Mr. Jerry Schweighart.

I’ve been here all of my life, I was born here.

All my family, my roots are all with us, all my relatives were here and then I like Champaign, had no reason to move out of here. All my job opportunities have been in this area so there was nothing to draw me away.

Probably the memory that will stay with me the most is when I was on the police department, I worked in the detective division and the juvenile division, and so, I worked a lot with the high school people and I was also the softball coach of a girls’ softball team. A member of that team was a young lady by the name of Bonnie Blair, who went on to be a 5-Gold Medal Olympian speed skating champion.

Bonnie was wanting to move ahead in her skating, but she lacked the financial aid. My daughter told her, “You know, you ought to contact my dad.” And she did, and we sat down at a local coffee shop one day and she gave me a list of what her expenses would be and how much money she would need, and I said, “How long do we have to raise that kind of money? When do you have to go into the international competition?” And she said, “In 1 month.” And I said, “Well, you can’t worry about training on an international level and worrying about money. You go skate and tell me when you need the money, and I’ll have it there.” And so, I went to our police department, our benevolent association, and we more or less adopted Bonnie.

She proved to us that she was the best in the world, and she ended up winning five gold plus some other assorted medals. And I’m still friends with Bonnie to this day, so it’s something that’s just carried on for years, a lot longer than we thought.

As I got close to retirement on the Police Department I decided there was two things that I wanted to do: I either wanted to run for Sheriff of the Champaign County, or for the Mayor for the City of Champaign. My first opportunity was to run for sheriff. I gained a tremendous amount of experience out of that, so I decided my next venture would be to run for Mayor for the City of Champaign. And to do that, I figured I needed some expertise, and so I decided to run for Council first. And I served on the Council for 6 years before I decvided to run for Mayor, so when I finish up this term which will be in the 1st of May, I will have served 12 years; Mayor of Champaign.

This is a city where you have a quality of life unlike others.

And the University, it’s the catalyst that holds the city together.

I hope we continue the growth; you want the growth but you don’t want to get too big cause you don’t want to lose what we’ve got in quality of life.

Mattis Avenue when I was a youngster wasn’t even paved, and now we go clear out to Rising Road. In fact, when I was a late teen, I worked on putting the intersection in at First and Florida. That didn’t use to be a paved road.

Well it’s small enough that it’s a friendly place to be, you know most everybody around, but yet it’s close enough in proximity to say Indianapolis, Chicago, St. Louis if you want to get away for a weekend it’s just a short drive so, had everything I needed.