

INDIANA UNIVERSITY  
ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER

HENRY F. BOXMAN

Interviewed by R. T. King  
28 August 1980  
OHRC accession #80-56-1

## INTRODUCTION

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INDIANA UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH PROJECT

INTERVIEWEE'S DEED OF GIFT AGREEMENT

I, Henry F. Boxman, hereby give my oral  
Interviewee (please print)  
history interview with R.T. King, which  
Interviewer (please print)  
was conducted on 28 August 1980, to Indiana University.  
Date

It is hereby agreed between myself and the Indiana University Oral History Research Project that all rights, title, and interest in the tape recording or transcript (verbatim and edited) belong to Indiana University.

The following restrictions are to be placed upon and will govern the use of the interview:

In full accord with the provisions of this Deed of Gift, I hereunto set my hand.

Henry F. Boxman 8/28/80  
Donor Date

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RT King  
Interviewer

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INDIANA UNIVERSITY  
ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER

INTERVIEWEE: Henry F. Boxman

INTERVIEWER: R. T. King

SUBJECT: General economic profile of Bloomington, 1928-1956; RCA and  
Showers; Role of Chamber of Commerce in 1930s.

DATE: 28 August 1980

TRANSCRIBER: Pauline Gliessman

Mr. King: The following is an interview with Mr. Henry Boxman. It is being conducted on 28 August 1980, in what was for many years a Boxman's restaurant, and is today a Boxman's fried chicken store on South Walnut Street in Bloomington, Indiana. I am R. T. King.

Mr. Boxman, does the Indiana University Oral History Research Project have your permission to make use of this interview and to make it available to interested parties for purposes of study or research?

Mr. Boxman: My pleasure.

K: Thank you.

I'm interviewing Mr. Boxman today because of his lengthy experience in Bloomington as a businessman: a restaurateur from 1928 to the present and an active member of the business community. I believe you were president of the Chamber of Commerce at one time.

B: That's right.

K: And you are aware of some of the things that happened during the 1930s that could be helpful to us and since the 1930s. And I'll be discussing today with you the fortunes of Showers Brothers Furniture Company, Incorporated, and also of RCA's location here and of their fortunes in Bloomington from 1940 to the present. I'd like to begin, however, by

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having you tell me something about yourself, beginning with when and where you were born.

B: I was born in Bartholomew County, Indiana. Bartholomew County's county seat is Columbus, Indiana, just for the matter of the record. My background is primarily a self-supporting youngster.

K: Can you tell me...we haven't gotten the date of your birth yet. When were you born?

B: The date of my birth is 26 June 1903. And at the age of 15 I started out in this world to see what I could do for myself in service to this country. And the first...of course, I was born and raised on a farm. I did not particularly like the farming so I decided to go into the food business. And I started working in a restaurant when I was 15 1/2 years old. Worked in the restaurant 4 1/2 to 5 odd years, then took ~~a~~ <sup>the</sup> position as sales ~~clerk~~ <sup>representative</sup> ~~at~~ <sup>for</sup> the R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company at Winston-Salem, North Carolina, with headquarters in Indianapolis, Indiana. I worked for that firm for 4 1/2 years. Fortunately I got some nice promotions. I had the record of being one of its youngest assistant division managers of the company at that time. ~~And~~ <sup>At</sup> the early part of the depression, things were happening that caused me to believe that I would be better off to go in <sup>to</sup> business for myself. And this turned out to be a location in Bloomington, Indiana.

K: What led you to choose Bloomington as the site for your first restaurant?

B: In my time of travel I was headquartered in Bloomington for nearly 2 years, and was very much impressed with Bloomington. My wife attended Indiana University and that drew us somewhat to Bloomington. But I did have some friends here. When they learned that I was going to establish

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 a business in Bloomington, ~~one of the~~ wholesale grocery company owner convinced me that Bloomington was the place to go, and he was interested in seeing that young men came to Bloomington to establish a business. We established what was later called the Boxman Restaurant, and operated this restaurant for 30 years. And I'm proud to say that during that time we developed a national or even international reputation, and we're very proud of that--not boasting, but I say that with pride. And we did something in our restaurant that people liked, and we liked the people. Our slogan, mainly, as far as operations was concerned, was to treat every customer like he was a guest in <sup>our</sup> ~~your~~ home. This, of course, made us very happy. And during that time we went through some hardships. The first hardship was the Depression years. Fortunately Bloomington did not get caught in the Depression as early as some communities because of the Indiana limestone industry here. They had many orders on the books that had to be filled after the beginning of the Depression. This was a great asset to Bloomington. But nevertheless, that was one of our real hurdles to overcome. ~~We did...~~

K: When did Bloomington first begin to suffer the effects of the national ~~no~~ economic depression?

