

AN INTERVIEW
with

LATHROP E. SMITH

Twenty-five Years of Community Participation
1946 - 1971

FARM BUREAU
UPPER MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
COUNTY COUNCIL
BOARD OF EDUCATION
SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

Interviewer

HELEN M. SCHARF

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FOREWORD

The interview with Lathrop Smith took place in August, 1971, and was augmented some six weeks later by a tape on which Lathrop recorded more of his thoughts on his experiences in Montgomery County.

Shortly afterward, on December 26, 1971, Lathrop died very suddenly while visiting in Montgomery County before he had the opportunity to review and edit the transcript of his tape recordings. This transcript, therefore, is presented almost in its entirety, and in the colloquial style he used in informal conversation.

Biographical notes on: LATHROP EMBURY SMITH

Birthplace and date: New York City, April 22, 1902 (Died December 26, 1971)

Residence: Moved to Tryon, N.C., 1907 and to Washington, D.C., 1926 and to Montgomery County, Maryland in 1935
Owned and operated a farm in Travilah, Montgomery County until 1956

Married: Marian Brooks Phelps (formerly of Lorrain County, Ohio) 1935

Education: Cornell University 1921-22
Georgetown University 1927-1932, graduated with BFS degree
(Bachelor of Foreign Service)

Military Service: Enlisted in Cavalry as reservist in 1928
Commissioned Second Lieutenant of Cavalry 1930
Active Duty with Civilian Conservation Corps 1935-1938 and 1939
Active Duty as Captain of Cavalry with Army 1941-1946
Three years assignment with General Staff, War Dept. 1941-44
Discharged as Colonel in Armored Division

Community Activities:

Organizations

Montgomery County Farm Bureau, Director 1947, President 1949
Rock Creek Watershed Association 1956 to 1971, President 1956
Montgomery County Citizens Planning Association, Board of Governors
Montgomery County Committee for Fair Representation
Committee on Human Resources, Washington Center for Metropolitan Studies
Montgomery County Committee for Democratic Practices
Rockville Unitarian Church, Board of Trustees, three years
Wilderness Society
Natural Resources Council of Maine

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Official Agencies and Boards

Rural Advisory Committee to first Montgomery County Council, Chairman '49-'50
Upper Montgomery County Planning Commission, appointed first Chairman, and remained a member until 1954
Montgomery County Council, elected from Third District, 1950-'54, elected President for 1951-52
Board of Supervisors of Montgomery Soil Conservation District, appointed in 1950, and reappointed to sixth term in 1971, served as chairman
Montgomery County Board of Education, elected for four year term, 1954-'58 served as President 1957-
Montgomery County Forestry Board 1953 to 1971

*

Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts 1960-'66, Sec'y-Treas.
President 1960-'69
National Association of Soil Conservation Districts, Committee on Rural-Urban Affairs
Soil Conservation Society of America (professional) Committee on Urban-Suburban Conservation Problems

there in March of 1970. We were married on September 1945, the first to be exact. LWV MEMORIAL FUND - ORAL HISTORY

Scharf: Then, we could say that Lathrop E. Smith was a resident in Montgomery County for more than 30 years.

Scharf: Mr. Lathrop Smith, a long-time resident of Montgomery County is now living in Maine. I am Helen Scharf and am conducting this interview on August 14, 1971 at the home of Lathrop and Marian Smith, his wife, in Dutch Neck, Waldoboro, Maine. Lathrop, I came across an undated clipping from the Washington Daily News. It's apparently about one of your candidacies for public office and contains this quote, "Mr. Smith is a maverick gentleman-farmer and sometime lawyer and army engineer." Do you have any comments about that?

SMITH: Yes, I think it is one hundred percent wrong. I'm not an engineer; I'm not a lawyer; and I hope I'm not too much of a maverick.

Scharf: Well, this is a very good way to launch into a few biographical details. I thought you would be amused at the description of you as a gentleman-farmer. I recall meeting you once at a public budget hearing, and you were not attired in clothes you would wear in a drawing room. You were in boots and a plaid shirt.

SMITH: Well, Helen, actually this term "gentleman farmer" is generally one of opprobrium. Farmers take this in a not too complimentary way. Actually, I don't mind because it just means that people think you know your own mind and are innocent of the politics of the situation, and said, "Why sure!" abc's or something of that sort. But certainly I'm... Most farmers want to be known as quote dirt farmers unquote, but Marian and I are both... have come from rural backgrounds. Although born in New York City, I was brought up in a little town in western North Carolina where we lived literally in the woods, and Marian, of course, was born on a farm in Northern Ohio. So, when we were married, we began to think about what kind of a life did we want to have, and we ended up living on a farm in Montgomery County, which suited us very well. Still suits us.

Scharf: What was the date when you purchased that farm in Montgomery County?

SMITH: Marian actually purchased the farm 'cause she was the one who had the job at that time. This was in 1934, December 1934. She moved her family "downstate" who wanted services beyond the ability of the farmers to pay. ... a sizeable complaint, or was there some other reason for it?

there in March of 1935. We were married in September 1935, the 21st to be exact. I'd like to record that to show that I remember my anniversary date.

Scharf Then, we could say that you've been active in Montgomery County for more than 30 years.

SMITH Oh yes.

Scharf More than 35 years, perhaps. But, when did you really first become involved? I recall that you had many community interests, just an endless history of them.

SMITH Well, as an active farmer in Montgomery County, I eventually became acquainted with the merchants and the neighbors, and also farm organization people. It's natural and logical that you do so. My first contacts along those lines were rather casual ones, when some of the neighbors came around and encouraged us to join the county Farm Bureau, which we did shortly after. And, not long after that, we went to one of their annual meetings. I think this was along about '46, somewhere along there, and they were having quite a time getting nominees for the Board of Directors. Somebody asked me if I would be interested in the Board of Directors. Well, I was completely naive and innocent of the politics of the situation, and said, "Why sure!" Well, I ended up being a director, and then we went to the annual meeting and they were in a hassle to get a president. Actually, the various people that were nominated, got up and refused for various reasons. So I, like a darn fool, jumped up and said, "Listen folks, this is serious business. Now, if you want a good organization, then you've got to support this." And guess who got elected president of the Farm Bureau?

Scharf Lathrop Smith, I suppose.

SMITH Well, that's actually the way it happened.

Scharf I recall that the Farm Bureau in the '40s started appearing at public budget hearings, the budget of the county government, held at that time by the County Commissioners. I also remember that very often the Farm Bureau representatives made references to the "down-county newcomers" who wanted services beyond the ability of the farmers to pay. Was this a sincere complaint, or was there some other reason for it?

SMITH It's the usual complaint, but it's based more on a failure to understand what's going on, what's happening to society, what's happened to the economics of the situation. Farmers are unfortunate in that they're the last people to realize what's going on, and they, of course, have a reputation of conservatism. But, too often, it's that they just don't know what's going on. And they are being told constantly by their leaders that they are the victims of change, and, in truth, I guess they are to a degree. But, at the same time, they ought to realize that, first of all, they are a part of society just like other groups. They are not a thing apart. This is very hard to get across to rural people sometimes.

Scharf Who were some of the leaders in the Farm Bureau? ... Lathrop, rather than answer that question, we ought to go back a minute. There seems to be a time discrepancy. You said you moved to the farm in '35 and became interested in the Farm Bureau, became members, and then you were president in 19 forty-when? 1949?

SMITH Eight or nine. I've forgotten exactly when.

Scharf Well, there's a lag of over a dozen years. What happened in that interim period - before you really got active in the Farm Bureau?

SMITH I don't know. It's a little hazy in my recollection now.

Scharf Let's just stop a minute. Tell me where you live. We never did identify the location of your farm in Montgomery County.

SMITH We lived on a 260 acre tract which had been an old run-down farm for years and years and years. It was located one mile northwest of the crossroads of Travilah.

Scharf Was there any time in that period of 1935 to '46 when you were involved in the military service outside of the county, or were you right there in the county all during that time?

SMITH I was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant of Cavalry Reserve on March 7th, 1930. I had had an interest in military affairs off and on, and

I went to a couple of camps. But, I didn't go into the army for active duty until, I think it was some time in ... No, I beg your pardon. I did to on duty as a military officer with the COC in 1935 (December) and I served for

three and a half years in the Civilian Conservation Corps in three different assignments, in Maryland, in Virginia, and finally out in New Mexico. Of course, that gave me some military service.

Scharf Then at the close of the second World War, your military involvement was finished and perhaps this is the reason the community activities heated up about this time?

SMITH Well, I don't really know, Helen, how or why these things develop the way they do. I think they just sort of happen. But, I was released from active duty in World War II in July of 1946 with the rank of Colonel of the Army and I had served for three and a half years with the War Department General Staff during that period. I don't know if this contributed except that it gives you certain ... It gives you the idea that things can be done. You learn to do things ; you learn to organize people and you get some ideas about leadership ... and you know these pay off in many ways, in practically every avenue of pursuit. If you know how to get things done, somebody'll give you a job. And I found this to be true.

Scharf What was the reason for the West Montgomery County Civic Association's organization in the first place?

SMITH The community was beginning to feel the effects of growth. People were coming out from the District of Columbia, buying places in the country and building houses out there and they began to develop community interests of one sort or another. It's unfortunate, it always seemed to me, that citizens associations are usually based on selfish interests, either positive or negative. They're either for something or against something and there are many more reasons people should organize. However, this situation developed where I went to a meeting one evening over in Darnestown. I was sitting there talking to my neighbor, Drew Pearson, and we were discussing the fact that we needed some road signs - that deliverymen came out with machinery and what-not and couldn't find your property. So I just said

off-hand that I was gonna put up a couple of signs on our road, and didn't think any more about it. Well, the outcome of all that was the Association undertook a project of putting up road signs in that area and they organized a committee and I was appointed to that committee. We didn't get very far for a while, but the next year they made me chairman of the committee and in a few weeks I had the whole community at each other's throats, unintentionally, of course. But people who came out there like Mike McConihe, for instance, who interpreted something he saw in his deed and named his road out there, and of course, when we made a historical study of the old names, and we were in favor of keeping old names where applicable, why this was sometimes not in keeping with the ideas other people had. However, one of the interesting things that happened was that this little organization began to grow as it became needed in the area. I hadn't taken any particular part in it except that I had a neighbor, Thomas Kelly, who was a member of the County Council. And, (Tom was a wonderful fellow) and I came home one evening to find out that he had called the house to try and persuade me to be a candidate for Secretary-Treasurer of the citizen's association. I immediately told my wife that this was something for which I had neither taste nor talent, and she said, "Well, Tom says he'll run for president if you'll run for secretary-treasurer." I still was unconvinced and Marian said to me, "Well, all you have to do is do what Tom tells you and I'll see that you do it," and that actually is what got me started in all this political...

Scharf Let's come back now to the Farm Bureau. Who were some of the leaders in the Farm Bureau at the time you became involved?

SMITH Of the leaders of the rural community, I think you would have to name first O.W. Anderson, who was the county agent. He was the acknowledged leader of the rural people. There were many others such as Brooke Lee, Watt Farmer, and a long list, the names escape me at the moment.

They were organized in the Upper Montgomery County Farmers Club, an organization to which I was invited on a number of occasions, but which to me seemed to be more concerned with the rising taxes and the problem of milk production than anything else. These problems seemed to obscure everything else.

Scharf Lathrop, was this organization of upper Montgomery County farmers separate and distinct from the Farm Bureau?

