

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Campbell, Ohio During the 1930's and 1940's

Personal Experience

O. H. 1236

HELENA AUGUSTON

Interviewed

by

William M. Kish

on

July 13, 1989

HELENA AUGUSTON

Helena Auguston was born on July 7, 1920 in Youngstown, Ohio, the daughter of Peter Nicholas and Mary (Kolovakos). Her family is of Greek descent living in the Haselton area of Campbell. As a young girl she assisted her father who operated a small vending company. Helena traveled with her father around the Youngstown area selling popcorn and peanuts, candy, soda pop and other light snacks. She attended East High School until the 10th grade.

Helena married Gazel Casey Auguston on October 29, 1937. Casey passed away in 1983. Casey and Helena Auguston had two children; Judith A. (Jones, age 50), Kathryn C. (Vargo, age 49). With World War II becoming a reality, Helena was involved in work related to the war effort during that period of 1941-1945. In 1941, she worked in Ravenna Arsenal in Ravenna, Ohio. There she contributed to the war effort by making detonator caps for artillery shells. She describes the transportation method used to get to work the working conditions and the war attitude of her fellow workers. From 1942-1945, Helena worked in Republic and Copperweld Steel Mills. She describes the working conditions, pay, the role of the women, and the attitude of the workers during the war years working in a steel mill. Majority of her work experience was spent as a crane operator. During this time her husband also worked in the mill. Helena talks with honesty how her mother-in-law assisted her in her children's rearing while she worked in the steel mill. After 1945, she returns to the role of being a housewife.

Helena describes with great accuracy conditions in Campbell,

Ohio during the 1930's and 1940's. She describes the landscape, businesses and occupations of the people during this time period.

Since 1945, Helena has not let time pass by, she received her GED in 1975; and is currently very active in senior citizen organizations. She is associated with the following groups Happy-Go-Lucky Seniors, 1418 Seniors, Order of Easter Star, Campbell Senior and President of Campbell's friends of the Library. She is also a member of St. John's Greek Orthodox church. In her spare time, she enjoys reading and needle work of all kinds. Her energy level is still running in high gear.

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INTERVIEWEE: HELENA AUGUSTON

INTERVIEWER: William M. Kish

SUBJECT: Economy, social conditions, entertainment,
occupations, transportation, steel mills

DATE: July 13, 1989

K: This is an interview with Helena Auguston, for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on Campbell, Ohio during the 1930's and 1940's, by William Kish, at 343 Blossom Avenue, Campbell, Ohio, on July 13, 1989, at 1:00 p.m.

Mrs. Auguston, what was it like growing up in the early 1930's in Campbell?

A: In the early 1930's in Campbell, the Depression had been on already, so we had to babysit. We were lucky if we got a quarter for baby sitting. Most girls and boys went to the Haselton Settlement or to the Campbell Bethel House.

K: Where was the Bethel House located?

A: The Bethel House was located down on Washington Street. There they learned to sew, cook, we had sports, we put on shows, we did all kinds of things that young girls and young boys do. During that time they had soup kitchens because it was Depression.

K: What do you mean by soup kitchens?

A: The Settlement Houses, they used to make big pots of vegetable soup with all kinds of stuff in it. People would go with their pots and get a pot of soup for their family and they used to get bread from Schwebel Bakery and it didn't cost anybody anything for it. A lot of people were on relief at that time, even if you had five children, you were lucky on welfare if you got \$3 a week, compared to what you get today.

We were lucky. My father had a push cart where he sold peanuts and popcorn so we didn't have to go on welfare and we always had enough to eat and enough clothes to wear.

K: Your father traveled around selling things?

A: Yes. We pushed the pushcart all over Campbell, Youngstown, Haselton, everywhere. Sometime, I think we walked over ten miles a day. If we came home with \$5 at the end of the day, that was darn good money.

K: How did you sell what you were selling?

A: My father popped popcorn, there was a fire, like on a stove. They used fuel oil, and we popped the popcorn on this. We kept the peanuts warm in a covered pan with a fire underneath. He sold candy, and at the end of the day when we came home if there was popcorn left, he used to give it to all the kids in the neighborhood and just let them have it, no charge. At Christmas and Easter time, he would make his own candy. The neighbors would bring five pounds of sugar and he would give them ten or fifteen pounds of candy it depended on how many children were in the families. He also had what we called a snowball wagon where you scrape ice and put syrup on it. Today, they call it a snowcone. At the end of the day, especially in the summer if it was real hot, he would pass out soda pop to the kids in the neighborhood. Sometimes I think that was the only goodies that some of the children ever had, was the popcorn that my dad gave them and the pop from the syrup that he made.

K: Who helped your father at this time?

A: My sister Mary and I, both of us girls. We were only ten and twelve years old at the time.

K: You were talking about the year of?

A: 1932. As soon as I was fourteen, I went to babysit. I made \$1.50 a week and went to high school. Then from there, I went to a bakery. I worked at Manos's Bakery which was the only bakery near the mills.

K: Where was that located?

A: On Wilson Avenue. Pies at that time, you wouldn't believe, they were about six inches round and they were only a dime. Doughnuts were \$0.20 a dozen. Jelly doughnuts were a quarter a dozen. Now you couldn't even get two doughnuts for that price. When I worked in the bakery, we made \$7 a week which was good money, but it went home to feed the family because everybody had big families.

K: How many hours a week did you work then? What was the average?

A: We worked six days a week and we went to work at 7:00 a.m. and we didn't get out until 7:00 p.m. Twelve hours.

K: So you are talking about sixty hours a week or so, plus.

A: Working in the bakery we got our lunch. It was a grocery bakery so we were allowed to go in the meat counter and get a slice of bologna and make a sandwich and have a doughnut or have a glass of milk or something like that. We were allowed to do that. We used to go out to a farm out here in Coitsville. They had goats and cows.

K: Who owned the farm?

A: Mr. Manos from the Manos Bakery. He owned the farm. Then after that, I got married when I was seventeen. I moved into Campbell which was only a few blocks away from where we lived originally.

K: Originally you lived where?

A: In Haselton, which is a ten block area outside of Campbell. We used the same streetcar to come to Campbell, that you would use for Haselton. You had to go through Haselton to go to Campbell. Then while I was growing up, from street cars we went to trolley cars, then to buses. When I got married, I moved up here on Blossom Avenue. These were all dirt roads.

K: You were married when you were seventeen and that was 1937. Your husband's name was what?

A: Gazel Casey Auguston. We moved up here on Blossom Avenue. These were all dirt roads around here. We had electric and gas but no running water. We got running water in 1942.

K: So for five years you got your water from where?

A: Well water. We pumped it. We had an outhouse.

K: The well was in the backyard?

A: Yes, right in the back of the house and we had an outhouse way in the back of the lot. We had to pump the water for everything.

K: Where was that outhouse located here?

A: You know where our fence is in the back? It was right at the end of the lot about five feet from the end of the property. This was all field around here. Your house wasn't here then either. Nothing across the street. We only had four houses on this street. I went to City Hall and I said we had water on Twelfth Street, why didn't we have it? Finally we got it in 1942.

K: So you were talking about dirt roads?

A: Even Twelfth Street was a dirt road at that time. It was right after the war when they really started paving the roads and doing stuff like that.

K: So you were the only ones on the block basically?

A: There were four families on the block.

K: Who were the families that were here?

A: Down at the corner were the Millers. Bushmans were still here in the big house, and the house I'm in right now was a little old lady, we called her Mary. Nobody ever knew her last name. Then our family, we lived at 339 Blossom at that time.

When the war broke out, I decided to go to work. My husband wasn't in the service because he had Rheumatic Fever when he was a kid. He worked in the Sheet & Tube. I went to work at Republic Mill. When I first started, I was stenciling pipe. I stenciled three different sized pipes. You had to go cut your stencils out and you put the lot number on the pipe and you had to put some code numbers and quite a few things you had to stencil on the pipes. One day the electricians came around, they wanted to know if any of us girls wanted to learn how to run a crane. I volunteered. So I ran the crane in the big plate mill. I used to change the big rolls in the mill. It was fun, but what was hard about it, you had to learn how to hook up your hoist and hook them where they could hook whatever they were putting on, the rolls or anything and you were able to take them off yourself. We had crane followers but a

lot of the work you had to do yourself. I learned how to put stuff in boxcars and flatcars. I learned how to change the rolls in the mill and I learned how to run the left hand crane, which very few girls could run. They usually had a man on it. I'm left handed. You'd go up there and if you ran the left hand crane first, you were fine and then went on the right hand crane. But if you ran the right hand crane first and then went on the left handed, you had to stop and think what you were doing. Because controls were completely backwards. Which was something odd. I went to work first at the arsenal.

K: Where was the arsenal at?

A: Ravenna.

K: What did you do there?

A: Up there I inspected detonators. They were as big as a pea and you had to inspect like 15,000 a day.

K: What were they used for?

A: They were put into the shells, into the booster and from the booster they went into the shells. After that, I went to the load line out at the arsenal because I was promoted to a better paying job. I was putting in the boosters. I would say the boosters were as big as a plum. You had to screw them into these big shells. I don't know what size shells they were. I got powder poison and that's the reason I quit out there and went to work in the mill.

K: Were you breathing it in?

A: No you broke out in a rash, like hives. Your eyes swelled up and your nose swelled up and oh, boy, you were just completely covered with hives. So I couldn't work out there anymore.

K: So you started first at Ravenna Arsenal.

A: Yes. I worked out there for about a year.

K: Was that 1941 or 1942 or what?

A: I started in February of 1942 and I worked until about Easter of 1943. Easter of 1943 was when I started working in the mill.

K: How did you get out to Ravenna Arsenal?

A: They all had carpools. They'd meet in Youngstown at

the bus arcade and whoever lived in which neighborhood went together.

K: Ravenna Arsenal from here is about twenty miles.

A: More than that, I think it is thirty miles. Snow, rain, whatever, we went to work.

K: Do you remember about how many people were working out there then?

A: They had two load lines, they had a line where we made the boosters and the detonators. It was a big place. It's still out there but they used it for hunting now.

K: Also I think it's used for storage.

A: We made all kind of shells and stuff like that out there.

K: How was the security?

A: Real tight security. You had a special badge when you went in, they checked you out before you could go to work there. They gave us uniforms, we had to wear uniforms, they were brown, they were two piece, pants and a top. We had to wear special shoes because of the powder and we had to change our shoes in the locker there before we left. Down at Republic mill we had to wear men's shoes?

K: What would be the reason for that?

A: For safety. At that time, they didn't have women's safety shoes. After we were in the mill about a year, they got women's shoes with the safety toes.

K: What department would you say you worked in the most?

