

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

History of Leetonia Project

Personal Experience

O. H. 570

JACK WOODS

Interviewed

by

Paul Merz

on

October 26, 1981

JACK WOODS

Mr. Woods was born in Leetonia, an only son of George Woods. He and his wife, Elsie, are the parents of eight children.

Mr. Woods and his father were undertakers in Leetonia for 3/4 of the 20th century. Mr. Woods discusses the business of an undertaker and the town itself from a unique frame of reference.

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INTERVIEWEE: JACK WOODS

INTERVIEWER: Paul Merz

SUBJECT: Industry, early schools, funeral business, Cherry Valley, immigrants, World War II, welfare, draft

DATE: October 26, 1981

M: This is an interview with Mr. Jack Woods for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program regarding Leetonia, Ohio, during the 1920's and through the 1940's and 1950's, by Paul Merz, at Mr. Wood's home, on State Route 558, on October 26, 1981, at approximately 3:00 in the afternoon.

I think the best place for you to start would be for you to tell me about your family, your father and your mother, where you were raised, brothers and sisters.

W: I was born in Leetonia with no brothers and sisters. My father was a funeral director and had a furniture store. He had that until he died in 1948. My mother was a school-teacher in town. She left town and went to New York and became a nurse at Mt. Sinai Hospital there, and she worked there for twenty years before coming back to town. Now this was before I was born. She passed away in 1965. As far as my family goes now, I have my wife Elsie who I married in 1942, six daughters, and two boys.

M: Was your father originally from Leetonia?

W: Mother and father both.

M: They were both born in Leetonia?

W: Right.

M: Then over the course of your family through that period, between your parents and yourself, you saw a lot of changes in Leetonia.

W: Yes, of course.

M: What do you remember about going to school in Leetonia as a young person?

W: We lived downtown where the Leetonia Grill is now. You probably know where that is.

M: Yes, I do.

W: I went to school my first year in 1924. That was the year that St. Patrick's School opened down on Main Street, and I had my first eight years down at the Catholic school there. I remember the sisters were awfully rough.

M: I went through that too.

W: I don't think there was anything really significant about the school. I do remember that our classes at that time were very large. They had two classes in the one room. In other words they only had the four rooms, and they had the eight grades in there. At that time they had all nuns teaching. Of course, as the years went on, why, most of them became lay teachers. Now they have closed St. Patrick's about twelve or fourteen years ago.

M: How about Leetonia High School? I assume that you attended Leetonia High School.

W: Right. I went to school at the high school from 1932 to 1936. Of course, we were in the old building that has since been torn down. Ours was the last class in 1936 to graduate from the old building. The following year at midterm they moved into the new building, the present building, which, of course, is on Walnut Street now.

M: Settle an argument, dispute, for me. What happened at the old high school? Someone once told me that it was condemned.

W: It probably was true. Down here at the old Cherry Valley Mine, down on the other side of the lower road to Washingtonville, they ran a lot of coal veins up in through the north part of town. Condemned, I don't know. You hear so many doggone rumors and that sort of thing. Possibly it was. One thing about it was that it was awfully old, and it probably would have cost as much to fix that as to build the new school. I don't think it was ever condemned by the state. Those old, white pillars that you saw when you came in the driveway are from the old school.

M: I wondered about that.

W: I picked up five of those. I had them up at the funeral home

for years. Then when I moved out here, I put them on a truck and brought them out here. That old school was quite a thing. It was a three-story building. The stairs were back and forth right in the middle of the building. Then the classrooms were like to the side. It had old facilities. It had no gymnasium. There was a makeshift locker room down in the basement. It had no place for banquets or that sort of thing. When we had a football banquet, the home economics teacher would clear out the home economics room. Of course, they cooked the food there and that was the banquet.

M: Are your memories from that period very pleasant?

W: Oh, definitely, yes, very pleasant. I don't know how you can get a better memory than going to high school and grade school too as far as that goes.

M: How about past high school? Did you go to college?

W: I graduated in June 1936. The following year I went to embalming school up in Cleveland. Then I came home and I served my apprenticeship at the funeral home. I got my license then when I was twenty-one. I was only seventeen when I started into embalming school. You couldn't take a state board before you were twenty-one. So I got that when I was twenty-one, but that was all the education that I have had.

M: That was just about the time the war started when you came back from embalming school.

W: No, 1939. Our friend in Lisbon was a funeral director. He died and I worked down there for a couple of years until I went into the Army in 1941.

M: Were you drafted?

W: No, I enlisted.

M: You said before that you did four years or four and a half years.

W: Between four and four and a half, yes.

M: What do you remember about Leetonia during the 1930's when you were in high school? That would have been during the Depression. Let's go back a step before that. Do you remember before the Depression? Do you remember when the Cherry Valley Mine and the furnaces were working?

W: Oh, sure.

M: What was it like? Tell me about that.

W: There was a fellow--who you probably know--who lives up on Walnut Street, Carl Sevenich.

M: Sure, I know him.

W: Carl was a metallurgist down at Cherry Valley. We used to go down with him when they poured. He worked in the lab, and we would go down there when they poured the steel. I remember the old coke ovens. They used to take the coke out of the ovens and put them on . . . It was naturally a narrow-gauged railroad. Then they would run those down and put them in the pig cars which would take them up on the ratchet affair which would take them right on up and that would dump right in the furnace.

M: At the side of the furnace?

W: At the side of the furnace that would dump that in. Of course, that was the fuel for the furnace. When the ladle was full, they poured. They used to pour into what they used to call pig pens. There are a few of them around town yet. It was on a conveyor. It would pour the little pig pen full, and the conveyor would take it on up through maybe to seventy-five feet. When it got up that high, it was cool enough that when they dumped it they would dump it into another railroad car. In other words, then, that pig would be ready to go out.

I remember the furnace too. Right next to that was where the sportsmen's club is today. They call that Cherry Valley now. We used to swim in there a lot right where the dam is where the overflow is. Of course, there was only one bad feature of that. I think part of it is still there and that is that darn flue dust. You would step down, and you would think that you were stepping into velvet or something. It was just a red flue dust actually is what it was.

That Grafton furnace would be right off of Main Street practically directly across from the McKeefrey farm where the McKeefrey farm is today. It was located right next to the railroad track too. Of course, naturally a furnace had to be located next to a railroad track. Basically, it was just about the same thing. At that time they had the Youngstown suburban which ran from Youngstown to Leetonia over where the car barns are there now on the south side.

M: On Pearl Street.

W: On Pearl Street. This was the dead end of the railroad. That ran for years. I remember I thought it was quite a thrill when you got to go to Youngstown. We would go over and get on the streetcar.

M: And go to Youngstown.

W: Go straight to Youngstown.

M: The Grafton furnace, were there coke ovens over there also? Do you remember?

W: I'm sure that there were. I would say just about positively there was, yes.

M: I have heard mentioned the Union Iron Company. Would that and Grafton be one and the same? Do you remember a Union Iron Company?

W: No. This was the Grafton furnace or the McKeefrey furnace.

M: McKeefrey was called McKeefrey because he owned it.

W: He owned it. All it was was one furnace, one plant actually.

M: Was Cherry Valley larger?

W: Yes, Cherry Valley was the larger of the two. It was owned by the Handle Mining Company in Cleveland.

M: I didn't know that. Where was the actual furnace in relation to the Erie Railroad tracks--this is Cherry Valley now--and the sportsman pond?

W: It would be east. Actually those railroad tracks ran just about through the doggone thing. You know where the legion is now.

M: Yes.

W: Coming from the corner where the legion is--actually the corner toward town from the legion--they had what they called the white row. Those were houses that were built by the company. Workers rented them from the company. On the far side over on the other side of the Cherry Valley dam, they had what they called the red row. It was basically the same thing. They were company homes that were rented by employees. As far as the furnace is concerned the building that they make the septic tanks in was, I think, a maintenance building for the furnace. Now the dinkey--that was the little railroad that ran inside of Cherry Valley--went right along-side that. That is were your Erie tracks are now.

M: I see. So the furnace--from that maintenance building--would have been closer to Washingtonville following the tracks?

W: Toward Washingtonville, yes. Then on up at the far end of it, of course, was the coke oven. At the end of that is where

you make that bend up there by Washingtonville. Of course, right behind that where all those big slag piles are was the Standard Slag. That was out of either Girard or Youngstown. I'm not sure. They hauled an awful lot of slag out of there.

M: I think they still are.

W: Oh, yes. Years ago there seemed to be just mountains of it. Of course, when you are just a kid, everything looks bigger.

M: What do you remember about McKeefrey? Did you know him, the old man?

W: Just as a child. They had card clubs, and my mother played cards out there. I had met him and his daughter Cloe who is still living. That is Mrs. Usis. I went out there quite a few different times. As far as actually knowing Mr. McKeefrey, the elderly gentleman, I just met him as a child. That was all.

M: Would your father and Mr. McKeefrey have been about the same age?

W: No, Mr. McKeefrey was older. He would be at least a generation or possibly more older.

M: So his daughter would have been more like your father's age?

W: Right. Mrs. Usis is up in years now. How old I don't know. Mr. McKeefrey was quite a well-known man. There is a town in West Virginia named after him, McKeefrey, West Virginia.

M: I didn't know that.

W: There are a bunch of phone lines down there.

M: He owned them?

W: Yes, at one time. Now, of course, I have no idea of what has happened since then.

M: Do you remember anything about the proposed mill? I think it was a steel mill they were going to build. Evidently McKeefrey was the instigator. It was just before the Depression.

W: As you go down past the High-Ho, going out toward the Catholic cemetery you see those allotments, stone or concrete allotments over there. The kids swim down in there. As I understand it that was going to be . . . The steel process that you talked about--I never heard of an actual steel mill coming in there. My understanding was that it was to be a nail mill and two or

three other different things. As you say, the Depression came along. It wiped everything out. Actually, it wiped out the furnaces too as far as that goes. I guess the same thing happened there that happened in Youngstown with no water transportation. It cost too much money to transport the material. That is all I can tell you.

M: How about the workers? This was just about the time in the 1920's when the Italians came into Leetonia. Do you remember there being a preponderance of Italians working around the furnaces?

W: Oh, yes.

M: Did it tend to be undesirable work that the Italian immigrant had?

W: I wouldn't say it was undesirable work. It was hard work. Half a dozen in our family worked down there at Cherry Valley. I know my grandfather was a foreman down there. I think they just needed workers. A lot of those families have stayed in town and have done wonderfully. I don't think this was a question like a lot of mills would bring people in and abuse them and that sort of thing.

M: It wasn't like that?

W: No, that never happened. I was around long enough, and I know that if something like that would have happened, I would have heard it through my family. No, there wasn't any of that. A lot of them did move. When the furnace went down, a lot of them went to Struthers. I would say that really most of them who left town went to Struthers and some of them to the mills in Youngstown. From what I know it was a good relationship all the way around.

M: You are a Catholic?

W: Yes.

M: The thing that is interesting about that to me anyway . . . Do you remember any animosity toward the Italian-Catholics when they came into town? There was one mention of the Ku Klux Klan for instance. Do you remember anything about that?

W: Just hearsay.

M: You don't know anything about that as fact.

W: Not that I could relate as fact, no.

M: How about the Italians? Were they victims? Did people suspect them? Were they treated differently because they

were Catholic because they were Italian? Do you remember?

W: Not to my knowledge, no.

M: Did they tend to live in one area of the town?

W: Yes, they lived . . . Well, as I mentioned to you they had the red row and the white row.

M: Yes.

W: I think most of the Italians lived down Grafton which would be down around the High-Ho.

M: Around the church.

W: Well, from the church west. I grew up with all the kids. I didn't know anybody who had any kind of a grudge or hang-up or any of that sort of thing. Just through talking to people I don't think the Klan was really very strong in Leetonia, that is compared to other places. At that particular time, I think it did probably hit a peak there. Of course, that has been gone for an awfully long amount of years.

M: Was that in the 1920's?

W: Yes.

M: You mentioned other towns. Do you remember it ever being active in Columbiana County? Do you remember anything about it at all?

W: No.

M: From what you have remembered?

W: No, I don't know anything about it that I could tell you personally as real fact.

M: That is what I'm interested in.

W: No.

M: Let's switch to your father. I'm curious. He was a businessman. He owned the furniture store, and he was an undertaker. That seems like an odd mix. How did that come about?

W: As I mentioned before he started out with the family working there at the furnace. Then there was a gentlemen who had this furniture store and funeral home. The furniture store has now been torn down. It was directly across from Beaver's building there, east of Beaver's building.

M: I think there is an empty lot there now.

W: That is right. Evidently, he was offered a job at the furniture store and from there mostly in small towns. It is still very true. In a lot of these small towns you will find that there are an awful lot of funeral directors who have furniture stores.

M: I never knew that.

W: Oh, yes, down through the years. I think that is kind of breaking away some now, but that was very true. Of course, he started in there. As Mr. Crowell got older, my dad bought into it, a portion of it. Then when Mr. Crowell died, he bought it. The present funeral home was a barn. Going up Walnut Street it would be the fourth house on the left which is the old McKeefrey house that now is in disrepair.

M: They call it the Gibson.

W: That is right. The funeral home was their barn. It was located back on Elm Street which would be the street directly behind Walnut. So my dad had that moved from there up to the present location.

M: Do you remember that?

W: Yes.

M: How in the world did they move a building that large?

W: At that time they used awfully big plank and rollers. You just had the phone company and the electric company . . . There were wires along Elm Street coming up there. When they got to it, they would move the wires and put them back. That was all there was to it.

M: What year was that, do you recall?

W: Yes . . .

M: About 1924?

W: Yes, 1924. Then the chapel I put on in 1950. That is the portion that is on the west side of the funeral home. My dad died in 1948. That was when I took over the business.

M: Were you the only funeral director, you and your father, the only funeral director in Leetonia through those years?

W: Yes.

M: I know at one time there were like eight saloons or something

in town and three hotels, but there was only one funeral home.

W: It was the only funeral home. Yes, I know that would be a fact.

M: Tell me about the funeral business in the 1930's and 1940's.

W: When I first started, I would say probably half to three-quarters of the embalming was done in a person's home. You would get a call, and it would take you about two hours to get loaded up and get out there to do the embalming. Most of the funerals were held in the home at that particular time. I think years before that more of them were held in the church. During the 1930's you would take the remains back home, and the funeral would be held in the home. As time kept going on into the 1940's and into the 1950's, it was an awful job to have the funeral in the home, especially when you have a good sized family. Then, of course, the funeral directors could make it easier on themselves and the people. They kept trying to push the funeral home concept. It just seemed to catch on all at one time. Today if you would have to go out and embalm a body in the home, I don't think there is a funeral director in the state of Ohio who could do it. He wouldn't have any equipment to do it.

M: I guess everything had to be portable. I never thought about it, but even the table?

W: Yes, it had to be. I can remember going out to the farm here one time. It was in the middle of the winter. We got half-way down the drive and we had to put chains on. We got there and there was no electricity. Trying to embalm that lady with the flickering light from the kerosene lamp . . . The funeral business went from the place that was an awful lot of work to practically nothing.

M: You saw it both ways.

W: Yes.

M: How did you manage privacy in the home if it was a large family? How did you manage to work?

W: We simply would have to curtain off a room or something. It was a terrible way to try to do anything. You wound up doing a half a job really because there were no facilities there to do it any differently. That is long gone. I'm glad to see that go, really.

M: One other question that comes to mind--I have seen the selection room where he has got maybe fifteen caskets. How would you know what size casket to take? Would a person

have a choice, the relatives? How did you handle that?

W: Normally a casket inside measurement--adult casket--is six feet by six inches by twenty-two or twenty-three inches. The twenty-two and twenty-three would be the width. Now they run several elliptic, round-end caskets that are smaller than a little old lady eight years old or someone who would look out of place in a normal sized casket would use. Now for an exceptionally big person, I have three sizes of oversized caskets. For the normal person you would normally use the regular six, six, twenty-three.

M: Did you have a truck? How did you handle the logistics of hauling a casket and your tools?

W: You hit the nail on the head there. You have to take out two pieces of equipment. I can remember as a child going out with the horses. It never worked that way. There was a load of equipment when I started to go out there, yes.

M: When you started practice.

W: You would have to have a truck with your equipment. More than anything I can remember about the funeral business was that it used to be that you would get a call. You would automatically load eight or ten dozen chairs and take eight or ten dozen chairs out there because half the homes you half filled them up with the amount of chairs you took out. That was a job. Most of the places in the early part didn't have electricity. As time went on they did. That created a lot of problems too.

M: Isn't there a pump that you used in the embalming process?

W: For different ones, yes.

M: How would you run that thing?

W: By hand. You would use gravity. Basically, it is the same thing as a pump, or you could use gravity. It would be the same thing. Of course, today you embalm under pressure. In those days, the only pressure you got was what you used on your hand, hand pressure.

M: Yes, as you said before you did as well as you could.

W: Yes, that is right. It is a completely different ball game today. The chemicals have changed so much. It's just the difference between night and day.

M: What do you remember about the people in the 1930's during the Depression? If you could take me back, say, to 1933, what would I have seen? What kind of people would I have

known?

- W: I would say myself from what I saw that they were very stable, frugal people. There were an awful lot of people out of work. Things were pretty doggone tough. People kept up their properties. They did one heck of a job doing that. An awful lot of people at that time had to go out of town to find work. I was just amazed. Going to school at that time and seeing anybody who had a pair of pants that weren't patched was something different. It just seemed to me that actually at that time that the town was kept clean. I think myself that people really accepted the fact that the economy was what it was and simply made the best of it. There certainly wasn't very much going on. There wasn't any money floating around. Gas was 18¢ at that time. If you could talk somebody in to loaning his brother's or sister's car or something and you had 18¢, that was a big deal.
- M: What changes did you see when you came back from the war? Did you see any changes in Leetonia?
- W: Yes, I watched the kids go to school, and I didn't know any of them. Once in a while you would be able to pick out a familiar face and say that he belonged to such and such a family. As far as changes go through necessity there wasn't any building or anything during that time. An awful lot of women were working when we came back. I did get home before the war was over. An awful lot of people were working in Ravenna at the Ravenna Arsenal and, of course, a lot of them in the mills and that sort of thing in Youngstown. As far as changes go . . . Of course, I got home a little bit early. Going downtown none of the fellows were around. It was maybe five or six months before the bulk of them came back. I don't think there was any significant change. There were a lot of things that were different. Down at St. Patrick's they lost ten men who were killed in service.
- M: I didn't know that.
- W: Yes, and, of course, there were others all around. They were different fellows from other towns who I had known who were gone. Some were taken prisoner and this and that. Of course, a lot of them stayed home and got married. I didn't think there were any really big changes.
- M: How about resistance to the war? Do you recall anyone . . . From what I hear people saying, basically, everybody was patriotic and glad to serve their country. Do you remember anyone who wasn't? Were there any groups?
- W: There weren't any groups at that time that, is to my knowledge. No, there were a lot of people who didn't want to go which

was more or less a natural thing.

M: Do you ever remember there ever being any contagious diseases in Leetonia that caused death?

W: Of course, the 1919 flu.

M: That was the year that you were born.

W: Yes. They had as high as ten burials a day. That, of course, didn't last very long. They didn't have services for them or anything at that time. It must have been terrible. They simply took them out and buried them.

M: It wasn't contagious. There was no chance of your father getting it.

W: Oh, sure, just like the flu of today. There are different strains of the flu that are contagious. That must have been a terrible epidemic at that time.

M: That is the only one that you know of?

W: The only one, yes, that I know of.

M: During the 1920's it was a pretty rough time in Leetonia. There has been mention of murders, unsolved murders. Do you remember anything about that?

W: I have heard of different murders and that sort of thing. The thing that I recollect most is that I can remember when the trestle fell up at Cherry Valley, and there were six men killed at one time. At that time your safety codes and that sort of thing were completely different, not only at the Cherry Valley but everywhere. There were quite a few accidents up there. There for years when I was a little kid there was an awful lot of fellows killed up in the blast furnaces.

M: At Cherry Valley?

W: Cherry Valley and I would imagine Grafton.

M: You have no reason to believe that Cherry Valley would be any worse than any other place?

W: No, heck, no. When you go back that far, your safety standards are really completely changed.

M: Was your father the undertaker in most cases?

W: Yes.

M: How was it when the six men were killed together? Were they

laid out in their own homes?

W: At that time, yes.

M: So they didn't have any sort of a group . . . I don't know if group is the right word, but sometimes today when a group of people are killed together, they will have a ceremony at one time for all of them.

W: No.

M: They didn't do it that way?

W: No. All of these people had individual families.

M: Homes, yes.

W: And homes.

M: You don't remember any specific cases of murder?

W: Just talk. I don't myself remember anything specific, no. Most of that talk goes from one to the other, and you never know what you got ahold of when you hear it.

M: It seems to me that if there were any fact to it, you would certainly remember being the undertaker and your father.

W: There would be people that I would know that I wouldn't be able to talk about anyway. Really, I don't know. I have heard that an awful lot of that went on, but I couldn't honestly say. I don't know.

M: Was it possible in those days to be buried without being embalmed?

W: Oh, sure.

M: Could the body have been taken to the hospital or the doctor's office where they would take it right out and bury it?

W: When the proper death certificate is filed, yes.

M: If the person was an unknown--let's suppose he was someone who just worked around the furnaces and he was killed--would he receive any kind of a service?

W: Oh, yes. The ministers in town . . . I can never remember having a funeral without a priest or minister, never.

M: Even in your father's day?

W: Even in my father's day. Even in my time when a person would die without anybody, all you would have to do was call one of those ministers. They would be right there.

M: Who would assume the responsibility of notifying the next of kin? Was that the undertaker's job?

W: Well, it would be the funeral director up to the point of your knowledge. A fellow dropped dead at St. Patrick's one time. We worked for a week. We finally did locate a second cousin up in Warren. You go through the police force, the highway patrol. They are all very cooperative.

M: I meant like back in the 1920's and in the 1930's.

W: As you say there were probably a lot of them who went to their graves relatives unknown. Not every worker who came over here came over with a family.

M: Was Leetonia the kind of a town where people and workers were coming and going all the time? Was it a roustabout town?

W: No, not to my knowledge, no. When those blast furnaces worked they ran three shifts. No, I would say it was stable. I never remember any . . . You are talking transits and something like that?

M: Yes.

W: No.

M: Was it a tough town?

W: It had that reputation, but I don't know that it was any different than any other town. I never had any trouble growing up in it.

M: Was it a desirable place to live in the 1930's?

W: Oh, definitely, I think. In the 1930's things were awfully rough every place. As I mentioned before the townspeople were all very frugal people. I would say they were very conservative which in times like that that is a big factor.

M: They had to be.

W: You had to be. If you didn't, you would go off the deep end. They were proud people. There were very few people on relief and that sort of thing. Everybody tried to do it themselves.

M: If you accepted relief in the 1930's, was it common knowledge

among your neighbors that you were getting it?

W: Yes.

M: How would people find out? How would you know?

W: I can remember that there was an old drugstore down there. It was where Ripley's Men's Shop is now. I can remember that they used to have clothing down there. People would come in and get clothing and that sort of thing. It seemed to me that a lot of people were in there. You can be proud, but if you are cold, it is a different ball game.

M: When you mention relief, do you mean like cash relief, money relief from the government?

W: At that time to my knowledge, most of it was commodities.

M: But from the government.

W: At that time it was handled by the county. Whether it was paid for by the state or federal government, I don't know.

M: The people normally weren't in a big hurry to get on relief?

W: Oh, no.

M: That was like a last resort.

W: Certainly. Like I said they were proud people. They didn't want relief; they wanted a job.

M: That has changed now.

W: I sure think it has. I think you will agree with me.

M: If you went into another town in the 1930's and said that you were from Leetonia--suppose you went to Columbiana; you went to Salem--people, what would they normally think? Let's suppose you went into Columbiana in 1935, and they didn't know anything about you except that you were from Leetonia.

W: I played football over there. I have some good friends living today that we played against; they were fine fellows. I do think that if you were from Leetonia at that time, I think they kind of would look down their nose at you. I couldn't say anything specific. Maybe it was in the Leetonians' minds, but I don't think it was. I think they kind of felt a little bit superior.

M: I don't understand that though. I see Leetonia as a hustling little town, two furnaces, railroad, streetcar.

- W: I think it was probably the fact that there were more ethnic groups there. There were a lot of Irish; there were a lot of Italians, a lot of Poles and Czechs. I think basically to my recollection Columbiana was built from kind of a farming community. There are still an awful lot of farmers who come into Columbiana, but I don't think there were as many at that time as they called them foreigners. They just didn't have that which Leetonia did. The reason Leetonia had them was because they had the blast furnaces.
- M: I never heard Czechs and Poles mentioned before. They evidently didn't stay.
- W: It wasn't any big thing like the Irish and Italians.
- M: Smaller numbers?
- W: Yes.
- M: Did your father come with the Irish immigrants?
- W: His father did.
- M: His father did? Your dad was born in Leetonia?
- W: Yes.
- M: Was that before 1880? Do you know when your grandfather came?
- W: Yes, I'm sure that it was.
- M: Before 1880. Do you know what happened to the Poles and Czechs? Did they leave when the furnaces closed?
- W: Like we talked about before, an awful lot of people left. There simply just wasn't any work; that was all.
- M: That was when you were in high school in the 1930's?
- W: Right.
- M: Your father was a businessman. Did you have any concern about surviving with people leaving and the economy so bad?
- W: Oh, sure.
- M: Did your family ever consider leaving that you remember?
- W: My dad's family--three of his sisters--went out to California. They went into real estate and insurance. At that time if you went into real estate and insurance out in California, why, you made money.

M: Right time at the right place.

W: They tried awfully hard to get him to go out there. They wanted me to go out there, but I never considered leaving. I think there is a big advantage to living in a little town. I like this area for that reason. There are a lot of differnt things that you can do in a short period of time.

M: And still be away from the problems of the city.

W: Right.

M: Yes, I agree. Let's talk a little bit about the 1950's. You were a young businessman newly in business. What was it like for you in the 1950's?

W: The 1950's were exceptionally good as far as I was concerned personally. We put that addition on at the funeral home there. I couldn't have asked for anything better. Of course, at that time my family was growing up. As far as I remember the 1950's were great. I can't tell you anything specific about it because I know at that time with the family growing like they were--it seemed to be getting bigger all the time--I had to work about all the time.

M: Do you ever wonder how you made it, how you did it?

W: You look back and I suppose you kind of think that. But then it comes down to that a guy does what he has to do.

M: Do you have anything else that you want to say? You did quite well. I learned some things today.

END OF INTERVIEW