

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Youngstown YMCA Project

Personal Experience

O. H. 415

HENRY HUNNEKE

Interviewed

by

Jeffery Collier

on

July 15, 1975

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

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INTERVIEWEE: HENRY HUNNEKE
INTERVIEWER: Jeffery Collier
SUBJECT: Personal History, YMCA Training and History,
Staff, Building, YSU Affiliation
DATE: July 15, 1975

C: This is Jeffery Collier and I am sitting here with Mr. Henry Hunneke who is the executive director of the Youngstown YMCA. The date today is July 15, 1975. I'm working with the Youngstown State University Oral History Program.

We're going to be reviewing a brief history of the YMCA here today. In fact, in front of us we have a compiled history that was put together about the Youngstown YMCA in June of 1968. I guess we can start from here.

As far as the YMCA goes itself, the Young Men's Christian Organization was founded in London, England, in 1844, by George Williams. I don't know at what time it came over to the United States of America. Would you happen to know that?

H: Guessing again, it was some time before 1900. I'm not sure of the exact date, but the first Youngstown meetings were in 1872.

C: They were held at the home of Dr. Gibson's parents.

H: Yes.

C: Did Dr. Gibson have anything to do with the founding of the Youngstown YMCA?

H: No. From here on Jeff, I think we should review the history that we have compiled and talk about specifics. We almost would have to look back ourselves because it's way before my time. Some of these things are just familiar by sound, but I don't know anything about them. Besides this little history, as you're talking of different people, they can

refer you to the records of board minutes that we have back in the newspapers. If you want to go through board minutes as we hit something that might be a big deal, especially when you get in to Youngstown State University; there are many, many minutes.

C: Okay.

H: You might have to do that kind of reviewing. Just speaking specifically, why, I just don't know that much about these fellows.

C: Is there anything that you've looked over at one time or another? Am I correct in assuming that?

H: Yes, probably a year or two ago.

C: Is there anything that you can think of offhand that you would like to bring out that is in the brief history here of the Y? For instance, you have something of yours right here that is not included in this, just small articles and stuff. I would assume, in fact, that's probably what the scrapbook and the other books are made up of.

H: Yes.

C: The YMCA has worked pretty closely with The Vindicator over the years. Am I correct?

H: Yes. The news media are really something that helps the YMCA keep going on and on. If we had to pay for all the things we have gotten in the way of publicity, why, you know about where we would be.

C: I'm going to use this and go back. I'm sure there will be a lot of things that come up in here that will be very helpful to me as I do the history of the Youngstown YMCA. What I would like to do is start at the time that you came here and go from there if we can. Perhaps you can fill in some things that are brief on the pages, just names and things, and also give some of the experiences that you had at the YMCA. To go along with that, I've asked everybody in conjunction with the Oral History Program to give a brief history of their background in terms of their education, their family, and how they came into YMCA work. Can you fill me in there.

H: Yes. Mine is quite a different story. I was educated, so far as college went, at Westminster in New Wilmington, Pennsylvania. As we all do, thinking specifically of what we want to do in the future, I was interested in becoming a coach. I've always been interested in athletics. In fact, when I was graduated from college, my first job was to teach

English and coach a football and basketball team in Matterhorn, New Jersey. I found out that I had to go back to school, for I was primarily interested in sports. I was working in New York City and got a call from Ray Sweeney, who was in Youngstown. He asked if I would like to come out and finish a basketball season with the Youngstown Sheet & Tube basketball team. At that time it was the beginning of pro basketball, because we all played all these big teams, Goodyear, Goodrich up in Akron, the Firestone Company, and traveled around. One of the first trips we made was in a national basketball tournament in Denver, Colorado. With that interest and joining an industrial team, I played here at the YMCA when Sheet & Tube, General Fireproofing, Commercial Shearing, and some of these other companies had teams down here. I knew nothing about a YMCA really, except what I heard by the news.

I met Paul Davies and at that time, and Jack McPhee, who is now with the old Ironsides Company and another really good contact for you. He was one of my first bosses here. He found out about my background and unconsciously I fit into YMCA training because of my college education, sports background, and that sort of thing. They offered me a job back in 1942. I came to Youngstown in 1937, so in the interim I played basketball. In fact, we played against the New York World Celtics who were known as the world champions at that time. We beat them, believe it or not, two out of five times. They beat us three and we won two. We had a tough team. That of course, was good publicity for the Youngstown YMCA. My first job was selling memberships. It just fortunately fit into the training, and I had very little extra college to do before I became a certified YMCA secretary. That was my start.

C: You came here in 1937. What did you do in the interim period from 1937 to 1942?

H: At that time I worked for Sheet & Tube; as I said, that's the reason I came here. I also sold insurance and worked with Dwight "Dike" Beede, who was the coach of the Youngstown State football team. He was an insurance man but his main thing was coaching and he did a wonderful job. He was a leader in the YMCA by the way and especially at Camp Fitch. There are a lot of stories about some of the things "Dike" Beede did. Even part of Camp Fitch is named for the Beede family. Also, the Beede flat is up there.

C: Is that how it got started? Did the Youngstown State University go up there in the fall for football?

H: Yes, "Dike" Beede was the instigator of that. He loved camp. Dr. Earlderfer, I think in some way, was a doctor for the state university and also interested in kids in general.

- C: When you started with the YMCA in 1942, could you tell us a little bit what the YMCA was like as opposed to today, perhaps the number of staff, if you can remember, and also anything else related to the building of the YMCA as far as the membership and some of the specifics that you can remember.
- H: I don't think I can remember specifically but there were approximately three or four thousand members against the ten thousand we have today. I can remember this building as a small building with one gymnasium on the main floor that is still there, the one with the running track. The other gym was the upstairs one on the third floor where you now see all those handball courts and squash courts. Believe it or not, that was a gymnasium. Between those things and a pool that was 60 x 20, you can imagine the size. This is something that I get quite a charge out of because some of the men who are now my age and around there now as board members will talk about the wonderfully big programs they had and the size and all that sort of thing. Really, it was so small compared to what we have now that they don't even believe it. We've extended from that. I can remember one time that I had a real go-around with the physical director because he was advising we take down the running track on the first floor because it hindered the basketball games. Fortunately, we left ours in. There was a time when all YMCA's were taking out their tracks. Now, you know yourself, you can't walk in that gym without seeing somebody running around that track.

There were two games of basketball that could be played and, right now, we can play five full-court basketball games here at one time. Of course, we now have two olympic pools which are 75' x 35'. It's so much greater, it's unbelievable. I don't know whether you want to get into the building as it sits today?

- C: I would like to if you wouldn't mind because that's . . . a lot of people, I think, don't know the history of the YMCA just as far as the building alone goes. Had it always been at this location?
- H: The impression to me is that it started on the corner of Champion and West Federal. Things happened between there and we moved down the street a little bit to here. When I came in it was here as I just explained it. Around that time too, West Federal Building was built, which is only a mile and a half away from here. Then of course, again now, you'll have to adjust the time as you study these things, but the U.S. Steel Company gave us the property and part of the building for the McDonald YMCA which you know about because your dad was the executive director of that branch. That branch went along well for a number of years until

the work kind of outgrew the community. They finally wanted to have a little community recreation program, so we turned that building over to the community because it was a bit unfair for the YMCA to be out there with such a small, not only program, but income. We couldn't stay with the income or else we would have had to have YMCA's all around the place, in Campbell, in Boardman, in Poland, and that sort of thing. We couldn't stay with that.

West Federal was a different proposition. It was primarily black because of the district. There were many white members up there, but people didn't realize they were the same as the blacks here. In the interim of the long period of years trying to keep that building occupied with staff, and the maintenance that had to be kept up as the building got older, it was just an impossibility. We finally closed that whole Youngstown program to Central. Frankly, it's working out great. We have more black members now than we've ever had before. Many, many more, instead of thinking of it as a community center, they think of it as the YMCA paying their way, which I think is so important. We can't do without the people who can't afford to pay their YMCA membership. We're down now to this even though we do a lot of area work.

We consider the Youngstown YMCA affecting the whole Mahoning County. The high Y and tri-high Y program for youth really goes into all the surrounding schools, even the Columbiana area schools. A couple of years ago we tried to get a YMCA started in Columbiana County, even to the point where we started to talk about a building. That's when that broke down because again, we didn't have enough concentrated members in one area to supply a building.

We began organizing the point of having one great, big, central branch. Youngstown, by the way, is quite different here. Many of the YMCA's have branched out, and they have so many small branches that their central branches in the cities have gone downhill so badly that they're closing some of them. We took the attitude that with the one building serving so many, many people, it might hold up. I really think that the decision of the board keeping Youngstown YMCA down here is going to help the city eventually. You can see what's happening now with the closing of the traffic one way at the Central and at the square. And now with the city garage and the plaza down here I think it has worked both ways. I think the YMCA is in an advantageous position to do some good and to have many members. I think this is really going to work. Our branch work now is going to be a little tougher to do, but with the access of 680 and the highways around here, people are getting in easier.

One big kick is still the pay parking. Many of the YMCA's that have their blacktop driveways around the Y's are making out pretty well so far as the branch is concerned. We are now known as one of the strongest Central YMCA's in the whole country. Of course, we just mentioned playing five basketball games at one time. The new community gym, which I consider two full-court basketball games because we have that divider, will serve the community for dinners and for meetings. We've already had quite a few exhibitions in there. I think it's going to again enhance the downtown area.

C: As opposed to other YMCA's which have branched out, you've made the statement you feel one of the reasons for the strength here is because you have stayed centralized. Do you see branching out in the future or do you think that the YMCA will remain right here as one unit and not branch out?

H: No. I think eventually we are going to branch out. We've already had feelers for the Boardman area which has a youth center now. Something like that could even become YMCA oriented in the future. I think they'll be small. There might be a different kind of program. Some YMCA's have started by building just the pool in the outside area. There are so many of the private clubs now that are having pools and that. The whole community can't buy into it, it's too expensive for them. Some people still gripe about the prices of our memberships, but if they think of what it costs them to do the same thing in a private club, it would be ten and twenty times as much money to actually have the same thing. I think branches are in the future. I wouldn't even chance to guess on where and when it would start. If something like Boardman would happen it would be because there already is a building there with a program going on. Personally, I just see that they would like some expertise of a staff that's trained for this kind of work, which we have.

You asked me a little while ago about staff. When I started here in 1942, I can remember there was a general executive and a central branch executive. Then there were three or four men under them. I would say that six was a big staff. We have eighteen on our staff now. Probably of those eighteen, fourteen are certified directors. We have a standard in personnel. Now at this YMCA, we have approximately 100 people on our payroll. People are amazed to hear that. When you think of our maintenance force, our dining service, our program people, and of course in the summertime . . . we just had a pay recently in which we must have been up around 140 because of Camp Fitch. All the leaders, well, you went through that so you know the Camp Fitch part of it. We probably have 40 people on the payroll right now who are young kids in college and in high school. Even Camp Fitch has expanded so much. We still

have the 300 acres, but the buildings we have just put on within the last three or four years; we've put on a maintenance building and a horse corral. In the maintenance building, you can play a big basketball game in there.

C: It's that big?

H: Yes, it's really big. Of course, Lake Geneva, the industrial management built that lake up there twenty years ago. We now have inland swimming as well as swimming in Lake Erie. By the way, I don't know whether this is going to affect your study or anything, but I think one of the most interesting things to me is the way Lake Erie is clearing up. Even the publicity I read in the paper now doesn't tell you what we see living on the lake. You can go in and out again and stand up to your neck and see your toes in the water. The fishing boats are coming back off Lake Erie property. It's really clearing up.

C: I remember for years when I first started going to camp, we would go down and swim in the lake. In fact, this was just before Geneva was being constructed. Then of course, Geneva was constructed to be 50/50; then the water got so bad that we used Geneva exclusively.

H: One of the reasons Geneva was built was because of the ear problems we were getting in Lake Erie. Now, we have got a close testing spot in Erie, and the health department comes down along the lake all the time. We haven't had a bad test in years.

C: Is that right?

H: Yes. We have to watch it because of the turmoil. When the rough water comes in and seaweed comes in and stuff like that, then we won't let the kids go in. Mostly that's just for comfort. There's nothing wrong with it except it's not clean. You know, you don't like to go in stringy water. When things go back out in two hours, it's perfect water again.

C: Is the camp now using that again?

H: Oh yes. It's just great.

C: I'm surprised. I'm sure a lot of people aren't aware of that.

H: I'm sure. I don't know, again I'm talking to you as a person involved right on the lake. I think that the news media has some kind of an agreement with the states to keep talking bad about it for a while. I think it's a good purpose: They're trying to make the people understand

that they have to keep working to keep this thing so clean. I think they have got it cleaner than they're admitting because it's just great swimming up there.

C: That's good, I'm glad to hear that. I can surely remember swimming in there and it was . . .

H: You can remember the dead fish, huh?

C: That's right, seaweed and everything.

Let's get back to bringing everybody up-to-date since 1942. When you came here in 1942, you said that you started at the youth department.

H: No, I started at membership.

C: What did your duties entail as membership chairman or membership executive at that time?

H: At that time my responsibility was raising money, not only for the membership dues, but also running a membership campaign which consists of getting in donations as well as the membership money. At that time I went in the program, but it wasn't titled as such. You can imagine with a physical director, a membership man, and an industrial management secretary . . . then we had to switch around and everybody took somebody else's job. I did everything. I can remember being sent to Camp Fitch to run it for a month. I can remember being sent out to the schools to make the talks on trying to get kids to go to camp. Of course, I liked that part when I was sent into the gym to be a physical instructor because that was my background, but here it was a hobby. If I got too interested in it, the boss would say, "Hey, back to the membership office. We need money."

C: Did they have a physical director at that time?

H: Yes.

C: Do you happen to remember who that was?

H: Yes. There was a switch around there too because just at the time I was coming in, Al Fairfield, a very popular and well-known person in town, was just on his way out, along with Wendel Morrow, and Ronny Lacion who worked for General Fireproofing. Some of these fellows were part-time men; we do the same now with the college fellows who were part-time physical directors.

As far as I'm concerned with my relationship to the Y, the

first real physical director was Oggy Penier. He was a Youngstown man who had gone to other YMCA's to work, but landed back here about the time I started. In age as well as in Y experience, he was much more experienced than me. I learned a lot from Oggy.

C: He was already in YMCA work, and he came to work in the Youngstown YMCA?

H: Right.

C: What YMCA did he come from?

H: Detroit, Michigan, I believe. He had also been in a couple of other places.

C: He came here as a physical director?

H: He came back here as physical director. He served two years as the central branch executive before he finally retired. This was in 1960 when I was appointed general executive.

C: In the interim between . . . so to speak, carrying through year by year, how long were you affiliated with the membership? What did you move into next?

H: I would have to look at these years again because they sure disappear. I went from membership to the central branch executive, really. Then in about 1958, I guess, I became the associate general executive and at that time, which I had no knowledge of, I think Paul might have already been thinking of retirement. In 1960 he became ill and had a little bit of a leave of absence. In 1961 then, I was appointed the general executive.

C: When you say Paul, you're talking about Paul Davies?

H: Right.

C: Paul Davies was the executive when you first came here. He was the executive for the whole period of time?

H: Yes. His background experience to become a general executive was different. He was in the youth department. Well, that's part of state, too. I guess we all were jacks-of-all-trades. One of Paul's problems was an injury that he received teaching gymnastics. He was in the lower gym spotting some kids who were tumbling. One of the young people wasn't doing it right and Paul said, "Here, let me show you. You spot me." He comes in doing a back flip and the kid walks away. Paul hit the floor and broke his back I guess. There were many years when the doctors tried to put him in a cast and he refused to do it. He's got to roll out of bed, get on his hands and

- knees, and crawl before he can stand up. I think that's guts. He's still living. He's in Florida and he still does not have a cast. He did lots of things too. He was primarily a youth director before he became general executive.
- C: You said that you and the people here at the YMCA are pretty much jacks-of-all-trades. I think that certainly is the case as I've seen the YMCA. It seems the people come first whether it be a membership or a program or a physical part of the YMCA.
- H: You know, Jeff, I'm glad you said that because I was beginning to think like everyone else, becoming the expert on your left ear and your right ear. When you think of our staff, when you think of what we're doing here, and when you see them all around, we each have our own jobs, but we're all doing the other things. I know that when Dick Pollack, who is just a really good man as our youth director, is in our gym it's because somebody else is away doing something else, and so he had to become the gym instructor for that day. Everyone is still switching around and I think they're absolutely right.
- C: I think it certainly helps in the building of the YMCA. You mentioned that this is a strong YMCA. I personally feel a main reason is because over the course of the years the other people have gained expertise, at least somewhat of an expertise, in a job. Let's take membership and then move into another position at the YMCA. A new man who has been at work has a lot of things to offer. I'm sure there are times when you can sit down with four people and three of them at one time or another might have been affiliated with [other areas] and therefore they can add some helpful things.
- H: You just asked a minute ago about what happened when I started. Let's take the membership campaign, for example. Part of my job as membership director was to run the campaign. At that time we had two divisions: A downtown division and an industrial division. We had two leaders, two staff men, who would work in the campaign for me. One in the industrial and one in the downtown. We covered the area that way. Now we would fluctuate between eight and twelve divisions a year, and each division is run by a staff person. I think this year we're coming up with eight or nine. Again, because of staff, in the last couple of years we've contemplated having fewer directors. Because of our economic situation, of course, and with all the things that have happened lately, we're now really short staffed about three or four people than we were three years ago. We compensate for that by hiring college kids to come in as life guards and for the things that we have to do. We assign them to specific jobs during the day. The membership campaign

has developed over the years. I can remember as a membership director I had four divisions, and then I had six. We are now to whatever we need by the number of staff. We find out that if we have one staff member responsible for a division, which probably means somewhere between 60 and 100 people, and get them together, we could probably run a campaign with about 600 workers.

- C: Did you say that the major difference between the campaign of 1945 and the campaign of 1975 is the number of people, staffs, and divisions? I think that probably you've worked with business in the valley very closely. Have they always been the backbone to the YMCA?
- H: Yes, I think. Again, it's relative, you see, to the size of the members and the size of the positions in the campaign, when I talked about just starting with two and now we have eight and this sort of thing. Really, we're blessed with real backing from industry and business. The Industrial Management Club, which was the old Foreman's Club, has been here a long time. I think this has helped the relationship between the industrial people and the YMCA, financially as well as anything. They still have it, and there are 3,000 members in that club. Again, back at that time when Lake Erie was bad and we were having ear problems, that was one of the reasons they backed us and spent \$20,000 to build Lake Geneva. Now it's almost \$20,000 to clean it out.
- C: I would also like to talk in conjunction with the YMCA and the university. I do remember being a member here. At that time Youngstown State did not have a gym, so the school used to run their physical education classes at the YMCA.
- H: Right.
- C: When you came here, how was the school affiliated with the university? I'm sure there are things, if dorm students lived here then or if the physical department was the only area. What are some of the ties of the university if you can remember?
- H: The technical aspects are quite strange, I guess. The Youngstown University started in the building. It had a floor here and was primarily a business college. The YMCA had the Youngstown College named. (The YMCA) bought some property up on that hill and the college started to separate. We very quickly found out that in order to become accredited, Youngstown College had to have their own president and such. There were some beginnings of "Okay, we had a separation, but yet we were combined." The general executive and a number of board members of the YMCA had to be on the board of the college. At that time, I think, the president of the college also had to be on the board of the YMCA. They kept a close

relationship. When it became a state university the rules changed again. They [Youngstown State University] had to separate from the YMCA. They paid something for properties and such, but a very nominal amount. They finally became a private institution.

C: When you first started here, in 1942, was the university using the facilities at the Y?

H: Yes. We handled the physical education department. They came down here for the classes. Were you still involved in that yourself coming down here?

C: No.

H: That got to be quite a big business both ways. We had income of around \$20,000 a year, which we were getting because we ran the physical program. Again, every time we ran the program it would cost us money. With the kids coming in, we had to pay an extra physical director to run the program, we had building usage costs, and we had to pay extra locker clerks to keep the place open that early in the morning when the class was coming in. I don't think we ever benefited that much financially from the interrelated program. It just was a good thing. Of course, the YMCA's primary purpose all the time is working with people. Your dad is one of the best at that. Your dad worked for me, of course, for many years; he was one of the best directors I ever had, the feeling for working comfortably with him because of the program. Now I see in Ridgewood, New Jersey, that his programs are always strong. What I feel good about is that they look like the Youngstown YMCA programs.

C: That's right. I've heard a lot here.

Was it 1960 or 1961 when you took over?

H: In 1960 I started as kind of an acting general executive. In 1961 Paul retired and I actually got the job. We can use 1961, I guess.

C: Was Oggy Panier still here at that time?

H: Yes. He was still physical director and because of being so close to retirement--when you become a new executive you struggle with changing staff--Oggy took the job as a central branch executive and helped me organize the whole staff. He worked for about two years at that before he retired.

C: Who took his place when he retired?

H: We had a little interim there of my handling it all again

until Dick Bennett was appointed. When Dick Bennett was appointed we would have to look it up, I don't know. He was the physical director and came into this two years ago; he was appointed associated general executive.

C: Can you give a little explanation of the title?

H: Yes. There was central branch executive before that. Two years ago I appointed him associate general executive so he could help me with the whole operation. He would centrally handle this. Bob Doyle is now central; he handles just central. In fact, he has a dual job; he is membership director. He has the right to assign staff the positions. Bennett is working closely with Doyle, training him as he comes along. Bennett now also helps with camp or any other interrelated programs we have.

I hope that he'll proceed to get my job. Right now the executive committee is studying whether to promote Bennett or whether to interview a number of outside people, general executives from other YMCA's. This usually happens in Y work: When there is an opening the YMCA directors have the right to go where they want to go. They can move around. Personally I am for Bennett because I've been training him. The bank president told me the other day that he has been training a man for two years for this job. He doesn't know whether he's going to get it or not because he has a board. He's hoping that he gets it and I feel the same way. Bennett has been working for me for eighteen years. I know his honesty; I know what he does, and how he is. In fact, when your dad and I talked over the first offers that he had, we turned a couple down. I can remember him talking in the YAC when some fellows first came who your dad was really interested in and which I saw as a thing too. In fact, the fellow who was sent from Boardman was up to talk to me about a reference in recommendation of your dad. They said, "What do you say about the job?" I said, "I'll tell you what reference I'll give him, I don't want you to take him." The guy said, "Well, that's a good reference." I said, "Yes, I know." I didn't know how else to say it. I don't want to say this, but I think Tom wants to run a Y. He could get started younger because he would have had to wait until I disappeared from the act. Your dad is closer to my age than some of the younger boys. That's the way it works. The YMCA is not only working with people on the outside. I think we're very social about working with each other.

C: I was going to add in conjunction with what we're talking about, it seems that the Youngstown YMCA here has certainly been a starting point for many people who have gone into becoming executive directors or whatever.

- H: We're really proud of that, Jeff. There are a lot of fellows that have left here and gone on to be successful. Since my time, fifteen to twenty people have gone into other YMCA's and have become the heads of them. This doesn't mean we lose people easily; in fact, we're known in the area as "how to get a guy out of Youngstown" because we do turn down a lot of jobs.
- C: I think that not only says a lot for the YMCA, but also for the people here because they certainly are being very well trained; they are going on to other YMCA's to direct them, hopefully successfully.
- H: Thank God. I don't know of any who went to other places and failed.
- C: I can't think of any either.
- H: We were just talking and you said that part of the interest that comes is so many little things, not worrying about the big things and mentioning Camp Reynolds to you . . . After Pearl Harbor, as in every war, the YMCA's throughout the country became interested in serving people again. In this association because Camp Reynolds was close, they always had weekend passes. They came over to Youngstown from Sharon and around that district. At that time we had them coming in and out of this building, and we wondered what to do with that many men.
- C: You said Camp Reynolds, was this an actual Army camp?
- H: Army camp, yes. They would get these weekend passes and flood Youngstown. There wasn't that many places for them to stay at that time. We became kind of a motel. The name wasn't even familiar at that time, but over a weekend we put between 300 to 400 men to bed in this YMCA. We have only 150 rooms and most of those were taken, so we would set up cots in the gymnasiums. As they came over we would rent a cot for 35¢, or something like that. We had a lay force at that time of a thousand people or better, meaning girls who would come down and entertain. We had dances for the soldiers and different industries would be responsible for certain nights. They would supply all the food. I can remember that my membership office was downstairs right off of the lobby. Every weekend I had pies stacked to the ceiling. On Monday morning when you walked on the floor, you kind of squashed them. Every weekend we would have to put all of those cots up and take them down again so that we could start our program on Monday. This was a big thing. What do you say from there? I can remember having people object because we danced on Sunday. We had an orchestra and we danced in the lower gym. We had to get the cots away quickly enough so we could dance in the afternoon. We had many

objections from people saying it was the wrong thing to do. Our answer was what will they do if we don't do this. We even had dancing on Sunday.

C: Did that go on the whole way through the war?

H: Yes. We had a couple of years of that. I think we did a really good job on that one.

C: I could be wrong, but I'm sure that's something a lot of people do not know about. I've never even heard of this myself.

H: Is that right? It was very interesting.

C: Is there anything else that you could think of?

H: Like that?

C: Yes.

H: I'm glad we didn't have many wars than that.

C: That's something which is a little known fact.

H: Yes, I guess you're right. You don't hear that much about it.

C: That's right. I'm sure there are a lot of small things that happen which the YMCA does for the community and, perhaps, doesn't get published in The Vindicator.

H: The things you hear are the things you remember. Like the First World War, there was a little trouble about cigarettes. I don't know whether you remember anything about this either, but that gave a YMCA such a bad name because they said the YMCA sold cigarettes to servicemen. Really, they didn't sell them. It was one of those deals where they got involved with another agency, and somebody pocketed some black market money. That's what is remembered. The good things are so easily forgotten. Of course, there were many, many funny stories about the fellows coming in. They came in and they had a few drinks, and you would have to put the guys to bed and all that sort of thing. One time we were having a gay 90's party; Sheet & Tube, I think, was running it. We had a bar set up in the lobby and people were wearing little black moustaches, the cardboard things you put on your face, and working behind it. Of course, they were serving orange juice and that. One soldier came in the front door and he had been drinking. He kind of staggered over to the main desk. I was on duty that night so this is not hearsay--I actually saw this happen. He turned around and saw the bar with these guys drinking at it. He said,

"My God, the YMCA. I don't believe it. I'm not going to stay here," and he walked out. He was drinking and he objected to it. I can remember putting these fellows to bed. You know how narrow the benches are in the locker rooms. I can remember guys sleeping on one of those narrow . . .

C: Those were what, six inches wide?

H: Yes. We were so busy, fellows would actually sleep on them.

You asked a little while ago about when the YMCA started. Talking about the present size of this YMCA, taking almost a city block, it was started from the corner to 17 North Champion. We had this here and we talked about the two gymnasiums. Back in about 1953, give or take a few years, we moved the YA, the athletic club, to the third floor. We started out with about 300 or 400 members and then that kept growing until the point where it got so big.

By the way, interrupting ourselves again, the third floor, where the athletic club is now located, was WKBN radio station. I don't know whether you knew that or not. They were here on the third floor and rented the YMCA for many years. At that time, they [WKBN] moved out and we took it over for the athletic club. Besides the pool, we also built the gym approximately on the third and fourth floors, which is on the northeast side of the building right over the pool. At that time we also built the women's locker room downstairs so that was one really big change.

Clear back to almost in 1968, we started another building change. The athletic club, originally organized for about 600 members, had grown so we built an addition onto it. The athletic club can now take up to 900 members. At this time we also built the community room, which is a great, big gym on the northwest side of the building. This is now the biggest gym we have. We've really expanded since I've been here in this building. We now have at least three to four times the athletic space that we had before. When we took the athletic club from the basement to the third floor, where WKBN was, we added many more locker rooms for the young people.

C: Did anyone else occupy any of the other floors? In other words, you said WKBN was on the third floor; there are what, seven floors there?

H: Six.

C: Was anybody else on any of the other floors or had that been maintained just as rooms?

H: Just maintained as rooms. Right now, Jeff, we're really

way down in occupancy, like Youngstown State University for example. I think they're having some problems with dorms at this point too. The kids are not coming here the way they used to, so instead of having the 150 rooms occupied we are probably down now to about 50%. This has happened all over in YMCA. I think it's probably because of the competition between motels; the Days Inns, for example, charge around \$10, \$11, and \$12 for a room. To maintain our facilities we had to go up around \$5 and \$5.50 a room. When you have to have a community bathroom and shower--and a gut can go out for that kind of money--well, it has kind of cut into the YMCA's service. I don't think it was a business, really. It's a service to give fellows the residence rooms. Now, in other YMCA's, they've actually cut out their residence and put in some other things. Of course, there's a tax problem involved here so they're fussing with it at the moment. We have a committee now studying to see what we want to do with our top three floors. At this moment we want to keep some residence open for the people who are having this kind of need. There is a need there for the young people that are switching around or traveling through, or for family problems and that sort of thing. People come in as residents. We've got some old-timers up there who have been here for many, many years. I don't know where they would go. Again, they now have these residence halls for old people.

- C: I think Dick Bennett was just mentioning that some of the people who have lived here for many years have moved into these halls. I think, if I am not mistaken, they are located around the university.
- H: Gutnecht Towers is right up here. They can live there cheaper than at the YMCA, so you can't blame them for going. They have nice residences. They have their own bathroom facilities, and they're pretty private. They have kitchen equipment in those little apartments and, of course, they have one, small room. I think the residence in the YMCA is going to become a thing of the past, even in Youngstown.
- C: I was just going to say, do you feel all across the country?
- H: Yes. I better retract a little bit of that. Some YMCA's in the busy sections of big cities, like the Chicago YMCA, the Lawson YMCA, are all residence. They run it as a hotel, like the ones that they are competing with. I believe they are paying taxes and everything else. That serves the purpose, that's why they're doing it. Our program in Youngstown is not to serve residents; it's to serve program people.

I think one of the biggest changes that came about in the last few years is free Y membership, as we call it. We've

always had a nine year old minimum age. They now come in and you go to any age. We like the 90 year old members. We started to talk about the younger children strictly not for publicity . . . let's say nine or in fourth grade. We had eight year olds wanting to get into the YMCA, so we kind of closed our eyes to their age. If the kid could make it, that was fine. We would caution the parent, "Now you're starting them a little young." It didn't happen; the eight year olds gobbled it up just like the nine year olds. Now we're back to younger than that. You can see as you come in the building downstairs now, all of those mothers with their little two and three year olds. We've got swimming classes now. We're going crazy with such a busy program in the morning. Those little tykes come to gym as well as the pool.

C: Is that right?

H: Yes. It's really funny.

C: I didn't know that.

H: You read in the paper about the six month old swimmers and all that sort of thing. We had that program too. At this moment, if I'm correct, Dick Bennett could answer you better why we cut out the program, but it wasn't taking off and there were only a few kids that took to the water like that. You could put them under the water and they would struggle to the top. Frankly, I personally don't see that much in this kind of program, anyway. I think people should do what their children can do. In other words, sure they are going to cry; a little two or three year old cries the first couple of times you put him in the pool. They way our people work, they are really better than the parents. The little kid depends on that swim instructor and he finally has them swimming, but if a child gets so nervous about it then he is not ready. We advise the people not to push, to wait until they want to do it. You don't very often convince a mother though. She keeps him in the program until the end. We make out with them, over 90% of them anyway.

C: Do you still have the programs like the learn to swim programs?

H: Yes.

C: The Vindicator's learn to swim week and things like that?

H: Yes. I think the biggest thing in the YMCA is that you take the average people up and down, which means for skill ability, for financial reasons, or for whatever. You take the people that excel in sports, they become varsity athletes. We get the kids who don't make the varsity teams but who still want to be in all of those leagues and competitions; therefore

we have our leagues for high school kids. Then we go back down to junior high and junior high now has so many athletic teams. We have probably more leagues than they [the schools] have with the kids participating in the athletics down here. We do what we have to do in the times we have to do it.

C: You also have the Y golf league. I don't know how much involvement the Y has in that, but it's probably the biggest league in Youngstown.

H: Yes, by far. There are hundreds of teams in that thing. It has been going on for many, many years. Really I think the Y has performed a very good service for them. It's a nice league. Men are in it and it's the kind of league men should be in, with the YMCA as a background and the morals that we try to put in the league and that sort of thing. Lately, they have come around to the point where they are now helping the YMCA by being on our campaign teams. They should have been all the time. Just recently we made a nice inn with them, and they're helping the YMCA campaign, just as the industrial management club is. Just this year, by the way, we are starting a new one. Bennett got the idea about what is happening to the kids who can't get jobs in the summertime. You know now, that jobs are scarce. They started talking about a junior golf league for kids under eighteen. Specifically as I hear it, they thought of teenagers. They're pretty far down into the teenage group. I think that some of the eleven and twelve year olds have sneaked into this program so they're having a junior league which Dick Pollack is now running. We have another golf league started this summer. Frankly, I think it will go. Some of the fellows from the older golf league, the senior golf league--especially those who are retired men and are still playing--are now helping train these kids. We have a program in Mill Creek. I think it's on Tuesday morning because the golf league is on Tuesday afternoon. It's another program that just cropped up, like you mentioned, these kids who are coming in at a preschool age just happened because it was a need for people to do it.

C: One final question for right now. Can you see the YMCA changing in any way which you would like to comment on? I know that the YMCA has changed drastically over the years. In fact, I've heard my father say that the YMCA is now a big business. Can you see it going any way in the future, in the very near future, that you think is good or bad?

H: Now you're asking personal opinion. The National Council of the YMCA's, which is our clearing house really, doesn't tell us what to do. Each YMCA has local autonomy. The

instruction of the National Council has become so big. It's really going like corporations where they're trying to get a little more power than just suggesting what to do. The YMCA is trying to help everyone. They are in with the Vietnam situation and Korea situation. No matter what happens, the YMCA is playing a part in it helping people and doing that sort of thing. We've raised world service money to put money into other countries on a voluntary basis. They give us all a goal, or we accept a goal if we want to, and then they assign a YMCA director, for example, in some foreign country. We pick up part of that bill and then they get the country to substitute some of the money. All of this kind of thing is fine, but the YMCA is also going into all of these welfare program monies.

We're doing some of it right here, Jeff. We now have help from these kids who are taking the jobs through the summer which are funded by the city, funded by the state, and funded by welfare. We almost have to do it. I see some good in it, but personally I feel that the YMCA should stay as a membership organization and have the people pay as much as they can into it as a member so that they can use it. The people that cannot pay, I would like to see it raised from industry, from business, and from these people. For example, an athletic club membership would cost us over \$200 per person. He's paying for a youth member's membership besides his own. It doesn't cost us the \$210 to service that man; he's paying some money into helping the YMCA stay organized as a membership organization. I have a feeling that they're trying to take away local economy. The National Council of Officers, and directors like myself, would object to that statement. They say they're not trying to do that; they're just trying to feed us all this information. I feel it and I see it coming as a big thing that eventually will be organized like big business.

They're talking about centers right now where--for example, somewhere between Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Youngstown, and Toledo and all around--there would be some computerized business effort so that we all feed our stuff in through a computer and that sort of thing. That certainly isn't local anymore to me. It's going to take away even the crossover on raising money from companies and industries. If we get into that sort of thing then instead of us being able to contact an industry in Youngstown, we'll have to go to the base in New York City or wherever they might be organized. I think these changes are . . . I don't know how to say it because I think they're going to come whether we like it or not. So far as I'm concerned personally, I applaud all that stuff saying that we are a local economy, that we have our own problems in Youngstown.

For example, the United Fund, the United Fund and the

National Council of the YMCA are now having top-level organizational meetings to try to tell us what the rules are. The United Fund tells us how to report our books. Some of this of course, is good; we cooperate. At a meeting I have even helped the community chest with a form they handed out. I said, "You know, I don't see this form at all. Let me suggest something." I suggested something that is now in the form. I think that all agencies in Youngstown should have kind of the same reporting so that when you go to the budget hearing committee meetings you might know what you're talking about. We have one set of books for the YMCA and one set of books for the community chest. This is pretty tough to coordinate at a meeting because people thing you're hiding things. Now, this community chest, at this moment it is still called functional budgeting I guess, has made it better really, because they know we're reporting their way. It's good because they're the ones we're reporting their way. It's good because they're the ones we're getting the money from. Our community chest supports us through the tune of around 10 or 11 percent. In some YMCA's throughout the country the community chest in that area might be supporting them 50%. Some of the agencies other than the YMCA, for example the YWCA, they get a much bigger percentage of support according to their budget. They're almost getting now as much money as we're getting. We get \$120,000, somewhere around there. The National Council worries me.

C: As I go through some of the people that I will be speaking with over the course in the next six or seven weeks I'm sure there might be a time when I would like to come back and go over some other things. I hope that we can sit down perhaps one more time. Thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW