

Kentucky Post - May 1, 1993

Robert Schawe, 65, kept fruit fresh on haul from field to market

Robert F. Schawe was a different kind of weatherman. He controlled the temperature inside freight cars carrying fruit from grower to consumer, from Florida grove to Michigan market.

Mr. Schawe, 65, of Florence, died Thursday at his home.

In 1944, Mr. Schawe and his three brothers found work after school at the rail yard shoving huge blocks of ice onto trains transporting apples and oranges for Fruit Growers Express Co. Mr. Schawe stuck with it for 41 years.

"We were in grade school," said brother Bill Schawe of Taylor Mill. "We were making 66 cents an hour, 99 cents overtime. That was good money."

Bill Schawe said his brother spent years before modern refrigeration shoving 150- to 300-pound blocks of ice off platforms and into the cars to maintain a proper temperature for the fruit. In winter, he stoked the heaters to keep the fruit

from freezing.

"Wintertime was the toughest," he said, "because you had to climb up the cars, climb down in the bunkers, check the heaters if they were out, clean them and refuel them."

Mr. Schawe must have been used to winter. He was stationed in Alaska during the Korean War as a communications specialist, working on radio and telephone communications. He was a member of the Marshall Schildmeyer VFW Post No. 6095 in Latonia.

Euchre was Mr. Schawe's favorite game. He played from 7-10 p.m. one night a week with his family.

He loved clocks and had 25 ranging from grandfather clocks to cuckoos he'd put together from kits. He collected cars, old coins and plants. The plants were watered on schedule.

Mr. Schawe retired eight years ago and spent almost two months a year traveling. His wife, Mary Lynn Schawe, died in

1976.

"He wasn't sick a day in his life," said Bill Schawe. He said his brother returned Wednesday from a two-week trip to California and said he planned to cut the grass on Thursday. He died while mowing his lawn.

Mr. Schawe was a member of Mary Queen of Heaven Church in Erlanger and of the Boone County American Association of Retired Persons.

Other survivors include brothers, Tom Schawe of Highland Heights and Don Schawe of Taylor Mill; and a sister, Dorothy Pearce of La Fontaine, Ind.

Mass of Christian burial will be at 10 a.m. Monday at Mary Queen of Heaven Church. Visitation will be from 4 to 6 p.m. Sunday at Swindler and Currin Funeral Home, Latonia. Burial will be in Forest Lawn Cemetery, Erlanger. Memorials are suggested in the form of spiritual bouquets.