

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Youngstown in the 1930 Depression Years

Personal Experience

O.H. 961

RUSSELL H. HAHN

Interviewed

by

Maribeth Harry

on

June 9, 1976

RUSSELL HAMPTON HAHN

Mr. Russell Hampton Hahn was born on November 29, 1902 in Churchville, Virginia. His parents were Frank James and Margaret Alene Hahn. Russell Hahn's father was a tenant farmer. Russell and his family moved to Austintown, Ohio in 1913.

While in Virginia, Russell Hahn attended Augusta Military Academy. He later graduated from Austintown High School in 1923. He is not a veteran; to quote Mr. Hahn, "I was too young for combat duty in World War I, and too old for it in World War II." Mr. Hahn married the former Miss Helen Mellinger on June 1, 1934. Mr. and Mrs. Russell Hahn have one son, Russell Hampton, Jr.; he was born in 1936.

Mr. Hahn was an Isaly's Dairy employee from 1923 to 1926. From 1926 to 1929, he worked at Youngstown Boiler and Tank Company. In the late summer and early fall of 1929, he was working for the Mazda Lamp Company in Niles, Ohio. From 1929 to 1931, he was under the employment of Mr. Amos Mellinger, of Youngstown. Mr. Mellinger was an architect and builder. In addition, during this period, Mr. Hahn worked for Standard Oil of Ohio. From 1933 to 1941, Mr. Hahn was a self-employed hardware store owner; his business venture was named Mellinger Hardware of Cornersburg, Ohio. In 1941, until Mr. Hahn's retirement in 1970, he was an appraisal engineer for the Cole-Layer-Trumble Company of the Tri-County area.

Mr. Hahn is a member of the Canfield United Methodist Church, the Canfield Men's Community Club, Argus Lodge 545,

Scottish Rite of Youngstown, Tadmire Temple of Akron, and Aut-Mori Grotto of Youngstown. Mr. Hahn is an avid golfer and home gardener.

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Youngstown in the 1930 Depression Years

INTERVIEWEE: RUSSELL H. HAHN
INTERVIEWER: Maribeth Harry
SUBJECT: the 1930 Depression years, high school, NRA,
the stock market, types of jobs, cost of
living, general impressions
DATE: June 9, 1976

MH: This is an interview with Mr. Russell Hahn for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on Youngstown in the 1930 Depression years, by Maribeth Harry, at 350 Overbrook Drive, Canfield, Ohio, on June 9, 1976, at 7:30 p.m.

Mr. Hahn, what do you remember about your parents and your family?

RH: Well, I was born in a little town in Churchville, Virginia, in the year 1902, on November 29. Of course, I don't remember too much about my younger days. We moved from pillar to post, so to speak. I went to school in a little town in Verona, Virginia, which is not too far from Staunton, Virginia. Then, I went to another little school in Mount Signey. From there, we moved to Ohio, and that was back around 1913, as I recall. Of course, then I went to school in Austintown, which is now Fitch High School. As a matter of fact, I graduated from there years ago. Then along came World War I, and my father was about to be drafted, so we went back to Virginia. There I went to Augusta Military Academy. Of course, I didn't graduate from there. I went to preparatory school in high school. To show you the difference between school systems, I was in the seventh grade there and doing

eighth and ninth grade work, which would be algebra, geometry and stuff of that sort. So in reality, I never had the eighth grade. When I came back to Ohio, they put me right in high school because I could do geometry and all that stuff. I didn't lose because you almost need the eighth grade to get into high school to be successful. I was never an atrocious boy or anything of that sort. I always got pretty good grades. I guess maybe I was just lucky that things came easy somehow or another.

I graduated from Austintown High in 1923. It has been a long while. Of course, after getting out of school, I started to work. My first job was with the Isaly Dairy Company. I worked for the Isaly Dairy Company for about two and a half years. Chester Isaly, who was the manager and the owner at that particular time, he and I had a little disagreement one day. Of course, that was the first job I ever got fired at, and my last. Those were the days when you worked seven days a week.

MH: What would be a raise?

RH: I don't remember that. It wasn't wrong to speak of, but I don't recall. So I just walked across the street and got a job at Youngstown Boiler and Tank. I don't recall how long I worked there. I started to work nights, and there I made pretty good money. I was operating a machine and had a helper. For myself, we worked piece work. You were allowed to make so much per turn. I was allowed to make my maximum, which was 15 dollars an evening and 11 dollars for my helper. Being single, I would run around all day and work at nighttime. Sometimes, you would have your money made by 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning and you couldn't go home until 7:00, so I would find a place to get a couple hours of sleep. I would come home and then do some work around home. It got to the point that there wasn't very much to do, so I went to work from there to Mazda Lamp Company in Niles. Frankly, I had to work there just to play basketball. They had a basketball team which you might call it semipro. It was kind of handy to play basketball. I worked there until early spring, and then, I started to work for my late father-in-law, Amos Mellinger. I learned the carpenter trade from him. What I know of it, and up to this day, it is still quite enjoyable. We had been building some houses. As a matter of fact, you know where your house is?

MH: Yes.

RH: Lorain's house, and then I think there is another house, Joseph's house. . . .

MH: Yes.

RH: The next house is where Earlman's used to live.

MH: Yes.

RH: Well, that was our first home.

MH: I didn't know that.

RH: Yes, we bought that house during the Depression. We weren't married. We had the house a couple of years before we were married, and we rented it. Helen paid on the second mortgage and I paid on the first mortgage, and that was how we got started.

Going back to the Depression, we had nothing to do, and we put away the tools. I started out looking for something to do. I took the first thing that was available. I started working for a refined oil company; I assume that I worked approximately nine months possibly, and then they were absorbed by the Standard Oil Company. That proved to be a pretty big job during the Depression time. There again, we were working seven days a week. Then we had the stock market crash in 1929. FDR closed the banks.

MH: What was that like, do you remember?

RH: Well, yes, it was kind of rough. People had very little money. Of course, there were some that did have money. I thought at that time when I took the job pumping gasoline that was about the worst possible job that you could get. I hated being the one to wait on my friends that had enough money to buy a gallon of gasoline.

MH: Do you remember the price of gas at that time?

RH: Oh, no. I'm just guessing that it was in the neighborhood between 15 cents and 20 cents a gallon. Kerosene, you couldn't give it away, but now it is a higher price than gasoline.

MH: Yes. Was there a national state tax at the time on the gasoline price?

RH: Yes, I think we had a state tax and a federal tax on gasoline back at that time.

Then, I worked for the Standard Oil Company for about seven and a half years. In the meantime, while I was pumping gas, Helen and I got married. I had a dad and mother, two brothers and a sister. Of course, they got

as hungry as I did. People would go in there and come in and use gold coins to buy gasoline. Well, I attempted to get as many of the gold coins as possible, but it got to the point where I had to spend the gold coins in order to feed the family. So I did retain a few of them. Helen and I got married and then we moved into our home on Mellinger Road.

MH: What was the date when you got married?

RH: June 1, 1934. As a matter of fact, we just celebrated out 42nd anniversary not too long ago.

MH: Mr. Hahn, you mentioned that you went to Austintown Fitch. In about 1924 you were graduated?

RH: It was 1923 that I graduated at Austintown Fitch. When we moved back from Virginia to Ohio, I started there as a freshman. If I remember right, John Eshelman was the principal there. John always had to pick on me. He used to always call me "old man Hahn". I was always the last to be doing something. We got along fine together. Wherever John would take a little trip or something like into Youngstown or something, he would always take me along. He had a Model-T Ford. I learned to drive this Ford. Of course, my parents never had an automobile. If I had a date, why, he would say, "You have a date tonight, don't you?" I would say, "Yes." He would say, "You can come and get my car."

MH: That was very nice.

RH: Then I would take it back. He wasn't married either. He lived across the street from the school and it was just a short distance from there to where I lived, so I would walk home.

Well, I graduated from there in 1923. I had planned on going to Ohio State where a very good friend of mine was, who is now deceased. Tommy was a year older than I, but we both had the same birthday. Tommy's mother passed away when he was quite young. He was raised by his older sister and dad. Tommy spent most of his time at our house. That was very convenient for me because we got along real well together. We would go back to Virginia for a visit, Tommy and I together. We both planned on going to college. Well, it was one of these situations where neither one of us or our parents had any money. This meant that we would have to work our way through school, which would have been all right to do. Tommy got a job in the mill, and he graduated a year ahead of me. Of course, when I got out of school, I started to work at the Isaly Dairy Company. So it was that neither one of us went to college. I guess

we, from the financial standpoint, couldn't make a great deal of that.

MH: What was your line of work after you were done with Amos Mellinger?

RH: During the Depression, we had nothing to do after the stock market crash or before the stock market crash. I was head of a gas and service station, and I worked for the Standard Oil Company for about seven and a half years. Then after that, Dad Mellinger had started a little hardware store in Cornersburg called Mellinger Hardware. He wanted me to give him a little hand selling paints. He was in the hardware line along with appliances. We sold Westinghouse appliances and Dad decided that he wanted to do something else, so Helen and I bought the hardware store. Then, we sold appliances up until the time when World War II came along, and we couldn't get appliances. If we would have hung onto the hardware store, we would have both starved to death, so we got out of that. In the meantime, I had quite a little sick spell. I was laid on my back for about nine weeks and didn't know whether I was going to make it or not, but I wouldn't give up. I was too young to give up. When I got out of bed, I couldn't walk. I had to learn to walk all over. I spent one whole summer just hopping around on crutches and a cane. I finally got to one crutch and a cane. Then I would go down to one cane and I would have to go back to the point where I could walk all over without them. I played a little canasta to get my equilibrium back together again.

Mahoning County was about to have a partial reappraisal at its real estate. The company was from Dayton. One of the men who owned the company bought a house in between where Dad Mellinger lived and the next house to Moran's house. He bought a house there. Then one day this chap called me and wanted to know what I was doing. I told him that I wasn't doing anything. He wanted me to come down the next day around 2 o'clock. It just happened to be a Sunday and I walked down hobbling on a cane yet. Then before I left, why, I had a job. I knew nothing about making real estate appraisal, but I worked. So I worked for the Cole Layer Tumble Company for 25 and a half years, until 1970 when I retired. When I retired, I was the district manager for the company for the Northeastern section of Ohio and part of the Western section of Pennsylvania. Boy, I guess I did all right.

MH: Very well. You mentioned that you were in high school in 1923, which was the roaring 20's. Do you remember anything about the period of fashions?

RH: Well, yes. Back in those days if you had a corduroy suit, you were in pretty good shape. Of course, those were the days when if you had one suit at all, you were lucky. If you had wavy hair a little bit, why, the trend was to see how much grease you could put on to straighten it out and part it in the middle.

MH: Did they wear raccoon coats? Is that the period or is that too late?

RH: I think that was a little earlier when they had raccoon coats.

MH: That's what I thought.

RH: I remember going to football games. Now and then you would see raccoon coats that didn't impress me at all.

MH: Who were the flappers?

RH: They wore relatively long dresses. I would say halfway between the knee and the ankle and more or less--I'm not much on fashions--but the jumper type, I guess you would say, sort of straight down.

The men, the young boys actually I should say, their coats would have a half belt in the back, you know. I can remember that.

MH: Long hair for females, was that popular?

RH: Well, yes, pretty much, long hair.

MH: Was there a Betty Boop?

RH: Well, I don't recall that too much. That was a little before my younger days.

MH: What business was your father in?

RH: Well, he was a farmer. He never owned a farm. He worked for . . . I guess you would say that he was a tenant on a farm.

MH: In Ohio?

RH: Yes, in Ohio and also when we lived in Virginia.

MH: What made him decide to come back home?

RH: Mainly, my mother had two brothers who lived here in Ohio and, of course, wages were much higher than they were in the South.

My parents pulled up the stakes, so to speak, and we all came to Ohio. Of course, he already had a job before he got here. That was back in about 1913, I think, when we came up here.

MH: Did many people come up from the South?

RH: Yes.

MH: You mentioned about the stock market when it crashed. Do you remember much about that?

RH: Well, it was kind of a sad day as I recall. The banks were closed. Nothing was opened, so to speak. A lot of people, of course--now, I didn't witness any of this, but a pair of people were spotted jumping out windows and things of that sort, committing suicide. They would say to cut it out there for a while. Of course, after a few days, things straightened out a little bit where you had some inkling as to where you were going. A lot of people that had money were putting it in real estate. For instance, if the bank owned the first mortgage on a piece of property and another person, antidependant, owned the second mortgage, the latter got wiped out entirely because the banks took over the property in order to satisfy the first mortgage. If there was anything left over it would be given to those who held the second mortgage.

MH: What was the credibility of the banks?

RH: After FDR had closed the banks, some banks stayed closed permanently.

