

This interview with Clement Spychalski took place at his residence on Oct. 17, 1977. The interviewer was Laurie Radke.

LR: You said you were born in Michigan City?

CS: Yes.

LR: Could you give me some details: date...?

CS: October second, nineteen-o-one.

LR: You just celebrated a birthday then.

CS: Yes. Just a couple of weeks ago. (laughter) Seventy-six.

LR: Were your parents immigrants

CS: No. My mother was born in Berrien county, Michigan. Dad was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Their parents came from Europe. Mother's people came in eighteen-seventy-two... and dad's parents came in eighteen-seventy-three. The year he was born ....he was born in the same year they came here. He was the last of their family. They had six children, and mother was the first one of their family born here. She was the third one of five. She told many stories of her father when he first came here: cut wood in the woods of Berrien County, Michigan, near Galena: that's where she was born. That was the first job he had - then later on they moved to a farm near Rolling Prairie ...then they came to Michigan City about eighteen-ninety-five.

LR: Why did they come to Michigan City?

CS: Oh, they thought they were going to make quite a few opportunities here.

LR: In the lumber business?

CS: Well...he got a job as a lumber checker along the dock in Michigan City.

LR: This was your grandfather

CS: Yes. On my mother's side. My dad's parents lived on a farm near Holmesville, and later near Burdick (?)--and he came off the farm.

LR: Why did he came to Michigan City?

CS: Of course he had relatives here. A couple of his brothers lived here, that'd already moved in here, the older ones. And there was quite a settlement of ...I suppose his relatives was the main thing. In fact, he had two sisters living here at the time too: two brothers and two sisters. When he left the farm he came to Michigan City to be near them.

LR: Where did he work?

CS: He worked in the car factory ...most of the time.

LR: At Haskel-Barker?

CS: That was Haskel-Barker at the time. That's right.

LR: What year did they get married?

CS: Dad and mother were married in eighteen-ninety-five. That was in St. Stanislaus church-- that was about ....I think that church was built in about eighteen-ninety-two. They were married there in eighteen-ninety-five.

LR: Where did they live then?

CS: They first lived on the southwest corner of Pine and Ripley, which is now part of the school parking lot. It belongs to the school city. Then for a while they lived on West Sixth Street, just off Wabash. Then the car factory bought those houses that were there for expansion. Then they bought the house at 210 E. Fulton where my brother and sister still live. They moved there in eighteen-ninety-nine.

LR: Which house were you born in?

CS: At Fulton Street.

LR: You grew up at E. Fulton St.?

CS: Yes. I was there until I was married.

LR: Then you moved here?

CS: No. For a while we lived at 110 Superior - for just a short time. Then we bought a house at 203 Decatur, and lived there from about nineteen-thirty-four until nineteen-forty-nine. Then we had this house built in nineteen-fortynine.

LR: I was going to ask you about growing up then.

CS: We had a wonderful place to grow up in. The area where we lived was the part of town was called 'Swedeville'.

LR: I wondered about that.

CS: That was Swedeville.

LR: Why was it called Swedeville?

CS: Well. There was one Adamson, a Berkquist, one Carlson ...E, D. A couple of Engstroms. F. Fredrickson. (laughter) Let's see, what else? Hokanson. I...J. I don't know, several Johnsons. K...L. There was a Munson. Oh about five or six Eriksons and a couple of Olsons. That was why it was called Swedeville. It was the area roughly between ....what was called 'Swedeville', was the area roughly between Franklin and York. .And from Belden St. south to Decatur. There was a lot of wide open spaces then. When my parents moved here, the area between York and Tilden and Barker and Greenwood ....the first year when they moved there had been sown in wheat. It was harvested that fall; and there was a threshing machine come in there to thresh the grain. After that the area was a golf course for a few years. And then, of course, it was left lying idle - and it was a place we had to play. We had several baseball diamonds there... and then of course we had the whole field to run through. It was the area roughly between ....what was called 'Swedeville', was the area roughly between Franklin and York. .And from Belden St. south to Decatur. There was a lot of wide open spaces then. When my parents moved here, the area between York and Tilden and Barker and Greenwood ....the first year when they moved there had been sown in wheat. It was harvested that fall; and there was a threshing machine come in there to thresh the grain. After that the area was a golf course for a few years. And then, of course, it was left lying idle - and it was a place we had to play. We had several baseball diamonds there... and then of course we had the whole field to run through. There was an open ditch that ran through our area there that was called 'Ronel Ditch'. It ran through that area. It crossed Franklin at Allan St. and crossed Barker Ave. at Maple. It ran in a north-easterly direction. That was quite an attraction for us. In the early days we would fish in there when it was clean. Before there were any sewers connected to this ditch the women of the neighborhood used to use that water for their laundry because it was soft water. They didn't have any city water in that area those days. They depended on wells and that was harder. You know how hard water works? It gets scummy when you use soap. For several years they used the water out of the creek for washing. It was clean until the Pere Marquette came through here which is now the C&O, about nineteen hundred and three. Then they built their depot there ...and then they ran a sewer line from their depot to the creek; and of course, that spoiled things. There was an open ditch that ran through our area there that was called 'Ronel Ditch'. It ran through that area. It crossed Franklin at Allan St. and crossed Barker Ave. at Maple. It ran in a north-easterly direction. That was quite an attraction for us. In the early days we would fish in there when it was clean. Before there were any sewers connected to this ditch the women of the neighborhood used to use that water for their laundry because it was soft water. They didn't have any city water in that area those days. They depended on wells and that was harder. You know how hard water works? It gets scummy when you use soap. For several years they used the water out of the creek for washing. It was clean until the Pere Marquette came through here which is now the C&O, about nineteen hundred and three. Then they built their depot there ...and then they ran a sewer line from their depot to the creek; and of course, that spoiled things.

LR: How deep was the ditch?

CS: Well ...It wasn't too deep. Ohhhh...the usual depth was from about twelve to twenty inches. There were times when the thing overflowed. It would be a half a block, or more, on each side of the creek. At one time, I remember flooding in that area west of Wabash ...right there west of the stadium. And that low spot south of the railroad? Oh, it would just cover that whole area for blocks. People used to get out of their homes in tubs and paddle to dry land.

LR: Rommel Ditch was a drainage ditch from the creek?

CS: Oh yes. That was eliminated about ...a big south side sewer was put through, I think about nineteen-twenty-five, or twenty-six; somewhere along in there about that time. That eliminated the ditch, and the drainage problem. It was covered then.

LR: How wide was Rowel Ditch?

CS: Oh, about ten, twelve feet.

LR: In the winter time, did you skate on it?

CS: It didn't freeze over only in exceptionally cold weather because it flew quite rapidly. But I remember it freezing so it would hold us, and we skated on it. Our favorite skating place was Barker's ...what we called, 'Barker's Pond'. That was west of Ohio St, and just south of the railroad. It was a very shallow, wet area--and it was a very popular skating place in those days. The place would be covered with people on Sunday afternoons. And the nice part about it was the water wasn't deep; if you ever did break through, why you only went through ...went down about a foot. You got a wet foot out of it, and that was about it. So you didn't have to worry about falling through. The place would be covered with people on Sunday afternoons. And the nice part about it was the water wasn't deep; if you ever did break through, why you only went through ...went down about a foot. You got a wet foot out of it, and that was about it. So you didn't have to worry about falling through.

LR: Skating was popular with the adults too?

CS: Oh yes Oh sure. Not the real older people. There were a lot of grownups that skated there.

LR: What kind of skates?

CS: You want to see a pair?

LR: You have a pair?

CS: I'm going to show you. (pause) These are from Sweden. They were on shoes.

LR: And those clipped on?

CS: Yes. See this is the way. See this clamp here? I'll show you just how they work. See, they didn't have rubber heels in those days. All shoes had leather heels. You put them on like this and they just clamp on. The trouble with these things were every once in a while they'd come off and you'd go flying.

LR: That's made out of steel?

CS: Oh sure. They've been sharpened many times. They've just been sharpened recently. They're real sharp.

LR: They're pretty heavy too.

CS: Oh yes. They're made out of good steel. That was the kind of a skate we used until shoe skates came in.

LR: How much did skates like that cost?

CS: I couldn't remember. They probably cost a dollar and a half. I'm not just sure.

LR: I've always wondered...

CS: Uh huh . . .that's your old-fashioned-that's one of your early skates.

LR: What other games and activities took place?

CS: Oh of course we played baseball. That was the favorite pastime. We played baseball during the vacation ...why, every day of the week, and sometimes twice a day. Then we went swimming ...and evenings, why, we had games we played under the light. The streets in our area weren't paved. Barker Avenue, Greenwood, and Franklin were paved. The rest of them were unpaved. The corner of LaFayette and Fulton had brick crosswalks. And we used them for goals. There was a lake there; we played various games there-like 'pom pom pullaway' and 'duck on a rock' ...and then we had our own game that we called 'chase the corner'. Some of them seen it started in this neighborhood never seen, had never heard of it, or seen it played in any other place because it was just adapted to this corner. One corner was the base. One person was it. The rest of them ...they would leave the corner, and he would try to catch them. But usually they would scatter around; and if you once left and started for the next one, you'd have to go in that direction. For instance, if you were on the catty-corner from your home base-and if you started for either right or left, you had to go that way. That way he had to have a chance; if he was at home base he had a chance to catch you at the corner. So you had to run to the corner that you started for-tag that base and then start back if you wanted to keep away from him. It was a lot of running. A lot of fun. The streets in our area weren't paved. Barker Avenue, Greenwood, and Franklin were paved. The rest of them were unpaved. The corner of LaFayette and Fulton had brick crosswalks. And we used them for goals. There was a lake there; we played various games there-like 'pom pom pullaway' and 'duck on a rock' ...and then we had our own game that we called 'chase the corner'. Some of them seen it started in this neighborhood never seen, had never heard of it, or seen it played in any other place because it was just adapted to this corner. One corner was the base. One person was it. The rest of them ...they would leave the corner, and he would try to catch them. But usually they would scatter around; and if you once left and started for the next one, you'd have to go in that direction. For instance, if you were on the catty-corner from your home base-and if you started for either right or left, you had to go that way. That way he had to have a chance; if he was at home base he had a chance to catch you at the corner. So you had to run to the corner that you started for-tag that base and then start back if you wanted to keep away from him. It was a lot of running. A lot of fun.

LR: How do you play pom pom pullaway?

CS: One would be it. You'd line up. Everybody would line up on one of the crossings. He'd call that, "pom pom pullaway"-- and we started across. Of course, you tried to dodge whoever was it-- and the first one caught was it for the next time. Calling him across until the last one was caught. So sometimes it lasted quite a while. But each one that was caught would help 'it' catch the rest of them. And that consisted of just tagging somebody.

LR: You would play this in the summer-time at night.

CS: Oh sure.

LR: How late would kids stay out to play? CS: Usually about nine, a little bit after. I can remember one of the boys. His name was George. His mother was Swedish and, she couldn't say George. She always called him "Yeorge". He was a good kid. And she was one of the nicest women in the neighborhood. The best natured. We'd hear her calling about nine-o'clock, "Yeorge"; "Soon as I finish the game, mother" . And she'd put up with it for a little bit ...and she'd say, "Yeorge"--and he would hike home. LR: Was there a gang of kids? CS: Oh yes. They just the neighborhood. LR: And every neighborhood had its own kids. CS: Yes. Usually if you had ....our area, it was all the kids from about Decatur Street, and Barker Avenue ...and then a little north of Barker. We all met at this corner because of the light and the fact that we had the brick crosswalks. It was just an ideal place: it was a control place, and an ideal place to meet. We played 'why sheep why'. We had several other games.

LR: How old were kids when they stopped playing these games?

CS: After they got to be about fifteen, sixteen ...up until about fourteen. The thing is that about, in those days, I would be safe in saying, after we got out of the eighth grade there were fewer going on to high school, than now. Most of them went to work after fourteen. I know in our gang there were very few who went on to high school.

LR: What school did you go to?

CS: I went to St. Stanislaus. The rest of the boys of the neighborhood went to Marsh School. It stood right about where this one is now, only it protruded about half way into Homer Street.

LR: Were there all nuns teaching?

CS: All nuns teaching there? Yes.

LR: How big was the school? This was before the addition wasn't it?

CS: Oh, yes, this was the old ....it was a combination school and church building that stood where the present school is. We had school downstairs and the whole upstairs was used for church.

LR: When was the big part of the church built?

CS: The early nineteen-twenties. Let's see, around nineteen-twentysix, somewhere along in there, I think the church was built.

LR: I thought it was earlier.

CS: No. It was in the nineteen-twenties. Oh! Wait a minute. No ...I think it was built before that. Wait a minute. I must be mistaken. Yes, it was because first ....I'll take that back; it was built in the teens because first they built the basement and used that as a church for many years. And then the upper story was built in the twenties. This was built about, oh, seventeen, or eighteen...somewhere along in there: the basement part. I'd forgotten that. That's the way it had been used.

LR: When you went to school, the basement was the school? In the old part?

CS: No ...it was in the biggest, on the first floor, in that part of the building.

LR: How many rooms?

CS: There were six rooms. It had eight grades. The fifth and sixth was doubled, and the seventh and eighth was in one room.

LR: How many would you say attended?

CS: We must have had close to around three hundred.

LR: Did they teach Polish?

CS: Yes. They taught Polish there. We had a few hours in the morning. St. Paul's Lutheran Church and School taught German-and so did St. Mary's until the First World War.

LR: St. Mary's taught German?

CS: Sure. They taught German there too.

LR: That was settled by German Catholics?

CS: St. Mary's was built by the German Catholics. The Irish Catholics had a church on the corner of Fourth and Washington Street. But later they combined the two. In school, the children of German descent, they could take German if they wanted it.

LR: Were you the only one of Polish descent in your gang?

CS: At first, yes, and then later on several other Polish families moved in. But for many years we were the only ones.

LR: From what I understood, most of the Polish families were on the West side.

CS: Oh, they were on the West side. There were a lot of them in what we call 'Canada' ...around Center and Fogarty Street. There were many of them in this area here-what we called 'Eastport'. In fact in the next block came .... people have been here since the eighteen-nineties. Some of their children are still living in this area. All along Fifth St.; along Poplar; along Hendricks St....there were quite a number of them along Hendricks St.

LR: When you were growing up were there distinct ethnic areas?

CS: Yes. More or less. See, this area where we lived was mostly settled with the Swedish. The area settled on the West side was almost solidly German-around West Tenth St., that three mile area around the prison ...along Woodland Ave. It was called 'Germantown'. It still is called that.

LR: Did Germantown have its own activities?

CS: Oh sure. But they all had....they more or less until, the town was more or less segregated, I would say until about nineteen ...shortly after I left, a couple of years after I left school. Then everybody started going to high school. Before that, everybody kept to their own neighborhoods. It was factional. In fact if you....I heard stories of boys walking girls home who lived in Canada, have even been dropped in the creek off of the bridge. If you went out on the West side, why, you'd get ganged up on. After about nineteen-sixteen, seventeen, when more of them started going to high school and meeting in central places, and getting acquainted ...why then, that changed.

LR: Was there ill-will between parents of different neighborhoods?

CS: Oh ...They brought sane of there old country prejudices with them, yes. There was to a certain extent. But after the children grew up-and especially after they started going to high school, and mixing with all of them, why that gradually disappeared. You'd have to be honest, to admit, they did bring some of their old European animosities with them here.

LR: There are families here yet that still...

CS: Some of them, ah...it moms to still persist in that, holding to that.

LR: We're interested in the growth of the town's neighborhoods. You can still find different cultural foods.

CS: Oh yes. And that is a good thing. After all, no one people have a monopoly on good food. Everybody has their favorite dishes. You like to enjoy the best of what all the others brought.

I can remember the dinners that the women of the Zion Lutheran Church which most of the Swedes would belong to- ....used to have dinners at least once a year; and they would draw many many people, because their food was delicious. The thing that I especially liked was their rye bread, which they called 'glimpka'. All their other stuff was tasty too. And there was another



thing I first tasted there was a cole slaw with fresh pineapple: just made it differently, and I loved the stuff.

LR: What other activities like that were there?

CS: St. Stanislaus Church we would have what we'd call a bazaar every year. Big affair. Then in between the women's societies would have like a bake sale, or before Lent they would have what they called a 'punchki' special. Punchkis are a little ....they're made of a sweetened, more or less, a something like a sweetened bread dough cooked in deep fat. Sometimes they served plain, and sometimes they rolled in powdered sugar. But, if they're made right, they're delicious.

They would have sandwiches of different kinds of meat: ice cream, things like that. They would have raffles. The women would make different fancy work and raffle it.

LR: When you went to school at St Stans, was it eight grades?

CS: Eight grades. Yes. I well remember the nun whom we had teaching eighth grade. She was a woman of many talents. She was a church organist. At that time it was quite fashionable to have cushions on your davenport made of satin, with things painted on them. You might have seen some of those. And she would paint beautiful roses on this thing in oil paint. She did beautiful work of that. Friday afternoons she devoted to ....the boys would do drawing and painting; and she would teach the girls fancy work like crocheting, tatting, and things like that. I can well remember seeing the girls do tatting. Do you know what tatting is? That's with that shovel. And some of the girls would do it by-the yard. And those who couldn't get on would have a little piece about two inches long; and it would be black as black can be. They couldn't learn to do it. They would handle that so much it would become so soiled. (laughter) But those who learned it would sure have yards of it. I can well remember seeing the girls do tatting. Do you know what tatting is? That's with that shovel. And some of the girls would do it by-the yard. And those who couldn't get on would have a little piece about two inches long; and it would be black as black can be. They couldn't learn to do it. They would handle that so much it would become so soiled. (laughter) But those who learned it would sure have yards of it.

LR: What else did you study?

CS: Being a Catholic school, we would have catechism; and we had Polish grammar, and reading up until about recess time. And after that we had the usual things that you learned in school. After recess it was math, and a few other things. The afternoon was English and History. This nun who taught us in the eighth grade even Kept us ....she told us, in real life, many here won't go on to school from here ...from the eighth grade. So I'll teach you as much as I can. She even kept us after regular school hours and taught us a smattering of bookkeeping, and shorthand. This nun who taught us in the eighth grade even Kept us ....she told us, in real life, many here won't go on to school from here ...from the eighth grade. So I'll teach you as much as I can. She even kept us after regular school hours and taught us a smattering of bookkeeping, and shorthand.

My younger-brothers went on to high school after they left St. Stans. They had such a foundation in math and grammar that the first semester in high school was more or less a review. It was very easy for them. Of course, the one brother..Ed told me that in his sophomore year of high school they were teaching the grammar he had in eighth grade. They were just a review for him. But we did get a wonderful foundation. Spelling was another thing was stressed. I can particularly remember one thing this nun said, "Penmanship!". She was very particular, and very strict about the way you wrote. Most of the kids wrote quite well. I can remember one girl coming in to the country after New Years. She was well up in her English, grammar, and math ...but her handwriting was terrible. The nun took that and she told her, she said: How all children aren't able to grasp things equally, but if you aren't crippled, everybody should be able to write. She says, I want you to learn to write. In about two months they wrote a beautiful hand.

You did school. Did things you were told, or else. That was just it. They had it in the public schools. They used paddling in those days. All the teachers had the right to paddle. In our school they used kind of a wild one: you had to hold out your hand-and they hit you on the hand. Depending on what the transgression was, there'd be two or three or four or five on each hand.

LR: What kinds of things did you get punished for?

CS: Well...for not behaving mostly. Or even for not turning in your assignment. But mostly for talking, and goofing off.

LR: They were strict then?

CS: Oh yes. They didn't mess around too much.

LR: Did boys get punished more than girls?

CS: Oh yes. In those days, I think the girls didn't mess around, or step out of line. But the boys you know, were always doing something like getting rowdy at recess time. Things like that. They'd get called to account for that too.

LR: What kind of things did you do at recess.

CS: Mostly tag. That was mostly it. That was about all we had to do at recess time.

LR: How big an area was there to play in?

CS: We had to play in the street. We played on Ripley St. in between Washington and Franklin. Then of course, before the present church was built, that was a sandy area. We played in there.

LR: Kids still play in the street.

CS: Yes. They still play in the street. They block the street.

LR: Did you have to wear a uniform?

CS: No ....No.

LR: What kind of clothes did kids wear to school?

CS: Whatever their parents could afford.

LR: What was the style?

CS: Boys until they were about fourteen wore knickers. Of course when you grew up you got long pants. That was a big thing. (laughter) I'll have to tell you a story about long pants. The movies, then were five and ten cents: five for children ...ten cents for adults. When we got to be about thirteen, fourteen, you started wearing long khaki pants in the summertime. And when you went to the ticket window, they'd look at them. If you had long trousers, they wanted ten, and if you had knickers, it was a nickel. So we got on to that. We went to the show while wearing these things we'd just roll them up to our knees, pay our nickel, and go in and roll them down.

LR: It was knickers then for school?

CS: Yes. It was knickers, stockings, and shoes. And it wasn't a shirt, it was 'waists'; we called them waists: like a shirt, only it had elastic on the bottom. It pulled them down.

LR: I wondered if the Catholic schools wore the same thing.

CS: Oh yeah, everybody...it was the style. They wore just what the style was. All the boys and girls wore practically the same kind of clothes.

LR: Since so many kids didn't go onto high school, was there a graduation ceremony?

CS: Oh yes. You always had a commencement exercise for the eighth graders. In those days they made quite a thing of eighth grade commencement because many, like I said before, very few went on to high school. So it was quite an event. And many of them even didn't go that far in school-if they were just a little behind in their studies--they would go to school until they were fourteen. That was the cut-off time then. And later, I think a year or two after I left, the cut-off age was sixteen. But then ...it was fourteen.

LR: What was the ceremony like?

CS: Everybody was dressed up and you wore your ribbons, your colored ribbons tied on to you.

LR: What did the ribbons mean?

CS: St Stanislaus' color was a red and white-just a red and white bow. They usually had a few skits before graduation. The different grades would put on a little skit. And the last thing was the eighth grade and the awarding of the diplomas. Usually the pastor would make a little speech before he presented them.

LR: How many kids would graduate?

CS: Well, let's see, in our grade, the eighth grade ....really I don't think there was more over twelve or fourteen in our eighth grade class.

LR: And then half of those didn't go on to high school?

CS: Out of my class one or two boys went on to high school.

LR: What year was that?

CS: Nineteen-fifteen.

LR: What kinds of jobs could the kids get?

CS: Well, I started working in a grocery store. I was a delivery boy.

LR: That young?

CS: Sure. The other boys got jobs in the chair factory--places like that. You could work in the chair factory, in those days when you were fourteen. Many of them got jobs in the car factory as rivet-heaters. I know quite a number of boys who went on to do that.

LR: Did the boys want to go on to high school? or couldn't they afford to go on?

CS: Well, that was it. That was mostly it, yes. Wages were very small at that time. The men were earning about twelve to fifteen dollars a week.

When the boys graduated from the eighth grade, why then, they went to work to kind of help their families, and to help take care of themselves. I know one of the boys in the neighborhood went on to high school. The reason he quit was that he just felt a little out of place. The children who went on to high school of course were the children of the affluent people of town. The reason he quit was that he just felt a little self conscious of his clothes. He said: I Just didn't feel right in the clothes I wore. That was the reason he said he quit. Of course, it didn't hurt him too much: he became a tool and dye maker later on. He's been alright ever since. It wasn't that the gang couldn't make it if they wanted to. They were smart enough to get along. One of the boys, his father died just about the time he graduated. And in those days there was very little insurance, and no social security ...and no help. Everybody had to help themselves. He went to work in a car factory, and afterwards, he took an international correspondence course in drafting. He became a draftsman; and later on he got into real estate; and got into politics. He did alright. It wasn't that the gang couldn't make it if they wanted to. They were smart enough to get along. One of the boys, his father died just about the time he graduated. And in those days there was very little insurance, and no social security ...and no help. Everybody had to help themselves. He went to work in a car factory, and afterwards, he took an international correspondence course in drafting. He became a draftsman; and later on he got into real estate; and got into politics. He did alright.

Another one, he didn't go to high school either, he got in the factory. He ended up as a foreman in one of the Michigan City factories...in their pattern department. Of the whole gang: they all did quite well after leaving the eighth grade.

LR: You said you had a job delivering groceries. Was this an after school job?

CS: No. No. This was after I ....this was a full time job. First I started just as a-working in and around the store, on sweeping up, and helping, and breaking up wooden boxes for kindling. Everything came packed in wood in those days: and you'd break them up for kindling. I started at three dollars a week.

LR: What store did you work at?

CS: Anthony Przyblinski at 1703 Franklin. Later on, the man who was head clerk and was doing the delivery and order taking, he took sick-and I took over his job. In those days very few people had telephones. This was true of all of the stores in town: you'd have a regular route; you'd go out in the morning with your order pad, take the peoples' orders, come back into the store. You'd put them up. And the afternoon you delivered the stuff. All the afternoon you delivered all this stuff. Among the stuff you delivered was kerosene; We had a lot of flour. They bought potatoes by the bushel. So ...you got quite a work out. The thing that kind of got you at times was the fact that when it was raining, people didn't want to come to the store. Those who had phones would call and say: I don't want to come to the store today. I'd have to have this delivered. They'd tell you what they wanted: Well, as long as you're coming, send along five gallons of kerosene, and fifty pounds of flour. Of course you'd have to keep that covered on the wagon to keep it from getting wet. It was quite a job to take care of that stuff. See you didn't have a covered wagon; you had an open wagon with just a tarpaulin to pull over the thing.

LR: And you did this through winter too?

CS: Oh yes. It was a cold job. In the winter time when there was snow on the ground we had sleds to ...to hitch the horse to the sleds, instead of the wagon. In those days they didn't plow the streets. The snow just stayed on until it melted. So there was a lot of sleighing in the winter time. We liked to drive around with the sled because that was only ....the sled we had was only about three feet high, so it was easy to slide on and off. It was fun having the horse on the snow because it didn't make, the sled didn't make any noise. It was smoother than a wagon then. Of course, in the early days all we had was brick pavements, and you drive that iron-tired wagon over the brick pavement. It was rough, and it was noisy.

LR: When did cars become popular?

CS: Cars? Cars bout nineteen-fifteen, sixteen. That's when the cars started coming in. But right after the war, the first world war, 1918, 19, that's when cars got popular and rather numerous. But before that there were very few cars. The man who had the first delivery ...motorized delivery wagon in this town, that I can recall, was Gus Witte. He had a store on the corner of Franklin and Barker; The southeast corner, where Belle's Grille is now. It was an International. It was built like a horse drawn buggy without the shafts, and it had a motor in the back. It had

rubber-tired wheels, buggywheels. Just a little box. He had that and he used it to deliver groceries in that. That was the first grocery delivery truck in this town that I know of.

LR: I can imagine that car caused quite...

CS: Caused quite a stir, yes.

LR: How long did you work as a delivery boy?

CS: Well, I worked there for two years, then I left there and I worked at the car factory for a while. Hired on the Michigan Central for a year. And then then man--Przyblinski is who I worked for--he wanted to get out of the store and he offered to sell it to me. So we took the store over then. That was in nineteen twenty-one. It didn't close until March of nineteen seventy-six.

LR: Did you keep the name, Przyblinski?

CS: No. We ran it under our name then.

LR: Were you married during that time?

CS: Yes. Nineteen thirty-three.

LR: Did you buy the grocery store by yourself?

CS: Yes. In those days it was rather much easier to buy a store than it is now, because you didn't have much equipment in it. You paid for the stock and it didn't take a lot of money to get into the business. I'd earned fairly good wages on the railroad, and before that; I put that together.

LR: You were only twenty years old when you bought that?

CS: That's right: twenty years old.

LR: Wasn't that considered young?

CS: Oh yes. Even then it was considered very young. I get a kick out of what my oldest son told me when he was in college. He said: I'm kind of hesitant about accepting your help; he says: here I'm older than you are, and you were working at my age, and here I'm still depending on you to go to school. But I didn't regret sending him to school, because he done very well. He's teaching at Penn State University. He's in his ninth year there.

LR: Was there any resistance in the neighborhood when they sold it over? Would people rather trade with...?

CS: Oh no. I didn't have any resistance. I kept all the old customers he had. In fact, in our neighborhood, I gained a lot of our own neighborhood trade that had been trading somewhere else; they came to the store. It-worked out nicely.

LR: Did you hire anyone else?

CS: Yes. I had a girl working for me for a while. Then I had boys coming in after school. Then my brother started working after school, and Saturdays. I had three younger brothers, and all three of them worked in the store while they were in school.

LR: What kind of hours did you work?

CS: In those days you started early: six, six-thirty in the morning, and we stayed open until six. Then we were, had it being open Saturdays until ten, eleven-o'clock.

LR: Did you close on Sundays?

CS: Always closed Sunday--never kept the store open on Sunday.

LR: What about holidays?

CS: Oh holidays. We stayed open for a few hours: up from about eight-o'clock until about ten, ten-thirty. Like fourth of July, Memorial Day, Labor Day; We would close all day Thanksgiving; all day Christmas and New Years.

LR: What kind of items did your store sell?

CS: When we took the store over, all we had was a few groceries. There were very few stores that had groceries and meats those days. They were separate.

LR: Stores that paddled meats were called markets?

CS: Yes. There were eight markets. We had two in our immediate neighborhood. There was Dingler's in the nineteen-hundred block of Franklin St. and there was another one in the sixteen hundred block, later, run by a man named Novreske. But they were separated in those days. It wasn't until ...in about the late twenties and the thirties, when they started combining the two. Of course now, they're about general stores. But you had your staples and groceries. People did a lot of their own baking those days. We sold a lot of flour. We called it a fifty lb bag, but actually it was about a forty-nine lb bag. You see, a barrel of flour was rated a hundred and ninety-six lbs. So your forty-nine lb bag was the quarter barrel, and a twenty-four and a half lb bag was an eighth barrel. But it came in twenty-four and a half and forty-nine lb bags. But you had your staples and groceries. People did a lot of their own baking those days. We sold a lot of flour. We called it a fifty lb bag, but actually it was about a forty-nine lb bag. You see, a barrel of flour was rated a hundred and ninety-six lbs. So your forty-nine lb bag was the quarter barrel, and a twenty-four and a half lb bag was an eighth barrel. But it came in twenty-four and a half and forty-nine lb bags.

LR: You couldn't buy five lb bags?

CS: Later on we started packing them ...but it was quite a bit later before they started packing them five lb bags. The twenty-four and a half lb bag, for a long time, was the strongest amount of flour. Or some of the stores would break bags and sell, but it was quite a bit later--late in the twenties, if I recall, after nineteen twenty-five, that they started packing them into five lb bags. And then later, of course, even into two lb bags.

But you had a lot of things in bulk in those days. You had saurkraut in barrels; pickles in barrel, sweet and dill. And then another big item were herring. We sold those and ....you had a little thirty gallon barrel that you got-and we sold them by the piece. And that was really cheap food. We sold herring six for a quarter: six fish for a quarter. They required a lot of wrapping, and we'd take regular wrapping paper and we'd save old newspaper, and wrap the rest in newspaper because they really had that fishy smell. It contaminated whatever anything it touched. And another, Just about all grocery stores sold kerosene: because in those days very many people didn't even have gas lamps. So you sold a lot of kerosene. Some of them had kerosene stoves too. And ...a lot of potatoes used in those days. It wasn't uncommon to sell a bushel of potatoes at the time. Most everything was in bulk. Sugar was in bulk. We usually put that up in five and ten lb bags in the spare time, and had it ready. Beans and rice and peas were in bulk. Most coffee was bulk. Many other things like that. Cookies were in bulk. They came in--first came in metal cans. Depending on the density of the cookie. Each can would contain about seven to twelve lbs. of cookies. Crackers came in barrels. We had a cracker container. You dumped them in from the top and then had a sloping inner shelf; and you had a scoop that you dipped them out and put them in a bag and weighed them. We even had cookies come in wooden barrels. They had a divider in between. You'd sell the top half, then you would turn it over and open the other side...And sell the other half. Most everything was in bulk. Sugar was in bulk. We usually put that up in five and ten lb bags in the spare time, and had it ready. Beans and rice and peas were in bulk. Most coffee was bulk. Many other things like that. Cookies were in bulk. They came in--first came in metal cans. Depending on the density of the cookie. Each can would contain about seven to twelve lbs. of cookies. Crackers came in barrels. We had a cracker container. You dumped them in from the top and then had a sloping inner shelf; and you had a scoop that you dipped them out and put them in a bag and weighed them. We even had cookies come in wooden barrels. They had a divider in between. You'd sell the top half, then you would turn it over and open the other side...And sell the other half.

LR: Did any one particular ethnic group shop at your store?

CS: Well, no. We had a mixture right from the start. And of course this man had quite a few customers of Polish descent. He had lived on a farm near Beatty's, and they had a lot of German neighbors. Most of those German neighbors came in and traded with him. There were three Deutscher families that I can recall right off hand, and several others. But they had been his near neighbors when he lived on the farm. They traded with him. He had quite a few other people of German descent in the southwest area. When I took over the store, those people stayed with me. Besides that ...he had a few of the Swedish people as customers. I gained quite a few in our immediate area. So I had quite a mixture, right from the start.

LR: When you first began, did the women do the shopping? their children?



CS: They sent the children in many times. Like I said before, you went around to get the orders from most of your customers. Those who lived nearby usually sent the children in. In those days, most of the people had charge accounts. You would write your order up, and they would pay on paydays. That continued until much later. But they usually sent the children in with their notes and their baskets.

LR: I was wondering what kind of people came in to trade.

CS: Of course, most of the customers would come in from time to time but some of them, I think, traded at the store for years without ever coming into the store. The only contact you had with them was when you went out to pick up their order, and again when you delivered it.

LR: You didn't have five different brands of the same thing?

CS: Oh no! You didn't have the variety that you have now. I said when we first started, the only thing of paper goods we had, was toilet tissue. I remember when paper towels came in. At first didn't sell at all. Now who would think of doing without a paper towel?

LR: You must have seen a lot of new items come in.

CS: Oh, I saw a lot of new things. Most of them...you start seeing things come in packages. When we first started fruit was--prunes, dried peaches we had...apricots. They were all in boxes. The thing that was kind of hard to handle was bulk brown sugar. That came in just a little ...smaller, round containers. If it got a little dry, it would harden, like it does now, if you expose it to air. That was quite a problem. So it was a welcome change when they started packaging this stuff.

LR: When did you start to see a change with the peoples' buying patterns?

CS: In the thirties they started coming in more and more. When they started getting automobiles, of course they started coming into the store. That was it. In the twenties, after nineteen twenty-five, and from then on. As they bought automobiles, why, more and more came in to do their shopping.

LR: Could you explain how ration books worked during World War Two?

CS: They had books of coupons--and everything required a certain number of points to buy. I forget what they were anymore. For change you had little round tokens. They were red and blue. I think the blues had a value of five, and the reds were one. You had coupons for coffee, sugar; and meats and butter, and things like that. And canned goods too. That's right. You had coupons for canned goods too.

LR: What did the rationing depend on?

CS: It would depend on the number of people in the family. So many ration points for adults ...so many for each child, for the children. I have some of the old ration books around here somewhere.

LR: Did that confuse the grocers' business?

CS: It wasn't too bad, after you had it for a while. You took it. At first you thought it was quite a chore, but in just a week or so, you took it just as a matter of course. You got used to it. There wasn't anything to it.

LR: It lasted all through the war?

CS: All through the war, yes.

LR: When you started in nineteen twenty-one, how many other groceries were there in town?

CS: There were a lot of them. We must of had ....I'd like to check that. We must have had seventy, eighty grocery stores in the town.

LR: They were mainly neighborhood based?

CS: Oh yes. We outlasted quite a few of them. I like to tell people this: At one time we had an A&P store in the sixteen hundred block, where the pleasure Inn is now. There was an A&P store on southwest corner of, southeast corner of Franklin and Barker; and a National store right across the street from them, in that nineteen hundred block. And before that, we had a store in each of those locations. Man by the name of Pawchik, and later a Merkel, in the sixteen hundred block. Witte was at the southeast corner of Franklin and Barker-and was later taken over by Mike Baunach, and later by a Briley before the A&P took over that building. Then on the corner of Ripley and Franklin, which was the fifteen hundred block, there was Gus Kienitz; and the fourteen hundred block was O'Manny. The other side of the street, on that fifteen hundred block, man of the name Diebold, had a store on Franklin; I forget just how many we had--but in the outlying areas there were quite a number of stores, There were at least sixty stores in town, if not more. Then on the corner of Ripley and Franklin, which was the fifteen hundred block, there was Gus Kienitz; and the fourteen hundred block was O'Manny. The other side of the street, on that fifteen hundred block, man of the name Diebold, had a store on Franklin; I forget just how many we had--but in the outlying areas there were quite a number of stores, There were at least sixty stores in town, if not more.

LR: Now they are all supermarkets.

CS: You didn't have supermarkets until after the war. Right after the war--or did we have some of them before the war? We had Kroger; and National started enlarging stores. Then Kroger came in with one of the early supermarkets. And Al Pontius took over a big store that National T had on Michigan. What was the name of that store that burned down?

LR: Wonderland.

CS: Wonderland. He started there. Of course, they started building them bigger and bigger. But before the war, I don't remember a big store ...because National, or A&P had six or seven stores around town. National had three or four of them.

LR: What other changes have you noted besides the loss of these little stores?

CS: You did get away from your charge accounts--more of it became a cash transaction. Though even up until the last, we had a lot of people with charge accounts. With them it was a matter of convenience. They didn't have to charge things . You did less delivering. We stopped picking up orders sometime after nineteen twenty-five. We only did that for a few years ...then the people started getting telephones, and they'd use the phones.

LR: Did you still deliver?

CS: Oh yes. We delivered. The gradual change came in the area ....They started paving the streets and paving the sidewalks in the places where they didn't even have sidewalks. And of course the big thing was when they put in that south side district sewer, and covered the Rommel ditch. In late nineteen nineteen the Michigan Central Railroad moved its division point from Michigan City to Niles. Here they used to have their shops; their round house, and all that. That created quite a gap in the employment proposition--though most of the people who worked for the railroad, continued working for them. But many of them moved to Niles. Some of them retained their home here and just commuted back and forth. But after that there were quite a few new industries came to town. That changed the type of work people had done for many years. Michigan City never seemed to do anything in a drastic way; it just seemed to be a gradual change. The downtown area was improved a lot in the early nineteen twenties when the Spaulding Hotel was built. And after that was built, of course, we were able to attract a lot of conventions. I can remember one was a Spanish American war veterans. The reason I remember that so well ....on the final day of the convention they had a parade, and it turned quite cold. And the delegation from Florida was marching with there panama hats, and light jackets, and shirtsleeves, and they looked quite cold.

LR: I was reading about the conventions, and at one time Michigan City wanted to become a convention town.

CS: For quite a number of years we had a lot of national conventions. They really drew a lot of people to town.

LR: Did the towns' people support that?

CS: The town attracted them. The conventioners themselves, the organizations paid for their stuff. But the town just offered them facilities. And we had a lot of things going to attract people here. The one thing when we had the excursion boats coming in. They made daily trips from Chicago. We had two: the Roosevelt, and the United States. And a part of the convention entertainment ....they would get in from Chicago about ten, eleven-o'clock, and then they would take a group of conventioners out for a lake cruise, they'd come back in then. They left for Chicago again about four-o'clock. But in between, why, these people--if they came from places

away from the lake--why, they were interested in the boat ride. They all flocked down to the boats for a late cruise. It was quite a treat. Then sometimes they'd arrange visits to the prison. They had a lot of other attractions around here. But these two were the main ones. The lake, of course, was the attraction, and still is.

LR: When you were a child growing up in Swedeville, did you and your gang ever go down to the lake very much??

CS: Oh yes. In the summer time, we'd go down there most every day. In hot weather, yes. In fact, we did a lot of swimming. Sometimes we'd go out to Roeske's creek, or to Trail Creek in the morning. We called Roeske's. I don't know if you know where Roeske's mill was or not. It's off of Michigan, near where the Fish and Game Club has a clubhouse. Near that area. We'd walk out there and swim in the morning, come home and have a bite to eat. Then we'd walk down to the lake. We went swimming. We didn't hang around on the beach. We were in the water all the time. We'd get out of there, then we'd walk home. But that was quite a walk. It must have been, oh, at least two or three miles out to the creek and home. And it was about a mile and a half to the lake each way. So we got in a lot of exercise. Then in the evenings, we'd play under the streetlights. We never had any need for sleeping pills.

LR: Did your parents get upset that you went walking all around?

CS: No ...because in those days you seemed to be free to go any place. Nobody bothered you. For an example: we used to spend a lot of time along the railroad, near where the Gardena St. playground is now. Just a little west of there--there was an open creek running through there. And we would catch frogs and crabs, build a fire. Cook them. Eat them. Roast them in the fire and eat them. Sometimes we'd take potatoes from home, salt and pepper. Cook them. I remember one time were there and somebody brought some meat. We had potatoes and carrots; we had a fire and this stuff in a tin can cooking a stew. One of the tramps had dropped off a train there, a freight train. He greeted us, "What are ya doing boys?" "Oh, we're cooking stew." He said, "It sure smells good." I said, "Well, it'll be ready pretty soon-maybe you'd like some." He ate most of it. The poor fella was hungry. I remember one time were there and somebody brought some meat. We had potatoes and carrots; we had a fire and this stuff in a tin can cooking a stew. One of the tramps had dropped off a train there, a freight train. He greeted us, "What are ya doing boys?" "Oh, we're cooking stew." He said, "It sure smells good." I said, "Well, it'll be ready pretty soon-maybe you'd like some." He ate most of it. The poor fella was hungry. These fellas never scared us. They came and they treated us like kids. We never worried about it. Very little happened to anybody away from home then. Of course, we were fortunate in having the privilege of doing some of these things. Now, a group of kids would build a fire to cook something some place, they'd have the police department, the fire department, everybody else. One thing we did ....the kids were mischievous; they did things, but I don't remember anybody ever damaging anyone's s property. These fellas never scared us. They came and they treated us like kids. We never worried about it. Very little happened to anybody away from home then. Of course, we were fortunate in having the privilege of doing some of these things. Now, a group of kids would build a fire to cook something some place, they'd have the police department, the fire department, everybody else. One thing we did ....the kids were mischievous; they did things, but I don't remember anybody ever damaging anyone's s property.

LR: No vandalism?

CS: No. They never did that. Pranks. They'd do little things ...but never destroy anything. I think that stemmed from the fact that nobody had too much; And they appreciated what they had, and they wouldn't bother the neighbors's things either.

LR: Were the parents strict?

CS: They were ....that is, they were strict in the things you had to do. You had to behave. You had chores you had to do at home. But we were free to roam. They never bothered us then. That stemmed from the fact that you kind of grew into the gang gradually. The older ones doing it all the time as you grew up. You'd go in and you became the older one. And the younger one's came in with you. One looked out for the other. Parents thought nothing of letting us go to the lake ...and if you go swimming all day, or go swimming at the creek. We did a lot of things they didn't know about. (laughter) But we did some mischievous things. You were always pretty careful. You didn't do things that would mean your neck.

LR: What kind of things?

CS: Oh, one of the things I remember, the kids used to try to get people to chase them at night. Looking for things to do: oh, ring a doorbell and run, and things like that. Or throw acorns or something on the porch. Making noise. Halloween time we'd soap windows. One of the things we had....I ....I guess kids nowadays don't know anything about, is tic tocks. The old people know them. You take a nail and attach a string to it, and put it in the siding. And then you'd take and stretch that string. You had a piece of rosin and you'd rub it. It'd make quite an odd groaning groaning noise. Some of the neighbors come out and look around. There was a difference of neighbors too. Some of them, no matter what you did, why--if you rang the bell, they'd come out and look, and see nobody there. They'd just forget about it. Some of them, they'd start chasing us. Of course, that's what we wanted, But there was only one neighbor we wouldn't bother. He could run too fast. (laughter) And we had one--oh, we could get under his hide very easily. No matter what you did, he was always complaining. Of course we liked to pick on him for that reason. One time we stuck this nail ....one of the boys got on the others' shoulder's and stuck a nail under the siding, up quite high where he couldn't reach it. He'd run into it when he was walking around the house. And then we stretched it across his yard, across the alley, and onto the neighbors barn. We were on this side of the road. And we'd rub it. He'd come out and look around. Soon he'd start into the house. We'd rub it again. He walked around the house and couldn't see it. He had a brother-in-law tell him. He says, "Cane, you're a darn fool. The kids never bother me." He says, "They want you to chase them. Why do you do that?"stuck a nail under the siding, up quite high where he couldn't reach it. He'd run into it when he was walking around the house. And then we stretched it across his yard, across the alley, and onto the neighbors barn. We were on this side of the road. And we'd rub it. He'd come out and look around. Soon he'd start into the house. We'd rub it again. He walked around the house and couldn't see it. He had a brother-in-law tell him. He says, "Cane, you're a darn fool. The kids never bother me." He says, "They want you to chase them. Why do you do that?" If we went through his yard, he was out there, "Hi boys. How ya doin tonight?" It was no use bothering him. He wouldn't chase us. If we went through his yard,

he was out there, "Hi boys. How ya doin tonight?" It was no use bothering him. He wouldn't chase us.

LR: What kind of punishment was there if you got caught?

CS: Oh, usually a paddling. That was it.

LR: You said before you played a lot of baseball?

CS: Oh yes; we played ball. Of course, we played among ourselves, what we called scrub teams. Then we'd play kids from different neighborhoods. We'd get together. I remember one we used to play, one team right off of Earl Road and Wabash Street. We played out there quite often. Played against them. We'd pick up against other neighborhood teams.

LR: Did your parents attend these games too?

CS: No. They were played in the day time during vacation. The fathers were at work, and the mothers were busy at home. That was strictly a kid's game.

LR: Was there much interaction between the parents of the gangs?

CS: Oh no! That was just among the kids. They never interfered ...never bothered among any of them.

LR: I know the neighborhoods were close.

CS: Oh, they were closely knit-the neighborhoods were. There was never any friction, that I know of, among the grown ups.

LR: Did the families ever go out together?

CS: The families did. Oh yes. The individual families did, sure. They often would pack a basket lunch and go down to the lake. In those days you could ride the streetcar, or walk down there.

LR: What did it cost to ride the street car?

CS: It was five cents. You had the city street car. The main line was from the railroad on the north to Coolspring Avenue. That was the city limits, those days. Then you had Ninth St. You had a branch line running to the prison. The other one ran East to what we called 'Doll's Park', which is where the Eastgate Shopping Center is now. Doll's Park got its name from a man called Doll, who had a picnic area there.

LR: Was it as big as Eastgate is?

CS: Oh no. It wasn't nearly that big. It was more or less a picnic grove. It was a fair sized grove, a good grove; and they had some open ground there they played baseball on.

LR: Baseball must have been very popular?

CS: Oh. It was, very popular.

LR: Were there any City teams?

CS: Oh, later on we had a good city team here. You had the Michigan City Greys, which later became the Haskel-Barker team. The car company sponsored them for advertising purposes. They played a lot of good semi-professional teams in Chicago. They played against them. And from other towns around here. Of course, they always played against LaPorte.

LR: Was there rivalry between Michigan City and LaPorte? There still is.

CS: (laughter) There still is, and I guess there always will be.

LR: Was there much travelling? Did you do much travelling to LaPorte when you were a kid?

CS: No. I didn't get to Laporte until I was about twelve years old---on the inter-urban. I got there occasionally after that. And as we grew bigger, well, about thirteen, fourteen, we'd ride to LaPorte on our bicycles.

LR: What route did you use?

CS: Johnson Road usually. It was paved with macadam. It was this white crushed stone, with the fine crushed stone on top of it. It was rather a rough ride back and forth.

LR: That's a good distance.

CS: It's about thirteen miles each way. It was a good days outing.

LR: I wondered which roads were used. If Johnson...

CS: Yes. That was the way we travelled, because it was easier for us from our neighborhood to get to Johnson, than to get to Michigan and around the other way.

LR: When you were growing up, what was the main employment?

CS: The car factory was the main employer here for many, many years. The chair factory employed a lot of people until they went out of business.

LR: Which chair factory?

CS: Karpen Brothers. It was originally the Hitchcock Factory. Then it was Ford and Johnson for many years. It was taken over by S. Karpen and brothers. And they ran that factory in here--I think some time in the thirties. I can't recall exactly the date. But they employed quite a number of people. They were good employers too. Then we started getting in some of the other factories.

Sullivan Machinery Company, which is now Joy, came here in the early twenties. And of course, Josam, and Weil-McClain, and quite a few of the others came in about that time. Along after that too. Then among the factories that employed women, we had the Reliance Shirt Factory, which is on Chicago St. I think they make mattresses there now, or did. You know where I mean? on Chicago, and the railroad. Then we started getting in some of the other factories. Sullivan Machinery Company, which is now Joy, came here in the early twenties. And of course, Josam, and Weil-McClain, and quite a few of the others came in about that time. Along after that too. Then among the factories that employed women, we had the Reliance Shirt Factory, which is on Chicago St. I think they make mattresses there now, or did. You know where I mean? on Chicago, and the railroad.

LR: Mhmm.

CS: Then the pants factory came in. First they made overalls, and then later on became Jaymar-Ruby. That thing grew in Michigan City. That started just before the depression. They started making overalls, and overall pants. Of course, then in the thirties when money was very scarce, they were very popular and they did a big business. That eventually grew into what they are now.

LR: How did the depression affect your store?

CS: It affected it very much, because people were out of work. Some of them had savings. But they were out of work so long that those ran out. A few had to apply for county relief. In those days they had charge accounts. You were able to carry a lot of them for quite some time. But a lot of them had to apply to the county trusteeship for relief. And that amount given was based on the size of the family. An individual was given a voucher worth a dollar and a half each week. I still have one of them somewhere in my things, that I forgot to turn in. I'm keeping it as a souvenir.

LR: You could go in there now and turn it in and see what they do.

CS: These people who were able were expected to work; after they got these vouchers, they were expected to do a little work in the park. Do other things like down there, trying to revive that and do the same thing: make these recipients of aid, who were able to do some work which I think is just. If they're able to work and we have something useful that they can do. Why, I think it's their benefit, and the communities benefit too. When WPA came out the government started making work in different projects. Michigan City was very fortunate in getting as much out these projects as they did. I think they got more out of it than any town I know of.

Ames Field was built during those days: The zoo buildings; the tower, and all that was built during those days. It was built with the money that we got from the government. But a lot of the reason that we got so much out of it was because that we're interested in that stuff. Some of the architects donated their talent in designing these things. The other people would go out and scrounge the materials ...get ways of getting it. Now, for instance one of the men who was interested in this deal was a man named Dickenson, who was manager of the car factory, at that time. Like any big corporation, all the years they been in, they accumulated a lot of odds and ends that they had lying around, that really didn't do them any good, but they could use it in



building these other things. He'd donate that stuff. They got some of this stone that these buildings, the zoo buildings. You know, that Indiana limestone. Understand that the railroad hauled that for them free; the Monon hauled that for them up here from around the Bloomington area, up here. Another man who was very active in that was Tom Mullen, a local attorney, who was very much interested then. He had contributed a lot of his time, and of course his legal talent too. But there were a lot of others who contributed their time and talents. Through this we got all of these different things. It makes me think that we just got a lot more out of it than these other towns did where this ....there was a lot of boondoggling. They did these things and they spent it frivolously. But we got a lot out of it. Ames Field is still in good shape.

LR: What single event in Michigan City history vividly remains with you?

CS: One of the things that I remember very vividly--this wasn't very well known--I can remember the first airplane I ever saw fly was a homemade airplane made by a man named Donald Gregory. He and some of his friends built an airplane. I had a snapshot of it, and I turned it into the newspaper and never got it back. I'd like to get a hold of that, go down there and see if they can find it. It was very similar to the Wright Brothers plane. The Wright brothers flew in nineteen hundred and three. This was about nineteen-eleven. And they built this plane. He brought it out to this .... about where Barker Avenue and Maple St. is now. That was this open field. And he brought it out there to try to fly it. First few times there, he just taxied it along the ground, to get the feel of it. Then one time, he got the thing up in the air, oh, about eight or ten feet. He flew it probably a couple hundred yards. And then when he landed he hit a rough spot and broke his landing gear. After that, he flew it at a smoother field out west of the prison. He made quite a few successful flights.

LR: Was he a local man?

CS: Yes. A young fella. He lived in town here. Later on ....I remember reading him flying somewhere over Buffalo, New York. He crashed and was killed. I don't know how many years later. I've been checking the newspaper files for that, but haven't been able to find it. I remember reading it in the newspaper. I don't know exactly what year it was. Of course, to us kids, that was quite an event.

LR: Did he get a big crowd?

CS: Oh, as soon as he'd start that motor, bring it out and start the motor, why, everybody was out there. One day he hit a cow with his airplane. Some people who lived in this area...just a couple blocks east of here, on this street: they had a barn, and two cows, a red one, and a white one. And the boys used to bring the cows--during vacation time they had two boys--they'd bring them out to this field to pasture them. And while they were there, when we were playing ball, they'd play ball with us, all that stuff. But this particular time, the cows were just a short distance away from when, where he used to start taxi-ing the plane. And this white one ran ahead of him. He turned to avoid it. It turned right with him, and the propeller hit it on the rump, and it splintered it into real small pieces. It was a wooden propeller in those days. It cut a gash in her rump, but she survived it. And of course, it looked kind of bad: the white, and the blood ran down on that white hide. It couldn't a been very deep because, she got over it in a hurry.

LR: Did any of the boys dream of flying then?

CS: Oh, kids thought of a lot of things. When we were young, the first thing we thought of was being cowboys. Of course, that was the early days when you heard of so many cowboy stories, that everybody wanted to be a cowboy. Then later on you had all kinds of ideas. You wanted to be a railroad engineer. That was one of the reasons I started firing. I enjoyed that work as much as any work I ever had, but I didn't like the hours. You had to work any time of the day or night. Sundays. Holidays. Then another time, keeping along with airplanes, on of the early power airplane pioneers....What is the name of that outfit now? They were builders seaplanes. And about a half a dozen of them came in and landed on what we call....where the marine basin is now, at that time was about twice the size of what it is now. And they landed there in....they were making a tour of the United States, and they landed here. That was quite ....to us kids, was quite an event. Then another time, keeping along with airplanes, on of the early power airplane pioneers....What is the name of that outfit now? They were builders seaplanes. And about a half a dozen of them came in and landed on what we call....where the marine basin is now, at that time was about twice the size of what it is now. And they landed there in....they were making a tour of the United States, and they landed here. That was quite ....to us kids, was quite an event.

LR: Did you know they were coming? CS? We knew they were coming. This was a scheduled flight. We read about it in the paper, and all went down there to see them come in.

LR: What did the beach look like down there then?

CS: It looked uh ....it was a little wider than it is now ...but it looked, more or less, like it did now. The only difference was, we had a nice beach west of the pier. That was almost as wide as the east beach. The water hadn't cut into the hills like it did now.

LR: They widened the harbor and the basin?

CS: Yes. That was about the same. Those days the beach was a lot nicer, along Sheridan Beach, and where Long Beach is now. But we had a nice wide beach there too.

LR: All of it was public beach?

CS: No. The only public beach was from where this basin is now, up to about Sheridan Beach.

LR: Was Hoosier Slide still around?

CS: Hoosier Slide? Oh yes. You see Hoosier Slide ....They hauled the last of it away about nineteen twenty. And over, well, right after that, NIPSCO took it over. I can remember, even before nineteen-ten there was still a big hill.

LR: It must have been beautiful.

CS: It was quite an attraction. Used to bring a lot of people out in the railroads, before the automobiles came. The rails hauled many people up here weekends. People couldn't come up

here in any other way to see the lake; and of course, they'd heard about it. It was quite an attraction. Both the Monon, and what was then the Lake Erie used to run excursions. from... oh, a hundred and twenty mile area south of Michigan City. They'd bring them up early Sunday morning. The people would view the lake, maybe go in back in the evening. But it was quite an attraction. The railroads did quite a bit of advertising to promote these things too. But they brought in big crowds every Sunday during the summer.