

BILL HUFFMAN AND FRANK CAGLE

Interview by Michael Deller
December 21, 1985

TOPICS:

Incorporation of Madison Heights
Municipal Government
Land Development

Deller: This is Michael Deller [City Librarian] and we're going to be recording a tape for the archives of the Madison Heights Historical Commission. Today's date is December 21, 1985 and I have two guests with me here today and I'll ask them to introduce themselves, starting with you, Bill.

Huffman: My name is Bill Huffman. I've lived in Madison Heights for the better part of thirty some years.

Cagle: I'm Frank Cagle. I've lived in the City of Madison Heights now for the last thirty years.

Deller: I'm really pleased that you gentlemen can be with me here today. Both of you were here when we became a city, changed from the Township into the City, and Bill, why don't you start and mention some of the things that you remember about how that change occurred?

Huffman: My first recollection was being a young family man that had moved from Highland Park to then Royal Oak Township and was really asked to attend a meeting at the home of Virginia Solberg and the participants were John Michrina, Frank Cagle, Charlie Edwards, George Sergeant, Darrel Davis, Richard Riley, recently deceased, and several others....Ted Krenn. And this was the nuclei of trying to incorporate an area of Royal Oak Township. Yes, I mentioned George. To try to incorporate into a municipality because that that time the Royal Oak Township was divided basically between Eight Mile and Wyoming and Ten Mile, and the population resided up to about Eleven Mile at that time. We found out we had no services, no police department, no fire department and so we became interested. The main participants in the township at that time were the then Township Supervisor, George Horkey, who is still living today in Dundee, and former Mayor LeRoy Ainsley, who was on the township board, and justice of the peace at that time. And so we had that coalition of black and white township board and trying to provide the services for Eight Mile and Wyoming and the Ten Mile, John R, respectively. As the population began to grow and spread it was the concern on the part of many people that we had no library facilities, we had no public service facilities. If you wanted your rubbish picked up you had to call someone and most of them threw it on John R at that time, which was a mud road. But then the first meeting had developed and if anyone could be called the mother of Madison Heights it would have to be Virginia Solberg. And the two main businessmen in that town at that time were Ralph Bryson and Jake Ancona, and they put up the...and Frank Cagle had a business at that time and Darrel Davis, and I think they put up twenty dollars apiece to form an incorporation to start proceeding with the charter. John Michrina did most of the hard work. The petition drive...we were all involved in it one way or the other. And finally we acquired enough signatures to put it to vote of the people to incorporate the city of Madison Heights. And, incidentally, the name was...was Madison, which was supplied by John Michrina. And they went up to Lansing, of course, and we already had a Madison, so they had to name it Madison Heights. Some said it should've been named Madison

Swamp at that time. But that was the original beginning and then, of course, the matter was submitted to the people. The first Council elected...the first Mayor was our good friend, Lloyd Ferguson, who was an executive officer at that time with the Nash-Kelvinator Corporation. Frank Cagle, I think, was one of the first elected officials. George Sargeant, Darrel Davis, Virginia Solberg, Ted Krenn, Charlie Edwards...I feel that I'm missing one...Joe Nosko, who is deceased and Ted Przybylski, who is deceased, was one of the original people that was elected and nominated. The first Council did not get to sit because of...the first charter did not pass, and so then we had to have a new charter. I might point out that the present City Attorney, Harry Young, and I and Les Kutinsky, we all became friends at this point and he was retained and did all of the legal work for drafting of the charter and bringing the city into fruition. The second proposition, I believe, was submitted. It passed, but was overturned in the courts. And so the township board sat for an extra year and finally the third charter was adopted and the mayor and the council took office and...at the time and the city began to go into some services. Like most fledgling, first-run communities, the entire first man council were turned out of office because they had to...people found out that they had to pay for some of these services. So, consequently, the township group that was in power prior to that were re-elected and Mr. Horkey then became the second mayor. At that point in time I think that I decided to run for office and I was elected to the council at that time with them. Subsequently, of course, I think I served then as mayor the next time around and then finally I headed to the Lansing legislature. The old-timers...you know [inaudible]...a lot of people don't know that practically all of Hazel Park was known as the Tram Bush Farm, which the two ladies today own the Farmhouse Restaurant. That was their farm. And basically all of Madison Heights was divided into three farms and half of Warren. The Tessmer Farm, which ran basically from the Ten Mile to the Thirteen Mile, then from Dequindre to Ryan Road, it was basically known as the Tessmer Farm. They were relatives of the Travnika family. Everything on the Madison Heights side, the Oakland County side, was owned by the Travnika family. Basically from Ten Mile Road...at that time it was almost...yes...Ten Mile Road to Thirteen Mile Road. Then you had the Horkey family owning the other portions. The largest pig farm in the state was at Fourteen Mile and John R. And so this is where it all began and where it developed from and, of course, again, Ginnie Solberg, if anybody could be called the mother of Madison Heights, it would have to be Ginnie Solberg. I guess the father would be John Michrina. Even though a lot of people contributed to this, Vern Pebley, Frank Cagle, Harry Young--these are the old-timers. Once again, Darrel Davis, Richard Riley, Bill Gravel, Jake Ancona, Ralph Bryson. And the first job that...that they gave me was--Mr. Frank Cagle may not remember it--they made me Justice of the Peace. I served three hours and resigned.

