

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Warren Government Project

Personal Experiences

O. H. 335

GEORGE JOB

Interviewed

by

James Manross

on

November 25, 1975

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Personal Experiences

INTERVIEWEE: GEORGE JOB

INTERVIEWER: James Manross

SUBJECT: Councilmen, Mayors, Depression, Projects

DATE: November 25, 1975

M: This is James Manross for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program. Today is November 25, 1975. I am talking to Mr. George Job, long-time city councilman and resident of the city of Warren.

Mr. Job, can you tell us a little bit about your family's background and where you were brought up and everything?

J: I was born on July 4, 1890. When I was six years of age, my father passed away in England. When I was eight years of age, my mother brought me to this country and we located in Niles, Ohio.

In those days life was very hard for mother and me. When I became the age of fourteen, it was necessary for me to go to work, which I did. I started to work at that time in the press room of the Niles News. The printing trade became my life work.

M: Did you marry, and how many children did you have? Tell us a little bit about that.

J: I was married in 1914 to Irene Harris. We had three children, one boy and two girls.

M: What were your primary occupations during your life?

J: Well, as I said before, I started in the printing business when I was fourteen years of age and I continued on through until my retirement in 1960. I worked in the early days at the Niles News, then for nine years in a small plant in Girard, finally, in the Trumbull Steel

Company printing plant, which I organized in 1917. I worked for Trumbull Steel and then Republic until I retired in 1960 comprising 42 years of supervisor of the printing department of Republic Steel Company.

M: Now, what prompted you to get involved with city government?

J: I was always interested in things from the time I was very young. Then when we moved to Warren, I became doubly interested in those things that eventually turned me into the political field. I became very interested in the East Warren Civic Association. At that time it was very active and prominent of the east side of Warren. Before I entered the political field I became president of that organization. The Civic Club is what got me interested in politics.

M: When were you first elected to city council? Tell us a little bit about what all you did in city council.

J: Well, my first job in government was in 1934. Gus Bjorson was elected and went in as the mayor of the city of Warren in 1934. He had appointed me as his safety director. I served that in 1934 and 1935. In those days, Warren, like most of the industrial towns, was entirely different. Prohibition was in. Naturally, there were a great many speakeasies. Houses of prostitution were very open in those days.

My two years in that I served as safety director were not easy by any means. I knew nothing about that type of work. At that time, of course, I was the supervisor of the printing at Republic Steel; I retained that. The other, of course, was a sideline. In fact, we only received \$200 a year for safety director in those two years. We really comprised the Board of Control.

But at the end of those two years, the head of Republic Steel, Mr. Elliot, told me that after my two years were up he didn't want me to participate anymore because I had received four broken ribs when I jumped a raid one evening. So, that was terminated.

Then, in 1940 I joined the ranks of council in the city of Warren. I continued for eight years as a ward councilman. Then for four years I was not accepted by the citizens of Warren. But after that time, I went back for eight more years as councilman-at-large.

Then the time came that the beloved Wally Lynn, who was President of Council, decided that he would not run anymore, and he asked me one evening if I would take up

and run for the office of which he had been a member for so many years, twelve, in fact. So, I started in 1962 as president of council. For 8 more years, or 25 total, I was a member of the Warren City Council.

For the two years I was safety director, of course, I had not been involved in politics in any way, particularly in the city. The police department, I felt, was of the old type. In fact, they wore all different types of blue uniforms. They wore a blue shirt with a white rubber collar with a black bow tie, all of them. They never had any inspections. The first Labor Day that I was in I ordered an inspection. That was the first inspection that either the police or fire department had had from I don't know when or if ever. The result of that was very, very bad. The report that I got from the committee was very poor. I then started to remodel a great deal of the police department. Before the next inspection, the next Labor Day, I had them all in the same kind of uniforms, all made by the same manufacturers. They all had police shirts on as they should have had, properly attired. All of their guns had been gone over and all of the other equipment, handcuffs, and so forth. They had taken a year of target practice. The change between the first inspection and the second brought out the finest letter I ever received about the change that had come about in that department. So, I'm very proud of the two years I served. The police department had come up to the ranking that they had. The fire department, even in those days, was a very wonderful department in all of its actions.

M: Did the Depression hit Warren very hard in the 1930's?

J: Well, it would be natural that the Depression would. The plants were down. Of course, the banks were in trouble. One bank, particularly, was in trouble until the change-over. Everyone suffered. Of course, then President Roosevelt came in and we had the works program. I might say here even though I'm a Republican, a great deal and a great change came over the United States through the years that President Roosevelt was in office. He had caused, of course, Social Security. He also did something that the country has suffered somewhat from ever since, free money. Our public indebtedness was never high up until that time. From that time on, it has been mounting and mounting; until now there seems to be no end to it.

I feel that whenever you bring goods like that on free, you're bound to bring trouble in other directions. In fact, right now we're going through this same process. We've had so much money that apparently was given free through our prosperous years that we're suffering from

that now. We'll do that in any time that we have inflation and then try to stop it by a reduction of work and other facilities. Of course, now we've got the reduction of work and we've got inflation at the same time, which makes a great many people suffer.

M: What was Warren like in 1940, in the city government?

J: The city government was entirely different. We had very, very little money to work with. In the city, if you don't have too much money, as long as you can meet the ends, you're not going to have the pressure from the outside. Today, all of our employees are unionized. They're organized to the point that it's only natural that wherever there is money they're going to take advantage of it for their own personal good. That is something we didn't have in the old days.

In fact, the first years that I was on council we worked for \$50 a month. Today, of course, council is getting much more than that. The mayor of Warren today is getting \$16,000 a year. Next year, when he goes in, he'll get \$24,000, or a raise of 50 percent. That is what is happening in practically every city in the country. We're getting in trouble today with it.

There's one thing I will say. They have done a good job in Warren being able to end the year in the black, which is the only legal way that a city can operate. They're going to do the same thing this year according to Mr. Izant, who is chairman of the Finance Committee.

M: I was wondering, during World II was most of council's activities directed towards the war, like directing rationings and things like that?

J: Well, that is taken not so much by council. That becomes a state or a federal project. The rationing was not handled by the city. That's all handled by higher ups than the city director. But they went through it naturally. They went through the same process that any other city would have at that particular time.

C: Could the unity of the people of World War II be compared to the unity during World War I?

J: Well, in World War I and World War II it was very comparable. They had the same process to go through. They went to Europe in order to defend France and England in World War I and World War II.

In Vietnam, you have the contrast. That was entirely, entirely different from the way the people felt. A great

many people, and a great many young people felt we had no business over there. We got into something that we probably would have been much better off if we wouldn't have done it, but it's over now. It's one of those things that I hope the time never comes. And I hope the young people of today will very definitely work with other countries on it, so that we will never have an atomic bomb dropped again. It will be very critical to the world, even very critical to our nation to have that happen.

M: Could you give a brief comment or opinion about each of the mayors of Warren you served under?

J: I served under the mayors in only a minor capacity. I served under Mayor Bjorson for only two years. In 1940 I came under Mayor Roberts for six years. It was entirely different then from it is now, as I said before. There was very little money. You cannot plan very many projects ahead that you have to apply a finance to.

In the two years that Mr. Wagner was in, he was a very popular man. He was the coach of the high school here and was very popular. He had a very disappointing two years. He only lasted two years and then he was taken out. I think it helped break his heart, because it wasn't too long after that that he passed away.

Then I went in under a good government committee that was formed in the city of Warren. I don't think that Mr. Burbank intended to even think of being mayor of the city until this committee. Knowing of his capabilities as a businessman, they asked him to run. He did run, and of course, he won. Mr. Burbank was a very, very conscientious and very sincere mayor. I think that there is no one who could say anything against Bill Burbank while he was in. He was very honest. People have the impression that everything in politics is somewhat dishonest, the men that participate in it, et cetera, but that is not so.

We had, and I'll speak of it now, the trouble of the group of men that did create the scandal. It was a sad thing. But, the one thing that I should point out is that those who participated have been in trouble ever since they came out of it. Of course, one of them passed away. The other one had a wonderful job at Republic Steel. Since then, he has served only in a minor capacity at the Ohio Edison. He lost a great deal from it. The other man I know very little about, but I know that he isn't in a high prestige job that he was in before that happened. It was sad. It was something that no one would want to have happen. It was a sad period. I honestly think it was bad that Walter Pestrak was in there at that time and the question came up

with a lot of people whether he was involved. You've got to take this in to consideration.

Walter replaced Mr. Burbank. Walter was a very aggressive man. I feel if he had been able to stay in, he would have been a good mayor. He wanted to build a bridge over the South Street. I talked to him in his office one day. I said, "Walter, I just cannot go for that because the Tribune is very definite that the South Street will not be built until the tracks are relocated." And that, of course, is what happened.

One day, after a trip to Columbus, Bob Dunstan, Mayor Dunstan, came up to the house to see me. He, once again, was mad at the Tribune because he would have liked to have had the ground broken for South Street. But it was held up until the Tribune would definitely have the tracks off of South Street. And, that is what did happen.

I don't think Walter, as a whole, could blame council any more than they could me. Walter and I, at that time, weren't too good of friends, but we made up after he decided maybe I was right on it. I felt and told him, "Walter, South Street can't be built until the income taxes pass. Next year I think you'll readily see that the income tax will be passed. But this year to build that little bridge over there, it might be stuck." We would have had to pay \$19,500 of our share of a section of bridge that would be for the wider street, but it wouldn't have cooperated with what we have there now at all because now we have a total new bridge on there.

Then Bob Dustan, in the two years that he was in, tried to do a really good job. Art Richards and I were very anxious to have him make friends rather than enemies. But among the employees of the city, Bob had the tact of making enemies. It paid in the end against him. But Bob tried really hard.

Then we come to Ray Shriver. Ray was a very likeable fellow. He was liked by everybody. Everybody, I think, wanted to be friends with Ray. In the last two years that I worked with him, I helped him a great deal. He wasn't well, and of course, he eventually passed away. Ray, I think, tried to do a good job all of he time that he was in.

M: Throughout your many years on the council, which body do you see as having more influence on the progression of Warren, the council or the mayor?

J: Well, that is something that the outside public doesn't hardly realize. Council is much stronger in a city than the mayor is. The mayor can not pass any finance. Every dollar that is spent before it goes to the auditor's office to be payed out must be passed by council. If council doesn't cooperate with the mayor, and if the mayor doesn't cooperate with council, you're not going to have the administration that you should have. There was a time there when the group that really got in trouble was causing Mr. Burbank's troubles. He had a hard time. I know I worked very hard to try and get some of the things through that went through at that time. They weren't working very closely through the mayor. The two have to work together.

I think Mayor Richards will work very well with a great many. Probably the majority of those Democratic councilmen will work with him and do the things that he would like to have them do. I'm positive about it. I know, personally, many of those fellows. They're really for the city and not for self.

M: Would you say that maybe, except for Mayor Pestrak, the rest of the mayors had pretty good report with council and they could basically agree on most of the issues?

J: Walter, no doubt, told you the proposals that he had. But you just don't have proposals; it has to work through the finance. If you don't have the justified finance for it, you can't start on anything. That's the thing. We've had three projects, really. We've had the water, which has cost millions of dollars. We do have good leaders there. Bob Marcian is a very good superintendent of the water department. It has worked very efficiently. That was a big project.

The one thing that was created through the Smith Administration is the incinerater plant that was never satisfactory after it was built. Of course, now it's abandoned; they don't use it at all. That was the one project that you can look back on that didn't have merit.

One thing that's ahead of us is sewers. Red Run sewer is in a very bad condition. It will have to be rebuilt. Of course, that's where the annexation comes in. That's what they've got in the future. It's the biggest project they have undertaken for a good many years, but it will be done.

One thing I will say, everyone has suffered more than people think because of expansion. I have fought for a great deal of time and I've thought for years on it. The time is going to come when Niles and Warren will have to go together and become one city, and then take the outlying

surrounding townships all in as one city, one metropolitan area. Today we are not a metropolitan area. Warren comes under Youngstown metropolitan area. They have the first choice.

We had hoped to get the new post office distribution here in Warren. Where did it eventually land? Down in the center of Youngstown, which means maybe one hundred to two hundred employees less than if we had gotten it in Warren. That is something that I think should be done.

Another thing I think would be better for the county and be better for the city would be nonpartisan elections because good men are not chosen as often today as party men are. We had an opportunity to elect, this last election, a man that has great capabilities. He was the leading man in Packard Electric until he retired. He would have been a big asset to the city, but once again, he was on the wrong party to win. I think that the time is coming where we're going to be far better off if the cities and townships go to a nonpartisan election. It can only be done, of course, by the vote of the people. I think that is far better for the future.

I loved my work on council. I think one of the greatest things anyone can do in a political life like I led is to make friends. I feel today that among the prominent Democrats and those that have come in contact with me, I'd like them to think of the night I retired. Bob Holmes, President of Council, said, "Well, Mr. Job, I haven't agreed with you quite often, but I've always respected you." I think when you end a political life of 24 to 26 years and have a leading man in the opposite party say those few words, that means a great deal to your life. It does to me. I love my work. I loved my work at Republic Steel for 42 years.

M: I'm just wondering, would you say the the council in 1960 and 1961 was the most controversial one?

J: Well, I would say that it was. I think it was probably brought around because of somebody who wanted to have something done and they didn't go along with his thinking, so he would feel that way about it. I don't know.

Now, for instance, Walter Pestrak called me in his office one day. There was a man that came in from Chicago. That was the first that we knew, that particular day, that by putting our application in for it that we could get these high-rises. Walter progressed with that all the way through.

I think that the saddest thing that I did was my application for urban renewal. It has been the biggest disappointment to

me of anything that we ever participated in. It was brought out particularly through the Chamber of Commerce that our tax evaluation duplicate would go up four to five times to what it was with the old buildings, when in reality, we're not getting as much realty tax, and that has hurt the schools erribly because what you lose in realty tax. . . . The schools lose more than the city does on it. Where they get somewhere around 32 or some percent, we only get four and one half percent. Now, maybe they're not getting that much, but they're way over what we get. we get about the same amount of tax out of the city as the county does out of city tax. We get no county tax.

I loved my work for the city. I enjoyed it from the time I went in until I retired. Then, the honor that came to me after is something that after you're 85 years of age you feel very proud of. That was when I was chosen as an honorary member of the Warren Rotary Club. That was the highest honor that I could think of. From my humble beginning of leaving school for work when I was fourteen years of age and then to have that honor bestowed upon me is something I'm very, very grateful for. I certainly thank him above for what has happened to me through the years.

M: What do you rate as your greatest achievement or is it just your service to council throughout the years that was your greatest achievement?

J: Well, I was the councilman that brought on the street dedication program. Before I got into this, a street couldn't be opened up without proper dedication. Particularly, it happened at Meadowbrook. One hundred and five homes were built out there, and the street was in bad condition. When we had high water the driveways and everything were flooded. We had an ordinance drawn up where streets, if they had sewers, had to be curbed. All streets had to be hard surface all down the grade, all in perfect condition so they could be driven on. It wasn't accepted very easily. I know one developer who was very angry about it, but eventually he paved the street the way the ordinance stated. They've got a very nice development.

Then the other one was to Mr. Biddlestone where we created the housing inspections. Now, two inspectors inspect all rooming houses, all boarding houses, or anyone that had a house or building up for rental to see that is in perfect condition before they can rent it. That, in itself, was an achievement. That, of course, was inaugurated by me really for Mr. Biddlestone. Those are the two, and of course, I worked on hundreds of ordinances that I didn't pass on.

M: If you could start all over again knowing what you know now, would you do it all over again? Would you make any changes?

J: I had a lovely life. I had a lovely married life. I was married 54 years. All the honors given to me by council when my wife and I had our fiftieth wedding anniversary, and my life in council, I think was supreme. One of the hardest things I had to do, when I was seventy years of age, was retire from Republic Steel. I loved my work there. It was a very fine ending, I thought, to think that I was able to continue until I was seventy years of age.

While I was president of council there never was a council meeting open other than with prayer.

M: Oh, really?

J: Yes.

M: I didn't know that.

J: Some of the council meetings before had ministers and all. If a minister wasn't there, I gave it myself. I've got the prayer in here that was always given.

M: Could you read it for us on the tape?

J: Yes.

Our Father in Heaven, we ask thy blessing of this body. As this council goes into session, help us to meet our responsibilities as legislatures here and in our committees. We pray for guidance in our decisions knowing that what is said and done here is under thy scrutiny. Give us the strength and wisdom to perform our duties and obligations in ways that are right. In his name, we ask it. Amen.

M: That's beautiful.

J: That was written by Jack Haustetler and his secretary. Jack was a very learned fellow. He was up at Packard Electric. No, he got his responsibility down in Rochester, New York.

M: This is the last question. What area in Warren were you really most happiest in, or was it a combination of all of them?

J: Well, I think the time I was happiest was the rearing of my children when I lived on 537 Oak Knoll for 44 years. Of course, I lost my wife there. The one thing I loved

above all was the beautiful flower garden that I had through the years. I had great admiration. I had a fountain that I built that circulated the water. It had electric lights under it, so at night it showed colored lights.

The one thing that I never mentioned, and you have to get this in your story in a different way, was my love for Courthouse Park. I worked for years. It was run-down quite badly and I worked for years. The fountain was rebuilt there. It was dedicated.

One of the honors bestowed upon me by council was the dedication of the fountain in honor of my name in 1963. Last summer on the 10th of July the fountain, which had been rebuilt, was once again rededicated in my honor in the Bicentennial Celebration. The park was always important.

M: Are there any other concluding comments you would care to make?

J: One thing I do hope is that downtown Warren will be re-established as a commercial center. I do not think it can ever be like any of the other older towns that have malls comparable to the Eastwood Mall. It can never come back a market appeal center like it was prior to that time. But I do hope it can be resurrected so that, once again, people will be very happy to go down there and do some of their trading. I do hope that.

M: It has been a very nice pleasure talking to you, Mr. Job.

J: Well, thank you very much. I'm very glad you came.

M: It's very inspirational. After that beautiful prayer, we would just like to wish you God's blessings and everything else. Thank you very much.

J: Thank you, Jim. Thank you for coming.

END OF INTERVIEW