

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Mahoning County Politics Project

Political Experiences

O. H. 299

ANTHONY S. CENTOFANTI

Interviewed

by

Carrie A. Stanton

on

October 20, 1983

ANTHONY CENTOFANTI

Anthony Centofanti was born September 27, 1929, to an Italian immigrant father and a native-born mother in Struthers, Ohio. He attended Struthers public schools and graduated from Struthers High School in 1947. His first employer was the American News Company.

Mr. Centofanti went into business twice and eventually got into politics, winning the office of president of council in Struthers after his first election campaign. He subsequently became mayor of Struthers and is now serving in the Lyle Williams Administration as administrative aid for Mahoning County.

In 1951, Mr. Centofanti married Shirley Ramsbottom. They have one daughter, Deborah Jean, and one son, Mark Anthony.

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INTERVIEWEE: ANTHONY S. CENTOFANTI  
INTERVIEWER: Carrie A. Stanton  
SUBJECT: Mayors of Struthers, Lyle Williams, Politics,  
Councilmen  
DATE: October 20, 1983

S: This is an interview with Anthony Centofanti for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program by Carrie Stanton at Lyle Williams' district office on October 20, 1983, at 10:45 a.m.

First, we want to know about you. We want to know where you were educated, your parents, where you were brought up, that kind of thing.

C: I was born in Struthers, Ohio, September 27, 1929. My Dad's name was Theodore. My mother's name was Nellie. I had three brothers and one sister, but two of them passed away at an early age, at one or two years of age. I can't remember them. One was younger, and one was older than me. My dad worked in a steel mill. I wouldn't say we were poor, but I wouldn't say it was average, between average and poor. My dad was a typical immigrant. He came across from Italy. My mother was born and raised in this country.

S: Where did he come from in Italy?

C: He came from a town called Sulmona Valley. I guess it is about eighty miles north of Rome. I've been wanting to get there. I've got two aunts, my dad's two sisters, but they're quite old, I understand, in their eighties. They are anxiously waiting for their nephew to come and see them that supposedly made good in this country. (Laughter) For some reason or other I had the desire but never had the time or, I guess, financial means for that type of trip.

My dad had one thing in mind, he tried to make sure that his children were educated. Actually two families lived together, my mother's sister and her family, which was my aunt, so there were eight children in the house and four adults. There were twelve in the house, and as I said before, we were quite crowded. Out of the eight children in the house, I was the only one that graduated. The other seven never did, they quit school for some reason. I don't know if that means anything. I graduated from Struthers High School in 1947, just average. I never really did anything exceptional, I just got by. I liked school, but I had no desire to go to college. I went to work for a company called American News Company, which was a magazine wholesale distributor. It was a big company. They had four or five branches. I started sweeping the floors and packing magazines and worked my way up. I became a route salesman. I worked my way up to a manager and I was transferred up to Ashtabula to work one of their branches. From then on, that's when I got interested in selling and then I got into sales and I was in business a couple of times.

S: Tell us about it!

C: Tell you about it? Well, it was a disaster. The first one, I worked in the Sheet & Tube when I came back from Ashtabula. I moved back here because the company, after 92 years, folded and closed all their branches.

S: That has nothing to do with you though?

C: No. Mine was one of the ones that made money, but couldn't carry the other 399! So I moved back and went to work for Sunshine Biscuit Company as a salesman. I went into business, bought a little business in New Springfield, Ohio, a little grocery store. The Sunshine Biscuit Company didn't appreciate a salesman owning a business, so they gave me a choice of either quitting or they were going to fire me unless I sold the store. Well, I had no intention of selling my little business so I quit. Then I went to work for the Youngstown Sheet & Tube. I worked during the day there. I went to school as an electrical apprentice and I learned the electrical trade, electrician. I ran my little store and after four years, I sold it because it was a grind working two jobs. I failed to say that I did get married in 1951.

S: Get that right? (Laughter)

C: 1951. I married the former Shirley Jean Ramsbottom, who was from a Struthers family. We had one daughter, Deborah Jean. In 1952 she was born. Then in 1962 we had another child, Mark Anthony. That takes care of the

children.

