Interview with Mr. Bill Frank at the News Journal offices in Wilmington, Delaware, June 28, 1972, by Myron Blackman. Project: Delaware in the Depression.

Q Do you remember the stock market crash?
A Yeah. That was in when, '28, wasn't it?
Q '29.
A '29. In October--what day was it?
Q October the 24th.
A O.K. I was then working for the paper called the Every Evening, which was then down at 5th and Market Streets in Wilmington. And I was a young reporter then, but I wasn't dabbling around in the stock market and it didn't mean anything to me then. But I remember a flurry of interest in the office. I remember some people who had dabbled in the stock market were getting quite excited about it. And if you was to push me against the wall, I would say that the market--that the name of the stock--name of one stock that came to me was Anaconda--something happened to Anaconda. Is that right?
Q Is that Anaconda Steel?
A Yes--copper or something. But it didn't mean anything to me then. And so that was in '28--I think it was in '28. But I was young. I think I hadn't been married very long, so it didn't mean anything to me. I just kept on working.

Q Did the Depression have any effect on you? Did you [inaudible]?
A No. Oddly enough, I always had a job during the Depression. But from the Every Evening I shifted over to what they called the Evening Journal, which was down at 4th and Shipley, and somewhere in there, at that time, I got into a scrap with the managing editor and I quit. And my wife and I then decided to pull up stakes and we were going to Mexico. So we went to Mexico in a Model T car, Model T Ford, and we had money--not too much money, but we had some money. And we camped on the way. So it was just blithe--it didn't affect me at all and I wasn't paying much attention to it. I got down to Mexico and parked the car and then went on into Mexico by train, living sort of a simple life, and then coming back and getting the car, and then heading out for the West Coast. Then I began to notice--then I began to run out of money. Then I began to notice that whenever I stopped looking for jobs, they weren't there. It was just a joke to try to ask for a job. But even then I just thought things were tight, that's all. And somewhere going out West, I began to see what later I recognized was the Okies. These were the people who were--I began to see families moving. And [tape is stopped here, then starts again as follows.] Well, then I began seeing these Okies. And I didn't really get the picture and I didn't really understand what the hell it was all about until I later got back. And of course when I read Grapes of Wrath, then I began to see the picture
retroactively. I got to California and then managed to get a job back in Wilmington, so I came on back. So that didn't affect me. And I still was just working along and it wasn't affecting me a damn bit. But I knew we began to have people out of work and my wife was working, and so everything was all right. The first real pinch we came, economic-wise, was when the News Journal merged with the Every Evening, that's the paper up the street, and then there came the pinch. Then fellows were eased out of jobs, squeezed out in the merger, and those of us who were kept were offered either a chance to quit or to work three days a week. And I elected to work three days a week. But fortunately, another guy who was also gonna work three days a week, fortunately for me, he got drunk New Year's Eve and broke his leg, and so I kept on working. But I never was really out of a job, although we did get from time to time some pay cuts. But it never pinched me, never pinched me at all, but I saw it all around me.

Q Did you ever see the--I heard about this from a few people, but some other people that I've asked didn't see any soup lines or you know--there were somewhere around this area, weren't there?

A I may have seen soup lines. I remember people--I mean, of course in New York they have the apple sellers and all that. I didn't see too much here, but there was a tremendous amount of relief going on. And somewhere--have you gotten ahold of that book called The Mayor's Report on Relief? You know what I mean? The Mayor's Relief Commission? Have you ever seen it?

A No.

Q You've never seen it? Well, there's a report on that extent. And P. S. DuPont, who's now dead, was involved in it. And there were all kinds of make--artificial jobs. There was of course an increase of movement to the Salvation Army and the Sunday breakfast mission. The thing I always thought, my impression was that we didn't get the full impact of the Depression as other places because we had so many white collar workers here, and the DuPont Company was engaged in research and they weren't about to stop their research. But people were out of work, no doubt, but I never saw any of the big depressing soup lines get together. But I do remember that there was this report that I was familiar with called the Mayor's Relief Commission. It was a city thing.

Q About 1930?

A Somewhere around there. I was then living in Arden, living very simply, it wasn't a lavish kind of a life. And my wife was working, she was an occupational therapist. So we were never really pinched. The time when we got--and I want to tell you about this Arden co-op project, which was quite an interesting thing. After a while, somewhere in '38 or thereabouts, '37, '38, there was a noticeable amount of people on welfare--out of jobs. And then came the Roosevelt era and W.P.A., and so that took up the slack there. But this fellow Frank Stephens--Frank Stephens, the fellow who started the village, based on the joint philosophy of William Morris and Henry George, where the village would be self-sufficient, he hoped. Well, what he did--oh yes, in Arden, of course, there was a grocer
who was carrying a lot of people for a long time in food, you see. Well, Stephens and some others got ahold of the land, a huge tract of land on the other side of Naaman's Creek where Arden is located, which is now Indian Fields, and he called it Ardencroft—the word croft being an English word for a gathering or a village. And he was to develop this very similar on the plan of the single tax, where you leased land. Now I had a job, but I was wanting to get part of the project, particularly to see what it was, because we were not only going to lease land, but we were going to have a sort of communal living in an old farmhouse, and we were going to go into communal farming. And that to me was fascinating, see. And I was doing it mostly because—and I was working—but to see what it was like. So we all signed up for it, and then in preparation for Ardencroft, we had nightly meetings in Arden, and Stephens was beginning to indoctrinate us in the theory of Kropotkin about workshops and agriculture. And we'd read and discuss Kropotkin and his ideas of small workshops. And of course Stephens and his son Don, who's now dead, were running small crafts. And they were so much interested in it that it finally got—Mrs. Roosevelt came down to see how a village could function with small crafts. And then he issued, Stephens issued, paper money, scrip. And it was a piece of paper, and a fellow named H. D. Ware, we used to call him Buzz Ware, who was an artist, designed it—two little funny little men with spades, and this was scrip. And the way the scrip worked was this—Stephens got some money from one of the DuPonts, who it was I don't know, and let's say a couple of thousand dollars, and he deposited it to Mr. Woolery, Robert Woolery, who spelled his name W-o-o-l-e-r-y, who ran the village grocery store. So he gave the money to Woolery, let's say a couple of thousand dollars. And then we worked over in Ardencroft in the field, we painted the farmhouse, we cleaned it up, we worked out in the fields and prepared the land for gardening, and then we put down how many hours we worked. And I think we were paid something like 40 hours a week. And then we'd give it to Stephens and then he'd credit us with—he'd give us this paper money. And then with this paper money, you went over to Woolery's and redeemed it for food. And of course as much as he got, then he would just deduct it from the couple of thousand dollars. Of course, I didn't need the money, but I was buying up the scrip as souvenirs. Because the fellows were selling me the scrip so they could buy liquor. But I think I was paying half price. For example, if somebody had a piece of scrip for 40—or say for 5.00, I'd give him, say 3.00 and use the thing for souvenirs while they went their merry way. Well, and then we worked—each one of us had a half-acre of land. And Stephens' idea was that we could overcome the Depression and meet the food by growing our own food. And then somehow or another he got an awful lot of corn meal together, somehow or another—lots of corn meal. And we had long sessions in various ways of preparing corn meal, corn meal mush and corn meal bread and all that sort of stuff. And so it was a communal living. Each one of us had a half-acre of land and we studied intensive farming and gardening and so that was quite a fruitful—and then we sold. Then came the [inaudible] group and then they could sell it and they got that cash. So for February and March, January, February and March, it was pretty rugged. There was no money coming in except the scrip. But then when April, May and June and July came along, then they were selling corn and radishes and stuff like that. So that tided these people over. Otherwise I don't know what they would have done. They had this house to live in, and they had the land, and they got the food from the land. And then
they would get the scrip. And then later on, jobs began to open, like the W.P.A. jobs or the P.W.A. jobs, some of them got in the federal theater and some of them got in the writers' project, and so they gradually got their own jobs.

Q Where were the majority of these people from, the people on the Ardencroft farm?

A From the people who were living in the town. One fellow was an unemployed actor, and another was a fellow who just wondered around, he was kind of a folk singer and he lived in a tent and he tried to make money by making some sandals, Mexican sandals. Another fellow was trying to eke out a living just mowing grass and things like that. Very few of them, practically none of them, had steady jobs. A guy like Brooks could subsist because he was a freelance photographer and there was always pictures—somebody was always taking pictures. See, I don't think we were as depressed as some of the highly industrial . . . . But this thing, most of the people lived there in Arden. Maybe they had one room, or lived with other people, making out as best they could. But I was fortunate because I was never out of a job, although I did suffer wage cuts. I just hung on, see. And then of course the whole Ardencroft project blew up because he couldn't get enough leaseholds, so the thing faded out and then it was taken over by somebody and now it's a very fancy suburban development there. Then gradually the others just sort of melted away or left, and then of course came the war. But it didn't pinch too much, though, not as bad as I say, not as bad as anybody else.

Q To go back to your story now . . . to the other . . . was there a difference--I was reading a book and the second chapter was, "The Gruesome Depression of Herbert Hoover," and the third chapter was "The Exhilarating Depression of Franklin Roosevelt."

A The exhilarating Depression?

Q Yeah. Was there [inaudible]?

A Yeah. You want to get into the Bank Holiday, too. Yeah. But the Hoover thing, it was kind of depressing, because--and I remember coming through town, I forget what year now, it may have been '31, there was a thing called the Hunger March. And these was--I think they were pretty extreme left. And they had been communists. I remember seeing a band--I was asked to cover the band playing with kind of--the patch with the Soviet star on it, and that would dramatize the hunger marches and the protesters of unemployed. It was--Coxey's Army had come through years and years and years before and this was about the latter-day Coxey's Army, they came through. And that really pinpointed to the people the Depression. And then of course, the travesty, the thing about the Bonus March, the Bonus Camp in Washington made quite a stir. But I remember very well, just about the time that Roosevelt was elected, came out this Walt Disney thing about . . .

Q Three Little Pigs?
A Three Little--no, Snow White.

Q No, that was '37.

A Was it? Well, "Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?" what was that?

Q That was in [inaudible].

A Yeah, that seems to be--"Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?"--and that seems--what year was that?

Q I think it was the early '30's.

A The early '30's. But I remember that seemed to get some people stirred up, you know, . . . "Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?" And of course when Roosevelt came in, it just was the big new era. Not only was he gonna come in with his great--what he finally did was to adopt all the--practically the whole platform of Norman Thomas, practically the whole platform. I was looking through a biography of Norman Thomas the other day and noticed--I think he was running in '32, too, wasn't he? Anyway, I noticed his platform and just about the thing was adopted by Roosevelt, social security. But with Roosevelt came a new feeling. Everybody seemed to be--a new optimism. And you could sort of smell it and feel it, and this was gonna be the end. It wasn't the end, but it was gonna be the end. And then I remember the Bank Holiday. Now, we heard about it in the office, and I remember calling up people that banks were gonna close or they had to close, and people were running to the banks to cash checks. I think maybe one or two banks didn't open in Wilmington, you could check that in the file--but there was a great feeling of camaraderie, you know, of know money. And I know that people got along and there wasn't nobody--my level, status level, economic level, there wasn't any scare--just had a few dollars and. . . . Then of course, also, it meant the end of Prohibition. And this was a great feeling. And I remember very well, when I knew Prohibition was over. Prohibition was over the day that I could buy a bottle of liquor, put it on the table, and leave the table with some liquor still there. During Prohibition, it was a terrible fear and you always drank what you had. But now, with Prohibition repealed, you had a bottle of liquor and would take four or five drinks and leave it 'til the next day or the next weekend, something like that. Nobody--we weren't acting like pigs anymore. But even then, if you went in to buy liquor, you still had that feeling that you were going into a bootleg joint, you see. But that was a big thing, the new era coming in; he was gonna solve everything, and he was gonna have a welfare program, and the repeal of liquor. It was an entirely new--it was a new century coming. And then of course came the W.P.A. and the P.W.A. And of course a lot of people in our town in Arden got on jobs. And we finally got roads built because of the W.P.A. Up until then we had dirt roads or cinder roads, and we finally got paved roads. And more damn people were on these federal projects. And of course they lived and you had to live. And they were no longer on the dole or no longer standing in line or going down to the relief to get . . .

Q I heard two different--well, there were two different sort of versions about W.P.A. One is that they were giving people jobs to dig ditches--you know, the people were leaning on the rakes--the famous picture of the guy leaning on the rake, doing nothing? And then the other version is
that there were a lot of people, not everybody, but a lot of people who were too proud, even though they were starving and their families starving, to even go on the W.P.A. for the family to get relief.

A They were kind of fools. But there was a lot of leaning on shovels, and the newspapers played it up because the newspapers were anti-Roosevelt. But I remember having written such stories about W.P.A. people whistling while they work, and you know, we used that a lot. Or people just sitting around. But then, even today I go out and watch people digging ditches under contracts, road builders, and they do an awful lot of sitting around, too. But we played that up a great deal. There was an awful lot of boondoggling—-that was a word that came out of that era; there was an awful lot of boondoggling. And I was living—in between marriages—let's see, I got married again in '38, so '37 I was living with a guy who was on the federal theater. And I used to have to get up at 6:00 in the morning to come to work, and he just kept on sleeping. And he would come into Wilmington about 9:00 and sit around and read a couple of plays and discuss plays and get paid. And the way we spent our money, by the end of the week, I wasn't any better off than he was. And sometimes I got a little sore about it, but not that I got—I never wanted to be in his position. And then there were the writers, too, and all they had to do was sit home and write. And I used to take off on the federal theater a lot. But they worked—I mean, they got money, the money went into the economy, and like today, the way I feel about welfare is, "So what the hell?" I mean, a family gets $100, they don't hoard it, it goes right back to the corner grocery store. So it doesn't make a damn bit of difference. At least the people on the federal theater and the writers' project, they got paid and they went and paid their bills to Bob Woolery or to the corner grocery store, so it didn't make a damn bit of difference, you see. And they bought liquor and they shared their liquor, but I just had a job, that's all. And I don't think I wanted their kind—I didn't want their kind of a job anyway. But it did help, and the W.P.A. projects, we got the roads built in the town, which we never would have been able to pay for. You know, there's so much federal and so much local and so much in kind operation.

Q Did you ever get to see any of the plays that they put on?

A Plays?

Q Yeah.

A Oh, yeah. I saw the plays they gave here, and then saw some of them in New York. And you could knock the federal's ear if you want to, and you could praise it if you want to, depending on how you felt. One of the great plays here was, they did *Julius Caesar* in modern clothes here long before—several years before Orson Welles did it in New York. Some of the plays were pretty good, and they'd take the plays around to schools and things like that. And the cost of the plays was pretty high. So if today I felt kind of bitchy, I'd bitch about the federal theater, and tomorrow I'd feel good, so I'd praise it. But it was one of the best things, actually, despite the money, one of the best things that happened to the country, culturally. But in New York, of course, you saw Shakespeare in modern clothes done by Negroes, and I saw long lines of Negroes in New York paying a quarter to get in, and Christ, they'd never saw Shakespeare before, but they were standing in line
paying 25 to 50¢. And there was a great deal of innovations. Of course, there were the great plays of the era, like *One-Third of a Nation*, which was tremendous, and it set new styles in staging. And there was the living newspaper story, which was a new technique, you know, spotting here and spotting there. And so that was tremendous. And then of course the Spanish war came out at that time, and plays like *Bury the Dead*, and I don't know whether that was a federal theater project or not. But the federal theater was innovative, particular the living newspaper thing and *One-Third of a Nation*, that was pretty tremendous. But they gave a hell of a lot of people employment, and they were working, even though the overhead was tremendous. But even today, hell the overhead of state government is stupendous. So I've gotten over that particular . . . but I thought the federal theater was, . . . And then the art project was tremendous, too. Now, the art project, a lot of it is gone. But out of the art project today, we have a fellow here in town named Ed Loper, who's one of our leading black artists. And Ed Loper was just a worker in a leather factory here in town, and he didn't know a damn thing about painting, but he got a job on what was called the project of recording folk patterns like furniture and hitching posts and stuff like that. And then he thought he could enter a picture, so he painted a picture with a ship—it was a god-awful thing and they threw it out in the Delaware exhibit. And then he kept on and finally he won a first prize, and this was embarrassing to the Wilmington Society of the Fine Arts because he was black. And they were all in a tizzy as to whether he was gonna show up at the preview, but he didn't. But Loper, I'll show you one of Loper's—well, Loper and the others began painting these murals, and W.P.A. had—many of them are gone now, but some people are trying to restore them. Oh, it was called the "Index of American Design," that was a big thing. And all that stuff is saved, and I think it's saved in Washington. And that gave people jobs, see. That was really painting photographically Delaware furniture and Delaware artifacts and Delaware-made silver and stuff like that. And that's where Loper started. I have odds and ends of stuff in the writers' project. This fellow Earl McGinnis, who's running for—he was on the writers' project. It's amazing the number of people in the writers' project, who were out of jobs. Huh?

Q Anthony Higgens, I interviewed . . .

A Well, Higgens was on the writers' project and they helped to put out that writers—Delaware Guide. And there's scads of unprinted, unpublished material at the University of Delaware—there must be. So in retrospect, of course, this thing really primed the pump. I think was the phrase they used at the time, of priming a pump. So when you look back, every once in a while I go to some public building and I see a picture there of the—but little by little they're all being either dissipated or covered over. But out of it came—I think what came out of it was something greater than this Arts Council they have now. 'Cause that part was to give jobs. Now it's—I don't know exactly what the philosophy is of the Arts Council now, the National Arts Council and the local Arts Council.

Q I heard about people during the Depression, that generally people were more cooperative with each other than . . .

A Oh, yeah. They were more—they were all in the same boat. And it's like
the day when the banks closed. Everybody was helping everybody. It's just like when you drive along the highway or in the city during a heavy storm. All of a sudden people get considerate of one another, and then they go away. They tell me that in Israel during the Seven-Day War, some woman told me, she says, "Our neighbors were unbelievably happy." People who had long, deep feuds, family feuds or neighbor feuds, suddenly began talking to each other during the first couple of days of the war. And so under that system, there was a great deal of cooperation.

You don't have that relief thing at all, that relief book? I'm talking about the Mayor's Report of the Relief Commission.

Q  [Inaudible] . . . in Wilmington and New Castle County generally, that the government--the mayor and the state government [inaudible].

A If you can't find a copy of it at the university, let me know. I'm sure I've got one handy. Now downstate it wasn't too bad, because there you lived on the land. And of course it did show people that they could go back to the land. And downstate, of course, they weren't hit--I don't know how badly they were hit, but . . . huh?

Q I think generally Delaware fared pretty good compared to the rest of the country.

A I always thought of it as kind of a Pleasant Valley, you know. Up here we weren't too bad. Industry did close, there was some industry closed. The DuPont Company still continued; they weren't going to sacrifice their research program. They may have been set back maybe in salaries or quotas, but they [inaudible]. But generally speaking, people were a lot more cooperative. Of course, I was very fortunate living in this town where I could buy an eight-room house--six, or seven, or eight-room house, on a half-acre of land without any money down payment. I mean, you just--some millionaire had built these houses and I just moved in and he gave me a mortgage on the house and then the town signed a lease for the land, and so--let's say for a year--this was now in '34 or '35, I would pay maybe $80.00 for the land rent and pay Mr. Fisk Warren maybe $20.00 a month for a twenty-year mortgage. And I was very fortunate. And living in a village with lots of room, no slums, I mean if the house was decrepit, it was picturesque, you see. But there weren't any real slums, and you lived in the open, you had a community life. And it was pretty good. If I had lived in Wilmington, it would have been something else, you see. So in that respect it was pretty interesting and comfortable living.

Q You mentioned the Spanish war. A lot of people I've interviewed really didn't have any--they had some awareness of foreign affairs with Germany, Japan, and Spain also, but they really didn't--they were too involved with their own problems.

A You didn't hear too much of the Spanish war in Wilmington. You heard a little bit of it in Arden, because of the left-wingers there. There would be--once in a while there would be a benefit for those who joined the anti-Franco people. We heard of one or two kids who had joined up in the Lincoln Brigade. One of them from Wilmington died over there. And then there
was some music--songs, folk songs that came out of it, but mostly the activity was in Philadelphia. The Spanish war didn't make much of a ripple here at all--not much at all.

Q What about Hitler's activities and Mussolini's?

A Well, the only thing you heard about Hitler, of course, was from the Jewish segment, and then there was the outfit called the something Against War and Fascism--Organization Against War and Fascism, which my wife and I finally joined, quite reluctantly, . . . and then when Hitler made his--and it was a communist directed thing--and we knew it. But then we Hitler made his pact with Stalin, then we wanted to know from the leaders of the Organization Against War and Fascism why we weren't going to boycott Russian stuff, too. And that--you see, the communists were caught short. I don't think they knew anything about the pact until it became accomplished. I think they were caught short and that thing exploded and it just dissipated. The communist movement was never strong here. I think at one time when Browder was running for President, and Thomas was running for President, and Roosevelt was running for President, then you had--then the liberals had a choice. And under the Progressive Party, with Wallace, a lot of the liberals flocked there, you see, so you couldn't tell who was a commie and who wasn't. But in that particular time, and I forget the year, the com--Browder only got 54 votes in the whole state of Delaware--54 votes were counted, see. And that indicated the small influence of the Communist Party here, 'cause there you had all kinds of choices. So the liberals could vote for Roosevelt, and the more left liberals could go to Thomas, and the ultra-left could go to Browder, so you had that big choice there, but it never got more than--I suspect there was a cell here, and we had a number of--several communists in Arden. But it was never a serious threat at all. But of course anybody who was left of the center they condemned as a communist anyway. They used to have a strong socialist group here in town. And then after the Russian Revolution, I understand they split. There was a Bolshevik group and the Menshevik and the Bolshevik broke away from the Socialist Party. Norman Thomas was acceptable as almost as a sort of Fabian socialist, I suppose. The interesting thing was that a lot of stupid bastards would call single-taxers communists, you know, and they didn't understand that--there was a lot of conflict in Arden in the early days between the socialists and the single-taxers. The socialists would say the single-taxers don't go far enough; they would say you nationalize everything, and the single-taxers would say you just control the land, that's all. But what we called the Philistines in the outside world kept lumping them all together. So if you were in Arden, you were a nudist and you were a communist. And they just couldn't see that the single-taxer was the exact antithesis of the socialist. He was for absolute freedom of the individual--you paid no taxes, he was against taxation, he was against unions, he was against monopolies, all he wanted was the economic rent, that's all he wanted, the land, see. But they couldn't see that at all. Someday somebody oughta write a good definitive story of the single tax movement. 'Cause in 1895 they invaded Delaware, and they really raised hell here and they went to jail in Dover, and they
tried to get Henry George to come down and join 'em, but he wouldn't have any part of it. Oddly enough he said you don't improve the movement by violating laws like getting out in the street. But it was quite an interesting campaign they had here.

Q Did you listen to the radio much then?

A Yeah, the radio was a big thing. Of course, you listened to the news. It was still kind of primitive, but ... in the twenties, the late twenties, anybody that had a radio, that was something—you know, everybody didn't have radios. And most people who had radios, you had to buy these great big god-damned sets, it was big table sets, you see. And then you listened to the plays mostly—a lot of plays. And then the big people on the radio came up like Norman Corwin was a big—and dramas, and always the news.

Q Well, most people mention Amos and Andy.

A Yeah, Amos and Andy and the Lone Ranger. And I think I understand some people in town would change their dinner hour so they can get Amos and Andy. There wasn't much local—the local radio stations—in town the prominent radio station was WDEL, and they didn't get much involved in local affairs until about the 1940's, and then they began to blossom out. Then WILM came into the picture and it blossomed out in special events, and now I think that all the radio stations are slowly going down the drain. They're not doing as much as they used to. Five minute commentaries are about as long as they can—everything used to be in 15-minute and half-hour segments, you know. But the radio was a big thing—not the car, we didn't have radios in the cars—ordinary people didn't.

Q Did you by any chance listen to Orson Welles' Invasion from Mars?

A Yeah, and I fell asleep. It just wasn't real enough to me, and I remember falling asleep and the next morning finding out that that terrible thing had happened. But a lot of people were taken by that. I remember the invasion, the opening of the first—with Hitler moving, I think it was around Labor Day. I remember coming home from a party kind of crooked, I think it was Monday, I think I woke up, or Sunday, and said, "Oh, God, I wonder what the hell's gonna happen now." And then of course everybody listened to the Duke of Windsor—that was recorded—and then of course came the war, World War II, and that was on a Sunday. From then on, radio was a big thing then.

Q Did you get to the movies at all?

A Oh yeah, movies were always a big thing—in town. There was practically no movies outside of town. Movies was a regular thing in Wilmington—you look back in the directories, city directories, you'll find a movie practically in every square. Borrowing money was a tough job. I used to have to go to the bank called Industrial Trust Company, which was at 10th and Shipley Streets, and you borrowed $50.00 at a time. That was a big deal. And you had to get two signers. And then when you wanted to borrow $50.00, they only gave you $48.00. They deducted the interest right away. That was always something big. But now, Arden had had a what they called the Rapheisen [sp] Guild, where you borrowed money and paid no interest.
But the resources weren't too good. But if you wanted money, wanted to bor­row money, you could borrow $50 or $100.00. If you borrowed more than $100.00, you really were stepping into it. I borrowed at the rate of $50.00 at a time. But we had a character here who was loaning us money at 10% in­terest. Everybody borrowed from him. Here on the paper, things were very tight. For example, financial--for example, the classic story is that if you wanted to get a pencil, you had to turn in the yellow stub. And if you wanted to make a long-distance call, that took a lot of talk. You could call Chester, but if you called Dover, you had to get permission, specific permission of the city editor. And if you were going somewhere, you didn't have your car--we weren't allowed our own car to travel, so they always had car checks or bus checks. They'd give 'em to you, you know. And sometimes we would try to cheat on expense accounts, like I had to make a telephone call, and it cost a nickel, so if you'd make enough telephone calls a week, you got a buck. And after a while they started to say, well look around and get a free telephone. All that and of course now we call all over the world now. But those were pretty--the paper was pretty tight as far as expenses was concerned. And if you managed to get a dollar expense account, or $2.00 expense account, you were doing pretty gad-dammed good. But now, pencils are all over the place, and telephone calls--I'm sitting here one day and the editor says, "Do you want to call Dr. Holland in Sweden and see what he's gonna do about his appointment to the stock market." And then he just put in a call to Sweden. Some kid puts in a call to Peking. But in those days, if you wanted to call Dover, damn you had to have it discussed, and they were really tight on money. And you really had to toe the line.

And then many of us moonlighted. I was working on the Morning News, and then I'd--on Saturdays I'd work on the Sunday Star for about five bucks. And then some of us would string--most everybody was a stringer for a Philadelphia paper, which was our competitor--but all that's cut out now, see. So let's say a police reporter or even a city editor would work here, and then he'd also telephone the news to the Philadelphia Bulletin or the Inquirer. And in those days you could hold all kinds of odd jobs, publicity jobs, which are all out now, you see. You'd do publicity for the public library or the Fine Arts Society, or the Children's Bureau--you'd get maybe $5 or $10.00 a month. But all that's out now.

Q It sounds like you made your living [inaudible].

A Well, years ago the reporters on the paper--many years ago, the reporters on the paper would get let's say $5 or $6.00 a week they'd make--a long time ago. And they were expected to make up anything they needed by stringing for other papers. Or sometimes we had a reporter here who'd write with--be a correspondent with a particular suburban--he'd be paid by the [inaudible]... all that helped. But the thing about working in a newspaper office, and working in a factory in those times, was there was much more opportunity for side money here than you could working for a factory. Well, first of all, you got a salary here and second, you could string for papers, third, you could sell stories to other papers, and you could do publicity for agencies. So you were able to augment your salary, which you couldn't--on company time, too--which you couldn't very well do in a store, working in a store, or... Of course an insurance man, as much as a--I'm talking about the employed people, not the self-employed people.
It was a much more--those who had jobs here could augment their salary much better. So you weren't hit too much, you see. And then of course you could cut down your expenses by covering dinners and--hell, I used to cover all kinds of dinners and luncheons, too, but now I sort of run away from them. So it wasn't bad. It was kind of a haven here. But once or twice I'd say we got pretty steep, I think 10%, cuts in salary.

Q To bring this [inaudible] a little bit, do you think that we'll ever have a Depression along the lines of...

A I doubt it very much. I don't think--I think there are so many built-in safeguards--as bad as that, you mean? Yeah, I think there's so many built-in safeguards and we have a more militant low-economic group, that you'd really have trouble. You'd really have trouble. And I doubt if we'd ever get that bad. Something would have to happen. But I don't think we'd ever get that bad--but if they do, then you really would have a revolution on your hands. But the amazing thing to me always was that the communists never made any inroads, never made any inroads that you would think they would have made during the American Depression, the Great Depression. And as far as this area is concerned, they made no inroads among the blacks, who were always the low people on the totem pole. And they made no inroads--it always amazed me that they didn't make any inroads. But I don't think we could ever have another situation--if we do, you're gonna have a new kind of government. If it's as bad as that, you'd have a revolution sure as hell.

Q Some of the older people I've spoken to feel the young people today just aren't as--I don't know how to put it--as worthy as they, as worthy as the people in the thirties.

A Well, that's the hallmark of old people. See, they went through the Depression, and they managed, and they scraped and they would work at all kinds of little jobs. And then they think they're holy and sanctified. Well, they did a job, but today, the kids today have that confidence, I think, that we're not gonna have that, and they actually plan, you know. My daughter, she's 30. At 30, she's been married 10 years, she already had a home, and--I always gauged affluence by how many bathrooms you had. So we have two--we got the second bathroom, something--they have two fireplaces, several powder rooms, stuff like that. I think they're much more, the younger people are much more confident. And the old people tell you, "Oh, stop that crap," you know. I mean, they went through it, no doubt about it. And there's no reason why the younger generation have to knuckle under it.

Q I think particularly they mean the hippies, and the long-hairs [inaudible].

A Well, I went through that Bohemian stage, we called it Bohemian, of wearing flowing neckties and corduroys and flamboyant shirts. Then you go through the beards--the beards came later. But that was the Bohemian era, that was the--La Vida Boheme time of the '70's. There was a revival in the '20's--Henry Merger [sp], I think. And so they're going through it now. But I talked to a woman yesterday, her daughters--two daughters--have gone through that era, and now they're let's say 20, 22, and they're coming out
of it, you see. And they're leaving that rock music, now they're going back to Bach and Handel and Hayden. So you know, it's just like you say, leave 'em alone and they'll come home. But the old people oughta stop that stuff, but they always do it, you know. This is the story of what happened, or must have happened, with the pioneers who went out West, you know. They really had a time, they grubbed the land and cleared the woods and the forests, you know, and made things easy for their kids and then they bitched because their kids live on the luxury of--there's nothing wrong with this, see. But I know a lot of old people think that the young people aren't earning their mettle.

Q The work ethic.

A Huh?

Q The work ethic, the idea of work...

A Yeah, well, they're stupid. They're really stupid, because the whole drive is toward less work and more recreation. It was a six-day week was normal, see. And there was no question, you worked until you got through. Then came the 40-hour week, you know. Then came the five-day week, and now we're into the four-day week, and maybe we'll be into the three-day week. That seems to be the push. So what the hell they bitching about? You know, I always marveled what the hell did women do before they had a washing machine? I mean, I remember my mother washing with a scrub board. I said what the hell do they do with their time? Well, they haven't the leisure-time activities, so I don't know what the hell these old people are bitching about. They want their kids to go through the rough times. I don't know. I think the kids are going through the rough times. They're going through the rough times of multiple values and all kinds of mixed-up standards and all this crap about the war and the double-talk about the war. Of course I say if I were young and I were drafted, I wouldn't mind going, because you do get to travel if you work it well, see. But they don't want to--they don't want that regimentation, they object to it.

Q Just to wrap it up, do you think the Depression has taught the country a lesson, or left a legacy behind?

A Well, I hope we've learned a lesson. I think we have, because we have all these--as I say, we have all these built-in things. Now, today I went to the bank, and there's a little sign there, "Each depositor is guaranteed (or insured) for $20,000." Hell, you didn't have any insurance, if the bank's gonna close, screw you, I'm gonna get $20,000. So we learned that, and we've learned about--to look at the future a little bit clearer. And we learned that made-work isn't bad, you know. Sometimes we haven't, sometimes I think we get a little foolish. It's all there. It's all there, if they would just listen to the historians or to the history of economics and sociology--they'll just read it and study it, it's all there. Now whether they're going to be so affluent that they'll just ignore that, I don't know. But it might--when my generation conks out, they may become so affluent they'll probably forget it. And then they'll probably head for--but we have an awful lot of stuff now that back in 1930 would be considered out-and-out socialism, really, see. For example,
the state and the cities are operating buses. Well, that was socialism back in those days. And welfare, I think we're all hung up on welfare. I think we're hung up too god-damned much on welfare. We have public housing now. And now the philosophy is that welfare is a right, and I think it is a right. I mean, just because you have a few, I mean a comparatively small percentage of chiselers, what the hell, you had 'em in those days, too. God damn, you had chiselers back in the days of the railroad barons, who stole the land and got all kinds of concessions, you see. Astor and the Vanderbilts and all those people, and the Hills, they got a hell of a lot of concessions. And the profiteering in the Civil War, and the god-damned profiteering in the Spanish American War, damned canned food and all that sort of stuff. So I think this is what the kids are hung up on, and they're more concerned now about real ideology. You just leave 'em alone, 'cause the only problem is the drug problem. That's what got 'em more upset, more than anything else, see. And if they can get settled the marijuana thing, I think that will be a breakthrough. But I don't know if they will or not. But heroin is something else. The interesting thing is that when the kids go to college and they have all this informality and low structured—but when they go to get married, god damn it, they want formality, see. And this is double-talk on their part, too, you see. They'll say, "Well, we don't want all this formality," but then they go up and cook up their own formality. So it doesn't make any difference whether you have the old-style marriage or the new-style, they are going through a formality. We had a story the other day of kids who were married on horses, you know. And the girls think about—and once in a while when you have a revolution on the campus, some of them kids get mad as hell, you know they pay four or five thousand dollars tuition and they wanna get their—that diploma is still important, I guess—is it?

Q A lot of kids that I know that just graduated get somewhere and then they find that it isn't important. It's important when you're going, but the closer you get to reaching it, you find out the closer you're coming to the real world, and you find out that you've been going along on some kind of phoney road.

A Yeah, but you gotta have that diploma to get your jobs.

Q Well, but there are no jobs.

A Oh, but if there were—when there are jobs.

Q Yeah, I guess, but nobody's finding them.

A Well, if you get into the professions, you gotta have a diploma to be a doctor, you have to have a diploma to be an engineer, to be a social worker. You may not have to have a diploma to be a drug counselor, but even here, in this office, you a college graduate, Betty?

B No.

A No. See, she probably couldn't get a job—you couldn't get a job again, the likes of her. I couldn't get a job.
Q You'd get a job better than I would [inaudible, tape recorder turned off in mid-sentence].

[END OF INTERVIEW]