

BURNS:            Yep.

WBP:                Did you know any of the downtown merchants?

BURNS:            Did I know . . . ?

WBP:                Any of the downtown landowners, or property owners downtown?

BURNS:            No.

WBP:                O.K. So, you would have no reason to . . .

BURNS:            If I did, I don't remember it. I might have known them and never known that they . . .

WBP:                /Benjamin/ Blumberg, for instance?

BURNS:            Oh, yes. I knew Blumberg. I admired him very much.

WBP:                Ben Blumberg?

BURNS:            Yes.

WBP:                But he didn't talk with you about property values or tax rates or . . .

BURNS:            No. I was on the board . . . maybe the Vigo County Fairgrounds board with Ben.

WBP:                Good.

BURNS:            Probably on some others.

WBP:                Did you know Miller of Columbus, Indiana?

BURNS:            Do I know a Miller?

WBP:                Yeah, J. Irwin Miller?

BURNS:            No.

WBP:                You never . . . did not know him?

Were there ever times when Weston Paper tried to attract people to come to work here -- perhaps engineers, executives -- and had difficulty because they did not want to live in Terre Haute?

BURNS: No.

WBP: O.K. That's never been an issue?

BURNS: No, no.

Most of the employees at the Terre Haute Paper Company or Weston have been residents of Terre Haute and have come to work here and the company has paid them. I always liked that.

WBP: It's been a good thing for the people who worked for the company.

BURNS: Yes.

WBP: What about organizations? Would you consider Terre Haute to be a city that had more than the usual number of fraternal and civic service clubs and organizations?

BURNS: It sort of seems to me that it's that way.

WBP: Fairly highly organized?

BURNS: Yes.

WBP: A lot of different organizations a man can join.

BURNS: Yes. I think so.

WBP: Is there any one organization that . . . such as the Kiwanis or Optimist or Rotary that you consider to be more influential than others?

BURNS: Oh, I would be prejudiced, I guess, to the Rotary Club because my father was charter member or something like that.

WBP: Uh-huh. But the members of Rotary Club have traditionally held positions of power in the community, have they not?

BURNS: Yes.

WBP: Bank presidents, corporate presidents, college presidents?

BURNS: That's right.

WBP: Has that been true through the years?

BURNS: I believe. I've never been particularly interested, because I never joined any of them I guess. But I just don't like to know that I have to be someplace every Tuesday or . . . because of my business, because of travels and because of . . . maybe selfish with my own time, you know.

WBP: Sure.

You spent a lot of time big game hunting, have you not?

BURNS: That's right.

WBP: Throughout your life did you try to be away one or two months a year or . . .

BURNS: Yeah, for a number of years I lived in a tent about two months every year, you know.

WBP: Oh, did you?

BURNS: Yes, with my hunting and my trail riding and my horse activity.

WBP: You're also an author, are you not?

BURNS: I've written outdoor stories.

WBP: You wrote a book entitled The Roving Outdoorsman.

BURNS: Yes.

WBP: Did it sell pretty well?

BURNS: Well, it did just what we expected. We wanted to sell enough to come out even, and we did. I often say that I wrote the book because when my grandsons or granddaughters went to Washington . . . went to the library, the big library there, and they ask for my book, they could find it.

WBP: (laughs) Yes. Library of Congress?

BURNS: Yes.

WBP: But you've traveled all around the world big game hunting?

BURNS: I've been to Africa, New Zealand, South America, Arctic -- up through Norway to the Arctic -- and nearly all over the United States and Canada, Alaska. I had a nice life.

WBP: Sounds like it.

What were your favorite trophies?

BURNS: Oh, I guess the elephant. I really . . . I was never a trophy hunter. I didn't really intend to shoot an elephant when I went to Africa.

WBP: Oh?

BURNS: But your guide -- your white hunter -- stakes his reputation on his client getting the Big Five; that's the elephant, the lion, the leopard, the buffalo.

WBP: Rhinoceros?

BURNS: Yeah. And he persuaded me to leave my money for an elephant license at the headquarters of the game association in Nairobi, because he thought he might persuade me to get an elephant. And we changed camp, moved down along the . . . I've forgotten the name of the river. And there were 19 elephants out there spraying each other. He said, "Now's the time you get the elephant." (laughs)

So, he drove someplace to a telephone and told the game people in Nairobi to announce the number of my elephant license that night. We had a radio and we heard, "Fox Burns, Fox Burns, your elephant license is number so-and-so." He said, "Now we go!" And we really did go! For ten days before (laughing) we ever caught up with one that . . .

WBP: Oh, really!

BURNS: . . . had suitable ivory. (laughing)

WBP: I see!

What year was that? Do you remember?

BURNS: Oh, 1959 or '60.

WBP: I see. It had to be a certain size before you could shoot it?

BURNS: Well, the ivory is what . . . you want a good ivory.

WBP: I see.

BURNS: Two tusks that are symmetrical, you know. You've seen them. . . have you ever seen them?

WBP: I don't believe so . . . I . . .

BURNS: See that picture? See how symmetrical they are?

WBP: Are those out at Rose-Hulman?

BURNS: Yeah.

WBP: All right. I've seen them.

BURNS: Yeah. They're . . . I was so lucky.

WBP: Oh, those are nice. Ha!

Is there any large game animal that you have not hunted?

BURNS: Yes. I've hunted for grizzly /bear/; I never got a grizzly.

WBP: Oh, really?

BURNS: Tried and tried. Got black bear, got Kodiak bear, got every kind of bear but grizzly. If I wasn't so damned old, I'd . . . we're not on this thing, are we now?

WBP: Yeah, we're on it!

BURNS: Are we? Well, if I wasn't so old, I'd be still trying to get a grizzly. (laughs)

WBP: (laughs) I would assume that out at Yellowstone or Glacier /National Park/ that they . . . every now and then they have to shoot a grizzly.

BURNS: Yep, yep.

WBP: They probably have them located. They could probably take you up there in a helicopter. That'd be interesting. That's an exciting life, indeed.

BURNS: It's a good life on safari in Africa. You have so many helpers, you know.

WBP: Uh-huh.

Well, if you had to choose between a . . . if you're talking about the most important forces for change in Terre Haute over the years, would you say it had to do with the community attitudes or people's attitudes toward Terre Haute or would you say it was just a matter of changing transportation technology from street railways and interurbans and then automobiles, too -- the Interstate automobile system? What's most important -- the technological change or the people's attitudes toward Terre Haute?

BURNS: I believe it's attitude. And now money, you know, to make changes that would beautify the city, make more convenient parking and . . .

WBP: How would you . . . if you could realize your ideal, how would you like to see Terre Haute change? What . . . you're talking about beautifying it, parking . . . what would you do?

BURNS: Well, parking is a problem in Terre Haute, and I would think it would be an improvement if we could make convenient parking. That would be expensive, out of the question. And I think that we should have more improved and beautified parks. See, when I get to thinking about making the city beautiful, I always think of Copenhagen. Have you ever been over . . .

WBP: I've not been in Copenhagen. I've heard of Copenhagen; I've been in other European cities. I've been in Amsterdam.

BURNS: Yes. The park?

WBP: The Tivoli?

BURNS: Tivoli? Yeah. That's the cleanest place in the world! And people are eating and drinking and everything, but never do you see any scrap or waste on the lawns, all pretty flowers and all.

WBP: They seem to take pride in the city and to clean it in its beauty.

BURNS: Yes. And then in their downtown they have what you might call Main Street, and /there is/ no traffic on it. People walk down in the middle of the street and every which way. Cross when they want to, you know.

WBP: So, automobiles don't interfere with pedestrian traffic?

BURNS: No. All of them ride bicycles. That's the reason we drive automobiles over here. We build it and then tear it down in a couple of years and build it again, you know, and . . .

WBP: Yes. We don't have a conservation ethic.

BURNS: That's right.

WBP: We don't seem to see the importance of living with nature.

BURNS: Over there /you/ see old apartment buildings, a hundred years old! Pretty. Flowers in the window, you know. Of course, we were there when the nice . . . people out in the parks, beautiful parks, big parks.

WBP: Then you were sorry, probably, to see some of the old landmarks downtown come down?

BURNS: Yep.

WBP: You've seen one Terre Haute House come down in your lifetime.

BURNS: Yes. Two! /He corrects this statement below./

WBP: Did you see the old Prairie House come down?

BURNS: Yeah. When we used to come up here from the mines, you know, on a freight train. My father and mother would come to Terre Haute once in a great while. /They would/ ride a freight train from Jackson Hill. I was 5 or 6 years old. We'd stay at the old Terre Haute House. And I remember how interesting it was. My mother and I . . . my dad was on business. My

BURNS: mother and I would sit up . . . it was sort of a balcony overlooking the lobby and watch the people, you know. And at meals have such courteous and polite colored men. It really impressed me then, because I was about 6 or 7 years old.

WBP: This is in . . . this was not the Prairie House though. It was the Terre Haute House.

BURNS: Yes.

WBP: Yeah. And so you've seen that Terre Haute House come down and then the other one . . . the present one built in 1928 /actually, 1927/.

BURNS: Yes.

WBP: But now it's empty. It's a danger I suppose. It's an endangered specie. And, of course, the Root Store -- you've seen it come down. You've seen a number of fires in the downtown area. The old . . .

BURNS: In fact, I don't know Terre Haute. I don't know downtown. I don't . . . I only go up there about maybe once or twice a year. I'm never up there.

WBP: What about racial relations in Terre Haute?

BURNS: Well, I don't think they're real bad. Of course, I think we have some feeling between the blacks and the whites. But I have friends and have a lot of blacks work for me, you know. /I/ always got along with them well. So, I don't think it's . . . the racial situation is /not/ bad in Terre Haute.

WBP: Have you ever . . . have you thought of Terre Haute as a city of different ethnic groups -- Irish, Hungarians, or Germans, Italians . . .

BURNS: Yes.

WBP: Have you?

BURNS: Uh-huh. Yes.

WBP: It's always had a number of different ethnic communities. Maybe that had something to do with the political situation?

BURNS: Could be.

WBP: What about people's attitude . . . would you say that they were perhaps more interested in their own lives and their own business than they were in the community as a whole?

BURNS: I think so.

WBP: So, it was individualistic?

BURNS: Yes. I think they are.

WBP: Perhaps more so than in other cities?

BURNS: It might be.

WBP: Was there an anti-labor feeling among businessmen? Was there a feeling that . . .

BURNS: I don't think it would be anti-labor. I rather think that they were, maybe, disappointed in the fact that labor was such an influence in Terre Haute.

WBP: Did they do anything to try to overcome that?

BURNS: No. Not that I know of.

WBP: Was there ever fear of socialism?

BURNS: I don't believe . . . . Although Gene Debs, wasn't he . . .

WBP: He was a Socialist.

BURNS: . . . candidate for President at one time?

WBP: Yes, that's right.

BURNS: I don't think his influence politically in Terre Haute amounted to much.

WBP: Basically, you're saying that . . . are you saying then that labor, while they populated the Democratic ranks, were not radical labor? There was not a radical labor movement?

BURNS: I don't think.

WBP:           What about the Ku Klux Klan? In your knowledge,  
was there ever . . .

BURNS:         I think it was very active in Terre Haute.

WBP:           During what years?

BURNS:         I wish I could remember.

WBP:           Is it still active?

BURNS:         If it is, I don't know.

WBP:           So, there might have been . . . if the Klan was  
active, there might have been a secret organization  
which acted to try to intimidate would-be socialists  
or blacks or Jews?

BURNS:         No, I don't think this.

WBP:           In your knowledge, was there any anti-semitism,  
anti-Jewish feeling?

BURNS:         No, I don't think so.

WBP:           Did the Jewish community . . . was it fairly  
prominent in the city?

BURNS:         What's that again now?

WBP:           Was the Jewish community fairly prominent . . .  
fairly prominent?

BURNS:         Yes.

WBP:           In local affairs?

BURNS:         Yes. And for good.

WBP:           Blumbergs.

BURNS:         Yes.

WBP:           The Meis? Levins? Silversteins?

BURNS:         I think the Jewish influence in Terre Haute's  
been good.

WBP:           They've been free then to be businessmen and  
to pursue their own interests?

BURNS: Yes. And I think Jewish people have been very charitable towards Terre Haute. Ben Blumberg especially.

WBP: Some people have mentioned and I don't know whether it even has merit, but some of the people have mentioned that the downtown property has been owned by people who live elsewhere, outside . . .

BURNS: I've heard that, too!

WBP: . . . and that that might have had some influence.

BURNS: I've heard that, too.

WBP: You don't know about that?

BURNS: No.

WBP: Well, I think that this has been an excellent interview. I've enjoyed talking with you about Terre Haute. Is there anything you'd like to add about your memories of Terre Haute and how it's changed, why it's changed?

BURNS: I just wish there wasn't so much traffic.  
(both laugh)

Youngsters don't seem to mind, you know. They've grown up with it. But four or five years ago I used to leave my house down in Allendale Place, no problem. /I would/ get on the highway, maybe meet a couple of cars. But, boy, it's a problem to get on the highway now, you know.

WBP: Third Street's almost a race track, isn't it?

BURNS: Yes, yes.

WBP: Not only that but it's worse now because there are three lanes of traffic each way.

BURNS: Yes, yeah.

WBP: Instead of just two. So, it virtually cuts the river off. It cuts downtown off from the river, and it makes the people who want to go to Honey Creek have to be race drivers in order to . . .

BURNS: Yep. (laughs)

WBP: . . . get there safely.

BURNS: Yep.

WBP: That's too bad, isn't it?

Maybe . . . wouldn't it be fun to have . . .  
maybe a streetcar again that you could get on and  
just take it to the door of Honey Creek?

BURNS: Yep.

WBP: Or take it downtown and take it to the bank?

BURNS: I told you about . . . are we on now?

WBP: Yes. Go ahead.

BURNS: I used to take my horses down in the fall --  
my dad's horses -- to his friend, Mahan. And then  
I had to walk about 3 miles from there over to the  
interurban that came up from Sullivan. I was only  
11 or 12 years old, and I used to wonder if I'd  
miss that or if it was on its way and when it did  
come, I really flagged it down.

WBP: Yes, yes. At least we don't have to worry about  
that so much.

BURNS: No.

WBP: It's nice not to have to worry about that.

BURNS: I've got this place full of horses out there.

WBP: Do you go horseback riding every day?

BURNS: I try to three or four times a week. In the  
last three or four days the mosquitoes . . . see, we  
own a lot of land down in the bottoms, and we had a  
trail cut through there so you can ride them.  
Beautiful place to ride.

WBP: All the way down to the river.

BURNS: Yes. And the mosquitoes . . . boy! They'd drive  
you . . . they'd run you crazy now!

WBP: Can you put on "Off"?

BURNS: Yeah, but they don't pay any attention to it.

WBP: Doesn't make any difference?

BURNS: No.

WBP: Well, I've enjoyed this, and it sounds as if you've had a good life and many more years to come, I'm sure.

BURNS: Oh. (laughs)

WBP: Thank you very much.

BURNS: I'd just like to get in shape so I could go after a grizzly.

WBP: All right. Well, maybe you will. It seems to me you're (laughing) in pretty good shape.

(both laugh)

END OF TAPE