

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Depression Project

Personal Experiences

O. H. 810

DONALD F. KANE, SR.

Interviewed

by

Daniel M. Flood

on

November 13, 1975

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INTERVIEWEE: DONALD F. KANE, SR.

INTERVIEWER: Daniel M. Flood

SUBJECT: occupations, politics, Idora Park, Proctor & Gamble, industry, unions, background

DATE: November 13, 1975

F: This is an interview with Don Kane for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program on the Depression project, by Dan Flood, at Mr. Kane's home, 41 East Florida Avenue, Youngstown, Ohio, on November 13, 1975, at 7:55.

Before we begin the actual interview let me point out to you that Mr. Donald Kane has led a very active life and is still leading a very active life being a member of St. Dominic's Parish, secretary-treasurer of Youngstown Men's Bowling Association. Having experienced so many different facets of life we would like to have Mr. Kane recall some of those experiences for us.

Let's go back and ask Mr. Kane to review some of his background information, his childhood days, the place where he was born, his parents' names, and general information like this.

K: I was born May 30, 1910, the son of James M. Kane and Helen O'Day Kane, at 216 East Myrtle Avenue. We resided at that establishment until 1916 when we moved to 110 East Chalmers Avenue. I am a member of seven in the family. I have four brothers and two sisters. Two brothers are older, two younger. One sister is older, and one sister is younger. I started to St. Patrick's School when I was six years old, graduated in 1924, where at that time the school enrollment had increased so that they had to convert the basement of the school into classrooms. Also, they had to convert the gymnasium that they had built into classrooms to take care of the overflow of students.

In 1924 I graduated from St. Patrick's and went to South High School until 1928. In the interim I worked for Herman Kling's Bakery, which was a known bakery, family-operated bakery, that has been in operation for at least thirty-five years before it

finally folded with Herman Jr. The bakery had celebrated its 75th anniversary.

F: This is on the corner of Market Street, around Chalmers?

K: No, it was opposite Kenmore Avenue, roughly the third storeroom from Williamson Avenue. It was situated between Williamson Avenue and Myrtle Avenue. Next to it was the Quality Market, run by Sam Solomon, who later moved his store to East Federal Street. At the present time his boys are operating a market on the corner of Midlothian and Southern Boulevard.

During my school days at South High School, after working for Kling's Bakery with Mr. Stalley--father of Lawrence Stalley, sports editor of the Youngstown Vindicator--I went to work for the Duffy Anderson Amusement Corporation at Idora Park, which originally was owned by the railway streetcar people, Youngstown streetcar people. There was the streetcar, the Park and Falls line, that came out on Market Street and went from Hillman Street south to Sherwood, down Sherwood to Glenwood, south on Glenwood to Parkview, down Parkview, circle the back end of the park, and the unloading platform was down below the dance hall, which was situated at the southern end of the park. To come back to town you went down between the popcorn stand and the merry-go-round to get the streetcar to come back to town. At that time there was a fellow by the name of Jack Lutz that operated a little concession stand at the corner of the parking lot with sandwiches, soft drinks, et cetera. Mr. Rex Billings was park manager, and Billingsgate, which is the entrance off of Canfield Road into Idora Park was named after him. He left Idora Amusement Company and went to work for amusement people in New York State. Ed Gilronan, a well-known soloist connected with the patrician quartet, was then made manager. Previous to that Eddie had operated the buses when the streetcars converted over to the buses.

F: When was that?

K: I wouldn't know what year offhand. After that we had Pat Duffy and Rube Anderson and his brother Lloyd, which rented various concessions and rides from Idora Amusement. Mr. Thomas Murray, father of Dr. Murray--Richard Murray--and Mr. Charlie Deibel were the Idora Amusement Corporation. Various outside concerns had rides. The Philadelphia Toboggan Company had the Jack Rabbit, the merry-go-round, and the Fun House. Gus Travis had the Firefly which was rebuilt and called the Wildcat in the present day. He also had the hot dog concession stand. Charlie Lenas, a P&LE engineer, had the novelty stand. Mr. Steinberg had the Penny Arcade. We had three city policemen that took charge of all the big picnic days that we had, which were Captain Roberts, Sergeant Nolan, and Officer Joe Carney. We had the regular park policeman Henry Kauffman. We had a night policeman. I can't remember what John's last name was,

but we had a security policeman there in the evening with the police staff. On exceptionally large picnic days, which at times we had as high as 10,000 to 12,000 people in the park, they would have to hire additional city policemen or Kane's Secret Service Police. We also had the mid-atlantic baseball team, which was a minor league. They were connected with the St. Louis Browns.

F: They played right in the ball park then?

K: Oh yes.

F: You had a lot of games out there then?

K: There was the regular scheduled season during the summer of all the mid-atlantic games, which some of the players from the mid-atlantic team here moved up into the big leagues. In fact, Floyd Baker might have been one of them. A fellow by the name of Johnny Mahalik wound up in the major leagues.

