

ANN EDWARDS, DARREL DAVIS, JOHN MICHIRINA AND HARRY YOUNG

Interview by Michael Deller
October 23, 1985

TOPICS:

Incorporation of Madison Heights
Municipal Government

- Deller: This is a recording for the Madison Heights Historical Commission done on October 23, 1985 in the direct City Librarians office of Madison Heights. Present today are Ann Edwards, Darrel Davis, John Michrina and City Attorney Harry Young. We're in the Madison Heights Public Library and with me are four people who were instrumental in the establishing of Madison Heights as a City: Harry Young, our present City Attorney, John Michrina, Darrel Davis and Ann Edwards. And I am the Madison Heights City Librarian, Michael Deller. Harry, I think we'll let you begin and then others will join in as they see fit.
- Young: I believe it was sometime in 1954 when I was trying to organize an area called the city of Southfield Park, which was then a portion of Southfield Township and included the area from Greenfield to Inkster from 8 Mile to 9 Mile Road. We had formed an association and we were about to have an election with the approval of the charter of Southfield Park. Unbeknownst to me there were present Ann Edwards, her husband, Darrel Davis, John Michrina...
- Edwards: Virginia Solberg.
- Young: ...Virginia Solberg and Ted Cranton, who later became the City...Mayor of the City. They were all part of the...what's the name of your association, John?
- Michrina: The Madison...er...the...
- Davis: The Madison Heights Businessmen's Association.
- Edwards: No, it was just a Civic Association at that time.
- Michrina: Civic Association.
- Edwards: Yeah, Civic Association.
- Young: Civic Association. Although they had...they had no interest, true interest in the incorporation of the City of Southfield Park, which later became part of the City of Southfield, they were interested in forming a group for the incorporation of part of Royal Oak Township, which was then...which later became the City of Madison Heights. At that time...well...incidentally, the vote for the approval of the Charter failed by about 60 votes. And I received a call, I believe, from Ann Edwards too, asking me if I was interested in assisting the people in the Civic Association to help them incorporate what is now the City of Madison Heights. I told them that I was, but I didn't know the area they were talking about. I knew that there was a Royal Oak Township but I always thought that to be the area around 8 Mile and Wyoming But they indicated that there was another area which was between Green...which was between Dequindre and Campbell Road or Stephenson Highway. In any event, I was invited to a dinner at Ann Edwards' home, at

which time I met John Michrina, Darrel Davis, Ted Cranton, Ann Edwards. Who else was there, Ann?

Edwards: Charles Edwards, Virginia Solberg.

Young: Oh, and Virginia Solberg. They told me that this area where Ann lived was part of Royal Oak Township. So that, actually, what was then Royal Oak Township consisted of two areas. One, the 8 Mile Road area and the other, the area from 10 to 14 and from Dequindre west to Stephenson Highway or Campbell Road, that both areas of Royal Oak Township had their own Police Departments, their own Fire Department and each area had 10,000 residents each, so that they were pretty equal. It was run by the Township Supervisor and his board and they desired to break away from the area, 8 Mile Road. We then formed a committee and went out and solicited signatures for an incorporation vote. The first vote that we had, we had to elect nine Charter members. The way this worked was you first voted on whether or not to incorporate a certain area and whether or not to elect the nine Charter members who ran for that office. If the vote was negative, then the vote for the nine members was meaningless. If the vote was positive, that is, voted to incorporate the area, the nine members would then be deemed to be elected and the individual receiving the highest number of votes would be the Mayor Pro Tem. The first vote on the incorporation was during the early part of 1955, I believe. Is that right?

Edwards: The first was in '54.

Young: It was in '54.

Edwards: Yes, the last '54, the incorporation election was successful and on January 24, 19...was it 1955...no...1955 we became a City. No, the first vote was '53 and then in January 24...1954, you see your first Charter Commission with nine members.

Deller: And then what? The one with the highest vote became the Chair?

Edwards: No.

Deller: No.

Edwards: There was a...I should have brought the minutes. There was vote by the nine Charter Commissioners.

Deller: To select their Chair.

Edwards: And of course they all nominated each other.

Young: Now, I think the one receiving the highest number of voted became Mayor Pro Tem because, you recall, subsequently, the petitions to form a new Charter Commission had to be served upon the Mayor Pro Tem.

Edwards: The new Charter Commission was served upon Virginia.

Young: Yeah, well...

Edwards: She was secretary.

Young: No, she was Mayor Pro Tem.

Edwards: Was she Mayor Pro Tem?

Young: Yeah, Mayor Pro Tem. So, the one receiving the highest number of votes became Mayor Pro Tem and all subsequent matters had to be served upon her or upon the Mayor Pro Tem. In any event, the...we met and we followed the...as a format...we followed the Charter of the City of Lathrup Village. That seemed to be a fairly good Charter at the time. And we then submitted the approval of the Charter to the electorate. In that first Charter we did not provide for the incorporation of Act 78.

Edwards: Right, but the Police and Fire.

Young: Which is the Civil Service Commission, which provides for Civil Service Commission for Police and Fire Department. So the Police and Firemen decided that they weren't going to vote for the Charter and they went out and I guess they campaigned against it.

Edwards: Yes.

Young: So the Charter was defeated. The first Charter was defeated. Now at that time, the opponents of the Charter had ten days within which to collect 75 signatures and serve them upon...or...wait a minute...300 signatures, and serve it upon the Mayor Pro Tem, who was Virginia Solberg. Knowing this, we discussed the matter and decided that Virginia was not to leave the City. She was to be visible, but was to be unapproachable and that's exactly what happened. Now, the Solbergs had a restaurant on the corner of Greig, was it?

Edwards: Yes, Greig.

Young: Greig and Dequindre, a little restaurant, and she worked in the restaurant and the people from the township, who opposed the Charter, would come in and they would see her and they would try to get to her but they couldn't, so they went to the County Attorney's office, who, incidentally, was a very knowledgeable person but occasionally he got a little careless, and he advised them to make Xerox copies of the thing, you remember?

Edwards: Yes.

Young: And they were to file the original petitions with the County Clerk and just leave the copies on her doorstep, he says that would be good enough. Well, that wasn't what the law said. The law said the Mayor Pro Tem must be served with them and...but...nevertheless that's what they did. So when 10 days had elapsed, we reconvened the Charter Commission and we incorporated Act 78 by reference and sent the thing up to Lansing for approval again. And in the meantime they had hired Clark Adams, remember that?

Edwards: Yes.

Young: Now, Clark Adams had been a Supreme Court Justice, who was appointed by Mennen Williams, but he was defeated for the election for the Supreme Court but Mennen Williams then reappointed him to the position of Circuit Court, but he wasn't...I think this was either in June or July of 1955...1955. And he was to be...take office in January 1956, so he was still able to practice law in the interim and they thought they had it made. Now there were three judges in Oakland County at the time: Judge Dorie, Judge Holland and Judge Hartrick and of course Judge Adams was going to be a...one of them in January, but...and they thought surely none of the judges would vote against him, so...but these judges felt that they couldn't sit on the thing because it was too close to home. So they had the Court Administration in Lansing appoint another judge to sit on this and who should they appoint but Lila Nuenfeld, you remember that?

Edwards: Yes.

Young: Lila Nuenfeld was the only woman Circuit Judge in the State of Michigan at that time.

Deller: Oh wow.

Young: And she happened to be a fairly good friend of mine. I didn't know that she was going to sit there. They didn't know either. It was just coincidental. Well, we got up and we argued the thing. Adams argued our second Charter should not be approved and should not be submitted to the electorate and so forth, and she listened and she lambasted Clark Adams but good. Remember, she ripped into him.

Edwards: Yes, she was excellent.

Young: Oh, did she rip into him (inaudible) and, I think, Clark never forgave me for that. But anyway, nevertheless, the thing went through. We then had another election and the thing was approved.

Deller: Now when was it that the borders of the Township were changed?

Young: The borders of the township were changed just prior to the first election. The township supervisor, a fellow by the name of Horgate, who was no fool, he was an attorney...but he certainly...he didn't practice law, but he knew what the score was. He was smart. We filed a petition for incorporation the first time. He immediately got hold of Royal Oak School District, was it the school district?

Edwards: Yes.

Young: And had them annex...no...it had to be the City of Royal Oak. It had to be the City of Royal Oak because the annex had [inaudible].

Edwards: But it was just the school district that was affected.

Michrina: No...well...the whole thing.

Edwards: Oh yeah.

Young: The school district wouldn't have made any difference.

Edwards: No, right.

Michrina: The boundaries for the...supervisors all gave it away. That's when they turned it over to the Royal Oak School.

Young: They got a hold of the City of Royal Oak at the time and they didn't need a vote of the people but the City Council and the Mayor there and the township board agreed that that area should be next to the City of Royal Oak. Where is that area? That's on Campbell Road...

Deller: Just south of 14. It's on the east side...yeah, on the east side of Campbell.

Young: Yeah, so...well, we didn't fool with them. Rather than go back, they thought we had gone to court and squabbled with them. We didn't. We just dropped those petitions, went out and got some new ones signed with the new boundaries. And...so...that didn't stop us at all. We weren't about to fight over something like that. And that's how a part of the City became Royal Oak.

Michrina: I know one thing; you gained a lot of respect when you beat them in Nuenfeld's Court, I'll tell you that. He was boss in the City after that. It was supposed to be an outside judge, attorney in Oakland County didn't have a chance, but he straightened them out a little bit.

Young: It's still that way there, good old boys, they have their own clique. But I've never had any trouble there.

Deller: Now when you started, the group was simply known as the Civic Association.

Edwards: Yes.

Deller: And then at that point, now, I've heard a variety of stories as to the point when the City suddenly got its name.

Young: No, what happened was at this first meeting we were talking, I said, I told them we had to select a name to put in the petitions, then we were going to file for incorporation and we started banging things around. I said, "Well, what's the name of the school district?" and somebody said Madison, and I said, "Well, that's a good name. We'll call it Madison Heights." And that's when we just inserted that.

Deller: Now John, you've been ascribed a role in that choice, I hear.

Michrina: That's how it actually came about, Harry. I was sort of in politics when Horkey was the Supervisor and I was on the Board of Review and kind of active in the township and I kept after Harry...not Harry...George...George Horkey to incorporate and he agreed...uh..."Good thing, good thing"...year after year to incorporate but "not at this time." Not at this time. Every time I'd approach him with it, he'd say, "Yeah, that's a good idea." He had a good thing going because he was the whole government.

Young: That's right. As Supervisor, he ran everything.

Michrina: So I finally says...he says...I have petitions all drawn up and everything, ready to go whenever the time is right." So I says...one day I went in there, I said, "I'm gonna start this myself." So he gave me two petitions. I said, "What the hell am I going to do with two petitions?" So we went out and got new ones made. I think that's when we...we started the...we organized the Civic Organization. And on this petition was Madison, Michigan. And we did present those to the Oakland Board of Supervisors who had to approve of these petitions before they...I don't know if they even went to Lansing...and discovered that there already was a Madison, Michigan. So we got a whole gang of us, eight of us...said, "All right, why not just add something to it?" And we added Heights, Madison Heights. But the original idea was that the south end had a greater voting capacity than did the north end. Therefore, they wanted to remain a township and we knew that we couldn't...we couldn't do anything unless we kind of got the men, so that's the reason for the Madison, to give them a little prestige down there, Madison School District. So then after we did that we met with Harry many, many, many times and we didn't have any money to pay him with, so we said, "Well, if we become a City, we'll give you first crack at being City Attorney," and he was agreeable to that. And although we couldn't guarantee him anything because we didn't even know if we were going to be in office.

Young: That's right.

Michrina: So from there it went to where somebody, I don't think it was the Police and Fire Department so much as the...

Edwards: Labor.

Michrina: Yeah. And also the township board with all...everyone against it. Everyone but a few in the City Hall that were working there were against becoming a City because they were all afraid they were going to lose their jobs and so we assured all of them, "We're not gonna fire you. You can work on if you want to." So Dorothy stayed. She was assistant but she stayed.

Young: And Myrtle Chamberlain.

Edwards: Myrtle Chamberlain.

Michrina: Myrtle Chamberlain was the one that was...

Edwards: Sara Bradford was Clerk.

Michrina: Clerk, yeah. But she didn't...

Edwards: She didn't stay.

Michrina: No, she didn't stay.

Edwards: Hank Shonka stayed.

Michrina: Shonka stayed and....

Davis: [Inaudible] run.

Michrina: No, he ran. He had to go with George. So we had...actually...we had a Treasurer.

Edwards: Houston was Treasurer and he left.

Michrina: Then we made somebody Treasurer.

Edwards: No it was down...what happened is the day after the election nobody showed up at City Hall.

Michrina: Yeah, that's right.

Edwards: Nobody. So when we incorporated and became a City, we were sworn in on December 8, 1955. On December the 10th, the new Council met and hired John Michrina as temporary City Manager at \$150 a week.

Young: We had no money to pay him.

Edwards: No money to pay him.

Michrina: The only reason that I was appointed was I was the only one that wasn't on an hourly basis. I was on a commission basis. I was selling storm windows, and stuff like that, door to door. And I was the only one that could take off time enough to do anything. Now I was not only Manager, I was the Electrical Inspector, the General Inspector.

Edwards: That's right. The Building Inspector.

Michrina: The Building Inspector, the Plumbing Inspector.

Edwards: Purchasing Agent.

Michrina: Purchasing Agent. Assessor. I was just everything.

Edwards: The demolition crew.

Michrina: I knew very little. But in the inspections there were quite a few new homes started. And of course the builders knew that I was green but I had two or three good builders that guided me and told me where, if any, violations were made by the shyster builders. So I'd go to them after somebody else had pointed it out to me. I'd say, "Hey, you want to work here after we get going? Do the job right." I didn't even know what to tell them to do.

Young: Well, you know, thinking about that, we also have a problem with water. Water and sewer. Do you remember that?

Michrina: Oh yes. Oh yes.

Young: What had happened...it...these builders would come in and pick up logs and they'd come into the township hall and ask them if they had water and sewer and they would say "Yes" when the water and sewer was totally inadequate. I mean, just couldn't handle the capacity there. And the State Board of Health start coming down and one of the builders accused me of putting the State Board of Health on him. He was a big builder here, Karam. And I didn't know Karam from Adam. And anyway they shut him down and we had a heck of a time. In addition to that, we found out that we didn't own our own water and sewer department. Remember that?

Edwards: Yes.

Young: And...

Deller: Who owned it?

Young: Township. They were working out of...they had all the money. They were working out of Hazel Park. Who was the fellow that was at the head of the water?

Edwards: Frank Nicie.

Young: Anyway, they were going to hang on to it. We went in the court because there were bonds involved. We had one heck of a time, we finally [inaudible] the sewer and water department away from them, because that's where the money was. In the meantime, we didn't have dime one to operate with. So, hand in hand we went to Royal Oak Township on 8 Mile Road. A fellow by the name of Elwood?

Edwards: Yeah, Elwood Dickens.

Michrina: Mr. Dickens.

Edwards: Elwood Dickens.

Young: He was the...he is the Township Supervisor. When we incorporated he took over being Township Supervisor for Royal Oak Township and I don't know who went with me...I guess...

Edwards: I did.

Young: Did you go with me?

Edwards: Every payday we went to Royal Oak Township.

Young: And they would give us checks. It was a heck of a way to operate. Then we...Lloyd Ferguson, incidentally, was elected first Mayor and he was a real fine person. And we wanted to get a City Manager, so we were opened for suggestions and somebody suggested that we get a fellow by the name of Don Smith who had worked for the Michigan Municipal League, and we would pay the League \$25 to send him down to our meetings to expound the virtues of being a home rule City, and he did a nice job, we thought. So, do you remember when we had a meeting? I think it was on a Saturday, and we would meet in the basement of the old township hall. And I said, "Well, why don't I try to get hold of Don now and see if he'll take the job." So I called him up. He was living in Ann Arbor; he was earning \$6000 a year from the Michigan Municipal League, and he said, "Well, I'll be glad to take the job, but I'd want at least that much." I consulted the powers that were there and they said, "Well, let's give him \$7000." So I offered it to him and he grabbed it and came down. Now his problem was when he started taking sides. He thought he was getting into politics instead of keeping out of politics. He started taking one side against the other. And he had the first Council in an uproar.

Davis: Well, he kept hiding the money. We didn't find it until two...a year and a half after he was out of office.

Edwards: We went on record as writing a budget in 14 days. It's never been done by anybody [inaudible].

Davis: What was the first one, do you remember?

Edwards: Oh, it was...I think it's like thirty-some-thousand dollars.

Deller: \$30,000 for this City?

Edwards: Yeah.

Michrina: Really, the only money we had to begin with was what we brought [inaudible].

Young: Taxes didn't come in until some time later.

Davis: The City Bank started financing our payroll.

Young: I didn't get anything [inaudible].

Edwards: With Henry Graham. Henry Graham. He helped us out with City National Bank.

Young: Henry Graham?

Edwards: Yeah.

Young: That's the name of a man or a drain?

Edwards: It's also a drain. He said now, so it's a drain, but he is...it's a man.

Young: It's a famous drain.

Edwards: It's a man. It's a man. At that time while the City National Bank...I've got an article on it, and he's the one that helped the City. He disbursed checks after the ruffle with Royal Oak Township. Remember Royal Oak Township moving in on us and taking over City Hall. And our employees did not get along with Royal Oak Township employees. At the same time we had to more or less train them in government and things really got tight when Don came in as manager. And John and the Council threatened to move the whole City employee over into a storefront and charge back the township for the rent. So they moved out on a Saturday. They even took the water fountains with them when they left.

Michrina: Problems that we had trying to get the first incorporation vote. We had some friends in the police department. Now when we were campaigning for the incorporation we had signs made up on Tick. We didn't have anybody but we had...we begged a little money from different people. But what strikes me is...the funniest part was we had a silk-screen sign, red and black. It said, "Vote Yes for Incorporation in the City of Madison Heights."

And...well...things were torn down. The signs were torn down, there were other signs put up right on top of our signs. And finally we put the signs up with ladders and then got rakes and raked them off. And then I believe it was George Horkey's idea that we...that they would leave the signs up but there was, "Vote Yes for Incorporation of City of Madison Heights." George had stickers made up of "No", N-O, and he...they plastered them right over the "Yes". But those signs never got to see the day of light because as soon as...as soon as the police department saw somebody out working on our signs, we'd get a call. We'd get a telephone call saying, "Hey, they're out." So by 5:00 in the morning again we were out there putting signs back up or taking off the "No." This was the funny part. This is what a lot of people don't know about the former Board of Supervisors, I mean the Township Board, that they were very, very, very devious in their methods of trying to...

Edwards: They were clever.

Michrina: And also there was Eagler, Eagler Printing, you remember?

Edwards: Yeah.

Michrina: He put out a little paper, just about the size of this two sheets. And George Horkey owned that. I mean that was his. He had his free advertising against the City every week. Every week that this came out he had a big article, a long, full-page article. That's about all that was in the thing other than a little advertising. And he had his free advertising. He was a good writer. He was smart and he would try to get the people to understand that it would cost too much for City government, our taxes would go sky-high and things of that sort. So he would always say, "Vote No, it isn't the right time."

Edwards: Then we had the problem of annexation by Hazel Park. They wanted to help us. The friendly City.

Michrina: Hazel Park wanted to annex the south portion of Madison Heights or the township at that time. Because that's where the tax base was. There was nothing north of 12 Mile to speak of. All of the people lived in the south end.

Davis: Well, I attended a lot of meetings on 8 Mile Road there where Hazel Park and the township was trying to incorporate the whole thing into one. But that never did work out.

Deller: Well, was that...

Davis: One thing I remember on our election, with the Council's permission, I went to Pontiac and hired the Sheriff's Department to have a man at our polling booths because we didn't trust our Police Department, our official, you know, the township's officials at all. And I was there when Mrs. Bradford come in, gonna challenge votes and disrupt the election. And when I had this fellow from the Sheriff's Department in uniform, I says, "Either you tell them to get out of here or we're gonna lock them up." He says, "Whatever you say." And that was it. They walked out. And that kinda killed that part of it but they would have taken over.

Young: Did they have an election? I wasn't aware of that.

Davis: Oh yeah.

Edwards: No, that was our first Charter. When the first incorporation election we had the Sheriff's Department there.

Davis: We've even had, in them days, we had them swearing in new voters on one end of the line and voting on the other, which is as illegal as anything there was. We knew they was, you know, things like that that they done that wasn't right at all.

Deller: Because they were...they weren't cutting off registration before.

Davis: Yeah, but I've done that under the...

Young: I think Horkey knew every trick in the book.

Edwards: Yes, he did.

Deller: Well, now, you mention the annexation that had been proposed by Hazel Park. Was that the principle reason that the Civic Association was formed or were there other reasons that people could see for incorporating?

Michrina: No, that came long, long after we had our Civic Association.

Deller: I see. That was...

Michrina: That was one of their methods of saying to the south end of the...these people, "We don't want to be a part of Hazel Park, so let's just stay as we are."

Deller: Oh, I see. Remain townships.

Edwards: The Civic Association was formed because of the road conditions. We lived for years without telephones. We couldn't get telephones. There were no

services and yet our tax dollars were going to support a separate police and fire department in Royal Oak Township and we weren't realizing any benefit.

Davis: Wasn't it 82, 13? They paid about 13 and we paid 82.

Edwards: We paid 84.7 and they paid...yeah.

Davis: Well, anyway, we was paying the majority.

Edwards: So, anyway that's why we formed. Remember?

Young: They had as many police and firemen on 8 Mile Road as we did here.

Edwards: They had more.

Young: They had more?

Edwards: They had more. They had one or two more than we did. And it was just constant. And the only one benefiting was our Township Treasurer when he held kangaroo court over there at night. One of the interesting things, when you mentioned treasurer, we had a treasurer, we didn't have a treasurer. That was one of the things when Don Smith came in, he set up by exam. And one of the ones that wanted to be treasurer and took the exam was our ex-Senator, Bill S. Huffman. And Bill Huffman could not pass the treasurer's exam, so he never received the job. But he goes on to be Councilman, Mayor, State Representative, Senator and ends up Head of Appropriations for the State. I always thought that was amusing.

Davis: He's got a better job than that then.

Edwards: Right. But he could not pass the Michigan Municipal League exam.

Deller. Well, now, then, so that it was one of the articles that we had preserved by a member of the Historical Commission is a picture of the....one of the children trying to jump over a big mud puddle on one of the roads in the spring here in the City. At the time that you voted for incorporation, what roads were paved in the City or what was to become the City?

All: John R at 11 Mile.

Young: It was just...John R was just a two-lane highway though.

Deller: And 11 Mile.

Edwards: 11 Mile.

Michrina: 11 Mile and 12.

Deller: 10 Mile wasn't paved.

Michrina: 12 Mile was.

Deller: 12 Mile.

Michrina: And 10 Mile.

Young: They were all two-lane highways.

Edwards: With deep ditches.

Deller: On either side?

Edwards: On either side.

Michrina: The south end, especially south of 11 Mile, every spring was a quagmire. The frost would go out and the people would have to park on John R and walk all the way, almost to Dequindre to get home and...so this was one of the things that we'd promised when we were trying to incorporate was that we would get them out of the mud. We'd pave streets. We'd give them water. We'd give them sewer. So in the first two years that we were a City, we paved up to...no...we paved the residential streets up to Lincoln...up to Lincoln. From 10 Mile to Lincoln and we put in sewers. We...I think we separated sewers at that time to...and storm from the sanitary. And...we found that during the time that the water and sewers were constructed on John R that they even found where a main...a water main was put right through a sanitary sewer. And so we put...we paved these residential streets down there, gave them good water supply and sewer and for that the township, the old township funds, said, "See, I told you." Because then it was a necessity. "We told you it was gonna cost you a lot of money. So there you are, now you've got big bills to pay." And so we, the whole gang of us got thrown out of office after two years because the township was...

Young: Three years, wasn't it?

Michrina: 2½ years actually.

Edwards: 2½ actually.

Michrina: So we were all thrown out of office. And the following two years the township bunch was in there. And they threw you out of office, Harry, and we...

Davis: And Horkey resigned.

Michrina: Well, but we...they didn't do one single thing in the next two years. The following two years was just dead. Nothing happened in the City because

they didn't want to...they didn't want to burden the people. And people wanted it. But they...people are funny. They don't want to pay if they don't have to, really. I went around; I knew that this was one of my...was one of my arguments whenever I went door to door campaigning to become councilman again was "Would you trade your street if I gave you back your money?" "Hell, no." So the following time the township bunch was thrown out of office after their two-year term and the, of course, George Horkey...

Davis: Resigned.

Michrina: Yeah.

Deller: When did he resign?

Davis: While he was in office.

Michrina: Yeah.

Young: He didn't resign, he was just out of office, wasn't he?

All: No. He resigned.

Young: In the meantime, Dick Marshall was appointed.

Edwards: No, City Manager.

Michrina: Yeah, he was a friend of the township's in a way.

Young: Well, he told me he never knew these fellows, that they knew of him in Oak Park and they asked him to come in as City Manager.

Michrina: Yes, and I thought, "Uh oh."

Young: He was a super City Manager.

Michrina: He was real super.

Edwards: He was the best we ever had.

Michrina: He was a politician over there.

Young: He was just Mayor.

Edwards: He was Mayor.

Michrina: He was Mayor in Oak Park and I said whenever the Township Board or the City Council, the Township City Council appointed him, I said, "Uh oh, they

have him in their pocket.” So because he was a politician and he would just work it as a politician.

Young: That wasn’t so, though.

Michrina: No, he was actually the best man that we’ve ever had.

Young: That’s right.

Deller: He’s been one of...he was one of the ones who’s stayed the longest too, was he not?

All: Yes.

Deller: Because, I remember, he came in here into the Library.

Young: Were you in here?

Deller: Well, no. He had retired and he used to make an annual trip from Florida to Northern Michigan and he would use 75 and when he’d get to Madison Heights he’d come off and he’d stop and say hello at City Hall and he’d come over there to the Library because Mrs. St. Amour used to provide him with a box of paper bags that had been donated at the back door and she’d let him take them out the front door and on his way south to Florida he’d drop the box off again and go down to Florida. But...so...I got to meet him maybe once or twice just after I was hired here, so I was hired like in ’79 and I...he stopped in maybe two or three times and then, I think, he’s since died, I think.

Edwards: Yes.

Young: He was one Manager that nobody ever said a word against. Everybody thought he was a super person. They may not have liked everything he did but they didn’t criticize him for it.

Michrina: No, he was very fair and he was kind of intelligent.

Young: Oh, very intelligent. He was an attorney, you know, but he never practiced law.

Michrina: He moved to Canada.

Young: No, he had a cottage up there. He was out in Florida.

Michrina: Oh.

Young: But he had some family problems and, I guess, between his family problems, that is, not between him and his family.

Deller: So then he came...he must have been hired then at what point? He was hired when the people, the second Council, right. So he would have come on sometime in, like, '58.

Michrina: Yeah.

Deller: But then did you...when they had the election then for the third Council, were you able then to resume...was the new Council able then to resume water and sewer and street activity?

Michrina: Yes, we progressed then and while Dick Marshall was in there we purchased this property for nothing.

Deller: For nothing?

Edwards: Practically.

Young: Wasn't Bill Huffman in office then?

Michrina: Yes.

Young: He was Mayor then.

Michrina: No.

Edwards: No, he was just on the Council when the property was purchased.

Deller: Well, now, wasn't it sometime around...I'm not sure of the dates. It was some time, wasn't it, in '56 or '57 that they developed the shopping center at 12 Mile and John R? Wasn't it some time in there where Hudson's opened that?

Michrina: The George Horkey farm, his family farm.

Edwards: The post office.

Michrina: That's when he moved...that's when he moved down to...

Young: Around Monroe, wasn't it?

Michrina: Yeah, down to Dundee. I guess he's still farming there.

Young: He's still there.

Edwards: Yes, he's still there.

Davis: He'd buy a bag of potatoes once in a while at Horkey's.

Deller: Oh really.

Davis: Yeah.

Deller: Oh, so he's still into that.

Michrina: But he used to conduct his business out in the field on a tractor on his farm here when he was Supervisor. Anybody wanted to see him had to go out in the field to see him.

Deller: Because their Supervisor's out there on the tractor.

Young: Well, that's the way you do it with most supervisors out in the rural areas.

Edwards: And he'd conduct the township's meeting. He would always go first and then the rest would know how to vote. And every now and then Tom Houston wouldn't be paying attention; he'd say, "What'd you vote, George?" Remember those days? George always voted first.

Michrina: George voted first and then he set the pattern for the rest of them and they all followed because George, I suppose he could have, he could've put anybody in office that he wanted to because at that time we weren't very wise on campaigning. We learned an awful lot.

Young: From George.

Edwards: Right. From George.

Young: You know, he...to look at the man and talk to him he looked such an insignificant person. You'd never realize that the man had the intelligence and the power that he had.

Michrina: There were...I was on the Board of Review, he made the mistake of putting me there, and I took liberty that I had no right taking because I checked to find who was assessed at what and I found a number of properties that were never on the tax roll...never on the tax roll. And they were all good supporters of George Horkey. And I took the liberty of changing assessments on people that were way down to nothing. And I thought I had that power, see, and George didn't tell me any different so I changed the assessments on many parcels that were all friends of George's that...

Young: What did he have, a 40 acre farm here?

Michrina: He had a 40 acre farm, yeah, right around the corner there. It wasn't all his, it belonged to his sister...

Deller: And different members of the family.

Michrina: But that was one of the first pieces of property that went for a good price. I think it went for \$8000.00 an acre at that time.

Deller: In those days that would've been, yeah, really terrific.

Michrina: I guess he was just glad to get out of the City. Because he was being outnumbered already. And...so...I'm not sorry that we incorporated because I feel sure that this would've been the first integrated in Michigan had we not because we had the two police and fire departments that was under Civil Service and they were getting a little edgy. They wanted to be, when they were promoted, it would go according to seniority. They could be switched from West 8 Mile over to the fire department here, sleep here, eat here. The next step was "Why can't I live here?"

Young: They had some colored men on the Civil Service Commission, didn't they?

Edwards: Yes, and my neighbor, Bob Skidmore, was Police Chief over in Royal Oak Township. Frank Richardson was Chief here and he was Chief over in Royal Oak. But, you know, you never did keep your campaign promise to me, John.

Michrina: Oh.

Edwards: I lived on Greig for 38 years and it's never been paved.

Michrina: We were the first ones that signed the petitions.

Young: You lived on Greig too, didn't you?

Davis: No, I lived on Wolverine, off of Greig, and it hasn't been paved today.

Edwards: It's never been paved. No, they never kept their campaign promises.

Young: Do you still live on Greig?

Edwards: No, I'm in an apartment over on John R. It's been a year now.

Deller: Well, I don't want to overdo our first experiment here for the Historical Commission on taping what people remember. I thank you all for coming today. And I know it was on the strength of Harry's name and stature that you three agreed to come.

Edwards: Not really. Not really.

Deller: And I thank you for coming and sharing what you remember because you each had an important roll to play in the beginning for the City and I hope that we'll be able to do more of these as time goes on. Perhaps even putting

some on videotape because I think that people like to be able to see who those people were that did these neat things. So thank you for coming today. I really appreciate you're taking the time to do this for us.

Young: Don't we get paid?

Deller: As soon as Greig gets paved we'll think about it.

Davis: You know, you can't afford it now. I could've got it paved for \$300. Do you know what it is now to pave my street? 12,000 bucks.

Deller: So thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW