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 about what's gonna be happening here in Oil City in the next week or so. We're in the lobby of the historic National Transit building and I have the pleasure this morning of talking with one of the oil regions most distinguished personalities. He'd 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 ?? six decade career in the Oil City area. His professional life is as a journalist and is an editor of the Oil City Derrick but he's 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 long time citizen who's lived his entire adult life here in this community, what he's observed over the years and how he's participated. So, welcome. I've had the pleasure of speaking with Buddy numerous times. It's really good to see you, Bud. You look great. As you were telling us your avocado and orange juice breakfast is really helping you look good after all these years. Welcome, how are you doing this morning?

Pelaghi: Very good, thank you.

McElwee: To get this going, Bud, you're not originally from the Oil Region area, Venango County or Oil City, actually you were raised in Masontown, is that correct?

Pelaghi: That's right, I was born in Masontown. I was raised there until I went into the army.

McElwee: And then afterwards you went on into West Virginia?

Pelaghi: Yeah, well I was in the army for three and a half years, then I came back and I was gonna go to University of Michigan for a business degree but a business opportunity appeared and I got partnership in a restaurant so I canceled my college path and went into business. I was in the restaurant business for eight years and the last four years I went through and 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 was called The Savoy.

McElwee: The Savoy?

Pelaghi: It was a really successful business and the family friend who picked this opportunity up and came down and talked me out of going to college and going into business with him, he was gonna 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. It was right after the war and guys were coming home, they were buying gifts for their girlfriends and girls were coming in buying costume jewelry so we did pretty good for

the first four years and then everybody saw we were doing good and they started doing the same thing, so naturally business slipped a lot.

McElwee: Okay. So, did you pick up a journalism degree or was—

Pelaghi: Yeah. I didn't know what—it's odd if I wanted to go into this. I was in business and I had friends who were in education—teachers and one was a college professor down in Norfolk—would come up every summer to Masontown and they just coaxed me to go back to school. You know I just couldn't work it, so what they did—being teachers they had their summers off and they were going to Morgantown for Masters degrees or fulfilling other education requirements. One fellow was working for his doctorate in history and they talked to me about it—worked it this way, they were going up and they needed transportation. Said how about you just drive us up for a class and then we'll come right back and you'll be in time here at the restaurant. They carry a noon hour lunch. So I said okay, I'll just drive you up. And they said well if you're gonna drive us up you might as well get a course, so I did. I got dreadful speaking or something, I forget what it was, just to take a course. And I liked it so that was first six weeks. Second six weeks I said let's take two courses. And gradually I talked to the people about a possibility of my getting—going through the system there of just go into school in the mornings 'cause I had to be back at noon for the restaurant. And they were very lenient and very nice to me and they worked it out, some two level, three level courses in my freshman year. And I got my degree, I got a little bit more than I needed in four and a half years.

McElwee: That's great. So, what happened did you just decide I'm going to go in to work for some paper, or? How was that career decision made and how did you end up putting in an application into the Derrick?

Pelaghi: Well, I owe it all to the director of journalism who really I owe a lot to, Percy Reed. He had a formula for me, he said get your degree, work one year for a good weekly, then one year at a good small daily, then pitch yourself. Don't go aiming for a big job, he said work a weekly first for one year then one year at a daily and then pitch. Well, he got me a job in Upton, Maryland, good weekly, big weekly, had good 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 okay. Well, I didn't do it, I was there another three months. He called me again. So right on the spot I resigned, I gave them my notice, two-week notice and told them I was gonna quit. Had no jobbut I was gonna quit. So, what'd I do, I registered with the Pennsylvania Newspaper Association that I was looking for a job, 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, though. I asked a lot of guys who were fishermen and hunters and they came up here, so I asked them "What about Oil City?" And I can remember the statement great place to hunt and fish but you won't want to live there.

So I called up Joe Saffron, sorry I just can't take the job. Well, he waited a week or two and he 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 in Franklin I went to Cranberry, I came down through the east end, 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. I couldn't see anybody. I rode across the State Street bridge which is now the Veteran's bridge. I looked at what was the railroad plaza. It was a windy day and I saw papers flying around, pigeons flying around. I went down Elm Street, which was like a cavern 'cause there were buildings on both sides and I said "Ohh, what a place." So I said oh this is it and I turned around to go back and I crossed the bridge again at St. Stevens I saw a policeman. 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 them." So I went down and talked to them and I accepted.

McElwee: To Oil City's and ?? delight that you did. I don't think most folks realized that you were almost ready to go back, back to Masontown and the Savoy Restaurant. (Both laugh).

Pelaghi: Not quite. I'll tell you I think eight years of experience in a restaurant was enough. I've often said if somebody offered me the best restaurant around here free and paid me a salary I wouldn't take it.

McElwee: Right. Alright, so we had the career change.

Pelaghi: Yeah.

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

Pelaghi: (Beginning at same time). Yeah, well, to my self I said, well I can say, I was in New Guinea 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). Okay, okay, but it ended up all these years.

Pelaghi: Yeah, so that 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 th—accidental decisions I ever made.

McElwee: So you stayed, you liked the Derrick, you married here and on and on.

Pelaghi: I started off with a reporter, beat reporter covering city hall. At that time it was a very active period because they were in the throws of the first, well, redevelopment period. Joe—

McElwee: Joe Barr.

Pelaghi: --Joe Barr was—at that time he was only Chamber president, but he sort of guided the whole renewal program himself and then later became a mayor. So I got in on that ground floor. They had the first master plan in—being put together at that time and I worked very closely with them. I attended all the meetings of the different organizations pending permission in there; 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 under valued—evaluated person. 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 but every once in a while he'd still 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 and 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, as I recall.

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 at 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 Committee Development, you know.

McElwee: Um, there's a story, you may have been there covering it, you had to be. The railroad station was still in existence when you came here and it's one right here down where ??

Pelaghi: (Begins speaking at same time). Yeah, I know what you mean, the plaza, railroad plaza.

McElwee: Right, do you remember when it was Gavin, Congressman Gavin was down there and they were to push a low or something like that and the building was to go up. Were you there that day that it went up in flames?

Pelaghi: Oh, yeah.

McElwee: (Laughing). That's awesome.

Pelaghi: That was the, 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, 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 the quickest way possible so they said we'll just burn it down. And they had the firemans ready and everybody else ready,you know, wanted to make sure nothing got out of hand. Well it went up and it was spectacular. It was this ?? thing, you know.

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

Pelaghi: Well, I—that I don't, I don't remember that but I imagine he would, he had been around, you 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 in Franklin?

Pelaghi: Well, that's a story that goes—we just had a meeting on baseball here and one of the key things that came out of this the rivalry between Oil City and Franklin. Now, in 1919 the editor of the Franklin paper wrote a book. He was very interested in baseball and the book was titled and it tells you the whole story *Fifty Years of Baseball War between Oil City and Franklin.* Fifty years of baseball war. Now after that came what we call the two team league. The two towns were so competitive at 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 that's a long story. Let's see, 1919, October 1919, Franklin had six of its nine first ringers all from the big leagues, major leaguers. And the reason they got 'em, they paid 'em a lot more than the big leagues were paying them. Fact, there was a big guy by the name of Oliver Humera who was interviewed in Oakland, by an Oakland paper years afterwards who came here to play from the Brooklyn Dodgers. He said when he came here his salary was doubled, when he came to play for Oil City. So, a long history of rivalry in baseball, particularly. But when I came here there was also a lot of rivalry, everything, a lot of areas; the hospital, the airport, they were trying to decide where to spend some money on a new airport in Franklin ?? prepared. They had a study made that was some people were in favor of improving Splain Airport because, according to the study, the weather was more favorable. Anyhow, Franklin raised a big fuss 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 gonna have a joint birthing unit, it fell through. Merle Mitchum, a friend of mine was on the committee at one time in the '50's, late '50's. The possibility of establishing one hospital for both cities. They went so far as to take an option of land between both cities down around Reno some place and that thing fell through because of the rivalry, who was gonna be in charge, I guess. But anyhow, this kept up—okay, so

this rivalry existed down to the newspapers. And the Derrick, was owned by a different family, the Derrick, and it wasn't the owners so much that got competitive but the news departments. We just fought tooth and nail that if you put a story in the News-Herald, we wouldn't run it and vice versa. It was very competitive. The editor of the Derrick wouldn't speak to the editor down in Franklin, they just hated each other. Intense competition, it was just intense.

McElwee: I've heard. It had to be an interesting time to be in the newspaper business.

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

McElwee: Oh, the standards were very high for both of these papers, no question about it and 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 ??

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

McElwee: Yeah and that's why, the intense rivalry. Now the intense identification both communities and the pride taken in those papers. Those papers have their own dynamic they do influence, no question they influence life here not just by covering what happens but also how they do it and that sort of thing. You, Bud, over many years have been a major player. I, as a 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 the time and I know there's a couple guys particularly—who were particularly good reporters when it came to covering the Oil story. Can you tell us a little bit about some of them? Can you recall some of those fellows.

Pelaghi: That were involved in—

McElwee: (Speaking at same time). The anniversary editions and things.

Pelaghi: Well, you know, did the—we had so many anniversaries coming up so there were many occasions for—to write stories. Some of the major reports, well one major reporter I think, was Jack Payne who did a lot of historical writing. And he had a big background in local history as far, I think was mayor at one time but as far as historical—everybody took part, everybody took part. We had a news room that everyone was able to do anything, you know. Person on society, we called it society then, it's no longer there. People working on the society section would have to go out and cover the meetings sometimes or even go out and take a photograph. There were deleviation between duties, like there is today, but some of the big things when I first came there, I think, Venango—I forget the date but the Venango County was celebrating it's hundredth anniversary, hundred and fiftieth, big edition. So we all worked furiously on. Uh, 1971 we had the centennial edition for Oil City for the Derrick and also the First Seneca Bank and we had a great big edition there, if you've ever seen that one.

McElwee: Yes, I have, I have it at home, that's—

Pelaghi: Yeah, I worked on that a lot. That took me about a year and a half to work on that and we spent many, many weekends and late hours working on that.

McElwee: And I can assure you many of us who do history use that as a starting point and I think you know, that was a tremendous work.

Pelaghi: It was, yeah. One section, I'll have to admit, one section was done by our sports editor who happened to be Henry Gallecki. So, you know who I'm talking about, who were involved in the covering history here. So that was one of our big, big projects as far as—but we had many occasions, you know, it was a time where—anniversaries coming one after the other. Either a bank or a business or somebody so we just kept—everytime 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 a picture in the paper, but it in a box and run it downstairs. Now, what I've been doing since I retired is going downstairs and retrieving all that stuff, they've given me an archives room down there which is, you know I'm not part of the staff they just found a room I could have it. And what I do now is go down and get those boxes, bring them up and look through them and refile 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 that all came out of your work when you were putting the anniversary editions together and accumulating this material. Could you tell us about the early days of the heritage society and who the prominent personnel's were and how that all came about? Just basically explain to our viewers just what that was.

Pelaghi: Well, this was—I'm going back to Joe Barr's administration and he was intent on getting managing director—city manager. But I guess the council wouldn't approve it or something or there was no legal status for it so he hired a guy by the name of ?? Albertson, a very young guy, very aggressive. Anyhow, a lot of things were going on in the town. We were having one great work project after the other. We're tearing down, you know, Main Street we were tearing down the plaza, we were tearing down Stephen Street—lots of projects. So, Albertson said we're losing so much—oh, what happened was everytime we were tearing these things down the DAR would come in and complain about tearing some historic building down. I guess Bob Albertson thought one way to do this was to start a historical society. So he got Jack Payne who I had 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 the Heritage Society. And just like that, we called the meeting, he sent out letters and we thought of a guy who ought to be a good head, Lawrence ?? 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, 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: Well, that was his idea, that was Bob Albertson's idea, but everything had two sides. Particularly, the one big issue was over on Main Street there was the—at one time was a New York Central Station. Uh, feed store, and that's where President Grant came and debarked from the train and the DAR were very adament about saving that building and they put up a big fuss so Bob Albertson, I don't know what we did, I think we had a ?? it, for and against it, you know. So that became the format for most of our programs. Now, I did one of John Douie. John Douie was sort of a controversial person with a lot of people and so I was a pro and we had another guy, I forget his name, Morrey something, he took the other side. So it was sort of a debate. And the core of the debate there was to establish a historical marker for John Douie on Central Avenue where the fire station is now, where he had taught. And the people against it said "Why do we want to put a memorial up for a guy like that?" 'Cause he was quite liberal, had a reputation of being liberal. And so we jockeyed back and forth and to go one step further on that point, I took it upon myself to apply to the Pennsylvania Historical Commission—Museum and Historical Commission—for a marker. So, I was friends with Jim Stephenson in Titusville who wrote the paper up there and he was on the Museum and Library Commission in Harrisburg. And I also knew Jay Kepler Davis who was a representative for Forrest County and he was on the Library Commission. So I talked to both those two gentlemen and I asked them about the possibility of getting a marker. So they said "Oh, yeah, just write it up, we'll send it in" and gave me the address where to send it and "we'll get it through for you. So I did it, I wrote the letter whatever it was that I had to do and submitted it and I get a notice sometime later. Sorry, about your

application for a marker for John Douie has been turned down. And so I saw the two friends and said what happened? They said well, we were outnumbered. They said he was a communist and they didn't want to put up a marker. So ten years lapsed—I forgot about it, that was the end of that. I'm sitting in my little office there at the Derrick one day and I get a call from the Pennsylvania Museum and Historical Commission and they tell me point blank "Hey, your application for a marker for John Douie has been approved.

McElwee: Is that right? After all those years.

Pelaghi: Ten years later without my knowing anything about it. So we did, we got a marker up there now.

McElwee: Well, congratulations, congratulations, John Douie. Um, years went by and you retired after spending some time as editor of the paper. Any comment on that time you served as editor that you want to share with us before we get into your retirement years?

Pelaghi: I don't know, it was a very different kind of paper then. I got into it when they had what they call hawk-type, where they had ?? type machine. 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 and I started with that system. Then later 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 there were a lot of changes. Then I think it came around 1971 when they converted it to photo paper, what do they call that? I forgot the—anyhow, cold type. Cold type, yeah. And interesting enough we were in the forefront of developing this system. It worked only for about two years, we had people from different companies come in here, from the college, I forget what college, university was involved in trying to convert bulky letterpress into taking offset. That was the other thing, at that time it 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—transfer an image onto a roller which then put onto paper. This was directly from the plate to the paper and they called it direct deflography. Dilitho, that was the name of it and it really started—we had people from Japan—

McElwee: Is that right?

Pelaghi: --that come in to observe the system. Actually it started here, the Dilitho program. What it did was make a paper maintain, you know, keep it's bulky presses. I didn't want them to have to buy new presses for the new system—

McElwee: (Speaking at same time). Totally new presses.

Pelaghi: But anyhow we were at the forefront of that.

McElwee: Great, great.

Pelaghi: Otherwise, other things about the Derrick, let's see. Probably not a big thing, just a little addition, our people were very involved in the city. Bob Rhoades was very involved both in the planning—we had a lot of projects going on: new hospital, new churches. There were always people in here guiding from drives, one after the other. There was a lot of involvement with people in our paper. E.P. Boyd was very involved moneywise and timewise. Bob Rhoades did a lot and some other people. And I was more or less the delegator to publish that other stuff and for that reason—I mean, now a lot of the reporters have a specific beat but when I came here I was more or less, you know, 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 the Lydia Dean trial. There was a big major trial here that brought in all kinds of media people. It was the soldier who married the Philipino girl in the Philippine Islands, brought her here and lived up around Titusville someplace. And I guess he wasn't too loyal to her. They had a little baby. I guess one night she had enough, she got a shotgun while he was on the couch, shot him, dead. So we had a murder trial, big murder trial. It 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 call us every night for a summary of the trial. And we had clippings from Japan, from all over because this poor little girl had came here, you know, with a soldier, and has a little girl and now she's up on trial. So we had, oh see, who was the attorney? Did a wonderful job. Anyhow, the bottom line 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. AP had machines down there sending pictures out.

McElwee: Imagine what that'd be like today, you'd have those big t.v. trucks with those satellite hook-ups, all those things.

Pelaghi: Yeah, it would've been different.

McElwee: Quite a story, Lydia Dean.

Pelaghi: Lydia Dean, Lydia Dean trial. She's still living, she went south, I think in Kentucky or Tennessee to live. She's probably still down there. That was a really, you know, obvious murder trial but she got off.

McElwee: When did you retire?

Pelaghi: Oh, I was trying to think about that, I think this morning, if you should've 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 you down or anybody else to say when actually Bud retired. You've kind of been at it and 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 no entrance really unless I wanna walk through the—so I'm down there a lot, yeah.

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

Pelaghi: As you've said before, there's a unique way we present the programs, we had pros and cons, with speakers. We had program meetings. I don't think they were annual meetings, more often, but in the holiday—and we would get a loadful of people, a hundred or more. And we had key speakers, we had, oh, I can't think of his name now. He was a bat boy for the two team league and he became an oil man in Chicago, but he came to talk to us. We had, but anyhow, the Heritage Society kept going pretty good for awhile until 1971 when ?? decided not to be President anymore. Then attendance to the meetings slipped down a lot and I remember the time we named—elected Barb Harvey, Mrs. Joseph Harvey, as President. And for one reason or the other the ?? just melted away and she maintained her position and she became real ill and so she did a lot of her work at home, simply correspondence with her. If there was a question about history that would come to the library or 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.

Pelaghi: Yes.

McElwee: She became a repository for so many 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, am I right? Were you—tell us a little about that so this can get on the historical record for people in the future, how that transpired, if you remember.

Pelaghi: The Barb Harvey stuff?

McElwee: Yeah, right.

Pelaghi: Okay. Well, yeah, Joe Harvey—I know Joe Harvey ?? and he was wondering what to do—well, there's two aspects to this: one was all the 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, see we talked about it and I sort of offered to assimilate the stuff for him. Cause I said some should go to Drake museum, some maybe to 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 how we assimilated that. But as far as the Barb Harvey thing, that's a separate—I don't know how that got around. I know he talked to me about doing something for Barb but I never knew how they got to that point.

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

Pelaghi: Yeah, okay, good.

McElwee: --in one of our interviews. Now I have to ask you as we're kind ofbeginning to get to the end of this, Bud. You've been here now five, six decades. You revealed to us, well you came here you tried it for a year, of course you were here much longer than a year. You first came here, your first visit to town didn't look too good, things of this nature. Aren't you trying to tell us what you see today after all this time in Oil City, the good and the bad. What's changed, what's good, what could be better, those sorts of things.

Pelaghi: Well, the biggest change was—I'd 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, Penzoil, oil well, J & L, and these were people in middle management who were very active in the community. In fact, Joe Barr made it a point to have a big advisement committee of about fifty people—all these people. And they were very active. They were on school boards, they were on a lot of things in the city and what has happened is these ?? , these banks don't have that middle management group here anymore. And what you have is a different mix of people. So, the big thing that's changed is that chl—or middle management people who were here 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, I saw a fly there.

McElwee: He's our friend, he's been keeping us company.

Pelaghi: Yeah, well, where was I? (Laughs).

McElwee: The company's that required their people to be on the??

Pelaghi: Yeah, right. It did a lot of good but you don't have that. Now people—as a result the school board mixed in the city, all the boards—It was, I hate to say that, a more dedicated, higher class of people. More doers—

McElwee: More professional.

Pelaghi: --more doers. They were dedicated, doers, and I see that missing. That's a big change, we don't have that group of people. The other thing is, well, the whole town has changed physically and you wouldn't recognize it if you had 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 out for another big redevelopment push or a big renewal because you have a lot of deterioration in this town. Aging is causing that and the mix of people you're getting in here. It's causing—and I think there are areas I look around, I think wouldn't it be nice to eliminate that block and put an apartment building for—not middle class, but middle-income people.

McElwee: (Speaking at the same time) Middle income.

Pelaghi: Wouldn't that be nice? I often think about that. And I hate to identify the places where I see that possibility but it's better than it was in 1955, yes, it's not as—but different needs now. I think there's needs for housing for people of middle income. I know a lot of my friends who are as old as I am who'd like to get out of there big house but they don't want to go into a little house, you know, or one of these small apartments in an individual house. You know, that Meadville has, something like that. But, no, it's a great place and I, even this morning when I looked out I saw the sky pink and blue and boy was it beautiful. I said "No better place in the world to be than right here.

McElwee: Right, I agree with you. Are there any parting 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 urge people to get involved in their community. The big think 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 the town look more attractive. The one thing is cleanliness and orderliness. Now, every time I walk into Wal-mart or even out in these other grocery 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 the 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. I park my car in the parking lot I hate to see bottles and papers strewn all over the place. Stuff like that. If there was only some way

to keep the city clean and neat, I think that'd be a big attraction. Because when people go to Singapore, boy do they talk about how neat and clean it is.

