

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

History of East Palestine, Ohio

Personal Experience

O. H. 571

JOSEPH KERSHBAUMER

Interviewed

by

Stephan G. Casi

on

June 1, 1979

JOSEPH F. KERSHBAUMER

Joseph F. Kershbaumer was born in Barnhill, Ohio on December 12, 1899. At the age of ten he moved with his mother and father from Roseville, Ohio to East Palestine, Ohio in 1910. Mr. Kershbaumer was unable to go any further than the 6th grade because his family needed financial help. His father had worked for the State Line Coal Company, but business had slowed down considerably.

When Mr. Kershbaumer turned sixteen, he got his first full-time job with the McGraw Tire Company of East Palestine, working in the tube room for \$8 a day. In 1922 he left McGraw's to join the National Rubber Company of East Palestine. After working there for five years, he got a job with the Salem Rubber Company. In 1929 Mr. Kershbaumer had an opportunity to work for the Pennsylvania Railroad and was put on the section gang for fifteen years, all in the East Palestine area. In 1944 he was transferred to the Conway yards in Pennsylvania where he retired as a truck driver in 1963 with 35 years service.

Mr. Kershbaumer is presently a member of the Moose and Eagles Club of East Palestine. After his retirement Mr. Kershbaumer was put on the honor roll of the Pennsylvania Railroad.

Mr. Kershbaumer presently resides at 593 W. Martin in East Palestine. He has two sons. His wife the former Bessie Thompson died in 1978. His hobbies include gardening and singing.

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INTERVIEWEE: JOSEPH KERSHBAUMER
INTERVIEWER: Stephan G. Casi
SUBJECT: Railroads, early transportation, Depression
DATE: June 1, 1979

C: This is an interview with Mr. Joseph Frank Kershbaumer for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program on East Palestine history, by Stephan G. Casi, at 593 West Martin Street, East Palestine, Ohio, on June 1, 1979, at 3:30 p.m.

Mr. Kershbaumer, what can you tell me about your parents and family? Where are they originally from and when did they come to the East Palestine area?

K: They came to Palestine in 1910 from Roseville, Ohio. What was the name of that building they tore down that belonged to Valley? I think it was Valley Bosick. It was back in there by Scareball's Alley. They tore that down and have taken it over to the fairgrounds. Well, not the fairgrounds, the park now. That's where we lived. We lived over there about a year and I went to Wood Street Schoolhouse. I went there a year. We lived in this house that they tore down for a year. Then we moved to East Clark Street. Anyhow, from then on I went to school over at East North Avenue.

C: Tell me, why did your family move to this area? What had your dad done?

K: My dad was a coal miner. He worked in the coal mines all of his life. He came from Roseville, Ohio. There was a strike and he came over here and worked at the State Line Coal Company. That's where they produce coal to coal these engines for the Pennsylvania Railroad. He worked there until they shut down.

C: What year did they shut down? Do you remember when that was?

K: The coal station was beyond the National Tire and Rubber Company at that time, let's see, I would say around 1924 or 1925. I knew all of the guys that worked down there, almost. I used to go down there and run around.

Dad worked at McGraw's too when they were running there, in the elevator. Then he went to Jake Ashman's Coal Mine and worked out there. He was 74 years old when he retired from the railroad.

C: The coal in the East Palestine area, was it good quality?

K: Oh yes, at that time. You could burn anything at that time. There was nothing said about it like there is now. They produced a lot of coal out of these hills in Palestine.

C: So you were ten years old when you got to town?

K: When I came to this town.

C: Tell me, when you were a child, what do you remember about some of the things you used to do for fun, some of your friends, where you used to go? Maybe you could tell me a little bit about some of the jobs your dad gave you to do, what you had to do around the house and things like that.

K: Things I used to do? Well, I had a motorcycle. I used to run around on a motorcycle. That was in 1918. I cut the grass, the lawn, at the house there on East Clark Street.

C: Were your parents pretty strict?

K: Oh, you aren't kidding! Nine o'clock was curfew. I would say, "Dad, can I go out and play?" Of course, I was younger then. When I got eighteen, I was pretty well grown up then. He said, "When that curfew rings, you make sure to be in here at nine o'clock. If you don't, you know what you're going to get." My dad raised us all. See, I have three sisters; I'm the only boy in the family, but my dad was strict with me, I'm telling you. Being the way he was and the way he raised me . . . Kids in those days were strictly raised by their parents. They weren't like the kids today. No sir, we used to have a lot of fun together. We used to run around.

C: As a family, did you have some fun with your family? What sort of things did you do as a family together?

K: I used to do a lot of singing at home. We had a player piano. I played the piano and sang.

C: You were interested in music?

K: Oh yes, singing. See, the words were right on the piano player. In those days, why, I knew a lot of songs because the words were right there and I could memorize them.

C: Did you sing in public any place or just . . .

K: Yes.

C: Did you?

K: I sang in Pittsburgh, Poor Pitt Hotel I think it was, yes. I sang at the Supervisor's Club there in Bailey. I sang at the Canton rally. I sang all around, at the Eagles and the Moose down in East Liverpool.

C: Was that when you were a young kid or was that later on?

K: This was right before I got married and after I got married. I was around 53 when I got married the second time. This is my second marriage. I have two boys from my first wife. She divorced me. So, that's the way that goes.

My dad, he worked out in Cheyenne, Wyoming. He was a rail-roader. He was a brakeman and he was flagging a train into a switch. When he went to get out, his foot got caught in between two ties and he couldn't get his foot out. The only thing he could do--the train was coming in--was grab onto the cowcatcher. Do you know what a cowcatcher on a train is? He grabbed onto that, and the engine pulled him out and he broke his leg in three places. He had a terrible leg. You should have seen his leg. Well, it put him in the hospital, but he was thinking about us. You see, we lived in Roseville, Ohio. I remember when he came home. I was six years old.

C: You mean he worked all the way in Wyoming at the time?

K: We lived in Roseville, Ohio, but he was working in Wyoming. I told you that about practically all his life he worked in the coal mine. Work was hard then and you had to get it. He worked on that job and this train pulled him out and broke his leg in three places, but he ran away instead of staying there. He was thinking about us kids at home. We were all small. He had been worried. He went out through the window. He was on the first floor. Somehow he got out through the window and he ran away from the hospital. All he ever got out of it was seventy-five dollars. If he would have stayed there, he would have probably got more, but he didn't. He had an awful leg after that, up until his death. He worked and walked with that leg.

C: What do you remember about school in East Palestine here, Joe? Did you go for a few years to school?

K: I graduated out of the sixth grade!

C: A lot of people did in those days.

K: In those days . . . My dad had a cataract on his eye and couldn't work. Times were hard in those days.

C: You were about twelve years old at the time when you were through with school?

K: I don't know how old I was. In those days, they didn't care about whether you went to school or not. They didn't send a truant officer after you. Anyhow, Mrs. Katherine Ball was my schoolteacher and I think--I saw her name in the paper today--she's still living. She used to be my schoolteacher.

C: Over on the Wood Street School?

K: On East North Avenue School. Mrs. Calvin Hartford--I think that's her name--she was my schoolteacher too. She's dead. I had to quit school to go to work. I was sixteen.

C: Did you like school?

K: Oh, I played hooky and everything else, me and Charlie McCally, and Raymond Flynn. There's both dead now. We used to go down to the State Line Pond and play hooky.

C: Were teachers pretty strict in those days?

K: They were tough. They were, my, I'm telling you.

C: What did they do to you when you did something wrong?

K: What did they do? Gave me a licking. That's what they did; they gave you a licking. Yes, they were really strict.

C: You had to quit school to help your family?

K: Oh, yes. My sister said too, when dad left . . . He did leave one time. I was the only one working. I was working at McGraw's then. "If it wouldn't have been for you," she said, "we don't know what we would have done," because I was the only one working.

C: Was that the first job you ever had at McGraw's?

K: Yes.

C: How old were you when you went to work there?

K: Sixteen.

C: What did you do at McGraw's?

K: Well, I wrapped rags. I carried poles. I worked in the tube room, for Ed Humpmaster. He's my brother-in-law now. He's dead now too. I never thought he would be my brother-in-law. I worked for him.

C: Was it hard work?

K: Oh, it was fast.

C: Fast. Dirty?

K: Well, you had to use soapstone. All that soapstone blowing through the air. Used air, mostly air.

C: Were most of the people that worked for McGraw's pretty good workers?

K: Yes.

C: You know, not like today . . .

K: You see, you were on piecework.

C: You got paid for what you did?

K: Boy, you wrapped one hundred tubes an hour; you had to work.

C: Do you remember what you got paid, your first job up there, how much you were making a week?

K: Oh, I was making pretty good money.

C: Were you?

K: Yes. See, I got 97½¢ a hundred, and we were knocking out eight hundred tubes a day.

C: That was a lot of money back then.

K: Eight hours. Yes, that was pretty good money, 97½¢ a hundred.

C: You were helping support your family, weren't you?

K: Yes.

C: How many years did you work at McGraw's?

K: Off and on, I suppose, about six years. I got transferred from McGraw's down to National. When the orders would go down . . . I wasn't too old of a man there at the time, but then I accumulated service. I would go work in some other department,

like the stock room, I worked in the stock room building tread for tires. I don't think they do that anymore. Flat drums, they build them.

One day, I intended to get married. I remember that was in 1922. I was going to get married and Bill Barry said, "Joe, pick up your tools." "Hey, what's the matter?" He said, "You're done." I said, "Before I leave here, I want to know what's going on. What did I do to get let out?" He saw that I was getting mad. See, I wasn't going to leave until I found out what happened. "No, Joe," he said, "They want you down at National. They want you down there to wrap innertubes."

C: Where was that located?

K: That's on the other end of town. "National Tire Rubber Company?" He began to grin. He said, "That's what I told you. They want you down at the National Tire Rubber Company." He was grinning and said, "You're going to wrap tubes down there." I said, "All right. That's different."

Charlie Labor, he was the timekeeper down there. I remember that well. He had a Model T Sedan. He took me down and I started to work down there. I worked for Bim Chapelow. Johnny Morgan, that was old man McGraw's son-in-law. He came down there and called us all in the curing room, where they cured tires. He was telling us about how much cord costs and rubber and all this and that, and that we would have to take a cut. I forget what it was, from 97½ down. Well, anyhow, he gave us a cut. Then he called us--it wasn't very long--and gave us another cut. He cut us down to 56½. I remember that time.

C: This was in the early 1920's?

K: Yes. It had to be because I was still working down there when Lindbergh flew the "Spirit of Saint Louis" across the Atlantic in 1927.

He gave us another cut. Well, that was it. I don't know whether I quit or what happened, but anyhow, I worked in the middle room until I had a promised job at Salem. Tinsman, he was the superintendent up there. Frank Ewing, Clyde Augustine, Frank Schooley, and I, we all went up there to work. We worked up there three years at Salem until they closed, shut down.

C: How did you get to Salem?

K: We drove our cars, took turns driving our cars.

C: When did you get your first car?

- K: When did I get my first car? You wouldn't believe this. I never drove a car until I was 25 years old. Let's see, it was in 1916 if I'm not mistaken. But when I was driving up there, why, well that was 19 . . . I lived over on Wood Street then, right across from Captain Taggart School. That's where I lived when I was working up at Salem. I drove a 1924 Model T Roadster then.
- C: How were the roads up to Salem, back in those days?
- K: Oh, they were rough.
- C: Were they paved yet on Route 14?
- K: Brick.
- C: All brick? How long did it take to get to Salem, back in those days?
- K: Well, you would only go ^{ab}out 35 miles an hour with a Model T. We figured about an hour. We would get up there a little bit ahead of time though, fifteen minutes ahead of time. We would leave around about six o'clock and we would get up there about a quarter till.
- C: You've seen a lot of transportation changes in East Palestine, haven't you, over the years?
- K: Oh, yes.
- C: When did a lot of people really start getting cars in East Palestine? Was it the 1920's that a lot of people started getting cars? Just a few had them in the teen's?
- K: The truck's didn't come in until about 1929. Around 1929 they started coming in, big trucks. Well, I would say the cars began to . . .
- C: Where were the gas stations here in East Palestine? How many did you have?
- K: Gas stations? There weren't too many in those days.
- C: Do you remember any of them?
- K: Do you mean when I was working up there?
- C: Like in East Palestine, when you had a car, where did you get gas in town?
- K: I bought my gas over at Jack and Jack's. I think they sold Sunoco gas there in those days. There weren't too many gas stations. Whisper owned a gas station there on Taggart Street.

C: There are a lot more today than there used to be, isn't there?

K: Yes.

C: Of course, there wasn't a need for that many since there weren't that many cars.

K: No. Now there are so many cars.

C: I wonder if we could go back for a minute. I know you were working when World War I broke out and I guess that's why McGraw's was doing pretty well at that time. They were probably selling a lot of tires for the war and so on. How did you get out of the war?

K: I was just eighteen when the war ended.

C: Oh, you were just a little too young to go.

K: Yes, I was just eighteen. They drafted me. I was ready to be called. I was in class . . . What was that? I wish I could memorize that. Class two, or something like that, and the war ended.

C: So you just missed it?

K: The Second War, I was 44 and my boss, Art Tory, made me go over to Beaver to get, what are they, deferments?

C: Yes.

K: He made me go over there. He said, "We need you down here." I was driving a truck down at Conway at that time and he made me go over to Beaver. He said, "We need you down here at Conway to drive a truck." They listed that as chauffeur truck. They called that chauffeur. They never called again so . . .

C: About that time, about 1918 I guess, the flu hit, didn't it?

K: 1918?

C: Yes, what do you remember about the flu in East Palestine?

K: Oh, a lot of guys died in 1918, yes. Well, you take my brother-in-law Joe Armish. He was a big guy. He was almost two hundred pounds. Double pneumonia is what he had, but he pulled out of it.

C: Was it all year long or was it in the wintertime?

K: I think it was in the wintertime. The flu seemed to take all of the big fellows. It worked on the bigger guys. Yes, there were a lot of guys that died in that.

C: You told me you were still working at McGraw's in the 1920's and then you went up to Salem. What do you remember about East Palestine in the 1920's--prohibition and all that activity going on? Was East Palestine a fairly quiet town in the 1920's? Was there some prohibition violations in town here?

K: Well, we had Mayor Ferrin. I think he was on during the prohibition. The only place you could get anything to drink was up at Waterford. Harry Davis had a joint up there and Luke's. Well, I used to get an accomodation out here. They called it the milkshake. You could get a milkshake out here most anytime. Well, not anytime, but different times they got out and went to Waterford. Milkshake was what they called them--when they stopped for the milk and picked up the milk along the route. They would get on a train and get one back. That's they way they did it.

My dad used to haul beer around in a wagon. He never was at it too long. He used to haul beer in town here. You were allowed to have your beer then. Otherwise, I guess he wasn't allowed to make it.

C: You got married in the 1920's?

K: I got married August 29, 1922.

C: Where did you live when you first got married?

K: I lived on East Clark Street.

C: Did you have any children, Joe?

K: My first, Eugene, he's the oldest. I had him when I lived on Garfield Avenue. The other one, Joseph Glen, was born on East Martin Street.

C: Was this in the 1920's or 1930's?

K: Let's see, Glen is 53; he was born in 1926. They are about a year apart. A little better than a year apart, thirteen months. 1925 is the oldest boy.

C: Let me ask you, when you first got married, where did you and your wife go for entertainment, to go out somewhere? To have something to do? What were some of the things you did in East Palestine? Where would a husband and wife go?

K: We usually would go down to Eagles. They put on a floor show and I used to do some singing down there. In those days, you didn't run around too much. You didn't have . . . The only way we could go any place, of course, was to walk. We were

I worked at George McGinni's during the Depression in 1932, nine hours for a dollar and a quarter.

C: Tell me, when you went to the railroad to work, what was the first job you had? Where did you work on the railroad and what railroad was it?

K: It was the Pennsylvania Railroad. I started out for Paul Fore. He was a foreman and I started out for him tabbing ties with a pick. That's hard work. I put fifteen years on section work. I worked for different foremen. Gee whiz, the Depression, you had seniority on it then. But back in 1918, you never had any seniority. The foreman hired you and fired you.

C: Where did you do most of your section work?

K: Well, right down through town here, most of it. Then of course, I got bumped. I needed to go to wherever I got bumped, Leetonia or wherever, to hold on. You had to bump the youngest guy. Then if I didn't have enough seniority to bump the other guy, I had to take a furlow.

C: Were there times during the Depression that you were out of work?

K: Oh, yes. I'm telling you work was hard to get.

C: So you didn't have steady work during the Depression? The railroad was off and on?

K: In the spring of the year was when they hired you. In the wintertime, they had so many men accumulated to do the work, but it was pretty hard then; you didn't need so many men. You cleaned switches and kept the crossing clean. But in the wintertime you couldn't service track because it was froze. The track got so bad you had to raise the track, but you couldn't bring the tie up. The tie was froze down. There would be so much clay in between the spike and the tie post. You had to chisel the tie up, sledge it up, put a chisel on the end of the tie and bring the tie up so you could tap it, but it just wouldn't help anything because if it thawed out, the track would go right back down again. It would hold up for the time being.

C: When you were laid off in the 1930's, did you have to find some other jobs to help pay for the bills and feed the family? How did you get by?

K: My wife, she worked in the pottery down here at W. S. George.

C: She worked while you got laid off sometimes?

K: She worked pretty steady.

too far away from town. We never had a car. Like I said, 1925 was the first time I had my first car.

C: Did you ever go anyplace on the train with your wife?

K: With this one I did, yes.

C: But not your first wife?

K: I didn't start on the railroad until late 1929. You had to work so many years before you got a pass. Well, then she did get a pass, but we never took any trips. I don't know why. My second wife, we went to Washington D.C. We took short trips like to Canton, Mansfield.

C: Was it sort of hard raising kids back in those days, money and everything?

K: It really was. It really was hard to raise kids.

C: Kids had to make some sacrifices. You couldn't give your kids what they give the kids today.

K: Oh, no. They never had it like the kids have it today, no sir. We had a nickelodeon in town. My uncle, I remember, he used to get all the kids together and it would only cost a nickel to go in to see a show in those days. He would get them all together. That's my pap's brother. He would take us all to the show down at nickelodeon.

C: You first started on the railroad in 1929, right?

K: February 12th.

C: I suppose your first job on the railroad you weren't going to get paid too much at that time?

K: Well, do you know what we got? We got three dollars and twenty cents and then you had to work one year to get a penny raise. I got three dollars and twenty-eight cents.

C: It was pretty hard to support a family on that a week. You really had to watch your pennies, didn't you?

K: Well, hamburger was three pounds for a quarter. Eggs, a dime a dozen.

C: It wasn't so hard then, was it? The money went a lot further, didn't it?

K: I paid rent at Palestine over there on Garfield Avenue, even down on East Martin Street, twenty-five dollars a month. That was a lot of money for the amount you received for your wages.

C: Tried to help.

K: I tried to get all of the work I could.

C: What were some of the things you did to make some extra money?

K: I used to trap. In the wintertime, the season to trap, I used to trap fur, muskrats, and stuff like that. I've done everything just to try to keep the family. Oh, I'm telling you, it was hard to get a job in those days.

C: Was East Palestine hit pretty hard in the Depression or did a lot of people keep their jobs? Were a lot of people out of work?

K: Oh, yes, a lot of people were out of work. It was pretty hard.

C: So during the Depression, it was just off and on with the railroad? Sometimes you would work and then get laid off? When did it finally get steady?

K: I would say around about 1940.

C: When the war starts? Picking up for the war?

K: They really hired them. They ran those shooters out. They had women in there working. Working on the railroad, women, colored people. Great, big women, they were, and boy, they would go out there and tab ties and do anything, yes.

C: Were most of the fellows who worked on the railroad back in the 1930's, when you first started working, pretty good workers?

K: Yes.

C: It's not like today where you have to keep pushing the guys to get their work done.

K: No, no. We had a foreman, Sam Check. You had to work when you worked for him. He would see that you worked or you wouldn't be there very long because he would say "Take your dinner bucket and go on home. I don't want you." He was a tough guy to work for; you had to work.

C: What do you remember about the railroad station here in town and some of the changes you've seen take place, like in the 1920's and in the railroad through East Palestine and the 1930's? Did a lot of people take the trains back in those days? Was the railroad station pretty busy?

K: Sure, they took those trains. They did a lot of business

- here in those days, but then the cars, more cars.
- C: How many passenger trains stopped at the station every day, back in the 1930's?
- K: In the 1930's?
- C: Back in the 1930's, 1920's, yes. When you first came to town.
- K: At one time, like I told you, there were seventeen trains that stopped here. Oh, there were quite a few of them. I just don't remember then.
- C: Was it expensive to ride on the train, to get a ticket? Let's say you were going to go to Pittsburgh.
- K: It wasn't then.
- C: Did you ever go to Pittsburgh on the train? I mean in the 1930's or 1920's?
- K: Well, you see, I had a pass.
- C: Before you had a pass, do you remember riding on the train?
- K: Without a pass?
- C: Yes.
- K: Oh, yes, when I first got married.
- C: Was it expensive to ride on the trains in those days?
- K: No, I didn't think so.
- C: Were they pretty comfortable, the cars?
- K: Well, yes, they weren't too bad.
- C: How fast could the trains go in those days?
- K: I wouldn't know. They went pretty good in those days too.
- C: Today a lot of the trucks are in pretty bad shape in this part of the country. Years ago, was most of the track in this area in good shape or did you have derailments like you have today?
- K: Well, I'll just tell you what's the matter there. When they had these steam engines on there, that counterweight knocked the joints down. Then you have that tank in the back end carrying your water, rolling, and that sort of throws your

track out of line. Today, since they've got those diesels, diesel electric, it rolls the track down. When I worked in it, down there in East Palestine, about every two and a half or three miles, there was a gang working--five or six men--and they had extra gangs besides, coming in. You go on the railroad today . . . The last time I rode it I went to Mansfield if I remember right. I saw a gang, one gang, extra gang, working on the railroad between Palestine clean out to Mansfield. Now, you don't see anybody on the railroad. You used to see a gang every two and a half, three miles.

C: You think they took better repair years ago?

K: They kept their stone lined and everything was just perfect. It was beautiful the way that track looked. Today, look at it. Look at your track. Sure they got those air hammers. What do they call that that raises the track? Oh, I forget what they call it. This was later on after I got off the railroad. Now I don't know too much about it. But they raise that track up and tap it and it only takes one foreman and a couple of men to do it. Before they had sixteen air hammers running, sixteen men, a big gang, an extra gang. It did a better job than these things do, I'll tell you that.

C: East Palestine, a couple of years ago, they got rid of the train station. What did they do? Closed it down, right?

K: Yes.

C: Do you remember the last time you could get on a train in East Palestine and go somewhere? What year that was? Had you retired?

K: I've been here nine years in this house here. I lived down on West Clark Street when they took those trains off. The last train they took off was the Steeler going towards Pittsburgh and the one going west. Those were the two they took off. I would say about thirteen years ago.

C: Did a lot of people used to use the trains or not? Is that why they closed it down?

K: That's why they closed it down; there was nobody riding it.

C: But you remember back in the 1930's and 1920's, a lot of people rode the trains.

K: Yes. They had a good business, the railroad did.

C: So, by 1940, the railroad is doing pretty well and you're back on the job full-time. Were you still on the track gang, section gang?

- K: Let's see, I don't know when I went down to Conway. There's my. . . what do you call that? [Looking at a certificate or plaque]. That's in Philadelphia. Thirty-four years and ten months I put on the railroad. put fifteen years down there, and the rest of them at Conway.
- C: Did you want to be transferred? Did you bid on a job?
- K: No. I was working out at Enon. I was working for Emmet Litner down there then and Moratory; he was supervisor at Conway then and he came up and asked me if I would take a job driving a truck, a pickup truck, that would hold about eight men. I got if off of Britton's down here and I had to go over to Wampum and Homewood to pick up these men and bring them all on the line and let them off. Then they got their own truck and I put a bid in on it and I got the job.
- C: You didn't mind leaving the East Palestine area to go to work?
- K: No, sometimes I rode 106, due in here about five or six minutes after six in the morning. I drove mostly down there too. No, I didn't mind it.
- C: What did you do once you got your men to the job?
- K: Then I would go ahead and do work they wanted me to do. See, I worked out of the office. Like haul, I couldn't haul too much with the pickup. You couldn't haul any heavy stuff. I would haul tie plates. If you put enough of them on it would be pretty heavy, but grid anchors and stuff like that I hauled. Or maybe I had to go to Pittsburgh to get a spring for an engine. It was something like that; they would send me down there to do that.
- C: You probably saw a great change in some of the things that were carried on the railroad back in the 1920's and 1930's, some of the things that used to be hauled on the railroad. Then we get to the 1940's and 1950's and I guess different things are being hauled. New types of cars are being developed.
- K: Yes.
- C: Can you remember some of the things in the 1920's when you first started and in the 1930's that the railroad would haul and then later on what new things did you see?
- K: They had smaller cars. They had those boxcars. They're bigger now. My, they can put a lot of stuff in one of those cars. Then you take steel hoppers; they had only what--two pockets? Now they have four. You can haul more coal in it.
- C: Were there certain items that you would see a lot of--back

in the 1920's and 1930's--that the railroad carried or did they carry almost everything back in those days? Since trucks weren't that big yet, were the railroads carrying just everything?

- K: Oh, yes, they could haul anything that could be hauled. I couldn't see any change. That is, whatever they had to haul, they hauled it, there's not doubt about it. They would haul it.
- C: During the 1920's and 1930's do you ever remember any bad wrecks in this area? I know they had a couple of bad wrecks later on in the 1970's.
- K: The one down here in 1970, that was a bad one. They had bad wrecks, yes.
- C: They didn't have the equipment to move the stuff then either like they do today?
- K: Oh, yes, they had equipment. They had the same steam cranes. They had the same outfit.
- C: Of course, they didn't used to carry the chemicals like they carry today.
- K: Oh, no.
- C: That's the dangerous thing about the railroads today.
- K: Yes, it is.
- C: During the 1940's, do you remember a lot of things related to the war being carried by the railroads to be sent overseas, tanks and trucks?
- K: Tanks, yes. We saw soldier boys.
- C: You remember a lot of soldiers being transported on trains then?
- K: Oh, yes, and tanks and guns of all descriptions we used to haul on the railroad.
- C: Do you ever remember seeing any German soldiers who were sent to prison camps?
- K: No, I never did.
- C: They said there were several prison camps in Ohio for the German soldiers. My father-in-law told me he had seen some go through Steubenville, Ohio.

- K: Well, they probably went down on the Berry Cutoff, that way.
- C: But the railroads, you say, during the 1940's, were hiring a lot of people?
- K: Oh, yes, they did.
- C: By the end of the Depression and in the 1940's when things were picking up, how much were you getting paid? Was it a lot better, your wages?
- K: No.
- C: The railroads have always sort of stayed behind other industries, haven't they?
- K: They were always behind, and were always in the red. They were always in the red and they would tell us.
- C: The government never gave any money to the railroads?
- K: No.
- C: During the 1940's, was your wife still working in the pottery?
- K: 1940? Let's see. I was living in Pennsylvania then.
- C: You moved out of East Palestine?
- K: Oh, yes.
- C: To get closer to your job?
- K: I moved out of there during the Depression and she was working at the pottery then. Then she worked down at the Merit China in Beaver Falls, the pottery down there.
- C: What do you remember about the 1940's? Do you remember any changes in your job or were you still driving a truck throughout the 1940's?
- K: I retired in 1963. Fred Dwyer, he got my job. He was the next man up for it, I guess. He got my job and still has my job down there. Of course, he was a younger fellow. I don't suppose he's more than about 45 years old right now. He's still down there working on my job.
- C: In the 1940's, you weren't living in East Palestine? When did you come back to East Palestine?
- K: I came back here in, let's see . . . I got married in 1953. I was out there at the Hart's Curve. I came here after I

got married.

C: About 1953? Did you live in Conway?

K: No, I never lived in Conway.

C: Where did you live in Pennsylvania?

K: I lived just a mile out of Palestine.

C: Oh, just out of town?

K: Yes, right on the Hart's Curve. What is it, 65? I think, on the curve. Well, the barn and the house have both burned down.

C: Do you remember any changes in East Palestine during the war? What do you remember about rationing and going to the store? They rationed gasoline?

K: Yes, you had to have stamps way back.

C: Did you ever have any trouble getting gas?

K: No, I never had any trouble.

C: How about the food?

K: I had more trouble getting tires than I did gas.

C: Tires?

K: Yes.

C: There was a shortage of rubber?

K: Yes.

C: Do you remember getting food at the store, having to use ration stamps?

K: No.

C: Your wife got the food for you?

K: Yes.

C: So you were still working in the 1940's pretty well with the railroad? You had a pretty steady job? You were never laid off again after you got put back during 1940?

K: No, never. I worked steady from then on.

- C: How about in the 1950's, were you still driving the truck in Conway?
- K: Yes.
- C: Any big changes in the railroad taking place, did you notice, in the 1950's?
- K: Yes, when they reconverted the Conway yard. I forget how many millions of dollars that cost.
- C: When did they first bring in the diesel engine?
- K: I thought you would ask me that. I would say around 1955.
- C: The trains got to their destination quicker I guess.
- K: Oh, I don't think so.
- C: You don't think so?
- K: They tell me that those steam engines were just as fast as the diesels. I imagine they are easier to maintain than are steam engines. They don't get as dirty either because you take that smoke flying around. Oh, I'm telling you, the fireman had to work; he really worked. It all depends on what kind of engineer you had too, I suppose, because he could blow the coal out the stack. A fireman really earned his money when he was firing those engines.
- C: You were driving a truck right up to your retirement in 1963?
- K: That's right.
- C: Did they force you to retire, Joe, or did you just retire?
- K: Oh, no, no!
- C: You could have worked longer, couldn't you?
- K: I could have.
- C: Were you just sort of disgusted?
- K: I didn't get disability. I tried to get disability, but they said that wasn't enough so I had to take a second annuity. That's what I'm getting today. I had arthritis so bad, I couldn't lift my arms and I had to take whatever I could get. That's just the way it was. Jimmy Cemeni said, "Oh, Jew, you can work in a gang." I said, "Jimmy, I can't even lift! I have arthritis." "Oh," he said, "I forgot. Oh, yes, that's right." After I took my pension, well, I didn't sit around. I lived right down here, down over the hill from where I live now, and I started making a garden.

I just worked it out of me. I was all right. Oh, I thought I was gone. I thought I wouldn't be able to do anything. I had arthritis so bad, but I got myself back into shape and I've been working ever since.

C: When you look back on your years on the railroad, was there any high point or highlight about the railroad, something that was sort of rewarding or something that stands out in your mind about your years as a railroader?

K: I don't know what you mean.

C: In your 34 years on the railroad, is there anything you can look back on that sort of stands out in your mind, something related to the railroad, some event or anything that took place while you were a railroader? Anything you really remember as a railroader?

K: No, I don't remember.

C: How about something you would have liked to have seen different about the railroad? Looking back on the years you worked and looking back at transportation in East Palestine, regarding the railroad.

K: I think the railroad would be better off if they would have kept these gangs like they used to have on here, every two and a half, three miles. Their tracks would have been in better shape. They kept them nice; they were in good shape and they would hold up better. They did the wrong thing when they took . . . See, they have that big extra gang that comes in there and well, when they're working someplace else, there are other tracks going bad. We got by so far with it, but they aren't going to keep it up, can't. You have to have men on the job to do the work. If you haven't got the men to do the work, you're not going to keep your tracks up. That's why your track is the way it is today.

C: Of course, they have so much track it's pretty hard, isn't it?

K: Why?

C: They have more track than years ago.

K: What's happening to the other track when they're working somewhere else? It's bound to go down. It can't hold up forever. Where you had the gang, every two and a half, three miles, your supervisor told you where the rough spots were and you went out and you picked them up, tapping them with a pick.

C: During your years living in East Palestine and Pennsylvania,

did you ever have any hobbies, Joe?

K: Hobbies? Yes, making a garden, if you call that a hobby. I like that. That's one thing I like to do. I have one now.

C: I heard you used to sing, right Joe?

K: Yes.

C: When did you start singing?

K: When I was in school in Roseville, Ohio.

C: Did you do a lot of singing in front of people while you were in East Palestine? Where did you sing when you were in East Palestine?

K: The Eagles and up at the Supervisor's Club there at Bailey. Down in East Liverpool at the Moose, at the rally. We had a rally out here at Canton. They had me out there. I sang. that was for the Pennsylvania Railroad.

C: What type of music did you sing, Joe? What kinds of songs or what were some of the songs?

K: Any kind of a song, old-time songs. When I sang up there at Canton, it was old-time lyrics. I sang three numbers up there. Montgomery--he was a division engineer--he got me. We had a party down at New Brighton up on the hill there, and he heard me sing. He wanted me to sing in this rally they had in Canton, so I did. Then they made a tape. Then one day when I was down there Zachariah--he was our supervisor--said, "I want you in the safety car tomorrow." We went in there and I heard this gal playing that piano, accordion, and I said to myself, "Here's where I'm going to hear myself sing." (Laughter) Sure enough, I did. They had it on tape. I didn't know it until I heard it.

C: You sang in Pittsburgh too, didn't you?

K: Yes. They never put me on tape there.

C: This was something for fun you did on the side?

K: Yes. I liked to sing.

C: Did you get paid for you singing in town here?

K: No. Heck, no, I just liked to sing, but I never sang, like you say, to get paid. I just like to sing. I used to sing for my wife. I haven't sang for . . . I don't know when, since she has passed away.

- C: Did you have a big garden during the Depression and during the war too?
- K: When you raise 70 bushels of potatoes by hand and 365 tomato plants, you aren't loafing.
- C: Did you used to sell some of the food?
- K: Yes. Tomatoes, fifty cents a bushel.
- C: A lot of hard work?
- K: Yes, that's right. All by hand too.
- C: That helped feed the family during the Depression, didn't it?
- K: Oh, yes. Oh, I loved it, I'm telling you. I like to work. I always did like to work. Of course, I'm not as young as I used to be, but I'm going to keep working as long as I can.
- C: Well, that's what keeps you young, Joe.
- K: Sure. I lost thirty, thirty-five pounds since my wife passed away and I just can't get it back up again. I don't know. I eat like a horse. Why? I don't know.
- C: Actually when you're thinner, you're healthier, they say.
- K: That's what Dorothy Brown said. She said the same thing. She said, "You won't have a heart attack." Do you want to hear me sing? I can sing you a song.
- C: Yes, why don't you? I would like to hear one.
- K: Any time you're feeling lonely,
Any time you're feeling blue,
Any time you feel downhearted,
That would prove for you my love is true.
Any time you're thinking 'bout me,
That's the time I'll be thinking of you.
So, any time you say you want me back again,
That's the time I'll come back home to you.
- C: Sounds okay, Joe. I want to thank you very much for talking to me.
- K: I didn't say very much.

END OF INTERVIEW