B: Actually, if my memory serves me correctly, not until in the thirties--early thirties. Or maybe a little later than that. But I do recall that it was about a year or a year-and-a-half after the country generally was in a depression period.

K: And how did the Depression manifest itself in Bloomington? What were the...?

B: Fortunately, having <sup>the</sup> Indiana University here <sup>which</sup> was a tremendous asset to Bloomington in preventing a real, what we might term, depression.

...depressions, ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> university then, and as it is now, is still one of the greatest assets this community has. It's the greatest industry we have in Bloomington and <sup>have</sup> had all these many, many years. As far as my personal experience, when I was still young, I thought that when you entered a business you should spend at least <sup>a third</sup> ~~part~~ of your time in community affairs and help the community in whatever the businessman could do in the community. I <sup>tried</sup> ~~try~~ to live up to that theory and was happy to serve, and I hope I did my share of community work. Along with that, I also was very interested in trade associations for the betterment of the food industry and helped, <sup>actually I</sup> ~~was~~ one of three that established the Indiana Restaurant Association. To this date I happen to be the only survivor of that group of three.

K: What date was that?

B: That was right after <sup>the</sup> early part of the Second World War... World War II. So it's been quite a few years ago. Actually, it was around the thirties <sup>es</sup>. it was following the Depression. It was following the Depression, because during the Depression...no, I'm sorry. It was at the beginning of World War II because we were limited to foods--rationed foods--and this brought a real problem to the food industry. And to help each other solve their problems we got the restaurant people together, which was helpful, and sort of helped us during that war effort. Then following that, <sup>we</sup> ~~it~~ was decided that the idea of working together as an industry was good enough that we should continue and as a result of that idea we developed the--or established--the Indiana Restaurant Association. So I've been very active in that for many, many years, and still am, and also <sup>in</sup> the National Restaurant Association. Because back in the days of 1928, through those early years, we were pioneering in a sense to

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develop better eating places and serve quality foods, up-date the operation of the food industry. And I'm very proud that I shared in that. And there was a period of about 25 years *until finally, [nospace]* it seemed like things were happening. At least we have mechanical refrigeration and not ice boxes as we did when we began in business.

K: Now I'd like to spend a few minutes talking about Bloomington in the 1930s, if we might now. I'd like to begin with having you give me, if you can, a description of Bloomington's economy in the 1930s with the salient features of the economy--the factors that dominated it.

B: As I recall, and also from the experience before I actually started in business for myself, Bloomington was always a thriving community. And also, back in those days, the stone business was *thriving... great...* *it* shared immensely in the economy situation. Back in those days I think they employed around 5,000-6,000 people. *Course the year.* And it was a growing industry and an industry that was much depended upon in the Bloomington area, even though it was a seasonable business; in the wintertime they could not operate the quarries. But it seems like everything went along, though, from year to year. Then, of course, the Showers Furniture Company played a great part in those years--for many, many years. And the *Nurre* Glass Company--they were a substantial... *or They* shared substantially in our Bloomington economy. And again, I must say, that above all the university helped stabilize Bloomington all through these years.

K: Stabilizing in what way?

B: Helped stabilize the economy.

K: Can you give me an example of just what you mean by stabilization, though?

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B: Well, the university payroll, so to speak...when we think of the economy we think of payroll <sup>and</sup> industry, ~~the~~ factory. Is the payroll year-round or is it seasonal? Like the stone industry is seasonal, but the Showers and <sup>Nurses</sup> ~~Nurses~~ and the university <sup>were</sup> ~~was~~ a year-round industry <sup>is</sup> for Bloomington. And that helped stabilize ~~the~~ business. And not only the university activities on the campus but...that is, from their year-to-year operation on the campus, but the other things that the university has always done as far back as I can remember, <sup>They</sup> Do things either athletically, ~~from~~ from the athletic standpoint, or expand their facilities by holding seminars for business groups--industry--that brought people to Bloomington. And all those kind of things helped stabilize the economic condition.

K: They were good for the...I would take it, good for the ~~resale~~ <sup>retail</sup> trade here.

B: Good for everybody. Indirectly, everybody benefitted from those things that the university did. There were times of criticism. Some times <sup>some people</sup> ~~they~~ thought they were stepping into private business, but there was always enough people that went along with the idea that what's good for Bloomington, sooner or later, it <sup>infiltrates</sup> ~~filtrates~~ in such a way that everybody benefits from it.

K: Now when you say that they stepped into private business occasionally, what do you mean by that?

B: Well, some things like when they built Indiana Memorial and had hotel rooms. <sup>Union</sup> That was

K: I see.

B: That was considered competition to the hotel business. Of course, there was a time we didn't have motels back in those years but it all turned out that I think finally everybody began to appreciate that all

AKB

these things are good for the community, and what's good for the community is good for everybody. Even the barbers sometimes <sup>would</sup> say, "Well, I don't get much business from all this ballgame crowds and all this and that," but nevertheless, there are people who come the night before the game and so on. And they spend money and that money they <sup>spend</sup> ~~spent~~ finally gets to the barber. But it's hard to sell the barber on that idea because he did not see the <sup>in</sup> <sup>benefit</sup> direct...and there's other businesses the same way. They didn't see the direct connection with some of these things that the university did for Bloomington. In other words, what they were doing for the public, which, of course, is one of their greatest objectives--to serve the public--it helped everybody.

K: What was Showers's reputation in the community in the 1930s?

B: Reputation?

K: Yes.

B: Well, a large population in the community depended upon Showers. Showers was a very dependable, reliable firm for many, many years, and the people <sup>who</sup> ~~seem to~~...worked at Showers were good people, reputable people, and they depended on Showers for many, many years. So Showers, for those many years, was a great asset to Bloomington. It was <sup>just</sup> so depended upon that when things did go in reverse, years later, it crippled Bloomington for quite some time until they did get more new industries.

K: Now we're talking about the late 1930s, when things began to go bad for Showers, is that correct?

B: Well, not that early. It was much later than that. I forget what years Showers had reverses. But back in the thirties, <sup>and through those</sup> periods, Showers was the industry in Bloomington. And justly so, because it was one of the biggest furniture factories in the world.

HHS

K: Can you recall any of the Bloomington business community's reactions to the Depression? Once the Depression became evident here in Bloomington, what did the business community try to do to counteract it?

B: Well, to the best of my knowledge, most of the business people took the position, this is something we have to work together in the community and face up to. There is a depression and we have to do the best we can. I think that was pretty generally the atmosphere.

K: The best you could in what way? Were there any plans?

B: Cope with...cope with the conditions--the economic conditions.

K: Were there any plans that you can recall that would have...that could be characterized as...?

B: Not specifically. And, of course, fortunate <sup>ly</sup> again--Bloomington was fortunate, we did not have any bank failures. And this was one of the outstanding features for Bloomington and it naturally was a great asset. It gave ~~people to Bloomington and gave people~~ confidence that we were in good hands from a security standpoint--financial standpoint. And it was a blessing where <sup>as</sup> many communities did have this misfortune and many time<sup>s</sup>, I understand, caused panics in those communities. But we did not have that kind of a situation here at all. I think we did have one loan company that had to close <sup>and</sup> ~~but it didn't~~...it affected quite a few people, naturally. They'd been here a long time. But the banks stayed solid here all during the Depression. We were in good hands.

K: We had discussed earlier over the phone, and I had talked with some other people about this as well, about what seems to have been a reluctance on the part of some prominent members of the local business community to..*encourage new industries*

B: Early...back, early in the '28-'29, something like that, there was some people that would hesitate to support the idea to expand industry,

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because it might hurt these industries we had.

K: Such as Showers?

B: Showers and the stone industry.

K: Hurt them in what way? I'm curious about that.

B: I don't know whether it was a matter of taking away their employees or whether there was a fear of they might pay more money or something of that sort. I wouldn't want to state that that was the real issue. But I think they were just proud enough of the industries we had, they didn't want anything to happen to them. And, of course, a lot of times these things had to be sold to citizens of a community, <sup>that is</sup> To progress, you have to accept some pitfalls, <sup>or</sup> some things that might affect the smoothness of an already operating business. But it wasn't to the extent that new business didn't come to Bloomington. It experienced <sup>some</sup> new business coming in.

K: Was the Showers family or management involved in that discouragement of new industries?

B: Yes, there were several brothers, and pretty much, basically, as I understand...of course, Showers was here a long time before I came here. But I think the information we have about the Showers industry, it was pretty much a family operation for many years. It started with the brothers and <sup>--and</sup> then I don't know how many girls or sisters were involved there, but it was family--let's call it a family--it really was a family operation, basically, for many, many years. And, of course, they grew and grew, as I said earlier, it was one of the world's largest furniture factories. And they had to do something good or they <sup>would</sup> <sup>not</sup> <sup>have</sup> never grown to that, you know.

But the stone industry is a little different situation. They had to learn a lot about the carving of stone. <sup>It's</sup> It's not quite as easy to get

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into the stone business as it was in the furniture making. Although furniture making was <sup>much</sup> such a part of Bloomington and children of families would follow their ancestors who also worked for Showers. That was sort of a tradition.

K: I think that the Showers's position is unquestioned. There's no doubt that it was a very vital part of the economy of Indiana.

B: Oh, yes, yes.

K: But I still need some clarification of their role and their position in the community. I want to know if it was strong enough for them to discourage the location of other industries here. I've been told something to that <sup>e</sup> effect, and since you were on the spot, I need to....

B: I think some of that is probably exaggerated theory. Nevertheless, Bloomington did start bringing in new industries and Showers...I don't think the industries here...that came here, necessarily caused the economic problems for Showers. I don't have proof <sup>to</sup> say it...<sup>to</sup> state this, but the general belief is that they got caught because they were making too many things <sup>extra</sup> for one company.

K: What company was that?

B: As far as...and again, I don't want to be quoted as this is <sup>not</sup> authentic, but I think the Sears, Roebuck Company, back years ago, when they started in the furniture business, they <sup>[Showers]</sup> started to make certain items for Sears and Roebuck and were satisfied...so satisfied with those items, constantly kept asking them to make more things. And the story, as I understand it, that's always been told, that with all good intentions, they tried to please their customer. Well, the customer got so big that they...<sup>Showers</sup> maybe not lose sight intentionally but they lost other business by it apparently, or didn't get other business. And then when the time came when this main customer saw fit to buy their product <sup>s</sup> elsewhere, then

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*Showers*  
they got caught ~~then~~. <sup>And</sup> It was a bad jolt. And whether that is the real answer, I don't know. But that seems to be the story right there. But we mustn't lose sight that for many, many years Showers was a tremendous asset to Bloomington and the Showers people were good citizens. ~~All~~ of ~~the~~ <sup>N</sup> not only the officials of the company but the workers, they were always considered as outstanding, good dependable citizens. So they, for many years, made a tremendous contribution to Bloomington, regardless of what finally happened to them *and they* had to go out. And, of course, it hurt Bloomington when they did. Terribly! And then, of course, if I remember correctly, is when every effort was made to bring in new industries, because we had the labor market. We had the people.

K: I understand that you were president of the Chamber of Commerce in Bloomington during the 1930s. What years as president?

B: I was president in '36-'37.

K: Can you tell me...I'd like 2 things from you: first, some description of what the role of the Chamber of Commerce had been in Bloomington prior to your being elected president, and then tell me what you did to change things?

B: Well, at that time, the Chamber of Commerce was not a very active organization. And there were quite a few people in the community thought that Bloomington should have a more active, progressive Chamber of Commerce. And then as president I made it my goal to try to do something about it. And by surveying the business people in Bloomington I received enough support to go to my board and say, "All right, there's what Bloomington wants."

K: And what did Bloomington want?

B: It wanted an active, progressive Chamber of Commerce.

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K: In what way? Can you give me some examples of the sort of activity that they were looking for?

B: It developed some programs that would attract industry and build the community. And along about that time, the university was growing and growing. Some people said, "Well, we've got to at least try to keep up with the university." And it was a pretty <sup>different</sup> ~~difficult~~ idea but we ~~did~~, we did <sup>re</sup> organize the Chamber of Commerce and from there on, the Chamber of Commerce became an important organization in the community.

K: Did you then begin trying to recruit industry into *Bloomington?*

B: Oh, yes. We had a program set up to cover almost every aspect of ideas or possibilities *for Bloomington*, like for instance, we adopted a slogan--it happened to be my idea. Just making a comment, I said, "Bloomington is really a gateway to seeing Southern Indiana. Why don't we do something about it?" So we adopted that slogan and ~~the~~ *our* Chamber appointed a committee to promote tourism. And it turned out to be fairly successful. And many other things: road building. That was one of our activities, to get better roads into Bloomington. And we were successful after a time to get a new highway to Bloomington.

K: Which highway was that?

B: That's Highway 37--improved. Really, it was old Highway 37. But we wanted to improve our roads into Bloomington. And our big argument was that it was a "must" because the university was growing and we owed it to the people of Indiana to have a safer, better road into the community. And after a time we were successful there. That was part of our activities.

K: Now, you say "after a time." About when were you successful *with that road?*

B: Well, I think, actually, probably 4 years, but there were a lot of hurdles to overcome because money was not too plentiful to build roads,

*JKB*



and everybody needs to build better roads. And we struggled a long, long time.

[Highway]  
K: What was the condition of 37. Can you describe 37 for me?

B: Thirty-seven, for a long time was a...to begin with, back in earlier years, was a very crooked, gravel road--very crooked <sup>from</sup> to Martinsville <sup>in,</sup> and even between Martinsville and Indianapolis there were some rather crooked areas. But particularly between Martinsville and Bloomington. And I remember well when my restaurant people <sup>a</sup> come and said, "Oh my, is there any way to get back out of Bloomington other than the crooked road." It was a daring challenge to many people who were....

[Interruption from person from outside.]

But that was one of the strong efforts, and to get a new highway, you don't do it overnight. You have to jump a lot of hurdles and prove. <sup>the need</sup> and we wound up, even though the project actually started in the Exchange Club (which I was president of just before the Chamber of Commerce--I took <sup>this</sup> <sup>project</sup> it into the Chamber of Commerce) and we found out it was even a bigger project....

End of tape 1, side 1.

B: ...and not only did the local alumni association on the campus here support <sup>us</sup> it, but they saw to it that the alumni associations all over the country supported it, because they were <sup>also</sup> interested in getting better roads to Indiana University, as we were, as citizens here, to get a better inlet to Bloomington. And that was a long-time battle--politics and everything else involved. But we didn't give up and we did get a 4-lane highway <sup>here</sup> there eventually.

K: Yes. Now during that period 1936 <sup>to</sup> 1937--in fact, in the immediate

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years after that, prior to World War II--did the...can you recall any of the specific businesses or industries that the Chamber of Commerce approached in trying to attract them into Bloomington?

B: I'd be guessing and I'm not very good at guessing. But I do know that we did receive a lot of requests and we followed up--the Chamber followed up the major requests--and did everything possible to respond to requests, with the idea that if our facilities met their needs, we did everything we could to get them interested in Bloomington.

K: What sort of selling points did you use for Bloomington? What did you feel made Bloomington <sup>attractive</sup> ~~an~~...?

B: Well, one of the things I think we...and we still do, we think Bloomington is a cultured community. And the university was always a strong argument for industries. There are so many phases of what interests <sup>ed</sup> <sup>REQUIRED</sup> industries that we have to take...always have to remember ~~the~~ <sup>that</sup> people ~~that~~ are involved. If you bring outsiders in--and it still prevails--bring outsiders in from the other parts of the country, they're interested in your education programs and recreation, <sup>and</sup> things that families can participate in or get benefits from. And certainly we do have...have had for many years, good recreation facilities. And the fact that the university has so many activities which can be available to local citizens, <sup>ec</sup> like entertainment, for instance--not only athletics but theatrical affairs, things of that sort. Those are good arguments <sup>to the community</sup>.

K: What arguments of a purely economic nature were you able to advance? As an example, now, I'm talking about such things as availability of power, natural resources, labor, transportation, things of that nature that are purely economic.

B: As far as energy--utilities--to my knowledge we have never

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suffered a problem there, with the exception of water. There was a time back in the early twenties and possibly...I forget how far it went into the thirties, we did have water problems. Finally we got that solved. But that was our only real problem that we had, that you might say was an obstacle for Bloomington. So we naturally had to be careful that we did not get industries that require water. But this was part of the Chambers activities, to more or less screen some of the requests that we would get for information for industry location.

K: Was it felt that you had a large enough labor pool locally to attract industry?

B: With the Showers labor market that<sup>+</sup> they had, and when Showers went out of business that gave us a pool.

K: But that's 1956--that's late. I'm talking about 1930s.

B: I don't think we ever had much problem in getting labor that <sup>could</sup> ~~would~~ be available. I think we were nearly always in a position to give reasonable assurance that the labor market was adequate here <sup>in Bloomington</sup>

industry might come in. Now I do recall one argument which was pretty good. See, the stone industry used men only. So when RCA attention came to us, why, this was a strong argument for us that we had a woman labor market here. Now I have a feeling that this had some influence in making their decision because that was a solid argument, that we had that labor market here.

K: Were you involved in that--in the negotiations and discussions with RCA prior to their location here?

B: Indirectly, I think. I'm sure I was because I was active in <sup>ec ec</sup> ~~the~~ All Community activities at that time. But during the Chamber, ~~my office~~ as president, the big thing, I think, we did at that time, we re-energized the Chamber of Commerce and built a good solid organization

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and it's been real good ever since. Well, we had a problem once since that, but fortunately I'd got the job with them and we were fortunate to rehabilitate again. But I say that only with pride. But I've always felt that I owed a certain amount of my time to Bloomington welfare. And did you see these things here? [Participants are viewing a collection.]

K: Yes, I know, that's quite an impressive collection.

B: Now, again, my daughter and son caught this thing [Reference to something in the office.] K: Give us a show of B: But it goes back a long ways.

I think Bloomington is a very attractive community to people once they know a little bit about Bloomington. But it's a combination of a number of things in Bloomington, but the basic...one basic thing we must not forget, our biggest industry is the university.

K: OK.

B: And the industries we have, in my opinion, are all top industries --top personnel. We're proud of them. <sup>Course, we're going into later...</sup> I forget when Tarzian started. Tarzian has been a very important individual to this community. Of course, he came here with RCA. I don't know whether you've gotten into that or not.

K: Yes.

B: But Tarzian has been a great asset to Bloomington--Tarzian Company. And Mr. Tarzian and Mrs. Tarzian--great asset to Bloomington.

K: I need to have a couple more things about RCA, though, and their location here in 1940, before we go beyond that. Do you know whether or not RCA contacted Bloomington first about the move or did the Bloomington Chamber of Commerce contact RCA?

B: I don't know the initial <sup>contact.</sup>

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K: Well, as you understand it, can you develop for me, then, what occurred in the late 1930s--your whole understanding of how RCA came to Bloomington, or how they were attracted to Bloomington?

B: Not the details...not the details. However, I think...really, I shouldn't attempt to. I'd be guessing and I don't think I should even guess. It doesn't come to my mind at all as to just what really initiated the idea of RCA. And I don't know who did it or how it came about. It may have been the Chamber of Commerce. One reason I don't know, because one thing I asked for were the records of the Chamber of Commerce. And I was told then that they didn't have the back records because the Chamber was involved in a building that caught fire and their records happened to be ~~in there~~ where they had their office at that time. So there was no record to go into at that time. It probably, if the records had been there, our board probably would have looked into it to see what has been done and those kind of things. That prompted me to have my office girl to keep a scrap book for me. because I thought that was a nice thing. And so when I looked for that yesterday, the day before, or last week or so, why, it hasn't been located yet. But it would give us a lot of information about that activity.

K: OK. We'd better move on with the tape.

B: It's here in storage.

K: Right. Maybe we can get that at some future time then.

Well then, let's go from 1940, with the location of RCA in Bloomington, to 1956--the time that Showers finally was sold.

B: Yes.

K: And I'd like you to tell me 2 things: first, I'd like to know your understanding of why Showers was sold; what led to the decision, finally,

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to sell Showers Furniture and get out of business.

B: I'm not in on that at all, as to how it all came about. I do recall when they sold to a company that made baby cribs, I think--baby things--Storkline, out of Chicago. And there was not...I'm going to be frank about this. In my opinion--now, it's my opinion--the Storkline management was not acceptable to Bloomington people.

K: In what way?

B: *The management* They misjudged the capable type of people we had here. I think they thought we were down here...as I say, this is a personal opinion--I think we were down here in the sticks someplace. But I think that's partly the reason that Storkline did not make a success....

K: How did that attitude manifest itself?

B: How did what?

K: How did that attitude manifest itself?

B: Finally...either they...I don't know whether they went broke or just pulled out. I don't know which.

K: What I mean is, you said that you got the impression that they thought that Bloomington was a bunch of hicks out here in the sticks and so forth. How did they...?

B: They misjudged the type of people we had here. They didn't treat *Bloomington people* them like they had been treated *with* at Showers, see.

K: Can you give me an example of that? I'm sort of trying to make this specific but if you can tell me what things they were doing, it would really be helpful, because I can get a contrast between one kind of management and another.

B: Well, let's just say that the personnel was not acceptable.

K: OK.

B: Their attitude towards the personnel was not acceptable. It was

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not a happy situation at all. Unfortunately, that ~~wasn't~~ <sup>was</sup> ~~wasn't~~ <sup>They</sup> still had a big plant over there that might have been an asset to Bloomington. Instead, it more or less fizzled out in a very short time. But in my opinion... I <sup>id</sup> had <sup>e</sup> a personal experience with some of the leaders as customers in the restaurant, and their demands were absolutely unreasonable. And I'm not saying that personally, I'm saying it from personal experience. Their attitude and their demands were absolutely unreasonable.

K: What sort of demands were they making? Were they demanding too much work or can you...?

B: I don't know about that. I think the attitude towards their people.... But my personal experience was dealing directly with some of the top people there. They were not acceptable at all in anyway that I could see, and I could understand why the employees weren't happy there. And if you ever get quotes from the newspaper--I don't know whether you can or not--but there were some *quotes, I think, that said* absolutely poor...used poor judgment.

K: And they were, I believe, from Chicago, weren't they?

B: Yes, out of Chicago.

K: And, as I understand it, Storkline itself, then, sold the business, or at least sold the equipment a year-and-a-half later.

B: I forget how that finally was solved.

K: But it was only a very short period of time after Showers had sold it.

B: Yes.

K: What was the effect, then, on the community of the, let's say, the final collapse of Showers?

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B: It seems to me by that time we had RCA here and I don't know just when Westinghouse came in here, but things were going better. We needed...we were drawing people...<sup>FROM</sup> surrounding area by that time, see, to get enough people for RCA. And by that time, I don't know when, Tarzian came into the picture. See, they employed way over 1,000 people. ~~That plant up~~ down here, and...

K: But earlier you told me that at that time, when so many people became unemployed as a consequence of Showers's final collapse, that the business community had, then, tried to attract outside business...

B: Oh, yes.

K: ...and had used...I believe you told me that they had used this increased labor pool as one of the attractions.

B: I'm pretty sure that's what took place. It would be the natural thing to try to get industries that would use up this labor that...who formerly worked for Showers, you see.

K: Do you know if there had been any effort on the part of local business or finance organizations or the university to save Showers.

B: Oh, yes. I was not in on this too much other than I made a contribution. I'm sorry I can't think of the name. I think this was done through the Chamber of Commerce. We established a fund to put the Chamber in a position to acquire attractive sites. That was a big thing for Bloomington. And out here where the more or less the industrial area is west of town, <sup>the ts are</sup> that plan there is the result of this organization that was formed. And the business people of Bloomington raised enough money that this location out here on the west side--land was purchased--and put themselves in the position to say to industry, "Now we have a place for you here," so to speak. "This is available." And the rail-

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road sites--the railroad track--was run out there to give them those  
 and the  
 kind of services. And it was the city Chamber of Commerce pretty much  
 in cooperation for that. Of course, the city had to be in on this thing.  
 But it was primarily the businessmen of Bloomington who raised enough  
 money. [Noise in background makes tape unclear.]

Anyhow, it was a plan to obtain positive locations for industry. And  
 that was a big asset to Bloomington.

K: Do you know whether or not there was an attempt to try to save  
 Showers before it finally went into...?

B: I don't recall too much about that. I was not in <sup>on</sup> that.  
~~That really happened.... I was pretty busy at that time trying to get~~  
<sup>MISQUOTE</sup>  
 established. ~~Although~~ I just don't recall that  
 part. That's about 45 years ago...50 years ago.

K: No, I'm talking about when Showers was finally sold in 1956. <sup>That was 24</sup>

B: Oh, no, no. I don't recall just how all that was handled. I'm  
 sure that there was...I think you asked whether the community tried to  
 do anything to save Showers?

K: Tried to save Showers, yes.

B: I don't know of anything positive. I'm sure there was a lot of  
 concern about it because it involved a lot of people here in Bloomington.

K: Well, what can you tell me about the university connection with  
 Showers and its ultimate decision to buy the warehouse?

B: I wasn't involved in any of that directly, so anything...but I  
 can't talk about that.

K: I don't have any other prepared questions to ask you about RCA  
 and Showers but there are one or two general questions that I'd like

years ago.  
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you to address if you can. And the first would be a comparison between the economic environment in Bloomington in the 1930s, <sup>when e</sup> You first came here and were first active in <sup>The community</sup> that ~~entity~~ and the economic environment in Bloomington today in 1980. What are the major significant changes, as you see them, <sup>?</sup> and what effects have they had on the community? <sup>?</sup> And maybe, how has the community itself been involved in <sup>e</sup> affecting this change?

B: Well, I believe Bloomington has always kept up with the trends and always has been very effective...effectively meets the challenge of tomorrow. I think Bloomington always has done that. We've had a lot of good leaders here in business.

K: Well, I'll coach you a little bit here on the kind of thing that I see, then, that's different. And you tell me...I'm going to tell you the sort of things that I see that are different and you tell me whether or not I'm right about this. But it seems to me that one of the major differences is the fact that Bloomington is now no longer directly tied to the fortunes of Indiana University <sup>and</sup> to other manufacturers. Now Bloomington has a very broad economic base, that includes not only tourism but a great deal of light manufacturing activity and, well, a couple of other things as well. There is some warehousing going on here now. It would seem to me that these things and perhaps others....

B: Well, take recreation. Show me a community that has the recreation facilities we have out here on the southeast of town. Show me a community of this size that's taken on the challenge to...<sup>you</sup> ~~their~~ YMCA building out here. If you haven't seen it, go out and see it and learn about it. That, to me, takes confidence on the part of the people in the community to support it, which has to be helped financially. And then the people

*AKB*

who come here must have a lot of confidence in the community to undertake *some of* these kind of things that we're doing. I think...and recreation...it's not only the past several years but it more and more become something that people will look at if they're thinking about moving to a community--what kind of recreation facility do they have. A lot of people have a lot of time now, see. And to me, this is a plus. And county-wide: see, recreation also stretches out throughout the county. All over the county we've got recreation areas--centers. And our senior citizen centers, things of that sort. Right here now--this building here, they're renovating it --<sup>as</sup> has a Number One senior citizen's center, which senior citizens go there anytime, they have a variety of things they can do, and the YMCA, by the way, is built from kindergarten facilities to the older senior citizens. It tops it off. Now that's Bloomington, as I see it. And whoever puts money into it certainly has to have a lot of confidence and foresight. Look at this thing...this addition to the Mall out here. What is it, \$73 billion addition?

K: I don't know

B: But that takes...that says Bloomington is attractive. It will draw from all southern Indiana, including even Indianapolis. I think Bloomington is just the perfect smaller community with all the big city facilities *and attractions*. And again, the real basis of all this is the university there. And fortunately, as you say, I think we're just about, now, balanced. The university has grown...from the report yesterday the amount that have registered so far looks like they were wrong... might be wrong...expecting a lower attendance. But enthusiastic remarks yesterday was made about the registration so far, they think they possibly hit the last year's goal and maybe more. So it has to be something here

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that the people like. We have a lot of people move here because they think this is a nice place to even retire. Churches tell us that. Of course, we haven't experienced this. So Bloomington has...I think we've been pretty solid in progressing over the past few years--it's sound. Bloomington is sound. And our industries are good. We've got industries that we can be proud of. Otis, Westinghouse, G.E., and that WETTER IGA is no small asset to Bloomington. Their warehouse over here, they funnel ...distribute out of this warehouse way, way around us--all around us. Bloomington is the center, see.

K: Yes. Well, thanks very much. This has been.... *cut here - end*

B: We have a lot of little industries, I guess, around here.

*employing* maybe employ 25 or 30 people, something like that. There's an electronic outfit here. And, of course, a rubber company--I forget which one it is--is coming in here taking over that Tarzian plant. That's another asset.

K: That's right, yes.

B: So, that's a pretty good plant over there. I think they employ as many as 1400 people. So Bloomington looks awfully good to me. *X* If I were 20 or 25 years younger I'd have some ideas. I'd get back into a real food business. I mean, I think the type of restaurant we have, the type of clientele that we have, if it can be done today...now the personnel is *not as receptive* rather *perceptive* to ideas and to be trained like they were years ago. We never opened our restaurant without having a menu school...before each meal, give our service girls--not waitresses, service girls--the opportunity to give an intelligent answer when they said, "Now, what is this here?" Tell me a little about it." They could tell... our girls could tell what it is and what it's made of, *how it would taste*

Now, people still like that service but you don't get it. And one reason is, "Oh, if I have to learn all that I don't want that." See?

K: Yes.

B: And we're spoiled. We've been  
Progress has been good for us and yet it's losing...  
we're losing some important things

K: I think the crew's out there waiting for us now. I'd better go ahead and terminate this interview. I want to thank you very much for the information you've given me. This has been quite important.

B: I wish you success.....

FAB