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Francis Halligan Memoir

H156F. Halligan, Francis (1894-1980)

Interview and memoir

2 tapes, 162 mins., 61 pp.

Francis Halligan, successful businessman, pianist, and inventor in the Beardstown, Illinois, area, discusses many aspects of early 20th century life and his pioneering work in aviation. He recalls his invention, the "Halligan plane", an aircraft capable of vertical flight: construction and test flight of the prototype aircraft, aircraft technology, dirigibles, and his experiences at the Third National Aeronautic meeting. He also discusses his family's grocery store and dry goods business, and entertainment: river showboats in Beardstown, carnivals, hot air balloons, theaters and movies, steamboats and railroads, and his musical training and teaching career. References are made to the 1922 Beardstown flood, early aircraft, and famous aviators including Orville Wright.

Interview by Horace Q. Waggoner, 1976

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See collateral file: interviewer's notes, newspaper articles, and photographs, diagrams and correspondence regarding the Halligan plane

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PREFACE

This manuscript is the product of a tape recorded interview conducted by Horace Waggoner for the Oral History Office in the summer of 1976.

Francis Halligan was born in Beardstown, Illinois on December 18, 1894. He and his brother, Russell, have operated grocery and dry goods businesses in Jacksonville. A graduate of the Illinois College Conservatory of Music, Francis Halligan has supplemented his income by teaching music.

In addition to being a successful businessman and an accomplished pianist, Mr. Halligan and his brother pioneered in aerodynamic design and airplane invention. Their unique aircraft, "the Halligan plane," is a vertical rising, hovering and self-stabilizing machine. For over fifty years this unusual design has attracted interest among manufacturers, inventors and the military. Prototypes and models of the Halligan plane have been exhibited at fairs and museums throughout the United States.

Readers of this oral history memoir should bear in mind that it is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, narrator and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. Sangamon State University is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for views expressed therein; these are for the reader to judge.

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Halligan, Francis, June to July 1976, Jacksonville, Illinois.
Horace Waggoner, Interviewer.

Q. I would like to consider a little bit of family background and start with childhood memories and on into schooldays perhaps, and then we'll get on up. Perhaps this first session we could maybe stick to that and the next session we can get into the aviation part of it. Does that sound like a good move to make?

A. Yes, it's all right. You just want kind of a family history. I think you mentioned once that I should start out [about] what our name was. You mentioned, I believe last week you said that [inaudible] . . .

Q. Yes, we could do that now. Before we do that [let's see if] we've got your voice on tape. Let's just see how we sound. Okay where were you born, sir?

A. I was born here in Beardstown, Illinois. I was born on December 18, 1894, back in what they called the Gay 90's, (laughter) before the turn of the century, and my father--I'm half English and half German--my father, he was born and raised in the city of Liverpool, England, and on my mother's side, the German, my grandfather--he came from Hess-Darmstadt, down on the Rhine River in Germany, and my grandmother came from a place called Baden-Baden in Germany. So whenever people ask us what we are why we have to say we're half English and half German.

Q. Yes sir. When did your father come to Beardstown?

A. I think he come shortly before 1890. I don't know just the year he came.

Q. What was his occupation?

A. He ran back and forth on the Atlantic for several years.

Q. Oh, he did.

A. As a young man he'd run in and out of Liverpool. I remember him telling [about] his work on the White Star line for a long time; ran into Montreal and Quebec, Canada. And then in later years he worked for the Lampert and Polk line, and they run into Philadelphia. Now the last time he came over, he came over on the big ship--at that time was called the Great Majestic--and he was in charge of a whole shipload of these--like Anheuser Busch--and they had these parade horses. They called them--I forget what they called them.

Q. The draft horses? Percherons?

A. Percherons, or something like that, great big draft horses. He was in charge of those; he brought them over. Then he came to Chicago and then

drifted down to Beardstown. I guess he had relation here or something, I don't know how he--we never thought to ask him how he got down to Beardstown, but he got down here and then he met my mother; she was a German girl, Henrietta Merz, and they got married, and so that was the beginning of our family.

Q. How did she happen to come to Beardstown? Was it with her family?

A. She was born here, out in the country, but my grandfather--her father and mother both came from Germany. But she was born in this country. They lived on a farm about two miles out of town and she came to school in town. She went to school for a while in the same hall where Abraham Lincoln held the famous Armstrong murder trial.

Q. Oh, is that right?

A. They were building a school at that time--short on schools--so, I remember her mentioning that she went to school the same place where Abraham Lincoln held that famous trial. It's still here in the museum. So, after we were born why we attended public schools. We went through school. Started in--I guess I started about 1900, the turn of the century--and we went on through grade school and all four years through high school.

Q. Right here in Beardstown?

A. Here in Beardstown. And we were studying music most of that time. We started in pretty young. My folks started me in on the piano and my sister on violin. So we studied music all while we went through school, and then we started into Illinois College Conservatory of Music while we were still in high school and then we went four or five years until we got out of there. We all three went through there.

Q. Where is that conservatory?

A. That was in Jacksonville at that time; Jacksonville, Illinois. We played in many recitals, college recitals, and then we had private concerts and recitals of our own. In the early days of radio, we played over radio. [There] were two or three different Springfield stations at that time, and from Quincy. We never played over a national hook-ups from New York or any place like that, but it was mostly all local stations. And we had some experience in that and then in later years we was on Springfield television once, so we've been in all the media, you might as well say. We've been in the newspaper, I guess thousands of times. Recitals and airplanes and everything like that. So we've got a pretty interesting life.

Q. What did your father do in Beardstown?

A. Well, he was a licensed veterinary surgeon from England when he came over here. He went through schools in England and then they sent him to a college in Dublin, Ireland. They call them a finishing school over there. So, I suppose that's where he was a studying veterinary medicine. He was licensed--he was licensed by the State of Illinois to practice over here--

but he was just a young fellow and the railroad here was a booming thing at that time. This was a division point of the Burlington CB & Q—that was a superintendent and all of them. They was from here clean to southern Illinois and down to St. Louis. So he got interested in railroads, so he got a job and was working for the railroad.

Q. What type work was he doing for the railroad?

A. I think he was a boilerworks engineer. They used a lot of water. They was all steam locomotives at that time and they had a pumping plant here and he ran these big steam engines; the Worthington steam engines. Then later they got him to be City Water Works Engineer for the city at the Water Works and he was there for several years. It was on the same type of work. They had two big Worthington pump engines there, and that's where I got some engineering ability. I used to spend my summer's up there.

Q. Oh, is that right?

A. And they had a water tower there, it was one hundred and twenty feet high. [It was] sixty feet of brick and then from there on up it was a steel tank. And I got so I could pretty near play a tune on those big steam pumps. They had a register there and at one hundred twenty pounds the water went over the top of the water tower. So, I'd get out there early and I'd time myself, time it, and I'd watch that meter and when it was twelve o'clock—they had a big whistle here in Beardstown at that time, a shop whistle, you could hear it ten or fifteen miles away on certain days—and they'd blow that at twelve o'clock and all the shop men would go home.

Q. Yes sir.

A. And a lot of them would all stream by that water tower there, and the wind was usually blowing in the right direction, so I made it a point to have that water tower overflow when them men always came by and many a time I gave them a good shower. (laughs)

Q. I'll be darned. (laughs)

A. I'd stand there and regulate that lever until I could just play a tune on it, pretty near. And at twelve o'clock when that whistle blew, why I had her up to a hundred and twenty and when they came by there, well, I done that every day. So I got a lot of engineering experience there as a kid. I was just down in grades then. Later on then he went back to the railroad and he worked there and he was planning on starting up some business, but he worked there until we got out of high school. So while we were still in high school why, he started building the first store—the first small grocery store—and so by the time I was out of high school in June or July, why, we started in business.

