

ANN EDWARDS

Interview by Bill Miles
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TOPICS:

Land Development
Madison Civic Association
Incorporation of Madison Heights
Municipal Politics

Transcription by John W. Weigel
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Q: Good evening. My name is Bill Miles, and I'm the city librarian for Madison Heights. Today is September 28th, 198...89. The time is 8:45. This evening we are going to interview Ann Edwards, a member of the Madison Heights Historical Commission. Madison Heights history is filled with strong, capable women. Mrs. Edwards is one of these individuals. Ann, the first question for this evening would be for you to please state your name and present address for the interview.

A: My name is Ann Edwards and I live in the Madison Park Apartments in Madison Heights, Michigan.

Q: Ann, according to our research, you were married without children. Please give us the name of your husband for the record.

A: My husband was Charles B. Edwards.

Q: Ann, you were selected as an interviewee as a result of your involvement in the early formation of Madison Heights. How long have you lived in Madison Heights and why did you move here originally?

A: I moved here in 1946 after I married Mr. Edwards. We purchased a half-acre property south of Eleven Mile Road on Ridge Avenue and built a home there.

Q: Okay. Umm...we were originally a part of a portion of south Oakland County called Royal Oak Township. What area did Royal Oak Township cover?

A: Royal Oak Township covered what is presently known as Madison Heights. It included six acres in the Ten Mile-Greenfield area and then the...what is now known as Royal Oak Township, the Eight Mile-Wyoming area. We were geographically separated, but we were all Royal Oak Township.

Q: So you were geographically separated.

A: Mmhmm.

Q: Okay. Umm...what was it like living in Royal Oak Township before incorporation? In particular, what were the services like? The roads? Especially in this portion that we call Madison Heights.

A: The services were nil. And the roads were horrible. We never knew what it was to park on our roads in the spring or wintertime. We had to park up on Dequindre and walking into our homes. In the spring you had flooding. You had wide-open ditches on both sides of the road. And there never really was any road service. As we start to incorporate, the township officials did hire a garbage service. They contracted for it and we had once-a-week garbage that we had to pay for it ourselves, by the way. And there was no water. There was water south of Eleven, but in the Twelve Mile Road area, there wasn't any water. They used to have to carry the water in. And we lived here, it was like almost '48, from '46 to

'48 before we had a telephone. We didn't have gas. We had to have oil furnaces. It wasn't the most pleasant of surroundings.

Q: Now you indicated originally that the two sections were separated.

A: Yes.

Q: Did the southern section fare any better as far as services than the northern section?

A: Well, the northern section, they were mostly homes...er...you could say even shacks, and businesses. The constituencies were black people. They were brought up here during the war. They worked at factories and they had this community. And it was your typical black community. The Ten Mile Road-Greenfield area was owned by a doctor, a Dr. McDonald. And he had visions of making a fortune on this small portion. And then we had our area. The problem was, because of the makeup of the West Eight Mile Road section, we spent ninety percent of our funds for police protection over there, and only ten percent in our area. We had to have two police forces. We had eighteen policemen in our Madison Heights area, and twenty-two over in the Eight Mile-Wyoming area. We had two police chiefs. We had Bob Richardson in our area. We had Robert Skidmore, who was a white man, over in the black area. So it really was very difficult and very costly to keep that portion up.

Q: Okay. So, really, why was the Madison Heights Civic Association established? You couldn't answer the question.

A: Well, too, we had felt by incorporating we could provide services.

Q: Okay.

A: We could give them the roads they wanted. We could bring in water into the portions that didn't have water. And...um...services that would cost less than carrying the two areas as one. And we would attend township meetings every Mon...every week prob'ly, and had...um...all these complaints. And the supervisors of the township say, "Well, it isn't time yet. It isn't time yet." We felt it was time.

Q: And your...

A: Something had to be done.

Q: You attended as members of the Madison Civic Association.

A: No, we attended first as just...

Q: Citizens.

A: ...citizens.

Q: Okay.

A: And then the more we waited and the angrier we became, a group got together with Darrel Davis, John Michrina...of course, it was Mr. and Mrs. Davis, and Mr. and Mrs. Michrina, Mr. and Mrs. Krenn, my husband and I, and Virginia Solberg and her husband. And we decided we were going to form an association and we get people interested, and our home was the focal point for all the meetings of the association.

Q: I think it's kinda interesting that we had the name Madison in the name of the association even before we the name of the city Madison Heights. You actually named yourselves after the Madison School District.

A: Well, the name was brought in years ago by LeRoy Ainsley when he was gunning for starting a corporation, or even a village. But he became one of the cohorts of George Horkey and decided he wasn't interested anymore in incorporation.

Q: Okay.

A: But he had the name originally.

Q: What part did you play in the Madison Civic Association and who were some of its members...you answered that already. What support did you receive from Royal Oak Township officials when you discussed the Association's desire to incorporate north Royal Oak Township and become a city?

A: Well, the members of Royal Oak Township, the individuals, were very charming people but they were not an educated people. They were politically minded, so we thought it would only be fair...we went to the NAACP and approached them, and told them of our plans of what we were going to do in our section. And ask them to start finding leaders in that community and for them to incorporate at the same time. Well, our reply from the NAACP was there was nobody over there that could be a leader. I guess it's quite evident; look at Royal Oak Township today, yeah. Yeah.

Q: Okay, while your efforts were being made to incorporate, were other cities interested in the area known as Madison Heights?

A: They were. And this is one of the reasons why we were interested in hastening this project, because we had to worry about Hazel Park. Hazel Park was always wanting to annex our portion. Hazel Park didn't have a tax base or the potential for growth that we had. And the Dr. Bower, do you remember, Darrel?

D: [Inaudible] Paultier.

A: Yeah, and Paultier. They were always calling our group in—the men from our group--and discussing annexation with them. And we had decided we were better off to go on our own. We didn't need Hazel Park either. They couldn't offer us anything, so...

Q: Just out of curiosity, do you feel that if you would have gone together you would have made a larger city and it would have made you a little stronger, or not?

A: No. We always felt that, possibly out of snobbery, we had the greatest potential over here, even among the individuals, the residents.

Q: Which is obvious even today.

A: Yes. Mmhmm.

Q: Okay. What were the steps that had to be taken to incorporate the present area of Madison Heights? We've talked about incorporation. What did you actually have to do to go through or to get ready for this process of incorporation?

A: Well, we had to circulate petitions and call for an election for incorporation at the same time you elect your charter commission. Southfield was incorporating at the same time, and they were holding a meeting, so my husband and I went over to Southfield to listen to what they had to say about incorporation. And there we listened to Harry Young, who was the attorney for the group. And after the meeting I went up and I asked him if he would be interested in coming to a meeting at our home and we would have the members of the Association there, and possibly assisting us in going through this incorporation. So he came. He agreed, he came to the house and he looked at the petitions we started to circulate, and he said "This will never do. You have to have a map of the area you're going to incorporate." So he gave us some advice, and then we said, "What do you charge?" And we said...he said, "We'll do it this way. If you win the incorporation I would like the City Attorney. So that's the deal we cut. If we won incorporation, he would be City Attorney. However, he would guide us all through all the elections, the writing of the charter and incorporation of the city. So we started to circulate petitions and they go up to the Board of Supervisors. And they were approved one meeting and then disapproved the next meeting because in the meantime the Township Supervisors and officials weren't sitting back and just accepting all this. They were doing their own little maneuvering. And George Horkey gave property to the school district of Royal Oak where Mark Twain school is, and that changed. That changed the map of the city of Madison Heights. So our petitions were null and void and we had to re-circulate petitions, which we did. And they were approved by—at that time was the Board of Supervisors, now County Commissioners—and we went forward with an election. It was a wild election. I mean people had very strong feelings. You know, my next-door neighbor was Robert Skidmore, the police chief of Royal Oak Township and no way was he...did he want us to incorporate. We had...um.. signs that we would go out and put up, "Vote Yes for Incorporation." And then about three o'clock in the morning, get a call from the police

department saying they've slapped "No" signs over our "Yes" signs. So then we'd go out and put 'em up again. You know, this...it was a very, very active campaign. It really was. And we were successful. We were successful in bringing incorporation and electing a nine-charter member commission. The members were Darrel Davis, John Michrina, Charles Edwards, Ted Krenn, two very, very adamant labor people--Earl Anderson and Stan Weiss--Virginia Solberg, Willie Pierce. Willie Pierce was a lovable person. He had the gas station at the corner of Greig and John R. A big, huge man. And everybody liked Willie. He was elected. And...who was the other...oh, George Sargeant. George lived on Tawas and he had all the interests of all the people north of Twelve Mile Road. And he was just a good individual. And that was our original charter members. Ted Krenn was elected chairman of the charter commission, Virginia Solberg secretary. Virginia Solberg didn't have any secretarial skills. I was secretary of the C...Civic Association, so I was volunteered to be secretary of the charter commission. This is all volunteer. Everything is volunteer here. Nobody received a dime.

Q: Weren't you the first active City Clerk?

A: That's after we incorporated...

Q: Okay.

A: ...and were on the charter commission. Yeah.

Q: Okay.

A: So...um... Harry Young decided to use the charter of city of Lathrup as our model. And at that time I was employed for a company on East Jefferson. And every day on the lunch hour I went downtown to the First National building where he was and took the dictation of what...cause this me...commission met every night that...to do...get everything ready for the commission meeting. That was day after day. And the charter met...our charter group met. They didn't agree. Many, many words exchanged. The two labor people, they wanted to make everything partisan and the other members wanted to be a more universal group, more to the interests of the residents, not just certain groups. So we went round and round, didn't we Darrell? Um...Young felt that expediency was of the utmost and it was very important. We had two years to write a charter, but he felt it was very important to do it in six months or less. So we...we met with various groups. We met with the police and fire. We met with the township authorities. To get a feeling of what people really wanted in this charter. And we thought we ra...we wrote a good charter. Umm...we had Don Smith, who was from the Municipal League as consultant. He had helped other cities on charters. And we...we were having a problem with Willie Pierce and Earl Anderson and Stanley Weiss. They didn't like the completed charter. And the police did not like the completed charter. The group had thought that having a civil service status would be better than having them come un...under Act 78, the state act. And the police and fire felt "No", that they did not want politicians interfering with their

departments. So...um...the first election was held...well, the first election was January 17th, when the commission was elected. In June we held an election and the charter was defeated. Umm...I don't want to backtrack. The expediency of this thing is when they saw they were having problems with the...the police and Act 78, Young decided he wanted the charter commission to close and he wanted that charter up to the governor immediately. So I spent a Saturday and a Sunday typing the city charter, six copies on a manual typewriter, and we got it up to Governor Williams on Monday. So [laughter] I never forgot that weekend, believe me. So the first charter was defeated.

? [Question from unidentified woman] What year was this?

A: 1955. And then they rewrote the charter. They compromised. They put in Act 78 for the police and fire. They s...did not accept partisan elections. They insisted on nonpartisan elections. And the second charter, we worked hard. It was accepted. Darrel'll tell you he...it was such a hot argument that he had the deputy sheriffs out at the precinct. The first ballots were all written ballots, paper ballots. The polls opened at seven, and it was seven-thirty the next morning when we finished counting ballots. When they found out that the charter had been accepted and we were then officially a city, none of the township officials showed up the next day and none of the township employees. They were told they had to stay home because there was no t...township anymore except over on West Eight Mile.

Q: Where was the original township building?

A: On John R.

Q: That is where now? Gateway?

A: Y...no, it's next to Gateway. It's where the Chaldaean Club is now.

Q: Oh, okay.

A: That was the original.

Q: So no one showed up for work at that building.

A: Uh uh. Nope.

Q: They were what? Afraid?

A: Well, they were told that they didn't have jobs.

Q: Oh, I see.

A: So here we are, you know, as green as grass. And it...we don't have...through the election, we had run Lloyd Ferguson as mayor. We had a mayor. We had

councilmen. But we didn't have any employees. Every asset we had was in control of West Eight Mile community. We didn't have bank accounts. We didn't have anything.

Q: That was part of what you had to do after incorporation. They had to divide the assets, but they had...what...two years to do it?

A: Yes.

Q: So they hung onto our assets.

A: Right.

Q: And made us wait.

A: So...um...John Michrina was...the group kept meeting, the council, every night and...to decide where they were going, what they were going to do and who they would hire as employees. We will always have a warm feeling for Hank Shonka. He was our first city employee, and he's the one that came out and said, "I will run your DPW." Were we grateful to see him. Of course the police and fire stayed, you know. Another thing is, we could not use township voting methods. We had to go out door to door and re-register everybody in Madison Heights.

?: [Unidentified woman] [Inaudible].

A: Yeah, we went door to door, and then I would come home and type all the things. 'Cause I had a job. I mean, you know, this is just a hobby. [Laughter].

?: [Unidentified woman] Only eight hours a day.

A: Right. But, you know, the support we had. I mean, you can't believe...like Helen was out. Lois was out. People did this for us and they were so enthusiastic.

Q: The Helen you mention is Helen Hennesy and Lois Myers.

A: Right. Right. And it was a...it was fun time.

?: [Inaudible] lots of it [inaudible].

A: It was busy. Oh yeah.

Q: Well you mentioned something about all the help that you got. You not only had help from people, you had help from businesses.

A: Oh yeah.

Q: Madison Heights has always been a business-oriented community.

A: Financially we had the backing of Eleven Mile Collision, John R Lumber, Mike Hrzina's Motomatic. City Bank was really great. They were just coming into this area. And when we formed this Association and had to turn out literature and everything, they gave us a store, a vacant store, on John R, where George's One Stop is now? They gave us that store, unlimited use, mimeograph machines. And we used it. They were really great supporters of ours. So we were very fortunate there.

?: [Unidentified woman] Is that City National Bank?.

A: Mmhmm.

?: [Unidentified woman] Yeah. [Inaudible] and Comerica.

A: Yeah.

?: [Unidentified man] [Inaudible] city payroll [inaudible].

A: Well, they ga...they guaranteed the loan. Yeah. What happened too is, I know Horkey and his crowd [inaudible] got great satisfaction out of this. The first Monday morning, down John R came all these cars, and all Royal Oak Township people marched into our city hall and took it over. And there wasn't anything we could do.

Q: Because they held the assets.

A: They held the assets. You know. And so in the meantime, we hired--when I say "we", I mean the council and the mayor--hired Don Smith, who had assisted in the incorporation, as City Manager. Don was a very brilliant young man, but...um...his downfall was, I think, lack of experience with politicians. You know, he thought he could...if somebody disagreed, he thought he could force his way through and you can't do that. There's compromise. With Don it was really great. And then, of course, a lot of people, including Civic Association members and including Bill Huffman, thought they should have jobs with the city. And one of the jobs Bill wanted was city treasurer. Bill's a very fine young man. He comes from Kentucky. He's working for Pontiac Motor and he had umpteen million acquaintances in town and he did help us a lot, but no way can you turn over a position like that. So Don came out with every position had to be filled by test. He used the Michigan Municipal League test and that's how everybody received their promotions or jobs. And...um... we hired Myrtle Chamberlain as clerk. Prior to this period, there wasn't any clerk in city hall, so I...what I would do is after hours drop in and do their business letters and take all the minutes at the council meetings and do them. Like I said it was a hobby. [Laughter].

?: [Unidentified woman] [Inaudible] five people.

A: Yeah. So I really welcomed Don Smith with open arms. In the interim, before Don Smith was hired, also, city employees had to be paid. And we had no funds.

So Harry Young and I would go over on a Monday night to Royal Oak Township to a council meeting and then be put on the agenda to have to beg for money to bring back. You know, and here we are, the two really shone out in the audience. You could tell that, you know. [Laughter]. Anyway, Elwood Dickinson's supervisor then and he was a charming gentleman.

?: [Inaudible].

A: Yeah, he was a very charming gentleman. And we did get the money every week but it...it, you know, got to be a bit much. When they come over and took over the township hall...or city hall, they weren't very cooperative. First of all, they didn't know anything about government. And then they just took over and they were very nasty to our employees. They were dragging their feet on this splitting of the assets. It finally came down to where we officially receive eighty-five percent and they receive fifteen percent. But they were getting so obnoxious that Don Smith petitioned the council if he could go out and rent a building, 'cause he could not work with these people. They...they took over the typewriters, they took everything over. And...um...and then that charged Royal Oak Township for this. They...when they got wind of that, they were very, very upset. So they moved out on a Saturday morning. They took everything with 'em, including the water bottles off the walls [laughter] their walls. So we went out and purchased... the councilmen all purchased office equipment and started up officially that time.

Q: Ann, who was handling the...the division of the assets? Was that Harry Young? Was he working on that?

A: He was working on that but the state handles it.

Q: Handles it. Okay.

A: Yeah. Yeah. Harry Young did a...a great thing for Madison Heights. He hired Jim Salle as the first City Engineer. Jim was very brilliant and he is the one that started setting up the planning, the Fourteen Mile Road industrial area. Putting in roads. They put roads in the south end 'cause it was the only way people could even get to their houses. And...um...putting in sewers and ditches. He really did a brilliant job. He was worth everything. He...people were good to us too. They...um...didn't overcharge us. They all seemed to be...take delight in helping us that they really worked for [inaudible].

Q: Creating a community.

A: Mmhmm. Really. So...

Q: Members on the council had charge over different departments, some of them, didn't they? Because there were people...there weren't department heads over some of the departments and they...

A: No...um...Darrel was in charge of police and fire because he has a rapport with that group. And he knew what was going on. And he knew what their complaints were, and he handled that. Then we had George Sargeant, whose big thing was roads. George was a wonderful man. People took advantage of him. If they have your phone numbers, you know and you're a politician, they will call you at all hours. George would get calls at two in the morning that somebody was stuck on their road and he would get up, get a wheelbarrow, fill it full of material and personally take it down to this person and fill in the road. He was a...really great. John Michrina was...he was an employee. He was the first acting city manager, but he had the most time to spend around town. And he more or less oversaw businesses and things like that. So...uh...

Q: Once again everybody just pitched in.

A: Right.

Q: To get things done.

A: Right.

Q: Now you were telling me that we were actually a city with improvements and everything in...how...what? A year?

A: A year and a half.

Q: We had water and...

A: They gave the...

Q: ...streets...

A: Right. They g...they brought in water. They worked through the builders. The builders assisted them in bringing in water north of the Twelve Mile. You had a [Spoon and Shucken?] up there and the Karam brothers, and they give the first subs and they were the ones that actually paid for it...

Q: Mmhmm.

A: ...then the city paid them back.

Q: Talk about the "City of Progress."

A: Yeah. The only thing is, you give people sewers, you give 'em roads, you give them water, but you give them assessments though. And this is something that people didn't think about. They thought all these things are gonna come because you said "incorporation." And that's what defeated the first council, why they weren't re-elected. Yeah.

D: You spent a lot of time down in Detroit Waterwor...works just [inaudible] Livernois.

A: Mmhmm.

D: [Inaudible] car [inaudible] waterline [inaudible].

A: Right.

D: [Inaudible].

Q: Darrel, that was...you did that in that first year?

D: Yeah.

A: Yeah. All that.

Q: Okay.

A: Those people worked hard. They really did. They did a tremendous job.

D: We had people coming from New York on this industrial deal over here at Dequindre and Thirteen Mile, Fourteen Mile...

A: Fourteen.

D: Yeah, and [inaudible] this city this...on this deal alone, where all those companies are today, in their own individual business places.

Q: I think it's interesting too that this was always a working-class community, but you didn't have...you were trying not to write a charter that was partisan. You wanted to keep politics out of the charter.

D: [Inaudible] you know, I've been through these union [inaudible] rackets and things like that, and I didn't want to see anything but non-partisan government...

Q: Clean government.

D: That's right. I vote...I vote even today I vote for a Democrat or a Republican. I vote for the man, I don't vote for the...I never did believe in that.

Q: That really is...that's...that really is...

D: [Inaudible] what we're going through now is no different than...than two people gettin' a divorce. They fight like the dickens and each of 'em ends up with a little bit.

Q: Mmhmm.

D: That's all it is. [Inaudible]...

Q: So like you said, this...this community held promise right from the beginning.

A: It...I also give credit to Harry Young, and who he brought in.

Q: Mmhmm.

A: You know, he brought in top no...notch people, and he had the ins with business people. So he could bring in people that had visions of what the Fourteen Mile Road could be like.

Q: Mmhmm.

A: And also to get people interested in investing.

D: Wasn't it that time that he was city attorney for Redford [inaudible]

A: Yes. Yes. Mmhmm.

D: [Inaudible] Well he had the experience, you know.

Q: Now that you're mentioning some...some people like Harry Young, just off the top of your head...just a few things...I'm...I'm gonna give you some names. Can you just...just talk about some anecdotes or maybe some information about each one of the people? Most of the people were on the original charter commission and on the city council, so you're...you're familiar with all of them. Earl M. Anderson. What can you tell us about Earl?

A: Well, Earl was labor. UAW. Very, very adamant partisan Democrat. Umm...intelligent, but he had tunnel vision. I...he just w....just his idea of what he thought the city should be and he would never compromise. And he was rough and tough. I mean some of those charter meetings really got...really got quite wild at times. And Darrel, you know, he...he had to pack his gun, because you never knew what was gonna happen, especially with Earl Anderson. Earl was a good person. He had great potential, but he was quite difficult, wasn't he?

D: [Inaudible] and I didn't want to see that happen around here [inaudible] and that's about all [inaudible] push.

A: Yeah. And Earl was the type, too, he didn't care if you were male or female. If he threatened to knock you down, he was going to knock you down.

Q: Okay, you were talkin' about Darrel Davis. A couple of things about Darrel Davis.

A: Well, Darrel has always been a very sincere person. He...he owned a cleaner's. He was a businessman throughout the years. He's always been a person of great integrity. And he really fights for the city. Especially, like I said, he has this affinity with the police and fire department. And he really goes to bat for them.

Q: [Inaudible] for the state.

A: For the state.

Q: Yeah.

A: Mmhmm.

Q: Theodore Krenn.

A: Well, Ted lived on Alger. He w...he worked for Dodge Motor. He...he was very, very good. He was sick of the conditions of the Royal Oak Township. He wanted improvements and he had visions of going on to other political aspects of the city.

Q: Did he...did he go on?

A: He became mayor and then he didn't run for re-election after that.

Q: Okay.

A: In fact he left the city.

Q: John B. Michrina.

A: John too lived above the Twelve Mile Road. He lived on Girard. And it was...we all had the same complaints that...you know, there were so many things wrong that we wanted to right. And John was another feisty little one. But he really, really had this vision of what the city was going to be like and worked towards it.

Q: Willie Pierce. You mentioned Willie B. Pierce.

A: Yes. Willie was a...a huge, huge person and he was of southern extraction. He had the gas station at Greig and John R. He was a very community-minded person and he did a lot of charity work.

Q: Had a lot of power too, didn't he?

A: Mmhmm. He did. He controlled the southern vote, wouldn't you say? Yeah.

Q: George Sargeant.

A: Oh, George Sargeant. Like I said, he was a painter by trade and he too was just another interested citizen. But he was so sincere. You know, he really did what he set out to do and he was very good.

Q: Now we come to Virginia Solberg.

A: Virginia is a very...was a very strong person. She had very definite ideas. She worked nepotism overtime. I mean she took care of her own. And she owned a restaurant at the corner of Greig with her husband. Art was very supportive of Virginia, but it definitely was Virginia's show. And she was very good and she loved politics. She really did. And she stayed with it 'til the bitter end.

Q: Stanley Weiss.

A: Stanley was Earl Anderson's cohort. And he's still out looking for a fight, [Laughter] to this day. He's a...another UAW...

Q: La...labor supporter.

A: ...man. Yes. And then too, these gentlemen were involved in the UAW when they were organizing. And they are listed in the records as communists, 'cause anybody that was in the UAW and did all this organizational bit, were listed as communists. And Stan is still out looking for a fight.

?: [Unidentified woman] I...I had a fight with him at the Center.

A: He never stops.

Q: Don B. Smith.

A: Don is a...was a very, very intelligent, capable young man. He was an only child. He thought he knew politics but he didn't. And what he did was try to split the first council in order to get his ideas over. And it backfired on him. We can't run a city that way.

Q: Madison Heights resident?

A: Well, no.

Q: Okay.

A: He became a Madison Heights resident.

Q: Okay.

A: That was...he moved into Madison Heights, but he came from the Chicago area.

Q: Okay. Another dynamic individual, Bill Huffman.

A: Bill, he's a charming Kentucky colonel. [Laughter]. One day, you know, there was a knock on the door and there was Bill Huffman. And he says, "I understand you have association and I'm interested." Blah blah blah. So we invited Bill in. And Bill is a trip. I mean he is an individual in his own right and he is very enthusiastic. And he too had a group of southerners that really...southern people that he knew and helped us. And he got out there and pounded doors. He...as I say, he wanted city treasurer but he didn't make it 'cause he didn't pass the test. But he continued on into council, mayor, and then my husband and I are responsible for his getting deeper into politics because we took him up to a Democratic convention in Grand Rapids, and Bill was in his glory. He s...he stayed up all night just talking to people and that's where he got vision for state rep was his goal. When Bill first ran for state rep, everybody...course, go back and think we were a lot younger in those days. He formed the Huffman Bells. And it was [inaudible] it would go out and that time there was still the Federal department store and the Kresge store at Eight Mile and Dequindre. And we would go up there with these stupid lampshade hats and, you know, "Huffman Bells" written on it. He would hire a horse and carriage to take us up there. And we would do these stupid things night after night. But this is the control Bill had. And to this day, I mean, we're all still friends and the women who are still alive are still part of the group, you know. He is very good. He always runs under the Democratic ticket but I doubt that he ever carried a card 'cause he does not really believe in partisan politics.

Q: And he always...he did a lot for the city. I know just from...

A: Oh yes.

Q: ...through the library, he was in part responsible for instituting the gift book program...

A: Mmhmm.

Q: ... in the library. And we've got so many books in the library with his name or the name of Art Selahowski...

A: Mmhmm.

Q: ...on the plate.

A: It's...

Q: Bill always gave something to someone, didn't he?

A: Right.

Q: Yeah.

A: See, that's where John Michrina and, well, Art Selahowski ended up, as aides to Bill Huffman, when he was up in Lansing. Bill never forgets his friends. He, you know, helped us get the Mobile Meal program going. [Inaudible] and I incorporated in 1970 and we started the Mobile Meal program. Virginia Solberg ran it. She was working for the federal government at that time and decided to run for mayor, and had to leave her job because of the Hatch Act. And she started working through the senior citizens' program. Well, there already was programs going for the area on aging and no way were we going to get financing. And Bill saw...and to this day the Madison Heights Mobile Meal program is a separate line item in the state budget. We don't go through the area [on?] agency. We just get this money every year to run that program, and we've got Bill Huffman to thank for that.

Q: George Horkey.

A: George was a farmer. [Laughter]. But a clever farmer. He was supervisor, and you talk about controlling that board. He controlled every individual on his township board. George was clever. He made a lot of money in this town, especially when Stephenson Highway went through. But George was set in his ways and even though originally, because we were the ones that were always at township meetings crying about something, he took us all in as friends. But he...he wasn't ready for incorporation and he would not give in. And he's a staunch politician and a clever politician. He really was. You have to hand it to him. Yeah.

Q: LeRoy Ainsley.

A: LeRoy was a friend of George Horkey. It used to be a joke at the township meetings. They're all sitting there, and the vote goes on. And LeRoy, you know what he's saying? George always voted first, which isn't according to Hoyle, but he did. And LeRoy would say, "I wasn't listening. Which way did you vote George?" And then that's the way LeRoy would vote, you know. LeRoy was a good person. He had vision. But he let George Horkey lead him around. He went on to be head of our planning commission, in recent years. But he's passed away since then.

Q: We have some members of the Madison Heights Historical Commission with us this evening. If any of you would like to ask Ann a question, if you'll give your name first, and then ask her. Does anyone have a question you would like to ask Ann?

IH: Yes, I have a question.

Q: Your name?

IH: Irene Hubbard.

Q: Okay.

IH: I'm a little confused about...when you're talking about the first election. Um...at this election, were you just voting on incorporating Madison Heights?

A: And electing nine members to a charter commission. You did both at the same time in the first election.

IH: And then those nine members, then they...they...how did they become the mayor and council?

A: No, they were elected to write the charter. They had two years to write the charter. And through Harry Young's guidance they did it in six months. The first charter was defeated. Then they rewrote the next one. First election...charter election...first incorporation charter commission was January of '55. The first charter election was June of '55. The second charter was December of '55. Then at that time too you had a slate of officers that ran for mayor and council. That was another thing that the opponents of the first charter...they didn't like the idea of a seven-member council. They wanted four council and a mayor, which would only give you five individuals.

Q: Does anyone have any other questions?

MJ: Yes. My name is Margene Johnston [Margene Scott at the time of this transcription]. And Ann, one of the questions that I don't think we asked you was once Madison Heights officially became a city, did you lose your interest in politics and if not, what new areas did you become involved in?

A: Well, my husband at that time...county supervisors were appointed, and he served on the county commission. And our interests strayed over there. Then when they had to run for re-election...when the county became a home rule county, they had to run for election. And they became county commissioners. He won the election for county commissioner. It's a standing joke in this town among the UAW...um...I am...we were associates, but I've never been, you know, definitely pro-labor. At the same time my husband decided to run for county commission, John DeWan, the PACman from the UAW, who just recently passed away, ran against him. And I have the reputation in Oakland County of being the only individual that defeated John DeWan in an election, because what happened is it took in Madison Heights and Royal Oak. Well, like I say, now this goes back to '69, so we were younger. And I went door to door in Royal Oak for him, and really it was the Royal Oak vote that swung it. Because labor on this end of town went for John DeWan but he won the election. He won two elections on the county charter. It was very, very, very interesting. And then he decided—he was a member of the county hospital board—that he would like to be administrator over there. So he resigned his commission, became administrator of the county hospital, and Jim Doyon was appointed county commissioner to serve out his term. And since then I've...still active with Madison Heights Democratic Club. I'm First Vice Chair of the Oakland County Democratic Party and the First Vice Chair of the Fourteenth District County Party.

MJ: And according to my records you also served on the Board of Review.

A: Yes.

MJ: You were elected to that.

A: Yes.

MJ: I also don't know if you officially mentioned the first council that we had in Madison Heights. Can you tell us who they were?

A: Darrel Davis, Ted Krenn, John Michrina, Virginia Solberg, George Sargeant and Charles Edwards.

MJ: And the mayor was Lloyd Ferguson.

A: Mmhmm. I can tell you an anecdote about that if you'd like. Lloyd Ferguson had a brother that was vice president of Norge Manufacturing. You know, and Lane Ferguson came up, and everybody thought he was the brother, Bill. Lloyd was a...a very nice person. A very kind person. A very serving person. And he too had a following in his town. But this is how he was chosen to run on our slate.

MJ: The only other question I wanted to ask you, if you do remember the population in 1955 in Madison Heights.

D: Sixteen thousand people.

MJ: Sixteen thou...

D: Sixteen thousand [colored?].

MJ: Oh, okay. I say I was...I figured the total vote in 1955 to incorporate was three thousand one hundred and thirty-one. So that's roughly twenty percent.

A: Mmhmm.

MJ: Which is much better than our voting record today.

A: [Laughter]. Very much. And then, you know, take in consideration Royal Oak and West Eight Mile committee couldn't vote in our incorporation, you know, and that was a big help too.

Q: Any further questions?

MJ: Could I say...may I ask you some personal...

A: Uh huh.

MJ: ...observations? First of all, if there was anything that you could change about Madison Heights, what would it be and what is the reason you've lived here almost all of your life?

A: First of all, I'm not one for change. I lived in my home thirty-eight years and then five years ago sold it and now I live here. I like the community. I like what Madison Heights offers. And it's home to me. It is. And it prob'ly always will be. So...and...no, I wouldn't change anything. I think we're continually making progress. I think we have matured. I...you know, our politics aren't as horrible as they used to be, as personal. So I think it's just a great town.

Q: Ann, I want to thank you for agreeing to do this tape this evening. It'll now become part of our Madison Heights historical collection. And we hope to add others in the near future.

LM: I wanted to ask [inaudible].

Q: Lois...before we close, before we close, Lois Myers has a question to ask Ann.

LM: I just think this would add a little more to it.

Q: Sure.

LM: At one we had two Democratic parties, and I'd like Ann...to have Ann tell you a little bit about that.

A: Oh yes. We had two Democratic parties in town. There was our end of it, like...members like Lois, and I and Helen, but then labor had their own. And it was John DeWan, Tony Olisinski, Earl Anderson, Stan Weiss, Cecil Robinson and there was a continual fight. They used to call us...at the county party, they used to call us "Mad Heights" because we were always up there screaming who was representing Madison Heights to the Democratic party. Well in...um...'76 we finally ironed it all out. We decided to have one Democratic chartered Club. And then, see, there was a Bill Huffman group. Bill was always anti- anything that labor was. And he helped keep that feud going for quite a few years. Yeah, it was fun.

Q: Ann, once again I want to thank you and you've made this evening very enjoyable and informative.

A: Thank you.

Q: Ann Edwards.

END OF INTERVIEW