At that time the various businesses and organizations had what they called the "three cent kiddie day". The industries such as Erie Railroad, P&LE Railroad, Westinghouse Electric, Armstrong Cork from the Pennsylvania district, had their regular days. Sundays were mostly confined to nationality days which they still have at the present time--Italian Day, Hungarian Day, Slovak Day. There were other various nationality days in addition to the local merchants such as the Southside Grocers; they would have their day. Coca-Cola would have their day. Westside Merchants would have Westside Merchants Day. Those were special rate days. In other words, the rides at that time were 10¢ a ride and you could buy a strip of tickets, possibly twenty or twenty-five tickets, for \$1 and ride any ride in the park at a reduced rate.

They also had bands that were booked in there for the summer. Some of the well-known ones were Red Nickels and his Five Pennys, Ace Brigot, Jimmy Dimitz and his Million Dollar Sunnybrook Band, Pinkie Hunter, and various bands that were there for the season. In addition, they would have special nights during the season where they would bring in your bigger name bands such as Duke Ellington, Guy Lombardo, to mention a few. They would have the entire ballroom and during the regular season it was more or less a dime a dance deal. When they would bring in these name bands then the fee would maybe be \$2 or \$2.50 a person, which during the late 1920's and early 1930's was quite a bit of money.

At the time the average workers which I worked for were all the concession stands: the fish pond, the horse race wheel, the blow the balloon, the blanket wheel. Later on bingo came in to be a very popular form for the older women spending their time and winning various prizes.. Some of the prizes--after they

won X number of coupons--were really valuable merchandise. The blanket wheel, if there was an eighteen number wheel and a blue or red light stopped on your number you got a pound box of candy. If the red light stopped you got a Beacon blanket. At that time, in 1928 and 1929 they had what they called the blazer sweater which was a striped, multiple-colored sweater. This was a popular dress at this time for sports.

They also had what they called monkey island. They also brought in various types of entertainment.

F: What was monkey island?

K: The monkey island itself was a cage with various monkeys, numerous monkeys of various breed. They would be in this cage for a form of amusement. People would feed them peanuts or popcorn and it was a form of amusement.

They had the Fun House which was another amusement. Later on they went into what was known as the restaurant end of it and they had Heidelberg Gardens, featured from the German end of it due to Mr. Deibel being of German descent.

F: As far as the Depression itself, you were working out there in 1929 at what age?

K: I worked out there from the time I was fourteen until I was twenty-four.

F: Did you notice any drop in attendance during the Depression itself?

K: Not so much a drop in the Depression for the simple reason that at that time you didn't have television to amuse people. There wasn't the number of automobiles, so the people's transportation was the streetcar. In addition to the streetcar, they walked. Idora was within walking distance from any part of the south side, the upper end of the south side. When you got the high temperatures in the summertime it was a cool place due to the fact that up behind the concession stands and the ball park were picnic grounds where they took their picnic baskets and that. Even sitting along what was known as the midway it was very cool, even with the number of people walking up and down the midway itself.

They talk about ecology today. At that time they had a labor gang that swept that park every morning. We had the various picnics in there, where naturally there was quite a bit of debris. Then the labor gang went around and swept it so it would be clean for the older people coming out or the people coming out to the dance floor in the evenings.

As far as the amount of business, business dropped off to a certain extent and they still maintained their number of employees that they had. It was a good way for fellows of my age at that time to make their spending money for the whole winter. The park season consisted of what we called a hundred days. At that time they did not close on Mondays; we worked seven days a week and we worked as high as ninety-six hours a week for \$15 a week.

F: You told me before how you got involved with Idora Park through Sergeant Nolan. Would you like to mention this again?

K: Sergeant Nolan lived on Marion Avenue, 114 East Marion Avenue, to be exact. Three of his sons worked out there, myself, and my brother Jim. The Kelly boys worked out there, Jack Diamond, and Jimmy Fulton. Bob Mills was maintenance man; Ed Siefert was head electrician. Then there were people like Ann Chipperfield. Her sister's husband ran the first Popsicle stand that was operated in town. They also had the frozen custard and the flossy candy, and the candy apples. One of the biggest features when you went to Idora Park was your popcorn. You had to have your bag of popcorn.

F: What was the price of that?

K: 5¢ a bag and you got a bag at that time. Your soft drinks were a nickel a bottle and your cones. Your candy apples, they would usually be 10¢--the price of the apple, the stick and the ingredients used to coat them.

F: Did they have school days at that time?

K: At that time they had parochial school days. That would be shortly after they opened in May, before schools closed in June. There would be a parochial school day out there with special rates with the teachers and the nuns from the schools being there.

F: As far as the park itself, was it enclosed with a fence? Was there fencing all the way around it? The reason I'm asking is, were you charged at the gate coming in at all?

K: No. At the time the admission was free and it was only in the later years that they put on a set fee. Previous to that other amusement parks throughout the country had a quarter charge.

Duffy and Anderson also had rides in Echo Springs Park in Chester, West Virginia and also Glen Echo Park in Washington, D.C. Anderson himself was a mechanic. Regardless of whatever nature of a breakdown it was, electrical, carpenter, he was capable of taking care of it. Duffy was strictly a promoter as far as a purchasing agent for the Duffy-Anderson organization. At the present time the park is now being operated by Max Rindin.

Max Rindin was Charlie Deibel's secretary. Pat Duffy Jr. is now president of Idora Amusement. Lenny Cavalier is part of it in place of his father, and young Rindin is there. Although Max Rindin is into his seventies, he still comes out and sees what things are like.

In addition to the baseball games that they had, they also had wrestling matches in the evening. One night was a various promoter. They also had boxing matches to attract people to the park. People coming out to the ball field where these were held, naturally, at one time or another they were going through the park, which meant revenue at the various stands. Youngsters selling popcorn and peanuts at these affairs picked themselves up spending money during the school season.

- F: Most of the ages of the workers who were helping out at concession stands would be what age? Is it the same as it is today, fourteen or eighteen or so?
- K: Yes. We had old fellows like Jack Fitzgibbons who was also partner of the Grand Bowling Lanes downtown. We had Bob Mills as I mentioned before as maintenance man, and Ed Siefert. They were ten or fifteen years older than we were. Anyone operating a ride, if my memory serves me right, could not be under eighteen years of age.
- F: The swimming pool at Idora, that was down where kiddie land is?
- K: That was down where your present kiddie land is. There was a twenty-four hour filtration plant connection right with it. The water was purified twenty-four hours a day. They had regular lifeguards and occasionally they would put on beauty contests for the girls. The different organizations would put on their beauty pageants of that nature. They had the Old Mill. The only amusements that are still in their present place are the Jack Rabbit, the merry-go-round, the popcorn stand, and the offices. They are in the same places that they were in 1924.
- F: What about the boat ride?
- K: No, originally it was up where the Wildcat is now. It was up there and they moved it from there down to where it is now. They moved the Firefly and called it the Jack Rabbit. They had the Penny Arcade where you could put your pennies in and see western pictures. They had what they called grab machines. If you picked up the right thing with the magnet you could win knives or silver dollars or things of that nature.
- F: Did they have games of athletic ability?
- K: At that time they had nothing but what was known as the spike game. In other words, they gave you a ten penny spike to drive into an eight by eight plank in three cracks. If you

drove it in you got yourself a prize. They had what they called a high striker, which they gave you approximately a twelve pound wooden mallet, rubber mallet on the end. You hit a rubber disc and on a wire there was a rubber cylinder which would go up, and if you hit it properly you would ring the bell and you would get a star.

F: I remember working out there a couple of years ago, when we had pickups. We used to have to go around to the different booths and pick up the money, pick them up in paper bags and walk through the park just with a paper bag full of money. You could have a couple hundred dollars right in there. No one knew about it, but at that time how did they go about the pickup of the money?

K: The pickup of the money was made by the concession owner and the ride owner. For example, the concessions run by the park were picked up by the park manager with the park policeman with him. With the concessions run by Duffy and Anderson, Duffy did all the pickups. Your concession stands at that time--the popcorn stand--usually had three employees in it. The other ones normally during the week only had one, but on these big picnics we would have two and we would also have relief men. When it was time to eat or give you a break they had someone come in and relieve you for half an hour or so, because you would be there from 9:00 in the morning until 1:00 the next morning on some particular picnic days.

F: They really worked you then.

K: For ninety-six to 100 hours you got \$15. In fact, when I first started working I made more money working maybe Decoration Day, Memorial Day. I could make as much work on that one day, on a Sunday, as I did when I went on full payroll. Some of those concessions, not counting the bingo, but some of the concessions on their bigger days would take in anywhere from \$800 to \$1000.

F: Just in one day?

K: Yes.

F: Being that you took in a large amount of money in just one day did you have a lot of trouble with the payment?

K: We had no trouble as far as money went, but as far as within the crowd, you would always have the jokers. Joe Carney was in charge of the dance floor and if anyone got out of line you went up and warned them. If they did it again you took them up to the office and they were warned that they were no longer permitted in the park and they were escorted to either the streetcar or if they had a car they were escorted out. When they offered to take the policeman on, Sergeant Nolan and Captain Roberts would keep things under control.

F: When I was working at Idora Park we had a lot of trouble with the money end of it. People would be picking up money and trying to rob. I mentioned that I had to pick up with just paper bags and go right through the crowd. There was a good chance of me being robbed. You mentioned before about pickpockets. Would you like to reminisce about that?

K: Like everything else we had our siege of pickpockets. On big days such as your holidays or your large picnics, that was a field day for them. To eliminate it as much as possible the maintenance men or the concession owners or operators would go through the crowd with their billfold partly exposed yet concealed. If it was picked, automatically, they knew who it was and they turned around and got him. As far as bothering the park at night, when the receipts were removed from Idora Park, the policemen that were on duty went with the manager.