McElwee: They certainly do and it is, it really is. We have lessons to learn from this. Well, I've learned a lot from you in my years here in Oil City and I think others have, too. You have been a credit to your generation, you've been a credit to this community, you are a man that's—that will always be well-thought of. I wish you many more good years of those avocado orange juice breakfasts, and maybe we'll all learn a lesson on long and happy life from you. And with that, I'd like to just say thank you Bud, it's been a pleasure.

Pelaghi: Well, thank you, thank you very much.

McElwee: We'll see you.

(Tape breaks)

??: Do you maybe want to look at your camera and just kind of do a little ??

McElwee: Um, this is—in this session, this is the first of our ongoing conversations with individuals in this area who've made an impact—had a great impact cause of not only what they did but the kind of lives that they've lived in this region. That we were able to meet in the National Transit building itself, something that is a great tool of the community is symbolic in itself. It's just something we're gonna continue to do, it's pleasurable ??

??: Okay, now we're sitting at about forty-eight minutes. If you can think of another question that we could edit in the middle that would work.

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

??: You certainly could. Go ahead and stop tape.

(Tape breaks cutting off beginning of McElwee's next statement).

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?

??: Let's wait until the siren goes—

McElwee: Oh, yeah, I'm just asking—don't, this isn't for tape, right now we're just talking. Do you want to do something like that?

Pelaghi: Okay, this is off--. Yeah, some of the people on that street?

McElwee: Yeah.

Pelaghi: I'm trying to think of any mayors we had on that street.

McElwee: Okay, well don't give it all to us, I want you fresh.

Pelaghi: I'm thinking now.

McElwee: Okay well, you'd be comfortable doing that? They could fit that in, I'll say something that you live in that really nice home you have on Cowell Avenue and that's famed for being.

Pelaghi: Some of the people on the street.

McElwee: Yeah, okay. Bud, you live and have for some time in that beautiful home of yours up on Cowell Avenue. I've actually stopped and asked you to sign my petitions a couple times but if I bet you're not the same party necessarily, but that's all right. Cowell Avenue is famous for being the street that Oil City mayors and chief executive officers of some of our oil companies. Who were some of your neighbors, like who do you remember as some of the fellows that lived on that street?

Pelaghi: Well, first, I'll try to recall some of the mayors. That's one thing I point out a lot to people, the city of mayors. We had Joe Barr at the bottom, we had Vankirk, Richard Vankirk. We had Ted Williams. We had at the top of the street Wayne Blyward and Jack Payne that I can remember. Then among other people on the street—some of the people I don't even know. The big house near the bottom, I know it was the Crawford house—

McElwee: That was a Quaker State CEO house. The big

Pelaghi: Brick one?

McElwee: --yes.

Pelaghi: See, I didn't know that. But we had Contino, Joe Contino who was President of National Transit, lived on the street there. We had Stu McCullough, who was the post master. So, that's—we had some of the business people, like McCarthy's, who owned the McCarthy garage there. The doctors on the street. Been a big change on the street since I've been there and I know—I've been there since 1971, been there quite awhile. But some of my neighbors don't even know me to tell you the truth.

McElwee: Wow, that's to be expected. You know Cowell Avenue physically—it only existed the bottom two blocks. Up higher, that's all fill.

Pelaghi: Right.

McElwee: That was put in there, what, 1910?

Pelaghi: We found that out when we were—stabilize our garage, it was leaning a little bit. So, we had Dave Shreckengost come in and he lifted the garage up to put forts around it and boy, they complained. 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, you wouldn't think of it 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, still is.

Pelaghi: Is it?

McElwee: Yeah, if you recall about five years ago the city put some sort of a plastic liner in there.

Pelaghi: Oh, yeah, yeah.

McElwee: Very expensive undertaking. Yeah there were sinkholes.

Pelaghi: Sinkholes, yeah, right. So, yeah.

McElwee: Folks on Cowell Avenue are very proud of there address. They'll tell you, "Oh, I live on Cowell," even today.

Pelaghi: Is that right?

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

Pelaghi: I don't know all the people, actually you probably know more of the oil people here besides Contino 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 Penzoil and South Penn Oil, South Penn Oil, they were all there but also those first level managers right below them, they had a lot of their homes there.

Pelaghi: Also, the judge who—what was his name? He lived on the corner of Third and Cowell. It's McCracken—

McElwee: McCrackin.

Pelaghi: Judge McCrackin lived there, yeah, so we had—

McElwee: And that was the road—the street you took to go up to the Circle.

Pelaghi: The Circle.

McElwee: Which at the time was—they were going up to the Circle meant something.

Pelaghi: Which at one time, the race track, in fact Tom Mixland performed up there one time.

McElwee: Oh, is that right? I didn't know that. You didn't build that home you're living in?

Pelaghi: No, no. It was a home by an oil man, Burgess. He was in one of the pipeline companies. And then, I think two houses up from me was another pipeline executive. I forget, where Stu McCullough eventually lived.

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

Pelaghi: Yeah, not big houses like you'll find other places where the oil people really built big houses. Well, Vankirk, his wife, Vankirk, lived on Cowell Avenue on the left handside. Right below his house was his sister-in-law's house and she was granddaughter of one of the three founders of Penzoil. ?? I forget who that was, but anyhow. Walkner, was it, no, I forget.

McElwee: Walz, Lou Walz?

Pelaghi: Who, Lou? Yeah, yeah.

McElwee: W-A-L-Z I believe.

Pelaghi: So that was oil connected, too.

McElwee: They're all there. Now, you—the street's still a grand street. Are you moving? (laughs). Is your house for sale?

Pelaghi: Well, I'm cleaning it out, getting ready.

McElwee: I thought so.

Pelaghi: Trying to get rid of all the stuff so that—

McElwee: Anybody's interested in coming to Oil City, make an offer.

Pelaghi: We had a yard sale, you know, the whole street had a yard sale so I've been getting rid of a lot of stuff that way, you know. Giving my nieces and nephews stuff.

McElwee: When's the yard sale, this weekend?

Pelaghi: No.

McElwee: Okay.

Pelaghi: I'm down to books now, mostly. I've got a great collection of books I don't know what to do with.

McElwee: Well, thank you for that comment, moving on.

??: Why don't you ask one thing about some of the positive things in Oil City and we'll keep that as a final question.

McElwee: This is just preliminary, not, you know I asked you at the end of the—

??: But, we're recording.

McElwee: Oh. Bud, because of your years around here I'd be very interested, I'm sure our audience would be, too, what do you see that is good or positive about not only Oil City per say but the region, Venango County, that sort of thing, that you feel good about and as you move on you'll feel good that these things have happened?

Pelaghi: Well, one reason I'm glad to be here is even though I'm not a hunter nor a fisherman, which would be a great place to be, like paradise, I still think it's great. I mean, the outdoors. I can remember times like, well, remember times like when we used to go up through Pickle area every Saturday and have a cookout. Travel—within five minutes you can get to someplace where you'd like to be. You know, whether it's on the river in a canoe or, I don't fish but just to look at the river sometimes. I just love walking across a bridge looking at the river. I was in York a couple times and I would just marvel, you go up a bridge a couple times and see that. Then I walk across the Veterans Bridge I said 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 someplace else to see a sight, you know? The hills, the variety in the hills. Basically, one thing I tell people because I've told this down—when I was down in Naples who was in charge of the historical center and I think he's the one that told me, by the way. I was telling him all that we had here. And he said we have to hike everything we put in here, we have to hike it up. 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 the buildings, you know, the stores. There's a soul because it goes way back. The history is part of the soul. The topography is part of the soul. Even the climate, the most beautiful fall we 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 a compilation of a lot of things which is physical, historical, and the people. People are so friendly. I don't spend much time at home, you know I'm always out. For breakfast I go to a coffee shop. I always eat out for lunch. I don't cook much at home, maybe open the can. But the people are friendly. I go out—meet people, you know, it's a pastime and the people are friendly.

McElwee: I happen to agree with you one hundred percent. I know 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 winter time. Just a wonderful place to be and you can't take that away from the Oil City area, that's just the way it is.

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

McElwee: Best water in the world.

Pelaghi: That's another plus, the more you think, the more you could find good about this place, it is. I think that, the only thing is that if we could someway make it more inviting. Cleanliness, orderliness. You don't have to have any big industries here. It could become a great place to live. I know people that would like to come back and live here.

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

Pelaghi: Thank you, thank you.

??: Okay, excellent. Good job.