

INDIANA UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER

DONALD HOOTEN

Interviewed by Catherine Jones
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INTRODUCTION

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INDIANA UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER

INTERVIEWEE: Donny Hooten

INTERVIEWER: Catherine A. Jones

SUBJECT: History of Paoli

DATE: July 20, 1988

TRANSCRIBER: Paul Russell

Jones: I'm Cathy Jones, and I'm here with Donny Hooten, at his home in Paoli, or a little outside, I guess, technically, and today is June 20, and we're working--July, thank you, July 20th, and we're working together on the Paoli project. That was about that.

Just to begin with, can you tell me a bit more about when your family first came into this area?

H: Well, my family has, my mother's side and my father's side both, have always lived in kind of this area. My father came from English, Indiana. And my mother was always, lived in this area, but she lived towards Salem, on the Orange County, Worchester County lines. They met here in Paoli, and were married here.

J: Oh! Was your dad working at Paoli at the time he was...?

H: Yes, he was working at the Turner Creamery here in Paoli.

J: Is that what some people have told me about, there was a place where they made whey. That farmers _____...

H: Whey and ice cream...

J: Cheese?

H: Cottage cheese.

J: Cottage cheese, OK. Oh. And what was he doing there?

H: He made ice cream. And soon as he got a job offer from Meadow Gold, which was called Tiptop Creamery, then, in Vincennes, and they both moved to Vincennes. And that's where I

was born.

J: Oh! OK, I didn't realize that.

H: Then they lived there until the war started. And I was born in '38. And the war started, and they moved to Indianapolis, and instead of him going to war, he went to work in a place called Curtis Wright's in Indianapolis, that was making airplane parts. He was a tool and die maker. And we lived out...well, we lived inside of Indianapolis for, on Bridgewater Street or something like that.

J: So how old, you were about five or six at this time?

H: That was '41 or '42, I would have been about three or four years old.

J: About three or four, OK.

H: And then we moved from downtown to the country, around Indianapolis, where a lot of the trucking farms were.

J: Trucking?

H: Trucking farms, you know, that done their farming and trucked them to the market. For vegetables and stuff like this. But he still worked at Curtis Wright's. When the war was over--just before the war was over--he was abducted by some men, and took all of his paycheck and throwed him down over a cliff, and he was...

J: Oh, my god!

H: ...and he was, he just made up his mind right then, that he wasn't going to put his family through this type of situation...

J: Oh, how horrible!

H: ...so, he decided to move back to Paoli, and we found, he found out the store--the grocery store that we're in now--was owned by a person named--they called him "Dump" Runyon, I can't remember what his first name was...

J: Dumper?

H: Dump. Runyon.

J: Runyon.

H: And Dad made him an offer on the business. It was a little Etna Oil Station, with a...it had ATE and A on the paint, and it had kerosene and all this type of stuff for sale, you know.

Then, he had a little grease pit over to the left of the store. And they bought, we bought the store, and it was kind of unique, you know, at that time, because it, it was the type of store that whenever somebody come in, they give you the list, and you'd go to the shelf and get your long stick and pull a box of cereal off the top shelf and catch it when it hit the floor, you know. And they would set down or stand and wait for their grocery order while you filled it. It was very personal type, personal one on one, personal with the person that you were doing business with. A lot of the housewives would send their husbands, you know, like it was really more of a farm area then than it is now, and they would send their husbands in to get stuff, you know, either on Saturday or whenever they weren't busy or something, and they would all set around the pot-bellied stove in the store and tell jokes and laugh and cut up until they got ready to go and sometime they'd overstay their visit, and there wasn't...

But anyway, that's the way, it started out that way. We started remodeling. We probably remodeled seven times. And the last time I remember that we remodeled was after he died. He died in 1967, and the last time I remodeled was whenever I took over the store from my mother.

J: Was that when your father died?

H: No, she stayed in the business until '79, and then, I took it over from her after she remarried.

J: And when did you all come back to Paoli?

H: '44.

J: '44. So you were, you were, what, 5 or 6, then. You were still a kid. Did you...?

H: I started to school in Indianapolis. And probably three or four months, and then, I finished the rest of my school in Paoli.

J: You know, it just occurred to me...do you think that we could get the TV turned down? Just a scosh, because this is pretty sensitive.

So, you all came back in fifty?

H: We came to Paoli in '44.

J: In '44. OK. And then, your dad went straight into getting the store, the Ate and Oil.

H: Atenna.

J: OK. I take it that was pretty much a family business, like it is now?

H: Right, except it was just my mother and my father, you know.

J: When you were growing up, would you, you know, help them out at the store and stuff like that?

H: Yes.

J: Some or just...?

H: Probably started out when I was just in the neighborhood of eight or nine. You know, doing odd jobs.

J: Well, the way you describe the store, is that the way that you remember it? Do you have a lot of memories of it being that way?

H: Yes.

J: Yes.

H: We had a little offset office with a desk and that's one part of the--what am I trying to say?--that's where the kerosene was held, that where the little crank up kerosene. And then, we had a little back room that was very small for extra stock and there wasn't much to it. But it was just mostly just a little, like a 18 by 30 type building and it was just very, you know, small.

J: So, you all, when you remodeled, you really have enlarged it...

H: Right.

J: ...a bit then, yes.

H: Quite a bit, yes.

J: Yes, before we get into the store more, let me backtrack for a second and ask did they--about your father--did they ever find out what, you know, who those men were? Was it just a mugging or something like that?

H: No, just a mugging. They never did find out.

J: Oh, God, how horrible! Once he got back to Paoli, was he like able to, you know, forget it and...?

H: Oh, yes. Yes.

J: And the other thing I wanted is, OK, your father is from

English and your mother from Salem area?

H: Livonia area.

J: Oh, OK. Do you what brought each of their families to this Orange County area in the first place? Do you know if they've been around this area for a long time?

H: Far as I can remember my great-grandmother on Mother's side--I don't know when they actually came, but they had lived in that area for a long time, and I can still see her. She lived to be, I think, right at 100. And she was unique. I didn't know her very well, but she smoked a corncob pipe and had a beard and she would set out on her front porch--you know, you've seen these things like Mammy Yokum or something like this? Really, kind of like that, but she was really a nice person and a unique person. I remember when she died, they had her funeral in the house, you know, which was like they used to. I don't remember my great-grandfather, he must have died before then.

And then, on Dad's side, his family came from English, and his dad's dad, as far as I can remember, were there during that time too.

J: Did he ever...he was originally from English and moved to Paoli? I mean, and he lived here, then, for like 30 or 40 more years? Until he died?

H: From '44 until '67.

J: OK. About 20 more years. Was English his home then or was Paoli his home? Do you know what I mean?

H: When?

J: At the time that he died. I mean, where do you think was home to him?

H: Oh, Paoli.

J: Paoli?

H: Yes.

J: Why was that, then?

H: Well, he got his roots here. He was real active in the Jaycees, civic organizations like Kiwanis Club and Lions and he was president of the Jaycees in.... I was president of the Jaycees the year that Dad died. And that was, you know.... And I was also in a cast from my hip to my toes when he died.

Because I was in a Jaycees, playing softball in...I ran to catch a ball and broke my leg. So...

J: Oh, god. I mean, what horrible timing.

H: [chuckles] Yes, it was.

J: Bad enough to go through, you know the death of a...but to have to have it happen at such a awkward time.

H: Whenever...one of the remodeling type things that we did at the store, we bought both houses on both sides of the store, and tore both of them down. The first one we bought and tore down and made a parking lot. The second one, when Tina and I--my wife, Gloria--got married, we moved into the house next to the grocery store.

J: Was Gloria her first name or was that her full name?

H: Her full name is Gloria Fay, but we, like two, three months before we got married, we spent a lot of time sanding floors, cleaning, remodeling, and got it all ready to move into. And it was real unique, my father was a real good carpenter and you know, worked together.

J: So, then, you all moved into a house right next to the store...

H: Right next to the store.

J: ...when you first got married, and was the house on the other side, was that where your...?

H: The house on the other side was just some people who used to live there. Then, the parking lot was all the way around the back of us.