As I said, I had the business and sold that one and about three or four years later I got the urge to go back in business even though I was working for the Youngstown Sheet & Tube. I went back and bought another store in New Springfield. From then, a friend of mine, who worked for Sugardale Meats, heard about a big supermarket being built in New Middletown, a new plaza going up. He talked to me and we decided to go ahead and take it. It was a very large store, a big investment. It was a total disaster after two years.

S: Who was your partner?

C: Dean McMurray. After one year he pulled out, and I stayed in for another year. I struggled, but I just couldn't see any light at the end of the tunnel. I turned it back over to Golden Dawn. The company took it back from me. It was a financial disaster. Incidentally, it took me about six years to recuperate, like paying for a dead horse. But I met a lot of nice people when I was in that business. Turns out it helped me out because I went to work for Procino & Rossi, P&R Macaroni Corporation, out of Auburn, New York. Then I had an opportunity to take a position to manage Fonderlac Country Club. My wife had been working there, she still does. She was the office manager, so they, for some reason, felt that I could manage it. I did take the position. I was very successful. Then I wanted to get into politics.

S: Were you still working for P&R then?

C: Yes, but then I decided it was too much so I left P&R. I took a leave of absence to run Fonderlac. I stayed there one year and I wanted to get into politics so I discussed it with the owner.

S: What made you decide to . . .

C: Well, I've always wanted to get into politics. That was probably my fantasy or my secret dream. I always wanted to be the mayor of the city of Struthers, for what it's worth. (Laughter) So I told my wife, we lived in Boardman at the time, I said, "We're moving back to Struthers. I want to run for mayor."

S: What did she think of that?

C: She thought it was all right, so we did. We moved back to Struthers and I found out at election time that mayor wasn't up! The second highest office was president of the council. I said, "All right, I'll run for that."

I ran against a gentleman whose dad was in politics in Struthers for years. He was in that position for, I think, eight years.

S: Who was that?

C: Tom Vasvari. I said I was going to run for president of council. Well, the cute story is, my next door neighbor was Ted Macejko, Sr., who was the law director, city solicitor of Struthers for years. I went over to him for some advice, political advice. He said, "Okay, I'll guide you. The first thing you do is you run for precinct committeeman for a few years, and then you might try for councilman." I said, "Hey, that sounds all right." The next week I went out and took papers for the president of council. (Laughter) I did everything the opposite of what he advised! A cute story was, one of the local, well, I guess one of the underworld characters in the town, sent somebody to my home and they wanted to talk to me. He said, "Come on, let's take a ride." I said, "No, no. You want to talk to me, come on in the house." It was in the summer. I was cutting the grass. He came in and I said, "What can I do for you?" I knew the gentleman, but I needn't mention his name. He said, "We didn't want you to run for president for council." I said, "What do you mean, you don't want me to run?" He said, "Well, it's not your turn yet and we decided to wait. We'll tell you when." I said, "You're not going to tell me when. Go back and tell so and so," who I knew, "that he has nothing to worry about, that I'm not going to win anyway!" (Laughter)

Anyway, the day of the election I was going around to the pools, and I saw this individual. I knew the family all my life. I went to school with one of the brothers. I said, "I don't know why you're so concerned. I have no intentions of winning. You had to send this goon up to my house!" We laughed about it because, really, I think I'm the only one that felt that I wasn't going to win. Everybody else that I spoke to said I was going to win. I said, "Never happen." But, as it turned out, that evening I won. I didn't know what to do. I was completely aside. I felt I owed Tom Vasvari. I had respect for him. I thought he did a decent job as president of council. I ran against him. I decided I should do something, so I went up to his house that evening. Somebody said, "You're not supposed to go to the one you defeat, he's supposed to come to you." I said, "No, no, I think I owe him that respect." So, the funny part, my brother-in-law said, "I'll go with you." I went to this gentleman's house because that's where he was supposed to have his victory party, and I knocked on the door and they said, "Come on in."

There was a lot of talking going on as I was walking down the steps. As I kept going down, then they finally saw my face, everything quieted. You could have heard a pin drop because I was the last person they expected to see. I went up to Tom and I said, "Tom, I don't know why I'm here," I'll never forget this, these are the exact words I said. I said, "but I just felt I owe you the respect to come up and pay my respects to you. I didn't think I was going to win." Tom said, "Well, I didn't think you were either!" Everybody busted out laughing and that broke the ice and we became very good friends since then and he still is, as far as that goes.

I was president of council for a year. The present mayor, Tom Creed, decided to take a position with EDATA Corporation so I automatically became the mayor. I served for three more years on the unexpired term and then I ran.

To show you how politics are, one of my best allies. . . I don't say friends. You never have friends in politics, you have either allies or foes, either one. But he was supposed to have been an all. We ran together the first time as a team. I was flabbergasted when I was up for reelection that nobody was going to run against me. Next thing you know, I read in the paper he filed to run against me. Anyway, I was fortunate, I won the reelection.

Then I met Lyle Williams.

S: Wait a minute. Let's go back to Struthers. Did you have a lot of problems?

C: Well, I'm very happy to say that I'm one of the few mayors, and this can be substantiated, that, even in spite of having all democratic officials, every single one was a Democrat as I was, I had nothing but problems. I mean it was just fighting tooth and nail continuously.

S: Why do you think that was? Personality?

C: No. Most politicians always want to elevate higher. Everyone wants to be the president of the United States eventually, every politician. So, every councilman wanted to be mayor. Naturally, they didn't want to seek the position, but they wanted to act like they were. Everybody wanted to make a big show. Our meetings were taped live, aired over the Struthers station, high school. Everyone wanted to hear themselves on the radio when they went home because it was played again. They really fought me on a lot of things, but I'm happy to say that, under my administration, we have a whole new park system, and a brand new swimming pool, which didn't cost the city a dime.

We had the railroad tracks repaired. We got new fire trucks. We got new cruisers; every year we would buy two new cruisers. We had a street resurfacing program. When I left office it was still in the black. The city was in pretty good shape. In 1977, when the Sheet & Tube closed, that's when it started to go downhill. I'm not chastising the mayor, although I think they should have seen what was happening and started to cut back. Most politicians hate to lay off anybody, any city employee or federal or state or whatever, because they're mostly supporters of theirs.

In the case of Struthers, we had a different sort of government that was under the statutory form, the "weak mayor" form of government, which is that the mayor has no jurisdiction of appointing any cabinet member other than the safety service director and the tax commissioner. That was the only two appointees he had. Where as the "strong mayor" form, such as the city of Lowellville or Youngstown or Campbell, most of them. . . In fact, I really don't know of another one other than the city of Struthers. I'm not saying there's not another one; there probably is, but I don't think so. But they appoint the police chief, and so on and so forth. The mayor had no strength in that capacity because the police chief, fire chief, and as I said earlier, the finance director, and the auditor were civil service, except the auditor, he was an elected official. The law director was an elected official. The mayor really had very few appointments.

- S: What do you think is going to happen with this new charter they have up for a vote?
- C: Well, a charter is just like anything else, it's a tool, but it's only as good as the people that are in the position that have come up with the charter. I think the people of Struthers are really desperate and they're searching for a solution. I give them a tremendous amount of credit. My personal thoughts on the charter, in this sense it's not the answer. If it was good times, things were different, or the money was coming in better, then it's a different story. They're looking for something, and I think they blame the administration accountant for the position they're in. Maybe some of it might be, but I don't think it's fair to really blame them for the financial situation. You can check anywhere, in any distressed area you're going to find it. Even our own county is financially in trouble, all the cities, other than, possibly, Lordstown, where they are fortunate to have General Motors in there, where you have the income tax coming in. The charter, I don't think is the answer.



