

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Junior Order, United Mechanics

Personal Experience

O.H. 909

LAWRENCE M. MOON

Interviewed

by

Jeanne Ontko

on

March 6, 1981

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Junior Order, United Mechanics

INTERVIEWEE: LAWRENCE M. MOON

INTERVIEWER: Jeanne Ontko

SUBJECT: Junior Order's beginning, activities of
the order, number of members involved,
beliefs of the Order, comparison to other
associations, response of Order to issues

DATE: March 6, 1981

O: This is an interview with Mr. Lawrence Moon for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, by Jeanne Ontko, at 3930 Baymar Drive, Youngstown, Ohio, on March 6, 1981, at 7:15 p.m.

Okay Mr. Moon, could you please give a short biography of yourself now? When were you born? [Tell me about] your education, religious affiliation, [and] employment.

M: I was born on November 5, 1908, in McKeesport, Pennsylvania. I finished grade school and [graduated from] South High School. I worked for [the] Youngstown Sheet & Tube, and for six months, I worked for General Fire Proofing Company and Truscon Steel. Then, I returned to the Youngstown Sheet & Tube.

O: Where was your education at here in Youngstown?

M: South High. Most of it was in Youngstown. We moved around quite a bit during my younger days. I started high school in Niles, and I actually ended up at South High. For grade school, I went in Youngstown and Girard and places like that. We are primarily Youngstown people.

O: How long have you been a member of the Junior Order of United American Mechanics?

M: [For] fifty-two years.

O: Could you explain to me briefly what the Junior Order is and what it stands for?

M: The Junior Order of United American Mechanics is a fraternity organization composed of men. Women can join an auxiliary organization. We believe in the supreme being of the universe. We believe in separation of church and state. We believe primarily in American principles. You do not have to have any particular education or political beliefs to belong to our organization. We are an organization of friends and relatives, primarily.

O: When you say "American principles," what do you mean by that?

M: By American principles, Jeanne, I mean that we believe that those people who are Americans believe what America stands for; freedom of speech, freedom to [have] the things you want, but by the same token, not to violate any normal laws that people have a habit of doing, like saluting the flag. When I think of American principles, I just think of freedom and doing the things that the law allows us to do, not what they forbid. We try to have our members stick strictly to that belief.

O: In the book that you gave me to read, there were three objectives that were stated of the Junior Order. One was the national principle of American freedom; another one was to take care of families; the other one was regarding public education. Now, could you tell me how you think the Youngstown council has been faithful to these three objectives, or nationally?

M: In any time that there was legislation that affected our schools, we urged our members to support that amendment. Whatever they were after, we asked them to support it. We presented flags to the schools, and we presented flags to churches. This was our way of participating in our school program. We believe that the teachers had a certain right of things they could do, but by the same token, we did not feel. . . . What is going on today, we wouldn't approve of. I will be honest with you.

O: What do you mean by that?

M: The strikes that are going on right now. . . . We would not approve, because we do not feel that this is the way that our children should be taught. I think

that the children should be taught the principles of American citizenship and that there are other ways of accomplishing some of their aims other than by doing what they are doing.

O: Does it matter whether it is public education or parochial education?

M: Jeanne, we are primarily a public spirited group of people; therefore, private education, whether it be parochial or any other private school, we did not believe in. Of course, over the years, the Government has changed their thinking about a lot of these things, so now it has become that the private schools are included in a lot of things. Money is being given to private schools. We have given up; there is no way that we can fight it any longer. We did object to private school regardless of what private school that might be, of being helped by public money.

O: How did you object then, politically?

M: If there were laws which over the years had been passed and brought up that some legislature wanted to give money to private schools, we made sure that they knew we were against this particular thing.

O: What position did you hold as members of the Junior Order?

M: Locally?

O: Yes.

M: I served all of these offices, and right now I am the financial secretary.

O: This is for local?

M: Local positions. When I was [in] all offices, you start in some places as sentinel and work your way through to the head of the council, which is the councillor. After councillor, you can become one of the secretaries. We have always used our past officers to serve in these particular offices. I have been an officer of Youngstown since 1932.

O: Why did you join the order?

M: If you are reading our history, you will read where we, as juniors, were the sons of the original people. This followed right on through. My dad gave me my membership as a Christmas present, because he had belonged to the Junior Order in McKeesport, Pennsylvania. This is the reason that a lot of the people

belonged to our organization; they were sons or relatives of members who were already there. This still holds pretty good today. Of course, we are not getting any kids in, because of the youngsters; there aren't that many of them. We are still getting relatives like brothers, grandchildren, and cousins and so forth, but we are primarily a relative-oriented organization.

O: Do you know in the 1930's what the greatest amount of members would be? When would be the apex of the Order?

M: [It would be] just before the Depression, I'd say in 1929, just prior to the Depression. We had better than 350 members then.

O: Would you know the history and the beginning of the Junior Order here in the Youngstown area? Who founded it?

M: No, I wouldn't. I don't know whether that book I gave you has anything like that in it.

O: It mentions about the different sessions held in Youngstown.

M: No, I have no way of knowing that. I could look at our charter, because we still have a few charter people who built our organization. When they started, it was in 1897. How they started and who started it, I really don't know. I've looked at the charter on more than one occasion. Most of the time, we were a Pennsylvania organization. As people moved, they took the people with them. I would say that this is what probably happened to Youngstown. [For instance], my dad came from McKeesport into Ohio, but he maintained his membership in McKeesport for a good many years. As a matter of fact, until the mid-1920's, just before he had me join, that was when he ran across some fellows out at G.F. [General Fireproofing], and one of them just happened to mention the Junior Order of United American Mechanics. My dad said, "Well, I'm a member." They wanted to know where, so they convinced him that he should transfer to Youngstown. I would suppose that is exactly where #51 started. People from Pennsylvania moved into Ohio with their group of friends, they decided they should start an organization.

O: That would be council #51?

M: Yes, council #51.

O: It is named after Samuel Randall, is that it?

M: No, no. It is just the Youngstown Council #51; that is it.

O: That is just it?

M: Samuel Randall Council was council #98, and they consolidated with us back in 1924 and 1925. No, that was another council. [Council] #98 would be after #51.

O: Two issues especially in the 1920's and 1930's seemed to have been very prominent in the Junior Order. These would be concerning immigration and education.

M: Right.

O: Could you talk a little bit about the immigration issue throughout the years that you have been a member, and how the Junior Order responded?

M: Because our organization was founded primarily on immigration back before 1853. . . . If you read our history, you read that these men had been together in protest of immigration of foreign labor that was coming into the United States and working at cheaper wages than they were and living old country ways. This is what they banded themselves to do. They were primarily a union group at that particular time, because it was only skilled labor that belonged to the original organization. When they finally organized the Junior Order in 1853, they were the sons of the men who originally started the organization. As I interpret the thing, the men that started the Order of the United American Mechanics had a good idea and from it, other groups broke off. Carpenters broke off into their own group, and electricians into their own groups, and iron workers into their own groups, because they could see where all going together wasn't doing much good for any one of them. It was alright for all of them. They felt that if they broke off and went into their own groups, then they could do more for themselves. They still left the youngsters to belong to the Junior Order, which was nothing more or less than an apprentice organization. Because they started to break off like that, my impression is that the original idea just died down. The youngsters decided that their dads had a good idea, and they would like to hang onto this. So, they organized themselves, and the people who were helping them organize themselves into what is known as the Junior Order of United American Mechanics. They threw the doors open because they realized that they couldn't remain a skilled organization and foster themselves, so they threw their organization open to everybody. Over the years, we have had everything from labor to presidents of companies and so forth, who belonged to our organization.

- O: In Youngstown, is there any specific program for immigration hiring?
- M: No, because this was on a national level. At that time, we had a lobbyist in Washington. Through our Philadelphia office, they kept us advised of legislation that was coming up that pertained to the immigration laws. Like today, all we could do was to band ourselves together and send letters to our representatives and our senators telling them to either vote for or against whatever it was. We fought for that immigration on the books of the federal Government for years. Three presidents vetoed it. Congress finally passed it over the veto of the last president. This was the only way that we ever got running. While we took the lead in this and our name was the sponsor, we did have a lot of help from other labor organizations--well, not labor organizations, because we belonged to the fraternal groups of America. This was everybody; social groups and fraternal groups like ourselves, and labor groups. We had help from them. Our name was the one that forged this thing and the one that kept after it.
- O: Then, you are saying that you worked with the Masons and the Odd Fellows.
- M: The Masons, the Odd Fellows. . . . We belonged to the Fraternal Society of America, and we were all members of that particular group. It seemed to be that it was the Junior Order's idea that we fight for this dog gone thing, and we were the ones who kept the lobbyist there. He was the one who kept us advised of what all was going on.
- O: Do you know the lobbyist's name?
- M: I don't know because they changed, and I don't remember now which one it was
- O: Would you say then, that the Junior Order was probably the most prominent social organization here in Youngstown for men? Which one do you think was?
- M: No, I don't think we were, because we worked within our own group of people. While we were friendly. . . . Because we had a lot of our people who belonged to the Masons, the Odd Fellows, the Knights of Columbus, and other fraternal groups around Youngstown, at no time did any of the fraternal groups themselves get together and organize themselves into a fraternal society. We all worked on our own. We all contributed in our own small way of the things that we would like to do for ourselves. I'm sure that if a fellow belonged to the Masons, happened to go to a Mason meeting some night,

and they came up with an idea what was good for the city of Youngstown, they would bring it to us, and we would certainly back it. By the same token, whatever we might have suggested in our own organization in our own council meetings, they would take to their own meetings and say, "This is what Youngstown has proposed, and this is what they are going to support." Maybe individually, we supported each other, but collectively, we never did.

O: What would be some of the things the Junior Order would propose for Youngstown?

M: School taxes [and] pay raises for teachers. That is about the only thing that I can think of that we would be vitally interested in. We are a nonpolitical organization, but by the same token, if there was somebody running for an office, especially our members, we notified our members that they were running for office. Whether they were democrat or republican, that made no difference. We certainly supported our own members, because we had members who ran for sheriff and for various political offices, and there were judges who belonged to our organization. They belonged to many others too, but they belonged to us. By doing this, we certainly would make it know to our membership that Judge Henderson was a member of our organization, and that we would like to see him elected to the office of something.

O: Can you think of some other prominent people who were elected?

M: Ben Morris was sheriff and belonged to our organization.

O: Do you remember the years that this would be, too?

M: I would have to look them up.

O: That's okay.

M: Ernest Maton, Jr. was one of our judges.

O: When these men would be running for office, would they say publicly that they were a member of the Junior Order? Did you think this helped to get people elected?

M: I don't think that any of them did. I think you will find out politically today, they do the same thing; they saw federal organizations they belonged to on the basis that. . . . Here in Youngstown, for instance, if somebody said they belonged to the Junior Order of United American Mechanics, there might be

somebody who didn't like us, and they wouldn't vote for him. Like today, you don't vote for this one because he is a democrat, or [because] he belongs to some other party like the independent party or something, and so you don't vote for him. By the same token, you wouldn't hear somebody come out and say that they belong to the Knights of Columbus even though we know that they do. I don't think, politically, our politicians ever said that they belonged to any particular organization. We knew that they did. Again, it is like the Masons and the Odd Fellows, and all the rest of them; as long as they were members of our organization, we let our membership know that they belonged to our organization, and that we should support them at the polls. That was the only way. They very seldom came to us and asked us to do this. We already would have promised them that we would, and they knew that they were winners and would be treated like that.

O: Where were the headquarters for the Junior Order in Youngstown?

M: When I first joined this organization, we were up over Lustig's Shoe Store. Then, we moved from there to right across from the Warner Theater, on the third floor. As a matter of fact, if you are downtown, Jeanne, and look from the Warner Theater side upstairs, you will still see the letters on the side down. That has been twenty years ago since we moved out of there.

O: Where are your headquarters now?

M: We meet at the Odd Fellows' temple on Glenwood Avenue.

O: In the 1920's, the Klan was very prominent here in Youngstown. Did the Junior Order have any association with the Klu Klux Klan? At that time, it seemed a more moral enforcing agent.

M: Here again, the Junior Order didn't have anything physically to do with the Klan. Some of our members belonged to the Klan, but that was their affair like everything else. The only thing that we are ever against is anybody who belongs to the communist party. We are absolutely against anything like that. They can belong to any other organization in the United States. Maybe the principles of the Klan might not have been exactly what they wanted them to be, but if some of our members wanted to belong to it, that was their affair. They made no bones about that; the same as we made no bones about us belonging to the Junior Order of the United American Mechanics. We have nothing against the Klan, and we didn't take any opposition to anybody. We didn't take a stand one way or the other about whether the Klan was good or bad.

- O: Did the Junior Order see immigrants as related to communists? I know that it was mentioned in the book, that sometimes immigrants were seen with communistic inclinations.
- M: The original group of people were the ones who started this thing of immigration. Really, what they were talking about was that they didn't want all of these people coming over here. It has only been in the last ten or fifteen years that we changed our laws to the effect that could have naturalized citizens. Up until that time, the only people who we accepted were American born. We had no objection to immigration, but we just didn't like what is going on now. This is what we don't like: just throwing the doors open and letting everybody come in. All that is really doing is creating more of an expense to you and I as taxpayers of supporting these people, because there aren't any jobs. We don't have enough jobs for our own people, and they are bringing these other people in here. They may never work, so they are living on Welfare or something along with our people. This was our main objection. This is the reason that we wanted immigration controlled. The control of immigration is just the thing they are talking about now with the Cubans that are coming in. Cubans are getting rid of all of their criminals. We know what happened when America was settled. Europe sent everything they didn't want over here. Some of them turned out good; some of them turned out bad; but there was more good than there was bad. People who were bad over there came over here and either were good or had to be good, and had to change their ways. Those who were bad and came over here, never lived to long to have much of an influence on this, because they kept traveling west, and they kept getting killed along the way. The things that happened when this country was settled are no different than what is happening today, except that you didn't have quite as many of them. The people who came over here, came over with one thing in mind; they wanted freedom. They were willing to work for it. These people who are coming over today, sure they want their freedom in the United States, but there is no way for them all to get a job either.
- O: Earlier then, the Junior Order would be against immigration more for economic competition. Is that what you mean?
- M: Right, that is what the book said. That was why we were originally founded, and that is one of our objects that we are opposed to: uncontrolled immigration. We always have [been].

- O: The strikes in Youngstown in 1919 and the 1930's, the labor strikes. . . . How did the Junior Order respond to this?
- M: No way at all. Here again, the people who we had belonging to our organization were strikers and non-strikers, politicians and nonpoliticians. We had lawyers, and we had every walk of life of people who belonged to our organization. When we walked into the doors of our organization, we didn't care what happened outside; we were members of one group. If they needed help, whether they were strikers or not, we tried to give them help as best as we could. We had not fault to find at their strikes. In 1913, I don't have any idea, because that was a little before my time. The strikes in the 1930's, yes, I was there, and I know exactly what happened. We treated every person who walked through the door the same.
- O: You are talking about the members who were striking.
- M: Yes. Even outside, we couldn't object to or take stands for or against a strike, because we are not that type of an organization. Here again, I get back to these teacher strikes, which appall me to no end, because we are going through it in Boardman, and now they are going through it in Youngstown. This type of a strike, I think we would probably object to, because we just don't feel that it is the right thing to do for our youngsters. We believe in the public schools. As a matter of fact, Bob Pollock, who was a member over in the Canton area, was a state senator. He was the one who got the free public school books for the state of Ohio. That belongs to them, but it still belongs to the organization, because Bob was the one who fought for it and finally got the approval for the school books.
- O: For the past fifty years, what have you discussed at your meetings?
- M: Our topics of discussion. . . . Prior to the Depression of 1929 and the 1930's, we were primarily an insurance organization, because there were a lot of people who belonged to our organization, and my dad was one of them. We had a \$500 funeral benefit. This was the only insurance he had, and he couldn't convince any of those old guys that some day they were going to pass away, and they needed more than the \$500. But being at the old school, that was enough, and it was. When the Depression came along and the fellows started to lose their jobs, we lost the young fellows, because they didn't have a job, and they couldn't pay their dues anyway. So, the old fellows were stuck. In the early 1900's, they started the funeral benefit department.

In 1929, you had fellows who were in their forties and fifties, and some older than that, in their sixties. This was the only insurance they had, so they held on to it and naturally, they started to pass away. It was a drain on the funeral benefit department. It finally got to the place where they ran out of money, and the state of Pennsylvania closed it. Because of that, we lost a lot of members. Our discussions at that particular time was how we were going to convince these old fellows who had dropped out and wanted to come back and that wanted insurance, we had another branch that we could put them in. I talked to my dad and he said, "No way." So, I just signed him up, and I paid for it myself. Primarily our discussions had to do with the things that may come out of our state or national council that pertained to membership drives, and how we could increase our membership.

O: What were some of the suggestions?

M: Some of our suggestions were that we buddy up. If we had a candidate, or if I had a prospective candidate, and I couldn't convince that he should belong to the organization, we turned it into the council. The councillor would appoint two strangers to go talk to the man to see if they could convince him, and it worked in occasions like that. They offered various programs of money and gifts and things like this to try to convince these people to come in. For us to bring them in, we offered them nothing other than association. Here again, the only people who we could convince to belong to our organization were people who were close friends or relatives, somewhere along that line. Our discussions were how we were going to keep what we had, and what we were going to do with what we had. If there was a particular subject, like I mentioned politically during the elections of what we were going to try to do to get so and so elected, or if there was somebody we didn't want, what we were going to try to do to hinder their election. We may not succeed.

O: Did that ever happen?

M: Well, we don't know. It's hard to say. Out of a few hundred men, if you have twenty or twenty-five there, that is where your discussion and that is what kept your group together. The other one would only go by whatever letter we sent them. Maybe they did or didn't follow it. There were times when some of the people we were against didn't get elected. Whether we had anything to do with it, I don't know, because there is no way of saying. I doubt very much that we did, because I don't think we carried that much credit. At least we knew that when the election was over, we had done what

we wanted to do. Our discussions primarily were along those particular lines. Most of the time, we just got in there and would run through the order of business, read whatever letters we got from any outside organization, and took whatever action was on it. If we were planning a banquet or a dinner or some sort of an affair, we would get our reports on how the thing was progressing, close the meeting, and play cards.

O: Did you have a lot of connections with the other state councils? Did you do things with them?

M: Yes, when I first joined, the main thing of our group of people was that almost every night we were some place. We had organizations in Girard, Niles, Warren, Columbiana, and East Liverpool, so there was some place almost every night that you could go. My dad was single, and of course, I was just a young fellow. We had a couple of other fellows down there that liked to go. We would get together a couple of nights a week and go visit other organizations. It was nothing more than just to go and visit. There was no particular reason. Then, every year on Washington's birthday, we had a Washington Birthday Celebration and had a banquet at some church around town. As I said, we always participated in the Memorial Day parades and, for a while, in the Armistice Day parades, until they got out of hand. Then, we quit them. We tried to participate in some general civic affairs like that. Although we were just a small portion of it, we still made ourselves know that we were there.

O: So, it was more like a patriotic organization?

M: We are American patriotic. As a matter of fact, we are the oldest one in the United States, because there is nobody else that is as old as we are. It was founded in the United States, and is still in existence.

O: Did events like the Depression and World War II have a major effect on the Junior Order?

M: No, not really. World War I or World War II, the wars really didn't have any effect on us. Those of us who went into the service. . . . There were fellows here who carried on the organization, and when we came back, they were glad to see us. We lost a couple, but not too many, thank heavens. It really had no effect upon our membership. The fellows that were there when I left. . . . When I came back a little over two years, they were still there. Those of us who were overseas and traveled around a lot, we organized a few things. During the winter months, we had no problem of doing things, because there was always something we could do at the hall. We almost always had something to eat.

As I said, we always played cards. We would throw a supper every once in a while and invite our wives to come down and eat with us and things like that. So, during the winter months, it wasn't too much of a problem to keep activities up and keep us going. During the summer months when it got hot up in the hall, and everybody was busy doing something else like farming or something, once a month--one of the fellows had a place out at Milton damn--we would go out there and hold a party, just the fellows. It may last until 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning. We would sit around and play cards and drink a little beer and things like this. We are not a temperance organization.

O: Did they get involved? Did the Junior Order get involved in the temperance movement?

M: No, we never got involved in anything like that, that could affect our membership. There was no way that we could become an anti-temperance organization, although our laws at one time said that we could not meet over a bar or where there was a bar in the vicinity. Now, since it is legal again, it doesn't make any difference. By agreement, we never had any beer or liquor in the hall. If we were going to do something where it needs to be served, we never had it in the hall during our meeting. After the meeting was closed and the doors were open, then if there was something around that they wanted to eat or drink, then that was up to them. But, we never got involved in the temperance, because most of the fellows that belonged occasionally took a drink, and some of them took more than one drink, but you always get that. Primarily most of our people are very temperate. They will sit down, like at our national convention, and will have a hospitality room here on the north side. There will be beer or liquor for them who want to drink it. The men will sit down and have a drink, sit around, talk, and leave. That is about all it amounts to.

O: How about the suffrage movement?

M: I doubt very much that we took any part of it. That was a little bit before my time, too. Knowing our organization, I doubt very much that we would take any part of it, because here again, it is like the strikes. We have people that drank and people who didn't drink. There was no way, as long as they were in a meeting together, those who drank didn't drink, and the people who didn't drink had no objection to them being there. What they did on their own was their business. I doubt very much that we would get involved in something like that. We were primarily interested in things that concerned the United States as a whole. The temperance movement really wasn't the right thing. It proved to

be the wrong thing. That is neither here nor there. I know nothing about what their attitude was at that time. Knowing what I know of them from the time that I joined up until the present day, if that thing came up today, we would probably take the same attitude. You vote the way you want to vote. If you win, that is your affair. How I vote, it is not your affair; how you vote, it is not my affair. Things like that we would not participate or even discuss in the meeting.

The thing that I am being reminded of is [that] our decree work was the center for a lot of our activities. We had up to twenty-five people who participated in our decree team.

O: Could you explain as much as you can about your decree work?

M: Well, there are three decrees: virtue, liberty, and patriotism. There are certain lessons taught in each decree. Virtue is belief in the Holy Bible and the Church. Liberty is the right of doing the things you want. Patriotism is love of country. Virtue is friendliness because the decree of virtue deals with friendliness. The decree of liberty deals with the privilege of being free and of coming to a country where you can do the things that you want. Patriotism is the one that deals with this love of the country and believing in the things that the country stands for. One of the passages says doing what the law permits. That is part of the passage. It would take anywhere from two to two and a half hours to confer these decrees, so you can see that they are quite lengthy. The people who participated in them, enjoyed their work. That is perhaps how I primarily got interested in the organization, because when I would be sitting here doing work, I felt that there was something that I would like to do. I asked them if I could, and they said that there was always opening on the decree team for somebody. So, I started fooling around with them, and [it] eventually ended up that I had charge of the decree teams, and we traveled all over the state of Ohio and into Pennsylvania, conferring the decree work of classes of candidates.

O: Did you take an oath, also?

M: Oh yes, absolutely. Your initiatory work is your acceptance into the organization as a full member. It involves going through these various decrees and knowing what they mean. The final obligation was your obligation of citizenship to the country and to the organization. The same as the president swears his oath into office, you swear your oath to your position.

O: Earlier, you mentioned about a belief in the supreme being. Does this put religious qualifications at all on the membership?

M: Not necessarily. The only thing that it puts on there is that you are asked if you believe in the supreme being, because an atheist has no place in our organization. The country was founded upon the Holy Bible, and our organization has been founded on the Holy bible. We open every meeting with a scripture reading and a prayer, and we close it with a prayer. The backbone of our organization is the Church and the home and the country. "Virtue, liberty, and patriotism." Virtue is the church; liberty is the home; patriotism is the country.

O: In Youngstown, was there ever any controversy between the use of the Bible in the Catholic schools?

M: We never got involved in the parochial schools. We never got involved in that. The only thing we ever got involved in was when a school needed a Bible and we knew about it, we would try to present the school with a Bible. Over the years, we presented a lot of the classrooms with Bibles, because that was when they used to open their classes with a reading scripture and [a] prayer of some sort. We believe that the Holy Bible should be in the public schools. Here again, the country was founded upon the Holy Bible, and we think what was good enough for the country, is still good enough for the kids that are coming along. Of course, we have a lot of opposition to that any more. After the prayer in public schools was kicked out, which we think is wrong . . . we debated that with the Supreme Court and through our legislators, because the thing they ruled against--and we agreed--was that there was nobody who can tell anybody in the schools the prayer they are supposed to use or, how they are supposed to say it. This is what New York was doing. Their prayers were handed down to them by the school board. We still say that if a teacher wants to tell the children to bow their heads and pray in their own way, we see nothing wrong with that. This is the only place that perhaps the kids get religious training of any type at all. To know that there is something else besides going to school and then going home and hearing a lot of fighting and feuding and cussing and things like this. . . . We believe that our public schools are the training ground for our youngsters.

O: Did any Catholic leaders in Youngstown grant the organization as anti-Catholic?

M: No, we never did. Whenever anybody asks me about the Junior Order of United American Mechanics, and says, "You're not a mechanic. What are you doing belonging to the Junior Order?" I say, "Well, that's true. But, do I look like a Moose if I belong to the Moose, or do I look like an Elk if I would belong to the Elks?" This is the same way with the K. of C. (Knights of Columbus) and the Junior Order of United American Mechanics. I cannot belong to the K. of C. I don't object to it, and I don't object to the person who belongs to it. They have their own restrictions as to who can belong to it, and I abide by it. We have our restrictions as to who can belong to our organization. We get along. I got as good Catholic friends as I have any Protestant friends, and we don't fight amongst ourselves. I am sure that if you would sit down years ago, you might, but today you sit down and talk to some of the priests and tell them about our organization and who we are, and they understand it. I doubt very much that they would have anything to say about it.

Here again, we come back to that I belong to the American Legion. There are a lot of people who can't belong to the American Legion, because there are restrictions. The only restriction is that you had to be a veteran to belong to it. But, there are a lot of organizations in the United States that there are certain qualifications for you to join. You either meet them, or you can't belong. I don't object to it. I don't belong to the Colored Elks. Maybe they might take me in, but I don't know. I don't have any desire, put it that way. I have no desire to belong to the Colored Elks. If I know that a man is a Colored Elk, it makes no difference to me. If I belonged to the other Elk club, which I don't, it would make no difference to me that someone belonged to the Colored Elks. I have been rather liberal on my thinking of this thing. I think that our people, over the years, have adopted this same attitude. They haven't wanted anything for themselves. Whatever they wanted, they wanted for everybody; like the immigration law. The immigration law meant nothing to us locally as individuals, but to a country it would mean a lot to everybody who had to work for a living. They were going to maybe not have first choice of a job, but at least they knew that there weren't going to be a lot of people flooding in and taking jobs for \$5 or \$10 an hour less than they could possibly get. As I say, they were not looking at this individually; they were looking at it as a country. Everything that we have done, like the Pledge of Allegiance, we believe in it. We feel as though that pledging allegiance to the flag is pledging allegiance to this country, because it is only by the grace of this country that we would ever be. We may not like some of the things that we've got, but it is still the best thing that we've got. We feel

by doing that. . . . There are people who refuse to salute the flag and pledge allegiance, and we think it's wrong. The Jehovah's Witnesses is one group I stay faithfully away from, because they refuse to . . . they have their Bible, and they believe in that Bible. They do everything to convert everybody that they possibly can to their religion, but by the same token, they do not salute the flag or pledge allegiance to it. This, I can't see. This country allows them to form their Jehovah's Witnesses, and it doesn't say anything about them not saluting the flag and so forth. That is their prerogative. We don't like it, but we are not going to throw them in jail or anything. We just keep our distance away from them. Madeline O'Hara's son finally saw the light and broke away from it, because he finally realized what she was trying to do was not for the good of this country. I still don't think it is.

O: Mrs. Moon mentioned earlier about Shriver. Was that during the Depression?

M: Shriver-Allison were the older funeral directors in the city of Youngstown. Both Shriver and Allison belonged to our organization. Over the years, we became quite good friends, because we do have a funeral ceremony. When any of our members passed away, we tried to put in an appearance and at least give them our sendoff with our ritual.

O: You mentioned something about who they helped during the Depression. As members, did they help?

M: At that particular time, there was a lot of tales. Kurt Allison . . . after a funeral sometimes, when we would have our service at 9:00. . . . They had their home there on Dewey Avenue and Market [Street]. That was when it was new and refurnished. We talked to Kurt a lot of times about some of the things that had happened in Youngstown for funeral directors. If they knew that all one of our members had was \$500 to bury them, they would do it as reasonable as possible. It was still a business, and they are in business to make money and always have been, but nevertheless, they didn't only belong to us; they belonged to a lot of other organizations around Youngstown. I think they did the same thing for the Masons and for the Odd Fellows if they belonged to them. If they knew that one of their members who was being buried was destitute, they would do it as cheap as possible. At that time, you could bury a man reasonably well for \$500. Also at that time, we were told about some of the things about funerals. By law, they could only collect so much money. If somebody ran up a couple thousand dollar bill, they could take them to court,

and by law, could sue them and get a few hundred dollars. Of course, that has been changed now. That is the reason somebody has to sign it. Shriver and Allison were real good friends of ours. They worked real close. On a few occasions on a real bad night when I would show up for a funeral and nobody else would show up to take the chaplain's part, Charlie Shriver would stand at the foot of the casket and take the part for me and things like that. When Marty Hoffmeister started his funeral home, Marty belonged to our organization. John Delker still belongs to our organization. They belong to these organizations. We are glad to have them, and we are glad to say that they belong to us. We know that they are good, but they do it for business. If you are trying to think of somebody where you want to go, you naturally are going to think of a name that you know and not just open a book and say, "That one looks like a good name," and pick it out. We know these people, and we have done business with them over the years.

O: You mentioned earlier about the Armistice parade. You said that it got out of hand. What did you mean by that?

M: When I say it got out of hand, [I meant] our members wouldn't show up and things like this. It just got beyond us. It was more than a couple of us could take care of. I'd say, "You're going to be down there?" They'd say, "Oh, yeah. We'll be there." We would have maybe fifteen or twenty guys who were going to be there to carry flags, and we would end up at an Armistice Day parade with maybe one or two of us being there. So, we finally just dropped away from doing that. We were doing it for publicity purposes. We found out that, really, it didn't do us that much good. You could talk to somebody the next day and ask them who the Junior U.A.M. was, and they would probably say that they hadn't even seen us and things like this. The Woodmen of the World [W.O.W.] was in Youngstown. They didn't get much publicity in Youngstown, and I think they still are [here]. They never got too much publicity. People would ask who they were.

O: Woodmen of the World?

M: W.O.W. I think it was Woodmen.

O: Woodmen of the World.

M: I think it is like everything else. You could go down today and jump off the top of the Union National Bank building and get a big spread in the paper about doing this. A week from now, somebody would ask, "Who did that?" Ninety-five percent of the people would even

remember. Our biggest problem has been publicity. We know that publicity doesn't work. The Masonic organization is an old world organization, and they brought a lot of things with them. People do know of them, but I am sure that there are people in Youngstown who don't remember anything that the Masonic organization may have done for the city of Youngstown. It is the same way with the Elks Club and the Odd Fellows. The groups that are banded into those things are banded together for a specific purpose, in my opinion. They have something to offer that nobody else has. Years ago, we had the \$500 death benefit to offer. We don't have it, so we don't have anything to sell in that way. We had an orphan's home.

O: At one time, they considered that in Youngstown.

M: Yes, they considered sights all over. It still ended up in Ohio. We had the orphan's home.

O: Was Youngstown a pretty prominent place of the Junior Order if they were considering the orphan's home here?

M: At that particular time for the membership that we had, we were probably second largest. Being close to Pennsylvania, everybody was coming this way. We had a lot of Pennsylvanians coming into Ohio. As a matter of fact, Champion Council #2 still is in existence. It would be the second council that was ever founded in Ohio, because we go by rotation. Champion Council in Springfield, Ohio is still in existence. It could easily be that at these national conventions--when they were talking about something like that--we had as much of a voice or could probably be considered as well as anybody else in the country. Why they picked Tiffin, Ohio, I don't know. I can see a lot of other places that I would pick. At that time, when they talked about an orphan's home, the population was in the East. You didn't have the population in the South that you have today--that is, the white population, for one thing. We had councils as far south as Florida. Whatever brought it about. . . . It was just a matter of somebody finally saying that Tiffin, Ohio looked like the good place to hole it, and this is where they established it. We raised a lot of kids. Over the years, there were 1,500 kids. In one year, we had over 1,500 kids between there and Lexington, North Carolina.

When President Roosevelt got in and started his various programs, social security and things like this, this is the other thing that put us away. Years ago, if we had nothing else to sell to a young person, we could almost sell them on the fact that you have young children and if anything should happen to them, what would happen to those kids? You could put those children in that home,

and nobody could take them out but you. They stayed there. If you didn't take them out or if something happened that you passed away or something. . . . No matter what happened, if there was nobody who wanted to take those children out of there, they stayed there until they were eighteen. [They were] educated and trained. Then, they were thrown out to the wolves.

We trained a lot of kids, and we took care of a lot of kids in my life time. Nobody objected to it. The economy again caught up with us. It was a better advantage for a widow to keep her kid with her. Even today, it is to the father's advantage to keep his kids with him. We can't say, "Well, you can join our organization and if anything happens to you, we can send your kids to a home." We wouldn't say "to an orphan's home," because we never called them orphans, because they weren't always orphans. It only had to be the father who passed away. The mother could put the children in the home. This they found out was a fallacy, because a lot of times, it was the mother who was passing away. As long as the father still lived, he couldn't put the kids in the home. So, they finally changed that, too. If either of the parents passed away and it was necessary, they could have the privilege of putting the children in the home.

O: The children were taught in this home, too?

M: We had a grade school and a high school. We had a baseball team and a football team. They had everything that went along with schools. They took some youngsters in there almost in arms. Somebody cared for them and trained them.

O: Did a few of them become members of the organization afterwards?

M: A lot of them did, as far as I know. They joined a council. I'm trying to remember the name of it. It is still in existence. I don't know how many might still belong to it, because they have scattered all over the United States, but they--a lot of them--go back every Labor Day weekend for a reunion. I have been trying to get over there the last several years, and I haven't made it, but I will one of these years.

O: What do you think was your most important contribution to the Junior Order?

M: My most important contribution to the Junior Order? That is a hard thing to tie down, really. The very fact that I was willing to work and take responsibility for jobs is the reason that you move in these various offices. So, the only thing that I can say my

contribution to them has been the fact that I have worked with them. I have worked for them, and I have tried to do the best that I possibly could do for the Junior Order of United American Mechanics. Because of that, I now have the national order.

O: Did you try to find jobs for people?

M: We did. One place in our order of business . . . the next to the last order of business is any brother in search of employment. Over the years, we have been able to find jobs for people. But here again, this was back thirty-five, forty, or fifty years ago. When somebody was working had the opportunity of being able to say, "Well, I have a friend who needs a job," and he could get it for him. Today, it isn't that easy, because with unions and other things going on, it's just almost impossible, like this last year with kids coming out of college trying to get jobs, and the mills were closed. They just weren't available. We still ask the question. If there is something that we know of. . . . Thank heavens, most of us are retired. We have a few that still work. If there was something that we knew they could do. . . . Like, this one friend of mine, he is a construction carpenter. I have thrown a few jobs his way, because somebody wished they knew a good carpenter who could do [work] and they didn't want to go and hire a union carpenter. He is a union carpenter, but he can moonlight. I told him, "Yeah, I know a guy, and I'm sure he can do a good job." it is the same way with all of these fellows. If we know somebody is qualified to do something, we would be more than happy to tell our friends about him. As far as finding somebody a permanent job today, I doubt very much that we could do that.

O: Really. The Junior Order has had to change with the times.

M: We have tried to change, but the changes have been forced upon us, not because we want to and not because our ideals have changed over the years. We still believe the same things that we believed when I joined the organization. As far as I am concerned, that hasn't changed in any way, shape, or form. We still do what we can for our members, but as I said, most of us are retired, and there is very little we can do for a retired person. Over the years, we have seen that they have been fed at Christmas time. We brought coal for them when somebody needed a load of coal and things like this. We have done our little things for our own members in our own way, but we never got up on a box and spouted to the world that this is the thing we do. We are willing to tell a member that if they need help and we can possibly do it, we will. But, we are not a

charity organization. We can't just take care of everybody or would take care of anybody. We just take care of our own first.

O: How often were your meetings?

M: We used to meet every Tuesday night.

O: This was when?

M: [This was] up until we moved, which would be about fifteen or twenty years ago. From the time of 1951 when it was started, they meet on a Tuesday night, and they meet every Tuesday night, bar none. I know when we were going together, I said, "Don't plan anything on Tuesday nights." This was the way it was for the fellows who belonged to our organization. All the wives said the same thing. They just don't talk to their husbands about Tuesday nights, because they went to lodge on Tuesday night. The thing about it is. . . . We played cards, but we never got rowdy about it. We didn't play for any high stakes in poker because most of it was 500. If their wives knew that if they were at a lodge meeting, most of the time, they were in pretty good hands.

O: Is there anything else that you would like to add or that you can think of? Do you think that the Junior Order will ever revive and grow again?

M: In the last four years, this is all I have talked about, because I hear more people say that the Junior Order is dead. I am an optimist. We were started with twelve young men, and we have more than that. This is the only thing that I have to tell these people. We are more than the twelve kids who started this organization. We have a better nucleus. We just can't seem to sell to the people today. They watch that idiot box or a thousand other things. Years ago, the only thing that the people had to do was to either go to church or go to a lodge some place because there wasn't anything else to entertain them. There were no radios, and there was no television. So, the only place that these fellows could get out of the house and away from their wife once in a while. . . . I remember up there in the country of Mill Run. . . . That lodge is still up there, by the way. The lodge, whether it was ours or whoever's it was, was a gathering place for the fellows sometime during the week to talk over their troubles that they are having with their plowing or whatever they were doing. It was a means of doing something like the old country store where they used to sit around a stove and eat crackers and so forth and talk about things all day long. This is what we were. We were a place for the people to go and talk about the

things we all knew about. If somebody wanted to spout off about his own personal problems, that was okay. We would listen to him, but nobody gossiped about things. Today, our churches and other fraternal organizations are suffering the same way that we are. The apathy of the people and the attitude of the people [makes] it hard for us to sell it to them.

O: How many people are there now, nationally? How many members do you have?

M: We have about 12,000 members in the United States. The bulk of it. . . . Pennsylvania has over 3,000. We have over 2,200, and North Carolina has over 1,600. The rest of them are all below 1,000.

O: You still have annual conventions and meetings?

M: No, we meet biannually. Each state has an annual convention. Nationally, we meet biannually.

O: Wasn't the Junior Order considered a secret organization?

M: Oh, it was a secret organization. It is a secret organization to the extent. . . . By secret, we mean that you have got to go through a ritual in order to get inside of a closed meeting. An open meeting everybody comes to, but in order to sit in at a council meeting when the doors are locked, that is what makes it secret. It is only because of the decree work. There is nothing that we say in our decree work in any way, shape, or form that is detrimental to anyone's life, habits, or anything like that. The Masonic are no different than we are. Their decrees that they give teach a lesson. Each decree teaches a lesson. It is to try to make a man a better man than he was when you first knew him. Maybe we accomplish it sometimes, and maybe we don't, but at least we have put our effort in trying to do it. I think that is the only reason that we are secret. Now, public installation of officers, public meetings under our name, dinners, and things like that just don't make us secret. It is only our closed meetings that are secret.

O: Well, I want to thank you very much.

M: I hope that I have given you something to send you on your way with this thing. I have been there fifty years, but we have been concerned with our own little group of people all of these fifty years. Today, we are the same way. Like I said, I hear people spout off that fraternalism is dead. It is only because they want it to be. Maybe some day, some how, something will strike. If we can do like some of these people do

and these religious groups who get together and get on television and promise them the world and collect the money from them. Maybe we might be able to do something like that. That is not the way we want to do it. We would like to know the people that we are going to. . . .

If I propose a candidate for membership, I submit that application just like that. The councillor then will appoint an investigating committee. I may think the guy is "A number 1," because I am too close to him, but they will go out and talk to his wife and to him and ask around the house. They may come back and say, "We don't think he belongs." Then, there is nothing we can do about it. That is their opinion. Again, the secret part of the thing is the ballot votes. We vote on every candidate, whether they become a member or whether they don't. There have been times where we have determined that somebody doesn't belong to our organization even after the application has been through. Somebody says that he doesn't belong, and you get blackballed. I don't think anybody in our organization. . . . We have blackballed very few, but in the years that we were beginning back in the early 1900's, right after we were formed, some of the old minutes that I read where they used to invoke a penalty upon a man who even said so much as "darn." They weren't allowed to use any kind of swearing. They got a fine. If they did something without the permission of the councillor, they got fined. There were a lot of things that you could get fined for. Even though they did this, the people still stayed members.

When we were still down on West Federal Street, we used to every once in a while say we were going to fine everybody for. . . . Everybody got a little lax, and it is more so now than it ever was. Then, we were still sticking pretty close to rituals and doing things pretty much in the way that they should be. The minute somebody would do something that they shouldn't have, we told them to go put a penny in the box, and things like that. We did it more for fun than for criticizing. Nevertheless, some of the fellows realized that they were unconsciously doing things that they had no business to do in a regular meeting. After the meeting, we didn't care. It was all done in jest. Years ago when these guys were there, they weren't doing it in jest. They meant what they were doing. They had a fine board that said exactly. . . . When you fined somebody a nickel, that was like fining them \$5 today.

O: Do you remember what some of those fines were then?

M: No, I don't, because those books have all been destroyed. Like I said, cussing was one of them, and

crossing the floor without permission and talking without given the councillor's permission, and all of this decorum within the meeting.

O: How were the records destroyed? Was there a fire?

M: No, I destroyed them, because when we moved up over Lustig's . . . we had a lot of room when we moved up over the liquor store where it is. We had a lot of room, and we could store a lot of things up there. So, we kept them, but we got rid of some books. Then, when we moved from there to the Odd Fellows, all we had was one steel cabinet. There was no way in the world that we could hang onto all of those old, old records, never realizing that somebody might be interested in it sometime. I don't know where we would have ever put them. We wouldn't have any place to put them. I have a lot of stuff downstairs now, because I was a state councillor in 1953, and I have been on the state board of officers ever since.

During those years, I have served as a district deputy in my own district here, plus the district over in Canton, and things like that which don't mean anything. They don't mean a thing today. One of these days I am going to go down there and toss it all out, because most of the people I was doing business with in those days, are gone. They are dead. Like I said, I have been an officer since the 1930's, and I have stayed active in the organization. When I became a state officer, we are automatically on the state board of officers. The councillor, the vice-councillor, and the junior press councillor are supposed to be the men who are running the organization. We, as past councillors, sit around the table and we all agree or disagree. If there is something that has to be done, the state secretary has to do it. He doesn't have to get permission from all of us.

O: Well, thank you very much.

M: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW