Interviewee: Charlie Hunton

Interviewer: David Cline

Interview date: June 5, 2006

Location: Louisville, KY

Length: 1 disc, approximately 1 hour and 46 minutes

DC: Good morning, I'll just make sure this is working. Testing, this is David. If you just want to say hello.

CH: Hello, Charlie Hunton.

DC: Perfect. So, good morning, this is Monday, June five, and I'm here in Louisville, Kentucky meeting with Charlie Hunton, who is the facilitator of the Rubbertown Community Advisory Council.

CH: Well, I just passed the baton this past fall.

DC: Oh, you did?

CH: Yes, right.

DC: So why don't I have you introduce yourself then?

CH: Okay, my name is Charlie Hunton. I grew up in Louisville. I was the facilitator for the Rubbertown Community Advisory Council from May of '94 until August of 2005.

DC: You said you grew up here in Louisville?

CH: Right.

DC: Can you tell me a little bit about that? When were you born and in what neighborhood?

CH: I was born on April twenty-eighth, 1940 in Bowling Green, Kentucky. My dad worked at a place called the Pan-American Mill right at the foot of the hill by Western Kentucky University. They were out on strike, so he came to Louisville on a freight train and got a job delivering furniture for a company called Bensinger's, and ultimately, my mother and I joined him in Louisville. Dad bought a house in the area of the city called Germantown or Schnitzelberg, which is not far from here. I stayed there until I went into the Army in 1957. I was stationed at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, four years. The Germantown area was near a racially divided area in town. I lived about a thousand yards from the Red Cross hospital, which was the black hospital located at the corner of Shelby Street and Lydia. I think it now houses homeless folks. That area of the city was called Fort Hill. That's where Fort Hill and Germantown met. That was a point where we didn't enter each other's area and from time to time, there would be fights on Shelby Street.

DC: So Shelby Street really was the—

CH: That was the divider.

DC: The divider, and it's black on one side and white on the other?

CH: Right. When I was fourteen, I ended up getting a paper route in Fort Hill, so all of my customers were black and I got along fine with them. During that period, the city of Louisville announced that they were going to obliterate part of Fort Hill, which was primarily just little shacks that people had built and they were going to obliterate it and put up the city incinerator, which was on Meriwether Street, which was the next street behind Shelby. I remember the mayor talked about, when people complained about burning garbage in our neighborhood maybe eight, nine hundred feet from my house, I can quote Mayor Bruce Hoblitzell as having said, "Ah, it'll smell like a bed of roses." One of the community members

said, "Yes, but it's going to be covered with manure." In any event, I remember that mom couldn't hang clothes out because of the fly ash that came from burning garbage when the wind was in our direction. I cannot imagine what life was like for the people in Fort Hill, but that incinerator continued to operate until, I believe, the mid-70s, and the building still stands there.

DC: Right there in a residential neighborhood.

CH: But it was totally fired by trash. I can remember having gone down in there when I was in my twenties. For some reason, I was invited to take a tour of the place and the operator showed me how they would start the fire with just newspaper and small pieces of kindling and ultimately, rotate obviously burnable stuff with garbage. That was a really big step in innovation because it stopped the landfill along the river where our garbage from the city had been dumped for years. I think most of that ground's been reclaimed now.

DC: Now did that incinerator run all the time?

CH: Twenty-four hours a day. Yeah, the garbage trucks would be lined up there on Meriwether to back in and dump it in a pit. If you had any trash or anything that you wanted to dispose of that wouldn't fit in the typical collection procedures, you could take it over there and back your truck or car up to it and dump it in there. I've done it many a time. Then they had an overhead crane operator that would go and pick up and select: wet and mucky, drop it; dead animal carcass, drop it; then some wood and paper and drop it, so that the mix was such that the furnace would operate without interruption.

When it was shut down for mechanical failure or whatever, then you simply took all of your trash over to Lee's Lane over in the Rubbertown area. Lee's Lane Sanitary Landfill. It was called "sanitary;" it was anything but that. I can remember driving my little truck down in there a hundred and twenty feel below the surface. A fellow named Joe Hofgesang, a German

immigrant that I met once, every tooth in his head was solid gold and he had made a fortune by buying parcels of property in Jefferson County, which in some areas of it, particularly out in the Rubbertown area, is rich with deposits of sand. He found that he could take the sand out and sell that for commercial use. Then he got the bright idea, once he had this big sandpit evacuated, he could make some money by letting people dump anything they wanted to there. That has subsequently become one of the first Superfund sites for the EPA to step in and take control of. In the early 70s, the methane gas from the accumulation of things that had been dumped in permeated through the soil, came up inside the homes of some folks that live in the Lee's Lane area, contacted their water heater, and blew the house into smithereens. Then we as a community recognized that we had a problem.

DC: When was that approximately?

CH: This was in the early 70s. The county stepped in, I think, and bought several of the houses there and then there was a big financial squabble. Joe Hofgesang had subsequently passed away and the attorney that had taken the case over, as I understand it recently, has Alzheimer's. And there's an attorney, I can't think of his name, and he's presented at some of the Rubbertown Community Advisory Council meetings, has ( ) his responsibility for that. And Metropolitan Sewer District has a thirty-year commitment to maintain the vent system that exists out there, so that they periodically test it. Now I'm not a scientist and I can't prove this, but I suspect some of the contamination on the list of the eighteen chemicals that the community should be concerned about, I think that one of the possible sources may be the Lee's Lane Fill. Carbon tetrachloride, for example, is not used by anybody and has not been for a number of years, but it's one of the things that's in our system and in our air here that we have no idea where it's coming from.

DC: So you think it might be venting from there?

CH: I think that's a very good possibility. Strangely enough, carbon tetrachloride was a commonly used solvent when I was at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. I was an atomic weapons assembly person and I can remember our working inside a little van with an atomic round with components of uranium where we put it together three times a week to stay in practice. This was the late 50s. I can remember that we would lubricate the threads with cosmoleen and periodically, we'd clean them with carbon tetrachloride directly. All I had on was a pair of latex gloves, no breathing, nothing, in a closed space. So I guess I'm fortunate that I'm one of the persons that didn't end up with lung cancer.

DC: So this is just from your youth, you've got the incinerator, you've got the landfill. Other things that you remember as far as that?

CH: Yeah, on Shelby Street down by the railroad tracks just maybe a thousand yards from the Fort Hill, there was a plant called Durkees and they hydrogenated oils, some of the bad cholesterol kind of material now.

DC: How do you spell that?

CH: Durkees. It was subsequently bought out by a company, I can't think of the name of it. They relocated to the old Shindley distillery out on Seventh Street. They had some problems out there where they had some soot that escaped and upset some of the neighbors. But the combination of the incinerator and Durkees, the odor from Durkees when they would clean out their vats or whatever, they always waited until it was nighttime and you could not step out of the house. It was horrific.

My dad worked at Durkees after he left Bensinger's. This was during World War II when I was just a little kid. His job was to go into the tank cars and clean them in the evening

on the evening shift where working conditions were unbearable. Then he got a job across the street at a company called Air Reduction Airco, where they made the hydrogen that went underground to hydrogenate the oil at Durkees. Durkees is now, the plant's been torn down. All the tanks have finally been destroyed or taken away and it's supposedly being developed as a retail or office complex. Of course, the Air Reduction plant's long been shut down.

Now the connection was that my dad was a truck driver and he would deliver tanks of oxygen, helium, acetylene, oragon, all of the gases that Airco made there. But the acetylene plant was in Rubbertown and I can remember him telling me that he would go out to the acetylene plant to pick up so many cylinders of acetylene and take them to places like Ford and General Electric, places like that, because they used it for the oxygen acetylene cutting torches back in those days.

On into the 50s, I can remember while I was at Fort Bragg in 1959, a number of my mother's brothers were all riggers and three of them worked at DuPont in Rubbertown. One of them was killed in 1959. He was operated a cherry picker and one of the outriggers, the hydraulic system failed and it tipped over and it crushed him against a fence. So the word Rubbertown and the odors and the potential danger from all of the things that you hear about Rubbertown became community knowledge that the only thing you wanted to was you just wanted to stay away from Rubbertown.

But on the other hand, Rubbertown was a vibrant producing economic center that created all kinds of jobs, particularly after World War II. I think a lot of the communities began to develop affordable housing nearby because of the convenience of being able to go to work and the price is right because of the effects of Rubbertown, but people didn't think about [the] air and all of that. They wanted to be able to afford a house. Prior to that era, a person owning

their own house was unusual until some of the things from World War II presented us the financial wherewithal for the government to help with FHA and VA loans and that sort of thing and home ownership became the American dream, which it still is.

In the mid-60s, I got out of the Army in 1960 and I went to work for what is now National City Bank. I worked in the loan department and then I ultimately became a commercial loan officer. I'm one of the guys that brought MasterCharge into being. I'm not proud of that because of what it's done to a lot of people's lives, but anyway, that was the last thing I did before I left and went to work at the powder plant up in Charleston, Indiana. The Vietnam War was hot then and so I helped make gunpowder that went to Vietnam and found out about a company out in Rubbertown called Rohm and Haas and went to work there in January of 1968 as a production operator.

DC: And what primarily do they produce?

CH: At that time, they produced a material called adipic acid and then they made a base material called methyl methacrylate, MMA. The combination of the mix was sulfuric acid, acetone, and cyanide. The cyanide and acetone came in as a mix called ACN, Acetone Cyanohydrin. So we would mix the sulfuric, the acetone cyanohydrin, and some methanol in a series of columns to react them and make the material called methyl methacrylate or MMA. If you go into typically any sort of a commercial place now where you see light diffusers that are plastic, that's MMA. At one time, MMA was used to make temporary fillings for your teeth. They would mix the catalysts in there and put it in and you'd hold your mouth still for so many seconds and you had a white tooth that would last for awhile, but that's how it was used. It also was used at one point to help stabilize implants for joint replacement, where they would drill a hole in your bone and put that material down there and ( ) and it would solidify the plastic.

The plastic would bond the steel to your bone. So they've made some improvements in that area. (laughs) Oh God.

DC: That's some serious material.

CH: Yeah. But then the plant that Rohm and Haas bought, which they bought from the government in 1960, was a part of the whole Rubbertown complex. Now, and it's hard to reconstruct all that at the right time, but out in that area there was a plant operated by a company called Bond Brothers, which was the largest producer of railroad ties in the country. The materials that are used to make railroad ties are pretty tough. Gosh, I can't even think of some of them now, but the stuff that's put in a railroad tie to preserve it so it'll last for decades, things like arsenic and formaldehyde—

DC: Creosote.

CH: Creosote, yeah, that's what I was trying to think of, creosote, those things. I'm sure that the ground, I don't know how many feet deep out there, is completely contaminated with that stuff. But in any event—

DC: Does that still exist, Bond Brothers?

CH: No, no, it's been out of business for years, but some of the Rubbertown operations are in the places where it was at one time. They just covered it up, if you will. I'm not sure about the sequence of events, but one of the power plants that LG&E build was right on the river at a place called Paddy's Run. You know what run means?

DC: You know, I never—

CH: Okay, run, that's a term that is used to describe the natural confluence of the ground such that rainwater finds its way to the river. That's a run. So you'll hear of Cane Run Road, Paddy's Run—

DC: That's what I always assumed, but I wasn't sure.

CH: Pennsylvania Run. That's exactly what it is. There's a lot of areas that are named after the runs that existed. So Paddy's Run was there. It was a coal fire generating plant ( ) right on the river, which would make a huge amount of electricity. One of the biggest customers that they still have today is a company called Carbide Industries. They've changed names four or five, ten times, I guess, but that was the acetylene plant. Now, strangely enough, DuPont is located near there and there is a pipeline where the acetylene, which is a byproduct of making the carbide graphite, is the feed stock for neoprene rubber. That's existed for decades now. The main use for the carbide graphite is that it has this unique ability to attract the slag or the waste components in iron, which is used in the process of making steel. In other words, steel is iron that has had all of the impurities removed and they use it with this graphite somehow, the process is such. Where I'm going here is that without all of the plants in Rubbertown, we'd have no ability to manufacture automobiles. Virtually every plant out there makes a critical component of the automobile.

DC: Now are these plants duplicated in other cities or is this the main source?

CH: I'm not that familiar with them. I know that in many cases, because of some of the restrictions that have been placed on their operating, some of the labor costs and other issues like that, they've relocated in places like China, Singapore, South America. So it's made, okay. It's a matter of what's the economic impact on Louisville to lose all of that production capacity. So I started out with carbide graphite and DuPont. B.F. Goodrich had a huge facility along Bell's Lane there and they made different kinds of rubber, one of which was the base component for tires. But B.F. Goodrich hasn't made a tire in over twenty years. That

technology and everything was bought by Michelin, which now owns American Synthetic Rubber in Rubbertown, okay?

DC: Okay, that's right.

CH: It gets convoluted here, okay? (laughs) But that plant now has been broken into four different companies. Let me see if I can think of the names. Zeon is one. They're one of the people that are high on the list of sources of some of the contaminants we're concerned with and they've done, as I understand it, virtually everything that they can, that modern technology would provide, but they still have some serious operating challenges. They make the kinds of rubber that will withstand the effects of gasoline and ethanol. So without that kind of rubber, you can't have a car that operates on fossil fuel. The Goodrich component has changed names I've forgotten how many times now. I can't remember what their name is now, but they make other various kinds of rubber. And then the—God, I can't believe I can't think of these names. There's the other one that processes chlorine and they polymerize it and make it into PVC pellets and it was Geon. Now it's—I'll have to look that up for you. Make a note there that we'll put that back in.

DC: Formerly Geon, right.

CH: Alright. Then there's another company out there called Poly One that buys the PVC pellets or some of the PVC pellets in use, right next door to them, to make the insulation that goes on electrical wires, the orange coating or white, black, green. They make all of that material there and they're in competition with some other huge companies, Georgia Southern and some other companies that are in that line of business, but they've got a pretty good share of it. So you see, all of that was under the operation of B.F. Goodrich, but has subsequently been broken into four different companies and they have the dilemma of sharing the

infrastructure. So they have to work out arrangements to share the sewer costs. It is a nightmare, but they're still in business, they're still making money.

DC: And I imagine that there must be rail lines going through everywhere and rail cars.

CH: Oh yeah. The other thing too is I'm going to have to make that pit stop.

DC: Yeah, go ahead. I'll put this on pause.

[break in conversation]

DC: We were talking about the ways that the various plants are networked and I had asked about rail cars and rail.

CH: The rail traffic is just all right there. After the turn of the century, in the Algonquin Parkway area, along in there, there were lots of refineries and a lot of oil and solvent production and there's still a whole lot of that production goes on there. But the Louisville Refinery used to sit right next door to Chickasaw Park right on Algonquin Parkway. I can remember, we would have our family reunions at Shawnee Park and my dad would drive us down Algonquin Parkway and this refinery would be belching black smoke and huge orange flames, just a routine operation. I mean, it was unbelievable. I can remember that he would tell us about making deliveries there where the ground would shake when he'd unload with some of the high compressed gases and stuff that he handled. Louis Coleman, he led the fight, I guess 60s, early 70s, first of all, to get them shut down and then secondly, they just moved out and left this rusting hulk sit there. It was awful. If you go by there now, you'll see that there's a row of trees planted in a berm-like. They took it all but, but they built that to try to give a different appearance to it. It's just to the left, just before you get to Chickasaw Park. And incidentally, the history of the parks, are you familiar with that?

DC: No, I'm not.

CH: Okay. Olmsted, that designed Central Park, came to Louisville, designed our park system and put in all of the parkways and lined them with the big black oak trees, Eastern Parkway, Shawnee Parkway, Algonquin, Cherokee Parkway. Then all of the parks have Indian names: Seneca, Iroquois, Cherokee, Shawnee. Now interestingly enough, Chickasaw Park was the black park, Algonquin Parkway on the river right next door to the refinery. But across the street were very nice, very expensive houses and in a lot of the early days, a lot of the black professionals who became successful, that's where they ended up. And they were the ones that smelled the stuff from Rubbertown, smelled the stuff from the sewer plant, smelled and ate the smoke from the refineries, because they weren't accepted in the east end.

DC: So there's been a racial component to this environmental situation for a long time?

CH: Oh yeah. And I've read the development of other cities. It's the same phenomena. The west end was the place to live at one time. It was very exclusive until the Highlands began to build and develop. And Old Louisville certainly, huge beautiful homes here. But between downtown Louisville and the west end, you had the Portland area, which was a white enclave of primarily working-class folks, then the successful west end, and then you had an area called Little Africa, which was kind of like Fort Hill, shacks and people with very meager circumstance. Urban renewal in the 60s decided to obliterate it. That created the need for the black folks to have someplace to go, so they began to migrate toward Portland and the west end. Then white flight took place. Then they came in with the Shawnee Expressway, which obliterated Thirty-fourth Street and that did it. Everybody that had white skin that could afford to got out of there. The housing prices dropped and the black folks moved in. And that's the same story in Raleigh or anyplace you think of. It's been the same sort of general overview of how things have come about.

Now the operation of the sewer plant was put there because of the geographic height, where by gravity, that's how all the sewage from this whole metropolitan area goes. The Rubbertown plants were there in the early 40s, so that operation was in place twenty years before blacks started to move into the west end. So it's not like that the plants located there and then because things had deteriorated; it was the opposite. They were there, then things deteriorated because of other socio-economic factors. Now at one time, the employment in the Rubbertown area was thirty-eight thousand jobs and after World War II, they were some of the best-paying jobs in the world. Appliance Parts didn't come on until mid-50s and so Ford Motor Company was down in the west end. The building is still there. The State Fairgrounds are right down there, still there, and there's a huge railroad complex where the rail cars that go into Rubbertown and so forth, they're still staged there. The railroad folks still call it the Fairgrounds, even though the Fairgrounds moved to the Crittenden Drive area in 1955.

DC: That's interesting.

CH: They just still call it the Fairgrounds. It's a staging area.

DC: And that's where the staging yard is, is there.

CH: Exactly. And that's an issue for folks that live in places like Park Duvalle, where some of the housing that was developed as a part of urban development is [now] drug-infested, crime-infected ghettos. And they've had the wherewithal now to recognize that just like Chicago and other places, hey, that's a disaster. We've got to do different. So they've come in and put in multiple-priced housing and the mixed—

DC: Right, I've toured around there.

CH: Right. Some of the folks that, for example, are on the Rubbertown Community Advisory Council, Sherman Biddix, he is president of the Park Duvalle Neighborhood

Association and that's an issue that Sherman and his neighbors have had. And one reason he started attending the Community Advisory Council meetings was to find out about the safety concerns about: how do we know that some kid's not going to go over there and strike a match around something that's going to blow the whole thing up? So that's a continuing debate about what's the level of safety needed.

DC: Because there's a school right by that.

CH: Oh, there's a number of them.

DC: Cane Run Elementary.

CH: Cane Run Elementary's right there. Then the other one, I have to draw you a map of this one, but the Shawnee Expressway goes like this. Right in the embankment is a brand-new school called the Steven Foster Traditional Elementary.

DC: Oh, I've been there.

CH: Okay.

DC: I interviewed the principal.

CH: Okay, Ms. Miller.

DC: Yeah.

CH: Now that's the Fairgrounds property that I mentioned earlier. It's now operated by the machinery company—Goodness sakes. Oh my, I'm having a blank moment—Whayne Supply. They have the huge road equipment, mine equipment, that sort of thing. But they have preserved the Fairgrounds pavilions, some of the buildings, even the ranger's log cabin is still there. They bought that facility from the state, I guess, in '54 when we moved to Crittenden Drive. And incidentally, a major portion of the property that Mr. Hofgesang owned was where the Fairgrounds is, so he made a killing with that too.

DC: Boy, he owned all the hot spots.

CH: Now when I worked for the bank, my boss and I put together a commercial loan. Mr. Hofgesang -- and I had no idea before this happened that he was tied in to Lee's Lane, matter of fact, this was in the 60s, so I didn't even know about Lee's Lane until ten years later -- but we took a mortgage on six hundred parcels of property he had in Jefferson County to secure a three million dollar note where we loaned him the capital to be able to have the cash reserves to meet the government requirements to manufacture electric motors at Equal Machine Company, which was right in the middle of where the Fairgrounds is now. So that's when I met Mr. Hofgesang. I didn't know fifteen years later I'd be hauling out there and dumping stuff in one of his pits, okay, but I did.

The development of the Rubbertown area had a lot to do with the need to fight a war; you've got to have rubber. So the DuPont Plant was there. The parcel which is now owned by Rohm and Haas was operated by Union Carbide. The government located that particular facility and built it in the late 30s, early 40s, to make a material called butadiene. Now butadiene can be made from grain alcohol. In those days, the St. Helen's and Shively area was nothing but distilleries. I mean, we had the whiskey, we had it locked up. So the corn production from Indiana and Kentucky came in, they made the grain alcohol, alright. Then the grain alcohol was trucked over to the operation in Rubbertown to make the butadiene and the butadiene was used to make rubber in what is now the Michelin Plant. Strangely enough, the units to make the butadiene were called units three, four, and five, because units one and two had been built in Institute, West Virginia by Union Carbide and they had both exploded. Does Institute, West Virginia ring a bell?

DC: No, not to me.

CH: Read about it.

DC: Okay.

CH: It's one of the worst releases we've had in this country and it was shortly after a similar incident in Bhopal, India.

DC: That I know about.

CH: Remember that?

DC: Sure.

CH: It's very similar to Bhopal, same company, similar situation; Institute, West Virginia.

DC: So we're talking about not just observable air pollution, but the potential for industrial disaster that has been and the community has known about for quite awhile.

CH: Oh yeah.

DC: Has this then been a community issue for a long time?

CH: Well, it's like I said earlier, David, what you did was you stayed away from it. But if you wanted a good, high-paying job, you got in your car and you drove down there and you did your eight or your twelve hours of work and you got the heck out of there.

DC: If you had the means, you lived as far away as you could?

CH: Yeah, you lived on the other end of town. Now some of the people that perhaps had, like Louis Coleman's father, who worked at DuPont as a custodian and was denied promotion because of his race, that's really Louis's hot button.

DC: Which plant, I'm sorry, where did he work?

CH: DuPont.

DC: At DuPont.

CH: Now Louis's father and nineteen other people filed suit for discrimination. DuPont stonewalled it for, I don't know, twenty-five years. His father and I don't know, eighteen, nineteen, twenty other guys filed suit. DuPont stonewalled it for years. They used to meet and picket the front gate daily. It went on for years and finally, I think most of them died. Then DuPont agreed to settle after they were dead. I think that was, Louis has a lot of environmental issues, but the social injustice aspect of it, okay?

DC: That's the fire under him.

CH: That's the real fire, sure, and I don't blame him. I knew what it was like growing up white and growing up black. As I told you earlier, I lived with that. Until I got into the Army and I had a buddy named Richard Brown, a black fellow from Annapolis, Maryland, he was probably one of the smartest guys I've ever met in my life and I was a seventeen-year-old kid and man, he had an influence on me, and he and I were riding on a bus together. We stopped for a restroom break in Stone Mountain, Georgia. We were being sent to Fort MacPherson, the Army headquarters in Atlanta. We were going to do federal prison guard duty for ninety days. And here we were, we both had the brown Ike jackets on it with United States Army, United States Army on them. We got off the bus and were walking to the restroom and he said, "Charlie, you can't go with me." I said, "Why?" He said, "You got to go to the white restroom."

And David, that's when it hit me. God, I had never realized the impact of segregation until I experienced, here we were wearing the same uniform and we had to use separate restrooms. I mean, it just devastated me. So I've tried to be at least empathetic and sympathetic to that. I don't know what I can do about it, but I've tried to raise my daughters in a way where they're not biased.

DC: So even growing up in Louisville, it was really that moment?

CH: Yeah, that was 1958, I think just before I turned eighteen. Can you imagine at seventeen years old being sent to guard federal prisoners?

DC: No.

CH: I did it with a shotgun on my hip and I worked three of them out in the cemetery for three months. I did some growing up early, I'll tell you that. The Rubbertown area really, it was there, the government located it there, because they wanted a location that was immune from offshore artillery, from Japanese or German boats, so we're six hundred miles inland. They wanted a water supply, which was the Ohio River. The other thing is that even what the water company's doing now, they're using the natural earth, they're drilling those wells inside, so that the water that comes underground is pulled out by these pumps without all of this silt that they get when they pull it out of the pumping station at the river, which is going to be a huge economic boom for us in terms of the difference in the quality of water and the requirements, because we're downstream from Cincinnati and you know what they do. Just like Louisville, when there's a heavy rain, their combined sanitary and surface drainage sewage systems, they just open the gate and the raw sewage goes straight into the river. That's the source of our water and what we put out as a source of water for people in Owensboro and Evansville.

DC: It just all goes one town down river.

CH: Right. So anyway, the abundance of water—

DC: There must be concerns about our groundwater as well though in terms of all these pollutants.

CH: I would think so and that opens up one, because I can remember in the early 70s, they had one of these huge oil drilling rigs in the parking lot at DuPont and they drilled I don't know how many thousand feet down and that's where they dumped some kind of acid. I mean, they pumped it underground for years and claimed that it didn't do anything but turn something into salt; limestone turned into salt when this material, it was some kind of acid. They maintained right up until the very last minute that there was no problem doing it, but because of the viewpoint that people just could not believe that, their deep well injection system, they closed it down and now that material is shipped out of here in tank cars for disposal now, hazardous waste incinerator someplace, I think in Michigan; I'm not sure where. I can't remember the name of it, but it's some really bad stuff.

DC: So you were at Rohm and Haas for how long?

CH: Twenty-eight and a half years. I left the bank in '67, worked at the powder plant for about three months, landed the job at Rohm and Haas and I went to work there in January of '68 as a production operator. Then I was made a supervisor in about three years and then about three years later, I got promoted to the plant training director job. That was in '74. In 1980, we had a twelve-week strike. It was a very ugly mess. We had two different unions -- one union was on strike and the other one was under a labor agreement to work. We threatened to replace them if they didn't. So the mechanics came to work and the operators were on strike twelve weeks. The salaried people like me, who had once worked in the plant, we were given a choice: go back to work in the plant and help us run the plant during all of this or go find another job somewhere else. So I went to work in the plant, went back down there making methyl methacrylate like I had done as an operator, loading tank cars, unloading barges. During that

period, I had to get my tankerman's license to unload barges. So I'm still a grade B tankerman. You have to go to St. Louis and take the big test with the Coast Guard and all that.

DC: So you and all the other managers were out there?

CH: Oh yeah, we had to go to work. So at the end of the strike, as you can imagine, it was not the peaceful, harmonious situation we once had and it went on for about a year. And our home office was in Philadelphia and they finally came down and said, "Guys, either get this thing straightened out and learn how to work together or we're going to close it." So the plant manager hired a consultant and came in, he interviewed a few people, and they concluded that they needed to start a program called QWL, Quality of Working Life. This was modeled after some of the pioneering work that had been done in General Motors and some of the other larger companies. We were just beginning to feel the pressures of the Japanese manufacturing.

So anyway, the plant manager walked in one day and he said, "Charlie, we're going to hire a consultant and we're going to start a program called QWL and that requires somebody in the plant to be a facilitator and we want you to be the facilitator." I said, "Well okay, Dan." He said, "You know, we've got to turn the plant around, blah blah blah." I said, "But I've two questions. What's QWL and what the heck is a facilitator?" (laughs) That was in 1980, so for the last twenty-six years, I've been trying to find out what is a facilitator.

But that's how I got involved in the master's program at Pepperdine. I've got a master's in organizational development and primarily what I learned in that program is what I was able to use to do a turnaround with the plant. We were chosen by the National Training Labs, NTL, and the organizational development network, and they did a story and produced two films about our work in 1990. As a result of the film, we had visitors that came from around the

world to come to the plant and spend a day with us, just talking to employees, talking to me and others.

I had so many consulting contracts as a result of those contacts with people that when I hit fifty-six in '96, I decided to take early retirement. So I've been on my own as a consultant for the last ten years, eleven years. In '94, I was still at Rohm and Haas. The Rubbertown Community Advisory Council had been started in 1991 primarily at the urging of DuPont. They and several other companies out there were members of a national chemical association. I can't think of the name of it right now. They've changed names again. But anyway, one of the requirements to belong to this association if you were a chemical manufacturer is that you have to sign on to what are known as the "Responsible Care Codes." One of the requirements of a responsible care code is that you have an advisory council. So it was started in 1991. They hired Doe-Anderson, the public relations firm, to facilitate it. The first couple of years didn't go too well.

DC: And who did they get to serve on this committee at first?

CH: They had community members. They tried to get a broad diagonal slice group and this is a pretty good description of it. I think, '91, American Chemical Council, there's the vision and the mission. In their charter, there is a description, there is a matrix, and a lot of the suggestions came from the responsible care codes about the composition of it. But they wanted people from the education arena, health, environmental perspectives, the police, interested citizens, just a diagonal slice group in so far as possible. They formed a steering committee in '91 and started trying to put that together and convince the other plants in the Rubbertown area to jointly sponsor it. I think what happened is when Archibald walked into my office in '94, he said that the community members were losing interest, the facilitator was running the meetings

himself and was controlling the dialogue such that the companies were not coming forth with everything that they should and the community members were starting to feel this is a shame, we're wasting our time.

So that's when I got involved and I formed a committee consisting of three company reps and three community reps and I paired them up one and one, three teams, and I had them go interview all of the top dogs of all these companies: why do you think we have to have a community advisory council? What's your perspective? What good will it do you? What are you willing to do? What are the parameters? What are the limitations that you have on this committee getting something done? Then we took the summary of those interviews and presented back in May of '94 to the whole group and we took that dialogue and over a series of meetings, the company and the community reps hammered out this vision and mission. The interviews themselves produced this and that's what's guided the group since '94.

I was asked as a facilitator, although I was working for Rohm and Haas as the organization development manager and an internal consultant for the company, to take this on as part of my job and to try to make sure that the vision and mission were reached and that I maintained neutrality in the meetings and had the objective to make it a community-member owned and run organization, but yet sponsored, funded by the companies, and set up a process for getting things done, establishing a budget and all of that.

So when I left in '96, the companies asked me if I would continue to serve in that capacity as a facilitator on a paid basis and we worked out an agreement. So for the next twelve years, that's what I did. I ran my own company plus I did this. I had the good fortune to have been a former employee, but now I was a contractor being paid by the companies, but trying to make sure that when we sat down for a meeting every month for a two-hour meeting, that it

was run by the community members, that it was owned by them, and that we played ball according to the way the vision and mission was run.

DC: Now did you ever feel that you had to finesse that or be very clear about your background with certain community members? Was there ever suspicion that you were met with about your industry background?

CH: To my knowledge -- I mean that was up-front and we talked about that -- to my knowledge, that never became an issue with anybody. I swear that I never know of that having happened. Now there have been a time or two when things would happen in a meeting where I was not satisfied with it and I thought I used good judgment in not making that a confrontation in the meeting, but I had a couple of very constructive lunches with some folks where they realized—because see, the heck of it is, is that through that twelve years, David, there was turnover. Not a single one of the plant managers is still there that was there when all of that was--. You have this continuous renewal process and so sometimes, you've got a guy that's come in here from Europe who has never even heard of this concept. They're a little shy about getting up there and telling what happened in the last month that they don't want too many people to know about. So I might have to nudge that a bit just to let him know, but then once I had that discussion, if something happened in the meeting then I'd confront him. But I also every meeting had somebody read both of these aloud and read the ground rules, where: it's okay to ask a question. There's no such thing as a dumb question. Listen. Be willing to listen to others. Try to judge based on the idea, not the person. Wait your turn. Finish on time and start on time. I mean, we had some cracker jack meetings. I'm very proud of how that went.

DC: Now were those open to the public?

CH: Yes.

DC: They were.

CH: And Jim Bergers from the *Courier-Journal* has attended many a one of them. This is Mary Wooldridge [showing picure]. Mary is a councilperson now, just ran for re-election from that area and was re-elected. Her husband was president last year, Gerald, Jerry. I went to a meeting with a neighborhood association where she and Jerry both go to church, Southern Star Baptist Church on Algonquin Parkway, and I recruited her husband at that meeting to come and attend, because he was with the Hallmark Association, the homeowners' association. Mary at the time was a clerk and so now she's the Metro Council person for that and she attends meetings periodically. Matter of fact, she attended, I know, back in December when I did and her husband, Jerry, was president last year. I've made some really good friends as a result of my work out there. My mother died last week and Mary and Jerry both came to the funeral home to show their respects and there were a whole lot of folks that did. I still have a good relationship with them and I miss seeing some of them, but it was time to play my golf game.

DC: About how many members are there on the council?

CH: They run about twenty-five to twenty-six, twenty-seven, somewhere around in there.

DC: Is that fairly evenly split between community members and industry?

CH: Oh yeah. The plants, one of the expectations that we had was that at least a significant number of the plant managers attend. I would watch that. We would have typically six or seven plant managers at every meeting. So we did not expect them to make every meeting, because those guys typically travel a lot and their agendas are full already. But the other company rep, it depended on the configuration of the particular company, but in some

cases they would send their public relations person. Some would send their environmental managers. Some would send their human resource person. It just depended on who the appropriate person for how they are configured in that company as to who the representative would be. And those people, they were expected to attend nine out of ten, nine out of twelve meetings just like the community members.

Now one thing that they did do and I was a little bit concerned about this when it was first suggested, for the first several years, there was no benefit at all to coming to the meeting except just you got to come and ask questions and hear reports about what was going on and so forth. One of the company people said, "You know, we're expecting a heck of a lot out of these folks to come on their time in the evening. Can't we come up with some way to reward them without paying them off?" I thought, "Oh man." My hackles raised up. I thought, "Oh my God, here we go." The perception, you know, the intent and perception, you know how--.

Well, we hammered and chewed around on that as a community group and as a company group. Matter of fact, we talked about it a significant part of a meeting and finally came up with if a person made some contribution of their time in addition to attending nine out of twelve meetings in a one-year period, then we would establish a thousand dollars, five hundred dollars, I can't remember exactly. I think it was five hundred bucks each that if they met that participation requirement and the attendance requirement, then they could name whatever 501 3C charitable organization they wanted to and at the dinner meeting in December, then they would be given a check payable to that organization. It's worked like a charm. They give it to things like the Animal Rescue League or their church or just any number of different organizations. So it's been a really nice idea where the people are rewarded, but yet

they don't get any benefit themselves. The benefit is for something that they value and so it's a win-win.

But people like Jim Bredgers, when we were explaining that, he started telling me stories about down in Louisiana where the company bought out the community members by taking all the kids to Disney World one year. I thought, "This is not like that, Jim." So I don't know. I guess the jury's still out on that depending on how you look at it, but I thought it was a very nice, very workable arrangement where everybody won, for whatever that's worth.

DC: How long do the community members serve? Is there a set term?

CH: They don't have a real limitation on how long. Matter of fact, Joyce Korfhage-Rhea, who is a pharmacist, I think she's one of the original members. She's still with it. This is a person, you ought to meet her. She has the All Care Community Center, it's on Cane Run Road.

DC: I've read about her.

CH: Oh my goodness. She came to the funeral the other day. Joyce, well matter of fact, her husband, Bob, was our first president and Bob was on that committee that I formed that I told you about earlier. He was a retired Jefferson County police officer and he subsequently died, but Joyce closed the pharmacy and she takes in primarily black kids from the neighborhood out there and has people come in and teach them things like reading and math. She has a heart of gold trying to help those kids.

DC: What's the last name?

CH: Korfhage-Rhea and it's All Care Community Center. The plants would get volunteers to go over and help her do things and paint her building. I gave her a refrigerator and people bring in food and stuff for the kids. It's just remarkable what she's done.

DC: And where is that located?

CH: It's on Cane Run Road and it's near an apartment complex that's just nothing but trouble, drugs and half the buildings are boarded up, because the landlords have just given up on it. It's just a horrible situation and I can remember meeting a child over there that Bob and Joyce, along with four other children, at the beginning of school, they'd take them over and outfit them with clothing for the entire year and not make a big deal about it. I kind of stumbled on it after one day when I was over there talking to them, so just real genuine people. Another long-time member is Martha Gammons. Martha lives right there in the neighborhood, but along the way, she ended up getting a job with the Metro Air Pollution, so she's an Air Pollution Control District employee and a concerned citizen. She's very vocal about lots of issues of odor and noise and rail traffic safety in that area.

DC: Gammons is the last name?

CH: Yeah, Gammons, Martha Gammons, an interesting person to talk to. You were asking earlier about the perception about Rubbertown. I think it was in 1964, but you can check this, about eight o'clock one Monday morning, the DuPont plant had a problem. They had a runaway compressor and I don't know anything beyond this, except that they were perplexed. They figured if they shut it down, it would explode, and they didn't know what to do about it, because there was something wrong with it. So they had a whole bevy of technicians and operators standing around the thing when it exploded. I think it killed thirteen of them outright. And WHS set up cameras at the front gate and you can still drive over there and when I take people on tours of Rubbertown, which I'm going to take a group of schoolteachers next month through there, I can still see the black and white TV coverage during the day. There were twenty-three explosions. It went on all day long.

DC: Right, just in that plant though and it just rippled through.

CH: Just in that plant, right. It blew the windows out in neighboring communities and plants, did a lot of damage to the facility. But the perception of Rubbertown, that solidified it right there as a very dangerous place to be. When I announced to my dad that I was going to go to work in Rubbertown a year and a half later, two years later, I can't remember what the time frame was, he said, "Well, son, you're taking a chance, but it's probably worth it." About a year later, I walked out of the cafeteria one night about nine o'clock and the whole sky lit up bright orange, where an acetylene tank, they had been dropping, what they call decanting, some of the water off the bottom of it to a ditch and it contacted something that was hot and it fired back up and blew that tank up. I'll never forget it and that scared me to death, but that's the only incident that I can remember when I was there. That was a pretty scary event. Rohm and Haas has had one fatality there at the plant. A contractor on a Monday morning, a big guy, was pulling a piece of roof tar up. They were putting a new roof on the building and they had removed the plexiglas skylights. He fell right through it thirty feet head first on a concrete floor and it killed him.

DC: Oh wow.

CH: That was the only fatality they've had in all the years they've been there, some fifty years now. The highest number of fatalities other than that single event probably at DuPont, probably are related to, which used to be an R.J. Reynolds, aluminum plant of some sort where they grind up aluminum into a ( ) dust. When you have an organic dust environment, any source of ignition, it's just like in a feed mill, boom. They've had I don't know how many fatalities or terrible burn situations where the people lingered and then died. I mean, it's just gone on. There was one just recently over there at the same plant. It's owned by

another company now, Eckert, but it's the old Reynolds plant there. They're not members of that, the community advisory council, but they're right there in the front of DuPont right on Canerun Road. So that was, "the Reynolds plant blew up again, three more of them killed out there," and then you go on with your business. So just the public perception--.

DC: So why would a plant not be part of the council?

CH: Well, I'm going to have to go again. Excuse me, I'm sorry.

[break in conversation]

CH: Title 5, the Clean Air Act, there's the identification of the kinds of companies that must give an annual report about their emissions. Eckert would not be one of those companies. They don't have the emissions that Title 5 requires. So most of the other companies would be on that list and I'm not totally up to date on that, but there might be some of these that participate even though they don't have to according to Title 5 requirements, but Eckert is one that just chose not to for whatever reason.

DC: I'm wondering what order to ask these questions in. There are a number of different councils or small groups or committees and just coming in from the outside and trying to piece it all together, this seems like a fairly complicated landscape that many of the plants have internal committees or advisory councils with neighbors, etcetera. Then there's Jefferson County and then there's the Air Pollution Board and then there's the community advisory council. Could you just sort of sketch out that landscape for me and then tell me how they work together or if they do?

CH: Okay. Well, my knowledge is fairly limited on that, but let me tell you what I do know about it. Rohm and Haas has their own community advisory council and they've scaled that back recently, but that started probably about the same time as the advisory council. Now

their purpose in starting it in the first place was they wanted to build a hazardous waste incinerator and that was the objective in putting it together. They decided, I think, that they would continue that, because it worked so well and Rohm and Haas is the kind of company historically where they really valued involvement in the community and having a good interaction with the people, and for whatever reason chose to continue it even though they also were sponsors of the larger Rubbertown Community Advisory Council. Now those companies, including Eckert, they meet monthly on their own, the plant managers do, and they share their own concerns with each other. They've had that network going from, I'd guess, historically as far back as I know. They had this similar group of people that realized that they—

DC: Is there a name for that or do they just—

CH: Rubbertown Plant Managers, yeah. They've used some of the local facilities that some of the neighborhood people have had, like outreach programs for kids and Joyce's place at All Care, they've met there, they've used that facility for their meeting. So it's not a big secret deal or anything like that, but they just get together once a month and kind of share issues that concern them jointly. I think as a result of the recent concerns that came about from all the testing that was done where the eighteen chemicals were identified, that they've continued that and from time to time, I'm sure that that's on the agenda, although I've only attended one and that was to tell them that I was getting ready to hang it up and that they needed to find somebody else.

Now the other ones, I think, like the Riverside Gardens organization, there's a couple, three of those folks that, I went out and talked to them, visited them in their homes and so forth and encouraged them to continue with their Riverside Gardens Association, but to come to the advisory council, because this is a forum where a lot of the questions that you guys, I read

about in the paper that you can't get answered, you can get them answered here. So there's a number of them, three of them, I think, that attend. Interestingly enough, I read the other day where they're suing one of the companies out there and so that's the way it goes. The other tie-in here, this is just such a complex thing, I told you about Hofgesang operating the sand pit and the landfill. He also sold them the property that the Borden Chemical Company came in and built, which is now Hexion, which is right smack dab behind these people's houses. Their house is here and the plant's right there. Now I don't blame them. I'd be upset, because that little community was established in 1926 and Borden didn't come in until the 70s

DC: Okay, so there is an example where the neighborhood precedes the company.

CH: Yeah, absolutely. People in the 70s, they had this vision of jobs and Elsie the cow and cheese and milk products. They made formaldehyde and they're still making it there and a host of other different chemicals that are made there, a lot of which are the absolute requirements for making cars.

DC: I drove around that area and that would be a very ideal little neighborhood right on the river, very lovely and bucolic.

CH: But here they are, I empathize with them and there's some really good folks out there. Let me tell you a little bit about that too. God, I didn't find this out until just a few years ago. The soil is such there that a septic tank doesn't work, so they would dig a pit thirty feet deep, line it with rock, gravel, gravel, sand, and their raw waste out of their bathrooms went straight into the pit called the leach pit. The health department finally outlawed them in '86. Interestingly enough, the people had leach pits and wells. You get the picture?

DC: Yeah.

CH: So here they are, leach pits, wells, Lee's Lane landfill, LG&E belching it out and the prevailing winds are always right smack dab over them, and then Borden comes in. I'd be madder than a hornet, I really would. I can remember, David, in the early 70s when the incinerator was closed, I bought a house and the people went off and left a bunch of trash in it, mattresses, box springs, just junk. I loaded it on my little pickup trunk, went to Meriwether Street and it was closed, so they told me about Lee's Lane, so I drove out there. I paid the guy three bucks, drove down in there. I was unloading this stuff off the truck and a guy pulled next to me with a flatbed truck with about thirty drums on it and he took the lid off and started dumping this black liquid right next to me and it took my breath. I could not breathe. So I hurriedly just pulled the whole thing off and I drove out of there as fast as I could.

I'm telling you, I cannot imagine what's been dumped in that place. It is horrible. Those plants were each identified as having had something go in there and so did the *Courier-Journal* and *Standard Reviewer* and all the paint companies. Everybody dumped everything there and so EPA did find all that they could and each of them had to pay a certain amount. I think Rohm and Haas paid, I don't know, two or three million as part of establishing the Superfund to clean the place up and get it under control. So here's this little neighborhood association, been there since 1926, leach pit, wells, LG&E, the methane gas underneath them, Hexion right here belching, my God. If I was them, I'd be hot too.

Now Lake Dreamland is another story; it's similar. A guy named Hartlege dumped up one of the little run creeks back there, created this artificial lake called Lake Louisvilla, opened a night club, and people used to come there and like it was their summer camp on the river. Then gradually they started replacing tents with a more permanent structure. Next thing you know, they got this house there, but they don't own anything. Then Hartlege dies and it's a

mess. Nobody's got the title to anything. It went on for years and finally, and most of this I'm gleaning from my observations over the years of reading about it in the paper, the county stepped in, bought the whole thing and then sold the lots back to the people for a dollar each.

DC: Okay, interesting.

CH: They still don't have sewers, get the picture? He's dead now, but he was the Kentucky environmental, he was a general, I can't remember his name, General something. I took him and a group of people down on a tour and took them down there to Lake Louisvilla and let him look at it. The green algae was that thick on the top of it. He liked to cried. He said, "It's unbelievable people have to live like this." Well, they're at a standoff on sewers. MSD's ready to put them in, but they want them to pay for them and they don't want to pay for them. So there's an example of the process is there. They finally forced Riverside Gardens to put in sewers just last year and they screamed and moaned about it.

DC: So when the leach pits were finally outlawed, did they have to go to septic tanks?

CH: Well no, they just couldn't build any new ones.

DC: Oh okay, so they were still functioning?

CH: Oh yeah, until last year.

DC: Unbelievable.

CH: Until they got the sewers in, yeah. So see, they're mad about all this other stuff, but they didn't want to solve their own problem. Now I never did, I didn't confront them with it, but it's in my mind when I talk to them, you follow me? I was like, "Come on, pal. Get a clue here. We got a problem that everybody's got a piece of." And while I'm on that, let me make this comment. There recently was this huge announcement about UPS expanding. Do you have any idea of the amount of butadiene that comes out of aircraft and trucks and cars? David, it's

phenomenal. It's not just the plants. Who's concerned about that? It's the economic stuff and our mayor's real proud of that, but he has completely abandoned the Rubbertown plants, because politically that's a loser now.

DC: That reminds me of a question I was going to ask. Is there city representation or city participation in the council at all?

CH: Judy—my God, my memory's really failing me. Judy Nielson, she's in a leadership position at the Metro Council. I think she's the president-elect this year and she's been a member for quite some time. Now one member that just recently resigned because of other interests is a fellow named Woody Miller and he works for county government. He manages the Neighborhood Place there on Lee's Lane.

DC: Oh, okay.

CH: Super guy, he and I play golf together from time to time, just an incredible gentleman. He can tell you about the socio-economic aspects out there like nobody else.

DC: You've given me a lot of great leads. I appreciate it.

CH: Yeah, Woody Miller, super fellow. I wish I had a roster with me, darn it.

DC: Specifically, Louis Coleman you mentioned a couple times and clearly you've had dealings with him. Has he been on the council or does he come to meetings or what kind of relationship have you had?

CH: I went down and met with Louis a number of times. Louis lives in Shelbyville, Kentucky. Louis has a contract with the state that pays him nearly a half a million dollars a year to be a minority employer source. I'm on tape here and this is scary. Louis has been to a meeting or two, but supporting what the plants do and recognizing that they have an open forum and that they're trying to do the right thing and work with people does not fit his agenda.

Now that's my opinion, but I don't think I'm wrong. It's about the money, David. Now I say that, but on the other hand as I told you earlier, if I was Louis Coleman, I'd be madder than he is given what that man's been through and what people in his race have experienced here in Louisville; I'd be mad too. I don't know what else I could say on the issue.

Now there have been, we've had other, like Riverside Gardens, we've probably had some interaction with the Sierra Club. We've had members before who were Sierra Club members who participated, but they hit a brick wall when they would try to convince other members of the Sierra Club to come and attend meetings, because they just—I've got a daughter that's a Sierra Club member, who is a high school biology teacher, who did a stint in the Peace Corps, who has a background with public and environmental affairs from Indiana University, that special program there. I've had her come to a meeting or two and, "Dad," she said, "I cannot believe this. I had no idea that it's the kind of forum that I've seen here. This is incredible." So a lot of them, David, it's that mindset: it's a company-sponsored thing, it's got to be bad. Now I encouraged Jim Bergers to come to try to help give us some press to indicate what we're trying to do here, but it would be twisted to his needs. He won some big journalism award for environmental reporting in California and then that's what he wants to do here and he did. Everybody's got their own agenda.

DC: There's a group called REACT. Have you dealt with them at all?

CH: The people that I mentioned to you from Riverside Gardens, they were members of REACT and that's who I went and talked to. Some of the other members of REACT are the ones that are with Louis Coleman and they've got issues that have to due primarily with the race aspect of it. But then in years past, the odors from Rubbertown were offensive. The Metropolitan Sewer District Processing Plant down in the west end went through about a

ninety-five million dollar overhaul to put lids on all of their open tanks and try to contain and put in some brand-new technology that--. Well, we had a meeting there on the facility, we had a meeting where we had a meal served and on the wall adjacent to us they're cooking shit. I mean, how else can I put it? Now we tried to have a meeting there about seven or eight years ago, I couldn't eat. I mean, it was horrible. Everybody's bathroom ended up there. You just cannot imagine what that's like and these people down here in nice homes are having to deal with that twenty-four hours a day. I don't blame them, I'd be upset as well. Now the plants and the participating companies, they've spent millions and millions of dollars to try to abate those things, because they want to be a good neighbor. They've got huge investments and capital investments in infrastructure there. They don't want to shut down and leave. They can't pick that stuff up and haul it to Singapore.

DC: This is a question I have that I keep coming up with because of this sort of threat that is always that there, that says if you put too many restrictions on us, well, we'll just leave. But the infrastructure is so intense and as you were describing, the connections between companies there, pipelines running underground from one to the other—

CH: Yeah.

DC: Would not really make for that to be an easy decision by anyone.

CH: And no matter where you go now, nobody wants anything in their backyard. I went to a GE plant down in Alabama someplace almost ten years ago and they were using ( ) and something else, I've forgotten. These were the two base components that they used in huge quantities, but they bought this town, they bought it, and moved it lock, stock, and barrel so that they created this like, I don't know, twelve thousand acre plant of ground where they operated in the middle and then they put a golf course all the way around it for the employees. And

everybody's happy, but they had to go to that length to make this particular material. I think it's the plastic components that go in a lot of their appliances, little decals and all of that stuff. But that's what they had to do to get a facility where they could operate like that.

DC: So what is the solution then here in Louisville, because a number of improvements, as you said, have been made, but there's still pollution, there's still leakage, etcetera, and there's still these neighbors?

CH: The other thing is that the calculations that EPA made on the reasonable health exposure and all of that, I believe that they overreacted, having been around this stuff thirty-five years. And it really boils down to the guidelines that EPA came up with are so far different than Title 5's requirements that the companies, in some cases, it's impossible for them to operate at those levels. Now they're in compliance with Title 5. In many cases, they have far exceeded Title 5, but in many cases, they cannot or they cannot afford to go to the new standards that EPA has established, which are incredibly tight. So it boils down to, like American Synthetic Rubber is putting in this new piece of equipment that's supposed to burn almost all of it out. I don't know, I think they paid I don't know how many million dollars for it. It really boils down to if it was available, would they be willing to spend the money or is it cheaper to shut down and move. That's what it boils down to. I think that the truth be done, that's the economics of it.

Now Rohm and Haas is putting in a central facility and this is called, it's some kind of a device that burns everything and they are routing all of their sources of pollution to this central burning station and they're having to pipe the whole plant out. Once they get that thing in operation, as I understand it, they won't even have to meet the Title 5 requirements. They won't even be a Title 5 source and they don't have to report anymore.

DC: Because that's ( ).

CH: Because they've done that. Now I don't know how far that is toward that continuum of the EPA standard. And people like Zeon, they can't meet that. They can meet the Title 5, but there's no way [they can meet the EPA standards], they can't do it. They'd have to shut down. Matter of fact, they've already closed down part of their operation and sent it to South America or someplace, I think, because people down there were tickled to death to get it. Within Title 5 guidelines, but not the standard that's been put on them now.

DC: In terms of number of jobs, historically speaking the number of employees at these plants, compared to at its heyday, where are we in terms of number of jobs?

CH: Well, I just saw here in a piece here, there's thirty-one hundred jobs out there now. I believe that since that's been published, it's probably five or six hundred lower than that. Now the DuPont Dow or DuPont Elastimer's Plant, which has been there since World War II, where they make the neoprene rubber, it's gone. They're going to close it. They're the single source of the chloroprene, which is on the list, but they're not relocating because of that. They're relocating because the facility that DuPont has at Lake Pontchartrain has a more modern technology where they can make the material cheaper than they can in Louisville. So economically, that's the reason for that. They're getting ready to go. That's a couple hundred jobs. When they shut that part of the plant down, I don't know about the remaining part of DuPont, whether they've got enough production capacity there to use that infrastructure that DuPont will support it. It may be a ( ), who knows? Rohm and Haas, at one time we were approaching a thousand employees. I think they're down now to about three fifty total.

DC: Wow, so this is a significant decline.

CH: Yeah, and it's not because they've cut back on production. They've modernized and economized and got rid of folks that they were paying too much money, like me. They've just eliminated jobs and had people double up on stuff. I saw some of my friends came to the funeral home and they told me, they said, "Charlie, you cannot believe what it's like out at the plant now. It is so different than when you left." They said, "They wouldn't give a hang about how people felt about anything like what you used to do around cooperation and all that." They said, "That's out the window. All they want is some money and if you can't make me a profit, get out," just cavalier. I think that all the plants down there are under the same gun and what bothers me is you take a city like Chattanooga. Now, I came up on I-75 and I saw two billboards and they both had at the bottom: "Chattanooga Can Do.com. Thirty-one plastics plants and counting. Mega industrial park available." But in Louisville, it's: "We want service technology. We want UPS. But Rubbertown, you're history." The mayor has almost come out and said that, "We don't need you anymore."

DC: Why do you think that is? Is that because politically it's too dangerous or ( )?

CH: I think it's both. He's concerned about the air quality as all of us are. That's legitimate. It's a question of how far do you take that. What is a reasonable standard to have an economically viable operating facility here in Louisville and choking to death? That's what it boils down to. Now see I've got the dilemma too, I've got this one daughter that's a science biologist and a science teacher, Peace Corps, Sierra Club, and my other daughter's husband works at the Ford truck plant. That's an interesting dynamic, but we have dinner together and we do things together as a family and we handle it, but my daughter's really hoping that my son-in-law can finish his career there. That's all he's got. He's a high school graduate, that's it. So an interesting dilemma. What bothers me is that if we look at our country as a whole, where

are we headed? Can we exist with no manufacturing? I think that we are leaving ourselves vulnerable to not having the ability to produce. We're going to be hamstrung to where we are dependent on other countries for goods and energy and we're sitting ducks.

DC: I think you're right, yeah.

CH: Now this is going to be offensive to you, but I'm going to say it. I have this vision and I hope to God I don't live long enough to see it that one day there's going to be a big red star on the Statue of the Liberty. They are coming, buddy. I think we're in a whole lot of people's gun sights and we don't even know it. That's my John Birch speech. (laughs)

DC: Well, I think we've covered a lot of territory, but was there anything I didn't ask that perhaps I should have or that you thought I might ask?

CH: Let me reflect on that a moment. I think that one thing that the community has done recently that we didn't talk about, it's a part of this whole complex process that we're in, but that was a decision to go with a metro Louisville.

DC: ( ).

CH: To combine them. I think was long overdue. I had a personal tragedy in my family four years ago. My little grandson was electrocuted. All Isaac did was to touch a garage door; it killed him. We have subsequently found out that the people where he was visiting that day, friends of my daughter's, had hired a contractor to build a garage. The contractor subcontracted an electrical person to wire it. The guy used twelve two, fourteen two, with the ground, put in three-way switches, and used the naked ground wire as a traveling hotwire between the two circuits so that there was no ground. The garage was electrified with a hundred and nineteen volts and when Isaac was playing with the water hose in the driveway, he brushed up against the door and a hundred and nineteen volts went through him and stopped his heart instantly.

My daughter, my son-in-law, and my wife and I have been through hell the last four years trying to get it such that no contractor could go out there and do something like that, never get a permit from the city, never have an inspection, and be fined only one hundred dollars and still has not paid it and is still in business.

DC: Unbelievable.

CH: So we have been to the state. We had Representative Ron Krim lobby with legislation to make the fine a thousand dollars, went to the governor's office back in April, he signed it into law. The version that comes out, when I met with the Metro Council people here a couple of weeks ago, they eliminated the phase "failure to get a permit" and put in some other flowery language, so we're right back where we started. I'm telling you, when I see what we have been through as a family, how difficult it has been to get something done, it just irritates me to no end the bureaucracy that still exists to get something that's so obviously necessary done. So when I see the situation with the plants and it certainly, the magnification is such that I don't know where in the heck it's all going to end up. I think people will be just like we're about to do. I shouldn't even have said that. I sometimes feel like just throwing in the towel. I can't do anything about it. I give up after four years of hell and I'm afraid that's what the plants are going to do. But it's only three thousand jobs. It's only a few hundred votes maybe. And a lot of the people that have houses right nearby there, some of them have legitimate complaints, but some of them came after the fact. They knew what they were coming into.

DC: Of course, I would think so, right.

CH: Some of the ones that have legitimate issues were serious polluters of the environment themselves and didn't want to take responsibility for it. You see the picture? There's no easy pass through this whole thing.

DC: Also, a bunch of derelict or moth-balled plants presents its own set of serious concerns.

CH: Yeah, absolutely.

DC: It's a tough situation.

CH: I used to lay awake at night and think about what else could we have done. We've tried everything you could think of. Our little grandson was killed on May twenty-fourth, the Friday before Memorial Day weekend and my mom died Thursday before Memorial Day weekend, died in my arms, was well the night before, watched American Idol with one of my sisters, woke up sick Thursday morning and by the time I got in there and got her in the bathroom, that was it. Good Lord, another Memorial Day weekend just, whew, tragic.

DC: Comes in waves, yeah.

CH: So life goes on and I think somebody we'll be successful in getting the legislation passed.

DC: I hope so. Any last thing before I shut this out, last statement ( )?

CH: No, I think that pretty well covers it. I appreciate the time with you.

DC: Well, I really appreciate your time, especially with everything that's been going on for you recently and making this time for me. I really appreciate that.

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcribed by Emily Baran. July 2006