MH: Was it the City Bank of Youngstown?

RH: I don't remember the name of the bank. That sounds about right, the City Bank.

MH: They said that wasn't too stable to begin with.

RH: That I wouldn't know. Then, I hadn't become interested in much of dollars and cents.

MH: Why do you think that the stock market crashed? What were your main reasons?

RH: I really don't know.

MH: Yes, you were just out of high school.

RH: I was just out of high school and hadn't been out too long. Of course, there are a lot of things about stock that I don't understand today and don't intend to, even attempt to try. I have never been much of a believer

in stocks. If you got some money, I think you better put it in the bank and draw a little interest on it better than playing something that you think you have got it today, and tomorrow you haven't.

MH: You weren't much of a gambler, isn't that so?

RH: No, I'm not a gambler either, in that respect.

MH: No, there is money to be made, but I have worked. It would be difficult for me to gamble. But you said that during the Depression you bought a home.

RH: Yes.

MH: Could you maybe remember the prices of homes during that period?

RH: No, I don't remember what we paid for it. Back about 1931 and 1932 was when we bought it. How we came to get it was Dad Mellinger had the second mortgage on this home. Of course, Helen paid that and I paid on the first mortgage. These people who owned it wanted to leave and go to California. I think their name was John. I believe they wanted to go to California. Anyhow, they wanted to let the house go for distance that they owned for it, and that is how we took it over. They didn't want anything; they just wanted to get out from there. Dad Mellinger had built the home, and we knew what it was like, and we lived in that home. It is still there.

MH: Safe investment.

RH: Yes, it was a safe investment. We never regretted it. At least we got a start.

MH: A very good start, I would say. Do you remember some incidents that stand out in your mind about the Depression in 1930? You got a home, but maybe people that were around you. . . ?

RH: I can't recall any more besides myself that had bought a home. You are talking about people who might have lost it or something?

MH: Yes, personal experiences. How the Depression maybe touched them.

RH: No, I just don't remember any personal experiences of people losing their homes.

MH: What was your first impression of President Hoover?

RH: I just don't know. I have never even formed an opinion on him somehow or other. I never got interested in presidents until FDR came along.

MH: What was your impression of FDR?

RH: Maybe I shouldn't say. Well really, FDR perhaps had a lot of good qualities, except I think you can contribute a lot of our difficulties that we have got today to the FDR regime due to the fact that he started this subsidy business. It has been carrying on until this time. That is what we are doing today, subsidizing everything. I don't know many things that aren't being subsidized, except pensions and things of that sort.

MH: Social security, would that be out of FDR?

RH: Do you feel that was a plus to him?

RH: Well, as far as he was concerned, I think it was, yes. That is too long for one man to serve as president. You become too powerful for one thing. Some of your ideas may not coincide with what the facts might be and he tried to change things. Well, some things he did change. One thing that he did during the Depression was that everybody who had a job were working seven days a week, that is if you worked at all.

MH: Yes.

RH: Then he . . . what was that called? NRA or something of that sort? I don't remember what the initials stood for, but I think it was the NRA which allowed you to work six days a week. Of course, then we have gotten down now to our five days a week. That is maximum and 40 hours. Of course, there had been talks of doing away with 40 hours a week making it four days a week. So, you have more time to live at the neighborhood bar and et cetera, listening to your president, listening to what he said.

MH: So, what was a typical day like for you in 1934? You were just married, is that correct?

RH: Yes. On a typical day, we worked different turns. I was working with the Standard Oil Company at that time. Helen was working, too. She was a mighty good wife, and still is. She was working in a law office. She would get up and ride to work. With the little transportation we had left, I went to work and to home. Maybe I would go to work in the afternoon; I would get home around 10:30 or 11:00 in the evening. The time that I was off and I would be home, why, I would help her do some of the cleaning around the house. After all, it was a two-way street. You better do it just

right then and help one another, and I think that is why we have always gotten along these some 40 years plus, because we help one another.

MH: You respect each other, too.

RH: Sure, absolutely. Then Russ junior came along and that sort of changed the picture somewhat. That meant that she wasn't working. We had a little fellow that needed attention, too. There again, I would help out. Back when we had the hardware store, Helen detested coming to the store and waiting on customers, especially if they wanted nails. In those days, you bought nails in a 100 pound wooden keg, which you don't buy them that way any more. You would package one pound or package 50 pounds in the carton. Anyway, she would detest weighing out nails because she would say, "Well, they are under the counter. Go pick out the ones that you want and weigh them yourself. There are the scales." Then if she wanted to go shopping or something and didn't want to take young Russ--why, he was a big boy, four or so--he would stop at the hardware store with me. The store wasn't very big. We did have refrigerators in there and kegs of nails under the counter and merchandise in the little back room that we had in the back of the store. There were various places that you could play hide and seek. I think that we wore that place out playing hide and seek, but I could never find him. You could walk right by them, but you would never see them.

MH: Do you remember the price of the refrigerator, for example?

RH: You paid 115 dollars or 120 dollars for a refrigerator, why, you were buying a pretty good refrigerator back in those times. Then, of course, along came World War II and you couldn't buy much. You couldn't get merchandise to sell. I was fortunate. I had a lot of merchandise which was bought and paid for. I had no problem disposing of anything I had.

MH: At a profit?

RH: Oh, yes. I had them. Then, of course, after I had taken sick, I couldn't operate the store any more. So we sold the stock they had and the building and the whole bit, lot, stock, and barrel. Maybe it was a good thing that we did.

MH: You said that you worked at Isaly's. Do you remember any of the prices of the dairy products?

RH: Oh boy, a 10 cent ice cream cone would be huge! Oh, yes. Before I worked there, you would stop then if you

had a dime, and you could get an ice cream cone. You would take that old spoon and scoop it out and stick it on there and it would be about yeah high.

MH: You didn't do that to customers and employees?

RH: Oh, no, no. When I worked at Isaly's Dairy, I started there driving a truck, and my route was . . . the first trip in the morning was to the downtown store right on the square, which was McCorry's off of Brick Square. Then I would leave from McCorry's. Then I would come back and load up and make a stop at Hubbard, Masury, then Sharon, Farrell, Sharpsville, and I would come back home. I drove a truck there possibly a month in the summer time. Those were back in the days when we didn't have refrigerated trucks. You load your ice cream on, then you go and put ice over top of it. It would be kind of a mess, so to speak. I had a flat tire about three days in a row. You never had a spare tire. The trucks that would go were internationals that looked like the old Franklin automobile with a sawed-off hood in front. They had a governor on them that you couldn't steal. Of course, they could be fixed that you could stop them and pick up a little stone and drop it behind the governor, and then you were in business.

MH: I'm not aware of the governor?

RH: Well, that was so you couldn't drive over a certain speed.

MH: It was set?

RH: Yes.

MH: What would it be, 50?

RH: Oh, no, no, about 30 or 35 miles per hour. You could drop a stone behind it. We soon learned all of these things. I'll never forget my first trip downtown in Youngstown. This Dave, a mechanic, went with me. That was my first trip. I was kind of timid. People would get in the way; they had all these whistles on that made a lot of noise. He said, "Let me drive." I slid over, he got under the wheel, and boy he pulled on this thing and plowed right on through traffic.

Anyway, I had a flat tire about three days in a row. You would have to call and they would send a repair truck out to fix your flat tire because you didn't have a spare.

Each night I came in about 7:00 in the evening, and my boss was out there. I said, "Mr. Libby, do you have

anything else around this place that I could do?" He said, "Yes. I may need a man to work in the cooler." I said, "I will take it."

That ended my career as a truck driver. I became a shipping clerk in the cooler, which consisted of putting up orders. People would come in wanting to buy cottage cheese, sour cream, whipping cream, and butter. I worked that for about two and a half years. Then, Mr. Isaly decided that my service was no longer needed because he and I had exchange of a couple unpleasant words.

MH: So then, you went out there.

RH: So then, I went to Youngstown Boiler and Tank. I worked there for quite a while. That was a pretty good job. I made good money there. I worked nights. They were about to take off the night then, and I wasn't interested in going back on days. So, I started to work for the Mazda Lamp Company in Niles. That was just principally to play basketball. That is why I was hired, to play basketball. It was one of those deals where if you had a ball game and you worked a turn that didn't fit in with the ball game, someone would come in and take over your duty just so you could go out and play basketball. There may be two for the same reason, and then you would come back and finish your turn and go home. You would get paid for it.

MH: That was nice. You can keep in good shape, too.

RH: I had a lot of fun doing that. I only did that for the one season. I decided that wasn't for me. Then, I started to work, of course, for my late father-in-law. That was doing carpenter work. I learned the carpenter trade.

MH: You also had met Helen, then?

RH: I had met Helen before the Depression, because we went together for about six years. We couldn't afford to get married because I had a dad and mother and two brothers and a sister to feed. We couldn't afford to get married.

MH: Looking back, are there any changes that you would like to make? Not in your personal life, but maybe in the country? Do you see any major changes in the United States well since 1923? What are the major changes that you have seen since 1923 until today, 1976?

RH: Well, there has been quite an increase in population for one.

MH: Yes.

RH: I think that putting a man on the moon, for another. I think in my time, we lived in a wonderful age. We saw the television develop, radio, our communication; certainly the telephone has developed and been improved much since that age. Automobiles have gone from the Model-T to the Model-A and various other mix of cars. The air plane, of course, I forgot that one. Well frankly, I think that the world today is perhaps a better place than from when it was back in the 1930s. Of course, we didn't have the environmental problems that we do today. We had plenty of everything, but nobody could acquire it. Living in as far as fancy chemicals was sort of a hay day. Nobody had money to purchase anything. Of course, we saw the WPA when people were out of work. What is now route 62 that goes down past Dad and Mother Mellinger's cobble stone house, that used to be old route 19. Along in front of their house was their own private little incline. They went back in the field and cut that down, straightened it out. Then from Cornersburg into St. Elizabeth's--do you remember St. Elizabeth's used to be right there then?

MH: Yes, I do.

RH: Then put in a sidewalk. Nobody walked on it; they walked on the road. They put it in just the same. It was something for people to do. Then, they got a little money. Of course later on, they were financed by whom? By the federal government.

MH: Then, the problems at home. They did have electricity then. What did they use in the basement?

RH: They had a Delco system. It was a series of batteries that generated electricity for your home.

MH: Was that easy to obtain?

RH: Well, if you had the money, yes.

MH: Was it expensive?

RH: Yes, it was quite expensive.

MH: Then, it was effective?

RH: Oh yes, it was effective.

MH: How long did you have this system?

RH: Well, that was before me and my time knowing Helen Mellinger. I didn't know how long they had that.

MH: That was in the late. . . .

RH: She was born in 1908. She is six years younger than I.

MH: Do you remember Fred Allen on the radio?

RH: Yes, I remember Fred Allen on the radio. He was quite a comedian. I think that everybody who had a radio would look forward to the Fred Allen hour.

MH: Where was that broadcasted from? Do you know?

RH: I don't know, either New York or Chicago. I'm not sure.

MH: I have read a little bit about him, but what type of comedian was he? Was he a type like Bob Hope?

RH: Well, yes, sort of. His repertoire was clean-cut. It was none of this smutty stuff that we have got today. He was pretty good. I think everybody enjoyed him. I'm sure I did.

MH: I was interested. You hear today how the family structure in the United States is disintegrating. Was it much different when your son was small? For example, you hear now that other people are drifting apart. Do you think that is a well-rounded comment, or has it really changed much?

RH: Well, in that respect, I don't think it has changed that much, if any. I think everybody today is busy taking care of financial affairs, attempting to lay something aside for their old age. I don't care whether you are a young person or an older person. I think everybody is getting the same thing. I recall when Russ junior was just a little shaver. I worked long hours. I worked in the store every day from 7:00 in the morning. I supplied a lot of contractors with nails and what not. They would call up and say that they needed so and so. By the time they would be ready to go to work, I would have it out on the little porch in front of the store ready for them to go. Incidentally, when you are talking about nails, if you made 50 cents profit on a 100 pound keg of nails and then if you would sell them to the contractor, you were doing real good. If you sold nails over the counter, you would buy them in 100 pound kegs, and you actually sold 85 pounds out of the 100, because if somebody asked you for two pounds of nails and you had two pounds and two ounces, you would take out two ounces of nails to get that to go to two pounds. That is why you sell 85 pounds of the hundred.

Well, you had a certain amount of time to devote to your family, and I think that every provider likes to spend as much time with his family as possible. But I was so doggone busy working and running the store from 7:00 until 6:00 in the evening and then going out in the evening selling appliances, which was where we made the money. . . . I got home, say, maybe 10:00 or 11:00 and maybe sometimes later. It depended on where I was and all I had buying or selling. I didn't have too much time to devote to my family because I was so doggone busy trying to keep something on the table and shoes on the family. The same thing I think is true today as far as that is concerned. Of course, salaries are much higher today, and profits are much higher today than they were then. We are living today in a highly inflated period. The cost of merchandise is much higher today. Certainly shoes are much higher.

MH: Yes.

RH: You got shoes right there, for example.

MH: What would be the cost of a pair of shoes, not now, of course, but I was thinking you would remember?

RH: Oh, you could buy a decent pair of shoes for 5 or 6 dollars.

MH: What would be the time?

RH: Oh, that was in the 1930s.

MH: Would these be hand-made shoes or manufactured shoes?

RH: They were manufactured, I would say. If you bought a suit of clothes, you could buy a suit for 25 dollars.

MH: Were they well-made?

RH: It would be a well-made suit of clothes.

MH: Twenty-five dollars now wouldn't get you a shirt, really.

RH: That is no kidding. If you want a real good shirt, it is going to cost you 20 to 25 dollars today.

MH: A lot of suits for that you could wear it once, and it could fall apart. If you could get a fine--you couldn't even buy a jacket, I don't think, for 25 dollars.

RH: Now you go down and buy a suit of clothes and you look at that old tag, and it says anywhere from 200 dollars to 350 dollars or better. That is if you want good

quality for it. You can buy clothes cheaper than that. But it is like anything else, you get what you pay for. Then back in those days, if you had one suit of clothes and a couple of shirts and a pair of shoes, why, you were well fit.

Now, I have to tell you a story about myself leaving from my house at our first home when we were coming out of the Depression. Nobody had any money, but once a month, they would have a little party. We had various card games and things that we would play. The prizes would be maybe a couple of onions, or a little bunch of carrots, and a few potatoes or something. We had fun; we really had fun. But anyway, the party this evening was at our house. We had one of those centrally located heating coal furnaces. The clothes chute came down right along beside the furnace. I had my own shower down there. True to form, we were running late, and I wanted to take a shower down in the basement; I had a good fire going in the furnace for warming that house. I peeled off my trousers and hung them up on the nail, and I took my shoes off and my socks, my shirt, my underclothes, and opened up the furnace door and shoved them in, thinking that it was the clothes chute.

MH: Oh, boy.

RH: I came upstairs and I said to Helen, "You know what I just did?" She said that she hadn't the slightest idea. I told her that I just burned everything but my trousers.

MH: Did she laugh?

RH: Oh, yes. We had fun, though, back in those days. There was a place down near Washingtonville. It was a dance hall. They had converted it to a rolling rink. There was a group on that we called it poverty hill where folks used to live. There is where your house, Moran's house, and I don't know who lives next door between Joseph's and. . . .

MH: Well, Pat Smith.

RH: It was a baseball diamond in there. The fellows would get together. We would have some really good baseball games. We would play softball. We became known as the poverty hill gang, and that is how it got its name. A lot of people still call it poverty hill. I will have to tell you the story about that, too.

We were living in our first house, and there was a baseball game that Sunday. I apparently was working; Helen was telling me about it. Her sister Phyllis came up to our house, and Robert's girlfriend came up there.

She was sort of a scatterbrain. They had just posted the score on the scoreboard that they had. It said, "Visitors X and O, runs and homes," you know how it goes.

MH: Yes.

RH: Apparently, the visitors had gotten three runs. Of course, there was Helen, Phyllis, and Chappy. Chappy said, "Oh, look at the legs. They keep track of the visitors as they come by."

MH: Oh, no.

Mr. Hahn, is there anything else that you think is important?

RH: Well, I wanted to tell you about this Washingtonville field. The gang would get together and we would rent the place and have a private game party. We had a lot of fun roller skating down there. We would do that maybe once a month. It didn't cost very much. We really had a lot of fun.

MH: What would it cost, if you can remember?

RH: Oh, gosh, I can't remember.

MH: It is fun, though; I love to roller skate. It is good exercise if you don't break a leg.

RH: Yes, it is a lot of fun roller skating.

MH: Well, is there anything you would like to add?

RH: No, I think that I bared my soul pretty much there.

MH: Well, thank you very much. I appreciate it.

RH: You are quite welcome. I hope that it will do you some good, maybe.

MH: It will very much so. Thank you again.

END OF INTERVIEW