

# LIFE IN PETERS TOWNSHIP

## An Oral History Project by the Peters Township Public Library

In the spring of 2003, the Peters Township Public Library staff, with funding from Taste of the Township, began an Oral History Project to record and preserve the history of the township through personal audio interviews with past and present residents. The library contracted with the Senator John Heinz History Center's Oral History Service to assist with conducting the interviews, which began in August 2003. The interviews reflect many facets of the history of Peters Township, including farm life, education, government, recreation, transportation, churches, and industry, and at the same time preserve many of the personal experiences of our longtime residents. Photographs, documents, records, letters, and other items shared during the interview process were digitized by library staff and volunteers and incorporated into the finished transcript by Heinz History Center staff and volunteers. The transcripts of the oral histories are available both at Peters Township Public Library and in the Library and Archives of the Senator John Heinz History Center.



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### **Oral History Service**

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Peters Township Public Library gratefully acknowledges financial support from the Taste of the Township committee members and the Friends of Peters Township Public Library. Of special note is our gratitude for the many volunteer hours provided by Edward H. Lybarger and William P. Jones to this project documenting the history of Peters Township.

We extend our thanks to Barry Alfonso who traveled to Peters Township Public Library over a two-year period to conduct all of the interviews. For this Township Oral History Project, we enjoyed the privilege of working with the Senator John Heinz History Center Staff who provided invaluable assistance throughout the duration of this project.

But above all else, we recognize the efforts of the many wonderful interviewees who gave of their time to share their life memories and experiences about growing up in, working in, and living in Peters Township. This is their story, the substance of this project, and we have been enriched by them. We dedicate the project "Life in Peters Township" in their honor.

Pier Lee, Director  
Peters Township Public Library

Margaret Deitzer and Carrie Weaver, Reference Department  
Peters Township Public Library

Interview subjects are, in alphabetical order:

Robert Chamberlin	Howard Jack
Dave Cushey	Elma Johnston
Reed Day	Martha Miller Latimore
Robert Donaldson with	Edward Lybarger
Patricia Donaldson Stutzman and	Robert Matthews
Alice Donaldson Coffield	Thomas McMurray
Richard Froebe with	Jean McMurray-Hutchison
Bessie A. Froebe	Bill Northrop
Erma Grego	John Opeka
Joe Hardy	Boyd Caldwell Roach
Dave Harmon	Doris Trax
Charles Haudenshield	Tina Wagner

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## Richard Froebe



Richard Froebe was raised in Peters Township and has spent his lifetime there working on the family farm on Froebe Road, which borders Peterswood Park.

Richard was born on October 27, 1953 at Magee Hospital in Pittsburgh, PA. He is the son of the late Earl Froebe, former Peters Township roadmaster and supervisor, and his wife, Bessie.

Richard attended Peters Township High School and graduated with the Class of 1971. He went on to the University of Pittsburgh and obtained a degree in anthropology after spending twelve months studying abroad in England, Scotland, Italy, Majorca and Yugoslavia.

He is a member of the International Order of Odd Fellows and currently resides in the township.

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Richard Froebe  
October 15, 2003, December 12, 2003

Tape 1 (1 of 3), Side A  
(1st Interview: October 15, 2003)

Interviewee = Richard Froebe (RF)

Interviewer = Barry Alfonso (BA)

BA: To get this on the record, your full name is Richard Froebe?

RF: Yes.

BA: And date of birth and place of birth?

RF: 10-27-53. Magee Hospital, Pittsburgh.

BA: Okay. So you are going to begin by going through a historical statement that your father wrote. Is that right?

RF: Yes.

BA: Okay. So let's go through that, and if there's something that really seems pressing, maybe I'll raise my hand and...

RF: That's a good idea.

BA: ...we can halt for a minute, but just basically we'll run through that.

RF: Well my dad wrote ...

(Reading)

I'll try to give the information I have on the Froebe's. Valentine Froebe was born in Germany; also Elizabeth Gutub, which is German for good boy. They were both born in Hamburg, Germany. When they landed by boat in New York, they said he was around 21 years old, and all he had was the clothes on his back. Then he worked his way to Pittsburgh working for different ones. He had enough money to rent a parcel of ground. Then he bought a horse and plow, and started a farm in Pittsburgh. [To] get across the Monongahela River, they said, at that time the water was knee-deep on the horse's legs. This was because the river was wide, and it went from Carson Street to Water Street. [That has] been narrowed down now, and the Smithfield Street Bridge was built. It still stands, and the traffic uses it everyday to get to Pittsburgh. What year it was built, I do not know.

Valentine Froebe bought a farm in Mt. Lebanon, PA, and he married Elizabeth Gutub. What year, I'm not sure. That farm was in Allegheny County. The only children I know they had were Willie, Mary, Elizabeth, George, William, and John Philip Froebe. Willie died an infant. I never heard them talk about anyone else. Willie was buried in Zion Lutheran Church Cemetery in Brentwood, PA. When the times changed [from the horse and buggies to

automobiles, it took part of] the cemetery and his grave had to be moved. Because they asked my father, George Froebe, they could move the grave back.

Valentine Froebe's children were all born in Mt. Lebanon on the farm he was buying. Later he got up again, and he owed around 700 dollars. Yet he could not come up with the money. So he lost the farm and had to be moved. Then he [rented] the Smith farm of 400 acres [from] attorney Smith in Washington, PA. The farm was located in Peters Township, Washington County. This move was around the 1870s on the farm. It had a red brick two-story house – barn, house, stable, wagon, shed, and sheep [shed]. The rent was a thousand dollars a year. They had 15 cows, 100 head of sheep, 6 horses. He had to ship milk to Smith Dairy in cans, haul the milk to Hills Station to the train. It was eight miles one way. It had to be at the station at 7 o'clock in the morning.

Then the manufacture's light heat company contracted Froebe's for two teams: two men in two wagons. The line was laid from West Virginia to Pittsburgh [and took] the biggest part of the year. They got paid five dollars a day – the team wagon men. After the line was laid, there was a well drilled and they got free gas in the house.

Valentine Froebe would haul hay to Pittsburgh with one or two teams. Of course, it depended on the condition of the roads, which was called Brownsville Road. On his way back in Mt. Oliver at Henney Feed Store, he'd bring back cow feed and other supplies. This trip he would leave at 10:00 PM tonight and get back tomorrow night around 10:00 or 11:00 PM. So this night he was not home yet at 10:30. So his sons started out to look for him. They got a half-mile up on Sugar Camp Road, and he was laying on the ground. He had been kicked in the [face] by a mule. The one trace was loose; [they] think he got off to hitch it up. Valentine Froebe was buried in St. Paul's Cemetery, Mt. Oliver, Pittsburgh, PA.

Elizabeth Gutub [Froebe] probably was buried in St. Paul's Cemetery, Mt. Oliver, Pittsburgh, PA. Elizabeth lived several years after the death of Valentine Froebe. They said she would have very sick headaches at times that would last for a couple of days.

At another point in time later on, George and Philip Froebe bought a 117 acre farm, which joined the Smith farm in the year 1890. In the year 1900, lightning struck the barn in August and it burned to the ground.

[Philip] John Froebe married Ricky Swingler, February 17, 1887. John Philip Froebe and his wife lived on this farm. So in the year [1902], they rebuilt the barn. After their death, the farm was sold, and it was sold again for farming.

George William Froebe and Philip bought the Ross farm in 1903, which joined the Smith farm of 100 acres. So they decided to give up the Smith farm. So the brothers said, "You take one farm, and I'll take the other." Then they divided everything they had: cows, sheep, horses, machinery. George William Froebe married Elizabeth Zimmerman, February 7, 1895. The Smith farm – they lived on this farm until they passed away. I was born on this farm, and still farming it yet.

John Philip Froebe was born in 1862, and he died [April 7,] 1949. Fredericka Swingler was born in 1863 and she died in 1958.

Children of Philip Froebe: One of the first born was born March, '87 and he died in '87. Henry Valentine was born [March 17,] 1888, and died [April 29,] 1977. Anna Mary was born [October 24,] 1890, and died in 1974. George William was born [August 7,] 1892, and I believe he died in 1952. Elizabeth was born [June 22,] 1894 and died [January 15,] 1978. William August was born [May 12,] 1896, and died [November 12,] 1899. Eva was born [April 30,] 1899 and died in 1989. Margaret was born [September 6,] 1903, and died in 1989.





1. John Philip Froebe with his wife, Ricky Swingler Froebe.

Freda Matthews married John Bacher. Three children: Ronald, Joseph, and Nancy.

Harvey Matthews married Betty McGee. Four children: Allen, Margaret, Barbara, and John.

Eleanor married Paul DeBald. Three children: David, Elizabeth, and Stephanie.

Eva Froebe married Fred Kleeb. They had four children, two stepsons: Frederick, Karl, Betty, and Margaret.

Margaret Froebe married Howard McConkey. They had two children: John and James. (Stops Reading)

Let's stop for a second.

BA: Okay.

RF: I'm going back... Now I'm going back into my dad's family, and reading all of this. I can continue doing that.

BA: Well, what might actually be useful is if we could get maybe a photocopy of that. This could be added to the transcripts that are made of the conversation today, and, in fact, it would be good to have a copy just to check the spellings of some of the names.

RF: That's fine.

Henry Valentine Froebe married Marie Jacob, and there were no children. Anna M. Froebe married Ira Bebout – one child. Ira Bebout, Jr. married Dorothy Trax. [They] had two children: Tommy and Carole. Tommy's two weeks older than me. George William Froebe married Evelyn. They had no children. Elizabeth Froebe married Harvey Matthews, and had four children.

Robert Matthews married Marie Hoffman. They had five children: Richard, William, James, Kenneth, Jane Ann.



2. View of the Froebe barn in 1917 with the springhouse in the foreground.

BA: So this sort of thing can be inserted.

RF: Let me do this last page of people, and then we're going to get started into different people on the farms and the history. So I just want to...

BA: Okay.

RF: A lady from California came up – Beverly Rocker. She asked my dad about the history of the Mollenauer family. And that's what we're going to get into.

BA: Okay. Which family?

RF: Mollenauer.

BA: Mollenauer. Okay

RF: (Looking through papers) All right.  
(Reading)

My grandfather, George William Froebe, was born February 2, 1860, died on April 21, 1949; Elizabeth Zimmerman Froebe was born September 14, 1872, and she died on January 10, 1950. They were married November 7, 1895. George W. Froebe's children were: Albert John Froebe born 1896, died 1929; Margaret Marie Froebe was born 1898, died in 1898; Clarence Philip Froebe was born 1901 and died in 1904; Harry William Froebe was born in 1903 and he died 1909 – he was five; Earl August Froebe was born May 1, 1909. I lost my dad about six years ago, and I wanted to talk about [it].



**3. Earl Froebe with family friend Howard Heinz at the dinner bell used on the farm.**

[Ruth] Viola Thomas: her parents passed away when they were young. My grandfather and grandmother adopted her, and adopted the name Froebe. [She] married Martin Stoltz, and they had one son, John.

My father Earl August married Mary Bessie A. Young. They had four children: Mary Elizabeth Froebe, born in 1939; Philip Earl Froebe was born in 1943; Erla Ruth Froebe was born August 19, 1946; I was born October 27, 1953. Erla has two children by the name of James and Christine.

Mary Elizabeth married August Mollenauer from the Smith farm. They did not provide me with a date, but I think they would get this information. August E. Mollenaur took his bride, Mary Elizabeth, to the farm at the Gilkeson Stop, Eighty Four, PA. They lived in a log house, a very large barn, farm. Their children were all born here, [that I know].

The West Penn Power Company has bought the farm now and they will build a big transformer for electricity for Pennsylvania and Ohio. I guess they have other plans to work out with the farm.



**4. Earl August Froebe with his wife, Bessie Young Froebe.**

He farmed, ran steam engines, thrushing machines in Washington County, Pennsylvania. After the [First] World War, his health was not too good, so he had a public sale and sold everything on the farm. The auctioneer said Mollenauer overslept. He got up at 3:15 AM, and that was 1923.

Then they went to Visalia, California, having farming in his blood. He got help [picking and drying] fruit there. [I] can't remember who all went out there with them.

Uncle August and Aunt Mary made a couple trips back here. They were coming around to see everyone. Later, after that, Uncle August passed away.

Aunt Mary made several trips by railroad to see Phil, [Will,] and Ed, and also the two brothers, George and Philip Froebe. They would have a real visit, talk things over, old and new. [The last] time Aunt Mary was [here, she was] 90 years old. On [her] way home, she lost her glasses. They were on her head when they found them. Things looked different. (Laughs) She put the glasses on her head.

(Stops Reading)

That's all I have.

[I'll] tell you a story on Uncle August Mollenauer. They delivered hay in Pittsburgh. After unloading his wagon, there was a man [who] offered him 600 dollars for his team of horses and gave him his team on the trade. August got home around 12:00 midnight. He put the team away in the barn, then went along the B & O Railroad to the house and went to bed. The next morning he got up and his pants were gone. When he went to the barn, his pants were laying along the B & O Railroad track. He figured he lost his 600 dollars and somebody followed him home. Two weeks later, Aunt Mary got her hat off the high wardrobe. She found his pocket book and the 600 dollars. He threw it up there himself, not knowing he had done that.



**5. Mary Elizabeth Froebe Mollenauer, daughter of Valentine and Elizabeth Gutub Froebe. She was married to August Mollenauer.**

BA: Okay. Well, that's a good place to start. I might ask if there are any stories that you know of about some of your ancestors on the Froebe side that are not mentioned in these notes – any anecdotes, stories you might have heard from family members?

RF: Not at this time. What I wanted to go from here was to go into like the farming and how they would deliver their products to market.

BA: Okay.

RF: I have one. George William Froebe, my grandfather, made a belt buckle out of his brass name plate on his milk can. The milk can rusted away and it said: "George W. Froebe, Library, PA, Charleroi Line." What they would do every day was to get up at three or four [in the morning] and milk. Take the milk to the Library streetcar stop on horse and buggy.

BA: And this is what era we're talking about?

RF: I'm assuming '20s.

BA: Okay.

RF: '30s. They would leave their cans at the streetcar stop and come home. The streetcar conductor would come out and he'd have to load all the milk cans from all the farmers onto his trolley. It was called the Charleroi Line. Down in the Reicks Dairy down in Charleroi. And they knew where the cans came from because of the brass nameplates. All the dairy processors gave each farm a brass name plate so you knew where the milk came from. So you would be credited. They tallied up the milk and then the empty can would make the return trip.

BA: This was with an understanding with the streetcar line. This wasn't a special arrangement? This was just something that they did for farmers in the area, as far as you know?

RF: That was the only way to get milk – fresh milk – to the dairy plant in Charleroi. I'm talking about transportation and the quickness of it.

We can jump to the Mon Valley Expressway and World War II. It's amazing. A lot of steel was produced in this area. They had a lot of resources and things to produce things for the war effort. So how do you get stuff out of the Mon Valley that is really just a railroad line? You need a faster transportation system to get the materials to the other factories to build equipment for war. So they actually sat down in the '40s during World War II and designed the Mon Valley Expressway. And everybody thinks it's a brand new thing, and they're coming in and destroying their homes, which it's not. It came under World War II.

BA: Okay. So going back to your grandfather's time, his name again was...?

RF: George William Froebe.

## *Benefit To Area*

# Mon Valley Highway Given Peters Township Support

A resolution in support of the Mon Valley Expressway was adopted by the Peters Township Board of Supervisors in regular session Tuesday night.

The resolution urges "area legislators to take appropriate . . . action to pass legislation providing for right - of - way acquisition funds for those portions of the Expressway which are currently a part of the Highway Commission's 'six - year program'."

The board feels that Peters Township would be benefited by construction of the Expressway since it would provide greater access and more direct routes to nearby areas. In addition, the Supervisors hope that the highway will be routed through the northern portion of Peters Township.

August H. Engelhardt, township engineer, said plans are being prepared to free the natural drainage channel which is causing flooding on Oakwood Road properties.

The board will advertise for bids on a new police patrol car. This is to replace a vehicle which is over the 40,000 mile mark.

A plan showing the entry to the proposed Ram Construction Company site on Valley Brook Road is expected to be submitted for consideration at the next board meeting.

The board scheduled a public hearing on the Subdivision Ordinance under the Comprehensive Master Plan for 8 p.m. Tuesday, March 23. The ordinance will be available for public inspection in the office of James A. Ross, township manager, prior to the hearing.

Supervisor Stanley H. Duckworth said meetings are being

held between the board and the Planning Commission to establish standard operating procedures for the benefit of those appearing before the Planning Commission.

Earl A. Froebe, supervisor and roadmaster, reported some 450 tons of salt and 900 tons of cinders have been used on township roads since Jan. 1. He thanked residents for their cooperation in keeping cars off the sides of the roads to facilitate the work of the road crews during the heavy snow. He requested that vehicles be parked on one side of the roads only so snowplows can keep the other side clear.

To ease hazardous traffic conditions during the icy weather at the intersection of Maplewood Drive and Valley Brook Road, the township will cinder the first few hundred feet of Maplewood Drive and deposit cinders further up the hill which will be spread by the residents.

Engelhardt said the situation at that intersection has been brought to the attention of the Department of Transportation. It was suggested a portion of the hill toward Radioear Corporation be removed to provide greater visibility.

He also will notify the Department that guard posts are missing in several spots along Valley Brook Road.

The board will notify the Peters Township Volunteer Fire Company of new buildings under construction in the community so that firemen may study the structural layout in case of future fires. This is particularly applicable to buildings where chemicals are to be stored.

6. A newspaper article from the 1970s documents the Peters Township Board of Supervisors support of the Mon Valley Expressway.

BA: George William Froebe. And his diary farm: Is that still property that's in the family hands, or is that no longer...?

RF: We have a 90 acre farm next to Peterswood Park.



**7. George William Froebe with horses, King and Jerry.**



**8. This photograph of the Froebe farm dated September 1964 was used as the family Christmas card.**

BA: Okay. And that is where his dairy farm was?

RF: My father stopped dairying in 1958.

BA: Okay. But your grandfather: Is that where he...?

RF: He bought the farm in 1905.

BA: Okay.

RF: My dad said 1903.

BA: Okay. Did you know him? Did you know your grandfather at all?

RF: No. He died two years before I was born.

BA: Okay. And your grandmother: Did you know her?

RF: She died a couple months later.

BA: Okay. Did you hear any other stories about your grandfather from your dad?

RF: My father has more ditties and stories than you can imagine. We try to record some of them.

BA: Okay. Some that come to mind that seem particularly interesting?

RF: We can go back to, well, where the Ruscitto Horse Farm is now. These two brothers – my grandfather and his brother – they rented the horse farm, and it was from the coal company, which was mentioned in here. And when they had enough money saved up, they wanted to buy it. And my understanding is that they weren't ready to sell yet. So when these two properties came up, the Froebe farm, George's side, and then the other side is where the Scenic Valley Golf Course is now. So you have two brothers buying two farms next to each other. The other farm was 114 acres. It's mentioned in here that Henry and Mary didn't have any children that survived. So that farm died out.

Our side is still there. I have photographs of Albert in front of the Bruni Farm. It was called the Bruni Farm.

But it was a two-story brick house and they rented there. We have photographs of them. And when they saved up enough money they bought our farm. My grandfather bought our farm for 7500 dollars in 1905, and they farmed there.

If you look through the number of family members, it was really necessary to have a large family to maintain and farm and survive. The larger the family, the healthier the family would be. And many of the children died within a couple months. In the 1900s, everybody [was] encouraged to have a large family and these large homes, and it was multi-generational families in one dwelling place. The parents and the children would take care of the grandparents so they

wouldn't have nursing homes. Parents would have to work, and the grandparents would take care of the children. So that was a very popular thing.

And when I grew up in the '50s, '60s, and '70s, as soon as a child was 18 years old, they're out of the house, literally kicked out of the house. You go to college, we'll help you out, although you don't come back. And that was a big shift over the last 60 years.

And now with the nursing homes and how they care for patients, it's another shift to go back to these large homes, and get the old people out of those nursing homes back in the care of the family and enable the family to care for their loved ones.



**9. Albert Froebe, brother of Earl Froebe, cutting wheat in a field near the Froebe house.**

BA: I know your father was very active in community affairs here. Was your grandfather to any degree, that you know of?

RF: From the Peters Township point of view, I would say no. Again, you have farmers who produce milk, grains, hay. They have to get them to market to Pittsburgh. You have wilderness, so they have to make roads. They have to develop their own transportation system. [Froebe's driveway became Froebe Road; Bebout's driveway became Bebout Road.]

If you wanted to get to McMurray's Grist Mill down here, they would tell you to go down to McMurray's place, and that becomes McMurray Road. And that's how some of the names – the older names – got started.

BA: So by putting in the road, in effect, he was investing in the community – in the future community – too?

RF: Yeah, because it was a network of local industry, and it was agricultural industry, and you had to tie all those people together and get their products to market. And as the families grew, there was less burden on the community as a whole, and the community was healthy in producing food and had a lot of good stores.





**10. Froebe Road before it was widened.**

BA: Do you think that your dad and your grandfather had a good relationship; or do you know anything about how close they were?

RF: The farm families back then... All the family members were close because their survival depended on it. So it wasn't a question of yelling or being mean to get people to do things. These were the things that had to be done, or you don't eat. We didn't have the luxury of being relaxed. When something needed to be done, it had to be done at that time, before the rain came in or the wind or the winter. It was very large structure, very complicated. Everybody basically knew what had to be done or you'd go to bed hungry, because there's no food in the house.

BA: Did your grandfather have a comfortable old age, do you think, meaning that he was secure? And, you know, did the farm give him a comfortable enough living that he could take it easy somewhat.

RF: Comfortable living is... I really can't compare those.

BA: By his standards.

RF: He had children. He had grandchildren in his home. By that standard, he had a great life because he was surrounded by family. And he produced a family to continue and that was a very important thing. I didn't know him. I have lots of photographs of him with the children and grandchildren. Everybody kind of bonded together. You also had a lot of people that would come to the farm and work, sometimes for a day, sometimes for 40 years or 50 years.

BA: I heard about that.

RF: That was a very acceptable practice back then. They would give room and board, and sometimes some money, if they produced a little bit of extra money.

Like George Bateson: he just passed away. He lived up the farm. And Eddie Winkler: rolled my dad's water retractor when he was a young kid working there. He went on to become one of the heads of the Lutheran Church. So there were a lot of people who would come and work for a short period of time. Then you had orphans, troubled youth. You'd go down to Washington, you'd go to Pittsburgh, and get these youths, and they would come out and work on the farm. And if they would work and stay on the farm, they could be there for a while. If they didn't work out, they went into the military.

My dad was helping a young fellow; he came out. And he was doing bad things at the [farm]house. My dad, after 24 hours, he was back in court with the kid, and the kid went into the service because he was...

And also to farm and to run a business, you have to be very well educated, very well read. But you didn't have time to go to school, except the very young kids. So you'd have to be self-taught in many aspects and be able to do whatever needs to be done on a farm to survive, anywhere from plumbing or electrical work or welding or water. Everybody would pull resources. If somebody got stuck on something, they'd go over and help out.

BA: It's your impression, at least, in your grandfather's day that it was a very structured world, but a mutually supportive world that existed, like as the farm as a model of this?

RF: For survival. Yes. That was the key rule. We were going to eat something this winter. So everybody worked together for that very simple goal. So we didn't have time for complex discussions or things going on in the world: battles and wars and politics and economics. We had to survive. And we had to grow and stay healthy, which was another major factor.

BA: Just out of curiosity, at that time in the community, politically, was this a very Republican area by that time? Did it still have some of its residual Democratic heritage? Or do you have an impression of that?

RF: Not really. Because the politics really weren't an issue of who's going to be one way or the other. Again, you're back to an agricultural community where survival comes first. A full belly and a warm bed transcend your time to be involved in politics. As industry and agriculture developed and we produced more food, the people had more time [and] we'd spend more time with politics.


BA: That wasn't something at least your family thought about a lot.

RF: Not when I was growing up, no. My father became supervisor in 1953, supervisor for 18 years. The last two years he was voted the number one supervisor in Pennsylvania. [In] 1971, the residents of Peters Township voted him out of office. They didn't want the best of the best. That was very painful.

BA: I would think so.

February 20, 1958


**SUPERVISOR**



Earl A. Froebe, a member of the Peters Township Board of Supervisors for more than five years, resides with his wife, the former Bessie A. Young of Pittsburgh, and their four children, Mary 18, a senior in Peters Township High School; Phillip 14 and Richard 4 and Erla 11, on the old Froebe Road in Venetia. The Froebe family have been residents of Peters Township for more than a ninety-eight years. Earl was born on the Froebe Farm on May 1, 1909. He was educated in Wrights School which was located on Sugar Camp Road near where the present Peters Creek United Presbyterian Church is located. Most of the old time square dancers of this area will remember Earl as the figure-caller at Square Dances all over Southwestern Pa. Earl took up figure-calling at eighteen, just about the time his older brother Albert passed away, leaving Earl and his father George to operate the Froebe's 100-acre farm. He is one of the original members of the Peters Township Protective Association, an active member of the I.O.O.F. since 1929. Earl and his family are members of Peters Creek United Presbyterian Church. In addition to serving as a regular member of the Board of Supervisors, Earl is also Peters Township Roadmaster, responsible for maintenance of our Township's thirty-four miles

11. A brief biography of Earl Froebe appeared in the February 20, 1958 issue of the *Peters Township News*.

**EARNST  
AND  
RELIABLE  
LIVING FOR ALL**



**FOR (Good)  
ROADS  
ON  
ECONOMY  
BASE (That is)  
ESSENTIAL**

- 18 Yrs. Exp. Twp. Supervisor
- President Wash. Co. Sup. Assoc.
- Member STATE Board of Supervisors
- Life Long Resident of Peters Twp.
- Married, Four Children

McPEAKE 1 PRtg. CO.

12. Election material distributed by Earl Froebe in 1971.

Peters Township *June 1 1973*

**Supervisors Reorganize**

Magistrate John M. Richardson presided at the swearing in of incumbent Stanley H. Duckworth and newly elected James C. Rocco during the annual reorganization meeting of the Peters Township Board of Supervisors on Monday, January 3. The men will serve six year terms.

Duckworth was elected chairman of the board, replacing Reinhardt J. Krebs, and David P. Hull was elected vice chairman.

Reappointments included James A. Ross, township manager; Mrs. Emma Pringle, secretary-treasurer; Roy Walters, solicitor; Engelhardt and Power engineer; Walter Butler, building inspector, and Frank R. Finley, animal control officer.

Earl A. Froebe ended 18 yrs. on the board. The supervisors expressed their gratitude for his service.

Froebe was reappointed road foreman for a 90-day probationary period ending March 31.

Other appointments were Willard H. Mack, reappointed to a five-year term on the Planning Commission; Jan W. Passmore of 202 West McMurray Road, named to a three year term on the Zoning Hearing Board replacing Paul M. Hankison who resigned.

James W. Stimson, five-year term on the Recreational Board; Mrs. Samuel F. Lybarger and Mrs. John E. Summers, reappointed to three-year terms on the Library Board, and Mrs. Willard H. Mack, one-year appointment to complete the term of Mrs. Hazen Lever.

Harold C. Knapper was reappointed to a five-year term on the Sanitary Authority.

Board Meeting dates remain the first and third Tuesdays at 8:30 p.m. except for July 4 and November 7 (election day). These dates have been changed to July 5 and November 8.

The salary schedule for police officers remains the same as 1971 pending the outcome of arbitration currently underway.

Police communications operators received a 10 per cent hour increase. There was a slight increase for secretarial employees.

Road maintenance crew salaries were unchanged pending a union election to be held Friday.

According to recent legislation the newly-elected supervisors, Rocco and Duckworth, will receive \$15 per meeting. Incumbents pay will remain at \$10 per session.

It was announced that a program of opening township facilities for public inspection will begin about March 19 when an open house is tentatively scheduled in the municipal garage and offices.

Committee chairmen on the board are Robert A. Meredith, building and finance; Krebs and Hull, highways, new construction and maintenance; Rocco, Library Board and parks and recreation; Duckworth Planning Commission, Zoning Hearing Board and police grievance, Hull, public relations and safety department (fire and police), and Krebs, sanitation.

13. A newspaper article details the reorganization of the Peters Township Board of Supervisors, including the temporary appointment of Earl Froebe as road

RF: And that still carries through with my mom and the rest of the family members. But we had a transition of like in Venetia and Hackett. We had the railway then. You had coal miners. You had agricultural people. And that's who my dad represented. And to get more money and improvements to Peters Township and the community, you would go to the state and the state programs. By being a supervisor, you'd petition things. You'd get more things in from the state to help develop roads and school systems. And he was very active in that. You figure there was no ambulance.

You had schools that dated back to the 1800s, but they were pretty much still the one-room schoolhouses that were scattered around throughout the area. As the food increased, the population increased, and you have more problems and more things to get done.

And snow removal was pretty nasty in the '50s. We have roads. We'd get like eight feet, ten feet of snow – from the photographs I have. There was no road department. So how do the local businesses get their products to market if they can't pass a road that's covered with snow? So you get together with the community and try to get the state to give you some money for equipment, so that you keep, you know, at least the major arteries open for the township to grow. There was none of that. My dad and other people in the community came up with the road department and the ambulance. Harvey Matthews was more on the ambulance side.

That was what my dad did. He built roads because his entire life he had to build roads out of red dog to get his products to market [and] to get the other people in the community to get their products to market. So all the original roads probably have red dog for a base because they would go in and get all the slag that the steel mills were throwing out. And that's what they would do to have a red dog driveway – be out there with sledgehammers breaking up the big rocks.

BA: To go over your dad's life a little bit more: Do you think that he patterned himself from when he was young after his father? Did he intend to be a farmer when he was young? Do you know anything about that?

RF: In 1952, if you weren't a farmer, then you had to live in the city and get a job. So that was, you know, sitting in a cubicle in a big building and being closed in was kind of contradictory to your genetic upbringing for you. So that would be a really hard thing to do. My dad farmed all his life, and when his grandfather passed away, he just kept on farming and he farmed until he was out of breath.

BA: He did some square dance calling?

RF: Yes. Everybody square danced. Everybody danced. You didn't have any other entertainment.

BA: But he was a caller.


RF: He was a caller.

BA: Do you know much about that side of his life and times?



14. Earl Froebe driving a tractor on his farm.

The Commerce News Page 5



**BOY SCOUTS**

Troop #71  
Donaldsons Crossroads

Troop # 71 took an over night hike Friday, September 2nd and returned Saturday afternoon. The hike featured advancement of scouting activities and just a lot of fun for all present.  
Tom Lenfesty, Larry Hughes, Lewis Mesta, Dick Sprenkle, Richard Thomas

# D A N C E #

Round and Square Dance  
Peters Twp. High School  
Friday, September 23, 1955  
8:30 - 12:00


Langston Orchestra  
Ernie Fisher--caller

Sponsored by Peters Town-ship Grange

Refreshments For Sale

65¢ Donation

# D A N C E #



**INDUSTRY IN PETERS TWP.**

R. F. McConnaughey  
General Store  
.....

15. A notice in the *Commerce News* from September 1955 advertises a square dance to be held at the Peters Township High School.

RF: I was too young to afford a tape recorder, so we lost a lot of those songs. You have the community coming together, like moral threads. The square dance was a way of bringing a happy activity to the community, and people would go out and party and square dance.

BA: How much time did he spend doing this?

RF: During the summer, not too much, because everybody had to get their crops in. But during the fall and the winter, after the frost, their production was done and people would get together and they could talk about their lives or families, what's happening in their communities, what their needs were. Everybody liked to share ideas and pool resources, and the square dance was a way to pull everything together to a fun point for the community, not only to have fun and to get to know your neighbors.

And everybody would not think the same, but think the same as opposed to other outsiders, so that everyone in the community was joined together with the same sort of structure for survival.

BA: So you would do this several nights a week during that season?

RF: It was usually like – well, what I remember maybe once or twice a week. They would get together and do that. Because don't forget, the dairy farmer still had to work during the winter. There was still a lot of things to do during the winter. They didn't have a lot of time for, you know, for social activities, which made that kind of special when they did have a social square dance or calling. Everybody went there to have a good time, and that's why they were going, and they did.

BA: Was that only in the Peters Township community, or did he ever go outside of here to do square dance calling?

RF: That was the hard part about me doing some of this research and things, because Peters Township wasn't a finite thing. There was a library in Finleyville. Finleyville had a fire company that covered Union and Peters. So you figure 50 or 100 years ago, Peters Township wasn't really what it is today. You can't confine things just pertinent to Peters Township, because everything was related. There was the grange and people belonged to that. There was Cross Creek Grange, there was Peters Township Grange. There were granges all over the area. People visit one grange to another grange, and they get to find out more about the same type of people in the same situation in different areas in Western Pennsylvania.

BA: So he would range around a little bit?

RF: A little bit. Sure. Everybody did. That was their time to get away from the farm work and that hard, disciplined structure. They would take time off and go as far as they could and meet as many people as they could with the objective of enjoying their life.

BA: He had been doing this before you were born, I imagine, and he continued for years after that?

RF: Pretty much. Yes.

BA: Do you know much about the musicians that might have performed at these square dances?

RF: I was too young. But you had a lot of people that didn't have any entertainment, so that somebody would pick up an instrument and had an aptitude for a violin or a banjo, you know, or button box. Everybody would just join in and get together.

BA: These would be more amateurs than professionals that would be doing that?

RF: You didn't have professionals back then. And somebody, if you want to call them amateurs, some of them were very enjoyable to listen to.

BA: No. I don't mean that they weren't skilled. I meant just people that didn't make a living primarily doing it.

RF: Not really, no. It was just members in the community that would pick up an instrument and make music. People that couldn't play a musical instrument would call or would dance.

End of Tape 1 (1 of 3), Side A  
(1st Interview: October 15, 2003)

Tape 1 (1 of 3), Side B  
(1st Interview: October 15, 2003)

BA: Now your father first became a township supervisor in the 1950s, is that right?

RF: The year I was born, '53.

BA: '53. And do you know what the circumstances were that caused him to run the first time?

RF: Roads. I really don't know with his background of transportation and road building, and the heavy snows that were here in the township. And we didn't have the equipment or the resources to keep the roads clear. That would all happen about the same time that he become a supervisor.