J: Let's backtrack a little bit and talk about, you know, being a kid and what that was like here. And I guess, do you remember living in, you know, Indianapolis and up there?

H: Yes.

J: You do. Do you remember what your impressions were or how you felt when you found out you were going to be here? What your first impressions were?

H: Well, for one thing, we lived on one street down there--just to kind of explain what Indianapolis was like--there was one boy that I associated with--and I really can't remember his name--but he got me in a lot of trouble, like when I was four years old, or three and a half or four years old. For one thing, there was a

railroad track that, real high up above us at the back of our house, and I think they made--some kind of a bone factory that made dogfood for dogs. Anyway, the railroad track went along there and I remember this real old car setting up there and it had a big trunk in the back of it, in the back seat, and the car was locked, and we couldn't figure out what that trunk was for. So, he and I decided, it wasn't just one way, he and I decided that we was going to break out the window and find out what was in that trunk.

J: Naturally.

H: Naturally, so then, we broke out the window and looked in the trunk, and it was just old clothes. So, we left. So, that day or the next day or sometime or other, the police came. And I remember telling Mother what had happened. And she says, "Well, you just may go to jail." And of course, there I was, three or four years old. When the police came, why, we was underneath the bed. And...

J: [laughing] Did your mom turn you in?

H: No, she just told them. She told me to come out from underneath the bed and admit what I had done. That's the right way to do it. And so I did. And of course, the police were stern but yet they were very understanding, and surprized that four or five years, breaking into a car. And it was a big impression on me, you know. That other kid went on to do all kinds of crazy things. Like laying down on the front of the road, in front of his priest, and waiting on, when he come down the road, why, he'd lay down in front of the road and the priest would always stop and say, "Now, Joey," that what he was named, Joey. "Joey, you get out of the road. I'm going tell your mother on you." Nobody would, he'd done it all the time, he just thought it was a really big joke, because he'd done it in front of his priest.

J: Was the priest in a car or just...?

H: Yes, in a car.

J: Oh, jeez, yes.

H: So, Mother and I, we decided that I shouldn't associate with Joey too much. [laughs]

J: [laughing also] Yes, I kind of figured that one.

H: So then, when we moved to the other place, I really liked it. It was out in the country, had a little garden. My father raised rabbits on the side to sell for, you know, to dress out rabbits for food, you know.

J: Where would he have sold them to?

H: To people that came there. And I remember I was very little-- there again, four, somewhere along in there--and when rabbits have their newborn, they cover up their newborn with their own fur, and there's this real fuzzy ball in there, you know, in the cage, and it moves, you know. So, I didn't know what it was, so I got me a stick, and I went to punching, you know. Well, I end up killing 3/4 of them, my father was really angry. But he was really a really mild person, though. But he had his angry moments.

J: Did you like...was it a very big garden?

H: Yes, it was pretty good size.

J: Was any of that sold or was it mainly just for the family to eat?

H: Just for the family to eat...well, no, I take that back, we had a little stand out in the front of the house, and they let me and my cousin that lives here now, Austin Foster--he came up there to visit us a lot because he liked it too--and he and I, he's about three years older than I am and we would sell produce to people that went by the road.

J: Oh, your first business.... Did you like doing that?

H: Yes, and whenever we found, all found out that Dad was going to sell the property, why, Austin, Lee and I both would run out and

take the sign down when he'd go to work of a morning, we'd take the sign down, that the property was for sale, and hide it till it was time for him to come back, and then we'd come back and stick it in the ground again.

J: How long did that go on for, do you remember?

H: Oh, months, at least. [laughs]

J: So, you didn't want to leave at all?

H: No.

J: No. Did they know, yes, I guess they knew that they would be coming back here, they knew?

H: Yes.

J: Yes. Did you...and you didn't want to move there, you didn't

want to move?

H: No.

J: So, for your father, he was doing the rabbits and then also working at the--where was he working at?

H: Curtis Wright's.

J: OK. And then, so when you moved back to Paoli, when you came down here, do you remember what your impressions of it were at the time, or...?

H: I went right into first grade here because I'd started up there. And as far as I can remember, I really liked it. I mean, the people, the friends that I had, and she was--my wife was in the first grade with me, too, at that particular time.

J: Oh, gosh. So you all go back a long way, then.

H: Right. Didn't like my first grade teacher at all. I won't mention her name, but she, one day I was sitting there, and the boy in front of me always had a problem with his--not his bowels, but urine, you know, he was always wetting his pants,--but the room was tilted just enough to where the water would run back towards me, so she, once she came up to me and slapped me across the face and told me that I knew better than this, you know. Well, I didn't tell on the boy because I knew he done it all the time and...but I took the rap for him, and I never did like her for that ever since then.

J: How about your mother and father? You probably can't remember it back then, you know, at five or six, how they felt about moving to Paoli. Was your mom also...?

H: I think they both had a mutual agreement to move back to Paoli because he didn't like the aspect of having to be subjected to something like that happen to his family, you know. In a big city, and he didn't want me to seem what big city life was like even then, but he just didn't care for it. He liked to be back home.

J: OK. What was it like being a kid in Paoli at that time? That was about '40...?

H: '46 or '47.

J: '46 or so, and you were in the first grade. And you grew up then...what school were you going to at the time?

H: The Paoli High School. Well, it was the Paoli grade school. It's tore down, now. It was the building, you know the little

place up here that's a factory, Hillcrest?

J: The Hillcrest, yes, yes.

H: OK, that was the high school. And the grade school was right next to it, where the parking lot is.

J: Oh, OK, OK.

H: It had a long stairway went up, kind of curved up into the balcon--the second floor. And we had a lot of very nice...I had a lot of nice teachers. I remember everyone of them.

J: You do or you don't?

H: I do.

J: You do? Oh, god, I don't.

H: Just, my third grade teacher really stood out as far as, you know, she was really unique. Whenever you would talk out of turn, she had these big mouths that she put on you, paper, made out of paper, and if you stuck your nose into somebody else's business, she put a big nose on you, and just all kinds of little gimmicks like that. But she's really a nice person, but she was just--I remember one day, there was a boy in our class that...he had a nose on him, and his mother came to visit the class while he had the nose on him. And she was really outraged.

J: [mugging] What's little Jeffie doing with that nose on his face?

H: My fourth grade teacher was Mr. Brubeck and I got into a mischief type thing, there was this girl sitting in front of me in class, and the teacher would leave the room, and I would pull the bobby pins out of hair and throw them on the floor. Well, he'd come into the room and say, "Hooten, come outside," and I'd go outside, and he'd spank me. And he said, "I don't want you to ever do that again." And I can't figure out, how'd he know, you know? So, then, the next time or so, why, I'd do it again, and he'd, "Hooten, come outside," and this time, another boy had got into it, too. Called Larry Barnes, was a very good friend of mine, and he come outside, and he spanked both of us. Well, we looked at each other, and we couldn't figure out how in the world he done this. And we would ask him, you know, after we were, he was still a really nice man, and he'd never tell us. So, after I graduated, he finally told me that he had a, one of these periscope things, that when he went to the principle's office, he could stick it out the window and see what was going on through the window in our.... I said, "That's not fair."
[both laugh]

J: That's not! Oh, dear.

H: But I had a very nice school life.

J: Was there a bus or did you walk to school or...?

H: My father drove a school bus.

J: Oh, he did. In addition to...

H: My mother would go in every morning and open up the store, or he would go in and open up the store and then, when it was time for him to go on a school bus route, why she would cover up for the store, and after she got our kids, my sister and I...

J: Off to school? They must have opened the store pretty early, then?

H: Yes. Seven o'clock.

J: Seven o'clock. Oh. When they opened the store, was it pretty much what you would think of as a general store type, from the way you described it or...?

H: No, we didn't have...if you want to describe a general store as having different objects or different things other than groceries, and there wasn't that much extra stuff than groceries. It was mostly grocery and gas.

J: And gas? OK, OK, alright. Now what was I going to say? Oh, OK, so then, your dad drove the schoolbus?

H: Yes, that was, like for ten years, twelve years, or something like that, he drove a schoolbus.

J: Did it take a while for the business to kind of get going or...?

