

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Law Enforcement Officers

Donald Elser Personal Experiences

O. H. 257

DONALD ELSER

Interviewed

by

John Bukovinsky

on

February 3, 1981

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

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Law Enforcement Officers

INTERVIEWEE: DONALD ELSER

INTERVIEWER: John Bukovinsky

SUBJECT: Donald Elser's father as sheriff in the 1980's,
the steel strike of 1937

DATE: February 3, 1981

B: This is an interview with Mr. Don Elser, son of former Mahoning County Sheriff Ralph Elser, for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program on Law Enforcement Officers. This interview is conducted by John Bukovinsky on 11025 Sharrott Road on February 3, 1981, at 3:00 p.m.

Mr. Elser, what kind of a relationship did you have with your father as you were growing up?

E: I had a pretty good relationship, I think. In some areas we didn't communicate like often times. I had a brother. There was just the two of us. Both my dad and my mother were teachers so they were always busy it seemed, at least we teased them, with other people's children. Some times we got neglected, we thought.

We had a pretty good relationship. I think there were a few areas where we didn't communicate. I don't think that there were a lot of things then that anybody was as open about as today. When it came to some of the deadly sins, they didn't communicate like they do today, I'm assuming like they do today, at least like I communicated with my children.

When it came to admiration for each other, for the things we could do, we had a great understanding there. We had lots of things that we did together. We traveled and we had a farm that we worked. He got it really for us. We had ponies. We had pets. We had all kinds of things like that. We went to a lot of places together as a family. We had a good family relationship, I think.

B: What was it like living during the Depression?

E: It was rough because I think in this small town practically everybody was out of work. My dad was rather lucky. For awhile he was teaching and teachers weren't too bad off. They got their regular pay. It was less rough on us than probably a lot of others until my dad lost his job. He was assistant county superintendent of schools. Jerome Hall, a gentleman who lived in Canfield and his family still lives over there, was the county superintendent. They became involved in a political fight over a number of questions with the county school board. The county school board was changed and they both lost their jobs.

Then my father had it a little rough going for awhile. He sold insurance. He thought he would teach somewhere else, but he decided not to. Before he really made up his mind to get back into teaching, he decided he would run for sheriff.

B: Is that what made him run for sheriff?

E: Well, he was on the county board of education for a number of years when he taught, when he was superintendent of the schools. He was involved in politics with schools. He was well known all over the country. He was an active Democrat, active in the party. He had a lot of friends in the Republican party also, so he decided he would run for sheriff.

B: What was the area like around here at that time when he decided to run?

E: How do you mean?

B: Was it really politically active?

E: This was rural, but the county was politically active. It was always politically active. He was involved in politics, more or less. I know they had an election board scandal. I don't know what it was based on. I would have to go back and look it up. He and several others were not found guilty of anything. He was out here in the country. Of course, they had an investigation. I think it involved loading the precincts with votes or something like that in Youngstown. Of course, he came from out in the country here and they didn't do that out here.

B: Did he have a good rapport then with the people from Youngstown?

E: Oh yes, and I think that's one of the reasons that helped him in the party because they were looking for people who had no particular political past that was unfavorable, and his was good. He had a way of contacting people and knowing how politics went.

When he ran for sheriff, however, he had a very difficult problem with the Democratic party bosses. He fought them pretty much all through his career. They wanted to dictate jobs. They wanted to dictate his deputies. He threw all that out and went on his own. One of the reasons he got by with it was before it was all over, they needed him more than he needed them. They needed him, more or less, as a good front man, respectable around election time.

They would always oppose him one way or another. He had trouble with the county commissioners. He had trouble with the party bosses, but he always told them exactly where he stood because he was used to that sort of thing. He had to deal with school boards before that. He was assistant county superintendent of all the schools across the bottom of the county. We'll start at Greenford, North Lima, Poland, and the Springfield schools, all those were under his jurisdiction as superintendent.

B: Do you remember anything specific or something that might have stood out about the first campaign when he ran against Englehart?

E: No, I know he campaigned very hard and thoroughly, which counted for the fact that he did win, I guess. They were underestimating him. Anybody who would vote for him or he thought would vote for him, he would visit and talk to him. One of the things he did, he covered the counties very thoroughly. Up until that time, a lot of the politicians in Youngstown would ignore the county. They would manage to slide by the city votes. But he went out and campaigned all over the county and the rural sections and carried that very strong, always he would catch his opponents short because they just wouldn't bother with the county.

He ran very strong in the city. Of course, he had taught at school in Struthers so he ran strong in Struthers. He was well known in Youngstown because he had belonged to various service clubs up there when he was assistant county superintendent. He knew a lot of the people in Youngstown so that helped.

B: We had heard that the Ku Klux Klan was really a focal point of everybody's lives in that era. What do you remember about that?

E: The Ku Klux Klan was very strong in the 1920's in the rural districts in North Lima. My dad fought it. One of reasons he fought it was they attempted to dictate teachers that he would hire based on their religion. One of his best teachers was a lady whose name I won't mention, but she was a very strong teacher and she happened to be Catholic. She was teaching in a certain school district not too far from here, not too far from this one. The school board told him very bluntly that he had to fire her because they were made up of Ku Klux Klanners pretty much. He told them where they could go.

He was one of the few people here that never joined the Klan. As a result, we had a lot of crosses burned. I remember we had crosses burned out in front of our house. I remember going to a Ku Klux Klan meeting over here in the country when all of the hooded white-sheeted figures were milling around on the road. As we drove through, my mother was in the front. My brother and I were in the back. I heard these figures saying "Hi Elser. How are you? Come join us Elser." We drove through and on up and turned around at the church up there in the parking lot. We came right back down through. My daddy had to blow his horn to get through. They were burning a cross up on the hill.

Again they said, "Come on Elser, join us. We're running things." My dad blew the horn and drove off. Many of the people who joined it later apologized and said it was wrong. It had been wrong because the grange, or whatever he is called here in the county, ran off with a lot of the money.

They had a big Ku Klux Klan headquarters, a farm, south of the fairgrounds up there. They had picnic grounds and a big cross up where they would have these gatherings.

The grange kleagal, or whatever he was, made a lot of money selling sheets and all that, and finally made off with, I guess, \$20,000 or \$25,000. That was scandalous, of course. There were a lot of other things that turned up to sour people on the whole thing. It was primarily based on religion, not race. It was one hundred percent American flag-waving. You're either for us or against us. If you're against us, you're not a patriot.

There were a handful of people in town who didn't join it. They were mostly Catholics in a Protestant town. They

didn't join because it was anti-Catholic and some anti-black and, undoubtedly, it had some anti-semitism in it.

Today, of course, the Klan in the South is based on race mostly. It's not so much religion. That is religion up to a point, but it's not so much Protestants against Catholics. I'm sure there are Protestants and Catholics who belong to the Klan. It's racial. Then it was religious, pretty much. It was very strong.

They had big parades in Youngstown. I remember my dad taking us to them. They paraded from out at Midlothian all the way down to the square. I remember they boasted they had the world's largest flag. It was being carried by men and women in these white sheets. Overhead they had an old army biplane from World War I because this was in the 1920's. It was lit up like a cross. Those things could go along about fifty miles an hour, you know. Less than that if they were in a head wind. It was just kind of hovering over the parade. This was after dark. With these lights on, it looked like a cross. I was very much impressed by that because I was about ten or twelve.

I always thought a lot of my dad. I was proud of him because he would get insulted and they would really act ugly, some of the people. I must admit some of them were very nice and came to my house and apologized.

The strange thing, when he ran for sheriff some years later, they went to certain sections of Youngstown where it was predominately Catholic and tried to say that he was a Ku Kluxer. The reason that they came to that conclusion was that North Lima and the rural district was Ku Klux. They just assumed if he lived out there he belonged to the Ku Klux Klan. On the other side of it, they went over to the western part of the county and said that my mother was Catholic and said that my dad and mother had been married by a priest. They got their wires crossed there because it wasn't my dad and mother who got married by a priest, it was my mother's brother who got married by a priest and was Catholic.

