

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Ohio River 1800-1935

Personal Experience

O. H. 979

HERBERT O. REYNOLDS

Interviewed

by

Thomas A. Hess

on

January 5, 1977

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

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INTERVIEWEE: HERBERT O. REYNOLDS

INTERVIEWER: Thomas A. Hess

SUBJECT: Ohio River, dams, ferries, river boats, floods

DATE: January 5, 1977

H: This is an interview with Herbert O. Reynolds for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on the Ohio River (1800-1935), by Thomas Hess, at 811 Second Avenue, New Cumberland, West Virginia, on January 5, 1977.

You drew the picture like that?

R: Yes.

H: And he was ninety-five when this picture was drawn?

R: Yes. He died at ninety-seven.

H: Delta Queen?

R: He was the artist on the Delta Queen.

H: Oh, yes.

R: I got a lot of old history from him.

H: And what was his name, Mr. Hughes?

R: Yes, after Jessie Hughes, I got a lot of old history from him. He told me there way back about his father on the river. He told me that in the early 1700's that this Ohio River was only about 800 or 900 feet wide, but it was deep. His father used to run on boats that would run from Pittsburgh to St. Louis and all those places

like that. The river was narrow and deep, but due to the floods and stuff, it got wider and wider, the land did. Out here along the river front now as you see it, out there for a distance from 500 to 700 feet that was all farm land.

H: It was?

R: Yes, all farm land. They farmed apple orchards, and a lot of the biggest onion growers at that time had to have twenty acres of onions. That was all that he raised; he just grew onions, and they shipped everything. He would pay the young boy back in those days 25¢ a day to dig up the onions.

H: About when was this? About what time?

R: That was back in the early 1700's. They would dig big onions. Then I talked to another old fellow who was here, and he died at the age of eighty-five. He had help to dig onions down there. This fellow's father helped dig onions. Then when this other one got old enough, he would help them dig onions and pick apples and stuff. The river was only between 800 and 900 feet wide, and deep.

H: Real deep though?

R: Yes, wide and deep. But as we got the floods and high waters as the years went by, it just kept washing and washing the land away. Some of those people are living down along the river front down there now; they own as much as 600 feet or more out in the middle of the river, out in the river.

H: Fred Steeley mentioned something about that, about owning out in the river. Somebody told me about a gas well down there that is in the river now. When he was a boy, it was a gas well. Do you recall that?

R: I don't recall that.

H: Wade Campbell was telling me about that.

R: I don't recall. Then as we got more high water, it washed the soil away. Before they got the locks and dams in, there were just two places between Steubenville and East Liverpool that you couldn't wade in the river in the summer time. That was down at Toronto, and right down here where that plant is, down here where we are

into town at the Barkhurst Plant, I believe. You couldn't wade the river there, and they couldn't wade it down at Toronto there. Every place else along between Steubenville and East Liverpool, Ohio when I had started on the river there at twelve years old, every place else during the summer, if you wanted to go from Ohio to West Virginia or from West Virginia over to Ohio, you could roll up your pants and take your shoes and socks off and wade right across there. The water wouldn't be more than eighteen inches or two feet deep.

H: I'll be. That would shut down the traffic on the river then?

R: The big boats couldn't run. They couldn't operate in eighteen to twenty inches of water. They couldn't operate. Our river transportation then was taken care of by small, small boats like that. The small boats only drew eight or ten inches of water. They would handle the freight and stuff.

H: Like this one here?

R: That is a newer model there, but this is one of the old timers.

H: Okay, Mr. Reynolds is showing me pictures of a riverboat called the Flat Rock. What is the name of that one, sir?

R: That is a brand new one, and I haven't learned the name yet.

H: Now, here is another one called the Atomite? That looks like a shallow draft boat too.

R: Yes, those are all shallow draft boats. In order for one boat to run. . . Here is one with a good head view. See those boats? Those low ones are what we call one longers. They had a great big head that would take two men to row that fly wheel.

H: A huge fly wheel on it.

R: Yes.

H: Yes.

R: That was for the gas problems. When they would get around into shallow water, you could. . . See those extra drums and stuff?

H: Yes.

R: Well, they would put all those extra drums of gasoline, and other heavy way out on the front so that back part wouldn't scrape. They would tow an eighteen by sixty flat boat, and they would haul all the produce, watermelon, chicken, and stuff, they would haul all that stuff up from Marietta and down in there to the markets up in here.

H: They would stop at the different markets, maybe?

R: They would stop at different landings and sell their stuff.

H: Who owned those boats, companies or individuals?

R: Individual people owned those little boats. At that time after I had started there on the river, we would get two raises a year on the river. We would get a pretty good raise on the river, and then the river would come way up. After the river raised and it got up there, then these type of boats here would then go down driving pushing coal from Pittsburgh to New Orleans.

H: Huntington? This one is going past something called Huntington Mattress Factory or something like that.

R: That boat's load has probably got thirty barges. We had two types of boats. This boat here, it would come down on the raise in the river, and it would probably have eight barges, and they never run at night. Then there would be a small boat like that one there. It would come down the river where the six or eight barges of coal. They would go as far as Gallipolis and then turned what barges this boat here had over to the big one.

H: Okay, they had enough water from Gallipolis down?

R: Yes. The Mississippi was deep, and they had enough water to take them on down there. Those boats when they would get down to New Orleans there and down in there and Memphis and down in there, they would have as high as forty barges of coal. They would have to hurry down there and back before the river fell. Then you wouldn't see any more of them, of these big boats, until fall. We would have a raise in the fall.

H: So you had a spring raise and then a fall raise?

R: Yes. You wouldn't see any more of them until the fall of that year. Then they would hurry down with the coal and try to hurry back. The fall raise on average would be October. It varied at different times. Some of the bigger boats, these little pool type boats that they had over here, they would come right back. They would come back with this one fuel flat. The big one then, they would have to hurry back. Some of them didn't make it.

H: Now would that be because the river froze or dropped again?

R: Yes, the river fell, and they were froze in. I know one winter that I recall down there that I was on that ferry. There were three of those big tow boats frozen up in the ice out there in the river. We had ice as much as three feet thick. They would lay there in that ice. We, most generally at that time, would have the spring fall which would be along about March. That was when we would have our spring fall, and we would get the high water. Then these big boats would start again. Just as soon as the ice broke up these boats that had been frozen in, they couldn't shove the tow in the ice. The boat would put one barge ahead of it, then they would say that this would be the tow boat. It would have one barge ahead of it so the ice wouldn't damage the hull. Then they would just tie a string to the barge from one right to the other. When the ice would break up, I have seen them go up there and they would have three quarters of a mile of barges and just pull them up the river breaking through that ice. They would get up there in time; the Pittsburgh pool wasn't so shallow there. These small pool boats like the Valley there, they would always time when these boats were frozen in down here. These pool boats here would be working up there making up tows. As soon as these big boats got up there, they would grab a tow and go.

H: Was one trip all they could make in the spring?

R: One trip in spring and one in the fall.

H: Boy.

R: They averaged two trips a year unless we got exceptional rain. They made the two trips a year. Then from that time as soon as that river fell, that river would be down so low that you could roll your pants legs up and take your shoes, if you were wearing shoes, take them away to. . . You know where the old lock nine is up there?

H: Yes, right.

R: You could wade across there.

H: That is before the dam was put in?

R: Yes, before the dam was put in, you could wade across there. I have traveled the river between Steubenville and East Liverpool. I had a small motor boat. That small motor boat was all that I had. I would have to lay rocks or something out on the nose of the boat to hold it and keep it from squatting in the back so that it wouldn't rub bottom.

H: Now was this pretty much all the way down or was this just a bad spot right here between Liverpool and Steubenville?

R: The bad spot was between East Liverpool and Wheeling.

H: Because you say once they got to Gallipolis they were home free then?

R: Yes. The big tow could go down there though.

H: And above Liverpool, why, they had enough water?

