

The person being interviewed is Mr. Robert Spore, Director of Vocational Rehabilitation at the Evansville State Hospital. The date of the interview was March 6, 1974. The interviewer is Donald Brandenburg.

Interviewer: What do you remember the most about your life during the depression?

Mr. Spore: Well, I remember most particularly the shortage of income. When the depression was at its worst, I remember one year, our whole family only earned about \$250 the whole year and the sad part of that was that my dad had gone in debt for the farm and the interest itself was over \$600 a year. So that's was the cause of so many people losing their farms during the depression and my dad would have been no exception if it hadn't been for his dad coming to his rescue to help him out. Prices were just ridiculously low. I remember corn was a little less than 5 cents a bushel and the going rate for hand-shucking corn was a nickel or 5 cents a bushel and my dad would give one bushel for every bushel that the hired-hand shucked for him. Hog prices were less than 3 cents a pound or less than \$3 a hundred and, oh, I remember I was about my second year in college. I had a little project to earn funds to go on to school. I remember I raised broilers one summer and I sold those for 11 cents a pound. But that was mainly the way I had to get through school. I saved through 4-H Club work for several years in a savings account and that just, I was home at for the Christmas Holidays my freshman year and I had just transferred the money from the savings to checking account for my

expenses the next semester at school and heard or got word one morning that our local bank at Owensville went broke along with many of the other banks during the depression and there went my money for college expenses down the drain right then - so being fortunate enough to have a school where I could get work scholarships and school loans, I, that's was the way I was able to go ahead and finish college.

Interviewer: How did your family survive on \$250 a year?

Mr. Spore: Well, that's not as bad as it sounds. You can see it would be a disaster for someone living, say in say, an industrial area. We in those days always butchered our own meat and mother did a lot of canning of fruits and vegetables, and so on. So actually we seldom ever bought anything from the store except other than for staples, like flour, sugar and salt and so on. Cause we had our own food.

Interviewer: Were most of the people living near you farmers?

Mr. Spore: Yeah, that was pretty typical of people in our area where I grew up. I grew up between Princeton and Mt. Carmel, sort of the western part of Gibson County just north of Owensville.

Interviewer: When you came to Evansville to shop and buy your staples were you able to find the things you needed?

Mr. Spore: Well, actually we never shopped for anything in the way of food buying or anything like that in Evansville. The only reason for coming to Evansville was to buy clothing or anything that would be used say on the farm from farm supplies stores here. Bought our farm clothing at Sears. They had just opened their store downtown at about that time. Which was the first retail store of the Sears, Roebuck chain.

The, we did the grocery shopping at grocery stores in small towns, Owensville or Princeton.

Interviewer: Did you have or were you able to always find a market for your crops on the farm?

Mr. Spore: Yes. Igleheart's was buying grain in those days, and had a station at Owensville and we never sold any of our corn. It was all feed to hogs, in fact, we bought additional corn for feeding purposes cause my dad was great on hog raising and got into pure-breed Durock breeding line and sold a lot of his hogs for breeding purposes.

Interviewer: Well, what about labor? Was most of the labor on the farm done by the family or did you have people working for you?

Mr. Spore: Well, no. About every farmer in our neighborhood had what we called a tenant house. Dad had a little four room home that he furnished to the hired hand and he furnished a garden spot and cow milk and give him one feed hog at the end of year. And he would work then for a dollar a day then, cash wages. Much of the help, particularly, wanted year-round employment. We hired people temporarily for work deposit. Heavy work, like harvesting, why many fellows worked for 50 cents a day or 75 cents a day. I used to pick up extra spending money when we had a slack time, I'd work for the neighbors many times for 50cents a day.

Interviewer: Do you think the farmer had it better than most people during the depression?

Mr. Spore: Well, the farmers were hurt pretty bad because we had no, what you call crop insurance and no insurance for mortgage loans and so on. So many of the farmers lost their farms during the depression and basically that's what caused the rural banks or banks in small towns to go broke because they were so heavily invested in farmland that, for instance, my dad, I think, paid \$150 an acre for his land and some land comparable to it was selling for as low as \$25 an acre then during the depression. So banks that had loans of that type were not able to collect and it wouldn't do any good to foreclose the mortgage, cause they couldn't sell the land any better than anybody else could.

Interviewer: What do you remember about the local politics of that time, as far as state?

Mr. Spore: Oh, my dad was a strong Democrat and I remember Paul Mathas, our governor at the time and dad thought he was the greatest man that ever was. He was a great speaker. I heard him speak several times and he was an outstanding man because he later went on and got into national politics and was High Commissioner of the Phillipines at one time.

*McNutt*

Interviewer: How did you pass your leisure time or was there much leisure time?

Mr. Spore: Oh, I loved to hunt and fish when I was a kid. So practically any spare time I had for that, why I was doing that. Of course, every neighborhood had a ball team and they'd get together on Sunday afternoons and play baseball. And of course, horses were the dominant form of transportation and work

and my dad had a good saddle mare and we had another good riding mare which I spent a lot of time roaming around bottomland along the river and so on and carried a gun and the big sport then was to shoot crows which were a pest to the farmers and this old mare also wasn't afraid for you to shoot from her back, so I've done a lot of hunting of crows in the slack period after wheat harvest and before fall work started in late September.

Interviewer: What college did you attend at this time?

Mr. Spore: I attended Earlham College, a little Quaker school at Richmond, Indiana, which is a complete boarding type school, I guess you'd say. They required all students to live on campus except ones that commuted from the surrounding area. Anyone away from home was required to live in the dorm and it was pretty closely supervised, but the expenses were all a package deal and paid your room, board, and tuition, all at one time.

Interviewer: What was the feeling on campus of the depression? Like today whenever something happens in politics there are usually some radicals...

Mr. Spore: Oh, we had none of that and I don't know that it happened even at the larger universities. I attended I.U. until the late 30's but even then everybody was serious about their education and school work so that, everything was pretty well planned. Our little school had planned recreation for every weekend that was handled by a member of the staff of the college. One of my little extra chores to pick up a little extra expense money at school was

to run their roller skates on weekends when they didn't have something else planned. The college owned a bunch of rink type roller skates and the field house had a rink in an oval around the two basketball courts which was real nice for recreation and exercise.

Interviewer: Well, I think that's about all. Thank you a lot, Mr. Spore.