

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Depression Project

Personal Experiences

O. H. 766

DOROTHY WAY

Interviewed

by

Daniel Flood

on

October 24, 1975

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

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INTERVIEWEE: DOROTHY WAY

INTERVIEWER: Daniel Flood

SUBJECT: research division, movies, prohibition, radios,  
rationing, quality education

DATE: October 24, 1975

F: This is an interview with Mrs. Dorothy Veazey Way for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, Depression Project, by Dan Flood, at Poland Junior High School offices, on October 24, 1975, at 10:40 a.m.

Before we begin the actual interview, let me point out to you a few things about Mrs. Way. First, she was a graduate from the University of Michigan with a B.A. degree in 1938. Thirty years later she was a graduate from Westminster College with a Masters in education. She was a former teacher from 1938 to 1940, and then she resumed motherhood duties. Then she went back to teaching later on. She was a bit analysis clerk for Dayton Signal Corps. Currently Mrs. Way is a guidance counselor at Poland Junior High School. Having experienced so many different facets of life would rightly call for an interview on these grounds alone. But today we are asking Mrs. Way to recall specific experiences she had whether they be good or bad as she grew up during the Great Depression of the 1930's.

Now, Mrs. Way, why don't we begin by allowing you to give specific background information such as when you were born, names of your family members, where you lived, and the occupation that your father was in at the time of your birth.

W: I was born on May 8, 1917, in Cleveland, Ohio. I was the youngest of three daughters of William Reed Veazey and his wife Edith Mercer Veazey. We lived in Cleveland during the first five years of my life and then moved to Cleveland Heights. I attended the Cleveland Heights public schools. My father was a chemistry professor at Case School of Applied Science which later became Case Institute of Technology and is now part of Case Western

Reserve University.

F: Okay, now he was employed in this position at the time of your birth in 1917?

W: From before my birth, from 1907 until 1936, for twenty-nine years.

F: So he was employed almost all the time throughout the Great Depression?

W: All the time. This is one thing that will surprise you when I tell of my recollections of the Great Depression. They weren't that depressing because since my father was a teacher he did have employment. He was also a research chemist and was able to make some extra money on the side doing investigations for various industries.

F: Do you remember any of your childhood experiences before you began school?

W: They are rather vague. I began school at the age of five and went to kindergarten. I don't really remember anything too significant other than our moving to our new house. My parents were the kind of people who would never buy anything on credit unless they could see their way clear to having a pretty good down payment. For many years they avoided buying a home. We lived in this home all the time when we were in Cleveland Heights, which was twelve years, I think. It was a modest home in a neighborhood where the houses were close together with a nice, little front yard. To us it seemed like a palace. I remember going there before we moved in and the smell of new paint. We had a little breakfast nook in the kitchen where we all sat down to eat lunch and the baker came down and we bought sweet rolls. I can still almost smell it, the combination of paint and sweet rolls. That is probably one of my earliest pictures.

F: Do you remember anything about the cost of the home at the time? Maybe in later years your dad stated this.

W: I could be wrong on this, but I would probably say \$10,000 or something like this.

F: About \$10,000 at the time.

W: They undoubtedly had a good down payment so that the monthly payments weren't going to be beyond their needs. This is the way they did most everything. I would say that they never spent all that they had. They always had some money in reserve. They used to live beneath their needs. They seemed extremely cautious about financial matters.

F: You said that you started school at age five. Would you want

to recap some of those school experiences, possibly the teaching methods at the time?

- W: As I look back, I think the Cleveland Heights schools were really outstanding. Many of the things that we wish we had today in Poland we had at the Cleveland Heights schools.
- F: Such as what?
- W: Such as elementary art, music, physical education. There was great encouragement of creativity. We were always doing interesting units in our schoolwork such as making shields out of galvanized iron and making costumes for King Arthur and his courts and this sort of thing.
- F: This physical education program you were talking about, was that like a once a month shot or was it regular?
- W: I remember it being almost daily.
- F: Really?
- W: We were playing baseball.
- F: I can remember, going back to my school days at St. Pat's, once a week, if we were lucky, we would skip around the gym and that was about it.
- W: Now, I could be wrong, but it seems to me that we had it quite regularly. In high school we had girls' sports. I was on the track. We played soccer and field hockey. I'm not sure whether we played other schools or not, but we did have teams and we practiced and then we played games.
- F: What was the quality of school then?
- W: We never had final exams in our high school, and yet except for that, we seemed to be well prepared when the time came to go to college. I think the Cleveland Heights schools helped encourage an interest in the learning for learning sake rather than for being tested constantly. I have gotten way off because I haven't told you about my two sisters yet.

I had two sisters. My sister Betty is eight years older than I am. My sister Jane is three years older. I am, of course, the baby of the family. Our parents were very special parents, I think. In raising our own children we tried to emulate them, but we just didn't succeed. Somehow or other, my parents had a way of making each one of us feel special. Betty was the oldest; Jane was the only middle one, and I was the only baby. So we had our place in the home. They always had us feel that we were equal in every way. We shared and shared alike. There was no room for any jealousy. They were extremely careful to

make sure that everything was evenly divided.

F: So it was a very close-knit family.

W: It was a closely knit family with a great deal of love and security in it. Our parents' attitude towards our successes and failures was quite remarkable, I think. We could always feel we could tell them if we hadn't done well, and they wouldn't be critical since we tried to do our best. If we did exceptionally well, they sort of made light of our successes. My dad would always say when we would bring report cards home with A's on them . . . You did awful in math or bad in English or whatever, so that we didn't get too conceited about successes that we had.

We didn't have a great deal of money. My clothes were always hand-me-down clothes because I was the third girl. This didn't particularly bother me. I always thought that it was a privilege to wear my older sisters' clothes, how they ever managed to persuade me of this I don't know. We didn't have many toys. I never had a bicycle. My middle sister managed to save her money and buy one for \$25, and she let me ride it. I don't remember having a vehicle of any kind other than roller skates that belonged to me. Dolls were often made of clothespins or hollyhocks. My dad was quite creative at making little innovative toys like this which we thought were very special. We had things like a tin can telephone rigged up between our house and the one next door and a mail system where we would pull the basket back and forth on wires and these sorts of things that we thought were really fun.

Our family life on weekends would entail spending a great deal of time together, and Sunday was strictly a family day. We seldom had friends in unless a whole family of people would come. We spent the day together. We were in church all morning. Then in the afternoon, we would either take a ride or go for a walk or do some quiet family activity. Usually there would be music playing or we would play with paper dolls or something like this or play John McCormick records.

F: Oh, really?

W: I can remember "At Dawning" and "Wild Rose" particularly over and over again. So we could gain an appreciation of music too. It was always playing in the background. We were not ever the first to have something like a radio or television set. I can remember our first radio was a crystal set which my dad made from a kit. It had a set of earphones so that the only person who could hear it was the person with the earphones on. The rest of us got as much pleasure from sitting around and watching the expressions on the listener's face.

F: Do you remember any of the famous radio shows?

W: Amos and Andy, Fred Alan, Fibber McGee and Maid, some of those. There were some musical programs, but I can't think of what they were. We attended movies rather regularly on Saturday afternoons. The whole neighborhood would go to the movies. At first they were silent movies. I always enjoyed those a great deal because there was always an organist who played music in the background. I can remember seeing Peter Pan and hearing this lovely organ music as a background. It seems to me that I saw a Peter Pan version with sound. It just wasn't as good at all because that music was missing. The first sound movie I can remember was Al Jolson's "Jazz Sing." Really the sound was not very good. It wasn't synchronized well with the picture. It wasn't until several years later that they synchronized the sound with the film. Of course, we thought it was very remarkable.

Some of the simple pleasures that we had as children would be driving down to Cleveland Art Museum in the spring when the dandelions were up. The whole lawn would be just a blanket of yellow dandelions. My dad would let us out of the car and let us pick dandelions. We thought this was paradise. We could pick all the flowers we wanted and nobody would care. I can still remember what a thrill it was. Then we would pile these dandelions in the car, and by the time we got home, they were all shriveled up and everything.

I don't want to neglect to tell you how interesting it was to be the daughter of a research chemist. My dad was always involved in some kind of project that was either interesting or frightening, perhaps, to us.

F: You probably talked about these projects when you were at the family table.

W: Yes, we did. We all took pleasure in the things that he did. For instance, he was involved with manufacturing magnesium metal for the Dow Chemical Company. He was one of the research chemists who developed the process for extracting the magnesium from brine and then making the actual metal. He later had a set of Dow metal pistons which were made of magnesium that he put in his Model T Ford. He was trying them out to see what possible usages there was for this lightweight magnesium metal. His pistons were one of the first tests. He was so proud that his Model T Ford could go up Cedar Hill without shifting gears because of the light weight of the Dow metal pistons. We were all along with him sharing his enthusiasm.

Another frightening thing that occurred was his investigation into the Cleveland Clinic disaster in 1929. This was a very serious fire and explosion that occurred in the Cleveland Clinic building on East Ninth and Third Street at Euclid. It happened rather suddenly. I think about 10:30 in the morning someone noticed some smoke coming from the storage vault where the X-ray

films were stored. They tried to put the fire out with an ordinary fire extinguisher, but it didn't seem to smother it. An hour later the storage vault burst into flames, and there were a series of explosions. One hundred people or so were killed before they could get out of the building. Apparently, these people were killed from the carbon monoxide poisoning because the whole building was filled with this sort of yellowish-brown fume.

F: Through the vents and everything.

W: Yes. It came up through the stairwells and everywhere. Even days and weeks later, people who had been in this fire and had managed to escape dropped dead very suddenly. So my father and Dr. Carl Prutton, his associate at Case, were asked by the Utman Insurance Company to go into the clinic building to investigate to try to determine the cause of the fire. They went in at 4:30 in the afternoon just five hours after the fire. The building was still filled with these fumes. I guess they had gas masks, but the gas masks were not effective against these fumes. At first they thought it was a light bulb. Later they decided it could have been a lighted cigarette. My dad said that if he had known at the time what he knew after he did his research--in other words how deadly these toxic fumes were--he would never have gone in there so soon afterwards. It seems to me that he was always involved in some kind of experiment like this that later proved to be very dangerous and deadly.

F: Now the changes that took place due to his research, do you remember any of these?

W: Yes, yes. For one thing, I believe, although I don't have any documentation on this, that the material for X-ray film has changed at this time. Also the method of storing films particularly in hospitals had to be changed. Possibly even stairwells were enclosed after this time because the open stairwell had permitted the fire to spread very quickly.

F: It must have been very interesting like you said, dangerous and frightening.

W: Yes. Some of the other things that he did by way of research as I remember were carbon tetrachloride. It is used as a cleaning fluid. This was one of the things that he was involved in. We regularly cleaned our clothes at home with carbon tetrachloride in the little washing machine. Then years later we found out that this attacks the liver. It can go through the skin. You never know. But at the time, no one thought that they were dangerous. He was involved in the development of the insecticides which, of course, now are looked at with mixed emotions.

So far I don't think anyone has found anything wrong with Saran

Wrap. That was another project of his. At first it was kind of annoying because it would stick together to the point where you couldn't unwrap the roll, but they finally perfected that. It was fun being in a chemist's family.

Oh, the Good Humor Bar. I have to tell you about this. Another delightful research project that he was involved in was a patent suit. He was often asked to do research for patent suits. This one was, I believe, the Good Humor Company was suing the Bert Ice Cream Company. The Bert Ice Cream Company made chocolate-covered ice cream on a stick, and the Good Humor Company claimed that their patent had been robbed.

F: Copied?

W: This should not have been done because they had a patent. Or maybe it was the other way around that the Bert Ice Cream Company was suing Good Humor. Anyway, the results were all good as far as we were concerned because my dad got free boxes of ice cream bars, and we got an ice cream scoop to practice making ice cream suckers at home to see what would cause them to stick to the stick without melting. It was delightful for us.

F: As far as the schooling, you graduated from high school in 1934?

W: Yes, from Cleveland Heights High School.

F: You went directly on into college?

W: To Westminster College. This is another interesting thing.

F: Most people didn't go to college.

W: After all, these were the Depression years, and most people would think whether or not they could afford to send three daughters to college. This was never even debated. My parents both graduated from Westminster. They just naturally assumed. In fact, it wasn't debated as to what college. It was going to be Westminster. So we all just automatically went there. They had been saving the money. We each had a savings account, but it wasn't very large. From the time we were born, they would put a little money into this whenever they got a chance. It was their hope that they wouldn't have to use our savings account for our college education, which they didn't. It was there in case it was needed.

F: Was there any problem with the banks when the banks closed with the savings that you had?

W: No. They were in the Society for savings and nothing happened. It was still there. But as far as the banks closing, I can still remember what the bank moratorium in 1933 did to my Grandfather Mercer. He lived in New Wilmington, Pennsylvania where he had



run the general store for many years. At one time, he was bank president, and he was president at the time of the bank moratorium. My grandfather was one of these careful people who would never owe anybody a penny for a minute without paying it back. It bothered him until he got it paid back. So his bank was solvent at the time of the bank moratorium. He couldn't pay off his deposits, and he just couldn't understand why the government closed his bank. He took it personally as if it was a reflection on his honesty in some way. He wondered what the people in town would think. Very shortly after, he died of a heart attack. I think it worried him so much.

F: Just worrying about his good name?

W: That his bank would have to close.

F: How did the people react at the time? Did they take it personally against the banker?

W: Well, I think everybody panicked. I don't know if they did or not. I think that they were just really startled. They panicked, and a lot of people rushed to the banks and tried to draw out their money, and, of course, that was the reason for the moratorium. To prevent this in case the government couldn't insure deposits.

F: This happened in 1933. As you said, in 1934 you graduated from high school. There was no problem for you to finance through college?

W: I did get a scholarship, but it wasn't large, just a few hundred dollars. So they had planned ahead.

F: So you attended Westminster College at the time with the idea of going into teaching?

W: Oh, that is another thing. When people talk about careers, I never thought of being anything but a teacher. I think I was born with the idea that I wanted to be a teacher.

F: Because of the fact of your father?

W: My mother had been a teacher too. There were many teachers in our family. When we were little, one of the games that we always played was school. When I went to school myself, each teacher that I had was my hero or heroine. I thought that when I grew up I would be a kindergarten teacher, and a first grade teacher and on up, and I never thought of doing anything else. I did think for a while that I would be a math teacher. I just sort of drifted into English which became my major because math wasn't my thing after I got into college. I had never thought that I would go to any school except Westminster because it was sort of inborn. When my dad took full-time employment at

Dow Chemical Company in 1936, he suggested that it might be nice if I go to the University of Michigan. He kind of liked having us a little nearer to home. I had never thought of that, but I considered this and decided that it would quite exciting, which it was.

F: So you left Westminster College after two years?

W: We transferred, and I had my junior and senior years at Michigan. I am so glad that I did because at a large university like Michigan it seems that the opportunity for learning is boundless. I think my interest in learning as a lifetime pursuit was probably encouraged by going to this great university because I just felt that I wanted to learn as much as I could while I was there. No matter how long I stayed, I couldn't possibly gather all the information and knowledge that was available there. I have been at it ever since. I think that I will continue to learn throughout my life. It interests me. I like to study. I like to find out new things. I didn't have this feeling at a smaller college.

As far as the expense goes, it turned out to be about the same. The interesting thing was that at Westminster the tuition was higher and the room and board were lower. At Michigan as an in-state resident it was only \$55 a semester, but the room and board were so much higher because the cost of living was so much higher that it amounted to about the same. I hope you don't ask me how much because I don't remember.

F: After you graduated from Michigan with a B. A. you went directly...

W: No. I will never forget marching down State Street in my cap and gown with these thousands of other people who were also graduating that June day. We were laughing because very few of us had jobs, and so we said that we were the great army of the unemployed. It just seemed ridiculous for us to have our degrees in hand and no jobs. It wasn't until late August of that year that I got my job. I think I only had two job opportunities or possibly two inquiries; one just wasn't in the right subject area. The one that I took was really the only job that I had a chance to take. It was in a small resort town near Traverse City, Michigan. The town was called Elk Rapids. It was a town that was strictly a resort town. Many of the people in the town had no employment except during the summer months of the year. The teachers were paid very little and were expected to do everything and to be good examples to the community.

F: Do you remember any of the salary?

W: Yes. My salary was \$1,000 and 6½¢ a year. When the taxes were deducted from that, it was less than \$1,000. We were paid only every three months because the school board had no money. They had to wait for the state aid to come in. So we lived on

credit, but our credit was very good in that little town. We were the richest people in town.

It was a strange, little school. There were 125 students in the high school, and there were four teachers. One of the teachers was the superintendent; one was the principal; one was the home economics teacher, and the other one was me. So I taught all the things that nobody else wanted to teach. I taught English which was my major; I taught German which was my minor; I taught math which I really wasn't qualified to teach, but I had algebra, geometry, practical math. I conducted the girls and boys glee clubs which I protested about. They told me that I liked to sing, and that I could do it. I even had to take my kids to contests. I remember buying a baton to give myself a feeling of security because I really had no idea how to conduct a glee club. Of course, we didn't win. We just got comments which were somewhat negative, I thought. I had to coach the girls' basketball team because the home economics teacher got stuck with this job the previous two years, and she said that she was going to pass it off to someone else. So I was the girls' basketball coach, and I really didn't know anything about coaching basketball. We played other schools; we took trips on the school bus; we won one game, and I really felt pretty bad about that because the kids tried so hard. They were a good group, but I didn't know how to coach it. We had no free periods at all. During our lunch period, we were expected to supervise the study hall with probably sixty to eighty kids in it. We never thought anything of it.

F: Was there a lesson plan book at that time?

W: I still have my lesson plan books from way back then, carefully filled out the first few weeks then getting slimmer and slimmer. It was a great experience. I was not quite twenty-one, and some of the kids were almost as old as I was. They had had a successful strike in that school the year before I came there.

F: Strike?

W: The students had had a strike, and they were backed by their parents. They had ousted the superintendent.

F: Wow, that is kind of unreal for that day.

W: They had kind of an uppity attitude. They would say in class that if we didn't do what they would say, then they were going to strike. I would tell them to go ahead because I could use a vacation myself.

F: This was from 1938 to 1940, in those years there?

W: Right. It was really kind of fun being a young teacher with kids who tried this sort of thing. It was a challenge.

F: Do you remember about talking of current events or anything like this?

W: In the schools?

F: In the schools during that time.

W: No, not particularly.

F: It really stuck to the book.

W: It was a local and rural sort of a cut off community you might say.

Bank nights. Let me mention bank nights. There was a theater in the town, a movie theater. Saturday night was bank night when they would give away money. I can remember going to this theater and sitting there trembling for fear that I would win that money because I knew if I did everybody would say that I wouldn't need it because I was a teacher. Nobody else in town had any income. Many of the people worked on the oar boats on the Great Lakes and had to go away and take their families in order to find employment. The kids in the school had no prospect for jobs.

F: Is this back in Cleveland, this school?

W: No, Elk Rapids, Michigan. They had no plans for future careers unless they would leave home.

F: Were there many dropouts? Can you recall?

W: Well, dropout types, but I don't think that they dropped out because there still wasn't anything else to do so they might as well go to school.

F: Was there bussing of students at that time too?

W: Oh, yes. They came from the farms all around. The school was in the town.

F: Do you remember a couple of events from the 1930's, the Lindbergh baby? I know that we talked about Lindbergh as your hero.

W: Right. I would say that my father and Lindbergh were my two heroes. I think the whole country felt that Lindbergh was a great hero. He was a young man, I believe 25 years of age, who has the courage and the desire to make a nonstop flight from New York to Paris in his little airplane "The Spirit of St. Louis". He was a very modest man. I think the hardest part of the flight for him might have been the publicity and the need to put up with a certain amount of it after his flight. To us it seemed

inconceivable that anyone in the world would want to do such a cruel thing in the case of his baby. Of course, he was married at the time of his flight. I can remember that he was traveling around the country then. He was at the Cleveland airport, and my older sister got to go see Lindbergh. The rest of us were very envious, but we felt very sure that a plane that flew over our house that afternoon was Lindbergh's. I don't know whether it was or not. We looked up and were sure that we could tell.

- F: Some people compare the feeling that they had at Lindbergh's baby being found dead with comparison of John F. Kennedy and the assassination.
- W: It was the same kind of feeling, a feeling of great shock and sorrow and horror to think that anyone could do such a thing. It was very much like that.
- F: I noticed doing a little bit of research that one governor actually more or less praised the efforts of townspeople who took the law into their own hands after this took place, this incident of kidnapping and things. Was there any tension in town that was being built up?
- W: I don't remember this because I suppose I was too young. I just know that we had a very strong feeling of revulsion and were not at all surprised to find out that it was somebody with a thick accent who was not completely American who would do such a thing.
- F: Did you feel that capital punishment was just and that it was what he deserved?
- W: I don't know. Just get him out of the way so that he can't do this sort of thing again.
- F: How about in 1933, "War of the Worlds," Orson Welles?
- W: I don't get too much reaction out of that.
- F: You had mentioned FDR, and your feeling on FDR as being not the positive point of view but the negative point of view. Would you want to express those?
- W: Well, with a little fear and trembling I do want to express those because they were very strong feelings. I was brought up with a great respect for the presidency, government, law and order, but somehow or other FDR seemed to me like a very diabolical person. His packing of the Supreme Court seemed unethical.
- F: 1936, right?

W: Increasing the number of government employees to I don't know what percent of the population seemed to insure his reelection. Of course, he was elected four times which no other president has ever been. Kids growing up thought that he was a permanent president. They couldn't imagine what it would be like without FDR as president. We felt that it was a terrible thing for one man to be president for so long.

F: Because of a dictatorial type of role?

W: Yes, yes. We always felt during his fireside chats he was laughing up his sleeves what he was putting over on the public. We just did not have confidence as many people did. His deflation of the dollar, his building up of all these government agencies which, of course, were intended to provide employment seemed like a great waste. The WPA [Works Projects Administration] you would ride along the highway and see thirty men leaning on shovels not doing a bit of work, just leaning on shovels. That was all that they had to do to get paid, and, of course, it wasn't work. Yet some of his projects like the CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps] where they were working on the forests and so forth and were out planting trees seemed very worthwhile. The TVA [Tennessee Valley Authority] building the dams to develop Tennessee Valley and to provide the power seemed very worthwhile. We didn't like alphabet soup, all the letters that we had to try to remember the meanings for and so forth.

I remember when FDR died. I lived in Atlanta, Georgia at the time, and most of the people there were democrats. I remember my next door neighbor coming over and telling me that Roosevelt had died. I thought that she was kidding me because somehow it seemed as if Roosevelt would go on forever, and we would never get out of his clutches, and he would control our whole lives. I thought that she was a democrat. I later found out that she was about the only republican on this side. So I was very cautious about my answer. I told here that I just couldn't believe it and that it couldn't be so. But I felt like cheering.

F: Really?

W: I just felt a great feeling of relief at last.

F: Like the time of Pearl Harbor and things, today we know that this possibly could have been avoided. Let's go back to that time. Was there any feeling that FDR put us into the war?

W: No, not at all. I don't think so. I was particularly interested in Pearl Harbor because it affected my own life in a very small, insignificant way. I was a young, married woman living in Cleveland. I was a member of a group called the Cleveland College Club which had regular weekly meetings and had a number of study groups on such things as current affairs, book reviews, this sort of thing. I had been asked to give a study for the current

affairs committee on the Far Eastern situation. I was in the process of writing my talk on December 7, 1941, and all of a sudden, my talk became very timely. People hadn't really been interested in the Far Eastern situation. We heard the news of the bombing of Pearl Harbor, and suddenly it gave it some importance. All this research that I had been doing about the peace talks going on in Washington with the Japanese Ambassador suddenly became very meaningful because behind our backs while these peace talks were going on the Japanese had been planning to destroy our fleet, which they practically did. So on Monday, December 8, while I gave my talk on the Far Eastern situations, I had a very attentive and large audience.

F: Can you recall some of those World War II days of rationing?

W: Yes, very well. We happened to be in a unique situation. My husband was a sales and service engineer for the Warren Swayze Company in Cleveland. He had been granted a deferment because his work was related to war production. He was sent across the country by the Warren Swayze Company to show a film and give a talk to various manufacturing concerns who were making materials to help them get better production from their turret lathes as they needed to step up their production. So for six months from October of 1942 until April of 1943, we traveled across the country. We had no children. He was given a company car to travel in. He had Fleet gas ration coupons, and we traveled at thirty-five miles an hour through Florida, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas, California, and so forth. We sold the car in California and came back by train. This was during rationing time, and before we left, we had our ration book number one that was issued to us in East Cleveland where we lived. This was for food and clothing. We carried these along with us. When we got to Los Angeles, it was time to apply for ration book number two, and, of course, we were far from home and hadn't been there for quite a long time. So I had to find the nearest ration board and go there and declare how much canned goods we had at home in East Cleveland in our apartment. We knew where everything in that apartment was. We did know how many canned goods we had, so I declared forty-eight cans. I remember the teacher at the school who was helping to pass out ration books was most reluctant to tear out our coupons, but she did. She took out all of the eight point coupons which left us nothing but about twenty-four points worth, which would enable us to buy the food items that were rationed. She was most apologetic. We really didn't care. Figuring it out very carefully, I figured out that it would be about three cans of peas less per week or something, but we weren't eating at home. We were eating in restaurants. For a dollar you could buy a complete dinner. Nothing was rationed to the restaurants. You could get anything that you wanted.

F: Oh, really?

W: It was just ridiculous.

F: They rationed the people at home, but not the restaurants?

W: Right. The people in restaurants had no problem. I found this little book. A four course dinner was only a dollar and a quarter, three floor shows and no cover charge. This was in Southern California in Los Angeles.

As far as rationing was concerned since we were on government business and had the use of Fleet gasoline coupons and since we were eating our meals in restaurants, no kind of rationing really affected us much except clothing rationing. We were concerned about shoes because we were doing a great deal of walking on the strip. I remember writing to my mother that I was watching my heels on the shoes and getting them repaired at the shoe man's before the shoes would be ruined. I was going to buy a new pair of shoes with my ration coupon because I didn't want to be walking around barefooted.

F: You mentioned the hotel and the prices there.

W: Oh, yes. Hotels were unbelievable, \$2.50 a night for a single occupancy of a room and just about 50¢ extra for an extra person. So my six month trip across the country was of very little cost. It cost possibly 50¢ extra a night. The meals cost \$2 or \$3 a day, probably \$2. It was very inexpensive, just unbelievable.

F: As compared to today's prices, definitely.

I was wondering if we could just go back and recapture any of those memories of the Depression; peace and isolationism you had mentioned as one of the big items of that time.

W: Well, yes. I really want to talk about this because I think people today don't understand why so many people are isolationists. At the end of World War I, everybody was so relieved that the war was over that they sold the young people growing up the idea that peace at any price was to be desired. Every November 11, which is Armistice Day marking the signing of the armistice at the end of World War I, we always took a moment in school, as we do now for Veteran's Day--but it doesn't have the same meaning--to stand, say our Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag and really to renew in our hearts this determination that there would never again be war in the world.

F: The war to end all wars.

W: It was the war to end all wars. We thought this was the way that it would be and the way that it should be. We were isolationists because we felt that if we stayed out of the affairs of other countries, we could avoid war. I think the people should have considered this viewpoint when they thought about the draft dodgers in the recent war. Possibly they were brought up with this idea. It is pretty hard to change the



orientation of twenty-five years thinking that peace was the most important thing. I have come around seeing it in other ways, but it took a while.

F: Another thing to mention could be the radios, the automobile, the television, things like this now.

W: Television was interesting.

F: Television didn't come until 1950, right?

W: Right. We weren't the first to get it either, but we thought that television was going to be connected with the telephone. I can remember thinking this when I was about twelve years old when television was being invented.

F: That was right around 1929 then?

W: They were working on television and some day we would have it. This would permit us to see the person we were talking to on the telephone. We didn't think that we would like this because how could you jump out of the bathtub . . .

F: And run to the phone.

W: Or if your boyfriend would call up and you had your hair up in curlers you wouldn't want him to see you, so we weren't really very anxious for the television to be invented.

F: So you thought that it always had this connection with this phone idea.

W: Right. That was our idea at the time. I don't know whether they had planned this or how we got that idea.

F: That was unusual. What about the prohibition?

W: My father was a tea totaler. He claimed this because he had had two uncles who were both doctors and who had both died of delirium treatments because they had both had too much alcohol. They were able to get it during prohibition days. He was a pallbearer at both funerals. This is what he always told us-- Don't drink. I remember once after I was married, the grocer put a bottle of wine in our basket of groceries as a Christmas present, and my dad happened to be visiting us at the time. He told us to let him have it because he would give it to the Midland Hospital. He just couldn't get it out of our house fast enough. Prohibition was something that he very strongly believed in. I will never forget how we, as children, regarded the town drunk in New Wilmington, Pennsylvania where my grandparents lived. The man was put in jail because he was drunk, and all the kids in town went and looked through the window at him. He was a curiosity of some kind because he was drunk.

- F: No one ever saw a drunk?
- W: No. It was very seldom that you saw one.
- F: It was very unusual.
- W: This was a very strange thing. Today it just seems inconceivable.
- F: Well, when prohibition was repealed, can you remember the talks around the dinner table?
- W: Yes. The people who were tea totalers, of course, were really upset that it was repealed. But other people said that it had been put over on the country when many people were away at war, and it really didn't represent the will of the greatest number of people.
- F: That is an interesting theory on that point.
- W: I sort have had mixed emotions because of my family background.
- F: Do you remember any advertisement about drinking and driving at the time?
- W: Drinking was just something that people did in dark, little speakeasies and so forth.
- F: Oh, it wasn't out in the open at all.
- W: No, not out in the open.
- F: I see. What about possibly . . .
- W: Automobile. There is one confession or something that I should make here with regard to the Depression and the automobile. As I mentioned, the Depression didn't affect us in the way that it affected other people. We saw it around us. We saw bread lines; we saw people waiting in line to get into the soup kitchens; we even saw little packing box homes along the railroad tracks where people who were without homes lived. We knew of people who, when the stock market crashed, committed suicide, perhaps killed their own families, jumped out of windows, this sort of thing. But it didn't touch us closely because my father was not unemployed. We gained at this time the idea that people who had things like Cadillacs and big houses are not really rich people; they are just people who are in great debt. It is really true. We used to look up and think that these people really were rich. After that we thought that these people really were in debt.

One strange experience with the cars, though, in the Depression was that we got a second family car. My mother was very embarrassed about this. She needed this car desperately for years.

F: Second car for the family?

W: Second car, but the reason was that my dad spent his summers in the middle of Michigan working for the Dow Company to make extra money to support the family. He couldn't afford to take us there more often than every third summer. We would go every third summer and stay one month and rent a house; otherwise, mother had to stay at home in Cleveland with the three of us. We had no transportation because dad had the car. She walked to the store daily carrying a little market basket bringing home just whatever groceries she could carry in the little basket. She needed transportation as we got older because we had to go to various activities, doctor appointments, whatever.

F: Social functions and things.

W: So finally during the Depression, I think around 1933, we were able to afford a second family car. I will never forget it. It was a little, red Buick. It was secondhand, a beautiful little thing. We called it Elaine, and my dad's car was Lancelot. They were proudly parked in the garage side by side. My mother hardly wanted to take it out of the garage. She was so embarrassed at having a new car, not a new car; it was secondhand.

F: Do you feel that there was resentment from your neighbors and things about that?

W: I don't think so. She just sort of felt guilty about it, yet she really needed it very badly and had done without it all of those years when she walked.

F: That is surprising that you even had the money to buy that second car.

W: Well, see, dad did his extra work. We were very frugal. We didn't spend much of anything.

F: Was conservation a main thing in your home too?

W: Well, my mother and dad had started their married life owing \$500 to my grandfather which was money that they had borrowed so that mother could go with dad to Baltimore for his last two years of work on his Ph.D. She helped him with his work. She did 50,000 calculations on his laboratory measurements. During this two year time, they had no car; they lived very frugally. This is the way that they were used to doing, so they continued doing this. When we were growing up, we never had unnecessary luxuries of any kind.

F: I noticed that you mentioned before about the ukuleles and the Charleston. I was wondering about the morals at that time. Did the people really get uptight if the kids were dancing and going wild?

- W: My older sister, who was eight years older than I, was a flapper you might say. She had short, bobbed hair with a short skirt with a long waist and fringe. She had a crowd of kids that she went around with, but they were all kids from the church. They just had a gang that went around together. They often came to our house. They played the ukuleles and sang "Vo do di vo do." They did the Charleston. Her boyfriends would come around in cars with rumble seats. I remember my sister Jane would sometimes be privileged to go with them. They always parked her in the rumble seat while they sat up front because she was younger, and I didn't even go because I was too much younger. They seemed to have a very gay, happy life.
- F: That was during the 1920's though?
- W: Yes, during the 1920's.
- F: Now as it changed to the 1930's towards the Depression itself, did this gaiety in the young decrease, or was it about the same?
- W: I think it was about the same. I don't really think . . .
- F: That they got that down.
- W: Yes, not really that down because there were things to do that were fun and they were young. So what if nobody had anything.
- F: Then the songs and things at that time reflected the idea that nobody had anything?
- W: Right. So everybody was in it together, you see.
- F: Do you think that there was more community friendliness, action, and things like this at that time than at any other?
- W: Oh, definitely. People had gardens and so forth.
- F: I'm thinking of terms of rationing again, going back to World War II. Being that they didn't have that much during the Depression, it was probably easier for them to adjust to a war rationing.
- W: Rationing was nothing. Of course, I really shouldn't say that because I wasn't at home for some of it, although later I was. But it doesn't seem to me that rationing was such a bad thing. In fact, when it was considered recently and everybody said, "Oh, no, not rationing," I couldn't imagine why people felt that way about it because it seemed to me that the ration coupons were adequate. We were only on this trip that I spoke to you about for six months; then after that we were at home managing very well on our rationing coupons. We could get the things that we needed.

- F: Nothing extra or luxurious?
- W: Nothing extra.
- F: Just the necessities.
- W: You know, it was hard to get a bunch of bananas or a pound of butter or a pound of bacon. If you were careful or shopped at the same place regularly, the butcher would save you bacon particularly if you had little children. I remember we lived in Atlanta when our daughter was born. There was this nice butcher named Mr. Medford who always saved a pound of bacon for anybody who had a baby.
- F: That was nice, yes.
- W: We would go there every week. He would have our pound of butter and pound of bacon for us.
- F: Do you remember anything about the medicine during the 1930's? Did people feel that they should not go to the doctor or not go as much because of the fact that they did not have the money? Or if they wanted to go in the hospital . . .
- W: I can tell you quite a bit about that. My husband's father was a doctor in Cleveland, Dr. Charles Way. He was in internal medicine, but he was like a family doctor. It seemed to me that he worked constantly, night and day. People called him at home in the middle of the night, and he would go out to make a house call. I always wonder when people these days talk about how much money doctors have if they realize how much time, money, and effort, and how much of themselves doctors put into their profession. My mother-in-law after she was married helped to put her husband through medical school. They were both from a small farm community in Wisconsin. He had formerly been a teacher; she had great aspirations for him as he had for himself and great faith in him. So she took my father who was just a little boy and went to Alma, Michigan where she worked as a purchasing agent for Alma College for three years, while her husband was in medical school, to earn enough money to put him through medical school. Her younger child had to live with her mother because she couldn't afford to have both children with her. They made a great many sacrifices. Now during the Depression, my father-in-law had many charity cases, and he never pushed people for the bills. In fact, my mother-in-law who had sacrificed so much to help him get his medical education just couldn't understand why he didn't try to get people to pay him, but he was that sort of person. He was really dedicated to helping people. Asking for money was just something that was not in his nature.
- F: Is there anything else that you would want to include in this tape interview as to the Depression or to your own life style

that was influenced by the Depression?

- W: I would say that having lived through the Depression was a good experience. I think that it brought many families closer together because they did have to share more; they did have to have simpler pleasures. They could not have money as a value. As far as it affected me personally, I have already mentioned that it did not hurt us as much as it did other people except that we were careful always about how much we spent. I think that I have continued to feel this way about money. It is something that you use when you need it; it is not something that you throw around and spend needlessly.
- F: One last question. You have jotted down about your inevitable teaching career. Do you just want to . . .
- W: It is really interesting when you look back over the pattern of your life after you have lived fifty plus years as I have to see how things have worked out. Maybe you thought that you were in control of everything that you did and that you were calling the signals. Yet you can see as you look back that you weren't, and that one thing prepared you for another, and somehow you were being lead to do the things that you did. I never planned to spend a lifetime as a teacher. It was the career that I had thought I would always have from my childhood up. But I thought that when I was married, I would no longer be a teacher. Instead I found that I am always getting back into it. I just can't seem to escape it, and it isn't of my planning. The way I got back into it after I was married was when my children were in school and I was active in PTA; they begged former teachers to sign the list that they had saying they would be willing to substitute because substitutes were in short supply.
- F: That was in what year?
- W: This was in 1955 approximately. So for four years I did substitute at East Brand Rapids Schools. We lived in this community, and they needed substitute teachers. Then in 1959 in the middle of the year, they needed to have a vacancy filled in high school English, so I took this job. Then the next year the junior high principal for whom I had substituted a great deal persuaded me that he needed me more than the high school did, so I taught there for two years. Then when we moved to Poland, I had no plans of ever teaching again, but I had asked some former administrators to write some letters. I planned to just put them in my file in case I would ever have to substitute, letter of reference. Instead, one of them had sent a letter to Mr. Male who was the superintendent of the Poland schools. We hadn't been here a week; we hadn't unpacked our cartons; we were still finishing our house when I got a call from Mr. Male asking me if I would fill a vacancy in eighth grade English in Poland Junior High School. I told him no because I was just moving in and my aunt had just died and I had to take care of her funeral arrangements. He told me

not to say no and to think it over and let him know. I told my husband, and he said that he knew I liked to teach, so I should. I did and have been at it ever since. I got into counseling only because I wanted to go on with my education. I couldn't leave my family to go somewhere for my masters in English, which is my major. I was interested in counseling because I had enjoyed working on a one to one basis with children that I had tutored at East Grand Rapids. I thought that this would help me to be a better English teacher. So I got my degree in counseling planning to come back and continue teaching English. At that time there was a vacancy in junior high guidance. Our new superintendent persuaded me, challenged me, whatever, to give up teaching English and go into guidance. I have been at it ever since, but not really at my choosing.

F: You know, as you said, you think that you are in control of a situation but sometimes it seems as though someone else is pulling the strings. I think that God had made a good decision to keep you in teaching.

W: Well, thank you. I found it to be a very rewarding profession.

F: I would like to thank you very much, Mrs. Way, because you have certainly given us a wealth of practical information on how it was to live during the Depression, and also on your philosophies of life. Thank you.

W: Thank you, Mr. Flood.

END OF INTERVIEW