

Alan: When you born?

James: 1954. May 4th.

Alan: What's the first thing you remember? Your youngest memory that you can put a halfway date to.

James: We moved from Kempsville when I was six. And I can remember quite a lot prior to that, but I'm not sure about the first memory. It would be stuck there on the farm anyway. Princes Anne Road, across from the golf course.

Alan: And where did your folks live before then? What did they move from to get here?

James: They lived at the Schloss place (Carter Rd, Chesapeake) when they moved down from Maryland. Actually, I think they got married down here, lived here a few years. Clifford and Willie, and I think Johnny, were born down here. And then Leon and Dorothy were born in Grantsville, Maryland, and I was the first one that was born back there.. Now,

Alan: Fred Yoder's are related to you by way of your mother?

James: Sarah, his mom's sister.

Alan: And then Fred Yoder was Dan Yoder's brother?

James: Right

Alan: Were all of them originally up around the Grantsville area?

James: No. Fred's family actually came from Oklahoma, I believe. And then I'm not sure, I'm assuming his dad moved to the Grantsville area, but that's where Fred and Sarah were until they moved moved down here.

Alan: I've seen some pictures of the couples, your parents, Fred, and Dan, all together taken in Grantsville.

James: My mom and dad and Fred and Sarah had a double wedding ceremony.

Alan: Why did they move from Grantsville to Kempsville?

James: Mom, I think, wanted to move back to Grantsville where she grew up. Dad never liked the steep hills and the rocks and all that, plus he was trying to farm with horses too.

Alan: How come?

James: I don't know. Well, I'm assuming a lot of it was probably a lack of funds, but he had gotten used to using a tractor down here when he was still at home. His dad, even though his dad didn't use it, he bought a tractor to do their field work and also used to do custom field work too for other people.

Alan: That's right, his dad lived in Kempsville too, didn't he?

James: Where Rock Church is now.

Alan: Okay. Yeah, as part of this project, I downloaded or had the folks at Behalt, the Amish & Mennonite Heritage Center in Berlin, Ohio send me in digital PDF format all of the Budget articles from 1895 to current that referred to Mount Pleasant or Kempsville or Deep Creek, and there was an article in there

about your dad helping his dad move to from Kempsville to Stuarts Draft.

James: That would have been in the early 40s, yes. That's when the ones that wanted to stay Old Order Amish and not have cars and that sort of stuff moved to Stuarts Draft, and the others stayed in this area and became Beach Amish.

Alan: I've read about a lot of different church schisms and splits during this research. That seems to be the only one that was friendly, that they helped each other out, and after it was over, they were still friends and family.

James: Yeah, they made a decision which group they wanted to be in, and the group that wanted to stay Old Order moved to Stuarts Draft then.

Alan: So you remember a time over when you were living on Kempsville on the farm. I can barely remember when you all were there. My dad would stop by and visit your dad. I don't know what for. He was doing electrical and plumbing work, maybe something to do with that. I just know I'd be in the truck with him, and we'd stop in at the farm. So I knew where you lived.

James: You see, one of the earliest memories that I do remember, now that you mention that, I'm not sure, what year did Hurricane Donna go through?

Alan: 1954.

James: Wouldn't have been Donna then. There was a pretty bad one when I was probably three or four, I think. There was another one that came through about three or four years after.

Alan: I'm sorry, that was Donna. Hurricane Hazel was '54.

James: I was thinking it was Donna. Donna came 1957. The farmhouse had a screened-in porch, and I can remember sitting in that screened-in porch and we were watching the barn, which was out behind the house, and the winds were bad enough, it started peeling tin off the roof, and it was one sheet at a time they would peel off, and that's probably the earliest, one of the earliest memories I have, is watching that happen during that hurricane.

Alan: Were you all going to Mt. Pleasant Mennonite Church then?

James: Mt. Pleasant.

Alan: Did you all ever go to the Norview Church?

James: Yes, well, yeah, I think we attended there. I remember as a kid we used to go out and help distribute The Way and stuff like that, but I think we may have been there for maybe a couple of years or something regularly. I remember Dad was real involved there, but can't say for sure.

Alan: You don't have any memories of it?

James: I can remember being out there, but I don't remember if it was more than... I don't know if we attended there regularly on Sunday mornings.

Alan: Was that still a white church then?

James: It was started as an all-black church as far as I know. It was an outreach from what I know and understand anyway.

Alan: Okay, because I've been told that originally it was a white church because Norview was a white community originally, but then very quickly it turned all-black.

James: Yeah, what I thought it was, I think it was an existing building possibly, but I thought it was existing.

Alan: Now, there may have originally been an existing building, but they built one then. Eli Kramer's brother, Levi, was the preacher there, and he built a big house on the same lot behind the church, and then they built a church, and he was the pastor in the very beginning.

James: I wasn't aware of that. I always was under the impression that it was started and continued as an outreach to the black community was what I always thought, but I was pretty young then. I can remember on Sunday afternoons. Now, we wouldn't have necessarily had to attend there, but I can remember Sunday afternoons, and I think that Mount Pleasant Youth did that too. We would go out into Norfolk and distribute The Way. You probably did that.

Alan: They did that during my time there. They did that when my parents were youth. They didn't go to Norview during my parents' youth, they went to Campostella.

James: Oh, I didn't realize it went back that far. Wow.

Alan: Carson Hochstetler has some old video film of Merlin and Leona Miller before they were married with the young folks distributing The Way in Campostella.

James: Oh, my. I didn't realize it went back that far. That's a lot further back than what I realized it was.

Alan: So, you were six when they moved from there to the Schloss farm?

James: No. I wasn't born yet. When they came from Grantsville, they moved to the Schloss farm on Carter Rd. And Dad was in partners with the Schloss Brothers with the dairy farm. They (Schloss Brothers) owned it, but there was some sort of a partnership there anyhow. And they were there several years anyway, and I think he was happy with it. Everything was going pretty well. And I think it was Eli Kramer brought up the thing about being unequally yoked. And they came to Dad and, I guess, pretty much gave him an ultimatum of dissolving the partnership or, I guess, getting booted (out of church). And that's when they moved from the Schloss farm to where John Miller lives now, the Bertha Fentress place, where John Miller is.

*Note: This before Francis B. Miller purchased the property from Bertha Fentress, currently 1652 Mt Pleasant Rd, Chesapeake, Va*

Alan: Oh, I vaguely remember you all living there.

James: They weren't there real long, I don't think. I doubt it was more than a couple of years at the most.

Alan: And Roman Miller moved in after you all? Or old man Francis B. Miller?

James: That's probably when Francis first moved in, I would imagine. And then, after that point, they moved to the Simon L. Yoder property and farm in Kempsville across from the golf course, where I was born.

Alan: When they were on the Fentress place, did he farm there, too? Or did he farm somewhere else?

James: I don't think there was any farmland with that. I know, I'm assuming, there was a short period of time that he worked for Curly Byler on a carpenter crew. And I'm assuming it was between the time when they were living at Bertha Fentress place and the Simon L. Yoder farm, I would guess.

Alan: So, when they left there, they went to Kempsville? Then, when they went from Kempsville, to Lloyd Stutzman's place on Land of Promise Rd?

James: I'm real fuzzy on some of the timeline there, but he apparently Dad had cows when he was with the Schloss brothers. And I'm not sure what the logistics would have been, but he must have had them over

there. It was a farm that my grandfather had owned. He didn't own it anymore, but he must have had them over there for a while until he rented the Simon L. Yoder farm from Chris Craneville. Because I remember hearing my older brothers talk about it when they got ready to change them from one farm to the other they took some fence down, just ran them through the back way, and they were on the other farm already then. And at that point, they were ready to milk on the Simon L. Yoder farm.

James: What were your youngest, earliest duties on the farm?

James: I was probably about seven when I'd start helping wash the cows when they came in and start feeding calves and stuff. Up until then, it was pretty much just fun. I didn't have to really do anything, but I started noticing that if I hung around the barn at milking time, they made me work. So I would try to make sure that I was somewhere else during milking time, but that didn't last long. At that point, I was assigned duties. But one of the biggest things initially was washing the cow bags when they came in to be milked and cleaning up, and things got added as it went along.

Alan: Until you were a full-fledged farmer. Did your dad have any horses, too, or was that with Fred (Yoder's) deal?

James: We had two when my oldest brothers were in their teens, I guess. They wanted horses, and that would have happened while we were at the Simon L. Yoder farm. He bought two, and they were there on the farm, they were close to 30 years old, I think, before they died. The older brothers used to ride 'em a lot. Us younger ones didn't much. I had a couple of bad experiences with them. I was never much of a horseman anyway.

Alan: What happened?

James: Well, one time...they would always... if you rode them out our lane there at Land of Promise, when you got anywhere close to the road, they would whirl and come back in just as fast as they could go. And I was on Brownie, the better of the two. Wildfire was really high-spirited and wild. But I was on Brownie, and when he whirled and came back for the barn, the belly band broke, and we were going full speed. And I was coming up probably about a foot or more, me and the saddle were about a foot or more every time he made a move. And when we got almost all the way in, he was still going full speed. I just bailed. I was surprised it didn't break anything. But I had no control. I was just bouncing all over the place. And then the other bad experience I had, Wildfire was really, really high-spirited. And one of the times I went to ride him, he didn't want to go in the direction I wanted to go, and I took the reins and popped him in the rear a little bit, and he reared up and went all the way over backwards and I had to bail off. He was that ornery. He was trying to squash me. So that was probably the last time I rode any of them. I didn't have that much interest in horses anyway.

Alan: How was Fred Yoder able to operate with the Schloss's after your dad wasn't able to? Was there something different there, or had the church leadership changed, and

James: Well, at some point, I think he owned that farm at some point. I'm not sure. I don't know whether he did or not since they didn't have the partnership thing going, I'm guessing that maybe they sold it, but I'm not sure, because I can't imagine he would have been able to continue on, although I don't know what year he came there. But Levi Kramer wasn't there too many years after that, I don't imagine.

Alan: What year did y'all move from there?

James: From the Schloss place? I think it would have been 1952 or so. They weren't terribly long at Bertha Fentress' place, so I'm assuming it was probably '52, '53, I'm guessing, I don't know.

Alan: Okay, yeah, he was around until the late 50s, possibly the early 60s.

James: Levi Kramer?

Alan: Eli.

James: Eli Kramer. Not as bishop? I think it would have been stopped earlier than that, because I can remember our bishop, was it Ward Shenk?

Alan: Yeah, came after him.

James: That would have been like the early 60s, I think.

Alan: Well, it would have been the middle to late '50s. Because he got so extreme in some of his beliefs that for three years he wouldn't give communion. Because people were not doing what he wanted them to do.

James: He's one of them that eventually moved to Amelia then, right?

Alan: Yeah. They started the Hope Church, and he went around and visited all the Deep Creek people and invited them to come with him, and a lot did and a few didn't.

James: Was this in Chesapeake?

Alan: It was in Deep Creek. And they had a church down where what is now the Nike site. And when the Nike site came in, it took the church and went right up next to the school and took several farms, and that's when they moved to Amelia. I had always thought it was because of the church, but it's because the Navy came in and took all that, and then they said, well, do we really want to live next door to a Nike park? You know, maybe we should move to Amelia.

James: Yeah, I wasn't aware of that either. I had thought it was just a decision to establish a new church once you get to a new area. I wasn't aware of that.

