

AD69536

JUNIOR LEAGUE OF CEDAR RAPIDS

Oral History Project

INTERVIEW WITH: Robert Fryrear

CONDUCTED BY: Holly Bergdorf

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PLACE: 2416 E Avenue N.E., Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52402

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INTERVIEW TOPICS  
CEDAR RAPIDS: THE EARLY DECADES OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

I. PERSONAL LEAD-IN QUESTIONS

- 1 --When were you born? Where?
- 1 --How long have you lived in Cedar Rapids?
- 1 --What are your parents' names?
- 2 --Where did you go to school?
- 2 --Are you married or single?
- 2 --Did you raise a family? How big?
- 3 --What has been your occupation (career) during your adult years?

II. COMMUNITY TOPICS

A. Technology in the Community

1. Transportation

- 5 --Railway travel (Union Station, trips to Iowa City on Crandic)
- 9 --Trolleys (the Interurban)
- 10-12 --Horses and First Automobiles
- 10 --Mud roads and the seedling mile
- 12-13 --Hunter Airport and the first planes
- 13 --Cedar River (ferries, floods, dams)
- 5 --Waterloo and Cedar Fall Railroad

2. Communications

- 23 --Newspapers
- 24 --Radios
- 24 --Advertising
- 25 --Telephones

B. People in the Community

1. Amusements/Recreation

- Motion Pictures
- Cedar Rapids Parks
- 7-8 --Dances
- Carnival Week
- Chautauqua
- Community Theater
- Little Gallery
- Symphony Orchestra
- Circus
- 18-20 --Greene's Opera House / Majestic Theatre
- Amusement Parks (Alamo)
- Camps
- Community Centers (YWCA, YMCA)
- 9 --Football

2. Famous Characters

- 18 --Cherry Sisters
- 16 --Grant Wood
- Carl Van Vechten (The Tattooed Countess)
- Marvin Cone
- 20 --William Gillette

3. Lifestyle

- 26 --Life before air conditioning
  - Winter Activities
  - Holidays (Memorial Day, July 4, Thanksgiving, Christmas)
- 8 --Clothing
  - Toys
- 16 --Saloons/Taverns
  - Farm Life

4. Family Life

- Household Help
- 28 --Women's Roles
- 14-15,40 --Childrens' Activities/Behavior
  - Sunday activities (Church life, Sunday Blue Laws)

5. Ethnic/Minority Life

- 28 --Immigrants (Czech, Greek, German, etc.)
- 30 --Indians
- 30 --Segregation of Blacks
- 30 --Jobs Available

C. Organizations and Institutions in the Community

1. Education

- 32-33 --Cedar Rapids Schools
- 15,31-32 --Coe College
  - Mount Mercy College
  - Cornell College

2. Government

- City Services
- Streets/Roads
- 33 --Relationship with Marion (Courthouse Dispute)

3. Medical

- Hospitals
- 39 --Patient-Doctor Relationship
  - Broken Bones
  - Polio, TB, Debilitating Diseases
- 32 --House Calls
  - Home Delivery of Babies

4. Business and Economy

- Local Factories (Douglas Starch Works, Quaker Oats, etc.)
- Local Brewing Companies
- 20-21 --Retail Businesses /Department Stores, Downtown
- Professions
- Banking and Finance
- Restaurants (Greek Restaurants in 30's)
- Businesses that no longer exist (old groceries, drygoods, icehouses)
- Farmers Market
- Mills on Cedar River
- 20 --Buildings Erected, Hotels
- Manual Labor/Types of Jobs
- Companies (Labor Unions, Strikes, Pay)

3-6--Railroad

5. Attitudes/Values

- Children/Discipline
- Sex/Petting
- Charity
- Divorce
- Work
- 28 --Working women, Voting Rights for Women
- Patriotism (World War I)

D. Historic Events in and Outside the Community

1. Catastrophic Events

- Clifton Hotel Fire (1903)
- 22 --Douglas Starch Works Explosion(1919)
- Bank Closings (1933)
- 41 --Lyman-Stark Building Collapse(1913)
- 41 --Public Library Murder(1921)

2. National Historic Events

- Womens' Suffrage
- 4 --World War I
- 7 --Roaring 20's
- 17 --Prohibition
- 6,35-36 --Great Depression
- 4-5--Armistice Day



Robert Fryrear was born in Knox County, Illinois 1901, the son of Carrie Ellen and Francis Aaron Fryrear. He moved to Cedar Rapids in 1910, the year of Halley's comet. For 48 years Mr. Fryrear was a railroad man for the Illinois Central and the Chicago Northwestern, working in the office as a clerk handling billing, claim, and demurrage. As a boy in the Cedar Rapids School District he won an art contest judged by Grant Wood, and he still enjoys painting.

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

JUNIOR LEAGUE OF CEDAR RAPIDS

Interview with: Robert Fryrear  
Date of Interview: January 17, 1985  
Interviewer: Holly Bergdoff  
Transcriber: Mary Bowden

HB: Mr. Fryrear, when were you born?

RF: On May 3, 1901.

HB: And where was that?

RF: That was in Knox County, Illinois.

HB: When did you move to Cedar Rapids?

RF: In 1910.

HB: How did you arrive here in Cedar Rapids?

RF: Well, see in 1910, that was the same year as Halley's Comet. Soon after I left Knox County Illinois, we moved to Cedar Rapids and arriving on the Rock Island train, at the Union Depot, there was quite a sight in the park, on the west side of the park, Greene Square a big flower bed was there, a great big flower bed, it read, in large letters, Cedar Rapids, and underneath it said Suits me and it will you.

HB: What were your parent's names?

RF: My mother's name is Carrie Ellen and my father's name was Francis Aaron.

HB: Where did you go to school?

RF: In Cedar Rapids I went to school, The first school I went to was Coe, over on B Avenue, between 15th and 16th Street on the east side.

HB: What years did you go there?

RF: I imagine it was the first couple of years I was in school because I transferred from there when we moved to south 10th Street. We lived in a house, a double house down there, that right now is the front yard of a junior high school. I transferred to Jackson school, which was located on 14th Street and 4th Avenue.

HB: How old were you when you transferred to Jackson?

RF: I imagine, around the age of 10, 12, something like that.

HB: Are you married?

RF: I have been married.

HB: What year did you get married in?

RF: In 1924.

HB: Did you raise a family?

RF: I sure did.

HB: How big was it?

RF: I had ~~my~~ first child was a daughter, then I had two sons. I had one son, a little over a year later, and the second son came about eighteen years later.

HB: What was your wife's name?

RF: Mabel Irene.

HB: What was your occupation or career, during your adult years?

RF: I went to work early for a railroad. I've put in a total of 48 years on one railroad.

HB: What year did you start working for the railroad?

RF: Well, the first year I started was in 1916, September 1, 1916. I went to work as a station helper for the Illinois Central Railroad, in the freight depot.

HB: What did you do as a station helper?

RF: It was more or less a messenger job. You did odd jobs and helped around with other things. You carried bills back and forth between other railroads and firms. My start was a little different than the ordinary messenger boy, cause I was listed as station helper and I made \$20 a month more than the other boys on the railroad.

HB: How come was that?

RF: Because they were listed as messengers.

HB: And you were a messenger, and . . .

RF: I was listed as a station helper and that paid better.

HB: How long did you have this job as a . . .

RF: Well, I had that job for a couple years and then I went into another job-- higher job, billing, making way bills for freight, and checking rates and things like that.

HB: What's making way bills?

RF: Well, a way bill is what goes with the freight. When you load freight in a car and send it some place else, this way bill does not accompany the car, but it goes ahead, or behind the car to the station, railroad, or place where the destination is.

HB: Now this was during World War I that you had been starting stuff like that?

RF: This was a little before World War I.

HB: How did the war affect the railroad, or did it in any way?

RF: Yes, it did just about that time I was on this billing job. The government put in the eight hour day-- we were working ten hours a day before that--and that was a big effect on the railroad. Another big effect on the railroad was the movement of goods and troops.

HB: Did you have anything to do with moving...

RF: Not at that time, no, only the freight office cop.

HB: What, anything else you can tell me about how the war affected or...

RF: Well, I tell ya, when I was on that job the war ended, and Armistice Day was a big day in Cedar Rapids and every place else in the United States. Nobody really showed up for work. If they did it was just for a few minutes, and then they would go out again and celebrate. We use to, at that...

I was probably 17, 16, 17 years old, 16 probably. We rode around on the back of wagons that drove around town and blowing horns and all that stuff.

HB: What else did people do on Armistice Day?

RF: Oh, they just celebrated. Some of them, course the older ones, I suppose some of them got drunk, but I was a little young for that.

HB: Do you remember when the troops came back from World War I?

RF: Oh, yes. See I had an older brother who was in the service, but he never got--He got in late and never got across the sea and never got in the actual war, but they all came home. Some of them were in good shape and some of them came on crutches and canes, but everybody was happy at that time.

HB: How was the railroad, was it booming during this time?

RF: Oh, yes, it was a booming time for the railroad. The railroads, of course, the trans-continental railroads were booming and I suppose the short lines were too, because at that time we had the Crandic that ran between Cedar Rapids and Iowa City. They were more of a connection between the railroads in Cedar Rapids and the Rock Island that ran through Iowa City. Then there was the Waterloo, Cedar Falls, and Northern that ran to Waterloo, and it was an electric line like the Crandic. Outside of that there was the three big railroads, the steamroads. That was the Northwestern, the Rock Island, and the Illinois Central.

HB: I take it that all the trains were electrical by then?

RF: No, just on the Crandic and the Waterloo and Cedar Falls.

HB: What about the other trains?

RF: The other trains run by steam, coal. We had a fireman that shoveled the coal into the fire, which later on they transferred. They went into the diesels, but that was a little later.

HB: When did the diesels take over? When did they get ride of the steam engines?

RF: It was in the thirties.

HB: Go on with your career in working for the railroad. What did you do? Did you take care of billing then, for how long?

RF: I had various positions. When I left the Illinois Central, exactly four years after I started, and went to work for the Chicago Northwestern, as a claim clerk, and I was on that job for about a year and I transferred to a job handling the demurrage. The demurrage, on the railroad is the same thing as storage on a plant or some place, and you figured it by car loads, instead of by items.

HB: What year would that have been?

RF: 1920, September 1. I started on that and I later transferred to that other job. I was on that other job for a while, When I was on that job, things got a little tough on the railroad, everybody had to take a 10 percent cut at one time.

HB: How come was that?

RF: Oh, because things were in bad shape, It was during the Depression.

HB: Oh, this was later on, end of the 20's and 30's. O.K. what else, like



the 20's? It was called the Roaring 20's, did that affect the--I mean was that affected by anything?

RF: Well yes, I remember the Roaring 20's because I moonlighted for several years in a dance hall. I started at Danceland in Cedar Rapids, It's located down on Second Street, Third Street--I'm sorry, Third Street between First and A Avenues. Located where the Five Seasons, part of the Five Seasons is now.

HB: What year was that? I mean what year did you start there, or approximately?

RF: I just don't remember exactly, but it was about: It was early probably in the late 1920's.

RF: Did you have any other jobs while you were working on the railroad, or I mean other than working for the railroad?

RF: No, outside of that moonlighting in that dance hall.

HB: What exactly did you do in this dance hall?

RF: I ran a checkroom part of the time or I took tickets or sold tickets, things like that.

HB: What kind of dances did you have?

RF: Oh, we had all the big bands.

HB: Oh really, what were their names, or do you remember?

RF: Oh yes, there was Paul Whiteman, and Benny Goodman, and oh there were so many of them I can't think of them right now, except we had the Bubbleman.

HB: What was that?

RF: The Bubbleman, Lawrence Welk. We had him, just before he became real popular, so he was practically new when we had him in Cedar Rapids. He started in South Dakota. We had all the big bands, as I say, I've forgotten some of the names now.

HB: Do you remember how people dressed back then?

RF: Oh, sure, the girls never wore slacks. All the girls wore dresses in those days.

RF: Did you have flappers?

HB: Oh, sure we had flappers. I remember the Charleston, I used to do the Charleston myself. That was quite a dance. That was started by the Negroes in the country.

HB: What other types of dances did you dance?

RF: Well we had--you mean the kind they played, back then?

HB: Yeah, well, I mean what kind of names did you have to your dances, you know like the Charleston.

RF: Oh yeah, well, of course we foxtrotted and some of us waltzed, not too much. Get a big band and up in front of the bandstand, people about ten deep, just sit and stand there watching and listening. You danced around them or maybe you stopped a while and listened yourself. In those days they had the band singers that sat on a chair and when the time come they would get a signal. They'd walk up and they would sing into the microphone. When they were through, they would walk back and sit down.

HB: Do you remember the trolleys, during this time?

RF: Oh, sure.

HB: What were they like?

RF: Well, Cedar Rapids had a lot of trolleys. We had one that ran all the way from Bever Park to Ellis Park. That's from the east side of the river to the west side of the river, and we had trolleys over. Their trolley barn was located down on Second Street, about C Avenue. Now Quaker Oats has taken over most of that territory at this time.

HB: Do you remember when they got rid of the trolleys?

RF: Not exactly, but I do know that at one time we had the trolleys that ran out First Avenue, all the way to Marion. They would get out about, oh, beyond Kenwood, a little ways and it was all country out there until you got to Marion. The trolleys in the interurbans, of course, were quite something in those days. I remember riding the interurbans to Iowa City, to see football games, many, many times.

HB: Did you go to a lot of football games, down there?

RF: Oh, yeah, because the field down in Iowa City at that time was located on the river side of the river--the east side of the river and the way it was built it was easy to sneak into. Didn't have to buy a ticket.

HB: How old were you then when you were sneaking in?

RF: Oh, I was in my teens, maybe a little later.

HB: How about horses?

RF: Oh, yes, they had a lot of horses. There was a horse barn up on about C Avenue and Sixth Street, at one time. Then there was other horse barns later on. There was a horse barn down on Fourth Avenue where the Killian Parkade is at this time. During the winter, one year, I got tired of selling papers on the street, I guess it was, and I looked around for jobs, and I got a job in a dry cleaning establishment, on Second Avenue, between Fifth and Sixth Street--between Fourth and Fifth Street, pardon me. That experience didn't last long, because it was a cold winter and I delivered dry cleaning out to residences. I remember one delivery I made out on Third Avenue, about Eleven Street or Twelfth Street. The fifth wheel on the wagon froze up and I had to drive that wagon back--all the way back to town and all the way back to the horse barns, with the wheel sliding sideways.

HB: Was there muds roads then and so forth?

RF: Oh, yes, there was a lot of mud roads. That's why a lot of people--that's why the Crandic did such a good business, on football games, people riding that because the first good highway was built, out on the Mount Vernon Road, I think they called it theSeedlingMile. Another thing about paving, Cedar Rapids had some mudding streets, but most of the downtown streets naturally were paved with brick. The pavement was good for what it was, but there was a lot of rolls and rumbles in it. The first pavement in town, different than brick, was wooden blocks. They put that in between First and Fourth Streets on Third Avenue. Those wooden block pavings were there for several years, till they started paving everything with cement.

HB: Do you know why they used the wooden blocks?

RF: They were trying them out. This was a trial thing, other than the brick, that

they were using. In those days--Now I imagine there are still some places around town that the street car tracks are covered up by cement paving.

HB: What year was or what period was this that they were doing all the road building or street buildings?

RF: It was around the First World War time.

HB: Do you know why it was called the Seedling Mile?

RF: Yes, because that was the first mile of concrete paving in the city, or in this location. I'm not sure if it was the first in the state or not, but it was the first in Linn County.

HB: Do you remember the first automobile?

RF: Not the first automobile, no. I rode in one of the old style automobiles from Burlington, Iowa to Galesburg, Illinois at one time. It was one of those old high seat things with the leather top and the brake and hand things on the outside of the automobile. It was my job--I was riding over there with my uncle, he was an engineer on the Burlington Railroad, and he lived in Burlington. It was my job on that trip to everytime we went up a hill, if we stalled on the hill I jumped out and with a brick and put it under one of the wheels, so it wouldn't roll back.

HB: Where there very many cars here in Cedar Rapids, when you were young?

RF: Yes, there got to be quite a few cars here, Model T especially. Model T started out with--it was just a touring car--with a cloth top and it had the brakes and things inside. It wasn't as old as this other car I was telling you about. But I remember riding in Model T's quite often. In fact, I owned one a little there.

HB: Oh, when was that?

RF: When I first--oh, in the early 20's, when I went to work for the Northwestern, I lived up on Daniels Street here in Cedar Rapids, and I bought myself a Model T, touring car.

HB: How much did those cost?

RF: Oh, the first one I bought cost me \$75, but that one was a lemon, all worn out, I didn't know, I drove it from Cedar Rapids to Tama one time to visit my sister and the--kept having blow outs. I think I stopped four times on the way Tama, to fix a puncture in the tire. Coming back then the old brakes, that they had in the cars in those days, they started disintegrating and I had an awful time. I never want another car like that.

HB: What was like a brand new car, what did they cost then?

RF: It depended on the car. You could buy a new Ford--for maybe \$300, maybe \$275, something like that. Then later on they become, when they started making the bigger cars they increased in price.

HB: Do you remember anything about the first airplanes, like Hunter airport?

RF: Oh, yes, I took a ride one time, out at Hunter airport. A fella could hear in the plane one of the old Ford tri-motors. They were called the working horses in the air. They were taking passengers up and I--this was a little later, so maybe this doesn't qualify as way back in Cedar Rapids--but this was probably later in--well it could have been in the 30's or even in the 40's. The earlier planes than that I never rode in, I seen some.

HB: Do you know what kind of impact the airplanes or anything like that had



on Cedar Rapids?

RF: Well it did, like any city, any progressive city. There was quite an impact. Cedar Rapids was always a progressive city, and they were quick to get business. They were doing--the airlines at that time were all rented out, you know and the term, I forget the term, but the plane you hire for the trip or something like that. At that time there wasn't any later on when the airlines got started, why then they built a new airport. I just noticed on my trip the other day the difference between the stewardess in those days, and the stewardesses today.

HB: Oh, well what was the difference?

RF: Well in those days the stewardess had to be a nurse. She was a registered nurse. Today these girls are primarily bartenders and waitresses in the sky.

HB: What about like the Cedar River? Do you remember like, when it flooded or the ferry?

RF: Yes, I remember in 1929, the Cedar River flooded, very much. I was working on the east side of First Avenue and Fourth Street at the freight office, and I lived on the west side of the river on I Avenue, 1136 I Avenue Northwest, and to get home during that flood I had to go clear down to Sixteenth Avenue to cross the Cedar River and then come clear back up north to get home.

HB: Did it do a lot of damage?

RF: Oh, yes, there was a lot of damage, there was a lot of damage to the businesses down along the river. Incidentally, back in the early days the businesses down along the west side of the--the east river bank all had two



entrances.

HB: Why was that?

RF: They had one entrance, it went down, and had another entrance that went up. I imagine I never knew at that time why it was but I came to the conclusion that it was on account of the flooding.

HB: You mentioned earlier, that you were going to be able to talk about downtown Cedar Rapids, you know, through the streets a ways, and so forth.

RF: Oh, yes, you know when I started selling papers after school, on the streets downtown.

HB: You were about what age, about...

RF: Oh, I was 12, 11, 12, 14. I was 15 when I quit selling papers and went to work for the railroad. But between the time I come here--I was about 9 when I came here--and up into my lower teens I sold papers on the street.

HB: What paper did you sell?

RF: The Gazette. The Cedar Rapids Gazette, and they were located on First Avenue, right on the river bank, on the south side of First Avenue. Right, oh between there and First Street was a mortuary and a Salvation Army, across the street was the YMCA. In the summer time us guys would shuck off our shirts and socks and shoes and go swimming in the river while we were waiting for the papers to come out.

HB: Where you suppose to do that?

RF: It wasn't--well none of us ever got arrested for it, but I don't know if there

was a law against it or not, but it was one thing that the kids do.

HB: What else did you do when you were a child, like for amusements?

RF: Well, we would go out to Ellis Park, or Bever Park, and we would have picnics, or we would go out there just to play baseball or have fun. We had... We made our fun in those days, see we didn't have things like they are today.

HB: How did you make your fun?

RF: Well, if you wanted, when you was a kid in those days, you didn't go down to the store and buy toys--You would make them. Like if you had a hoop and a stick, why you would play with that. You roll it down the street and roll it back. We'd play baseball with a sock all rapped up, and full of sand, or something. It was, well, we'd play games. We had a lot of games in those days as younger kids.

HB: What were they called?

RF: Oh, there was, Plum, Plum, Pull-Away, and Run Sheep, Run, and another game was a good one, was the one where you sat in the chairs, you know, and then there was one vacant chair, and somebody would run around the circle and the person they touched had to get up and chase the other person around the person if they hit the chair first. We played games like that. Today, kids don't even think of games like that. If they have any games today, they have to be something that costs a lot of money and they buy them downtown.

HB: What were the schools like back when you were a child?

RF: The schools were nice, I always had good teachers. The fact is I had an

art teacher once that was real nice. We put on a--Cedar Rapids School System put on an art show, or an art contest one year. It was for a painting, drawing, and a painting of a spring screen. I drew a picture of a girl with a basket full of flowers, and I won the city contest. Grant Wood was one of the judges.

HB: Did you know him?

RF: I knew Grant Wood, yes.

HB: How well did you know him?

RF: Not too well, but I just knew him because he was in--He did that besides his art work, himself. He had his place there, in that carriage house, behind Turner's Mortuary. I knew him, I knew him well enough to that I knew his name and he knew mine.

HB: Is there anything you can tell me about him?

RF: Well, not too much, because he left this country and went to France for quite a while, and he studied impressionist art there. He has now become one of the best known natives of Cedar Rapids to have ever lived. Everybody knows that painting of the, that gothic scene. It and the Mona Lisa, I think, have been lampooned, more than any other paintings in the world.

HB: Going back to talking about downtown Cedar Rapids, any other incidents, when you were a child or when you were a teenager?

RF: Well, yes. When I was selling papers, I remember at that time there were still saloons in this town. There was a saloon in Allison Hotel on First Street, and there was one in the GrandDelevan Hotel on 1st Avenue, and there was one in the back of the GrandDelevan Hotel on 3rd Street, it was called the

Yes Wet . I always thought that was a funny name, but I learned why it was called Yes Wet , because it was a saloon. There was a saloon in the Montrose Hotel. There was a saloon in the Taft Hotel, and there was a saloon in the Magnus Hotel. The reason I know about all those saloons is because there was a good place to stand in front and sell papers, cause you see when the guys come out, because you usually got a tip.

HB: When Prohibition came through how did it affect all those saloons, did they close up then?

RF: Well, they become soft drink places, and some of them closed up entirely, later to open up when Prohibition was repealed. But There was an awful lot of bad liquor being made and passed around during the Prohibition days.

HB: Did you know of where any of it was made?

RF: No, I didn't know where any of it was made, except I heard rumors of different places.

HB: What were some of the rumors?

RF: Well, in the western part of Iowa, there was supposed to have been a big still operating out there, and the larger cities at that time, like on the Mississippi River were known and the people from Iowa would go to Illinois and bring liquor back from Illinois.

HB: Illinois could have liquor?

RF: No, well they...

HB: Oh, they made the illegal stuff?

RF: Yes, that's right.

HB: What else can you tell me about downtown Cedar Rapids?

RF: Well, as you come down First Avenue from the bridge, you veer off on Second Street to the left and right in the middle of the block was the Greene's Opera House. Greene's Opera House was well known. It was on the circuit in those days. They had stage shows and later it became a movie house and later became a storage garage for cars.

HB: What kind of productions did they put on?

RF: Oh, they had a lot of the big stuff back in those days. I don't know. I've heard, I didn't know the Cherry Sisters, but I've heard a lot about the Cherry Sisters back in these days that put on those hockie shows that they put on. But Greene's Opera House had big time stuff coming through there. I've never seen much of that, but I did see some shows at the Majestic Theater, which was located on Third Street and A Avenue. That was because they had road shows more than the Greens's Opera, the Greene's Opera House had some more of the big stuff.

HB: What were road shows?

RF: Companies would get together and form acts and stuff and they would go on the road and they would go from this town to that town.

HB: What kind of act were they?

RF: Some of them were very dramatic. Some of them were comic. The first time I ever saw Buster Keaton.

HB: Did they have any other big name acts?

RF: Oh, yes, I think Jack Benny and others that I have forgotten. At that time, I didn't know them well enough to remember.

HB: Any other productions that you can remember, that they put on, like at Greene's or the Majestic?

RF: Well, the Greene's Opera House had that, . . . I don't know how to describe it. It was suppose to be a little higher class, and the Majestic was more vaudeville. The Greene's Opera House had the more, it was suppose to be more higher class shows. There were some famous people back in those days, that I don't remember their names because at that time I wasn't interested in that type of stuff. I remember one year at Greene's Opera House, that was the time that Jack Dempsey was on the road training for his heavyweight fight--championship fight with Jess Willard.

HB: What year was that?

RF: That I imagine was about in the 1920's, 1919, 1918, someplace in there. Those years, I didn't keep track of the years like, in those days. I remember the incidences. I remember that because that was after the Greene's Opera House quit having shows, road shows, and they were showing small time stuff and sports and stuff like that, and Jack Dempsey put on an exhibition boxing match at that time and my older brother, Johnny, was on the warm-up card. You know I told you a while ago about sneaking into the football games at Iowa City. In those days I didn't have the money to pay to buy tickets, so I sneaked into Greene's Opera House, by climbing up the fire escape and going in on the third floor of the building and then coming down into the auditorium and watching the boxing. That's how I saw Jack Dempsey.

HB: Any other ones? I remember when we were talking the first time something

about they showed Ben Hur, some place--Was that--Did they put on a production?

RF: Well, that might have been at Greene's Opera House. Cause that is the kind of stuff that they would show in those days. Then they had other big shows that I can't remember. I think that there was an old time actor at that time, by the name of William Gillette. He played a lot of Shakesphere and stuff like that, William Gillette. Later on he moved to Connecticut and he built a castle there, in Connecticut.

HB: Anything else about downtown Cedar Rapids, that you remember?

RF: Well, if you want to talk about the hotels there is, I think I named some of them. There was the Grand Delevan Hotel. It was right down there on 1st Ave. and Third Street, where the Five Seasons is, and the Chicago Northwestern Freight Depot was on Fourth Street and, on that same side of the street, and across the street on the same corner was the Allison Hotel. Down on the next corner on Second Avenue and Fourth Street was the Magnus Hotel, and kitticorner from that was the Taft Hotel, and then there is the Montrose Hotel down on Third Street and Third Avenue. The reason why all these hotels were bunched like that, is because they were close to the railroad. In those days they had the traveling salesman that were called drummers, would come in on trains and stay in a hotel and then go out and sell their ware. That's the reason, I concluded, that there was so many hotels bunched around the depot, which was located between Third and Fifth Avenue, on Fourth Street.

HB: What else was downtown?

RF: Well, I told you, I mentioned a while ago, about some of the different theaters, but I didn't name them all. There was a lot of theaters at one



time, movie houses, besides Greene's and the Majestic.

HB: I think they were silent movies.

RF: They were silent movies in those days, and I remember the Columbia Theater, on First Avenue. We would go there to see the "Perils of Pauline". She'd get hung up on a railroad track, or a bridge, or a big cliff or something, that, then it would flash on the screen, continued next week. You would always have to come back to see what happened. "Perils of Pauline", and then there was some others too. There was Fatty Arbuckle. He was a comic and Buster Keaton, and several of those, but the Columbia Theater on First Avenue was located right next to the owner's--they owned the store also, they owned a fruit store. Once in a while, us kids, would go down there, and we would go behind the fruit store and pick up these big banana stalk, that bananas grow on, and we would go in. We would pay a nickle to go into the theater, and we would chase the rats up and down the aisles in the theater.

HB: They had a lot of rats down there?

RF: Oh, yeah.

HB: They come from off the river I suppose.

RF: Another thing downtown too, see things were pretty well bunched on account of the river and the Cedar Lake. We called it the slue in those days, Cedar Lake. Things were pretty well bunched south, from A, B, C Avenues, and then south to First, Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth Avenues, like that. Incidentally, First Avenue was originally called Iowa Avenue, and First Street was Commercial Street.

HB: When did they change the names?

RF: That was before my time. There was what we called a fire house. That was back in the days when we had horses, and horse drawn fire trucks. The fire house was located on Third Street, about B Avenue, and it was naturally a wooden building and it had a big cupella on top, with a big bell on that thing. They would ring that bell whenever there was a fire.

HB: Was there a lot of big fires back then?

RF: Yes, there was. There was a big fire shortly before I came to this town. Quaker Oats burned down. Later on the big fire--it was more than a fire--was the Douglas Strach works. That happened in--they were located on Eighth Avenue and First Street Southwest--in May of 1919, a big dust explosion, and killed a whole lot of people. I think it was--the records say it was 40 or 41 people killed in that explosion, and at that time I was living at--on Fourth Avenue just off of Fourteenth Street. About three or four of us were out in the back yard playing, and we heard this explosion, and we knew there was gas tanks down there at--around Eighth Avenue and we thought it was the gas works that blew up, and we hopped on our bicycles and we rode down there, and of course, the closest we could get would be to the river side, the east side of the river, because this fire was just on the west side, and it was a mess. That was the Douglas Starch Works. That was originated by Mr. Douglas, the big man in this town, that went down on the Titanic.

HB: Do remember anything else about the Douglas Starch Works, I mean, did they go out of business then?

RF: No, they didn't go out of business. They rebuilt and later became the Penick & Ford Company. Penick & Ford originated in Louisiana, some place down there and they rebuilt and took over the place, Penick & Ford, and they're still

located there in part, and part of their business has moved away.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

HB: You were saying you wanted to talk some more about the fires, go ahead.

RF: Oh, yes. One night I had a dream that there was a fire some place and I woke up the next day and went downtown and found out that there really was a fire. The M.M. Townson Clothing, was located right where Merchants National Bank stands today, and they burned down that night. It was a wooden structure.

HB: When was this, about?

RF: That was while I was still living on Fourth Avenue, so it was possible 1919. Could have been about 1915, or so.

HB: You mentioned things about, like you sold a newspaper, the Gazette and stuff, was there another newspaper here in town?

RF: Oh yes, there was a Cedar Rapids Republican, located down on Third Street, where the Art Center is today, across from the gas company office, there. That was the Cedar Rapids Republican, but later on, the Gazette bought them out and the Gazette became the only newspaper in town, outside of a labor paper that was printed here at one time, on Third Avenue, and that labor paper, moved to Washington D.C..

HB: Do you remember what it was called?

RF: The Labor Paper.

HB: What about like the radio, what type of shows were on the radio at that time, back in the twenties?

RF: They were kind of funny. To start with, but on the radio, you see they could do

a lot of things on radio that they can't do on TV, cause they weren't seen. The better part on the radio, was that you had to use your imagination. The first radio was mostly just yacky, yacking and news, and things like that. The first radio station that I know of was located on Second Avenue, Fourteenth Street in the carriage House behind the house, and it was just a small radio station and I think at that time it was owned by a man named Harry Par. Later this station became WMT, when it hooked up with the Waterloo Morning Tribune station. At Waterloo. Then KCRG started up. They were, KCRG, was the Cedar Rapids Gazette.

HB: How old were you, about when they started up?

RF: I think that was around--I'm not sure. I think that was around 1929, as I recall. As I mentioned before, a lot of these things, the actual dates I don't remember, but I can tell you all about what it was.

HB: What about advertising?

RF: Advertising in those days was a little different, because everything was cheaper.

HB: How cheap was cheaper?

RF: Well, you take a restaurant advertising a meal for 25 cents, and a real dinner for 75 cents, and a pair of shoes for a dollar and a half, a suit for \$7. That was cheap, and it was cheaper, and the advertising was cheaper, because it wasn't so high pressure. As far as advertising was concerned, I never was too interested in it except one time when the Gazette ran a contest. They printed on one sheet of the paper names of different business places, and then you were supposed to write an ad for that business place, and if you

won, you got a prize for some kind of merchandise. I won about four different times. It was different kinds of merchandise. I got a traveling bag and an umbrella, and some stuff like that.

HB: Were you young then when you did that?

RF: Yeah, I was about eighteen.

HB: Do you remember the first telephone?

RF: Not the first ones, no, but I remember when they changed from stand-up phones to lay-down dial phones. I remember the old phone with the box on the wall and you had to crank it.

HB: How long did it take for people to get phones in their houses?

RF: Well, I don't know what their reason was for slowness, but I think it was due to people's financial standing, or something. Some people just couldn't afford a phone. Some people were scared of them to start with.

HB: Did you have a phone in your house when you were young?

RF: Oh, yes. We had a wind-up, crank phone. I don't remember just when we finally got the other phone. See when I was working on, with the railroad. At the freight depot. We had phones, and about late 1920's or early 1930's, we even put in a switchboard. We even called it a PBX.

HB: Why did you call it a PBX?

RF: It was something about exchange or something.

HB: How were they run? Were they real complicated?

RF: No, there was a toggle switch that you switch one way or the other to hook somebody up, and you would get an inbound call and you would answer it, and they would want to know--in other words they would want to talk maybe to the agent. O.K., you would push his button up and ring his bell and then he would answer it.

HB: Did the lines break a lot, and stuff like that?

RF: No, not an awful lot in those days. No. Those things happened possibly earlier back in my days, when I wasn't aware of telephones or anything like that. I spent quite a few years not connected with that stuff.

HB: What was life like before they had things like air conditioning, and all the modern conveniences?

RF: Like iceboxes for one thing. We would have--You would have an icebox, probably sitting out on your back porch, and the iceman would come around, and you would buy a 50 pounder, or a 100 pound keg of ice, and you would put it in the top of the icebox.

HB: How much did like a 50 pounder cost?

RF: No very much, I think around 20 cents.

HB: How often did you have to have him come around?

RF: Well, it depended on the weather on how long they lasted.

RF: Well, let's say it was summertime.

RF: Summertime, I think, as I can remember it was at least once a week.

HB: When did they get rid of the iceboxes?

RF: When refrigerators came in.

HB: When electricity came through?

RF: When electricity came through, and the first refrigerators.

HB: When was that about?

RF: I couldn't tell you.

HB: Was it in the twenties or thirties?

RF: It, let's see, I moved from the west side over there and at that time I had my first electric refrigerator, and that was in, that was in the fourties. That was later than this period here. Another too. In those days you had a coal burning furnaces. You had to shovel your coal in and shovel your ashes out, and all that stuff. You didn't have hot water heaters. Usually a coil ran around on the inside of your furnace and it heated your water.

HB: Did houses have their own pumps, like wells, or did you have to carry your own water in?

RF: No, we had--earlier in life we had pumps, but later on we had water, regular water.

HB: Indoor plumbing?

RF: Indoor plumbing, yeah.

HB: Do you have any idea of when like indoor plumbing came in, more or less,



in Cedar Rapids?

RF: No, because I think it was here. I don't remember. The only time I remember the old fashion back house was when I was just a young kid.

HB: What were women's roles, when you were a child, I mean did your mother work out of the house at all?

RF: No, no. Of course, my mother was a dress maker. She made dresses for fit and today they would call it a modiste, a fancy name for a dress maker. Women's role in those days was naturally in the home.

HB: Were there any business women in Cedar Rapids?

RF: There were a few secretaries, secretaries and office help and stuff like that.

HB: How about like in the 20's or in the 30's?

RF: No, not yet. It took quite a while for women to get going, and become doctors and lawyers and things like that.

HB: How did women's suffrage, when women got the vote, did that effect women here in Cedar Rapids?

RF: It may have, but I was too young to worry about that.

HB: Did the railroad employ any women?

RF: Yes.

HB: How did they and in what capacity?

RF: They had them as secretaries and billing clerks.

HB: Then they were employed pretty well. What were the immigrants' status. I mean

you know like the different...

RF: Most of the immigrants in this city were the Czechs. There were some Irish.

HB: Where did the Irish live?

RF: They lived mostly up in Time Check.

HB: What was Time Check?

RF: Time Check is a location on the west side of the river, north of F Avenue, and they worked in the Rock Island shops, and they got paid with what they called time checks. In those days, they had to be cashed within a certain time, and that section became known as Time Check.

HB: Czech people did they fill certain positions in society?

RF: Oh, yes, They became regular citizens. They bunched up mostly down around 16th Avenue and down around that territory, on the east and west sides of the river, and that became known down there as Czech Town, and we have had a couple Czech mayors, we had back in those days. We had, I don't remember their names, but I remember we had a couple.

HB: Was there any German community?

RF: Yes, there was a small German community, but I'm not aware of where they--if they located in any certain part.

HB: Did the Czech people--I'm sure there was such a big number of them. They must have filled quite a few, was it more merchant type or...

RF: Yes, they had. They would run bakeries. There were several Czechs that would run bakeries, and store keepers.

HB: The Irish, you said were more factory workers.

RF: They were more factory workers, they would work for the railroads or Quaker Oats, or something.

HB: What about the black people? Were there very many here, like in the twenties?

RF: Not an awful lot, but there were. If they were in this town at that time, they were located in the Southeast part of Cedar Rapids, and whether they were forced to or whether it was their own doing--They seemed to bunch up right there.

HB: Was there much, like segregation then?

RF: It might have been, but I wasn't aware of it.

RF: How did like the railroads handle it, you know, like when they road in the cars? Did they have to sit in certain places?

RF: I don't remember on the railroad, because I wasn't in that part of the business, but the blacks on the railroad were mostly porters. The blacks in town on streetcars may have ridden in the rear end, but I couldn't prove it. I wasn't aware of it in those days.

HB: Were there any Indians around?

RF: No. The closest Indians were in Tama.

HB: Going to education, you mentioned earlier that you went to Polk School and what other schools, or like were you in any sports or . . .

RF: Yes, in fact, I was a member of the City Championship Baseball team in 1916.

HB: Who did you play usually play for--different schools and so forth?

RF: We played other different schools. I couldn't tell you right now which ones we played, but I know we were the champions.

HB: What about like the colleges, like Coe and Mount Mercy and Cornell?

RF: Cornell was in Mount Vernon, but Coe was much smaller than they are now. I only remember two buildings at Coe, but they have got a lot of them now. That was the only college in Cedar Rapids, outside of the Barber College.

HB: What was the Barber College? Oh, that was where they went to learn to barber. Did the colleges of the day have any effect like in the 20's and 30's on Cedar Rapids, itself?

RF: Oh, yes, because you see Coe College is a private college. It is a, I forget which designation it is now. It's a private college. An awful lot of fellows from well-to-do families in Chicago went to Coe at that time. I don't know if it is that same way today or not but it used to be quite a few of the students were from well-to-do families in Chicago, and maybe other cities around here. The only thing that I remember from those days about Coe College was where they had their football field.

HB: Where was that?

RF: That was between A Avenue and B Avenue and Twelfth and Thirteenth Street.

HB: Did they have a good football team?

RF: They had good football teams in those days, yes, They really did, but they didn't have stadium. You know they just had seats lined up around the fence, they had wire fence around it there and then on the game days they would put the canvas there on the outside so people could watch and that was another place I never paid to get into.

HB: You sneaked. What did you do climb underneath the canvas?

RF: I climbed the fence one day, and tore my pants, a big hole in my pants.

I went home to Fourth Avenue and Fourteenth Street and came back and sneaked in again.

HB: What did your mother say about those torn pants?

RF: Well, I got away with it.

HB: I remember you mentioning earlier about Cedar Rapids schools. You were going to mention something about their player escapes or something.

RF: Oh, yes, now I'm not sure about the other schools, but Jackson school up on Fourth Avenue and Fourteenth Street had a circular fire escape that had doors leading to the east side of the building, and on fire drill or if necessary, if there was a fire, you went to a door and slid. You slid circular down this fire escape, to safety.

HB: So it was like a big slide?

RF: Oh, we had a lot of fun on fire drills.

HB: Did you ever have a fire in school while you were there?

RF: No, but we had a lot of fire drills.

HB: Going on to like the government, how did Cedar Rapids get along with Marion? Were there a lot of conflicts?

RF: Yes, there was. They were fighting over the county court house.

HB: How come?

RF: Well, the county court house was originally in Marion. Fact is that is where I got my wedding license, when I got married in 1924, and that was the last year they were in Marion. The next year they were in Cedar Rapids. Cedar Rapids built a big new court house on the island in the river, and they had for several years before, because Cedar Rapids was trying to get it and Marion was trying to hang on to it. But Cedar Rapids finally got it. Now talking about that island in the river, Cedar Rapids is one of only two cities in the entire world that has their city government located on an island in the middle of the river, and the other one is Paris, France.

HB: Talking about you getting married, and marriage and stuff, was it hard to get married, or I mean was there a lot of technicalities to go through back then?

RF: No, just get a license and a preacher and get married.

HB: Did you have to have a blood test or anything.

RF: No, not at that time. See that was 1924 and as I remember all I had to do is go to the court house and get a license and get a minister and somebody to stand up with you.

HB: Did people have big weddings back then?

RF: Oh, yes, but I didn't. No, I just had a wedding in the church where the minister lives, that part of the church and I had, my wife had a girlfriend, and I had a boyfriend, and I was 23 at that time and I was still working for the Northwestern. I had been there since 1920. So we took our honeymoon and we rode a train to Des Moines and we stayed at the--at a hotel there in Des Moines, and we, I'll never forget we went out to a show, a

stage show, at one of the theaters down there, and it was showing the "Bat". I don't know if you ever heard of the "Bat" or not but that was quite a mystery show in those days.

HB: Was it hard for young people to get married back then, I mean, just starting out and stuff like that?

RF: Well, yes. We didn't start out with two TV's, three cars, radio, six radios.

HB: Did you own your house then or did you rent or...

RF: Oh, we rented. We lived in an apartment. An apartment in those days, well, they weren't even called apartments then.

HB: What were they called?

RF: They were just called rooms.

HB: How many rooms did you have?

RF: Oh, two or three.

HB: Two or three, how much did they cost?

RF: That has slipped my mind, but it wasn't very much.

HB: Did you have to pay for like, well, did you have electricity or...

RF: Well, I lived in on two, three, probably four different apartments, till we finally bought a house. No, we didn't buy this house. That was that house up on J Avenue. Then we lived in one, rented house on an Avenue over here. I can't remember the name of it now, but then we bought a small house over at 1136 I Avenue Northwest. That was a full basement, a coal



furnace, one, two, three, four rooms and the kitchen, and an extended back porch, an outside back porch. We paid \$3,200 for that place.

HB: I'm sure you had to take a mortgage out right then, right away.

RF: Yes.

HB: How long would it have been before you got it paid off?

RF: Well, I don't remember that, but I remember we were awful happy when we got it paid off. Then we--by that time, we had two children, and we wanted a larger place, so we sold it. I sold that place while it had two feet of water in the basement. I moved to 2057, 2054, now what's the name of that avenue we moved to? Anyhow, it's up on the east side, the southeast side, and we lived there for several years, and we paid, let's see I told you what we paid for the first place. We paid \$10,500 for that place. Then when the children started getting married and moving away. We didn't need the big place anymore, and we bought this place that I live in now. But, we had quite sometime in the different places we lived.

HB: How did like the Depression affect you, you know, when it hit?

RF: The Depression didn't affect me one bit.

HB: How come was that?

RF: Because I took on extra work where my job was on the railroad. I took on extra work, and when they started bumming around, and guys coming around looking at my job, they would throw up there hands and walk away.

HB: Why, why would they do that?

RF: Too much work.

HB: So you just did a lot of work for the railroad. Did you do any other outside work at that time?

RF: Well, yes, at that time, that was part of the time I was moonlighting at the dance hall. . . . Back in those days, you didn't make a lot of money. Didn't cost you an awful lot to live, but you didn't save an awful lot.

HB: How was Cedar Rapids affected, overall, by the Depression. Were people in pretty bad positions?

RF: Not as much as some places. Not as much as some of your larger cosmopolitan cities. There was some effect, no doubt about that.

HB: Did you have like hobos come through quite a bit?

RF: Yes, We had to watch out for those guys.

HB: Them riding the railroads, did you have a lot of problems, or did the railroad have a lot of problems getting rid of them?

RF: Well, of course, the railroad had their police. That was their job to watch that stuff, and I never had any contact with any of them, any of the bums or anything like that, but there was any awful lot of people out of work and they were riding the rails and walking the streets and the highways, but like I say the cosmopolitan cities were hit harder.

HB: How was like the bank closings? Were there any, or was there a lot of them?

RF: There may have been, but I wasn't affected.

HB: You didn't put your money in a bank then.

RF: I didn't have that much money to put into a bank in those days.

HB: Going back to like children, you having children, did your wife deliver at home?

RF: No, at the hospital.

HB: She did deliver at the hospital?

RF: Fact is, I was invited into the delivery room when my youngest son was born. Of course, that was later on.

HB: Your other children they were born in what, like the late 1920's?

RF: Yeah 1924 I think, and 1928, something like that?

HB: What were--did they have any like child illnesses, or was there any like epidemics, through Cedar Rapids, back then?

RF: Earlier, the biggest epidemic to hit Cedar Rapids was the Asian Flu during World War I. There was a lot of people from--my wife's mother died during that, and there was a lot of people here that died of that, but I was never affected by it.

HB: What about, right after World War I there was that big influenza outbreak?

RF: That was what I was talking about.

HB: That was it, O.K. Did a lot of people die from it here?

RF: Oh yeah, and all over the country. At that time I was helping out at one of the theaters downtown part-time. A big fat guy ran the theater, and you would think he would never die--a big, fat, healthy looking guy, and he got it. But it had no respect for age or anything.

HB: Did they close things around here then, you know condemn it or anything?

RF: I really couldn't tell you anything about that, because I really wasn't involved. I only knew that it was happening and I was still pretty young in those days. Well, I really didn't get old until I passed 39, but now I'm 39 three times and well.

HB: What about things like polio, did that effect anybody, I mean that you knew?

RF: Oh, I knew about polio and read about it, but I had no personal contact with it.

HB: Did they~like what about TV? Were there very many people in Cedar Rapids or did you hear of any people with it?

RF: You mean TV?

HB: Yeah, with TV.

RF: Oh, yes, not for an awful long time though. Of course there was a time-- I don't know, I think what brought me through all these things, is when I was about six years old, I had diphtheria. That is when I was still living in Illinois, of course. I almost died with that, but I came through that, and so I think that helped me shed off an awful lot of other diseases later on.

HB: Did you ever notice, like when you were in school and stuff, did they, like did a lot of children come down with diseases?

RF: Oh, sure, there was a lot of measles, and mumps, and scarlet fever, and things like that.

HB: Did many children die?

RF: Oh, yes, a certain percent, I don't know whether it was a large percent or not, but there was a percentage of children that died. Especially if a grown-up person got the mumps or something like that.

HB: How was the, like the patient--doctor relationships. Did doctors make house calls then?

RF: Yes, doctors made house calls. Their bedside manner was an awful lot better than the awful manners they have today. But, I remember some of the doctors, that treated me, even though my younger days have been long gone.

HB: How much did a doctor charge for like making a house call?

RF: I don't know. I never paid. I never had to pay it, but I imagine it was around \$2 or \$3 or \$4, something like that.

HB: Did like during the Depression, did the doctors except, do you have any idea, did they except other things other than money as payment?

RF: They may have from some people. They may have. I've heard of cases where, in small towns they would trade stuff off the farm or...

HB: You have children and discipline and so forth. Did you were they, were you a lot stricter then?

RF: In those days people were stricter. Some of them were much stricter, but at the same time a lot of them gave you love. In other words, in those days, the parents ruled the children, not like the children are ruling the parents today.

HB: Was it more of the father's responsibility to discipline the child, or...

RF: Well, yes, but it would come down to a case of wait till I tell your dad, when he gets home. But mothers were a good. They would do it in a different way. I personally, I don't remember. I probably got some paddlings when I was a kid, but they just came and went.

HB: It wasn't too bad?

RF: Oh, no.

HB: What about, going back, way back to World War I, and patriotism and so forth, was there a lot of it here in Cedar Rapids?

RF: Oh, yes. They had bond drives and things like that, and they had groups that would greet the soldiers at the train depot, when they came home on leave. There was quite a bit of it, and the bands played "Tipperary", and all that stuff during the war.

HB: Going on and like during the Roaring 20's and Prohibition and stuff, what was the atmosphere and how did people think and react, I mean what was their outlook?

RF: Well, that was the days when the kids became wild.

HB: Wild in what way?

RF: Not in the way they do today. In those days there was no drugs. We didn't have the drug problem and you didn't have near as much alcohol problem. but, we're still on discipline, aren't we?

HB: Yeah, more or less.

RF: Well, and of course, the Roaring 20's, was a different atmosphere in this century than any that I've ever experienced. Everybody was out to have fun, and that was the days, the birth of the big bands and the big dance halls, and, just a different atmosphere entirely than...

HB: Was it an optimistic one, I mean were...

RF: Yes, it was. Strange as it was with the war going on and everything, from 1914 to 1918 there, we, people seemed to have the spirit, a different spirit. They didn't, there was probably among the older people, there might have been a lot of drinking too, but it wasn't like it is today.

HB: What about when the depression hit, was it, did the people change abruptly, or was it...

RF: Well, there were a lot of--of course, I didn't get to see that period in a large metropolitan area, and that's where they had the bread lines and soup kitchens, and people like, were just, no place to live and no place to, nothing to eat, and it was terrible.

HB: Just picking up a few events, before we close. How about the public library murder from 1921, do you remember anything about that?

RF: Well, that was a big Dutchman, I forget his name now, murdered somebody and the police got after him and they ran him out of the public library and they finally cornered him down on south Third Street. I think he was shot. I'm not sure now, but he was a big Dutchman, name of, oh, I can't tell you that.

HB: How about the Lyman Stark building collapse?

RF: Oh, yes, I'll never forget that because I was going to Jackson school at the time and after school, that night it just so happened that me and another



kid, out in the back alley, was having a difference of opinion, with our fists and we, somebody came running up to us and told us that the building had collapsed, and so we all went down together to see what it was, and there it was, the south side of that building. It was under construction and apparently they put too much weight on, while the concrete was green, and the weight from the seventh floor was just too much and it took the whole side, the south side of the building down to the street. And there were several workmen killed at that time.

HB: Just more or less to wrap it up. Do you think, what do you think, compared to now a days, compared to then, what--was it a better life back then than it is now?

RF: I don't believe in the old expression, the good old days .

HB: You don't, how come?

RF: Well, because there is no such thing. It is just a state of mind. When you are young, you have different values. When your older, you have different values. So you can't compare, what I feel and like today with what I felt and liked 80 years ago, or 75 years ago.

HB: Do you feel though that, are you glad that you grew up then, instead of now?

RF: Sometimes I do. Some times I don't, because I tell ya, I have lived through the greatest expansion in the history of this country. That was when radio, and the TV, and the automobile, and the airplanes, and three wars. I've lived through a period that, it is something that you can't forget.

HB: Anything you would like to say, just anything, you know, I don't care,

just anything you feel like you would like to say ?

RF: Well, I would like to say that although I was born in the state of Illinois, I consider Iowa my home, I always have, because I lived most of my life here. Cedar Rapids, I don't think can be beat for a city to live in. It has always been a progressive city, We've got things here that--We may have our troubles at times, but we've been very lucky in city government for one thing. We got a good city government now, I know times when we had bums in the city government, but that will hapen any place. They didn't last long. I think that, well, the only thing I would like to say is this, May 3, of this year, I'll be 84 years old, I'd like to start in on my next 84.

HB: Well, I hope you do.





# Fame isn't the object

CR Gaz. 8-26-79 p. 12C

By Gail Cooper-Evans  
Gazette Growing Older editor

Bob Fryrear says he's not looking to become rich and famous with his hobby. It's the satisfaction of seeing a job done from start to finish that he's after.

Fryrear, 78, of 2416 E Ave. NE, took up his hobby — acrylic painting — eight years ago, after being retired from the North Western Railroad for three years.

"Nothing beats these 7-day weekends," Fryrear said of retirement. That's why he took up the hobby.

"I've always been interested in drawing," he said. "I had three cartoons published in The Gazette during World War I, and I won a contest in the Chicago Tribune once.

"When I was a kid in the sixth grade, I won a city-wide poster contest. I never painted again until eight years ago."

He thought a minute, then qualified his statement. "Oh, I did a few 'paint-by-number' things, but that's not really painting."

In his early years, Fryrear said, "I had to go to work when I was young. I spent so much time working, I didn't have time to paint."

Even now he has to find time for his hobby. As a national officer (a vice president) in the National Association of Retired and Veteran Railway Employees Inc., Fryrear travels to recruit new members.

"I designed the emblem for NARVRE," Fryrear said proudly. "I spent three years getting a patent for it. Now that I have it, the emblem is used on all pins, stationery and whatever the organization puts out."

Appropriately, the emblem features a head-on drawing of a train engine (see illustration here).

One might think because of Fryrear's 48 years in railroading, he would choose that as a favorite subject to paint. In fact, he did at first. Since he works primarily from postcards, photographs, pictures in magazines and newspapers, always adding his original touches and "never" copying another painting, one of his first works is "No. 14 On Time," taken from a 1936 black and white photograph.



It features a steam train, heading for the old North Western freight depot. In the background are Quaker Oats, an old viaduct, Cedar Rapids Transfer and Storage, and Calders Van and Storage. Quaker Oats is the only remaining structure on the site today; the new Five Seasons Center and parking lot take up much of the remaining area.

"I've only painted a few railroad scenes," Fryrear noted, admitting he's really hooked on landscapes with snow and frozen streams. "I liked this one so well ('Mountain Snow' from a picture of the Bavarian Alps) that I decided to do more of the same. I really like the effect I got with the shadows on that one."

Another favorite of the self-taught artist is one he calls "The Menu." It was taken from a newspaper photograph of a man in an overcoat standing outside a newspaper office, reading the paper through the window. "I changed it to a man outside a cafe reading a menu through the window," he said. "That gives it my own personal touch."

Fryrear, who said he's sold about a half-dozen of his paintings, has had one exhibit at St. Luke's Hospital. He's planning a showing and sale at his home next weekend — Saturday from 1 to 4 p.m. and 5 to 8 p.m., and Sunday, 1 to 5. "I don't charge as much as some artists," he said. His pictures, which are bright and colorful, range from \$50 to \$100.

"I only work in acrylics," Fryrear said. "A friend suggested it when I first started out, and I found I liked it."

"I don't have to wait so long to paint over my mistakes," he explained, laughing. "Some of these probably have three or four layers of acrylics on them!"





Gazette photo by John McIvor

Bob Fryrear, 78-year-old Cedar Rapids artist, starts on another painting. In background is "Mountain Snow," one of his favorite landscapes. He's planning a show and sale next weekend.

JUNIOR LEAGUE OF CEDAR RAPIDS  
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Follow-up Interview With  
Robert Fryrear

Conducted by Laura Derr  
March 25, 1985  
2410 E Avenue NE  
Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Transcribed by Sue Daugherty

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*3 year  
(follow-up)*

INTERVIEW TOPICS  
CEDAR RAPIDS: THE EARLY DECADES OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

I. PERSONAL LEAD-IN QUESTIONS

- When were you born? Where?
- How long have you lived in Cedar Rapids?
- What are your parents' names?
- 18, 19* --Where did you go to school?
- 21* --Are you married or single?
- 25* --Did you raise a family? How big?
- 19* --What has been your occupation (career) during your adult years?

II. COMMUNITY TOPICS

A. Technology in the Community

1. Transportation

- 7* --Railway travel (Union Station, trips to Iowa City on Crandic)
- Trolleys (the Interurban)
- Horses and First Automobiles
- Mud roads and the seedling mile
- Hunter Airport and the first planes
- Cedar River (ferries, floods, dams)

2. Communications

- 2-4, 6* --Newspapers
- 15-16, 23-25, 26-27* --Radios
- 26-27* --Advertising
- Telephones

B. People in the Community

1. Amusements/Recreation - *14*

- Motion Pictures
- Cedar Rapids Parks
- Dances
- Carnival Week
- Chautauqua
- Community Theater
- Little Gallery
- Symphony Orchestra
- Circus
- Greene's Opera House
- Amusement Parks (Alamo)
- Camps
- Community Centers (YWCA, YMCA)

*15-17 - Baseball*

2. Famous Characters

- Cherry Sisters
- 17* --Grant Wood
- Carl Van Vechten (The Tattooed Countess)
- Marvin Cone
- 17* --Wm Shire



*Any year*  
*(follow-up)*

3. Lifestyle - 10-11, 11-14

- Life before air conditioning
- Winter Activities
- Holidays (Memorial Day, July 4, Thanksgiving, Christmas)
- Clothing
- Toys
- 29 --Saloons/Taverns
- Farm Life

4. Family Life

- Household Help
- Women's Roles
- Childrens' Activities/Behavior
- Sunday activities (Church life, Sunday Blue Laws)

5. Ethnic/Minority Life

- Immigrants (Czech, Greek, German, etc.)
- Indians
- Segregation of Blacks
- Jobs Available

C. Organizations and Institutions in the Community

1. Education 34

- Cedar Rapids Schools
- Coe College
- Mount Mercy College
- Cornell College

2. Government

- City Services
- Streets/Roads
- Relationship with Marion (Courthouse Dispute)

3. Medical

- Hospitals
- Patient-Doctor Relationship
- Broken Bones
- Polio, TB, Debilitating Diseases
- House Calls
- Home Delivery of Babies

*1 year*  
*(follow up)*

4. Business and Economy - *Lincoln Head Pennies 7*
- Local Factories (Douglas Starch Works, Quaker Oats, etc.)
  - 30 --Local Brewing Companies
  - Retail Businesses /Department Stores
  - Professions
  - Banking and Finance
  - Restaurants (Greek Restaurants in 30's)
  - 4-5 --Businesses that no longer exist (old
  - 8-10 groceries, drygoods, icehouses)
  - Farmers Market
  - Mills on Cedar River
  - Buildings Erected
  - Manual Labor/Types of Jobs
  - Companies (Labor Unions, Strikes, Pay)

5. Attitudes/Values
- Children/Discipline
  - Sex/Petting
  - Charity
  - Divorce
  - Work
  - Working women, Voting Rights for Women
  - Patriotism (World War I)

D. Historic Events in and Outside the Community

1. Catastrophic Events
- Clifton Hotel Fire (1903)
  - Douglas Starch Works Explosion(1919)
  - Bank Closings (1933)
  - Lyman-Stark Building Collapse(1913)
  - Public Library Murder(1921)
2. National Historic Events
- Womens' Suffrage
  - 32-33 --World War I & II
  - Roaring 20's
  - 28-29/31 --Prohibition
  - Great Depression
  - 1-2 --Halley's Comet

Junior League of Cedar Rapids  
Oral History Project

Follow-up Interview with: Robert Fryrear  
Conducted by: Laura Derr  
Date: March 25, 1985  
Place: 2410 E Avenue NE, Cedar Rapids, IA

LD: This is Laura Derr. I am at the home of Mr. Robert Fryrear (sic) on March 25, 1985, at 2416 E Avenue NE. This is a follow-up interview with Mr. Robert Fryrear (sic) and we're going to just touch on a number of topics today that we missed in the original interview. Mr. Fryrear will you start . . .

Fryrear: Pardon me a minute. That's Fryrear.

LD: Fryrear. It's F-R-Y-R-E-A-R. Thank you.

Fryrear: A lot of people leave that second "r" out.

LD: That's the French, isn't it?

Fryrear: Yeah.

LD: Since Haley's (sic) Comet is so much in the news today, I'd like for you to . . .

Fryrear: I believe that's Halley's Comet.

LD: Oh, don't tell me, I've got it all wrong. You know, they're calling it Haley's Comet.

Fryrear: I know. But Haley is the guy that wrote several books and Halley is the man that discovered the comet.

LD: Well, you saw Halley's Comet the first time this century that it came around, didn't you?

Fryrear: In 1910, in the spring.

LD: What can you remember about that?

Fryrear: Oh ho ho, I'll never forget it. I don't know as you'll ever

see it as good again as I saw it in 1910. It was in the western sky and you could see it for days and weeks in the western sky, the tail streaming towards the north. The comet was headed south from the north and you could see it in the western sky day and night.

LD: And that corresponded with the time that you moved to the Cedar Rapids area.

Fryrear: That's that same year.

LD: And you would have been how old?

Fryrear: Nine years.

LD: Nine years old, so that really would impress you.

Fryrear: Oh, yes.

LD: You also described in your original tape, being a paperboy downtown.

Fryrear: Right.

LD: There were probably lots of your contemporaries that were on the different street corners. What happened to those other downtown paperboys?

Fryrear: Well, I can't tell you all of them, but I can tell you a few. One of them went to California and made western movies in Hollywood.

LD: For heaven's sake.

Fryrear: One of them became a governor in the state of Nebraska.

LD: What are the names of these fellows, do you remember?

Fryrear: I don't know whether the names will make any difference or not, but the name of the fella in the movies was a--Pardon me--  
(tape turned off) Then there was a fella named Terry, and he

became the governor of the state of Nebraska later on. He was known as "Terrible Terry" at that time. Then there was a fella that sold papers on the corner of the Merchants National Bank building and he'd go in after he was through selling papers and deposit his money in a savings account. Later on, he became an employee of the Merchant's National Bank and retired as a vice president in the loan department. His name right now slips my mind but there are people who know him. Then there's one other that I know very well. He's a well-known dentist in Cedar Rapids. Fact is, I've been going to him twice a year for over fifty years. We're very good friends. His name is Morris Katzoff.

LD: Oh, yes, we have his name to interview, as a matter of fact. Can you talk a little bit about the relationships between the paperboys? Did you each have a territory that you staked out when you were doing that?

Fryrear: Yes. Usually we would stake out a corner someplace. One fella had the corner at the old Post Office building, which is now Witwer Center. This fellow that I mentioned a while ago that had the Merchants National Bank. The corner that I finally staked out after roaming around quite a bit on the streets was Fourth Street and Third Avenue, across from where the Union Depot used to be.

LD: Oh, that would have been a good spot.

Fryrear: That was a good spot because there was people coming off the trains, the salesmen that moved in at that time, they'd come into town and bein's that the various hotels in town were

scattered in a close area of proximity to the Union Depot, they'd come in there and see go to the hotels and it was a pretty good spot for selling paper. Of course, at the same time, we all had some regular customers in office buildings and stores downtown that we would sell to . . .

LD: They would always seek you out or they would . . . .

Fryrear: . . . we would go to their store.

LD: You would seek **them** out.

Fryrear: Yes.

LD: How did you get your papers? Did you go to the Gazette?

Fryrear: We went to the Gazette, which at that time--I mentioned before--was down on First Avenue on the river bank. People might have the idea that we were more or less kind of street urchins or bums or "street children" as they call them today. But we weren't, we were junior merchants because we bought our papers for a penny apiece and then we went uptown and sold 'em for two cents and no matter which way you look at it, that's 100 percent profit.

LD: That's pretty good.

Fryrear: But none of us got rich on it. . . at those prices.

LD: But it was a good way to keep yourself in spending money, I'm sure.

Fryrear: That's right. And not only that, (Laughter) I mentioned before the stores downtown but my favorite stores were Dysart's Candy Store on Third Avenue between Third and Fourth Street and (they called them candy kitchens at the time) then there was an ice cream parlor on Third Street between Second and Third Avenue.

I forget the name of that. But my favorite was Brimm's Bakery down on First Street, just off of Third Avenue because--you ask any of the old-timers and they'll remember Brimm's Bakery. They always had a big baked ham on the counter under a big glass cover. Of course, they made their own buns and they were good-sized buns. They weren't like the hamburger buns you get today, they were larger than that. But they had this ham and they would slice off slices and slap it in that bun and put some mustard on it and boy, I'll tell you, you had a lunch.

LD: That was your lunch.

Fryrear: That was a lunch. Well, you'd maybe go down to a drugstore down on the next corner and get a bottle of sodie (sic) or some thing like that with it.

LD: How much would you pay for that kind of a sandwich.

Fryrear: Five or ten cents. Big money in those days.

LD: Right. Dysart's Candy Kitchen you called it.

Fryrear: Yeah.

LD: Can you describe what the inside of that store was like?

Fryrear: Oh, it was delightful. (Laughter) Just the odor, the smell. Candy. My favorite candy was the pecan rolls. If you have ever eaten a pecan roll, you know what they are.

LD; They're wonderful.

Fryrear: Yeah.

LD; Did they have all sorts of fudges and that sort of candy as well as hard candy?

Fryrear: Oh, yes, they made their own candy right there in the store. They had everything, they had chocolate creams and--that was



before the days of candy bars--because you would go into the store and you'd buy so much, so many pieces of candy or maybe a sackful or whatever. They did it. And it didn't cost you an awful lot.

LD: That was before they had all the pre-packaged.

Fryrear: Yes. And I will tell you a little more about pre-packaged stuff later when we get to talking about grocery shopping.

LD: Let me just establish time here again. Now we were talking about your being a paperboy and working downtown, would that have been when you were about nine, ten years old? Or were you older then?

Fryrear: Oh, I must have been ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen. I sold papers up till I was fifteen years old.

LD: So that would have been about 1910 to 1915.

Fryrear: 1916.

LD: 1916. Okay. Well, let's go on to . . . I don't know if we've covered **all** your favorite downtown places. I know Dysart's and Brimm's must have been two of them, were there others that you really enjoyed?

Fryrear: Well, of course, I told previously about the theatres.

LD: Yes.

Fryrear: And the all the theatres downtown and the hotels, where they were located. Outside of those stores, the rest of them didn't impress me too much. But there were quite a few stores downtown that have been defunct for many a year now.

LD: As a young boy, what kind of impression did Union Station and all of the railroad traffic make on you?

Fryrear: Well, it was a good place for me because when we first came to town in 1910, in the fall, we come in on the Rock Island. And we stopped at the Union Station--the train pulled in at the Union Station--and we got off. And the first thing I noticed, of course--and I think I mentioned this before--was the big flower bed in Greene Square.

LD: The "Cedar Rapids Suits Me".

Fryrear: Right. Yes. And also, at the same time, I didn't mention before--the big Civil War cannon that was placed in Greene Square on the northwest corner of the square.

LD: So it was a very impressive sight for a youngster.

Fryrear: Yes, it was. About the biggest thing I had remembered before I moved to Cedar Rapids was, of course, the Halley's Comet, and previous to that about 1906 when the first Lincoln penny come out. I'd have been five years old at that time. At that time, to introduce the Lincoln penny to the people of the country, there was a couple men in a wagon--horse-drawn wagon--kept driving around the square in Galesburg, Illinois, where I was, throwing out these pennies to the people.

LD: No kidding!

Fryrear: That's the way they did it to introduce the Lincoln penny because up till then they were all indian head pennies.

LD: And that was just so you would be aware of them that they were real pennies. Or that they were something that you would want to collect? Or . . .

Fryrear: Well, no, because at that time, they were something to spend. And I always wished later that I had saved some.

LD: Oh, you used them all up. (Laughter)

Fryrear: Like any child that age.

LD: You talked just a bit about grocery stores last time. Where would you and your family shop for groceries when you were growing up?

Fryrear: Well, there were several different types of grocery stores at that time, but there wasn't any markets, any supermarkets. The grocery store at that time was either run by a they'd call a "pop and mom" store or it was run by some businessman and it was usually located on a corner someplace in town in the neighborhood. And if you lived close enough, you went to the store and did your own shopping. And, as I mentioned before, shopping was a lot different then than it is now. You didn't have carts and check-out counters and things like that. You went in there and if you wanted a pound of lard, they scooped it up out of a barrel and put it in a container, wrapped it with paper and string and that was it. The same way with butter. That was about the only thing they sold by the pound in those days, everything else was sold by the piece or by the dozen. You could buy a dozen cookies, you could buy a dozen this, a dozen that. If you wanted meat, why, you'd go to the meat counter over in the corner. The butcher--they had a butcher there--he wasn't just one of the clerks, he was a regular butcher. And you'd tell him what you'd want and he'd walk into the big, walk-in freezer and he'd bring out a big hunk of meat and then he'd sharpen up his knife and slice off what you wanted.

LD: Right in front of you.

Fryrear: Right in front of you. And if he had to saw some bone, he had a big saw there and he'd saw it off. And then he'd wrap that up in some heavy paper and tie it with a string and there you are, you had your--no packaging for it. I don't remember until later, any packaged stuff at all in stores. Everything was bulk. You bought a dozen pickles, the clerk would get a big scoop and scoop 'em up out of a barrel. Same way with sauerkraut. Potatoes was sold by the sackful. There was very little stuff at that time--groceries--sold by the package or by the pound, it was mostly all individual stuff.

LD: Would you generally bring your own basket or bag or would they provide that?

Fryrear: Well, no, you'd bring that to the store, but if you lived a little far away from the store, or the weather was bad, what you would do, you would get on the telephone and you'd call the store. The clerk there would get a pad with a carbon paper in it and he'd take down your order. Then he'd--when he got your order--he'd go get a big box and start piling the stuff into this box. Then this box would go on the wagon for the delivery man and the delivery man would drive up in front of your house and take your box into the house and put the stuff out on the kitchen table or counter and take his box and go on his way.

LD: Boy, I wish we still had that.

Fryrear: Yes. And that also reminds me at the same time, that was at the time when you would get house calls from doctors. So it was about the same proposition. But in those days, they delivered. You would either pay them on the spot--the delivery man

--or if you had an account at the store, you would wait till the end of the week, maybe payday, and you'd go to the store and you'd pay your bill; settle up for the week or two weeks whatever the period was. And for settling up with him, the grocer would give you a big sack of candy, a treat.

LD: Well, that was a real incentive, wasn't it?

Fryrear: That was. (Laughter)

LD: Then in those days, did people tend to dicker over the prices of things in grocery stores or was it just all accepted--cut and dried--the way it is now, you walk in and you look at the price, you can either buy it at that price or not buy it at all.

Fryrear: I don't remember much dickering going on at the store but it seems to me that seemed to be one business that you accepted what their price was and especially if they let you run a week or two weeks before you paid on account. There were some accounts like that and then some people, of course, had to pay cash. But I don't really remember any dickering over prices except when you was buying something at a store other than groceries.

LD: In the same line as groceries, how did you keep your food from spoiling in those day?

Fryrear: Originally, at one time I lived with my grandfather on a farm in Illinois--well, the fact is, the family lived for a while on a farm--I went to a counrty school. And at that time, people had an outdoor cave dug into the ground and covered up and that was their cooling system. They put their milk, butter, and things like that that might spoil in this cave and keep 'em

cool. Later on, we got iceboxes. An icebox, at that time, was really an icebox. It was a big box with the lid raised on the top and you put the ice in on top.

LD: Oh, it went on the top.

Fryrear: Top. And your food went inside underneath and you would buy your ice from the iceman that come around in a horse and wagon. You'd buy it by a fifty or a hundred pound cake of ice and of course, you had to keep a pan underneath to keep the drip when the ice melted. You had to empty that every once in awhile, but the ice at that time was real river ice. Here in Cedar Rapids the Hubbard Ice Company had a plant up on the river north of F Avenue on the west side. And they had also a storage barn closer to F Avenue between F and E Avenues. And in the wintertime, when the river would freeze up-- at that time, the dam on the river was farther up the river than it is now-- and they would go out on the river when the river froze to maybe a depth of two feet or a foot and a half or whatever it is-- they'd go out on there with horses and saws and they'd saw up big cakes of ice and then the horses would drag the ice up the bank and they'd store the ice in this big storage barn. And if you can imagine a storage barn full of ice that burnt down one day, you'd wonder whatever happened; why the ice didn't put out the fire. And it may have helped a lot because there was an awful lot of ice stored in that storage barn.

LD: And it caught on fire.

Fryrear: It caught on fire and burned down one day. . . one night. There was a lot of rough ice laying around on the ground--on the

riverbank for a long time till it melted out.

LD: So it must have been in the wintertime when that happened.

Fryrear: Yes. It was in the wintertime.

LD: Do you remember how old you were when that happened?

Fryrear: No, I really don't, but I think that was, when that burned down, that may have been a little later. That may have been late twenties or early thirties--at that time. But I do remember seeing them cut the ice in the wintertime. They'd saw these big chunks of ice right out of the river and then when the iceman went to make his deliveries, why he'd go to this storage barn and pick out, load his wagon up with ice and go out into the neighborhood and sell. You could always hear him coming 'cause he had a bell that kept ringin' on the wagon. Us kids we used to have a lot of fun, we'd hop on the back of this wagon--it had a step back in the back of it. We'd go in there and we'd grab small pieces of ice that got chipped off and suck 'em.

LD: It was a treat.

Fryrear: Yeah, but it was river water you wouldn't dare do that today the way . . .

LD: How did you tell the iceman that you wanted to buy, did you just come out and wave at him?

Fryrear: No. Usually you had a card. I think it was a green card and it had "50", "100", "150", "200" on each side of the card and you put that in your window and if you wanted 50 pounds of ice, you'd put the "50" up and as he'd come by he'd see that in the window and he'd bring your ice to you and stick it in the top



of the refrigerator and he had big tongs that he carried 'em with.

LD: He'd have to be a pretty hefty fellow, wouldn't he?

Fryrear: Oh, yeah. They always had a piece of leather or somethin' that they draped over their shoulder and when they brought that ice, they'd carry it on their shoulder.

LD: Do you remember how long a fifty pound cake of ice would last in the summertime?

Fryrear: No especially. It wouldn't last near as long in the summer. (Laughter) But those iceboxes were--oh, they would hold 'em pretty good because the top where the ice went in was usually lined with metal of some kind. I really don't remember how long it would last.

LD: Must not have been your job to clean out the water underneath.

Fryrear: (Laughter) Well, it was my job part of the time to dump the water out that dripped down. Because that's what . . . you see, if the ice don't melt, then you don't have the refrigeration. That's what causes the refrigeration is the melting of the ice.

LD: I guess it runs down the sides.

Fryrear: No, it runs down a tube.

LD: A tube. But that cooled the sides of the icebox.

Fryrear: We had a little built-on back porch when we lived over on I Avenue West, we had a built-in back porch there and we cut a hole in the bottom and put a pipe down in there and let the water drip right outdoors so we didn't have to empty it.

LD: Was that Northwest or Southwest?

Fryrear: Northwest.

LD: Northwest.

Fryrear: And then the electric refrigerators come along. See they were originally. . . the process of making ice and freezing that was invented by Lord Kelvin of England.

LD: So that's where Kelvinator came from.

Fryrear: That's where Kelvinator come from. That was the original refrigerator was the Kelvinator and it was invented by him. Process.

LD: That probably would have been thirties or forties, wouldn't it, when you actually had electric refrigeration?

Fryrear: Yes. We lived over there until about the forties and we had icebox for a long time and then we finally bought ourselves an electric refrigerator and that was probably in the late thirties or early forties.

LD: Okay. What are your memories about the amusements that you had when you were growing up?

Fryrear: A lot of the amusements we made ourselves.

LD: Yes, you mentioned some of the games that you played, that's great.

Fryrear: Yeah. Of course, there were some places to have amusement. We'd have picnics, say, in Ellis Park or Bever Park. There was always horseshoe pitching or a softball game or something like that going on. And, of course, in Bever Park, they had the small zoo that they had there. We had different forms of amusement, but most of them as I mentioned before, we made ourselves.

LD: Do you have memories of the Alamo Amusement Park?

Fryrear: Yes. Later on it became a baseball park and it was over there in the vicinity of where Harrison school is.

LD: Did you go there much when you were growing up?

Fryrear: No. I don't remember too much about Alamo Park. But I do remember the baseball park.

LD: That was near it. That was close to it.

Fryrear: It was over there on--I think it was bounded on one side by E Avenue on the north side--by E Avenue. It was just south of E Avenue at about Ninth or Tenth Street--over in there.

LD: This was the Southeast side.

Fryrear: Southeast side. No, the Northeast side.

LD: Oh, it was northeast.

Fryrear: Yeah, the northeast. And later on they used to have good ball games over there. The funny part of it was when radio first come in and started becoming popular, the ballpark people wouldn't let radio people in the park to broadcast the games, so there was a young fella that worked for one of the radio stations in town that broadcast the games from the porch roof of a house which was owned and lived in by one of the engineers of the radio station. It was across E Avenue and he would get out on the porch roof and with binoculars, he'd watch the game and he would report the play by play. He later on went to Chicago and become quite an announcer for one of the stations in Chicago. I was trying to remember his name while I was talkin' here, but it just slipped my mind. Everybody in those days will know who I'm talking about.

LD: I suppose that the whole notion of advertising and how it could

enhance the baseball income, I guess none of that had come into play then.

Fryrear: Not then. Later on, of course, they got smart and let the radio people in the ballpark. I personally knew one of the fellows in the later years--maybe in the forties and fifties--that broadcast from the broadcast booth over there at the ballpark. Originally, it was called the old Bunny ball park, Cedar Rapids, because that was the name of the team, the Bunnies.

LD: The Bunnies! Well, now I had never heard of that. This was way before the days of the Cedar Rapids Reds, I guess. Were most of the teams that played in that ball park city teams or did they come from all over the state?

Fryrear: Well, they had a regular league. They had a regular league; it was called--at that time, I think--it was called the Central League. Later on it became the 3-I League--Iowa, Illinois, and Indiana teams.--that's why they called it the 3-I. Before that I think it was called the Central League and Cedar Rapids had a team and they'd play teams like Waterloo and Ottumwa and places around like that.

LD: So these were paid baseball players.

Fryrear: Yes. Yeah, they were pros.

LD: And who paid for that, was it the city?

Fryrear: No, they were paid through admissions and sale of popcorn and stuff like that, you know. But they had a regular league. They had a general manager. One of the general managers back in those days later become mayor of our city. He moved here from someplace in South Dakota I think it was. But he become

the manager of the ball team. But the baseball team has had many names since it originally was the Bunnies. They've been associated with almost every big league team since then. Now, of course, they're the Reds. But they were, for a long time, there were other teams.

LD: Did that go back as far as when you first moved to Cedar Rapids or was that more of the twenties and thirties?

Fryrear: I believe that was more--yeah--later on. I don't remember in the teens so much of the baseball as I did later on. You see it was my grammar school remembrances and the newspaper selling and all that were in the teens and some of these things come later on but even at that forty, fifty years ago--things have changed an awful lot.

LD: Back in those days, who were the famous men? Do you know a famous man who came out of Cedar Rapids from that period?

Fryrear: Yes, I do. Two of them I knew personally. You all probably know Grant Wood. Grant Wood at one time was a teacher in school--art. And also, one year when I was in Jackson school, they had an art contest in the schools and he was one of the judges for the art school. And I won the contest that year and so I got to meet Grant Wood and talk to him. And also, William Sheyer. You know William Sheyer. [Shires]

LD: I just got his new book.

Fryrear: Yes. I knew him very well. I really knew him better than I knew Grant Wood.

LD: He was at Coe in the twenties, wasn't he?

Fryrear: He was at Coe in the twenties and he was--I think I first knew

him when he was either first at Coe or when he was at Washington High school, I forget which. But I knew Bill Shirer pretty well.

LD: How did you come into contact with him?

Fryrear: I don't know. I just knew a lot of the people at that time from different walks of life. Fact is, I was so well acquainted with some of the fellas at Washington High school that I used to work out with the wrestling team up to the YMCA and they took me with them to the wrestling meets.

LD: Okay. Well, now at that time, were you older than the Washington High students?

Fryrear: I was a little . . .

LD: You would have been out of school at that time.

Fryrear: Yes and no. Actually, I didn't go to high school.

LD: Okay. So you met them . . .

Fryrear: But I knew a lot of 'em . . .

LD: . . . at the "Y".

Fryrear: I knew some 'em prior to the high school years and some them after. You see, some of those fellows that were pretty good athletes and stuff in Washington High school were in my classes at Jackson in the teens, so I knew some them to start with and then I got to know a lot of them after that through just pallin' around with 'em.

LD: I want to go back for a moment to your memories of Grant Wood. It sounds as if you received some encouragement for your art work and I see your artwork on the walls here and I have heard about it. Why did you not pursue that as a career?

Fryrear: Well, I went to work when I was 15 years old.

LD: And it just didn't seem like a way to make a living for you?

Fryrear: At that time--see, when we moved to Cedar Rapids, it was because, one reason we moved to Cedar Rapids was because my father and mother were separated. She moved here with us--there was five of us children--and she was a good, very good dressmaker and so between that and us kids going to work early, we kept the family together. So that's when I graduated from eighth grade at Jackson school, I was done with my schooling.

LD: Were you the oldest child?

Fryrear: No, I had an older brother; an older brother and two younger brothers.

LD: So you were right in the middle.

Fryrear: I was right in the middle.

LD: But you certainly had to have a role in helping to keep this family together.

Fryrear: Oh, yes. Yes, very much. So as I said, I went to work after I graduated from eighth grade. I went to work as a messenger for the Illinois Central railroad September 1, 1916. I worked for the railroad from then on till I retired from the Chicago Northwestern in 1968.

LD: That's a long time.

Fryrear: So I had 53 years of railroading.

LD: Did you manage to continue your art during that time?

Fryrear: I didn't for a long time. Actually, I never started painting till after I retired.

LD: I see.



Fryrear: But before that, I was very interested in drawing and cartooning. Fact is, I had a cartoon on the front page of the Gazette during World War I.

LD: Oh, really. What was it about? Can you describe it?

Fryrear: It was a picture of the Kaiser with his big pointed helmet and his big mustache. It was a caricature of the Kaiser and that was printed on the front page of the Gazette and I don't know why I never saved a copy. I don't know what happened. Over the years, a lot of things I lost.

LD: Do you remember the date of that?

Fryrear: It would have been about 1917 or 1918.

LD: Sure. Did you just send it in and they chose to use it?

Fryrear: Yeah. Yeah, I just sent it in. I was always pretty fair drawing a cartoon. As I said, I won this art contest--poster contest is what it was--in the school. So it was just something that came to me naturally. Later on I did--just for the fun of it--I did a lot of cartooning and drawing things like that. But actually, I didn't start painting till two years after I'd retired.

LD: I'll be darned. Well, I'm glad you had an opportunity to pick it up again, that's really important.

When you were growing up, do you remember the names of particular people in this community who were considered to be the important people in this community? The leaders of the community.

Fryrear: Well, yes. Howard Hall was one of them. The girl I married in 1924, worked for Howard Hall. She was his secretary. We were

invited to the reception after he married Margaret . . .

LD: . . . Douglas.

Fryrear: Douglas.

LD: That was at Brucemore, wasn't it?

Fryrear: At Brucemore. And we were invited out there and we were invited to the reception.

LD: That was quite a social event, wasn't it?

Fryrear: That was. At that time, they had a kind of a sunken garden out in front there that was quite interesting. I remember we drove up under a portico there and we got out and somebody took and parked the car for us. No. We went in a cab that time. And we went in and I had never met Howard Hall before and I congratulated the best man.

LD: (Laughter) It's a natural mistake. (Laughter) Well, yes, I've read that . . .

Fryrear: But Howard was a real nice fella. He was very nice and she got along well on that job and she worked for him for a while until we started having children. But I'll never forget that reception out there. Margaret and Howard were both real nice people.

LD: There were hundreds of people at that reception, weren't there?

Fryrear: Oh, yes. Yes. That was a big deal. It was like those movies you see of the people in the East or back in the days when they had those--I can't remember the name of the author that wrote those stories--

LD: Oh, I'll bet you're thinking of F. Scott Fitzgerald.

Fryrear: F. Scott Fitzgerald. You're right. It reminded me of that

cause I--at one time--have visited that mansion in Rhode Island that the people . . . part of the show was shown . . .

LD: Oh, the Gatsby movie.

Fryrear: The Gatsby movie.

LD: A portion of that was done there, wasn't it. Yes.

Fryrear: The Gatsby movie, that's right. It was shot at this big mansion there, now I forget which family.

LD: Yes, I know what you mean.

Fryrear: But it was a kind of a party like that only it wasn't the drinking.

LD: There was no liquor served?

Fryrear: No. It was still in prohibition times.

LD: I guess that might have been--yeah--late twenties.

Fryrear: Still prohibition time. But I do remember Howard inviting Mabel and I out to visit him one evening out at the house and I don't know what the purpose was, whether he wanted to look me over or whether he wanted to look us both over or what it was. But anyway, at that party, he served some prohibition liquor. Howard before . . . he originally started with the Universal Engineering Company on the west side, him and another fella.

LD: Before Iowa Manufacturing.

Fryrear: Before Iowa Man. Then he bought in, married Margaret and he when he was still alive--when they were both still alive they did a lot of things for the medical things at Mercy hospital.

LD: Did you have the perception that the city of Cedar Rapids' real leaders were people that were in the government or were

they people that were businessmen or people that were involved with the industries? Was there a sense of who ran things?

Fryrear: Most of them were--outside of the city government, which was just another city government--the people that run this town were people like Howard Hall, Leo Smulekoff, and some lawyers, a few lawyers--some of them I knew personally--and businessmen, like Armstrong--Sam Armstrong, which was the original Armstrong's Clothing--people like that.

LD: It really is, it's a business town.

Fryrear: That's right.

LD: Shifting a little bit. We talked about the radio in relationship to baseball but what was the effect of radio on your home life when it came in as a very popular thing?

Fryrear: Funny thing about radio. When radio first started, the only radio that you could get in your home was crystal sets. This crystal was the power. It didn't have batteries. This crystal was set into a lead cup and you would touch one end of a wire onto that crystal to get the best reception, the best power. There was some kind of a power in that crystal. You would buy the different parts and assemble them and make your own radio set, which I did at one time. We'd take a Quaker Oats box, one of those round Quaker Oats boxes that the oatmeal comes in and we'd shellac that and then we'd wind it real tight with copper wire. And then we'd build a slide across the top with a thing that slid across on a wire and that was what tuned in our stations. And only one person could listen to it at a time because you had to use headsets.

LD: You had to have earphones.

Fryrear: Earphones.

LD: Okay.

Fryrear: Then, later on, when the commercial sets started coming out, first things they were great big things. Oh, maybe about four feet long, couple feet wide and maybe a foot, foot and a half high. And they had three big dials on the front and you had to tune in a station, you had to regulate all three dials and synchronize. The speaker was a separate unit. It was a horn that set on a base and then the horn come up and come to a big open at the top--it looked more like a megaphone than . . . . Then later on when they started the puttin' the speakers into the sets and then they started building consoles and they become bigger and they got bigger and bigger. Then later on they started reversing and they started making them smaller and smaller.

LD: Yes. Now they're tiny.

Fryrear: Now they're tiny, in fact, you can wear them on your wrist.

LD: Were you able to pull in radio stations from very far away?

Fryrear: Not with the crystal set. The crystal set you got local and at that time it was all news a little music, news and weather.

LD: That would have been . . . twenties.

Fryrear: yes. Yeah, well, the late teens, late teens and twenties. Because I remember when I built this crystal set, I lived on 1411 Fourth Avenue right cattycorner on Fourteenth Street there was a young fella lived with his folks in an apartment--second floor, this apartment. We got a bright idea one day and

we stretched a wire from his room across to mine through a window . . .

[End of side one - begin side two]

Fryrear: It was a joke or whatever you'd call it. But we made a lot of kids in our neighborhood think that we had a radio station.

LD: So he had a record player.

Fryrear: He had a record player.

LD: That must have been an old gramophone.

Fryrear: Well, a victrola.

LD: Victrola.

Fryrear: Victrola. And he really would put the speaker in the victrola in front of the speaker and then I had the headsets over on my side and I'd give him a signal and he'd start playing the record player. (Laughter) And to this day, none of the kids in the neighborhood ever knew the difference.

LD: They thought you had a real, bona-fide radio station.

Fryrear: A radio station. Yeah.

LD: What are your memories of . . . I'm presuming now, let's see, you were married in the twenties . . .

Fryrear: 1924.

LD: So you started having a family not long after that. How did the radio work in your family life? How did it affect your family life?

Fryrear: Well, I'll tell you what it did. It kept the family together much more in those days than they are today. We would schedule the evening dinner time so that we would be done in time to



tune in Jack Benny, Fred Allen, George Burns, Fibber Magee and Molly and all those people that come into radio from vaudeville. And we would sit there and would sit there and watch with our eyes pinned onto that radio like we was seein' it. And I really believe that was the reason that somebody invented the TV because they got tired of lookin' at somethin' that they couldn't see. (Laughter)

LD: Well, did you have more interaction as a family listening to the radio than you think people do with television now?

Fryrear: Oh, yes. One thing, you had one radio set at that time and everybody merged together and set there and listened to the radio and you followed the Fibber Magee and Molly and every time he would open his closet door and everything fell out on the floor, you know, why he'd say, "I gotta clean that up someday." (Laughter) And everybody would laugh and we enjoyed it very much because it was something new and it kept the family quite a bit together much more than it does today because today everybody has maybe two or three TV sets and stereo and all those things. They have so much, much more to take their time today.

LD: It can be a very separating thing, you're right, to go off into different rooms. Yeah.

What are your memories of advertising on the radio in those days and the affect that advertising had on you as a consumer? Was it dramatic? Do you remember that certain ads still stay in your mind or not?

Fryrear: Well, advertising on the radio in those days was a lot different. and it's just like the shows on the radio. You sat and

you heard what they talked about, but you didn't see--you couldn't tell where they were, what they were doing or who they were. And it was all imagination. Every person listening to that radio had a different idea of what these people looked like. It made a difference, it kind of stimulated your imagination more than it does today. The advertising in those days was very, very crude compared to what it is today. To start with, they were much more cruder than some of the shows were. In other words, they had some of the shows in the old radio days that were still classics. But you've forgotten a lot of the advertising they had in those days because . . .well, it just didn't amount to too much. But there are some things you remember. You remember Jack Benny and his "J-E-L-L-O"?

LD: Yes. Yes.

Fryrear: And different ones like that.

LD; Even though, you know, it was the late forties and fifties when I was listening to the radio, but I'll never forget the "L.S.M.F.T", you know, it had a great impact on me.

Fryrear: Oh, yes, "L.S.M.F.T." Yeah, that's right and "J-E-L-L-O".  
(singing) "Six delicious flavors".

LD; People--I think--weren't as cynical about advertising as they are now. We distance ourselves more from it than . . .

Fryrear: Oh, yes. I'll tell you the difference is, they throw advertising at you now like they're beatin' it into you.

LD: Yes.

Fryrear: And I'm so glad that I have a remote control on my TV set 'cause I can cut those babies out.

LD: Turn it right off.

Fryrear: Yeah.

LD: We had mentioned the prohibition days earlier. What are your memories of the effect, the impact of prohibition on Cedar Rapids?

Fryrear: Cedar Rapids wasn't much different than other cities of that size except prohibition was felt more in the larger cities like Chicago and New York and Detroit, Miami, places like that. But we had our share of bootleggers. There were at least two or three drug stores in town that you could always get what you wanted.

LD: Prescription. (Laughter)

Fryrear: Yeah. And without prescription. But at that time, too, besides the bootleg liquor that they'd get, there was at least one drug store that I remember that peddled what they called "Jake". It was Jamaica ginger.

LD: Jamaica ginger.

Fryrear: Yeah. And you could drink that and it would give you a high.

LD: What did they advertise it as?

Fryrear: They didn't advertise.

LD: Oh, they didn't advertise. That was something you had to know about.

Fryrear: It was all under the counter. The reason I knew about it because bein' downtown a lot even after I quit selling papers and I went to work, I worked for years and years downtown on the railroad so I was quite familiar all those years with all the different downtown establishments and when you have a

bootlegger practically next door to you--to where you're working--  
why, you get to know . . .

LD: . . . you can't avoid knowing that.

Fryrear: That's right.

LD: What was the name of the store?

Fryrear: I can't tell you that because I just met a fella yesterday out  
here at the Eagle market that used to . . . his folks used to  
run one of those stores.

LD; You want to protect that.

Fryrear: And I'm not going to give any names right now.

LD: Okay. I can appreciate that. Were there saloons downtown that  
were affected--I'm sure they were--by the prohibition?

Fryrear: Oh, yes.

LD; What happened to them?

Fryrear: They just went out of business until the prohibition was re-  
pealed. They were real saloons, of course, when prohibition  
was repealed they all opened up as beer parlors.

LD; Okay. They didn't come back as saloons.

Fryrear: Not for a while. Not for a while. I remember one time-- this  
had nothing to do with Cedar Rapids--but a few of us fellows  
went into Chicago to see a Cubs baseball game. It was on a  
Sunday morning and we were walking down the street--shortly  
after prohibition had been repealed--and we passed a bar that  
was just opening up and the bartender was just getting his  
stuff out and setting up the stuff in the bar. We went in  
there and the bartender said, "Well, what'll you fellas have?"  
One fellow says, "Oh, I'll take this and I'll take that." And

he asked me what I'd have and I says, "Give me a boilermaker and a helper." And the bartender looked at me and he says, "I'll tell you something." He says, " That's the first I've heard that since they started prohibition." He says, "That sound so good to me, this one's on me." (Laughter)

LD: It brought back old times for him.

Fryrear: Old times.

LD: Were there breweries in Cedar Rapids that were closed down as a result of prohibition?

Fryrear: There was one bar in Cedar Rapids at one time, but I don't remember much about it because it existed mostly prior to my being here. It was the Magnus Brewery. It was up along the Milwaukee railroad tracks. Up around C, D Avenue, around in there. But I don't remember too much about that because as I say, when I was in the saloon days, I was pretty young at that time and of course, the prohibition lasted--what was it--from 1933 or . . .

LD: Ten years, wasn't it?

Fryrear: Yeah. From 1919 to 1923.

LD: Oh, I thought it was longer than that.

Fryrear: No. 1933, I'm sorry.

LD: Okay.

Fryrear: Yeah, it was longer. 1933.

LD; That pretty much took up your young adulthood. (Laughter)

Fryrear: So I wasn't--at that time, oh, I didn't even know what beer was when I was young selling papers and stuff like that but later on I got to learn what beer was to a certain extent. It was a

lot different than it is today.

LD: In flavor?

Fryrear: In flavor. It had the hops flavor in those days that you don't get today.

LD: A much strong, yeasty sort of flavor?

Fryrear: No. The hops.

LD: The hops.

Fryrear: The hops flavor. Of course, during prohibition, I was old enough I made my own home brew.

LD: I've heard lots of stories about that. That was kind of how you got through that period. (Laughter)

Fryrear: I had an eight-gallon crock that I made my home brew in. I made a pretty fair home brew. I wasn't selling it, don't get me wrong, I wasn't selling. This was for home consumption. At that time I was married and old enough. Later on, after prohibition, I used that eight-gallon crock for making dill pickles and sauerkraut.

LD: Oh, that sounds good, too.

Fryrear: I raised enough stuff in my garden when I lived over on I Avenue West. I had--myself and the next door neighbor--split a vacant lot over there for several years and we gardened that vacant lot. One year I made this eight-gallon crock full of dill pickles and the other year I made it full of sauerkraut.

LD: That was pretty common, wasn't it, for people to do a lot of their own foods . . .

Fryrear: Oh, yes in those days. 'Cause during the war, you know, they had the so-called "victory gardens". And people would--the



city would set up part of a lot someplace that the people could go to and mark off a territory that they would plant in. Fact is, one of my children had one of those up close to Arthur school and Paramount Pharmacy up there that I would haul them up there in their little red wagon and help them hoe and spade and plant stuff.

LD: This was World War II we're talking about.

Fryrear: Yes.

LD: Right. Do you remember the day that prohibition was repealed? Was that a big day in Cedar Rapids?

Fryrear: It wasn't near as big a day as the signing of the Armistice after World War I. That was a big day in Cedar Rapids. Nobody reported for work that day except maybe firemen and policemen and people like that. Everybody else was . . . let's see, that was 1918, wasn't it--see I was only 17 years old. I remember going downtown and fellas driving horse and wagons around town and tootin' horns and we'd hop in and ride in the wagons and ride around town.

LD: How did that compare with your memories of when World War I was over?

Fryrear: That's the one I'm talking about.

LD; Oh, I'm sorry, World War II is what I meant.

Fryrear: Yeah, World War II.

LD: Was the excitement as great here?

No. No. I don't know the reason why but the excitement was very, very strong after World War I. But there big celebrating here when World War II ended but not to the same extent that . .

. . there'd been so many boys killed and crippled.

LD: In the second World War.

Fryrear: Both of them.

LD: In both of them. You escaped World War I then, didn't you?

Fryrear: I was too young for World War I and a little too old for II.

LD: And I presume that your children were not quite old enough, were they?

Fryrear: Oh, no.

LD: Well, that's good luck.

Fryrear: Yeah.

LD: You were telling me about--speaking of school children--and asking you about computers and how business could operate without computers. Would you speak about that?

Fryrear: Well, when I tell people that 55 and 60 years ago, I operated computers, they look at me kind of funny. Then I explain to them that in those days they were called adding machines and comptometers. And when you come down to think of it, I was sitting here at home one evening, and I got to thinking--it struck me kind of funny. I have a son in Chicago that manages the computer division of a big advertising agency there (my youngest son) and I know a little about computers; he knows an awful lot about them. Now I got to thinking one day, why are they called computers? And I looked it up in my dictionary. My dictionary says, the word compute means "to determine by mathematical measures or to make calculation". It also says that a computer is an automatic machine for performing calculations". Well the computer today does an awful lot more than

that. Fact is, the adding machine and the machines that I operated fifty, sixty years ago were more of computers than the present day computers which are much more than computers. I think that there should be a new name and I wonder when it's going to be that somebody's going to get wise and either find an alternate name or a new name for the word "computer".

LD: Especially as they become more and more complex. Do you think that the advent of computers has affected people's memories? Did you have to carry a lot more information in your head?

Fryrear: Yes. Not only computers but your hand calculators. Today, the joke is, the teacher asks the kid what six and six is and he says, "I don't know, my battery's run out." (Laughter) Still today I never use a hand computer. I compute everything in my head. I got used to it and I can do it just as well. I balance my checkbook and anything else I never use a hand computer. But they use them in school today where when I was in school, you learned your numbers and all that stuff by heart because they didn't have that kind of stuff in those days.

LD: They still require memorization, you know, multiplication, etcetera, but it's much harder to convince youngsters today that they have to know those things.

Fryrear: I wish schools taught pronunciation today more like they used to in the old days. The English language is getting to be bastardized to the extent that it's a new language. Specifically, what riles me is the people that use "perduction" for "production".

LD: Yes. There are a lot of slurs that occur nowadays. You're

right, that's something that's not valued as much as it used to be. Would you like to return to those days?

Fryrear: Oh, I tell ya, that's a leading question and that's a question that can't be answered because there's no way of ever knowing. I don't think that I could ever return. Whether I wanted to or not. It reminds me of this book that was written by Thomas Wolfe called, "You Can Never Go Home Again". He didn't mean that you couldn't jump in your car or hop an airplane and go visit your hometown after being gone for several years. I take it that what he meant was when you go back there, you're not going home again because you've changed . . .

LD: . . . you're not the same person. . .

Fryrear: . . . and your town has changed and it's full of strangers. So I think that's what he meant.

LD; In an alternate way, let me ask you, do you think that the community in those days was a more close-knit group of people? Of course, obviously, we have a lot more people right now than we used to in Cedar Rapids.

Fryrear: Yes, because when I came here the population was 24,000. Today it's almost 100,000 more than that.

LD: So obviously it has to make a difference.

Fryrear: Oh, it has to make a difference. The industrial revolution made a big change in this country and in this city. For some reason or other, the state of Iowa is losing ground and I don't understand why because at one time it was one of the most progressive states in the Union. Cedar Rapids had very much. They had the Quaker Oats Company, they had Douglas Starch Works--

which after the explosion in 1919, later on became Penick and Ford, and the Iowa Manufacturing Company, Universal Engineering Company, and many other. . .

LD: And of course, Collins.

Fryrear: . . . five railroads, Collins--yes, Collins was a bit later years--I remember when Arthur Collins started his electronic empire. He had a second floor spot down on the--I think it was Second or Third Avenue, I forget which it was--on the second floor of an automobile agency down there. That's where he got started.

LD: That was the beginning for him.

Fryrear: The beginning.

LD: Mr. Fryrear, I really appreciate these additional comments that you've made. Are there any areas that you feel that we have not touched on that we spoke of earlier? I think we've pretty much . . .

Fryrear: I don't think of them right now, but I'm sure I will. . .

LD: You will. (Laughter) Well, I thank you for the time and the effort that you have put into our project, both for the Junior League of Cedar Rapids and for the Public Library and for the people that are going to take advantage and enjoy this in the future. Thank you very much.

Fryrear: Well, I'll tell you, I thank you, too, because this has brought back a lot of memories to me.

LD: Really, we've had a number of people say that.

Fryrear: And I've had the chance now to talk about it and I've spoke at one school and I've had an invitation to speak at another and

due to a misunderstanding it didn't go through but I know that it will return again.

LD: They'll come back to you, I'm sure.

Fryrear: Yes.

LD: Thank you very much.

[END OF TAPE]