

## **Lloyd Johnson**

Transcript of the oral interview with Lloyd Johnson conducted by Emily Salvette on June 10 2001 at the monthly meeting of the Pittsfield Township Historical Society at the Pittsfield Recreation Center, 701 W. Ellsworth Rd., Ann Arbor. Mr. Johnson reviewed the transcript in October 2001 and made spelling corrections, which are reflected in the transcript.

### **Interview Summary**

Lloyd Johnson was born on April 5, 1922 in Highland Park, Michigan and was reared in Hazel Park, Michigan. He served in the Eighth Air Force during World War II. His first contact with Pittsfield Township came when he met and married Mabel Lewis in 1946. Her parents, who had come to Pittsfield Township in the 1940s from South Dakota, lived on a farm on Morgan Road that traces back to the earliest settlement of the township in 1835.

Mr. Johnson bought his first business "nine days before I graduated from high school." He has been a very successful entrepreneur ever since. His business interests have covered a wide range of endeavors, from retail, to heating and cooling, to his most well known enterprise in Pittsfield Township, the Whitehall Convalescent Home, which opened February 1, 1956. Mr. Johnson also owned WAAM Radio (1600 AM - Ann Arbor) for eighteen years. He purchased the station in 1972 so that the broadcasts of Norman Vincent Peale's weekly sermons would not be pre-empted by broadcast of over-long Michigan Panther football games. Dr. Peale is a person friend of the Johnsons, as was the late president, Richard Nixon.

Mr. Johnson was also active in Republican Party politics. He was involved in helping Pittsfield Township become a charter township, and served on the Township's Compensation Committee and Fire Commission. He also served on the Board of Cleary College for many years.

### **Transcript Contents -- Outline**

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## Lloyd Johnson Interview

- R:** Respondent (Lloyd Johnson)  
**I:** Interviewer (Emily Salvette)  
**BL:** Betty LeClair  
**DW:** Doug Woolley  
**GW:** Geri Woolley  
**EW:** Edward Wall  
**F or M 1,2,3,etc.:** unidentified female or male questioner

Side One:

- BL:** Good afternoon and welcome to the Pittsfield Historical Society, Sunday program. And today Emily will be conducting an oral history interview with Lloyd Johnson. And as probably most of you are aware, Lloyd has been ... played a very important role in our township, and I think he's going to give us a good story of all the accomplishments that you have done during all these years. So I'd like to have everybody welcome Lloyd this afternoon. [clapping] And of course here is Mabel.
- R:** Well, I don't know how good it's going to be, because I had ... they made me sign a paper before we started here that I had to tell the truth. [laughter] And that could be an impediment to my presentation. But my first contact with Pittsfield Township came when I married the farmer's daughter in 1946. And we had met at a YMCA dance in Detroit where she worked in the Fisher Building and I worked at General Motors Research Laboratories, which was right at that time behind the General Motors Building, about two blocks apart. And one of her patients invited her to this Valentine's dance at the Fisher YMCA, and my supervisor invited me. And I didn't know whether I'd have anybody to dance with, but they were trying to get these dances going and they had a volunteer pickup band, and the patient in her office played the piano, and my boss played the saxophone. So I went and met her that night, and lo and behold, nine weeks and six days later we were married. I was saying up here that I had taken a personality test given me by a business consulting firm and two personality traits I ran over 100 percent. One was impulsiveness and the other was aggressiveness. And I called her, we were due to get married on Friday, but we had the marriage license, the blood test, and the wedding rings set, which cost a total of sixty dollars, which was all the cash I had at the time. I was just out the service about three months, from three years in the Eighth Airforce -- or not all of it in the Eighth Airforce, but in the Airforce. And I had called the minister who had been a friend and had called on my mother after my father died and all ♦ he preached the funeral sermon, my father's funeral -- and found out that he lived near Claremont and Third Avenue in Detroit, and that his time was free Thursday night as well as Friday. So I called her from my office at three o'clock in the afternoon and said, "Well, we've got the marriage license, the rings, and the blood test, how

about getting married tonight instead of tomorrow night? I have called the minister and he's available." And of course she kind of stumbled around a little bit, and she says, "Well, I was going to wash my hair, but okay." So that was ... that was where I first got started. I'd been out once to meet her mother and father who had come here from South Dakota in 1940 and bought the sixty-acre farm and farmhouse from people by the name of Rochol, who had owned it since 1921. And I have ... went back, and I have the abstract of the farmland and I've got it dated clear back till 1934 when it was first purchased. No, it was 1935. Purchased from the United States Government when this land was made available.

I had been raised from the time I was four years old in the Detroit suburb of Hazel Park, which some of you may know where it is. It's at 9 Mile Road and John R, north of Detroit, and about the only farm experience I had was working one summer thinning rows of sugar beets down on my hands and knees in the mud for fifty cents a day. But I came out and her folks were in the dairy business and they had been able to buy a farm and pay for it, even though they had three barns burn down in the summer of 1944 when the barn was ... When the farm was supposed to be paid for, they paid the final payment, and the three barns with 54 ton of hay burned down about a week later, and it was a great job for her father to get the cattle out of the barn so they didn't burn up all the cattle that ... ruin their entire income. But the cows were ... were stabled outdoors for the rest of the summer and fall while they tried during war time to get that ... a new barn up there, which is a barn that sits on the property today.

