

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

YSU Depression Project

Life Experiences

O.H. 211

HENRY R. BARNHART

Interviewed

by

Dolores Z. Margiotta

on

May 12, 1976

HENRY R. BARNHART

Henry Russell Barnhart was born in Punxatawney, Pennsylvania on April 28, 1906, one of five sons born to Rubin and Lillian Cessna Barnhart. Because of the death of his mother at age 26, Henry and two younger brothers were placed in an orphanage. Their father, Rubin, was unable to care for them at the time. Henry ran away from the orphanage several times and at the age of fourteen finally succeeded in leaving the orphanage to work in the coal mines of Pennsylvania.

At age sixteen, Henry came to Youngstown, Ohio to look for a job. Lying about his age, he found employment in a local steel mill. This job lasted six months. He then began working at the Dunning-Crum Ice and Fuel Company. He stayed there for almost twenty years, working at various jobs, finally working his way up to driving an ice-wagon.

During his employment as stated, Henry met many people, some of whom became his friends for the years to come. When the ice company folded prior to World War II, he worked at various foundries and steel mills until his retirement in 1968.

In 1927 Henry married Margaret Zets. They had no children, but became involved in working with young people throughout the years.

Now retired, Mr. Barnhart is enjoying his leisure time by puttering around the yard, visiting old friends

and helping those in need.

Although he had no formal schooling, Mr. Barnhart is well-read and versed in many areas. He attributes this to the many experiences he has encountered throughout his lifetime.

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INTERVIEWEE: HENRY R. BARNHART

INTERVIEWER: Dolores Z. Margiotta

SUBJECT: Living conditions for average Youngstowner during Depression; Changes in City; Wages and employment throughout the years; Welfare; President Roosevelt; Driving an ice wagon

DATE: May 12, 1976

M: This is an interview with Mr. Henry Russell Barnhart for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program Depression Project by Dolores Margiotta at 125 South Dunlap on May 12, 1976 at 6:30 p.m.

Mr. Barnhart, do you remember much about the Depression?

B: Oh yes, I remember a lot about it, people losing their homes, men going down to the mill. Every day they had to go down there to report for work in a line. The boss would come out and pick one, two, three men and say, "The rest of you go on home and come back tomorrow morning, and you better be here in case we need you." Then the ones that were working, off the record, they kicked back some of their pay to these guys so they would get work and so on and so forth.

As we know, all the folks that went through the Depression know about the soup lines and the bread lines and places where they give clothes away and shoes and flour they used to give to people. I don't know who furnished that, whether that was state or federal. Of course, we didn't get much from Hoover. He was trying to balance the budget. He didn't care whether the nation starved or not.

M: Do you think this is why maybe Roosevelt won the election?

B: Absolutely. They had to have a change. It's just like

a man doing nothing and of course, we didn't know what Roosevelt was going to do. He got in there and tried to help the working man out. I think he did a lot. He made a lot of mistakes, which everybody does, but he sure got things moving. Whether it cost us later on for taxes or not, I don't know, but it sure stimulated the economy and got the money back where it would do the most good. The average man is the man who keeps this country going, the little fellow, because when he hasn't got the money to buy merchandise, that's where the rub comes in. The mills go down, the factories go down, there's nobody to buy anything so they can't make it. Then the first thing you know, we get a big layoff. That goes on until they stimulate the economy.

I think, on the whole, in the Depression, people helped each other out a lot. I know because I was driving an ice wagon and I used to help people out, I tried to. People with bottle babies had to have ice, but they had no money. You couldn't leave them without ice. You had to give them credit. Some of them paid later, some of them never did. They never broke me.

M: Where did you have your ice at?

B: Rautl's on the east side of Youngstown. Yes, I worked over there on that one route for about nine years.

M: Then you probably were able to see a lot of things that we weren't aware of?

B: Oh yes. The little groceries around the neighborhood, you've got to give them 100 percent credit. They gave credit to people and saved stuff for them so they could make out. Trimming their vegetables, they used to trim vegetables off and they would save them for people to make soup with, and a bone out of the meat, they would save that for them. They tried to help out. I know one grocer in particular, after the Depression started to get over, he had so much credit out, he went under. He went bankrupt trying to stock each store again when business did pick up. He naturally had to close the stores.

You find people like that. You give them credit and you try to help them out and when they get on their feet, they forget that somebody helped them out, but not all of them.

When we rented out this house here during the Depression, before we bought it later, the man who owned this house, I don't know how many more he owned. I think he told us that we were the only ones paying him rent. He just went around and wanted to know how the new baby was.

He couldn't collect any rent because they didn't have it. He finally lost everything he had and went into bankruptcy.

M: Where were you living at that time?

B: We lived on Mahoning Avenue from 1928 to 1930 and we moved here in 1930. We've been here ever since, but we rented this house before we bought it. When we got out of the Depression, why, I bought it.

M: You worked most of the time during the Depression?

B: Yes, I worked from daylight till dark, there were no quitting hours for \$2.60 a day.

M: What was a typical day on an ice truck like?

B: It was a lot of hard work, I'll tell you. You didn't loaf around like labor does today. They wouldn't put up with that. You really worked.

M: Did you have to load the truck yourself?

B: Oh yes, load it and run up and down stairs with all that to these apartment houses and everything. You ran your legs off. You did it or they would get somebody else. There was no way out. You just worked from daylight till they got through with you, till you couldn't see the ice cards they used to put in the window. Then you had to come home, because you couldn't see after dark.

M: What about the kids jumping on the back of the wagon? Did you ever have problems with that?

B: No, not too much trouble. You would chop them up a little ice and throw it in the devil strip there in the green grass and they would pick it out and I would get in the truck and get away before they would get back on again. That's about the only way you could do it. Kids were kids, you had to watch you didn't hurt them. No, I didn't have too much trouble with them.

When I was peddling ice, it was rather high for retail at that time considering wages. It sold for 70¢ a hundred, that's for retail and then wholesale was 35¢ according to your need. We had some small stores that paid 50¢ and 60¢. That was during the Depression that ice was so high and when we started out of the Depression I don't know what happened, but they cut the price of ice to 66¢ a hundred and took the sales tax off of it. Somehow they

got mixed up there in the Ohio Congress and it went through. I don't know how, but it went through and that was a big help to us. It was a lot of bother with those crazy stamps.

M: What kind of stamps are you talking about?

B: Little stamps you used to have to give to people when they pay your 3¢ per dollar, it was then, and so on and so forth. You had to give them a stamp. You had to use so many of those stamps. You had to buy them from the company, and then you had to get rid of them. That's how the State collected their sales tax. Finally, they don't use them anymore at all, they just pay so much percentage I guess, now, I don't know.

M: What were your wages like during the Depression?

B: Before the depression, I made \$18 a week and then when the Depression hit, the ice company took advantage of everything they could, they cut us down to around \$15 a week. That was \$2.60 a day. I sold as much ice then, during the Depression, as I did before because after all, there were people that did have money and they had to have ice. It was like food. They had to buy ice to keep their food. Bottle babies people had, they had to have ice to keep the food from spoiling.

It wasn't only the ice company, but all companies took advantage of their workers. They figured they would cut their wages and get all they could out of them because they had 10 or 15 men or 20 men for every job. You had to do what they wanted. If you were late for work in the morning on the ice wagon, boy, when you got there, your truck was gone. You didn't work that day, somebody else had it out. They wouldn't take 'no' for an answer. When you got through with your work in the evening, if it was a little cold in the fall or something, why, you did other work, repaired trucks or whatever they had to do, work in the storage till they got through with you. There was no quitting time at all.

I've had people on this street during the Depression tell me they wouldn't work for that kind of money and those long hours. After all, I was working and they weren't. They felt that nobody should work those hours. You had no unions, nobody to protect you. I think that's the whole thing in a nutshell, that's why there are unions today. If men could sit down and work things out, they wouldn't need a union, but you can't because they wouldn't listen to the men. You would try to dicker with them and it's just this or that.

M: Getting back to the ice, how did they make ice?

B: They put cans down in a brine, a 400 pound can, a long can. The block weighed really, 420 pounds. They filled that with fresh water, distilled water, incidentally. They distilled it over again after they got it from the city water line to clean it up and take all the impurities out of it. There was an air line in each can that kept that water agitated while it froze. It froze around the outside edge first. It would freeze from solid to three or four inches in the center and then they cleaned that out. All the impurities went to the center and then they sucked that out with an air line and refilled it and your block of ice was really nice and clear. Then you would lift the cans out of the big brine tank, take them over and put them in a temperature a little bit warmer than your ice to loosen them from the can. Then they would dump them and they would go down the chute and a conveyor and into the storage room.

In later years, they had a scoring machine which scored that ice into 100 pound chunks and 25 and 50, whatever you needed. Then out on the route you cut it the rest of the way off and it broke nice and straight for you. Before, you used to get a crooked cut and everything else with it till they modernized that with what they called a scoring machine. It was a machine with a lot of saws in it. The block of ice went through there and it made that perforation in it, maybe I'd say an inch and a half deep. Then you would stick your ice pick in there and hit it a couple of times, it broke nice and straight, 25 pounds, 50 pounds, 100 pounds.

Of course, these great big butcher shops, they wouldn't let you carry less than 200 pounds because the smaller the piece of ice, the more surfaces there are to melt; it melts faster. They wanted them in big chunks in their cooler so they would last longer.

I remember when I started in 1923 at the old Crystal Ice and Storage Company at West Lake Crossing and they had a plant there that made 300 pound blocks. These butchers insisted you carry it in there. Of course, the company got after them and said it was too much for a man to carry them constantly. I have carried them in different instances for some customer that you couldn't get along with because there were other companies in town and you had to keep your trade. Finally, they abolished that kind and we didn't have anything but 400 pound blocks, but nobody would ask you to carry one of those. However, I did carry one.



M: When you started back in 1923 what kind of truck did you have, was it horse-drawn?

B: We didn't have trucks, we had horses and wagons. We used a horse and a great, big, German-built wagon, a full circle wagon. We cleaned the horses in the morning, went out on the route, and smelled like a horse all day.

I think it was in 1925, we had a big fire. The barn used to sit under the Belmont Bridge there. Well, the bridge wasn't there then, but down in that section. It burned most of the horses up and burned a lot of them so bad they had to kill them the next morning. Trucks were coming into their own at that time so we bought a fleet of Ford trucks. They weren't broken in and we burnt engine after engine up during the hot season because we didn't have time to break them in. All that mechanic was doing down there was changing engines till fall came and we could quiet the engines down a little and give them a rest once in a while.

M: Going back to horses, did you have the same horse every day?

B: The same team, yes.

M: How many, two horses?

B: Two, yes. Oh, those ice wagons rolled easy. On level ground you could pull one yourself loaded with ice. That's what I say, it was a German patent wagon, a great, big, heavy wagon. The front wheels went clear around underneath it. You could turn on a full circle with it. Those horses, they were trained. They wouldn't hit a car parked in the street or anything. They would walk right around it. They seemed to know, and you wouldn't even have to drive them around it. They would walk right around a car or another wagon or a buggy or whatever it was. They would pull up and stop and you would look around wondering why they're stopping. Here you look around under the trees and there's an ice card sticking in the window. Maybe the horse saw it and I didn't, I don't know, but I swear they did.

Of course, when you were on a retail route with a horse, we used to use one-horse wagons on some of the retail routes up here on Wick Park, the man got right on the ground. He never got on his wagon until he got his load out, just stop the horse and he would go wherever you wanted him to go if there wasn't any shrubbery around for him to eat. You had to watch that, put a muzzle on some different teams or they would get into a woman's shrubbery and everything and then the insurance company would raise Cain.

M: On the route then, did you have to feed the horse during the daytime?

B: We fed them at noon, yes. We carried oats under the wagon seat and put the nose bag on when they ate. We had one there, he hit his leg. We got him traded for a circus horse and then he got his leg fixed up, the barn horse did. We had him on the Idora Park run and we got to Parkwood Avenue, it runs down behind the park there. A kid went by with an ice cream cone and I saw him reaching for it. I said, "Jesus, my buddy, that horse likes ice cream. I'll get him some." I went and got him an ice cream cone, man did he eat that up; And a hot dog with mustard, onions, or whatever. Somebody must have fed him that in the circus, I'd say. Yes, that horse would eat anything a person would eat. Of course, tobacco, he couldn't get enough of that. I like chewing tobacco. Of course, most any horse, I think, likes chewing tobacco. I know they did when I was on the farm when I was a kid. They used to give him a little bit once in a while. The farmers said it was good for him, I don't know. Yes, that's the way we used to do that.

M: Did you miss the horses once you got back into . . .

B: Not really, it was nice. It didn't take you too long to get in from your route. A lot of people I talked to later on said, "Gee, it would take you so long to peddle a route with horses." Well no, because like I say, you would go down on the ground and the horses would move up with you. It's a lot easier on you. You couldn't tell the truck to move up. You would have to get in it and move up two or three houses and get out and work the street. This way, with a team and wagon, you could stay on the ground, talk to them and have them move up for you and peddle the ice. I enjoyed that, just standing around.

M: You talked about a fire at the ice house. Do you remember anything about that, how the fire started?

B: Well, they think some hobo was sleeping in there. The barn boss just made his check every so often. He had a little office there I imagine, and pretty soon then, he would make a check every so often. In the meantime, somebody snuck in there and the fire started. In that straw and hay and everything, it got so bad. Of course, in those days they didn't have fire equipment like they have today and they took quite a while getting there. They got a lot of the horses out of there, but like I say, they were burned so bad that they had to destroy

them. They didn't destroy all of them. There were some that they could have saved. Some of them, later on, they found that they had breathed fire and they still had to shoot them. But they figured rather than replace those horses, like I say, trucks were coming into existence.

Even after the fire they still had some teams on the road for quite a while. If a fellow would run out of ice maybe down on Poland Avenue or somewhere, I'd start loading the truck and take it down to him. It saved him driving the team back. That was inconvenient, that was of driving clear back to the plant for a load of ice. I took it down to him or somebody else. We did that for quite a while. It was quite a while before they got rid of all the horses. I just don't remember what year they really did abolish all of them. I think when the companies merged; they all merged together. I can't think of the year that happened.

M: Was that during the Depression?

B: No, no, that was afterwards that they merged. No, the ice business lasted up until World War II and they started bringing these refrigerators out and it just kept falling off and falling off. I saw the handwriting on the wall so I just got out. I think 1941 I quit.

M: What happened to the ice companies then? What did they do?

B: Naturally, they had to shut down because they didn't have enough business. The remaining customers they did have, they forced them to buy mechanical refrigerators. Well, they peddled ice quite a while after that, didn't they? Finally, they had to fold up.

The biggest drawback in later years, like I say, around 1940, 1941, was the inconvenience of waiting on the ice man. The young housewife, at that time, she didn't want to stand around and wait on the ice man, and you couldn't run on a perfect schedule; it was a hot day, a cool day; you were late; you were early. They just didn't feel that they wanted to wait. These mechanical refrigerators came into existence so people started buying them. You can't stop progress, that's all there is to it. Of course, I bought one myself when I quit because I couldn't get any ice. They had some ice men out, but he wouldn't come up this way so I had to buy one myself. I went and got it for awhile in the car, but I decided that had to stop. That was too inconvenient, half the time when I went they were out of ice.

I think there's very little ice around now. They have

some up on Federal Street yet. They bring it in from Canton on a truck. They did the last time I heard. They have it up there for people who want it.

In the wintertime, maybe you would get through with your trip on your ice route a little early, maybe 2:00 or 3:00 in the afternoon, so then you went and hauled coal, shoveled it on and shoveled it off. They didn't have any dump trucks in those days. You had to get a big long chute. A lot of places you would have to carry a shovelful at a time. You couldn't get near the coal hole. Practically everybody used coal, even the big buildings, a lot of them downtown that didn't have Ohio Steam from the steam company. Dollar Bank, we used to haul it down there, that fine coal for those stokers. Coal was a big business. They had the ice and coal both there.

M: How much coal would you shovel, say for instance, in one afternoon?

B: Well, that all depends. A lot of times you had counter orders. Naturally, that would take you longer. A lot of people didn't have money. They would buy a ton at a time. If you were filling a guy's cellar up, maybe he would want five or six ton.

M: What was the cost of coal at that time?

B: It varied, different types, anywhere from \$6.50. This coal from Kentucky, I think it sold for about \$8. It was clean burning. You didn't get many ashes, and what you did get was like wood ashes, real fine.

Then, the Castle Shannon Coal we used to get from Pennsylvania, the Castle Shannon Mines down there they called it. I think it sold for around \$6.50 a ton. It went up and down accordingly. Sometimes down to \$5.

M: Stoker coal was cheaper?

B: Yes, cracked coal or stoker coal was around . . . Of course, most of the parties who used that were commercial and they, naturally, got a rebate off of theirs. The retailers, the small-man business, they would get it for \$3 or \$3.50. The big greenhouse in Boardman, Culver's Greenhouse they called it, Brian and Culver, we used to take coal out there. That was pretty near a must. Every time you got through with your route, they would start coal trucks going out there to keep the supply in there.

That's where I upset a truck before they ever built that cemetery out there in Boardman. It was a two-lane road at that time. I missed the burm of the road a little bit and pulled a knuckle off the steering; me and coal and all went over in a ditch there where that cemetery is now. Never got hurt, just got wet and dirty from the dirty coal and the water.

M: What happened to the coal then?

B: Oh, we shoveled it, got the truck on its feet, a wrecker came out and got it on its feet and we shoveled it back on. You would pick up what you couldn't shovel and go on your way. The mechanics had to put a new thing underneath the truck. They did it right on the road in those days. They would come out and fix it.

M: You were one of the fortunate ones that did work during the Depression.

B: Yes, we worked, that's what I say. I would have worked for 10¢ an hour, I would have been a millionaire, the hours we put in. They paid you by the day, and that was it. You belonged to them, that's all there was to it.

M: A lot of people said that it was very hard and they had hard times getting enough food or they couldn't do this. Did you experience any happy times during that?

B: Oh, I did, yes. Like I say, we were working and my mother-in-law used to give us a lot of stuff from the farm. They raised chickens now and then. Heck, I didn't starve. Of course, we didn't have anything else.

M: Did you have your own garden? Did you raise any vegetables at all?

B: No, we didn't have a garden at all. You couldn't raise one around here. It wasn't built up like it is now and all those dogs in the neighborhood dug it up. Kids had a ball field in the back there and we tried to have a garden one year back there and they ran through it. You couldn't raise anything. I bought some little trees to raise, to plant around the place. I think I bought one hundred of them. They were about as big as wheat straw, I'd say. I think I salvaged three out of the whole bunch from the kids tracking them down. They finally all died and I had to cut them down now from the kids breaking the limbs off and everything. Kids are kids, you can't stop that.

M: What did you do, after your long hours that you had, what did you do for entertainment? You were a young married man at that time, did you walk up to the show?

B: Yes, we could afford the show once a week and we would walk up to the show.

M: What was the price of a movie at that time?

B: Thirty-five cents I believe, somewhere around there. That was a scrape to get that. That's what I say, we used to have to figure our budget to see if we could afford 35¢ to go. Sometimes we didn't, but most of the time we could.

M: You walked?

B: Yes, we walked, we didn't have to drive. It wasn't too far away.

M: Were you renting at the time?

B: Yes.

M: Then how expensive was your rent?

B: I think when we moved in here we paid \$18 to \$25 and then he kept cutting it as things got bad. He said, "There's no use in me robbing you," and he just kept cutting our rent. I think he got it down to \$15, so it wasn't too bad. Then when things started to pick up a little, I bought the place.

M: What do you remember about Youngstown, downtown, or any of the mills, or anything like that? What was the attitude of some of the people in the Depression?

B: Naturally, they were depressed and put out and argued and grumbled like they do today about our government. They couldn't figure out why our government wouldn't help them. All they could get from the administration was that they were trying to balance the budget. I could never figure out why they kept at that because, the way it is today, our debt is so high they'll never get out of it.

I first came to Youngstown when I was a little past sixteen.

M: Where did you originally come from?

B: In Pennsylvania.

M: Whereabouts in Pennsylvania?

B: I was born in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, and worked around when I got big enough over there. My parents died when I was young; my mother died in 1914. Then my father put us in an orphan home because he was a carpenter and he traveled all over, building wherever jobs were. He couldn't take care of us so he put us in there. We didn't like it there, my little brother and I. In fact, I ran away three times. Finally, they decided that was enough of that, so they took us out of there and I used to work on farms for farmers and go to school, the ones that would let me go. Winter came, why, some of them, they wanted you to work, they didn't want you to go to school. They didn't seem to have the laws like they do today to make you go. At least they didn't come around and force me to go. I finally hammered around and I got a common school education. I worked for different farmers. A lot of them were good, they helped. A lot of people were good to me, a lot of them were bad, that's the way it goes.

Then I got big enough, I dug coal. When I was fourteen years old, I had to go work in the coal mines. Then later on I had a chance to come over here to Youngstown. Some friends I knew told me I could get a job over here, so I came over here and like I say, I was a little past sixteen going on seventeen so . . .

M: Do you remember about when that was?

B: In 1923. The first place I went to get a job was, I think I stopped at the railroad. I went in there and I asked them. That was down by Fifth Avenue. It was called Holmes Street at that time. They had a little office there and I went in and I asked the fellow there if they were hiring any men. He said, "Yes, if you see any send them around." I said, "Well, that's the smart ass you are." He said, "No, I'm sorry son, we ain't hiring, that was just a little joke."

Then I went down to this mill that sits down there on West Lake Crossing. Carnegie Mill owns it. I got a job in there. I lied about my age, got a job in there on the stranding mill. It was a hand mill. They made wrought iron such as quarter rounds, which at that time, Henry Ford used for brake rods in his cars, the Model T's he made. The lightning rods, there was a big demand for lightning rods at that time, star steel. It was like an X on the end. We made that and gun steel for gun barrels; we made that up to 3/8 inch round.

Everything was hand. You had to feed that hot iron by hand. After we roughed it down, we carried it from the furnace on tongs on a track. Everything was done by hand, even the water system. When I first started in there, I'm getting ahead of myself, I carried water, buckets of water. Boy, I called them the elephants. They would drink and spill more water out of these buckets hanging on a wire. They would drink out of it and spill half of it getting a drink.

M: You carried water to the men?

B: Yes. Then I got a job on the strand roller. Now, it was a tragic affair that I got this job. When they bring hot iron out of the furnace and put it through their melting rolls, why, it gets a splinter on it, like a Y. It's rougher on the down side, they call it. There's an up side and a down side. There are three sets of rolls and they bring it by the bar back and forth through there. When the fellow on the up side threw it through there, that Y opened up and that bar belted that man. He couldn't get away from it. It went right through him. The whole twelve feet of hot iron went right through him and killed him on the spot. They moved me up on the mill.

Then I got a job on what's called the strand roller. I worked on the edging roller. I worked where you have to clean the sawed-on edge and put the fine edge on it. Then I moved over onto the pony strand rolls they call them, the pony roughing and rolls. The mill shut down before I got over on the roughing and rolls where the big money was.

M: Why did they shut down?

B: Well, lack of orders. In those days, the mills, when I was a young fellow, they used to work them. They would work like the dickens for about six months a year, then they would be down six months. Not clear down, I suppose a few men worked, but the big bulk of the men were off. I was out of work, no compensation, nothing to fall back on. I knew a friend that worked at the ice plant right across the street practically, right on the corner of West Lake Crossing there and Rayen Avenue. There used to be a big market in there where the farmers brought their vegetables in that corner at one time. I went up there and talked to him. He said, "Yes, I'll talk for you and get you a job in there. You can help me." I started in there at the ice plant.

M: When was that now?



B: The ice plant? That was in the wintertime when I started at the ice plant, in the fall of 1923. I worked, like I say, about six months in 1923 at the steel mill there, that was it. It was in the fall of the year that I got the job in 1923 at the ice plant. Just a little plant, they made the ice by steam in those days. They didn't use too much electricity. It was a lot of work. Today it's old style, but in those days it was the latest equipment, I imagine. They used air cranes to pull that ice out of the cans and everything, like later on. That's how I got in the ice business.

Like I say, about the city of Youngstown, when I first came to town here, oh, there has been a big change. You couldn't get from the north side to where I roomed up Arlington and Belmont, I roomed up there. You had to cross tracks. There wasn't a bridge across those tracks. To go, you had to drive down to the gates there, till they opened them up and let you through. Now, they've got bridges over every one of them.

M: This is crossing Mahoning River?

B: No, that's crossing the railroad, the Erie, on this side. No, the Mahoning River goes on the other side.

M: Did they have the bridges built then?

B: Oh yes. They changed some of them. Spring and Commerce, there is a big, big change there since I've come to Youngstown. There used to be a great big hotel there just as you start up the hill there, Mahoning Avenue Industry they called it. There was a great big hotel there, they used to call it the Fritz House. That's all torn down now. Over on the other corner there used to be a sidewalk store that sat there, like over the river there. Now they're all gone and they put this new bridge in. We used to come up there and over the old bridge there. They had a bridge there over the river and a policeman stood there with one of those signs. He'd turn and blow the whistle and let you across. That's the way you went, up Federal Street or Holmes Street. It was called Holmes Street then; it's called Fifth Avenue now. They changed the name of it.

When you got over on Holmes Street there, why, there are the railroad tracks up over the hill, Wick Avenue, all of them. On Wick Avenue was a big railroad crossing. Then they changed Commerce Street all around. That used to be a narrow street and now they've got it all fixed up.

Downtown, my goodness, that's a major change, East Federal Street down there. Great big street cars used to go down there. If you parked a truck or anything there, he couldn't get by. He had to wait till you got out of there. The street was narrow then. I don't know whether it was widened up or not. Watt Street, oh, it's awfully wide now. It was just a two-lane road and it wasn't even paved. It was mud. You had to be careful. You drove a wagon through there on a muddy day and you'd splash people on the street; it was that narrow. Now it's really wide. Of course, they paved it after that. They put brick in there to get rid of that mud. There used to be, when I first came to Youngstown, over there a long time, a house on the square; it would sit right there on the other side of the Dollar Bank.

M: Yes, did a family live in there?

B: Yes, I think he was a doctor. Dr. White, I believe was his name now that I remember. Yes, it was a little picket fence around the front lawn. It was there quite a while.

M: Did he practice medicine at that time at his home?

B: Oh yes, he was a doctor of medicine. I don't know if he was a specialist of anything or not. In those days specialists just seemed to be coming into their own here in the last ten or fifteen years. Before, the family doctor, he took care of everything, operated on you and everything else. Now, they've got a specialist for everything. I could say they've done wonders with that in Youngstown since I came here.

M: Do you remember any of the old stores that used to be downtown?

B: Oh yes, the old Lincoln Market.

M: Where was that?

B: That was down below where this house sat. That little market ran from Federal Street clear through to Commerce Street. You could hear the cars on Commerce Street and wagons going when you were back there filling the ice cooler. You had to carry that ice clear from Federal Street clear back to that store with all those customers in there and everything, clear back to the back end where the cooler was. Oh, that was a job. They used to pull four or five wagons up there. It was a big cooler.

Armors had a big place down on Commerce Street, right by Commerce and Fifth, but like I say, it was Holmes Street then. They had a big packing plant in there. We used to fill those big coolers. My goodness, they took a lot of ice. That was a big meat company they had there. That's all gone now. They took that out of there. They've got parking lots in there.

M: Getting back to the square that we have now. Do you remember when they put up the man on the monument or wasn't it up at that time?

B: Oh yes, it was up. It was there, up and down. I don't know. They took it down a while and then they put it back up, but it was up there when I was here. It sat down in the middle there in a little grass around it. Oh, it was always nice downtown there in the square, but like I say, they make awful changes especially now. I haven't been down to see it. I drove through there, but I haven't been down there to walk around. I'd like to go down and see it and walk around down there, but I haven't gotten to it.

Some other buildings they got rid of down there were Tod House, that was there for years. They got rid of that. That was a big high-class hotel when I first came to Youngstown and the Ohio Hotel over there.

They're gone now. It's still there, the Ohio is, but I guess it's some kind of an apartment.

M: For the elderly.

B: For the elderly people, I guess.

There was a big market over where the Vindicator building stands now. The City Market they called it. Oh, that was a great big market. They sold meat and vegetables and everything there. It was sort of half of an open market and then it was closed in the winter. That was a great big market. That's where my buddy got in trouble with the police down there one day.

We had a team and wagon at that time and we were filling the cooler. A big fellow by the name of John Peacock I worked with, we were inside packing the cooler. The old ice, we had to pack it back. We were parked along some cars out there with the team and this gentleman came in all dressed up and he said, "Who in the

--owns that team and wagon out there?" Big John was down on the floor and I was up in the cooler and he said, "We do. Why?" He swore and said, "Get that thing out of there," and everything. John said, "We'll get it out of there when we get good and ready." He said, "You'll move it now or else." Boy, John hit him. He went over one of the barrels of flour. They used to sell flour by the pound. Here he got straightened around and he shows us that he's a detective. He got on the phone and he said, "Send up a couple of policemen. I got a couple of ice men to take down." John said, "You don't need no couple of men. We'll go down with you." We went down and explained the story to the desk sergeant there. He said, "Well, did this man tell you he was a policeman?" John said, "Not till after I hit him." The desk sergeant said to the detective, "Well, he didn't know who you were. Unless you want to prepare an assault charge, there's nothing we can do about it." He said, "No, let's forget about it." They must have forgot about it, but, oh, that was years ago.

M: Where was the police station located?

B: Right down where it is now, same place. It has been in that same place since I can remember.

M: During that time though, the policemen were more like patrolmen. They walked; they didn't have cars.

B: A lot of patrolmen downtown, yes, they walked the beat. Old Pat Kinney, I knew him; Coppersmith, I knew all those boys. Yes, old Pat's, all nice fellows. I think our city has got a good police department; they always did and they have now. They find a few that are a little dishonest, but that happens in any city. On the whole, I think we've got a decent police force.

The only time I called them, of course, we would try to settle our disputes ourselves in the neighborhood and some people don't listen, I'd call them and they would come up and straighten things around and that's it.

The fire department, we've got a good fire department. Those boys are beautiful.

M: Do you remember any differences between the fire department then and now?

B: Yes, they've got more modern equipment. I don't remember of any horse-driven fire departments in this town. I think they were all mechanized when I got here.

M: Well, where was the fire station in Youngstown? Do you remember if they had one?

B: Yes, it was down there right across from the Ohio Hotel there, right next to the Police Department, City Hall. I sat in there. They moved it up to Belmont and Federal Street where it is today. That's No. 1 up there. There's one up at Madison and Elm, No. 8 up on Market Street, it was there. The one at Steel and Mahoning, it's the same one that has been there ever since I can remember. There's one they had in Fosterville out on Glenwood Avenue. I imagine it's still there, it was the last time I was there. There's a bit more than that around, I just can't remember where they all are, the fire departments.

M: During the Depression when President Roosevelt initiated the different programs that he had, do you remember any of them and what effect they had on the people?

B: Yes, they had the NRA [National Recovery Act] for small business people that wanted to go into business for themselves. He and his congress stimulated that program so that the small businessman could be in existence, which slowly they're dwindling away today. There's very few of them.

M: During the Depression many of the small businessmen were losing money because they took a lot of people on credit.

B: Well yes, oh yes, that was the whole trouble, that's what took the country where it was.

M: Did this act help these people?

B: Yes, that's what that was mainly for, to get them back on their feet. Shops were shut down and everything, and he stimulated money for that, appropriated money, Congress did. Of course, Roosevelt didn't do it himself, he had his Congress there and they stimulated those programs and lent people money, I imagine, at a small interest. It was paid back, I'm sure of that, most of it. Naturally, the government loses some.

They had the Civil Construction Program, and Three C's [Civilian Conservation Corps] for the kids. Young people, they went out and cleaned ditches and forests out. They had camps to live right there. I don't know exactly what they did pay them, but they paid them something besides feeding them. Then of course,

we had the WPA [Works Progress Administration]. Sixty dollars a month I believe that was, the public program. They did a lot of good. Oh, people used to kid them about leaning on shovels and one thing and another, but they did a lot of work around for the city and the state.

M: Do you remember what kind of work the WPA did in the Youngstown area?

B: Oh, sidewalks and the highway approaches. At one time they came down here and wanted to know if I wanted an approach put in. It would cost me \$5 dollars under the program. I said, "Sure." I signed up, but they never got this far. They either ran out of money or the program went out of existence. Things like that they used to do. They put in a lot of sidewalks and sewers and about everything that had to be done to the city, but the city didn't have the money to do it. The main problem was to get the men back to work and get the money flowing again so they could buy things. After all, the worker, when you give him the money, he's going to spend it because he's going to buy things he needs for his family. That's the man who keeps the country going. The little man keeps spending the money. When it stops, you take the money off the little man and that's when trouble begins.

M: Do you think during the Depression that people who were hard up, did they accept welfare very easily, or did they more or less help one another?

B: Yes, people helped each other. A lot of good people helped one another with clothing that one couldn't use and shoes or whatever the case may be, or even some of them had gardens and they had more than they could use. These big gardens, people down along the Mahoning River there where that nice bottom soil was, gee, there were so many gardens along the banks of that river. During the Depression they would raise, gee whiz, lots of stuff, and give it to each other.

M: The programs that you mentioned, the men got paid for it, but I'm wondering about the people who weren't able to get work. Did they accept the charity or go to welfare?

B: Yes, they had relief in those days. Like I say, I suppose their programs were limited and there wasn't too much relief like there is today. It was much harder to get. You had to be really down and out before you could get anything from the relief agency or anybody. Of course, there were people that were too proud to accept the help. There were some in our neighborhood

here we wanted to help and they were too proud to take it. You tried to explain to them what I always believed, I don't know how some people do, I think the good Lord put us here to help one another whichever way we can. I tried to explain that to them, but still they didn't want to accept help. They were just too proud, but they got along, they managed. One woman we know went out and worked for \$1 a day, a big family she had.

M: What did she have to do?

B: She scrubbed floors and everything she could get. Her husband died, died young and left her with, I think, about eight children. She wouldn't accept help. She wouldn't accept relief or anything else. She tried to get help of some kind. I don't know just what it was. It got so complicated that she just wouldn't do with it.

M: I imagine living on \$1 a day with eight children was rather difficult to do.

B: Yes, they ate a lot of soup, the girls told me later, the children. Yes, they're grown up now. Some of them still live on this street. Two of the girls still live here. They were a set of twins, with a family of their own.

Like I said, we tried to help each other, but I don't know of anybody in Youngstown here that ever starved to death. I mean, they might not have gotten all they wanted to eat or they might have been hungry. I don't know of anybody that had to sleep outside in the winter or anything like that. They saw to it that they had shelter of some kind. These organizations, they gave shoes to needy children, flour or things like that. They had programs that you could go to. When I was out working I would see them hauling it in little wagons, sugar and stuff they used to give, salt pork, they used to give away a lot of that. I guess you could go quite a ways on that stuff.

M: Having lived through the Depression, what have you learned from it? Has this taught you anything or is there anything that you don't do because of it? Are you a little more frugal with your money?

B: Well, no. After we got out of it, it kind of taught me that you just have to kind of provide for yourself and try to put a little away for a rainy day if it ever happened again, heaven forbid. It didn't teach some people anything. I know people that it didn't teach them a thing. They were back in the same old groove

they were then. Like I say, people today, they make it too easy for them. A lot of them wouldn't care if a depression hit today because they know they would be taken care of under these programs that we have today, which is their right. I'd say they should have it, but they make it too easy.

I understand that people can refuse jobs if they're not in the same hourly rate that they were working, things like that, and collect relief. I can't understand that. When I was a young fellow and was out of work and I went and applied for a job, they told me what they would pay me and that was it. I couldn't say, "No, I ain't going to work for that." Today, the way the law reads, they can do that and I think it's wrong. You should take a job when you don't have one, and kind, whether it's in your line of work or whatever, until you can look around and better yourself and get another job. That's what I always did. If I got a bad job I didn't like when I was a young squirt, boy I'd work at it till I found a job. Today, as I say, they don't have to. They can get compensation, relief, whatever it is. They make it so easy. Something better be done about it because I saw statistics here not too long ago where 50 percent of the people in this nation keep the other 50 percent. That can't keep on going because pretty soon there's going to be a bigger percentage on welfare and less percentage keeping them. That can't keep on going.

M: You've heard the expression 'in the good old days'. Do you think that would apply to the Depression for you as far as you're concerned?

B: No, I don't think so, I think that was before. Before the fast living and modernization. No, I think that was back, from what I recall, horse and buggy days, what they refer to as the good old days. Back there where you could get a nickel beer and a free lunch in a saloon. That's my impression of the good old days.

Of course, I think when the country was in its most stable position in my lifetime, I was a Democrat myself, but during the Eisenhower Administration I think the country was on a good stable footing at that time, if they could have just kept it going that way. Everything seemed to be working right. Of course, the war was just over and maybe that had something to do with it, I don't know, but during his two administrations I think the country was good, sound footing as I can recall.



Of course, there have been other good times. There were the 1940's before the war started. Things were, after the Depression, beginning to level off. There was no boom, but things were leveling off. People were working and hunting jobs. At that time, like I say, things weren't made too easy for people. There were jobs; they went out and got them.

I understand there are a lot of employers today that would like to hire some of these young college kids or high school kids coming out of school, but they can't hire them unless they pay them a minimum wage. Well, they can't afford to do that, and I think that's wrong. If a boy wants to work for \$1.50 an hour or \$2 and a man can use him, that's fine and dandy because you've got to crawl before you can walk. Give a young fellow some responsibility. When you just hand him a \$5 an hour job, that's not good because I think a man should work himself up in a job in his life. I don't think they should hand them all this stuff.

M: Getting back to the young people then today, do you think that they would be able to survive a depression such as you did?

B: I don't know how you could judge that. I don't think, with the situation today, that if you would take these the way they are and put them back there, no, no way. Like I say, the ones born in that era or were big enough in that era, yes, they would have to survive because they wouldn't have the knowledge and things handed to them like they do today.

If I had any children, I wouldn't want them to have to work and go through what I went through. You always make it easier for your children to survive. No, that's not what I'm trying to say, but they still should have some responsibility of some kind. They should be helpful and they have to have help, naturally.

The election is near, they're hollering that they're going to try and create jobs, the government is. That's fine and dandy, but let's not keep them going. Create them until things pick up and then get rid of them, but it seems like when they get these jobs going, they never abolish them; they keep them going and then, there's the taxpayer again.

M: Well, do you have any other remarks that you can think of now related to the Depression, any closing thoughts on it?

B: Well, only that it was just a rough time, that's all, for all of us. We couldn't do the things we wanted to. I was young and would have liked to have done a lot of things and go places, but I just couldn't. I never had a vacation. I think the first vacation I ever had of any consequence was in 1951 when I worked at Sheet & Tube; they gave us a vacation. Before that, places I worked, the ice company, you never got a vacation. I finished out my working career at McKay Machine Company, which is now the Wean Industry; they merged. I finished out my trade there.

Yes, the Depression has taught some people. I noticed that some people there, I asked if the Depression had taught them a lesson, but some of them it didn't, it takes them back to the same old groove, never saying anything. Come easy, go easy until something hits.

If something hit like in the Depression today, Uncle Sam would have to step in and do something and do it in a really big hurry because I think the average young, married couple today is mortgaged to the ears. They have to have everything. They have to have a car; they're buying a home. They have to have everything now, television, everything. When we were first married, we bought one thing at a time and paid for it, but they have to have everything now.

M: In the early 1920's, we had a migration of immigrants from Europe and other countries. Do you think the Depression coming so soon after they arrived here made them change their mind about America?

B: No, no, no way. I think if anything, they were grateful that they got here. Even today, you read in the Vindicator and overhear a lot of them. No, I don't think that.

M: No matter what they had gone through, they still liked this country?

B: Yes, I still think they think it's the greatest country in the world, right, which I do too. No, I don't think it slowed down immigration. I don't know what the quotas are, I suppose they raise them and lower them as conditions permit.

M: The immigrants had heard that in America the streets are paved with gold and then they arrived here and some of them had just started out probably, with jobs and things and before you knew it, the Depression hit and they were without. I'm just thinking what their attitudes might be on that.

B: I never really came across any that . . .

M: They didn't want to go back?

B: No, I don't think any of them went back to amount to anything. There might have been a few, of course, I suppose. Some of them go back today off and on, a different one, but I think that's a very small quota that goes back. Once they get here, with that expression that the streets are paved with gold, I don't know whether that was the lack of their education or what, but they took that in the wrong way. What that meant was that over here everybody had an opportunity to be a millionaire and make money and not be inhibited by his government like they were over there. Now, whether that was their lack of schooling or knowledge or what, but if they thought that was true, they sure didn't understand the situation. That's my theory of it. If somebody would tell me that, some Shangri-La, that streets are paved with gold, why, I'd just say, "Gee, that must be a great place to go. You could make some money," but I wouldn't really think the streets are paved with gold.

We've got some rough times ahead, yet they say we're coming out of this recession we have. I don't know. It doesn't seem like it's going too fast. They're not working too well up at the plant where I worked, that closed down. Some of them picked up; these steel mills picked up. Now, the fabricators are down. It is no Shangri-La.

M: But it's still a great country.

B: Oh, my goodness, yes. I wouldn't trade it for anything else in the world. Like the city of Youngstown where I made my fortune, you could say, as it goes, that I lived here. I don't think I would want to go anywhere else. I never had any desire to move, even as bad as things got. We had some rough times and some good times. It all comes out. But no, I wouldn't want to live anywhere else. I got married here and my wife was here. I met here in town here. Well, she's from Pennsylvania too, and she worked here in town. We made out all right. When I got married, I think I had \$2 left after we got married, after we paid the priest. We started from there.

M: How much was your marriage license? Do you remember?

B: Two dollars.

M: Was it \$2?

B: At that time, yes.

The Depression was a bad thing. It was a part of our life. Thank goodness it's in the past and we hope it never happens again.

M: Okay, thank you for your interview Mr. Barnhart.

END OF INTERVIEW