I went down to a couple meetings as a concerned citizen. I don't live in Struthers, but I have a couple of pieces of property in there. My daughter lives there and my granddaughter, so I was interested. I went to one of the meetings and I read the proposed charter and there were certain things in there I just couldn't see. I think it's bad. One of the things is that three councilmen can control the whole city! This to me is wrong. The mayor has no power whatsoever, no veto power. There was nothing in there for any veto power, period. At least under any form of government, the mayor has a veto power where it takes seventy-five percent of council to override it. There, there was none! They're suggesting five council people, so if you have three of them form a group, and have a power struggle, they can control the whole city, three individuals! You see, people are very, very uneducated in the local government, how powerful a councilman position, or councilwoman, or whatever you choose to use is. For example, this is a true story, when I was the mayor of Struthers, the individual who owned a big supermarket in Girard, Ohio, called me and asked me if I could help him out. I said, "What's the dilemma?" He said the council that night was going to vote on a piece of legislation that would ban the sale of California lettuce in the city of Girard. At that time that's when Chavez was having trouble with the lettuce growers in California. People don't realize, but had there been four councilmen, even five, four could have passed it but five could have overrode any veto the mayor might have had. To give you an idea, five councilmen, five individuals, could have voted a piece of legislation, which is the law, stating that no grocery store or retail outlet could sell California lettuce in the city of Girard, and it would be law! It actually would be law! This is frightening because, it sounds ridiculous, but a councilman has a tremendous amount of power, more power than a mayor. To start with, and to a degree, he has more legislative power than the President of the United States! I mean he can actually write the laws for that community. The sad part of it is, there are no requirements of educated people to be a councilperson. In the city of Struthers or just about any city according to size, at one time all a person would need was eleven dollars and twenty-five signatures on a petition and he could be placed on a ballot and could have possibly been elected to a legislator with no education whatsoever.

I'm not sitting here saying that an educated person would make a better legislator than a non-educated one, but I think that our system is wrong in that sense because there are no requirements other than being a citizen of the United States and, I think, it's eighteen years of age. That's the requirement. It's frightening because most

elected officials are not elected on their qualifications; they're elected as a popularity contest, that is all it is. That's sad, too. But again, it's as fair for one as it is for the next.

S: Okay, now we'll talk about Lyle.

C: This is a question people always ask me: How did you, a Democrat and a mayor of the second largest city in Mahoning County, come to take a position like you have with a commissioner from a different county. Is it because you and Lyle are good friends? The answer is no. We weren't what you would call good friends. The only time I was in Lyle's company was maybe three or four times. One, the most, we took a trip to San Antonio, Texas. He was the commissioner of Trumbull County and I was the mayor of Struthers. We went with EDATA down to a convention. We spent five days together with the county commissioners from Trumbull County. There must have been about ten or fifteen from this area who went down. I spent a week with Lyle, but that was basically it. Then I served on the board of EDATA and Lyle happened to be the chairman one year. I would come to the meetings, which was once a month. He was there for a year so the most I ever, if I attended all the meetings, was at, were twelve meetings. That was the extent of it.

S: Must have been love at first sight?

C: Well, I'll tell you how it happened, and it's funny. On September 19, 1977, the Sheet & Tube closed down. That was Black Monday. A year later they had a function right here on Federal Plaza to commemorate it. I was mayor of Struthers so they asked me to be one of the speakers to see how the city had gone in a year. Since that happened, Lyle had won the primary. This was in September, as I said, and the election was in November. Lyle was in the audience. It was a nice warm day. When I was through speaking, the program was over and I walked down and I shook hands with Lyle and wished him luck. That's the first time I had seen him in months.

S: He was running for Congress?

C: He was running for Congress against Charles Carney the first time. He was standing with Jack Hunter at the time, I remember it distinctly. Lyle said, "Tony, can I talk to you a minute?" I said, "Yes, what's up?" He said, "I want you to come on my staff when I'm elected." Well, first of all, it was a surprise because I said, "This boy is in for a big surprise because he thinks he's going to win." I didn't think he was going to win. I'm sure that most people didn't think he was going to win. Charles

