

White Looks Back On Years At Massena's Helm

BY BERYL BOND
 MASSENA — It was never G. Laurence White's ambition to be mayor of Massena, but he has now held that post 15 years and was just named president of the Conference of Mayors of the State of New York.

White assumed the village reins in 1963, when then Mayor Thomas Bushnell died shortly after his reelection to that post. White continued until his defeat in



MAYOR G. LAURENCE WHITE

1969, and returned to the helm in 1971 and "has been here since," he says. The Mayor says that what is sadly lacking in Massena today is the volunteer who in the past has lost expertise, knowledge and background "from other places" to village problems. He pointed to the years of sudden growth brought about by the Seaway and Power Projects and the know-how that came from Alcoa employees at that time. He recalled Bob

Ferguson and others who drafted subdivision plans and master-planned the growth years. "Today citizen participation is in name only," he said, deploring the lack of personal input which he feels is important, and which means "today we hire consultants."

Master Plan Essential
 A number one priority for the village chief is a master plan, which presently needs updating. He expects that may come from an offer from SUNY, Potsdam, for a study of community needs by students there. He pointed out that the fresh insight from outside helps to offer repetitive. People coming in bring new ideas, he points out.

The value of a master plan that spans at least a five-year period was illustrated by White who said that three federal grants which took care of Alcoa Field, East Hatfield and Cook Street would not have been possible if the plans had not already been drafted. "You have to look ahead five years if you expect to cash in on federal programs," he declares.

While the Mayor finds the federal aid beneficial, it leads to another fact of life which he finds a bitter pill, namely the outside funding and the attendant bureaucracy.

He mentions with satisfaction renovation of the fire station which was done with local expertise, and that there was "enough in the coffers, so no money was borrowed and no federal funds" were necessary. An architect had proposed a design that "called for astronomical expenses" for the Department of Public Works headquarters, he said, but the Mayor, DPW head Reginald Cross, and two assistants drained a fire station and village highway quarters that provided much greater space at much less money.

"If you go out for bids, get specs, a consultant, it costs twice as much," he

says. "We did it with our own forces, and we didn't get slapped by the auditors."

Downtown Needs Facelift
 What bothers Mayor White today is the downtown section of Massena. "The vacant stores... they cause headaches," he admits. "We have to preserve downtown. High taxes come from there; a lot of jobs are created there. We have to have some concern and want to have a nice looking downtown." He has visited Plattsburgh with some of the merchants and they plan another trip elsewhere to see what other communities are doing. "We are checking on federal funds for facelift," he added.

White also feels downtown needs department stores. He feels the flow of traffic and parking situation have improved with one-way Water Street traffic and space for parking behind the CM building. He feels, however, traffic patterns must be studied.

Another priority for the village chief is the creation of more jobs, particularly for young people who want to stay in Massena.

If he had his druthers, the mayor would like to have a safety commissioner to coordinate police and fire activities. He sees this as a way of cutting back on cost yet getting the same services. He says the proposal was defeated a couple of years ago when residents protested the elimination of some paid fire department positions. He said "the majority rules" indicating he accepts that, yet he remains unshaken in his belief that what is working in the mid-west would work here too.

He explains that fire calls could come into the police station, as they do already and policemen on duty would be dually trained to take out the fire trucks while volunteers responded as they presently do. He pointed out that Louisville and Canton have volunteer departments and Potsdam presently hires four men. He feels that it is his responsibility

to make suggestions, and it all "depends on what people want to pay for."

Vitality Comes From Citizenry
 White says he feels the community expects five part-time men to spearhead everything, and the only time the citizen is heard from is when there is a gripe or complaint. He would like to have more positive community input, he said, explaining "All we are is the representative of the people. We have to listen to people and look at the budget, and see what we can afford to still get by and get the job done."

He hears, however, that today "everyone is so engrossed with money" that many of the people and organizations who used to be a vital part of the community are waning in activity and impact.

In speaking of what he likes in a village board member, the Mayor said he respects and prefers a strong board declaring "It can't be a one-man board." He elaborates that he prefers forceful members who comment, offer opinions and proposals, and who will state their positions.

He recalls Bob Dougherty, with whom

he served for 16 years; "He is a great man to express his opinion. This is what you are looking for." He continues that "you can't give an opinion if you're not versed in the subject," acknowledging that there is "no end to the homework" called for by the job.

"We have a good school system" White says. "Municipal power will be another big attraction," he adds with a laugh. He is proud of the continued growth of the community in housing developments and of the water system.

White enjoys working with people he admires and he wishes that more of the people coming to the village officials for something for themselves would come as volunteers. "It makes it a much better community to get people involved," he feels.

Looking for respite for the village chief, there appears to be none, because the demands of his dairy business and the obligation of the office of mayor account for almost all of his waking hours. He was hoping to salvage one day however, to spend with his wife and daughter, his only child, to help her celebrate her 21st birthday.

Seaway Credit Optimistic

MASSENA — Seaway Community Federal Credit Union is looking with great optimism to 1980 and many happy year end returns. Many changes have occurred since the new facility opened one year ago. The drive-in teller is open now and will expedite the peak rush hour traffic. For

those who stop in this office there is plenty of free parking available.

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Seaway Credit is open Monday - Wednesday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Thursdays and Fridays, 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.

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The history of the credit union dates back to 1963 when it was operated out of one of the member's homes. Deposits were \$15,000 and members numbered 150.

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The future looks bright with membership and deposits growing rapidly. The increasing demand for more diversified services could well bring the introduction of share draft accounts, revolving credit cards, and home mortgages, all in time.

Westcott's Keeps Pace With Buyers

MASSENA — Westcott's Stationery Store features many items at one location in Downtown Massena.

As one of Massena's oldest stores, Westcott's has kept pace to meet the needs of the modern buyer. Mini-departments are featured in the store, a greeting card department in the back with a gift wrap section, a wedding invitation order desk, with decorations and accessories on display, a book section with coin and stamp collector supplies beside it.

Westcott's is also a complete office supply store, with bookkeeping and filing materials in stock, and office desks, chairs, file cabinets and coatracks on display. Typewriters, adding machines and a big selection of unusual gifts are in Westcott's Stationery stock. Binoculars, microscopes, telescopes and magnifiers and many other items help to make Westcott's a complete shopping center.

Downtown Massena has become an area of many fine specialty shops and Westcott's is proud to be a part of it.

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