

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Smoky Hollow Project

Growing up in Smoky Hollow

O. H. 274

FRED QUATRO

Interviewed

by

Annette Mills

on

April 14, 1976

FRED QUATRO

Fred Quatro was born on July 13, 1907 in Bellaire, Ohio. At the age of eleven both of his parents died, and at the age of seventeen he drifted into the area which he later learned was Smoky Hollow. When he arrived in Smoky Hollow he knew no one. At this time it was quite common to room and board, which he did. After a short period of time he soon learned there are no strangers, or at least none that were not welcomed, in Smoky Hollow. Mr. Quatro stayed there until the late 1960's when he moved closer to his work.

Mr. Quatro was active in the management of sports, especially softball. He was employed at the General Fireproofing Company from August 1929 until February 1971 when he retired.

Mr. Quatro has one son, Fred J. Quatro, who is an osteopathic doctor and is currently attending Physicians University at Michigan State University, studying towards being a surgeon.

Mr. Quatro is a member of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church and his special hobbies are gardening, golfing, and of course, keeping current on sports news in general.

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INTERVIEWEE: FRED QUATRO

INTERVIEWER: Annette Mills

SUBJECT: Living in Smoky Hollow, Dom Roselli, softball

DATE: April 14, 1976

M: This is an interview with Mr. Fred Quatro for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program's Smoky Hollow Project. The interviewer is Annette Mills and the interview is being conducted at Mr. Quatro's home at 37 Upland Avenue on April 14, 1976, at 9:30 p.m.

All right Mr. Quatro, could you tell us about the time when you moved into Smoky Hollow?

Q: Well, my parents died when I was a young boy of eleven years old. I just about had to work all my life from then on. I had to quit school. In 1925, I came from Bellaire, Ohio. We went on strike and I went hunting for work and I landed in Youngstown. I knew some people in Youngstown. I came to Youngstown and I settled in what I knew afterwards, was Smoky Hollow. The first time that I went down there I was kind of impressed with the people down there. I was always athletically inclined but I never had the real talent to participate in the sports that I liked to do. So I took mostly a leadership end of it, like managing or writing up or keeping score. When I got down to the Hollow, the people down there they were so, I don't know, they had that friendliness about them. I don't know whether you are Irish or Italian or Slovak or German or whatever, it seemed to me that they were all alike. Because imagine, I'm just a young kid, I was about seventeen at the time and I came down there knowing nobody. And good God, I came out of the house and figured, well, I don't know anybody, let's take a look. And lo and behold, right down on the corner of

Watt and Adams, every night there used to be a gang of those old people. They would sit out there and they would start playing tre e sette, cards, right out in front there, or play la morra, or play bocce.

M: Excuse me, Mr. Quatro, could you tell us a little bit about what the la morra was and the tre e sette?

Q: Well, "la morra", that is a game where you match fingers. If I would say "sei", in Italian that means six. Now if I threw three fingers and you threw three and I said, "Six," that would be a point for me. That is an old Italian game and that was seen on the streets many times. I've seen that thousands of times.

M: You mean that they just stood up right on the corner and did this?

Q: Stood up right on the corner and in their own native language they would say, "Sei, due!" All night long you would hear them on one corner and then the other corner.

M: Okay now, could you describe the tre e sette? What is that?

Q: Well, tre e sette is another Italian game. What they would do, what I'm talking about, these are not American-born people. These are people that couldn't speak good English, but they had that old tradition and they brought it over here to playing cards. One of the games was tre e sette.

M: Were they immigrants then that settled in Smoky Hollow?

Q: Yes. They would sit out in the front there and get an old pop case or any kind of a case and just act like a table. They would sit around it and start playing that game.

M: Now was that a finger game too?

Q: No, that was a card game. What they played for would be a quart of wine. They never played for money. Now you could have won the game and still you wouldn't win the wine. The way they would do that, they would cut cards after the game was over and see who would get what they called a patrone in Italian or sottie. Patrone means that you are the head man and sottie means that you are under him. Now you are the patrone, so to speak. You would be in charge of the bottle of wine. Now I am a

- sotte. Now if you can't drink that wine, you want to give one of your buddies a drink and I don't like that guy, I would say, "No, if you can't drink it, then let me be in charge." Many a time a guy would not give another guy a drink, he'd get drunk.
- M: Now, was this wine then? It wasn't so much because they were winos, this is the native drink.
- Q: No, that was just like Coca-Cola is to Americans. They had that wine morning, noon, and night.
- M: This is kind of traditional then, like from birth they drink wine, as I understand then?
- Q: That is right.
- M: Could you tell us a little bit about this bocce game?
- Q: Bocce game, they had a real small ball and then they had a ball about three times bigger than the little one. Each man had two of them, the bigger balls. They would throw that little ball out about 20, 30, or 40 feet and the ones that got closest to that little ball with the bigger balls would get points.
- M: All right now, where would they throw this, right up the sidewalks?
- Q: Up and down the streets.
- M: In the streets?
- Q: Nowadays, they play that game in the backyard, they've got little bowling alleys in the back. But in those days we had one place we played, but whether you had it or not if they had too many to play they would think nothing to go from one street to another, just go street to street.
- M: All right, you said that you played that right in the streets. Were the streets at that time bricked?
- Q: Yes.
- M: Then this is the way it was pretty much back in 1925?
- Q: Well, the only difference from those days to nowadays, maybe you would see one or two cars on the street parked where nowadays I don't think you can do that on the streets because traffic is way, way more.
- M: There are more vehicles on the road today?

Q: Oh yes, there is no question.

M: Do you remember the first car then around that time?

Q: Yes, as a matter of fact I do. Some fellow who lived up above the street, he was just a young fellow of about 21 or 22 years old and he bought an old Hudson, and I can't forget it. Every time he would come around that corner about eight or nine of us would climb in and fill the car right up to the brim. We used to go around looking for girls, eight or nine guys in a car going all over the west side. We would go to a football game. In fact, one time we went to Rayen and I'll never forget, we went to see a Rayen football game and somebody stole the car and we had to walk home. And lo and behold, on Sunday morning we saw a young guy coming around. We were sitting on the steps and hollering about who took that car and this and that. The guy that stole the car came right in front of us. We chased him and we caught him down at the bottom of Walnut Hill.

M: You chased him by foot?

Q: No, this kid had a car and we chased him and we caught him.

M: With another car?

Q: Yes.

M: And you got him and you got your car back?

Q: Yes.

M: Was there a big to do about it or did you just get your car?

Q: Nothing. What could you do? It was a young kid there. We just got the car. We wanted to beat him up, but really he was just a young kid.

M: So you just kind of took your own property back?

Q: It wasn't our car. It was this friend's. We called him Bartholomew.

M: Could you describe that vehicle for us?

Q: It was an old Hudson. I think he paid \$125 for it. It was a really old car. It must have had about 50,000 or 60,000 miles on it. It was a really old, beat up thing.

M: Did it have kind of a funny horn?

- Q: Yes. It had horns where you would press on it and it would give you that "Ooh, ooh."
- M: Yes, an "Ooh, ooh," sound instead of the more modern sound.
- Q: Yes. And it had running boards on it.
- M: They're collector's items today.
- Q: Oh yes. There were no such things as sedans like there are today.
- M: You mentioned sports and you said that you were pretty much on the management end of it. You never really participated as much as you liked. Could you recall any particular activities that you did manage yourself?
- Q: Well, as I said when I first went down there I was kind of impressed with the talent that I would see running around down there, whether it was football, boxing, chess, so to speak, and even ping pong. And I remember that I didn't know the guys too good. They used to hang up on the pool. After all, I was just married then and I didn't know too many people. But anyhow, I had seen a lot of boys play and as young as I was, I managed teams when I was back home in Bellaire, Ohio. We used to have a Class B. One time there was a tournament at Volney Rogers and I picked ten guys up and I said that I was going to get into that tournament. I picked the guys up and I got a pitcher. I knew who the guys were. We went there and we won. We won the tournament just on a pick up team.
- M: What sport was this?
- Q: Softball. We didn't know what name to use when we put the entry in and we called it the Walnut AC's. That was in 1929.
- M: Could you tell us then what happened to this Walnut team?
- Q: Well, the fact that we won that tournament, we had ideas because softball was just coming around at the time. The first thing you knew there were teams that started sprouting up all over the city. They started different leagues. We had a Sunday morning league. I remember at Harrison Field on a Sunday we used to draw big crowds. And I'm not exaggerating. The right and the field lines were just loaded. We used to have a cop down there to watch the crowds, that's how big the crowds were. I used to go downtown and get different sponsors. The first year we had the Walnuts. Now remember, we didn't have any jerseys or gloves. The only guy who wore a glove was the first baseman and the catcher. We didn't have anything. We used to pitch in a

dime apiece and buy a ball and go and play. I remember one time they had a tournament up in Alliance. We had such a name in this town about our ability. We were just about beating everybody that they invited us up to play in that tournament. Now this is a fact. I picked up fifteen boys and we went up there. We had no uniforms. If you would have seen us, you would have thought we were a bunch of bums. We had overalls on and we had patches on our pants. We went up there and this team that we played was from Alliance and they were favored to win. Now the winner in Alliance was supposed to go to Milwaukee. Now this team in Alliance was already picked to go to Milwaukee. They didn't even play a game. Now they invited us up because we were trying to get a game with this team and they would never want to give us a game. They invited us up to go into this tournament. They figured that they would give us a good beating. They put us first, we had to play in the first game.

M: All of these members on the team, were they all from Smoky Hollow?

Q: All from Smoky Hollow.

M: On the Sunday morning games where you had patrolman police the area, were most of the people from the Hollow?

Q: Yes, the whole Hollow turned out.

M: Then you had good attendance and solid backing from the neighborhood?

Q: Oh yes. They would come out. We used to play on a Sunday morning and they would come out there just like going to church.

M: Then you were invited to a tournament?

Q: Yes, I was going to tell you about this.

M: Okay, go ahead.

Q: It's funny because we had all the competition we wanted in this town. But this team, they wanted to show the people on this side of Ohio that they were better than us. No, we never laid any claim for any championship. We just played in Mahoning County. But anyhow, we went up there. Believe me, the score after nine innings was 0 to 0. Now in the tenth inning Abbe Bernard, he was one of the fastest ball players around here, was on third base. There were two outs and the guy hits a ball and believe me, I will swear to this day that that runner on

our team that hit that ball was past first base when they attempted to throw him out. The umpire called him out. We had the winning run in. There was confusion up there. I thought there was going to be a riot. The people from Alliance were against their team because they knew they robbed us.

M: What was the outcome then?

Q: Well, the outcome was that we just went home. We just left. About a week or so later I get a letter from them and they offered us \$50 to go back up there. They wanted to play us again, but we never went up.

M: You never went up?

Q: We didn't want to bother with it.

M: Could you tell us anything else about your own experience other than the Walnut Team?

Q: Well, then I had the Boys Club, Smoky Hollow Boys. I had the shirt tailors and that's when we started getting really city-wide. It was like cat and dog and going out and getting the best players. We used to hold workouts every spring.

M: Are these still softball teams that you are talking about?

Q: I am talking about softball teams. We would go around the city and the year before you would see a guy and you would say, "Boy, I would like to have him on my team and next year I'm going to try to get him."

There was a boy up there by the name of Mike Bernardsky. He played fullback for South High in 1928 and 1929. He was a good ballplayer. He played shortstop for me. I've got to tell you this story. I had a kid out for the team, he was a little half pint. He must have been about five feet tall. I think the glove was as big as he was. He was standing on the sideline there and he was working out and working out. This kid didn't go in to try out. I went up to him and I said, "Hey, you, aren't you trying out for the team?" He said, "Oh, that guy is better than me." I said, "Hey, let me be the judge of that. If you can show me that you are better than him . . ." I preferred Hollow boys, but I didn't put him in on account that he was from the Hollow. He was good. And do you know who that guy was?

M: No, I don't have the vaguest idea.

Q: Dom Roselli. What an athlete! I tell you, if that kid was

a little bigger, he would have made anything. Where he lived he was supposed to go to East. The coach, I think it was Harley Littler, him and another kid they told them that they were too small. That was the biggest mistake that they ever made up there, because he turned around and went to Rayen, and my God, he has got records that are still standing up there. He won championships in you name it, even ping pong. Anything he went into, that kid was good.

M: He got an attitude of "I'll show them," and did.

Q: And that is one ballplayer I would like to have. Well, any manager would like to have nine guys like that, because it's easy to manage a team like that. All you do is make the line-up and go to sleep.

M: Yes.

Q: You tell him to bunt, and you tell him to do this and you tell him to go there and he didn't say yes or no, he just went up and did the job. Most of the time he did it.

M: Was there any other thing that was rather outstanding that happened?

Q: Well, in 1929 this country had a Depression. Now I'll tell you, there were so many young fellows down in the Hollow that you wouldn't believe me when I tell you that we had a league only from Smoky Hollow. We had twelve teams in there. You know how many boys you've got to have. Now that's how many we had.

M: Now what age group was this, can you recall?

Q: Yes, from maybe 17 or 18 to 25, in that area. They were all young fellows. Nobody was working. Only one thing was wrong, we didn't have any balls or bats. We would get a ball and we would beat the heck out of it and then we would have to wait until we got another one. I saw an ad in the paper one time. We had a playground league in our playground, Harrison Field. We formed our own league and we called it the Unemployment League.

M: Now, that Harrison Field is also in Smoky Hollow?

Q: Oh yes. We had a league only from Smoky Hollow. When I say a league with twelve teams, I just mean from Smoky Hollow.

We didn't have any balls or bats. We had maybe one or two bats and we would break them. We had a ball, and a ball after a game is gone. I saw an ad in the paper one time saying that the Park Commission in Youngstown

would give us balls and bats and all we had to do was go up there and apply for them. So we went in there and told them what we wanted and why we were there, he said, "I'll give them to you, but you've got to form a club." I looked at Otto and he looked at me and he said, "That's easily done. We'll start one." We didn't know what name to give it, so Mr. Chase happened to have a golden eagle hanging on the wall there and he said, "Well, call yourself the Golden Eagles." We said, "Fine." Otto and I went back down to Harrison Field and the first guys we ran into, we got them together. I think there were twelve or thirteen of us. We had a meeting outside in the back of Butchie's house. Do you know Butchie Baker is on Watt Street? We went in the back of his house. He got chairs out and some boxes. We sat around there and we started a club. We had about two meetings, and we picked a temporary president, temporary vice-president, secretary, a regular club.

We went up there and we got some balls and bats. We played a whole year like that. Now this Golden Eagle Club, with these options that I mentioned, we were going to have a club for the whole Hollow. These club members were going to start a club. We were going to start a club and we were going to start getting members in. When we got so many we were going to have an election. At first, what we call now, charter members, we asked for 50 guys. We were going to take in fifty right off the goal. We applied for a charter from Columbus and we got it. There are chartered members, 50 members.

We did a lot of great things with that club. I remember one time we brought down some guy from Cleveland and we bought 87 jerseys from him. We paid him cash. How did we get the money? Well, we had a contest and we called it Miss Personality or Miss Something of all the girl clubs in this county, not just Youngstown. We made, I think, 100,000 tickets. We had two guys in our club who were printers and we got that done free. We charged each ticket one penny. Then we had to go down to the Vindicator and get all the names of these clubs and make arrangements to have a date that we would have speakers go in and tell them what we were doing. We would come to one girls' club there and we would leave maybe 5,000 and go to the next one, and leave 10,000 until we distributed the whole 100,000. Then we climaxed it with a big dance at Idora Park. I think we got Tommy Tucker, now don't pin me on that because it was kind of a long time ago. I think it was Tommy Tucker. We made a little money out of that and that's how we got all those jackets.

M: So, even though money was pretty scarce, then you could still go out?

Q: Oh, money to us was something that we didn't even bother about it.

M: You could still go along without it?

Q: We went anyplace. We would go to Milton Dam. We would pitch in five or six pennies apiece. At that time you could get gas for pretty cheap and we would go to Milton Dam.

M: Which was quite a ways from the Hollow.

Q: Yes, oh yes.

M: So really there was always something to do?

Q: Always. Activity all the time. We played ball and we were at Harrison Field from morning till night.

M: Even though we didn't have TV or anything of this nature, they made their own fun then?

Q: Forget TV. In fact, I didn't have a radio in my place. Well, the first time that we put a radio in my house, it was kind of funny. You're sitting in the house with all that quiet and then all at once you hear somebody coming out that you never saw before. Imagine, somebody coming out of a box, talking. Sure, that to us was fantastic.

M: It was a great accomplishment.

Q: You talk about having a radio, we didn't even have electricity. We just happened to put electricity in before the time when we went out and got a little radio, and boy, was that something, having a radio in your house.

M: Now could you recall any of the programs that were on the radio during that time?

Q: Oh, Amos and Andy. You are putting me way back. I remember we had a dance marathon or something down at Rayenwood Auditorium. That used to come over the air every afternoon and let you know how many people had let go.

M: Could you describe that just a little bit for us?

Q: It was a marathon dance. You got on there, maybe 50, 60, or 80 couples and the last couple on the floor was the winner. Now this was continuous dancing. You would get a break. They had cots right on the floor. You would get 15 minutes of sleep and then you had to go back on the floor. You would see them dragging, sleeping on each

other's shoulders and they just kept going and going until they couldn't anymore. Then there were ten left and you would go there the next day and then nine and they just kept peeling off until . . . I think they broke up when there were two left. They just couldn't go any longer.

M: Could you recall how long then that the winner would last?

Q: I couldn't be honest about it.

M: Would it maybe be two days?

Q: Oh my God, more than two days. It was a matter of, I would say, more close to a week.

M: And that would be with just fifteen minutes break?

Q: When your turn came to rest, you got fifteen minutes and then you had to go back on the floor.

M: Did they call you after fifteen minutes?

Q: Yes, they would come and get you out of bed and put you right back on the floor. This is night and day now. Many a night I stayed up, I was a young fellow then, maybe 21 or 22 years old. I used to go up there and sit there a lot of times till five or six o'clock in the morning. I would stay there all night. I would just sit down and watch them walking around there.

M: But really they were supposed to be dancing, right?

Q: Well, they were dancing, but I'll tell you they used to give exhibitions every now and then. Every dancer had his style. Some would do the Charleston. The Charleston was a big thing in those days. And they used to be pretty good.

M: What happened to the winners? Did they get a special prize?

Q: Well, I wasn't in on that end of it, but I did hear a rumor that the promoter of this thing wasn't making the money that he was supposed to be making, although I couldn't prove it. I know we went there one night and it was all over. The word I got was that the promoter just took off and nobody was the head of it. The man that was supposed to pay so much to the winner, he wasn't there. So that was the end of the line.

M: So he probably took off with the money it sounds like?

Q: Here is something else about the Hollow; I don't care

what part of town in those days, if you told them that you were from the Hollow, they would look at you kind of funny, "Oh, he's from Smoky Hollow." But I'll tell you, I'm proud to say, although I wasn't born and raised there, I felt like I lived there all my life. One thing I'm proud about, I don't know one boy that went to jail for any kind of crime. We've had some very, very prominent people come out from the Hollow. We've had doctors, lawyers, coaches, professional players, you name it. Their background started right down here. Well, one of our leading builders, Eddie DeBartolo, was born and raised down in the Hollow. I remember one time in the poolroom there, he was playing a five cent game of 8 ball.

M: So then would you say that he too came up the hard way in Smoky Hollow?

Q: Well, I didn't know Eddie too good, because when I came to the town he was around my age and I couldn't tell you his background as far as when he was a kid. But when I knew Eddie, he was a young man. But I did learn from other people that he was born and raised in the Hollow.

M: Could you tell us a little bit, Mr. Quatro, about what happened after the mills started working and they started hiring people again. This, I would say, was after the Depression was pretty well over.

Q: Well, when the Depression was over, we all started back to work. But still we weren't what you would say 100 percent. We went through CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps] and we had WPA [Works Progress Administration]. I can remember you had people walking up and down the streets with soup buckets. They used to go up Watt Street hill, that building where they used to make it, and they would come home with a bowl of soup or something. Then the CCC's came out. Then the work got a little better. We went for a little while and then I think we went back to not working too good again.

M: It wasn't steady work. It was maybe several days a week?

Q: Where I worked, we made a lot of beer cases. You know, the beer came in style then. They passed a law in 1933 for beer.

M: Could you tell us a little bit about the CCC and WPA?

Q: Well, the CCC was a nice experience for all of us. Hell, a lot of kids went to California. They had never dreamt of going to California. They used to get, I think, \$30 a month. That used to come home for their parents. They got their board and everything. They got their trip and it

was a nice experience. I remember that first carload that went out of there at Youngstown, it was a whole carload full, right out of P & LE Station.

M: What did they do? Do you know what they did? What was the idea of the CCC?

Q: Well, working out in the woods, forest, cutting down, and building roads, beautifying the country is what it was. My brother went to Massilon, right in Ohio. He was sent in 1936. But the kids that went out here first went to California and Utah, but towards the end they starting sending them here.

M: Do you think we ought to have such a program today?

Q: I think if they had a program today, it's better than putting them on relief and spending all of that money the way they do. Instead of giving them \$100 for nothing, there's a lot of things in this country that could be done. There are a lot of things in Youngstown that could be improved, instead of letting the kids run around and do nothing. That was a good program.

M: This would not only give them a purpose, but it would also keep them out of getting in trouble.

Q: That's right.

M: And it's a good program. Like you said, it gave them their room and board and gave them some spending money.

Q: I could see myself when I was a kid, I could picture myself, if I didn't have anything to do, no money, nothing, no clothes, and I had no enjoyment in life. Hey, I'm going to start thinking about something. I'm going to start doing things. Now things like this, you would be surprised how companionship and people, you know, a lot of them still communicate. They're old men now and they still communicate. These are people from all over the country.

M: This was an experience for them, besides, it was broadening their education.

Q: An education, that's right. Now your WPA, if our fathers in this town had the foresight as some of the other cities in this country had during the Depression, we could have had a stadium in this city. You want to realize that there's over, I would say, three-quarter of a million people around this area. And we don't have a stadium. They started hollering about Youngstown State

playing this team and that team. I don't care if Youngstown State had a team like the Pittsburgh Steelers, who could they play? Are you going to bring them up to Rayen Stadium where you can seat 1,500 people? Those teams, they want a lot of money. So what happens? If they would have seen ahead and had the foresight during the WPA, they could have built a stadium twenty times cheaper. You could have built a stadium in those days for five million dollars where you would have to pay fifty million today.

M: Do you think that this could still exist today if our present administration could maybe take some of these people that are on welfare and let them do this kind of a project today?

Q: You could, but you are going to pay through the nose now. You are not getting it as cheap as you did then. My God, they pay people nowadays not to work. Now what do you think you are going to pay them to work? As long as you are giving people no money, there is no incentive for them to go to work. In those days, I would be tickled pink if they would say, "You go to work, the WPA will give you just the necessities of life." Not to pay you five dollars an hour. You could get bricklayers a dime a dozen in those days. They would be glad to go to work for you. Carpenters, you name it, you could have built anything. You could have beautified your city. They failed and now you are going to have to pay if you want one.

M: Now some cities did do this?

Q: Some cities did do it and they gained by it.

M: And they are still appreciating the benefits of the WPA?

Q: That's absolutely right. Right offhand I can't name you any cities that have that. I can't think about it. But I know for a fact that there are a lot of communities in Ohio that got that thing done through WPA. If you have to do it today, well . . . I just saw in the paper where Youngstown College is going to build a little place there for, I think, six or nine million dollars. What they're doing there you could have got that done for a million dollars or maybe less. Now you see what they have to put out.

M: Well, they are paying for the labor too.

Q: You get a guy for five dollars an hour, you've got yourself a janitor, that's what you've got. You're not going to get anybody else but a janitor for that kind of money. To build a stadium, you've got to get the craftsmen there. You've got bricklayers, plumbers,

electricians, and those guys are high salary men. Then you've got to have technicians. You've got to have your architects. Those guys, they don't go for cheap. Take an architect, to draw a plan he probably wants \$100,000 to \$200,000 just to draw a plan. Oh yes, they missed the boat and there's no question about it. They missed the boat.

M: It's kind of sad. But you would think that maybe we could learn by our mistakes, but sometimes we never do.

Q: Well, that is one, big mistake. It just sticks right out. Nobody wants to admit, but we should have had a stadium in this town at least during the Depression. What an opportunity somebody let go.

Then everything got settled out and everything, and then that war came. We lost quite a few from the Hollow. Now name me one place in the city that has got a shrine or monument for their fallen boys. The Hollow, as old and ancient as it seems and it looks, we've got a monument there with all the names of the boys that lost their lives. I think the Hollow, during the war, did their share. We lost about 22 or 23. They have their name on that.

M: Now these were all Smoky Hollow boys?

Q: All Smoky Hollow. Every name on the plaque is a Smoky Hollow boy. In fact, I've got a nephew in there.

M: Could you name some of those boys for us?

Q: Well, there's Hymie Fine, Billy Santore, the Marinelli boy, I just can't remember too many.

M: We're talking about the boys that were killed in action?

Q: I'm talking about the boys that were killed in action. We had quite a few. And to sum it all up, if all the world would live and act like the people from the Old Hollow, I think this world would be a better place to live in. Nowadays, no matter where you go, you hardly know your neighbor. That's a fact. I went to California. I've got a brother down there. They've got fences ten feet high. He has lived in that house four years and he doesn't even know the people who live next door to him. It wasn't like that down in the Hollow. If you didn't have anything to do, you would go down to the corner. The first thing Joe would come out and then Jack. And the first thing you know, you've got a gang down there. You get out in the street and you start playing ball right out in the street.

I remember my father-in-law, and not only him, but all those immigrants, if we would knock the ball in their yard, we would have a heck of a time buying one. Then we would get it and somebody would throw it over the fence. They would be like hawks. They would get that ball and throw it right in the pot belly stove they had over there and they would get rid of the ball, football or anything.

M: Do you think that the reason for this was because they were kind of protecting their windows?

Q: No, they were from the other side of the pond and they were brought up like that and they brought it over here. Well, do you know when I first saw my wife? I saw her running from the house and she was going in the back to get rid of some rubbish. I was sitting on the corner with a couple of guys and I said, "Who's that girl?" They said, "Hey, you'd better not mention her. Her father will kill you." I said, "Kill me, what for?" "Oh, you're not allowed to talk to her." I said, "Why heck, I'm no murderer." So I got off the seat there and I went over to where she was walking around the house and when she came back I said, "Hey!" She shook like a leaf and she was scared. If her old man would have seen her there he would have probably killed her. He was really strict, but he was a real honest man.

M: Again, he was still protecting her property.

Q: He wouldn't even let my wife cut her hair. In those days it used to be bobbed hair. When I married her, her hair was way, way long. About a year after we were married she said that she wanted to cut her hair. I said, "You want to cut your hair, go ahead." She went and cut it. The old man wanted to throw her out of the house. This was after we were married! That's true.

I had the cheapest engagement any man would want to have. I couldn't take her out. I would go down to the house there and I'd go in the house there at maybe 6:30 or 7:00. I would go upstairs. It wouldn't be me and her. The old man and the old lady, one over here and one over there. The old lady, her and I got along pretty good, but the old man. . . One night I went in there and I had chewing tobacco in my mouth. I didn't hear him coming up. And the first thing you know, there he was. He didn't like anybody that chewed tobacco. Now I had a mouth full of it and I couldn't spit. So there was only one thing that I could do and that was to swallow it and that's what I did, and boy did I get sick.

M: Okay, was there anything else you can recall about Smoky Hollow?

Q: Well, there's no doubt a lot of things just escape me right now, but I think I've covered most of it. I can sum it all up in one thing, it was one heck of a bunch of people down there. I can go on and on and remember and think. I can think of a lot of instances that probably escape my mind right now. There are a lot of them I know. I never had any hard feelings towards anybody down there.

M: Now you were always accepted as part of the people there?

Q: That's right. It was buddy - buddy. They still have it. They still have Golden Eagle meetings. Once a year all the guys get together and they reminisce. Guys come from all over the country just to be there.

M: What would happen when some outsider would come into Smoky Hollow, say not to live, but to visit? Were they treated with the same conditions?

Q: Well, the first thing that we know . . . Naturally, when you are that close, it's like a family. When a stranger comes in town, you are going to know right away. The first thing you want to know is who he is. All right, let's say that's Joe's cousin or something and he was accepted right into the community.

M: As long as somebody else knew him, then he was part of it?

Q: As long as we knew him. If we didn't know him, we would find out pretty darn soon. If he didn't fit into our category, he would know it right away.

M: All right, but if he was a relative or a friend of somebody else . . .

Q: As long as we knew. You take a lot of strangers sometimes, you don't know who they are. But as long as you say he is this and that, then we accept it. He could be the worst guy in the world even though he is your relative. But we were lucky in that matter.

M: They were all accepted then as a friend?

Q: Oh, yes.

M: Okay, thank you, Mr. Quatro.