

Leonard Swoverland

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Tulsa Historical Society

Leonard Swoverland

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Recording of Interview with : Mr. Leonard Swoverland

Identification of Interviewee Swoverland

Subject(s) of discussion, Mainly Tulsa and Community Chest work.

Name of Interviewer

Date and place of interview

Brief synopsis of interview

Catalog file no. LL 334

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MEASURE	SUBJECT MATTER	DRAMATIC QUOTES (Key by Number)
019	Numerous appeals brought action to organize Community Chest in one single appeal.	
033	12 or 13 agencies; \$238,000 and "Went Over" \$8000. Exceeded \$2,300,000 in 1971 and employed 4,000 people to help.	<i>Comm Chest</i>
058	Served as executive for Tulsa Com. Chest for 20 yrs.	
068	Leaders named are prominent citizens: John Rogers, Lawyer, Otis McClinick; W.G. Skelley, Richard K. Lane, W.K. Warren, Clarence Wright, R.W. McDowell, R. Hunt, M. Millard, etc.	
117	"Rugged individualists" all of them.	
145	Story of Dick Lane and first contract.	
184	Campaigns and how organized , 4-6 units.	
200	These volunteer citizens are motivated by needs of others and pride in their city.	
271	Ed Moyer, former executive of Tulsa Community Chest. Mr. Swoverland invited to come see Tulsa.	
315	Invited to Miami, Fla. but refused for Tulsa.	
333	The ward of a Tulsan is good-always. Different "down inside."	
389	Men who led these campaigns	
412	Hospitals in Tulsa and Oklahoma City campaigns.	<i>Hospitals</i>
442	40 agencies in all, but Tulsa Recreation Center.-for 700 handicapped persons is imp. He volunteered as driver to pick up handicapped .	
501	Church work also. Blind persons and camp. Individuals who receive help.	

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591	As retired person, great satisfaction in volunteer work.	
604	Helpers and personal secretary very brilliant.	
656	Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Carr- 20 yrs. service	
	Indian girl stenographer.	
702	Mr. Cotner followed him as Executive Director of Chest.	
793	"Depression " caused by Gov. 'layoffs' of their projects and contracts. Effects the chest pledges.	
841	Year's program given.	
940	How he became interested in Chest Drives.	
027	Volunteer work led to this profession (no sign off) Is there more on another tape?	

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356	Executive Director of Tulsa Community Chest 1947-1967. After retirement served 2 years as consultant with the Chest.	
365	1923 - Chamber of Commerce of Tulsa had many business and professional leaders making complaints to them that something must be done to bring order of the chaos of the numerous solicitations in the name of charity. There was little assurance at that time that the solicitors were necessary and little known about any budget process and whether the goals were proper or not was not known or made public. So this strong feeling that existed resulted in the Tulsa Chamber of Commerce, headed by J. Byrd Gibbons, a leader in the advertising field, to be appointed to a committee to study the problem. This resulted in recommending that a community chest be organized.	
386	In 1924 the Tulsa community chest was organized and drew on top leadership of the community. Then and over the years since. D. W. Moffett, the vice president of Mid-Continent Petroleum Corporation, was elected as the first president of the Community Chest. Campaign chairman was the well known Ralph Talbut, theatre owner. The goal then for 12-13 agencies for one year operation was \$238,895. A credit to the leadership back then in 1924 that they could exceed the goal by more than \$8000. The number of volunteers in that drive according to the little records we could discover show about 2-300 people working and 8-9000 contributors. The last Community Chest goal, Tulsa's United Drive in 1971, goal was \$2,300,000, exceeded by \$48,000, the number of workers was around 4000, the number of subscribers in fall of 1971 was 78,000 Tulsans.	
424	My great pleasure has been to work with the top leaders of this community over these 20 years. Heads of oil companies, banks, many other businesses and professions have served Tulsa Community Chest as they have a number of other institutions and civic groups.	
431	I think it might be of interest to name a few of these leaders, truly the pioneers and rugged individualists of this great southwest. A number of them are known nationwide, statewide, and prominent citizens of this great and beautiful city of Tulsa. JOHN ROGERS, lawyer and leader in many fields on integration and all civic projects, former president of the Community Chest and campaign chairman, former president of the Chamber of Commerce and leader in all fields of endeavor in his profession as well as the civic improvements, truly one of Tulsa's outstanding citizens. R. OTIS McCLINTOCK - board chairman of First National Bank for many years, now chairman emeritis, served back in 1937-1938.	

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The late JOHN E. MABEE - Mabee Foundation, given many millions of dollars to benefit this community. My pleasure to work with him as well as,

the late W. G. SKELLY, who had his own oil company.

RICHARD K. LANE, known to people as Dick Lane, president of Public Service of Oklahoma, was both president, then campaign chairman when I first came to Tulsa in 1947.

462 In 1947, MR. W. K. WARREN, whose family is the donor of St. Francis Hospital, a \$30 million institution, was president.

CLARENCE WRIGHT, board chairman of Sunray Oil Co., and R. W. McDOWELL, president of Sunray DX Oil, RUSSELL HUNT, one of the top officials of First National Bank, and MARVIN MILLARD, of First National Bank of Tulsa, board chairman.

478 On the north side of Tulsa, the late BEN HILL headed the entire northside solicitation and another year, HENRY C. WHITLOW, a very prominent educator, still with the Tulsa Public School system, was chairman of the northside solicitation, as well as ED GOODWIN, publisher of the Oklahoma Eagle, another year.

To the southwest, the phrase rugged individualist has a special meaning. All these men fit that mold.

506 When I got in town, a day or so later I contacted Mr. Lane and told him I was now in town and would like to see him at his convenience. He said well I'm very busy now, in a couple of days I'll have a little time for you. That finished that conversation. (The city I'd come from in northern Indiana was much smaller than Tulsa, but I'd been in the same line of work as the executive director of that Community Chest and also the Council of Social Agencies and I was used to having people respond rather quickly when I made an appeal because I never bothered the people unless I had something of importance) I waited a number of days and Mr. Lane didn't return my call, so I put in another call to him and he is one of the most efficient operators I've ever seen. He said, Now Leonard, I told you I'm an especially busy man right now and when I get the first opportunity I'm going to call you. Well, I read the writing on the wall so I didn't bother him anymore, and a few days later he did call me and two days after that he had the entire leadership lined up. I just couldn't believe that because usually that stretches out over a period of several weeks to say the least. I learned something from him - that I kind of needed to stay out of his road - and others needed guiding because some of the leaders are just so busy with their own business and many had business

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outside of the United States, where they spent considerable time. No two people were exactly alike.

548 R. Otis McClintock, head of First National Bank of Tulsa, his son is in the oil business, "MACK" - FRANK G. McCLINTOCK, became interested in the bank and has since succeeded his father, R. Otis McClintock, as president and currently as board chairman of First National. R. Otis was campaign chairman of the chest back in 1940 and his son "Mack" became campaign chairman in 1958.

569 VIRGIL S. TILLY, SR., partner in an accounting business, was budget chairman of the Community Chest in 1947. Two years later, Tilly Sr. became campaign chairman and the following year, president of the Community Chest. His son, VIRGIL S. TILLY, JR., followed also in his father's footsteps and served as budget chairman, campaign chairman, in 1967; and president in 1968,

586 I recall one campaign chairman who remarked many times in the year he was campaign chairman before many groups, large and small, he said "some of you may wonder what I'm getting out of this" of course, everyone knows none of these people get paid salaries, just the small office staff gets paid (this year the staff only numbers 12 year round). There has to be something in this that attracts these volunteers, these busy business and professional people and not only men. I've been naming men here (see 618).

609 Women have headed the suburban drives which we've had as many as 2000 workers, where the residential solicitation is done house to house, time consuming and wears out a lot of shoe leather.

618 To get back to your question, this one volunteer chairman said 'I think my business and what we got out of it and out of this community, that I owe something to the community and about the least I can do is to pay a little out for the space that I occupy and that rent is my time thinking of other people and helping underprivileged and less fortunate and the boys and girls with character building.' The Salvation Army is one of the 46 agencies, and the American Red Cross, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Camp Fire Girls, YMCA, YWCA, and various other agencies; serving various sections of the community, clinics, and so on. The cancer clinic at St. Johns has been included for many years, the Heart Association, etc.

These men and women spend their valuable time & give sizeable contributions and wear and tear on their shoes and cars. It is the inner feeling. We talk about them being rugged individualists, as tough as they seem, they have a good heart. There is something

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in the human heart when you reach a certain place, and I've mentioned the heads of the oil companies and big banks, little banks, and so on, they want to share.

