

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Shenango Valley Depression Project

Life in the Depression

O. H. 472

PHILIP KOPPEL

Interviewed

by

Marilyn Lees

on

August 3, 1982

PHILIP KOPPEL

Philip Koppel was born June 6, 1906, in Baltimore, Maryland, the son of Reuben and Fannie Koppel. His parents emigrated from Latvia and Ukraine respectively and moved to Newton Falls, Ohio when Philip was a young boy. Philip graduated from high school in 1923 and worked his way through Mt. Union College by working in a steel mill during the summers. He graduated in 1928 with a B.S. in Education and was hired by Brookfield High School in the same year.

Philip taught for eleven years at Brookfield such subjects as: math, science, and history and also coached boys' football, basketball, and track, in addition to girls' basketball and track. His years at Brookfield were spent during the Depression and Philip remembered the hardships that many of the students witnessed at this time. He lived in a boarding house and spent most of his time with his teaching and coaching duties. During the summer he would return home to Newton Falls to live with his parents. Philip married a Brookfield elementary teacher in 1941 and then enlisted in the Air Force in 1942 and served until 1945.

Philip became a teacher at Newton Falls, Girard, and at Warren Harding until his retirement in 1970. At the present time, Philip continues his interest in sports, travels, and reading.

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INTERVIEWEE: PHILIP KOPPEL

INTERVIEWER: Marilyn Lees

SUBJECT: Teachers' contracts, Athletic contests, Radio, PTA, Students' behavior, Young people activities, Brookfield Center, Roosevelt's election, Elementary Schools

DATE: August 3, 1982

L: This is an interview with Philip Koppel for Youngstown State University on the Shenango Valley Depression Project by Marilyn Lees at Girard, Ohio, August 3, 1982, at 2 p.m.

First of all, where were you born and when?

K: I was born in Baltimore, Maryland, June 6, 1906.

L: What were your parents' names?

K: Mr. and Mrs. Reuben Koppel.

L: What nationality were they?

K: My dad came from Latvia and my mother came from Russia out of the Ukraine.

L: They met here in the United States?

K: Yes.

L: How many children were in your family, in your parents' family?

K: Six.

L: How were you in the . . .

K: I was number five. There were four girls and two boys.

L: What did your father do for a living?

K: Shoemaker.

L: Did your mother work?

K: No.

L: Where did you go to secondary school?

K: Mount Union College.

L: When did you graduate?

K: 1928.

L: What did you get your degree in?

K: In education; I majored in history and minored in--in those days you could minor easily and I had minored in physics, science, chemistry, math, and majored in history.

L: What were your college days like at this time? This would be like pre-Depression, during the Roaring Twenties.

K: We were poor before the Depression. I belonged to a fraternity but I was not a social. Socially I was out. I didn't do that too well. I learned to do it later. It was very enjoyable, a very small college.

L: Why did you pick Mount Union, was there a special reason?

K: My brother had gone there. No other special reason. I had a scholarship there, I had worked the year before I went.

L: Was it an academic or athletic scholarship?

K: Academic.

L: Why did you pick teaching as a career?

K: I didn't know what I was going to do until my senior year and I crowded everything into those last years; they didn't have the kind of tests they have today like aptitudes and those things.

L: Where was your first teaching job?

K: At Brookfield, in 1928.

L: 1928 until . . .

K: 1939.

L: How did you hear about the job?

- K: I had applied at the county office and I had been an athlete in college, but it wasn't until July that I had a job. I worked in the mill again that summer as I did every summer. They came over to see me and I was interviewed and I took that job. About a week later I could have had about three or four others, but I had signed that contract.
- L: Can you remember what your salary was at this time, when you first started?
- K: \$1,440 in nine months, that is \$160 a month. At the end of my stay over there until 1939 I made \$1,710.
- L: That included your coaching activities too?
- K: Yes.
- L: Did they have supplementals at that time?
- K: No supplementals. I even directed a couple of plays over there.
- L: Where did you live when you were teaching in Brookfield?
- K: Weekends I went home, but I had a room in Brookfield at C. C. McMaster's, on the green. I stayed at the same place for ten and a half years. He became ill and he had to get a full-time nurse. I lived with Mose Hall down in Masury for a half year, and that was it.
- L: Was that common that teachers . . .
- K: All teachers had rooms back then and you had to live where you taught.
- L: That was like an unwritten law in other words?
- K: It was written, not really in the contract. In the contract you didn't smoke, didn't swear.
- L: Right written in the contract?
- K: Yes, they made liars of a lot of people. Of course, married women couldn't teach at that time, and that didn't happen until after the war. That's the way it was. Teachers lived where they taught.
- L: What subjects did you teach at Brookfield?
- K: Everything but English and Latin. Primarily I taught social studies and I taught some math; I taught chemistry and general science. The classes were small so you taught quite a variety of subjects. The faculty wasn't very large.

- L: Did you have any extracurricular activities?
- K: Besides the athletics? In the fall I coached football, then girls basketball, boys basketball, and boys and girls track. When you sponsor a class you sometimes directed plays and I directed a few plays. Other than that . . .
- L: That kept you busy. How many students did you have per class usually?
- K: I really can't remember that. There weren't very many.
- L: Like maybe on the average, twenty?
- K: Oh yes, it wasn't a very large high school. In the earlier days you wouldn't have forty graduating until . . . the class of 1932 had 49 in it. The first three classes were smaller than that. After 1932, they became larger.
- L: What grades were considered the high school in that building that we refer to as the present junior high?
- K: Four years.
- L: You taught generally what grades?
- K: I would be teaching freshman, juniors, and seniors. My homeroom was generally the senior boys. The senior girls were in a different room and the boys were all in one room.
- L: Oh, they kept them apart?
- K: In the daytime.
- L: What were some of your worse discipline problems?
- K: I can't remember any of the bad discipline problems.
- L: Did they have a problem with boys smoking in school?
- K: I don't know what the discipline problems were either. There weren't very many. They would be usually talking noise. In those days you did not talk in the halls between classes. There was a lot of smoking and chewing, but not on school time. Actually the kids were very good; we had a few problems I suppose, but I didn't have any serious problems.
- L: Were there a lot of dropouts at this time?
- K: Oh yes, especially the junior year when the kids turned sixteen, and during the Depression years kids just couldn't afford to go to school. Some of the kids on the football

- team would drop out. I know two boys that graduated wearing my suits and another wearing my shoes.
- L: What methods of discipline did you use in the classroom?
- K: You just got their respect and you kept it.
- L: Did you ever have to paddle students?
- K: I never paddled my students. I never slapped anybody.
- L: How did the school try to help some of these poverty-stricken children at this time?
- K: Disciplinewise?
- L: Just in general, was there anything like free lunches that we have today?
- K: We didn't have a cafeteria so there were no free lunches like we have today. The kids who could afford it, and there were a few, would bring in the extra lunches and they would leave them up in the principal's office. Those who didn't have a lunch could go up and get them. I can remember two boys in my classes, the two tackles, big boys who were in my homeroom rather, I was very disappointed after the first two games and when I called them in and talked to them they said, "Well, we can't live on beans." They would have beans and then they would go up to the Village Green and pick some apples. They had too much pride--they were seniors--to go to the office, so I arranged with two girls, Betty Hoffman and Olga Romiak to bring me the lunches, and I would stick them in their desks. That's the only way they got their food.
- L: They were probably just too weak because of their diet.
- K: They weren't eating; that's right.
- L: They were growing boys.
- Was there a school nurse that would help with any health problems?
- K: There was a school nurse, but nothing like you have today. Everybody was limited. They had too much to do with no aids of any kind. There was a school nurse and she was available.
- L: What kind of materials did you work with in the classroom; did you have regular textbooks?
- K: Yes, we had textbooks, an occasional film, but not the slides

as we did later and the aids of that nature. The materials had to come out of the county office, primarily for your slides and such.

L: Did the schools have to pay for it? Like for the film strips and so on, did the school have to pay for it?

K: Yes.

L: What was the dress code like for teachers?

K: We all wore ties and coats. At the end of the day your blinds were pulled, even throughout the school, halfway down. You got in the habit. Between classes you stood out in the hall by your room. There were never any teachers sitting in their room. The dress code didn't have to be because kids dressed up too; they wore ties occasionally. Considering the times, and money and all, they did very well.

L: In other words, was there a written dress code for the students to follow?

K: No, it was just understood, just like so much of it was.

L: Can you describe a typical day when you were teaching at Brookfield?

K: School took up at 8:30. I would be there at 8:00.

L: How would you get there?

K: I lived about two blocks away; I walked. No student drove to school; cars were not that abundant. I would walk to school. I did have a Model T when I first got there, but I didn't use it; I didn't need it. In the days of football season, I would sometimes drive my car because I would take some of the football players home after practice. They didn't have rides. They lived up by Yankee Lake and farther so I would take some of them home. In basketball season I would have my car available so I could go to eat for an hour in between the boys and girls practice. Usually I walked down. I would teach every period; there were no free periods. You were in hall duty or gym duty. Everyone carried their lunch. They would be in the gym after lunch and there would be intramurals or games going on and everybody sat there in the gym. I was generally in charge of that gym, so I was busy at noon hour. I think school let out at probably 3:30, and I went over to sports activities after that. I had classes every period.

L: Like you said, you coached football and basketball and so on. How many games did you have per season?

- K: We would have nine or ten.
- L: For the away games, how would these students get to these?
- K: They would go on the school buses or parents would drive them. Most of the games were away from home because we didn't have a home field.
- L: Oh, you didn't. Addison Field wasn't there?
- K: No, no that came just after I left. We would play down at Elks Field, and that was right across from Gray Wolf Tavern. We would sometimes have games there. We would pass the hat and collect. There was no admission. We would open with Farrell every year because they would give us \$200. We played Warren twice because they gave us \$200 and Niles a couple of times. We would go away from home, and \$50 was a good guarantee in those days. Today it would be \$2,000.
- L: Was that usual that you didn't charge admission at these sporting events at this time?
- K: That was only at that open field at that time. There was no way that we could have handled it. They charged at basketball. I can't remember what it was.
- L: What was the equipment like? We'll just take football for example.
- K: In 1928, when I first started, the football equipment--the pants were one piece that contained all your pads. Today, your pads are separate. You have about two to three sets of pads under your pants. Your helmet, the first year I was here, it was not required to play football; the next year they started making them wear helmets. Our helmets were not much. The equipment today is much more superior. There is no comparing it. We furnished the shoes; we furnished all of the equipment for the boys.
- L: Was it hard to get the money for the equipment at that time?
- K: Yes. I would hold a carnival once a year. I would get material from the Sharon merchants and sideshows. We would have rooms where she "eats, drinks, and sleeps underwater," for example. They would go in there and there would be somebody sitting underneath the bucket of water. Anything for a penny or two. We raised about \$600 at that carnival. We had furniture and things for sale; we had a little entertainment up on stage; we had everything going. We did that for several years to help raise money that way. We managed.

L: Can you remember any of your outstanding players at this time?

K: At Brookfield?

L: Yes.

K: Oh yes, George Rado graduated in 1931 and attended Duquesne under Elmer Laden as coach. He became an All-American, and then he played with the Steelers and the Eagles. Then we had Harris Rogner who graduated the same year and played football as an end at Army, and was their basketball captain. We had, possibly, some other football players that didn't become quite as well-known, but we had boys play at North Carolina State, and quite a few went to Kent. Joe was the only one who made All-American. We had other boys who were almost as good that didn't go to college. The best football players I had didn't go to college. It was during the Depression years. It isn't like it is today. They didn't recruit like they do today, and the opportunity wasn't nearly as great.

L: Were there scholarships available though?

K: You mean as scholarship itself for scholastic scholarships or athletic?

L: Well, both.

K: Yes, you could get some help, but nothing like today. Thiel was one of those places, they gave them but on a much smaller scale, and very few.

L: Was there a lot of community pressure on you. Like today it seems that you hear the fans at the game really getting on coaches?

K: It wasn't bad; I didn't hear anything. My mind was shut to that so it didn't bother me. I knew some years we were very good and some years we were very bad. We had the most spirit over there of anyplace I've been though.

L: Was it hard getting the boys and girls out for sports at this time?

K: Oh no. When I first went there we had eighteen or twenty out. The players went both ways in football. As time went on we got more. We were never overloaded with a lot of them. The first football team I coached over there weighed an average of 137 pounds.

L: That's all?

- K: Yes. Joe was a big boy at 175, but that's the way we played. The other teams must have been just as small because the first few years when they were small we had good records: Eight and two, nine and one. The next year was our best ball team, although we didn't have that kind of record, but that was due to the schedule. The other teams that we played must have been just as small.
- L: Did the community seem to support the sports programs at this time? Did they come out to the games?
- K: Oh yes. We had a good following. I wasn't always proud of it though.
- L: Why? Did the fans get . . .
- K: Some fans were very hostile I thought. They weren't very nice as far as their actions. I wasn't proud of the fans, but I was proud of the following.
- L: How did the school district get funds at this time? Was there any state money coming in? I don't know whether you would know this or not.
- K: Yes. They got their money from state, from taxes too, primarily from taxes. I can remember one time when school was in trouble and one of the other teachers and I told the superintendent that we were going to be in Columbus that weekend. He asked us to stop at the bank and pick up a loan. We finished the loan for the school for \$50,000 at one of the banks down there until the tax came out.
- L: Was there any federal money coming in, do you know?
- K: I don't think so.
- L: Were there levies in Brookfield, because today we depend upon our levies to support our school? Did they have levies at that time do you remember?
- K: Local tax and state.
- L: Was G.A. there? (General American)
- K: Oh yes, it was there. That is where Rogner was from-- the boy who went to West Point. His father was a superintendent there.
- L: In other words, the athletes, the one's whose parents had a little money, are the ones who went on to school?
- K: Well, in most cases. Some that went on to college, like the McMullen boy, played for me. He didn't play in college;

he became an engineer. They had the money or they wouldn't go to school. At the reunion I went to the other night, there were 3 people out of 49 who went to college. Of all the classes that was the least at that time.

- L: How did you manage to coach all these different activities? When you were coaching football that was just in the fall, but then how did you manage to coach boys and girls basketball?
- K: When football was over the season was over. You didn't do like they do today, a continuation all year. Basketball likewise, each one had their period and that was it, and the boy could go on his next sport. We usually gave the football players a week off before they would start basketball. We just coached in season and the season ended; it was not a carry-over as it is today. Today every sport lasts all year.
- L: When you were coaching boys and girls basketball, right after school you had boys basketball, and how long would practice last?
- K: A practice only lasted between one and a half to two hours.
- L: Then you took a break?
- K: Sometimes the girls practiced after school, sometimes the boys. Then the bus would pick them up and take them home and pick up the other kids and bring them back. While the bus was gone, which was about an hour, I would eat and get ready for the next group.
- L: Your normal day would end around what time?
- K: Around 9:00.
- L: What was the mood of the people like during these times, during the Depression?
- K: Just from the people that I knew, they took things in stride and they adjusted really well. No one had too much to begin with. We didn't live on the same scale as we do today. If you bought a chair, a child would recognize a chair as you would recognize a car today. It had as much impact on a child as something bigger would be today. You didn't have so many frills and everything, so the sacrifices you made were primarily to put food on the table. You didn't sacrifice the others because you didn't have them to begin with. It was a case of eating more than anything else. People cooperated together very well. There was one class as far as society was concerned; there were no poor or middle class; we were all one class and we stuck together. You cooperated. In

my homeroom at noon when we were eating, the boys would be eating and I would take a number between one and fifteen, whoever would come the closest, I would buy them a pint of milk. You played your games; everybody was in the same boat.

L: Yes. As you mentioned, there were even kids who brought in extra food for those that didn't have it.

K: I think on a whole they were pretty decent.

L: Did anybody bring clothes in for anybody that didn't have anything?

K: No, we didn't have that at the high school; whether they did in grade school I don't know. Kids dropped out as I mentioned before, because they didn't have clothing. We would try and get clothing for them.

L: Did a lot of kids drop out because they were trying to get an extra income for their family?

K: To some extent, yes. A lot of them graduated and went into CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps] camps and I heard from them. They would graduate and immediately go into the CCC camps and do very well and help out their folks; the money would come home.

L: If you were sixteen, was that too young to go to the CCC Program?

K: I'm not sure about that. I do think you had to be eighteen, but I'm not sure.

L: I think we have kind of answered this question, but I will ask it anyway. How do you think children at school were affected by the Depression? You mentioned their clothing.

K: I don't think it hurt their pride too much. Some of them were proud naturally and didn't feel like getting in a line for that food, but that was very few. I don't think it affected them too much. The only thing that might have affected them later was when you hear so many people say I didn't have this or I didn't have that and my child is . . . It may be upon having their own family, but in school itself, I don't think it affected them too much.

L: Did the school provide papers and writing materials and so on for the children? I was just wondering, the families that didn't have it, I wondered how the kids . . .

K: They supplied their own paper. I think sometimes we supplied some of it too.

- L: What was the reaction towards F.D.R.'s New Deal? When he went into office for the hundred days and so on, what was the reaction to him?
- K: People were so used to things the way they were, it didn't bother too many. The thing that hurt back then was when the banks went down, when the banks closed. The first generations were over here and some of them in the steel mills, and how they were going to get that man at the bank and how the president had embezzled, but actually he hadn't. He had helped a lot of the business people. He took the rap for all of them. There were going to be shootings and all that. On the whole, as to discipline outside, you were just as safe outside as inside during the Depression. Guns weren't available then like they are today.
- L: So times were more safe?
- K: They were more safe then, yes. You weren't afraid to go anywhere.
- L: Was there any vandalism, teenage vandalism like today?
- K: No, the kids couldn't get around because they didn't have cars. People didn't have cars. Even before that, I didn't have a car until I got out of college. My folks never owned a car; very few families had cars.
- L: Did you have to finance your car or did you just . . .
- K: We financed it. Very few people could just buy a car. When I was at Brookfield I had that Model-T; I paid \$60 for it; it was an old Ford. My first car cost me about \$900. My wife taught school at Brookfield, and during the Depression we would teach for nine months and get paid for eight and a half. They didn't have enough money. We wouldn't get paid every time. You had to suffer through it just like everybody else.
- L: How did you get by in the summer if you weren't getting paid?
- K: When I first started in I got \$160 at the end of May, so I lived June, July, and August on my \$160. My wife bought a car; she says that one year she only made \$800 and the car cost her \$850. It cost more today, but more money is left over.
- L: Are there any particular events that you remember at this time? You mentioned when the banks closed down, any other things like that you remember that really stick out in your mind?

K: You mean during the Depression?

L: Yes.

K: During the summers with no money you would play tennis or you would swim. We had tennis teams and we would play other towns. One Fourth of July, I played sixteen sets of tennis. Then you could go up the river and jump in because the water was purer then. We would spend the day playing tennis and then go swimming.

L: Did you live at Newton Falls during the summer time?

K: Oh yes.

L: Is that where your family lived?

K: Yes. That is when I usually went home on the weekends. It was nothing more than what you read about. Life was simple, and honestly, it was a bad time, but it was a good time too.

L: What did young people like your age do for fun then? You said you played sports of course, tennis, basketball and things like that.

K: Young people played more baseball. There were more places to play. It wasn't organized like little leagues and that. You learned to play together and fight together. You learned your way instead of having someone else do it. In the summer league, you just got together in little groups and played. At night you got together and just talked or gathered at places and visited. Movies were a nickel or dime and people would go to the movies some, I guess. It was just a case of getting to know your neighbors better. You didn't go out out of town; people didn't go out of town.

L: Do you remember, you said you lived up on the Green in Brookfield, that would be the center of town almost; what stores were up there?

K: A grocery store on the right-hand side, Knivals. I lived right next door to Knivals. It was the only grocery store up there.

L: The only store. Was there a gas station in town?

K: Oh yes. There was a gas station. No, there wasn't any gas station up there.

L: How much was gas?

K: Oh yes, Obermyers had a garage right around the corner.

Gas was sixteen cents. Later on I remember it was seventeen. Of course, there was no leaded or unleaded. There was just one kind of gas. It was sixteen cents a gallon usually.

L: How much did you pay for the room you stayed in?

K: My room was five dollars a week.

L: Did you get your meals there too?

