

Interview with Robert W. Crawford

July 17, 1976

I'm glad to have this opportunity to discuss with you these earlier days when we were both working in the city administration in Philadelphia. You've asked me certain questions and I think for clarification, I will read the questions that you posed and then answer them.

Q. What was your educational background and experience before you came to Philadelphia?

I was raised in Iowa and I worked on the playgrounds in Des Moines, Iowa, while I was going to college. I went to Des Moines University and graduated from there. I then became a high school athletic coach and teacher. When I had a team at the Drake relays, a gentleman who was Superintendent of Recreation for Newark who used to be the Superintendent of Recreation in Des Moines, said to me, "Bob, why don't you go into full-time recreational work? There is a school in New York called the National Recreation School sponsored by the National Recreation Association and they take 45 college graduates who show an aptitude for the recreational field each year. I'm on the Board of Directors and if you come, I'll give you a job working in Newark and you can go to school there and you will make as much money as you are teaching." He felt that there was a real future in the recreational field.

Now keep in mind that this was in 1934. So, then, I came to New York. However, there was one factor I had not taken into consideration; that I was going with my wife. She was an English teacher in the high school and she said she would go to New York and try to get a part-time job to help while I was in school. We had a lot of courage giving up our jobs at the height of the Depression. But we did, and I graduated from the National Recreation School.

Then I went from there to be the Director of Recreation of Hastings-on-Hudson, New York. I was there for five years and then went to Brooklyn and worked for the Association of Red Hook, Brooklyn, with the New York Housing Authority. From there I went to Montclair, New Jersey where I was Director of Recreation.

From Montclair, New Jersey, I went into the service. I ended up as the Welfare Officer for the 7th Fleet. When I was out in the Pacific, when the war was over and I was due to come home, I received a letter from Oakland, California asking me if I would stop there. The Superintendent was retiring and they wanted to talk to me about the possibility of a job. Unluckily, our ship was not due to stop in San Francisco. We were to go to Seattle but after three days out, we changed direction and we got orders to go to San Francisco. To make a long story short, I ended up as the Superintendent of Recreation in Oakland, California and that is where I was when recruited to come here to Philadelphia.

You ask me how Freddy Mann knew about me and how I came to take the position as his Deputy of Recreation because as you have pointed out, Fred Mann was appointed by Joe Clark as the first Recreation Commissioner, and the commission

was set up by the Department of Recreation under the Charter and voted by the people in November; recreation, therefore, was taken away from the Bureau of Welfare and made a separate Department of Recreation and was given the status of other city departments.

Fred Mann had asked the National Recreation Association for names of men in the profession who were qualified to take the job. There was a gentleman in Philadelphia named Otto T. Mallory who was President of the National Recreation Association. He was a wonderful gentleman. He knew about me and my work because I had been President of the American Recreation Society; they represent the professional recreation people. Through that source and through the help of the Welfare Council in Philadelphia, Fred Mann got my name. I think he got his list down to two or three people and I was one of them.

I was very happy in Oakland. We had a wonderful department; a well organized department. We had a Board of Commissioners, which consisted of the most distinguished people in Oakland. I was very happy and did not want to leave. Mr. Mann kept calling me and said he wanted to meet me and asked if I could come out to meet him. I finally consented to do this. Mr. Mann took me around to see everything in the city and what I saw was not good and I was very unhappy about the condition of the recreation and park department. I didn't want to offend Mr. Mann but when he put me on the plane to Oakland, California I said to myself, "I'll never come back here."

I went back to Oakland and told my wife that most of the employees were political appointees; the places were dirty; the areas were not maintained and properly developed; very few of the staff had college degrees or were trained at all in the field. I felt, from a professional standpoint, that it would be unwise for me to come to Philadelphia. However, I underestimated the tenacity of Mr. Mann because he called me almost every day. Sometimes it was 11:00 o'clock at night. We would be getting home from some social affair and the phone would ring and it would be Mr. Mann. It was 2:00 o'clock in the morning in Philadelphia. He kept calling me and calling me. Everything I would ask, he would have an answer.

Finally, I said to my wife, "We've been in Oakland; we love it out here; we don't want to go, but they have a new Mayor in Philadelphia and a new Charter. It seems an opportune time, if we ever want to work in a large city, to accept. Would you be willing to take the risk?" She said she would, so we then decided to come to Philadelphia. Never in our wildest dreams did we think we would be here for 24 years.

Now, you ask also -- Did you have an understanding with Fred Mann at the time that he would step aside and you would become the Commissioner? Yes, there's no question about that. Fred talked to me. Mayor Clark knew and the Managing Director, Buck Sawyer, were in agreement that I would not come out here at the salary they wanted to pay me. Since I was Fred's deputy, the salary was small; the Commissioners got \$12,000 and the deputies, \$10,000. I was getting about that in Oakland and I wasn't about to leave but Mr. Mann said to me, "Bob, if you come, I will pay you out of my own pocket an additional \$5,000. You want \$15,000 a year and you feel you must have that to come to Philadelphia, and if you do, I will pay you out of my own pocket until the salaries are raised by the city." I said, "Fine." Mr. Mann also said, "You're the professional. I'm not a professional person in recreation. But I really feel strongly that I don't want to stay too long. I know the Mayor knows of this position. You come back and get your feet on the ground; do a good job and I'm sure you will be considered for the Commissioner's position."

You ask, also, Walter, about the condition of the department when I got here. Now, someone might ask, "How come you took the money from Mr. Mann? Wasn't that unprofessional?" No. It was agreed by the Mayor and Buck Sawyer that it was all right for Mr. Mann to pay me. If he had been a contractor or someone doing business with the city, I could not have accepted it. I positively would not have come because I couldn't have afforded to move that far and buy a house as at that time, salaries for officials, the top people, were comparatively low compared with other places.

Now, the condition of the department when I got here.

I indicated earlier, Walter, that when I looked at the department the two or three days I was here, I could see that it was very inadequate; that I scarcely saw any facilities which I thought were well developed. In fact, it was so bad that I said to Mr. Mann, "I think it would be advisable if you talk to Mayor Clark and Mr. Sawyer and ask them if we can have an unbiased study by the National Recreation Association of our facilities, staff and programs -- those three aspects."

Mr. Mann asked, "What would be the purpose?" I said, "I can see how bad it is and if you and I tell everybody how bad it is, they will just say we are running down the previous administration. We should get in an unbiased national organization, respected in its field, and bring their technicians in to tell us what is wrong." Mr. Mann asked, "How much will it cost?" I said, "I think we could have it done very reasonably because they are concerned about Philadelphia and they are interested in an old, established eastern city that has a history of political involvement to see what really can be done in the field of recreation and parks."

We contacted them and they said they would do the study for \$7500. The study was made and that was early in the year. I came here March 20 and it was just a month or so after that we had the study made. They finished the study on November 1, 1952. It was a study of the various recreation properties, programs, and inter-agency relationships. We had problems of overlapping. For example, the schools were running recreation. There were other agencies such as the Public Property Department running parks. They were running recreational activities under the Welfare Department. There wasn't the coordination that should exist among the public agencies, nor the private agencies.

The framers of the Charter were pretty smart. They recognized this and they set up a Recreation Coordination Board in the Charter to coordinate the activities of recreational programs with the public agencies and they realized they did not have any powers to regulate the private agencies. They felt through the powers of persuasion of the Board, they could accomplish the same ends. The Charter called for three members of the Board of Education, three members of the Park Commission, three citizens-at-large and the Recreation Commissioner and that worked out very, very well.

I felt that several things were really bad. Mr. Mann and I took the Mayor on trips to see the inadequacies that the National Recreation Association pointed out. In their report they said they did not find one playground that was properly developed. They stated that the programs, on the whole, were woefully inadequate and there was overlapping and duplication among the agencies in the public and private sectors of the city.

The facilities were poor. Take swimming, for example. In 1952 Philadelphia, the third largest city in the United States, did not have a filtering system in any swimming pool. This was against the law. Even Podunk, Iowa, would not have allowed that.

There were no places for people to sit and there was no drinking water. Most of the areas were more or less dustbowls and they had a lot of cinders for the surface areas of the playing fields and playgrounds.

Philadelphia did not have the adequate facilities they should have had. The Recreation Department in 1952 had two tennis courts. They did not have the concept of how to develop these areas into useful facilities. These were a few of the things we found.

Another problem was the personnel. I was surprised to find out how untrained many of the employees were and how lacking in education and background experience. Many of them told me frankly that they paid a certain percentage of their salaries to the ward leaders or to the committeemen before the Clark administration, and how they got their jobs through their committeemen. They would even ask them if they could take their vacations at certain times and if they would intercede on their behalf.

Coming from a well organized department, as I did, all of this was rather discouraging as I was unfamiliar with this type of interference. However, with the strong support of the Mayor and the Managing Director we started in and in the first three or four months, we fired 75 people.

Some of the stories I can tell are amazing. I was looking for a house on the weekends. Mr. Mann had loaned me a car and as I drove past playgrounds and parks, I would make notes as to the condition of the areas. I was going up Chew Street and there was the Pleasant Playground. I stopped. The grass was high and bottles were strewn around; also cans, debris and paper. There was a fellow standing nearby chatting. It was a Saturday afternoon and he was dressed in a pair of slacks and a sport shirt. I could see that this man was obviously the caretaker talking to some gentlemen.

When I got him by himself, I walked up and said, "Excuse me, sir, are you the caretaker?" And he said, "Yes, I am." I said, "Who do you work for?" He said, "I work for the Department of Recreation." I said, "How come the grass is so high and everything is so dirty?" He said, "You want to know, mister? They brought in a new administrator. They brought a guy in from California to run the recreation along with Commissioner Mann and he's got everything fouled up and the morale is at an all time low." I said, "What is the fellow's name from California?" He said, "It's Crawford." I said, "Have you ever seen him?" And he said, "No, and I don't give a damn if I ever see him." Well, I said, "I got news for you and I suppose you've been telling everybody this story." And he said, "Oh yes, I tell anybody." I said, "My name is Crawford. And you report to my office 8:00 o'clock on Monday morning." He was fired Monday morning. This is what we found. We also found employees sleeping on the job.

I went up to Simpson Playground one day and there was nobody around. I looked around and saw a man about three or four houses down the street painting a house. Pretty soon he got off the ladder and came up and said, "Can I do anything for you?" I said, "I'm looking for the person in charge." He said, "I'm in charge." I said, "Aren't you the gentleman I saw down there painting that house?" He said, "Yes,

but I can see the playground from there. I'm watching it from there." I said, "I've got news for you. You can go ahead and paint full-time because you're not working any more. I'm firing you right now." These were the types of things we ran into.

I remember going down to Palumbo Playground one time. They had a big mass meeting down there. The playground was built on an old cemetery and one of those old vaults had caved in. A reporter got in there and was waving his hands. All you could see were his hands. The people were having a mass meeting to protest. Freddy sent me down there to talk to them. They had the street blocked off. They had a truck and when I got up on that truck some guy said, "Why in the hell don't you go back to California where you came from?" I was so disgusted, I turned to him and said, "Why don't you go around the crowd and take up a collection for the fare and I'll leave."

You ask now what measures Mr. Mann and I took to correct the situation. One of the first things was the study which backed us up pointing out the inadequacies of the programs, facilities and personnel. Of course, we gave the Mayor credit for putting teeth into the Civil Service Commission by appointing people to the Commission whose integrity could not be questioned. They stuck their necks out but stuck by their guns so that the employees had to do a full day's work each day; that they had to be qualified for their jobs and couldn't tell us where they were going to work, what hours and when they were going on vacation. I think this was a step in the right direction.

The second thing we did was to appoint architects whom we felt were competent and qualified to do a job. Some of them, before we found out, had copies of each other's plans. We had an investigation. The late Judge Raymond Pace Alexander was Chairman of the Recreation Committee. We held public hearings and it was amazing the things we found out; paying for sidewalks, paying for trees, paying for improvements that were never even built.

I remember one particular area they had designed; it was down in South Philadelphia- the McCoach Playground. The architects built it and they had the same mistakes as another building. We found that they had just copied the plans and had made the same mistakes. They had doors going in through the shower room and other stupid things like that. Then they had those old Jack steel buildings and they were supposed to build 50 of them and put them around the various playgrounds. They ran out and bought a lot of land and tried to develop playgrounds in a year before the election of 1951. The late Wilbur Hamilton said to me, "If there is one mistake we made as Republicans, it was that we didn't pay any attention to recreation." They built these areas so quickly they had to stereotype them and as a result, they had the same type of buildings and the same mistakes in every building. It was just a very poorly planned program of construction.

Now, you ask to what extent did you plan facilities for all sections of the city?

As I look back, very little. We adopted the policy, however, that recreation facilities should be in all sections of the city. We did not feel that recreation should only be in the disadvantaged areas. We thought that was important but we also felt that every child and every adult in the city should have recreational opportunities. We sold this plan to the City Planning Commission, the Mayor and the City Council. We developed what we called the 20-Year Plan whereby we would have facilities in all areas of the city. I think, if you look back, you will see that there will always be people who say they are not adequately served and I would have to agree with them, but on looking at every section of the city, you

will see facilities almost everywhere. That is one of the things for which I received widespread support from the City Council and from the Mayor - that all sections should be served.

Now you ask if I remember the magnitude of our capital budget facilities.

Yes, I think the first year the Mayor appropriated either three or four million. That was a lot of money in those days. That was when we first started our capital program and then it developed right from there. I would say that would be equivalent today to ten or fifteen million.

You ask now to what extent the Managing Director's office helped me in the task of rebuilding the department and whether or not that office was helpful; also that I describe the role it played.

Well, from the technical standpoint, they did not help us but from a managerial standpoint and administration standpoint, they had to approve our programs. We submitted our programs to them and they helped us with our budget presentations and getting them through the City Council. I am sure that Buck Sawyer, as the Managing Director, was very helpful in talking to Mayor Clark and having him understand what we were trying to do because, as you know, the Mayor had so many new obligations that he would not have the time to sit down with each one of us and discuss in great detail our programs. He would have to rely on his cabinet to help him. I do remember many times when the Mayor dropped everything and went on field trips with us. They were helpful to us in getting our budget and I think you understand this. From the technical viewpoint, however, on how to develop the facilities and that sort of thing, they left it all to us.

Now you ask if the Commissioners' meetings were helpful to me in the programs of our department.

I thought they were very helpful and I think Mr. Mann would say so, too. They were particularly helpful to me since I was new in Philadelphia. I didn't know a soul in Philadelphia and the meetings helped me to get acquainted. As I recall, Mayor Clark would tell the group that if they had any pressing problems, they should be brought up at these meetings. I complained to the Mayor about the procurement as they were slow in getting things to us and he said, "Say, Bob Crawford, you had some complaints." That was the worst mistake I ever made because I got up and told about how we were not getting supplies. After that, I started to get Prestone in the summer. Those guys really put the bug on me and delayed the issuing of our supplies.

We would talk over programs and problems but the thing that I remember that stimulated me was the inspiration received. I remember a meeting at the halfway point of the Clark Administration at the public library. The Mayor invited Senator Humphrey to speak to us. And as you recall, we hadn't had our programs going. The Clark Administration was just on the eve of breaking out after two years in office. It takes about two years to get your programs off the ground. I believe it may have been the time we lost a bond issue, but anyway, we hadn't gotten our programs moving. We were just on the verge of embarking on some meaningful programs and one could really see some significant changes taking place. There were a lot of changes that had to be made and I remember Mr. Humphrey said that after two years as Mayor of Minneapolis he had a feeling that his programs had not developed and it was a low point in his administration and we should not be discouraged.

Now, how important was the City Planning Commission in the selection of sites for new recreation facilities and did your department and the Commission see eye to eye? If not, please recount the kind of difficulties that occurred.

I would say that in those early years I had very little difficulty with the City Planning Commission. We worked closely in the selection of the sites. I cannot remember in the first four years one specific instance where we really were at odds in the selection of a site. There may have been some, but I cannot remember. Because we had so much to do in so many areas of the city that were unserved at that particular time, the only difficulty I can recall was when Mr. Ingersoll said, "You want gold-plated playgrounds." He felt that they were being a bit over-designed. I explained to Mr. Ingersoll that they were not over-designed and what we were trying to do was develop facilities for all the various age groups, and that was why we had to have more facilities in all sections of the city. In the main, however, we had very good cooperation with the City Planning Commission.

You ask that I describe the magnitude of the capital program.

Over the years, we have had literally hundreds of new facilities. I gave you one example of tennis courts. We never build a playground now that is of any size where we do not put in tennis courts. Another facility that we have gone into lately is the neighborhood swimming pool. We put in small pools with no dressing facilities. I had reservations when we started this program. We were the only city in the United States to do this and I was concerned that it might not be accepted. Other cities are now starting to build these small pools. They are sensations. The staff loves them. The neighborhoods love them. They are much cheaper to build; about a third cheaper than the regular pool. We do not need all the supervision that the large pools require. We now have 75 swimming pools. We have more swimming pools than any city in the United States and they are very heavily used.

Right now we are operating approximately 200 playgrounds. One of the rules we established as a policy was not to duplicate the facilities of the schools. For example, when we came there was a playground in South Philadelphia right across from the junior high school and they duplicated the building and the gymnasium and yet, the school building was never used after 4:00 o'clock. We felt that was wrong. We met with Mr. Add B. Anderson at the Board of Education. We said we would like to have some of the schools at night and to use the gyms so the city wouldn't have to build gyms. Mr. Anderson said he had hesitations about turning over these valuable schools. He finally agreed to give us six schools to try out. Today we are in over one hundred schools. It has worked out very well and has saved the taxpayers millions of dollars. I feel it is the responsibility of the Board of Education to build indoor recreation facilities and that they should be a part of their physical education programs.

The biggest program we had capital-wise was the building of the new stadium. A lot of people do not realize that the stadium is under the Department of Recreation. Recreation is not just playgrounds and swimming pools. We also work closely with all the cultural institutions and operate many special facilities.

You ask now if I find the structure of the city government under the 1951 Charter to be a good one from the standpoint of service to departments such as our own. Or would it have been better if the financial controls resting with the Managing Director had been with an independent finance director?

I think that the structure set up under the new Charter making a separate Department of Recreation, where it used to be a bureau under welfare, was a good one. However, I felt that the framers of the Charter did not go quite far enough, as far as recreation is concerned. They probably had very good reasons, which are unknown to me. I think they could have brought the park and recreation functions a little closer together.

As you know, the Fairmount Park was set up by the State Legislature in 1873 and they have 16 members; 10 are appointed by the Board of City Judges and 6 are ex officio members. They have a certain amount of autonomy but I always felt that recreation and park functions should be closer together as they are historically throughout the country. In the beginning, the park movement started and a few years later, recreation came along. They were separate and many cities still have separate departments of recreation and separate departments of parks, but it is really wrong. However, the framers of the Charter were wise enough to place Fairmount Park as a department under the Department of Recreation. I felt it would have been better if they had made one department of recreation and parks. Otherwise, I think the structure of the city government with the Managing Director is a good one.

You ask if it might not have been better had the financial controls rested with the Managing Director, rather than an independent Finance Director.

I think it can work this way; having to justify the budget to the Managing Director, the Finance Director, the Mayor, and finally the City Council. Therefore, there are a lot of checks and balances in there and the department can be chopped down at any of those four locations along the way. And then there is a fifth checkpoint, on getting before the City Planning Commission. So, I have no strong feeling. I think it has worked out quite well, as far as I am concerned.

You ask if I found the capital programming system prescribed by the city Charter and placed so much under the Planning Commission a good arrangement.

I think, basically, it is a good arrangement. However, I think that many times we have had some problems with this arrangement because, as you well know, they have the final authority to make recommendations to City Council as to the projects that are in the capital program of the city. It is true, however, that they can be overruled, and they are many times, by the City Council. I think, by and large, there are good citizens on the City Planning Commission; reasonable people. If a good presentation is made, they usually are in favor of it and give their endorsement. I cannot, therefore, say that we had much difficulty with the Planning Commission. In fact, they have been very helpful in many instances; i. e. in helping us to find the necessary land and in helping to determine the need.

You now ask to what extent the City Council rejected projects which had been placed by the department in the capital program and approved by the City Planning Commission.

This rarely happened. The City Council usually endorsed our projects. I can only think of a few instances where they did not go along with the recommendations, and they had good reasons for rejecting them. For example, they may have felt that they wanted more swimming pools and I know this happened -- this is why I am using this example -- that they decided when we built the neighborhood pools,

that each Councilman ought to have three in his district. That means thirty new pools over a couple of years that we were going to have to build. Maybe we had twenty in the program, so they added ten. But this happened on rare occasions.

There were occasions, however, when Council put in the budget projects that had not been formally discussed with us. I can recall several of those projects. They were not recommended by us and they were not recommended by the City Planning Commission. It did not happen very often; only on rare occasions. I am thinking of two of those areas now. When they were put in, we didn't move on them. I discussed this with Mayor Rizzo personally. I told him I did not feel those projects should be in and I gave my reasons. He told me to stick by my guns. I would not recommend them and as a result, they were never built.

Were the commissioners' meetings which were instituted by Mayor Clark, helpful to you in developing good relationships with other departments and especially so to the service departments such as Procurement, Law, Personnel, City Representative?

I think they were extremely helpful. We were able to get acquainted. We were able to discuss with our counterparts, the Mayor's cabinet and others, on an informal basis, some of our problems. I think they helped to develop better communication and better service.

Now, will you describe such differences as you have discerned between the Clark Administration and the Dilworth Administration, from the standpoint of operations, inter-department cooperation, and general esprit de corps.

I worked for four administrations. I have had a lot of people ask me the difference between one administration over the other; about the Mayors and the relationships, about getting things done. I have always felt that I can truthfully say I have enjoyed working for all the Mayors. Of course, they are all different; you would expect them to be different. The administrations are different. But from the standpoint of the Recreation Department and our work, I have had excellent cooperation from them all. I cannot think of one instance where any one of the four Mayors I have worked for ever asked me to do anything which I considered unethical or unprofessional.

Take the Clark Administration as an example. The Clark Administration came in after 67 years of rule by a Republican machine. Things which I encountered in the Recreation Department I am sure were found throughout the city government. People in my profession -- people whom I admired and respected, after I finally decided to come here and which was announced by the National Recreation Association, called me by phone and wrote me letters asking what in the world had gotten into me; going back to that political-ridden city. They told me that this would be the end of my professional career. I was really concerned about it, but with the strong leadership we had and the tempo which was established, and the direction set, developed some very exciting days. We felt we were blazing new trails -- unknown trails -- and there were so many things to do that it was just exciting to be in Philadelphia.

Each administration, however, as we went along, brought new challenges. I told Mr. Mann that for the first three years when he was the Commissioner and I was his Deputy Commissioner, it was a wonderful situation for me because I didn't have any political pressures. I concentrated on running the department, selecting

the staff, supervising the program and planning new facilities. I didn't have all those pressures on me that I had later on because any time people wanted anything -- favors or anything like that -- they had to see Commissioner Mann. I was really sorry to see him go. I did my best to try to keep him. But he wanted to move on to other areas of service.

I think the difference in the administrations was the people. Different people in different positions make an administration. It isn't only the Mayor. The Mayor sets the tone but there must be good people. That makes the difference. If we do not have competent people in all our key spots, we are in trouble.

You also asked if the City Council, during the Dilworth term and a half when he was in office, was as cooperative with the administration as was the City Council which served under Joe Clark.

I believe that Jim Finnegan was President of City Council during the Clark Administration and Mr. Finnegan, being a former city Chairman, was very wise politically. He had connections with the politicians and he knew the ins and outs of the political machine.

(WMPhillips: May I interrupt you and say that Jim Finnegan remained Chairman of the Democratic City Committee even while he was in City Council and that is one of the things that caused his health to break -- he tried to do too much.)

I was just going to say that. I think he was trying to do too much. It was really too much for him. As I look back, it was beneficial for a while, I am sure, to Mayor Clark and the administration but over the long run, it is not a good thing to have the political boss also the head of the City Council. Generally speaking, it would not be a good situation. Many times the attitude of City Council was affected because they were close to the political machine.

I think, in Dilworth's term, there was a little hostility that developed and this does not make the best working conditions. I can recall some of the fights they had back in those days. I was not conscious, however, of a deliberately spiking of the program by City Council in the Dilworth Administration. There may have been people who were closer to it than I was who can speak authoritatively on that. I know it worked quite smoothly during the Clark Administration.

You want to know about our constituency for our programs and to what extent they were articulate and effective.

I think one of the most effective things we have been able to do here is developing or harnessing the resources of the community and the neighborhoods. We start with the involvement of people at the grass roots level. We started shortly after I came here to develop advisory councils at every playground, recreation center and installation in the city. Now we have in the city twelve district councils, 150 local councils and a city-wide council. They have been very, very effective in mobilizing community support; in working with the City Council and in working with the Mayor. They also work with administration officials and above all, they help to secure and enlist volunteers for us. I hesitate to tell you how many volunteers we have but it is upward of 10,000 people. We have a very dynamic person now who is Chairman of our City Council, named Mrs. Harlan Anderson. I recall meeting Mary Anderson over 20 years ago at a little playground which we were developing and I got her interested in our field. She has been city-wide Chairman for a number of years and I would say that the Advisory Council has been

one of our main supporters. I have personally attended over 1,000 public meetings on one subject and that is the capital program. We explain what we are going to build in the neighborhood. We have never built anything, since I have been here, without first going out and consulting with the people. We have a rendering of what we think can go in the area, explaining how much it will cost. We publicize the meetings, circulate notices to those who live around the perimeter of the area. I feel that those who live nearby are the ones who are going to be affected the most by anything we do because their property values will be changed.

I started these public meetings way back in 1952 and, as I say, I have been to over 1,000 of those meetings myself. Some of them have had 25 people and some much larger; the largest we had was 2,000 at a public meeting. They usually ran just 200 to 300 people. We make it very plain to those attending that we are not here to superimpose our ideas on them but because of our experience in the development of the areas, we feel that with the amount of money that has been made available, this is what we think could go on the site. We explain what we have in mind and open the meetings for general discussion informing those attending that we can do anything that they want. I can say that out of those thousand meetings which I have attended, we have had unanimity of thinking on all of them with perhaps the exception of about four or five.

(WMPPhillips: May I inject a question, Bob? Would you say now that you have all the capital facilities in the city that you really need at this point?)

No, I would say that we do not have all of them. We are a long way down the road but we have a number of areas that really are not adequately served and that should be served. There are a number of reasons for that. One thing is the kind of city we have and how difficult it is in certain areas to cross boundary lines. This creates a problem for us and we have to make those neighborhoods more self-sufficient. Also, because of gangs, there is not mass movement between the areas in many sections of the city. There is fear about crossing over certain areas. We have to take that into consideration and it makes additional problems for us.

I would say, basically, however, that we have accomplished a lot. There are some things that have to be done. Take the swimming pools. I do not envision many more swimming pools now in the city. Take the tennis courts. We envision a few more whenever we build new facilities but not a great number of new tennis facilities. I do not envision any great new sports arenas, any new houses in the parks; perhaps a few more neighborhood playgrounds and some more vest pocket parks. There are a few things like these which we have to do. As far as the vest pocket parks are concerned, I insist that the people keep them up or we won't help them. We do this so that we don't have to maintain them. Everyone who lives in the area signs a petition. We have 175 of those now and the people keep them up pretty well. I was just on a tour of these vest pocket parks and I was very pleased with what I saw.

I could not make a flat statement that we have all the facilities we need because I know the demands from some of our constituents in certain areas for more facilities but I would say, basically, that we have covered the city quite well. There are a few sections in the Northeast which have been built up so rapidly and which are short of playing fields.

(WMPhillips: ) What about sections where you get large concentrations of the Black community?)

We have tried to put emphasis on those communities. Our problem is that in some of those areas we can't get the land without tearing down whole blocks. We have done this in a couple of areas but it is very, very expensive. For example, we tore down the whole block at 22nd Street and Montgomery Avenue and put in the Martin Luther King Recreation Center which is one of the finest centers in the city and one of the most expensive. We built a swimming pool, a large gymnasium and facilities for senior citizens and others there. At this Center there are 1700 senior citizens registered and we do not have the sanitary facilities for all of them so we have to put an addition on it. If we could get the land in certain sections in these densely populated areas, we ought to put in some new facilities.

(WMPhillips: ) Do you have a lot of vandalism like the Housing Authorities experience?)

Vandalism has been one of our problems but I believe it is lessening as is the graffiti problem. I do not think we have the problem now we had two years ago. I would not be truthful, however, if I did not tell you that vandalism is a major problem; not only the vandalism, but the behavior patterns of some of our younger people at our facilities after closing hours. Many of our facilities are isolated and we have problems with the young people having parties at a number of them. Of course, this happens after our people leave; after 11:00 o'clock at night. We need to have the cooperation of the police but with all of our facilities, this has not reached an alarming proportion. The thing we are constantly working on is trying to build facilities which are almost vandal-proof. One of the main things we are now doing is lighting our facilities. I have found that this eliminates a lot of vandalism.

(WMPhillips: ) What about racial conflict? Does this occur in your facilities?)

It does not exist on a large scale. It does exist in a number of instances. I can give you a couple of examples but I would say that in the vast majority of our facilities we have no trouble. Usually when trouble does occur, it happens at the swimming pools. I can think of a couple of locations where it is difficult. Our solution has been, where we get a situation of mixed races, to mix the staff. I have found this to be one of the most effective instruments to combat it. If there are problems at the swimming pools and a mixed staff is placed there, this lessens the problem considerably and almost eliminates it.

It has eliminated it in one instance. We have a place I will mention -- Lanier Playground, near Tasker Homes. Tasker Homes residents are Black; the community is White and the playground is in between. It is a very bad situation and has been for a number of years. Police constantly patrol the community. I attended a meeting recently concerning this. Some of the residents at Tasker Homes felt that their teenagers were not being allowed to use that facility. They also mentioned another playground near there at 30th and Tasker. I told them that the staff policy was that anyone can play on any playground but that organized teams are assigned. We have had fist fights on this because there is one thing we are deficient in and that is areas to play ball. The more we build, the more teams spring up. I said that the fields are given out in February and I ask where they were in February or March and now the season is almost two-thirds over. It turned out that I investigated and found that some of the teams are inter-racial. The

gentleman who organized those teams was working in that community and I found out that he already had a number of fields. I am amazed that we do not have more racial trouble but I have found out that if the adults would stay out of the picture, the young people would get along better.

(WMPhillips: ) How many years now have you been Commissioner of Recreation?)

I came here in 1952. Mr. Mann was the Commissioner then and he left in 1955. I have been the Commissioner since then. I was the Deputy Commissioner for three years and I have been the Commissioner for over twenty-one years; longer than any other top official in the city government.

(WMPhillips: ) Is there anything more you want to say?)

(WMPhillips: ) Let me just ask about one more subject. Has your Department been involved with the Bicentennial?)

We are very much involved in the Bicentennial. You know, of course, that the Park Commission and the Parkway were involved in the Bicentennial program. We were involved in the park houses and the park trolleys. I am Chairman of the Bicentennial Sports Committee. As a result, our committee worked with the staff of Philadelphia '76 in getting all these sporting events. We are involved in many of the programs and activities that are going on. We are involved in the building of the new Dell and the programs there. We are involved in the programs at the old Dell and the programs around the neighborhoods, so I would say that our Department has played a major role.

We have had practically every major sporting event here this year and I am proud of the sports program. Our committee started to work on this some years ago; we lined up many of these events when all the other cities were sound asleep. I think it is going to be a very interesting year here; it already has been as there are a lot of things going on in the city which should be of great interest to people from all over the country.

(WMPhillips: ) Did you have anything to do with these little play lots that Bacon provided in his plans for the Society Hill area?)

Yes. Many of those come under us. The breezeways are very nice and I cannot say that we have had a great deal of difficulty with them.

I think the essence of what we are trying to do in the city is not just put on programs, although that is important. What we are really trying to do is create an environment. I think that probably a better way to say it is "improving the quality of life."

A lot of people can be self-sufficient as far as recreation or leisure hours are concerned in providing the type of activity they desire. Take Fairmount Park, one of the largest municipal parks in the world in the confines of the city limits. People who are self-sufficient, as far as providing their own recreation is concerned, go through the park and look at the trees and enjoy the scenery. I would say that there are very few Philadelphians who do not in some way benefit from the recreation and parks programs of the city. They also benefit from all the squares and the neighborhood parks, which we also keep up.

(WMPhillips: ) To what extent is the Park Administration subject to your department these days, or are they more or less independent?)

They work closely together. I neglected to say this as I am the President of the Park Commission. This is the first time that such is the case. When Mr. McCloskey retired and became ill, the Commission elected me President. This is my seventh term as President of the Park Commission and since I am also the Commissioner of Recreation, we do not have the problem of overlapping and duplication now.

(WMPhillips: ) It must make a big difference in the programs of Fairmount Park because for so many years it was a gentlemen's preserve, you might say.)

Well, back in those old days, the grass was there to look at but not to sit on. They were against the use of the park for recreational facilities or programs. That has all been changed and the park is now really being used. It is beautiful and I do not think we have over-developed it. We have tried to use restraint in placing recreational facilities in the park so as to keep its natural beauty and to let the park-like atmosphere exist. It is not a playground in the sense of a playground. It is a park setting but there are recreational facilities in the park and it is heavily used. What pleases me is that I think it is used by the people who need it the most. They get out of the congested areas of our city. I wish you had been there on the 4th of July. You couldn't put your finger in the park.

(WMPhillips: ) I know there is a great deal of picknicking in the park --)

Yes, it is used extensively for picknicking and what pleases me the most is that the people who come there are very neat and very rarely leave trash or garbage around. They take bags, put the trash together, tie it up and stack it against a tree where it is picked up by Park maintenance personnel.

(WMPhillips: ) Anything else you'd like to add?)

I think we have gone a long way in the inter-agency relationships, especially with the Board of Education where there has been fine cooperation. We just have no overlapping or duplication. We have a very fine working relationship with the Board of Education as well as with other public and private recreation and group work agencies.