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Interview with Gary Bebout – 8377 Bertnett Road, Gambier, Ohio 43022

Monday, November 1, 1999

7:00 pm

Gary: Linda and I since we've been married, so I haven't moved around much. I'm not much of a nomad. I kind of like it here on the hill.

Chrissie: Now, where did you live and did you grow up in Knox County too?

G: Yes.

C: Where did you grow up at?

G: Just across the little creek. I lived there 20 years, why I was born and raised in the same farm house and the only place I moved when I got married. We come out around the road about a mile and a half and this is where I stopped and that's as far as I went.

C: What is your occupation, or was your occupation? Did you farm?

G: I farmed until 1963. My dad my brother and I we farmed about 525 acres then it got so the paychecks were less and less until it was starvato in so people wanted me, well the superintendent from Howard high school called me. And I'd already drove bus for a couple of years for Mount Vernon. So I went to work full time for Howard schools, drove bus and I took care of the building. And, I fortunately got to drive to all of the ball games at night cause I was one of the youngest ones driving then. Course I enjoyed that, but it made for some long days some days. And it was pretty near volunteer work, then they didn't pay you extra too much for - maybe five dollars a trip for driving school bus then. And I worked at other, I drove truck and other things besides my job then when I could to survive. Oh, I don't know I always hated that I gave up farming but in order to support the family and do the things I wanted to do I had to do something different so.

C: Did the rest of your stay in farming or did they all get out?

G: They all quit.

C: They all quit.

G: They all quit.

C: How big was your family?

G: Just mom and dad, my brother and I. Just the four of us.

C: And then how many kids do you have?

G: Three. . . Karen, she's the oldest one. She's working out at the Developmental Center now. She's a nurse, she always wanted to be a nurse. She was born with a birth defect, but she never let that hold her back. Well, I always used to tease her all the time. She did have a bad lip and everything else, but I always told her the only disability she had was being left handed. So, she kept on a going anyway. Had my only grandson. Which, Michael, he's down at Hocking Technical School right now.

C: What is he studying there?

G: Natural Resources, he wants to follow in the footsteps of his uncle Kenneth and be a game warden or a park ranger or what ever. That's my son (Kenneth) he's the next to the oldest. He's a graduate of Hocking and Ohio State.

C: Does he live around here?

G: He lives in Circleville, he's the game warden in Pickaway County. And that's doing what he's always wanted to do. Of course we have Kathy here yet. She's, I tease her all the time and

call her the farm foreman, and she lives here with us and works at Kenyon for the Maintenance. Had no major problems out of any of the three of them, and I thank the Lord for that. The youngest one in there, I always tease her but she's been really good.

C: So your sons a game warden, did you do a lot of things-hunting and fishing and everything when he was little?

G: He everyday, he was out over this countryside, out and around the creek and I don't think there was hardly a day went by when he didn't make his rounds. He was never here at meal time, or any other time, unless he had something particular he wanted to do, you know, he was always out. He hunted and fished and matter of fact, he made a lot of his money he went to school on, his extra spending money, trapping coon and muskrat and stuff on his breaks and stuff in between. While he was going to school.

C: Now did he do that, the creek down here is Indian Run?

G: Indian Run Field, yeah.

C: It runs into the Kokosing?

G: It dumps into the Kokosing.

C: How far from here?

G: Probably, ok, the way the crow flies it would probably be a mile, but as the creek flows it'd be two miles. You know how it zigs back and forth and crosses 229 down here and goes on down through past Charles Ingalls and winds through his property. And I've been at the place where it dumps into the Kokosing, we've fished down there before. Always enjoyed that.

C: How is the fishing along there?

G: I, about, you can get some bass. Pretty nice small mouth bass. Always liked to catfish along the Kokosing. I haven't done that, I've been retired for awhile, but it seems I get less and less time to fish. I got into these antique tractors. That's been one of the things I use some of my fishing time for. We've got a real nice antique tractor club with about fifty members of us.

C: Is that the Kokosing Valley?

G: The Kokosing Valley Antique Tractor Club, which I started about two years ago, I'm responsible for that one way or another. Whether good or bad, everybody wanted a tractor club. So, I finally started one up here at Harrison Grange Hall and it's grown a little bit and little bit each year. It's just a lot of people that enjoy getting together talking about old tractors.

C: I think I remember at the fair you had all of them displayed down past the grandstand.

G: Yes, we'll be there again next year.

C: Now, did you guys have your own parade this year or were you in another?

G: No, we didn't parade with the museum. I was a former member of the museum. I still think we have the greatest farm museum around, anywhere you want to go, to the fairs or anything, but we - I don't know - how do I explain that? We wanted a tractor club of our own that wasn't involved with the museum, there's lots of things that come into the museum and there's a different train of thought about the museum as there is the tractors. Because we like to buy and sell and trade parts and tractors and things like that, where the museum you get old stuff in there and it just stays there. Most of it's got a story to it, I know there's a lot of wagons and farm machinery, they all have a story that goes with them. And that makes it kind of interesting, of course that's the way most of us guys looks at tractors too. You see, my tractors two of them came from, originally, from the farm where Howard lives, over here. That was my cousins that lived on that farm, and he bought these tractors. Well, the two tractors that I've got and the one tractor that's over at Howard's right now, they've all bought them all new themselves (Gary's cousins) it all kind of runs from that, that's why I have Almis-Chalmers tractors, I guess. It

wasn't what I farmed with, myself, because I had Ford and Farm-Alls, from when we was farming. We had, dad always said, you boys don't do as much with five tractors as I did with one, when he was doing it himself. You know, so, but I like all of them I guess. That's just one of the things, I like all of the tractors. Especially the older ones. About everything, we get a monthly magazine, Antique Power. Don't know if I got one in here or not, I set them out . . . whether they're in here or not. . . I know I got a case of them down in the camper, sometimes. Oh, but here some photos. Now that's my dad, and my brother, and a neighbor over here, that was taken about 1941. And, ok, here's my car when I was 16 years old. This was my dad's first tractor and dad bought this car brand new in 1950 and then he got another one and soon that passed down through the generations. These are pictures of, I was trying to think what was in this, I'm getting you confused here again, these are some model tractors, I seen those up to a . . . tractor show up to the northern part of the state. They're all models, all cut down models, I guess that's why I took all of these pictures of them, they're miniature, they look just like the real thing. The fellow that made those. . . here we'll change back, I'll get you confused yet. This here is some of my tractors right here, ok this is right down below the museum, that's Kathy and mom and I. And this here is the tractor that I take to all the parades and everything that's. It's in the Tomato Show and everything, that's the same one, and there's another model. These are just odds and ends of things. Didn't mean to throw this in. There's another one of our tractors, that's a Case, neighbor and I own that together. Oh, there was my first experience with 4-H work. That little piece that was in the paper (*From Our Files -1948*) way back, some of your neighbors in that.

C: Oh, yeah. Gordon Clutter, I know them.

G: You know Clutters do you?

C: Yes, I went to school with his grandchildren. And the Boutons, they live down where I live.

G: Now, see Jim and I was the same age. We was in 4-H together, Harry was a little bit younger. I, that's how we come to know, that's how I come to know people all over the county, by being in 4-H. And, 4-H camp and everything like that, that's good training for any young person, I still think it is. Because you get to know the people around you and.

C: Do most of the people still live here that were in this with you?

G: Yes, and if they aren't deceased then most of them are around here. I haven't looked that for awhile to see which ones, see which

C: I recognize a lot of the names.

G: I think that ,oh this Beverly Dudgeon she's lived away from here. Let's see, ok there's one of these deceased, of course Donna Hall she still lives over here on Grove Church, and I don't know where this. Now here, Ernest Farmer, now does that ring a bell? He was former mayor of Mount Vernon, he was a neighbor, he was raised straight up the road. All these people, come around and holler at me. This guy still lives over by Danville, this Earl Colopy, he has or he just went out of the dairy business here. Yeah, Gerald Reynolds, he still lives down at the end, Kenneth Reynolds, he's in Mount Vernon, he's been a State Patrolman and worked for the telephone company, Gerald he's the same age that I am so. I was trying to think yeah there's a few of these people that went on by. Well I happened to stick that piece into the scrap book cause I would have lost it. I've got lots of pictures of that tractor and different ones. That's just a conversational piece in the middle here.

C: Now the mill that used to be down here that fell into the river, did that fall in this past summer I think, That's down right off of 229 by the bridge,

G: Oh, did it, I didn't know - Jacob's Mill?

C: I'm not sure what the name of it is.

G: The one where you cross the new bridge over here or coming down this way,

C: Yeah, it was kind of set back,

G: Off to the side.

C: Yeah, it's gone. Parts of it I guess, I think Howard was telling us that part of it fell into the river this summer.

G: Could be, part of it did. I don't know, cause the last guy that owned that was, Grohe, Bill Grohe that just got put away for all the stuff, you know he used to run the funeral home up there on North Main. That was his, uh, oh hide out. He used to have friends that he brought down there and they used to party it up down there by the old mill. Yes, we used to get our feed ground there when I was a kid. We didn't have a truck or anything, so if we didn't take the wagon we would sack it up and take it in the back of the car. Or the trunk of the car. The cow feed when I was a little kid. Of course that all went passed when we haul truckload after truckload of feed. Made an old man out of me, wore me out.

C: When was that mill built, do you know that? Do you remember?

G: Oh, mercy.

C: It'd been there a while?

G: Yes it'd been there a while. They quit operating that in the late 40's. When it quit operating, because everything went to the Gambier Co-Op then. Everything was milled and brought back to the farm there, took all of our wheat and marketable grains and so on to the Gambier Co-Op.

C: Where was the Gambier Co-Op at?

G: Right where the Maintenance for the college is now, where they've got a new garage there now. The building set right along the railroad track and it burnt a few years ago, where the main feed storage was. The railroad track was right there behind where the path, where the bike path is now. I did have the opportunity before that was all torn out or anything, my father-in-law used to run the Penn Central railroad. (Dog barking) So, I rode from Gambier clear down to Millwood and Danville, and on the railroad switching the cars and I thought that was quite an experience even though I was. . . . I enjoyed that when I did take a ride on that, of course it's all gone now too. There's another thing I was thinking about too, I was going to make some notes today but I got distracted by something else. I was going to make some notes of things that might be of interest, but used to have the community stores around here. Convenience stores and gossip, where we'd gather in the evenings for, there was one at the junction of 229 and 62 down here and that was that was known as the Jot-'em-down store when I was a kid, guy by the name of John Wolfe run it. In the forties, talking about the forties, that's when I was a kid, in the forties. Good years was in the fifties, that's when I was a teenager. But then there was a big town down here of Ardana, with the filling station, that had gas pumps and a convenience store, and the motel and the cabins that Dan Wolfe run. Of course I was close here, bout a five minute trip to go down to the store and see some of your neighbors, they'd usually meet down there over night some of them, one store or another and you'd find out what the gossip was around the township or real close anyway. That was something that don't happen anymore. I miss that too. That's another thing I'm missing, it seemed like when you was doing that you had a little more closeness with your neighbors then what you do now. You see your neighbors once or twice a year you're doing good. Howard over here, I see him quite often, course Paul Smith that runs the hardware. You remember little Paul who runs the hardware up at the Farmer's Exchange hardware? Well, he lives right up here at my granddad's place, where my granddad used to live. And he's been here for several years too. Farmer's Exchange is the only place he's ever worked.

I think. So,

C: What happened to those places?

G: Well, times change, people was going to other places, business you couldn't, it's just like the plight of the farmer that used to have a couple cows and some chickens, you know they all disappeared over time. Time changes, whether we like it or not, it changes. It's just like families and so on, seems like it don't take long to get spread out with transportation and everything. That was like with my mother she went from horse and buggy to the jet age, and that's quite a thing to think of in a lifetime. That's a lot of changes - go without where you didn't have lights, you was like these Amish people, you had a little bit of kerosene and stuff, then you changed into everything, electric and all the quick foods, modern conveniences. Things seem to just go their which way.

C: Where did you go to school? Did you go into . . .

G: Gambier.

C: . . Gambier. So you went there to high school or all the way through?

G: I went from first grade to seventh grade at Gambier, and then there was the Kokosing Valley School District, they was trying to make a consolidated school district for a while so I went over to Howard for school, my eighth grade, ninth grade and tenth grade, eleventh grade, then I came back and graduated from Gambier High, just because my schedule worked out better. So I could work and finish my school, I was trying to farm and work at a job, trying to make some money - but I spent it all. Like I said, the fifties was good years and I run free and had a good time.

You're only a teenager once.

C: So what kinds of things did you guys do?

G: As a teenager?

C: Yeah.

G: Well, shoot - like in the fall of the year it was great, because we'd get together because moms and dads and everybody thought we was going to Kenyon to go swimming, of course we did go swimming a lot up to the Kenyon pool, then that wasn't the whole story though. Course, there was some watermelon patches around different places-mercy-we had fun getting watermelons out of other peoples patches, having watermelon parties. I can remember one night, we had a couple guys with us that really didn't know what was going on and we told them to feel and see what was around because we was running through these patches at night and so on. We got back and got out in front of the cars and we was dumping out these burlap bags that we had had with us they got some cabbages and stuff, now cabbages and stuff wasn't too good. When you think you were going to have a watermelon a cabbage was a little bit different. We had, shoot, that was part of the fun just getting in and getting watermelons and not getting caught. It was a challenge and then halloween time we would pull a prank here and there, but it was. . .well a lot of us boys out here were the same age. There's still quite a few of us around, right at the end of the road here [name]he and I we was together a lot of it. He was always different, he was a skinny kid with glasses and a lot of times he couldn't see and he was kind of the puny kid and we always tried to help and see that nobody hurt him. Then, there are at least six of us about the same age right around here, we're all about sixty years old now. That's kind of an odd thing too, that there's a lot of us here in the community that went to school here and are around one place or another.

C: How many did you graduate with?

G: Oh a big class, yes we had sixteen of us!

C: Oh that is pretty big [laughter from Gary] That was from Gambier?

G: That was from Gambier, in 1957.

C: How many would have been at Howard?

G: The same. . . just about - there was a few more, and we still have class reunions, I go to both of them. In fact I have to write that down, the class wants to have it out at the Fishing Club next summer again, and you have to get those in pretty early if you want to use the Club House. . . we've got a couple of those fountain things that give it a little more action. Just to sit out there on the deck and look out over the lake. There's about 10 acres of lake there. . . you just don't see it from the road that's all.

C: Where is it? What road is it off of?

G: Grove Church Road, you go passed the Grove Church off of 229 and take Grove Church Road until you come to the first log house you'll go across Hopewell, and you go through the curve and right on down and up over the hill there. There's a log cabin that sets off to the right and the driveway - we've got our number there but that's all - and the driveway goes back to the clubhouse.

C: Does someone live in that cabin at the front?

G: Yes, people own that, they sold that. The people who started the club they bought the whole farm, McClelland Farm, there's even a cemetery back there, the Veach Cemetery. My cardiologist, Mary Lou Wollford who works up to the hospital there, she's got control of my heart, yes. I've got a pace maker in there and she controls it, I tease her about it. Her family - the Veaches' - some of them are over there, so I tease her about that a little bit.

C: So how many members are in the fishing club?

G: I think there's 125, but that's where the membership stops, it stays there. The only way you get a new membership is only if somebody sells their membership to someone. I don't think we've upped the membership, it's just if somebody sells it to you that you get in.

C: And it's just all ages or is it mostly the same age of people?

G: well, I did get a couple of younger people in here last, there were some people that called in that wanted to sell their membership so I got Kathy, my daughter one, and a young couple that lives on the other side of 62. We kind of adopted them. They was people we really liked, and they're just a young couple and they're tickled to have somebody close that -older people I guess, we're all the time looking out for each other. They come down and help us and we help out them. I did get another membership for them. I'm always getting in trouble though because there's always somebody telling me that they want a membership and then, but I did want some younger people in it. A lot of us are old and when you have a work day and you have people who can't hardly get there and do any cleaning up, you know cleaning up brush or anything. So I'm kinda looking to, hoping that a few older people do look for some younger people.

C: Do you guys stock the lake out there then?

G: Yes, every year we put new fish in it. And we try to - we have land that we rent, Dan McKee farms that, and with the rent money from that field, that's what goes to set aside so that we can put in fish every year and maybe treat the lake. But we in my reign as president I guess we had to up the, you have to pay a membership fee every year which is forty-five dollars, but that isn't so bad to own a piece of lake, a piece of the rock or whatever you want to call it.

C: What fish do you stock it with?

G: Usually bass, bluegills, we've got some grass carp,

C: The one that get huge?

G: Yes, huge. . . I wish I had my son to give me the names of these fish, but they're grass carp. They do with our treatment, it keeps the lake looking pretty good. We had an algae kill though,

summer before last. That scared me to death, but it's a natural thing where the oxygen from the summer weather takes the oxygen out of the water and kind of gives it a real hard kill and the fish were losing a lot of the bigger ones but the smaller ones do survive cause the dead ones come down and the smaller ones eat the bigger ones that way and eat up the trash and clean it up and it looks just as good. Mike Miller, him and my son, guided us along on the up keep of that.

C: Was that before or after the flood - that was the summer of the flood?

G: Yes, we thought maybe it was chemicals and stuff from where it feeds the lake, but it was tested out that it was not, it was just the algae and the problem like that with the oxygen in the lake, but mother nature straightened itself out.

C: So the lake is fed out of the Kokosing then?

G: No, out of spring water from back in farm fields and such. It's spring water, good clean water. The water eventually then goes into Big Run another one that goes into the Kokosing, and it empties into the Kokosing above the old mill, more towards the new bridge. That's Big Run, but this lake over here goes around and empties into that.

C: Do you think that, since you've lived here your whole life, do you think that the Kokosing, the river itself, has gotten better or worse in terms of fish population, or just being clean?

G: In the last few years I would say it has cleaned up a lot. There isn't near the raw sewage that used to go into it. Cause, the EPA and everything else. There is a few good things that happens with the EPA watching the water. They used to call it the floating sewage, it's not a problem anymore, but back a few years ago there was a time, that just about anytime you could see some kind of sewage in the water or even off of your fish line you could tell it.

C: What was the strangest, I know that the Kokosing through our front yard and we've seen some really strange things wash up, what's the strangest thing that you've seen down there?

G: Oh, dear oh dear. I remember the flood of '59 when the Marathon oil tanks, or Marathon gasoline tanks and some of that floated down towards the old mill. There were some fuel tanks and stuff that floated on down through, the one in '59 I've never seen so much water. That was a big flood you know.

C: How big did the river get?

G: Mercy, it washed out 229 back this side of the new bridge, it washed out a great big section of that right straight on down through, and I don't know there was all kinds of trash and stuff in it then, a lot of old tires and just junk. Great big deposits of what do want to call it, just regular trash, old cans and all kinds of stuff that we had to clean up after that.

C: Did people loose a lot of farmland that year?

G: No, not really because it was right . . . it was after the crops had come off and before they went on. It was right out in January so you didn't have anything, most people didn't have anything out then. But, I remember in '59 it was kind of the change of the whole thing. That was the year I get married so things went down hill real fast, no things haven't been so bad for us. I tell everybody how I've been lucky-I've been the richest poor guy you'd ever seen. I have never had any money but I've never really needed anything real bad. I've never had to drive any junk cars or anything like that, we've lived here and certainly had to do repairs to this old house, but we've gotten along fine.

C: How old is this house?

G: The main part of the house, Oh Lord, I'd say. . . . probably the main part of this house is 100 years old I'd expect, it's got the sandstones around the main square of the house. It's been added on to. Three kids lived here and we didn't have near this much room almost. We had two bedrooms upstairs and Linda and I used, it was just a little front porch then, we covered up the

windows and turned that into a bedroom....there was a porch on here and a summer kitchen, so we tore it all off and started new. Don't know why I didn't just take the whole house down and start new, but we've had to do it in steps. So, like I said I'm not complaining too much. We've both worked for the school systems, it's kept us going pretty good, I like it out here. We raise a garden a little bit every year, I guess there's nothing much to complain about.

C: Last year when the river flooded, how was that compared to the flood of '59?

G: It was mild, the one thing I seen water come up in Howard's old barn up here from Indian Fields [small stream that feeds into Kokosing] which I never seen it get up in that old barn before, I seen it get up high but I've never seen it in the old barn before, and I've got some pieces of old machinery sitting in there, it floated everything around in there. Finally got some of that cleaned up it'd still need a lot more help, but I'm not able to do a lot of manual labor anymore, I do some. Of course I don't want to do as much as far as manual labor. Yes, we had plenty of water. It came over the road on both sides of the bridge down here, for a while. That was one of the higher times of water.

C: When they put in the dam up at Fredericktown did that help down here after that big flood?

G: Oh, yes it did. It took that threat of being out, the Kokosing would get out in the bottoms from here, from Mount Vernon clear down through the Mohawk, I'd say it helped tremendously.

C: When that was proposed were people for it? Did they want them to put that dam in, do you remember?

G: All I know is that they said they was going to put a dam in up there, Kokosing, to help control the water, I don't think people said too much about it. When they said it would help control the flood waters, that was after '59. They just went ahead and put it in that was all there was to it. I didn't here much pro or con about it. I guess I don't remember, maybe your folks do or somebody does but I don't.

C: I know that they have pictures, my grandpa owned the lamp manufacturing, right where the elementary school is and they have pictures of somebody out in a rowboat behind the shop, it flooded all through there.

G: It was, the water was all through there a lot. You had all of the watershed clear up above there. The Kokosing Reservoir, when it fills up you see how far it goes out in towards Waterford Rd and back in there, that's a lot of water. It's a big help especially for Mount Vernon and Gambier, it helps them out a lot, in my opinion, I've never seen it real bad since then I guess.

C: People are talking a lot about the drought this year, did you notice much? Did you think that the river was a lot lower this year than before?

G: I noticed it was down some, but I noticed it more on my sweet corn this year, cause it came up and done pretty good for a while and then just died. You know. It was on the hillside down here, I should have had it down by Big Run but it dried up too. All of the stuff that was in my truck patch just kind of dried up and blew away.

C: Do you think, some have said that the drought this year was worse than the one in '89?

G: I do believe that it was drier this year than it was then. My estimation with the things I seen happen. Anytime you get dry - that's what the old farmers used to say - it's better to be too wet than too dry. You can always get some hay and some feed up if it's too wet, but if it's too dry you don't have anything.

C: Do you ever there being a worse year than this? Were there any major droughts when you were younger growing up on the farm?

G: Well, I remember sometimes it being fairly dry, but nothing real bad that I can remember. I remember people saying that the wells had gone dry and other things. I suppose it's about equal

to what I seen this year.

C: So, when you were in high school did people jump off of the Howard bridge into the river? Was the Howard bridge there then?

G: Yeah, they'd jumped off the bridge into the river. Yes, they done that then they jumped off the railroad bridge up here at Gambier too.

C: How long have people been doing that for?

G: How long, Oh Lord, a couple of generations before myself. Oh yes, I was never much of a daredevil, I always liked to swim and do things like that but I am not much for jumping off of bridges and so on, doing things like that. But there was guys, I seen them do it, go off the bridge down at Howard and into the hole right there where the sand bar comes around it. And up here, it's the bike path now but the old railroad bridge.

C: It's not nearly as deep there now as it must have been.

G: It was deep there though back then. Of course I can remember too when a boy hung himself there too though. A boy, when I was a senior, a guy by the name of Whitmeier or Whitmore hung himself down there off of that bridge, he was a junior. . .

C: In high school?

G: Yeah, I always thought he was a little bit nuts anyway but nobody ever thought he would do that, but he did. Now they went down there found him hanging and swinging.

C: Did they ever find out why?

G: Oh just suicide.

C: Was he from a family around here?

G: Oh he had relatives, he wasn't, he didn't live around here all his life, no. He had been in and out of Gambier school anyway. He wasn't a regular, wasn't one of us guys. Let's see what else. Powerhouse road that went down along below there. It wasn't a heavily traveled road then, it was just a little path that went down below Gambier and back over the railroad, that was all different down there then it is now. A car could pull off the road there, and a path going back into the river, and bridge. A lot of partying back there and crazy Kenyon students and all would go back in there. Of course that was all boys back when I was going to school.

C: What was that like?

G: Oh mercy, we teased them.

C: Was there a lot of, did you get to know any of them very well or was it very much like they were Kenyon students and you guys were Gambier kids?

G: Yes, kind of that way, it was them guys and then us. That sounds funny, it's not like that now, but everybody always called them "Candies". Yeah, cause they was different then us old farm boys and we teased them. A lot of times they'd be thumbing back and forth from Mount Vernon you know and to Gambier and we'd haul them back and forth. Once and a while someone would take some students snipe hunting, have you ever been snipe hunting?

Sometimes they had a terrible time finding their snipes or their way back to Gambier. I didn't do it myself, but I know some guys that did. I was too sympathetic, I'm too much of a guy that I think about if I was walking in their shoes, what would I feel like if some jerk took me and dumped me someplace, I've had a few pranks pulled on myself. That's why I was never any good at playing nasty pranks on people. I liked the silly stuff, if anything was silly it was funny to me but to hurt somebody or do something like that, no I didn't like that.

C: Were most of those Kenyon students not from here, most from the cities and other places?

G: Seldom you got one now Ernie Farmer he went to Kenyon for awhile, and once in awhile we would turn out somebody that was smart enough to go to Kenyon around the neighborhood. Not

too many around this area. There's more now from the area or the county that go to Kenyon then of course we've got Kenyon and the Nazerene, and there's a lot more opportunities for people to go with schools closer, a lot more opportunities than we had before. Of course, so I've been looking at education for a long time from the bottom side up. I've had 32 years of education before I retired, I call it working behind-the-scenes, it be like a stage manager or something. I wasn't in the main play but I helped set up everything. Mercy, I've seen lots of things happen, lots of teacher, lots of people in and out of the education system. Administrators and all kinds of teachers, from some of the nicest people you would ever want to be around to some of nastiest naughtiest people you would ever want to see. Form one extreme to the other. I still like just a down home people that are trying to understand what normal living is like. But it don't bother me one way or another to mix in with, what do you want to call it, society or the, I'd rather not, I've been into bars and places like that and seen what's going on I'd rather not, I'd seen what goes on. When I was running around I'd always hear my mom say, "Gary, you don't belong in a place like that you're just a little bit better than that to be associating with them bums." I hear my mother calling once in a while and I'd think, no I don't really want to be doing that. That's one thing I did have a lot of respect for my mother and dad when I was younger, and I still did till they was gone. I never wanted to disgrace my mother and dad by being a jerk, that was one thing I always tried to teach me children as they grew up. I said there will be lots of things you'll want to do or seek out, you know, but I said you earn your freedom, and you're as free as could be until you prove other wise, and I said that's when it hits the fan. Because I will not put up with that, but as long as you pay and do what your supposed to do. There was no curfews for my children either, and I had none when I was running around. I still felt due to respect and all that there were just things that you did not do. That's some of the old farm teaching that I wished that it would have been passed on a little bit more.

C: Did both of your parents grow up here too?

G: My dad was born and raised right in this same area, my mother was born and raised in Brown Twp, that's up around Jelloway. My mother was a Lifer and her family was pretty good sized and I've got cousins by the dozens yet.

TAPE TWO:

C: So your son went to Hocking to study to be a game warden,

G: Yes, he went there and then transfered to Ohio State where he took Natural Resources course you had to take all of the police training and so on too. Courses in criminology and words that I can't even pronounce or even remember. But he was very thrifty, he worked his way through school. That's why I say if he can do it anybody can do it, that's what I keep telling my grandson I said if your uncle Kenny can go through school. Mom and I didn't have the money too much until he was in his senior year and he was going to not go the whole year because he was running out of money and we just happened to hit it lucky. Mom and I was a little bit ahead right then so we pitched in and kept him from having to work all the time and finish up his senior year.

C: Has he ever thought of coming back up here if a job opened up?

G: It has but he didn't take it. Becuase you'd have to be working around your own relatives and so on. And he likes his freedom a little bit more. He's about two hours away he'd be up here if we ever needed him.

C: What does he think of this area in terms of the wildlife population and the river?

G: I think that he thinks it's got better too then it used to be. I think that it has gotten better.

When I was a kid I don't ever remember seeing a deer around here. I was right here in the middle of all this, the neighbor always said "Oh, there's deer around here." but I never seen it. By gosh I do now, they eat apples right here by the house. Oh, yes there's an automatic light that comes on that if they make enough motion they turn it on.

C: Do you remember any beaver when you were younger?

G: No.

C: Have you seen any since?

G: Yes, there are some around now and the wild turkeys are around here. Now I never seen any of them when I was a boy, but there was lots of pheasants and rabbits when I was a kid.

C: Do you see as many pheasants anymore?

G: No, I heard one the other day along the fence row back towards Howard's wet land. That was the first one.

C: Your son made money off of the muskrat and coon, what about the those populations?

G: Coon, coon was a good price then. Populations are way up on the coon, muskrat quite a few of them around yet, I seem them in the creek this last summer. I like to set and watch the small stuff in this little creek down here. I'll just set there and watch. Matter of fact I watched something I shouldn't have seen, I guess. I seen something that looked like oil or whatever, and I called Mike Miller. Well, the long and short part of the story - the neighbor up here his oil well, it doesn't belong to him but some other guy, but anyway, it was leaking oil into the creek down here. I called Mike, of course Mike got ahold of EPA so they had quite an investigation checking out where the oil come from, so I don't know anymore if, of course my neighbor he thinks I'm a real jerk now. What do you say, I mean what do you do when something like that happens? I've asked different people, you know I says what do you do when you know? I didn't really know what it was and I thought maybe it was more of that algae problem we had over the lake. There was no current, as a matter of fact that the wind was blowing enough that the oil that was on the water was moving back upstream, now that's ridiculous. But there is a long stretch with no curves or anything going down this way and when the wind comes up through that it shoved that back up on that side of the bridge, well the guys looked because there are several oil wells back up this way. Well, they got to looking and looking and finally they said it wasn't any of those wells up there, but it was coming right down a field drainage tile right down past their tanks, so here I am I didn't know but here I am the jerk. It's one of them things, so what I done what I thought was right. My neighbor don't like me too well, but it's no big problem to me. I don't like for things like that to happen but they had plenty of opportunities to straighten it out before. The old guy that owned the wells, I guess knew it was happening and he didn't do anything about it. I didn't know that until after the fact, but I feel like I wronged a neighbor but I didn't. It could have gone on down the creek if there had been a current, then they would have really fined him. But, of course I might have felt worse about that. That's about like being right or wrong, are you dead right, or are you dead wrong? I was telling me other neighbor there, Sadie, I felt bad but I said I don't know when to keep my mouth shut. I still felt that maybe I did the right thing. I didn't hurt anybody, you know physically, mentally I did.

C: How do you trap muskrat.

G: How do you trap muskrat, Oh mercy.

C: Yeah, I've never, I know that they trap them around by our place, but I've never been along for when they do it.

G: Never witnessed that? Oh my, goodness. I done it when I was a kid. I guess that was one of things that we always used to make a little money this time of year, catching muskrat and mink

and a few things to make a little money for help buying Christmas presents. That sounds really old fashioned don't it? It isn't that bad, though. Ok. . .let me think a minute... There like old traps we used, see the kind that is a complete kill is after my time. We used traps in my day where you would set it down in the riffles and with the water flowing over, the muskrat had to go up and down there with his food or whatever and when he come through there that trap would snap and catch him by the foot, and most generally depending on how you put your stake it would drown him. But if you didn't and if you didn't check your traps often enough that muskrat would chew his leg off. Once in a while you would catch a three legged muskrat. That was one thing that always amazed me - that they would chew their leg off to get loose of that trap. Of course everybody complains about leghold traps, the thing is if you put out leg hole traps you've got to check them often at least once a day.

C: Those are the kind that have a spring and they snap.

G: Now see the collie-bear trap and it comes together and catches them around the neck, what they call a body trap. . . .Howard, he's working on the zoning ain't he. I think the zonings fine but I don't want somebody keep snipping away at my rights.

C: Were you at the zoning meeting?

G: [nodded head]

C: Yeah, I went to that, it was interesting.

G: I sat up there towards the front and another time I should have kept my mouth shut, but I didn't. I've been on the zoning appeals board here in the township several years, ten or twelve years. This last year I decided to quit and I think that was one of the better decisions I've made in my public duties. But I understand some of it but still, the thing I don't like is that my rights are being snipped at. But then I don't have anything against a lot of it but who is going to do the policing of it? You're going to have to pick out your police, that's another question of it. That's the thing, you can't get enough teeth in anything.

C: How many new people do you think have moved into the township in the last. .

G: Oh quite a few. Still in other townships and so on there's been more. I feel like in one way that people should be able to build a house, if they do it right, build it where they want to. I think that your county with your sanitation can't boss us on. I don't think five or ten acres to a tract is the right idea. I think that we're going to have too much waste land. An acre or lots, what's that going to hurt the farmer? Let the other people farm this ground back in here, they might get land a little cheaper, land that's not on the roadside, maybe people can farm this land on the backside a little cheaper. I thought about that a lot, this little house down here and the one across the road, and there's another one that's going to be up on the hill, and other one going in across from the grange hall up here. Gary Steinmetz. .

C: Oh, he's building that?

G: His daughter is that,

C: Kim? I bought my first horse from Kim.

G: Oh that brown one what was his name,

C: Nip.

G: Oh, Nip.

C: We still have him, my youngest sister took him to the fair this year.

G: Oh do you? Now, he was a pretty good horse.

C: Yeah, he was really nice.

G: Kim, now I see her once in awhile.

C: It was when she graduated and I was twelve maybe and we were good friends with the

Laymon's because they had a boy my age, Jay, the youngest one of Joe and Jane's.

G: Jay, who's he?

C: Yeah, who doesn't know Jay. That's how we ended up meeting the Steinmetz's

G: Oh, Gary and I we're like, oh I don't know what would call us, Laurel and Hardy. Yeah that's pretty close we go lots of places with our antique tractors.....[conversation about Steinmetz's -irrelevant]

C: There aren't any mink around anymore are there?

G: yes.

C: There are.

G: Yes. You'd be surprised mink and skunk their scent is just about equal. I had kind of forgot until I was down with Kenneth and I had the stake and was holding him down to make sure he was drowned. They're nasty to get drowned. I was holding him down and thought, he must be drown now, so I let him up and put my foot on him, well mercy sake's he was letting go some of his smell. Wow. It was just about as potent as a skunk. Them and a weasel was pretty close to the same. . . .

C: What about the coons, did he trap them too?

G: Yeah, he'd take the same kind of trap and put some corn or peanut butter on it. Sometimes he would just wrap some tinfoil around the bottom. They'd reach for something shiny. . . .

C: We weren't quite sure who to ask, but I think that you would probably be a good person to ask, do you remember any drownings in the river?

G: Ok, let's just cut it off at Millwood and come on up. I can't think of anytime when I've seen them ever have to do any dragging or anything.

C: The only thing that I could think of was when that boy fell in. The eighties or early nineites.

G: Yeah, that was put in wasn't it? She put him in. Well, I knew her she was a drugy and she was nuts. With all due respect she was black and she got on drugs and she would prostitute herself to keep in drugs. . . .

C: When you were growing up did you notice any differences between you and the "city kids"?

G: Well, they would always hire the farm kids first. They knew that they would work. There was no goofing off when there was something to be done. Being out here you done your work or somebody had a boot the right size to fit your seat. And you'd get it there was no doubt about it. So you had discipline, they knew that when you were going to do your job you wanted to do it and do it right. Do it the first time and not goof off. The farm boys usually had priority over just about everybody else when it come to getting a job in town. People would hire people from the farms because they knew that they would work and they knew that they were dependable most of the time. It was usually the thought that they were dependable people.

C: This is way off the subject, but do you know of any churches that have done their baptisms in the river?

G: Oh my goodness, I know of some I went to in Pond's but that was in Licking County. I don't remember myself but I'm trying to think of someone that would. I think that it was Hopewell, I haven't been in that church in years but I don't think that they had a baptistry in there.