

Orleans County Historical Association

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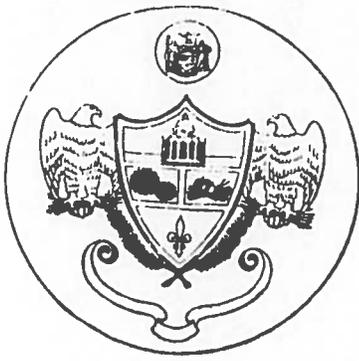
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Orleans County Historical Association

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Mr. Lester Canham
13377 Ridge Road
Albion, New York

Lester Canham, Born December 1904

Interviewed by Luther P. Burroughs, Albion, New York
June 3, 1979



Orleans County Historical Association

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The purpose of this project is to collect information about the historical development of Orleans County by means of tape-recorded conversations with people whose experiences reflect the county's growth.

These tapes and transcriptions will be preserved as educational resources and possible publication (all or in part).

I hereby release this tape and transcription to the Orleans County Historical Association.

[Signature]
Signed
5-3-79
Date

Understood and agreed to:

Fisher P. Burroughs

INTERVIEWER

5-3-79

Date

LESTER CANHAM 1

Luther and I are in the same house that I was born in. It is known as the Lovell Estate and I think as people look back, they'll find that Miss Katherine Billings of Albion has the family tree of the Lovell family, which goes back into the Revolutionary day. She spent a lot of time and proper credit should be given to her for her work. But, I think I was fortunate in being born a twin in this house. It's the third time I have lived here, about seven years as a child and later came back with my bride and lived here for five years and then in 1953 I came back and lived here ever since.

My brother and I, of course, were very close. We went to school in what we call the Bullard District, just east of this place. It's a cobblestone house and Miss Ruth Merrill was the teacher and she still relates little anecdotes, twins, and what happened. I was talking to one of her granddaughters the other day, and she reminded me of her grandmother telling some of the things that happened. My brother and I, we were identical twins and caused quite a little comment. We weren't self conscious about the whole thing because people used to come and we always had to come in the front room and line up and they would compare us. And we didn't like that at all. We were a little bashful and liked to be out in the yard playing. We had our goats and things and that was the obvious place. We lived here seven years, and I remember walking to school and sometimes we had to leave the road because they weren't cleaning out ruts at the time. They would just let them fill in. And they would stay there until nature thawed the snow out. Sometimes we had companions to walk with and sometimes we had to walk alone. One girl, in

particular, used to scare us about the orchard where Fay Hollenbeck lives now. It's been taken out now. But she used to tell us of the gypsies and we'd shy away from that because we were easily frightened.

There was a maiden lady lived just east of us, down on the Waterport road, by the name of Suzanne Hyde. We called it the "Plaster House". That's what it was. The main house was made of plaster. She had guinea hens, that being true guinea hens, they were never at home. They were over in our yard most of the time. I remember one particular incident when the hired man had told us that if we could get salt on their tails, we could catch them. We spent a couple of hours chasing them and found out we couldn't catch them, so we around on the east side of the barn, broke the windows all out and then went in the hen house and mixed some eggs in with mud pies and we weren't chastened for that at all. In fact, my parents never sat down to discuss it at all. I don't know whether they thought it was cute or not. But we knocked the frames off the windows. There was a horse in there but, we liked to see him jump.

But at that time of course, there was no television or anything and the entertainment was caused a good deal by the neighborhood or what have you. We used to hear it repeated several times by my father. He was a raconteur, anyway. He liked to tell horse stories and we used to sit around at night to hear them relate some of the things. There were many anecdotes. The old Ridge Road at that time, was just a series of deep dirt ruts. If you got in a rut, the old joke was that you had to stay there because you couldn't get out, especially when the automobile came

along. Our first ride, I think one of the Callard boys came by and took mysister, my brother and I west. I forget now how far we went but it was quita athrill. I believe that was not a "side-winder". But at the time they used to crank them on the side some.

And then while we lived here seven years, there was a militia marched by and they had blue uniforms. We had gotten word that they were bivuacking at Oak Orchard Flats so my mother took us up there and I remember them being camped in the valley of the Oak Orchard River and their guns were stacked campfires were going and I carried this in my memory many times that I was old enough to remember when soldiers had blue uniforms. But after talking to the County Historian, Cary Lattin, I found that it was sort of a memorial march in memory of some anniversary of the army and they marched from Fort Niagara to Fort Oswego. And that was a common occurance here. We saw many, many military trains and troops go by but now the've all disappeared.

We always seem to have a better recollection of my father coming from Michigan. My Grandfather had emigrated from England and he landed in Michigan. We never knew why. When they were coming from Michigan on the train, my father was just a small child and I remember that he cried quite a bit and a man feeling sorry for him on the train, gave him his watch and he slammed the watch on the floor, probably breaking it. But, anyway my grandfather established himself in Orleans County. I don't know whether he farmed it . But when the Civil War came on, he volunteered and served one, what they called one term at that time. I would take it that it was two years. But when he came back, at that times the ones that didn't want to

go were buying out and he got a certain amount of money and went back. He fought at Gettysburg and I'm awful sorry about my grandfather not relating to him what we wanted to hear him say about his experience in the war. Because when he came back, he was a very heavy drinker and we used to be quite afraid of him and when I think of and go back to Gettysburg, I wish now we had listened more to his tales. Usually when he talked about it, he was under the influence of liquer and we ere brought up that that th inking was wrong, so we didn't pay much attention to him. My son, after he serrved in the navy for years, he wished he had listened to him to but he could not because he was only about four or five years old when my grandfather died, none hundred years and six months. He lived to be a real healthy man right up to the last. He had no illness and I think he went down with a slight shock. But he had a pension from the government. He could have had more but he always said he would have to have a psychical. So he would avoid getting any more. I think he had a hundred dollars a month pension which did very well for him in Depression because he could lay some away besides supplying his keep.

My father was a farmer and also a horse dealer. He traded in horses and every year, at this particular property, around now, he had an auction every year. I remember that. He would always sell all of his horses and harness and implements, and then buy new ones. This became an annual affair and I remember they always served coffee and doughnuts and many people came here just for the lunch. There was always crackers and cheese which appealed to farmers. They were hard workers and I regret very much that they never did see real prosperous times. Especially from the Depression on, it was hard going for them. They held out anyway and I think

the children were probably raised so we were taught not to spend a lot of money. I know at school, we didn't have much money to spend.

My older sister was named May and she was married to Ross Hollenbeck who was Sheriff at that time in the twenty eights. That was in the bootlegging days and things were quite colorful at the time. She later died in the seventies. My sister, Anne, married Glen Miller and they were located on the ridge and ran a sort of cabin outfit, a store until their final days. My brother, Leslie, became an electrician in Albion and that was his main occupation. He is now semi-retired.

On my mother's side, as I stated before, Miss Billings traced the genealogy of the Lovell Family back to pre-revolutionary days and brought it down to the time when each family was represented right up to today. It's been quite interesting to the children because they had no idea of who their ancestors were. And my grandfather Lovell, who would be my mother's father, built this house that we are in now. He was a carpenter and he engineered and did the work himself. Sometimes I can't help but admire because he did do a good job. The house has stood many storms and it's still standing here. My mother had two brothers and three sisters and of course they're all departed now. There is no one of that generation left.

Q Where did you go to High School and how did you get there?

A That was in Albion High School and at first my brother and I rode bicycles to church (HS) which was about six miles. There were no busses then, it was unheard of. We later drove a horse and I remember we parked it in a barn, the Wright's on West Bank Street. Then as we had gotten to the third and fourth year, we thought we were

too proud to drive a horse or ride a bicycle, so we walked to Eagle Harbor to the trolley and rode. We used to say we walked three miles and rode three miles. And many times when it was raining, my mother used to take us up in a horse and buggy. And sometimes we had to go pretty fast when we saw the trolley coming, but we always made it. It was fifteen cents, I believe one way but I remember some of the boys used to get on the trolley and they would bluff the conductor out and not pay their way. He was very good about it. He didn't refuse the student the ride. The next time he saw him, he would forget it. I remember, especially, in riding the bicycle, that we always rode in the good weather and once in a while we'd have to come back in bad weather. Previous to that, in going to Albion, we spent about two years at Waterport School and before that another Bullard District north of us. It was north of 279 where we had moved. When Les and I were seven years old, we went down on the, what we call 279. It was a schoolhouse on the corner of what we call the Pea Vinery Road and Park Ave. And we went there one year and then we went to Waterport. But our school was interrupted slightly. When the "Flu" bug came around in WWI, our father took us out of school, afraid that we would catch it and so we missed a semester. We went on the same, but when we went of course the boys were being drafted at the time. And every time a contingent went out from Albion we had to get out and march, regardless of the weather. I remember many times we had marched in the rain, had our flags, went up to see them off. They were rather - some scenes were not very bright either. Some of the families did not want their boys to go to war, likely so because

some of them never did come back. But I think in High School we were a little smaller than the average. There were a lot of large boys went there at the time and we were quite intimidated and kept out of sight as much as possible. One of the biggest things that we feared. When you came with long trousers the first day, they would see if you had socks or stockings on. They were rather rough and my brother and I escaped that. When the war came on, the order came through that everyone had to wear denim trousers. Everybody came that day, large and small, with denims on, so they couldn't look at all of them so it had to be passed up. But that's one of the things that stand out in my life. Many of the teachers that we had were outstanding teachers. They were good History and Language teachers. We had some excellent mathematics teachers. I think Charlie D'Amico stood out in our minds as a science teacher. We'll never forget him. I remember when Carl Bergerson and -

Q Could I ask if you would give the names of these teachers, those you remember?

A Yes. There was a Miss Rowland who now is Mrs. Charles Hart. She taught French. An excellent French teacher. There was a Miss Holmes and Mr. Gilbert that taught History on different occasions. Then Mr. Bergerson was never my teacher although his influence was felt. He was very strict in seeing that discipline was carried out and many boys, especially, went to the "Boiler room" and were promptly taken care of when they got out of line. My brother and I were lucky enough not to ever get in that. And when Charlie D'Amico came, we took Physics from him. We all went to class. It really was the fright of him, he never hurt anyone but he had an air about him. You'd either learn or else. I think that

many students went back to Charlie to see him because they respected his discipline. They respected the fact that when he taught them something, they listened to it. My brother and I were in an Algebra class and the professor, if you could call - I don't know if he was a professor or not. But he - it was during WWI and there was a scarcity of teachers. There were about fifty in the Algebra class that failed. So Miss Sadie Britton took this repeat class over next year and got them all through, and then we followed her right through school. We took Algebra, Intermediate Algebra and Geometry from her. And we often recall with her these days, little anecdotes. Like John Larwood came in one day and said he had to sit up until two o'clock that night and trisect an angle and proved it. Miss Britton pointed out immediately where he had made a mistake and John's efforts were in vain. On my brother's fiftieth anniversary, Miss Britton was there and recalled that very well. She was clever enough so that one day she was going to show us how to make x equal y. None of us could see where the mistake was and she had to go back and she had inserted a zero in the formula and killed the whole thing. None of us were smart enough to see it. We thought she really had made x equal y. And she was - once in a while she would deviate. Usually she was very strict and kept the students under very strict tutornship and we respected her for it because no one ever forgot her. She was probably one of the best teachers in that particular class that was ever hired by them at Albion.

When we were living north of Gaines, my brother and I had been pretty well loose on Sunday on our play and everything and our sisters came out one day and told us we had to start going to Sunday School. It was quite a crushing blow because we felt as if this is where we are going to loose some of our rights. But, anyway,

we went to church and I think at the time we we probably around eleven. This was our first introduction to the Gaines Congregational Church and rev. Charles Burroughs, that was Luther's father, was the pastor there. I remember him so well because I was telling someone just the other day. I can see him now as he walked up in the morning to the pulpit with his long tailed coat. I don't think I ever remember him preaching without that long tailed coat. He had his choir. The organ was a pump organ with treads, with treads on it and I remember many of the people that sang in the choir and were very faithful about it. The Sanfords and Marie Taylor, Nettie Appleton and others that came later to fill in. And one thing, I remember my father had a great respect for Luther's father. He didn't go to church and I don't think he ever went inside of a church but he always thought Mr. Burroughs was a very good man and he spoke highly of him. In fact, Mr. Burroughs came in many times to chat with my father. And I remember very well, the black cow that was pastured out in the schoolyard across the road that belonged to Mr. Burroughs. I don't know just how it was fed in the winter. We never got into that because we always remembered seeing it on a chain and there was enough yard there the school didn't need to provide plenty of pasture during the summer. Later Luther's mother in the first school that we went to in the Bullard District and many of the children around here, who are still in the area remember her as a teacher. And I remember your father used to come and pick her up in a buggy and walk away - ride away after school. Sometimes there were discipline problems. Maybe Mrs. Burroughs had to stay longer after school to straighten that out. There were some youngsters there, sort of mavericks, used to cause prob-

lems. My brother and I were going to the High School in town at the time so were not at the country school.

Later, we were exposed to Charles Howard. He got us to go to the Methodist Church, especially through his Sunday School Class. He had about fifty-five or sixty young men in the class. He got several of them to join the church. In fact we joined the Methodist Church at the time and he kept us very busy. We learned a lot from Charlie about life and philosophy he taught us. He always seemed to be with us all the while. Anything extra going on, Charlie would be at the head of the line to create the activity. Later we were married. We were married in 1928. Mabel and I were visited by the Gaines minister, so we decided to go back there in 1948 and we have been in the Gaines Congregational Church ever since, and steady attendance. We attend there every Sunday and see ministers come and go and actually the children, we've had four, they've all been church members there and I think this church has been a big part of our life for many years.

In 1928, Mabel Plummer and I met and married. In ¹⁹³⁰~~1950~~ our first child was born in the old Arnold Gregory Memorial Hospital and his name was Lester, Jr. David was born in 1932 and Paul, the third son, was born on Sept. 3rd, 1939. We always remember that because that's the day Germany invaded Poland. Our daughter, Sharon, was born in 1949.

Lester, Jr. went to High School and in 1949 joined the U. S. Navy and was there until 1969. The end of 1969 he had attained the Lieutenant rank. He served in Vietnam. We never understood why he should go to Vietnam after being in the service for eighteen years. But he went through the orientation and was sent over there

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as advisor. He had one incident where he was the advisor on the vietnam's boat that wanted to get off at this island. He told them that they weren't supposed to and it ended up in a fiasco where the young Lieutenant that was in charge of the vietnamese, was shot in the head. The first they knew about it, they saw the splattering on the beach but the surf kept the sound of bullets and guns out of it. But they decided they were being fired upon so my son had a radio and got the troops and forces there. They came in ships and aeroplanes and rescued the - the young Lieutenant who was shot made a break for the beach and no one knew why. But he was shot in the head and lay there almost two hours and a half and he died. Later, Les came back to Hawaii for an R and R session. While he was there, he was taken ill and thought he had appendicitis and he found out it was a malignant tumor. So my wife and I went over in Sept. 1969. He had some operations and was due for more. We stayed a week and the next day we left, he had an operation again and finally ended up in Chulla Vista, California, his home, and in 1970, he was retired from the Navy with full disability. His wife died in May 1970 and he came back here, knowing that his days were numberer. We helped him. Got his home in Albion with his two children. Finally, in July 1971 I took him back to the veteren's Hospital where he had been running back and forth for treatments. On Oct. 10th he died. He served about twenty one years.

My son David, got through High School, went to General Motors Institute and later came back and married Annette Conner, of Lockport. He was in business for a while in Lockport but finally ended up, with General Motors in Rochester where he is to this date. They have four children.

My son Paul, is working for Xerox and lives east of Penfield

in Wayne County and at the present time he is working in Mexico, back and forth for Xerox. He married Grace Dalton. They have four children. My daughter, Sharon, spent two years in Brockport College and then married Peter Sadler and they have three girls. They went to Troy. Peter was there seven years and acquired his Doctor's degree. He is now teaching in the University of North Dakota and they have just experienced the high water from the Red River. They were fortunate enough to own a place that was high enough that water didn't reach. Red River has the peculiar characteristic of running north to the Artic Circle. Of course the north end is frozen when it starts to thaw, and the water has to go someplace. So it spreads all over the plains. There was a lake 60 miles long and 25 miles wide. At the present it is thundering towards Winnipeg and expected to crest there at over 55 feet! They were very fortunate they escaped this holocaust. Many of the people in the lower regions have suffered, losing their homes.

Q You were Gaines Supervisor for 12 years I believe. Could you tell us something about that?

A It was back in 1945 that Charles Morrison of this area was an Assessor, and he passed away. I was in the dairy barn one day working when Everett Levins came in and said that they had two jobs open and wondered if I would be interested. One of them was Dog Enumerator, and one of them was Assessor. He went on talking, and I finally asked him, "Which one are you talking about?" "Well", he answered, "Assessor". I was quite interested because I'd begun to think that maybe my life on the farm was going to be

just one disappointment after another. It was hard work to make a living on a farm. Dollars were scarce and we had to work hard for what little we got. I always loved farming for the freedom it gave me but -. Anyway, I accepted the appointment. So the following spring, I went down and Mr. Christopher Drake and Ed Chapman was on the Board of Assessors and Mr. Chapman was chairman. And when I got in his car he said; " Lester, this job won't last long because the county is going to have an Assessor of their own and eliminate all the town jobs." Well, we all know of course that this never happened. I think at the time Everett Levins said; "Whatever you do, work on the boundaries. They have been getting in bad shape." So that became a little joke. I usually drove because I was the youngest one of the group. I would watch my book upside down and remind Ed Chapman about the boundary that was wrong and that I was pretty well acquainted with the town at the time. And he used to say; "How can you read bottom side up?" We had a little laugh about that and as time went on it became - it became near 56 and 57, things began to tighten up again. The Farm Bureau was encouraging the farmer to protect their assessments because they said they were over assessed according to the houses. A lot of THIS was created at the time. A farmer would have two houses on his farm and and maybe this little house would be sold to someone who would maybe have a six hundred dollar assessment on it. And the man with a city job and doing very well, while the farmer was paying the bulk of the assessment and not enough pay. So Earl Harding was on the Board at the time and he started a legal action. He always thought it ironic that a Town Board member would start a legal

action. But he was suing the Town for being over assessed and things became quite heated. I don't think Earl and I lost any friendship about it. I would presume that we, maybe, respected each other. I fought the thing mainly because we were Assessors. We thought we ought to protect our values and finally ended up one night, after the Board of Assessors went to the Town Board. The agreement was that Mr. Chapman would take the torch and carry it. Well. Mr. Willard Densmore, Earl Harding, John Kast was the Supervisor, but the other members of the Board didn't say anything. But Mr. Harding and Mr. Densmore did all the talking and I think Ed Chapman thought it was getting a little too deep for him. So he wanted to know if I would take the argument over. Well, I don't think we ended up with either side victorious. But that night there was a good discussion. I don't think there were any hard feelings come out of it but, anyway, this now had become '57 and Mr. Kast had said twice that he didn't think he would run for Supervisor any more. And I had always been interested in it. I had watched the Proceedings of the Supervisors for years and studied their actions and was quite interested in it. And my father of course was Assessor before I was and I had had experience in that. And I became quite interested in Town government. And so finally, in the - in January of '57 I went to talk to John Kast and he said that he had made this remark but he didn't think he had come to any decision. Well, after meeting with him two or three times. in the spring, and each time there was a delay. In June I met him in Gaines and asked him if he had made up his mind. He said; "Yes. I think I will run again. There is a building program going on in the county and my colleagues want me to stay in". Well, I said;

" I guess that I am going to be your opponent."

So we did have a primary contest. There were no sarcastic or derogatory remarks made. John was a real good Supervisor and an upright citizen. He believed in what he stood and he was very strong in County government at the time. He had been Chairman, very well respected and it never entered my head that he would defeat me. I thought, I worked for it. I went out to see people. Some people told me they were satisfied with John's administration and other people said; " Yes. It's time we had a change." And I think John was like the rest of us. After you have been in for a while you do get a little caustic because some people bear on you a little heavy. I know that John had put some people down, which probably was the best way of doing it, I heard afterwards. But it wasn't such a sin after all. Anyway, when primary came, I won it and I think Mr. Densmore was the most disappointed. He was quite put out because previous to that I had gone to see Everett Levins and Everett told me in no uncertain terms that I was - he didn't call me an upstart - he referred it that I had no right to be running against a man of John Kast's caliber. However, that didn't deter me in any way and I went on and I say I had won the primary. And I think, at the time, Leonard Rice was the Mayor of Albion. Thinking our party was being disrupted, he thought it maybe was a chance to get in, especially with some of the Republicans that didn't vote for me. So in November and I was easily - it was an easy task to take over the town. At the time the Republicans ruled the Town. We had a strong Republican Committee and the Committee and the Town Board, neither one backed me, but I did go on and when I did go in as Supervisor, I was no one's fair-haired boy. I went in free and

without any particular handicaps. I could do as I wished and when I went in to the government, I was blessed with the fact that I had been exposed to some of the town and county government so it wasn't so much of a mystery. Two boys, Mike Paduchak and Bill Knights, went in but neither one of them was versed quite as well. They hadn't been exposed to it and I guess at the time with the people going in to the Board like that, they might have thought that we were trespassing. I don't know. We went in and of course we didn't run on any particular platform and I don't think anyone should on town and county levels. Because I had seen one man run for Supervisor on an economy program. He lasted one term. I don't know what happened. But when you get in with these people, if you want any thing at all, you have to cooperate. And I will say this about the Board, there was no corruption. I don't think there was anybody on the Board but what were dedicated to good government. They - we had our disruptive arguments. At the time Harold Hill was Chairman, when I went on, and he - Harold's a good speaker and he was just about the spokesman for the Board at the time. The two senior members on the Board at that time were Manley Morrison and Justin Roberts, who had served nearly forty years between them. But these men were well versed in County government and did much to build up a good financial structure, and stabilize the government of the county. There was a tax stabilization and surplus and reserve then of many hundred thousand dollars and this helped some in the contingencies that arose at the time. I remember that we did have certain machines to buy and also there was a tax appraisal coming up. The money was available at that time. Manley Morrison, who had been on, at that time, getting into twenty years

of service. Both of these men were devoted to the service of the county and did a great deal to keep the rest of us in line so that it wouldn't be any new spirit come in to the - and when in '59, we were rotating the Chairmanship then every two years. And of course it was rotated in the Republicans. We were the majority party and this had come about because previously Oley Orsland from Kendall had had it for twelve or fourteen years and we thought it was time the chairman was changed to stop this longevity. They made the rule that two years was enough. Ironically enough, of course the Democrats criticized this severely but long, long afterwards when they came in power, they broke it themselves by leaving Democrats in. George Batchellor served many terms. And I know Bill Monacelli was (DEM) Chairman at the time and he used to report in the papers that the Republicans were breaching their promise, the contract by rotating their own members. So in 1960 I was elected Chairman of the Board. I always thought it was a little too fast. A man should have more than two years on the board before he took the Chairmanship. All the rest of the people in the Board had served except Neal Wilson. He was the man that was supposed to be elected. Rather than take a chance on the Chairmanship, Neal refused to run again. And so I was quite influential in getting Richard Bloom to run. He did become Supervisor in Albion. But in my term as Chairman, there is a lot of power invested in this office. I mean the Board almost circles around this office. We had deans on the Board that had been on many years. But there were many things that happened that the Chairman had to do himself. There were - there was one thing I remember I could have done and didn't. We had a vacancy in the Civil Defense Office and Bob Balcerzak of Medina put his name in beside several other names. And I remem-

per four of us on the Board wanted Bob because we believed in his efficiency and the Republicans in the west end had sent down word to elect him if you want to, but don't give him the salary he wants so he will be discouraged. well, we were then past the Board meeting so one of the men suggested we have a recess. So this is where the word politics comes in, and we did canvass some of the members and get them to agree to elect Bob Balcerzak. It was a good move because Bob, as I have said before, was a very efficient administrator and did his job well and went on and created the Civil Defense. And though the Civil Defense Center was criticized severely, it was built during my administration as Chairman. And it released us from a lot of pressure because the Radio Clubs and different people that wanted to do things for the government. It took them into a position where they had a place to operate from and the Cuban crisis was on at the time and was very popular. In fact it cost the county \$25,000 and the State and Federal picked up the rest. It was a hundred dollar project. And I think it would be wrong to criticize it because the principle was there. The theory was that if a crisis came about, that certain officials would go up there and be protected from any nuclear radiation. And that was criticized severely because they always said; "Where are the rest of the people going?" It still is a good plan. It has it's subsistence, it's own food, it's own generating plant to go along with emergencies.

But one of my first actions as Supervisor was the vacancy of County Historian. I think there were six that ran and Cary Lattin, from our own town, and we supported him whole-heartedly. Cary served a long profitable term of it. He was - he said he couldn't

Imagine anyone getting paid for a hobby that he loved to do. He stayed there until he retired and won many other laurels. But as I entered the Supervisors, of course we had gone through in the town - we had gone through an appraisal that I call myself, "Child Storm" because there were many issues came up during the administration that I had as Supervisor that could have killed me very easily, politically. And of course the appraisal was started before I got in and even though I fought it lightly before I went in, the Board had voted to reappraise the town and we did do it. And we had to stay together. We had a man come in from the outside and did the appraisal. It was done for five thousand. Today it would probably cost about twenty five or thirty thousand. Anyway, we had about one hundred and thirty on "grievance day". The Appraiser told me afterwards, if there were a dozen more to come I would have said; "Let's forget it.". But it did go through and later - about two years later the county took it over. It made another crisis in my administration because already people were beginning to look for a successor. The first term, no one bothered me but the next term Francis Kirby ran against me. He ran against me the third time. He ran as a Democrat both times. I defeated him very easily. Well, of course Ted Swiercznski came out, and I defeated him by thirty nine votes, and that was getting pretty close. They defeated Mike Paduchak that year and I began to be a little concerned. Although I did not go out as strongly as I did the first time. I ran but I didn't work hard at it. But Ted did use the platform that he had a big family and I had had it twelve years, and that did it. I'm glad of the experience because I have met many men who have been both state and national people. Often I watch television and say to my

wife; "I know that man". One in particular, Jake Javitts, came to Albion at one time, to a banquet. I was Dean of the Board at the time, and he mentioned it. I think that Harold Hill will agree, 12 years in there gives you an insight in government. It probably rounds out, maybe some of the opinions you would have. Some of the people who had never been in there, could criticize and not realize what the Board has to put up with. There are certain mandates and restrictions to follow. I think our biggest problem all the way through was welfare. It was a growing concern at the time and people were capitalizing on it. By creating family disagreements at night, the man would walk out and this would leave his family on welfare. He would usually go scott free, go out and pick up another "housekeeper", and go on to produce another family. Usually, instead of curtailing it, it would blossom out into two families of welfare. Of course, we had to live with that every day. We saw the chiseling going on, and they were trying to down-grade it as much as possible. I don't think any of us wanted to see children or people that weren't able to work, not have the proper care. But many people who were living off Child Welfare had no business to be; people that were perfectly able to work.

Another thing that interested me very much was the Highway Department. I had only been in there two years when I said I could write a "white paper" on Highway Department action because each town was a separate entity and in their operations each had valuable tools. They didn't interchange at all because each was after his own "empire", as we used to call it. They both wanted new machinery. They wanted their little pick-up

trucks. They kept them changed often enough. They all had the large graders and the County Highway Department, I would believe, could be strong enough to take care of the county. They are talking of reversing it and let the towns to do all the Highway work but I don't think it would be as efficient as to have one entity do it and the others be subsidiary. In fact, at the time, the County government thought the County Highway Department was mostly subsidized by the state. It was run on license fees and other things that came through and one particular thing that Henry Hannan, the Highway Superintendant put in. He wanted a hundred thousand dollars more for snow removal and one citizen got up and questioned that item and thought it was pretty expensive to have a hundred thousand more and caustically asked if he thought there was going to be a big snowstorm! Mr. Hannan refused to answer. So I got up and asked him if he knew how the County Highway was set up, that it wouldn't make any difference if they put in a million dollars for snow removal. He would still have to have a million dollars on the other side he was expecting from the state. But in our budget hearings, many people did come in and criticize something like that and probably were not well informed enough to get up and argue about it.

~~was~~ Carl Kleindienst was Chairman, even though Carl was sick at the time and I served at times as interim Chairman for him. At one time he wanted me to go to Washington because messages had come out from there that if we had representatives from the county, they could tell us about some of the programs they had to supplement our cash reserves. So I went down and I met Congressman Conable there before the meetings. ~~and~~ we had been there before,

A group of six went down and talked to Barber at one time and he showed us a little of Washington. What he didn't show us, we went around to see. But this particular meeting, I remember that Jake Javitts was in there about 25 minutes before the meeting started, and was working on getting everything in detail because there were many people from various departments that were going to speak and tell us what their program was. They did just that. They got up and told us what the program was, but always ended up by saying that they had no money. One of the things that stood out in my mind, of course I was not a very strong advocate for the Kennedys. And I remember that Robert Kennedy came in. He was the State Senator at the time, or the New York State Senator. They always called him the "carpetbagger" because he created a residence out of nothing to be our Senator. But instead of coming in the way Jake Javitts did, he came in thirty minutes late and his picture - he was constantly under the cameras all the while the meeting was going on. He said nothing. Later they had a luncheon, Hubert Humphrey spoke. I wasn't over eight feet from Hubert Humphrey, and Bobbie Kennedy sat beside of him, and never looked up. I sat across from the Mayor of Niagara Falls and he was a very strong opponent of Bob Kennedy. And somebody asked him, "Did you call Robert Kennedy a SOB in full language?" He said, "Yes I did!. I always swore Boh could have heard it because he didn't quiet it down any. But this is one thing that always impressed me and made me such a strong member of my own party because I always thought of the little irresponsibility on the other.

This has been an interesting experience for me to tell some of my thoughts about County government. I know that people that want to go into politics and I stress that particularly to younger people, to go in with a full vision of what they are expected to do. There are so many that go in thinking of retirement and thinking, maybe, there will be some glory in it. But if they would do some training before they go in, so to be prepared to know some of the objectives of County government, it would be to their advantage. As was stated before, and I know many of the Supervisors have stated the same thing, that it's an experience worth going through. It changes your perspective of both sides of the question. In our service to the County, we many times had to listen to the other man and sometimes his argument was better than ours. I think that in serving an entity, one should keep in mind that there is more than your own personal exploitation. It is a service to the community and I think younger people should be interested enough to give some of their time. Thank you.

(Transcribed and typed by Luther Burroughs, Albion, New York)