I don't know how the people of Tulsa would define the term rugged individualist. I'm a Hoosier from Indiana. I didn't seek this job when the executive director, Ed Moyer, of the Tulsa Community Chest, left this job to go to Kansas City, Missouri to head the Community Chest. He called me one day and told me to put in my application down here. I said Ed, I'm satisfied where I am, we own our home here, we started some new agencies up here (one was Urban League, another a nursing service with registered nurses called Visiting Nurses). We have a church connection and all. He said, well you can get a free trip down here. We'll pay your expenses. Why don't you look over the city and let them look you over. So my wife and I drove down and we were greatly surprised to see Tulsa as the clean city it was, the tall shiny buildings. We didn't have anything in the northern part of Indiana where we lived that compared to the beauty of Tulsa. They made an offer after they looked me over and we looked the city over, and I agreed to come after talking with my wife.

My wife started crying as I called back to Indiana and told them to start looking for a new director. I thought it was too bad she would have to start making all new friends and we'd have to start from scratch on that basis. I hadn't been here only about a year and I was contacted to see if I'd be interested in the position at Miami, Florida. It was a good salary offer and all. I said to my wife, it being only one year after we'd come here, now I've got a contract. We couldn't leave immediately. I'd have to give proper notice because professionals require 3 years service nationwide or you are considered to be out of line. Well, when I told her that, she broke down and cried again and didn't want to leave. She was in love with the city. So to show how much we love it now (laugh) we bought some crypts at a mausoleum so it looks like we plan to stay here for the rest of our natural life and even beyond (laugh).

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Well I went all around Robinson's barn for a definition of rugged individualism. These men were pretty tough to me. I was the old country boy who came from a big family of 9 children. We were poor and still are today (laugh). Down here when these fellas said something they meant it and you could depend on their word. They put much money, hundreds of thousands, sometimes millions, as I mentioned about the Warren family putting in \$30 million, I looked at some monuments in the way of buildings around town and the number of well-to-do people who were letting go of their money and putting up something for somebody else. The Mabree Foundation for example. Someone gave \$500,000 for the Red Shield Club of the Salvation Army. One man giving \$500,000 that struck me in my heart. I've never seen anything like it. I say rugged individualists. Many were poor when they came here.

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| 735 | <p>I've heard the late Maurice Sanditen of Oklahoma Tire and Supply Co. say when he landed in New York City off of the boat from the old country he had \$5.00 in his pocket. Well he became a millionaire and died just recently here. He worked in the Community Chest, was a liberal contributor.</p> <p>Of course, that story could be told over and over dozens of times. They look like other people but under their shirt there is something down inside that causes them to react differently than many people. Many cities have wealthy people but there is something here about Tulsa that has always struck me as being most unusual.</p> | |
| 759 | <p>Maurice Sanditen and his brothers were examples of this. Maurice, when on the budget committee, would come down, sit with 60 other people, spend several hours a day, and the budgeting runs for 4 or 5 weeks, and they meet 3 or 4 times a week. That's a lot of time to be leaving your business.</p> | |
| 777 | <p>Dick Lane was general chairman of the campaign for remodeling of St. Johns Hospital a number of years back. They set out to raise a few million dollars to put on the west wing and to air condition the hospital. Mr. Lane asked me to set up the campaign outline and organize the mechanical aspects, all of the pledge cards and prospects, etc. Raised \$2,000,000.</p> | |
| 798 | <p>Mr. Lane was also asked to go to Oklahoma City and manage a hospital drive there which he did, all of this for free. You spend weeks, maybe months. This was also a Catholic hospital in Oklahoma City and he was a non-Catholic, prominent member of the First Presbyterian Church of Tulsa. The Roman Catholic Bishop of Oklahoma thought that was so unusual. Both drives were successful.</p> | |
| 812 | <p>I assisted Tulsa University in managing their drive without any remuneration. They mailed me a check when campaign was over. I returned it and thanked them. We raised in excess of one million, first time in their history.</p> | |
| 837 | <p>To pick out one agency as especially touching my heart out of all I've seen over the years would be like a mother with 12 children trying to choose one and neglecting the other 11. However, I can say this, the one that appealed to me greatly was Tulsa Recreation Center for the Physically Limited at 800 South Utica. They serve 700 handicapped people at no charge. Members do contribute \$2.00 a year as a membership but if they don't have their \$2.00, they are still served.</p> | |

I've watched that agency over the years and I did make an approach to the agency executive, Mrs. Eileen Murdoch, and I told her if she could use another volunteer I'd be happy to do so. A little later, I received a letter that I had been elected to the board of directors. I made fast time getting over there to tell her I appreciated the

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offer and the honor very much and I told her I had had all these inside, sitting down jobs and now I wanted where the action was. She said how would you like to be a driver to go out and pick up some of these handicapped people to bring them to the center. They'll spend the day here and you come over about 3:00 PM and pick them up and take them back home. I started that two years ago shortly after I retired from the Community Chest and I have that volunteer job today. It pays the greatest satisfaction outside of church work that I know of. I've taught Sunday school for over 25 years, served two terms as chairman of the board at United Methodist Church also.

I pick people up two days a week and they aren't always the same people. Among the people I pick up and take home are three totally blind people, one lady is 92 plus. Very sweet. I've visited her in the hospital and had prayer with her. Her daughter is also a member of the rec center. She is a heart patient. The 92 year old bowls. Her daughter doesn't, but one time the daughter had a heart attack at the bowling alley and was in the hospital quite some time. I visited and prayed with her. Some of these people are closer than my own blood relatives to me.

928 Another blind person I pick up at Methodist Manor. She bowls every week. They also do choral work, ceramics, go to camp at Fort Gibson Lake.

I also pick up a soon to be 92 year old man. He has a brilliant mind, recites poetry, entertains people who come out.

I pick up a 20 year old deaf woman, a 60 year old blind man who told me he used to have over one quarter million dollars and now he can hardly get by. He was shot in the eyes and stomach, had several operations and his stomach is held together by bands. He lives in a room with a parakeet. He loves to work with leathergoods at the center.

985 Square dancing is fun. Even the people in wheelchairs participate with an able bodied person pushing them and they do all the intricate patterns.

1005 Mrs. Bess Jones, with the Chest 2 years when I came in 1947, is still employed as associate executive director of the Community Chest. She was clerical, my personal secretary when I came. I hadn't been here but a few days when I realized she was too valuable to stay in that position so I took it up with the executive committee and board and had her made officially the assistant executive director. After I got here she earned her masters degree at Tulsa University at night classes, also secretary of the oil division.

1051 Another employee, there one year less than Mrs. Jones, is Mrs. Maureen Hall.

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1118	My successor, Howard Cotner, executive director of the Community Chest at Fargo, North Dakota about 8 years ago. Our chest was growing to the place we needed an additional assistant to me and so one to succeed me on my retirement so the board appointed a committee to interview some applicants and he was chosen. He graduated from Ohio State University School of Social Work with a masters degree. This is one of the few schools in the U.S. that features a course in fundraising. He's doing better than I did and they meet their goal every year.	
1185	Each year sometimes the goal was raised \$100,000 or more. Depression Years of 1929 weren't the only bad years. Years when, for one example, the aerospace industry had suffered layoffs. You couldn't ask unemployed people to give what they didn't have.	
1257	You finish 1 campaign at the end of October and the campaign proper starts the latter part of September with big gifts and special solicitation gifts and general solicitation during the month of October each year but as soon as you finish that campaign you start planning for the next one. You have to get pledge cards prepared, addresses checked, which is a voluminous project. Billing statements done every month for collections. Another big job is budgeting because records in detail, certified CPA audits of each agency, with program described, every employee listed, any proposed changes, etc., are required.	
1348	I served for many years in a trust company making mortgage loans and writing insurance. There was a state senator of Indiana, a man who was a district governor of the Rotary Club. I knew him very well and his son even better. This was in Gary, Indiana, an industrial city, where I came from (on Lake Michigan, the U.S. Steel Corp. plant had in excess of 20,000 people when I was there with 3 or 4 subsidiaries there). This senator stopped me on the street one day and said Leonard, our chest executive is doing to be leaving for a larger city and I'd like to see you put in an application to succeed him. I kind of laughed and said I'm not trained in that field and he said, you've been working closely there and I said, yes, as a volunteer for the past five years. On the budget committee. I've served 4 years as chairman of the budget committee. I thanked him, mentioned it to several others, and ended up submitting an application.	

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