

James Aldrich

James Aldrich served on the Pittsfield Township Board of Trustees from 1970 - 2000. He was born in Ypsilanti and moved to Pittsfield Township when he and his wife bought a home in 1965. In his 30 years on the board, he and his colleagues managed many changes as development turned the Township from a rural to suburban one. The interview, conducted by Marcia Ticknor on January 9, 2005, was part of a Sunday program of the Pittsfield Township Historical Society meeting at Pittsfield Community Center at 701 W Ellsworth Road, Ann Arbor.

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Side 1:

I: There, now that should work.

R: All set?

I: Okay. This is an interview with James Aldrich for the Pittsfield Township Historical Society by Macia Ticknor, held at the Pittsfield Community Center, 701 West Ellsworth on January 9th, 2005, at 2 o'clock p.m. Okay. Guess we'll start out with if you would like to tell us when you...when you were born and where you were born, and when you came to Pittsfield Township.

R: Okay. Actually I was born and raised within 10 miles of Pittsfield Township. I was born in the city of Ypsilanti, lived on the west side of Ypsilanti. I was born in 1940. So I must be about 30 years old now, but...[laughter] I lived there on the west side of Ypsilanti till 1963, which is when I got married to my wife Carol. And we moved not too far into Ypsilanti Township, just on Munger Road, so we're right on the border of Pittsfield. We were only there a couple years, and then we bought our house out in "Payeurville" as we call it, right on Payeur Road and corner of Payeur Road and Marton Road, and that was in 1965, and have lived on one side of the road or the other, because we did build a house in 1979 just across the road on...in the same lot basically, so...So I've been in the

township since 1965. I don't know if you want other history to keep going, if you have a certain order you want this in or whatever?

I: Well, ah...

R: [laughs]

I: ...if you do the talking, that's...that's fine.

R: Ah, okay.

I: I do have a couple of questions that...

R: Okay.

I: ...I can ask you and you just carry it from there.

R: Okay.

I: When did you first become involved in township activities?

R: Okay. In 1970...well, let me back up a little bit. I've been in banking in the area for basically since 1963 I believe, so...I would see Jim Reader a number of times throughout the year because of course he had accounts at about every bank in the county. But in 1970, I think that was when Perry Brown went from trustee to the township clerk, and Jim Reader came to me and said, "Why don't you run for the township board?" And I had no idea what he was talking about, what was going on or anything else. And he twisted my arm and I did run and somehow I got elected. At that time, there was a couple older gentlemen across the table by the name of Perlman and LeClair. See, they...they...And then another younger gentleman, by the name of Ed Wall came on a little bit later, so...So I've crossed paths with a number of those people and learned a lot from them. But...So it was 1970 when I was first elected to Township Board. My wife was pretty well active with the Parks Commission, because we...As I recall, I may not have this completely right and Don can probably correct me if I'm wrong, but when we first started out particularly in the parks, the Township Board basically was "the Parks Commission" and this whole field was all weeds out here, and I don't...I think for a while we didn't even know that we owned that property, so...And kind of out of the blue, I think...I don't know who looked into it, but they finally...

M: Cary.

I: Okay, either Jim Cary or Bob Blair, somebody said, yeah, that's our property out there.

M: Jim Cain came in at one time, wanted to use it for a baseball field.

R: Oh, okay.

M: Mow it down.

R: Well, I remember coming over on a Saturday or Sunday and we had Don Hagen and I think somebody else bring in like a cub cadet or something and we mowed all the weeds down, and basically turned it into a baseball field. The fireman, I believe, with some help with some others, put up the original backstop, which is still up there. I don't recall when that was, but it must have been early '70's I'm guessing, so...And that's, that's why I started into the, working with the Park Commission and then of course we went to an elected Park Commission. And at one time, my...I...my wife was a chairman of the Parks Commission and Ray Ticknor I think was a chairman either before or right after she was, and...So I basically got started in, quote "politics" on the Board in 1970. And the kind of unique thing about that was, of course, if your math is good, that means I was 30 years old in 1970. I had a daughter that was one year old and a daughter that was four years old. And my wife said, "Well, you know, you got to spend time with the family. You can't be doing all this." And so I think I made the statement something to the fact, well, when the kids start school, then I just won't be on the Board. Well, 30 years later, which was 2000, I did not run for re-election. So I turned 60 in 2000 and 30...half of my life, 30 years, I'd spent on the Board. And my daughters that I was going to get off the board when they were five or whatever, they were now 31 and 34, so...And she still razzes me every once in a while about that. But...And that's when, when pretty much my political career ended was in, in 2000, although I still, as Betty knows, I work elections and I've worked with Marcia. But she's too hard to work for so I got transferred to another polling place, see [laughter]. So I still...And I still, you know, see people from the township and I retired from banking in 1995, and so...And I used to see a lot of people of course in the bank, which I, I do miss. But...because I enjoyed talking with people and comparing stories and whatever, so...But that's pretty much my political role. Like I say, I was involved a little bit with the Park Commission. I was on -- I think all of you know -- on the Planning Commission, there's always one representative from the Township Board. And it seems like everybody that's ever elected pretty much takes their turn doing that, at least that's how it used to be, and I did that for I'm going to guess maybe six years. I don't know for exactly how long it was, but I took my turn as a Township Board Representative on the Planning Commission. And then, when I originally started out, somebody mentioned Jim Kay who was a fire chief back in the '60s basically. I was on the volunteer fire department probably from, I'm going to guess maybe '66, '67, up until the time that I was elected to the Township Board. And when I got on the Board, I really...I was still a member of the fire department, but I was not an active member. So, you know, I remember the things where we outgrew this garage here, and when we bought the first ladder truck that we bought and, and as most of you have seen a fair amount of change in 30, 40 years.

I: Can you tell...you mentioned a few names that you served on the Township Board with. Could you come up with any more names of people that you served with over the years?

R: Well, I'm sure I'm not telling you anything you don't know. Of course when I came on in 1970, that's when Perry Brown went from trustee to clerk, and Jim Reader of course was the treasurer, and Bob Lillie was a supervisor. Don LeClair and Bill Perlman were trustees, and Al Church was a trustee. I think Al died I don't know how many years ago, but it's been a while now. And we know that Perry and Jim and Bob have all fairly

recently passed away. Hopefully the rest of you guys will hold on for a little while here yet, see. I can remember Ralph Schmuckle being on the board. Of course most recently we had Robert Brackenberry when we were over at the new township but...I already mentioned. Of course Ed was on the board for a number of years. I don't know who else I might be overlooking but...

M: Marge Shelton?

R: Yeah, well, I was thinking back in the olden days, but yeah, the newer...Margery Shelton of course and when we moved...

M: Dick McMullen.

R: Oh, yeah. And Dick McMullen was on for a number of years too.

I: Part of the reason I'm picking your brain is so that we...

R: Right.

I: ...have the opportunity to do some more oral histories...

R: Right.

I: ...one some of these people, that we make sure...

R: Yeah.

I: ...that we catch everybody.

R: Have you contacted Ralph's father, Ralph Schmuckle, Sr.?

I: No.

R: Okay. Because he lives over on Fosdick. And I think he's lived there quite a while. Anybody know him or know...? I believe he's been out in that area for quite a while, so...

I: Few years. Okay.

R: What else? [laughs]

I: Okay. Well, you, you had mentioned that you...one of the things that you worked on was the boundary agreements between Pittsfield and Saline and Pittsfield and Ann Arbor. Could you explain...

R: What?

I: ...a little bit about that?

R: Back in the early days when I was on the Township, that was in...before we became a charter township. We always had a problem with the City of Saline and the City of Ann Arbor wanting to annex property to...to each one of those cities. And as a common, general out township, whatever, I think that's what we were called at the time, we didn't have a whole lot of say as to what happened. And Bob Lillie was the one that kind of pushed to become a charter township and by becoming a charter township, they had different rules and basically it stopped another political entity from annexing something, unless both...I think I said that both communities agreed on it, *and* the property owner agreed that they wanted to be annexed. As in the past like say with the common law township, you could take, you know, property down maybe around Saline and if somebody wanted to sell some property and annex it to the city of Saline, they pretty much could do it and we couldn't say a whole lot about it. So...But like I say, it was probably mid-'70s, I don't know if anybody else recalls for sure what time it was, but we pretty much had a bound—agreed to boundaries for the township and the city of Saline and the city of Ann Arbor that to my knowledge still pretty much hold today. And all the two communities agreed to at that time was basically that we're going to designate a certain boundary and each community's going to say, "Well, okay, we will allow annexation up to this particular line," or also that such as the township when they were expanding sewer and water services, that we wouldn't try to go in and service those areas. And it pretty much put an end to that political fighting that was happening between the...the areas. I don't know, Doug, was you on the board when, when we had the boundary agreements or...?

D: Yeah. I came on the Board in '74.

R: Okay. Yeah, you're just a kid, right?

D: That's right.

R: [laughs] So it must...so you think it was even before '70...so it must have been between seven...

D: Well, I think that the boundary...the boundary was assigned before the '70s.

R: Okay. So it must have been done between '70 and '74, since I didn't come on the board until '70s.

I: So the boundary agreement was different than when we became a charter township.

R: Yeah. It's bout—it's my understanding is that we agreed with the boundary agreement before we became a charter township. Although once becoming a charter township, I think the border agreement then is fairly moot [pronounces it "mute"], because it...you know, there's certain laws. And, and again, as I recall, Bob Lillie worked in Lansing very diligently to kind of form the rules of becoming a charter township. And, again, I'm going back on my hazy memory. But I think some things were such as you had to have...like public safety Department, had to have a fire department and police protection or contract with it or something. In other words, to do that you also...

M: Sewer and water.

R: Sewer and water? Okay.

M: _____ were you able to work with him.

R: Oh, yeah, you're right. Yeah, they...they raised from 1.4 to 5 mills. Of course that's the benefit of becoming a charter township. But like I said, to do it, you had to be able to provide certain services. And I think the whole idea was then they just wanted to make sure that some real rural township that has a thousand people living in it didn't just say, "Well, we want to charge 5 mills of taxes and become a charter township," and just, what—whatever they worked out, it pretty much stopped that from happening because they had to be able to do these other things sort of in...And I'm not sure exactly what all of them were, but...go ahead.

M: Did the state grant the charter, or did the county grant the charter?

R: It's a state...All, there's a lot of...in fact, I think most of the townships in Michigan, particularly urban townships, are all charter townships. Yeah. But as you know, Pittsfield was the first in Washtenaw, so...And like I say, at the time...

M: Washtenaw didn't have too much to say about it, just the state then.

R: Oh, the county I don't think had *anything* to say about it. It's...Yeah, it's between the township. Now, I assume like anything else, if there was a big uproar they probably could have a referendum vote or whatever. But at that particular time, it was not a big issue. But it did give the township a lot more leeway of what they could do and I feel that it helped us so we could expand the fire department and build the new buildings and the different things that we have accomplished over the years.

I: When...you, you talked about Bob Lillie going to Lansing to work on this. Was this charter township something...Was that something new when we became a charter township? Or was it already on the books?

R: I've been...I'm, I'm not the ex—I don't think...

M: It was already on the books.

R: There was or wasn't.

M: It was on there.

R: It was on the books already?

M: Yeah, there was a few other townships that had, had _____.

R: But I think they changed the rules as far as what you had to do to become a charter township.

- I: Okay.
- R: And as I recall, the reason was so everybody didn't just jump on the bandwagon and not be able to provide the services to serve the people of the township, so...
- I: But Pittsfield was one of the early charter townships.
- R: First in our county. And I don't know statewide and whatever how that fell into place. Hm.
- I: Okay. You also said that you worked on updating the land use plan. And what were some of the changes from...?
- R: Well, again, in the earlier days, our, as I recall it, our land use plan probably sat for 10, 15 years and nothing was really done township-wide. What we saw, or at least my recollection of what we saw happening was, as developers came in and they wanted to take a piece of land and develop it, they would change it on the land use plan, and so you'd have piece by piece this thing happening. And I think in the last 30 years it might have been updated about every five years. But originally we took that and the Planning Commission and the Township Board had some joint meetings and actually looked, looked at this and what they thought they wanted to do. And the whole idea was to...You know, because we saw development coming, and we want to try to set the township out the way we thought maybe it should develop. And so you would have, particularly out in the rural area, you'll have people sitting on maybe one acre of land that was zoned agriculture, and I think they could always build if they had one acre, and then you had what was called, maybe still is, R1A, which basically means you have a rural type setting where you would have...would not have sewer water from the city sewer and water. You'd have to have a well and drain field, and I forget what size of lot that required. Then you had like a R1B, which is a subdivision type lot with sewer and water. And so we kind of looked at the township. And as I recall, we were looking at percentages down at one time. We wanted like 40 percent -- I'm probably wrong on the percentage, but a certain percent commercial and a certain percent residential, and then a certain percent multiple family apartments or condos or whatever. Because again, in the...my earlier days, in the '70s, all we saw developing was apartment complexes. And they were coming pretty hot and heavy at one time. And that's in some cases good and some cases bad. It depends upon how you feel about that. But I won't get into the politics of it. But we felt we also needed to set aside some land, so that if somebody come in, say, "I want to buy this land and put apartments on it," we can say, "No, we got that set aside because we want that to be developed as some form of residential or some form of commercial." And particularly with the commercial land, as I again recall, we kind of took the intersection quarter, such as State and Michigan and Platt and Michigan and Carpenter, Packard and Ellsworth, and Carpenter and Michigan and Carpenter, those types of things, and kind of designated those as commercial areas, simply because we thought that's where they should be. Plus we didn't particularly want to see somebody buying the corner of Michigan and Carpenter and putting up 2,000 apartment units. So...And I'm sure some of those things have been restudied and maybe some of them changed. But at least, when we started out, we had a plan for the whole

township that said, "Here's what we think we'd like to see happening in the future," as in the pa—before that at least, I'm pretty sure it was like somebody would buy a piece of property and want to develop it. We'd see if maybe that's what we thought should happen. And then that became the land use for that particular property, and it just kept jumping around on it, so...that's my recollection now. Somebody may have a different view on it [laughs] but...

M: I don't want to get into the politics of that, Jim, but that was one of the fueling factors that changed the redeem here in Pittsfield Township about that time.

R: Right.

M: Were you close enough to that that you can talk about that transition? That's one that I've really been interested in, and I don't, I don't know the details.

I: Maybe I should...

M: At which point is that?

M: But that would have been the change from more a rural management of the township essentially to the suburban management that came out of the old Park and that area.

I: Well, I can...

M: I think Bob Lillie got involved and Terry Brown got involved.

I: Right.

M: It started out with Louie Ferber, as I recall. Woodland Hills went in there, and apartments started going in all around it. Joe ___ was on the board. I think Jim Reader, and they wanted to control the board because it's too much to...wasn't any...just you saw them going up, no rhyme or reason, there was no building codes. And that's where they said, "Hey, we want you to run." So that's when we got in and took control of the board, and that's when we brought in...might have brought _____, and he ___ with the Planning Commission and started right quarters of getting buildings back into where they should have been.

R: And those, those things are just, just before basically I got in, in 1970, so...

M: This was a big...

R: Yeah.

M: ...it was big...it was _____ and all kinds of problems.

I: I think none of this is going to be on the tape because...we, that's great.

M: People waste time, yeah.

I: Well, it's...

R: Yeah.

I: ...plus with our wearing the microphones, it doesn't. But Don, we need to do an oral history on you [laughs].

M: When I _____. I'm a little younger than he is. When I get older.

I: And...

R: And when you get wiser? [chuckles]

I: And then maybe we can get some of this on record. And that, I think that would be very important to do.

M: I got a question while you're getting ready with yours. The...a lot of...the land use ordinances primarily come through the township. I suppose the misdemeanor laws, the criminal code, it mostly comes from the county, Washtenaw County?

R: I would think that's probably state and federal. I doubt that there's any...

M: Well, in _____.

R: ...county and local laws that would apply just to...

M: Well, in the City of Ann Arbor, they rely on the county...the county laws of...for misdemeanors et cetera, and so...

R: Um-hum.

M: ...So I would imagine that Pittsfield does also. Well, now, Ann Arbor may have some of its own criminal code...

R: Um-hum.

M: ...too. But Pittsfield I would imagine they rely on the county or the state for their criminal code.

R: I'm not the one that can answer that question for sure. But I would have to say I believe—because I've never heard of any, quote, "township laws", so...

M: Well, we, we do our own legal ordinances, the fines and so on, but...

R: Oh, yeah.

M: ...they can't be...you can't have a lesser degree of the law than what the state has.

R: Right.

M: But we implement our own ordinances as far as fines.

R: So...

M: Primarily misdemeanor.

M: Yeah.

R: Well, set—setting the fines for it, but we don't, to my knowledge, we don't decide what is a misdemeanor and what is a felony and...

M: We're fortunate in that.

R: ...so...

M: Of course we go by the county.

R: County and state and federal, right.

M: _____

I: How...you, you were taking part in the township politics during the time that the new fire station and the new township hall were built. Could you talk about that a little bit?

R: Again, I can try to remember to the best of my ability what happened. But I know, particularly in the first township fire hall that was built on Michigan Avenue, which is of course still that public safety building is there now, there was some concern when we decided we needed to build something because we outgrew the department here. And there was some discussion on the Township Board. And that's when the subject of the Building Authority came up, and I, for one, had never heard of a Building Authority. I think some of the rest of the Board members had. But basically that...that's how that building was built, and what it...and I think probably all the other ones might have been built with the same program. But to make a long story short, a building authority is where the township appoints, I don't know if it's three or five people to the building authority. These people then, they get funds from the state, I believe. And then of course the township has to pay them back. It's I want to say a bond, but I don't think they're bonded. And Doug probably knows a whole lot more about this. But...well, anyways, when we build that building, and I think when we built all the rest of the buildings, including I think the new township hall, I think we did it through a building authority, if I'm not mistaken, so...Although maybe, maybe the last building we didn't. But that's how we started with the new one anyways. And like I say, I recall at the time we were saying amongst the Township Board members why we need to bui—we need to build a new fire hall. And there was some concern as to even where it should be built, because when the township bought that property on Michigan Avenue, I can recall some people saying, "Well, no, that's not the place to be. You're getting...you're not,

you're not centrally located and whatever, so..." And of course with anything that you do politically you got some people think it's right and some people think it's wrong. I personally think that that's probably a good place to be, mainly because you've got a couple of expressways that cross near there, and of course you have Platt road and Michigan Avenue and Ellsworth and Carpenter. So you have a lot of roads that you can use as far as fire trucks. When we were here, on this corner, and like I say I was involved for a few years at least, when a fire truck had to leave here, you had no choice but to pretty much go down Ellsworth Road to get over to the other side of the township, or go up State and try to cut through the City of Ann Arbor, which usually we did not do. There wasn't a whole lot of options of going. No matter where you're going, there's pretty much one road that you could go on, so...Anyways, they bought, I don't know how many acres they bought down there, but they bought enough so that they could plan to expand in the future. And that's of course now where the township hall is also. And that's the best I can recall what [laughs] what was going on there.

I: Were you part of the Township Board when this building was expanded?

R: When we add this part on? Yes. But I think that was, I think that was just done through township funds. I don't think we borrowed on that, if I'm not mistaken. Well, of course, we built -- and I'm sure everybody knows this -- we built a utilities building out here, and then basically really connected the two together and built this part in so...Because there was a time where this was open between the two buildings.

I: Okay. And then you outgrew this building and that's when the move was made to the...build the new town hall?

R: Right, 9...was that 19...? I think they moved in in 1995 maybe and started in 1994, or...give or take a few months right in that same time so...

I: Kind of backtracking, when you first moved to Pittsfield Township, can you tell us what it was like then compared to what it is now?

R: Well, again, I live out on the corner of Payeur Road and Marton Road for anybody that is familiar with that area. I had some pretty rowdy neighbors right to the north of me, see. But they've kind of moved around now, see. Meaning that my neighbors on one side were the Ticknors and my neighbor on the other side was the Fritz's and this, this was a Fritz and now she's a Ticknor so...She didn't move very far. But again, we moved there in 19...we moved there in 1965. Anybody familiar with the area there, there's a house right on the corner that looks like an old schoolhouse or township hall or something. That's a house that we bought. We bought that house with 4.9 acres of land and we paid 14,000 dollars for it. And my wife's grandfather was a carpenter, an old German carpenter, and he said, "You guys are crazy." My mom and dad still live in Ypsilanti. They said, "You guys are crazy." Her mom and dad lived in Manchester, and they said, "I'm not sure you're doing the right thing." They didn't tell us we were doing the wrong thing, but they didn't think we were doing the right thing, so...And, again, the house was, was nothing fancy, but at the time when we bought it, we didn't even know that it was in the Saline school district, and of course we had no kids then. And when our kids were old enough to go to school, then we found out that we were in the Saline School District,

and you go across Marton Road on the other side, you're in the Ann Arbor School District. And I had no knowledge of either one of the school districts. But at that time, Saline was a much smaller school district -- probably a class C school. Now they're a class A school. So our kids all went to, to Saline, and they to this day basically tell us that they were glad they went to Saline, particularly when it was smaller. But like I say, we moved in there in '65, raised both of our kids, and then in '75 we built the house that we're in now across the road. Strangely enough, the house that we had bought with half the acreage was just sold in the last month or so for I think somewhere in...I'm not sure, maybe \$170,000 or something like that. Before my parents died -- my father died in 1985 -- they came to us a number of times and said, "Well, I guess you guys probably did the right thing when you bought that house," [laughs] so...

I: Right.

R: Now, again, it wasn't anything fancy, but for the time it served our purpose. We put an addition onto it in the back that had a family room and a dining area. Made it a little bit more livable. But that area, even to this day, is still relatively rural because Payeur Road is about a mile long and it dead ends on Marton Road, and Marton Road's a mile long between Textile Road and Morgan Road. So there's not a lot of traffic that comes down there, although we saw a little bit of traffic pick up with they closed State and Textile. So as far as what changes I've seen, our house that we built in 1976 was the last house built in that neighborhood, so there hasn't been a lot of construction, mainly because we have the good old Pittsfield Townships soils, which means you got more clay than you know what to do with. And in fact when we got ready to build our house, Dick Elliot, who some of you may know, used to have Elliot Trucking Company, and he had big power equipment and whatever, and he built a house a few years before we built our house in the neighborhood. Those are the only two new houses that have been built in probably 80 years out there. But, but I mentioned to him at one time, I said, "Could you come up with a back hoe and dig down and see if we can find any sand to see if can build a house." And that's what he did. He went out in what ends up being our backyard now, and he dug down 36 feet of solid clay. And I just happened to come home from...for lunch and saw that. And he said, "Well, now what should I do?" So I said, "Well, go up by the road and see what's up there." He went up in front and dug down six feet and there was sand, just about like quicksand, going through the front yard. So he opened it up and they came out and checked it, and they said, "Yeah, you can...you know, that's perkable sand, or soil, and you can, yeah, you can build there." Now all out in that area and around this whole area into the airport, there's basically an underground lake, and I think you people probably know that. It's...anyplace out here, if you go down 50 feet or 35 feet, you run into water, and you'll run into more water than you can ever use. Marcia's husband tells me that -- I may not have this correct -- but he used to work across the street in the Research Park, and they had like two sump pumps in the basement that ran 24 hours a day and the water level might change an inch or two, and it just...So apparently there's...And of course the city has....has and had wells out here on the Ann Arbor Airport property. I think one of them is maybe still used. But...So there's all kinds of water out here, if you can find a place to build. But the problem is finding perkable soil. And in our neighborhood, probably we'll never see sewer and water come down there because there's not enough houses to service it. And compared to Payeur Road, on one side of Payeur Road you have the railroad right away,

and, you know, they're not going to want to sign up for any assessing for sewer and water if all they got is a railroad track there. In some way, if...if you don't want any development around, it's probably good. And the other way, if your drain field goes bad, it can be a problem. So I guess you take the good and the bad. But as far as the changes I've seen, I haven't really seen a whole lot of changes. The only time that I will...that I really notice is when you go out any time of the year after dark, when we first moved out, you were out in the middle of basically nowhere, and there was very little light pollution. And then Saline did their downtown whatever they did and put in the, the yellow lights, whatever they're called -- some mercury vapor, sometime a...And of course those yellow lights, and I think Ann Arbor has them too. They pretty much kind of light up, you know, reflect off the clouds and light up the sky, so you look toward Saline now and you kind of see this yellow glow, and you look towards Ann Arbor, you know, see a glow and so...The sky is lit up a lot more than what it used to be. But as far as that neighborhood, I see very little more traffic. They're still farming the property that was going to be...that the township just bought after they had the big fight over, you know, whether we wanted to have...I forget the development. But the big development that wanted to go in there.

M: New Market.

R: New Market. Because I would, I would have been right across the street from New Market, which I didn't know whether I really want it or didn't want it. I could see, at that time I could see, in fact they had proposed taking Payeur Road and extending it into there, which I didn't particularly like, because I didn't plan on paving it or anything. And that meant just dumping traffic out onto our little two-lane dirt road. But on the other hand, they would have to serve that whole area with sewer and water, and if that had gotten done, it may have opened up some of our area to sewer and water. Now I don't feel that I'm going to need it, because when I built, you know, my drain field, everything was approved by the county. But there are properties that have been out there for years and years that in the old days they just used to dig a hole, as I understand, put your drain field in and fill it back up. And they pretty much told me that's like taking a swimming pool. You know, you can, you can do this, but the water will fill back up, and if it doesn't drain, you'll have a problem with your drain field. We've never had any problem. And I think some of the areas out there, particularly in the spring when you get a lot of water, you could have trouble with your fields. Wells, never have problem with a well, unless it's routine type of thing with the pump going out or something. But apparently never run out of water out there. So...

I: I'm going to kind of open this up, but I want to repeat the questions so that it's on the tape.

R: Okay.

I: Are there any questions from the audience?

M: Jim, in terms of the, the really old original or the second generation township hall that was here, do you remember how the garage was used?

I: The question was: Do yo remember how the garage was used for the old original township hall that was on this sight?

R: Now when you say that was on...you're speaking of that building, or was that...?

M: I'm talking about the one behind you over here, Jim.

R: Right.

M: The two door, the double doors...

R: Right.

M: ...over here.

M: That was a part of one.

R: Yeah, okay. Well, when you said...when you said something about the original township hall, I thought maybe there was a different building here before this one that I didn't know about.

M: I'm talking about Morgan. That was the original town hall.

R: Oh, yeah, right. Okay.

M: And ___ became our second one.

R: Okay.

M: Generation Township Hall.

R: Well, like I...like I said earlier as...I recall with this township hall and some of you were here when we met here. We even had some offices as you call, built in along the side where Bob Lillie's office was and a couple other ones on this one side of the building. But before we built the...the new fire station, that...that garage that we call it has, still has two doors. They had a...At one time, I think they might have only had one fire truck in there. Like I say, I joined the fire department in I think '67 maybe. Because we bought a new fire truck in 19...I'm pretty sure it was 1968. And at that time, they put three fire trucks in a two-bay. So they...back, you know, one in one side and they backed one down into the middle and they backed the other one in the other side. So they, they had three trucks at the...at the time. And this...this part was the fire department, the front part being the bedroom, and then there's still a kitchen and stuff out here I believe that was pretty much a fire chief's...And the house across the road, which I think they've tore down now. There was a little house across the road. That used to be...I think his name was Thompson who was assistant fire chief at the time.

M: Um-um. A fire chief wasn't there.

R: Oh, was he the fire chief at one time also? Okay.

M: And when they had fire ____ here he was over there. He was the answering system.

R: Okay.

M: Then Kay came in.

R: All right, Jim. But that's all I can remember of the original building is that that was three trucks in a two-bay. And when we had our...once a month...I think it was once a month we had fire training, we'd come over on a Tuesday evening or whatever. And that's where we would meet and then normally we'd take the trucks out to a site someplace, and back in those days you would learn how to hook up hoses and how different things work and...We had a number of controlled burnings, where you would actually...And they still to this day I think, would go into a house -- maybe it's going to be torn down. I know just recently they were over at the Mayflower Motel and had some fires in there. And that's...if you've never done something like that...That was very interesting to me, because they would...we'd go into this, this...You don't just go in and burn the house down. You go into the house and...and most of the people will put on...I call them gas masks, but I guess there's smoke mask or whatever, so that you can breathe in there. And this was before even you carried air bottles. It was just a filtering mask. But what they would do is they'd build like a fire in a closet, and all the fireman would kind of sit around the room and watch how this fire grew and how it would spread. And when I first started, I didn't know any of this stuff, but it was interesting to see how a fire would start going and all of a sudden it would go up the walls, and then they'd have what they call a flashover and the whole ceiling would just burst into fire. And of course they would tell all of us new guys, "Just stay low, stay low," because they'd tell us what's going to happen, so you wouldn't freak out basically. And then the fire chief would always tell you when to vent the scene. And vent the scene means you go over to a window and you push the window up. When you push the window up, that lets the smoke go out, but it also lets the air come in, and the air feeds the fire. And the first fire that I was on, everything was going fine until this one relatively new recruit went over to vent the fire, and instead of staying down and pushing the window up, he kind of raised up, went like this, and his fire helmet melted right down on his face. And you've probably heard before, you know, a fire can be, what?, 15-17 hundred degrees up on the ceiling and down on the floor -- that's why they always tell you to crawl -- down on the floor it might be 120 or...something that at least you can bear when you're on the floor. But it can be 12 hundred degrees hotter. If you stand up, it's a very bad situation so...So it was interesting to do that. And then they would also take a house and take bales of straw, take them down in the basement and light them on fire so the whole house fills with smoke. And the whole idea was, is you were supposed to go in, crawl around the house to, you know, see...see what it's like in a smoke-filled building. And that in itself is a very unique experience, because you can get into one of these things, and unless you go along the walls and kind of feel where you're going, you very soon will get lost. And if the house is filled with smoke, you can't see this far in front of you. So you're kind of crawling around and...And they would have people like laying on beds and you had to go in and find these people. You know, nobody was going to get hurt, but it was a real experience just to go in and see what it was like to be in a situation like

that. And it kind of let you know that if you were ever in that, if your own house caught on fire, that you know you want to stay low and you [laughs] try to get out and...All right. The original question I think was about the garage and the garage, like I say, as I recall, just had three fire trucks in it, and that's where the fire department met.

M: Do you remember the details for the acquisition of Montibeller Park?

I: Do you remember the details for the acquisition of Montibeller Park?

R: As I recall, that was through the County Drain Commission because you got Paint Creek going through it. And I think there's, what?, 50 acres or something over there?

I: Fifty-five.

R: Okay. And I believe we got that for basically next to nothing, I believe. And then I think we've also purchased some other land to add to it over time. But my recollection, and some of us you may even know better, was that that was a first park other than this park here, of course, in the township. And they had a plan to put all of the tennis courts and the sliding hills and whatever that's over there. Keeping the chicken coop that's on the house there. And I guess they still use that chicken coop with the kids or something in the summer so. But I believe that was received from the Drain Commission. Yes.

M: Jim, there's a house that used to be in the township and now it's in the city of Ann Arbor that's been puzzling us. It's been abandoned for about 30 years. It's on Runway Boulevard, across from the Ann Arbor Airport. Do you know anything about that?

I: There's a house that's now in the city that used to be in the township. It's been abandoned. It's on Runway Boulevard. Do you know anything about that?

M: It's a very modern house, international Style. The slab is a white plaster and cement block. Been empty for a long, long time.

R: Where?

M: Runway Boulevard. Makes a loop around into that industrial park just each of the airport. It's the area...it's part of the...

R: Okay.

M: ...city now. And there are all these light industry places being built around it. Backs up to the railroad track. Skateboarding punks have been using it. It's ___ all over the inside.

R: I'm, I'm completely drawing a blank on that. I remember there was a...

I: Okay. I think I can tell you.

R: Okay.

I: You're talking about the, the cement house. It used to belong...

Side 2:

R: You're speaking of the O'Connor House. And, again, that's...as I recall it, it was off of Morgan Road, because you had a drive that went back to the house. Just happens that Elaine O'Connor, who lived there -- and I think her husband was named Tom, if I'm not mistaken -- we had two German Shepherds different times, and we had our dog bred with their dog at one time. And she was also a customer of mine at one of the banks that I worked at. So I knew her fairly well. And I...I know that...I forget. Did thy got o Colorado or California or someplace? I'm not exactly sure where. But I don't know either why all of a sudden it was just vacant. It's my assumption that whoever bought that land for the research park...

I: Yeah.

R: ...I assume bought that land also.

I: It's a very strange place to build a house of that style at that time, out in the country, and it was very, very modern.

R: Yeah. Well, that...I don't know if they built it or if they bought it. Because like I say, I'm, I'm saying when I knew the O'Connors it would have been probably late '60s, early '70s, and at that time, that was the only house was there. None of the rest of that was...

M: They added an addition to it some time in the '70s...

R: Okay.

M: ...And I wondered if you knew what the O'Connors did or anything like that?

R: What they did as far as professionally? Um...he...I would need some help from somebody else on that. I'm not sure exactly. Because I know there's like two or three kids and some, some of those may still be around. Marcia?

I: There...they had five children I believe.

R: Um-hum.

I: And he had his business there at the house I believe also.

R: That...I'm pretty sure that's true. I just don't recall what, what he did for...

M: That's more than we knew before.

M: What was the house made of?

R: It's kind of block...

M: Cinder block, ____ block?

R: Yeah, it...just a white...it's kind of a squared off type of...you know, it's all...

M: Flat roof.

R: Right. And now, like you say, it's now, it's pretty much all grown up over and windows broken and whatever. At one time it was a very attractive building back there, so...

M: What transitions did you see to the Ann Arbor Railroad during your...the year you've lived there?

I: What transitions did you see to the Ann Arbor Railroad?

M: I think the only transitions that I saw is in the mid-'60s to mid-'70s. There was a fair amount of trains that would go through there. And of course we're not too far from the Pittsfield Junction where the two railroads cross and I don't know when they actually close down the, what I call the Hillsdale track that goes through Saline and down to Hillsdale and up into Ypsi. But I think it was even before I moved out there. But we used to have fairly large freight trains going through on the Ann Arb—on the north-south run. And as Marcia probably recalls, there's been a number of derailments there for...particularly right around the Payeur Road because that's where the two railroads cross. And I can even remember I would guess maybe mid-'70s, I was I think sitting out in the yard watching my kids, but I was facing my house and the railroad's behind me. And I heard this train that was really rolling through there, and I was thinking they don't go that fast through there, and then all of a sudden it got quiet. And of course...and that's when one of the derailments and the cars went all over the place and whatever. So and I understand before my days of moving out there, they had another derailment where one of the cars pretty much was hanging over one of the houses just east of the track that was up over [laughing] the house or something. Um, but what we see now is maybe two or three trains a day that go through. And maybe one or two a week that are what I call freight trains. I think what they do is they're hauling...somebody told me at least that there's some type of a sand that's good for making molds and things that they take to Cleveland or someplace for some type of a factory that does moldings anyways. And so we'll, we'll see these freight trains with these ca—cars that are full of sand. And there's probably, I don't know, maybe 40 cars in the train, which is big for...Now fortunately they go by a lot slower these days. And the other thing you'll see if you're...if you cross the railroad tracks at Morgan Road or at Payeur Road, if you just stop for a second, look, and it's not snowing, and you look up and down the tracks, you'll see these piles of sand in the track, because apparently they leave the car sit there for a day or two, and they must have a small leak, so you'll [laughs], you know, you can see sand piled up like this high in these different things. And then probably couple times a day smaller trains will come by that make that...there's a connector track between the two tracks there where the old junction station used to be. And the trains will come by and make that curve and then they go down to the Visteon plant or Ford plant down in Saline. So we'll hear those come by every once in a while. Unfortunately, sometimes they're doing that at five o'clock in the mornings and...But if you've lived near a railroad

track for any length of time, it soon becomes something you don't even hear anymore so...So we'll, you know, we'll have people come and stay with us and they'll say, "Well, the train woke me up and five o'clock," and we'll say, "We didn't hear it," so...[laughter] So as far as the changes in the...that I've seen, I do remember back when we first moved out, when Ohio State and Michigan played, you know, they, they would send a train up from Ohio State. They would come up to the Michigan game and then park next to the Stadium there by the tennis courts, whatever. And then they'd go back down. I don't...they don't do that anymore, I don't think. I don't know if we sent a train down to Columbus or not, but they used to always send one up, and we would see that train come through. I don't think I've ever seen any passenger type traffic on that track, so...Doesn't mean there wasn't ever any, but I don't recall it. But right now that...it's very seldom that you really see any type of anything on that track. And like I say, if it's more than three a day, and a lot of those are going to be like maybe six or eight cars and all they're doing is they're turning and going down to the Ford plant. Or going down empty to pick up some cars and bring them back up.

I: Well, are there any more questions. If not...

M: I'll ask just one question.

I: Okay.

M: One more. You live very close to the Ann Arbor Landfill. And that obviously has been a focal point of community use and involvement and issues for many years. Since you're so close to that and you were involved in that during...count your board meetings and stuff, would you want to say something about that, Jim?

I: The question is about the Ann Arbor Landfill. Do you want to make some comments on the Ann Arbor Landfill?

R: Um, I was never too concerned about the Ann Arbor Landfill, only because, and I'm telling you my own views now, not necessarily maybe my wife may have a different view, but I...I felt that even though a landfill was not the nicest neighbor to necessarily have, my feeling is that after the landfill was done, at least it's covered over and it basically is open land. And at that time, I was told, well, once you have a landfill, you can't go in and build on top of a landfill. I think that's somewhat still true, but I believe also that somehow they found ways to either dig them out or do something, but...and build on them or maybe put certain things on them. So I felt, well, with the landfill sooner or later it was going to be full and basically it was going to be open land. My main concern with the landfill since, our area out other depends on wells, and as I told her, there's supposedly big ground, underground lake. I don't know if that went over to the landfill, and I was...I've always been concerned that the landfill would, would taint the underwater supply. Apparently that's not a problem. And I've also been told that apparently the underground water kind of flows like a river would flow, but certainly not as fast. I have been told at least that the water around there from our area goes towards the landfill and not that the landfill water's coming towards our house. I don't know if that's a scientific truth or not but, you know, we've seen no problems with, with our water and I...all the neighbors, I've never heard of anybody with any trouble that

they claim they've had with water or diseases or anything like that. So I'm guessing that probably the water does flow towards the landfill and not, not west, but east. So...But I don't know that for sure. Yeah. And then of course, as everybody knows, the landfill basically was...ceased, what?, 20 years ago? I don't know how long it's been now since they quit using the landfill. But I think at one time there was talk of taking that whole square mile all the way down to Morgan Road and pretty much making that all landfill. And, again, my own initial response is, if you have a landfill there now, even though you may not like it, you...you may be better off expanding one landfill as going out and finding another landfill, because no matter where you go, the people who are going to be next to the landfill aren't going to want it, and if you go someplace else, those people aren't going to want it. So I just wasn't too per—concerned other than if it was going to contaminate the water, so...

I: Well, than you very much Jim.

R: Okay. Well thank you!

I: I appreciated this.

[applause]