

## [Charles Kerr]

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Charles Kerr, 72, Reynolds Bridge:

“Knife business? That part of my life is all over. I don't give it a thought any more. What's the use of thinking or talking about something that's dead and gone. It's just like trying to keep alive the memory of someone who's been dead for thirty years or more. You can do it, but it hurts to think about it, see what I mean? Best thing is to forget.

“Maybe you think that comparison's kind of far fetched. Maybe it is, but if you'd ever worked in one of the old knife shops, and then worked in one of these high pressure, machine mad, up to date factories, you'd know what I meant. The knife business is past and gone but for a good many of us old chaps that worked at it--what few there is left--it was the best part of our lives. It was a trade you could be proud of, and it was work that gave you a little independence.

“Why, the knifemakers were kind of a clan in themselves, and I've often thought, if you read your history you'll see what I mean, that they were maybe the last survivors of that old Guild system in England that was the first attempt at labor unions. And they had it over the other trades around here--the Yankee factory workers used to laugh at the “johnny bulls” and tall funny stories about 'em, but they respected 'em right down in the hearts, and wondered what their system was, that they could walk in and out any time of the day and never catch hell from the boss.

“When you think what happened to that industry it's enough to make you sick. It was a sign, only people didn't realize it, of what was going to happen to a lot of other industries in 2 our time. The clock business, too, that's shot to hell. They get in machines, and they take

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away a man's pride in his work and they hire a lot of young green kids to hammer the stuff out any old way at all and what's the result? Bad workmanship and inferior goods. Can't be any other way.

“Well, you got me at a bad time young fella, I got to go up town and do some buyin'. What time is it now? I have to catch this four o'clock bus. I can't tell you much anyway. My father was one of the old timers from England and I grew up with the trade like a lot of others around here. The village was quite a thrivin' little community when I was a boy. I'll tell you. Look at it now. About three quarters of the people on relief. They ain't knifemakers families, though. Most of 'em are new families that've moved in within the past ten years or so. I don't even know some of them. Well, I got to catch that bus. If you could come back some other afternoon---”