Q. Oh, I see.

A. And then we worked there and we worked up a pretty good business; that was a pretty slow year in 1914. Woodrow Wilson had just been elected president, and they said Wall Street was calling in all the money and they was

pulling the tightest panic the world ever seen for the country. The railroad men here, they were just practically paralyzed. They were down to practically no—everybody was laid off, pretty near. But about the middle of July, why that's when they started—that's when the Arch Duke of Austria got assassinated over there and that plunged us into World War I.

Q. Yes sir. What was the name of the store?

A. Halligan, J. F. Halligan Company.

Q. J. F.?

A. J. F. Halligan Company.

Q. And what type of store was it you say?

A. That was grocery, a grocery store. And three years later, why we built an additional store and opened up a dry goods and general store. And then the next year, just a year later, we opened up another grocery store uptown. So we opened three stores in four years, almost one a year, we was going pretty fast. And we was planning on opening two more, one in Virginia and one in Jacksonville. I guess I was planning on starting the chain store business, I didn't know it at the time. But then that first year in the spring of 1922 was when we had our first big flood in Beardstown. They didn't have no seawall yet and the river came up and covered the whole business end of town clean up to the railroad depot with about five feet of water.

Q. My gosh!

A. So that stopped everything there; stopped our plans and everything for a while.

Q. What did it do to the stores?

A. Oh, the whole stores, they was practically paralyzed. They had to walk the ground—and some of them closed up, the banks and that closed completely, and you had to get around town in boats and that there.

Q. Did it do a lot of damage to your goods in the store?

A. It didn't bother us any. We were in a high place. It didn't bother our home. We happened to be in a high place in Beardstown, so it didn't bother us one bit. We were very fortunate. But we had a lot bought down on Fourth Street close to town—we was planning on putting up a two story superstore—and the water was about five feet deep over that. That was on this side of the track . . .

Q. I see, the south side of town.

A. . . . where it was pretty deep. They was going by there in boats and we was glad we didn't build. And the water barely went down and they called the biggest railroad strike the country had ever seen. They called that "Shopman's Strike" in 1922. And Beardstown being a big railroad center,

practically 90 per cent of the people worked for the railroad.

Q. I see.

A. They was all trainmen running from Galesburg to St. Louis and way down to Cairo and the southern part of the State, practically the whole shopmen had a hundred per cent strike all over the country. So, they begun bringing in what they call strike breakers from Chicago and St. Louis and all around, so it was a rather hectic time, so . . .

Q. Was there violence at that time?

A. Yes.

Q. Oh, there was.

A. There was some brick-batting the trains and they found one man dead out in the timber by Arnzville. They thought it was the effects, but they couldn't recognize him or nothing like that, but they thought it was the effect of the strike here. It might have been from that. So that kind of--we slowed up for the time being--we thought it best to set silent and wait to see how things was going to be at that time.

Q. When you started with the store, what did you do yourself? What type of work did you do in the store?

A. I was manager of the store.

Q. Oh you were, which one?

A. The first store we opened up.

Q. The first grocery store.

A. And then my brother, Russell, he was just in the eighth grade yet.

Q. Oh, I see.

A. He was a kid in the eighth grade so, after school why he'd come and work in the store. And I was manager of the store and I done practically most of the work at that time, because things were pretty slow that first year then when we first opened up. That was the year of 1914.

Q. Where did you get your supplies, your food supplies and that sort of thing?

A. We bought mostly from--we handled pretty near Oakford and Fahnstock from Peoria. They had what they called the Blue Ribbon line. That was one of the biggest wholesale houses I believe, and the third biggest one in the State outside of--I believe there was two in Chicago they said was bigger. And this Oakford and Fahnstock they were big and they had a very fine line and they put out America's Cup Coffee. I don't remember--do you

remember that or not?

Q. No sir.

A. It was well-known all over the—they had billboards all over the State—and I went up there. But . . .

Q. Well, how did you go about ordering from this company? Did they come to you or did you go to them or . . .

A. They had salesmen. And I wasn't—it was an interesting thing too—I wasn't twenty-one years of age yet; I was only eighteen or nineteen, just out of high school, so they must have had faith in me because they said I could buy all I wanted and they trusted me with credit, so I guess they knowed my father would be good for it maybe, but I know the banker here even told me that any time I needed money I could borrow all I wanted to. But I believe I only borrowed a small amount once.

Q. I'll be darned.

A. In the fall I overbought a while shipload of stuff, and I just crowded a little bit, so I think I had to borrow two or three hundred dollars, but I paid that off in a week and that's the only one I ever borrowed in all the twenty years in business. So then finally we had such a pretty good business that he came around and called on us twice a week. And at that time in the summertime it all came down by the Eagle Packet Lines out of St. Louis. They run from St. Louis to Peoria and one was called the Bald Eagle, and the Golden Eagle. It was mostly all Negro help at that time and they'd bring down. Then in the wintertime when the river was froze, why, most of the goods was shipped by railroad.

Q. Oh, these were steamboats then that . . .

A. Yes, they were all steamboats; you had big steamboats at the time. And then the river was full of excursion boats at that time; they had excursion boats. A lot of the boats, the Goldenrod and the Cotton Blossom, and some of those that's been in Broadway shows; where they got the song Old Man River from, that boat was here in Beardstown many a time.

Q. Oh, is that right?

A. Yes. I was on that boat to see "Uncle Tom's Cabin."

Q. You mean they had shows on the . . .

A. Yes, it was a regular showboat they called then. They'd stop up at the town's—up along the river—big towns where they could get a crowd or something; so Beardstown was quite a showplace at that time. But with the advent of the movies coming in—we had the first movie in town in a small building, it's called the Theatorium. It was five cents admission. (laughs) I think they'd run a show every half hour or every hour, I forget what it was. But I remember one picture. Theodore Roosevelt, I guess, was president at that time and I remember seeing the picture where he sent the fleet around the world.

Q. Oh really, the "Great White Fleet."

A. He sent the fleet around to Japan and everything around there to kind of threaten the world, I suppose to let them know the strength of America. That was one of the first pictures I saw in movies at that time.

Q. What were the showboat shows like?

A. They had regular dramas on there, they was all dramas; and they had good music, they were all good singers; and I think most of them were from Memphis and Nashville and New Orleans, I think most of the people were, as they come up the river they'd show all the way up the Mississippi, I guess, Memphis and Nashville and whatever towns was on the Mississippi. I don't know all what they were. And then they come on up the Illinois, I think as far as Peoria. I don't know whether they went up as far as Starved Rock or not. That's that Indian legend rock up there, the state park.

Q. Yes sir. Well how many people would the boat hold? How many would go to the show on the boat?

A. Well, I'd believe they'd hold two or three hundred people.

Q. That many?

A. Yes, they had a steamboat in the back, a regular steamboat pushing it, and the showboat was a big barge.

Q. Oh, it was separate from the boat itself?

A. Yes. It was separate. The stage and all that was in the--I think the sleeping quarters for the actors and all the crew was on the steamboat. So the whole barge was nothing but chairs and seats in there, so they had a pretty good crowd. And then they always had a band, so there was a pretty good crowd. They would always have a band parade around town several times during the day to let them know, and then they had a calliope playing. They always had a steam calliope, and they played that all day so at night why the crowds was down there.

Q. And they'd just tie up to the wharfs here in Beardstown?

A. Yes, tie up here.

Q. How much did it cost to go to a show?

A. Oh, I think it was expensive. I think it was fifty cents.

Q. Fifty cents for a show?

A. (laughter) In them days, I don't know what it'd be today, but I believe it was fifty cents, maybe a quarter for children maybe, something like that; but that's where I saw "Uncle Tom's Cabin" several times. They'd always show "Uncle Tom's Cabin," that was a favorite in them days way back then,

movies wasn't in yet very much or anything like that.

Q. Do you remember any other shows besides "Uncle Tom's Cabin" or plays they put on?

A. No, I can't remember the names of them. They were mostly all dramas. They didn't have much comedy I don't think in them days. I think it was mostly all dramas they put on.

Q. Was the barge roofed?

A. Yes. It was all closed in, you could go in the rain, yes, it could be a pouring rain, it was all closed in. Yes, they were pretty elaborate boats for the time.

Q. What did they use for lighting?

A. They must have had their own electric generators on the boat.

Q. Oh, they had electric lights then.

A. I think they did, yes. They had electric lights so I guess they generated their own electricity or they could have hooked up to the--well, I guess they generated their own because they stopped at smaller places like Brown-ing, places like that where they didn't have no electricity in them days. Beardstown had a light plant so they might have connected up here, I don't remember that.

Q. What did you sit on? Were there benches or chairs or tables?

A. I believe they had regular chairs. They was kind of like regular theatre chairs. They were very, very elaborate things for a boat I thought.

Q. How often did one stop? Once a week or less or more?

A. No, I think the Cotton Blossom would come up maybe for a time and then maybe the next time it would be the Goldenrod, and then there was a C. R. French--French's New Sensation I believe they called it. I can remember the names of those three of them, there might have been more. But this Cotton Blossom that was the one that they later made into a movie in a Broadway hit, Jerome Kern or Sigmund Romberg wrote the music for "Old Man River."

Q. I see.

A. That was taken from the show that was supposed to take place on the Cotton Blossom, but . . .

Q. What other types of entertainment do you remember besides that, say when you were in high school?

A. Well, they had carnivals here every week. They had some of the big carnivals in the country. They would come in here--that was the third week

in August, the Beardstown fishfry, an all week carnival, that was one of the big elements around here, one of the big entertainments--and they had quite a few shows. They was all clean shows in them days. And they had mummies from Egypt and all kinds of relics like that, genuine, pretty genuine. And then special trains would come in. The B & O, they would bring up--I think they started down in Pana, southern Illinois--and they would get in about ten o'clock in the morning with about fifteen or twenty special cars loaded with people. And then there'd be a train come up from St. Louis on the Burlington and they was loaded; I don't know how many cars. And one come down I think from as far as Galesburg. And then excursion boats came up, the Julia Belle Swain come up the river and one came down from Havana. So Beardstown they had about maybe fifteen or twenty thousand people here back in the fishfry days.

Q. Who cooked the fish?

A. I don't remember who they were. They had special committees and they worked all night. They'd start in about nine or ten o'clock in the night, and I think they had several tons of fish because they come in here and then they give it away in the park at noon. And I know they had crews of men, I don't know how many vats they had, but they was frying fish all night long and all morning long to get them ready for twelve o'clock. So they had it timed pretty good and the park was packed. Then they always had some kind of a noted speaker like Henry T. Rainey, he was Speaker of the House in Congress at that time. He was quite an important politician. He was here; I can remember him coming and then they had different ones, I can't remember the names at that time but--it was quite an event here.

Q. Was it city sponsored? Did the Beardstown city council run the thing or was it put on by the churches or.....

A. No, it was put on by the city, it was put on by the city, and there was a lot of concession stands. Nearly all the churches had stands and then there was private stands, different lodges and organizations, they had stands all around the park. The whole city, you couldn't get through the town, everything was blocked. I believe they had one little place open where you could get over the wagon bridge, that was one of the high--that was the main street. This is a main street what we're on now, State Street. The wagon bridge went to the north. So I think the State made them keep a little one lane traffic open so they could get around down on Main Street to get over the bridge, the traffic.

Q. And that goes across the Illinois River then.

A. It runs across the Illinois River. All the rest of the town practically for blocks was all just blocked off.

Q. Did they have a big parade?

A. No, I don't think they had any parades. I don't remember about them having any parades. They had bands, a carnival band, but they'd bring in, I believe they always had about ninety or a hundred cars, carloads of things.

Q. Train carloads.

A. Trainloads of carnival equipment. It was a whole train come in special. I know they was parked, all the sidetracks and that, was parked where they'd unload the equipment, so it was quite an event.

Q. What types of things would they bring in? Rides . . .

A. Oh yes, rides, merry-go-rounds and ferris wheels, and whips--what they called whips in them days--and I can't remember all of them. As the years went by they had airplanes and different rides, they had everything under the sun pretty near that was in them days. And then they always had a special event. They had what they called a daredevil in them days. They always had a special attraction that'd be at--I believe one was at four o'clock at night. And one I can remember, it was called Daredevil Tilden, he went down I think it was about a sixty or seventy foot incline on a bicycle. He'd ride down a bicycle to the end of that incline would come down, come down awful fast, and then they had a flip that threw him up in the air and he went over them handlebars and he dived into a six foot deep water. They dig a pit right in the sand street and I believe they said it was six feet of water.

Q. Gee whiz!

A. And he dived from that heighth over the handlebars in there and went into that thing and he'd fly out on the other side of that water.

Q. That'd slow him up so he could land. (laughs)

A. It was devised of some feet. But I believe they said he got killed later up in Canton. I believe he missed it and I believe they said he got killed. And then another time they had a Daredevil DeCastelane. I can remember him. It was a bicycle in them days too. He rode down a steep incline and I guess he was, oh sixty or seventy or eighty feet high, and he'd fly down over the creek and then he went down over another--he made a big leap in the air--and then come down over another one and down at the end there was a loop and then there was a skip in the top of that loop and he went over that. His bicycle was up and he was down. He was upside down when he made that loop, and then he flew up for about a half a block before he could stop.

Q. (laughs) Well, I'll be doggone.

A. So they had some wonderful--and then they had balloon descentions. Nearly every time they had a balloon descention, a man went up in a balloon.

Q. Oh. Hot air balloon I guess.

A. Yes. They done trapeze work. They'd swing around way up there doing trapeze work . . .

Q. Hanging from the balloon?

A. Hanging from the balloon, a little trapeze.

Q. What type things would they do on the trapeze?

A. Oh, they hung by their toes and they hung by their knees, I don't know what. They was up there so high you couldn't see. And then they'd cut loose with a parachute. At the end they'd cut loose with a parachute some way and sometime they landed in the river. They always had boats out there to rescue them. Sometimes they landed on land.

Q. (laughs) Were these tethered balloons? Were there cables attached to them or did they just float up?

A. No, free flight.

Q. Just free flight.

A. They'd anchor them down on the ground until they had them filled up.

Q. I see.

A. And then there'd be a bunch of men, they'd hold the ropes. When they got ready to go they'd untie the ropes and hold it--a whole bunch, fifteen and twenty men to hold it down--and then when they give the signal the balloon fellow was ready why they'd all let loose and then up he went.

Q. (laughs) What did they use to generate the heat for it, to inflate it?

A. Just build a bonfire. As far as I remember, they just built a bonfire on the ground and then put the balloon over kind of an escapement there, and it filled full of hot air and up they went.

Q. How long would the balloon stay up? It would go floating away, I guess wouldn't it?

A. Well, I imagine they'd be up there for a half hour or more before he'd cut loose. He was up there performing and then he'd cut loose and then as soon as he'd cut loose, the weight was off or something and then the balloon would turn over and then smoke would come out and then it'd come down.

Q. Oh, is that right? That's the way it descended.

A. That's the way the balloon descended and he'd come down in a parachute.

Q. Did the balloon--it just landed anyplace I guess. There were no controls.

A. It landed sometimes over the river and timber and sometimes in the river. Then there was one balloonist killed here one time. That was before my time on the Fourth of July. I think it was a Beardstown fellow who went up in a balloon and after he got up there they let it go too quick and the balloon caught on fire.

