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Interview with Richard Grimm

Peter Wickline

Richard Grimm

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PW: -Peter Wickline, with Life Along the Kokosing, Rural Life Center, Kenyon College. On February 17, 2000 interviewing Dick Grimm at his home in Fredericktown

PW: How long have you lived in the area?

DG: Oh, we've been here, we moved here from Marion, we've been here about 20 years, now. Here at Knox lake. And uh...I know this area- around the lake 'course, I'm very familiar with but...the area your speaking of, I've been there, but I haven't spent a lot of time over there.

PW: But you have mushroomed over there?

DG: Oh yes, I've hunted mushrooms over there. Different times I went over -clears throat- Marel hunting one time. Which uh- of course- is a spring sponge mushroom, that everyone knows. Unfortunately I didn't have too much luck, but I...as I recall it was pretty dry that spring and uh...that what's you run into when you hunt mushrooms. No water, no mushrooms, that's just the way it is. So, unlike wildflowers and other things it's sort of a hit an' miss proposition. You know, it might be great one year and lousy the next, or great one week and lousy the next. But uh...fortunately when you hunt 'em all year long why...you always come up with something. You know, that's...my mushroom hunting doesn't end after spring marel season. However last year was so- probably the worst year I can recall, ah...it was so dry, all year long, and ah...I was even in house mycologist for a couple of clubs out of town and ah- it was the same, it was just awful. All over last year was...[sound of hands rubbing together] was a bigger drought than I think people suspect maybe. We are wizards at drought -mycologists- because where other people have their vacations ruined with rain we ah...pray for it [laughs]. So we work backwards from what is the norm.

PW: How long have you been mushrooming?

DG: Oh, I suppose a little better than forty years...ah, it-it's a very challenging hobby it's- I've encompassed most of the other things in-in the natural sciences, some of them I've avoided: simply because I've had no interest in 'em but...oh, when I hit the fungi that- that overtook everything else. But fortunately -you know- if it is dry you can go out and look at other things but...ah, my prime concern is the fungi.

PW: So, last year wasn't a good year, what- wasn't a good year. What- how would you describe a good year?

DG: A good -of course- is-is plenty of rain [laughing a little]. Ah, that's the prime concern. Other types of weather doesn't enter in to it too much. In other words, if it's- ah,...ahh, cold, summer

cold: I'm not talking about freezing but...that doesn't matter I mean, different things in the fungi like different types of weather. And- for instance, you can find the super markadnokee which is- which is a species called *Flamulina Valudipis*. And...you could pick that now, if it would warm up for about a week. And ah, it's always out during early spring marel season, and then late again in the fall. So, that's the extreme of- of coldness, and then a lot of the bowleats, which is a tube-bearing...fungi, like summer. So we spend a lot of time...hunting them in the summer and fall, along with many many other mushrooms. The best time- I generally start...[creaking of couch springs] after the marel season, which is- typically ends around here by the end of May. By that time the grass gets so tall-even if they're there you can't see 'em. And then June is kind of a bummer it isn't too good, but then, about the fourth of July on to frost is...my mushroom season. That's when I hunt mushrooms and...it's always good when you eat 'em because nobody else bothers 'em -you know- at that time everybody- All the anglo-saxons are afraid of mushrooms they don't- the very thought of 'em makes 'em cringe. But ah...the slovaks an- and the polacks, and the Germans and the Italian [note: pronounced eye-talian] and especially the Russians, and the French, they're all into 'em. So when those people come over ah, we get a lot of 'em in our society, which- we have a society, here in Ohio, and we get a lot of uh...people from foreign countries that move in-more so now than before because more people are movin' in -now- than before. But uh, they're not afraid- they don't know the names of the mushroom but they know what they're looking at. But in- unfortunately some of the Orientals uh...have mushrooms in their country that look like...our deadly poisonous mushrooms. So, a lot of times when you read -poisonings it-it's-it's in the Orientals and in -one particular mushroom so, they just mistake 'em. Mistaken identity -you know- from their country to ours. Typically a lot of mushrooms look the same, abroad or here, but that particular one doesn't. It's unfortunate because there's a lot of poisonings due to that. However, posionings...are-are rare because there isn't very many poisonous mushrooms, believe it or not [laughing].

PW: Is there any particular species of mushroom which are rare, but common to this area?

DG: Uhh, you run across one once in a while but, ah, nothing too much. Mushrooms are pretty cosmopolitan, I mean they...east to west, there's not much variation, they look a little different but it's the same mushroom. So no, I wouldn't say anything...course we don't actually wallow in the mushrooms that- for mycorisa with pine, because we don't have a whole lot of pine, other than our pine plantations, which do support those mushrooms. I mean- I'm not sure the pine plantings over in the Kokosing area, I don't believe there's too many there may be some- some sparse plantings but nothing like the plantations like around the lake here, and some other areas in the state. Those are for a whole different group of mushrooms, so they wouldn't be as prevalent here as they are -like in Michigan and places where there is pine.

PW: If they haven't been there much- what are the particular types of mushrooms you find at the reservoir and along the Kokosing?

DG: You mean over there?

PW: Uh, at Kokos-

DG: Over here? Or, Kokosing. Well, like I say, a lot of mushrooms in the summer are supported

by what we call mycorisal association which means, myco- meaning mushrooms and risal mean roots. So the mushrooms coincide with certain trees, thus you have to have the trees. Kokosing isn't too well supported from a sylvan aspect at all because, ah...I----i don- there's some area- now I shouldn't say that in a broad sense because, like I said the times I wer- I was over there I was looking for marels. So I wasn't in- I was looking for elm valleys and uh...elm basically supports -old apple orchards and things like that. But now were I to go over there in the summer time I notice a pretty wooded area on the left-hand side of Waterford rd which I never was in which probably would be good for-for the summer species. I don't know when you're gonna take your walk but [breath] if it was in the summer time...your apt to run across, especially if you get along a wooded area along -along the river. I hunt a lot along this-this branch of the Kokosing, and it produces well in the summertime.

PW: So any particular types you're likely to run into? Aside from morels-

DG: Ah, well, there's a lot of small stuff of course, it's insignificant...ah, you're apt to find Oyster mushrooms on-on the willow over around there, and on elm. Ah, depending on when you go, if it's in the summer time ah, you could find ah, a whole rushula, boleteats, some are boleteats that grow under oak, especially, that you're apt to find...along th-along the river over there. River's support a lot of oddball things, especially along the banks -you know- where different timbers float in and lodge and ah, they'll support different types of mushrooms that wouldn't normally grow in the area proper. So it's a good place to find -odd things.

PW: Such as?

DG: And ah, I would be hard put to suggest what those might be because it depends on-on what the habitat would be. Mushrooms just don't grow anywhere, they're very ah, very fussy about where they-where they form their mycorisa and produce. So, depending on what the habitat is, that's what you're going to find.

PW: Any particular, in your experience, strange finds you've had? Anything that stands out?

DG: Around here? Yeah, I've found...these would just be names to you. I've found a coltrichia over here, which is very rare. I find ah...ohhhh, hidden amembricadum which is a tooth fungi. It isn't too common I find it along the lake here. I can talk more about along the lake here, because...I live here, but that's the same water and the same habitat as you'll find around the reservoir. This river is ah, surprisingly clean except -you know- what people throw in it. As is that water over there, ah....I've got to get over there more really, I'm glad you came around an[laughing] and mentioned it, the place is there. Because, when you have a place like I live here you just -frequent here, you know, but it's- but I do want to get over there this year. I don't think ah- I-it's difficult to talk about rarities- because they're rare, in the first place, and any mention of them would just be a name to the novice. It'd be hard to describe why they're different and why they're here...and so forth.

PW: Well, don't be afraid to.

DG: Pard?

PW: Well don't be afraid to if it...

DG: Well, I could- I could mention a lot of mushrooms that you'd probably find I don't think they'd be particularly rarities, but...

PW: That'd be fine.

DG: This...this area for some reason is conducive to a mushroom called ah, ahhh *Macrolepioda Racodis* which is a- which is a gill bearing mushroom, that isn't too common around different places but for some reason, this area produces 'em under landscape spruce, for one thing, and old-ah, old manure areas like around old barns that actually aren't in use anymore. The manure is rotted and- I found a place down here, by the dam like that one time, and right along the edge of the building where- I picked fifty-two really very nice- and these are edible, they're good [laughs].

PW: Was this a place with a pond right in front of it? The barn had-

DG: Down here, you mean, where I found those?

PW: Yes.

DG: No, it's up on the right hand side of the road...ah. A fella who used to live down here kept horse in there, and ah-frankly- he didn't tend 'em very well, and the building fell in and the horses grew [laughs] abnormally long hooves and- and things like that. He didn't have so many but what- the manure had rotted and the building fell in, it was just an unnatural habitat but it was very good. Since then I've hunted that type [laugh] because I didn't really realize that that's where they grew.

PW: So, you consume the mushrooms yourself, do you sell to anyone else? Or help anyone else who-

DG: Yeah, I-I have people here all the time, they just stop in, people who -you know- aren't afraid of them and go out and pick 'em. But they won't eat 'em because I've told 'em -you know- 'bring it to me and I'll be glad to tell you what it is and whether or not you can eat it.' But I'll never say 'you can eat that' I'll say 'I eat that.' Because there are allergies to these things and- if I tell somebody to eat something and they get sick...-you know- it'd be like telling you to eat strawberries, and then they make you ill, you blame me. So, I don't do that, but yeah, I have a lot of people who stop in. Like I said, we have a society in the state, and a few of the members live right along here who I've...enrolled, twisted a few arms. We get together once in a while and go out, just like birders or wildflower hunters or anything else. I did have an oddity here, two years ago I think. It was so wet in the spring that this farmer couldn't plow. And the year before he had corn in the field just like you see there now, and he had picked it but he couldn't get in to plow, and there's a mushroom called the Wine *Stroferia* which is a large mushroom, sometimes gets as big as a dinner plate. And that corn field right over there was lined was lined, the rows of stubble were lined with those things, not the whole field, but a good large section. I picked, oh, probably one hundred and fifty and left the rest of them, I mean what do you do with [laughing]

five hundred mushrooms!?! When nobody want them, would be a afraid to eat them, really. But that particular mushroom is grown commercially now, I don't do too much with commercializing I just- growin' my own mushroom...because, mother nature takes care of that. I just go out and hunt 'em. The only advantage of growing your own like shiitake and oyster mushrooms and things like that is you can water them, yourself. Whereas I have to depend on- on mother nature and she isn't- always cooperative. But I would think that a float down a river like the Kokosing over here, in a canoe, close to the shore, would conjure up a lot of things if a person would want to do that.

PW: You've spoken a bit about the standing bodies of water, how would the river environment change how the mushrooms are grown?

DG: Typically, when you have a flood plain, you won't find mushrooms. It just soak 'em too much and it just ruins the hunting. However, in the spring if you have, you know a flash flooding and then it goes down, that doesn't affect anything. Matter of fact, one of my better morel places is right here along the river where that happens. It's an old elm valley and when you find elm that the bark -you know- our elm is infected, it has a blight. I was trying to think of the fungi that does it...it's immaterial anyhow, it's ah- the elm is infected by a beetle which carries this fungi with it. And of course it's killing all of elm trees. You'll seldom see a large elm anymore. When you come across elm that's -ah, maybe seven to ten years old, and the bark's starting to come off of it onto the ground: that's a great place to hunt morels. It don't dare have all fallen off, and lay there, in other words it don't dare be an old [emphasized] dead elm tree. Just, it- you've got to hit it and it don't dare just be starting [laugh].

You've got to hit it just at the right time, and that's when that bark's sloughing off. And if you find one or two at the base of that, you can usually move that bark away and find all kinds of 'em in there. That's just one -I mention that because most people are interested in hunting morels, that's-that's their thing, but I would advise them to get involved with their- if they're into the natural sciences at all they'll get hooked on morels. Or on mushrooms in general. I don't know much else to tell you unless you're interested in...in how these things propagate themselves.

PW: Sure.

DG: They grow from spores which drop from things we call gills, which are underneath the caps. Or, in the case of boleteats these are a series of little tiny holes. And-and these spores develop up in these holes like a series of field piles stacked together and shoved up in under there. And then the tooth fungi 'course, they-they produce themselves on exterior of the teeth. In puffballs -when you kick and old puffball and all that smoke that flies out of it -those are spores. These spore will fl- you can't see them individually, they're too small, you have to look at them under a microscope, but these spores are so light that uh, it could take a spore a half-hour to half a day just to drop from a mushroom to the ground. But in the meantime if there's any breeze at all -of course- they're blowing away. There are so many of them -'course- that if they were all to...to...ahhh root [laughs] so to speak, and grow, there'd be more mushrooms than human beings. But as it is, they have to seek a special habitat to grow. Therefore probably 90% of 'em just die out because they land...you know, it's be like planting a tomato in cinders or something like that: wrong place. So, when they land, this spore...in the right place, this spore produces a -if you want to liken it to a seed, a little rootlet type thing, called a hypha. And these are cells and

this series of cells develop into a growth called a mycelium, which is a total soma structure of the mushroom. That, in itself, is the mushroom, and it's underground. If you ever rigged a- if you pull bark off of a tree, you might see it growing on the wood, or if you rake back leaves in the woods and you see this white, cottony looking stuff, that's all mycelium of some sort of fungi. Now, the thing that you pick and eat is the fruit, which this somatic will grow close to the surface and then, for whatever reason, produce fruiting bodies. And these fruiting bodies are what you eat. So you can pick all the mushrooms you want to and it doesn't hurt the plant, because the plant's underground, and that plant will exist as long as the goodie's there, whatever it's eating: horse manure, jus- soil in your yard, or on a tree or a haystack, or wherever might land. That mycelium will devour that, until it's gone, then the fruiting ends, it's over. So a lot of people ask me 'what do you do about a -a dark green fairy ring in your yard?' You've probably seen those. People will put weed killer and everything else on 'em -you know- but you can't get rid of them because it's a myceliar growth, and it's caused... One of the main ones is a little mushroom called marasmius oryzae, and it's a- it's a really good mushroom, delicious to eat, but I don't advocate eating it because there's also a couple of poison one's grow that way. I wouldn't want to encourage someone to eat something that's poisonous. Anyhow, this forms a fairy ring which is -when the spore lands the mycelium grows out from the spore, in a circle. So, everything between the spore and the fairy ring is dead, I mean the mycelium has eaten that. But as it moves on out, into a larger circle, and eats whatever it's eating, then it leaves behind it this -probably a nitrogen content which encourages this deep green circle, and every year that gets bigger and bigger, and you can decide how much growth that mycelium has made in a year, and then measure from the center to the outer circle and decide how old the whole ring is, you see. Some of them -been taken from an airplane, oh lord, hundreds of years old, because they had the room to expand. Of course, nowadays somebody digs a basement and that ends that, it don't go any further. So, that's the way mushrooms grow. For a prolonged times the state wouldn't allow us to pick mushrooms in our state parks, because they treated 'em like, flowers and so forth, that you destroy the plant if you pick the fruit, but your not. The club finally advised them, and they took it under advisement, and decided that it could be treated as a fruit or a nut or anything else that you could take from a tree in a state park: berries -you know- carry them home and eat them. So as long as you can prove that's what you're going to do with them, and you're not out there picking some hallucinogenic thing which you're going to get in trouble, serious trouble, if they catch you with it. You better be able to identify what you're picking, because I'll tell you something [laughing], most of the rangers don't know one mushroom from the other, and they're going to take the negative viewpoint right away. Whatever you're picking you'd better know what you're picking, so you can clear yourself if you run into somebody.

PW: When did the state, the park department, recall the ban against picking mushrooms?

DG: It's been about six years, now, I think. Most states still don't allow it. I don't know where they jus- it's easier -you know- especially in a state function to just cast out a blanket coverage, and uh -you know- you accept the bad with the good and the good with the bad, and it limits a lot of- I can understand plants -you know: people go out and-and pull up ginseng and bloodroot, different things that they use in...especially now, in natural medicines which are kind of catching on now. And you know if the state did that, allowed that, that would eventually deplete the flora in the state parks. It's understandable, I mean thei- their attitude, but I think sometimes they ought to do their homework a little bit better on [laughing]. I hope I hope no state person is

listening to this, but I think it would be a good idea -I think they're...they're broadening their - their -their views. I think we have a great department of natural resources, in this state, better than some other states. They're very cooperative, and they put out- they put out a very good book now that's free, all you have to do is sign up for it, and send it in. I'm not here to push the ODNR, it's just when you get into other states you can get into serious trouble picking mushrooms. The Carolinas and the south, mostly. We had a national mushroom foray in Carolina one year, and they picked up something like 22 of our members who strayed from North Carolina into South Carolina. We had to prove what was going on to get them out of the clink [laughs], which was kind of embarrassing, but we didn't know. And somebody, who dreamed up the foray, didn't do their homework very well either. So these are the things that you run into, it's a very interesting hobby. I've written, well, the picture- some of the pictures -I'm not sure just which book you got -I wrote two books. One is just a...a beginner -and I'm not pushing a book either. One is a -is a beginner -mushroom books are laden with Latin, they just scare the amateur to death when -he just casts the whole subject and goes elsewhere. So I wrote a little book -I think it's only about thirty pages long, it doesn't have a -one Latin term in the whole book. And it's just an expose of how to pick ten or fifteen really good edible mushrooms, and then there's some humorous stories involved and so forth. But the booklet is very good, and ah, like I say, I'm not pushing it. If anybody'd want it I'd be glad to see -the club sells it, I just wrote it for the club, and they sell it for a money making project. But ah, it's been well received, and people who've gotten the book say it's one of the better ones they've ever ready for the purpose it was written. And I'll drop that because I sound like I'm being commercial.

PW: [Indistinguishable]they took pictures and I've just seen the slides.

DG: I think you've got the first one which is handprinted and illustrated, and was pretty long. It went from rank amateurism to mediocre collecting, to pretty serious stuff toward the end. So, it's a very good book but I never got it published, I never tried to get it published. I have a few...copies floating around which one of the club members did on the copying machine, that - the colored sections of the book lost a lot of its value because of course the all came out black - you know how copiers are. But now with the advent of...color computers [PW: you're thinking about scanning-] I think I'm going to get it finished a little lighter. I was going to reprint it on - you know- on a processor but, everybody I show it to says 'don't do that, it's original the way it is' and 'if you could get it published-[breaks off laughing]' it may fly and it may not, I don't know if I'll ever do anything about it. But it's a- it's interesting. I wrote the book in just...two months is all it took. But I'm retired [laughing] what else do you do when there's snow outside and freezing temperatures. I write a lot anyhow, but writing mushroom books comes very easy for me. It's like writing anything -you know- if you know how to ride a horse, it's not hard to talk about how to become a horse rider, and so forth. So...I probably have lapsed a little bit the last couple of years, because of the drought mostly. I get a little disenchanted once in a while, and stray away from it, but I always return- [side ends]

-what I was saying. If people can get beyond their stomach, and get to their brain. Learning these things is a challenge, I think -course like I say I haven't touched all the natural science. But it's a bigger challenge than anything I've ever tackled. And if you like challenges, in natural sciences, it's a great, great field to get into. Ahhh, mushroom growing, commercially, blossomed about seven or eight years ago I would say. That is, other than the little round buttons that you find,

like forever -you know- in the supermarket. But growing a variety of mushrooms...the people who grow them thought it would be a great thing -you know. Well, the old Anglo-Saxon, we call it mycophobia, of not eating unusual mushrooms, or wild mushrooms...The total conception was [laughs] a flop, you know they put them in the supermarket; people would pick up their little white button mushrooms and go home, and they'd never try the others. So, that sort of, it didn't really fizzle, but it didn't go like -like interpretation would have it. But now with the natural...medicine thing coming on, there are mushrooms like -mytake which is a- grifola frondosa technically, 'hannah-o'-the-woods,' commonly called, which is very medicinal. However, all mushrooms, like a lot of wild, natural foods, are only medicinal-medicinal in the effect that they enhance the immune system. In other words, few of them act directly on the problem, they just enhance the immune system to fight whatever malady may exist. Hannah-o'-the-woods, the...shiitake, which is *lentinus edodes*, which is grown on logs: very heavily now, I mean that's one of the more prominent ones, that's medicinal. Rechie, which is a polypore that grows wild, *Polyporus lucidum*, and *Polyporus sugae* which grows on Hemlock, is medicinal. There are others that would be not probably available around here, there's a group called cortisepts which-which ah...finds its habitat on dead or dormant beetles, beetle grubs and stuff like that, and it's medicinal, but it typically grows more in China, the one that's used for medicine.

PW: So, the one's you were mentioning before that are all common to this area?

DG: Yes, especially the Hannah-o'-the-woods.

PW: Along the river?

DG: Well, if you can find a big old oak tree, they always grow under oak, no place else, right at the base of oak. So right along the river, it'd be, maybe not so good, but I have found them there. Once you find them you can return year after year, until -like I said, until they use what they're - and it seems to take a long time with this particular one to use up the good. You can pick 'em, I picked -I had a place in the Marion cemetery where I picked under an old oak tree oh, seven years before I left town. And they were still growin' ther- maybe they are now, I don- I've never gone back, because I have my spots around here that I get it. It's a good mushroom, delicious thing...and I contradict by saying that I don't particularly like 'em. But frankly, I don't particularly mushrooms [laughs], my wife does, that's how I find out poisonous ones from edible ones, see I just feed her, she's around the next day: why, it's edible [laughs].

PW: What about other groups, you mentioned the rooters of the area, you ever run into them much?

People like the ginseng hunters?

DG: You mean the other medicinal thing?

PW: Yeah.

DG: Yeah, I have a lot of 'em in my back yard, cause bloodroot's very easy to grow, but bloodroots are treacherous, and let me tell you about it. You never take it internally, however

now they are using very dilute tincture of bloodroot to work on cancer. Now, bloodroot exteriorly is used, on what I have [indicating the top of his head], which is skin cancer, and its - There is a formula that's used to make a salve containing bloodroot. Typically the way this works is you only put it on one spot at a time. If you think you have cancer, that what you have is cancer. If you put it on and it doesn't react, it's not cancerous it's just some sort of a mole or growth or something, or a wart. But if it is cancerous, it'll start to look, to coin a phrase just godawful, it gets all bloodshot and pussie and that lasts for about three or four days, and then the thing drops off, and you have a very faint scar. And the further the cancer's spread under you skin, the further that thing will spread, until it gets it all. I've read articles of women with breast cancer losing their entire breast, just like a mastectomy, it just went until it got all the cancer. So, it isn't something I'd play around with, I'm personally going to use it, I just got the formula from a young lady in our club, who is ah...her father was -was Native American and her mother was Korean, and right now her college career is directed toward aiding Native Americans, that's what she does. She's getting to use computers and all this stuff and take it out -well, up in North Dakota, actually. Anyhow, she sent me the formula for the stuff, I'm going to try it once I get it put together. Dr. Weild in his book mentions and feels it's...quite acceptable. The main thing is you don't use it on more than one at once. Apparently it would make you quite ill if you did that. Traumatic, you know, it would be trauma. Ginseng of course is supposed to be very good-

PW: Do run into people who collect them?

DG: I have friends who grow it and I have friends who just hunt it. I find it occasionally but I don't go out specifically to hunt it, I just run across it while I'm hunting mushrooms. I don't make a habit of digging it -you know- I have tried it -you know- I question some of the- but most of those things are long term things, you don't take it today and you're better tomorrow. It might take six to eight months for something even to kick in and get with it, and then you don't particularly notice it because, like I said, most of it works on your immune system. You're fending off a lot of things you don't even know you're fending off, because of the enhanced immune system. Goldthread is one, that's around here....It's hard just to come up off the top of my head, but there are a lot of them. There's a lot of native plants, probably along that Kokosing river, that could be classified as medicinal, if you know what you're looking for. So my advice to anybody -there's all kind of books out there -you know. If you get a mushroom book don't go half-cocked, and start eating stuff -you know. A half-knowledge is the worst thing that can happen to a mushroom hunter. He thinks he knows more than he does, and there are a lot of twin-like species out there: they're going to get a hold of the wrong thing. The odds are in there favor, because like I said there isn't that many poisonous mushrooms. And a lot of them are so small that you wouldn't want to fool with them anywhere, 'less you wanted to take a trip [laugh], and most of those are very small. But, even then, if you indulge in recreational mushrooms the trip could be a one-way ticket [laughs], if you don't know how much to use, the trip -you might blast off and not come back, so I wouldn't advise that either. Besides, hallucinogenic mushrooms are quite rare in Ohio: there's only one and I hesitate to mention it. Some weirdo would go out and get him some. [PW: indistinguishable] Yeah, it wouldn't kill him, but it wouldn't be a good experience. So, I would -you know if you've got any kind of a natural plant-man -most natural plant people know the medicinal plants, and if you had one along with you on that trail, I'm sure that you would -you would find some things that you could liken to that. I haven't indulged in them much. I mean I have a son in law who just -well, he had lung cancer and it was removed,

and then he developed cancer on the one he had left. And rather than go into chemotherapy he's going into this natural medicine and ah...after he was- he's...they gave him less than six months to live. After two months, nothing has grown, a few of the places have decreased in size. So...you know, I can't point to the natural medicines and say 'this was the answer' but he's not really doing anything else so it almost has to be. So, all I would say about medicinal mushrooms or plants is: don't expect miracles tomorrow, you know they just don't happen that way. Anything else?

PW: Well, to change subject off of that, any particular stories you think that people might find interesting about your time going along the river and mushrooms in general? And it doesn't even have to be mushroom hunting it can be your experience around here.

DG: Well of course in the Kokosing -too bad my granddaughter isn't home, she's into fishes, and she's pretty adept at that stuff. Do you take people along on these trips? Or are you-

PW: We want to give them the tour and let them do it themselves.

DG: I see, yeah.

PW: Because, that's the point is to get them interested.

DG: I see, yeah.

PW: You can stand and talk to somebody all day, but they aren't going to

DG: Yeah. It's always better to research something than to have somebody tell you what it is, because it goes in one ear and out the other. Especially mushrooms, because three-fourths of it's Latin. Yeah, there's a lot of nice things I would, you know, anybody interested in trees...all of our plants grow, according to habitat, and areas along the Kokosing would no doubt support sycamore...beautiful tree. How far does this thing run -how far does this trip go?

PW: Well it starts basically up in Millwood.

DG: Yeah, well there's a lot of sycamore along there. I was going to say right over here, the fella that raises Angus cattle over here on route 30. That's the branch, from up here I believe - there's several branches of the Kokosing, and they all join an-and form the main branch, which starts at Mount Vernon as I recall. Anyhow over here on route 13, fella raises Angus cattle, if you ever drive along there, just before you get to the railroad tracks, look off to the left there and you'll see the -the grandest array of sycamore trees I think I ever saw in my life. So, you'll run into those, and of course the willows, the elms, the alder...you'll find eh -of course you'll always the ever-faithful...what I want to say the hedge...god, that awful plant that grows everyplace now. It's slipped my mind right now, it's real thorny, anyhow that thing grows everyplace and you'll find it there. Wild barber sometimes grows along the river. If, depending on the time of year, mayapples will grow along the river. It's easier to march along and tell you what everything is than try to recall it.

PW: Any stories you have, like, things that happened?

DG: Not really. As a kid, of course, I used to always float the rivers, south of here, down around Coshocton. We'd hunt turtles, you know, I'd go with old gentlemen, my age now, but I was a kid then. And of course, snapping turtles always crawl in their hole in the bank head-first. Or so they'd tell me, and I was always reluctant -these old-timers would just go along and pull their boat up next to the bank and reach in these hole and grab the snapping turtle by the tail and pull them out. But I always had aspirations of one going in backwards, and that'd be the one, and I'd grab a hold of his head.

PW: Or try to, at least.

DG: Yeah, you might see a soft-shell turtle, there's a lot of those in the river which are called leatherback -which typically lay in an area- and a great long neck, probably nearly a foot long. And they'll stay on the bottom but, slowly, poke their neck way up and stick their nose just out of the top, the surface, and get air, and then withdraw their head back down in their shell again. They're edible, and tasty, and their shell isn't as hard a snapping turtle, that's why they call them leatherbacks, it's sort of soft to touch. Frogs, probably see frogs, bullfrogs, leopard frogs, which again you're talking edible if you're talking bullfrogs, a delicacy. Once you've put them in the skillet and fry them and the legs begin to jump around in the skillet, it kind of deters [laughing] some people from eating them, but they settle down eventually, and taste pretty good. Squirrels, yeah, squirrels are apt to be in the hickory that grow along the river, mostly red squirrels, the little red devils. You can always tell a red squirrel from a fox squirrel because he has a white chest and spectacles, white spectacles. Whereas a fox squirrel is much larger, and has no white, to speak of, on him at all, grey squirrels too. Ah...nettles, good lord, you're probably apt to run into nettles, which is also medicinal, but these would be stinging nettles, which have little stinging spurs on the undersides of the leaves. Of course, anybody that brushes past them is going to get stung and it will itch like the dickens for a while. Typically if you poke your stung area in the river and wash it real good, it doesn't cure it, but it subdues and it goes away faster I think. Mussels is something pretty rare that we have, in the Kokosing, which is- Our mussel shells are-are quite large, probably, oh, the size of a good sized softball, cut in half. And if they're laying open, they're dead, of course. If they're upright, with just the backside sticking out they -the locomotion is done by a leg, a soft muscle leg which sticks out and pumps them along the bottom. So you can see the track, and if you follow the track you'll eventually come upon a mussel.

PW: So you've come upon them there?

DG: Oh yeah, oh there's a lot of them here, especially in this branch. Now I'm not real sure, but I'm sure it would be the same over there. If you pick them up, a lot of times there a little bit open, they'll quickly squeeze shut and squirt wat-just like a clam. All they are is a clam, but as clear as our water may seem, it's not clean enough to eat mussels, because mussels live on the silt. So, if there's any...chemicals of toxins to be picked up, they're going to pick it up, and it's not going to hurt them, but it sure would hurt you, if you ate it.

PW: [indistinguishable]

DG: Yeah, yeah, it's just like non-point fertilizer, yeah. So it's the same with bottom feeding fish, you know. Although you wouldn't get enough mercury probably to hurt you, a consistent diet of Kokosing fish would probably eventually get to you. Or not just there, you can't lay it on the Kokosing, that's anywhere now. Our lake here, which is Kokosing water, not that particular branch, but- is full of catfish. This lake's *full* of catfish, and they're very nice -they're very good, but I wouldn't want to make a steady diet of them. I think, possibly, the ecologists have us running scared a little bit on some of this stuff, but that's better than running the other way. It's like the weather forecast on TV, you know they...they keep you guessing and scare you to death, to keep your attention, but it doesn't always happen. Mussels would be one thing in particular I'd look for because, that's a rarity, anymore, to find a river that's clean enough to support mussels.

PW: So you fish, you mentioned, fish- ever fish down along the Kokosing?

DG: Oh, this ah, I suppose that- no, I fish the river more than I do the lake. This river, I don't know how it is now it's probably over-fished, because, the minute you have nice fishing place, the department publicizes it or it get sport and field or something, as an insert. Then, everybody and his brother converge on the place, and believe it or not, if you get enough fishermen, it don't take too long to fish a place out. Ah...that, this river, and I suppose that one over by the reservoir too, was at one time, full of smallmouth bass. I mean I had the best smallmouth bass fishing I've ever had, for probably the past...not the past but the first 15 years I lived over here. Now, the past five years it's depleted. Now, whether it's being overfished or it's being polluted, I don't know. But there are catfish in the Kokosing. A little fish you're apt to run across called a gizzard shad, which swims around in real thick schools, has a black spot right behind it's gill, I find that down here in the Kokosing. Largemouth bass, too, they just weren't as prolific as the smallmouth. It's strange that there are smallmouth bass in the river below the lake here, but no smallmouth bass in the lake; it's just a different habitat. The Kokosing, as you wade it, you'll find, is very gravelly and full of sandstone, and actually, this is the end of the Wisconsin glacier, right here. So, I've heard that you can pan gold in the Kokosing. A rarity but -and not, you know, just little bitsy things. [PW: Indistinguishable] If you didn't have nothing to do, you know, you could go out to- and you know, you're apt to find...ah, different things along the sur [?] because of that, because this was where it ended, and there are some trees, and I know you're going to ask me which one, and I'm not going to be able to come up with the answer, but over in the Mohican valley there are trees there, hemlock, hemlock's a rarity in this state. Whereas you may find them along the moraine, although not here, for whatever reason, that's a product of the north, you know, and that was dragged in here by the glacier. And if you were familiar, and I'm not too familiar with some of the odd plants, and probably mushrooms, I don't know -were dragged in here, by the glacier that aren't, you know, natural in this area. So, that's always something though. This is an interesting area along here, just for that reason. The rivers, course, before the glacier -I'm not speaking as an authority on glaciers -before the glacier, the rivers in this state ran the other direction. Many rivers now run...east and west to south. Whereas originally, like the Tias valley, and the Tias river used to run across the state, east to west, and then of course when the glacier came down it -it dredged it out and made everything run the other direction. So, one can find -if you would -if you would spend a lot of time along the Kokosing river, as well as the Mohican river, and Wohonding and the Killbuck crick, but mostly along Kokosing river right here, in this vicinity, you would probably run across a lot of unusual things that I couldn't tell you about because I don't know what they are. But, if you were looking for any kind of specific rocks, or

god bless you gold [laughs], if you were apt to find it, or oddities in vegetation, you'd probably be more apt to find it here than anywhere. But you'd have to know what you were looking for in the beginning, or else it would just be -you know- another stone, or another flower or whatever. But ah...I belong to a wildflower or plant society too, over in Mansfield. They have a bunch of brains in that; I thought I knew a lot until I joined that club. I'm fortunate -you know- you want to go out with people like this. You learn a lot of things and it enhances a walk down a river because you know, a lot what you're looking at, and maybe see some, some rare things that you wouldn't normally find. People who will take this trip, are interested in nature or they wouldn't be there. And trips like these, in my opinion, only whet the appetite, and enhance people to do -to go further, I mean there's nothing like it. You've got to realize people...there are thousands of people in cities like New York that never saw anything except what's in central park, and they go clear through life and miss, half of the freebies that're out there. You don't have to be a millionaire to enjoy what's out there. Matter of fact, millionaires don't usually enjoy what's out there. It's the simple that we've had bestowed upon us that...that make for great interest. I think anybody could become a naturalist, if they could just steer their self away from the 'thing to do' so to speak. I've taken a lot of kids who've never had the chance, or never took the chance, they weren't from cities necessarily, they just got into drugs and things, and never got out there. I take them out, turn 'em around, and show them that there's something else out there besides what they're doing. It's there, all you have to do is look for it...I think I've babbled about as long as I can, unless you got something else you want to cover.

PW: Uh, well, anything else you'd want people -you said it pretty clearly, is there anything else you'd want people taking the tour to know? That they should see?

DG: Ah, yeah. I'm not a birder either but you're going see a lot of birds along there that you don't typically see too, waterbirds: like kingfishers, herons, there's a lot of herons along the Kokosing. Some people never seen a great blue heron, that's a bird of majesty: walk around out here in the back in the channel and muck and never sink in a half an inch, I can't do that. Every time I go out there, I'm in trouble. Kingfishers, and herons, ducks: mallards and teals, mostly around here, a lot of bluewing teals, spoonbills, I don't know whether. Most of that, you have to pick up a lot of the ducks through migrating season, they go on, you know, to the north from here. If you get close, I don't know how close that comes, to route 13 over here, there's a low-lying barnyard over here, that in march...boy, has a lot of wildfowl: ducks, swans even last year, wild swans, whistling swans, spoonbills, greenwing teals, baldpates: they're all in there at one time or another, sometimes together. We have here in the lake a -a pair of loons that always show up while they go north. We have a pair of bald eagles, which I wouldn't care to disclose where the nest is, but...unless half the people in the state of Ohio come. But I see 'em right out here in this little woods right next to me, once in a while, because this channel has a lot of carp -comes back in here, and that's easy prey for an eagle. We have a pair of ospreys, probably wouldn't be, certainly commonplace. They fly up the chan- [end of tape]

Beginning of tape 2.

DG: -They, ah, their song is 'drink-your-tea' and you can hear 'em...they're very social, sometimes they'll hop along right along the bank, right along side of you. They scratch like a chicken, they'll stop and [skritch noise] they'll scratch the leaves, so they're interesting to

watch. A lot of warblers, but boy I'm not into warblers, I don't -I'd be into them if I could straighten 'em out. They're like the Russulas in the mushroom group, a jillion of 'em and they always look different. It's a very -very tough group. We've got a lot of goldfinches, they're more apt to be in the fields over there around the reservoir. Some...that would be a nice trip for birders, you know, they -and most birders know their birds, they could go down along there and...but - you know- they might not see some of these birds very often: a lot of hawks, and they'll frequent along the river's edge because of [clears throat] mice and squirrels, and frogs. So, you're apt to see different kinds of hawk, marshhawks would probably show up over there, but I'm certainly not a specialist on hawks; redtails, we've got a lot of them around here. Mammals: you're apt to see racoons, although they're more nocturnal than they are in the daytime. Muskrats: meadow voles, but they're usually more up in the grass. Rabbits: they always house themselves along a river bank. Skunks: again, your nocturnal...I mentioned squirrels, chipmunks all over the place. Pheasants...I've run across pheasants along the river here, however they're more an upland bird, if you get into areas around the reservoir you might run across something like that. Deer, of course, populate that area pretty heavy.

PW: I interviewed Michael Miller the county wildlife officer-

DG: Yeah, you're very apt to, if not see deer, certainly see deer trail, because they frequent the river a lot to drink. There are dirt trails, you'll see areas where they just -pursue that crossing, time after time after time. Ah...I can't think of ah -'course there are high-bush blackberries over there. Unless you would find -there again that's more upland, than it is right along the river. Crayfish, the river's full of crayfish, which is what I use when I fish for smallmouth bass.

PW: Is that an edible crayfish?

DG: Well, if you want to take the time [laughing] to- they're not very big. If you get into some areas, that house the big ones -large crayfish...if you walk along the bank, you're going to see...mud chimneys, I don't know if you've ever seen them or not, but they're just a like chimney sticking up out of the mud and they have a hole in the top of them. And these are crayfish dens, on the bank, you don't always find crayfish in the water. Matter of fact, they'll go into a cornfield close to a river and just riddle the corn, you know, eat the leaves. And if you go out after dark with a flashlight, and shine it in a cornfield like that ahh, their eyes shine copper. So you see a whole lot of little copper specks out through there, and those are all crayfish, ruining a farmer's corn. Very good to eat, crayfish are good to eat, the tails -you know- they produce 'em commercially in the south, but these crayfish -you'd have to attack them like ground-feeding...bottom feeding fish and turtles and mussels and things like that. They are bottom feeders, and they do eat junk, feces and different things like that, but so does a chicken and I know a lot of people to eat chicken. So, I wouldn't be afraid to eat crayfish tail, and tail's about all that's good on them, unless you get real big ones, then you can treat them like lobsters: crush the claws and eat the whole thing. But [laughs] the pickin's is pretty meager in our crayfish. The tails are about all -in the south they throw the whole thing it and boil it, and then you just pull off the tail and eat, in butter. You treat them just like lobster; they're sweet, very easy to collect, maybe not as a group as you have it, but if you get a guy with a rake and two guys with a seine, you know you can go up a river and the guy ahead rake the stones and the crayfish swim into the seine, you just stop every so often clean it out, put 'em in a bucket, you can get a lot of crayfish.

Excellent bait for smallmouth bass, I take my little dip-net to the river, and catch a satchel-full of crayfish that I hang on my side, and other than getting bit several times when I reach down in there to get one, it's an easy way to fish, and I just hook 'em through the back and float 'em down a riffle into a little backwater, and there's generally one there. These smallmouth in this river, in either of these rivers, are not small, are not large, I mean. They'll only be twelve inches long, maybe, maximum, but every once in a while -I had one by the bridge over here on Sparta rd, if you know where that is [PW: Yes] you'll probably go under that bridge, on this walk, I'm not sure. I had a big old boy in there, I just couldn't catch him, he got off every time, I guess that's why he was big. I'd float a crawfish down through there, he was there every year, but the last year I was there he wasn't there so maybe somebody smarter than me, [laughs] caught him, but he was a dandy. Occasionally you'll run into that size in the river, usually if you get into deeper areas, but I never spoke too much about the smallmouth. It did make the 'Sports Afield' insert one time, I think after a lot of people fished the river pretty bad, pretty hard. Now the Mohican, that has nothing to do with you, that's probably the cleanest river around here, and they -the department's really stocking that river, that river's full of trout, walleye and everything else. Whereas they're limited here, but they do, they do stock a little here, they used to stock the reservoir here muskiline, but now they've made this into a bass lake for...what I want to say, ah... all the bass fisherman gather here on Thursday and compete, so they have a rule on this lake that isn't on many lakes, and that's that you can't a bass out of this lake less than 18 inches. You can catch him, but you'd better put him back. All the game warden's [laughs] aren't on the lake, and there's this thing called binoculars. So, I wouldn't advise you to keep a bass under 18 inches. Well, the theory is, eventually all the bass in this lake will be big, except -you know- the fry and those that are growing up, they expect to really have a lake of large bass, just for contest fishing, so that's the rule in this lake. I would- notify all fishermen to that effect, in case they don't see the signs. The largemouth, in the river that you're going in -aren-aren't real large, I've never caught a big one but I suppose there are some in there. Ah...I'm not into insects so I can't help you there much. I really can't think of much else.

PW: It's alright, is there anything else you want to say? I mean, it doesn't have to be about anything.

DG: No, I ah...I'll make a commercial pitch, and ask people to join our mushroom society. Just- I just like to get people interested, you know it's not like any kind of a financial thing at all. We're just a group like any other natural science group that goes out and investigates mushrooms. On a good year, you can learn in the field than you can...reading twenty books, on the same subject, because we have a few people in our club that are very knowledgeable, and we're a nature group, we're not just -we're -we're basically mushrooms, but when we get a goodly number of members in the field together, I challenge any group in the state to...there's always somebody out there who knows something about something. So, it's a good learning process for, for people who are interested in that sort of thing. And I think all naturalists like to broaden their horizons as much as possible.

PW: I can't guarantee that it'll make it in, but why don't you give the full name of the group.

DG: Pardon?

PW: Why don't you give out the full name of the group, I can't guarantee it'll make it in.

DG: Oh, the Ohio Mushroom Society? That's the name of it, they could just get in touch with me and I'll put 'em on the right track. I'm not real sure what- what the uh...the fellah who takes care of the- the books and things. I 'm not sure just what...his full address is, so, they could just in touch with me, or if anybody just wants to go out. You know, give me a call, I'm retired, and I've usually got time on my hands. Uhh, I can guarantee you I'm not going to take you to my favorite morel haunt, or anything like that, but I could take you out and teach ya -some things about mushrooms. Kind of an interesting thing, you know, I'm a gardener too, and if you ever grow corn and your plagued by corn smut. Uhhh, which is a, looks like a road-kill without blood [laughs] when you look at it on the stalk, or on the ear. Sorta a silvery-grey, goody-lookin' thing, I guess you might say. Which there in itself is going to deter eating it. But corn smut's good to eat. And...uh...matter of fact, I don't care how much smut gets in my garden, you know I like the smut as much as the corn. So if you pull the smut off in just the right condition, which is when it's silvery gray and just sort of a liquid interior of black...uh...pick it and separate it, and dredge it in flour, and sautee it and then pour your -you know- beaten egg in on top of it then you won't ah- you won't find a better omelet. And it's good just alone, but I think especially in an omelet it's good. It's called ah -try to think of the name: ita- it's a...it's a delicacy in Mexico and it's called Iatialuchi or some goofy name like that. You pay for it through the nose when you get it down there, and you can collect that stuff, if you can find a buyer, and it brings a good price on the commercial market and gourmet restaurants in the big cities like New York, Chicago, places like that. You know, there are a lot of places where the clientele will eat things like that, just because it's different and they can say they ate it. But I would guarantee that... 'course, everybody has different tastes, I guarantee that that-ah, that-uh, a corn-smut omelet would go over with most anybody. I been considering, you know...corn smut is not...relegated to sweet corn at all, you know...it'll grow in corn fields so-. And I'm sure no farmer would object, if you went to his corn field and picked the corn smut, because that's a deterrent to their crop, they don't want anything to do with that. I'm not trying to lean everybody into corn smut, but...ah, give it a try, what can it hurt? Good lord, some people will eat nightcrawlers...If you're not adverse to oddball things, give it a shot, it's sure ain't gonna to hurt you, and it's good, and it's...It's like morels, you know, it's easily identified, that's why everybody eats morels because they know what they're looking at. Well, nothing grows on corn but corn smut, an...and there's nothing that looks like the ugly stuff. So you couldn't mistake it for something else. That was an oddity that I'd forgotten. Oh, and I would mention this too it's kind of interesting because for whatever reason, in the supermarkets, beyond the other mushroom's been presented, portabella caught on. Portabella is a large brown mushroom that you'll see in the supermarket, and it's- it has gills on the underside, which are purple-brown. That's because the spores that I talked about later- earlier, that drop from these gills, begin young with no coloration at all, but as they mature they turn certain colors, and that's- that's a good identification factor to get within the genus of a group of mushrooms. Agaricus are purple-brown, and clytosopes are white, and to do this you pick the top off the mushroom and put- put it gills down on a piece of white paper, and leave it there for several hours, maybe even a day. And that'll drop a print on that paper with certain color, and then you go to that color- 'course there's more than one sp- genus in one color group, but that eliminates all the other color groups. So you eliminate hundreds of mushrooms, just by

getting in that one color group. Anyhow, portabella is an Agaricus, therefore it has purple-brown spores. Well, unknown to most people -now you pay through the nose for portabella, it's expensive. It's the very same mushroom as that little white thing is right next door in those cartons. It's Agaricus Bosporus, but it's variety brune, which is a brown one, it's the same mushroom, only they allow it to open, which does give it more flavor. Now, Agaricus Campestris, which is our pink bottom, it grows out in the pasture fields that people collect. If you allowed that mushroom to get that big, it'd get all wormy, but you see, grown commercially, under strict sanitary conditions, there are no worms, so they can allow that portabella to get -four or five inches across, you can fry that thing and put it in a bun, you've got a sandwich. But you can do the same thing with Agaricus Campestris, if you don't allow it to get too old. And even then, sometimes, now this year in particular, field mushrooms, Agaricus Campestris, were lousy, they were this thick! I saw a group over here on a road here in Berlin township, now I've hunted mushrooms for forty years but I saw more mushrooms in that man's yard than I've ever seen in my life. You could have picked three bushels out of there, and all those- I went up to ask him if I could pick them. I never get in anybody's lawn and certainly not in their pasture-field where there might be a bull, without asking them. He allowed me to pick some, he was a little reluctant, people always think you're going to sue them because you pick the mushrooms out of their yard and eat 'em. I didn't find one worm, in the whole...well I had a milk pail full of them, that's all I had with me at the time. So you run across years like that too when there isn't -especially when you get a couple of good frosts and then a warm spell then they come up from that. Anyhow, to make a long story short, which has already been long, that's the same mushroom as portabella, practically. If you were allowed to get as big as it can get, you can- it'd be big enough for sandwiches too. And then there's another Agaricus called a horse mushroom, ah that grows in these large circles I talked about, or under, I find it a lot under landscape spruce. It has a rosy, not a bright pink bottom, when it's young, but then it gets purple brown spores, or gills, because of the spores. And it smells very much of A N I S E, anise, liquorice. That thing is, well it's as big as the base on your microphone there, which is five inches at least. It's every bit as big as portabella and every bit as good. So you can make your sandwiches out of that too and it don't cost you an arm and a leg. Oyster mushrooms which are [???? something] mushrooms...grow on Elm, but mostly cottonwood, so if you can get into cottonwood bottom...now Oysters are sold in supermarkets as angel wings I think they're called. [PW:unintelligible] Yeah. That's a commercial grown mushroom. And ah, but strangely enough a lot of people don't eat it, it's very good, my wife's favorite. In the right habitat and weather conditions, it likes temperatures from oh- forty to fifty-five, and very wet. So early in the spring and late in the fall's the best time. You can go out, boy, when you find it, and they grow right along the street in the city, silver maple supports it a lot. And I found a group, this past year, by a lady's house. And of course people are always very happy to give them to you, you know, they're afraid of them -they don't want them. I picked a bushel and a half off of that tree, just on the trunk. You know -I gave mushrooms away -everybody around here eats what I give them because they trust me. So if I ever wanted to get rid of the neighbors it'd be easy. And I even froze some and dried some. You can dry mushroom-dried mushrooms...you know, you can reconstitute mushrooms. So if you ever find a lot of them, I prefer to dry them, rather than freeze them. Dried morels are just super good. Just dry them and when you're ready to use them, why...throw -I like to throw them in -in warm water that has maybe a half-consistency of chicken broth, because it soaks out [??? something] and ah... Sauteed they're just as good as fresh...better, I think most dried mushrooms are enhanced by drying, it increases the flavor. So if they're bad they're extra bad and if they're good they're

extra good, once they're reconstituted. Freezing mushrooms typically...ah turns them into mush when you try to use them. When they thaw out they get soft and mushy, you get the flavor, but you don't get the texture. I don't like mushy mushrooms, if I want mushrooms, I'll grind 'em up. But I've got -I've got several jars of different types of mushrooms that I eat, in the winter time. I like 'em in gravies, omelets and things like that. They lose a little something sauteed sometimes, they're a little tough. But ah, they're good, it's a good way to treat 'em. The best way to treat 'em is to just eat 'em [laughs] the way you find 'em. There's a mushroom called a shaggi mane, very easy to identify, but only lasts a short while: what we call autodigestion. It turns black, at first it turns pink at the bottom and then it turns black and it proceeds to eat itself up. So we call that autodigestion, but if you can pick those, just when they're coming out of the ground and there's no pink or black on them at all, and get them home, and separate both sides of the stem: make sure they're dry, that's important. So if you collect them in wet weather, they turn into mushrooms, even when they're fresh. So I usually lay 'em out on a towel -paper towel, dry 'em out a little bit, then dredge 'em in flour and then sautee 'em in a little like -garlic olive oil, or garlic butter, or just plain olive oil or butter: you won't beat that one either. But, you'll never find that on the market because it don't last: two days max probably. It just digests, boy you don't ever want to get that stuff on your clothes. I got it on a porcelain dryer one time and I couldn't get it off. So this stuff it's like Indian ink, it's terrible, but boy it sure is good. We have one lady in the club who just lets autodigest and puts it in a bottle and uses it like ketchup [laughs] mushroom ketchup! It's good on steaks, if you can get past the looks, you know: black. But shaggi mane is...shaggi mane ah, oysters mushrooms; agaricus; lapioda procera, which is a parasol mushroom, that's the one I spoke of ...very early, that grows in -around the old barns and things. It's a better one than that one, and it's plentiful around here: nice gravelly soil. So, sometimes you run across it out in the pasture fields; just prolific, just lots of it. I've got a place right across fro- right across the lake here, where it grows in the woods, which isn't typical, that's a different variety, tastes the same, looks much the same. But I picked up a mess of them one year: found one along the trail, and looked up the bank and they were just -solid. So, you can really -if you're a mushrooms eater you can't believe how you can enhance your mushroom eating by knowing all these good edible mushrooms. You know, there are a lot of mushrooms out there that are edible, but they're no good. Like buying a box of wheaties, and throwing away the wheaties and eating the box: it's edible but it isn't very good. So it's good to know the very good ones. There are mediocre ones, and then there are mildly poisonous ones, and then there are the deadly poisonous, which are not uncommon, but all in one genus. 90% of the mortal mushrooms in this area and mostly in the United States, are in the group called amanita. And they always grow with trees, however, you may have a -a landscape pine in your front yard that would produce it. So you've got to watch for grazing children and things like that. But typically you hunt for them -you don't hunt for them, if you want to investigate 'em, you hunt for them as a collecting species, always in the woods. But they're not uncommon, that's the bad part. If they 90% of the fatalities and you seldom found one, it wouldn't matter much. But the one that kills the orientals is that one; the oriental people who mistake it for a volverielia. It looks very much the same. So, it's got its bad aspects, but what doesn't? You know, there's wild plants that are just as bad, and you learn to stay away from those things that make you poisonous: that poison you. I picked poke over here one year in the corn field before he plowed. Poke typically is only good when it's about -just coming out of the ground up to about four or five inches tall. When it gets old it gets poisonous. You can parboil it, and pour off the water, after two boilings, and render it edible. I'm kind of a chicken, I even parboil the young stuff. But one year I didn't, I

didn't know. I-uh tell you you'll spend the biggest part of the day in the bathroom, both directions, when you eat that stuff. But it's very good, it's a good pot herb, but get them when they're little, god knows it's plentiful enough. And the farmers, again, will welcome you, it's a weed, which most wildflowers and edible plants are: dandelions...poke...
...ah, goosefoot...that's a- chambyludia-? I don't remember half the names anymore. I'm getting so old that I can't remember my wife's name sometime. Can't think of any of them, but there are a lot of good edible plants. They're all pot-herbs, you know, they don't -but usually -like dandelion greens you know, wilted in vinegar and brown sugar and...-bacon, bacon grease. That's hard to beat; that's a very good edible, and only available in the spring, it's tougher and bitter than- the dickens after that. Then you can pick the blossom and make wine out of that. So all that stuff out there is free for the taking, man, if- if people miss a lot. I'll grant you there's some things that people eat that I don't...I don't think are particularly good, but just remember: one time, everything was wild, and the select things were nurtured in -turned into garden products, and that's what people buy and eat. At one time, way back, you probably could've went out in a -pasture somewhere and picked them. So...beauty is in the eyes of the beholder...and a good-lookin' mushroom isn't hard to take. And there are, again, photographers, I mean my god...a third of our members are photographers. There's some mushrooms you just can't walk past without taking a picture of it, 'cause they're just too perfect. Of course, we do a lot of slides, when we get programs and things, of course, that all entails close-up photography and so forth. So, I probably threw away...hundred and fifty slide, this past winter. I probably should have given them to someone, but it's hard to find somebody who cares as much about them. I kept the better, most of them I threw away were not...not good enough to use for a program to depict certain things, you know. But...I, I'm in-house mycologist, different years down at...Natural Bridge, Kentucky. They have a photography weekend for mushrooms. Well, that's what it started out- but people got so interested, that photographers kind of dwindled off, and it's all just collectors now. People want to eat them and people just want to know them. So we'll fifty-sixty people turn up down there just for that. Nice bunch of people...there's nobody quite like Kentucky hill people. West Virginia hill people, either they love you or they hate you. There doesn't seem to be any in between. So, and you know, they'll always gauge you first to see which direction they want to go. But boy if they like you, there's nobody that'll treat you better, and if they don't like you, there's nobody'll snub you more. And I think any Kentuckian that would hear this tape would agree with that. So that's a nice foray to attend, but we have three forays a year- [side A ends]

PW: Seven minutes, eight minutes. Which means we just gotta look for the small bits-

DG: Yeah, just go through and get what you- think would be best, for what you want. Well, you ought to have enough there to select from.

PW: Oh yeah, a lot of good stuff.

DG: I've been known to talk. They always say 'never ask an old man about his health nor his hobby, or he'll give you a verbal novel.' [laughs]

PW: I think what you do is fascinating.

DG: Well, you know when I teach kids, in natural sciences -I volunteer over at Marion and different places- they love those little old stories and stuff: what I did when I was a kid. Matter of fact I'm writing a book now 'bout...my memoirs of when I lived down in Coshocton county, that was back during the depression. My god, some of the things we did, and I wouldn't say it was a book...for anyone who can't handle [laughs] some rather profane moments. Ah...but that's the way it was, and that's the way I write. A lot of people would be shocked this day and age if they went out...in the woods with some high-school kids. I never had [????] but I never, as a teacher got mad about it either. As long as I didn't do it. That's just the way kids talk, nowadays. I can't say to kids, my god, you can't limit it to kids, certainly. You need only turn on the TV and read some novels to know that things aren't what they used to be. Little Bo Peep, don't just tend her sheep anymore [laughs].

PW: Anything else you want to mention?

DG: Oh, I don't think so, I think I've just about talked myself out.

PW: Alright, well thank you very much.

DG: If I had a couple shots of bourbon or something I might go on forever.

PW: Well, who wouldn't?

DG: [Laughs]

DG: Well, actually, I don't drink, not because I'm against, I just got a bad stomach. I'll tip a beer once in a while, but even that gives me fits. I'm not adverse to it, I just don- I can't do it, I don't really care.

PW: Alright, well, thank you very much.