

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Leetonia, Ohio

Personal Experience

O.H. 1088

FLORENCE WILHELM

Interviewed

by

Paul Merz

on

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M· This is an interview with Miss Florence Wilhelm for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program on Leetonia, Ohio, by Paul Merz, at Miss Wilhelm's home on Summer Street, on October 20, 1981, at 3 00 p.m

Miss Wilhelm, I would like you to take me back as far as you can remember Particularly things about your family, your parents, and your brothers and sisters

W I had two sisters, both older than I am They had started at school before I did I was about four years younger than my other sister The other two were close together, they were only 18 months apart so they were both in school I started school in Pittsburgh at West Elementary School I went there three years when we moved to Ohio I was in the fourth grade we came to Ohio We came to Ohio as the result of Liberty Tunnels or Tubes, whichever you want to call them, in Pittsburgh that were going to be built

My father had a grocery store on West Liberty Avenue and the Wilhelm heirs would not move the store back into the hillside so it could still operate So, my father decided to leave the city and we moved to the country here in Ohio He said that he was going far enough away that his family or nobody would know where he was My mother's family always knew They were from Mount Washington and my father though, had always lived in West Liberty When we did move to Ohio, we lived on a farm south of Leetonia I went to school, the fourth grade, in a one room country school which was quite a change from city school Where I had gone to school in the city had been close to an orphan's home We were always very happy to try to do something for them My sister especially, she always made sure that they got home safely We lived very close to this orphan's home Then we moved to Ohio and went to this one room country school for a year which would be in 1915 My one sister came to Leetonia in high school, the older one, and she was a sophomore in high school then. My other sister was in seventh grade She and I had to go to the country school and she just liked it terribly She said that she was not used to anybody going to school in overalls and their bare feet We were used to kids being dressed all alike and dressed up a little bit.

After that year we went to Fairfield Centralized School, that was the first year it was opened I was in fifth grade and she was in eighth grade From there I went to Centralized School until I was a sophomore in high school We moved to Leetonia in 1921 and I finished my freshman year at Fairfield and then I came to Leetonia High School as a sophomore I have lived in Leetonia now for 60 years That was in a village, a different place then what we had been in before Students were different. They were very friendly and very nice at Fairfield We enjoyed it very much I did not enjoy Leetonia High School very much at all until they came and asked me to play on the basketball team. I had played on Fairfield's team when I was a freshman So, as a result, I got in with

the students a little bit better playing athletics and getting involved in activities in school

Likewise too, I remember various things from the town itself I can remember some of the mayors of the town, they were always very friendly. One of them liked the neighbors locally because there has always been a friendly relationship among them It seems as though everybody enjoyed being with everybody else. First of all, I can recall them improving the streets, one of the things they did

Then I graduated from Leetonia High School in 1924 and went to Wittenburg College for four years So, I was not in Leetonia very much during those four years I still would keep in touch with it because my family was here and I would be here in the summertime We would participate in church activities The whole family are Lutherans and we, of course, went to the Lutheran Church right across the street My family was involved in different activities Then I came back and started teaching at Leetonia High School in 1928 and I taught there for 46 years

I am involved in numerous things in town, but chiefly in connection with the school I seem to be more involved in school activities than anything else because that is where I taught and that is what I did I sold tickets for football games, basketball games, kept score for basketball games, and went to all the track meets no matter where they were It did not make any difference whether it was Geneva College or where I attended those various events I can recall we won several championships in football, but we were always poor in basketball for a good many years We did have a good team in 1950 They were little but mighty Later on we went years before we had a winning team, but we seem to always have a winning team in football We had good students in track We would go to those various events Sometimes we, as teachers, used to have to take the students to football games because there was no other means of transportation

Now, of course, everybody goes in buses Even the school bus business would be quite a different event too, because when I first went to Fairfield we went in a school wagon In wintertime, we went by sled The driver would have a big sled and put a top on it and we would go by sled to school. The first school bus I was in was when I was a freshman I would go by streetcar. I finished my freshman year at Fairfield I would go by streetcar to Columbiana and then a bus would pick me up That was the first school bus That would be 1924 There were no buses in Leetonia at that time at all because Leetonia was not consolidated.

When I first started teaching at Leetonia it was just the village of Leetonia and those from the township that wanted to come in here. Some of them had an opportunity to go to Lisbon or they had an opportunity to come to Leetonia In some families, some members would go to Lisbon and some members would come to Leetonia They would come by streetcar or by horse and buggy Then

we consolidated, and the first class that I can recall that graduated consolidated would be the group of 1931. It just celebrated the 50th class reunion this year. So, we consolidated about 1930. When I say we consolidated, that meant Washingtonville High School came in with us and all the ones from Salem Township. Previous to that time, the people from Salem Township could go whichever way they wanted to. Washingtonville had a high school of their own for two years and then they came to Leetonia for the last two years. We were in the old building on High Street until December 31, 1937, when we went into the new building and we moved during Christmas vacation. We went into the new building, I say new building but it is an old building now, but it was 1938 and that is where Leetonia High School has been ever since. The first class to graduate there was 1938.

People today think things are easy and everything. We lived through a depression, and we lived through a depression in schoolteaching just the same as anything else. We did not have supplies, and we did not have all kinds of things. I was teaching chemistry at the time. The mayor of the town was a member of the school board, Harvey Shaffer, who was the chemist over at the Cherry Valley Furnace. I would contact Mr. Shaffer in order to get enough chemicals to have chemistry class. He would furnish the chemicals.

M. He worked it out for you?

W. We worked it out together and he would furnish the chemicals for me. That is how we continued with chemistry back in the Depression. I also taught physics during that time too, as well as some math. If I needed things to make projects, either my brothers-in-law would help me fix up something or somebody locally would donate up some things because all you do in physics is make use of what you have available. We had no fancy control boards and all kinds of things now that they have in physics classes. I think our people in both chemistry and physics got along just as well sometimes with the meager supplies that we had, as these people do today with all of their supplies. We never used to have anybody fail in chemistry or physics in college and now we have it occasionally because they do not have a good foundation. It seems the more supplies we have, the less we work with them.

M. Do you think there is a point of diminishing returns then?

W. There is, yes. Well, I have told you a lot about school business now.

M. I have a lot of questions here. You mentioned coming to Leetonia in 1921. What was Leetonia like in 1921? If you could take me back in time, what would I have seen in 1921?

W Leetonia was a very thriving town. The reason I say it was very thriving, we had two furnaces in operation. The McKeetry's Furnace at the west end of town and Cherry Valley Furnace, I would say in the northeast section of town. Besides, the Crescent Machine Company operated out here and the Tool Company was in existence. Of course, Cherry Valley had coal ovens in connection with it. I used to take my chemistry class down to visit the coke ovens.

M They are still there.

W They are still there but not in operation. We would go through the lab because Harvey Shaffer, as I said was the mayor and a member of the school board, and we always had an opportunity to go see those various things. We would go to the furnaces if we wanted to go. My brother-in-law worked at Cherry Valley Furnace. My father worked at Cherry Valley Furnace. My father worked at Crescent Machine Company and my other brother-in-law was in connection with the Tool Company. His father had it, and in fact, he owns more than 50% of it today, my brother-in-law.

