

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Youngstown YMCA Project

Personal Experience

O. H. 416

FRED B. KING, JR.

Interviewed

by

Jeffery Collier

on

July 25, 1975

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Youngstown YMCA Project

INTERVIEWEE: FRED B. KING, JR.

INTERVIEWER: Jeffery Collier

SUBJECT: Personal History, Education, YMCA Interest,
Campaigns

DATE: July 25, 1975

C: This is an interview with Mr. Fred B. King, Jr. at his place of business, 292 Madison Avenue in Youngstown, Ohio, by Jeffery Collier. Today's date is July 25, 1975, and it is approximately 3:45 p.m. I'm working for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program on the history of the YMCA. Mr. King is the past president of the Youngstown YMCA, and a long time member of the board of directors.

The first question I would have to ask you is: Could you give me a background as to your education, your family, and basically how you got affiliated with the YMCA in Youngstown?

K: Well, I was born and raised in Youngstown. My family had no particular connection with the YMCA. The man who ultimately became the general secretary, Mr. Paul B. Davies, was a very good friend of ours. As a youngster I belonged to the YMCA, although I never was a participant. When I was eleven or twelve years old, I had a paper route; the paper route got bigger and I had no time to go down after school as many of the boys did. I carried papers clear into my senior year in high school. Then I worked in the summers with my father in a furniture store in Girard on a truck. I guess it was when I finished college, I came home and started to work with my father. At that time some of the boys that I knew had become affiliated with the Y's Men's Club, which unfortunately dissolved when the war came on. They got me interested in the Y's Men's Club. I belonged to that for many years and I believe that that was my first connection with the Y. I hadn't belonged to that very long when they got me involved with campaigns. I guess that was probably in 1930 and I think

I've been involved in every one since. I was campaign chairman in 1940.

C: Did you attend high school here in Youngstown?

K: Oh, yes, Rayen High School.

C: Where did you go to college?

K: I went to Washington & Lee University for three years. I did not graduate. I only went for three years because the Depression came on. Then, after I came home from college . . . I had been playing in the orchestra for a while and had planned to come home and go to work for the Sheet & Tube Company, but in the fall of 1929, they were firing, not hiring, so I went to work for my father for a while.

C: And your father was in what business?

K: My father was a funeral director and I was very happy to have a job as most kids would have been in those days. So I got started and found that I liked it. I served my apprenticeship and went on to Cincinnati College of Mortuary Science where I received my education. From there I was subsequently licensed as an embalmer and funeral director.

C: When were you licensed?

K: In 1932.

C: You've been in the business ever since then?

K: Really since 1929 full-time.

C: Could you tell us about what the Y's Men's Club was and what they did and any people you remember in it?

K: The Y's Men's Club was just a group of younger fellows in their twenties, some of them a little older. There were attorneys and doctors and boys who were with some of the larger corporations. I suppose that maybe there were about thirty in the group. We used to meet, I think, every Thursday night. We generally met at the Y and had supper there and then we went out to somebody's home and we would play cards; I used to play the saxophone and Harold Collins played the piano. During these Depression years, we didn't have any money to do anything, so we made our own fun. I enjoyed it very much. But as you get older, those things are just shoved in the background and you get involved in other things.

By that time, the Junior Chamber of Commerce came along,

and I got involved in that and then Kiwanis Club. So, as I say, along about 1940, when the war years came along, the Y's Men's Club just sort of evaporated and the members, many of them, went to the Army. Then I believe they tried to resurrect the Y's Men's Club many years after. Somehow or other it just didn't catch on; the Y's Men's Club didn't mean what it used to mean. They have had any particular project, such as a service club might, except that we did things for the YMCA. We were all involved in campaigns, membership campaigns. It was all very exciting. Bill Mead was assistant general secretary and subsequently went on to other things, as a fund raiser with the Ketcham Company in Pittsburgh. We lost a number of boys in 1937 when the Republic Steel Company moved their general offices out of Youngstown to Cleveland. We lost six or seven good boys because of that. But I still see the majority of the boys.

- C: You said that when you were about eleven years old, you had a paper route. As a boy, had you gone before that time to the Y?
- K: Not with any regularity. I didn't really get involved. I used to swim in there and maybe go down on Saturdays.
- C: What would it be like to go down there approximately when you were around nine years old?
- K: I was born in 1908 so that would be 1918.
- C: Would there be a pretty good number of people down there?
- K: Oh yes. It always seemed to me that there were hundreds of kids and at that time they had the smaller Y. That was so much smaller than the one we have now. The old building--on the corner of Federal and Champion--was subsequently torn down and a theatre was built there. That then subsequently was torn down. I remember there was an extension into the 3rd and 4th floors of that building. I remember going to big Halloween parties that the Y would hold there, a couple hundred kids. I was involved in Boy Scouts in those days and Boy Scouts was generally in the evenings. I would deliver papers and then go up to Boy Scouts. I was not really, as a kid, active in the YMCA program. I did go down on Saturdays and learn how to swim. I was not athletically inclined. I like athletics, but I was not one of the boys who made the team and I was always on the bench. My father used to say "your feet are too big," so I was never on the basketball team which was a major indoor sport.
- C: Was the biggest thing at the time when you were going down there, swimming, basketball, or were those the biggest in 1917?

- K: Well, they stressed calisthenics. The general secretary was at one time the boys' secretary, the physical director. They used to do a lot of tumbling and gymnastics. They were very strong in that. Boys learned acrobatics.
- C: As a matter of fact, Sweet Hunneke was just telling me a week or so ago that that is how Mr. Davies hurt his back. Apparently he was doing some gymnastics and somebody was supposed to catch him and they didn't. He hurt his back like that.
- K: I've never heard that story, but it could be true. It's interesting that they're beginning to bring this back. During this summer, I played volleyball. In the big gym, which is divided now, is where we played volleyball, on the one side of the gym. On the other side they are bringing in youngsters, little toddlers, who look about three years old. They are teaching them to turn somersaults, walk beams, and they even brought the trampolines back. For years the trampoline was a dangerous thing. It is a dangerous thing unless you have absolute control. But they are bringing that back now.
- C: Seems like that was a number of years ago. When I grew up at the YMCA, initially when I was nine, ten, eleven, and twelve years old, probably up to the time I was fourteen, it was very big, but then for ten years or so it sort of went away.
- K: I think it was because of the danger. Somebody just thought that it wasn't worth the risk. I recall reading that a college student at the University of Washington hurt the back of his neck and was paralyzed from the neck down and always will be. That's a horrible thing. They are very dangerous.
- C: Was Paul Davies the executive director when you were down there in 1917?
- K: No, he was boys' secretary.
- C: Did he also perform in the physical department too?
- K: yes, I think so. In fact, I know he did. He instructed calisthenics and that sort of thing.
- C: Can you tell us if there were any changes from the time you participated when you nine or ten to when you came back at age twenty? Would you ever go down on a Saturday? When you came back from college, did you ever go down and participate in any of the activities other than the Y Men's Club?

- K: No, I didn't. I got interested in playing squash and I played handball. We never played squash in college. When I got back home and started to play some handball, the other boys were playing squash. I always loved tennis, and so squash appealed to me. I liked to swing around a racket. I played squash for years and years, until I wrecked my shoulder. I can't play that anymore. Now I'm a left-handed volleyball player. I'm still down at the Y, depending on my schedule. Instead of going to the Youngstown Club and sitting around, I'll go to the Y and do some calisthenics and play volleyball. We play some pretty good volleyball, not just this stuff that you see in commercials. It's the younger fellows who really pound that ball. Sometimes I wonder what I'm doing in there--I'm three times as old as they are, but we play ball and enjoy it.
- C: They don't play volleyball with the caliber of people in New Jersey as they do here. Of course, they always have great volleyball teams.
- K: Still do. At one time they had two courts going. They were going pretty good and it was said that Youngstown had a good noon volleyball group, of any YMCA that they knew of. It was businessmen and professional men. They still say that we've got a great volleyball team. You know that volleyball is now an olympic sport and it has gone professional. Keith McDonald, who I think you would remember, is involved in this new professional volleyball group. I'm anxious to see how they are going to do. They had them on Johnny Carson's program the other night and I sat up and watched it. They have one of the girls involved; this team is ~~co-ed~~. It could be interesting and bring in some groups to our YMCA. I've never seen the kind of volleyball that they are playing in the west coast, except on televsion.
- C: They get a good crowd for those games too. I don't know if they'll have the interest in the east or midwest, as they do on the west coast. They are trying to build into that.
- K: California is the only state with that interest. It's a big sport at the universities.
- C: Yes, it is. To get back to the YMCA, could you give me a date on the Y Men's Club so I could build on from there? When would you say that you were in the Y's Men Club?
- K: I think it was 1930 to 1937 that I was active.
- C: During the course of that time did you work on any of the campaigns?

- K: Yes, I think I started in the campaign of 1930. I've got to be one of the older campaigners at the Y.
- C: Could you tell me how, if you can remember, the campaign was run, as opposed to how it is being run now? Of course, I know there would be a difference, quite a bit, because of the difference in numbers, but is there anything else that you can add?
- K: The only principle difference I see is that there was an entirely different spirit in those days. Again, we go back to the time when we made our own fun. We used to spend an awful lot of time developing themes for the campaign. I remember, one time, one of the boys from Republic Steel-- he was head of the industrial division--and his crew down at the mill made up a blast furnace out of paper and wood and whatnot. They had whistles and there was an awful lot of kidding and joking. One time George Brainard who was president of the General Fireproofing Company was chairman. Jack Dempsey, the famous fighter, was our campaign speaker. Another time, of all things, we had Sally Rand, the fan dancer. We brought her in to entertain and make a speech. Martha Raye, one time was doing shows and somebody knew her personally and she was brought in and we had a lot of fun. Those days are sort of gone; times are different; now things are a little grim. Now we've got to raise \$110,000. I can remember if we raised \$25,000 it was a big thing. Now if we can raise \$110,000, we can't keep the doors open. Again, it's an entirely different atmosphere. Although we tried on occasion to bring this spirit back, those efforts failed. The old days' campaigning was a circus. We got the job done, but it was so much more fun.
- C: Would you work it the same way? Would you have an initial meeting and then report meetings along the way?
- K: Yes. The format is very much the same and they experiment on whether you're going to have two, four or five report meetings, and how long you should spread the campaign out. That has been changed over the years with experimenting to find out which is the best way. I think probably now, we have an open meeting and not more than one or two report meetings and the final, over a period of maybe three weeks. So you can argue that it goes on too long and people get bored with long meetings. If it's too short, they say that they can't get the work done. Well, these are busy people and the people you're trying to see are busy or they are out of town. So it is a matter of compromise, to experiment and see which format is the best. In the last number of years, maybe ten years, pretty much the format now is an opening meeting and two reports and the final meeting.
- C: How about talking a little bit about the athletic club there

from the time that you joined until now, perhaps the differences in the number of members and things like that, if you could.

- K: I think originally we called it the Health Club. It was down in the basement, and this was the premium membership at that time. We had to pay \$35 a year or something like that. I remember Bill Larkin was a colored fellow who did massaging and sort of ran the club. Then it just gradually grew over the years; I can't tell you how many men belonged to that. I would have to guess; it wouldn't be more than 200 back in those days. Now we are in the neighborhood of 700 or 800. Two years ago we closed the membership because there weren't enough lockers for everybody. Now we have beautiful accommodations, equipment, and it is a great group--very active and very busy most of the day. Just about this time of day, four o'clock in the afternoon, a lot of the fellows can get away and go out and play handball and squash, until early evening.
- C: Has handball always been a big activity in Youngstown?
- K: Oh yes, as long as I can remember. Attorney Bennett was one of the strong players. Ernie Travis played; he was quite well-known as a tennis player in Youngstown. Olan Masters was champion. Doctor Walter Strand, long gone, was one of the better handball players. I wasn't as much of a handball player as I was a squash player.
- C: When did squash start catching on in Youngstown?
- K: Probably in the early 1930's, I would guess. It was always very popular in the east, as you know, in the eastern colleges. I think those boys who went to eastern colleges came back here and . . . I remember at first, we had only one squash court, and it wasn't a regulation court. They made it out of a handball court. It gradually grew in popularity, and now whether it's in its peak or not I don't know because now racketball has come in. A lot of boys are going bananas on racketball. Lots of handball players now are taking up racketball. I don't know if you're familiar with racketball or not. This has gotten to be very popular.
- C: I know there has been some expressed concern about most of the racketball people driving the handball people out. In fact, this morning, Jim Mitchell mentioned the fact that he was one of the squash players with one of the first teams to play in this area when he came back from Cornell. He said that there became a pretty solid group of squash players.

- K: Jim Mitchell got me into squash too. He is such a great guy. I bought a racket and Jim offered to teach me.
- C: When did you start on the board of directors?
- K: It's really called the board of trustees. I would say between the late 1940's I first went on the board. No, I think I was on the board before that. I became an officer and a vice-president. We're talking about 30 years ago. I remember Sid Collins was the treasurer and had been treasurer for years. Then he became vice-president. Russell McKay, president of the Home Savings and Loan and Eugene Bennett, an attorney, were presidents in those days. I think both those men served ten years as president of the board of trustees. This we don't do now. I served it five years. I followed Mr. W.E. Bliss who served, I think, six or seven years. The reason that he extended the time was because we were involved in a new building and acquiring property. We prevailed upon him to stay on because he had come in with the original purchases of land and the contracts for construction. Then I followed. I think it was about 1950 to the year 1955 that I was president. I think, R.T. Beeghly followed me. I think he was president for only two years. The men now are serving about two years, which in many respects is good; I mean after all, it's a big operation. It takes an awful lot of time. There's an awful lot of difficulty in it. You just can't ask a man to stay with this thing for all these years. I can remember back when a deficit was almost unheard of. We always came out in the black, maybe it was only nine dollars, but we came out in the black and now it just doesn't work that way. We're having trouble now as most of the YMCA's are. So you can't ask these fellows to stay on longer, like for five or six years.
- C: What would you say were the most important things that were accomplished when you were the director of the board or the trustees?
- K: We were involved in many phases of expansion. Capital funds were held in those days and I was involved heavily in that and then in the actual construction. I forget what exactly my capacity was. I was head of the first planning commission, or whatever they called it. I was not the chairman of the building committee, fortunately. That was a rough job. We had to have two different campaigns. The first one was held in 1954 and then we were held up on acquiring property that we were promised. The owners reneged on the promise. The inflationary period that followed the Korean conflict, or incident . . . we had to go out and raise some more money, before we could go ahead because we were held up over these years, about three years. I have to guess on the years. So then we had two capital

campaigns and we finally raised the money. We got the building built.

C: What expansion was done in 1954 and 1955, these years that you're talking about? Can you tell us?

K: We had a new gymnasium, pool and a lot of renovating done because the building was old. There was an awful lot of electrical wiring and electrical service that had to be changed. The plumbing was old and a lot of that had to be changed. That's expensive work, tearing out plumbing in a whole building. Then of course, this last phase involved another pool, more of a training pool, and then a big recreation room, which was more rooms for smaller groups to do all kinds of things. We added a couple of squash courts, a couple of handball courts, and put a running track on the roof. It caused the roof to leak so they took it down. It was originally planned for 1957. Sorry I can't give you an accurate date. I'm sure that the records would show that. It's a great institution and I think Youngstown always supported the Y. Looking back, I remember when we had the West Federal Street Branch, so-called, financed by industry. I think your dad ran the McDonald Branch of the Y. We were involved with that. In those days we had the dormitory, the residence hall, which was a big factor. It was built for people coming to Youngstown, so young men would have a place to stay.

C: It wasn't primarily college students then?

K: No. But, here again, times have changed. I'm chairman right now of a committee just activated to see what we're going to do about residents. Our occupancy is down 50% or 60%.

C: Does the Y have about 150 rooms?

K: About that, yes. Of course, the rooms aren't the greatest. They don't have individual baths or toilets; it's more like a dormitory thing.

C: Of course, the facilities of the Y were offered along with the residency.

K: That's right. It was right downtown, so there was no transportation problem; the boys didn't have cars in those days. The theatres and downtown was much more active then. It was a great thing for them. Again, times have changed. Now, I don't know, from what I understand there are very few students in the dorm. As you know, college dormitories throughout the state that were built in the last ten years, many of them are going begging, because the kids don't want to live there; they want to live out in private homes

- and in fraternity houses. They are living under conditions sometimes that I think are much worse than the Y, but they still want to do it. You can't make them. We don't know what we're going to do about it. It is a problem.
- C: I'm glad you pointed out about the actual businessmen and people coming in from out-of-town; I don't know if it would be from Republic or Sheet & Tube or these people, but nobody had ever brought forth the fact that in the early times mostly business people and overnight people like that would stay in the dormitories. Again, my affiliation is more with the college students. I think when my father was there it was about 50% college students and 50% people traveling through.
- K: I remember when it was. Back in the earlier years, a young fellow would come to town and look for a job, or a company would bring in a young fellow and ask for accommodations for him. The Y proved to be very convenient and it was very inexpensive. During those Depression years, it was really inexpensive. A couple of dollars a week was a big factor.
- C: Of course now with athletic clubs being built--health clubs and things like that--the Y had a little bit harder row to hoe, I guess. Could you tell, to an extent, a little bit perhaps of the difference between now and when you were growing up? I wouldn't think there would be that much, outside of the Y, that offered physical facilities? Is that correct?
- K: I can't think of a single thing outside the country club, which would have have tennis clubs maybe . . . There were no clubs or health spas or big new racket clubs. We must have five now in the area. This I'm sure will have some impact on the Y. The Youngstown Jewish Center, here on Gypsy Lane across from the hospital, has a pool, handball and many people go there. I think the factor that saved us downtown has been because the men are downtown and they can go in at noon. It's easy and they can always find a game. I know some people that belong to the Jewish Center also, but they are at the Y most of the time because they know that they can get a game there. The Jewish Center cannot always assure a game.
- C: Has it been the case in the past that a good many Jewish people belonged to the Y in Youngstown?
- K: Sure, it has always been like that. In fact, we have Doctor Morris Rosenblum on the board of trustees of the Youngstown YMCA now. He has been a very active, strong member, one of the biggest producers every year in the membership campaign.

- C: Do you see these clubs and things of that sort hurting the YMCA in the future? By that I mean, financially as well as memberwise.
- K: I have to say that it's a threat and it's a serious threat. We have to do something. I belong to the Youngstown Country Club and we're having a difficult time. Our membership is not up to a satisfactory limit. Younger people today want to do things more family like. The swim club and tennis clubs that have been formed over the last ten or twelve years have become much more attractive to younger married fellows. Country clubs aren't cheap. They can do this and have their kids play tennis and go and have family things together, at a much less cost. When you think of a fellow, today in his thirties or early forties thinking about sending his kids away to school, they just don't spend that kind of money, unless you're independently wealthy, and not too many of us are. So, I'm sure that this will have an impact on the Y. This is one reason why we made the athletic club as attractive as possible. Those memberships run about \$200 to \$210 a year. There's no doubt that it'll have some impact.
- C: Of course, the financial considerations like you said have certainly been in the favor of the Y, compared to an athletic club membership which would be more expensive. You wouldn't have as much in facilities; perhaps they would offer you swimming and tennis, but you wouldn't have handball, racketball, squash or the other sports that you have at the Y.
- K: I think that's true and frankly I don't know what the 'spa' dues are. I see a brand new one going up on Market Street, The Executive Club. I saw the sign, "Opening Soon."
- C: Boardman Athletic Club?
- K: No, that's not what it's called. It's down on the west side of Market. Anyhow, it's there and it's a tremendous, big building. I'm sure there's a lot of equipment available there. What other sports I don't know.
- C: Besides the physical at the YMCA, have you seen also any changes in spiritual? Of course, the triangle of the YMCA is spirit, mind, and body--the development of each. I know some people have made comments to me that they feel that the religious aspect has sort of dropped by the wayside. The affiliation with churches, church leagues, et cetera, are not what they were; in fact, they are almost defunct. Perhaps some of the educational institutions and classes and things that have been in the Y have sort of ceased. Can you expound on changes you have seen and also do you see anything in the future in that area, going back to

those or just falling away from them?

- K: To go back to the first years that I can remember, about 1930, they would have Sunday afternoon religious speakers come in. I remember some of the men, one man in particular, Jake Barrett. He was a very, very religious man and I think probably the last of the religious people that I remember in the Y. Dancing or cards, he frowned on that. There were to be no dances in the YMCA. He was a very strict Presbyterian. United Presbyterians, in those days, were just about as hard-shelled as anybody in the world.
- C: Did he speak every Sunday or did they have a different pastor?
- K: No, he would bring in ministers or other people. There would be between 200 and 400 men out there to hear him.
- C: Would this be strictly men or would they bring their families?
- K: I don't recall that. I was pretty young at the time. I think I went there a couple of times with my father, but I'm sure the whole aspect has changed. There isn't the religious feeling now as there was years ago. But again, it's the change of the times. Churches, you know, are having problems with poor attendance, people not joining or maintaining their membership. There's a whole different attitude about it. I'm trying to think back when we used to have a YMCA triangle on the gym floor. It's not there now.
- C: That's something interesting right there. That shows a real change. I can remember in the upper gym at one time there was the circle on the floor.
- K: Every once in a while somebody will get rough. We'll say, "Hey, we're supposed to build a little character down here or whatever happened it's mind, spirit, body." It's done in a jocular fashion, just in a kidding way. Now you don't hear, as you might on a golf course or out on the street, language on a volleyball court that would be offensive. The few instances that I've known where some of the boys got a little rough in their language, they were told about it. Up until just recently, occasionally a fellow would forget to be charitable and in some instances, it is reported to Mr. Hunneke, and he would handle it. This is the way it should be, it ought to be. We talk now about how a whole generation or more that has passed, almost two generations, and we think of all the changes that have happened in this world. People's feelings about so many things, their feelings about the Y, religious aspects, have changed.

In our new facilities the Bliss Chapel was built. As far as I know there are still Thursday noon services there. A minister is assigned, or a volunteer. Now it happens that I have not been to those because I go to Cambium Club on Thursday noons. So I haven't been to those. I know that the attendance, if it wasn't for some of the staff people or one or two older men who sort of make the Y their home, it wouldn't really mean very much.

C: What about in the times that you have been affiliated with the Y from 1930 on, in terms of the educational aspect with the Youngstown College?

K: I remember back when they had the Y trade school up on Rayen Avenue near where my father's establishment was. They taught boys mechanics, body work, auto mechanics and that sort of thing.

C: It was sort of technical then?

K: Yes. They also had classes in bookkeeping and stenography and things like that. That's really how the college got started. This was really before my time, being involved with the Y as a trustee. But Youngstown College grew. It fell to me as president, I guess, when we disaffiliated ourselves from the Y college. It got to the point where the tail was wagging the dog. The college just grew and grew. It was really more than the Y could or should handle. So it became Youngstown University. Regarding disaffiliation, I remember I had to go to Mr. McKay and Mr. Bennett and help to sell it, because there were a lot of people that weren't too happy about it. They thought, "This is the mother and the mother shouldn't abandon the child." They had pride in it. They felt they just ought to hang on to it.

C: You mean, about the properties, the land?

K: Yes, I mean the whole college so to speak. They just felt that they had a kind of a pride of parenthood. After all, these men started it. they just kind of hated to give it up. I remember I was the vice-president at the time . . . or maybe I was the president. Anyhow, I had to go see these men which was not a very pleasant task. Both, they were both great men, very fine men. They acquiesced.

C: The college, at that time, would it be Youngstown College or Youngstown University?

K: Youngstown College.

C: Were they totally in favor of taking and separating from the Y?

- K: The college itself was, I would think, because it was getting to be a pretty big operation. Then it became Youngstown Univeristy and then a state university about ten years ago. A number of people felt that it was wrong. We should keep it a small independent school. Smaller independent schools are dropping by the wayside now. My own university, Washington & Lee, is hanging on, but I think if it weren't for the alumnus, who felt so strongly and gave so generously, it would go by the wayside. I think it was the right decision and I was happy about it, as many others were. But again, I can understand these older men had the pride of founders. They felt that we needed a small, independent college.
- C: Did you deal with Dr. Jones?
- K: Oh sure. Howard Jones was originally a YMCA man.
- C: I ask that simply because of the fact that he was a YMCA person and was brought here from Hiram. He is affiliated with the Y and I wondered how he felt about it.
- K: I know that it was a thing that he desired too. So time marches on, and as I said, the tail got to wagging the dog. We had for a number of years the boys at the university who had their athletic classes at the YMCA. Now, of course, the university has their own tremendously, big athletic fields, field houses, and all the equipment. That is no longer a part of our activity.
- C: What's interesting, of course, is that many of the people who were on the board of trustees at the Y--the Beeghley's, the Bliss', the Manchester's, and all those people--were very involved in the university.
- K: Oh sure. They were the responsible people in town. You know, there's a small percentage of people who will get out and do something, either in time or in labor or money, or all three. These men were all very involved.
- C: Is there anything that you can think of that you would like to add about the YMCA? Perhaps, something that you didn't say or that you were thinking about? Perhaps, just your own philosophy about the YMCA, in terms of past and present, and maybe, future. Like you said, times are changing and . . .
- K: I've always been a very strong supporter of the Y. I enjoyed it. I don't regret a single moment of time I gave to it, or money that I gave to it or that I'm leaving in my will to the YMCA, because I believe in it. I liked the YMCA. One reason is because we're an autonomous group. We're an autonomous group here in Youngstown. We don't have to

abide by the policies that some group is setting down in New York. We handle our own affairs as opposed to many other organizations who take their leadership from some ivory tower. Here the YMCA doesn't do that, which is one of the strong points.

I'm not too familiar with the world service program of the Y where we all give a few dollars to world services every year. I have to say that I've never got excited about that phase of it. I've been more interested in what is in my own backyard I guess. I'm sure that they've done a lot of good in a lot of places, and I'm hopeful that the Y will still continue. We have a new committee with one of the staff members whose job now is to promote legacies to the endowment fund. We're going to need it; we're going to have to have it. This can be done with proper selling. I've been active in the Cancer Society for 30 years or better and when I see what they have done with this program, that endowment curve has gone from nothing . . . it's almost a straight-line curve up. Each year a tremendous number of bequeaths are made for the Cancer Society. This goes back to the earlier years when we began to preach this and to talk about it and to sell it.

If you've seen our fund raising ability, it gets tougher every year. The so-called community chest . . . at one time we were receiving in the neighborhood of between 21% and 23% of our budget from the community chest. Now we are down to about 11%. If we could, somehow, just forget the community chest and go on our own, we would like it, but I don't see how that could happen.

- C: If I can remember in reading the minutes of the YMCA somewhere in 1928 or 1938--I can't remember the date--they needed to raise a million dollars for something. They sat down at a meeting and they never had to have a general campaign; the money was raised right at the meeting.
- K: That's right. That was the campaign, I think of 1928 or 1929. It must have been 1928, because Leonard Skeggs was the general secretary and this was when they wanted to build a college building and improve the downtown YMCA. It cost a million dollars. In those days that was an awful lot of money. At that time, of course, we had many wealthy people. They had set the opening night of the campaign for October 10, I think, and everybody came expecting to go to work. They announced that the million dollars had been raised. John Harrington, for instance, pledged \$25,000 or \$50,000 as well as other who were well-to-do. Then came the Depression and a lot of those pledges were never met. Some of these people went bankrupt. Their holdings evaporated and it took some ten or twelve years

before they were paid off. That was one of the interesting campaigns. That was before my time, but I remember hearing about it.

- C: What I was going to make a comment on was, that industry has played such an integral part with the fund raising, with membership, and everything for the Youngstown YMCA. Republic Steel, Sheet & Tube, and U.S. Steel have always donated very generously over the years. Is that still the case?
- K: I think it is not to the extent that it was. Now I'm guessing; this comes from the top of my head. My impression is that it's not quite as strong as it used to be. In our capital campaign I think they've done very well, and I'm not complaining about anything, because I think if we really got into some kind of a jam, the industries would help us. Here again, Republic Steel is not in Youngstown, they are in Cleveland. U.S. Steel is in Pittsburgh and the Sheet & Tube is now in Lykes, Youngstown. Decisions aren't made in Youngstown. When Frank Purnell was president of the Sheet & Tube Company, I was on the committee to go out and see Mr. Purnell. When Frank said, "Yes," it was yes, and if he said, "No," it was no. You didn't monkey around going to New York or New Orleans and those places trying to get a decision. Those days are gone. I'm sure that if we got into a real jam and were worthy of their support, they would support us. In other words, if we didn't do something silly, like the city of New York getting themselves into a financial jam, I'm sure that they would come through.
- C: I'm sure the Y has helped them in many areas over many of the years.
- K: Of course. The Mahoning Valley Management Club has been Y sponsored. It is the largest foremen's club in the world. It had 3000 some members at one time. Industry was very heavily involved there, backed it and supported it. This was a fine thing for their people. As far as I know it's still a very strong-going club. Now I've not been identified with that because it is industrial and I had not occasion to. Now we have, along with youngsters, the Mora Club, the men of retired age. I guess there must be a hundred of them or better who meet on Thursdays at the YMCA. Some of them are old-time Y members and some aren't.
- C: Some of those people, as you said, were involved in the Y for 40, 50, or 60 years. Of course, with that long an affiliation, it's very dear to them, with very strong feelings.
- K: Yes. I see a number of them on Thursdays. I'm just hopeful that the men will feel strongly about the Y in the future as some of us have in the past. There's a lot of dedication.

I still see it. I see younger fellows, who were in their thirties when I was, so they are ready to do anything and go to any extent to see the campaign succeed. You see a lot of that though, it isn't quite the same as I recalled, but nothing is the same anymore. I don't know what else I can tell you, Mr. Collier.

C: I would like to thank you for taking the time to give me some of your reflections, not only what it has meant to you, but the things you've seen happen, and the changes that have taken place.

K: It has been interesting to me because I naven't sat down with anyone like I have you before, to try and remember and to assess what has happened and what's going to happen.

END OF INTERVIEW