

This interview is for the Barbara Morgan Harvey Center for the Study of Oil Heritage. This interview is with Clarence "Bud" Pelaghi, who is a long time resident of Oil City, and used to be the editor of The Derrick newspaper. Mr. Pelaghi now spends his time organizing Oil City's history, in the archives room at The Derrick. This interview is being conducted at the historic National Transit Building, in Oil City, Pennsylvania, on October 24, 2008. The interviewer for this session is Neil McElwee.

McElwee- We're having a conversation this morning, it's an October morning. The 24th of October year 2008. It's a beautiful fall morning. It's Halloween, we're all excited to, what's going to be happening here in the Oil City area in the next week or so. We are in the lobby of the historic National Transit building, and I have the pleasure this morning talking with one of the oil regions most distinguished personalities. He probably wouldn't consider himself that, but we do. And that's why we've invited Mr. Clarence Bud Pelaghi to be with us today. Mr. Pelaghi has had a decade of big part of five, six decade career and life here in the Oil City area and his professional life was as a journalist and is an editor with the Oil City Derrick, but he has done far more than that. We're asking Bud this morning to relate to us those experiences he's had as a journalist, but also as a citizen, a longtime citizen whose lived his entire adult life here in this community, what he's observed over the years and how he's participated. So, welcome. I have had the pleasure of speaking with Bud a numerous times. It's really good to see you Bud. You look great, as you were telling us your avocado and orange juice breakfast has really helping you look good after all these years. Welcome, how are you doing.

Pelaghi- Good morning. Very good, thank you.

McElwee- To get this going Bud, you're not originally from the oil region area; Venango County, or Oil City. You actually were raised in Masontown. And, is that correct.

Pelaghi- That's right. I was born in Masontown, I was raised there until , up until the Army.

McElwee- And then afterwards you went on to West Virginia.

Pelaghi- Yeah, well I was in the Army for three and a half years. Then I came back, and I was going to go to University of Michigan for a business degree. But a business opportunity appeared, and I got a partnership in a restaurant. So I cancelled my college path and went into business. I was in a restaurant business for eight years, and the last four years I went to, I commuted to West Virginia University, daily, every morning. And got a degree and when I got the degree I sold my half of the store, and got into journalism.

McElwee- What was the name of the restaurant you had down there?

Pelaghi- Well, it's called the Savoy.

McElwee- The Savoy (laughs)!

Pelaghi- It was the, a really successful business, and a family friend who picked this opportunity up and came down and talked me out of going to college and going to business with him. He was going to be the silent partner, and I was the active partner. So I did that, and not only did we have a restaurant but we also sold jewelry. Which was an odd combination.

McElwee- Yes it was.

Pelaghi- It was right after the war. Guys were coming home, they were buying gifts for their girlfriends, and girls were coming in and buying costume jewelry. So we did pretty good for, for the first four years, but then everybody saw that we were doing good, and they started doing the same things so actually, business slipped a lot.

McElwee- Ok. So you, did you pick up a journalism degree or was it

Pelaghi- Yep. I had a lot, it's odd if I want to go into this, I was in business. I had friends who were in education, teachers and one was a college professor down in Norfolk, who would come up every summer to Masontown. And they just coaxed me to go back to school, and I just couldn't work it. So what they did, they being teachers they had their summers off and they were going to Morgantown for Master's degrees or fulfilling other educational requirements. One fellow was working on his Doctorate in history. And, well, they talked to me about it. So they finally worked it, worked it this way. They were going up and they needed transportation, so how about you just driving me, driving us up for a class and then we'll come right back and you'll be in time, you're at the restaurant, you know they carry your noon hour lunch. So I said, "Ok, I'll just drive you up." And then they said "Well if you're going to drive us up you might as well you know get a course." So I did. I got interpretive, interpretive speaking or something, I forgot what it was. Just to take a course. And I liked it, so that was first six weeks second six weeks. I said "I'll just take two courses." And then gradually I talked to the people whether a possibility of my getting, going through the system there, just go into school in the mornings, because I had to be back at noon for the restaurant. And they were very lenient, and very, very nice to me, and they permitted, they worked it out taking some two level, three level courses in my freshmen year. And I got my degree; I got a little bit more than I needed but uh, in four and a half years.

McElwee- That's great. Alright, so what happened. Did you just decide I'm going to go into, I'm going to work with some paper, or how was that career decision made and how did you end up putting an application into the Derrick?

Pelaghi- Well, its, I owe it all to the director of journalism who I really owe a lot to, Percy Reed. He said he had a formula for me he said. You have to, when you get your degree, work one year for a good weekly, then one year at a good small daily to know how daily, then place yourself he says: "Don't go aiming for big jobs. Work in the weekly first for one year, one year in the daily, and then place yourself." Well I was, he got me a job in Elkton, Maryland. Good weekly, big weekly. Big circulation. And I was there, I liked the place. I was there a year and three months when he called me up on the phone. "Hey, get out of there." He

says. And I said "Ok." Well. I didn't do it. I was there another three months. He calls me again. So right on the spot I resigned. I gave them my notice, two week notice, and told them I was going to quit. Had no job, but I was going to quit. So, um, what I do. I registered with the Pennsylvania Newspaper Association that I was looking for a job. I gave them my credentials. And Joe Saffron who was managing editor of the Derrick called me up. And offered me a job. Well, I still had this, I didn't have the store then no. But I asked lot of the guys who I knew were fisherman and hunters, and they came up here. So I asked them: "What about Oil City?" And I could remember the statement, he said, "Great place to hunt and fish, but you won't want to live there." So I called up Joe Saffron I said "Sorry, I just can't take the job." Well he waited a week or two and called me again and told me "Hey, just come up on a Sunday." It was spring "Take a nice ride up, and we'll pay your way up and let us talk to you." So I came up, and I missed a turn down at Franklin and went to Cranberry, came down through the East End and, you don't know the East End. It was a ramshackle, it was just falling apart practically, but it was a big area. I drove through that, then I, I couldn't see anybody. I drove across the State Street Bridge, which is now the Veterans Bridge. And looked what was the Rail Road Plaza, and it was a windy day. I saw papers flying around, pigeons flying around. I went down Elms street, which was like a cavern, because they were both buildings on both sides. And I said "Oh, what a place." So I said now, "This is it." So I turned around to go back, and I crossed the bridge again at Saint Steven's. I saw a policemen. I said "Where in the hell is The Derrick?" He said "Right down this street just about a mile." And I said, "Well, I'm here I might as well go down and talk to him." So I went down, talk to them. And I accepted.

McElwee- Wow. To Oil City's and areas great delight that you did. I don't think most folks realize that you were almost ready to go back, back to Masontown and the Savoy Restaurant (laughs).

Pelaghi- Not Quite. I think eight years of experience in a restaurant was enough. I've often said that somebody would offer me the best restaurant around here, free, and pay me a salary; I wouldn't take it (laughs).

McElwee- Alright (laughs). Alright. So we have the career change.

Pelaghi- Yeah.

McElwee- You're now a young journalist in a small town newspaper. And this was as far as you were concerned professionally just another step in your career as a journalist.

Pelaghi- Yeah, well to myself I said "Well, I can try." I was in New Guinea for , it was in the Pacific for three and a half years. A lot of it in New Guinea. I said "Hell, I can take Oil City for one year."

McElwee- (laughs) Ok. Ok. But it ended up all these years.

Pelaghi- Yeah. So I'm stuck.

McElwee- So what happened?

Pelaghi- I'm very happy to be here.

McElwee- You're very happy to be here.

Pelaghi- One of the best accidental decisions I ever made.

McElwee- That's wonderful. So you stayed. You liked the Derrick. You married here.

Pelaghi- Yep.

McElwee- And on and on.

Pelaghi- I started off with a reporter, a beat reporter covering city hall. At that time there was a very active period because they were in their throws of the first, well, read about in the period.

McElwee- Joe Barr

Pelaghi- Joe Barr, was, he at that time was only Chamber President, but he sort of guided the whole renewal program himself. And he later became a mayor. But, so I got in on that ground floor. They had their first master plan, in, put together at that time. I worked very closely with them. I attended all the meetings of the different organizations. Planning Commission, and their city council, school board, stuff like that.

McElwee- You were good friends with Joe Barr.

Pelaghi- Very good. I had a lot of respect for Joe Barr. Very undervalued person. I think he did a lot for this town. He sacrificed his life actually for this town.

McElwee- He was kind of a legendary guy over time. I had the pleasure of meeting him, when he was in his later years. You know in his later years he was having trouble. Every once and a while he would show that flash of humor and charm that he had. And I mean it, he was a handsome guy too for folks who didn't know him. But, yes. You guys really changed Oil City dramatically. I know you were part of that group, and these were your friends. To your credit and all those guys credit that these things did come about. Joe was the first Secretary of Economic Development in the State of Pennsylvania.

Pelaghi- Yeah, he was on the ground floor of city planning. There was no such thing as city planning I don't think at that time. And he harped on it, he spoke in different places. And, I don't know, he developed a reputation in city planning. So when Governor Scranton set up his Cabinet, Joe Barr was named the first Secretary of Economic Development. Yeah.

McElwee- There's a story, and you may have been there covering it. You had to be. The railroad station was still in existence when you came here. It's the one right here down over (inaudible)

Pelaghi- Yeah, I know which one you mean, the plaza, railroad plaza

McElwee- Do you ever, do you remember when it was Gavin, Congressman Gavin was down there, and they were to push a lever or something like that an a building was to go up. Were you there that day when it went up in flames?

Pelaghi- Oh, yeah (laughs). Yeah. That, that was, yeah, this was one of the redevelopment programs to redo the plaza area, and I guess to get rid of the, there were two stations there was the main station, which was brick, and then to the right there near the bridge was the Erie station and that was all wood. So to get rid of that in the quickest way possible, somebody said "Well, just burn it down." And they had the firemens ready, and everything everybody else ready to make sure nothing got out of hand. Well, it went up, and it was spectacular (laughs). It was a spectacular thing you know.

McElwee- I understand that they say that Congressmen Gavin who was kind of a tall guy, or at least he had long legs, he was leading the pack running away from the conflagration when it went up in a big.

Pelaghi- Well, that, I don't remember that, but I imagine he would, I mean he was, he had been around I know.

McElwee- So those were your younger days. And while we're still on your younger days. Could you tell us a little bit about your relationship with the paper down there at Franklin.

