

## Gary Greaves Oral History Interviews Digitization Project

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#### Dorothy Cordova Interview

Greaves - Even today in high school--

Cordova - Outside the USA.

Greaves - Well, not even outside, but not, you know, foreign born--, american born, I mean they even have that issue that they have to deal with and she says that now she has three sisters in law who are japanese. So, you know that's a big change from over 20 years ago. But uh--

Cordova - Well, you know it's very difficult for you to, to get married, uh, when we talked, and I was telling you about our uh, our neighborhood. There were so few families that we all became very close to each other. We weren't related by blood but at least, we grew up together. And, so, by the time we reached the age where we dated--, we used to have teen clubs and we would all go, and we would go in groups. But there was a time when the boys wanted to date the girls alone. And if a boy who I grew up with would ask me to date, I would laugh at him. I would go, " Oh, no! Are you crazy? I wouldn't date you". I was getting hysterical on the phone. This guy wouldn't talk to me for several months. And someone told me years later that he really resented me for the longest time. But it was just really a funny kind of a situation, where I, I mean I couldn't date a boy who was like my brother or my cousin. And, so most of the girls my age, when we married eventually, we married who were sailors who had come in. Uh, my husband is from California and he came up here to go to college. Or, if they didn't run in the same social circle as their parents at least, they weren't the people who on saturdays nights you were together, on sunday you were at their house for birthday parties, or the mother's use to hang around together, the dads played cards or worked together. They just didn't do that. Or, the boys would marry younger girls, or the girls would get married older guys.

Greaves - My friend came up here to go to school, like I said a lot of-- that's true of Seattle, that a lot of people go to college. Why do you think they do? Is there a school--?

Cordova -We didn't! Well, those of us-- there were a number of kids at that time-- I'd say, a lot of us-- I remember the reason I decided to go to college, because from the time I was in grade school, I used to get good grades and there was this little kind of priest, and he taught at seattle college, which is Seattle University, which was then Seattle College. And, he used to come eat dinner at the house and play cards, and he always would say, " When you go, when you graduate you're going to go to Seattle college.". And he said, " you tell them my name and [untranscribable]". But, I did go to Seattle-- but there was no question in my mind, and in my older brother's mind, and then consequently my younger brothers and sister, that we would go to college. And many of the kids in my group, there was no question, but there were different things going on in society. That there was our girls group grew up really fast. Because there were so few women, females, that lot of times, the girls that I grew up with, started to go to dances. And, our dances were multigenerational, it wasn't just a dance for teenagers, a dance

for old folks, it was all these different groups. And when I look at the pictures, cause we do photo searches, and you look at them, these girls are--, I was still running around like a little girl, and here are my peers dressed up in black dresses, high heels, a lot of makeup, and here are all dressed up in these pompadours and whatever. So, they were fourteen year old girls dressed up like twenty year old women, that pushed a lot of them into growing up very quickly. Then we had a lot of, like I say--

Greaves - And there was such a demand for them too...

Cordova - Yes there were! And there were different kinds of demands on them. You had the guys our age. Then you had the guys from outside, either from California or, we-- right after world war II, then we had another great big influx of young philipino sailors, from the Philippines, US Navy. Who could--, very romantic, I mean still had those old spanish ways of courting the girls, you know, writing the letters to them saying they are "the moon and the stars".

Greaves - haha, comprende on that, or no?

Cordova - Heck, No! [ Untranscribable] We would sit there and laugh at them! But, some girls loved it!

Greaves - Hahahah!

Cordova - And so um, and then those guys from the philippines knew how to do all of the latin dances. We didn't know how to do them all, and they would do it. And then there were all those older men. Who now, that I'm in my sixties I realize they weren't old, they were in their 30's, I mean that's not old! But, when you are fifteen, sixteen, that's old okay!

Greaves - Yeah.

Cordova - So, I remember one of my girlfriends was fourteen, and we were little girls, and my mom decided to keep me young as long as she could. And I wore these dresses with big sashes, I was such a square! I can't believe it. And my girlfriend was the same way as me. And, we were busy, the nuns were teaching us a dance, and we were doing one of those dances with the little girls, and she whispered to me at one of the practices, "I'm getting married next week". And we all looked at her, and we were little girls, we were thirteen. But, we were, we actually had retarded social growth. We were two ways in the community, we were, our mothers chaperoned us to death, or our mothers aloud us to grow very quickly. And, I belonged to the former group. Well anyway my friend belonged to the latter group and she did, and the man she married was 30 years older than her.

Greaves - Whoa, he was forty...

Cordova - Maybe twenty 25, 25... yeah, let me see she was around 15, 16 then she was a couple years older than me... she 15 years old and she was going to marry him and he was almost 40 years, he was about 38-39 and they ended up having about 13 kids. But after um, 40 years of marriage, he left her. Yeah, and I just saw her here recently, she's here and he's in California.

Greaves - I guess if she-- if he was willing to have 13 kids he had to get a 15 year old pregnant, haha?

Cordova - I guess... she had, she had a lot of kids, God, best natured woman I ever met. I swear to God, I had 8 kids and I thought that was a lot but Noreen had much more than me. Anyways, that was our community, we were a mixed bag. Umm, Delores [Debaga], grew up the same time as me.