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Interview with Mr. Gordon Bell at his home in Newport, Delaware, April 5, 1971, by Myron Blackman. Project: Delaware in the Depression.

Q O.K. Just to begin, Mr. Bell, where were you when the Depression began?

A I was in northern New Jersey at the beginning of it in 1929, until the early part of 1932. Of course at that time I was attending college, from September of 1929 until June of 1931, when I graduated--a two-year college.

Q And then you came down to Wilmington?

A Not immediately. No, then I went out looking for a job. And this was a very definite problem. There just were no jobs. And in those days, to get anything at all, it wasn't necessarily what you knew, it was who you knew. So I can remember well, a friend of mine at school, I played sports with, interclass and what-not, we were both about ready to give up, and we were heading for New York, we were gonna see if we could get a job on a freighter, even if it had to be shoveling coal. And surprisingly, within a week's time, before we met at this particular spot that we had prearranged, we both had jobs. Now, I don't recall exactly how he got his, but I do know that I got a job in the laboratory of a textile plant through--well, connections with my brother, older brother, who had previously graduated from the same school and was in the textile business. And this was in north Jersey. Well, I think I worked there from September until December, when the plant closed, just before Christmas, and that put me out. So the next job I got was a job in a silk plant in Patterson, New Jersey. I think I worked there four days. Now this was all prearranged by my father, through his own connections. Well, four days of that was enough for me. I don't remember how much I got, but believe me, it wasn't much, probably \$15.00 a week for working something like 12 hours a day, five days a week. They had two 12-hour shifts. I believe I started on a Tuesday and on Friday they told us that we were going to work Saturdays and Sundays for a couple of months, so that ended that. I'd had it. And it wasn't long after that--as a matter of fact it was January when again my brother stepped in, through his connections with a textile processing plant here in Wilmington. And I was told who to write to, what experience to tell this particular person I had, and how much money to ask for. Everything had been prearranged. This points to what I told you. It wasn't what you knew or where you graduated from, it was who you knew. So I came to Wilmington on a Sunday and had an interview with the departmental superintendent and went to work the next week. Well, I worked there for approximately five months, I think, until May in that year. And things were pretty rough. The plant was running sometimes only two days, sometimes three days a week. Well, I got laid off. So I went on home.

Q What kind of work were you doing in the . . .

A I was a chemist. And what I was doing . . .

Q Then you had graduated as a chemist.

A This is right, chemical engineering. And what I was doing, actually, was

was chemical control work in the bleachery, where they bleach cloth, in preparation for dyeing, printing and that sort of thing.

Q And how much did you as for as a . . .

A \$25.00 a week. And this is what I got. Things went from bad to worse, really, for the textile business. And as I say, I was laid off, sometime in May, possibly around the end of may. But I hadn't been gone more than-- not even two weeks--when I got a telegram to come back to work, which I did at a 5% cut. So now I was getting \$23.75 a week. I continued on for the rest of that year, until the first of the year, in January of '33, I got another cut down to \$20.00 a week. So here I had been working for a whole year and I was making \$5.00 a week less than I had been getting when I started. And this went on for oh, I guess another year before I got that \$5.00 back. And then I think it was in about September of 1934 that I finally got up to \$27.50 a week and then \$30.00 a week and then the rest is history as I worked my way up and so forth. But as I say, during those days, in 1932, very often those people were getting only two, three days work a week. And as I remember, the lowest paid job was 17¢ an hour.

Q Hmm. What was that? What kind of work?

A Just standing in front of a machine and keeping the cloth into the controls, to keep it running in a straight line.

Q Were there many people doing that?

A Well, that was in one particular department. They had several women doing that. But there were other jobs throughout the plant, which were pretty much common laboring jobs of one type or another that had to do with the textile process, and they ran anywhere from 19¢ an hour up to a top of about 40¢ an hour. Now, you can readily see that two days a week, \$5.00, \$6.00. As a matter of fact, the regular work week was 55 hours, this is what they worked, seven to five, five days, and from seven until noon on Saturday. And they for that would have a take-home pay of about \$10.60 or something around that nature as I remember it, without trying to figure it out. So you cut that in half and they didn't have very much. And people with families were living on that. But at the same time, they were renting company houses where maybe they paid \$1.50, \$2.00 a week, for their rent. And the company would advance them something, you know, so that when they got a full week they could return some of it, and they treated 'em pretty well. And surprisingly, they got through it. Now at that time, you had nothing taken from your pay. Obviously at that pay there was no tax, there was no social security. There was just nothing deducted. Hospitalization, that sort of thing, well, they just didn't have it, that's all, insurance or anything else. Whatever they earned, this is what they took home, minus their rent. Because most of them lived in company houses. But most of those houses have been sold now. They don't operate on that basis anymore.

Q This was in Wilmington, now?

A Well, yes, this is right on the Brandywine, textile mill, right on the Brandywine, within the city limits.

Q How long did you work for this company?

A I worked there 36 years, until May of 1938 . . .

Q Oh. Then you mean you worked there six years.

A 36 years. May of 1968, I should say. I beg your pardon, did I say '38? Yeah, 1968. And then things started to go downhill and they started to cut, cut, cut, so they actually employ in that particular area less than half the number that were employed there when I was terminated back in 1968. They're still running, but of course they've been on the verge of not running anymore for the last five or six years. They're still operating.

Q Did things improve for you--I guess in terms of wages--throughout the later years?

A Yes, because gradually I moved up from a control chemist to a departmental foreman and then to an assistant division superintendent and finally divisional superintendent. So obviously they had to improve in every way.

Q I was wondering if the business improved as the '30's went on.

A Not too much. It improved because it had to go only one way. In other words, things began to improve generally as they went on. And then of course the war came along and that boomed things, war contracts and civilian contracts which generally were better for the company than the war contracts were. But they had to take a certain amount of war contracts in order to get material to run the civilian goods; otherwise they just couldn't get it--it wouldn't be allowed by the government. So they did pretty well during those years, through the '40's and on into the '50's. You never got back to a point where you were on this so-called two-day week, three-day week thing again. And the company had other plants, too. They had income from another plant, they also had income from special processes that they had developed, got royalties on, licensed them to various companies and so forth. They never did too well in processing, but they did pretty well in that respect.

Q Was there ever any attempt to unionize the workers?

A Yes, there were four or five union elections in the time that I was there, and in each case the union was defeated. It was a family-type of operation, there were generations of people had worked down there. And they had a solid enough group in there, whose people had worked there, to defeat the union in every case. And I frankly firmly believe, even to this day, that had the union won, that would have been the end of it, provided they were asked to meet the demands the union was asking. Because they just never could have paid it. Their demands were too high. You see, this company was competing with textile companies down South, where wages were probably 50% lower, workloads were higher, and people were expecting to get wages comparable to the automobile companies because they were in this area. It just couldn't be done. And I firmly believe to this day, no matter what they did to me, I still feel that had the union gotten into that plant, that would have been the end of it in a very very short time--provided of course, again as I say, that they had to meet what the union was asking for, what they

told the people they would ask for, let's put it that way. Maybe if they won, they would have toned down a little bit, you know.

Q I imagine that people in such a situation that were getting--oh, whatever getting the wages they were getting, would have to be quite helpful to each other, quite cooperative, helping each other out.

A I suppose they did. I didn't mix too much with the people, because being in a supervisory capacity, I couldn't. You can just go so far with that sort of thing. But there again, they lived in Rockford Village there, they lived in the Kentmere Village; these houses and what they called flats also were all owned by the company, and they paid a very minimum rental. And the company was pretty good. If they were stuck for some sort of a bill that they couldn't pay, they could borrow at no interest, up to a certain amount, without any problem at all. So when it was under the Bancroft family, they treated 'em pretty well. Things changed a little bit in the early '60's when they were taken over by a big conglomerate. A lot of that was cut out. It was still available to a certain extent, but they were a little stricter about it after that.

Q Did you live in Wilmington at the time?

A Yes, I think I always lived within the city limits. I lived on East 40th Street for a while. I'm trying to think--I think that was outside the city limits. I think the city ended at 38th Street on the east side of Market.

Q Did you ever see any bread lines, missions in Wilmington?

A Not really, no. Obviously I've seen pictures of them, and I've known of them--soup kitchens, bread lines, selling apples on the street corners. All these things were prominent in the newspapers, but I never got into that part of town, really, that I actually saw this, anymore than I have seen the food stamp lines and the lines at the welfare department now. No. Many pictures of them, yes, and newsreels in the movies before you had television, of course. As kids we used to go to the movies on Saturday--I think it cost us 6¢ or something like that--Saturday afternoon.

Q Did you go to the movies much during the Depression?

A Once a week.

Q That's pretty regular.

A Well, as I say, during the Depression and oh, the early--oh, it's before that. This is--I'm going back now. I shouldn't have said that, because this is before World War I, actually, and in that area. It was 5¢ to get in the movies on Saturday afternoon, plus 1¢ war tax--this is back in 1917 and '18.

Q I'm interested in the movies of the '30's. Do you recall any?

A Well, obviously I saw movies. I saw them both up in north Jersey and I saw them down here, both the silent pictures and the beginning of the talkies, I can remember. I think the first talkie was--wasn't it--the Jolson story,

Al Jolson, which . . .

Q The Jazz Singer.

A Yeah, The Jazz Singer. This is the one. That was the first talking picture. And I did see that. And I think I saw that in New York. Oh, I saw a lot of movies in the '30's when I was over at school in Brooklyn, see. I went to school in Brooklyn. Now, I commuted for a year and a half, but the last six months I lived over there. We used to go to the Fox Theater, Paramount in New York. And at that time, these theaters, of course, had their stage shows. All of your top performers were on the stage at that time, and you could go and sit in the balcony for a quarter down at the Fox in Brooklyn. And we used to knock off school once in a while in the afternoon, you know, and go down. We'd go down to the Star Burlesque down in Brooklyn, down near the Fulton Fish Market--not often. I don't think I was there more than twice in the two years I went to school. But movies generally, your big theaters, Paramount in New York, which was one of your big ones, 25, 35¢ as I remember.

Q Was it the same down here? Did you go much down here?

A Not as much as we did up there because after coming down here, I used to go home weekends, and then I was married and I couldn't afford too many movies then. And then a couple of kids came along and I could afford it even less. But what we did go to quite often, as I recall, was go to the Playhouse. We preferred that. And they had the New York shows that were on the road, and I can remember paying 55¢ for what they now call the balcony, it was a gallery then, and 83¢ for what they call the mezzanine now, which at that time was called the balcony. Those were the prices back in the '30's.

Q Is there any single show that you can remember . . .

A Gosh, it's been so long ago. I couldn't remember the names of the darn things. No. Some were plays, generally plays, once in a while a musical. But I can't remember the names of the plays that I actually saw.

Q I imagine . . . well, I'm very interested in that, especially the movies.

A Yeah. Well, there again, it's been so long ago to pinpoint . . .

Q You know, things like Gone with the Wind, and . . .

A Yeah. Of course, I can remember The Jazz Singer because it happened to be the first. When I was younger, of course, all kids went to see the Westerns--Tom Mix and William S. Hart, but this goes back before the Depression a lot. Tom Mix was still in there in the '30's, yeah.

Q Did you have a radio?

A Our first radio we had was--the very first thing I heard on a radio was the Dempsey-Carpentier fight from Boyle's Thirty Acres in Jersey City. And that was our first radio. I think my brother built that.

Q That was during the '20's, right?

- A It must have been the late '20's [July 2, 1921, the first live sports event ever broadcast], yeah. And then, yes, we had a radio. We used to listen to the radio what you call soap operas now. You know, Amos and Andy and The All American Boy and the squeaky door thing, what was the name of that?
- Q Inner Sanctum.
- A Inner Sanctum, and Fibber McGee and Molly, and Allen's Alley and all of these things were in the probably middle and late '30's when radio really came in.
- Q Did you ever listen to Roosevelt's Fireside Chats?
- A Oh, yes. Yeah. Yes, any of those things that came on, of course, everybody listened to. This was all before T.V. and--don't ask me to quote anything. I couldn't possibly do it. Oh, yeah. Yeah, the first election I voted in was--let's see--Hoover, I guess.
- Q '28?
- A Hoover against Roosevelt in 1932.
- Q May I ask who you voted for?
- A Yeah, I voted for Hoover. We were staunch Republicans.
- Q That brings me into a question that I ask everybody, and I phrase it this way, that--I mean, I have been reading a book, and the first chapter is called "The Gloomy Depression of Herbert Hoover," and the second is called "The Exhilarating Depression of Franklin Roosevelt."
- A Yeah. Well, of course, Hoover has taken the blame for it and had Roosevelt been in four years earlier, he would have taken the blame for it, and in my honest opinion, it would not have been any different. Everything was over-sold. The stock market was really the cause of a lot of it. People were just gambling way over their heads. They could buy stock on a 10% margin. And I'm a firm believer in cycles, eight, nine, ten-year cycles. And it was not only due but overdue. Things were very much overpriced as far as stocks were concerned and the return that people were getting on 'em, it was strictly a--well, what does somebody call it--it's a bigger gamble than Las Vegas. There was a book published that I read not too long ago and it claimed that the stock market was and still is a bigger gamble than Las Vegas. And of course that was the beginning of the thing as those things went down, and people just went wild. Well, people went broke and homes that they had purchased with mortgages--they just didn't have any money. The building and loan companies were just picking up houses to beat the band. People just moved out, that's all there was to it. And some of the building and loan people were hard-pressed, too. I know that generally speaking in that time, if you had building and loan shares they would mature in let's say 11 or 12 years. Some people were eight, nine, ten years overdue before they ever got their money. And of course others didn't get it at all. And then there was your bank holiday in there, which just took the life savings of most people. Banks just didn't open, that's all. They were completely insolvent. And when Roosevelt closed the banks, and put the federal bank examiners in there, they just came up with one insolvency after another, and they just never opened. I don't know personally people that

were caught in it. I knew a couple that were caught in the stock market crash.

Q What happened to them?

A Well, strange as it seems, they got out of it. One in particular that I can think of lost his business--he had a jewelry business in New York. He lost that completely. He lost all of his cash, and the only reason he didn't lose his home was because he couldn't raise money on it fast enough to cover his margin in stock. It was just going down so fast that people had to come up with cash. They wouldn't take property anymore. And the stockbrokers, to save their own necks, were just selling them out, that's all, to get as much as they could out of their loan to an individual, which as you know is all margin is. The stockbroker puts up the money. Of course, all that was changed. What is your margin now, 70%? I think it's about 70%, something like that. It was as high as 90. And that has a tendency to control things now. Then of course banks are examined more thoroughly and they're restricted in the type of loans that they can make and what portion of their savings can be put in a particular type of loan, and their reserves based on their deposits have to be at a certain percentage.

Q That would lead right into asking what your opinions of Roosevelt's policies were, because many of the--such policies as you mention . . .

A Well, there's no question about it, a lot of his sociological policies had to come to protect the people against this very same thing. And more rigid financial controls had to be instituted for the very same reason, put some sort of control on this. Now when you have a break in the stock market, yes, it drops off. But people aren't sold out, because generally speaking they own the stock. So there's nobody to sell them out. And they can't lose everything that way, by being sold out. And these things had to come, for the protection of the people. I can't help but agree with social security. I think a lot of people labor under a misapprehension [tape is interrupted by phone call, picks up in mid-sentence]. . . . at common. There again, I will have to say that I don't care who was in, whether Democrat, Republican, or what particular man might have represented the party and was elected, these things would have come along just the same.

Q Do you think they would have come if Hoover had been reelected?

A Yes, definitely. Oh, yes. I firmly believe that, because they had to. And how fast, whether they would have been a little bit slower or not, I don't know. As I say on social security, this had to come. But unfortunately, a lot of people had the idea that, "Well, this is fine. Now I won't have to save any money, because when I reach 65, I'll get social security and that will take care of me." They lost sight of the fact that this was only supposed to supplement whatever they might have at the time they retired, money, income, whatever it might be. And obviously with inflation it's--well, what did I read, one out of four people over 65 is in the poverty class right now? Even with their social security. And this was a little bit of if you want to call it, misunderstanding on the part of a lot of people. They just thought that they wouldn't have to save any money. And I think this was bad, because before that time, people saved money.

Q Did your opinion of Roosevelt change at all through the years?

A I think he was a very dynamic person. I think he had a lot of good ideas. And I think he managed to get a lot of them through. I never really thought that as a person or as a President that he wasn't satisfactory. Now, don't misunderstand me, because I'm a staunch Republican is beside the point. But I still feel that these things had to come. And they would have come with a Republican just as well as they did a Democrat. He had a lot of showmanship, and he had a way of getting through Congress the things that he wanted to get through. But I think he was in just the most ideal time to get them through. I don't think there's any question about that.

Q In other words, the hard times [inaudible - tape interference].

A Exactly. Yeah. And that's why I say they had to come.

Q You said he was a showman. The people--well, many people's response to him was--you know, they were overjoyed with his election.

A Well, they couldn't help but be overjoyed with the election, because when a thing like that happens, when you have a crash like that, and a depression comes along, there's only one thing to do, and that's make a change. Now, whether the other man would have done the same things, I don't know. In the same manner I say that you would have had the crash, and you would have had the depression whether the President was Hoover at that time or anybody else you want to name. These are personal opinions, now.

Q And you believe in cycles.

A Yes.

Q Do you believe that there's--well, that although we go into different cycles, that there's progress, that . . .

A There's continuous progress, no question about that. But what I'm saying is that you're gonna have--I don't care what you call this now, a depression, a recession or whatever you may. It's like one person says, "If you lose your job, it's a recession, if I lose mine, it's a depression." (Quote, unquote.) But yes, I think you will have it, and I think the reason you have it is because--take this very period now. Things right now, in my opinion, have bottomed out. They're starting to move the other way. You've got a lot of people laid off, people like myself, if you will, who thought that I had nothing but firm security in my job, after all those years, and would continue into it until I was 65 and get my pension and so forth and so on. And you scared a lot of 'em. Fellows in their forties, have been with companies 15, 20, 25 years, in good positions, and suddenly found themselves out of a job and couldn't get another one. Now, it isn't just those people alone who have been affected, it's the people who still have their jobs and have been with companies 15, 20 years, who suddenly decided, "Well, maybe tomorrow it'll be me, so I'm not gonna spend any money. Yes, I've got two cars, but I'm gonna keep 'em. Instead of trading my car in this year, I'll trade it in next year." Or, "I need a new roof on the house, but the one's good enough. It'll take care of me for another couple of years." Or, "We were gonna put on an addition," or "we were gonna buy a boat." And they said, "No, we'll keep the money in the bank." Now,

they're starting to loosen up a little bit. And as soon as they do, then you're gonna see things start to roll. And then what happens, things mushroom again, until you reach a point where everybody is overproducing.

Q Do you think that we can ever fall into another depression of such magnitude as the one of the '30's?

A Frankly, no.

Q Why not?

A Well, because I think your controls take care of that. I think you have enough controls to take care of that. You'll have slumps and you'll have tops, but I don't think you'll ever reach that point. And I certainly hope not, because this thing about selling apples on the street was no joke. It was done, and if the guy couldn't sell the apples, that's what he ate for supper that night. It's true, every bit of it. And as I say, fortunately, in my own case, it didn't affect us too much. My father had his job; he didn't make a heck of a lot of money, but he was able to keep the family going. My older brother when he got out of high school, he went to work for four years. Now my next sister in line went to normal school, physical education. When she graduated in two years time, she went to work teaching, he quit his job and went to school for two years. The next brother in line, he worked for a year after he got out of school. I did the same thing. And everything I earned went into the bank so that I would have money for tuition and so forth. And this was the way four out of five of us got through. Only one actually went to a full four-year college. My sister went to normal school and my brother and I went to that institute over in Brooklyn, which was a technical school at that time, but it wasn't a degree school. And this is the way a lot of families worked it. But we were, frankly, in a little better position. But there were lots of others that weren't. And they took any old job they could find. You didn't have social security, and you had very little welfare. Now, you might have had it in the larger cities, but up in the small town that I was from, you didn't have anything like that. As I say, down here, I was just a young fellow at the time, not married or anything. I was down here only for five days that I worked, and after that I'd scoot back up to north Jersey, for the weekends, see. So I didn't get into town and see much of that.

Q You mentioned that you knew families who were getting by on something like \$10.00 a week.

A Oh, there's no question about it. A great number that worked at the plant were getting by on \$10 and \$12.00 a week. Yeah. Families was not just man and wife, either--three and four and five kids. But as I say, they had a couple of dollars a week rent, and that was it. The rest of the money went for food and clothes, whatever they could afford. But you see, you have to take, \$10.00 at that time, well, maybe it would take \$50.00 to do the same thing today, in certain cases.

Q If we had another depression, this is speculative, of course, how do you think today's--well, the youth today, the post-generation--post-Depression generation, would react as compared to what happened to people in the '30's?

- A When you're speaking of the post-generation, you mean--what age group are you talking about?
- Q Well, anybody from--even born in the late '30's, but not old enough to experience it--who would be about at the most 35 years old.
- A Well, first of all, I'd hate to see it happen. But to be perfectly honest, I don't know what they could do, but accept it and do the best they could. This is it. What are you gonna do about it? Certainly a revolution or anything of that type isn't gonna help the situation any.
- Q A lot of people feel that they would panic, especially the younger ones, the ones about 20 or so.
- A Well, I don't know why they should panic. As a matter of fact, from what I read, there's a lot of them that want to go back to that sort of thing--live on a farm and eat what you grow and so forth. I'm afraid they're gonna go broke doing it, get awfully tired of it very fast. I'm speaking of the majority will. And maybe some will like it. But this is pretty much a thing of the past, and economically, it just isn't practical. Because in those days, people had a little piece of ground and they had a garden or something like that, or they had a couple of acres and they farmed it. You can't do that anymore. You just can't compete with the growing facilities of the major combines. Small farms are practically out of the picture. Small farmers have starved to death. They just couldn't do it. So you get an entirely different situation now than you had then.
- Q Many people complain about big government and they see it as a result of the New Deal, specifically.
- A Well, there's something to that, too, I presume. But at the same time, you have to realize that big government and all your giveaway programs and all this sort of thing, have really come about because of the demands that people make on government. We want this and we want that, we want paved streets, and we have to have street lights in front of our house. The automobile age has had a lot to do with that. And we have to have garbage collection where they used to bury it in the back yard, and all this sort of thing. And so all of these high government costs are basically based on the demands that people are making. But at the same time, they turn around and say, "We don't wanta pay taxes." You're not gonna have 'em unless you pay taxes. Everybody today wants every convenience that's available. Now, I'm not saying it's wrong, 'cause far be it from me to go back to the '30's, as far as conveniences are concerned.
- Q Do you think that the Depression has taught the nation a lesson at all?
- A Well, it's taught those people, I think, who were affected by it a lesson. But I don't think that the people who were not involved in it or experienced it really learned anything from it, even more than I think you would the next time. It's just a question--this is all hearsay to them. It hasn't affected them, really. I mean, unless you're directly involved in it, what can you gain from it? You have to learn from experience. You can't learn from hearsay. I think a certain amount of advice from people who were through it does

make some impression. But in those days, as I say, there wasn't too much to be had unless you went out and got it yourself.

Q That's what a lot of people--well, some of the people that I've spoken to have stressed the importance of work.

A No question about it. And there's no alternative to it. You've got to go get it. It's just like the programs that I'm involved in today. You get fellows on jobs, if it happens to be a little noisy or a little dirty or they have to work a little hard, this is not for me. Or if they have to go out of their way to get to work on time in the morning. Well, my gosh, when I was working in the '30's down there, there were weeks in my particular department when we didn't have any work at all. Everybody got laid off except me. I was on salary. And I cleaned tanks and I repaired pumps and I did all kinds of dirty work that you could possibly imagine--got out and hooked up tank cars to unload chemicals, and worked 70 and 80 hours a week. Because if I didn't do it, there was nobody to give me any money to support my family. Now, this is part of the problem right now.

Q And that's part of the reason why people say that the younger generation would panic in a depression.

A It might do 'em a little good. As I say again, I wouldn't want to see it reach that point. But at the same time, I really feel that if you weren't always there handing something out, they'd realize that it's their own responsibility, and they'd have to dig in. A lot of 'em do, don't misunderstand me. You can't generalize. A lot of 'em do. But there are a lot of 'em that don't. And this goes for either race, now. I'm not separating races. Yes, maybe one more so than the other, that's beside the point. But I've seen plenty of both races that wouldn't lift a hand to help themselves. Because it's too easy, perhaps, to go somewhere and get help without lifting a hand. There's always some agency ready to jump in. And it's discouraging, believe me.

Q Another aspect of what people have brought out of the depression was a sense of pride that they wouldn't--during the depression that they wouldn't go on relief. They wouldn't take welfare, anything from the government they couldn't get on their own.

A By their own hands. There are still some people like that today, believe me. They go there only in desperation. But at the same time, I have seen other people, who are working on good jobs, and let's say a strike comes along. Now, these fellows are making \$160, \$180.00 a week. A strike comes along and two or three weeks after the strike, even though they may be getting supplementary pay, let's say from a union of \$35 or \$40.00 a week, are over to welfare making requests for food stamps. Now, here's another thing that these sociological programs have done that I mentioned before. People don't save. They spend right up to the hilt and then when something does happen, they're out on a limb. And I see it happen so many times.

Q Well, wouldn't it be possible that because of the experience in the Depression, people feel that they have to materially acquire things, have to get security, to get a house, or . . .

A This is fine. This is wonderful. I'm not saying that. Yeah, I agree 100%. And believe me, if they do it, it's great. But it's the other things. All the luxuries that are available on the market today and really have reached a point where they're not luxuries at all, they're considered to be necessities. Somebody can't get along with a \$100.00 black and white T.V., they've got to have a \$700.00 color set. This is my opinion is a luxury which they shouldn't buy, when they don't have a cent in reserve. People have mortgaged themselves up to the hilt, and as soon as they lose their job, they just--well, they're in the bread line. And there's no reason for it.

Q Were you at all concerned about the European situation during the Depression, or the Asian situation?

A During the Depression?

Q During the '30's, before the war . . .

A Not really, no. No, I probably never gave it a thought. I was too busy trying to make a living.

Q Yeah. It's hard to look back and see all the things and say, "Boy, Hitler was rising, Mussolini and Japan were--you know--threatening." To look back, I expect everybody to react the way you do when you're reading a history book, it's . . .

A Well, the press has something to do with that. Keep in mind, President Wilson said our boys would never fight on foreign shores. Two years after he was elected, we were in World War I. Roosevelt said the same thing. But nevertheless, we became involved. So I don't think anybody can come out and say we won't do it. So when you see all that and read all that in the paper, when the President says this, especially when you're in the younger age bracket, so it's not gonna happen. But it does. So therefore, in those days, I wasn't very much concerned about it. I was too young to be concerned about World War I, and in the '30's and what not, there may have been rumblings in Europe, but I don't think anybody took it too seriously, up until the time that Hitler started to move into Poland and what not. I know a had a sister took a trip over to Europe in 1939, I believe. And I can remember her telling us about the time that a friend of hers, who was in Germany, wrote a letter to a friend here--this happened to be up in north Jersey, and she smuggled a letter out, but everybody on the train was searched by the S.S. guards coming from Berlin on over to Holland. So even then, in '38 or '39, they had pretty rigid controls. But I don't think anybody--as far as the general public was concerned--really expected in the mid-'30's that we were going to be in a war in Europe. I certainly didn't.

Q When you look back to the '30's, and the Depression, what do you feel about that era? Do you feel anything special?

A No, nothing special, except that again it didn't affect me personally, particularly, or anybody in my family that I know of. Obviously there were a lot of people hurt by it, a lot of people never got over it. But there weren't too many suicides because of the Depression. Most of the

that you read about were the people that were in the very wealthy class, who lost everything and jumped out the window. But your average person didn't do that. He buckled down, and with a little help from the neighbor and the relatives, he got through it somehow or other. And this is the way you had to do it then, because there wasn't anybody else to go to. But you didn't have mass hysteria or panic. Most of the panic was financial, it wasn't amongst the working class. They did with what they had, and helped each other out, I would say.

Q Do you think Roosevelt brought hope?

A Well, that's a good question. It all depends on what you mean by hope. Hope for a better life?

Q Yes, that and hope that they can . . .

A Or do you mean that his policies that he instituted brought hope to people?

Q Both, if you can answer both.

A It's a little difficult to answer a question like that. I suppose in some cases it probably did. I don't know. I don't remember anybody getting up on the street corner and shouting, "All our troubles are over," when he put in social security or anything of that nature. He certainly--I can't say he did it, but the bank holiday was a holiday--he caused the downfall of a lot of people, they lost their entire life savings. Now, I don't think he inspired hope in people with that. Yes, it had to be done, no question about it. Banks had to be put in order. The country's financial status had to be put in order. But I think a lot of people thought, "Well, there's no hope left. All my life savings are gone." But somehow or other they managed. Oh sure, there were some that--probably suicides there, too, but your suicide rate today is a heck of a lot higher than it ever was then, based on the population. No question about it. They say life was easier then. Well, maybe it was, but you had to work just as hard, and maybe harder, for what you got. I don't think there's any question about that, either. Not there aren't a lot of people that work hard today, they do. But they worked hard then, too. And as far as pressures go, there were just as many pressures on them. You talk about speed and pressures and all this sort of thing. I think that's so much baloney. I think it's only what you yourself make it. I'm a firm believer in the book The Peter Principle. Have you read it? I suggest that you do. In other words, people reach their level of incompetence. The fellow that runs a machine here may be a top-flight machinist, but as a foreman he's a complete bust. But since he's been-- he's a top-flight machinist and he knows the shop backwards and forwards and can do any job, he's advanced to foreman. This is his problem and there he has reached his level of incompetence, and he's of no value to the company at all. This is not right. But this happens, day in and day out. In other words, some people can do a beautiful job when they're on their own, but give them responsibility and they just don't have the temperament to do it. And this happens in business today. It probably happened then, too. But this is where your pressures are. And of course there's always pressure to have a home as good as somebody else that you know well, your friend, or

if he has a new car, you have to have a new car. Well, of course, this is an individual trait. I couldn't care less. I get a new car when I think the other car is about ready to fall apart. I keep a car for seven years, maybe. Then if it begins to cost me too much money to repair, then I go into the market for another one. I don't buy a new one, either. I buy a used car, maybe a year, year and a half old, with reasonable mileage on it, something like that, because I think it's ridiculous. But there are people who can't do that. And maybe in a lower income bracket than I am, they've got to have a new automobile. Of course, this is the way the automobile companies want it to be. This is their whole sales line. And in those days, too, you didn't have--well, to have an automobile at all was to be something out of the ordinary. Now the kids drive a car to school when they only live five blocks away. We walked almost a mile to school, and since the school had no cafeteria or anything, we had an hour for lunch, we walked home for lunch and had our lunch and walked back to school and so forth and so forth. I'm not saying you should do it today. We didn't have to worry about getting run over by an automobile, because there weren't that many around. So you have a different era altogether. I wouldn't do it now--I get in the car to go down to the corner, sure. Maybe I'm spoiled. But you have all these various appliances that you didn't have then. In those days a woman scrubbed her clothes on a scrubbing board. Now she has an automatic washer, an automatic dryer, automatic dishwasher. Sure, it's wonderful. But you didn't have the drains on income for these appliances in those days, 'cause they just didn't exist. You wanted a radio, you took an oatmeal box and you wound some wire around it, and somehow or other you got a set of headphones and a couple of parts and you had a radio. That was it. Then gradually, of course, as things started to pick up and they make them more attractive and--so all these things cost money. Well, this is the whole basis of the American economy. You can't discount it. And you wouldn't want to go back to it. But, nevertheless, this does put a certain amount of pressure on people, to have these things, and you can't blame 'em for it. And then when something like this comes along, a guy loses his job, he's completely frustrated. He's up to his neck in debt, and this--as I say, as far as a lot of people today are concerned, this is a Depression, believe me. They're losing their homes, they're losing their cars. They have to get in the bread line. And so forth. It's every bit as serious as it was then. But it's not to the same extent. There aren't as many people affected by it. And I don't think you ever will again.

Q O.K. Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]