

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

The American Bicentennial

Personal Experience

O. H. 1342

PATRICIA ANN ALESSI

Interviewed

by

Joseph P. Alessi

on

November 1, 1990

## PATRICIA ANN ALESSI

Patricia Ann Alessi was born on October 16, 1935 in Youngstown, Ohio, the daughter of John and Lucille Skinner. After moving to Leetonia, Ohio at a young age, Mrs. Alessi attended parochial school until high school. Mrs. Alessi graduated from Leetonia High School in 1952. Following high school, Mrs. Alessi wed her husband, Joseph, on September 6, 1954.

Throughout her lifetime, Mrs. Alessi has held a variety of jobs. Some of these jobs include clerk of the Youngstown Auto Club (1958-1972), and a member of the Ohio Air Quality Development Authority (1975-present). Also, Mrs. Alessi has been awarded many honors such as a Distinguished Service Award (1975), a City Resolution (1975), and was appointed to the position of United Nations Chairman of Youngstown (1972).

Mrs. Alessi belongs to several local organizations, such as the League of St. Jude, Ladies Catholic Benevolent Association (L.C.B.A.), Order of the Sons of Italy, Ohio Acid Rain Task Force, Girl Scouts of America, Boy Scouts of America, Catholic Family Movement (C.F.M.), The Right to Life Society, The Joe DiMaggio Club, and is an active member in St. Christine's Church. Although Mrs. Alessi is very active, she holds her family as her most important responsibility.

Currently, Mrs. Alessi resides at 3857 Baymar Drive in Youngstown, Ohio with her husband. She has four children: Christina Jo, Sandra Lee, Lisa Ann, and Joseph Paul. Mrs. Alessi is still active in local and state politics. Mrs. Alessi also enjoys reading, church activities, home making, baseball, football, and most of all, her grandchildren.

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INTERVIEWEE: PATRICIA A. ALESSI

INTERVIEWER: Joseph P. Alessi

SUBJECT: American Bicentennial

DATE: November 1, 1990

JA: This is an interview with Mrs. Patricia Ann Alessi for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on the American Bicentennial, by Joseph Paul Alessi, at 3857 Baymar Drive Youngstown, Ohio, on November 1, 1990, at 10.30 a.m.

Hello Mrs. Alessi. Before I get started with the questions dealing with the Bicentennial itself, I would first like to get some background information on you first if that is okay?

PA: Sure.

JA: First of all, where and when were you born?

PA: I was born at home on 1610 East High Avenue in Youngstown, Ohio on October 16, 1935, to my parents John Skinner and Lucille Fast Skinner. My father migrated from West Virginia and met my mother, who was born in Washingtonville, Ohio. She then moved with her family to Youngstown, Ohio when her father passed away. So, that is where I was born.

JA: So, you were born in Youngstown, Ohio?

PA: Yes. Then my father died when I was three years old. So at that time, Youngstown was a big city compared to Washingtonville and Leetonia. My mother took her three girls to Leetonia, where her brother lived, and from age three until age 19 I lived in Leetonia, Ohio. I went to school at St. Patrick's Catholic Elementary School and I was a graduate of Leetonia High School.

JA: Tell me something about your childhood, your hobbies, and things that you remember; school, for instance.

PA: Well, it was a very small town. I think that there were about 1,037 people when I lived there. There was a big train station but very few trains. We grew up in a very small town, as I said. My hobbies were--I think from the time I was about seven or eight years old--I became a great baseball fan and sports of any kind was very exciting for me. I lived in a town with all Indian fans and five Yankee fans, and I became one of them. It was back in the days when the Depression was going on and I knew nothing about that, but you always somehow managed to have something like sports to take your mind off of it. [There were] men like Mussolini and Hitler, and a great part of that I remember.

The first part of history in my life that meant something to me was when Franklin D. Roosevelt died. I truly thought at that time that I didn't know how the world was going to continue because I had only known that man as the President of the United States. So, that is really became interested in government. Those were the war years. Several of the boys from Leetonia, Ohio were enlisted in the services and there were stars on people's windows when they had men in the service. And of course, we were all females so there were no stars, but I always remember the people across the street had three stars in their window, and you always prayed for these fellows and their safe return. One restaurant in this little town had an 8x10 glossy of all of these servicemen. A great deal of patriotism of that time was enforced in my life through radio and newspaper accounts of what was going on.

JA: Do you recall anything about the school itself?

PA: Oh, yes we were taught by the Ursuline nuns and we had two grades to a room. We had the largest graduating class at St. Patrick's, and there was only 17 in my graduating class. That was the only Catholic formal training that we had because there were two high schools at that time in Youngstown, Ohio, which were so far away that you had to leave your family and stay with a family in Youngstown if you had to go to a Catholic High School. Mom was a widow and we were poor and there was no money or relatives in Youngstown that I could stay with. Besides, I had become a cheerleader for the Leetonia High School team as a freshman. I went in as a little freshman and I was really happy to be in familiar ground. In my high school years there was cheerleading, and in sports there was Notre Dame football and Leetonia football and basketball and that sort of thing.

JA: What types of employment have you had throughout your life?

PA: Well, my first job was a babysitting job so that I could get enough money to buy the Joe DiMaggio book, The Life of Joe DiMaggio, and I saved that money and bought it. I went from there to this little restaurant that hired me after school to do dishes, and from there I went to Salem Hospital where I worked in the kitchen and delivered trays. After I graduated from high school, I took a job at Mullen's Manufacturing. Well, my first job was at the church budget, a place where they make

envelopes and calendars. From there I met the personnel director at a banquet and he asked me to come down to Mullen's. He wanted to hire me. I found out later that he was a great Yankee fan and we would talk sports all night long. My salary was almost twice as much as I was making at the church budget. So, I went there and stayed until I met my future husband. Well, I worked there even we were married. My next employment after I was married was at the AAA [Triple- A]. They had opened up an AAA office in Salem, Ohio. Then we started our family, and I worked part-time at the AAA. We moved from Salem to Youngstown in 1958, and I was hired part-time to work in the Youngstown Automobile Club, which I continue doing on a part-time basis, and then I helped my husband with the cookware business that he was in. After that I was in a telephone office. They were selling light bulbs for the disabled and I managed that. After that I was appointed by the governor and I took on a position as a State Commissioner, which I serve on as we speak.

JA: How did you become appointed and to which government?

PA: I became interested in government at an early age. As a young housewife, I was very appalled that the garbage man would not pick up my garbage because he thought that it was in an odd place. I called the Mayor's office and said that I didn't like this and they said, "Well, those are the rules." And I said, "Well, how do you change them?" He said, "You get a new mayor." Well, that bothered me and at that time they had a local program, which is still on, called "The Open Mike." There was a man at that time running for Mayor and he had to give his credentials or whatever of whom he was and where he graduated from and all of this. I became very angry because the man happened to be black and his name was Hugh Frost, and I felt that the man was qualified and that he would have made an excellent mayor. So I called him and told him that he had my vote and his campaign manager said, "Well, why don't you go ahead and campaign for this man." I said, "What do I have to do?" He said, "Just tell people about this man." So I did, and I decided that the best thing to do would be to stand out at a polling place. I guess, after the election was over that day, he was defeated. But they came around with money, and I didn't know what it was for and so I said, "Well, you can just give it back to him because I did it because I believed in him." He became a very good friend of mine and from that time on, it just progressed.

I became active when Jack Hunter knocked on my door and told me that he wanted to be mayor, and I became campaign manager--I didn't even know what it was--for the local councilman's race. He won and Jack Hunter won. I became caught up in how the system works. Good men were aboard at that time and I believed in Jack Hunter's philosophy of government.

Then I met a very, very dear friend who became my best friend. His name was Clingan Jackson. Really it was quite funny, because I really became interested. I became a Fifth Precinct Committee person, and then I ran for an office as Secretary Treasurer. I was on the Central Committee. I worked very hard. Then, the Bicentennial started about that time, and it was about that time when there was a notification in the newspaper about anybody wanting to become involved in the Bicentennial. Mr. Hunter had appointed me United Nations Day Chairman in 1972, and I really was so excited. I didn't understand what that was all about, but I had to make a speech on the square. I was so excited that I forgot to introduce the main speaker. It became quite a joke because I am very enthusiastic, but I selected a young man to give the speech for the day and that was what the Chairman was suppose to do. He was to gather people around at the square and talk about the United Nations Day. I selected a young man in the Political Science Department at Youngstown State University, who had just moved to town and was not known. I found out that he lived at the end of my street. His name was William Binning, and no one knew him.

So I had talked to Mr. Jackson, and he thought that would be a good idea for me to do that. Well anyway, that started me out in 1972 as my first experience in public. It turned out all right, even though I forgot to introduce the main speaker. It became a big joke because I was so enthusiastic I kind of covered it over and said, "What happened was, the mayor presented me a Distinguished Citizen's award for being a United Nations Day Chairman, and I got so excited at the award, I called up the Benediction--that is the closing of the ceremony--and forgot the speaker." I was never given anything quite so prestigious in my life.

I look back on that and the only other award that I ever received was one that will stay dear in my heart and that was the football team back in 1952 and 1953. We started what they named a Homecoming Queen. I was not the prettiest girl in the class and had no idea that I would ever be selected. I thought that I was happy being the head cheerleader of the team, but at that time, the coach had the football players select the person that they wanted to represent their team. I was sitting in class and they announced that I was the football queen. I had two thoughts in my mind at that time: "Why is it that I to have to miss cheerleading and the most important game of the season?" This was actually the Wellsville game. I then realized after the principal and the coach talked to me, that this was an honor that the men selected me on that team because they appreciated my support as a cheerleader. And so I was very honored. Then, I was even honored further when the local man--well, what we called the local wealthy man--had a buggy that he donated. In Leetonia I had been known as the third football queen and the only football queen to have ever had a horse and buggy, which this man donated.

So, that was the only other award that I had ever received when Mayor Hunter gave me this Distinguished Citizen's award. So, knowing Mayor Hunter, he thought that it was so wonderful that I was so naive and so excited and so appreciative and had done many things on a community basis such as a Girl Scout Leader, and Boy Scout Leader, and things such as that nature that were not meant to be rewarded. We had a good relationship in terms of wanting the best for the community. So, I called him and said, "How do you get on the Bicentennial?" He said, "Send a letter."

There was a man by the name of Clingan Jackson, who I had met, who was going to be the Chairman. So, I sent a letter to Clingan and I will tell you about that later. We were sitting in the City Council Chambers, and he said that he was leaving. He had to go to a meeting and it was at the Ohio Hotel across the street from City Hall, to meet Jim Rhodes. I said, "You mean, Governor Rhodes?" And he said, "Yes." I said, "Oh, I like him. I really, really like him." Well, he said, "Come with me and I will introduce you." And I said, "Really?" He said, "Yes." So, I was going out and I said, "Well, I have to run home first." And Clingan said, "Fine." So when I got out, I had to tell my husband where I was going and he said, "Well, you can't go and meet the governor of the state in those slacks." He said, "Put on a dress." So, that meant pantyhose and the whole works. So I did, and I ran down and met Clingan in the lobby of the hotel. We went up and he was going to run for governor, and I just was very taken with this man's ability to run and with what he had done. I felt that maybe he might need a little bit of help. So, Clingan introduced me and he said, "You might want to get to know Patty, she might like to help you in your campaign." And at that time, John Gilligan was governor and I just didn't like the way that he was doing things in Ohio.

In 1974 I had four children and our youngest was probably about nine years old, and it was a good time to do some campaigning because he was in school and I always brought him, as well as his little sister, who was two years older. The other children were six years older and four years older, so that worked out very well. Anyway, I met him and on coming out, I said, "I would really like to help you." Well, I tripped down the steps of the hotel in front of the governor and in front of whoever was there. [I tripped] on my knees, and I really thought that if the world would end right there for me it wouldn't have mattered because as I stood up, I had the biggest hole in my pantyhose

that you could have ever seen in your life and there was blood coming out of this gap in my knee. Clingan was there and reached in his pocket, got out a handkerchief and said, "I feel so bad, what can I do?" And I said, "Well, for one thing you could probably buy me a new pair of pantyhose." And he just laughed and he just felt terrible about it. Well, I went to the gathering of the Republican party that night and met Clingan there, and Clingan said that he had a call from the governor wanting to know how I was doing because he felt kind of bad about that. I said, "Yes, I really wanted to help him. I really like him a lot." I also said, "He will forget about me altogether." But Clingan, being the political reporter, put in an article in the newspaper that Sunday, and in his column it said, "Patty Alessi Really Falls For Rhodes." It told the story because the governor had asked me to run his campaign here for him and I said, "Well, I don't know too much about running a State Governor's Race." He just said, "Well, just do the same thing that you have been doing."

At that time, William Binning was a professor in the political science department and he wanted to get aboard. The Republican County Chairman didn't seem too interested in heading up Governor Rhodes' Campaign, and no one thought that he would win. So, I took my two children and we campaigned every place I could think of in those years, including every side of town and any part of Mahoning County for Jim Rhodes. So after the election, he called me and I congratulated him. He said that he would like to see me in Columbus. When I got there, he asked me if I would go on a board that would help fight pollution, and I said, "Well, let me ask my husband."

I had no idea that there was any money involved or what a Governor's Appointment meant, but what it did mean was that I had to be confirmed by the Senate, and that was something that was a great experience in my life, too. But anyway, I accepted the appointment, and I was appointed on February 25, 1975. Prior to that there had been the call and the letter that I had sent to Clingan, and it had a big "V". It had said that I would serve at "Vin, Vigor, Vitality" and on the bottom there was a big word that caught Clingan's eye: "volunteer." He loved it. We had our first meeting in May of 1974. All of this preceded the Bicentennial. It didn't interfere with anything that mattered in the Bicentennial. I don't know now if you want me to lead into that or if you have any other questions for me.

JA: How and why did you become involved in Bicentennial?

PA: I would like to go back to when I was a young child growing up in Leetonia and what the Fourth of July meant to me. It meant fun. I really knew nothing, at that time, about what the Fourth of July meant [in terms of] our freedom. I just knew that it was a time for fun. There was a serious part of the Fourth of July and there was a fun time, and people were really and truly happy. There was always a picnic. There was always a memorial service at the cemetery. There was always patriotism. I didn't have a bicycle, but I helped decorate the bicycles belonging to the kids on the street. I was a part of the parade because I was a cheerleader, and I got to carry the flag and that all meant something to me. I really felt as though I didn't know what it all meant historically, but I knew down deep inside of me that I was an American. I was so sad when we had the flag and the 21 gun salute. I remember that our soldiers were dying and that two or three members of my friend's families died during World War II. I remember all of that. So, my patriotism was always there. I was very fortunate, I wanted a son. I had three daughters and I swore that if I ever had a son, flags would fly. Well, he was born on the Fourth of July and that meant something to me, too. My love of involvement in what your community and government is all about and your government grew. If you want to change something, you have to go in and work to do it. I think that is what the governor saw in me. I didn't realize [that in the] political [system] if you worked, you got a position and that sort of thing. After knowing Jim Rhodes as I know him now, [I can say that] he respected my

enthusiasm, but my family life and my character was more important to him. There was a mutual respect between Mr. Jackson, myself and Clingan. We were involved in the Bicentennial, as the three County Commissioners, with the Mayor, who selected Clingan to head up the committee. My involvement with Clingan, therefore, was on a government type basis, and it really just transcended over into the Bicentennial. At that time, Clingan was on the Ohio Civil Rights Commission. I was afraid to drive to Columbus quite honestly by myself for this appointment because the meetings were once a month. Well, this was fortunate for me and I will always be grateful because the Ohio Civil Rights Commission met at the same time. So, that meant Clingan and I could travel to Columbus. My husband was at ease because I wasn't on the road by myself, and Mr. Jackson didn't like Clingan being on the road himself. So, we drove together and drove home and it is a part of my life that I would never want to change. I learned so much from Clingan, not only about government, but about life itself. He is a wealth of information in this community, and his character is one that is hard to describe. He is a decent, good man, [with] good family values. He has a great historic sense about him and he knows what is right in government, and I like that about him. If I were able to choose a father, I would have asked the Lord to make him my father because I think we shared a lot of great interests. He didn't have quite the interest in baseball that I did, but on everything else we agreed. In fact, I would talk so much on the way down and he would talk, too. So I said, "Well, let's make a deal, I will talk on the way down and you get to talk on the way back." So he said, "Fine." When we traveled to Columbus, I would talk to him all of the way down on what was happening in the Republic Party and on absolutely anything that I felt very comfortable with. So coming back, I would have to tell him what transpired on this commission that I had accepted, which was a commission called the Ohio Air Quality Development Authority. What it does is it finances air pollution abatement equipment through the sale of industrial revenue bonds. The interest is tax exempt on these bonds. So the places, for example, would be the Ohio Edison, a utility company, meat manufacturing, [and] LTV Steel. They would finance this equipment and we would put an air pollution equipment piece in, which would be called a bag house. That would eliminate the air pollution and our funds would go to finance that particular piece of equipment that would eliminate air pollution. So, I would have to tell him about everything that transpired on the commission. He would drop me off at home and he would say to my husband, "You know Patty made a deal, but I just never really get my turn." My husband told him at that point, "No, and you never will." But he did get his turn, and I have a lot of great memories. He also was a Rhodes appointee. So, we had the love of Jim Rhodes together and that was a common bond that we had, even though Clingan is a Democrat and I am a Republican.

That is how I lead into the Bicentennial and my purpose in the Bicentennial when I got there was that I was the only unknown, in my opinion. There were county commissioners. There were judges. There were people that if you walked into that room, you would know that they were people because you had seen them on television or had read their name in the newspaper or had been acquainted with them. I was the only one that everyone was saying, "Who is she?" So, at that meeting, there was the first gathering of anybody interested. And from that, Clingan formed his committee chairman. Clingan asked at that third meeting, there in the City Council Chambers, about what we should do as the Youngstown/Mahoning County for the Bicentennial, in order to celebrate? So everybody had an idea, and when it was my turn, I just said, "I think that we should just have some fun." That stems back from what I meant when I discussed fun. Government is serious but they do take time out for fun events, and dancing and music is fun. So, I wanted to have a costume ball where you could dress up and represent Philadelphia at the time of the Bicentennial in 1776, and Independence Hall and all of that. That is what I thought that we could use as one of our events, and I was very surprised that these very well known people thought that was a very good idea. They

passed about several different things. There was a writer there who had a special interest in preparing a book for the Valley. Then someone else wanted to make something more commemorative. Each of us made some suggestions to chairman Jackson on what we thought would be a viable event. I was surprised when we voted as a group that the ball was one of the events that was going to be carried out. So, as each meeting went on, [The question that was asked was]"what would you do with this ball?" My understanding was that I was to be a member of this ball committee and that Mr. Jackson would have a chairman that he had in mind to put this ball together. I have to tell you, at this time, I was very unknown as far as most of the people that came on this committee were from the Sesquicentennial. People like Mrs. Schaff, Harriet Schaff, from the Arms Museum and Gibby James, were all known to Mr. Jackson as well as their ability to accomplish something. I was the only unknown but for some reason, Clingan named me chairman of this ball. Along with my Distinguished Service Award, homecoming queen, and my Appointment by the Governor, this became very, very important to me. I wanted to achieve an event that would mean something to people as a celebration type of event. So, I became chairman and I was named by Chairman Jackson and the committee as the Ball Chairman. I put together what I thought the ball would be like, and we put our dates together. As a member of the Bicentennial Commission itself, I was involved in all five of the events that were selected. We first started out in Canfield, Ohio with the Dedication to the Carriage House, and I was Martha Washington there. We dedicated that along with Ed Hulme and Chairman Jackson, and that was the first event.

Then the next event that we had was the Dedication of the Monument to John Young. That was our next event. That is a monument where we stored everything that we did in a vault that is to be opened in the year 2000, and we put mementos in there. I believe that Ed Hulme would be able to tell you about that, but I did put in a lot of the ball memorabilia. I was a part of that dedication. Then the book was another event. Then we had the ball held on July 3rd and then the parade was on July 4th in 1976.

What we did was, we had a whole year almost two years to plan this ball, and I knew what I wanted. So, I formed a committee and I selected a spot that was very, very historical in itself, which was the Idora Park Ballroom. There were bands from many years prior, and the carousel in itself was deemed a historical site and it was the perfect place to have a ball. The parking was perfect. There would be a ball. Do you want me to tell you what the ball was like and how we did that?

JA: Before we go into the ball, I have some more general questions about the committee itself.

PA: Okay.

JA: First of all, we know why the committee was formed to promote the Bicentennial, but what was the goal or purpose of the Bicentennial?

PA: The purpose was to celebrate our anniversary, the anniversary of the Bicentennial, which was 200 years after July 4, 1776, [when we obtained] our freedom. Each community throughout the United States had a celebration for the Bicentennial. Most communities only did one event. We selected five to be remembered as how we celebrated our nations 200th birthday.

JA: How was the committee organized? Were there official positions or was it just Mr. Jackson who was the chairman and everybody else was to listen to him?

PA: Mr. Jackson, as I told you, published in the newspaper to anybody that wanted to become involved and there were a lot of volunteers. After the committee got together then, officers were elected. Then, there were chairman selected. We met every Wednesday at what is now the Hasty House, but it was the Italian Restaurant at that time. We had meetings, and then we opened up the Bicentennial office and we selected a director. Then, we had meetings and every facet of our celebration for the Youngstown Mahoning Valley Bicentennial Committee was discussed through membership. We had quite a membership there. In terms of meetings and attendance, I attended every meeting that we had and we voted in majority vote. I don't think that there were any disagreements on anything. We knew that we wanted a parade. We knew that we wanted a ball. We wanted a book to remember our valley up to that point. We wanted to have a monument that said, "This is what we did in the Bicentennial." Then, we opened up our headquarters with the Paul Revere Ride, on Paul Revere Day in April of 1975. Then, they formed the Brigade and it just blossomed into that.

JA: You say that it "blossomed." How strong, really, was the community support? Was it just a bunch of people jumping on the band-wagon? Were you jumping on the band-wagon?

PA: I was one of the ones that were there in May of 1974. I was so busy in making sure that the events were a success and helping out that I don't remember looking around to see if there was anybody on the band-wagon. I cannot remember how many parades there were and how many times I was asked to visit a school to bring any information. The community by January of 1976, was really spread out enough that there was a lot of public interest. I give a lot of credit to Chairman Jackson who kept the interest alive with the events. I can tell you that when we opened up the office I went down to the local costume place, Master's Costume, and we dressed up and made a big introduction to the community in April of 1975. I believe it was what we intended to do. Chairman Jackson and I appeared on radio and television along with Mr. Amedia and Ed Hulme. Mr. Amedia headed the parade. I went on the Veteran's Hour and the community came alive with support. There were some different--Chairman Jackson handled that--nationalities that wanted to become involved with the Bicentennial. Chairman Jackson encouraged each ethnic group to have something incorporated into the general Bicentennial Commission. He wanted us all to work together for one common cause, which was to celebrate. I think that he did an excellent job in doing that.

JA: You said that a lot of groups were encouraged to put on their own things, but still be part of the general Bicentennial. In Mr. Jackson's interview that I had with him, he mentioned that there were some conflicts. Do you recall these conflicts and to what degree they may have been?

PA: Well, I do know that everyone is proud of who they are and where they came from. The Irish wanted their celebration to be the very best, and I respect that. I really and truly do. I respect the Italians. I respect the Black segment, the Jewish community, the Slovaks, and the Germans. But I only remember the part when-- I hesitate to mention--one of the groups wanted the ballroom, which we had all worked out. Then, they wanted to bring in a well-known singer, I believe, on the day of the ball. We had worked for a year and a half and this group had gotten together and had decided that this was their heritage and they were going to come in and call this a Bicentennial event for that particular ethnic group. It didn't really bother me because we had done our work. We encouraged them. I went to their meeting and explained to them that this was a Bicentennial for all. It was for absolutely every person and our commission was not in a position to sponsor one of their functions. We were in a position to certainly encourage them to go and participate in these events. In fact, I did. I went to a couple of the events that they had. I believe Judge Leskovyansky had a

great event. The Irish people had a nice event. We encouraged them to put all of their efforts to become a part of the overall Bicentennial. I think that Chairman Jackson handled it very well. I was only involved in one conflict and that was in my particular ball committee. I had a young singer that decided that she should be the focal point of the ball. Somehow, I took her aside very nicely and told her that she had a beautiful voice and that I really could use her influence as part of the ticket committee, and that if she really and truly was interested in the Bicentennial Ball in itself and the community, that she would want to help in that capacity. Believe it or not, it worked. I was able to incorporate what maybe would have been a self-interest, at first, but turned it around to become a part of something. She was not very active, but she uses that on her resume quite a bit. It worked out, and that is the only conflict that I ever knew about.

JA: What was your opinion of Mr. Jackson's leadership?

PA: Well, you have heard me say that I wish he were my father. I have a great love for him. I also admire him in his ability to get all sides to work together. The conflicts that he spoke about were things that he managed to work. He and Mr. Hulme could probably elaborate more on that, but all in all, he had some real spark plugs that we all band together and work as a commission. We worked with him to help him alleviate any problems. I don't think that we could have had anyone any better. I think that we are so fortunate that he is in our valley. I think that his leadership was excellent. I give him four stars and all of that good stuff.

JA: Was the Bicentennial group politically oriented, or, for the most part, was your intention to be free from politics?

PA: I can speak for myself, my intention was certainly free from politics. I really wanted everybody to have a great time in Mahoning County, in Youngstown, for our celebration. I wanted everybody to have a good time whether they were a Democrat, Independent, or Republican. When we all started out, I remember seeing this. Most of the office holders--and I don't say this with any animosity or anything like that in my heart--are Democrats. I am a registered Republican, and I think that as we started out, that might have been upper most in my mind. I mean, this is how I am looked upon in the community. Thanks to Clingan, because he really brought all aspects of the community together and I think that he kept the politics out of the Bicentennial. He truly did. I really believe that he did.

JA: Do you recall other individuals who were instrumental in the Bicentennial? I have heard you mention Mr. Hulme, Mr. Amedia, Judge Leskovyansky, and you mentioned the author of the book, which was Mr. Aley. How did they contribute? Were they the tentacles of Mr. Jackson? Would they be the go-getters? Who were the go-getters of the group? Who were the individuals that were there all of the time, that made the committee work?

PA: Well, first of all, there were those of us that were the committee, the people that worked on a volunteer basis that were not paid. We did have to pay certain people to write the book, and we had to pay to keep our office open. But when you ask, "Who were the great supporters?" naturally I feel that the ball was an event and I actually told you that I wanted it to be a spectacular event. So, I had a great interest, and maybe that was selfish, but my heart was in it. I just didn't want the ball to be spectacular. I wanted the parade to be spectacular. I wanted everything that we did to be outstanding and those of us that headed these different event groups, wanted the same thing. So to answer, each of us had a committee and I think as the leader of the committee, our enthusiasm went

forth into that committee. Does that answer your question?

