

BENJAMIN JOSEPH SITEK

Interviewer: David Henderson

Interviewed on: October 18, 2001

Interviewer: All right, for the sake of information, we usually start with name and date of birth.

Benjamin Sitek: My name is Benjamin J. Sitek.

Interviewer: What does the J stand for?

Benjamin Sitek: Joseph. I was born in 1922. May 25. I was born in Pittsburgh.

Interviewer: Where did you live in the township?

Benjamin Sitek: I lived on Silverthorn Road.

Interviewer: Did you move there with your parents?

Benjamin Sitek: Yes. I was two years old when my parents moved onto Silverthorn Road with another family to the house. That family's name was Randall.

Interviewer: Related to Frank?

Benjamin Sitek: Yes. Then eventually, after a few years, the Randall's went over onto Fry Road and we stayed on Silverthorn.

Interviewer: OK. You're talking about the house at the top of the hill there?

Benjamin Sitek: No, I'm talking about the homestead. Where Diane is. [His daughter at 10327 Silverthorn Rd]

Interviewer: Oh, where Diane is? OK.

Benjamin Sitek: Where the old home burnt down, and then we built on that property. And then I moved up to the top of the hill.

Interviewer: When did you move to the top of the hill?

Benjamin Sitek: In 1945.

Interviewer: Right after the war?

Benjamin Sitek: Right.

Interviewer: But before the war, though, you lived up there where Diane is now. What kind of a house did you have there?

Benjamin Sitek: We had a two-story farmhouse. We had a 50-acre farm we made our living off of.

Interviewer: How was it heated?

Benjamin Sitek: Wood and coal. Mostly wood because we couldn't afford coal.

Interviewer: Did it have running water?

Benjamin Sitek: No. Our water came from a well maybe 200 yards away from the house. We had to pump water and carry it in. It wasn't so bad in the summer, but in winter, oh boy, awful cold.

Interviewer: You had an outhouse?

Benjamin Sitek: Yes, we had an outhouse. We didn't have toilet paper. We used a Sears & Roebuck catalog.

Interviewer: There you go. By the time you moved to the house after the war, had they put inside water in yet? First of all, had electricity come there yet?

Benjamin Sitek: Yes, electric came in during the war.

Interviewer: OK. So, did they put inside plumbing in then, hook up the water and all that, or did they wait awhile?

Benjamin Sitek: No. We waited a while. In fact, with living on a hill, I was pumping water and carrying it in. Then, after about four or five years, we put some plumbing in, and an inside bath and running water.

Interviewer: OK. Did you have brothers and sisters?

Benjamin Sitek: Yes. I had one brother and three sisters.

Interviewer: Their names?

Benjamin Sitek: My brother was Walter; my sister was Mary, Helen and Julia.

Interviewer: Do you remember their ages, when they were born?

Benjamin Sitek: Well, that I can't tell you.

Interviewer: Well, were they older or younger than you?

Benjamin Sitek: Well, my twin sisters were younger than me and one of them is living. The others are all passed away.

Interviewer: OK. Who did you marry?

Benjamin Sitek: I married Helen Lechefsky, my old school sweetheart.

Interviewer: We're going to get to schools here in a minute. How many kids did you have?

Benjamin Sitek: We had three.

Interviewer: And what are their names?

Benjamin Sitek: They were Benjamin Sitek, Jr., and Diane Sitek and Phyllis Sitek. Well, that's what their names were at that time.

Interviewer: Right, they've married. OK, now I'm going to take you way back here. You came to the township at age 2, which means, you were talking 1924.

Benjamin Sitek: Yeah, somewhere around there.

Interviewer: At that time, what businesses or professions do you remember were in the township? Let me give you some suggestions here that you might think about: blacksmith, saw mills, cheese factories, mechanics, merchants, stone quarry, oil and gas, wagon makers, shoe makers, doctors, dentists, feed mills, leather goods, tinkers or horse and cattle dealers.

Benjamin Sitek: Well, feed mills. Grinding grain was the front and center.

Interviewer: Ok. Who ran that, do you remember?

Benjamin Sitek: I think it was Peter Roan (Ted Roan).

Interviewer: Like r-o-w-n?

Benjamin Sitek: That's who his daughter is married to. He worked for us. He's not working for me now.

Interviewer: He worked for us before?

Benjamin Sitek: Yeah, at the township. Edith Roan. Her name's Edith Roan. She married Swift.

Interviewer: Oh, Ray Swift?

Benjamin Sitek: Yeah.

Interviewer: Ok. And that was at Franklin Center? What other businesses were in Franklin Center at the time?

Benjamin Sitek: Well, there was the Roan actuary store.

Interviewer: That was the grocery store. That was right on the corner.

Benjamin Sitek: It was a tavern and a store combined, with no partition in between. There was a big potbelly stove, with the groceries on one side on the shelves and a little bar on the side for the beer.

Interviewer: And Francie Rodak ran that. Do you remember who ran it before him?

Benjamin Sitek: His father Mike Rodak I think.

Interviewer: OK.

Benjamin Sitek: Then it was Francie. Then they put a partition in, between the grocery store and the bar. And the grocery store stayed.

Interviewer: What other businesses were in Franklin Center at the time?

Benjamin Sitek: There were a couple of sawmills. Some of them were portable...one of them was portable and would be moved from one woods to another. And I heard talk about the cheese factory down in Franklin Center, and there was supposed to have been another, but I can't think of the name.

Interviewer: Had it already gone out of business?

Benjamin Sitek: Yes.

Interviewer: Ok. And there was another cheese factory over by Ivoray & Crane, too.

Benjamin Sitek: Right.

Interviewer: Was that one out of business, too, by the time you remember?

Benjamin Sitek: That one was still in business for a while, but then it went out of business, but I can't tell you the time or the year.

Interviewer: Ok. In our old records, there were blacksmiths at the Center, there was a gristmill, and there were shoemakers. Was there a shoemaker in the Center?

Benjamin Sitek: Yes.

Interviewer: In your earliest memory, do you remember there was a school right across from the tavern, on the other

side of Old State? Had the town hall been built, the one that's over across from the church?

Benjamin Sitek: Yes.

Interviewer: It was already built?

Interviewer: Ok. I'll get to more on the town hall. Were there any doctors or dentists in the township?

Benjamin Sitek: Well, not in the township. In Edinboro, Dr. Ghering. He was a doctor and a dentist combined. But outside of that, I don't know. I thought there was a Washburn was some kind of a doctor, but I'm not sure.

Interviewer: Ok. Now there's Washburn's that were in the township?

Benjamin Sitek: Yes.

Interviewer: Are they the same ones you're talking about?

Benjamin Sitek: Yes. Do you want all the names of the people that lived on Silverthorn Road?

Interviewer: Go ahead, if you know them.

Benjamin Sitek: Janette Matheson lived on Silverthorn Road. Then there was Ben Eaton. But I think that Ben Eaton, that's where I lived, you know, on the hill. But I think that may have been Silverthorn lived there first years ago, and that's how they named the road after Silverthorn and then Ben Eaton. Ben Eaton was in that place, and then there was Nims.

Interviewer: Now do you remember Roy's dad?

Benjamin Sitek: Yes.

Interviewer: What was his name? Ira? I-R-A?

Benjamin Sitek: Yes, Ira Nims. And then there was Kalicky lived at the next place where Tom Lechner, and then across the road was Bulla, Steve Bulla. And then the next place up was our place, where my mother and father lived. Then on the left side was Washburn, where Washburn lived. And then down the road from our place was Carl Strobel, and then across the road from Carl Strobel was Kavulics. And then across from Kavulics was Brzezinski. And that's the one that I...

Interviewer: OK, now, almost of these people were farmers, right?

Benjamin Sitek: Every one of them was a farmer.

Interviewer: I'm going to ask you about farming in a minute, but did any of them also work outside the community?

Benjamin Sitek: I don't think at that time for a few years there, there were any of them working out of the community.

Interviewer: Ok, they were all farmers?

Benjamin Sitek: They were all farmers and making their living off farming.

Interviewer: Ok. So what's your earliest memory of farming with regard to the crops that were farmed, and the

techniques, you know, like what equipment they had and that kind of stuff?

Benjamin Sitek: Well, one of my neighbors, I don't know which one of the people were plowing with oxen. And horses did the plowing. And my Dad and I trained a pair of oxen. And the crops were mostly oats, buckwheat, and potatoes. Things that were productive for living; things that they made their living off of. They raised their own cows, their own milk; made their own butter; made their own cheese. And they raised their own hogs that they butchered for the winter. They raised cabbage, which they put up for sauerkraut in 50-gallon wooden drums, and so on. They took all the meat and they butchered in the fall, and they smoked their own hams, smoked sausage and baked it. And everybody made a living off that, outside of salt and pepper and things like that.

Interviewer: They were self-contained.

Benjamin Sitek: (*glitch in videotape*) 150-200 jars of different stuff.

Interviewer: So if you had to go to town for something that was a food supplement, what would it have been—salt and pepper, sugar?

Benjamin Sitek: Salt and pepper, sugar, and maybe flour. But I remember when we ground buckwheat and made buckwheat flour.

Interviewer: Took it over at the gristmill in the Center?

Benjamin Sitek: Yes.

Interviewer: What equipment did they have, did they use in the fields?

Benjamin Sitek: Well, first the only equipment they had were like plows, drags, rollers, and grain drill, a horse-drawn grain drill. And that's what they would use. And as they progressed, when they first went to harvest grain, they would have a mowing machine with a tin behind it. And as the grain fell on top of the tin, they had a wooden rake and they'd reach over and pull it off into lumps.

Interviewer: And somebody could shock it then?

Benjamin Sitek: Yes. And then the women would come along, take grain, and make a twine, and then they would bundle it up and shock it. And when the first thresh machine was operated by a steam engine...

Interviewer: Who got the first one that you remember?

Benjamin Sitek: I thought it was Steve Simon (?).

Interviewer: Where'd he live?

Benjamin Sitek: Over on Shaddock Road.

Interviewer: And everybody shared?

Benjamin Sitek: Yes. And no matter how much you grew, or how much you had--you had five acres, you had two acres, they had 10 acres. When the thrashing season come, they would just follow the thrashing machine and everybody would work together. And when it was all over with, there was no "I owe you", no "You did more for me" or "I did less

for you" or stuff like that. They all got along real good in the community.

Interviewer: Ok. When you first got that, it was steam-powered. It was pulled from place to place by horses, I presume.

Benjamin Sitek: Right.

Interviewer: When was the first tractor that you remember and what was it like?

Benjamin Sitek: I remember the first tractor was a 10-20 McCormick.

Interviewer: About what year?

Benjamin Sitek: Oh my gosh?

Interviewer: Well, how old were you, do you remember?

Benjamin Sitek: Well, I was probably around 12.

Interviewer: So that'd be 1932 or '34 maybe?

Benjamin Sitek: The Caslins (?) got the first tractor, a McCormick 10-20. And they went out and plowed for the neighbors just for the gas. Gas was very cheap then.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Benjamin Sitek: And we had a potato digger then, as we started advancing. And we got a potato digger where we could dig potatoes by hand we dug them with the digger

Interviewer: How about a cabbage picker?

Benjamin Sitek: What?

Interviewer: A cabbage picker?

Benjamin Sitek: No. We picked all our cabbage by hand.

Interviewer: How about planting? Did you have a ride-along?

Benjamin Sitek: The first part of our life we planted by hand.

Interviewer: Ok.

Benjamin Sitek: And then we got a planter.

Interviewer: Ok.

Benjamin Sitek: And then two people sat in there and kept feeding the planter.

Interviewer: What else do you remember about farming? Was it tough work?

Benjamin Sitek: You know...

Interviewer: Was there often failures, crop failures?

Benjamin Sitek: As a young kid, it never seemed to me that it was that hard. It seemed like it was part of our life. It was part of our community. It was part of the life we were making for ourselves. And us kids, we'd be helping, get straw on our arms when we were thrashing, and all that, and then we'd go down to the creek to wash up. It just didn't seem like it was a lot of hard work.

Interviewer: All the kids got along together, and played together and worked together as a regular...?

Benjamin Sitek: Yes. It was a lot different. We got together. We had no radios. We had no TV. We had nothin'. And what we'd do is get together on a Sunday or Saturday and we'd all go down to Sterrettania or Grangeville, which is about three miles. We'd walk down there and go skinny-dipping in a big waterhole. Nobody thought of nothin'. All the girls and the boys and everybody just had one hell of a time. And we'd come home, and that was one of our great outings as kids. And our other one was... Well, we were church-going people and we used to walk to St. Francis Church. I used to walk all the time for catechism, my religion. But, on Christmas, I remember all the neighbors getting together, and snow on the ground and snow on the road. We would walk that three miles or three and a half miles singing, you know, all kinds of Christmas songs we didn't even know. And that was the kind of...

Interviewer: Well, since we're on churches, what other churches were in the township in your early memories?

Benjamin Sitek: The only one I really remember was St. Francis, and then a Lutheran across from St. Francis.

Interviewer: How about down in the Center? There was a Church in the Center.

Benjamin Sitek: Yes, yes. That was a Methodist. I remember going to that church once in a while with some of my friends.

Interviewer: Just to be neighborly.

Benjamin Sitek: Yes. Neighbors are neighbors, sure. There's never any difference.

Interviewer: Why don't we talk a little bit more about your early life with regard to your friends, the schools, and some of the stories that you remember about the trouble you got in? I know you were a troublemaker!

Benjamin Sitek: Not me, I was never a troublemaker. Well, I remember four schools: Goodman, Eureka, Crane and Silverthorn. And we went to Silverthorn.

Interviewer: And that was on the southeast corner of Old State and Silverthorn?

Benjamin Sitek: Right. And one thing that stands out about this school because we always seemed to do things for ourselves. Like when Christmas come, we'd have all kinds of Christmas plays and our families would come. And even if we weren't very good, we'd be on stage, and all that, acting Christmas plays and Halloween plays. And the other great thing was the box social. They'd have the girls make up little boxes with sandwiches or something to eat. And then they would take them to school and be it a big deal for everyone to come and buy a box, sometimes for a nickel or sometimes for a quarter. There wasn't much money then. And then you got to sit and eat what that person or that girl had put in there.

Interviewer: Did you know whose box it was you were buying?

Benjamin Sitek: No. That's what was the mystery about it.

Interviewer: So it was potluck that you were buying?

Benjamin Sitek: You always wanted to get the girl's you liked, but many times, you didn't!

Interviewer: Right!

Benjamin Sitek: So you took what you could get. So, potluck brought you.

Interviewer: Helen went to school there too with you? Who else went to school with you?

Benjamin Sitek: No, Helen only went to school with me, maybe the last... Well, it would be the year I quit school in '39, no '38.

Interviewer: Ok, so you never finished school?

Benjamin Sitek: I finished the grade school, eighth grade.

Interviewer: Was that all that was required back then, was eighth grade?

Benjamin Sitek: Yes. One schoolteacher, I remember the teacher Thora Harris, Dave Reno, Harned, Sundback, and Marian Harned.

Interviewer: These were all teachers at the Silverthorn School or some of the other schools too?

Benjamin Sitek: These were all teachers that taught at Silverthorn School at one time or another. And when the kids got rough, they'd bring in Dave Reno. He was a pretty big boy. And I used to go every morning in winter.... Oh, and Janette Matheson was a teacher, Margaret Porter was a teacher. I used to go up and build fires for 15 cents a day and keep the school warm with a big potbelly stove. That's how I got my first bicycle. I saved up the money and bought a used bicycle I think for 10 or 15 dollars.

Interviewer: You had to get there early?

Benjamin Sitek: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: To get the fire going?

Benjamin Sitek: I had to get there at least a half hour early. Get the fire going and get the school warm. Well, we had trouble kids; we were all trouble kids I remember, but nothing that would lead to a gunfight or something like that. Maybe a good fisticuffs once in a while.

Interviewer: Did you ever get into mischief, like tipping over the outhouses or anything like that?

Benjamin Sitek: That was our Halloween. Not in the school. Over there, they were built a bit differently.

Interviewer: A little more sturdy, huh.

Benjamin Sitek: They were a little more stout and tip outhouses, and pull machinery out in the road, and cornstalks in the road. All in fun. And then, I remember the fun started to end because the older kids, or some of the real troublemakers, would put cornstalks on each side of a piece of machinery. And then you know, some farmer would come along in a Model A Ford, and push the corn off and he didn't know there was a machinery in there and he'd bang up his Ford new car. So, things settled down after that, and we didn't have too much of that.

Interviewer: Who else went to school with you?

Benjamin Sitek: Oh, my brothers and my sisters, they went to school with me. All the neighbor kids.

Interviewer: Do you recall how many were in the school at one time?

Benjamin Sitek: I think, probably around 35 to 40.

Interviewer: Well, that's quite a number actually.

Benjamin Sitek: Well, see they had a school bus. It was a horse-drawn wagon in summer and it made the round Silverthorn, West Stancliff, Fry Road and State Road to the schoolhouse. And in winter, it would be a bobsled. And to keep the kids' feet warm, Wayne Washburn, he was the school bus driver, to keep the kids'...

Interviewer: They just made a big circle around that block then?

Benjamin Sitek: Yeah. And he would heat up rock and then wrapped them in blankets on the bottom and you could put your feet on it to keep them warm. But us kids, we always walked. We would always walk that mile. And then when I started high school, in early '39, I think...class of '42, back up four years....

Interviewer: '38.

Benjamin Sitek: '38. When I got out of school, I started high school that winter. I had to walk. I had no transportation. So, I walked the six miles, winter and summer.

Interviewer: To what school?

Benjamin Sitek: To Edinboro High School, the wooden building.

Interviewer: Downtown?

Benjamin Sitek: Yeah, well, it was right off the doctor's offices up there, that used to be there. And in the winter, I'd stay with a woman Sheets (Lorna). I shoveled her walk and things like that for a room.

Interviewer: So you stayed at her house?

Benjamin Sitek: Yeah. Then in '39, I started high school in '39. I couldn't afford to go, my parents couldn't afford it. We were pretty poor, you know, just coming out of the Depression. So, I joined the CC Camps. I went into the CC Camps at Old Hill Sheffield [Sheffield, PA]. And I was in there for a while. Then, after that, I got out of there and I tried to go back to school but I just couldn't make it. So, what I did, I joined the Navy in January of '41.

Interviewer: Ok, stop there with your Navy stuff; he's going to pick up with that. Let's get back to the CC Camps. Was there anything... I know you were over in Sheffield, and you told me some stories about that, but was there any CC work done around the Franklin townships that you know of?

Benjamin Sitek: Not that I know of. Not that I know of. Most of your camps were like Marionville, McKean, out west all of them. There were no camps around home.

Interviewer: Ok. Back to your upper grade school days, you talked about the boxed lunches. What other social events did you have and where did you go to have them?

Benjamin Sitek: We had the Dutch place...

Interviewer: Was there dances in the Franklin Center Town Hall?

Benjamin Sitek: That was later on. Yes, there was. And then we would go to the dances in Franklin Center.

Interviewer: And was that after the war?

Benjamin Sitek: No, that was before the war. That was in the '40's.

Interviewer: In the early '40s?

Benjamin Sitek: Yes. That was in the early '40s.

Interviewer: Again, I'm looking for more information on the general life of the community. What other interesting things can you remember about your interrelationships of the families and...?

Benjamin Sitek: Well, it's hard to describe it, because the inter-families...

Interviewer: A whole lot of people were related in Franklin Township...

Benjamin Sitek: ...and the friends. It was all like one big family. It was nothing to go visiting. Anyone in the neighborhood would welcome you. It didn't matter what time; even if it was supper, they'd always set a plate. So, the relationship was great. And it's hard to describe. There's nothing like that today. Today, the people are living alone, by themselves.

Interviewer: In your travels, how far did you go in the Township? Did you ever get beyond, say, Eureka Road or Route 98?

Benjamin Sitek: I went a lot of times on top of a horse to get groceries at Franklin Center. And then I walked a lot, my buddy & I, because we'd done some trapping. And we used to take our hides over to Charlie Harned on Crane Road. You know, where he lived up there.

Interviewer: Ok.

Benjamin Sitek: That's almost, you know, 98 and Crane.

Interviewer: Right.

Benjamin Sitek: So we were around the township quite a bit, and we walked most of the time. I walked as far as Erie. I walked to Erie a few times.

Interviewer: Do you remember...What's your earliest memory of government in Franklin Township?

Benjamin Sitek: The government? Perry Mills, he was the supervisor. And, he had the best in grading; they had the horse pull grader. You know you stand there with your wheel, you know. Then in winter, there was no plow or snowplows. I remember when they made that v-blade out of planks, and horses would pull it if the snow wasn't too deep. And the horses would pull it. I remember when they all got

together when there was a big drift. They would shovel the drift off.

Interviewer: Did that occur often?

Benjamin Sitek: Off and on. In those days, there wasn't too many traveling, as far as Model As. They went through quite a bit of snow. You know, in fact, I had one when I lived down the road on the top of the hill. And there was no way I could get down through the road there because the road was all blown in. So, I went through Janette Matheson's field. And I went down the field until I got to Old State Road, and there were some wood blocks in the ditch. And I crossed that because there was less snow in the field.

Interviewer: Right.

Benjamin Sitek: And the Model A Fords would go a long way. I remember our first car, a Model T....

Interviewer: So if you had a blow in the wintertime, you were stuck at home for a long time.

Benjamin Sitek: Oh yes. Oh yes. We were stuck after that even when we had that big storm in 1944. I just left for the Navy, after I got married and the whole country got snowed in. They had to get the Army out. Then in the '70s, I remember where it blew for 3 days or 4, and you couldn't see nothing. And it blowed in the roads, and everything, and the whole state roads and all the country roads, they were blocked. And people were running out of milk for their kids down the road, and fuel for their oil heaters. And I remember, I'd take my snowmobile and go down to the church corners, State and Fry, because they were dumping milk because the milk couldn't be picked up.

Interviewer: In the old days, though, you were pretty self-sufficient.

Benjamin Sitek: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: So if you got blowed in on a storm...

Benjamin Sitek: I'm talking in the 70s...

Interviewer: Yeah, but I'm talking about back now before the war, you just holed up...

Benjamin Sitek: You just holed up like a woodchuck.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Benjamin Sitek: You didn't bother about trying to get out or do anything.

Interviewer: What about school?

Benjamin Sitek: Nothing. You didn't go to school. You went to school after it cleared up. I remember walking to school after the storms were over with, through like four or five feet of snow, and there was one little path that we walked. A lot of people, in them days, they didn't have the equipment to move the snow. But, they'd walk to the store, or they'd take the horse and go to the store, like Rodak's store, and stuff like that.

Interviewer: If you got electricity during the war, when did you get telephone?

Benjamin Sitek: Well, we got the telephone after I got out of the service. They might have had it before then.

Interviewer: You just didn't. Do you remember when the lines were run up the road, even though you may not have had the phone?

Benjamin Sitek: I know the lines were there when I got out of the service.

Interviewer: OK. So, a lot of it must have happened....now you were Rural Electric, right?

Benjamin Sitek: Yeah.

Interviewer: Well, where was the phone out of? Edinboro?

Benjamin Sitek: Yeah. I think Churchill was the one that put the electricity in.

Interviewer: Yeah. REA probably came right up Silverthorn road from down south, I would think.

Benjamin Sitek: And then everybody got their electricity from Penelec anyway.

Interviewer: What else do you remember about government in the Franklin Township, in your early....before the war? You mentioned Perry Mills. Do you remember any other supervisors?

Benjamin Sitek: I think there was a Washburn. It could have Elmer Washburn, Wayne's dad. And anyone else I can't bring to my mind.

Interviewer: What about tax collectors?

Benjamin Sitek: I think there was, I'm not sure, but I think our first tax collector was Elmer Washburn, and then it went to Keefer(?).

Interviewer: Was there....I know you weren't enough of a troublemaker to get into trouble, but what about justices of the peace?

Benjamin Sitek: Well, I don't like to talk about that too much. But, I served a little time when I was 13 or 14 years old for filling one of the teacher's pants full of snow. I'm not proud of that. Then, I served time again after that. I was working for Charlie Harris. And, my sisters and I were picking blackberries and we happened to be on another guy's land that joined our woods. Then, he come out and started telling us we had no business picking berries on his property. So, I said, "That's OK, we'll go." So, I was going to pick up my bucket of berries, but he kicked it over. So, I picked up the bucket and I went after him, my sisters and I. And we gave him a pretty good trashing. Then, when I got home, he had me arrested for trespassing. I didn't know what to do, you know. I was working for Charlie Harris, and I told him all about it and that I'd probably go to jail. He said "Well, we'll get you an attorney. Five dollars." At that time, an attorney was five dollars that I got.

Interviewer: That's a goodly amount back then.

Benjamin Sitek: Oh, yeah. Well, he beat the case because the guy only rented the house and five acres he was living on. He didn't rent the rest of the property, so he had no control over it. The attorney found that out. And my last little episode was when I was trapping and I was coming from

school. I caught one of my ... Well, at that time he wasn't my brother-in-law. Jerry Lechefskey's stuck in my trap. He got pretty huffy about it, and he and I went at it and got into a pretty good battle. His mother came out and jumped in between us and I hit her, and she went down on her fanny. So, I went home, and then they had me arrested. I think I spent something like 20 days in jail.

Interviewer: Who was the justice of the peace?

Benjamin Sitek: Every time I went, it was before Judge Hertz (?). I didn't go before any justice of the peace.

Interviewer: Ok, that was where, in Edinboro? Or right up to Erie?

Benjamin Sitek: Erie. I had to go to Erie court. In fact, when they sentenced me, they'd take me right out of there and right back to the jailhouse. A shortcut.

Interviewer: The constable came and got you?

Benjamin Sitek: Yeah.

Interviewer: Who was the constable?

Benjamin Sitek: I don't remember. I don't remember the constables' names. All I know is when I got out, the day I got out I walked home from Erie. When I got as far as my house, I just kept right on going down to my mother-in-law's, and they were eating supper. So, I walked into the house, walked through the door, and said "How are you doing?" And I shocked them. I said, "Hey, I'm hungry!" Then she helped me, so they gave me a plate, and that was the end of that. Funny how people done that. That's about the worst thing I got into.

Interviewer: In the early 1900's, in the Township, what diseases...

Benjamin Sitek: What?

Interviewer: What diseases, what illnesses, were prevalent?

Benjamin Sitek: The most common thing was the cold.

Interviewer: Flu?

Benjamin Sitek: Well, I don't know if you'd call it the flu, because in them days they didn't know that much. But I know it was the most common thing, but it was always cured by horse liniment. You'd give it to the horses and they'd give it to the cows and they'd give it to you. JR Watkins. I remember him. Outside of that, I don't remember outside of a toothache. And that was Dr. Ghering if you had to have a tooth pulled.

Interviewer: Before your time, you know, back around the 1900s, I think there was a big plague outside of the township and there was a big change in the population. Do you remember anyone talking about that?

Benjamin Sitek: No. There was a plague, whether that's the one or not. No, that wouldn't have been the one. That was the plague when two of my sisters and three of my brothers died.

Interviewer: Oh, when was that?

Benjamin Sitek: I must have been in Pittsburgh with my mother. First, my mother, then my dad.

Interviewer: That would have been in the early, early 1900s,

Benjamin Sitek: Oh, that would have been early, early, early.

Interviewer: Because there was a big change in the population. The population in the township shot up to 1100, then it dropped back to like 600, and many of those people died of the disease.

Benjamin Sitek: I know, because I lost two brothers, three brothers and two sisters. Geez.

Interviewer: Do you remember if there were any Civil War veterans? Now they would have been really old, when you were really young. When you were young, when you were 4, 5, 6, 7 years old, they would have been 90-year old people.

Benjamin Sitek: I didn't know any.

Interviewer: What about World War II, World War I vets, or the Spanish American War?

Benjamin Sitek: I don't recall any.

[Ben was too weak to continue. He died from cancer November 8, 2001 about a month after this interview. He was a good friend. Dave Henderson]