

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

1952 YOUNGSTOWN SHEET & TUBE STEEL STRIKE

Personal Experience

O. H. 1217

JOHN SHEVETZ

Interviewed

by

Andrew Russ

on

Nov. 14, 1988

## JOHN SHEVETZ

John Shevetz resides in Campbell, Ohio and was born in Struthers, Ohio on the 6th of February, 1920. He was employed at the Youngstown Sheet & Tube Company, Campbell Works. While working at the mill, his job specification was that of truck driver, loading and carrying finished steel products throughout the mill. He was a member of the local version of the United Steel Workers, and the interview that was conducted with him focused upon working conditions as they related to his life.

After putting forth his biography, Mr. Shevetz discussed the way in which his employment at Sheet & Tube affected his [life] and his family's life. He said that the wages he earned while employed at the mill allowed him and his family to enjoy a comfortable life style. After this, he discussed general economic issues that affected the Youngstown area, and he felt that the decline and the death of the steel industry in the Youngstown area adversely put Youngstown's economy in a situation that was not conducive to economic growth. He related that when the steel strike of 1952 occurred, it did not jeopardize his family's well-being, due to the fact that he possessed other economic resources from which to draw upon. Also, Mr. Shevetz discussed the future of labor in Youngstown particularly, and in America generally, and concluded that American labor has undergone a transformation that does not conduce to a situation where labor can exert itself politically as it has done in years past.

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INTERVIEWEE: JOHN SHEVETZ

INTERVIEWER: Andrew Russ

SUBJECT: 1952 Youngstown Sheet & Tube Steel Strike

DATE: November 14, 1988

R: This is an interview with John Shevetz for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on the 1952 Youngstown Sheet & Tube Steel strike, by Andrew Russ, on November 14, 1988.

Why don't you tell me a little bit about yourself. You know, where you were born, and went to high school, and all of that stuff.

S: Well, I was born in Struthers, in 1920.

R: Right.

S: I went to Struthers High School. And, from there. . . . I didn't graduate. I had to leave on account of the . . . it was during the hard times.

R: Depression.

S: [During the] 1936's and that, or 1939's. I left there, and I went to the Three C's (Conservation Corp. Camp) for two years, which was a very good thing. I wish that I had it today. It was one of the best things. You got a good education out of it. That's, how to handle yourself, and everything. These were eight dollars a month. That was a lot of money.

R: That was a lot of money back then.

S: That was a lot of money. All month we lived on it. Everything was given to us, but toilet articles, and writing paper, stamps. And, if you smoked cigarettes, roll them Bull Durham. That was a nickel a pack. I'll tell you, we had it good. Then, when I left the Three C's (Conservation Corp. Camp), I came back home. It was in 1940, and I worked on a railroad. And Buddy's Furniture, I worked up there. I worked at the Dairy Products. And, from there, in the 1st of February, I was drafted to go to the service. I spent four years over there on the Islands, which is another good . . . that was really good, educationally. And, you had to work. It was a good living. You still had the best food out there. You had good food. I don't care what they say. And, we went through everything on it. We went through the Islands. Sure, a lot of them didn't come back. I was fortunate. I came back. And, I met a lot of interesting people over there.

R: Yes.

S: Guys like myself, and even the bigger ones, they're entertainers, and the officers and all. They were really good. You couldn't. . . . I'd never want to go through the service again. But for experience, that was the greatest thing in the world. What I went through--didn't have it bad--but, I just wouldn't want to go through it again.

R: Right.

S: I wouldn't want to go through it again. But, as far as experience, you couldn't ask for a better experience. I think that's what made a lot of these older ones over here. . . . You can come out of the service and work down in the mills. I think really, they got their education through that, a lot of them.

R: Right.

S: [They] learned how to live.

R: Exactly, yes.

S: And, you work for it.

R: So then, you got out of the service. Is that when you started working at the Sheet & Tube?

S: I worked at the Sheet & Tube. I started in 1945, the last month of 1945. I worked there thirty years.

R: Thirty years.

S: I had a good job. I enjoyed it. I looked forward to going to work in the mornings. And, I even looked forward for the days off, too. I'll tell you that.

R: No kidding.

S: It was really good. We had a good bunch of boys. And, we worked hard there. We didn't have all of this modern equipment like we have today. But, we had good equipment. And, we worked. We had to work.

R: Which department did you work in?

S: Coal Strip, hauling coil and sheets, and that. And, it was a loud place. It was cold in the winter, and hot in the summer. It was really good. [I] earned a good living. [I] raised six of us over here--well, eight of us all together. So, I guess I've done pretty good.

R: Yes. Were you involved with the Union at all?

S: I was just a Union member. I never was involved in anything but the Union, just paying dues. I was out on a couple of picket lines, which [you] just stand around. Half of the time, I'll say, half of the guys didn't know what they were out for. Just for that sandwich, or something. Or, [they] have a B.S. session.

R: Yes, right.

S: And, that was really good. Well actually, we knew we were on strike for this. But, we lived through it. We lived through it. In fact, like over here, it took a lot of hard work, a lot of work. Even two jobs, that's the thing.

R: Did you work mostly days or nights?

S: No. I had mixed shifts.

R: Mixed shifts.

S: There's all different shifts. Three shifts, we worked, which was a good thing.

R: After you came back, did the production slow down in the mills after the war was over at all?

S: Well, after the war was over, our production was in full blast. We were in demand. We shipped steel all over. And actually, we knew it was coming. When it closed down in 1977, we knew ahead of time that something was happening. They were slowing down. I don't know. It just wasn't the same as what we started out

with. It wasn't the same thing. We knew that something was happening, because they were shutting down departments and that, and cutting down on time. You'd see that down there a lot.

R: What did you think of Roosevelt as a president? You said you voted for him.

S: Yes. He was a good president. I'll still say, he was a good president. I think he actually put this thing on it's feet on the Eastside, these there, WPA and that. Give the people a break. That's what really put it on it's feet. In later years, after the first of that, around 1936 and 1937, you knew there was something coming up, because there was heavy steel being shipped: plates and that.

R: Right.

S: And, you knew they were getting ready for something. They were making tanks, and stuff like that, planes. We were going good, all the way up until they closed the place down. We had orders blowing out that. . . . I still can't understand why they closed it. They said it was too expensive around. I don't know. I couldn't figure that out. Because, all of the stuff had to be shipped in. Every place you ship it in, you ship it out.

R: Right. What did you think of Truman as a president?

S: Very good.

R: Pretty good?

S: I liked him. He was a very good president. He was real good, because. . . . That's another. . . . See, there were two democrats, so I voted for them right there. I think he was in there when the war was over. He made up his mind, and he did it.

R: Right, exactly.

S: That's right. He wasn't taking the back seat for anybody. That's what I liked about him.

R: During the Korean war--what happened was, when the war was on--a lot of the nation's steel mills, including the Sheet & Tube in Youngstown, struck in 1952. And, what happened was, Harry Truman took over the steel mills. Do you remember that?

S: Yes. He said: "If you don't want to run them, don't run them."

R: What was the feeling among the men when that happened, do you know?

S: To me, who ran it, I didn't give a darn. And, he ran it good.

R: As long as you would get your pay check.

S: That's right, We were getting paid. That's the thing. We were working. When he took . . . that was the railroads that he took over, wasn't it?

R: Didn't he take over the mills, too?

S: No, it was the railroads. And, he said, "If you don't want to run them, don't run them." But, that didn't last very long.

R: No.

S: No, it didn't last very long.

R: What do you remember about the 1952 strike over here?

S: [The] 1952. . . . Well, I'll tell you. I was down around this gate over here. It was just a sit-around, that's about all. As far as us sitting around, we didn't have any trouble over here or anything, like on the Stop Five. I wasn't down there. I just knew what I heard, because I wasn't down there. I wasn't about ready to go down there.

R: A lot of trouble, or what?

S: Well, they had trouble down there.

R: Do you remember what happened?

S: No. I know there was some shooting and that in there, but I don't know. Just about what I read and heard, that's about all.

R: Was the union very involved with that 1952 strike? What exact role did the union play?

S: Well, they were involved, but what role, I actually can't remember what role they played on it. But, the union was really involved in it. That's for sure.

R: I think they stayed out for 110, 120 days.

S: Oh. That wasn't in 1952. That was in 1959. Wasn't that 1959, Rose? [In] 1959, yes. We were here. That was in 1959, I think it was.

R: And, why did you have a strike, then? What was the issue?

S: Well, was it the pay or the benefits? I really don't know which one it was--the raise in pay or benefits? I really don't know. I don't know which one, because I know I was working out here. And, my neighbor across the street called up. He was working. He said, "They need a man up there to work at that aluminum company." So, I went out there, and I worked the whole strike. They didn't bother me.

R: Oh, I see.

S: It didn't bother me at all.

R: Yeah.

S: I worked the whole strike.

R: When Truman took over the mills in 1952, he said that he needed steel for the war effort in Korea. Do you think that was a good. . . ?

S: I think that had a lot to do with it. I think so.

R: Do you think that he was right in what he had done? Because, I remember, didn't the Supreme Court come out and say that he couldn't do that as a president?

S: Yes. But, I think he was right, because he was out to back this country up. We were involved in it heavy. The only thing I didn't like about what he did, when he slapped Macarthur for keeping going.

R: Yeah.

S: That's the only thing, because Macarthur was my Commanding Officer over there, too. Not to . . . that. But, he should have let him go through. He shouldn't have stopped. That's what I really hold against him on that. He should have let him go.

R: What was the general public's mood towards the Korean war, back then?

S: It wasn't as bad as the Vietnam war, no. They felt bad about it. But, to me, it was more of a "must." We had to do it. That's the way I looked at it. We had to do it. Because, I'll tell you, over there, we even fought for that over there. And, why give it up just like that. I was so proud. I figured--I'll tell you--if it was getting rougher, I think a lot of the guys that I met would have to go back. I thought of that twice already, a couple times. And, if I have to, I have to.



R: Oh, yes. Back then, in the early 1950's, how was the economy in Youngstown? Pretty good?

S: Real good. It was good. We all made a living. Everybody was working. Even Downtown Youngstown was always crowded. There were always people down there. It was really good.

R: How do you compare that to today in Youngstown?

S: Well, (laughter) today, you have nothing. Everything is moving out. I think Youngstown is actually killing itself. I don't know. I just don't know how to explain it. It seems like now, nobody wants to come in to there. Very few of them do. And, I think it's your officials down there on that.

R: Yeah.

S: Because, they're not putting the law down there. They're somewhere up in the air. They're not putting the law down, because who's going to move down there? You can see what's going down there. You can even read in the papers.

R: Yes.

S: They ought to get that sorted out first.

R: When you worked in the mill, what exactly. . . . You worked--did you say--in the coil?

S: Yes, the coil. I was driving diesel down there. I was hauling that coil around.

R: What was your attitude about the management? Did you get along with them?

S: I got along with the management. I had no trouble with the manager. I'll tell you one thing. I don't think any of us had trouble with the manager. Because actually, I believe, it was the management is the union, not the men. I think that's where our trouble really originated. They both wanted to be the top boss. That's where it is.

R: Oh, I see. In 1952, the strike, I think, was over a union shop.

S: Yes, a union shop. Now see, there's another thing.

R: What do you think about that?

S: Well, I'll tell you. I can't see that everybody going down there has to be a union man.

R: Yes.

S: This way you have no say-so. It's good on one way, and it's not good on another way. And, if it's all union shop, there's going to be a lot of friction going on down there. Because, I can't see closed shop, union shop, and that. Let them have it. Then, a lot of your guys would realize it, that weren't in the union, they'd join the union. So, I'd be forced in it. And, then I look at it another way. The guy's eighty [years old], and you're in there still getting the benefits that we're fighting for. So, you have two sides to look at. Which way are you going to grab? So, there's two sides to the whole story. The guys that weren't in the union, we're fighting for them. They're getting the benefits, and they're not paying for it. We have to pay for it. The dues weren't that much over there, then.

R: How much were dues?

S: I really don't know. I'll say four or five dollars a month, and then, it started going up later in the years.

R: Yes.

S: It wasn't much.

R: Did you go to a lot of the union meetings?

S: A few of them I went to.

R: What were they like?

S: Well, (laughter) I think it was more arguing among ourselves, than actually. . . . We had a lot of good points brought up when I went. And, a lot of bad ones, too. It was actually, I think, more among ourselves. Somebody would answer a question, and three guys would jump him. But, they don't want it that way. And so, there you are. But, it was very interesting.

R: Did a lot of people come to your meetings?

S: No. Very few. That's the thing.

R: How many would you say came?

S: Oh, I'd say ten, twelve of them. Unless it was something to hurt everybody, then they'd all come in.

R: Yes.

S: But otherwise, you'd have just the same bunch going over there. So, there wasn't much going on.

R: What was it like when you had a lot of people there, over something that was one of your problems?

S: Well, there was a lot of noise and that. But, they had some good points and some bad points, and everybody would favor themselves. Then, if somebody would bring up the wrong question, that's what the discussion was about. They bring up the wrong question, iron them out. But no, that was not going to kill it. But, that's who it is. [It was] never settled.

R: Do you think the union actually helped the working conditions and helped the men at the mill?

S: Yes, it did. The union helped the working conditions a lot down there. In fact, I believe that the management was at fault. Then, they said about safety and that--company pre-safety, union pre-safety, but when they came out and turned it in, nothing was done about it. It wasn't even on both sides. So, we had friction on that. There was a lot of safety features. Well, there was a lot of heavy equipment, so you had to have them. And, they had the cranes inspected, and that. They did that--I'll say that--with the cranes. And, even the tractors, they had inspected. Not that often, the tractors were out on the floor always, but they had them serviced and all that. And, we were had a pretty good bunch down there.

R: You worked in the Campbell Works?

S: Yes, the Campbell Coal Strip.

R: How did that operation link in with the Briar Hill works?

S: Well see, we got rounds, and that, from Briar Hill and the Campbell plant. And, I go through . . . mill, flatten them out. We got the finished product. We're on the finish end. And, all that was just . . . all them nailed and everything when it shipped out, oiled and everything, and packaged. And, they got right on trucks, trucks or cars. That was the finished product. If it was damaged, we'd have to re-do it again. Well, there has to be damaged stuff in there. We'd just redo it again and ship it out, unless there was nothing wrong with it.

R: Did you say you drove a diesel truck?

S: Yes.

R: So, basically, they would lead pieces up on your truck, and you would take them to a different place?

S: No. I'd just go under the coil and pick them up and take them. Nobody handled all that, we just handled no coil. That was us. Nobody worked with us. We just picked it up and took it where it was supposed to go. Different units for shipping, that's ours. Nobody was there with us.

R: When did you first see problems with the steel mill, as far as production and laying people off and stuff like that?

S: Well, I'd say about 1976, around there. Even earlier than that, because they shut the scout mill down. They shut a couple others down. We knew there was something happening then, like the scout mill. And, orders weren't coming in as fast. So, they shut down.

R: How did a lot of people take it? You retired before this happened.

S: Well, we were forced retirement. It was all forced retirement. Well, to me, when they shut the thing down--when I got forced retirement--we got paid for that. On that day, we had so much else, seven, eight hundred dollars a month. And, that wasn't on social security. And, that kept us going there good. Then, when you go on social security at sixty-two, you don't get the full amount. But then, they cut off--I don't know, was it--three hundred or four hundred, and the social security would pick it up. And, then you'd have your regular pension from down there, plus the social security, like now. To me, I really hated to see it go down, because it broke up . . . families had to move. And, for me, retirement, they retired me early. To me, that was the best thing that could have ever happened. That's my personal opinion.

R: Right.

S: Because, I got paid for it. And, I did a lot around here. I hovered around and all of that, but I always had food on the table. But, these other ones that didn't have anything, they didn't have the years and that. That's what I felt sorry for. And, these kids, how many of them left here and go on out of town? They're still going out. And . . . they're still going out. And, these kids around here, a lot of them say they can't find a job here. Hey, if you really want to work, go out and find it. I got three of them. [In] Minnesota, he (my son) just moved from Minnesota. I

got North Carolina, Indiana, and New York, they didn't have jobs here. They got good jobs over there. So, they live out there.

R: Yes.

S: What's the difference? If you don't have the work here, go out and find it.

R: Right.

S: Lots of them over here saying, "Well, this president did that. This president. . . ." No! You're doing it for yourself. If you want to work, you'll find it!

R: That's right.

S: And, a lot of them say that they have homes, and they can't leave. The heck you can't! My son left. He had a home here. He went to Dallas. So, he got a good job there, and he sold his home and went out there. And, don't say [that] he can't leave. He had a family, too. He didn't sit here and cry. He made a move.

R: When they closed the mills, were a lot of workers angry?

S: Oh, definitely!

R: Definitely. What was on. . . .

S: I'll tell you. In fact, a lot of them didn't know what to do. There was even, like a . . . ready. And, they lose everything they got. But, I don't think that many of them lost it. If they lost it, they always could have gone some place to get jobs. We felt bad about it. I wanted to work until [age] sixty-two. I wanted to put the five years in.

R: Right.

S: And, retire then. Instead, they retired me five years earlier, which--I think--I benefited out of it.

R: Right.

S: And, at that time, we weren't making as much, but we weren't paying as much.

R: What was the average wage before they shut the mill down?

S: There was always average pay. Well, there was about \$120.00, \$150.00 every two weeks, something around in there. That's not a lot, but. . . . Like, a lot of

the payments that we had on the house, they weren't that big. See, the payments are a lot smaller. Now today, they're making bigger money, but look at what you have to pay for a house.

R: Right.

S: I think we had it better then, than we have now, because our houses weren't as expensive.

R: Since this is the election season and we just had an election, what do you think about American Politics now, as compared to the 1950's and 1940's when you had--what seemed like--a lot stronger presidents back then?

S: Well, I don't know. Around here, before, it was more of issues.

R: Right.

S: And, what they were going to do, which--I don't think--any of them did anything about them. They still run the same. No, I think it was. . . . It was slander. It was slander on both sides. I don't care what they say. In fact, I got even disgusted with them. I didn't even want to hear them, because [if] you hear them once, it's the same thing they're going to say. Everybody would pat themselves on the back, not the other guy. "I had some of my people give." I don't care about that. It's up to them.

R: It seems like--I noticed--between Dukakis and Bush in Mahoning County, which is basically Youngstown, Dukakis got more vote than Bush, because this is a big Democratic area. But, why do you think, on a National level, the Democrats are having these problems? They can't get a president elected. Why do you think?

S: Well, you know what I think? A lot of people aren't voting for parties, either. They're voting for a man, not for parties. And, especially these young ones. They're thinking twice about voting for parties. They're voting for men. I hope they aren't. To me, that's the way. . . . I don't want them to vote the way I do. But, I vote for the men who I think can do it. Because, the parties aren't going to do nothing. It's just the men themselves. And then, you got your Congress in there, and that. So, there's going to be another battle in there again. Actually, I don't know. I vote for the men, not for the parties.

R: Do you think George Bush will be [as] strong a president as--some would say--Roosevelt or Truman?

S: No way! I don't think so. I don't think so.

R: How do you compare Reagan with someone like Roosevelt or Truman?

S: The first four years, he was really good. Then, he got a different congress in, and that's where you got. . . . The second four years, I didn't care for. The first four years, he was good. But, he did a lot of good for here. I'll tell you one thing that he did, on this here between the two countries, he settled a lot of it there.

R: Right.

S: He simmered it down. Because, it was before a world. But, he simmered it down. Not only him. There's a lot of men that did that. Even congress and the Senate, too. All of them helped. They simmered it down. This last time, they blew up again around there. So, he'll never make a Truman or a Roosevelt. No, I don't think so. Congress wouldn't let him do it. Your congress and that, they'd never let him do it.

R: What do you think the future of Youngstown is as far as manufacturing?

S: They're getting smaller. Companies are coming in.

R: Smaller companies. Do you think Youngstown will ever get built up to the point where it was before?

S: No. Not in steel. They'll have to go on to a different product. They'll have to go on to a smaller one, just like in the southern states. The northern states, they don't have these big mills in there. They're all smaller business establishments, and manufacturers of products, smaller companies. That's the only way that I can see it. I figure, I don't know why. . . . I think we got most of the water over here, and we can always keep that.

R: Right.

S: And, down there, they don't have the water. Well, they have the water ways down in Pittsburgh and Cincinnati, Ohio. But, not around here. We have the lakes and the river, that's all--Lake Erie, and that's about it.

R: When you worked in the mill, what was the average day like? What time would you get to work? And, how did the day go?

S: Well, we started at 7:00 a.m. And, I'd get up about 5:30 a.m. or 6:00 a.m. It would just take me five minutes to get down there, and we'd park over there. We'd start at seven o'clock, and quit at three o'clock. And, the other three o'clock shift takes over. But, we got up at five-thirty, six o'clock. I usually got up at five-thirty, because I like to put around, and stop down at the pool room and have coffee down there. And, we'd get to work.

R: Once you got to work, what exactly did they have? Did you have breaks every so often?

S: Well, in fact, I'll tell you. We had breaks there. You would make your own breaks. We didn't have ten minutes off for smoking. You could smoke anywhere or have coffee. The job is while you're drinking coffee, eating a sandwich, and you're sitting right out there. And, I'm watching it. That's all. We had our breaks. They'd bring coffee down. We'd get up off our tractors. Five minutes we'd break. Then, [we'd] get back down there and go. At eleven o'clock we had dinner, twenty minutes. Before that, half the guys had their lunches all ready. They had their sandwich, eating already. They just sit around.

R: Oh, I see.

S: That's all.

R: So, you worked eight hours. Did you work a lot of overtime?

S: Toward the end, yes we did. We worked quite a bit of overtime.

R: So, sometimes you would work sixty hours a week?

S: Oh, (laughter) I put more in that work than sixty [hours]. When was it that one month? We worked twelve hours a day for a month straight. Five hours that one day, and we had to put sixteen in. Six of them were twelve, and one was sixteen. That was for one month straight. I'll never go through that. It's too much. It's just too much. We didn't have anything down there then, and then, you couldn't put a new man on there. They just hold you up, so they just doubled them up. Everyone came out. [They] put them on overtime. They experienced one day what we were in. That's how we cleaned up the whole mill. We got rid of all the stock.

R: How many men actually worked at the mill, would you say?



S: In our department--I'll say, when I first started out down there--we had about thirteen hundred down there. And, when we ended up down there in 1976 and 1977, I doubt if we had four hundred. I doubt it if we had four hundred. Well see, the reason for that, too, we had different equipment. They made bigger steel coil and that. So, that eliminated the old sheers. They put two on them. They eliminated about six of them, and that was all automatic. The same thing on the nails. They made bigger coil and that. They didn't have small coil around down there. [They] welded them together. Out of one, maybe they'd put five coils together, and you get one big one out. So, that eliminates a lot. When they roll, it just keeps going right through, and then, [we'd] ship it right out.

R: Besides Youngstown Sheet & Tube, how many other Steel Companies, big ones, were there in Youngstown?

S: Well, there's Republic, Carnegie, U.S. Steel is around in there, too. There was a lot of steel companies. But, the main ones out here were Republic and the Sheet & Tube and Briar Hill. Then, there was Carnegie. And, down there is Sharon Steel and Hooper. There's all big steel mills. Sharon Steel is still running. The biggest ones right here were Sheet & Tube and Republic.

R: At the mill itself, how many thousands worked there totally, not just in your department?

S: The whole mill?

R: Yes.

S: I would have no idea on that. I couldn't even come close, because each department. . . . They had Conboot Seamless, and down in Struthers. . . . I would never know how many men there actually were in the whole thing. There was a lot of them, because all the clerical workers and that. That took a terrific amount of people.

R: Some of the National Union Leaders and some of the big leaders, do you remember Philip Murray?

S: Yes.

R: What did you think of him?

S: Well, the only thing I know of, he was our big honcho. The only thing I knew, was "Philip Murray." That's all. To me, we didn't have any trouble. We had a couple of strikes. Otherwise, everything was running smooth, right along. We had our faults down there with the Union and with the manager, but it settled out.

R: What about Danny Thomas?

S: Danny Thomas. Well, he wasn't with Youngstown, the Sheet & Tube. Not when I was down here, because they had different. . . . Danny Thomas, he was up in Youngstown. We had nothing to do with him. We had nothing to do with him. We had all our presidents over here. Who the heck was the last one? I can't think of his name. I can't think of his name now. In fact, one of the presidents lived right on this street, Tim Cole. Then, we had Begosick, and I can't think of this last one. Not Hutton, it's not him. Was it Tommy Fair? I'm not sure now.

R: Can't remember. Basically, what happened then, in 1952, there was a strike down at the mill over the question of a Union Shop.

S: Yes, Union Shop.

R: I think the strike lasted for 120 days. But, during that strike, did you work somewhere else?

S: That was the 1959 strike I worked somewhere else, not the 1952.

R: The 1952 strike was 120 days.

S: Yes, that's 1959.

R: What did you do? Did you stand on the picket lines? Do you remember?

S: Well, yes. I was down there. I think we had duty once a week. You know, we had so many guys, and. . . .

R: You would go.

S: Yes, once a week we'd stand down here and drink coffee.

R: And, hold a sign.

S: Yes, right on Short Street. We were even talking one time . . . (laughter) the Sheet & Tube security guards were over there. [We were] talking and drinking coffee with them.

R: Oh, I see.

S: Nobody tried to get in. Nobody tried.

R: Okay, because I talked to a couple other people I interviewed, and they said it was more or less, they would go after each other and yell at each other.

S: Well, not over here. That was up, I think, Stop Five, I believe that's the one.

R: Stop five.

S: The worst strike, I think, was in 1936 down in Struthers when they even cut the wheels out. I wasn't working in the mill, then.

R: Right.

S: I wasn't working in the mill, then.

R: When you went down there and you were on the picket lines, what did you talk about? Probably, just about everything else besides the strike, huh?

S: We talked about sports, everything but the strike. We talked about sports and that.

R: So, you really weren't too concerned about the fighting?

S: No, we couldn't do anything about it anyway. We couldn't do anything about it. All the time, we just sat there and talked about sports. We'd be reading papers and drinking coffee, that's about it. No matter about it. A car come pulling in to see us on strike, they'd just keep going.

R: Oh, I see.

S: They had no trouble.

R: Do you remember the negotiations? What eventually happened with the strike?

S: Well, I think we got a little bit of a raise on it, when it ended up. But, I think we lost more than what we got. I think we lost more than what we got. Actually, the company and the workers both suffered a loss. I think everybody was at a loss there.

R: Did you have any problems running the household when you were out of work as far as paychecks during the strike? Did you have any other income?

S: No, there was no other income during that. But, we had ours. In fact, in those days, it was summertime. We had a garden and all that. I think people had some put away.

R: What was the public opinion in Youngstown against the strikers during that period.

S: Well--look at it this way--I think all of the housewives were against it, because they weren't getting their stuff in the house.

R: Right.

S: Which, is natural. And, a lot of workers were against the strike. And, a lot of them were for it, too. So, I think most of them were against it, because they weren't getting paychecks. When you have two or three kids going to school--when you have kids and that--you need it.

R: What was the Vindicator's attitude towards the strike? Do you remember?

S: Well, I really don't remember all that. I couldn't even say on that.

R: Do you remember who the mayor was at that time?

S: No, I don't know. I wouldn't know who it would be. We went through so many mayors. I wouldn't know which one was in.

R: So, out of your experiences working in the mill and stuff and being involved in the Union, what do you think the future of labor in the United States is now? It seems like it's gotten a lot weaker.

S: It's a lot weaker. There's a big change in it. I don't know. I don't like the way it's going now, because they have a lot of high tech in it. And, I'll tell you. A lot of this, even these airmen, I don't know how you can say it. I don't think they're worth more than what they're getting paid for.

R: You think they're asking for too much?

S: I think so, especially the ones in the top brass there. Just like in your automobile companies. Who's making it all? The stock holders, I don't blame them for making. . . . They're the only ones that are in there. And, some of these are over the shop, like this Iaoccoca, Lee Iaoccoca. No way. I think these guys will be better off to make the money by going into sports. That's where your money is today.

R: So, do you think the United States will ever--as far as labor is concerned--do you think we will ever grow and become a big force, as big a force as it used to be in politics and society?

S: No way. No, I don't think the labor force will be as big as it was. We've got too much machinery that does all that.

R: What do you see as the future of our economics in the United States, our economic system? Do you think things will get better for people?

S: I think so. I think so. Because, they aren't too bad now. I think the paper's building it up, but they're building it up on Wall Street. That's what makes it look bad. Even over there, when they had this Stock to zero . . . lately. These companies are running full blast. It didn't affect them.

R: Right.

S: It was all down in Wall Street. That's where it was. In fact, I wrote to Jack Anderson, everything was going good. Companies were running. Orders were going. Everything was moving. They just got on a wild horse over there.

R: Yes.

S: That's what I think.

R: Right, yes. Do you see any possibility of having another war soon?

S: I hope not. I think, right now--the Russians and the U.S.--I think there's a good possibility that this is going to last a long time. They're afraid of each other. It's not us, it's the other countries.

R: The smaller ones.

S: The small ones. It's not us. We know we could annihilate each one of us, and we don't want to do it. Not that I wouldn't worry about them over there. It's these smaller countries.

R: Do you think there will be another war like Vietnam, that type of small thing?

S: I don't think so. I don't think so.

R: How do you think the public would support a war like that?

S: They wouldn't. I don't think the public would support. I wouldn't even myself, unless they hit us, not us hit them. That's the only way. If they came over and tried to do something to us, yes, I'd support it. But,

if it would go down like this Vietnam, I'd never support it. I'd never support that. I never did.

R: So then, in closing, the last thing I wanted to ask you: What do you think the mills did for Youngstown, Youngstown Sheet & Tube, as far as the economy and society of Youngstown? And, how did it really affect you?

S: Well, I'll tell you what the Sheet & Tube did for this valley here. It built it up and then left it. [It] just let it go down. So, that's the only way. What went up had to come down.

R: Right.

S: But, I think it's going up. Not Youngstown, up around Boardman and Canfield. It's growing. They're getting out of Youngstown. I don't think. . . . I haven't even been down there myself for I don't know how long.

R: What are your thoughts every day, whenever you go out and you drive past the mill and you look at where you used to work?

S: I'll tell you what, I wish they would knock it all down, so I don't have to look at it, because that was my home down there. I would look forward to many days, just to go to work and come back. Many days.

R: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

S: No.

R: Thank you.

S: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW