

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

YSU Depression Project

Banking Experience

O.H. 172

TODD P. BROWNLEE

Interviewed

by

Dan Flood

on

December 4, 1975

TODD P. BROWNLEE

Todd P. Brownlee was born October 10, 1913 in Youngstown, Ohio, the son of Orrin W. and Esther (Mellinger) Brownlee. He attended and graduated from Poland Seminary High School in May of 1931. Although he did not attend college, he had 13 years of classes given by the American Institute of Banking.

In June of 1931, right after graduation, Mr. Brownlee got a job with the Dollar Savings and Trust Company and has been working there ever since. He married M. Lucile Brownlee in February of 1937 and they have two children.

Todd Brownlee belongs to the South Side Merchants and Civic Association, the Youngstown Area Chamber of Commerce, and the Home Builders Association. He is a member of the Trinity United Methodist Church and his hobbies are gardening and photography.

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INTERVIEWEE: TODD P. BROWNLEE
INTERVIEWER: Dan Flood
SUBJECT: Bank operations during the Depression
DATE: December 4, 1975

F: This is an interview with Todd P. Brownlee for the Youngstown State University Depression Project by Dan Flood at Mr. Brownlee's home on South Avenue. The time is 3:45 p.m., approximately; the date is December 4, 1975.

Now, before we begin the actual interview, let me point out to you that Mr. Brownlee is currently working in a bank, the Dollar Savings and Trust Company's main office in Youngstown.

Mr. Brownlee, do you want to begin by just going back to childhood days and recalling any events, possibly your parent's occupation at the time and family members.

B: Well, at the time of the Depression, and when I first went to work at the bank, my dad, who was Orrin W. Brownlee, and was working at the Republic Steel Corporation. And my mother was Esther, and she was just an ordinary housewife. I was the oldest of the children. I had two other brothers who were younger and a sister that was younger. So, they were still at home and going through school at the time. The two youngest ones weren't even in school yet come to think of it. At that time we were living in Poland. Though things were rough, I guess we really didn't

realize how rough they were until later on as we looked back at some of the things.

I got out of school, graduated in the latter part of May of 1931. And on June 1, 1931 I was fortunate enough to be able to get a job at the Dollar Bank. And at that time, the bank was operated under a common ownership plan with the First National Bank. So, the two banks were on the Central Square in Youngstown, the First National and the Dollar Bank. And at that time a man by the name of J. Howard Parker was the president of those banks.

I think this common ownership thing is something that may have been forgotten by a lot of people in Youngstown. But it worked very well during the boom years, that is up until the stock market crash of about 1929. The First National Bank held a charter from the U.S. Government. And as I recall--maybe some other people recall this--the First National Bank was the third bank in the U.S. to be chartered by the National Government. And at that time on the north wall of their banking room, they had a huge bronze Number "3" that they were awfully proud of and had every reason to be.

But getting back to this joint ownership thing, at the time, the National Bank took all of the checking accounts and the commercial loans, which are of short-term duration. And because of the fact that the State bank could make mortgage loans, management decided that they would put all the savings accounts and the mortgage loans in the state-chartered bank. Well, this was fine as long as conditions were booming and things were going normally. But when the crash came, why, of course, people who had saved their money for a rainy day needed it, and needed it fast! Therefore, between the time of the crash and the date of the closing of the bank, which was October 14, 1931, we found that deposits had decreased by some six million dollars. That was a lot of money in that day and age. So you see, I felt very fortunate to get a job during this Depression. Though it was very brief, that is from June 1 to October 14, about four and a half months, I guess.

But then also, during those times we were very fortunate to have had some civic-minded men in the community and in the bank that immediately set about a reorganization and reopening plan. And about seven months later the bank reopened on May 18, 1932, which was a remarkable thing in that day and age. The other thing that

was remarkable, our bank reopened without any loss, not a penny's loss to any depositor.

F: That is really remarkable. Didn't most of them pay like ten cents on a dollar?

B: Well, some of them not even that, but some of the stories about that time you might be interested in. The bank closed, as I said, on October 14th and the state banking authorities, of course, came in and set up operations mainly for the purpose of trying to collect loans and liquidate as much of the assets as possible because, though the bank was closed, still, these people needed the funds they had saved for emergencies and this surely was one.

So, since I was the cheapest employee they had, I think, in the bank--I was a messenger boy. I was making \$60 a month, by the way. And when the state took over, I stayed right on as a messenger boy, and the first pay I got reflected a five dollar raise. So, I went to the head bank examiner and I said, "There's been some mistake someplace." And he said, "Well, even in a Depression no one can live on \$60 a month." (Laughter) He said, "That's the lowest the state pays." So, that's what I worked for during that time.

F: What were the banking hours at that time? Was it Monday through Friday?

B: During those days we were open Monday through Friday from 9:00 to 3:00 and then on Saturday morning the banks were open in town from 9:00 to 12:00. So, I would work for the state and they worked the same hours almost as the bank. Actually, banking hours are kind of crazy. Nine to three were "visiting hours," I always said. (Laughter) You went to work at 8:00 in the morning and you got through at 4:30 or 5:00.

But when I'd get through working for the bank at 4:30, I immediately went into another area that they let us use to work for the reorganization committee. And here there were literally dozens, perhaps as many as a hundred employees that were working, free of charge, trying to get the papers and the information together to get the bank reopened. And so, I would go over there from about 4:30 until about 9:30 normally, sometimes 10:00 or 11:00 at night. And in fact, during

that time, in order to get funds to reopen the bank, the Federal Reserve would still rediscount prime paper, but what paper was prime in 1931 and 1932? (Laughter) Nothing!

So what happened was, there was an organization called the RFC, Reconstruction Finance Corporation. I don't know whether you've ever heard of it or not, but it was developed as a means of providing some funds. So, we would process mortgages and all of the things that they would accept and had, and we'd do this up until about 10:00 or 11:00 at night.

And one of the fellows I went to school with, William A. (Bill) Siegal, was working at the bank also, well we were both working for the State. He happens to be my next door neighbor, by the way. We've lived together all our lives, in Poland and even here now. We would take his 1931 Plymouth automobile, a little four-cylinder job, and we would leave the bank at about 10:00 or 11:00 at night and get up to Cleveland at, well it took about three hours in those days, and give a box of papers that was all the forms that were processed, give them to two of the men from our office that we had that were working up there. And they were working for nothing also. I think they did pay their hotel expenses. (Laughter) And we would go and bunk on the floor in their hotel room and they'd get us up at 4:30 to 5:00 the next morning so we could get back to work in Youngstown at 8:30.

F: This was all done on your own time then?

B: Right. And this got to be a little drag, by the way, but I was eighteen, he was nineteen or twenty, so you could do a lot better than at my age now.

But that was interesting I thought, as I look back, what we went through and were willing to go through. Then, of course, when the bank reopened I got my first pay and was back to \$60 a month. That was still a happy day and it was worth all the work and the effort that we did, not only for our own sakes, but for the sakes of all the depositors and so forth.

F: This is one side of the banking story that you never. . .

B: I'll never forget, no.

F: Never will forget, but that I never even heard of.

B: And everybody said, "Well, didn't you know it was going to happen?" No. Actually, on the morning of October 14th, we were on our way to work. It happened to be Bill Siegal and a couple of other men from Poland, on our way to work, and we saw paper boys out hocking extra papers about the fact of the closing, not only of our bank, but some of the others.

But then getting back to being back to work in 1932, though I was only making \$60 a month, I saw Sheet and Tube paychecks that married men, for their regular pay period, draw eight and nine dollars. And remember, there wasn't any unemployment compensation then and there wasn't any SUB pay or SUB benefits. There wasn't anything like that. Things were just rough that's all.

Would you be interested in knowing what we did to get that bank open?

F: Yes.

B: At the time of closing, as I recall, there was about sixteen million dollars in deposits and we had to get all of the depositors, or a large percentage, I don't remember exactly what percentage now. By signing the agreement the bank agreed to release all the checking accounts in full and the agreement also got all the savings depositors to agree that they would accept a hundred dollars or ten percent of their savings account, whichever was higher. And once we had them signed up they would also leave any additional savings in a restricted fund until we could liquidate and release it; all this was part of the agreement.

F: Now, how did you contact these people?

B: We went around and knocked on doors, two of us at a time together. And we used, again, our own cars, our own time and our own money to do this.

F: Oh boy.

B: And we succeeded to get these depositors, that is a large enough percentage of them, signed up.

Then I mentioned RFC. The thing that happened then was that these papers we had been transporting up to Cleveland to the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, finally were approved and they granted the bank a loan of three million dollars based on this. And

that's a lot of money. I remember the day it came into town. We had all of the police in town out that day, you can imagine. At that time we had an armored truck and we went over to the Erie Railroad Station where the trains came in frequently then, and we got this three million dollars with more guns and ammunition around that I had ever seen until I was in the service. The funny part is the railroad station was right in back of the bank, but we couldn't do it that way. You know the government. We had to go from the railroad station to the post office over on Front Street and sign in there as receiving the funds, and then from the post office back to the bank. Then we finally got that money in the bank. And I had an opportunity to sit down with many others and verify that cash and get it put away for the re-opening, which was going to happen the next day. I may have forgotten some of the details, but you don't forget three million dollars very fast. (Laughter)

F: I was just wondering, you said before about people probably asking you, "Didn't you know that it was coming?" Did the banks, back in 1929 and 1930 invest the people's money in stock, and didn't they see the stock drop?

B: Having been only seventeen and just turned eighteen when this thing happened, I really don't know. I do know, as I got working with the records, that during those times people thought the stock boom and good times were going to last forever. Banks rarely asked anybody to pay back money they borrowed. As long as they were willing to pay the interest, that was fine. This was why, in 1932 when there was a Bank Reorganization Act or Law that was passed back then, now requires that from that point on, you don't get a loan at a bank and just forget it. You have to set it up with regular payments. You have to liquidate it over a specific period of time. And this is good. It's good for the bank; it's good for the economy, good for the borrower, good for everyone and everything.

F: I was thinking of one more question. When you went to people's homes to try to have them sign over about the ten percent or hundred dollars, whichever they chose; let's say, when you went to their homes, what type of resentment did you run up against?

B: Most people, sure, they were upset because of the fact they couldn't have money that they had saved. However,

most of them realized that this was not any individual's or management's fault in particular. The economy had crashed, literally. And I think more of them were interested in how fast they could sign the papers so they could get that hundred dollars or that ten percent than they were to try to incriminate anybody. They were anxious to get what they could because they needed it. So, it did make our job a little easier in that respect. So, it wasn't too often we got a bad reception.

F: Now, a lot of the bankers from a lot of people that I've talked with said they're angry because the banks took over their home and so on and so forth. Did this then become more or less a tendency by them to be a little bit more strict in the future concerning the loans, to make sure that they get the proper repayment agreement because of what they had gone through before?

B: No, I don't think so. As I said, this new law in 1932 required that they be more strict and the examinations of the banks were more strict also. But back in those days too, even after the bank had reopened, we never, in all the time that I can remember, foreclosed on anybody just out of meanness or spite. If somebody was trying, any effort at all, to make a payment, we went along with them. We had to. There wasn't any other way. The only other thing to do was to take over all the houses in Youngstown.

F: I mean, if you foreclose on someone. . . ?

B: We had instances when people came in and said, "Here, here's the keys. I just can't do anything. I'm through." And of course, families, even though they were married, they had a tendency to get together in houses, two or three families in a house to conserve expenses and so on. And what we did with those houses we had to take back, you'd be amazed. The only way we could sell them would be to redo them inside and out, repaint them and refinish the floors, put up new window shades.

F: Put so much work into it.

B: Yes. And I remember at that time I could have bought some of the most lovely homes that you ever imagined for \$3000. Imagine, \$3000. Now, those same homes today, I'm sure, would be selling for \$30,000. And

all I would have needed was \$100 down, but who had \$100? (Laughter)

F: That was the catch.

B: By the way, interest on savings accounts during the boom times had been around 5 percent and 6 percent, but once the banks had reopened, interest on savings was 1 percent and 2 percent. Most of the banks were 1 percent because you didn't have money to loan out. You weren't getting money.

F: How did they . . . ?

B: Attract funds?

F: Attract funds, really.

B: It was very difficult. In fact, in 1932, when we reopened, we had \$16,000,000 in the bank, as I recall, and I just looked--knowing we were going to sit down and have this discussion--and found that in 1935 that had dropped to \$12,000,000. So, as fast as funds were being released, it was being paid out. And of course, this is a help to the economy, but the fact is that with what we borrowed and the way we had done it, we had weathered the worst part of the Depression. I believe, about 1936 I think it was, was when we started to turn the corner.

F: You mean towards prosperity?

B: Yes. And of course, you take that \$16,000,000 or \$12,000,000 in 1935 and think now that the deposits in the bank--just the deposits, not the total assets; and that's all I was talking about--now runs \$275,000,000 or \$280,000,000; that's in 42 years or about 22 times as great as it was then. So, it was a rough corner to turn, but once it was turned, then things started coming back up. And of course, now interest rates, as you know are somewhere between 5 percent and 7½ percent depending on your deposits or your needs.

You might be interested in knowing that in 1931, when I started to work, there were eight banks in Youngstown. There was the Dollar Savings and Trust Company, the First National Bank, the Mahoning National Bank, the City Trust and Savings Bank, the Commercial National Bank, the Second National Bank, the Union Savings Bank--and that's not to be confused with the present Union National or the one in Warren, neither one--and the Morris Plan Bank. There were all of those banks in Youngs-

town. As a messenger, I went to clearinghouse and we exchanged checks and so forth, so I remember this very distinctly.

When we reopened seven months later, how many do you think there were in Youngstown?

F: I don't know.

B: There were four. There was our own bank, which had just reopened; there was the Mahoning National Bank; there was still the Morris Plan Bank, which is now called the People's Bank; and the Union National Bank, which was organized. And again, I don't remember exactly, but as I understand it, it was organized out of the good assets of the old Commercial National Bank and the First National Bank. And this is the Union National Bank that's now operating in Federal Plaza today.

Soon thereafter, then there was one other bank. The City Trust and Savings Bank also had a reorganization committee and they opened up soon after we did. So, that made five banks in town where there used to be eight. I think that's interesting.

Then later on in August of 1947, I believe it was, the Dollar Bank purchased the assets of the City Trust and Savings Bank, so they're now one bank.

Even though the economy turned upward in 1936, things were still kind of rough. I don't remember the year exactly, but I do remember the City of Youngstown didn't have any money, and they had to pay their employees and their bills with script, which they printed in ones, fives, et cetera, in the same denominations as money. And the local stores and banks accepted this readily and it transferred hands just like money.

F: It was just the trust in the City then that really was the backing of this script?

B: That's right. And I remember--as the City got funds and tried to redeem some of this script--taking big bundles of it over to the City Hall and sit there and watch while they counted it. Then they would give us a check for it once they had some money available. So, that was interesting to me.

Also, Lucile, my wife, and I, we got married in 1937; one of the few weddings that took place. (Laughter) Everybody said we were crazy. Well, we were young and we went ahead. And at that time, that was 1937--this

was six years later--I was making \$135 a month. And my boss, who at that time was Carl Ullman, President of the bank, gave me a \$15 raise, which we were overjoyed about because that's better than 10 percent. (Laughter) And out of that \$150 a month--it still doesn't sound so much to people today--but we purchased a brand new Chevrolet automobile. My payments were \$35 a month on that. We rented a nice little three-room apartment on Lucius Avenue; and that was \$35 a month. Food cost us, during those times, about \$30 a month. And of course, that still left a balance that was quite adequate for things like life insurance, medical expenses, entertainment, clothing, and even a little savings.

Well for instance, at that time hamburger was four pounds for a quarter, and good hamburger too. (Laughter) They would frequently have sales when they would put it on sale at five pounds for a quarter. Bread was 5 cents a loaf, good bread. Sometimes I think some of the stuff we have today is more like cardboard. Bread was 5 cents a loaf. A Vindicator was 3 cents. So, you didn't have much, but at that time you didn't need much. I'm not advocating that we go back to this but . . .

A movie, the best movie in town, a double feature, at the Warner or the Paramount or the State Theater, 25 cents for any seat in the house; that was for first-run double feature movies. Or, if you wanted to go to one of the second-run houses--and of course, most of the movie houses were downtown then--you could go and see a double feature, anyplace, for 15 cents, 10 cents sometimes, if they'd have specials. And then of course, if you wanted to get real ritzy, you could go to the RKO Palace, which was just across the street from the bank; and for 50 cents you could see a movie and five acts of good vaudeville. I know I saw Jack Benny and Fred Astaire and his sister. Oh, just the finest of vaudeville in those days. Edgar Bergen, I remember seeing him there, things of this kind.

F: Now, was there another one at Idora Park?

B: Oh, Idora Park, well yes. I lived, as a young boy, on Parkview Avenue and I remember going down to Idora Park to the theater there to see the Lillian Desmond Players. And of course, though I was too young to dance, I could still enjoy the music of Ace Brigode and his orchestra. That's even before the Depression Days. That's quite a ways back.

During this time, around 1931 and 1932, I also remember one of the restaurants downtown that we used to go to. Well, since it's getting close to suppertime, I'll tell you what the menu was. They served soup, very good, and salad, filet mignon, french fries, a vegetable, roll, some butter and coffee or tea and dessert for 55 cents. Later it went up to 75 cents and later they took the price clear up to \$1.00 and, oh, how we screamed. I'd kind of like to scream right now and have it for the same price.

I don't know, my memory may be faulty on some of the details of some of these things. And probably there's many things I've forgotten that I'll think of after you've left, I suppose.

But even though it was rough at the time, it was a great experience. It's like my Army experience. I don't think I want to do it again, but now as I look back, I probably wouldn't have missed it for the world.

I've seen the streetcars go for the trolley busses and seen them go for the gas busses and just seen the busses go period. (Laughter) I've seen the fountain on the square downtown and seen the kids wading in it and swimming in it on a hot day. I've seen that torn down and the branch library put up in a small building on the square. And I've seen the library disappear and a flag pole put up on that site.

F: This is right on the . . . ?

B: Right on the square.

F: Right on the square today?

B: Yes. And then I've seen the square turn into the Federal Plaza. And of course, the man on the monument has watched it all. (Laughter)

Oh, in 1932, of course, Franklin Delano Roosevelt was elected. Most people, either one of two things, loved him or hated him; but that's beside the point. He was elected president and he established what was called the National Recovery Act, that was the NRA, and had that eagle as a symbol.

F: Yes.

B: And I remember too, going over to the post office to sign our bank up for that and bring that banner back and put it in the window. You had to pay a minimum, I

think, of \$15 a week to your employees. Of course, we were about at the minimum, but we qualified.
(Laughter)

Prior to this time prohibition was in and this was eliminated in 1932. I remember that day. I was a little young at that time. Well, I was too young to be going to get anything like this. But I do remember that there was quite a bit of excitement that day as the "boys" went out for a legal drink.

So, since 1931 to the present time, I've spent some 44 years with the Dollar Bank. They've all been interesting. I've enjoyed them. Forty-three months out of those 44 years I was in the service. I was in the Army; went in as a buck private; came out as a first lieutenant and spent a considerable length of time in the Philippines. I haven't been back since.

We've been travelling a bit now, but we've never gone back to the Philippines. But they've been interesting years, interesting experience. As I look back at those times, as I said, they were rough but . . .

F: Now, if you can compare the salary you were making at that time with the prices, would you say that it was just as well or possibly better than it is today?

B: That's a hard one to answer. For \$3.00 we would go to the market; and the markets were downtown then too. We didn't go out to plazas or super markets. There were some corner stores, things like that, but they were small. We would go downtown to the markets. Oles had a large market there, and Toths had a big market. Both of them had bakeries and meat counters and the "works." For \$3.00 I could buy all the meat that I could carry home. Not hamburger, but steaks and chops and roasts of beef, pork and lamb. Of course, I think the difference is this: out of \$150 that I was making then, I got \$150.

F: That's right.

B: There wasn't any City tax; there wasn't any State income tax; there wasn't any Federal income tax; there wasn't any Social Security tax--and that's what Social Security is, a tax. Now, when you add all of these things up--just out of the clear blue; I'm only guessing--but I think we probably hit a good 35% of your salary that you never see. Isn't that right?

F: That's right.

B: And remember that Social Security, that 5.85 percent you pay, your employer puts another 5.85 percent to it and he doesn't get that unless you earn it. So, this again is something you never see.

F: I can see where it would be a hard question to answer now.

B: That's right. I don't know what the average wage is today. Well, the minimum wage, I think January 1, 1976 will be somewhere in the neighborhood of \$400 [per month]. But remember, the people that are making this are not going to see but \$300 of the \$400 right to begin with.

F: Now as far as, let's say, hospitalization at that time when you were working, when did the banks start picking up hospitalization plans or start getting into the . . . I know social security was--what? 1936?

B: I believe that's right, 1936 or 1937.

F: When did you start seeing your paycheck decrease and the money being taken and set aside for some other reason?

B: Well, the nice part about the hospitalization--I don't recall just when the bank did this, but the bank and a good many other business places paid this for us. They paid for the employee's hospitalization anyway. That was a fringe benefit. Then I had to pay the part for my wife and the children later on. But this is a fringe benefit. So, that really didn't cost a whole lot.

Now remember, hospitalization then wasn't much because a hospital room, again, as I recall, the best room in the hospital was somewhere around \$7.00 or \$8.00. I think it was \$5.00 if you were two in a room. As I say, my memory may be faulty. I wasn't in the hospital, fortunately, but the costs weren't that great. An office call at the doctor's office was \$2.00.

F: Now, was it a call to the doctor's office, or were they still making house calls?

B: They were still making house calls--I think at \$3.00.

F: House calls primarily? At that time, did many women go to the hospital to have babies?

B: Well, I think at about that time is when it became--I don't know whether the word "popular" is right or not--

to go to the hospital. But there still were many midwives and people would have their children right in their own homes.

Also, funeral homes, I can't recall any at the time. Of course, when you're that young you don't worry too much about this sort of thing. But as I recall, funerals were in the homes. You'd see the wreath on the door.

And another thing that you would see . . . We talk about ecology and how awful things are, but as a kid, and up to this time, we would see signs tacked on the door in different colors, diphtheria, typhoid, smallpox, chickenpox, measles, scarlet fever, things of this kind that were, I think, picked up by the fact that we were getting water out of pumps and wells while horses were going up and down the streets, some unpaved, and there's bound to be some debris from this type of thing. Even into the 1920's this went on. Of course, these were the good times. (Laughter)

F: Yes, the good old days. (Laughter)

B: So, when people think that things are rough, they're quite improved. They talk about the good old days-- may they never return. (Laughter)

F: I'll tell you, I really think maybe if you could just recall some of those clerk days in the bank, as a messenger. You were talking about going up to Cleveland, and working with . . . well, meeting other people from the various banks in Youngstown and exchanging the checks. How long did this take compared to today?

B: Well, when we were going up to Cleveland, that was just for that reorganization thing. But each morning in Youngstown, there was a clearinghouse. The messengers from each bank would take . . .

F: Where was the clearinghouse?

B: The clearinghouse was located in a little building, centrally located downtown.

F: Oh, you mean everything was kept in town then, really?

B: Yes, for the checks of the banks in town. The out-of-town checks would be mailed to Cleveland or New York. Those out West were mailed to Chicago. This was in regular operation. But when I went to clearinghouse, I would take whatever we had for each bank and we

would exchange the checks and write down the amounts. If, for instance, I had \$750,000 for the Mahoning National Bank in checks and they had \$500,000 of our checks, we'd take them and I would give them a debit, or a credit ticket in this instance, which would be for \$250,000. That was done first thing in the morning.

In the afternoon then, around 2:00 or 3:00, around 2:00 as I recall, we would go back and we would return all of the checks that weren't good that they had cashed and that we had cashed on them and we would exchange those and give them a check for the difference. In other words, the Dollar Bank would have owed \$250,000 and maybe in that we had \$5,000 worth of checks that they had given us that were not good. So, we'd return those and give them a check for \$245,000, or the difference.

F: Did you see many bad checks at the time?

B: No, there weren't. People are the same Depression-wise as at any other time. I don't think you could say it was worse then. And another thing, though there are bad checks, actually, 99% of the people are honest or we couldn't unlock the doors of the bank at 9:00 in the morning. That's all there is to it. Sure, you've always got the "sharpies" and the shysters and somebody that's trying to "take" you and so on.

F: I'm wondering about let's say, posting the check. For instance, I'll give you an example. I might write out a check today knowing that I'm going to get paid tomorrow. It's going to take time for my check to reach my bank, so I don't put the money in the bank for a day or two before the check actually get's there.

B: In that day and age you could do this a lot safer than you can now because then, if you went to one bank, they couldn't take it to the clearinghouse until the next day. So, the next day you could cover it. Well, in this day and age with electronics, these things go through those micro-readers at--I don't know, what, 600 pieces of paper a second or something like that; and they get there fast even though your check goes to California or Cleveland. You would be amazed how fast it gets back. So, you can't depend on that sort of thing now since there's a rapid clearing of these items.

I remember, also, when the bank reopened, I was a teller then. And at the time the bank would open, there would be long lines formed at each of the windows because peo-

ple still were trying to get their funds. And again, they needed it. And those lines would sometimes go down the lobby of the bank and out into the square. And when 3:00 p.m. would come, our policeman would go out and get on the back of the line until the people got in the door and then they locked the doors. It wasn't unusual to still be waiting on customers inside the bank at 4:00 p.m. or a little after that. Frequently I didn't get balanced and didn't get home until 5:30, 6:00 p.m. and the bank closed at 3:00. (Laughter)

F: Yes, banking hours.

B: And it's true today. People always joke about bankers hours. Well, as I said, they're visiting hours. I'm down at the bank, generally, at 7:30 in the morning. I don't have to be, but I'm there at 7:30 and I can get more done in the first hour before the phones start to ring than I can all day long.

F: Were there any bank robberies at that time or did you have any devices such as they use today in the banks for setting off alarms to police stations?

B: We had a branch down in Struthers and we had this in some of our other branches; but down in Struthers, that branch was right close to the Youngstown Sheet & Tube. And in those days, the payroll was a huge thing and there were a lot of men working in the mills at that time. But we had tear gas that was above each one of the windows. And one day they did try to rob this bank and the girl pretended to faint and when she hit the floor, she touched the button that shot off the tear gas. And oh boy, it was a cold day! The robbers had the money, but with tear gas in their eyes, they dropped it on the way outside. The tear gas was kind of rough, not only on the robbers, but on our customers. And I remember going down there and everybody was working with the windows wide open and with their coats and their hats on and standing there crying. It took a couple of days to get that gas out of there.

We don't do that now. We have such things now that are much more sophisticated such as cameras and silent alarms.

F: Did they have any direct links at that time to a police station?

B: No, But now all of our branches do. I don't know about the other banks, but every one of our branches is linked directly with the police station in the com-

munity that it's in. For instance, the Boardman office is linked to the Boardman Police Station. And those are silent alarms as I said, very sophisticated. You don't know they've been pushed or set off in the daytime, so that, hopefully, nobody is going to get shot or hurt because the robbers hear a bell ringing and get excited. Now, after the bank closes or before it's opened in the morning, then you get what we call an audible alarm. Sometimes the alarm goes off when it shouldn't. (Laughter) It's a false alarm.

F: There are a few stories I'm thinking of myself where my wife worked, well, right up here at the Lowellville Bank and the alarm went off and it was not supposed to. It can happen.

END OF INTERVIEW