A: First I worked in electric weld. I worked there about a good nine months. Then I got transferred to the cranes down in the plate mill. I worked down there about a year. We happened to visit the Copperweld Mill. My girlfriend's uncle was superintendent up there and he said he was ready to hire women and I was bragging. I said "I can run any crane you have here." He said, "If you can run this one crane, I'll hire you. If you show me you can do it, I will hire other women too." What he did, I had to pick up nickel bars wrapped in burlap dipped in oil and put them in boxcars and set them down. I showed him I could do that so he put me on another crane in back of the furnaces and he said, "I'm going to see what you can do back there." I showed him I could run that, so he hired me and he hired my girlfriend too because she ran a crane in the

Republic Mill. The reason we went there was that in Republic Mill we were making \$0.85 an hour, no tonnage. We only worked eight hours a day there. We went to Copperweld, we were making \$0.85 an hour and tonnage. Our pay was averaging about \$150 a week. Down at Republic, we were lucky to even get \$50 a week. Of course, we took the better paying job. I worked up there until the war was over.

K: In any one department, how many workers were in one department and how many of them were females?

A: When we went to Copperweld, the electricians were all male. Most of the crane operators were men. About 25% were women. Most of the people that worked on the floor at Copperweld were men. They didn't hire too many women up there. Down in Republic, almost half were women. When I first went to work in the plate mill, when you had to change these big rolls, the electrician that was teaching me how to run the crane, he let me change the rolls without the men on the floor knowing because they wouldn't trust a woman for anything up on a crane. As you run the crane you could feel through the controls if your hoist is strong or if it isn't. I could feel that the hoist was going to crack. I had this big roll on it, so you ring a bell and you holler to the men, "Get out from under there." because it was like a pit where you put the roll in. After that, the men got out, I sat down the roll, the hoist cracked and the men said I could run that crane anytime, I could change the roll anytime I felt like it. After that, it seemed like we had three girls on that same crane because we changed turns, but they always had to roll change when I was up there. The men were real nice to the women, they treated us nice. At first they would crack jokes. If you walked away and they saw that you were going to be a lady, they didn't talk dirty or crack jokes in front of you. In fact they watched themselves with what they said. The women who were dumb enough to stand there and listen were not treated like ladies.

K: How was the pay, was it equal pay?

A: At least I thought it was because down at Sheet & Tube, they were getting the same. \$0.85 an hour.

K: This was during the war years.

A: Yes.

K: Obviously during this time period, were times really hard? Did you have to work to earn your money?

A: You earned your money, nobody did your work for you.

Because even when I was stenciling, you'd reach over and you might be able to stencil maybe four, maybe six pipes. It depended on the size of pipe. Then you went to the end and rolled the pipes down and you rolled six more down to stencil. Nobody came down to help you. They couldn't do your job because who would do theirs? We all had our own job. It's just been lately when women went in the mills again, that the men started to help the women and they were told not to do it because why should the women get the same pay if they couldn't do the job? But during the war, we did the men's work. There was no hassle or anything.

K: Around Youngstown, what were some of the other factories that were doing a lot of hiring of women? Obviously Sheet & Tube was the big employer.

A: Yes. Sheet & Tube, Republic Mill, General Fireproofing, U.S. Steel, and Commercial Shearing, they hired women. That's about all I knew that really hired women for factory. The other jobs women already had.

K: What was the attitude in the mill at this time period because we are talking about World War II going on. So what was the attitude of the workers? Did they keep in mind that it was all for the war effort?

A: Yes. They tried to get everything done, do good work. Because we know men that came back, they said they found different steel that was marked with Republic or Sheet & Tube on it. They found, when they went to the Philippines, when they bombed the Philippines and they went into the places, they found furniture made in Youngstown at General Fireproofing and a lot of things like that. Camp Reynolds was in Pennsylvania. We had soldiers out there.

K: That's in Western Pennsylvania?

A: Yes. We had soldiers from England because we met some English boys. Everybody just tried to do their best during that time.

K: You said your husband worked in the mill then too?

A: Yes. He worked at the Sheet & Tube.

K: What was his job basically?

A: He worked in the store room down there. He delivered all kind of supplies out of the store room. He couldn't go to service. For one thing, he had a Rheumatic Heart and he had two children.

K: How old were your children while you were working?

- A: My mother-in-law was living and we all lived together and the children were one and two years old up until they were five and six years old. My mother-in-law was living and she died in 1945. When she died, of course, I had to stay home. She died in 1945 after Christmas. The war had already been over. We could have stayed in the mill but my husband said, "Either you quit or I quit." So I quit working.
- K: I was going to ask you, how did your husband see you as working in the mill?
- A: He didn't mind me working during the war. Then of course, my mother-in-law was able to take care of the kids. After she died, he said, "Either I worked or he worked." So I quit. Then, of course, I was with the kids with Girl Scouts and everything else. They were going to school and they needed me more, too. One of us were always home. One thing about my husband, if he got home first, he started supper. He started washing the clothes. He never let me do everything because I was a woman. A lot of men, if their wife worked they come home, the whole house was there, but my husband helped me out. Something that today a lot of husbands do. At that time, very few husbands would help around the house.
- K: Today they would divide up the responsibilities. But back then it was kind of unheard of, that your husband would be willing to help you out that much in the house.
- A: A lot of women, they say, "Oh, we have to go home, we have to cook and take care of the kids and do everything. Our husband did nothing." They figured they would put their eight hours in, they came home and sat. Mine always helped. My husband could iron a shirt better than most women. I'm not kidding you. His mother was partially paralyzed on one side. She had a stroke when he was sixteen years old, so he learned to do the work.
- K: I think that's a good quality in a guy, to help out. Okay, we talked about the war years and we're probably going to go back to it, but maybe getting into the 1930's as a young woman living here in Campbell and Youngstown. What did you do during the high school years, or as far back as you can remember from maybe the late 1920's or early 1930's as a student in school? Describe the school, maybe?
- A: When we were young we went to Covington School. At that time, there wasn't many blacks in Youngstown.

K: Covington was located on...?

A: Covington Street. Right now it is called Martin Luther King School. When I went there, there was maybe two black children in each room. That would be the most. We had two black neighbors, very nice people. In fact, I still see some of them today. Everybody was real compatible. This is going to sound funny but we had more trouble with the one family because they were Irish (their father was German) but they used to call us "Hunkies". Then, of course, kids are bad. We used to call them "Krouts". They didn't like it. Their father was German but they thought they were better than us that they were American and we were Hunkies.

K: Your nationality is what?

A: I am of Greek descent. Most of my neighbors were of Croatian or Polish descent. So we were all Hunkies and they weren't, which is funny. We laughed later on. Their son happened to marry the girl next door who was Croatian.

K: I wonder how the family felt about that?

A: It was funny. We weren't good enough for them when we were kids and then they end up marrying the same.... That's the way it works. My dad was very liberated (I might as well say) because when we couldn't go to the Orthodox church, he'd send us down the street to the Croatian Catholic church. If we couldn't go to St. Peter and Paul Catholic Church, in the summer, we went around the corner to the Methodist church and went to Sunday school and to summer bible school there and learned our bible. So not many families allowed their children to go out of their own religion like that at that time.

K: Yes. They were more strict.

A: Yes. In the 1920's and the 1930's. Then we moved to Haselton when I was eleven. That was a good neighborhood. We used to go to the Settlement House. We had a lot of fun there. We learned all kinds of things down there.

K: Some of the activities that you did during the day was like what?

A: After you worked in the garden at home and helped around the house, you were allowed to go down to the Settlement House. Somebody played the piano and we'd sing or we'd learn sewing or cooking and crafts. All kinds of stuff like that. We used to take walks down to Lincoln Park. There was a swimming pool down there.

We used to be able to go swimming. If we wanted to go to town, we walked which was at least two miles to town and back.

K: Did you have a car?

A: My dad had a Model A, but he had made it into a little store where he sold his popcorn and peanuts, his snowballs and candy and stuff like that.

K: Kind of like a mobile type store?

A: Yes. And we work in that. I was eleven years old and I was in there selling things. We would go to the ball games and we'd sell right through the window. We also went to high schools. He used to take it everywhere. He used to have sandwiches in there, hot dogs and hamburgers. The high school kids would buy from him because they were only \$0.05 a piece. It would cost more if they bought it somewhere else. At that time, they didn't have lunch counters in the schools.

K: So during lunch breaks in school during the day you'd be selling snack?

A: A lot of kids instead of bringing their lunch, they'd buy it from him.

K: What were the prices?

A: A nickel for a hot dog or a hamburger, which is nice. A nickel for a bottle of pop. Candy bars, the ones you get today for a quarter were only a nickel at that time. All kinds of things like that.

K: You were kind of like a small business.

A: Yes. All our life you might as well say because where the Vindicator is today, downtown, that used to be a big market at one time. You know, they talk about the malls, I still think DeBartolo got his idea from Mr. Dibel and Olds who had this enclosed market. They used to have a restaurant in there, a butcher shop, my father had the candy store. All kind of vegetable stands, it was enclosed where the Vindicator is today.

K: An outdoor market enclosed.

A: It was an enclosed mall, but not like the stores are today. I still say that's where he got his idea, because he is a little older than I am. I know darn well he must have been around there.

K: A wide variety of stores underneath one roof?

A: Yes.

K: How about that. That was where?

A: On Boardman Street where the Vindicator is. We had a store in there and then they knocked that down because the Vindicator bought it. It was the Youngstown Telegram and Vindicator at that time. They bought that. Then my dad had a store in Girard for awhile and then the Depression hit. We used to push either the pushcart with the peanut wagon or we'd go out with the truck with all that candy and everything, popcorn, peanuts, whatever we sold. Us kids used to have fun. We used to sit on the curb in front of our house, our neighbor played the mandolin. All the neighborhood kids used to come around, we'd sit there and sing. In the wintertime, we'd sled ride down Center Street which is a very steep hill. Everybody would take their ashes out of the house and put it on the bottom of the hill so we wouldn't go passed the tracks. When you'd go down Center, the street car used to go passed there so there was tracks on Wilson Avenue.

K: There was a streetcar that went along Wilson Avenue?

A: Along Wilson all the way to Campbell, down to Stop 10 in Campbell where Sheet & Tube ended. Then after the streetcar, there was a trolley car. After they left, they put the regular buses on. Today, we're lucky we have buses.

K: One bus comes through Campbell not that much.

A: At that time until 1947, we had to walk down to Wilson Avenue to get a bus. We had to walk down to Stop 10, which was Short Street and Wilson Avenue to get our bus to go to town. Then, finally, everything got paved up here and they put the bus up here on Twelfth Street.

K: Basically you're telling me the majority of the business or establishments were taking place. And where most of the people lived in Campbell was along the mill area.

A: Yes. They had the Sheet & Tube houses down there.

K: What do you remember of them, the Sheet & Tube houses?

A: Not too much. My son-in-law's parents lived in them. I've been in them. I think your dad owns one down there.

K: Right.

- A: They built those for the mill people. I never could understand because we never had boarders. But I never could understand how those little four room houses, how people had three and four boarders and a half a dozen kids in them. Almost everybody had a half a dozen kids at that time. They all had boarders. Two or three boarders. You wondered where did they put them all?
- K: Okay, you have the husband and wife and they have their six kids, as an example, and yet they bring someone else in to live?
- A: Maybe a cousin would come or a friend from Europe would come over and they would take them in as a boarder. They'd eat there and they'd pay so much room and board. I think that's how half of those families survived though, during the Depression. I know when we lived in Haselton, everybody around us had boarders but us. We never had them.
- K: Boarders to help pay the rent.
- A: Or if they owned a house, to help pay the mortgage. A lot of the people still worked. The mills were still open but it was not a full time job. I think they really started up again around 1935 or 1936 because my dad went to work in the mill. My dad went in, in 1937, but he was hurt in 1940 and he died right after that.
- K: How did he get hurt?
- A: He was working on the ore tressels. They had great big crowbars which were about six feet long and one of them slipped off of where they hung it on the end of the car to open one of those ore cars. They had to take the crow bar and open the door so all the ore would fall through. One of those bars slipped and hit him in the middle of his head and down his nose and he got meningitis and died from it. He was hurt at Easter time, he had a broken leg, and he died the end of July in 1940. My mother was left with two of us married and six kids at home.
- K: Six kids.
- A: Two of my sisters joined the service as soon as they graduated from high school. I had two sisters in the Army, in the W.A.C.S., as they called them. One was a Master Sergeant when she came out and the other one was a Sergeant but she was in the Medics. She used to take all the records and do things like that.
- K: Did they retire?

A: No they just stayed during the war and then they quit. One had four years and the other had three in the service. One got married in the service.

K: Are they still living today?

A: Oh, yes. One lives in California and one lives in Youngstown.

K: Just to take one step back, when we talked about when you said you were sitting on the streets playing with the banjo and that sort of thing, for entertainment activities, how does the radio fit in during this time period?

A: The early 1930's very few people had radios. I think right after the Depression was when everybody started getting a radio. We had a neighbor next door who had one of what they called a crystal radio. Did you ever hear of them?

K: No. I don't know much about that.

A: The first radios, they were called crystal radios. They used to hang wires way out somewhere and then they worked.

K: Was that a big attraction?

A: Oh, yes. Of course when one of the neighbors would hook it up, everybody would go around and listen to it. It was usually boys around eighteen or nineteen years old that had them at that time. I think we got a radio in our house... Well we always had one after I got married, but about 1935, my father got a radio. They weren't small. I'd say they were about eighteen inches high with the round top.

K: The older style. In other words they looked like a piece of furniture more or less.

A: They did. Yes.

K: Do you remember any of the shows you listened to during that time?

A: Oh, Jack Benny, The Lone Ranger. We used to go downtown. There was the State Theater and there was the Palace Theater. There was a show in Campbell down here, I don't know what the name of it was. There was one in Haselton and when we were kids, it cost a dime to go to the show. In fact I was lucky I could get in until I was sixteen years old. You were not supposed to but I was small at that time for my age. I was babysitting at Cataland's house, he had a business and

I was babysitting at their house and every Saturday I'd take their three children and we'd go to a show then we'd go to their restaurant and eat and we'd come back home. A pass was a dollar. A pass for a whole week that you could ride the bus.

K: Where?

A: Anywhere in Youngstown, Campbell, Struthers, anywhere in Mahoning County. That dollar pass, you could use it as often as you wanted. There was no limit on it.

K: Buses ran everyday, right?

A: Oh, every half hour you could catch a bus at that time. If you didn't have a pass you paid a dime every time you went on the bus. A dime to go down, a dime to come back, so it was cheaper to buy a dollar pass.

K: In other words if you had a job downtown, you'd be going back and forth. Say if you worked five days, that's ten times, basically.

A: It was cheaper in the long run. You could go rent it too. You could go down to the store and rent it for a dime, go downtown and come back. A lot of these little stores had the passes and they'd rent them to you. Maybe I'd use it for an hour or an hour and a half and the next person would get it for a couple hours. We always bought one because my mother lived in Haselton and it was a lot simpler for me to take the two kids and go on the bus and go down there. Then, if it was bad weather, my husband could use it to go to work. He had a car too. First we had 1934 Oldsmobile, then I don't know what he got after that. I don't know one car from the other. We had that in 1936, so that was a good car.

K: It was fairly new.

A: At that time, cars were cheap.

K: How much did you pay for the car before you bought it?

A: He had that before I married him though. I don't know what he paid for it. When we got married, kids today won't believe this. We had \$35 between us.

K: \$35?

A: \$35 saved. Now that's not a lot of money.

K: It's not much, no.

- A: I would say every two weeks when you went to pay groceries, it would probably not even run you \$5 a week at that time. I could just see from the time I got married until after the war how the grocery bill went from \$5 to \$15 and then up to \$50 and God knows what you pay now.
- K: Back then for \$5, what did you get?
- A: You got everything. You got your meat for the whole week, you got all your vegetables, you got fruit, you got cookies for the kids. Most of the time you baked stuff like that yourself, though.
- K: When you got married, in 1937 or 1938, for \$5 you got a lot of supplies. What was your husband making at that time, he was working in the mill and you weren't working?
- A: He would bring \$15 pay home in two weeks. That's what the average guy brought home at that time, when we first got married. Of course later, they weren't working full time, either. They were making during the Depression, they were lucky if they were making \$0.50 an hour. Of course after the strike of 1937 they got a little more. That's when they started getting a little more money. You could live good on that and you could save a dollar or two. It doesn't seem possible.
- K: For \$15, \$17, \$18 for a two-week paycheck, yet you still have some money left over.
- A: You could go to a show for a quarter if you were an adult, it cost you a dime if you were a child. Gasoline was like three gallons for a quarter. Hot dogs were \$0.05 a pound. Hamburger, two pounds for a quarter. You would go buy soup meat and they'd throw in the bones. Today you pay \$0.59 for one little bone. I'm not kidding you.
- K: Yes. What a difference today.
- A: Nobody bought liver. I don't know why. They would give it to you. If you ate liver when you went to buy your meat supply for the week, they'd put a big hunk of liver in it.
- K: Now they say that liver is healthy for you.
- A: Then after that, people started buying it. You'd go out to the farms and pick your own apples.
- K: How was Campbell during the time in the mid 1930's with the gardening and farming? Were people more self sufficient then?

