

name of Abels operated it. And at that place they're just joining now the white Knights of Templars Hall, you know, at Tenth Street, that big stone building...

Z: Who read the Democratic?

T: Well, it was a weekly paper, most everybody would buy it now and then.

Z: Everybody in Lawrence?

T: Yes, and if I wanted an article really printed sometimes I was turned down by the Journal-World, and then I went to the Democratic paper and the new manager said, "Sure, I'll publish it." And they did.

Z: What organizations did you belong to?

T: Well, yes, I belonged to a benevolent lodge and I was a Grand Master when it failed, I don't know whether I was the cause of it or not, but I was elected over a lawyer by the name of Leroy Harris. He was running for it and they wrote my name in and I was elected.

Z: Is this where you got your life insurance, from that lodge?

T: No, I first was with them and then I changed to the National Life Insurance. I had Metropolitan and the agent and I, we couldn't get along. So then I just changed over to National and I've been with them ever since.

Z: I understand that a lot of the colored families got life insurance from Metropolitan, that was one of the few companies that would sell?

T: Yeah.

Z: Right. I've talked to a real interesting character whose name was Henry Lee Jones. He's a real character.

T: (Laughter) "Real" is right. At that time I operated a liquor store at 518 East Eighth Street and he belonged to one of those, oh, kind of a radical-like groups, not Jehovah's Witness, but Church of God or holy rollers or something of that nature. And he was always coming down in the neighborhood of my store and he would get someone else to come in and buy Mogen David wine for the church sacrament, so that he wouldn't be seen in a liquor store; he was that type of radical.

Z: Yeah. When did you own a liquor store?

T: Oh, it's been oh, about fifteen or eighteen years ago.

Kaplan: John, do you have any records or any of the materials that your grandfather had during those years in city government?

T: No, I don't.

Z: That's too bad that the records are gone, because I know that if they could be put in a library or something a lot of people really could use them and study them, but these things get lost.

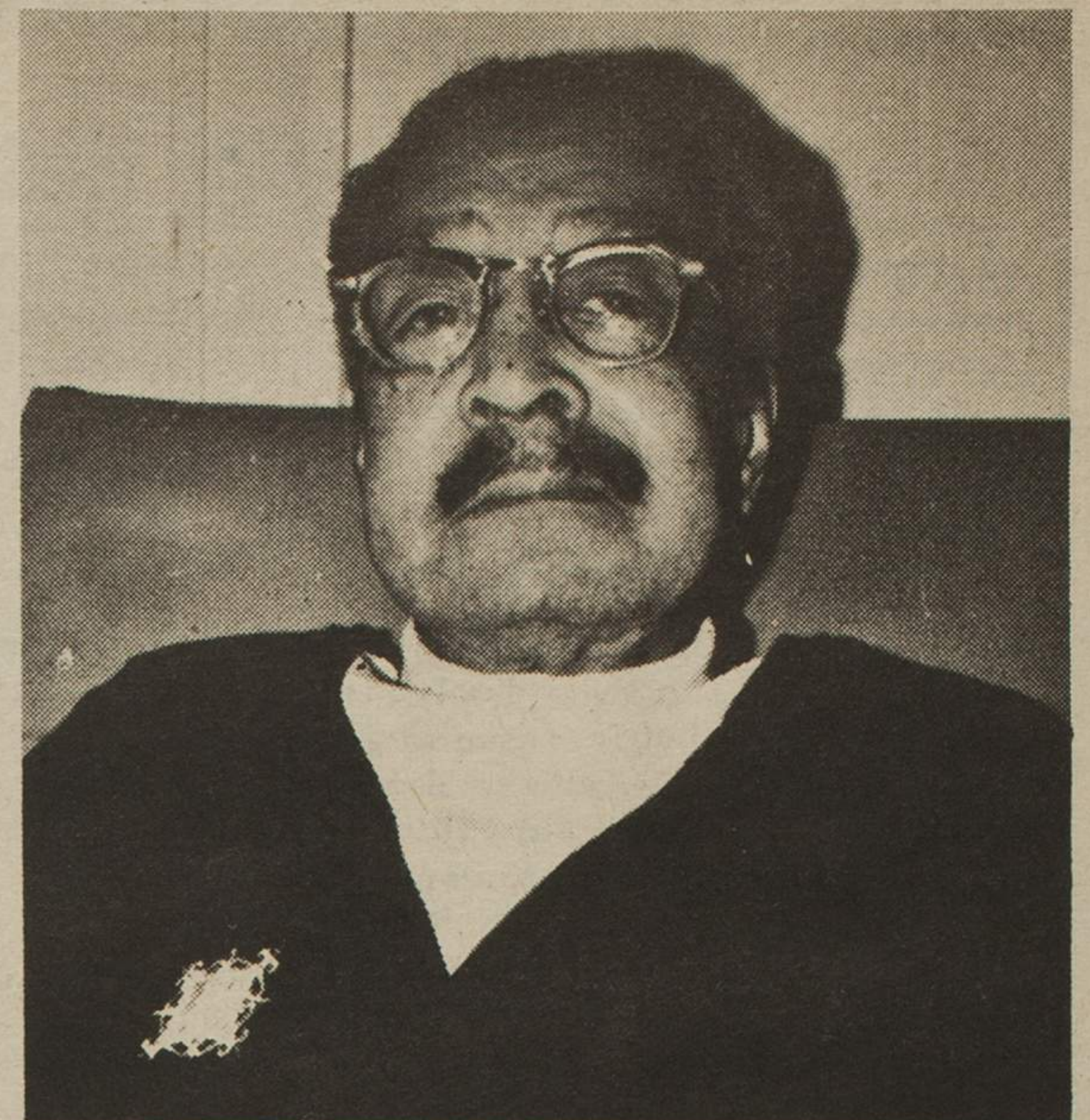
T: Well, I know we had some and my sister destroyed them, she said she didn't want nobody else to see them, it was property that my grandpeople bought back in seventeen hundred and something. I thought they were nice documents to save, but she didn't. She just put them in the wastecan and burned them up, she wanted to have her way.

Z: That's a shame. Was there ever a real active chapter here of the KKK? You know, the Ku Klux Klan?

T: They tried to start here and they were strong in Leavenworth and they burned a cross every Sunday night and there was a few people in Lawrence that belonged to it and I remember, you know the Underwoods?

Z: No.

T: Juni, and I think one of them is in the Lawrence Bank. And the sons operated that old tin building next to Massachusetts and I think they repaired refrigerators and stuff like that. They used to be a big feed store and my father traded there and bought all of his feed for his horses and his cows there. And so he learned the Underwoods used to live in North Lawrence, Seventh and Wedge Street and I lived down at the end of Eighth and Wedge Street. And my father got on to the wind that Juni Underwood, Sr., was a member of the Ku Klux Klan and he hit the ceiling. And he said, "Juni, I always liked you and I thought you was a fine man, but," he said, "I did not think that you would stoop low enough to persecute your own blood." He said, "I haven't forgot about that child you fathered by your maid, your father's maid." And he says, "From now on, I don't intend to spend another penny with you." And he did; he quit and then he went to another feed store that was at the foot of Vermont



Street right along in there where they call it the Independent Laundry now, they had a milling place and a feed store there and that's where he did his shopping, at that one place. And the Ku Klux tried to get a stand in here, but the governor at that time broke it up. He had the militia on guard so that they could not parade in Lawrence, so they never did get no foothold here, but they tried. And my grandmother said the beginning of the Ku Klux Klan when she was in slavery, she said it was known as the powder rollers, that they would ride nights and see if there was any slaves that was running away and all like that. And she said the menfolks would put, there was muddy roads, would put logchains across the road, when they would come romping and running down the road, course the horses would trip and fall and throw them off. And they wouldn't know who did it, sometimes they got hurt badly and the horses got killed. But they had their way of revenging and I would say that slavery has one good point for it and that made the colored people get close to God and that's where the spirituals started.

Z: You sure look good. And you've sure been a big help. I really enjoyed talking to you.

T: It's been nice, helped to pass away the afternoon.

Z: It's really important to get this history written down; it really is.

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# WORKING...

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the farmer made it is because of inflation; the price of their land has gone up and he is worth more today because of the drastic inflated prices of land and he can borrow more on it to continue raising livestock, which loses you money each year.

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## JOLENE BABYAK

Jolene Babyak is a 6 year resident of Lawrence and a freelance writer-photographer to boot. She also doubles as a landlady, plumber, electrician and whatever else seems necessary to keep her house on Louisiana going. She has sold articles to the KC Star for several years and is presently finishing up an article to sell to Ms. Magazine. In November she will show her photography at the Lawrence Public Library.

## RESPONSIBILITY

As a writer I guess I'm responsible to myself and that's a pretty big responsibility. When I used to do travel stories, the way I made money was by writing a story and if I didn't make money, I didn't get money for another trip, which meant that I would write more articles. In those days I felt more responsibility to be constantly writing. Now it's not as much based on money as it was before. My articles are bigger and farther between. I guess my desire to write is what keeps me writing and the desire to get better and better so that one magical day, I'll be GOOD.....

## GOOD MEANS

For fiction, the New Yorker and for Nonfiction, Esquire. That's where I can consider the heights, not books.

## COMPETITION

Sometimes I feel it very acutely and sometimes I don't feel it at all. The immediacy of an idea

draws me into worrying about competition. When the ideas are really happening right now, I wonder how many other people are on top of it. And then I'm competing with those people. In fiction, you're competing with quality. When I was in New York and I went to the New Yorker, the secretary there told me they get 60 short stories a day, every day. So you're really competing and you're competing with the likes of John Updike and Jean Keys or whatever that guy's name is and people from all over the world, you know, and the competition is really stiff. I've been writing for 4 years. Some of those people, SJ Perelman or JS Perelman, whatever, he's been writing for 20 or 40 years, and that's you're competing with.

## EXPERIENCE

Years has alot to do with writing. Just the day to day ability to sit on your can and write.

## INTEREST

Maybe everyone who writes stories thinks that what they're doing is helping out some way. But everything that I write has to have a personal interest for me. When I do find that I have done some good like that metric article---- I wrote an article on the metric system and tried to show where the US was going towards metric. We were doing it in a way that wouldn't cost us money; we weren't committing ourselves to a program that would take 15 or 20 years and cost us 6 million or 300 million or whatever. After that article was in the Star, a local talk show discussed it and the news show "man on the street" interview focused on the metric system in America. So I really feel like it had generated some interest at least. I always feel that whatever I'm doing must have some social good or I won't do it. I guess, I feel very close to my work and I have more control over my writing and I feel pretty in touch with it.

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## RUTH MACDOWELL

Daughter of Christian missionaries, Ruth lived her first 18 years in Africa. The last several years she has spent in Canada, California and now Lawrence. She likes Lawrence a lot and feels that the community here is pretty tight---"There's more togetherness about the way people come together."

## RESPONSIBILITY

My work is really important to me that I enjoy it while I'm doing it. I don't know--- I can't relate to 9 to 5 jobs. Right now I'm doing housecleaning jobs that I can arrange a little bit for the hours that are good for a more relaxed pace of working. I work in about 4 hour shifts and I also like to work with another person sometimes--- that really makes a difference to have someone to talk with and just sit down and have a cup of tea with. I do a

whole lot better work that way. Some days I have 2 jobs, somedays I have just 1 and I'm also filling in spare time working for Sister Kettle, sewing and things like that---- trying to get the restaurant going. I don't feel responsible to anybody except myself. My own self respect is the thing that I have to answer to. I know when I've done a good job or when I've spaced somebody out. But its not like a heavy thing, you know, its more a matter of relaxing. It seems like when you relax and just enjoy life, you do things well. Its not a question of having to force yourself to do it.

## ENERGY / MONEY

I don't know. Its hard to say because everything is so relative to the whole culture. It seems some people work way too hard for the money they get and some don't really do anything for the amount of money they get and they get a whole lot more. As far as the culture itself goes and my fitting in,



I feel pretty comfortable as far as making ends meet. I could earn more. But as far as things go, I feel like I'm doing pretty well.

## PHILOSOPHY

I like to see both jobs as a service to humanity in a way or another. I think its important to do things for people because people are me, we're all part of an us. Its getting to the point in the world that people have to start doing things for each other and not just for selfish motives. And I find that when I start doing things for people without a selfish motive, although thats always a part of it, it makes me get higher. It raises my consciousness as a human. I see it as a kind of road we can travel on getting higher and higher.....

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