SMITH Yes, it was. There had been organized, something over a hundred years ago, in the Sandy Spring area, a farm organization (I've forgotten at the moment what they called it). This was an old and distinguished organization, and they used to start each meeting by reading the minutes of 100 years ago, which was very interesting because it gave the prices of labor, and farm costs and the prices gotten for farm products. And this organization had this off-shoot of the Upper Montgomery County farmers organization which collected all the more-or-less successful farmers that dominated the agricultural scene in Montgomery County. Mr. Lee, of course, was a leader, and Mr. Anderson was his right bower, and these people were powerful people. I heard sometime, someone tell just how many hundreds of acres of land they controlled in Montgomery County.

Scharf You suggest, then, that this was a very effective organization of perhaps some self-interest. Was that right?

SMITH Well, I think it was effective in the sense that these people got together and talked about their own particular ideas and interests and they weren't too receptive to new ideas or any understanding of what was actually happening in Montgomery County. These were wealthy landowners, to be frank about it. They owned a lot of land which encompassed the direction of growth and development in Montgomery County.

Scharf Was the Farm Bureau politically allied in any way in the organization?

SMITH Oh yes.

Scharf Were they effective?

SMITH Yes, both. They were politically allied and politically effective.

You may remember that before the Charter, Montgomery County had a commissioner form of government and there were three commissioners from the so-called rural area. The growing areas of Montgomery County were Bethesda and Silver Spring. They had only two commissioners. So the vote was in the upper county and, of course, what they did was they just refused to ... they held back progress and they held back the development until, as always happens, the dam breaks, and there's a change.

Scharf You're suggesting that these three up-county commissioners reflected the attitude of the people and they had control of the vote on the Board of Commissioners, so they ...

SMITH Well, they just resisted the change and the progress. I think they're perfectly decent people. They just didn't understand and they were trying to translated into political action what they felt the sentiment of their friends and neighbors to be.

Scharf What specifically was the program of the Farm Bureau at the time you were in office there?

SMITH You embarrass me a little bit, because I haven't really thought about what the program was.

Scharf Well what was the purpose?

SMITH The purpose was to preserve the status quo and to preserve the political power of those persons who lived in the rural area. And, of course, this was totally by the Charter.

Scharf You are not saying that this was in their by-laws or constitution ..

SMITH Oh no.

Scharf Basically, in effect, whis is what the program...

SMITH Well, yes, that was the practical effect. Actually the program, and even as a past president of the Farm Bureau for a few months, I'm embarrassed that I can't elucidate on any program which they should have had, of course. But what I think basically they were trying to do, was they were

trying to protect the interest of the agricultural area in the county, trying to keep taxes down and let land values rise and yet keep taxes down which is a nice trick if you can do it. But, they were dominated by people who were very acute politicians. Of course Brooke Lee is one that comes to mind but he wasn't the only one. There were a number of these individuals and they had control of a large area of land which was right in the path of development. They were trying to keep the cost down and maintain the land at the same time they wanted the value to increase.

Scharf Was there anything more you wanted to say about the Farm Bureau?

SMITH Well, looking over some of the old clippings in my records here, I'm somewhat embarrassed at some of the quotes of which I am guilty. For instance, here it says, "Farmers Deny Planning Need in Montgomery County." I was a spokesman for the Farm Bureau. Frederick Lee was the Council President in the chair at the time and it quotes me here as saying "Lathrop Smith who speaks for the county Farm Bureau expressed concern over the quote "intemperate haste" which he said the Council has shown and the blank check aspect of the proposed ordinance. After I had had some experience on both sides of the fence, I realized how stupid a comment that was. But that's just the sort of thing people say if they don't watch themselves when they get up in public.

Scharf Well, it is rather amusing because the next thing I wanted to ask you about was your experience and service on the Upper Montgomery County Planning Commission. As I recall, you were appointed to a rural advisory committee. When was that, and by whom, and what was the purpose?

SMITH To answer your question, I have here in my hand the resolution by the County Council which set up the Rural Advisory Committee. As a direct result of this hearing that I just quoted from a few moments ago, the County Council in its wisdom realized that planning was essential in the upper county. So they organized a temporary Rural Advisory Committee. This was done on February the 21st, 1950. And I recall that over at the home of Tom Kelly, Tom

told me that the Council wanted to know if I would accept the chairmanship of that, and also would draft a list of names of individuals who would serve on this Rural Advisory Committee. If I may read from this (the formal charge to the committee) -- it says "If the Rural Advisory Committee finds a need exists for any of the foregoing, then whether such needs should be met through the extension of the Montgomery County jurisdiction of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, or through regulations by an elected County Council, and following the preparation and submission of such regulations by an elected County Council, and following the preparation and submission of such regulation by an unpaid planning commission, composed of the residents of the area affected, this would be under the, or pursuant to, the requirements of Article 66-B of the Maryland Code." Now it's important to realize that the planning (we have in Montgomery County) is done under the authority of the M-NCPPCommission, which is a creature of the state legislature, and is not, as most planning commissions are in the state of Maryland, organized pursuant to Article 66-B of the Maryland Code. I always thought that the relationship between the local government and the planning commissions under Article 66-B was a very healthy one; and it serves in rather distinct contrast between the experience of the MNCPPC.

Scharf Lathrop, was this in essence what came out of the Advisory Committee, as a recommendation that you organize such a body under 66-B?

SMITH Yes, yes it was. I have here in my hand a report dated May 26, 1950 which is the report of the Rural Advisory Committee. I might mention that the individuals who served on this committee were selected by the County Council. They included the newspaper editor of the Montgomery County Sentinel, Malcolm White, a farmer; Allie Messer, a farmer; Marshall Davis, a farmer; Kenneth Windham, a farmer; Basil Mobley, a farmer; Wilson Poole, a farmer; William Fulks, a farmer; Mr. Leroy McCaffrey, mayor of Washington Grove; and myself as chairman. Tom Kelley was the liaison between the Council and this

group. It was a very good group, and essentially, they recommended that, and I quote, "It is the unanimous opinion of this committee that there does exist in upper Montgomery County a definite need for planning. The committee finds there is a need for minimum standards for structural safety for electrical and plumbing installations in theatres, etc. It is the recommendation of this committee that this be met through the establishment of an unpaid planning commission, this commission to be composed of the residents of the area."

This is under Article 66-B of the code of Maryland. I found that this was a very sound report. It went on to say that "changes in land use should take place gradually as demand or necessity requires. Control is necessary to insure orderly growth and development." These are facts that most people recognize.

Scharf Was there anything happening at this time that made these people aware of an immediate need for some control?

SMITH We had meetings over a period of some three or four months and we discussed many problems and interviewed many people, and my recollection is that it was perfectly to all concerned (this was a unanimous report) that things were happening that had to be brought under control...land development, subdivisions, the Sanitary Commission's sewers, and building permits. (At that time it was not necessary to have building permits up-county.) And there were just many reasons -- it was perfectly obvious to all concerned that this was a necessary move.

Scharf Was the Federal government making inroads at that time? Was that when NIH was built? Or did it come later?

SMITH No, the Federal government program of building dispersal, as a result of which the AEC was built up in Germantown, came a little later, but this tended to emphasize that when you make a land-use change of that magnitude, you realize that what happens is that people move to the neighborhood, -- the people who are employed there have to have a place to shop; they have to have a place to live, to be entertained, and these are all factors that the expert planner takes into consideration. The more I learned about this, the more sense

it made to me.

Scharf You became a member of that Upper Montgomery County Planning Commission when it was set up. Is that right?

SMITH That's right.

Scharf Who appointed you?

SMITH The County Council appointed me. I was designated as its first chairman.

The County Council, after receiving this Advisory Committee Report, did in fact organize and set up this Upper Montgomery County Planning Commission in accordance with the recommendations of the report. They selected certain individuals to serve on this commission. Mr. Marshall Davis was designated Vice-Chairman; Mr. Thomas C. Kelly of Darnestown, Mr. Kenneth Windham of the Woodfield or Damascus neighborhood, and Mr. Frederick Gutheim of Dickerson area were appointed commissioners.

Scharf What date was that?

SMITH That was 19 .

Scharf Was this appointment by the first Council?

SMITH Yes. The first County Council served in '48 and '49. This was immediately following that, some time in the early fall -- , I was designated the chairman; Tom Kelly was the liaison, the Council member of the Planning Commission, which was one of the features that Article 66-B requires, and I think, a very sound requirement.

Scharf Was any other agency in the county represented on that commission?

SMITH No. By selecting these individuals, they tried to take individuals they thought understood the problem and could serve the county to advantage.

Scharf Lathrop, were those people of fairly similar backgrounds in training and experience, or were they pretty different, one from the other?

SMITH Well, I think they were different. For instance, Tom Kelly, as you know was a member of the County Council at the time and had been a successful lawyer for a number of years. Frederick Gutheim was a trained planner and a

planning consultant. Kenneth Windham was a successful farmer. Marshall Davis was a farmer, but at the same time he ran an apartment management service downtown. And, of course, I don't know what you'd call me. I'd done some farming, and I had very little experience in this other field, but you can learn fast in some of these ...

Scharf That 's that old leadership quality you put your finger on a minute ago. Did these people come to agreement quickly? In other words were they able to work together with some success?

SMITH I think this was largely the basis on which they were selected, which was that they worked very well together. The county also provided some money to finance the staff. We were very fortunate in that. Of course this was the function of the county manager who was the so-called secretary of the staff, and we employed a young planning engineer just out of Harvard. I believe it was Patrick J. Cusick. This was a most fortunate appointment. He was a splendid chap and he assembled a staff consisting of his assistant planner, Harold Taubin and Miss Nancy Setright as junior planner. Harold Taubin went on years later as planner, I think, for Savannah, Georgia, and Nancy Setright married one of our finance people in the Board of Education. They were very competent people and did an excellent job.

Scharf Where did you hold your meetings?

SMITH We held the meetings in the Council chambers.

Scharf Now, I recall that there were a number of citizens advisory groups set up -- about ten in number, right?

SMITH That's right.

Scharf What was the reason for this?

SMITH One of the reasons comes from the experience of a competent staff. They said they had to have certain kinds of information. They also realized that we had to, if we wanted to recommend ordinances or anything of that sort, we had to have the people with us. So they wanted -- For instance, Pat Cusick asked me, "Do you have a Soil Survey of the county?" We did not have a soil survey at the time, but on inquiry, I discovered one was underway, but it had been underway

for some years. So, Mr. Cusick said, "we've got to have a soil survey else we can't do competent planning the county."

Weel, I got in a hassle over that because when the Soil Conservation District (you'll have to come back later to my getting into that particular area of activity), the state Soil Conservation Committee turned down our request to get some additional funds to expedite this soil survey. And I attended a meeting in Montgomery County at which the Governor was present at the time and we got to talking about the need for expediting this soils survey and it was suggested that I go back to the State Soil Conservation Committee to ask them to reconsider this because we knew there were some engineers and technical people in New England who couldn't work during the winter months because of weather conditions. The Soil Conservation Service said if we would pay their board and room, they would loan them to us in Montgomery County. So I went back over with Pat Cusick to the State Soil Conservation Committee and made this appeal and they granted it. Everything was fine until the next meeting of the Montgomery County Soil Committee when I was accused of superarrogation by going over and acting, as I thought, as a County Councilman as well as the Soil Conservation supervisor. Nevertheless, we did get the survey done.

Scharf You were talking, Lathrop, about the Advisory Committees --

SMITH Oh, that's right. Keeping in mind that we had five laymen on this planning commission -- at least four laymen, Fritz Gutheim, of course, was a trained planner. We realized that we were considering ideas that would have to be understood by the people in order to be supported. And it seemed wise that what you did was to project an idea and maybe try to get some discussion on it by the local people, and then an expression of their reactions. This is sound operation on any consideration. We set up these committees; we tried very hard to pick a chairman who understood what he was trying to do, and who was capable of making sure they were discussing all aspects of the particular planning problem. Also, he could bring this discussion to a head and get a decision. You've just no idea

how hard it was.

We selected people, anyone who wanted to become a member of these neighborhood advisory committees was welcome. But we did try to select a chairman and to select a cross section of the people in that particular area. To show you how little this was understood, perhaps I ought to digress just a minute to say that I went with a member of our planning staff (innumerable times) to these meetings and I would introduce the planner and we'd talk generally about this and get him to explain what particular point we had under consideration. For instance, we were talking about maybe what should be a minimum lot size in this particular area. Well, the planner would give all the pros and cons, the reasons you need to have a minimum lot size. Then we would try and get some discussion and, of course, you'd get all kinds of reaction.

People imagine a lot of things that could happen to them that, of course, never do. But, we were only partially successful. This idea that people should be given the opportunity to hear the explanation, to discuss it, and then give us their reaction on which we could make a decision was difficult for reasons I'll never know. But I remember one situation that I went to, one of the more reaction-areas of Montgomery County, and the meeting went fine. We had a man who was a government employee, had a prominent position, and he was chairman. We had one heck of a time getting him to bring his group to any point of making a decision. When they finally got to vote on it, the vote was about even, and I don't remember at the moment, just what the point was that we were discussing. But he finally said, "Well" -- He thought the idea was okay and should be supported, but he couldn't vote for it because his neighbors wouldn't understand it. Well, of course, he defeated the whole purpose that we had in putting him on this committee. And this was the problem we ran up against, despite our best efforts. It's very difficult to get people to understand anything as complex as land use and land-use problems.

Scharf Could you remember some of the projects in which the Upper Montgomery Planning Commission was involved, for which they needed support? Could your be specific?

Tape I, side 2

SMITH Well, the program of work of any planning commission, of course, is to provide for the orderly development of that area. And they do this, as you well know, through certain tools, subdivision regulations, which has to do with breaking up the land into smaller parcels, and zoning regulations, which has to do with the actual use of land. Then, there are other aspects of this, such as safety standards, building inspection and commercial regulations of one sort or another. These are the general over-all objectives. One of the first things we tried to do was to make a study of the land use in the upper county and the road network. This was done and I'm sorry I don't have a copy of that, but I gave it to the League (for its Memorial Library collection).

Scharf Let's just take the land use, the zoning regulation. Was the Upper Montgomery County Planning Commission successful in arriving at some conclusions about appropriate zoning? Did the people support you in what you wanted, in other words?

SMITH We had considerable experience with that in varying ways. Actually, what we did first was the subdivision regulations and we did finally propose an ordinance which was finally adopted by the County Council. Now, when it comes to zoning, I had passed into other fields of endeavor by the time that came along. I just simple remember certain incidents which occurred as we were discussing various aspects of the zoning or land use. You know, it's unfortunate that people have just learned to be against zoning like they are against sin. And, incidentally, the people in Dutch Neck in Maine, are no different than anyone else. They just don't understand the word "zoning". A housewife, or a farmer or a businessman (he does a certain amount of zoning in his own business with practically everything he does) - - zoning is one of the few ways you preserve anything you want. But people interpret this in terms of prohibiting them from doing something they might want to do in the future, therefore they're against it.

I remember talking with the planning engineer from the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission when the Council was considering the subdivision regulations. We had proposed a minimum lot size of 10 acres for agricultural areas on the theory that you couldn't make a living on less than 10 acres in agriculture. This was discussed all over the place and various people for various reasons had various ideas. The planning engineer, when we were talking about the possibility (eventually it was adopted as a two-acre minimum size for the rural agricultural area of the county) said, "Oh, no!" He wasn't in favor of two acres. He said, "actually, it ought to be 10 acres." The response of the County Council was, "Well, if it ought to be 10 acres, why don't we make it 10 acres?" People anticipate the opposition of the public. They're afraid. You know you're going to get opposition from people who don't understand, resistance, and particularly if they have an interest in it that dictates another course of action, you're going to get their opposition. This, of course, is what plagued Montgomery County in their land use problems from the very beginning. I daresay a couple of billions of dollars have been made in real estate in Montgomery County, and the people who make that money are very much opposed to any brake or any opposition or any difficulty being placed on them in any way. I know you're thoroughly familiar with that.

The Upper Montgomery County Planning Commission had the advantage in dealing with an undeveloped area, largely undeveloped. We had excellent, bright, young staff that didn't know what they couldn't do. They believed things should be done and they went ahead on that basis. We also had a number of reasonable people in the area that would listen. The fact that we didn't work totally successfully, easily and quickly, perhaps is just as well. I don't know, I wonder about those things.

Scharf How long did this commission last before it went out of existence?

SMITH It went out of existence when it became perfectly obvious that the sensible

thing to do was to extend the ~~Maryland-National~~ Capital Park and Planning Commission to cover the whole area. You had to do away with one or the other.

Scharf How long were you on the Upper Montgomery County Planning Commission?

SMITH I was on the upper Montgomery County Planning Commission from the date it was organized in 1950 until my Council term expired in 1954.

Scharf And when you were a member of the County Council, you were their liaison person with the Commission throughout your four year term?

SMITH When the Commission was formed by the first County Council, I was made chairman and, of course, when I was elected to the County Council,

Tom Kelly became the chairman on the Commission, and, because he was off the Council, I became the Council - Commission liaison. We just traded positions.

Scharf Looking back on that experience, would you feel that that set-up under Article 66-B, of a lay board appointed by the Council with a staff, would be just as effective as the bi-county agency we have now?

SMITH My own feeling, based on that experience, is that it would be more effective and would come a lot nearer to what people in Montgomery County who have given serious thought to this problem would like to do for planning. There are a great many things about this that I thought were great strengths. Under Article 66-B, and this is the legislation under which most Maryland planning commissions are set up, it's simply required that a member of the local government also be a member of the planning commission, and this, I thought, was a fine feature because it kept both the planning commission and the local government in close touch, each with the other. It was a help to the local government to know what the planning commission had in mind, to make their wishes known to the planning commission and then it was a tremendous help to the planning commission to feel that the local government, the people who possessed the police power through which all planning is affected, understood what they were doing. It is essential that the local government take an interest in planning. You're just wasting your time on a planning commission unless the local government is serious about it, unless they're going to support you, unless they can guide you.

Scharf I raise this question because under our new form of government, the Council-Elected Executive, we have the power of appointment of members to the planning commission in the hands of the Executive, and the feeling is that, perhaps this is another step removed from the Council which has the responsibility for planning and zoning, so it's still a matter of controversy. I was interested to hear what you'd say. Is there anything you wish to add?

SMITH Well, just to go back for a moment. We discussed a little bit about zoning, the zoning accomplishments of the planning commission, and what happened to the commission. I'd like to point out that one of the problems again stems back to the very essence of politics. As you know, Montgomery County has traditionally been dominated by the Democratic party and Democratic political leadership. When the Charter came along, the Republicans were wise and smart enough to cooperate with the Charter. It wasn't a politician who asked me to run for the County Council. It was a member of the Charter Committee who called on me, Allen Gardner, and also, Colonel Ames. They appealed to me to run, and the Republicans went along. Well, by the very nature of things, with my political ideas, I soon became an object of "noblesse oblige" with the Republican party, but when my term was out, I very foolishly acquiesced to the Charter people and ran again. 'Course, the Republicans killed me off without any difficulty. But the fact of the matter is that the Republicans, by disavowing the support of some of the Charter people, lost the election to the Democrats. The Democrats came in strong because they'd been out of power, but they came in with a lot of individuals who were closely allied with the old Democratic leadership and people who were either lawyers or zoning attorneys, or people who had a direct interest in the vested interests of political leadership. So, that's what happened to the Upper Montgomery County Planning Commission. The Democratic group contained at least one or two, two at least, real estate men. --

When this zoning proposal which the Planning Commission had worked up very carefully got to that point, why the farmers appealed to these people (I say the farmers, the political leadership which is manifested in upper Montgomery farmers clubs and Farm Bureaus and some of these others), they began to work on

these real estate interests and when they got around to a zoning proposal, the scuttlebutt was (and I have every reason to believe that it was true), that the real estate member of the County Council sat down one day and took a ruler and drew a line across Montgomery County and said, "We'll make everything above this an agrivultural zone at one-half acre", which is ridiculous because if you make everything a certain zone, you cease to do any planning. Doesn't make sense at all, but that's the way it happened. Now, here again, the two parties come into the picture. Each one thinks that they've got the advantage and they may not have, but they usually do something and they usually have got objectives and ideas, but they do something that doesn't pan out.

Scharf Let's go back to the 1950 campaign which was your first bid for public office. You've already explained how you came to run, and will you tell me what the issues were during this campaign?

SMITH The issues we tried to present were related to good government, mainly because we had two years of almost incredible accomplishment on the part of the County Council, particularly on the part of one or two individuals. I think mainly of Fred Lee, who was the president of the first County Council, and Dorothy Himstead. They literally picked this county up and set it down headed in another direction, and we were so impressed particularly when we began to learn something about this. Our function, it seemed to me, was to maintain this to give the Charter form of government an opportunity to prove itself. I think the four years that I was a member of the County Council, our principal job, I always felt, was to hold things steady and give these reforms a chance to work.

You may remember we got into difficulties over reassessments. Well, this had nothing to do with the Charter form of government, except that it was a more honest form of government. But people, and I'm sympathetic to some like Colonel Ames, whose assessment went sky-high. He actually got to the point one time where he wondered if the Charter had been a good thing. That had nothing to do with the cause. We had operated under a state assessment law

which at the moment was being applied on a long assessment cycle, and during this period we had the Korean War and its accompanying inflation which raised prices 'way up high. Then when they finally got around to assess the lower part of the county, Bethesda and Silver Spring, the amount of assessment was fantastic, it was incredible! Now, the farmers had gotten assessed more often because just from a practical standpoint it was easy to send a few assessors out and check the improvements on farm land. But it was another matter to assess Bethesda, for instance, or Silver Spring. All that the county government was trying to do was make an honest application of the law, but it was a poor assessment law that was at fault.

Scharf Let's return to the subject of the election of the second county council. How did it turn out from the standpoint of party balance?

SMITH It seems to me that two members of the Democratic party were elected, Mrs. Stella Werner and Grover Walker. The other five, George Nesbitt, Harold Hammond, Katherine Lawler, Lewis^{su} Monarch and myself were Republicans. I always felt that this was a very good group of people and I had great respect for the, not that I didn't differ with them in certain cases, and later on I got into difficulties myself because of these differences with some of these people whom I still respect very highly. But I do think if we did anything at all, we held things pretty steady and gave the reforms that had been effected by the first County Council, such as the road code, a chance to work. We introduced building inspection in the upper county and oh, a number of things, many of which escape me at the moment. I'm sure that what we felt was that we wanted to keep things going the way they started.

Scharf Lathrop, would you say that there was very definite leadership in that Council, leadership that depended on one or two individuals such as there was in the first one according to your statement, or was the leadership well distributed?

SMITH Well, when we were elected, the first problem we had was to select our captain. We had a number of members of the Council that all of us thought could do a fairly good job as president. So Mr. Monarch had stated

that he would serve for a year. He was a man of great experience and so it was decided we'd elect one of our members for a year. I had no idea at that time that I would be the next man~~y~~ up, but that's the way it happened.

Scharf Let's run over the roster. You're mentioning names, some of which are completely unfamiliar to the county now, and some that are still very well known.

SMITH Our first president of the second County Council, ^{the} Lewis Monarch, was a tax attorney, and had been with the Department of Justice for a number of years but was at that time in private tax work. Lewis Monarch was a man of tremendous ability and wisdom, I thought. I remember one time, our biggest problem was the number of zoning cases that we had to sit on. I think I figured that I sat on some thirteen hundred zoning cases during my period on the Council. I lived over in the western part of the county and most of these zoning cases were taking place in Silver Spring, so I had to go across county three and four times a week in the evening to sit on these zoning cases - and the Council used to sit there and the proponents would come up with a zoning case and then the opponents would rebut and then the Council would sit there, innocent bystanders while these two factions attempted to talk each other down. So, about two o'clock one morning, Lew Monarch said, "This is ridiculous. I've had enough of this. The Supreme Court never allows me more than thirty minutes to present an important case and there is no reason we should sit here on this." So from that time on they never had more than thirty minutes and it was just as well.

Scharf What was your compensation at the time of the Second Council?

SMITH Compensation, that's right.

Scharf Dollar compensation/

SMITH As I recall, we got a maximum of \$1800, \$20 a meeting, with a limit of \$1800, and I discovered that it ran out in about six months. And the worst of that was that about \$250 was taken out for withholding that I never saw anyhow and so more than half of the year, we just worked for nothing. Now that's all right up to a point, but sometimes when you go to seven or eight

Council meetings in the course of a week, which sometimes happened, to say nothing of the extracurricular activities, responding to citizen associations, PTAs, and what not --

Scharf Let's look at some of the other members of that Council

SMITH Katherine Lawlor was an attorney. She served for several years, two or three years; then she was appointed to the state legislature, and her place was taken by Louis Gravelle. Lou was an attorney. Harold Hammond was a man of some experience. At the time, I believe, he was working for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and I believe he was director of their transportation division. Harold was a specialist in transportation. Then we had George Nesbitt of Silver Spring who was an insurance executive and George was a wonderful person. He had strong liberal leanings in spite of his Republicanism and a lot of experience. He actually served on a planning commission out in Menlo Park, California. He was a great strength in many ways. And then of course, we had Mrs. Werner who had been one of the leaders of the Charter movement, who had worked very hard and was committed to the Charter form of government and these reforms. Grover Walker was a dairy farmer in Gaithersburg and I don't think Grover had had any experience in government but he was a good, staunch Democrat.

Scharf That takes care of everyone except yourself.

SMITH As far as I was concerned, I was probably the most naive and innocent member of the whole business, and certainly the least politically minded or I certainly wouldn't have done many of the things I did, if I'd known anything about politics.

Scharf Let's look at the positive side. What do you think of as your accomplishments or your contributions to that Council?

SMITH Well, I learned an awful lot. When we discussed, I listened to things. One of the earliest things I did was to learn to listen to the League of Women Voters and I remember Helen Smith and Marie Bennett and Elizabeth French and Helen Scharf and a number of people like that. I discovered that it paid

to listen to them because the League was strong where I was weak. They gave a great deal of study and consideration to many of the subjects that came up and they always had something to say about it. I think that one of the weakest things that Council members have is when they try to inject their own private limited experience into many of the ideas that come before the Council.

Scharf Lathrop, you certainly gained the support and favor of those people who were interested in our public school system in Montgomery County, as later events were to prove. Was there a position you took on the Council that aided and abetted the --

SMITH Well, I gravitated into a position of fairly liberal approach to the budgetary matters simply because it seemed to me these needs were demonstrated or justified. I also was equally unhappy with the method of arriving at the budget. It seemed to me that too often the Council just got together and decided budgetary matters on the basis of what one person was willing to do. If you got four members of the Council that wanted to take a certain figure or to cut a request to a certain amount, that happened. And there was seldom any real justification except to resist inflating the tax rate. One of things that got me in trouble with my associates was the fact I thought they didn't give proper consideration to many of these items, where I thought the request was justified.

Scharf I would like to ask a question, just going back a bit. What did you think about the relationship between the county manager and the County Council? Was it a satisfactory one? Was it working out as had been anticipated when the Council-Manager form of government was chosen?

SMITH Yes, I think so. It was a relatively new idea, and it had only been a few years since that method of government had been originated. But we first had Irving McNayr, who was a mild-mannered and good man. I thought he knew a lot about government. We got into difficulties later when selecting managers. I didn't agree with the final selection of one of the individuals we hired as a manager, and I turned out to be justified later on. Yes, that worked all right.

The point I want to make, though, is that I have always felt that

the trouble with the Council-Manager form of government is that the Manager is a professional. He has ideas as to how government should be run. He's inclined to weigh these things in terms of right and wrong in needs and so forth, whereas the members of the Council reflect the pressures from their neighbors and their friends and they play ducks and drakes with the manager's recommendations. One of the weaknesses I felt that the Council had was that the County Councils that we had were passive organizations. Instead of providing the kind of leadership that the burgeoning community needed, they simply reacted to the leadership that came from other sources. The strongest leadership in Montgomery County, with the exception of the Charter epoch, came from the real estate industry, and so the Council just reacted to this. And I think this was a weakness, and I voted for the County Executive and one of the reasons I did was that (I was naive there again in thinking that this would give me a chance to listen to these individuals present their ideas and then I could make a choice). Well, as it so happened this last election (1970), I didn't hear a word of planning or ideas or constructive suggestions on the part of either one of the Executive candidates. So I lost out on that deal too.

Scharf I don't know whether you had the opportunity to follow the course of events in Montgomery County in recent months. If you have, have you any ideas where the leadership is in that Elected Executive-Council form of government at the present time?

SMITH I think there's potential leadership, but I'm afraid that it's chasing each other around. The same thing's happening in Prince George's County. Sometime earlier, I think I referred to the stupidity of the electorate. I think we really manifested it when it came to the election of our government. I don't know the answer to that. How does a community select strong leadership? The worst thing about Montgomery County's voting problems is that it has a transient voters list. People work for the government; they're reassigned, go somewhere else; they're here today, gone tomorrow. I recall being at the polls recently and two very well-dressed gentlemen that I never say before were standing there

and they had in their hands the candidate lists from both parties. They were obviously downtown executives and they were trying to decide, and they were discussing these things and from the conversation which was impossible not to hear, they made all the wrong decisions. They didn't know the individuals, they didn't know the issues. They just made all the mistakes possible and yet they were obviously educated, capable men. Unless you know what you're voting for, it's a great big gamble and so far, it's proved to be. Of course, many of the present (1971) County Council were people I worked with for many years and I admire and I think they have the possibility of great political strength. But they're handicapped.

Scharf You were referring awhile back to your defeat in your second bid for election to the Council. Perhaps you'd like to talk about that for a minute again, in term of whether it was the limitations of the electorate that defeated you, or whether it was the strategy of the Republican political machine that defeated you.

SMITH I certainly wouldn't want to blame my defeat on anyone else and it was probably a good thing. As a matter of fact, by the time you've been on the Council a couple of years, you find out your friends look at the other side of the street when you walk along, and you're unpopular all the way around; that is if you use your own conscience. But, I realize my voting record was such that the Republican party just couldn't support me. So, there was nothing wrong with what they did. Actually, I got 2500 votes in that primary election, and the Republican candidate who won only got 4000, and those were 2500 Republicans who voted for me in spite of my atrocious "conservative" record. (and I put the conservative in quotes).

So, I just felt differently about it, and I'd had about enough on the Council. I think it's...well, take Grover Walker, he was on the Council for sixteen years. I wonder how much of an advantage he was to himself or to Montgomery County. I don't want to say this at this particular time, but if you want to make your mark, if you want to be effective, you're going to make enemies, you're going to have opposition. If you want to be ineffective, you can stay on

there forever. Look at the members of Congress. Some of the worst members we have, have piled up seniorities of thirty, forty years, and they have no business in government.

Scharf Well, there was a large body of people in our county who were not willing to retire you from public office in 1954 when you lost that election in the primary. Would you tell us something about that?

SMITH What happened originally, before losing that election, I had become interested in educational matters. I had tried to defend educational requests when I was on the Council, and I had spent a lot of time going to PTA meetings and visiting these groups and trying to understand their problems and also to explain the Council's. Actually, a group of my friends approached me about running for the school board, and 'course I didn't think very much of that idea because I was tired and weary at the time. However, they prevailed upon me and I could see that there was some merit and possibly there was an opportunity to do something although my knowledge of educational matters was limited to my own experience, particularly in my early years, with very ineffectual education. I've always felt there was certainly lots of room for improvement. So, they tried to salve my feelings by telling me that they were drafting me and one rather humorous thing there. I had a friend who kept telling everybody, "we're drafting Lathrop, we're drafting Lathrop". So when Lathrop finally ran for the Board of Education, one of the local papers came out with my picture, and the headline underneath the picture was: "Man Defeated For One Job Runs For Another". Well, it was true.

Scharf This election of 1954 was the first time the entire school board was elected, and the last time, because the law was changed to provide for overlapping terms. There was no primary, no run-off. Everybody just ran and there were many candidates for each of the offices. Who was your opponent?

SMITH My opponent - I was most fortunate in my opponent. He was a professional educator who ran a private school, and his name was William Bullis, and I'm surprised he hasn't shot me long before this.

Scharf What were the issues in that election?

SMITH I think the issues were, from our point of view, better schools. Even if we have to spend money, we want to strengthen our educational system.

So, this was a relatively simple issue. But the other issues were to beat off the attacks from the tax people and from the special interests who wanted to warp their own ideas into an educational system. I could never understand why it is that people who know nothing about education are bound and determined to run for the school board. They just want to influence something about which they know very little. That's too often the case.

Scharf Do you recall who the contenders were? We have you opposed to William Bullis in the Third District. I was running unopposed in the Fourth District. I had a next door neighbor who was running at large, Helen Quayle.

SMITH Yes, I remember Mrs. Quayle, although I never knew her well.

Scharf Then there were at least two persons running in the Fifth District, probably more. One was Rose Kramer, and the other one was Leila Edwards. Now, I came across some material, a clipping announcing that you and Rose Kramer had joined forces for the campaign. Immediately, your opponent charged you with creating a political party (in a non-partisan election). Perhaps you'd like to explain why you slated and answer the charge.

SMITH Some of these accusations came along. For whatever reasons, some people identify with certain interests. Mrs. Edwards, as I recall, was a very conservative individual. She'd been allied with a group known as the Minute Women, and I didn't know much about her except I happened to be talking to one of my neighbors, Drew Pearson, about this situation one time, and he knew a great deal about her. The more I found out about this, the more ammunition it gave us to oppose our opposition, because there seemed to be the possibility for some outside interests getting into our educational fight.

But, you ask about Mrs. Kramer. I had known Rose Kramer casually since my early Council days. I had spoken, at her invitation, several times, and I recall when the good school people including Elizabeth French and Marcia Gilmartin and Helen Scharf and a few others got together and wanted to cinch this, they invited us to French's one evening, and Rose and I were both there. We sat and listened to all the persuasive arguments and it seemed to me that our ideas on education were sufficiently similar that it didn't make sense for each of us to go out and set up a political organization, so right off the top of my head, I

said to Rose, "Why don't we run together? We could utilize the same group, the same people and economize on effort and cover a lot of territory." And Rose immediately says, "Sure." Well, of course, this was a gold-mine for me 'cause Rose had a lot of education experience and she's a very wise woman, and capable, and I was just latching on to a very real advantage there. So, my naivete and whatever it was that guided me into making that remark, I was very happy we did. It was rather ridiculous because all we did was just pool our efforts and our good friends who had arranged our candidacy, arranged these opportunities for us and we were able to cover twice the area with half the effort. And it just made sense. It was ridiculous to be charged with a political party. I know that came from the Bethesda Tribune, whose editor or somebody down there was chronically able to come up with ideas like that. They were just silly.

Scharf Did you enjoy that campaign for school board election?

SMITH Yes, I think I did. I found out my opponent was very susceptible to needling; and I found out early in the campaign that all you had to do was to irritate him a little bit, and he'd do very, very foolish things, and be very indiscreet. To illustrate that, one of the early meetings I went to was at a candidates meeting held by the Rock Creek Republican Womens Club at the Meadowside Shelter in Rock Creek Park. A very dear friend, who's now gone, Elizabeth Cole who later served on the Maryland State Board of Education, was chairing the meeting. She started out by saying, "Well now, we have so many candidates here we'll allot three minutes to each one to speak, and please keep to this three minutes, so that everyone has an opportunity. Mr. Bullis, with the name beginning with B was second or third speaker, spent two of his three minutes telling the meeting that he wasn't going to pay any attention to time limitations. He said it wasn't fair to ask a person to come there and not give him a chance to say what was on his mind.

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I don't know how long he talked, but this gave me an idea so, my name beginning with "S", I was 'way down the line. When my name came along, I got up

and stated that I was opposed to Mr. Bullis and that in the first place I wanted to say that he wasn't qualified for the school board, that he was a private educator and had private vested interests, and he has set ideas which I didn't think had any place on a Board of Education. Well, Mr. Bullis took off like a skyrocket and I discovered that all I had to do was to show up to get him to be intemperate and foolish. He did that all through the campaign, and I didn't have to do anything except needle him.

Scharf - So the winners were ...

SMITH Well, I won. As I recall I got 14,000 votes which was pretty good in those days, I don't remember exactly what it was, but something less than 10,000.

Scharf - And the rest of the group, let's say rather quietly allied with Mr. Bullis, Mrs. Edwards and Mrs. Quayle, what happened to them?

SMITH They joined the fray and they too, lost. I'd like to mention one personal reference, if I may, with respect to this campaign. I was being quided and instructed, more or less shepherded along by Elizabeth French and Elizabeth Rohr. I was ill at the time, that particular night I had a temperature of 103 degrees. I didn't know it at the time but I was having a reaction to some medicine that doctor had been giving me. Any way, on the way home, I was driving and Elizabeth French knew I was sick. So she drove right behind me all the way home. Then, on another occasion, not long after that, the same thing happened, when I attended some kind of a conference, and Elizabeth Rohr took me home, made me lie down on the couch, loosened my collar, bathed my forehead and took care of me. I didn't realize what was wrong, but I was having blood pressure problems at the time. That perhaps was not relevant but it had a great deal to do with my success.

Scharf - Perhaps you would like to name the members of that board that served together from 1954 to 1958, as a background to some of the issues that we faced.

SMITH Yes, Helen Scharf, Willard McGraw...Mrs. Scharf had been on the preceding Board, as an appointed member, and so had Willard McGraw, a trust officer

for the Union Trust Company; Wayne Birdsell, who was identified with one of the stenographic outfits downtown; Rose Kramer and Wylie Barrow, who was the Treasurer of the Washington Gas Light Company, Harrison King, who was an up-county farmer, and myself, constituted that board. And what a board it was.

Scharf - Well, looking back over that board, what would you say were the big decisions that we had to wrestle with?

SMITH I think that the big decisions came about because the county was in the throes of a wildfire real estate development, which resulted in a big load on the school board to find the money and the ways and means to meet the school needs. And, of course, there were great differences. At about that time you may recall that McCarthyism and all sorts of isms were plaguing people, and many of the people in the country had doubts about the school boards. If you were at all liberal, they thought you were pink, if not downright red, and of course in the last year that I was on the County Council, we had the Supreme Court decision of 1954, which brought decisions on integration.

We had a survey^{1/} made of the business end of the Board of Education and we had a great argument about that.

Then, of course, we found it necessary to select a new superintendent. The superintendent we had was a good man and a kind man, but he was totally inadequate to the challenge that he had in his responsibilities and he got into difficulties with his own staff. The job was just entirely too big for him. Near the end of his term,^{2/} we discovered somewhat to our surprise that we were unanimously opposed to his reappointment. We then had to do something about it, and what we did was very wise. We went to the state superintendent (Dr. Pullen) and told him we'd reached this conclusion as a board and that we realized that this would have a rather drastic impact on the career of the retiring superintendent. We were concerned about this. We tried to be as kind as possible. As I recall the state superintendent said, if that was our decisions, please tell him as soon as possible

^{1/} McKinsey Survey
^{2/} 1957

deal kindly, and this was our intention. We found that he wasn't as easy to deal with as he might have been and I think he acted not in his own best interest because we were disposed to cooperate with him. But there had to be a change, any board that was worth his salt would have had to make a change at that time.

Scharf - You were president of the board at that time we recruited a new superintendent, were you not?

SMITH Yes, I was president in 1957, following you. There were many aspects of that rather difficult situation because the incumbent always has lots of friends, and the first thing you know the word gets out that you're treating him unfairly, or doing something that you shouldn't. How it easy ti is for the general public to fall in with that sort of thing without knowing anything of the circumstances. We couldn't go for instance and say publicly that some of our high school principals had come to us privately and said, "If this man is continued, we are resigning." We couldn't go and say for instance, that members of his staff said that they couldn't get along with him and they'd have to leave. This sort of thing sort of snowballed. Certainly we didn't want to injure this man by making these facts public. They weren't public facts. But they did influence the action, the decision of the school board.

This board was more or less divided between the liberal element, which consisted of Mrs. Scharf, Mrs. Kramer and myself, as opposed to the conservative element of Mr. Barrow and Mr. King, with Mr. Birdsell and Mr. McGraw somewhere in between. Actually, I recall having many discussions privately, within small groups, as to how we'd resolve some of these things because we got into hassles over actions, particularly with respect to making moves in the direction of integration. It seemed to some of us that we should move; others didn't want to move. The moderates in between didn't know if we should move or not and we were stymied. But we finally decided that if we were to move forward, the actions would have to attract the votes of the swing individuals. And that's the way we did it and eventually resolved some of these things.

Scharf - Looking back over the moves we made toward integration, do you think we handled it well, or could we have done better? Are you unhappy about it?

SMITH I'm very proud of what we did as a board, but I'm unhappy about some of the things I did as president of the board, or as an individual. One of the things that has made me feel unhappy was when the word got out, and incidentally, my telephone rang one Saturday night about 11 O'clock. It was one of the downtown newspapers and they had just been called by some woman who said that we were firing the superintendent. We simply told the superintendent we were not going to reappoint him. He had a four-year appointment which was expiring. We hadn't fired anybody, although it might be tantamount to that. We finally had all the newspapers prying into it and it culminated in a meeting of the board when eight or nine appeared and quizzed us trying to get us to admit that we were firing this individual, and to tell why, and a lot of other things that we thought it kinder not to tell. Actually this was a board decision. It wasn't public information. We were trying to be as responsible as we knew how. We were trying to carry out the admonition of the state superintendent by treating it as kindly as we could. But I recall, one of the newspaper reporters asking me - he bore right up over me and stared down at me as I was in the chair, and he asked if this individual were incompetent. I thought a minute and I said, "Yes, he was." Now, as I have considered that many, many times, it's true, its true then, but that was a rather harsh thing to say about a man of that age. I wish I had been smarter and parried the question and not have made that bald statement. That's just one of the little things that has haunted me.

Scharf - Would you like to make any comments on our search for a new superintendent? What kinds of things we had in mind as criteria?

SMITH I think we wanted a strong man. We wanted an up and coming individual, a man who was competent to face an educational system that had tremendous problems. We had a building program that was tremendous. The increase in the number of pupils every year was about five thousand. We got an increase every year and that

was much greater than that of most of the school systems in the state of Maryland. We searched for a man we thought could meet that challenge and we considered, as I recall, some 50 or 60 people, and then finally, whittled those down to 12 or 15. We actually interviewed 11 or 12 and came up with final interviews with two men. They were obviously very competent and capable individuals, and we finally settled on this one individual who was Dr. Taylor Whittier. The Board called the other individual in and explained that we had decided on Dr. Whittier, and he complimented us saying "He is the younger man and I think you're wise." I thought that was the measure of a big man, too.

When you stop and think, here is a group of lay persons who are very sensitive, very keenly aware of the impact of what they do and what they fail to do, and also aware of the fact that many people misunderstand. I recall receiving a letter from the ministerial groups of Silver Spring wanting an explanation of our outrageous behavior. I called them up and I said, "If you'll assemble your group, I'll come over there and tell you all you want to know." That wasn't necessary, for they took an entirely different tack when they got a little information.

Scharf - Lathrop, we did have large problems. We did seem to resolve them as a board. What were the decisions that were difficult for us? Where were the problems of getting consensus among us? What were the nitty-gritty issues on which we had rough times?

SMITH I think one of the grittiest issues was What is Education? What do you mean by Education? Certain members of the Board would come in with letters from infuriated parents who disliked the way they were teaching Maryland history, parents who had all kinds of objections. People are very subjective about that sort of thing. We thought of education in terms of a large number of people, what constitutes the educational needs of people like those who live in Montgomery County? They thought of education in terms of what happens to little Eloise, or young Tom, or something like that. When people are unhappy they are quick to tell you about it. They are less quick to tell us when they're happy, although some of them do from time to time.

Scharf - Do you think you satisfied your friends and supporters who insisted that you go on the Board of Education?

SMITH I think I satisfied some. I know I disappointed many, and I'm sure I infuriated others. You asked me earlier how I felt about action on that board. I'm quite proud of it. It was a difficult time and I thank goodness for some of the characters who served on that board, people like yourself, people like Rose Kramer, people who are strong characters and certainly the kind of people who are needed in situations like that.

Scharf - When 1958 came around, you made the decision not to run again. Was there a special reason for doing that?

SMITH In the first place I had personal problems, personal interests. I had developed blood pressure problems during World War II and they were beginning to make themselves felt, and I wasn't at all well during that year. And, then too, I have the feeling that one makes a contribution. You come along and you do what you can and then you step aside and let people who are more familiar with the new problems, who have new ideas, take over. I believe that this is good. I don't believe that people should sit on a job forever just because the school board manages to live with them. I think a certain amount of change is healthy in government.

Scharf - Was this about the time you stopped being an active farmer?

SMITH I had stopped before then. We sold the farm in 1956.

Scharf - That's when you moved to Boyds. There must have been an interlude in your life at that time when you had fun.

SMITH Well, we sold the farm for a variety of reasons, one of which was that Marion wanted to retire and the doctor had told me that I'd be better off if I stopped trying to do too much on the farm. So, the two considerations influenced the sale of the farm. We bought a piece of property up in the Boyds area and built a new home there, a very nice home and enjoyed it very much. We sold that some seven years later because in the meantime we had been traveling during the summer months and realized that we couldn't do all the things we wanted to as retired persons and come back to all the things that had suffered from not having been done while we were gone. These were some of the considerations that influenced us there.

Scharf - I look back on that home with a great deal of pleasure. It was beautifully designed and built, and must have been hard to give up.

SMITH Well, it suited us. You may remember we were right on the edge of the woods. We had large areas with lots of glass, and this just seems to suit us. We like to live in the woods.

Scharf - I don't blame you. All of your career in Montgomery County had sort of a running theme of conservation. Your interest in the Soil Conservation District - was that in any way related to your farming activities, or was it in any way an outgrowth of your experiences with the Farm Bureau? Explain it to me.

SMITH When we began this interview, I explained that both Marian and I had rural backgrounds. WE'd lived out in the country where we could enjoy the flowers, shrubs, trees and the wildlife and all the benefits you get from rural living. When we got into serious farming, we realized, as did many people in those days who were using conventional farming methods, that we just weren't getting results. So we appealed to the Soil Conservation District for help, and perhaps I ought to digress here to tell you just what a soil conservation district is.

Back in the Depression days, there was a very wise man who was with the Department of Agriculture. He was from North Carolina, and his name was Dr. Hugh Hammond Bennett. He had been concerned because farmers in his area were farming in such a way that they were wasting the valuable top soil, the seed and the fertilizer and their efforts and the gasoline; and everything they put into farming was wasted, due to the type of farming. So, he thought that, for instance, if a farmer plows his rows up and down hill, when it rains he has created a series of sluice ways. If he plows his rows across, at right angles to the slope, he has created a series of little dams. That's an oversimplification but anyhow this matter was important and he got the ear of President Franklin Roosevelt and some Congressional leaders. They wanted to set up a government agency which would try and help the farmers to do a better job of farming by considering some of these

natural factors which were too often operating against the farmer. The outcome of this was a government agency in the Department of Agriculture which was originally known as Soil Erosion Service, 'cause this was their first target (erosion). It soon became the Soil Conservation Service and just briefly, it was based on the fact that the federal government would set up an agency that would provide technical know-how, scientific investigation and experiments, and studies of all these things, and make available to the several states this kind of information and help, provided the states would set up an organization which would provide for local control and local application of these facts. Now, the State of Maryland in 1937 passed the Soil Conservation District Law of Maryland. This provided that each county could, upon application and compliance with certain rules that were required, establish a soil conservation district, that this district would then receive certain funds from the state in order to operate - postage, housekeeping money and things like that. The federal government through the Soil Conservation Service would provide the technical help, would assign a conservationist, or additional conservationists, or a geologist or a hydrogeologist or whatever the problem required; and that the local conservation district would then elect local individuals who would then elect local individuals who would be non-salaried, but receive expense money, and at the same time would actually run the District. They would make the decisions, set the priorities. It was obvious that everybody couldn't be responded to at once, so you had to set priorities. In Maryland, they provided that two individuals would be appointed by the State Soil Conservation Committee, and incidentally, this law set up a state committee that would administer this law within that particular state. Two individuals were appointed by the state, three individuals were elected by the farmers of the county.

Scharf - Were these the Supervisors?

SMITH These were the Supervisors, yes, Soil Conservation Supervisors. In 1945, the Montgomery County Soil Conservation District was organized. At that time,

there were some 1800 farms, active farms, in Montgomery County. We talked a little earlier about politics and the domination of the County Extension Service over this group. Now, the Extension Service has the responsibility of information and education. The Soil Conservation Service has the responsibility for technical investigation, technical advice, engineering and things of that sort, by trained, skilled technicians. They should work together. Then, of course there is another branch of the government which is the Agriculture and Stabilization Committee which had money to give to farmers to encourage them to institute these practices. It gets a little complicated, but in 1951 when I was on the County Council, I guess by virtue of the fact that I had made a couple of appearances over before the state committee on behalf of the county government (you may recall I referred to getting help to have the soil survey completed), I was approached by the executive secretary of the state committee, Fred Bull, and asked if I would be interested in being a Soil Conservation Supervisor.

Scharf - Excuse me, was that the husband of Mrs. Bull of the PTA?

SMITH Yes, that's Mrs. Bull's husband. And I'd like to say here that Fred and Betty Bull we count among our greatest friends. There is a place not far from here, about 60 or 70 miles, where they visit their son. They come up here frequently; Fred was up here just last week. We see them frequently - wonderful people.

Well, Fred got me interested and I said "Sure". I thought I'd gain a lot, learn a lot about farming. In the meantime, we had applied for and instituted a farm plan. Now, the importance of a farm plan is that if an individual farmer wanted help, he went to the Soil Conservation District and signed a memorandum of agreement, whereby he would authorize the technicians of the government to come on his land to help him inventory his land, evaluate it, classify the land into various classifications and then help him devise a plan of operation, hopefully make his farming operation more profitable. This was a scientific approach which has proved to be wonderfully successful. Now, the reason that the government wanted to have

this administered by local leadership was that they realized, knowing the sensitivity of farmers as a group to advice from city slickers, or technically educated men, that they would have to be a little more subtle. So, they set up these local supervisors who were supposed to take care of that advice. It succeeded in varying degrees, of course. Montgomery County had some problems because the Farm Bureau, the dominant farm organization, and the county extension agent who was the leader of that group were jealous of their prerogatives and of the limelight, so to speak. It was necessary to tread very softly and move carefully. They weren't getting anywhere very fast.

To illustrate what actually was happening, a sum of money was made available to each county by the state each year to provide for the needs of the district. Some of these districts bought machinery and they rented that to farmers to put contour strips or to do re-seeding and whatever that particular farmer needed. Now, the people who took advantage of this were usually the part-time farmers, or the so-called city farmers, who did not have this equipment and who were open minded. Many of the old dairy farmers were hard to convince. You couldn't convince them any way except by force of example. Obviously, the supervisors were supposed to be leaders in that field, but many of the supervisors themselves had no farm plans at all. It was people like ourselves that had the farm plans and we began to get results. I say "we". Marian and I signed up in 1947 and we got immediate benefits and people saw that you could get benefits from this. Well, the publicity, the education and the sum and substance of all this was that it did eventually change farmers' attitudes - not all of them. Some of them you couldn't change with dynamite. But it did change many of them. I mentioned Drew Pearson, he was a neighbor at that time. He had a farm and he signed up. Our Soil Conservation District awarded a recognition in the form of a sign, and an award to some 30 farmers in the county and the highest score was received by Drew Pearson. And the second highest score was received by Marian and myself. Although Marian had been a lifetime farmer with a lot of experience, I had not. I was learning fast. (It seemed fast to me).

I was approached in 1951 by Fred Bull because our district wasn't getting anywhere very fast, and we weren't in the running with many of the other Maryland districts. They wanted someone who would get the district on the ball, and I know this is what they had in mind when they appointed me a supervisor. I am in my 21st year as a Soil Conservation Supervisor and the University had the Soil Conservation Committee reappoint me every third year during this period. Of course, as I said earlier, we were rurally oriented. We've loved the land, and I feel if I have any religion at all, it's my respect for the land, and the obligation I think I have for the land. It gets to be, as I say, almost a , what you do with the land. The land takes care of you if you take of it.

Scharf - Lathrop, the district you're describing was originally called the Soil Conservation District?

SMITH The Montgomery County Soil Conservation District, it's been from the first.

Scharf - When did the term Soil and Water Conservation District --

SMITH The term Soil and Water - Some years ago, the districts in the country, of which there are approximately 3,000 in the U.S. got together. In many sections of the country, water was critical. In the southwest, the central plains area, water was critical. It was easier to get support and to get attention if you put the word "water" in there. I have always disagreed. I resisted, and in Maryland it is still the Soil Conservation District, simply because a few of us have felt that water is part of the soil. Of course, we didn't need the additional attention of being flagged by the term water. What they couldn't get by "soil", they could get by "water" because water was critical in areas of the country that had less than 20 inches of rainfall. We have some 38 in Maryland - 40 or 50.

Scharf - One of your early interests, I recall, was the Rock Creek Watershed and here it seems logical to speak about water conservation as well as soil conservation. They both enter into the preservation of that watershed, don't they? Or the creek?

SMITH The story of soil conservation and of the Soil Conservation Districts,

individually and collectively, is a long story and a rather exciting one to me. It didn't take me very long to appreciate some of the opportunities that this organization and this idea held, for not only me, but for everybody else. Back in the early 50's there was a drought, followed by a flooding of the Red River out in Oklahoma and that part of the panhandle of Texas, and tremendous damage was done. They got the idea from some of these soil conservation individuals, that if you could tie this water down on the land, not only would it enrich the land by building up the water storage in the soil -- if they could hold this water instead of having it come down on barren land and rush off to the sea, carrying with it all the topsoil -- if they could figure out a system for doing that, perhaps they could prevent these floods. This gave rise to the idea of a flood control law which is based on the public law 566 (which is the Flood Prevention and Small Watersheds Law of 1954, its technical name) provided that the federal government would help local districts, areas, communities. It would provide funds to build the watershed or flood prevention costs into a system if the local people would provide their share, first the leadership, and then the land. They'd have to provide the easements. They would have to provide certain of the costs.

They would have to enlist 51% of the landowners in the critical area above these projects in soil conservation practices, the dams. Obviously, it didn't make sense to spend money to build these dams and then let them fill up right away with sediment that they were trying to prevent with their erosion control practices. So it was a mutual idea, the federal government with the local people, each paying a part.

They started out in the Red River District. They put up some of these dams experimentally, and they worked beautifully. They had some flood conditions out there and they stopped them. These dams had a high free board which would accumulate all the flood waters, then they'd release it gradually at a rate that the normal drainage could handle. In the meantime, they stored this water and

made it available for many purposes, such as water supplies for towns, irrigation in the midwest and west, and recreation. And then this idea of recreation began to catch fire when the population exploded with such a bang all over the place and people were wearing the parks out. And they knew they had to have more parks so they amended the law so the federal government could provide a limited amount, a percentage of cost above the flood control, toward recreation, if the local people would build additional height into the dam. Som that was effected.

There have been a number of amendments and changes from time to time, but this was done in 1954. About that time, there was an individual in Montgomery County by the name of Bernard Frank. *Frank Frank*

Bernard Frank had made these observations, and was very much concerned about what was happening to Rock Creek. It was obvious that the stream was deteriorating at a rapid rate. In September of 1956, the Soil Conservation District, responding to appeals, filed an application with the County Council, and with the State Conservation Committee asking for this survey. ^{-1/} The survey was approved in January by the Department of Agriculture, and the field survey crew actually reported on the ground in March. After that they asked that a steering committee composed of interested parties, officials and so forth from interested agencies be organized so they could report their findings as they went along. This would help them also in developing the kind of information they felt was necessary. They studied the entire Rock Creek within Montgomery County, from the possibility of flooding at a number of reaches, some thirteen reaches as I recall, and evaluated the cost-benefits of the detention structures at each one of these reaches, and then they left it up to the steering committee to decide at which one of the reaches they would finally build the dam.

It was perfectly obvious to everyone familiar with the situation that the place they built the dam, in the Needwood area, was the logical place. You get the most flood control for the least money, to do the most good. Actually, from

1/ Presumably the Survey of the Rock Creek Watershed

a technical standpoint, they'd have got more flood control had they built the dam just below Meadowbrook, but you can't flood out literally hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of private property and homes. That land was already developed. So, it was decided to build the dams upstream on Rock Creek and its North Branch in the Needwood area. Then the next question that came up was, under the amendment do you want to put in some two percent additional funds to build the dams a bit higher for recreation? And, it would have been silly for Montgomery County to have built dams right in the middle of the county without building all the recreational advantages possible. So, that was decided and the dams were built as high hazard structures and built very carefully because they realized that even part of the White House grounds lay within the drainage area from these dams. Lower Rock Creek in the District of Columbia around Pennsylvania Avenue, you may recall, is very constricted and limited. If you release flood waters down there, it would do extensive damage in the District of Columbia, so they built into these dams what they call a high hazard provision.

Scharf - Lathrop, I would like to come back later to the dams in the Rock Creek watershed. I would like to have you comment on the Army Engineers' recommendation for dams on the Potomac, and particularly the Big Bend. It seems to me I have read that conservationists opposed these dams.

SMITH The Army Engineers have an authority in certain specific areas. They are responsible, and have been for years and year, for transportation ways in the rivers and harbors. They are specialists in building large structures and there's a conflicting philosophy between the Army Engineers and the Soil Conservation people, in that Soil Conservation people believe that you do a better job of flood control by holding the water where it falls on the land by good farming practices rather than waiting 'til the situation gets so critical that it takes millions of dollars and the efforts of the Army Engineers and their tremendous concrete structures. So, it's just how do you want to do it? My own feeling is that there's room for both. . There are certain places where the Army Engineer Corps is indicated. This would be only after every effort would be made by the

conservationist to keep the water where it falls on the land.

Now, you asked about the Big Bend Dam on the Potomac. Basically, a dam the size of the proposed big dam on the Potomac involves an awful lot of land, and the biggest damage that occurs (it obviously would be a success as a dam) is the influence it has on the community and the area, the way it changes the land use patterns; it literally changes lives in an area. To cite just one, down in Atlanta, Georgia there is a dam located about ten or twelve miles north of there, a tremendous dam - and it's done a great deal of good for Atlanta. They have developed it beautifully for recreation, but one of the almost immediate effects was the development of a honky-tonk area from one of the better residential areas in the city of Atlanta.

At this dam, the powers that be just failed to control this. They either failed or refused to control it. And you've got every kind of conceivable honky-tonk area that you can imagine, and I think we're all familiar with that type of development. This is one of the great reasons for opposition to large-scale development such as that of the Army Engineers. I'm not against Army Engineers' development because there are locations and situations in which this is indicated and needed, but to have the Army Engineers brought into every situation where you have a flood control problem seem to be ought to be a last resort.

Scharf - Am I right in remembering that the Soil Conservation District of Montgomery County opposed this Big Bend Dam? And dams below Harper's Ferry?

SMITH I don't know whether we actually opposed it. I remember sitting in on numerous meetings in which the matter was discussed and the feeling among those present was always against the Big Bend Dam. Montgomery County would not be the same if you had a large Army Engineer's structure there and it attracted to this area that kind of development that is inevitable in situations like that. It would just change the county. This was the reason we were opposed to it.

Scharf - Let's get back to our dams in the Rock Creek Watershed. Are they dams of a limited lifetime?

SMITH Well, high hazard structures like that are designed -- (Obviously you can't build a dam to last forever. The dams do fill up and they do cease to be useful, and changes to land use changes the life of the dam --).

Scharf - Are they made of dirt?

SMITH They're made of dirt with a clay core and they're designed for a so-called 50 year period. Now, this means 50 years under maximum hazardous conditions; they should last for 50 years. Now, if you spent two or three or four or five or six million dollars building a flood control structure; if you can take care of that structure, reduce the sedimentation above it, and it will last for 50 years, why not develop the best conditions and have it last several times 50 years? This is the point, that it doesn't pay to spend tax money to build dams that you're going to allow to silt up - when you don't have to.

Scharf - Has our county taken precautions to get the maximum use?

SMITH Yes I think they have. At the instigation of our State Conservationist, Edward Keil, who's now down in Puerto Rico - Ed was very much concerned about this siltation problem because it was obvious that where developers were bulldozing the heck out of the land all above here, and every time we had a storm, the stream ran red with mud. So, we visited some of the neighboring areas, Accotink Lake, and Lake Barcroft which had silted up completely. They had spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to dig the silt out of the lake several times. This was evidence enough that something should be done. So Mr. Keil, being the peppery little German that he is, said to the County Council, "Now unless you are going to control the type of development above this dam to reduce the siltation, I'm not going to let you have the rest of the money" (some six hundred and some thousand dollars). Well, this was tough talk and the Council said, "What can we do?" We suggested that the Council set up a task force - a task force because by that means you could associate with a government engineer, the Soil Conservation District, the so-called do-gooders (like ourselves, with the builders, the

engineers, lawyers and whoever you might want to work with this, and get them all together on this problem. They came up with what is known as the Montgomery County Sediment Control program which provided simply a set of techniques, such as: timing, methods and techniques, over a period of time which would tend to reduce the damages that real estate development, uncontrolled, has in an area like that.

Scharf - What date was that?

SMITH Oh, I guess it was about '58.

Scharf - I just read in a paper a month ago that a new sediment control law had been passed by the Council; that the old one was either not enforced or inadequate in its provisions.

SMITH The first sedimentation control law in the U.S. was put in effect in Montgomery County. It was not completely effective, simply because there was so much disagreement between governmental agencies that had the enforcement responsibilities that were not enforcing. We were painfully aware of the fact that they were not enforcing it. They were not enforcing it on the Board of Education projects till finally, we worked that out. This was a problem of various county agencies' jealousies, lack of sympathy, or what-not. It was strictly up to the county government.

Now the law to which you just referred - Now, three or four years ago, certain people became interested in having a sediment control law to control the whole Patuxent area, and this was passed by the State. Then more recently, the State Department of Water Resources approved it, and they just checked it off, so to speak, on all the counties. We still have to work out an enforcement problem and this has been taken up with the County Executive recently, and I don't know if it has actually been solved or not. It's still a serious problem. To give you a rough idea of how serious it can be, and where politics gets into it, one of the initial efforts under the sediment control law was by the people who were interested in developing an autopark on Route 29. They came to the district

and said, "We want to put in a sediment control program out here. We'll do anything you say." So, our people went out there and looked it over and came up with a plan. Still isn't in. It just happens that one of the leaders in that particular investment is a prominent zoning attorney in Montgomery County who knows just how much he has to, and how much he doesn't have to do. Until you get so that you treat everybody in the county the same, legally, you're going to have problems like that. This is an enforcement problem. The Soil Conservation District is not an enforcement agency. We have no police power. We simply recommend.

Scharf - From the standpoint of recreation, this dam named Needwood, has become very popular with citizens using its recreation facilities. Now, who manages those facilities?

SMITH The Park and Planning Commission administers the land. They have jurisdiction of the land in the name of the people of Montgomery County, and later on, as the development continued, they were made a sponsor, a formal sponsor, in lieu of the county government, or rather representing the county government. They administer the land, they have jurisdiction of the land and they are doing a pretty good job. They told us that the first eight or nine weeks of operation they had something like 200,000 visitors. One of the things they did was to grow fishing worms, and sold \$1100 worth of worms to the fishermen there in the first three months of operation. Of course, the State Department of Game and Inland Fish stocked it with harvest-sized fish. These things indicate the need for recreation.

Scharf - There are other places in our county where we could institute programs of this nature, I think. What about the Seneca watershed? Over near the Germantown development?

SMITH The Seneca watershed constitutes the majority of the count, actually, and due to various reasons, again political, this area has been neglected. Now, there were many years that some of the enthusiasts in Montgomery County felt that Seneca should have been developed as a park. When I first came to Montgomery

County. I met Malcolm King who is well known as a conservation enthusiast, and he tried to promote the interest of the state in buying land in the Seneca. At that time, that land could have been bought for \$35 to \$40 an acre. Here is a copy of a resolution that was passed by the Upper County Planning Commission in 1951 in which it says, "We stringly endorse the plan as outlined by Mr. Joseph F. Kaylor, Director of the Department of Forests and Parks, for a streamside park to be developed along Seneca Creek from U.S. Highway 240 to the Potomac River. It is understood that such a streamside park should be developed to provide simple recreational facilities for the citizens of Montgomery County, picnic grounds, fishing areas, and possible overnight shelters", and so forth. That languished. We just couldn't get any interest, and one of the reasons given to us was the fact that people who had influence at the State Planning Commission opposed money spent for development in the western part of the county. And the prominent political leader Brooke Lee was one of those reported to me by some of the officials as stating that he was opposed to that. Actually, he used to be one of the advisors to the State Planning Commission. He of course was interested then in the eastern section of the county where he had extensive holdings.

Scharf - Did you say \$25 an acre was the price of the land ?

SMITH Land could have been bought in that section, back in the early 50's for \$25 to \$40 an acre.

Scharf - Do you have any idea of the size recommended for a state park there?

SMITH Well, this varied. Planners, they get enthusiastic. The State Department of Forests and Parks had a very interesting character, whose name I'm trying to remember, who designed parks. He looked over this area and recommended a park of some 2,000 acres. He wanted the whole Seneca. On the other hand, you try to be realistic and you say, well obviously we can't get away with that. What is practical? How can we get it started? There were three or four distinct areas that were particularly attractive and so they recommended that the park be started in these three or four areas. I think that with all due respect to the Lees that

Blair Lee, who was in the House of Delegates at the time, did get some money earmarked for the purchase of land. But, unfortunately, they never got any money for maintenance, so the Director of Parks refused to buy the land because he had no money to maintain it, or to develop it, so we just didn't get anywhere, and it wasn't until recent years that they finally began to purchase some of the land, and they developed a small park up in the Cloppers area. They had condemnation proceedings going and I've heard figures mentioned from \$8,000 to \$12,000 an acre for critical areas that they needed to complete the park. I don't know why it is that political leadership is so blind when it comes to the needs of people and the spending of money for future development - why they have to wait until it's too late and then spend ten times what it should have cost.

Scharf - That's an error of omission. Did you read about the error of commission in 1956, when the County Council rezoned 35 acres in the middle of the Seneca Park boundaries, or so-called boundaries, for industrial use?

SMITH I'm familiar with the situation you mention but we went through a period then, (and we can't blame this on either party because both parties, because both parties were at fault) when the Council just went haywire and adopted wildfire zoning on the basis that anybody who wanted it, here it is, come and get it, and that particular error was responsible for enormous costs and losses to the people of Montgomery County. I don't know what you do, you elect people to public office and unless you have the power of recall - but the sentiment in the county was for development. Develop! Develop! They even hired somebody to come down and tell how to get industry into the county. Well, it's fine to get industry, that's supposed to meet the tax problem. You develop - you get the jobs here. But it also bring to the council table new voices and new demands for development, new demands for costs in the tax expenditures. There's no end to it, it's a vicious cycle.

Scharf - Well, if we incorporated that little piece of land into the park now, at the price quoted by its owners at \$35,000 an acre, that one little piece of the park would cost us about \$2 million.

SMITH In my earliest Council days I began to hear from the attorneys for zoning that you can't zone anything down, that you must always zone it up. In other words, when you zone it up, you literally put into the bank, or the assets of this particular landowner, additional money. But, for some reason or other you can't down zone it. Well, why can't you down zone it? For the very reasons that you zone land upwards to a greater value, it can be zoned down. If you can do one, certainly you can do the other, and I believe that the courts have held that you can do that, and I think there's actually been a couple of cases in Montgomery County. But we always heard from the attorneys, "Oh, this is taking property without due process." That's nonsense. The needs of the community have to be met, and if it goes one way, all right, and if it goes another way, it's just as right.

Scharf - We're running out of time for this session of your interview, and since this will probably be the last session with you for a little while, I want to ask you if there is any other county activity you enjoyed and would like to talk about. Anything that gave you particular pleasure, or to which you feel you made some kind of contribution.

SMITH Oh, I don't know, obviously there are. I've had a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction out of some situations which were at the time somewhat painful. I'm glad, I'm proud to have had the experience. I'm proud of the friends and proud of some of the enemies I've made. The experiences have been wonderful, and I'm fortunate to have had the opportunities. At the moment, I don't think of anything particularly, except that my conservation activities led me eventually into state activities, and finally into the national field. But, while that is another matter, it's just an extension of the same thing.

Scharf - We have a few minutes left. You're living in New England now. This is the area of our country where local government always has been considered very close to the people., with the small town-meeting opportunity. Are you continuing your interest in community affairs here?

SMITH You can't avoid your interest in community affairs, but I had a strange experience here. I was put on the local planning board without my knowledge. I went to several meetings; they're wonderful people, but very elementary. They don't know what's going on around here, and they are completely oblivious of the pressures that are heading in this direction.

Scharf - These people are rural to the extent that upper Montgomery County was rural when you first went there. Is that correct?

SMITH Yes, that's right. Incidentally, I didn't stay on the commission because

I realized that the people didn't know me well enough yet and before you get into that briar patch, you want to be sure that they know you and have confidence in you. Once they have confidence in you, you can begin to do things for people. We're more effective here, completely without any official responsibility. They'll have to come a long way before they get into the problems that we've had so much trouble with.

Scharf - Looking at your barn and seeing that large tractor, and looking out over your wonderful garden, and tasting the products from that garden, I would say that Marian's horticultural interests and your farming experiences are still with you, even in this so-called retirement. The question that comes to my mind is, are those crops so abundant, so full of quality because of extra special care that you give them or is there something about the soil here?

SMITH This particular place here we found quite by accident and it impressed us so much that we just bought it on the spot. And, for the first time in our careers, we have a garden spot here with the quality of the land so high and so responsive to care, that it's a real joy. I've struggled with the renn loam area in western Montgomery County, then with stony land in other areas, the blue clay out in northern Ohio, and you come out here to this lovely land that just responds and gives forth of its richness. It's just magnificent. We're doing this because we love it and because we enjoy doing it. You spoke of the products. We like fresh vegetables and it's a lot of fun to get up here in the spring and plant that garden and to watch it, nurture it, and then sit back and eat the sweet corn such as we had the other day. We had a bumper crop of strawberries this year. We actually gave them away and they bring in 90 cents a box here, too. This is wonderful if you like to do it. I think you have to be oriented to this kind of life, but I've had enough traffic and noise and confusion to last me the rest of my life.

Scharf - Lathrop, it's been enjoyable to talk with you, and you've been very generous with your time and your recollections.

SMITH You're most welcome here at all times. It's just been a pleasure for us too, and come again, real soon.

End of Interview

The foregoing interview was shorter than originally planned, due to the time consumed in locating a recorder to replace Lathrop's Ampex which stopped functioning just prior to the time the interviewer arrived en route from Montreal to Bethesda.

So Lathrop responded to some unanswered questions intended for the interview, after his recorder was repaired. He spoke alone into the mike and then mailed the tape to the interviewer.

SMITH Good morning Helen. Here I sit on a very foggy morning with the Ampex which came back last Friday, after a six weeks absence and with a hundred dollar repair bill. Now, from your letter of September seventeenth you mention that you perhaps had misinterpreted your role.^{1/} I can't agree with that because I find that it's one thing to talk to you and another thing to talk to this mechanical gadget. Well, I prefer to preserve the illusion that I am talking to you; it's helpful to me.

You ask about the Citizens Planning Association. I would like to go back for just a moment to the Upper County Planning Commission. I think it's important to review the political and economic set-up that existed in Montgomery County at that time.

The Charter movement having overcome the old political machine, some of the political leadership then turned to the farmers, who had control of the land that they, as businessmen, hoped to profit from later. The reaction to anything in the name of 'planning' was considerable. I think that was mostly because farmers and rural people simply didn't understand it, and secondly because the demagogues made sure that they didn't understand it, and misled them. I'd like to mention the quality of the staff of the Upper County Planning Commission.

^{1/} Referred to the interviewer's self-criticism of "talking too much".

I think great credit goes to Irving McNayr, the then Manager, who located and then hired Patrick J. Cusick, a most unusual young man. He in turn acquired Harold Taubin and Nancy Setright, who, as you know, is Nancy Setright Hall, now, having married one of our Board of Education staff. They were remarkable people. They went to great effort to explain to the Planning Commission members what this was all about and asked for guidance as to where they should start and in what direction they should go and when they should soft-pedal things or loud-pedal. As a result of that, some of us on the Planning Commission went to considerable effort and spent a great many evenings out with members of the Planning Commission attending various groups in the upper county. I know I went with Harold Taubin on many, many occasions. I recall at the time the subdivision regulations were presented for public hearing in the Courthouse and Pat Cusick was making what I thought was a very fine explanation of the reasons for the need, and also the details of the proposal. The people in the audience hooted him down, and wouldn't let him continue. This was just typical of the attitude that they just weren't going to -- I think this was stimulated almost entirely, not by farmers themselves, but by the real estate industry leadership which was determined that they would resist to the last any effort to place any obstacles in their way.

This reminds me also of the famous hearing on the road code back in early 1950, when public officials of Montgomery County were actually seen out in the streets passing out money to get anyone who'd take the time to go in and pack the hearing and to stamp his feet and hoot. This is a peculiar operation of democracy.

To me, the proposals which the staff brought in and which we discussed at great length, with particular reference to the influence it would have on the local people concerned, and every effort was made to try and understand their problems, and to do what was in their best interest. Now, I had several years of this. It got to be pretty frustrating. This business that people would refuse

to listen, and after a while, people know in advance when they see you just what your attitude is and they associate you with unpopular subjects.

When the Citizens Planning Association^{1/} was organized; I think it was in 1954, I was fed up, worn out and discouraged. I just couldn't take it anymore, the refusal to listen, to think or to discuss calmly, or to be just plain courteous on the part of those who were opposed to the efforts of the Planning Commission to do something which was so obviously needed and so enormously in the public good. The overwhelming power in the opposition leadership, both political and financial, made you feel, "Oh, what's the use?" The Citizens Planning Association came alive about this time and they brought great encouragement to people who more and more could understand the need for planning and the objectives of the Planning Commission.

I was a member of the Planning Association for a considerable time, served on the Nominating Committee once or twice, and as a Director, but I was just plain spent. As for the accomplishments of the Citizens Planning Association, I think it is impossible to overemphasize the good they accomplished. With such remarkable people as Elizabeth Rohr, Mollie and Warren Vinton, Dick Hovsepian, yourself and a host of others, these fine folks gave enormous amounts of time and effort on behalf of planning in the public interest versus the powerful political interests. It forced a more balanced discussion of the problems and as time went on, more and more people had some opportunity to hear both sides of the question. It was the most powerful single group, save perhaps the League of Women Voters, that kept planning in the public eye and prevented the situation from being much worse. To me they deserve enormous credit and my only regret is that I might have been of more help.

One final comment, with respect to the Planning Association, it always^{ys} seemed to me that those persons who were attracted to the Association and its efforts, were several intellectual levels above those of the leadership of industry and this was bound to impress the public.

^{1/} The Montgomery County Citizens Planning Association

We turn now to your question regarding the value of citizen groups to their public officials. I think first, this depends a great deal on the official. When I came into public life, I was very conscious of my own limitations, so I attended innumerable meetings of all kinds of groups, citizen groups, civic associations, PTAs, conservation groups, even an occasional Chamber of Commerce, as well as farm groups. These groups had considerable influence on my ideas, attitudes and behavior. On the other hand, one councilman seldom went to meetings except perhaps an occasional farm meeting, never said anything, and he made no talks. He served four terms - sixteen years. I served one term of four years. There must be some kind of lesson there. Any and all groups that serve as an opportunity and a place for the discussion of the public business, especially ideas, and involve people in the public business are useful, especially if some information and education result.

Montgomery County, of course, has been so hopelessly overorganized that it is difficult to spend your meeting time wisely and effectively. You naturally respond more readily to friendly groups. Hostile groups don't want to hear you; they aren't going to support you anyway. Theoretically, of course, it's a waste of time to spend all of your time talking to friendly groups who agree with you anyhow, when you should be trying to win over some of the doubters from hostile groups. Too few persons really understand the matter under discussion and how it affects them personally. Discussion becomes too technical or becomes a debate between the experts, which often results in boring those present. And, as you mention, Helen, these various groups are training grounds for prospective candidates for public office. You go somewhat timidly to a group meeting; something comes up that interests you and you open your mouth. Next thing you know, you're on a committee. You open your mouth again, and lo! you're chairman of the committee, and so it goes. This is all to the good, however, and the present County Council is a good example of councilmen and women who have served in groups and organizations for years, achieving considerable expertise in affairs. I think, too, that these groups give a person confidence. Background on a group of this sort is very helpful. You learn

what the problems are and develop ideas you'd like to try out. These associations help the public, too, since they learn to look to certain groups for leadership education. The League of Women Voters, of course, is in a class by itself in this respect.

Now, regarding the place of churches in the growth and development of the county, it's frequently said that the church represents a stabilizing influence in society. I think much of what we have said about the other groups probably applies as well to churches, especially, since in recent times, more churches are involved in activist - in problems of society. In my youth, I recall it used to be said commonly, that politics are crooked and dirty. Since nice people went to church, they didn't want to have anything to do with the sinfull and dishonest. Rahter a strange view for church people to take. I suppose people built churches because they were conscious of some spiritual needs, or perhaps, for other social reasons. Some had fears of the hereafter, not knowing just which direction they were headed. Others were missionary conscious. There are as many reasons as there are people.

My own views, in organized religion, are somewhat unorthodox. Since so many church organizations are hot-beds of hypocrisy, especially the Simon-pure variety, Marian and I gravitated to the Unitarian Church because years of singing in a choir in a downtown church, during which we heard many prominent clergy. It simply bored us. They Unitarian Church is activist-oriented. Maybe, sometimes too much so. But the idea of religion is how you live and what you do, rather than what you profess or say. The strong activist tendencies of recent times is encouraging and politics are likely to be better because of it. I think churches can perform a very important role in today's society and many of them do, especially in urban situations. Not enough do, however, and there is too much "faith" in clinging to the past, and I use that word faith in quotation marks. The opportunity is certainly there. I think the more liberal churches fit the needs of today, especially in the Washington area.

Helen, I'd like to say a word about this farm assessment business, and at the risk of repeating myself, I'd like to go back to the Upper Montgomery County Planning Commission, who in its earliest discussion had decided that if we thought open space and low density should predominate in the upper county, some ways had to be found to make such uses economically possible. Some device to relieve the farmers and long-term users of woodlands of a speculative influence of developers would involve a reduced tax rate, based on an assessment appropriate to that tax rate; also, either agricultural zoning or some method of deferred taxes. Taxes soon get to the point where they exceed the capacity of an acre of land to produce wealth in terms of dollars. When you disturb the constitutional safeguards by some preferential treatment to some group, something should be received by the public in return. Farmers and landowners as a group, when they see the land prices skyrocketing, are loath to give up the chance to profit accordingly and the desire to have their cake and eat it too, is too strong.

One evening, when the farm assessment law was under consideration, I was called by a delegate from Annapolis to explain that Mr. Blair Lee had made her a chairman of a committee to marshal support for this proposal. I asked, after discussing it to some extent, as to the safeguards to the general taxpayer, what were proposed. She explained that Mr. Lee had listed some twenty-seven points that would have to be satisfied before land could receive this beneficial treatment. I asked her how it would be enforced and she explained, "by the state assessors". I agreed to go along on that assurance. Of course, as we soon found out, the so-called safeguards of twenty-seven points, were not actually part of the law and the first court case threw them out. I was outraged and no one can make me believe that the proponents had anything other in mind than just what happened. The land interests now had their gold mine, and, of course, the sympathy of protecting it of all farmers and rural fold of Maryland. I, for one, had been 'took' and I'll never excuse my naivete in supporting such a proposal. This kind of politics is too much for me, and I hope this situation will eventually be

adjusted in the interest of fairness.

In closing, with a feeling of sadness, I've been reading in the press reports of the trials of the Prince George's Commissioner, and the admission of planning officials of involvement in which money actually changed hands. I recall some years ago, when I was a somewhat unwilling and, of course, unsuccessful candidate to the Planning Commission of Montgomery County, the polite but totally disinterested attitude when not a single question was asked of me by members of the County Council during my interview. The total time was taken up with reminiscences by Stella Werner. I know at once what my chances of appointment were. I can understand how industry and persons dealing with the Commission couldn't afford to have the likes of me in the way.

I'd best stop here. You know how easy it is to ramble on, on this subject. I hope all this makes sense to you and those who are working on this history. Thank you for including me.