JA: For the most part, yes. Mr. Hulme was the only paid official of the Bicentennial. Is that correct that he was the only one paid that was on the committee?

PA: We needed an office to have somebody have all of the events flow through. Yes, Director Hulme was [paid]. This was in agreement with all of the commission members, and I do believe that we had a secretary there that we hired, too. I could be wrong, but I think we enlisted Mr. Aley to write the book. I think we had, and I think those were the only people that were involved. The Brigade itself was a big part of every event that we had and it was done on a volunteer basis. There was nothing paid on that at all. These men and women were all very close to my heart because my husband headed that, and I being his wife, watched the work that he put into that, as well as the dedication that he had for that particular group. He incorporated our son as the flag bearer as well as all of the children of the Brigade itself. They were all volunteers. When you say "money," I think that was the furthest thing from anybody's mind. I think that the job we paid Mr. Hulme to do was far superior. I mean, we really got our money worth with him. We had good reviews on the book. Mr. Aley is no longer with us. He is in heaven, and I think he did an outstanding job. But I think that spirit of Clingan Jackson siphoned down on all of us.

JA: Now, you said that there were five events. You mentioned the ball and some things that were involved with that and you mentioned the others. Could you elaborate a little bit more on the book and the Young monument and the parade itself?

PA: Well, I was a part of all of that. The book mainly was what Mr. Aley did. I really had nothing. He would call me and ask me some the things about our ball, and unfortunately none of it was in the book. I think that in my memory, I see people and they still remember that great party we had. It will be a part of future books to come. As far as the monument dedication, that was exciting. The Brigade was a part of that. Mr. Jackson, Mr. Hulme, and myself were dressed, and two or three of my committee members were there. We had relatives of, I believe it was, John Young and James Hillman. We have photographs of that. Everything was put together. We did, at the end of the Bicentennial, meet, and we put together a film of the Bicentennial and all of the events associated. That was given to the Arms Museum. So, that was something that was done by the committee itself and that was real nice. So, we have all of these events recorded. I am not certain that one went into the time capsule, which went into the monument.

The event that was closest to my heart was the ball. The parade was outstanding in itself. The team that was involved in with Chester Amedia, which would be Judge Leskovyansky, and Mary Burros, put together one of the most outstanding parades that I have ever witnessed. I really feel as though the ball and all the other events really got a lot of publicity prior to the events taking place. It was something that they will still talk about. I really feel very badly that was not recorded in our history book, you know.

JA: What was the Bicentennial to you?

PA: Well, if you know me, I am enthusiastic. It was about life itself and watching the communities come together. To be around to celebrate your nations 200th birthday, to get people together to have a good time and really stop and appreciate what our forefathers had done was something that I will never forget. It meant two years and my family suffered along with my many meetings. I had my

children along at most of the meetings with me and when I traveled to schools. In fact, I had my son dress up at most of the events. I had the Boy Scouts involved. I had the Girls Scouts involved. It was just a great, active, and exciting part of my life.

JA: Do you think that the Bicentennial would be successful today, or would the community support not be there like it was then?

PA: That is a very good question. I think that we were ready at that time to celebrate, and perhaps we might need something in our lives now to celebrate. I know that I would go back in the trenches. I know I would. I would be willing to help celebrate something. I think there have been a lot of events which have occurred since 1976 that have been disturbing in our country, and I don't think really that there is a lot of reason to celebrate. We need reasons, we really do.

JA: If you had to do it all over again, would you?

PA: Without a doubt. I would really like to tell you what it was like. Could I explain my ball to you at any point?

JA: Go ahead. That is what I wanted you to do.

PA: Okay, I want to tell you that when I started, I wanted Guy Lombardo because Guy Lombardo was significant with the old time music. But what I started out doing is forming this committee, and I knew I wanted Idora Park ballroom. I really invited members and sent out through the newspaper volunteers such as myself to bring the ideas to have this great, great evening of fun. I had a man who wrote a song, his name was Gerald Myer, to be sung the night of the ball. I had a lady call me that wanted to make a dress for me so that she could say that, "I made a dress for the ball chairman." I went down to the Master's Costume people, and they would just put me in a costume and send me here and there to just say that I was wearing a costume from Master's Costume. I had people call me to say, "What should I go dressed as?" I said, "Whatever you want." I remember Tom Barrett, God bless his heart. I wanted him to be Benjamin Franklin. He turned out to see these officials come forth in that garb and spend a night, on July 3, in those costumes. I think that it was 90 degrees in those costumes. I wanted everyone in costumes. I found a girl that was very, very decorative in her mind and very knowledge and creative. We created Philadelphia and Independence Hall. We had the whole city of Philadelphia in the Bicentennial ballroom that evening. I had the Williamsburg Garden full of flowers, and Burke's Flowers did the arranging. I will always remember the two movies where they had a man announce the guest as they came through, so I decided that this Brigade needed some kind of honoring. So, we put together a guard, so that I could have a town crier, who served at several events. During all of the Bicentennial, I became very involved in having a Christmas celebration on Christmas Eve, and then, a Fourth of July celebration, that I later became chairman of, and also through the coming years after the Bicentennial. But we had this man who became our town crier with his bell. Well, when guests came to our ball, they were announced and escorted to their table by the Brigade, who were the soldiers. They [the soldiers] were beautiful. I have to tell you about this Brigade. The group that became our escorts would practice Saturdays and Sundays for three weeks in Mill Creek Park, marching and understanding how we wanted this all done. The town crier was excellent. When you came in, your name was announced and you were lead to your table. The decorations chairman was Lynn Moraine, and she was a peach. We covered the tables with blue and white check, which was made

back in the Colonial days. That is how table cloths were all done. We had the milk glaze ink oils with the pen. We had a copy of the Constitution for every person that came to the ball. We had a program that was made, and I had it designed in the shape of a Liberty Bell. There were pictures of the committee inside. So to make it a part of everybody I wanted some more money for the ball because it almost paid for itself. I think it did when we ended up. We sold patrons on the back of it so that they could be a part of it, and their name could go into the history channels of the Bicentennial, and everybody wanted their name in. So I said, "Well, let's get everybody's name on for 1 dollar." Everybody contributed to this little program, which was a part of their program that they received and they were able to take it home that night. Then everyone got a Betsy Ross doll, that we made out of corn husk dolls. The committee got together and we had Betsy Ross sewing the American Flag so that they would have something to take home, too. It worked out that we had the wives of the Brigade there and we had them passing out the programs. The Brigade members themselves escorted them after the town crier announced their names and they went through the Williamsburg Garden. Canfield High School put on a play of 1776, and their decorations were outstanding. So, the committee purchased the decorations from Canfield High School. We had a town tavern. We had Independence Hall. We had a church. It was just like you stepped into Philadelphia in 1776 for the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Judge Leskovyansky came in his robes. Clingan came dressed, and he looked so beautiful. He was there. We had the tables, as I said, all decorated. The flowers were there. Burke's Flowers did an excellent job. Then we had--I couldn't get Guy Lombardo--Stan Kenton, who was the next oldest band. Stan's music rang out from the rafters, and everybody danced and had the greatest time.

Congressman Charles J. Carney came from his office in Washington, and he delighted in telling me that he had never witnessed anything quite so spectacular, and that he wanted to stay. People were there and they paid to go to the ball. They paid for their costumes. We had people from Pennsylvania. It was just absolutely wonderful. In fact, it was on the national agenda of events being sponsored on July 3 and 4 of that year. That was on the national register in Washington. I had a phone call from a girl, Kathy Pierson was her name, and she wanted to photograph this ball. She was traveling around. She was a photographer who was photographing events in order to put together a book to be published. She asked if she could stay at my home and be a part of the ball. I welcomed it. She filmed the ball itself in photographs and sent them to me. I have a beautiful letter from her. The ending and the final climax of this ball was a grand march. The grand march was a big topic of three Bicentennial meetings as to who was to lead this great grand march. I remember saying to Stan Kenton, "You know, I really want you to play very patriotic music." Knowing Mr. Jackson, it was the ending of "God Bless America". Oh, it was so touching. I don't think that I will ever forget that part. It really was the fun part of the grand march and everybody got mixed up. It started out great with Chairman Jackson leading the Brigade, but everybody got so filed up in turns and twists and no one wanted to stop. They were just marching around to this great music. Then at the end, we came up and we thanked everybody, and we played. Stan Kenton ended with God Bless America, and truly, there wasn't a dry eye in the place. After that, Mr. Kenton thanked everybody. He said that, of course we paid him, people at Idora Park were really wonderful, and it just was a night to remember and being a part of it was excellent.

JA: Do you have anything else to add?

PA: No, but I really want to thank you--because I did most of the talking--for this interview, and for remembering how we did it here in the Mahoning Valley. Thanks to you we will be remembered. So, I really want to thank you and encourage you to interview other people that were involved

because I truly feel that the enthusiasm, the spirit, and the heart that I gave to the Bicentennial, you will find in the other people you interview. So, thank you very much Mr. Alessi.

JA: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW