

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

History of East Palestine, Ohio

Historical Experience

O. H. 108

HENRY R. ASHBAUGH

Interviewed

by

Stephan G. Casi

on

May 11, 1979

HENRY R. ASHBAUGH

Henry Ashbaugh was born on June 7, 1904 in East Palestine, Ohio. He was born in the hotel his parents owned on Market Street. Mr. Ashbaugh graduated from East Palestine High School in 1924. During his years in school he was very active with the school orchestra.

As a young boy, Mr. Ashbaugh held several jobs including delivering meat for the Rukenbrod Meat Market and delivering the Daily Leader the first time it was ever delivered in town. A year after graduation he joined a local band and played banjo throughout the tri-state area. By 1931 he stopped playing in area bands because of the Depression. Mr. Ashbaugh was accepted at Ohio State in 1930 but was unable to gather enough money to enter college. For the next three years Mr. Ashbaugh worked on a local apple farm. In 1933, his uncle got him a job working for U.S. Steel in Youngstown. Despite having a good job during the Depression adventure beckoned and he left for the gold mines of Arizona. After staying in Arizona for one year, he returned to East Palestine to work for Adamson Manufacturing Company as a welder. After working for the Adamson Company for three years he moved to San Antonio, Texas where he operated a gas station and also worked

for several air fields in Texas. In 1942 Mr. Ashbaugh joined the U.S. Coast Guard and worked as a mechanic in Galveston. While in the service Mr. Ashbaugh had the opportunity to go to the G.M. Institute for diesels. After his discharge in 1944, he worked for Brown Express in San Antonio, Texas. Mr. Ashbaugh returned to Ohio in 1948. From 1948 until his retirement in 1973 he drove his own truck, drove a truck for the city of East Palestine, worked for the East Palestine Lumber Company and was a part-time employee in the parts department for Mackal Motors.

Mr. Ashbaugh resides with his wife, Florence, at 278 West North Avenue, East Palestine. They are members of the Methodist Church and Mr. Ashbaugh is a member of the East Palestine Order of Moose.

Stephan G. Casi

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History of East Palestine, Ohio

INTERVIEWEE: HENRY RUSSEL ASHBAUGH
INTERVIEWER: Stephan G. Casi
SUBJECT: History of East Palestine
DATE: May 11, 1979

C: This is an interview with Henry Russel Ashbaugh for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, History of East Palestine by Stephan G. Casi at 278 West North Avenue, East Palestine, Ohio on May 11, 1979 at 3:30 p.m.

Mr. Ashbaugh, what do you remember about your parents and family and what could you tell us about them coming to the East Palestine area?

A: Well, my father was born in East Liverpool and he was a potter [pottery worker]. He moved up here I don't remember what year. My mother and her dad run the hotel down at Market Street and the railroad, a three story hotel. The only transportation in and out of this town was the railroad, and that was in the early 1900s. I was born in that hotel and my mother and dad lived there. They were married there and I had an older sister that was born there, too. They run that hotel for I don't know how long.

Then, in my infancy, I had a bad start. I had lobar pneumonia and mock [not fatal] meningitis together. They give me up three times for dead and I had seventy-five straight convulsions and I come out of it. Of course, you know I lived. So they started to feed me iron medicine. What I mean: medicine with iron in it. We grew up

and then my granddad built the house on 45 West Clark Street.

C: When did your family move to East Palestine?

A: They were here in East Palestine.

C: Okay. You say they owned a hotel in town?

A: Yes.

C: Not East Liverpool?

A: No, no. [The hotel] was right above the railroad tracks and by the way, my great-granddad, Joe Meek, homesteaded the farm out here west of town, 640 acres. He was the first sheriff of this county. He raised seven boys out there and one girl. And, of course, they were scattered all over the country. My granddad built this hotel down here and run it.

So, I got off to a bad start but I started to grow up and one thing led to another. My mother was cooking at the motel. She's a good cook. She was a good cook and everything went fine. Then my granddad built this house at 45 West Clark Street and we moved in there in 1911. I was seven years old and I'm seventy-five now. I was seven years old. Pauline was twelve; my brother was five and we lived there from then on. That's where we were raised, 45 West Clark Street, where Kenny Rukenbrod lives today. [K.E. Rukenbrod was married to my sister]. Well, then we started to grow up. That was our home.

Now, we just did the natural things. We started to go swimming. We started to bicycle ride. I joined the Boy Scouts and I had an accident with the Boy Scouts. I got run over with a truck. A truck run over my knee and I picked my bicycle up and went home and laid down on the davenport. There were no hospitals in those days. So, I got over it. I went through it.

Later on, when I started to grow up, I met Kenny Rukenbrod at nine years old. I met him down in front of the hotel. He explained he was going to the new houses down State line. So I went with him and I started to go with him, one week, two weeks, three weeks, and pretty soon I was

taking that route myself with a pony cart. You'd go down there and you'd deliver their meat [from the Rukenbrod Meat Market] and you'd take their order for the next time, for two days later, and you'd come back and do it the next time. I was only ten, eleven.

Well, I wanted a pony. I really wanted a pony. So the first day the Daily Leader [a daily paper printed in East Palestine in 1915] was printed in East Palestine, I started to deliver it. I delivered it from the Christian Church to the city light plant that was called Lowtown, [a suburb of East Palestine]. For two years solid I delivered that paper and I saved my money. I had enough to buy a pony and I bought a pony. And he was something.

C: How much did it cost you?

A: The pony? Forty-five dollars. By the way, it was today I bought him, May 11th. I remember that distinctly. And so I brought him home and he was an Indian pony. He was rough, and I was rough so we got along pretty good.

I wasn't too big. I was small for my age. My teeth were bad from this iron medicine and I didn't know what was affecting me. When I graduated from high school I only weighed 120 pounds and I didn't know what was wrong with me. And nobody paid any attention to kids in those days, nobody. You raised yourself. You did what you wanted to do and they kicked you out and let you go. So, I was a pretty rough guy. I could take it. And finally I found out what was wrong with me, my teeth. They were killing me. Well, that's later on. I started through high school and I developed an ear for music.

C: Before we get into high school, I wonder if we could just go back for a minute. Going back to your childhood, as a child, what do you remember about being raised in your family, about the discipline? Did you have a lot of work to do for your dad? Did you have chores and things like that?

A: No, no. I worked at the meat market. I worked there and they took me on. I was just a kid but I did my work and I took this route and everybody

accepted it.

C: So most of your time was spent, when you were a kid, working with the Rukenbrods?

A: That's right. That's right. Most of my time. And Kenny liked me. Big Kenny liked me. He was going with my sister. Of course, I knew they were going to get married eventually so I strung along. But I started to raise myself and in the meantime, I picked up this music. Well, I was only seventeen, eighteen. I was playing in the high school orchestra, which I got a full credit for through my career. A quarter of a credit a year for music, and I was on to music. They couldn't kid me. I played banjo and I could go and I knew it. Nobody could hand me anything on banjo. I knew chords. I knew rhythm.

C: But you didn't start till you were how old? When did you start playing the banjo?

A: About fourteen.

C: About fourteen?

A: Yes, fourteen or fifteen. I got out of high school. I have a picture in here of the 1924 high school orchestra. My brother was a violin player and I was a banjo player and there was eighteen in the orchestra. I knew them all. I got out of high school and I finally joined up with a little band in East Palestine and I started to play for dances, professionally. That was in 1925. So one night I was down in the valley. We used to go to the valley every night.

C: Where are some of these places you played? Maybe you can tell us where the valley is.

A: I can tell you all of them. The valley was Beaver Valley, [Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania] and we used to go down there to play music, see gals. And we were cutting [running around] the country. One night I was coming back from the valley and I stopped in a place called Lincoln Gardens. It was a great big dance hall on old 51. I stopped in there; I had another fellow with me, and I always had my banjo in my car. I walked into Lincoln Gar-

dens and there was a beautiful dance going. They had a big crowd. They had a beautiful band, about ten men. In those days, the bands used banjos, tubas, three saxophones, two trumpets, and a slide and drums and piano. Now that was ordinary. It wasn't Dixieland. It was just straight [Big Band] music. So, I listened to them and I thought, there's a nice band. They had a hell of a nice fellow up in front waving his stick and playing the clarinet. So, I walked over and asked the fellow, "Who owns this band?"

"Well," he said, "That man sitting over at that table right there. He owns half of it. The clarinet player owns the other half." So I went over and sat down and talked to him. I said, "I'm a banjo player." "Well, so what do you want?" I said, "I want a job." I said, "You need a banjo. You don't have one."

"Well, do you sing?" I said, "No. (laughter) I can't sing whole notes. I'm a banjo player." I said, "I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll come down next week, same time, same place. I'll sit in for you for nothing. I'll prove that you need a banjo player."

He said, "Okay, that's all right with me." But before the week was out, he called me up. He said, "We broke up. We reorganized and we need you next week." I said, "I'll be there." I was with that band for three years.

- C: What was the name of that band?
- A: Cornwell-Treggaser. We played all of Beaver Falls. We played Pittsburgh. We played North Pittsburgh. We were all over the country. Grove City College. We played a lot of good [places]. We played Masonic Youth Dances and the Broadhead Hotel. Tuxedos--we all bought tuxedos. We had a nice outfit. But at the same time in 1925, I went with a hillbilly band out here in Columbiana and they were strictly square dance. I had a good banjo, a hell of a good banjo and I was tough. What I mean: my fingers would take it for four hours and never bat an eye. I was playing a job out here at Peace Valley [amusement park west of Palestine] one day with a little outfit and inter-

mission time come and I walked outside to get some fresh air and a guy walked up to me and said, "How would you like to play with a good band?" Just like that. (laughter) I said, "What do you mean?"

He said, "I can get you with a good band," I said, "Okay, I'm ready." I was ready for anything. I was twenty-two. He said, "You come to Columbiana on a certain night and park in a certain place and I'll pick you up." I did. He picked me up and we went out and we played at Midway Grange between Columbiana and Lisbon. Midway Grange. There was a bunch of farmers out there that could really go. They could really square dance. They could round dance. They could do anything! So, I parked down there and here he comes. He come down and talked to me. He said, "We got a couple more coming in here pretty soon."

Well, pretty soon a bald-headed guy come in there [with a] Model-T Ford with the steam flying out the radiator. He pulled up and turned, parked, and got out. This fellow said, "I want you to meet Bull Montana," Now that was his nickname. His real name was Frank Hall. I said, "I'm glad to know you." He was a wizard! He was actually a wizard. He had an old clarinet that was an Albert System and about four keys left on it.

We set up for the job and he went in and he put this clarinet under the spigot and he run it up and down to tighten it up but listen, when that boy took off, he was something. And I stayed with them for about three or four years, but I mixed the two bands up. I got the best out of both of them and we had a real band. What I mean: we never hit the road. We stayed right around here and that went on till 1931. The Depression shut us down.

- C: People couldn't afford to even pay their . . .
- A: They couldn't afford to do nothing.
- C: Did you play in East Palestine on several occasions also?
- A: Oh, yes.

C: Where did you perform in East Palestine?

A: Early or late?

C: Well, both.

A: Well, my nephew, Pete Rukenbrod, he's a musician and he plays piano and slide. I come back to this country in 1948. I was in Texas for eight years and I hadn't played anything. So I come back in 1948. My wife divorced me. I was single and I was tearing around the country. So Pete, I raised Pete. He was my buddy. He was hitting the music. What I mean: he was hitting her. He had a band that was going. The Eagles down here had a minstrel show going and they wanted a banjo player. I said, "I'm a banjo player."

"All right, find yourself a banjo and we'll go." I did. Fifty bucks I paid for a banjo, and it was a good one. So, I started to practice and I practiced. I worked, I sweat. My fingers were bleeding for three weeks. I started to tighten up and I could really rattle a banjo. And so we played the minstrel. And Pete said, "Well, come down to our dances." They were playing at the Eagles [Hall]. Well, I knew piano. I knew chords on a piano. So I started to play piano and banjo. When I'd go on piano Pete would go on slide trombone and we had a Dixie outfit that wouldn't stop. What I mean: we could go, and we went for six years.

C: In the 1920s, did you ever perform in East Palestine, some of the bands you played in?

A: Oh, yes.

C: Where did you used to perform then?

A: I performed at the old skating rink. Did you ever hear of the old skating rink?

C: No. Where was that located at?

A: Right where Christopher Courts are. I brought this Pittsburgh band in there one night, two, or three nights [at] Peace Valley, Odd Fellow's Hall, Randall's Park out 14, the bowling alley. They had a dance hall out there. I can name a few more

and that's where we went. But, in 1931, she blew up. You couldn't make enough money to buy gasoline to drive to the job. So we just quit.

But this guy, Bull Montana, Frank Hall, was without a doubt, a wizard. I've seen the crowd just quit dancing and come up and listen to him. We had a Dixie outfit. What I mean: we had a tuba, a trumpet, a slide, a saxophone, a clarinet and piano and banjo and drums, seven men, and we could really go! We'd go on anything. But this sax player, he couldn't stay off the bottle. He fouled up every job we ever had but he could go to Youngstown and get the best work there was, the best! But everybody in Youngstown knew him and knew he couldn't last. And I was faithful. What I mean: I was loyal but I was fighting a downhill battle. I couldn't win. And he died in 1937, forty-four years old. We put him away. Well, then I give it up. I just give it up.

- C: Maybe we could go back for a minute. We'll get back to the 1920s and 1930s.
- A: Okay.
- C: How about going to school here in East Palestine. What do you remember about schools, your teachers, the discipline, the subjects?
- A: Oh, yes. I had some wonderful teachers, wonderful. And then I had some that I didn't get along with.
- C: What schools did you attend here?
- A: The middle school, that was high school then and I went straight through four years. And when I started in there, A.D. Ladd was the superintendent and he was a fine man. A.D. Ladd was a fine man. I had some good instructors. Father Ryan--they called him Father, I don't know why. I forget his first name. Ryan taught mathematics and I really loved that guy and I studied under him. He was a very slight one hundred and twenty-five pound man and he had a big head, slim jaws and he was a character! What I mean: a character, but I really liked him and I would do anything for him. And the first year of algebra, I flunked because I didn't have a good instructor and I wasn't interested. But I quit and I come back the next year

and I went under him and I made the best grades in class because I was interested. So, he was one, algebra. Next year was the second year, third year.

C: Junior year?

A: Yes. What's in mathematics?

C: Trigonometry? Geometry?

A: No.

C: Calculus?

A: They didn't know anything about calculus in those days. Not Euclid. It was the third year of mathematics and I had a teacher by the name of Retter, Edith Retter, and she was good too. Well, by then I had my feet in the ground and I knew mathematics. I could just see them and I did good in them. Languages, I never could make it: Virgil, French, Latin. But I had a French teacher, she was a nice little thing. I used to date her. That's the way I got my credit. In my senior year, she and I were buddies and I didn't know any more French than I know today. (laughter) That's a confession but it's the truth. I'm here to put down the truth. Her name was Norma Chenwith.

And, there was a fellow in there--I forget what he taught--his name was Winnery, Dutch Winnery, and he has a relative that's a chief of police in Salem today. He was without a doubt, the finest man I ever met. He and I just were like that and he died at thirty-seven years old with pneumonia. But I've often wanted to go to Salem to talk to his relatives and ask about him because he was a fine fellow.

We also had a fellow by the name of Niesel and he was one of the meanest sons of bitches I ever knew. If I'd ever met him when I was twenty-five years old, there would have been no arguments. There would have been no talk. I'd have hit that son of a bitch in the jaw as hard as I could hit him.

C: Were most of your teachers strict?

A: Fairly strict. Some of them. Now here's what astounded me about high school. Some of them could walk in a room and you could hear a pin drop. Some of them could walk in a room and nobody would look at them. Nobody would pay any attention. They'd just keep throwing their erasers and raising hell and there's nothing the teacher could do. And that's the way it went. You either had discipline or you had no discipline. Some people had it and some people didn't.

This Father Ryan could walk in a room and everybody settled down and started to study and he never said a word; never had to say a word. He was a fine man and he was intelligent and he just had that characteristic about him that brought on discipline. I couldn't understand it. I still don't understand it and I imagine it's that way today. Some teachers have it and some teachers don't.

Some teachers get rough. We had a couple of rough ones when I was in school. The principal up here by the name of Boutle was rough. He thought he was rough. He'd take the kids down in the office and just beat the living hell out of them. What I mean: he'd take his coat off and go to work on them. He was a boxer in college.

There was one fellow here in East Palestine by the name of Russell Vanfausen who is a sheriff today. [Sheriff of Col. Co.] He was in high school then.

C: That would be his son that's the sheriff, right?

A: Russell Vanfausen is the sheriff [today].

C: He's presently the sheriff?

A: Yes. And he was in high school then and this Boutle took him down in the office. Well, he weighed a hundred and eighty-five pounds and he was all muscle. He was all muscle and he wasn't afraid of anything because I knew him all my life and his brother too, and they were rough. Boutle took his coat off and he was going to work Russell over. Russell just kind of got a silly grin on his face and he said, "Okay, start."

Well, Boutle didn't start. Why, Russ Vanfausen would have eaten him alive. He would have killed him if he'd ever started and that's the way it went.

Some guys--I don't know. Some of these high school teachers try everything in the book but psychology. Psychology is what it takes. You've got to out-think the other guy. Do you understand this? We're off the subject.

C: No, no. We're still on the subject. So, you graduated from high school.

A: In 1924.

C: Right. And then your first job actually . . .

A: Was with Kenny Rukenbrod. I went to work [driving] on a truck.

C: Right. After high school, were you still working with Rukenbrod or did you go into music to make a living?

A: Both. I was in both.

C: Okay.

A: Now, I worked for Kenny for four years, till 1928. In 1930, I got an idea that with my banjo, I could go to college. I knew a piano player from Youngstown by the name of Frankie Lewis, that was going to Ohio State. He was a good friend of mine and he was a slam-bang piano player. So, I contacted him and he said, "Come down." So I went down. I got a ride down with Harry Herbert. Now this was in 1930 and what I mean: money was nil. There was no money. So, I went down to this fraternity house and I talked to the guys and I put in my application and there was no use to stay there because I didn't have any money and I couldn't start and I couldn't find Frankie Lewis, so I come back home. In two days, I got a telegram from Ohio State.

I wanted to go into the school of forestry, which they wanted to fill up. Forestry, that's forest ranger stuff. And they said, "Come down. We need you." I tried to borrow fifty dollars to buy books to start and get down there and get my banjo going

and get with a band. I could have done it. I couldn't borrow ten bucks,

C: How about your parents, were they having a hard time then, too?

A: They were having just as rough a time as anybody. Nobody had any money and I'm not kidding you. Nobody.

C: So the East Palestine area would you say suffered during the Depression, a lot of people?

A: Terrible, terrible. All right. In 1931, I went out to an apple farm here. I didn't have anything. I didn't have a job. I went out to an apple farm.

C: Where were you living?

A: With my sister and brother-in-law, Kenny Rukenbrod, on West Clark Street. I was single. I was twenty-seven. I went out to Chick Adam's apple farm. He raised a hundred thousand bushels of apples a year. He had four farms. Well, I was young and I was full of steam. I was twenty-seven years old. I was pretty strong. I wrote out a card and I give it to them. I said, "I'll be ready to come to work anytime you're ready."

They called me up in two days. "Come on." So I started to drive truck. I was a good driver. I was a good truck man. I knew my machinery. I started to drive a truck but working on an apple farm, I was working for twelve-and-a-half cents an hour, ten hours, a dollar and a quarter, and I was working hard. That's what put this meat on me. So, I liked it. In a way, I liked it but I was working my butt off for nothing. So finally I got to hauling apples to Cleveland and Pittsburgh on their trucks, a hundred and thirty bushels a load. Load by hand, unload by hand. The trip to Cleveland was five dollars. Middle of the winter, no heaters in the trucks, 1932 GMC, 1932 Fords, no heaters, just sit there and take it. Two trips and I was tired out, which took twenty-four hours. You loaded, packed, loaded by hand. Two trips, ten bucks, twenty-four hours of hard work. What I mean: you were ready for bed when you got home. I went through that for three years and I was driving a car, I was dating a gal and . . .

C: But you had a job.

A: I had a job. I never went on relief. I never, never asked for anything. I earned it. I didn't earn much. But, finally I went to my Uncle Mike-- I don't know whether you're going to talk to him or not--down on Market Street. He was an employment agent in U.S. Steel in Youngstown. So, he got me a job over there in the steel mill at fifty-seven cents an hour.

C: What year was that?

A: That was in 1932, 1933 and what I mean; I thought I was getting rich. I was in the bucks. So, I was going with a gal down here in the country and she had a brother-in-law by the name of Dutcher and his dad was a promoter. What I mean; he was a promoter. So, he had twenty gold claims in Arizona and he wanted to go out there and find out what he had. Well, he got talking to me. Now I had this job in McDonald. I was working in the steel mill. I was making fifty-seven cents an hour.

C: You were driving to work every day?

A: Oh, yes. Yes. I had a room in Girard where I was living. That's about three miles. So, this adventure sounded like something. It took my ear--adventure. I was a single man. I was ready to go. Gold mines in Arizona, that enticed me. I said, "All right, what's your proposition?" Well, he said, "There ain't much money in it but lots of work in it." So, I said, "All right, let's go." I quit my job at McDonald. We took off in the middle of January in a 1933 Chevrolet Coupe, all our supplies, everything in it. We took off for Arizona. We went to Phoenix. We went 108 miles west of Phoenix to Salome. Salome, Arizona. And that's where his mines were. Twenty claims in the Harcahela Mountains south of Salome, sixty miles from Yuma and it was sound country. Sound country.

So we tied into her. We went out to the mines. We had a crew. Those Arizona cowboys follow you anyplace for a couple of bucks and we started to open up this mine on these twenty claims. We were opening up a forty foot cut, three foot wide and forty foot high. Straight through a razor back.

We were drilling two foot holes in solid granite with a two foot bull nose drill and a four pound single jackhammer and it took you two hours to put a hole down, fill her full of dynamite and shoot, clean the muck out, get the vein out. It was quartz rock. We put it in sacks, except the big stones. It was interesting and it was hard work.

But in the middle of February it was a hundred in the shade out there and in the middle of the day. Nights it was cool, beautiful. That's wonderful country. We were there three months. We went into Los Angeles and we tried to promote some more money. We needed money.

C: You weren't finding too much gold?

A: We found gold that assayed five hundred dollars a ton. We put thirty tons in a freight car and shipped it to El Paso to the smelter and as soon as this old man got his report from that shipment, the syndicate bought it like that. Just like that, big syndicate. Big syndicate. It must have been good. I never did hear. All I got out of it was my trip and adventure. What I mean; adventure. I had it. That was in 1934. Then I come back here and settled down. I've been around. I've been around.

C: So you get back to East Palestine and then what was your next job?

A: I come back here in 1950. No.

C: You were back in 1934, 1935.

A: Yes. And I went to work for Adamson's. I learned to weld.

C: Were things pretty bad still in the 1930s?

A: They hadn't picked up too much. I went to work for Adamson's and I forget how much we made. It wasn't too much but I did learn a trade. I was always ready to learn. I was mechanically minded and I was interested in engines, four cycle engines, internal combustion engines, and I went in the service in 1942 and I went to town there. What I mean; they shipped me through schools that I'll never forget what they taught me.

C: You worked at Adamson's until you went to the war?

A: I worked at Adamson's from 1935, 1936 and 1937 and then I married this gal. Well, I was trucking. I had a truck. I was doing good. So, her folks were kind of footloose. They wanted to go to Texas. Well, what's wrong with that? They went to Texas and we went to Texas and I've driven that thirty-three times to San Antonio. So we went to Texas and we had a little money and I went in the gas station business down there. And I wasn't in it three months till the war broke out. That was December 7, 1939.

C: 1941, right?

A: No, 1940. December 7, 1940. So, it just shut me down completely. So I went to Kelly Field [a U.S. Airfield in San Antonio, second largest] and they were hiring men faster than they could put them to work and I went out there and got a job. And I was out there till, oh, a long time and then I transferred to Randolph Field [another air force field in San Antonio] which was the West Point of the air. Well, the draft got breathing down my neck and I was thirty-eight years old but the draft was still breathing down my neck. So, I thought if I'm going to be in this, I better pick my job. I don't want to be in the infantry, because I couldn't stand it. So, I got in the Coast Guard as a mechanic. Then in 1942, August, I took my oath in Fort Worth and they shipped me to New Orleans. I took my boot training, went to boat school, Andy Higgin's boat school and then they shipped me to Galveston, Texas. I got into Galveston and we were at the Galvez Hotel, which was a beautiful place right on the beach.

So, the first week they sent me down in the cellar. "What are you?" I said, "I'm a mechanic."

"Okay, go down in the cellar." The old chief, he was a hell of a nice fellow, Whitney, Chief Whitney. He said, "Can you weld?" I said, "Yes."

"Okay, come on." I did a job for him. He said, "You're a welder. You've got a job." And I was there for a year, a solid year. Well, I liked it. I didn't mind it a bit. I got home once in a while to San Antonio.

So one day, there was a guy come in there interviewing boots [sailors]. So he called me up in the office and he said, "You're a mechanic." I said, "Well, I'm supposed to be." He said, "Could you tighten up the bearings in an engine?" I said, "Yes and no." He said, "Now, listen, I don't want any smart answers. I want to know."

Well, I said, "From the way you asked the question, you don't know. A poured bearing like an old Chevrolet can be tightened. A shell bearing where you put the shell in can't be tightened." I said, "How much do you know about engines? I've been into them a few years." Well, he kind of pulled on his horse. He said, "Are you happy here?"

I said, "Yes. I'm doing good."

"Do you like it?"

I said, "Yes."

"Do you want to go anyplace?"

"No. Don't want to go a damn place," I did! (laughter) He knew it too. He said, "Okay." In thirty days I had my papers to go to Flint, Michigan to General Motors Institute Diesel School. It's just what I wanted. So I went up there and studied Diesel for about three months.

C: So you never really did any actual fighting in the war?

A: Oh, no. No. No combat. No combat.

C: Right.

A: No, I was over-the-hill. They knew it. They were just using me. So I thought, I'm going to use you a little bit. So, I wrote a letter back here through a lieutenant to a coal company that I worked for back here and a buddy of mine, a real buddy. The answer come back: We need him. He knows his business. Well, in two weeks my discharge was in. So I come back to Ohio, but I had to bring my family back here. I had two boys and a wife. Well, she didn't want to come back. She hated it. So we come back, and we stayed a while. We worked a while. Finally, she went back with the boys. I knew I

was fighting a downhill fight. So, it wasn't long till I said, "I'm going back to Ohio."

Well, she said, "You just pack your God damn suitcase and go back to Ohio any time you're ready."

She didn't have to say it twice. I did it and in two months I had papers for a divorce. These boys were small; they were four and seven or seven and ten or something like that. I thought, they'll be all right. They're in good hands.

So I come back here in 1948 and I was working. I got a good job, truck driving. I went down to see them, and took them presents. I went down to see them a couple times. Well, then I met my present wife in [East Palestine] 1950. We've been married twenty-nine years, just like that. Everything is fine. So, no regrets. My boys are 34 and 37. One is a major in the Air Force, in Anchorage, Alaska. The other one is an electrician in Austin, [Texas], six-fifty an hour, got his card, works for Otis Elevators. He's a working fool. He'll never quit, and he's doing good. I have no troubles, no troubles.

C: So, you're back in Ohio in the 1940s and you drove a truck again in the 1940s.

A: Oh, yes.

C: Did you continue to drive a truck?

A: Yes. I drove truck after I married this kid. I had my own truck. I drove truck and finally I went to work for the lumber company down here driving truck. I hauled lumber for them for six years. Then, I worked for the city for five years driving a truck for them and then I was semi-retired. I took my pension from the city and I took my social security. Then I worked for Ronny Mackall, [Mackall Motors] parts department up here on the hill and that was just a part-time job. So, I didn't make much out of that. I was there four years.

C: Maybe we could talk about what the town was like, some of the changes you've seen in East Palestine since you were a kid, some of the different stores and buildings that have changed hands and so on.

A: Oh, gee. There were restaurants on the front street, when I was a young fellow, what I mean: where we used to stop at night, Les Dornan's, Fred Botts, and hamburger joints, Busy Bee Restaurants and oh, gee what a change there's been. Now, Shaffer's House, Mackall's Shaffer House started up in, oh, wait a minute now. Shaffer's mother and my mother were cousins. His name was Hugh Shaffer and he was a nice guy and he was a businessman and he started a restaurant down there in [East Palestine--Taggart Street] oh, I wish I could think of that date. I remember it distinctly. It went, it really went and it's still going. Since Mackall bought it, it's going. Of course, Hugh Shaffer is dead now.

The plaza wasn't built. There was a baseball field down there where the plaza is now and Golden Dawn wasn't there. That was all pasture field. And the front street, oh, there's been so damn many changes on the front street that I [must think]. There was a harness shop where McAmmon's Insurance Agency is, a harness shop owned by Overlander, Furdy Overlander, and if you'll look on the building down there where Sally's Restaurant and the doughnut shop is, look up in the top, you'll see "Overlander." He built that building and he used to have a livery stable right back of that. He rented out horses and buggies. Well, there was a livery stable right across the alley called Moyne Wilson's and the Kramer brothers had a livery stable down on Liberty. They rented out horses and buggies. My granddad had a livery stable right back [on West Clark] of Kenny's house. He rented out horses and buggies. Then Harriott Trucking come in there and rented the whole works, and they had teams of horses. And that was the Harriott Trucking, Kenny's dad.

C: They started with horse and buggy?

A: That's right. They started with horses and wagons, and they had teams. They'd do excavating. They'd do hauling of any kind. It was called the Harriott Transfer and I used to ride on their wagons when I was a kid. It was something. It was something.

C: What do you remember about the prohibition period in East Palestine?

A: Oh, man.

- C: The dry period and the "roaring twenties?"
- A: Yes, yes. The roaring twenties. I was playing banjo then. What I mean; banjo. And I drank lots of bootleg whiskey. Oh, man!
- C: Was there a lot of bootlegging here in East Palestine?
- A: Oh, yes, bootlegging everywhere. I drank whiskey that was so God damn rotten it would tear your guts out. But one thing about me, when I got enough that was enough. I never overdid it. That's the only reason I'm living today. I knew right when I got to a certain point, that's it. I shut her off. I'd been in the valley so God damn drunk I couldn't see straight.

I run around with seven guys; Bob Merwin was one, brother to Paul. Leonard Morris was another one, brother to Bob. All my age. Firpo Hineman, Don Hineman, he could have been a pro boxer. He was a big fellow. He had a bad leg. He was with them. My brother, Warren; Bob's brother Fred--he's dead now--Alex Adanson. Oh, we used to have a gang that would just go out and fight, Jesus Christ!

I had a fight with Bob Merwin one night and I hit him so hard and he was so drunk, he didn't know what hit him, and that's the truth. We were in a blizzard, a snow blizzard, and driving a Cole four-door sedan with big doughnut tires on it and he come in the back door and I was in the front seat and I just whhhew, I just clipped him one and he rolled out through the snow. He didn't know who hit him. That's how drunk he was. Now, this is maybe a confession. But that's the way I grew up.

- C: What do you remember about the police department in town? Was there much crime in East Palestine?
- A: Oh, yes, a good bit. When I was young, McGraw's Rubber Company was going. It was the third largest in the world in those days, and E.C. McGraw was the owner. He was a fine fellow but he had a son that wasn't worth a damn and a son-in-law that wasn't worth a damn and they just used the place up. But as long as E.C. was living, he did a good job and he run, and it went.

The police department was one man, no cruisers. He patrolled this town on foot. And this was a rough town. What I mean: rough, because there were guys that would go to work and as soon as they would get out of bed down at the flop joint down there at Tiger Street somebody else would be off a job and they would go in there and sleep and it was just a flop joint. That's all it was and that's the way it went, three shifts a day, and what I mean: there were some characters in this town. You've heard of Gene Austin, the crooner? He worked down there and he went from there to Cleveland and he made the tops but he died just shortly after. He was a real thin fellow. But he had a wonderful voice. Oh, I knew a lot of them. And they didn't pull 'ere a punch me. But this cop, his name was Grant Wilson. He weighed about 240 and was about 6 foot 2, 6 foot 3, and he wasn't afraid of anybody. He would show up where he wasn't supposed to be and nobody buffaloed him, nobody. I don't care whether there were three or four of them, and he kept the law.

C: This is during the 1920s?

A: Early 1920s. Early 1920s, yes and the late teens, yes. Yes, I lived through it.

C: When we talk about the 1950s here in East Palestine, what are some things that stand out in your mind?

A: Well, they built the schools. They put an addition on that school. I remember that distinctly.

C: That's the middle school?

A: Yes. They didn't have that gym on there. I graduated out of that school. That was high school then. And they built a high school then and I don't remember much about them building the high school but things started to advance pretty fast. And when I moved up here, Howard Parker, my neighbor--hell of a nice fellow, big fellow. He's rough. He was rough. Nobody backed him down and he was a good neighbor. And it was long before that, a good bit before that, they built the post office down here. There used to be two homes down there. They tore them out and built the post office and then they tore down the Morris Grocery Store [corner of Market and West Clark] which was where the Neil Motors Ford parking lot is now. That was a building. I worked in there

for a long time.

Let's start with the Clark Gas Station on Market and East Clark. There used to be a doctor's office and residence in there, big square house. He was a good doctor, Doctor McCommon. He brought me into this world, he brought all us children into this world. The flu, the year of the flu which was 1918, that killed him. He went till he couldn't see the road anymore. He just went and there was sixteen people died here one night with the flu in 1918. Well, they tore his house down and they put the Clark Gas Station in there.

Directly across the street on the south side of East Clark and Market was called the Pierce House and it was a boarding and rooming house, two stories, a pretty good-sized place, and they kept a lot of boarders and roomers. Next to that was [a white brick building] the B.F. Todd Grocery Store in a brick building, white brick building which was two rooms and B.F. Todd was in one side and C.B. Rainsberger Drugstore was in the other side. I worked in the C.B. Rainsberger Drugstore from the time I was a freshman till I was a senior. I'd go at six o'clock in the morning and I would go to school and I would come back at six o'clock in the evening and work till ten, and that went on all through high school.

Well, then next to that was the C.F. Woods Feed Store which was a wooden building and he sold feed, cattle feed, horse feed, and chicken feed and all those kind and he was in business for a long time. And he lived up next to where Lester Morris lives today on about 441 North Market. Well, then next to him was a Chinese laundry. I forget the name of the Chinaman that run it and his wife and they run that as long as I can remember. And next to that was a shoe shop, shoe repair shop. Right next to the railroad track, and John Peterson run that. To my knowledge, I don't remember who run it before but John Peterson who was related to the Petersons down the street here, he run that.

Well then, across the track was a tall brick building, two or three stories, and this big brick building south of the railroad track where the Amoco Station is now, there was a poolroom in there. There were apartments and offices upstairs and there

was also a Yoder and Shastine department store downstairs. They sold dry goods and stuff like that. Across Taggart Street was a vacant lot and then a big house and in this big house was a residence of an electrician by the name of Hineman and I ran around with his son. They were Swiss. His son was a beautiful-built fellow. He could have made the prizefighting ring but he had polio. He had a bad leg but he still played basketball in East Palestine. They lived in this big house.

Across the alley from where the Western Auto is today was the S.J. Lowry Funeral Home and furniture store and they were pretty big. They were a good outfit. S.J. Lowry and his wife were both killed in an automobile accident around 1940, and Jay Lowry, their son, lived right down the street here. I don't know how long he lived. Then on down the street [from Lowry's] was the Fern Drugstore next to S.J. Lowry, run by John Southern and then beyond that was Furdy Overlander's Harness Shop, where an old man by the name of Firch made harness. He actually made harness. He would take two needles and shove them through like this, and pull them through and he made traces. He made anything, anything. It was slow work but it was good work. And Furdy Overlander owned that harness shop on down the street where Justison Hartley's Hardware is today.

C: McCommon Hardware?

A: Used to be McCommon and by the way, that McCommon was the son of this doctor. And that was the Hartley Hardware. I worked there for two or three summers. And then next was the Horace Chamberlain and Thomas Moore shoe store. It was a good shoe store. It was there for a long time, and on the corner of Rebecca and Market, on the north side was Harry Ortt's paper store. He sold the same thing Blythe does today. Newspapers, papers, any kind of paper.

C: What was that name again?

A: Harry Ortt. O-R-T-T. His daughter lives right up here in the corner and she's married to Mike Bishop and that's where he lived, Harry Ortt. Then across the street where the Insul building is was Billy

Southern, that's a brother of John. He run a drug-store there for years and years and next to him was Harry Lawrence's Grocery Store. Willis Lawrence delivered in their truck. I drove truck for Ruk-enbrod the same years. We both drove Dodge trucks, old 1923s and that was the Harry Lawrence Grocery Store.

Next to them was a residence by the name of the Failer sisters. Now the Failer's were an old-time family in this town and they had several sisters and several brothers. One of the brothers was in the Ford Automobile business, over back of the five-and-ten, where the five-and-ten is today, that's on Rebecca Street. I could go on and on and on.

- C: Why don't we go up to the Center Methodist Church and then come across the street to the dry cleaners and just come back on the other side, okay?
- A: All right. That was the Logan building and I don't remember what was in there first. There used to be a five-and-ten cents store in there. Then on down the street on the west side was a confectionery store run by Adam Bott. Now, he's a brother to Bill and Fred. Bill was a father to Mary, Kenny Rukenbrod's wife. He was the father. I knew the family from way back. Nick Bott was a good athlete in high school and he was the son of Adam. And Genevieve was the daughter of Adam. She was a good athlete in high school. She married an Army officer. She died here, three or four years ago.

Well, then on down the street was Henry Roderos Grocery Store. Now Henry Roderos was related to Bob McCloskey here in town right now. He was a father of Bob's mother. I don't know her. I think she's still living but she's in a home. And then next across the alley from Roderos was Izzy Skerball's clothing store and Izzy Skerball was an old-timer. He was in high school here and he holds the only record in high school for the fifty yard dash because he took it and they discontinued it and he's dead a long time. But he was a Jewish fellow. His dad started to push a cart around this town years and years before my time and he still holds the record for the fifty yard dash. Well, on down the street was Dave Smith Hardware. Now Smith was the father to Mike Meek's wife. Her name is Ruth. I believe it was J.S. Smith. He run a hard-

ware store in Blosko's building there.

C: Are we still on the east side of town now?

A: We're on the west side of North Market.

C: West side of North Market.

A: Yes, and on down the street was a Jewish clothing store, Fassberg's, and then on down was Hellman's. Now this was Ace Hellman's dad. He had a tailor shop. He made clothes. He was a tailor. He sold clothes. That's where Ace's Sports Center is today, same building. And it was Ace's dad that run it. Well, on down where the bank is, the First National Bank, was a restaurant. The first I knew, a fellow by the name of McConahey run that restaurant. That was early for me but you move on down and there was a big brick building there and the liquor store was in one side of it, the south side, and the Daily Leader was in the north side, right where the First National Bank and parking lot and Lowry's Drugstore is today. That was the first Daily Leader that was ever put out. They used to put out the Reveille Echo, which was a daily newspaper. The Merwins, they were related to me. I remember the first Daily Leader that was ever printed in this town. I was one of the first carriers and I had that route for two or three years and I was just a kid. Next was called the Busy Bee Restaurant run by Gus Pappas and he was a good restaurant owner and cheap.

C: This is where the Newberry's is today, five-and-ten?

A: Right along there. South of that a little bit. It was a big building and where Newberry's is was a confectionery and candy store and ice cream parlor. I played in the jazz band that opened that place and all we had was a bass, banjo and saxophone, no piano and it was opened by a fellow by the name of Joe Bozzo. Later on it was sold to Jimmy Saturas and he put a beer joint in there. But directly back of that was the Ford Garage which was run by Sam Failer and Homer Rukenbrod's brother, Park, and they had the Ford industry there for years; years and years. In fact, when they first started, they sold Overlander's automobiles and then they took on the Ford. Now that was when the Ford was infant. Well, directly across the street from the Ford Garage on

the corner of Market and Rebecca was another drugstore run by Homer Southern, that's a nephew of these other Southern, There were three drugstores right there.

C: All with the same family name?

A: The same family, Southern, And then next to that where the City Loan is was a grocery store run by Sam Jenkins. I never worked for Sam. I worked for most of them but I never worked much for Sam. On up the street where the Ohio Edison is was Chapin's Millinery Store and there was also a Morris Dry Goods Store which was the brother to the Adam Morris, the father of these boys that run the Golden Dawn today. And next was Rukenbrod's Market which has been there since I was born. It was run by the father of Kenny E. Rukenbrod. And then next was a restaurant run by Fred Bott and Les Dornan.

Now next up there--when I first remember--there was a residence, a bungalow type house that was a fruit market run by Casio's, a family by the name of Casio, and they bought and sold fruit. And one cold winter night, it was five below zero, that place caught fire and you just should have seen it the next morning. There was ice that thick on everything, everything and it destroyed it. And next was the hotel. No. Next was Adam Botts and Bill Botts' Clothing Store on the alley and they sold mens clothing and they were there for a long time. I did business with them many, many years. Then next to that was the hotel called the Thompson, the Thornberry; it changed hands several times and it was a three-story hotel.

C: Are we up to the Union Commercial Bank now?

A: Right on the Union Commercial corner. Right across the street was the depot, the Pennsylvania Depot, which was a popular place. Well then, right across the railroad tracks, my granddad, Warren Meek, run a three-story hotel, which was the only means of transportation in this town which was the railroad except horse and buggies. He run that for years. That's where I was born. And that extended from the railroad track to the alley and beyond the alley was a grocery store run by John Early and George Eaton. Now that's a story in itself, but next to that was another grocery store, which was

the original Golden Dawn, Morris brothers. Now we're up to the post office and that was torn down in the 1930s.

C: 1936, I believe.

A: And that's when they put the Neil Ford parking lot in there. But the original building of the Early and Eaton's is still standing there; it's a fabric shop.

C: Let me ask you, Mr. Ashbaugh, looking back over the years, I know you didn't live in East Palestine all your life. You moved out. Are there any things that happened in this town, or maybe did not happen that you wish had turned out differently, looking back on the town, maybe some of the decisions that the city made or things that were built. Is there any one thing that stands out in your mind that maybe you wish didn't happen in this town?

A: No, the only thing I can think of is the fairground over where the park is. Now I used to call out races. I was just a kid, fourteen years old, I rode a horse and the last years of the fair, about the last four years, I was interested to get in the fair with a fellow by the name of Max Eaton. He was the superintendent. And I used to post the fair around the country. Then I had a horse and I would go over there--we had harness races every afternoon at the fair, about four, maybe five afternoons--and I would ride this horse around and call out the next race. So that went on till the fair quit.

C: What year did the fair quit? Do you recall?

A: Oh, in the early 1920s.

C: So that's the one thing you wish maybe had stayed, they kept the fair?

A: Well, it was interesting, it was really interesting. And I rode this horse around and I'd call out the next race, and I really enjoyed that but the fair quit. A lot of the buildings burned down and then when I was gone from town, they tore it all down and put up the park. But it was pretty nice. That was a good project. That was a WPA [Work Projects Administration] project, I think.

ASHBAUGH

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C: Well, I want to thank you very much, Mr. Ashbaugh,
for your information that you've given us.

A: That's okay.

END OF INTERVIEW