Q. Caught on fire.

A. Caught on fire, and when he cut his parachute loose the parachute was all on fire and didn't go and he come down and got killed.

Q. Gee whiz.

A. I remember people talking about that said it was someplace south of town. So that happened on the Fourth of July, but that was before my time. So Beardstown had quite an exciting history.

Q. It sounds like it. Yes sir. Now that was the Beardstown fishfry. They have a lot of watermelons around here, did you have a watermelon festival?

A. Yes, they have one day they had a special--the fishfry that was the big day. That's when they come in from all around and then I think the day before that they had the watermelon festival, they give away free watermelons. Beardstown was noted all over the country as a watermelon town; it had good watermelons. They shipped them to Chicago and New York, all over. And they usually had them down by what they called the old brewery--there used to be a brewery in town at that time, they made beer here, the Rink family--and they kind of had that down at one end of town. (laughs) That was a mess to clean up. They kept watermelon in slices and all the carnival people and everybody would be down there and they gave them away free. The city paid for them or somebody paid for them, and then the farmers would bring them in and they gave away several wagon loads of watermelon.

Q. My goodness.

A. So, it was quite a--they had a special day for that too. I'm glad you mentioned that. The fishfry was the big day when they made their money.

Q. When you were going to school were there any other types of activities in the schools themselves that you participated in?

A. No, the only thing was we had programs. It was a little different then. They had programs every Friday afternoon. That was to give the children, the students, an opportunity--they don't have that anymore today they tell me--but that was to give them an opportunity to appear before the public, and I played the piano I don't know how many hundreds of times in my four years there; and they had violins and singing and speaking. That was every afternoon they'd take off the last hour. Many of them got their experience appearing before a public there.

Q. Every Friday.

A. Every Friday afternoon.

Q. Were there large crowds?

A. Oh yes. It was open to the public and the auditorium where we was in was usually packed with people. Sometimes the superintendent here in Beardstown, he would leave the railroad and come over there to attend some of them. Very interesting programs.

Q. Was this in high school?

A. In our high school days, yes. Yes, they had them all during my four years and my brothers four years too in school. They used to have Christmas--Christmas and Thanksgiving and them were all big days. They had big programs, and like on certain days like Lincoln's birthday and Washington's birthday they had some old Civil War speakers. There was a lot of Civil War speakers coming then yet who was in the Civil War and they would come out there and make addresses to the students.

Q. I'll be doggone.

A. But that was sixty years ago, there's none of them left.

Q. I see, yes sir. Well soon as you graduated from high school then you went right into business managing the grocery store.

A. Yes.

Q. How long did you work in the store business then?

A. We were in business for about twenty years. And while I was still in high school that's when I saw a first airplane, during the year 1913.

Q. Where was that?

A. That was on the Fourth of July here in Beardstown.

Q. Here in Beardstown.

A. I think they bought it up from St. Louis, I believe he was supposed to be a daredevil from St. Louis, but I'm not sure. But that was my senior year in high school, and he landed down here in the ball diamond, in the south part of town. They could take off at--the plane was made out of bamboo fishing poles, we examined it and it was made out of fishing poles yet.

Q. For heavens sake.

A. So that was the first airplane I ever saw.

Q. What was it, the biplane?

A. Yes, biplane.

Q. What type of airplane was it? How many engines did it have?

A. Just one, just one pusher. It was pushed from the back and he set right outside in the front--there was two sticks sticking out in the front. He had a little kind of a seat on there about this wide. (gestures)

Q. About a foot wide.

A. And he sat out on that kind of a seat and run the controls. He set there like there was nothing underneath him. (laughs) I believe they offered fifty dollars, it was a fifty dollar price for anybody to go up with him, and nobody went up.

Q. Not a soul?

A. And a few years later after the war, why they paid five dollars. A lot of these barnstormers they called them, fellows who'd been in the war, they had some of these old Conucks they called them, what was leftover war planes, so they was what they called barnstormers and they had a lot of them came here every year and they charged five dollars and they made a lot of money. People went up then.

Q. I'll be doggone. (laughs)

A. But they could sit in the cockpit; they didn't set out on the old seat.

Q. Did he fly as a demonstration here, this first fellow?

A. Yes, he took off from this ballpark and people say he flew as far down as Arnzville and turned around and came back. He could take off and land on a little baseball field in them days.

Q. Yes sir. What kind of day was it? Was it very windy the day he flew do you remember?

A. No, I believe that Fourth of July was a pretty nice day, something like this it'd be; a sunshiny calm day. If it had been a real stormy, windy day I don't know whether he'd of took off or not.

Q. Would have tried it or not, yes.

A. But I believe it was a pretty nice day if I remember.

Q. And no one would fly with him?

A. Nobody went up that I remember, not while I was down there.

Q. I see.

A. And I believe that's just--well, I guess nobody went up because that was the only flight he made at that time. I believe he made two flights, maybe one in the morning or something or in the afternoon, and maybe one at night. That night was the Fourth of July celebration, so he probably made two flights.

Q. Had he flown in from St. Louis?

A. No, I believe they shipped it up in a baggage car.

Q. Oh, is that right?

A. I believe they shipped it up. I don't know if they would fly that far

or not in them days. They shipped it up, I believe they said, in a baggage car and then they assembled it here in town.

Q. How would they tear it down for transport, take the wings off and--do you recall how that works?

A. No, I never seen them unload it or assemble it, I just seen the completed plane when they had it assembled down on the field down there. I never seen them assemble it.

Q. You don't remember his name?

A. No, I don't remember that either. I remember one famous flyer at that time, his name was Arch Hoxey, but I don't know whether that was him or not. I believe he was from St. Louis too. I used to see his name in the paper. We was interested in aviation even then, because we remember a lot of those early names, Glenn Curtiss and all those different names way back then when we were kids in school.

Q. You had heard about flying then before you saw this airplane I guess?

A. Oh yes, we had heard about them, yes.

Q. What's your first remembrance of an airplane or knowing of an airplane?

A. I don't recall that.

Q. It would of been in high school and through books I guess of some sort.

A. We probably were children in school, I guess we heard about them; down in the grades I mean. I believe it was in 1903, I believe it was in 1903 when he flew; and in 1914, that was about ten years later we got out of high school, so they'd been flying for ten years before one ever came to Beardstown.

Q. Well, when you got out of high school you started managing the store and you say you got most of your goods from Peoria?

A. Yes.

Q. They shipped it down by steamboat. How did you get it from the landing to the store? Did you use a team of horses?

A. Yes, that was all dray wagons in them days; a dray wagon.

Q. You hired that done?

A. Yes, we had to pay for that.

Q. Did you have to go do the loading or unloading?

A. No, they had the draymen do all that; they loaded and unloaded. And then later when it got a little bit rough they begun putting in the hard

roads, that changed too. Instead of using the steamboats where they had to haul it down from the warehouse in Peoria to the steamboat and load it and unload it, and then they hauled it down here and then loaded it and unloaded it, and then loaded it in the store again, had trucks, they had dray trucks, and they loaded it right at Peoria once and then come right down to Beardstown and then loaded it in the store.

Q. Oh, I see.

A. So that saved a lot of labor costs.

Q. Yes. sir. That must have taken quite a little while to come down from Peoria by truck though in those days.

A. No, I think he said he made it in about three hours.

Q. About three hours from Peoria.

A. By the time he left Peoria, I think he drove it in about three hours.

Q. Was most of the things you were getting at that time in bulk, or was it packaged already for you?

A. A lot of it was in bulk. The beans they would come in great big hundred and sixty-five pound bags, and sugar was all in hundred pound bags, and potatoes was in a hundred and fifty pound bags, two and a half bushel to a bag, and crackers came in great big boxes but you could get them in small two pound cartons too.

Q. Oh, I see.

A. So some of them were in packages and the cheaper ones were all in bulk. So a lot of goods was all in bulk. It wasn't packaged like they are today.

Q. No sir. That must have kept you in shape handling those big sacks and that sort of thing. Of course, I guess the draymen came in position that did it in the store and then you just packaged it in smaller packages out of them when you sold it.

A. Yes. They unloaded it in the warehouse and then we unloaded as we needed it, or would fill packages from the warehouse out there.

Q. You had a warehouse separate from the stores?

A. It was all part of the store, but it was separate. It was enclosed off and it would hold pretty near a carload, a railroad carload of goods.

Q. I see.

A. We had an awful stock of groceries in there. I bought for the two stores, so they'd unload it all in the one warehouse and then our trucks would haul down to store number two what we wanted.

Q. Oh, you had your own trucks you say?

A. Yes, we had our own trucks at that time, and truck drivers.

Q. Sir, let me turn this over. We're almost through on this side here. (turns tape over)

END OF SIDE ONE

Q. Did you have trucks? Did you do your own delivery through town?

A. Yes, everything was delivered in those days. Fifty or sixty years ago you could pretty near count the cars in Beardstown on your hands.

Q. Is that right?

A. There wasn't too many and people didn't do any shopping. Everything was telephone orders in them days and I think every store in town delivered. They depended on delivery.

Q. Were the telephones here when you first started out in 1914 when you started the store?

A. Yes, we had telephone and electric light and all the conveniences like that there.

Q. I see. How did they get their electricity for Beardstown?

A. Beardstown had their own light plant here. They had a light plant of their own that was later taken over by the Central Illinois Public Service Company, CIPS they call it now. So they come in and---it was owned, I think it was owned by a private industry here in town. They made their own electric light.

Q. What power did they use for it?

A. They generated their own steam power.

Q. With steam.

A. With steam.

Q. So they used coal I guess, or wood.

A. Yes, coal. And they made their own gas. They generated their own gas. They had coke ovens in the early days here. They generated their own gas down there at the gas plant they called it. They had a great big tank up there, and I think they burned coal here. I don't know how they done it but they called it in coke ovens and then they'd ship carloads of coke out for some blast furnace or someplace else, I think they used it; but they made their own electricity and their own gas here in those days.

Q. What did they use the gas for primarily?

A. Everybody heated pretty near that could get gas, and then they had lit by gas too. A lot of people had gas lights—it was the first thing they had put in. We had gas lights first and then we came to electricity. After they kept spreading the electric lines why then we had electricity.

Q. Well your store, when you started out then, had electricity in it?

A. Yes, I believe we had electricity if I remember right. I'm not sure but I believe we had electricity.

Q. You were open what, six days a week, or were you open on Sunday?

A. Sometimes they demanded Sundays. When we first opened, I believe we were opened on Sunday. There was a lot of railroad and I think a lot of the shopmen worked on Sunday, and they demanded gloves and tobacco and things like that there so I think we stayed open on Sunday for a while.

Q. I see.

A. And then I think after a year or so we closed. I believe they made it a point to take Sundays off.

Q. Yes sir.

A. They didn't do much and that there.

Q. Be kind of hard work seven days a week.

A. Yes, it was. It cut out all other activities; you couldn't attend church or do anything, so it finally—and then they got used to buying too. I believe after we put up signs closed on Sundays, why they bought their tobacco's and gloves and things on Saturday.

Q. Oh I see. And that would get them prepared for it. Was this in the grocery stores that you sold that sort of thing? Gloves and some of the dry goods then was also sold . . .

A. And after we opened the dry goods store, then we sold overalls and dry goods and gloves and everything in that dry goods department. We carried pretty near everything in dry goods in that line there, things like that, stockings and everything in there.

Q. What was the name of your dry goods store?

A. It opened with the name J. F. Halligan Company.

Q. Oh, I see.

A. We generally kept it under that name, under my father's name.

Q. So you had three stores then here in town?

A. Yes.

Q. And you say two in outlying towns, or did you actually start . . .

A. We was planning on that.

Q. I see.

A. We was planning on opening two more when that flood came in 1922. The water was all over town and so we didn't.

Q. How long did the water last during that flood?

A. It must have been up for, oh, I guess it was a month before people could move back into their homes again, and maybe longer down in the west end of town. That was a low part of town, very low. And some of the water was up--when the twenty-six foot water was up to the upstairs, some of the people moved to the upstairs apartment, some had to move out altogether; and some of the just one-story houses, water was over the top of them if I remember rightly.

Q. My gosh.

A. It was deep down there. But we was in the high part. We lived on Oak Street in our store at that time, so it didn't bother us; it was high and dry.

Q. You say you lived in the store?

A. No, we lived separately, but our house and store both was on a high place so it didn't bother us any.

Q. I see. And was your father with you in this company then?

A. Yes, he worked with us. After we started he still stayed with the railroad for a while. While I started he was still foreman at the railroad and he still kept his job over there for a while. After we got started why, we wanted him to quit that and get with us in the store so he finally did. And after he started the store--he died three years later, so he didn't--he had the flu, influenza, got a bad case of influenza at that time. That's when they had a flu epidemic here and it was pretty bad, and he got the flu; and he went back to work too quick they said and so it kind of affected him and he only lived about three years after that and then he died.

Q. Oh, I see. Was your mother living at that time?

A. Yes, she was still living. She just died twenty years ago, about twenty years ago; so she lived out here with us all these years.

Q. Your store was located right downtown in Beardstown was it? The first grocery store.

A. No, it was right down just a block from this street. It was over on

Jefferson, Fourth and Jefferson.

Q. Fourth and Jefferson Street?

A. Yes, the building is still there. There's another business in there now. It's a building down that way. There's four filling stations down here on the corner now and the Princess Theater was right next to them. That was a big theater, one of the big theaters in this part of the country around here was the big Princess Theater. That was crowded every night. That was in the heyday of the movie business. And our store was on the next corner and right next to us was a modern garage selling Studebakers and they were busy all the time, and now that's a Chevrolet and they're adding on an addition, and there's a Kentucky Fried Chicken in there and then we got a Texaco Station, we own a Texaco Station down another block, and they're putting up one of those Pizza Huts right across from that and then there's a big shopping center right across the street from that and then it's businesses all the way down to the railroad track. So it's getting to be quite a main business street. So we was located on that street there, but we wasn't down around the park.

Q. I see. Where was the theatorium that you mentioned?

A. That was over on Main Street. That was in just a little store building, and that's the way they started out. They had a camera up in the booth. (laughs) I guess it didn't hold over a hundred people in them days.

Q. Oh, is that right. How long were the picture shows themselves?

A. I believe most of them were just one reels. That was just in the early days and they fluttered and flickered a good deal; they didn't do too good. Then they got on fire one time and they burned out.

Q. Oh really?

A. So that was the end of them.

Q. What happened? The film catch on fire or . . . ?

A. In the booths, it must of been the film caught on fire. I remember they said up in the booth where they showed them. It burned the whole building, I guess, and that was the end. And then the next one they opened in a brick building that used to be a laundry building. They called that the Theatorium--no, that was called Dreamland; that was called Dreamland--and they operated in there for a while, and then they put up a big tent on another lot and I forget what they called that, and then they got into it right. Then Mr. Goodell and Harris, they formed a kind of corporation. They put up the Gem Theater; that was all modern, just a regular brick building just special for show business. Then a few years later while I was in high school--that must have been between 1912 and 1914 sometime--they put up this big Princess Theater right around the corner, so we had two modern theaters going here at one time. Now we don't have any.

