

Town Meeting Produces Growth Ideas...

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"Now, you're going to have to pretend you're in the back of a cotton picker and really holler at each other."

With that, Evelyn Kurihara began working with "Group Two" of the 100 Henry residents who came to a town meeting Monday night.

The townspeople came not really knowing what to expect, and they left with the satisfaction of having, in only four hours, composed a story about their town, written proposals for future growth and even a town song.

The meeting was one of 5,000 held in small towns across the United States. The "Town Meeting" idea was sponsored by the federal Bicentennial Commission, and Monday night's meeting is one of several being held in West Tennessee as a continuation of the project.

Henry's meeting was the only one to be held in Henry County.

It began with entertainment provided by Uncle Bill and the Hillbillies, a local country music band. After about a half-hour of music, the residents got down to business.

First, a proclamation was read by Mayor Glen Lipps "celebrating the future" of Henry. The proclamation was followed by a brief talk by Terry McCabe, regional director of the Institute of Cultural Affairs, a non-profit research, demonstration and training group concerned with the "human factor" in world development.

"This land is your land, this land is my land ..." the group sang, amidst sporadic cries from the several young children at the meeting.

"Sherry, you come up here and help me," said the Rev. Paul Conquest, who was master of ceremonies for the evening. "You're real good at leading songs."

The residents divided into two groups, one led by Ms. Kurihara, a volunteer

assistant to McCabe, and the other by McCabe.

Then the singing started again.

"Now, we're gonna outsing that group," Ms. Kurihara declared to her group. "Let's sing so hard they won't know what hit them!"

"I'm a Yankee Doodle Dandy," they sang, with about 90 percent participation.

After the singing, Ms. Kurihara explained to her group the real purpose of the meeting: to review the town's past, evaluate its present situation and come up with ideas for the future.

"Gee, this is Henry and it's in Henry County," the Memphis native said. "Which came first, the town or the county? Does anyone know?"

No one answered. No one volunteered any information. But within minutes, Ms. Kurihara began extracting contributions from all members of the group.

They began with past accomplishments of the town: good schools, roads, volunteer fire department. "We've always had (in the past) a bank, drugstore, three doctors, livery stable, and we used to have a tomato packing plant and a cheese plant, too," one man said.

"And a casket factory," another cried out.

Current assets of the town as listed by the group are its two factories, parks,

fire department and churches.

Among items listed as needs are a better water system, improvement to the "run-down buildings," and more family life and togetherness.

Also needed: a restaurant, hospital or clinic, youth center, full-time police force, basketball court, drug store, motel, supermarket, shopping center.

"If we're gonna do all this," chided one man, "then we're going to need more people too!"

Once the listing was completed, the two groups produced the town's story, song, challenges and proposals.

Lipps this morning expressed satisfaction over the meeting, saying it was a first step at bringing the community together. "I think it will help," Lipps said. "Part of it will catch hold and help."

"You've got to start somewhere," Lipps said. "Just getting them together is good."

Lipps said he "didn't have time to fool with it" when McCabe and Kurihara came to him a few weeks with the idea to have the meeting. He was busy working on obtaining a new water system for the town, he said. But they persisted, and contacted Mrs. Josephine Hughes, who coordinated the meeting.

"I guess it caught hold pretty good," Lipps said. "The whole thing was to get the community together and have them cooperate more."

.. *And A Town Song*

This is the Town Story and Town Song about 100 citizens of Henry produced during Monday night's four-hour Town Meeting.

—A Town Story: "Henry, named for Patrick Henry, was formed in the middle 1800's. Our heritage had always been rich in agriculture. The railroad played a major role in developing our industry. Early industry included a cheese factory, a casket factory, a grist mill, tomato factory and a millinery shop.

"Henry has always had excellent educational facilities with other communities sending their children here to the grammar and high school. Henry also had three practicing doctors at this time which also served surrounding communities.

"Early transportation was largely confined to railroad activity. With as many as eight train daily, five of which were mail trains, another form of transportation stemmed from the livery stable situation mid-town.

"Early worshippers congregated together as a Union Church. As the gown

grew in number, these later broke away and other churches were formed.

"The town of Henry was twice destroyed by fire and twice rebuilt, showing the courage and determination of the people.

"As a growing community, we now have a city park, nine churches, a school, two industries, a volunteer fire department, natural gas system and improved water system. It is an excellent retirement community and is within easy commuting distance to other towns.

"As a future growing town, we would like to have an active police force, youth center and better shopping facilities."

—A Town Song: "(to the tune of 'Revive Us Again) — Hotel and mill — All burned to the ground — The people stuck together — And rebuilt the town.

"(Chorus) Amazing what sheer will does — Amazing the plans — Amazing what sheer will does — 'Cause Henry now stands!

"We're happy to be — In a town named Henry. — Friendly and growing — With love so free. (Chorus)".
