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Interview with Pat Crow

Amanda Feld

Christina Engler

Pat Crow

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Amanda Feld and Christina Engler
03-31-96
ANSO 67-68
Fieldwork: The Family Farm

Farm Organizations and Community Life: The Visitors' Bureau

The following is a transcription of an interview with Pat Crow on March fifth at three o'clock pm at the Visitors' Bureau.

CE: This is Christina Engler and Amanda Feld and we are interviewing Pat Crow at the Visitors' Bureau in Mount Vernon at three o'clock on the fifth of March.

CE: - that just happens to be one of them. And we thought that we'd come and talk to you and find out sort of a little bit more about- sort of the far- you know, the Visitors' Bureau and how it plays into- in terms of the community and what not. [to Amanda]- I don't know if you want to-

AF: yeah, just to give you an idea, we've spoken with you know, members of different Granges in Knox County, teachers at various schools, who else? Father Snoke at Danville St. Luke's and then a number of farm families and we're just trying to create a comprehensive view of- sociologically- of what the community is composed of. And that's not to say, you know 'here's the Grange. It's an organization; this is what it does.' We want to find out you know, what impact that has on how community life in Knox County is different from somewhere else. And so, we're trying to take like a holistic perspective and in order to do that we need to speak with lots of people.

PC: sure

AF: so

PC: well, I represent actually- I can represent several facets of the community. I do three or four act- actually three or four jobs. I am the director of the Knox County Convention and Visitors' Bureau plus I'm also the downtown development project manager responsible for all development work in the downtown area of Mount Vernon.

AF: does that, does that involve zoning and that sort of thing?

PC: to a limited extent it does. Actually, the downtown organization has adopted what is known nationally as the Main Street approach, developed by Main Street, U.S.A. In those- there's four basic principles in downtown development. First, organization- that there's an organization where- an economic development organization that's specifically aimed at at downtown org- work. Promotions, design- which is the design characteristics the architecture and so

on of downtown buildings. And then economic restructuring. So, it's more complicated than just having extra sidewalk sales or something. It's a very sophisticated process that you go through to try to preserve and to create more economic development in the central business district of communities. It has everything to do with the social development, the social economic changes in America, the shift of retail marketing to the, to the malls, the destructive impact that's had on the central business districts. This is wrapped very closely, in a community this small- it's wrapped very closely with travel and tourism. Because from an economic restructuring standpoint, downtowns are are are you know, like Mount Vernon, are historically rich, meaning there's a lot of older buildings and typically they've been under-developed. They haven't been utilized fully. In downtown Mount Vernon we have the Opera House, the [inaudible] Opera House which is a target for our most recent restoration and revitalization efforts. And that involves the Visitors' Bureau, it involves the downtown redevelopment organization, it involves a number of different groups coming together to improve the, the overall condition- living conditions, business conditions in the central business district. And in fact, the down- the health of your downtown actually reflects on the health of the community. If people drive through your downtown area they look at your downtown and there's an immediate judgment or decision on their part as to what- what does this say about your community. Every town has an area that perhaps needs redeveloped or improved, but your downtown is is the heart of that. And so, downtown redevelopment really does reflect a lot on what goes on throughout our entire city and indeed into our county, especially when it's your county seat. So I'm involved in other things besides that- I'm also the Mayor of Danville, which is probably perhaps a small job, but I sit on a number of regional and variant boards so I have another view of of the development in Knox County that perhaps I can help you with- if you're if you're at all interested. But in any case, again- I understand I think I know what you're doing now- now what specifically would you like to talk about?

CE: well, I think [laughs] I mean it's interesting just seeing that I think you're coming from a lot of different standpoints being that you're the Mayor of Danville which I think to some extent is a very different community than Mount Vernon

PC: yes

CE: what- how do you see those differences? What, how would you describe both communities?

PC: well, from several aspects- you know if you talk just about people, social events and those sort of things, Knox County is very homogeneous. It's a very reasonably conservative- I don't want to say very conservative, but generally most of Knox County are people have been here for a long time. They have roots here. I'm one of those; I actually left and was gone for twelve years and to came back here to "raise my family." And I came back here for a lot of good reasons. Because it's a very nice place to be. The award that we receive from

Ohio Magazine that named Mount Vernon, Ohio as “Most Livable Community” in 1994 is indicative of what the outside world- of how they view Knox County, what they think of Knox County. So, from a social standpoint, the people are similar; Danville, Mount Vernon, Fredericktown- they’re all pretty much the same kind of people, they do the same kinds of things. They accomplish things in the same methods, the same ways. The volunteer organizations operate in very similar ways. So, from that standpoint, I think they’re very similar. When you talk about the economic issues though, the change in America- and this isn’t just indicative of Knox County- has been away from small towns. You do not have- when I, when I was a young, a young man- a boy in Danville, which really wasn’t that many years ago

CE: [laughs]

AF: [laughs]

PC: you know- I’m forty-four years old, that was thirty years ago I was in high school. At that time we had two or three grocery stores in Danville, we actually had a car dealership in Danville, a couple of hardware stores, a couple of implement dealers, and there was a lot of business- two or three. And- I got myself in trouble by quoting three onetime- someone disagreed with me but- anyway there was a lot of localized business. Danville was a business hub. You could buy shoes, you could buy work clothes. Now if you wanted a nice suit, obviously that typically was a trip to Columbus or a trip to Mount Vernon. But, the day to day living things you could purchase in Danville. Today that’s not true. Today, you’re hard-pressed to find a pair of work boots to slip over your shoes if you want to get out of the mud in the spring. There’s one grocery store. ‘Course we have the convenient stores, but they’re not really grocery stores. They’re a new thing. We don’t have- we have an implement dealer who really is out of town, but we only have one in the area, we have no car dealers, we have no clothing stores- those things that we had just thirty years ago- many are not there any more. And that shift- you know the same thing happened in Mount Vernon where everything used to be downtown and thirty, forty years ago, everything was downtown. When you wanted to shop, you went downtown. Wherever you lived, you went downtown. The advent of the malls and the economic restructuring that that has created has been probably the most profound impact on small communities like Danville because the business left. Profound from a standpoint of a town like Mount Vernon because it’s not where it used to be. And what used to be downtown is not here and the prosperity that brought to that trade area is gone. And downtowns all over America struggle. And I’m not talking just about downtown Mount Vernon; I’m talking about downtown Dayton and downtown Cleveland. Downtowns in general and it’s that economic shift, that restructuring that happened because we think malls are neat and we like big spacious parking lots and all the things that go along with strip malls that make them a place to go. And of course the indoor malls were we used to like to congregate and all the other aspects that evolved from the first mall that was built. All those things have had a very profound impact on on the community.

And I'm not judging bad or good, but there was a shift there and in areas like Danville- the smaller communities are suffering, trying to recreate or to do something to replace that because the loss of business means the loss of jobs. The jobs can also- people can drive to jobs, but the more devastating effect on communities like Danville is that the revenue is not there- the tax base and what is needed to keep the buildings fixed-up, to keep them pretty, fix the sidewalks and all the other things that make a town nice to live in. That revenue is not there anymore and so you have to change the way you do things in order to accommodate that. Government- where they used to never get involved in private development- that's changed. And government has to. Like the village of Danville, we do cooperative work in our industrial parks and indeed, even with our sidewalks. We share expenses with our property owners to get sidewalks fixed-up even, just to get 'em fixed-up so that they're pretty and nice. We assume the responsibility for replacing curbs where that used to be a property owner expense in order to make sure that our town stays nice. Towns-cities like Mount Vernon have had to do similar things. Downtown Mount Vernon, about fifteen years ago went through a, what I call 'a streetscape improvement.' The south Main Street trees were planted, the brick cross walks were put in and prior to that time, those kinds of things weren't even thought of. That in order to keep the- a pleasant place to be, a nice place to be, in order to dampen the decline caused by this shift of economic me- economy, the retail economy- there was a great cooperative effort put together to just do that. Now we're currently working on the downtown revitalization grant and that's one of the things I am implementing as the project manager. The grant we have currently is to help revitalize the exterior of buildings. And we received a four hundred thousand dollar grant last year to do just that. And again, the government is now concerned about the decline of central business districts and the federal government created a program through the urban renewal of the sixties which turned into the 'hey we shouldn't tear these buildings down because they, they're historic significance is tied to the community- if we tear 'em down, we can't replace 'em.' So the federal government, realizing this created a program through the community development block grant system where they return money back to the communities and part of that is defined as either a [inaudible..] or areas in redevelopment. Well, downtown Mount Vernon is in the process of improving itself from that aspect. So, there is no way for me to say 'Danville is different from Mount Vernon' because Danville is part of the economy of Mount Vernon

[interruption- telephone call]

I am the Mayor of Danville but I work in Mount Vernon. Now, when I was a young man, very few people worked in Mount Vernon from Danville. There were some, but most people [inaudible] But today, very few people work in their hometown. So, when you talk about the economy of Mount Vernon, it certainly ties very closely with the economy of Danville. If manufacturing companies in Knox County- which are pretty much centralized in Mount Vernon- are healthy and jobs are available, then that's good for Danville, it's good for Fredericktown, it's good for Millwood; Gambier perhaps would be somewhat of an exception to that although you might be surprised at the number of people in Gambier who

don't, who don't work at Kenyon College, too. There's certainly- If the economy sank in Knox County because of some recession, it would affect Gambier.

AF: How would you explain the relationship between the changes you're talking about in economics and the changes in agriculture? And that can be general- you know, widespread across the country or more centralized to Knox County.

PC: I'd say- and I don't have any statistics to back this up- but I'd say that the agricultural community in Knox County- other than changing with the times- hasn't changed a great deal in the past thirty years with respect to- sure there are fewer acres, but production is higher. You know, we are not next to an urban area where we've lost fifty percent of our farm land. We haven't had any kind of effect from that standpoint. It is probably the most consistent thing that Knox County has had. I mean it hasn't changed that much.

AF: Well, the changes we've noted in the farm include like specialization rather than diversity, they're smaller, less children are going into it- those sorts of changes. And the farmers seem to think those are very pronounced and definitely play on their survival rate and that sort of thing. So, you are mentioning moving away from like central districts like town square and that sort of thing but it seems weird to me that if people are less self-sufficient in their hometowns that they wouldn't come to town more. Do you see what I'm saying?

PC: Well, I've never indicated that they don't come to town more, but the question is which town to they go to-

AF: okay

PC: were do they go to shop and where are they shopping within the town- we have three trade areas within Mount Vernon. We have downtown, we have Harcourt Road (which is on the westside), and we have Coshocton Avenue. I mean, you know- I have a very visual perspective of this. When I was a young- as [inaudible] as I can remember, like when you're six or eight years old- I mean I can remember when the 'Ol Big Bear, the first mall was built in Mount Vernon. And I was just, I was just very very young. When people come to town, they may be coming to Mount Vernon, but they also might be going into Richland County, Mansfield, I mean- let me quote somebody else here that that that is- Tom Heine, our Chamber President gives an example of, I think it's Snoopy in the Peanuts cartoon saying that 'we've met the enemy and he is us.' Our threat in Knox County right now- we used to think it was Coshocton Avenue. Within a forty-five minute drive of here, a new mall is being proposed which will be one of the largest malls in the United States. Now, that could impact Knox County more than we ever could imagine. Where thirty years ago, people typically if they went to town would come to Mount Vernon if they were- and this is my view as a farmer- today are more likely to go to Richland County or to a giant mall down off of the Polaris exit north of Columbus. So, when you say from a

standpoint of shopping, doing business- you know when I was a young man I, we probably went to Columbus once or twice a year; with my family, we probably go to Columbus twice a month, three times a month- sometimes I'm in Columbus ten times a month. I've been in Columbus three times this week. You know, that was unheard of thirty years ago. So, when you talk about the changes and the perspective that the farmer has, perhaps that's part of it. And I'm not sure whether you're talking about visits for business or whether people leave and don't come back.