Alan: No, they had a church there, and it wasn't until the Navy bought them out. I think there were two Mast brothers there who first went to Amelia, so they already had contacts there. And then somebody else moved, and then the first thing you know, the whole push either went there or Pantago. But he was a lot of a nut. I mean, one of his things was he didn't believe in insurance. If you carried insurance, then he wouldn't give you communion.

James: He was definitely a lot more conservative, I guess you would say, than what most of the congregation seemed to be from what I knew of him.

Alan: Yeah, even the conference. In fact, the conference (Virginia Mennonite Conference) talked to him at one of the conference meetings to try to get him to ease up a little bit. And when he wouldn't, the conference stepped in and said, well, we're going to offer communion. All that was at the same time he said, okay, I'm gone.

James: I haven't got a lot of information on that, but from what I've heard over the years anyhow, it was far different from what things were like later on when I came along anyway.

Alan: And it's even more radically different now. So when you all... I'm trying to get this fixed in my mind, but the timelines give me a fit. So when you all moved to the Schloss farm, how many acres were there?

James: I don't even know. I'm not sure.

Alan: And your dad was there until after you were married and gone, right?

James: No, no. The Land of Promise farm.

Alan: I'm sorry. I'm thinking Stutzman and said Schloss. Okay, so you were home when they moved to the...

James: Six.

Alan: And then you all were there until your dad retired.

James: Well, I got off the farm in 1973. I got four acres from dad and built on the corner of the farm and we lived there 17 years, from the time we were married until we sold that one. So it was like '93, I believe.

Alan: Who lived next door to you there? Was Leon next door to you? Yeah.

James: He built a number of years after we did.

Alan: How old were you when Johnny died?

James: Six.

Alan: Was that the first year you all were there?

James: Well, I probably was seven. It would have been 61, I think, when he passed away. I believe it was 61. I was in first grade. We used to... Summertime, it was September. It was hot, really warm. And we used to always eat outside when the weather was warm. And I don't know if you remember, but the entrance was off of Mount Pleasant Road at that time to the front of the school. That was the front of the school at that time. And to the left of it, Brother Wenger's peach orchard came up pretty close to the school on that side. And we were all, my class and probably a couple of classes, anyhow, we used to like to eat out there in the peach trees, and a bunch of us were up in the peach tree eating our lunch. And I think it was Willie pulled in, and he went in and talked to Brother Wenger, and then they came out and got me and took me home, and that's what I remember of it.

Alan: I remember that. I mean, them coming to school.

James: You remember Willie coming to school? Okay. Because back then there wasn't even a telephone in the school. Anybody that needed to make a phone call used to have to go to Brother Wenger's house and make a phone call, so there wasn't much chance that you were going to call and get a hold of anybody at the school in those days.

Alan: Yeah. Yeah, everybody wondered, well, what was that all about? They didn't tell us until school was just about over. And then they said that Johnny had been in an accident with a tractor, which was all we knew.

James: Yeah, they took us home, and I remember going back, trying to remember going back... I think they had already, of course they put the fire out and had taken the body away by that time, but I think I remember them taking us back and we looked at the wreck of the tractor there.

Alan: What do you remember about Johnny? What was he like?

James: He was fairly quiet from what I remember. Of course, they were all enough older than me. I didn't have as much interaction as I did with my younger siblings, but I remember him mostly as being pretty quiet. I mean, he talked, but he wasn't loud or boisterous or anything like that.

Alan: Yeah, we were good friends. I was teaching him how to play guitar.

James: Oh, wow. He played guitar?

Alan: He was learning, yeah.

James: I didn't know that. Wow. Now, were y'all...

Alan: He was about two years older than me.

James: Okay, I would say, because you're Dorothy's age, I think.

Alan: Yeah, I was a class ahead of her.

James: One year. Okay, Dale was her age. Okay. I figured he was probably at least a little bit older anyway. Okay.

Alan: The first night I went to the literary, after literary I went out with Johnny and Wayne (Miller) and Pete (Yoder.) Pete. Bad company all three. And they wanted to... Pete did it. Wayne was driving. Johnny and I were in the back. We didn't have anything to do with it. We had to go by Roy Wengers and, you know, throwing bricks and stuff in the mailbox and finally Wayne pulled in the drive, Pete jumped out and pulled it up out of the ground and threw it in the ditch.

James: Oh, my. Oh, my. Times are different then.

Alan: Very much so. We had another thing at literary...well, this was before we were old enough to go to the literary. And they had a thing then, the literary, or the young folks that were going on Halloween would ride around in the back of the truck, trick-or-treating, just in the neighborhood, in the community. And they had Pete's truck and whoever it all was. And Merlin (Miller) wasn't with them either, so it was me and Merlin and Dale and a couple of the Wenger boys who weren't in the group. So we were kind of following them down the road in the cornfields.

And they stopped at Melvin (Wenger's), and they all were out of the truck up on the porch. I said, let's steal the truck. So the rest of us jumped in the back of the truck. Merlin jumped in the truck. He's the only one who had a driver's license. He was 15, I think. And the thing wouldn't start. It goes, nyeh, nyeh, nyeh, nyeh, nyeh, nyeh, nyeh, nyeh. Of course, by that time, they'd seen what was going on and came after us, and we're back into the cornfield to get away from them.

And so after they left, we came out, Melvin came and said, "hey, you all wanna get 'em?" Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. He said, "come with me". He had an old Chevy II, I think. And we all jumped in that and went back to Herbert's, and he loaded us up with eggs. And we went looking for them. And we found them. They were at Deal's store. He came sliding in there like gangster-style, man.

James: Was Melvin driving?

Alan: Melvin was driving.

James: Oh, my goodness.

Alan: Melvin was driving. He came sliding in there. And all of them were inside, I guess, getting refreshments. Except for Pete, who was standing on the porch with a Pepsi or something in one hand and a candy bar in the other. And his truck's sitting there. And we all jumped out and just plastered that truck. And he'd just stand there with his mouth open, never moving. And the window was down on one side, but not the other. And at least half a dozen eggs went inside the thing. And then we jumped in the car and took off again. And nothing ever happened. I thought sure, oh, we're dead. We're dead.

James: Kids today would not believe that.

Alan: Good times. When you started going to literary, how did it work then? I don't know if it changed. Because it wasn't that many years after I went.

James: I'm trying to think. It was, like, maybe Thursday nights was the literary night. I remember we would always meet at the school and then either do something there... I don't remember what exactly the programs were. One of the biggest things, it was just nice to get together with your friends. I mean, what we did wasn't as important. But I do remember a big deal. Every year we got together with Denbigh for a beach party on our side. And they would invite us over for a Thursday, or a literary meeting of some

sort over there. I'm not even sure. I don't know what all we did over there. But that was always, again, big to get together with another church group because there wasn't a lot of interaction, as far as I know, with many other church groups back in those days. Not nearly as much as it is today.

Alan: We did it with Newport News, like you said, softball. And then it seemed like every now and then we'd go over there and there'd be a cookout or something. That was of only benefit to Rodney and Dorothy.

James: And I guess, I'm not sure if it was part of literary, but I remember at least several times we'd get together with the Denbigh group to have a camp out somewhere over there. It was a youth weekend, I guess you would call it. But there was always guest speakers that were featured for the weekend. I can't remember some of the names now, but Ed Godshaw was one of them. I can remember him. But I remember doing that a number of times. And that was always fun because that meant a weekend away from the farm.

Alan: Can't get away from those cows. We had tournaments and we always had to figure, okay, if it's going to be Sunday night when we're playing, we can't play. The boys have got to go milk cows. Or church, one of the two.

James: And that was a problem once we got a little better, we were winning quite a bit. We were advancing on to Sunday quite a bit. Early years wasn't as much of a problem because we didn't advance past Saturday anyway.

Alan: I remember the very first game we played in a tournament, I was still coaching then. It wasn't even a tournament. It was an end-of-the-season tournament or something that we played. First time we'd ever played in such a thing. In the seventh inning, we were down 10 to 5. And we came back and won that sucker. Boy, you'da thought we won the World Series. Hooting and hollering and having a good time. And Leon (Yoder) hit the winning run.

James: Leon, my brother?

Alan: I was on base and he hit the winning run in.

James: Oh, my. Yeah, the early years we hadn't played outside of our league much and didn't know what was out there. I'll never forget, you remember Billy the umpire? I can't remember his last name.

He's the one that talked us into getting into that Metro when we qualified for Alabama. We didn't know anything about tournaments. We loved to play ball, but we didn't know anything about tournaments. He said, y'all are pretty good. Y'all ought to get in that thing. So we tried it and wound up winning it. Was that the summer you broke your ankle?

Alan: Yeah.

James: That's what I thought. You didn't make the trip then, did you? I knew you were on the team, but I was thinking that must have been the summer.

Alan: Daddy and Lnnn went. Somebody had to stay and watch the store. Well, when you were literary, did the boys pull any pranks of any sort?

James: I don't remember a lot of it. I don't think our age group did near as much of that as some of the older ones used to. I mean, I can remember we did some, rolled some yards with toilet paper, but other than that, I don't think we did a whole lot.

Alan: Was Mark Lehman in your...

James: No, he was about the same age as Leon. Robert (Lehman) was my, or actually a year older than I am, but he ran in the same group we did.

Alan: So y'all were pretty good then.

James: Well, we just didn't, I don't know. We just didn't do as much of the crazy stuff, I guess, as what some of the older ones did. Some of the stories we used to hear, we apparently didn't pick up on it that much.

Alan: When we had, my age group had aged out of literary, but there was still Sidney (Wenger) and Susan Miller and Dorothy (Yoder) and Evelyn (Miller) and we got together one night and toilet papered about three or four yards. Of course, nobody suspected us at all. But we did it one last time. And sure enough, I remember Mark (Lehman) all upset about that, even years later, "oh, we got in trouble. But we didn't do it, I don't know who did it, but we didn't do that." And they got blamed for it, of course, because they'd just been in trouble for it already. And now here they are, do it again. Brother Phil came to see them all.

James: They probably did some things they didn't get caught for, so it's averaged out.

Alan: I'm sure that they did. How did you and Linda meet?

James: Well, she had, let me go back a little bit. When I got off the farm in '73, Willie had one of his employees that was going to be leaving, but he hadn't left yet.

Alan: He was at the plumbing company then?

James: Yeah, I was 19 and still living at home. And we were still in the milking parlor before we sold the cows. I didn't have enough money. I didn't get paid for working on the farm. I didn't have enough money to go out and get my own place. And we sold the cows on Thursday. The sale, the auction was on Thursday. And Dad told me if I'm going to be living at their house, I had to have a job to go to on Monday morning. So I had to start beating the bushes. I knew Willie wasn't going to be ready, he wouldn't have the job open until the other guy left. The guy apparently had told him he was going to leave, but didn't tell him when. And I guess I was asking around.

Anyway, Leroy Miller at the time, was doing tile work, and he needed some short-term help. So I went to work for him for about two months before the job opened at Byler Plumbing. I used to park at his place, and then we would jump in the tile truck and go out on the job from there. But the only time I saw Linda was one time we came home. I guess it was probably a regular time. She was out in the yard hanging wash or something, and she took off for the house, I guess she didn't want me to see her. But that was the only time I ever saw her. Of course, she was four years younger than I am, so she was pretty young at that time. But anyhow, shortly after she graduated, she wound up moving to South Carolina. She was down there from that point on until we met. She had gone down there and lived with one of her aunts and her family down there. Then she went to college, I think, for a year. I guess I can tell. It is the story, so I guess it doesn't matter if I tell it or not.