It became almost ridiculous because they produced a list of Ku Kluxers, members in Youngstown, and there was an Elser in it, but it wasn't my dad. My dad's opponent was in it. They didn't even bother to look. I don't know whether that was in a primary or when, but his opponent, at the time, was in it.

People were very much ashamed of it. Since he took a very strong stand, I think it helped him because they were ugly. They could get ugly sometimes, you know, smash houses, upset cars.

B: Did you have any problems with them once he did get in?

E: No. The only thing he had trouble with was kind of a pro-Nazi Silver Shirt thing that came along. He got a few letters and threatening things from them. They never really surfaced to where you could put your finger on them. They were just a hate group that was anti-Semitic and pro-German, that type of thing. They were called the Silver Shirts. They weren't connected with the Ku Klux Klan.

After the Ku Klux died here in the 1920's, it kind of disappeared. I don't know whether it is around now or not. If it would be, I think it would be much quieter today than it was then because it was very brazen. They were electing politicians. They were electing people into office. You either joined them, or you would be done in politically. But it didn't hurt my dad. In fact, it did him a lot of good when it came out that he was so anti-Klan because there were an awful lot of people in the county who were not Klan, but there were a lot who were.

You figure the ones who were were ashamed to admit it and the ones who weren't were appreciative of the fact that he wasn't a member. It didn't hurt him.

B: In the 1930's, during the Depression, were there any kinds of programs that the sheriff's office was involved in to help the people?

E: No, well, my dad had this farm. I know he raised potatoes and a couple years he decided, and it was political, he would bag up the potatoes and give them to people who were on relief as more or less from the sheriff's department. He didn't say they were from Sheriff Elser. It was a good move. I mean people were just glad for a sack of potatoes. I remember we just loaded them all up and took them into town and people came and picked them up. It said, "Compliments of the sheriff's department." Well, that didn't hurt him politically. He figured, I think, it costs money to run for office. You have to invest a certain amount of money and if you can invest it in potatoes, which you have, you do that. I know he got accused of that, but he admitted it. He said, "Well, of course, I have these potatoes, and you don't have to vote for me. I never said that. I just said you can have the potatoes." He said, "I'm not checking to see if they're going to vote. That doesn't come with it." It was a good gesture at the time when people just didn't have the money and have the food. That was in the first, maybe, term after he got in. It was still Depression years up until the 1930's.

I know that the cruiser cars had to go out a lot of times to help people who were cold and had no electricity or no fuel and that sort of thing. There were an awful lot of tramps, what we called bums back at that time. We don't have those kind today. They were itinerants going through. He was always very understanding of them. They would be in jail all night maybe just to get warm. He would put them upstairs where they had cells. Joe, the cook, Joe Cassome the cook, who had been a cook for a number of sheriffs, was just a great guy. Joe would feed them, give them a big meal, and send them on their way. They did a lot of that.

B: What was a typical day like for your father?

E: He lived at the jail. They had, at that time, they don't today, the sheriff lived at the jail. He was supposed to. At first, he went in and stayed there in an apartment by himself and came home on the weekends. Finally, my mother went in and lived there with him and we just stayed out here at the family home. Finally, I ended up staying in there. There was a room upstairs where I liked to stay. We kept the house up out here, but we weren't there all that much. It was empty. We never rented it, but it was empty. Still we lived in it, but it was empty. We never went out that much except to check on it, maybe every other day or something like that. That was the house in town. We had my uncle living on our farm, the farm on Route 7. He lived there and ran that.

My dad would get up in the morning and go down and check and see how many prisoners were in and see what happened during the night, probably had appointments with people, business he had to see or maybe he had to go over to court sometimes on different cases they had. They used to probate all mental cases. They didn't have Woodside. Somebody would get in for some mental thing and they would have to be probated and then put into jail. My dad would have to go over and sit there, either that or send a deputy. Then they would bring them over and put them in a cell and then take them to Massillon, the state mental institution.

He would cruise out around. He usually had a deputy drive him. He would just drive out and say hello to people because they appreciated it a lot then if you would drop in on them, especially out in the county. In the city, he would drive out to different places and say hello. He liked to be visible.

In the summer he would have to go out and check on a

carnival that was being held down in Struthers or Lowellville or out by Austintown that was maybe running some games that weren't on the level. He would have to go out and warn them.

He would plan raids. He used to plan raids by having his deputies gather out at our farm, because if they gathered around the jail and they noticed any undo activity around the jail at any particular time they would figure there was a raid coming on. If suddenly twenty deputies turned up and six cruiser cars, the word would go out all over town the sheriff's out, coming somewhere. He would meet all his deputies out here and they would plan it very carefully, maybe six or seven places they were going to hit at the same time. Then they would go from out here in. No one had ever quite done that before, you know. It bewildered a few people.

B: What kind of crime was going on in the 1930's? What kind of cases?

E: The usual, murder, robbery, and juvenile delinquency. He had a lot of problems with slot machines. He was determined, since they were illegal, he would keep them out. It wasn't that slot machines as such bothered him, but slot machines generally represented one person. He would come into the county and by hook or by crook want to take over the county and control all of the slot machines. If he would have let them run, he could be accused of taking money or deputies or somebody could be taking money to let a particular person run slot machines. He was determined there would be none, and there weren't.

He didn't touch them in the municipals, in the cities. While he had jurisdiction in Youngstown, Struthers, Lowellville, and Campbell, he didn't always bother them. He was pretty much in the county, but he could go into Youngstown anytime he wanted to.

He would make raids on the bug or on prostitution. During the war, the Army was very much concerned about prostitution in Youngstown because we had Camp Reynolds over here. Pretty soon you would get a whole bunch of prostitutes coming to town. Before you knew it, a whole bunch of fellows who came for the training at Camp Reynolds would come down with strange sicknesses. So the Army was very interested in cooperating with him to get the prostitution closed down. Collier's Magazine, which was a big magazine back then, did a big article on him on what he did on prostitution and the Army.

He was pretty tough on them, but since they were all young

girls, 18, 19, or 20, he was torn between trying to find the people who were backing them and punishing the girls. Why put them in jail? Who were they working for? It was pretty hard to find out because they would bring in a bunch of girls from West Virginia someplace and my dad would hear about it and he would have to nail them. Of course, they didn't know who they were working for. You couldn't get them. He would bring them down to jail and they would try them. He would tell them to get out of town. Of course, they would leave and go to Wheeling or someplace and a batch would come in. It was a constant effort.

You people don't know today what downtown Youngstown used to be like on weekends. It was a swinging town. It was a great place to be. You go down there on Sunday evening now and all you'll do is get mugged. But, back at that time when I was staying at the jail, you could walk over there and there would be ten or twelve theatres open, and there would be restaraunts booming, big, fancy, nice restaraunts. The railroad station was going big, trains coming in from everywhere, New York and Chicago. I think there were ten trains each way between Youngstown and Pittsburgh a day. Taxis were pulling up at the stations and unloading people. The big bands would come to the Palace Theatre there on the square, which was one of the most beautiful theatres around. A whole carload on the train would be performers, bands, and everything coming to the Palace Theatre.

Downtown Youngstown on Sunday night and Saturday night was just a great place to go. People standing in double lines trying to get into the Warner Theatre, which is the symphony center, the Palace Theatre, the Paramount Theatre, the State Theatre, the Strand Theatre, the Park Theatre, and the Princess Burlesque.

I often wondered why my dad never raided it. He had some answers for that. One thing he said when he wanted to pick up certain people he knew where he could go to get them. He would be over at the Park, that and the Purple Cow, down at the Ohio Hotel. He would go down to the Purple Cow at midnight and he could find out how many hit men were in town and get a good idea of what was happening ahead of time down there. Oh yes, I would go down with him. He would say, "Let's go down to the Purple Cow." We would walk in and they would say, "Hi, Sheriff." He would sit down and say, "Do you want your grandmother shot, knocked off? There is a fellow . . ." He would say, "I just want to let them know I know they are in town and if anything happens I have their number."

The one thing that they always said about him, they said that he never told them one thing and did another. He never made any promises and never collected any money. He had a few friends that tried to collect money by just being seen with him. He would go out to lunch with them. They would go out maybe three or four times and pass the word out that they had influence. I know some that collected some money and just about got shot for it.

That downtown section, Boardman Street was a busy street. There was a Star Oyster House right across from the jail, a great restaraunt. There was an Oles' Market with a nice restaraunt. There was the Ohio Hotel with several nice restaraunts in it. Right down the street there was the Odd Fellows Hall Cafeteria, which was a great place to eat at noon. It was just booming.

There was the Erie Railway Station, the Pennsylvania, the B&O and the New York Central all busy with people and trains and taxis and streetcars and buses. The streetcars would line up over there on the square. Down Boardman Street a streetcar line would come in from New Castle and Sharon and all that. There were just dozens, hundreds of people.

Your theatres were booming. There was the Hippodrome Theatre. The Hippodrome had stage shows and vaudeville. The Palace Theatre had stage and vaudeville. The Park Theatre had stage and vaudeville and the Princess had stage and vaudeville. There were four theatres that had live shows and bands, in the Pit also.

B: That's amazing.

E: That was downtown Youngstown. East Federal was fascinating because that was all ethnic stores. You could go down there and find Greek stores, Italian stores, Slovak stores, Irish bars, and everything. It looked like something out of New York City; peddler carts, crates full of chickens and geese and ducks out on the sidewalk when the weather was good, and then inside when the weather was cold.

Right around the square there were about four or five bar-lunch places like the Central Square Lunch and places like that. It was mostly an all man place where they would go in and drink beer or cash their checks after prohibition was repealed and eat big ham or beef sandwiches and baked beans.

There was an Isaly's Dairy on the corner there and Tod

Hotel. When you thought of downtown Youngstown and the jail and the courthouse, it was a center of a very busy place.

Today it's just not the same environment or atmosphere. There were sirens going, police on horses and police on motorcycles, and all that sort of thing, the pedestrians, and the shoppers. It was just fascinating. It was just great.

B: You mentioned before about the gambling, the bug, and this and that. Was that really prevalent back then?

E: Oh sure. You had the bug, which was based on the last letters in the stock market. Then I think they did that in and instead of the last three digits, they just ran three zeros or something instead of rounding it off and that. They tried other things. But, the bug was very big.

My dad would raid it periodically, although there were several syndicates that would move in and out. There were private fellows who had their own bug men. Mall operators, he wouldn't do much with them. Some of them would hang around the jail. I remember one whose name I won't mention. He ran his own bug thing pretty much. He would come into the jail all of the time and tell my dad who the big men were coming in town. You know, kind of a mouthpiece for somebody. My dad knew not to touch him.

He would raid the bugs and slot machines. I remember there weren't many slot machines around. They would come periodically, but he had a thing against slot machines because they were generally being run by some syndicate.

Up until the last six months he was in office, there were fellows trying to contact him to put slot machines in. I sat in the back door of our house -- We lived here right after the war, after I got out of the Army--and I saw a great big Cadillac pull up. A fellow got out and he came towards the house. He said, "Hi, Don." I didn't know him. He said, "Sheriff's son, Don, where's your dad?" I said, "I don't know." "Well, has he been out?" "No," I said. He said, "Well, will he be coming out?" I said, "I don't know. He usually does." He said, "Well, tell him so and so was here." So my dad came out after and I said so and so was out here. My day said, "Mmmm." I said, "What did he want?" He was six months from the end of his office. He said, "He wants a slot machine concession in the county for the remaining months of my term. That's

what he wants. He said he would give me a nice chunk of money." I said, "Well, he's not going to get it?" He said, "Well, of course he's not going to get it. Why, after all these years, would I give it to him for six months?"

Then we had another fellow who was kind of in the numbers business. My dad treated him good. He never would pick him up. He knew Tommy. . . . Well, I won't tell you the last name. Tommy was selling the bug and he would drop into jail and all that.

About that time, my wife heard a knock on the door and she went to the door and there was Tommy with a nice, big package. It was around Christmas. It was a great, big box of chocolates. I won't say it was made in Youngstown. I had one daughter then. There was a nice, big envelope from the bank with a nice, new five dollar bill in there with her name on it, Patty, and something for my wife. So I called my dad and I said, "Tommy so and so was out here and left us a Christmas present." I said, "What is that?" He said, "No, go ahead and take it. He came in and just said he was sorry he was leaving. He had been a good friend and he wanted to come out and give you a Christmas present. So, now go ahead." He said that was okay. I was going to throw it out the door. He said, "No, you'll hurt his feelings." I won't tell you his name because then I would reveal his nationality. His nationality represented one phase of the bug around Youngstown at that time. But, Tommy always was a good guy so my dad never bothered him.

The syndicate was what he was after. The big ones, you know, the gang from Detroit, and the gang moving in from Cincinnati. He would tolerate that because it almost always meant that they paid off.

Then he had to raid bootleg places, too. He had a thing about that because it was rot gut stuff. I saw them pour it in a jail in cans and it would leak out of the cans and eat right through the linoleum. I remember drinking that stuff. So, he did a lot of raids.

- B: Were there any big gangs fighting back then between these different groups?
- E: Yes, there were some, during the war and after it had started. I know there was a young fellow and I can't remember his name who decided he was going to open up his own model. The model boards, you know, were coming in at that time and they were controlled by syndicates, a lot of them. This fellow moved into Youngstown and started

setting up his own slot machine. My dad arrested him and brought him into jail on something else, I forget, and warned him that if he would do that there would be trouble. He got murdered, found in McKelvey Lake or somewhere.

That was kind of the beginning then. Then, we went into quite a whole rash of it there in the early 1950's with bombings. Youngstown earned its name "bomb town". We didn't have too much of that back there. There were always rumors of the gang, the Purple Gang from Detroit or something coming in. I know there were people who tried to come in, but part of the bug was kind of localized unless they were hooked up with some national group. There were a few names in the racket business around Youngstown who were involved in gambling and that sort of thing.

B: Between the local ones and the gang?

E: Yes, they were local fellows. Now, whether they had connection with . . . They probably did. I mean the mafia operates on a kind of rod. They didn't go out and say who they were. These fellows wouldn't say who they were. But, there was always this seesawing back and forth. Wherever there was any gambling there was somebody there trying to take it over. Wherever there were any model boards, wherever there were any slot machines, there was always somebody who controlled them. There was no such thing as individuals operating them.

The thing you had to do as a law enforcement officer was just try to keep it under control. I remember a time when there was a whole box car of slot machines that stood on the tracks back behind Boardman Street in back of that parking lot over by Mahoning Street Bridge for three months. He went over. He heard they were bringing it in. He heard it was over there on the siding. He went over with a crow bar and broke the door open. It was full of slot machines that would dispense little life saver things. In other words, they were trying to say it was a legitimate candy machine, but the candy was terrible.

My dad brought a whole lot of boxes out up here and set fire to them. They wouldn't even melt, they were like cement. They just kind of melted down to like a glob of hard stuff that laid there for months. So, this was a whole crate car full of slot machines and this candy. It belonged to a fellow named Jim so and so in Warren, Ohio. My dad padlocked it, got a court order, and they finally went over there and smashed it. They got a big crane with a weight on it, and piled them up, and just smashed them

all to pieces. He said they weren't going to set them up. They were from Youngstown and the county. I don't know how many there were, a couple of hundred in this car. He smashed them up.

Then, the mob awards started coming in. That's where you play the games for so many points and then collect up the money at the bar. They were hard to control because . . . Is this gambling? No, we just play for fun. My dad didn't care if they played for fun. The idea he always had was if some syndicate or somebody came in, almost always they would try to contact his deputies or somebody out of the city police and pay them off. Then, it would go around, why doesn't he raid, or else the deputies are getting paid or something. It would get to the place where there would be two rival gangs coming in with those. The one would pay to raid the other if you wanted to collect. In other words, you could legitimately go out, my dad didn't, and stage a big raid and make it look good only because you were trying to close down the one fellow at the request of the other one. He would have to tell them both to get out of town. They would move to some other close place.

I remember he had troubles with dogs. Canfield had a dog track and dogs were illegal at that time, betting on dogs. My dad wasn't against dogs, but if it was illegal and he was a law enforcement officer, he felt it was his job to do something about it.

My brother and I were offered something like \$25 a night, that was back when \$25 was a lot, to work at that dog track. All we were supposed to do was leave the dogs out on the track. That would have been \$25 a night for six nights. That would have been what, \$150 a week back in a time where you could go across the street to the Star Oyster House in the evening and get a full course meal for 50 cents, which included soup, fish, cole slaw, bread, and coffee, and dessert, I think. So, you see what \$25 could buy you then. You could go to Chicago on a train and back for about \$12 round trip. Today it cost you, I don't know what it is, an arm and a leg just to go one way, especially by plane. Of course, we didn't do it. My dad went out and closed the track at Canfield and got a lot of people out there mad at him because they said it helped the economy of the town. I suppose a conservative town would kick people out if they drank or played cards, but they found out this was something that made some money. He said it's not legal. It was an embarrassment to the fair board because they signed a lease. I think it was an embarrassment to them. They didn't realize what they were doing.

My dad finally closed it down. It moved out to the other side of Milton Dam in the next county. It operated out there.

I remember going up into Trumbull County somewhere up north of Youngstown one night with a date. I didn't think of anything of what I was doing. I wanted to show off this girl. I said, "Let's go to the dog track." This actually happened now. I'm not kidding you. So as we walked up to the front ticket place a fellow came out. "Hi, Don Elser, the Sheriff's son." Well, I had seen him around town. He was one of the downtown characters. I didn't have an acquaintance, well nodding acquaintance, but he sounded familiar. "Come on in, Oh, come on in." He gave me a box seat. Of course, this impressed this girl. I thought that was great. He bet for us. He gave us the tickets for the races. He brought us beer and stuff to eat at the box seat. Boy, did I show off on this girl, but did I get it when I got home. My tongue made a mistake of telling my dad. He hit the roof.

I said, "What was I to do?" He said, "Stay away from them." He said, "They'll be in here next week wanting a favor. Don't you know that?" I said, "Well, it wasn't even Mahoning County." See there was a joint. What was it called? It ran north of Youngstown there out towards Hubbard.

B: Jungle Inn?

E: Jungle Inn. It was right out Boardman on the other side. My dad, of course, he couldn't touch it. It wasn't in the county. They would always say to my dad, "Why don't you go out and raid the Jungle Inn?" It's not in the county. Then, they would use that in a letter and say, "If the sheriff is so smart why doesn't he go out and raid Jungle Inn?" Well, you're not in that county. You are not going to go out into other people's counties. You don't have any jurisdiction there. The dog track was just over the county line.

My dad said, "This is the legality of this thing." He didn't go around preaching sin. There was nothing holier than thou about my dad, although he was against liquor and drinking. He was great. Oh, he was dead set. The only reason was he had some alcoholism in the family he grew up with. He just saw it and so he just turned against it and partly because he was teaching school. He was no pantywaister or anything like that, he was no reformer of that kind. He wasn't out to tell people of Youngstown what they could read. He never raided magazines, he never did that.

I heard him explain, "To go raid the Princess Theatre I would have to go over with cameras and get pictures of the girls on the stage." He said, "My wife just won't let me go to the burlesque, so that's that."

Strangely enough, the man who ran the Park Theatre the last few years lived out south of town and he was a Mormon. So they told me. I got to know him pretty well. He ran four or five burlesque theatres. He ran one in Youngstown, one in Buffalo, one in Erie, and one up along the lake. He never bothered with that. He was against prostitution simply because of what it was doing to the girls, partly. This disease was quite something back at that time. He didn't like that. Of course, he just didn't like people coming around paying for favors to get by the law.

B: In the 1940's then, were there any problems with rationing or stuff like that?

E: No, I don't know. I would have to look back and see whether he got involved. I was in the Army two or three years there when that was going on. I don't think there was too much. Some of that saw federal, like gasoline stamps and everything. He wasn't going around catching people for that. If they would steal stamps it would be theft and he would have to go and make arrests or else keep them in jail and somebody else made the arrests. He would investigate hold ups and murders and things like that. They caught some, too.

He was awfully concerned about juvenile delinquency because he had taught. There are a lot of fellows today in Mahoning County that don't have a record, police record, simply because he took them down and just threw them in jail all night and didn't even book them. When young boys were brought in for things, unless it was serious like murder or something like that, naturally he would book them, but if they just got involved in fights or scrapes and things like that and were arrested for disorderly conduct or that, he wouldn't book them.

I know he locked up boys from this town one night who were in trouble. He had some cells upstairs where he just put juvenile delinquents. He locked them up all night and their parents didn't know where they were. In the morning, he would call them. They were friends of his out in town here. He said, "I have your son." He just wanted to scare the daylights out of them.

I can remember those boys coming back years later thanking him. They were picked up by the deputies or somebody for

trouble. He wouldn't book them. He would just scare the daylight out of them. A lot of them stayed in jail all night. A lot of drunks, alcoholics that they would pick up.

B: Did he have a good relationship with the other law enforcement people around here like the police chief?

E: He had a pretty good relationship with the police chief in Youngstown because he knew what they were up against.

B: Did he ever have any conflicts over whose authority or where one might overstep the other?

E: There was some irritation there. It never got out of hand. Most of the policemen liked him. I know he raided a prostitute place and picked up a book that listed a couple of police officers on the take. He never told anybody. As a matter of fact, I have one of those books that has the officer's names listed. It has electricity, milk, bread, and then the name of the police officer, \$5 a day or something. He let them know he knew. He figured he could swindle them. He wasn't about to call the newspaper in and make a big thing because police weren't paid enough. Some of these fellows they just collected. He wasn't about to make a federal case out of it. If it was one of his deputies, he would have fired him. If he so much knew a deputy that took a dollar, he would suspend him or throw him out. That doesn't mean he knew every time, and there were times when he thought that he didn't know.

B: Did he have a big administration, staff?

E: Oh, he had only 35 or 40. That includes deputies and staff in the courthouse, jailers, maybe a few more. I don't know how many they have now. I don't know what staff is today.

B: Yes, who knows now. What made your father decide not to run or what happened at the end?

E: He got defeated.

B: Oh, he got defeated?

E: He hurt his leg and his health was poor. He didn't campaign. He didn't want to win. He didn't want to quit and he didn't want to win.

B: Did he get defeated in the primary or in the general?

E: In the primary. He got defeated by a fellow from Struthers who liked to say he went to school with him.

B: Langley?

E: Yes. He said that Langley liked to say he went to school with the sheriff. My dad's health was very bad. He had a bad knee where a car hit him when he was out some place. It ran in and hurt his leg. His health wasn't that good. He was just tired. Fourteen years and that was enough. He had three four-year terms and one two-year term.

After his first term, the state law extended the sheriff's term from two to four terms, which was a good idea, I thought, because you didn't have to campaign again.

The day after my dad was in as sheriff this guy came around. About the second or third day he was in his office up in the county jail, the deputy came in and said, "Sheriff, there's a relative of yours out there. He wants to see you." Well, he was married to a distant relative. He made my dad an offer of something like 50 cents a keg of beer if he represented a beer company. All my dad had to say was he liked that beer and you know what would happen. They would go around in these bars where there was a little gambling and say, "Hey, this is the sheriff's beer." Then, my dad would go raid the place. They would say, "Hey, Sheriff we're selling your beer. What are you doing?" I don't know how many barrels and cases they sold in Mahoning County. They would have given him something like 50 cents.

That was dad's first contact with that sort of thing. This was a fellow posing as his nephew, saying that my dad was his uncle. He was married to a relative in my dad's family. He was sent in by somebody. He promised if he could get through, why, everybody would get paid off. Dad turned him down.

B: What did your father do after he left office?

E: He just retired.

B: Just retired and worked on the farm?

E: He was getting up there and as I said his health was bad. He had sugar diabetes. It was giving him a lot of trouble. He had this bad leg and he was on a cane. He was using a cane.

He got shot at one time. We were living here. We moved here and we fixed the house up. It's a little different

than it was then. It was just a little, small, farmhouse. He came down and stopped here. This was in the late 1940's. I had just gotten on the school board. I ran for school board down here. I was at a school board meeting and he stopped in to see my wife here and play with the girls. I suddenly got a call down at the board meeting. My wife called and said, "You better come home here. Somebody started taking a shot at your father." So, I came home. There were deputies out here and cars, and all that. What happened is he was visiting here with my daughter. As he drove down the drive to turn north, he noticed a car blinking its lights down the road. He turned out of the drive and started down this road. He got down here just a quarter of a mile and a car went passed him, bam bam. One shot missed and one shot went through the roof of the car, right over the driver's seat where the car roof curved down over the door. The bullet went through that curve and off the roof.

He didn't know at the time quite what had happened. He came back and got a flashlight out and found the hole. He went down to the Purple Cow the next day. He gave a speech. He was a big fellow, big feet and hands and heavy. He wasn't any taller than I am, but he looked bigger. He weighed 240 or 250 pounds. He laid the law down. He said, "So and so missed, but I know who it is. You fellows, for your own good, get that fellow out of town." He said, "He's an inefficient hit man or something. He doesn't know his job. He's an amateur. If you don't get him out of town, I'm going to raid the hell out of everybody. I'm going to clean this Purple Cow out. I'm coming down here and I'm going to start here. I'm going to have my deputies down here, and we're going to arrest you for something, carrying a gun, there will be something on you."

Let the sheriff take care of it. When he walked out, someone came up and said, "Sheriff, you won't have anymore from that." My dad said, "Do you know who did it?" He said, "You won't hear anymore." That was it.

There were two cars involved. How many men or how many people? There were two cars involved. One did the shooting. They knew he would come out. They followed him. They knew he would come out and have to turn north. They knew that.

Somehow this car was down over the hill here or up there. He said he remembers those lights blinking up there and he thought what is that? He didn't get a quarter of a mile down the road when this car came past and shot. He didn't quite know how or why.

He said that he thought that if they wanted to frighten him, that was coming awfully close. They didn't shoot to miss. He threatened them so much and he said he was going to clean the place up from one end to the other end. Youngstown would be the cleanest.

He would come into the city and he would come into Lowellville, Struthers, Campbell, Sebring, and everything. He would just go from one end of the county. He meant it. They knew he meant it because he would have. He was so mad.

B: All right, is there anything that you think might have been important that we haven't covered yet?

E: He was involved in strikes, too, you know.

B: Yes.

E: There again, he ended up being criticized by just about everybody because he was more interested in keeping people from burning buildings and smashing heads on either side. I know he ended up with everybody mad at him for awhile. That was kind of hairy in Youngstown with big steel.

B: Steel strikes were different then than a strike is today?

E: A strike today is peaceful compared to then. He sent deputies. The rubberworkers in Akron or some outfit were going to come into Youngstown and parade and support the strike. He heard about it. He called the highway patrol and his deputies and the deputies in the next county. They barricaded the road and stopped this caravan of cars.

They had piles that high of guns, sticks, and clubs. I still have some of the clubs that they carved out of ball bats. That's not like they strike now. That was their outfit, kill, and people did get killed.

One night they had a shoot-out under the Market Street Bridge. There was so much tear gas over downtown Youngstown you could hardly stand it. It was a combination of a good many things. I went with my dad to a certain bank building one night, an office in the bank. These fellows were telling my dad what he had to do. He got up and pounded the table and told them what he would do. These weren't the unions, these were the other side.

Then they organized a back-to-work movement. He was afraid of that because he knew that if they were going to organize

let's say like 500 men and come down and bust into the steel mill, the strikers were in a lot of the mills and had them barricaded. That was when they called in the National Guard.

The National Guard came in and for once they kept people from getting shot. It wasn't like at Kent. They did come in and they just broke up any attempts to break into the mill.

They were going to break in. They were trying to organize people who were against the strike to break in back to work. My dad realized that when those two groups would clash there would be a lot of people killed and hurt. That was when he just went to the phone and dialed Governor Davey, who happened to be a friend of his and said, "You better send in the National Guard." It wasn't Davey, I forget right now. He said, "You better send them in because things are awfully hot here." They came in.

The next morning they were all over the town. It was a bad scene. I don't think the valley ever recovered completely from it. I think the mills made up their minds back then they were going to move out, some of them, I think, but maybe not.

Lykes wasn't. Lykes wasn't in the Sheet & Tube. Sheet & Tube, for instance, was independent then, but I think there was a certain feeling then that never was erased. There were two sides to it.

But it got pretty rough, but not as rough as it did in Gary, Indiana, and Chicago and other places. But it was bad enough.

He was caught. What are you going to do? How are you going to keep people from breaking heads? If somebody smashes a window, no matter who it is, it is illegal. That was the way he was operating. If somebody sets fire to a building, whether it's union, whether it's management, no matter who it is, they're guilty of disturbing the peace. He was kind of caught between the two. I guess there was some Communists, certain Communist influences.

B: Oh yes, when did they come in?

E: Well, they were in because Gus Hall was in. You know that. He was here in town. I think when he got in here the strike got out of hand with a lot of the union fellows. That was one of the problems they had.

On the other hand, management was pulling all kinds of stuff too, dirty stuff. They were going to break the union. They were in no mood to have any unions at all. My dad and I differed some on that. We would argue about it. It could have been a lot worse.

B: Did he have any other problems with the Communist movement in the late 1940's after the war?

E: No. The Communists used to have a meeting down at a hall below the jail on Boardman Street. They would have these meetings and I would go down with a reporter or somebody just to see what was going on. They whooped and hollered and fussed, but they didn't stir up much.

The Communists were caught. They were against the war. Going to war would help Great Britain, you know, England against Germany. But then when Hitler attacked Russia, overnight they reversed. They had pictures about the great Soviet Army and the dirty Nazis and all of that. They were double-crossed.

The trouble is that these fellows were never told by the Communists, by Russia, or the Communist International what was happening. They really got cut short. One minute they were saying don't fight Hitler, he's a great something. The next day he was trying to blow up Russia and they had a reverse. They had to come out for the great Democratic war to save the world. It made them look a little silly, I mean, if you followed them closely.

Most of the people were busy with other things. There was a war coming. During the Depression jobs were being created by the war. We were starting to ship stuff all over the world. Of course, it was the war that got us out of the Depression when it comes to it.

B: How about with these servicemen, when they came back the women were already in the jobs and this and that. Was there rising crime or anything like that then?

E: No.

B: Did you have any more problems with them or getting them back in?

E: The veterans weren't a problem. Everybody said what a terrible problem they would be. They weren't that big of a problem. In fact, when they started enrolling in Youngstown in college, I started teaching there. Everybody said what a terrible situation, all these vets coming back here. They were the best students you could

want. They were old men even in their early twenties compared to the seventeen, eighteen, and nineteen year old girls who were there.

There was a conflict, I remember, on the campus between the girls and the fellows who didn't want to put up with any nonsense. Fraternity hazing just went down the drain in a hurry. During freshmen hell week that they used to have in March everybody around had little beanie on. You could see these fellows coming up there after being shot at and bombed, and having your boats blown up in the middle of the Atlantic and then coming to Youngstown and enrolling and somebody is telling them they have to wear a little, silly hat and carry matches and cigarettes for the upperclassmen. You know, they're crazy.

The girls were accusing these fellows of just taking the joy out of the university. They were too serious. They would sit around and talk about their war experiences all of the time and it wasn't interesting. You would hear that, but they were great students. I thought they were because I identified with them. They were my age. We would sit around and discuss things that had happened. I felt that I identified. They were good students. There was not a great problem with veterans coming back. Not right immediately afterwards at least. Later on they started organizing and marching and making certain demands, which they felt they should have. Some they should have had, I guess, and maybe some that they should not have had.

Remember there were over ten million people in the Army at that time. That's a lot. That's just about every other person between certain ages, or everyone off the streets. The population of the country back about that time was about 150 million or something. That's one-sixteenth of the population.

B: Right, and you break down to male and female.

E: That's a good chunk of the population. There was no problem.

B: Okay, there's nothing else?

E: Is that it? No. I don't know how you can summarize it up. I think in summary the sheriff's office then was more of a law enforcement agency. It was real important. Today, we never see any sheriff's cruisers out here in the county because it's all highway patrol. Many of the sheriffs today are more or less just in charge of that dormitory down there. The reason he has any political thing is that he does control a number of jobs. But,

maybe not that many as compared to some of the rest of the courthouse. I don't know how it compares. Back then the sheriff was a lot more important.

B: Did you think your father probably would have molded into this type of administration?

E: I don't know. You know, you could always say we are all products of the time in which we live. It's hard to take anybody out of this place and say what would he do here. It's different. I don't know what he would have done with the dope thing. We didn't have much of the dope stuff back then, the business.

B: Like with the bombings then in the 1950's, do you think that would have happened if he was still in, being that he kind of kept the gangs out and this and that?

E: I don't know. I don't know. You see, that's when they got in here and they were competing. What he managed to do pretty much was to seal off Mahoning County to the point where it was a good place for them to come and eat and meet, but they just didn't operate to a great extent. They always said they knew exactly where they stood with him.

I think if anything he kept them from getting in here and finding that it was a lucrative place that they had to fight over it. Only some small operators got fighting with each other. The big fellows, I think, didn't operate that much.

I know out in the counties there were, down in Campbell, Struthers, and the valley. I'm not saying there weren't any. I'm not saying that there weren't some of the fellows around, but they didn't want to start any trouble. They wanted to keep a low profile. They felt that they were quieter and safer. Then they got fighting each other in the 1950's. I don't know what that was all about.

Oh, I could tell stories. I could tell people why I'm against capital punishment today. In spite of the increase in crime and all that, I'm dead set against it. I drove a car for three or four fellows going to the electric chair. My dad went down and watched it. He took two deputies. One was a tough guy. What was his name? Oh, he was a bully. My dad had to keep watching him beat up people, you know. He went down and he didn't come to work for three days after it. He was sick about it to his stomach.

It was a young kid, eighteen. They dragged him in there

into the electric chair screaming and carrying on and on. My dad walks out of the penitentiary and here standing in a Coast Guard uniform is this boy's brother. Of course, he said, "Hey, sheriff, how did my brother take it?" What was he going to answer? My dad said, "Oh, like a man." Well, it comes out in the Vindicator then, you know.

I talked to these kids. I remember one kid, he was a black fellow. He robbed a parking garage where he worked. This was the Depression. He came back at night and he knew where the money was. He got surprised by the night watchman. It was his first offense, too, of anything. He got panicky and he picked up something. He thought it was a stick, but it was an iron bar. He hit the watchman on the head and killed him. He never had been arrested before. He was a Rayen High School kid.

I saw a white kid come in who murdered three people. I know they gave him 99 years for each murder and he's out today running around. That guy should be about my age now. When he went to jail, he said he was going to get out of jail and kill two people. One was my dad and one was the judge. He was so crazy they put him in back with some other prisoners and they sent a note up to get this crazy maniac out of here. He killed three farm people out south of town here. My dad tracked him all along.

He got 99 years for each murder. He got out five years ago. Somewhere he's running around. It was so inequitable and it didn't solve anything.

There are some who deliberately try to get caught. Some were trying to get killed. They had suicide tendencies. A lot of people don't commit crimes without getting caught. A lot of people don't commit a murder and think about it. Like these fights, they get in a fight on the north side and two fellows get killed. That wasn't pre-meditated. That's two drunken hotheads.

B: Yes, I didn't know about the jailbreaks and things like that.

E: Oh yes, jailbreaks. Of course, they built that new building and they had just as many jailbreaks.

B: Is that the reason they built the new one?

E: The old one, the plumbing was going bad. I think they could have made a better thing out of the old one for the

money. That new building isn't built as solid as the old one. The other one was solid, but the plumbing was starting to rust and they had leaks and it was dirty. They could have gutted it pretty much and cleaned it up. It was solid, hard stone built the same way as the courthouse. It was built at the same time as the courthouse out of the same type of blocks. It was built. It was a like a fortress.

I had two friends living with me. We had a room on the third floor. One was kind of like a step-brother. He was working down at the Sheet & Tube at the time. The other boy was working at Yauming & Riener Music. I was working there, too. One boy was an orphan. Well, both were orphans, but the one lived with me, with us. He was kind of like a step-brother. We just had that room with white tile and we had cots. We had a nice bathroom and a key to the door, a great big key.

The one was down in the alley one day getting into his car and these fellows were breaking out. They dropped down behind and hit him in the head and threw him in the back of his car and drove out that narrow drive and banged his fenders and everything. He got out there around on Market Street and Williamson Avenue and he forced the back of the car open. He got out of the car when they stopped at a red light, bleeding and waving his hands. Everybody thought he was drunk and crazy, you know. He finally got down to the jail and they didn't even know they had broken out. He walked through the jail all bloody. They went up and checked. Oh, my dad raised cane with them.

They caught the three guys. I remember sitting down in the front office and my dad calling up and saying, "Come down here John. Some friends of yours are down here." I could hear his voice on the telephone from where I was at the time. John is, incidently, retired and become an assistant to the vice president at IBM. There were four vice presidents and he became an assistant to one of the top under old man Watson. He lived in Princeton, New Jersey. He has a nice, big home over there. He's retired. He worked his way right to the top. John said, "I think I have some friends down there." He said, "I think your dad caught those fellows who broke out," so he went down. Oh, my dad was so mad. My dad had a bar that was a club. It was a club they found in the back of his car they had hit him with. My dad said, "All right, John, here it is. You want to hit him back?" He said, "One at a time." He said, "You stand up, stand up." He knew he wouldn't. He wasn't going to.

He said, "Now, hit him. See, you dirty, low down coward." Oh, he was so mad. He said, "He's too much of a gentleman to do what you did to him. He's going to amount to something someday. You fellows are going to go down in the gutter." Well, golly, he did, vice president of IBM. Oh, my dad was so mad. He said he was just infuriated with these punks, as he called them. One was an old hand. The old ones always pick two chumps to go along with them. But, they caught them. In fact, the city police caught them the next day or two.

B: You worked a lot then in the office?

E: I used to help out. For awhile I was going to school at Youngstown. Then I worked at Yauming & Riener's. I worked down at Motor Express and then I started teaching. I got a job teaching after about a year or so because jobs were scarce. You couldn't get a teaching job. You can't get them today.

B: Yes, tell me about it.

E: I finally got a job the second year I was out of college. I got a job, but the first year I just bummed around. There weren't any jobs hardly and I worked at this music store, Yauming & Riener, selling radios, pianos, and everything. Then I worked down at Motor Express on the dock loading trucks with refrigerators and God knows what else I broke my back loading. Then, I got a job in September a year after I graduated. I went teaching and then on into the war.

When Johnny, John Phillips was his name, went in, he was working for IBM. He went on into the Air Corps. He ended up in Calcutta, India, working for IBM. He was in the Army. The Army was paying him, but he was doing IBM work using primitive calculators or stuff then, you know, keeping records. It was very primitive compared to today. But, he got a wild ride and they make good pay.

B: Is your brother a deputy?

E: He was part of the time. Yes, he was part-time. He drove cars and hauled prisoners.

B: Okay, it sounds like a fascinating time.

E: Oh, it was an interesting time. I used to ride in the cruiser with the fellows. They would say, "Come on Don, so and so's off tonight and you can ride with me." I would go riding and out cruising around. You would get these calls.

I don't know how they do it now, but we used to get some weird calls, suicides. I remember going out. A prominent fellow in Youngstown hung himself in his basement on Sunday morning. The paper came out he had a heart attack, naturally back trouble. If you hang yourself, you're obviously going to have trouble.

I remember one night, oh, this was weird, we picked up a fellow. They said there was a fellow lying in a ditch out in Austintown at some roadhouse, as they called them then, a beer kind of a restaurant. They called them roadhouses. They were ex-speakeasies. They said he was dead. Well, at that time, my dad had just put in some cruisers where the back would lift up and they had a cot. They were kind of combined ambulances. The funeral homes got mad. They wanted to have the ambulance business themselves. They got mad at my dad. My dad finally had to sell them. For a couple years they picked up bodies and people.

We went out. The fellow was lying there and he looked dead. A couple people helped put him on a cot. It was just my dad and myself way out there. There was no turnpike, nothing out that way then. We started in towards town. This guy was supposed to have to go to the hospital. They said "Oh, they think he might be alive." Nobody seemed to know. We got him into the hospital and he was alive. He was just drunk and I don't know if he had been hit by a car. I think he had been hit by a car or something because his leg was all banged up. We took him to the hospital and he came to. That was about midnight.

When I came in that road, Route 18, Austintown was nothing then. There were no buildings, nothing past . . . What's the name of that? The road on the edge of Youngstown. That was the edge of the city then.

B: Meridian?

E: Meridian. When you got to Meridian, you were out in the country from there on, at that time, nothing. In fact, the Meridian Field was where Ringling Brother's Circus used to come. Big, open fields were there where those warehouses are. That was all country.

We took him to the hospital. That time we were out that way and we got a call, man dead at a certain place. They called the inn. He said, "I know about where that is." Well, it was off down in west Austintown, which is on down along the railroad. We pulled up and there was a party going on, shouting and laughing. He said, "This must be the number." He called back in. He said, "Check out

that number again." They gave it to him. He said, "Oh, this it it." We knocked on the door. We said, "What's the problem?" He said, "Oh, a body." We walked in and here was this old guy stretched on this bed dead with his mouth open and all that. "Family?" He said, "Grandfather." They said he had just swallowed something and killed himself. It was suicide.

What happened was the old guy was brought home from the hospital that day or the day before. They were having this party and he was in there. He got up and thought he was getting his medicine, instead he drank lye or something that you clean out the sink with and died. He died in this party and they just looked and said he committed suicide. Instead of calling the funeral home, they were going to call the police. They figured they could get him buried free, I guess. They didn't care. They knew he was dead. He was a pain in the neck to them. That was weird, I'll tell you.

Oh, there are all kinds of stories I could tell. It was fun. I used to just love to come in there in the evening and just sit around and go out with the cruisers and run into things.

One time they raided a place of prostitutes down there in a kind of rooming house. This was at night when they raided it and they couldn't find anybody, but they found a fellow up on a step ladder wallpapering the ceiling. My dad said, "Why are you wallpapering this late at night?" Here it was about midnight. He said, "Oh, I want to get it done." He noticed there was a bump in the ceiling. My dad said, "Let's take the wall paper off. You're not doing it right." He got one of the deputies from North Lima here. He was kind of, he wasn't a hick, but he hadn't been around much. They pulled the wallpaper off and there was a trap door. My dad said to this guy, "Get off the ladder. Get away." They got the ladder over to open up the trap door. So, my dad said to this fellow, "Now, get up there and look with your flashlight." Three girls were hiding in the attic. This guy was wallpapering them shut. Isn't that crazy?

They cussed and they came climbing down out of there looking like a mess because it was dirty up there. My dad said they were tipped off that there was going to be a raid. He never did know, but he had about four or five crews out. By the time they got there, they had been tipped off. Where the guy got wallpaper so fast . . .

B: He must have had a supply.

E: He must have had a supply. He was pasting it on. He pasted over this hole at midnight.

He took the cook out, Joe Cassum. He was a tough little Serbian guy. The girl he liked used to make soup for us and sandwiches when we would go down and eat in the kitchen with Joe and the prisoners, the trustees. Joe liked to go on raids. They went out to catch a crazy fellow who was shooting at people. My dad said to Joe, "Joe, just stay there." No, not Joe. Joe tore up to the door of this fellow's house and he swung the door open. Just as he opened the door the guy had a gun. Joe ducked just as he blasted with his shotgun. He missed him.

Another time, my dad sent Joe into this house. Mostly just girls were in the house. He said, "Joe, you go in and check it out." Then he said, "We'll give you five minutes to check it out and see what they're doing so when we go there we'll know it's not a sewing circle." Joe went in and they didn't know who he was. He said, "How much?" They told him. Joe said, "Okay," and he got out his money. He started paying the girl just as my dad and the other deputies came in. The girl turned towards Joe and cussed at him and kicked him right in the leg and in the stomach. He was that gal who kicked him in the stomach and in the leg. Joe said, "Well, I couldn't get away. I had a good thing going there." She had a high heel shoe and caught him right there and right down here and he was all black and blue and he thought she caved in his stomach. She just gave him a kick. It was funny.

Another time there was a carnival down in Struthers. They were gypping people and people were calling in. My dad called a fellow from home town here. "Frank," he said, "come on in. I'm going to send you down. I want you to case out this place." He gave this guy \$30 and said, "Now, go down there and check out those games," shell games or something. The fellow went down and lost his \$30 and went to the phone to call my dad to ask for more money. My dad said, "You're crazy. You're supposed to get evidence. Do you have any evidence?" He said, "No, I lost my money." Oh, those are some of the funniest things that have happened. They were laughable.

I used to write all those down. I kept track of them. Sometimes I would write a story about what was so funny.

I could show you some threatening letters my dad got. I know I have one upstairs. I don't know where it is now.

It's a skull and crossbones. I think it came in an envelope and on the back it said, "You are next," or something like that.

B: Did he get many of those?

E: Oh, he got more than he ever showed us because he didn't want to worry us. We hadn't gotten any around the house for awhile. We still lived down here. After he went in, he had deputies come down and guard the place at night. They would sit out in the driveway. I don't know what they would have done.

B: Yes.

E: When I would see the deputies out there I always knew he had a threatening call or letter, but they were mostly just harassment.

B: Usually if you're going to send a letter, then that's just a threat. If you're going to do it, you're not going to send a letter.

E: Yes, you're not going to throw that away. These were just fellows who were bad and wanted to scare the sheriff. It just wouldn't do any good. Of course, my dad took it more seriously until he realized most of them were nuts, some nuts writing.

B: How was this on your mother?

E: Mother, finally, when dad went in she wanted to be matron. The last couple of years he was in he made her matron. She did a good job. It was funny because you know my mother wouldn't admit the existence of prostitution and all that. She went up there and she got thrown in there and was trying to take care of those gals. She knew what they were. She was nice to them. They would always say this and that and they would write her letters after they got out and thanked her. Some of them were pretty tough and some of them were just scared kids that came up from Reardon and down there. They were on the move, constantly moving.

When they would get thrown out of Akron, they would come here. When they got thrown out of here, they would go to East Liverpool. My dad would put them in jail and keep them there for a couple of weeks, feed them, get them washed up, and send them on. They would go somewhere else.

Then there were the madams. Big Ethel was one. She gave

my mother a pocketbook and my dad made my mother give it back. She gave her an alligator pocketbook. He said, "You give it back because three weeks from now we're going to have to raid Big Ethel. She'll be back in. I don't want her to say to me, "Hey, I gave your wife a pocketbook. Why are you doing this to me?"

At that time prostitution was a filthy thing. It paid too little. It was only worth two dollars, what these girls are getting two hundred dollars a night for now. These girls know what they're doing now. Whether they have pimps or whether they're working for syndicate, I don't know. That two-hundred-dollar-a-night girl wears furs and all that. But, those gals were just bottom of the barrel. Of course, sex was a lot different back then. It wasn't as outward. I don't know what you would call it. I think, in spite of whatever they say, it's treated more sensibly today than what it was then. That whole district down on East Federal was a red light district.

B: That's the red light?

E: You could go walking down there any time of the night or day and there would be whistling out the window to you. You didn't know who was behind it, what kind of a syndicate ran it. There were blacks and there were whites, Chinese, different kinds.

You had a street down there that was all Greeks, Greek names on the restaurants. It was all Greek. Then, you would have an Italian section. It was more ethnic then. The city was more ethnically divided. When my dad would campaign, we would start out on a Sunday, and we would get to every kind of ethnic church meeting. We would eat all kinds of foods. My dad would never drink because if we would have stopped to drink wine or something at every one of those we would have never made it.

We would go to blacks for spare ribs. We would go to Greeks for Greek food, Hungarian food and Italian food. We would go all day Sunday campaigning. I would drive for him. He would try to go to all of them. He didn't care how little a group it was, he would go and say hello. They appreciated him stopping in because a lot of politicians would ignore them, the little churches.

These black churches would start about election time. He would say, "The Third Baptist Church down there." He would go down there and it would be a house with a sign, "Baptist Church." A woman died and there were four

people. That was it. I remember he went down one night. It was a house. There must have been twenty people. That was the congregation. That guy passed the collection plate at least four times in twenty minutes. My dad said, "I have to leave. This is too high price for me." These fellows had just started a church. They weren't preachers. They used to get the politicians down and make money.

B: Do you remember who the commissioners were then?

E: I have to look it up. I forget. I forget who they were.

B: Who was head of the party? Sulligan?

E: Sulligan was in there again before him. Isn't that awful those names escape me?

B: Your father got along pretty good with them then?

E: Well, yes and no.

B: There had to be some conflict at the end with Langley?

E: My dad got in wrong with the party at the beginning. When he was elected sheriff, the party tried to appoint all his deputies. They came out and handed him a list and said, "Here, Sheriff. Here are your deputies." My dad said, "What?" They said, "These are the list of your staff." My dad said, "The hell."

He had a meeting out at our house one night and appointed his deputies on his own, some that they had suggested, but all his own. I heard him say to those fellows, "If you pay anybody one dollar for your job and I find out, you'll be fired." He kept a few from Englehart's. You can't get rid of all the jail personnel like Joe Cassum the cook. He was cook for a lot of sheriffs.

B: Is he still there?

E: Oh no, he died about ten or fifteen years ago. He kept chiefs and some of the jailers there who knew how to run and book people and the secretarial staff. He kept some of those. Mostly, he appointed new deputies. That's the way they did it then. There was no civil service or anything. Everybody got out of the spoil system. To the winner went the spoils.

He appointed them himself. He didn't let the party beagle him. That made them ticked off. For one thing, they didn't appoint any rural deputies from out in the country.

He felt that he got his vote and they should have their own people. He had to appoint so many nationality groups. That was expected. He had his own ideas of what he wanted.

B: Did he have any troubles in the later elections?

E: No, the party liked to run with him. They felt that he pulled down so many votes always that the party needed him. If he could swing a lot of votes his way, he would have others too. The party knew he was going to win. He would just tell them he was going to win.

The last time he just didn't say that. He ran hardly any campaign. He just didn't feel like it. They would always try to give him trouble in the primaries. That was what his fight was with the party. Not in November, it was always in the primaries where they would want to stick somebody else. Once he won that then the party would back him.

B: That's pretty similar to today.

E: Yes, it's the same way. The primary was always when they would give him a little trouble. He bluffed his way. He would walk into the bank up there and say when he first ran, "I'm your next sheriff." He would talk to you that way. He got a lot of Republican votes too.

B: Were there any bank robberies?

E: Yes.

B: Big ones?

E: Well, that was when Baby Face Nelson and those gangs were running around. A couple of them came pretty close. I remember they went down after Baby Face Nelson down in East Liverpool. They thought they had him. There were always rumors that he was in town. They would stake out places and the FBI would come in. But, they never were there; they were always some place else. Dillinger and all those boys were around.

I think the FBI did an awful lot too to build up the reputations of those fellows, to make them heroes before they got them. They had to create these ten most wanted people and then get a lot of publicity out of it.

I didn't like Hoover at all. I thought he was a nut back then. They would invite my dad's deputies to go down for a week in Washington. Of course, they had to pay their

own way sometimes. Sometimes he gave them some money. Then, they would come back and advertise "FBI-trained," for one week. He had some of his deputies run against him in the primaries. They would be FBI-trained.

Then, of course, one of the faults he found with the FBI was that he would be working on a case and the FBI would come into town. They would turn it into the newspaper that the FBI was here. If my dad and the fellows would solve it, then the FBI would want to get in and get the credit. He didn't like them that much. He thought they were glamour boys and publicity hunters.

Some of them he liked. He said, he could trust at least the younger FBI fellows. If he was investigating something they weren't going out and selling out somebody. They got along.

Usually the police chief in Youngstown and the city police he was friends with. He liked them. He realized they had their problems with their office. The police chief was not his own boss. The police chief was hooked into the mayor and all that, where my dad was his own boss. The sheriff reported to nobody. If he signed away his life or his jurisdiction, it would be to the party bosses or somebody or some syndicate or something. If he lost his power, it was his own fault because he was supreme. His law was he could go anywhere in the county, and the city police could not. If he came in and raided in Youngstown a lot and he knew the police chief was tied up, it was an embarrassment to the police chief. He needed the police chief for simple arrests, murder and things like that. He didn't like to embarrass the guy because he was generally a nice fellow who just couldn't move, maybe because something was set up against him.

There were times where he had to come into the city on a raid. Generally, down in Campbell and down in Struthers the police force wasn't that big and well organized at that time. When the Army came in about prostitution and cleaning it up, they came to my dad. They didn't come to the Youngstown Police Chief, they didn't come to the others, they came to him because he had the total jurisdiction and they could work more completely.

If they had to clear it with two or three people to raid some house down in Campbell, by that time everybody would know it. They would come to my dad and they would set this up. They had to work through civilians. The police could not come in and raid. They can't allow that. They would be a police state. They would have to come to some officer and say, "We have to clean this up. We'll help you."

They would come to my dad and they would say, "We're getting a lot of men coming through Camp Reynolds in the next few months and with that comes an increase in prostitution and venereal disease. Would you help us?" Then my dad would say, "Sure. We'll stir up the girls and keep them moving." They would move to Akron. You've got to drive a little farther. That's what happened. He would clean them out of Youngstown and they would go down along the river. Fellows would just drive down there on leave or on weekends. Camp Reynolds was located near so many cities and towns where these girls could go, it was just like having sixteen holes in a dike leaking water and you're trying to plug them up. You plug up one and the other one would . . .

They would try to get them to pass through Camp Reynolds as fast as possible. It was within the Army itself. A load of fellows going from Camp Reynolds to someplace else would get there and a certain percentage would turn up on sick call. Then they sent the report in from Camp Reynolds and then Camp Reynolds would get the pressure. It was funny to watch that work. They were all young kids and they were away from home for the first time. I know I processed a lot of them when I was in. They would come through and if they had a case of syphilis or something, it would go into their book. There would be a pink tag in there. We would pull all of those out and they would end up in the hospital. We wouldn't send them out. We wouldn't want to send them out to mechanic school either or something because if you send them you infect everybody. That's what they thought at that time. They couldn't control it like they do now. It got to be a problem. Ship them overseas and let them infect the Germans then we'll win the war. That was funny. Camp Reynolds was a pretty big place.

B: Where was that located?

E: On the other side of Sharon. We always had camp followers and gals that would move in. It helped the war effort. (Laughter)

B: In their way.

E: Yes. Well, I have this Colliers Magazine, the article in the Colliers Magazine that they wrote on my dad.

B: Okay. Thank you.