

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Rayen School Project

O. H. 327

EMIL RENNER

Interviewed

by

Mark Connelly

on

November 22, 1974

December 19, 1974

EMIL RENNER

Mr. Emil Renner was born in 1883 in Wooster, Ohio. When he was six years old his family moved to Youngstown, Ohio. His father was a brewer and owner of one of the two breweries in Youngstown.

Mr. Renner attended Rayen High School and spent two years at Cornell after which he went into business with his father.

He resides at 43 Gypsy Lane with his son, Robert.

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INTERVIEWEE: EMIL RENNER

INTERVIEWER: Mark Connelly

SUBJECT: Prohibition, Brewery Business, Stadium

DATE: November 22, 1974

C: This is an interview with Mr. Emil Renner for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program on the Rayen School. It is being done by Mark Connelly at Mr. Robert Renner's residence, 43 Gypsy Lane. The date is November 22, 1974, Friday, and it is approximately 11:00 a.m.

Mr. Renner, would you please talk a little bit about your family background?

R: Okay. I was born in Wooster, Ohio, in 1883. When I was about six years old, we moved to Youngstown, Ohio. My father was a brewer and he bought the brewery here on Pike Street.

When I was seven years old, my mother and Katie Hetrick took me to Uncle Tom's cabin. We walked over the little bridge there. It wasn't the Market Street Bridge. It was a little bridge over the river. Then we walked over the Pennsylvania tracks and the B&O tracks. We got back about 11:15 p.m. It was always our custom to drink a little beer in the evening. We got a little wine, a little beer. We got a taste of everything.

It seems that people drink at home. They do not drink to excess. My mother told me to go in and ask Mr. Richards for a pitcher of beer and I did. Mr. Richards went to go into the cellars and there was a terrific explosion and it took his head off right at the neck, knocked me against the ice machines, and blew the head to the boiler across the river. It laid on the south bank for fifteen years before it disintegrated.

Father just built mother a new home there. It was a small town in those days. Men from all over the city came over and they laid three garden hoses on with the house. My mother was not afraid of the fire or afraid of anything. She tried to save everything she could save. She gave the silverware, all of the light stuff, linens, and so on to people whom she didn't know, the men, and in three weeks, everything was back and mother never lost a spoon. The house did catch on fire. They called mother and she came out and said, "Oh, you men can do that. I'm not afraid of fire. Put that out."

The house was right alongside of the brewery and the brewery burned down to the ground. Father was broke. He had eighteen thousand dollars insurance and to show you what would happen in those days, Mr. Henry Garlick, who was president of the First National Bank, called up father and father went over. He asked, "How are you fixed?" He said, "I need seventy thousand dollars. I got eighteen thousand dollars's insurance." Mr. Garlick said, "Sign this note." He gave father thirty five thousand dollars. Father said, "I have no security." He said, "That's all right. You look like a strong fellow, like you'll make it."

He lent father thirty five thousand dollars without any security. Also, Louis Aaron from Pittsburgh, came up and he lent father thirty-five thousand dollars. So that built the new brewery.

In those days, you know, everybody had consideration for everybody else. Everyone would help, all of these men. This happened at 11:30 at night, around then, and they all came from all over town. And Youngstown was a small town. Everybody was out to help.

- C: How long did it take your dad to get his business back in operation after the fire?
- R: Oh, well, I would say that was about a year.
- C: How long did it take before he got over the damages of the fire?
- R: You mean when it was paid off?
- C: Right.
- R: He paid off all of his money in three or four years; he paid his debt.

C: Did he sell just to the Youngstown area?

R: Just in the Youngstown area at that time, yes. And, you know, in those days there was no violence, no violence at all. I remember, of course, when I was older, we had a collector, Mr. Fred Gurgia--gees, that was in the horse and buggy days--he carried a satchel and he put the money in the satchel. He also carried a gun and he put the gun in with the money. (Laughter) So, he never had to use the gun. He could go to the bank. You parked three or four hundred feet from the bank and walked in with a bundle of money and no one would bother you then.

C: When did you notice the change? When did you notice that you started needing protection?

R: Well, violence began after the First World War, and after prohibition. That was in 1919. That's when violence began. We had actually no violence in Youngstown before that.

C: What started happening after 1919?

R: After that, it increased and increased. Now, in the olden days, you could go to any part of the city and be well received. Not like today, today you might go to some parts of the city and be relieved instead it was the . . . so, things have changed. There was no violence at all in those days.

C: I went to St. Joseph School on the corner of Rayen and Phelps Street and I lived on Pike Street. We walked over. We had about thirty boys on that street. We would walk to school in the morning, come home at noon, go back after lunch, no busses to carry you, nothing, everybody walked.

Now, those were in the horse and buggy days, when no one was in a hurry, but everybody got there on time. Businessmen, they all had made their appointments. The school children were all on time. We never played hooky and we just enjoyed going to school.

After you were graduated from the elementary school, you could go to high school. There was only one high school. That was Rayen. You weren't compelled to go. You didn't have to go, but if you wanted to go, you could go. You see, in the olden days, an education was not as important as it is today for the simple reason that nearly all of us figured on following in the foot steps of our fathers and going into their business. The only people and the only fellows that were interested

in an education were men that wanted to be professionals, lawyers, engineers, or doctors. Of course, they had to have an education.

C: Was that why you went to the Rayen School?

R: No. I just went to Rayen School because I liked it. And you couldn't play hooky. If you played hooky, you were expelled and you couldn't come back.

C: What had you heard of the Rayen School before you had entered it to make you want to go there?

R: Oh, well, there wasn't many that went to Rayen. I really don't know, but I just went to Rayen. I think they only had nine teachers there at the time. Mr. Jewett, who was of French extraction, was the principal. There were eight of nine other teachers, that's all.

Now, you take the lessons. We never played hooky and when the circus would come to town, take the Wallace+ Hagenback circus or the Sauls Brothers or P.T. Barnum's, the parade would go north on Wick Avenue, and then turn on Madison, then go out to the fairgrounds. And the principal would excuse us until the parade was over. We would all go out and sit in the front and watch the parade.

C: How old were you when you started at the Rayen School?