BA: Do you think that kind of helped push him into politics, local politics?

RF: Yes, because they needed people. Again, you had the culture between the railroad people and the coal miners – very hard working people – and you had other people coming in. There were two different cultures, which later became a problem in the '70s. But in the '50s, it was a new community that didn't have a lot of resources. Not much development. Many people back then, they would have fist fights, not gentle conversations.

BA: Tell me about that.

RF: Nothing seemed specific. But somebody would want something, and the others ones didn't want it, and they would actually get into brawls about who's going do what, and how they were going to do it.

BA: This would be like at a supervisor's meeting?

RF: Yes.

BA: I see. I know you were very little when this was happening, but did your dad ever mention to you anything about the other supervisors, or who was influential in the community at that time?

RF: There were a lot of local newspapers: one just for Peters Township, one for Bethel, South Park and Peters, and there was another one for Peters and Union Township. And we have lots of that information that's being photocopied at the library. And so you can actually go down and read the articles about who those people were, how they were involved, the things that they did, and the things that you could imagine that would spur a fist fight here and there. There were photographs of groundbreaking for the telephone company with a grader in the background. It was the first grader that came in. Keep the roads cleared. I have the first telephone bill. They give you little postcards to mail out to all your friends, and tell them that you have a phone. They had the four numbers with a Wilson code.



BA: Right.

RF: And I spoke about my Aunt Ruth Stoltz. I have a photograph of her working at Bell Telephone Company. And we have my dad's picture with McCaskey and a few others actually making the first telephone call in the township. So it's not the *Washington Observer* papers. That information can't be found in there. That's why you'll find that we have a lot of things that nobody else has.

BA: Your father took office when slowly the Peters Township area was starting to grow and starting to become more suburbanized. Did he, as far as you know, have particular feelings about that, and how to cope with that, at least at that particular time?

RF: Well, in the beginning, he was coping with Mother Nature. And the more land routes that were open, the more traffic it could handle, and the population could grow. And then in the township, you have township roads, and a developer would come in and put in a plan and that plan would not be a township road. They'd have to petition permission from the township: "Can we be a public road or a township road?" And then you'd have to budget in the care and the maintenance of that road. So you had to hire people; you had to have resources available for tarring and chipping putting roads in. There [were] a lot of reports about the reputation of Peters Township, and about where they were going to go. These are dated from the '50s, and they're pretty much the same things [that are] happening today, except there's a lot more complexity and people.

[I have been led to believe that] stated that my dad came up with the idea for tarring and chipping roads because everything was red dog. He knew how many feet to each road in the township, and he knew every road in the township. He calculated how much oil, how much stone he needed for each road. And Russell Supply and the other companies would come out, and they would have enough product to do that job that day. And he had to have local manpower from the township working to take care of those things.

BA: I know he served as Town Roadmaster. Was that simultaneous with some of his terms as Supervisor? I should just kind of get clear what you think happened. What do you think were the circumstances of why he was, I guess, defeated in a re-election bid essentially? Is that right?

RF: Essentially. We have documentation in the library. Again, you get new people coming in; they want things that are different. Something happens some place that one guy didn't like. You can go back to the records to see which supervisors voted against my father.

BA: Do you think this was more sort of a petty fight, or were there real issues involved?

RF: If you compare the issues to one's livelihood, then the issues could not have been strong. They had to be petty in comparison to the results of the general election.

BA: What I meant was whether he was opposed because some faction of the area saw things differently than what he wanted to do, or whether it was like a sort of personal, you know, vendetta that someone had against him. That's what I meant.

## In Peters Township

# Supervisors Abolish Roadmaster Position

The job of roadmaster has been abolished in Peters Township following action by the board of supervisors at the regular meeting Thursday night.

Two questions posed at the March 15 meeting concerning the job of roadmaster were resolved by Andrew W. Cummins, township solicitor, and the supervisors Thursday.

In March, Earl A. Froebe, supervisor and former roadmaster, asked Cummins, "What is the title of a supervisor when he works on the roads," and "Does the roadmaster have to work on the roads?"

The questions were raised soon after James A. Ross, township manager was named roadmaster replacing Froebe, who then was appointed foreman in the road maintenance department. Froebe claimed he had not concurred with this change. Supervisors Harry C. McKelvey and Luther E. Milspaw said they had understood that the agreement was unanimous.

At Thursday's meeting, Cummins stated that, according to the second class township code, "A supervisor can be other than a roadmaster and also work on the roads," as a laborer or foreman.

As to whether the roadmaster must work on the roads, Cummins replied, "Yes seems to be the answer. The code says the roadmaster must by physically able to work on the roads. A fair interpretation seems to be that the roadmaster is expected to work on the roads," he concluded.

The matter was settled by abolishing the job of roadmaster appointing Froebe superintendent and Ross programmer of road maintenance.

In other business, Cummins reported that a hearing has been set for 1:30 p. m. Friday,

April 9, before Judge Barron McCune for William Robert Sanner, 626 East McMurray road, on a charge of contempt of court.

Sanner had been ordered by Judge McCune to rid his yard of domestic rabbits and junk autos by March 15. Cummins stated, "I want Sanner brought before the court and committed to jail unless he cleans it up because he has failed to obey the court's order and is in contempt of court."

Ross and Ralph P. Barton of police, were appointed to examine the Sanner property and report to Judge McCune at the time of the hearing.

The supervisors granted seven holidays with pay to the Peters Township road crew to be added to the two weeks paid vacation previously allowed.

Residents of the Marella Plan appeared at the meeting to argue slip seal pipe rather than premium seal pipe for township sewer installation. It was the opinion that slip seal is preferable because it is cheaper and is as good as premium.

August H. Engelhardt, township engineer, replied that premium joint pipe is more flexible, less likely to crack, can be laid faster and allows less infiltration of water. It was also the pipe recommended by Joseph Lagnese, sanitary engineer.

Representing the Marella Plan were John A. Schifano, John Gruber, Tom Haynes, Jack Staley, Frank Opferman, Desmond McGlone, W. H. Fleig, H. L. Lewis, Vince Fazio, Tony Anania, James Anderson and Tony Renter.

The supervisors set rates for the use of township equipment with an operator on private road jobs. The rates are highlift, \$12; truck, \$6; grader, \$17.50 and roller, \$10.

## Also Questions Bids For Clearing Park <sup>March 18 1965</sup>

# Peters Twp. Supervisor Objects To Minutes About Roadmaster

A protest was made concerning the minutes of the March 1 meeting of the Peters Township Board of Supervisors by Earl A. Froebe, supervisor, at the regular meeting of the board Tuesday night.

Supervisor Harry C. McKelvey announced on March 1 that the board had agreed unanimously to name township manager James A. Ross roadmaster, replacing Froebe.

"I was against Ross being made roadmaster," Froebe stated Tuesday.

Both McKelvey and Luther E. Milspaw, supervisor, said they were unaware of Froebe's disagreement at the last meeting.

Froebe was made a foreman in the maintenance department when Ross became roadmaster.

Referring to the annual auditor's report read at the meeting March 1, in which he was disallowed \$400 for gasoline reimbursement, Froebe accused McKelvey of bargaining.

"McKelvey said to me if I let Ross be roadmaster they'd ease up on that (the \$400)," Froebe said. "But they didn't, so I won't either."

McKelvey denied the charge. He pointed out that it was the auditors who disallowed the \$400 and it is the auditors who determine the rate paid to the roadmaster.

Froebe then asked Andrew W.

Cummins, township solicitor, for a definition of a roadmaster. "When you are a supervisor and work on the roads, what is your title according to the law books?" Froebe asked.

"I'd like time to study the matter," Cummins replied. "The law says the roadmaster must work on the roads or he can't be a roadmaster," Froebe maintained.

Result of the discussion was that the minutes of the March 1 meeting were approved except for the part concerning the roadmaster. The matter will be considered further in executive session. Meantime, Cummins will study the problem.

Next item of business was opening bids for the clearing of seven acres of Peterswood Park for the Board of Recreation.

Froebe asked who advertised for bids, since no action was recorded in the minutes. "I want no part of the bids if it's not in the minutes," he stated.

Cummins explained that the recreation board is only an arm of the supervisors, so approval of advertising must come from the supervisors.

McKelvey pointed out that \$4,500 already has been allocated to the recreation board in the budget. Further, anything over \$1,000 must be advertised.

"I assumed all had taken place in the minutes (of the supervisors) when the recreation board was going to award the bid without advertising," Cummins said.

Apparently it was a misunderstanding all around. Since the cost of the project is over \$1,000, and therefore must be

advertised, Cummins advised the required three times. The supervisors then authorized an after-the-fact entry in the minutes showing approval of advertising for bids before the bids were opened. The supervisors will consider the bids submitted before making decision.

In further business, approval was received from the State Department of Highways for installation of traffic signals at the entrance to Pleasant Valley School. As soon as the West Penn Power Company decide upon the best location, the 1 MPH flashing signals will be installed.

Ordinance 77, regulating traffic and parking in the township was approved.

August H. Engelhardt, township engineer, will investigate an unofficial request from the school district to connect the sewer line from the administration building into the system now serving the municipal building.

The request was made because the school district must disturb a septic system to install a vol-

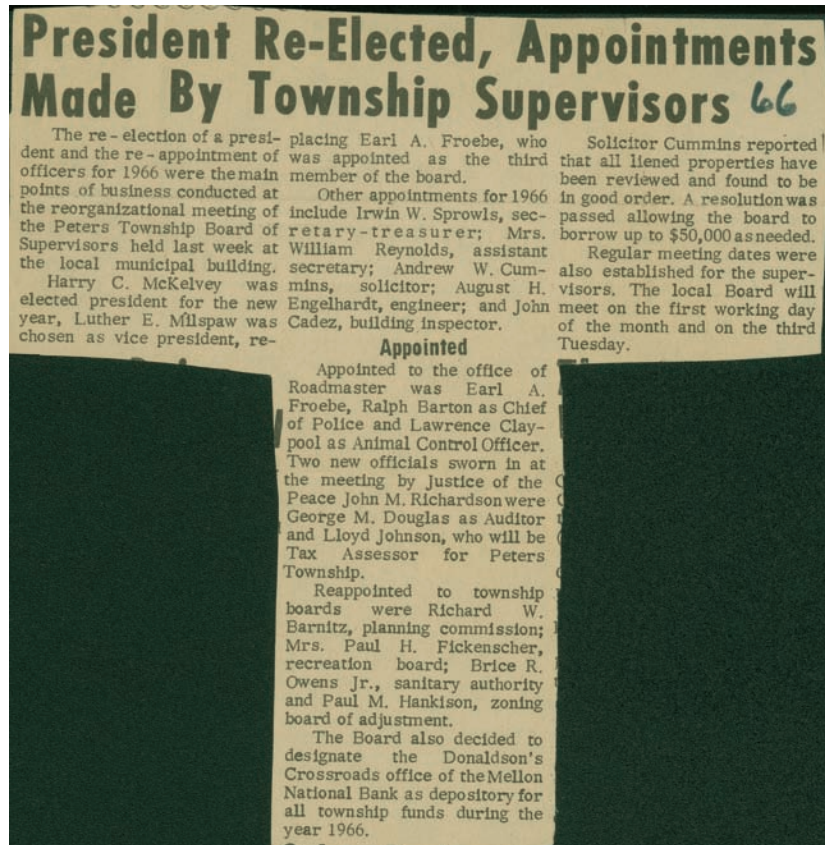
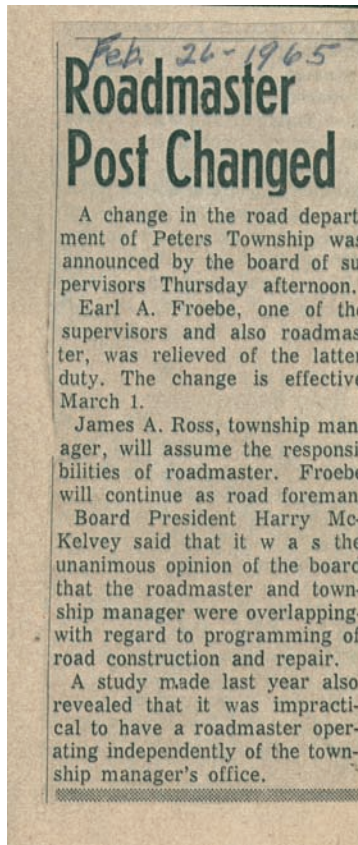
leyboard and court behind the administration building. Rather than install a new, temporary septic system, school authorities prefer to tie into the existing line at the municipal building.

This would also be easier than laying sewer lines around the tennis courts to reach the new municipal sewer to be installed back of the administration building.

It was agreed to allow up to \$150 per year clothing allowance to include part-time policemen as well as the regular force.

Robert Sanner, 626 East McMurray road, will be cited for contempt of court for failure to comply with the zoning ordinance regarding rabbits and junk cars.

16. Newspaper articles highlight the controversy surrounding the roadmaster position in Peters Township.



**16. Newspaper articles highlight the controversy surrounding the roadmaster position in Peters Township.**

RF: You take a community from the 1900s to the '50s. And then go back to farmers, miners, railroad workers. And then you have new labor people coming out of the city into the country that have more money than the local people. So they want more things. So like if you wanted a tennis court... You worked in a coal mine, you're not going to go play tennis, because you don't have time. These people had more time and more money than they knew what to do with. And as the original residents passed away, and [with] the influx of new people coming in, there was a changing balance of power. And you can change the balances very gently or you can go in there and like destroy the stock market bubble. Everything trickles down. Everything was destroyed after that.

BA: I'm curious about how that unfolded. I talked to a lot of people about that and the sense that a lot of people give me is that it was a gradual process. And from there, your point of being just ordinary residents, they didn't see it happening dramatically. Now maybe your dad, as a supervisor, did see these changes happening more noticeably over the years.

RF: My dad not only saw them, he was responsible for them, because you had to go to second-class township rulings by the state. The state would have to classify you as second class, then hold new rules and laws that are applicable. And when you get hold of a charter, you notice all the rules. You go from one supervisor to three to five supervisors, and then if you know the state law, then you know what you're allowed, what the state will back you up on, what you're

allowed to do in a community. So the people that don't know the law will come up and complain because they want something. And it's not the law; you can't allocate those resources for that one person's need because it's not covered under the laws.



17. A newspaper photograph of Earl Froebe as Supervisor-Roadmaster with other Peters Township officials.

BA: How did your dad feel about the growth in the community? And did he favor it being managed in a certain way? And were his views acted upon?

RF: (Pause) Too many questions.

BA: Okay. I can take them slower than that. How did he feel about the growth?

RF: Well, he was involved. He was growing something. He was building the best. If you go to the number-one supervisor in Peters – in the State of Pennsylvania and the Supervisor of Peters Township – that's a lot of hard work. That's got to be your very proud and special honor: that the entire State of Pennsylvania said that Peters Township was being run by one of the number-one supervisors not once, but two years in a row. He was involved with everybody. *Everybody*

called my dad; everybody knew him. “There’s snow in my driveway. When are you getting down here to clean it up?” “I got a pothole. When are you coming over to clean it up?” So he talked to every citizen in the township. He would wish them a Merry Christmas and they’d calm down. So the next time somebody upsets you, you wish them the next legal holiday. And it works.

So [when] he grew up, he had all the original residents. Everybody knew each other. Everybody worked together to build something and have better lives for themselves. And we had an influx of people from an outside area coming in. Those residents at that time said, “Oh! We’ve got to do something to stop all these people coming in. I like my community. I’m living in a fish bowl. Now there’s all this development.” But if you asked somebody who was living in the township two years ago, they’ll tell you that. If you ask somebody who moved in 50 years ago, they’ll tell you that. So every couple years of saying, “We like this way, we came out here to buy because it was this way.” And as that changes over the last hundred years, everybody saying, “Well, it’s not like... I came out here for this reason. Now there’s more people here, more congestion.”

The township police don’t like driving on [Route] 19 because they’re scared to death of getting hit. And you have all these traffic problems. And Route 19 at the Crossroads is two lanes with one red light. A fellow from the Hollywood – he had photographs of those. Hollywood was originally on the left side of the Crossroads where the BP gas station is.

BA: When you were growing up, were you aware of changes in the community, especially the growth of it, and the newcomers?

RF: On the school district. By going to school. Yes. Then we had the original group of residents. And then you had all these people, other people coming in. They had a little bit more wealth than we did, and more time to do other things that we didn’t have. So you had like a slight cultural – a little original group and a new group coming in. You’re always going to have that conflict. And yes, it was very noticeable because of the different value systems and what was important.

BA: How did that impact itself or show itself?

RF: (Pause) It created conflict. That’s what life and civilization is all about. It’s going to create conflict. You have an opportunity to see how they lived and how they think, which was good knowledge. But when they have something and you don’t have it, and they make a point about it, it becomes unpleasant.

BA: You mean the people that drive flashier cars, or dress in a different way, or something of that sort?

RF: Yeah. I mean... The people in the original community didn’t care about the fashions or the flashy cars. That wasn’t a priority. But you have fashions and that coming in, and you always have a little bit wealthier class – not class, that’s a bad word. You have some wealthy people that have more than the other ones, and they can have all those things. And then because they have them, they try to create jealousy, and it creates civilization.

BA: So when you were a teenager here, obviously the growth was already starting to accelerate slightly. Would you say that's true, as the '60s drew to a close?

RF: Well, yeah. [During] the sixties out here, there were a lot of developments coming in. I was aware of that. And we had more and more kids in the schools. Because we had more people coming in, we needed larger and bigger schools.

I was told a story by Mr. Taylor that his father was in the savings and loan, and his father wanted a loan to start a construction company. And the loan officer asked my dad if this guy was worthwhile giving a loan to. And my dad said, "Yes." So Ted Taylor got his first loan based on the word of my father – by one word.

BA: And I imagine as time went on that was there was a little less of that, because less people had known each other so long, and their parents hadn't known each other as newcomers came in.

RF: They called them "new" because they don't know everything that's going on. And you have a core group of people and all the families have grown up together. Now what do you think about everybody in the community? All these new people coming in, you're not sure about them, and so there's something to be aware of.

BA: Do you think that generally the older residents were very accepting of the people that moved in? Were they in favor of them moving in, and welcomed them, or was there some resentment that you could detect back then?

RF: I can't detect that. You had the Odd Fellows, the Masons, the other Granges. And each group of those people, each organization, laid out like a chamber of the government. And by belonging to those, you were your own government. And the way you conduct business with meetings, and things you could say, and things you can't talk [about] – depending on what organization you're in – like three or four moral threads from these different organizations going through the community.

So if somebody's in trouble, I know about it. It's still the old farm owner community, which my mom's a member of. Something could happen to somebody in the community, she gets a phone call. In twelve hours this person's in the hospital and that's not the internet, that's not anything. It was just a voice of a family. And the word would spread out like wildfire, and everybody would be aware of that situation going on. The more people you have, the more complex it is.

You have the internet now and lots of information. You can sit and read and read for hours, but you don't get any tonal inflections in your voice; you get no sense of sight, smell. Your senses are useless; whereas back then, your senses was what made you successful: eye, hand, and motor coordination in speaking. And you had to do those things to survive. I guess the feelings were a little bit more intense. What you used your body for back then was a little bit more alive and real than what I'm seeing today with people in cubicles.

BA: Now these folks that were moving to Peters Township in the '60s: they didn't become part of these kind of networks. They either started their own or remained a part from the existing ones. Is that right? Or did they integrate into these kind of moral threads and networks you're describing?

RF: No. They didn't integrate. If they were a farmer born on the Grange [and] came to the community, they could transfer into some of the Odd Fellows, the Masons; they could transfer in.

But the new people coming in, they weren't aware of those, or they had no desire of doing that because they had their job and their own career. The way that – you know, a two-bedroom house, and send the kids to school, and have a nice, green front yard, and have shrubs, and have to mow the grass every week, and paint the picket fence. That was pre-programmed into those people when they grew up, and you'd get like two decades of that generation growing up like that. That's why I went back when the kids were 18 years old; they're out of the house because the house was sometimes only two-bedroom.

What I'm saying is these moral threads that run through the community are starving to death because the numbers are dying off and you can't get anybody new coming in. Why would you join an organization to raise money for charities? You can go out and play video games; you can swim; you can golf. You can do all these activities with kids involved in sports, which are all good things, but that's because it's a very healthy society and they're not hungry. And they have the money and the time and the luxury to pursue those events, whereas the original ones had to be attached with a thread to survive. That way if someone would fall, get ill, you know... Cookies and cakes and food would come through the door if somebody's sick.

BA: Back when your dad was a supervisor in the period we're talking about, was there any desire, any thought to limit the growth of Peters Township? To limit the amount of developments, or business development, or anything of that sort? Was there any move of that sort?

RF: I'd say no, because back then you had lots of resources. There was lots of ground. There were lots of room to make money and for growth. The more money that came in, the more taxes – the less taxes the original residents had to keep. So that's what my dad fought for: [it] was to keep their taxes low because their income was low.

When you start putting in tennis courts and swimming pools and those things, it's going to cost money. So those people were kind of upset when none of them played tennis. I don't want to go swimming. I have my lifestyle – how I was raised, how I'm going [to] continue to raise my life. I might farm, retire, and I don't make any money, but I'll continue to farm until I draw my last breath. And that was, you know, honorable. They were pre-programmed to be like that.

You have new people coming in being taught differently in schools and college – how they should be, how they should have their house and their families.

BA: Do you remember specific projects that your dad might have opposed in those days?

RF: (Pause) I think it was Opeka. I can't say my dad opposed it because it really wasn't a personal thing to oppose things. You had laws, and you had laws of physics, and you had [to] ask the state to do things. One article that Opeka was concerned [with was] that they were too close to the creek. So there was a problem there to get the Opeka building in there because of the flooding of sewers and things that would affect their property. So it was done to protect Opeka, and the things that were done to protect their business so that the building wouldn't wash away.

Community Needs Are Cited

# Supervisors Looking To 1961 With High Hopes For Township

At the beginning of a new year, what's ahead for Peters Township? Located between the cities of Pittsburgh and Washington, Peters Township has been described as "the hub of the South Hills" and the "greatest area of potential development in western Pennsylvania."

Widely-known as a rapidly growing community, Peters Township showed a population of 7,126 in the 1960 census. Transportation, roads, safety, and housing developments are among the various community problems that must be taken care of by elected officials.

Three Supervisors handle official business for Peters Township and they were asked their views on the challenges ahead for local government and also a review of accomplishments in 1960.

Their comments follow:  
**HOWARD KUNKLE**, president of the Board of Supervisors of Peters Township: "There's every indication that Peters Township will continue to grow in 1961 as it did last year. The building of new houses is going on and plans have been approved by the Planning Board for developments that haven't started yet. About 150 homes are to go in the plan on the Matthews farm behind the High School.

### Second Unit

"The boys are talking about a second unit for the Fire Department. I don't think



L. WILLETS McCASKEY HOWARD KUNKLE EARL FROEBE

we need a new Municipal Building now, but when we get another fire department, it would be advantageous to have a Control Center where we can house our Fire Department and Police Department and equipment.

"For the present time we have an adequate Municipal Building. Before we start spending money on a new building, I'd like to see the Township roads with a good top on them.

"At nine mills tax rate money, it keeps us sharpening our pencils to get everything done now. When we have 10,000 population, that's the time to talk about a new building in a central location for the Fire and Police Departments.

### Big Project

"Roads were the biggest

project in the Township last year as far as the work load is concerned. We resurfaced Turkeyfoot Road, graded, oiled, and put down slag on Moccasin Road, Old Washington Road to the County Line, widened Hillsdale Road, and widened and put a walk-way on Thompsonville Road.

"I've enjoyed being a Supervisor but I think one term's enough. I'm not going to run again when my term expires next January. Let some other young fellow have a turn.

"There should be some worth-while progress in the Township recreation program this year. We should know in a few weeks about the land offered by the Pittsburgh Coal Company for recreation.

"Our Police Department does a good job, Police Chief (Please Turn To Page 2)

# High Hopes For '61

(Continued from Page 1)

George Thomas did a fine job in the Ray Talbert case. He was highly commended by the FBI and the Washington County Sheriff's office.

"Before I go out of office, I'd like to see the Township get some more equipment, like a high lift and another snow plow. I'd like to see the Township roads get an L. D. top on the roads that have good bases to support the asphalt. Then we wouldn't have to oil and dress the roads. We get most of our calls from people about the roads. In the summer, it's the holes and dust and in the winter, ice and snow."

**EARL FROEBE**, Peters Township Supervisor and Road Master:

"If things continue in 1961 as they did in 1960 we can expect another fine year. Peters Township will keep on growing. The new RCA plant being built nearby will provide work, and where there's work, there's prosperity, as the old saying goes. People still have to have some place to live.

"We've made quite a bit of improvement in the roads. Hillsdale Road was widened, and Thompsonville Road, by Elm Grove School, was widened for 1,000 feet. If we get some help from the state and county, we'll look for the rest of the widening of that road this year. It's supposed to be widened for 1,000 feet on each side, but we only got one side finished.

### Same Revenue

"In general, we expect to have the same amount of money for Township business as we had last year. We try to keep inside the budget without bond money. That's too hard to pay back. We're getting along fair with what money we have.

"New housing developers continue to come in to Peters Township. There's lots of land to be purchased. It's only about a third built up. The western side is all built up and there's land that's not being farmed but the sale of that depends on the price situation.

"A new Municipal building is being talked about but we have one that's good enough for the present. I don't think the Township should go to the expense of a new one at the present time.

### Important Year

L. WILLETS McCASKEY.

Peters Township Supervisor: "The year 1961 should be important to Peters Township because during the year, the people of the Township will select a new Supervisor for the Board. I sincerely hope that both parties -- Republican and Democrat -- will put up for candidates a man recognized for his successful attainments in life, because it's the vote of the Supervisors that determines the entire character of Peters Township as a residential community.

"Through their zoning powers, the Supervisors may retain Peters Township as a beautiful rural community or it could be changed to a more densely populated community with less attraction. The decision of two out of three Supervisors determines that feature.

### Hard Job

"Howard Kunkle's term expires in January, 1962, and he has stated that he's not going to run again. The Supervisor's job is a thankless one, but it has to be done and I'm hoping someone will be willing for the benefit of the community.

(Supervisors in a second-class township are elected for a six-year term on a staggered basis. Earl Froebe's term expires in 1966, and Mr. McCaskey's, in 1964.)

"I'm hopeful for a lot of things for Peters Township during the year. A lot of good will come from the community joint meetings we've been having with the School Board.

### Needs Studied

"The study made by Clifton Rodgers and Associates relative to the growth of the area specifically forecast the municipal needs of Peters Township to the expanding population. First is the need for a Municipal Building to house the police department, communications, and fire department and the second need is expanding the fire department.

"Records prove the desirability of Peters Township. During 1960, 140 to 150 new houses were built in the Township. This is the same rate of growth as last year and it indicates favorable progress for the area."

## 18. A 1961 newspaper article describes the potential development of Peters Township.

And then he had to come up with sewers. He had to design roads with sewers, just like the Romans did. It was really no different. It's just like a new society with a new police system. Now like what Andy Rooney said the other night was that Rome and Greece -- all those civilizations -- fell because the people stopped believing in the police. And once people start the way [so that] they don't care, then somebody else can come in here and take them, and destroy and take over.

Pretty much what my dad had to do was design [using] the laws of physics. This was when you put in a road, you have drainage basins. You put in a house, your house is going to flood full of water. And those [house owners] try to come to the supervisor and say, "My house if full of water. Do something about it!"

So they had to really work with the developers, and it's really a fine art now when they put in a plan of houses. That's why it costs so much to present it. And if the township turns it down, if it doesn't pass, those people lost their money. What I'm hearing is the township is doing that more and more; making it difficult to develop -- slow down the growth of the township. The people that have lived here last year don't want those new people coming in.





**19. Supervisor-Roadmaster Earl Froebe and crew with equipment used to widen Thompsonville Road in 1961.**

BA: I imagine that would mean the development would be on the outskirts of the township where it might be more favored. That usually seems to be the pattern when that sort of thing happens.

RF: Places that weren't developed before, you don't get the traffic and congestion.

BA: Was your dad involved with the development of Donaldson's Crossroads?

RF: Yes.

BA: What was his role in that? And was he a prime mover in how it actually turned out?

RF: The supervisors hired August Engelhardt, Augie Engelhardt. If you wanted to come in and put in Donaldson's Crossroads or any type of commercial business, you had to go to the township engineers, and they had to sit down and make sure [that] what you were doing met the specs for the State of Pennsylvania. You would have to stop the supervisor and say, "Look. All these things are met. These things are met. You've got to change these things."

And then after all those laws of physics and the specs are met, then it goes in, and it brings money into the community and helps develop it, brings tax money in. So that's a good thing, to have development. Have too much, people complain; too little, my taxes go up.

1964

# Budget Geared To Better Way Of Living

**Your Top Township Officials**

**The 1965 Budget for Peters Township calls for more money to be spent for fire protection, planning and zoning, health and sanitation, roads and maintenance and library needs than ever before.**

Now on view to the public, the budget, as recently completed by the Peters Township Supervisors, with the assistance of Township Manager James Ross, will not be acted upon until the board's regular meeting in mid-March.

The total revenue receipts for 1965 has been estimated at \$233,175 by the supervisors. \$187,225 of this total will be in real estate, \$22,500 from the state, \$6,000 from the county and the remainder is from building permits, liquor licenses and fines.

**Need Road Program**

Ninety-two thousand, five hundred dollars, set aside this year for roads and maintenance, is the largest budget for this purpose that the Township has ever had, according to reports from the supervisors. They plan with this money to begin curbing projects on Township roads and to change and improve the repair and maintenance of the roads.

With plans launched for a comprehensive zoning master plan the supervisors have allotted \$5,000 to planning and zoning in 1965. They reported that the total project will probably be stretched out over a two-year period.

The supervisors have revealed their intentions to begin a general rubbish collection during this year. Having set aside monies for this purpose, they will attempt to set up a free-of-charge collection in response to requests by residents. If the supervisor's initiate the rubbish collection it will be a first for the Township.

**The Firemen**

Fire protection, the supervisors have estimated, will cost \$10,700 in 1965. Eight thousand dollars of this amount will be to the firemen's relief fund, which represents a \$4,500 increase from last year. The supervisors reported that this amount was necessary to compensate for the lack of funds received by the firemen in their family membership drive last year.

A contribution of \$2,500 is in the budget for 1965 for the new library, which will occupy the entire second floor of the new municipal building. The library is operated on a non-paying basis by women's clubs in the area and contributions are being received by local service clubs.

The Park Recreation Board of the Township will receive \$4,500, in the miscellaneous expenditures, to provide for the development of Peterswood. The supervisors reported that the monies will be used to clear eight acres of ground in the park and drill a well there to provide water.

The total miscellaneous expenditures in this year's budget amount to \$12,300. Increased services to the residents are sure to be provided from these funds, the supervisors said.

Protection of persons and property in the  
(Please Turn To Page 2)

**McKELVEY**      **FROEBE**  
**MILSPA W**      **ROSS**

20. This newspaper article explains the township budget for 1965, a large portion to be used to begin curbing projects and road repair and maintenance.

BA: Were there people particularly that your dad was close to politically in those days that were kind of people that believed in the same things that he did and worked towards the same goals?

RF: Oh, everybody. It was kind of such a smaller community, everybody knew everybody. Everybody personally knew the tax collector, [Edwin Snee]. He was involved in a motorcycle accident, and that's how he became tax collector. Everybody pretty much knew each other. There wasn't really a lot of favoritism.

BA: It wasn't factionalized so much at that point?

RF: No. Everybody was... They were still hungry yet. They didn't have that extra can of food in the kitchen or that extra 100 bucks in the bank. Their life style was improving – the quality and the quantity they had. But it wasn't that great. Because if you reflect back to the Depression... All those people grew up with their parents going through the Depression. They had nothing. So if you had like two cans of food in the pantry, you'd still keep those two cans there. We'd want more room for that third can of food just in case it happens again. So everybody used to work together. Things were improving – lifestyles.

BA: What was it like for you growing up in Peters Township at that time? Did you get to enjoy some of the things that your dad might have? Was there enough that was still rural in the character here that you could have a life a little like his when he was young? Or was it very different?

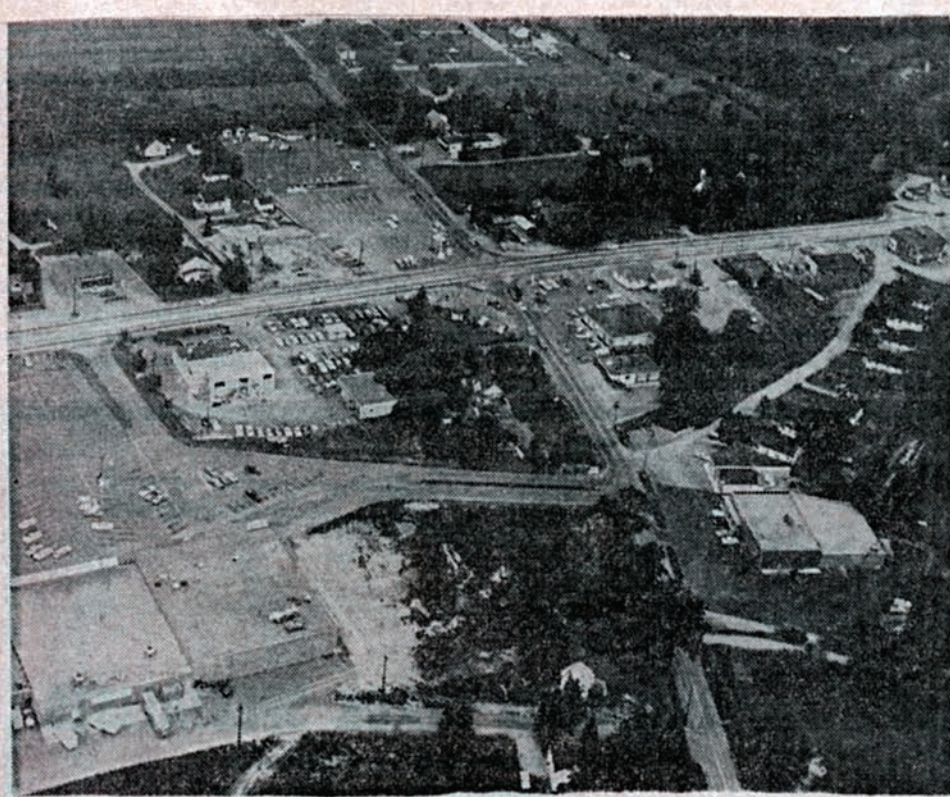
## Better Way Of Living

(Continued from Page 1)

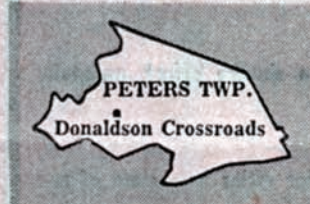
Township will cost approximately \$55,600, according to the estimate of the supervisors. This includes the police force, with the new addition of two school guards and a police car; equipment for the police; traffic signals; materials; supplies and signs.

A new expense this year will be for the Township Building. Nine thousand and three hundred dollars has been set aside for this purpose.

The expenditure for the total administration of the Township will cost approximately \$26,465, according to the budget allotment. This includes the services of the Township Manager, Secretary-Treasurer, Auditor, Clerks, Engineer, Solicitor's fees, advertising, printing, postage, telephone and bond expenses. Tax collection, it is estimated, will cost the Township \$4,000 this year.



Donaldson Crossroads Shopping Area



## Report On The Townships PETERS

The outlook for the current fiscal year is a spending plan similar to its predecessor, with no hike in the eight and one-half mills for general purposes and another one and one-half mills for a special building fund.

Supervisors anticipate an increase in the assessed valuation of about \$1 million, which would, based on the 10-mill tax structure, yield another \$10,000 in added revenues. The assessed valuation at the termination of 1964 was \$15,459,135.

In all likelihood the majority of the extra \$10,000 will go toward maintenance of the police department. This would include perhaps an increase in salaries and the addition of a second patrol car, bids for which have already been received.

The township expended about

be the codification of all township ordinances.

"This will give us a comprehensive picture of our laws," according to James A. Ross, township manager.

Other officials of the township are Harry McKelvey, president, and Luther Milspaw and Earl A. Froebe, supervisors; Irwin N. Sprowls, secretary - treasurer; Mrs. Helen Reynolds, assistant secretary; Andrew W. Cummins, solicitor; August H. Engelhardt, engineer, and Howard W. Kunkle, sewerage inspector.

Start of construction on a new \$215,000 municipal building and addition to the present quarters dominated the progress picture in Peters Township in 1964.

The new building, slated for occupancy in late spring or

and police will be contained on the first floor, along with public meeting rooms. The entire second floor will be given over to the Peters Township Library.

The present building and addition will be utilized as a maintenance garage.

Another major undertaking in 1964 was the beginning of the Donaldsons Crossroads sewerage project.

This year, a one and one-half million dollar sewerage project will be launched which will see sewers placed on Route 19 north from the Crossroads to the Krebs Professional Building and south for about one-quarter mile.

Other areas to be seweraged are East McMurray road extension, Valley Brook road extending to Bebout road.

In 1964 the township operated

21. This 1964 report on Peters Township highlights the codification of all township ordinances, the construction of a new municipal building, and the beginning of the Donaldsons Crossroads sewerage project.

RF: No, it was very much like his [time]. When you look at a map, you got to draw things in certain areas. Different areas grow different things. Where we were at, there was the trail; it was a boundary, an unnamed, unmarked boundary. You lived on this side of the street, you lived on the other side of the street, and you lived like I did. And that's why the development took so long to [get] over that. And to get together, different people that think different [had] to do things together.

BA: The way that you lived: was it more rural, or how would you define it?

RF: More rural. More close to the people. We didn't have the luxuries of going on big vacations. We went on vacations. We went a couple times a year. We did things everybody else did.

No, it was very much a rural and agricultural life style. You can walk out the door and see a hawk, see Mother Nature. You see things grow, you see things dying. You can help animals when they're sick, and you can bury them when they're dead.

BA: Did you do farm chores when you were young?

RF: Sure. We all did them. It wasn't really chores; it was a way of life. You asked people, "Do you want to work?" People would look at you like you were crazy. But back then, it wasn't work. They weren't chores. "Do you want to eat next week?" Okay. "You want to go on vacation?" Well, okay, I'll go over to raise a side crop, raise some cash to go to accomplish a goal.

BA: I have the impression that a lot of farm properties were being sold off. They were being partitioned off and being developed. And the younger generation was thinking about something else to do with their lives than being farmers. Was that the sort of thing that was going through your mind and through your family's mind at the time?

RF: Oh, very much so. From the '50s to 1971, you can draw the line that split that balance [that] happened that year. The original residents were dying off [and getting] very small. Others were coming in, getting larger and more powerful. Yeah, I lived through that transition. I got to see how that, personally, affected my father and his reaction to those things.

BA: How did it affect him, do you think?

RF: Take Peters Township. You grow it, you build it, bring it together, unite it as a community, make it recognizable in the State of Pennsylvania. You improve it, you increase the lifestyle – all those wonderful things. And in 1971, everything stops. So you – up at that point in time – everything. That's how the community... See my father... How I was brought up ... stopped everything.

BA: That was a real demarcation line from what you can tell? That year?

RF: Because my dad had a write-in for supervisors. They lost roadmaster. I think he had like over two thousand signatures. Over half the township wanted him to stay as roadmaster. And

Stanley Duckworth said, “No.” He wouldn’t give a reason. I’ve gone through all the records and things. That question’s never really been answered. But because there’s no answer, some sort of darker side of something was going on and nobody was supposed to know about it.

BA: And more than anything, this was just a question of numbers – that now there were more relative newcomers in the community than there were older residents, and the balance had tipped. Is that the way to look at it, or is there another way?

RF: That’s my opinion. You can have new residents coming in, but still if somebody’s doing a good job, you’re not going to get rid of them because they’re the best of the best. So that’s why I could say something about it. That’s the year I graduated from high school, too. So that affected me. That’s my opinion. I don’t know how else to describe it.

BA: Yeah. I was just trying to make that clear.

RF: Clarifying my point.

BA: Were a lot of your friends when you were growing up, like in junior high and high school, thinking about leaving the area and being something else than a farmer’s child or something of that kind?

RF: The balance shifted, so you had more people coming in. We’re going to go to college. We’re going [to] move out. We’re going to become professionals. We’re going to become millionaires in three or five years.

BA: Right. I guess...

RF: That’s what some of the kids told me. That was their goal after high school. If I’m not going to be a millionaire, I’m a failure. And I know some of them, and they believe [they are] failures. For me, I have home.

BA: What about the kids from the older families that had a background like yours? Were they more inclined to stay, or were they starting to think about going elsewhere?

RF: There [are] still Trax’s around. [There are] people that still belong to the Grange. You have the Farm Owner’s Society that’s still around and their families – those people. But again, as those get older and die out... And plus you have the resources, demographics of farms are shrinking. [And] you just talked about farms being developed more and more and more. So you have that demise of that lifestyle in the community.

End of Tape 1 (1 of 3), Side B  
(1st Interview: October 15, 2003)

Tape 2 (2 of 3), Side A  
(1st Interview: October 15, 2003)

BA: The late '60s, early '70s is when you felt that there was just a noticeable change, and that was connected with your father's tenure with the community. Also, I was asking about whether your peers, particularly people that came from the same background that you did, were thinking about moving on and leaving the community. We were discussing all of that.

RF: Peters Township High School at that time was also trying to become an accredited or nationally prominent high school. So what you want to do is start teaching the children to go to college. And that was what we were faced with when we were growing up. My brothers and sisters going to college was a possibility. But it wasn't really pushed, or they were not really educated, or had the academic discipline, because that wasn't really their goal. There were so many opportunities back then before this college program started up. Everybody has to go to college. If you don't go to college, you're not going to get a job. So that was a noticeable change too. There were more people in the school planning to go to college. And you also have different groups of people. People that were planning to go to college would start hanging out together.

BA: Yeah.

RF: The people that went into trade schools or working of some sort: they would kind of like hang together. So there was another split there. And you had different cliques. And the cliques are starting to become more prominent, I think, with my age group than with my brothers and sisters because the classes would be larger now. And back then, they would all get together and have fun together, go to dances together. But with the change of society, you would go to college. It changed how kids acted.

We're all pre-programmed. And we would be programmed to do something different. And I was told that I would never go to college. I got my Bachelor of Arts degree in college in 1976. I worked two jobs, plus the farm. I went to Europe and made the digs, and I got credit for those, and all that credit was pushed towards my degree.

BA: Was the expectation when you were growing up that you would continue the family agricultural business?

RF: No. I could do whatever I wanted to do, basically. If you want to leave, that's fine. You know. You need a place to sleep, there's always one here for you. In other words, you can come back and do whatever you want. No problems. You want to stay here on the farm or you could do that as well. But at that time, farming wasn't producing. Most farms were not producing a good income compared to what the rest of society was creating.

I want to have a family, I want [to] provide for them. If I just stick with agriculture, I ought to become a huge farming operation and expand. Or I got to choose something else.

BA: Was there the sense that the changes in agriculture and the rise of corporate farms and all that helped to push out farmers, at least locally, on this level?

# Hull Named To Board Of Supervisors

An appointment to replace Luther E. Milspaw was made during the regular session of the Peters Township Board of Supervisors Tuesday night.

He is David P. Hull, of 124 Holly Drive. He will complete the remaining five years of Milspaw's six - year term. Milspaw resigned as a supervisor effective April 1, 1969.

The motion to appoint Hull was made by Stanley H. Duckworth and seconded by Earl A. Froebe. The vote was unanimous.

Duckworth noted that Hull's name was among many that had been submitted to the board for consideration in the appointment. According to Duckworth, Hull is a chemical engineer employed by the U. S. Chemical Company. He is scoutmaster of Boy Scout Troop 320, Trinity Methodist Church. Duckworth said that Hull is active in community affairs and church, is interested in the position of supervisor and, in Duckworth's view, is equipped for the job due to his educational and business background.

A fallen sycamore tree was the subject of much discussion by the board. The tree, which grew in Peters Township on the banks of Chartiers Creek, has fallen into the creek and poses a possible flood hazard according to complaints received from residents of Cecil Township on the other side of the stream.

Problem — who should

22. A newspaper article from April 17, 1969 reports on the appointment of David P. Hull to the township's board of supervisors.

## Elected In November

# Meredith Sworn In As New Supervisor At Board Meeting In Peters Township

Magistrate John M. Richardson administered the oath of office to Robert A. Meredith at the start of the annual reorganizational meeting of the Peters Township Board of Supervisors Monday night.

Meredith defeated incumbent Harry C. McKelvey, chairman, for a six - year term on the board.

Before relinquishing his seat, McKelvey expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to serve on the board for the past six years. He noted his gratitude for the services of James A. Ross, township manager, Irwin N. Sprowls, secretary - treasurer, and Luther E. Milspaw, a former supervisor who resigned a few months ago.

Reinhart J. Krebs was elected chairman of the board for 1970. Vice chairman is Earl A. Froebe.

Several snags developed in the normally routine appointments listed on the agenda. Left open was the designation of a township engineer. The firm of Engelhardt and Power has held this post for a number of years. The board delayed the appointment, stating that agreement had not yet been reached on the matter.

Concerning the office of township secretary - treasurer, Irwin N. Sprowls was reappointed on a temporary basis. A special session was called after adjournment to discuss the matter.

A motion by Meredith that the two township policewomen receive a raise in pay from \$85 to \$100 per month subject to approval by the school board was passed with Supervisor Stanley H. Duckworth voting against the measure. His view is that the policewomen should be paid on an hourly basis as are other township employees. The

supervisors and school board share in paying the wages of policewomen.

Reappointments included Ross, township manager; Owen B. McMahon and Roy Walters, of the Pittsburgh firm of Brandt, Brandt, Reister and Malone, township solicitors; Walter Butler, building inspector; Earl A. Froebe, roadmaster, and the Washington Observer - Reporter, the official newspaper.

Depository for township funds during 1970 will be Mellon National Bank and Trust Company.

Appointments to township boards were Jerry L. Kintigh, reappointed to a five - year term on the Planning Commission; Thomas Erdos, 264 East McMurray Road, to a five - year term on the Recreation Board; William M. Mathias, Robin Hood Lane, to a five - year term on the Sanitary Authority, replacing H. Richard Lawrence who is moving from the township.

William L. Fauth Jr., 128

Joyce Drive, to the Zoning Hearing Board, replacing Keith V. Porter, who resigned, and James H. Alton reappointed to a three - year term on the Zoning Hearing Board.

Louis C. Schaeperkoetter, 310 Pleasant Avenue, was named an alternate member of the Sanitary Authority replacing Gene Harsh who resigned.

The regular meeting dates of the Board of Supervisors will remain the first and third Tuesdays of the month, however, a time change was announced. The board will meet in executive session at 7:30 p.m. on those nights, with the public meeting time changed from 8 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

There is no municipal lien to be renewed during 1970.

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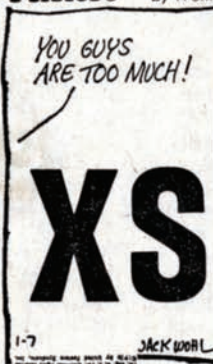
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23. The Observer-Reporter of January 7, 1970 reports on the annual reorganization meeting of the Peters Township Board of Supervisors.

RF: Well, the federal government pushed out the small farmers. I think they're still pushing them out. In other words, we don't need cattle farmers, we don't need farmers. Large farms produce so much food that they really don't need little farmers. If something happens to society, I kind of like to have a cow in my backyard, in case I get hungry.

BA: Would this have been something that your dad would have been aware of in the '60s, around that time?

RF: Well yes, because the people that were coming into the township, and the people that were currently running for office, were people that were coming from a corporate discipline. This was different from "Hey, let's all work together." Not so much work together, but we all live together. This was our way of life; it's not work. And in the corporate structure coming up, this is work and this is what I do after work. And you have that social chasm coming in, and it's splitting things.

BA: Was there any pressure on your dad to sell his property for development during that time or later?

RF: All the time. All the developers wanted to buy it real cheap so they could make money.

BA: How did he deal with that? How did that affect him?

RF: Um... "How much are you offering?" And then he turned it down.

BA: Was he at all considering it, if the offer was good enough?

RF: Well, the offer was never good enough. But by them making an offer, and his consideration of that offer, would mean that... He did his own subdivision when he donated some ground for a park for free and put in a subdivision, and he sold three lots.

BA: So he sold the lots at the same time he made the donation?

RF: To the park.

BA: No. That was different. Different time.

RF: Different time frame. He had to go through the papers and see where the park was. My dad was instrumental in getting the coal company to donate the property to the township. My dad did that – donated that core of ground.

There was the Grubich Alvie Miller farm. And as those families moved out, that ground became available in the township. He'd talk to them and offer them money to buy them out so that they could have a bigger park. And we had a park with one entrance on Bebout, and it would be really nice to have a second entrance. Robert Meredith was one of the supervisors with



him, so the people would have a secondary entrance to the park in case of a disaster – two entrances and two exits. And while he was doing that, he probably split part of the farm off. And then they arranged to have it put in a subdivision so you could sell it at some future date.

BA: Sounds like your dad really was the spokesman for a lot of the older and maybe less affluent people in this region. Did he see himself that way?

RF: Ah... I have a problem with lower and affluent.

BA: Older, I said.

RF: Older. I think so. Yeah. Because when he was fired as Road Supervisor, all those people signed a petition. They wanted him back. They respected him. He knew they were honorable. He'd get the job done. He'd get the job done under budget with whatever resources he could find. He was very effective because there wasn't a whole lot of money to spend on roads in the '50s and '60s. So, yeah, it was a way of life for all those people to be together. And so, yes, I agree with that.



24. A newspaper article from 1972 regarding the dismissal of Earl Froebe as road foreman for Peters Township.

BA: Once he was no longer with the township, did he primarily devote his energies to farming? Or what did he do then?

RF: That was his main source of livelihood. He would be involved with different people and different organizations that were still in power and different things that were going on.

BA: Such as?

RF: Well, some of the supervisors that didn't vote against him.

BA: He was an advisor to some degree.

RF: Yeah. Not paid. You have a resource. You need something, and if we have it, we're going to give it to you. That's how those people were raised and I was raised. They don't care about the cost or what it is, or the time, or anything. You have a need, we have it. You don't have a need anymore. You don't think or hesitate about that.

A quick story about the Odd Fellows. George Todd's in a nursing home, he

dropped his razor [and broke it]. So I went and bought a razor head for like thirty dollars. You know, without thought, without hesitation. George's need is taken care of. That still exists today with the Odd Fellows.

Certain people. New people – they don't have that discipline and structure. But you do that. If you don't do that, you go out there and you try to, deep down, you try to get that dollar out of them, no matter when or where. There's a lot of people like that.

BA: I get from you a real sense of loss of the way that things used to be, perhaps, in this area. Do you think that things could have developed or Peters Township could have grown in any different way than it did? Was there a different path that could have been pursued?

RF: I think there was a different... When my dad lost this job... Now, I graduated from high school, so I knew kids of the parents, and how they felt politically. What they did by just telling them to stop everything without any reason or new purpose or growth pattern or anything. Just come in here, and we'll just stop it. Nobody else did anything before me. The transitional period could have been much more gentle than it was.

BA: Were different policies pursued once your dad was off the supervisor board?

RF: [I] didn't really follow that too much. I think that the resources of the township – [the] recreational resources of the township – were growing, and I think that was a large... That really grew after the '70s, because society was coming in; they had more money.

Mt. Lebanon, Upper St. Clair got a tennis court: we got to have a tennis court. They got a swimming pool: we got to get a swimming pool. Can't do a swimming pool. What about ball fields? And what about all these things here? So a lot more money – the tax money – was being used for recreational purposes, not for education, not for the library, n for the police, not for the road company, which is a sign of an affluent and wealthy society. But you still have the core people that [say], "Hey! This is how society is supposed to be, and you guys have just too much time and money on your hands."

And they're bored. People are bored out there. That's why they're doing all those things. But it costs money to do that. The original residents said if you don't swim, and the township puts in a swimming pool, you're going to pay for it. How does that make you feel? If you don't play tennis, and they put in a million dollars worth of tennis courts, you have to pay for that with your limited income. You'd rather use your money to spend with your family or go to something enjoyable. Like I said, you got to forfeit something to benefit all these other people. How does that make you feel?

BA: I know, as you said, that you went away to school and studied anthropology and came back. Did those studies give you any insights into your own community? Make you look at it any differently?

RF: I didn't look at the people differently, because when you work and travel all over Europe, you go to places or...

Okay. Fez, Morocco: You walk in at this home and there's this camel there, walking in circles, and there's this canvas belt with wooden buckets on it. And as the camel walks in circles, the water comes up out of the ground and provides water for the whole community, and

it's a very basic, non-electric system. And those types of people, those cultures, are working together to survive and to better themselves a little bit. They don't have lots of wealth and time to do other things.

So the more I traveled, the more I felt more comfortable with my upbringing, and the type of people in the community, and moral threads of each organization, community. It gives me strength, it gives me confidence, and [it] makes me feel comfortable. But those people out there that... There's a problem. You got to take a look, you got to pitch together and take care of that problem.

BA: Those old moral threads that existed in Peters Township when your dad was growing up: Were they all created by necessity, or was there another element link, for instance, a religious element or some other kind of moral belief element that made people interact the way they did back then, do you think?

RF: That's a good historical research question for somebody for religion. You take a lot of Europeans [who] came here and settled. A lot of them had Christian, King James Version, teaching from the time they were a child from generation to generation. So you have that religious belief system that's ingrained in everybody.

And based on that, these organizations would form, and everybody would be thinking the same, believing the same, and work[ing] the same. We have other religions coming in, people thinking differently. With a multi-religious factor, there's a problem with that. You don't know how to relate to those people. You don't know how they think. This person has a need. You don't know how to convey that need to that person.

BA: Was that true here in Peters Township?

RF: I think I'm relying on my own education and my own opinion and perspectives. You can check with the number of churches and the denomination of the churches in this area.

BA: Forgive me for not knowing this, but did you become involved with civic affairs once you returned from school?

RF: No.

BA: You didn't follow in your father's footsteps in that regard in some way?

RF: No. I think the pain and anguish was more than I really cared to deal with. I went to the hardware store one time, and this guy... He must have recognized me. He knew who I was. And he started talking about Peters Township, and the supervisors, and [the] stuff he was involved with, and got away with my father. And I told him, "You worked really hard, and you did so much, and destroyed that man's life, and you accomplished nothing." And he didn't know what to say.

For his great effort, look what I can do. I want to do this. I want to do this now. I don't care about the world. One certain point of perspective at that point in time where somebody for once in their life – the destruction of other people, so they don't think about the consequences, and they don't care. They have to live with that the rest of their lives.

BA: Now, once you returned, did you return to the family farm when you were back in Peters Township?

RF: I helped my mom and dad out.

BA: Was it your sense that was where you were going to remain, and that was what you were going to make your life's work?

RF: No. After high school, I spent a little time in Europe, traveling around.

BA: I mean after that, when you returned.

RF: After I returned to the township?

BA: Yeah.

RF: Not in the beginning, because I still wanted to go out and do things.

BA: I see.

RF: I wouldn't say that I'm trapped there, but I was actually... That's my home. That's where I grew up. That's where I was born. That's where my father was born in the bedroom. He died in the bedroom when he was 80 years old.

BA: What challenges have you faced running that farm now? What's it like being a farmer in Peters Township in this day and age?

RF: Well, what we do... It's not farming for a living, it's farming for a way of life. That's how we grew up, and that's what I'm going to keep doing. And sometimes we make money and sometimes we don't. Jack Frost was particularly brutal to us this year. [But] you see a balance. Things don't produce one year, and other things produce other years. No, there's no money in farming.

BA: But you can at least get by. You can have a sustainable way of life doing that.

RF: My freezer's full. I got a warm, dry bed.

BA: Is there much of a kinship among the farm families that are still in this area?

RF: Again, I think if you look at the age group of the people that you're interviewing and you talk to today, they're all in their 70s and 80s. Again, this is their way of life. So there's not much of a younger generation around. [The] Trax's have some people around. [The] Simmons have some of their grandchildren around.

There's a man called Dutch. He sold produce up in Charlcot Street, Mt. Lebanon, and South Side. My dad got to know him. The nickname Dutch means that you're very shrewd.

You weren't vicious down to the last nickel. They got to know each other, got to be friends. And my dad said, "There's a farm out here for sale." He was looking for a farm. He came out and looked at it, and he bought it. His name was Earl Simmons. They called him Dutch. He had some children, and the children now have kids and grandkids. And that's really about how their struggles are in farming.

BA: Right. I was out at the Simmons farm a few weeks ago.

RF: Increased overhead. People don't want to pay nothing to... You can make money, but it's tricky.

BA: Do you work with migrant labor from out of the area or with people in the area?

RF: At our farm there are four of us. We take care of the farm. Now if people want to come up and pitch in, and help out, or get away from their wives for a couple hours... A dozen people like that pitch [in]. They don't come to work; they come because that was *their* way of life. And they're glad to get out of the city, out of their house, and be on a living, healthy farm.

Certain people really make a difference, too, when they come out. Other people come out and they can't comprehend, because the discipline in the program is so alienated from doing something on the farm. We have teenagers coming out and standing on a stump because they never saw anybody farm before.

BA: I was going to ask if, among the newer residents and their children, there's interest in what you do, and if it's somehow exotic that you're a farmer in the middle of what to them is a suburb, essentially.

RF: I think it's up into the first grade – I mean second grade. They'll come out, feed the cows, and that's a big deal for kids that are like five or six years old.

BA: The teenagers: they're not into that?

RF: No. They want to work and make fifteen, twenty dollars an hour. Now, we do lots of popcorns. We like pop different kinds of popcorns and give them to Sunday schools. We give them to kids, because they don't know what popcorn looks like.

BA: Have you ventured into agritainment?

RF: We're not a corporation. We're family-owned, so we can't really do anything from a liability point of view.

BA: Right.

RF: We can't hayride. If somebody fell... If the lawyer from the township comes and falls down, you need some mortgage payment. We live in an age of terrorism. [When] we were growing up, we had to hide underneath the desk because of a nuclear war attack. They were going to drop a bomb. That was terrorism. Now we're terrorized by our own laws. Terrorism is

always here and always will be here. Our perspective, the government's perspective towards it... The people that believe and follow that... It's crucial for the existence of society,

BA: Do you want to continue?

End of Tape 2 (2 of 3), Side A  
(1st Interview: October 15, 2003)

Tape 3 (3 of 3), Side A  
(2nd Interview: December 12, 2003)

BA: This manuscript here: when is this from and who prepared this?

RF: Lost page.

BA: Okay. Let's see.

RF: I was doing some history way back when.

BA: Oh, boy! Oh, this in 1957. This would be nice to have a copy of. Obviously, it's very delicate.

RF: I can read that today or talk a little bit about the Odd Fellows from memory. I can't find George's bible.

BA: Well, I know that you said that you knew some of the old-timers that were involved with the Odd Fellows, for one. I believed you mentioned that.

RF: Oh, Shannon Dale.

BA: Yeah. You might talk a little bit about them and what their memories were of those organizations. Did they tell you much about the earlier history of them in this area?

RF: What Shannon Dale told me was [that] after the Depression in the '30s, that was the *best* and the greatest time of his life. Because the economy was destroyed, and when the economy started being rebuilt again, there [were] jobs and work and he stated that he would have better times with people and enjoy himself a lot more.

BA: There'd be more free time to be social and friendly?

RF: Yes, because you're not working to fend off starvation. So when you're belly's empty, then nobody's happy and has time to do things.

BA: Sure.

RF: For that time period, things started to improve, and there was more food and better health care. And there was in Shannon's mind – what he said was that was the best time of his life.

BA: Now for the record – Shannon Dale: who was he? What did he do for a living?

RF: Shannon Dale was an Odd Fellow. He worked... Didn't he work for the gas company? Yes. He worked for the gas company. [He] goes to Kennywood every year to get a prize for being the oldest member of the pension group. And if you recall, they murdered his wife here not too long ago across from Vaccari Enterprises, Inc.: Frieda.

BA: That I wasn't aware of. No.

RF: Three gentlemen came in and duct taped them, beat them almost to death. And they taped up his wife as well. And she had a heart attack, and died on the floor.

BA: Now I do know the case. I didn't associate it with this area.

RF: Shannon Dale would mow the grass for Rees Park behind his house. He was doing some mowing back there... So he was just, you know, a very tough, honorable man to get through that. And we had the dues-paying banquet at [the] lodge a couple months ago, and I took him down there. [He] got himself dressed, was very capable of going, and went back home again by himself – really an honorable gentleman.

BA: What role do you think the Odd Fellows played in this area, at least in his generation?

RF: Visit the sick, relieve the distressed, bury the dead. Especially it was set up that you had a lot of working-class people like in the coal mines and on the railroads and things. And if there was an accident, which was very frequent, for men to die, then he would take care of the widow and the orphans.

They would join the Odd Fellows. And all the other men and families in the community would support that family if something happened to the breadwinner, and also provided money for the children's education and for the orphans as well. They had three orphanages – at least three orphanages – in Pittsburgh. And their mainstay was to take care of the young children if their parents would die, which was very frequent back then, and make sure they had an education and got on with their life.

BA: What sort of people were members, at least in this area? Were they from a distinct background, or professions, or anything of that kind?

RF: A lot of ex-veterans, ex-Marines, and military people. Some were in D-Day. Some were in the Pacific. The military people went through things that you don't want to even imagine. And when they came back, they still had their lives, and they wanted to give something back to the community and to society. The working class people – a lot of coal miners, railroaders. You had a lot of different professional people, too – attorneys. The Masonic Hall and the Odd Fellow Hall would be in the same building, on two different floors. A lot of people joined both organizations.

BA: Oh, so there was interaction. I didn't realize that.

RF: They were separate organizations. It's like you belong to the Rotary and belong to something else. So there really wasn't a lot of interaction, but you had a lot of members in common to both organizations. The goals of the Odd Fellows were to take care of the moral and the family needs of the community. And if you were a stranger and you traveled some place, to a strange town, you don't know who to trust or a place to go. If you found an Odd Fellow Hall or an Odd Fellow, he knew that since you were a member, he knew what you believed and what



you hold, what your value system was. And they would help you. And by traveling to these communities, too, you could feel relaxed that you weren't going to get beaten up and mugged and robbed.

BA: Who else from that era was prominent in the Odd Fellows besides Shannon Dale?

RF: My dad. My dad's brother, Albert Froebe.

Mrs. Froebe: More than 60 some years.

RF: Yeah. Dad was a member for 60 years. Albert died in his thirties from pneumonia. That was really hard because he was very strong and active. On his tombstone he has the three links which stands for friendship, love, and truth. It's on my dad's tombstone as well.

Trying to think... There were just people from all different walks of life, really. [They] didn't really care what the profession was, where the Masons were based more on roles in my opinion, so that the professional – the doctors – would be in one group and the stone masons would be another group.

Whereas the Odd Fellows were more a family, moral thread type of thing that you'd want to route through the community, so that if something happens to somebody, you know about it. If there's a death in the family, you'd find out through this, the old moral network, so to speak. And then you could pitch in to the family. If you had extra food or wanted to do something for the children, you could do that.

BA: Is what they did in this community kind of more on a one-to-one basis a little less public, or were there public events, or public functions that the Odd Fellows were part of too?

RF: Yeah. Lots of things. Today we do different type of events, like we do like "Night at the Races." We raised money for two leukemia victims. One was Randy Travis. He was a young lad. And we had a horse race, and raised several thousand dollars and donated that. And then Randy passed away a short time after that. There was another lady come into the same situation. And we just gave the money to the Leukemia Society. We do spaghetti dinners to raise money. I'm going to do a "Breakfast with Santa" on December 20, [with] proceeds to benefit Children's Hospital.

So they had different events back then. They had lots of parades, and [were] very active in any type of community event. The Odd Fellows were there participating.

BA: Are there any special Odd Fellows events of the past in this area that really stand out to you? Special public events of any sort?

RF: Not so much here in downtown Peters, but in Finleyville. Finleyville was a pretty thriving center hub of the community, and they would have parades every year, and they would have community events every year. And the Odd Fellows played a prominent role in those events.

BA: They'd be participants in like a community parade? They'd be marching or have a float or something of that sort?

RF: No. Floats are kind of recent, but everything else would be accurate.

BA: Yeah.

RF: And there was always like presents. And they would work with the Fire Company. We had a spaghetti dinner which we got money towards the Finleyville Fire Department for a thermal graphic imager after those two young children burned up in that trailer house. They couldn't find the children. Now they have this machine and we raised some money towards that for them.

BA: Has the Odd Fellows been as important to the community in recent decades as they were, say, back in the time you were talking about earlier?

RF: No. It's like most organizations. Everybody's dying off, and no new people are joining. Back in the 1800s, when you had a family, you kept your family here on the farm to work. And it was geared to keeping the family together on this property, whereas when I was growing up, many of my friends, when they were 18 years of age, they were out of the house.

BA: You spoke of that. Yeah.

RF: The parents would pay them for college or wouldn't give them any money at all. So they were actually forced out and kind of cut off from the community, basically being on their own and being away from organizations and things.

Whereas like when the people were hungry, they would go to the churches, and everybody would work together and support each other and take care of the needs of each other.

Whereas today, everything is... You have insurance companies that you buy insurance with. You have no interaction with them. You send them a check and, if something happens, you get some money – usually not enough. But you have no interaction with [them]. They don't care whether... They're not going to do anything to help you. Everything is so blocked and cut and dry. I like the word "interaction," between family and the community.

BA: In this community, did the Odd Fellows have any sort of women's auxiliary?

RF: The Rebekahs.

BA: Yeah.

RF: [The Rebekahs] is the ladies side. And they have basically their own meetings, their own structure. It's like a mirror image of each other, except one's male, one's female. They also raise money for events that they want to. And then the Odd Fellows come and join and help them, or they can join and help us in our events or not.

BA: Have they been prominent here? Have they been very active?

RF: They've been very active here. But again, as membership keeps dying off, there are less and less resources. And it's harder for the elderly gentlemen to set up chairs and tables and to

put it up, [and to] take time off and attend. They don't like driving at night, so it limits the amount of time and energy they can put into the Lodge to keep it going.

Our Lodge: we got some new members coming in, and they're getting some place to join. I think when I joined, there was like 150 members. In ten years, there were like 40 members – like burying one [member] every month.

BA: What year did you join?

RF: About twelve years ago.

BA: What was the peak that you think it might have reached during your lifetime?

RF: When I joined. Since then, it's been declining.

BA: That would have been the high point?

RF: For the last twelve years, for me. But in the '40s and '50s, there were 1200 lodges in Pittsburgh, or in Southwestern Pennsylvania – that's more accurate. Now you figure there were tens of thousands of members. They had free homes and a couple [of] orphanages.

BA: How big do you think it might have been during that time?

RF: Oh... (Pause) [I] really can't say. You got to do a demographic analysis of the population. And maybe [you] can pull out a percentage number like maybe ten or fifteen percent [that] probably belonged to one of the organizations. But as the new people started coming in, they didn't care about giving anything back to society or taking care of their neighbors. This is my yard. This is my house. You cross [it and I'll] sue you.

BA: Yeah.

RF: A lot of that was lost.

BA: Do you recall anyone that was prominent in the Rebekahs years ago?

RF: I don't know because I'm an Odd Fellow, basically. You can contact the Sovereign Grand Lodge here and find out who all the past Grands from Pennsylvania are. We have three at our Lodge that were Past Grands of the State of Pennsylvania. And their wife is usually [a] Rebekah. We have three past Grand wives. They were very prominent coming out of this area. And we had other ones too that were past Grand, but have since passed away.

BA: What about the other fraternal organizations in this area? Do you know much about them and their history?

RF: The Masons. I really don't know anything about [them]. My dad was a Mason, so my mom belonged to the Eastern Star. The other organizations were kind of young compared to those two.

Mrs. Froebe: Phil was a Mason.

RF: My brother's a Mason. Dad was a Mason. Yeah. Dad was a Mason and Odd Fellow. Phil become a Mason, and I became the Odd Fellow.

BA: How would you make a choice between the two? Things would push you one way or another?

RF: Oh, that was easy. That was real easy. Dad didn't like driving at night anymore. So guess who got elected driving to the lodge. That's basically the only reason I joined.

BA: I see. Okay.

RF: But now that he got there and he got to know the people... And he accomplished things, and he helped people. You can see the smiles and expressions on people's faces when you do something for them, instead of just sending somebody a check in the mail or dropping a coin in the box. You don't have that interaction or that energy. That kind of like lifts your spirit and, you know, enables you to do more.

BA: Have any of the old-timers in the Odd Fellows told you that there was a specific point where it seemed like the organization was less vital to the community or less needed by the community than before? If you had to pin it to a certain era, would you?

RF: It was kind of like two eras. One was the Depression. Nobody had money to pay the dues to the lodge. They lost half their membership because nobody had any money to pay dues to the lodge. So they lost their benefits...

BA: Sure.

RF: ...the death benefits and those benefits, because they didn't have money to belong any more. And a lot of those people didn't join again afterwards. Like when I joined, there were 150 members. You had a lot of members from World War II.

The Odd Fellows is the only organization [that's] allowed to drive up and walk up to the Tomb of the Unknown – the only organization allowed to place a wreath on the Tomb from each of the 50 states of the United States. All other organizations have to walk.

BA: You're talking about the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier?

RF: That's it.

BA: Which honors the veteran of the First World War, as I recall.

RF: All wars.

BA: But wasn't it established after the First World War?

RF: I'm not sure exactly when it was established.

BA: That's a fine point.

RF: You need to speak up.

BA: Well, I did not know that they were the only one that was allowed to do that.

RF: It was an Act of Congress in 1944. The Odd Fellows is the only organization that is allowed to drive up. All other organizations have to park like a half a mile away and walk up. And our buses go right up to the Tomb, and the people get out.

BA: Do you know if any Odd Fellow members from this area participated in that ceremony?

RF: Probably most of them. I haven't gone because it's too far to drive. Most of the Odd Fellows that I know made it. They've gone down and participated, and stood there. From what I hear, it's pretty special to do that. Underneath the Tomb, there's also all the medals that were awarded to everyone on display down there. I'd like to see that someday.

BA: So you're saying after the Second World War there was a big influx of membership. Is that what you were indicating?

RF: Yeah, because you had a lot of servicemen coming back, and there wasn't really a support system for them. And they did say it was an Act of Congress in 1944, which was at the end of World War II. A lot of ex-military people did join the organization.

BA: And you said you joined about when?

RF: Twelve years ago.

BA: Twelve years ago. So there's been a decline even since twelve years ago in membership?

RF: Well most of the guys that were on D-Day or on the Pacific islands are in their 80s.

BA: It was more like a generation dying off that was reducing the...

RF: Very much.

BA: I see.

RF: And they can't get their children to join because they were too busy with other things: working, socializing, and being... There was no direct benefit. If you joined, you weren't going to get something. A lot of people say, "If I'm not gonna' get anything there's no point in me joining," basically belonging with an honorable group of people that raise money, you know, [to] help other people out. And if you have a need, you know, they help you out. If somebody else

has a need, you help them out – more of a social, moral thread than giving somebody some money or something like that.

BA: What have been the high points or the real points of satisfaction?

RF: Meeting people that have done more and gone through things that I cannot possibly imagine or I want to imagine. And they're still sitting there, raising money for charities. Everybody goes through their life and they have questions, and deal with certain circumstances. They basically sit back and tell you what's okay. They've gone through those sorts of things and how they dealt with different things, and all the different problems and things. So it's a really nice support system. Again, you get to see expressions on people's faces when you actually help them. There's a lot of social interaction.

BA: Are there any other old-time members that are still active that you'd care to mention?

RF: George Todd, Sr.

BA: George Todd, Sr?

RF: He was delivering 905 almanacs every Wednesday before he had a stroke. When my dad died, I met George down the Odd Fellows Lodge. And when Dad died, George decided to stop up, and he walked in the kitchen. And he looked at her, and she looked at him, and they grew up together. [They] hadn't seen each other for, what, 60 years? 22 years.

BA: My!

RF: Long time. Many decades.

BA: Is he still living and still active?

RF: He's 91. He's been a member for over 70 years. He's up at the McMurray Hills Manor. I take him to [the] lodge every Thursday. I take him to the auction every Friday. So, yeah, he's very active. He was down there with the tables last night. Half of us – we can't walk across the floor. He's down putting tables up and setting up chairs. He's very active, very healthy, and very sharp, and he tells a lot of good stories of things. And, you know, there's a lot of singing. We don't do that much singing any more. But in her time, everybody sang. Everywhere you went, somebody sang a song about something.

BA: What sort of songs did they sing as Odd Fellows?

RF: (Pause) Patriotic songs. You didn't have television or radio back before the Depression days. So they would do square dancing. The only way to entertain yourself was people pulling out instruments, and singing, and different types of songs. And everything was very patriotically based.

BA: Has any of that gone on since you've been a member, or was that long gone by the time you joined?

RF: No. When they had a piano player, they sang every night. But when he passed away, they didn't have anybody to play the piano. So most of the songs are: "We Pledge Allegiance to the Flag." The songs are all basically [from a] patriotic standpoint. Everything is based on the King James version of the bible, so you have all the religious songs. It was kind of like that unique perspective that was taught to children all their lives. It's just being patriotic and having a Christian upbringing.

BA: And that was very much part of the activities and the entertainment function of the lodge to do that?

RF: The lodge and everybody else too. That was before radio and TV. That's how people entertained themselves, and they would get together and socially interact.

BA: Anything else you'd care to say about the Odd Fellows here in this area?

RF: We need more members. We want people that want to take an active involvement in the moral threads of their community and their society. I'd like to see that continue.

BA: Is there a way that you've gone about membership recruiting, or have you not done that actively?

RF: Would you like to join? (Laughs)

BA: I'm not a Peters Township resident.

RF: Fidel Castro's mom was a Rebekah. And she told her son [that] he could give up all the other organizations, but you have to leave the Odd Fellow and Rebekah organizations [alone]. Also, they're selling it as an insurance. If you join, we'll put money in towards it. If you pass away, we'll give money to your widow and your orphan.

In the Netherlands, you have to dress in a white top hat and solid tails completely in white to join.

BA: Really?

RF: What country would you like – are you a member of?

BA: I'll have to think about that.

RF: It's an international organization.

BA: I did not know that. I thought it was American, basically.

RF: It came from England, but it's Odd Fellows organizations, like I said, all over the world, including Cuba, which I thought was kind of interesting.

BA: Yes.

RF: There's more Odd Fellows and Rebekahs per capita in Cuba than any place in the world. That's the only organization allowed.

BA: Very interesting. Do you actually have a recruitment? Have you tried to draw in people kind of on a one-to-one basis?

RF: Pretty much one-on-one. How you've been living your life styles and how you've been pre-programmed to think and to act... If someone asks you to join, there's nothing you can really relate to from what I just said. By having events down there and raising money for people, people see that. And we ask people to join. Basically, I go around asking people if they would like to join, and most people have no interest whatsoever.

BA: Do you think it's mostly like there's been government functions that have taken over for what these sort of organizations did at least in this area, or is it more than that?

RF: I wouldn't say government. I'd say radio, TV, movies, and DVDs. All this entertainment that used to be family-based is now commercially-based. I don't have to go anywhere to interact with anybody. I have more interaction... You have the ... nuances of the senses. You don't get to see somebody smile or see somebody react. You know. On TV, you just get to watch a flat screen, and everything's being done to a script accordingly, and everything's scripted out. So you lose the personality nuances, and people smiling and reacting.

BA: That's true. Anything else that we should say or you care to say about the Odd Fellows, or the Masons, or any other fraternal group in this vicinity?

RF: George Todd, Sr. comes to mind. He's just kind of an exceptional guy.

[If you have specific questions about the Odd Fellows or Rebekahs, there's a web site.]

We can get to the local lodge [and] we can get to the Grand Master of Pennsylvania [at] the Sovereign Grand Lodge.

John Neill was on one of the islands in the Pacific. He was one of the Marines that... He was one of the very few that survived the one encounter. I couldn't believe it. It was like 99 percent death rate, and he was one of the one percent.

BA: Which battle was this you're referring to?

RF: I can't recall. There were very few battles in the Pacific. We can narrow it down. And he's just a really sweet, gentle fellow.

Walter Forsythe was an engineer, and he went in on D-Day.

BA: Walter Forsythe?



RF: He lives in New Eagle, and John Neill lives in Monongahela. And there [were] a lot of other ones. Bob Lore was in the Pacific. The stories that they tell you are kind of like beyond our comprehension. But they transcended those things, and they're still giving things back to the community and helping people and standing there. Sometimes you don't have to do anything. You just have to be able to stand there when somebody has a problem.

BA: Is there anything that we didn't cover the last time we got together that you wanted to go into? I think we talked fairly into at least the 1970s. I know we spoke about your father a great deal. But is there anything else we did not touch upon?

RF: A lot of different things. This was kind of a neat book we came across: *Good Roads for Farmers*. It came out in the 1900s. They would take loads of hay up through Brownsville Road, and then down to the river, and cross the river by horse and wagon because the rivers were low enough in summer. You could take the hay right to the Triangle. So there was a transition. As a farmer, you had to develop a road system to get your products from your house into Pittsburgh. The government came out with some guidelines which were pretty vague, but very interesting.

These are some receipts from the Gillespie Gas Station where BG Tires is now. Played Euker with... For a number of years they played Euker together – about 20 or 30 years.

BA: The cider question: Does that have to do with temperance?

RF: I don't think so.

Here's a file here called "Police Calls Received in Peters Township," from Peters Township [in the] 1950s. Peters Township didn't have a radio, so everything went into Bethel Park, and from Bethel Park they would call the officers out here. And they'd answer all different types of calls. [They] had to keep logs.

"Peters Township Testimonial Dinner Honoring E. Paul Day and Harvey H. Matthews , Gammon's Restaurant, Route 19, June 8, 1959, 9:00 PM."

This is the Peters Township High School, the *new* Peters Township High School. Dedication: April 11, 1930. And that's old pictures of all the members. Advertisement.

[In] 1962 they built the municipal building. [A] company in Peters Township approached my dad as supervisor, and said, "We'd like to build manufacturing facilities for making hearing aids."

BA: Was that the business that Mr. Lybarger was involved with?

RF: A. J. Myers and Son.

End of Tape 3 (3 of 3), Side A  
(2nd Interview: December 12, 2003)

Tape 3 (3 of 3), Side B  
(2nd Interview: December 12, 2003)

RF: Again, they had a couple [of] police officers, and then they hired these Peters Township residents to be... What do they call them? Not part-time police. They weren't policemen, but they weren't regular citizens. They could enforce the law.

BA: If you have any personal or family stories about any of these things, please offer them if you know any.

RF: I'm trying to get her to talk, but she's keeping her mouth closed.

Mrs. Froebe: It's better that way.

RF: All this has happened before my time. So I know some of these people. I've talked to some of these people, and they were very surprised to know that I would know about that document. Before there was the municipal building, there was... This was one of the repositories of all information for Peters Township.

BA: Are any of these auxiliary policemen still living or still living in this area?

RF: Jim Mervin is. I think a few others ones are too.

BA: Jim Mervin is his name. I see his name on here. Do you know anything about a scandal that I think happened in maybe the late '50s or early '60s of someone in the police department that was involved with some criminal activity?

RF: There was a bunch of them.

BA: Robberies or burglaries, I should say.

RF: I've heard stories about Jack Davis being robbed. Do you remember that? He would go to the bank every Thursday night. Rumor is what I heard is that the police department found two criminals that were out on parole. And he told those two criminals to go rob him and give him the money, otherwise they'd go back to jail. Mom, can you verify any of that? Did you hear that story?

BA: Would that have been like the late '50s or early '60s? Does that sound about the right era?

RF: Yeah, before my time. And then there [were] a lot of things to do with George Thomas. He sued the township. He was fired or demoted, and he sued the township.

BA: George Thomas was a policeman?

RF: Yes. He was at that time the head of the police, or chief of police at that time.

BA: And do you know the basis of his dismissal?

RF: (Pause) Opinion. Hearsay. He was getting something for free, and they didn't want to give them free anymore. And, he did something.

BA: There wasn't an official statement from the police department as to why he was let go to your knowledge?

RF: Yeah, it was. But I don't know. I really don't want to go into that. I mean, there's nothing dastardly about it. It was just another conflict between somebody. And I just have some paper work, so I don't know the situation. I don't want to hurt him or his family.

BA: Okay. Okay.

RF: Things like that happen today and always have happened. So there was nothing; any maliciousness, or any violence, or anything.

BA: Okay.

RF: It was just communal... What? Disagreements.

BA: And that would have happened around when, do you think?

RF: Before my time. It would be '50s or '60s. The supervisor before my dad, Ralph Barton.

BA: Okay.

RF: Be very gentle with the first telephone book...

BA: Oh, look at that! This would have been from 1958.

RF: ...because you have the copies of the articles.

BA: Yes. Right. This is about when dial phones came in.

RF: [My aunt], Ruth Stoltz, worked for [the Bell Telephone business office]. [We] have her photograph in there. And there's little postcards on the right hand side that you had to mail out to your neighbors. There was a card that they gave you. You mailed it out to your neighbors saying, "Our new telephone number is..."

BA: I see.

RF: "...9764."

BA: This would have been the phone number. It was a four-digit number. Would that have been it? 1472?



25. Group picture taken at the McMurray groundbreaking for the new Bell Telephone building.



26. Ruth Stolz, aunt of Richard Froebe, who worked as a telephone operator in the township.

## Business, Civic Leaders, Bell Officials Attend

Ground for the new McMurray Central Office building was broken Thursday afternoon, it was announced by Stanley B. Ross, Manager for The Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania.

At that hour Irwin N. Sprowls, Peters Township Supervisor, turned over the first spadeful of earth and Mr. Ross took the second spadeful, officially marking the beginning of a construction and installation program which will entail the total expenditure of approximately \$973,000 by the Bell Company, Ross said. Almost half of this will be required for central office equipment.

The change from manual to the dial system of operation is tentatively scheduled for March of 1958. The new office, which will be known as "Wilson," will provide the community with the most modern type of telephone service.

The building will be erected on a company-owned lot located on the easterly side of McMurray Road, Peters Township, in Washington County. It will be one story and constructed of fire-resistant materials throughout and have a frontage of nearly 80 feet on McMurray Road and extend to a depth of 75 feet.

The groundbreaking was attended by a number of business and civic leaders, who later were guests at a dinner in the Colonial inn, Route 19.

Telephone growth in the area of the McMurray Office has been extremely heavy. The office now serves approximately 2,035 telephones compared to 1,601 on January 1 of last year and only 840 in 1950.

More than 87 per cent of the estimated 1,700 households in the area now have telephones and on an average business day nearly 10,000 calls are made by McMurray telephone users, according to the Company.

27. In an article, "Ground Broken for McMurray Phone Building," the *Washington Observer* of September 15, 1956 reported on the groundbreaking for a new phone building for the Bell Telephone Company to be located in Peters Township.

## First Dial Telephone Call



Making the first dial telephone call to his daughter, Dorothy, of Denver, Colorado, is Mr. Howard Kunkle, President of the Board of Supervisors. Looking on is Mrs. Kunkle, Stan Ross, Wm. J. Melvin and William Droz of the Bell Telephone Company.

28. *The Peters Township News* of February 20, 1958 reports on the first dial telephone call made from the township's new dial equipment.

RF: No. It was always 9764, wasn't it?

BA: Just trying to see if it's on here, but it was four-digits basically. That was the original number.

RF: Yeah. You had exchanges like Wilson and Hemlock.

BA: Right. Here are the cards.

RF: Yeah. Those are the cards you'd mail out. (Pause) But that's Ruth's photograph.

BA: Do you remember when the dial telephones came in?

RF: No. That's the same thing. They gave you a blue book that went inside this thing.

BA: I see.

RF: My father was involved with getting the telephone system in. He was a supervisor [and had an] active role in the township. What do you know about the Matthews, mum?

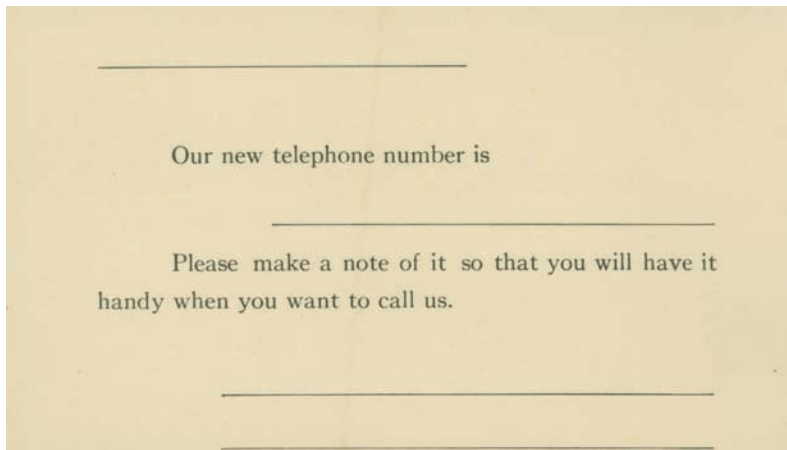
Mrs. Froebe: Matthew who?

RF: Matthews.

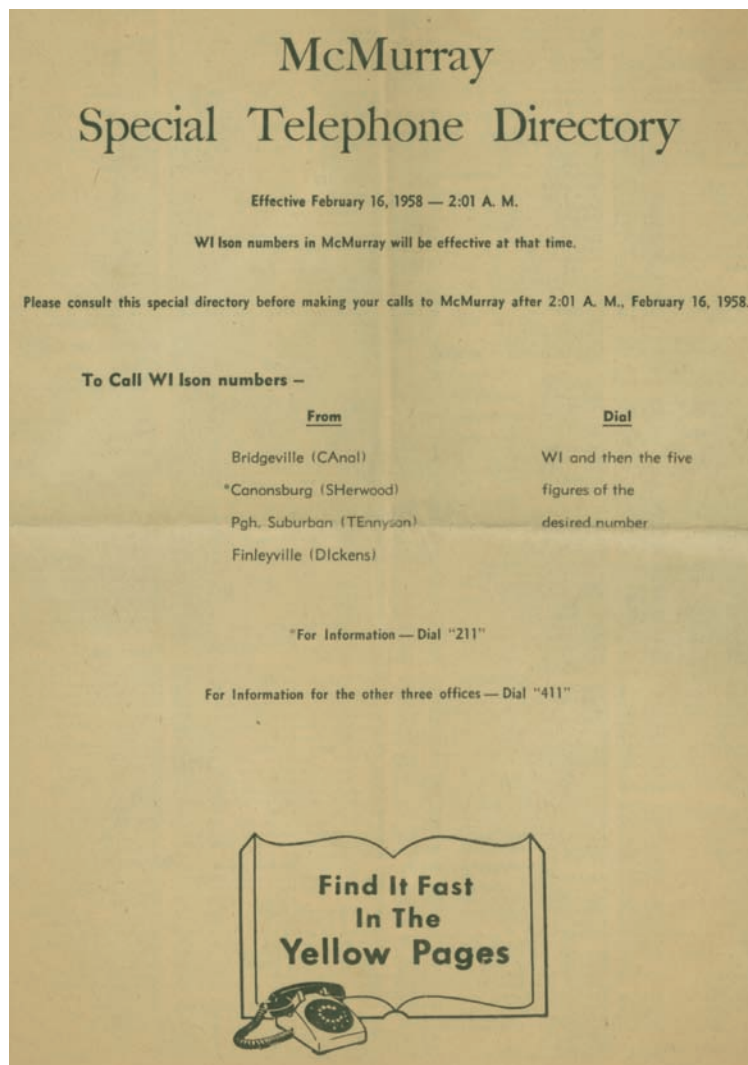
Mrs. Froebe: What do you want to know about them?



29. Pictured above are the Bell Telephone officials and the officials of Peters Township that attended a dinner in February 1958 to celebrate the opening of the new Bell Telephone office.
- Front row, from left to right: Stan Ross, District Manager of the Bell Telephone Company; Irwin N. Sprowls, Township Secretary; Howard Kunkle, President of the Board of Supervisors; Mrs. Dorothy Baron, Editor of the *Peters Township News*; Curt Nasser, Bell Telephone Company employee; Mrs. Martha Latimore, Chief Operator of McMurray; Earl Froebe, Supervisor; Miss Jane Smith, Business Office Supervisor; E. Paul Day, Supervising Principal; James Minetti, President of the Civic Association; John Hall, High School Principal; and William J. Melvin, Plant Wire Chief.
- Second row, from left to right: Al Fleming (hidden); W. C. Masters, Chairman of the Planning Commission; George Thomas, Chief of Police; Russell L. Cowden, Switchman; Jack Braun, Vice President of the Chamber of Commerce; John McClure, President of the School Board; John Opeka, Jr., President of Crossroads Toastmasters; and Gaylord W. Greenlea, Attorney.
- Not pictured when the picture was taken was Jack Meridan, President of the Protective Association, and Hamilton McWhinney, President of the Chamber of Commerce.



30. Telephone number postcard.



31. McMurray Special Telephone Directory, 1958.

RF: Do you know any stories about Harvey Matthews or the Matthews family?

Mrs. Froebe: Not too many. Bob's still living.

RF: Bob's still living.

Mrs. Froebe: Uh-huh.

BA: I've spoken with him.

RF: What we have here is a documentation of his family's involvement in stuff since...

Mrs. Froebe: Harvey Matthews.

RF: Harvey Matthews on the other side of Eighty Four. The Froebe's are very prominent or not prominent, but active in the educational aspect of schools and things. And I asked Vince [Yaksic] about the first school bus up on Townsend on this corner: Sugar Camp and Turkeyfoot. And he said Mr. Townsend had to go get kids in this weather and bring them to school. So he took a cattle truck [and] leveled all the sides of it off. [He] took some wood and made some wooden benches, and that was the first school bus. That's not on record anywhere. Vince used to work for Doc Townsend, and Doc's dad had the farm and the schoolhouse.

BA: And who was Vince?

RF: Who's Vince? (question directed to Mrs. Froebe) How do you describe him? He was a young lad that...

Mrs. Froebe: He stayed with me.

RF: She asked him to spend the night. That was fine. He just retired from the school district.

BA: What was his last name?

RF: Yaksic. Vince Yaksic.

BA: Vince Yaksic.

Mrs. Froebe: He lived here with us.

RF: He's like my brother.

BA: Oh, I see.

RF: See, when you have people coming and work would need to be done, you could stay at the different farms.



BA: Okay.

RF: Some would stay a day. Some would stay decades. Usually it was like a couple years.

BA: And so he created the first school bus for use in this area?

RF: Townsend did. Yeah. Townsend's ran the school bus business in Peters. Where the library is, there's an old rusty sheeting metal garage – big building. That's where the Peters Township school buses were. And I tried to get Doc to get rid of that for years and finally won. But Doc basically had the contract for 20 years providing school buses and school bus services for Peters Township.

BA: Just so I'm clear, Doc is...?

RF: Doc Townsend. And he would be one of the younger Townsends that owned the property at Sugar Camp. Not Sugar Camp – Churchill and Turkeyfoot.

BA: Okay.

RF: Churchill and Turkeyfoot. Doc's long gone now. Don't know where the rest of his family is.

BA: They're not in this area any more?

RF: Not that I know of, but Vince [Yaksic] takes care of the farm since I can't, and he would work for the school district full-time. And after we lost dad, he would still take care of the farm. Now he's retired. He takes care of everything. But he has a little more time to do the things that he enjoys doing.

BA: Anything else you care to show?

RF: Not too much really. *Home Spun News*. [*Home Spun News, South Park, Peters, Union, and Nottingham Twps.*, Finleyville, PA 15332. Price: 10 cents.]

BA: *Home Spun News*. What was this?

RF: Topics. They covered areas of Peters, Union, Finleyville.

BA: So *Home Spun News* was a small local paper.

RF: Right.

BA: Not a free paper, either. Ten cents; basically a community paper. Is that how you would describe it?

RF: Yes.

BA: How long did it exist?

RF: Don't know. We have two or three of those. That's all we have.

BA: This is from 1970 from June 24. So it might have had a brief life possibly. This is an account drawn up by the city? Or I should say the township?

RF: Peters Township. Looks like a monthly statement.

BA: Right. I see the name John Opeka on here. Wonder when this is from? Would you care to venture when this might be from?

RF: You could go back in the township records for wages. Try it that way.

BA: But you're not aware of when this was from, particularly?

RF: Between '53 and '71.

BA: Okay.

RF: Looks like it's closer to... From that monthly wage, it would probably be closer to late '50s.

BA: Nothing to indicate what these payments are for specifically?

RF: [William] Mark Perry and a lot of the fellows worked for the road department.

BA: Okay.

RF: There were reimbursements, supplies. Basically, those were the employees of the township.

BA: Okay.

RF: A list of all of the equipment, [what] the township bought for themselves. See what you can find about the Hackett Club.

BA: The Hackett Club.

RF: Have you ever been to the Hackett Club?

BA: What was the Hackett Club? It was in Hackett, I imagine.

Mrs. Froebe: Yeah.

BA: Any information about it? What its purpose was?

Mrs. Froebe: I don't know much about it. But I know – like a meeting place. People meet there, just meet there, I guess.

BA: Hackett Club was a meeting place. Your father was a member of it, it looks like. I see his name on the stationery here.

RF: Well, actually...

BA: Oh, no. He was a supervisor. I see. Okay, I'm not looking at the full document.

RF: It's a document from the township for doing work for the Hackett Club.

BA: Okay.

RF: Because they needed, I believe, some road upkeep.

BA: I see. So it was basically a social club, you think?

RF: Every place was a social and meeting club. People would go there for their events and different things.

BA: But it may not have had any larger function like charitable or events of that sort.

RF: [It was] before my time.

BA: Might have been just a gathering place.

RF: Most people don't know.

BA: You have no idea where it would have been located besides being in Hackett – where the building would have been or anything of that sort?

Mrs. Froebe: It's still down there.

RF: It's still there.

BA: It still is?

RF: Should be there. If you're going into Finleyville before the railroad and the train station, which you have a copy of now, on the right hand side there's lots of houses and roads there. Almost all those roads go back maybe like a horseshoe, and they have clubs at the very back of the horseshoe.

BA: Okay. No idea when it might have passed out of existence or...?

RF: [It still exists.]

BA: It might still be going?

RF: We don't know. Not too many want to go to a lodge and ride a horse three or four miles to the lodge and back home again. Like the Odd Fellows, you need like five people to start your own lodge. These little social halls and community halls would be set up just for walking distance in the local community and have access to easy, comfortable, warm transport.

BA: I see the name William Pernisec here. Was he alone responsible for this bill in McMurray?

RF: Not a clue.

BA: That name doesn't ring a bell of any sort? On Southview Court?

RF: It sounds like he's getting the invoice for work done by the township.

BA: Right.

RF: The implication would be that he would have been involved with the Hackett Club – running it without actually living close by.

BA: Right.

RF: (Looking at papers) [He] supervised road inspection [in] 1956 – October 29. [He] went around each road and decided what needed to be done in Peters Township.

BA: Who would have prepared this road inspection document?

RF: My father. (Looking through papers) He would give documentation of what he and the people on the road were actually doing, or what needs to be done, and the number of man-hours, materials, and supplies that they would need to keep the roads up to code. (Looking through papers)

BA: This might have been from the same era around the '60s?

RF: Pretty close. Typewriter letters are a little bit different. So it's a different typewriter.

BA: So, basically, it's just detailing what needs to be repaired?

RF: Right. (Looking through papers) The specifications for buying road equipment. In the early days it was "bring in, get stuff," and that got to be more complicated. You got to write down each individual spec: what you need, what color, what gear ratio that you need for the vehicles, because we have hills here. Out west, where it's flat, you have different gear ratios for

the vehicles – the amount of power it needs to get ten tons of salt in a vehicle up Smith’s Hill, which is now being developed. That used to be Smith orchard.

BA: I might ask you before we go just about your feelings overall about the Froebe property and what your hopes are for it in the future. What do you think will be its use?

Mrs. Froebe: I told the men down there if I could come and live with them, I’d sell it to them.

RF: If she could go live with them, she would sell it to them.

BA: So if your mother could live in the developer’s house, you would sell the property. Do you have any particular hopes of what should happen to this in the future yourself?

RF: My front yard. I like my front yard. That’s what I would like.

BA: Ideally, would you like it to be the same as it is now in the future?

RF: Of course.

BA: A farm, basically.

Mrs. Froebe: Where would you go if I sold it?

RF: Oh, anywhere I wanted to. But where else would I want to go? I’ve already been over [to] North Africa, and the Mediterranean, Europe, and England. This is my home. It’s the only other place I’d really want to be. That’s basically my front yard; no neighbors; stay away from us.

What I might want to do is find ways that we could actually do more things to create more money, to get more people, more involvement. That’s what we’re doing with the Odd Fellows, too. Grow things for children and Sunday schools, and do like popcorn and give to Sunday schools for the kids there – keep them educated.

We’re the last ones here with cattle in the township. You could walk up and hand feed them. They’ll eat an ear of corn right out of your hand. Hand somebody here a pop corn, they literally back away three or four steps, because they think you’re trying to poison them. And some people don’t know the difference between straw and hay. It’s a unique, different life style that’s against... You know, upper middle-class. You can say programming or standards and things.

And that’s how we were. That’s how I was raised and that’s what I’m used to. And it’s like for me to go someplace else...? Where would I go? I don’t know of any other place I’d be happy at. This has been part of my life and my parents’ life and my grandparents’ life.

I found some documentation from Valentine Froebe when he came from the French Empire in Germany in the middle of the 1800s. So I’m going back to those documents now, which I thought was kind of unique. He’s from Germany, but the document was from the French Empire to get permission to leave his country to come to the United States. So I need to find out what type of acetate or non-acetate materials I can have for those documents because we got special plastics that will destroy the darned things.

No. This is my home. I am going to fight change, and I'm going stay as long as I can draw my last breath.

D. J., [our dog,] is 15. He got two ground hogs last year. He can hardly walk, but he got that little adrenaline rush. So we're not sure how much longer he's going to last. He's been a guardian and protector. [He] keeps the rodent population down and the groundhog population down, helps with the cattle. So he's not at all just an employee, but he's part of the family.

So for us it's not work, it's a way of life – how we get up each day, and what we're going to do and accomplish. There are only about a thousand more things to accomplish that we can actually get done. But that's the fun part of it.

End of Tape 3 (3 of 3), Side B  
(2nd Interview: December 12, 2003)

End of Interview



Observer-Reporter / Charles V  
 Former supervisors Earl A. Froebe of Peters Township, Otto Verderber of Canton Township and Emile J. Hospodar of Robinson Township reminisce about the simpler times in which local governments used to operate.

## The way it was

Officials recall when running government was a lot less complicated than it is today

By Kathie O. Warco  
 Staff Writer

They remember well the days when the roads in their respective townships were spread with red dog slag they got for nothing from nearby coal yards.

Running a township 20 years ago in Washington County was nowhere near like the business of running a government today.

At the 75th convention of the Washington County Association of Township Officials last weekend, past and present supervisors got a chance to compare notes as to the way it is today compared with the way things used to be.

The association was formed in 1915, six years before the state association began.

Back in the days when John Cadiz first became involved with township government, there was no such thing as zoning or planning. All but two of the roads in North Strabane Township were paved with red dog.

"Our main concern back then was removing the snow and fixing the streets," said Cadiz, who has been attending the annual convention for almost 40 years.

Cadiz has served as the association's secretary-treasurer since 1964 and was formerly secretary-treasurer of North Strabane Township, then supervisor before becoming secretary-treasurer and manager of South Strabane Township. He now works for Englehardt-Power and Associates overseeing road construction projects.

"Life was also simpler. We had virtually no mandates from the

"We had virtually no mandates from the state telling us what to do."

— John Cadiz,  
 former supervisor and municipal government official

state telling us what to do."

Earl Froebe remembers the days when Peters Township was a farming and mining community instead of the bustling, upscale bedroom community it is today.

In addition to serving as township supervisor from the late '50s through the early '70s, Froebe served as president of the township association from 1970 through 1971.

"Back in the early '60s when I served as supervisor, there were no more than 3,500 or 4,000 people living in the township," Froebe said.

According to preliminary 1990 U.S. Census figures, Peters Township has a population of 14,454.

After originally voting down a proposal that would have started zoning, by the mid '60s, Peters Township residents began to think about it again, Froebe said. Communities in neighboring Allegheny County had already instituted some plans to control growth.

"I think people started to realize that there had to be control over development," Froebe said.

Otto Verderber served as president of the county association from 1953 through 1954 while a supervisor of Canton Township.

"We had virtually no bookkeeping system for the township back when I served as supervisor in the early '50s," Verderber said. "We contracted with the Pennsylvania Economy League to put together a

bookkeeping system for the township."

Some of the projects undertaken in Canton Township when Verderber was a supervisor included installation of fire hydrants and street lights in parts of township.

When Emile J. Hospodar became a Robinson Township supervisor in the early '60s, the equipment owned by his township was limited to one old road grader and one old truck.

The two road department workers were often assisted by Hospodar and other members of the board of supervisors who came to fix the roads.

"We used to get \$1.05 an hour to help work on the roads in the days," Hospodar said. "We used red dog from the slag piles on the streets. We just didn't have money for much of anything."

Hospodar, who served as president of the county association from 1964 through 1965 and in 1972, said the township was eventually able to purchase 10 acres of ground to build a township building and a room for their road department equipment.

"The township is doing pretty well today. They have a little more money to work with thanks to a larger population and better equipment to do the work with," Hospodar said. "Things sure have changed."

32. In this *Observer-Reporter* article from October 14, 1990, former township supervisors share their recollections of township government from the early 1950s through 1990.



**TOWNSHIP OFFICIALS MEET** — Earl A. Froebe, of Peters Township, seated left, was re-elected president of the Washington County Association of Township Officials at their 55th annual convention here Saturday. Seated right is John W. Cadez, of South Strabane Township elected secretary-treasurer. Standing from left, are Emile J. Hospodar, of Robinson Township, named first vice president; Milton W. DeLancey, secretary of the State Association of Township Officials, who was keynote speaker for the convention, and Isaac Iams, of Amwell Township, who was elected second vice president.

33. Earl A. Froebe appears in this 1970 newspaper photo at the 55<sup>th</sup> annual Washington County Association of Township Officials convention with other township officials.