AF: oh, I'm speaking more about visits for, visits for business

PC: okay

AF: I was just curious that, you know- if there's a farmer in Danville you know, if they're not going to shop in Danville because there isn't very much available, that they come to Mount Vernon, but you're also suggesting that they go to different places, too. So, that's-

PC: oh, abso- in, let me just go on. How many places in Knox County, if I wanted to buy a business suit- How many places in Knox County are there to go? I don't know how familiar you are with the shops-

AF: there aren't so many [laugh]

CE: yeah, not many

PC: right, now you can go I think Penny's, perhaps has sports coats, but I'm talking about a business suit where you have a selection. We have Colonial Men's Wear down here which is a very nice selection but almost- I don't consider Wal-Mart and K-Mart a place to shop for a suit. Now if I want to buy sweats or whatever, sure you know. Going to buy a men's suit now, when I was a young man, there was ten or fifteen places that you could buy suits. There was two or three clothing stores downtown where you could buy suits. You know, there was places to do that. So, that's the change I'm talking about. And people today, if they want selection- if they want to go look and have a selection of twenty-five different men's suits, you're not going to find it in Knox County.

AF: Why is it so difficult for small businesses to maintain there existence here?

PC: well, that's a very simple answer. The superstores have changed the entire- they have restructured the entire process of the way things are manufactured, how they're sold, how they're distributed. For instance, the Colonial Men's Wear of yesteryear would typically purchase a suit from a distributor who would have purchased the suit from some sort of a network or purchase it from the manufacturer. Today, somebody like Wal-Mart- a suit's probably not a good example- but products in general- Wal-Mart deals directly with the manufacturer. They've cut out two or three levels and they operate on high

volume [inaudible] mark-up. And so a small business- and I don't want to sound too profound about this- a small business cannot go head to head with Wal-Mart or K-Mart and compete. Just can't do it

AF: right

PC: because of the buying power, because of the way they've restructured the process and there's no secret about this- I mean this is not anything new. A small business, in order to survive but I include businesses smaller than the superstores- in order to survive, they have to find a niche and serve something in- serve a product, or a- perform a service in some way different or better than a Wal-Mart or a K-Mart or the superstores. They have to do it different and if they don't, they simply don't survive. You know and look at the whole evolution of retailing. Wal-Mart's and K-Mart's are starting to see significant- there's a change going on today; we don't see it necessarily, we wouldn't- if we looked back twenty years in- I remember what K-Mart looked like fifteen years ago and today's K-Mart and what was there fifteen or twenty years ago are completely different. It came from the Kresbie [?] Company which used to be a downtown store. Wal-Co, and I'm not sure what they ended up being, but they came from Woolworth's. The downtown retail chains have developed into superst- now the next evolution, the next thing taking place is what they call the super specialty stores where you go to Columbus and you can go in a store that is, that may have ten thousand, eight thousand square feet of nothing but shoes. Nothing but tennis shoes. Now, ten years ago that was unheard of. That change is taking place and and we're going now to the malls that entertain people. They're building malls that have ferris wheels and rides and and and that's the next evolution of malls because Americans seem to want to constantly have something new and different. All of these things are consumer driven; all of these things are developed in order to accommodate what we today perceive as our needs, what do we want to do when we go shopping- let me give you a good example- store hours are something that are probably one of the bigger changes in store operation in the past thirty years has been hours, the hours that are open. It used to be that if you wanted to go shopping, there was one night a week that your downtown was open and Saturdays you'd go shopping either like on Wednesday or Saturdays.

PC: the other- last November before Thanksgiving, my wife and I decided that we'd forgot to get enough groceries- and nothing in Danville was open. We decided to go shopping for groceries and the only place- and this was like at eleven o'clock at night- so we ended up at one of the local places here on the on the strip. Plus, at eleven o'clock on a Wednesday night before Thanksgiving, the store was packed. We met more people that we knew in that store- I probably talked to people I hadn't talked to in a year or two- socially

[interruption- telephone]

And, the visit turned in not only just to a shopping trip, but it turned into a- I don't want to say reunion, but it was almost a place to go to see people. And, but now thirty years ago at eleven o'clock on the Wednesday before

Thanksgiving, I never could have found roast beef or ham- I could never have went shopping at that time. So, those are the kind of changes I'm talking about that have occurred. Another significant change, and this may not relate to what you're talking about, in my opinion has been the drift as the job market shifts- how so many young people will leave Knox County when they grow up and they go to college and they never come back. When I look at my family- I have four brothers and sisters. I'm the only one that lives in Knox County. But I was gone for twelve years and came back because I chose to come back. But all my brothers and sisters are college graduates- one of 'em's a doctor, one of 'em's a very sought after computer programmer; she travels all over the United States. Some people call that brain-drain, they call it a lot of things, but the jobs that college graduates get aren't in usually in the rural communities. And I think the farmers' feel that when there children grow up and go to college more than anybody. Because thirty years ago, forty years ago, fifty years ago, kids grow up then even if they went to school, they'd come back and they'd run the farm and Dad would retire and they'd build a new house on the other forty acres and that isn't happening like it used to- in my opinion. I don't know what the statistics are with that, but

AF: they are. [laughs]

PC: that they're leaving?

AF: yeah

PC: yeah

AF: well, the parents are encouraging them, too. We've noticed that. You mentioned that this is a nice place to live- this county

PC: sure

AF: and you told us the reasons for an outsider thinking that that's probably true

PC: I told you a few

AF: yeah

PC: there are many

AF: why do you think I mean even living here that this a place that you would encourage people to live and

PC: it's safe. You know it's- the schools are decent. There are some things that you don't get in the local schools that perhaps you could if you went to the cities, but when you put the difficulties the cities have with discipline, with all of the horrible things you see on the six o'clock news, you weigh that against the things you don't have in the small schools, to me the scales tip very carefully to small schools. I graduated from Danville. All my brothers and sisters did; we all

made it through college fine- I- sometimes there's this impression that small schools don't prepare you for college and I think that's nonsense. I think it has a lot to do with families and how they prepare you for college and your maturity level and what you do to encourage your children to go to school and so on. Safety. All the opportunities I think are available in a small town. My daughter- I've had daughters in state- I had one daughter in her second year in state fair band. She has the same opportunities that you would if you went to Upper Arlington or Dublin- perhaps not in course curriculum but in leadership. Larger schools tend to- there's more kids do the same things; at a smaller school, I think your kids get a broader education because they get into the school plays more readily. They get to play a higher position in the orchestra and I think that that ability is very beneficial for kids. If I had to give you a reason why I lived in Knox County, it had a lot to do with my family. More than probably any other reason. I'm here because I've got six children. Three of them are at least your age or older and we still have three at home. But that's the- one of the biggest reasons. And all of the amenities are available here. And you know if I leave my car unlocked or my house, no big deal.

AF: Do you attribute that sort of safety thing to overall atmosphere? I mean specifically-

PC: yes, yes. Well, and it's family and it's small towns that you know your neighbor. I mean, I live in the house that I grew up in. It's a long story how I ended up there, but I live in the house I grew up in with my family. The lady that lives next door is the same lady that lived there when I grew up. You know, that's hometown America.

AF: yeah. [laughs] I don't have that where I live

CE: no, neither do I

PC: Where are you from [to both]?

AF: I'm from Los Angeles

PC: aahh. Used to live there

CE: New Jersey

PC: didn't live there

CE: [laughs]

PC: I lived in L.A., lived in Azusa for a year or two- lived in Playa del Rey, too.

AF: yeah, I'm from Santa Monica

PC: oh, okay

AF: it's not really L.A. but its closer and most people don't know the difference, so

PC: there isn't much

AF: no, it's quite similar

PC: I doubt if it's- I imagine its probably changed a lot. Its been- its been almost twenty years since I've lived here

AF: I mean [inaudible] each six months I go home there's a million new buildings and totally different people and

PC: We lived in Chicago for a total of almost three years, we've lived in L.A. two years, lived in Chic- Omaha for a year, lived in Washington, D.C. for a couple of years and if I had to give you three or four reasons why I live here, those are the three or four reasons

AF: [laughs]

CE: [laughs]

PC: no disrespect to Los Angeles

AF: no, no not at all

PC: but I couldn't wait to leave

AF: yeah

PC: no, those are the three or four main reasons I live here. Yeah it's a real live out there- and I had a good job, made good money. I don't think I've ever really attained the income I had since I left. I've never reached that level again since I left there. I had a good job working for MCI- the new telephone company. I worked for MCI when they turned their first circuit up in 1973 in Chicago. Now they have thirty thousand employees and I worked for the company when- I knew everybody in the company. There was only three hundred employees. So, to give you a perspective- I've been there, done that thing. Had the big job, high pay, had thirty-five or forty people working for me done all that and I always go back to the Wizard of Oz and Dorothy [yells] 'there's no place like home.' And I say that not because Knox County is where I grew up but Knox County is a place you can call home.

AF: We are interested in sort of putting together a list of events and I noticed these that you have on the wall and also the ones down there. How- what do you- how is the Visitors' Bureau involved in documenting what goes on? Like do people come to you and say 'okay, this is what we're going to put on on this

date?’

PC: I wish it was that easy

CE: [laughs]

PC: I have to get on my knees and beg them to tell me what they’re doing most of the time. I’ve been here almost three years. When I first got here that’s pretty much how it happened. You called, you got put on the calendar. I take a more proactive approach. Actually each fall, we go through every event that’s been held actually for the last two or three years which we’ve got documented in the data base in our computer. And we actually mail letters out to last year’s contacts. And we ask them to fill a new form out for the ‘96 season and then when they don’t we call them back and harass ‘em

AF: follow-up

PC: no, harass is a better word

AF: [laugh]

CE: [laugh]

PC: I have a student that works for me who is a senior at the Career Center. She pretty much handles all of that for us. She does a real good job. But, we have a preliminary ‘96 calendar- excuse me- that sometimes in the next thirty days will be preparing the final version that you see on the pink paper. I can give you a copy of that pink one, which is last years and is kind of a summary of what we’ve confirmed so far this year before you leave.

AF: yeah, that’d be great

PC: but that’s typically how we do it. It’s already in the computer pretty much and there’s a lot of events in ‘96 that aren’t on that list. I did that list just as kind of a summary.

AF: okay

PC: so, it’s an on-going process. Now, that calendar will be on the web within a week or two. I think that I told you, Amanda that it would be before you got here, but that hasn’t happened so-

AF: What is the web stuff that you guys are working on?

PC: well, you know about KnoxNet?

CE: yeah

AF: yeah

PC: well, KnoxNet is provided to all non-profits space to put on some basic things. We will have a listing on the web site of all- did you get one of the green brochures- one of these here?

AF: oh, yeah

PC: did ya'?

AF: I don't have it right here. I could grab one though.

PC: I could have Sandy get it if you wish. [to Sandy] That's all right, Amanda's taking care of it.

AF: this? the schedule one?

PC: yes, that in essence will be put on our web site and will be under Knox County Visitors' Bureau and we will responsible for maintaining all of that information in there- and of course it's available to link up to. Then, as our businesses get there own web pages, we'll put hot keys for them to link up from our- ours will be kind of like a phone book index.

AF: oh, I see

PC: we can not embellish too much because we're not a web service provider. All we're doing is putting an index in for people who are looking for lodging information or restaurant information. And those kinds of things. And that actually is already done and on a floppy and we just haven't finished it up- we wanted to put some graphics on it and get it out there

AF: yeah, we're in the process of learning how to do all that stuff and it's- it's a little bit more involved then

PC: then you might think

CE: yeah

AF: it's taking us a while

PC: not as easy as it looks as I think the [inaudible]

CE: no

AF: no. Our project has twelve people including- well, not including our professor. And so there are six groups who each have a focus- like ours is 'farm organizations and community life'

PC: Who's your professor on the [inaudible]?

AF: Professor Howard Sacks

PC: oh, Howard. okay

AF: yeah. And so,

CE: [handing him a list of topics and group titles] just to give you an idea of the different [inaudible] that there are

AF: So, our job is to put together a home page about our section. And that includes the graphics, the audio- all that stuff and then the text. So- and each one has its little sub-divisions and

tape over]

[flip

PC: the development of this in Knox County one is the KnoxNet Board of Trustees, the other is the Knox Technology Services Board. KnoxNet Board of Trustees was set up as a 501c-3 type organization accountable to the Knox County commissioners. And the KnoxNet web site ThroughNet is actually the responsibility of that group. That group raises funds and so and so forth- I'm on that board as the vice-president. There's also a group called the Knox Technological Services Board. The KnoxNet actually came from that group- that board actually still exists and it's a larger board of I'd say thirty or forty people. We have discussions about making sure that if the Visitors' Bureau is doing a thing- the Mount Vernon School doesn't do the same thing. That we don't duplicate what each other is doing. And I have concerns that as this evolves, that we're not falling over each other, county wide. And it's an interesting problem, something I don't think we thought of a year or two ago. Because the schools were all out trying to get- for instance, the elected officials on the computer. I raised my hand said, 'I've already got it on a floppy- do you want me to give you a copy of it?' Well, that's the kind of thing that we need to continue to network within Knox County on to make sure that you know- the only thing, it's it's bringing chaos into order I guess

AF: right

PC: Remember whenever you start something new, these things are inevitable. Not that it's bad, but we have to have an open dialog between everybody to make sure- well, it's a waste of time for two people to do the same thing. You know, why do that?

AF: right

PC: so, and organizationally we have to decide, okay, what's the Visitor's Bureau-

what should we be doing and what should the Chamber be doing? And what should area development be doing? And if the schools want to help with that, well make sure that if it's something for the Visitors' Bureau, the Visitors' Bureau has to be involved in it. You can't do it yourself. Because we're accountable. If somebody comes in and and loads up, loads up a file that says Knox County visitors and it has our name hooked in it somewhere, you know we need to have some control over what goes in there because we're accountable for that, you know. You wouldn't want to put your name on a document that she prepared and you had nothing to say about it and hand it in. Same thing. Although you might want to do that- I don't know how much stress you're under-

CE: [laughs] no, no

AF: [laughs] no

PC: but you know what I mean. It's the same type of thing. So, it's bringing some interesting issues and concerns up. And of course the whole web thing has.

AF: right

PC: nationally and internationally. Somehow we're going to have to figure it all out in the next few years.

AF: [laughs]

CE: right

PC: if we can

CE: I was just interested in looking at this particular brochure here, it sort of seems that the sort of that rural character is very significant in terms of why people actually come to

PC: that's correct

CE: Knox County. The idea of the Driving Brochure, you know the sort of road trips throughout Knox County. And to some extent there also seems to be- I don't know if you would agree- somewhat of a threat in that as well in the sense that people are coming from the cities and they are seeing this area and they might you know

PC: absolutely

CE: And what impact do you see that that might actually have on this rural character if people actually come out and say 'wow, this is beautiful and this is where I want to be living?'

PC: well, Apple Valley- that's what Apple Valley is all about. If you've been to Apple Valley, have you?

CE: yeah

AF: yeah

PC: Apple Valley is about 'gee, I want to retire and I want to live- I want to have trees in my back yard and squirrels on my back porch and deer walking across the road in front of my house.' I mean that characteristic's there. What the danger is- the danger is that if we collectively in the community do not prepare zoning, consider it a regional issue instead of 'gee, I'm x, y, z township and I'm gonna' do it my way.'

AF: right

PC: The danger is that that takes place and we don't get regional in our thought. The Focus 2100- I think that was very re- very- the most obvious thing to come out of Focus 2100 is that people are concerned about land use- what we're gonna' do, how we're gonna' do it. And I share those concerns very vividly. Tourism- the aspect that tourism promotes, we do market the rural aspect of it, but we're also marketing it from a standpoint if somebody may want to live here, fine- but our purpose for creating the image is to bring 'em here so that they'll come and stay a day or two, spend a few dollars and leave. And that's the most user friendly type of industry that you can have

AF: [laughs] right

PC: because it, it's must more effective than us just being an island unto ourselves. If you lived here and you worked here and you sold products that were sold here and you earned money here and you paid taxes here and you spent your money here, that dollar that you spend- earn and spend is churning. It- it doesn't really do anything to increase the wealth of the community. And communities that don't even have that, like bedroom communities- the tax burden on people in bedroom communities is substantial. 'Cause they don't have any industry and the jobs and the income tax they generate to pay for the infrastructure that they require... Tourism is a nice thing. Obviously, you will find no one in Knox County that I've ever talked to that wants to see us turn into a Berlin, Ohio.

AF: [laughs]

PC: I mean where you have a hundred buses a day going through. That's not what we desire. But we do have, as part of our economic restructuring plan for downtown Mount Vernon- we have a, a treasure here that can be marketed so people can come and visit, shop in our stores, make existing businesses more prosperous or even prosperous enough to keep their doors open. We can use

that money to- to enhance our facilities, keep our parks nice, the grass green, the trees replanted, fix-up our Woodred [?] Opera House and all the things we need to do to keep it nice. And when somebody from Cleveland or Pittsburgh or Detroit comes and spends a dollar, that multiplies three or four times and turns over more than the dollar you earn and spend here. So, it's very healthy to have that tourism as long as it's kept within check. I don't consider tourism near as much of a threat as the looming beast coming from Columbus- that growth. And it is a beast.

CE: yeah

PC: Did you ever see the Neverending Story?

AF: yeah, that was one of my favorite movies and books actually

PC: the great nothing was coming

AF: yeah

PC: well, I compare that to the growth from Columbus.

AF: [laughs]

PC: It will chew away at this beautiful rural ar- neighborhood if we let it do that.

AF: well, we went to the Planning Commission Meeting

PC: Regional Planning

AF: to see how zoning worked and

PC: well, that's only a small part of how zoning works

AF: yeah, well- we realized that actually when we were there

PC: actually, they're not even a zoning board. You understand that we don't have regional zoning in Knox County and that's one of the major problems we have. Each little township has its own zoning.

AF: oh, yeah. You were talking about trying to regionalize it

PC: yeah. right. And unfortunately, the state of Ohio doesn't allow that to be done very easily. There's not an authority there to do that I understand. And I'm certainly not a lawyer, but I understand there's a problem doing that and that's one of the reasons it creates a problem. I'd love to see it regionalized. And- to protect Knox County and keep this rural atmosphere- that's why I live here. You know, I don't want it to be L.A., I left that.

AF: right. Well, it's nice to come here for me even

PC: I'll bet. Yeah, Santa Monica is about in the middle of an unbelievable population density thing out there. You can start and drive any direction and almost an hour and a half or two hours and never leave the city.

AF: yeah

PC: from Santa Monica

AF: leave L.A. you mean?

PC: Leave the city- people

AF: oh, yeah

PC: get away from people- not the city limits

AF: yeah, we're right on the beach so at least it's a little bit- 've got nature right there but....[laughs], yeah, it is a problem. Well, I guess we asked you all the questions we really needed to- it was more to collect info. and find out what you do so

PC: One thing I would say, the mission of the Knox County Convention and Visitors' Bureau is to increase tourism in Knox County. It's a very simple mission and we do that with a lot of conditions, understanding that we do want to maintain the integrity- the integrity of rural Knox County is really the marketing item we sell and we certainly don't want to destroy the product in the process of promoting it. So we are really concerned about that- Knox County Visitors' Bureau, the Board of Trustees are very clear on this when I talk to them. When I deal with them as their director but suffice it to say it is a Knox County issue, it is a farming issue. Farming as I understand it- I think generates fifty or sixty million dollars a year in Knox County in gross product. Travel and tourism in direct product is somewhere between twenty and twenty-five million. And that may surprise many people, but it is a substantial part of our economy. I think our industrial output is probably over two hundred million, but I don't think we have a good number on that. So, agriculture is not the largest industry in Knox County, it is the largest single industry, but collectively manufacturing is substantially larger. So, we are rural, but we have a substantial industrial base in Knox County. Thirty-five hundred jobs- full-time jobs. For a community of fifty thousand that's substantial- in manufacturing. I don't know how many agricultural jobs presently held in Knox County, do you know?

AF: We have the papers [laughs]

CE: no, I don't know off hand

PC: Travel and tourism amounts to something roughly between four and five hundred full-rou- equivalent full time jobs. And that means that part-time at McDonald's it takes a couple of those people to make one full-time equivalent. But McDonald's- a certain aspect of McDonald's, the Sunoco station, those are all travel and tourism jobs to some extent. Depends on- they have a way of measuring the ratio of visitors versus local people that use those resources. But all of that put together, it's a substantial, it's a substantial industry in Knox County.

CE: interesting

AF: very. Well, thanks for your time, for meeting with us. I think you have my phone number still so if you have any questions or any concerns about this project

PC: well, you mentioned Howard Sacks- I can always find you

AF: [laughs] yeah

CE: [laughs] absolutely

AF: We have a release to- where if we chose to use any of the video- audio clips, that we have permission and most likely, we'll

PC: I don't think I said anything wrong.

AF: [laughs] get back to you and tell you what you- what we're gonna' put on the internet [laughs]

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