Deller: And resigned. Was it that awful?

Huffman: That bad. Frank Cagle was the...our liaison man with the police department, even though theoretically we did not have a police department. So Frank was the police department and the only person that could get deputized by the sheriff's department to control the crime in Madison Heights today.

Deller: Well Frank, your...your title when you were elected was constable. What...what kind of duties were you expected to perform as constable?

Cagle: As constable, I did all the paperwork. serving subpoenas and so forth, and warrants, serving the warrants and you'd turn the warrants over to the constable, then we'd take them out and serve them. That went on for quite a while. I had to handle, because of some of the other men that was elected... there was two constables. One of them couldn't attend court because of obligations to his job. And so I, more or less, did all of the jury...picking the juries, and all of this was dumped into my lap. But now it's different. It's done by the state on a drawing from the registered voters so they don't have to do that anymore. Going into the court, Judge Lawrence was our first municipal judge and he never was out of office. He was full time, his time with the city as judge. When district court came in; the constables had not more tardies, such as court work. So they appointed me court officer and I went from there on into a couple...three years ago I had to retire on account of my health. I remember when we used to have the court and the police department all in the old building down there on John R and they went in and did the basement over...the coal bin, where they used to have it. And that's where the judge sat in down there and the jurors when we had to take them in for delivery.

Huffman: Frank, I think you should mention too that the first justice of the peace and the judge here for all those years was Hendrik Smit and the other first constable elected with you, of course, was our friend Paul Bonk, who is deceased, whose daughter today is married to Bernie Michrina and our police [inaudible].

Cagle: That's right Bill. I...I remember it too. I said that Paul Bonk...I didn't say Paul Bonk, but I did say that you had to have two constables and Paul had a job with Consumers Power and he could not serve on jury trials so I had to do all of 'em.

Deller: Mmhmm.

Cagle: In fact, back then here wasn't enough paperwork to keep one guy busy, but the charter called for two constables. And I went on doing that all the way into the new buildings up north, on Thirteen Mile Road, when...when I retired. But I do remember that Bill here has been very, very much indeed working all the time on the city. I know Bill had done a lot of footwork in Lansing to get different grants for the city. I know he's done a lot on that high-rise [inaudible]. He worked with Gin Solberg on that and got that through. In fact, I could sit here all day if I had time to think it over and tell

you things that Bill has done for the city. And sometimes some people think that when a guy gets out of the eyes of the public, such as city work, what have you, that they're all done for, but Bill is still going and trying to do more for the city and I really appreciate his help in everything. I know that he was tied up [inaudible] in Lansing there for quite a few years. I don't think he was ever treated as a...as a state office as all. He never lost an election.

Huffman: I knew when to leave, Frank.

Deller: I think that's being very, very modest because your...your support here has always been very strong. One of the things that I've heard mentioned is that when the facilities on John R became very small, I think there's a picture in one of the library scrapbooks that the library had to, in essence, close when the space was needed for a hearing. They...they show a picture of little kids and their picture books waiting while somebody was giving testimony here. It's being used as a courtroom until the case was finished and then they could go back to the shelves and finish selecting their materials. But when the move came to build the current Civic Center, how...how well was that received, Bill, here in town?

Huffman: We'll go back to the first library. It's true; it was in the basement of the old township hall on John R until they had the flood in '55 or '56. This ruined everything in the basement and that was the end of the library facilities period for the then Royal Oak Township, now Madison Heights. So, when it became a city, the city then entered into an agreement with the Madison School District, which was heavily populated, about five thousand enrollment, and the Lamphere District, which has a hundred and twenty-two and incidentally, Mrs. Jackson--Lon Jackson's mother--was teaching at that time and has taught all of our children in school. So the facilities were just absolutely terrible. We found out, number one, that you couldn't get fire insurance in Royal Oak Township or the then Madison Heights, because we had no fire plugs, we had no fire engines, we had no police department basically, and no services of any kind. And so it was proposed by the so-called leaders in the group, and we call them the good government group, remember, Frank?...that we needed these facilities and services and so, when the new council was elected, they had so much to do that you couldn't spread it out over a period of time and so the general public just could not accept the fact that we were going to have to have garbage refuse. You could no longer throw it on John R. That you had to have library facilities for our kids because they had to travel all the way to Royal Oak Library. That you...the Oakland County Sheriff's department was providing basically the police protection through our deputy sheriff, which was then Frank Cagle and Paul Bonk, and so there was a great need for these services. We had one employee when we first started and it was Mrs. Chamberlain, who was the old township clerk. Mrs. Chamberlain, after the first council elected, decided to hire another assistant clerk, and her name was Dorothy Lents. And

Dorothy came in and became the deputy city clerk the day, I guess, the city started or thereabouts.

Cagle: That's right. Mrs. Chamberlain retired, I think, and she took over from there and did a wonderful job so far.

Huffman: So over the years, to answer your question, each mayor and council then learned from that bad experience. And each then would do certain things. It's very difficult when you do not have any streets paved or any sewers in or any of the other public services. So then each council and mayor then coming up through the years, starting with Lloyd Ferguson and then George Horkey, LeRoy Ainsley and then it was Ted Krenn and then it was Bill Huffman and then it was Herb Smith and then it was George Suarez and prior to that Ginnie Solberg. Each one standing unit then would add the necessary services as the dollars became available. I have to give a lot of credit to our congressman at that time, and still my dear close personal friend today, Bill Broomfield. He got us the money to initiate the Civic Center. Today, as you know it, on Thirteen Mile, which is the city hall, the police station, the fire station, the public library and the court. From those services, Bill Broomfield, at that time I left local government and went to Lansing. And Bill Broomfield helped us to get the money to cover the Twelve Town Drain, which as a \$50 million dollar project at that time, today would be \$200 million. He helped us get the money for the parks, for the fire department. We got the first grant for the police station and on and on and on. And Bill Broomfield has been our dear friend all of these years and assisted all of the people in this area as a result of that. Ginnie Solberg, in my opinion, Virginia dedicated her whole life to this community. They had the first restaurant. They gave all their monies and their talents to their family and to the people of this community. That's why I'm pleased today that they can name the high-rise tower after Virginia Solberg as her landmark for what she contributed to this community, and on and on and on, many others.

Deller: Well now, there...there have been a variety of newspapers that have served the area. Right now we have the Madison Heights Weekly, which is somewhat of a misnomer since it's really a bi-weekly. But it's there and we've had the Reporter in a number of guises. But before that, and it was still in existence in '79 when I came here, was a paper called the Madison News. And I think that the company that produced that also produced like the Hazel Park News, something like that, and a couple others.

Cagle: The Reporter.

Deller: Yeah, the Reporter.

Huffman: The main newspaper at that time was the Hazel Park-Ferndale-Madison Heights Gazette. In Ferndale it was the Gazette, in Hazel Park it was the News and Madison Heights it was the News, and Wilma Waldrun was the editor. And the...the people provided the necessary circulation. It was a

weekly paper at that time. Later on the Tribune...the Royal Oak Tribune, which was always in existence, which was more sophisticated, they seemed to be west of Campbell Road. But they needed a whipping boy since they could not write bad articles about Royal Oak or Birmingham, and so Madison Heights became the hot political bed of the...of the county. All the wrong doings, and so forth, were supposed to be in Madison Heights. All the good doings were supposed to be in [inaudible]. It was but a turbulent time and then during that period they started several other newspapers. None were successful, of course.

Deller: Well, the News lasted a long time. Now did Virginia work with any of those or serve any of those?

Huffman: Yes, Virginia Solberg was the editor of the Madison News. And Wilma Waldrun was the editor of Hazel Park-Ferndale Gazette and News.

Deller: Mmhmm.

Huffman: And then Mary Kaminski was the associate editor.

Cagle: I know back then, Bill this city of Hazel Park and the city of Royal Oak--I understand if we hadn't went for a charter and got it passed at the time--they were going to take off a hunk of Madison Heights and at this time us going to a city, I know our first charter was down because of them giving the piece of land on Campbell to...Royal Oak?

Huffman: Right.

Cagle: And this here become quite a fight we had to go through was another. Anybody thinks this was easy making Madison Heights a city, they're crazy. Because we worked day and night at it. And I...I know Bill here did, and most of the others. Of course, I was quite young then. I had a service station, it run twenty-four hour service, and I would be available at all times for help. I had my little group together when...such as...we had a sign on the post saying, "Vote Yes on the Charter."

Deller: Mmhmm.

Cagle: We came out of a place we was meeting at over on, our first judge there, what was his name, Bill?

Huffman: Hendrick Smith.

Cagle: No, the other. He got elected the first associate judge.

Huffman: Williams.

Cagle: Williams.

Huffman: I wasn't going to mention that.

Cagle: But anyhow, we was over there one morning quite late going over some brain work to get work done in the city and someone came in and says, "They're tearing down our signs." I says, "They are?" "Yeah." So what did we do? I got my little gang together and their rakes and we went around and where we could, we put a "Vote Yes on the Charter." It was just that easy to do away with and so we covered the whole city. By daylight the next morning, we had them all covered. We would really have to work hard because we had them against us. Not only that, I don't think Hazel Park and Royal Oak helped us any because they weren't too well satisfied with this motor city themselves. But this time, we...we...we won the first election that we had, such as the charter, okay. And Bill here, he didn't run the first time but worked harder for not running than he did if he had run. So we...we worked hard. I'll say we had a bunch of guys running for this here deal. But the second election came up, why all them got wiped out but me and Bill. We was the only ones elected in the second election as a good government group. And I'll have you know that we had beck and glory in the second election but they came out with, George Horkey and his group. I had to put that in there, came out with this...what do you call it...hand-printed signs, "Vote Yes" or "Vote No". They passed them out all over. They didn't spend no money at all, and I beat every one of 'em. In our group, me and Bill Huffman, we were still the elected officials, but we had...it was fun. I'm glad we are a city, anyhow. It's served me well.

Deller: Now, how long...somebody has a picture that they say was taken about the time that Madison Heights was created, of an old saw mill that was here in the city? Where was that?

Huffman: It was on the property north of Gardenia. There was a big field in there and that's where we had the saw mill at that time, where you would get the excess lumber. I have the documentation. I have at my home, if anyone is ever interested, the dates, the names, the photographs and all of the media at that time for all of those years, from the day we started 'til this point. So if anyone was ever interested in specific dates...One bit of history there, Frank, I remember now...the reason that the first charter failed was the township board gave away that...as you pointed out, that section of Royal Oak from Campbell Road to...to Stephenson Highway, which is now I-75. They would give away pieces and once you would incorporate you had to define in principle by metes and bounds the area that you are incorporating.

Deller: Mmhmm.

Huffman: Every time we'd file a petition they would give away five or ten acres here or ten or twenty acres there. We screwed the thing up for several years, three years as a matter of fact.

Cagle: Now this hits me as no surprise because, you know, our friend George Horkey was an attorney and he knew what he was doing. He tried to defeat us. He did a pretty good job of it but not for long.

Huffman: The crime capital of the state of Michigan was Royal Oak Township. All the numbers, the prostitution and everything you can dream of at that time. And so consequently that we learned many people had the interest in this remaining as it was.

Deller: Oh, I see.

Huffman: For example, city of Royal Oak, it was not in their best interest and many of the other cities.

Deller: Well, now the...once the city was going and was operating, you...you mentioned that residents...suddenly it dawned on them that there was going to have to be a dollar paid in order to support some of these things or to make the changes and they weren't exactly pleased about that. But how much support was there for some things such as the covering of the Red Run to...to make it a drain? I mean, was that...how...how did that fit into the priorities at the time?

Huffman: I remember they let me make the presentation with the Tribune with Rus...with Russell and Jack Sinclair, who is today the chief aide to Bill Broomfield and Rudy DiFazio, who today, I think, is the vice-president of Blue Cross. But they allowed me to handle the numbers and their first budget was \$90,000 at which, as a township, you do not receive monies back from the state and federal government. You must be a municipality. And so when we got the first dollars in, it was adequate. Except when you start out with nothing and then you ask the general public, "We'd like for you to pay a dollar a month," as I recall for example, for garbage, and he says, "No", those people just stood on the streets. And you ask them to pay a dollar a month for police protection and they refused. So it was that kind of...a very poor area at that time. I don't think there was a home in Madison Heights worth ten thousand dollars at that time, or twelve, or something like that.

Cagle: We had...had the co-op in Madison Heights, north of Thirteen. It was quite... well I tell you, they had their garbage taken away and everything. They have their own city waters with a well there.

Huffman: Speaking of co-ops...excuse me Frank...one of the original people in our group that we failed to mention was Arthur Tancredi.

Cagle: That's right, we should say...more or less, Mrs. Tancredi did most of the work with Arthur going along for the ride.

Huffman: Another point of interest, if the tape is not out...Frank Lloyd Wright came to Royal Oak Township thirty-nine years ago. And you probably noticed the

other day that the movie star, his granddaughter was Ann Baxter, who just expired. Well, Frank Lloyd Wright came and developed the co-op, which is today about...being abutted on Thirteen Mile Road by the Senior Citizens Tower and the new swimming pool is going in, and that was the high-class co-op home area in Madison Heights or Royal Oak Township at that time. Then Frank Lloyd Wright laid out the streets and developed it as you're probably aware, and built all of those homes in there.

Deller: Well, he is...he is...I think Fred Hiller was one of the original...

Huffman: Right.

Deller: ...people in the co-op.

Huffman: I forgot to mention...excuse me again, you get to talking...Fred Hiller was one of the original people. I can remember the meeting...we said we should consolidate the Madison and Lamphere School Districts and I think Lamphere had about a hundred people in it at that time, and all the people were in Madison and so we weren't able to get them to join hands. Now of course, years later, the state will see to it that they do join hands and become one district.

Deller: Well they...Fred had mentioned the connection with Frank Lloyd Wright and the fact that Wright had great plans for a house that people could afford even during the war and the Depression because the materials were supposed to be simple and didn't put a proper foundation under it, and when the first Michigan spring came, the house crumbled back to earth from which it had come, which I...I thought was...was intriguing. In where...which part of the city were you living in at the time, Frank?

Cagle: In the south end.

Deller: In the south end?

Cagle: Yes.

Deller: And you're still there?

Cagle: I'm still there, but, I'll tell you, our city in the south end needs a lot of improvement. It's...I've got on the police department, we've got ordinances and they're not working...they're not upholding. There's junk cars in the driveway right now next to my house there. The guy's got one of these dune buggies sitting out there with a trailer right in his front yard. That's absolutely a no-no. So until these people get out there...The council said the week before last...no, the meeting before the last one, that they're gonna have to start workin' on these violations.

Deller: Mmhmm.

Cagle: Otherwise, the backyard next to me has got two junkers sittin' in the backyard. Any time a car is abandoned like that and doesn't have a license on it, it should be towed away or else they've got to get rid of it, and it's just that easy. If you go down in Detroit, you'll hit places in Detroit that's got nothin' but junkyards in their yards and getting' by with it. But out here we haven't got that much ground to cover that they shouldn't be able to go around and serve these papers. I know because I served a lot of the warrants on these people when I was in there and they're...they're just not getting off their fannies and gettin' out and doin' it. The way I feel about it, I wish they would do it because our city at the south end is going to become a dump if they don't enforce them.

Deller: We...I think that that was one of the areas that had to...people didn't understand at the beginning of the city were the changes that were going to happen as a result of being a city versus a township. How...what time...when did they actually begin having their own police officers? Now in the beginning you pointed out that we counted on Frank being deputized to do some things. How long did it take us to have the beginnings of our own police force?

Cagle: At the beginnings of the city we had a small group, police work...cops, and a lot of the police officers got scared to death that they were gonna lose their jobs, so they went elsewhere. I remember Tom Linville--he's just retired from the city--he was in my place there at Dunn's at the time, just scared to death if he's going to lose his job, and I told him, I said no, in fact, no one would have to leave their jobs. We weren't getting rid of nobody.

Huffman: Well, basically what happened, Frank, was that the black officers and some white officers stayed with Royal Oak Township and basically the six officers that stayed over here and joined this force was Chief Richardson...

[Tape change]

Deller: You had just pointed out when the tape flipped that...that Harry Young had to get a loan so that the city could meet its payroll and that was to include another...what...six...six officers at the time then that we became a city?

Huffman: I think we only had four at the time, if I recall. Two DPW people decided to stay with us, which was Hank. We had two DPW people...people and Myrtle Chamberlain decided to stay, and Fort Gleason [inaudible]. John Michrina served all that period as city manager, building inspector for free until later on, when Harry got the loan that carried the government for three months. Then we got Bill Broomfield, who was then our state representative in Lansing...

Deller: Mmhmm.

Huffman: ...to get us a grant from the state to meet the basic primary functions of the community...

Deller: Mmhmm.

Huffman: ...until they could adopt a tax code and get the government in order.

Deller: Oh. Okay, so then there was a...a gap in terms of the creation of the city and the actual ability to levy taxes and collect taxes. That can be...that can be frustrating, I imagine, trying to round up banks.

Cagle: Bill, do you remember we had two dog shelters in the city on Gardenia? Do you know where those were? Their location?

Huffman: No.

Cagle: That's something we've been trying to do with an outfit here, tried to find out someone that knew who run 'em or...

Huffman: Well, Dean of Gardenia was that big field back there and that was the first dog shelter, and I guess it was selling them to the medical schools and what have you because they didn't get paid anything.

Cagle: Ah, that's right.

Huffman: And Wallace was our first dog catcher, remember?

Cagle: John Wallace.

Huffman: And he worked for six months, didn't get a check, then he quit.

Cagle: And the next one, he went to work for the city as a dog catcher and, I hate to say this, but he was caught writin' out violations on paper bags and what have you, and not turnin' 'em into the city.

Huffman: It was a difficult period.

Cagle: Yeah, it was.

Huffman: And basically what you've always had over the years is the so-called south end, the old township, where the people felt, "My home is paid for, why should I pay for widening and paving of John R?" and the demand was placed upon the general populace by the people that were moving from Highland Park and other areas to new land. Everybody wanted to go home. You could come out here then and buy a beautiful big home in Karam Subdivision for ten thousand dollars. And so the north end began to develop and the schools began to develop, and the businesses began to come in. But it was difficult to explain to the people living here that you can't get anybody

to come and open a business on Twelve Mile Road if it's single land, full of holes or John R, or none of the side streets were paved or cleared. There was no snow removal, there were just no services, period.

Deller: Mmhmm.

Huffman: And it was a tough blow for the community to accept this when other communities, like Royal Oak, had been cities for years and years and years. Now, here we are today and we have our main arteries are all widened, we have good snow removal, we have good this and this. Royal Oak needs nineteen miles just to improve their street facilities. It's still a nice community but it's like Ferndale and Hazel Park. They're feeling the effects. Incidentally, Hazel Park had just become a city, I think, about a year or two before.

Cagle: A year before us, yes.

Huffman: And Louie [inaudible] of course, and all the big boys, Louie was mayor and I was mayor. Art Miller was the mayor of Warren, the singer, and his son today [inaudible]. We were all mayors together. We came out here...the two of them came out here from Hamtramck.

Cagle: We had one fellow there who did quite a bit for the city: Ferguson. The bar at Ten Mile and John R, he...he was always in there dippin' in the till to help the city along. He worked hard for us. I guess we could go along and say a lot of people worked hard for us if we just get down and think it over.

Deller: Mmhmm.

Cagle: Because no two or three men made this a city. It was hard. Every foot of it was hard.

Deller: Well now, was...was the lumber company on John R in existence at that time?

Cagle: Jim's Lumber.

Huffman: Incidentally, Jim had just had a stroke, Frank, and he's over in the nursing home. Jim Cruse, Ralph Bryson, Mike Krezina...Mike Krezina owns a tool company, Johnny Bushong just recently died, Jake Ancona, Mike Fregurski, these are about the only businesspeople we had in the whole town and every time we wanted something, they would give us some money whether it be a phone bill or a needy family, we had the largest Goodfellows organization in the state of Michigan at that time because we had more poor people.

Deller: Mmhmm.

Huffman: Over the years in Lansing, I was always able to say that I have the richest school district in the State. So every time we needed something back in those days, it was contributory. It was contributed by various people. Contractors, for example, put in a [inaudible] difficult a few years later. Contractors put in the ball field at St. Dennis and St. Vincent's...put in their water, put in their sewer. None of them could afford it back then. So the contractors were here putting in [inaudible], and I says, hey, go down the street there, put some ball teams out there. It was a very contributory kind of community because it seems like everyone was sort of poor and again coming back, we had six major businesspeople who contributed most of the money for everything. We had no legal bills. We didn't have anything because everything was paid for, mostly contributory. Good people here. You got good strong people in this community. [Inaudible]...good people [inaudible]...this community. And none of this would be here today if it did not encompass the voluntary contribution of hundreds and hundreds of people to make this all possible today. And as Frank pointed out, maybe there are a few things here we have our shortcomings with, but...

Cagle: You can talk all day, Bill, if you wanted to, if [inaudible].

Huffman: But basically this is a very young city...what is it...twenty...let me stop and think for a minute.

Deller: Thirty.

Huffman: Thirty years old. How many communities thirty years old that have very little bonded indebtedness, almost everything is paid for? We have good professional people in the community now running the city. We have good services, excellent services. We have a good relationship with the county, the city of Detroit and the state. Our services are excellent and yet it's very modest compared to some of our communities to the north. The per capita cost is probably one of the lowest. The per capita police cost is one of the lowest. The DPW, the snow removal. All we have to do is look at the kind of services in the community that's only been here thirty years and started out dead broke. Now how many people getting married or married thirty years ago can tell me they saved ten thousand dollars? Not any, if they're sending kids to school.

Cagle: I was laughing the other night. I was over listening to the council meeting on the TV and they brought up the deal that they needed a branch picker or somethin' to cut the limbs that are hanging out over the street and they needed the truck and the equipment: forty-seven thousand dollars. And I thought, "My God, what would we have done if they hit us with that?"

Huffman: Now we used to do all that work voluntarily. Of course it's changed. People demand more today. And I've got to give credit to the township people. George Horkey was a very smart man and had great foresight. LeRoy Ainsley contributed immensely to the community and still lives here. And

then we might as well place ourselves in that age group: Frank, you and I, John Michrina and Art Selahowski. I failed to mentioned one of the mainstays in the community was Art Selahowski and Michael Zenon and Ralph Bryson and Jim Cruse. And...and so each year each mayor and council became a little more sophisticated and a little less [inaudible]. And I can say today that the community is very happy with our mayor and council, the way they conduct themselves, publicly and privately. They're working very well together. Our services are excellent. Our schools are very, very good and you must consider that we have one of the richest school districts in the state, which is Lamphere, and right adjacent to it is one of the poorest, Madison. Both have developed students. One of them is the president of Xerox Corporation today. Several of them have become great professional athletes and on and on and on...that what has materialized and come out of this quagmire that really nobody thought we had any chance whatsoever of building this community. And again most of the credit I have to give to the voluntary contribution. Ginny Solberg spent sixty hours a week for free working for the city. Frank Cagle, Paul Bonk, John Michrina and on and on and on and on and on. If there's only one thing that I can point out that's lacking in the city today is a voluntary contribution. For example, we would have a library drive; we didn't have any books back then. We'd have a drive and we'd pick up fifteen hundred books. We'd be lucky if we could reclaim five hundred of them. And so you had a real voluntary contribution. We had a volunteer fire department, a volunteer police department. I don't say we're too sophisticated today to go back to those. But we need to re-institute a voluntary commitment that made this community what it is.

Cagle: I know that two or three of the fellows that were on that fire department, the volunteer...one of 'em is...

Huffman: Mrs. Solberg's brother.

Cagle: ...Mrs. Solberg's brother. He was volunteering for the city. But prior to the city he was [inaudible], now it's all paid.

Deller: Mmhmm.

Cagle: I do know that before the city bill, we had very little north of Thirteen Mile... Fourteen...Twelve Mile Road. It's all been built in there since the city, most of it. I don't say all of it, but the majority. We've got all of these huge manufacturers out here that's really an advantage to the tax roll. And it really helps. We've got some beautiful businesses out on this end.

Huffman: Well, that was brought out, of course, by the I-96. And the first meeting we had, they wanted to bring the I-96 across south Oakland County. This was twenty-nine years ago, when I approved the route and know that the accessibility to the community is the most important thing, same way with the I-75. This group of people accepted the expressway of I-75. We didn't force them to make curves or this or that, or you must put up barriers. We

accepted it because we knew we had to have good transportation, so let's put in a community road. And Madison Heights was the first city that approved the I-75/I-96 route. Several other communities adjacent to this went through court proceedings. It increased the cost of those two projects hundreds of millions of dollars by saying that, "No, we...we don't want the incinerator in our town." It was none of them who accepted it. The fourteen cities, which is one of my clients today in Lansing, I represent all of the cities in the rubbish and water authority, nobody wanted the incinerator but Madison Heights says, "Well, okay, we'll take it." And so we have today the refuse of the fourteen adjacent cities. It's not a detriment like most people thought it would be. They've donated land back for parks. We have a golf course on it now. It's covered. Now we're gonna have a wave tech swimming pool, thanks to a lot of people. But Madison Heights was a good neighbor, was a better neighbor than some of the neighbors were to Madison Heights. I've got to give a lot of credit to Harry Young's legal firm at that time, who worked for practically nothing all those years. And I noticed the other day in the newspaper where they're charging eighty dollars an hour. I pay a hundred and fifty dollars an hour for my legal services for my two companies in Lansing, and Madison Heights is getting legal services for, I think, eighty dollars an hour or whatever the case might be. But they don't remember that the man worked for a year for nothing. Les Kutinsky, who has been a big contributor of this community, worked for years in this community for nothing. We've got a lot of good people here.

Cagle: I think the city council just give the attorneys a raise. I think it's twenty-five percent.

Huffman: Eighty dollars an hour.

Cagle: Yeah.

Huffman: Which is half of what I pay for legal services in Lansing.

Cagle: Well, you know, it's like that Bill. You know you have a guy like Harry Young in there that's done so much for the city of Madison Heights, and there's always a couple picky-pickys in there that don't like so and so and so forth, and it's all politics. It's not because Harry isn't doing his job. I understand he might retire, not too long away.

Huffman: Speaking personally, I might mention that I raised four kids in this wonderful community, and sent all four of them through the school system here and through college, and they all reside in Madison Heights except one who was [inaudible].

Cagle: I can top that, Bill, we have...

Huffman: Frank's son served on our common council in town. I don't know if you know that or not.

Cagle: Charlie.

Huffman: Charlie Cagle. He raised a big family in this town. His daughter is very active on the school board in Madison. We have deep roots here.

Cagle: Yes we do.

Huffman: Good community.

Cagle: I just hope that things turn out for the best from here out, and I think they will because we've got some pretty smart people on the council. It's getting to be...we've got more hens on the council. I was thinking, not too long ago, we...we fought like hell to get Gin Solberg in there. Now they've got three women on the council.

Huffman: The first time...if you have another minute on the tape...the first time Ginny Solberg ran it was unheard of for a woman to be elected to office in those days. It's just...it just was unheard of, a rather extremely difficult time. And Ginny was the most knowledgeable person in the city and county government that ever served this community. And it was very difficult to get her elected to council. And then she ran for mayor and became...many of our friends would say, "I can't believe Ginny, she's the best, most qualified, but she's a woman." Nothing pleases me more today than to see that we have three very capable women that I've known for many years, serving on council. That shows the maturity of the community that we've accepted and grown that much in stature that we now have these women serving. They have something to offer. My wife is a better bookkeeper than I am. She's a better person than I am in many, many ways. She sees things differently than I see them. And so I think it shows the progress of the community. And we leave to their credit that they have done these things.

Deller: That's a...a good note, I think, for us to come to a close on. It's nice to have an up at the end of a session. And I really appreciate Frank Cagle coming today and Bill Huffman. It's an honor, I think, for the Historical Commission to be able to speak with both of you and to have this recorded and to add to our archives, and so, gentlemen, thank you. Have a good holiday and it's...it's been a real pleasure having you.

Huffman: Thank you, Michael.

END OF INTERVIEW