

# PROSPERITY

*Everyone I knew either worked in the mill or worked in a shop that the people from the mill went to. There were a couple of professional people but they were not people that I knew. Definitely a blue-collar town.*

*Carpenters, electricians, this is where I'm from, you know? My friends worked in the steel mill, worked for the city.*

The millworkers union was now the United Steelworkers of America. Greenfield's Jim Thomas, a former sandlot football star, had been district director of the union since before the war. Now the president of the national union was another Greenfield man, Dave McDonald. McDonald's vision was to better the steelworker's condition by increasing his salary and creating shopfloor rules that gave him dignity in the workplace. But to accomplish these goals, a long strike was necessary.

The nationwide strike went on for a 116 days and put many Greenfield families in hardship. Lines formed at the firehouse on Farnsworth Street where coffee-can-sized containers of peanut butter, powdered eggs, oatmeal and powdered milk were distributed to keep families fed. But the burden proved worthwhile when the strike was a resounding success. The men finally made a living wage and could even earn a sabbatical, unheard of in blue-collar professions. Men who worked more than 15 years in the mill were entitled to 13 weeks vacation every five years to recharge the most important tool they used—their bodies.

The success of the steelworkers' strike promised prosperity for all of Greenfield, so it was inevitable that new shops would open on Greenfield Avenue. The Homa family moved from The Run, where they had a greenhouse, to open a flower shop across from St. Rosalia Church. Johnny Sheffo bought Nick Funaro's barbershop. The new prosperity also meant more automobiles, easier to drive on The Avenue since the streetcars had been replaced by buses, and the trolley tracks, laid in cobblestone, were paved over. Still, less than half of Greenfield's residents drove to work. Men on their way to the mill, carrying their trademark shopping bag of workclothes, took the bus or walked.

Prosperity had finally come to Greenfield's immigrant families. Their average income was comfortable and almost everyone was