Pelaghi- Oh (laughs). Well, that's a story that goes way beyond. We just had a meeting on baseball here. And the key, one of the key things that came out of this thing was the rivalry between Oil City and Franklin. Now in nineteen, 1919, the editor of the Franklin paper wrote a book. He was interested in, very interested in baseball. And the book was titled, and it tells you the whole story, *50 Years of Baseball War: Between Oil City and Franklin. 50 years of Baseball War*, now right after that came what we called a two team league. The two teams, the two towns were so competitive trying to outdo each other, both as far as community pride, and also the people who were betting big money. So they start importing big league players into their teams. And, well that's a long story, but I see 1919, October 1919, Franklin had six of its nine first stringers all from the big leagues, major leaguers. And the reason they got them, they paid them a lot more than the big leagues were paying them. Fact there was one guy named Ollie Omara who was interviewed in Oakland, by Oakland paper years afterwards who came here to play from the Brooklyn Dodgers, and he said when he came here his salary was doubled when he came to play for Oil city. A long history of rivalry in baseball, particularly. But when I came here, there was also a lot of rivalry about everything in a lot of areas, between the hospital, the airport, they were trying to decide where to spend some money on a new airport. Franklin's needed repaired. They had a study made. There was some people were in favor of improving ?? airport, because according to the study, the weather was more favorable. Anyhow, Franklin raised a big fuss and so the money went down to Franklin. You know the hospital rivalry. It started way, way

back with a birthing unit. Way back they were going to have a joint birthing unit. It fell through. Meryl Michum, a friend of mine was on a committee at one time in the fifty, late fifties, to the possibility of establishing one hospital for both cities. They went so far as to take an option on land between Oil City, down around Reno some place, and that thing fell through because of the rivalry, who was going to be in charge I guess. Well, anyhow this kept up, up, up. Ok. So this rivalry existed down to the newspapers. And the Derrick was owned by a different family than the Derrick. And it wasn't the owners so much that were competitive, but the news departments, we just fought tooth and nail. That if you know if you put a story in the news for ours, we wouldn't run it, and vice versa. It was very, very competitive. And we, Joe Saffron, the editor of the Derrick, wouldn't speak to the editor down in Franklin; they just hated each other. It was an intense competition. It was just intense.

McElwee- I've heard, I've heard. It had to be an interesting time to be in the newspaper business to say the least.

Pelaghi- It was competitive, and it made for better papers I think in a way, because you really had to go out and beat the other paper.

McElwee- Oh, the standards were very high for both of these papers. No question about it. I've heard for relatively small communities, these communities really enjoyed the benefit of top notch newspapers for the time, and so that competition always brings out the best in people. No question about that. We'll be talking to one of the old News Herald folks, Carolee Michener, here. Do you have any sweet words for Carolee, prior to (Inaudible).

Pelaghi- No, well I'll tell you the truth, for many years I, well you know, I just you know wasn't very friendly to her. When I got to know her we are friends now. It took time to wear that off. It was intense competition, you know. In fact, I don't know if this is true or not, but when The Derrick bought the News Herald, this is my, my guess maybe I shouldn't even say it. But the reason, normally when you buy a paper you combine them. You know, you put two names together and you have one paper. And being so close it was near to Franklin it would be pretty logical just to have one paper, with one name, serving both communities. But because of this rivalry this community's spirit that existed in both papers, both towns, I think the Derrick, I'm assuming, The Derrick said we better give, we better maintain Franklin their own paper. So although both papers are printed in the same building, the same news staff puts it out, they have this, the paginator a little different, they are told to do, it'll feature Franklin stories. They have two editions. So they keep them separate to some degree, but that goes back to the rivalry.

McElwee- And that's why, that intense rivalry, now the intense identification that both communities have and the pride they take in those papers. Those papers have their own dynamic, they do influence, no questioning influence life here, not just by covering what happens here, but also, how they do it, and that sort of thing. You, Bud, over many years have been a

major player, I as an historian recall many of the articles or the papers at the time you may have been the managing editor for that covered the oil history around here. And the Derrick always did an outstanding job during your time. And I know there's a couple guys particular, who were particularly good reporters when it came to covering the oil story. Can you tell us a little about some of them. Or do you recall some of those fellas.

Pelaghi- They were involved in

McElwee- The anniversary editions (inaudible)

Pelaghi- Well, you know, we had so many anniversaries coming up so there were many occasions for, to write stories. Some of the major reporters, one major reporter, I think it was Jack Payne. Who did a lot of historical writing, and he had a big background in local history as far I think he was mayor at one time, and, but as far as historical, historicals, everybody took part. We had a newsroom that everyone was able to do anything, you know. A person on society, we called it society then, it's no longer there. People were working on the society section. Would have to go out and cover meetings sometimes. Or even go out and take a photograph. So it was, you know, it was little delineation between duties like there is today. But, some of the big things you know, when I first came there I think the, I forget the date, but the Venango County, Venango county was celebrating its hundredth anniversary, hundred and fiftieth. They had a big edition, so we all worked furiously on that. 1971 we had the centennial edition for Oil City, for the Derrick, and also for the First Seneca Bank, and we had a great big edition there. You've probably seen that one.

McElwee- Yes, I have. I have it at home.

Pelaghi- Yeah, I worked on that a lot. It took me about a year and half to work on that. I spent many, many weekends and late hours working on that you know.

McElwee- And I can assure you many of us who do histories use that as the starting point. And even I think you know that, but that was a tremendous work.

Pelaghi- One section, I will have to admit, once section was done by our sports editor, who happened to be Henry Dilecki. So you know, were talking about who were involved in the covering history here. But, yeah, that was one of our big, big projects, as far as, but we had many occasions, you know, it was a time, there was anniversaries coming one after the other. Either a bank, or a business or somebody, so we kept, every time we would write a story people would come in and bring us pictures, and give us more information, and my being busy I didn't have time to do much with it, and maybe run the picture in the paper and then put it in the box and take it downstairs. Now what I've been doing since I retired is going downstairs and retrieving all that stuff, and they've given me an archives room down there, which is, you know, I'm not part of the staff, they just find a room and I can have it. And what I do now is go down and get those boxes, bring it up and look through them, and re-file the stuff in files.

McElwee- That's all part of kind of like your other life, and that is, at least that I'm aware of, and that's the heritage society activity that you've been involved in and it all came out of your work when you were putting these anniversary editions together and accumulating this material. Could you tell us about the early days of the Heritage Society and who the prominent personalities were and how that all came about, and just basically explain to our viewers just what that was.

Pelaghi- Well, I'm going back to Joe Barr's administration, and he was intent on getting a managing director, a city manager, but I guess I don't know, council wouldn't approve it or something, or there was no legal status for it. So he hired a guy by the name of Bob Albertson, a very young guy, but very, very aggressive. Anyhow, a lot of things were going on in town. We were having one rebuild project after the other. We were tearing down, you know, Main Street, we were tearing down the plaza, we were tearing down Stevens Street. Lots of projects, so Bob Albertson he said "We're losing so much." Oh, what happened is every time they were tearing these things down the D.A.R. would come in and complain about tearing some historic building down. And I guess, Bob Albertson thought, well, one way to do this is to start a historical society. So he got Jack Payne, who I mentioned before, who did a lot of historical writing. Myself and he, and we sat at the Holiday Inn one day and we decided to organize a Heritage Society. And, it was just like that, we called the meeting. He sent out letters, and we thought of a guy who oughta be good to head it. And that was Varnsbern, who was working for Quaker State at the time. So he served as president, and that's how it got started, just the three of us. Bob Albertson and thought that this was a good way to evaluate some of these historical projects.

McElwee- I understand in the early days you had speakers who would take different sides of an issue and debate it. It was really quite an intellectual group if you will.

Pelaghi- Oh, yeah. That was his idea, that was Bob Albertson's idea. But everything had two sides. Particularly, the one big issues was over on main street there was , at the time, at one time was the New York Central Station. And later was a feed store, and that's where President Grant came, and debarked from the train. And the D.A.R. were very adamant about saving that building, and they brought up a big fuss, and so Bob Albertson, I don't know what we did, I think we had a program on, for and against it. And you know, I mean so that became the format for most of our programs. Now I did one on John Dewey, John Dewey was sort of a controversial person with a lot of people. And so we had a, I was a pro and we had another guy by I forget his name, Rory something. He took the other side. So it was sort of a debate, and the quarrel of the debate there was to establish a historical marker for John Dewey on Central Avenue, where the fire station is now, where he had taught. And the people against it said "Why do we want to, you know, put a memorial up for a guy like that?" Because he was quite liberal and had a reputation of being liberal. And so we jockeyed back and forth, and to go one step further on that point, I took upon myself to apply to the Pennsylvania Historical Commission, Museum in Historical Commission for a marker. So, I was friends with Jim Stevenson, In Titusville, who owned the paper up there,

and he was on the Museum and Library Commission, in Harrisburg. And I also knew Jake Kepler Davis who was a Representative for Forest County, and he was on the Library Commission. So I talked to both of those two gentlemen, and I asked them about the possibility of getting a marker. So he said, "Oh, yeah. Just write it up and send it in." Gave me the address of where to send it. "And, we'll get it through for you." So I did it, I wrote the letter or whatever it was, that I had to do and submitted it. And I get a notice sometime later, "Sorry, but your application for a marker for John Dewey has been turned down." And I saw my two friends and I said "What happened?" Well they said "We were outnumbered. They thought he was a communist and they didn't want to approve a marker." So ten years lapse, I forgot about it. Ok that was the end of that. I'm sitting in my little office here at the Derrick one day. I get a call from the Pennsylvania Museum of Historical Commission, and they tell me point blank, "Hey, your application for a marker for John Dewey has been approved."

McElwee- Is that right.

Pelaghi- (Laughs) Ten years later without my even, you know, doing anything about it. So we did, we got a marker up there now.

McElwee- Well, congratulations, Bud. Congratulations John Dewey. Years went by, and you retired, after serving sometime as the editor of the paper. Any comment on that time as you served as editor that you just want to share with us, before we get into your retirement years.

Pelaghi- I don't know. It was a very, it was a different kind of paper then, I mean. I got in when they had what they call a hot type. Where they had a line of type machines, you would write up, well you would write a story, it was sent to the shop, and they would convert it into lead type, and then it would go and do that so. I started with that system, then later it was, it kept changing gradually with tape. You would write a story, and they would put it on tape. Then you would write stories on special paper, which they could feed it through a machine that would actually operate the line of types automatically. So they would, that's a lot of change. Then I think it came around 1971 when they converted to photo paper, what do they call it, I forgot the, anyhow, cold type. Cold type, yeah. Interesting enough we were in the forefront of developing this system. They worked on it for about two years. They had people from different companies come in here from a college, I forget what college, university was involved in trying to convert a bulky letter press into taking offset. The other system at that time was offset. It was either hot type or offset. Well, they worked on it and worked on it, and what they developed was they got around the offset by instead of printing, transferring the image onto a rotor, which then put onto the paper, this was directly from the plate to the paper, and they called it direct lithography. Dilitho, that was the name of it. And it really started here. We had people from Japan

McElwee- Is that right.

Pelaghi- To come in to observe the system. Actually it started here, the Dilitho program. What it did, made the paper maintain, keep its bulky presses. I (inaudible) to buy from the presses

McElwee- Totally (inaudible)

Pelaghi- But anyhow, we were in the forefront of that. Otherwise, other things about the Derrick, lets see. Probably not, nothing just a lot about editions. Our people were very involved in the city. Bob Rhodes was very involved. Both in the planning and, we had a lot of projects going on. The new hospital, new churches, there was always people in here guiding fund drives. They, one after the other, and there was a lot of involvement with people in our paper. (Inaudible Name) was very involved, moneywise, time wise. Bob Rhodes did a lot, and some other people. And I was more or less the delegator, you know, to publicize all this stuff. For that reason, now lot of the reporters have a specific beat, but when I came here I was more or less urged to cover everything. I went to board meetings, school board meetings, even go to Franklin. Oh, the other big thing that happened in my period of time with the Derrick was a, was the Olivia Dean trial. There was a big major trial here. That brought in all kinds of media people. It was a soldier who married a Filipino girl in the Philippine Islands, brought her here. They lived up around Titusville someplace. And I guess he wasn't too loyal to her, they had a little baby, and I guess one night she had enough, she got a shotgun while was on the couch and shot him dead. So we had a murder trial, big murder trial. And had really international repercussions, because people in the Philippines sent a special attorney to defend this woman. I can remember I forget what paper in England would us every night for a summary of the trial. And we had clippings from Japan, from all over, because of this poor little girl who came here with a soldier, and she has a little girl and she's up on trial. So we had, oh lets see who was the attorney, did a wonderful job, anyhow. Anyhow, the bottom line was, she was, the verdict was non-guilty.

McElwee- She was acquitted.

Pelaghi- Acquitted, yeah. But that drew a lot of attention. The Derrick Newsroom was converted into a sort of international newsroom. A.P. had machines down there sending pictures out, yeah.

McElwee- Imagine what that would be like today. You would have those big T.V. trucks with the satellite hookups, all those things.

Pelaghi- That would have been different.

McElwee- Quite a story. Lidia Dean.

Pelaghi- Olivia Dean. Olivia Dean trial. She's still living. She went south. I think in Kentucky or Tennessee to live. She's probably still down there. Well that was a really, obvious murder trial. But she got off.

McElwee- When did you retire?

Pelaghi- I try to think about that. I think this morning. You should have asked me that. And I can't remember. I think I've been retired for about thirteen, fourteen years. Maybe fifteen years. So I have to go back, it's quite a while.

McElwee- I've often wondered, I can never nail, nail you down or anybody else to say when actually Bud retired. You kind of been at it, you never really did retire. He's still in the Derrick office.

Pelaghi- I'm still down there a lot. You know. I go through. I have my archives room is on the way on the far end. I have my own entrance, they don't see me, unless I want to walk through. Yeah, so I'm down there a lot, yeah.

McElwee- Well, the Heritage Society kind of, it continued to exist, not always active. Mrs. Harvey was a principal person involved in that. Could you tell us little bit more about her role please.

Pelaghi- Oh, yeah. Right. Right. As you said before, it was a unique way we presented problems. We had pro's and con's. And had good speakers. We had, we would hold our meetings, well I don't know if they were annual meetings or more often, but in the Holiday Inn. And we would get a roomful of people, hundred or more, you know. And we had key speakers, we had, oh gee, I can't think of his name now, but he was a bat boy for the two team league, and became an oil man in Chicago. He came to talk to us. We had, but anyhow the Heritage Society kept going pretty good for a while. Until 1971, when Varnsbern decided not to be President anymore, and then attendance in the meetings slipped down a lot. And I remembered the time we named, we elected Barb Harvey. Mrs. Joseph Harvey as president. And from one reason the other the club just melted away. And she maintained her position and she became real ill, so she did a lot of her work at home. Still did the correspondence up there. If ever there was a question about history, they would come to the library or to the Derrick, they would refer it to her, and she would handle it.

McElwee- I never had the pleasure of meeting her. I understand she was kind of legendary, beautiful woman. That's what they tell me. She became a repository for so many of the sources of material that we value today as basic history for the oil industry and Oil City. In time, that, much of that would go to the new Barbara Harvey Library section, at the Venango campus. Isn't that right.

Pelaghi- Right.

McElwee- Were you, tell us a little bit about that so we, so this can get on the historical record for people in the future how that transpired if you remember.

Pelaghi- The Barbara Harvey stuff?

McElwee- Yeah, right.

Pelaghi- Ok. Well, yeah. Well, Joe Harvey and I, I know Joe Harvey quite well, and he was wondering what to do, well there's two aspects of this. One was, all this stuff that Barb Harvey had

collected up in her house, historical stuff, what to do. So he did one time bring a mess of it down to the Heritage room upstairs at the library. Then, we talked about it, and he sort of, he didn't tell me, but I sort of offered, offered to disseminate this stuff for him. Some should go to Drake Museum, some maybe other places, you know. So, as a result of that he brought everything down to me. I know I had Barb Zolli come down from the Drake Well. She had first choice, whatever she wanted, she took it. Some went down to Franklin, there was some Miller stuff, which I thought would be more appropriate down there. So that's the way I disseminated that. But then as far as the Barb Harvey thing, that was a separate item, I don't know how that got around. I know he talked to me about doing something for Barb, but I never knew how it got to that point.

McElwee- Well, hopefully he'll be able to tell us here.

Pelaghi- Yeah, Ok. Good. Oh, good.

McElwee- Now I have to ask you is, were kind of beginning to get to the end of this here Bud. You've been here now five, six decades, you said you'd, you revealed to us, well you came here, you tried for a year. Of course you've been here much longer than a year. You first came here, your first visit to town didn't look too good. Things of this nature. Why don't you kind of tell us what you see today, after all that time, about Oil City. The good and the bad. What's changed. What's good. What could be better. Those sorts of things.

Pelaghi- Well, you know the biggest change was I say the culture maybe, or the mix of people, because when I came here like in 1955, and for many years afterwards, there was a big number of people in the middle management area. We had banks, Pennzoil, Oil Well, J&L, these are people in sort of middle management, who were very active in the community. In fact Joe Barr made it a point to have a big advisory committee of about fifty people, of all these people, and they were very active. And they were school boarders; they were a lot of things in the city. And what has happened is these plants, these banks, don't have that middle management group here anymore. And what you have is a different, different mix of people. So the big thing that's changed is that core of middle management people who were either by their own instinct or desires to be active in the community, or many times they were urged by their companies to get involved. I know some companies wanted their men on the boards. I know First Seneca Bank, Oil Well, they all tried to, excuse me. Saw a fly there.

McElwee- Little gnat is our friend. He has been keeping us company.

Pelaghi- Yeah, well. Where was I?

McElwee- The companies that required their people to be on some of these boards.

Pelaghi- Yeah, right. Yeah. And it did a lot of good. You don't have that. Now people, as a result the school board, the school board makes (inaudible) All the boards, I would say, I hate to say that, but it makes a more dedicated, higher class of people. More doers.

McElwee- More professional.

Pelaghi- More doers. They were dedicated to doers. And I see that missing. Yeah, that's a big change. We don't have that group of people. The other thing is, well the whole town has changed you know. Physically (laughs). And you wouldn't recognize if you would put 1955 against today.

McElwee- Well, today you have to admit, Oil City is a much better looking town than it was in 1955, don't you think. Or maybe you don't.

Pelaghi- Well, yeah! It's a little bit, you know what I've been saying, you're on city council, and I hate to say this, but I think there's a time now for another big rebuild up, and push, urban renewal, because you have a lot of deterioration in this town. Aging has causing that, and the mix of people that you are getting in here is causing, and I think there are areas I look around, but wouldn't it be nice to I could eliminate that block and put a an apartment building for many. Not low class, but middle class, middle income people. Wouldn't be nice. I often think about that, right. And I hate to identify the places where I see that possibility, but it's, it's better than it was 1955, yes. It's not as, but there are different needs now. I think there's needs for housing for people who are middle income. I know a lot of my friends who are as old as I am, and liked to get out of their big house, but they don't want to go into a, you know, look house or one of these small apartments in an individual housing. Something like Meadville has, something like that. But, no it's a great place, and I even this morning when I looked out and saw all that sky pink and blue, boy was it beautiful. I said "No better place in the world to be than right here."

McElwee- You're right, I agree with you. Exactly. Are there any parting comments, closing comments you would like to share with, remember now we're talking to the world, and we're talking to generations to come.

Pelaghi- Well, I don't know. I guess the thing is I'd like to urge people to get involved in their community. I don't, the big thing that I would like to see done in this town, if you want to even improve it more than it is now is to make it, make the town look more attractive. The one thing is cleanliness, and orderliness. Now, every time I walk into Wal-Mart or even now these other groceries stores, one of the prime things is to keep their place neat. You look at the floor, it's neat and clean. You look at the shelves they have people stacking them. So that's a big thing that they're pressing on the business side, is to make it attractive and pleasant when you walk in. So I would like Oil City to be that way. If I walk down the street, I hate to see stuff on the side. Park my car in the parking lot; I hate to see bottles and papers strewn all over the place. Or stuff like that. If there was only some way, you know,

to keep this city clean and neat I think that would be a big attraction. Because, when people go to Singapore, what do they talk about? How neat and clean it is.

McElwee- They certainly do.

Pelaghi- (laughs)

McElwee- And it is, and it really is. We have lessons to learn from those people.

Pelaghi- Yep.

McElwee- Well, I've learned a lot from you in my years here in Oil City, and I think others have too. Its, you have been a credit to your generation, you have been a credit to this community, you are a man that's um will be always well thought of. I wish you many more good years of those avocado, orange juice breakfasts (laughs). And maybe we will all learn a lesson on long and happy life from you. And with that, I would like to just say thank you Bud, it's been a pleasure.

Pelaghi- Well, thank you. Thank you, very much.

Unknown- Neil, you wanna look at your camera and just do a little outro?

McElwee- Um. This is, in this session this is the first of our ongoing conversations with individuals in this area who have made an impact, had a great impact, because of not only what they do, but the kind of lives that they live in this region. That we were able to meet in the National Transit Building itself, something that mean a great deal to the community, its symbolic in itself. It's just something that we are going to continue to do, and it's a pleasure to look forward to.

Unknown- Ok. Now we are sitting at about forty-eight minutes. If you could think of another question that we could edit in the middle that would work.

Pelaghi- Hey, could I go to the men's room?

Unknown- You certainly could. Go ahead and stop tape though.

McElwee- That sort of thing. Could you kind of like get into that, get your mind into that and recall for all of us who your neighbors were.

Unknown- Let's wait until the siren goes.

McElwee- Oh yeah. Well, we'll just, I'll just, I'm just asking, don't. This isn't for tape right now, we're just talking, you wanna do something like that?

Pelaghi- Yeah, ok. This is off. Yeah some of the people on that street, yeah.

McElwee- Yeah.

Pelaghi- I'm trying to think of how many mayors we have had on that street. I think.

McElwee- Ok, well don't give it all to us. I don't want you to (inaudible).

Pelaghi- I'm thinking now (laughs).

McElwee- OK, well you'd be comfortable doing that. If they can just fit that in, I will say something about, well you live in that really nice home you have on Kyle Avenue. That's fame for being the.

Pelaghi- Some of the people on the street.

McElwee- Yeah. Yeah.

Pelaghi- Yeah.

McElwee- Ok.

Unknown- Ok, ready? Go.

McElwee- Bud, you live, and have for sometime in that beautiful home of yours up on Kyle Avenue. I've actually stopped and asked you to sign my petitions a couple of time, but I find out that you're not the same party necessarily, but that's alright. Kyle Avenue is famous for being the street of Oil City mayors, and Chief Executive Officers of some of our oil companies. What were some of your neighbors like that, and who do you remember as the fellows who lived on that street?

Pelaghi- Well first, maybe I will try to recall some of the mayors, because that's one thing that I point out a lot, a lot of time to people that see the mayors. We had Joe Barr, at the bottom. We had Vankirk, Richard Vankirk. We had Ted Williams. We had on the top of the street Wayne Blyler, and Jack Payne. That I can remember.

McElwee- Yeah.

Pelaghi- Then among other people on the street, some of the people I don't even know. There's a big house at, near the bottom, I don't know if the Crawford house.

McElwee- That was the Quaker State CEO house. The big, um, brick.

Pelaghi- Brick, brick one. Was that? See I didn't know that. But we had Cantino, Joe Cantino, who was President of National Transit. Lived on the street there. Well, we had Stu McCullough, who was the Postmaster. So well that's, lets see we have some of the business people like McCarthy's, who owned the McCarthy garage there. Some doctors on the street. Yeah, yeah it's been a big, you know, change on the streets since I've been there, I know. I've been there since 1971, so I've been there quite a while. But some of my neighbors don't even know now to tell you the truth.

McElwee- That's to be expected. You know Kyle Avenue physically, it only existed at the bottom two blocks. Up, up higher, that was, that's all fill.

Pelaghi- Right.

McElwee- Yeah, that was put in there what about 1910? You probably may or not.

Pelaghi- We found that out when we were, we wanted to put, stabilize our garage, it was leaning a little bit, so we had Dave Schreckengoss come in, and he lifted the garage up to put the footers around it. And boy did he complain. It was all dirt, stones, rubbish. It was terrible. So they must have had all kinds of fill in that place. You look at it and you wouldn't think of it but by looking at it. But it was almost remade that street. I guess, and also up the street they had problems with subsidence of soil, because there was an underground stream.

McElwee- And still is. And still is.

Pelaghi- Is it?

McElwee- Yup, yeah. If you recall about five years ago, the city put some sort of plastic liner in there, very expensive undertaking.

Pelaghi- Oh, yeah, yeah.

McElwee- And there were sinkholes.

Pelaghi- Sinkholes, yeah right. So yeah.

McElwee- Folks on Kyle Avenue are very proud of their address. They'll tell you "I live on Kyle", even today.

Pelaghi- Is that right?

McElwee- Oh yes, oh yes they will. Up in library, second floor of the Oil City library, there's some publications speaking to Kyle Avenue, and how proud they were.

Pelaghi- I don't know all the people actually. You probably know more of the oil people there besides Cantino that was on that street.

McElwee- The names aren't coming to mind right now, but you're right. It was where the not only the CEO's of Quaker State and sometimes Pennzoil, and South Penn Oil, South Penn Oil. They were all there,

Pelaghi- Yeah, yeah.

McElwee- but also those first level managers right below them, they had a lot of their homes there.

Pelaghi- And also the Judge who, what's his name? Lived on the corner of Third and Kyle. It's um, McCracken. McCracken

McElwee- McCracken.

Pelaghi- Judge McCracken lived there. You know so we had.

McElwee- And then that was the road the street you took to go up to the circle.

Pelaghi- The circle, yeah.

McElwee- Of which at the time was "*Oh they live up at the circle*" Which meant something.

Pelaghi- Which at one time was a race track, which one time

McElwee- Right, right.

Pelaghi- In fact Tom (unknown) I understand performed up there at one time.

McElwee- Oh is that right. I didn't know that.

Pelaghi- Yeah.

McElwee- That home, you didn't build that home you're in?

Pelaghi- No, no. It was owned by an oil man. Burgess. He was in one of the pipeline companies. But then I think two houses up from me was another pipeline executive. I forget, there were Stu McCullough eventually lived.

McElwee- Well, you know this is interesting in itself. You're bringing out something. The homes in the Oil City area, both sides of the river, they were all connected to oil people.

Pelaghi- Yeah.

McElwee- In the years that they changed hands it was always either the oil men built it or they moved into it, that sort of thing. We can't get away from our oil history here.

Pelaghi- Yeah, but there not big house like you find other places, where the oil people really built big houses. Yeah. Yeah. Well Vankirk, his wife, you know Mayor Vankirk lived on Kyle Avenue on the left hand side. Right below his house was his sister-in-laws house. And she was granddaughter or I guess granddaughter of one of the three founders of Pennzoil. ??? I forget who that was, but anyhow. Let's see was it, I forget. Anyhow.

McElwee- Walz. Lou Walz.

Pelaghi- Lou. Lou.

McElwee- Lou. Lou Walz.

Pelaghi- Yeah.

McElwee- W-A-L-Z, I believe. Right. Right. Very good.

Pelaghi- So, yeah that was oil connected too, because.

McElwee- They were all there. Well, you've um, the streets still a grand street, are you moving (laughs)? Is your house for sale?

Pelaghi- My house?

McElwee- Yes.

Pelaghi- Hey I'm cleaning it out. Getting ready.

McElwee- Are you really, I thought so (laughs).

Pelaghi- Trying to get rid a lot of that stuff so if (inaudible).

McElwee- If anybody's interested then come to Oil City, and cut them an offer.

Pelaghi- I've had, we've had annual yard sale. The whole streets, you know a yard sale. So I've been getting rid of a lot of stuff that way. Giving my nieces and nephews stuff.

McElwee- When was the yard sale? This weekend?

Pelaghi- No (laughs).

McElwee- No, ok.

Pelaghi- I'm down to books now mostly. Great collection of books, I don't know what to do with them.

McElwee- Well, thank you for that comment. Moving on.

Unknown- Well, why don't you ask one thing about some of the positive things in Oil City, and we will keep that as a final for sure.

Pelaghi- Alright, this is just preliminary, you know we were, I asked at the end of the

Unknown- We're recording.

McElwee- Well, because of your years around here, I'm very interested and I'm sure are our audience would too. What do you see that is good, there are positives about not only Oil City per say, but the region Venango County, that sort of thing that you feel good about and you know as you move on, you'll feel good that these things have happened.

Pelaghi- Yeah well, one reason that I am glad to be here is, even though I'm not a hunter nor a fisherman, which would be a great place to be, be like paradise, yeah. I still think it's great. I mean the outdoors. I can remember times well, well, I remember times like when we used to go up to pitt hole area, every Saturday, and have a cookout. You know, travel within five minutes you could get to someplace where you'd like to be. You know whether it's on the

river, the canoe, or I don't fish, just to look at the river sometimes, I just love walking across the bridge, and looking at the river. And I said I was in Europe a couple times in Italy, and I would marvel at the see, and walk a bridge and see that. And then I walk across the veterans bridge I say "This is a hundred times better and nicer. I should appreciate this. I don't have to go to Italy, I don't have to go to some place else to see a sight", you know. The hills is a variety, the hills. Basically one thing I tell people, and I've told this down, when I was down in Naples to the guy who was in charge of a historical center, and I think he's the one who told me by the way, I was telling him all that we have here, and he said "We have to hype everything we put in here, we have to hype it up" He said "You have it naturally. Your place has a soul." And I keep thinking about that, that this place has a soul. It's more than a buildings, you know, the stores. This is a soul. Because it goes way back. The history is part of the soul. The topography is part of the soul, and even the climate. The most beautiful fall we've ever had. I think recently, I used to marvel at it. I said "No place in the world would be nicer than this to be right now." So it's an accumulation of a lot of things, which is physical, historical, and the people, the people are so friendly. I don't spend much time at home, you know. When we's out for breakfast I go to a coffee shop, we eat out at lunch. I don't, I don't cook much at home. If I might open the can, but this, the people are friendly. I go out to meet people, it's a pastime, and the people are friendly.

McElwee- I happen to agree with you one-hundred percent. I know that years ago, my family used to come up here on weekends just to see the place. My dad worked here in the thirties and he just wanted to come back to enjoy the hills, the river, he loved the ice. I have to tell you the ice on the Allegheny in the wintertime. Just a wonderful place to be, and you can't take that way from the Oil City area. That's just the way it is.

Pelaghi- And the water is great. I have to tell you this story. My father lived in Masontown and I would visit him occasionally, about once a month. And every time I go down. I would bring two gallons of our water. Because it was so much better to make coffee with.

McElwee- Best water in the world.

Pelaghi- Yeah! Right! There's another plus. Probably the more you think, the more you can find good about this place. There is. I think the only thing, just if we could some way make it more inviting. Cleanliness, orderliness. You don't have to have any big industries here. It can become a great place to live. I know people would like to come back and live here.

McElwee- Let's hope in the next decade or two, that actually becomes reality. And again, thank you Bud.

Pelaghi- Thank you. Thank you.