We had any number of youngsters that would come up to the stand with \$5, and in fact, as high as \$20. They would give it to you to take a chance on the fish pond which was one of the few places that they were allowed to play, because they got something for their dime. When they handed you a large bill you started to question them right off. In the meantime, one of the other employees would go down to the office and get one of the policemen. When they would contact their parents, the parents didn't even know where they were at. They had taken the money out of the sugar bowl in the kitchen or in the dresser. The youngsters did not realize the difference between a one dollar bill or a twenty dollar bill. They would give it to you and you would ask them how much change they had coming and they had no idea. They did not know the value of what they had given us, and they would give us as high as a twenty dollar bill.

F: During the Depression with the money being so scarce, do you think that more people were inclined to rob each other, and cheat?

K: No, it was the same way as people talked about playing the various games of chance. Any game of chance, the percentage is with the house. Regardless of what we gave out there was a certain amount that the operator of that stand would . . . For example, if we gave out a blanket . . . At that time \$1.80 wholesale was a lot of money for a blanket. If you bought them downtown they ran you \$3.50 or \$4. If the red light came up that red light would only come up when the amusement company had approximately fifty percent profit or better on that particular item because of the percentage of the way the white, the blue, and the red lights were set.

F: As far as the employees working there, they couldn't rig it to the point where they would actually steal?

K: There was no possibility of rigging. We were accused of rigging it. In fact, one time I was accused of giving a blanket to a

party that didn't win it. The Darksy brothers were standing there when this incident happened. I went to South High with them. This guy was calling us all kind of names, crooks and cheats and that we were running a gip joint. Idora Park does not permit any cheating or any rigging of any kind. Pat Duffy came up to me and said, "Big Red, what's your problem?" I said, "The man is accusing me of cheating and giving the wrong party the blanket. I'm not saying anything further. I've got three people there that will give you my answer." They gave the story that I gave the man who claimed that he won it, the blanket. Duffy said, "Give him a blanket. We don't want any hard feelings." Even though I had given the proper winner the blanket, he still got one.

F: As far as making sure that the public was satisfied they bent over backwards at that time.

K: The public had to be satisfied. You had to watch your language. There was no foul mouth, no cursing, no swearing. If you would lose your temper even when there weren't many people around and one of the bosses went by and you happened to cuss, they told you off and told you off in plain words that that wasn't permitted if you intended to continue to work there. The next time, out.

F: That was it.

K: That was it. This was during the bootleg days and when the various outfits would have their picnics there were people in intoxicated conditions. They would take them down to the office and put them back in the office for a while and let them get in shape.

We also had fellows that wound up in politics. Eddie Gilronan was county commissioner. We had Frank McBride, who wound up as assistant fire chief. When he retired from the city department he went as chief of the fire department at the airport. He also has a brother still on the force that worked out there with us, Jack, who is an assistant fire chief at the present time.

F: You see where these boys started at, Idora Park, and they ended up pretty well.

K: We had another Carney there, Jack Carney. He was known as "Porky" Carney. He could keep those people under control. This was after my time, but they had Pete out there at the dance hall. Pete, when he was growing up, was the biggest devil, but when Pete put that uniform on Pete was a policeman; he was a policeman from the word law.

F: I've had a few run-ins with Pete and I knew that he was definitely a policeman.

K: Various weeks during the season they would bring in circus acts.

One, his name was Babcock, rode a bicycle down a 150 foot ramp. He started at the top and came down 150 foot ramp and jumped a 10 foot gap, and then came down the midway. We had a number of various circus acts, but at the present time it's too many years to remember what some of them were.

One point I forgot to mention was the Idora Playhouse. Lil Desmond was the producer. They put on plays all season long. There was a different play every week. They used the local stagehands and they would bring in lead actors in addition to her. Lil Desmond married Dr. Rantz and they moved out west.

F: Where was this playhouse at?

K: The playhouse sat where your present hot dog stand is today. The hot dog stand is down there. Behind that was a playhouse that I would say would seat approximately 500 people. They would put on all types of shows: musicals, drama, and whatever was popular at that time. They would put them on and they would be there for the entire summer.

F: What was the cost to get into this playhouse?

K: 50¢ was all it cost to see a live stage show.

F: The 50¢ that was paid for the playhouse there at Idora Park, can you compare that with the money that you would spend to see a show in town?

K: Your downtown shows roughly would be in the 25¢ to 50¢ range. In fact, at one time Lil had put on shows at the old Hippodrome. The old Hippodrome building is still down there; they call it the Hip Arcade. That was a theater where they could put on regular road shows.

F: Going back all those years, I only see what Youngstown has today. I know that it has changed so much.

K: In addition to that we had what was known as the old Park Theater which was a burlesque house later on. They had road shows in there.

F: The Park Theater used to be right by the YMCA?

K: Where the Central Store was, on Federal Street. It was between Boardman and Federal. They would have road shows in there and then after that they had vaudeville. When the vaudeville went then the Stambaugh Auditorium was used to bring road shows in. They had ice shows at Stambaugh Auditorium. They even brought in, if my memory serves me right, Father Sullivan. He was the instigator or the perpetrator of the song "Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition." The Catholic organization brought him into Stambaugh Auditorium and they packed the house. He stated--this

is going back into the middle 1940's--at that time that the country was going to the dogs because you were not a name anymore, you were a number. You had a social security number; you had a number in the service; you had a number for this. When you worked in a shop or a factory or a steel mill you were known as a number, you weren't known as a name. To him this was very degrading because you still should be recognized by your name and not a number. I think his name was Sullivan.

- F: I don't know if you were ever involved with this, but going back along with that at the time did they ever restrict names or try to tell people to limit the size of their name? If it was a long one they were told to shorten it for payroll checks.
- K: No. I started to work for Sheet & Tube in 1934. I was hired in 1934 by Sheet & Tube in the open hearth. The first day that I worked was February 2, 1934 in the stock house. I was put to work in a car of frozen dolomite and my ears were frozen. From there I went down to what they called the cinder yard. Your cinder from your open hearth, the steel goes into a regular ladle and the impurities come to the top and flow out into a smaller ladle. That ladle is removed out to what we call the cinder yard. The cinder was broken up and hauled to various places as fillings. From there I went on to the job known as tab boy, timekeeper, test carrier which meant that I had to know which furnaces and what kind of heat was being poured, what type of steel was coming out of that. I had to have that report ready for the superintendent, the assistant superintendent, and general foreman when they came out to work so they knew exactly what furnace was going to be pouring steel at what time.
- F: This was on-the-job training then by someone older than you who showed you how to do it?
- K: No, this was right there. Then from there I went to slagging. Due to the temperature which is 1800 degrees Fahrenheit, the heat got the best of me and the doctor advised me to get off of it. I went over into the inspection office working on conditioning reports. I worked there a year and then they brought my brother John back. He had been in the office; they had put him out in the mill to better himself, but they found out that he was the one who knew the operation of the office. You could not work for a relation, so I was sent up to the seamless mill with the same type of work, handling conditioning reports.

From the seamless I went to the blooming mill, the rod and wire at the Briar Hill plant. I continued on that job until approximately 1942 and then I went on as general foreman of conditioning, which meant that specific steel could not be scarfed. By scarfing I mean with a combination of acetylene and oxygen, a torch, and the heat from that. You remove the impurities in the round billet to be charged into the mill. We would charge for a six inch billet, maybe six inches in diameter

We would end up with forty feet of pipe, anywhere from five and three fourths od (outside dimensions) up to as high as fourteen inches.

During the Second World War we made bomb stock. We made what we call fourteen inch od pipe in anywhere from thirty-eight to forty foot lengths. They were shipped to various places; the closest one was New Castle. They were cut up by machines into 500 pound bombs used in the Second World War.

We also made gun barrel stock. The thickness of the tube or pipe when it came out would be anywhere from an inch to an inch and a half in thickness, with nothing but maybe an inch hole in the center of it.

From there they took all the conditioning to Briar Hill. Going back, when things got a little tough and business slacked off, the seamless mill would go down to four day operation. When I started the labor rate at that time in the mill was 47¢ an hour. The job that I went on, I was high-priced; I got 48½¢ an hour. When I went on to slagging it was on a tonnage basis. It amounted to 75¢ an hour for a slagger. Your second helpers, their rate was up around \$1.25 an hour. When you got to the first helper, he was the money man. When you got to the melter, they were in the three figures on their monthly paycheck.

- F: As far as the Depression itself, how did it affect the paychecks and the people who were being paid? Layoffs?
- K: There were considerable layoffs. In fact, at that time there were no unions and you would go out and if there were only two hours of work, you worked two hours and you were sent home. You might work four hours and then you were sent home.
- F: Were you on call at that time, something like "If we need you we'll call you?"
- K: They would have your schedule and when they sent you home they said, "We won't have anything for two or three days. We'll call you when we need you." When the union finally organized in 1937, when they went out on strike, we were out for approximately thirty days. When we went back they worked us twelve to sixteen hours a day, seven days a week, trying to get caught up on the backlog of orders that we had.
- F: Before 1937 you said there was no union. What about strikes?
- K: We had a company union. Employees elected people to represent them in their own department when there was any grievance or gripe. Those were the people that would go in and talk to the superintendent. Everyone wasn't permitted to go in with their beefs to the superintendent. You had certain men that went in, and they were as powerful as the union is today, but they were considerate. They would give and take; they weren't out

to create the condition. Even though I was a union man and was for unions, they created the condition we're operating under today as far as wages go. My argument all the time was right from the go that all companies should have a profit sharing plan; by that I mean there is too much waste. These companies could make enormous amounts of additional profits if they would share it with the employees. For example, if I would throw a tool away that still had use and we were on a profit sharing basis, my fellow workers would be on my neck to use that tool until it was worn out. All the years that I was down there that was my argument.

This is going back into the Depression days. I started to work for Proctor & Gamble soap people on what was known as field advertising. Field advertising at that time was house-to-house, giving out free "buy one, get one free" coupons; We also sampled detergents and soap that people of today wouldn't know what we were talking about, such as: P&G soap, Chipso Granules, Chipso Flakes, Camay soap. They were the first ones to come out with perfumed soaps. The sales pitch was to have women try it, that it was recommended by dermatologists who are your skin doctors, and the perfume put into it was a French perfume. I worked for them and at that time we had 150 crews when I started in 1929. The Depression started to hit then. Our crew had such a good production they cut to seventy-five crews. We were sent out of the territory that was covering the Youngstown district and we continued on. They cut from seventy-five crews to thirty-five crews and our crew still went on. We worked the eastern part of Ohio such as East Liverpool, Steubenville. From there we went to Akron and worked Akron, Cuyahoga Falls, Barberton, Kenmore.

- F: How were you transported to all these different places? Was there a van?
- K: We had a truck that carried our supplies and we had a regular sedan where we traveled from one town to another. When you would get into a large town you would be in the town for . . . For example, Akron, we were there three months. Our room rent, by rooming in a private home, would run us anywhere from \$2 to \$2.50 a week. Our breakfast, including eggs, bacon, and coffee would be 25¢ to 30¢.
- F: These private homes you're talking about for room and board, how did you get a reservation there?
- K: When we would hit the town we would look in the newspapers to find out where there were people who had rooms in private homes for rent.
- F: The reason they had the rooms to rent was possibly due to the Depression itself?

K: They needed additional income to operate their home, maintain their home. In some places there would be as high as four of us out of a crew of eight staying in one home. We would stay in hotels in that time out through Indiana where it only cost \$2.50 and \$3 a week. We would put our laundry out in the morning and come back that night and our laundry was on the bed. The only town of all the towns that we covered throughout the western part of Ohio and Indiana, the only town that still didn't know there was a Depression was Galion, Ohio; their main industry at that time was caskets. The president of the bank absconded with \$150,000. Up until that time the people didn't know what a Depression was. They were so independent. You took your laundry into the laundry on Monday and if you got it by Saturday you would consider yourself fortunate. In traveling, naturally, packing your suitcases, when you would get into these smaller towns we would work the other ones out of the larger towns surrounding it and maybe we would be in that town only two weeks. Fort Wayne, Indiana was the largest town in Indiana where we stayed. We were there approximately two months. In Toledo we had room and board which consisted of a cooked breakfast and a cooked evening supper as it was called before we got high tone and called it dinner. We got it for \$8 a week, seven days a week.

F: That is really something. As far as wages, did they pay for your room and board? How was that set up?

K: When you started you made \$20 a week salary. You were given a \$5 a week allowance. Depending upon how long you worked your next raise would be to \$27.50. It wasn't on your salary, it was based on your \$20 a week. You would go to \$10 expenses. Your top money was \$35, \$20 [expenses]. Then at Christmastime, due to the fact that people weren't interested in peddlers, as we were called, pounding on their doors . . . According to the company we were not salesmen, we were there for the purpose of promoting the latest product to help the housewife in doing her housework, soap and latest detergents to be used in their laundry.

To give you an idea of the Depression in Akron. One family would come up and get the job at the rubber works up there and then they would bring up some more. We would run into a six room house where there might be three or four families living there. That's the only way they could manage.

I worked in Peru, Indiana, where at that time that was the winter quarters for Ringling Brothers, Barnum & Bailey Circus. The boss took me down and dropped me off to make a section all by myself. I went down there and those people were living in piano boxes and Victrola boxes. There was no cement or wood on the floor. Their tables and chairs were orange crates or wooden boxes of that nature that they got from the grocery store. It was so pathetic that I would give a sample to every place

to see if they could at least know what the heck soap was for. The boss raised hell with me, Why was I so long? How come I was out of samples? I said, "You go down there. Never send me down there."

When we worked in Campbell, we worked up on what was known as Short Street, Robinson Road, and that. They had what they called the flats down there. With the Depression and the amount of income, someone would be working in the mill on daylight and would go to bed at 3:00. There was someone else in that bed at 3:00. They would get out of bed and go to work. When they got out of the bed in the morning at 7:00 there was someone that came off of the 11:00 to 7:00 turn that went into that bed. In a four room apartment you would run into as high as twelve or fifteen people.

F: What about the soup lines and bread lines in these various cities?

K: We didn't run into them; it hadn't gotten to that stage.

F: You're talking 1930?

K: I'm talking 1929 and 1930. Things weren't to the point that there wasn't a sufficient amount of employment. There was part-time employment; there was no such thing as unemployment benefits. At that time your charitable organizations, Catholics, Salvation Army, Red Cross and that, they were the ones that manned the soup lines. We had George Olde's Market right on the square in Youngstown which specialized in giving rates. For example, you bought five loaves of bread for \$1. They were pound and a half loaves, not the pound loaves that they put on special now, four loaves for \$1. Your produce and all that was on the same basis. You didn't have chain stores at that time. You had a few coming in, but the majority of them were your neighborhood grocers where you went and you charged and you paid on payday. When you paid the bill on payday, a bag of candy was given for the children and pop got a cigar.

F: How about the people at that time, they didn't have the money, but did they really try and make the payment?

K: Those that had any income, they tried to keep their credit rate regardless. I know one particular fellow that got a home on the north side, on Felicia. At that time a \$15,000 home was a lot of money. He picked that home up for the mortgage that the people that owned it couldn't pay, for \$3500. That's why your city bank actually liquidated and you only got a percentage of your money back. To reopen they asked anyone that had any kind of a savings account at all to take out stock so they could reopen. The reason they were in the financial position they were in, they had so many mortgages on homes in Campbell where the value of the homes was not too great. They could not even

sell them for what the mortgage was on the homes. They formed a holding company. In my own particular case, I had \$100 in a savings account that was tied up. Out of that \$100 I wound up with roughly \$10 and then the holding company was dissolved.

F: Almost like ten percent of whatever it was.

K: For example, my dad, he had somewhere around \$1000 or \$1500. He wound up with maybe \$700 or \$800 out of his savings; it taught him a lesson from then on. When dad died we found out that he had only put so much in this bank and so much in that bank and so much in the other. He didn't put all of his eggs in one basket; he spread them around due to being stung on account of that.

F: What were the opinions of your family itself? Did they blame this on people in the presidency at the time and the people in politics?

K: It was blames, actually, on the government. It was a letdown from the boom that we had gone through previously. In other words, they claim according to history there is a cycle of every seven years that you run into a depression or a recession. This one was one of the biggest ones that they had ever run into. We've had recessions today. They don't realize the number of people out of work. The average person doesn't realize. I know especially they don't realize these truck drivers. Without these shipments from the factories today, the number of truck drivers that haven't worked for months . . . In fact, I know one particular fellow that hasn't worked for six months. He is a truck driver. In the meantime, their unemployment runs out, although the government has subsidized it, but that is still not the answer to it.

F: You can compare people that are unemployed today with people that you knew who were unemployed during those Depression years. Today, they, at least, are getting some kind of subsidy either through unemployment check or unemployment compensation, or food stamps we have. Something like this they can get. At that time, back during the Depression, how did a father of a family react to it?

K: What they did at that time, everyone had their own gardens. Mothers did all the canning. You could go out to farms and pick the stuff there for nothing. You brought it home and you canned it.

When I was a youngster my dad raised chickens. He had fruit trees; he raised all kinds of vegetables. I'm referring back to when you did not have the coal furnace, you had the coal stove that sat in the room and it heated the whole house. Our food was from what garden dad had, although we were one

of the fortunate. As I stated, dad was in supervision and his pay was reduced fifty percent even though he worked full-time. In years after that we ran into it. Supervision would be cut as high as ten or twenty-five percent in their salary, but they still had to work the same number of hours whereas your hourly employee, they were off. They only worked when there was work. Under the same conditions today you have these students getting out of high school, especially referring to girls that took up office work, typing, secretarial work, There are no jobs for them because there are so many of the ones with experience that they will hire the experienced one in preference to the ones that just got out of school. You have any number of those people that have got degrees. What I'm referring to are degrees in chemistry, electrical and various types of that, that are minor jobs in industry today just to make a living.

As I stated before, the people today, the younger people today, claim that we didn't know what it was to live. We knew what it was to live; we knew what a nickel was. We went out and we cut the neighbor's grass if they had money. We went out and we would get 20¢ or a quarter, and that was a lot of money. In fact, we had a grocery store run by the Hutchinson family on Erie Street. I think every one other than the oldest brother worked there after school and Saturdays for a couple of dollars for our spending money.

- F: I was just wondering, during the Depression, talking about these grocery stores, what if a person's family did not have the money? Did they work in exchange for food from the grocer?
- K: Some of them would. The grocer would carry them as long as he could, and if they didn't make any effort then he had to cut them off completely, because he had to have income to replenish his stock.

Just like they resurfaced Milton Dam during the Depression. If you went out there and got a job yourself as a laborer you got \$5, but if a councilman sent you out there you would get three days. If the councilman sent you out there on the same job, you could get \$10, but if I went on my own I got \$5 for the same job.

F: Just because of who you know. That's what it comes down to.

K: Definitely.

F: Now WPA [Works Progress Administration] . . . Being that you're from Youngstown and know this area, all the swimming pools I've noticed, most of them are through WPA. I noticed that Shady Run, the ball park, and a couple of other baseball fields around Dewey Park are WPA also. What did you think?

K: That was strictly politics, you had to know the right politician to get the job. You couldn't go on your own. You've got the same condition today. You've got people that have been nothing but leeches of the taxpayer's money from the word go. I know any number of them working on city jobs and county jobs that never worked a day in their life. It has been nothing but through their political pull.

F: Mr. Kane, is there anything else that you think is important to add that we did not cover as of yet?

K: The only thing that I will state is that at that time, Monsignor Kane of St. Patrick's--and not because it is the same name as mine--had a coal car sitting down on Dunning & Crumb siding on the Y&S tracks. Anyone, regardless of their faith, color, or anything else, if he found out they were without coal, there was a truckload of coal delivered to their house and they never knew where it came from.

F: This was done by Monsignor Kane of St. Patrick's?

K: He wasn't the only one. St. Vincent DePaul Society, and Mr. Tom Crogan Sr., more people in that neighborhood down there in tough times had groceries and other items of necessity given to them and they never knew where it came from.

F: I know that it was a tough time to live in, but maybe it brought people closer together?

K: Someone that did have a little would see that a neighbor wasn't starving; they would see that they would get something to eat. Under today's conditions you're lucky to know your next door neighbor. In the old days your front porch in the summertime was a place to sit out and talk to your neighbors and chat and find out what is going on. Today you can go by street after street where there are porches, and you don't see anything sitting out. Your newer homes they don't put porches up because the cost is excessive. They have air conditioning and they don't sit out there to get the fresh air is what it amounts to.

They've got a senior citizens nutrition program at the present time. I don't know whether it's the state or federal government that subsidizes it, but there are eight places in town where you can go and get a noonday cooked meal for 50¢. You've got to stipulate what days you're going to be there so they know how much to prepare. They have one out here at St. Dom's; Salvation Army has one down at the old St. Patrick's School. There is one out on the west side, on the north side. All told there are eight of them. It's 50¢ for a cooked meal and that cooked meal, as an example, you can get two slices of beef that are a fairly good size, mashed potatoes, a vegetable, bread or rolls, dessert, and coffee or milk for the 50¢. Two people on a

limited income, which your retirees are on, this was a godsend.

F: This is the only thing that they've actually done as far as to help out the senior citizens today. A year ago they were going to go with the food stamps for senior citizens. I know I myself took petitions and we had signed them and sent them in. It's up to the people and the government to get things moving. They have been lax, as you said.

K: The government has been lax. In other words, in my estimation, all through your city government they talk about the conditions today. The conditions today start right with your local government. By that I mean first your city, then your county, then your state, and then your federal government.

They don't let the policeman do the job that he is sworn in to do. When he does his job he is criticized by a minority group, and when it comes to the trial the judge, for political reasons--votes, will make the policeman the goat instead of the person that really committed the crime. They've got to reorganize the entire legal setup as far as laws. They're on the books. All they've got to do is enforce them; that is what it amounts to.

F: The policeman can do all he wants, but it's up to the judge to actually . . .

K: There is one particular judge in town. I sat next to him one night at a banquet and I didn't get off of his back because we're pretty good buddies. Finally, he turned to me and he said, "Don, why don't you get off my back?" I said, "John, when you throw the book at those people that are brought in front of you, then I'll be a hundred percent for you, but until that time every time I run into you I'm going to be on your back." He said, "Even cases where the policeman is brought in and the person that was held up or beat up has their witnesses, they will bring in fifteen or twenty witnesses that that party was clear across town. It happened on the east side, they were on the south side. I've got to go by the evidence produced in court." I said, "That evidence is all produced by your minority race. Even your colored people, they will call these ones that are running their race niggers. I've had that experience happen to me personally.

I sat with an attorney and a banker, and there were 500 or 600 colored people there. There were only about a half of a dozen of us whites there. There was no commotion or loud business or that. They invited me to go over to the barn and have a drink with them. I went over. I said, "It's amazing to me to see the number of your people in here and no commotion or anything." He said, "I'll bet you worked in the mill, didn't you?" I said, "That's right." He said, "Let's put it this way. We are colored people. The people that you are used to dealing with are niggers. They want everything handed to them. They're a minority." I

said, "If I would have called them a nigger you would have cut my throat, but you can call them a nigger and get away with it." He said, "That's right."

I've got a colored cleaning woman here and there was no nice and better person in this whole dang town. She hates those nigger's guts. She has neighbors; she won't even go out on her street after she leaves here. She gets picked up and taken home. She won't even leave her house unless she has a ride, and she's colored herself. She heard the neighbor kids coming in at 2:00, 3:00, 4:00 in the morning with batteries and tires. She says, "I can't say anything. I wouldn't have a window in my house."

F: I thank you very much for the interview.

END OF INTERVIEW