

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Leetonia, Ohio Project

Personal Experience

O.H. 1090

SAMUEL BELTEMPO

Interviewed

by

Paul Merz

on

November 20, 1981

SAMUEL BELTEMPO

Mr. Beltempo was born of immigrant parents in Leetonia, Ohio in 1907. He spent approximately twenty years working around the coke ovens of the Cherry Valley Iron Company. He discusses in detail the methods used to turn coal into coke as well as the production of pig iron. He also discusses the Black Hand and its influence on the town.

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INTERVIEWEE: SAMUEL BELTEMPO
INTERVIEWER: Paul Merz
SUBJECT: Coke and iron production, the Black Hand,
life around the furnaces, and the 1920's
and 1930's.
DATE: November 11, 1981

M: This is an interview with Samuel Beltempo for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on Leetonia, Ohio, by Paul Merz, at Mr. Beltempo's home, at 94 Pine Street, on November 20, 1981, at 3:30 p.m.

Sam, would you tell me about your early childhood, what you remember about your parents and about Leetonia back then?

B: You want me to tell of where I went to school and all that?

M: Yes.

B: How many was in the family?

M: Yes, what your father did for a living?

B: Well, we had nine children in the family, but six of them died. There was only three of us living, three boys. Me and my brother, he was older than me, and my younger brother, Jerry. His name is Jerry, the same as up at the school.

M: Okay, that would be his father?

B: His grandfather.

M: Okay, okay.

B: It would be his father.

M: The bus drivers father and. . .

B: Yes, that's right.

M: . . .and young Jerry's grandfather.

B: Yes, that's right. I was born in a company house. . .In Cherry Valley at the company house at the Cherry Valley Furnace. It was a red row, and I was born in one of the homes down there. At that time they only paid about \$10 a month for rent. My dad was a bricklayer. He repaired the coke ovens for, I would say, ever since . . . He came to this country in 1904, then he came back and brought my mother back to this country. He had left my mother in the old country and brought her back and brought my brother back. He started to work in the coke ovens, and he worked all his life in the coke ovens until they did away with them. These coke ovens were bee-hive coke ovens which they call a by-product, if there was a bee-hive. A bee-hive, in other words, a bee-hive coke oven everything went up in the air, smoke and dust and everything. A by-product coke oven, like they have in Youngstown, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, They salvage all the smoke, gas and there's different things. They make pills, different pills are for different things. They have different by-products. In other words, all the waste that goes out of the burner and coal to make that coke, they use it for other purposes.

M: Okay.

B: I started to work when I was about, I would say, about fifteen years. At the same time I was working on Saturday's and Sunday's and went to school during the week. I graduated out of high school in 1926. The coke ovens worked until 1929 which was the last of them. The coke ovens are still in existence, but they are never put to work anymore. There was 200, over 200, coke ovens in existence, and 100 of them coke ovens was drawing every other day. Only half of them every other day. We draw to make coke. The coke burned for two days. Every other day it was drawn. The coal came from in Pennsylvania. It was a number three class coal, anyhow, number three, probably.

M: Coraopolis?

B: No. It was Little Washington.

M: Little Washington, Okay.

B: That's where they get the coal.

M: They brought it in here by train.

B: By train. It was brought in by train, and it was unloaded in what they call "The Shoots." There was two men who open the doors to the car, and the coal would run down in a shoot. There was a little dingy came around, and on one of them pictures there its got the cart on there.

M: Okay, I saw one. I saw a picture of one.

B: Them unloading on top of the oven, putting the coal in the oven. Is that the picture you saw?

M: Yes.

B: Well, that's the way they filled the coke oven. It ignited herself because the oven was hot enough after they drove the coke out of it that they ignited herself, they didn't have to light them up. The coal would. . . There was a man with what they called the goose snake, leveled the coal in there. He'd stand in front of that door like he was patching the door and stand in front of there and level the coal in there, so it would be level. At one time, all the coke ovens down there were drawn by hand. A man would draw three ovens a day.

M: Draw, you mean pull the coal out, coke out?

B: Pull the coke out, that's right. They would go about 3:00 or 4:00 in the morning and about 10:00 or 11:00 in the morning it would be done. They would have to take the coke out of the ovens, water it, put water in there, take the coke and pull it all out with what they call a scraper. It was a gooseneck. It was something like, let me show you.

M: About how long was it?

B: About twenty feet.

M: Twenty feet long.

B: It was like this.(SHOWS PICTURE)

M: Sort of L-shaped then?

B: Yes. They would stick that there in the oven after it was watered down. The coke was cool, and they could handle it, and pull it out with this and the wheel barrow. Here was the oven.(SHOWS PICTURE) The wheelbarrow would sit right there, and they would pull it in the wheelbarrow.

M: Right in front of the oven? They just drag it out of the coke oven with that right into the wheelbarrow.

B: Right. Put it in that wheelbarrow. If they would dump it on the ground okay, if they wanted to put in the car, the track was in there. You saw them pitch it in there?

M: Yes.

B: They were always with cars in there, railroad cars in there. They would dweedle. . .

M: Right into the railroad car.

B: Into the railroad car, dump it in the car like that. Go back and get another wheelbarrow load and come back and dump it in the wheelbarrow.

M: How did they get from the top of the oven to the railroad car? Did they have a plank laying there or something to walk on?

B: On top.

M: Yes.

B: On top of the ovens they had, at one time they had horses that could pull two carloads of, two truckloads of coal, and they would dump it in there. See, they had three or four horses. We had a barn there, big barn to keep horses. We had eight horses in that barn. That's all their job was; to hook them up, go up and get the coal and dump it in the coke oven after it was emptied. The time came that they used a trolley then. We put. . .

M: A dingy.

B: A dingy, you saw that on. . .

M: Yes, on the picture.

B: Those three cars, three or four cars would pull at their cars and stop on top of the oven. The oven had a hole on there, you saw that.

M: Yes, they are still there.

B: They had rings in there. My dad. . . I helped put them rings, a lot of times put those rings in there. Open the shoot on the little car, and there was a track over here. Open the little shoot and put the coal in there.

M: Yes.

B: Then like I said, below there was a man, he would come along with one of these here like I have over here and level that coal because the coal was dropping in a pile. They had to level it all off. After they leveled it off, they would take and put bricks up like I was doing in that picture there, putting bricks all the way up. Closed it up, leave about that much air so enough ventilation would go in there.

M: A draft.

B: That's right, a draft. When they coal was burned, there was no more smoke coming out of the top, and the next day or about two days after, they would close that gap. There was a night man, all he was around for was to close that gap on the oven so no more air would go in there and burn it. It was burned enough so there was coke, see. If you made of that go in there. . .

M: It would burn the coke up.

B: Yes.

M: In other words, you knew it was done when the black smoke quit coming out from the top of the. . .

B: Yes, right.

M: What exactly is coke?

B: Coke?

M: Yes.

B: Well, when you were already down there, did you see it?

M: Yes, I know what it looks like, but how is it different from coal?

B: Well, it takes the coal to make coke.

M: Okay.

B: You have to have coal to make coke. Nothing else will do it. You have seen coke, they use it for heating purposes too, all over. Well, a lot of places, they can't get coal, they can get coke, and it keeps the heat in there. In other words, I wouldn't know how to explain that. In the blast furnace they use that in the blast furnace to keep the heat. They keep there lime stone and all the other ingredients they put in there, they put right over. The limestone and different stuff in the furnace, blast furnace, and that coke keeps the

heat. In other words it is like charcoal.

M: It burns hotter than coal?

B: Oh, yes.

M: Coke burns hotter than coal.

B: Yes, oh yes. It is a lot hotter. You take and it will last longer too. They used to have jacks when it got real cold in the winter time when we worked outside. Jacks, take a barrel, put a lot of holes in the barrel, and then start with a grate underneath and fill it up with coke and light that. It takes awhile for it to get hot, but after you have it lit, and you put coke in there, it will stand a long time.

M: Okay, you keep warm that way in the winter time. Then the coke, after it came out of the oven, went into the railroad car, then down to the furnace.

B: Then the dingy would come down there, a little dingy would come down there and pull that coke out of the coke ovens, put the empty carts for the next day, and bring it up to the blast furnace. You see in pictures of the blast furnace. . .

M: Yes, that is right, yes.

B: They would have what they call a box. They unloaded it up on a trestle and it would go down below. The coke would go down there red ore, limestone and whatever else had like bluedust and different things they used. It would go down the shoot, and down below, then what they call they made there rounds. They call it the rounds. They would get so much of this, so much of that, and combine it in the furnaces. Skip would take that up and dump it in the furnace.

M: What did you call that thing?

B: Skip.

M: Skip, that's that little car that would go up the furnace.

B: Yes.

M: Then it would dump in the furnace.

B: It would dump inside the furnace. It would go up to the bell of it, what they call the bell, and dump inside the furnace. Now when the furnace was going, we had two things. We had what they called slag, that came out of the furnace, and iron. The slag always came to the top

where you mix this coke, iron, and limestone and scrap went into the furnace. When it melted, the slag would come to the top and the iron would go down below. So, before you took the iron out of the furnace, you had to take the slag out. We had a place up there we called the slag dump. I don't know whether you saw it or not.

M: That is where Girly is?

B: That's right.

M: Okay.

B: Now, we had to dump the slag in there. We dump that slag up there with a ladle. Two ladles went up there. The whole town was lit. It was always light all over. Now, over here when they had the blast furnace.

M: Grafton.

B: They had a pit, a water pit. They dumped the hot slag in that water pit, and when it hit the water pit, it would crush like. Like you put out in the road, you know, with the. . .

M: Yes, granulated.

B: Yes, and then would load it and ship it away the same day. When they undone this up here, it was different.

M: At the Cherry Valley.

B: Yes, that was different. That was just slide dump. Some of the old slide still . . . Girly is still getting it.

M: Sure.

B: It was dumped over the hill. You had to make a trough. There was a cable. Well, here is the place where the slag would come out, you see. (SHOWS PICTURE) This is the furnace. There is a little hole you put in this place, and you went way up there to slide dump where the dump is, where the Girly is. You dumped it. You turned it by hand, keep tuning it, the ladle would dump.

M: Was it like a conveyer belt?

B: Well, a cable.

M: Okay, a cable. All right.

B: A cable was running up in there, and they had the trolley up in here. They cable would run up in here, was hooked to this ladle, take the ladle up here and come

back down again.

M: And get some more.

B: Yes, get some more about twice. It was running down here. See by the . . . Somebody would run that thing, would run your ladle up there and then bring it back with the cable.

M: Okay.

B: Understand?

M: Yes.

B: It would take it up there, and there were little trolleys along here that they would hook on to so the cable wouldn't get off and unbalance itself, it would take the ladle up and down. You only did that. . . Well, the slag came a couple hours before the iron came out. This is a slag hood over here. Over here was the air hole, this is the furnace, see?

M: Yes.

B: This is the furnace where the iron came out then. The iron would come out this way. Oh, you're not interested in that so much as you are the coke ovens.

M: No, I'm listening. No, go ahead. The iron would come out of there and what. . . Did they form it? Dump it in the . . .

B: Well see, in the early days they had what they called beds. Each one had a bed. See, they had beds like this. The iron came down through this center here from the furnace. They would open this and put a rudder in there. You know what I mean, a rudder?

M: Like a trench.

B: Yes.

M: Okay. That iron is running out of there like water?

B: Yes, a liquid.

M: Red hot?

B: Red hot.

M: Okay.

B: They would come over to these beds, and they had beds over here on fire, you see. They were made out of sand.

Well, when the sun hit these here beds, it would get in here and form iron piglets, they called it pig iron.

M: Yes, piglets. I've heard that expression, okay.

B: In other words, a pig iron is just enough of it. A sow is when the pig iron is overlapping. That is the way the guys used to work. A couple hours every. . . They worked eight hours, but those couple of hours were hard work. They would work then, and take this iron. They had leather gloves, leather aprons. They would take it and put it in cars, and would walk up and throw it in the car.

M: How much would each piglet weigh, would you guess?

B: Oh, they weighed around 200 pounds, this kind of iron.

M: One man could lift it?

B: Yes, one man used to lift these.

M: 200 pounds.

B: Yes, 150, 100 pounds. It was supposed to weigh 100, but some of them were 200 pounds. Now, after this was done, that was in the early days, afterwards they called a pig machine. The iron is still going down in through here in these tubs. The iron went down in here into a big ladle. It wasn't this big ladle. A man went back in here by this big ladle, and there was a pig machine. A machine was running up and down like this, and he would tip this iron into that machine. It was all made up of pigs.

M: Oh, okay. And those pigs were right on a conveyer line?

B: Yes, that's right.

M: So, the ladle stayed still, and the pigs now came past the ladle.

B: Yes, that's right.

M: Okay.

B: Underneath this here pig machine was a car.

M: A railroad car.

B: Yes.

M: Okay.

B: So, the iron would drop when it got to the end over here

and start to come back again, it would drop into this car.

M: It was already stiff, hardened.

B: Yes, It was watered. There was a water line all along there.

M: Oh, I see.

B: With this down, it was the water lines that were lime. It went through a lime box like. Each pig would get some lime on there so the pig iron would stick.

M: Oh, I see. Lime would keep them from bonding together.

B: That's right. It went around there and there were sprinklers all along there. Then you wet it all down when it got over here it would drop out. Now, once in awhile one would stick or two and come back down. Well, there was no way. Only thing, this guy here running this ladle would dump a little bit more in there and get what they call a sow.

M: It would be a sow, bigger than a piglet.

B: Yes, that's right. Did you ever see any of that pig iron?

M: No, Paul Guido said there is still some down there.

B: Here, you can go over and see one. Now, I don't know about the coke oven but I can tell you about them.

M: Where did the iron go after it was made in Leetonia?

B: It went to the foundries.

M: Where there foundries in Leetonia?

B: No . . . Yes, one foundry.

M: There was one foundry.

B: Where the National Rubber owns now, the Crescent.

M: Okay, that used to be Crescent Machine Company.

B: Yes.

M: They would buy material from Cherry Valley to make their tools.

B: Yes, that's right. Some of it. I don't know if they bought it, but Salem would, Demings, Eldridge.

M: They would buy iron out of Cherry Valley.

B: Youngstown. All these foundries, they used to buy it because it good pig iron. It was one of the best around.

M: What made this pig iron better than other pig iron?

B: One thing is that they used by-product coke, or not by-product, old coke that was a different make instead of by-product. They used just coke, what you call bee-hive coke from the ovens down there. That helped because there were a lot of ingredients in this coke that the other coke didn't have.

M: In other words, the coke was better.

B: Yes, the coke was better. Of course, a lot of it was in the management, too. A lot of the guys that run the furnace, the blast furnace, the guys that run the blast furnace here originally were born here. Might as well say they were in here all their lifetime. They knew all about every knickknack about the furnace. They could tell you everything about the blast furnace.

M: They knew the business.

B: That's right.

M: When was the furnace built, do you know? You said your father came over in 1904. It's in that book?

B: Yes.

M: Okay. I can find out then.

B: It is about 1866, I think.

M: Okay.

B: This one was built first.

M: The Grafton was built first?

B: I think it was first. The second . . . McKeeferys owned it after they went back. They bought . . . They called it the Salem Iron Furnace or something. I don't know, Salem Iron or something. It was owned by John Graff. That is where they get the name Grafton.

M: Okay, and then McKeefery got it.

B: Yes.

M: You said your father came over in 1904?

B: About 1904.

M: Then he went back and brought your mother and your brother.

B: My parents, my mother, and my brother and they come over. He never went back again.

M: When did he make his trip back. He came in 1904.

B: About 1906. He worked here for about . . . He worked ten hours a day for about \$9.

M: He worked ten hours a day for \$1 a day?

B: That's right.

M: Why did he go back to Italy? Why wouldn't he just send them money and have them come over themselves?

B: Here's the thing my dad used to tell me. He got married. I don't know what year he got married, I think it was around 1900 he got married. He served two years in the service. You have to serve a couple years in the service, it is compulsory. He told my mother, he says, "I'm going to America". After he got married and stayed a couple of years and got her pregnant, got her in a family, we had two children. He said, "I'm going to America. There is a little town they call Leetonia in Ohio." He said, "A lot of my friends have been going over there. They say they got everything over there." My mother said, "Well, what do they got?" "Well, they got two blast furnaces, they got the Erie Railroad, they got the Pennsylvania Railroad, they got the Wino and the Whinez, They got the two blast furnaces, coke ovens," He said, " They are making money over there, so I would like to get over there." So, he came over, and he worked like I told you, for \$1 a day. Made a little bit of money, went back, and got my mother and got a few of his best friends. In fact, he got . . . Pauli's dad, was his brother-in-law. He came over. So, they got on the boat in Naples, Italy, they came over to this country. They were supposed to land in New York City, instead they had trouble on the ocean and storms, and they landed in Boston, Massachusetts. It took them to all the way between New York and Boston. Then they came over and came to this town. Of course, she was a stranger. She had to . . . Well, she made friends with different people, but that is the way it went.

M: You were born right after they got back?

B: Yes, I was born 1907.

M: He must have came just about that time.

B: Well, it was about 1905, 1906. Around in there.

M: Okay. What did he tell you about Leetonia back in those days? Did he ever talk about. . .How did the people here feel about the Italians coming in and working in the furnaces?

B: Well, they didn't say to much about the Italians because there were quite a few Italians that came, like you said. They came over here, and a lot of them made a little bit of money, and they went back to the old country and stayed there. They didn't come back.

M: Oh, I didn't know that.

B: See, they stayed there. There were lots of them that stayed over there. A lot of them came over to this country with there wives and everything, they made a little bit of money and they would send there wives back to the old country, too.

M: They didn't like it here?

B: They didn't like it here. They went back and stayed there awhile too. Maybe later on they brought them back again, but a lot of them, they had there wives over there. They never wanted to come over. In those days . . . You come now to the United States from Naples from Italy, you can come over in airplanes. It is only a matter of a few days. In those days it took fourteen or fifteen days to come on the ocean. Those old ships, you know, they always took a chance because you didn't know whether you would get here or not.

M: Yes. Now, you said that of nine children only three lived.

B: That's right.

M: What did the six die from? It seems high.

B: Well, a couple of them died with what they called in those days diphtheria. I had two sisters that died from diphtheria, and I had . . . There was a set of twins. Right after she came from the old country she was pregnant, she had a set of twins. That's when she came here. It was a little older than I was, about a year or year and a half older than I was. One died . . . Oh, it must have been, I used to here them tell about it, a few months old and a few months after that the other one died.

M: Probably didn't even have doctors.

B: Well see, they didn't know. They didn't know what it was. A lot of people didn't know what the heck it was. I lost two sisters. I know one of them, when they operated on her at home, they tried to put her tubing in here throat here. They said it was Black Plague.

M: He operated in your home?

B: Yes.

M: He tried to put a tube in here throat.

B: Yes.

M: I didn't know that. I guess they do though, I just never thought of it.

B: You can go ahead and ask me. I don't know what to tell you.

M: Well, you worked at the furnace from 1919 until it closed in 1929, so you had about ten years in there. How long did you live in the company house?

B: We lived in the company house twenty some years because old man Grinimar told my mother . . . He said, "If you'd have bought a house than you'd had had a house, but you paid rent for twenty some years and you ain't got no house." I would say twenty-five years.

M: When did you move out? When the furnace closed?

B: No, no. It was before that. Yes, bought that house on Main Street next to the big shop. You know where city hall is?

M: Yes.

B: Right on the right hand side. Before you go down to city hall, it's about the third. The Wood store and then it was a furniture store.

M: That was Wood's furniture store?

B: Yes, at the corner. Then somebody used to have . . . The Bait Shop and then it was us, because before we moved in there was somebody who used to take pictures, Webb studio.

M: \$10 a month for rent seems like a lot of money. I mean, when your dad only made \$1 a day. He had to work ten days just to pay the rent.

B: Yes, but you got coal free, too.

M: Oh, you got free coal with the house.

B: Free water. You had a pump outside. Every one of those house had a pump outside. You go out there and pump and get water.

M: It was free, you just had to go get it.

B: Sure. Outside, the toilet outside.

M: Did each house have an out house?

B: Yes.

M: Had its own out house. Did they keep them in good repair, the houses?

B: Pretty good.

M: Well, they are pretty well gone. I understand. . .

B: They are all gone.

M: Wasn't Johnny Roose's house a company house?

B: No, not Johnny Roose. You know where Dick Roose lives?

M: Oh okay, there right on the hill.

B: That used to be the office. We used to get our pay there, the company office. Down below him there were two houses. There is one of them now. That is a company house. That's one of the Red Row houses.

M: That is a Red Row house, okay.

B: Do you know where the Legion is?

M: Yes.

B: It was about fourteen red houses, twelve I would say with those two up on there. There were twelve houses of Red Row houses.

M: Right where the Legion is?

B: Right there from the Legion over to the where you make that turn. Right there.

M: Okay. That was the Red Row. The White Row was across the creek.

B: The White Row, you know where the Sportsman's Club is?

M: Yes.

B: Right across there.

M: Okay.

B: It ran over to. . .There are one or two houses there now.

M: Yes, Shar lives in one of them.

B: Yes, that's right. That's one of them.

M: Okay, were they attached? Did they have common walls between them?

B: No, they were separate. Separate houses.

M: What do you remember . . . You went to school and you worked in the furnace. What do you remember about those years as you look back on them?

B: Well, a lot of times, you know Lou Kegimier?

M: I know the name, I know the Kegimiers.

B: Well, he was a boss down there. Bill Kegimier is their dad. He was a boss in the coke ovens. Well, we lived in this one house, sat by itself for . . . Thirty or forty years that house was by itself. Do you know where the Cherry Valley grounds is, the picnic grounds?

M: Sure, I've been over there. I know where the damn is.

B: Well, I don't care about the damn.

M: You don't care about the damn.

B: You know where the Cherry Valley picnic grounds is?

M: Yes.

B: You know when you make that bend.

M: Yes.

B: That's where the house set, right there. Number fifteen. That's where we lived for about ten years after we moved from the Red Row. That was still a company house. So, we lived there right close to coke company. So, when I would come home from school, he used to come over to the house because it was close to the coke ovens. He used to come over to the house and say, "How about helping me out tonight?" "What?" "I want some coke cashers to hall the outer coke. How about going to

the barn, take a horse out." They had what they called two wheel carts. You know what a two wheel cart is? You could put a shaft . . . Give me that pencil while I show you. That's what they call a tailgate.

M: Okay, I see. Really a small cart.

B: Okay.

M: The horse was out there.

B: The shaft on this cart here. The horse right in here. He would pull that. You sit on top here. You took the horse, and then when you got where you wanted you got off the cart, it was hooked down at the bottom here. You turned that hook, take it and push it like this, and you would dump that cart.

M: Okay.

B: You know now?

M: I understand.

B: You take that there end gate out. . .

M: And you dump all the ashes right out of the car.

B: Yes, whatever you had in there. I used to help him out at night getting different things for him. He paid me a couple hours every night and I went to school the next morning. I played football on Saturday. My dad and this kid caught me playing football with my older brother. My brother made me play, so I went over and played football. If you look at the . . . You go to high school?

M: I'm in the junior high, but I go down to the high school.

B: There is a silver football there. I wondered if you saw it or not.

M: I think I have.

B: My name is on that.

M: From when you were in school?

B: 1924 we won the championship. We beat everybody around. In the League, Liverpool, Salem.

M: Well, I bet you guys were pretty tough from working around those furnaces.

B: It's starting to show up on me now.

M: What were the working conditions like in the furnace, around the furnace?

B: Well, it was hard work because those guys would go . . . There was no clock when they made the punch. You didn't go in and have to punch a card or anything. You went over there and you knew what you had to do. You take like breaking that pig iron. Those guys used to work . . . That was a hard one. After they got through loading that pig iron, they would go downtown and get a few beers or wine or whiskey or whatever. They stay downtown maybe an hour or so, and they would back and take it over there and go back to work.

M: Oh, they could pretty much come and go as they wanted as long as they got the work done.

B: Yes.

M: Were a lot of people fired? I mean, would they get rid of you easily?

B: There were a lot of times there were scraps, fights. They didn't get along, you know.

M: Yes.

B: You take a lot of the Italian and Polish people and the American people, they couldn't see eye to eye sometimes. They worked together, they were supposed to work together, and a lot of times there were fights and you get hurt. There was nobody ever killed or anything like that.

M: Would the company fire people, I mean, would they tell you to get. . .

B: In those days you couldn't get fired. If you got fired, they were supposed to pay you right away, give you your money. If they wouldn't give you your money a lot of times they would go fight with the boss, see.

M: Yes.

B: They got in trouble. Bosses got in trouble if they tried to fire anybody. They were supposed to have their paycheck ready when they fired. If they didn't have their paycheck ready, the guy would holler, "Give me my pay." They would go, "I ain't got it. You'll have to wait until tomorrow morning at 9:00." The guy would go. They wouldn't give it to him and the first thing, you know maybe, hit him over the head or cut his face up or one thing or another.

M: So, people weren't fired too often?

B: No, not too many. They were glad to have people work. Now, you take . . . Ned Bates was tough, I'll say that, but I worked on the railroad for \$2.60 an hour during the Depression.

M: \$2 and how much an hour?

B: \$2.60 a day!

M: During the Depression?

B: That's right and see that was about twenty years after that.

M: Okay, what happened when someone did get hurt around the furnaces? Suppose a man with a family got hurt. Say he broke his leg. Who would take care of his family? How was that handled?

B: Well, the only thing, I think there was compensation in those days, but there was nothing else. There might have been compensation. I can remember, as far back as I can remember there was always compensation, but anything else, there was no insurance, nothing like. . .

M: Would the company do anything for the guy and his family?

B: No, not much. They hardly ever did anything for them.

M: Okay now, I understand that the Italians, when you went to work and got paid, you would come out of there and there were people waiting there, you were to pay them money.

B: You mean the Black Hand?

M: How did that work?

B: Well, I'll tell you. My dad was off of work for awhile. There was no work for awhile. Of course, if you worked in the coke ovens, they would shut down maybe awhile while they repaired the furnaces and stuff like that, they had to shut it down. They would stock so much coke and then that was it. Well, my dad was out of work for a couple of months, and it was getting about the time of Easter time. A guy came over to him on the bus around the furnace and said, "Do you want to go to work, Guy?" He said, "Why?" He said, "You come to work tomorrow." He said, "What's tomorrow. Tomorrow is Easter. I'm not coming to work tomorrow." He said, "Well, I got a job for you if you want it." Well, he wouldn't go, but

there was some guys down on the job before my dad never did it. There were guys working for bosses, they used to call them a second boss. You see, you would be they big boss, and I would be second boss. Well, I would tell the guys that were working, there were eight or ten guys working, "Say, you want your job, you got to pitch in a little bit." So, on payday each one would give me \$1 or \$2 and I would turn around and up it to you, and you would take the money and keep it.

M: Okay.

B: In other words, you had to pay. . .

M: To keep your job.

B: Another thing, if I was working over here, and you came from the old country, and you wanted a job really bad. I would take a basket, fix it up, and bring it over to the boss, bring it over to the big boss over at the office where Dick Roose lives now.

M: Yes.

B: The big boss would be there. He takes the basket, and take the stuff and everything and day "Hey, come to work tomorrow." That's the way it works.

M: So, you had to pay to get your job, and you had to pay to keep it?

B: Yes, that's right.

M: How did this Black Hand thing work then? Tell be about that.

B: Well, I don't know that much about it. I can tell you my dad never belonged to it, but because my mother always kept on my dad's toes. He was called. He was tempted quite a few times because my dad was a Sicilian, he was born in Sicily, and my mother was born in the lower part of Italy, so he had to cross the Straight of Messina. You know, the Straight of Messina?

M: Yes.

B: When he met my mother, and he was just a little kid. In those days when he was a small kid, they used to pick olives and oranges and stuff like that. In other words, oranges around there in Sicily was just like in California. Just like in this country you see apple trees, now, harvest time how they are hanging on trees and how many are on the ground? That the same way it was over in Sicily. He said, "Tell me. Sam, there used to be a lot of oranges on the ground. Oh, all kinds of oranges."

He crossed the Strait of Messina to go to a the north part of Italy, and that is where he met my mother. But you really want to go on to the Black Hand, here's the way they work. I can tell you how they work.

M: Okay, how did you belong to the Black Hand?

B: Well, if somebody belonged to that, you put so much money in. You paid your dues, and you belong to it. Now, if something went wrong to it that somebody was trying to end it, they just eat a lot of chickens, pigs and stuff like that, especially chicken. They used to go out at night and turn their neck, twist their neck and put her in their sack and go away with twenty, thirty chickens. They would live pretty good on the chickens. If you belonged to the organization, and you were called to do a certain job to get rid of a man, you were picked to do the job and their was another guy picked to see that you did the job. Because if you didn't do the job, the other guy was supposed to get rid of you.

M: Wait a minute. We have gone from chickens to people?

B: Yes.

M: That is a little quick for me. It was an organization where they would take the chickens.

B: Yes.

M: Okay, I understand that. Now, why would they want to kill people? What kind of people got killed?

B: Well, a lot of times the good people got killed because they had something against them or something. They would have someone against them. That would do it.

M: Were they all Italians in the Black Hand?

B: Yes.

M: You had to be an Italian?

B: Yes.

M: Okay. What kind of people got killed? One of the bosses, like for instance?

B: Well. . .

M: What kind of people got killed? Give me an example of somebody who would get killed.

B: All right, there was someone in my Italians, just to

give you an example.

M: One example, okay.

B: There was a guy they called "The Champion" in Leetonia, Ohio. He would come to your house. He went to a certain house, and he said, "I want, by tonight, I want \$200." The guy says, "I ain't got it." The guy says, "You either get it tonight, or I'll . . . I'm coming up tonight, and I want the money." So, he went over to the house that night. The guy was prepared for him. When he saw him coming up the hill, he had a shotgun, he had a sharp-shooter, and he shot him with pellets. He cleaned him up. They dragged his body, and they carried him downtown. They put him down there where George Woods was, where the funeral store . . . They used to have the morgue downstairs, down below.

M: In the furniture stair?

B: Yes, they had the morgue down below. That is where they laid them out. That's the kind of people it was. If they wanted money or something off of you, you had to give it to him.

M: Who were those people that would take the money from you? Were they other Italians?

B: That's right, other Italians.

M: This was a pretty rough place then?

B: Yes, it was. Then they told you . . . See that happen, that's what they call the "Champion." That happened . . . You know where Johnny Mulistitch lived?

M: No, I don't.

B: You know, when you go on to New Road, there is what they call Clover Hill Road . . .

M: Okay.

B: On the left hand side. This guy went up this hill . . .

M: Johnny Millsitich lives. Millsitich?

B: Yes.

M: Johnny Millsitich. I know exactly where he lives.

B: Okay. This guy went up there to receive this money, to get the money he had told him he had wanted. He walked up that grade, boy, when started up that grade, they was ready for him. The other guys was ready for him. They

shot him. I don't know how many times. They used those pellets like they shot on deer, and they brought the body down like I told you.

M: The Black Hand, were they trying to take the money, or were they the people who were killing the people who were trying to take the money. I mean, which side was the Black Hand on? Do you understand what I'm saying?

B: I know what you mean.

M: The Black Hand would be trying to take the money from them?

B: That's right. They were trying to all they could get.

M: How about the Mafia?

B: The same thing I would say. There was a Mafia.

M: Yes.

B: That is the same thing as the Black Hand.

M: That was once in Leetonia?

B: The Black Hand was.

M: Did that come over from the old country? Did they bring that over?

B: I would say so.

M: You would? What about the police? Did anybody call the police?

B: Well, there was only one police, that's all. There was only one police to police the whole town. Only one police. There was no police at night. Just the police in the daytime.

M: When did the Black Hand leave?

B: I would say right now that the Black Hand left here because we started putting more police on the force. One thing, you have all kinds of cops out. We have about seven or eight cops right in this town now. You got night cops, day cops. Another thing you have, you go before a judge now. In those days you very seldomly went before the judge. In other words, they took the law in their hands. You take like we were talking about the Black Hand, or they took the law in their hands. They did as they wanted to. Just like at the main street down here, Mangcose.

M: Yes.

B: That didn't happen to long ago now was it? When they shot the pigs. Remember, Mangcose had hogs back there. They shot the hogs, and they didn't get enough tubs to take the hogs out. They let them lay there. It was during the night, too. They shot the hogs and let them lay there. I would say that was, I would say, about forty years anyhow ago. Then about thirty-five, forty years ago, they went up another place up there, Ranches; back of the school, way back.

M: Yes.

B: He was always bragging about, "Oh, nobody gonna take my stuff. Nobody gonna steal anything off of me." So, they went over.

M: The Black Hand went over?

B: Yes, and they went over and skinned the bull. Cow, bull, whatever it was. They hung the fur there, whatever it was, a calf. I don't know what it was, but they showed him they could do it.

M: You kept your mouth shut.

B: You never bragged. Well, they told my mother . . . We used to raise 400, 500 chickens a year out there. We used leave them loose out there were the Cherry Valley ground is now. all those fields belonged to the company in those days. We'd leave them all loose and everything. They said, "We're goona come over and choose some of your chickens, Mrs. Beltempo," and she said, "You don't have to come over and see them. Take them now while I'm right here now." So, they would take fifteen, twenty of the best chickens, and you have to leave them go, take them, that's all that was to it.

M: When did that end? When the furnace closed? Was it here after that?

B: No, before that ended. The Furnace closed in 1929.

M: By then the Black Hand was gone?

B: Yes, most of it was gone.

M: You don't know what made it leave?

B: No. In about the 1920's. 1920, I imagine, along in there. Yes, just before I graduated.

M: It pretty much died out?

B: Yes. Well, you got these cities like Youngstown and different cities, they still got it. We haven't got it.

M: Okay, you think they moved to the bigger cities. There was probably more chickens there to steal.

B: Money and stuff.

M: How about friction, now, between . . . The Protestants, I understand, lived over on the North Side. The Catholics, the Irish and the Italians are here on the South Side. I'm sorry I got it backwards. The Irish and Italian were here on this side of the tracks, the North Side. The Protestants were over on the South Side.

B: Yes.

M: Do you remember any problems between the Protestants and the . . .

B: All this on Main Street over here was all Irish.

M: On Graphton?

B: Yes, on Graphton. All that was all Irish.

M: Where did . . . The Italians tended to live over by Cherry Valley?

B: That's right.

M: How about friction then? How about problems between the Protestants? Did they let you know they didn't like you here?

B: Well, there are a lot of things they didn't go agree with the Catholic citizens on a lot of things. I don't know.

M: I know there isn't now, but how about then?

B: There was friction then, yes. there was always, when they got a few drinks in them . . . There were a lot of saloons. You know, at one time in this little town there were thirty-two saloons.

M: Wow! That would have been during the 1920's?

B: Well, it would be before that.

M: Before the 1920's. Thirty-two saloons.

B: Thirty-two saloons, and most of the guys were drunk all the time. Every place you went, you went to a damn saloon.

M: There must have been an awful lot of poor people, I mean, if the guys work in the mills for \$1 a day, and the . . .

B: Well, you got a drink for a \$.05 or \$.10; \$.10 for a whiskey and then a \$.05 for a beer, you got all you wanted.

M: Okay.

B: See, they used to play cards, too, and that is where it caused friction. You take, like we were talking about the Black Hand. You play cards. Maybe there was a bunch of them, you would get a lot of money, maybe win the money. There was always friction, caused friction between them. Before you would get out there, get out someplace, they would get a hold of you. They would try to get the money off of you. Stuff like that, that was always on. Most of the fights were always in the saloons. See what they called the Big Saloon was right there. Right across the street there, Cannel. By the corner used to be the Cannel Saloon. Oh, that was . . . Then up here at Grassland, the Hi Ho, right across the street from the Hi Ho on the corner there used to be a big saloon. Where the picture show is now, there used to be a big saloon there, the Charlie Saloon. Oh, there used to be a lot of saloons, and people used to go in and get half tanked.

M: And there would be trouble.

B: There would be trouble.

M: Do you remember anything about the Klu Klux Klan?

B: Well, we were one of the lucky ones. We weren't bothered too much with them, but at one time when you made a big march in town here everybody was well prepared for them. It only takes that one Irishman. There were tough Irishman in town here. They had guns ready for them, waiting. They paraded in town here, but there wasn't too much done around here, but they were ready for them. If there was any trouble, they would step them off.

M: Were the Irish pretty rough?

B: Oh, we had Bill Fires running this town. Oh, there was quite a bunch of them.

M: Rougher than the Italians, do you think? Were there more Irish.

B: No, there wasn't more Irish, but the Irish are

always . . .

M: Ready to fight.

B: Fight. Where the Italians would clip you off if they got a chance.

M: They'd shoot you.

B: The easy way out.

M: When do you remember the Klan? During what years? Is that during the 1920's?

B: A long in there, before the 1920's.

M: You mentioned working on the Erie Railroad? When did you work on the Erie Railroad?

B: Well, after 1929 through the Depression.

M: All through the Depression.

B: Well, I worked a couple of years on it. I couldn't . . .

M: Early 1930's then?

B: Yes.

M: What was it like to work in the Erie Railroad? Tell me about that. What did you do?

B: Well, they had what you called ties. Put a tie, put that thing under there, so the railroad engine would run over them, over the rail, and they wouldn't go down. Hold it up, see, you put new ties in there, put new rails if the rails went bad, and different things like that.

M: You tamp the valves down to bring the ties up?

B: Yes, slag, more like. I didn't work to much on the railroad. I put most of my time at the Cherry Valley furnace, the coke ovens. From there I went to Demming's. I worked thirty-five years at the Demming Grate Company. I was a molder.

M: That's in Salem. When did you start in Demming's?

B: 1937, I put it down.

M: Okay. So, you worked on the railroad from 1929 until 1932, or something?

B: Well, in 1934 I went to Elders. I worked in Elders for three years, and I was getting \$.40 an hour. They told me . . . I had a good friend working at Demming's. He said, "Sammy, you oughta come over to work at Demming's. I said, "Do they pay you more money?" He said, "Yes, \$.45 an hour. A nickel more." I told her, I said, "I am going to go to Demmings." So, I went to Demmings, and I stayed on the same job from 1937 to 1972, thirty-five years on the same job.

M: Wow!

B: Molting on the molting machine. From \$.45 an hour, I worked until I was getting close to \$4 maybe \$4.50 an hour when I left. After I left, the last couple of years they have been making \$8, \$9 on that same job. Same thing, making cashings for prugs.

M: Leetonia sounds like it was a pretty rough time back then. That's a fair thing to say?

B: Yes, it was a rough town.

M: I was told my someone, I won't tell you who, I was told by someone that he didn't know of any murders that ever happened in Leetonia.

B: He what?

M: He didn't know of any murders that happened in Leetonia. Anybody being killed. You wouldn't agree with that?

B: No.

M: That's interesting.

B: Personally, myself, I didn't want to tell you, but I know there is.

M: Connected with the Black Hand?

B: Well, there was one guy, he used to go out every night. He had a horse and buggy. He used to go out every night just about when it was getting dark and go out hunt some lamb, sheep, stuff like that. So, this one night, they were waiting for him. When he went passed there, got close to the place, they clipped him off. They shot him, and the horse took him back home in the buggy.

M: Was that just a farmer killing a thief?

B: Yes.

M: That didn't involve the Black Hand?

B: No.

M: That sounds like an awfully rough place.

B: Right on this street here is where it happened and where that guy used to keep his horse and buggy.

M: What was Main Street like in the 1920's? If I could go back there, 1925, what would I see on Main Street on a Saturday afternoon?

B: The pictures show they used to have a matinee on Saturday afternoon, and Monday afternoon they had a matinee where the picture show is. That was built about 1920 and along in there. Now, when I graduated in 1926, boom, 1926 they had picture shows. The kids would go to the show and pay \$.06. They go in there, it's \$.06. Paid tax on it is what it was.

M: Taxes then, too.

B: Serial, they reshewed a serial on Monday and a serial on Saturday. Everybody wanted to go see the serial the next week.

M: That was the ending of it, right?

B: Yes.

M: Okay.

B: Well, it continued the next week. They had Eddie Pollo and William Dunkin, and they had Pearl White. They had a bunch of them there. There was only a two reeler. You would see a main feature too, but you saw a two reeler. There was a continued . . . Most of the time most of the older people, like I told you before, they spent most of there time in those movie showings drinking. Most of the people other than that, there were so many saloons, most of them were in the saloons drinking. You didn't have any ice cream parlors in those days. They didn't have any supermarkets. They never had any . . . Well, they had pool rooms, that's the most, one or two pools rooms in town all the time. That was just a way of getting around it though, the pool rooms.

M: Was there a company store over at Cherry Valley?

B: No, not at Cherry Valley.

M: There was at Grafton though?

B: Yes, Grafton Supply. That was owned by the Graftons.

M: Were you better off at Cherry Valley than you would have

been at Grafton?

B: I think so. Well, my dad worked before he started over at Cherry Valley he worked for a couple, about a year or two, at Grafton Furnace. There was a guy by the name of Dennis Conley. He was an Irishman. That's where the Irish got in trouble with the Italians. They had a bunch of Italians working for them, he was the boss.

M: Conley was the boss?

B: Dennis Conley. He was the boss. He told my dad maybe a couple days he was to go into a certain job. He didn't understand him. My dad went over into another job. He went back and said, "You didn't do what I told you to," and they fired him, see?

M: Yes.

B: He was asking for it because that is when he is giving them the trouble.

M: Yes.

B: That's why the Irish and the Italians . . . The Italians didn't know how to talk English. The Irish, they knew how to talk a little bit of English. They were always super . . .

M: They were the bosses.

B: Yes, they were mostly the bosses. Dennis Conley lived over here on Ridge Street. He was the one . . . That was the kind of a guy he was. He was an Irishman, he was tough. You talk about tough Irish. This one day I was standing right there by a . . . You know where the store was?

M: Yes, the company store.

B: These here Black Handers were chasing two guys.

M: Who was chasing them?

B: The Black Handers.

M: The Black Handers. They were Italians?

B: Yes.

M: A couple of Italians.

B: There were about four or five of them. They had guns in their hands. I was on a bicycle in the back. When I saw this I stopped the bicycle. They were chasing these

two Italians. They were running away, and they were shooting at them. Bang, bang, bang. The guy shot back, and he shot one of them and he hit him. They laid him out there, and there used to be a doctor right there across the street. They laid him out in the lawn. This Dennis Conley was a policeman at Cherry Valley where Curley is now. He was a watchman over there, and he caught these guys coming, these two Italians they were chasing. He said, "Put up your hands." He didn't even have a gun. Those guys put up there hands, and he caught them too, see. The guys were trying to get away from him, the Black Handers. The policeman caught them because he had a lot of guts to go up to them and tell them to put up there hands, didn't even have a gun.

M: What happened to the Black Handers though?

B: Well, some of them got away. There was nothing done about it.

M: They didn't fool with Conley?

B: No. The guy that got shot, they took him to the hospital. Laid him out on the lawn there. I was over there, and they laid him out on the lawn. They took him to the hospital. He came out alright afterwards, that was it.

M: Would you call those the good old days?

B: No, I wouldn't. I would say the good old days were about 1926 to better days.

M: The late 1920's just before the Depression.

B: Yes.

M: How about the 1950's?

B: Those were good days, 1950's were all right. The worst was the Depression days. That's what I said to her one time. I said, "Depression days-you didn't have the money, you couldn't get the goods." You had brown sugar, black flour, corn meal. You didn't get any white flour, hardly ever get it. If had a little bit of money, you could get it. Meat and stuff like that, you couldn't get because you didn't have the money. You weren't working. Today, you have the money, it is not enough. There is stuff, you go to the store, they have it all right, but the prices on it, you can't afford it.

M: So, today you have the products, but not the money. It's like the Depression years.

B: Yes, it is the same thing. They call it the . . .

M: Recession.

B: There used to be in those days, the Depression days, you get a sack of flour, and you were a pretty good friend with the store keeper, he could get you a sack of flour, white flour. They would put a burlap sack over on top of the flour, so people couldn't see if you happened to be taking it out. Some people wouldn't see that it was flour, see?

M: Yes.

B: They had different ways. You paid a little bit more, but you got it.

M: That way people wouldn't know you had it.

B: That's right.

M: How about meat and that? You said your mother had chickens, did you have any farm animals or anything?

B: We had some hogs, we had two dogs. We raised two hogs every year for our own use. A lot of people, they would hang them out to smoke them and stuff and the first thing you know . . .

M: They were gone.

B: They were gone, see. They couldn't take a chance. You can ask me the questions, and I'll try to answer them for you but . . .

M: I don't know. I think that pretty well takes care of it. Thanks.

END OF INTERVIEW