

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Coitsville History

Local Government and Fire Department

O. H. 433

LOUIS POPE JR.

Interviewed

by

William Manser

on

February 9, 1974

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

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INTERVIEWEE: LOUIS POPE JR.

INTERVIEWER: William Manser

SUBJECT: Development of the Volunteer Fire Department and
Its Role in the Township, Development of Political
Awareness of Affairs, Road Maintenance.

DATE: February 9, 1974

M: This is an interview with Mr. Louis Pope for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program by William Manser in Coitsville, Ohio, on February 9, 1974 at 2:45 p.m.

Mr. Pope, what particular problems or difficulties have you encountered in township government in the 1960's and 1970's?

P: The difficulty the township has is revenue. We don't have enough money to operate and to maintain our roads and ditches and all that and we don't have home rule so we have to abide by the statute of the state. That's where the government and the township are wrong. We have no powers except what the state gives us.

M: What improvements in financing township government do you think might help to alleviate this problem?

P: We now have revenue sharing which has been set by the federal government that has helped us considerably.

M: Do you think the full effectiveness that this program has, has been reached or do you think revenue sharing can help you more?

P: In our township, as small as it is, it's reaching the school for what we need for our maintenance. In a larger township, they may have larger problems.

M: As far as road maintenance goes, what particular problems plague the township nowadays?

- P: To keep them in shape after the winter, when the frost tears our roads up. To put them back into the condition they were before the frost came. Our roads in our township are excellent right now. We have three more roads that we are going to improve this summer, and that puts our roads at one hundred percent.
- M: Do you feel that any outside help might be effective in maintaining roads?
- P: We do have outside help. We have the county taking care of the county roads, and the state taking care of the state roads. We take care only of our township roads. Our township roads are in fairly good condition, so are the county and the state roads.
- M: In the past, I believe, there was some difficulty in maintaining some roads, particularly when you first became trustee, in the late 1950's, because the county would not give adequate aid in maintaining roads such as John White Road. Is that problem still met to any great degree today?
- P: No, it's all solved. In fact, the county is going to resurface John White Road. That is one of the roads we are going to have done this year and the county is cooperating very well with the township at the present time.
- M: How was that problem solved at the time?
- P: By a different administration. The new administration has different ideas and they cooperate more. It's the individual person who gets in office that helps to maintain our government.
- M: So the new blood helps things along?
- P: Yes.
- M: When you talk about a new administration coming in here, do you mean the new blood in the township, the new men in the township?
- P: No. We have a new county engineer who is working more with the roads now. The other county engineers were good too, but the new one we have now has really progressed our roads. They are in a very satisfactory condition right now. We are very pleased with them.
- M: Was this problem of road maintenance--particularly of John White Road and so forth, in the 1950's--ever an election issue? Did it ever touch much on Coitsville politics?
- P: No.

- M: Were most people aware of it?
- P: Everone wants their roads fixed. With the revenue that was at that time . . . the county gets a big share of the revenue sharing now and they have more money to operate with. With this revenue sharing that the federal government has given us, it really helped put a lot of townships and counties into very good condition.
- M: Besides in the late 1950's, at other periods, was road maintenance a great factor in Coitsville politics?
- P: No, it was the way it was run. Years ago, back when I became township trustee, we were using ashes for our roads. We have done away with that. Then we used slag. Then after slag had built up on the road, we resurfaced our roads. We have no slag roads in our township now. All our roads are macadam or blacktop, and we are very proud of it.
- M: Well, when did this come about, this idea of getting rid of slag roads?
- P: In 1958. The old trustees . . . I have nothing against the old trustees, but they used to buy the ashes from the mills and just throw it on the roads, and the ashes would wash away with the heavy rains. So we decided that we would go with gravel. Then we tar and chipped it and after we had a base, we stopped buying ashes altogether in 1958.
- M: About ten years later, I think, the township got an oil truck?
- P: Well, that never worked out. It was too expensive to maintain. It was cheaper to buy right from the City Asphalt Co. The contract with City Asphalt was cheaper.
- M: Where did the idea come from, to buy this oil truck?
- P: We thought it would be much wiser to have a tar truck and tar and chip our roads and have them in better condition instead of just putting gravel. It did not materialize and we sold our tar truck for a mowing machine to cut the berm of the road and it is paying off very well on that. I think we are the only township in the county that cuts grass three times a year.
- M: Were the people aware of the use of this oil truck?
- P: No, there was never anything said about it in the township; nothing about the truck that I can remember.
- M: Why did Coitsville need a Volunteer Fire Department?

- P: Well, we were growing; every township is growing. I personally went down--I was just a new trustee--to Struthers and asked for a mutual aid contract. They said that they were going to refuse to give us mutual aid contracts now unless we formed our own fire department and helped ourselves instead of sitting in the window and watching them put the fires out. So with the help of the other two trustees, I started on the fire department. In 1958 we started our first fire department, which we were very pleased with. We got our first truck in 1959, and it's progressing more and more. I think we are at the limit now; I think we have everything that any city has within the surrounding area, including Campbell, Stuthers, Lowellville, and Hubbard. I think that we can go against any of them. We have a very well-trained volunteer fire department too. They know how to administer first aid; they know how to drive every truck; they know how to man every truck and put fires out; they know how to man the pumps and everything. We are very pleased with them.
- M: The idea seems to have come from Struthers to have a Coitsville Fire Department?
- P: That was the starting point. Without that we had nothing; we had just the township and that was it.
- M: Were there ever any earlier ideas about getting a Volunteer Fire Department before that time?
- P: I'm sorry to say that we had been given a fire truck in 1950 and the trustees turned it down. They said that we did not need a fire truck. We would have had it free of charge from the federal government, the Civil Defense. They turned it down and it went to Austintown; Austintown got out truck. That was almost eight years before I got into office.
- M: How did the people of Coitsville react to this action on the part of the trustees in turning down this fire truck?
- P: I really don't think that they knew anything about it, to be honest.
- M: Weren't there any civic organizations or anything like that that would object to their actions?
- P: No, there were no civic organizations. I brought the first of these organizations into the township, Coitsville Civic Club.
- M: How about the Ladies' Auxiliary Club?
- P: That started when the fire department started. The fire

department started first, then the Women's Auxiliary in with the fire department. The wives of the firemen have the auxiliary.

M: Were there any other organizations independent of the fire department?

P: There was the Farm Bureau. That was the only one that I know of.

M: How about the older Ladies' Garden Club?

P: I am not aware of how long that has been in existence. I know that they meet at the Town Hall once a month. They still do today, but when they started, I don't know.

M: Did they take much of a role in politics at that time?

P: No.

M: Was the public aware of the problems of relying upon outside aid for fire protection before 1958?

P: No, the community was not big at that time and it was mostly farm area. Whatever the trustees told them to do . . . if they asked them where to call, they just told them to call Hubbard, Struthers, Lowellville or New Bedford if there was a fire and the township trustees would pay for the fire call. At that time it was \$100 a call, from Struthers, Hubbard or Lowellville and they thought that was the pattern of it at that time. Nobody ever had the idea that we could actually establish our own fire department. Money was scarce then too and revenue wasn't coming in. I imagine they could have had it when Campbell and Struthers were part of the township at one time. I know we had a lot of revenue then, but no one ever initiated, or tried to initiate, a fire department.

M: Was it difficult drumming up support for a fire department after Struthers told us we had to go on our own in that respect?

P: No. I went to the prosecuting attorney and he helped me out in which way we could go about getting a fire department. I went to some of the people and told them what would be a good idea. Would it be a good idea to have a fire department or not? I told them we were going to lose the contract with Struthers and they were for it. I brought it up at the meeting and the clerk told me that they had just so much money to work on. So we went and bought a piece of ground on Hubbard Road, and then after we bought the ground, we advertised for a fire building; it was beyond our reach. We cancelled that and had to hire an outside contractor to build a building and buy the land off us and then we bought

the land back again with the building. We got a much bigger building for the same amount of money that the first contractor proposed to us and everything was falling into pattern. Our firemen were trained before we even had a truck. I am very proud of them. They learned from New Bedford and from McKinley Heights and from Hubbard and the surrounding area. They were teaching them how to man a truck when we didn't even have one yet and when we did get our truck, the men were pretty well versed on it; they knew exactly where to go and everything worked real well in our fire department. People were pleased about it; we put a levy up; the levy was passed and it has passed ever since. The firemen are all equipped with complete uniforms, safety equipment. They all have radios in their homes to get the calls, and they are doing a wonderful job at all fire calls. There are anywhere from ten to fifteen at one fire call, and I think that is pretty good work.

M: Out of 32 firemen?

P: Out of 32 firemen.

M: One thing that has puzzled me a little bit about Coitsville's support for the fire department is in 1965 when they had the renewal levy for the fire department, I think 290 people voted for it, and quite a large number, 214, voted against it. Why do you think there was so much opposition to it?

P: You will always find that, no matter what it is. You find that on your levies, and levies that are put up--today too-- people will vote against the levies, whether it's good or not, because they just go in there to vote; they want no part of it and they vote no. I don't know why. If they save just one life in the township it is paying itself off, I think, myself.

M: Do you think that these might have been new people or people who didn't generally participate in politics very much?

P: I couldn't say. I wouldn't know if they were just new or people who just didn't care whether they had a fire department or not. In other words, they just were not interested in their community is what I think.

M: Would you say that sentiment is declining or increasing?

P: Well, if it always passes, I would say that the majority are in favor of it. We are going to have a levy on this November and I hope it passes again. It's a very small cost to operate it. If we don't have enough we have to use money out of the general fund plus the levy to operate our fire department, even though the men are not full-time; we have no full-time men.

- M: Did the men who joined the fire department, or continue to join it, have a much greater knowledge of local affairs and issues than most other citizens do?
- P: I think they do. I think they are more interested. I think the reason they joined the fire department is because they are civic-minded people. You know that they jeopardize their lives and it takes that kind of people who are really interested in their community to join the fire department. They know what's going on; they are well versed on everything that is going on. I think they are more versed than the average person in the township.
- M: Do they generally know each other fairly well before they join?
- P: No, nobody knew anybody. That was one thing that brought our community together was the fire department. Today they know the people and the people know them. They brought this community much closer together and they are friends besides being firemen; they are now coordinated together into a big family. That's the way I look at it.
- M: Do the men who join now, or who have joined recently after the fire department had been well established, generally know the men in the fire department very well?
- P: No. The younger boys and some of the people who moved out of the city are joining. The children of the firemen who were in at first are joining now, and some of the older ones are dropping out. We haven't lost too many from the beginning. I think that we lost about ten since we started and they know what they're getting into. We're having trouble now. They know that their cars are not insured to go to a fire and come back; the insurance company won't insure them. But yet, they are doing this regardless and their car is in jeopardy when they are going to a fire.
- M: How did they try to correct this situation?
- P: We called all the insurance companies and there's no insurance company that will insure them on that. There's no insurance company made, because they say that to put liability on firemen . . . they could have their cars damaged other places and then say it was done at the fire. There's no way in the world that they can get that kind of insurance. We had to tell them, but they're still staying with us.
- M: Do you think this might have discouraged any potential new members from joining?
- P: No, I think the person who joins must like it or they wouldn't join because there is a lot of hard work. It's not easy to be

a fireman. It's a lot of hard work. You have to learn to take orders from the officers and you have to not only maintain the equipment, but the building. Even when you go to a fire and come back at two or three o'clock in the morning, you have to put your hoses all back together before you go home. So there is a lot of work with the fire department and they know it and I think they like it. I think that they have to like it or they wouldn't be in it.

M: Do the firemen, after they join the department, tend to socialize quite a bit with each other after they become established members?

P: Some do. They have a bowling league; they participate in the little league for the children. They even had a little league baseball team for the children. Some do well socially and they become friends, but if it wouldn't have been for the fire department they would have never had these friends. I don't think they would have known each other. That was the way our community was years ago. But now it's more close together than it was before and I think it was the part of the fire department that had something to do with it.

