

ARTHUR SELAHOWSKI

Interview by Bill Miles  
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TOPICS:

Politics  
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Transcription by John W. Weigel  
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Q: Testing, one, two, three. Testing, one, two, three. Today is November 10, 1994, the time is 11:25. We will be interviewing Arthur Selahowski this afternoon. As part of our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration we are planning to interview many of the people that were highly involved in the 40 years of Madison Heights. Art was...has been a long-time resident and has been involved in many of the political campaigns and political goings on in the city. Art, can you tell me...first give me your address...give me your full name and your address, and give me the names of your kids, just for the record.

A: Well, it's like...it's like Bill said, the name is Art Selahowski, and I migrated from Detroit and close to Hamtramck, where politics really was hot and heavy. We migrated in 1951 and our first home...supposedly it was to be a starter home, but here we are, still in Madison Heights.

Q: Still in the same house.

A: Still in the same house.

Q: How did...how did you pick Madison Heights? I mean, there were a lot of other places around you could have moved.

A: Well, the way it happened, I...let me first...I'll come back to that, Bill.

Q: Okay.

A: The question is how many children have I got.

Q: Right.

A: And I have two. And that is Janice, last name Smolenski, and she's a resident of Clinton Township. Presently she is a principal at Schoen...Schoen...Schoenfeld-- I think that's the way to pronounce it--in Warren. And my son, Dan Selahowski, who lives in Holly, Michigan, and he has a business. He's a physical therapist. He has a facility of 30,000 square feet in Waterford. Very successful. And now we come to the question, how could I happen to pick Madison Heights? Well at the time I worked for Peninsular Metal Products, and they had their business in Ferndale. And they also migrated out of Detroit into larger facilities out here in Ferndale. We employed about 12...1200 people.

Q: Big plant.

A: It was a large plant. And I started out as just a...a worker, and worked myself up to be production control manager of that company. The company wasn't that successful because it...it bankrupt in...in the late 50s, early 60s. And I had to then leave that profession or occupation and look for something else and...and I went into real estate, which I really loved. And had a hard time with it. But today

I'm not as successful as some of the other real estate people, but I...it...it was good enough for Edna and I, where we gave our children an education and found that we still wanted to stay in the same nest that we made for ourselves and our children on Harwood. And...

Q: What was the address? We didn't get the address.

A: Oh that was 661.

Q: Okay.

A: And there's a lot of history when we came in. All we had was a ditch in front of us, mud. If you wanted to park your car, you parked your car on Stephenson.

Q: Was there a house? Or did you have a house built?

A: No. We have one of the oldest homes here in Madison Heights. It was built in 1928 and the people that we purchased the home from was a Mr. and Mrs. Bilkey. And you can see that we're still here, and the neighbors are very cordial. And, like I was saying before, that all we had here was a lot of mud. Stephenson was a main thoroughfare in Madison Heights.

Q: John R was nothing but mud.

A: Well...

Q: Or was it?

A: John R was passable where we could...you had like three lanes, and it was asphalt. It...it...it was something that you could get around.

Q: So you came in what year?

A: We came in 1951.

Q: Okay. 1951. Okay. So by that time it had at least been paved with something.

A: Oh yes, yes. We can get around. And our favorite shopping place was...Edna used to take the wagon and take the kids, and she would go to Hollywood Market, which was on Lincoln and Campbell. She did most of her shopping there with children and then she would pull the wagon and the groceries and fight her way through the mud that was there...

Q: No sidewalks.

A: No sidewalks. No. And that was quite a deal when they finally decided to pave our street.

Q: Now that was the township?

A: It was...

Q: Royal Oak Township?

A: called Royal Oak Township.

Q: Okay.

A: There was no city at that time. It came, I would say, four or five years, maybe six years later, when they incorporated or made this first Madison. And then John Michrina came around and gave it a little more sophisticated meaning by calling it Madison Heights. And...

Q: That was in '55?

A: Well, that goes. Yes. That was in...round '55, '56, when...when people started to look for services and the politicians at that time was a handful of people that really loved this city. Virginia Solberg was one of them. And there was John Michrina. There was Krenn.

Q: Theodore...Theodore Krenn.

A: Theodore Krenn.

Q: Yeah.

A: And Ferguson.

Q: Lloyd Ferguson

A: Lloyd Ferguson, who, as time went on, in the...in the early 50s, he became our first mayor.

Q: So you're talking about these people even before we were a city.

A: Yes.

Q: These were people that were political...

A: Yes, they're political-minded. And they would...would gather...Now this is something that should be remembered, that a lot of our resident don't realize, that

politics usually has a beginning. And its beginning was in Virginia Solberg's restaurant. It was on Dequindre, on the corner of Greg and Dequindre.

Q: What was the name of the restaurant?

A: I don't recall.

Q: Okay.

A: Sorry, I can't show a picture to Bill of what it was.

Q: Just a small place, right?

A: It was just a small place, a place where truckers would stop for their coffee and doughnuts. And she was quite a cook, so she always had a good lunch menu. And when you went there, in the corners of that restaurant, you would hear some rebellious shouting or whatever you want to call it. But it had to do with the beginning of Madison Heights.

Q: People complaining about muddy streets and no...

A: Oh, people...

Q: ... sidewalks?

A: ...people complained of anything and everything. And those groups of politicians that used to gather there for their...for their coffee and doughnut would strike up notes like "We should have a city. We should divorce ourself from Royal Oak Township." Because...

Q: Because they really didn't do anything for you. You were on the far end of the township.

A: We were on the furthest end. And in between us was Royal Oak.

Q: Okay.

A: And Royal Oak Township was really on Eight Mile. I don't recall...

Q: That's where it started, right?

A: That's where it started. And...

Q: Because the township is like thirty-six square miles, right?

A: I...

Q: [inaudible] Yeah.

A: I assume that...

Q: Yeah. Yeah.

A: ...that's about what it is.

Q: Mmhmm.

A: And we felt that our city hall at that time was way around Eight Mile, and why should we be going all the way over there, and across Ferndale and across Royal Oak to go pay our taxes or our water bills?

Q: Okay.

A: So there was a lot of rumbling going on, and these politicians decided that we should start thinking about making this area...

Q: Independent.

A: ...Madison Heights.

Q: Yeah. Independent.

A: Independent.

Q: How did you get involved with the politicians? Why did you get involved with the politicians?

A: Well, I grew up in a area where, when you were fifteen, sixteen years old, you cut your teeth on politics, and that was Hamtramck. If you study Hamtramck and the politicians that eventually left Hamtramck, you'll find that a nucleus of good politics, good politicians, moved to Warren, to Utica, Ferndale, Madison Heights. Every surrounding city, Hamtramck touched it...

Q: Mmhmm.

A: ...with its style of politics. And, having politics in me, I would listen and...and I wanted to tie in with...with...with somebody.

Q: You weren't a politician, though? You were more...

A: Oh no.

Q: ...like a...

A: I was just a resident. A resident that felt that there was time for griping.

Q: Okay.

A: A time for getting things done. And who should I get myself involved with was—a lot of people don't know this--but Billy Sunday Huffman. Mother named him that because...after the evangelist.

Q: Yeah, there was a preacher named Billy Sunday.

A: Yes. And mother felt that Billy Sunday would be his name. And that's how I happened to get myself involved in politics.

Q: He was the first one you came in contact with?

A: Bill was the first one I came in contact. Coincidentally, it...it was because I would go over to Wayside Bowling Alley, and they had a bar there.

Q: It was located where?

A: That was on Ten Mile and John R.

Q: Okay.

A: And I struck up a relationship with this Billy Sunday, who was a bartender, just a bartender, and we had things in common, and we would discuss different political views. And Bill used to live right here in the lower part of Madison Heights. I think it was Osmun...

Q: Okay.

A: ...between Eleven and Lincoln. And again Bill had a strong voice, and...and...and there was leadership in the man.

Q: Did he get involved here? What did he...

A: Yes.

Q: ...what was his first way of...

A: Yes.

Q: ...getting involved?

A: Yes. First involvement into politics was...he became a Homeowners' president of this area.

Q: Kind of like an association.

A: An association it was.

Q: Okay.

A: And he...people liked his style, people liked the way he presented himself, and the subjects that he would bring out. And one of the big things out in this area was the streets with no sidewalks, no...no paving. Parking was a...a hard thing because you were stuck most of the time in the mud, to get out...to...to...to go where you wanted to go.

Q: Mmhmm.

A: And Bill was chosen to be the voice before a group. Now this is the beginning, where politics start to rise.

Q: This is about...what? 195...?

A: This...yeah. This goes into the 54s, 55, 56, up in that area.

Q: Okay. Now you had...you met him at the bowling alley.

A: It was bowling.

Q: Did he also go to the restaurant?

A: Oh, Bill probably stuck his nose in there because of the...of the politics that was involved. And he probably met the up and coming politicians in Virginia's restaurant. Sorry I don't recall the name, but, like I mentioned to Bill, that if there was a gripe, it usually ended up where there was an assembly of some people.

Q: Okay. People willing to listen.

A: People willing to listen and exchange their views. And it was interesting because that was the birth of politics.

Q: Okay. Now were you in the real estate business when you would go? Because that would make it easier for you to go the restaurant and...and take part in some of these discussions.

A: No. Real estate came after I left Peninsular Metal. And I took that on as just a part-time deal, looking for other work, other jobs that I could feed those robins

that I had at home. And because they always had their mouth open, and you have to drop something in it. And I...I'm still in real estate, not as successful as others, but enough to make a mark on the real...real estate field, because of my unique name that I had. I...my name is Selahowski, and what I did was I made...my logo was "Sel" (that's S-E-L), and then a small "a", and then I had a capital H-O-U-S-K-I, and I had a roof over my name. And I was recognized as a...as a...as a real estate man. But like I say, not as successful as others.

Q: Okay, now what...so what made you go to the restaurant? Did you just know that the politicians were meeting there, and it was a place to get your ideas across, or you wanted to listen to the ideas? I...I mean, did you go there after work, or did you, you know...why...why did you show up there?

A: Well, I...I...I showed up because of...

Q: This interest in politics?

A: Well, the thing is, I wanted to be heard. Harwood was a mudhold, and I was just as anxious as the others...

Q: Okay.

A: ...to put my views that we needed attention.

Q: Okay.

A: Here was Stephenson as a thoroughfare, and before we could...we were, I would say, about five, six hundred, no about two hundred feet from...from Stephenson. And by the time I got to Stephenson, I had to sometimes yell at the neighbor, "Hey, give me a shove; I'm in!" So we would help one another. And this is the way it came about, the...the big question of roads. Sidewalks...sidewalks for our kids to walk on. And it became a reality because then we had quite a few ears that were wide open and listening to some of these things that were coming from all sides of Madison Heights. Madison Heights was only really populated like from Ten Mile to Twelve Mile.

Q: Okay.

A: And beyond that was open fields. There was no such thing as the industry that came in and settled in here. And the beginning of industry was...There was good vision here, in the planning department, because they planned it in such a way that industry wouldn't be scattered throughout all of Madison Heights. They picked Fourteen Mile and Dequindre almost up to...almost up to Thirteen, and designated that as...as industry should be.

Q: Kind of like an industrial park.

A: Industrial park, that's what I'm...I was trying to say.

Q: Is this like after the city became a city?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay.

A: Yes. That was more thought of, where industry should be. So it was picked, Fourteen and Dequindre, and Ten Mile and Dequindre, from about Lincoln to Ten Mile. You'll find that you have businesses which, again, was on Stephenson Highway, and then you had small industry on John R beyond...beyond Eleven Mile 'til about Twelve Mile. It was a well-planned idea of where industry should be, and where business should be, and where residential should be.

Q: So to a certain extent you had some involvement in making the city...well, going from Royal Oak Township to becoming Madison Heights? Did you actually get involved in the charter process at all? Or once the...the people got together and started to talk about a charter, you kind of laid back a little bit and then watched what was going on?

A: No. I...I never was as forward as the others, and my views were limited. My views were over a glass of beer at Wayside with Bill Huffman, and maybe a coffee over at Virginia's restaurant. And this is why I...my input of...my version of what I thought would be was left at these...at these establishments.

Q: And then other people...

A: I...yes...with other people being there, real leaders...

Q: Okay.

A: ...of putting this thing together.

Q: Do you want to make some comments about some of the early leaders? Some of the things that you might have noticed about 'em? You were...I know you were really impressed with Virginia Solberg. Very strong person?

A: There's...there's a...quite a story about Virginia. But the...the one that to me was the outstanding individual of our community was Bill Huffman.

Q: Okay.

A: He had ambitions, I guess, because he saw that the city had a lot of potential...that it would really grow, and he wanted to grow with the city. And as

time went on, he became one of our mayors, our first state representative, and he became a senator.

Q: You were actually his administrative aide.

A: I...I was Bill Huffman's administrative aide. Well, when...actually, more so when he became a senator. But as...when he was a representative, I couldn't spend that much time in...in politics, but I was his campaign manager on every one of his...in politics that Bill became representative. I think there was...he was representative for about ten or twelve years. And then he decided to run for senate. But I can honestly say we never lost an election. Our politics at that time...‘cause we gathered a great following simply because of the...the man...man's character, and he got for our district, which at that time was the Sixty-Sixth District, he got whatever was needed. That, I think, makes him a great politician. He knew what to get for his city.

Q: Now he didn't have a lot of training, a lot of education or anything, right?

A: His background is very, very limited in politics. In fact, when he came from Kentucky and migrated into Detroit, Betty's job...

Q: That was his wife?

A: That was his wife. I...I'm gonna say that was...her first job was working at the First National Bank in Detroit. And Bill worked at General Motors in Pontiac. At that time, what I got to know about him, he was a follow-up man in the production control end of the business. So maybe this gave him a little bit of training that...In order to get something you had to do a good follow-up on whatever you're assigned to, and he was trained to bird-dog some of the parts and things that he was assigned to.

Q: Okay. Yeah, he would...he would take care of whatever happened to be missing, or...

A: Yes.

Q: Yeah, okay.

A: Yes. So his background on politics was very limited.

Q: Kind of a self-made man.

A: Exactly. Let's...let's put it that way. Self-made man.

Q: Corn, bread and beans stock, right?

A: Corn, bread and beans, and his mother was a die-hard Republican. And she used to say to him, "Billy Sunday Huffman, I don't like what you're doing. You being a Democrat." So we used to laugh about that because when he talked about his mother he had to be very cautious in using "Democrat" as his logo.

Q: Mmhmm.

A: That was him. But he felt that that's the party he wanted to belong to. And Virginia Solberg, for many years, we couldn't see eye to eye on politics.

Q: Was she the mayor at this time?

A: Yuh, she was mayor.

Q: Or was she before? She was the mayor?

A: She was mayor, you got to remember, she was mayor for only about a week, and then election came in (I think it was '56), and Ferguson, Lloyd Ferguson, was then our first...

Q: Official mayor.

A: ...mayor. Official mayor.

Q: Okay.

A: And that's where the word...there was a word you asked Bill the other day.

Q: Yeah, I can't remember what it is. It's not mayor pro tem.

A: No. At...at...at...at that time, that was the...the logo they would hang on people that were in-between.

Q: Would stand in for the mayor?

A: Would stand in. Yes.

Q: De facto mayor.

A: De facto.

Q: Yeah. Well, see she was the de facto mayor for a week.

A: Yes.

Q: This was right when...after the charter was passed.

A: Yes.

Q: And they needed her to...what, run the city for a week...

A: Run the city.

Q: ...until the official council meeting, where they made...

A: Right.

Q: Ferguson the mayor.

A: And the guy that was quite...quite the man, who Madison Heights haven't really given this man recognition, was John Michrina. John Michrina, at that time, was the supervisor, the electrical engin...inspector, the plumbing inspector. He was everything rolled up into one. When a problem came up, John Michrina was there to try to resolve it for the mayor.

Q: You don't happen to know his background; was he a civil engineer or anything like that?

A: No, John was just a...

Q: Another self-made man?

A: Another self-made man, with....He raised quite a family. Again, I wish I could remember background of this man, of everything he did. But if there was something to be done, John was able to do it. He was...when he tried to put his point across, he was just a strong, strong voice in the political arena at that time. Again, I say there was a man that is not recognized the way he should. Too bad that somebody can't research John's background and put into history where it really belongs. But I got to know John like...through just maybe a coffee, a doughnut with him. And he would spell out what he thinks we should be headed for. And he was the originator of...we first were known as Madison, but John felt that there should be a little bit more class to this city, and he added "Heights".

Q: Okay.

A: So...

Q: Okay, now the city's become a city. Now how...who decided on what you needed first? Did you have town meetings, or did they go door to door and talk to people? How did these people that started this nucleus, this first council, what did they...how did they get...?

A: Just like you put it, Bill. Like any small thing that begins, it's a group of people get together. You could call that town meetings.

Q: Okay.

A: And out of those meetings, you heard from different corners what we should be doing.

Q: Where were these meetings held?

A: Well,...

Q: Because there was an original city hall on...

A: No.

Q: ...right on John R, no?

A: No. Our first city hall, really the first city hall, was out here, right across from your library.

Q: Okay. Wilkinson Intermediate. Right across the street.

A: That's right. This is where the first city hall was built, where you had the jail, and you had the city hall and...

Q: It actually was built as the Madison Heights city hall. It wasn't a Royal Oak Township city hall that became Madison Heights.

A: No. Nope.

Q: It was ours.

A: As I remember, that was ours.

Q: Okay.

A: That was where we paid our tax bills, our water bills. And our first police chief, I can remember as Bob Richardson. And everything was in that one building. Our jail and our city hall. And eventually our ideas were to build, to...if we wanted to bring business into this city, we couldn't show them, now this is our city hall. It...we weren't ashamed of it, but it wasn't something that businesses would want to come. They wanted more sophisticated type of a looking building. So...

Q: And if you were gonna do business, and do...offer services, you would have to have a bigger building, because the original building was very small.

A: Exactly. And the dreamer...the way I view it, the dreamer of a civic center was Bill Huffman. He felt that if business...business was to come to our city, we had to have something that looked like...

Q: Professional.

A: Professional. So the logo "City of Progress" sprung up. And there we had the site that was picked was...originally was going to be on Twelve Mile and John R, but then it got...

Q: Was that Horke's farm?

A: That was Horke's farm. So they dropped the idea of the city hall being there and moved to Thirteen Mile and John R, and that's where the Civic Center had its beginning.

Q: Do you happen to know why they dropped the idea of using Horke's farm?

A: Well, the way I remember it, is Hudson's wanted to come here.

Q: Yeah.

A: And we thought that that would be a excellent shopping center for the people of Madison Heights. So it became...

Q: It would have been your first.

A: ...Hudson's

Q: Right? It would have been your first shopping center. Right?

A: Yes, that would have been the first big super.

Q: As we know shopping centers today.

A: As we know shopping centers today.

Q: Okay.

A: And as it was, we had Hudson's here, and there was a few other businesses that were big business that went alongside of Hudson's, but that wasn't the vision that Hudson's had, and they wanted a lot more elaborate set-up than what they thought they would build. Because eventually it became a Hudson's thrift store.

Q: Mmhmm.

A: And the...the real Hudson's, as we know, is Oakland Mall.

Q: Okay.

A: Their...they had room for expansion. They went into a huge tract of land. I don't know what acreage is involved. But their other big businesses, Crowley's and Hudson's and Sears, they all wanted to be alongside of Hudson's, and unfortunately they picked Troy. And they went to Troy, although that...

Q: You don't know why they did that. Probably the land was cheaper. There wasn't anything there.

A: Because of land being cheaper. Because of what they wanted, a large tract where they could, where they could get a variety of people coming there, because everything would be in one place.

Q: Okay.

A: The one that was picked originally, Twelve Mile and John R...

Q: It wasn't that big.

A: It wasn't at all that big for a growing concern.

Q: Okay, we'll get back to city hall now, the Civic Center. So it was originally going to be on John R and Twelve. It went to Thirteen. Were people in this end of town disappointed that it was moving that far away?

A: Very much so. There was...there was...it...it was a political issue. Of...

Q: Huffman get burned over asking it to be up on the other end?

A: Oh, when you talk about somebody being panned, Huffman was panned by a fellow named Smith, who was running for mayor at that time with Bill. And he made a great big issue that moving out into the boondocks and spending this...people's money to build something that was so far away. But Bill felt that if this is going to be a city of progress, we need to look like a city hall, a courthouse, a library, a fire house, and he was smart enough to go to the federal people and ask for federal funds to build that Civic Center.

Q: That was when he was, what, a representative?

A: No, that was when he was mayor.

Q: That was when he was the mayor?

A: Yeah. That was the big...that was the big issue on the ballot at that time. He wanted the Civic Center, and Smith (I don't recall his first name), he felt that the people were being asked too much, because it would have been a tax burden on them. But it wasn't so, because Bill had the vision to get moneys from the federal people. We would pay ten percent of that building...of building that, and the federal government would pay ninety percent.

Q: So he was a pretty astute politician, even when he was mayor.

A: He had...he knew because he probably started to ask questions from other poli...politicians as, "This is what I want to do. What do I have to do? Who do I see? Where do I go? Who do I talk to?" And he was led into the right directions. And if it wasn't for him, we wouldn't have what we have on Thirteen Mile. Because the politics was nasty, and he had to go through all that mud to...to realize, for the good of this city, this is what we needed.

Q: People must have agreed with him, because they elected him...

A: Right.

Q: ...even though he was going to put it on the ballot.

A: Very much so. They elected him, and they found that with him having those ideas, he put out feelers, should he run for state representative? And...

Q: This is once he was mayor.

A: Once he was mayor.

Q: Okay.

A: And then it became a reality when we decided that he would run for state rep. And he lasted almost six terms. Representative terms are two years, you have to campaign every two years. And he became a strong voice in...in politics.

Q: Did he come and talk to you when he was thinking about becoming a representative?

A: No, no he didn't. We just happened...he was representative one...one, I think one...one term...

Q: So this was something he did on his own.

A: On his own.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah. He...he was his own campaign manager. He was everything rolled up into one, and he was the...

Q: He was a born politician.

A: He was a born politician. He was a dynamo. And it got to be so that people started to recognize him, and that's when I saw that here was a man I want to get on with, and learn a little bit about politics.

Q: Did you approach him?

A: I don't recall just...

Q: How it happened.

A: How it happened. But the relationship struck up and I was with him. And I was proud to say that we never lost an election.

Q: Now you said you designed your logo for the real estate company. Did you design his campaign materials?

A: Well, we worked together.

Q: Okay.

A: We as a...there was a team. I...I was part of a steering wheel that Bill put together.

Q: Who were the other people?

A: Gee, I don't recall. John Michrina was one of them. And there was a few others, but...

Q: Charlie...

A: Charlie Edwards.

Q: Yeah, Charlie Edwards.

A: Charlie Edwards was one.

Q: That's okay. We don't have to know them. I just wondered if you remembered who they were.

A: No, it just...it's a little vague, but if I sit down and really dig in, I suppose those names would come to me.

Q: Okay, and you guys would sit around and decide on what had to be done and...

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Q: ...this particular steering wheel he had.

A: Yeah, we would mull over the...the...the issues that came up, and if Bill...if Bill thought that that was good for our city, why this is what his program would be.

Q: Do you remember some of the things that he did for Madison Heights? Now I've heard things like he made sure that there was an exit off the expressway onto Madison Heights. Is that true?

A: Well, when you put it that way, if you study Madison Heights, when the expressway came through, we are the only city that has four exits coming off the expressway and going...coming into the expressway. You have one at Ten Mile, Eleven Mile, Twelve Mile and Fourteen Mile.

Q: Did he have a hand in doing that?

A: Yes. He had a...he was instrumental in suggesting that this is what Madison Heights should have, because it being called a city of progress, Bill felt that this is the way we want to be recognized. The only city that has these openings.

Q: For...good for business.

A: Good for business. Good for in and out.

Q: Easy for people that want to shop here.

A: Correct. Yes. Yes. And you can see how...how business generated for Oakland Mall, because those were the boondocks and here there's an exit for them to come into...to the businesses that....It was the big mall, the biggest one around here, and...

Q: Another thing I heard he did, Meals on Wheels. Did he have a hand on Meals on Wheels?

A: Yes. I'm glad you're...brought that up. Now Wheels and Meals was something that was just an idea. How do we help those people that need help? Can't get to...can't get good nourishment.

Q: Older citizens.

A: Older citizens. The senior citizens of our city. So Wilma...

Q: Padula?

A: Wilma Padula was elected to head the project because she knew nutrition, and it was her that picked the things that we should have for our senior citizens. And Wheels on Meals was known throughout Michigan, but we didn't have it. And Bill was instrumental of instigating it here in our city.

Q: He got money from the state for this, right?

A: Yes, there was appropriations. Fortunately, Bill was...was on good committees. He was appointed to the appropriations committee.

Q: Highly important committee.

A: One of the highest. The best that you can get on.

Q: Mmhmm.

A: And he made sure that the sugar bowl for Madison Heights were always taken care of. And that the reason why he's so...He was successful because he brought the things to our city that it took others many years to recognize. But Bill was a real politician. He knew how to deal with the other politician. "I'll give you this if you give me that." And...

Q: Remember anything else? Anything else he might have brought to the city? How about some of the roads? Our roads are in real good shape, our main roads.

A: Well, our roads...he was in close with transportation department, so he had something to do with better roads. But the key man for roads, you've got to give that to our representative later, called Wilfred Webb.

Q: Oh, okay. From Hazel Park.

A: From Hazel Park.

Q: Dr. Webb is superintendant of the school district.

A: Dr. Webb was superintendant of...of the school district for thirty-seven years. And we, actually Bill and I, convinced him that he should start another career in politics, and that was the beginning of Wilfred Webb's initiation into politics. And you can see what he's done for Hazel Park and Madison Heights.

Q: Was he...

A: Now there are...there are other...there are other people that need to be recognized, and it doesn't come to mind. Wilma Padula. Wilma Padula was high on politics. She was part of Bill Huffman's steering wheel. And she believed in our city. She, I think they had her on the beautification program, and she always...“what is good for Madison Heights?” “What would make it look great”? And there's a lot of trees along the highways and on these...John R you can see trees that are planted, that was Wilma Padula's project.

Q: John R was made very wide...

A: Correct.

Q: ...as opposed to Hazel Park, where the businesses are right up on top of the street.

A: That's right. Again, that was Webb's idea.

Q: Oh, okay.

A: See? And...

Q: He was familiar with the way it was in Hazel Park, and he wanted to make sure that if it happened again, it was going to be done right.

A: Yes. It's...it's...it's unfortunate that we were...we gained his wisdom, and he could see what it would do to Madison Heights. And because of the different pressures, and Huffman probably needling him and some of the others, to put in the...the wider lanes here on John R. You can see that Hazel Park now is gaining from all of this. Before Webb left, why again, he put in a lot of...of his know-how with the transportation department. And again there we were fortunate that he also was on Appropriations, so it was easy for us to get the financing to...to get the things done, that these two cities needed.

Q: Another major thoroughfare, Stephenson. Beautiful. Businesses set way back off the road. Boulevards through the center. Trees. Who...how did that come about?

A: It was because of our...our politicians that created the ideas, and carried it on. Because having to know the big...the big wigs in transportation and highway department, they had their input into it because of their political clout.

Q: People like Huffman and Webb?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. Okay. Anything else you want to talk about?

A: Well, we strayed from the birth of Madison Heights to the growth of what it is today.

Q: Anything about the incinerator? Were you around when the incinerator...

A: No, I...I...I can't...I was here when that became an incinerator. That was...that was a bad, bad situation. The incinerator should have never been in the heart of our city. I don't know the politics behind all of that, but I feel as a resident that that incinerator doesn't belong in the heart of our city. Now it's...it's come back to haunt us. It could have been put somewhere in the corner of Dequindre, if it had to be. It could have been in another city. But again, politically...

Q: Somebody always gets...some

A: ...somebody gets...

Q: It's got to be on somebody's...

A: Yes, it has to be in somebody's back yard. And as it was, they dumped it on us. I don't know what kind of politics was involved in that.

Q: Okay.

A: But there must have been. It...there must have been a tradeoff somewhere along the line.

Q: We got something.

A: We got something. And...

Q: And obviously...

A: We didn't get the greatest, but we got something.

Q: Sure, and obviously we didn't...no one realized back in those days the impact of something like an incinerator we have.

A: No. Nobody realized that the incinerator would be an issue later on. Nobody realized that by putting it there, it would hurt anybody, or look like a sore thumb

sticking out. But as it was, it was something that I'm sure that all of...of us...if we had to do it over again...

Q: Wouldn't do it.

A: We wouldn't do it.

Q: I got another question. We talked...we were talking about Bill Huffman. And when I first came to the library, I was pretty impressed with the fact that every time someone passed away in the community, whether they were well known or not, it could be just someone that lived in the community, Senator Huffman would send a check. And then you would show up at the library and give us a check. For books. Now how did this come about?

A: This was something that we saw other politicians doing in Lansing, and we learned that we got more recognition, instead of sending a flower, which was only something that lasted for two or three days and then gets discarded, the idea came to us when we saw some of the other politicians in Lansing, what they were doing to give these people that were your voters a bit of appreciation. So the idea came up, what if we put a book in the library in memory of, and it would be lasting. Something that if anybody wanted to gain knowledge, they would pick up a book and if you opened it to the first page, or opened the cover, you would see that it was a donation in memory of that particular person that passed away.

Q: Library was very lucky you selected the library. Because you could have taken anything. You could have had memorial trees. You could have had plaques put on a wall.

A: Well, we did that too. We...we did...we used to put roses up where our DPW is.

Q: Right in the front...

A: Right in the front.

Q: ...in the rose garden.

A: But it wasn't as impressive as a book. And it did us a lot of good to see children come into the library and ask for a particular book, and it would be a book that was donated by Huffman. And even Virginia picked up the...the idea.

Q: She did, because...

A: Virginia Solberg.

Q: ...we have several books. Yeah.

A: That's one of my favorite things to do, is...is to have a book in a library. I know that when my mother passed away, Huffman and Solberg, and a few of the other politicians, put something in her memory. But Madison Heights isn't the only city that this was...this project was instigated. We have that in Hazel Park. We have it in Royal Oak.

Q: Oh, sure.

A: Ferndale.

Q: Yeah.

A: Sterling Heights.

Q: Mmhmm.

A: Who never realized that there was such a thing until we started the program over there. And...

Q: He was kind of a library booster right from the beginning, because you...you made sure that there was a library in the Civic Center on Thirteen Mile.

A: Yes.

Q: Good-sized library. The library was finished before city hall, wasn't it?

A: Yes. Yes, we...Bill believed that you've got to have a place where the kids could find the books to get their knowledge from. And one of the first things he asked was, "Let's put the library." And the fire house. Those were the two first things that came up. And then came the city hall.

Q: And everything else after. Well you satisfied with the way everything turned out? Are we a good city?

A: Yes. The city is...it has the right logo, "The City of Progress." And if you look around, out of our city stemmed a lot of good...good things, good ideas. We...others are copycats of...of the things that we have. And the things that we do. And...and I...I've got to say I'm proud of the people that are running our city, and have run our city in the past, because of the recognition that we stand up, the City of Progress.

Q: Art Selahowski, I want to thank you very much for talking to us today. We are very proud of having someone like you. If it wasn't for people like you, that were interested in keeping Madison Heights at the forefront of southeast Oakland County, we wouldn't be what we are today. Thank you very much, and...

A: Thank you, Bill, for having me.

Q: May you enjoy health and happiness for all of the rest of the time that you're in Madison Heights. Thank you very much.

[tape turned off and on]

Q: I'm starting the tape again because Art has indicated that he would like to make a statement. He feels real strongly about people like Bill Huffman and Dr. Webb, and the things that they did for Madison Heights. He feels so strongly about it, that in the election we just had this week, he did something and he just wants to let people know what he did for posterity. Art, what did you do? Voted absentee ballot.

A: I...I voted an absentee ballot, and when I looked at the candidates, I measured them up to two politicians that I knew, that had such a strong doings here in our city. And if you're familiar with an absentee ballot, on the end of that ballot it shows unopposed candidate. And my feelings are so strong for these two men that I wrote them in as write-in candidates, Huffman and Webb, for governor and lieutenant governor. This is my feelings, and I feel strongly my love for them...that I felt that they deserved recognition in that respect on that ballot. Thank you.

Q: Arthur, I can't think of any more fitting tribute for these two people. Thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW