

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Leetonia, Ohio

Personal Experience

O.H. 928

KARL SEVENICH

Interviewed

by

Ted Carchedi

on

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C: This is an interview with Karl Sevenich for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on Leetonia, Ohio, by Ted Carchedi, on April 21, 1986, at 3:20 p.m.

Can you tell me something about your family? When did they come to Leetonia?

S: My mother was born in New Castle to Dominic Zanini. After being born over there, her dad came to Leetonia. He built a brewery on the south side of town. After building the brewery over there, they all moved to Leetonia. The home is constructed of brick made in one of the bottoms; they burned their own brick. That home still stands over there where the car barns used to be. Then my dad was born in Leetonia down here on High Street. His father was John Sevenich and he was born, I forget the date, but he would be more than a hundred years old right now. So would my mother, if she were living.

C: What was the name of the brewery?

S: It was the Leetonia Brewing Company. That was built by my grandad, Dominic Zanini, on the south side of town, you cannot miss it if you go down Mill Street. It was at the corner of Mill and Store Streets. They tore it down, but after he died, he died quite a number of years ago, my grandma sold it to people in Leetonia. But they never operated it. At that time, when it ran, there were forty saloons in Leetonia.

C: What year are you talking about?

S: I am seventy-eight. I would say about 1900. Before 1900 is when that was built, because my mom and them lived over there in that big brick house on the south side and the brewery consisted of a wooden building. They made their beer in this building, but they had four springs in it. And those springs furnished them with water for the brewery and they filled the brewery walls with ice in the summer until they had ice in the wintertime. In those days, it was five dollars for a barrel of beer. My mother and her brothers, after they were older, the brother went to Detroit and the other brother worked on the railroad here in Leetonia, Bill Zanini. They had an Uncle Karl, the one that I am named after. He was killed in Detroit. He was run over. That was before they had these automatic couplings on the cars and before they had air brakes. He was run over and killed.

C: Was there another brewery in town?

S: No. That was the only brewery. They had in Leetonia, at one time, a pottery. The biggest pottery in the world went to Liverpool. It was situated down where IGA is now. It went on to Liverpool. Then down to the left of that, as you come

up, there was a great big livery stable. The livery stable, they had hauled the people to the block over where Straub has his filling station and downtown at the corner they tore the Leetonia Hotel down. People used to come in on trains, the passenger trains. They had the Erie railroad and the Pennsylvania. The Pennsylvania went from Pittsburgh to Fort Wayne, Indiana, which it still does. The Erie went from Lisbon through Leetonia to Niles. On the south side where we had the Y & O and the Y & S railroad, the Youngstown and Southern came from Youngstown to Leetonia and it went around the station over there, the big streetcar barns, and it headed for Liverpool. That was the Y & O. The Y & S, when it came to Leetonia, it went to the station, loaded up with passengers, and it went to Salem. In Salem they picked up the Stark Electric and that took them on into Niles and Canton. That was the big thing in those days, the railroad.

C: What about the street cars?

S: The streetcars were run by electricity and they had a great big generating unit right there at the car barn in the building right across where they make furniture now. That all belonged to the car barns, that was all the streetcar lines. You did not have to worry in those days because they pulled all of their juice out of the lines overhead. The rails were the ground and the lines were overhead. It went from Leetonia to Salem, Leetonia to Youngstown, Leetonia to Liverpool and like I said, when it went to Salem, they picked up the Stark Electric and the Stark Electric took them into Niles and from then on into Canton.

C: Did you ride on these?

S: Yes, we used to get on. If we wanted to go to Salem to the dentist, we would get on in the morning and ride to Salem, and then in the afternoon we would ride it back. My mother had friends in Liverpool, so we would ride it to Liverpool. To Youngstown, all of the rates were cheap. I think it was only 25 or 30 cents to ride to Youngstown and it was the same for Salem. That was the only means of transportation in those days. There were no such things as automobiles like there is today.

C: How long would the streetcars run until?

S: The street cars were around until the Depression. When the Depression hit, that was in 1929, everything went.

C: Down the tubes.

S: Well, it was the same for the blast furnace at Cherry Valley.

C: Tell me about your role in the industry in town and how did that industry, Cherry Valley, have an effect on the community as a whole? What was your role in that?

S: Well, when Cherry Valley was operating, we had around four hundred and fifty fellows working.

C: When did you start there?

S: I started there in 1925, because I was eighteen years old, and worked there for four years, until June of 1929, when the Depression hit. That was the end of the blast furnace. That was also the end of the McKeefrey Iron. But the blast furnace where I worked originally belonged to an outfit, before any people bought it. Well, then they would go up a skip and they would fill the blast furnace with their ingredients or limestone, coke or whatever, and then they did not draw off slag like we did in the blast furnace. The slag was intermingled with the molten metal that came out. They had what they called putters. Those putters would take those much balls, as they called them, and they would work the slag out. Then after they worked the slag out, it was rolled into various forms. We still have a fence down here on the top of Walnut Street hill, the rod iron fence. That was made out of rod iron that was made down at the furnace.

Then the M.A. Hanna Company decided to take it over. They took it over, I forget what year, but when they took it over, they put a skip hoist in and everything else and it was all filled with machinery. The skips would go up and they would load two skips of coke, a couple skips of limestone, couple skips of iron ore, and they had what they called the big opening in the top. I forget what it is called anymore, but it went into the top opening and then the fellow in the stock room would drop it down into the next opening and that in turn would place and stock at various places. There was a large bell and a small bell. The large bell was the bottom bell and the small bell was the top bell. It would place the stock at various locations in there. The inside of the furnace was ninety feet tall. It had tuyere, blow pipes, and water coolers all the way up.

C: That provided ventilation?

S: The twier itself had blow pipes that would go in and would blow hot blast through that stock all the way up and that is the way we melted it. And then when everything would melt it would get down below the tuyere, the bottom of the furnace had an opening there, we would open that up every four hours and we would draw our pig iron out. It would go in the pig machine. The top opening would be opened up every hour and they would run the slag off, put it up in the dump and that slag was used by Standard Slag to aggregate the country. It was a big thing because before they had the pig machine in there that they would

pour the pig iron in, the reason they called it pig iron in the first place was because it would come out and you had a skimmer, it would skim off the slag and then run it to one side, because the slag is lighter. It would run out in what they called the sow, a big runner. It would run out there and the molders would have that fed. It was as long as that garden. They would have outlets for it to go into different branches and there they would make pigs. That is the reason it is called pig iron. Years ago, that was the beginning of pig iron. It would come out and when it came out, the slag that was the lightest was on top. They would skim it off this side and then go to the ladle. The pig iron was heavier and they would run it to the north. They would run it off in the main runner, they called it the sow, and the sow would have branches off. The molders would make places to fill up. They would have a fellow down there that would shut it off when they got it full. They would have to go in those beds after cooling down, they would have to put wooden shoes on, then they would have to break the pig iron apart from the sow and the runners and everything else. But when they got the pig machines, well that was a different story. It would go into the ladle, when it went into the ladle they had a pig machine there that was going continually up and dumped the stuff in the cars. The pig machine had forms with CVS marked on them, Cherry Valley on it, and they would be cooled off by the time they hit the cars. I worked there from 1925 to 1929. I worked seven days a week, twelve hours a day, I ran three casts at night. When I was on night turn one time for eighteen months. When I was on day turn, I ran three casts. I got a hundred and twenty-five dollars a month for twelve hours a day and seven days a week. They did not shut the blast furnace down. When I was one day turn, I not only analyzed the pig iron, but I also analyzed all the stock, the coke and the limestone and the ores and the water. We had to do that because if we did not keep the water at a certain softness, then it went in the boiler and we would have trouble. It was a big thing, but you could not get the fellows today to work like that.

C: It was different.

S: Yes, it was different. They had the coke ovens, which is where we got our coke. They made their coke up there. That was the beehive oven. The reason they made it in beehive ovens when we used it in the blast furnace we wanted a coke in big chunks, so when the blast went through there it would not form a mass up there and we would not have what they called a slip. It would hang forty or fifty feet in the air if you did not and whenever it dropped we had explosion doors that would blow everything out. By having this coke in big hunks, it was about two feet high when it came out of the coke ovens. They had an arm that would go in and pull it out, but before that they had men that would go into the ovens and drag the coke out. Before they got the lye cars on the top of the ovens all of the ovens were filled with dump carts operated by one horse. They would have

to ride in between those hot ovens and they would dump two cart loads in each one of the ovens then after they were in the ovens they would brick up the front, after they bricked it up they had a bar across the front with a man that would level that all off so it was all uniform and they would brick it all the way up to the top and they would leave it about that much of an opening on top. After they burned off all the carbon, Neil Kegamyers dad was a boss up there that would burn off the carbon. He would shut it down to barely nothing because he did not want it to burn to an ash. It would burn for two days, then after they burned for two days there would be a fellow outing them, pouring water in them and then they would pull the coke out. I had to analyze that, the coke.

C: What was involved in the analysis of the ore?

S: Well, in the ore you would have iron, we would run it through iron, we would run it through all the elements like sulfur, phosphorous.

C: What instruments did you use in doing that?

S: The instruments were used were chemical analysis. I had to put it on the burners in little cups or Altmyer flasks. We ran phos, sulfur, manganese and silicon. Silicon was what the pig iron was sold for. They had three or four different grades. We had foundry iron, basic iron and I forget what the other ones are off hand. But the foundry iron was picked up by all of these foundries like the Crescent Machine, the foundries in Salem. They used that for their castings. After the Depression the blast furnace shut down. After they shut down it was expensive to buy pig iron and the reason why they did not want too much pig iron or cast iron is if you made a casting and you had a mold and they were dried out, the thinner they made the casting the better, because if you did not make it thin with cast iron and you hit on the outside they would knock the core out of the son of a gun you would break it. So what they did then they only took one part of pig iron and two parts of scrap steel, now they made a better basting because they can pound the daylights out of it and it does not fall apart.

C: The molds that the foundry made, were they sand?

S: Yes, they were sand. The molds the foundry made were sand. And the cores they put in them were made out of sand and molasses and those cores then were baked. Because if you had a hole that wanted that core was put in there and baked. That is how they made all of that stuff. They still do that. The core makers, if you had a section in there that you wanted open, in order to keep it open they made the cores and they placed them in there.

C: That is the interior of the casting?

- S: Yes. But then they had holes on the top, but they were filled and the fellow, the molder, would take a piece of steel and would bounce it up and down so he would have a solid casting.
- C: Then when it cooled they broke the mold.
- S: When it cooled they would take the mold out, it was in a molder's box. They would take it out and pull it apart, they would knock the core out and all the insides that were loose they would knock out and you would have you finished casting. In the foundries, in order to get a smooth casting, after they knocked that all off, they had them up at Salem in those foundries. They had a fellow that grinds it, a grinder that would grind that all out.
- C: Finish it off.
- S: Finish it off, yes. It was a big thing, the blast furnace.
- C: It provided a lot of jobs for people.
- S: Oh, yes. In those days they were only getting, at the most, 45 cents an hour. Then a fellow by the name of Henry Ford came out. He was the first fellow to give laborers all over the country fifty cents an hour. That was a first. But you can imagine with me working down there, it was twelve hours a day, seven days a week, one hundred and twenty-five dollars a month. That was not a lot of money, but you could live on it.
- C: That was not bad.
- S: No, that was not bad, at that time. You could live on it.
- C: Did the Cherry Valley produce a lot of other businesses in town?
- S: Well, the Cherry Valley kept all the foundries going.
- C: You mentioned Crescent Machine.
- S: Well, Crescent Machine over there where National Rubber is now.
- C: What is the street?
- S: That is Columbia Street. Crescent Machine made all of the wood working machinery. After they went under, then National Rubber bought them out. That was a big place. Just like Leetonia Tool. It is still in operation.

C: Where is that at?

S: That is right down where the Catholic church is, off to the left. It sits back in there, Leetonia Tool. They make coal miners tools of all descriptions. They still make wrecking balls. They make ship scrapers and all that stuff. Then we had the fabricated steel down there. They made boilers and stuff. Then we had the Leetonia Boiler Works down there. That was operated by the Woodwards in Leetonia. That ran for years and made boilers.

C: The Woodward family?

S: The Woodward family that lived in Columbiana. They used to live on Chestnut Street.

C: How many times did Cherry Valley change hands, as far as ownership goes?

S: Well, first it started out making rod iron. Then the M.A. Hanna company took it over and after they took it over they sold it to Davidson Coke & Iron in Pittsburgh. Davidson ran it a little bit, I worked for them too. Then after that, when the Depression hit, that was it, because they had no need for cast iron, or pig iron, like they do today. Davidson Coke & Iron are still around. I do not know what their product is now, but they had the blast furnace here. They had one in Sharpsville, one in Canal Dover. The M.A. Hanna Company had three blast furnaces in Detroit and Neville Island. No, not Neville. Zug Island is where the Hanna people have three blast furnaces and they still operate.

C: Where is that at?

S: They are under, a steel company on Zug Island. Outfits like Ford Motor bought a lot of steel off of them.

C: Karl, you talked about McKeefrey Iron.

S: McKeefrey Iron was down at the west end of town. The McKeefrey Iron had a blast furnace down there at the west end, run by the McKeefrey's and they owned Grafton Supply, the store down there.

C: That was William McKeefrey?

S: W.D. McKeefrey. The fellow that was the head of it was old John McKeefrey. He owned one of the buildings downtown and this home on the right going down that is all dilapidated. John McKeefrey built this and this home down here where Mr. Hole lives in, John McKeefrey built that and gave it to one of his grandsons

years. The McKeefrey's are a bunch of dead beats because they were supposed to start up a steel mill years ago. There is still that hole down there, and they beat everyone in Leetonia out of their money.

C: It was going to be community owned?

S: They were going to make a big steel plant like the Sheet & Tube.

C: After the Depression?

