

Q. I went to Toronto, Canada, Chinese-speaking—so he taught me how to speak Cantonese. But I was there when they announced it. I remember it.

A. I went to Catholic grade school, and it was in the southwest corner of the temple square. It had been built out of temple stone. Once, when I was in third grade, we were playing ball out in the field north of the building—right about where the temple is now. The ground gave way. Boy, I went down into the ground of the basement, something—I don't know. The nuns were frantic—they thought we were in a well, but there was no water. It was big! We were probably in the basement of the temple. They had to get a ladder to get us out, then they covered it all up. But the ground just gave way, and down we went.

Q. How far did you fall?

A. I don't think it was too far, probably from here to there. Eight or nine feet, I suppose.

Q. It must have been pretty scary for you.

A. I don't think I was scared. I probably just read *Alice in Wonderland*—and I was Alive. [laughs]

Q. Well, we will take these books back and look at them. I'm sure Larry Dahl will be interested in them and appreciate seeing them. He's found that a lot of the anti-Mormon feelings that people have in the area, or just information that they have, had originated from some weekly newspaper articles back in the early 1900s that slandered the Church—and just passed along through generations.

A. And as it passed from one generation it was added to or change—just like a lot of history. I was also a history major in college, and I found out a lot of the stories about George Washington and Thomas Jefferson were not true. A lot of the politics back then are just as bad as they are now.

John McCarty

Nauvoo, Illinois

Birthday: December 2, 1959

Interview on November 24, 2001, in Outlaw Tee's Video Store and Print

Shop by Jayson Edwards

Q. [Jayson Edwards] What brought you to Nauvoo?

A. [John McCarty] I was born and raised here. My dad was born and raised here. My mother was from Niota—they met in high school, and settled here when they married. My Grandpa McCarty was from the Carthage area and moved here after marrying my grandmother, who was from the Carthage area as well. My mother's parents were from the Niota area. My grandfather William Jennings Bryan McCarty was in the military. After the military, most of his jobs were police related. He was a guard at some of the prison camps in the area and ended up being the city marshal in Nauvoo until he died from a heart attack in his sixties.

Q. Where were they originally from?

A. I couldn't tell you that. Beyond my grandfather, I don't know. I'm pretty sure they were in the Illinois area when he was a kid.

Q. So you are the second generation to live in Nauvoo?

A. Right.

Q. Tell me more about your grandfather.

A. Well, like I said he was the town marshal—I couldn't tell you the exact years on that. He was also the state fire marshal for a while. During the war he was the prison guard when they had POWs across the state.

Q. How about your mother's side?

A. He was the depot agent in Niota for the Santa Fe Railroad. That's all I know he ever did.

Q. How have you liked growing up in Nauvoo?

A. It's limited, but it was fun. Everybody knew everybody. You could ride from one end of town on your bicycle and back and not get tired. It was a small town, so you could enjoy every little piece of it. If Dad and Mom wanted me to go out and play, they didn't have to worry about me getting abducted or something happening to me. There was nobody here, and that's just how it was.

Q. Now as it has grown, how have you liked it?

A. It seriously hasn't changed that much since I was a kid, size-wise. New businesses come and go, but as far as the general town there is nothing that has changed. When I was a kid, we never did do much down on the flat because that was down the hill, and back up again on a bike—it was a long ways to go. The grade school was our domain, and we usually would play baseball there or different things. The town that I used as a kid is still the same. There's no big change there.

Q. What's the nicest thing you found about living in Nauvoo? What do you like about it?

A. It's that small-town feeling of knowing your neighbors. Well, I shouldn't say that—used to know your neighbors. Now they do come and go quite a bit. The safety net feeling—you don't have to worry about a lot happening. Everybody talks about the traffic, you know—it's minimal. You can complain about little things here and there, but it's still so simple here. Everything's just so laid-back.

The economy is not the greatest. It's not the best place to get rich. You can make a living and you can raise your kids, but that's about as far as it's going to go.

Q. Have you found that being able to get by is your biggest challenge in living here?

A. Right. The financial end of it is always a challenge here. We market ourselves out quite a ways. If we had to depend on business from Nauvoo, we'd never be doing what we are doing. Only 10 to 15 percent of my sales [T-shirt printing] are Nauvoo related.

Q. Where does the rest come from? Around the area?

A. Yes. We also do a lot of Internet sales too. We are coast to coast, with clients in Florida to California. The majority is within a two-hundred-mile radius. Years ago as we got started, we tried to capitalize on what's here, and it's grown. But still, only 15 percent are here.

Q. Do you expect the temple to bring in more sales from the area?

A. I would think so. I mean if everyone has shirts to sell in their business, one's going to step on the other one's toes—it's not going to really gain them anything. I would think it's got to increase. The sales have got to get better because of the amount of people coming in. For how long? Will it be just after the hype of the temple, and then just die back down? It will be just basically what we have now. I don't know—it's all speculation.

Q. As you have lived in Nauvoo, have you had opportunities to serve in civic groups or any other service-related organization?

A. I've been in business seventeen years, and for all but two years I have been on the chamber of commerce. During this time I was also involved with the first planning commission, which was appointed by the mayor.

I started doing a little complaining about the way things were done in town—that's when my dad said, "You ought to run for city council," so I did that. Of course nobody else was running, so I got elected easy enough.

Q. What were the things you complained about?

A. Lack of anything being done. It seemed like the town was just staying stagnant all the time. There was no possibility of growth, which nobody seemed to want anyway. Roads and sewer systems were just staying the way they were.

Just in general, the look of the town bothered me. Nobody was doing anything on the nuisance end of town; there was substantial debris and trash build-up. That's one thing I'm against. I wanted to get involved with it. When I got on the city council I asked to be on that committee—that was probably the dumbest thing I did. I found out right away that it is one of the most thankless jobs you could get. Everyone in town hated you if you sent them a letter in the mail telling them to clean their yard up—and then 90 percent of the time they wouldn't do it. You would have to go through the court process, which would take over a year—still nothing was getting done. It never seemed like anything was getting accomplished there either. This was all within my first year of being on the council.

Right after I got elected, it wasn't within a month later that they announced the building of the temple—and that's when I thought, there went four easy years. Sure enough, that was true. The temple was supposed to be started on the following year, but they came to us in September and started talking about possibly starting on it earlier.

Of course, when we first were told about it, a gentleman came to see us, and met with a bunch of business people and city officials over a luncheon at Blimpie. He made the comments that a small town like this is going to really have some problems with this big of a construction project, and of course the Church is willing to do an impact fee to help subsidize the problems in town. When I first heard that I had no idea what an impact fee was; I'd never heard of it before. I talked to a few others who said that it would help the town cope with what all's going to happen here—the town can't raise that kind of funds on their own. All of a sudden we were thinking we have a year to think this all out and do a little planning, and bam—they were right back in here in a couple months wanting to start on it.

So we started doing a little crash course on what we needed, but we weren't really sure because no one was giving us information. And they really weren't sure either. They had no idea what to expect. We would ask them, "Well, how many people would be here day-to-day, and for how many years?" We weren't getting good answers—we were getting guesstimates. And of course if the guess is low you're in trouble, and if the guess is way high you've way overdone it.

So what we did was sat down and started crashing some numbers around. When I said we, there was just two or three of us—Karen Ihrig, myself, and the mayor, Tom Wilson, who really wasn't extensively involved—he just listened to a few of the proposals we came up with. We also talked with Jerry Floyd, the chief of police, and Barry Cuthbert, the public works director. We wanted to get an idea from them about what to expect as well. Everyone was in the dark; they had no idea.

We finally sat down and started meeting with the officials from the Church. I don't know why this happened, but the first thing they did was throw a price at us of \$108,000, and said, "You know, we could give the city this much to get going." To me, at first I thought that sounded like a lot, but what do we have to do? What do we have to build to get ready for this? I started by going to the Internet and finding some other towns where temples were built—and I contacted city officials in pretty much all the ones that were built in the last four or five years. The first thing I would ask them is the size of their town and the size of the temple, because there are a lot of different sizes of temples that are being built. None of the towns really compared to the size of Nauvoo, so that put us in another dilemma. We didn't really know what to do now and to what scale this was going to be.

When I started to ask a few of them, especially this small one out in Utah—Park City, I think it was—they told us that they were pretty creative on their permit fees. There really was no way to get an impact fee on it, so they just had a twenty thousand dollar water hookup, a forty thousand dollar sewer hookup, and, you know, it came out to like two hundred thousand dollars in permit fees. I was in awe with that, because our water hookup and sewer hookup would have been probably fifteen hundred bucks [chuckles], and a building permit would have been about five hundred.

So I say, "Well, I think we are a little under the gun on this one." So we talked to some other towns and basically we found the same things. They said, "Well, we needed a road to go out there," so they put the road in, or the water and sewer lines—you know, it was big projects that were done. The difference with Nauvoo was that it was in town, and roads to it, and water to it, and sewer to it—so those things weren't going to be done. What we worried about was how many people were going to move here. Were we going to have water and sewer capabilities for that? Were we going to have streets that were adequate enough for the crowds that would be coming in and would they hold for the crowds? Those were the numbers we started kicking around.

The first thing I asked the Church officials, "You know, other towns you've given over two hundred thousand in permit fees"—and they just come right out and said. "Well, just double that!" I mean there was no discussion or nothing, it went from 108 to 216. And I went, "Wow, that was pretty simple [chuckles], there must be more to this."

Nauvoo is in a unique situation—in Illinois, towns under twenty-five thousand people cannot assess an impact fee. They legally can't do it. Really the Church had us if they wanted to—they could have just paid for a building permit and went on, but they wanted to work with us—which was good. In the middle of all this, we kept getting this pressure of, "We gotta get more money, we gotta get more money." Well, we couldn't ask for anything that was astronomical because we had no grounds for it.

It got down to the point of us getting rushed—it was in a matter of days to get all this done. I didn't know what the rest of the council was going to do, 'cause nobody else had even met. It was me and the mayor basically when it came down to the meetings, so I just made the comment to them, "What happens tonight if we turn you down?" (we already did it once to get more time). They said, "Well, we'll come back in the spring and start this process again—but you can guarantee you won't get anywhere close to that kind of money." At first, it made me mad if anything, 'cause I thought basically what they're coming down to is that there is a price on your town, and this is the price—you either do it tonight, or you don't get it.

The money wasn't the issue as much it was the attitude of "We're going to do it, and we don't care what happens to your town." That's the way I took it, and whether I took it wrong I don't know—but I got mad. [laughs] You know, I just thought, "We just sat down and did all this talking or days, I have a job to do, and I'm taking time away from it to go down and listen to this?" I talked to Karen and Jerry, and everyone that had been working on it, and said, "Okay, worst case scenario—just give me a figure." Because the whole time they kept telling us, "Just give them [the Church] a price." Well, we never did. They would come and give us a price, like the first 108, then they said "just double it" every time.

So I said, "They wanted a price from us—let's give 'em a price." Jerry figured out the police force and extra man, another car down the road for the next three years, and he figured his extra wages over and above for different things involved. They took in account for water hookups and sewer hookups, as well as the equipment we'd have to buy to do all these—just different things. We started throwing all these numbers together, and I threw in the fact that we needed a city planner to come in, because we don't have anybody here that is going to be able to tell us what job to do

first. We've got engineers, but that's not really their position to be planners.

We put together a package, with a city planner for two years factored in, and it came out to be \$560,000. That was the price, and I was like "Whoa, that was quite a bit more than what we were talking about." But I thought, "You know, they wanted a price, we'll give them a price"—and then now they have something to work with.

We went back and met with them, threw it on the table, and they looked at it. Their first comment was, "Hey, we're not Santa Claus—this isn't a Christmas list time."

I was like, "You wanted a list, we gave you a list. We gave you a price." I said, "You made us mad earlier by saying there's a price on our town."

He said, "Well, that's not what we meant."

Well, that's how it came out. That's the comments that were made; it's either do it tonight or else. I said, "You didn't give us time to do this. We're in the dark."

On the contract we also said that we wanted an open-ended contract—that within three years we can review it and see if we are okay or if there are areas that need help yet, and then again in five years, after it's built, and the crowds are starting to come in—so we have an idea of how we are sitting.

Another reason why I supported that idea was, what do you build in Nauvoo that would look right for that temple?—we need a lot of work. I would love to redo the streets, take all the telephone and light poles out downtown and replace it with nice street lighting, and get a really nice clean-lookin' town. You can't do that overnight, and you can't do that on the limited budget we got. You are looking at things that are going to be down the road to beautify the town—to equal what that's going to be. In one sense, you have to look at what that's going to bring to the town, and on the other sense, you have to look at the negative that's going to bring to town. How many people are going to come in here and tax the streets, tear up this, tear up that. We are fixing it constantly, at our cost. Those reasons are why we came up with some numbers.

We shot it to them—they came back and told us they'd have to think about it. They went across the street, and it wasn't a half an hour—they came back and said, "The Church will furnish the city planner, we'll get someone on a mission here for two years if that's all right. Take that price out of there (which we figured at \$70,000—and if you could get a city planner for \$70,000, you're not getting a very good one) so it comes to be \$490,000. They said, "This is the most the Church has ever paid to anybody."

It wasn't like a victory—we just thought, "Well, face the facts. We're a city of twelve hundred people, what are we going to do? Do you want us to keep raising the taxes year after year to keep repairing roads and putting in water and all those things?"

Hopefully it starts out where we use the money and use it right. We haven't used it all up yet, but we are getting close. There's only like ninety-some thousand dollars left in that account. We've done some streets. We remodeled city hall, which was the best thing we could have done—it looked like you was in Hicksville when you walked in there. It was pretty bad. There were extension cords hanging from the ceiling. It wasn't the prettiest of sites. That was the first project; we wanted to modernize and make it look as professional as we could. We got new computer systems, which we networked together, as well as built a small office for the city planner. We pretty much did everything you could do to make it look a little more professional and a lot more efficient.

Next we tackled the issue of roads and tour bus routes. People in town had been complaining about buses forever—and it was just getting worse as the years went on. The biggest problem with the tour buses is the Nauvoo Family Motel. It is built right next to a bunch of houses, and buses would run constantly—there was a lot of complaints. So to address that issue, we used quite a bit of the funding on the legal and engineering work of the roads. All of this work wasn't directly because of the temple, but we knew that the temple was going to bring more people in. The impact of the roads and people was a concern, so that's what we've spent most of our money on right now.

It didn't work out with the city planner. The Church brought Ken Millard in on a mission, and half the town was hesitant about that because they thought he was only going to do what the Church tells him to do. I think he caught wind of that, and at first there were some things he did do that left you a little uneasy about which direction we were going here.

But then it was almost like he reversed his role to have an "against the Church" type attitude. He inspected everything the Church did and he'd have complaints about it. so he'd make the Church redo some things. There were a lot of hard feelings being brought up. The problem with Ken. too. was his health—his situation was pretty bad. I knew that he had cancer and was in treatment for that, but he was working himself so hard and trying to get so much done in a short amount of time that I think it was just weighing on him too much. He neglected himself more than anything, and that got to him. His health got in the way, I believe; that was the biggest problem. So there were a lot of hard feelings between different groups, and nobody wanted to work together anymore.

Towards the end of his time here, Time magazine came to do a story on the river. He made a comment during an interview and was quoted as saying, ". . . the sinners in the draft house." That went over real well with the Church, of course, and was probably one of the nails in his coffin [chuckles] as far as getting him out of the way. The tavern of course capitalized on it—they held no grudge against him or anything. At first they were thinking, "Well, who's he thinkin' we're sinners," but then as it went on it become the town joke. They printed T-shirts up even—"I've sinned at the draft house"—and they've sold a ton of those things.

Q. So it helped you out a little bit.

A. Oh yeah, [chuckles] Every time something happens in town I sell a T-shirt because of it—which always helps. But they took advantage of the situation there, and it was like, "Oh my God." That shows the split of the town. The Alyan house will sell a shirt commemorating the exodus, and now they do one saying they've sinned at the draft house—just a little difference in taste, I guess.

Well anyway, it was the opinion of the city and the Church that it was just best to relocate him and get a private firm to finish out the project. We went ahead and got a city engineer from Poeping, Stone, and Bach. They took over and appointed one guy to work with the planning commission to try to get the zoning in effect. We had all these little projects going, and it worked a little better. But it was a lot more costly, of course.

Because the Church supplied a guy on a mission and all of a sudden it didn't work out, now they would have to pay for somebody. And they did pick up the cost of that to an extent, and that ran out pretty quick. We found out real quick what it was going to be like to plan for the future: it was going to cost a lot of money.

What we have a problem with is that the Church has never sat down and said, "This is what we hope to accomplish in five years, this is our ten-year plan, and this is what we want in twenty years." If we had some kind of an idea how far they want to build, how many more homes they want to put in and what other amenities they want to bring here, it would be helpful to us. I know their ideas are already there—this isn't an overnight building process that they do. These things are thought out way in advance, and might sit on the table for ten years. And then they bring them in, just like the temple.

I know that he [President Hinckley] announced that they were going to build it Easter Sunday, but they've been talking about building that thing for a lot of years. It wasn't just, you know [snaps his finger], on Easter Sunday that he says, "Hey, I think we're going to rebuild that." They've looked into it and seen what they'd have to do to rebuild it.

That's what bothers the city officials and the people of Nauvoo right now. Nobody knows what the Church wants and how far they want to go. Just like with the Academy. When they bought that, 90 percent of the people knew that they were going to bulldoze that down. They knew they didn't want that—especially the priory where the sisters were at. When the temple was announced, we really knew that it was going to go—the view of the river would be

blocked otherwise.

So the town has a rough idea judging by the way things have went since the seventies. You know how they've been building, but in our opinion, we'd like to know more. I don't know why it's such a problem to say, "These are our plans, whether we do them or not. But this is what we want to do." It's not going to hurt anybody's feelings; it's going to help.

Like the Brattle Street. They want to put a bypass road in—that's been on the books since the sixties and seventies too. The city is trying to get involved with it and they are not getting a lot of effort out of the state right now, which is bad. It's a five million dollar road. If we have to do matching funds on that, two and a half million dollars is what we'd have to come up with to put a bypass road in. That's probably why the city is dragging their feet: we don't have two and a half million, and we're not going to get two and a half million. For a while the Church was coming in, asking, "What's going on with the bypass; what's going on with the bypass?" The bypass is needed for two things: it keeps the trucks out of the main streets and also hopefully develops an area of growth on the edge of town.

I'd personally love to see it; I think it would be one of the best assets to Nauvoo. To have a bypass road on the edge of town would take all of the elevator and cheese factory trucks out of the main street area for safety issues. With all those people there and the trucks coming in, I'm surprised over the years somebody hasn't got hit, killed, or hurt really bad—there's just too many trucks for a little bitty town.

It would help an area for growth as well. We have no more area to grow as it is. If another motel or two come in, we couldn't put them in here. Right now they're putting one on the edge of town possibly, which is great because it stretches your town out and gives you another business district away from the crowd that's down there now. Then turn the downtown into more of a historical district, with the uptown shopping more "walker friendly," where pedestrians can walk anywhere without much worry. It's going to take a lot of time to develop it because we have some council members that really aren't too excited about pushing the issue. "If it happens, it happens"-type thing.

The only ones that want to get it done—that have a desire to do it—are the Church and the tourist-based businesses like the motels. The grain elevator and the cheese factory haven't shown a ton of support. They think it'll be great, but you're not seeing them jump in on it. It's sad to say, but they're hoping someone else takes care of the problem for them. They just sit back. Why should they invest the time and the money when someone else is gonna do it? Whether it gets done, I don't know; I hope it does. We just need some kind of drive to get it going.

The city is split right now. There's a handful of people that are against any kind of growth. Those are the ones you hear: the loudest ones. They're not really anti-Mormon as much as they don't want to change their way of life. It could be the largest Jewish group you've ever seen, and move into Nauvoo and take over and build some massive synagogue, and have two hundred thousand Jews coming in here, and that would bother them. It's just the impact of the people. It's not as much the Mormon Church as it is the change of life.

Some of us, like myself and people my age that have businesses or kids, want to see the growth. They want to see more people here to keep the schools up and get income coming into this town. I can see on the other hand, too, why people are the way they are. When you've lived here for sixty or seventy years, and now it takes you twenty minutes to go downtown where it used to take you five—I can see where that would be a problem.

People would complain about privacy all the time; people will be in the yards, walk in their house, or taking bricks or whatever because their great-great-great-great-uncle used to live there. That's been brought up at council meetings.

Q. You've seen that firsthand?

A. Yes. Right across the road here from the shop, there's a house on the corner with a little bronze plaque on it,

which means “stop here, look, take pictures, and check it out.” Tell you what, I’ve been here for eight years in this shop and I have never read that plaque, I don’t know what that says on that building over there [laughs], but everybody else in town stops there.

I caught some people going into the house one time, when a guy and his wife lived there. I yelled over and told them, “Hey, that’s a private residence, you can’t go in!”

“Well that’s okay, my great-great-great-great-uncle used to live here or whatever.” I’m like, “Sheez, that’s pretty bold!”

The guy also had a pet alligator inside his house, too, in a little swimming pool, which didn’t take them too long to find. They were in and out of that place real fast.

I’ve seen people go around the back and take bricks, walk around looking in windows. Just on this house here is the only time I’ve witnessed it, but that’s the only one I’m around. We get complaints on that all the time.

Lori, my secretary, her folks were gone on vacation one time and she went down to check on their house one day, and on the back of their house there is like a little brick garage with a deck built off of it. and there’s a family sitting there having a picnic on their deck. This [house] isn’t off the street or anything; it’s back in an alley in the middle of nowhere.

Lori is like. “Can I help you guys?”

“Oh, it’s such a beautiful day, so we thought we’d just have a picnic.” I couldn’t do that: I couldn’t go to St. Louis and stumble on someone’s house, walk on their deck, and set up and have a picnic. I’d have a problem with that.

Those are the little things, and again, it’s not the anti-Mormon, it’s the anti-privacy: I want my life, and I want my private life, and I want my peace and quiet. The buses are noisy. People don’t like that, so that’s what they complain about. It wasn’t a fact of who’s on that bus—it’s the bus!

Everyone says that there’s a lot of anti-Mormonism in Nauvoo—it’s not that as much as a change of life. That’s been the biggest thing to deal with in Nauvoo. I personally haven’t seen that change. I’ve lived here all my life; I’ve grown accustomed to it. The town is the same as when I was a kid, as far as the amenities. Nothing’s really changed, just the amount of people coming here. You can let it bother you, or you can just blow it off.

Q. Do you see it changing in the future?

A. I hope it changes. I would love to see Nauvoo be twenty-five hundred to three thousand people. It would make the town grow in the school system. Community pride—which would get more people involved in the town to get more projects done, especially in the park systems—that’s what I’d love to see.

But I don’t know if we’ll see that big of growth. The problem right now is that the growth we’re getting is elderly couples moving here, so there are no kids and there’s no involvement. I mean, the community involvement’s there, possibly, but we’re not seeing that base we need to get it built up to see a strong future here.

Q. Down on the flats there are mostly Mormon tourists. Do the Nauvoo residents have a place to call their own?

A. Not really. The flats never were. I mean when I was a kid they were nothing I ever went to anyway—it was

too far to go, and you had to ride your bike all the way up that hill when you were done. The city park was used minimal. The grade school was used more than anything; we'd play ball there all the time. The new park district out on the edge of town just has a softball and little league there—that's it, that's all it gets used for.

I think if there was more to it out there like walking paths, basketball courts, and more activities—there's tennis courts at the one, but they haven't been kept up—the townspeople would use it. It would pull them away from downtown and get them out there where they could utilize all the facilities for them. It would be off the beaten path, so the tourists are not going to find it easily too. The state park is basically tourist oriented in the summer months.

There really is no section of town that we can call our own. Of course, there are two taverns in town where people go and hang out. How long are they going to be there? With the population swing as it's going to be, it's probably close to seventy-thirty now. It's starting to slow, and when it gets fifty-fifty, those taverns aren't going to be in business. There's not going to be anybody in them.

Q. Overall, have the feelings changed at all within the city council since the planning and construction started?

A. I think it has. Yes, there was a lot of negativism at the start—a little apprehension on what to expect. Now that we're seeing how it's done and seeing the ways things are looking closer to completion, and especially the housing too, things are better. It's being done right—they are not going cheap on anything. They're not trying to get the city to do more than they have to do. They've done more for us than they said they would: they've fixed roads, done sidewalks, drainage systems, all this stuff they've worked on and done.

It's inevitable that the temple is going to be here. We had to accept that and go on. We couldn't stop it. We could not stop it no matter what. People will still say today, "Why did you let them build that temple?" Well, they own the property, and if they have a building permit, and as long as that building's structurally safe, which we had to prove, but I think that after two-hundred and fifty million tons of concrete in there—I'd say it's a safe enough building, [laughs]

Those are the comments we keep hearing: "You let them build that; you shouldn't let them build that." I don't know how you're supposed to stop that, you know. Once that was accepted and it's being built and it's getting built and it's almost done—the closer it gets I think everybody's realizing "It's here. Let's go with it and make it work."

I see a little more positive attitude with new council. I'd personally love to see one or two Mormons on there—that would straighten the thing out a little bit.

Q. How did you feel the first time when the boys from the Church paid the council a visit to talk about the temple? What was their reaction, and what was your reaction?

A. There were four or five suits [Church officials] with the mayor and myself at the one meeting. I was in my painter's pants and a T-shirt, and the mayor's over there in his fanner duds with a little cup spittin' his tobacco in it, and I'm like, "Boy, if this isn't Beverly Hillbillies time right here, man."

Oh, it was pretty sad; these guys were just sitting there trying to be as professional as possible, and they're probably thinking the whole time, What are we doing here?

Ron Price, who I think is the project director (I call him the Head Honcho, who's been probably the easiest to work with and the most accommodating), he will also tell you the truth up front too: if the city is asking about something, or someone brings up a comment like, "Well, they need to do that," he'll go, "Well, why do they feci we

have to do it, haven't we done enough?" He'll come out and be honest with you, and yet he'll listen to you too—we couldn't ask for a better person to work with. He's helped make this a really smooth transition. I'm glad he was here. I just wish he'd stay.

That's the problem: you get some of the missionaries that come on to work on the town or work on the temple, and, my God, you want them to stay. Those are the people you want in your town—but they are going to move on, and you're right back to where you were before.

Q. So do you see the “same old, same old” in the future for the downtown area?

A. I can't see a major change. Physically. I can't see what you can do downtown. With 75 percent of the main street owned by Danny Kraus (who doesn't belong to the Church, and he's not going to sell out, as far as I can see), how do you change the downtown business area? You don't.

The only thing that I see will change, which I hope does (basically because I have a business up here), is that the growth from downtown will spread this way [east]. Maybe build a nice minimart gas station, another motel or two, a nice restaurant—something to span this town out. Someone was talking about a little strip mall. I don't know how many stores you could support in this town, though.

There needs to be a lot of research put in regarding what's in your [Church's] temple towns. What businesses are in there? I'm sure there are just little gift shops like we have here now, but we could find out what other areas we need to hit.

Q. When you mentioned earlier that you did research by calling the cities and asking for information about the temple and its impact, did you ever go and see one?

A. Yeah, what I did is when my nephew and I decided to start the video store, we located a video shop out in Nicholville, New York. We took off with a truck and trailer and bought all the contents of that shop. When we got done loading it, we dropped down to Burlington, Vermont, and spent a day down there visiting a friend of my nephew's.

When we drove back, I told him we were going right by Palmyra. I said, “Why don't we just kick off there and go check it out.” Well, we're flying down the road, and of course it starts snowing; it was the middle of winter and the wrong time to be out in New York. We decided to drive to Palmyra anyway; it was just a little bit off the freeway. As we went in we thought we surely would see the temple—it was going to stand out in the middle of the night when we were going in there. We drive right by it, never seeing it. We saw the monuments on that hill where they do the play but got all the way into town and never saw it. We drove and drove around town and we still didn't see it anywhere.

Well, near the Book of Mormon printing press there, across the street is the local tavern. I thought, “Hey, what better place to go to get true information, right?” [chuckles] So we go rolling in there and sit down and say, “Hey, we're trying to find the temple.” They all looked at us real funny.

“You're trying to find the temple, and you're in here. Okay, what's going on?” We told them the story: that we live in Nauvoo and they are building a temple and we just want to check yours out. Then we asked if anybody there had worked on the Palmyra temple or knew anything about it. Oh, we were just filled with information then. The comment that struck us the funniest the whole time, and again, there was never a negative Mormon comment, it was more of, “They are so picky! If you are going to build anything for them, you'd better be good at it! If they want them brads every 1/16 of an inch, you'd better have them on every 1/16 of an inch.” They were going off on how they moved it a

couple times to get just right so when the sun hit it and everything—”They’re just too picky!”

I’m like, “What’s wrong with that,” and yet we sensed the whole time that they did everything right, and they did everything right for the town. We didn’t hear anything where they [the Church] said, “Build your own road, or do this”—nothing like that was ever said.

I felt better when I left there, knowing that. It didn’t cause any animosity in the town; if anything it brought a lot of income in, and a lot of people worked on it and made money. It was a good thing that way. I was enjoyable to do that. As we were leaving, they told us where it was at.

As we were driving out, here’s this beautiful thing up on the hill all lit up, and I thought, “How did we miss this thing?” [laughs] Of course we drove up around there, and it was just a little overwhelming to see something like that, so clean and neat and well lit. Right then I knew and never had a doubt about the whole thing. To see one done in another town, and the way they did it, I knew that this one would be a welcome addition.

My father has lived here all his life. He is what I would call one of your moderate anti-Mormons. His problem with Mormons was that [imitates his father’s voice] “Those dang missionaries coming down to my house again wanting me to . . . [laughs] You’d hear that all the time from him.

I just told him, “Tell them to go.”

He’d say, “I just told them the other day, and, by God, I told ‘em good too—they won’t be back.”

And then there was the way the missionaries drive—they’d park on any side of the road they want, or they pull right to the front of the grocery store and park right up in front of the door—blocking traffic. [Imitates his father’s voice] “By God, Idaho and Utah—they must not have driver’s education, because they don’t know how to drive.” Those are the comments he’d always make.

Well, here about six months ago, he goes, “Boy, that temple’s going to be beautiful.”

I looked at him and said, “What?”

He goes, “Oh, I go down there every day. I drive around that block everyday, and I even get out sometimes and stand there and watch them for a while.”

“You do what?” [laughs]

“Oh, I go down there every day, and I think it’s gonna be the neatest thing in this town. I’ll tell you what, that’s just a beautiful building.”

I said, “It’s just going to bring in more of those people who don’t know how to drive.”

“Well, you got to put up with that. You know, I’m getting’ old, and I don’t know how to drive that good, either.”

Right then I thought that this was kind of a surprise! [laughs] Hopefully the mind-set of most people gets that way, and they see it as nothing but a plus to the town. It’s going to take a lot of adjusting—especially that first month when they do the open house and the dedication.

Q. What are the worries that are involved with the open house, besides the obvious ones?

A. Just taxing the physical property of the town. The town is the busiest during the *City of Joseph* pageant. It’s going to be like that everyday for thirty-five days—or how many days it ends up.

It's good for the economy, but if you're not in this town making money or have access to the amenities you want—like right next door—you're going to have a problem. If you got to drive downtown every night and get groceries or do anything, you're going to hate it here. It's just going to be a mess. I know, because during the pageant I don't even go downtown. I don't even try to. I hate that time of year, so I don't even fool with it. That's a month I'm gonna have to sit here and not do anything.

Q. You've got plenty of videos to watch though, so . . .

A. Well, that's true—I'll just stock up on that, [chuckles] No, the old wheels are turning; I got to come up with something to make some money. I can't sell shirts, per se, myself. I could if I wanted to be the biggest dope in town. All my costumers that I deal with are here. I just walk all over them and say, "Hey, I'm selling my own shirts, you guys do whatever."

I know that they are going to buy a lot of shirts from us. I hope to generate some business for us, as well as them. But I'm thinking of other ways, and trying to get something little going for a month to make some money. You know. I've got five kids, and Nauvoo's not loaded with money. If I can make a chunk of money in thirty-some days, I'm going to try it. Who knows? I might be shooting myself in the foot too.

There are five to ten other people in town that are thinking the same way. As long as they do it in good taste, I think it will be great. We just don't need a bunch of tents set up—streets hawkers and that carnival attitude. There are church groups that come in with their food stands, which is fine—there's not enough restaurants and things like that. But just getting people organized to do it—I don't know if it will happen.

Q. Well, I think we hit it on the head this time, except for the kids talking about burning the temple.

A. Oh, the comments, yeah. You still hear that, and it shows their mentality. They say, "We'll burn it down." First of all, you won't get close to the building. Second of all, there isn't probably ten things in there that will burn, so good luck. You're a genius if you could—I don't even think C-4 would bring this thing down. That thing's built, and built well! To hear those comments hurts. I'm the first one who jumps right back on 'em by saying, "What did they do to you?"

I wait for that one comment that's going to be truthful and meaningful to me—I've never heard one back yet. You know like, "Well, they came to my house and told me I'm a sinner, or, they told me my religion's wrong"—I've never heard anything like that.

"Well, what have they done to you?"

[In a sneering voice] "Well, there's just so many of them in town—they're takin' over."

I'm like, "Takin' over what? Can't you go to the grocery store? Can't you go to the park? Can't you get gas? What have they done, what have they taken away from you?" I try to get these kids to open up and tell me what's wrong. And it's just, "I want to be cool; I want to hang with my buddies and be Mr. Cool and say, T can't stand the Mormons." They'll turn right around and hang out with four of five Mormon boys and girls and go out and do stuff. They'll get with their other friends and make the comment, "Oh, those dang Mormons."

It hurts to a point when you got to put up with that; and it hurts even more when you try to talk to these kids, and say, “Why?” You can’t get an answer. A lot of it is coming from home—daddy and mommy. Just like I told you before, the silent majority in this town needs to get louder. The ones who don’t have this animosity need to stand up to the others and just tell them to shut up and live your life—get over it.

So again, it’s not as much anti-Mormon—it’s just the crowd. They just don’t like the change of life. If we could just flip that around.

Q. Well, if it worked with your dad . . .

A. [Laughs] Yeah, he was a lost cause. I never figured he was gonna change. He’d come out of it though.

Paul J. McKoon

Nauvoo, Illinois

Birthday: June 28, 1954

Interview on November 29, 2001, in his home by Andrew Wahlstrom

Debbie Ludwig also present

Q. [Andrew Wahlstrom] When were you born, Paul?

A. [Paul McKoon] June 28. 1954.

Q. How long have you lived here?

A. I have lived in this house for ten years. I have lived in the area all my Life, within a twelve-mile radius.

Q. Where did your ancestors come from?

A. James Gifford came from Pennsylvania. He was a riverboat captain; he worked on steamboats. In his later years he bought what was called Mormon Springs, which is on the river halfway between Nauvoo and Fort Madison. It was an exceptionally good spring, so that was a good stop for people. He had an orchard there. He lived to be about ninety years old.

Many people interviewed him in his later years because he knew Brigham Young and Joseph Smith and had a