R: Sixteen years old. You see, we didn't get in to Rayen as early as the boys do now. We couldn't play football during the freshman or the sophomore year, so you were eighteen years old before you played your first football game or baseball game. So you were almost fully grown. We had a wonderful team. We didn't play an high school teams. We played prep schools and small universities, and the Youngstown team would beat them every year. We beat Westminster College; we beat them. We would play University School in Cleveland, Shadyside Academy in Pittsburgh, and prep schools.

C: Did you use to travel to these schools to play them or did they always come here?

R: Oh no, we traveled, yes. When we played at Salzburg, that was where Thissy was, we would go down to Pittsburgh on Thursday night. We would spend Friday there and Friday evening and we would go over to Salzburg Saturday morning and play a football game.

- C: Who would pay for all this, the expenses?
- R: Why, the Rayen School.
- C: Did they pay for the equipment the players wore?
- R: Why sure, yes, we didn't buy anything. Our first uniforms looked like Joesph's coat, all different colors, you know. And then later on, we got the orange and black. But, at first, we had almost any color.
- C: Did many students or faculty follow the team around?
- R: Oh, my goodness, yes. Professor Jewett would walk in the mud. He was the principal. Why, he would walk in the mud and just root for the team all the time. Oh, he was wonderful.
- C: Who was the coach?
- R: No coach, we had no coach. The best players would coach the other team. We would tell you what to do. We practiced in the Rayen School yard.
- C: Now, you were in school from what year to what year?
- R: I went in 1899, 1900, 1901, and 1902. I was graduated in 1902.
- C: Okay. So what other extra curricular activities during this period were there? What did you do while you were going to high school?
- R: Well, there wasn't much fun in those days. You take every Sunday--there was about thirty boys of Pike Street--we all walked through Mill Creek Park every Sunday. We had a good baseball team. We never destroyed any property. We never stole anything. We never bothered any girls and we had as tough a gang as there was in the city. We could take care of ourselves, but we never got into trouble.
- C: Well, was there ever any conflict between Pike Street and say another street?
- R: Oh yes. We would have a scrape with different gangs. We had a swimming hole there; we would always defend that. No one could take that away from us.
- C: Who were some of your friends in this Pike Street group?

R: Tellys, Gillespies, Brennans, Flints, and Jimmy Deibel.

I'll tell you a good story about him. When I first went to the brewery, he came in one day. His mother had him dressed like Little Lord Fauntleroy-- in a plush suit. It was July and hot. Oh, he had the most beautiful curls you ever saw and I said, "Jimmy, you look hot." He said, "I am hot." I said, "Do you want your hair cut?" He said, "Will you cut it?" I said, "Sure." We had fifty head of horses then, and I took him over to the barn.

I said, "Now, I want you to save all the curls." I went back to the plant to get a newspaper to save the curls. So, we clipped one here and one there and one there. Oh gee whiz, he was a blond and after we got him all clipped, there was white spots there and he looked terrible. I said, "Jimmy, that isn't very good. How about clipping your head?" He said, "Will you clip?" I said, "Sure, go on and take it. Now, you take these curls home to your mother because I saved these curls."

They lived on the west end of Pike Street and whenever I went to town, that's the way I went. After this, I went the other way, I went the east way. Well, Mrs. Deibel was in the office within fifteen minutes and I saw her come. I got down under the desk and near the wastebasket. She asked Miss Haas, "Where is he?" She said, "Who?" She said, "Young Renner." "I'll tell you, he's around here some place." She said, "Well, wait until I catch him. See what he did to my boy?" Miss Hass said, "No." She said, "Well, wait until I catch him. I'm going to slap him all over the street."

Well, Mrs. Deibel didn't catch me until six weeks later in front of McKelvey's. She came up and grabbed me by the neck collar, and I said, "Now, wait a minute, wait a minute, I saved the curls." And I felt her hand loose and I knew I had her. (Laughter) So, she just looked at me and didn't hit me, just turned around and walked away and never said a word. After that, Jimmy just had a little tuff of hair right in the middle of his head. (Laughter)

C: What other streets had gangs?

R: Well, Front Street had a gang. They had a pretty tough gang.

C: Who was in this gang? Can you name any of the members?

R: I don't remember their names.

C: What ethnic group were they?

R: I don't know. You see, in those days, everybody worked in the mills, nearly. Now, take on Pike Street, there were Irish, Germans, and Welsh. They all worked in the mills and they all chewed tobacco. All of the kids chewed tobacco.

I chewed tobacco when I was nine years old. One day Mom was sewing a pair of pants of mine, patching them, and she found some tobacco and she said, "Hey, come here. What's this?" And I said, "That's tobacco." She said, "What are you doing with it?" I said, "I'm carrying it for some kid that isn't allowed to carry it." She took me upstairs, ripped my pants off, and I'm telling you, my bottom was blessed for two weeks. That's the kind of a spanking that I got and she looked at me and she said, "Listen, that's for lying." I never quit chewing, but I did quit lying then.

C: How many of the Pike Street gang went to the Rayen School?

R: I think only two or three. After you graduated from elementary school, you didn't go to high school. They didn't have to go because they would go into business then. They would follow in their father's footsteps or work for their fathers and so on. There were only a couple from Pike Street out of thirty boys that went to Rayen.

C: Now, when you went to Rayen, did you work in your father's brewery?

R: Oh no, not when I went to Rayen. I didn't work there until 1905.

C: So when you went to school, you just went to school?

R: Yes, that's right.

C: What was your first impression of the school, when you walked in, the first day, when you were a freshman, if you can remember back to that first day? Can you recall what impressed you most about it?

R: Well, it looked very large, of course, but it wasn't because it was so much larger than the elementary school. Of course, you didn't know anybody. But you

got acquainted very quickly and after that, it was easy.

C: So you made friends very quickly?

R: Oh yes, sure. You made friends very quickly and, as I said, there was no violence in those days. Nobody played hooky and you didn't try to cheat anybody or anything. Everybody worked for everybody else. Everybody helped everybody in those days. It was different than it is today. Now, I know that.

C: Once you started school there, did you find yourself going around more with the students from Rayen than you went around with your Pike Street buddies?

R: No, oh no. I just went to Rayen and played football and baseball. But I went with my own gang. The only time we would be together was when we were practicing football or on a trip to play football, or after school sometimes.

C: So, the student body at Rayen really wasn't that tight knit of a group?

R: Oh no. They were from all over the city, but there weren't many there, you know. When school was out, you went home. When you were done practicing football or baseball, you went home. And then you played with your own gang.

C: About how many students were in your class?

R: Oh, I wouldn't know that. I would say there was a couple hundred students altogether because there was about nine teachers, I think, that's all.

C: What teachers impressed you the most, that you thought of the most?

R: Well, Mrs. Peterson. She taught mathematics. She was very good. Miss Pyle was wonderful. Fraulein Kerber, she taught German. I was a good German student because everyone around the brewery speaks German. Fraulein Kerber and I got along fine.

C: Did she ever visit your dad's brewery?

R: Who?

C: Fraulein Kerber.

R: No, I don't think so. No, I don't think anybody ever did. No, not anybody.

Let's see. There was Miss Baldwin, Miss Brice, Miss Hall, and Mrs. Johnson. I think there were nine teachers altogether.

C: Was German your favorite class? What did you enjoy?

R: No. German class was a very small class. There weren't many students in that class. I liked mathematics and I liked English. I liked German because I was a good German student because as I told you the inside workers of the brewery were always German. I wasn't any good at this manual training. I never made a dovetail joint or a spindle or anything like that. I could make a lot of shavings with a plane, that's all. I put the shavings down and I chewed tobacco and the professor chewed tobacco and he came up and spit in my shavings. He made all my dovetail joints and spindles and stuff. I couldn't make them because he spit in my shavings.
(Laughter)

C: Was every boy required to take manual training?

R: Oh no, you didn't have to take that. You had to take four subjects. You had to take mathematics, English, and ~~a language~~-I never took Latin. I took German and history. You had to take four subjects. You could take the manual training, but you weren't compelled to.

C: About how many hours a day would you say you put in studying while you were going to high school, if you can recall?

R: Well, let's see. We got over there, I don't know whether it was eight thirty or nine o'clock and we got out around noon and back again at one thirty until about three, three thirty.

C: Did you go home for lunch?

R: Yes, everyday. I walked. As I said before, everybody was on time.

C: How long did they give you to go back and forth?

R: An hour and a half. We were on the other side of the city, other side of the river when I went to elementary school and when I went to Rayen. I walked to school, walked back at noon, walked back after lunch, and walked back at night. There were no busses in those days, no one to carry you around, but

everybody was on time. That was an unwritten law then.

C: Did many students who went to the Rayen School, did their parents have carriages?

R: Some, yes.

C: Would you say the majority of the students?

R: No.

C: For example, did your parents have a carriage?

R: Yes, they had a carriage. They would take my sisters, but not me. I didn't go in a carriage; I walked.

C: Would you say that most of the students at the Rayen School, when you were there, were from families that had a fair amount of money?

R: Yes, that's right, yes.

C: For example, you don't think there were many students there whose parents worked in the steel mills?

R: No. There weren't. There were some there, but we didn't get in there early, as I said before. We got in there when we were sixteen years old. We were almost fully grown, so a lot of the boys went out and got positions.

C: What type of grades did you make in high school?

R: Just fair. I wasn't what you call a good student, but I made fair grades. I just passed, but I wasn't a brilliant fellow.

C: But you studied and worked hard while you were at school?

R: No. You see, an education wasn't so important before the turn of the century.

C: So, would most of the students at the Rayen School, during this time, have the same attitude?

R: Absolutely, except the ones that wanted to be doctors and lawyers or engineers. Those fellows had to study.

C: What about the teachers? Did they accept this attitude?

R: Oh sure. The teachers were fine; they were wonderful.

- C: How would you say your relationship was with the teachers? Was it a friendly one or a reserved relationship?
- R: Oh friendly, very friendly. They all wanted to help you and work with you and stuff like that. There wasn't anyone there that you could say was mean or had a temper or anything like that. We all got along fine.
- C: What about discipline? Was there any need for discipline that you knew of?
- R: Well, sure. In other words, you didn't do anything in those days. You didn't raise hell or anything like that. You didn't do anything like that. Because if you did, they'd throw you out. See, you couldn't even play hooky. If you played hooky, they would expel you and you couldn't come back. You didn't have to go to Rayen, see?
- C: Were many students that you knew of thrown out of school?
- R: No. You went there and we didn't play hooky.
- C: What about students dropping out for various reasons?
- R: No.
- C: Most of the ones that started school there finished?
- R: Most of them that started finished, yes.
- C: What were the topics of conversation as you recall that went around the school? What did you usually talk about between classes or right after school?
- R: Well, after school all we would do is talk about athletics. We had no coach, and the best players would tell the other fellows what to do and so on and we would work together like that.
- C: That's just like today's fellows.
- R: Yes.
- C: Now, obviously, you were going to school during a pretty important time in American history, in the turn of the century. Would you like to share your views with certain national figures of that time? For example, what was your opinion of Theodore Roosevelt?
- R: Well, we thought he was a great man. Down in wherever he was, he took Cuba. We weren't in politics, then, you know, but we liked Theodore Roosevelt.

William Jennings Bryan came there. I think that was in 1902, though. That's when we had automobiles. He ran for the Democratic presidency but he lost. We didn't monkey much with politics, not until later.

C: What about when McKinley was assassinated, was school called off that day? Do you recall that day he was assassinated?

R: He was from Niles and he was assassinated at a fair or fairgrounds. What was it, Chicago, was it? I don't know.

C: But you don't recall that day?

R: No.

C: What was your favorite year at the Rayen School, which year, first year, last year, or the middle two years? Which year stuck out the most?

R: Last one.

C: Why?

R: Well, we didn't have to do much that year. (Laughter)

C: What didn't you have to do that you usually had to do?

R: Well, let's see. Your studies weren't as important in your senior year. Maybe they just wanted to get rid of us, I don't know. (Laughter)

C: Can you recall your graduation? The day you graduated?

R: Just vaguely.

C: As you look back on your years at the Rayen School, what sticks out the most in your mind? What immediately comes to your mind when you think of the school?

R: I don't like to talk about this. See, my nickname is "Spitz". In high school, we made toothpicks about three inches long out of metal; they're very resilient. Everyone of us carried a pocketful of BB shots. You put a shot between your teeth, took this toothpick, and you would be surprised how proficient you came in shooting and how accurately you could shoot the girls in the back of the neck with the bows and so on.

