

Voice 1, Fordney Cushman, 6 minutes and 21 seconds - I knew Kehoe, I knew him very well. He was our neighbor down here and my folks played cards across the road there, and it was boring for me, but I knew Kehoe had this radio. And there was a basketball game on at Michigan State, and they were going to broadcast it, so I went over and stayed with him and his wife. And he was just as nice to me as anybody could be. He let me experiment a little bit with the headphones and radio. He seemed to enjoy my coming over, and Mrs. Kehoe was a lovely woman.

I can see him as clearly as I can see him in my memory. He had a shock of white hair and lots of gold teeth and such.

A lady who married my cousin said that he helped dynamite some stones on their farm. And she said he was wonderful to them and to the children. And she said this was only I guess a month before it happened. He was crying, he was losing his farm, and he didn't know what he was going to do.

I played the night before it happened in the small orchestra for the parent-teachers meeting right above that dynamite, about ten o'clock that evening. And they say he looked in on the party, and I thought I saw him that night, afterwards.

And there was quite an explosion even two and a half miles away. My mother was on the back porch and she called into us and said, "I can't see the school house." And you know this was a strange thing for a person to say because she could see the end that went down, which shows through an opening in the trees normally. And almost immediately there was a big cloud of black smoke going into the air. So my father and I jumped into our Model T Ford and headed that way, and when we went over the last hill before you get to Kehoe's house, we saw all of the barns were on fire and the house was on fire. There was black, deep black smoke. And it looked like there was oil in it, like they might have soaked an amyl or something with oil, and they were all burning at once. The wind was in the north and the sun wasn't up very high. And it actually covered the sun it was so black, as the clouds floated to the south.

And the rest of us started fighting the fire. The fire, sparks, embers and things would land on the Hart's house across the road. They were my father's cousins.

I went up on the roof, and people would hand pales of water up to us and we would throw it on the roof. I remember while I was up there, the explosions in the house and the barns were just terrific. I couldn't hardly stay on the roof. And parts of the house would go a hundred and fifty feet in the air.

We kept hearing about the schoolhouse, and a disaster of some kind at the schoolhouse. And we thought, well the people must be mistaken and it came in on the telephone line because of the smoke at the farm. But they kept saying so much about it that I drive down to Bath to see what was happening. It was only about a half a mile away. She called into us and said, "I can't see the schoolhouse."

I walked across the schoolyard and the roof of the building was down. And there was about five little children laying along the sidewalk dead. They lined them up. They were all white from

plaster. And I can remember Mr. and Mrs. Sam Ewing. They were holding each other in their arms and crying. I wondered if they hadn't found their little boy. I walked up to the building, and I watched them carry out Ms. Madison, and she was white. And there were some men who had a Consumer's Power pole, and they were trying to lift the roof with that. And I thought I better get out of here and go back to the farm and tell them to forget about the fire and come down here. I got in the car and, I got on the hill just before you come to the railroad track. I wasn't more than a half-mile away and he blew that car up. He killed the postmaster, the postmaster's father in law, Superintendent Hike.

It hurt the town; it hurt the town. Then the great depression landed right on top of that. I think maybe the fact that there were so many people in the same boat, you see. While the funerals were going on and you learned of who was gone, at the same time people were going to the hospital. You were just as busy as you could be to see if these people they were going to live, or how badly they were hurt because they were neighbors of yours or something. And I think the feeling that everyone was in the same amount of trouble seemed to make a difference. They all managed to get through somehow. It was amazing how some parents seemed to get through it. They lost a lot of ah several children. And that maybe what happens in most disasters. They all help each other to go on. I was only 15 years old, and I was pallbearer to four funerals in three days. So you could see what you were doing, they were short of pallbearers. You try to get pallbearers for forty-five people in a community that size and you have a problem, you know. You can't use any parents; you can't use any brothers and sisters. Some of the brothers and sisters were in the hospital anyhow. You go through the cemetery and it was nothing to see 3 or 4 funerals going on at the same time and people all over the place.