A: Oh, yes. We always canned everything. You canned your tomatoes and peppers. You canned everything that could be canned. When you got a good buy on pork, you would grind it and make sausage and put it in jars. We used to put sauerkraut and cabbages up, we'd put the whole head of cabbage in the barrel with the sauerkraut around it and make sauerkraut.

K: Canning, was that an all-year activity?

A: Whatever your garden had, you canned it in the fall and you'd have it. You'd have your onions hanging out there and garlic and everything else. Potatoes out of the garden, you'd put them in sand. You'd have a cold cellar where you'd put vegetables and stuff like that that would stay, they'd stay maybe three or four months.

K: A fruit cellar?

A: Yes. A fruit cellar, but a little colder for that kind of stuff. A fruit cellar, of course you'd put all your canned goods. You canned pickles and fruit. All the fruit you could get you would can.

K: That way you'd have it during the winter?

A: You'd have it all year round.

K: A lot of people in this area, you mentioned there were n't too many people around. Did they have big farms, did they have animals?

A: All this was farm before. We had goats here. I had a brother-in-law that was sick and we had a goat so he could have the milk. We had two little goats and of course, we sold the little ones off, we didn't need them, we kept the mother for the milk. Everybody around here had cows. In fact, they used to call this neighborhood Cowshit Hill.

K: That's what my father said too.

A: It was funny. We always had a big garden here. My husband started in March to plant things. We always had chickens here. We never killed them, Mrs. Caggiano would always come down and kill them for me. I'd clean them all up but I never killed a chicken.

K: What did she do to kill the chicken?

A: She'd cut it's neck. I would clean it. Mr. Maretic had pigs and every fall he would butcher a pig. I'll never forget, one time they were ready to butcher a pig and it got away from him. Boy you should see those

guys. You talk about a greased pig. You would think that's what it was the way it would go around and the guys tried to catch it and everything. Finally Mr. Maretic had some kind of club and he got it and he hit it and it fell and then he butchered it.

K: He chopped it up. Was it during the fall months?

A: Always after it got cold. After the first frost. They never butchered before the first frost. They'd have a smoke house where they would smoke sausage and bacon and the hams and stuff like that. The neighbor next door had a smoke house. Mr. Maretic had one. This was all field around us. There was always a cow out in the field. I don't know if before I married Casey if they had pigs or not but I know they had chickens and my mother-in-law had two geese and she called them Peter and Paul. They were better watchdogs than a dog was.

K: Really?

A: Oh, yes. If you went up near my mother-in-law and you raised your hand the geese would come up right at you.

K: They were mean geese?

A: Most geese are like that.

K: They get attached?

A: If they get attached to you they watch out for you just like a dog would watch out for you. We had a dog and a cat. You'd laugh. The dog was a girl and the cat was a boy. Those were the only names grandma ever gave them. The cat was a beautiful orange cat. I don't know what the dog was. We grew endive in the garden. My mother used to laugh. We always said we'd bring her a care package because we'd bring her onions and tomatoes and peppers out of the garden and endive and stuff.

K: Was there a lot of this sharing going on around this period in the 1930's? People were really out to help each other?

A: Oh, yes. If you had more than somebody else, those that didn't have gardens, you always gave them something.

K: There is not really much jealousy because everybody had pretty much about the same.

A: Some people didn't have enough and you did. You tried to help other people. My dad, he always helped the kids. He'd make that pop out of the syrup he had for

the iceballs and he'd give them popcorn out of the wagon because he always says, "Kids need some sweets." He'd pass penny candy around to them. When we would go to get the candy down at the wholesale house, there would have to be about a dozen little bars of candy in a box and they'd give us a box of bubblegum there were twelve pieces in there. When you took it home, you didn't keep it for yourself, you'd pass it around to your friends too. We never locked our doors. I remember during the Depression because Haselton was the switchyard for the railroads, the hoboes used to come up the hill, they'd rap on the doors, my mother would always make homemade bread. My father used to take the gallon oil cans and he made those into bread pans. My mother used to bake a dozen loaves of bread about twice a week. When these hoboes would come up, if she had soup, she'd give them a big bowl of soup, a couple big slices of bread and some coffee. I always said to my mother, "Mom, they must mark the house because why do they always stop here."

K: Well, their making their tour across the country, when they stop in Youngstown, there they go.

A: You'd tell somebody, "Hey, there's a family up there that gives you something to eat." They were always polite. The hoboes mostly offered to work in the garden or scrub the porches or clean the yard. They always offered to do some work.

K: Slightly a little bit different than today when we're talking about someone that's a homeless person in the 1980's.

A: Yes. My mother always fed them. She said, "You didn't know, maybe they didn't have something to eat." They ate everything, they didn't waste anything you gave them so they must have been hungry. They would come up Center Street, they always knew what houses to go to. My mother always fed them and there was this one Italian woman up the street that always fed them. We never locked our doors, nobody ever locked their doors.

K: So in other words with the crime and that sort of thing...

A: There was no crime, very, very little crime. When we walked to school, we walked two miles to East High school when we lived in Haselton, everyday. I'd walk home for lunch a lot of times. I'd walk to school, walk home for lunch, walk back to school.

K: What school did you graduate from?

A: I quit school in the 11th grade, I got married and I got my GED in 1975 at Penhale School in Campbell. I was 55 years old, right on my birthday, I passed my GED test. My grades were all in the 90%'s.

K: What do you remember most about Campbell in the 1930's and 1940's? What stands out most basically?

A: When I first got married in Campbell, certain parts of Campbell you didn't go to.

K: Reason being?

A: Reason being there was a lot of whorehouses down by the mills. So we didn't go to that part of Campbell. There was a lot of women in Campbell that when they went to work they gave their cousin's address in Youngstown or something like that because you were always teased about living in Campbell. Women had a hard time getting a job because they lived in Campbell. So they would give their relatives address in Youngstown to get a job. All this was field around here and I remember telling my husband that we should buy some of that property up there, because you could get it real cheap at the time. Everything has built up now.

K: So obviously your husband didn't agree.

A: No. In later life he said he would have been rich had he listened to me.

K: I find that interesting when you mentioned about the women or young girls in Campbell looking for a job that when they put down, "Yes, I live in Campbell" people would what?

A: They'd look at you and they'd tease you because Campbell had that image of racketeers at that time, and whorehouses and a lot of gambling. Even the police in Campbell at that time, didn't have very good reputations. They had the reputation of being on the take. In fact, I remember my dad wouldn't even let me come to Campbell when I was a kid. I had a neighbor who had relatives in Campbell and they asked me if I could go down with them and my father wouldn't allow me to.

K: When you were a young girl?

A: Yes. When I was a young girl. Then during the war, of course, Campbell was all cleaned out... Well, it was down around the mills is where all that was going on.

K: Do you remember things about prohibition with illegal...

A: No, but my husband tells me about that. In fact one of the houses on the next street, on Porter, he remembers when they dumped the big barrels of whiskey. Instead of taking it outside and dumping it, they dumped it right in the attic, it came down the walls and they said this whole neighborhood smelled like mash for a long time. That was that house in back of us. Up on the hill... In fact my son-in-law's sister when she bought her house, there was a big bathtub up in the attic and she wanted to know what it was for and her husband says, "The people who lived there used to make whiskey in that bathtub." The woman that lived in this house, she used to sell whiskey because we lived next door. I used to notice cars would pull up, a fellow would run in and the next thing you'd see, he'd run out with a bottle. My husband said, "She's a bootlegger next door." She quit after 1940. Almost everybody quit bootlegging when prohibition went off. There were a lot of people where bootlegging was the only way they made a living, selling whiskey. I know in Haselton, how many widows were selling whiskey in their houses. What else could they do? I don't approve of it.

K: But then you have to survive to survive.

A: You survive the best way you can.

K: Obviously you're not forcing on anybody. They want a drink.

A: I hear people today say they're suing because they got cancer from smoking. This one woman was suing because of whiskey. Nobody put that cigarette in her hand. I never smoked. All my friends smoked, why didn't I smoke. I didn't drink. All my friends drank around me, I drank coke, I didn't drink alcohol.

K: It's an individual thing.

A: Sure, nobody pushes it on you. Well, maybe my dad didn't drink, he didn't smoke so we never did. I have sisters that smoke, my husband smokes. We laughed, during the war it was hard to get cigarettes. When I worked at Copperweld, this Greek family I knew owned a beer garden. It was a restaurant beer garden. He used to ask me, "Do you smoke, Helen?" I lied. I said, "Yes." "What do you smoke?" My husband smoked Camels at the time. So he'd give me a carton of cigarettes a week. It would be \$1 a carton at that time. So I never lit a cigarette up in front of him, and yet I said "Yes," to get that carton of cigarettes for my husband. When I think about it today, he ended up with lung cancer and cancer of the spine. Really, the lung cancer came from the gas in the mill where he worked because he worked over in a nealing in the cold strip.

He was a nealer and all that gas that he inhaled down there didn't help any.

K: Now, probably the same type of job, the person would have to be wearing a gas mask. Then years ago, during then, they didn't. So let's compare the 1930's to today.

A: Life was easier then, a lot easier. It was simple, that's why. You did what you had to do. Today, everybody's on a merry-go-round, everybody wants what they can get. They want to collect whatever they can get. People are not satisfied with just so your house is nice and clean...

K: Sort of keeping up with the Jones'?

A: My daughter married a Jones. Somebody told my husband in the mill, "Oh, well, does your daughter try to keep up with the Jones'?" My husband says, "She doesn't have to keep up with the Jones' she is a Jones."

K: So in other words, you don't have to worry about what somebody else is doing.

A: Materialistic, that's the word, people are today. I know my kids were about fifteen or sixteen years old. Everybody was building new houses, and buying new houses. Somebody said to me, "Oh, you have that little house, why don't you buy another one." I said, "What do I need a bigger house for." I said, "I have two bedrooms, I only have two daughters, etc. What more do I want? I said, "You people are all my age or older, you're building new houses, your kids are getting married in a few years. Why don't you put that money away? When you get older, you'll have something to fall back on." I'll have something to fall back on. Today, most of those women are living down at the Vassu Manor or with their kids because they don't have anything to fall back on. All they had was their social security. A lot of the men at that time, when my husband retired he tried to tell them, "Wait..." Five of his friends retired in June, he told them, "Wait until September and the new contract will come out for the mill and you'll have a pension for your wife and she'll have full coverage of hospitalization." They didn't wait. Before they really got medicare, they were paying \$125 a month for their hospitalization where I haven't had to pay a penny for hospitalization. If they would have listened to him.

Another thing my husband had said, see he was with the union at first, then after that he was paying his dues but he wasn't doing anything for the union. They wanted a raise. My husband says why don't we fight for

the unions to put that 10% that we're going to get for a raise, back in the mills to remodel them so that in the future we will still have steel mills. The union told them, "What do we care about the mill, we want the money." So they got the money. When we were at a 1418 Union meeting, the big shots from the union were down there, from LTV. They were giving us a song and a dance and I got up and told them what my husband had said during one of the strikes about putting the money back in the mills to remodel it. Do you know those union guys got booed and they walked out and so did the LTV men. They walked out of that union meeting, they said, "You were right and your husband was right, and none of us would listen to them." They walked out, they didn't like the idea that I brought it up; if they would have remodeled it. You know the mills in Europe, the government owns 40% of all big businesses in Europe. They don't take that money to the government, they put it back into the mills. Whatever kind of businesses they have to put it back in there. There was two representatives from Sweden and they talked to my son-in-law as mayor and they wanted to know why our mills were being wiped out and all that. Jim told them, "They never remodeled anything."

K: So it was out of date, more or less.

A: They were all out of date and the guys from Sweden says, "Why doesn't the American government do like we do?" 40% goes to the government and that money remodels everything and brings it up to date.

K: You look down on Wilson Avenue along the Mahoning river, there is not much there.

A: There's nothing. Center Street is all down, everything is down. My brother is an engineer and he is over in China putting in a rolling mill in China. He just came back when this thing was happening in China. His wife got out a week before him. She got out before the big ruckus and he just got out the week after that. He was here. They asked him to go back. He said, "No", but they're sending him to Korea. He has to check the mills that they're building (the companies in America) over there. He's going to check them out. When he comes back he's supposed to go to Australia. When he came back here, they called him down to LTV. He said that all the parts of that mill, they're selling it to Brazil. They called him because he was the one that set up that mill that's left down there now. They paid him to go down there and check to see what was good so they could send it to Brazil. You see where all our steel is going, why we don't have anything. If we ever had a war, you know where we'd be? We were self-sufficient during World War II, we are not self-sufficient

anymore. We're depending on everybody else but ourselves.

Now they're talking about the EPA and these garbage dumps. Weren't we better off when we had that big plant down in Youngstown where they burned everything? Through that, they heated the Courthouse, Youngstown College, they heated everything from that garbage and today, now what do they have? They have it converted over into gas furnaces and stuff. Wouldn't it have been better... There are a few places in this country that still heats half of their city through the garbage and trash burning. Wouldn't it have been better if we would have separated our bottles and our cans and threw all the rest of our garbage, paper and stuff like that and burned it like that and heat half of the city. I know that Strouss was heated, City Hall was heated.

K: When was this?

A: I think they knocked the whole thing down not too long ago. It was all heated from that. I don't know how many years since they've knocked it down but they used to heat everything with it. Sometime you'd walk along federal street and you could see the steam come out from the street certain places. I remember Youngstown when there was horse and buggies, a lot of things like that. I'm not that old, I'm only sixty-nine.

K: In Campbell, they had a lot of horse and buggies too, didn't they, because there wasn't that many automobiles. Did you own a horse?

A: Yes. When I was a little girl of about five years old, my father had a horse that pulled his cart. Although, we had the store too. I remember gas lights too. When we lived on Rayen Avenue in Youngstown, we lived there until I was six or seven years old. We had gas lights. You'd have to light them. You had coal furnaces, you didn't have gas furnaces at that time. You had coal stove, most people never even had a furnace.

K: So there was a big different though from the 1930's and today.

A: Yes. Life was easier. I don't say it was better because today you can get anything you want, but it was easier. Your expectations weren't that high, like today. If my husband was living, I'd be married fifty-two years this October. What we have acquired in our forty-five years of marriage, our kids get married and they have it already. What took us twenty-five years to accumulate, our kids wanted it yesterday. They don't think they should work for it, they want it right then and we give it to them like dopes. Really

we do. Because when I got married, I got married in my mother's livingroom. What did I get for wedding presents, I got sheets and pillowcases and glasses and stuff like that. What did my kids get when they got married, my kids were twenty-five and twenty-seven years old when they got married they got everything you could want in the kitchen. I'm not talking about furniture, I'm talking about in the cupboards. Dishes, pots and pans, all these little things that you use. My kids didn't get two things the same. Everything you could imagine, they got.

K: Again, as time goes on, it seems things just keep getting more and more expensive. Do you want to add anything else to finish up the interview about the 1930's and 1940's?

A: Well, the only thing is, in the 1930's, you could buy a house for \$3,500, a new home. If you bought one that cost \$5,000 to \$7,000 you really got a good home at that time. By the time your father bought his house, they were already up to \$15,000 to \$25,000.

K: I think he paid \$10,000.

A: Well, because he built a lot of it himself, too. You take this little house here, at that time, I could sell this house for \$19,000 today and when we bought it from the man who lived here we payed \$1,500 and of course it was a shell. I'd say total, to fix the house all up, it cost maybe \$3,000 to \$5,000. The land itself was worth \$5,000, so that's the difference.

K: So there is a big difference from fifty years ago and today.

A: Oh, yes. Even the grocery store. Oh, boy. You figure hamburger, at that time you could get two pounds for a quarter, now what do you pay for hamburger? \$1 or so a pound, if you want good beef. Another thing, hospitals. When I had my kids in the hospital, you know what babies cost then? When Judy was born, she cost \$35 to the doctor, in 1940 it cost me \$50 for the doctor. The hospitalization was paid. For \$150 you could go and not worry about it. You know how much it cost to have a baby today?

K: A couple thousand dollars.

A: Oh, yes. That shows you the difference right there.

K: Are you glad you did this tape?

A: Yes. I enjoyed this talk, too. Reminiscing.

K: Sure.

END OF INTERVIEW