R: They had dams then up there and in around Pittsburgh there, and down that way they had the locks and dams then that took care of it there. Lock nine up there, it was decided that they didn't start to build it until 1909.

H: And this low water trouble was before lock nine was built?

R: Yes. The next lock nine they had lock eleven below Steubenville there. Lock eleven kind of helped a little bit but not enough for the boats to tow a barge down there that was loaded nine feet deep. But they started to build lock nine in 1909 and finished it in 1914.

H: Five years building?

R: They had the copper dam was stacked up and ready to pour the concrete on May 21, 1913. We had to have had cloudburst up the river. All this copper dam work that they had ready to go ahead up there to build lock nine, it just washed it all away. I know I was on the ferry down there at Toronto that night. I got across there

with the ferry with the skiff. I might as well run along and all of a sudden I stopped. I couldn't imagine why. Here my boat ran on to some of this copper dam stuff that the E.P. May Construction Company had washed out. I landed it; it was floating pretty close to shore. I landed that piece. It was better than one hundred feet long, that piece of copper dam as they called it back in those days. I landed it and then got to looking for more. I landed six hundred feet of that from that they had up there. I landed six hundred feet of it down there.

H: On the Toronto side?

R: It was floating over close to the eddy side of the river. I always carried a rope in my bottom skiff about 200 feet long, a half inch low rope like that. I always carried that then if I run-on to anything large like that that I couldn't put in the skiff. I always carried a hammer and some nails. I nail one end of the rope on to whatever it was. Then I would go to shore, and just let that line fly out and then tie it up. The current would swing it right around into the eddy. I got in the row boat the next day and told E.P. May about it about having some of his form. He told me that I helped him out by about six months on that. He said that he was supposed to have this done and working. But the way it was, he would have to start all over again, all this form and stuff would have to be rebuilt. They paid me well for it at that time. Back in 1913 you didn't make much money, \$1.50 a day. He gave me a check for \$50 which for being a kid, you know how that looked?

H: Yes.

R: Yes.

H: So you were about fifteen then?

R: I was in 1913 about fourteen years old.

H: Fourteen.

R: Along there. Boy, that looked big to me. Then they finally completed it in November of 1914. I told E.P. May that I would like to have the honor of being the first one to go through there. He told me that it could be arranged. Later, he called over town over there at the police station and told them to tell me that the dam would be open for operation at 6:00 in the morning. I



didn't take my motor boat. What I had was, there was another fellow over there, H.Q. Mooney, the manager of a big department store over there. I told him about it. Well, he said that we could take his boat through. The next morning around 5:30, he came down there. He had gassed up his motor boat and had two cartons of Mail Pouch Tobacco and two boxes of the marsh wheeling. At that time, they used to come in a box about eighteen inches long and about six inches deep. They weren't wrapped, as I could do now. He had a couple boxes of that marsh wheeling. When we went in the locks up there, he had one of the fellows climb down their ladder to the motor boat. We gave them the two cartons of Mail Pouch Tobacco and the two boxes of marsh wheeling. We went on up the river there a little ways and the lock master asked if we had anything else. He told us to go up there and turn around and come back. "You fellows will have the honor of being the first boat through lock nine." So we went up maybe one quarter of a mile and turned around and came back. I had the log over in Steubenville on lock nine that lists us going through as the first boat. Then that helped out when lock nine was finished there; there was a boat coming up the river. They would let enough water out of lock nine to let it clear and come up through. Here is a picture showing the dedication of lock eleven in 19. . .

H: Eleven. (Lock eleven)

R: Yes. In 1925 to 1928, they started to build lock ten. All the time they were building lock ten, they just let out enough water up there to let them run through. The river was finally channelized to a nine foot stage in 1929. We had a nine foot stage of water from Pittsburgh to Carroll in 1929. After that I forget just what one was added. It escapes my mind. But one of the Presidents came to Pittsburgh; the President of the United States. He came to Pittsburgh and got on a boat and made the trip from Pittsburgh to Carroll dedicating the nine foot stage. After that we had boats running the whole year round unless we got awful hard weather. If we got awful hard, bad weather, then that river would freeze over with ice three feet thick. Then the boats wouldn't run. They would lower their wickets and stuff at the lock and dams. They would lower their wickets and let them freeze over. If they left the wickets up, and that ice, when that ice would have been broken up in the spring, it would have torn everything out.

H: Now, would you explain what a wicket is? I know what it

is, but there will be people who will hear this tape that don't know a wicket.

R: Well, this copper dam that I spoke of that was washed out, that was built all the way across the river that the men could work down in there. There was a big heavy iron plate that ran all the way across the river. Wickets, they worked just like a hinge. They had a special little boat up there to raise and lower those wickets. When they were going to lower the wickets, that little boat would hook on to those things standing up there. Then it would fall right to the bottom of the river. When the ice and the stuff was all done or a real high water or a flood or anything like that, you had to raise and lower them. When all that was done, that little maneuvering boat as they called it would go out there and just raise it. It just worked like a hinge on a door.

H: They were big gates like?

R: Some of it was steel. They had long timbers. Those timbers were about six inches squared that they would put down in between there to chalk that, keep the water. If they hadn't had them put that timber in there, it wouldn't have held the water back. They had those long timbers in there. With those long timbers, I learned from the contractor so that anything heavy come down and hit them, it would break that wood and not damage the rest. All they would have to do is just take that maneuvering boat out there and put another one right down in there. Then those timbers that they used were around twenty-five feet long. That way they could cork it in there. If we got just a small raise, nothing real large, they wouldn't lower the wickets, but they would lower the bear traps. Now the bear traps were about one hundred feet from the Ohio shore. Those bear traps worked on a hinge. If they would get word from Pittsburgh that they were going to get maybe a ten foot raise, well that ten foot raise, they wouldn't have to lower those wickets. If they were those men, when that pool gets so full up there, they would row out there in their yawl. They had a turntable then, and they would just walk around that line that led that down. Then the main part raise that they got would go down to the bear traps.

H: Just sort of spill past it.

R: Just go right down to the bear traps there. I recall

the Pittsburgh engineers up there. They controlled the operation of the locks and dams. I recall on one occasion there when the lock master telephoned in and said that they were going to get more of a raise than they were predicting up there. He said that they already got so many feet down there now, and that his predictions were wrong up there, whoever the fellow was. He was wrong; you leave them wickets up. We got a flood out of it. The wickets in the dam was up. There was so much pressure coming down against there that they couldn't lower them.

H: Okay, you get so much pressure against the wicket they couldn't even lower it if they wanted to?

R: No, they couldn't lower it. There was so much pressure. If they had, it would have washed everything out down below. That raise that we got, we got around three or four feet of water down on where the red line is down in town. We had about three or four feet of water that was created there.

H: What year was that? Do you remember?

R: I don't recall what year it was. Fred Staley could probably tell you.

H: Okay, go ahead.

R: In the meantime, this member of the U.S. engineer corps out of Pittsburgh had fired this lock master because of that. As soon as the U.S. engineering department in Washington, D.C. found out about the whole truth on it, this man in Pittsburgh was fired and the lock master that this fellow had fired, he was given him another job. Green was his name. He was given another job up along the river. From that time on they left everything up to the lock master. We had another sudden raise there. It was around 1916. We had an awful hard rain up the river some place. They called it a cloudburst, but I don't know what it was. Somebody from lock eight up there at Newell.

H: Lock eight was at Newell, okay.

R: Somebody telephoned down to the lock master at nine that there was a sudden burst of water on its way. At that time they had four men on duty each turn on four eight hour turns. They had twenty-two men working up there all together. As soon as he got that word, he blowed

the steam whistle up there at the power plant there. Then he telephoned, and they came and lowered the wickets again before it would be like the other one.

H: Now, the wickets when they lowered, they lowered upstream, right?

R: Down.

H: Yes, but when they would drop them they would drop them. . .

R: Downstream they were dropped.

H: Downstream, okay.

R: Like this. You are a wicket.

H: Okay, they would drop downstream. The pressure of the river would push them open unless they were held shut.

R: They had some kind of a latch. I never did get down in there to see. But how it was that they had some kind of a latch on this high beam that the wickets fit in that this maneuvering would just hook to that and it would release that latch, and the wickets fell down the river right to the bottom. When they would fall like that and lay on the bottom, the tow boats, these stern wheel tow boats like I am showing you here, they would go on up through here. Their wheel would be a turning steady. But when it got up there to where it was passing over them wickets that were lowered, that wheel that was going twice as fast. When they got up to pass over them wickets that were lowered, they would have to reduce the speed of their wheel or the boat would have run through, the engine would have run through itself.

H: Now, they still had the locks off to the shoreside, but if the wickets were down, the tows just went right through the dam?

R: When the wickets were down, the tows just went right through.

H: It didn't bother with the lock at all?

R: Not at all. Although every boat that went up and down there when the wickets were down, they had a large megaphone at that time. They would holler in to the lock master who was in charge and tell them what they

had; if it was a tow boat, he would say that he had got eight barges 900 tons each. If it was a packet boat, he would come through and say that he had maybe 500 tons of freight and ten passengers. They still had to report on everything.

H: Now, you spoke about them running only in the daytime. What did they do at night?

R: They tied up at night.

H: Did they try to make a village or something like that so that they could. . .

R: Just wherever they could find good mooring, a good place to tie up. At that time I would always watch. At that time we could always predict when there was going to be a raise in the river. It may sound funny to you, but we could always predict when there was going to be a raise in the river. The sea gulls would fly up. We had a lot of sea gulls on the Ohio River here then, and they would fly up the river. If they came back the next day, there was no raise. If they went up the river and didn't come back, you could always predict that there would be a raise in the river. When you did see them, see the sea gulls that flew up the river, they would be riding that driftwood, just getting what they could to eat.

H: Okay.

R: There was an old river man who told me that when I started on the ferry down there at night. He said that you could always tell, unless it was a cloud burst or something like that, you could always tell when there is going to be a raise. I asked him how. He said that I should watch those sea gulls. If they go up and don't come back, when you see them, they will come back down riding the driftwood and stop getting what they can be. I just followed that from there then on. I could tell just when we were going to get a raise; it might not be a large one, but we would get a raise in the river. They would come down different ones. If someone would ask if we were going to get a raise, I would say no because the sea gulls went up yesterday and came back. It may be two or three weeks or a month later and someone would ask if we were going to have a raise in the river, and I would say yes. All my time on there from 1912 until 1935 that I monkeyed around the river, I never missed a shot on this.

Then some of those boats there, the big coal tow boats that went down here shoveling that coal. . . Well, there were really good pilots and captains on the river at that time, and there were a lot of bad ones. Some of those bad ones would get to drinking a little too much and then they'd lay a wreck. Right down here at the head of Brown's Island down there, I have pictures of it around here some place that one of the pilots got a little too much to drink. He sank four barges of coal right down here in Brown Island. But wherever they would be, if they were to sink a barge of coal up around Pittsburgh there or below Pittsburgh there, you know you have seen the coal that is dug, it is square and different shapes, all those big lumps of coal that would be in those barges that were sunk, why when the water got a hold of that, it would wash them out of that barge. They would just roll and roll and roll, and they would be just about the shape of a football. I used to go down every year, every fall, to Brown's Island. I had a twenty-two foot skiff row boat. There I used to go down to Brown's Island there and take a pick and dig around there. If I would get enough of that coal, we would never have to buy a bit of coal for winter. I had a couple of other fellows that helped me. I don't know if whether you know Charlie Haynes down here or Rich Jagger or not. Charlies Haynes and his brother Chris, we would go down there and dig and get that coal and bring it up and sell it. We made a lot of money just going to down there and getting those big lumps of coal. Some of them weren't too big, and some of them lumps we couldn't lift. We would have to take the pick and break them in two. That coal was as hard as a brick. It had rolled and rolled and stayed in the water so long that all the softness like sulfur and stuff that was in it was soaked out of it. We filled our coal houses up with it, and then we would still go down and load the boat up until it would be to move one inch this way that the water would run into the ore box. We would bring it up there, unload it onto the Toronto ferry there and sell it. We got 4¢ a bushel.

H: 4¢ a bushel?

R: Yes.

H: It is \$2 a bushel now.

R: Yes, we got 4¢ a bushel for it. We had no way of measuring those big lumps, the little lumps and how much would make a bushel. The fellow who would give us the

most money got the coal. When we would get a raise in the river there, they would have to lower the wickets. Everytime they got to get a pretty good raise, this Charlie Haynes and his brother, we would get in the row boat and row to do you know where Stratton is on the other side?

H: Yes.

R: We would row up Stratton there. We would get up at 2:00 in the morning and row up to Stratton there and wait until daylight and just drift catching the drift that would come if it was any good. We would just grab anything we saw. If it was something small, we would put it in the row boat, and we would put it in. We didn't grab too much small stuff. I recall one occasion that we went up there. We were up there at Stratton and when it got daylight, you could see what was going to happen. I recall seeing the lumber pile. You could just see two or three planks of it. They were sixteen feet long of what we could see. There were over ten of them. When we got out closer to two of them, we noticed that they had been wired together. We hooked the rope to it and started pulling and we landed in Toronto. When the river went down, we had 10,000 feet of lumber. It was eighteen inches wide and two inches thick. My brother worked the daylight on the ferry there. He never had too much energy. He would say that we were crazy for doing that. When that river fell and we have that great big high stack of lumber there, they went up and it was fir at that. That is what they used to build the boats.

H: Right.

R: I went up and asked one of the contractor lumber dealers at Toronto what they would give me for it. One fellow said that he would give me \$25 for it. I told him no. He offered me more, and I said, "No." There was a boat builder there in Pittsburgh. His name was R.C. Prise. Well, I made a trip to Pittsburgh and visited Prise and told him what I had down there. Well, he said that he would come down and look at it. He came down and looked at it. He said that he would give me \$200. Sold. He had this two inch lumber. He didn't build big heavy boats, he built light boats, motor boats, yawls, row boats. He took that lumber up there, and he just split it. With a two inch piece, he would have two. He built boats out of that lumber. There was no identification or anything on it to let you know who lost it or

anything. The next raise we had, we went back up to Stratton there and laid there watching. We saw four pieces of timber floating down the middle of the river there. We went out and got it. It was. . .I don't know what they did ever use that kind of timber for, but it was eighteen inches square, forty feet long. We said that we had our days work picked out right now. We play and kept rowing, three of us rowing and three of us along the boat. When we got down to Toronto, we landed there and we got an extra high water out of that. We got a flood out of that raise. We just kept pulling it up and pulling it up until the river has raised. When the river is up about normal again, our timber was 300 feet from the river. I went to a lot of the contractors over there. The only contractors we had three of them over there. One had offered me \$25; another maybe \$50; another \$75. Then there was a fellow over there that was going to open up a coal mine in Toronto. I just happened to think of him. He owned the bank over there in Toronto. I went out and asked him if he had any timbers for his temple. He said that he didn't and couldn't find any and the contractors here couldn't locate any for him. Well, I told him that if he got a chance to come down the river and look at it and see what I got. He came down and looked at it and said that was what he had been hunting for. He asked me what I wanted for it. I told him that I didn't know. Lumber, timber wasn't too valuable then. I didn't know what they were worth. He said that he knew. He said \$300. The Haynes, Chris, they were poor like we were. When he gave me a check for \$300, I went out and got it cashed and gave each one of them \$100 a piece.

H: That was a pretty good day's wage then, wasn't it? That was a month's wage.

R: Yes, and I operated a ferry there at night. My brother operated the ferry during the daytime. At that time we didn't have a motor boat when I first started. On the Ohio side of the river we had a cable fastened here, and on the West Virginia side we had a cable fastened there. On the ferry flat when we would be hauling horse and buggies. There weren't too many automobiles in those days. The only way we could take that ride back and forth we had pullers about eighteen or twenty inches long with a notch cut in them. On each end of that ferry flat we had a pulley there and that wire was over them. You could just walk and pull, walk and pull, walk and pull like that until they got by. Then we got us a motor boat.



In 1909 there, Weirton Steel, and all that down there where Weirton Steel is now, that was all farm land. E.T. Weir and J.C. Williams they had been over in Toronto trying to buy a land for a mill. There was a lot of good land over there, but those people wanted a fortune for it. I hauled J.C. Williams and E.T. Weir across the river that evening, and J.C. Williams, one of the big heads of the mill, he got out of the car and helped me pull the ferry flat. All I got out of taking that automobile over was 25¢. 25¢ to pull a car over the river. If you were a passenger, it was a nickel. It wasn't too bad when the water was low, but when you got the water way up high up to the top of the banks of the river there, we would have to row up if it was on the Ohio side and I was taking a passenger up, I would have to row up a quarter of a mile up on the Ohio side of the river in order to land at my landing on the West Virginia side. The current was so swift.

H: Swift, yes.

R: It was the same when you would leave the West Virginia. To go back to Ohio, row up West Virginia's shore for a quarter of a mile and then taper across the river. If you would try to run straight, you would have to row quarter across the river.

H: Now, you say you had a cable across the river.

R: For low water, yes.

H: What would you do with that cable when a tow came down?

R: It would fall to the bottom. As the ferry flat passed, that cable would fall right to the bottom of the river. When you would go to pull it back towards, say, the West Virginia shore, well, it would keep raising toward West Virginia and fall to the bottom of the river next to the Ohio shore.

H: There was quite a bit of slack in that cable then?

R: Yes, you couldn't have it too tight. That was after they got the locks and dams in. We had to do that then. We always wanted a motor boat. One of the partners who owned the company he was willing but the other one wasn't. My brother he was sick for a day or so. This one fellow who was willing to give us a gasoline engine to shove the boat, he came down and helped. I told him that I couldn't do it all by myself and then take care

of my job here at night. So he would come down and help. He was a strapping big fellow. He was around six feet tall and weighed 250 to 300 pounds. He was a big man. He was popping like a steam engine pulling ferry flat. He said that was enough of that! About a week later he came down there and asked me to go to Pittsburgh. I told him, "I suppose." He said that I should go up to Pittsburgh and that there was a motor boat up there for me to bring down. So I went up and brought the motor boat down. When we got a raise in the river, there was a lot of current. We had a cable fastened into the hill down here along route two there. Then they had a derrick on the other side. That cable ran all the way across there. They had a pulley that ran on that cable. Then they had a lead cable that would run down to the ferry flat. We had a wheel put on there on the ferry flat to use on high water. That rope ran around there. We had what we called lead boards that were the full length of the ferry flat on the upper side. If we wanted to go over to West Virginia from Ohio, we would push this end of that board down while the current would drive it. You could cross the river there in three minutes if it was a good current. When you got over to West Virginia shore and you wanted to go back to Ohio, pull this end down and push that end down while that would drive us back to Ohio.

- H: Where did you land here in West Virginia?
- R: Down here at. . . Don't you know across from Toronto there?
- H: Yes.
- R: Right on, you know, you have been down along there and seen Toronto.
- H: Yes.
- R: Just straight across.
- H: It would be below New Cumberland then actually. You landed below New Cumberland.
- R: Yes, that is where I would work. Then I would come up here. I didn't know anything of that river. When I had any time to spare, I would come up here and help my friend that operated the ferry here at Calumet, Sikey Marshall. When he had to pull his ferry flat the same

way as we started before we got a motor boat. I would come up there and help him. I would help him row the passengers back and forth in the row boat. We had another ferry that went down here by Matt Phillips' place, Freeman Ferry.

H: Right.

R: Well, it started out as a row boat ferry. Virginia Marshalls' father started it. He got a motor boat then. When Weirton was first built when they first got the 10 mill built at Weirton there, there was no transportation from Steubenville up on the West Virginia side to Weirton, only the train. I used to go down there and help a friend there. When I didn't have too much to do the people working at the Weirton and in mill there and in the office, they would come by streetcar up there to Costonia. I would row them from the Ohio shore over to Brown's Island. They would walk across Brown's Island, and this Harry McGuiness had a motor boat. He would take them from this side of the island to the West Virginia shore. I was every place along there. Then when they got the Steubenville and Wheeling track, the Company got going. Then Harry McGuiness had no more use for the ferry. I told him that if he ever wanted to sell it that he should let me know. He did. He said that he wanted to sell out, and he asked me what I wanted for it. He had a skiff and motor boat. I told him \$50. I got it right away quick. I was making more money. I was working down there on the ferry at night in Toronto, and my brother was working daytime making \$15 a week for seven days a week and twelve hours a day. Well, I was earning more money, and I had the money. I bought McGuiness' outfit down there and brought it up the landing up there. Just about that time, the old motor that the ferry had got there for us, it had worn out. The fellows who had seen this outfit that I had bought wanted to know if I would sell it to them. I told them that I would sell it to them if they would give me enough money. They asked me what I meant. I told them that I would let them have the boat, motor, and everything for \$100 and you give me free gasoline so that I am operating at night. They did that. My brother was making \$25, \$30, \$40 a week at night. What I made was mine, was all my own. We used to have a lot of show boats. I don't know if you ever saw one or not.

H: I have just seen them, yes.

R: We used to have show boats just about every week. Well,

those show boats would come. I would have to get a couple of the boys down there to help me; one to take care of tying up the flat; one to do the collecting and all I got to do was just sit in the boat and operate the boat. I would make as high as \$15 to \$20 just by one night for a show boat.

H: Now, the show boat had to stay out in the channel?

R: No, they laid up; they tied up to shore, the Ohio shore.

H: Okay.

R: The people from West Virginia would all go over to that show boat. Then I would have more than I could handle. It would take three of us to get around to it. If the river was high, we never run at night. I wouldn't run that cable system we had on high water. You couldn't see the drift and stuff. I wouldn't run it. At night, I would get three or four of the fellow there to help me out and haul the passengers in the row boat. I would make \$15 to \$20 a night. That poor sucker of a brother of mine was working seven days a week, twelve hours a day for \$15. He didn't have too much energy as I said. The only time he ever had any energy, he belonged to the Toronto Fire Department over there. It would take him ten minutes to fifteen minutes to row that skiff across the river. But, boy, just the minute that fire bell rang, he went. He had us all trained. I had six other brothers. He has us and my father all trained that when we heard that fire bell wherever we were make it to the river. He shut her down right now and went to the fire. He was never in a hurry. I helped; I would come up during the football season there in Toronto. They had a big. . .

H: The way we know the river.

R: Yes, that is what I think. That was at East Liverpool before the bridge was built. That was in Wellsville. You don't see much river.

H: What did you say, 800 or 900 feet across, huh?

R: Yes.

H: But now how wide is it across?

R: I would say now it is 1500 feet.

H: 1500, almost twice as far.

R: Here is a picture of the old steam ferry boat that ran at Toronto. That was the old steam boat that ran at Toronto. You don't have too much water, see here.

H: Yes.

R: These are boats landed on the Ohio shore.

H: It talks about taking the clay plant workers across to this side.

R: Take that one with you.

H: Okay.

R: I have a spare right here. I have another one. I have another picture here. I have all kinds of history. Here is East Liverpool in 1898.

H: I'll be. Okay, this is the bridges down now, right?

R: That is the one that they put down.

H: Okay.

R: At that time that bridge was just for streetcars.

H: Oh. Did Smith have it built?

R: Yes, yes, Smith had that bridge built. It was just for streetcars.

H: Did that connect with T.S. & T. Pottery over in Chester?

R: Some place in there. Let's see if I can locate it here. I showed you the picture of the ferry boats. They hauled the passengers and horse and buggies by ferry boat. Then later on. . .

H: They put the floor in.

R: They put the floor in on them to haul the streetcars and that stuff.

H: Now, that is the island where the new bridge touches up there, right?

R: Yes, that is the island up there where the new bridge is.

- H: There is even some farm land cleared on that island.
- R: Well, that island was formed, all of it. There are enough here on these islands, with the exception of Brown's Island, that they raise mostly watermelons and mushmelons. When they built the new locks up there, they dug out an island up there.
- H: Yes. What was the name of that island?
- R: I forget now. I just forget what island that was now.
- H: Brown's Island is where the Coke plant is, right?
- R: Let me see. Here we are. I have a chart here with all the steamboats that operated the horsepower and the slide of the wheel. That one there would make it Cluster Island, I guess, yes.
- H: Cluster is the one that they dug out.
- R: Yes, Cluster Island is the one that they dug out. It was fifty-one and four tenths miles from Pittsburgh.
- H: Everything seems to be governed by Pittsburgh, right?
- R: Yes, everything. Pittsburgh takes care of everything now down to Pike's island.
- H: Okay.
- R: All the way to Pike's Island Dam.
- H: Now, who picks it up there, sir?
- R: Well, then that comes under the Huntington district.
- H: Okay. You told me some things about the players on the show boats and so forth. I would sure like for you to tell me over again.
- R: I'll give you something here for your history there. There is a small one. You can have that one of East Liverpool.
- H: Yes, thank you. I used to live right up there on that farm. It was a big farm then, the Houston Farm on top of the hill. Finally he sold part of that farm to the school board.
- R: You can have that.

- R: Did you ever remember those old farm steam boats? Did you ever see any of them?
- H: Only in a museum. I never remember them running. They were all diesels by the time I. . .
- R: That is what I figured. Everything was diesel. This is that picture that I was telling you about on high water. My brother's dam was right around in front of the wheel, but you can't see it. You can see that. See that rope running around there?
- H: Right.
- R: That is my brother. He used to live downtown here. He died. Here is my father, and here is my brother.
- H: That is the. . .
- R: That is the equipment that we used for high water. This other equipment. . . I never used it at night. Especially at night I never used it due to the drift when the river was up. In the daytime, or rather at night, when the river was low, we had a pulley that fastened right on to this post and one on that one on that cable fastened on the Ohio shore and one on the West Virginia shore. That puller, the thing that we used would be the thing. . . Of course, it had had a handle more like that. Through the summer when you would go to take that ferry flat across the river on low water, this thing here hooked right down over the cable.
- H: Over the cable.
- R: It would pull and pull.
- H: And just walk.
- R: Walk and pull.
- H: You could either stand still and slide it back and pull it to you or else you could just take a long walk on it?
- R: You couldn't stand still. You had to walk up the head of the boat and hook on and walk.
- H: Then go back and hook up again and walk the length of the. . .
- R: Yes, walk. That ferry flat was, I would say, forty-five feet long. You walked, I would say, forty feet each

time.

H: Now, you said that you ran that through pulleys. Did that give you. . . Was that for extra help? It wasn't a double pulley system lift for you or anything?

R: Those pulleys were just to guide the cable so that you could stand up. It would have been pretty hard if you would have had the cable like that.

H: It would.

R: That is like Ralph Powell that time that they had the Lion's Club had their first doings up here. Somebody told him about me having a lot of river pictures. He said that he would like to take some up and put on display. He came out here and looked and said that he would like to take all that. I said that he could take all of it. It would take me too long to look through all of that. That is just part of it.

H: You must have 1,000 pictures all together.

R: Over at my buddy's there in Steubenville, he had pictures over there that I haven't no room for here. He had them made for me. I will get them one of these days. That is why the bed my wife used. . . I'm going to get rid of it one of these days and then get me a filing cabinet.

H: Okay.

R: You can go ahead and see whatever you want there.

H: Can you go back to the boat show?

R: Back during the days of the show boats there, I don't know whether it is on the tape or not, but I would make as high as \$15 to \$20 a night just hauling the people back and forth. Some of the performers that were on the television worked on the show boats. There was a woman. I forget her name now. She still is acting on the show boat over in St. Louis. Red Skelton, Bing Crosby, all of those performers at that time would work on the show boat through the summer. Red Skelton was thin then. I think that if the wind would have blown real hard, it would have blown him away. His hair was fiery red, and he was on Brant's, floating. Billy Brant told me to come and see the show when I wasn't busy and that it wouldn't cost me anything. I recall that I wasn't too



busy that night. While the show was going on, Billy Brant called Red Skelton and said that I should watch Red. Red's act had been over, and he told me to stay out front and watch. If there were any passengers that came along, go in there and tell this man. Red stayed out front. Red was a comedian along there on the show boat. They had their drama like that. Red's act was over. Captain Brant had told Red to watch for any passengers that may be coming and then tell this man. I would like to see old Red just tell him. Bing, Bing was younger star then.

H: He came out of Pittsburgh, didn't he?

R: Yes.

H: Bing Crosby started in Pittsburgh.

R: Yes.

H: About what year is this, sir, in the 1930's or in the 1920's?

R: Well, it started back in . . . The show boats started to run after they got the nine foot pool.

H: That was in?

R: 1929.

H: Okay.

R: 1929. The show boats ran; they were regular. But before that we had the show boats, but they didn't come in frequent.

H: What did they need? What did they draw?

R: Well, the tow boat alone shoved the show boat. It would draw about four feet. But the show boat itself wouldn't draw any more than eight or ten inches.

H: What all was on a show boat? Was there an auditorium like?

R: The show boat had big rows of seats. This Golden Rod, the biggest show boat ever built, seated 1,000.

H: And it stopped along through here?

R: It stopped along here. We had the Golden Rod, the Cotton Blossom, the Water Queen, the French at New Sensation. It is hard to remember all of them. But I tell you that I could hear all that they had. The last show boat that we had up this way was the Majestic towed by the little boat Attaboy. It was owned by T.J. Randalls.

H: The tobacco company people?

R: No, up at Gallipolis. We had here then the Cotton Blossom. There were four or five boats renamed and built anew. They renamed it Cotton Blossom.

H: Oh, there was Cotton Blossom one and two and . . .

R: One would wear out. You probably read of the history of Major Bow?

H: Oh, yes.

R: Well, Major Bow. I have a picture here of Major Bow's amateur show boat on the Major Bow amateur. They traveled the river once each. There is your slide there.

H: Major Bow's amateurs. They didn't draw much water, did they?

R: No.

H: But you still had to get your tug through, your pusher?

R: Yes.

H: Well, besides the big auditorium what else was. . .

R: They had Peanut Heaven. That was a balcony up over up like that where they would sell peanuts and that stuff right along there. You never wanted to get a seat close back to Peanut Heaven. Those people would buy the peanuts and shell them and throw the shells down on you. Then around on the side, they had the balconies that would seat several people.

H: You told about making \$15 or so a night. Was that at the same price of 25¢ a car?

R: This was just hauling passengers.

H: Well, when these people came, they left their cars on the West Virginia side.

R: There weren't too many cars then. Everybody couldn't afford a car. You had to be a millionaire to afford a car then. But the people at one time down along old Route Two there, there were 1200 people up along there from Holbum's down to King's Creek. They would all go to the show boat. They would come up and go to the show boat.

H: And the show boat tied up at Toronto or at Steubenville?

R: Toronto.

H: At Toronto.

R: I ran the Toronto ferry. They would all go. Those nights I would always like to see were those show boat nights.

H: And those people paid a dime a piece to rider your ferry over?

R: They paid 10¢.

H: Did you charge them a dime to come back?

R: 10¢ round trip.

H: 10¢ round trip. You had to haul a lot of people to make \$15.

R: Yes, I would get 300 or 400 people. That is for the showboat not counting the regular cross. The showboat would start at about 8:00. That is when the showboat started, and I would pull in a lot of regular people that crossed the river on the Ohio side going to Steubenville or East Liverpool. At that time the train was running and it would come up at 6:00. Believe me, that was the last time the train would run until the next morning at 7:30 when it went back. If you wanted to go to Stuebenville or East Liverpool or any place like that, you had to cross with the ferry and take the streetcar.

H: On the Ohio side?

R: Yes, take the old streetcar. After I got the motorboat to push the ferry flat down there so I could marshall

and close his ferry down at 1:00. Well, all those people that would cross here on this side to go over Ohio and some place there. Naturally, they couldn't get back across. They would keep me going down there until 4:00 or 5:00 in the morning.

H: When did your big brother come to work then?

R: He came in at 6:00. He would come to work at 6:00. They would keep me going until 4:00 or 5:00 in the morning. I charged 25¢ for the automobile at the start. Then finally I raised it. There were people trying to go so bad then that I raised the fare on them. They didn't kick a bit, so I finally got the fare up to where they would run over and back with me and make the round trip with me from 6:00 until 12:00. I would let them go for 75¢. But if they were just making it one way I would charge them 50¢. They kept me going all the time. Fellows and even people from up in Toronto there would go to Pittsburgh to see those big operas that they used to put on in Pittsburgh there. They would say that they would be back after awhile right around 2:00 or 3:00. They would want me to wait on them. I would wait on them. I was going to school. They were keeping me there so late that I couldn't get up to go to school in the morning. I would make arrangements with the teacher that I could sleep in and then go to school in the afternoon. Well, then I would make up the lessons that I had missed in the morning. All the teachers let me do that. I went up to the eighth grade that way. You never knew on that job just when you would get home. Maybe I would get home at 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning and go to bed. There would be a heck of a rap on the door and go see what it was. Here it was a doctor wanting to come to West Virginia. The doctors back in those days made housecalls. The doctors would try to wake me up so that I could take them over the river if somebody was sick or to go to some woman who was going to have a baby like that. Then I would wait on them. All I would get out of it was, maybe I would wait three or four hours, \$1.

H: While you were working on the river all of these years with the ferry, you must have seen a lot of other things happen on the river. Mr. Cuppy and Fred Staley both mentioned the hauling the brick away with barges.

R: Yes, they did.

H: And somebody told me about there being a barge builder some place along the river here?

R: There used to be a boat yard way back there when the river was narrow and deep. There was a boat yard right up down in there.

H: Behind where the fire department is now? Is that where you are talking about?

R: About that place along in there. I don't recall.

H: Was that part of the Canville operation?

R: I don't know. I never did know just who had this. They built boats down there like the same way over in Toronto there. That land extended out there 900 feet. They had a big boat yard down there in Toronto that built boats. Have you ever been at Toronto?

H: Oh, yes, yes, yes. I have been up and down River Street quite a few times.

R: Well, there you know where the Christian churches are.

H: Yes.

R: Well, that there they call that River Avenue now. Well, back before we got so many floods and stuff, they had the streets numbered. They had First, Second, Third, Fourth, and at First Street and Second Street ran right along the river there, close. What is River Avenue now that was Third Street.

H: That was Third Street?

R: Yes, and after some of the councilmen over there, they got after all of those streets that disappeared. They got after and changed that to River Avenue. Then Third is the next one.

H: Right.

R: But that is how they got numbered. Those streets started out First, Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, Seventh Street like that then the river. A couple of streets washed out. The floods came and washed it away and filled the river up that way.

H: I'm kind of fascinated with these boat yards. Were they just building barges, or what all were they building?

R: They built barges, steamboats, everything.

M: Most everything.

R: Yes, there have been several steamboats built along this river here.

H: Did they use native timber from along the hills there?

R: Yes, they used to have to before the railroads were up this side or the other side of the river. We used to have a little steamboat that would run daily between Steubenville and New Cumberland. Of course, I remember seeing her but I was small. The main railroads and stuff came in by way of Columbus into Steubenville. All the groceries and everything that was used around here was hauled over into Steubenville. They had a little boat here, the Lettie they called her. She would run daily hauling the passengers and freight from Steubenville from New Cumberland.

H: Where was the main dock, or was there a main dock?

R: The main landing at that time was up there right where old lock nine was.

H: Oh, clear up by the dam houses? Right out from there?

R: Yes, that was the main boat landing.

H: Do I understand right that there used to be a couple of hotels up there?

R: Yes.

H: Was that because that was the landing and the men would come ashore?

R: The people would come ashore there. Those packet boats would bring those people up the river. They would land here in the middle of the night. They would go to those hotels. I'll show you what I mean by a packet boat.

H: Yes, I wanted you to tell me the difference between a packet boat and some of these others.

R: Well, you have seen these.

H: The tows, yes.

R: Here are your packet boats. There is what a packet boat looked like. They had a lot of cabins. That is what

our excursion boat looked like, the good old Homer Smith. This here was the best Noah boat that ever operated, the old Ben Hur. That boat operated so near on schedule that you could practically set your watch by it.

H: How late did these operate into the 1930s?

R: Well, the 1940s.

H: In the 1940s.

R: In 1940s was the last.

H: Built in 1887. Ben Hur. Now does that mean that it was rebuilt in 1916?

R: That was when she ended.

H: Oh, that was when she ended.

R: There was a fellow down on the other side of West Virginia who built that boat and hauled produce and stuff into Charleston and into Pittsburgh and down around in there. There was a whistle on it. He had an agreement that if that boat ever left the Ohio River, the whistle had to stay here. Well, he sold out to some company, and they sneaked and they sold the boat. It went into the Missouri River. As soon as that fellow found out about it, he went over there and brought that whistle back. The Steamer Liberty was that last boat to use that whistle. I'll show you. . . See that it is a. . . Now look at that picture that way.

H: That is pretty good with reflection. Which way is right?

R: This way. That is a picture of some artist trying to paint up my library. Did you notice that?

H: Yes.

R: Did you notice that painting of Betsy Ann? Well, that is a Betsy Ann. If I didn't tell you any different of which was the right way. . .

H: You didn't know which was the right way.

R: This here was one of the old passenger boats.

H: Queen City.

R: Queen City. That old boat on the river. Here's the Ben Hur.

H: How much water did the Ben Hur in Queen City need?

R: The Ben Hur drew about three feet.

H: Well, then on real low water, she had to stay below Gallipolis?

R: Yes, she had to stay. They would load what freight they had on into a flat in that little gas boat that I showed you.

H: Yes.

R: That is it. That is a packet boat. None of the packet boats were the same. The old tow boats were made just about the same.

H: Well, they could have put cattle in there or anything if they had to move cattle.

R: They did. They hauled horse, sheep, anything that you wanted shipped, cows, anything that you wanted to get shipped, they would haul it for you. There is one up here in Brownsville, Pennsylvania.

H: That would be over in the Monongahela.

R: Yes. This is a picture of the Delta Queen when they got her out of the water. See how deep she was there.

R: She would draw about six.

H: Six.

R: Six or seven feet. That Delta Queen when she first came here, she first came here from San Francisco. The Navy used her as a training boat. She came over here. That was the way she looked when she came. They had that wheel covered.

H: Oh, covered.

R: That is where they had her engraved and rebuilt. Here she is after they rebuilt her.



- H: Now did they consider this to be a packet?
- R: It was never considered a packet. It is too awkward. It was more of a tour boat.
- H: Yes, excursions.
- R: Tours, travel to Pittsburgh and New Orleans and like that. That there is another packet boat. We had all styles like stern wheel. Here this one is the City of Cincinnati. It used to run up in here. She ran at it in 19. . . She lasted in 1924 up to 1932. That there is a sawmill boat.
- H: Oh?
- R: It used to be before everybody could afford a sawmill; anybody along like people back in the country here or over in Ohio would get their log and would haul them to the river. There was a sawmill right on that boat.
- H: Okay.
- R: This here boat along the front is something like that. It has got a shoe back there, the hull. They just opened up a little winch and pull that log up there right under the saw. Then those fellows wouldn't charge them anything for the saw, but they took so much of the timber.
- H: Yes, okay.
- R: That was a sawmill boat.
- H: Probably some boat builder or somebody owned this, and he could use the lumber to get an advantage.
- R: They sold it.
- H: They sold it?
- R: They sold the lumber there to the boat builder. There is another packet boat. Sitting at Wheeling.
- H: Now they tell me that each steamboat had a whistle that was all its own. In other words, people could tell who was coming by the whistle.
- R: Yes, you could. The old river men back in those days would say here comes the Ben Hur or here comes the Queen City, or here comes the Virginia or here comes the Ohio.

The tow boats were the same way. The tow boats all had a different whistle. There was never one of them the same. That is a tow boat there. I have one special picture in here some place that I want to show you. That there is a sand digger that used to dig sand down at Steubenville on the Ohio River.

H: Was that part of Greyvues operation?

R: It was owned by Steubenville.

H: Oh.

R: That one was an accident, sunk.

H: Were there many accidents on the river?

R: Oh, yes, lots of them. You would hit stumps in the river there. There was rock and stuff in the river when they would get close to shore.

H: Was the channel not marked, or were they just. . .

R: The channel wasn't marked like it is now.

H: Boy, they were out there walking on the ice.

R: There is one picture that is special in here that I want to show you. There that steamer, the Avalon. It was agreed that it was a different name then, unloading passengers that it had out on an excursion. They hauled 1,000. That was taken of Steubenville here. I want to show you. . . That is the last boat that carried the whistle on the Ben Hur, the Liberty.

H: The Liberty.

R: I started to learn the river to get the steam boat license. The man who operated it died of a heart attack.

H: Oh.

R: Say if you had a government dredge, that was the Geneva.

H: Now the Corps of Engineers is responsible for the river, right?

R: Yes. Were you ever up around Glenville, West Virginia and down in there?

H: No, sir.

R: They used to. . . Down there at Parkersburg you could take up little Kanawha River.

H: Okay.

R: They used to run boats way up there to Glenville, West Virginia there.

H: On the Little Kanawha?

R: Yes. Here is a picture. . . You had a fellow stuck in the mud. The horse and wagon pushed him out, pulled him. I have this one special one here that I wanted to show you. Here, there is a scene. Look at the boat tied up on account of low water. That is down at. . . Have you ever heard of Glenny Hazard Island?

H: Yes.

R: That is down close to Glenny Hazard Island. They were tied up because the river was so low.

H: So low. Were they in a pool where they were sitting there?

R: They were in the deepest part of the river there. But they couldn't go any farther.

H: Now, that is near Parkersburg.

R: I would say that it was below Parkersburg.

H: Below Parkersburg.

R: Below Parkersburg, yes.

H: That is really interesting.

R: You could have an idea of just. . . The year before last I belonged to the Sons and Daughters of Pioneer River Men. We have a meeting every September in Marietta. This fellow Gabe brought them up and gave them to me.

H: You mentioned floods a lot of different times. The question of floods has come up in talking with people in brick yards, some of the really old men like Mr. Staley and all.

R: They had a lot then. They had floods then, yes.

H: Well, you talked a little bit differently about floods than what they do. I don't know if I can quite make you feel the way. . .

R: I'll tell you. I know where Fred Staley lived there. It takes a lot of water to get him. The 1936 flood didn't bother him. I could take you downtown there and show you. . . You know where that sporting goods store is down there?

H: Yes, Frontier store.

R: I could take you down there and show you where the 1936 flood was. It would be hard to believe that that building. . . Have you been in that sporting goods store?

H: Yes, sir.

R: Well, that 1936 flood lacked about six inches of being up to the ceiling of that.

H: In the store itself?

R: Yes.

H: Now when Agnes came through here a few years ago, you had some water downtown too, didn't you?

R: Oh, yes. I had a flood directory up to a certain year. But from 1945 and on, I don't have any flood record.

H: Well, Agnes would have been about five years ago.

R: Those fellows downtown there just didn't mind the flood.

H: Well, that is what they tell me. They just go right back there and clean up and move right back in.

R: Yes, I don't know whether all of them did it or not but they would stay sober long enough to get moved out. They would really get drunk. Then when the water would get down, sober up and clean it up. I was in one flood down there. I was in a flood down there in 1942. That house that sits out on the river bank down there belonged to Matt Phillips Stamping Plant. I don't know who lives in there. I moved up here in November. We had a flood around Christmas. That was the only one that I was ever in as I remember. But I have heard my mother and father talking about it. When they first

moved from West Virginia to Ohio, I was about two or three years old. Where they moved it had been a barn that had turned into a house. The water came in and flooded there. But I don't remember that. I remember this one that I was in down here. We had to get out right quick.

H: Now that was still when they had the wicket dams, right? The new dams weren't built yet then?

R: The new dams weren't built. They let the dam down alright. The wickets were down, but the U.S. Engineers didn't estimate it high enough. They had some of those big flood control dams built back around different places. They still would keep that drained. When they would get so full, they would drain it and then take care of that. But they didn't drain that. They had all that rain and stuff. It just come over the dam. That was how we got the flood. The U.S. Engineers didn't estimate the flood. They didn't know what was happening. They said that we were going to have so much water here. They didn't know what it was. Instead we got about six or eight maybe ten feet more than what was predicted.

H: Wow. That makes a lot of water.

R: Yes, it was all due to those who were taking care of those controlled dams up back in there. It was all due to them not keeping that water draining out.

H: Well, in December they probably didn't expect that kind of rain. Did they?

R: They didn't expect it, but we haven't had a bad flood since that.

H: Was 1936 the worst flood on the river?

R: It was in some places and other places it wasn't. 1936 was the worst flood that we ever had. It used to be way back there that they said that the 1884 flood was the worst, but the 1936 flood had the 1884 flood beat by right around six or eight inches here down here. On down the river farther, the flood of 1936 was lower.

H: Now in 1884 there were no dams at all, were there?

R: No, nothing, no.

H: Now from talking to these real old men that you talked to when you were a boy, there were certain times of the year that the boats just couldn't run at all.

R: They could not run at all.

H: I wonder what these brick. . . They had no railroad here yet, no highway. What did these brick makers do, these clay factories and so forth?

R: They had small boats like small steamboats like that.

H: Like this first one.

R: Like that little gas boat that I showed you, just a small flat that wouldn't draw too much water. They would ship that way. I will never forget what my father told me. He worked there at what was the old Claymont Brick Works right there across from Toronto. There were no dams in the river then. They said that they would follow the land, they would little boat landed in there. A fellow by the name of Garlic ran the brick works. A fellow landed a little boat down in there. There were three little barges that didn't draw too much water. One fellow came up and told him that he wanted the brick. At that time they had a chute made out of wood. Then they would slide the brick right down into the barge. While they were loading the barge, my father said that there was a fellow that came up there mosying around the yard. He said that he had never seen a bum look as bad as he did. Old Garlic walked up to him and got him by the shoulders. He told him that they didn't allow bums around on the yard here. My father said that that fellow just looked at him. He just walked out to where they were sliding those brick out into the barge. He told him not to go any more down in there. Don't put anymore down. He said, "What is in that barge, take out." Here it was the man who owned the outfit. He said Garlic coaxed and pled with him in every way. This fellow said that he liked to do business with people that treat the person right. But he said that he didn't appreciate being called a bum. He said that if he wanted to know just how well he was off, he told him to look here. He showed him a big bank book. He said that he wouldn't miss the money. When the river was up after the river had built two or more dams here and there, you know, to hold the pool up.

H: Yes.

R: Then they didn't have any trouble traveling. They built the number 11 down there in 1911. Well, they started to build it in 1909. Then they had a dam, I think, down there close to Wheeling or some place in there. I forget just now where it was. All of them are gone now but one. All those types of dams are gone but one.

H: Where is the one now?

R: It is down around near Carroll.

H: Clear out at the end?

R: Yes, it used to be that you had to have them every ten miles apart. They had fifty-two of them.

H: Is that right?

R: Fifty-two of them. There is just one now. This New Cumberland dam up there, it takes care of it up to Montgomery about a distance of thirty miles. Pike Island dam takes care of it up to this one, which would go around a little over thirty miles. Some of those larger ones that they built down the river there takes as much as forty-five miles to go without interlocking. I have a contraption here that I can sit right here and listen to the boats in East Liverpool when they are talking down as far as Wheeling.

H: Did you ever meet any of the Porter men that seemed to be big river men, like Jim's dad?

R: Yes. I never met Jim's dad, but I met J.B. Porter who lives up along Route Two there. His father was a brother to Jim's father. I met him. They had a boat, the John Porter. I had a picture of it, but I loaned it to a fellow and never got it back. This John Porter, they had it towed, but they hauled sewer pipes, brick stuff, products and stuff. This boat made a trip. They had a crew of seventy some men on it. That boat made its trip along just like Lewis along like that. On its way back the black fever, or something, broke out on the boat. When that boat got into Pittsburgh, there were just two men living on there.

H: That is William's dad, isn't it or grandfather which?

R: Who?

H: The captain on that boat that you were talking about,

the J.B. Porter. That is William Porter's grandfather, right?

R: I don't know. They didn't say just who was captain on there. I don't think it was him.

H: They told me that same story, but they didn't identify the captain of that. . .

R: I don't know. I forget. I could have been a good writer right back when I was younger. I could have written a book on the river. See if you can find John Porter. Look in the J for John Porter.

H: Okay.

R: I think 229. I might give some history on it there.

H: Right there, 229, John Porter.

R: Does it say who was captain?

H: Yes, John Porter commanded by Captain John Bickerstaff with Charles Dingleman, chief engineer. Yellow fever.

R: Yes.

H: They wouldn't let them land any place coming up the river.

R: All the barges, the boat was towed, they burned that.

H: Boy, that would be a loss, wouldn't it?

R: Yes. The rocker arm as they call it on the boat was down at Point Pleasant there at Gallipolis. They had monument there for that thing on it. Somebody stole it; it broke in pieces.

H: I'll be.

R: If I could find it, I could show you the piece that broke that the boat had to tie up. They had the picture down there.

H: Now who is calling there? Who is calling you?

R: P.C. The Kelley Lynn, I think, was the boat was calling me. The way they route now, the channel is so bad that they always send out a warning ahead for their aid. So



that if they are close to a place where you know it is shallow on one side, and there is another boat coming, they will say that they hold back until you get by. They will go on wider; they will go on two whistles.

H: Is the channel in bad shape now?

R: Yes, the channel is in bad shape.

H: Because of why?

R: They never did any dredging or anything up in here for years. The channel is filling up from the high waters washing the land aground.

H: That makes the river wider and shallower.

R: Yes, wider and shallower. Right now here just right straight across from us, it used to be there, before they dredged the grave from down here, dredged the sand and gravel out of there, it used to be that there was a boat coming down and one coming up. The one coming up would have to wait until that one would come down. With those boats, it is not like a car or truck. There are no brakes. The man coming up can stop easier and let the fellow coming down through. Right up though here now it is getting pretty bad. I hear the fellows talking that they rub bottom.

H: What is their channel supposed to be now?

R: The channel is a nine foot channel where it is. It used to be nine foot to fill in. You had to fill a lot to fill them up just like a bar up there like Staley said; that bar down here at Holburn's Run. See, that is what harms the channel.

H: They will have to come in and do some dredging on it to get it back, right?

R: They will have to come in here one of these days and do a lot of dredging on it. These boats that we have today are drawing so much more water that what the old steam boats did. The old steamboats drew four or five feet of water; some of these boats that we have now draw eight feet of water. They have got more power. Every night when I go to bed, I put the scanner right here. I have a police band on it and then the rest of it is river. I was laying here yesterday around 4:30, it woke me up. A

boat down by Brown's Island there, it was so shallow that the boat sunk a barge down there.

H: Oh, I'll be.

R: Yes, a large load of slag.

H: It ran aground?

R: It ran aground. It hit something and sunk it.

H: During a flood they can't navigate on the river at all, can they until the flood goes back down?

R: It would have to go back down.

H: Then isn't there some cleaning up with regard to debris in the river before it is safe for them to get there?

R: Most of the cleaning up will be around the locks. Some of those old tow boat pictures that I showed you in there, they were all right back when they were running. They could make it all right from Pittsburgh to Steubenville. Their stacks were on a hinge. When they got to Steubenville there, there were the bridges before they got to Steubenville. Of course, we didn't have the Fort Steuben bridge then. We just had the railroad bridge and the Market Street bridge. Before they would get to those bridges, they would let those stacks down so that they could get under. Then they would leave them and put them back up. When they would get down, say, in Wheeling where your old bridges would cross there, then they would have to lower the stacks again.

There was one incident that happened in 1910 at that back of Queen City that I showed you there. She was coming on up the river. She was loaded pretty heavy, and the river was up pretty high. There wasn't clearance. She didn't want to lower her stacks to get under the Market Street bridge there. Instead of lowering her stacks, they pumped water down into the hold. The captain, Tony Mondell was on there. He called me and said that he had pumped water because he only needed four or five inches clearance to get under that bridge. When they landed there at Steubenville at the wharf boat, they started to pump some. They got the Steubenville fire department to come down with one of their old time steam pumps like the fire company had. They pumped the Queen City out of there. She didn't have any trouble. This little boat Delta Queen in the

there a ways up a little bit, of course it does not bother her stack or anything. They have to lift the flag mask down to get under the bridge.

There was a lot of history right on this old river. That book that I showed you there is out of print now. I had it for a friend here. A fellow not too long ago from Pittsburgh came down to see my pictures. He wanted to get copies made of some. He saw those books, and said that he had \$200 on him then. He wanted to know if I would let him have them. He said that he had been trying to get history on all of the old steam boats. He said that he had \$200 and asked me if I would let him have them. I told him no. When there are any arguments about the boats and stuff or the river, captains, pilots, I can just refer right to there. Those books give the names of captains, pilots, and engineers way back from the time the boats started operating. That Porter, J.B. Porter, we went up to see him about ten years ago. The fact of the matter is the same day, my wife had a coronary, ten years ago. September 4, we went up to see him. He had been down here and brought me down a picture of the John Porter to get a copy made for herself. There was another copy made over in Steubenville. He told me that when he was a little tot his father named the boat after him. I asked the name. He said the Bennet. I told him that we would go back here and look. I told him that I didn't know. I told him that I didn't have any record here of what I had, you know that if you would ask me what boats I have. I don't have any record of them. We went back and looked, and in the first bunch of pictures I picked out which were maybe a half a dozen, there was the Bennet. He said that he had heard his father talk about naming a boat after him, but he had never seen it. He asked me if I could get a copy made off of that. I told him that I could get a copy made. His old father was a millionaire.

H: Yes.

R: He said that he would pay me well. So I got my buddy that was in with me and told him to make an 8 X 10 for him. So we made an 8 X 10 for him and took it out. He was eighty-four years old then, yet he had never seen the picture of the boat that was named after him, J.B. Porter, John Bennet Porter.

H: Right. Well, he is not alive now, but his son Bill said that he was very much attached to the river.

R: Oh, he was. I got pictures of him here some place. I don't know just where to look. I got pictures of him, and I got pictures of his father.

END OF INTERVIEW