

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Youngstown YMCA Project

Employee Experience

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J. RICHARD BENNETT

Interviewed

by

Jeffery S. Collier

on

September 5, 1975

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INTERVIEWEE: J. RICHARD BENNETT

INTERVIEWER: Jeffery S. Collier

SUBJECT: personal history, education, beginnings in  
YMCA, 1957-1975, associate director's job

DATE: September 5, 1975

C: This is Jeff Collier. I'm sitting in the office of Mr. Richard Bennett. Today's date is September 5, 1975. The time is 10:30 a.m. We're at 17 North Champion Street in Youngstown, Ohio, at the Central YMCA. Dick is the associate executive director here of the Central Branch of the Youngstown YMCA.

Could you give me your background on yourself as to when you were born, where you were born, education through high school and also through college, and how you became involved with the YMCA?

B: I was born and raised in Youngstown. I attended local schools mainly on the south side of Youngstown, graduating in 1951 from South High School. I worked approximately a year and a half after graduation and then decided to go on to school and pursue a career in the Y. This led me to Kent State, where in 1957 I graduated with a B. S. degree in education, a major in physical education and a minor in commerce.

I've been with the Y here in Youngstown now since 1957. It has been eighteen years. Mainly the first twelve years were in the program end, which involved working the physical department. Since the last four years I have been in administration here at the Y, so my total YMCA career has been Youngstown association.

C: As far as your involvement with the YMCA before 1957, whether it be at Kent State or when you were growing up, at any time did you come to the Y when you were a youth?

- B: Yes. I probably had a different background in the Y than most of the guys because I didn't get very involved in the Y as a youngster, probably not until high school age, and then it was mainly through Hi-Y. Probably my greatest involvement happened after graduation from high school when most of my friends went to college. I didn't want to go so I ended up here at the Y. I worked at G. F. and played on their basketball team. We practiced here at the Y and then I got involved with the physical director here to the extent that he encouraged me to help with classes and encouraged me to go on to school and pursue this career.
- C: Who was the physical director that you're speaking of?
- B: This was Doug Anger. Doug went from here then to Alliance. Then I lost track of him.
- C: At anytime during the course of going through college, whether it be summertime or. . . I assume you lived at Kent State?
- B: Yes.
- C: You didn't commute?
- B: No.
- C: Did you spend time here at the Y or any other Y's?
- B: No. I spent a little time at the Akron Y because a roommate of mine worked the locker room. He was a locker room attendant so we went over there occasionally. My real background in the Y, involvement, as a participant and as a staff person has been exclusively here at Youngstown.
- C: It seems interesting that in talking with a lot of the people at the YMCA--Mr. Hunneke or my father or Zajack--everybody, of course, it evolved around the physical part. Most people were athletically inclined or participated at the Y or in some league and thereby became involved with the Y. Would you say that the athletics, I guess you did say that, is probably what drew you here initially?
- B: Yes, I'm sure that was it. I guess it goes back a little further than I recalled there earlier. My first exposure was as quite a youngster, I would guess nine or ten years old, when my mother signed me up for a Red Cross Free Learn to Swim, which was held here. That experience wasn't all that great. The mass confusion of kids, they were just jammed in, I didn't relate really well to that. From that point on I didn't get very involved until maybe junior high or high school. I think part of it was that it was just that the initial

exposure was really maddening. It was just a mass of humanity jammed into the pool.

C: You mentioned your exposure in high school as being with Hi-Y?

B: Right.

C: What type of involvement did that bring about in terms of ever coming to the Y? Did you ever come to the Y then with the Hi-Y or was it strictly at the high school that you were affiliated?

B: Pretty much at the high school. It was an out-of-the-building kind of thing. Again, it related to athletics. I enjoyed the meetings and the fellowship of the meeting night, but again we had basketball teams. However, the games were played at Princeton Junior High School.

C: All of the Hi-Y games at that time?

B: Right. They rented those two gyms there and we played there once a week rather than at the Central Branch.

C: Knowing what you know now, did you play there because they didn't have the physical capabilities to handle all of those teams at the Y at that time? Is that why they rented the Princeton gym?

B: At that time I didn't even consider it. I just thought well this is where the Y plays their basketball games and it didn't mean a whole lot to me. Since being on the staff, I think it was probably done because at that time this Y had one gymnasium and probably couldn't handle the added load.

C: When you started out here in 1957 at the Y here in the physical department, what were your duties? Who did you work with or for at that time? Who were the people that you were involved with at the Y then?

B: I started in 1957 as an assistant physical director. My boss was Don McConnell. In our department at that time was Bob Mowry, Don McConnell, Leslie Sasvery, and Rick Garver. I was associated with those guys, and my main responsibility was essentially the gym work with the younger boys, organizing the gym classes, working with the younger Leaders Club.

C: Going one step further and talking about the Leaders Club, I was personally involved with that. Was that something that you established yourself, or something that had been here before you came?

B: No. This was established. The tradition of the Leaders Club was great at the time I got here. I didn't know what it all involved. In the Junior Leaders Club on the roster there were over 100 names when I got involved. Don McConnell had the club and because I could see their importance and appreciated the work that they did, I got involved with what we then called the Cadet Club. In fact, I guess I chartered that club. This was to be a feeder into the older club. From that, of course, when Don left I got the Junior Leaders Club. Probably the most rewarding work in my Y career has been the Leaders Club.

It's a real torment to me at the moment because our club is down. It takes some kind of an enthusiasm from the leadership on the staff to keep it going because leaders are supposed to do the job for you, but I'm telling you they take a lot of time and a lot of work. I'm afraid at the moment that we are not committed to that effort because we just don't have the numbers of kids that we should have to do the job. This is one of my real goals at the moment: To get that thing regenerated and rekindled.

C: For the interest of explanation, can you expound a little bit upon the Leaders Club itself as far as what the people would do, their involvement here with the Y?

B: The Junior Leaders Corps, as it was initially developed through the national Y organization, had as its purpose assisting the physical department staff. Our YMCA, it would amaze you if I could come up with the numbers of names of who's who in Youngstown and who's who in this country that have come through the Youngstown leadership program. It is truly remarkable the number of people that have been involved.

Their function, as I said, is to relate to the physical department, to assist in anyway possible. This would mean aquatics and game work, the whole bit. We've always felt that if the leaders were properly trained, that any day the physical director didn't show up they could handle the job, and this was true. It was true because we never really planned it that way to take a staff member out of the gym, but by being closely related to the physical director they learned the skill work, they learned the technique of leading classes, of disciplining. It is a nationwide program.

The best thing I could say about the leaders program. . . The comment was made to me one time. We were doing a pretty good job in Youngstown and we were editing a newspaper called Today's Leader. A guy wrote to us that got a copy of it and he said the most essential job in the YMCA, the most important job, is the development of leadership. This happened to me probably the third or fourth year into the work. That one

- B: statement has stayed with me forever. When I would get down in terms of too much work to be fussing with all those guys that always came back and regenerated me because that is our job. The development of leadership is the most important job in the YMCA, and you can expand that from boards and committees down to Leaders Club.
- C: You might have some figures on this being so closely related and working with the Y every single day as that is your job. The number of people that have gone into YMCA work that were former leaders I would think would be very high. Is that the case or not?
- B: Oh yes. It is very high. I've got a list somewhere. Again, I can relate to eighteen years. Before that I've heard names that have gone into Y work that were leaders. I could probably, without too much effort, name twelve to fifteen in the last eighteen years that are full-time professional directors now. I've related that many times to my church in terms of the number of people that ended up in the ministry from our church, because that's certainly one of the missions of the church; their own church family develop that. I think we've done an amazing job at that level with the number of kids that have ended up in the Y from Youngstown now. I can name them, but you know most of them.
- C: Going along further then would be in terms of the physical director; you started out as an associate physical director?
- B: Yes.
- C: Did you then move up to physical director, and when would the time be of that?
- B: I would say probably 1957 I started as an associate, probably by 1961 I was physical director and probably had the department at that time because some of the guys moved on.
- C: Who are the people that would have worked for you at that time?
- B: There have been lots. I had a Fenley boy who was with us, Larry Miller, Chief McDonald, Les Sasvery worked for me, Kay Bechun, Denny Rubal, Barry Rose, Tony Whitney, who of course you know now is a Ph. d. running the physiology lab at Youngstown.
- C: It's interesting that a lot of those people have stayed with the Y or still work in some capacity with the Y, whether it be part-time or full-time.
- B: Yes. Bill Bluit, Dick Jones, these guys are currently pro-

fessional directors.

C: In terms of the duties of a physical director could you tell me what they would be?

B: Yes. One of the real challenges, I think, in the area of administration is to interpret and thoroughly describe a job for a guy. I'm not so sure we always do the best job at that. My feeling is that in most cases, and this is maybe good and maybe bad, we've been very ingrown in Youngstown. Those names that I just rattled off to you, probably ninety percent of them came through this YMCA as kids and as leaders and as volunteers and then as staff people. It didn't take a lot of interpretive work in terms of this is the job and this is what we expect and this is what our pattern has been. Consequently, when we do get a guy from outside I feel a little bit that we don't do a good enough job of interpreting the job for him.

I guess my strongest feeling is that when I started it wasn't very well interpreted for me, but there has to be. This is where I get upset with some of our current staff people, and I think we have a good staff at the moment, but it has to be a personal challenge. It has to be something that. . . I would say a very high percentage of our work is common sense: What does the person want? How do I sell myself? How do I improve the program to make that member satisfied and happy? Self-directed effort? I think most jobs are pretty much that way, but a guy can sit back and say, "I was never told that." I say, "Baloney, you know what is expected, what is good practice," just turning it around very simply and saying, "What would you expect as a member? Now do it." Serve that guy the way you want to be treated. I think we have those options in the Y as professional directors. Sometimes we fall down, some guys do a fantastic job.

C: Feeling that to be your philosophy about the Y, have you seen that coming about more and more and developing, and being the case here at the Youngstown Y?

B: I have a feeling, and this isn't new because when I started at the Y eighteen years ago it was kind of a joke at our conferences of physical directors. They used to joke about the word dedication. Even though you hear today that they aren't like they used to be, eighteen years isn't all that far back, but that's a long time. It was an attitude then, so I'm not that critical of people that say I'm not dedicated.

The thing that really bothers me, I guess, at this point, is that we as administrators have to recognize that no longer are these guys all YMCA up to the eyeballs. They are very

concerned about their personal time, their personal life, their families, their outside obligations, responsibilities, and interests. I think that we get hung up because we don't recognize that it's no longer gung ho, night and day YMCA. Now we have to learn to work with that breed. That's our challenge. I think they're great people. We've got a tremendous staff, very young at the moment. We're doing a job, and we've got a lot more to do, but I'm enthused.

C: That's interesting that you note that because I think that with the company that I work for, Xerox, a similar thing happens. People that are currently. . . The younger people coming into Xerox, they are dedicated, but they are not so totally twenty hours a day Xerox like people perhaps were year ago, or eight years ago. It's a matter of, I think, the society right now is breeding people that are concerned like you said with their own interest. They want to have a life outside of their job because that's just as important.

B: It's very hard for that other guy to work with, and to get his job done through that person and it has to be through that person. That twenty hour a day guy can't do that job. He has got to be clever and yet he has got to be frustrated much of the time because he looks at it and says, "God, I could have done that myself." It's true.

I'm going to do a management course here soon for the Y at a little meeting and the guy wanted me to give him a title of my presentation. I started fussing with the word manage and I finally ended up with Man Age. It's a different age now. To me it's the man, the thing we've just been talking about. It is the guy you've got to start with, and then the job. Satisfy the man and then get him to do the job and keep him satisfied and keep him doing the job. It's a bugger to do that. That's the kind of thing I'm going to fuss with at this meeting, is to try to get that across. I'm not totally committed to that, and I'm trying to sell it.

You can have a ball back there in those gyms with those Hi-Y Clubs. Just go and dream. This is the thing, too, that I think is so great about the Y: We are not so regimented that here's your textbook and you follow this everyday for fourteen years. This is the textbook you use. Of course, they update them. But here if the guy wants to dream and experiment he can do that. The challenge is so much greater and so much more interesting to me than it would be in school teaching I think, because these kids aren't going to come back if he doesn't make it exciting.

C: Do you pretty much let physical directors or aquatics directors or whatever have their own hand then? Is that what



you're saying?

- B: Oh yes. Of course, we're watching them. If they're going off the deep end in terms of sound principles and practices, they're called on. As long as they're getting the people-to-people, people-to-staff relationship across and they're doing sound programming they can go the direction they want, sure. That's what I think is great about it.
- C: Would you say that is a major difference between the Y right now and the Y when you were a physical director? Let's take, for instance, physical directors right now. In 1957 to 1961 and 1961 to whenever you moved out of the physical department. I'm sure that you brought about many things that you thought were innovative and changes in the physical education program and things such as that. Are the people that are coming in today continuing to do that? Are they dwelling on past programs, what is happening there?
- B: That's a great question because that's our whole dilemma right there in a nutshell. What is good for the past that should be carried on? What should be scrapped because it's no longer relevant? I guess where I get hung up there gets back to this leadership thing. To me there is no more critical job. Yet, I can't get, at the moment, the commitment from some guys that I want it from to do that job. They think that it is more important. . .

Herein lies some of our problem. Physical education in the Y has become much, much more sophisticated than it was. We got a lab up here that has been funded through the heart association, which we can use. There must be several hundred thousand dollars of equipment up there. These guys now, the physical directors, take a guy up there and strap him up on the EKG and put him on the treadmill and evaluate his capability to do the workload, then prescribe a pulse rate for him to follow. In my beginning at the Y that would have scared me to death for someone to say, "You're in charge of that lab." No way, I'm going to run for cover. My role then was in the gym just having a ball, I mean really physically participating with the kids, emotionally participating. I think there is a sophistication that is causing us a problem in my mind because to me. . .

The other night I went out to the sporting goods store and some guy says, "Hey, you used to work at the Y." I said, "I still do." He says, "Gee, I remember you from a hundred years ago." To me that is important, that relationship, that he remembers that it was something good. I think he remembers. I'm afraid that in taking a guy and putting him on a treadmill and measuring him it is almost a mechanical thing that "Okay, you can work up to 120 pulse rate, that's your workload, see

you in six months for a reevaluation." That worries me because it's not as personal and it gets back to this guy's time and what he expects of his job. I think that many of us put much, much more work home than these guys do now. It was just a matter of it couldn't be don't here.

Mr. Hunneke used to tell me, "Now I don't want you sitting in the office; I don't want to see you in the office; I want you moving around that gym." I took it literally. In fact, I think everything I was told I took literally. That meant don't get caught in the office. Now they want to know how much office time do I have; I've got to do this work, and when I suggest take it home. . . . If I can't do it within an eight hour day or ten hours, it's not going to get done. This bugs me.

I think this idea of. . . . Physical education now is what I'm speaking. I get to speaking to some of the other programs . . . . We've gotten very involved in deep, interpersonal kind of things that I think happened before, happened even more effectively before, but there wasn't a lot of focus and a lot of attention. Now unless you take parents and the kid and sit down you really have this chart, statistical study, that shows you're not doing your job as a counselor. I think it all happens. That's a confusing aspect.

- C: Just an interesting side on that is a lot of people say, "You can't go back; the old days were the better days," all that stuff. Hopefully that isn't the case that the things that you're talking about can be incorporated in perhaps in a humane way, and exciting way. I guess that's probably what your business is trying to do.

Go a little bit further on with your career; how long were you in the physical department as director of the physical department?

- B: I think it was about twelve years. Just as a sidelight, that makes me a real weirdo from the standards of today, and even the standards of eighteen years ago. You don't stay in a program that long. Why don't you stay? Well, the money is in the administrative end, better hours are in the administrative end, and the only reason I stayed. . . . It was a real tough thing toward the end because Mr. Hunneke's philosophy was, and I keep trying to pass this down the line, that you stay in a program as long as you can stand it. Then he started to heap administrative responsibilities on me as well as program work. It just started to get up and up and up and up to the point that I said finally, "If you want me to be the Central Branch director or you want me to do this then I've got to get out of physical." He said to me, "I've been waiting for you to come and say that because I knew you

had too much," but I just wanted to hang on because of his statement years ago: "Stay in there at program because we need a consistency in program as long as we can have it."

You've seen our turnover, three to five years and a guy is gone in most Y's. That's here. In most Y's it's a year, two years and they're gone. The program end of it is. . . The thing I think that causes this exodus is that it becomes a monotonous thing, even though you say you're creating, but you're doing the same thing. You're starting with a new nine year old so you have to take him through all these steps that you took the other kid through and you start it all over. In a fitness class there are just so many things you can do. You constantly have to keep psyching yourself up because it does become another new calisthenics class. The guy on the floor says, "Boy, you have it made, all you do is exercise."

I've had many kids in the pool look up to me and say, "Where do you work?" I say, "I work here." "No, I know you teach me swimming, but where do you work? Do you work at Sheet & Tube or Republic?" That thing exists that it is not a job. Therefore, they look at you differently and they handle you differently.

People come through this door or in the program director's office and they barge right in. "It's not a working office, you belong to me. I'm a member and I can come in anytime I want." I've always maintained that policy, this door is rarely closed. Yet, I've wondered many times if this is the right way to do it. I'll never change it, right or wrong I think that's the way to do it. They don't respect your privacy, they don't respect. . . Bob Doyle's office is like a fishbowl with those glass windows; that door is open all the time. You could be sitting in there talking about a machine that we might want to purchase and there will be ten people that walk in. They think he's part of it. I like that though, if I didn't I would get out of it.

- C: When you said there to five years here, one year in other YMCA's people are gone, do you feel that is because maybe their job gets monotonous? They're sticking with the Y and moving into another capacity, is that what you're saying?
- B: Here?
- C: Here or in other Y's.
- B: A guy has to be satisfied. There has to be a potential for them. If they stay in Youngstown, for example, the

history has been that we have promoted from within. So if you start to see the handwriting on the wall and you want to be an administrator and there are so many blocks ahead of you, no one in their right mind, according to Y standards, would wait eighteen years to try for a job. That's what I waited for, for eighteen years. They can get that much sooner by moving. Your dad is a case in point. If he had waited this long he and I would be vying for Sweet's job when he retired; it's that simple. He just didn't want to wait that long. There were too many other opportunities and too many things that he said, "Hey, I'm not going to wait that long." We've lost people of top caliber because of that. It's that simple. It's all through your industry; it's the same thing. I've thought about it a hundred times, you have to; it would be silly if you didn't move.

C: You moved out of the physical department into administration?

B: Yes.

C: It's an interesting thing that you had made mention of the fact that you have a million things to do and I appreciate you taking the time to talk to me. What would, as the director here of the YMCA, a typical day of yours be like?

B: When I was a physical director, when I got those down days, I liked to go grab Mr. Hunneke or I liked to go grab a board member or somebody and say, "You walk step by step with me today;" I mean a day where I started in the pool and I went till noon and I had to go to a fitness class and then back to the pool and then I went to a 4:00 gym class and 5:30 fitness class and got home by 7:00. That was programmed all day, it would just blow my mind.

Administrators, it is a hard one because I always looked at the administrator when I was back there. When he tells me he's too busy to see me, that guy doesn't know what busy means. I don't like to do that. That little exchange we had this morning about this interview, I'm always feeling pressed. That is just me. I've got time to sit down for a forty-five minute interview, and I don't like to ever tell anyone that I'm too busy because it bugs me when I call somebody and he says, "I can't meet with you for a month." I don't believe him, first of all, that he can't find time. I guess this is a rope with me and our program people; when I say, "Why don't you get this new class?" "Gee, I don't have time." Then I see them sitting at their desk or something like that.

An administrator in the Y, and I can only describe my day. . .

Currently it's a frustrating thing because Mr. Hunneke is retiring soon. Most of the stuff that he has been doing is just being fed down to me to do, to make decisions, to meet with the people. So it is a matter of just hours in a day. I've been very guilty in the past of not wanting to give up things and pass them on. I've wanted to lead by example and consequently, to shove it off on a guy without really going through it step by step with him; I've always been reluctant to do. Consequently, it keeps piling higher and higher and I get rid of the things at the bottom, but not enough.

Let's describe today. Well, let's describe a hard day because maybe today isn't a hard day. Let's go with Tuesday. Tuesday we're into our campaign; so Saturday, Sunday, Monday, because of summer, I was off and was just thinking those days about what had to happen on Tuesday because I have the four industrial teams: Sheet & Tube, Republic, G. F., and U. S. Steel in the campaign. I had to get out to see those guys on Monday.

I met with U. S. Steel on Monday, put their campaign picks out to them, this was probably an hour. I went down into the mill and met with the captain and the district leader explaining the whole deal. I set up a meeting for. . . They take their captains out to dinner at the country club, that's going to happen. In the afternoon then, I met with Republic Steel the same way. At noon we had a meeting with Sheet & Tube where we got the foremen all together and I was able to thank them for helping. Their general or the assistant district manager really zapped it in there, "This is what we expect from the Y." In the course of that day, it started about 8:00 with making sure I was on time to Sheet & Tube and the whole bit. That was a normal day, really, a normal day.

We're trying to develop a new manager there because we need more cost control; we need supervision of the personnel. We've got to upgrade some standards there in terms of finding out why our food costs are so high. Is it waste? Is it theft? It's just a job that many segments of it, the Y career. . .

This is the frustrating point, I think one thing that drives guys to cover, and your dad could relate to this vividly, is that any one of fifteen jobs a guy has could take his entire time if he did it very well. We get criticized many times because we don't do things as well as some businessmen do, some bankers do it. We're doing that job; we're doing a program job; we're doing a fund raising job; we're doing a

scrubbing job; we're getting a dorm cleaned up; we're doing a gymnasium class; it's just wild. Leaders Club, I could have spent eight hours a day programming for 100 kids, and really been effective and done a much better job. I couldn't do that; I've got the new fitness class and the volleyball and the swim team at that time and all kinds of weird things. Those are important points. It all relates to this job and how different it is.

I don't know your job, this is the sad point. I have built up over the years a tremendous respect and carefulness for everyone's job and everyone's interest. An example of that is when I first started here a weight lifter to me was an idiot, because who would go down in that sweaty, old room and look at himself in the mirror and do all kinds of gyrations. I have developed for every sport, and I think every facet of life really, a respect now for the discipline that's required to accomplish something. For you to be a top salesman it takes a lot of discipline and a lot of time and a lot of study and a lot of effort. I don't even know what you do, but I respect it. That weight lifter, I respect him. He might be a complete misfit in all other areas of life, but when he goes down there and I see what he did and the hours of effort and pain and struggle that he went through to get there, I respect that aspect of his life.

That feeling that I've developed through physical education has made me more tolerant and more respectful of everything. This is the kind of thing the Y does. You get so involved in managing and handling people. A guy gets chewed out by his boss and he comes down here and he really raises cane with you. "Where are the balls? The balls are bad. This is bad. The lights are bad." For the \$70 or \$100 he spent you do what he tells you now, and you've got to handle that situation and let him go out of here feeling better, not crapping on you, but let him vent some of that. This is part of our work.

- C: That sort of leads into a couple of last questions that I have about the YMCA. What do you see happening at the Y as far as change? How has it changed since you've been there? Is the YMCA developing more to physical as opposed to, at one time, the family? What do you see changing and happening at the Y in the next couple of years, and also since the time you've been there?
- B: When I came we were extremely traditional. I mean it was line up on the black line, count off by three's, march around the circle, very traditional in all of our programs. We in Youngstown have maintained a lot of that because we've felt that it is still important. You asked earlier

what relates today. Is there a possibility of bringing what was good in the past? I think there are lots of things that were good, so we've tried to do that.

I keep reading all this current literature that if you don't change you're dead. You must be dynamic and all this baloney. To an extent it is baloney because you don't have to change everything just because there is a trend going on. I think we're caught up nationally in tremendous changes. We've become much more a social agency, forced by national . . . And I do think in many instances forced into it. It's a sign of the times. It's a socialistic attitude that has just taken over. Your funds, this is the thing that dictates. To get funds you're supposed to do these social projects. We've resisted it very strongly in Youngstown.

I think that our big change has come about in that we have gone from strictly men to a family. We're not as strong as many YMCA's familywise. We have a good, strong men's program and a strong women's program. But in terms of putting them together we haven't really pulled that off too well yet. We had lad-dad programs that are strong; we have mom and kids programs that are strong, but we've never really pulled it. Location is part of that problem.

When we remodeled there was a tremendous amount of flak as to why we were putting the building downtown. We questioned ourselves and studies were made. We'll never get fully over those kind of shock waves until we put a branch in a suburban area somewhere. At the moment, we can't financially operate this. We're getting closer and closer; we keep cutting into it. We just didn't realize the financial burden that this physical plant would cause us in terms of just the utilities.

I think the change, as far as the Y goes, we are getting into more sophisticated programming and physical education, procare, reconditioning heart patients, testing our own members, which is great. We need that refinement in measuring people and having them work to a load.

We've changed tremendously here in that we've consolidated a black and white Y. This has been a real traumatic experience for both communities, the black and the white. We've got a few years before we're going to solve that. We've got attitudes out there in the community that aren't accurate, but they're going to sit out there and feel the way they want to feel, both communities, the black and the white. So we've done a lot of work there.

C: Are you saying that the blacks would rather have their own

Y, do you think, and the whites?

B: Yes, sure, I think to an extent. At one point this was very. . . This business of black and separate was absolutely forbidden--black, separate, and equal--because it couldn't happen. In the school systems and all that, was the feeling of the black community. When we decided that financially and for lots of reasons, participation, that we were going to consolidate, the attitude had swung back a little back that the blacks needed these cultural centers such as the black Y. We got caught right in the midst of that coming as being the emphasis point. When we were making a change, they were going the other way. Now we have to make it work though.

C: In conjunction with that, with the blacks and whites at the closing of the West Federal YMCA, were there any problems or anything that you found to be exceptionally vivid during the course of that time? I might add that in speaking with Jim Lottier I had asked him the same question about the blacks preferring their own YMCA. He said that he most definitely felt that way. Like you said, they need to have their own culture, their own centers or something like that where they can be around and associate with black people because they enjoy perhaps that than associating with black and whites mixed, or white people.

B: My attitude on that is simply this: It might border on corny and it might border on not being able to substantiate it with all kinds of statistics and philosophies, but it has to be together. That statement leads to all kinds of problems because it's not going to be together for many, many years. Every once in a while I think we're coming closer and then there seems to be a falling away and separatists attitudes. This whole school busing thing is just a nightmare. I don't know how I would react. I keep challenging myself. What would I do in that situation?

I think that as far as Jim is concerned, that has to happen if they want it to be churches or in social clubs. I fit us in there somewhere between there as a community agency that should foster a togetherness thing. That's a nightmare.

Right now, if we had an all white Y here it would be much easier for us because we don't have the conflicts that blacks and whites together cause. Whether they're real or imagined, they're there. If it was an all black Y with the same facilities and we were able to fund it, which I can't imagine, there would be less a problem I think. However, then would come from that this criticism: We're supposed to be one country, and all that other jazz. How can you sit there



with these two. You're damned if you do and damned if you don't.

The whole struggle of closing that branch, there was a lot of hard feeling. We're still going through a test as to whether it was right or wrong. Financially, it was the only way, we felt. It got down to a dollars and cents thing. The income wasn't there. The membership constituency there was unable to pay in most instances. It was in a location that it couldn't really grow because there was no parking available. It was an isolated area. It serviced that area immediately around it probably well, but it didn't generate income and it didn't have much potential for generating income. The building needed almost a total renovation. It was the judgment that when we built here we weren't able to do both, so we consolidated.

- C: One final question on the YMCA and that is in talking with some of the people that are professional YMCA people, several of them have said to me that the YMCA, they feel, is perhaps no longer serving as it once did the average type of person. The well-to-do people have their place to go, their country clubs, et cetera. The average person has always come to the Y, and, of course, many well-to-do; and they are being forced sometime to always work with the underprivileged. There should be a place where a person of average physical, mental, spiritual, et cetera, intelligence, just overall active can go and develop and develop the leadership and things like that. Do you see the YMCA falling down and eventually perhaps going down to the point of serving the low end of the community and excluding the other people? Is that ever going to happen?
- B: I hope not. My attitude on that is that there should be an understanding. For me to say this to a person that doesn't have a cent, that's out of a job, and that's on welfare, I can't imagine him accepting what I'm going to say or understanding it -- understanding it rather than accepting it. I have a feeling that our structure, our system, our total system is under attack from the top down. It deserves a lot of the attack that it is under, but essentially I still say that the system is right. That, to me, means that if the YMCA, if there is need for welfare work, social kinds of programming and day care centers, and medical attention and so on for people that can't afford it, that that should happen somehow. The YMCA should not be at the level of serving the total community

on a social kind of base, but that we should be a rung or two above. That part of the system is that you drag yourself up by your boot straps and you go from welfare or social assistance to the next rung, which maybe means you buy your membership to the YMCA and you go to that rung if you can afford it because that then leads you to the next rung which is a semiprivate club, which next is the country club. If that is the system they want to go through all these chairs . . .

To answer your question, I don't want to be what you described as a social service agency. I think we can play a role. This is contradictory to national and I'm not so sure it's contradictory to personal feelings of national people, but to expound this publicly leads us into some really sticky areas. Therefore, we just. . . I don't know whether we're taking a hypocritical stance or what we're doing, but in my mind for us to. . .

A teacher comes in here with fourteen referrals from a school; they don't have any money. For me to talk to those fourteen kids and that teacher with what I'm telling them, they walk out of here and say, "The Y threw us out. I took kids down there that needed that experience and they threw us out." They wouldn't understand that I'm saying, "You go out now and you guys and you girls, you work and you somehow come in here with \$15, \$20, or the whole \$36 and join the Y because that's the way the system works." It's a real delicate thing, but I think we have to keep struggling, that this is a rung above mass kinds of supports. Someone else is doing that.

This whole new juvenile justice system that billions of dollars are being poured into, the YMCA is in there with both feet saying, "We're going to grab some of that money and we're going to do a job because it needs to be done." I'm not arguing that it needs to be done; there needs to be something done, but the Y's are going in there with these billions. We ought to scrape us some of this and turn out dormitories into an intermediate step between prison and school. I don't agree.

It's kind of a long-winded way of saying that I hope we don't go that way. We're going to try not to go that way. The pressure though is horrendous. It's a feeling when you tell a guy, "Hit the road." You don't say it that callously, but if he walks out of there without being serviced, that's his attitude. We've said, in our publicity over the years, that anyone who needs the Y, somehow they're going to get it. That's a pretty nice statement.

- C: It's all well and good as long as not too many people would expect something for free. You are a big business too and it takes money to operate it and perhaps total government involvement would turn everything over to them as far as their dictating what you have to do.
- B: I have an easier time saying what I just said. If it wasn't a matter of black and white, and to me I always get back to that. . . If you were coming in here and you couldn't afford it, I could talk to you and say, "Jeff, you go out and earn a few bucks, sell some papers, rake some leaves, I don't care what you do, and then you come back." I could do that to you.

That's a hang-up we've got that I can't speak to you the same way I speak to this other guy. I've had this kind of conversation with some black leaders, and they say to me, "You don't understand the black culture." Again, I have to respond to that; if I respond honestly, "You're right." But I still say, "Why doesn't this total system work for you?" Then they point out all the discriminations and all the legitimate things that have happened over the years. Therefore, we're not on the same level when we talk, and this is a big, big problem.

I still say we don't want to be a social agency; we want to be selective; we want to be something that you earn, that you buy if you want it. The pressures from the community chest are going the other way. Substantiate where your money is being spent, and if it isn't being spent where it's needed, you don't need it. That means have-nots. We put twenty-five have-nots in a locker room with five haves who paid, and the have-nots are a little more aggressive and outnumber them and the haves don't come back because it's not fun; it's not enjoyable. We can't supervise it one-to-one, so it's a tremendous dilemma that we're caught up in.

I hope we have the strength to fight it through and do it the right way because to me, honestly, it's not a black and white thing; it's a system that I think is essentially right. I could have a Leaders Club that could be half black and half white. If I had the thinking that I wanted in there it wouldn't bother me a bit, but if I had an attitude problem with either side that was contrary to what I think the system is, I would be hung up.

That's hard to interpret. Prove what you're saying. For me to prove what I'm saying we should have five. . . . Percentagewise, probably, we should have two black staff members. We don't have any. Now how can I be really legitimate in what I'm saying when I don't have a black staff member? My answer to that is that I don't have any that are qualified, even ask. I'll have twenty-five people a year call in here about working for the Y staff, and I haven't had a black in five years call. That doesn't matter. Sure it matters.

C: I would like to thank you for taking the time to talk with me. I got a lot of things from you that nobody else has said. It's all part of the YMCA.

END OF INTERVIEW