

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Depression Project

Personal Experiences

O. H. 306

JACK EIDELMAN

interviewed

by

Paul Bick

on

October 18, 1975

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

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INTERVIEWEE: JACK EIDELMAN
INTERVIEWER: Paul Bick
SUBJECT: Depression, Jewish Culture, Organized Crime
DATE: October 18, 1975

B: This is an interview with Mr. Jack Eidelman for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program on the Depression, interviewed by Paul Bick at Mr. Eidelman's office, on October 18, 1975, at approximately 10:00 a.m.

Mr. Eidelman would you like to say a few things about your early childhood, what you remember about your parents and your family, where you lived, what you did from day to day?

E: I'm a native born Youngstowner. My parents are also life long residents of Youngstown, possibly from the time of their early childhood. This early childhood part mainly pertains to my father who moved here when he was about ten years old. My mother came from a nearby community in New Castle, Pennsylvania, which is something like twenty miles away. We consider ourselves natives of the area. His father brought him here from Connecticut where they settled when they came from Europe sometime in the 1890's. When they came to Youngstown he told me that he attended the old Rayen School that was located on Wick and Rayen. When he was about fifteen his father thought that that was far enough for him to go and asked him to go to work, which he did, to help support the family.

He also had some brothers and some sisters, some who were married at that point in time and others who weren't who were also working to help support the family. I think he told me that his brother was eleven years old when he went to work in the steel mills here in Youngstown. That type of labor was used in those years. I imagine this was somewhere around the turn of the century because

I'm dating it back from my own date of birth. I have to assume that was the period of time he was talking about. They came to Youngstown mainly because one of his sisters married a man who eventually came to Youngstown and went into business. Since we were of Jewish extraction, he became the center of all activity here in Youngstown. This particular man I'm talking about who I have to refer to as my uncle, actually married my father's sister, but he was considered an uncle by marriage. This man and his brother were in the bakery business, were well-known community people for many years, well-thought-of in the community. They were responsible for settling most of the Jewish community here at that time in the early 1900's. Most of the European type of people were mostly the people that came here. Somehow or another they went to work for these people until they were able to strike out on their own. They were bakers. They drove bakery delivery vehicles, mostly for retail trade. There was no such thing as a bakery truck going to a store and doing everything wholesale.

B: What was their business name?

E: It was the Usersky Baking Company. There was a man from the Usersky Baking Company by the name of Schwebel who learned the baking trade with them, and I'm sure as of 1975 those residents in this area know about the Schwebel Baking Company which was started by Mr. Schwebel after he left the employment of the Usersky Baking Company, which failed somewhere around 1930 or 1931. I recall the failure of that particular baking company and I also recall the beginnings of the Schwebel Baking Company. I can't exactly tell you what year they started, but I do remember it quite well. In fact, my father told me that he worked in the bakery at that time, not that it is such a big thing, but helped the original Mr. Schwebel run the baking business. I wasn't there to see it, but I assume that he wouldn't tell me that type of story if there wasn't some merit to it.

Subsequently, because of the bakery situation and the schooling of my father, he decided that he would have to strike out on his own to make his own living and not work for somebody else, as he used to say. Incidentally, he always dropped that in, "Try to work for yourself. Try not to work for someone else because you're your own man." That probably has some merit to it, and I've never really worked for anyone else except for certain periods of time where it had to be, and that was late in the Depression.

I would like to tell you that my father had various businesses in Youngstown including, I think he told me once when he first started out, a pool room with the then

famous Warner Brothers who went on into the motion picture business. Incidentally, they asked him if he would not like to come to California when he first started. This is what he told me and I'm sure it is so. He thought that they were out of their tree or something, going into some kind of funny business like that. He decided against it, which was chalked up in one big , fat mistake probably in his lifetime.

From that operation he got into, and this is what I'm starting to remember in my own time, he had a small grocery store when I was very young, but I do remember. Strangely enough, I have a good memory for my early childhood. I don't think I was more than two years old when I remember that particular thing. That was out on what was known as West Federal Street in Youngstown which became the Briar Hill district in Youngstown. It housed the lower working class people at that time. I don't really think that there was a middle working class at that time. You were either the working class or you were not the working class, and that's who lived there. Many, many foreign people lived in that area.

His brother had also learned the butcher trade and opened a meat market in the same area. Subsequent to that we moved to the lower north, which is now known as the lower northside of Youngstown. My father became a jitney. I have to use the word jitney, and I don't know if anybody knows what the word jitney is anymore in this area.

B: Why don't you explain it?

E: A jitney was a private passenger vehicle that usually went on a given route, like a bus, except it was a private passenger vehicle. It occasionally deviated from its route to accommodate its passengers or to accommodate the driver's friends or something like that. This became a pretty good business for my father, who eventually owned three vehicles and had people driving. This jitney business went twenty-four hours a day. You could always get a jitney if you stood on a corner of the route that they were going. In downtown they had this little station which is now McKelvey's parking lot, but at that time this is where they congregated to service the public. That's how my father started to make a living at that point. This business lasted for a few years. What was known at that time as the Youngstown Municipal Bus Company took the jitney drivers to court. There were several jitney drivers and they took them to court and put them out of business because they didn't conform to the safety standards or whatever. The transportation went out and there were a few drivers that had enough money to take them further on to a higher court and so

on. Now we had to find something new to get in to.

We're talking about 1925 or 1926 now. We still continue to live on the lower northside. The lower northside of Youngstown at that time, this is not far from what is now Youngstown State University, but this was on Arlington Street where we lived between Belmont Avenue and Fifth Avenue, that was the area that I'm talking about. The residential area was bounded by Lincoln Avenue, a little bit above Wick Park perhaps, partially settled above Wick Park for a few years until more population moved in and it became much more built up. There were many, many people of all extractions that lived in this area bounded by Lincoln Avenue up to Wick Park or let's say slightly above Wick Park. Most people got along well with one another. The ethnic groups lived together and I can't really remember any particular problems that people fought about in those years. It was also the years that no one was afraid to go out at night, any time of the night. Nobody felt threatened at any time that I can remember.

I started school in a public school, at Elm Street School at the time. One of the outstanding people in those days in my memory was the principal of the school who was a very, very fine regal looking woman named Catherine Edmonds. She was a well-known educator in Youngstown. She drove an electric car, one of the few electric cars. My father at that point was also in the service station business on the corner of Belmont and Arlington up the street, in addition to being in the jitney business, because it tied up with each other. He could put gasoline in his own vehicles and so forth. Miss Edmonds was always driving an electric car when she used to come in and get air, maybe air; I think that car had neumatic tires instead of regular. I don't know. She used to drive into the station once in a while.

My father thought very highly of her. It was a mutual feeling between them. I remember she had an electric car because she didn't buy gasoline from us. Miss Edmonds, as I mentioned before, was a very outstanding person. She knew all of her students by their first name. She never forgot them. You could go back there twenty years later maybe and she would still remember who you were and could tell you incidents that happened at that time. I say this because it was many years later when I used to go back to visit once in a while over a very long span of time. She always remembered certain little incidents that happened at that time.

I also remember that none of the teachers, and I don't say this because I was a youngster going to that particular school, but most of the teachers that I had had to be women in their 40's or older at that time. I can remember

that they were the grandmother type of people. I don't think it was just because I was a youngster I said this. They were quite old. I remember when one of those teachers died many years later, a very outstanding woman by the name of Nesbitt. I think Nesbitt Street in Poland was named after her family. She died in her 80's and that wasn't that many years since I had gone to school. I could tell that she was probably in her 50's when I was in school. I will say that most of those teachers that I had were very outstanding people with children. I don't know if this still exists in school today, I'm not familiar with it. I know that we thought a lot of our teachers and we respected them very highly. I think that part of the teachers' personalities had to do with the principal of the school who I remember as being just the most marvelous person who really cared about her kids.

I went through four years, through fourth grade at Elm Street School when my father decided that he couldn't exist doing what he was doing. He was doing many things now at this point because I think my father really couldn't find himself. He was never financially well-off and many things he did out of desperation. We finally moved to the southside of Youngstown and I transferred to another school which is known now as Sheridan School. I moved into the fourth grade at Sheridan School and the reason I mentioned this now at this point is that there was a difference in the school in the teachers at that time. The teachers were much younger, not because I got older, but the teachers were really much younger than they were at Elm Street School. The principal at Sheridan School was also a very good friend of Catherine Edmonds, the principal at Elm Street School. They had like personalities. Her last name was Ireys. She seemed to have a similar type of personality to the principal at Elm Street School. That was probably why they were such good friends, I don't know. However, her staff at Sheridan School was younger, but the teachers still had good relationships with the students. We're talking now about the year of 1928.

My father opened a convenient type of store not far from the school, a few blocks down the street. We remained there for many years attempting to make a living, but as you know, you've heard about the "Crash of 1929," the Stock Market Crash, and the Depression, and so forth . . . We had some really tough times slaving through those years.

The neighborhood that we moved into is what we would call the middle class working area where most people owned their own homes, not all, but most people were buying their homes. The neighborhood was constructed better

than the one on the lower northside probably because the homes were newer. I don't think the people were that much different, but the homes were newer because the area was a newer area. The school and the school system were new, and maybe that's when people were moving into that area. Most of these people, again, were either working in the steel mills, some of them were self-employed, professionals, attorneys, or physicians. In those days physicians weren't in the \$150 salary bracket.

Speaking of physicians, I can remember that the physician that we used to have came to our house when we got sick. When the doctor came to your home he generally didn't give you a prescription either, he carried his own medicine with him and no matter what ailed you he always had to reach in his black bag and come up with some kind of a pill or liquid or something to make you feel better at least. In those years there really was such a thing as house calls and you expected a physician to come to your home. There wasn't any such thing as coming to the office. If he ordered you into the hospital at that time, which was a rarity in most cases, you had to be dying. Today people don't have time for that kind of thing. Let them go to the hospital and spend the weekend there and maybe they will feel better Monday morning or whatever.

- B: When you were talking about living on the near northside you spoke about the good feeling and good, well-integrated nature of the neighborhood, well-integrated in the sense that a lot of distinct and various ethnic types seemed to have lived together in harmony. Was there any difference when you moved to the southside, did you notice that moving from one type of neighborhood to another type of atmosphere that the attitude changed among your neighborhood?
- E: I'm glad you brought it up because I should have mentioned it. Yes, definitely. There was a definite change. I played with the children and the boys in the area, this is when I was twelve or thirteen years old playing ball on the streets in empty lots. We really didn't play much in the streets, and even if we did it wouldn't have mattered so much because there wasn't really that much traffic. Before I got to somebody's house I could hear their mother say, "Go down to the Jew's and get a loaf of bread." I had never heard that before and I was taken aback by it. I've heard it a lot since then and it doesn't bother me as much as it used to. At one time that used to bother me and I used to think, well, why don't they refer to my father as Charlie, because everybody used to call him Charlie. He was a very likeable man. He was a popular type of person. He could identify with a lot of people.

He had a very kind heart.

I could tell you some stories about that too which I think really pictures him. I think there were a lot of people in his generation who were like that. When we had this store we always sold penny candy there are no penny candies today. Kids would come in and would put their nose up against the showcase and take 45 minutes to pick out two pennies worth of candy because they had decisions to make between 35 different kinds of penny candies. I don't think there was ever a kid who came in that store that didn't have the penny and looked in that thing longingly and then said finally, "I just looked, I don't have any money." Nobody went out of there without something in their pocket, my father was the kind of person that would do that. I don't particularly think that was great business, but he was always crazy about children, little ones. When they got a little bigger he wasn't because they could give him a hard time. The little ones never went away from there without something in their pocket even if they didn't have money to buy it.

I would think that when those references were made about him by some mother who said, "Yes, go down to the Jew's and get some bread and a quart of milk," that it was just because there was some type of prejudicial feeling. I just couldn't understand at the time because my father and mother were born here in this country and had American ways and so forth, and I thought that that type of language should just never happen. It used to hurt me at this age to feel that some of these people would do it. It wasn't one particular person who would do this, I used to hear it from other people, or people would not come in for that very reason. I could hear kids say they didn't come to us because of that reason. There was a change, however, there were many people who came in and said just the opposite, "I don't care what you are, I like you for what you are." They traded with us and so forth.

We didn't make a great living up there, but we just kind of existed through the Depression years, and I continued to go to school and so forth up there. We could get on the bus and buy a weekly pass for 75 cents, maybe 50 cents at one time. You could have unlimited rides for 50 cents. The people that bought that were the ones that were working maybe three days a week, which was a lot of work at that time. It got to the point where I couldn't even ask my mother to give me car fare downtown. No one had it.

We finally got a bright idea one day, we used to buy the weekly pass for 50 cents or 75 cents and we would rent it out. Maybe we would take \$1.50 and buy two passes and somebody would come over at ten o'clock in the morning and say they want the pass until noon. They would be back

at noon and you would give them the pass for a dime, for ten cents for those two hours. Somebody would come in at one o'clock and take it from one o'clock to four o'clock. They would take it to go shopping and pay another ten cents. You were getting twenty cents for the pass. In the evening maybe the pass was yours if you wanted to go down somewhere on the bus. If you rented the thing out six days a week and got 20 cents a day you got \$1.20 for an investment of 75 cents or whatever it was. You didn't lose out, everybody benefited by it, the person who rented it and us. It was the only way you could go downtown. I would have to wait until no one would use the pass that day and then my mother would give it to me.

We used to have another little gimick too. Somebody would get on the bus with a pass, especially in the summertime, sit right down, and throw the pass out the window. Somebody else would pick the pass up, one of your friends that was with you and he would either wait for the next bus or he could run to that bus according to the route we're talking about. I remember one route if you ran east of the bus--the bus used to go south and then go east and then come back north--you would beat the thing. This is how it was done. You just did everything like that.

I can remember when theatres here used to run. This was before we moved to the southside. When I was a youngster then the movies became the thing. For five cents or ten cents, probably a dime, we used to go to a show in the morning. They would have a special show for kids at ten o'clock in the morning. I was up at maybe six o'clock or seven o'clock at that time. For a dime you used to go and they would give you a bag of candy. They gave it to you when you bought your ticket and walked in. You would go in and sit down and watch the silents. Maybe they would run a comedy for you and a serial. Do you know what a serial is?

B: Yes.

E: Okay, they would run a serial, a weekly serial. You saw part of the weekly serial and then they ran the movie. The movie was over at one o'clock or one thirty; I don't think I ever left the theatre before seven o'clock or eight o'clock at night. That was when my mother used to come looking for me wondering what happened, after she checked with the neighbors and so forth. This is how it was. That was when the first double feature ever came into existence. There was no such thing as a double, two full-length movies until those Depression years. In order to attract people they used to have a ten cent movie during the day and they would give you two full-length movies, plus two other odds and ends like a comedy or something like that. It pretty well showed what was happening to

people. They didn't have anything to do and even ten cents was hard to come by sometimes just to go to a movie. The kids, sometimes they found money on the street. Sometimes they would take it and go to the movie. You could earn it the hard way, shoveling snow maybe, cutting grass, and all that kind of thing. You did that type of thing.

We survived the Depression as most people did. Things started to get a little better, and people started to get back to work, and people started to pay off their old debts, most people did that, at least they tried. You very seldom heard of somebody that was too far into it and declared bankruptcy. Most people felt that that wasn't the way to play the game. Bankruptcies from business standpoints were generally for the huge businesses, businesses that had a net worth of \$25 thousand, a huge business, because most of the little mama and papa stores like my mother and father were involved with, I don't think had an inventory more than \$1500 or something like that.

We got caught into that Depression type of thing too and got behind with our creditors. For many years, my father, after things started to get better, wouldn't go bankrupt. He eventually paid off everybody he owed. Incidentally, I think it is quite interesting that even though he incurred the debt in the 1930's, somewhere in the 1940's he had everybody paid off. I remember one time I went with him, I was a young man home on leave from the Army and we went into a certain place where he was buying something and he told these people that he wanted to pay off the old bill that he owed. The place is still in business in Youngstown. The old-timers used to call it Frankel Brothers. He told Frankel Brothers, "I owe you an old bill and I want to pay it." Somebody from Frankel Brothers looked at him and said, "You don't owe us anything." My father had continued to do business with these people, first on a cash basis and later when things got better he was back in their good graces for credit again. They never said anything to him about the old account, but he knew about the old account. I'm talking about \$200 to \$300 if I remember correctly that he still thought he owed them, and I'm sure he did. When he said he wanted to pay them, they said, "You don't owe us anything because we wrote that off back in 1938 or whatever it was, we just wrote it off. We wrote it off as debt that was no longer owed." He insisted on paying them. They were also such good businessmen that they really didn't want to take it from him, they really didn't. They said, "No, we wrote it off and that's it." He really argued about it. I remember this quite well. They argued about it. The guy didn't want to take his money because he felt it wasn't owed anymore, it was too old. My father insisted that his conscious wouldn't be clear unless he paid it. He wouldn't strike

a compromise. He knew how much he owed and he paid it. We're talking about the early 1940's, 1941, 1942, or whatever year that was. He, incidentally, had now changed his business once again and moved to the outskirts of Youngstown on the northside. He was doing much better financially in those days.

B: What was he doing?

E: He bought out a bar and restaurant, which was a business that I never had any particular love for. I didn't even want to have any part of it. He liked it, he said he did. He worked there for eight or nine years before he decided he had enough of it. In the meantime, he did well financially there and was able to accumulate some property and so forth.

Things had changed in Youngstown too. Neighborhoods were building up even before World War II came. The southside of Youngstown was extended. Boardman became a force as such. Austintown wasn't doing anything yet at that time. Austintown really didn't become alive until the early part of the 1950's. There were things happening there, but not anything near what happened on the later side. Other communities were springing up.

I'm going to digress and go back just slightly. After I continued on with school and went on to South High School in Youngstown and graduated, I had intended to go on to a higher education, but with still a somewhat depressed economy I just didn't think I could make it. I know many kids who somehow or another made it through a university even with the Depression and without any help from their parents. I was a little afraid to make it. I never went on to a higher education at that point. I was interested in music and I did feel I had some talent to go on what is known as the stage. No kidding; I'm a little bit of a Hamlet anyhow. My father always discouraged me. He used to tell me there were too many unemployed people without having another one added to the rolls when I could maybe be doing something productive for myself.

I did, I found something to do, not much, but it paid pretty well for those years. I worked at it. Now I'm working for somebody. I was driving a delivery truck for a dry cleaning business. I worked at that maybe for a couple of years and I decided that I could do the same thing for myself. I found somebody to do the dry cleaning for me and somebody to do the laundry for me, and I think when I was about twenty or so I was out on my own. I think I called myself the Crown Laundry and Dry Cleaning Company. I didn't own the dry cleaning plant, nor did I own the laundry, but at least I went out and did it. This was before my father had moved to the northside.

He decided he wanted to take over that bar on the north-side and he didn't know what to do with the mama and papa store he had because he was still in debt at that time and he felt that you don't just close out one thing and go into something else and leave your creditors wondering about you. He asked me to bail him out a little bit, not bail him out financially, but to run the operation, continue running the operation and see if I could pay off part of that debt and so forth and so on. That is really what I did, I stayed up there in this neighborhood that I was a little afraid of. I don't mean the type of threat today of being held up, I don't mean that type of thing. I'm talking about a neighborhood where people weren't sure if they wanted our kind of people in its neighborhood. Anyway, I went through that.

B: You were a grocer at that point, now you're an independent insurance agent. When did you get in to the insurance business such as it is? What brought you in to it, and what struck your interest and things of that sort?

E: I'm glad you brought it up because I never even thought about that particular phase. After doing service, I came back home and met my wife and she insisted I ought to go back and pick up an education that I denied myself of some years before, so I did. When I graduated I took up the accounting field. I didn't really like the accounting field anyhow, so I went into mens' haberdashery business and stayed in it for some years. I didn't really feel it was that protective. In the meantime we had children born into our union. My children were growing and I purchased our first home. In the meantime we decided to build another home, which we did. Eventually we sold our first home. I found myself in a business that was growing smaller instead of larger due to the location and the advent of the shopping plazas, which are now starting to syphon off much of the trade.

One day I went to a bank and saw a man in railroad overalls and stuff like railroaders wear making what looked like a big deposit dividend into the checking account or savings, whatever it was he was making. He was standing in front of me and he put this huge amount of money in at that time, it looked like \$1200 or \$1500, which is still a pretty good amount of money. When he left I asked the manager who that guy was and he told me he worked on the railroad, but he was also in the insurance business. I said, "You're kidding?" He said, "He has had a lot of years in the railroad and he's only in the insurance business part-time." I told him he was putting a lot of money in there and he said, "Oh yes, he's doing really well."

To me, insurance always meant something where you went from door to door and collected 35 cents a week or whatever it was. I just never took any interest in the insurance business even though I probably had a course in insurance somewhere along the line. I never really looked at it that seriously, and then I started to realize that this might be something that I would like, but I still didn't know anything about it. I decided that I would look into it, which I did.

In the meantime I was thinking to myself, I now have a 16 year old, my oldest son, at that stage of the game where he's going to have to go to college shortly. I have a child who is a year and a half behind him and ten months behind the middle child. They're all going to be in school at the same time and where am I going to get the funds to do that unless I make the change pronto. Sometimes you have the tiger by the tail and you're afraid to hang on and you're afraid to let go. Here I had this business that was going for me and I didn't know how to get out and I didn't know if I got out if I was going into something that was going to provide me with something.

After researching the insurance business, and not saying that I knew marketing that well, I thought that maybe I had a new idea about how to sell insurance. I pursued the idea, and it kind of worked out for me pretty well. I've remained in it ever since. We've made some changes in my first thinking about it. I've been in the insurance business now for quite a few years. It does provide me with a good income. I was able to send all my children through school, and as it turned out one of them is now a practicing physician. The other one is a building contractor. The third one is a librarian. My children are successful and we feel that the insurance business provided this help that we needed to do all this for them.

My wife came to this country as an immigrant at age two, perhaps. Her family were immigrants from Russia. I think they came into this country in 1923. She was quite an accomplished cellist at quite an early age. When I met her she was playing at an engagement here in Youngstown with a group of people. After we married she came here and she too had as much employment as musicians could get. She has played with Youngstown Philharmonic Orchestra which provided very little income. Between the two of us doing other things and trying everything we could, we were able, along with changing in the insurance business, to raise our family and become somewhat more independent than we formerly were.

- B: Through this period of being an insurance agent and some of the other things, I assume you've had an opportunity to encounter a lot of people. Are there any figures of politics or local business or things of that nature that you can recall anything anecdotal, or interesting, or perhaps interesting that may be enlightening over these periods?
- E: As I recall in the early 1920's, and I was really young at the time, the mayor was elected here in Youngstown. His name was George Olds. He was a really straight-forward, outright businessman. He decided he was going to make the city of Youngstown an honest, peaceful place to live. He felt that there was too much politics going on. There is still too much politics going on today, but he felt that he could do something about it. He encountered such difficulties with politicians that I think it was a matter of probably two months or so that he resigned as mayor simply because he felt that he was not ready to hassle with all of these politicians.

Other people took over as "city fathers", so to speak. As I can recall, all through the Depression there was so much graft and dishonesty in local politics that I wonder why people stood for it. I guess people stand for it all the time anyhow. They stood for Nixon until somebody caught him. Most of it I'm sure is because of somewhere along the line there hasn't been a straight shot by all those that are in power and so forth. This is what happened here in those years as I remember. The people still went along with it. I can remember when things got so bad in Youngstown that the city of Youngstown printed script. Do you know what script is?

B: I have an inkling.

E: Script was that all of a sudden the city didn't have any money and they started to issue their own money and they called it script. They would pay off their workers in script, which was really a promise to pay. They had it in denominations of one dollar bills, five dollar bills, and so forth. Merchants were asked to honor the script from those that had it, and got paid with it, and used it like money until the city had money to redeem it. They did. We used to accept script in our place, but there were a lot of times we couldn't buy anything with it. Some of our suppliers for example, said they didn't want it. The local suppliers would take it. They were part of the community and had to do it, not had to, but they felt it was their duty. If you had to buy from an out of town supplier, a Pennsylvania supplier, or something like that, they weren't about to take a script, they wanted hard U. S. currency. They wanted it to say

government money.

B: How long did that go on? Was that a recurrent thing or did it have a regular span to it?

E: I think they started to do this about 1935 or 1936. I'm not certain on those dates, but I think by the time of 1938 or 1939 the city was already redeeming script.

B: There must have been a fair amount of it floating around for a while?

E: I imagine there was. They used to pay their workers part in script and part in cash. You didn't get all your money in script, but you did get some of it. This is how the city operated for awhile.

There were a lot of foreclosures during that period too, by the bank. This is just my opinion, but I don't think the banks really wanted to foreclose on people. I don't think they had any choice. At one time I understood a couple of savings and loans or banks, I'm not sure which ones, had so much property that they had to take . . . People would turn them back. I don't think they really wanted to do it, I think they would try to work out anything with people if they could. They would say, "Okay, we'll forego your principal if you just try to pay on the interest." I don't think people could even do that so all of a sudden many of these institutions accumulated a lot of property that they didn't know what to do with in those years. I think I mentioned some time before that there were people buying or paying on homes and just could not pay. Many people were able to obtain it, many of them just gave up, and many people who had a little money were able to buy homes or property that had residents on it, and even some business property for next to nothing.

In that period, this goes back to the city script again, I think the city was issuing the script because people weren't even paying the real estate taxes, which resulted in no money in the city treasury.

Also in those years is when we had a governor by the name of Davies who initiated in state the first sales tax. It was only supposed to last a short period of time, like two or three years. That was also a political promise. Here it is 1975, and that's probably 35 or 40 years later, we not only have the sales tax, but we also have an additional one percent over what it originally was to begin with. Maybe it's two percent, I don't remember the first sales tax. All of this with not too much protest from the citizens at that time.

I don't think people were politically aware of what was happening as they are today. I don't even know if they are today, but I think that they are more aware of what is happening to them from a political standpoint than they were in the late 1930's and early 1940's as I recall.

The late 1920's was when people first became aware of what is known as "gangsterism." Al Capone became the legendary character, he was almost a hero for many people. We didn't know anything about the black hand, as it was termed at that time. They never used the word mafia. I don't remember at that time, but they did use the word black hand and other names for organized crime. Al Capone was the Chicagoan who became famous for this kind of thing.

Also in those years the people in this country went ahead and let the Volstead Act become a law, which as you know was prohibition. This created a lot of things. First of all, we had what is known as a speakeasy. A speakeasy is a place where you had to know somebody who would get you in and you could buy whiskey and so forth. I can remember people making what is known as home brew. They would make their own beer. A lot of times you would read about a person's still blowing up in their house. Usually it went in the paper that the guy was making rootbeer, but he really wasn't. People were doing it, and people were drinking a lot of alcohol that they should not have because it wasn't safe to drink and there was all this blindness and stuff that was happening. It was happening right here in Youngstown.

We had a lot of prostitution in Youngstown in the 1930's. We had a big red light district that the police turned their backs on; and we had a lot of speakeasies that the law enforcement officials turned their backs on.

We were in the numbers business here. The numbers business flourished really well here. It was just an open thing that later became known as the bug. Everybody said, "What's the bug number for the day?" They would say, "The number is 683." If you had bet on 683 you were a winner. Every little store and even ours was writing the bug. This is how people got their kicks. You could go down for a penny and play a number and you might win five dollars for a penny. That was a lot of money. The bug usually paid five hundred to one. If you bet a dime on the number you stood a chance to win fifty dollars. If you played one dollar on the number, which many people might have, you could win up to five hundred dollars, maybe a little more. Anyway, that was the game. Everybody did it, everybody played it, even those people that swore on Sunday that gambling was bad were back on Monday playing that game. They didn't figure

that that was anything so terrible. That just shows you the standards of people. I think they have that kind of standard even today.

Somebody around 1932 in Youngstown invented the Whiffle Board. I think he made it just for his own amusement. I remember the guy because he was my neighbor. It was a game. He tacked some nails around some little holes in a board, maybe two by five or something like that, and then it had a little spring on it and you put a marble in front of the spring and let the spring go to see if you could get the marble into a certain scoring number. The higher the score the more it paid off. It became known as the marble board, which eventually became coin operated, which eventually lead to some of those things being put into stores and poolrooms and so forth. People would go down and that's how they got their kicks. For five cents they could get ten marbles to shoot out of there and then you gave them a prize on a sly if they got a certain score of something or more. Eventually these games became electrofied with electrical energy, that type of thing. Today you see them and they have all kinds of lights flashing and this type of thing. This started in Youngstown, it really did. They used those in this game and it became big business. It became big business throughout the country at a late time. The whole operation then moved to Chicago. You probably wouldn't know why, but besides being in the bootleg game, the mafia also became interested in this thing because they could see a lot of potential dollars in it.

B: What was this fellow's name, do you recall?

E: I can't recall his name. I cannot recall his name now, but I remember his doing it and he called it The Wiffle Company. On that game it used to say Whiffle Company, Youngstown, Ohio. There was a glass on top of this thing. My father got one in his store and the next thing you know we had three of them in there because people used to stand around and that's how they got their kicks. They would put a nickel in the machine and shoot these things. When they got electric a lot of things happened by itself, lights flashing all over the place and this sort of thing. The police officials also let that go. It was somewhat a form of gambling. There were protests by a group of people, but they even participated in it themselves.

Between the prostitution, the bootlegging, and people making their own stuff at home, the marble boards and its concessions, and the bug, Youngstown was quite an interesting city. I really think that that little excitement made for a little bit of prosperity for somebody. It just had to because it seemed you could drum up

a nickel or a dime for this kind of thing.

B: We've almost used up an hour's worth of time. Is there anything you would like to say, anything that you would like to add that we haven't crossed over that is important to you personally, anything that you would like to mention that stands out in your mind?

E: Actually I think that many of the events that I told you about are especially important in my life span. If they weren't I wouldn't be bringing them up. I'm sure that there were many more important things that happened in the city of Youngstown that don't seem important to me at this point, which I'll probably remember later. At this point, I don't think so. I hope that I was able to help you.

B: Okay, well maybe we can do this again later. Thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW