2-11-2000

Interview with Mike Dailey

Todd Juengling

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Accession Number: LAK-TJ-A021100.A
Researcher: Todd Juengling
Event: interview with Mike Dailey
Place: RLC research room, 15 Davis House

Todd Juengling: Basically people who've told me to talk to you are Jordan Parker, she's a student here, I don't know if you know her.

Mike Dailey: I've met her, yes.

TJ: And then I mention your name to Inese while I was interviewing her and she said, "Oh Mike, I didn't even talk about Mike the whole time!"

MD: That's just because I do all the little labor work, that's what I like to do, help out. So what are you looking for?

TJ: Well, I guess just to start off can you talk about some of the stuff that you have done at the Environmental Center. Like I know you've worked on planting the trees along the river.

MD: Right. I came in the first year they had it, were beginning to establish it, and we didn't really have a committee but we had a planning committee. So we planned projects and then we just went out and carried them out. I think the first project was the butterfly garden. It was actually the first thing I got involved in, and helped them get rid of the weeds so that we could begin to form beds, and had students help, and get Briar Hill Stone, which is a local quarry, and put stones down to outline the beds. Then I helped with the plantings. Soon after that I think our next major project really was the tallgrass prairie. And I brought my tractor and spreader down, and I think Oscar Will, which you may or may not remember, that was a professor here, he helped, and let's see Ray Heithaus helped, and there was somebody else involved there and I gotta think who it was . . . Stu. Stewart oh that's terrible. I've got time to think about it. His wife is in public affairs here. I'll think about it, just let that pass. But anyway the four of us went out there then and put the seed in and went back and forth over the ground during the cold time of the year like early March, so the freezing and thawing would work the seed into the ground. And so that's been a real slow progression, because this is not a natural prairie area, although we wanted a representative prairie. It's a natural woodland area. So we're kind of fighting nature there to try and establish a demonstration that's not, you know, native. There would be native pockets here. So that's been, actually that's been one of my more enjoyable projects cause I have watched the grass advance on the prairie. And with management and time I think we'll have a real nice demonstration. Then the tree planting came along, and Ray pursued this that we should put a natural border along the Kokosing in the part that we are allowed to affect, and try to, you know, keep particulate matter like soil out of the water, and any chemicals the farmers would be using. And so that became our next major project and I kind of helped, Ray and Oscar and I did a lot with that, as far as they got the trees, but organizing the students and the local community once we got people there I helped a lot with organizing to get them to plant, you know, how to do it in lines, and how Ray had it organized through kids' research projects on different species. And there's just been a lot of other little things. We've actually had two planning sessions. One close to the Environmental Center, the house down there on

Laymon RD., than the rest of the reaches. And Ray got the machinery and did part of the other reaches, but we had so much help we did probably a thousand trees last spring just by hand. And we could have done a lot more. It took half the time we thought it would take. People like to help do that kind of thing because you can see the tree grow.

TJ: I was down there actually. I came down and I didn't think there would be that many people there.

MD: Amazing, wasn't it? I mean I was really pleased. The first year we got some students and you could tell they were the really dedicated students that thought this is what, you know, environmental centers are about. The second year we got students that had never even been involved, just wanted to be there because tree planting sounded fun, and that's more exciting to me, you know, because I was a student here. I graduated in '79, we didn't get very involved with community things like that at that time, and when you have center like this to me it's a luxury compared to other colleges I'm familiar with. And I just thought that man they ought to be here, and they were here. So that excited me to see that many students and community members. So, no if you were there, I don't know if you found it to be enjoyable or not.

TJ: Oh yeah.

MD: It's relaxing. And this year then I think we're gonna look at hopefully getting that apple orchard in up on the hill. I went up with the young man that started the orchard idea, and his name eludes me right now. I'll think of it. If I try not to think of those names I remember, I don't know how you are. But, anyway he, we went up and looked for a site, and they were gonna put, you know I'm trained in soils and site selection for that kind of stuff, that's my background. Cause once I left Kenyon I went to Ohio State in agriculture and I worked with the federal government in agriculture, and that's all I've done is agriculture since then. So, their site was a beautiful easy-access site, but terrible for trees because it's heavily, a heavy possibility of frost, and so your apples never do anything, so we went up on the side of the hill there on that beautiful hill there behind the Center, and found a sloping but not steeply sloping area, which gives good air drainage, and picked out, based on the deeper soil right there, this would be a good apple orchard site. So they began mowing it. And so hopefully next year then, instead of spudding in one tree at a time we'll be digging holes, putting in some peat, unwrapping burlap and putting trees in. So that'll be fun too. We've had a lot of good projects. I've helped with the, we had the county Heart of Ohio tour come through there two falls ago, were you here then?

TJ: I was here, but I didn't go on it, I went on the Heart of Ohio tour this past fall.

MD: Okay okay, but we were on it. It's fun. Well you probably went, it went through Oscar's farm last year. I don't know if you, Oscar Will had the farm out by the black angus beef farm out by Apple Valley. It went through there last year. And the year before of course we were on it, and I forget how many visitors Inese said, 700-800. There was a mountain of people. It was 2 days, Saturday and Sunday. That's been a good thing. Last year's environmental camp for kids, my daughter attended, and we encouraged a lot of other kids her age to attend and that was excellent for the first year, I hope they keep it up. But it's kind of become a focal point for

community members to actually focus on Kenyon and that Kenyon's actually a good thing. Because believe it or not over the years the community has not looked at Kenyon as a good thing. They've been their own little, tight little circle, and they don't get outside that circle, and within the last 5 years it's like Kenyon has begun to expand into the community and be part of the community instead of separate from it. So to me the thing that caused that was the Environmental Center. You're getting people here that never stepped foot on campus before. I think that's good too, if it brings us some more good students in the future. That's something you can put on your website, I mean Pat Heithaus did a lot with the website. I don't know if you talked to her, but once she got it on I think we got a lot of people interested in what the activities, what have they planted that would be good to educate my children on. Like I say, the prairie, the tree plantings. The tree planting are hard to observe. It's more something you do and then wait. But the prairie's right there. Ray's pine plantation's right there. People love that walk up the mountain there. Yeah, there's a lot of people who go up in there. Bird watching's fantastic here, I think that's probably something we're neglecting that we should concentrate more on is community bird walks. I do birding, if I do any birding in the spring when I get a free day I'm gonna do it out there. It's got all the different habitats you're looking for. So, and it also, I'm talking too much probably. With all the farm ground that we actually own, rather than turning it all into, with quotation marks, "greenspace," I think you're better off to keep a blend, and this would be my own personal interest because I work with farmers, but to keep a blend of current modern agriculture, anything we can demo on the past state of agriculture, maybe looking into the future, and then blend that right on into the environment, because 80% of our environment as Midwestern people is farm ground. 20% is greenspace. So, it's good to see that we have both here almost in that percentage. I think you've got to continue to maintain the farmers and keep that kind of ground and not discourage that because we're losing enough of them to development. To me it's a perfect blend. We've got farming in its modern state, we've demo-ed old state, and we have environment. So we've got the undisturbed. So I don't know what the kids are thinking, but. So what other questions do you have?

TJ: Well, why is it so important to keep that balance between farmland and greenspace?

MD: Well, I think having working with farmers myself over my entire of my career, my working career. In fact before I came to Kenyon I worked for all the neighboring farms and milked cows. You've got the option, you keep the farmers farming, feeding beyond our local people, which means, you know, the world. And we do do that, I mean, urban people make less and less of that everyday that, oh we're not farming the world we have all this surplus. That surplus ends up in the homes and bellies of people that do need the food, it just takes longer to get there. But if we lose those farmers it isn't going to become greenspace, it's going to become homes, and I'm already seeing that. I've worked over, in my career, somewhere in the neighborhood of 30 counties in Ohio, and I currently work about 11 intensively. And more than half of those counties have become 30% more urban since I've worked in them. You know, I can remember when you drove a lot of gravel roads, you only went from farmhouse to farmhouse, and now you pass a lot of urban houses to get from farm to farm, and it's not the same. So it isn't that this ground's gonna revert back to greenspace or it's gonna revert back to old fashioned farming, it's gonna become houses. So to me maintaining farming is keeping greenspace. Even though it's growing crop, maybe even call it a monoculture of a corn crop or a wheat crop or a bean crop,

it's better than houses. That's just the way, I mean that's just my personal; I would like to see Knox County stay more rural and not become an urbanized county, because I've worked in Medina County, I've worked in Stark County, and they re no longer any way, shape, or form farming. Wayne County is becoming that way very rapidly. Holmes County has become that way in spite of it's Amish population. It's extremely built up; I don't hardly work in Holmes County anymore. It's sad. I mean I used to work with literally hundreds of farms in those counties, and I don't anymore, I just have really concentrated more on the rural areas. So, to me to keep Gambier as Gambier, you know, the little village or college on the hill, we've got to keep it surrounded by farms, not houses. Yeah that's why, that's why I think we need to maintain that.

TJ: Well, what is the work that you do, the programs at the Environmental Center mean to you, or why do you do that?

MD: Well, I participate just out of general interest. I come as a student to those whenever they've got a good speaker lined up. I'll just use Ray Heithaus as an example. He speaks on a lot of topics I'm interested in as hobbies, so for something tree-wise, bird-wise, stream-wise then I come to his programs for that. There've been some other programs concerning insects; that's not only my hobby, I work in that in my working world, too, so I might pick up one new thing that I would learn and could use in my work. When it's something for the kids in the community, you know pre-grade school or grade schoolers, or it's for college students, I'm really interested in education. I educate adult farmers now, but my true interest lies in seeing students of all ages have a chance, you know. And for them to be, maybe set up programs for them with other speakers, and I've even helped a couple programs as a speaker, is if you can use somebody who actually knows their field that can teach those who don't, or want to know about it, you're gonna be pretty effective and influencing them for the future to also take interest and do a better job environmentally. Or farming, community-wise. Or even what we want to call our community, certainly Gambier's not rural, but it's centered in rural. So I guess I want to see their education programs continue because it teaches community people and particularly the students of the community, including Kenyon students. I just wish Kenyon students took a more active interest in it. But I know how busy they are. I know what it's like. It's easier said than done. I went home on weekend and milked cows, so I didn't spend a lot of weekends on campus, and I know I didn't have much time. So other than going home, milking the cows for the neighbor to give him a break, and the rest of it was study time, you sure didn't find much time for extracurricular. A little sports, if possible, a little clubs or organizations if possible, but yeah I just. That's probably my only disappointment, I would really like Kenyon students to get more interested and take advantage of the resource that isn't available hardly anywhere else. No, you go to other colleges they have little land labs but they're really little. This thing's a huge land lab. It leaves a lot of doors open for their future. You know, future studies, let's say they want to go on in agriculture or something, they cans tart right here and build a foundation, and be ready to go to an agricultural or environmental school. So, I don't know if you have interest in that part of it.

TJ: Yeah, I mean I've never been a big science person, I've never been real heavy into the science part of it, but I love the idea of community and I love being outside in the environment. I

do landscaping over the summers, and I worked in a greenhouse.

MD: Oh, so it's perfect. Yeah, it's a perfect blend and you know exactly what I mean. Outside is a huge amount of freedom, especially if you can make a career out of that. And for me, I mean, it's been the ultimate career. I'm 300 day a year outside, and the bad weather I'm inside, because, you know, and during the winter I can be working on the computer getting ready to be outside again come March. So, I know exactly where you're at if you're talking landscaping or anything like that. It's the ideal.. And you can start that at Kenyon, I mean at the Environmental Center. All those doors are open. Even, I'm surprised some students, I'm just starting to be contact by some students about composting, and maybe working that in with a local farmer, and if they could use the composted material as a natural fertilizer, and I'm surprised that hasn't already happened. I can think of project in my head already about how we could, you know, be composting some stuff down there. If nothing else on an experimental scale to take to the community and say hey you can do this and make good use of waste instead of filling the landfills up. I guess all that started at Kenyon, the environmental part of it. I don't call myself an environmentalist, I feel conservation is the right word for me. Cause I want to conserve everything, I know you can't totally eliminate use, otherwise we wouldn't be wearing the clothes we're wearing, or I wouldn't have come here in the car I came in. So, you know. What else?

TJ: Well, you kind of touched on this, but what do you see as the major role of the Environmental Center in the community?

MD: Education about what can be. I don't think we can just do it and say we're doing our part, I think what we have to do is say here's a small portion of it as a show, as education, you all can do this. So I don't think Kenyon, I think Kenyon can lead by being an example, but not on a big enough scale to be effective as the example. But if they want to be effective as the example, then they can educate 10 other people or 100 other people about the same thing, and I'm just going to use composting as one example. If we can learn to compost just regular household waste, and we can get 100 other families in the community to do that, we're gonna take less stuff to the township hall, or to get rid of your refuse, or the local dump, what do you call them, the waste collectors. We're gonna send less stuff to all those people. Then, I think in that state the Environmental Center has to be a point of education. I think they should be the point in Knox county. I don't know who would be a better leader than, you know, we have other small colleges here, but really Kenyon should, they've got the right attitude to be the leadership in education. Not just be educative, but educators, including students. The ones that have taken an active role down there and said hey I want to guide a tour, or I want to talk about a topic, I think that's wonderful. That's where we need to be if we want to maintain our rural community. So, yeah that's it, they should be the focal point of education. Old and young students. I even had one of the meetings that I had down there was on weeds, something that simple, and that weeds aren't always weeds if they're in a good place. And we had some farmers attend, and I was excited to get them there because they look at a weed as something you have to kill, and there are places the weeds do 'em good, they protect you know open soil, areas you wouldn't disturb for some cause and there's even some good weeds to eat. So, all that becomes educational, that a weed is only a wed when it's out of place. You know that in landscaping.

TJ: Yeah, the idea that a rose bush in the middle of farmland can be considered a weed by some people.

MD: Yeah, right. Especially the multiflora rose. Now that's a weed, that's one that gets out of hand almost anywhere you put it. Bt that's a case where short-sighted men pulled something out of its environment where it had limits, and put it in a limitless environment and it just decided to take over. We've done that with so many things. Over half, just an example at the Environmental Center, over half the weeds that I've catalogued down there are alien, so if you took all of them away it really would be a different landscape. And a lot of the weeds that were native here weren't that invasive, and not that big a problem. The weeds that are here because we brought them here are the huge problem. Same goes with insects, same goes with a lot of tree species. And, like you say, multiflora rose, that's the biggest. Everybody can pont at that one and know what it is, how many times their dog or they have been caught in it with their coats, you know, that's a good example. What else?

TJ: Well, you were talking about the Environmental Center being an educational opportunity for Kenyon students who go on, who want to go on in agriculture or something like that. Do you see that extending to like Mt. Vernon high school students?

MD: I think so. They've tried some stuff, you know, on their own with little nature trails or little portion of a field or a little cubicle here that's growing, and you can't get the whole gist of the environment if you don't have all the different types of little niches that occur in our local area, and we have all that at Kenyon. And actually on a bigger scale than I've been thinking, we haven't done it yet, but they have a thing where high school students participate called an Envirathon, and it's half agriculture and half urban environmental. And those kids come together as teams and work in, I think it's 5-man teams, or 5-person teams because there are a tremendous number of ladies in it now. They actually do better in a lot of the stuff than the young men. Young men don't pay enough attention; I know that from experience. But they come together these teams, and one of the famous teams is right here at East Knox High School, Tom Holden is their leader, and they win, they go into state competition every year. But we had one competition here, probably the second fall that we were here as an environmental center, and I had encouraged that, and Inese got a hold of the right people, and they had the county contest there. We have the environment and urban environment, the rural and urban environment as far as soils and vegetative niches. We could have the state or the national Envirathon here. I think that would be quite a plus, to bring people's attention to Kenyon. I would like to eventually see that happen. I've mentioned it, but I know that for Inese it would create a huge amount of work and paper work, but I think it, to me that would be the climax of what we have accomplished here. I went to one, my wife was on, in fact she's currently on the state board, and she was on the state board representing Ohio when we went to the University of North Carolina in Asheville, and had the national Envirathon. And those kids, those students were all high school students, were all so excited about it and worked so hard at it, you know, it's encouraging. So, I guess that, you have to have a campus so you have a place to stay, a place to eat, you know a focal point. You have to have an environment where you have everything. Of course Asheville has that because they have agriculture in the form of corn, beef, tobacco production, they have a lot of woodland production, they have a lot of stream and river bottoms. There isn't anything there

we don't also have except the tobacco. We've got other grain crops, which makes it just as interesting. We've got urban in Gambier and Mt. Vernon. So I could see people, yeah let's use Mt. Vernon High School for example, utilizing this for environmental training, practice Envirathons here, just coming out here for the general education, we just have to make that avenue available for them. So, no I think it's a wonderful place, and it's so centrally located and easy to get to. You don't have to fight a traffic jam to get here. If you head toward Columbus, I mean, I hate it when they schedule meetings for me in Delaware and Columbus because I can't get there. I know how to get there, but you spend days in the car, hours I'll say, getting somewhere that should've taken you 45 minutes. I can come to Gambier from anywhere within an hour and it only takes an hour. So to me that, we're in the ideal location. Everything, we've got the environment, we've got the niches, you know, we've got woodland, we've got brush, we've got open fields, brushy fields, crop fields, the river bottom, which in itself is a whole system of its own. So, no I think we've got it all here for the ultimate in education.

TJ: So, how does the river tie into all this?

MD: Well, the river obviously is the low point in the entire landscape, and everything collects there. And the river becomes a conduit, not just for water movement but for wildlife movement, dissemination of plants and animals both. They follow the area. One of the largest eastern wild turkey populations in the state is centered around Gambier Ohio, which is hard for a lot of people to believe. You look at it and say, well it's farm ground with a little bit of woodland, but really you've got a conduit like the river that brings things to Gambier. We're up on the protected hill as far as the types of soils here, the types of vegetation, the old oak trees that draw turkeys for winter food. I'm just using them as one example. But that all happens because of the river. A lot of the birds that end up here in the river, in the winter, come from about 4-5 miles away and concentrate here. Come March they will begin to move back to their summer homes, as far away as my place 5 miles away, and our bird population will pick back up and Gambier's will go down. But I really believe a lot of that occurs because of the river and all the tributaries that lead to it. It's like a natural corridor for travel. It would, also on the bad side, it carries weed seeds during flooding periods; on the good side it carries tree seeds and revegetate the river bottom. That's, the river is totally, it's the lowest point in the horizon, and it's where everything ends up accumulating, including our, if you look at the Laymon, the Brown Environmental Center down there, it's literally in the river bottom. It's on the second bottom so it's not subject to flooding, but you know your first bottom's your flooding bottom which no one should live in, although we do have people that foolishly do. And your second bottom is your premier soils, which generally farmers should be living on. And then when you go away from that is onto the side hills and terraces, that's where other people should be living, ground that's not very useable for agriculture. So, no I feel the river is actually the lowest, but the focal. You know, the focus of the whole environment aspect there. Rivers are kind of ignored. You know, you go along a river and spend some time walking up and down the river banks, and you'll see stuff you don't see anywhere else. I mean, you see a lot of variety of plants that you don't see outside of the river banks themselves, and so I think that's why Ray's idea of planting the buffers of trees is so outstanding. It becomes an area to collect nutrients and purify water. We really need to, for the long haul I think there'll be more wetlands, that you know will actually revert back into their wetland use too, because that has a certain amount of purifying effect, wildlife use, some of

those areas aren't as farmable as we originally thought they were. And that's basically based on the soil type. That's where we need to delineate. However, some of the Midwest, some of the most productive soils throughout the Midwest and throughout the Russian breadbasket, and throughout all the breadbaskets in the world, are based on wetland soils. They drain 'em, they're highly organic, they're highly fertile, they produce more per acre and they actually make it so a farmer can stay in business so we can't just go back and say, okay all these farmers have to give up all of this ground because it should revert back to something else. That's that would force the to go further up the side of the hill to less productive, more erosive. That's why the river bottom, river bottoms just do everything. The Indians knew that. You know, the native Indians, or native Americans in this area spent all their time using river or stream areas, for trave, for food, home, you know home areas. In fact this area's rich in that kind of stuff, even the Environmental Center. A lot, when they do plow the soil you can find arrowheads pretty easily. So you should know that from anthropology. Have you been out at all or been able to?

TJ: Not really looking for artifacts or anything.

MD: there's a good field that we own clear to the, at the west end, you know you go up there on that whatever the river road is that goes down, turns to the left.

TJ: Lower Gambier Rd.

MD: Yeah, that field right to the left, that's always been great for artifacts. There was a kid named Craig Davis in here that was from Logan where they had a lot of Indian artifacts on his dad's farm I went to school with him, and every spring when they'd plow that field he'd head straight down there, cause that was, he wanted to find his artifacts before some piece of tillage equipment destroyed them. They don't, you can't catalogue them very easy cause they're so disturbed, but he wanted to salvage them from the tillage tools. What else are you thinking about?

TJ: Well, you were talking a little bit about wildlife along the river, earlier you talked about birding in the Environmental Center lands, I was just wondering if you had any experiences with wildlife down either along the river or at the Environmental Center.

MD: Quite a bit. The river and the tributaries that are real close here, like the big one here is Indian Run, or that's the small one, the smaller one, the big one is Big Run, and the next one's Indian Run. Both are, I do some birding along there because I know farmers that own ground along there. And just for example, where the Kokosing meets Big Run this year, I saw a large bird in the middle of a cornfield, so I, I always have binoculars with me, get the binoculars out and it's a black-crowned night heron, which is real infrequent here. When you see em they're always in the river corridor, and when you see em it's a great sight and it's relatively rare to have it on your bird list, you know very frequently. I keep a running list over the years of how many I've been able to find. And the last time I saw that one was on the Olentangy River in Columbus near the Ohio State University campus. I used to walk a cemetery because there were no homes but there was the river right through the cemetery, and the birds were undisturbed, and you could get a lot of birds there. This Environmental Center is the same way. They're fairly undisturbed

and you're following a river and all the tributaries, and it just brings a tremendous amount of bird life. Wild turkeys, of course the great blue heron's very common. We get a tremendous amount of warblers in the spring that are going through here headed toward Canada to nest, and so I come over here during peak warbling time, which generally is a little later than the other birds. So I'm going to say I come over here about eh first week of May. And the transition from the pines on the hill, down the brushy hill, into the mature woodland, or mature river bottom, I can find almost all the warblers that are gonna pass through here would be right here on Gambier's campus. I helped with, when Dr. Burns was still here I helped with his ornithology course and field ecology, and we did a lot of birding. And I kinda grew an appreciation for it them. I hope that's still stuck on campus, I don't know if, in was one of the few kids who wanted to get up at 6 o'clock and go birding every morning. But as long as they would give me binoculars I was always willing to go, you know, cause there's always something new and different. But a lot of wetland birds because of the river. Bittern, I've seen bitterns down there. A lot of people either don't recognize them or have never seen bitterns, and they're common, but they only, they spend all their time sitting around the edges or on logs. Kingfishers, I'm sure you've seen them. They're real common down along here. Like I say, the turkey is not a wetland bird, but they love wetland areas. The roost over wetland areas because of the great amount of protection from predators. They follow wetland areas, so the corridor is great for them. Of course the geese, they're more than plentiful. The wood duck are actually above average in numbers, and that's probably the most beautiful duck. The male, when they're in color in the spring is just absolutely beautiful to see. So they're pretty common to see whistling through down there. Yeah, it's an area to follow for wildlife.

TJ: Yeah today I saw a bluebird, I was walking on my way over here, and I hadn't seen one in years. And I was talking to Ray about the bluebird trail they just did down there and how they had 40 new bluebirds this spring and I thought that was just incredible.

MD: Yeah, it really increases the numbers in the area. I've done the same thing at home, always kept bluebird and gotten the neighbors to put some up. In fact if I can get free boxes I just take em to em. And we see the same thing, you'll see em in groups during the wintertime. They show up at our bird feeder box, which they're not normally seed eaters but they do during the inter when they're desperate and they stay here year-round which is so unusual. Once they got rid of the old farm fence posts, the old-style fence posts and farmers started tearing those old fences out because we had few [end of side A] . . . They got a few birds, but this thing really works. The only thing I don't like about it is they kill somewhat other desirable species to salvage the bluebirds and I think you've got to reach a limit. You get rid of the undesirable species that are not native the European house sparrows. I don't see that they have any place in our environment. Now that's harsh but that's just a fact; they shouldn't have been here. But the wrens should be here and the wrens also like those boxes. And I guess at home when a wren take over a box, he has a beautiful song in the morning too, and he's a worm eater. And worm eaters are good. They're eating things, get em out, that are gonna cause crop problems. So I don't like to disturb the wrens. But bluebird box, the bluebird people are as purist as a farmer is accused of being a monocropping. Well, what's the difference between that and mom-bluebirding? You've got to let a few other things live. So I guess I'm kinda, I'm more moderate in my environmental stance on that kind of stuff. That's neat you saw one, was he in full color?

TJ: Oh yeah.

MD: Yeah, the males look so pretty. They're aggressive, too. If they're helping nest, and you get near the box, there'll be about 1 for every 4 that you go to, that'll buzz you, click his little beak as he comes down and try to scare you off. So, it's gonna be a great area if we can get more ornithology stuff going here.

TJ: Yeah I guess, I mean, I'd assume the justification for chasing out the wrens is that they, they can nest in a lot of different places, whereas the bluebirds are more selective.

MD: Yeah, I think that is the justification, and I can accept that. It's just hard, I don't know if I could do it myself. I'd rather just put up ten more boxes so everybody has a home. That would probably be my focus, instead of. But the European house sparrows go every time, they're cruel and vicious. They'll wait till the babies hatch and go in and peck em to death, or just build a nest right over top of them and let em starve to death. The European house sparrow, no good place for them. And really we brought these house finches here too, the ones that have got a little purple on em?

TJ: The red ones?

MD: Yeah, the reddish ones. The only good thing about them is they don't allow European house sparrows to stay. And they don't nest in the same filthy places that a house sparrow will. So that's to an advantage, but they're not supposed to be there either. We've just, I think we as a society, we've got to be more aware of what we bring to the environment. People have introduced about half of my insect concerns, they've introduced half of my weeds. Slugs. We normally have 2 species of slugs, and I have seen up to 4 species, 2 that don't belong here. So, no that's, we've got to be more careful. I think that's what the Environmental Center would help teach. You know just like the river. There's a lot of things that we do to our river and for our river that are good and bad. Just like letting those people in the upper reaches dump that lime sludge into the upper reaches, you know the people that are drawing the water to send to Delaware. They're having an effect on it. You can't change anything in the environment without having a cascading effect on everything else. And for them, for our "epa," and I will only give that small letters and quotation marks, to allow that, then they really don't environmental protect. There's no environmental protection in allowing stuff like that. I don't know if you've been in on all that or heard about all that controversy, but it's bad. You know, Ray was dead set against it and for good scientific reasons, not for personal reasons. I was dead set against it, I wrote some letters, too. We affect our upper reaches like in Fredericktown, go up there and do something to the river up there, eventually you can come down here as a class and monitor it. It happens here too. So, that's the way water is, it's mobile. Diffusion. Anything else?

TJ: There was something I wanted to say about that.

MD: You're like me. Stu Schott, Stu and Lisa Schott. Stu was the other person. You know Lisa

Schott, I'm sure, she's in a lot of stuff, publications up here, but Stu's her husband and he's been involved a lot at the Environmental Center. And he helped specifically that day, he drove on a lot of the seed for the prairie. He's helped a lot down there. I still haven't thought of the young man who got the trees started, but I will.

TJ: Oh, I remember now. That whole thing with Del-Co, I remember reading over some of what went through with the legal battle. And the Del-Co people were saying, they were basically accusing Mt. Vernon of using eminent domain as a way to lie control the water, and I thought, what else are you gonna use?

MD: Yeah, yeah, right. I wrote the county commissioners and told them that I saw 100% behind them spending all the money at their means to fight these people, because once it's done it's done, and you can't back away from it once it's affected the river. You know the river's our life source. Even though we don't use it on a day-to-day basis, it is what causes our environment to be here the way it is. I mean everything drains to it. Plug it up and you'll have a lake. You know, everything you do to it is going to affect somebody upstream or downstream. So no that, and of all places they went up stream as fr as you could go and are going to affect all of us, are going to affect all of us. They say they won't they've got all this data–you can find data to prove anything you want. For anything. You can prove to me that organic farming's the only way to go. I can go find data that prove to you that common modern farming's the only way to go, and we'll both be right and we'll both be wrong, you know. We have to reach some happy medium. That thing's been real offensive. I think, why do I have an "epa" that stands for environmental protection, when they don't protect anything. They're almost paid for hire. Whoever pays the biggest bills to their funds, is the ones who get to do whatever they want. They slap down some of my farmers for their practices harder than they would a company like that that had an accidental spill directly into the river, and some of the things the farmers are doing I can tell you from experience have not caused anybody and environmental or pollution harm. But yet they're regulated on it. And here's a company that wants to affect an entire reach of river from here to the Walhounding, and it's just like, well that's okay. You know, because it helps urban people, well it helps people that are overbuilding homes in Delaware drink. Which I could care less about, sorry, I'm selfish that way. I care about my local environment and you know if we would all care about our local environment a lot of this stuff wouldn't happen. So, yeah that's, I guess that's the main thing about the Environmental Center, you know the Brown Center, if we can just continue to educate. I sure hope that over time I see more and more encouragement from the Kenyon students. I'm getting more calls this year than last, and last year than the year before, which tells me they're really starting to get involved. So that's exciting. I just wish I was here now instead of twenty years ago. We jut didn't have that. Yeah, you're at an advantage. Are you a junior or senior?

TJ: Junior.

MD: So you've still got time to enjoy it.

TJ: [I talk about how I want to do more at BFEC]

MD: Well, the tree planting's a good start, and that brought a lot of people. It's just amazing how enthusiastic they all were. I even saw a girl down there, it made me laugh but I worried about her the next day. She wore sandals, and the first field we planted in, we were on the other side of the bridge but on this side of the rod, that was all poison ivy in there, and she had short pants that come up to like half length and sandals on, so I'm thinking of her little toes and ankles all swollen up. I never heard, I figure she spent some time up at the medical center. But that' part of learning your environment better. I mean, I know that because I'm out all day and I don't care to itch all summer. I don't get it very bad but I avoid it. And I think, well, you know, if you're not out all the time you don't really recognize this is what we're into. She was at the point she'd already walked halfway across the field before I recognized it, and there was no sense in me telling her at that point. The damage was done. If you learn your environment better I think you survive better. Just like you and landscaping, I bet you've learned things about the outdoors you never even thought about. Even in landscaping every little landscape is a miniature environment.

TJ: [I talk about how catering to the unnatural wishes of the rich in landscaping bothers me.]

MD: [Talks about landscaping with native species. Says he wishes he did it more consistently. Says I should get into the native landscaping business. The wonders of coneflowers and dogwoods. Eastern, Midwest, Western native.]

TJ: [I tell him about a book about native landscaping we had in the bookstore; it said the OSU extension office has lists by county or region, or something]

MD: [Says more about getting info from extension office. More talk about buying useful plants– for hummingbirds, butterflies.] We've got it at the Environmental Center, but we started just like I did on my home, we thought, we've got to get this butterfly thing up and running so we put a lot of stuff in it. Then you re-evaluate and say, well half that stuff probably isn't native, and will it spread, that's your next concern. Some of it has said yes, I'll spread. Some of it's real benign so you don't worry about it. It's okay. So that's something that just more though and research needs to go into before you do anything. We're pretty good, we've got a lot of native stuff down there. A lot of students take advantage of that, too, even the art classes. In the fall there a lot of art students. I don't know if you take art or not. There's a tremendous number of them down there. Why can't I think of that young man's name? [Tries to think of his name. Talks about Matt Brown leaving. Mentions Molly Warren ('99).] even though Kenyon wasn't right for her Kenyon got her headed toward what was right for her. Same thing with me, Kenyon wasn't right for me if I wanted to work in agriculture, but it got me a real good foundation, and then when I went to Ohio State it was easy. [Elaborates.] Who would be your advisor here?

TJ: Actually I'm an English and music major.

MD: You're kidding!

[We talk about enjoying things outside your major even more than your major.]

MD: To this point I still enjoy the anthropology and archaeology. Sociology's was a little bit too urban for me, studying cultures. I wanted to study how the cultures affected where they lived and what they did and that's more anthro, more like what you're doing. How's the culture affected because of the river, how does the river affect the culture. [Talks about Howard Sacks. Mentions the picture above the computer, says it looks like Oscar will's farm] Anything else, have we done everything you . . .?

TJ: Well, we kinda started talking about this in relation to Del-Co and talking about wildlife along the river, but I just wanted to talk about what you think people in Knox County should understand about the river, or you think people should relate to it?

MD: Well I think I don't know if they can so much relate to it as they can think there's a consequence of everything they do that's out of sight out of mind. If it goes down the drain, if it goes across the land, if you do it to the river, you've really done it to your entire environment because the river sustains the rest of that environment. You know the river itself, if you want to monitor the purity of our environment, the river is groundwater, it's not surface water. It's on the surface now, but the river water is only a reflection of what's underneath each of our homes. So whatever we do at our home affects the quality of the river, and if the quality of the river says it's bad, we've done a bad job at home. So, I think I would encourage these people to use the rivers and waterways as a reminder of what we're doing. You know, each of us are doing. And the health of our environment based on what we're doing to it. It tells you everything. Everything you monitor down there you can eventually tell what somebody did at home. It may take years, it may only take month or a couple weeks, depending on how porous your soil is. If you dump it down your drain, it ends up in the river. If you dump it in your yard, it ends up in the river. You know, I'm thinking something as simple as to this day people still don't think about oil. And the cars run on oil, they need oil to be lubricated, we're going to have some kind of transportation, and there's by-products. And the by-products have proper places, proper re-uses, and it's so easy, that's just one simple example. But yeah if you want to focus on the Kokosing River, cause it literally is litmus paper for the entire community on what we're doing as a culture. So that'd be the main thing. Just when people see there's something wrong with the river, there's something going on, there's changes going on and they're not to the good side, we should all sit up and take notice and get together and say okay what do we do to change that. You know, you go through there and you find batteries and old tires and stuff like that, and I think of how short-sighted, or how unthoughtful somebody had to be to toss that stuff toward a waterway, and then affect the health of all the other who want to do a good job or want a clean place to live. You know, what you do affects me, what I do affects you, and you would want to have that consideration for your fellow neighbors. I don't think we can always say it's on a bigger scale of America, or we affect the state of Ohio, but we affect people downstream, and we certainly affect our neighbors more than anybody else by doing non-conservative things. That'd probably be my main message on the river, it's litmus paper. Listen when people, you know as long as it's qualified, valid research, somebody going down there and giving me gut emotion or gut reaction because they think something if different than somebody like Ray Heithaus doing a study and saying the dissolved oxygen has been cut in half in ten years, well I'm nervous now. Something's happened to my river, and it's going to affect me eventually it's going to affect the

health of my children or grandchildren. Nothing's immediate; it's all over time. Just cause you don't see the river turn red and burn like it did in the Cuyahoga River, you know, like it did 30 years ago, that's doesn't mean there's nothing wrong with it, we didn't do anything serious today. It's just like for a while, a year ago, two years ago, there was a lot of soap suds coming down the river from somewhere in these housing developments I'm convinced. Cause right across the bridge there'd be a head of foam coming down, and it was soap suds, which phosphates cause sudsing, so I expect some lady was doing her laundry the same time every day and rather than her leach system going through the soil and being purified first, it was going straight to the river or a small tributary. And I had Ray start looking, you know, try to find it. He even did a couple canoeings and he didn't find it but I noticed it quit, so I don't know if somebody got wind of it or figured out you know. That's the kind of stuff that affects all of us. If you dump something in the river and it doesn't affect my health or beauty, but it affects the birds that live down there, then my recreation's taken away, cause I like to go down there and bird. And healthy environment means healthy birds, healthy other wildlife. So yeah, probably the biggest message anybody could get is the river is litmus paper. You know, pay attention. I think it's all common sense I don't know why we make it so difficult. Don't you think? I mean is recycling common sense or what? I mean even farmers, there's a lot of things they have learned to recycle. Recycling newspapers to use for bedding for hogs and young cattle, and then spreading that on the land so that it rots up and becomes humus again. That makes full sense to me. Farmers that have been taking the centers ut of old tires, and they cut that center out and band them together and you can use them as culverts and tiles. And so they're doing that, and they last a long time in the ground, and once they're put in the ground that way they're benign to cause any environmental problems. And so to me that's common sense. Who wants a big old dump full of tires that'll burn eventually and really pollute our environment. So, now then, that's the biggest thing. Even if you're going to concentrate your study on the river. Even though it seems very, not very much of a focal point for Knox County, it should be. You know a lot of counties have a major river or tributary of some sort, and almost none of them treat it as a gold mine. They build on it and treat it as a place to dump. Well, in the old days, my brother he was at Kenyon. He worked for the Kenyon crews in the summer, and somehow the crews also helped maintain something down at the water works plant, down where they do the sewage. There's a lot of time the motors didn't work, the old the Gambier sewage pumping motors, and the stuff would just go direct brown right into the river. And he said you could watch it roll right into the river, just sludge, sludgy water, and you could see the brown area going on down stream out of sight. Now somebody down stream got to drink that. Fortunately it wasn't us, but unfortunately how can you do that to your neighbor? Fredericktown in the old days had some bad sewage problems, Mt. Vernon did in the old days. We've finally come out of those days, but you know accidents still happen. But you can live with an accident, you can't live with habitual poisoning. Well that's more than you wanted to know on that.

TJ: It's never more than I want to know.

MD: Yeah, you always want something more to write about. If you're in literature and English you probably enjoy a lot of that, bringing stuff together. [Talk a little about music and English] What else, anything else?

TJ: That's all I have specifically. Do you have anything else you'd want to add?

MD: No, just if you can encourage the students to make better use of the resource they got, cause once for years is over they're out of here and most of em don't see it again. Yeah, any participation they do I think will be something to last. I really want to encourage Inese to make this a focal point for the future for a national Envirathon. I think Kenyon could handle it. [Talks about scheduling, etc.] We've got the forest, we've got the farms, we've got the halfway-in-between, we've got urban, and we've got a river. That's all you need. You can have the perfect Envirathon with that. [Talks about some of the things they do.] To think about high school kids doing that, I'm certain there's kids at Kenyon that couldn't do that without training. Yeah, I've even see some of them coming from biology classes to the environmental center, and I've thought the best place for them is the Center, not a classroom. Because a lot of that doesn't transfer over unless you've seen it and lived it. And the best way to do it is just go do it. So I guess my biggest encouragement is if they want to become biologists, environmentalists, conservationists, you get out and do it and apply your book work to that. You know, don't apply a job to your book work. It's too hard. I do pretty good at what I do because I've lived all that stuff and so it comes easy. You actually have something to teach other people. I couldn't have learned much of that out of a book, you just have to do it. If you can tell em anything on your little writing or your CD, it's go out and do something. Don't think about it, don't talk about it, don't even write about it, just go do it. I'll bet you enjoy working in your landscaping more than you enjoy writing about your landscaping.
TJ: [I talk about splitting wood when I go home on break.]

MD: [Talks about splitting wood for his cousin 20-25 years ago.]

[We talk about Cincinnati, etc. Golf courses. Laying sod. More about landscaping.] [end of tape]