Bob Allesee Part 2

Q: This is Mike Smith interviewing Bob Allison at the Walter P. Reuther Library on June 15, 2005. Bob, we've filled a couple tapes and I think we've got a good background for your establishment in the radio world in Detroit. So what I'd like to start with today is -- let's talk a little bit about your TV work. You're a radio man, and all of a sudden you find yourself on TV. Maybe you could tell us how you made your debut.

A: Well, it wasn't that sudden. First of all, I am a radio man. I've always liked radio better than television, but every time I've done television, I've been successful at it, which is fun, because a lot of radio guys don't make the transfer over to the other medium, because they are very different in the way you work and think and put things together. The very first television show I ever did would have been around 1952 -- yeah about 1952 down in Bloomington, IN, when I was going to school at IU. There was a variety show there, and I played piano for it, and the lights were hot and it was a whole different world there.

Q: Were those speaking parts then?

A: No, that wasn't speaking, I was playing. I think I did

talk, though. I think I spoke with a couple of the singers. It was a variety show and they had me talking with them because they knew I was a talker, anyway (laughter) --

Q: (laughter)

A: -- and then I did no television until, oh, what was it, around 1960. It would have been about eight years later, and at the time, I was working at the station in Michigan City, IN, WIMS. The program director from the radio television station in South Bend -- this was in Indiana -- was driving through town, flipping around the dial and he heard me doing my afternoon record show, and liked what he heard. I get a call from him: "Would you like to come over and work at the Notre Dame radio and television station?" They had a commercial operation, and I was to work in radio and do some television too, and that intrigued me because the offer for the money wasn't very good, as you can understand in a university-owned and operated – (laughter) production.

Q: Yeah, right (laughter).

A: Anybody who's ever worked for a university knows. At any rate, I worked there for a year, and I was able to do television. In that I was doing mostly commercials, and they were live. We didn't have tape facilities back then, and so I would do live commercials. As a matter of fact,

Drewrey's Beer was one of them, that I used to do for the evening newscast -- they had the 10 o'clock news. I did some variety shows and some other things; mostly, I was doing radio there. But then, when I came here, I was doing radio as you know, and it wasn't until, oh, around 1962, I think it was -- or maybe it was '63, I forget, it was '62 or 3 -- and the fellow who had been the milkman on "Milky's Party Time" which had to be the most successful kid's show in this market, and for that matter, probably one of the most successful children's shows in the entire United States at that time. It had been on the air through the 50's, and now we were at the beginning of the '60s, and, oh, what was his name -- it'll come to me in a moment. He passed away, died, and I took his place as the milkman.

Q: Before you continue, perhaps, maybe just explain a little bit what Milky --

A: What Milky's did --

Q: -- what his show was --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- and who Milky was.

A: The reason for the title is that the sponsor was Twin Pines Dairy. They were one of the leading privately owned dairy companies -- locally owned dairies here in town. And this was an hour show -- maybe it was an hour and a half. It was

a long show on Saturday morning, and we taped it on Saturday morning and it played, I think, right after we finished recording it. We would rehearse and everything and then come in and do the show. We did the show live, and we rehearsed in the morning and then we did the show live. I think we went on the air at about 1 o'clock or something like that. At any rate -- (laughter) I don't remember to tell you the truth -- you'd think I'd never forget something like that. What it was a variety show that had all sorts of different features in it, and the star of the show was the clown, Milky the Clown, and this was all tied into the advertising -- you talk about advertising tie-ins -- We had a whole audience full of about 40 youngsters -- little boys and girls -- who were up in the bleachers, many of whom came down to compete in little kids games that we ran, and there were young people who competed in the stars of the future -- we had a 30 minute, essentially a 30 minute --

Q: Talent show?

A: -- talent show, and Milky did the tricks with the kids, and when he would do a trick, he would say to the audience, you know, "What are the magic words?" and the audience would holler, "Twin Pines!" that was the magic -- you can still, to this day, find people, if you say, "What are the magic

words?" they'll say, "Twin Pines!" You know, they grew up with this show.

Q: Absolutely.

A: And I laugh about it now, but it was a very, very big show. Everybody watched that show, kids and adults, and it went off the air in '68, so I must have started in '62 because Bob Leslie -- and there, the name came back to me -- Bob Leslie was the milkman. He had been the milkman for most of the run of the show up to that time. There had been one other -- and I don't even know who that was -- in the 50s, but Bob took over back in the early 50s, and he had been the milkman. You wore a milkman's uniform incidentally -- boy I could never get into that thing again.

Q: (laughter)

A: I think I had about a 29 inch waist back when (laughter) I was the milkman. I was skinny -- and we had an actual milk truck, a real milk truck on the set, and at the beginning of the show, everybody came out of the milk truck in order: Milky would come out, and then the gal that ran the talent show and the fellow, or the -- gal or the fellow, it varied from time to time -- the fellow that ran the games would come out, and then milkman would come out. I was the last one out, and I would say, "Hello," and welcome everybody to

"Milky's Party Time.", and this was back in the days before teleprompters, and we had cue cards, and of course the cameras weren't multi-lensed like they are now. You had to crank around the lens to get a close up or a wide shot or a long shot, and so, therefore, the cameras would be at varying distances from you, and when you were writing your cue cards, which -- I wrote my own cue cards -- when you'd make out the cue cards, you had to know whether or not the camera was going to be a close up, a medium, or a long shot so that you could write the proper size of the lettering. On a long shot, -- no kidding, -- these cue cards were, you know, cardboard things that were about maybe a foot wide, and about three feet long, and I hired the cue card holder and paid him out of my own money to hold the cards. That was his job, and oh -- one of the fellows that was a cue card holder for me was going to school here at Wayne State, and I hired him to hold the cards, and he is now doing a feature portion of "Ask Your Neighbor". Len Maylis is his name, and he was my cue card holder when he was in college, and now he is doing a little show with his wife called "Nutrition On Call" because his wife is a registered dietician. He became a professional writer, and they had written an excellent diet book called "The Duct Tape Diet." They do a show once a month. They come in and we talk

dietary stuff and take phone calls and it’s a very interesting feature. So you never know where people wind up (laughter) in this funny world. I'm trying to think of the first cue-card holder, because he became one of the top directors. He probably went from cue card holder to floor manager to camera man to director and he's one of the top -- that name will come to me sooner or later. I'll think of it. I haven't thought about him in years -- super guy but that's a long time ago, and that show ran from '63 -- no, '62 to '68 because the riots came in '67, and the following year the bottom fell out of the home delivery milk business, and Twin Pines was home delivered milk. You had a Twin Pines milkman, and he came to your door with the milk or whatever else you ordered. But, everything moved into the stores, and Twin Pines had to make some very major changes in how they advertised and what they did as business just fell out from under them, and as a result, the show went off the air. After the '68 season, that was the last season, and that was my first regular job at television. What I did was, not only the commercials as the Twin Pines milkman, I was doing all the commercials. That was one thing. I sold the stuff, but also when they did the talent show, I would introduce the talent show and we had some really, very wonderful talent come on that

show. As a matter of fact, anybody who knows anything about violinists -- Ida Kavafian and her sister -- I want to say Ada but I'm not sure that that's right -- Ida and -- oh, anyway, my memory is terrible anymore -- it's a good thing we're getting this down now, because I might not be able to remember what I had for breakfast soon. At any rate, the Kavafian sisters were winners of that talent show. It was a very well-produced talent show, and one gal -- we called her Mary Lou -- she was the pianist. She would accompany these people and she ran that show. She set everything up, auditioned people, and set them up for whatever shows they were going to be on. We used to have about four or five different performers. It was a half hour show, and they were very good young people -- very talented and did all different kinds of things. I mean they could come up there and do card tricks if they wanted to, but it was a talent show. You sent cards in to win, and of course, the audience applauded. Then, the winners would go on in a regional contest and in the finals, and we'd have the big finals -- we'd have about four finalists. We had quarterly winners and then finalists, and the Kavafian sisters -- both won the finals at different times. One was a little older than the other, and they are now nationally known performers with their instruments. And then, besides that,

I used to help with the games, too. Many times, I would be the final arbiter in the games, and help get the kids from here to there, and little things. So I was around the set doing a lot of stuff, and it was a big stage. We had a very large room, and a lot of stuff was going on, and when you did it live out, it was --

Q: Where were the studios?

A: The studios were the -- channel 4, not where it is now, but next door. The building was directly across from the old Detroit News building on Lafayette between 2nd and 3rd, and the new Channel 4 studios -- and this is just channel 4 -- they are now just east of that. They're in that corner between 2nd and they take up about half a block. I was telling the story to somebody just a couple of days ago. We had one commercial -- the company, Twin Pines, had come up with a product, a pancake syrup -- I mean, not a pancake syrup, a pancake batter that you simply poured onto the griddle and made pancakes. You poured it right out of a carton just like a milk carton, only it was pancake batter. It was a very fine product. Now, they set up, actually in the studio, a little griddle, and the commercial was that I would pour out about a half a dozen blobs of batter while I'm talking, and then scoop it up and flip over one of the pancakes to show them how easy it was. You do this right

while you're talking. Well, I should have poured the first couple of pancakes onto the griddle before the commercial started, but I didn't -- nobody had thought about that. So, I'm doing the commercial, and I'm pouring the pancakes, everything is going beautifully, you know, I'm just, I come to the point where I'm supposed to flip the pancake, and I stick the spatula underneath the pancake and it wasn't done yet, and it just globbed up in a big -- I tried to flip it and it globbed up and sat on the griddle very much looking like a chunk of dog doings. It just was, like, a really funny thing, you know, and everybody in the studio was aghast. You know, all the cameramen, floor manager, my cue card holder was (laughter) in hysterics. Bob Lipson, that was the fellow, and Bob Lipson -- excuse me Bob for not remembering your name right away, because he was a very, very talented guy, and he's gone on to make quite a name for himself, particularly in broadcasting. He's very good, and he was the cue card holder, and he was hysterical back then wondering, "What is he going to do?" while in the control room they're wondering the same thing. I don't remember why, but George Zeff was the fellow that was doing the games for the kids, and we called him Pierre. He was French, and he talked with a French accent, and he wasn't -- I mean he had no accent at all in reality -- but we

called him Pierre and he spoke with this French accent, and for some reason or other, whatever game that they were doing preceding this commercial, he had this chef's cap on -- a chef's hat, and I wore -- as I said, I dressed like a Twin Pines milkman, and I actually had a milkman's cap, you know, the hard-billed cap. I looked over and I saw him with this cap on his head, and I said, "Oh, I know what the problem is. I've got the wrong hat," and I took my milkman's cap off, and I said, "Pierre, come over here," and Pierre came over and he's got the chef's hat on. I said, "That's what I need." All this time, the other pancakes are cooking, see --

Q: (laughter)

A: -- and I take the chef's hat and I put it on my head and I said, "It'll work now," and I reached down and hit the second pancake and flipped, and of course, it was perfect. I said, "Do you see how easy that is?" and I said, "All you need is the right cap," (laughter) and everything works fine.

Q: (laughter)

A: And I was the king of the hill for a while to the dairy and the director and the advertising agency, and the people who said, you know, "Never saw anybody get out of that deep a hole," --

Q: (laughter)

A: (laughter) I said, "Well, it was serendipity," I said, "I don't know what I'd have done if George hadn't been wearing that crazy chef's hat," because I said it just made sense. I said, "I got a way out of here." Otherwise, I really was in deep doo-doo and that's what it looked like on top of that griddle.

Q: I bet the kids loved that.

A: Oh the kids were laughing -- they were having a wonderful time. Yeah they did. They thought that was hysterical, and that was one of my finest moments in the business.

Q: (laughter)

A: Anyway, that show went on for six years, and people began to know me from that, of course, because in radio, people don't recognize you, and that's fine. I like anonymity anyway. I'm not in the business to be well-known or a celebrity. I accept it -- you know, you have to, but I don't want to be that way. That's my original feeling of being an introvert, you know, I'm an introvert, and I really don't like public adoration and all that nonsense that goes with that, but it's part of the price you pay for being in this business. Then that show ended, and I was back doing my radio stuff. It wasn't until '73, which would have been about five years later, that the television

station -- oh, we were talking about where the station was located, I didn't mean to get away from that.

Q: Oh, that's all right, we --

A: There was a building that housed both WWJ Radio and WWJ TV Channel 4; it was in the same building. That building was originally built for WWJ in 1936, and it was the ultimate broadcast studios in radio in the United States at that time. You know WWJ was the first radio station [with regularly scheduled programs] on the air, I think we talked about that, and in 1936, they built these new studios right across the street from the Detroit News who owned the stations. When television came, in they took half of that building that was set-up, or storage or something, and built control rooms and studios and all that stuff. The radio side stayed the radio, and then, television was in there, so they were all in one building. That building has been torn down now, I think -- oh no, the building's still there, it has been used by other -- I think the Chamber of Commerce, or one of those kind of groups, leased that building and they used it for awhile. I don't know who's in there now, maybe that's who's in there. But anyway, it was a beautiful set of studios, you know, and this is where we were. In '73, they were trying to promote a bigger audience for their six o'clock newscast, and as we all

know, this depends on the show preceding your newscast, which can, you know, kill or cure. In this case, they had -- I don't remember what was on there -- but they got the idea of putting on this bowling program from 5:30 to six o'clock. It was a game show; "Bowling For Dollars." As a matter of fact, it was syndicated. The show came out of Baltimore, where it originated, and the company that ran the show, that owned the show, was Claster Productions. They had done a lot of major network and syndicated productions, and the son of the founder, John Claster, was running the business at that time; young fellow, but he had (laughter) the right name. The show was formatted rather strictly and they had a pattern. This was done in about 17 major markets around the country. They would pay for the show, and then, they would hire somebody to do it and put on the show. It was a syndicated show that had to be done their way or the highway, which didn't wind up being that way because I'm very independent when it comes to those kind of things. They decided to put that show on the air, and as a matter of fact, I was one of the first people considered to do that. I didn't know that at time, but they had considered me to do the show because I was talking to people everyday on "Ask Your Neighbor." They knew that I could interview people, and that's what this show

depended on; as people would come onto the set to bowl, you had to talk with them for about a minute and a half, maybe two minutes, finding out what they did for a living. And, there was one of the things. "who did you bring with you tonight?" you know, and "say hello to people at home." These were all the formatted stuff that the Claster Productions had you doing, and it was -- well, the show was -- then the person would go bowl and they had money prizes for winning.

Q: Yeah, please explain the premise because I think that they got an opportunity to bowl and it was three strikes in a row or --

A: No, no. Well, it varied through the years, but the way you got on the show was very simple. You sent a card, a post-card, and we used to get at least three of those huge mailbags -- the ones that are about four feet tall or something like that, great big canvas bags -- we would have three or four of those a week that came in. Thousands of cards, and out of that, they would just randomly select about 35 people a week 'cause we would have seven people on each show. The producer, Laurie Oberman, would pull the cards and contact the people. Of course, if they couldn't do the show, she would schedule them then for another week, but she would schedule these people about a month or two

ahead and know that they were going to be able to be there and all that -- you know, it's a complicated thing. That's the way they were selected, they were drawn by lot, and then, along with those cards that came in, we would draw for the pin pal. So, if you couldn't be a bowler on the show, you could be a pin pal. What that meant was we took those cards, those thousands of cards, and there was this huge drum that was on the set. I would spin the drum and then open it up and reach in there and pull out a card for each bowler -- so there'd be seven cards every show -- and you would say "and your pin pal is"… That's enough to scare you to death because we asked them to print; "please print your name" and phone number and all that. You'd look at it and you'd get something that looked like Mrs. Jane Alphabet (laughter) you know, I mean 17 letters, and particularly, the Polish names, which were sometimes quite interesting. And I would spit it out like I'd known them all my life, you know? And later, when I would run into people on the street, they'd say "my Gosh, you must be Polish" and I said "no, I'm not." I said "I was at one time a honorary member of the Polish" -- was it the Polish National Alliance? I guess it was, the PNA, because I'd done a Polish radio show years before that. I also understood how the names would be pronounced, and besides, which I guessed.

Q: (laughter)

A: And it's the old story; if you sound like you know what's right, it sounds like it's right, and people never think a thing about it. Many times I was just completely guessing at how to pronounce these names. I would make up a name if I had to. Sometimes you couldn't read the name, it was illegible, and I would -- the phone number would be OK, they'd get their prize -- I would just make up a name that looked something like that and away we'd go. Well, the thing about this was that I was in contention to do this show at the very outset but they decided they had a weekend weather/word caster and the management said "you know, Allison" -- you know, you said Allesee when you introduced this segment, but my professional name is Allison -- and they said "you know, Allison does 'Ask Your Neighbor' and he's the biggest radio guy around and, you know, he's doing fine. We've got this weekend weather/word caster who could use a boost, why don't we promote him?" So they did, and he did the first, I think, five weeks, and they had contracted with Claster to do this show for 13 weeks, they wanted to see what would happen with it. And, after five weeks, it was dying. It was just not going to work -- and that's why I'm not going to use the weekend weather forecaster's name. He was a super nice guy and it wouldn’t

be a good thing as a fellow member of the AFTRA Union to mention somebody when they fail. I don't know whether he failed; he just wasn't right for that show. It was a difficult show to do. Hardest thing I've ever had to do and I hated it. I'll get to that in a moment. But, I get called into the station manager's office for television and they said: "would you do this show?" And I said "well, what's the matter with the other guy?" And they said, "well, it's just dying, it's not going to work." And, I said "what happens here?" He said "well, we've got a 13 week contract, we've got eight weeks to go, and if you can turn it around in eight weeks we'll make you the Courthouse deal. If you can't, well, we're going to take it off the air". I said, "you mean to say, I have the splendid opportunity to go and let a turkey fall and die, and then everybody laughs at me instead of the other guy, right?" And he said "oh no, no, no. We'll take care of that" -- the Detroit News was the major newspaper in town and Frank Judge was the television writer, and he worked for the News -- He said "no, Frank will write a very nice article about you and how it wasn't your fault, and it was just the show wasn't right. Don't worry about that, you won't get stuck with that." And I said "well, OK, if you promise me I'm not going to have to bear that stigma, I'll do it." Well,

the one thing I knew that I had -- my ace in the hole -- was I had my "Ask Your Neighbor" audience that was the largest daytime audience in the market, and everyday when somewhere in the show or at the end of the show, I would say "hey, you know, if you're not doing anything tonight at 5:30, tune in Channel 4. And those of you who have always wondered what the heck do I look like, you'll get a chance to find out. I'm doing a show called 'Bowling For Dollars'. We took that audience, which was a gross of about two and a half million, a very big audience, and that all moved instantly down to Channel 4 at 5:30. The management was ecstatic, the show was kept on, and it went for six years until '79. In that year, or the preceding year, the Detroit News and the Washington Post swapped television stations because of the problem with the FCC and the fact that you could not have radio and television stations in the same market. We had been grandfathered in, but they were changing that, and the way to get around it was very simple: the Detroit News took the Washington Post's station in Washington, DC, and the Washington Post took the Detroit News' station here in Detroit. And, they had to pay us money because we were a bigger station in a bigger market. So there was a few million dollars and a swap. And that was fine except that they didn't like

"Bowling For Dollars" at the Washington Post. I remember clearly this program director saying to me: "well, we're going to take 'Bowling For Dollars' off" -- which was the only thing that the entire television day, the only thing that made any money for them. It billed a lot of money, and it was the number one television show of all time, I think. I've never heard of another daily strip show that was on a half an hour from 5:30 to 6:00 for about three years and then -- or two years -- and then, because of its popularity, they moved it over to seven o'clock, early prime time. It was about three or four years in that time period, and it was far and away the number one show of all time. We had a 50% share, which is incredible, I mean of all the television sets that were turned on at seven o'clock at night, half of them, 50%, were watching "Bowling For Dollars." Somebody said once to me, he said "do you realize that half of the entire Metro area" -- this is a big market, you know, about five million people -- he said "half of those people are watching you every night?" I said "yeah, and half of them aren't."

Q: (laughter)

A: And I said "if I walk down the street, every other person I meet watches me on the air." He said, "yeah, that's right," and I said "every other person I meet has never

heard of me," and he said "how can you take that attitude?" I said "how else could you possibly look at it, you know, it's the truth." Well, it's funny about people in our business. So many people are kind of hung up on celebrity, and I'm not hung up on celebrity, nor money. It's not that I don't want money -- I want a fair price for what I do -- but money has never been one of my goals, and celebrity has not been one of my goals. Doing good work is a goal, and entertaining people is a goal, and you get that by doing good work if you've got a good product.

Q: Well, let's step back a second.

A: OK.

Q: Because, you were really good at the "Bowling For Dollars" --

A: Yeah...

Q: I mean, it's not just my observation. You had a great way with, for lack of a better term, the average family, the average man or woman off the street, but why do you say it was --

A: Why I hated it?

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: Well, let me tell you how they were on the cheap in production. In other words, I came in there and I can tell you the pattern: we started the show at noon, and I had

just -- or maybe 12:30 it was, the first show we taped would be at one o'clock -- there was a half an hour given to us to prepare this show. Now, I would go out to the bowling center and I would carry with me four additional coats and four additional neckties, and if I were wearing basic browns, they would all be in brown shades; if I was in blues, they would be in different kinds of blue jacket. We didn't have a standard outfit, in other words, for the show. Which would have been one way to do it, you know. That was easier. But, every show, I would have to go in and change my coat and tie and come back out, because it's another night, and we'd tape five shows at one time. Now, when I would walk in there at 12:30, I'd just gotten off of doing about three hours. "Ask Your Neighbor" was on three hours at that time, I think, at least two, but it was on a long time, and that's a hard grind to talk for two hours straight, and then go out and you had five hours of, again, talking. And the first part of it, the first thirty minutes, is I'm interviewing these seven people that are going to be on the show. I had to interview them, ask them questions, and I was filling out my own cue cards which were hung up on a wall right over their left shoulder, so as I'm standing there talking to them the camera is on them, and I'm looking over their shoulder and the cue card

was out of sight of the cameras, but I could see it and it gave me their name and what they did a living if they had a job, or they were a housewife or whatever. When I interviewed them, I asked them: "what are your hobbies, things you like to do?", I would get just a quick snapshot. I couldn't talk to them more than about two or, at the most, three minutes, because there were seven of them. And then after I got all these cards written, and you know, that's working pretty hard to find somebody's life story in two or three minutes, write it down, and expect it to work. Then, I'd have to go out on the set and say hello to the audience, and tell them what was expected of them. There was an applause sign, and I said "when that thing comes on you're all going to look hysterical, and laugh and giggle." I would warm up the audience, and every show we would change the entire audience, there would be 75, 100 people in the bleachers up there, and they would march out at the end of the show and the next audience would come in, and the next group of seven people would come in and this was the pattern. We did five of those in a row, and I'll tell you what, I was pretty good at adlibbing small talk as people came on, and asking them what they do. 'Course, I had the little notes to guide me, but it still had to be little one-liners here and there, small talk, and after

you've talked through the first two shows you've talked to 14 people, when you get to about the fourteenth or fifteenth person, you have said every line of small talk ever known to the mind of man. You're sitting there grappling with words, trying to find out "how do I make this sound fresh and different?" Bear in mind, it was 24 hours later for the viewers, but for me; I'm standing there doing five of these things -- 35 people I had to talk to, that was a grind and a half. I would wake up on Friday mornings and I would say "wow, it's Friday morning! Wow, I'm ready to go!" And I would realize it was Friday morning and that meant not only "Ask Your Neighbor," but I gotta go do "Bowling For Dollars." Literally, I would become nauseous. I almost would throw up. That's how much it affected me, you know. When I say I didn't like this show, it wasn't as much about the show itself except the difficulty of doing it. Although, I really didn't like the show, I found my own ways of doing it. As a matter of fact, the Claster people who owned the show wound up doing things the way I did them rather than the way they had designed them because this saying hello to people at home, I kept that to a minimum. I wouldn't let them say but more than two or three hellos. When they first went on the air with that thing, honest to God, it seemed like they would

pull out a roll of toilet paper that had names on it, they would unroll it and want to say hello to 200 people. Well, I can understand that was very good for them and their friends, but to the massive audience, that was death. The same way with "who did you bring with you?" Sometimes they had a whole -- it looked like a family reunion up there and I wouldn't let them say hello to more than two or three important people: their immediate family, or their closest friend or something. Whoever they brought with them, that was really important, and not go down through every -- I realized very quickly that that was an audience killer. That was the way Claster wanted you to do it. Matter of fact, I went out to Baltimore to view the show, to be indoctrinated to see how it was done, and I talked with John about that. I said "boy, that's an audience killer if I ever --" "Oh," he said "they love it, they love it." And I said "yeah, the person who's on the show loves it, but what about the people watching?" "Oh," he said "this is why it's so successful." I said "OK, John," and he was showing me some tapes of the show as it was done, for example, in Los Angeles, and I said "yeah, that's all very interesting." I said "I'm going to tell you something, and I don't want to sound egotistical about this, but I'm not going to do this show the way you want me to do it. I can

tell you that now to your face" 'cause, I said, "I just won't be comfortable and I'm going to do it my way." And I said "before a year is out you'll be showing all your new people my tape because I know that I'm right about what I speak," and I said "you'll just have to see it and make a difficult decision about whether or not your way or my way is better, but I'm going to do it my way. If you can't live with that then I'm not going to do the show because that's just the way that is and there's no point in us discussing it. I know what I can do and I know how I will do it." Well, you know, I'm a very experienced performer and John was a young fellow (laughter) and he wound up showing my tape to the newcomers. You know, we had the number one "Bowling For Dollars" show of all the markets in the country, including New York, or Los Angeles, or Chicago. We were the number one. And he was telling people "this is how I want you to do it" because I had proved to him, you know. We were very good friends. It wasn't a belligerent kind of relationship. I wasn't prancing around saying "oh, look at me." I was telling him, I said, "this is not the way to do it, and if you want it to be really successful, I'll show you how to do it." And I did. And I didn't mean to sound pompous about that but it worked out well. It is one of the reasons why our

show here was so successful. I was able to talk to people one to one, not talking down to them as most people do in quiz shows or game shows, where the performer is the star. One thing that I kept telling myself -- well, one thing I knew, innately -- the people who came on the show were the stars, that was their fifteen minutes of fame, and they were star of the day. Every time one of them came out there, they got my complete attention, and because I could do that without looking phony, the show had that thing that you were talking about. People walk up to me today -- this is 25 years later, that show went off the air in '79 -- and they still come up to me 25 years later and talk about their experience on the show. The first thing I say, I say is - "did you throw a strike? (laughter) Did you win the jackpot?" And most of them said "no," of course. The format was very simple. If you threw a strike, you won a certain prize, and if you threw a strike, you got a chance to throw a second one. If you threw the second one, then you broke the jackpot, and the jackpot was increased by 20 dollars every time a bowler came out, so each program -- and I think that they started it with 500 dollars or something like that -- and back in those days that was a fair amount of money, nothing like the 64,000 dollar question, you understand --

Q: No, that's substantial.

A: But this was every. . . so you couldn't have too much money going in there because every night you were going to put 140 dollars in there, or if somebody broke it, you were going to start it with I think it was $500. And the jackpot just kept building until somebody broke it, and the pin pal would share. They would split the prize, whatever it was. Now, in the case of you go up there and you throw the first ball and you don't throw a strike -- if you throw a strike and you don't throw the second strike, then you had a special prize. We had a gift board up there, and people who threw strikes could walk over and pick out whatever they wanted from that board, and the pin pal would get that same prize. These were things donated by sponsors. And then, if they didn't throw the strike, then they would have a chance to throw their second shot -- so every bowler was going to throw at least two shots -- and they would throw the second shot. If they made a spare, they won dinner for two at a contributing restaurant, and the pin pal also would get dinner for two, which was a nice prize, you know? And I don't think there was any money given, just the dinner for two. But if they didn't get a spare, let's say they wind up with a split and they wound up with eight or nine pins, they would get a dollar a pin

or something. I think it was a dollar a pin. They'd win eight or nine dollars so a lot of people came down. It was more for the fun of being on television than it was to win money because there wasn't that much money. But there was notoriety. It was amazing. These people would come in and I'd see them later and they'd say "boy, wow, all the people that came up to me and saw me on 'Bowling For Dollars'." It was an incredibly popular show. As I said, I don't know of any other television show that I've heard about on a nightly basis, five nights a week, that could pull half of the television sets that were turned on. It was really remarkable.

Q: Oh yeah, I think you're right too. The fact that your average person could get on your show and be seen by half of the city; it was phenomenal. I must say, also, I saw some good bowlers and I saw some bad bowlers, Bob.

A: Well, that was the thing. I would talk quietly while they're bowling. As a matter of fact people used to say to me "don't you bother the bowlers when you're talking?" I said "no, because they are far enough away from me that if I speak softly in there they're not going to hear me, I would never talk if they could hear me." But, rather than just let them bowl, I would do a little repartee, you know, like a sports show, and they would throw the ball down

there and then I would talk about the ball is hooking or slicing, and try to put a little drama in there. When they would throw the Brooklyn Strike I could -- "oh, there's the Brooklyn ball" you know? And the bowlers all loved this, they loved me -- but I was a bowler and, matter of fact, at that time I bowled in three different leagues. I knew the terminology, and that was one of the Godsends for me that I think that first guy did not have; I don't think he was a bowler. And that helped because I could talk to them not only as a fellow citizen and as a fellow human being on their plane, on their level, whatever it would be, but I could also talk to them as a fellow bowler, and almost every one of these people had come from a bowling league; they were bowlers. And so having the opportunity to see them -- we had people who were out of work to the leaders of the city; people that I knew from Rotary Club, or the Detroit Athletic Club, or Oakland Hills Country Club, where I belonged, and I would rub shoulders with these people, and elbows. And they would come on the show and it was just as much fun talking to them as it was talking to the guy that was working out in the shop. Because I worked in a shop, I understood that kind of thing. It's a blessing sometimes to have a meager beginning because of two things: one, hopefully you never outgrow your pants, you know, you

still put the pants on one leg at a time, and if you don't forget that you have all of this background -- where I grew up during the depression, at tough times, didn't have much money. I was patched but clean, and my first job when I got out of high school, as well as working at a radio station and playing dance jobs, was in a factory, you know. And I think I've mentioned this earlier, but that understanding of the factory mentality -- if I may use that term, I don't want to sound disparaging because that's where I learned respect, when I went out to work in that shop. I want to say this because many people do not understand the mentality of the worker. It was particularly true of the management people where I worked because for awhile I worked as management with them, and there was a big divide between peoples' understanding of what it was like to work in a factory and the actual people who worked there. They were real people, they had real lives, and I got along with them even though I came from a well-known family, even though we didn't have much money, but who did back in those days. I got a perspective out of that year of working in the factory for just the sorts of people that 30 years later that I was going to talk to on "Bowling For Dollars." It was a blessing to be able to have that in your background, and 'course everything you do

in life is your bag of tricks for the next job you have and the problems that you come up against, and in television -- I don't really like television. You're too much at the mercy of too many people. I mean, your ability to do a show depends on the camera men, on the director, on the producer who set the thing up, on any number of people and there's just so many folks in your line of sight. In radio you're all alone, you get to sit there, and even with a director 'cause we used -- on "Ask Your Neighbor," when I first started doing it, this is going back to 1962, at WWJ Radio they still had radio directors for shows. You had a director that told you when to do the commercials and they set-up the phone calls and they directed the show. I'd never had a director before, I was my own director and producer and performer, and that was interesting to me. But in radio -- they took the directors out of there shortly after because there was no point in having a director on a radio show when it really wasn't necessary like it had been back during the 30's and 40's before radio changed over to be mostly music, news, and talk and that kind of thing -- and sports. They didn't need directors anymore, really; Only that first year or so that "Ask Your Neighbor" was on. Then, they took the directors and kept them over in television where they belonged. That's what I

loved about radio, you were in charge of what you were doing and you could really handle things the way you wanted them -- your timing and all that's so necessary to working came out better in radio better than it ever does in television. Now I suspect that there are people who are naturally television people. They would be scared to death to be in radio, on their own and they need the people to tell them what to do, point them in the right direction, wave their hands at them all the time to tell them what the clock is saying. Where in radio you were talking on the air with somebody, you were reading the next commercial, seeing if there was something in there that might throw you, and you were watching the clock to see that you were on time, and you do five or six things at one time. And I like that, you know, multi-tasking and being on your own was my kind of thing. So when I say I don't really like television, that's primarily why. I'm just not a television person, I don't even watch television that much; very little, mainly because I don't like what's on all that much. There are a few shows that appeal to me and I'll watch, and I'm on the Board at Channel 56, the public television station. I'm a board member and I do commercials and interviews and production stuff for them. I'll go down and lend my name and talent to doing things

for which I'm delighted. I mean, that's great that I can be a part of something that is valid. Public television is a valid thing just like this University. These are valid things in the community.

Q: As long as you're on that subject, Bob, now that "Bowling For Dollars" went away in 1979 --

A: (laughter) And I have not really done any television to speak of since then. There was one other show that I did. It was short-lived, 13 weeks, and it came out of "Milky's Party Time." In '68, when that show went off the air, the head of the advertising agency and the director of the show got together and they made a half hour out of the Stars of the Future, or Stars of Tomorrow or whatever they -- they used a different name when they did this show, one show was Stars of the Future and one was Stars of Tomorrow or something like that. But it was the same format. Kids came, people came -- and they could be adults this time, it wasn't just kids it was anybody that could pass the muster and have enough talent -- and we had committed to 13 weeks. The show did not do well. I don't know why, really, but it didn't. You never can second guess what you think is the greatest idea in the western world. I didn't think "Ask Your Neighbor" would last more than one, at the outside two, years. My judgment was "that's the corniest thing I

ever heard of. How can you ever possibly make that turkey fly?" Well, it flew. Same way with "Bowling For Dollars." That was a turkey, too, and hard to do that thing, but I made a couple of the biggest turkeys in the business fly and I'm proud of that. Frankly, I don't mean to sound, again, egotistical, but I am very proud of it.

Q: Sure.

A: Because that was difficult, to take programs like that that really in my estimation shouldn't have been on the air. (laughter) I wouldn't have watched them, or I wouldn't have listened to it. But there I was doing it. I didn't think "Ask Your Neighbor" would last, and here it is, well 43 years.

Q: "Bowling For Dollars" -- you became a household name.

A: Well, I was a household name, really, before that, but nobody knew what I looked like, and the household was not as big. That's the one thing about it. Television, being the prime medium, had many more viewers, particularly at seven o'clock at night than -- I would think that my 5:30 show, when that show was going at 5:30, I'll bet you my radio audience was every bit as big as the television audience because there weren't that many people available at 5:30 to watch television. They were getting home about that time from work. Remember, this is back in the early

70's; '73, '74 when we were on at 5:30 and people didn't get off work as early as they do now because the traffic wasn't as bad as it is now and they let people off their jobs earlier, for good reason, so they've got time to get home before it's dark. (laughter) Unless you stop for a couple on the way. At any rate, I think when they were on at 5:30 probably they were a little bit average-quarter-hour, higher, but not that much. My radio show had an awfully big audience, and that always surprised me. I said "how could it possibly be that appealing" but it was, and I can't argue with that. I was proven wrong and I'm glad because it's been -- that's really what I should be known for in this market, for my radio work; "Bowling For Dollars" notwithstanding, I think if "Bowling For Dollars" were still on the air then I would say "yes, that's what made me a household name." Although being a radio guy, I like to think of "Ask Your Neighbor" being my claim to fame. Although a lot of people now know me from my Bobson commercials. I do commercials for Bobson Construction Company. They were my most loyal sponsor on "Ask Your Neighbor." They've been on the air with me for about 38 or 39 years now, on "Ask Your Neighbor," and they're still my biggest sponsor every day. As a result, I do commercials for them on other stations and people who hear these

things, they know me by that. Because they don't listen to "Ask Your Neighbor," which is on at ten o'clock in the morning, which is not really a very available time. That's why our audience is so old. We have an older audience because, it's not only a matter of housewives and guys that work in the afternoon, but now it's retired people, men and women, who have worked, are now retired, and they can listen to the radio during the day. At ten o'clock in the morning, we have a lot of seniors, which is good for us, in a way. Besides which, I'm one, so I like to -- I can relate, I can relate, we can talk together.

Q: One of the things that you've become known for in the Detroit area, certainly here at Wayne State University, is all your work with civic organizations, charities, you name it. And so, not just you but your wife as well --

A: My wife is probably better known than I. It's given me my real name back because Maggie uses Allesee, where I have been almost forced to use Allison. Thank God she got into this fundraising, charitable bag. I've created a Frankenstein monster. She was a good *hausfrau* and she had a very, very successful husband who ran a family business that was worth many, many millions of dollars. When he passed away and we got married, a number of a years later, the company was sold and when it was sold, we only had a

few shares. Her three children had half of the company split between them, and her brother-in-law had the other half. He wanted to retire, and he wanted to sell the company, so he did. And I was in a way disconcerted that that happened because that was a very, very fine family business that went back 100 years.

Q: What was the family business?

A: It was Acheson Industries, and they were a colloid company. They manufactured lubricants and colloids, and the founder worked with Edison. When Edison was up in Lapeer, that's where they are, they worked together in a lab. He invented carborundum, never got to use it 'cause it got stolen out from under him by one of the big money people. I will not mention names because that's not my point here, but one of the big -- who was also a major philanthropist nationally known, and had a big company -- took that product, and actually stole it away from the Acheson family. But that's all right. He [Acheson] invented untold other products. He's like Edison. And he invented all these high-powered colloids; lubricants that major, big machinery could use. This is the ultimate three-in-one oil, you know. They'd have these great big punch presses, for example, huge stuff that needed to be lubricated, and he developed the products for that. His son then carried on the business and his

grandson was Maggie's first husband; Howard Acheson. I never knew him, of course, but he ran the company. This is a worldwide company. They have plants in several continents; I mean, they have a plant in Australia, they have a plant in Japan, they have a plant in England, and a plant in Belgium. It's a big company, and when he sold this company we only had, I don't suppose, but about 15 or 20 shares that were actually in our name, in Maggie's name, and therefore mine, but we suddenly came into about 25 million dollars. As I said earlier I don't have much interest in money. When Maggie and I first got married she was doing the family thing, taking the kids to soccer games and hockey games and ballet and all the things that kiddies do. She was very active in the Junior League, which is a very major charitable organization. She was very active there and she was very active over at Oakland Hills where she gratuitously produced the monthly club magazine. And she had always been in -- she had studied journalism in college, although she never worked in journalism. She taught grade school. She was a grade school teacher until she got married and then she was a momma. But when she married me, she suddenly is now in a whole different world, (laughter) the showbiz world, and of course, I have had an attitude all my life of giving back to people and

especially in the broadcast business. What have I been in this thing -- 55 years and at every station and in every market that I've ever worked I wanted to be a part of that community and do things for them mainly because it was my way of returning the recognition and celebrity and money that came to me as a well-known person in that community, wherever it would be. You say I'm a household name here. Well, I owe something for that. I mean you don't take that gratuitously. And I'm so ashamed of some of the people in our business and the fact that they don't pay their dues, so to speak. They just don't pay back; they think that they're walking on water and that everybody owes them a living. No. Not true. The only reason anybody ever knows me is because they listen or watch me, and therefore, I have to say thank you for that to this city that gave me the opportunity to be watched and listened to. And I have probably worked for every charitable group that you can name, including a lot that you don't know at all; dozens and dozens and dozens of them. I mean I've done it all my life. But Maggie was not into that kind of thing. She was in a garden club, and she was with the Junior League because she had a major job to do raising the family, but when we got together, all of a sudden she's seeing me going out night after night, or day after day, to go and MC

something, or to be at a fundraiser as the celebrity person, golf outings, and whatever it was that I would do. Or meetings, I must have been on, I don't know, 15 or 20 Boards and Committees. I started introducing her to some of the people who were friends of mine who were very active in these kinds of things, and although she had a very large circle of friends who were very wealthy, very important people, they weren't in that milieu of philanthropy and charity. Working in fundraising, in other words. I remember one person particularly, Betty Gerisch, who is no longer alive. Her husband was my doctor, and Betty was Madama Fundraiser. She was in everything. And the Gerisches were good friends of mine for many years. Not only was he my doctor, I knew him from Rotary Club and we were just good friends. When I started taking Maggie over to the Gerisches, and she got acquainted with Betty, suddenly, Betty realized "here is a natural fundraising, charitable person," and she was right. I think now that Mag must be on at least 30 or 35 Boards and Committees groups. That's more than she should do, she's doing more than she should do. But she doesn't do the monthly newspaper over at Oakland Hills anymore, hasn't done that for years. And she's still active in Junior League. She has sung every Tuesday with the Junior League chorus in

nursing homes ever since '69.

Q: Wow.

A: When she came here she joined Junior League because she had been a member of the Junior League down in St. Petersburg where she was born and raised. Her mother started the chapter down there, so she grew up with Junior League, which I suppose the way to describe it, it is the female version of the Rotary Club. Rotary Clubs do all sorts of good things. They don't make a big fuss about it, they don't talk themselves up, they do it quietly, and Junior League is that way. They're a marvelous women's organization that does quietly all kinds of good things. And we have two Junior League organizations in the metropolitan area: the Junior League of Birmingham and the Junior League of Detroit. They share their own little areas but they really do a lot of wonderful stuff, and Maggie was a natural to go into expanding on what she did with Junior League, to go in -- and she's just like a fish in water, like I said I created a Frankenstein monster. She's now doing more than I ever did. And so that's one of the reasons that people know me is because she does so much work, and that money that we got, we were now able to give it away, and I told her, I said, "I didn't marry you for money." Well she had money when I married her but that

wasn't at all my reason. I said "I have no interest in money." I said "how about you?" I said "enough to live on is all I want, you know, I don't really need anything more than that." And she said "I guess that makes sense." I said "I'd like to give it away, if you don't mind. I want to go out of life the same way I came in, bare naked and broke." You know, you come in with nothing, in one sense. Of course, if you're born into the right family, you've got a lot of money, and power, and name, and prestige, and all that stuff. But I didn't come into this life with all that stuff and I want to go out the same way. I don't really want a lot of money. And I want to leave some to my kids. We don't have to leave any to her children particularly because they're well off. Matter of fact, they'll probably be taking care of us if we give everything away. But that's really why we're philanthropists, you know, we like to give to things. Of course, when you run into bad markets like we have had for the last couple of years, that slows you down. You really have to give very close thought to being selective about where you're going to give money away. We're not profligate, we give money where we want to. Like here at Wayne State. We both have interests here; she in the Dance Department, in the Fine Arts Department, and me with Music and with Broadcast. And I

let her handle this. In the first place, it was her money. It wasn't my money, so let's be clear about that. It was Maggie's money that came from her family, so -- or her husband's family -- and, so I said "you can pick things out to give to, but do it with my approval if you don't mind because I don't want to see you giving away money to the wrong things, or I will sometimes suggest something to you and you can decide whether or not you want to, but it's OK with me if you don't." And, with that understanding, we have worked very well together in underwriting things. Yeah, I got my name back because most of these things are given in the name of Allesee, not Allison, and for that I am eternally grateful because I was beginning to forget who I was. You know, it's funny. People who have never had two names don't understand this because your name really is who you are, and the one thing that you should understand when you start out in life is take care of your name and your reputation 'cause it's really all that you have. That is really all you take with you through life, your name. And that is, when I say your name, what it means is your reputation. Now we've gotten a reputation as being philanthropists. I'm not too happy with that, I don't want to be known for that. I would like to be known for the good things we do. We help a lot of people and do a lot of

things, and that's good, but I don't really like to be called a philanthropist, I don't want to be in that class.

Q: Well, let me ask a question then.

A: OK.

Q: Whether you crave celebrity or not you've had a good measure of celebrity in this city. And, being a radio man and a TV man, at a certain point in time, you reach people. So, how would you like people to think of you? How would you like people to think of the impact you've had on Metro Detroit?

A: That's an interesting question because I don't contemplate that. I figure people will remember me or know me in as many different ways as there are people. In other words, people who don't like me -- and there are many of those, for whatever reasons, they don't like me, they don't like the way I perform, they don't watch or listen, -- remember only half of the people watched me, right? The other half didn't, and so you've got to keep this image in perspective -- people will remember me for exactly that reason, the way that they react to me individually is the way that they'll remember me. Some people who like me will remember me with great love and affection, and people who don't like me for whatever reasons, whether they're right or wrong, will remember me as somebody they didn't care for, and that's OK

with me. Because, you know, you can't please everyone, and once you know that, you quit trying to please everybody. You see politicians out on the trail trying to shake hands and kiss babies and please everybody and get every vote they can get. Well, maybe they should try to get every vote, but you cannot please everybody if you're going to be honest. And truly there are very few politicians who will stand by their positions and not start watering things down. This is why Congress has such a terrible time trying to get anything passed, because they're trying to please too many people, constituents. They're more worried about getting reelected than making honest decisions for how you run this country, and this has always been the political problem. This thing is the same -- what you're asking me is ultimately that same question, do I want to try to please everybody? No. I do what I do and I do it the way I do it, and if you like it that's wonderful, thank you very much. If you don't like it, I still like you. I'm not ticked off at somebody who doesn't like me. And I'm very pleased that I'm that way. It's something that I developed. You're not born that way really. I don't know how you are born, but you have certain instincts, and your family raises you with certain attitudes. My family happened to be very outgoing where I am not. I'm an

introvert but my mother was an extrovert and she was involved in all kinds of charitable organizations around our little town in La Porte. My daddy was an athletic director at the YMCA so he taught half the town how to swim and how to play basketball or volleyball and everybody knew him for that from his era. But he was always an outgoing person who did things for people. He was always happy and smiling. I knew about his dark side too because he would talk with me, and a lot of fathers never do that, they don't talk with their children. I don't know that -- I'm going to have to ask my kids sometimes whether I talk with them much about me and about my problems. I mean, usually I didn't. I talked about their problems and tried to help them. But, my dad and I were close enough, we were like friends rather than like father and son. And, like with friends, you start talking about your problems and you share your feelings. I was lucky enough to have wonderful parents, and particularly with my dad, that I could listen to him and that helped me. And it's not surprising that I've grown up to be an egalitarian and one who is a man of the people and not hoi polloi, and I don't want to be, I never had any intentions of that. I have come to be sort of that in a way, I, you know, I run around with all the hoi polloi people, I run around with the top people in the

-- but I hang out, too, with the people who work in the shop because all my life I have found that those are the people, ultimately, who tell you what's really going on. My own problem with the community, for example, is that I don't have any problem with where you live, but the fact of the matter is that there's a big divide between the city and the suburbs, and it's not just a racial thing. It's always been that people moved out to the suburbs and they set up little clans. They were isolationists setting up little islands of people just like them, and so (laughter), if you went out to the suburbs, you know, they were all little "Ticky Tacky Houses All In a Row" like the song back around in the 50's when they started building, and we became, instead of people of urban life, we became people of ex-urban life, or suburban life. Pardon me, the ex-urban life is coming now. We've gone that far out where suburbia is exurbia and where it ends I don't know. But I know one thing: when I came here I was delighted to be in a major market because I could live in a city. I did not want to live in a suburb. It turns out now for a number of years I have lived in a major, affluent suburb. That's because that's where Maggie was living when I married her, and I did not want to disrupt her children. I moved in with her in her house, and then when the time came, the

kids are grown, we sold that house. Both of us are golfers and we had an opportunity to buy a home on Oakland Hills Country Club on the fourth fairway and that's where I live. It's not a pretentious home. It's a very simple home but it's got a great backyard. And that's where I will die. I expect to be here -- but I always have been close to the city because the city is the heart of this whole metropolitan area. The suburbs have a tough time trying to understand that they don't exist unless Detroit exists, and they just don't want to accept that; especially, now that it's become so black and white, and that's too bad. When I came here the city was, oh, probably 60% white and 30 or 40% black, and some other -- now you've got blacks and Latinos and no more than 10 or 20% white in the population pattern and this is totally wrong. One of the things that I decided when I came here and decided to stay here, because I wasn't originally going to stay here but I'm glad I did, I've never regretted that decision, that was one of the best decisions I ever made. I love the city, I love the whole city and I've tried to tell people that you don't live in Birmingham, or Bloomfield; you don't live in Grosse Point; you don't live in Warren or Southgate, or Trenton, or Rochester; you live in Detroit. This is your city. And the thing is, if you're going to put up with all the

aggravations of a major metropolitan city, and all the disparities and problems that come with that, and there are many of those in any major market, the least you can do is to get the assets, the plusses of living in a city, and I consider that rubbing elbows with every kind of human being. The fact that I could live next door to a black family, and not only live next door to them but co-mingle with them, share meals, share conversations with them, that is a joy to me. People are too insular. Now, this coming from an introvert is funny, maybe, but this introvert, who is necessarily one who likes to be seclusive and by himself when I can, at the same time I extol the virtue of variety. Sameness is deadliness, you know? If you had to listen to the same song, played the same way, day after day after day, you would go bananas. I feel the same way about people. When I run into people who are all rubber-stamped, they become very uninteresting very quickly -- not that you can't find one or two individuals out of that group that are particularly interesting for other reasons -- but as a group they become uninteresting because they're all saying the same things in maybe slightly different ways. They all have the same attitudes and backgrounds and they all look alike, whether they're black, or white, or yellow, or red, or green, it makes no difference. They have become

ethnically separated, and this is a great tragedy because the beautiful thing about humanity is that it is one. We are just one, and until people get this idea in their heads they're never going to be one. They'll always want to be with their own instead of with "them," and I always wanted to be with them. It's just -- that's the funny thing, that's why I'm comfortable whether I'm in the city or suburbs or wherever I am. I'm always happy where I am, that was one of the first things I learned from my background in philosophy is that wherever you are, whatever's going on, this is the now. Right now -- this is where you are. If you can't make something out of that, yesterday is gone and tomorrow's not here. You're not living in yesterdays and tomorrows, you are living now. You might be thinking about tomorrow, and if you start thinking too much about tomorrow, you forget that you're alive today. If you start thinking too much about yesterday -- and either getting angry with what wasn't going right, or those were the good old days, which they really weren't -- you wind up not living now because you're living your life in the past, and there are many people who do both. They live in the past or they're living for the future, and they forget that there's only one time in your life that you're alive and that's right now. I'm alive

right now, at this moment, talking with Mike Smith. And talking to whoever wants to tune these tapes in, and I hope they understand that all the things that I am and do and think come out of this realization that we are but one. And, in terms of labor and management, for example. I almost went into labor relations, you know. I felt like I was spinning my wheels early on in the business and I'd been in broadcast about six or seven years or something like that, eight years maybe it was or -- it was under ten years and I wasn't getting any place. Now, I'm an achiever, and so if I'm not getting any place, I'll go to another well. If this one runs dry I'll find another well, and I'm not unhappy with where I am, but if it's not working for me, I'm smart enough to go someplace where it does work. And one of the interesting things was that I met a guy who worked for a major corporation and we were talking at the piano bar where I was playing piano. I was playing piano, and working at the radio station, and making a living. And, he was looking for somebody to do industrial relations, to do what they call now -- what is it, IT, no not information technology, what is it, HR?

Q: HR, right. Human relations.

A: Human relations, that's what they call it now, but back in those days, and this was around 1959 or '60, so it was a

long time ago, it was called industrial relations, and I actually applied for the job. And I almost got it, and the reason I didn't get the job, I know, was because I didn't have a college degree. That was the only time that I regretted, perhaps, not having a college degree. Because I never needed it. It wasn't important to me work-wise, it's a symbol, and it's a good one too. I'm not knocking it but I didn't need it. But, that time I did. That particular company had certain rules and parameters and ways that people should bring with them on their resume, and I didn't have that. But I know this: I could've gone out in the shop and solved labor management problems because I knew from my own experience, and from watching and reading the daily newspapers, that there was something seriously wrong with the way management was approaching labor; they just didn't understand what labor was about. And, in many cases, labor did not understand what management was about, they had no idea what management -- they thought they [management] were sitting around and going to lunch every day and having three martinis. And the management people thought that these guys [workers] were a bunch of goons out there fiddling around and taking coffee breaks and not caring whether they made the widgets right or wrong. Well, both of them were terribly wrong. Management can't get

along without labor. If there's nobody to make the product, you don't have a product, and if there's nobody to manage the company, to produce the capital that it takes to start the company, to have the sales people and the whole corporate structure, or business structure -- it can be a small business -- but if you don't have somebody running it, and hiring and firing and making management decisions, you don't have any place to work. So labor needs managements, management needs labor; and that sounds terribly stupid and simple, but for a long time, since the beginning of the industrial revolution, 2, 300 years, nobody's figured this out yet. Well, I was ready to go out and find the answers because what I saw happening was that management should give a lot more to labor and labor should give a lot more to management. They should understand each other. And all it takes is a matter of sitting down (laughter) and talking to each other. They don't do that, do they? If you ever sat in a labor negotiation -- when I was on the Board of AFTRA, for example, that particular union, when we would come into labor negotiations with the stations, many times I was involved as a board member with these negotiations, and I could not believe the silly arguments that the union was making, and the silly arguments that management was making. They just didn't

understand each other at all. And I almost went bananas with that. I hope someday that -- this is very much like people understanding that we are one, and management and labor is the same way. You are one, you're not separate entities, you're part of the whole, and they have to work that way. Anyway, I'm glad I've been here working.

Q: So, we're near the end of the tape.

A: OK. Every good thing comes to an end.

Q: Everything good comes to an end.

A: There is a beginning and there is an ending in life and in everything that happens. Everything is finite, nothing is infinite except God.

Q: So I'm going to give you the opportunity --

A: (laughter)

Q: -- to end this.

A: I get to make an infinite statement?

Q: Yeah. What do you want --

A: For posterity.

Q: What do you want to leave people with who read your transcript or listen to these tapes about your career in Detroit?

A: Oh, my career has been very rewarding. I've done the things the way I want to do them and I think that that's good. I think people ought to know that you make the

decisions for yourself and that everything that happens in your life you did it. It didn't happen by accident; everything you do is done for a reason, but it comes to you because of your attitudes, because of the things that you say and do, good things or bad things come to you. And if bad things come to you, know one thing: it wasn't just the devil who did it, it was you who did it. Any bad thing that happens, any good thing that happens, and the city of Detroit has been nothing but good for me, I love it and I'm glad I'm here. And all urban areas ought to know more about the functions that go on between the city and their people, and the interactions that go therefrom. It's very much like management and labor relations, urban relations are the same thing. You've got to understand people must talk. They cannot hide like they're doing now in urban settings; we've become isolated. And if I leave this thought with nothing else, it is that we must come out of our enclaves and come back together and celebrate life because that's all we really have. What else is there? Whether you're in a rural area or an urban area, you know, you have this life to live, and live it, for goodness sake.

Q: You impress me as someone with no regrets.

A: Oh, no, I have no regrets. No, no. What good would that do? People who sit around hollering "woe is me" or

blaming, either way, never understand themselves and they don't know what's going on. No, I have no regrets. If I were to live my entire life over, every moment of 73 years, on June the fifteenth of 2005 I would be sitting here talking with Mike Smith. I have never done anything -- I would not live my life over and change anything because the things that went wrong are things from which I learned, and you don't learn from your successes, you learn from your mistakes. So every mistake I made was a great learning experience, and here is where I would be and I would be very happy (laughter). Thank you very much.

Q: You're welcome. And, you don't even regret the pancake.

A: Nope. Not even the pancakes (laughter).

Q: Thank you very much, Bob.

A: You're welcome, Mike.