S: No, before the Depression hit, years ago. But see where the McKeefrey's got their money originally, there was a fellow by the name of Hofus and W.D. McKeefrey, they were in the McKeefrey Iron Company. But who set them up was W.D.'s wife; she had all the money. She was a Spearman that came from Sharon. She set them up. Well then after W.D. got his own business, he said he was no good in the business and bought Hofus out. Hofus, I think, was glad to get out. Because it was a jip joint. I worked for McKeefrey's I know. I got forty-two dollars a month as a grocery boy, a butcher, a mailman and everything else, and they thought they were over paying me. There is that Fellas building over in Youngstown, down in Youngstown. The Fellas building which you will see down in Youngstown. Well, Sam Fellas was a good friend of my dad's. They lived on chestnut Street. He was one of the superintendents down there, one of the first. He came to me long after the place was gone and he said, "Hey Karl, I will give you fifty thousand dollars worth of lime if Shenango Limestone stops." That was one of McKeefrey's stocks, company's. I said I did not want it. He said, "Why do you not want it?" I said, "They are not paying you dividends on it." He said, "It will not cost you a thing. I will give it to you." If he would have given it to me and I would have taken it, I would have had to pay personal property tax on it. That is the way they got all of their stock back. They had McKeefrey Coal of West Virginia, the Shenango Limestone Company, and then they had a couple of other companies like Grafton Furnace. They had a railroad around the furnace and Grafton Furnace had to pay to run stock on their railroad tracks. That is how cheap they were. They still own the farm up there. They got that farm and all of that stuff for nothing, because of the way it was set up, Mrs. McKeefrey had a daughter and it was Chloe S. McKeefrey Usis. The farm and everything else was in Chloe S. McKeefrey, so when everybody died, it automatically went over here. There was no money that changed hands. They had a big place up there. Oh, sure it made money, but I do not know.

C: Were the people disappointed when the mill did not go through?

S: Sure, they were disappointed. A lot of fellows in Leetonia lost money. What made them before, that they had a panic in Leetonia. That was before my time.

C: 1890?

S: Yes, that is when the Shmicks were in Leetonia.

C: What is that?

S: There was a Shmick building here. They were in Leetonia and when they were in Leetonia they had the bank down here and they beat the people out of a lot of money. They went to Liverpool.

C: What do you mean? They just packed up and left?

S: Yes, they packed up and left. They had the people's money. What could you do? That was before it came out that you had to have money insured in the bank. Well, the aftermath of the Depression in 1929, when the Depression came Roosevelt called a bank holiday. It was a good thing he did. Even with the bank holiday, like my wife in there her uncle had money in the loan and various places down here and they got fifteen cents on the dollar. That is all they got. But now your money is safe because it is insured up to a one hundred thousand dollars. It is a shame.

C: Was there another bank incident a little bit later on about some guy embezzling money?

S: Oh, sure, that was the People's Savings & Loan. That is where Ruby Angamyer and Lady Grenemyer's day, old Gary Grenemyer, he ran it. They got him for embezzlement. He owned the old picture show down there, too. That went under. When that was built, Pat Kelly built that, and Pat got the money off of the loan. He never paid it back. Pat made money off of the loan for a coal mine right outside of North Lima, on the right where they caught him, him and Ruby Angamyer. Ruby was as crooked as him, the two of them. He was going to go to Pittsburgh. He either shot himself or jumped out of a window or something, but they brought him back dead. He was supposed to be on trial the following Monday. Well, that was the end of Grenemyer. He was a crook, hell yes. They called him a Jack.

C: I do not know if it was one of these two gentlemen or not, but one of them supposedly committed suicide.

S: Well, that was the guy, Cary Grenemyer.

C: Oh, he committed suicide.

S: Yes, he went to Pittsburgh. Like I said, I do not know whether he shot himself or jumped out of a window. They brought him back dead. He was supposed to appear in court on Monday. Well, they brought him back Monday dead. What could you do. The Loan was in poor circumstances. They put in different bosses and everything else. Now it is in pretty good shape. Rubby Angamyer would only loan money out to her friends. If you went in there and you wanted money, you could not get it, unless you were a friend. I know in 1946 my wife and her sister and my brother-in-law Jack Fast bought the bowling alleys in Washingtonville and it was sixteen thousand dollars that they wanted for the bowling alley up by the KP hall. So we went to the Loan. The Loan would have given us sixteen thousand if we would have had sixteen thousand. The bank was the same. Fisher, he was the boss over there. He would have given you sixteen thousand if you would have had it. So a fellow by the name of Mark Klingensmith with the Union Bank in Columbiana, we went to him on a Friday night and we were bowling up there and we asked him how about us borrowing some money. He said, "What do you want to buy?" I said, "We want to buy this bowling alley." He said, "How much do you want?" I said, "Well, we are worth sixteen thousand." But I said Grenemyer's had it. Young Eddie was selling it. I said we did not want to buy the damn thing as long as he had it. He would want a commission out of it. He said, "How much do you want?" I said that the wife and I and Jack and his wife, we could get two thousand together. H asked how much we would need now. I said, "Sixteen thousand," after Grenemyer got rid of his franchise on it. He said, "Come around tomorrow, I will have it for you tomorrow." I said, "Do you not want anything other than the two thousand?" He said no. I said, "How do you want us to pay?" He said, "All you have to do is pay four hundred and fifty dollars a month for nine months of the year and if you do not have that, you just pay the interest and in the summer you do not have to pay." We paid it off in ten years. Then Mark was raisin' cain because he had to loan the money out again. But that is the way the banks did it. Now, that was a good bank. It is still in existence over there, because they were not afraid to loan money. We went to them at various times. I went to them when I wanted to buy this house. Three thousand dollars. On a Friday night I was bowling up there. I said, "Hey Mark, I want to borrow some money." He said, "What do you want it for, Karl?" I said, "I want to buy my mother's place." He said, "How much do you want?" I said, "I want three thousand dollars." He said, "How much do you have?" I said, "We do not have one darn cent. He said, "Come around Monday and we will give it to you." Three thousand dollars. I said, "Do you want to look at the place?" "No," he said. "I went past it various times. I know where it is at." So I go over and we get the money. I said, "What do you want per month?" He said, "You can give us thirty dollars a month and if you do not have that, give us the interest." We paid for that in ten years time. That is the way they operated years ago.

C: More on a personal level.

S: The only thing is that they did not trust some people. But very few. The bank down there would not loan you money because the Flodding's who had the meat market were the big shots. If they knew that you and I wanted money, they would loan it to you personally, but not through the bank. That is the reason why years ago, the bank was in poor straights. They damn near went under because they were loaning money out to people, not through the bank.

C: Is that right?

S: Yes.

C: This is the Floddings?

S: Flodding's. They had the meat market down on the corner. Then on the south side they had a great big butcher shop as you went up over the hill across that bridge on the left. They cut ice three or four times in the winter and that is what they loaded their ice with. I was telling my wife this morning, nowadays, if would see that the EPA, they would say it was no good. Flodding and Sittler would get on the accommodation in the morning and they would go to Damascus. They had three dogs. The grandsons have one. They would take these three dogs to Damascus. The farmer up there had fifty cows or 25 steers to sell. They would herd them down the middle of the road. They would walk from Damascus with the three dogs, all the way in through Salem, in through Washingtonville, then through Leetonia, over to the butcher shop. They were foxy, because I was a butcher too. They were foxy. Walking the cows from Damascus from Leetonia, by the time they got to Leetonia, all they had was the meat, because the cows had cleaned themselves out.

We had one farmer, if you told that fellow we were coming after a calf, the day before he would feed them a lot of mash. There was a lot of sale in it and all that calf would do is drink water. When we killed them, 75 percent of its weight was water. We had dirt roads through Salem, in Leetonia. In later years they paved all of that stuff. The roads in Leetonia, the main road out here was red dog. It came from the coal mines. The slag was put on slag dumps. The slate was put on dumps and they set it on fire. They would set the slate dump on fire. In a couple of years time, that would be what they called red dog. The roads in Leetonia were all covered with red dog.

C: Is that right?

S: Oh, hell yes. Red dog. They took the slate. The slate was on the top of the coal. They would take that and haul it out and put it in a pile for United Mine.

Cherry Valley had a mine over there, the United Mine. They had a dump. They set that on fire and that was the foundation for 90 percent of your roads. Then when we had the coke, there was still a lot of coke ash down there. They used the coke ash, too. Today, they have asbestos and pollution and everything else. When the blast furnace would slip, that was common. When they slipped, if the wind was blowing to the east, that was all right, but if the wind was blowing this way, we would get all of that. What it would do is that it would blow out the fine particles of ore, coke and all that stuff would mingle in the air and we would get all of that.

C: What did the people do? Did the people bitch or what?

S: No. They did not holler because they were making money.

C: People were working.

S: Yes. We had the white row on the south side and we had the red row on the way going to where the legion is. That was the red row of houses. The Hungarians and the Romanians lived there. The Slavish lived in the white row of houses. Nobody bitched.

C: What about the Italians?

S: The Italians, there were not as many Italians in town as there were Hungarians and Romanians and Slavs. There were not as many. What had all started, this is getting back to the Italians, first, years ago, when you patty on the railroad, the Irish were the first to patty on these railroads. When they got foxy, it ended up that the coloreds were the guys pattying on the railroad.

C: What do you mean by pattying?

S: When they laid the ties. They laid the ties and put down the rails and everything else. A colored fellow named Carter, still living out there, he raised a family on two dollars and ninety cents a day. That is all they made pattying the railroad. Now you see more white hats on the railroad working than you do laborers.

C: There is no crew anymore.

S: No crew. All that stuff now, the railroads are continuous. They are welded together from Columbiana, but then they have to have an expansion joint because if they do not have an expansion joint in the summer, the heat brings it together and the rails would go off.

- C: The rails themselves are a lot longer.
- S: Yes. They are heavier. It used to be there was a light rail. Then they put in a hundred and 70-pound rail because we had those big hog engines. They would go through carrying a hundred and fifty cars. But the biggest trouble was this hill going toward Columbiana. A lot of times they would have to back up clean to the cut to make the hill. But there at the cut is where they picked up water. They had a pumping station out there and they had pans in the tracks. The pans in the tracks were from here up to the football field long. They would fill them full of water. Well, a guy coming from Pittsburgh and he were going west, before he hit the pan, would blow his whistle, when he blew his whistle he dropped his shovel and would pick up the water and put it into a water tank. He would start pumping water. He would fill that one tank up. That is how they picked up water. They could not stop and you had to have water to make steam.
- C: They did not have to stop.
- S: No, they did not have to stop. The pan was like a shovel. It would drop and when it hit the other end, it automatically flipped up. The guys used to say, I never saw it happen, the fellows that would bum rides on the freight trains, the darn fools, they made a mistake by hanging on right in back of the water tank, because when the water tender got full of water that it could not hold, it would flip over and they would get sopping wet. We had four lines of traffic, too. We had two lines going east and two lines going west. But when the Depression came along, the center lines from here to Pittsburgh and from Pittsburgh to Fort Wayne, the center lines were full of gondolas, flat cars, and everything else. They had no house for them. There was no freight. That is what the Depression did. It knocked the heck out of business like that. In Leetonia at one time, there were over 45 hundred people.
- C: In the 1920's?
- S: Well, before that.
- S: In the teens?
- S: Yes. We will say from 1917-1918, when the blast furnaces were going well. They had forty-five hundred people or better. Now it is down to twenty-two hundred, because they do not have the business. Nothing to hold them.
- C: When the Depression hit in 1929, the stock market crash, what happened to you?

S: What happened to me when the Depression hit? June 29 of 1929, the blast furnace and everything shut down. I was out of work. Mr. Shonce lived next door, he was like a second father to us. He said, "Hey Karl, I will give you a job down at the Grafton Supply." I worked down at the Grafton Supply in 1935. From 1935 I went over the Sheet & Tube and got a job there in the metallurgical. I did not know any more about metallurgy than a cat knows about Sunday. But after a years time, those college graduates over there in metallurgy, I was teaching them things that they did not know. They used to tell me, "Hey Sevenich, how do you figure out the physical properties of various shapes of steel? Ingredients and everything else? Do you use Campbell's formula?" I said, "I have my own." The fellows from the city office and all around used to come to me and have me show them how to figure out the shapes, like angles, "C's," reinforcing bars and all of that stuff. I knew all of that. Wire, all of that stuff. That is the trouble with people today, they are not all that way, but those that come out of college because he has read it in the books, that does not mean he can apply it. You have to use your head. If you do not use your head, you do not get anywhere. They would say, how do you do this, that and the other one? I learned it all the hard way.

C: So you learned it by experience, rather than reading it out of the book.

S: Yes. When I was working over there, the fellows who were working for me, I had a bad habit of telling them to take it easy, you will last longer. One of the bosses heard me one day and he said, "You cannot tell the guys that." He said it was not right. He said, "If you do not like your job, let us know because there are plenty of guys on the outside looking for a job." I used to help them. I was not supposed to. I was on salary, ti did not belong to me and I was not supposed to touch any of their equipment. I used to tell them, in the lab we had squirrel cages instead of slide rules, like you have. They had what they called a squirrel cage. That was equivalent to a 30-foot slide rule. I used to tell them I want you guys sitting at the desk and always have a pad in front of you and then when the big shots walk in then start writing the squirrel cage. What they do not know will not hurt them.

C: Where did you work at the Sheet & Tube?

S: Down at the rod and wire in the metallurgical and out on the hot strip in the metallurgical. Down at the rod and wire in the metallurgical, we had the wire mill, we had the rod mill, we had the spike mill, we had the merchant mill that made all different shapes. And all that we would get down in the merchant mill were off-falk of steel that we could not use for various other good purposes. The same with the spike mill. Railroad track spikes were made out of a cheap grade of steel. We called it tin can steel. About eight carbons, thirty to sixty

manganese, O₄ phosphate and O₅ sulfur. We never tried to go over O₅ sulfur on any of the steel. Because if you did it would get brittle. Sulfur was not good, the same way in the blast furnace. Then the wire mill they made string wire, they made rope wire for road running. All of that stuff, that was all bicarbonate steel. Ten seventy-five, ten eighty-five steel. I was even affiliated with seamless. In seamless they made drill pipe and they made casings and they made coupling stock. That was all made out of a good grade of steel. It had to be because with the drill pipe, if you go down two or three miles, it has to be good.

C: How long were you there?

S: Well, I was in the Sheet & Tube until they threw me out at the age of sixty-five. Let's see, I am seventy-eight. That would have been thirteen years ago. I have been retired for thirteen years. In fact, I was on salary. As soon as you are sixty-five, in November of the year I was sixty-five, I was out. But I worked there thirty-eight years. I had good times. I got along with the guys. That was the main thing. If I wanted anything, the fellows would help me out. I did not have trouble with anything. You get a lot of the fellows, a lot of the bosses that were overbearing.

C: Let me ask you about the Depression in town here. What was it like for your family?

S: When my dad died, we were four, seven and eleven. He died in 1919. All my mother had to go on was a little bit of insurance he had. I was forty-five hundred dollars worth of insurance. And she rented rooms out upstairs to school teachers and the like. The only memory we had coming in was the rent for the rooms and then we had the big garden that ran from the sidewalk to where it goes now.

C: So you survived?

S: Yes. I worked at Grafton Supply. Like I said, I got forty-two dollars a month out of Grafton Supply. Twenty-one dollars out at the McKeefrey's upstairs, their offices. I was a mailman and the fellow that did it before me got seventy-five dollars a month, Ollie Orr. Then I was a butcher, a meat cutter. I killed and dressed veal. I was the ice man, I was the grocery boy. I did everything for twenty-one dollars a month. We worked from Monday through Saturday at least ten hours a day. They had relief work, like work for the township and various things. Well, Mr. Shonts tried to get my little Ernest on. He worked for the county under relief one week, that was all. They said, "No, you do not need any relief, you have a big house here." That is the way they did it. If it had been somebody else, they would have gotten it.

C: What did the house have to do with it?

S: Well, we had lots of money, they thought, because we had a bit house. It is a shame. We did alright, I did alright on forty-two dollars a month. That kept us going with what mom took in from roomers and boarders. I worked down at Cherry Valley, when the Cherry Valley was still going. The fact that everybody knew dad, the fellows would come in from Cleveland and crowd, the big shots, they would be up here for meals and mom would feed them in the dining room with meals. They treated her right. They gave her a good price. I always had homemade wine for them. I was a guy, the mainstay that kept the place going until I started with the Cherry Valley when I was eighteen. That was in 1925. Then it was not too bad, one hundred twenty-five dollars a month. That was not to be sneezed at. I learned analytical chemistry. I learned a lot of that. I learned how to sample stuff.

I will never forget the first day that Shaffer, the chief chemist, he was not a college man either, ICS, the same as me, said, "Hey Karl, we got some ore samples." I said, "Okay, where is it at?" He sent me up on the tressel forty feet in the air. All we had were cat walks on both sides. If you ate on one end of the board, the other end would fly up. The big Hungarians and Romanians would not move out of the way, you had to go around them with two buckets and a pick and shovel. Well, I got half way out to the cars, I crawled on my hands and knees, they called me a cake eater, so I told Mr. Shaffer. I said, "Just take it easy, give me a couple of days." Within a weeks time I was out on the tressel with two buckets jumping from one car to the other, and while I was in the cars, those Hungarians or Romanians said, "We will break you in." They were knocking them out of the cars, while I was in the car. There was one fellow there, he had shoes that were about that long. I had to go around him.

C: It was tough back in those days.

S: You had to do it, because it was a job and we had to live.

C: You had to do it back then?

S: Yes, you had to do it. But the Grafton Supply or the McKeefrey's, they were a bunch because they had these companies and I used to go upstairs and W.D. and W.J., they would get me the devil because I did not have a white shirt and tie on. I would wear a sweat shirt and stuff like that. They would say, "Sevenich, why do not you wear a white shirt and tie?" I told them, "Goddammit, if you give me the money, I will wear them." We had no windshields in the car or anything, the old push pedal Fords.

C: When did you buy your first automobile?

- S: I bought my first car when I started in the Sheet & Tube. that was fifty-one years ago. I was thirty years old when I got married. At that time, I was twenty-eight or twenty-nine.
- C: Do you remember how much it cost?
- S: Yes, you paid eight hundred and fifty dollars for a new car. Josephine can tell you. We kept it ten years. We took it to Columbiana and traded it in. They gave us five hundred dollars for a trade in. For Three hundred fifty, we would get a new one. The original tires were still on the car, but it would not rust out for the simple reason, in those days they did not put salt on the roads. We put chains on and we carried a shovel. You put your chains on when the first snow fell. You would have them on until the snow left.
- C: What kind of car was it?
- S: A Ford. That is all I ever drove. We started out down at Grafton Supply with push pedals and then they came out in 1929 with the gear shift. It was alright. The push pedals were good. The only thing with the push pedals you could go like the devil down hill but it was hard going up hill. They did not have any windshield wipers on them. You had to wipe them by hand. Then on top of that was the gas tank. If you were going up the hill with the gas tank in the back, you had to back up the goddamn hill because if you did not, you would not get gas into the engine.
- C: Is that right?
- S: Oh, yes. They did not have a fuel pump. Then they came out with fuel pumps.
- C: Otherwise the gas would not feed. You mentioned you worked at Kelly's.
- S: Kelly's Park, yes.
- C: Can you tell me something about that?
- S: Pat Kelly built that park when I was fourteen. I would go out there and I worked for him. That was forty-five dollars a month. I worked seven days a week. I worked in the dance hall, I worked in the pop stand, I worked in the bath house. They charged twenty-five cents in the bath house for the people to go swimming. Then you would pay twenty cents for those cotton outfits. I did not wash them or anything else. I put them through the wringer, then when a guy came in and wanted a suit, I would give him one of them.

- C: Kelly's Park. Where was that located?
- S: Out there where the interchange is, route 11. Where you get on Route 11, off to the left, that was Kelly's Park. There is a Kelly's Park Road there.
- C: When did that go out of business?
- S: Well, that went out during the Depression, too. He was going to build a big lake back in there, but they did not bother. But Pat did not pay for that. He did not pay for his coal mine and he did not pay for the picture show down there. That was a forerunner of the People's Savings & Loan. Cary Grenemyer, at that time, shot himself or whatever the hell he did. They loaned more money out and they never got anything back.
- C: Is there anything else you can tell me about the businesses during the 1920's and 1930's that comes to mind now, that you have not thought of before?
- S: Well, I told you about the railroads.
- C: How about the newspaper?
- S: We had the Leetonia Reporter. That was in business for years. It was run by Arnold on the south side. Spencer Arnold and his brother ran that. That was down next to the picture show. Well, then after that went out of business, Gally ran it for a while. Then after Gally quit, I cannot think of his name now, he had it, but it did not amount to much. Ripley took it over, the Ripley boy, Jack Ripley took that over. But it did not amount to much.
- C: What other forms of entertainment were there?
- S: All we had was a picture show. Years ago we had the Nickelodeon. That was down there where the Laundromat is. It was what you called the Nickelodeon.
- C: On Front Street?
- S: Well, right across from Nemenz's store down there. Over on that side was what they called the Nickelodeon. And then down from that was Riding-Housers Meat Market and then there was Slater's Meat Market. We had Flodding and Sitler. But the Nickelodeon, you would go in there, but it was not a show. They had these various boxes you would put a nickel in and you could see a show for a nickel.
- C: How long did this show last?

- S: Not very long. You got your nickels' worth. Not very long. That was one of the big things back then, they called them Nickelodeons.
- C: That was the very early 1900's?
- S: Yes. The biggest entertainment we used to have, you do not see it anymore. They used to have a fellow that came on the square down there, on the corner next to the Masonic Building, and he would set up and he would have oil lamps and he would sell patent medicine of all descriptions.
- C: Tonics?
- S: Tonics, yes. But ninety-nine percent of it was nothing but alcohol.
- C: It made you feel good though?
- S: Yes, those guys would drink it and they would feel good after that. That is nothing. Years ago, in prohibition days, I used to have a fellow that came into the chem lab down there, old Paddy Fox, who lived on the south side his canned heat of the blast furnace. Paddy would come in and he would drink canned heat. Whenever he would take a shot of that, after that you could kick him in the rear end or hit him across the back so he would get his breath. Canned Heat, that is what they lived on. But anyway, I used to tell Paddy when I had to go to the blast furnace after my samples, I would tell him to lay on the floor and do not get up. I did not want him to get into the acids and stuff. Well, this one day, the one night after I left, I would always made the rounds and Paddy was in there, he was moving around. So I went in and I told Paddy, "Do you see that?" We had an empty container of oxygen that we used for combustion of carbons. It was empty. I said, "See that goddamn thing? You bumped it. The next time you bump that thing, and knock it over, you are going to get blown to hell and back." I said, "That is it." That was the last time Paddy Fox came in.
- Then we had another one out in Grafton. He died on the way going to the cemetery. He fell in a ditch. Old Butch Harrigon. Butch came to me one day and he had a yellow stuff on the side of his mouth and everything else and had a junk yard over there. He said, "You are a chemist, are you not?" I said, "No, I am not a chemist, but I know a little bit about chemistry." He said, "Well, wood alcohol is poisonous, is it not?" I said, "Yes, why?" He said, "Hell, I have been drinking it right along." They drank wood alcohol. But what they would do is that they would take a loaf of bread, cut the top off and cut the bottom off, and they would run this wood alcohol through and the ingredients that were left, that is what they would drink.
- C: But that would kill you that way?

- S: No, they were draining the radiators over there at Smith's junk yard and getting that stuff out of the radiators.
- C: They must have been hard up.
- S: Well, he was an old Irishman.
- C: They would drink anything.
- S: Yes, they drink anything.
- C: You mentioned the Masonic Temple. Where was that at?
- S: The Masonic Hall?
- C: Yes.
- S: It is right down there where your bake shop is, down over the hill.
- C: Right on the corner, what street is that?
- S: Walnut Street. On the corner of Walnut and Main. That belongs to the Masons, the whole building does. They used to be upstairs. But they bought the whole building. That is the Masonic Building.
- C: Do they own it now?
- S: They own it now. Then up to the left, they went up that opening that you go to the hall, that was the old police station up in there. And that is where they had the jail and everything else.
- C: Thank you.

End of Interview