

Poweshiek History Preservation Project

Interview Transcript

Interviewer: Mari Duke

Speaker: Ted Clausen

Date: September 16, 2013

Place: Grinnell, Iowa

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Persons present: Mari Duke-I
 Ted Clausen-S

Duke: Okay, it's September 16th, 2013, and the interviewer is Mari Duke and I'm talking to Ted Clausen who was a longtime City Manager in Grinnell. Okay, let's start back when you were telling me what your training was and you were talking about being trained as an engineer.

Clausen: My college education was in civil engineering, and I had been designated as an engineer-in-training, passed the appropriate test for that, interviewed various employers while I was at Iowa State, and ended up choosing Grinnell. I'm not sure I have any one particular reason other than it seemed like an area where I probably would be – where I could get involved with the things I was interested in, roads, water, sewer, this type of thing. Also at that time the City Manager was the City Engineer as set out by the city code that formed that position. And as an engineer-in-training I had to work under a licensed engineer for four years—

Duke: Okay.

Clausen: before I could qualify to take my exam as a professional engineer.

Duke: Okay, so you came to Grinnell as an engineer?

Clausen: As an engineer-in-training.

Duke: Okay okay, and then, at what point did you become City Manager?

Clausen: Well, at the – shortly after I had received my professional engineering license, the individual who was the manager left for another job,

Duke: Okay.

Clausen:

and the City Council had advertised the position, was looking for a replacement. I did not make an application, I hadn't really looked into being a city manager or thought about being a city manager at that point, even though I had worked, you know, pretty closely with one for four years. Somewhere along the line, I don't remember just how long after this individual left, I was asked by a couple of councilmembers if I would consider being the Acting City Manager until such a time as they hired a permanent – you know, a person in that position of City Manager. I thought why not, and so the City Council appointed me as the Acting City Manager. I thought it was kind of interesting after, I don't remember how long exactly, it was probably a couple months or more, I'd send out information to the City Council and sign it as Acting City Manager. And one time I was asked, 'why do you sign that Acting City Manager?', I said

‘because that’s how I was appointed,’ and they said ‘well, we’ll have to think about that,’ and at the next meeting I was appointed City Manager.

Duke: Okay, okay and it was still a requirement in the code that the City Manager be an engineer, a civil engineer?

Clausen: An engineer.

Duke: And you said that wasn’t really common in other Iowa cities, it was kind of unique to Grinnell?

Clausen: I think, uh, at that particular time I really don’t know what percentage you might say were that type of an ordinance, or how the city manager position was established in other cities. I know I think there were a couple at that time that I’m familiar with, but I believe most of them just called for a city manager.

Duke: They were managers. Okay, and when was – what year were you appointed City Manager?

Clausen: Uh, would’ve been ‘66, late ‘66.

Duke: ‘66, ’66. Okay, well, how did you find the city when you became the City Manager? What was existing here and what were the issues?

Clausen: Well, the, when I’d come to town, the issue at that point and I think one of the reasons they really were looking for an assistant to help the City Manager, an engineer, was Grinnell had started on a street improvement program paving streets. And that did continue for several years and was still an ongoing project.

Duke: So there were a lot of unpaved streets in Grinnell when you came to town?

Clausen: Uh, yes.

Duke: Like, where? Starting where?

Clausen: Well you would say most of the streets south of 1st Avenue

Duke: Okay.

Clausen: were not paved. There were streets in various parts of town, in the eastern part of town, 3rd Avenue, and streets like that were not paved.

Duke: Okay.

Clausen: Some up in the northeast part of town, I can’t tell you which ones right now, but–

Duke: But around the edges of town there were some unpaved streets. Okay. Okay.

Clausen: The core of the business district and immediately surrounding residential area, I believe, were pretty well paved out at that point.

Duke: Okay, okay, okay. Okay, how about things like sewer, and, I mean, were there issues there? I mean, I know there are always issues there.

Clausen: Yeah, there were always issues with paving a street. In fact the first year I was in town, still as the assistant, the city was taken to court by a group who were protesting the special assessment

Duke: Sure.

Clausen: system being used. The city was successful in going forward with that project, and I don't believe there were any other challenges of that type that I can recall.

Duke: Okay.

Clausen: But there were of course – I shouldn't say of course probably, but when things are changing like that there's usually always a few folks who have a concern about it. And, you know, in many cases rightly so.

Duke: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And so, how about Grinnell in general, it must have been a smaller place.

Clausen: It was a, yeah, there were a lesser population. In fact I think it was between '60 and '70 that the city really did pick up population.

Duke: Oh, that's interesting. And was that because of businesses or industry?

Clausen: Well, you know, I think it was just the time of the, you know, after the Second World War and so forth, when everything was expanding,

Duke: Expanding.

Clausen: growing. There were businesses and industries in town then, and there have been, you know, new ones, a lot of new ones after that.

Duke: Sure

Clausen: But it just seemed like it was a time when there were a lot of people building houses, the, what's now the northwest section of town, west of 146 and north of 11th Avenue was almost undeveloped.

Duke: Sure.

Clausen: There was one street that went through there at the time with the housing around it, and a few houses along 11th Avenue.

Duke: I'd imagine there were a lot more commercial businesses downtown serving the population.

Clausen: The, yeah the downtown area was much busier at that time, particularly, you could note, you know, in the evening when the stores were open. I don't remember now if that was Friday night or Saturday night. But, I think it was Saturday night and they later changed to Friday. But anyway–

Duke: Didn't people come to town on Saturday, you know–

Clausen: Lot of people came, the rural population was larger at the time and that seemed to be when all of those folks would come in, and also, you know, the people who had 8-5 jobs or 7-5

Duke: Sure.

Clausen: or whatever they were, that was their opportunity to shop.

Duke: Grinnell was more of a shopping center for the local area than it is now.

Clausen: I believe that would be correct.

Duke: What about the interstate, when did it come, was it here then?

Clausen: The interstate ended at Highway 146 in 1962.

Duke: Ended from the east, or the west?

Clausen: From the west.

Duke: Okay.

Clausen: And the traffic was routed off and through Grinnell on Highway 146 and 6, coming in both east and – going –

Duke: Sure. So there was significant traffic coming through Grinnell.

Clausen: Yes, yeah.

Duke: So did that cause difficulties? Or—

Clausen: It caused – I'm not going to say that it had extraordinary difficulties. It made it more noisy along the highway at night. At that particular time I was in an apartment at the corner of Broad and 6th. And we did have the traffic signals and so all night long the trucks were coming, going, stopping, starting, and you did hear them but of course, you got used to it after a bit, and it just became part of the background.

Duke: Yeah. I've always assumed that the interstate affected the commercial businesses downtown, when people could get to Des Moines or Iowa City to shop.

Clausen: I think that would, you know, would be true, because, what, on Highway 6, Old Highway 6 was a, I don't know, probably hour, hour and fifteen trip anyway, and it turned into a 45 minute trip or thereabouts.

Duke: Okay, what other things when you came, what, was there anything else in particular you noticed in the early '60s?

Clausen: Well, that I noticed, we, well there were some water problems, I'm speaking of drinking water now.

Duke: Quality problems?

Clausen: Not quality problems, I don't know,

Duke: Distribution?

Clausen: Distribution, and pressure and availability.

Duke: Ah, okay.

Clausen: At that time, the city had only three wells. One, the newest well, designated as Number Seven, could produce enough water to provide Grinnell a day's supply, and a little extra. Then we had the old wells, Number Five and Six, which were not good producers, they went into the Jordan Strata the same as Number Seven but they were smaller wells, and less pumping capacity, this type of thing. And so there were a number of times when you'd come awfully close, when they were working on the water tower and this type of thing, of wondering if you were really gonna make it or not. And there was one time, I think this was in the late '60s, that we didn't.

Duke: Oh really, so what happened?

Clausen: And the city was without water pressure for, it wasn't very long, it was just a few hours.

Duke: So the residents just discovered that on their own, or were they notified, or I mean, what happened?

Clausen: I really can't remember right now what took place on that. But there were of course a lot of phone calls, like, why we don't have water, this type of thing. And once it was turned back on, of course, everything was okay. But it did bring home the point that we did need to look at something more for water supply.

Duke: Another well, is that what you mean?

Clausen: And that resulted in the drilling of another well, well Number Eight.

Duke: And where are, are these wells still over there, over –

Clausen: Well Number Five, Six and Seven are located, well Five and Six, let me put it this way, are located near the water plant, right basically on the property.

Duke: Oh, right, I knew that, yeah.

Clausen: Where the storage and treatment facilities are. Well Number Seven was located, well it would be just south of what used to be the Dairy Queen.

Duke: On 146, yeah.

Clausen: Of course one of the problems there, they were close enough together that the drawdown of well Number Seven also had an effect on the water level in Five and Six, so it used their capacity. Well Number Eight was drilled east of the street department building, over on 1st Avenue and East Street.

Duke: And what are they using now? What wells are they using now?

Clausen: Well, okay, and since then they've drilled another well, well Number Nine, which is located over in the Lake Nyanza/Miller Park area, and either one of Eight and Nine, I believe, and this is kind of – I haven't been that close to it for a few years now,

Duke: Sure.

Clausen: but when they were initially put in service, either Eight or Nine could provide a day's worth of water, you know, continual pumping, and Seven was still close to that mark. I don't know just how they are right now.

Duke: Right. And they're incredibly deep wells, aren't they?

Clausen: They're in the vicinity of 2,500 feet.

Duke: That just amazes me. Like half a mile.

Clausen: Yeah, quarter mile – yeah, half a mile.

Duke: And what about that old water tower, how long's that been there, like forever?

Clausen: Well it seems like that. I think it was built in '29.

Duke: And do they have just an indefinite life expectancy?

Clausen: It depends on how well they're taken care of, and the work that's done on them. We, ah, we have been able to, as far as I know, it still holds true, the city was able to maintain its fire insurance rating with the tower that's there, many times cities build new towers, bigger towers, to maintain a fire safety rating because you have to have a certain supply of water on hand.

Duke: And a certain water pressure?

Clausen: Yeah, water pressure of course, at whatever the usable pressure may be. Grinnell did a major overhaul of their water plant in '63, and as part of that overhaul installed a natural gas engine, or pump, operated by a natural gas engine. And that was available if power was out, which was one of the things they looked at, if you lost power, you still had the natural gas-fired engine.

Duke: So, it's a backup, you mean?

Clausen: As a backup to the tower.

Duke: So otherwise it's an electric pump?

Clausen: Yeah, they're electric pumps that pump water into the tower.

Duke: Okay.

Clausen: So electric pumps bring water from the wells into the concrete storage tank east of the treatment building,

Duke: Okay.

Clausen: and then it's pumped through the treatment process and into the water tower.

Duke: Okay. Now the \$64 question, Ted, why isn't our name on the water tower? Why isn't the name of Grinnell on the water tower?

Clausen: As I recall, since, you ask that question, that was discussed, way back when, and at that time it was decided that the cost of painting it was not worth doing it, and so it was never done and I don't know that it ever came up again while I was City Manager.

Duke: Okay. The anonymous water tower, most places have—okay, and how about, you supervised, like, the police department and the fire department?

Clausen: The City Manager was always directly in charge of the fire department, which basically meant hiring the chief, or at one time the chief was a volunteer chief,

Duke: Oh, really?

Clausen: Who was elected by the volunteers, and we had three at that time three driver-dispatchers, they served as fire truck drivers and also as police dispatchers. And they were directly under the City Manager. But the fire chief basically was in charge of them as far as fire protection went. The fire chief, or, sorry, not the fire chief, the police chief, was at that time directly responsible to the mayor.

Duke: Oh, to the mayor!

Clausen: The mayor had the authority to directly appoint a police chief. I don't remember just when that was changed, but probably in the early '80s.

Duke: Okay.

Clausen: It was decided that the police chief should also come under the general authority of the City Manager and there was a change made in the ordinance to that effect.

Duke: And that worked well?

Clausen: Pardon?

Duke: And that worked okay?

Clausen: I think it has, yes.

Duke: Has there been much change in the way fire and police operate in this town?

Clausen: I think of course with the new building there's been a considerable change in their operation,

Duke: Oh, really?

Clausen: And I'm not familiar just what all the ins and outs may be. But prior to that I think it would be safe to say that there would be no major changes in the way they operated, their relationships, and that sort of thing. Because the fire and police operated out of the same building, much the matter as they do now, and of course now, as I understand it, the dispatching is handled through the county,

Duke: oh yeah, yeah.

Clausen: So that part of it has changed, and the fire chief is a full-time employee. That had changed, prior, as I recall, while I was still City Manager.

Duke: Until this new building and centralized dispatch everything, it didn't change much while you were City Manager over the years?

Clausen: No, because they all operated out of that building, the firefighter-dispatchers as they were referred to, I believe, drivers/dispatchers, they maintained during the daytime they would work on, you know, trucks, cleaning them and making sure they were properly maintained and so forth, then during the evening and morning hours, I think like, from four in the afternoon to eight in the morning, they were responsible to do the dispatch. If a fire call came in they were still the dispatch, and their first responsibility was to take the fire truck and head for the scene of the fire. A police officer would be notified that the place was vacant and they responded back to the station quickly. So hopefully there was a minimum of time when the place was unattended.

Duke: Oh, I didn't know that. That's interesting.

Clausen: And I think for the most part it worked out quite well for a number of years.

Duke: Okay, and then, have we always had building codes and things, I mean when you came were there all kinds of electrical and plumbing and construction codes?

Clausen: No. There were some codes, there was a zoning code. But, planning and zoning was in place, but as far as building codes as we know them today they were not there. There were some requirements that had been set out by ordinance, but they were very minimal.

Duke: And when did that start developing?

Clausen: The, I think we hired a building inspector, it would have been in the last half of the '70s, I again can't recall the exact year,

Duke: Sure, sure. Was it, were our building codes established in direct response to pressure from the state, or was it something that came out of a need in Grinnell?

Clausen: I think it was primarily originated from Grinnell, concerned about proper construction, you know, of buildings, because occasionally something would happen that just wasn't good.

Duke: Yeah, okay. Let's see. What other areas were reported to the City Manager?

Clausen: Well initially it was the, we had a street department, solid waste collection department, water treatment, wastewater treatment, and cemetery.

Duke, Oh, okay.

Clausen: I believe they were reported directly to the City Manager, and there was some connection between what was there at that time as recreation. There was no full-time Recreation Director initially. That again happened in the '70s that the Council established an ordinance establishing a Recreation Department, I shouldn't say department, a Recreation

Duke: Director?

Clausen: Commission.

Duke: Commission? Oh, okay.

Clausen: Who was in charge of the recreation operation and was responsible for hiring the director. That was not directly under the City Manager but other than as we talk about budget and that type of thing.

Duke: Right, right. And the budget. You were responsible for drawing up a budget?

Clausen: City manager was responsible for putting a budget together and presenting it to the Council.

Duke: How did that go over the years? Was that an easy operation or sometimes was it contentious?

Clausen: It generally was time-consuming, and of course as with those kind of things there was always some disagreement as to what was the most important thing to have delimited funds, because there were a limit on the amount of taxes the city could levy, and of course then with your enterprise funds, the water, sewer, solid waste, they were not required by law to stand on their own but the City Council had always pretty much taken the position that they should not be supported with tax dollars.

Duke: They had to support themselves. And were you successful with that, pretty much?

Clausen: I think we were quite successful with that, pretty much. The cemetery also was an enterprise fund, but there usually was some general fund money that had to be put into the cemetery. But the water, sewer and solid waste usually stood on their own.

Duke: Okay. Did you have any like, specific goals when you took the job, like, I'm gonna shape up the streets or you know, did you just take things as they were wrote?

Clausen: I would have to say no, I really did not. I think the getting through the street improvements was probably one of the general goals of that point of both the City Council and myself. I might add to that that the city had in 1962 adopted a comprehensive plan, and that had a list of things that the city was going to try to complete in the next 10 years.

Duke: I'm sorry, when did you say that was?

Clausen: '62.

Duke: In '62. So did they have one before that, or was that the first one?

Clausen: I'm not sure that they had what you would call a comprehensive plan. They may have had, but I don't ever recall seeing or hearing much about it. But that was adopted at about the time I came as the engineering assistant, and is really the thing that was kind of guiding the council as far as planning for the future.

Duke: Okay, so there was kind of a framework of goals that they had.

Clausen: Right, they had listed, I think it was 10 items that they were going to try to complete in the next 10 years, and I believe that most of them were fairly well completed other than the development of an airport, a new airport.

Duke: Okay, okay, great. And then when that one – did they keep having 10-year plans?

Clausen: They did have, I don't know that I'd say 10-year plans, I think it was a bit later than 10 years when the next one was developed, but yes, they have, and I assume that they still have.

Duke: But you didn't have personal goals, you pretty much responded to the direction of the City Council.

Clausen: Yes, I saw that as my job

Duke: Right, that was your job, right, right. What were some of the big issues that developed while you were City Manager?

Clausen: Well as I mentioned, you know, the streets continuing and the water, the well business. There were also some water backup problems which to a certain extent still continue under the right set of circumstances.

Duke: Right, right.

Clausen: As we know from last Memorial Day.

Duke: Yes, recently that's right. Right.

Clausen: No, the, there was backup from sanitary sewers at that time which was you know primarily occurred in the lower areas of the sewer system. The sewers all drain to the southwest, out to where the wastewater treatment plant is today. But the sewers as you would go to the southwest, which is where most of them pass through the residential areas, so forth, there was considerable problems there with, again, it took a heavy rain, it wasn't just every rain,

Duke: Right, right.

Clausen: But it would occur often enough that there was definitely a serious problem.

Duke: And that's an emotional thing when it happens to somebody.

Clausen: And I think too, we were beginning to see more basements developed sd living space.

Duke: Oh, more people were moving into their basements for recreation and things.

Clausen: Which also drove concerns about that. And there were concerns in the northwest part of town, as well as, well, both the northeast and the northwest, because a lot of that was served by lift stations, one near 16th Avenue and the country club pond area, and then another one located, well it would've been roughly again 16th Avenue and a few blocks west of, of Highway 146. There were, as I think we have talked about, heard talk about recently, footing drains connecting to those sewers and under the right set of circumstances those were—

Duke: overwhelmed.

Clausen: Overloaded those sewers and created backup and there you were talking about newer houses in particular, not just ones that had been around for a lot of years.

Duke: They still use the same lift stations?

Clausen: No, those lift stations were replaced in the mid-80s by one large lift station located in the northwest corner of town north of 16th Avenue and west of 146 and with new force mains that basically skirt the developed area of Grinnell and empty into the sewer heading for the wastewater treatment plant below where most development has occurred.

Duke: And they're run by electric motors?

Clausen: Electric motors, right.

Duke: That, that was kind of the problem recently, wasn't it – that the electricity went out—

Clausen: Right, the, part of the arrangement when that lift station was first built was that the city would, well we had to have some type of auxiliary power in the event of a, you know, a prolonged electrical outage.

Duke: Oh, okay.

Clausen: And, had the choice of some kind of a, internal combustion engine, you know, gas, [unclear] oil, natural gas, whatever, or additional electrical generator. And we wanted the same thing for the wells because again, if you were out—without power for much more than a day you were probably also about out of water.

Duke: Sure.

Clausen: And so arrangements were made, we purchased a rather large generator and provided a place on the lift station as well as the wells and water plant where this generator could be connected to provide pumping capacity in the event electricity was off. And it was, at that point it was felt that there was quite a large storage capacity provided in the lift—in the northwest lift station, and so it was thought to be possible that if we ran into a long-term electrical outage, you could pump the northwest lift station dry, disconnect the generator, and take it to the well or the water plant and pump there as needed, and, you know, just make the circuit. Well, what happened as I understand it with this last rain, the whole lift station was underwater, and it was not even possible to get to the station with the generator.

Duke: Oh, oh, okay, so, best laid plans, yeah.

Clausen: But at that time, the waterway was raised up supposedly high enough that it was not going to be affected in that kind of way, but the water we had, and I suppose the paving of additional streets and houses during that period of time all contributed to that flow.

Duke: Sure. You must need a drink of water, you've been doing a lot of talking.

Clausen: That does sound good.

Duke: I remember a bunch of issues around one-way streets downtown and parking meters downtown.

Clausen: Yeah, there was quite a bit of discussion of that, of course, nobody likes parking meters, except they do, if properly enforced, do create turnover.

Duke: And they support enforcement of the parking laws.

Clausen: And the revenue from the meters supported the cost of enforcing them. I don't recall that they, that it provided anything extra of any consequence, but it did balance out. And of course at that time there was, we mentioned earlier, you know, the evening, Saturday or Friday night.

Duke: Right.

Clausen: There was also a lot of shopping during the daytime, and the need for parking spaces existed sort of during that period of time too, well, the parking meters were designed to create turnover, limit of 2 hours, therefore hopefully people would be able to find a place downtown to park. Well, as time went along, the number of folks coming in at that time apparently decreased a bit, and as you mentioned earlier, going to Des Moines, you know, with the interstate completed, Walmart, I don't remember just when they came in with their store and parking for as close to Grinnell.

Duke: Right.

Clausen: And now farther out of course, all created a concern about the parking meters that the parking meters were driving people away, and so there was a push, primarily I believe by the Chamber of Commerce, the central business district merchants, to do away with it, and the Council did respond to that and had them removed. They did for a while try just 2-hour enforcement by tickets, but that was not too successful and it finally just sort of was not—

Duke: So they don't enforce the parking—

Clausen: It was just after a time it was really not enforced, I don't know if that's still on the books or not. The other thing then, the traffic, well, the one-way streets. I'm not sure what really was driving that. I think there was a certain amount of support in the central business district for it, but also there was a lot of folks there who were not in favor of it. And the Chamber of Commerce as I recall finally suggested the system that was in place for a number of years, which was basically one way around the central part of town. 4th Avenue, Broad Street, Main Street and—

Duke: You think that recommendation came from the Chamber?

Clausen: I think that recommendation originally came from the Chamber. There seemed to be a fair amount of enthusiasm on the part of the council to set up a one-way system, or at least among certain councilmembers, and there was, you know, skepticism, and it looked, I think it looked like something was going to happen and the Chamber, decided this would be a good way to try it out, see if it would work.

Duke: They were there for quite a while, weren't they?

Clausen: They were there for quite a few years, and I'm not sure, you know, I think it depends on who you talk to and how you view it whether you would really call them successful or not. As I recall, one of

the problems that happened, again with more traffic downtown, and the two-way system, cars would back up at the intersections when the lights, you know, were red. And sometimes quite a distance,

Duke: Oh, really?

Clausen: And created some problems even with people backing out of parking lots

Duke: Sure, sure, they get blocked in?

Clausen: Pardon?

Duke: They get blocked in?

Clausen: They get blocked in, right. And, you know, sometimes just plain getting in there there seemed to be quite a circle of cars going around town.

Duke: Looking for—

Clausen: Sometimes, you know, a lot of the younger kids doing this for the fun of it.

Duke: The loop de loop kind of thing?

Clausen: Yeah, the loop.

Duke: I remember the loop.

Clausen: And some of it of course being also people looking for a place to park.

Duke: What other kind of issues do you remember over the years?

Clausen: Well there were things like the Community Center—

Duke: Oh, refurbishing of the old junior high yep—

Clausen: Refurbishing of the old junior-senior-high building, and that was looked at for a number of years and the school I think tried to sell the building and did not get a very good price like they thought they should get from it, and eventually a deal was worked out where the city would attempt to pass a bond issue to refurbish it.

Duke: okay, yeah.

Clausen: And the school would then give it to the city, and the issue was successful. I always thought it was one of those situations where you really shouldn't say your vote didn't count—

Duke: It was close, was it?

Clausen: 'Cause I think it was within six or seven votes, yeah, six or seven votes of being approved, so three or four people changing their vote would've sent it the other way.

Duke: Yeah, I can, we had some City Council elections that were just a couple votes too, didn't we?

Clausen: Yeah, I think so, I don't have a specific recollection right now but it seemed that like, as a rule Grinnell elections were not terribly controversial, at least compared to what you heard and saw from some other towns. They usually seemed to be fairly straight-forward, yes, there was two people or three running for the same position, and disagreement as to what they might try and do, but it did not seem to be a real—

Duke: Didn't get ugly.

Clausen: Yeah, yeah, exactly.

Duke: And I guess one of your main jobs was to try and get along with all the people on the City Council, to be the ultimate diplomat?

Clausen: You kind of had to, yes.

Duke: Yeah, yeah, was it difficult?

Clausen: I would say no, again I think Grinnell has always been very straightforward and reasonable in that area, and you look at the longevity of people on the Council. To me also seems to show that there was not a lot of serious controversy.

Duke: Do you think that's a good thing, that people stay on the Council for 20 years, or do you think turnover's better?

Clausen: Well I think it's kind of like when they talk about term limits for legislators, both federal and state, yeah there might be some advantage in a turnover but on the other hand, they get to what know some of the problems and benefits are, and how to pursue it, how to take care of it.

Duke: Yeah. And I don't think you've ever had a Council where everyone had been on for 10 or 15 years, I mean, there's always some turnover—

Clausen: There's always, yeah, I wouldn't, I think, I think the election in maybe two elections after I resigned that I recall, that there was no turnover.

Duke: None at all?

Clausen: None at all. But for the most part there usually would be one or two people who would be leaving, and occasionally an incumbent would get beat out by a challenger.

Duke: Oh, really? Okay, okay.

Clausen: Didn't happen often but a couple of times it did.

Duke: And the mayors would stay for a long time. You didn't work with too many different mayors, did you?

Clausen: Well when I came as the engineering assistant, Joe van Horn was the mayor. When he decided not to run again, Dr. Beaver was elected mayor.

Duke: Right.

Clausen: When he retired, Dave McConnell was mayor, and that was just I believe a two year term that he served. And then Bob Anderson got elected, and he served I'm not sure how many years, but then Gordon Canfield, well, Gordon Canfield replaced Bob Anderson when he passed away.

Duke: Were you still City Manager when Gordon became mayor?

Clausen: Yes.

Duke: Okay, okay, okay. Um, so what really big successes did the city have over— while you were City Manager?

Clausen: Well I think number one go back to the paving the streets, got most of it, not all of it but most of it, accomplished that I set out. Mentioned the sewer business, that was improved to a large extent but as we mentioned it still—

Duke: Right, it's just an ongoing thing, but, yeah.

Clausen: We had the, you know, improvements at the water plant, the plant itself was improved prior to my being here but then we had a subsequent updating of it again in the '80s. We did develop an airport, which met federal—

Duke: The one down on 146, is that—

Clausen: Yes. Yeah, that was in the mid-80s when that was approved. We have the community center. We did replace the swimming pool at one point, which of course has been redone again as a major kind of a waterpark situation.

Duke: And I guess the whole Parks and Recreation thing,

Clausen: Parks and Recreation that was a new, a new system completely, with, the parks I guess I hadn't thought about that earlier, but the parks originally were under the control of a Park Board. And that was eliminated, I'm not sure when, but I think it was just before I became City Manager, somewhere in that four-year period.

Duke: Oh, okay. So it wasn't part of city government, it was separate.

Clausen: It was separate. Again, they had to come to City Council for the budget and that type of thing, but there was a four or six member commission that took care of the day to day sort of operations and they had an individual hired. That was changed, like I say before I was City Manager, and then the parks were under the direction of the City Manager directly, when the Parks and Recreation Commission was adopted, then that kind of moved to that commission.

Duke: It put a layer between you and – the City Manager and the City Council.

Clausen: Right. The commission was responsible for the day to day operations and how that went. Again their budget was subject to Council approval and oversight. Then during that period of time the ordinance

was changed at one point to put the recreation, no, to put the parks part of it directly under the city manager.

Duke: And separate it from the recreation?

Clausen: Separate it from the Parks and Recreation, it became the Recreation Commission. And I'm not sure where they're at now, if they're back together or not.

Duke: Is there anything that you're disappointed in that you wish were different around here, or that you wish had been different while you were City Manager?

Clausen: I can't say that I see anything that I would call a disappointment. Now, you know, there were probably things along the way that were you maybe thought would've been nice if it had been different, but apparently came out quite well because they—

Duke: And you're not losing any sleep over it now.

Clausen: No.

Duke: Right. What about the finances of the city, were we always in pretty good shape?

Clausen: I would say yes. There were, the City for a lot of years has levies the maximum amount under the general fund, but beyond that we usually always were able to keep enough money in the bank to tide the city over, property taxes generally come in in two chunks, pay your property tax twice a year.

Duke: Right, right.

Clausen: So there was always a desire to have enough money on hand to operate during that period of time, and we never had to borrow any money which occasionally happens, you sell some temporary GO bonds or some kind of notes to—

Duke: Just to make it to the end of the year kind of thing.

Clausen: Right, to make it 'til the next shot of money comes in. I don't think Grinnell, I don't recall anyway, that we ever had to do that. I think there may have been a time or two when there was some money borrowed so to speak from the water, one of the enterprise funds.

Duke: Internally?

Clausen: Internally. But, never anything officially, and then replaced when the time arrived. So no I think Grinnell has always been kept in good fiscal condition, and I think the City Councils over the years really need a lot of credit for that. They were always concerned about where are we at on the money, and are we going to be able to make it, and thought that having a nice reserve was important.

Duke: Okay, okay. Were you pretty much in charge of managing the budget, or—?

Clausen: Yes, yes. City Manager, that was one of the City Manager's responsibilities was to keep track of the budget. The City Clerk's office probably did most of the work.

Duke: Yeah.

Clausen: You know, the bookkeeping so to speak, and prepared those kind of reports, but the City Manager had to use them to make sure that things were going as they should.

Duke: Yeah, that was your ultimate responsibility. I guess I don't have any more questions. You wanna tell some gossip stories or something? That would be fun.

Clausen: [laughs] I don't know right now that I really would have too many of those.

Duke: [laughs] Oh, I know you have them. But I appreciate your discretion.

Clausen: Yeah, the, uh, I guess one thing we didn't mention here was there was a large push in the '60s and early '70s to dredge and do some redevelopment with Arbor Lake.

Duke: Oh, yeah, yeah,

Clausen: And—

Duke: Now, a long time ago that used to be a swimming place, right?

Clausen: Yeah, apparently—

Duke: Like up until the early '30s yeah.

Clausen: Early '30s, and maybe even the '40s there was quite a bit of swimming activity at the beach area. They had a beach area where sand had been trucked in.

Duke: Yeah, I've seen pictures of that, yeah.

Clausen: And they even had a skating, roller skating rink out there at one time, and various things, uh, but again going back to the sanitary sewer situation, the sanitary sewers all came together and went around Arbor Lake. And occasionally those manholes would top out and you would have sewage spilling out into the lake, which was not a good situation.

Duke: Yep.

Clausen: And I don't know at that time, I don't know that there were really any coliform bacteria counts or anything like that done, but a swimming pool had been built, which I think hadn't existed until sometime in the '50s,

Duke: Okay.

Clausen: So I think there was no real reason to try and develop Arbor Lake as a swimming place, although there were a lot of folks who had an interest in that because they remembered it as, you know, the good old days from their younger years.

Duke: Yeah.

Clausen: We did drain the lake, it was drained. And a lot of the dirt, the old silt that had accumulated was moved out, in various ways, basically a bulldozer was hired to bulldoze the dirt out, piled up, and if anybody wanted to come and help themselves, and there were a lot of people that would—

Duke: Oh really? Well I bet it was good dirt, huh?

Clausen: Well, it's good dirt but surprisingly it doesn't grow things very well immediately as you bring it from the lake, because all the bacteria that support the – I guess is the problem, I'm no authority on this – but as I understood it the bacteria that help support the land-based plants—

Duke: Wasn't there.

Clausen: wasn't there because it's been underwater.

Duke: Yeah, there wouldn't be much oxygen down there. Oh, okay, okay, yeah.

Clausen: No, it was out of— Well, there were, there were some weeds, and of course there was always a certain amount of algae and that type of thing present.

Duke: Yeah. That's interesting.

Clausen: It just, it took a while for it to come around. I know some people were disappointed, went down there, thought they were going to get some real good dirt.

Duke: Yeah, I would have thought so too.

Clausen: For houseplants, and it didn't work out that way.

Duke: Yeah, yeah.

Clausen: But it was pretty well cleaned out in that respect, and then allowed to fill again, and was quite good for a number of years but then there were, development began upstream from the lake and of course probably was not, didn't have good erosion control systems in place at that time, and so a lot of it has filled back in.

Duke: Is there storm water in there? Is that where the water comes from that's there?

Clausen: Yeah, it's all supplied by storm water.

Duke: It's all supplied by, okay, because there's a dam there,

Clausen: Right. See, as I understand it, it was originally, the dam was originally constructed to hold water to provide soft water for the generation of steam heat for the downtown and central areas.

Duke: Really, really, really.

Clausen: Because there used to be steam tunnels, pipes running.

Duke: And there was a central heating plant.

Clausen: Right.

Duke: Where was that, do you know?

Clausen: Well, where the Iowa Southern, what was Iowa Southern, now Alliant Energy, building is at.

Duke: Okay, okay interesting.

Clausen: At least, that's my understanding.

Duke: Yeah I didn't know that. That's interesting.

Clausen: And of course the pumping facilities were down at the lake. Had a six inch main that they pumped the water up that plan through, in fact there's a portion of that main was incorporated into the water system years ago.

Duke: I'm sorry and did you say when, during what decade that steam heat was?

Clausen: I think it would've been going back into the '30s, '40s, earlier than that.

Duke: Okay, okay.

Clausen: I don't know just when it was changed over to the electrical. I think it used to go all the way up to the College.

Duke: Well I think the College has their own now.

Clausen: And the College has their own, did have their own back in '62, because that no longer existed.

Duke: Huh, interesting. What else?

Clausen: Yeah, no there are a lot of changes like that that have come about, the industrial park for instance.

Duke: Yeah, yeah.

Clausen: That really started, a packing company, Armor and Company,

Duke: Really?

Clausen: had purchased a, I don't know, 90 acres or thereabouts, extended from the Highway 146 to the railroad, and south from what we now call Ogan Avenue to what's called Pinder Avenue. It was Ogan Avenue at that time, and Pinder Avenue was a County road.

Duke: Yeah, yeah, right.

Clausen: Okay, they purchased that land and were going to develop a packing plant there. Well, for a variety of reasons it didn't happen. And the land just kind of laid there, I think they rented it out as farmland or something for a couple of years. And then the Farmhand Company

Duke: Okay.

Clausen: was showing an interest in coming to Grinnell, locating a plant in this area. And that looked like a prime piece of property to get for that purpose.

Duke: Sure.

Clausen: So it was purchased back from Armor and Company and turned into Greater Grinnell Development Incorporated.

Duke: That's separate from the City, right?

Clausen: Separate from the City. Actually it was set up, as I understand it, and this is something I was on the edge of, and probably there's other people that will talk about it or should be contacted and asked about it because it was a major thing with the City.

Duke: Like who, who would...?

Clausen: Well, I think out of the original bunch there's only one person left now, and that's Addison Jones.

Duke: Okay, I'll, yeah.

Clausen: I think Addison Jones, Al Eiseman, and Al Pinder—

Duke: They were the main—

Clausen: Were the three people that met with the Armor and Company and worked out the deal. And like I say I think it'd be good to visit with Addison about that.

Duke: Yeah, yeah, right, right, okay.

Clausen: And anyway, got it back, the City and the County cooperated on paving what's – known – I'm sorry, I said Pinder Avenue, it's Farmhand Road, I believe it's called. Then there's a Pinder Avenue, no, I think, it is Pinder Avenue.

Duke: Pinder Avenue, isn't that the one that goes all the way east and west? No, never mind, I don't know. I don't know the names of the streets down there. [pause] It doesn't matter. I know, we know what you're talking about. Those roads down there, right?

Clausen: Yep, haven't bothered to looking at the names for quite a while, having to deal with it. Anyway, they, Farmhand purchased, I think it was about the southern third of that plot, to develop their property, and then the rest remained with Greater Grinnell development, and was subsequently, I think the next development was what they called a Speck building, built with some kind of a grant from the electrical company, and a certain amount of other private funds in it, and that was originally then used by a company, uh, manufactured plastic pipe, water pipe type.

Duke: Okay, that's not—

Clausen: That's now Jeldwen, the window—and I don't remember for sure if the Speck building or if Golden Sun was the next one constructed out there, Golden Sun being on the extreme end there by the railroad, which is now a co-op owned facility.

Duke: I miss the Golden Sun color. Always knew when you were coming to town, you could see it down the interstate.

Clausen: Yep. You, you talked about gossip, this isn't really gossip, it's what are the things that I always thought was kind of amusing, when we were dealing with Golden Sun, there were really only a couple of people who knew for sure the name of the company that was being dealt with.

Duke: Oh, it was a secret?

Clausen: Big secret. And by origin they were located in the northwest corner of the state is where they started their business, Golden Sun. And that's originally where I come from, and my folks were living there and while this was going on, you know, a name hadn't been released yet. They came to town, visit for a few days, and they said 'we hear you're gonna get a Golden Sun plant here'.

Duke: [laughs] Your parents?

Clausen: Yeah, well they had a cousin, well, would be a nephew for them, that worked for Golden Sun.

Duke: And you didn't know?

Clausen: I did not know at that time.

Duke: Isn't that funny?

Clausen: I probably could've made a wild guess, who it would be, from that part of the country and knowing that they had a big operation there, and we knew it was some kind of a feed sort of thing.

Duke: Yeah, yeah, funny. Well, they forget it's a small state, you can't have a secret in one corner of the state that it doesn't—

Clausen: It doesn't last too long, no. But, you know, like I say, you know, there's lots of different things I'm sure that right now don't pop up in my mind.

Duke: Well, if they do pop up let's talk again, because this has been interesting, and we need to get all the stories. How long were you City Manager?

Clausen: I was City Manger 36 years.

Duke: So, into the 90s? No, into the 2000s!

Clausen: I retired in '02.

Duke: In '02. Okay, so you came in '62, you were City Manager in '66 'til '02. Okay. You know where all the skeletons are buried. We need to talk again.

Clausen: No I, uh, lots of things that kinda came and went that I think would be of interest, but some of it I would like to go back and go through some of the old records just to refresh my mind at least that it happened, like I mentioned earlier before we got started here about the taxi business.

Duke: Sure, okay, yeah, that's right.

Clausen: Grinnell had a privately owned taxi company for quite a number of years

Duke: Was this before you came?

Clausen: Before I came and during the first part of while I was here. The City did provide some subsidy to them. I don't remember how much or how it was set up, but there was a subsidy there. Well, the company that owned it or was the taxi company decided they couldn't make it anymore and they just basically went out of business one day. And there were a number of folks that did use it, mostly old folks that used it for some type of transportation. And in many cases they also delivered groceries, they could pick up groceries at the store and bring them to their house.

Duke: Sure.

Clausen: And so it was expected that the City would do something to reestablish the service. Well during the same timeframe, and I don't remember just exactly what was happening then. But, there was the churning around in Grinnell College, the Vietnam War and you know.

Duke: Oh yeah, sure.

Clausen: And a group of students had attended a couple of Council meetings and were planning on attending more, and I don't remember right now what their points were that they were trying to make. But anyway the taxi business, the City having to do something with a taxi came along, and totally washed that aside, the taxi became the big issue.

Duke: [laughs] To heck with the war, or whatever they had in mind.

Clausen: Whatever it was, like I say, I don't remember exactly what they were pushing for, but there—

Duke: What, you mean, there were people in town who were agitating for you to support something, or?

Clausen: There, there were students, yeah, as far as the taxi goes, there were people that wanted the city to provide, because there was no, at that point there was no other way of getting service. Now we've got the bus, PeopleRides.

Duke: PeopleRides, I've seen that around town too. So did you do something about it?

Clausen: Yeah, there were eventually, found some individuals who would operate a service.

Duke: Pick it up.

Clausen: And again, needed a subsidy, none of it lasted real long, it came and went because it just wasn't a big money maker, and so when Area 6 got into the business that they're now in, the PeopleRides, that pretty well took care of it.

Duke: I remember, at one point they had volunteer drivers, I can remember, I even did that for a little while. And that was like the Area Aging, Area Council on Aging or something?

Clausen: Could well be. There may well have been something like that involved with the taxi originally too, but I don't have a specific recollection of that. Another thing that happened in about that same timeframe was the funeral parlors provided ambulance service.

Duke: Oh really?

Clausen: That had been a long-standing thing, you know, they had their hearse, or, you know, their vehicles, of that type that—

Duke: They'd come pick people up in their hearse?

Clausen: Yeah and in some cases you know they had a regular, not an ambulance as we see them today, but a station wagon or something.

Duke: A big car.

Clausen: Some type that you could slide a person into on a gurney or whatever, maybe not a gurney, but a stretcher. And they would respond to emergency calls for,

Duke: In something other than a hearse, or would they pick people up in the hearse? I'm not getting a good feeling from that.

Clausen: I don't have a real good recollection what they used on that.

Duke: Okay, but they were in charge of the service anyway.

Clausen: They took care of the service, and they decided with that time we had two funeral homes, Smith and James Shalenski, and they decided that they would no longer provide the service, and they gave good warning, you know, this type of thing, notice that it was going to happen, and so again became the city's responsibility to provide that service. Don't know if it was or not, but that's the way it was viewed, and that's the way it was pursued. And we then ended up with a couple of, well Shelby Burkett was the last local person who—

Duke: Oh, yeah, was that associated with the fire department, or was it separate?

Clausen: It was separate. Again, they would get some calls through that department, because that was the emergency department. This was before 911 too.

Duke: right.

Clausen: You had to know the number to call. And so they, there was a fellow out of Oskaloosa, I believe it was, provided, I can no longer recall the name, provided the first ambulance service on a 24-hour basis, and the city agreed to subsidize the service at a certain level.

Duke: So was it just for Grinnell, or was it a county-wide thing?

Clausen: I'm not going to say for sure.

Duke: Okay, okay.

Clausen: I think actually, I don't know, I better not say because I'm a little unclear right now. But a, this individual ended up because of health reasons having to stop, and I think he had, I think Shelby may have been working with him some, and then Shelby came in as the operator and they had a regular ambulance, probably not as equipped as they are today, but it was an ambulance-looking ambulance.

Duke: And, like, one?

Clausen: Uh, I don't remember if he had one or a backup unit of some type, probably had a backup of some type, I'm not sure.

Duke: And he had some employees?

Clausen: He had employees at that time, the business was growing a bit, it was being used as more than just emergency response.

Duke: For transport?

Clausen: For transport to hospitals, this sort of thing. So from transport from the hospital here to someplace else.

Duke: Right.

Clausen: So I don't remember just exactly how it all came about, but I know the Council, or the County, the County was involved but we were together but separate or something or another. And then the proposition came up that somehow we join together, both put money into the pot, and they would serve not just Grinnell but the county area as well, I think, throughout the county.

Duke: Okay, but they didn't work for you, you just subsidized their service?

Clausen: We subsidized their service, they were a private—

Duke: But they weren't your employees?

Clausen: No. And I think that's still the way it's working today, although I think there's been some conversation about going to a city-operated service out of the new facilities.

Duke: The Public Service building, you mean?

Clausen: No, the fire, police.

Duke: Yeah.

Clausen: Because, yeah, the city did, there was a period of time when the funeral home said no we're not gonna do it anymore, and a private person was hired, that the city actually did run the business through the volunteer department, but that was relatively short-lived and was intended to be.

Duke: The fire, okay, okay. Well, when an ambulance is called, well I just noticed every service vehicle showing up, you know the fire, the ambulance, the police, everybody just shows up at once.

Clausen: And that is I think an agreement that is now in effect, and really has been for a long time, that a police officer, at least one officer tries to show up, along with some representative from the fire department probably with their emergency truck.

Duke: Yeah, okay. Yeah.

Clausen: The idea being that depending on what the emergency is, there may be more people needed than are just on the ambulance, and these people are on duty, they're not being necessarily, being called in.

Duke: And I suppose with the central dispatcher that he can notify everybody, you know, when a call comes in he can notify, everybody.

Clausen: Right, everybody gets notified, and that's the way it was when they were of course operating out of the Safety building or the police department.

Duke: Oh, there was still a central dispatcher.

Clausen: Right, the city, yeah, the city was the central dispatcher for fire, police and then the ambulance.

Duke: Okay. I get it.

Clausen: There may be some little quirks to some of this stuff that I'm not recalling right now, but generally speaking that is I think, the way it worked.

Duke: Well, could we get together in a month or so and talk about some of that stuff you might have thought of?

Clausen: Yeah, I think, I think that would be good. Say, probably, seems like there's been quite a bit of activity in our area here recently,

Duke: Your family, you mean?

Clausen: Well, family, and Helen's still, you know, in business, and so yeah, I would say at least a month or six weeks, something like that.

Duke: Yeah, I'll call you later.

Clausen: And I'll try to look through some of this stuff to refresh my memory on it, because there were a lot of different things to—

Duke: Well I now am over, I can't do the math, what is that, 36 years?

Clausen: Well you know, another item that we didn't mention that's just one of those things that happens is recycling.

Duke: Right.

Clausen: That was a new item.

Duke: You want to talk about that now or later?

Clausen: I think later. Let's, because that was done by what they called, Grinnell 2000 was very active, instrumental, in getting that going.

Duke: Yeah, I remember the first installation they had over on Commercial Street I think where you brought your stuff.

Clausen: Yeah, down on, somewhere down there on Washington Avenue.

Duke: Was it on Washington?

Clausen: It's kind of gone through different places.

Duke: Well I really appreciate you spending this time.

Clausen: yeah, you're very welcome.

Duke: It was interesting!

Clausen: Hopefully it will be of help!

Duke: I think—