This pile was sitting on a desk one day and all of the football players and baseball players were sitting in the back. She said, "Renner, come up here." I went up. She said, "Sit down." I said, "What's the

matter?" She said, "Sit down." I said, "Yes, but why?" She said, "Will you sit down?" I said, "Certainly, I will, but there ought to be a reason why you brought me up here." She said, "You sit down." I sat down. Well, then the fellows started to shoot at me, see, with those BB shots. And they hit me.

Finally, she was looking the other way into Mr. Jewett's office. It was the custom of each class to give a picture to the Rayen School, the picture about two and a half feet high and about seven long or six long, something like that. There was one in front of me and I took a handful of shots and I hit that and all of a sudden, I said, "That's it." All those shots came down and took my foot off and I went back there and I started to rough up the gang.

Miss Powell went down and she said, "Who was it?" I said, "There." Mr. Jewett came up and he expelled them all. I told him who they were.

I was very remorseful after I came back from lunch, so I finally went in to Mr. Jewett and he said, "Renner, what do you want?" I said, "Well, now, I want to talk to you about that stuff that happened this morning." He said, "Oh, terrible." I said, "You punished the wrong fellows." He said, "Who did it?" I said, "I did it." He said, "You did all of them?" I said, "I did all of them." He said, "You're expelled." I said, "Okay." He said, "You can't come back until your father comes back and signs up for you." My father was a retiring man. It took him three days to go back and vouch for me.

Miss Strauss, that's of the old Strauss and Hirschberg Company, Helen Strauss, called me "Spitzburg." She was in a German class. "Spitz" in that means "troublemaker." Bob Harmon said, "We'll call him Spitz." And that name stuck to me. (Laughter)

C: What did your dad say about that, when you came home and told him?

R: Well, he didn't give me a licking, but, oh boy, was he mad at me. In those days, the parents spanked you. If you got a licking in school, they would give you a licking when you got home, too. They would give you two lickings because they were for that. It's not like today. Today, I think those kids run the families. In some of them, they don't get punished.

- C: If you could change anything about your high school, what would be the one thing you would have changed when you were going there? What one thing would you have wanted to change about the high school if you had the power to do it?
- R: Nothing, not a thing.
- C: It was what you considered the perfect high school?
- R: Yes. I say it was fine. We were all pleased. We didn't play hooky and never had any trouble.
- C: Have you kept up with the Rayen School?
- R: Oh no. I was down there about a week ago. That's the first time I was there in seventy-two years.
- C: You sent all your children there, right?
- R: Yes, all but I think Art. All the boys went there. All of my sisters went to Rayen. My sons all went to Rayen and then they moved up here to Rayen up on the north side.
- C: Why did you keep sending them to Rayen? Why did you want to send your kids to Rayen?
- R: Well, because that's the only high school here. Later on there was one on the south side and one on the north side, so all of my children went to the north side. There was great rivalry between the south and the north at that time in football.
- C: This is a good question. You're a Catholic, true?
- R: Yes. That's right.
- C: Okay. How come you didn't send your children to Ursuline High School?
- R: There wasn't any St. Ursula.
- C: There wasn't any Ursuline High School for your children?
- R: Oh no. And another thing, they had the north high schools, but they had academies and different places, the Catholic schools. Well, I wanted my sons to go to school with everybody in Youngstown, so they would know the people. In other words, if they went to school some place else, they didn't know the young people in the town.
- C: Would you say that the Rayen High School now is the

same as the Rayen School you went to? Would you consider them to be the same?

R: Oh no. They're all different.

C: In what way do you see them as different?

R: Well, kids play hooky. Of course, I don't like talking about that.

C: What did you do once you graduated?

R: Well, I graduated in 1902 and then I went to Cornell University for two years. I came back and went into business with father. As I said, I wasn't a very good student.

C: What did you study at Cornell?

R: Nothing.

C: What were you supposed to study?

R: Let me see . . . I think a straight course, the academic course. As I said, I was a poor student and I only went there to play football and baseball.

C: So that took up just about all your time?

R: No. I had a lot of time. I had a fraternity; I joined the ATO, Alpha Tau Omega Fraternity, so I had some good friends there.

Then I came back and went into business with my father.

C: Would you like to talk a little bit about the business?

R: Well, I started out by visiting all taverns. I never drank much. I carried a hand carved ivory froth. I went to each tavern and said, "All right, come on fellows, come on and have a bottle of Renner's beer with me." I put this ivory froth on the bar. Now, if I hadn't done that at least two or three of these people would have said, "Don't you drink your own profit?" So I didn't drink much, see? But I would visit the taverns. Later on, I branched out, went all through Ohio, up to Ashtabula and so on. I did the outside work for the company.

C: Such as . . .

R: Yes.

C: What was some of the outside work you did?

- R: I go from place to place. I open up a spot, ride it up to Ashtabula, and go to the taverns. I'd try to sell them beer, and I would sell them beer. There was the Italian Club up there. I had to go up there once a year when they had their annual meeting. I had to be there. I'd be there all night. I was the only one, the only brewer. I got their business. And I have this card trick. It is the finest card trick ever invented. I've only taught six or seven fellows the trick and I had to go up and do that.
- C: Did it help you sell beer?
- R: You bet it did, yes.
- C: What other breweries were in town at the same time?
- R: Schmidt's Brewing Company. That was the only one. Then later there was the brewery that opened up on just a small place, they call it the Youngstown Brewery. They didn't last very long.
- C: About how many people did you employ at your brewery?
- R: A little over a hundred. About a hundred, I'd say, including drivers inside the funnel house and so on.
- C: How did you make your deliveries? How did your dad make his deliveries before the automobile, before the truck?
- R: Why, horses and wagon. We had fifty head of horses and a wagon. You put the beer on the wagon in halves and barrels and so on and delivered them. That was before the time of the automobile.
- C: Where did you keep the horses?
- R: In the barn.
- C: How many acres of land did you have besides the brewery?
- R: No acres of land, just in the barn, that's all. All these were big horses. They all weighed from fourteen to eighteen hundred pounds because they weren't in a hurry, they were great big horses, just like you see on the Anheuser Busch commercials.
- C: About how much did they cost a piece, a head?
- R: Two hundred dollars, two fifty. I used to buy the horses and go out and sit on the farm fence with them.

- C: How long did they usually work the horses?
- R: For years. My brother was kicked by a horse and killed when I was just a little kid, seven years old or a little less than that. He and I were playing in the back of the house when a fellow had his two horses there and they kicked up and hit my brother in the head and he died. They wanted father to shoot the horse and father said, "Why? That isn't the horse's fault. He didn't know what he was doing." That horse lived for fifteen years; he was a gray horse. He pulled a wagon for fifteen years. Why should we just shoot him because he didn't know what he was doing?
- C: How many brothers and sisters did you have?
- R: I just had one brother and five sisters.
- C: When did they start switching over from horses to trucks to deliver?
- R: That would be about 1904 or 1905.
- C: And how many trucks did you have?
- R: The truck could do more business than the horses because they could travel faster and they could carry more. I'd say we had about five trucks, big trucks.
- C: Did you still keep the horses?
- R: You see, when the people that bought the Isaly Dairy, the Isaly's, came to town, they bought their first two teams of horses from me and the harness and the wagon. That was before the days of the trucks.
- C: What year did you really take over running the brewery?
- R: For years I did outside work and when my father retired. I became president of the company. When that was, I just don't know.
- C: Do you want to talk a little bit about Prohibition, what your view of Prohibition was?
- R: I think it was wrong because that was when the violence started because they would sell beer and whiskey and stuff under the table. That's when all the violence started. Take for instance when we closed, two or three times people came over and wanted to run the plant. We said, "No, we are closed."

C: These people, did they have any other business?

R: Sure, I don't like to mention their names, Al Capone. I don't like to mention it. I don't want to mention it.

C: He came personally?

R: No. He wanted to run the place. He wanted us to run the place. I'll tell you the story. A fellow came to my factory after we closed the plant. He called up my wife. He said, "Is Mr. Renner there?" She said, "Yes." He said, "Is his name Spitz?" She says, "It's Spitz." I went to the phone and he said, "Hello, Mr. Renner?" "Yes." "Is this Spitz?" I said, "Yes, this is Spitz." "Well, " he said, "I have no name." I said, "This is very interesting. Who are you?" He said, "I have no name. I'm down at the Ohio Hotel and I'd like to talk to you." I said, "Okay, I'll come down. Will I page you or will you page me?" He said, "I told you I have no name. I'm a little fellow. I have a fur coat, fur collar on my coat, and a derby hat."

I went down and looked around and I walked over and said, "Hello, Derby Hat. How are you?" He said, "Hello, Spitz. You got a car?" I said, "No." He said, "Where can we talk?" I said, "I'll get a room." He said, "Oh no, no room." I said, "This is getting more interesting every minute." So he said, "You got a car?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Let's take a ride." I said, "Okay."

We went out and got in the car, drove out to Mill Creek Park. I said, "Okay. It's your turn to talk. What do you want?" He said, "I want you to run the brewery. And I want twenty five hundred dollars cash every week. You have to do what I tell you." I said, "Well, who are you?" He said, "I'm from the government." I said, "Well, you'll have to prove that for me." He said, "Okay, every time you get a wire from me, exactly twenty four hours later, the flying squadron will be at your brewery and they will inspect the plant."

We made an appointment for ten days and at the end of ten days, two or three times he'd wire me and in twenty four hours the flying squadron would be over there, and they said, "Mr. Renner, we want to inspect the brewery." I said, "Go right ahead." They'd walk in one door and come right out the same way and say, "Everything is fine."

In ten days, the Derby Hat came back. I said, "You proved that you were from the government." When I told my father, he said, "You can't run that brewery. None of us were ever in jail and none of us are going to jail and you can't run the brewery." Well, I said, "Now, let me look into this a little further." He said, "No." I said, "Well, I'm going to look into it." He said, "All right, but you can't run it."

I went to Mr. Red Moore, who is a wonderful attorney here in town. I told him about it, that the fellow was from the government and so on. I had him set out and get into the protection of the government. Then I had to get state protection and local protection. When Mr. Moore looked up the state protection, he said, "No, those fellows will take money and if the plant gets hot, they'll take it in. I don't think I'd do that."

Anyhow, Derby Hat came back again, had a government car and what not. I said, "No, can't do it." He said, "I was here. The inspectors of the state will turn you in." I said, "They turned in Lionel Rollover in New Castle and he shot himself. They turned in Wheedleman down in Cincinatti and the father died of a broken heart. Here's two hundred dollars for your time." He said, "You don't owe me five cents for this." I said, "Okay. Who sent you?" He said, "The Pennsylvania brewers, your friends in Pennsylvania. You'll be out of business." I didn't want him to say that. Why should I say that? I just wanted to tell you that, sir, but that's a true story.

Prohibition started in 1918 and the amendment was repealed in 1933. We opened our brewery then. In the olden days, no one came into the city to sell us, to sell beer. But after Prohibition, everybody came in.

We made our beer out of the water, the Meander water, which cost us a lot of money. The big fellows came in and undersold our own markets and we had to close. In 1933, 852 breweries reopened in the United States. Today there are only about fifty. The big fellow ate up the little fellow. He just couldn't carry on. In other words, when they come in and undersell you on your own market, you can't compete, that's all.

C: That's interesting. What did you do in between the time Prohibition started and ended?

R: We had real estate and I'd collect the rents and stuff like that.

C: Did you always expect to reopen the brewery?

R: We didn't know. See, it wasn't until 1933, when the eighteenth amendment was repealed by Roosevelt. You know, I enjoy talking about the days before the turn of the century. They bring back fond recollections and happy memories. The olden days, I really enjoyed them.

C: Anything else you want to talk about or do you feel you've said all you wanted to say?

R: That's about all.

C: Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Renner.

C: This is interview number two with Mr. Emil Renner for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program on the Rayen School. It's being done at Mr. Robert Renner's residence at 43 Gypsy Lane. The date is December 19, 1974. It's approximately 1:00 p.m.

Mr. Renner, you said you were involved in the financing of the Rayen stadium?

R: I'd like to preface my remarks now by singing a song that I wrote many, many years ago. It's a true history of Youngstown. And it indirectly involves all of the high schools because as Youngstown grew, and the different sections grew, a high school was built in each section. Today, I think, there are eight high schools including Ursuline and Mooney. Now, I'll go to the song.

Many year ago
 Here in Ohio
 Near the Pennsylvania line
 Was a soft coal mine.
 Like the top seed, we know
 It began to grow
 Right into a town
 Known the whole world round.
 They call it Youngstown,
 Ohio.
 I call it Youngstown,
 My home town.
 It's known as Youngstown,
 Ohio.

And as Youngstown grew,
 Many times its size
 Rolling mills began to blow
 Smoking our blue skies.
 We seldom saw a day
 That is not a joke
 Smog really made hay
 We love soot and smoke.
 That's why it's Youngstown,
 Ohio.
 We call it Youngstown,
 My home town.
 It's know as Youngstown,
 Ohio.

You meet nice folks here
 As you gab and roam
 Folks that came from every land
 Calling Youngstown home.
 And when you learned to live

And when you learned to care
You wouldn't trade Youngstown
For a town elsewhere.
That's why it's Youngstown,
Ohio.
I call it Youngstown,
My home town.
It's known as Youngstown,
Ohio.

Now, let's get back to Rayen and South. That's when the rivalry began. Now, I think this, I don't know. You see, I remember before the Market Street Bridge was built, the city limits were only one street above Falls Avenue, at the turn of Market Street. The south side grew rapidly and finally, the South Side High School structure was built, a beautiful school. They built a football field, and a track.

I think they had the first football field. I don't think we had a football field because when Rayen moved to Ohio and Benita, they didn't have a football field. So Lucius McKelvey, Earnie Swartzwelder, and I borrowed thirty thousand dollars from the First National Bank and we had the Rayen Stadium football field and track built.

The field was eighteen inches of sand, gravel, ash, sand, gravel, ash, and the top was two and a half feet of the finest black soil we could find. The seating capacity was about thirteen thousand people. Now, that's when the rivalry began. The rivalry would be between Rayen High School and South High School. It would make the Ohio State-Michigan rivalry look like a kindergarten rivalry. That's absolutely true. You couldn't imagine it. We always played on Thanksgiving Day and on the north side, the men and women, they carried and wore yellow chrysanthemums, hat bands, and noise makers. The South rooters wore bright red flowers and noise makers because their colors were bright red. That's when the rivalry began. And it was always a pleasant rivalry, no violence at all.

When the team would lose, which ever team would lose, there would be a shadow over either the north or the south for two or three days until they worked out of it and said, "Well, we'll take them next year."

- C: On the buying of the stadium, now, I remember at the end of our conversation last time, you said that you were really not involved after you graduated with Rayen that much, right?

R: Only this, yes. But we built the stadium, and then, Lucius and I were awful interested in the high school team. One year, we had them dressed like old time undertakers with black hats, black helmets, black shirts, black pants, black stockings with an orange band, and boy, they looked terrible.

C: So it was your interest in the football team that made you buy that stadium?

R: Yes. After we built the stadium, sure, we stayed on and were interested in the football team. But nothing else from the Rayen.

Now, I want to tell you about the crowds, how they grew. The crowds grew until we had, one year, twenty thousand people at Rayen.

C: Do you remember when that was?

R: I don't remember, but that was the last game because we had the seating people from over at New Castle build temporary seats on both sides so we had twenty thousand people there.

C: Was this in the 1930's?

R: I don't remember that. Then when the high schools came in, that gradually cut out because they were permitted to play at South or Rayen on Thanksgiving Day and that's when the whole thing fell apart.

C: Well, if you bought the stadium, you and Mr. Swartwater and Mr. McKelvey, how come you didn't have a say so in who used the field?

R: Well, I'll tell you. You see, we wanted them to pay to take the note off of our hands. And they wouldn't do it.

C: Who wouldn't, the Board of Education?

R: No, the Rayen Board. We borrowed this thirty thousand dollars from the bank, built the stadium, and then we wanted the Rayen trustees to take the note. But they wouldn't pick up the note, they were making a lot of money on the football games. So Lucius McKelvey said, "Listen, if you don't pick up that note, we are going to hold prize fights there until it's paid off." And they immediately picked up the note.

C: How did the rest of the teams get to use the stadium? What permitted them to use the stadium?

R: Well, as the high schools were built, Rayen and South

didn't dominate Thanksgiving Day. So other high schools played here, played at South, and so on. Finally, until now, there's no interest anymore, not as much as there was. I don't think now they have over four thousand people at a game, do they? I don't know.

C: Well, were you angry about other teams using the stadium? If Rayen wasn't even playing, for example, say East . . .

R: Well, we had no say about that. That was the Board of Education.

C: What was your feelings about it?

R: Well, we didn't like it because it spoiled the rivalry between Rayen and South.

C: Did you have any say so in the construction of the stadium? For example, did you three pick the construction company?

R: Yes. We told them what we wanted.

C: What year was the construction?

R: I can't answer that.

C: And it cost thirty thousand dollars to build the stadium?

R: Yes.

C: Do you know what construction company did it?

R: I don't remember that either. No, but you see, as these other high schools came in, that spoiled the Thanksgiving Day rivalry between Rayen and South because they had the provision of playing Rayen or South and all of the different high schools. So gradually, gradually, gradually, it fell away.

C: When was the last time you were at the Rayen stadium? Do you recall?

R: I haven't been there for many, many years. I can't answer that because I don't know. I lost interest. You can't imagine the rivalry between Rayen and South. Then afterwards, everything just died. With so many high schools in town, I know they don't have the attendance that they had years ago. I know that. One year, we had twenty thousand people at Rayen.

C: Do you actually think that you three would have held prize fights there?

- R: Why sure. We had to pay the note off. After all, they were making big money, but they wouldn't pay to take the note. So Lucius McKelvey, we were all interested in boxing and stuff like that, and he said, "If you don't pick up this note, we are going to hold prize fights until the stadium is paid off." They picked it up immediately.
- C: Were they paying you rent or anything for the stadium?
- R: No.
- C: No payment at all?
- R: No, no payment.
- C: And at that time, did you have a say so on what teams played there? At that time, did any other teams play at Rayen stadium besides Rayen?
- R: No, we had nothing to say about that. That's up to the Board of Education. You see, this was before the high schools came in and played. But when the high schools got there, then, they had the privilege of playing Rayen and South. Then Rayen and South wouldn't meet for, maybe, four or five years on Thanksgiving. The interest died.
- C: When was the last time you attended a Rayen-South game?
- R: I can't answer that.
- C: Do you remember who was playing in it?
- R: No. Well, Ima Newshaw and, I think, Bill Renner playing quarterback. Wally Bevin was the coach and South High had a wonderful coach, Dusty Ashbaw. I would compare him with Woody Hayes. That's the kind of a coach he was. He was from the north side. But oh, he was a wonderful coach and a wonderful fellow.
- C: Now, you chose the uniforms. Did you buy the uniforms, too?
- R: No, we didn't buy the uniforms. No, the band bought those.
- C: But you picked the colors.
- R: We picked the colors; that's it.

C: Did they allow you to do this?

R: Yes. We were interested. (Laughter) Mr. Miller was the principal up there then.

C: Do you remember who were some of the best players the first year the stadium was in use?

R: Hal Sebastian, Hyman Newshaw. I'm sorry, I can't remember those names because they were wonderful. I don't remember them, see?

C: Did you consider the stadium to be better than the South High stadium?

R: Yes because we seated more people there. South, I think, seated twelve thousand. One year we had to put in these temporary seats because we had twenty thousand people there.

C: How much did the price of a ticket go up?

R: Not much, I think the price of a ticket was only a dollar and a half for an adult, and fifty cents for a pupil.

C: Now, this was in the 1920's, around there?

R: I don't remember. You never saw such a rivalry in your life. No violence, in those days there was no violence; it was a friendly rivalry.

C: Was there violence anyplace else in the city at that time?

R: No, no violence in the city until after the First World War.

C: Was the stadium built before World War I?

R: Yes.

C: When you decided to build the stadium, did you go around looking at other ones to model it after?

R: No, no.

C: You just left it up to the construction company?

R: Yes, we left it up to the people who built it.

C: Did the Board of Education or the Rayen Board of Trustees make any suggestions on the stadium to you?

R: No.

C: They had nothing to do with it either?

R: Nothing to do with it. We built it, and then we wanted them to pay for it and they wouldn't pick up the bill.

C: What was their reasons for not picking up the note?

R: I don't know. But they were making money there because the attendance grew year after year. When we played at South, when we played at Rayen, the attendance every year grew and grew and grew until finally, it hit the twenty thousand mark. And then, when the other high schools came in, it died.

C: Did you get any part of the profit from the gate?

R: No, we didn't get any profit.

C: This is even before the school picked up the note?

R: Sure, we got no profit. We wanted them to pick up the note.

C: When you agreed to build the stadium, did you ask them if they would pick up the note?

R: No, I didn't think so because we figured they would pick it up.

C: But you never talked to the officials or anyone before that?

R: Oh, I think we spoke to them, but we didn't get anyplace..

C: Why did you go ahead and build it then, if there was still nothing definite?

R: Because we were interested in the football game, that's why, and they were interested in Rayen.

C: Did you think, at the time you built the stadium, that you might not ever see that money again?

R: No. We knew that they would pay us off. They had to do it because they were having such crowds and they made money.

- C: What reasons did they give for not picking it up?
- R: They didn't give any reason.
- C: They just said they wouldn't do it?
- R: That's the way they did it.
- C: That was the only thing you used is pressure, just the threat of the prize fights?
- R: That's right, yes.
- C: Why do you think this made them change?
- R: Because they didn't want prize fights there; people were against prize fights.
- C: Were they illegal?
- R: No, they weren't illegal at that time, but you know, they didn't want the prize fights in the school.
(Laughter) No, that was a funny situation.
- Wally, we got him from, I think, Toledo.
- C: You picked up Wally Bevins from Toledo?
- R: Wally Bevins from Toledo and we brought him here.
- C: Was he coaching a high school there or a college?
- R: He was coaching a high school. Wonderful coach . . .
- C: Do you know what salary you offered him?
- R: I think we paid him a little more than the Board of Education paid him.
- C: Who paid, the school or did you, Mr. Renner?
- R: No, the school paid him.
- C: Do you think the Board of Education knew about that extra money?
- R: No. (Laughter)
- C: Did you personally get involved in any coaching aspects of the game?
- R: No.

- C: How many coaches did they have at that time, just one?
- R: Just one, just Wally Bevins.
- C: About how many players came out for the team usually?
- R: I'd say about forty, thirty-five to forty.
- C: How many male students were there at Rayen at that time? Do you recall?
- R: I can't answer that.
- C: Would you say it was a good percentage of the male students?
- R: Yes. In the early days, you didn't have to go to high school. In my day, you didn't have to go. If you played hooky, they expelled you and you couldn't come back. But this is when they had to go to high school.
- C: Do you know how much it cost to equip a football player back then?
- R: No, I don't remember that. We bought them the best material we could find because we were interested in them. I'm sorry that I can't remember the names of the players because they were wonderful.
- C: When you would pick out the uniforms for the team, you picked them out on your own?
- R: Just that year?
- C: Just that year.
- R: The year that we dressed them up in black. (Laughter)
- C: And the school picked up the bill, no questions asked?
- R: Yes, they picked up the bill.
- C: After that, the school picked out the uniforms and everything?
- R: That was changed then.
- C: Was that sort of like the reward for building the stadium, you think, allowing you to pick out the uniforms?

- R: I don't know that. You ought to have seen that ball game.
- C: Was Mr. Miller a big football fan?
- R: Not especially. He wasn't as much as a football fan as Professor Jewett was down at old Rayen, but he was a nice man, a very nice principal.
- C: Who was the man that kept saying they wouldn't pick up the note? Which member of the Board of Trustees was heading it at that time?
- R: Well, I don't know that either. They finally picked up the note.
- C: When you paid the thirty thousand dollars, when you got the loan, the three of you, was that split evenly, ten thousand apiece?
- R: We just went on the note, the three of us.
- C: Was it considered a large loan at that time?
- R: Well, you know, it's a funny thing. The brewery blew up and burned to the ground, and father was broke. He only had eighteen thousand dollars insurance and Henry Garwick called him in. He was president of the First National Bank, and he said, "How much money do you need?" Father said, "I need thirty-five thousand dollars. I got thirty-five thousand dollars from a man in Pittsburgh and I need another thirty-five thousand." The guy wrote him out a check for thirty-five thousand and father said, "I have no security." He said, "I know, but you're a good, strong man." So he had no security. He just signed the note.
- C: What security did you have to put up for the loan, the one for the Rayen stadium?
- R: Not any.
- C: None of you three had to put up security?
- R: No, we didn't put up anything because we were all in business. Father got thirty-five thousand dollars from Mr. Lewis Ian with no security.
- C: Did you ask the school to pick up the note the year the stadium was built or was it a couple of years later?
- R: We wanted them to pick it up immediately.

- C: How long did it take between the time you asked them and the time they eventually . . . ?
- R: I'd say about three or four years.
- C: So, for three or four years, you three paid on the stadium, paid back on the loan?
- R: I don't remember that. I know it was at least three years before they picked up the note.
- C: So in between that time, how was the loan paid then?
- R: Just the interest. In those days, everybody trusted everybody; everybody gave consideration to everybody. And as I said, there was no violence. Violence started after the First World War. There were a few stick ups and stuff like that, but no one was shot or killed. Youngstown was a wonderful city. Today you're afraid to go out.
- C: How much violence did you notice during Prohibition? Was there a lot of violence in the city during Prohibition?
- R: After Prohibition.
- C: After Prohibition?
- R: Yes, as soon as Prohibition started, the violence started.
- C: Even more so than after World War I?
- R: That was about the same time. Prohibition came in about 1918 and 1919 and that is right at the end of the World War.
- C: Did you know anybody personally who was a victim of this violence during this time?
- R: Sure. Didn't I tell you about that flanker? The city limits were just up one street above Falls Avenue.
- C: What was on the other side of Falls Avenue before it was moved into the city limits? Was it forest or woods or what?
- R: Well, farms. This was a coal mine area in the early days, coal mines, and then the rolling mills came in, see?
- C: Can you remember the time before the mills were here or at least when they started to grow?
- R: When I was seven years old, I wouldn't remember that.

- But after that, I remember the Brown Bonnell Mill and I remember the Cobb Foundry, William Cobb Foundry, and the Moore and Reaper Works right across from my home, across the river, it burned down. Then Sheet & Tube was built, I think, in 1900 or 1901, down at Campbell, and Briar Hill. We had wonderful factories here.
- C: When you took over the brewery, did you continue to live in the house where you lived when you were young? Did you live in the house your father had?
- R: No. Father built his home in 1907 on Park Avenue and my home, too, and I lived there.
- C: Where was that on Park?
- R: Michigan.
- C: Park and Michigan?
- R: Park and Michigan. You've seen that house over there, haven't you? With the big pillars? That was father's home. We sold it to Patty Ross for twenty-four thousand dollars. He couldn't build it to pay for the half a million. (Laughter) That was in the early days.
- C: Did you associate much with the Wicks or the Todds?
- R: No.
- C: Did you ever meet them?
- R: I used to play billiards with Mr. Todd, Mr. William Todd.
- C: Could you talk a little bit about playing billiards down at the old Todd Hotel? That's where you used to play, wasn't it?
- R: Yes, the Todd Hotel and George Moore's billiard room, where the Federal Bank is now. That's where Mr. Todd and I used to play. He was a very good billiard player.
- C: Do you ever think of doing it more than you did, for example, going professional?
- R: Well, for fourteen years, I played in national and international tournaments. I never won. I was runner-up five times. We played in New York, Chicago, all over the country. Now, today, billiards is a lost art. I don't play it anymore.

C: You don't play anymore?

R: No. We used to have tournaments.

C: Who were some of the good players around here?

R: The best player here is Danny Rand. I taught him how to play three cushions and I tried to get him into the national tournament, but they wouldn't let him in.

C: Why?

R: I was after them for years to put Danny in.

C: Why wouldn't they let him in?

R: They wouldn't let him in. They finally wrote me a letter and said the only way we'll let him in is if you have a tournament in Youngstown at a club. Well, we didn't have any clubs here that would take on a tournament for a week. So, they just wouldn't let us in.

C: Who were some of the people you played that are prominent?

R: The two Applebee brothers in New York. I'll tell you a good story about that. Their father was a multimillionaire and he hired Cutler to teach his sons to play billiards. Al Cutler was a professional. He paid him two hundred and fifty dollars a month. Each year I would beat one of them, but the other fellow would beat me; I never won a tournament. I was runner-up, as I said, five times. Now, the profession finally died and after we quit playing, and my son was moved down to New York, I used to go down to New York to see him.

I went in to see Edgar Applebee and he said, "Will you have a drink?" And I said, "Sure." So he sent his secretary out to get the ice and ginger ale and stuff like that. He said, "Do you want to drink to Cutler?" I said, "Sure." He opened his desk and pulled out a beautiful urn and I said, "Is that Cutler?" He said, "That's Cutler." I said, "What about his wife?" He said his wife wouldn't accept him, wouldn't take him. So he took him and had him cremated.

Year after year, I'd go down there and see Edgar Applebee and he would say, "Have a drink." "Sure." "We'll drink to Cutler?" "Sure." Out would come Cutler in the urn. Last year, when I'm down there about the fourth time, I went in and, "Have a drink?"

"Sure." I said, "What about Cutler?" He said, "His wife picked him up and made off with him." (Laughter) That's a true story. (Laughter) Yes, it is.

I had some of the funniest experiences that you ever heard of.

C: About how many hours a week did you usually put in at your brewery?

R: I used to put in a lot of time. I'd go over there early and I used to go around all over the state of Ohio and boost our business. We did business all over the state and I'd go in and say, "Come on, boys, have a bottle of Renner's beer with me. Wait until I see if I can drink the beer." I carried an ivory froth, a handmade ivory froth, and I'd put it on the bar. I said, "I'm sorry, fellows, I can't drink with you." If I hadn't said that, two or three of these fellows would have said, "What's the matter? Don't you drink your own product?" I didn't care to drink. I would drink once in awhile, but never to excess.

People that drink at home do not drink to excess. That is several years ago, maybe they do now. I don't know about now. People who drank at home did not drink to excess.

I handed him twenty dollars and he taught me to . . . You never saw anything like it, I tell you. It would take about an hour to teach you. In other words, you could cut the cards as often as you wanted and you could take out all the cards you want and I'll tell you every one of them. And say now, "What suit is the fortieth card?" And I'll tell you the club or spade right away. There's nothing like it; it is the greatest trick you ever saw. I'll be glad to teach you. He only taught eight fellows and made them all promise never to teach anybody else that trick. I used it all through Cornell and Jackie Keogh used it all through State. Luke Cochran's son used it all through college. You never saw anything like it. It's the greatest trick in the cards. (Laughter)

END OF INTERVIEW