my family? My parents?

NC: Both.

AB: Well, I left after I graduated I went off to graduate school and then I got married and I never lived in Greenhills again. My parents stayed until about ‘75 and then they moved. That be about right? Because I talked about this the last time. I have to calculate. My father was born in 1909 and he retired at sixty-five so that would have been ‘74 right? And so, they left in ‘74 or ‘75 and they also never came back so it's hard to say, you know, I wasn't there, and they weren't there.

NC: Do you have any keepsakes that you kept growing up in Greenhills?

AB: I think we did, But I don't know where they are. All the moves I’ve taken. I may have some. I don't know where they are. They are in boxes. I've been cleaning out the attic here in fact I'm having more construction going on in this 300-year-old house, so I think I have some, but I don't know where they are, and I think my sister you know one of my sisters or brother might have something, but we didn't keep much.

NC: Are there things you miss growing up in Greenhills?

AB: Did we miss- did-? I don’t know what it’d be. We thought it was pretty good. You know what? I mean, we didn't have a lot of money where people do have a lot of money so, no, I think we were lucky. We had lots of stuff that we could do. We were never bored.

NC: [laughs] Sounds like you never were.

AB: [laughs] And you know we didn’t even get a television until 1952. And the only reason I remember that is because I remember the Republican National Convention of that year because it was on television.

NC: Were there any downsides to growing up in Greenhills like isolation or the fact the town was limited from developing too far?

AB: I don’t think so because you could always go out of Greenhills and we used to go. This is probably ninth, tenth grade.  You know we could go to North College Hill or College Hill on the bus and go to the movies. Then all of a sudden in 1950, you’d get another car. In fact, my mother went back to work in 1950 as a nurse. So, I don’t think we did. Other people may have but I don’t think we did.

NC: Alright, is there anything else you’d like to add to our interview that you think we haven’t been able to talk about?

AB: Nothing that I can think of. It's interesting that you all are interested in this and that's the thing I find interesting. It's a shame that we shouldn’t or, you know, maybe they did ask people like my parents and the other parents or people of that age in the 70s to do this kind of interview and stuff because they were the ones who really, yes, we involved ourselves in this and I think it was a wonderful time for us but you know what about them? It's a shame we don’t- I mean we’re always saying “we should have asked Mother and Daddy, X, Y or Z and probably should have been interviewing these people. Maybe somebody did but I don’t recall it. It would be nice to compare my view at eighty-two, almost eighty-two with what my parents thought. Could tell you about them going there and being there during the Depression.

NC: Alright well thanks again for the second interview. I hope you have a lovely evening

AB: Thanks, same to you.