She had been dating a guy down there, and Leroy and Sarah didn't really care for him. When they broke up, I guess she was pretty upset. Her dad talked her into coming home and living back here for a little while. She hadn't been back very long. Byler had a Christmas party every year. It was usually in early December. Normally, the married men brought their wives, and most of the single guys would have a date come with them. I needed a date. About a week before the thing was going to happen, I still didn't have a date. I was a little bit late getting to church one Sunday morning when I parked out there by the graveyard. She was there, too, and she was late, so I walked in behind her and made sure I was walking out when she came out, too. I asked her to go to the Byler Christmas dinner, and she accepted.

We hit it off pretty good. We saw each other quite a bit. She was going back to South Carolina right around the first of the year. She took off and went back, but I don't think she was gone but a couple of weeks, and she moved back to stay. By the following October, we were married.

Alan: That was quick. I would have had in my mind that y'all would have known each other growing up.

James: I knew who she was, and she probably knew who I was, but she was four years younger and in a different church, too.

Alan: Oh, they were at the conservative church, then?

James: Mm-hmm. We never really crossed paths much. Had she been a few years older, maybe we would have crossed paths more, but with that scenario, we just never crossed paths much. Once you get older, several years doesn't make as much difference as it does when you're young.

Alan: If you get old enough, 20 years doesn't matter.

James: Exactly. Anyhow, that's how it happened. That's been 44 years ago, I think it is.

Alan: Was Brent (Miller) your age or he was younger?

James: He was younger. As a matter of fact, Keith (Miller) is younger, too. Lauren (Miller) was a year older than me.

Alan: Okay. Where did y'all live when you first got married?

James: Well, I had been living in one of Mrs. Miller's apartments after I left home. And then when we got ready to get married, Willie had an opening in one of his duplexes, and we moved in. Dorothy was already in the other side, and we moved in the back side of that one, and lived there until we built the house on Land of Promise.

Alan: I remember when Dorothy lived there. I had a date with her once.

James: Did you really? I didn't know that.

Alan: We went dancing, if you can believe it.

James: Oh, my. I didn't know she was a dancer.

Alan: She wasn't.

James: I was going to say, Yoders aren't usually dancers.

Alan: I wasn't much either, so it doesn't matter.

James: Musical ability and dancing ability bypassed us big time.

Alan: So then you stayed there until you built your house?

James: We got married in October of '79, and I think we moved into the house in probably fall of '81, I believe.

Alan: You worked for the city for a while, didn't you? How long did you stay at Byler?

James: I worked there from '73 until late '89, and then I went to work for the city. It was during that recession and things, business-wise...he had to do a lot of paring back. I went to the city had an opening, and I applied and got it, and I worked there until 2000 when we moved up here.

Alan: How'd you like it?

James: I loved it. It was one of the best jobs I've ever had.

Alan: You were an inspector?

James: Mm-hmm, plumbing inspector.

Alan: Why did you decide to move up here?

James: Well, I got caught in a salary situation with the city. They had a recession at the time that I got there. Anyway, to make a long story short, they had told me it was a city policy for everybody, but they gave you paperwork stating that too by the time you were there 7 years, you would be at the top of whatever your pay scale was. Well, at the end of 6 years, I was way far away from that, and I brought it to their attention, and first they said, well, you will be by then, but anyhow, at the 8-year mark, it was still wasn't even catching up. Basically what had happened, they had jumped the starting pay for years after I was there, but they didn't do anything for those of us that got left behind. And it was pretty... second-year guys...the day they hit their second-year anniversary, they made more than I did at 10 years. And I just, I said, well, I'm going to find something else, and I went elsewhere. Other than that, I would have retired from there. I like the work, and the people I worked with.

Alan: Why move here?

James: I had kind of become enamored of this place. When Steve and Julie moved up in 85, I came up, and Mark Lehman helped me, too, put the plumbing in their cabin. And I'll never forget, I'd never been up here before, never seen it before, and I asked Steve, I said, how did you find such an out-of-the-way place as this? But then I started coming up to visit, and I really liked it. It reminded me so much of what our area down there was 50 years before that, before all the growth and all that. It was just very similar to that.

And, I kind of liked it, and then I started hunting up here and liked doing that. And Linda didn't have any inclination to move. She still likes it down there. But then in '98, Richard and Carroll Broadwater moved up here, and then her parents moved up in '99, and by that point, without them up here, she would never have agreed to move. But once her parents moved up here, too, then she became more open to the idea, and since I was going to be changing careers anyway, and she was in a good situation with Farm Credit. They actually were looking, she was branch manager in Chesapeake, and the guy that was the manager up here was planning on retiring in several years, and they wanted her to work in the branch here and then just move in as manager when he retired, and that was what the plan was. She got into real estate after that. But anyway, that's how we wound up here.

Alan: How did Steve Hochstetler wind up here?

James: He wanted... farming is what he's always wanted to do. He worked at Christy (Kurtz') from the time he was... He used to ride a bicycle down. He couldn't drive, ride a bicycle down to the farm. And unless, down in that area, even in the '80s, unless you were inheriting a farm, you couldn't... You weren't able to buy one. Young guys starting out couldn't buy a farm, and all the equipment stuff goes with it. So he knew to farm, he would have to go somewhere else, and he looked in a lot of different areas. And this was the one that, I guess, attracted him the most, and he wound up buying up here then.

Alan: I didn't know. For some reason, I thought, well, maybe it was because Milan Hochstetler was up here.

James: I'm trying to think of all the different places. He's told me a number of different areas, but he had looked in a fairly wide area just to see land prices and the different things he was looking for, and this one seemed to fit his needs. And he learned to know this fella he bought the farm from. He was a pretty big time operator. He owned a lot of farms. He had a lot of cattle. He owned a processing plant out in Lynchburg. He had his hands in a lot of different things, and I think he worked with him on financing the farm and that sort of thing. He wound up moving up here, and then a bunch of others followed him.

Alan: Well, Farmville has really grown since you... How long have you been here?

James: Oh, 2000. It's been 23 years. My brother Clifford lived in Cumberland from '74 to '80, and when he... Nothing much existed...do you know where the tractor supply is by any chance?

Alan: Yeah.

James: Nothing much existed south of that when he moved. That was as far... because that used to be the Walmart there where Tractor Supply is. Actually, I'm not even sure that was there when Clifford lived here. Most of the... There's a shopping center just up from... actually, the parking lots connect. That was probably as far south as most of the stuff went at that time.

Alan: He had a lumber business, didn't he?

James: Who's that?

Alan: Clifford.

James: No, he was a contractor in Cumberland.

Alan: Oh, okay. For some reason, I thought he had a lumber business.

James: Cumberland Building Supply was owned by Mennonites. The Yoders, as a matter of fact. But he was a contractor.

Alan: Where's he now?

James: He's in Alta Vista in a nursing home there. He's got a daughter and son-in-law that live in Gladys. And he'd gone up to live with them. But then about three years ago, he got to a condition where they couldn't take care of him anymore. He needed to go into assisted living care, and he's been in there ever since.

Alan: Is it physical, or is it mind?

James: No, it's physical. They can take him out once in a while. He's in a wheelchair. I don't think he can do much walking anymore. But now his mind's clear as a bell. He calls several times a week, and if you had questions on the Schloss farm, you could ask for the smallest detail. He'd remember it.

Alan: Do you have his phone number?

James: Sure.

Alan: Can I get it from you before I leave? I'll call him.

James: He'll talk as long as you want.

Alan: Well, I'll give him a call, because I hadn't even thought about Clifford until you just mentioned it. I'm trying to get a hold of anybody who was at the church and has little memories here and there. We even went to Albania.

James: Oh, my goodness.

Alan: To see the Shahini's and spent four or five days with them, mainly because they're not associated with the church now, other than the church supports them somewhat. But every time they were here, there was no chance because they're busy running around visiting churches and taking care of stuff.

James: I'm Facebook friends with them, and they're very active.

Alan: They've had an amazing life. When under Hoxha, who was the dictator there from the end of World War II until 1985. It looks like it should be pronounced "Hoxa", but it's H-O-X-H-A, but it's pronounced "Hoja". He was a dictator, and he declared it an atheist nation. They were Muslim, but it was strictly a name because their family didn't go to any mosque, didn't know anything. If you'd asked them, we're

Muslim, but...that's just what they were because that's what their parents and their grandparents were, but they didn't know anything about it. But that was a rough regime because I read some history before I went and just know.

Her sister, when she was in high school, when Dini was... I'm sorry. Klementina, was in high school. Her sister was a communist, worked for the Communist Party, and saw something going on that she didn't approve of and didn't think the dictator would approve of, so she wrote him a letter. But what happened was she got thrown in jail for 10 years.

James: Oh, my goodness.

Alan: But the way they ran things there then, not only if you did something against the regime, they didn't punish just you, they punished your family. And so all of her... she had five brothers and sisters, and the ones who were away from home were ordered to cut off all communication with them, period, nothing. If they don't, their husbands will be required to divorce them. Her father got fired from his job and sent to work as a laborer for the last few years of his life. And Klementina was in high school, and she was smart and was on a fast track. She was in diplomatic school, learning languages. She was going to be a diplomat. You know, somebody important. And they took her as soon as she graduated and put her in a labor battalion where she dug ditches and worked in canneries and did the absolute bottom of the stuff for 10 years.

James; Wow.

Alan: When they finally allowed religion in 1991, and a group had a revival in Tirana where they'd been gathering for four or five days. They didn't know anything about it. That was the capital city. And one of the ministers who was from Lezhë, where they're from, and actually was a friend of Dini's, asked would they go, do the same thin in his home town of Lezhë. He was a government cultural minister, I think.

And Sam (Scaggs) was preaching that. And they said they were just walking down the sidewalk and they saw this crowd here. Well, let's go listen. And he had lost his job because now that communism was gone, the companies had to make it on their own. And he was working in a milk factory, or plant, and the plant closed. So, you know, what are we going to do now? You know, the whole world is in uproar. Communism is gone. We don't know what's coming next. I don't have a job. I've got a family. They lived in a little apartment that was 400 square feet.

James: Oh, goodness. Wow.

Alan: Had a Turkish hole in the floor for the bathroom. And she cooked on one burner kerosene heater in the bathroom because it was too smoky to put out in the living room type thing. And they thought they were doing pretty good. Til he lost his job. And Sam asked, do you want to change your life? And he said, yeah.

He raised his hand. Yeah, I want to change my life. It ain't going so good. And then so after the service, Sam asked anyone who raised their hand to stay behind. Well, Klementina knew English. So that was great because now they could talk, you know, because the interpreter they had was actually from Holland, and she didn't have very good Albanian, but enough. So anyway, he said, so here they are. They give them a New Testament. And he said, do you know even the word? It was God. It's a brand new word. What's that? You know, Christian? Never heard of Christian. Bible? What's a Bible? Never heard of it.

James: Wow.

Alan: And they gave him this book. He said, he thought they were giving him a novel, you know, to read. I mean, just no clue whatsoever. And so then they, and I don't know however many, four, five, half a dozen, twelve, maybe, I don't know, other people who raised their hands started holding... once a week they'd get together and they'd read the Bible and discuss it with absolutely no input from anybody else.

James: Now Sam preaching at this meeting they were at?

Alan: He was preaching at the meeting and somebody else, this lady was interpreting it.

James: Okay. But he didn't actually meet them at this point?

Alan: Yeah, he did. And he did come back once a month because he was in Italy across the bay. So he'd come back once a month to talk to them. And, you know, so they were, you know, growing in the Christian faith. Through that and through just independent study and reading and so forth. Now later Dini did go to Bible school. But it's just amazing the stuff they came through.

James: Now did they live in Chesapeake and go to Mount Pleasant at one time?

Alan: Yeah, they were members of Mount Pleasant.

James: What years would that have been?

Alan: 1999 to 2010.

James: Okay, that's why. Because he, he, I'd seen some of his posts and he requested to be Facebook friends. But my mind was blank. I couldn't, I couldn't remember him. So that's, that would be why then. Now there was another, there was another guy from Albania, I think, that worked at CBN. He was one of 'em that the church sponsored, I think. I knew him because I used to run into him at, when I was an inspector. I did inspections at CBN. He was, he was in charge of some of the maintenance or something there. I talked to him a time or two. I can't remember his name. I can still remember his face. And his wife's...

Alan: Wasn't Dini though?

James: No, it wasn't him. See, that's why at first I said, man, I don't remember him looking like that. But that, that clears, I mean, makes it clear. I didn't think I had probably been there when he was there. This other family, I think, might have been one of, maybe possibly lived in that house across from Herbert Wenger's driveway there when they first came over. The church sponsored them.

Alan: There was a Cambodian family that lived across from Herbert.

James: I remember that one. But this, there was a, I think it was Albanian that we sponsored.

Alan: Could be. There was 30, well, it was actually not quite 30, 20-some years that I wasn't at the church because I was Methodist. So a lot of, like the whole time the Shahini's were there, I wasn't, until the last couple years.

James: Okay. This other family, I think Merv and Nina (Troyer) did a lot to help them along. If I remember the story right, I think he had been in training to be a doctor over there, but none of that schooling applied in the U.S., so it didn't do him any good. And I cannot remember their names anymore. But very, very nice people, and they succeeded very well with help over here then.

Alan: Well, at first they went to... Dan Bergey had started a church, (Dove Fellowship) and they went there because that's where James and Mary went, because they knew James and Mary because James and Mary had been in Albania. And then when that didn't go, they started going to the church in Virginia Beach. Shoot. The one Harold Buckwalter started. Anyway, you know what you're talking about.

James: Yeah.

Alan: They went there. It was Lansdown.

James: Lansdown, yeah.

Alan: And then James and Mary started going to Mount Pleasant, back to Mount Pleasant, so they came back to Mount Pleasant, and then they were at Mount Pleasant until she got a wild hair to go back. Well, she's had this thing to start a school her whole life. She wanted to run a school, to start a school, and then got it off the ground and got it going.

James: I've got to say, it looks like it's going pretty well from the pictures I see in here.

Alan: She's an ambitious woman. James and Mary Bergey made, I guess, a bigger impression on them than anybody that ever came over there. But she's got a picture that, to me, in a way, told the whole story. He said, you know, the preacher that they finally sent over to start a church or take what they had there and form a church was... never really got involved with society there, and his wife was never, you know, was always shy, wouldn't talk to anybody. You couldn't come visit him at home because she wasn't feeling good or whatever. Dini said if James and Mary had been preachers, we'd have had a big church because they went to, you know, to all their neighbors and everybody liked them, they liked people, and James was there always doing work, and he's got a picture of when they're working on the church, James is on his knees doing some sort of work with a hammer and the young preacher standing there with his hands in his pocket. He said, that's the picture.

James: They related to people.

Alan: So he was doing some good. Now, if those people would learn how to drive...

James: What's that?

Alan: Said if those people would learn how to drive... All of them. Every one of them.

James: Well, they probably... I would imagine when they went from communism, they had a lot of learning to do to do stuff on their own.

Alan: Yeah, well, because during communism, you could not own a car.

James: Okay, well, that's all... I didn't know that, but I'm not surprised. I know it would have been vastly different anyhow. Even if they'd have been able to own cars, there wouldn't have been many of them probably.

Alan: Only the government owned cars. You weren't allowed to leave the country. You weren't allowed to own even your tools. The government owned all those.

James: Like your work tools?

Alan: Everything. Just a few little personal items that you might have, a toy or something, or a soccer ball, but the apartments, the houses, all owned by the government. They assigned you, told you where to go live. Except that when they got married, they didn't ask the government because they knew the government wouldn't approve them getting married. So they got married anyway. Of course, now they didn't have anywhere to live. Because the government has to give you a place and the government wouldn't give them a place. But so, it's just amazing the different people who have different experiences that have come through that church and how it's done things. So that's the whole thing here. Who in the church and the older folks do you think made the biggest impression on you, and why? It didn't have to be just one.

James: I would probably say Mr. and Mrs. Wenger, both. They were... particularly Brother Wenger, not only church leaders, but they were our school teachers. Between the two of them, let's see, Mrs. Wenger would have had fifth and sixth, and Brother Wenger was seventh. So the majority of my school years were with those two teachers. In the first four grades, I had Ms. Krupp, Ms. Smucker, Grace (Wenger),

probably maybe Grace for two years. One of them would have doubled up. I think the other, Ms. Krupp and Ms. Smucker were one year apiece, I think. So most of my school years were with those two. I appreciated them at the time, but not nearly as much as I did later on. I thought about it many times since then. Even today, I see a lot of, probably, well, I'm not sure most, a lot of schools that have teachers that aren't accredited or anything else. They're just pretty much somebody off the street. But we had college-educated teachers teaching us, which was unheard of back then.

And then the example they gave us, but I would say by far the two of them, in my opinion, probably more than anybody else. There was others too, but they were probably far and above because they were so involved between church and school. They were huge influences. Probably, for a number of those years, I was probably intimidated, I guess, by Brother Wenger because he was so stern. But it wasn't until later years that I realized there was a different side to him. We had a couple that attended our church, and I cannot remember their names anymore...didn't grow up Mennonite...but they got to be good friends with him, and I heard some of the stories about, they didn't have the inhibitions that I would have had because it was Brother Wenger. But they would talk and joke with him like he was anybody else, and he laughed. He wasn't the Brother Wenger I knew, but that was the first I realized, hey, there was another guy there inside him that we just never saw because we treated him as the pastor and the teacher and all. But that amazed me when I heard that because it was a side I had never realized was there. I wish I could have been there and seen some of that.

Alan: I've often said, if God doesn't look like Brother Weiner, he should.

James: Who's that?

Alan: God. So that was kind of his position. He was way up there.

James: Yeah, I've got a couple of memories of being in class one time. I think Robert Lehman was sitting in front of me and we were messing around, and I'm not sure what he did, but to retaliate, I had a pretty good sized rubber band, and I pulled that thing back, and I would go pop it in the back of the head, and about the time I let go, he ducked like that, and it was between classes. Brother Wenger was reading a book, and that thing landed right on him. And he looked, because I was looking down, he looked up and said, "who did that?" And nobody answered. And he said, okay, "I'm going to start over here, and I'm going to go all the way down the line asking each one." At that point, I knew I wasn't going to lie, but I said, I did. But I don't remember that I got disciplined terribly hard for that, but my heart dropped when Robert moved his head.

Alan: Who was in your class?

James: Eddie Buckwalter, Joyce Miller, Betty Kurtz, Kathy Bergey, Lauren Miller, Robert Lehman, Leonard Bergey.

Alan: Well, you all had a big class.

James: It was, it was. I could easily be missing one or two. I'm trying to think if there was anybody beyond that. That was most of them. I do have one funny story, too. You took music class, I'm sure, too.

Alan: Yeah

James: It was mandatory. Well, I couldn't sing, and I knew I couldn't sing, and I wasn't about to. When I did sing, I would sing quiet enough that nobody could hear how bad I was. But one of the requirements of music class was that you had to sing a solo. And when it got to be my turn, I was sitting probably halfway back. I sang it. I knew I was singing. But when I got done, Brother Wenger, "I didn't hear anything. You'll have to do it again." It's the only time I ever, and I didn't feel like I was disrespectful to him, but I said, "well, I did. I can't do it again." I said, "if I have to get an F, then that's what it'll have to be." And he didn't give any, he didn't rebuke me or anything, and that was all I remember of it.

Alan: Well, maybe he knew by then that sometimes ...Jerry Kephart had started Great Bridge by the time we had music class, so he wasn't at Mt Pleasant when we had music. But he wanted to learn to sing. So Brother Wenger agreed to teach him in the evening. And he once said, "Jerry was the only person I've ever met who could not could not hit a note."

James: I can't carry a tune. And I knew that. I mean, our family just doesn't sing well. And I knew that, and I was not going to make a fool out of myself. And I really tried, but I was singing low enough, he couldn't hear me up there anyhow. I wasn't going to do it again. It's the only time I can remember that I refused something that he wanted done, but I can't do it.

Alan: Did you all play Pen My Sheep or Sheep My Pen or Prisoner's Base?

James: We used to play Prisoner's Base a lot, yeah.

Alan: What were the rules on that? What do you remember the rules?

James: You chose sides, and you would have a line, I don't even know, 150 feet apart maybe, whatever it was. And you would run out there, and you would try to tag somebody else before they got back to the base. If you tagged them before they got back to the base, they had to stand over here by where your line was. And then the goal was, you had to rescue your teammates without getting tagged first. That's the way I remember it anyhow. There was a lot of running around involved.

Alan: Did y'all play soccer too?

James: We played quite a bit of that. Played some football, but always softball. And that was something that the girls played too. We didn't play a lot of basketball. I didn't care for basketball anyway. Matter of fact, one of the two fights I had was over basketball.

Alan: What happened?

James: There wasn't about six or seven of us that were in that group to play anyhow. I wasn't very good at it. Speed didn't count for much in basketball. But I think it was Marcus (Hochstetler), Lauren Miller, and maybe Eddie (Buckwalter) would be on one team. And then it was me and Robert (Lehman). Lee Hewitt went to school with us at that time too. They wanted to play basketball instead of playing whatever else. And I said, I don't want to. They decided they were going to make me. So they chased me, and I outran them until I made the mistake of going in the cloak room. They got me cornered in there and they were going to drag me out and make me play basketball. I guess they were a little worried about coming in and actually dragging me out, but they finally talked Lee Hewitt into trying to drag me out. And when he got close, I nailed him in the nose. And he started bleeding. And then they left me alone. And I don't remember getting in trouble for that. I don't know if they didn't tell or what, but I would have thought that would have got me in trouble in Brother Wenger's room.

Alan: What was the other fight?

James: That was Gary Hobbs.

Alan: Oh, was he in your class too?

James: No, he was younger. He was in a grade, I think a grade behind or two grades behind. Playing softball, we used to, you know, one side would come in and the other would go out in the field. He didn't have a glove that day. And he wondered if he could borrow mine. I said, sure. So one of the times when an inning ended and let's see, he was coming in with my glove and I was going out. And when I reached for it, he took it and just smacked me across the face like that. And I punched him. That was the end of it, but that's as close to fights as I had in school.

Alan: I never had any... came close to one.

James: Did y'all ever play field hockey?

Alan: No.

Alan: We played that.

James: Y'all had sticks and all that stuff?

Alan: Baseball bat and a soccer ball.

James: Okay, I was going to say I couldn't imagine y'all having hockey sticks.

Alan: No, no, no. Baseball bat and a soccer ball. We were playing one day. Just the guys played this. The girls never got in it because it got rough. And Pete Yoder was on the other side. And somehow we got at the ball at the same time. And we both got upset with each other. And we both had bats. And I threw my bat at him, which was a mistake because now he had a bat and I didn't. And we didn't like each other.

James: Did you hit him?

Alan: No, I didn't hit him. But we didn't like each other. It was their first year in school. We just hated each other. He'd pull a cap off my head and take the label out of it just to be mean. We despised one another. Then he came after me and I didn't have a bat. So I ran to Brother Wenger's room who immediately saw what was going on. Well, the punishment was that for every recess for a solid week we had to sit in his room. And that was before they built the third room. In front of him while he ate his lunch, we'd eat our lunch. When recess was over we'd go back to class. Never said a word. Never asked what was going on. I just... He figured it out right away and said, here's what we're going to do. At the end of the week at the last thing he said, okay, shake hands. We've been good friends ever since.

James: That's interesting. I've got a Brother Wenger story too. When I was in first grade the third room had been built by that point. The hallway was through there and the boys and girls bathrooms both had a window into that hallway. The windows were painted probably three quarters of the way up. And to this day I have no idea why we thought it was a good idea but somebody, whoever took care of maintenance, this was at recess time, somebody had left a step ladder in the hallway. And as we were through there Harold Bergey, Lester Hobbs, and me and they were how I even joined up with them I have no idea because I was first grade and they were a good bit older. But as we were going through there and spotted the ladder somebody thought it would be a good idea to peep in the girls bathroom. So they put the ladder up against it and were in the process of getting on the ladder. Anyway I think it was maybe Mrs. Wenger anyhow somebody told them and we had to go into Brother Wenger's office in his room at lunchtime for a week sit there while he ate his lunch. And I don't think he... if he said he didn't say a lot... but at the end of that week the idea was that we were all going to get a spanking. And when that last day came Mrs. Wenger came in and pleaded my case on my behalf since I was only first grade for me not to get a spanking and I just...

Alan: Did they?

James: I think they did. I think they did but because I was so young she got me off. I've had not thought about that one in a while.

Alan: I should have had such good luck with her when we had a book report on Tom Sawyer I'd read the book but I just copied the blurb in the back knowing I was going to get caught. But we had just learned about forgiveness. So this works out. I'll confess and then I'll be forgiven and this is easy. Well, of course she knew right away it wasn't mine because I'm going to start off "nestled along the banks of the Mississippi." You know we didn't write like that. So she went in and said you didn't write this. No, I didn't write that. I'm sorry. Wait a minute you have to write another one. Whoa! Hey!

James: You're supposed to say I forgive you.

Alan: What happened here? This is .... but liked Huckleberry Finn too. I'll write a report on that one.

James: I have another another one I remember it would have been fifth grade I believe. We were I think we probably had multiple book reports due during the year but there was one that was close to the end of the year and I didn't get it done. And she gave me an incomplete so I wasn't going to be advancing to the sixth grade without passing. And I was terrified of failing the grades but anyway it was it was after school had let out already she said if you get a book report done, turn it in, if it passes then you'll go to the next grade. Normally we had to do book reports on approved books. I think I had already read it a book, because the bookmobile used to come to the come to the the school and I loved reading. I'd read a book on Amelia Earhart and I really liked it and I did the book report on Amelia Earhart without clearing it with her and she accepted it and I went on to the I went to the next grade. But I was I was pretty desperate at that point because I did not want to go back and do the fifth grade again or fifth or sixth whatever it was.

Alan: That would have been a terrible thing.

James: Yeah. So they were they were pretty stern but they were also pretty good to get along with. Very good to get along with I have to say that.

Alan: Do ya'll go to a Mennonite church up here?

James: Not now. We had initially been with Trinity (Mennonite) when we first we were part of the group when we first founded it but we have been to Assembly of God for a number of years. Right now we're between churches.

Alan: How come?

James: We haven't found one that aligns with what we're looking for.

Alan: Such as?

James: The outreach and some things like that. One thing I will, I will say many times over, sometimes you don't appreciate just how good something is until you don't have it but the the church and church family at Mount Pleasant we've never been able to replicate that. And I miss that. The people and the church I miss more than anything from being down there. It's...y'all got something special. I know it's had issues at times too but it's endured for a long time and that's that's something special there.

Alan: I think one of the reasons is because the roots are so deep.

James: Probably.

Alan: And it's it's more than a church it's a community. Even the people who don't go there... when somebody dies or gets married they're still part of the same community and just as comfortable.

James: It is. It's kind of unique and that's something that we look for up here and we still haven't found it.

Alan: The Mennonite church you were talking about where is it located?

James: Trinity is in Prospect.

Alan: Oh, okay. Is that on the way to Ruth's?

James: Yeah.

Alan: Okay. She pointed that to me. What conference do they belong to?

James: Conservative. I guess they still are. They were when we when we first formed the church we were a conservative conference. As far as I know they probably still are. They took the Mennonite out of the name but I don't know what that means. I'm assuming...

Alan: What didn't you like about that church that you switched?

James: I would rather not get into specifics. It's a situation we moved on from and I don't I think it would be any...

Alan: And I don't know anybody there so it doesn't serve that purpose.

James: Well, it's Stephen and Julie (Hochstetler) go and you may know a few. Anyway it's a situation we moved on from and I don't think it would really be beneficial to us or them.

Alan: What's the difference between Assemblies of God and Mennonite as far as their beliefs? Are there any? Other than non-resistance?

James: It's not it's not it's basically I played softball for Bethel Baptist for from '78-'84 and I found the same pretty much the same thing with Assembly of God as I did with Baptist. I was pretty pretty surprised because over over the years I thought we were brought up you know, Mennonite was here and everybody else was over here somewhere but the two things that I found in the years I was with at going to Bethel, we had to go twice twice a month to be eligible to play, but I actually went twice a month year-round and attended Mount Pleasant the rest of the time the other two Sundays. But the only two things I found we really differed on was non-resistance and their take on... what is the word, eternal security that was the only two and basically the same thing with Assembly of God. The Assembly of God had a a real heavy emphasis on tongues, speaking in tongues but that's about the only the biggest difference between them and Baptists was the speaking in tongues thing that they that they they're pretty big on. But other than that it's... I was surprised when I was with Bethel I thought we were a lot different from them but it it really wasn't.

Alan: Once you got past the coverings and the capes and the straight cut coats the basic beliefs...

James: The beliefs, right exactly you know exactly.

Alan: It struck me about Dini Shahini over there that they started out with just the Bible and their church is Mennonite or it's called Mennonite except they're also not non-resistant and they immerse rather than sprinkle. Of course the Mennonites now also immerse...

James: So sprinkle sprinkle probably they sprinkle

Alan: No they immerse.

James: Mennonites Mount Pleasant does? Where's where's the baptistry?

Alan: Well in years past some have done it in a swimming pool somewhere but three four weeks ago a month or two ago they baptized four and we just brought them to a big galvanized tub and dunked 'em.

James: Oh I didn't know that.

Alan: Well, you can choose if you want to be sprinkled they'll sprinkle if you want to be dunked they'll dunk.

James: I totally did not know that.

Alan: Yeah yeah they've changed a lot.

James: That was a difference too, I didn't think about that but and to me that's not that big a difference saying

baptism is baptism to me whether you...

Alan: It's a symbol more than...

James: Exactly but they do both of those denominations did immerse.

Alan: It made me think you know if they came that close... of course now that doesn't get down to some of the really fine points like Mount Pleasant just changed its constitution because some of the leaders got a little... they used to when they started the constitution they've got a a board of elders who's the preacher and then whoever's responsible for missions whoever's responsible for Sunday morning service who's responsible for operating the plant and maybe four or five people and they were called elders and they're men and women

James: Used to be deacons.

Alan: Well, yeah, some of the same thing the deacons did and some that they didn't do but they called them all elders, well which book I don't know which book but anyway, somebody got convicted or upset because the Bible is very clear elders are men and here are the qualifications and they aren't women.

James: Well I was I was going to say that going back a step further than that when they were deacons uh if the elder I could see where you could it could be a man or a woman probably if it's a deacon it'd be kind of hard to imagine a woman being a deacon.

Alan: Actually the men in the church had a lot of deaconesses who tend to be the wife of a deacon.

James: But they even changed that back when...when I remember my younger years they were deacons and you wouldn't call a woman a deacon with an elder you could probably you could probably say well you know she's an elder but anyway for whatever that's worth.

Alan: So what they did is they added another board on top with two men who will be called elders and will act as advisors and final authorities along with the minister and the people who were now elders are going to be called department heads.

James: Oh my okay.

Alan: So that way they can still be women 'cause they can't do without them. I was the only one who voted against it but I don't really care one way or the other. There are so many other things we can argue about. Do you know Bob Walker?

James: Wendy's husband? Wendy was at the school when I was there. I don't think they were going to Mt Pleasant when I was there.

Alan: He was raised in the Christian church in Larchmont in Norfolk that started the Triple R Ranch and that's where he works and he's he's very very conservative they're good friends; they would come over, oh I don't know, once every two months for pizza; have for years, so we get some discussions going sometimes. He tends to be... I have to watch it because he's very thin skinned.

James: Well, what what church what denomination were they?

Alan: It was independent essentially Baptist, they didn't call themselves Baptist.

James: They were just independent.

Alan: Yeah I can't think of the name of now. It's a big church still there... Norfolk Christian Schools they operate.

James: Okay okay wow

Alan: And they're on, I think Thole and Granby or somewhere.

James: Yeah I know where the school is.

Alan: The church is right next to it. So he was raised in that and I don't know what she was raised as but she's not as conservative. The other thing wine is ubiquitous in Albania but nobody well, I shouldn't say nobody, gets drunk I didn't see anybody drunk but when Dini went to work for CBN they had a rule at the time that they wouldn't hire anybody who drank anything, at any time and somebody reported him and said well he's got wine and liquor

James: That's before they served alcohol at the founders inn but they do that now too.

Alan: But anyway, then he said well I grew up that's custom if somebody goes to my house I offer them a glass of wine, I just do and so when we were there, there was wine everywhere and I asked him I said how about the people that visit from Mount Pleasant do they drink wine?

“Oh yeah they drink wine”

I asked how many of them?

He said, “all of them.”

I said, “James and Mary?”

“Yep James and Mary.”

“ Are you kidding?”

“No I'm not kidding.”

That surprised me so I said okay.

James: Doing what the Romans do when they're in Rome.

Alan: Where did Leroy (Miller) go to church here? Did they go to the Mennonite church out there too.

James: “They did. We all left at the same time. They wound up going to the Farmville Mennonite church, the Beachy (Amish) church

Alan: I didn't know there was a Beachy church here.

James: Yeah t Troyers moved up from Prince Ann County in the early 60s and Ezra Troyer, there was a number of Troyers in the area and the church was established at that point. It's pretty small.

Alan: Is Oak Hill a conservative church?

James: yeah they're BMA, Biblical Mennonite.

Alan: Oh yeah they're fairly conservative.

James: Yeah it's very conservative yeah.

Alan: is that the same thing that the church... oh shucks the one uh uh Milan Hochstetler was buried at it and went to? It's halfway... South Boston.

James: No I'm not sure what they are um I'm not sure if there's BMA down there or not they're very conservative, very conservative down there but I'm not sure what who they're affiliated with.

Alan: Which is ironic because they were founded the same time Mount Pheasant was.

James: In south Boston?

James: I didn't know you're kidding I had no idea that it was that that area would have been that old.

Alan: In fact uh do you remember Powell Wenger? Powell Wenger had made an agreement to buy land in south Boston he was going to move to south Boston. *[NOTE: Not Powell Wenger, but his father Timothy J. Wenger, brother of A.D. Wenger, Sr]*

James: I didn't know that:

Alan: And Amos Wenger senior, A.D. senior, talked him into coming along and buying land across from his in Mount Pleasant and that's how they wound up in Mount Pleasant instead of south Boston.

James: I had no clue I mean I've I've never been to that church. I've been past it when I'm traveling through there and hear a lot about it but I figured it was probably you know '50's or '60's type of thing. I had no idea. Where did those people come from?

Alan: Some came from Tennessee. There was a church in Tennessee that didn't work out and others came from other parts of northern Virginia or Pennsylvania.

James: I'll have to google that that's interesting I would like to know more about that.

Alan: I kept coming across references in letters to The Budget to Wolf Trap.

James: Wolf Trap?

Alan: Yeah where is Wolf Trap? Wolf Trap was the name of the train station in South Boston

James: In these old articles you were reading.

Alan: Right and like at the turn of the century these people in Fentress were going to Wolf Trap to preach and where in the world is that? I thought it was in Newport News, No, it's South Boston. I remember sometimes I would see South Boston the same names and finally I put it together and looked it up sure enough Wolf Trap, South Boston, same thing, Ebenezer too, yep that's it.

James: I never knew that. I just assumed it was like Gladys, the church there in Gladys that was in the 1950s I think and I assumed it was probably somewhere in the same time frame I had no idea it had been around that long.

Alan: And there were even some relatives some Wenger relatives who did settle there. A.D. Wengers sister or brother or something. I don't think they stayed forever. But I find it ironic that as many Wenger's and Miller's as there were in the Mount Pleasant, you know they're all gone, none there except for Herbert,

James: Herbert Wenger okay, yeah but there's still a bunch of Millers though. In the community.

Alan: But not in the church, in the church. There's some Mille'rs from Ira Miller's which is a differnt family from E.R. Miller's but even those there's not many. Well the church itself has suffered a lot it's much much smaller than it used to be.

James: I was gonna say I stream it sometimes and you don't see everybody but it looks like and it sounds like a lot of people are watching online which would account for some of them but just from what I was seeing is it much more than 50, 55 people most mornings?

Alan: Yeah there are more. One thing the last stream doesn't show is in the back of the church there are a lot more people than there are on the front.

James: Even on both sides the back rows you don't see a lot if they're on the outer edges you don't see it but I was just guessing from what I was seeing the camera was showing that's about what I would have guessed.

Alan: And they're old. We're old. What do you think of Abram Wenger? What's is your impression of Abram Wenger? Did you ever have any dealings with him?

James: Not a lot. I used to see him around. He was he was always very quiet I never.. he would he spoke in church some but he was... I'm sure one-on-one he probably talked more but from what I remember seeing him, he was always very quiet. And other than seeing him around church I think dad probably stopped in at the farm occasionally but other than that I wouldn't have seen him much.

Alan: Did Walter Shaddinger ever come to eat at your folks house?

James: Pretty sure he did. I can't remember a specific time but I know he used to like to do that a lot and pretty sure he probably did. He got around the community a lot. Of course we were further out than what most of them were too, so he probably got most of his meals closer than us.

Alan: What do you think is the most important thing you learned from your dad.

James: I don't know, there was a lot of things. One of them probably I didn't necessarily like it but I learned it; learning how to work hard was something that came in real handy in life. I didn't like having to learn it the way we did but his spiritual values too. But we worked hard. He had grown up Amish and he knew doing things the hard way and since labor wasn't costing him anything he wasn't particularly worried about being efficient so we usually did things the hard way. Even at a young age I was thinking we could do things a lot more easy and efficient than this. That's the way we did it. 'Course he took it on himself to do this.

Even at a young age it bugged the mess...everybody else, their silos had a pipe that stayed in place. You moved your blower over it it, you hooked up, you filled it up and went to the next one. When you fill silo, you always fill it and in a week or so it settles and you fill it again, that way it's always full. We had one pipe and we had three silos. We'd fill one, move to the next one, move the pipe every time. When you got done, take it down, move it to the next one. You'd put it up six times in a season. I remember Dan Yoder had pipes on all his and I'm sure others did too. Man that would easy, just take about six, eight bolts off that blower and move it here and you're ready to go. But anyway, that's the way we did things.

I guess another one was, by the time Leon left that left me, Morris and Dad and we were still milking the same amount of cows, same amount of work. And just before Leon left had got a silo unloader, had never had one of those. But, one silo unloader and we had three silos. So you would have to hoist that thing up to the top, put it together, eat all the way down to the bottom, pull it out, put in the next silo...it was almost easier to throw the silage out by hand. But that's the way we did it.

Alan: When it was a kid, it always amazed me, to get in a silo, in the middle of winter when it's freezing cold, throw ensilage out and it's steaming. Couldn't understand that. That was at the Wenger's farm. I didn't go over there much, Dale was there all the time. I didn't want to be a farmer.

James: I didn't either, but I didn't have any choice.

Alan: What was your mom like?

James: She was very quiet. She loved us, wasn't ever any doubt on that. She wasn't that good on giving discipline, she'd rather love on us than discipline us. She did have...I don't know if you remember this...the paddles, had a ball with a rubber band? She had one of those without the ball and band attached that she paddled us with. But she didn't use it real often. Most of the time she would tell us "Daddy will take care of you when he gets home." I don't think she liked the disciplining part.

Alan: Would he take care of you when he got home?

James: Yeah, he didn't have any problem with that. She was a good mom. She was very even tempered. I don't

remember her hollering at me or any of my siblings. She was she was very much better temperament than I've got.

Alan: I probably told you about her lemonade didn't I?

James: Her lemonade I don't know if sure if you did but people loved her lemonade.

Alan: Yeah we had to your dad got a tank from my dad, a gas tank, and I dug that hole.

James: I saw the email for that. You sent me an email with that story or a text message. We worked hard but that was an unbelievably hard job for a kid. How old were you?

Alan: Oh, I was old enough. I was 19, 20.

James: I don't think you're ever old enough to dig a hole like that because that was probably a 500 gallon tank wasn't it?

Alan: Yeah 550. But it must not have been too hard digging. There was one on Centerville Turnpike that I was digging... it wasn't a farm, it was somebody's house they were putting in a tank. And that was the hardest ground...I had a pickaxe and a shovel and I got that suck down about that deep (indicates 6") and I had to go get a Pepsi. I was about to die, and went up to the store and Jerry Broadwater was there at the gas station and I was talking to whoever was there about how tough this hole was and Jerry got to "Ah..how bad can it be, can't be that, I could dig that hole." I asked, "You wanna make five dollars?"

James: Was this when Reid had the station probably?

Alan: It coulda been, it woulda been about that time. So he went back there, dug that hole and was ready to shoot me when he got back, but he dug it.

James: We did we did things the hard way too but when I saw that it reminded me again when I saw that text I said man that is just unreal.

Alan: Well I dug a lot of holes for tanks.

James: When I first started with Willie, Byler didn't own a backhoe then, there was a fella in the in the area that did nothing but backhoe work and we would oftentimes get him to dig. He probably he probably dug more of them than we did by hand but we still, particularly in Aragona Village, we still dug some by hand.

Alan: It was for fuel tanks?

James: No, to replace sewers or put sewers in and even then I thought man backhoe's gotta be better than this.

Alan: Yeah a Ditch Witch... anything would have been helpful but hey poor Daddy didn't have any money so you use what you could what you could.

James: Nowadays you wouldn't think about it, you'd say, well you get a quote from somebody that digs it with a backhoe that's part of the that's part of the the price of the job but back then it wasn't always that way I guess.

Alan: If you had to do anything different in your life what would you do different, and if you and if you knew what you knew now and go back.

James: I don't know. Tthere's stuff I'm sure I could have done better but when I look back at it I'm pretty happy with the way... I mean I I didn't have a blueprint when I got off the farm. I knew how to work but I didn't have a plan.

Alan: You had rent due.

James: What's that?

Alan: You had rent coming due.

James: When I got off the farm the only money we got, we didn't get paid for working there from the time we were young trapping muskrats was the only money we got. When I first started I couldn't even set up a Conibear (trap) by myself. I would have to get my older brothers to set it, take it back in the field with my bicycle and if I happened to snap it I had to come back to him to set it again. But within a within a couple years or so I figured out if I took it in the shop I could put it in the vise and I could set it that way so I was at least able to set my own. But anyway we got money from the from the from trap trap muskrats was the only money we had. Then later, the last several years that we were on I was on the farm, started raising veal calves. You buy a bag of milk replacer and buy a calf and then whatever was above what you put into the calf, in the bags of milk replacer costs that was your profit. And then after we did that for a little while Morris and I got a bright idea that, matter of fact I think Percy Parsons might have put the idea in our heads, that hey if we made a little bit of money with these calves, if we buy a cow we can put two calves on it and we did that so when I left the farm I had \$1200 cash to my name. I paid \$800 for a '69 Dodge Dart and by the time I put insurance and all the expenses and all that, I doubt I had more maybe one or two hundred bucks left that I had to make last so I started getting paycheck and I was making \$2 an hour.

Alan: And that was pretty big money.

James: It was tight but I learned how to get by. And now look at looking back, I didn't have a blueprint. I wound up being a plumber because that's the job that was available when I got off the farm but I'm happy with my life. If I had charted it I don't have any idea how it would have gone but looking back at it all the different twists and turns it's been good. One of the biggest things I liked about it, I was just happy to be in the game. It was fun being in and playing the game of life and I've enjoyed it.

Alan: The thing about not paying the children, that's an Amish holdover isn't it?

James: Well, yeah actually I'm not sure about Leon I think he did. You had to stay on the farm until you're 21. I was the only one that left before I was 21 and the agreement we had...this all happened at the time Dad sold the cows and I was getting ready to go out since I didn't stay until I was 21, whatever money I made from those two years would have to be deducted from my inheritance so when we sold the farm a few years ago I still kept my W2s from those two years and we deducted that off of my total.

Alan: Because that was assumed to be owed to the family?

James: Yeah because I didn't stay as long as they did but now what happened with them that was an Amish thing where you had to stay until you were 21 and they would, at least some of them that's how it worked in Dad's family I guess, I think he paid \$1.50 a week when you're 17 or 18 he went up to \$2 and even got his high ast maybe \$3 or \$3.50. You didn't get paid, you were getting paid, but you didn't get your hands on money. When you turned 21 and left the farm then you had whatever that amounted to which still wouldn't have been a lot. But given the chance to get off the farm at 19 I'd signed a whole lot more money away if I could. I was more than happy to do that.

Alan: I just finished reading a book written by an Amish fellow from Ohio who became a doctor and of course is no longer Amish. He talked about that he left before he was 21 and he and his dad didn't get along because his dad thought he was a reprobate. I forget all the details now but anyway his dad throughout his life confronted him "when are you going to pay me the money because you left early?"

James: Yeah, it was a thing. Now Dad didn't I didn't expect to get paid for it but like I said if you're leaving early then whatever amount you made will be deducted and I was fine with that.

Alan: They contributed two extra years to the value of the farm.

James: And I kept my W-2s all those years so I knew exactly what the amount was and once we divided the money I threw the W-2s away so I don't have those. But there's been some ups and downs and all but looking back on it I'm happy I'm happy the way everything turned out.

Alan: What causes you stress or what caused you stress during your life the thing that some of you didn't like had a problem with or unknown or...

James: I would think probably the biggest stress I had most times... I mean you have normal stress with jobs. You have that no matter what you do. Early years making sure that you kept the bills. In later years that's not ...you know you got you got things going well enough that wasn't an issue. We built our first house, Dad, I didn't... I wasn't given anything. I probably approached him about building on the corner there. He agreed to. We agreed on the price of the lot. Linda did some research. Back then there wasn't that many lots being sold down there but she found enough. Agreed on a price. He didn't give the lot but he gave us a year to get the house built and then at that point we were gonna borrow the mortgage for the house and the land and it worked because we got the house built in about nine months so it got in under the wire and he agreed to co-sign. Let's see I'm trying to think ...I think he co-signed with us at Farm Credit for the construction money which we wouldn't have been able to do. We didn't know how this was back during Jimmy Carter's administration and interest rates had been as high as 21% and we didn't know... You could lock in at that time with a balloon payment a balloon mortgage but it kept it fairly reasonable at the front end but it just kept going up. You didn't know, I think every time it increased it was whatever the current rates were and I wasn't that much of a gambler. We locked in for the mortgage, I think it was 11 or 11.5%. I thought we had the world by the tail. It had been as high as 21% during that time period but anyhow we didn't know how we were going to pay for it. Linda said I'll get a second job if I have to. But we managed and it went well. We've never been rich but we've got more than I ever thought I'd have dreamed of having when I left the farm.

Alan: How many children do you have?

James: One. Sarah was the only one we had. We would have possibly considered...we were married 10 years before she would agree to try... I always wanted kids but she was always convinced she would die in childbirth. And I said no it was just a bad fear. I said that was like in the pioneer days, that doesn't happen nowadays. After 10 years she just agreed to try to have a child and she developed toxemia and there for a while I didn't know she or Sarah either one was going to make it. She spent... in the last probably two months, she spent a good bit of that... we moved in with Leroy and Sarah so somebody would be around her during the day. We lived in the living room there with the curtains she needed nothing to rile her up or anything so we kept it dark in there with the curtains pulled and all that and then the last two weeks before Sarah was born she was in the hospital the whole time for that, she wasn't in good shape but God was with us and they both pulled through. She didn't want to have any more babies.

Alan: Yeah, I could understand that.

James: But it was weird because she kept saying "I'm afraid I'll die" and I was serious too because who ever heard of anybody dying of child birth nowadays. Sure enough it came closer than what we wanted it to.

Alan: Strange I never knew that I didn't know that. I wasn't aware of that.

James: Now that was a stressful time.

Alan: Yeah I could imagine that would have been. How about Robert Mast? Did you ever have any dealings with Robert? What's your impression of him?

James: I always liked him. He was I always felt he was a really godly man. He was very even tempered to me, he was a likeable guy. I don't know how much we ought to say on this thing but you probably remember

the incident when we played softball with the Navy guys?

Alan: No I don't remember that. Was I there?

James: Maybe you weren't playing then. To make a long story short we did some stuff... we played them in softball and did some stuff we shouldn't have done.

Alan: Like what?

James: We played them for a keg of beer.

Alan: Oh, I don't remember that.

James: You must not have been part of the team then. I thought you were.

Alan: I may have been. Was Lynn?

James: Yeah.

Alan: I can't imagine Lynn...

James: He played, he he helped us beat 'em but he didn't have any intentions of the other part. We actually... it was supposed to be play them a game... Phil Slabaugh somehow... the barracks used to be right out there by the road and somehow or other...he used to come over to my apartment... Anyhow make a long story short, he was going through there one time and I guess I don't know if he hollered at them but they hollered at him and he got over and got talking to him and he was coming home and won the softball tournaments or something and talked about how good we were and they thought they were pretty good. They wanted to play a softball game for a keg of beer so we agreed. We beat the socks off of them. Well, they didn't want to pay up, they wanted to play two out of three, so we beat the socks off of them again. So then they went and bought a case.

Alan: Where were the games played?

James: Right there on the base.

Alan: See now, I'm not saying I wasn't there because people will tell me things that I have no recollection of whatsoever and I know happened.

James: That was the summer we lost our uniforms your dad took our uniforms away from us.

Alan: Because of that?

James: Well let me... that's what brought the....I remember that from the talk about Robert. Church leadership was Robert and Phil at that point and they were totally opposed to what we did, and rightly so. They wanted to shut the ball team down... we couldn't play anymore we couldn't use the name, nothing. Harold Buckwalter intervened for us. He convinced 'em to... well your Dad said right off the bat, he's taking the uniform away... but Harold Buckwalter... and I always loved him for that... he intervened for us, thought it would be more beneficial not to do that and I don't know that it would have happened but it might have run some people away, that they might not have come back to the church. But anyway he always appreciated that about Harold, that he intervened for us and they let us play the rest of the year but we couldn't wear Mount Pleasant uniforms. We just dressed whatever. Johnny Cary always tickled me, he played the rest of the year in a Hawaiian shirt. But anyhow he was pretty strict and hardline on church rules and I'm not saying that's wrong, but I still liked him even through all that and do to this day.

Alan: I don't know why... if I knew that, that story should stick in my mind, unless I was in 1W service then.

James: No it would have been after we went to Alabama so your ankle should have been recovered were you

out of the area or something?

Alan: I was...

James: Were you playing with the Methodist team?

Alan: No because, (when) I broke my ankle Evelyn and I were separated then and I played until...

James: I didn't remember y'all were still married at that point when you broke your ankle.

Alan: No we were separated and may have been for a year or two. No we had been separated for about 6 months at that time because I just moved into a house that Dale and I built, with my broken leg and I played with the Mennonites until Linda and I got married and couldn't go to the Mennonite church anymore

James: That's when you started playing with the Methodists.

Alan: That's when I started going to the Methodists. That would have been 5 years after I broke my leg.

James: I wonder why you wouldn't have...

Alan: Maybe I just don't remember it.

James: Well I mean you would have.. I would have thought you'd been on the team, you may not have been at the ball game .

Alan: Well I remember playing with... did we have those maroon with the striped pants.

James: I think we even wore them to the game over there.

Alan: I still got my uniform.

James: I do too. I don't think I can fit in it anymore but I have it.

Alan: I remember we had a banquet at a restaurant on Newtown Road on top of the credit union building and Richard Kephart was there and insisted that everybody have a mixed drink.

James: Was this the Mennonite team or the Methodist team?

Alan: Mennonite team.

James: Oh my I didn't remember that

Alan: He insisted everybody have one. Lynn and Debbie were there.

James: Did Lynn have one?

Alan: He finally got one.

James: Oh my

Alan: Then he went home and told Daddy. You know, I don't know what happened except my Dad was awfully upset but I don't know if he was even sponsoring the team anymore so...

James: Oh my, I didn't remember that story.

Alan: You know, but this idea of no alcohol? That's really not a Mennonite traditional thing because the Mennonites made whiskey and drank whiskey and wine... and the Amish without a second thought. In fact it was a Mennonite practice... I guess a farmer practice period... in Pennsylvania when they were doing harvest they'd bring out the whiskey in the afternoon, give the guys a shot to get them revved up again so they could go on and work till dark. That's part of the American part of the influence from the outside that is not scriptural, but it's from the American temperance movement.

James: I will say because I could easily believe what you're saying a lot of that stuff I'm sure that we have today has come along since then. I mean you wouldn't believe how many people would argue with you that what Jesus served was not wine that was grape juice.

Alan: And obviously it wasn't I mean grape juice doesn't keep in that area.

James: Not only that, but the culture. It was like drinking water to them but the people that are opposed to that aren't going to swallow that. So yeah, I wouldn't have any trouble believing that and I know in a lot of Amish cases. I've heard Leroy talk about it. It wasn't uncommon...like in Holmes County that they had some around different types of stuff, so I wouldn't have any trouble believing it.

Alan: There was an Amish community in Union County, Pennsylvania that E.R. Miller's family came from. It split up it had terrible feuds and so forth.

James: Now E.R. would be Ernest right?

Alan: No Ernest's grandfather, Ernest's father I'm sorry.

James: Then was he the one that originally came to Mount Pleasant then?

Alan: Leslie Swartz was the first

James: Bbut Ernest's dad would have been one of his contemporaries that came to...

Alan: Ernest's dad. Leslie Swartz came here in 1895 and the Millers came here in 1900. They were the first and then there was another one, Wert came in 1905. He got in trouble for messing around with women. There was a recession in 1907 called the Bank Recession so from 1907 as people moved to find better things to about 1911. The place just exploded. It went from half a dozen twelve fifteen people to forty and fifty people, so there was a whole lot that came in it was all at one time all the names that you know and a lot of them you don't know because there was a split in about 1911.

James: In the Mount Pleasant Church?

Alan: Yeah that I had no idea until I started (researching) because I'd never come across it anywhere else and the only reason I came across it is there were names like Eby's and Landis's who were prominent and had moved here in that time period and Wert, J.D. Wert, I knew about. He was frequenting prostitutes. He was the bishop and so he got censored and moved to Amelia. Well then as I started doing was research into these families to try to figure out why did they come here? Who did they know? Who are they related to that's here? Do you remember Dan Wanner?

James: Dan Warner?

Alan: Wanner W-A-N-N-E-R he would have been before your time. His dad came from up there, Grandpa Buckwalter came from up there, all at the same time all of them knew each other.

James: Oh my.

Alan: And so they were half the community. The other half were Wengers and Millers. Landis had a lot of money, in fact he owned the Deal store that Carson (Hochstetler) later bought and so forth.

James: Which store?

Alan: The store where Carson Hochstetler...when Deals had it. he (A.A. Landis) actually built it and the house next door and other land. Aand he and A.D. Wenger both had money. A.D. Wenger inherited this from his first wife but and together they had a lot of property together. But somewhere they had a falling out.

James: A.D. Wenger, Sr.and him?

Alan: Yeah.

James: I never heard, I never knew that either.

Alan: Because he (A.A. Landis) and his bunch started worshipping, having Sunday service in the homes. I mean the church was built in 1910 and 1911 they'd already split away from them and then they all moved... eventually back to Pennsylvania, except for Grandpa Buckwalter. He was too poor to go. Literally, He go here because his mother died, he inherited enough money to make the move and had a bunch of kids.

James: And didn't have enough money to move back.

Alan: Once he got here he couldn't do it.

James: I never knew any of that.

Alan: In fact that house on Wenger Road, you know where Richard Kephart lives?

James: Uh huh.

Alan: He built that house. That was the original Buckwalter house.

James: Was that Abe's dad?

Alan: Yeah

James: Okay, wow, I didn't know that. Did he die in Mount Pleasant then?

Alan: Oh yeah he couldn't leave, he didn't have any money, he was poor.

James: What line of work was he in?

Alan: Carpenter. Didn't own a house until he had that one. Rented. His family were farmers, has been here (in America) since the first Amish came over. But when his Dady died he was only 18 years old and his uncle had a lien on the farm and gave him about a year and half but he couldn't keep up with it so the uncle foreclosed on it. to After that he did whatever he could. He was basically a carpenter and that's what he did when he came here. He got that land because Abram Wenger who'd come down in the middle teens, 1915 or so and bought his land and this land too. He said (to Buckwalter) "I'll sell you this land, finance it for you.

James: Just where that house is?

Alan: No, he had about 16 acres.

James: So all the Buckwalter houses are on that same...

Alan: Mostly. And Abram told him if he'd help tear down the houses on Mill Landing...there was a barrel plant on the canal that closed (about 1920) and they had a bunch of houses they were selling and Abram

bought some of the houses for the lumber. Told him if he help Abram tear 'em down, help build his house, then Abram would give him enough lumber and help him build his house. That's how he got a house.

James: Wow, never knew any of that.

Alan: One of his daughters was Naomi. Naomi Hobbs? When she and Chester got married...

James: One of whose daughters?

Alan: Buckwalter.

James: See, I never knew that. I knew the Hobbs' were related but I never knew...

Alan: She was a daughter.

James: Ok. So she would have been Abe's sister then?

Alan: Yeah.

James: I knew they were related but I never knew how.

Alan: There was a bunch of those. Maggie. Ira and Maggie Miller. Maggie was a sister.

James: Oh I didn't know that.

Alan: Did you know Ruth Thomas?

James: I remember the name.

Alan: She was a sister.

James: I knew...what is her name?

Alan: Nettie?

James: No, probably granddaughter, great granddaughter. I can't remember. There was one we used to know that came with the youth group some.

Alan: Robin Thomas?

James: Robin Thomas, yeah. So she would be related to the Buckwalters?

Alan: Yeah she was Ruth Thomas's granddaughter.

James: Never knew that. I always wondered what her connection... I thought she just liked hanging around the Mennonites. I didn't realize she was related. Okay, Wow.

Alan: So anyway when they got married, Sam Kurtz, who was Christie's dad, was a big speculator. He'd buy a farm and sell it and buy a farm and sell it...never made any money at it.

James: He just wasn't a good speculator.

Alan: Well, the land, right next to Emery and Nettie Hochstetler? It's a horse farm now? He owned that, that farm.

James: That's who Lloyd Stutzman bought it from?

Alan: Yes. And the way he got it was that Sam sold it to Grandpa Buckwalter with the understanding that Chester and Naomi were going to live there and make the payments on it. Chester worked at the Ford plant so he was making good money and everything went fine until the depression came along and he got laid off. Well, now they can't pay for the farm. Sam, bless his heart, I don't know much about the man but I have to admire him for this...agreed that for the equity they'd paid into it, when in reality there really wasn't any equity because the farm wasn't work what they'd paid for it anymore. In fact, when he sold it later to Lloyd Stutzman, he didn't get what was owed on it. But anyway, he agreed for the equity he would give Grandpa Buckwalter three acres that butted against his farm and fronted on Wenger Rd. So that's how he got the part where Abe's house is.

Then Grandpa Buckwalter gave them (Hobbs) the land where Sissy (Keffer) is now that one of the Landis' gave him just because they felt sorry for him because they figured he'd never get any land, so he gave him that land. *[Note: the land was given to John A Buckwalter by Jacob Eby, not a Landis]*

I'm sorry. Kelly tells me I get talking history, "don't you notice how people's eyes glaze over?"

James: I'm having a great time. I guess it's ok to put on here, I've got a funny story about Lloyd Stutzman buying that farm. Carson (Hochstetler) told me this one. I wish I'd had lots more time to talk to Carson and Milan while they were here. They had so many good stories. He was telling me that when Lloyd bought that place, he wanted to rent it. I didn't realize it was Sam Kurtz, I didn't know who owned it. But when he went to buy it, he didn't have the money to rent it but he got him to agree that he'd make the payment at the end of the first year. Well, he had it planned, according to Carson, moved in, milked the cows for a year and then said, "I can't buy it" and moved out. So he got a year to make money and a place to live and it was not long after that he bought our farm down here. (Land of Promise Rd.

Alan: That's a different farm.

James: It is?

Alan: The farm right across from the church, he bought that outright, and was living on it. It went back to Sam Kurtz after Chester Hobbs couldn't make the payments. He foreclosed on it.

James: I thought it was the horse farm next to your grandpa's place.

Alan: That's the first land Lloyd bought when they moved here from Ohio. His dad was living in Kempsville.

James: How long did they live there?

Alan: Years. And then they sold it to the Street's.

James: I don't know. Maybe I didn't get the story right.

Alan: No, you're right, because the farm they pulled this trick on was...do you know where Albert Hughes lives on Fentress Airfield Rd?

James: Yeah.

Alan: That farm there. It was on Cason Lane at that point because Fentress Airfield didn't exist then. That was the farm. He bought an option on it for a year and farmed it and that's why Gramps came down here. He (Lloyd) already had a farm, he needed somebody to run this farm so he talked Gramps into coming down from Ohio and he lived in Albert Hughes's house which was (at the end of now Lehman Rd at Cason Lane).

James: Albert Hughes's house?

Alan: Yes, which was moved to a different place. It was down at the end of Lehman Rd at Cason Lane. That's the farm, that after the partnered for he year he said "I don't want to buy it."

James: I had to location wrong.

Alan: But it was exactly as you said. Gramps had planned to go back to Ohio but after the year was up and they closed the farm down, Lloyd sold him an acre and a half right next to him where he built their house and he went to work for Roy Wenger in the dairy.

James: Well, why did Lloyd sell that one on Mt Pleasant Rd then?

Alan: To buy the one on Land of Promise.

James: 'Cause he actually bought several parcels to put that together.

Alan: Oh really?

James: The main part was the Tom Wood farm but then I think the part where Dennis (Yoder) lives belonged to somebody else, and the back part of the farm where Ted (Fries) is, we always called the Newbie field. I don't know if it was a Newbie farm but anyhow there was at least three or maybe four parcels that he put together from the 375 acres than it was total initially.

Alan: That's a pretty good-sized farm then for this area.

James: It was.. Well, Dad wound up, we bought it in '59, and it wasn't, but I'm thinking probably mid-60s or so, not much past the mid-60s, Lloyd decided he wanted a farm again, so he offered to buy the part that Ted has, and Dad sold that. That was, let's see, it was 200 acres, I think. If I remember. I can still see the sign that had been posted, the for sale sign that was out there, it was a big sign, and I think it was 375 acres total. That must have amounted to 200 back there because what we had, the rest of the time after that was 175, but not nearly all of that back there was farmable when Rufus Jordan bought it. He cleared a bunch of it to make more farmland in there, but I think...it's been so long since I've been back there, I think maybe they left his son, Rufus' son, had it, and I think he might have left a lot of that growing back up again. I'm not sure. It's been years since I've been back there.

Alan: Is the house still there? I haven't been by there in...

James: Oh yeah, our farmhouse? Yeah, probably won't go anywhere anytime soon. They finally took the barn down. The milk house is still there because that's where the pump is located. Machine shed is still there. It's Debbie...Mark and Debbie Convoy live across the street from it, and she fills me in on a lot of the stuff. She was talking to...they do SWAT training there with the house and the machine shed.

Alan: Oh really?

James: And she was here six months or so ago. She sent me a bunch of pictures. She was talking with the guy that I guess kind of heads it up for Chesapeake. They had a team from the Netherlands training there, and he said this is the most popular SWAT training site in the state of Virginia. Really. The time that these Netherlands people, that particular time, they gave the neighbors some warning because there was gonna be a lot of activity. She said she's glad they knew because about 11 or 12 o'clock, something like that, they had about 50 people stationed in their woods on the other side of the road, and she said they were running up and down the road, firing, they stormed the house. It was pretty interesting. But she said if they hadn't given a heads up on what it was, they'd have probably been calling the police. But they do a lot of training there, day training and night training.

Alan: Who owns it now?

James: The city. They sold it to the city, yeah. Green land preservation or something. Yeah, they wouldn't let

us, because we're too close to the airfield, they wouldn't let us sell it for development, which pretty much limited us to farm acreage value, and they finally agreed. It was grant money that they used, but they bought it with that. They had initially told us they were gonna tear all the buildings down and farm it, and that was all that was gonna be there, but somewhere along the line, somebody came up with the idea for SWAT training. I'd love to see the inside of it just to see what it looks like after all this training. But I hadn't had enough nerve. I think Willie's been down there and looked around. I doubt they keep it locked, because there's really not anything there of value anymore.

Alan: Was that a three-bedroom, one-bath, or four?

James: No, it was one, two, three, four bedrooms, an office, and then in front of the office, there was a mom's sewing room, but it could've easily been another bedroom, and then two full, a bath, in the main bath in the far end of the house, and then in the furnace mudroom there, there was a full bath there, too.

Alan: Did Lloyd build that house?

James: Mm-hmm, 1949, yeah.

Alan: Big house for '49. They weren't building houses that big in '49.

James: They did on that one, yeah. That's when he built it. They got the date inscribed in concrete when the concrete was put in place. I mean, it's big by today. Today's, it was 90 feet long. It's one story, but it was... Of course, he probably had all the family home at that point.

Alan: He would've had. In fact, I didn't get to...Keith is the second oldest one, and I didn't really get to know Keith until within the last 20 years, Family reunions.

James: Is he still living?

Alan: No, he passed away about five years ago. Bill and Edward are the only two still left, and nobody's heard from Edward in the last five years, and nobody can find him, so he may be dead, too. We just don't know.

James: Was he in California, or was that Brenda?

Alan: Well, they were both in South Carolina. Brenda died also four or five years ago, but Keith was still upset that Lloyd sold that farm because he wanted the farm so bad.

James: Well, apparently Bill did, too, and for whatever reasons, I guess Lloyd, I don't know if he... he may not have been financially able to set them up, either, but they didn't, anyway.  
Now, I never knew... I knew Bill, Bill best, because he used to work for Ralph Frost. W

We worked back and forth sometimes. Bill and Howard used to come out there a lot. He and the boys used to come out there a lot, hunting and just like coming out there, and I knew Harold before he passed away.

Alan: Keith would have passed for Harold's double, almost. Really?

James: Okay. And I remember I saw Ed a few times. I saw Brenda a few times, but those other three were the ones we saw most of the time.

Alan: Jimmy was in Washington State.

James: Okay, I didn't know him.

Alan: And he was the oldest, I believe.

James: The one thing I really appreciated about the Stutzman family, when we bought that lot from Dad, there's a big ditch that starts down from Leon's house and then runs through the woods down towards Pete Mast's house down there. When we subdivided that lot, we came to find out Dad bought the whole farm, but when the lawyer did the deed transfer and all that stuff, they never transferred that section from the ditch to the road. It wasn't big enough. You couldn't put a septic system in there. It was probably half, might have been an acre, half acre, three quarter of an acre, but it was a narrow strip. But they came to find out that that had never been transferred, so it technically still belonged to the Stutzmans. And I sent, our lawyer got the stuff together and I sent it to each one of the kids, explaining what the situation was and would they be willing to sign off on it. Otherwise, we'd never have been able to build there because they couldn't have done anything with it, but it would have kept us from ever building there. And every one of them signed it, sent it on to the next one, and everything went through then. It would have just, if just one of them had been obstinate it would have killed our plans of having a house. Leon wouldn't have been able to build there either.

Alan: It was white of them.

Leon: It was. And actually, Harold's wife, Carol, used to waitress up at the corner and then she was, for years after that, she was waitressing down at Moyock too. And I'd gotten to know her pretty well through that. And I was in school with Lynn and, what's the other one?

Alan: Tim.

James: Yeah. They helped. So I felt like I at least knew them pretty well and Bill and all them, but the others, I hadn't seen them enough. You know, they could have just, he just said, well, heck no, I ain't going to. I'm gonna see what I can get out of this.

Alan: I'll tell you, Keith loved farming because he worked as a foreman in a rubber plant or something. But after work, he'd go work on a farm. After he retired, into his 80s, he's working on a farm.

James: Oh my goodness. I did not know that.

Alan: I mean, he loved, loved to farm...still mad at his Dad he wasn't farming the old home place. Well, I'm gonna need to get back and get ready.

End of Interview