I:

Where is the property?

R:

It's at 3400 Morgan Road. It's right next to the White Hall Convalescent Home or nursing home. In fact, I'll tell you a little bit about that, about the nursing home and how it happened to be in that location. Now the history of the sixty acres of farmland, I don't know whether you have in your historical archives or not, but one reason that Indiana and Ohio were developed into farmland and houses built so much sooner than Michigan, some early explorer and mapmaker in Michigan had seen so many of our nearly 20,000 lakes, or what we choose to call lakes, and he had made the map of Michigan showing that it was almost all swamp land, or low land, and was not suitable for farming. Well of course those of us who've lived here all our life know that it's a tremendous farming state with very rich land and everything, but that did keep Michigan from being developed. And this territory, which included Michigan, the land they wanted to develop and get people to move out there, I had a great grandfather who purchased in 1836 200 acres of land near Portland, Michigan between Lansing and Grand Rapids, and the land was being sold for two dollars an acre. Of course that was quite a big price, but he farmed the land till 1849 and then he was gone four years to California in the Gold Rush and came back broke, not rich, but his wife and three children have done a good job of farming the land.

But it was kind of interesting that the farmhouse on our property there was built in 1885, and it was built by the ... Sumner, S-U-M-N-E-R family. Seth P. Sumner, and Mrs. Sumner was Sam Morgan's aunt. I think it was his father's sister. And, but the first sale of the land was in 1835, was sold for the United States Government to a man named Israel Smith on October 10th. He had it six years and sold it in 1841 to Nichols VanBuskem who had it until just 1854, and he sold it to just the first initial H. Olds in March. And then Olds sold it to Hamilton H. Clark in 1861. Now those of you that are history students know that you're getting into the Civil War area there. And 1865 Hamilton Clark sold it to Seth Sumner. Now it was between then and 1893 that Seth and Emily Sumner built the big farmhouse that you see there today. And when we put out a new

foot on about two years ago, the roofing boards, we had to go down and put plywood on to take the new roofing and take off three layers of roofing that had been on there for generations. But there was 12-inch-wide beautiful white pine boards that was in the original roof, but the only problem was that I don't know what kind of shingles they were using, but there was about an inch and a half or a two-inch space between each of the one-by-twelve white pine boards.

Now the Sumners, Seth and Emily Sumner, had the house till 1887, and they sold it to a Lucy Frothingham, F-R-O-T-H-I-N-G-H-A-M, and it would be rather interesting to know if some of these names ended up in the cemetery over there that I know you folks have taken an interest in. Then 1892, Lucy Frothingham signed it over according to the abstract to a George Frothingham, 1894, George Frothingham signed it over to an Anne Frothingham, so that family owned it from 1887 to 1921 when Lucy E. Frothingham was a widow of George Frothingham. He evidently had died and they sold it to Edward J. Rochol and his wife Louise. It's spelled R-O-C-H-O-L. And they in turn, in 1940, the Rochol's sold it to William H. Lewis, his wife Fern Lewis, and Mabel Lewis, who is my dear wife, Mabel Lewis Johnson. So that's kind of the history of the land, which I thought was interesting and I got all out the old abstract, and the abstract is rather brittle and of course the early writing on it is in the Spenserian handwriting. It's beautifully done, but of course it was done slowly, carefully, and before the typewriter was invented. So it's kind of interesting to trace the history of that farmland.

Now from 1940 on, when her folks bought the land, of course we got into 1941, got into World War II, December 7th, Pearl Harbor, the whole works, and the dairy business that they were in, they had 23 cows and they would have new cows coming fresh with new calves every year, and I kind of irritated my new mother in law and father in law because being a city kid, I'd made a pet out of everything live that I ever came in contact with, and they had a beautiful calf that they were going to make into a milk cow. And I had her spoiled so rotten they had to sell her to the person that bought their surplus calves.

So the other story that have to tell you is that with her father and mother getting older every year and trying to do all of this dairy work, and we have on our front lawn a little milk cart that they used to fill up four cans of milk and then her mother and father together would haul that cart that has big wheels on each side, two big wheels, up and put it in a cooler in the ... and we still have the cooler in our little pump houses, between our house and the original farmhouse. And it means a lot to us because it dates back and Mabel can still see her mother and father hauling that cart up there. And anyway, we came out one weekend and the folks had gotten a little bit behind in getting the manure pile down to where it should be, and they had a manure spreader and a tractor. Well, of course my wife had gone back and forth from Detroit. She had a small apartment in there where she worked as a nurse, but sometimes she'd get up and come out in the evening, help them with the night milking, get up at four o'clock in the morning, do the morning milking, drive forty miles in to the Fisher Building, work all day long, and hustle back out and do ... help them with the night milking. So she was a very good daughter, and I can tell you right now that my father-in-law wasn't too happy that I sort of married the farmer's daughter. But I was going to make an impression on him, so we decided that we would hook up the manure spreader to the tractor and we filled up the manure spreader from the pile and pitched it in and I stood on the back of the tractor because being a city boy, I didn't even know how to drive a tractor. We went out to the middle of the field and my wife threw the lever forward that was supposed to start the manure spreader. Nothing happened. So the new city boy son-in-law went around behind the manure spreader to see what had happened, and she

started the tractor and it worked (laughter). Of course, it was kind of a .... put a kind of a strain on a new, less than year-old marriage, but I put my hands up the best I could and hollered to stop, but I decided within a minute or two that it was the first thing that I'd ever discovered that could spread it better than I could (laughter).

Now, they continued to farm that land. My father-in-law, who was quite old when he got married -- my wife's mother was quite a bit younger than him -- had a stroke in the barn and by this time we had the first nursing home over at Farmington, Michigan, which we had started. I've had quite a background in the business world. We had 22 college and high school graduates in church this morning, and I said, "I got a challenge for all of you." And I said, "I bought my first business nine days before I graduated from high school. I've been working in retail dairy products store, lunch counter and soda fountain, and the engaged couple couldn't agree on how to run the place, and they'd broke off their engagement and they put the place up for sale, and I had been saving money, even though I'd been supporting my mother and father for about three years. I'd been saving money since I was twelve years old and found out that they would take 300 dollars as a down payment and I had 370 dollars I'd saved in postal savings certificates. How many of you remember those? When the banks all went broke, if you wanted any savings certificates and didn't want to keep cash in the house, you bought the certificates at the post office. Anyway, I had that business for about two years before I went into World War II and I actually had to get a parents' consent form to get into World War II because I was still about two months short of my twenty-first birthday when I went in, and I was there almost three years. But I also got ... I ran my little store and I got my Ph.D. in business the hard way. I hired a fifteen-year-old boy and I was so good to him and paid him fairly and everything, but what I didn't realize was that he was stealing money out of the cash register whenever I disappeared out of the store for a few minutes. And I finally caught him at him. But by that time I was so depleted of my cash and working capital that I had to get a second job. So I got a job at General Motors Research Laboratories, and would work there eight hours a day and then come back and work till midnight in the little store, and my father sort of helped out at the store. But that was all before this time, and then after World II and Mabel and I got married, we built a new house and I became enamoured with the plumbing and heating that was going in the house, and I went to work for a plumbing and heating contractor for about a year. And then by the time I was twenty-seven, I was a plumbing and heating contractor and I did the plumbing, heating, and ventilating on 36 schools in a 6-year period. But then my mother had a stroke, and she had been a partial invalid from the time I was ten years old, and I had to ... I was an only child and had to do a lot of things for my mother, help her with bathing and all that type of thing. So that started us in the first nursing home, and then we built the second one on a seven-acre piece of land which was a brand new building. And Mabel's father came in and we lived some of those early years longer than forty-one years ago on Lahser Road in Detroit. And then he afterwards had to be also in the nursing home. My mother died in the nursing home just six weeks after we started it. But we decided in checking over the area out here around Ann Arbor that Ann Arbor needed a nursing home, and of course I had the idea I was going to build a third place, you know, this ... if two places are doing well, you expand to the third. Well, her mother thought I was start raving crazy because anybody that had one nursing home and then two, why in the world would they want three? But she offered to give us the northwest corner of the land which had been a pasture for the cattle. And that's where the present Whitehall Convalescent Home is built, and it was in 1955, the fall of '55, that she deeded over the first six acres to Lloyd and Mabel Johnson and Whitehall Convalescent Homes. We had ... we had incorporated with an S corporation in 1951 ...no, in 1956 I guess it was. But we've opened the first 40 beds of the Whitehall Convalescent

Home February 1st, 1956, and I even advertised in the newspaper for a big open house, and it was the worst blizzard they'd had in the area here in 50 years, with about nine inches of snow that fell in about two hours time, and we still had 60 or 70 people there. Most of them wanted jobs back then. Then we built on ... we filled those forty beds and we had people that was coming from all over the country. Because there were no ... no books on how a nursing home should be built. So I figured out, and I did some articles for the Michigan Medical Journal even on the design of nursing homes, that you ought to have nothing larger than a two bedroom, because high occupancy is very important in a nursing home. And you can find, if you put one old fellow that snores in a room, you can put another old fellow who's deaf, but it's pretty hard to find three old fellows who are deaf to put in the nursing home room. And plus, if you've got a four bedroom, if you've got one man in there, you can't put any wom ... well, maybe you could today, but back then you couldn't. You couldn't put two or three men in with two or three women. So we built all two-bed or single rooms. We found out quite a few of the college professors had high enough retirement income that they could afford the single private rooms which were a couple, three dollars a day more. And ... but everything went so well with us that as time went on we found that we were hiring more and more people and we built a third addition of 38 beds and opened that in 1959. Now the nice part about this was that Pittsfield was not a charter township yet, and the Pittsfield Township taxes were lower. And when the decision came about as to whether Pittsfield became a charter township or not, there were some people that were strictly against it because they thought it was going to raise their taxes. And yet I knew and Cliff Simmons knew -- he was head of Hoover Ball and Bearing Company at that time -- they had over 300 employees in Pittsfield Township, and we were both very much in favor of the charter township, because we both had found out that if Pittsfield Township had been a charter township at the time that Briarwood was built, we would have had Briarwood Shopping Center in Pittsfield Township, and we'd have had their taxes and their support and that type of thing. But there's a little story that illustrates the fact that you ought to know all of the facts before you start making major decisions. This is a story about little Jimmy who was age five and he announced to his mother and father one night at supper time that he and little Suzie who lives three doors down the street were going to get married. Well, this ... his father smiled and winked at the mother, and he says, "Well, where are you two going to live?" He says, "Well, we talked that over and we decided we'd live right here with you and mommy, then she can visit her mommy and daddy real easy." And he says, "Well, what are you going to use for money?" He said, "Well, we talked that over too and we decided with her dollar a week allowance and my dollar a week allowance and eating here with you and mommy, we'd get along just fine." The father winked at the mother again and says, "Oh, what's going to happen if you have children?" And he said, "Well, up to now we've been lucky." (laughter) Well, at this point in our life, up till then, we had been lucky. (laughter) We had done real well. And I remember writing an article that appeared in the Ann Arbor news after Pittsfield Township became a charter township. We did a survey and we found that the two largest employers in Pittsfield Township was, number one, the Simmons Hoover Ball and Bearing who had over 300 employees, and we had between 70 and 80 employees at Whitehall once we got to the 102 beds. And so we found that we were the two largest employers at that time in the entire township. And one other bit of information that I want to include here is that this turned out to be wonderful for us also because we found out that that the tax differential in the charter township of Pittsfield over what our taxes would have been in the City of Ann Arbor added up to about two dollars a day per patient in a 102-bed facility. So as a consequence, we could get our fair profit and charge two dollars a day less than the nursing homes that were built in Ann Arbor, which gave us a tremendous advantage over the facilities that were renting beds in there. Now, shortly thereafter, Pittsfield Township

became a charter township. The three officers at that time was Bob Lillie, who when I was vice chairman of the Republican Party for the county her ran on the Republican ticket here in Pittsfield Township and was elected but was only going to run for a four-year term and when I was a vice chairman and he was a good candidate and a hard worker and did a great job for the township, and there was ... Perry Brown was the clerk and Jim Reader was the treasurer. And I had talked Bob Lillie into running for an additional term in office, and had become acquainted with all three of the elected officers at that time. And lo and behold, after we became a charter township, they appointed a compensation committee, and I found myself being elected by the committee as chairman of the compensation committee. Well, interestingly, all three of the elected officers before we became a charter township had other sources of income, and they were all taking a very substandard remuneration from the people of Pittsfield Township, ten thousand a year, eight thousand a year, nine thousand a year, like that. Well, one of the first things we did on our compensation committee was to do a study of other charter townships in the entire state of Michigan. We were able to get that information, and we found out that lo and behold charter townships like Redford and Bloomfield Township and ... and others, that the three elected officers were getting 25,000, 27,000, 500, like that. Well, we came in with a preliminary recommendation that we raise a supervisors pay. I think it was to 22,000, or 23,000. Well, Bob Lillie just about blew his stack. He said, "Oh, my God, he said, they'll murder us in the Ann Arbor News if you come up with a raise in pay like that." And I said, "Well, I'll tell you what I'll do. We will invite an Ann Arbor News reporter to be at the meeting and I will be at the meeting, and I will give the results of our research into this and what the other people are making." Now there's only one thing in our recommendation that you may find unacceptable, and that is, is the recommendation of our compensation committee that one of the three of you be in the township hall every day. We know that you serve on committees and have to drive to Lansing and things like that, but we don't want a charter township where somebody is being elected just to show up on Tuesday night for a board meeting, and that hired employees are doing everything all the rest of the time." Well, interestingly, that tradition is pretty much ... there's at least one of the three elected officers that are there if somebody has a very critical problem or ... or something, or wants to interview an elected officer for a newspaper or an article. So that was interesting and it was ... I served as chairman of the compensation committee for about fifteen years.

I:

When was that formed? When was it started?

R:

Well, Doug, can you tell us when the charter township originated? I know you were on that board for a lot of years...

DW:

I might, I think it was about since 72.

R:

Yeah.

DW:

And the board ... I would not really know.

R:

Uh-hm. Well, I think that's probably pretty close to it. It's about 19 ... 1972. Now, we've had a lot of population growth here in Pittsfield. It's been a good place in order to do business. I don't know whether you know it or not, but our radio station, which we bought, it'll soon be eighteen years ago, eighteen years ago the third of July, that we made the deal for that. It's rather interesting, the reason that I bought the radio station; I was sponsoring Norman Vincent Peale

who was a personal friend of mine several years already at that time, with his weekly sermons from the marble collegiate church in New York City. And some of you will remember the old Michigan Panther football team, and we started being preempted with Doctor Peale's sermon with that Michigan Panther game because it had ran overtime. So I went into the station to find out where we could move Doctor Peale, and the young manager at that time said we could move him here and I can guarantee you that he won't be pre-empted so people turning into Doctor Peale won't be able to hear him. But he said, "I can't promise you for too long because I have to tell you the station's up for sale." I said, "Oh, tell me more." I hadn't lost any of my impulsiveness, I guess, since I got married in '46 because I bought the radio station eight days later. And so it's ...

**I:**

Can you give us the call letters of the radio station?

**R:**

WAAM, 1600 on the AM dial, and it's ... this is our 54th anniversary, the station's 54th anniversary. I've had it longer than any other owner. I don't know how long that's going to continue, because the radio business is changing materially and I guess having been married to that farmer's daughter for 55 years plus now, I guess maybe I'm changing a little bit too. But it's been a great life. I have built, Mabel and I, have built apartment buildings in Florida. We have seven apartment buildings in the Clearwater-Largo-St. Petersburg area of Florida with 287 year-round rentals of senior apartments down there. And we have about eleven employees down there and about fifteen at the radio station up here. But we operate at about 96 percent occupancy and we bought the first apartments down there in 1968. We also had half interest in a Whitehall Convalescent Home of St. Petersburg for 20 years, but the folks that were in with us figured twenty years was long enough. They didn't want to go 44 years like we did.

But it's been great living in the area here. One thing I want to tell you, you may wonder why there's a house on each side of the driveway over there, which wouldn't meet code requirements today. But when my wife's mother was 84 years old, we were going to move to the Plymouth area, which was approximately half way between our Novi and Farmington facilities and our Ann Arbor facility. But I said to Mabel, "Your mother is getting a little older and maybe she's going to start needing our help and she might lose her driver's license or something." So I brought it up to her mother and she says, "Oh, that's wonderful of you, build here. There's lots of room between the house and the barn." And so that's what we did. We built between the house and the barn about half way, and we had a rather serious fire there and one of your previous guests was telling about going to that fire and of course we've had the swimming pool with 34,000 gallons of water in it, and I'd already offered the water in that swimming pool if they couldn't get back and fill up their tanker truck like they can today. And I remember one of your previous guests said that when that warm water in January started to make the steam come off of his gloves, he didn't know what was happening. But we had the three barns that burned down on her folks' place in 1944 and then we had a serious fire there. It was about 18 years ago last January. And we also have two houses in Florida. Her mother started going down to Florida when we bought the first house down there in March of 1959. And then they widened the road and everything she liked to do was on the other side of the road in Florida. So I tried every other way to try to figure out if I could build a bridge over the road. They wouldn't let me do that, so I ... I figured it out the Johnson way again. I bought a house on the other side of the road, a new house. We found out that at age 97 she was so thrilled and excited, it was a first time in her life, her entire lifetime, that she had moved into a brand-new house. I have pictures of her here when she had her 100th birthday, because maybe



of you may remember, I was close friends with Richard Nixon and took over the Nixon Justice Fund after he was forced to retire as president. And we took her out on one of our visits, and she was 97 at that time, and Richard Nixon said, "Well, let me know when you're a hundred. I don't know whether I'll make it or not, but I'm sure you will, because you're so great." And on her 100th birthday, there was a picture of her with a two-page hand-written letter from Richard Nixon, and an autographed copy of his memoirs which had been just published the year before. And they took these two pictures to the Ann Arbor News to announce her 100th birthday and she played her harmonica for them. She played a harmonica. My wife said she's had harmonica music all her life, because her mother played from the time she was born and I played the harmonica all of these years.

When they built I-94, some of you remember Enoch Feigel and his wife that lived there on Ellsworth Road. That was their farm, and I-94 cut their farm right in two, or not exactly in two because there was more land on the south side of I-94 of the Feigel property. And Mrs. Feigel had been good friends and neighbors of her folks ever since they had moved in there, and many of the other folks in the community, the Geddes family, helped when their barn burned and when they had a barn raising way back when in 1944, the Geddes family and other families in the community helped in the barn raising, and they had an awful time getting enough equipment to built that new ... new barn when it was built. In the meantime, as I told you, the cows were being milked outdoors and the milk cans stored in the little pump houses there.

The ... I wanted to tell you one other story. You may think that I'm pretty much an optimist, the number of things that I have sort of jumped into. When I was going out there to see Richard Nixon, I was on the board of a company in Florida which I went on to because they paid for round ... 12 round trips a year for me to come down there to ... and I stayed overnight in a house in Florida, but I was building apartment buildings down there. And then I could go down and pay all of the bills on the apartment buildings and still keep the nursing homes going up here, and all. But the chairman of the board asked me if I would investigate, when I was going out there to see my friend Richard Nixon, a letter that he had from a company in Los Angeles that had quite a few hospitals that was interested in the merger with the hospital. We had three ... three hospitals and a nursing home in a 45-million dollar a year company in Florida. That was what I was on the board of. It was called Medfield Corporation. Well, I took an extra day, negotiated with these people and ended up with an offer from them that was 58 percent above where our stock was selling on the American stock exchange, and I flew home to Michigan and back down to Florida for a special board meeting, and the board approved the negotiation for a merger with a company. Well, I had quite a bit of money in stock in this original little company in Florida because I figured if they were paying my way back and forth and all and I was taking an interest and we had some people that were criticizing our board, and so I figured, well, if they started a lawsuit, could vote their stock, they might vote me and the rest of the people out of office. And so I had bought quite a bit of stock for as low as one and five-eighths per share. Well, I negotiated the merger and took over as president of the company in Florida for a nine-month period of time and by the time the merger took place, the stock was \$23.50 a share. You can imagine what the cost was to me on some of that that I'd bought between the one and five-eighths and about 12 dollars a share was the most I'd paid for it. And lo and behold, the company's continued to grow. This past week the stock closed as \$48.73 a share, and to show you that it's probably not too bad a deal to do something for one of your old friends like Richard Nixon, even though he's not too popular with the public, we've still got nearly 18,000 shares of that stock at \$48.73 a share and our cost is 29 cents a share. That's what you call capital gains,

with a capital C and a capital G. But anyway, God has been good to us, but in everything that Mabel and I have ever done, we're both only children, we don't have children. We say that it might have been nice if we'd a had children but the nice part about not having children is that you get the pick of the litter of other people's families, and we've Gordon Kummer that some of you know that's been with us 35 years now. He's a grandfather three times over and he was 23 when he went to work for us. And Kathy Kalman at the radio station is a wonderful younger lady, much younger than us, and does a great job for us over there. We have excellent management of our apartment buildings down in Florida, including this lady that's managing the apartments now, majorly, she's a general manager. She's been with us about 12 years. But, yes, we've been impulsive and, yes, my wife's gone along with me. We've seen a tremendous amount of change in the township. I've had differences of opinion with people that were good friends, but I've never believed that if you don't believe alike a hundred percent of the time ... nobody likes a doormat particularly, and nobody likes a person that is negative, too negative in their thinking. And you can have a difference of opinion as long as people are thinking positively. A little example of negative thinking is a story about the young man that drank about one or two beers too many, and his friends as he went to sleep rubbed limburger cheese on his mustache, and his eyes fluttered a couple of times and he stumbled to his feet and he ran outside, came back inside looking panicky, ran outside, came back inside, sit down, he started to cry. He said it's no use, the whole world stinks. (laughter) I think with that little story about negativism I'll kind of wind this up and take any questions that anybody would like to give.

I:

Thank you very much. I'm going to ask everybody to stop two seconds. I'm going to switch the tape over to the other side.

R:

Did I time it pretty well?

Side Two:

I:

Let's try it. Can you say something? Something?

R:

Yes, okay.

I:

Okay.

R:

You got it?

I:

Okay, we're ready for questions now. Anybody have any questions for Mr. Johnson? Yes.

F1:

What's the name of the nursing home in, or, the apartment complex in Florida?

R:

We call those Whitehall Apartments II. And it's rather interesting, we've been asked many times why and how we chose the name Whitehall. And I was trying to find an answer for my mother's illness. She had a stroke and started needing full-time care and Mabel and I were both working at that time. She was in a doctor's office and me at the plumbing company way out in Wyandotte. And I was reading the want ad section of the paper one Sunday night and I let a whoop out of me. She's already gone to sleep and gone to bed, and I said, "Hey, I got the perfect answer to take care of my mother. Here's a small nursing home for sale out in Farmington. And

lo and behold, we bought it about two weeks later. Again, I wasn't exactly a slow mover. And we opened it and we had one lady that was going to run it for us, but she only lasted two weeks. And we kept expanding it. When we got up to ten beds, I think it was at that time, we had to get a license, a state license and we had to spend money on the building and thing, but I could do the plumbing on it at wholesale. And but the thing was that my mother only lived six weeks. We bought the nursing home July 20th, 1951, and she died September 7th. So it was a rather devastating thing for us. On the other hand, we'd, by that time had about 15 or 20 patients and we had the idea that people couldn't get along with out us, and that we'd continue with the nursing home. And we continued to expand it up to 42 beds. It's the largest house in Novi, or was, and it was built in 1867. It's a 7,000 square-foot house. But it's a two-story place, so we learned the advantage of having everything on one floor, by the time you took everything -- plates, trays, the food, and everything else that had to be moved from floor to floor. We did learn though to buy two vacuum cleaners, one for each floor, so we didn't have to carry them up and down.

**M1:**

Did you have elevators?

**R:**

No.

**M1:**

Don't ... no elevators?

**R:**

Only me (laughter).

**F2:**

Did Mabel ever say, "Hey, enough!"

**R:**

No. Well, I'll tell you another little story that was an interesting experience in our life. This was Thanksgiving Day, 1957, and we'd worked 14 weeks without a day off, and I'd built the other nursing home and I'd wound up the plumbing and heating business. And we had a reservation at the old Commodore Perry Hotel down in Toledo. Do you remember the ... anybody remem ... right near the river. Mabel had cooked Thanksgiving dinner at one place and I cooked Thanksgiving dinner at the other, and we were exhausted. We drove the 60 miles down to Toledo and piled into bed for a couple of hours and then got up and thought it was fairly late in the day. We went down to the ballroom, and as we sat down and our eyes adjusted to the light, she said, "Don't look now but I think you're sitting back to back with Elvis Presley." And I glanced over my shoulder, and sure enough, it was him, and he had a big six-foot-two, base fiddle player with him. Well, about two minutes later a young man came in Thanksgiving night, started a fight with Elvis, because his ... he complained his wife was carrying Elvis's picture in her billfold instead of his. (laughter)

**I:**

Oh!

**R:**

Well, anyway, the police arrived just about two minutes after the fight started and carted the young man off to jail and Elvis and his base fiddle player and Mabel and I sat there till 3:30 in the morning talking to him, and he figured I was, at age 37, a middle-aged business man because he was 22, and said, "Well, Mr. Johnson ..." and he wanted to come out to my nursing home at Novi and put on a show for the patients, and I said, "Well, I'd love to have you, but I don't think you realize, having made 10 million dollars last year that you're not going to be allowed to do that from now on." But anyway, a lot of the advice that I gave him that night, that he wasn't

going to be able to just go out and make friends going into a local McDonalds and strike up a conversation because people just wouldn't allow him to do that. I advised him that was going to have to have his small circle of friends who would be ... he would be close with and he could spend his time off from his appearances on the stage and singing appearances and everything. But anyway, pretty well, that was the way he lived the rest of his life. But he was a very, very fine simple country boy at that age, age 22, and very kind, but had the most beautiful complexion. He was the envy of every woman in the country, I'm sure, and the most beautiful dark brown hair, and I kind of hadn't followed his career much up until that time, we'd been too busy taking care of nursing home patients.