M Is that Leetonia Tool Company, on the west end of town to this day?

W Yes.

M What was the Crescent Machine Company?

W Up here where the National Rubber is now. That was called the Crescent Machine Company. It was really a very thriving town. People worked. Everybody worked. It was not the case that we were extremely wealthy but they had plenty. I could recall at one time, there were at least seven or eight saloons downtown. As high school students we were never downtown at night, we never ran around.

M. It was not a good place to be?

W No, we never were running around. We used to have a tennis court right over here at Weikart's store and we used to play tennis. We had to leave the big shots, we used to call them the big shots from the furnace, used to come to play. We would lime it and everything for them. Where the South Side School is, was also tennis courts. That at one time had been a church, and they dismantled the church and then they allowed us to make a tennis court. We used to play tennis there. We always had some games. We used to play baseball, I played with the kids when I was a high school teacher. That is what we did, we got together and played.

M For entertainment?

W For entertainment, yes

M. What were the people like then?

W Well, like I said, the people in Leetonia have always been very friendly

M How about the people that work around the furnaces? Is that not when a lot of the Italians came in?

W That is when a lot of the Italians were here, but they were the nicest people You could go to any of the Italian homes and they were as clean as could be

M You did not sense any friction between the Italians that came in and the people that were already there?

W No Well, one time before we moved to Leetonia they said there had been friction But see, I lived on the south side here where there were not any Italians. Now we have some

M That brings up a question Where do the Italians live? Did they have a special area?

W They lived over in the north side of town around the Catholic Church Down around the Catholic Church is where most of the Italians lived

M Did they build those homes?

W Lots of those homes were built, yes

M By the Italian immigrants?

W Yes Now they were built before I came See, now our house is here because this house that I live in is more than 125 years old

M In other words, they tended to have their neighborhood?

W Yes, they had their own section and we kind of had our section We were all friendly I cannot remember that we were not friendly people

M But you remember the mention of friction before you came?

W Yes

M Do you remember anything specific about that?

W The main thing I can remember, when I was to come in to high school, I had lived in the country where everybody was exceptionally friendly because we families would round on Sunday to dinner to different homes and the like After we would go to church, then we would go, first one home, and then go to another one That is the thing they kept saying, "Oh, if you are going to move to Leetonia you are going to have to go to school with the 'Hunkies '" That is what we called them.

M That is what the Italians were called?

W They called them "Hunkeys" They said that you were going to have to go to school with them and you will find it is going to be terrible to go to school with them I found that was not true at all. It was hard for me to convince the people at Fairfield, because I still was friendly with them In fact, I went to the Junior/Senior Prom at Fairfield when I was a junior in Leetonia They just could not believe that they would treat us right I said, "You will find that they are very friendly people " It was hard for them to understand that we could go to school with them and they would be friendly with one another How we really, I think, overcame some of that was I think maybe I helped a little, I do not know We would go to dances. Well, I would dance if the Italians asked me to dance I would dance with them and I would introduce them to the other people so that they would learn to know each other Well then of course, they played basketball with different ones We did not have football at first at Fairfield Now Leetonia has had football teams for years. I can remember when I was in college, my freshman year, I could not wait until my mother sent me the paper because they beat Salem Then the next year they were defeated so terribly Let me see, I think it was 97 to 0 because Leetonia had nothing I would say the larger ones graduated with me and the next year One of them went to Duquesne University, two of them went to Duquesne University and different places in Ohio to school and had good football teams then I think they eventually learned to know each other better Now today, it is a good mixture. I would say they are very friendly We have Italians right in our neighborhood, the second house below me

M Paul Guido?

W Yes, Paul Guido. We did not think anything of it Across the street is Joe Ferry's and I go to their home just the same as they come to mine We

are not separated, we are friendly in the neighborhood

M Do you think the view that people in Fairfield had of the Italians in Leetonia was really more out of ignorance than anything?

W I think so I think they really did not know each other They thought it was terrible that I was going to have to move here I felt, when I was in Fairfield, that I really was somebody over there I was coming to Leetonia and they said, "You are going to be nobody. Nobody is going to be friendly with you," and that was not true We got to be friendly just the same Particularly teenagers want to be accepted in different places

M That is right, that has not changed

W. No, that has not changed a bit Now see, right away when I was a sophomore I invited the ones from Fairfield to a party over here Well, I did not invite the ones from Leetonia and that was not very nice They thought that I was thinking myself better than they were I know those kids all had cars over there, even though it might have been in the 1920's, they still had cars. They took the cars and pushed them down to the back streets Well, then they got to be friendly and that was not true then They were back and forth and discovered that they could be friendly with the different ones A couple of them in particular I can recall said, "You do not want to associate with those Italians " That was not true at all They were nice people Now, of course, families can be friendly I do not necessarily mean that you need to marry into the group, I do not mean that, but you can associate with them and treat them as you want to be treated

M The golden rule

W Yes That is how I was brought up, that you were to treat everyone the same. It would not make any difference if they were black or white. I have had students that were colored, the Carter's and they have come in my home just as well as the others. Italians have been here. I would not necessarily say we had a rousing good time, but we associated more friendly

M The view that Fairfield had of Leetonia, do you think that was typical of the other towns around here?

W Yes, because Columbiana has always been like that

M Leetonia, at least in the 1920's, was an undesirable place to live?

W Yes.

M Was it a desirable place to work? I know there was a lot of industry

W Very much to work, yes

M It was a place to work but not a place to live

W Yes, but they did not always think it was a place to live We really tried to move from the country to Columbiana, but we could not find a house There were no houses available Even though my dad was going to work at the Cresent, there were not houses available We even thought we had a house out in Fairfield Township See, part of Leetonia is Fairfield Township We thought we had a house there but somebody else bought it ahead of time so there was nothing left but this, and here we are. The same house yet

M 60 years later?

W 60 years later At one time there were eight of us living in this house That is what everybody thinks is so funny Why do you live there by yourself? It is a family home and there were eight of us here at one time During the Depression, my older sister was married and had two children who lived here, so that is four. My mother and father and my other sister and I were four more. So, eight of us lived here at one time The people do not think of what might have been years ago During the Depression, you did not leave people go without anything. My brother-in-law was out work where I was the only one that worked for awhile

M Of the eight?

W Of the eight We were not paid for seven months time at school here

M How did you live?

W Well, of course, my father always had supply. We were not wealthy people but he would have enough available I remember very distinctly when the banks closed in 1929. That was one time that my mother said, "I do not know what we are ever going to do This is one time I do not have money hidden here and there and so on in the house "

- M They had it in the bank?
- W It was in the bank but we could not get a thing We had enough to supply us, but she was always used to having plenty of money
- M Did they lose their money or ever recover it?
- W No, we did not lose very much A little bit There was a percentage that was picked up, but not very much
- M So much on the dollar
- W Yes I think that my dad figured it up that we did not lose more than \$ 10 or \$.15 on the dollar
- M Some people were lucky to save that much
- W. Yes The most that I can remember that my family ever lost was, naturally, when we moved and sacrificed the store was one place After I was in Pittsburgh my cousin used to take us different places I remember we came home from a baseball game at Forbes Field and on the streetcar with us was a man who kept a newspaper up in front of us My older sister remarked, "That man must really be interested in the newspaper " My cousin said very loudly, "He should be interested in the newspaper He owes your father thousands of dollars!" Of course, we did not know what it was all about
- After we got to her home, we were staying at her home and we lived here in the country, and when we got to her home she said, "Well, I will explain to you why " He was the one that bought my father's grocery store out and never paid him You know how my father was with something like that, "Well, the good Lord will always take care of me I try to do the right thing and if someone else does not, I think we will still live." That is the way he was He really lost money by moving from Pittsburgh to here, but we survived I can remember when the banks closed that my mother was so upset She said, "It is the first time I do not have money here or there " We were all here at home and you had to feed little children, you do not leave them We never went without anything to eat We always had plenty to eat and maybe we did not have everything we wanted We did not have new clothes and that, but we survived
- M What was the mood of the time when the Depression struck?
- W Well, any number of people just did not take things very well. That ran into the time .

- M. You just started teaching
- W Just started teaching and just ended college I kept in touch with sorority sisters and I know in their families That would be in Springfield, I went to Wittenburg Some of their families were hit very hard and some of their parents even committed suicide over it Of course, they lost so much in stocks where my dad did not lose that way
- M He had not invested in stock?
- W What he had, he got something out Well, we were not what you call wealthy, but we survived and did not lose a lot
- M Do you remember any specific instances here in Leetonia where people did take it in a unique way?
- W I do not remember anybody in particular I know numerous ones lost a good bit.
- M Let us talk just briefly about the two furnaces, one was Cherry Valley and the one the west end of town was McKeefrey's. You can help me with this, the McKeefrey's Furnace was there and as I understand it, late in the 1920's they planned some sort of addition. They poured the foundation.
- W Yes, and it never materialized.
- M It never materialized, but I understand that people always suspected McKeefrey of always pulling a shenanigans there That McKeefrey did not get hurt, but the people in town did I never understood how that materialized, you can help me with that
- W As much as I can recall in connection with that, I think my father maybe was asked to enter into that too, but I just do not recall exactly We had not lived here too long, but I think he was So often they were asking people to take stock, I guess that is the way it would be Like buy stock into it You put so much money in it and then when it was getting to be a profitable affair you would get something back Well here people were pouring money into that and got nothing back That is what I understood happened there in connection with it As a result then, it had to close up That is all I ever knew about it I really do not know too much about that
- M What do you remember about the McKeefrey's?

W Very rich people I had been in the mansion.

M I had my head in the door once.

W. Well, that was good I do not know whether you knew the Frondoffer's or not.

M. No, I do not

W I had the Frondoffer's in school, but Mr Frondoffer was the chauffeur and Mrs Frondoffer used to work, what would you call her?

M A maid

W Like a maid She would help with the dinners and the like One girl was up there and I had to go pick her up for some reason She must have been a junior, we must have been working on the prom Yes, we were and she was going to furnish tulips for the prom and she was going to get them at the McKeefrey home Somebody had to go pick them up and I said, "Well, I better go myself " I was class sponsor I said, "I better go myself then to send of you kids because when you get back you will have the heads off the tulips " That was the expression I used In order to go up there, I had to go when she was up there So, I contacted her and she told me to come I do not remember it was 4.00 or 5 00 and as a result I got to go in and see Some of them were away at the time so that meant that I could go see some of the different places The place was really beautiful The silverware was just out of this world Now we have silverware too, but not anything so elaborate as that was That impressed me, that beautiful silverware That would be about 1931 or 1932 when I would have her The table was a huge, long table with a great big white tablecloth on it and the dishes and everything on it, it impressed me that they were all so outstanding Of course, they had everything, and people lost a lot of money in that McKeefrey Furnace deal, which I did not know too much about She took me to see the ballroom, because I was interested I enjoyed dancing and I wanted to see the ballroom She took me quick to the ballroom but we had to hurry because we thought we heard them coming and we wanted to get the tulips so we could finish up with the prom It is a very beautiful place

M Did you have any of their children?

W No, I never had any of them

M Did they go to school out of town?

W Yes, generally they did

M So, there was an air of bitterness towards McKeefrey's?

W Yes, now June McKeefrey used to ride around She always had all big cars and everything and always had all kinds of people here visiting, friends and so on I think we all kind of envied her a little bit because we did not have as much I remember saying she can have all of her money because I do not think she is very sociable I would always say that Now, I assume she was in her class or her own group

M She was the daughter of old man McKeefrey?

W Yes

M How old would she be? Is she still alive?

W No, I do not think she is Her son, Eustis, is still around, I think

M That would be her son-in-law?

W Yes, that is her son-in-law She was older than I am, so she would be past 80 I would say, if she were alive I am sure she is not I think she died in California, but I am not too certain about that. They always seemed to be traveling somewhere They were always on the go The McKeefrey's in general, I can remember seeing them, they were always getting off a train They have been here and there Mr Frondoffer would have to meet them at all hours of the day or night So often they would stop a train right in Leetonia We had trains that stopped here

M Yes, other than breaking down

W Yes, I always went on the train out here to go to college I never had to go anyplace else Sometimes they would have to go to another place to meet me because I would come home at a different time and would not come home with one that stopped here One time they used to meet me in Alliance and then it would go on to Niles instead of coming up here. Cherry Valley Furnace went on for quite a while too That was during the Depression if I recall, but it went down My brother-in-law worked there but I cannot tell you exactly what he did, but he used to work there After they moved away from here, that is where he was working was there

Then eventually, that went down and he started working at Jones and Lockrin in Youngstown That is where he worked until he was about ready to retire when he died

M Miss Wilhelm, you mentioned the mayors Politicians have always fascinated me, what stories can you tell about Leetonia mayors? Do you recall any at all

W Well, we had numerous ones Of course I can always remember Harvey Shaffer he was the one that helped us so much at school

M He was on the school board?

W Yes, he was on the school board for awhile and was the chemist at the furnace Then he moved to Coraopolis in the 1940's right after his youngest son graduated from high school He graduated with my nephew, so I think that would be about 1941 or 1942 After that we have had numerous ones We had a Kennedy, Minone, Jim Carry, and definitely different ones Seems as though not always, a lot of them are democratic and they have their own little clique that stays in and nobody pays much attention to it It has been kind of varied recently

M Was it a desirable job in the 1920's and 1930's? Today it is almost like the kiss of death No one seems to really be interested

W No, nobody seemed to be interested There was a little more competition Even when Harry Ginther was in, I think there was still a little more competition because we generally always had a democratic mayor and Harry Ginther was a republican It got that it was a little difficult for him and he had to give up and then, of course, he did not live much longer than that.

M What do you remember about the police? Have I struck a nerve?

W No, I used to kind of enjoy them Of course they knew me well and I knew them because I walked to school all the time We always called him "Booger" and he was always after the kids The kids were the worst and so on. One time we had a hay ride, and guess what they did Somebody reported us and said that we did not have lights That was when Mr Naragen was our superintendent We had left the South Side School here and he lived right out on the hill out here and he even checked us that we had lights and everything I was with the kids Yet, they tried to say that somebody down here reported us and we all had to go to the

mayor's. Well, I went with the kids "Booger" could not believe it, he was not going to tell us who called but eventually we found out

M "Booger" was a policeman?

W He was the policeman, yes Then too, he always liked to be in on anything that was rather spectacular

M That has not changed, has it?

W No, it has not We had a robbery here in town one time

M When was this, in the 1930's or 1940's?

W My father was still living, so it would have to be before 1952 I would say it would be in the late 1940's They wonder how I even knew anything about it or anything like that How I did was that I always walked to school and I went out and it had snowed. I went out and right outside my front door here was blood in the snow I came to my father and I said, "Dad, something has happened " He said, "What is the matter that you are coming back?" I said, "There is blood and I can trail it down the street " I went down a little piece, maybe two houses, and I trailed it all the way down to the garage, but I did not go that far until I came back and told him Then I said, "Dad, you are going to have to get up and find out what happened. When I come home tonight, give me the latest and the scoop " Just like that My sister lived over here next to the car barns We used to have streetcars around here.

M Yes, on Pearl Street

W On Pearl Street She lived right next to it My dad would go over to see her nearly every morning because he was retired and he was 80, maybe 81 He died in 1952 so I would say it would be about 1949 or 1950 He goes out the door and here he trails him right around behind our garage to the garage right next door The family next door had a young kid that was in school and he had the car Here he had come in with the car and this person had seen him, he must have been down here where I saw a larger pool of blood, was going to try to get his car He could not get that car. My dad trailed him right across the street to my sister's and that is where he took a car Here the people that lived in there, Don McCoy lived in that apartment and was married to the Weikart girl, and he got out of the car We always left everything open In fact, my garage was unlocked But there were no keys in my car but he had not tried that This one, the door was open in the garage The keys were in the car and they took the car

He took the car and went off There he was bloody and bleeding and we could trail him along the way I trailed him down and I knew they had not tried down here at the garage. I was going down, somebody saw me and they said, "Could you see where he had gone?" I said, "Yes, he went up Summer Street right across our lawn " We all laughed and I said, "I want to know what happened " He said, "Well, he took a towel off my back porch and evidently was bleeding He got blood on it and threw it away " He came from down here at the garage You know, everybody was curious I never said anything when I got to school I kept quiet waiting to see what the kids would tell me The kids were telling me, "Did you hear about the robber last night?" He shot the pipe out of Booger's mouth " I said, "Yes, I trailed him past my house " They said, "Well, he took Don McCoy's car." Well, see I did not know that, my dad would know that It got to be quite a joke Everybody was telling about this and that really happened We had a robbery in town or that they tried to break into the garage down here

M Did Booger shoot him?"

W He shot at him but never got him It took some time before they did finally catch up with the person I do not remember where they did get the car, North Lima or someplace It was always something spectacular that was happening and he was always involved in it Then from him went his son, and I had his son in school Now he is retired, that is Alan

M Gibson?

W Alan Gibson

M Oh, I know Alan Gibson

W Yes, Alan Gibson and his son did various things too They were always accusing the high school kids of being so terrible and it would irritate me because we had not done anything We had even checked with the superintendent That was funny that we checked with the superintendent and had lights and everything. They finally decided that we were not so bad after all He said, "Well, if they won a victory they were going to parade You might as well be prepared." And that is how we always went about it, but I could not say anything about the police because they have always cooperated very nicely with me If I would go with the kids they would say, "Well, the kids must be alright if you were with them " I said, "We did not do anything wrong. You are just getting the wrong impression Somebody is calling you and it is not good You can either take my word for it or you can take the neighbor's, I do not care It does

not make any difference " I said, "They are here, and I told them they are to sit and listen and I would do the talking They have always then cooperated Now, they have always cooperated with the school because I would sell tickets up there and get the money to the bank Until I arranged it with Mr Fisher, he used to be our cashier at the bank, and then when I had counted the proceeds I would take it down to him I did that for years with football and basketball Times that we would have huge crowds in football and I often wonder that maybe somebody did not hit me over the head with it Then they started taking it to the mayor's office and it was robbed one time As long as I had it, nothing ever happened

M From what you said, your escapade there with the wounded thief.

W I never saw the thief at all, I just saw his blood

M You saw what he left Crime was not that much of a problem, you did not have your garage door locked.

W No

M Would you say it is a problem today?

W Yes, I would think if leaving my garage unlocked or I would not think of leaving my car unlocked Now I go downtown and leave the car on the street a little bit unlocked. In fact, I did today, I let the engine run too for a few minutes I ran into the bank and out but then I am only gone three or four minutes.

M When did that change? If you had to put your finger on one year which you felt that crime became a factor here in town, what year would you say?

W I would say back not until about the late 1970's did I ever start to lock my car My car is not locked now in the garage, but the garage is locked, but at school. I walked most of the time, but then when I would go up there I would leave my car and I would never think of locking it It never was locked up there

M It is very recently?

W Very recently. I would say 1970 because I changed cars and I had a different one in 1971 and then I bought this one in 1973 I think in 1971 I started locking my car That was the first time

M. You spent close to 50 years in a classroom, 48?

W 46 years

M What would your fondest memory be of the classroom? If you could pick one thing and look back on it

W I enjoyed working with teenagers. Even today I would rather work with teenagers than I would with adults. I think you just cannot satisfy adults, I do not know why. I think sometimes maybe I am unreasonable too, but it seems to me that I always found students are eager to learn. Everybody does not find that out. I think I had all kinds, I did not always have the same kind because I even had one that was a dope that I dealt with. I did not feel afraid of him and I think I cured him for that year for the simple reason that he knew he could not graduate unless he stayed in my homeroom. I think he is nothing today, from what I have heard. I have not heard of him just recently but I heard a few years ago that he was involved with a dope group in Florida but escaped with his life, and that is about it. Then he was here for a while again. I saw him, but I do not know where he is now. Other than that, and I think students will respond the way you want them to respond in most cases. They knew when they came into class that they were not to be monkeying around. We were there to work. We would laugh at funny things that would happen too, you have to give and take I think. I could be wrong, but I think one of the things today is that the kids do not respect the teachers. You cannot expect them to respect you if you do not have any respect for them.

M You think it is a two way street?

W I do think it is a two way street

M. I agree

W I still am in contact with students and they still come back and say various things. One just told me on Saturday of some incidents that have happened and she said, "I am bored to death with that class." I said, "I would love to go into that class and just drop a book and let you know I am there." She looked at me so strangely. I said, "You need something to create some interest. If it has not been created now, when is it going to be created?" That should start the first day. Let us see, the largest homeroom I ever had was 75. I had 75 juniors one time and big study hall which is now the library at the school. I used to pick up chairs and they would do it. I would just ask them if they would just sit on the chairs and

they would do it I would just ask them if they would just sit on the chair everyday and pick it up, and if they did not want to, I would force them to do it The first thing I would do would be assign a seat to them

M: Tell me about the principal that you worked for I have been in it 12 years, I am a rookie compared to you but teachers generally, do not like principals How was it in 1930?

W When I started to teach, I had a principal from Salem, Mr Whinnery He was a very stern person In fact, I was afraid of him myself when I first went to teach You had to learn to know him and everybody had respect for him He may have seemed severe and he may have had kind of a scowl on his face, but he was the most cooperative person If you got into trouble, he said, "Alright come into the office and you tell me your troubles " He did not start out by saying, I am going to paddle you right away He would start out by saying, "Now you tell me your troubles I will listen to your side of it and then I will also listen to the teacher's side of it and we will compare notes." That is the way he dealt with the students Now, remember when I first started to teach, there were only 90 in high school here

M In the entire high school?

W In the entire high school we only had 90

M In 1928?

W In 1928

M Four grades or three?

W All four years of high school, but only 90 students.

M So, there were only about 23 in a class

W Let us see, the first class that graduated was in 1929 and I think there were only 19 in it

M. What happened to kids along the way? Did they just quit?

W Yes, they mostly would be here for football and then they would drift off A lot of them went to work in the furnaces or whatever they would find to work People worked in those days.

M And there were jobs?

W There were jobs available for high school kids

M You tended to end up with the students then that wanted to be there

W Right

M There was no such thing as a kid going because he had to

W No Then we consolidated in 1930, because the first class that just had a class reunion I think they had about 52, if I remember, in the class of 1931

M So, it just about doubled

W Yes, it about doubled Because see, we had the people from Washingtonville, people from south of town Now we went clear out where Fairfield picks up bus students now, we always had those The Spafholt's and all went out there

M To Leetonia?

W All went to Leetonia.

M When did attendance change? When did the compulsory attendance begin?

W I would say long about in the 1940's Now see, we lived through a war in between that time there, too The first one that graduated from this high school was 1938 I had those seniors but I do not remember exactly how many there were there. There must have been around 50, I expect, in the graduating class

M. Did you notice a big change in behavior when kids quit leading themselves out, in other words, as kids stayed in the school longer?

W Yes, you could tell a difference I think they wanted to stay in school too, because then came along especially in the time of the war, they could further their education and then go to college on a GI Bill

M If they finished high school My family, announcing my sisters, one had two children the other had one My nephew graduated in 1940 Now see, he graduated in time that he got started in college, but then got caught in

the war. He had to either enlist or be drafted. He did not want to be drafted, so he went and enlisted and as a result, his eyes went in the Marines. Everybody wanted to be a glory hog Marine then. He went in the Navy. Well, of course, he got into the V 12 program and got an education. He got to go to Notre Dame, he first went to Baldwin-Wallace, he went to the University of Chicago, and we could not afford all that. Because right after the Depression you were trying to get yourselves adjusted again and my sister and her husband did not really have enough to do that. He finally graduated from Youngstown College because he had all of his credits transferred there, because that is where he was going to school. He went back and forth with his father who worked at Jones and Lockrin. Then my niece graduated in 1943, but see, that was getting to be compulsory education.

M. Into the 1940's?

W. Yes, in the 1940's, that was getting to be compulsory education.

M. What was the war like? How did the war affect Leetonia?

W. A lot of the students had to go. I can remember my niece's class was the class of 1943 and they were the first ones it really affected. They were all there for commencement except for one. He eventually became a student at Youngstown University and played football for them, Joe Driscoll, and was the superintendent of schools.

M. Did they not call him "Pappy" Driscoll?

W. "Pappy" Driscoll did not finish high school. He had to go in February because he was 18 then, but he eventually wanted his education. He had a very unusual life because he came from the country and was just a poor country boy and could have never afforded an education any other way. It was interesting to talk to him because he was in the invasion of Normandy.

M. Did Leetonia bounce back at all after the Depression because of the war? The furnaces never reopened?

W. No, the furnaces never reopened. We never did bounce back too much. In 1944 we were in trigonometry, and I ended up with two. The rest of them were all taken in the draft. Our postmaster is one of them.

M. Jim Stewart?

W Jim Stewart, yes.

M Miss Wilhelm, did anyone resist?

W Anybody resisting to go to war?

M Yes I forget, which term if you use about the Marines?

W Everybody wanted to be a glory hog Marine

M Do you remember anyone at all that did not want any part of it?

W Not from Leetonia High School, but I do know of some

M In this area?

W No

M In the United States?

W In the state of Ohio One of our teachers was a Quaker, our home economics teacher I usually was friendly with them They lived in apartments here in town So often they would come and be here and we would eat together and things like that, and she was a Quaker She had two brothers that called it alternative service The one went to be a dishwasher or help in the kitchen

M Like in a hospital or something?

W Yes He did not help in the hospital, he was a dishwasher or something in the camp

M There were Quakers in this area

W No, she was from Harrison County

M But I mean there were Quakers here?

W Yes, we had some Quakers around through here

M There were not any in Leetonia School?

W No

M How about Mennonites, do you remember the Mennonites at all?

W. Yes, the Mennonites were mostly though in either Greenford and some in Fairfield

M But not Leetonia?

W We did not have any

M Do you remember those people?

W Now, I am wrong We did too, we had the Bowman's They did not resist it, maybe Harold Bowman did but that would be after he graduated from high school Ruth Bowman was one of our teachers, now she is a missionary in Africa today

M I met her, I remember when I first started

W. I do not know whether she is in Africa right now

M She was at one time.

W I think she went back again She came back because of her eyes and then she went back She lived in Jerusalem for a while She did something for an Arab in Jerusalem I do not know whether she got house service, I think she taught his children if I recall I think she was teaching his children English I am not sure but I think that is what it was I talked to her and she talked of course, when we got together we did so much talking We reminisced about what we did in class more so than anything else So, I usually found out through somebody else

M. You do not remember any specific examples of resisting?

W No, I do not recall anybody, hopefully, that actually resisted There could have been, but not that I was aware of

M What do you remember about December 7, 1941?

W Very distinctly I can recall It was a Sunday afternoon and we were listening to the radio because my dad and I enjoyed listening to the radio I think my niece and nephew were both here, because they lived over here and they were here quite frequently It was really very cold that day. We had a radio in there and we had a register right there because I was

standing on the register and I said, "I better enjoy the heat. It is pretty hot over there, I will bet." We remarked and my dad said, "Oh, I hate to think of another war." We lived through World War I. He said, "I hate to think if another war because that is where my grandson will be going." We listened to that to find out what was going on. Well, we knew people who were in the Navy in Hawaii at that time. We were good friends with people by the name of Pebbles out here in the country and their grandson was there. I wondered how he was, but he was not hurt. He happened to be on shore and viewed it all from the shore. He had shore leave that time. It was really quite a mess.

M Were you worried about your own safety this far away?

W Well, that is the only thing my dad said, "If they invade, they will invade California and I do not think we will get it right away." I think that is all. I do not think we took it too seriously that way, but when it came time for these kids that had only so much time, then it was getting pretty close. My niece's husband now, he was her boyfriend then, did go in the Marines. He was in the invasion of the Philippines and likewise too, was on a little island by the name of Emarou. When they took it the Japanese had left and the airstrip was already made. That is where he was for 17 or 18 months. Nobody knew where they were, they knew he had gone to the Pacific but they did not know where. Mail did get through occasionally. She would hear once in a while from him, but not until he came back did we know much about it. He never knew what he looked like. They were five miles out from Hawaii and got supplies but they never got in. In 1975 we all went to see Pearl Harbor and where they were. He wanted to see what Hawaii looked like. He said, "Now here I have been out there," but they went by boat. He was a mechanic in the Air Force.

M You never personally feared for your own safety in the darkest days of the war?

W No

M What about the troop trains, do you remember the troop trains going through town?

W Yes

M I was born in 1947, so tell me about troop trains

W You do not know what it was like?

M: No, I have no idea

W: Well, I can tell you better in World War I than World War II

M: I have World War I here on my list. I neglected to realize that you lived through World War I. That was going to be our next topic anyway.

W: Yes, a teacher that I had in school in fourth, fifth, and sixth grade was Warren Barr from Columbiana. He was drafted and he had to go.

M: This is World War I?

W: This is World War I and we lived in the country. We liked him so well that we wanted to go see him. We went by streetcar to Salem, my mother took us up there to the train station to see him go. He waved and waved to us and he said, "Well, you sent me away with a smile, I will keep wearing that smile." We can remember that as plain as day. He sent a card, I might have the postal card yet because I have all kinds of postal cards upstairs, he said, "You sent me away with a smile and I am still wearing a smile." We would see them and there they were. Some people cried and screamed and yelled, some of them were terrible. I know my mother said, "Now that is no way to ever send anybody off. You should do your crying at home." That is what she always told us. She said, "That is terrible because they are going to remember you like that and maybe they will never come back alive, and they will think of you just crying and screaming. So do not do that." We are kind of hardhearted, I guess. We are not supposed to do that. Not that you are not supposed to cry in public, I do not mean that. I mean you are not to show off at the time.

M: It would make the parting awfully hard?

W: Yes, you are to try to be brave at the time when they leave. I know what it was to have my nephew go, that was a blow to my father because he had nothing but girls and he was the only grandson. He still was the only grandson.

M: Were there hundreds of men on the troop train that you remember?

W: It was full. There were a lot that went from Salem that time.

M: You said that the people standing on the platform cried and carried on, how about the soldiers?

W Some of them did too. Some of them would too but not all of them. Of course a lot of them would open their windows and there they would be hanging and the train would be starting and people would be hanging there trying to kiss them goodbye and so on, which made matters worse for them I think. As I said, everybody cannot be that hardhearted. Yet, I think we are compassionate people in spite of it, but, I think we were brought up not to be that way, not to show off places. I think that is the difference in people, some people would and some people would not.

I do not remember as much about World War II. I can remember of Paul and them going but we did not make an issue of it. Now I know when he first came back with his sailor outfit on, my dad said, "He sure does not look attractive in that, does he?" He had red hair and he had his hair all cut off and he did not like that. Not that he liked a beard or anything like that, or long hair, but he did not think that looked right, them shaving all of the hair off their heads like they did. They had to endure various things. Some of them when they went were gone for years when they came back. My cousin's husband was in World War I over in France and he would never talk about it. He would never say anything about it. They came here visiting one time and I just accidentally asked a question, and he and I talked about two hours and she could not get over it. She did not know what we were talking about and she said, "Do you mean to tell me that he talked war to you when I cannot get one word out of him?" He told things that they did in France. When the Armistice was signed, he was on the road to Paris in a boxcar. He said that they had boxes and boxes of chocolate bars, they did not have anything to eat but chocolate bars. Now, that is the way some of our doughboys were treated in World War I.

M This was your cousin?

W Yes, this was a cousin.

M. What else did he tell you about France during World War I?

W. He told of how they escaped from place to place and how different people would make take them in their homes and keep them so that the Germans would not get them. We could not believe that is the way they would be, but that is how they did it. Things that they would do. Sometimes some of the Germans would come over to the American lines and never go back, trade uniforms with the dead ones. When they told that I could not hardly believe it. I said, "You mean to tell me they did this," and he said, "Yes, they did not want to fight in the German lines."

M There were Germans in this area, do you remember any of the animosity towards the German people during World War II?

W Yes, I think there was some My German name has gotten me into trouble more than once. I wrote to some kids I had in school and would send it down to the South Pacific. They were just boys I had in school and I would write 17, 18, or 20 letters a week and it would be only about what was happening here or what was going on in school There was somebody who would pick up my letters and would see, because I put my name on the outside in case it did not go through, he said, "What is this? Some German getting something, sending it back so that they are using it as a spy here and there?" One fellow said, "Well heavens, that is my old school teacher, she is no spy " See, that happens

While I was traveling in Europe, every time that I went through Checkpoint Charlie and a couple of other places into East Germany, my passport was always on top The rest of them were not but mine was They were checking my Wilhelm name Poor, innocent me, I was nothing but a lowly schoolteacher Back in my family tree, we did come from Germany. That would be my grandfather on both sides, my mother's father and my father's father both came from Germany That is back far enough that, surely, you would not think that I would be hunting up any trouble now, but you just never know.

M So there was some animosity towards the Germans during World War II?

W Yes

M How about the Ku Klux Klan here in town?

W My father belonged to it I have a Klan suit upstairs It was rather a strange affair, my mother never wanted him to go

M What year are we talking about? Let us just say what decade?

W It was when I was in high school My father went my nephew was born in July 1923 and he was only a few weeks old when he went to a meeting That is the only meeting that I ever remember him going to and it was held out here you know where Mellinger's reels place is out here?

M On Kelly Park Road?

W Not Kelly Park Road, the road this side I do not know what the name of it is It is Beesen Road, that road We used to go out that way to go to Unionville because we lived on Crestview Road It was out just across the creek in the field the and my dad was with them that time. We were here on the porch because Paul was just a little baby A car came into town flying and said, "Trouble with the Ku Klux Klan, trouble with the Ku Klux Klan!" My dad was along and my

mother was having a fit. Well, here it happened to be some kids from high school got real smart, because the one kid was valedictorian of my class, thought he was so smart and he was trying to pull the masks off to find out who they were. He was told not to do it and he would not stop and then they finally were using billy guns on them. That is these sticks and clubbing them. Well, I know he had a scar on his head where he had been hit, but that was his own fault because he would not quit. My dad came back and he said, "I am never going back to them again." I do not know if he ever went back, but he did have an outfit and so on. I think they were trying to do the right thing in the beginning.

M What was their purpose in the 1920's in Leetonia?

W I think that they were trying to separate the two groups. I think they thought the Catholics were reigning supreme and they were trying to have the other people think that one was as good as the other. I think the Klan's people originally had a good idea of taking care of people who were destitute and needed help and so on, that it was the good idea. It was not the carpetbagger idea from the South, it was the other one I think. It did not materialize because there was too much animosity. There was always somebody ready to fight. If they would just let them have their meetings, and get it over with, and pay their dues, then see that somebody was taken care of that needed the help financially, I think it would have been alright. They did not do that.

M It was more of a charitable organization, like the Shriner's or something.

W Yes, I think around here that is what it was.

M You do not remember any violence other than one instance?

W No, I do not think there was any other. The reason I recalled that one is because this person was in my class at school. My dad was in the same place, yet he did not see all that happened. He just knew there was a fight but he did not know what had happened.

M Do you have any idea how many people were there?

W I do not know. They must have had several hundred from the way he talked because he said, "They would do bad if they all came down."

M I know it was not good in the Catholic name, but other than that was it pretty much a sociably accepted thing that people belonged to the Klan? Did everybody belong?

W No, I do not think everybody belonged. I cannot even remember who took him because he never drove very much. That is the reason why us girls all learned to drive, because he did not like to drive. I do not even remember who took him. I do not know how he happened to get there but somebody came and picked him up or would not have gone, I do not think. He was not one to do that so much. I do not mean that he was opposed to organizations because he belonged to the Odd Fellows for about 60 years. He had a 60 year charm. He never joined the Mason's because he always called them the bricklayers, and yet everybody in the family belonged. His brothers, his father, everybody belonged but he did not. His way was paid but there was a dance that he went to instead of going and being initiates to get the first three degrees and he never went back. That was his attitude toward it. My mother was an Eastern Star, my uncles were Mason's, my mother's one brother was a Thirty-three degree Mason, so it was not that they did not believe in organizations, they did. He was a K of P, and Knight of Pythias and Odd Fellows, he did belong to those. He belonged to those until he died and, as I know, he had that 60 year pin from the Odd Fellows because they were honoring him in January. We would have gone but we had such a terrible snowstorm and we did not go. It was in Pittsburgh.

M Do you remember anything else about the Klan other than that one instance?

W I remember them burning crosses. I think they burned one in front of the Catholic Church down here, and they burned one out on the hill out here.

M Down at St. Pat's?

W Yes, at St. Pat's. They burned one out here by the cemetery.

M Was there ever any violence involved in that kind of thing?

W No, I do not believe so.

M How about Booger, did he play any part in it? Was he there?

W I really do not know.

M You were not there yourself?

M No, because we never were allowed downtown.

M Your father was not involved in that. I never remember there being any other meeting than that one out there. I know somebody picked him up but I cannot recall who picked him up.

M There were cross burners?

W Yes, I remember going sometimes when I heard there was going to be a cross burned someplace I cannot remember where that was now, someplace out in the country I know we got in the car and we saw it at a distance, but we were not close to it

M When did the Klan disappear from this area, from Leetonia?

W I think when I was in college I would say that it disappeared entirely

M. Yes, I would say about 1925 or 1926 It did not develop much here It just did not take, I do not believe

M The outfit that you have upstairs, was it your father's?

W I suppose it was I know he wore it that night, but I do not know I suppose he bought it, I do not know I do not think my mother made it She used to make so many things but I do not think she made that. We do not have the hat anymore, I know that. I remember the kids playing with it and I said, "Let us throw that thing away. Everybody knows what it is" The robe is fairly decent material It has got a lot of material in it.

M Does it have an emblem on it?

W No, this one does not

M Just plain white

W Just plain white

M So, it is something that she may have made it, but I do not know that she really did She could make things and I would be in school and I would not always know about it

W Yes, that is true I would not always remember about that That was rather an interesting organization, I do remember that

M It is fascinating I thought of that when you mentioned the hostility that you faced with the German name and for some reason that flashed into my mind

W I mean I have never done anything wrong that they could check on me to say, "Oh, your name reveals what you have done It is like anybody going to be in

office in Washington DC, if they do a few other things instead of going hunting back in all of their history and everything that they have done

M It has sort of been out of hand

W Yes, it certainly has Who cares to be in politics today?

M That is right They keep a lot of good people out

W Particularly good, religious people that would be honest

M An overreaction to Watergate, we tend to be people that overreact I think that is what that was I think that might change someday.

W. I hope so I hope it does not continue like that I think really our government has gone overboard in so many different things They have to have so many secretaries and so many things, why do they not do a little work themselves

M Let us just flash back quick to your teaching career Today I would say it is truly typical of teachers to feel that they are overworked and underpaid What was the typical outlook of a teacher in the 1930's or the 1940's?

W We were just happy to have a job

M You did not feel like you were overworked and underpaid?

W. Never. I started to work at \$100 a month and I saved enough to buy a car My mother started me out, "If you do not have enough money to buy a car, you cannot have a car " So, I had to have enough money to pay for my car as well as take care of it myself

M Did you ever feel that the Board of Education or the administrators were unsympathetic of your plight? Did you ever feel that they were not interested in the problems of Miss Wilhelm, as far as teaching went?

W No, I always think they were interested I think they wanted to know what we were doing I think they knew what we were doing and we did not have to tell them or broadcast

M They were aware?

W. They were aware of what was going on.

M Was that true towards the end of your career?

W Yes, I would say they never came in too often and never sat there and checked us to whether I was teaching something that was worthwhile or not. I could hear Mr. Trumbidas say, "Well, nobody was in to evaluate me." I usually talked with the door open so they did not have to come in to find out what I was doing, they could hear it standing out in the hall and listening. He said, "I can be out in the hall and know what you are doing. I can hear you. I can evaluate you from the hall."

We had several principals, we had a few that were very poor. We had one, I felt sorry for poor Mr. Boothe, he wanted to be a good man and a friend to the kids and you just cannot be too friendly with them. I think you have to be firm with them and you have to be a little distant with them. I can remember Mr. Naragen, you did not know him but I taught 17 years under him, he had such a good idea and he would say it in such a nice way. He would always say, "Keep the desk between you and the student. You can be friendly, you can be nice to them, and so on but keep that desk between you and the student." I still think that is what the teacher should do. I think you can be close to them. If they want to really be friendly with you and want to tell you their troubles, they will come in and tell you whether you try to pry out of them what they want to know. I knew of lots of things that I could tell at home that if they knew those kids told us, there would be trouble for sure. Those kids sometimes would say things about their parents, and sometimes I knew the parents quite well. Why are they not aware of their problems with their children? A lot of them are not because they lack communication with their students. That is the thing that we always tried to keep open. My family always tried to keep open communication with the rest of the family. I have a niece that has a daughter too, and her mother said that she needed a degree in psychology to cope with her. I said, "The thing we have to do is keep communications open." For a while, she was in college and she would call me and I would know what was going on. I could convey to the family, "You just better check on something, this or that or so on." I think that is what you have to do.

M I am going to refer to the NEA, (National Education Association) as a union. When did the union first come into Leetonia, the teacher's union?

W I would like to think that it is not a union even yet. I do not care for unions. Now, this is what I have about unions, unions were fine when they started until they got those radical heads in that have to come along and say that this has to be this and it has to be that. You know we were given a slip of paper like that and say our salary is going to be such and such, and you either accepted it or you were gone.

- M Were they fair with you when they have you that slip of paper with your salary on it?
- W Yes, I would say they were. I think they gave us as much as they could give us
- M Let us suppose you were a five year person and I was a five year person, were we payed the same or were you paid more according to your ability?
- W We were paid according to our experience in education
- M Much as it is today?
- W Yes
- M Do you remember when the NEA came in?
- W I belonged to the NEA from the time I started to teach school. We used to belong, and I cannot remember what we used to pay. I know it was only a few dollars. We always went to meetings in Cleveland, we always had that day off to go to those different meetings. We always belonged to, got the Ohio Schools, so we had to belong to the Ohio Association of Teachers. I belonged to all of them as long as I taught school, and I belong to the national ones now. Only the National Retired Teachers and Ohio Retired Teachers, see you have to have the "R" in it now, where before we did not have that.
- M Miss Wilhelm, we probably have time for one last question. Take me to sometime in the early 1950's. What was a typical day like teaching in Leetonia?
- W I think we had eight classes a day then. I used to teach eight classes a day and I never felt abused.
- M You taught eight classes with no free periods, no planning periods, and no study halls?
- W I did not have any free periods for years.
- M Eight straight classes?
- W I am trying to think when I had my first free period, and I had the last period of the day because I was the oldest one there. I think when Mr

Trumbidas came in, I might have had it before then. It would be in the 1950's before I ever had free periods and I got the last period for a while. Then it got to be jumping around. One time I had the second period, another time I had it some other period, and so on. We used to have to go back to homeroom at noon and check roll.

M You taught eight periods, how many different classes?

W All eight.

M They were all different?

W No, they would not all be different because I, generally, used to have two physics classes, two chemistry classes, advanced math, and algebra II, sometimes I would have two classes of algebra II. They would have to work it in chemistry because I would have to have double periods and physics. Well, how they used to work that, I would have my chemistry the first period on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday and then Tuesdays and Thursdays I would have lab. I would have physics the second period like on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday and then I would have lab connected in with that. It alternated around like that somehow, I cannot remember exactly. I still should have some of those upstairs. I have not thrown quite everything away but I have thrown some things away. I had all of my grade books from the time I started teaching.

M You threw them away?

W This summer I just finally disposed of them. Someone is going to have to throw them away if I do not. I know I used to have eight classes.

M Were you tired at the end of the day?

W By the time I walked home, I was ready, I could do something else.

M Did you have to bring work home with you?

W Always, I hardly ever got papers graded in school. I nearly always graded them at home.

M How about the kids, did they ever behave for you? I assume they did in 1928, but how about when you were teaching in 1972?

W I did not have much trouble. 1973 was when I was off more than I was.

there In 1972 I was off the whole month of January, that is when I had eye trouble I only went back then for a half of a day See, my poor seniors, my substitute teacher could not do a thing with them I had a couple of them that were flunking and parents were coming and the kids were they were my neighbors, that is the best of it, one lived down the street, one lived up the street, one lived over there and so on Parents were beginning to complain They were wondering if I was going to be able to go back and I said, "Well, I will try " I went back and we taught the advanced math and algebra II, at first Each of us took two classes because they were both in the morning I let her continue with the algebra I, she did not have too much trouble with the algebra I people and the geometry people Then I was only teaching six classes, we had seven periods She was a good teacher, she is teaching in North Lima today and South Range She teaches advanced math and everything there She had good training and so on, but they were just so used to me keeping them busy They could talk her out of things just as quick as anything I might assign maybe ten problems, and they would talk her into five, where they would not do that with me That was the difference, they were getting behind and that was really bothering me But I had to be in and out of the hospital and I could not help it, was not really my fault It was the result of an eye man operating or doing something in the wrong way on my eye I am the sufferer as the result Let us see, what could you get him for today, malpractice?!

M Yes

W Well, I would not be that mean

M Generally speaking, you found that the kids were easy to get along with?

W All I needed to do was to go back and just sit there in the class and it was entirely different. She said, "Oh, I accomplished so much with you just sitting there " It was not that they were afraid of me, I know they were not, but it was a case that they had respect for me that they did not have for her. That is why I termed it But then, their parents knew me and I had them and it makes a difference I still say a teacher has to establish a reputation first, because I know when I was first teaching I do not think they cared whether I kept them busy or not. It was just like everybody when they start out. Although, I have some of the students tell me that they admired the young ones because they always had old ones, and they wanted to have young ones They thought we dressed up a little bit better Well, of course, my mother made me clothes and I did have plenty because it was easy for her to do it. It was easy for her to fix me up You

have to appear in front of them in such a way that they like look at you
You do not have to be beautiful

M But appealing

W Yes, wear things . And I would have never thought of wearing the same dress two days in succession I would have a change for three weeks before I would start wearing the same thing again I would have fall clothes and winter clothes and spring clothes and summer clothes, and you have a change of scenery like that and I think that was appealing to them They liked to have somebody to look up to, I think I do not know but that has always been my idea Today, particularly the women, because I do not think men can change too much, to me I think the women are sloppy looking. I know slacks, I wear them myself, but I just do not think they are . Now, they are alright I think for the grades where they are going to sit down on the floor maybe and something with them. I think high school people ought to be a little more dignified I think there is a time and a place for everything.

M That is not a place for slacks?

W Well, in the wintertime it might be alright, an attractive outfit, but I do not think all year round I think they like to see something else Even Mr T. told me about people coming, he said that some girl came and applied for a job He said, "Guess what Miss Wilhelm," of course he has always been very friendly with me and I know a lot of things that go on, I would know it before it got in school He said that she had jeans on, "Can you imagine? And sloppy, old shoes. Do you think I would hire her?" I said, "Well, I would not think so." You have to appeal not to the heads but to students as well

M From what you said, I would take it that teaching, generally, was pretty financially rewarding to you You did not suffer because of what you earned as a teacher?

W No

M You always felt that you received just compensation?

W Yes, I never thought that we needed to be paid the highest salaries of money. I think that is what is wrong today There are too many people today who want huge salaries for doing nothing. Then, the welfare, I think, has caused that People can get money and not even do anything

We felt that we had to work

M Earn it?

W Yes, we had to earn it. If Mr. Naragen would have been their superintendent, I think he would have left that impression in their little minds, too. He said, "The board gives you as much as they can give you, and if it does not suit you, you can go to another system where they pay you a lot more. That is all up to you because this is a free country." That is really how it was. I said that I would rather be in a little town and feel as though I was doing something for the people in the town which I lived, then to go to Youngstown and just be a number. That is about all they are. I said then you would want to demand as much as you could demand. That is the reason why I have the idea of unions. I think they have to have a contract, and they have to have this, and they have to have that. We did things verbally and he would come and tell us whether we were going to be rehired.

M I tend to agree with you about unions, but I think the key to that is if you can believe that you have a trust in the man that is talking about it, and if you sincerely believe that they are doing the best they can for you, that is fine, I think. I think often times that trust is not there and that is where the problem comes in.

W Yes. I think I followed this over in Youngstown when they were having their strike, and I followed some of these in Pittsburgh too. They had a colored woman who was the head of their teacher's organization over there, and she was a little spitfire.

M Constance Hall?

W Yes, she was a little spitfire. I would hear her sometimes on the radio that she sounded beautiful, she just seemed wonderful. She was for the teachers and she was going to cooperate. Another time I would hear her and she was as radical as could be. Who would have her as the president of an organization? She wants the earth and a fence around it and she wants it painted, that was my impression.

M Thank you

End of Interview