

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Depression Project

Life During the Depression

O. H. 609

ROY GEORGE HULL

Interviewed

by

Maribeth Harry

on

May 25, 1976

ROY GEORGE HULL

Mr. Roy George Hull was born Januray 1, 1890, in Youngstown, Ohio. His parents were Daniel and Martha Hull. His father was a butcher by trade. Mr. Roy Hull was married January 1, 1913 to the former Miss Mabel Williams of Youngstown. Mr. Hull is not a veteran.

Mr. and Mrs. Roy Hull are the parents of five children: Mildred was born in 1914; Robert in 1916; a set of twins, Roy and Harry in 1919 and Owen in 1926. Each child holds a B.A. degree from an accredited college.

In 1903, Roy Hull completed an eighth grade education at Hazelton Junior High, Youngstown; this was the extent of his formal schooling. Mr. Hull was a retail grocer from 1903 to 1945. In 1919, he opened his own grocery store on Woodland Avenue, Youngstown. From 1945 to 1958, Mr. Hull was in the apartment business. He owned and rented several complexes. Mr. Hull retired in 1958.

He is a memver of the Masonic orders and has received a 50 year membership award. His church is the Western Reserve United Methodist. His special interest is gardening.

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INTERVIEWEE: ROY GEORGE HULL

INTERVIEWER: Maribeth Harry

SUBJECT: Inflation, wages, social security, dance marathons

DATE: May 25, 1976

HA: This is an interview with Mr. R. G. Hull for the Youngstown State University on the Depression years, by Maribeth Harry at 4348 Mellinger Road, Canfield, on May 25, 1976, at 7:30 pm.

Mr. Hull, what do you remember about your parents as you grew up?

HU: Well, my father was a butcher by trade. We lived in Poland, Ohio, and he had a meat market right on the main street, back off of 224 about two hundred feet. He had a slaughterhouse there, see, and he used to go out and get an animal and walk them in. I heard him tell about going to Boardman one time to get a cow, and they walked it from Boardman to Poland. Do you know how far that is? He ran what they called a meat wagon. day they had a route through the country mostly. Well it took in the city of Poland, the village of Poland. They took fresh meat with them and the liver; they gave the liver away, the liver and hearts. They didn't even sell it; they gave it away the meat was so cheap.

HA: And the people just liked it and ate it.

HU: Oh, people were glad to get it.

HA: Rich people were glad to get it?

HU: Well, they had no refrigeration in the meat wagon at all.

HA: About what would the meat cost?

HU: The meat, the price of the meat?

HA: Yes. For, I don't know, roast?

- HU: Oh, ten cents a pound I would say for . . . Well, I can remember selling round steak for sixteen cents a pound at my father's meat market on East Federal Street. See my father had a meat market at 129 East Federal, together with Howard . . . I was just a little kid there and I can remember selling round steak for sixteen cents a pound in there. For some reason or another, I don't know why that figured in my mind. My father lived right in the center of Poland and the house is still standing. Yes, he married Lucy Cleveland of Poland.
- HA: When was your father born and when was he married?
- HU: Gee, I can't tell you that exactly.
- HA: Estimate.
- HU: He was 66 years old when he died and I was eleven years old. Can you figure that out?
- HA: I'm not very good at math. When were you born?
- HU: I was born January 1, 1890.
- HA: You have an excellent memory to be eleven and remember the price of sixteen cents.
- HU: Well, I don't know that. It's just that things stick in my mind. Friday afternoons I was allowed to go to the meat market for some reason or another. I don't know why. We lived on Scott Street at that time, and I was allowed to go down there. My father sharpened the knives and filed the saws always on Friday afternoons every week. I was allowed behind the counter and pattered around, waited on a few customers as I could.
- I was telling you about in Poland my father married Lucy Cleveland. Now the tombstone at my father's plot there has all that information on it, cut into the stone. She died early. I would say she died in 1887. My father married my mother then. My mother was his second wife. Then they moved from Poland to Youngstown. We lived at 105 Lincoln Avenue when I was born.
- HA: Now it's the university.
- HU: Yes. It was right across from us. When I was five years old they bought a house up on Scott Street, on 17 Scott Street. I lived there most of my life, went to school there. My father died in 1901; I was eleven years old and I don't know how much later it was when my mother married again. She married Joseph Burton; he was my stepfather. He had property down on Byron Street, 14 Byron Street, and we went down there to live for . . . I went to Hazelton School from there and I

graduated from the old Hazelton School down on Center Street. It's all ~~turn~~ down now, pretty rough neighborhood anyhow. My mother still owned the Scott Street property and we moved back there. I was getting sixteen years old along in there and I got a job and went to work. I worked at Yeager's on Phelps Street, 31 North Phelps. I worked at Charlie Dible's meat market on West Federal Street. He did the big business in the town in that day.

HA: Do you remember what your wages were when you were sixteen?

HU: Yes, when I first started to work, when I first got out of school, I worked for Cuddleston on Wilson Avenue, and you won't believe this, but two dollars and a half a week he would pay me every week. Every other week I got five dollars.

HA: Did they have such things as withholding?

HU: No, nothing like that. Then I went from there to Yeager's on Phelps Street and I got four dollars a week there.

HA: Oh, it was a raise.

HU: Yes, well, I was doing more work too. Worked longer hours, much longer. We went to work at seven o'clock in the morning and it was six or seven at night when you were through. See you worked twelve hours as a rule, we always did then. At Yeager's, when I worked, we worked that way. Seven to six was the time and on Saturday we worked from seven in the morning till ten thirty at night, so that was a pretty long day.

HA: That would be.

HU: We had a big fish market in Yeager's at the back end of the store. We had about two thousand pounds of fish a week there. We sold lots of fish, people ate fish in those days and it was cheap.

HA: It's good for you too.

HU: We sold boned herring at two pounds for a quarter; blue pike three pounds for a quarter.

HA: Why do you think they are so much fish?

HU: Well, it was plentiful. You can't get that fish today; there's no herring. I don't know what happened to it; it was Lake Erie herring.

HA: Lobsters, oh, they're so expensive now.

HU: We used to get five gallon tubs of oysters. You just can't

conceive what that was. It was about that high and this big around and that was just solid oysters, no water at all. We had to put water with it to loosen it up so we could handle it. We sold a quart of oysters for twenty five cents and fifteen cents for a pint. Most everybody bought a quart because that made a couple of meals.

HA: The good old days. Well, you needed it especially with the changes.

HU: At Yeager's where I worked we delivered. We had three delivery wagons, horse and wagons. There were no automobiles.

HA: I know.

HU: The machines were just beginning to come into view. I remember Sala had a restaurant across from Yeager's on Phelps Street. Did you ever hear anything of Sala's Restaurant?

HA: No.

HU: Well, you might have. You could say it was a hotel. I remember he was the first one I knew that had an automobile. He had an automobile there.

HA: Do you remember what year that was?

HU: No, I don't.

HA: You have such a good memory.

HU: Well, I graduated from school about 1901 or 1902, 1905 or 1906, it would be along in there that I worked there. I went from Yeager's to Dible's. He offered me a little more money. I think I got five dollars a week there.

HA: That's where you learned the trade then.

HU: Oh, yes.

HA: From your father too?

HU: Yes, well . . .

HA: The grocery store?

HU: It ran in our family, the meat business. Rudy Bixler was working at Yeager's and he coaxed me to come back there and work. I went back there and that's when I met my wife. She was a bookkeeper there at that time.

HA: Love at first sight?

HU: Yes.

HA: Was it?

HU: No. She was dating this Rudy Bixler and another fellow.

HA: Oh, Mr. Hull you took Mrs. Hull out of circulation?

HU: I said I was going to beat his time. We were married January 1, 1913.

HA: You've said much about your childhood, but were there any special games you played?

HU: Well, baseball was my only game that I played. I didn't like football. I think football is crazy to this day.

HA: Well, it is; it's ruthless.

HU: It's too dangerous. I like baseball. We had what we called a sandlot baseball just on the corner.

HA: That's about . . .

HU: On a grass field.

HA: My mother's friend used to live on a farm and she used to play with a pig's bladder. Her mother used to dry it out like a ball and I just wondered if maybe you did that since your father was in the meat business?

HU: No, he never brought any of that stuff home.

HA: I was really surprised.

HU: My father had this meat market on East Federal Street and I wanted to go with the delivery boy on the wagon. Of course they didn't think anything of letting me go, and he took an order of meat to the Park Hotel. We drove in behind this with the horse and wagon. The railroad tracks were right here. A big engine came along and you know how they go blowing off steam. This horse ran away down East Commerce Street and hit a lumberyard wagon and threw me out on the pavement. I limp on this side, you notice. I'm lame today--have been ever since. They never even took me to a doctor. Never told the doctor about it.

HA: Any reason? No faith in doctors?

HU: Well, I was just a kid and I had no experience in it. I don't know. Somebody told my mother about "Bonesetter Reese." I imagine you've heard talk. He lived on Lane Avenue. It's up on the east side and it's off Nemont Avenue. She convinced

my father that she should take me over there to see him. He did a lot of good for the baseball players and all this. So she took me over there and he did me some good at that time. He charged me all the way, no he didn't make a charge. He wasn't a doctor and he couldn't make a charge. My mother said, "Well, what do I owe you?" And he said, "I can't make a charge. Whatever you can afford to pay, I'll accept." So she gave him two dollars. I remember that well. I was about nine years old then.

HA: Was he like what a chiropracter would be today?

HU: Yes. He was glad to get it [the money] I think because he worked in the mill too. He just did that at his home on the side.

HA: That was his side trade too. Did he manipulate or . . .

HU: No, he just felt around my hip and said, "I don't see anything there," but he gave me a plaster of some kind. I never could find out what it was. It just went over the hip joint here. It was about like a . . . That really helped me, but being an active kid. He told me as much as I could, you know, don't overexercise.

HA: Tell me about your school, your elementary school. It was one room I suppose.

HU: I never went to anything but public school.

HA: Were there such things as private schools?

HU: I went to Elm Street School when I first started school; not the Elm that is there now. That's the old Elm Street School; they tore down and replaced it with the one that is there now. I think that school's still there, the new one, but the college owns that I imagine. Well, I went to Covington Street School. Wait a minute, ahead of that at that time, my father died and two years later my mother had to work. We had no income. She kept house. She went to keep house for . . . He was a great football man of South High. It was his folks that she kept house for. I lived there and I went to the old Iron Street School. That's Wayne Avenue now, I believe, the old Iron Street building. Then after she left there we came back to Scott Street to live. They wouldn't let me go to Elm Street School because they moved the boundary to Belmont Avenue and I had to go to Covington School. So I went there, I don't know, for about over a year. Then I graduated from the Hazelton School over on Federal Street.

HA: How old were you?

HU: When I graduated?

HA: Yes.

HU: Twelve or thirteen years old, along there. I never remember getting a certificate or anything.

HA: Then did you go to high school or was that your high school?

HU: No, I never went to high school.

HA: Did they have high schools?

HU: Oh yes, Rayen. Rayen School is still standing. My mother couldn't send me to high school or anywhere. We had no money.

HA: Did it cost money to go there? You had to buy your own books didn't you?

HU: Your books, clothes, and stuff. I didn't want to go to school.

HA: You wanted to be out and work.

HU: I wanted to work.

HA: It's a lot different than from today.

HU: I wanted to earn money because I knew my mother wasn't in financial straits, so I wanted to help her.

HA: Of course. How many were in your family? I know your mother and your father, but were you the only son?

HU: I was the only son to my father, but my mother had two other children to her first husband Luke Mariner. He had Bob and Bessy Mariner. They were their two children.

HA: And you all lived together?

HU: No, well Bessy lived with us, but Bob's uncle raised him. My mother couldn't afford to keep the kid. Of course he is dead now and Bessy's dead too.

HA: When did you have the store? Didn't you own a grocery store?

HU: On the corner of Woodland in Poland.

HA: When did you begin that?

HU: 1919.

HA: You worked for the people in grocery stores before you owned your own shop?

HU: Yes, through our doctor, Dr. Howard Miller . . . He said,

"They're opening a meat market down there and they want a butcher. They had one, but he wasn't very fast; he was quite an old man; he wasn't very satisfactory. Why don't you go down and I think you can get the job." So I went down and I got the job and that was when the First World War started. We were living on Willis Avenue then and we moved to Struthers on Sexton Street. I was there for three years I think.

Frank Creed had a brother and he ran a milk route in Struthers. He and I got to talking and he wasn't working. He sold the milk route out and he wasn't doing anything. He was going to get his meat off of me. I said, "Being that you're not working, how would you like to go into the meat and grocery business? I know where there is a place in Youngstown for sale. I have no money though. I have the experience, but I don't have the money. He and I came up and looked at a place. We looked at a place on Belmont Avenue first, but I didn't like that place. It was too fancy.

HA: What was fancy about it?

HU: Oh, fancy fixtures and a very big storeroom and great, big, high ceiling. It didn't appeal to me. So we came over here. I said, "I like this other place better." We struck a deal on it and he bought the place. He bought the building too.

HA: He bought everything?

HU: Yes.

HA: Do you remember what you paid?

HU: I didn't invest any money in it.

HA: No?

HU: I was a partner in the business because I was the one experienced and the one who had a job in the meat market. He didn't know anything about the meat business and very little about the grocery business. His brother Frank did.

HA: Did you give away liver?

HU: No, not in those days.

HA: My mom said you used to make meatloaf and everything. At least that was for Briggs and Jones'. Didn't they own a store there too?

HU: That was the boys'. Roy and Robert and Owen all owned that store down there, big joint.

HA: And you weren't involved at all?

HU: No. Oh, I used to go in and help them out a little bit. I didn't get paid for it I just . . .

HA: No?

HU: They were my kids. I was glad to do something for them.

HA: What type . . . When you first opened, what type of groceries . . . I know you had meat, but today they have everything in there.

HU: Well . . .

HA: Do they have cereal?

HU: Oh, yes.

HA: In the boxes they have now?

HU: Some were in boxes.

HA: How were the others?

HU: Well, we had loose rolled oats. Now we bought sugar, not in five or ten pound bags. We had one hundred pound bags of sugar and we had a big, long counter and drawers in that that would hold one hundred pound sugar. You bought the sugar and we had to weigh it up in five pound bags or two pounds. People would order two pounds of sugar in those days.

HA: You can't now. What would be the cost of sugar, do you remember then?

HU: Oh, it wasn't expensive. Five cents a pound. I guess five cents a pound for sugar. Now navy beans which you never buy . . .

HA: No, but I know of those.

HU: We would buy them in one hundred pound bags of beans. Lima beans, we bought one hundred pound bags of lima beans. Rice, one hundred pounds.

HA: Soap?

HU: That's laundry soap. I used to buy a barrel, one hundred and eighty pound barrel of soap chips.

HA: Did people come in and buy two pounds of that?

HU: Oh, no. We put that up in ten pound packages.

HA: And that's what they would take.

HU: That's the only way we sold it.

HA: What did that cost, do you know?

HU: I can't remember anymore.

HA: No, you can't remember so well.

HU: Well, it was more than ten cents a pound I can tell you that. I suppose we got a dollar or dollar and a half for a ten pound bag of soap chips. See, that lasted a long time for your washing machine. Proctor & Gamble was in business and we bought from them, but they didn't have it. We handled their product, Ivory soap. All of us bought Ivory soap.

HA: Did you have chips of a bar?

HU: No, I don't think we had Ivory chips then. I don't remember. That didn't come until later.

HA: Would you say that the oldest brand name that you can think of would be Ivory soap?

HU: Well, there was Rinso.

HA: Rinso? Do they still have Rinso?

HU: Yes. Then Pag soap was that brown cake of soap that you bought. A nickel a bar, but that was good soap. You liked that soap.

HA: Did you have toothpaste? Did you ever use toothpaste?

HU: I never used toothpaste.

HA: Baking soda, at first baking soda . . .

HU: The first toothpaste I had was in a tin bcX. It was soap and you rubbed your toothbrush on it in a little box that folded back. It was a cake of soap like. And you rubbed your toothbrush on it and cleaned your teeth with that. It was very good, very nice taste.

HA: Fresh taste? A lot of people used baking soda.

HU: I never used to clean my teeth.

HA: Never? How come they didn't all fall out?

HU: They did.

HA: Because you didn't clean them?

HU: These aren't mine.

HA: You could have fooled me.

HU: I bought them. Would you believe I paid fifty dollars for that upper plate.

HA: And you still have them. How many years ago was that?

HU: 1921. We went to Denver and I got my false teeth the week before we went to Denver. Then when I got back I got my false plate. I got along with it pretty good.

We made our own liver pudding. I never made weiners and bologna.

HA: Did they have the laws, the security laws I guess?

HU: No.

HA: You could just throw everything in if you made your own?

HU: Yes, but you better make it good or your not going to sell it.

HA: Sometimes they'll taste good and it could be any kind of . . .

HU: I've used everything on a pig except the squeal. We couldn't find a place to put the squeal in.

HA: I still think they do do that.

HU: Yes.

HA: I know you remember about the Depression, how did it effect you? People had to eat.

HU: We were in the store on Woodland Avenue at that time and business just got so terrible. You know, people didn't have any money.

HA: Did you run accounts?

HU: Oh, yes. We shut almost everybody off at that time. Only the people who could pay, the ones who had money, the others we had to forget about, that's all.

HA: Did people come begging a lot?

HU: Another thing I did during that is, I got a lot of notoriety from it. We acted like a soup kitchen. Now, I told you about this kettle we used for killing chickens in, a very large kettle. It was a fifty gallon kettle and it was this deep so you could see how big it was. I used to take all the soup bones we had and all the celery trimmings. You know celery trimmings in a meat and grocery store, they would pull all

these outside leaves off and leave the good centers in, that's all. We took them and we cleaned them all and cut them up and put them in this kettle and we put in carrots and turnips and any vegetables we had that dried out. See, we had no refrigeration for vegetables in that day. We did have coolers with ice in them, but no refrigeration. We used ice as an ice cooler, with ice overhead in it. The vegetables dried out so fast because you had a little heat in the store in the winter and it dried stuff out. I gave that soup away one day a week, I think it was Wednesday, every Wednesday.

HA: Did you get a long line?

HU: Oh, we had a big sign in front of the store, free soup on Wednesday. Bring your own kettle.

HA: That was very nice.

HU: I gave it all away. It was a lot of advertising.

HA: Good for business?

HU: Yes.

HA: Plus, a lot of people wouldn't have done it. I mean you should if you have it, but still it took some time on your part.

HU: Oh, it didn't cost me much of anything. Well, I had gas under the kettle to make the soup and I had a girl working for me, Lydia. She prepared all the vegetables, you know washed them and cut them up and all such likes and that was about the story of the soup.

HA: You've mentioned about how Youngstown was hit by the Depression. It was an industrial area at the time wasn't it?

HU: Oh, yes.

HA: Were there Hoovervilles?

HU: Hoovervilles?

HA: Yes, those little towns that emerged that people were so out of work . . .

HU: No, I don't remember anything like that.

HA: Do you remember Fred Allen?

HU: Go back to your Depression. I took a heart attack in the middle of all this because I had to shut some good customers

off and I walked the floor at night. The first thing you know I had a heart attack. The doctor said to my wife, "You know, he had a heart attack over people being hungry." People come to me with troubles and cry to me about the Depression so we're both in the same boat.

HA: Many people lost everything.

HU: I was six months in bed that time. I had pretty good help at the store. I had a butcher there, Ed Nago. Lydia Cook was in the store. They ran the store.

HA: Did you really have to cut your prices?

HU: Well, stuff was cheap.

HA: True.

HU: I remember I had a sign on the front window with this white lettering. I put it on with a brush. I had about four items of meat, three pounds for a quarter. You see how cheap that was?

HA: Yes.

HU: Rib boiler pork chops, I can't remember what else. I know there was boiler and I suppose hamburger was the other one and I don't know what the other one was, but they were all three pounds for a quarter. That was darn cheap. Where can you get meat today for . . .

HA: You can't. What have you noticed the greatest inflation in? Everything, but especially foods. What would be the one product that has just gone sky high? Meat or everything?

HU: Meat was, but not now.

HA: Sugar is high.

HU: Your gas bill.

HA: What was your gas bill about in, I don't know, 1919?

HU: In the store in 1919, well, we didn't heat with gas. We had a coal furnace and electric lights. We had gas in the building. I did have a little, small gas heater for the store, but we didn't use that very much because we had a coal heater furnace. That heated the store and the apartment above; it heated both. The best coal was about ten dollars a ton then and that was cheap. That was good coal; that wasn't cheap. Oh, you could buy run of the mine cheap coal cheaper than that.

HA: Like clinker.

HU: Yes, that's what they call sulfur coal.

HA: That would be smelly, wouldn't it?

HU: Well, it has fumes to it when you . . . There's clinkers in the furnace too.

HA: But the sulfur, I think of that as being strong.

HU: Oh, what else do you have?

HA: Let me see. What would be a typical day for you when you were 25. You were in the grocery business?

HU: No.

HA: Weren't you then?

HU: I worked for the C. F. Adams Company in Cleveland. Before I went into business, I worked for them collecting. They were the installment house. They sold merchandise house-to-house with agents and I had to collect these accounts. I have a good business style. I made money. I made twelve dollars a week then.

HA: Did you ever have people slam doors in your face?

HU: No, people weren't too bad.

HA: Now tell me about Uncle Gar teaching you how to drive a car?

HU: He took me down to Marion. I think it was Marion at that time. There was snow on the ground and it was icy. We went down there and we just turned that car around like this in the snow. You would go down and put the brake on quick and the car would spin around.

HA: You're crazy. What kind of car was this?

HU: Ford. It was a Ford truck.

HA: Did you have to crank it?

HU: Yes, there was no starteg on it.

HA: Did they have motorcycles? I remember the Indian motorcycle.

HU:; I had a motorcycle.

HA: Did you have an Indian?

HU: No, I had a Harley Davidson.

HA: That's an old company.

HU: Yes. I got that before we were married.

HA: Did you drive Mrs. Hull places?

HU: She rode on it.

HA: Later when you had grandchildren, you used to have a pony didn't you?

HU: Yes, I remember he threw you off one day.

HA: Me or was it Martha?

HU: You. You were the oldest.

HA: I know I'm still afraid.

Mr. Hull, tell me when dog food came around?

HU: We had dog food. We had Rival dog food in the store.

HA: Did you? In 1918?

HU: Yes. I used to buy twenty-five cases of it at a time. We sold a lot of dog food in that time. We bought tiny little bones for our dog. That was National Biscuits. They were biscuits, dog biscuits. You can buy that today, dog biscuits. It's shaped like a bone.

HA: Yes, for their teeth and everything.

HU: We had them.

HA: And you have Rival dog food?

HU: I remember the brand.

HA: Was it new? Was that about the time it came out about 1919 or was it prior?

HU: No. It was older than that. Frank Emps sold that. He had the agency for it. He used to buy a whole carload and every time he had a car come in he would give me twenty-five cases off a car without hauling it to his warehouses; he hauled it right to my store.

They were loose tin cans, cookies. And say this was your meat counter or your grocery counter, they had the thing built on a plumb. These cans set like this on an angle and there was a glass front to them. They all had glass so you could see what was in them; some kind of cookies were in them. We used to have that it was about . . . We had about twelve of those cans in a row there and soda crackers all

came in a can like that. We had to put them in the bag and lay them up.

HA: The soda crackers?

HU: R. B. Biscuit Company sold them. R. B. Biscuit Company had the best soda crackers in that time. We thought so anyway.

HA: Is R. B. out of business?

HU: Oh, yes, I don't think they're in business today.

HA: What did gasoline cost when you first . . .

HU: I remember buying gasoline at ten cents a gallon, no tax.

HA: No tax?

HU: There was no tax on ten cents a gallon.

HA: Did they have an income tax back then?

HU: No.

HA: When did that come about?

HU: Well, I was in the grocery store when that first started. I think we lived on Florida Avenue then. Owen was born in 1926. It was probably around 1930 when the income tax started.

HA: Were you pleased when that came?

HU: It didn't mean much to us. The tax was very small.

HA: Ofcourse, the revenue was much smaller too.

HU: At the time I had five children. We had seven exemptions and the exemptions were big, around two thousand dollars a piece so I had that much exemptions. I paid very little tax in the early days.

HA: Social Security came out of FDR, the New Deal.

HU: I never paid social security at the store or very little of it. It must have just started. Not on myself because the grocer couldn't pay social security on himself.

HA: You don't get it at all today?

HU: We get it because of our age. They exempted us. Well, not just us, but all grocers. And the landlord didn't pay any social security. They do today.

HA: What about Prohibition? Did that affect you?

HU: The first time we voted on that we were on Garfield Street.

HA: Did you vote for or against it?

HU: I voted for it. My wife voted against it. Our votes canceled out.

HA: Did you think that was a good idea? Didn't you think it was almost an impossible task?

HU: Well, they couldn't control it.

HA: You lived fairly close to Canada too. Many people went up there.

HU: Oh, yes, they couldn't control it, you know. Everybody was making home brew.

HA: A lot of people died from their own brew didn't they?

HU: No.

HA: Well, a lot of the hill people I think.

HU: What was the name of the one whole group called Red something, Red Dot? I think Red Dot. We had it in a can like a big can of peaches, you know that size number two and a half can. We sold the can of stuff. That made five gallons. That can of stuff made five gallons. You had to ferment it and oh, I don't know what else you had to do with it, put yeast with it and that's so far away. I can't recall ever making it. I was never crazy about beer anyhow.

HA: No? It seems like a lot more people thought they missed it even if they weren't a beer drinker before. Some people when they don't have . . . It's funny when you don't have it it means so much to you.

HU: If you can't get it.

HA: Right.

HU: You think you can't get it.

HA: Just like a child.

HU: That's right.

HA: Tell me about Fred Allen? I don't know that much about him.

HU: I can't tell you much about him though. We had a television

at that time and we used to get him on the television. He was a great talker. Oh, I don't know much about Fred Allen. I can't tell you anything really, Only that he was a witty man.

HA: Did you like Will Rogers?

HU: Oh, yes, he was a very smart fellow. We flew to his place in California.

HA: Did you?

HU: I remember he had a nice home there and he had lots of ponies. He had a big barn.

HA: How did he meet you? I mean what were the contacts?

HU: We saw him on television. We were on a trip to California. We were gone 31 or 32 days, just toured west. His home was full of souvenirs from all over the world. It was a big, beautiful ranch house and then this corral he has for the horses and this white barn.

HA: I bet it was worth seeing then. Were people so animal crazy as they are today?

HU: Well, lots of people like horses.

I well remember the day when there was no automobiles. If you went anywhere, you either walked or rode a horse or rode a horse and buggy.

HA: Was the car accepted very readily by very many people? In Youngstown, an industrial city, were they accepted more readily?

HU: I think so. They had more money. I remember buying a Ford for three hundred and sixty dollars.

HA: Do you remember the date?

HU: A Ford Coupe. Well, we were in Struthers. No, that first Ford, I was over at the store in 1919.

HA: Was that your first car?

HU: No, I had a Regal before that.

HA: How much was that?

HU: I paid four hundred dollars for that.

HA: Oh, that was more?

HU: But that was a touring car. That was a . . . Ford was considered a tin can.

HA: It was?

HU: We called it a tin can. Tin Lizzy they called it. It had four wheels and an engine and the rest was tin.

HA: And then your other car was a Regal Underswung?

HU: Well, it was called Regal.

HA: Do you remember who manufactured it?

HU: Here was the frame and the iron part went under this, that's why it was called underswung. You got in the mud, you could look back and see behind you through this thing. That was a right hand drive car. There was no door on the right hand side either, not even a door there. You had to get in from the left hand side from the front.

HA: Do you remember when dentists as a profession came about? There was just a discussion on that. I remember reading that they used to have dentists that just pulled teeth and that was their only . . .

HU: Yes, we got a tooth pulled for fifty cents.

HA: Is that all the care they would give? I mean now you have your teeth cleaned and they show you how to use dental floss.

HU: You could get other kind of care there, but I don't remember much about it.

They used to cap teeth. I had two gold caps on the front here. One day one of them came off so I pulled it off. It got so that it bothered me and the tooth that was under it was just like jelly. It might have decayed or I don't know what they call it, the stink. Man the odor was terrible, so I went to the dentist and had the whole thing pulled.

HA: I'm sure they didn't use Novocaine.

HU: Yes.

HA: They did?

HU: Yes.

HA: I thought maybe you just held on.

HU: They always had Novocaine as far as I can remember. I had eleven teeth pulled in one sitting one time. I took gas for

that day.

HA: How old were you?

HU: We were in the store at that time. I was thirty, thrity-five years old.

HA: Do you remember the Roaring Twenties?

HU: Yes.

HA: Did they use to roar?

HU: No, that's all . . .

HA: The Charleston, did you dance that?

HU: Not necessarily.

HA: The dance marathon, did you go to one of those?

HU: Over on Rayen Avenue.

HA: And was it on every couple nights a week?

HU: It's continuous night and day.

HA: For how long did that go on?

HU: Quite a while.

HA: Was that in the 1920's?

HU: We moved into the store in 1905. That would be in the 1920's that's right.

HA: Would the people dance for long?

HU: They would stay on there and dance until they fell.

HA: What was the prize? Money, wasn't it?

HU: I think it was.

HA: Who would sponsor this?

HU: Merchants. It wasn't worth all they got out of it.

HA: Was it the same people or always new people?

HU: They were on the floor continuously. They had some kind of a break. I think ten minutes every hour, but they couldn't sit down or lay down or do anything. On their break they could.

HA: They couldn't or they were disqualified.

HU: Yes. Sometimes they would get down and they couldn't even wake them. Their partner would drag them out on the floor.

HA: You would have to have a break.

HU: Oh, they were something.

HA: What about the run on the banks?

HU: Yes, I lost money in that.

HA: Did you lose faith in banks after that?

HU: Well, no.

HA: Did you put money in the mattress?

HU: No. You can't get along without a bank. We had to have a checking account. We handled a lot of money you know and you had to have a checking account.

HA: You did, I know. Have checking accounts been around as long as you can remember?

HU: Yes, as long as I can remember. Of course, my folks, my mother never had a checking account or anything like that.

You could buy all the bank books you wanted for half price if you had money to invest and people had money in the banks. They would come in, "I have a bank book. I have a thousand dollars in the bank book and I have no money. I couldn't get it." They would offer you that for five hundred dollars. You could hold that and maybe you got your money eventually. I didn't buy them up. I didn't have the money then to buy them up.

HA: People would come in and sell their bank books?

HU: Yes.

I had money saved for the kids in college at the Home Savings & Loan. I just took the bills down. I knew Fred Green down there. He and I went to school together. I took the bills in and I said, "Fred, I have two kids in college and here are the bills. I expect you to pay them," and I walked out. He paid them.

HA: He paid them?

HU: I never heard any more about them. It was taken off my account at the bank though.

HA: What were the banks then? Home Savings & Loan, now what were some of the others?

HU: Dollar. City Bank was on the corner of Federal and Phelps.

HA: That's not City National is it?

HU: No. that was just called City Bank.

HA: And that's no longer is it?

HU: No, the Dollar Bank took that over.

HA: After the bank run or just eventually?

HU: Oh, eventually. I don't think it was the bank run.

HA: Did they have the Farmers of Canfield?

HU: We lived out here; we never went to Canfield.

There was another one. Mahoning, there was a Mahoning Bank and one called Commercial something, but that's the oldest. There was a Commercial right on Federal Street on the first block, I remember that. It folded. I don't think people lost their money in it, they just closed up, that's all.

HA: Well, Mr. Hull, what do you think has been the greatest change since 1920 until 1976? Think of the greatest changes.

HU: Well, the invention of the automobile is one of the biggest things for transportation. Airplanes.

HA: Do you think people have changed?

HU: You mean more crooked?

HA: Yes.

HU: Yes.

HA: Do you think so?

HU: Yes.

HA: Of course, you have to lock doors now. I'm sure when you were first married you didn't lock your door, did you?

HU: Yes.

HA: You didn't feel under . . . There wasn't a fear of being mugged.

HU: Oh, no.

HA: Or robbed.

HU: You walked anywhere night or day, it didn't matter.

HA: Now I wouldn't go in Youngstown and walk today. Where your old store was, I wouldn't go near there. In fact, I think it's still there now isn't it?

HU: Oh, yes.

HA: It has all the iron.

HU: Roy did that.

HA: To protect?

HU: Bricked it up. Wired it. They just wrecked your store there once. You ought to remember that you weren't too old or too young.

HA: Oh, I do. I do remember. So that's the case of people who are more crooked? Is it because there are more people? Things have changed.

HU: Well, I hate to say colored. We shouldn't say anything about the colored people in there. But the black people were better in that they . . . The black people were better. See I ran that store at that time. We had a lot of black people on Ridge Avenue, Plum Street, and still further down over the hill, New Court and Ridge Avenue. There were lots of black people. They were good customers and we trusted them and we had accounts with them.

HA: It's different now; everything's a lot different. Was there anything else you would like to add?

HU: There's not really anything else to add.

I remember when streetcars on West Federal were pulled with horses. That's very faint to me, that is. That's very faint. I can remember just seeing that. The electric cars came along very, very soon, the electric cars. It was in vogue at that time. The streetcars ran from Briar Hill I think to Hazelton. I don't know if they ran clear to Hazelton or not, maybe just down to the east end bridge down there at the end of East Federal. I'll bet that's all it ran because it didn't go to struthers or anything like that. Four cents a ride. Oh, yes. We used to ride streetcars for a nickel. We rode to Warren for fifteen cents. Five cents to Girard, five to Niles and from Niles to Warren it was ten cents more makes fifteen. That car only ran every hour.

HA: And you would have a nice outing or trip?

HU: And cheap. Fifteen cents.

HA: Fifteen cents would go a lot further though than it would today. What can you do with fifteen cents, but lose it. That's about all it's good for. Even bubble gum has gone up.

HU: I don't know. I never buy it; I hate gum. Our kids used to buy licorice sticks.

HA: Black?

HU: Yes, black licorice. They were half as thick as my little finger and so long. You would get that for a penny.

HA: Was it Switzers? Is that an old licorice, Switzers?

HU: What's it like? Just like candy?

HA: It's just like this little bar, strips that you peel off and eat them. Oh, they were good.

HU: We used to get little pieces just about like that and there was supposed to be a little tin tag on it that you could buy for a penny, like chewing tobacco. The big folks chewed tobacco, almost everybody chewed tobacco in those days. They didn't smoke cigarettes in that day like they do today.

HA: Women didn't chew tobacco, did they?

HU: Well, I never saw them, but they smoked cigars.

HA: Did they?

HU: Oh, yes, occasionally you would find a woman who smoked cigars.

Were you ever in the B & O passenger station down on Mahoning Avenue?

HA: I don't think so. I took the train to Cleveland once, but I don't know if it was the B & O station.

HU: I can remember the Mahoning River flood. We don't have them today.

HA: Why don't we?

HU: Meander Dam. The water was twelve feet deep in the passenger depot. The mark was up on the wall for many years where the water went up. The water went up Oak Hill as far as High Street to the bottom of the cemetery hill there. In fact, I have pictures upstairs. Craiger's had a livery stable on Mahoning Avenue and they were going out the second floor of

the livery with boats and they had horses in there and they were leading the horses out. The horses were swimming out; they couldn't get their feet down.

HA: I'm so glad we have Meander.

HU: Remember the building on Federal Street burning? Oh that was a big fire. McElroy's fire on West federal. Five-and-Ten, those were big fires.

You've been up to St. Elizabeth's Hospital?

HA: Yes.

HU: Well, straight across the road there is a brick house that they use for a nurse's home or something today. Well, they had a big, brick barn in the back. See, they were rich people and they had horses and carriages and a man to take care of all of them and all this stuff. I remember that barn burning. I couldn't have been very old. There were a couple of firemen. The whole front wall fell out and killed a couple of firemen at that time. We were living on Scott Street then and I went up there. It was quite a little walk up there, but I went up and saw it. How did we get all the information about these things? How about that wreck down there? We had no radio, no television. If there was a fire, wreck, or anything, before I was out of bed in the morning the kids were on the street with newspapers.

HA: They would just follow everything or what?

HU: The Vindicator put an Extra out.

HA: For everything.

HU: All of these scrubby kids, you know, dirty sold the papers for a penny and two cents. They had no other way of making money.

HA: Yes, and they would

HU: Shine shoes for a nickel.

HA: No telephones, no television, no radio

HU: Oh, we never had the telephone at home. I put the first telephone that was in my mother's home . . . I had to put it in and I paid for it. I told her I wanted a telephone and she said I could have it if I paid for it. A dollar and a half a month. No installation charge.

HA: And no deposit I'm sure.

HU: No. There wasn't the telephone business in that day like there is today.

HA: Tremendous operation, very wealthy.

HU: Lizzy Burton was a stepsister of mine and she worked for the telephone company. She could plug these in a switchboard. I never saw how they did it, but they had things that pulled up out of here and plugged them in. I don't know how they did it, but I heard Lizzy tell about it.

HA: Well, there have been a lot of changes. Thank you. I really appreciate it.

END OF INTERVIEW