H: Yes. But as he done the remodeling in periods that he felt like they could afford and make up, you know, enough money to pay for that, and then do it again.

J: Yes. Was the business enough to...it sounds like, you know to provide wealth for the family?

H: They did real well. Probably when I became, maybe a sophomore or junior or something in there, I felt like--I was working at the store then, and I felt like that they should have remodeled again, and they didn't, and another grocery store came into town, and it hurt our business. And maybe if we had had it remodeled, it might not of, but, nevertheless, it hurt the

business some, and then, the J.C. store that was here in town went to another store, too. They built another store where they're at now.

J: They were where Wilson Robert's, and Wilson Robert's was on the square? When did they move? Was it like '65 or something like that?

H: Something like that, yes.

J: So when Jaycee moved to where they are now, north, and then Wilson moved to their store?

H: Right.

J: OK. Well, at the time, what grocery stores, when you all, like...?

H: Well, we had a grocery...we had two grocery stores on the square, I can't remember--well, we had three, I take that back. We had a A&P store down on the lower side that was run by Earl Barnett. We had--I don't remember what the name of the store, I guess it was just Newland's Market, was on, where the Chamber, pretty close to where the Chamber of Commerce building is now. Then we had a Kroger store move in over on the east side of the square, where the Navy recruiting office is now. And it was very trying during the Kroger store being here because they were big and they had a lot of, but we overcome it, and they moved out.

J: Oh, really! Oh! How long did they give it a stab, then?

H: I would say in the neighborhood of two to three years.

J: Well, that's interesting. Did people, you know, purposely not shop there because they wanted to shop local, or...?

H: Well, that, and people like to have, like to be waited on. You know, a more personal type thing, especially in a small town. You know, in a big city, it don't care, it don't matter one way or another whether you're waited on or not.

J: You would never expect it, yes.

H: But it was a very personal type.... In our business, in the business that Mr. Newland had, and the business that Mr. Barnett had, it was a personal type thing with your customers when you walked in. "Hello, how are Mrs. Johnson," or whatever, you know. And people liked this. But when you went into the new Kroger store, it was people you didn't know, and there wasn't this personality...

H: ...Well, not really, they just...

J: ...well, when you said "bigger"...

H: ...had a better--bigger selection of products and, you know, they had more check-out lanes. They would, they were here, you know, when we came, and it was just, they had their business established. And they were pretty well noted for cheaper prices, until people started to come to our store to where we was as competitive as what they were to an extent, you know.

J: Yes, OK. The Saturday nights, do you remember? Did your store, would you all stay open like...?

H: Yes, we stayed open till like nine o'clock. Those usually, Saturday's were the biggest day because seems like that's when all the farmers came to town and got their groceries, and then, whenever they'd get their groceries, they'd go uptown and set on the square like for another hour or so, or whatever. Or else, they would do that and then come to the store and get their groceries, and then go home. Saturday night in Paoli was a very big night.

J: Yes, I've been hearing that a lot.

H: You'd back into the parking lots then--you could back in, you can't back in now--and you would set there and watch...I mean, there just crowds of people walking all around the square all the time. And my mother would always say, "Well, do you want to go uptown and watch the silly people go by?" You know. And I said, "Well, yes." It was just kind of like that, you know. People done funny things, you know.

J: Like...? You mean, just because there were characters and that's was their time to come out more? Or...?

H: Yes. And there was different things that happened, you know.

J: Like...?

H: I don't know if I can make an example of it or not. Like some person, one person would come walking by and they'd get to joking and laughing and they'd slap each other on the shoulders, you know. And then, somebody else would come by and maybe been drinking too much, and they would kind of get into a little argument, and they'd get into a hassle. You know, just different things like that that went on.

Hooten

J: Yes. So, would you, you'd start out by helping out your folks at the store, and then, at some point, get some time to come up to the square yourself and wander around and stuff like that?

H: Yes.

J: Do you miss those Saturdays, or...?

H: Yes.

J: You do? Why, do you think?

H: I don't know, it was just a good time, you know. It was relaxed and everybody was...you weren't.... Of course, it's not really hustle-bustle here like it is in a big city, but yet people don't have time for that anymore because the housewife has to work along with the man, now. That's made a big change in the lifestyle, to an extent, you know.

J: Do you remember...well, of course, you were a kid and that's always different too, but would you say that the pace of life was any slower then?

H: Yes.

J: Do you think?

H: I think so. My mother...I know, my sister and I--Patty--she was three years younger than I was, and we had to spend a lot of time at home by ourselves because mother was in the grocery store, but we only lived, like from the grocery store, we lived about four houses down on the left.

J: Down on...

H: ...on Westman Street, near the creek.

J: Right.

H: So, she would run up there and she would fix our dinners and run back, and then she would come back and check on us, and when we got to the age, you know, where we didn't, you know, where we could do it ourself, she was very particular that we done part of the house cleaning and part of the cleaning up of dishes and...

J: Was that something that was different for women? You know, to be particular and make sure that their kids helped out with the house stuff, like their little boy helped out with that kind of stuff?

H: I don't know. I resented it at times, but yet...

J: Did your friends have to do stuff like that? Or were you put upon because, you know, "Tommy doesn't have to. Why do I?"

H: No, I don't think I was really that resentful of having to do it. And now, looking back, you know, it gave me a certain amount of pride, you know, to know that I made my bed and it looked nice. And my mother would always say, "Your room looks nice." She praised us with it too.

J: Of course, I guess my impression at that time that there weren't very many women working outside--I mean, your mom was working... she was working outside the home, but it was also in the family business. I guess that difference. My impression is that first...I mean, were there very many family...?

H: Women working out? No.

J: No? I didn't think so. And the other I was just thinking of, you know, when you said the Saturday nights the farmers would come up, are we talking about mainly like the men or is it...?

H: No, the whole family.

J: The whole family, that's what I thought, yes.

H: And you know, at that time, too, there was like the father and the mother and the kids and either her mother or his mother or his father or you know. The whole family came, you know.

J: Right. So, you're saying it was everybody, not just...yes. And why did they just come up on Saturdays?

H: Well, they were so busy working in the fields and everthing, it was just kind of a day of rest, you know.

J: Also, do you think most of them just had...I mean, there was just the one car? You know, now like a lot of people have two cars, a lot of families, everyone's got a car. You know what I mean? At that time, was it more that there was just one, one car or truck?

H: Yes, mostly one car.

J: Yes. I guess there was one.... Well, OK, let's just keep on talking about the business since we're going that way. When you helped out, did you help out continuously? I mean, until you took over the store yourself?

H: Yes.

J: Have you ever done anything else besides?

H: No.

J: No, OK.

H: I started out even when I was in school, when I could drive. I remember we had an old '31 Chevy that I learned to drive in. We also had a cabin down on Patoka River that was very good for the whole family. I mean, it let the family get together and do something together. My father and my, Austin Lee, and my other cousin built the cabin. And every Saturday night, a lot of Saturday nights, we would go down there, and stay all night, fish the next day, mow the yard, play badminton, basketball, done all kinds like that.

J: Sounds like there's some good memories of...yes, yes.

H: Very good. And I was always able to take any friends down there that I wanted to, to stay all night. I was always worried about my mother, the fact that she wanted to...she didn't get to enjoy herself as much as I felt like she should have. But it was her being, she wanted to cook, she wanted to clean, very immaculate person.

J: So, she sounds like what they call the super-moms now. You now, you're working outside and you work hard outside then you come home and you're still doing everything. And you also have to do it just like your mother did it even though she wasn't also working outside kind of thing.

H: But we just had really great moments at the cabin. Like even through the week, we would go down there and stay all night, and my father would get up the next morning and come in to open up the store, and then, we would come in at a later time during the day. You know, like my mother and my sister and I. And it was nice.

J: And how far away was that?

H: It's towards English, probably 15 miles.

J: About 15 miles.

H: But the store, whenever--I started to say, when I was working, my _____ old '31 Chevy that I had, that we had and made the back of it into a truck and we delivered groceries, and I remember I would even deliver groceries to the school. When I went to school, I would take the school's cafeteria order to

school, before classes started. And then, I would go to school and leave the truck at school.

J: So, you were driving yourself...you were driving, then?

H: When I was 16, yes.

J: Was that very common or were you pretty popular because you had a car? [laughs]

H: Well, it was nice that I had this older type car, '31 Chevy, where at that time, it was in the neighborhood of 1952 or '53, and it was neat, you know.

J: Yes. Yes.

H: And so, the whole time I...I probably started out, the first amount of money I remember getting in the way of hourly wage was 45 cents an hour, and I, you know, I done alright on 45 cents an hour. But I went on through school, and I was going...I made good grades in school. I made As and Bs in chemistry and all mathematical subjects, algebra and.... And I took all of these to go to college. And my father and I talked and we...the business was doing real good at that time. And he said, "What do you want to do?"

And I said, "Well, I've taken all these subjects and I made good grades, and I'd like to go to college, but I like that grocery store, and I like Paoli, and I know..."--and I wanted to be, what I wanted to go to school for was chemical engineer. And I didn't, I just decided that I would rather be in Paoli, because to be a chemical engineer, I knew I was going to have to move in a big city and metropolitan area or something and I really didn't want to do that. And plus, my wife had a big...we weren't married yet, you know, when I decided that I wanted to stay at a store, and we were going together, and it was...

J: Everything was just kind of pointing towards....

H: Yes, right. We really didn't get to know well, to be in a boyfriend-girlfriend situation until we were seniors in school. And then, and she worked at the store also. So that, that's kind of how that transpired, too. [J laughs] So,--she started when she was a sophomore.

J: Working at the store? It just took a while for you two to kind of see eye-to-eye on things. Yes. Well, how old were you, was this during your junior or senior year, or before that that you and your father were...you know, that you were thinking these things over, about....

H: This was my senior year. I was going to go to the service. I, you know, at that time, you had to sign up in the reserves or whatever, and I went to go to...I went to go to war, or not war but in the service, but we didn't have any war at that particular time.

J: What year was it you graduated?

H: '57.

J: '57. And why were you thinking of the service?

H: Well, to get that out of the way. To just serve my time and get it out of the way.

J: I guess I'm con--I mean, like you said, there wasn't any war. I mean, there's no draft or anything like that.

H: Yes, there was.

J: Even though there was not war going on?

H: Right. There was still a draft.

J: Oh! So, then you signed up because there wasn't any need, in a sense, you didn't have to go through with it.

H: But I mean, I, you know, I would have went if there'd been a war, whatever, but nevertheless, whenever I went to have my examination, of course, whenever I was a sophomore in school, I had a real bad wreck on a bicycle, and it made a kind of an impression on my life. I took a pack of cigarettes out and went squirrel hunting on the 15th of August. Another boy and I, and we smoked the whole pack of cigarettes. On the way back home, I had a wreck on my bicycle, and on this knee here, I twisted it and broke a bone off inside of it. And it was locked in that position and they told my mother and father that they didn't think I'd ever be able to walk again. And I was a cast from August 21 to March 21. And had to learn to walk all over again. And it kind of tore up my being as...sports. Because I was on the team the year before that in basketball, and that pretty well put the chunds to that.

J: Wow! Well, I mean, that must have been really scary, too, to think that...because the doctors were saying there was a chance that you might not walk, so it was not only sports, but it was just being able to be independent and walk around and stuff.

H: And that...I guess that impression, as far as smoking a pack of cigarettes, I never smoked another cigarette again.

J: Yes, Yes.

H: And, you know, I'm glad I didn't.

J: Yes. It's a hard way to have to quit, but.... [both laugh]
Was that at the period that your dad died?

H: No.

J: No. OK, I remember you mentioning the cast. I guess something else happened.

H: Oh, that's just the same leg. You know, and probably the reason is, part of it, was it was weak from the first time.

J: So, did you and Tina, did you all get married right out of high school or...?

H: We graduated in '57 and didn't get married until '59. We had a kind of a period in there that I decided I wanted to have a date with another girl and she decided she was going to have a date with another boy, and it kind of worked into a situation where we just drifted apart for a while.

J: And once you got married, were you pretty sure that you just, you know, I mean, it was pretty clear that you were going to go on with the store and stuff like that?

H: Yes.

J: Yes. Well, what kind of...OK, so you didn't, you've been with the store, then, since '44? When did things start changing? You know, like business being done the way that you've described it with the pot iron--what do you call it?--pot-bellied stove? The personal attention and stuff like that? The Saturday nights?

H: Well, as far as doing extra remodeling, we put in a meat department and had, and hired meat cutters, and we hired extra help. We put in produce departments. And just kept making the store larger. We'd knock out a wall on this side and put in a whole. Then, we would move the store out this a way, towards the road, and to the back as far as it would go, and we just really expanded in all directions. Probably, like I said, around seven or eight times. Probably the biggest expansion was in '63, when we tore down the house that Tiny and I lived in, and moved over that direction with the store. But it was still--you know, of course, the other stores were doing the same thing, and it was hard to keep up with the competition.

J: Well, were you doing...let's see, was is basically having the

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same kinds, selling the same kinds of food but just enlarging? Or were you going into different kinds of lines? Do you know what I mean?

H: No, we really weren't going into different kinds of lines. Just more variety.

J: ...more of the same, more variety, yes.

H: And we really got strong on our meat quality. And it was really...and to this day, it's still one of our best attributes, is our meat department, and we've always had pride in our meat. We started out with service meat, you know, like your meat case would be lined up and it would have a tray with bacon all sliced up in it, and it'd have a tray with your pork chops all sliced up in it, and your T-bones and stuff like this, and so, we had, at one time, we had three people behind the meat case, just waiting on the meat case.

J: Jeez!

H: For people that came through, you know, "Mrs. So and so, what would you like to have?" And "Well, I want that piece there, but move that one over there, because it's fatter, you know." And you know, they had their selection.

J: And it was real personal attention, and you could tell them what...you know, not even just...

H: How to cook it, and...

J: Right. Right. And pick out the ones, the exact ones that you wanted. And stuff like that. Have you been able to keep it up like that or have times changed that...?

H: No, we went to self-service because of the cost involved with the extra labor.

J: ...person. That's what I figured. Yes. Well, when did all this kind of stuff change? You know, going to self-service and you know? You know how you were talking before, the kind of personalized attention? Like during high school, do you still remember, was it still that same way, that people would come in and give you the order and you'd go _____ and stuff like that.

H: Oh, no. No, that all changed...

J: ...before?

H: Probably, probably '51 or '50 or something like that, as far as that type of a business.

J: Was it just a real gradual change or did suddenly kind of all the stores go to...? Can you remember or not really?

H: We had so many changes, in remodeling and things that happened in remodeling, that I have a hard time remembering exactly when this transpired, whenever it became from less personal to more the other way.

J: But during say, around '51, then, it was different?

H: Yes. Would men, you mentioned before about the men coming in and sitting around and stuff like that, you know, talking while the orders were filled out, so that was pretty much...

H: That no longer happened. They came in and got their own groceries.

J: Is that like...you remember, I talked to Gerald Jackson, you know, from the high school, and he was telling me about he country store out there and all the men would go and sit and talk and the liars' bench and the philosophers' bench and whatnot. Was it that same kind of idea, of men sitting around?

H: Oh, yes.

J: Would you ever get a chance to, or would always try to just be able to--when you were small--to stand around and listen to them?

H: Oh, yes.

J: What was it...could you talk or were you just there to listen?

H: Yes.

J: Yes, oh, yes, you could?

H: Yes.

J: So, what kind of stuff would they be talking about?

H: Some of the men that used to do it still trade at our store. There's a man called Andy Wilson that still trades in there all the time.

J: Oh, yes.

H: A person that just died just not very long ago was Nathan

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Weeks, that used to come in there and do the same thing. Part of another family that trades in there all the time, his father used to be the one that was doing that a lot too (?).

J: Oh, so...I mean, I guess the point...

H: _____ people who were able to...you know, you had such a close relationship with them that that feeling went on and they stayed loyal, you know. And of course, your loyalty of your customers has kind of went by the wayside. I mean, they go, like they, we call it cherry-picking. Whenever you buy...

J: One thing here and one thing...

H: ...one thing here and one thing there. They take their lists and say, "Well, I want to go to the Jaycee store and buy this because it's cheaper, and I'll come down here and buy this because it's cheaper, and I'll go over here and buy this because they got the best meat..." and they, you know, they do a lot of moving around.

J: Are there still some people who will come in or is it pretty much just everyone's that way because you have a car and basically all the stores are really pretty close, I mean, when you think about it. Do you know what I mean?

H: Yes, there's still a lot of people that do this type of shopping.

J: The cherry-picking?

H: Yes. And the economy in Paoli is not the best in the world, and it makes it more that way, where otherwise, if you're making good money, and you're satisfied with a product, you know, you don't care what it costs, you just go buy it, and....

J: Yes, right, if there's enough extra stuff, and you don't mind about the extra money. Well, are many of your customers regulars? mean, customers of long standing, I should say?

H: Yes, we're probably the only--well, we are the only bigger size grocery store in Paoli that does credit.

J: Ah, I remember you mentioning that. Well, when did this start and why do you do it?

H: Oh, it's always been.

J: It's always been family policy like that?

H: Right.

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J: Was it common at the time to do it?

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H: Yes, it was more common than it is now, by all means.

J: Well, why do you think you all kept up with it, and other stores have stopped?

H: Well, it's been a way of competitive type thing...

J: ...edge?

H: ...edge. It's hard to say whether it was really that good or not, because we've got stuck with some pretty good size bills in the years, and I know my father's got a book in there that's that big with, you know, ten dollars here, twenty dollars here, thirty dollars there, that was never paid, you know.

J: Was your dad the type that would just as soon not bother with it?

H: No, he was very much for it.

J: I mean, not bother...

H: As far as trying to collect?

J: Yes. Yes.

H: Yes. And my mother was always very aggravated at him because he didn't want to. And even on bad checks, he's just lay it in the box, and not do anything about them, and she'd get really mad, you know, and.... But I'm a lot like him.

J: Are you?

H: Yes.

J: Yes. In fact, yes, I can...I remember you saying the last time we talked, you know, yes, having some people that you kind of know, I guess, that might get into trouble, but you extend them the kind of thing, yes. I think I also remember you saying that different kinds of people use that; like sometimes it's maybe some lower income people during the hard time of the month, you know, the last half of the month. And then, maybe some other people who don't really need to use it just do it for convenience. I guess there's like a range of customers that you have in a ____ and they use it for a lot of different things.

H: Right. Right. Yes, we've got customers that we've had all those years, that have been charge customer ever since, and just like clockwork, just like that, they're there every, at the first of the month, on the third of the month when they get

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their check, they, that's the first place they come, they come down to the store and cash their check and pay their bill. Say..."We're on speaking terms till the next time." [J laughs] But we still get taking advantage of quite a bit.

J: Well, have you seen, you know, I guess in the last, I don't know how long it's been, maybe ten or twenty years, where there's been newcomers, new people coming in? More new people coming in? I mean...

H: Well, we have new people all the time. We've lost a certain amount of regular customers to the different bigger stores, like the Buler's Buy-Low Store. Every time a new store comes into town, you're bound to lose a certain amount of people. And the bigger, more items and more, you know, they can sell their stuff cheaper, and....

J: And have it, afford the variety and stuff like that.

H: And of course, it's hurt the grocery store, and in fact, you know, _____ we're having kind of a rough time right now making ends meet.

J: I didn't know that. Huh!

H: It's the smaller Mom and Pop store that tried to grow, you know, to change, things, that are struggling.

J: Yes, yes, well, I mean, all across the nation.

H: Right.

J: Certainly, not just here in Paoli.

H: And, you know, it's a struggle to keep up with.

J: [Pause] Is that, I mean, hard in the sense, just to think that's it's, I mean, it's not because you're doing bad business or things like that, it's more just, you know, well, now there are these, all these things that you've mentioned: people have cars now, and there are cheaper places they can go, and you're on a low income and you need to stretch it, and stuff like that. I mean, so in a sense, it's like it's nothing that you've done wrong, you know what I mean? But it's just like the times are changing.

H: ...changing, right.

J: Does that ever seem unfair, or do you know what I mean, like...?

H: ...sure it does.

J: ...well, damn, you know. yes.

H: It's always on our minds, the fact that we're having problems financially in the store. We're able to live our own life. We don't.....

END OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

J: Well, like we were talking that other night, you know, in a sense, it seems to me that what's going on with you all, you know, has gone on a lot with a lot of the merchants around Paoli. Like we were talking about--...

H: Right.

J: you look at the square and there's empty buildings now, and whatnot. I mean, is this pretty much how you see it too, that it's like this trend of...

H: ...bigger business.

J: ...bigger business and stuff like that, and local people can't compete as competitively, and all that.

H: Right. You know, if they were, had had enough money to where they could go into a mall, and make a mall of their own, and you know--their product isn't any worse off or any better than the person that's got their product there now, it's just the convenience of a mall. And the transition of people's lifestyle changes, of wanting to be, you know, you walk from one store to the next store to the grocery store to the drug store and do it all right there, and it's just been a way of life, you know, to speed up your way of getting things done. The housewife is a working person most usually anymore, and she doesn't have time to go all over town hunting for the wares that she needs. And the malls and that type of thing is, you know, the discount stores are so much more prevalent.

J: The Walmarts.

H: The Walmarts, the K-Marts, you know, whatever are, you know, the volume is so much bigger for those, and they can afford to sell everything cheaper, where the merchant up on the square, they can't buy in volume like they can. So, therefore, they can't sell that much in volume to make it cheaper. They can't

have the variety that they need because it's, it's setting there taking up space and money, while it's not selling, and you can just have a certain amount that what your budget, you know, what you can buy your product for to sell, so therefore, you don't have the variety to pick from like your bigger stores do, and one thing just kind of offsets the other, you know. There's three different things: the money, the availability, and the, you know, and the convenience. Those three things.

J: Do you ever...you know, when we were talking that night about people don't shop local enough, I mean, how can I say it, do you ever blame people for not doing it, or do you just kind of understand all, you know, well, people want the...?

H: Well, a lot of stores in town do blame people for not doing that, but I don't to an extent because I understand the economy, for one thing. The economy is so much lower in this area that people have to do what they got to do with. And if they're loyal--loyalty, I mean, like, they like Mr. Hill up on the square. He's a nice person, and he's got products that they like, and everything, but the price is higher, the availability is, the selection's a lot less, and the money, you know, the money situation, the big situation of it. So they, they either go to Louisville or Bloomington or Bedford or where they've got more of a selection. And they end up...you know, it's the...it's kind of the excitement of being at a mall, too, you know.

J: Yes, a trip, and you're out, yes.

H: You meet people, you meet a lot of different people and you see things going on, and there's always little candy shops and you know, all kinds of stuff like that that people enjoy. You know, like a place to eat, like with Tiny's Mom and Dad, they like to go to Louisville and shop, and then, he'll set and watch, he'll set down at the bench and watch everybody go through while they go...

J: She's inside shopping, right?

H: ...shopping.

J: Right, right.

H: And then, they go to the Blue Boar--that's in the mall--and eat. And just an everyday...

J: Right, right. So, it becomes more of an occasion.

H: Right.

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J: Yes, right. The people that are...in fact, I was in Hill's Hardware one day, and someone came in, you know, and it was, you know, he'd come there because he wanted to shop local and not go to Three-D or something like that. Is it mainly older people that kind of think that way, in terms of loyalty?

H: I think so.

J: Do you think?

H: Yes.

J: Well, you're president of the town board, now. How long have you had that?

H: Well, I've been on the town board for twelve years. And the first three years, I wasn't president--no, the first two years, I wasn't president. Then, I became president the second year.

J: Gosh! So, for almost ten years now. Wow! Can you kind of briefly help me understand what's the difference between the Chamber of Commerce and the town board, and...?

H: Well, the Chamber of Commerce was--of course, even before I was the town board, I was on the Chamber of Commerce, too, and so was my father when he was in town. The Chamber of Commerce is made up of merchants that would like to make business better.

J: Are they...[H is called to the phone.]

You were just saying that the town board, no, the Chamber of Commerce is made up of merchants...

H: Merchants that are for the betterment of the business for Paoli, for the betterment of the economy for Paoli. A long time ago--I don't remember the date--there was one big track of land that was just gave to Paoli, which was called the Pope Track, and that's where the industries are now. And the Chamber administered selling these lots and building some things in the Pope Track for the development...economic development. And then, we also acquired another track of land on the other part of--you know where Brittany is?--out on the hospital road, through another donation type thing. And the Chamber has always been the entity that pretty well...

J: ...oversees all that.

H: ...oversees all that. Now, while I was on the Town Board--I don't know whether it was the third or fourth year or something like that, the town had, we got a grant, and the town had to own this particular part of the land before that they could receive

the grant, so then, when we bought the Pope Track off of the Chamber, at a very low price--I don't know what it was, but they didn't want to make any money on it, they just wanted to get the expenses that they had it in already, and let the town take it over, so we bought the Pope Track, and administered...we started administering who would be in the Pope Track, but they helped us, you know, find businesses and, or factories, prospects and, you know, kind of helped along with us on administering on who would have the property and the restrictions that you would put on the property.

J: So both of you, both entities, I guess, were...

H: Kind of working together on it.

J: ...kind of going through the whole process, yes, of finding prospective people and factories and figuring out things should run and stuff like that.

H: Right. Then, the Chamber then took over the track that was on the hospital road, and they pretty well handled that themselves, as far as, now, as far as administering, selling property to factories and whatever. But since we've got a grant, we're in the process of a grant now on that property over there, so the town has to enter into that because they won't administer a grant unless the town is the...

J: ...owner, OK.

H: ...owner of the...I don't think we have to own the property anymore, but we have to administer the grant and go through that process of it.

J: Yes, OK. Right.

H: Another big thing that has been helpful in town, I think, especially this year, was a big issue when it came up, was Patoka water.

J: Yes.

H: There was one person on the Town Board that was against it. And then, the other person that wasn't thoroughly convinced one way or another, and I was convinced that we needed it, and it was kind of a hassle back and forth, so then, we had a public meeting at the school, and got views of the people, how they felt.

J: And what were the different views that you got there?

H: It seemed like the general consensus was that we needed

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Patoka water. There were people there that were against it. You know, there's always people that's against something, but it just simply...I felt like that the general consensus was that we needed the water. Factories needed the water for fire protection...

J: This is after the Cornwell...?

H: Fire, yes.

J: Yes, OK.

H: And so, the other board member that was kind of on the line, you know, made up his mind at that particular meeting that it would be best to go Patoka Water, and I'm really glad we did. We'd have been in a real bad mess this year.

J: Oh, this year! [bad drought] Yes. Yes. I think I remember you saying at one point...so, OK, you're on the, President of the town board, and you're involved in the Chamber, too. Both, you know, entities trying to work for economic development of Paoli.

H: Right.

J: Are there different kinds of--and I remember we talked about how, you know, a lot of people in the town are older and, you know, they're on fixed incomes, and they don't want their water bill to go from two dollars to whatever it went to. I mean, they don't care as much about these...you know, progress and stuff like that, they just...

H: They like Paoli the way it is.

J: They like it the way it is. It's changed enough. New people coming, new people--and then, you've got farmers who, you know, are kind of an independent group, too. And maybe with the zoning and stuff like that. Is this true? You know, that there are kind of like, different groups with different views towards progress and what's, you know what is progress and what's pain, and all that stuff?

H: Sure. Yes, you get...your business people realize that we need more industry, better paying industry. We're very low paid industry, wood working is. It's our primary industry. Like the Paoli Chair Factory, that's been here for many years and the Mi-Lin Wood Products became an industry in the early '60s.

J: Where...someone else mentioned that. Where are they located? Or what happened to them? I don't....

H: Towards Salem, on the right.

J: Mi-Lin. Can you spell that?

H: Mi-Lin.

J: OK.

H: I think it started from...the boy that was one grade below me in school was Bobby Lindley, and he and another boy that he went to college with started the business. And he bought the...and that, his name was Miline or something like that--Milan? John Milan, I think. And then, Bobby's name was Bobby Lindley, so they called it Mi-Lin, and that's the reason it was named that. But since then, Mr. Lindley, Bobby, has bought out the other partner. But that's another workworking, and then, of course, he's went into another venture of woodworking, down on West Main Street, that's called Mid-West Wood Products, with another friend of his that was in school with him at--and he went to school here in Paoli. So, it's primary, almost every factory here in Paoli is geared to woodworking. [Mrs. Hooten checks on the progress of the interview.]

J: Right, and then there was the basket company, and that's changed...I mean, that burned down, but that was wood.

H: I don't really remember that.

J: Yes, I guess that was...well, actually I think someone said that it burned down in '41, so I guess that was, you guys weren't on.... So you'd need to see, or you'd like to see higher paying...

H: ...jobs.

J: ...industries move in, yes.

H: Right. Of course, there's some people that's in the Chamber right now that are factory people. And they're kind of resentful of another factory coming in and taking their cheaper labor away from them. They, I guess you could kind of look at it that way, but yet, of course, they came in and here and took the chance on putting the factory in here, you know, and they were the first in here, and they got people working whenever the other factory burned down. They've progressed and they've got bigger and bigger and bigger, and they've raised wages to extent, but noways anyways near as the way they should have been raised, is my feeling. So, they're kind of resentful about--I don't know whether I'd really call them real resentful, but they feel like the labor force is not here to have another factory come in. Then it threatens their labor force, the fact that they later

have to raise their product to get these people, and therefore, hurt their prospects of becoming competitive. Because the labor force is what kept them competitive.

J: Right, right, and that's why they came here in the first place. Maybe it's they feel like, in a sense, you're not being loyal to them because they came here, you know, because of the cheaper labor, stuff like that, and then I guess that this is where the whole zoning stuff comes in. Because if you're not zoned, then you can't get industry. But then, like I was talking to Mrs. Foltz, and she was saying again, like I've heard before, I guess some farmers, as well as maybe other people, are against it because they're not going to have, they might have the free use of their land.

H: Well, they're from independent people. I mean, you know, they've been farmers all their life, and there's other people that's against it too, you know, like...and I think a lot of it is that people just don't really understand, and something that they don't understand, they don't want, you know.

J: They don't understand that...?

H: What zoning is. They feel like that they're going to tell you that you have to build your house here, and you can't do this and you can't do that, and you have to ask, before you can put a doghouse on you lot, that you have to go to the Town Board and get a permit and say, "I'm going to put a doghouse on my lot." "And that I can't, my mother becomes ill, and I want to take care of her, but I don't want her living in my house, so I want to move in a trailer next to my house, and I don't want somebody to tell me that I can't put a trailer in my front yard, or in my back yard."

J: So, it's like you're really trying to interfere with their lives.

H: Right.

J: Yes, yes. But you're saying that that kind of stuff isn't going to happen?

H: To what?

J: To people. I mean, that they will be able to build trailers, and they're not going to have to worry about that kind of stuff?

H: It's just all according to what, you know, a town wants to do. A trailer...say a person goes and buys a _____, builds a house for a hundred thousand, anymore, eighty thousand or ninety thousand. And then, here's another house that was already

sitting there, and they, you know, maybe it's a kind of poor income type person, and they bring in,--like I said, their mother or father dies, and you know, they bring in a little trailer in here that maybe cost them 150 to 200 dollars. And they put their parents in there, you know, or whatever or...and then, after they die, they leave it setting there, and they...kind of loads up with junk and stuff like that, and it's detrimental to this person that's got this real nice home. But yet, these people can't afford the home that this person's got, and they can't afford to keep up the property the way it should be. And you know, rather than send their mother or father to a nursing home that they couldn't afford, they kept...

J: ...kept Mom at home.

H: ...kept Mom there. And let them live as long as they could in a lifestyle that they were in with a family, you know. And you can't knock that. But it's still, you know, it stands in the way of progress as far as having a nice neighborhood to come to, just a...you know, there won't be an old fall-down shed with car parts and everything like that; There just has to be some kind of dividing line there.

J: Yes, yes. So, in a sense, what you're saying is, to move ahead people have to be willing to kind of give up--not give up--but make some compromises, and I guess there's some people that are saying, you know, things are fine the way they are, and why bother with it. So, as a member of the Town Board and the Chamber of Commerce, do you sometimes just feel like you're doing an impossible job there?

H: Yes. Well, when I was first started on the Town Board, I had a--I call them a vigilante committee--but there was five men that came to my store and just--didn't threaten me, but they just told me like it was, you know. "We will vote for you if you will be against zoning." And "How do you feel about zoning?"

And I said, "Well, I don't have any feeling right now about zoning one way or another." I said, "I haven't been into the swing of it enough."

And they said, "Well, do you feel like you will go for zoning?"

"I don't know. I'm not going to say."

And they said, "Well, you're going to have a big opposition if you go for zoning, I'll tell you that."

So, you know, it, whenever I went in, we already had one town board member that had never been involved with zoning or

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anything, and we'd never done it, you know. But then, when the flood plane came in, and they decided that that needed to be zoned for people that were in a flood plane, we had a big _____ balloo, you know, of people standing in the, at the meeting--standing room only-- against even zoning for flood plane! And so, you know, if it was that much against it then, what's it going to be now, you know?

J: Yes. Just out of curiosity, the vigilante group, I mean, did they like, would they stop going to your store for business? I mean...

H: Yes.

J: Are there definitely ways they would make their opposition to you? Do you know what I mean, if you voted...?

H: Yes, they would...like there was one place in another town around here that they decided that they were going to take three retired business men, run them on the town board, put in zoning, because they had nothing to lose as far as business or anything like that.

J: Ohh, right.

H: And you know, there's people on the Chamber right now that are afraid to say, "We'd like to have zoning." Because they didn't want to put it in the paper that they're for zoning because they've got a business, and they don't want somebody boycotting their business because they're for zoning. And it happened, because we were going to have a lake right out here, and there was farmers and there was people against having a lake, and whenever it came to a head, I mean, they were violent people. They hit people over the head with a pli--with a wrench. They threatened letters to the family. You know. I don't think it would be quite that violent now.

J: But the point is it's not just new industry comes. It's really people's ideas of, you know, what the land is for, what Paoli is, and what's right and what's wrong. It's pretty heavy

stuff.

There's one question I do want to ask you, and I guess we're kind of changing horses real fast, just because I know you all are going to have to leave soon, and that is this: I interviewed Rex Morris, and I guess you all graduated...

H: ...same year.

J: ...same year. And he left, I think, soon after that, if I...trying to find work.

H: Right.

J: And you know, he mentioned that there were a lot of his friends, young boys, guys who just graduated from high school, that were in the same kind of position, that had to leave to go find work, and I was thinking about this in terms of this whole thing with, you know, a town, if the young people have to go away to find work, you know...

H: Right. You know, there's a lot of people that have family ties here, and the mother and father are still here, you know. And the grandfathers are still, and the grandmothers are still here, but yet this person, in order to make any kind of living whatsoever, knows that they have to leave Paoli. Because if you want...you know, a lot of people that's left Paoli, like when I was in school and that were my friends, have all become more, you know, their lifestyle is better, as far as money. It might not be better as far as tranquility or something like that, but as far as money, their lifestyle is better. And it's pretty well-known of a lot of people in this area, and these type people that were in this area, that has left home, have made better lives, and they had, I think, something that really helped that situation, was the lifestyle that they had here to begin with.

J: Yes. Which is why now you have all these newcomers who are coming here so they can raise their kids in a place like Paoli.

H: Right. Because your employees seen a different type of a person, you know, that came from a small town. They had better values about things. They had better feelings about their parents, about their relationship with people. And they're just a different type person than somebody that's just always been in this hustle-bustle. You know. I won't say better person, but...

J: No, I've noticed that in my own life. People that I've met. There's a difference, you can always tell someone who's grown up in small town or even in one suburb that was, that people, you know, where people knew each other. It does make...it does, you

know, it does form the person somehow, in some way.

Well, at that same time, with friends of yours leaving high school, too, do you remember when you were young, out of high school like that, you know, was it the same thing? You were saying good-bye to friends who were leaving and...?

H: Yes, but there wasn't very many in my class that left. There are probably more out of my class in this town--probably--than any other class that I could think of.

J: That stayed or...?

H: That stayed.

J: Now, are you talking...because Rex mentioned, too, you know, that it would be...the women would tend to stay, you know? Girls would marry and then stay. So, it would be the men who had to go out and make a living who would leave. But you're saying that it seems to you that more, more of men from your class...?

H: Men and women, both, stayed, in our class than as compared to different other classes that graduated. I mean, it's no big deal. I mean, it might just be something that I relate to, but I know there's an awful lot of my class here in this town. And I don't see very many--that many people of, you know, say, the class of '65, I don't see that many people staying in the class of '65 that...you know. But there might have been a better opportunities at that time. You know, maybe...

J: ...around here then, yes.

H: ...they got on their feet faster than they would now, you know. And a lot of them was...like we've probably got six couples of people that married each other in their own class. And one of them owns the Green Acres Country Club out here. Vic Eliot? and his wife--Barbara--was in our class. You know, it was that type of deal, where they were intermarried and....

J: Yes, right, right, right, right. But I guess, when Rex was telling me about this, I guess I realized that now, you know, some young people will leave Paoli Do you know what I mean?

H: Right.

J: I guess when I found that out, I hadn't realized that that was part of a trend that has always gone on. Do you know what I mean? That young men, young people, graduate from high school, and they leave.

H: Right. Well, I think that's true in any city, you know.

J: Yes, sure. I mean, that's the time if you're going to leave, you going to leave.

H: But it...for--say something, you know, if you wanted the choice and if you want to take the choice and say, "Well, I want to leave home. I don't want to live here anymore." That's one thing. But yet, if you liked it here, would like to stay here, and realize that you can't stay here because you can't make a living, then that's another thing, the fact that you have to leave.

J: And that was more the impression I got from Rex, and I guess from other people that I've talked to, too, that they looked around and you know, "Dammit, you know. Paoli's my home and I like it here, but I just can't make the kind of living I want." Of course, you want to do better than your parents did, you know. You want...you know, all that kind of stuff.

H: Right.

J: Do you think that's ever one time that this wasn't as much true, you know?

END OF TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE

H: ...were sharp kids, you know, as far as mathematics and chemistry. You know, they knew that they could make a better living for themselves, what they knew inside their brain or whatever, you know, compared to what they had known instinctively as far as farming was concerned. Because she knew where the trend was going, as far as farming, and with Mr. Jackson being in the situation that he was in, he felt like that, you know...

J: I can imagine his response. Yes, but that's also ironic, too, because now, more than ever, a farmer has to know not only farming but business, and so he needs all that other stuff too. It's just funny that...do you know what I mean? That a kid who has both of those, is encouraged in a sense, not to go into farming, at a time when, if anyone's going to succeed in farming, they...do you know what I mean?

H: Yes. But it's just knowing more and more that the bigger farming you get into, you have to buy a whole lot more equipment. The seed, the fertilizer, everything's costing so much more astronomical. The bigger farming that's competitive against them, you know, as far as where...how much they put out

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in...like thousands of acres compared to 150-200 acres here. In the competitive field, you know, they can't afford to pay for their bills. And keep up their, you know.... Farming is, you know, not by the wayside, but...

J: Not like people...yes, again, people may not have chosen not to go on?

H: It's just, it's went bigger like business has. I mean, you know, it's a business.

J: Yes. And let me, and I'm sorry for kind of doing this again, but...and this goes back to high school and...

H: Do you want me to have her turn the radio down a little bit?

J: Oh, OK, yes, that would be good.

At the time you were in high school, did you notice or were there any kinds of differences between, you know, the kids like Rex or someone who lived out in the country and were of a farming family and kids like yourself that were in the town?

H: Not a whole lot. I became friends with both sides, you know. I had real good friends that were kids that were from farms and real good friends that were kids from Paoli. And... yes, they had different views on things, you know. They were dressed differently. Some of them were poorer, some of them were richer. Not much different than what it is now, you know, really.

J: Not as different as it is now, or not...or less?

H: Well, you know, like the kids now, you still got farming kids and kids that live in town, and I don't think, and they still make a lot of friends back and forth. There's not that much difference between kids, you know.

J: Yes. I guess there might have been just in terms of, I guess, farming kids not having transport to come back into town, and so not being not being able to get involved, as involved in extra- curricular stuff?

H: Yes.

J: Although, of course, there probably wasn't the extent of that kind of stuff like there is now, I'm sure.

H: Yes, that, that was a big thing as far as a farming kid becoming a basketball player. They always had this turmoil of their father or mother trying bring them into town for basketball practice, and then, having to come back and get them,

you know. And their coach was always...the father would say, "Well, he can't come in this time because he has to help me put up hay." You know, and the coach was upset because one of his better players was putting up hay instead practicing, and.... Yes, yes, that affected them.

J: Well, I guess I wonder if there is, you know, a difference like that--how can I say it? Did it ever seem then, I wonder, that, like the high school was more the town kids, since they were more involved in extra-curricular stuff and could easily go to games and stuff like that?

H: No, I don't believe so. I believe that really, you know, when it got down to it, the farming kids were just as much involved in the school activities as the town kids. To an extent.

J: Do you think...other people have mentioned that they thought that there was--and this is not so much in school, but just in general, more--you know, that there were people in the town had certain attitudes about what country people were like and vice-versa. And I guess I'm wondering if...or how that's changed over the years? [Pause] Or maybe, you know, maybe from your...maybe you don't even think that there have been, different attitudes like that.

H: Well, I don't know exactly...

J: ...what I mean? I guess I'm talking pretty vaguely.

H: I have a lot of customers that are still farmers, you know, and I have a lot of customers that are.... And I haven't seen very much of an attitude change. I'm trying to think of certain people that I associate with all the time, and...it's, you know, farmers and people that live here in town, and I don't really see that much of a change other than the fact that there are more and more farmers that are going out of business and are becoming either a factory worker or a.... I was trying to think of the farms that were going by the wayside, that...as to what they were doing, but it just seems like more and more of them are maybe keeping their farm going, and working in a factory, too. They're maybe trying to keep their farm going and their wife is working in a factory. You know, that type of a.... Or whatever, they've got their own jobs, you know.

J: Yes, yes. Make it a side thing and not just the main...

H: And of course, that...I'm not a person against women's lib or anything, but--and it's just the way it's went--but it's hurt a lot of marriages to have to have the husband tore away from the wife. You know, the husband's here, working in this job, and the

wife's there, working in that job. If they've got any problems, they come home and they talk about each other, maybe they get into arguments. You know, maybe you spent too much money, and I spent too much money, or we done this, and we done this, and you shouldn't have done it. And they get into an argument. But they go to work, and they talk about pleasant things, you know, like to other people, you know, like we had a good time doing this, you know, we had a good time...and then, you don't talk about your problems, you know. And then, you get to thinking, "Well, this person's alright, you know." And then, they get into marital problems, and you know, it, you can see that kind of a trend. It's happened in the United States all over, with the divorce rate. That's one bad thing that I feel about that.

J: Right. Do you think there's been other changes with women working outside? Like in the family, has it affected...?

H: Yes. Of course, there's more, that's what's caused the boom of fast food, too.

J: Has it been harm....?

H: And the fast food service has had a big effect on grocery stores, you know. And it's just becoming more and more that elderly people don't cook as much as they used to. They go to a restaurant and eat. Because there's only two people and they don't have a whole family to cook for. Your families are getting smaller, they don't have as many people to cook for, so they go to fast food, and maybe once a week, not once a week, but maybe once a day, they'll cook something at home, and then the rest of the time they are either eating either dinner or supper out, you know, one or other.

J: Do you think there's been, that having women work outside has hurt? I mean, things have changed, but do you think it's like been, some bad things have happened? Or do you think there's been some...?

H: Oh, I think it's hurt family to an extent, as far as kids is concerned, being able to raise your own children. A lot of things that you have to have a baby-sitter. You don't have the time...I haven't had the time to be with my daughter the way I would like to because I work and because--and even now, the age she is now, I feel like I've missed out on part of her life because I haven't been there all the time, you know, for her. Now, my wife, while she was growing up, she quit work and took care of my daughter. You know, and...

J: While she was young?

H: Yes. And I'm glad she was able to do that. You know.

Because it made a big difference. But....

J: So, for you, to think, "Gee, if she hadn't been able to do that..." and--what's your daughter's name, I'm sorry?

H: Theresa.

J: And she's in high school now?

H: No, she's out of school. She's been out of school two years.

J: Oh, OK. If Theresa had been raised by a baby-sitter or something like that, that would have...been different?

H: You know, you don't get all your morals and....

J: It's just not part of the family. Yes.

H: Yes. But I think that's another reason there's so many kids, even though that they're from high class families that got a lot of money, social beings and everything, but they don't really know parent and kid relationship, you know, because the kids feel like they're being left, you know, "My dad, he has to go to a meeting. My dad's going to go play golf." And they don't have a...they feel like, well, they can have anything they want, they can have their clothes, and they can have a new car, and they can have a.... But they don't get the love. You know, and I guess they get love, but I mean, it.... You know what I'm talking about?

J: Yes, I do. I do, yes.

H: They just don't have the closeness that they need. And therefore, _____ a lot of kids looking for other thrills or whatever, to make their life more meaningful or hopeful or whatever. Exciting or whatever it is that they're looking for, a lot of times, they are going in the wrong direction.

J: Right.

H: Drugs and booze and...

J: Yes, yes. And then, let me just ask you this one last question, if I can, because I know you are going to have to leave real soon. In 25 words or less--or more--what do you think has been the story of Paoli? You know, was it like a small town that's grown and grown or was it a bustling town, one that's starting to die down now? I mean, when you, you know, when you look at Paoli since '44?

H: Well, I think it started from a real, real farm town to when

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the factories came into town, it became a lot better, like when the Cornwell factory was here, the economy was so much better.

J: When did the Cornwell factory start? Had it been here long before it burned down?

H: Yes.

J: So it was part of...?

H: It was part of Paoli, it was Paoli, almost. That and the chair factory was the only two bigger factories we had in Paoli. And that was Paoli. That was just it. And if you were not on the farm or had a business of your own, you were working for one of those two factories, you know. Or else, working out of town somewhere.

And whenever that particular factory burned, there was a lot of people that had to find other work. They had some people had to move from Paoli. Then other factories started coming in. It started coming back, but the money wasn't there, the economy wasn't there before. Cornwell Company didn't pay that well, but they paid well for that time. You know. Compared to what some of the factories are paying now, for the time what we're in now. And so, we went from real good back down to in a lower income again, and farms are still sliding and the businesses are sliding, and we're kind of in a depressed situation right now.

J: Given the way things are going, what do you think?

H: You mean now?

J: In the future, yes.

H: If we can have more development of more factories, better paying factories, I think it's got a good chance of coming along, you know. But I, you know, I think that Paoli square itself as a business entity is dead. I mean, it's not there anymore. People don't want to shop the Paoli square. They don't want to pull into a parking place and pay the parking meter to park, and to have to walk all the way around the square just to go to a shoe shop here and a barber shop up here, and over so and so forth here. They want it all in the same place, you know. And they want the price and availability, and...

J: And the convenience, yes.

H: And until those people do that, you know, these people that own the stores, either they get out of the stores or else they'll go into a bigger business in the mall or something, why I don't think it'll ever.... The town itself, on the square, will die to

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that extent, because all you've coming up now with is lawyers and insurances and that type thing.

J: OK. [Sound of Mrs. Hooten entering]

Mrs. Hooten: [laughing] Got enough?

J: We've got enough. And thank you so much.

END OF INTERVIEW

Interview with Donnie Hooten, p. 44. Conducted by Catherine Jones , 20 July 1988, Paoli, Indiana, Indiana University Center for Documentary Research and Practice, OHRC accession #88-79-1, 2