Q. Oh, none at all?

A. None at all, except out in the country they have a drive-in.

Q. Oh, I see.

A. But that's not in town.

Q. Well, they showed movies here. Did they also have plays or was that all on the boat?

A. No, that was the end of the showboat business. After the movies came in, why that put out the showboat business; nobody went there anymore. The movies could get ocean scenes and woodland scenes and regular scenes on there; they could show movement and action, automobiles, ships at sea and everything, where the showboats couldn't; they just had the stage so—there was a lot of troupes came down from Chicago. Every year they would have vaudeville shows too. They had the Winneger Brothers—they were noted then; they were later in the movies in Hollywood—and they come down every year, the five Winneger Brothers from Chicago. And they had shows for a whole week at a time. There'd be troupes come down and then they would rent the theater, I guess, and they would have road shows they called them. They come in with a whole baggage carload of scenery too. It was pretty elaborate shows they put on [with] quite a few famous actors.

Q. Do you remember any of the shows in particular?

A. Yes, one I always remember: they have the whole town plastered with big red bills, the whole Chicago going up; it was called the "Heart of Chicago." I believe it was the story of the Chicago fire.

Q. Oh really.

A. The Chicago fire. And they put that on; I don't know how they done it. I guess in them days they let them build fires on the stage. I think after that Iroquois fire in Chicago—they had that big fire burn so many hundreds of people—I think they forbid that; they couldn't have no fires in there. So I don't know they might have lit fires on the stage, I don't remember.

Q. Well . . . (laughs)

A. And I can't remember the names of the shows either. They had different shows all the time; they was all . . .

Q. Which were the . . . the Gem Theater and the Princess Theater was that primarily or . . .?

A. Most of them was in the Princess Theater; that was the big one. I believe they held eight hundred people, people of eight hundred I believe they had, eight hundred capacity at a time. They put on one show right after the other. They had two shows every night, so they had around one thousand six hundred or around two thousand people. So they had a pretty good . . . Beardstown was quite a theatrical town in them days. Then I noticed in a history book at one time or paper sometime here that Oly Boly the world famous violinist played in the opera house here. Oly Boly was a famous Norwegian

violinist and he's the one that Longfellow mentions in Tales of a Wayside Inn.

Q. Oh, is that right?

A. Have you ever read them? About the story of Paul Revere and those stories; they was in the Wayside Inn and he was telling about how Oly Boly played for him there. I never knew that and that was on the same stage I graduated out of the eighth grade from. I graduated out in the old opera house in 1910 and that was the same stage that Oly Boly—felt proud when I read that Oly Boly was on that same stage where I played on.

Q. I see.

A. I played a piano solo when I graduated out of the eighth grade. I played a ten page piece by heart.

Q. Well, do you remember what it was?

A. Yes, the piece was called Coronado.

Q. Coronado.

A. A pretty difficult piece and I memorized it in a month. So I can remember that.

Q. How long had you been—when did you start your piano lessons or learning to play?

A. I think when we was around twelve years old as near as I can remember. I don't remember the exact date but I've tried to figure back many times. I think it must have been around twelve years of age.

Q. How did you come to get started on the piano? Did your mother want it or did you want it?

A. Well, my mother wanted us. That was part of our—he was an Englishman and they was sort of all up in that. He played the concertina; he was pretty good on the concertina. That was an English instrument at that time. He could play the concertina and my mother didn't play no instrument, but she was very musical, she liked music, so they insisted that we had to have that as part of our bringing up—other education. And we went farther than we expected I guess. We kind of started into the concert piano music line so we got up there where we could play Rachmaninoff and Franz Listz rapsodies and—I taught all of the fifteen Hungarian rapsodies already—and Chopin and Rachmaninoff and all, that was the type of music we played. We always went in for the—folks insisted we ought to go in for the higher grade of everything. (laughs)

Q. Yes sir. Were you really interested in the piano from the beginning . . .

A. Yes.

Q. Or did they have to—they didn't have to encourage you at all.

A. No, we all loved music.

Q. How long each day did you work at the piano and your practicing?

A. I usually practiced at least an hour every day and one day I remember I put in eight hours. That's the longest I ever put in. I'd read where Paderewski and Rachmaninoff and some of them would practice from seven to ten hours a day, and I thought that was a long time so I wanted to see if I could do it, so I remember I practiced four hours in the morning and four in the afternoon.

Q. My goodness.

A. But that was the longest time I ever practiced, eight hours, but I could play and it paid off.

Q. Yes, sir.

A. A lot of times I'd think I'd practice for two or three hours a day. We just loved music I don't know why; we all three of us. We all three took piano and got pretty proficient in piano and then my sister took up the violin and she became pretty proficient as a violinist. She had a studio here and one in the store. She had two studios teaching violin all the time about twenty or twenty-five miles north of here.

Q. Who taught you piano?

A. Well, we had very good teachers. My piano teacher, he studied under Theodore Leschestitski at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Vienna, and he studied under Arthur Schnabel and he studied under Ossip Gabrilowitsh. They were all victor recording artists; they were all world famous pianists. And my harmony teacher, Professor Kritch, he taught for nine years in the Stern Conservatory of Music in Berlin. They had very efficient teachers in them days; they were all European educated. And he was my sister's violin professor. She studied under six or seven different professor's and they were all educated in Europe.

Q. Where did you study? Here you mean?

A. No, at the Conservatory of Music in Jacksonville at that time. They had very good schools at that time.

Q. Was it a separate school or was it connected with some school?

A. It was connected with Illinois College . . .

Q. Oh, I see.

A. . . . it's still a noted college over there in Jacksonville. That's from William Jennings Bryan. He was one of the noted ones and one of the noted graduates.

Q. And how long did you go to school there?

A. I think we went four or five years. We went through and I think we put in an extra year, I think if I remember right. We studied music-- I was in business--we studied music and then we had an orchestra at that time too. (laughs) We had so many things; we had an orchestra, Halligan's Orchestra, and during them war years we was playing for the Red Cross; the Red cross would have benefits here. And then they had liberty bond sales. I guess the government was putting them on or something, selling liberty bonds they called them, and they would have special programs or something. And I remember we played for all the things like that.

Q. What kind of orchestra did you have? Was it--you had strings and brass and all that . . .

A. Mostly strings, mostly violins and two or three horns, but mostly strings, violin, mostly violin; it was a string orchestra.

Q. Who did the conducting?

A. I did.

Q. You did?

A. I was conductor (laughter). Yes.

Q. How large piece band was it?

A. It had about ten, I think it was around ten in the orchestra.

Q. And you had violins and what other types of instruments?

A. I believe one coronet, and I believe one trombone, and I believe one clarinet if I remember right, and then later on when we played for outside programs. We played for church services in a lot of church programs and we played for box suppers around and different things. We had quite a time of it. It was quite a nice orchestra. I had quite a good time out of it, so. . . . We was involved in a good many things. (laughter)

Q. Yes sir. Did you play for dances at that time?

A. Yes, sometimes we played for like alumni reunions and what they call graduation exercises, and we played for alumni dances and things like that.

Q. I see. Where were those normally held? The dances.

A. They held them in different lodge--usually they held them in lodge rooms, like the Masonic Lodge, or the Woodman Lodge. They had a big auditorium at that time, so that's where they usually had their reception. Now they have them all out at the high school. They got a big place out there to have them and they can hold around 500 people at a banquet; so they went to a different place.

Q. How was it decided you would go to the conservatory at Jacksonville? Did you want to go there? How did you select that for your advanced training?

A. Well, I was over there at one time I think at some kind of a recital or something and I heard my future professor play—he played on the program in the opera house and I heard him play—and I inquired where he was from and they said he was from Jacksonville, a professor over there, so I made up my mind I wanted to study under him and it was a good choice because we became fast friends. We corresponded for, I guess, thirty years after they left. They left over there and the they became head of Illinois Wesleyan University in Bloomington.

Q. Oh, is that right?

A. They got them over there so they were—Mr. Kritch, he was director of the Illinois Wesleyan, that's a Methodist—a big school in Bloomington.

Q. That's my school.

A. Is it?

Q. (laughs) I went three years there, yes.

A. So they was over there until they quit, I believe. They taught in New York City; they taught and played in concerts in New York City and different places before they came to Jacksonville. I read their history already. They would go to Europe a lot of times—we'd get cards from Europe from them—and they went up to Alaska and every summer they'd go someplace, beside him practicing for his recitals every fall. Every fall and winter I believe they had to put on a recital, so I attended a lot of those there. Very good, very good teachers in those days.

Q. You say you were working and going to the conservatory, so you travelled back and forth did you?

A. Yes. Later on after we was in the store, why we went back and forth. My sister she stayed at the Academy Hall.

Q. Oh, I see.

A. She roomed there, the violin, studied there, she stayed over there, but my brother and I after we started in high school, going over there, so we went back and forth on the trains every week. And we left here at six o'clock in the morning; we had to get up at four by the time we got up and got dressed and got breakfast and got down to the depot. And the train left at six o'clock and just about that time there was always what they called drags. That was a big freight train come out and it'd hold about a hundred cars and it went as slow as could be. (laughs) It was just starting out and we had to get up early to beat that freight train over there or we'd miss our train. So once or twice the conductor held the train for us. He knew we was going on that day and he was good enough he held the train, I think it was fifteen or twenty minutes late he'd hold the train, or if he seen it a coming or he seen us coming he'd motion for us to run to get over first.

Q. Now this was—you mean you lived on the opposite side of the tracks from the depot and to get to the depot . . .

A. Yes, you had to cross the tracks to get to the depot there.

Q. Where were the drag trains coming from?

A. They were coming from the south. They would come there, but the passenger train was parked by the depot and they'd come by on another track.

Q. I see.

A. But they was between us and the passenger train and they were going north with the river and the other one was going south.

Q. What were they hauling mostly?

A. Coal. They had a few other boxcars then but mostly it was all coal trains in them days; that was a big shipment through here. I think they run a train every hour they said, every hour on the hour.

Q. Is that right? Coal trains going through.

A. Yes, coal trains.

Q. And then returning empty I guess.

A. Made their money. They hauled coal from southern Illinois and--everything was coal in them days.

Q. They put it on the river, did they? Or did they go on across the river?

A. No, they hauled it directly to Chicago and then I think they hauled it from there, I think they shipped some as far up as Minnesota. That's what I understood; I don't remember but I know they hauled it from here direct to Chicago. Then the local--that was the through freight trains, I guess--then they had local trains that had some and they would set them out at all these different towns along the road, they'd stop along--the freight trains I guess, went right on through to Galesburg before they stopped. Then they had locals that would haul it and they'd stop at Browning and Astoria and Lewiston and Havanna, I guess wherever they went through and they'd leave out a car of coal there I guess every week or something for them.

Q. How long did it take to get by train to Jacksonville?

A. Hour, just about an hour run. They stopped at Arenzville, and Concord, and they'd pick up a lot of milk and different things every time, why they'd load milk and quite a lot of stuff and haul it into Jacksonville.

Q. Were there other students going there with you? Were there a group of you that went together?

A. No, we were about the only ones I remember of, us three here, and then I think there was some from here going over, but I think they went on different days. After we got into the store we'd go over on Saturday.

But in high school, why we'd get to go any day of the week. We'd get-- on our school days we could get excused through the week; the school they'd give us a half a day off. We'd go over in the morning and we got back on the noon train. They'd run a lot of trains in them days, so you could go over in the morning and take our lesson and get back on the twelve o'clock train and go to school in the afternoon so--they called that all important education--the school board, so they give us credit for that.

Q. What was it like over at the conservatory? When you got there did you walk from the depot to the school?

A. In the summertime I'd walk and in the wintertime we took a streetcar. In zero weather why we'd take a streetcar down.

Q. Were these electric streetcars at that time?

A. Yes, electric streetcars.

Q. And that would let you off at the school then and . . .

A. Just about; we had to walk just a block off the streetcar lines. It run pretty close, right almost on the lines; it was pretty close there. And then they went right up to the depot, so we got right off at the depot so it was pretty handy for us. It was a lively place. I played in recitals over there and it was just music and it was--music in them days seemed like it was a bigger and a different type of music. It was kind of high class music and I used to like to hear it in violins and different things practicing there. It was a wonderful experience.

Q. How many students were their in the conservatory at that time? Do you know?

A. I really don't know. They had a lot of them coming there. Every time I was over there they was just a coming and going all the time.

Q. What was your lesson period like over there? Did you play for the instructor and he'd comment or what?

A. Yes. If you'd make any mistakes--this is a picture of the studio. That's my professor there; that's the one I got in later years. He had two big Steinway grand pianos and I'd play one piano and he'd set at the other piano. And if you didn't play it according to the way he like it, why he'd play it on his piano . . .

Q. Oh, I see. (laughs)

A. . . . if you made a mistake he'd correct you or something, and after you got done why he'd make comments or something. That's the way they taught in them days.

Q. Well, did you have work periods or practice periods over there? Did they have individual rooms so that you . . .

A. Yes, they had individual rooms. Those who stayed over there practiced

all the time. I had a room up there; they give me another teacher's room. She had two Steinway pianos in there and they'd let me go up in her room. She wasn't there the day I'd take, so all the time after I got done taking my lesson early in the morning I had till pretty near noon to catch the train so, I could practice up there for an hour or so, and they let me use her studio, (laughs) but they had whole rows of studios on the upper floors for violins and pianos to practice in.

Q. Oh, I see. I suppose those rooms are still there aren't they?

A. No, the building is tore down.

Q. Oh is it?

A. I think the high school bought it and put up a gymnasium.

Q. Oh, well.

A. I think they tore it down and put up a gymnasium in later years.

Q. Do you remember specifically any of the recitals over there?

A. Yes, I remember one especially that I played in. I believe it was during the advanced student—I don't know if it was in my last year over there; I can't remember that. But there was always about ten or twelve of the best students, what they called the advanced students, ready to graduate. It was on a recital of the piano and violin mostly and I believe one song or something, mostly piano and violin, and I was next to the last and that made me pretty nervous. I was hoping I'd be the first one. So, the students who was on the recital were standing out in the hall and they had an entrance way up into the stage—you had to go up a little stairway on to the stage—and we were standing back there and we was all pretty nervous, you know. You get pretty nervous, what they called stage fright, and you're under sort of a tension, and some of them was going on playing and everything like that and I know I made a mention, I said, "I've got no piece ready for an encore." When I played in high school on these different programs, sometimes I'd have to play two or three times. I'd get called back two or three times before they'd let you go off. I didn't know whether they'd do that over there or not so they said, "Well you don't have to worry about an encore. You don't get any over here."

They were all students and professors and musicians; they were all critical. Everyone in that audience was a critical audience who you played for and that made it that much more. They could tell every mistake you made. So they said, "You don't need to worry about an encore. You won't get any." (laughter) So that was that; so I didn't worry no more about that. So finally it got around to me, and I was sweating it out, and it got on to my turn to play. I played a very difficult piece too, at that time. I remember it was—and I memorized it. I'll never forget it. And I went out there and I played on there and I guess I went through it all right because when I got done the encore they kept a clapping and clapping and clapping; they wouldn't stop. And I went back and bowed two or three times and they still kept a clapping and that was something new, so I went out for the last time. I wasn't going to come back and I don't know what was—my professor, he was setting out in the crowd and he was back in there and he gave me a shove

and he shoved me out and I fell on that little landing with my hands. He said, "Get out there and play." And I went out there and played. I knowed another peice but I hadn't practiced on it or nothing but I went through that. So I got through it all right, and I was the only one on there that they encored on that whole program.

Q. (laughs) My goodness.

A. So they, the faculty, after that was over got up sort of, I don't know, a little party afterwards and we went down to a confectionary, one of the best ones in town that day, and they were going to give me a little celebration afterwards. So I guess it was sort of a special event they thought. And I know they thought I'd order a big meal, but as I remember I think all I ordered was an ice cream soda. (laughter)

Q. Still had a little nervous stomach?

A. (laughter) Couldn't get over it. But that was one experience. I've played on other recitals but I'll never forget that night. I think that's the most people I ever met at one time. When I got done with that there why the whole hallway was filled with students and people shaking hands. So that's one I'll never forget.

Q. (laughs) I guess not. These were held at night were they?

A. Yes, this was at night.

Q. How large an auditorium did they have there for you to play in?

A. They had a pretty good sized auditorium and they were standing all around, they were standing that night, this one night that I played there. I don't know whether they was [always] that full or not. They had different recitals, of course, that I never was on. They had a recital, I guess, every so often, but this one I was on that night, why the place was packed. It [auditorium] might of held three or four hundred people. It was kind of a big recital. They had two big grand pianos on the stage. Quite a big place for a building like that.

Q. And you commuted then for five years to the conservatory?

A. Yes. I think it's five years we went. I think I went an extra year. I wanted to kind of go as far as I could go, and after we opened our second store then I quit. After we opened our second store uptown, why then I had my hands full and I was pretty proficient, I could play—I was playing Hungarian Rhapsody and Chopin. I was up there pretty high, so—and then I studied four years, four or five years, under another teacher here before I went over there, so I could play pretty good before I went over there. And she was a very good teacher, she was a graduate of the Beethoven Conservatory of Music in St. Louis at that time and she studied under some very good teachers. She told me at the time they were from the Vienna Conservatory, Royal Conservatory of Music in Vienna, and I noticed in this Book of Etudes that one of them was one of the editors who edited all them etudes.

Q. Oh, is that right?

A. She studied under a wonderful pianist, so she was very good.

Q. Well, what was her name?

A. Nora Hagener, Miss Nora Hagener. She was very good. I think she played for about fifty years, she was church organist at the Lutheran church here.

Q. Did you belong to a church here?

A. We belonged to the Methodist church all our life. Belong to the Methodist church here.

Q. Oh, did you play in the church activities in any way?

A. Yes, our orchestra played there, and then when I was down in school yet I was church pianist. I played down there Sunday morning for Sunday school. I guess they thought I was good enough to play so, (laughs) I don't know who appointed me but I got up there and I played. You had to sit down and play--they'd call off a piece and you had to sit down and play it, and they told me, they said, "We'll let you know what pieces we're going to announce so you can practice them ahead of time," and they didn't do it when I went down there. That was one of them: I don't know how you do it, but you do it.

Q. (laughs) Yes sir.

A. Then after I got out of high school--well no, my last year in high school, I started with the conservatory over there then. I was up there pretty high, had gotten up pretty high in music, so I wanted to get into advanced music so that's when we went over there.

Q. When did you start teaching music?

A. Well, I taught my first year in high school when I was a little freshman. I never planned--we never took music up; it was just supposed to be part of our--what do you call it--ethical education or something like that, and I never planned on teaching or anything. It was just for our own purposes. And different ones heard me play and they came and wanted to know if I'd start teaching, so that's how I started teaching. So all the while I was through high school I taught after school. I taught music after school. I had married people and at one time I gave another music teacher. She heard me play and she liked my touch and everything, so she came here one summer and she heard me play and she wanted to know if I'd give her lessons. I think she was teaching at some conservatory up in Wisconsin someplace. So she studied with me all one summer. So I taught all through high school and then after we got in the business, after we got into the business life, I taught for a little while. We had a big grand piano. In one of our stores we had a sheet music department too, and the dry goods, and we sold pianos and recording machines, so it was really kind of a general store instead of just a dry goods store; we had kind of everything. (laughs) We was involved in a good many things, (laughs) kept us busy.

Q. Where did you teach? In the store itself or in the home or . . . ?

A. No, I taught in the home when I first started out; a studio I had in my—just taught everybody who came to the house.

Q. Then did you transfer to the store and do it down there?

A. No, I never taught in the store much. There was too many people in and out so I never taught down there; always go up to the house and teach up there where we wasn't bothered. That's why I say after we got started in business, then I couldn't—I had some that just wouldn't quit. I had one boy he just wouldn't quit; he'd come over with his books anyhow, to the store, so I'd give him a lesson on the grand piano in the store. We sold sheet music and at that time the war was on and we had strings across the store and they was all lined with "Over There" and all those wartime songs.

Q. This is the sheet music you mean?

A. Yes, sheet music department. And he just come over there and he said he was going to take a lesson or he wouldn't go home... So to get rid of him I give him a lesson on the grand piano.

Q. (laughter) Well, and then he'd go home.

A. But when we got into more stores than one why then I couldn't, they had my hands too much.

Q. Well you only sold the pianos in the one store though?

A. Yes, just in our main store.

Q. What kind of pianos did you sell?

A. We sold for the Bruce Company in Springfield.

Q. Bruce?

A. Yes. Bruce had sent down some pianos and . . .

Q. Were they made in Springfield?

A. No, he sold mostly—let's see what was this big—Kimbell pianos from Chicago. I think he was a Kimbell agent over there in Springfield.

Q. Oh, I see.

A. I believe they're still in business, the Bruce Company. I believe they're down there along on Third and Monroe [Street] or someplace. The last time I was over there I believe they was in Springfield.

Q. And did you sell any other kinds of instruments or just pianos?

A. No, my sister sold violins. We had violins in there too; we sold violins.

Q. What kind of violins did you sell? What was the company that made those?

A. She got them from a music supply place in Chicago, but I can't remember the name of that. They carried a big stock of mostly imported violins. They were all good violins, and she sold quite a few violins. Then in our store--we was in the paper here a while back; that might be interesting for you, I don't know. We was in Associated Press all over the country. They had a picture of it; I could show it to you; they had it in there a few months ago. We had the biggest tomato can in the world on top of our store.

Q. Biggest tomato can?

A. Biggest tomato can in the world. That's what the paper--Associated Press--called it, and I guess it was maybe. We had made some advertising when we--I was pretty well up on advertising. We advertised a lot on any new schemes in them days. I was just young in them days, but I was good on advertising, I think. I conceived the idea of getting a great big can of this Blue Ribbon, so I contacted the officials of Oakford and Fahrstock in Peoria. I wanted a big can about nine or ten feet tall and about four or five feet in diameter--it's a big thing--so I contacted them to see what they'd think about it and they were enthused over the idea right away, so they wrote right back or called back, and said they would have one made for me. So they either made it or had one made.

END OF TAPE

Q. Sir, the other day we talked about the balloon ascensions and the first aircraft you saw here in Beardstown. When did you first become interested in aviation?

A. I don't know, that was back in the teens or in the early 1920's; in the early 1920's we was interested in it then because my brother he's got a piece in the Popular Mechanics in 1923 where he had a model telling them how they could apply this principle and we'd been applying them before that, so I imagine it was back in the teens when we first was flying these airplanes. Then after we saw that they were a success and we had the secret that we knew how to fly them that's when we got interested. Then we built them for quite a while and tested all different models like it there, and then after we saw that we had and tested all different models like it there, and then after we saw that we had the correct principle and see that they would fly then started investing some money into building a big one, which was pretty expensive even in them days because we had to obtain everything from out of town. There was no thing like steel tubing or tubes or aluminum, anything like that there, so it was pretty expensive. So I think we really got interested back in the teens. [1900's]

Q. So this would have been about the time you got out of high school, you think, someplace along there?

A. Yes, about along there sometime.