Interestingly one of our early patients when we built the first new building was Henry Ford's brother, William Ford, the original Henry Ford. And he and his wife both came in as patients and we had two of their first cousins, Emory Ford and there was a lady that was ... had a married name but she was a first cousin to Henry Ford. And one of our last patients that we had when we sold out at the end of July was Alexander Graham Bell's granddaughter, and she always hastened to explain that she really wasn't that old because Alexander Graham Bell was so busy inventing the telephone and getting it going that he fathered his last child at age 56. Any question?

I:

Any other question?

M2:

I was going to say one of the organizations that Lloyd has mentioned has been his devotion to Cleary College, he and Mabel. I don't remember when you came to Cleary as a board member.

R:

It's about a year after I got the radio station, so that would make it about 17 years. Yeah. Cleary College, and one reason why it's so special to me is because Cleary came at age 12 from Ireland. His mother and father, he was an orphan from the famine, Potato Famine in Ireland, and he had a sister who was married and living in a little town of Hubbarston, Michigan. My mother was married twice and both of her husbands came from Habbarston.

I:

Boy.

R:

And my grandmother lived there and I spent a lot of time there when I was a youngster, so it was real familiar to me. But he started the ... a lot of people don't know that he started the first school of penmanship in Fowlerville and then started the school of Spenserian hand penmanship, similar to what you see on these papers here that I had the history of the farm here. And Harry Howard, who was president of Cleary when I went on the board, was a wonderful man and his mother and his wife's mother were both patients of ours at the nursing home. And his wife's mother died and his mother was going downhill and she was in an American House home for the aging in Wayne. And he moved her over, and we were astonished because they wanted the same bed in the same room that her mother had occupied. I thought that ... something like that might be depressing, and I was trying to figure out where else we could put his mother and care for her, but they wanted the same ... They were used to that room, they liked the wallpaper and it would keep them from being so devastated with the loss of her mother if they had his mother to come and visit. But Ted Heusel had Harry Howard on as a guest, one of his guests one time, and he asked him why he didn't invite Lloyd Johnson to be on the board (laughter). So I've been on the board ever since. I'm secretary of the board, have been now for the last three years.

**F3:** Oh, mother was a patient.

**R:** I remember your mother ...

**F3:** Mother.

**R:** ... In the south wing.

**F3:** She was English, and she ... and your mother-in-law had quite good conversation.

**R:** Yes.

**F3:** And she had the best of care, because she had all these old English stories she used to tell the nurses, but ...

**R:** Yeah.

**F3:** ... anybody that showed up in the room got one...

**R:** One thing at holiday time, like Thanksgiving and Christmas, I would always get people reminiscing about which of the native foods that their folks, if they came from Germany, if they came from Poland, or if they came from England or Scotland or Ireland, what were some of the holiday dishes that they would serve? And that was always fascinating and ... because my mother had the English tradition and the things that she'd always serve and ... One thing was the tradition, yeah, they always had a quart bottle of wine at Christmas time, red wine. The only time we ever had it in the house, any other time, and ... but we had the ... and of course people ask, "Well, how old were you when you had your first sip of wine?" Well, I wasn't very darn old, I don't hardly remember, because it was a tradition that you did have that little ... little sip or two of wine. Yes, Doug.

**DW:** What you're doing, to mention your involvement with the Fire Commission.

**R:** Yes. Ah, early on, right after we moved here, about in the 1960s, Russ Payer, who most of you know, their family lived here and did business in the township. In fact, when her folks bought the house, Russ Payer was 12 years old when he worked with his father on a contracting job on the big old house that her folks bought in 1940. But he knew that I had some engineering background and business background and all. And he was at a meeting where he learned that Pittsfield Township was going to lose their fire rating because our equipment was getting to be obsolete. We had to buy some new equipment, and the fire chief at that time, he was not a bad man, but he ... he gave favored treatment to some of the volunteer fireman, and he hadn't had a training session that he'd sent anybody to for four years. So that, combined with the obsolete equipment, was going to cost Pittsfield Township their fire rating, which would have cost the residents of Pittsfield \$325,000 a year more in premiums on their fire insurance. Well, they ... the board at that time asked me if I would head up the Fire Committee, and then they took all of the critics of the board and put them all on my committee. And they said at that time, well, if anybody could handle them Johnson could. And I said, "Well, thanks a lot, but ..." The first meeting, I made everybody promise if they were going to stay on the committee that they

would not use the information that we were able to develop to save our fire department for any political purposes, to defeat any incumbent running, or to fun themselves and use it for that type of advantage. Well, they all agreed, and we did ... we had some real fine people on that committee, and we came up with a report. We even went up and met with the State Fire Marshall and we visited other fire departments that were fully approved and we came up with recommendations of how much training that the fire department had to have and we recommended a change in fire chiefs. And that was when the elder chief, Kay, came on board. And it was kind of interesting because we had this building here, and one of the deals where we were able to get Jim Kay was to provide him lodging that was close to the fire equipment. Well, as you recall, this was before the fire station was built over there on Michigan Avenue, so this is where the fire equipment were ... was. And I suggested putting the mobile home on the property. How many of you remember that mobile home? And they said, "Well, we have a law or a regulation in the township that you cannot leave a mobile home in a temporary location for longer than a year." I said, "Well, if anybody complains about it, refer them to me," and the only person that complained about it ... in fact, we ended up finally having two mobile homes on the property because we built the new building over there on Michigan Avenue. The only person who complained was Roland Worster who had the landscape business. And they referred him to me, and I said, "Well, Rollie," I said, "You're saving \$325,000 a year in fire premiums by having that there on the property. Now do you still want it removed?" "Hell, no, leave it alone!" (laughter). So anyway, that's ... that's the story of the fire department and the way it developed and the training sessions and I was very ... the committee operated without any expenses to the township. And that was something that I was very proud of the results, the committee, but the town board ... the township board did support all of our recommendations.

**I:**

I think we have time for one more question.

**GW:**

This isn't exactly a question, but I want to go back to the nursing home just for a few minutes. Doug's dear mother was there, she lived in the retirement center then we moved her to Whitehall, and she died there in 7, and it really wasn't being realistic to describe Whitehall, it really wasn't an occupation. It wasn't an occupation with Lloyd and Mabel, it was a way of life. They visited with the patients. When Doug's mother died, her skin all over was just as soft and nice as a baby's and that's really a representation of the type of care she got, she got such good care and we really appreciated it.

**R:**

Well, I'll finish up with a little definition that I wrote. I was challenged by a Department of Health employee who, when he first started coming in as an inspector, was pretty hard-nosed, but as he saw and came into our place time after time, he kind of let up on us a little bit. He said, "I've heard you speak for 25 minutes defining what good nursing home care was. Can you define it in one sentence?" I said, "Boy, that's ... that's a rough assignment." And I said, "I'll see what I can do." This is the sentence I came up with, and they're still using it in the state association, even though we're ... we've been out almost six years, out of the industry. I said, "Our job in a nursing home is to let the patient know that they are loved and respected, to keep them clean, dry and well nourished, and to help them do as much as they can as well as they can for as long as they can." Everybody's always agreed that that defined it pretty darn good. And I put it in the order in which it should be. Number one is to let them know that they're loved and respected. There are cattle that are well cared for in a barn, but there is no interaction between the human beings carrying for them. So you can, you could care for people, keep them clean and keep them

occupied, but if you didn't let them know that they were loved and respected, you wouldn't be doing the entire job.

**EW:**

If there's time, Lloyd, a month ago, you made some comments about your grandfather in the Civil War.

**R:**

Yes.

**EW:**

Since that was not captured on tape, if there's time, why don't you retell that so we also have that on tape.

**R:**

Yes. Well, my grandfather, from the little town of Hubbarston, where Cleary came when he was a 12-year-old boy, went in the Civil War and was part of the Michigan Sharpshooter's Regiment in the Civil War, and I didn't know what that meant. It was always told with pride, and I read a story in the True Magazine that was published a number of years. It was a magazine for men, and it told how the Sharpshooters Regiment were given some of the first repeating rifles that was imported by the north from England, and that how ... about I think it was 12 hundred Union soldiers with their repeating rifles held off 35 hundred Confederate troops and killed something like 23 hundred of them because they were expecting them to have to stop and reload their rifles and use the ramrod to reset the rifles and the repeating rifles and these ... They said that the Sharpshooters Regiment was composed of young men from Michigan and Ohio who, if they couldn't shoot a rabbit at 300 feet, they didn't meet that day (laughter).

**EW:**

But your grandfather was hit by a bullet and his life was saved ...

**R:**

Yes. The ... a piece of shrapnel or a bullet or whatever it was hit his canteen, and I still have his canteen and there's a dent in it where this piece of shrapnel and they said he could have very well have been killed by that, maybe not, but he very well could have been, because it's ... it was kind of a heavy metal canteen that could have saved him from being wounded by that.

**EW:**

Now the question, Lloyd: was your father born before that happened, or afterwards?

**R:**

Ah, my father was born after that happened. He came ...

**EW:**

Do you know where that canteen is?

**R:**

Pardon?

**EW:**

That canteen is pivotal in your life.

**R:**

Yeah. Well, I guess you're right there (laughs, laughter).

**I:**

Got time for any more questions?

**R:**

My mother was 40 when I was born. She was married 17 years the first time and raised three people, three girls that her sisters had died and left. And, well, one of them was a step granddaughter from her first marriage. Her first husband the first time. But my mother, being 40

years old, and she'd been an actress in the silent movies, a comedienne, and I'll have to confess to you, the first three months she was pregnant with me, I was a tumor (laughs).

**BL:**

Okay, I'd like to thank you, Lloyd it was very interesting.

**R:**

Well, thank you for inviting me.

**BL:**

And also Emily for all your work. I have a few announcements here. Um, this is our last Sunday program until September, and then on September 14th and 15th the Historical Society will be sponsoring a Pittsfield Heritage Day Arts and Crafts Show. And Mary Ellen over here, you're the young lady that's going to be responsible and she's very capable ...

The End