

**MIMS 9HOERGER) PIRTLE/FRED HOERGER/JACK HOERGER**  
**Interviewed by Sally Worrell**  
**October 26, 2009**

*Today is Monday, October 26<sup>th</sup>, and we are doing an oral history interview with Mims Pirtle, Fred Hoerger, and Jack Hoerger. They are sister and brothers, so Mims was a Hoerger.*

*First of all, Mims, what was your full name?*

**Miriam Charlene Hoerger Pirtle.**

*And when were you born?*

**1934**

*And when did you graduate from high school?*

**1953**

*And Fred?*

**My name is Frederick Charles Hoerger, and I was born in 1929. I graduated from high school in 1947.**

*And Jack?*

**My name is Jack Lewis Hoerger. I was named after my Grandfather Lewis. I was born in 1926, and I graduated in 1944.**

*Did you all always live in the same house when you were born?*

**(F) 15<sup>th</sup>. In fact, I was born in the back bedroom.**

**(J) I was born at home, but down on Pratt Street, which is now 9<sup>th</sup> Street right east of Tibbs Avenue.**

*What were your parents' names?*

**(M) Miriam Caughlin Hoerger and Harry Emanuel Hoerger. My mother was named after her mother, but no middle name.**

*Did you have any other siblings besides the three of you?*

**(J) Richard was born 20 years after I was, in 1946. An older brother was born in 1922, but he has since died.**

*The house at . . . 15<sup>th</sup> that is still standing, we know, and is it still in the family?*

**(M) My daughter, Susan Pirtle, lives there. My dad built that house in 1927, and it was the first house west of Winton Avenue.**

**(F) In fact, 15<sup>th</sup> Street went to our driveway going west. It didn't even go through. It was gravel and just like a cow pasture down to Lynhurst Avenue they tell me. I wasn't living at that time.**

**(J) My grandparents' house was the first one west of Winton. It was on Winton just behind the church.**

*And that address was?*

**Winton I think.**

*Did you all go to school in Speedway all your school?*

**(J)** I went to first grade in a city school. Bob was in 5<sup>th</sup>. My grandfather was sick that year, and we moved out on 16<sup>th</sup> to take care of him. Also we found out years later that they couldn't make the mortgage during the depression, so they rented it out for about a year. So I went to School 90 south of 16<sup>th</sup> Street on Tibbs Avenue. It was a two room portable school house with a pot belly stove in each room, but they had four grades in there. Bob went to 5<sup>th</sup> grade down on Belmont, I think it was. Then we both came back to Speedway the following year. From 2<sup>nd</sup> grade on, I was in Speedway the rest of my life. That would have been 1932 down in the city and 1933 back to Speedway.

*How did you get to school?*

**(J)** Walked because we weren't very far away. But even those that were a mile away walked. There were no busses to bring you in there.

*Do you have any memories of any specific teachers that you liked or disliked?*

**(J)** We didn't have too many teachers to start with.

**(F)** No, we didn't have too many problems with teachers; we enjoyed all of them.

**(J)** Northcutt was our band director and history teacher, and he was one of the better teachers I remember.

*Did you like school?*

**(M)** I loved school.

**(F)** It was a block away and the same way with grandmother's house was a half a block away and the church was a block away and all our shopping was 2 blocks away so everything was real close.

**(J)** The old drive that was a driveway at one time when that was a county school. The school busses came up around the grade school. That was a driveway where they would come up and drop off and go out the other side.

*And what did you wear to school back then?*

**(M)** I wore skirts and sweaters. The girls didn't wear slacks.

**(F&J)**--I think real early I can remember wearing knickers, and we wore corduroy.

*Were there a lot of kids around close by or in the neighborhood?*

**Most everybody walked to school.**

*And so who were some of the kids that you played with when you were out of school?*

**(M)** I played with Irvin's and Nick Stump, Cary Seaver's. They all lived in the neighborhood there.

**(M&F&J)** We would go out under the street light at night and play kick the can or something like that. It was nothing organized. Walt Webster lived across the street. Even if we went down on a Saturday and played baseball down on the baseball diamond, it was just pick up games. You had no adults down there running the show at all. We just played in the lot next door. It was vacant there were the double was at and we hit many windows over there where Bobbi is at.

*When you got into high school were there any kinds of organized sports yet?*

**(J)** Yes, we had six man football. It wasn't 12 because the league in Speedway and out around the west side couldn't handle that many.

**(F)** They played the night games down at the Speedway Midget track. We would all walk from Speedway to go down there; so they would dress and walk down; and the

band stayed at school and marched down and played for our night games down there; and we marched back to keep us together.

*Now the Speedway Midget track - was that there on 16<sup>th</sup> Street?*

**(F&J)** Right across from the Brickyard Crossing. That's where all of our football games were played for a couple of years.

**(M)** I remember Jack Mays saying that the football players would get their shoulder pads and shoes on their shoulders and get on the fenders of cars to ride down with the coaches. They wouldn't have a bus or anything to take them down.

**(F)** Mr. Johnson would make them walk the field and pick up all the nuts and bolts before the game started (from the race cars.).

*What did you do for hobbies or extra-curricular things when you were in high school?*

**(F)** Mainly it was things they did in school. The church was right across, and they always had choir practice one day a week. We also had study halls for school in the basement of the old church. They used each other back and forth through the war. I always had a paper route. I delivered the Times in the evening, and I worked at Guarantee Auto, and I worked at Rosner's Drug Store too my high school years - so I was busy after school.

**(J)** That was the same thing I was doing. We got 65¢ for working 5 hours at the drug store--12¢ an hour.

**M**—I worked at the Main Drug Store down on 15<sup>th</sup> Street. I was able to work there for \$1.00 an hour.

**(J)** We carried the newspaper; we carried the Speedway Flyer, the Indianapolis Times back then.

**M**—Then at school, there was two of us that worked at the drug store; and on our lunch hour we would run down to Main Street, fix lunch for Esterline-Angus and some of the Allison's group. We would stand there and fix sandwiches and malts and shakes, and then we would run back to school.

**(J)** They would fix beans one day a week, and we would run down there and eat.

*What stores do you remember on Main Street or just in Speedway?*

**(M&F&J)** Nofke's was on the corner, we had a Grande's Hardware Store, the bank was there, the Clarence Haupt Sandwich Shop, Dottie's Coffee Shop, Skidmore Barber Shop, Zinks's, Guarantee Tire and Rubber, Sutphin's was on the point on 16<sup>th</sup> Street, Showalter's Hardware, and we also had a filling station and above Rosner's Drug Store was a doctor's office. Dr. Hanna was behind the main drug store. There was a theatre there. That was big time to walk down to the show on Sunday or Saturday afternoon. You could get in for 10¢ to the matinee. When they put that 1¢ tax on, I had to walk back home because I didn't have the extra penny to pay the tax.

*Did you have any other interests or did you play in the band?*

**(J)** We were all in the band. Fred and I and my older brother Bob were all in the band.

**(M)** I was in the band. And was Richard in the band - I can't remember.

**(F)** Of course, we were in the church choirs all the time, we had CYF and HiY.

**(J)** The church for a long time was the community—plays were put on there, they used the auditorium of the old white church there.

**(M)** For a long time they never let anything be scheduled at school on choir practice night. They would coordinate and try to get it together. I was a cheer leader from 7<sup>th</sup> grade on through high school so I was involved in the sports part as a cheer leader. But did you guys play football or basketball?

**(J)**I was on the track team one. I was sports writer of the Speedette—I would follow the football teams.

*Did the bands play at the football games then?*

**Yes** and we went to a lot of band contests - Danville a lot and Plainfield.

*But not with the Indianapolis schools. What church did you attend?*

**(J)** Speedway Christian Church. I was baptized at the age of 12 back in the 30's. We were all baptized there. Howard Anderson was our first minister, our scout master, our youth leader—he was just in charge of everything—a one man job for all of it. For over 80 years we went there—still do.

**M**—He baptized me too. I worked at the Main Drug Store at 15<sup>th</sup> and Winton and then when I was in high school there was Eddie Devine's Drug Store right across from the Catholic Church and that's where we hung out a lot. There was two drug stores down there when Beck's moved in at Lynhurst but Eddie's had all the tables where you could go in and sit.

**(F)** Later on in high school, they had a drive-in down on 16<sup>th</sup> Street. It was Corky's, and Corky's Band played on the roof. We would all congregate down there in cars after the games and on the weekends. That was after we were able to drive in cars - we were always down at Corky's. Lynhurst was a dirt road from 16<sup>th</sup> north up to the farm. My brother and I both learned how to drive when dad would go up to get milk for a quarter a gallon.

*Were you involved in any other kinds of organizations or special groups?*

**We** were pretty busy. We were in Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts. We would go to summer camps and stuff like that.

**(F)** I stayed in scouts for a while to help Richard, my younger brother. I didn't marry until I was 55 years old after I retired - which shocked everybody. But I was married for 14 years to Polly Wacker.

**(J)** To show how much difference there was with Richard. When my older brother Bob and I came home in 1946, both of us were engaged to be married. My mother said there will be no weddings in our family. I am not walking down the church aisle looking like this. We had never been told that she was expecting so everything was put on hold until Richard was born in September. I was married in October, and Bob was married in November. So the year of 1946 was quite a big year for us. Two of us coming home from service, one birth, and two weddings. It was also the folks' 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary in the spring. So that was a big year for our family.

*Are there any other special kinds of things that happened in Speedway that you can remember?*

**(F&J)** Well we used to go to church fish fries down at the tennis courts on 16<sup>th</sup> at Prest-O-Lite. We moved off the corner of 14<sup>th</sup> and Main Street and went down on 16<sup>th</sup> for the fish fryies all the time. When we were real young, Jack and I would go together to the race track during qualifying and stuff. We could get in with Maxwell boxtop coupons, but you had to go in with adults. So we would stand there and wait for the busses to unload and say, "Can we walk in with you?" And then we were in for the day. We almost lived at that track when we were kids.

*But you didn't get involved in racing other than as a spectator?*

**(F)** The only thing was that a couple of times during the summer we would go over and put our bikes underneath the fence at the little creek on Georgetown, and take our bikes and drive around on the inside of the race track, and that was back when it was still brick. Nobody was over there, and nobody knew we were in there. That was

when the National Guard was in control over there, and during the summer when there wasn't any activity, and it was closed during the war.

(J) Mother always had a meal after the race for about half of the Speedway timers. They just started coming there, and one year they gave her a plaque for 20 years of faithfully serving them meals. One year even Duane Carter who was President of USAC was over with friends of his, and we had a cookout in the backyard after the race. Speedway was just a very convenient place to grow up. We didn't know it at the time but everything was so convenient. As I said, everything we wanted was within walking distance—grocery stores, getting a haircut, show and it satisfied us. Very seldom did we go downtown—maybe around Christmas we would take the bus down there to see all the displays and stuff like that. Dad used to run a bill with Zink's and go down and pay the bill once a week—very convenient for everybody. We didn't realize the depression was on - looking back, yes - but we all had clothes to wear, and food to eat, and we all had big gardens next to our house, and we didn't know any different.

(F) Back then we had a lot next to the house there on 15<sup>th</sup> that was my grandfather's. It was completely cultivated and put into raising vegetables, corn and everything - plus we had rabbits and chickens right there in Speedway in our backyard.(J) We would keep our stuff all winter. We had it dug out with tarps over it, and you could put your cabbage and apples down there and bury your vegetables. Then on Saturday, Dad would take a wagon and go down the street selling radishes and onions and taking orders for the chickens and the rabbits.

*So you actually sold the rabbits and chickens? I had heard from Susan that there was a chicken coop out back of the house.*

(F) I don't know if we really sold the chickens up and down the street—most of them came to the house during meat rationing asking if we had any extra chickens and rabbits.

(J) I remember pulling that wagon with the radishes, lettuce, green beans and stuff like that and selling it.

(M) I can remember one Christmas Eve we were all at church and came home and somebody had robbed the chicken coop, and we didn't have any chickens.

(F) They stole my dog the week before.

*Is there anything else that you think would be interesting to talk about of your time in Speedway?*

(F) When they put in Leonard Park, in the winter time they had the tennis court built so they could fill it with water and we would ice skate down there. Then the Parks Department or Police Department would put a big bonfire down there, and we would go down there and skate.

(J) Father Lindeman or Howard Anderson got the town to flood that.

(M) I remember skating up here on the pond in front of the farm on the old duck pond where they are having trouble with the sewer systems today. We used to skate up there.

*Thank you very much.*