M: How great is the tendency really for a man to join the fire department and lose contact with his old friends and his own social circle?

P: Do you mean, if he joins will he lose friends?

M: No, would he tend to lose contact with his old associates once he joins the department and becomes part of the department social life?

P: No, he won't lose contact with any of his friends. Even after they resign, even after a fireman resigns, you see them at the meetings. Some resign and still belong to the association. They don't attend fires anymore, but they do belong to the association because they want to be with the members. Some of them do come back. We had one fireman, in Youngstown, Ohio, Frank Fabrizio, whom I'm very proud of. He has trained these men; he put many and many hours of his own time into training these men and I mean to tell you, when he trained them and he told you to do something, you had better do it or else, or don't come to the meetings. He's from Youngstown and he doesn't get a penny for this here and he just comes on his own. He comes to every meeting. There isn't a meeting that he has ever missed at the fire department. Why does that man do it? He could be with his family, but he still has his heart set on training these men and he's very proud of them. He's very proud of the fire department; in fact he's very, very proud of our fire department because he's doing a very good job. When he tells them to do something, they do it.

- M: How important is the fire department according to a social life?
- P: You mean like going to other social functions? They go to the Tri-County meeting which is combined with the Trumbull County, Columbiana County, and Mahoning County; they have a meeting once a month and they go there. They go to some conventions which are not too far away. They go to homecomings. They've gone to New Springfield, Hubbard, Brookfield, and McKinley Heights. They have homecomings. They win trophies for the best equipment, the newest equipment, or the biggest tanker. They really polish their equipment up. Complete units don't go there, because we always have one at standby in our township. They know other firemen from other communities. They met at parades or other doings they they have, social functions like the dances or picnics or whatever they have.
- I think a man like our chief . . . I appointed John Sinkovich as first chief in our township, because I didn't know who to appoint. I think he's much wiser today than he ever was, because of the friends that he has. He has friends from Columbus clear down to Youngstown. Of course, he's not a chief anymore, but the man is strictly all fire. He didn't know one thing about the fire department. He never was even concerned about being chief until I asked him if he would try it and he tried it and became a very good chief. Then he stepped down and we've had three other chiefs since then.
- M: In the early days of the fire department, when it was first being organized, what was the reaction of the people whom you asked to join or take part in the program? What general kind of reaction did you come up with?
- P: I'll be honest with you, I asked for volunteer firemen, but I think we got everybody we wanted. I think we had to stop at 35. We stopped at 35 and we had the fire department. That was something new in the community; we had more than we needed to join our fire department. So, we had no problem there in getting men to join.
- M: Is that still the case today, do you have more?
- P: No, we still get the men; the men still join the fire department. It's the younger boys taking over now.
- M: Are there still more applications than there are places for people today?
- P: Well, we're not asking for applications. We have enough now and whenever there's an opening, the man asks to join the fire department and the chief asks him to attend the meetings; he looks the man over to see if he'll become a good fireman and then he recommends to the trustees that he

would like to have this man placed on the volunteer fire department. The trustees make the motion to accept the man as a fireman. We haven't turned anyone down that the chief ever recommended for us yet.

M: The fact that you've had more than you needed during the early days of the fire department shows commendable city spirit.

P: Yes, it does.

M: However, did you ever ask anybody who joined that didn't want to join?

P: No, we never asked anybody. Everybody came in voluntarily. It was something new. A new building, new fire truck, everything was new. Today if you look at our 1960 truck, you would swear it was new today, because the men have really taken care of it. I mean it's just as nice as the day it came out of the factory, and yet it put a lot of fires out; it's in excellent condition. It's marvelous what those men can do.

M: Did any organizations in Coitsville, at that time in 1958, help in your efforts to encourage membership to the department?

P: No, there was no organization.

M: I've been reading that the limit is 35.

P: That's what we set. If we get ten men to a fire, we're satisfied. Our biggest problem today is getting men on day turn to go to the fire because most of the people work on a day turn shift. We had incidents from two o'clock to three o'clock to get men to a fire . . . with our radio communication, our men can call from the truck right to the radio and ask for more help. He gets on the radio and asks for more help. But we have never been really short. I mean that is our danger point of the day [2:00 to 3:00]. Nighttime, 3:00 to 11:00 and 11:00 to 7:00, there is no problem getting men to go to a fire; it's just in the daytime. That's why we have 35 firemen, because they're working different shifts. Just so we get enough men to man and operate the truck and put a fire out and be back again is all we're interested in.

M: Well, there are about three vacancies now aren't there?

P: Yes, so they never asked to put anybody on and I guess it's accepted as that.

M: Has there been much enthusiasm among people who aren't on the fire department to do anything to fill in these vacancies?

- P: No, some of the new boys that we have now are really firemen. I mean, they're young and you tell them to do something, they do it. We have one man that even takes off from work. His wife calls him down at the plant, says there's a fire in Coitsville, and he leaves his plant to come to the fire and then goes back to work again. Now that is something, when he takes off from work to put a fire out and then goes back to work again, which his company allows him to do.
- M: How much dissatisfaction has there been with theselection policies for township workers in general and for the fire department?
- P: For the workers in the township?
- M: Yes, and for the fire department.
- P: We are not big enough to have full-time laborers in our township, so we only have part-time laborers. What we do is hire them when they are either on vacation or retired; whenever we need them, we ask them, try to pick someone up. It's pretty hard to do that, because you just can't ask a man at the last minute to do something. It makes it kind of rough without having a full-time employee. We don't have any full-time employees in the township, other than in the sheriff's department.
- M: How much dissatisfaction has there been with selecting people for the fire department?
- P: There has been no problem. No problem at all. Some of the firemen we have, young firemen, were there when they were children coming up to the fire station, now they're firemen. One of the boys used to go down there and I think he knew all about fire departments until he grew up and now he's president of the association.
- M: Well, is the support of the fire department very important in Coitsville politics and affairs?
- P: Being that I just ran for office again, I didn't ask for their support. I didn't try to get involved with the fire department. I didn't want to hurt the fire department, in other words. I don't think anybody else really went down to campaign with the fire department. I think the fire department has been left alone and I think it has been like that in almost every election. We didn't go into the fire department to campaign or make speeches or ask for their vote. There wasn't one trustee that ever ran that I know of that went down there to make a speech to the firemen to support them on an election. I think they've done it in other fire departments in other townships, but it hasn't been done in our township.

- M: How much have the firemen themselves attempted to stay out of politics?
- P: We had one fireman there who ran for office; in fact, in this last election. Before that we had another fireman run, but none of them have ever been elected to the office yet from the fire department.
- M: How did the fire department react towards their candidacies?
- P: I wouldn't know because we didn't ask them to draft any candidacies. We didn't get involved with them, at least I didn't anyway. I didn't get involved with them and I don't think any of the other politicians did either because our township is small.
- M: How did the people in general react towards the firemen running for office and so forth?
- P: All I can say is that they didn't win. That's all I can say. They came close, but they didn't win.
- M: How much difficulty was there in gaining support for the location of the fire house and the garage? Was there any dissatisfaction with this location?
- P: No, we were never questioned on the location, but we tried to get it in the center and we tried to get it near the intersection of 422 and Hubbard Road. Hubbard Road was the road that we were planning to put it on. The landowner found out we were putting up a fire station so he doubled his price. Then we went to Mr. Shuttleworth's property, which is about 1000 feet from the intersection of Hubbard Road and Oak Street extension. He gave us a very good deal. It was \$700 an acre of ground and we got the approval to buy it, and bought it. There was no objection whatsoever anywhere in the township that we were putting it there. I thought it was best to be centralized and it was centralized.
- M: Were there any complaints from disgruntled landowners who felt their land should have been bought?
- P: No, there were no landowners that said put it here or there. Well, at that time the township wasn't knit as close as it is right now. I mean you do something now in a township and you know about it and they know about it. But then, you opened a fire station up here, nobody even said don't put it there, or put it there. They were all satisfied wherever it was put, I would imagine.
- M: This increase in awareness of township affairs, which is a new thing that has developed since 1958, how much has that been curbed by the formation of organizations like civic

associations and the women's auxiliaries to the fire department and so forth?

- P: Our civic association, which I'm sorry to say is not functioning at all right now, the only time it functions is when anybody hears annexation. I started a civic club when Youngstown wanted to annex us into Youngstown and the people jammed our town hall. I thought that if we had an organization to back us up, we would have a better chance of beating the annexation. I went to attorney Joseph Sheban and he drew up the papers and sent them to Columbus and had seven men to become charter members. We had them form that first civic association. After the annexation people were not getting involved in annexation, they stopped coming to the civic club and it dropped down, until today. Now they don't even have a meeting today. It's just by name only.
- M: This annexation issue, has it stimulated interest in other issues not connected with annexation?
- P: No, the only thing is that when they hear annexation, they don't want to belong to a city. I don't want to belong to it because the annexation is no good where there's an underdeveloped area. The only time it's not good is when a person owns a home and has a big frontage and then when he has to pay for the improvements, he's going to be way up in debt from his property. That's what's bad about annexation today. Everybody says, "Why don't you belong to the city?" Whenever there's an area to take and where it's undeveloped and he puts all the improvements, the land is sold with the improvements. But a man that has a home and most of these people in this township have 150 to 200 feet frontage, most of their homes are in the center of their property. So when they start putting sewers, water and curbing and all that . . . today I think it's up to \$45 a foot. When you multiply that by 100 feet you know what you're paying.
- M: Well, before the days of annexation, and the fire department, why was it that people were seldom aware of basic things going on in Coitsville, such as the building of a new fire house or public issues in general?
- P: Coitsville was starting to come out of dormancy about 1935 and 1940. People were starting to move out to Coitsville and they started coming out more and more. Most of Coitsville, at one time, was nothing but farm area. They weren't getting rid of the farm. From the 1930's, after the Depression, people started coming into Coitsville. Then younger people were getting more interested in their community. They wanted to know what was going on and of course, if they didn't have anything to go by or any civic, or anything, or any organization whatsoever . . . people wouldn't even come to the meetings up until 1948. Then they started coming to the meetings

and then the younger generations came in and ran for office. I was one of the first trustees not a farmer after they broke away from Campbell as part of the township. We came in with new ideas and we started spending money. Our township had nothing at that time.

M: When did you start to attend trustee meetings?

P: In 1955. Then I got interested in zoning. We had no zoning in our township, so I went out and petitioned the area and got 8% of the people in our township to sign up to have zoning in our township. I went to other townships and got their zoning laws and the state zoning laws. Then I combined them together and got the zoning law that would be suited more to our township and then we went and got a map from the Mahoning County Planning Board. We declared what area would be zoned commercial, agricultural, business, and residential, then we put it up for the vote of the people. The people voted on it and we had our first zoning law, in 1956. Then I decided to run for office after that.

M: What was the attitude of the people at the beginning toward the zoning laws?

P: They were a little scared because they were closing all of the junkyards on Poland Avenue and they were moving them out onto areas where they had no zoning laws; Coitsville was one of them. So with the fear of having junkyards in Coitsville, they went along with it. Without zoning laws they could put junkyards anywhere they wanted; we had no laws to stop them. Now with a zoning law, they can put business in business area, residential in residential, and commercial in commercial.

M: How long of a period prior to your organization of the zoning program, had people been complaining about the junkyards?

P: Nowhere in Coitsville had any people complained about zoning law. It was my initiative to start it. I mean, someone had to start it and I started it. People didn't ask for zoning in Coitsville; I mean, there was nobody that came and said, "We need zoning in Coitsville." I had thought that we needed zoning and I went out and petitioned and got the zoning, but nobody approached me, or nobody ever told me that we had to have zoning. That was just my idea; I felt that we should have zoning. After that, a person asked me to run for township trustee and I ran.

M: These new people that were becoming involved in Coitsville politics between about 1935 and 1950, and before you, did any of them gain very much support from the people at that time or accomplish much?

P: I'm jsut going by what I've heard. From 1939--I'm going

back--to 1956 they never had opposition; trustees never had opposition. For example, in Portage County, there is a trustee who has been a trustee for 56 years. Nobody ever ran against him and he has been a trustee for 56 years. Down in the southern part of Ohio, we have a clerk who has been a trustee for 62 years. So you see if you don't have opposition, the man just stays there. It's just a lifetime job. It was almost like that in Coitsville. I ran and then they put Bill Cowden to run. They figured that Bill would upset me being an old establishment in Coitsville. Bill Cowden and I both won, so we finally broke the ice. From there on, the people got interested and every two years there was a township election for clerk and trustee. There was opposition and two years beyond that there were two trustees to be elected. So there was a four year term and we had opposition. In fact, this last time we had five people running for the job of trustee. One year we had as high as seven. It has been people who are interested in running for the job now, trying to get in as a township trustee. Years ago they just didn't care. They just ignored it; they just didn't care about being a township trustee. Now they are running for it. You have to establish yourself; you have to tell your people what your programs are, what you can do for the township, what you think is best for the township, and let the people decide if you get in or not.

- M: Why do you think that there wasn't very much interest in government affairs before 1950?
- P: The same thing. It was a farm community. Coitsville, actually is not a farm community. It's an urbanization the same as Boardman. We're having the same problems as Boardman, Poland, and Austintown. We're urban now, we're not a rural area anymore. That's what our biggest problem today with the State of Ohio is: Farm community and urban community. The farm community is a little more against ours. We're both the same form of government as trustees, as far as that goes. They are a little bit against the urban community. So we have to get people in the State Associations to combat our problems; a farm community does not know our problems. We have serious problems. We have problems going. We have people coming out of the city who want to live like city people. They want everything that they have in the city. We just can't afford to do it. In a farm community it's just the same way as it was 50, 75, 100 years ago; it still hasn't changed. All they do is maintain a few roads, plow the roads if they have plows, or get the county to do it. We have growing problems, plus road maintenance, plus people coming in trying to build business areas and everything which just implies urban.
- M: When you and the other trustee ran against the old trustees in the 1950's, did the people feel that the old establishment would defeat you?

- P: Yes, they thought that we would still go that way. I won by a very big margin; I was surprised. Like I say, the township . . . if it wouldn't have gone at all, if it would have still been in a stalemate, we would have lost it completely because the people weren't satisfied. They weren't getting anything for what their money was getting into. In a township you get so much revenue to work with and you've got to give the people the best you can with the money that you have in your treasury. You just can't leave it in there and not spend it because if you don't spend it, other townships will take your millage away from you. Schools will take your millages away.
- M: I've been really amazed that so many people didn't show much interest or awareness in what was going on in those times.
- P: They sure do now.
- M: As you said, this is a result of people like yourself, and other new, young people getting involved in the 1940's and the 1950's. When you--the new people of that period--started to get involved, did you get involved on your own or did you get involved as a result of pressure and support from other new people who wanted representatives?
- P: I think I got on my own. I thought about zoning, which I didn't know very much about but it seemed like everything, I thought, would be better for the community. A lot of people had the same thought. That was my first stepping stone in politics, zoning. From there, I went further into running in the township, but I didn't want to go any further. I didn't want any higher political gains. All I wanted to be was a trustee and that was the further I wanted to go. I didn't want to go any higher than that.
- M: When you ran for trustee in 1955, did you run on the issue of zoning.
- P: No, zoning was already in. I went around and knocked on doors, told them that I was running for trustee and I wished their support. I got it. I mean, I was a new man; I didn't know anything about politics. I didn't know how to go about asking political things to do and anything like that. I just asked them to vote for me and they did. That was all I asked them, to vote and give me support.
- M: Did your role in bringing about zoning bring you much support?
- P: I think it did because then we got our first zoning inspector, Clarence Allen, and we elected five zoning commissioners. Then we elected five zoning board of appeals and we started to go

in forward towards zoning. Then one gentleman asked me to run for trustee and I did, and I won.

M: What was the old trustees' first reaction to this idea of zoning that you and other people were promoting at the time?

P: I don't think they knew. I went around and asked the people and I put it on the ballot. I gave it to the trustees and they put it on the ballot--the clerk put it on the ballot--which is done by law. I can't comment on them, what their thoughts were, I don't know.

M: As far as building new buildings for the township during your early years as a trustee, the firehouse and the new garage on McCartney Road, what specific difficulties were encountered there?

P: They had no problem with the fire station. We went through the procedure of the law and we went to the prosecuting attorney and of course he didn't sign the plans. So we got out of that one and we built a bigger building for the same amount of money that this architect had for us. He said that the building cost \$25,000 and we got a bigger building for \$17,000. We decided to put up a garage to house our truck and cruiser. So we went to federal aid and I think we were the only township in this state that went for federal aid matching funds. We put \$10,000 of our money and the government put \$10,000 of their money and the building was put up and they thought they were going to put a building up that we didn't know anything about. We made them tear it down three times and put it up again and we finally got a fairly good building. Now we're contemplating upon putting an addition to the building for a snow plow and a tractor that pick up the salt to put into the salt pit of the truck. We are contemplating on putting that up within a year or two.

M: Well, how about with the building on 422, that garage? I understand there were some difficulties in getting that up.

P: That was what it was. The building was way off center; the building was two inches off center. Then they put the pillars back that support the building and it was still off one inch or two inches and everyday the inspector would come. We would mark it with a chalk line; one trustee and I would mark with a chalk line and it would be one or two inches off. They thought it was done by the inspector, but it was way off and when the inspector saw that he made them tear the building down . . . the building was way off, and they had to fire the building foreman. They had to get a new building; they had to tear it down clean to the ground. The building was always up and they had to tear it down to the ground and start all over again with all new blocks and everything. The building was so

shabby that it didn't even come near to the good workmanship. It was under the government inspection too, not only ours-- the government from Chicago. He came down one time, and the second time they tore it down. When he saw that job there, he made them tear it down. So, we do have a very good building. The old trustees bought that land there years ago and they put the town hall there. We just used the land in back of the town hall for the garage.

M: The project for building the town hall emerged in the late 1940's. What role did the newer people such as yourself and other new people have in pushing this project?

P: I don't know. I think that was a little bit beyond my time when I wasn't too interested. I just happened to see the building up. I think it was done in the 1950's. The land was bought by the old trustees and put there too; I think it is a very nice building. They did a good job on that.

M: Did you ever hear of why they built the building?

P: Trustees used to meet years ago in homes. They would go to one trustee's house, then another trustee's house, then maybe to the clerk's house. That was where they would conduct their meetings. All they would do is bring the order of business, whatever they needed, or discuss the road problems. Of course, trustees had more power at that time. They used to give out food for the poor during the Depression and all that. They were the ones who were issuing out all of the commodities for the poor people, at that time. Then the county took over. But that was the reason that they put that building up, because they had no place to meet. Like in our modern time today, there are townships that don't have a township building.

M: Back in 1965, there was a controversy about financing the police department and extending the police protection. Why was there opposition to this?

P: We had a constable form of government, then we went into the sheriff department. All our sheriff has is duty in Coitsville Township. We supplied everything. We supplied the salary, the clothers, the car, the badge, and the gun. All the sheriff supplied was communication, and allowed us to go on state roads. That was the only thing that a constable is not allowed to do--have an arrest on state roads. They are only allowed to arrest when passing a schoolbus which is letting kids off. So we contacted with the sheriff's department and when we opened our first one, we had one sheriff. After that, we put a levy up. The levy passed and we put our second sheriff on. Now with this extra little money we were getting from the revenue sharing which was helping for the roads, we put our third deputy sheriff on. So, we have protection for the

people around-the-clock; we have around-the-clock protection for the people with the sheriff's department. When our men are off, they call the sheriff's department. They [the people] are still protected even though they [the sheriffs] are off because they have to call the sheriff's department to notify our sheriff that they have something going on in that area, something going wrong. They do not leave the area; they do not go anywhere other than Coitsville Township. They do not go into Boardman, Smith Township, or wherever you want to call them, Milton Township; they have to stay in our township. That's the agreement we have.

- M: In 1965 the mill levy for more police protection was defeated. Why do you think some people were less enthusiastic about this than other people?
- P: It was defeated the first time, because people thought that they should go back into the constable. Somebody talked about constable, that we would be better off with the constable form of government. I think word got around that it would be better to have a constable form of government and it was defeated. Then it was put back on the ballot again and the second time it won.
- M: What advantages would there be to the constable form?
- P: The only thing that's different between a constable and a sheriff, like I stated before, is that the constable doesn't have any jurisdiction on state highways at all. We cannot get communications. Coitsville can't hire three people in our township on twenty-four hour standby on the radios to give them communication because the cost will be too large to support, while the sheriff's department does have that. We just have our radio tied in with the sheriff's department and then we can call. If it wouldn't be for the communications systems, I think it would be almost the same except for that state highway. But, we have no way of getting communication other than to tie in with the sheriff. We could tie in with a political subdivision like Campbell or Struthers, if we wanted. It is up to the department if they want to let us tie in or not. We just can't go over there and ask them to let us tie in. They have got to agree with us, the same way in a contract form.
- M: Have they made any overtures in this direction?
- P: The cities? No. The county is the only one we have. The county has three in the whole county. Coitsville Township, Poland Township, and Milton Township are the only ones of the political subdivisions out of thirteen that are tied in with the sheriff's department. The rest of the townships either have constables . . . Boardman had constable form of police department and they have their own communications

because they have the full-time fire department, and so they have full-time communication. So does Austintown, but they are not tied in with the sheriff at all. They are the same as constables. They are not allowed to arrest on state highways.

M: Has there been much enthusiasm in Coitsville, itself, for tying in with Struthers or Campbell?

P: We've never been asked to tie in with any of them. We told them that was our best way of doing it and the people let go to what we thought would be best. We asked the sheriff if they would and they made a contract out and we signed it after we agreed to it.

M: Recently, with this upsurge in annexation sentiment with Campbell have there been any suggestions that it might be more advantageous to have Campbell police protection as part of the general annexationist enthusiasm?

P: Our police protection is just as good; in fact, I think it's better, because they only have a certain area to cover and they do cover it. They monologue everything down; they put down all that happens in the log--every step that they go, when they stop, when they go, where they go, and what procedures they do. This is logged everybday. We have a file in our office that we can read if they've been on duty or not. Whenever they're called, they're right there and if they need assistance all they do is get on the phone and call and if they need real bad assistance, they still can call the city of Campbell or Struthers. I've seen Campbell police at an incident; I think they were called in.

M: The opposition, to expand police protection and also the financing of expanded police protection, did this give any support to any political candidates at any time?

P: No, we had one candidate go around, this time when I ran, and he was going to bring back constable form of government. I guess the people are satisfied with the way that we have it right now, the way we have it with the sheriff's department. Mind you, if we lose this revenue sharing--the government might take it off; it's only a five-year program--we would have to curtail one of our sheriffs. We can't afford to pay. It's very costly to have three men on a job.

M: What do you think the public reaction to that would be?

P: If they wanted police protection, hire out another one. All we have to do is put a higher levy on and if the people vote for it then we can go ahead and put another man on; if they don't vote for it, they we just can't do it. One thing about township form of government, you've got to operate

your township within the budget. You can't go over the budget.

M: How do you think the people would vote on such a levy?

P: I wouldn't know. I had reactions both pro and con on our sheriff's department. A lot of people do like our sheriff's department and a lot of them don't like it, so I've heard it both ways. I heard it during my campaign they liked it and a lot of them say they didn't like it.

M: Why do you think they don't like it?

P: I don't know.

M: Is there a lot of sentiment in Coitsville Township in favor of our transferring into another school district?

P: Yes, they would be glad to. For example, we had close to 90% of the people in Coitsville Township sign to go into the Campbell school district. It's a sorry thing when 90% of the people in the township are wrong and the state board should have considered the amount of people that actually wanted to go into the school district, if anything at all. They should have decided that . . . all but 10% wanted to go into the Campbell school district and it wasn't done fair; I don't think it was done fairly. They're going to try it again now. I heard Lowellville is going to try it because they need pupils in their schools. So, people want to go out of the Youngstown school district. I can say one thing about Coitsville, I don't think there's another township in Ohio that has six school districts and five phone exchanges; we have five phone exchanges. But Coitsville Township, as small as it is . . . we're only two and a half for five, we have Campbell, Struthers, Lowellville, Hubbard, Youngstown, in our school district. I think, there isn't another township that has that many school districts and that many phone exchanges.

M: When did the sentiment in favor of changing school districts start to emerge in Coitsville Township?

P: I would say in 1964, but I'm only guessing. Lowellville first annexed a section on the east part of our township. Then two years ago, they started on getting us to annex into Campbell school district which was defeated.

M: How favorable has changing school districts been?

P: Campbell was for it. The school board told us that they would be willing to accept us in. We checked their schools. We checked how many children they could absorb. They could absorb all our children; they had classes there empty. They

had classes there that were empty, and they have classes that were only half filled. They would absorb us without adding any teachers or buildings to absorb the pupils out of Coitsville. The same thing goes for Lowellville; they can absorb all of us, if they would take us all in too.

- M: Why did Coitsville, in the first place, go into the Youngstown school district?
- P: This is what I heard: Coitsville was in financial trouble back in 1939. One of the residents who lived in Coitsville petitioned to take Coitsville school on Route 616. At that time, we had John White, Scienceville too, because that was Coitsville at that time. The same person annexed the biggest part of our township in 1939. They took from Landsdowne to 616 all of the land there including Campbell and part of Struthers. They dissolved it from Campbell. They took us out of Coitsville into Youngstown. At the same time, they took the school out. Youngstown, at that time, didn't want it, I don't know what happened. They took it over and they absorbed the cost of our school district. We did have Coitsville School; we had Coitsville school district. They dissolved it in 1939.
- M: Assuming Coitsville would be transferred into another school district, what changes do you think would result?
- P: I think, quite often, people won't want to go to Youngstown schools and then, Coitsville would grow.
- M: How much do you think Coitsville would grow? Greatly?
- P: Well, there's not too much land, because, not unless some of the farmers would lease some of their land . . . the homesteaders, are still holding onto their land. If they would ever let loose, it would grow. There's nothing down in Coitsville. In fact, when Youngstown took over the annexation of Coitsville, in 1939, it wasn't until in the 1960's that they ever did anything at all in that area. They didn't even put sewers or anything. In fact, right today, they finally started to put sewers in on the Sharon line. After annexing in 1939, they were finally coming in with sewers in the Sharon line district, but they're putting them in now. So you see that Youngstown hasn't done anything at all to help build up the community whatsoever. They didn't do anything.
- M: How closely connected is annexation to Campbell, to the Campbell municipality? How closely connected is that with the desire to transfer school districts?
- P: School districts have nothing to do with annexation whatsoever. School districts are one thing, a political

form of government, and the city or a township is another. You can still be annexed into a city and still not go to the school that is there. But the chances are that they would rule in favor of going into the same city--the school annexation would go to the same city. But you still have to go through the same procedures, getting 75% of the people to sign to go into that school district. You cannot just go annew and say, "I want to go to Campbell schools."

M: Why has there been strong sentiment in favor of annexation of part of Coitsville to the municipality of Campbell in recent years?

P: They used to tell the people that they were going to get things. If you come into the city, you get all of these things. He's not actually telling you the truth. You're going to get sewer, water, gas and everything but you don't get it for free, you pay for it. There's nothing you get in this annexation for nothing, not unless you paid for it. You get improvements, you pay for improvements.

Last year we had an area they wanted to annex into Campbell. We could give them anything they want. This person wants to annex into Campbell because he wants to put up apartments. But if he wants to not belong to Campbell and still be in Coitsville, he gets everything they have in the city. He can get water, sewer--he's in the sewer district--and gas. He can get gas; it's just across the street from him. Gas is a private concern and there's nothing in the world for him to stop his building. He can put his roads in; he can have curb roads, sewers, and sidewalks. He can have them just the same as in the city. He wants to annex and that's his excuse; he wants to put up apartments, but he was turned down. He was turned down because we do belong into the Ohio water service. He said he wants water and all that. We would give him water service. If he pays for the water line, he gets water; if he pays for the streets, he gets streets. He gets all of that stuff.

M: Well, that's an interesting motivation. Why have many other people, well, how did many other people get the idea that going into Campbell would be a good thing?

P: I heard pros and cons. They said out people would like to come out there and build in Coitsville. I always heard that their people would like to, I never heard anything about our people who were living downt here. They don't care any more about our people than the man on the moon. They just want to annex because they want to come out here and build. They figure if they can annex, then these people are going to have taxes so high--because they belong to the city--that they have to sell their land. It only takes 51% of the people to have a street paved. Then what's the man with the big lot going

to do when this street is opened. He can't afford to pay for the assessments so he has to sell. He has no choice but to sell. So he's getting penalized for it. I think, eventually, there might be a metropolitan form of government. I think it's going to come, a metropolitan form of government, one of these days.

M: How do you think people in Coitsville would react to such a metropolitan form of government?

P: It's got its pros and cons. I'm against it one way because the township form of government is the closest to the people. There's no government in the country, in the world, that's closer to the people than the township form of government. If there's anything wrong, who do they call? They call the trustees first. If there's something wrong in Youngstown, who do they call? They don't call the councilman, they call the committee or something like that. He doesn't know what the problem is until they have a meeting. But the township form of government, that's the people choosing the trustees. They tell them what their problems are. A metropolitan form of government, when they have a ruling body, might not have any representation from your area, then what happens? They are not going to take care of our area, because we don't have anybody to represent us. That's the only thing I'm against. Where we have a fifteen man board, Youngstown, the metropolitan area, would be 50,000 people or more. They would be the ruling body and have the majority of the directors and then the other directors would be pulled from the other townships and then if you have a little small township, like Coitsville, there will be no way to get a director from there. They'll go to Boardman and Austintown and pick directors from there. We'll be left alone; we'll have to go and keep begging for things to be done in our township. It would be worse than it is right now. That's my opinion of it.

M: Are the people in Coitsville very much aware of the pros and cons of this kind of metropolitan government?

P: It was on the ballot and it was defeated very badly, so the people have spoken. It was defeated very, very badly.

M: What do you think they get most of their information about it?

P: There are two bills up at that time: a right-to-work bill and this other issue. I think they voted against both of them. I think they didn't care what it was; they just voted no; they didn't want any part of it.

M: Well, with all the changes going on in Coitsville recently-- zoning, the new fire department, increased police protection, increased costs, and this issue of annexation and switching school districts, how have the farmers reacted to this, the

homesteaders?

- P: There are no more farmers. The land is still there, but the farmers are almost all gone. Very little farming is done in Coitsville, but there's land that's still held by the heirs. They are not letting it go. They're not letting loose of the land. People come out there and try to buy land; there's no land out here to buy. The farmers are not farming, but they're still holding onto the land. There are still big pieces of land available.
- M: In the 1950's when these changes were first starting to take place, were there many farmers then?
- P: Oh yes, there was. Awhile back, I came off the farm and it finally broke down--there's no more farm there. We plowed it out and my brothers got land. Each one of them got so much land and it's all cut. This is on Cooper Road. Where it was only five houses, now there are about thirty homes. It's all cut up. There's one big farm on the left-hand side. Mihaly's, and that's the only farm that's holding that road from becoming more densely populated.
- M: How did the attitude of these farmers in the 1950's towards change differ from that of the other citizens?
- P: They didn't get involved in politics, the farmers? They just did their work and that was it?
- M: They said nothing for annexation?
- P: No, but they didn't want to go into the city. They didn't want to go into Campbell; that's one thing they didn't want to do. That much I know about it because I was around when I talked to them, they didn't want to go into the city.
- M: Why do you think that is?
- P: Well, I guess they were afraid of the taxes going up, I imagine; owning that wide frontage over there and somebody comes across the street and puts in improvements, then he has to worry about improvements.
- M: Is annexation sentiment spreading?
- P: There's always going to be annexation. One thing to remember is that you can never stop progress. Eventually some day, as I look forward, there won't be anymore Coitsville. I think it will be divided between two political subdivisions, Campbell and Youngstown. I don't foresee it right now, but it's going to happen. You can't stop progress. Cities are getting bigger and they're going to expand and expand.

Annexation is only the wish of the people. If the people don't want to go and they don't sign that petition, they just don't go in. There are two ways of annexing another territory. One is by 51% of the people, the other one is by putting it on a ballot and have the whole township vote on it. They never want to put it on a ballot because once they put it on the ballot and it is defeated, they can't annex that territory for another five years. That's why it never goes on the ballot. They did try one on a ballot. Struthers did and that was defeated. But the other procedure is, you go out and petition. If you don't get that area, you make it smaller until you get your 51%, then you have to go to the commissioners. That's the only two ways that that can be annexed that I know of.

M: How much sentiment is there, in Coitsville, for annexation to Youngstown?

P: Very little.

M: Why?

P: The reason why is when they had proposed to annex Coitsville only they called it a different name, instead of annexation. I can't recall the name. Our hall was so packed up. I have never seen so many in our hall as I saw at that time, when they said they didn't want to have any part of annexing into Youngstown whatsoever.

M: I see, looking at the proceedings back in the 1950's, that even then Campbell was trying to annex part of Coitsville. The WHOT part of Coitsville, has that had any effect on Coitsville politics?

P: No, WHOT was never, to my estimation . . . there was a big quarry there and nobody wanted any part of that quarry until WHOT came up and put a station there. After they put the station there, the land is worth tax money now and both of them would like to have it. But they can't proceed on any annexation because there are no houses on that land to proceed with annexation. There's no free holder on the land, so it's in Coitsville Township way down in the east side of Youngstown.

M: How about annexation in Struthers? Is there much desire to go in with Struthers?

P: They tried, but the people turned it down. Campbell has tried and they're going to keep on trying and Struthers is going to try, until they eventually get what they want.

M: Well, is there much sentiment in favor of going into Struthers on the part of the Coitsville people?

- P: I never heard people say very much about going into Struthers. But this year, piecemealing . . . I'm against piecemealing, where they would come out and take a small territory, or they chop right into the middle of it, then leave the other two sides in the Coitsville Township; I'm against piecemealing. If they are going to take it, I would like to see them take it all or none at all. I don't want to see them keep chopping and chopping. We can't run our government good either, because we would be losing tax revenue. So, what they were trying to do was piecemeal and I'm against piecemeal. I think everybody else is against piecemeal.
- M: Why would that be?
- P: Because you don't know how to take care of a territory. When they piecemeal, they come in and take a piece of the township, and then you have disputes between the city and the township-- who is going to take care of what, and what's going to be taken care of. We have that problem right now on Kimmel Avenue. We would maintain it and then Campbell, very seldom, would come and plow. They won't do anything on that road. We're not looking for piecemealing.
- M: Why is there more sentiment to go into Campbell instead of Struthers?
- P: Because they're pushing it harder. They are the ones that are pushing it. They have an annexation committee too. They're trying to push it.
- M: Why are they more interested in it?
- P: They want land. Coitsville is bigger than Campbell in area. They would like to have some more land. They would like to expand, but they only want so much of the township, because they can't maintain all of the township. They just want so much of it, take so much now and so much later.
- M: Generally speaking, what do you think will happen here in the future?
- P: Eventually, I think it will go one way. I think it will be divided between the two of them. I don't know how it would ever happen. If they ever passed a law in Columbus for it. The township would grow small. No, they couldn't do that either, because Lorain had only a township big enough to house a fire truck and they wouldn't let their township go. All they had was just a fire station. They finally gave it to Lorain. They had problems there and wherever there is a big city, there is going to be annexation problems. It's not with the rural area. The rural area will never go into annexation. Right here in our own county, in Smith Township and Milton Township . . . those areas will never have

annexation problems. It's just where the township is abiding next door to a city. That's when it's going to happen.

M: And that's where the big problems are.

END OF INTERVIEW