Transcript of Oral History Tape #T-2-44, Transcribed by Mary Ann Vartia 08/21/03.

(Tape begins abruptly without identifying the gentleman being interviewed. However, the subject of the interview is "Growing Up in Wanatah, Indiana.")

Mr. Welkie: That's where people used to rent horses, to ah—had a buggy to go out in the country or visa-versa. If they came into town, stayed overnight, they put their horse in the barn over there and they boarded it overnight. And my grandfather started that. And then, let's see, it was Heidi and Otto, I think, worked with that. And then dad went out to the farm. My father was a farmer. My gosh, they tell me that that was my first home above the livery (indecipherable). It was 63 years ago, and I can remember them out there on the farm. Why, they bought 160 acres. Of course, half of that was under water, in marsh hay. So I remember making marsh hay out there in the country, too. However, it's marsh hay, it's just wild growing grass is all that it was, but they used it to feed their livestock in the wintertime.

Interviewer: Can they (indecipherable) haying operation?

Mr. Welkie: Sure.

Interviewer: How was that done?

Mr. Welkie: Well, yeah. That's one thing I couldn't remember, how they cut this. But I do remember 'em having a big slide with a horse on each side, and they'd go along like this and pick it up and they'd shove it up to a stack. And then they'd pitch it on the stack. I can remember that.

Interviewer: How much hay could you cut in (indecipherable)?

Mr. Welkie: I don't even remember that. Do it, but I just remember those things. And, of course, it was nothing to have probably two or three farmers who worked together at different times doing these type of things. And, of course, way back then, there was recreation in those days, we made it ourselves. We had to because where was the community center? And how could you travel far enough to get any place? Of course, we were fortunate. In the summertime when I was a kid, we had made a baseball diamond right across the house from where we lived, and we had picnics or something going on there every Sunday of the year—that is during the summertime. And some activity was there, and we always played ball. I guess that was just one of our pastimes. Even as we grew up, I had a—I have two brothers and, of course, we were farm boys and dad would always say, "You guys work hard all day and then you come home and the first thing you do is pick up the old ball and glove, and you're out there playing ball." Well, that was what we did. Of course, we got a little bit older, it was going to school in the fall of the year, and playing a little basketball if we could. That was so far in that we couldn't afford to travel that all the time.

Interviewer: Where did you move after the livery stable?

Mr. Welkie: Out in the country here, seven miles out.

Interviewer: How old were you when you did that?

Mr. Welkie: I don’t even remember.

Interviewer: Do you remember anything about the livery stable? The sounds? Or the smells? Or the…

Mr. Welkie: No, I don’t even remember that. Actually, my mother is still living there.

Interviewer: Is she?

Mr. Welkie: She was 90 years old in September.

Interviewer: Would she be interested in talking about it?

Mr. Welkie: She don’t hear too well. And she gets a little nervous. We—I guess we were lucky. We always, even during the worst of Depression times, we always had plenty to eat, never had to worry about that. School, of course, we started going to what we called the Newman School out there, and it was a one-room school for eight grades, and that’s as far as it used to go. Then when they discontinued that one, we ah—they built the—at that time it was a South Central School, too. They call it South Central. And then that was about two and a half miles from our house.

Interviewer: Was this eight grades? Or a twelve grade?

Mr. Welkie: Eight grades. And then anything over the eighth grade, the one in town here. So I finished the school out there, and then I came to town.

Interviewer: Did you walk? Or…

Mr. Welkie: Half the time we walked to school. Then they got so that we used to have the—well, like an old cracky wagon, we called it, with a top over it. And then they would haul us to school. But, of course, the roads were so muddy at that time, it was just a problem for the horses to get through even, so wet. And in wintertime, I guess we were just glad to stay in the house. About the only thing you could play in the wintertime was—we used to call it Fox and Goose. You’d make big circles out in the snow, you know, and a cross like that, and a place in the middle where that was a—if you got in there, nobody could get to ya. Or you couldn’t jump from one line—there was two lines in the circle—and I don’t remember who could jump from one to the other, and one couldn’t. But anyway, that’s about all we did in the wintertime. Of course, then I would say we probably had maybe a little more church activities, but really not that early because I can remember rather going to church on Sunday that’s as far as you ever got in a bobsled or a sleigh. And this was—oh, just something different, I guess.

Interviewer: What kind of church activities?

Mr. Welkie: Well, that was in a little later years I would say. We played Dart Ball and just got together just to have a…

Interviewer: Dart Ball?

Mr. Welkie: Yeah.

Interviewer: How do you play Dart Ball?

Mr. Welkie: Have you ever heard of it?

Interviewer: No, I don't think. Maybe I know how to play it, but not by that name.

Mr. Welkie: Well, we called it Dart Ball. We made a—oh, it was about a four-by-four piece of plywood, then we painted it green like first base, second base, third base, and home plate. Then you had certain areas where you hit it with this dart would be ball. White was a strike. A ball was brown. Green was a fowl ball. Black was a homerun. And if you hit any of the bases, that would be how many of the bases you could advance. And, of course, this took probably two nights a week that we did this. And we used to go all over playing Dart Ball. After I got a little bit older, we went as far as LaPorte, North Judson, and those areas. But it was something just to get together, you might say. I think they were a lot closer together than they are now. I know that. The younger people. Because we didn't have any of those things in those days. I can remember also when we used to take the horses and plow out the roads out of the snow. In fact, my dad had some kind of a verbal agreement with the township that he, as I recall, he had four square miles or something like this. Whenever the snow got so deep he'd hitch the horses and plow this all out. Of course, it would take half a day or better because it would—the snow would get up real deep and you could hardly get the horses through. I remember one day, I think when they started out—my older brother went with him that day. There was no school. It seems like they left around nine, ten o'clock in the morning and got back around five. I think they hadn't traveled any further than eight mile, plowing out the roads because the roads were so deep with snow. They made a V like this out of planks, and then we would put weight on top of that, and just drove down the road just pushing out the side, just like that. Make it higher in front and just kept on rowing. Of course, this was done with the horses, not with anything else. You'd hitch your horses. The horses used to get so—well, we'd have to warm up the bits, what we called the bits, and put in the horses mouths, it'd be so cold, so they wouldn't freeze. If they'd freeze, why then it was just like you had a spot frozen on your hand. It if was wet, it'd just pull the skin right off. We'd have to warm up the bits for 'em to put 'em in their mouth.

Interviewer: How would you warm them up?

Mr. Welkie: Oh, probably hold 'em in your hand like this. Or you'd take warm water out to the barn. Yeah, yeah. It was interesting. I could always say that our childhood was probably—well, we were not able to go many places, but yet we enjoyed ourselves as much, or probably more than, anybody. I can remember when we got the first radio. Well, we were very fortunate. We built the new house in 1919, and that was really something to have a new house. And, of course, when dad built that house, it was made all modern and one of the first houses that was made modern. We had our own electric plant.

Interviewer: Your own generating station at the house?

Mr. Welkie: Own electric plant, yeah. Yes. For electricity. And then, of course, we were able to get a radio that worked with this, but with the great

big old—what do you call it, like a horn on it, where it would speak out. And you only got a few stations as I recall. But I'll never forget when we got our first radio. I think that must have been the first night that our house was full of neighbors because they wanted to hear the radio. And that was unique. This electrical system, well, you—it was like a batteries—and you would watch it and it had like a gauge on it for charging; and if it got down, you'd start the motor, a gasoline motor, and charge the batteries up and get your electricity up. And, of course, when ma would iron with this type of a thing, it pulled so much electricity that you always had to run the motor—just an iron did.

Interviewer: What else was hooked up to it? Besides an iron or anything?

Mr. Welkie: Electricity, lights.

Interviewer: I was just wondering what kind of appliances were coming out then? To run on electricity?

Mr. Welkie: Very, very few appliances. That was in, well, I would say, right after—oh, it must have been a little later than that. I think there was two neighbors, our folks and Minnie's or our folks and Nouwens (sp?). There was two of us, I think, that bought the same kind of an outfit to start with. It was really remarkable to see it. And then how much advancement there's been to this time is just remarkable.

Interviewer: When you were growing up, did you have a lot of chores? Are you from a large family?

Mr. Welkie: No, not a large family. It was only three boys. I would say there was three of us boys. We had chores to do. Yes, we did. Every night when we came home from school there was so many things to do and before school. And I even remember when I started to high school here in town in the fall of the year, my older brother and I used to go out and husk a load of corn. We walked to South Central School, then get a bus and come to Wanatah. And this would be a little after eight o'clock in the morning. That's right. Well, you got to think the bus left out there about 8:10 or 8:15, and we had to walk about two and a half miles to get—because we missed the bus that normally would have went past our place. We was out husking corn, then we had to walk to school. We probably didn't walk as much as we used to run. We were, I guess, probably as healthy as anybody in the country, and it'd mean nothin' for us just to run a half a mile just to run. We just did it. Today you wouldn't find anybody doing that.

Interviewer: When you husk corn, how did you used to husk corn and your brothers?

Mr. Welkie: By hand. Like this. Where you had a—well, I used a peg to start with—and this had, oh, like four stalls you put over a glove, and it pulled the ears open like this, and you just pulled the ear right out of it. And, well, I don't mean to brag or anything like this, but I was—after we got out of high school, why, my brothers and I, we were pretty good corn huskers. It was, well, it'd be nothin' for us to pull out a hundred and ten bushel in a day, and we'd be done at 3:00, 3:30 in the afternoon. But, that was all we did then. But then we'd—I didn't have the opportunity to play as much high school basketball as I wanted to because it was too far away. So the coach up

town here one time he told my older brother and I, he said, "Now, all you need to do is come to practice." One practice a week—they usually had three—and they would give us the chance to play basketball. Well, it was seven miles out in the country and sometimes you just couldn’t ask your dad to come to town, so I guess maybe we got a little bit too over ambitious or something. So, out at South Central they had the gym floor out there, too, and we’d go out there and horse around playing basketball, and so I got caught. I was trying to play independent basketball and high school basketball at the same time, and finally I chose to play independent basketball, which I wasn’t sorry.

Interviewer: Now, what was independent basketball?

Mr. Welkie: Well, this was not any—connected with any school, but so many communities had small baseball fields or basketball, and we had the gym out there at South Central, and we called this independent basketball where we were not affiliated really with anything, except we would play basketball with different towns in the—around our area. And, in fact, this is one thing I was always proud of. There was five of us. We was supposed to be the second team out here. But we went to LaPorte and beat the No. 1 LaPorte team at that time. And then the other part of the team went to Crown Point to a tournament down there, and we went to LaPorte to be in a tournament. Of course, that’s when I was probably 17, 18, 19 years of age.

Interviewer: These basketball games, were they well attended by the public?

Mr. Welkie: Oh, yes. Because there was no other entertainment, you might say, in and around and, yes, I would say even much better than you find the basketball games attended today because you just wanted someplace to go. When we got to playing independent basketball, we would go play at least one game a week, and probably two, which we always practiced on Sundays, and we’d at least have one game a week, or if we had two games a week, then we wouldn’t practice on Sunday. Same way with baseball. Every little—well, like a little community, as they used to call them—used to have a baseball team. And, well, we were known as the Welkies baseball team out there. Or we’d call it Hog Island. And then Pinkertons out here had a baseball team. Blacks had a baseball team. Grieger’s had a baseball team. And, well, then it was up here at Clinton School had a baseball team, but there was at least a half a dozen teams right from, let’s say, Wanatah. And we played baseball all summer long, just go round every Sunday from one place to the other.

Interviewer: Were they mainly high school age, or younger?

Mr. Welkie: Older. Older. Oh, yes. Older. ‘Cause that’s one thing you had to be careful of, even in those days of not being with what we called an independent team, and thus you’d be ineligible for high school basketball. And many times the season, one overlapped the other, and that’s where—that’s why you couldn’t do it. Of course, I guess I lived out there in the country and worked around on the farm for a few years until I went to work for Uncle Sam, and that was in 1941. I was in service for four and a half years.

Interviewer: What kind of farm did you have? You said it was it a hog farm? Or was it called Hog Island?

Mr. Welkie: No, this was the name of—I just don't know why they ever called that Hog Island out there. It was just a name for a lively community was all. No.

Interviewer: What kind of farm did you have?

Mr. Welkie: Well, my brother is still on the farm today. It was strictly a grain farm. Strictly a grain farm. We used to do it all with horses. In fact, at one time, I suppose, we farmed, even with the horses, probably close to 600 acres. But even with the horses, we never knew what it was to be working after five o'clock. We see so many people that they work as long as they can, but we never did that. I guess we were a little more fortunate, because we grew up there was three of us boys and dad did most of the chores, and three of us worked the fields. Of course, it kept one busy repairing tools and harnesses and this kind of thing. And on rainy days, that's when we had, even though dad couldn't keep up with it at times, we had to repair harness, and oil them and grease 'em and clean 'em up. And everyone had their own team of horses, and they was usually pretty proud of that team because you picked yourself up something that looked good. I had a team that, that when I left home, nobody else could do anything with 'em so they had to sell 'em because they was just too wiry and frisky for anybody else. They—after I went, left home, my brothers tried to work 'em, but they just couldn't. They was just like a dog that's for one individual and that was it.

Interviewer: Now, these teams of horses, were they used in fields only? Or were they used at home, riding, too?

Mr. Welkie: No, never riding. We never rode to work, just mostly for field work or else sowing the grain. I can even remember hauling grain to town with the horses. And, of course, that would be oh, a half a day's trip at least, to take a load of grain in.

Interviewer: You take it to that elevator?

Mr. Welkie: Yeah.

Interviewer: How would that elevator work then?

Mr. Welkie: Well, they had some kind of a thing there that would lift up the front wheels, and as the grain would go out of the back end and they shipped the grain someplace. I don't even remember where it was. We used to haul most of ours out to south Wanatah here.

Interviewer: Did the Depression hit the farmers hard around here?

Mr. Welkie: I will have to say we were probably pretty lucky. Yes, it hit the farmers hard, but yet, at that time they were not depending on anybody else to make their bread, raise their—what they needed around the farm. And I can remember of going to the mill in LaPorte with my folks to grind wheat into flour in the fall of the year. And then we'd take it upstairs and put it in the attic, and whenever ma wanted to make bread, well, we went in the attic and got the flour out, add the yeast, and you made it. Same way with meat. We did all of our own slaughtering of hogs and beef. So we never went hungry. We raised all of our potatoes, our pickles, our cabbage and apples, and, of

course, in them days we used to, well, have quite a few potatoes. In fact, we sold potatoes. And I can remember it always used to be a certain time of the year when the kids were off—when we were off from school—it was the day we was supposed to pick potatoes. And we used to pick 'em and put 'em in bushel crates, then we'd get 'em on the wagons, we'd load 'em up, take 'em up to the house. And then maybe you'd spend some time sorting them later on, but my dad used to put 45, 50 bushel of potatoes on the hayrack and bring 'em to town, and oh, let's say, in four or five hours the people would all buy it, and that was it. One day he would go to LaCrosse, and one day he'd come to Wanatah here. And they just bought 'em. We did the same thing with cabbage. That's about the only two things I think we sold like that. But everything that you really ate, you raised right there. The Depression really, I guess, didn't hurt us quite that bad. I remember that dad bought the second farm right during the worst Depression, and he gave Twenty Dollars an acre for it. And, of course, we boys were all young and ambitious so it was no big problem to take care of it. And he was lucky at that time because that was just before so many of the banks went under and each one of us, each one of us boys had a little money saved up from working, and this was in the bank, and dad took—maybe it was only a Hundred Dollars that we had in there, something like that—and dad drew this all out, and all of his money out and paid for this farm.

Interviewer: Which was near your own farm today?

Mr. Welkie: Yeah. Yeah. And just like I mentioned before that we had one of the newest houses in the neighborhood and I couldn't remember when my dad hauled a load of hogs away to the market. They had to take 'em over to Kouts; and this paid for the complete house, the labor, materials, the plastering, and everything. So that's been a good many years ago. Like I say it was 1919.

Interviewer: I do want to know about—Do you remember your uncle's ice cream shop at all?

Mr. Welkie: Oh, yes. In fact, where did we get out of there? Oh, sure, because that was one of the main places to come to town on Saturday night. To get an ice cream cone or buy a bar of candy or something. How much stuff do we have from home from Jocko's old store? Not much is there?

Mr. Welkie 2: No. (Indecipherable)

Mr. Welkie: That we finally got from that old store. Dad, Otto—he was better known as Jocko—that's where he made all of his money, I guess, was right in that store. But he was pretty conservative, long hours, and well, just like anything else, you want to stick with it, I guess you stay with the job and you make money.

Interviewer: Where was it located?

Mr. Welkie: Right over there where—on the other street over there. Ah, let's see, what that old antique shop's in there now?

Interviewer: I don't know the name of it. I know what you're talking about.

Mr. Welkie: Right next to the Wiesjohn (sp?) Drug Store. It's just like when we bought this building here. They tell me—well I can remember when there was a dimestore in this building. There used to be a blacksmith shop right in the back end of this building, too. And then there used to be—there was double doors right out, straight out through here, and this, at one time, was the car salesman room, where you drive in one car. You know they had one car to sell. Well, this is the place they'd store it. They'd drive it right through the door and bring it in here. This is one of the older buildings in town which we bought in 1964 or something like that, I think it was, '63 or '64, and remodeled it and we've been here ever since. And then the oddest thing is some of the materials that we've seen in the wall were from the Baskey & Mitzler Lumber Yard, and I never even heard of them. I knew the name, but as far as the lumberyard was concerned, I never knew them.

Interviewer: Has the layout of the town changed that much?

Mr. Welkie: I would say not really that much. We are in a bind right now. If we had more area to expand, why there would be no problem in selling lots. Of course, when the Legion bought this addition out here, there was two other individuals and I—we were going to buy that and subdivide it, though we finally decided it as a little bit too much money and too much of a risk and so we didn't do it. But the Legion bought 40 acres out here and subdivided that, and I guess it was in about three or four years that all the lots were sold, that they wanted to sell. The same thing would happen now if they were available, the lots were available, that the—there was no telling what the population growth could be.

Interviewer: When you were growing up, where was the residential area?

Mr. Welkie: Just like it is now, you might say. This was the town square right in here. And, of course, I can remember when right across the street over here, we used to say there was an old bootlegger over there, and he did--he'd actually boot…

(Side one of tape ends.)

(Side two of tape begins.)

Mr. Welkie: I can remember when he used to bootleg, and I was in there once just to see what it was, maybe I bought a little, I don't remember, but anyway it was…

Interviewer: Do you remember what the inside looked like?

Or was the shop straight out of his home?

Mr. Welkie: Yeah. It was about as filthy a place as you ever could run into. He was as black as it could be, Dick's—Dick's hatband. But anyway, he was selling whiskey on the side. I guess that's all I ever known him to do, the only thing I ever knew him to do. And, of course, later on, why, this REMC went in there then.

Interviewer: That's the Rural Electrification…?

Mr. Welkie: Rural Electrification Membership Corporation.

Interviewer: Have any big industries ever been there?

Mr. Welkie: Well, the only ones are Kaiser Aluminum and Wickes. A number of years ago, I will say, when I was younger, 15 years ago or so, an individual named Robert Spare (sp?) and I, we were—well, I got to say this, Bob died of a heart attack, sorry to say. I guess probably if he'd have been living we'd of probably went places because we had ideas for the town. We started the housing thing, building houses and trying to sell them, and we worked with different factories that wanted to locate in this area. But, of course, this area does have a water problem, and the water table is so high that we needed something and, in fact, in 1964, '64, yeah, it was '64. When I met—of course, I'm not, we don't live right in town so I'm outside of the city limits—that's when we started working to get water and get the town incorporated and it started right here in my office. And I worked with all the people from Clyde Williams to getting the initial surveys made around here.

Interviewer: When was the town incorporated then?

Mr. Welkie: 1965, I think it was. Right now, I understand we've got a grant that if we will do something about it to put water in, but since I'm outside the corporate limits, I don't go to these meetings.

Interviewer: Why would you need to put water in if the water level is so high?

Mr. Welkie: The impurities.

Interviewer: How did people cope with the high water level before when they didn't have all this technology?

Mr. Welkie: Well, actually it was just here to stay and they'd wait till it'd get to—go away down the river and forget about it. They used to fish right out here and everything else. Used to go out and spearfish out in the fields.

Interviewer: What'd they catch?

Mr. Welkie: Carp mostly. Yeah. These would just come right up from the river and so forth. Why it'd be nothing to see guys out there with their spears and a boat and spear the carp right in the field.

Interviewer: Now these were the marsh hay fields?

Mr. Welkie: Yeah. Yeah. Of course, then the water'd go down; there you'd be. That's why this is a good rich community really otherwise.

Interviewer: What are the advantages of being incorporated?

Mr. Welkie: Well, we were hoping to get sanitation. This was our biggest problem. The water is so hard in this town that most everybody needs a water softener, plus the fact that there's septic tanks and so forth. And one of these days, we might have an epidemic and the government would say, "You must

put water in within so many months," and then you’d have to take whatever they’d shove it down your throat. If you can do it before they do these things, it’s so much better. The advantage really was there was no place to get rid of the, let’s say, garbage and trash in town. And of course, now they pick it up twice a week, and we do have a little police protection. Previous to that time, when—of course, I’m an avid Lion’s Club individual, as you can probably see by this. Whenever there was anything that should be done in the town, why they’d look at the Lion’s Club, and we did it. We did many things. And I can remember just like when the school had no place for the school to play baseball. So we went out here and that’s why we bought this park out here to start with. And then we a—the Lion’s Club bought the park. Then we sold off lots and had enough left to have the park. We made the baseball field. I’ll never forget that. Of course, baseball fields all needed clay; and so right over in Valparaiso there was a hill being removed, and I can’t remember, right close to where the Anderson Company is in Valpo now, and they told—someone got wind of it if we would have enough trucks in there to haul this clay out, they would load it for us and everything with a crane and we hauled it out here and made our ball diamond. And that’s something the Lion’s Club really did. And, of course, we do have our park out here now, which is an addition to the town. It’s been there for 1953, or ’51. ’53 or ’54. And we’re kind of proud of it. Yeah, we’re proud of it. As far as the Lion’s is concerned, probably you don’t know it, I was—just finished up a term as a district governor last July 1st, except they still keep me busy two, three nights a week on Lion’s stuff. We’ve enjoyed it. We’ve been on trips to international conventions and so forth, Mexico, Tokyo, things like that, and we’ve enjoyed this. We’re planning on going back to Tokyo this summer probably if things work out right. I have a collection of about 800 rings. You see some of them there—800 Lion’s Club pins from all over the world, and these actually you only get by meeting people, and meeting people from different countries. And some of the experiences we’ve ran into in foreign countries are quite odd. Touring Tokyo or Japan, I should say. How lucky we are that we live in this country. At that time. This was in 1969 we was in Tokyo, and we toured Japan for a week prior to that. That’s why we always say how lucky we are to be right here.

Interviewer: What do you consider—do you sound like a one-man Chamber of Commerce? How do you sell Wanatah?

Mr. Welkie: How would I?

Interviewer: Yeah, to prospective people. Why have you stayed here all your life?

Mr. Welkie: Well, there probably is a little more to it than a lot of people have ever known. I was born and raised here. As I told you before, I was in World War II. I was, somehow this probably sounds (indecipherable). Buton, Corregidor. You’ve probably read all about these things. Well, we were known as the Defenders of Buton. And I prayed many, many night, if the Lord would just leave me come back all in one piece, I’d do everything for this town that I possibly could. And that’s why I stayed here and I was lucky. The only thing I got out of it was malaria, and I guess that’s why I’m staying here.

Interviewer: It seems like a very nice community.

Mr. Welkie: Well, this community is, as you probably have noticed—well, you probably didn’t notice it as much as we have—originally a German settlement. And during World War II, why the government looked and watched this community very, very strong because they thought there was some connection between here and the old country, but there never was. There never was.

Interviewer: What did they do? Have an agent right in town or something?

Mr. Welkie: They were in and around here all the time. Yes. But the people were very patriotic, and I can truthfully say from all of those that I knew, and I probably knew more people at that time that lived in this area than I do today, because they come and go so quickly. They were very, very patriotic people. And I’m proud of them. This is a good, clean little town. If you’ve driven around enough, you’ll find everybody has taken a lot of pride in it. I can only possibly think of one or two places that should be torn down, just like we got an old church back here that should be torn down, but well, there’s sentiment behind it and they have problems. Well, you don’t want to raise up too much trouble in the community, so I guess we could have it taken out of there if we put a little pressure on ‘em the way we do. The state fire marshal has been down here and condemned it and told him he had to fix it up or tear it down, and he won’t do either one. So there we sit. That’s the worst, the largest eyesore we have in the town. ‘Cause you know this is a farming community; and of course, now it is getting away from that. There are more younger people moving into this town every week, coming and going. If we had rentals, there would--there’s people in there that we would find a place for ‘em. And of course, this is naturally low.

Interviewer: You said that it’s growing away from agricultural?

Mr. Welkie: Well, the residents, the residents are all right. Because it used to be retired farmers. They lived on a farm, and then when they retired, they moved to town, their children took over the farms and then this is fast leaving because it seems like the older people are staying right where they were and the younger people are building houses right close to them, so possibly there is more people work away from here than they are locally right now. I still like it. Of course, my wife is from Lexington, Kentucky, so this is…

Interviewer: I wanted to ask you about—you said this was a German community? Were there very many ethnic activities?

Mr. Welkie: No.

Interviewer: I thought maybe there’d be.

Mr. Welkie: No, no.

Interviewer: There wasn’t?

Mr. Welkie: Never. I was in on one when we started the volunteer fire department, when they incorporated the volunteer fire department. That was in 1954. I’m sure it was 1954. Yeah. And that’s came a long ways. We are an independent volunteer fire department. We owned all of our own equipment, and the community leases the equipment from us. The town does, the township,

Clinton Township leases fire protection from us and some of Oregon Township. They pay us for their protection.

Interviewer: Wow, it sounds like the mafia.

Mr. Welkie: Well, you might call it that, but yet we banded together with two townships to build the building to put the fire trucks in, and we just kept on going that way.

Interviewer: Now, for things like hospital service, you have to go into…

Mr. Welkie: Valpo.

Interviewer: Valpo?

Mr. Welkie: Yeah. And, of course, we're just working or getting through with the dissolution of a profit organization to get a doctor in town who just—I was working with the attorney last week on that, and that was a problem, a long, long haul for about 1971 we started looking for a doctor, and we finally got one that would stay. We had one that got killed for us, two of them couldn't pass the state bar exam, and one of 'em, well, he just wasn't too up and up. He wasn't too trust worthy.

Interviewer: Have you always had doctors, though? When you were growing up, was there a doctor?

Mr. Welkie: Oh, yes. There was probably two doctors in town at one time. I can remember old Doc Mayfield used to live right over there in a house, and, of course, we ah—I was born—well, we were raised closer to LaCrosse, so we went to old Doctor Oaks. You probably heard of Doctor Oaks in Hannah. His father was in LaCrosse, and we were only about, oh four miles from LaCrosse. Even though we did live in Cass Township, we went to the doctor in LaCrosse. Of course, my—was it my brother worked for somebody who had something to do with Doc Oaks, so that's the reason why we went to Doctor Oaks. Yeah.

Interviewer: I think that's it. I just wanted to sort of overview the interview.

Mr. Welkie: Yeah. If you have any questions, don't be afraid to ask.

Interviewer: Okay. I'll probably come back sometime. I want to thank you for the…

(Tape ends abruptly.)