Well, Walter, you and I have been together a great many years.

(WMP: It's been very pleasant, too.)

The first question has to do with the origin of the Greater Philadelphia Movement. As I remember it, of course, it was a good many years ago now, that's twenty—twenty-five -- twenty-eight years ago, Joe Clark had just gotten into the saddle as mayor, the Republicans had been thrown out after some fifty to seventy-five years, I've forgotten which one it was. They had gotten fat, lazy, and I can't recall that they were crooked, but like most political machines, if they'd been in power too long, they get a bit casual as to the reaction on the government and on the people. There seemed to be therefore, an opportunity, if some people in Philadelphia could get together with a non-political philosophy, but a philosophy based on what was the best for Philadelphia to make it a desirable place to live and to work in.

There were three others who were somewhat more active in the movement than others, perhaps, and that was Bob McCracken, Bill Kurtz, and to a lesser extent, myself. When the group of about twenty-five people got together, and that group consisted of people prominent in banking, prominent in law, prominent in good works, such as hospitals, orchestra, etc., plus labor, plus some of the minority groups, Kurtz, McCracken and I were made co-chairmen. I think the main reason that I was picked out was that I was a Democrat and I don't think there were an awful lot of Democrats on the committee. And we were a non-political group but we didn't want to have ourselves in a position that they would say -- it's all Republican, all Democrat, all minority or the reverse. And we got, I think as our first paid executive Robert K. Sawyer, better known as Bob...

(WMP: as Buck.)

Buck, that's right, Buck. And he was our one paid man, and I guess he must have had a secretary, but I don't believe she got very much. We got a little office, and we met as a group, I would think, once a week -- about once a week. And we were always able to call an executive committee meeting if there was some special thing that came up in the meantime.

Buck Sawyer was a wonderful fellow, and another wonderful man who was one of the twenty-five was Harry Batten, and Sawyer and I think Batten made a team that made up the baseballs or the snowballs, whatever you want to call it, for the rest of us to throw.
The public, I think, welcomed wholeheartedly, a group that was non-political and yet had the confidence of Mayor Clark and other people in the political machine in City Hall.

The powers that be, that would be Clark first, Dilworth probably second, were very powerful and we asked them who they would recommend in addition to the group that we somewhat picked out and I think my memory is correct when they picked out Walter Phillips and said that they thought he would be a good man to be helpful in the development. This worked out very satisfactorily and I guess as of today, Walter and I are probably amongst the few that are still around.

(WMP: Another person, I think, was Bernard Seger, but he didn't do very much on G.P.M., I don't think.)

No, but he was a member certainly, and because he being in the law profession, was represented to a certain extent, that group.

(WMP: Sure, and he was in Schnader's office. Schnader had a big hand in this kind of thing.)

Yes, I think that's right. But Harry Batten, to me, was the person that was the most helpful and had a queer ability of never wanting to be standing out front, but he kept needling the rest of us and he made a hell of a lot of very good snow balls.

(WMP: I think he may have been the instigator, was he not?)

I hardly knew him then, to be perfectly frank with you, but I became very, very fond of him and very admiring of him, and I only wished to heaven he would have been willing to run himself for mayor at some state in the game. But that was not what he wanted.

One of the things that Joe Clark was very interested in, and in my estimation, very wisely interested in, was the City Planning Commission. He appointed Ned Hopkinson, of Drexel and Company, and who, I think, at the same time, was a trustee of the university. I was a great believer in the planning commission and as a matter of fact, was appointed as a member. I got into a bit of a snarl in reference to that later on when Dick Dilworth appointed Ed Palmer, a real estate man, as chairman when Mr. Hopkinson resigned. And I felt that that was a dreadful mistake. I was not referring to any individual, but that no real estate man should be placed in a political position where he had so much to do with the value of individual pieces of real estate. I offered my opposition, although I personally resigned from the commission as a result of this appointment--it did not change Mr. Dilworth's plan.

We'd had a city charter for I don't know how many years, but
many of us felt that it was a source of great inefficiency and corruption in Philadelphia and I think I'm correct when I assert the GPM, that is the Greater Philadelphia Movement, backed up a change in the city charter which had to go to the voters. But of course, the most important part of any change like that was that it should have first, a group to draw the new charter and to back the new charter with the public, and the next, to work up the enthusiasm of the mayor, that a good charter should be born.

He appointed top notch people on the charter commission -- two of which I remember were members of the GPM, those being Bob McCracken and Lou Stevens, both men with great knowledge of the law and also wonderful citizens and active workers in GPM.

(WMP: There were a number of things that had to be done to get the new charter -- there had to be a commission appointed to draft a new city charter. You recall the GPM in that regard, in their efforts to help and create support of having a campaign, so people in the city would vote in favor of the charter -- it had to be submitted to the voters.)

Yes, we had to get the voters of the city in favor of a new charter. That is always a very difficult thing to do, especially if you do not have the old guard of either one of the parties in favor of it.

(WMP: Right.)

McCracken and Stevens, who were highly respected in Philadelphia, took an active part in getting this accomplished. I don't know what else much I can say... you know, as you get older, you don't remember...

(WMP: I think you're remarkable... you're doing very well. The charter, of course, was adopted and then in between the campaign for municipal offices of mayor and district attorney, I guess, -- in any event, Joe Clark got to be mayor, and then you were named to the City Planning Commission.)

Yes, that's right.

(WMP: You remember one time when a man named Norman Denny wanted to make a housing development on the North Philadelphia airport and this land the city had acquired, and he wanted to have the city give it to him for that purpose. He had a good deal of political backing for it. So you being on the City Planning Commission, you objected to it. Airports were in my department when I was in City Hall with Joe Clark. So you and I got in a helicopter and looked at the whole situation up there in northeast Philadelphia and we could see very clearly that a housing development up there would kill the airport, because the houses would be in the way of the approaches to the airport. So as a result of that flight we took the position, the planning
commission, that they shouldn't be allowed to have housing developments for Mr. Denny. I just thought that was an interesting thing that you did...going up and looking at it and coming down and taking a position.)

Walter, that's very kind of you, remembering that, 'cause it sounds as though I had done something...I don't think I ever accomplished much and therefore that's pretty much passed out of my mind, I think. But I will go into the thing that I think is very important, that GPM had a very large hand in, and that was the moving of the Dock Street markets, which were a disgrace from many angles. It was not only a disgrace from the health angle, but the expense, which was always passed on to the consumer, of necessity, the expense...trucks would come in there laden, and they would sometimes wait six, and eight, and ten hours for an opportunity to unload. And there was this big dump down in south Philadelphia. And I then come back again to Harry Batten. Harry Batten visualized that dump being turned into a wonderful food distribution center. And it's wonderful how a chain reaction takes place in that we were able to close up the Dock Street merchants and move them down to a dump which had been rebuilt and we were instrumental in getting a good committee for the food distribution center, which was headed up for many years by Stu Rauch.

But Batten, of course, went even further in his dream, and that was that the whole Dock Street development, down around Second and Spruce, should be turned into a development that would retain the old atmosphere of that area which was known as Society Hill. The society word had nothing to do with society in the sense usually known, but was a society of merchants, way, way back in Philadelphia's time which was a square mile down there. And they lived there, had lovely old 18th and 17th century houses. That all developed and now, I think, is a showplace, not only of Philadelphia, but perhaps of the United States, as a redevelopment authority. I'm sorry to say that I don't think it could happen today because I don't think you'd ever get the backing. And some of it was fairly brutal, you could say, but, anyone who had a house, and an honest appraisal was made, he was offered that price for his house and he could keep his house, provided he agreed that the façade of the house should be put back into its original condition and that it should be a one-family, primarily, a one-family home. And that, I'm afraid, we'd have great difficulty in accomplishing today, and yet, as you look back on it, it was a great accomplishment.

(WMP: Did you not have a house yourself down there?)

Yes. My wife and I, when I had been on the planning commission and also on GPM, and now I had been arguing in favor of people moving back to Philadelphia...and we bought from the redevelopment authority a lovely old house built in the early 18th century but which had gone completely to rack and ruin. The filth was beyond belief, the fleas were such and the stench was such that you couldn't stay in the house over about ten or fifteen minutes,
because the fleas would eat you alive. There were two dead cats found in the bathtub. The front door was just partly open all the time. There were double beds in each room, and I don't think anyone made any money out of renting the rooms, but they were all occupied every night. And really the filth was beyond belief. And another little item ... this was at 217 Spruce Street ... and between Second and Third Street on Spruce, there were three very disreputable, but very prosperous and active bars. And later on, because we lived there for eighteen years after we had fixed it up, it had become such a respectable neighborhood that you weren't able to buy a drink at any bar or any house, and you had to rely entirely on the hospitality of your friends.

Now, let's see -- what else. Well, Walter, I'm not giving you a very good line-up, but I feel that the city of Philadelphia is tremendously indebted to Messers Clark, and Dilworth, who were top-notch mayors.

One of the serious mistakes made by Dick Dilworth was that he got over-ambitious and wanted to run for governor. And we had in the charter a provision that he couldn't remain mayor and run for another office. So he resigned as mayor. A slight anecdote in connection with that is interesting in that Harry Batten, who was a great friend of Dick Dilworth, and was very much against him making this shift, but Dick was in Europe, and Harry Batten had planned to meet him on arrival of his ship back in the United States. And for some reason he wasn't able to meet him. And by the time he did meet Dick, a relatively few hours later, Dick had already agreed to someone, I don't know who, to resign from being mayor, and run for governor. The net result was that Jim Tate, president of council, became mayor. Jim Tate, in my estimation, was honest, and that is awfully important in a political position, such as mayor of this city. But he was not brilliant, was not as brilliant and far-seeing as it takes to be a top-notch mayor. And then, as we know, since then we have had Mr. Rizzo, but I think I would rather not get into that argument. I think that would be a different story, because I don't think Mayor Rizzo has been a good mayor for the city of Philadelphia.

(BF: Do you want to say more about GPN and its merging with The Partnership?)

Now you're hitting on something that is fully modern and I'm in my eighty-fourth year and there's one thing that I believe in, and I've stuck to it. When you reach a certain age, get the hell out. And therefore I have not been able to keep up with the detail of that merger. The main thing that you need is the confidence of the people and I think that's harder to get now. It oun't be. I think we ought to have a real change. But I don't think the people of Philadelphia, as they have voted lately, I don't think appreciate how important it is to have a government that they can really wholeheartedly be proud of for the growth of this wonderful city. Not only growth
as a place to live in, but a place to work in. I wrote a letter the other day to the mayor, asking him if he would kindly do me a favor of walking along Fifteenth Street, and then back along Sixteenth Street, between Market and Walnut. And I think he would be ashamed of the condition that he would find in that center part of our city as of the present time.

(WMP: You're still fighting the good causes, I can see. That's great. I almost called you Sturgis...do you want to say anything about Sturgis? His brother was a great fellow too.)

Yes, Sturgis was a wonderful fellow, oh, I miss him dreadfully. He did a good job, he did a very good job for the city of Philadelphia. He was not only a very brilliant lawyer in my estimation, as a partner of Ballard, Spahar, Anderson and Ingersoll, but he also was president of our big museum and held that position for many years, and he was a great guy. He was two years older than I was, but we were very close. Personally we were close in business and when that type of association has to be broken up, due to death, it is part of the problems of getting old.

(WMP: You don't look old... you've done very well.)

Oh, go on. Don't give me that baloney!

(WMP: You look fine. Your mind is in good shape.)

Well, Walter, I thank you very much. I hope what you're doing will make a good record.