Carney was a powerful political figure. I just said, "Let me think about it." You know, it was just one of those things, let me think about it. I completely forgot about it. I didn't even tell my wife about it because I just didn't think that much of it. Then I met Lyle again. The governor was in town at one of the functions at Mr. B's in Cornersburg and Lyle was there again. He was campaigning. I was there to see the governor. I met Lyle again and he said, "Have you got any other offers?" I said, "No." He said, "Let's go get a sandwich then at the Mansion." I said all right so we stopped at the Mansion. He said, "Have you thought any more about that?" I said, "What?" He said, "I want you to come with me." I said, "Lyle, you've got to be crazy! To start with, I'm a Democrat!" He said, "That doesn't mean anything." I said, "Why would you want me?" He said, "Well, for one thing, I've watched your career and I think you've done an excellent job down there. I think you know the valley and you know Mahoning County. You would be an asset." I said, "That's nice. Let me think about it." So that night I did tell my wife. I said, "Do you want to hear something funny?" So I told her. She said, "Well, it's something to think about." I said, "Well, we'll see." Through the whole campaign every time I would see him he would say, "What do you say?" I said, "I'm thinking, I'm thinking." But the night of the election, that he had won completely surprised me. My finance director, John Kovach, and George Wilson, who since then formed the CASTLO Corporation, were having a meeting that night. It happened to be on Tuesday night. We saw Lyle had won. George is a staunch Republican, under Rhodes. He was appointed by Governor Rhodes. He said, "Let's go up and congratulate Lyle. I said, "Yes, that's a good idea." He was up at the Avalon Inn because I don't think there was any election going on in Struthers to speak of. There was nothing up. There was nothing to do so we went up. As I walked in--the place was crowded--Lyle saw me and he was on the microphone, and he said, "Here comes my favorite mayor." I walked up to him and he put his hands out and he said, "Well, partner, are you with me?" It just came out, I said, "Yes." I didn't even think, it just came out! The Vindicator was there and it made the front page, shaking hands with Lyle. Here's a Democrat, not a Democrat because I'm a traitor, and I think to this day they still think I'm a traitor. But I've got to say this, many of them privately said, "Tony, that's the smartest thing you ever did." So that's how it came to be. My wife heard about it on TV that night. Somebody picked it up and they just put two and two together why I was there. After I had said yes I said, "My god, what am I doing? This guy's going to be a one-termer! I'm going to be out in the street!" (Laughter) But I said yes and I committed myself to him and I still

do, and as it turns out, I'm very happy working for him and I like to think we're doing a good job. Evidently, the people must think so.

S: Tell me what you do for him.

C: Basically, my title is administrative aid for Mahoning County. I take care of the district. I, in essence, to a degree, fill in for him when he's out on a speaking engagement, functions, or ribbon cuttings. I handle the SBA, Small Business Administration. We assist people on how to go about funding their new businesses, old businesses. I try to guide them, things of this sort. Then I run the office here.

S: Do you kind of filter things out for him?

C: Oh yes, if I think that something is important. It is a proven fact, some people do have a tendency to feel that they can't get hold of the congressman. I tell this to everyone and I still hold true to it. I say, "I'll give you one week to get hold of your state senator. I'll give you one week to get hold of your governor. I'll give you one week to get hold of your United States senator. You give me one hour and I'll get hold of your congressman for you." I mean that. It's true, because when I call Lyle, unless he's on the floor voting, he knows it's important or else I don't bother him. He knows, he has enough faith in me that he comes down here maybe two or three times a month in his office and he has no worries that this office is being run properly and the district is being run properly. If I feel something comes up that I think it's important that he should be there, then I'll tell him, I'll call up the law office and say, "I think you should be there." "Okay, fine." That's it. If I think that it's not important enough . . . I just think that there's a priority. I think something else is probably a little more important. Every individual that comes into this office, their problem is the most important . . .

S: Just out of curiosity, what kind of problems do you get? I don't want you to mention any names, just . . .

C: No, we're not allowed by law. On the lower level of the mayor, you get the calls that the dogs are barking, the garbage hasn't been picked up, things of this sort, but in this position the people really have problems. The families of servicemen come in and want to get their sons out of the service. Some people want to get them into the service. A lot of it lately is disability, people who are on disability that have been cut off. Under the

Reagan Administration what he did is basically cut everybody off. Then you have to go through the re-examination. By doing that you would be surprised how many people have been cut off rightfully so. The ones that really need it, when they have a real problem they are reinstated. A lot of them haven't been.

S: How do they think that he can help them, though, just by directing them to the right place?

C: Well, we can. Yes, we direct, and we assist, and a lot of times directly. We have what we call the 'Hot Line'. It's an FTS line. It goes to every government agency in the United States, direct line. I don't directly do it, but we have three case workers out there that do it, with the Social Security, with the veterans, with the Army, and with the Navy. We have HUD people and we have SBA. What we do is we pick the phone up. If we can cure it by a phone call, we do it, solve it, I should say.

Most of the times you can't do it. You have to sit down and write a letter. Then we correspond and we intercede for the individual. We've got files and files of letters from people we've been successful with. Sometimes we're not successful simply because the case just doesn't warrant it. I have a paper here from an aged gentleman that has a hearing with the Department of Health and Human Services. This is for the state of Ohio, but yet they come to us to see if we can help. We have different letters.

S: Why do they? Don't they get enough results from . . .

C: As I stated earlier, and I'm not condemning the state senators in this instance, but I'm saying they are not as easily accessible as we are. It's as simple as that. Whatever their reasons, I can't answer for them.

When Lyle took over, the previous congressman had one office in town here, a small office, and he had a part-time office in Warren in the basement of the post office that you couldn't find. Well, the problems are here, not in Washington, so what he did was, we had a staff of eighteen people, and out of the eighteen we had six in Washington and the other twelve in the district. We have two offices and they're both staffed. As you see, you have no trouble finding it because we took the best spot right on the public square, ground floor. It's easily accessible. We're not hiding. We want the people to come in with their problems. As I said, we've been very successful with a lot of them. Some of them, we haven't been as successful, but we try to help them with any problem they have. A lot of it's passports. A lot of it

they're trying to get their relatives from the old country over here. Some want tickets to the football games, and stuff like that.

We were having a meeting this morning in a restaurant, that's why I was a little late getting here. The reason was, after I got through with the first meeting, a lady stopped me and she knew who I was and she said, "My son just got out of the service. He went down to the employment office and tried to get a job. They said, 'You can't sign up for unemployment because you have an honorable discharge. If you had a dishonorable you could get it.'" You see, that's all state. I said, "Well, I'm late. Call me at the office, I'll make a few phone calls to Columbus and I'll see what I can do."

We handle a lot of state problems. One instant happened that we couldn't help them. We recommended getting in touch with a certain state senator who doesn't have an office here. You have to call their home. We said to tell him that we recommended that they call. Boy, we heard about it. The phone rang back to me and the wife said, "What are you doing? Trying to be smart?" I said, "No, I don't mean that. We can't help them. We feel the senator can help them." She said, "Well, quit recommending people here." This is what you're up against. A lot of times we've been successful, and a lot of times we haven't.

S: Do you ever have to travel to Washington?

C: Yes. In fact, I'm supposed to go next Wednesday. I like to get down there. I try to get down, not on a regular schedule, but five or six times a year. The only reason I do that is, not that I could go down there for any specific case, it's just that I like to keep abreast of what's going on down there. We have excellent staff in Washington. We have Marty Millich who was Mayor Hunter's administrative assistant in Washington. He commutes and he's there four to five days a week, sometimes six. He stays over.

S: How many people did you say you have down there?

C: Six people. No, I think we're down to five. One of them was put on the staff of another committee that Lyle got him on. We're down to five in Washington. That's basically all we need because with the access to the phones that we have directly to the different departments, a lot of it we don't involve Washington in unless we really have to. A lot of people, because they really don't know, they make a mistake. They'll write directly to Washington and then a lot of it comes right back here. We have

individuals that are specialists in certain things. We have one girl who handles nothing but Veteran's Administration and the military. One handles nothing but Social Security and disability. One handles Medicare and Medicaid and handles other things. She runs a computer and she handles nothing but legislation. This is what we try to do. They're experts in their field. Everybody has a certain job. It sounds terrible sometimes when people will call me. They'll always, first of all, ask for the congressman and I'll say, "He's not here." "Well, may I speak to Mr. Centofanti?" I get on there and then he starts rattling off that they have a problem on Social Security. I say, "I don't mean to slough you off, but I don't handle that." They probably wonder, in fact, I had one the other day that said, "Boy, you're not very intelligent, are you?" I said, "Well, by your standards I might not be. If you want to know anything about SBA, ask me. I know that frontwards and backwards. I don't know a thing about Social Security, but I'll let you speak to one of the ladies." That's what I do. I put them on hold and I tell certain people and they take it and they handle it. That's my position.

S: Just as a kind of an aside, what do you think is going to happen here in Youngstown? What's the future? Is there a future?

C: Oh yes, absolutely, there is a future. Here's what people fail to realize, Carrie, we're at a standstill now.. Remember, for years and years and years this was a mill town. We depended on Youngstown Sheet & Tube, Republic Steel, US Steel, and all of them. No way were they going to go out of business. My father worked there. My grandfather worked there. But it happened, it did happen, but it didn't only happen here. If it had just happened in Youngstown, Ohio, that's a different thing, but it happened all over the United States. It was the same way with the utility companies and everything. Our gas bills were so low and electric bills were so low. Now the whole thing is just catching up with us. It was the same way with our steel mill town. Now we have to diversify. It's not that easy. If someone wants to come into Youngstown, they say, "Youngstown? That's a steel town." It's not a high tech town or it's not an automobile town.

Well, now it's changed around. Now we are known mostly through our automobiles. We've got a new company coming in, American Sunroof. We have Hunt Steel, which is very viable. They've had problems, but any new company is going to have problems. I strongly believe that it will be a good, solid company in a few years. We've got more looking.

I'll tell you what has hurt us tremendously. This isn't political, but we've had a lot of very, very bad publicity in the last year or so that has just been uncalled for. There was no truth to it. We've had problems in the past. We've had a town that was noted for this and that. We've had some bad elements, but very few towns don't. It's just that some are publicized more and this one happened to be and I think it hurt us tremendously. There's no question in my mind that we've got a reputation. I've been places and they say, "Where are you from?" Before I used to say, automatically, Youngstown, Ohio, even though I never ever lived in the city of Youngstown, but it's still my home. "Oh yes, you guys have trouble down there. You've got a goofy sheriff. You've got racketeers," and this and that.

How are you going to sit there and justify, and tell them, "Don't believe what you read." "What do you mean? We didn't read it. We saw it on "20/20". It was on television! It was in the Wall Street Journal three weeks ago!" You know, the sheriff made front page of the Wall Street Journal, all derogatory! I mean, I'd love to be on the Wall Street Journal. Why don't they put in the Wall Street Journal American Sunroof is coming in or something positive? For example, this Jimmy M's Deli, we were fortunate enough to get them an FDA loan. There's a nice new business that employed twelve, fifteen people. Put that in the Wall street journal! That's positive! No, they don't want it.

S: They want the bad news.

C: The sad part of it is, if it was true, fine, I have nothing the matter with printing the truth. If it's bad, it's bad. But look around, is the town that bad? I always thought it was pretty decent, myself, before. An individual made a remark, he was going to start tearing down buildings with bulldozers. I drove by there not too long ago. I had to get out to the turnpike. The building is still standing.

Somebody in California, if they were thinking of moving a company to Youngstown, Ohio, would say, "Oh, I'm not moving my family!" The wife reads about the bombings that they saw on "20/20" or an incident that happened twenty or thirty years ago, and she says, "I'm not moving there." If the husband gets transferred and says, "You're going along with me," she would say, "I'm not going to Youngstown."

Youngstown is a beautiful, beautiful area, I think. That's why I'm still here. I had opportunities when I



was younger to move to Florida and other places, but they say, be it ever so humble, it's home.

S: Anything you would like to add?

C: No. I apologize if I rambled. I have a tendency to do that, but I get carried away. That's me. I'm not going to change.

S: Okay, thank you.

C: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW