YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Campbell, Ohio During the 1930's and 1940's

Personal Experience

O. H. 1239

CHARLES TESTA

Interviewed

by

William Kish

on

July 14, 1989

CHARLES TESTA

Charles Testa was born on December 30, 1907 in Niles, Ohio. Mr. Testa is of Italian descent. He is the son of Ross and Laura Testa. Charles lived his early years on Penhale Avenue in Campbell. His home was located at the corner of Penhale and 12th Street. Mr. Testa attended the Fairview and Gordon Elementary Schools; and Penhale Middle School. He attended high school until the 10th grade.

Mr. Testa observed many of the events that took place in East Youngstown until 1925, and the early years of Campbell. He was able to give in detail the working conditions that were found in the Youngstown Sheet & Tube Company during the 1920's and 1930's. Mr. Testa was employed by the Sheet & Tube Company from 1925 until 1970. During this time, he observed many changes taking place in the steel industry.

Mr. Testa was married on June 15, 1935. His wife's name is Mary. He and his wife had one child; Susan Leone, age 40. Presently, she is attending Akron for her doctorate in elementary education. Mr. and Mrs. Testa live at 159 Gladstone Street in Campbell.

Mr. Testa attends St. Lucy Church on 12th Street in Campbell. He belongs to the Church's Men's Social Committee, the 1418 Retirees, and Campbell's Happy-Go-Lucky Club. His special interest lies with gardening and fishing.

- William Kish

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INTERVIEWEE: CHARLES TESTA

INTERVIEWER: William Kish

SUBJECT: Depression, working conditions in the mill, Fire of 1916, Steel Strike of 1937

DATE: July 14, 1989

K: This is an interview with Charles Testa, for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on Campbell, Ohio, During the 1930's and 1940's, by William Kish, at 159 Gladstone Street, Campbell, Ohio, on July 14, 1989, at 1:00 p.m.

Mr. Testa, what was it like during the Depression living in Campbell?

T: [It was] bad. We worked in the Sheet & Tube. We were all laid off.

K: You were laid off, not too much work?

T: There was no work at all. I worked one day a month, in 1929. They just kept me on the payroll not to let me loose. When I went down to Sheet & Tube, I was a messenger boy. I delivered mail. I picked up the mail; and then, I went through all the department. They brought the mail to me; and then, I was a messenger with it. After that, I got a job with the labor gang. With the labor gang, I worked my way up into the seamless mill. The mill was built in 1927. In 1927 we had two departments: the German mill and the American mill. Anyway, my job was to press the pipe out, squeeze it out. I had a roll go in the middle of it, and we kept pounding on it until it came to the

right size. After that, on the breakdown, we went in there and we trimmed pipe. I used to leave home at 7:30 a.m. and come back at 11:00 the next night. I worked sixteen, seventeen, or eighteen hours a day to stay down there.

K: What year was this, now?

T: [It was] 1927. In 1925, I went in as a messenger boy.

K: This is before the Depression?

T: Yes. In 1929, we were all kicked out, every one of us.

K: What do you mean, "kicked out?"

T: There was no work. We were sent out. After that, I had to go down at six in the morning, sit down at that office down at Weigh Labor Shanty; then we would go back in the evening. [During the] night shift, no work--come back home.

K: So, you walked from where you were at, where you lived?

T: I walked all the time. I walked all the way down to Stop 10 and walked all the way back to 7th Street.

K: Where was Stop 10 located in Campbell?

T: Stop 10? Right by the Sheet & Tube bridge. Short Street. You'd go down Short Street; and then, we'd have to walk half way back to Campbell again. Now, they put steps down there at Stop 7. We went down in the hole, then. After that, when I got that job, finally in 1929. We got that Depression after 1929, and we went back. In 1929, Sheet & Tube took orders from families that they had to have a Sheet & Tube Store. We bought clothing, shoes, and groceries.

K: Are we talking about something like the Sheet & Tube Company House?

T: No. It was the Sheet & Tube Company Store, itself. The Company House was separate. Anyway, they'd come around and take an order and give them the order. For ten dollars, you used to get a sack of flour. There was black bread too, made out of sunflower seeds and stuff like that. We got our food there; and then after we went back to work, they would take it out of our pay, like so much a pay. We were lucky that my brother and my father and I, the three of us, worked in the same mill.

K: Your father's name was what?

T: Ross. My brother's name was Anthony. We all had jobs down there at the same time. That was all that was. It was mostly a family deal in Campbell. In one department, they had the father and son.

K: So, it depended on who you knew, maybe a little?

T: In them days, yes. In them days, there was mostly. . . . I told my dad I wanted to get into a company shop. So, in 1929, I went down there and found my way in. I stayed there from 1929 until 1970.

K: You were down there for forty-one years?

T: Yes. I turned around and retired in 1970. It was pretty good. Lucky, that's all.

K: What did you make in 1929, in wages?

T: In 1929, I made ninety dollars a month.

K: Ninety dollars a month? So, we're talking about. . . ?

T: Five days a week.

K: About how many hours a day?

T: Ten hours a day. I stayed in that department all that time. I never moved. When the war broke out, a lot of these guys, they disappeared. They wanted to go up, and make bigger money. They all went to this Warren, Ohio, where they had the machinery and all that. As soon as the war was over, they lost out. I was the lucky guy. I stayed. They tried to come back. They wouldn't take them back. At 1929, we had people going all. . . . Young fellows would go all the way to Lowellville. One of those coal freight trains would come in from Pittsburgh. These guys would start in Lowellville. They'd pile all that coal up in the box car; and when they got into the Campbell limits, they'd kick it all off. All that coal would come off. Then, they'd pick this coal up and sell it for ten cents a sack, whoever had ten cents.

K: This was now during the Depression?

T: Yes. We survived it anyhow. Sheet & Tube was our survival. They treated us pretty darn nice. You bought your shoes there. You bought your clothes there. Everything.

K: Kind of like a Company Store?

T: Yes. Then in 1937, they disbanded everything. They weren't allowed to sell nothing. They had to give up everything.

K: They took some money out of your pay?

T: Yes. Out of our pay, out of our wages. Some guys got five cents out of their pay when they went back, because they took their money. Guys who lived in the Sheet & Tube quarters, they took the rent out of them. They took everything out of their pays. Sometimes, they were only left with five cents. I know one friend of mine, he still got the check. They keep calling him for the five cent check. He won't send it to them. Close the books. He died. That check was never cashed. There was a stink over it. They wanted to straighten their books out for five cents.

K: Do you remember anything about the Sheet & Tube Company Houses?

T: They bought concrete slabs, just like they do now. They made the framework first, then they picked it up. In them days, it was just nothing but concrete slabs. They'd mold them together in some way, and they made homes out of it.

K: Do you remember them when they were building them?

T: Oh yes. We'd stay up there. Then when they got done with them, they had one big celebration. They had fireworks and everything. The houses were really nothing but a big block with a roof on it. That's all they are. You go upstairs and go through a winding step. [You] couldn't feed your furniture through a window, if it was something big.

K: They were kind of fancy then, weren't they?

T: No, they weren't fancy.

K: What I meant was that they were well kept up.

T: Oh, yes. The company kept them up, then. They sold them. Whoever bought them took care of them. Whoever didn't, now there is, like a big hole. Then, they came back a couple years later, and they built them in Struthers. They made them into apartments, brick apartments. They made one half on each, two people in one building. They even modernized them. During the strike. . . .

K: What year was that now?

T: In 1937. For six weeks, they had that big strike down here and the big war down on 5th Avenue and Poland Avenue, there. [They were] shooting at each

other, shooting those big gas tanks at Republic Steel. They were mean down here at Sheet & Tube. The police ran down the gates at that employment office.

K: Why was there a strike in the first place?

T: To get the union in, which was real good at that time. But now, we got to be at the tail end of it.

K: They wanted to establish a union in 1937, and the Sheet & Tube did what then?

T: They brought in colored guys from Alabama by train. They locked us all out. They had food and clothes. They were all locked in. The warehouses and storerooms, all full of frigidaires and everything, food and everything for them. They took care of themselves, but not us. Then, a lot of guys scabbed. They stayed in the mill. What good does it do? They're all dead, now. Every darn one of them scabbed. But, they made big money. They got paid for twenty-four hours a day. They never came home.

K: So, they locked everybody out?

T: The foreman had to go take care of the blast furnaces and keep them going. The foremen had the dirty rap. They had to go out to the departments and work, keep the furnace open, the hearths up, keep the blast furnaces up, keep the gas up. They did all the work, all the foremen. They brought in beds for them and everything. They had a city in the Sheet & Tube.

K: How long did this last?

T: [This lasted] six weeks.

K: Do you remember when they brought the military in? The National Guard?

T: They came in 1937. They unloaded right on flatcars down on Stop 10, Wilson Avenue, there. They walked straight up to the grounds, and pitched their little tents up.

K: Where did they pitch their tents?

T: Gordon Park.

K: Is that where the present day City Hall is at?

T: City Hall is there now, yes. Their headquarters were at the Crino Building on Twelfth Street. That's where the big guys were. The other little guys were in the mud, rain. These pictures show it.

K: They're camping out.

T: They lived in little pup tents. We'd go down there, and they'd pitch pennies in the mud. I think the kids picked pennies out of the mud and everything. Twelfth Street was never paved.

K: [In] 1937?

T: No, this was during the war, during the burning. The city wasn't paved. They did pretty good, though. They didn't bother nobody. They just kept moving. You had to keep moving, that's all.

K: So, you're saying during the strike in 1937, you really just couldn't stand around, a big group of guys. . . ?

T: Oh, no, they made you move. Republic Steel had a big war going on, down on Poland Avenue there. People were beating each other up. A couple got killed, I think. That was out of our turf. We never went down there. We'd never go down around there. We stayed up at this section. It was real rugged. I got married in 1935 at the heart of the Depression. I had to sell my insurance policy to get married.

K: How much money did you have starting off when you got married?

T: Nothing. I just showed them the bill. I think the bill was $167. We got a new stove, linoleum, a bed. . . . Today, you can't even buy cable for that much. During the Depression there, I didn't have no money because of school. We'd bring pennies to school, and they'd put it in the bank book. They used to have a bank book course when I went to grade school.

K: Where did you go to grade school at?

T: I switched all over . . . Penhale, Gordon. . . . I started off at Stop 7, on Warhurst Road, where the ball park is now. [Did you] ever see that little building on 6th Street and Warhurst Road? There is a little building, like a school. That was the school. It had two rooms. They took everybody.

K: What school was that there?

T: Stop 7 School. Then, we went from there to Italian Hall. We had a school there on 12th Street. From there, we went to Gordon. Then, we advanced to Penhale and then Penhale Memorial. Of course at that time, we had our territories, zones.

K: What do you mean by zones, territories?

T: So many streets had to go to Penhale. So many streets went to Gordon. So many went to Reed. Somebody made a big mistake. Instead of having to go to Penhale, we had to go to Reed, walk in the snow boy, oh. We had the school right on our nose, and we had to go to Reed. We didn't ride like they do now. These kids have got it made. We had to walk boy. Get home in time to eat and go back again.

K: So, you're talking about going to school back in 1910, 1915.

T: Yes. I was around ten or eleven [years of age].

K: This was before World War I?

T: Oh, yes. [It was] way before. After World War I, they opened Memorial High School. They opened it up in 1925 and called it Memorial High because of the soldiers. Now, they got everything different there. They changed it all.

K: Mr. Testa, you were a young boy in Campbell. Do you remember when there was the Great Fire of Campbell?

T: You mean when they burned the town down? Oh, yes. In those days, they had saloons all over Campbell. I still remember when I went down 12th street. We got out. Sables had the saloon there on the corner of 12th Street and Robinson. They used to have their whiskey bottles right on the counter. You would just pour your glass right out of the whiskey bottle. For a nickel, you got a glass of beer and a meal. They had eggs on one end, sandwiches. We weren't allowed in.

K: You were young?

T: Oh, we were kids. I'd see them. They'd go in there and have. . . . For a lousy nickel today, you can't even get a glass of water. [They used to have] five cent-beers, and plenty of them. I used to go down and bring beer home by bucket for my dad. You can't do that today. You bring a bucket of beer home, by the time you get home, it's flat. My dad used to buy a keg of beer, and they'd drink it out in the field there or wherever they drank it. What was left, they came home,

and they tapped it, put it in bottles. You couldn't do it now with this kind of beer. Every March, they had Bock beer, that black beer. They cleaned the vats out. They don't feature that anymore. I'm surprised.

During the Depression, during the fire . . . I remember we went down, and we snuck out. My dad wouldn't let us out of the house, but we snuck out. Wilson Avenue, they raided that place. They burned it down inside out. They had people robbing clothes and shoes, and they started up 12th Street, Robinson Road and went in all them beer joints. That was something boy. They just kept burning like that.

K: They stole stuff out of different places?

T: They robbed the daylights out of them department stores, like all of them down on the Sheet & Tube bridge there. They had the Five & Dime there. I used to sell papers down there during the war.

K: World War I?

T: Yes. I sold them at three cents a paper. Look what they're paying today. Anyway, we survived and everything.

K: Why did that fire get started in 1916, or how did it start?

T: No one knows. They just got mad and started burning things down.

K: Was there a little drinking involved?

T: I don't know what happened. I know during the strike, my brother's father-in-law, when he would come in from West Virginia, he'd get off at Stop 7. He had to make that stop on Center Street. Every train has got to make that stop to get that switch. He'd get off there and head up 7th, and they'd put him back on the train. They told him to get out. They thought he was one of the strikers. They sent him back with his suitcase and all. When everything settled down, we had jitney buses here.

K: What is that?

T: It was a five cent-ride to Youngstown. It was like a Taxi Cab, but it was a jitney bus. It was a big automobile and they'd tune these up. He had a great big Cadillac. They put you in there, and for five cents, take you to town. And, for [another] five cents,

they'd bring you back. It was only a nickel. Then, the street cars came in. Shakey buggies, Two-wheel Charlie's we called them. They'd start off from Stop 10, go all the way to Youngstown, and come back in any time you want to. It went continuously all day long.

K: Back and forth?

T: Yes.

K: Do you remember the cost of that?

T: A nickel. Five cents to get to town, and five cents to come back. Then, it went to a dime.

K: What year was this now, with the street cars?

T: It was in the 1920's.

K: Wasn't Campbell, East-Youngstown at that time?

T: Yes. They named Campbell after Jim Campbell. He owned the Sheet & Tube. He was the one who owned it. I don't know how they ever got the name Youngstown Sheet & Tube, but when the new administration came in, they changed the name to Campbell. Why, I don't know. He treated us pretty good. The Sheet & Tube gave us a good living. I can't say nothing against it. Things happen that's all. Change of times. We managed to survive that strike, survived the fire. We survived everything. I still remember when I used to go to the show. We paid a nickel. One day, I went down with knickers on, then long pants because long pants came out, then. She charged me a dime. I went back home, took my pants off, came back down for a nickel.

K: In other words, as a young boy you wore knickers?

T: Oh, yes, we wore knickers. We were golf players.

K: So, what exactly were knickers?

T: Golf knickers. Did you ever see those golf knickers, socks and shoes?

K: So, you wore like a sock and the pants come up to your knee?

T: Yes. I went home and put long pants on when they came out. She charged me a stinking dime.

K: How many theaters were there?

T: We had two theaters. "The New Show and the Old Show," they called it. The Old Show was on Short Street and Robinson Road. Hutchins owned that. The New Show was up on . . . where the post office is at, Robinson Road. Birminghams owned that.

K: Is it still there?

T: No, there is nothing there. Robinson Road was loaded with barber shops, beer joints, everything.

K: Do you remember some of the names of different places in Campbell?

T: Oh, yes. We had Joe the barber; then coming up above, we had a Romanian drug store. Up above the Romanian drug store, we had the Heiman buildings.

K: Was this on Robinson?

T: Yes. They had novelty stores, like hardware. They had everything in there. Malcoffs had a butcher shop down on Murry Avenue. Jake Idleman used to own the newspaper stand. He had a little slot machine. It was like 12 inches by 7 inches, something like that. He used to take our pennies back because we played pennies. We'd sell our papers to go down and play that stinking machine. He would take the money we lost.

K: Gambling never worked out.

T: His son-in-law, Leo Dunn owned the big dry-goods store down there on Robinson Road and Wilson Avenue. The two big pool rooms he had was White Palace. They didn't allow no Blacks in there.

K: Excuse me?

T: They called it the White Palace. It was a pool room. If they went in there to buy a cherry coke or something, he'd charge them fifteen cents. They would say, "How come? It's only a nickel?" He told them, "[That's] ten cents for the glass." He'd charge them ten cents for the glass. That's the honest-to-God truth. If they didn't take the glass, he'd break it. They'd come in for cigarettes. He'd tell them, "We're out of them." It was Paul, Nick and Tony Gee. Tony Gee is still living. He has got to be close to ninety.

K: What was his last name?

T: Gee. Tony G-E-E. He used to own the pool room down there. His father used to own the other pool room on the opposite side. I remember I got in a crap game. I was only fifteen years old, but I got in, in the back

room. I was fifteen years old. I was skinny. I only weighed about eighty pounds. So, when the red light came on, everybody ran. I didn't know where to go; so I ran to the commode back there, and I hid behind it. They had their commode about that far back. They had all that space. I snuck behind there, and I stayed there. After they left, I came out. Hank Shepas was the policeman. He says, "I saw you back there, Chuck."

K: The red light meant what?

T: That the cops were coming.

K: What do you remember about the police in Campbell during this time?

T: They were rough. Old man Constintino got shot. Some guy by the name of Smith, I think, did it. It was big time. Pete Petrol, he shot a colored guy. They never called you in. They threw you over a car and took you to the hospital. Kenny was a policeman. He was one of the fastest policemen we've ever seen. That guy could run. He's a police chief in California somewhere now. He retired. Boy, that guy was fast. You couldn't get away from him.

K: Was there much crime in Campbell?

T: Not very much. No, not that I know of. It was mostly all bootlegging days. That was another big incident in Campbell. They went from joint to joint. State, Federal cops came in. They went up to 10th Street, 11th Street, and smashed all the whiskey out the windows and everything. They threw all the whiskey right in the street, bootleg whiskey.

K: Now, this was during prohibition?

T: Yes.

K: You were how old then?

T: I was nineteen. I was in the mill. Robinson Road, Washington Street, Adams, Jefferson, all disorderly homes, every one [of them]. There were two places down at the other end of Struthers line called Seventh Heaven, and the other one was called the Ten Commandments.

K: Is that right?

T: They were disorderly homes.

K: Was there a lot of that type of activity in Campbell?

T: Yes. In World War II, Campbell was out of bounds, the Ritz Bar. All of the soldiers didn't go there.

K: During the war?

T: Yes, during World War II.

K: Okay, meaning they would not allow soldiers in Campbell?

T: They weren't allowed in Campbell. Every street in Campbell down that way.

K: Okay.

T: Big Bertha, a big fat woman who owned a disorderly home, she had two of them Irish Wolfhounds, them big things. On Wilson Avenue, they had a porch over there. She had them chained to the railings so they wouldn't jump. Here, she came home, and she found them both dead. They hung themselves. Somebody must have teased them. They jumped over the railings. All during the bootleg days, they used to go into a beer joint down on Wilson Avenue. It used to be twenty-five cents for a pitcher of whiskey, bootleg whiskey.

K: What was the name of that place?

T: One was Sammy's Place, and another one was Jim's. They would tell us in the mill. One day--I used to work in the tool room--the boss came in there, and say's, "I saw you last night over at Jim's." He said, "Next time I catch you in there, I'm going to send you home." He caught me in there drinking whiskey.

K: So, that was illegal whiskey?

T: Oh, yeah. Bootleg.

K: Was business good? Did the places always have a lot of people in them?

T: Yes. People went blind and everything.

K: They went blind?

T: Drinking that whiskey, sure. They made it out of anything.

K: It wasn't made properly?

T: In them days, they used to make it out of plum, corn. My friend used to make it out of corn.

K: Before you were married, did you drink a little bit of. . . ?

T: Bootleg whiskey. Oh, yes. I drank a little of it. That was rough stuff. It was 100 percent proof. My buddy used to make it. He had a regular steel pipe with copper pipe in it. Sheriff Elser was the sheriff who raided him. When he raided him, boy, he had barrels of it. He used to make it upstairs on two floors. The sheriff said, "Whoever this fellow is, sure knew his business." He was talking to him right to his face. He said, "Yeah, when I see him, I'll tell him." You used to be able to smell the stuff in the sewer. You would walk by the house and smell it.

K: So, from inside the house, the excess was poured right into the sewer?

T: Yes, right into the sewer. We used to live next door to one. He fell asleep on our porch with two guns. My grandmother came. She got scared and wondered what was going on. He used to work all night bootlegging.

K: He carried two guns with him?

T: No, he was just a big shot.

K: Did many people carry weapons, like the bootleggers?

T: Heck yeah. They had the bootleg war in Campbell. One of them got shot. When there was a fight, they'd kill each other. On 12th Street and Wilson Avenue. The bootleg section was from Gordon Avenue on down. That was all bootleg section.

K: In businesses and houses, they were making it?

T: All homes. One woman, she had a two-story home; a cellar and an upstairs. All upstairs was nothing but kegs and barrels. I think they burned the place down because they couldn't get the stink out. Oh, I tell you.

K: So, Campbell had an image in the 1920's and 1930's as what type of town? What type of town would you describe Campbell as in the 1920's and 1930's?

T: It was a rough town. We had a reputation. They got away with it. It didn't bother me. I've been here eighty-one years. It never bothered me none. I went my way; they went theirs. If they wanted to shoot that guy, go ahead and shoot him. I didn't care. It didn't bother me.

K: In the 1930's, there was a depression or a lot of people didn't work. What do you remember about the prices of things in the 1930's? What did people do for

a job? How did they learn to get by? That sort of thing.

T: To get a job, you had to know the guy. We had people down here that come in from Europe and went down to see this one guy. He'd get you in the mill, but then you had to give him your first pay. That's how they worked it. That's true.

K: Really?

T: You'd give him your first pay. He'd get you a job. Another thing, when I went in, it was mostly a father and son deal in Campbell. My dad went in there first, and he got my brother in. Then, he got me in. Mostly all one department, too. If you weren't Slovak, you didn't get in there. If you were a Diego, you didn't get in. It was mostly all a family deal.

K: Nationality deals, too?

T: That's what I mean. Where I work, my general foreman, he was Italian. His wife was Polish. That was the difference. So, she had him hire her side, and he had to hire our side. That is how it went. When I went down there, I found the general foreman there. He had about four brother-in-laws. They were all working in there. Then they started dragging in the nephews and son-in-laws and all that, see. It was pretty hard to crack that ring. When the union came in, it broke it up.

K: Before that, it was always like a family deal?

T: Yes. [It was] all family. Nationality and family.

K: In Campbell, how were the neighborhoods? Were they segregated? Different nationalities on different streets?

T: Oh, yes. Penhale was all Italian. On one side [of the city] was all Polish. After Hyatt Avenue, there were all Croatians. Penhale Street was strictly Italian and Wipple Street was Polish.

K: You lived where on Penhale? What was the address there?

T: [It was] 367 Penhale. That is a big place. It's still there. That home was built a long time ago. I'm eighty-one now. You can imagine how old that house is. They remodeled it. It was a macaroni box type. Two floors. My dad built that home. He bought the lot and the home for twelve hundred dollars. It took him all of twenty years to pay it.

K: Do you remember what year he bought the home?

T: He bought that home in 1907. That's when I was born. It took him all that time to pay it.

K: As far back as you can remember when you first moved into the home, did you have electricity?

T: Heck no. We didn't have no heat either. We had a pot-belly stove. My dad had a hole in the floor. The heat would go upstairs. When the furnace came in--that was years later. We always had a pot-belly stove, kerosene lights. When they did come in with electricity, my mother was a main instigator down there. My mother used to be an interpreter. Italian-American. She went to the sixth grade in the United States. She got married when she was fifteen. She used to jump rope with the kids when they came home from school. So, she took over on Penhale. She got all the street lights. She fought for the street. She fought for the sewers. She fought for the gas. She got everything.

K: As a young boy, did you have an outhouse?

T: Oh, yes. It would be over here tonight, and my dad would have a hole dug over here the next night. Instead of calling them outhouses, they called them "honeydumpers." We'd come out of the house at one or two in the morning, and it wasn't there no more. It was over here. They would move it from one hole to the other. Instead of getting somebody to clean it who would charge you money, they'd dig their own hole and put the top on top of that. They'd keep moving it back and forth.

K: How long did you have that?

T: Up until the time we got electricity. Up until the time we got the sewers. When they first built Campbell on Penhale, the crowd of people up there said [they] had sewers and everything. We never had sewers. We had a well. My father had a 116 foot well. The water came up. We pumped the water. We had two pumps. One inside and one outside. When they tore the street apart to rebuild it, here they found pipe in there. They had sewer pipes in there. It was in there, but there was no sewer.

They used to take streetcars that would be pulled by a horse. There would be horses in the mill. It was rough. It's hard to remember most of that stuff because it's so doggone long ago.

K: Growing up in Campbell, as a young boy, what did you do?

T: I blew my fingers off. I picked up a dynamite cap playing around with it.

K: What year was that?

T: Well, I was eight years old.

K: Is that how you lost your fingers?

T: Well, I'm eighty-nine. Seventy-one years ago.

K: How did that happen?

T: I picked up a dynamite cap for a firecracker. I put it in my pocket. They used to put them in sewers on 12th Street. They had wires in them. When the wires came off, they would throw the caps over the sewers there, and we'd pick them up. [We'd] sit down by a fire. A spark [would go] in and took them right off. We spent most of our time at Roosevelt Park woods. They had big woods up there. There is a shopping plaza there, now. We used to go back in there. We did most of our mushroom picking and everything in there. Berries. At maple syrup time, we'd carry a hand drill and a hammer with us. We'd go out there and drill a hole in the elderberry bush, put a quart bottle, leave it there; and then, go back and we'd drink the sap. It was really sweet. We had good times. We enjoyed ourselves. We didn't know what a girl was in our day. If you went out with a girl you were scum.

K: Really? As a young guy?

T: Oh, yeah. I played baseball most of my life. That's how I killed my time.

K: What were some of the teams back then, when you were a young boy in Campbell?

T: When I was a kid, there was the Campbell A.C., the Hillcrest, the Campbell Indians. We were the Indian Juniors. That was about it. There were only four or five teams. The same group played football. They were semi-pro. They used to play down in Struthers where they have the waterworks now. That empty lot, that used to be a football field there. Of course, we played our games at Gordon Park, the Stonepile. No grass grew in that place. It was solid stone. It started from way down on Wilson Avenue up to the Stone Quarry. It was back in there where they had that dump.

K: In Campbell say during the 1920's and in the 1930's, did a lot of people have their own farms?

T: Everybody had their own. My dad had three lots. He'd dig it up by hand, raise their own food. We would raise our own food all the time. We raised tomatoes, and potatoes, corn. We sometimes would eat it right out of the field. During the big Depression, Sheet & Tube had property out at McKelvy Lake. Everybody had their own lot. They would pick you up at five or six in the morning, and they'd bring you there. Everybody had their own lot. Then they changed it to a victory garden. In them days, it was the "starving garden," during the Depression. My dad would stay out there all day long, and the truck would come pick him up and bring him home. Sheet & Tube supplied him the seeds and the tools. All they did was go there and work. They made their own gardens. They brought their own vegetables and everything. Of course, they had a lot of farms in Campbell. We had Creed's Farm. Roosevelt Park was a great big farm. That was Creed's place. They had everything up there. Ninety percent of the people raised their own stuff.

K: Meaning vegetables and stuff?

T: Yes. Then later on, in later years, they called it a victory garden. They had it up at the water tank on Tenny Avenue. Everybody had a little garden up there. They were on their own, though. The ones that I just talked about, Sheet & Tube, they supplied the seed and everything.

K: The ones you're talking about is more or less during the Depression?

T: Yes. They raised their own vegetables, and they'd go out of the woods and pick fruits; apples, peaches, and berries.

K: During World War II, they called them Victory Gardens?

T: Yes. Did you ever see the Jubilee Gardens down on Oak Street?

K: Yes.

T: They were the same thing. Everybody had so much land. The bigger the land you had, the more you worked. You dug it out.

K: So, you had a lot of responsibility at home as a young boy?

T: Sure. At least you got a job. Like I said, if your father wasn't working anywhere, you didn't get no work. It was mostly a family deal: nationality and family, up until the union came in.

K: Do you remember when the union first came in?

T: Yes. That's when I went in the office and told my superintendent. He had six brother-in-laws in there. They were the cream of the crop. Me, I go down and asked for a job. I was in the tool room. A new machine came in. I said, "How about putting me on that new machine?" "Go up there and keep your shirt on." Next thing you knew, one of his brother-in-laws would be on it. You would turn around when the union came in, and I said, "Hey, what are you going to do with your brother-in-laws now?" [It's] true. They all went down. We all went up, because we were there a long time. I was there in 1929. Them guys came in 1944, 1945, after the war; and they had the best jobs in the world. Still, they demoted them all. I still remember. It was hard, then. If you weren't in the union, you were out.

K: During the 1930's, how much did you make, maybe during the day or during an hour?

T: . . . during the Depression?

K: Yes.

T: I made about a dollar an hour or less than that. It was probably ninety-five cents at most.

K: What could you buy for that?

T: Heck, you bought good. You bought meat. Every payday you ate good. You could get a pound of steak for almost nothing. Potatoes, you would buy by the bag; flour, you bought it by the bag. I still remember my mother used to buy a big twenty five pound container full of them little crackers for soup and stuff. We used to eat that in coffee. They were the little round ones. You ate whatever you could eat.

K: Then also, you had your food from the gardens?

T: Oh, 90 percent of our food came out of that garden, all but the meat. My dad had chickens, and he had pigs. I remember one pig we had weighed over three hundred pounds. Everybody in the neighborhood raised pigs until they got civilized a little bit. The health inspectors would come around.

K: How about butchering the animals? Did you get involved?

T: All the neighbors did it. My job was to catch the blood.

K: Catch the blood, meaning what?

T: You would make blood pudding out of it. My dad would slice a vein; and I would but a bucket under there, and I would catch the blood.

K: What kind of animal are we talkaing about?

T: Pigs. I would hold the bucket, get some blood. Then, we made a pudding out of it, blood pudding, all that stuff with that blood.

K: When did they normally butcher a hog?

T: January or February. The one we had was three hunded pounds. Chico would come in and help kill our pig, clean it up. Then, we'd go to the next neighbor. Caranos, Ritchs, and Testas. We all had pigs in the back yards. My mother had an oven back there too. She made her own bread in those old-style ovens. Under there, we had the pig. That was his home. Then, we had chickens running around. You had your own chickens. You had your own eggs. We were pretty well off. I think we were better off then than we are now. We were. At least, we were more neighborly. Today, heck, you don't even know your neighbor. I don't know why.

K: So, in other words, you are describing that maybe by during this time period that people were willing to help each other more?

T: Heck, yeah. My mother was a doctor's assistant. Anytime he would go out of town, he would say, "See Mrs. Testa." We had our own midwives and everything. Doctor's didn't mean nothing in them days.

K: What is a midwife?

T: She brought the babies. We had a professional, Mrs. Babich. Over on 12th Street there, in a barn-like building. She had a big sign on her house, "Midwife." She was a professional midwife. My neighbors had their own midwives. Everybody. All the women did. My mother was a pro. When the neighbors were ready to have a baby, all of them were ready for it, boy.

K: What was the average size of a family, then?

T: Seven or eight kids. Mine was twelve. There are only four left. Now, my grandmother had twenty-one children in Warren.

K: Wow.

T: I still have four aunts and one uncle living. They're all in their nineties. Uncle Billy is ninety. My brother Tony was older than his aunt. She was the last one.

K: She had how many children?

T: Twenty-one.

K: And, then your mother?

T: [She] had twelve. Rich's, they had about eight. About six or more, that's a family.

K: Really.

T: Oh, sure, because at Testa's there were six or seven.

K: Larger families?

T: Oh, they were big families. We were big, and we survived. My dad would bring us downtown and buy us five or six pairs of shoes. He came home, and he would still have change in his pocket. Today, you have to go to the bank to get one pair of shoes. It's true. Everybody had blue sweaters with blue buttons in school. They had a big sale downtown. Everybody went downtown to buy sweaters.

K: Everybody bought the same thing?

T: Everybody had the same clothes.

K: Were people ever jealous at that time?

T: No. Campbell, I still say way back in the days, the Greeks were Greeks, Slovaks were Slovaks, and times were times, but we mixed. We always mixed. It is still the same way today. You go around today. . . . Now I was the first Italian in this neighborhood [on Penhale]. It was still Slovak. I got along with all of them. They wanted me to go to their church. I still say we always mixed. Still today, it's the same way. I remember the kids used to fight, but the parents didn't.

K: Do you remember when your father was born?

T: He was born in 1876. He died when he was eighty-eight.

K: So, he died in the 1960's?

T: Yes. He died in 1965. My mother was eighty-seven when she died.

K: Were your parents born in Campbell?

T: My people were all from Italy, all but the children. We were all born here. My grandfather and my grandmother, they were all from Italy. We were all born in Niles. My dad traveled a good bit. He was in Niles, Steubenville, Youngstown. In 1902, he got to Sheet & Tube. I don't know. I was born in 1907. He must have worked there while I was born in Niles. He must have moved back to Niles, then. When I looked at the records, he was one of the first men in the Sheet & Tube. They used to work for fifty cents a day. Then, they took room and board out of you.

K: The company took it out?

T: No. They had to board some place. My grandmother had twenty-one boarders.

K: Boarders?

T: She cooked macaroni in the wash boilers

K: Like in a washing tub?

T: No, they were regular copper boilers. She put macaroni in there. She washed her clothes and everything in those.

K: You had a lot of people to feed?

T: Well, as soon as they came from Europe, they would either land in your house or my house. They were relatives. What were you going to do? You can't throw them out. So, they had to pay for their food and their room. In them days, money was money. It was scarce.

K: Could you still be hired during the 1920's or 1930's when you didn't even speak English?

T: No, very few got in. It was just like I told you. You got in the mill through one of these shysters. We had a bunch of them. I don't want to name them. We had the big ones all over. One was a policeman. One had a butcher shop. The other one had a grocery store. The other one had a bank. He'd sell stamps. It was a foreign bank. Another one had a department store. They did everything. They did all your paperwork for you, and they'd rob you. That's how they made their

money. If you needed a job, they'd get you a job. But, like I said, you'd pay for that job.

K: There is not much difference today, is there?

T: [There is] not much difference.

K: Mr. Testa, what would you say stands out most during the 1920's and 1930's? Anything in specific?

T: Yes. Like I said about the big strike, that was the biggest thing in Campbell, burning the town. Bootlegging days. I went through all that. No matter where you went, if they found out you were from East-Youngstown, they'd try to ride you a little bit.

K: But you didn't mind?

T: No. It was true. Why deny it? If you tried to deny it, they'd make it tougher on you. Yes, sir. Campbell was associated with the "disorderly homes."

K: "Disorderly homes" you call them?

T: Oh, yes. The ones we talked about. The Ten Commandments and Seventh Heaven.

K: On a number figure, say before World War II, exactly what would be a good estimate of those types of homes?

T: Almost all down the hill. Big Mary's, Big Bertha's, Ten Commandments, Seventh Heaven. Ten Commandments were two big long buildings. They were apartments. They were owned by one of the biggest guys in Campbell. He eventually got to be Mayor, too. I never monkeyed around. I had the fear of diseases. I saw the guys in the mill that had it. Mostly all black women had it. It would be twenty-five cents if you had it.

K: [It was] twenty-five cents to rent one of these women?

T: Yes. I was the only one that never owned a car. Well, I was the only one old enough to drive. Then, the father's had the car. The kids would get the car; and then, I'd drive them. I'd take them all over: Hubbard, Girard, Niles, Akron. I was a chauffeur, and I never owned a car. I was a driver.

K: You still drive today?

T: Oh, yes. I have been driving ever since I was fifteen. I never owned a car, though until I got in the mill in 1925. Then, I owned a 1927 Model-T.

K: What year did you get your first car?

T: [In] 1927. That was a used car. I think I paid about twenty-five or thirty dollars for it. It was a used car. You opened it up, and it had a seat in the back. They called it a roadster.

K: Did they call that a rumble seat?

T: It had a rumbleseat. I was rich. I had a car. The rest of the guys never did. In my neighborhood I was the only kid that worked. I went to work with Campbell Electric when I was sixteen years old. I stuck around and worked with him for chicken feed. I got paid, and I made a little money. It was rough, but I'm still here. Thank the Lord. When you were a kid, your door was never locked. Never. My dad would lock me out. We had an apple tree, and I'd climb the apple tree and go in my window. But today, you've got to keep everything locked; windows, doors, everything. They'll walk in on you.

K: So, people were very trusting then?

T: Yes. I remember when my brother Tony was born on the 4th of July. We were all in bed. We left the doors all unlocked. Boom! Fire crackers all over the place until two or three in the morning. You don't dare leave the doors unlocked now, boy. . . . I tell you . . . You've got to sit in your own house locked up as a prisoner.

K: True.

T: Then, I never carried a key. Back then, you didn't need it. Now, you got to have two. One for the front door, and one for the back door. It's rough. I don't care what they say.

K: So, things were much more simple then?

T: More friendly. Ninety percent of your neighborhood was all one nationality, like me. I belonged to the Polish Falcons. I belonged to the YMCA. I used to run a baseball team there; Campbell Junior, Indian Junior, and the ACME club. I was a manager of the basketball team. You had all nationalities. This is why they would come to my house. [It was] a club, and my mother had macaroni and meatballs. Then, we would go to the Hungarian house and have Goolash. We would go to the Croations house and have saurkraut. And, at the Slovaks, we had their dish. We got along pretty good.

Now, you don't even know your neighbor. You know [them], but you have to be on guard all the time, no matter where you're at. It could be your neighbor who is robbing you. You don't know.

K: Did you ever hear about drugs in the 1930's?

T: Never. No. The only people I knew that drank were the older people. Young people never touched that stuff. They never had beer or whiskey or wine. Maybe a glass of wine when they ate. That was homemade wine. It wasn't bought. We had a saying in Campbell on Penhale. "If the window was open in the attic, you had sausage in there. If the windows were open in the cellar, you were making wine." My mother used to take it and put it in crocks, the sausage; and she'd pour oil over it or lard and make a sealing out of it. She sealed it in. They called it a compost. The Croatians and the Slovaks had the sauerkraut. Everybody had their own style. They made it. They never bought it. I still remember one Jewish man would come around with a wagon. He had so much cabbage on there you couldn't even see the horse. As soon as he would come to the Polish neighborhood, everybody would come out with tubs. They were making sauerkraut. He had routes everyday. Benny the Jew, we called him. Benny used to come around and buy rags from us. [He'd charge] a penny a pound. That was money. The saloons would buy the empty whiskey bottles. We'd get a penny a bottle. We'd go down the dump there, pick them up dirty as they were; bring them down there on 10th Street and Reed Avenue. There used to be a big saloon there. There used to be a horse and buggy that would go in there to unload the beer.

K: Tenth Street and where?

T: Tenth Street and Reed Avenue, on the corner there. It was an awful big beer joint. It even had an archway. You could drive in there. They used to make a lot of different types of candies back then, also. You could get eight pieces of chocolate candies for a penny. They don't even make them now. This was when I was a young boy. My mom made sure we saw a show every Sunday. She had that nickel for the show only, nothing else. We didn't see no ice cream. My mother used to make the ice cream.

K: When you first started going to the movies when you were a young boy, were they talkies?

T: Oh, no.

K: They were silent films?

T: Oh, yes. They had that stinking player piano in the background, making noise. Then, they all continued, and you'd have to go back next Sunday to see them. I still remember them. Tom Mix, Hoot Gibson.

K: The movie would be showing one week, and then you would have to go back the second week.

T: It was like a serial they had.

K: Do you remember the radio?

T: My brother made the first radio in Campbell. He had an oatmeal box--you know--Mother's Oats. Anyway, somehow, some way, he put a wire all the way around. He got a crystal, and he got that thing going. The first thing we heard was WKFC Pittsburgh. Red Barber. He was the announcer. My mother had a second floor. He put this thing in a wooden box, and we'd sit there. We'd all sit on the stairway down there, and he'd get this thing working.

K: What year was that?

T: In the 1920's. He was an engineer. He worked wherever he got the most money.

K: That was your brother Tony, right?

T: Yes, but he passed away. He got that radio going. Then when they came out with the real big radios, I bought an RCA. I bought everything. I believed in music. I like it. I didn't know how to do anything with it, but I loved my music.

K: Mr. Testa, would you like to include anything else before we finish up? Anything in particular?

T: In our day, when we had Christmas, they used to give us a stocking with fruit, oranges, and all kinds of candy. We'd see a movie. After that, they'd let us out the back door and we'd all come home. Now, on George Washington's birthday, they'd shut the school down. We'd march all the way down there and go see a show. That was a treat. I'll never forget Christmas. We never bought a tree. Three of us would go out there and cut down a tree, and bring it in. Today, [it costs] fifty-five dollars for a lousy tree. To me, you got to go along with the times. Like now, they are changing the masses from Latin to English.

K: Well, if that's everything you wanted to talk about, and if you have nothing more to add, we can conclude the interview. Is that okay?

T: [I'd like to add, that] my daughter and my son-in-law are both graduates from Youngstown State University. Their name is Leone.

K: Well, thank you very much.

T: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW