

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

History of Mecca, Ohio

Life Experience

O.H. 206

JACK W. SWITZER

Interviewed

by

Beth Hanuschak

on

May 9, 1979

JACK W. SWITZER

Jack Switzer, born June 19, 1931, is the son of Clinton and Cora Switzer. His parents moved to Mecca in 1931 to begin farming and become active members of the Mecca Church.

Mr. Switzer is married to the former Marie Adams and is the father of Jack Switzer, Jr., Vickie and Tina. Today, Mr. Switzer's life in Mecca revolves around Packard Electric, farming and being an Elder of the Mecca Church.

Reflecting back on his life, Mr. Switzer graduated from Mecca Centralized School. While in school, his class developed the first yearbook and the school's nickname of "Rockets." His graduation class of 1949 had nine members--all of which he can account for today. In August of 1949, he enlisted in the Marine Corps serving in Korea. After being discharged in 1952, he returned to Mecca to go into the dairy business with his father. In 1954, he gave up the business and began to work for Van Huffel of Warren until 1968. He changed jobs and is then employed by Ajax Magnethermic, where he worked until 1971. Once more he decided to change jobs and is now employed by Packard Electric.

Mr. Switzer's hobbies include sports, flying, and reading.

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INTERVIEWEE: JACK W. SWITZER

INTERVIEWER: Beth Hanuschak

SUBJECT: Mecca Centralized School; description of the school; description of the town; The Township's Justice of the Peace and Constable; Mecca Church; Mecca Fire Department

Date: May 9, 1979

H: This is Beth Hanuschak with Mr. Jack Switzer dealing with the History of Mecca, May 9, 1979 at 6:05 p.m.

Mr. Switzer, looking over the information that I have, I see that around 1914 there was a Jack Switzer here in Mecca. Who is that person?

S: I don't know.

H: Is he any relation to you whatsoever?

S: Not that I know of, no.

H: There was a Bula Switzer. She was a teacher at Mecca at one time.

S: Possibly, she could have been related. Was she from Youngstown?

H: I don't have any information on that.

S: It's very possible, but I'm not sure of it.

H: Going through the sources that I used, I came upon a Clinton Switzer, who was a resident here in 1936. Now, is that any relation to you?

S: Yes, that's my father.

H: That's your father? He moved here to Mecca in 1936?

S: No, he moved here in about 1931.

H: Yes, and your mother's name was Cora?

S: Right.

H: She was born in 1893?

S: Right.

H: Is that right? Where was she born?

S: Indiana.

H: There are two children. Dick and obviously, you.

S: No, I have two sisters also, Dorothy and Elva.

H: Let's look at your parents. Why did they come here to Mecca? What made them come to this community? Your dad is not from here?

S: No, he was originally, also, from Indiana.

H: Why did they come here to Mecca, Ohio?

S: Well, that's a long story.

H: Go right ahead. You've got all kind of time.

S: First, we came from Indiana to Gustavus Township. My father had a blacksmith shop that he traded for a farm in Gustavus, a dairy farm. And then he ran into some problems with his cattle and lost most of them at a TB test and then, when the Depression hit, more or less, he had to give up that place and really, this was the only place that he could find and he came to Mecca. That's really how we ended up here. Really, you might say, it was a forced move.

H: What did he do upon arriving here in Mecca?

S: He bought a small farm and then he worked for Republic Steel most of the time he was here.

H: Where was the farm located?

S: The farm was in West Mecca, North Park Avenue.

- H: Is it still there today?
- S: Yes, it's still there. All of the original buildings are all gone now, but the place is still there.
- H: Was he happy with the move?
- S: I don't think so really. I don't really know for sure, but I don't think. From what I--of course, I was so young--from what I gathered, it was more or less a forced move, something that had to be done.
- H: Right. Did he continue farming then? Was he still in the dairy business?
- S: Yes, he built it up again. He didn't, for quite a while, but he continued to build up to when he did retire from the shop he was dairy farming.
- H: In the history of the Methodist Church, he served on the building committee there. Was he actively involved then? Is that the same person?
- S: Yes, that's the same person. He was always active at the church in West Mecca.
- H: What did he do? The book that I used says he was on a building committee. What exactly did he do?
- S: Well, the building committee was probably when they put the basement under the church. He would have helped then on that. He served on the board and was superintendent of Sunday School and things like that.
- H: Was your mother involved?
- S: Yes, she was also involved.
- H: I see. Looking at other Switzers, there's a Charles and Certha Switzer. Is that any relation to you?
- S: Not to my knowledge.
- H: They had children: Grace, Lawrence, Charles, and Elizabeth. I was just curious whether that was any relation to you.
- S: Where was this at? In Mecca?
- H: Right in Mecca.
- S: Not to my knowledge, no.

H: You're the only Switzers then that are descendants of Clinton and Cora?

S: Right.

H: You were born in 1931. You grew up during the Depression. What can you remember about your parents during that time? Knowing that your father had to make that move, what can you remember about the guy? Was it hard? Did you have to do a lot of work for him? Just tell me about your father and your mother.

S: Well, no, I didn't really have to, as I'd say, work hard, because I was really young, but, let's see, I have to go back and think now. Our place, where our farm was, why, was kind of a meeting place for the whole little area right there, the crossroads and we had a piano, I remember. That was one of the reasons everybody met there, because we had the piano.

I remember things were rough. I can remember Dad getting up like and going to look for work and getting work for a day at a time or something. His biggest thing was always, he liked to buy calves. He would always try to buy a calf somewhere, to raise. That was always a big thing, when the calf got sold, why, that meant we had ice cream that day. (Laughter) I can remember that.

My father was never on any sort of relief or anything. He never had to do that. I can remember one time he was upset. He applied for some kind of funding or something. I really don't know exactly, but for some money of some kind, something, but he was turned down because he had a team of horses.

H: Is that right?

S: And they told him he could use them, which he did have, but I remember he was pretty upset because just because he happened to have a team of horses, why, he wasn't eligible. And at that time, with these horses, then he helped--they had a project for cleaning our Mosquito Creek--and he used the team. I remember doing that, cleaning out the Creek.

H: Why did he have to clean out the Creek?

S: It was a project for the whole, well, I guess--Trumbull County. It wasn't WPA, but it was another project they used to clean out the Creek. It was just to put men to work. That's what it amounted to.

H: Men got paid for that?

S: Yes.

H: Do you remember how much he earned?

S: No, I have no idea. I have no idea what he earned.

H: That's interesting.

S: But they had the project and they had a certain section that they each cleaned out, pulling trees out and all these things.

H: What was your mother like?

S: Oh, very small lady. Everyone remembers her, she was very thin, always joyful. I can't ever remember her getting up and not singing sometime during the day. You always saw the two of them together. You very seldom saw one that you didn't see the other one. I had different people tell me later on that that was one thing they always remembered--if they seen one, they seen the other one. She was spunky I guess you might say. (Laughter)

They also were very keen on--this might fit in with nowadays when you hear so much about our youth being so ornery and everything--they both always felt honest about that as far as their life went. My dad especially, when I heard him talk about that. He would say, "Yes, we didn't have this to do or that to do. We didn't get into trouble," and he always heard the good things. He would always say, "We did go to church on Sunday, twice every Sunday." But he said, "The part you don't hear is that we met down at the Creek to have our fights before we went to church." (Laughter)

H: That's cute.

S: Both of them were always very honest about that. I felt they were. They used to tell about racing with their horses and coming home from the fair and things like this and how they would race them. How he used to steal his father's horse--not steal--take his father's horse out of the barn to date my mother. He used it to go see my mother. I don't know whether you know anything about horses, but they will go certain places and instinctively learn it. And this one time, why--it would have been my grandfather--had his horse going by my mother's place and it just whipped in there. (Laughter) So, that's how he got caught.

- H: He got caught. Were they religious? Did they make you, in fact, go to church twice on Sundays?
- S: Never made us, I wouldn't say they made us. They were, I guess you would say--religious, for lack of a better term. They always seemed to make it that you wanted to go. They never said, "You must." But they always encouraged, but never really pushed at all. We just grew up with the idea that you did it, that's all. It was real good.
- H: Are you the oldest of all the children or the youngest?
- S: No, I'm the baby.
- H: All your brothers and sisters were born here?
- S: No, my two sisters were born in Indiana and my brother was born in Gustavus. My one sister lives in Gustavus now. My brother lives in Kinsman and the other sister is deceased. I'm the baby.
- H: That's interesting. Bron in 1931, you started school roughly around 1936, 1937, right?
- S: Right.
- H: Where did you start school in Mecca? What was the name of the school and where was it located?
- S: It was Mecca Centralized School. It was right in almost, you might say, the center of the township, Route 88, right about where the lake is right now, right in the middle of the water.
- H: I'd like to get a description of what that school looked like. Tell me, when you walked in that building, what did you see? It was all grades in one building, correct? One through twelve was housed in one building?
- S: Yes, right.
- H: Tell me what school looked like in your mind. What can you remember? Did they have pictures of George Washington on the wall, Abe Lincoln on the wall? For many, many years, that's the way schools were set up. What can you remember about that school?
- H: Well, I think the first thing I can remember, as you walked in the front was the fire bell. The fire bell there, I can remember that distinctively and of

course, the offices, or the office for the school was right as you entered it. I could almost go right through the whole building. (Laughter)

H: Go right ahead. That's what I want. Go right ahead.

S: The office, it was on your right as you entered-- I'm entering the front of the building--and then they had a small library right on the left and then behind the library was a big, well, then it was a big study hall, we called it. It was a study hall. A flag in the room was a thing. There was always a flag at the front of the room. As far as pictures, I don't remember pictures. Then you'd go directly on into the gymnasium. All the classrooms were built on the outside of the gymnasium. It was probably one of the safest schools that was ever built, because there was two exits out of every room. Every room in the building could go outside from the room. There was no room in it that you couldn't go to the outside from that room or you could go into the gymnasium, either way. At the end of the gymnasium then was a stage. And the property, of course, was low and it was always a thing when it rained in the spring and everything, we looked forward to getting a few days off from school because the basement would always flood. I can remember the basement being almost flooded up to the floor level. That was always something we always looked forward to.

H: I'll have to try that. (Laughter)

S: Yes. Outside of that, I don't know of anything. We had a home economics room. There was a manual training room.

H: What is a manual training room?

S: They taught wood working at the time, and that was the main thing, woodworking in the manual training room. When you got to the ninth grade, you got to change rooms for your classes. There were bleachers on each side of the gymnasium.

H: Did they have a cafeteria?

S: No.

H: Where did you eat your lunch?

S: You carried your lunch. They had a home economics room. I remember, it was in kind of like with your lab. Then later on, we did have hot dogs one time; a

week. Ladies would come in and cook hot dogs and we'd have hot dogs and chocolate milk once a week, otherwise, we always carried our lunch.

H: Who was your first grade teacher?

S: A lady by the name of Miss Gates.

H: How many were in your class?

S: Oh my, I don't know what we did start with really. There were probably about fourteen, fifteen maybe. I really don't know.

H: How many did you end up with?

S: I graduated with nine in our class. That was in 1949.

H: Are there any outstanding features about you in school? Were you a big kid? Did you get into trouble?

S: I can only remember in lower grades one teacher telling my mother, "Jack is a real nice kid and everything, but he likes to fight." I don't know if I was a bad kid, but I was rough, I guess.

H: Who did you fight?

S: Anybody that was available. (Laughter)

H: Can you give me any names? Do you remember?

S: Used to have a neighbor boy, Eugene Dean and we used to wrestle around quite often. Right now I can't think of any in the lower grades. There was a kid, Robertson, was his name, but I don't know whatever happened to him. They moved out a long time ago.

H: Did your mother reprimand you then, upon finding out that you used to fight?

S: Oh, she would tell me about it. They had a way of discipline. I don't know hardly how to explain it. They really didn't have to. If they said something, I just knew that's what it was and took their word for it and that's the way it was. Never had too much problem along that line.

H: Going through high school, were you involved in any extra-curricular activities?

S: Yes, I was always in with the band the baseball and basketball and whatever we happened to have, you might

say.

- H: What kind of basketball team did they have? Who did you play with? Who was on the team?
- S: Well, at that time, our team, let's see, there was Bud King, Jim Kennel, Larry Workman, Dennis Stantial, Robert Cator. That's about the ones I can think of right now.
- H: What were some of the schools? Who did you play?
- S: Bloomfield, Bristol, once in a while we'd play Cortland, Greene, Johnson, Kinsman, Vernon, all small schools same as we were. Really, our basketball team at this time it was about that time when "Rockets", the name, came out.
- H: Oh, tell me about that. How did that come about?
- S: Well, our class, in 1949, we made one of the first--well, I guess you call them yearbooks. Now, do they call them yearbooks?
- H: Yes.
- S: We made one of the first ones and it was called "The Rockette" when it started out. At this time, my oldest sister, the one that's deceased--Dorothy Switzer-Holko was her name--she was teaching here at that time and we were looking for a name and this is one of the names she happened to come up with was "Rockets". It was really right at the time when everybody was looking into the future--rockets was going to be something and that's where they came up with the name Rockets.
- H: I've never heard that before.
- S: That was 1948, I guess, we came up with it.
- H: Did you date while in high school?
- S: Very, very little.
- H: Did anybody date or not?
- S: Not as, I guess you would say they do now. They didn't, not as much.
- H: When you left school at the end of the day, did you have to work at home?

S: Yes. Well, at that time when I was in high school-- just what we were talking about--I did. Actually, it was during the Second World War at that time. The day my brother was drafted, my mother went to work in a factory. She said, "If he can go, I can go." So, she started to work in a factory in Warren at that time. My father was working at Republic Steel, so that left me to do the farm work, which I liked.

H: Did you?

S: So, that's where that was at and chores to do and it was kind of rough sometimes when we had basketball games and baseball games. That was worth the time because we didn't have practice like they do now.

H: Is that right?

S: No, we had a--they called it an ECA period, extra time, a half hour more at lunch time. That was our basketball practice time.

H: Is that right?

S: That was it. (Laughter)

H: That would be nice to do that today.

S: We didn't have any of that after school or nothing like that. We didn't have that time.

H: When did you play your games?

S: At night.

H: At night?

S: And they usually always started at eight o'clock.

H: One game? I mean, today we have junior varsity and varsity.

S: No, they usually had two games.

H: Is that right?

S: Yes, and then they called them first and second teams, but it was the same thing.

H: You went to high school during World War II and you just said your brother fought. How did Mecca view World War II? Now, you had someone that was there.

How did Mecca feel about that war? Was there a feeling of excitement? Did people really get in that war effort? In your family they must have, because your mother--"He can go, I'm going."

S: Right. I think, from what I can remember, everybody was involved with it. I know, of course, like my family and my brother-in-law, he wasn't in, but he had brothers in and we always kept a map of where his brothers were and where my brother was, with the pins on it. Kept very close track. Out there, I can remember Pearl Harbor Day very well because we had just gotten electricity at that time. Our place, we didn't have electricity at the time. We had just gotten electricity and we had a radio. I can remember listening to the radio and hearing that when that happened.

H: What was your first reaction? Kill?

S: No. I started looking out the window. (Laughter) First reaction, I was kind of wondering, not really knowing exactly where Hawaii might be, really. I was just kind of wondering.

H: Had you talked about it a lot in school? Did the teachers bring it up, the war?

S: Oh yes. We had these stamps, well, they called them war bonds then, the savings bonds?

H: Yes.

S: But you could buy stamps also and we always had a contest of some kind going on buying stamps. They were ten cents apiece or twenty-five cents apiece. We always had that going. And then, I can remember one year we had a thing going at collecting milkweed pods. They're used in life preservers. We were provided with, like, onion sacks and we went out. We always had a contest of some kind going on. We had sides that are different. I guess we were sides, contests. We were called Junior Commandos and see who could get the most bags and things like that. On weekends we'd go out and fill these up and then they'd be all brought into the school.

I would say, as far as Mecca goes, it was really patriotic. Of course, with Warren being close, the manufacturing and everything. Tanks were made right here in Warren. There was a lot of people that were working in the factories and running their farms at

the same time. A lot of people did this at that time.

H: When you graduated, did you graduate from the school where it is right now?

S: Yes.

H: Did you like that change where they moved it? Were you in favor of that? I guess maybe what I'm trying to get at and this all ties in together--were you happy to see the reservoir come, destroy that school? They tore it down and built this school. First of all, were you happy with seeing the reservoir being built?

S: No, not really. I was sad about it.

H: Why?

S: Probably the best farm land that was in Mecca was there and it was hard for me to understand why they had to build it. But anyhow, the families had to be moved out that lived there for years and that kind of thing, but then, I can see now where it was a good thing. It's been a good thing, I think. Of course, younger, I was glad to see the school go. We went to Cortland school. The west side of the lake went to Cortland and East Mecca went to Johnson School.

H: Cortland in Cortland, Ohio?

S: Yes.

H: Where was that school located?

S: Where their elementary school is. Of course, they had all twelve grades there then too. And we rode bus clear down around to 305 and up around that way back up to the school. We did that for, well, see, I was there for the last half of the seventh grade and the first part of the eighth grade and then we came back here. That was in eighth grade and I graduated in where the building is now. Yes, I was glad to see the building come here, I mean, to get the building because at one time they thought we wouldn't even have a school.

H: Oh really?

S: But, at that time, I kind of knew what was happening because my father was on the school board. And I can remember different men coming to the house because

then you didn't have all the motels and so forth like now and they'd come in there. I don't know really what they were, construction men or architecture or whatever, talking with him about this building and so forth. And it was quite a hassle whether the building would be built on this side of the lake or on the other side of the lake.

H: How did they solve that? How did they decide?

S: Well, I always heard there was three board members from East Mecca and there was two from West Mecca, so, that's how it was decided. I understand that there was a person in West Mecca that offered to donate the land if it would be built over there but instead they decided to buy land over here and build it on this side.

H: Do you know how much they paid for that land?

S: I have no idea. I don't remember at all what they paid for it.

H: How many years did your father serve on the school board?

S: I would say probably--they serve what, four terms? He probably served two terms I think. I'm not really sure.

H: Can you remember anything at all about him serving on the school board? Were you in school the time that he was on the board then?

S: Yes. He went off before I graduated. I think it was his last year when they finished the school up. I can remember when he got on the school board. It was more of a write-in thing. He got elected. That was how it happened. I was fairly small at the time. I can't remember all the details. I can just remember my brother coming home and saying that he was elected on the school board. It seems to me like he used to get six dollars for serving.

H: You've given me a physical description of the first school that you attended. What did Mecca, where you graduated from--Maplewood . . . Was it called Maplewood?

S: No, it was called Mecca.

H: How did the change come about? Do you know? How did they get Maplewood out of Mecca?

S: Well, when we consolidated--Johnson, Greene, and Mecca consolidated--and then if I recall right, they ran, not a contest, but they asked for people to send in names and names were sent in and Maplewood was chosen.

H: I see.

S: I don't know who presented it or whatever, but that's how it came about.

H: Well then, what did Mecca look like to you, that school of Mecca? Give me another description of that school. What can you remember about going there.

S: Well, we had one of the hardest gym floors in the county. (Laughter) Where the cafeteria is now was the gym floor and it was a concrete with a tile covering on it. When we built it, building materials were very limited--being able to get material. And as it was built we had--just something that crossed my mind about the old one, thinking about that--we were about the only township, the Mecca School, that had outdoor toilets at the time. (Laughter) Everybody used to hate to come and play basketball then because they had to change out in the toilets and it was outside, but that was in the old school. That's not the one we're talking of now.

But anyway, the new one was built similar in size but our gymnasium was on the back of the building with the classrooms in the front with a hall. I think that when they built it they had built it with the intention of someday it would be added on to. I don't think they put the building up and said, "This is going to be it." I think they had seen that there was going to be more. But as I recall them talking and so forth, it was kind of nip and tuck for awhile whether we'd have the school or not. They just wanted to do away with Mecca having a school and then it ended up that this is the one they consolidated where the high school ended up so I think there was some foresight there somewhere along the line.

H: I'm sure there was. When you graduated in 1949, what were you going to do with yourself? Did you go on to college, the service? What did you do?

S: My ambition, of course, always was to farm, but I had it all figured out. I enlisted in the Marine Corps in August. I graduated in May and I enlisted in the Marine Corps in August and I had it all figured out,

I would serve my three years and then I would be eligible for a GI loan, which at that time was \$15,000 maximum that you could get. But at that time you could probably get close to buying a farm and equip it for that kind of money. That's what my intentions were. Then the three years that I was in there, things all changed money-wise and everything. It was almost impossible.

H: Well, how did things change? What had happened?

S: I guess it was the inflation same as it is now.

H: Is that right?

S: It just seemed like everything kept getting higher and higher. It was just impossible to make a move like that at that time and it doesn't seem possible that in three or four years that it could change that much, but it really did. Like when I went in, I mean, lots were selling for like \$50 and \$60 you could buy a lot. But of course, then it was \$500 and \$600 when I came out, which was a lot of money, which now today it's \$5000 and \$6000, so . . .

H: Were you overseas?

S: Yes, I was in Korea.

H: You fought right in Korea then?

S: Yes, I was in Korea.

H: This is probably to get away from our subject for a second, but any reflections on Korea? Were you right there?

S: I was right out by the 38th Parallel when I was there and it was more of a game of cops and robbers in my estimation. I went over in 1951 I think, in 1951. And this is after the push had been made back up. I was over there actually when the worst of it was over. They were set up on the 38th and they were back and forth talking all the time, but I spent most of the time on what they called outpost duty.

H: And that was?

S: That was, like we'd have an area would be set up, headquarters area would be set up and then there would be guards, outposts out beyond that. It was our duty just to keep watch that nobody came through and stuff like that.

H: What was your final rank in the Marine Corps?

S: Corporal.

H: Corporal?

S: And of course, when I was there why, Uncle Sam decided he needed me longer than three years. (Laughter) So, I was extended. My wife and I, we planned on getting married earlier and then that changed. I was to get out in August, but I didn't get out until in December.

H: Of what year?

S: 1952.

H: 1952, I see. After that, in 1952 then, you were finished, did you come back to Mecca?

S: Yes, yes, I came back to Mecca.

H: What made you come back here?

S: That's a good question. (Laughter) I don't know. Well, one reason, I wanted to get married.

H: Your wife is from here?

S: Right. There used to be kind of thing going between East and West Mecca all the time and . . .

H: I was going to ask you about that. (Laughter)

S: Oh, you were?

H: Yes, I was. (Laughter) I hear a lot about that.

S: I guess we were like the Indians or something, we made the peace there. Marie was from East Mecca and I was from West Mecca and that kind of broke that quarrel.

H: Well, you knew your wife before going over there?

S: Yes.

H: Had you gone to school with her?

S: Yes.

H: What is her maiden name?

S: Marie Adams.

- H: She had originally been from Mecca?
- S: No, she moved out here from Warren when she was in, I think, the seventh grade.
- H: Is she younger than you?
- S: Yes.
- H: So, you knew her then all the time you were over in Korea and had all intentions of getting married and that's one reason, then, why you moved back here?
- S: Yes, we thought this was where we wanted to stay.
- H: And obviously it is, right? (Laughter)
- S: That's where we're at.
- H: You just talked a little bit about this and I knew there's so much animosity between East and West Mecca. What is your version of why all that got started? What had happened to bring all that about? Was it because of the Creek?
- S: The Creek seemed to be the boundary line. I don't really know when it did start, but I know it took a long time before it got cooled down, I mean, even up until the new school was built on this side people were still--like I said, there were three board members from the East and there was two from the West. (Laughter) And even yet, today you run into people that still bring this out.
- H: Is that right?
- S: You live in one, you're a little different than the other one. Of course, see, now I moved from the West Side to the East side. (Laughter)
- H: That's cute. When were you married then, what year?
- S: 1952, December 1952.
- H: What did you do then for a living after the service?
- S: When I first got out we went into a partnership with my father on the farm. Then that worked out to where there really wasn't enough income for two families so I went to work in Warren for Van Huffel Tube and I worked there for quite some time till I figured that I could get out. I'm still working at the shop yet, but . . .

H: At Van Huffel?

S: No, I worked at Van Huffel close to twelve or thirteen years. Then I went to work with Sears for awhile and then I went with Ajax.

H: Magnethermic?

S: Yes, magnethermic and U.S. Gypsum and now I'm at Packard Electric.

H: What do you do at Packard?

S: I work on the assembly line in there.

H: Do you farm?

S: Yes, I still keep my hand in the dirt.

H: How many acres? Or dairy?

S: I bought thirty acres here and then we sold some off. We just have the nineteen acres right now. But we raised some beef and some pigs and all that and have horses.

H: What do you think the average cost of an acre is today, roughly? I'm just curious.

S: \$2000.

H: Is that high, low, about average?

S: That's market price I would say. Our church just bought some property and that's what we had to pay for it. I would say that would be probably a good figure.

H: Did your wife and you ever think about leaving here, going someplace else?

S: Oh, we've talked about it different times, but I guess we're still sticking around. Well, our children, we had three children, two of them graduated from Maplewood.

H: Their names are?

S: Jack and Vickie. Of course, we still have Tina at home and we figure we want to stay here till she finishes school here. After that I don't really know.

H: Do you think you might leave?

S: Possibility.

H: That's very interesting. Sometimes when you go through small towns they have one street where everything is--the drugstore, the hardware shop. Do we have that here? Is that here at all?

S: I would say probably that Route 88 would be the only thing. In West Mecca, there was the church and at one time there was a town hall building over there also. Each side of the lake had their own town hall. At one time over there, there was two stores in West Mecca and a garage which now there isn't at all on that side of the lake. The Circle, Mecca Circle was always down here and then there was always the stores around here and so forth. That would probably be the local meeting points.

Years ago, there used to be, on each side of the lake, men had horseshoe courts set up. They would go down and play horseshoes at night. There was nothing else to do. That was the entertainment I guess you would say.

H: Continuing with everything that we've been talking about and one thing that was just brought to my mind, as with all small towns, they do have a homecoming. Do they still?

S: No, no that's been done away with.

H: Why?

S: Lack of interest and lack of money.

H: What was the homecoming like then? How many years did they have it? When was the last year then for it? Do you remember?

S: It must have been about four or five years ago, I would say, since the last one. And I really think it's because right now, I would say, most of the people living here now aren't really originally from here. It's more of a new town, so to speak. Just lack of interest I think even more than lack of money is the reason for it.

H: Were you involved in the homecomings when they did have it?

S: Not very much, no.

- H: What was the homecoming? What did they do?
- S: They usually had a big meal. Everybody got together at homecoming and had a big meal and they had a dance then afterwards and a parade in the morning. They used to have a parade and they gave out goofy prizes for newest ones married and there was babies and all this sort of thing. It was really a hometown thing and I think that's why it has been done away with because there's not that many people from it to really actually have a Mecca homecoming now. They used to have a Mecca Homecoming, but it's just lack of interest of it.
- H: Did all the communities around here have a homecoming?
- S: Yes, they used to.
- H: Are there any that still carry on?
- S: Most of them do, yes, like Greene still has one; Johnson has one. I'd say we're probably one of the few that doesn't have that. There aren't that many people that have been here in Mecca that long.
- H: I've been reading a lot of things. Mecca Circle, I know, has been trying to get a committee together to stop some of the things that are going on and at one time, the Circle was just beautiful. It was a park. People could come here, have their lunch, have a picnic, that type of thing, and it's not quite used like that today. Do you have any thoughts about that? Did you go down there when you were a kid, to the Circle or to the park as it was called?
- S: No, I didn't. Well, later on we did, but never to hang around there we didn't. Of course, I was from the other side of the lake. (Laughter)
- H: Right.
- S: No, there used to be a little restaurant down there when I was a kid, the Circle Inn it was called and that was more or less where kids at that time, we would meet. Like basketball games and so forth, why, the ones on the East side of the lake, this is where they would go to catch the bus to go to the basketball game, and we would catch it on the other side, at the store, to catch the bus for the games and so forth. And it was a big thing. If we won the game, we'd come back to the Circle Inn to get our milkshakes and things like that. I mean, it was more or

less the hang-out for the kids then.

H: You said there was the Circle Inn. What else was there around that circle? The grocery store wasn't built until . . .

S: No, it's changed quite a bit. There used to be a garage and a gas station on the Circle. The one small tavern that's still there has been there for years. Another big building there was a store building for years and years till now it's a tavern. I understand that originally at one time when it was built, it was a roller rink. Of course, that was way before my time. It's always been a store there since I remember. And then, there used to be, on that one corner, let's see, there's always been taverns there. There was another tavern down there at one time. And dating way back, well, I can remember the building there that used to be a livery stable. I can remember that building when they tore that down. It has changed quite a bit.

H: Right.

S: It has always been a place of activity though.

H: Are you bothered by all the busy people coming in? I know I'll go by there right now and it will just be packed, motorcycles and . . .

S: Yes. It upsets me.

H: Does it?

S: I kind of avoid it, I guess. Of course, I'm far enough away from it that I'm not down there that much, but I came through and have been down there at times when it was just wall to wall with kids down there.

H: Oh boy, you know that, right.

S: Some nights, even like during the summer, motorcycles going by there going down and you just wonder whether they're going to end or not. Of course, again, the lake attracts a lot of that and a lot of them come here.

H: Do you think they can do anything about that? There's no constable or police force here in Mecca right now.

S: No, there isn't. It's all in the sheriff's department and I feel that the sheriff does as much as he

can do. And until, really, the people want something done, there won't be anything changed. Like they've started now, trying to push things. I don't know. I still feel that kids will go the right way if they're led right, I think.

I kind of have a saying, I mean, you hear so much about youth today and everything. I think today the only difference between when we were kids is today they do the things that we thought we'd like to do. Now today they do it and I think that's about the way it was. Of course, as I said earlier, this is just about the same philosophy, I think, my father had. I think we all go through a stage like that.

H: Sure.

Have there ever been policemen or a constable in this area?

S: Yes, we used to have a constable and a justice-of-the-peace; they both used to be here.

H: And they're no longer here?

S: No.

H: What happened?

S: Again, lack of money and lack of interest, not finding anyone that would take the job, not being able to pay him anything to have the job. At one time, like I say, there used to be a constable and justice-of-the-peace both. In fact, our home here, the third justice-of-the-peace that Mecca ever had used to live here.

H: Really?

S: So, at one time I think they must have had a real good organization.

H: Do you remember any names of people who were the constables? Who were the people?

S: The last one I can recall would be Chet Tominson. He was the constable at one time. I remember at one time he had a family that he had to--they hadn't been paying their rent and so forth and he had to set their furniture and stuff out. I think that was the last thing he did and that was the end of the job for him.

H: About when was that, approximately?

S: Oh, that would have been back in, probably in the late 1940's, I would say.

H: You said that we had justice-of-the-peace here and there was one here--what do you mean "here?" This was his house that he used to conduct his affairs?

S: That's the way I understand it. Well, it was his home; he lived here.

H: Who was that person?

S: I don't know what his name was.

H: Well then, how did you acquire this house? Did you just buy it off of him?

S: Oh no. This was way back that I'm talking about now, when the township was first started. From the history that I've read that other places have collected, that's what I understand; he lived here.

H: I see. Then how did you get his house? Who did you buy it off of?

S: Oh, I bought it off of Chittle; George Chittle was his name. He was only here a few years. A man by the name of Ike Cole owned it before him. This was his home; I think Ike grew up here.

H: Is there any history that goes with this house. Have you had to do a lot to the house? How long has this building been here?

S: I really don't know how long it has been here. It evidently has been here a long time. It's got hand hewn beams in it in the basement and so forth and a rock foundation.

Oh yes, I was told another thing. In my barn I have a shallow well, a spring like, and I was told that the water to make the concrete between Mecca and Johnson came from that well. That's as much as I really know about the place.

H: How many acres does this sit on?

S: Right now just ninteen, but originally it was a lot bigger.

H: How much--if you don't mind me asking--how much did you pay for all of this in a very nice setting and . . . ?

S: Well, when I bought this in 1954 or 1953, we bought it--that was thirty acres at the time--for \$10,500.

H: That was a nice price, boy, you can sell it and get some good money today.

S: There's quite a big difference since then.

H: Yes.

Going back to your parent's home, do you keep that up or you sold that to other people?'

S: That was sold and here about four years ago it burned. The barn got blown almost over and they went ahead and tore it down. There's no original buildings there anymore, but people by the name of Andersons live there now.

H: Are you happy to see the changes that Mecca is going through today? Let's face it, as you said earlier, the people here today are not the original Mecca people and just look right around you, right across the street, brand new homes, are you happy to see that? Do you like seeing this community grow? And it is, my goodness.

S: Well, there's no way of stopping it.

H: Right, there isn't.

S: I don't mind the community growing, but I'm not happy about it. I'm not excited about it. In fact, I keep telling my family: "You might as well move to the city."

H: Yes, you're right.

S: On the east side of my property now, there's probably, oh, there must be about seven or eight properties come back a short distance. But it's growing; there's no doubt about it and it's going to continue to grow.

H: Why do you think it is?

S: Oh, everybody wants to come out from the cities and it's the only land available.

H: It's easy to get back and forth.

S: Yes, it's a good location.

H: The people that come out here, are they farming or they just live in the area?

S: No, they just want to be in the area. Yes, they want the atmosphere.

H: Are there still a lot of farmers here?

S: No, you could probably count them on one hand.

H: Can you name any that are still into agriculture?

S: Actually, just farming probably would be Joe Letwen, Joe Zerovich and Earl Knight are really the only full-time farmers that I know and one on the west side of the lake, Mr. Passell, but he's more or less semi-retired now. Well, let's see, there's one other one, Karl Knight. That's the only ones that off-hand I can think of that their total income would be from farming. And it used to be, I mean, every other place was a farmer.

But that change all came about with the lake. Of course, in this area, a lot of it came with the Second World War. People found out they could work in the shop and make easier money and still live out here. So, that did a lot too in this area as far as the manufacturing area that it is now. In fact, when I worked for U.S. Gypsum, the superintendent told me they liked to hire people from out this way. They got their better workers from this way, from there-north than they did from there-south. I think it all goes back a lot to that. He said, "Those people knew how to work when they came in."

H: Sure.

S: They're quite a few out here now, like myself, that work in town but still I like to farm too and do both.

H: Isn't that tough? Isn't that hard to do? Where do you get the time?

S: Yes, you never get caught up. (Laughter) Like my lawn hasn't been mowed yet, but things like that; it seems like you never get caught up. It has been good though. I think it has been good for the family growing up out here as far as that goes.

H: Would you want your kids to carry on what you have started? Or have they, the two that aren't living here?

- S: No, well, I guess you might say they have. Neither one of them went too far. They both got married. My son just moved to Johnson and he and his wife, I think they more or less wanted in the Maplewood School area. That was really, I think, part of their reason. And he is doing practically exactly the same thing I am, working in a plant and he's got a few acres. My daughter and her husband, her husband was originally from Mecca too.
- H: What's his last name?
- S: Bower, Eugene Bower, and they live in Vernon and they are doing the same thing. (Laughter) He's working in a plant and they do quite a bit of farming.
- H: Would you like to see Tina do the same thing?
- S: I feel they have to live their own lives the way they want to. Whatever they want to do, why, that's what I want them to do.
- H: That's good.
- S: I don't think I'd ever tell them, "You should do this or you should do that." We never have. We try to suggest when they ask questions, outside of that, whatever she decides she wants to do, we'll help her in that direction.
- H: Do you belong to any--I don't know if you'd have time--do you belong to any organizations? You mentioned earlier your church just bought some land. Do you have time for that?
- S: I don't know where all the time comes from. (Laughter) At one time, when I was working at Van Huffel, I also did sub-contracting plus the farm and I was flying at that time so I was really busy. But right now, actually, church work is the only organization as far as I work with at all.
- H: The name of the church is?
- S: Mecca Community Church, which I am an elder in at this time. I was in the fire department, which I am now retired from, so to speak. In fact, I was on the original, at the beginning of the Mecca Fire Department. I wanted to help get it started.
- H: When was that? Let's look at the fire department. You wanted to get that started, that's why you became

involved.

S: Right, well there was a group of us, we saw a need for it. We really needed a fire department out here.

H: What year was this, about?

S: This was in 1959, well, in 1958 it was in the talk session. In 1959 actually, I think was when we first got our charter and became a fire department. Just like everything else, it kind of originated by a group of guys talking at the garage. "We should get this going," and so we went to meetings with different other departments around to find out what we had to do to get started and we started out by buying an old truck and built it up till it could be used and then got a levy bond issue put on to buy a new truck so it would be what the State required in a department. It has been a real good department.

I'm retired now, but I still have a keen eye on it all the time. We set up a thing where after fifteen years you could leave the department if you wanted to, but if you wanted to go back you would be first on the list to go back.

H: Now, is this strictly all volunteer?

S: Yes, this is all volunteer. But the reason we did that was because we had such a waiting list of people wanting on and so, we wanted to keep the younger men coming on all the time so the ones that wanted to leave, why, could leave.

H: Did you go through any training to become a fireman? Where did you go?

S: Oh yes, there are State requirements that we had to have. A lot of training instructors came right out here for us and we got our instructions right here with our own equipment.

We had several big fires. Probably our worst one anytime in this part of the community was when we had the fire at the schoolhouse, at Maplewood High School. That was probably the worst one.

H: I had heard about that. How was that started? Were they able to determine how that blaze was started?

S: Not to my knowledge or I don't recall at this time what it was, but it was hot. (Laughter)

H: I'm sure of that.

Now, the fire department today, is it still volunteer?

S: Oh yes, it's still volunteer, so it's just the same as it always was, volunteer fire department.

H: Are they involved in community activities a lot?

S: Quite a bit. I would say, as far as community activity, it would be the church, school, and fire department. That's where everything happens in Mecca. I mean, one of the three and that's it. The fire department is very active as far as community work.

H: You just said the church is an active part of the community. You're an elder in the church. What exactly is that? What do you do? Are you elected to this position?

S: Well, not really elected, it's just kind of a thing that comes about naturally, I guess you would say. People of the body, the church body, more or less someone usually comes into leadership. Not really voted on or anything, certain people kind of start looking for leadership to. Actually, I guess you would say our job is really the spiritual needs of the people along with the pastor. We're more or less his helpers and kind of a--you might say--watch dog to see that we don't get somebody way off in left field involved or something like this.

H: How long will you remain an elder?

S: Really, there's no set time as far as our church sets up; there's no set time. Once a year we review it.

H: Does this church have a big congregation? Is it growing because the community is growing?

S: No, it's growing, yes, but it's not a big church, no, but we expect it to grow more, that's why we purchased property to build.

H: The original church is . . . ?

S: Down by the Circle.

H: And now they are going to start building this?

S: Yes, in the future. How soon, I don't know.

H: You don't know yet. Who is the pastor there?

S: Charles Kindell.

H: Has he been there for quite some time?

S: He's been there now for, I think this is going on his seventh or eighth year.

H: Who were some other pastors that served? Do you know?

S: Oh, there was Reverend Hood was there. We had a man by the name of Thomas. There's been quite a few over here. There was a Thomas. The churches went through quite a change. At one time, it was The United Church of Christ, which we've withdrawn from. It now is a non-denominational church in the community. We're connected, but no denomination whatsoever. Through this we draw quite a few people.

H: What kind of things does this church do for the community?

S: Right now we just try to meet the needs of the people.

H: It's just sort of there for people who need it and they know that they can come there if they are in need of something whether it's spiritual or . . . ?

S: Right. Of course, the pastor tries to work with the school. In fact, I think they still have a meeting with the superintendent.

H: Oh, is that right? That's good.

S: Not just the superintendent here. I think the one in Bristol is involved. Several superintendents and ministers of the area meet and try. And they have a thing set up that you're probably aware of, at school, if there's kids that need someone to talk to or something, there's someone available if they need them.

H: That's good. You need that. You need more of it in fact.

S: Yes. It's kind of a beginning thing really. There again, we run into the problem of, you might say, being a new community, so many new people.

H: Sure, that's true.

Is there anything else that you think is important that you can add to what we're talking about in Mecca that we haven't covered? Do you have anything that would be worth mentioning that you would like to mention?

S: Not a thing. We've covered it pretty well, I think.

H: Yes, I think so too.

S: I don't think there's anything.

H: One of the last things that I do like to ask the people: Is there anybody else you know that could help us with this project?

S: No, I think the list you had was real good. That was a real good list of people.

H: Good. Well, I want to thank you for spending this hour with me. I found it very enjoyable and you've told me a lot that I had never known before and you've really helped us a lot. We're putting Mecca on the map. (Laughter)

S: Very good.

H: So, thank you very much.

S: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW