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Interview with Gary Bebout

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Gary Bebout

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Lucie Manoussoff
December 1, 1994
Anso 67-68
Howard Sacks

Transcription of Interview with Gary Bebout

Monday, October 24, 5:00 P.M. at Gary Bebout's home.

LM: You said that you were born here and that you've been here for your whole life when I first came in?

GB: Yes.

LM: Were you born here, here (indicating the house)? Or just here in Knox County?

GB: Right across the hall here. I can see the farm house I was born in from here. And I've lived here (indicating his house) thirty-five years. My wife and I have lived here since we've been married, in 1959.

LM: Did you have brothers and sisters?

GB: One brother.

LM: Is he still around here?

GB: Well, he lived at Martinsburg and he passed away from cancer September the 9th.

LM: Oh, I'm sorry. So you've been here since you left the house across the street and then, your kids... you had your kids here, then.

GB: Yes.

LM: You said you have one son whose in... where is he now?

GB: He's in Circleville. Got a daughter that lives on New Gambier Road and she's a nurse. Then I got another daughter that lives here with us and she's thirty years old.

LM: Oh. Nice, so everybody's in the neighborhood.

GB: She hasn't grown up yet, so.... She works and Kenyon, on maintenance, a custodian.

LM: Oh, you said you had a daughter that works at Kenyon.

GB: Yeah. If you see a white pickup truck or ranger around Gambier there that has birds and stuff on the... wind thing up on the hood...

LM: That's her?

GB: That's Kathy.

LM: Okay, well I'll run up to her and introduce myself.

GB: She's a husky girl... I mean if you need some protection or something, well she's the...

LM: The one to look for?

GB: The one to look for.

LM: Okay, I just wanted to get a feeling for... Howad had said that you've been around here a long time and that you knew the place pretty well, so I just wanted to get a background on that.

GB: Yes, I have...

LM: And, did your parents move into the neighborhood, or was it long before that, or...

GB: My father, and so on, was born, well he was born in Gambier but he lived down here to Pipesville. It's listed on the map yet. Pipesville. Then they... he grew up, well Pipesville part of his life then right up here at this next farm on the left.

LM: So your family has been here for a long time.

GB: Yes. All my life.

LM: How long have you been in the Masons? That was something you said... about six years, is that right?

GB: Yeah, about six years

LM: Okay, and the Grange.

GB: The Grange? Well, since 1949 I was in the... in the, uh...

LM: Really?

GB: Juevenile Grange. We had organized a juevenile Grange here at Harrison Grange. So the charter's hanging on the wall up there from 1949, and... I was out of Grange for a few years and now I'm back in it again, so...

LM: But you were a charter member.

GB: Well, I don't know, I doubt they'd give me a charter member... you know, 'cause I was out of it for several years...

Just, you know the Grange is kind of a thing that's dying down, too... you know, all these farm organizations are kinda...

LM: Yeah, I had heard that from some other people I talked to.

GB: We probably have thirty, thirty-five members at the Grange meetings.

LM: And what, what was it before?

GB: Lots of times it'd be full. You know, It'd be sixty-something for this community, you know.

LM: Is it different people that are coming? Do you find that, like, younger people aren't joining? Why are the numbers...?

GB: Younger people are not joining.

LM: Really?

GB: I did con my daughter into joining. Then the neighbor boy up here, so we play dart ball. Now you've probably never heard of that before, but instead of throwing darts at the dart board it's a four... I think four-by-four dart board. So we play that in the winter time. So, I did get those... get them to join so that they could play darts with us.

LM: Are other people trying to get, like, do you find that your friends are trying to get their children to get into it, try to keep it alive?

GB: Yeah, we're trying to... it's awful hard.

LM: Really?

GB: You know, they find meetings boring, all the ritual is boring, and they'd rather be somewhere else.

LM: Really? Is it that the meetings don't... I mean, you said the Grange is primarily... I mean, if it's a farm organization, is it that they're not interested in farming so much so it doesn't pertain to their lives so much, or...?

GB: No, it don't pertain to their lifestyles.

LM: 'Cause that's not what they're doing?

GB: See you're talkin' about... there's only maybe two full time farmers on this whole road, where it used to be everybody was a farmer, you know.

LM: Really?

GB: See, now that makes a big difference. See I'm a displaced farmer, too. I retired from Mount Vernon School System after 32 years.

LM: But before... is it... you were farming before you were in the school system?

GB: Yes.

LM: And then did you also farm somewhat while you were in the school system?

GB: Eh, a little bit, just to help people because it was just too expensive for me to stay in it.

LM: Was it... is it the land around here that you were farming before you went in?

GB: Yeah.

LM: Really? How much, if you don't mind my asking?

GB: We farmed three-hundred and twenty-five acres right here.

LM: That's quite a bit of land.

GB: We milked cows and fed hogs and had some sheep... but it worked out that my brother wasn't able to stay with it and dad was getting older and I said...

LM: You don't want to do it yourself?

GB: I don't want to stay in it because, well, it's just hard to go without money and hard to go without vacation and all your benefits, see? That makes a big difference on you, whether you have your hospitalization and your retirement benefits.

LM: Yeah, I've heard a lot of people saying that.

GB: Oh yeah. I love that. See I have my hospitalization and everything paid for yet... from retirement, so I enjoy that.

LM: Yeah, a decision a lot of people seem to be making.

GB: So that takes away from the farming and it's expensive to farm.

LM: So after that, when you said you were helping people here and there, is that like you would be helping friends at times when they needed you?

GB: Friends, in the harvest time, driving... machinery operator, tractor operator, truck driver...

LM: So would people hire you to do that, or was that like...

GB: Yeah. People would hire me to do that extra. It helped out.

LM: Nice. And that's a regular practice around here? Like, people are hiring out help at certain times?

GB: Well, they do if they know who they're getting or something to drive their trucks, because you don't...

LM: So it has to be someone they know?

GB: Yeah, really. 'Cause they don't, you know, it's hard to... you take a fifty on up thousand dollar piece of equipment, you don't want somebody that don't know anything to drive it, mess with it.

LM: Did that used to happen a lot, too. I mean, is this a new practice that people are hiring extra people...

GB: No, not really.

LM: That always went on?

GB: Used to be that people would grow livestock farm and grain. Most of your grain and stuff you took off you fields you fed it to your own livestock and made your money through... maybe you'd have one cash crop, and the rest of it you'd have... cows, everybody had cows, and everybody had some hogs, some chickens. And of course that took quite a bit of grain, you know, and hey to feed that. Now, you know, you've got your producers that...

LM: Doing all the cash crops instead.

GB: Do it all on a big scale. And, like, everybody around here sells their grain, you know, into Mount Vernon or Coshocton or Columbus for a cash crop and work someplace else.

LM: So people aren't doing the couple cows, couple hogs, things like that? It's just gone?

GB: The Amish people do that.

LM: Really?

GB: You can find that at the Amish household. But still, they do a lot of carpentry work and a lot of stuff away from home.

LM: Would there be anyone in the Mount Vernon area who is still doing, like, a little bit of this and a little bit of that instead of selling a whole lot of cash crops?

GB: Well...

LM: Not really?

GB: I can't think of anybody right to the present time. I've got a neighbor over here. Now he and his son both farm but they have a fence building...

LM: A what building?

GB: They build fence, you know, besides doing their farm work. But they do have cattle, besides farming.

LM: Yeah, but everybody's doing something for cash outside of just...

GB: You do something for cash outside.

LM: So, okay, now that most people's lifestyles, if they do involve farming they also involve something else, do you find that in the Grange they're dealing with things besides farming now?

GB: Right.

LM: The meetings are moving more away from farming?

GB: Well, they're trying to keep them farm orientated, but...

LM: So what would the changes have been? Like, before you went in and it was all farming issues, or...

GB: Yup. Legislative, you know, if they was trying to pass a bill that would either benefit or hinder a farmer, you they would, the Grange is...

LM: Huh. I didn't realize it was that political...

[Enter Gary's daughter Kathy and the dog, Daisy (Gary's "grand-dog"). Introductions and a short chat.]

LM: Okay, so you were saying they do legislative work?

GB: Yeah, they would. They did then more than... they do some of it now, but it isn't as important to the people as it used to be.

LM: I didn't realize they did any political...

GB: Most of the people is old now that's in the Grange. I'd say two-thirds of them are some seventy years on up.

LM: You're kidding. So they're probably definately not farming.

GB: No, they're mostly retired people. You just look around, and all but Kathy, she's the... you know, there's very very few... she's probably one of the younger members now, aren't you.

KB: Mmhm. Me and Tom (?).

GB: But now the lodge, a few of the younger fellas are starting to come into the lodge now.

LM: At the masons?

GB: In the masons.

LM: And does that have anything at all to do with farming, I mean... no?

GB: No. Not really. It's just a... organization, you know, a, what do I want to call it? Social... aw, I'm trying to think of what I would compare it to... a fraternity.

LM: Same kind of thing?

GB: It is a fraternity of men that are... it's a social and learning... and you're supposed to keep your morals and everything up, you know, in order to be a member. And you got a lot of rituals and stuff you go through... that's part of the fun, learning some of these long speeches out of books and so on. There's a lot to learn.

LM: And I heard that, Howard said that you had raised up in degrees in the Masons by learning... I mean, I don't know what degrees means.

GB: I went up to the Scottish rite. Now, that's a thirty-second degree. It's more of a state level.

LM: So you move up by learning more about the Mason organization, is that what happens?

GB: Right, you learn more about the Masons in order to go up in degrees like that.

LM: Then that sounds like exactly the way the fraternities work at Kenyon.

GB: See your fraternities and everything... that's what I was going to say, it works the same way.

LM: Now, what about Grange? Does Grange have different levels of members or is it all the same level?

GB: It's all pretty well the same level. Now you can take degrees on up that's in the Grange, but usually people don't. They usually, the local Grange is as far as they go. Then you got a county organization that's in the Grange, that's Pamona Grange. That's all the Granges put together. They call it Pamona Grange. But that's all the other Granges in the county when the meet...

LM: So is it one per city and then they all come together? Like, is there a Mount Vernon Grange or...?

GB: No. Townships. They was originally organized around townships. See, like we got Harrison over here and then there's Pleasant over here and Middlebury township up by Fredericktown and Union down to Blakesburg. But usually just townships, you know, instead of cities because they're located out in the country where people could get to them. Well they could get to them by horse and buggy back in horse and buggy days. That's the way they went to the Grange. That was one of the big social events of the month was going to Grange.

LM: And we were talking to some people who were in Grange a long time ago and they were talking about how the biggest thing when they were kids was to go visit the other Granges. Like, get their whole Grange together and go visit.

GB: Just to go to other Granges.

LM: Yeah. Another township and all get together.

GB: That's just another social club.

LM: Yeah, but it also has that political aspect, like you were talking about, like the legislative. I mean that's...

GB: Well, you can pull a lot of power. You can get the state levels, and so on. You get your feelings, you know, and they do some... they try to get somebody to go into Washington for lobbying, you know, do a little bit of lobbying.

LM: Well, in the Mount Vernon News they were talking about how Granges now are talking about the Del Co water thing and they're debating that and coming to one consensus decision about whether they want it or not and then lobbying for that.

GB: Right. So they can make, they can get pretty... you can get a lot of people together.

LM: Yeah. You can get the numbers together.

GB: Over something like that, you know, get the numbers up. That's the whole thing. And it works just the same way in any, you know, in the student body.

If you want something you try and get other people to have your same idea and go the same direction.

LM: So, are there people in Grange that... you said that the two organizations were kind of parallel when I was talking to you on the phone.

GB: Well, As far as how they set up their degree work or your, what do I want to call it, to be a member of these organizations. I'm at a loss for words on some of this. I'm not real good on this. I know what I want to say but I'm at a loss for words on what you... like you have your head of your organization that...

LM: Oh, the heirarchy, the way they're set up?

GB: Well, you know, like you got a master of the Grange and a master of the Lodge.

LM: Right.

GB: And you've got, of course, there's your secretary and your treasurer and all that on down. Then you've got your governing body, what's your trustees. You've got trustees in the Grange that do the main decisions and you've got your trustees in the Lodge that make the main decisions, only your people will vote on that.

LM: So is that like, a revered position. Like, is everyone like, oh, he's the trustee of the Grange. Is that something that people look up to?

GB: Kinda, yeah, in a way.

LM: And in the Masons too?

GB: But we all vote on the idea, you know, but they.

LM: But, I mean that says something, if everybody voted somebody in that everybody respects that person.

GB: Right, right. All works the same way in both organizatins. I was trying to think of something else. Well there's other parts, too, that of the organizations that are parallel as far as...

LM: But the Grange seem to be having less and less younger members and the Masons seem to be doing okay.

GB: Well the Masons are kind of leveled out. I mean, there are enough... I'd say they are holding their own yet, holding their own. But you get a lot of, let's see, I'm tring to think of last year how many people we took in. Course that's one of the big things to put on the degree work, you know, the Grange or the Lodge, whatever.

LM: That you brought...

GB: It's more of a thing for the Lodge to put on the degree work than it is for the Grange.

LM: That you brought somebody in?

GB: Yeah, that we brought somebody in. I'm hoping I get Howard to go one of these days, if he gets where he has things calmed down. I don't know when that would be. He's on the move all the time. Aw, he's a great guy, though. I get a kick out of him.

LM: We all do. All his students love him to death.

GB: He's quite a leader, though, probably, isn't he, as far as that goes.

LM: Yeah. Absolutely, he's got a lot to say. He's got good ideas.

GB: Well this weekend is his big weekend, too, for the folk festival coming up.

LM: That's right. I have to go and pick up a gentleman in Columbus for him. A wood carver and he's got some huge sculptures and Howard asked me to go and get him because I have a truck, cause I've got a big enough vehicle to carry the sculptures in. But, yeah, he works real hard on that festival.

GB: Yeah, I look forward to seeing old Clifford Harvesty and some of those.

LM: Do you come in to the

GB: Yeah.

LM: You do come in to see it?

GB: Yeah. I do, I've been there every year, well, ever since Howard's moved over here, anyway.

LM: Gotta go check out what he's doing?

GB: Oh yeah. We have good times. He'd be mad if I didn't come. All the parties afterwards, I've met a lot of people. I really enjoyed meeting the people he has in for that, too.

LM: Like when you go back out to the Grange or Masons.

GB: Go back to the house. Course that's the part I like about being in the Mason's. See we go round on inspections, around all over the district. They have a district office. We're the 19th district here, so we have several Lodges that we go to... we got to different Lodges in different months during the winter. Maybe there'll be three or four having inspections during the month. And we try to go to several of those, get people together. Of course, Ohio Lodge down in Lanesburg's been the leader in that for a long while. See, I belong to the Lodge in Lanesburg. There's a Zion Lodge in Mount Vernon, and there's several lodges around in the... well, there are some small towns, I guess. They was usually in the towns, the

lodge was.

LM: As opposed to townships for the Grange.

GB: Yeah, you didn't have township lodges or anything. You had to travel a ways for your lodge. A lot of preachers didn't like the lodge in a way, but...

LM: Really?

GB: Well, they thought you was out on Saturday you didn't... wouldn't be too sprite on Sunday mornings.

LM: So they didn't want all you guys getting together and having some...

GB: There was a lot of church people, you know, even preachers and so on belong to the lodge. But there is, I know the one here at the Grove, no, he's opposed to the lodge. He thinks it takes time away from the church.

LM: Do you think that that effects whether or not people are signing up?

GB: No. I see that they have trouble keeping people coming to church, right now. That's other... other interests, you know. I don't know whether you get up on Sunday morning and go to church or whether you sack in, or what. I know sometimes we do and sometimes we're tuckered out, we just don't go anywhere, until maybe Sunday afternoon we'll get up and go somewhere.

LM: Or stay home with the paper.

GB: Well, yeah.

LM: Are there farmers in the Masons, as well?

GB: Oh, yeah. That was mostly a farm social thing too, in a way. I mean it's not created for farmers, but it was one of the highlights of the old farmers' month to get ready and go to the... I mean, you don't go to the lodge in you bib overalls and your holy, dirty pants...

LM: You get all spiffed up?

GB: You don't hop out of the pig pen and go to lodge. That's one thing you do not do. So, that's expected that you go to lodge in a tie and a coat and you're supposed to be... supposed to be pretty respectable (laughs). I laugh at that sometimes. There's some guys I know that's been in lodge that's not been real respectable as far as that goes.

LM: Really? So that probably varies by lodge? Like, some lodges are more strict about that and some are less?

GB: No, usually that's a pretty well... it's one of the unwritten rules. If you don't, well somebody's liable to be coming up to you and tapping you on the shoulder and say "Hey, let's get things in a little bit better shape here for the next time." They're the old school in a way, as far as people...

LM: Is it a conservative organization, as far as...

GB: Mmm, yeah. Pretty much conservative.

LM: Do you find that it's conservative politically? Are there political discussions there? I mean, I don't if you would necessarily know if there...

GB: Once in a while. It's not supposed to ever come up.

LM: Oh, really?

GB: It's not supposed to ever be a political or religious...

LM: Is there a rule about that or do you just not...

GB: Well, there is to a certain extent. There's more of an unwritten rule that religion and politics are not supposed to be discussed. Once in a while, though, somebody will get up and tell a political joke or something. Sometimes it doesn't go down too good with people.

LM: Really? Do you get any feeling from that... those few comments whether it's a generally politically conservative feel or a more liberal feel, or how they go politically?

GB: They're pretty... you've got Democrats and Republicans. I don't know what the balance would be on that, but as far as politically on both sides, I would say there's conservative on both sides.

LM: Are there politically active people in Masons? Like, are there some people in there that you know that outside of the Masons they're very politically active?

GB: Aw, yes. Very politically... well, in our lodge, the former president of the Ohio State University belongs to our lodge. Novice Faucett belongs to our lodge. Of course, he's a relation of mine.

LM: Really?

GB: Yeah. We're kin. He's getting pretty old now. He and my father was about the same age, my father passed away when he was 76 but Novice is 80-something now.

LM: And he's still making it out to lodge meetings...

GB: Well, he comes up once in a great while. He don't come up... see, he lives in Columbus and he don't come up that often, but we have people that live in Columbus that belong to our lodge, and Mount Vernon and every place else, anymore. It's not as concentrated like it was if you go back years ago. Usually it'd be concentrated around one area, but now people just go every which way.

LM: I wanted to come back to the political discussions for a bit. Now, in Grange there's obviously no rule against having political discussions because that's part of the reason Grange is there, to discuss farm politics and stuff, are there a lot of very politically oriented people in Grange. Are the farmers pretty political?

GB: No. They're not as much as they used to be on that. They're not as... you don't have a... they're more... what do I want to call it... they're more independent than anything else, anymore. I mean you have a few staunch Republicans and a few staunch Democrats, but I mean, more of a liberal... the people will vote either way, you know.

LM: But they're voting to protect farmers' interests and things like that?

GB: Yeah, they're more... they try to pick out the bills and pick out who would do more good for the farmers.

LM: And, like, the way that they're banding together for the Del Co thing, is that typical? For other bills they'd all sit there and discuss the pro's and con's of the bills and say "Okay, we're gonna do this. We should talk to other Granges about doing..."

GB: It's just like, taking the water, like you were talking about Del Co taking the water out of the township or out of the county and so on... You know, why take the water out of our county when we might be needing it, you know. It's under our ground, so let's try to keep what we have. That's their theory on it.

Of course, you know, they figure if a guy owned the land and sold it to somebody else they can do what they want with it, but there's another part of it. That's like zoning, zoning is another thing where they try to put rules and regulations on what you do with your land.

LM: Is that discussed in Grange?

GB: Yeah. That has been discussed in Grange.

LM: And people coming up with different opinions about what zoning should be in certain areas and things like that?

GB: Yes. See, I don't really believe in all the zoning rules, but I'm on the board of appeals here in Harrison township. We're trying to make decisions that would be best for the people involved. It's hard to do sometimes. We're like a judge and jury on that. You know, somebody wants to set a mobile home of something you've got to have special...

LM: zoning for that?

GB: Zoning for that. Special permits. And of course, your county overrides all that. They have their rules and regulations for your water wells and for your septics and your sewer and all that stuff.

LM: So it's county zoning?

GB: Well, no it's not county zoning, it's township zoning, but your county has the say-so, uh... planning commission. It'll over-ride some of the... and the commissioners. Your local zoning comes first and then if it's alright it passes on to higher levels.

LM: Okay, and then the higher levels can say "No, we're not letting you do that."

GB: Yeah. Some of the stuff, I know what I want to say, but it's hard for me

to get the right words to put in the right place.

LM: You're doing better than I do. Are there value debates going on in Grange as well as political debates? Like, people talking about... I don't know, family values, or church values, or community values?

GB: It's a small part of it, anymore. You usually have one legislative agent and he gives his talk or something every meeting, which is mebbe five, ten minutes out of the whole evening.

LM: But that's the political part of the evening?

GB: That's the political part, the legislative agent... He tries to bring out the high points, and that's it.

LM: What about, uhmm, values issues, though. I mean, is that discussed at all? You were saying that people are going to church less these days, and that... you know... are there farming values that come into play that are discussed? Maybe like family orientation and things like that?

GB: Oh, yeah. Yes. A lot of times that's discussed. But, like I say, we're dealing with older people and they're talking about how it used to be. It's not... they're not talking... Course, they all think things are going to heck in a hand cart, you know, right now, cause... but I don't believe so.

LM: So what kinds of things are they complaining about. Like what...

GB: Oh, you know, as far as the children you know. No control over the children. Done away with paddling and discipline, so, it's harder to keep them in line. And I, I believe that a lot, too. As I've worked around the schools I've seen there's lots of kids... you know you wouldn't even have to paddle 'em once. You know, your parents once if they disciplined you some way, not necessarily the paddle, maybe. That might be the last alternative to bust you once... you know what I mean, don't ya?

LM: Yeah.

GB: Got to have some kind of rule on them. Very seldom I had to smack one of my children or anything, cause they knew if they got me mad they was in trouble.

LM: Yup, yup. Very effective.

GB: But you have to have some kind of control over them.

LM: Yeah. So do you think that that's a distinctly farm value?

GB: Oh, I think it's a value they discuss. They discuss general themes. It's not so much farm anymore. Like I was saying... it's just, there just isn't that much that's discussed about farm issues.

LM: Right. Cause the farmers have all moved on.

GB: You don't have that... like I say, if you could just watch the old retired

people settin' round and plus, you know, heck, I'm fifty-six and I'm one of the youngest ones in there. That's, you know, that's kind of bad.

LM: Well, do you run into those discussions in town or anywhere else? I mean, are people discussing, you know, the... I'm thinking about the family values debate that was going on nationally, you know, with this whole...

GB: Aw, yeah I hear people say that once in a while...

LM: But not... it's not a big deal?

GB: Politics, they talk about that. I'm not much of a politic talker. I, you know, I think that there's a right and a wrong way for things, with me, you know? And if the country's going down hill and getting in bad shape, I'd say that was their own fault. Because we haven't paid enough attention to who we've put into Washington. I mean, that's my theory. Cause we just did let it go.

LM: People weren't paying attention?

GB: You know, let John Doe do it, he's... we'll send him down there and he'll do whatever we need to get done. Well that's not true. He's gonna go down there and get all the money out of it he can get.

LM: So you think they're in it for themselves these days, too much? Instead of looking out for...?

GB: Yeah, I think they're in it more for themselves than what they offer the people. You can, I think if you dig down...

LM: What about local politicians? Do you think the same way or not as much?

GB: Yeah, I think the same way for local.

LM: Really?

GB: Well, now, we've got a couple commissioners. I'd say they're looking out pretty much for the people. The salary isn't that much on that job, you know. And they really, a couple of them are pretty well educated, they wouldn't have to do that job, I'm sure they wouldn't...

LM: So they're doing it for the love of the job, not for the...

GB: For the love of the job, yes. Cause I think that... I think money plays a big part in too many things, anymore. Even does in my life. I have to work all this stuff to buy antique tractors.

LM: Do you think that that's a big trend though, in general, that people are too concerned with money these days and less focused on...?

GB: Well, I think that... in the speed of their lifestyle, you know, there's too many things that are going on.

LM: Did it used to be slower... a lot slower around here?

GB: Yeah, lifestyle was a lot slower. I've seen it go from when I was a kid to...

even though I don't claim to be real old yet. But uh, used to be neighbors, you know, and you'd have... oh, neighborhood functions all the time. Like, I always look forward to going to Grange. My mom and dad did look forward to going to Grange. Cause that was one of the big social events of their month, you know, where you got together with other neighbors than what you get when you went to church. You know, you had a certain bunch that went to church and a certain group that went to Grange and you socialized with both groups and worked with both groups.

We built... I remember when we built this Grange hall up here that everybody worked together and all the labor was donated, and quite a bit of the labor and everything else was donated to that, see.

LM: That shows some nice community spirit.

GB: See, now that's what community spirit to me is all about. The only thing that I can see, right now, tha they're doing that's similar to that is this habitat, Habitat for Humanity, I think that's good, too.

LM: My roommate does that, yeah.

GB: I think that's very nice, too. They all get together and do something for their neighbors.

LM: Is that in Grange? Do Grange people set that up and get people to go help?

GB: Naah. They do community things, anymore, shoot, we're lucky enough to go along and pick up along side the road, you know where they have the signs to pick up... Most of the while they have money making projects to pay for the taxes and the upkeep of the building, but usually that's by donations, anymore. Just, you know, "Hey, we're running short on money. We're going to have to have some more donations."

LM: So not so much group cooperating and getting everybody together for a project?

GB: Yeah. That there was what it was really designed for. You know, everybody had a purpose, cause they was building a building or they was doing some big project, see. That was one of the purposes for doing these things. Besides, you know, it was a big social event.

LM: Yeah, getting all the neighbors together.

GB: Yeah.

LM: So do you think the neighbors don't see each other anymore since not as many people, you say...

GB: Oh, mercy no.

LM: Really?

GB: You can go... now, I neighbor a lot. I go back and forth with Howard, you know, over here. And i got another neighbor up here, we have the old tractors together. I don't know, we was more... I grew up with most of these people here.

It's maybe a little different for me than it is some. If I don't see them for a while I maybe I'll get in my pickup truck on my day off or something and I'll

go see 'em, you know, or...

LM: But is that more or less than...

GB: It's less, I mean, you don't neighbor like you did. That's what good about the Amish. That's one advantage I can see about the Amish.

LM: Is that they're still tight?

GB: They still do everything for each other. I think that's one of the, you know, if you want to be by yourself why not live on an island out here by yourself somewhere?

LM: Do you think that the younger generation does that even less than maybe the older generation does, like the neighboring, like you said, just getting in your car and going to see everybody if you haven't seen them in a while?

GB: I don't...

LM: You don't know?

GB: They don't... I don't think they do that too much, 'less somebody hollers "party." That might be so, I don't know. I know when we was younger we used to have a lot of parties and people coming in... they've all split up, and their families and all and I don't hardly ever see any of them anymore. I don't even have a fishing buddy anymore. Used to have, see, some fellas would get together and go fishing and things like that, not anymore. Got the one fella up here, we got the old tractors together and that's about it. You know, it's changed, even in my lifetime. I get to talking with my mother, she's eighty-eight years old, I get a kick out of that. She tells me about all the things they done. Just seems like it all got less and less and less and less. I never... when I was a kid, you know, 'bout everybody in the family, whenever they had a birthday, you know, aunt or uncle or cousin or somebody we'd get together and have a surprise birthday party for them or something. Now they don't even care if you got....

Yeah, you're lucky if you can get enough people together for a reunion, you can't hardly get people together for that anymore, to have reunions.

LM: Do you think that's tied to the way that farming has changed in some way?

GB: Well, I think it's tied to the way people are living anymore, you know. Farming and everything. You know, if you've got a business, or if you work in business or whatever, your time schedule don't allow you to do things.

LM: MmmHmm. I'm just thinking that maybe the time schedule has changed more like nine to five rather than being out here, or whatever, and being able to budget your time differently. Might be why, or part of why, people...

GB: It is, it is I think.

LM: Affects every part of life.

GB: I think it affects every part of life. I think people would enjoy life more if they would enjoy life with each other, well, you know.

LM: What about, like, when your mom talks about the way it was when she was growing up, like, do you think that that... I mean, does that sound good to you?

GB: Aw, I always enjoyed it myself. Course, you know, my kids, now they wouldn't know what that was all like. There wasn't hardly a Sunday in the summer-time that went by that you wasn't going someplace for a dinner. That's all there was to it. I mean a dinner that had everything to it. I mean, every Sunday, it was either my dad's family or my mother's family, one or the other, and away we'd go.

LM: So, are there family members now that you don't know as well?

GB: Oh, my gosh. Cousins I haven't seen. I've got cousins now, I don't know their children, you know, and they wouldn't know me, besides maybe here in the book, in the family book they'd say "Now there's your cousin Gary" or something, and they wouldn't know who I was before, no. See, when you had the family reunion and stuff, at least you did know some of them, some of your relatives.

LM: Seems to me what everybody's talking about is how the family has changed. I mean everyone...

GB: Oh, yeah. I don't know whether it's for good or bad, I just enjoyed the other way case I enjoy people. Some people don't. Some people would rather be by themselves and so on.

LM: So it has shifted more, though, from the group to the individual.

GB: Individualized. I think that's one of the reasons that your organizations... we just... oh, the postmaster up here, he and I and some of us, we go to Shriners together, we're going to, we're going to Fredricktown Sunday night for a fish supper for the Shriners. And I enjoy things like that. The post-master, I give him a rough time. You know him, do you?

LM: No, I don't.

GB: Don't you?

LM: No.

GB: Well, make it a point to get acquainted with the post-master up there. He's quite a guy.

LM: Okay. I'll do that.

GB: You tell him I sent you. Say "Old Gary said to introduce yourself and know who he was." He's quite a guy. His wife works for the school system, too. I've known him ever since he was a little kid. Ever since we've been little kids together. He's a little bit younger than I am. He's still, I think he's... I don't know if he's past the fifty mark or not. Pretty close to it. Pretty close to the half century mark. That sounds old to you. But you think, in another... think how much things are going to change in your lifetime. You don't think about it so much. Things will change in your lifetime.

LM: I'm already saying that, like, you know, I hear my father talk about how much

this used to cost and how much that used to cost, and now I'm doing it. Like, I'll go back to places... especially being out here, and then I'm from New York, and I go home for breaks and it's just like, I can't believe that this store is gone and this store is in its place. Or I can't believe that I go to the place where I used to get pizza every day in elementary school. It used to be like, you know, fifty cents, and I remember when it went up to seventy-five and now its like two-fifty for a slice of pizza. And I am sitting here, being like "No" cause it's a lot of change in a very short time.

GB: I'll tell you though, back in New York and New York City, things are really speedy there besides what they are here. I mean, your lifestyles change from here going into bigger cities.

LM: Yeah, oh it's...

GB: But, I'm used to, you know, for me I was used to a real slow pace and just seemed like the older I've gotten the faster things has went. I can't go no faster anymore, I have to slow myself down to the pace that I can stand it. Even being retired now, I wonder how I had time to do the work, you know, a full time job. But I had more time... just as much time then as I do now. You know, I'm only working three days a week. My job... my wife says my honey-dew (?) jobs don't get done near as fast. Course I like to talk, I like to visit...

LM: Sure, take some time out with friends...

GB: You know, this week, enjoy going to the folk festival in the evenings and just visit around.

LM: And it's back to a little bit, like you were saying, about going back to a slower way of life and hanging out with neighbors and friends and going to the folk festival in the evenings is sort of going back to that a little bit.

GB: Oh yeah. But I think things are just.... It's not the same, you know, you're more selective. You have too many choices about what you can do.

LM: Do you think some people are trying to keep the old way. Like, I know that 4H, for instance, is trying to get kids interested in farming and that whole idea. And is there some kind of youth part of the Grange? Where they're trying to get younger...

GB: Yeah, but we don't have that much youth in our Grange right now. We maybe have three or four kids to the whole group. I know that the kids that are in our Grange are in 4H. I belonged to 4H for ten years when I was a kid. Soon as I was old enough to belong to 4H. They just... I wouldn't have given anything for all the social... I know people from all over the county from 4H. Cause we... I went to 4H camp and went to the fair. I stayed at the fair all week, you know, when they had 4H, and just had a great time, that was my vacation time growing up.

LM: Has that changed too, do you think?

GB: Well, now, my grandson, now he's going to 4H camp and he's looking forward to... he always looks forward to that. And, as far as going to the fair, I think they meet a lot of different kids from all over the county and it gets a bigger

mixture, you know. That's one thing, like I'm telling you, that lodge, that the mixture when I go to these other lodges for inspections, or what have you, for similar social events to meet the other fellas and gosh, I suppose I've doubled the people that I know, you know from that.

LM: That's excellent.

GB: So that's what, like I say, that's what I enjoy. And most of the people that belong to lodges do enjoy that. In other words, we're a lot of b.s.ers all in one great big place.

LM: I guess having never been in a fraternal organization (obviously) myself I just... now I have a better idea of what goes on a little bit.

GB: Really, it's just, you know, just a kind of friendship get-together of people that you know. In other words, you're making your family, not your related family but your social family, a little bigger each time you belong to these groups.

LM: That's nice.

GB: I've met a lot of people even since I've been in... since July when I started delivering flowers. Like one lady said today, she said "This really must be a nice job for you." She said, "You don't get around sad people this way, do you?" And I said "No, you know, usually if I hand some lady a dozen roses they're pretty happy about that, you know." Or some kid gets one with balloons on it or... Most people are happy to get a flower decoration of some kind. You know, so, other people have been thinking about them and... The other day a fella sent his wife a box of roses. Now, I mean a... long stem roses. There was a hundred and four dollars worth in the box. Have mercy. A hundred and four dollars of roses.

LM: Well, either he loves his wife...

[The tape side ran out, flipped tape. Gary joked that he was talking a lot to fill a whole side. The machine clicked when the side was done so no conversation was lost.]

GB: I said to Howard, the other day, I said, "You know I'm full of it, that's why you sent me a student."

LM: He just thought you'd have some good information that we should get down.

GB: We get... we have some real good conversations, Howard and I do, I enjoy him. I really do. I'm really glad he moved out here, he just fit, as far as I'm concerned.

LM: That's actually the... I'm so happy you mentioned that because I was going to forget to ask and it's something I wanted to know about. Ummm, is Grange a good way for people... or, maybe a better way to ask it is, how do people moving into the area get to know other people? Because, like, you've been here your whole life, you said you know people from 4H, from when you were a kid, and, you know, you've been doing Masons, and you just know people from way back when. Do people move in and become part of the community very easily?

GB: If they want to. You know, that's the biggest thing anymore. People usually

move in, clam up, shut the door, and put a fence around their place. You know, they don't want nothing to do with you. Now, we've got some young people just built a house down here and I'm sure they'll be, you know, they'll be community people if they go on, but I've seen lots of places that people just move in, they don't want nothing to do with their neighbors. "Stay away from me."

LM: Really? But you don't think that there's any problem, like, if they wanted to become part of the community? Just that feeling, if they wanted to become part of the community that they haven't been here as long as everybody else? It's easy to get...

GB: Oh, it would be. Yes. That's one thing that we used to do is go, if somebody moved in or somebody new come around, we always try to make 'em feel welcome and invite them to dinner as soon as we know them. If they decide to take a hold, why they'd start coming on their own. It was... you know, they made up their own mind what they wanted to do in the end product. Whether they wanted to become a part of you or be on their own.

LM: And Howard, obviously, was one of those that decided that he wanted to know as much...

GB: I adopted him right off the bat anyway, see?

LM: Did you?

GB: Oh yeah. Cause we had, Lee Clarke was a cousin of mine, or his wife was cousin, but they were related to me, anyway, the people that lived there before him. And I got the old tractor and stuff after Lee moved out and, of course Howard, he kept a few peices, you know, that we needed to mow with. So we trade back and forth and all. And behind his house there's a patch of weeds that I mow... help him mow that. And maybe my lawn mower would be broke down or his lawn mower would be broke down, we use each others.

LM: Now, does that go on... you were saying that you go and help other people at some times in the year and they hire you to help them out. Is that kind of like, reciprocal, like, you help him, he helps you, but nobody pays anybody?

GB: There's no money exchanged. I wouldn't

LM: No, no. But, I mean, does that kind of no-money thing go on with other people?

GB: Oh yes, yes, yes. Like I say, that's part of... I enjoy that.

LM: Do you think that that's happening less as the community is getting less in... keeping less in touch with each other like you were saying?

GB: It has. But I don't know wether some of the younger folks are trading back and forth or not. Cause I know this fella down here, he put up his garage and stuff and I don't... a lot of the fellas that worked with him came and helped him do his garage. I don't know how they... whether he goes and helps them or he has helped them or what.

LM: Part of the reason that I'm asking that is that I'm writing a paper as part

of this class, but also for my own requirements for my major at school, on sort of, like, community values and community, like, working together in the farm community. So I'm interested in trying to figure out how that works and how....

GB: In the farm community that still happens a good bit, you know. Maybe, let's just say that a neighbor... I'd get home from work before my neighbor does and I've got time, I go rake his hey. And he gets home later and he'll bail hey and maybe he'll come over and do mine. You know, they trade back and forth after, after work in town and stuff like that. They still trade work. What do you call it bartering? Used to barter for lots of things?

LM: Usually expect that other people are going to help you out.

GB: Yeah. I know, and that still happens in (????)

LM: One thing I was reading about in, where was it, I guess it was in Iowa and there was, I can't remember, I think it was a flood, and everyone had to sort of band together to get anything done.

GB: Right.

LM: And they all just kind of looked around and were like "Wow, we did it, you know, cause we all worked together" and that kind of thing. And, so it just seems like times of crisis, that's when people come out and come together....

GB: I wonder sometimes, I don't know, but I think sometimes these crises and so on are put together to teach us a lesson sometimes? Do you think, wonder sometimes, whether they are or not?

LM: Sure.

GB: I don't know, maybe that's... but you wonder if it's

LM: Something spiritual about it?

GB: Something spiritual or something, maybe something that's happened that makes us closer together, things like that, I think it helps people, helps people get together, know how the other people feels. How else do you know how they feel till you've walked in their shoes? I believe it's true lots of times.

LM: Certainly. That gets us back to that feeling, like how you said that people are now more staying into themselves, it sort of brings them back to that feeling of, you know, you've got no other choice.

GB: They don't have anybody else. See, they have their own... they're not into these things and they go... I'm, I'm sure that if I, if I was to have problems one way or another that, well let's see, ther'd be several guys here from my lodge, or some of the other organizations I belong to that would be here to help me.

And I'm sure if they had a problem, why, I'd be out of here helping them right now. I'm sure I would.

LM: That's a good feeling.

GB: And I have done, too, for other people, and I.... It's like I told one neighbor,

he was wondering about paying me for helping him here this fall, and I said "Got my day off" and I said, "I'm enjoying my visit here with you" and I says I, you know, I was helping him to do some things, and I says "I'm just doing it because I like to do it" I said "I don't want a cent for it." I don't, you know, I don't need anything. I really don't, I really don't need anything. I got lots of things I want. You know, as far as needing anything, I sure don't need anything. Several of us don't need things.

LM: So you and your friends would all feel comfortable asking each other, or maybe you wouldn't have to ask, I don't know how that works.

GB: Well, it'd be helpful, you know, if they tell the rest of us, say you know "Can we help you?" or... If somebody's sick or something around the community, usually they just get together and go ahead and do their crops for them or whatever. And that still happens here, even though we all are maybe not full-time farmers, or whatever, we still help each other around here. If somebody's in need, they'll get help, I'm sure. Whether they're farmers or professors or whatever. You know? That's just one of the things that is kind of stressed around here is just.... Now the, the rules are not written as you come into the township, but it's there. [laughs] You know, it's unwritten rules.

LM: Yup.

GB: That you try to be part of it, or... and I think it's good. You know, it's not, I don't think people are meant to live by themselves.

LM: So that sounds like you think that that's more of a good thing about living in an area like this. Do you think that that's partly because it's still a rural area? I mean, that people still know each other a little bit?

GB: Yeah, I think... I was in an area the other, well, okay, tonight, I was in an area trying to find a person and a house and I stopped to ask a guy and I know he'd lived there a long while, that's why I stopped at his house. And he didn't know the people who lived across the street.

LM: I know it's that way for me at home.

GB: See they don't know the people that live across the street right here in Mount Vernon. Well, you know, that seems funny to me. That's one part of being out here in the rural part that... you know, if I didn't know my neighbors I'll....

LM: Do you think that that hinders... in Mount Vernon, the whole idea of helping each other out that we were talking about, because they're so isolated?

GB: To some extent, but I still say that people will come to do... will help other people out in crisis, I believe. I believe they bit more here, out in communities like this than they will in the... Maybe not, maybe, that's my idea. I think rural communities are better to do that than they are in big cities. You know, once you get into....

LM: Cause you actually know the people.

GB: Yeah, really. You do. You know, John Doe is in trouble and he needs help.

LM: So, what about the people that move in? You said that some of them just aren't interested in being part of the community.

GB: Oh, I... there's a few that do. But we haven't had anybody I can think of for a long while that, round here, on this road. We was the people that.... Well, there's a lady on down the road here a ways that she stopped, she's been with cancer. Now I hardly ever see her and she says "You know, I kind of miss having the road party..." We had a road party here, well I don't know, must of been four, five years ago now. We invited everybody that lived on this road and some of them that had moved on, you know. And just sent cards and invitations to come for a picnic. By golly, we had a turn out. I was surprised. There was only, I think, one family that didn't get to come and they wrote us a note to say they were sorry they couldn't come. And I thought that was kind of fun.

LM: Yeah. We used to do that when I was a kid. We'd have a block party. I live on a dead end street, so there's no, I mean, there's almost no traffic, and we just put up police lines through the middle of the street to close off the street so that nobody could drive down it and set up barbecue grills.

GB: A block party, huh?

LM: Yeah.

GB: Well, we don't have to... We just set up some old tables just set up around the yard, and I don't know, matter of fact, I don't know,.... I pulled in a wagon, we used a wagon for a table and... for one of them... and used whatever we could use to make tables out of around here and had a good time. You know, a lot of people got to visit and say "Gosh, I haven't seen you for I don't know how long, you know." And they enjoyed it. People were here, guy over across the road, he's retired from General Motors and he didn't know anybody hardly around them. They just built the house and people over here just built a house a couple of years ago and I don't think they know hardly anybody yet.

LM: So it takes a while?

GB: Yeah. You know, it takes a while. It makes it easier for the people if they're introduced and kind of thrown together, then they'll kind of know each other then. We try.

LM: Sounds like you do a good job.

GB: Like I said, the old time values are still... I particularly enjoy them, you know. And I think people would enjoy their life more if they knew what community life was and Granges and lodges and the enjoyment out of them, you know, there's more to it than just going to the organization. It's... I don't know cause if you enjoy other people, that's quite an event for every month, something like that.

LM: It'd be a good way for the new people also to become part of it. Like you said it's easier for them if they're introduced. Well you're automatically...

GB: Well, see you get that in your Granges and your stuff like that. You can get new members, I know, several of the young guys joined the lodge. I see them, you know, in their business or whatever, in their business or out in every day

life. I know them now, and they know me. They know what I did, I know what they do, and you can, if you need something, well you kind of trust them more than you do somebody else because "Hey, they belong to my organization."

LM: So you think it helps out for business to be...

GB: I think it does. Yeah, I believe it does. Now they say that it don't but I can see that it does.

LM: Who says that it doesn't?

GB: Well, different people, it's just not supposed to make any difference. But it does, I know it does. It would be like

LM: So they don't want people joining it to get business? They're scared people will join for that reason?

GB: Yes, come in for that reason. And I don't, they do in a way and still you get to know the person... it's good, it's good even if they do it that way. Even if they are doing it to get business you know whether they're a half decent person or whether to stay away from them anyway. You get to know them better.

LM: I guess I just... really thank you for taking so much time to talk with me. I'm sorry I've taken up your whole evening.

GB: I don't care.

LM: I just wanted to ask you one more thing about the project, because we're going to try and come up with something at the end of the class. You know we've been talking to a lot of people in town and everyone's been really helpful and given their time and we want to give something back, basically, is what it amounts to.

So at the end of the year we all have to come up with a project and we want it to be something that sort of serves the town, and I was wondering if you had any ideas about what you would want to see. I mean, it's not, you don't necessarily have to... It's just something that I want you to be thinking about. If you come up with something you can definitely talk to Howard about it, I don't mean to put you on the spot right now asking what should we do. But, I guess, Howard did another project in the area last year at the end of the year last year, or two years ago. At any rate, at the end of the year they put together an exhibit that travelled, I think all around Knox County, so that it was giving back to the community because the community members could go in and look at the exhibit and there were all sorts of pictures up and around and family memorabilia, and...

GB: See now, I go out to the Ag Museum too, and I like all that museum stuff too...

LM: Actually, someone's talking to the Ag Museum this week to see how we can help them and how they can help us.

GB: They'll be out to the folk festival too to do some exhibits and so on for the folk festival, too, coming up this weekend. A lot of the older guys that are retired, they really enjoy that Ag Museum. Well I got me... matter of fact, tomorrow night is... see, now here's what gets me. Now this is the part I really don't like. There's a Grange and Ag Museum meeting tomorrow night. I can't go to both of them.

LM: Right.

GB: So the Ag Museum will take the preference right now because the Grange is right up here and I, well I donate their, I'm a... the only thing I do up at the Grange, I mow and help take care of the building, you know. Help clean up in the building and stuff. I mow the yard all summer long with our tractor. We got a tractor with a mower on it, and Kathy and I... if I don't do it Kathy'll do it. We mow the yard up there and try to keep it looking half decent. And, but I enjoy going up to the Ag Museum meetings, too, and having some input into the... what we're going to do for the Ag Museum and for the fair and for all the stuff that... We've got quite a children in schoold and through that from schools too now. They go through the Ag Museum, you know, and see what-all is in there.

In the Spring we have a day when fourth and fifth graders or fifth and sixth (I don't know which it is) but they go through the... I know I took several groups last year, took them through the Ag Museum and answered questions as much as I could.

LM: So that seems like another way where the community is trying to get the young interested in community life.

GB: See, that would be a big help, if we had... you know, things like that.

LM: Something to show the kids?

GB: Yeah, something to show the kids or...

LM: That's a good idea.

GB: That would put back into it as far as I'm concerned.

LM: Well just... because everybody's being so helpful, you know. And we definately want to do something back, not just take out of the community.

GB: Well, like I say, there's lots of stuff... I know a lot of stuff, but I can't put it into words to say it... I'm a poor, I'm a poor speaker as far as...

LM: No. You actually interview remarkably well.

GB: Well, different things... I try to stay out of... If I'm at a meeting and I want to make a point I'll do that, but I'm not a real good public speaker, I'm not. My voice don't carry good enough to be a public speaker and I wished I, I wished I was.

LM: Well, you're a fabulous interview subject. Truly, truly.

GB: Aw, I talk more than I should.

LM: No, no that's the whole point. I wouldn't be here with this thing turned on [indicating recorder] if I...

GB: Yacking...

LM: No, that's great. I guess the only other thing that I need to check out with

you is just to make sure that you don't think that we've missed anything that we should be talking about. Nothing you've been saying she needs to ask me this? Okay, just wanted to be sure that we're not skipping over any...

GB: You'd be more to see that than I would, cause I, I don't know what you want to... I have some idea, but I don't know what your projections are that you want to get out of this. I mean, I'll help you as much as I can.

LM: Oh, you just did, immensely. This talk was really...

GB: There are other things that I can tell you about, farms or farm... I gotta show you my farm machinery. You gotta see my tractors...

LM: Absolutely.

[End of interview].