

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Youngstown in the 1900s

Personal Experience

O. H. 1043

LEROY W. VAN HORN

Interviewed

by

D. Scott VanHorn

on

June 8, 1986

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Youngstown in the 1900s

INTERVIEWEE: LEROY W. VAN HORN
INTERVIEWER: D. Scott VanHorn
SUBJECT: The 1920s, construction, Ku Klux Klan
DATE: June 8, 1986

SV: This is an interview with Mr. Leroy W. Van Horn for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on the Youngstown in the 1900s project, by D. Scott Van Horn, on June 8, 1986, at 5266 Tippecanoe Road, at 11:00 a.m.

What are your earliest recollections?

LV: When we landed here in Youngstown, it was too late to get to the house that we were going to live in. So, we stayed at the old Fritz House, which was at the corner of Oak Hill and Mahoning Avenue, near Spring Common.

SV: What was that like?

LV: It was just an ordinary hotel, not a fleabag. It was a good hotel. We had breakfast there the next morning and then got on the streetcar and went up to the house my father had rented.

SV: Where was that?

LV: At the corner of Lakewood and Thorn.

SV: What was it like there at the time?

LV: It was a good residential section.

SV: What were the houses like?

LV: Mostly frame, wood structures, well-kept. It was a nice, quiet neighborhood.

SV: Did you stay there at Lakewood?

LV: We stayed there until about 1917. We came to Youngstown in January of 1913.

SV: What was Youngstown like at the time, when you came here?

LV: I wouldn't know exactly how to compare it. I'd hate to compare it to what it is like now. There were good businesses in town; old established firms. Some are still around, but the name is the only thing there. McKelvey's is gone. That was called the big store at that time. Strouss-Hirschberg was the old Central Store. There were various merchants. They had bars and saloons at that time.

SV: What was it like inside those stores?

LV: There was always somebody there to wait on you. I remember a men's clothing store, . . . & Flaughter. Some of their [Flaughter's] decendents just went out of business in the last couple of years. I can still see old Flaughter with his tape measure around his neck or draped over his shoulders, ready to take your measurements. When you went out of there, you were fitted. If your suit needed alterations--they dealt in ready-made--they weren't tailors. They always had a good tailor working for them, though. Hartzell's was still in business at that time. Stambaugh Thompson's, they had a great sporting goods section. They used to supply all the athletic equipment for the two high schools that Youngstown could be proud of at that time, Rayen and South. There was a great rivalry between the two, but they always ended up friendly enemies.

SV: What was the rivalry like at South and Rayen?

LV: Well, it was basketball and football mostly. Thanksgiving Day was the turkey day game. Once in a while, there were a few fisticuffs along Market Street after the game, but nothing that couldn't be forgotten about. They socialized afterwards for the rest of the year before they got warmed up for the next fiasco. Rayen was the old school. South wasn't established until about 1911 or 1912. They didn't have school bands at that time. South always hired a band for the parade. There was a lot of cheering and good cheerleaders. Mostly the men were the cheerleaders at that time. The cheers were well-organized. Back in that time, they

didn't play on turf. They played on mud on Thanksgiving mostly. The rest of the time in the fall, it would rain [on the] weeds [like] pebbles.

SV: You were on the football team.

LV: I played in 1920 and 1921. [The year] 1921 was my senior year. We beat Rayen that year.

SV: What was it like playing football at that time?

LV: It was just about the same as it is today, except it has developed more into a coaching science. The plays are different. The guy that could hit the hardest was the one who came through the best shape. We were taught to hit them hard, so that they would remember it when they saw you coming the next time. It was clean. You didn't see anybody intentionally try to cripple a man by flipping [them] or something like that. You could make a flying tackle at that time. We didn't come out second best. They had trick plays that they tried to keep secret, but there was always somebody that could find out what was going on, either from inside the school or outside.

I remember the night before the Thanksgiving game in 1921. I was in the locker room getting out of my muddy clothes and ready to go into a shower, and I started to sing the Rayen victory song. The next thing I know, they grabbed me and started to throw me into a cold shower. It didn't bother me too much, because I don't know for how many years I had been taking a cold shower every morning. They held me in there and, when they found out I was enjoying it, they let me alone.

Youngstown developed some good football players over the years. They had a pro team in Youngstown at one time called the Patricians. It was part of the St. Patrick's School and Church. It was called the Patrician Club, and they fielded a football team. They used to play at Wright Field. That is now where the Westlake Housing project is. Wright Field was also a circus grounds. I saw Jim Thorpe play there a couple of times. There were quite a few of the Indian players from Carlisle University. They developed a pretty good team there back in the 1900's. Canton had a good team called the Canton Bulldogs. They had quite a few of those Indian players on it. There was a team from Columbus called the Columbus Panhandles. They got their name from the Panhandle Division of the Pennsylvania Railroad. I forget how many brothers there were called the Nesser Brothers. They were the "refrigerators" of that time. They were all big men and good football players and rough. They used to play on Sunday afternoon. I always tried to make it somewhere

or another.

South High turned out quite a few good football players. One became captain of one of the Notre Dame teams. He was a graduate of South. The Youngstown district went on to make a name for themselves on college football. They're still doing it today from Youngstown State.

SV: What was the coach like at South?

LV: Russell Ashbaugh--Busty they called him--he was a local boy. He had gone to Brown University and got an All-American Honorable Mention. I believe, on one of the All-American team choices, there was Walter Camp that had one. Brandon Lyce had another. Walter Camp was considered to be number one back then. If you made his All-American, you were considered to be the best. Ashbaugh coached up until the late 1920's. He was a good coach. I never saw him get riled up over anything. If you did something you weren't supposed to, he gave you a couple of extra laps around the track. It was a quarter mile track around the field. Most generally, when you finished football practice in the afternoon, it [practice] always came after classes. They didn't neglect their scholastic work in favor of athletics. Every week there was a list posted on the bulletin board in the locker room telling you who was eligible and who was not to play in the Saturday game. If you didn't have the knowledge, you didn't have the ability, I guess, they figured.

SV: Was he just the coach?

LV: He also taught Algebra. I had him for an Algebra teacher my freshman year. I think we learned more about football than we did about Algebra. I always figured it made it kind of tough for me in that line because of my false start in Algebra, but I managed to wiggle through all right. I didn't have any failing grades. We had . . . World War I when Ashbaugh went into the Army, and they brought in a man by the name of Hermen Welsh. He was either a graduate of Cornell or Syracuse. He was well-liked. In fact, after I graduated from South, he and I used to go fishing out at Pine Lake together. I got better acquainted with him out on Pine Lake than I did in class. He taught math, and he was good. When you came out of his class, you had learned something. If you hadn't, it wasn't his fault. In fact, I liked him well enough that I named my son after him.

SV: Who were some of the other teachers at South?

LV: The chemistry teacher was Guy Foster. He also coached

the track team. There was Fred Beede. I believe he was a brother or uncle of Dyke Beede, who later went on and coached at Youngstown State.

They had quite a bit of vocational teaching at South back at that time. They had a course in foundry and forge, pattern making, cabinetworks. I went through all of those. In the forge and the foundry, they used to cast parts that they used to replace the other worn out, burned out grates in the boilers. When those castings were completed, they were sent to the machine shop, which was another one of the classes. The machine work was done on them, and they were ready to fit right in to replace the old, worn out grates. We did a few knickknacks. I have a plaque at home of Abraham Lincoln that was cast in the foundry. They eliminated that department later on. I think all that equipment was sold to a high school in New Springfield. We made sand molds, got everything ready. This one particular item was a cup, saucer, and spoon all cast in lead in one mold. It was cast in one piece. I think we made a cast of two dumbbells, the ones you exercise with.

SV: Was the emphasis just on vocational education?

LV: Oh no. They had some very good history teachers. There was a Miss Fry. She was also the supervisor of the girls. You might call her the Dean. I don't think anybody appreciated her until it was too late. Jean Fry was her name. She was very strict with the girls. She was a darn good teacher. I always liked her. There was an English teacher, Ruth Beecher. I just noticed the other night in the paper where she left this world. There was a woman who had a sister who taught, and I think her [the sister] name was Jean. Elaine Van Fossen was an English teacher, and Edward Zinninger taught English. They had a music teacher that handled the South orchestra. They didn't have a band. They had a good orchestra. The teacher's name was Herbert Monroe. When he left South, he went to the International University of Constantinople. They used to put on operettas. He [Monroe] handled all the music for those. I tried to take part in those too. I don't think there were any of the teachers at South that I disliked.

SV: Did you get along with all of them?

LV: I believe so. I had a little run-in with one, but it was a misunderstanding more than anything else, and I never did try to straighten it out. If he wanted to be mean, that was his privilege. I just stayed away from him, from then on.

SV: Who was that?

LV: Malcolm Hogg. He taught the forge and foundry, and also woodworking. . . . Burrows taught pattern making. They used to make all the patterns right in the shop, patterns that were later used to make the molds to do the casting form the foundry. That was the last portion of that semester. All the molds were ready, and they had a couple there that looked like a miniature blast furnace. They would load that up and start the heat. Hogg had picked me to take charge of the furnace. When it was ready, it was unplugged. The pig iron had melted, and it would run out. The molds were already laid out on a nice, neat floor all ready to pour. What was necessary went to the machine shop. That is where you learned how to operate lathes, various machines. I missed out on that because they built an addition to South at that time and they were building a new machine shop. I was taking the machine shop class, and all we were doing was listening and reading. When a piece of machinery came in, they uncrated it and explained it to us. But, nobody ever got a chance that year to operate any of it. It got kind of monotonous, and a little horseplay went on.

The misunderstanding between Malcolm Hogg and I was that he whirled around and caught me grinning at a fellow who had made a grab at the fly of my pants and I had gotten back. Hogg turned around just in time to see me grinning. He said, "What are you grinning about? I just feel like punching somebody in the nose today, and I would just as soon it be you." I turned around and stood there for a little bit, and I turned around and walked out of the class. I didn't go back.

They had a good gym teacher at that time. That was one of the things that was required, that you attend gym class. His name was Phil Ackley. He was a good athletic instructor.

South turned out some pretty good basketball teams. Back at that time, you didn't have to be seven foot to play basketball. It was a different game then than it is today. It was a lot faster today than it was. It's too fast for me to watch. I feel like I'm watching a tennis game. I move my head from one side to the other. There is still quite a bit of rivalry between Rayen and South in basketball. South was never any good. They had a rough time against Rayen in basketball, and also in football too, but they finally broke the ice. It just seemed that South could play against every team that Rayen played during the season and could win. Rayen could play the same teams and lose, but when Rayen and South got together, it was Rayen that was winning.

SV: When did you start playing football?

LV: I tried out for the team my freshman year. I weighed 105 [pounds] at that time. I went out for football each year, for four years. [During] the last two, I was on the varsity squad. I was a little heavier by that time. My senior year, I think I weighed 160 [pounds]. I played against a fellow at the time, and he weighed 20 [pounds]. I was playing center, and he was center for the other team. I was a little too quick for him. I would get out of his way when he charged. I would press on the back of his head gear, and he was on the ground. I think he played himself out getting up and down off the ground. It was fun outsmarting some of those fellows. Bussy said one time, "What's the matter? [Am I] too quick for you?"

SV: What was the 1941 game like?

LV: I think we beat Rayen fourteen to nothing. I'm not sure. I had some pretty good friends on the Rayen team. Mike Goodman, who became a well-known architect here in town, he went to Carnegie Tech. We had an assistant coach, Dutch McClain. He was also a Rayen graduate. He coached later on at Newberry, South Carolina. Quite a few of the fellows from South went down there to school.

I'll never forget the day that I walked out of South for the last time, when I was graduating. I walked down to the sidewalk from the entrance. It was a circle sidewalk. One went south, and the other went north. I went down towards the south end, and when I got down to Market Street at the end of the school walk, I just stopped. Something made me stop. I turned around, looked back, and thought, "Now, life gets serious. What am I going to do?"

My dad, his dad, and his three brothers were all plasterers. At that time if a son was a plasterer, you could get into the union as an apprentice. It was pretty hard to get in. I went to work for a local contractor as an apprentice, first as a laborer. I pushed a wheelbarrow, and I carried planks and scaffolds around until I got the okay from the union. I started out as an apprentice. You weren't subsidized by the government on your wages at that time. You probably got between three and four dollars a day. At the end of six months, you got another dollar a day. There was a four year term as an apprenticeship. Then, you became a journeyman.

I was always kind of glad that I did that. I got the opportunity of working on some beautiful buildings, some of which are still standing, like Stambaugh Audi-

torium. I went more for the ornamental plastering. The high wages that they're paying today has eliminated some of the finer things that went into buildings. The Keith-Albee Theatre, which was later known as the Palace Theatre down on the square, was one of the most beautiful examples of ornamental plaster that I know of. They tore it down and made a parking lot out of it. Even the stores, like Strouss-Hirschberg, built their new store on . . . Street. Their old store had been farther west on Federal. They put a lot of ornamental work in that. The Union Bank built a new building there. There was a beautiful ornamental ceiling in that. I worked on that. I worked on Stambaugh Auditorium, the Reality Building. Even the houses that they built at that time, a good many of them had some dressing up with ornamental plaster. There were plaster cornices instead of wood molding in the angle between the wall and the ceiling. You couldn't afford to put that stuff into buildings anymore. The cost is prohibitive.

SV: After you were living on Lakewood, where did you move to?

LV: To West Warren Avenue.

SV: How long did you stay on Warren?

LV: I don't remember. We rented the house on Warren. About 1919, we bought a house on West Chalmers.

SV: Was that area of the south side pretty built up at that time?

LV: Oh yes. If you went out Oak Hill Avenue and got to the top of the little hill there at Oak Hill and Dewey, then it would thin out. Going down Market Street you got to Kyle's Corners, which was Indianola Avenue and Market. There was a little grocery store there, and later on, some other business had moved in. When you got out past Dewey Avenue on Oak Hill, you were getting out in the country. The realtors began to develop some of that land west of Indianola Avenue, and from there down to Glenwood, it was all real estate development. The section down on Glenwood Avenue at Sherwood used to be a baseball park. That was lotted out and sold, and there were houses built. As you went on out, that later became Hudson. I believe, at that time, that was an extension of Edwards Street. It started clear down at Ridge Avenue. It wasn't until the 1920's that they went on beyond what they called Dean Man's Curve, which was Market and Indianola. They built schools, churches. Idora Park was still in existence then.

They had streetcar transportation from town out to

different routes that the street railway company had. They turned down Parkview to Idora Park. That was one of the big things that . . . streetcars, the spreading around of different routes. It had a lot to do with helping to build up those neighborhoods.

It wasn't until about 1927 that the Tna Kennedy Land Company owned that whole section from south of Indianola Avenue. They developed that, and that became a very good residential section. They built good houses, and they all had architectural design to them. There were quite a few Italian general contractors here that used to use a lot of stone. A lot of those houses are partially stone. They are really well constructed, and they were all well kept. It was a beautiful section.

Mill Creek Park was something that was a beautiful place. They had the two lakes at the time; Lake Glacier and farther south was Lake Cohasset. It seems to me there was a swim club that had a little club of some kind that had the rights to swim in Cohasset. Down at Glacier they had good swimming, and it was well patronized. They had a good bathhouse on the east side of Lake Glacier, and they had a diving tower out in the center of the lake. Across from there, on the west side, later on, they put a swim house in there. Along came the Mill Creek sewer, and it was all run through Lake Glacier. Eventually, those joints began to sing, and there was no longer any swimming in Lake Glacier. That was all eliminated. There was good fishing in Lake Glacier too. That's mankind and his wisdom.

SV: They had another purpose for Lake Glacier, didn't they?

LV: The Youngstown Ice Company used to cut ice on the lake. That was when the water was still comparatively pure. They used to cut that ice, and sometimes, it would be frozen as much as eleven or twelve inches. They slid it down a runway at the dam. The Youngstown Ice Company had an icehouse down there, and they store it there. I think as time went on that ice had enough strength in it to become building blocks, because the water was so impure and contaminated. Then, they built ice manufacturing buildings. There were quite a few ice companies in town. There was Youngstown Ice and a couple of others that I just don't remember.

Mill Creek Park was one of this district's assets, because there were picnic grounds all over the place. They later on put little grills in, and the park cut firewood and put a few at each one of those grills. They had different spots all over the park for people who had cookouts. It was really well-kept, and it was something to be proud of. I believe when I was a kid, I drew a map at one time and showed every path of Mill

Creek. I traveled it. We all have.

In the section known as the Bears Den, there was quite a lot of sandstone rock. It was all solid, and the quarry dropped out of that. The one bridge on the east side of Lake Glacier, the stone bridge, I think, that was construction from the stone that quarried up there. There was also a spring on the Bears Den. It came out of the rock. People used to come all around from section to get drinking water. As they built up above there, that water went bad. They also had a good spring down near the Slippery Rock Bridge. They had to shut that down on account of contamination.

A while ago, you asked me what Youngstown looked like back at that time downtown, and I told about the stores that were there. There were quite a few saloons along Federal Street, and quite a few picture shows. They called them "nickelodeons" at the time, because it only cost a nickel to get in. They were the flicks.

About 1912, they built the Park Theatre. There were quite a number of good road shows that came there, musical shows reviews. There were quite a lot that sprung off from Ziegfield's Follies. There was Earol Carol's Vanities, and there was a passing show with Fred Allen featured in it. Those little movie theaters that they had were just like a hole in the wall. It was just like a small storeroom converted into a place to show movies.

SV: Did you go to the movies much as a kid?

LV: About once a week.

SV: Where did you usually go?

LV: Wherever there was a good western, cowboys and Indians.

SV: Do you remember any of the early movies?

LV: The Perils of Pauline. One that got quite a bit of publicity was Smiling Through. Norma Tallmadge played that. It was a tear jerker. That's what they used to call them.

Then, they had the old Opera House. I don't think I mentioned that. The entrance was right at the southwest corner of the square, right between the Mahoning Bank and McCrory's. They used to have some pretty good shows come there. I remember there was a western called The Roundup. There is a book by that name. I think a man by the name of Earl Conner wrote that. It was really interesting. I always did like live show.

They showed a whole summer of legitimate stage shows at the Hippodrome. There was an arcade that ran through there, and it ran off of that. There were some stock companies at that time; one was foreign stock. They had quite a few good legitimate state plays. They had good actors, some that I saw later on in movies. They got their start in summer stock. Youngstown wasn't noted to get too enthusiastic about shows, even vaudeville. They had the reputation of sitting on their hands. They had a theatre in Idora Park, and the Lillian Desmond Players used to take it over for the summer. They would have a different play every week. I don't know what stuck the rail in the wheel and put a stop to all that, but I think the public just didn't want to be bothered. They have summer stock now in some sections of the country. That is where a lot of these actors and actresses get their start.

SV: Didn't they have places for reputable stage shows?

LV: At Burlesque. There was the Princess Theatre on Champion Street. I don't know whether they operated it year-round or not. Every now and then, you would see where the police came in and stopped it. They would shut down a show at the Princess. It wasn't as bad as some of the stuff we watch on TV today.

SV: Did you ever go to the Princess?

LV: Yes, I think maybe a couple of times. They would have a movie too. Back at the time the movies were continuous. The ticket office would open about nine or ten o'clock, and they would start showing what the program was going to be for the day. They would operate continuously up until about eleven at night. You could go in at any time and pick up a show and walk out. When you got to the point where you came in. . . . the films that they showed were rented out. When you went in, you would see somebody there with a counter, and they would count what the intake should be. A percentage of that went to the company that rented out the films.

The Dome Theatre used to show good movies, but they had censorship in movies at that time. Later on in the 1920's, the movie industry had a watchdog, Will. . . . They would say what could be shown and what couldn't. Anything that didn't meet with their standards, it was either edited out or the show wasn't shown. It was banned in Boston. It was top dog.

SV: What was it like inside the Dome Theatre?

LV: They had a balcony. It wasn't a large theatre, but it was one of the largest. That was built about 1912.

That is when the Park Theatre was built, the Ohio Hotel, and I believe the Stambaugh Building. Of course, they built an addition of several floors on top of the Stambaugh Building.

The Tod House, that was one of the old, reliable hotels. Around Spring Common, there were a couple of other hotels. I just don't remember the names of them.

I remember one time on Saturday morning, I went down to see a show. I only had three cents. I asked the girl at the ticket window if she would let me in for three cents, and she said she couldn't do it. I suppose, I wasn't over nine or ten years of age. There was another boy there, and we got to talking. He said, "Can't you get in?" I said, "No. I only have three cents." He said, "I only have two cents." I said, "Wait a minute." I went up to the ticket window and asked the girl if we both could get in for a nickel. She said, "Yes," and let us in. She had to account for each ticket. She had to have a nickel to show for that ticket.

We got quite a greeting in Youngstown when we first came here. We came in January of 1913. Later on in that spring, came the 1913 flood. I don't think that people today realize just to what extent that flood reached. Marshall Street was all under water. It stretched back to the lower end of Oak Hill Cemetery. That was how far it went. All those houses that were down there, the water was up to the second floor. For years after, you could see the water marks on the brick. On East Federal Street, they were taking people in a rowboat to get to their homes. It stretched out to the foot of the Market Street Bridge. Mahoning Avenue was all under water.

A Jewish fellow had a grocery store across from where we lived, Lakewood. He used to make deliveries. I used to deliver them for him in a horse and wagon. He and I got in the buggy because it had high wheels and took the horse and drove down to Mahoning Avenue. We went through the water to a house, and they reached out of the window and grabbed their groceries.

You would see all kinds of things floating down the Mahoning River under the Market Street Bridge. Those mills took an awful beating because of all the machinery. It took a lot of cleaning to remove rust. That flood was responsible for Lake Milton. That is when they decided they were going to do something about flood control. They built the dam at Lake Milton in about 1916.

We had vandalism back at that time, too. I guess we always will have. They had a canoe club in 1920 at

Cohasset Lake. Bussy Ashbaugh was commodore of the canoe club. You had to have a membership, and you paid a tax to the park. They had racks built for you to store your canoe. You turned it upside down and put a chain around the framework so nobody would steal them. They didn't have a lot of park police at that time. We went out there one day to go canoeing, and about every canoe that was on those racks had been slashed with a knife. It was probably a slice that twelve, fifteen, sixteen inches long. They slashed every one of them. Vandalism was pretty historic. That happened to one of mine.

SV: Did it have a name?

LV: I don't remember what I called it. I remember a friend of mine--his dad was a preacher at Central Christian Church--he and I buddied around quite a bit in school. He got a canoe, and his dad asked him what he was going to call it. He said, "I haven't decided. I was going to call it Cupid's Cup, and then, I thought of the Spoonholder." His dad said, "I think you should call it The Spoonholder. Cupid leaves something to the imagination."

SV: When you first came to Youngstown, where did you go to school?

LV: Hillman Street.

SV: What was it like inside the Hillman Street School?

LV: Wood floors, gas lights suspended from the ceiling with a jet on each end. The teacher would have an extension to light them. You could control the size of the flame with a lamp lighter, too. There were all wooden stairs and wellworn floors. There was a little playground to go out for recess. It was all mud and rock. We had some good teachers. I think teachers were more dedicated at that time. They had a principal there that was dedicated. She wasn't above putting the paddle to the unruly.

SV: What was her name?

LV: Annie Thomas. She was built like Winston Churchill and just about as gruff. Most of the teachers were old. Now and then, there would be a new one coming fresh out of Kent. It was called Kent Teachers School at that time. When she paddled somebody, she would take them in the office and have them lean over the back of a chair. She had this paddle, and it was just as worn and smooth as glass. She would give two or three or four whacks with it. You could hear it all over the school. That was just a way of life.

SV: What was a typical school day like?

LV: They had eight grades and one teacher. It was her responsibility to teach whatever was required in that grade. They had a recess in the morning, and when you went to school, they had a bell. You would hear that bell, and you knew you had to be going. If there was a little flag sticking out of the door at the entrance, that meant you could stay out until the last bell rang. If that flag wasn't there, the weather wasn't fit for you to stay out, so you went right in. You could go home for lunch if you didn't live too far away.

The schools weren't too far apart. Hillman Street was there, and you went to Myrtle Avenue. Just to your left was Myrtle Avenue School. A little farther south was Delason, and even farther, was where they built Princeton School. Now, when you go out farther, you have Sheridan. You go down towards Glenwood, and you have the Fosterville School. They weren't too bad. They had a school at Market and Falls. Down at Mahoning Avenue, they had West Avenue School. It was the same thing on the north side. If you lived in that district, you went to school.

SV: Did you finish up at Hillman?

LV: No, I went to Myrtle for a while. It was overcrowded at Hillman. They hadn't built St. Patrick's School, yet. We had all of their pupils attending Hillman. They sent some of us to Myrtle, and I happened to be the one they picked to go to Myrtle. I went there two years. It was quite a long walk from Lakewood to Myrtle. They figured I needed the exercise or something. I had a good teacher at Myrtle Avenue.

I went out and stayed with my grandparents in Pennsylvania for one winter, and I went to a little country school there. The teacher that taught all grades, she told me she was recommending me for the eight grade examination. I was really only in seven. I had to go to town on a certain date and spend the day taking a complete examination, and I passed it.

When we came back to Youngstown, that was during the first World War, it was in the fall of the year. I could have entered in South, but I lost too much time between September and November. Dad couldn't find a house, but when he finally did, we come back. They suggested I finish up the eight grade again, so I did that at Delason. I started at South in January. They had mid-year classes at that time. That was January of 1918.

SV: What was the war like here in Youngstown?

LV: Everybody was patriotic. The steel mills were busy. You would walk down Market Street Bridge and look on one side and see Republic. On the other side was William Tod, United Engineering later on. There were just stacks of shells stacked out there, ready to be shipped. There were a lot of troop trains coming through here.

In the fall of 1919, came the flue epidemic. It was really something. I don't think that people today realize just what that amounted to. They shut down the schools. They took the seats out of the rooms in South High and stored them in another room, so they had room to put in beds and cots. They were loaded. They were coming in alive and going out deceased every day and every hour. I went down and asked for a job at the emergency hospital, and I got it. I did everything from carrying them in to carrying them out. It was nothing to lose a whole family. Nobody seemed to know what it was. They had an Army doctor stationed at South. If any soldiers on the troop trains got it, they would bring them to South. I hear this doctor who was a major say to a typist one day, "Mark the death certificate 'flu and pneumonia.'"

There were so many immigrants coming in at that time that they had to have an interpreter when they questioned them. Most of them came from Eastern Europe. There was one guy who could translate all of the languages. We worked from eight in the morning until eight at night. They had a kitchen going, and we got good food and plenty of it. The drinking water had to be pumped from a well at South. One fellow came from Rayen, and we would fill those five-gallon jugs of water and take them in. We would invert them into the fountain.

On Armistices Day, the flue epidemic was sort of breaking its back. It was tapering off. On a clear, cold day there were flat bed trucks going up and down Market Street having big celebrations. Were having one in-side. I remember one evening there was a nun who was a nurse, and she took my arm and took me into one of the rooms. There were nine beds in that room, and she pointed out seven and said, "They won't be here in the morning." They weren't either.

SV: How did they dispose of the bodies?

LV: Funeral homes would send their hearse or another method of transportation, and they were embalmed and buried with a regular service. I didn't see this, but I was told they were digging graves at Calvary Cemetery with

a steam shovel. They couldn't dig them fast enough by hand. They didn't have gasoline-powered shovels at that time; they had steam shovels. It was a wonder to me that we didn't lose more of the ones that worked in the hospital. Some of them took some awful chances. We lost one teacher. It was just shortly after he started that he went there to work. He took the flu and died.

There were quite a few soldiers that dropped off there. I don't think we lost of any of them, probably because they were in pretty good shape. They were on their way overseas. Those trains that came through were from Fort Riley. There was one little room there that was the assistant principal's office. There was a captain in there, and I had instructions to take a bed in there and make room for another patient. When he saw me coming in, he raised cane. "I'm supposed to have this room to myself," he said. He pulled rank. I said, "You're not in the Army now. You're in a hospital. You follow orders when you're in the Army. I follow orders here." I put the bed in and put another patient in. When he was discharged that night he left, he came up and shook hands with me. He said, "You know young fellow, you ought to have a medal." I said, "I'm just doing my job." He was sick and miserable. He had to take it out on somebody.

We sure used a lot of garlic at that time. These immigrants that came to the hospital, they all had a clove of garlic around their neck. Somebody told me that, as long as you kept your feet dry, you had a better chance of avoiding it. I had powdered sulfur that I dusted in my shoes every morning. There were quite a few of them that got well. A couple of them stayed and worked there. It was all handled by the Red Cross.

I had to go down to South Side Hospital for some supplies one day. Of course, I had to have transportation because it was too long. There was an old 1917 Dodge Touring car there, and this major that was a doctor, he drove me down to get the supplies. When I walked down to the hospital there and told the old lady at the desk what I was there for, she grabbed a rag and put it over her mouth and told me to go stand back. When we were working, we had full-length, white robes and a mask. You took that off when you went out and dumped it in the laundry. Armistice Day has always meant a little bit more to me than the end of World War I. Armistice is a temporary succession of hostilities in the dictionary, and that's all it was.

SV: Was there much anti-German feeling in Youngstown?

LV: Oh yes. I imagine here and there a little pro-German.

SV: How did you help with the war effort?

LV: Through stamps. You would buy them in school for a quarter. You had a book that you kept them in. It was about all I could do. I was only fifteen at the time. The first job I had in the hospital was holding a little baby in my arms while the nurse swabbed her. She asked me to come and hold her. She was probably about two years old. She died right there in my arms. That's quite an experience when you're fifteen years old. It didn't take too long to get back to business. We got the school all ready for lessons, and everybody went back to school. About Thanksgiving time, it was pretty well over.

SV: What was life like in Youngstown in the early 1920's?

LV: Everybody seemed to be busy. There was quite a lot of construction that went on--schoolhouses, residences. About 1917, Sheet & Tube built a lot of houses that they rented to their employees. That would be about East Midlothian and Sixth Street coming from Stop Fourteen. I don't know how many houses they built, but there were a lot of them. I worked on some of them. That was in 1917, because it was an awfully bad winter, and it stopped construction for a while.

In 1919, Carnegie Steel built McDonald. They built the town. All the houses that were built up there were owned by Carnegie. Some legislation or interpretation of the law said that big companies had to get out of that business. It was like a company store among miners. Carnegie Ohio Works had a BX at the plant where they had a store. I don't know whether they dealt with groceries or not. Sheet & Tube did, because it was a regular department of their's. Carnegie built just off of Steel Street. They built fifty houses there. That was about 1919, I imagine. They were all concrete houses with a cement finish. The ones Sheet & Tube built were built out of red brick.

SV: What was it like living in a steel town?

LV: It was nice for me. I always got a thrill out of it. I'd be working on a job out of town, and I would drive three hours or more. But, when I got in sight of Youngstown, I could see the lights and reflection of the mills. Every now and then, you would hear a train whistle, and I don't think there is any better than the sound of a whistle of a steam engine. You could hear the trains because a lot of freight went through here. The steel mills shipped a lot of stuff.

When I was working on those houses down in Struthers, I rode the streetcar down to Poland Avenue. When you got to what they called Stop Fourteen, that's where that office building was. You walked up the hill on your way to work and could see the houses being built. You would go down on your way home and see the fellows coming off the three o'clock shift from the mill. They looked like they came out of a coal mine. They must not have had any place for them to wash up, or else they didn't take advantage of it. They would wear a towel around their neck, and you could see the whites of their eyes. Everybody was working, and everybody seemed to be happy.

Prohibition was on at that time in the 1920's. There was a lot of bootlegging that went on. A lot of people made their own home brew. There were places called speakeasies that sold it. They also sold the hard stuff. Somebody back in that time said that prohibition was better than no liquor at all. A lot of young people started to drink at that period. They called it the Roaring Twenties, and that's about what it amounted to.

We were talking about the fellows coming home from work in the mills and how they looked. There was a lot of smoke hanging over Youngstown, and it wasn't all from the mills. Back at that time, they didn't have gas furnaces. You would wake up in the morning and go outside, and you could see smoke coming out of the chimney on every house. They were burning soft coal. Quite a few families in town had to burn coke, which didn't give off the black smoke or fumes. Nobody seemed to worry about the snow turning black overnight. The soot from the furnaces would settle on the snow. It didn't stay pretty very long. As soon as the gas furnaces came in, a lot of people converted their coal furnaces, so they could burn gas. Later on companies came out with a regular gas-fired, hot-air furnace.

SV: Were relations always good between the mills and the laborers?

LV: There was a strike in the building crates [department] in 1921 I believe. It wasn't anything like strikes are today. They sat down and figured things out. Maybe they would be on strike for a week or two. Then, they would come up with an agreement and settle it. That was before the CIO, Congress of Industrial Organization, was developed. That was developed for the miners. It was John Lewis' pet project. He did the miners a lot of good.

Back during that time, some of the racketeers got into

the unions. I made the remark one time, and I still stick to it, that when the unions--every place had its own union, and then they consolidated with the CIO. Then, these unions sprung up. I made the statement that they sprung up like mushrooms. When you first see mushrooms and first pick them, they're really good; but it doesn't take long for them to get wormy. I think that's what happened to the union. The wrong people got to the head of it. There got to be too much money involved, and the result was that it got into the wrong hands.

I remember in our union somebody approached our business agent when we were on a little strike, and they wanted to know if there was anything they could do to smash some things for somebody. He said, "We'll do the smashing if there's any to be done ourselves, and you stay out of it." He had the size, strength, and ability to back whatever he said.

We never had a lot of trouble negotiating. Most generally, we just went in and sat down at a table, and neither side would say a word for a little bit. Finally, we would say, "What are we going to do?" We would ask each other what we would like to do. They would get a raise of maybe 12 1/2 cents an hour, which amounted to one dollar a day. That was a good raise at that time. If you were making ten, twelve dollars a day--I think we went up to fifteen or sixteen dollars, eventually. Now, they have more fringe benefits than we got in a full day. I wonder if, maybe, we just didn't pressure ourselves out of the market.

SV: Did a lot of outside organizations come in and try to stir up trouble?

LV: Not that I know of.

SV: How about the strike of 1919?

LV: I don't remember. That was the building crane strike, I believe. The mills weren't organized yet. They did have a union at one time in the mills, but it broke up. The stores all did a good business. It didn't affect them. There were probably little skirmishes here and there, but nothing that would spread out and take in a whole lot of territory like they are today. The Teamster's Union, at that time, was the Teamster's union. Now, they spread out until they take in so many different types of working men. It's a different type of labor. The building trades, they always stuck to themselves. They were the American Federation. Each local union had their international, but the local union is the one that made their own decisions, did their own thing. The Teamster's Union, today, is

spread from one end of the country to the other. A group of men, so-called officials of these big, international unions, they make the decisions for the whole rank and file.

SV: When did you start work?

LV: Do you mean at my trade?

SV: Yes.

LV: As soon as I finish high school, which was in 1922.

SV: What was your first job?

LV: The Reed Avenue School down in Campbell.

SV: What was it like on your first day in the trade?

LV: It wasn't any different than any other day for me, because I had been around the building since I was big enough. I knew how to handle the tools before I ever started my apprenticeship. Some of the journeymen that I worked with said that I must have been plastering over in Pennsylvania while I was still in grade school. I knew how to handle the tools, and I was willing to use them.

When we got into the big buildings, we built several in Youngstown back then, that was in the 1920's. We built the Central Tower and Rayen High School. I think I mentioned before that they built a lot of schoolhouses. They built an addition to the Mahoning Bank. They rebuilt the Union Bank and tore the old one down. They built the Reality Building. That was built by the Reality Guarantee & Trust. They were land developers. They developed Brownlee Woods, Pine Hollow.

SV: What was it like building the Reality?

LV: We just worked every day. An uncle of mine said one time "When you're plastering, you just take a handful of plaster off the board, walk over to the wall, and leave it there; and go back and get another one.

SV: They were tearing down the First National at the same time I think.

LV: Yes. When they were tearing that down, I just happened to glance out the window, and the vault of the First National had a solid concrete wall and a roof on it. I wouldn't know how thick it was, but it looked to me from that distance that it was probably close to three feet thick. I just happened to glance over and saw that thing collapse at one time. I don't know how many

got caught under. There were quite a few injuries on construction jobs at that time. You didn't always hear about them though.

SV: Who were some of the big contractors?

LV: There was Heller Brothers, Heller Murray. A couple of the buildings were outside contractors. Mellon Stuart, they built the Keith Alby Palace Theatre. I also think they're the ones that were the general contractors of the Stambaugh Auditorium. It was built back at that time. Mahoning Bank had a company out of St. Louis. I don't remember the name.

SV: You were working for Dougherty & Brennen at that time, weren't you?

LV: Yes. That is who I served my apprenticeship with.

SV: What was it like working under them?

LV: No problem. As long as you turned out a day's work, he kept quiet and so did you. They did quite a few jobs out of town. They did a theater in Morgantown, West Virginia that I worked on and a church in Sunbury, Pennsylvania. It was mostly ornamental plastering. The theater in Morgantown had quite a bit of ornamental work on it. I did school houses out of town. I did one down in Havella, Pennsylvania; that's south of Pittsburgh.

Sheet & Tube built a lot of houses at one of their captive mines down in Green County at a place called Nemacolin. I always spent a Christmas vacation down there. I hadn't started to learn the trade then. I was just a helper. I did a chapel for Baden, Pennsylvania. I believe it was the Sisters of St. Joseph. They had a convent there. We built a new chapel. It was a beautiful place. We took our meals there and had rooms. I roomed down in Ambridge. Then we had breakfast, dinner, and supper at the convent.

SV: What were some of the buildings in Youngstown that Dougherty & Brennen worked on?

LV: They were the biggest contractors, back at that time. Next was Henderson and Johnson, but they didn't get into it like Dougherty & Brennan did. We did the Strouss-Herschberg Building and the Keith Alby. It's just too bad that that building was ever destroyed. I don't think anyone would have money enough to rebuild that the way it was. The cost would be prohibitive.

SV: What was it like inside the Keith Alby?

LV: It had a beautiful foyer, wide staircase that went up to the balcony for mezzanine, an ornamental ceiling that was all precast, and there was a suspended ceiling. The lobby had four alcoves that had ornamental caps at the top of each one.

The inside part of the ceiling in the theatre itself, there was grill work that was used to distribute sound. The acoustics were perfect in that it [the grill work] was all precast plastic.

There were arches over the box seats. They had a beautiful pipe organs that raised and lowered out of the orchestra pit when they were going to feature it. All new theaters back, at that time, had a good pipe organ.

I remember they were still doing some work touching up here and there the day that they had an organist. I think he was the organist from St. Patrick's Church. They had him come down and try that organ out. We listened to music for probably three or four hours. It was really something. Dougherty & Brennen did the Rayen School, the new one. If there was anything to be done around Youngstown in large buildings, they generally did the plastering.

SV: You also worked on the Stambaugh Auditorium.

LV: Oh, yes.

SV: What was it like working on the Stambaugh Auditorium?

LV: The same thing, only it was a lot more elaborate. There was a lot of ornamental work in that [Stambaugh Auditorium]. There was one small room off of the mezzanine that they called the marble room. There were six of us that did that room. We spent about fourteen weeks doing it. It was all arches and a coffer ceiling, paneled ceiling with huge panels. They conformed to the general architecture. I forget who the main architect was on that job. An associate who was doing the job every day, he was from Youngstown. That was Morris Scheibel. He was associated on quite a few of those jobs that outside architects had drawn up.

SV: Did you know Morris Scheibel?

LV: Very well.

SV: What was he like?

LV: He wasn't hard to get along with. Mostly what he would talk to you about was how things were going. He would tell you what a nice job you were doing. Morris was

Jewish, but he was also very high up in the Masonic Order. I liked him.

I think, if some of these buildings today required an architect, even to design them let alone to go through with it and put all the finishing touches on it, they couldn't find anybody around here, because they're not using that type of architecture. Along Fifth Avenue towards Gypsy Lane, all those homes out there were built in the 1920's and up until the crash came in 1929. Northside Hospital was built in 1928. Dougherty & Brennan had the contract for that. The general contractor on that was Job Buchheit & Sons. St. E's [St. Elizabeth Hospital], when they built additions on that, I think, it [the contractor] was the Heller Murray Company. The heads of those companies died off.

Stambaugh Auditorium had a suspended scaffold. The framework was built on the ground and then pulled up on cables to the proper height, so that you were just that far under the ceiling. The bottom was all clear. We would go in there and play softball at noon.

When the crash came in 1929, the bottom fell out underneath everything.

SV: The early 1920's in Youngstown were pretty wild weren't they?

LV: Do you mean the human element? Yes. A lot of young people got carried away. There was a lot of bootleg liquor sold--a lot that wasn't too safe to use--but they did. It seemed to be fashionable, like when women started smoking cigarettes. That's when I quit.

SV: How could one come by bootleg liquor?

LV: Word of mouth. They handed it out the cellar door. I was living at home then, and our house number was 137. Up the street from us, there was a 173, and he was selling bootleg whiskey. You would be surprised how many times during the night somebody would rap on our door. They were confused to start out with and got the numbers mixed up. Word got around to the ones who wanted it. Word went through the grapevine.

One building that I worked on in Cincinnati, there was a fellow there that did his bootlegging right on the job. He would bottle it up right there in a coke bottle. [He would] take it around and peddle it right in the building.

A lot of people made their own wine and their [own] home brew. You could be all the ingredients required from home brew right in the supermarket. You would get

large crocks for your beer, barrels for barreling wine.

SV: Were there a lot of speakeasies in Youngstown at that time?

LV: I think so. I don't know how many, but I know they must have been getting it someplace. They used to bootleg it from Canada, whiskey--at least that is what the label said. You can't tell whether that was true or not.

You could get the real stuff from the drugstore with a doctor's prescription. If you needed it for medicinal purposes, your doctor could give you a prescription. You went to the drugstore, and it was bonded whiskey. That's really the only kinds that people were safe with. Some of the drugstores would make up what they called drugstore gin. They had grain alcohol, and they put a few drops of flavor in it and some distilled water and mixed up a batch.

Along Federal Street, a lot of the smaller stores started putting new fronts on. Some of them went a little farther than that and did some remodeling. Lustig's rebuilt downtown. They got a beautiful store out of that. The Central Store did some remodeling. They dressed up the fronts, but in the back, it was still the same old dump. They would have to have a truck come in and clear out all the garbage.

SV: Was there a lot of gambling in Youngstown at that time?

LV: They had a couple places in town where you could bet on the horse races. Just anybody couldn't get in. When the Depression started then, they were playing the bug. They were playing that everywhere, even in Strouss'. Their employees knew who to go to, and they would take their slip. Money was short then, and you could even play for a penny if you wanted to. If you got enough of those pennies, it developed into a big business. They put a raid on one or two of them now and then, but pretty soon, they would be back in it again.

SV: Weren't there some race tracks around here?

LV: They had harness racing, of course, the Canfield Fair always had harness racing. There was a track at Southern Park, just out beyond where the mall is. It was between Southern Boulevard and Market Street. I'd say it was maybe a third of the distance between where the mall is now and Woolworth. They had some very good races there. I don't know if they allowed gambling, pari-mutual gambling back at that time or not. People want out there because they liked horse racing. I was just a kid then. This would have been 1914 probably.

One of the fellows on the job took me out. I don't think there were any other tracks at Southern Park. Some of the wealthier people in town that had country homes and estates, a few of them had race horses of their own, and they used to take them out there.

SV: Didn't they also have dog racing?

LV: They came later. I never went to any of the dog races. They had dog races out beyond Lake Milton. There was a dog track out there; I was told.

SV: Where did people go for recreation in the 1920's?

LV: They went to Idora Park, the young couples. A lot of them from here went over to New Castle, to Cascade Park. The ones from New Castle came over here to go to Idora Park. They also had good fishing. I think Lake Newport was open at that time. I'm not sure, though. They had closed Cohasset for fishing. It kind of filled up, and they did fish there, and Glacier. Then, they went to Lake Milton. There was good fishing at Milton. Later on, there was Pymatumming, and then, later on, Mosquito and Berlin.

SV: What was it like out at Idora?

LV: There were a lot of stands where you would win prizes, or you could ride the different rides. It was quite an attraction back at that time. There was no fishing in the Mahoning River. There used to be fishing from Warren on up to Newton Falls and then across to Lake Milton. Then, a steel company built a mill at Newton Falls, and that [the steel company] wrecked fishing from there on down to Warren. There was never anything in Warren, because there was water pollution there, too.

SV: Were there any dances?

LV: There were several clubs organized by some of the high school students. One of them used to have a dance once or twice a year. They generally held it at Stambaugh Auditorium or Idora Park in the off season. Brim and Bott built a dance school and ballroom up on Elm Street, where his wife taught ballet to the young children. Her husband, Raymond, taught ballroom dancing to the high school crowd. Pauline Joyce had a dance school in the old Elks' building at the corner of Rayan and Wood and Wick. Some of the organizations had dances in the ballrooms at the Ohio Hotel. They had a nice ballroom on the second floor. They were generally held during the holiday season, around Christmas. Alumni clubs held the dances. I think Notre Dame had a group that held a dance at the Ohio Hotel. I think

Michigan was represented by an organization too.

SV: Didn't some churches also sponsor some activities for people at that time?

LV: Yes, but I don't remember just what they consisted of. There was always a New Year's Eve dance at Stambaugh Auditorium, after it was opened up. Sometimes some small organizations would have a dance at the Stambaugh, and they hold it up on the second floor in what they called the marble room. The Stambaugh Auditorium ballroom was down in the basement under the main auditorium.

Idora Park had dances by ticket. You dropped a ticket in the box for each dance. They used to get some very good bands that came to Idora at different times. Red Nickels was there. There was the Sunnybrook Orchestra that was formed by an industrialist over at Greenville. He got a group together that really played some very good music.

There was a dance floor, too, at Lake Milton. There was one at Craig Beach. That was by ticket. Then, there was Milton Gardens at the east end of the Milton Bridge on Route 18. They built another dance pavilion between Route 18 and Craig Beach. If I remember right, it was called Roselong. It didn't last very long, because it caught fire for some reason and burned down.

[Here is] something that might be of interest. [I was] driving from Youngstown out to Lake Milton. All along that highway, [from] Youngstown city limits--which was at Meridian Road at that time--clear out to Milton, any place that there had been an auto accident and anyone was killed, there was a small white cross erected alongside the road. It got to the point where they had to take them down, because it was like driving past a picket fence. There would be certain spots where there would be five or six crosses, not all from the same accident, but from various accidents that happened at the same spot on the road. They finally removed them all, which I think was a good idea.

SV: Were there a lot of cars on the roads at that time?

LV: It just depended on what road you were on. You didn't have traffic congested like we have today, but the roads weren't as good either. People didn't drive as fast. Speed was about forty-five miles per hour in most of the cars at that time.

SV: Were there a lot of auto dealerships in Youngstown?

LV: Yes. There were quite a few more companies building

cars right after World War I. There was an abundance of engines, and some companies would buy up a bunch of those engines and build a car around them. Wick Avenue was filled with dealerships. I think Buick was clear out in the neighborhood where it is now, [but] not in the exact spot. It was out a little farther. Chevrolet, Dodge, Page, Studebaker, Cadillac, Packard, they were all along Wick Avenue. They couldn't spread out over too much territory, because there were a lot of well-to-do families in homes along Wick Avenue. They were still occupied, then. Nach had an agency. They seemed to head north more than south, although there were quite a few good dealerships along Market Street out to Indianola.

There were a lot names of cars back at that time that you only hear now in ancient movies. There was Automobile, Hudson, Ford, Peerless, Flint. A friend of mine, his uncle had a Will St. Clair. It had Spanish lease and a motor on it. If there ever was a sports car, that was it. It was really something. There was a Stats, Dusenburg, and they had air-cooled, the Holmes Franklin. Once in a while, you would see an old electric with some elderly lady all dressed in black. They wouldn't do over ten miles per hour, I believe.

SV: What did you do for entertainment at home?

LV: In 1924, they started to broadcast over the radio. KDKA was the first to broadcast, and a couple of my friends were ham operators. We would go to their place and listen to the radio. There was another one of my acquaintances that had a little house in back of his dad's house on Market Street. About five or six of us gathered there and listened to the returns of the 1924 election.

There were a couple of broadcasting stations here in town. One of them folded and got run out, because one had more pull than the other. They revoked the one guy's license. Yahrting-Rayner had a little low-watt station. Most of those back at that time, [in] 1924, we listened to that on a receiver that these fellows built themselves.

Back at that time the Vindicator put a series of articles in the paper, directions and all the plans to build your own receiver. They were quite complicated in a way, and, in a way, they were simple. The only thing that was complicated about it was the detector, and that was the Lena Crystal that you fished around with what they called a cat whisker. You got a sensitive spot on that Lena Crystal, and you could put the earphones on and tune it in. It was just a series of takeoffs from a coil to a knob that had a finger stick-

ing out of it. That hit these different spots that were wired from different spots on the coil. You get your reception that way.

The detector II came later. That really put the buzz in radio receivers. A man by the name of DeForest, I think, developed that vacuum tube detector. Then, they began to build these components that could be added to your string of sets, amateurs began to build these. The components boosted the volume. Then, they came out with a horn that you could clamp the earphones on, and they came out with a horn like what was on the old Victrola years ago. Then, they built a receiver that fit right into the so-called loudspeaker. That was a Magnivox. It was developed by the same people that build Magnivox equipment today. They did.

They didn't have towers for the antennas back at that time. They generally had a wire that went right under the eave of the house, and there was a takeoff from it down into a window that hooked onto the set. When they brought out the first sets, you had to have batteries. They had what they called the A battery and the C. I think you needed the C battery, and they were wet cells. You had to keep them down in your basement, so if any acid spilled, it wouldn't ruin your floor. They would bring that wire up through the floor by the baseboard and hook that to the receiver. They developed some receiver speakers that really brought through some good sound.

Some of the old programs they had back at that time, people just wouldn't even answer the phone if the program was on. I remember my dad developed a hankering for "Amos & Andy." He would listen to that. It came on the same time every night, just around seven o'clock. The phone rang and Dad answered. He said, "Call me back in fifteen minutes. 'Amos and Andy' is on."

SV: Were there a lot of Blacks in Youngstown?

LV: Yes. We had quite a few of them that were semiskilled, what they called plasterers, and the bricklayers had them. They were hod carriers. I never saw one that I wasn't able to get along with. They were all nice fellows. Most of them were married and had families.

SV: Were there any of them living on the Southside?

LV: Yes, on Earl and Chicago down towards Glenwood down on St. Louis, I believe. I just don't remember. They were all down in the lower end of those streets near Glenwood.

I went to South, and when I graduated there in January of 1922, there was one Black in our graduation class. Boy, could he play the piano. At our class banquet, we all sat down at the table, and he said he would play the piano while we were eating. I said, "Nothing doing. You're coming over and sitting along side of me at the table." He did and nobody said a word. He could sure tickle the ivories.

SV: Were there any hard feelings against Blacks?

LV: No, not that I ever knew of.

SV: What about the Klan?

LV: The Klan was quite strong here. They had a conclave here at one time. I think it was estimated there were a hundred thousand from all around this district. They never caused any trouble that I know of. There were a lot of prominent men in Youngstown who were affiliated with it. They endorsed some candidates for political offices. A good many of them they elected. I never knew of any trouble from them.

SV: Didn't they have an office downtown?

LV: I don't know. In later years, I think they bought a little building on the Southside that they used an office. I don't think they ever used it as a meeting room or anything like that. Someone said they bought a farm on the other side of Canfield, but I never knew for sure. It just died out here, as far as I know of.

SV: What was it like at the meeting they had on Midlothian?

LV: That was at the conclave they had. They paraded on Hillman Street. They had an ox roast or something, I believe. The paper covered it pretty well.

SV: Wasn't Fred Warnock in the Klan?

LV: I heard that he was, I don't know. The Klan elected the mayor of Youngstown and the governor of Ohio.

SV: What was Fred Warnock like?

LV: He was lawyer. He spoke at one of the assemblies at South. I think it was just prior to the time he ran for Mayor of Youngstown, and he was elected. I don't remember what year that was.

Back at that time, if you were on the Republican ticket, you were generally elected.

SV: What was the George Oles election like?

LV: That was a three-ring circus. He was a showman and a salesman. They had a street fair on From Street, up near Spring Common. Somebody went to George and said they had a girlie show there doing the Hula, putting on a dance. George went and saw it and came back. [It] came out in the paper and George said, "I went to the show, and there wasn't one of these girls that had enough meat on her to put on a good dance."

SV: What were you doing the day of stock market crash?

LV: We were building a church in Bridgeville, Pennsylvania. I don't remember if that was when the crash came, but I do remember Dad coming into the room, where there were three of us young fellows standing, and handed the paper to me. The headlines were that they declared a bank holiday. That's when they closed the banks. That wasn't good news.

SV: What happened during the bank holiday?

LV: The banks just shut down. People that had bank books, that had no money, would sell their bank books. There were quite a few men around town that were able to buy them at about forty cents on the dollar. I know one that built a big home and paid off the general contractor and subcontractors with a passbook at full value that he bought at forty cents on the dollar.

SV: How did your business handle it?

LV: It fell apart. Finally, towards spring, of 1932, we began to get some repair jobs. People had a piece of a ceiling down or needed a new ceiling.

Then the government came out with some jobs, the post offices, and things like that. That put a few fellows to work in the building trades. I think they were getting about ten dollars a day at that time. Today, ten dollars wouldn't cover an hour's wages. Back at that time, we carried our own. Blue Cross came into the union meeting one night and explained a setup where we could, as a group, get hospitalization. Some of the fellows wouldn't even take it. It wasn't too good of coverage, but it was better than nothing.

SV: Did you try to get work with the WPA, Works Progress Association?

LV: I put my name in, but I was single. I did get one call to do some patching out in the school at Ellsworth. That only lasted a few days.

SV: Where did you go to apply for it?

LV: I don't remember.

SV: What was it like in Youngstown during the Depression?

LV: Just like it was all over the country, men standing crowding around the gates of the different plants just hoping that one of the employment officers would point a finger, but they didn't do it. The ones that had jobs were hanging onto them, and the ones that didn't have them were trying to get jobs. It was just a case of no work. There were plenty of places. Now, they have no place to go to work. It's getting better though. The small business are building up now, and they're taking up some of the unemployed and putting them to work. If you would drive down Market Street and look east or west, you saw wide, open spaces where there used to be plants and buildings where men were working. The buildings were no longer there.

Just before the World War II broke out in the late 1930's, they were fighting over there. This country got into the ammunitions business, and the mills started operating on a little higher percentage. I always said it was that that brought us out of the Depression. It also brought us into World War II, and then, there wasn't enough people to do the work. They were working long hours. The women moved into the mill. They stepped in and filled the places of the men that were called to service, and they did a good job of it too. That's where the expression Rosy the Riveter came from.

SV: There used to be a drugstore close to the Central Square on West Federal Street?

LV: Trevor & McGarrity.

SV: What can you tell me about that?

LV: The daughter of McGarrity attended the Bott Dancing Ballroom when I did. She had a brother that did research on Xray techniques and developments. He had a write-up in the paper. That store was next to the Wick Building.

SV: Was there one farther down?

LV: There could have been. What year was that?

SV: About 1906.

LV: That was before I came here.

SV: The name of the place is Stahl & Mentzer.

LV: I don't remember that. We didn't move to Youngstown until January of 1913. My dad brought me over a year before to look around. When he decided we would move to Youngstown from New Castle.

SV: Wasn't there also a cigar store close by there?

LV: Klafter & Sauber Cigar Store was right at the corner of the square where the Union Bank is now. Later on, there was United Cigar Store. I don't think they're in existence any more. They used to give coupons, and you could turn those coupons in for various articles. I think that's where I got my little, box camera. I got a baseball glove and a football for so many of those cigar store coupons. Some of those fellows that went over to France in World War I passed those United Cigar Store coupons off as money for a bottle of wine or cognac.

SV: What about Frankie's?

LV: I don't know if Frankie's went back that far or not. They were in the same place that they are today.

SV: Did you go in there often?

LV: Yes. I used to go in there quite often. In fact, the clerk in there--before my daughter was born, I had told the clerk there that they would call and get word across the street, because we were working on an addition to Strouss'. That's what happened. He came over and told me to go home.

SV: Wasn't there also an ice cream shop in that area at one time?

LV: Harry Burt's Candy Shop, and I think they made ice cream. In fact, I think he is the one they accredited for making Eskimo pies. I forget what he called his. Later on, they moved to West Federal and had a dance hall on the second floor and his business down below. They did a lot of custom orders on candy for some of the wealthy women in Youngstown that had a favorite. Burt's candy makers could handle about anything that was ordered.

SV: Did you ever go into Burt's as a kid?

LV: Later on, when I bought a box of candy or something that was a gift for someone.

Back at the time you're talking about, there were quite a few saloons along Federal Street. There was one called The Barrel House. I was too young to ever to go in there, but one of the fellows told me that you could

go in there and get a sample out of different barrels and decide which you wanted. You could buy a half pint, and you had already drunk a half pint before you made a purchase. Farther out on West Federal, there was a little shop like a pawn shop. The sign on the window said, "M. Light Jeweler." A son and daughter of his went to South when I did, and they both played violin in the orchestra. South always had a good orchestra, and they had some talent there. It [South] proved [it had talent] later on. Enoth Light, the son, did a lot of recording, later on first on the high-fi and, then on stereo. He had quite a number of records and was quite well-known. He got his start in the orchestra at South. Owen Kincaid played clarinet. He later on became part of Citizen's Bank.

SV: What were some of the other bars that were on West Federal Street?

LV: There was one called The Marble Walk. You entered that along Federal and walked through a passageway that was all marble. I was never in there, but I could see from Federal Street. There were quite a few liquor dealers along West Federal. I don't remember who they were, the names. I think there was a family by the name of Gallagher that had a whole-sale whisky shop.

SV: Wasn't there a bar that had an association with silver dollars?

LV: That was on East Federal Street. It was called The Silver Dollar. I never even thought of trying to estimate how many silver dollars were embedded in the wall and on the walk inside of the street line. It was part of the building itself. They were all silver dollars, and they were all embedded in cement.

SV: Were there more bars on East Federal than there were on West Federal?

LV: I don't remember.

SV: To go back to West Federal Street, was there a jeweler in the 100 block of West Federal?

LV: Yes. I'm not sure of the name. There was a Jonas. Later on, Samuels had a jewelry shop on West Federal. He later on moved down into the corner of the Tod House Building. In fact, I bought your grandmother's wedding ring from him. I knew him quite well.

SV: How about John Brenner?

LV: I don't remember where he was located, but Brenner was one of the better and bigger jewelry stores. They're

still in existence, his sons.

SV: Where was Lustig's located?

LV: On West Federal, in the same location that they finally closed some time ago. That is no longer owned by Lustig's. They are not connected to that now.

SV: Were there any other shoe stores downtown at that time?

LV: Yes, there were a couple down on East Federal. Hartzell's Men's Clothing was right there close, on the same side of the street.

SV: Wasn't there one closer to the square, a men's clothing store?

LV: Yes, Power's & Flaughter. They were on the north side of Federal. I think I bought all of my clothes there. In fact, I think I still have an overcoat, maybe a couple of hats that have the Powers & Flaughter label in them.

SV: What could you get there?

LV: Clothing, suits.

SV: Just clothing?

LV: Yes.

SV: Were there a lot of ready made clothing stores?

LV: Yes. Then, there were some tailor shops. Shearer was up on West Federal. I only had a couple of tailor-made suits in my time. I wasn't too hard to fit, and I could buy them off the rack. Maybe, I would need a few alterations on sleeve length and collar adjustment. They always had a good tailor doing their alterations.

SV: How about the Hodes Brothers?

LV: Albert Hodes was the only one that I knew, and he was a tailor. His daughter graduated from the same class that I did from South. His shop was on North Phelps, on the second floor of a building there.

SV: Weren't there some breweries in Youngstown?

LV: Yes, the old standby was Renner's. There was Smith Brewing Company, and I think there was one called the Youngstown Brewery. It was on North Avenue I believe. Smith Brewery was on West Federal.

SV: Were there places that manufactured soft drinks?

LV: Yes, there was Giering's. That was a family affair. Later on, there was a man by the name of Darsky. He had Golden Age Bottling on East Woodland Avenue.

SV: Didn't they, at one time, manufacture hard liquor here?

LV: There was a distillery out at New Middletown that had what was called Golden Wedding--whether it was a rye, bourbon or not, I don't know. They probably made both. I think they operated after prohibition was repealed.

SV: How about supply houses for contractors for building?

LV: There was the Youngstown Ice Company. They had several yards where they delivered from. They had one off of East Federal called the Witch Hazel. Then, there was one on West Federal beyond West Lake Crossing. They had another in Kyle's Corner's. They had the Logan Avenue yard. They were the largest. There was City Coal. They were up on the west end. I think Youngstown Ice got most of the large orders for schoolhouses and office buildings. They used to have . . . , hard, rubber, machine-driven trucks. At one time, they delivered by wagon.

SV: How about lumber yards?

LV: Union Wholesale was the largest. Sharp Brothers was here. Union Wholesale is no longer in business. Sharp is still carrying on. On Williamson Avenue, there was Yoho & Hooker. Heller Brothers were general contractors, but they also had a lumberyard on the west end. Heller Brothers was one of the large, general contracting firms. They built the Home Savings & Loan Building.

SV: What about Banner Electric?

LV: That is the one that just closed a short time ago. They manufactured light bulbs. It was called the Mazda Lamp Works.

SV: Was Neil Hartzell still in business?

LV: I don't remember that.

SV: Were there still a lot of liveries in operation?

LV: Craver had a livery. They were downtown. I don't remember of any others. Youngstown Carriage built buggies and light wagons. They were down off of East Front. In fact, if I remember right, they built an automobile at one time. I think it was called the Fridonia.

SV: What were the Fridonia's like?

LV: I don't remember.

SV: Were there many cars in Youngstown in the early days?

LV: Vary few. I think Dr. Booth had the first. Most of this is what I saw in the paper or was told about.

SV: Didn't you have some deals with Dr. Booth as a young boy?

LV: He was the first one that saw me when I got bronchitis. I used to get it every winter. He was North Phelps Street. They called that Kill Alley because in every one of those houses, there was a doctor's office.

SV: Were you susceptible to a lot of diseases as a child?

LV: I had all the childhood diseases like whooping cough, scarlet fever, diphtheria, mumps.

SV: Didn't you have scarlet fever and diphtheria at the same time?

LV: I was just getting over scarlet fever, and I developed diphtheria. I didn't get out of bed from one, and I was still in bed for the other. They just about had given up on me. That was while we still lived in New Castle. That was at the time that doctors made house calls with a horse and buggy. Dr. Reed was the one that delivered me when I was born. He came out to the house. When he came and heard me coughing, he turned around on his heels and said, "I'll be back in a little bit." He drove to his office and got a hypodermic with an antitoxin for diphtheria. He came out as soon as he could and gave it to me.

SV: How did they treat diseases at that time, contagious diseases?

LV: The house was quarantined. There would be a red sign on the house at the door, and it would tell why it was quarantined. I missed about a semester of school on account of whooping cough. Every time I would cough, the teacher would send me home. I think they took those things more serious, because they didn't know too much about them. Any thing that you don't know you're afraid of.

SV: Who were some of the other doctors in Youngstown?

LV: There was Dr. Heberding. He was an Xray man. Dr. Buechner. After I got over those childhood things, I

didn't require any doctoring for a good many years, so I wasn't too well acquainted with doctors. There was a Dr. Buchanan that interned with Dr. Booth. After Dr. Booth was gone, we carried on with Dr. Buchanan.

SV: What about bone setter Reese?

LV: I was just thinking about him. He was the chiropractor. Some big-league baseball player, who was having arm trouble, would come to bone setter Reese to have him straighten their arm. He was considered to be very good at it.

SV: We've already talked about Harry Burt and his confectionery story. Were there a lot of other confectionery stores in Youngstown?

LV: I don't remember any. There were ice cream parlors. There was The Sugar Bowl. That was on Spring Commons. They would make their own candies. Youngstown Sanitary Milk Company made ice cream. Tellings had a plant where they made ice cream, and they delivered to the different stores that sold ice cream cones. They always had a little store on the corner near a schoolhouse. There was one at the corner of Hillman and Falls, right across from Hillman Street School. There was one towards Market Street School. You could get an ice cream cone there. You could buy writing paper and snacks. It was a husband and wife store. The manufacturers would deliver ice cream to them and other confectionery stores that didn't make their own.

SV: Didn't drugstores also have soda fountains?

LV: Yes, they did. Practically every drugstore had a soda fountain. It's only a few years ago that they eliminated them.

SV: Wasn't there a local, well-known drugstore on the Southside?

LV: At the corners of Chalmers and Market, there was Lou Ritzy. He had a drugstore there. At the Corner of Warren and Market, there was McConnell and Shrag. There was Bloom Brothers. They had a couple of stores.

SV: Was Reed Drugstore still in operation?

LV: That was downtown. I think that was in the Tod House Building. I'm not sure if that was Reed's or not. Farther down on East Federal there was Jenkins'.

SV: Wasn't Ritzy's the hangout for the South football crowd?

LV: It and McConnell and Shrag.

SV: Isn't there a story connected with Ritzy's?

LV: His daughter was a ballet dancer, and she went to New York and disappeared. I wasn't too familiar with that because, at the time of her disappearance, I was working out of town on some jobs. I would be out of town for four or five or six months at a time. I missed what was going on in local news. The paper said they thought she knew too much and wanted to get rid of her. She was involved.

SV: She was involved in the Judge Craiger disappearance.

LV: That was the one.

SV: Besides drugstores, confectioneries, and ice cream shops, weren't there also quite a few restaurants down in the center of town?

LV: There was Chelekis, Bombolis. There was the Oyster House. That was really some place to go to eat!

SV: Wasn't there one next to the Tod House?

LV: That was in connection with the Tod House, Rib Tavern. The Tod House had its own dining room. The younger crowd used to go to the Rib Tavern after a game or show. They would get sundaes.

SV: Wasn't there also a place next to the palace?

LV: It wasn't a restaurant. It was a candy shop.

SV: I don't know why, but I keep thinking there was a tea garden around there.

LV: I don't remember that. There was a Chinese restaurant on West Federal at one time.

SV: Wasn't there also one on Phelps?

LV: Not that I know of. There was a hotel there, the Salow, that had a dining room.

SV: What was the Salow like?

LV: I was never in there. They had a fire there in the early 1920's that just about gutted it.

SV: What can you tell me about Chippy Bell?

LV: He was just the town character. I don't know if he ever worked. Some of the wealthy men in town used to

give him clothing. You would see him with a tall hat and a Prince Albert coat. He always had a flower in his lapel, generally of a bright color that matched his nose. Somebody painted a portrait of him in oil. It used to be in one of the bars downtown. I've wondered what happened to that. That would be a good donation to the Arm's Museum.

SV: Okay, thank you for your time.

LV: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW