

**Interview with Joseph Paulus
conducted by Marian J Krzyzowski
for
the Chene Street History Project
April 6, 2003**

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MK: This is Marian Krzyzowski and I'm at the home of uh Mr. Joseph Paulus, Joe Paulus, uh, in Bloomfield Hills. And today's April 6th, 2003 and we're here to talk a little bit about his family, the Chene-Trombly Rec Bowling Alley and um, let me first begin by asking you, uh, your dad's name and where he came from?

JP: My father's name was John, was John Paulus and he came from uh a little town outside of Vienna in Austria Hungary and came to this country at an early age of about 16 as a certified barber. A trade that he learned in Germany.

MK: When was he born, you know?

JP: He was born uh, on June the 1st, 1890.

MK: Mm-hm.

JP: And died on July the 15th, 1970.

MK: And when he came to the United States, did he come to Detroit?

JP: He came to Detroit because he came here to live here with his older brother who had come here a few years prior to that.

MK: And what was his brother's name?

JP: His brother's name was Joe Paulus, like my name.

MK: Okay.

JP: In fact he was my godfather and that's why I'm a Joe Paulus, yeah.

MK: And where did he live when he moved in? Where was his brother living at the time?

JP: On the east side of Detroit I can't give you the exact street.

MK: Okay.

JP: Probably near the Mt. Elliott area or something.

MK: Okay.

JP: East of Warren [Warren runs east and west – MK]

MK: Okay.

JP: Yeah.

MK: Okay. So then how did he get going? What happened after he got to Detroit?

JP: My dad.

MK: Yeah.

JP: My dad applied for a job as a barber at the Griswold Hotel. Obviously somebody told them that they needed a barber there and it was a big hotel at the time. He applied for the job and although he could speak only German, why they, they tested him out and found out that he was a pretty good barber. A young man but a good barber. And so they hired him and he was there for a number of years. And while he was there he got to know the ball players who were staying at the hotel at that time when they played in Detroit. And one of his customers was Frank Navin. And Frank Navin happened to be the owner of the Detroit Tigers and the uh, the Navin Field as we remember it. And, uh, Mr. Navin took a liking to my father and uh, recommended that the ball players that come from out of town, and even the ones in town, wanted a good haircut, they should go over and see John Paulus at the Griswold Hotel. And they did. And so that's how he got to know a lot of the players on all the teams in the city of Detroit and they they patronized him and so he got to know them. And uh.

MK: Was was, the Griswold Hotel, what was it called later, do you know what?

JP: I think that was at the corner where a where a National Bank of Detroit is right now.

MK: Okay.

JP: I think it was on that corner. Griswold and uh, just near Fort St. near the Penobscot Building.

MK: Right.

JP: Right into that general area there. Yeah, I can't I can't give you the exact location of it but uh.

MK :How did he get from there to Chene Trombly.

JP: Uh, he had a, he lived not too far from there with his with his brother. And he, they they had a little, they found a, my father found a little store there and built a barber shop on that corner and left the Griswold to start his own barber shop.

MK: Do you know what year that might have been? Or what years that was?

JP: ... Well let's see he was about 16 I'd I'd say about, he was about 20 years old.

MK: So that would have been, if he was about 20 when he moved there. That would have been, he was born in what 1890?

JP: 1890, yeah.

MK: That would have been 1910.

JP: Right, yeah.

MK: So, and where was the actual, the barber shop actually located at? Was it on Trombly or was it on Chene?

JP: It was on the corner of Chene and Trombly.

MK: Okay.

JP: Part of it was on Trombly and part of it was on Chene.

MK: And the entrance was from where, do you remember, was it?

JP: Yeah the entrance was from Trombly.

MK: Okay.

JP: From Trombly.

MK: Okay. And did he buy the building or did he just lease the space for the shop?

JP: He eventually bought the building after a few years. He made enough money and and they, the building, actually the barber shop was also used as a place where the fellows that worked over in the plants around there could take a, a uh, bath on a Friday or Saturday night and clean up themselves too as a place where they could, oh what do they call those places today, bath houses I guess. But he combined it in not only into a bath house but a barber shop as well. And it finally came to being so busy there they had 5 or 6 barbers working for him.

MK: How was it set up? When you walked in the door off of Trombly, where were the barber stores and where were the baths?

JP: I can't recall that.

MK: Okay.

JP: I can't recall that. But like most barber shops you had an entrance and you had a very narrow, narrow hallway and that. And he eventually, he saved enough money from time to time to buy two family flats in the city of Detroit.

MK: Mm-hm.

JP: And those flats he would rent to German immigrants who were coming to this country. He he was a member of the **Karpatheius** which was a German society at that time. And he would let them know that he had these couple of houses and that they had downstairs and upstairs and a good place for them to rent. And his brother Joseph, who got here ahead of him, was his carpenter and his maintenance man. Uncle Joe could fix anything.

MK: Mm-hm.

JP: And he took care of, took care of the thing and when the tenant moved out my father and Uncle Joe would go over to the, to the house to see, or to the flat to see what had to be done with it. Fix it up so that the next tenant came in and wouldn't have to complain about the paint, about the plumbing or that kind of stuff. And so he kept those two, three houses that he had going all the time. And uh.

MK: Did your Uncle Joe also help out in in uh, sort of, uh, helping with the barber shop setting it up and putting in, new chairs and anything like that?

JP: Oh yeah, anything anything having to do with the mechanics was done by Uncle Joe.

MK: Mm-hm.

JP: And uh, it went down to his son John Paulus who owned the Hoover Tool and Die Company in the city of Detroit. Uh, a very large company out on Hoover Road.

MK: Sure.

JP: That was eventually sold for a ton of money.

MK: Mm-hm.

JP: And uh...that part of the family was, they were very mechanically-minded. And, uh, my part of the family was more business-minded.

MK: Mm-hm.

JP: And the two of them worked together very well then. So that, my father needed help he would call Uncle Joe and Uncle Joe would call his two sons John and Joe and they would help out where they had to. In the mean time, John, my uncle's son, John, went to the Hoover Tool & Die. Pardon me, to the Ford Trade School and learned, the trade of tool and die maker.

MK: Mm-hm.

JP: And he went on from there then to start his own little shop, tool shop called Hoover Tool & Die and it finally turned out into a very big place and.

MK: Yeah, yeah.

JP: But uh.

MK: When were you born?

JP: July 16, 1917.

MK: And where were you born?

JP: At the corner of Chene and Trombly.

MK: Okay.

JP: Yep.

MK: And at the point, did you have any siblings, or not? You had some sisters before, right?

JP: Older than I was. I was the baby of the family.

MK: Okay, so, who were your sisters, can you give me their names?

JP: Yes. Catherine, Catherine Markell She married Ted Markell

MK: How is that spelled, excuse me, Markell?

JP: M-A-R-K-E-L-L.

MK: Okay.

JP: Ted Markell. And my sister, my younger sister Betty, Betty Leon, married a fellow by the name of Nick Leon. Ted was a chemical engineer over at Chrysler Corporation.

And Nick was a tool and die maker with uh, with General Motors in their technical division for many years.

MK: Mm-hm. Where they also born on Trombly there?

JP: No, they were born near there. Ted was born a couple of.

MK: No, I meant your sisters. Your two sisters.

JP: Oh my sisters, yes, they were born there too.

MK: Okay, do you know what years they were born?

JP: Well I can. Let's see...I had sister. Yeah. Catherine was, Catherine was born, she was the oldest, on uh, January the 19th, 1910. And died in 2001. I don't know exactly what month. Uh, Elizabeth, Elizabeth Paulus Leon, my other sister, was born on March 27, 1911 and at 92 years of age is still alive. And she's an artist. And let me show you the picture that she recently painted for me.

(Break)

MK: And, so you were born in 1917 and then, you have some photographs here of, of some of the uh, the one with Babe Ruth and so on. Could you tell me a little bit about when that happened and so on? Uh, who is in these pictures?

JP: Well, uh, these pictures obviously have the, have the picture of Babe Ruth and Harry Heilmann holding me on their shoulder, right.

MK: Okay, do you know when they were taken?

JP: Yeah that was in the spring of 19, what is it. 1925. 1925.

MK: Okay, so, okay.

JP: And I was what, about 8 years old then.

MK: Mm-hm. And uh, so who, who all is in the picture?

JP: Well.

MK: Where is this picture taken in the first place.

JP: That was taken right outside other Chene Trombly Recreation Building, the building where we lived. Not, recreation building was on Chene St right next to, adjacent to it. This is the building that was built in 1919 and that's my father there.

MK: That's kneeling in the middle there.

JP: Yeah in the middle, the little guy. And these are some of his friends that knew the ball players too. I think this guy was an agent for one of the ball players, I'm not sure.

MK: The guy in the, the guy in the left.

JP: Right there. On his left there. And these are, these are fellows that worked for my dad. These other guys around here.

MK: Are your sisters in the picture by any chance?

JP: Yes, there they are, right there.

MK: On the far right, then.

JP: Far right. Right in front of their uncle, Uncle Nick. He was the barber. See that barber pole?

MK: Uh-huh.

JP: He was the barber then at that time. Seems like barber was in the family. And that's my sister, Betty. And that's my sister Catherine. And that's Joe up there.

MK: Mm-hm.

JP: And these are all just neighborhood people that were there at the time and were fascinated that someone the likes of Babe Ruth would come into their neighborhood and have their picture taken with someone and they wanted to be a part of it.

MK: Mm-hm.

JP: So these are neighborhood kids. See all these kids around here?

MK: Yeah.

JP: All neighborhood kids and fascinated with it. And this picture appeared in the Detroit Times at that time.

MK: Mm-hm.

JP: And uh.

MK: Can you tell me a little bit about Babe Ruth? How often did he come by or uh.

JP: Babe Ruth would come by our house after this picture was taken, uh. I'd say at least once a year when the Yankees were in town. He would uh, call my mother or my father would call him and he would come over for dinner and have dinner with us and. He liked the wiener schnitzel. And my mother was a good cook and fixed some wiener schnitzel. And, uh.

MK: And your dad gave him something else, too, didn't he.

JP: My father, my father treated him to a good scotch whiskey. Uh, there was a time in there when we were on Prohibition and you couldn't get, you had to trust the kind of liquor, but my dad knew some guys in Canada and they snuck him over some liquor so they could have his alcohol and so my father could have a little bit of that too. But uh. I'd say that he'd make two trips a year.

MK: Uh-huh.

JP: Over the place. And enjoyed coming and someone would bring him there and someone would taken him home. It might be one of these guys here, his agent or somebody, you know. But anyway, uh.

MK: How about Harry Heilmann? Did he come by again?

JP: Harry Heilmann was not that close to us as Babe was. He lived in Detroit here and he had his own circle of friends and then he got involved in the commentating of Tiger games.

MK: Right.

JP: You know he was our commentator for many years.

MK: Mm-hm.

JP: I think he followed Ty Tyson and Harry Heilmann, and then whoever came after him. Oh, the guy that's famous.

MK: Well for a while you had Mel Ott was there too.

JP: Well I don't remember who the ones after came that, after that.

MK: So tell me a little bit about your mom. When was she born and where was she from?

JP: My mom was born from virtually the same part of the of the uh town that my father was born in. And Elizabeth Paulus was born in uh, March 27th, 1911.

MK: No, is that your sister?

JP: Oh wait a minute. Elizabeth. Oh that's my sister. Pardon me, my mother. I got my mother down here someplace. Oh here, Elizabeth Paulus, pardon me. Elizabeth Paulus, my mother, was born on May 10, 1889, and died on September the 10th, 1974.

MK: And what was her maiden name?

JP: Mallek. Elizabeth Mallek. And her, her brother was on that picture that I showed you on the end, that was the barber. He was Nick, Nick Mallek.

MK: Okay.

JP: So her brother came in and ran that barber shop for my dad.

MK: So was he German too?

JP: Yep, they were all German. Yep. All born over there. And uh.

MK: Near Vienna I think you said?

JP: Yeah, near, a suburb of Vienna. It was Austria, Austria Hungary at that time.

MK: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

JP: But the language was German. And, as the years went by my grandmother came from Germany and lived with us for a while and from the time I was about 8 years old until the time I was about 13 or 14, why, I learned to speak Germany very well because she couldn't speak English.

MK: What was her name? Do you remember?

JP: Oh geez. It will come to me.

MK: Okay, if you remember it then.

JP: I just remember it was Grandma. Always Grandma

MK: (laugh) And she lived with you up there on Trombly?

JP: She lived, yep, lived with us on Chene and Trombly. We had two beds in my room and uh, Grandma slept in one, I slept in the other one when she joined us. But the only way I could converse with her was in German. So I learned, finally learned how to speak German and one of the few A's I got at U of M was in German (laugh).

MK: So tell me now, you say the barbershop was started, you know, let's say around 19 uh 10 or so.

JP: Yeah.

MK: When did it get converted to a bowling alley? And why? And how did that happen?

JP: My father invested a few dollars with a friend of his who had a small bowling establishment in Centerline Michigan.

MK: Where?

JP: Centerline Michigan.

MK: Centerline. Okay.

JP: Yeah, Centerline Michigan. And uh, he was a plumber. His name was Charlie Brown. And Charlie Brown was our plumber and whenever anything went wrong with the Chene Trombly Recreation or the building, Charlie Brown and his family would always be at our [REDACTED]. He showed my father this 8 lane establishment that he had an interest in. And my father became fascinated with the fact of seeing all the people bowling there. Families, you know, and he thought, my God this would be a great family sport, see. And there was nothing around Chene Trombly at that time like that and uh, so what he did then, he got the bug, and uh, decided to sell all those little houses that he had. And bought some property next door to the Chene, where we were living at the time, where we had the office building with the offices and the stores down below. And, uh, bought the property next to it enough to build 10 lanes on one floor and 10 lanes on the other. That's all that was available. And, which is what he did then. He built.

MK: Do you know what year, roughly, that was?

JP: Yeah, 1929.

MK: Okay. 1929.

JP: 1929. The office building and our living quarters was 1919.

MK: Mm-hm.

JP: And this was 1929.

MK: Mm-hm.

JP: And just at the height of the Depression, too. And he had a hard time keeping it going but he made it, he kept it going and kept it through the Depression and did an excellent business and did a lot of family, promoted family business. And that got into my blood eventually so that when I left. I left the University of Michigan Law School n

1939. 1940, somewhere in there. My father got into a terrible automobile accident coming back from one of the houses that they owned and Uncle Joe was driving the car it stalled into the building of the car track at Mt. Elliott and some other side street there. And a streetcar came along and bashed them on the side where my uncle was driving the car and uh, the door flew open and my father flew out of the car and was dragged down the street beneath the car and the streetcar for about 30 feet and broke him almost limb from limb. They didn't expect he was going to live. And I get a call then from my mother. I'm going to school in Ann Arbor, in law school. Now I had gone, I had gone to Lit school and graduated and had started my first year of law school and I wanted to finish law school in two full years and three summer sessions. To get out, because I had gotten married the summer. I joined the law school and graduated from Michigan. And all.

MK: What was your wife's name?

JP: Uhhh, Katherine, Kitty.

MK: And her last name, maiden name?

JP: Stanley.

MK: Okay, great thank you.

JP: It was a derivation from Stankowitch. She was of Serbian descent and they ran under the name of Stanley.

MK: Okay.

JP: And uh, she uh...we we became friends in high school and we went through college. I think I'm one of the few guys that never dated during the whole my four years at the University of Michigan because she and I made a pact. She was in Detroit here working here. That we wouldn't date.

MK: Mm-hm.

JP: And uh, so when I graduated from Lit school, we got married on August the 12th that year, 1939, and rented an apartment in Ann Arbor while I was going to law school. Well I finished my first year of law and did fairly well. And I was in my summer session when this thing took place in about August of the summer. And I was called to my father's bedside. And, uh, he said, Joe, I just don't know if I'm going to make it or not. And we're having our leagues there starting pretty soon and he says, I'm desperate for help here. And I can't trust the guys. You got to leave school and come home and run the family business. I said, geez, Pa, I'm already in a year, a year and of half. He said, Joey, you can always go back to law school but you can't always run our family business. He said, I desperately need you. Because these are tough times and you got to come. So what could I do, I came home and ran the family business then. 'Cause I was doing the

book-keeping when I was 15 years old already and I knew the business back and forth and I was excellent at it because in my senior year in high school you saw here my picture in here with, uh, as one of the young stars, come, rising stars coming up. And I was averaging 190, 200 when I was 15, 16 years old already. I had a knack for bowling and I had the opportunity because the place was there all the time. So I could bowl as much as I wanted just for nothing. And I became an excellent bowler and at 85 I still average around 200. In fact, last year I finished with 202 average. Uh, and that's why this article calls me the legend at the DAC, I'm the legend when I get down there. And it's an interesting article, you'll read it. So, then I, I became interested in the business. And I became the youngest president of the Bowling Proprietors Association of Greater Detroit. I became the youngest president of the Bowling Proprietors of America. I became the youngest president of the National Bowling Council, that's the ABC, the WIBC, the manufactures and suppliers, the people that govern the game had their president. And, so I had quite a career in the bowling business. And that's why they had these testimonial dinners on my behalf, see.

MK: Can you describe to me the bowling alley? Physically from the outside. You know we don't have, it's not there now, so, for the record.

JP: It looked like an ordinary building from the outside.

MK: What was it, brick?

JP: Huh? It was a brick building. It was a brick building.

MK: What color brick?

JP: Light-colored brick, light-colored brick.

MK: Mm-hm.

JP: And uh, it had a front door and uh, double front door. But eventually we had a cocktail lounge, a large cocktail lounge next to it then. Where some of the stores were. My father put a big cocktail lounge in. In fact we had a nightclub in there. And that then became the entrance pretty much to the bowling establishment.

MK: So where exactly was the entrance? Was it off of Chene. Off of Trombly?

JP: Oh no, on Chene, on Chene.

MK: It was on Chene. Near Trombly or?

JP: Well, maybe, maybe 50 feet away from Trombly.

MK: Okay. And when you walked in, what did you see?

JP: Well a little vestibule and if you went to your left, you went into the cocktail lounge. If you went to the right, you went to the bowling establishment.

MK: And the cocktail lounge had a name?

JP: Tavern. Chene Trombly Tavern.

MK: Okay. And how was that set up? Was there a bar with tables?

JP: Oh bar tables, yeah. In fact it was, it became a night club. Had dancing there at night and all that kind of stuff. My father was quite an entrepreneur. He was.

MK: So then to the right was the bowling alley. What was, can you describe the bowling?

JP: It had a big double door, opening from that entrance that led you either to the bar or to the bowling alley that took you into the bowling alley downstairs where there were ten lanes. That's what the first handler built. It was kind of, 'cause the lot was fairly narrow. We didn't have a whole lot of room for benches and things behind the bowlers. Yes there were two benches but they were squeezed in and very little room behind that. And it was one of the reasons why we could never put automatic pin-spotting machines into that place. Because we never had the front, the room in the front to do it with. And you had to have three feet behind the back of it to service the machines. And they could never put it into the place. So we had to go with pin-setters all our lifetime down there. And it was one of the reasons why it never became again, the same as it was in the beginning, once the automatic pin-spotting machines came.

MK: What about the counter? What was the counter with the shoes and all that stuff?

JP: That was at the end of the first floor. Right at right at the end of the building on Chene Street.. And that faced Chene Street. You walked up the steps to the second floor, and as you got to the top of the steps there was a counter at that level there. Well, from the beginning it was only 10 lanes up and 10 down. But then as I told you, in, what was in '39, he added, he added 8 more lanes up there so that we broke through the wall on the left and uh knocked out all the offices up there and our living quarters that were up there. He eventually moved into the River Terrace Apartments on East Jefferson. And that all then became 8 more lanes. So now it was, now, and a check room and office at the end of that building where our where our dining room used to be became my office and our check room and stuff there. And we serviced it through that area there. Had the check room the back. We had shoes to rent. Did a lot of renting of bowling shoes then. People didn't have a whole lot of money and it cost the 15 cents to rent a pair of bowling shoes at the time. Bowling was about 25, 35 cents a game. And we also had some rental shoes behind the counter right where we're going up the stairs, right at that point there we're going upstairs on this side of it on the second floor was a counter there for people for the 18 on the second floor. And I wish I had plans, I don't have. But we managed and we did very well there. We did it with pin-setters.

MK: Where did you get the pin-setters? Who were they?

JP: Most, we would not hire, my father did not want to hire kids. He said they could get hurt doing this, so we hired mostly Black individuals who were looking for jobs.

MK: Mm-hm.

JP: And uh, we had a dormitory for 'em there. We slept them and had a, in the back we had a shower for them. And they had a pin captain on each floor. The pin captain on the second floor would control the 10 or 12 pin setters that would stay there all night long. And we had a kitchen for them too. They would pay, the pin setters would pay for their own kitchen food and linens for their stuff like that, to the pin captains, the one that handled the first floor and the one who handled the second floor. And we got along very well with it and when times got, during the war it was, it became difficult to get pin-setters because they could get jobs elsewhere in the factories. So my pin captain happened to be from Cincinnati Ohio. And Cincinnati Ohio did not have the industry that we had in the city of Detroit. And they had an excess of pin setters. So every couple of months, Julius would say, the fellows we brought the last time want to go home. They've saved a few bucks and they're going home. We've got to go back to Cincinnati and get some more pin setters. So I would go with him. And we would take a train to Cincinnati. I would stay at the hotel and Julius would go to the various bowling establishments around town. And wherever he could pick up pin boys that would be willing to come and stay for at least a couple a months, we'd pick him up and he'd meet me at the at the train station and we would bring them back here and then they'd live with us then for another couple of months.

MK: What was Julius' last name, do you remember?

JP: Sorrells. S-O-R-R-E-L-L-S.

MK: Was he a white guy? A Black guy?

JP: He was Black.

MK: Black guy.

JP: Very sharp. Sharp young man. Clean cut and had a good job and we paid him a good salary. And the pin setters also paid him for the kitchen stuff like that he made a few extra bucks.

MK: Did he live there too in the dormitory?

JP: Yes, he lived there with them too. Yep. And he had no family, no husband, no wives, no kids. We brought him up. He came to us when he was about 16, 17 and never got married and then we had another one. Handled the second floor later on. Walter

Williams. And Walter Williams was also from Cincinnati. And these fellows we were paying almost twice as much for pin setters in the Greater Detroit area than they were paying in Cincinnati. Because this was a unionized town. And our pin setters were all unionized. Building Service Employees International Union. And their contracts were a whole lot better than the ones were in Cincinnati and in other cities that were not unionized.

MK: Mm-hm.

JP: And so we, we were able to get these kids and they'd, not kids, they were men, some of them had families. And they'd send their money back at night sometimes. Sometimes they'd keep it for a week and wire it to family, money at home. It was an interesting thing. And then along of course came the automatic pin setting machines and.

MK: When was that?

JP: Oh, golly. Let's see. About the time I became National President in '41, '42. Between 40 and 50. 1940 and 1950.

MK: Mm-hm.

JP: In there, yeah. And if you wanted to stay in business. You almost had to have the automatic pin spotting machines.

MK: So how did you stay in business and not have them?

JP: Because we had developed a trade that was loyal to us and we were close to the Dodge plant and there was no bowling alley nearby and it was the only place they really could bowl. And they all knew me very well and I knew them very well. And we entertained the the league secretaries and the league presidents to keep their good will. And threw little beer parties for them every once in a while for the guys, for you know, no charge at all. Just, uh, treat 'em right and they'll treat you right. That's.

MK: So, who were some of the big name bowlers who bowled at Chene Trombly?

JP: Joe Norris. Johnny Crimmins. Herman Gibson, Fred Bujak, Eddie Lubanski, Sylvester Thiel. Louie Selow. Tony Nowak, Cass Grygier.

MK: If you had to pick one or two of those guys to say like, these are the best guys that you saw bowl in there. Who would they be?

JP: Well the best would have to be Joe Norris.

MK: Mm-hm.

(break)

MK: About the the handicap system?

JP: Well the handicap system. My father started the handicap system.

MK: Tell me about when he did and what was, what it was.

JP: Well there was a, the 850, started with the 850 handicap tournament that you've seen the picture of.

MK: Tell me about the 850 tournament.

JP: Well, there had been bowling tournaments going on for a long time in the city of Detroit. Especially the city tournaments. City and state tournaments. And not too many people had the nerve to start their own team tournament in the city of Detroit. They just felt like they didn't have the courage to do it and to guarantee the prize fund and my father was willing to do it. And so he started the 850 handicap tournament. Let's see, where is it? On one of those pages?

MK: That's okay, that's okay.

JP: Look.

MK: Mm-hm.

JP: And that went on for about 30 years. And then when the automatic pin spotters became, started to come into effect by, had lost its interest and people just didn't participate anymore. And we just stopped it that's all.

MK: What about the handicap system? When did he come up with that?

JP: ...God let's see.

MK: Was it before the war?

JP: Chene Trombly was built in 1929. I'd say in about '35.

MK: Mm-hm.

JP: About 35.

MK: What was it about. What was the purpose of it?

JP: You get five bowlers together and it was called the 850 handicap tournament. No matter what your average was. And we always used the established averages from the time that the beginning of the season or middle of the season, whatever it was. So

everybody used their handicap from the same time of the year, like maybe January the 1st on. Whatever it was. And there as a record kept of that at the Detroit Bowling Association Offices. And you would get, you'd get 5 bowlers together. And let's say that your hand, let's say the averages of those five bowlers was 900.

MK: Mm-hm.

JP: For the sake of argument. He would take 66 and 2/3 of the difference between your average and 850 and then he changed it to 60. But anyway, it was 2/3 then. And take that many pins away from your score at the end when you finished your three game bowling.

MK: Mm-hm.

JP: Now if your average was 802, and 850 is the handicap. That's 48 pins difference isn't it. He would then add 66 and 2/3 of the difference between what your hand, what your average was and 850 was. And that would be added onto your score. So that gave the poorer bowler a chance to compete with the better bowlers.

MK: Mm-hm.

JP: Now at the Detroit Athletic Club, it's a 100 percent. If our team averages 800 and your team average is 700. There is a 100 pin difference. So every game, we had on 100 pins to your game before you start. Hopefully that will even things out so that the 800 fellow doesn't win everything all the time. And that is the handicap system. And my father helped start that system in the city of Detroit. At that time we didn't have any handicap tournaments.

MK: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

JP: And it became very very popular. Because now the average bowler says, well, okay, I'm giving away 2/3 but I'm also getting something out of that. I have a fighting chance then you see. Well, as the years went by, we always kept it at 2/3, but as the years went by, it got higher and higher and higher so that at the moment, like I say, at most places it's about 70, 80 percent difference between in all the tournaments that they have.

MK: Yeah.

JP: With your average and the average you stopped at. If you're above it, we take that much away from you. If you're below it, we give it to you.

MK: Right, okay.

JP: And all our leagues at the Detroit Athletic Club, all 15 or 16 clubs are based on 100 percent handicap.

MK: Mm-hm.

JP: So that the winnings and things can be spread around a little bit. Not that Joe Paulus wins all of it because his average is 202 and I shoot better scores than other guys do.

MK: Right.

JP: Which is fine. And it's become very popular. And people accept it. And I bowl in a league at the DAC on Saturday nights now in a mixed league. Girlfriend, boyfriend, husband and wives, and we bowl. And there it's a 100 percent handicap too. And it's fun. We have fun together. So sometimes the low average bowler beats the hell out of the high average bowler and gets a big kick out of it, see, yeah.

MK: What about the history of the alley after you took it over, running it, in the early 40's. How long did you run that bowling alley?

JP: I ran it 'til uh, 'til it was, to the demise.

MK: Which is when?

JP: When uh, the Poletown Plant was built. That was about, what about 80 or 81.

MK: Right.

JP: Right, somewhere in there, yeah. In the meantime I had also been involved in other bowling establishments. So that was not my whole income anymore.

MK: Okay.

JP: Because I couldn't live, afford to live on what I was making on it at the time.

MK: Right.

JP: Because of the automatic pin spotting machines and we didn't have them and we couldn't put them in.

MK: Mm-hm.

JP: So I had a place called Joe Paulus' Bloomfield Lanes next to Fox and Hounds there.

MK: Mm-hm.

JP: From 61 to '72 or 3. And my lease ran out and I was told I had to leave. And he turned it into an office building. Just broke my heart. I built it up to a great business and they begged me to buy it to begin with and then when I did and the lease ran out, he said,

get out Joe. Just like that. Boy. Uh, then I also invested with, with a group called the Thunder bowl Lanes and Lounge in Allen Park Michigan.

MK: Mm-hm.

JP: Which is, now I think the largest in the United States. We have 94 lanes in that establishment.

MK: Wow.

JP: And that's. I got enticed into that one because we had a professional bowling teams that were starting at that time. Teams, 10 teams from around the country. Dallas, Chicago, uh, Los Angeles. And we'd meet. Our five bowlers would bowl against their five bowlers. Three game matches. Who would win the match then would have the winner for the day like the hockey guys do. You know

MK: Mm-hm.

JP: And we went into that for one year. And we all lost so much money that we almost all went broke. We just couldn't get enough people to pay what we had to pay the bowlers and to ship them, just to ship them from here to California 5, 6 of them, you know, you had 6 bowlers on the team in case you needed a sub.

MK: Yeah.

JP: And we lost so much money in the first year that the league broke up.

MK: Mm-hm.

JP: But where the lanes were for the arena that we had built. We added 20 more lanes in there. So we started out with the arena and 54 lanes. And then we ended the arena because it didn't work out. And we added 20 more lanes there. And then business was so good we had more property on the other side of the thing. So we added 20 more lanes on the other side. So we had 54 in the arena, then we had 20 in the arena and then the 54 and that was it. And just, the group of us just sold it to a, to an another group right. Too many of us are in our 80s and 70s and uh, felt it was time to get out of it and let somebody younger run it. And they're doing a hell of a job with it over there too.

(Break)

MK: I wanted to ask you also about, there was a restaurant in the bowling alley too, wasn't there?

JP: Yep.

MK: What was it called?

JP: Chene Trombly Restaurant. And it was a fish and chips place. They were famous for it. We didn't run it, we leased it out.

MK: Who was the renter, do you remember?

JP: Charlie. Charlie and Fred. I can't remember their names. Did you want one of these or not?

MK: I took one of those already.

JP: You already got it.

MK: Yep.

JP: Uh. Yeah they ran it for many years and it was very famous. Fish and chips. Buck ninety-eight all you could eat.

MK: Mm-hm. Was the 10 Pins a restaurant in there too or not?

JP: They made it, they may have called it that.

MK: Mm-hm.

JP: 10 Pins. That could be it. That could be, could have been the name that they used too.

MK: Mm-hm.

JP: 10 Pin Restaurant. Yeah.

MK: What about crime? Was there much crime? Did you have to deal with much crime?

JP: No, we had no crime at all up until near the end.

MK: Mm-hm.

MK: What about during the '43 and '67 riots? Was there anything going on there?

JP: No. They, the Polish people in the neighborhood and the German people in the neighborhood, they controlled it pretty well.

MK: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

JP: And we didn't have too many Blacks living there anyway, at that time.

MK: Mm-hm.

JP: But then when the expressway came in and our people over there started to move out to Madison Heights and to other places, why then, a lot of the immigrants from the Middle East came over there.

MK: Mm-hm.

JP: Some of the Blacks came over there because rentals became fairly cheap and stuff like that. We cashed a lot a lot of checks for the guys in Dodge Main. And we kept about \$10,000 on hand all the time. And I would take the checks for cashing over to National Bank of Detroit and they'd give me cash again for the checks that I cashed and I'd walk back from Chene Street to Milwaukee and Chene to Trombly with \$10,000 cash in my hand and think nothing of it. Thinking nothing of it. No, no problem at all. But toward the end, why my one bartender got shot in the shoulder. That hurt, and so then we started to stop cashing checks because the neighborhood started to get too bad. They uh, it was almost a God-send that the Poletown Plant came along by then and took care of all that garbage that had been starting to accumulate over there. And It was tough. Tough to see it go like that. But, it broke my father's heart.

MK: Were you involved in any of the Chene Street Business Association activities?

JP: No.

MK: No?

JP: No, no, I was not. I was so busy involved in the bowling business. I knew them all. Witkowski Clothes, Lutomski, lawyers, uh, a lot of those Polish people. And they all were good friends of my father's. The John W. Smith old timers, I don't think you've seen that.

MK: No. What is it?

JP: John W. Smith was the mayor of the city of Detroit.

MK: Oh, okay.

JP: And a bunch of people on Chene Street and that general area supported him. And my father was kind of the kingpin. They called my dad the czar of Chene Street. Because when we had those bowling matches for the Capuchin, we raised money for them, we'd bring in the governor. We'd bring in Soapy Williams. I got to know Soapy. John W. Smith. Lou Miriani. All those guys. They all came over and attended these functions. And uh, it was it was fun. And you should read that one particular article by uh, please don't drop it.

MK: Nope. I just want to put it back where it belongs here. And let's put this one back where it was. Which was near the front here.

(break)

JP: In fact my father let 'em bowl for free.

MK: Tell me, tell me about Eddie Lubanski. Where was he from?

JP: He was from Milwaukee and Piquette or some place in through there, yeah. He could walk.

MK: And how, how did you meet him?

JP: His father bowled in, uh, in one of our leagues at Chene Trombly and then brought his son in to bowl and uh, he, we took a liking to him, my father did and uh, he was good at it, and Eddie and I are still good friends today. We bowled together about a month ago in a tournament, the Old Timers' tournament at the Thunder Bowl in Allen Park Michigan. And he's had a few ailments but he's still, still trying it. And he still does some teaching at the Thunder Bowl in Allen Park.

MK: Do you think he'd be open to my talking to him about Chene Street.?

JP: Chene Street. Sure, absolutely. I think he would. I don't know how I could.

MK: Do you have a phone number for him or?

JP: No, I don't know. He works, he works at the Thunder Bowl in Allen Park.

MK: Okay.

JP: And I don't know. Maybe we should have the, being one of the owners there, I should have a book. Here's when I was president, I, I greeted Miss America.

MK: Yeah? Wow.

JP: Yeah, how about that.

MK: Pretty impressive, eh? So, when did you get into the banking business?

JP: When I lost my lease out here. And I was very active. I was very active. But this was Mrs. Paulus. That was she was a very beautiful lady.

(break)

JP: No, not that one.

MK: Was she in the neighborhood? Did she grow up in the neighborhood?

JP: Yeah she grew up, she grew up on uh, near Frederick and Riopelle and into that area again there, in the Slavic neighborhood.

MK: Mm-hm.

JP: And I met her at a house party one time. And these are some of her paintings.

.....

JP: You can see it, and she put this room together too. We added this bedroom for a master bedroom and uh she, she built the scale. The whole thing to scale. And then made the bedspreads, made all that stuff.

MK: Multi-talented.

JP: Oh, wonderful. And more importantly she was . She left me three daughters. Three wonderful daughters. And, I'm happy about that. One day she went to the doctor, and he said, I don't like what I see here. Took a picture of her colon and, she said, I'm fine, there's nothing wrong with me. Well, maybe maybe there's nothing with you, but let's . And they did, they went in there and sure enough they found a tumor in there. Within two years she was dead.

MK: I'm sorry to hear that.