K: No, I went around the corner to Komlos'. They were just beyond Obermyers as you're going towards Warren, on the left-hand side. Sometimes in the evening, I would drive to Savoldi's. I don't know if you ever heard of Savoldi's.

L: Where was that?

K: It was up State Street. It wasn't as far as Hermitage, but it was on the right-hand side going out. I would go out there once or twice a week for spaghetti.

L: They have like a little place there now.

K: They have one now in downtown across from Dallos that used to be a candy store across the street. I used to go there when they moved in.

L: Did you go to the Gable, the movie theater downtown?

K: Gables, yes. I went to the Columbia on the main drag. Yes, I went to both of those. Did you hear your dad talking about those?

L: Oh yes, how you could sit there and watch for as long as you wanted, watching the same movie. Are there any personalities that stand out in your mind at this time?

K: From Brookfield?

L: No. Well, yes, on the local scene or the national scene too.

K: Will Rogers. I heard Knute Rockne. I heard him in 1930 up at the Northwestern. He was killed the next spring.

L: Were Americans sports-minded like they are today, even though money was . . .

K: They were sports-minded, but they weren't spoiled like TV has done with them. As a coach everybody today knows the answer; because of TV, they think they know the answers. I think we are overdoing everything today. Kids are made to overdo it too. I don't like it at all the way it is. You went to baseball games. I went to ball games at Cleveland

and ther might be 5,000 to 10,000 people there. The salaries wouldn't be like they are today. I watched Babe Ruth, and I watched Lou Gehrig; I've watched them all. In football you listened about Red Grange and all the great stars. Athletics was a nice way of life. People enjoyed it, but some people have cable and watch sports all day long. Even if I had not been a coach, I wouldn't do that.

L: Did you have a radio?

K: Yes. I had a radio; I don't remember when I got the first radio. Radios came out, I think, when I was in college. I didn't have a radio until 1931. I listened to the radio a lot. I still listen to the radio a lot--more than TV because this way you use your imagination. With radio, you don't have this picture, with TV it's there.

L: Do you remember any of the radio people and the shows at this time? Amos and Andy, I have heard people talk about that show.

K: What show?

L: Amost and Andy.

K: Amos and Andy, oh yes. Al Jolson. In comics it would be the other singer. I can't remember. McGee and Molly was also very popular. Jack Benny was my favorite one.

L: Do you remember F.D.R.'s fireside chats?

K: Yes, I do. He had the people with him. I can remember the day he died in April. Yes, I can remember his chats.

L: When he was elected, do you think the mood of the people changed after that?

K: Yes, they were ready for anything. Any new change they welcomed. He had ideas; he gained the people's confidence in a hurry. During the war, they weren't going to change presidents.

L: What changes did Brookfield go through at this time?

K: While I was there?

L: Yes.

K: I wouldn't say it changed at all. We developed very slowly. We had more coaches. In football I had an assistant and the girls basketball went to someone else. We had three or four coaches all together.

L: Like you said, you didn't get paid anything extra for that?

K: No. I didn't get paid for coaching when I came here. I came here in 1940; I didn't get paid for coaching until after the war.

L: Nowadays, that is what the first question is: How much will I get paid.

K: Yes, and now they have a hard time getting coaches. They don't even want that because it takes so much time and they think it isn't worth it. Regardless of the money or not, I enjoyed it very much.

L: Looking back, would you consider these the good old days?

K: Yes.

L: Why?

K: Because life was easier. People let pressure get to them today. It was just simpler, easygoing. There are a lot of things nicer today. There are a lot of things that you wouldn't want to lose that we have today that we paid so much advancement in. There was not the hurry after that extra dollar. That is what causes all the headaches now. You were just happier. People have everything, yet they will hurry up over the weekend to the lake and hurry back late at night on Sunday and be tired all week. You didn't have that to contend with. You just had a very simple way of life. Your dad was there about that time, how does he feel about it?

L: He remembers how the neighbors were much closer together and how the people were more interested in one another. Families, it just seemed that you were more family oriented; that you did more things with your family.

K: It did help this way, if you were through it and you had a family like we have, our family is scattered over the country, but they're closely knit.

L: When did you get married?

K: In 1941.

L: Did you go into the service, you mentioned?

K: A year later, in June 1942. I got out in 1945 and I went to Ohio State for a year, graduate school. I came here in 1946.

L: You came to Girard to teach.

K: I was here before the war and I came back in 1946, and I left here in 1953 and went to Warren Harding.

L: How do you think you might have been not living through the Depression?

K: What was that again?

L: How might you have benefited living through these times?

K: You appreciate everything a little more. You're more considerate of other people, much more considerate. You're just a better person. I think actually you should be a better person having experienced these things. Whatever you have gained has been difficult, and if it comes easy it is no good. It was hard to come by.

L: Would you rather be a teacher now or back then?

K: Actually it didn't matter. I think you have more to do a better job today, more aides, and you can get a better education if you get the respect that you want. I enjoyed every day I taught, even over in Warren. I retired in 1970. I taught at that vocational school for four and a half years. Those were my most interesting four and a half years, and we had that type of kid, worse than you have today. I had no problems there.

L: Are you glad you went into teaching then?

K: Yes.

L: Anything else you would like to add, or anything else you can remember about the Depression?

K: Just that the house was home and how easy it was to entertain yourself and meet your friends. I'm thinking of summers now. Instead of playing poker, you played bridge. We didn't have any money to play poker. The things that you found that were entertaining, people would be bored with today. You appreciated your neighbors.

L: Your parents lived in Newton Falls during the Depression. Was your father still a shoemaker?

K: Yes, he was. During the Depression, yes he was. I had to help out at home too. Things were bad. There were six children in the family. Of course, I was the next to the youngest. They had a hard time making ends meet.

L: How many children still lived at home with your parents?

K: There was just the one, and she was a teacher too. She was

three years younger than I am. The others are older than I am. They're still living.

L: Did your parents have a garden?

K: Oh yes. When I was a kid we lived out in the country. When I was gone they didn't have one. Whenever it was possible they did. They were renting; they didn't own a house. Most people didn't own one. Whenever possible they had gardens.

L: Did you work your way through college then, when things were tough?

K: Yes. My first year out of high school I worked at the mill, and then I went to college and I worked every summer at the mill. In college I waited tables for two years, and my senior year I did not work. College at Mount Union at that time cost about \$600 a year. I went to a private school.

L: That was for tuition and your board?

K: Yes. It took a little over \$600 to go to college for a year. My first year out of high school I worked in the mill twelve hours at night or ten hours in the day. You could only work 54 hours a week if you were under eighteen. I was under eighteen so I worked ten hours a day, five days a week, and then on Saturday I would be through at eleven. We started at seven. When I got a night turn job, they forgot all about that and I was working twelve hours, six days a week, sometimes seven. That year I saved \$1,000. I gave \$5 every two weeks to my mother. You weren't out of place without money or with money.

L: Were teachers looked up to at this time, in the community?

K: Yes, they were respected, in Brookfield anyway. Teachers were respected. Most of the time you didn't have any trouble. You didn't have continuing contracts or anything of that nature. They could fire you anytime they wanted.

L: Oh really?

K: You had no security.

L: Did you have any benefits?

K: No, we paid for everything. If we had a day off we lost that day of money.

L: We have sick days now.

K: We didn't have it at Brookfield. You lost a day's pay.

The whole time I was there I only missed one day.

L: The whole eleven years you were there you only missed one day?

K: Yes. I injured my leg playing basketball in Youngstown and when they treated me at the hospital that night it made me sick, so I missed the next day. The next day I came with a crutch. I came to school on Friday and Saturday I had it put in a cast. I missed one day that week. We didn't get any sick leave. I couldn't afford to miss any.

L: You had no personal days or anything like that?

K: Oh no. You had a job and that was all.

L: Were there a lot of layoffs?

K: No.

L: Once you had a job, you felt pretty secure?

K: Oh no. They could fire you at any time. If they didn't like you or some board member didn't like you, you failed his child or something of that nature . . . I had that experience; you might get fired. You were lucky to hang on sometimes.

L: Anything else that you could think of?

K: When I was in the service, I was married the year before. I got the phone call down there telling me to tell my wife to apply for the job, she could have a job. During the war is when it all happened, married females could teach.

L: You went off to war so that is when they decided she could teach.

K: Married women were not permitted.

END OF INTERVIEW