

Telephone conversation 12/31/2021

Stanley: Hello Alan.

Alan: Stan I missed your call earlier, how you doing?

Stanley: Well just fine man, looking good.

Alan: Well, good, you're all prepared for the new year, I suspect.

Stanley: Well yeah, is it prepared for me?

Alan: That's the question, alright. What I wanted to talk to you about was, me and Neady have been interviewing people for the last 20 years, just getting their impressions and their experiences in the Mount Pleasant community with the intention of someday putting it in a book, if we ever get around to it. I never dreamed when we started, we'd probably end up interviewing each other. It's been dragged on now for well over 20 years.

So you were living with Grandpa and Grandma Buckwalter for a while, right?

Stanley: Yeah, until I was eight years old I lived with grandma. Off and on. Because Mama had to take Buddy to various doctors. She had to take him to Baltimore. Plus we lived out there for time.

Yeah, Mama rented a little house across the road from Fentress Naval Air Station for a time from a farmer there and then then one time, the last time I remember us living in the colony was down behind Wenger's vineyard.

Alan: Oh OK, back that long lane?

Stanley: Yeah, I remember the house, it a had a smokehouse and everything, it was just a fascinating place.

Alan: Yeah, that was Chester Wenger's house, I think. He just died recently.

Stanley: Wow.

Alan: He was over 100 years old.

Stanley: Yeah 'cause, I mean I have long memories of Amos Wenger. My memories are kind of scattered. I remember that Wenger Rd was dirt and that the newspaper boxes for the people who lived on the road was out on Mount Pleasant Rd. And there were only four houses, I think it was. It was the Buckwalter house. And then there was the Wengers there where the road curved. And then Uncle Abe. And then down to the end of the road was the Brothers family.

Alan: Brothers?

Stanley: Well, it was Wiley, I forget her, oh, Wiley & Ruth Brothers I think. They weren't part of the Mennonite community but they had lived back there, I guess for some time, and she had a wood cook stove. It was porcelain and big and at the end of it had a big part of it was a big water tank. They had that for hot water and had to keep it loaded and she was always making cookies and stuff. And what I did, I was maybe 5 so, I would go out to Mount Pleasant Rd and get everybody's newspaper and then I would bring them... I would go and I will deliver them to each house and when I get to the Brothers' house Mrs. Brothers would always give me some little treat, cookies or food or something. And one time she gave me a rutabaga and I took that thing home to grandma. She fixed it but I couldn't eat it. It was the most awful tasting thing to me at that age.

Alan: Did they live right across the road from Abe Buckwalter's house?

Stanley: No, it was...the road ended in those days at the Wenger's field...Wenger's had a field back there and there and there was just a cow path so it was down the road a piece from Uncle Abe's, and on the right hand side.

Alan: Gotcha.

Stanley: And also, you know Uncle Ira, Ira Miller, was like the colony barber.

Alan: Oh, really? I did not know that.

Stanley: And every so often Grandma'd give me a dime and send me to Uncle Ira's. Now she'd let me walk all that distance from the Buckwalter house, down through the field and over to Uncle Ira's and Uncle Ira raised turkeys among other things and he had these hand clippers and he'd cut my hair. I was afraid of his turkey's, man, especially the Toms, they can get a little aggressive.

That's one of my memories and another was the Wenger boys loved having me come over and mess with the cows. They made fun of me sometimes but I remember going, helping run the cows in for milking and it seemed like the road, the farm road back to their pastures was perpetually wet. I remember knee deep mud and running back early and getting the cows you know, and just having a time of my life. So, one day Herbert...was it Herbert or Harold?

Alan: Herbert

Stanley: Uh, Herbert. Herbert and one of the other boys...you know they were constantly having problems with possums getting in their chicken house and a possum can do terrible damage to a chicken...they found his possum, I was like 6 years old, he found this big ol' possum and Herbert took him out and killed it. He killed it by breaking its head, chopping

it in the back of the head and he gave it to me and said, "Now Stanley, take this over to your grandma and let her bake it for you. It's real good."

I took the end of that that possum's tail and his head was dragging the ground, that's how big it was, and I drug that thing over to Grandma's

"Grandma, look what the Wenger boys gave me! This possum, says it's good to eat."

Grandma got a little perturbed to say the least.

And I remember, back where Grandpa Buckwalter has his chicken houses there was a little ditch back there and she made me drag that possum back there and throw it in the ditch. And the Wenger boys called me "Possum" from that day on. That was my nickname from then on.

Grandpa Buckwalter was a broom maker that shop was in that garage and building behind the house and I loved to go in that old shop, and look at those broom making machines. You know, they just fascinated me.

Alan: Did he do anything besides making brooms for living? Did he farm or anything?

Stanley: Well, he raised chickens. He raised fryers. That was his main income, but I think each family had some kind of specialty just like Uncle Ira was the colony barber, Grandpa was the boom maker, but he probably made brooms to sell elsewhere, I don't know, 'cause I was like five years old when he passed. 1945 I think it was.

But I remember Grandpa Buckwalter very well. what you see in the pictures, that's exactly how he looked. That beard scared me and he spoke broken English. He spoke with a real heavy German accent, he and grandma Buckwalter both because they were from Pennsylvania and come from Pennsylvania in 1913. They had a big family and all but they were from the colony area there in Lancaster County.

Alan: Do you know why they moved here?

Stanley: Things got kind of hard up in Pennsylvania. I think there had been a drought or something. And he needed the land, you know, they needed space and here he had eleven kids and a lot of daughters, and he's probably related to everybody up there and you had to get husbands for your daughters, you know. Yeah, that's never mentioned. Like half of the daughters went back to Lancaster County area.

In the Buckwalter house, Grandpa and Grandma Buckwalter had half the house and Aunt Nettie had the other half. In Grandma and Grandpa's, they lived in a couple of rooms.

Alan: Which half did they live in?

Stanley: Alright, if you're looking at the house from the road, Grandma lived on the right hand side of the house. Aunt Nettie lived on the left hand side of the house. There's a stairwell or stairway that goes right up the center of the house, or did, and when you go up that stairs to the left there was a little room and that was my room when I was there. And because I wet the bed until I was like I don't know, Uncle Freddie did until he was like 14 or 15, Mama did and I did too...but grandma wouldn't waste anything so she made a mattress out of corn husks and a burlap bag. I slept on my mattress of burlap and corn shucks.

It was fascinating to me, though the Pennsylvania Dutch that Grandpa had. Grandma Keffer had a little bit of an accent, but she didn't have this German accent, this unique accent that they had in Pennsylvania .

When your Daddy and Mama got married Mama bought a fuchsia colored suit. Now fuchsia, that's about a shocking pink as you want to get. Mama says Grandma Buckwalter looked at Grandma Keffer and says, "Ach, vhy, Alice, you're not going to let Betta Lee vare a dress like that to Yohhnie's vedding are uuwhoo?"

And probably Grandma may have replied, "I can't do anything about this girl." Mama was kind of rebellious.

But grandma to me, Grandma Buckwalter, is one of the most fascinating people because of her accent and because she was so feisty.

Alan: Oh, really?

Stanley: Oh, she was a controller, bro. You know, the family has a reputation for being controlling of their kids and Grandma Buckwalter, trust me. She took impeccable care of Grandpa, being diabetic and osteoarthritis and all, tremendous pain that last couple of years, but I remember they had that big table in the dining room when you went in that side door with this sort of what was the dining room. There's a parlor off to the left but there's a big table and I forget how many of us sat around that thing but a lot of meals would be Grandma Keffer, Grandma and Grandpa Buckwalter and maybe....

I never saw Aunt Nettie. So she was a nurse and I'd see her come and go but I never visited or anything. She was an outcast.

Alan: How come?

Stanley: Because she had Uncle John. Out of wedlock. (Note: her son was Russell Buckwalter, John Buckwalter was her brother)

Alan: Was it John? Is that his name?

Stanley: Yeah. John Buckwalter. I have no idea who the father was, I don't.

Alan: I asked my mother once and she said it was Doctor Fentress or a Doctor she at Fentress where she was his nurse or something.

Stanley : Yeah, but you know in her day, that was a big “no, no” especially in a community like that.

Alan: If she was an outcast, did they not speak to her anything or just...

Stanley: Well, she was young. I don't think I ever saw her in church. She was very quiet. I never heard or seen her, you know I saw her sometimes through a window, but she kind of she stayed to herself. ‘Course like we're kind of like that anyway.

Alan: Was her son there then? He would have been well older than you, right?

Stanley: Oh goodness, yeah, because that's our second cousin, that's Harold’s first cousin, Harold Buckwalter. Uncle John went in the army at a young age, he spent over 30 years in the army, retired as a Warrant Officer. I forget which grade, I think it was W 04. I went when Virginia and I got married. We took our honeymoon to Anderson, SC and that's where Uncle John was living. He and Rose, and they were very gracious. Uncle John was a joker. A very funny guy. And we talked.

He told me, “Well, Stanley, every family gotta have a black sheet and I come from a mighty big family.”

He was an alcoholic.

Alan: Oh, really?.

Stanley: Yeah, he's in the army and he spent 13 years in the Panama Canal Zone when they surveyed it and when they built the canal. He was a muleskinner. And he said, come payday he’d get drunk and he’d stay in trouble for it. So finally one day his commander called him in, says “Buckwalter, You're a hard worker when you're sober. What I'm gonna do, every payday I’m gonna give you a three day pass. You go get as wild drunk as you want to but you gotta stay sober the rest of the time.”

And that's kind of how he worked it, except he said he said he was drinking like a fifth of whiskey a week. And sometimes could do it in a day, but yeah, he was a serious alcoholic.

Alan: Did he have any children?

Stanley: Yes, they had two children, a daughter, uh no, the only one I know about is a daughter.

Alan: What was her name?

Stanley: I don't remember.

Alan: Was it Phyllis?

Stanley: So that was the only time I saw him. When I went to see him 'cause he know he lived there and all over the place.

But back to Mount Pleasant, that Wenger Rd thing was one of my big memories and the other was the church. How bats would get loose in the church sometimes.

I don't remember, I was, I don't know maybe five at this point, vacation Bible school, and at the end of vacation Bible school we always had the big program. Yeah and it was at night, we had it and I went with my Grandma and they had these pews, slatted pews, and a bat got loose in the church. Grandma told me, "Stanley, stay down" so I got down, I was gonna get under the pews. I think it was Harold and one of the Wenger boys did something about the bat and they chased it out or something, but it was so funny, people's reaction to the bat.

Alan: Who was the preacher then?

Stanley: Oh Amos. Amos is one of those people you never forget, you know that steel hair of his and the way he talked in the back of his mouth. That's really the Rockingham County kind of accent and Staunton, up in that area. I kind of feared him one time.

The old Miller store was a one room school.

Alan: Did you go to school there?

Stanley: Yes, I don't know if it was kindergarten or 1st grade, but I went to after my stay at Grandma's. Next door to it was a house and that's where we had our Bible classes. But there was all the grades right there in that one room, and there was a little platform in the front of the room and that's where Amos had his desk. I sat right along the chalkboard that was on one side. On the other side of the room there was a pump, a sink, so what we'd do, they had this powdered soap that when it came to lunch time, we all got in a line and all washed your hands before we eat lunch and most of us brought lunch from home, you know, a little sack lunch and would go outside and eat. Well, I don't know if I was mouthy or what, but sometimes kids would pick on me, especially the girls. And then there was one person who took up for me and that was Robert Mast. He was probably a teenager by that time, but I remember Robert so vividly that he would take up for me and defend me.

Alan: He's still around. I just talked to him the other day.

Stanley: I remember him when I was doing a lot of preaching and he was the overseer. And, uh, Robert, we got along real well. He was just a kind person, a wonderful guy, you know.

The school...Freddie went there. When I was living with grandma, Freddie is only 11 years older than me or something like that. Marvin and Freddie were young teenagers at home when I was staying with grandma so much. Your dad was dating your mom.

Alan: Was he living there too?

Stanley: Yeah your dad and Freddie and Marvin all lived there at the house and your dad lived at the house or until he and your mom got married in 1945. Actually they got kind of irritated with me sometimes because Grandma made him take me places with him. Marvin and Johnny were the ones who went places. Freddy was quiet and reserved and retiring. Freddie used to sit me on his lap and read Bible stories to me.

I was the oldest grandchild, you know, so I'd get special treatment sometimes. I used to see Johnny go out and I wanted to get in the car and go with him. One night he says "No, Stanley you can't go tonight, I'm going out with my girlfriend. So when he wasn't looking, I slipped out of the house, got in the car in the backseat and got down on the floor. And then when he stopped in front of your mom's folks' house on Mount Pleasant Rd I looked up out through the window, you know, and saw him go up to the house to pick up your Mom and escort her out to the car. And when they got to the church... the big date for the Mennonite youth at the time was going to literary society and that's where they went. Well when he got to literary society, he found me and he was not happy, but they took me in but when he takes me home he let me know in no uncertain terms I better never do that again. Grandma was worried too.

Alan: He let you stay and took you home afterwards?

Stanley: They let me stay with 'em, because he wasn't gonna leave me out in the car. Yeah, and I just remember like there's some people speaking and some something about they studied the Roberts rules of order. If you remember Literary, you know and so that was that was kind of interesting. But when they took my home, I think Grandma was kinda upset too because I had kind of disappeared on her.

Marvin would always take me to sports stuff. He was perpetually playing baseball or softball. He was a heck of a pitcher, could pitch, but he was a shortstop too. When I was like ten or twelve was over visiting one time and he took me out to his practice and by then, by 12, I had a heck of an arm. I could serve the ball. He let me scrimmage a little bit and then he told me "got a good arm there, but you can't throw it straight." I was left handed.

Another memory for me was the sewing circles at the church, well, it's the quilting sewing circle. And these women, Alan, I don't think any of 'em spoke English. Everything was in German and of course the one thing that ain't any different in German is my name, "Stanley". Once in while I'd hear Grandma and I'd hear my name come up and my ears

would burn because I can't understand what they were saying about me. But those ladies would talk as fast as they sewed and they were excellent. Grandma Buckwalter was a very noted quilter. She quilted up into her 90s.

Alan: Where did they have sewing circle?

Stanley: At the church. In the all purpose room. I remember the frames very well, I can almost smell it, 'cause they'd bring lunch with 'em and I remember the meals. You learned how to eat standing up 'cause there wasn't always a place to sit, so you knew how to take care of your flatware and everything. And the food, it seemed like to me everybody was a good cook. Shoo fly pie I don't remember too much about it, but uh, man fried chicken and all kinds of good stuff.

Alan: Do you remember the names of any of the ladies who would have been at sewing circle?

Stanley: Nah, names don't stick with me very well. It's faces there. I remember choristers. I remember the four part harmony. I was like 9 years old before I knew that churches had organs and pianos.

You know they didn't have a quarterly free for kids. I don't think they had quarterlies for anybody, they used the Bible.

So here when I was nine years old, my uncle, my natural father brother-in-law, Leland H. Waters Sr. was a Southern Baptist minister and evangelist and he worked with the Mission Board and he was quite an orator. And he would do this when he's talking (makes a clicking sound) and he would speak so well (imitation a pompous preacher), and he could pray. He prayed the angels down, you know.

But he was also a crooked businessman.

Alan: Really? How so?

Stanley: Well, I just I didn't trust him. He smoked cigars so I didn't trust him. He also wouldn't let me live with him. He kept putting me in foster homes and stuff if he had to charge me for a while. When he put me in a home for boys in Richmond, a Baptist home for boys and this couple ran it. The first Sunday at that Baptist Church the Sunday school lesson....now understand my first like 8 years I've spent a lot of time with Grandma so I'm learning about the Bible In the Mennonite church, right?...and the lesson the teacher started teaching and I knew more about the lesson than she did because of what I had been taught In the Mennonite church and being in preaching and everything and grandma would do some instructing once in a while. My grandma is the first person I can ever remember praying for me, Grandma Keffer.

Alan: What did she pray?

Stanley: Pray for me about my life and stuff. You know she could be kind and she could be severe.

She's a....oh, about Grandma Buckwalter sitting at the table, switching gears here, since Grandpa Buckwalter had certain restrictions on his diet because of his diabetes, she put his food on his plate. She chose what food he would eat and if he reached for something he wasn't supposed to have she tapped his hands and said "Neine." My goodness, but she ruled the roost. That 4'11" lady ruled the roost. But that was back in those days, that was respected. Yeah, and of course she was a very powerful.

So for me, I had this mother thing worked out. My Mama was "Mama" and Grandma Keffer was "Big Mama" and Grandma Buckwalter was "Little Mama". Yeah, well, I had three Mamas. Grandma and Mama didn't get along too well because maybe they were too much alike. Grandma was really very sharp. Very smart. She taught me the first German word I learned, was how to say "cow", was "coo"

And when I was a child, probably when you were, there was still a lot of German spoke in the colony.

Alan: Yeah, My mother and her parents always spoke it, which was very irritating to my dad. He didn't speak it.

Stanley: Harold, he learned it. Harold said that Grandpa Buckwalter would put his grandchildren on his lap and read 'em Bible stories from German and he would always do it in German, so you had to learn German, period. Grandpa Buckwalter had a reputation for being a man of prayer. As spicy as Grandma Buckwalter was, Grandpa Buckwalter was gentle, I guess. I don't know if you know about the legend that he supposedly had calluses on his knees from the time he spent in prayer for his children, his children's children until the 4th generation.

Alan: You know, I've heard that. And I was looking around Church the other day and at least 50% of the people there are Buckwalter descendants of his or married to one of them.

Stanley: Half of the colony, man and you got all those daughters and they have a bunch of kids, you know. And of course, all the Millers and all.

I can remember Harold Buckwalter being the chorister. He was a teenager. I used to spend time down at Uncle Abe's with Aunt Roberta's. She was quite a person, very nurturing. They were so good to me and of course, Uncle Abe, I don't know it is about the Buckwalter men but they have a sense of humor and Uncle Abe was such a wonderful person. He'd tell stories and he was a ferry boat captain on the Elizabeth River and I

guess when they got rid of the ferry boats, he became a toll collector in one of the tunnels. But I loved them both.

Alan: Yeah, he was a ferry boat captain on the Cape Charles Ferry and then he ran one of the tunnels and then they put him in charge of the Expressway toll booths when they built expressway from Norfolk to Virginia Beach.

Stanley: Wow. He'd bite his lower lip and say "Yep, Stanley" (imitating Uncle Abe) and he had that tenor voice. I remember reading that in that book about Mt Pleasant that the men pulled him in. My mom says that the young colony men, just before the Second World War, Uncle Abe and a bunch of 'em made moonshine. They had their rebellious time, their own form of Rumspringa.

Another thing I remember about the colony was the love for the kids. I was in and out of the colony so it would be very obvious to me. Lived in Copeland Park in Newport News for time during war and there were duplexes and quadplexes, single story. One day, I was going to go play with these kids who lived a couple of houses down and the mother came out and grabbed the son, pulled him inside, 'cause "don't you play with those boys they're from a broken home". My mom wasn't even divorced yet, she was legally separated 'cause my daddy made sure he stayed out of the country so she couldn't divorce him. But, um, that hurt me like crazy, you know, I didn't understand that I was in outcast because my family, my parents were not together, but then I would go over to the colony, to Mount Pleasant and there's so much love shown for the children. The children were considered very important it seems to me, my impression now, and that if it had not been for that, I don't know how I would have turned out. I've had my problems anyway, but that I just have never forgotten the amount of love that was shown.

And it was pretty isolated. Although they did a lot of business for people outside the colony, it was a whole culture thing you know with the plain suit and I remember seeing Harold in his first straight cut or plain cut.

When I was living with Anna Mae & Oliver Hertzler I was having one made for me. I was baptized by Truman Brunk in December 1954. I lived with them for a year working on the dairy farm there and living with them. My mom and stepdad had so many problems.

The preaching...it seemed to me that Amos Wenger was angry all the time. I don't know, it's just his severe way of speaking, you know.

Alan: He did have a stentorian way of preaching. It was difficult to follow him.

Stanley: But what you didn't want...because there was more than one man was prepared to preach 'cause they had what like four people I guess who could do the preaching. And

you hoped that when came prayer time one of them would not pray out loud because he going to preach his sermon.

Well, being down on your knees, thinking when are we going to get up? And night service is sleeping in the pew 'cause I'm still a little kid, been running all day.

Grandma Buckwalter had a garden, I was about 7 then, towards the end of my staying with Grandma a lot, she got a cultivator from the Wenger's that you pushed and I was just big enough to push that thing. I had to reach up to the handles, but I was kinda big for my age. I raised tomatoes and corn and she helped me lay it out but I remember Uncle Freddie'd put a salt shaker in his hip pocket and go out among the tomatoes and eat a tomato. If you faced the house the garden was to the right. There was a coal pile just in front of the building that had been Grandpa's workshop and I remember mint grew around that coal pile and I remember Grandma making mint tea from that.

But the people, and how they treated each other...if you were compliant they were wonderful but I didn't see sometimes they were helpful to somebody who was having a hard time. There were those folks who were judgmental and the folk were good and that's just the way it was. The first name basis, I still like that to this day.

The eight years I spent at Warwick River, after getting out of the army and coming back up here, I was actually preparing for preaching credentials. Lloyd Weaver was trying real hard but of course me being a divorced man it was kinda hard to do. I did a lot of preaching out and stuff. Lloyd had been an influence on me when I was 16 or so. I remember the way I was treated, people were very kind to me. You weren't supposed to be vindictive. Back in the colony it was a different world. I'd leave here and be out there and it just didn't seem real, but I loved it over there.

I was born April 14, 1940. We lived in Newport News my first 3 or 4 years then I stayed with Grandma off and on until I was about 8 years old. When I was 8 my uncle had put me with a family that owned a hog farm. It was in Richmond, he lived in Richmond. My daddy's family is from the Richmond area. I was mistreated. There were four of us foster boys and we were fed one food and their boys were fed something else. They'd pick up left over food from restaurants in Richmond to feed their hogs and they'd go through it to find anything that was edible and that's what we ate. I remember telling Grandma I didn't want any limp carrots. They were stale carrots but they were edible. And one of 'em tried to do a sexual advance on me and I kicked him the gonads. His mama spanked me for that. She wouldn't believe he'd done anything wrong.

One day your daddy showed up. Mama'd come up to see me in '48 after Leonard was born to show me Leonard and I kinda let her know things weren't all that great and pretty

soon, here come's your daddy and he was driving a sedan delivery, I remember that vehicle, and he took me back to Grandma.

Somehow after that I wound up back in Richmond with my uncle who put in a home for boys where I was gang raped by six boys who threatened to kill me if I told anybody. Screwed my mind up royally. Before school started each boy could go stay with his family if the family wanted them and my mom and stepdad had moved down to North Carolina because he'd been laid off when the government stopped spending money on ships after the war so he decided to be a farmer and they were sharecroppers. I got to go see Mama there and when I told her how things were in Richmond, she called Uncle Leland in Richmond and told him not to send me back and I was sent back to Grandma. My Mama was a fighter. She was a controller, one of the reasons why I went in the service.

That was my last time with Grandma, I was eight years old, I knew a little bit more, I'd seen a little bit more, I wanted to stay but she couldn't afford to keep me.

Alan: Where was Granddaddy at that time? Was he in Huntington?

Stanley: I don't know where he was. He would show up once in a while. I didn't know Grandpa Keffer. I remember him coming in one time and he brought Ice cream, and then I never saw him again. Well, when I was 13 I went to live with Grandma & Grandpa Keffer because I just couldn't take things at home. I was two years behind in school in 6th grade and the principal at Park View Elementary wrote a note home to my Mom in the second week of school telling her "I'm going to put Stanley in the 7th grade whether you like it or not. He's too big and too bright to be two years behind." So I skipped the 6th grade and at the same time I went out to live with Grandma & Grandpa Keffer and I was there for three months and I could not get along with Grandpa. Grandpa's Irish would always show. He loved professional wrestling and I remember him taking me to see a couple of them, somebody named Wild Red Berry was one of them and Chief somebody. One of them was always an Indian. So after three months I was back home and then with Anna Mae & Oliver Hertzler. I kicked around from pillar to post growing up.

I had to learn how to get along with everybody and I learned one thing, the old folks were the ones who had the money and who controlled everything. So, I became very adept at getting along with older people which meant I didn't always get along with the kids around me sometimes because I was going to be obedient 'cause there were rewards involved in that.

At 17 I lived with Fred Slabaugh for a few months.

Alan: Who was Fred Slabaugh?

Stanley: Fred Slabaugh rented a farm from Uncle Oliver's dad who owned a couple of farms, the farm where Oliver & Anna Mae were and another one about where Stoney Brooke is, and Fred rented that. I'd worked for Uncle Oliver while living with them and I got a reputation for being a hard worker. I was slow but I worked hard. Fred had had Nevin Steiner working for him. I'd quit school and Fred wanted to hire me so I went over to live with him and work on the farm. Room and board was the only way to do it, living way out there. At that time, it was "way out there." The first day he said "Stanley, you need your education." It's one thing the Mennonites were very strong on, education. He was going to pay me \$13 a week plus room and board and he said, "I'll make you a deal. I'll pay you \$11 a week, room and board and you go to back school. So I did.

I enrolled at Warwick High School. It was a quarter to ride the Greyhound bus to school. I had discovered girls way back, but girls were beginning to discover me so I was out late at night sometimes and getting up at 4:30 in the morning wasn't an easy thing and Fred wasn't a very good business manager but he laid me off. I had a time. I was going to Huntington Mennonite because that's where they went and where I got to meet Lloyd Weaver because he was the pastor at Huntington. I had a tenor voice that wouldn't quit, I could get real high so there was Lloyd, Myron Ross, a Fisher and John David Yoder and they were a quartet and they took me under their wing and though they didn't need me, took me into the group and I sang real high tenor. They nurtured me.

That nurturing I would receive anytime I was among the Mennonites was what kept drawing me but I couldn't live up to the standard. I had this idea you had to be perfect or something. Grandma and Mama said when I was three or four years old I would get a wooden box and grab a book and stand on it lead singing. I'd imitate the chorister and after that I'd preach. Grandma said I was going to be a preacher, a lawyer or an actor.

Oh, did you know that Grandma Keffer read the horoscopes every day in the newspaper?

Alan: No, I didn't. For curiosity or did she take them seriously?

Stanley: Well, Pennsylvania Dutch were pretty serious about folk culture, you know, hexes and stuff. She'd say "Stanley, let's see what your horoscope is today. It says you're gonna be a preacher, a lawyer or an actor. For two of those you have to lie for a living so you're gonna have to be a preacher"

But I knew, in that church, at Mt Pleasant, at a very early age, four or five or six, that God was calling me to the ministry. And I just thought you gotta be too perfect. I was very extreme in my thinking and so I just kept running from it. But I had that nurturing there and it's still very dear to me, the teaching I got.

When I finally surrendered at age 39 to God, the Holy Spirit opened my memory and lot of what I would know at that time was what I had learned as a child at the Mennonite Church

so my theology is a mix of Pentacostal and Anabaptist. It's more Anabaptist as a matter of fact. The peace, and where do I stand on it. I heard so much about that and it became the litmus test I guess in the '80's. My own conviction, when Jesus said that, He's talking to people who know about that. He said "If one person slaps you on the cheek, to turn the other also". The Mennonites believed that. Turn the other cheek.

Which by the way, Uncle Freddie did.

Alan: Oh, what did he do?

Stanley: He served his conscientious objector time at Eastern State Hospital and there was a Jehovah's Witness in there serving his conscientious objector time. The Jehovah Witness's were conscientious objectors due to the fact that you owe no allegiance to anyone but God. But for Mennonites it was not just that, but you're not supposed to kill people and not supposed to bear arms.

And he says to Uncle Freddie, "Keffer, c'mon, you're here just like I am, just to stay out of the military. You really believe in this stuff??"

And Uncle Freddie said "If a man strike you on one cheek, turn the other also".

"What would you do if I slapped you upside the face"?

"Jesus said, 'If a man strike you one cheek, turn the other also'".

The man hauled off and hit him, hard, back against the wall. Uncle Freddie slid down the wall and he's getting back up and the guy says "What are you gonna do now, Keffer, if I hit you on the other cheek?"

"Jesus said 'turn the other cheek'" Uncle Freddie said. "If a man strikes you, turn the other to him also."

The man reached back to hit him on the other side of his face and could not. Was like something grabbed his arm or something. He stopped and turned and left it. He never bothered Uncle Freddie again. But Uncle Freddie took his faith extremely seriously. You know that. He was a very serious guy.

But when Jesus said that I believe He was talking to us as individuals. That should be your individual thing. If a man, you know, you're not supposed to strike back. But, if you strike my wife, now that's a whole different ball game. So, when it came to trying to make the government non-resistant, that I think is carrying it too extreme.

Alan: And Paul writes that government is ordained by God to provide peace and protection.

Stanley: When I asked Uncle Oliver about it...Uncle Oliver taught me how to take notes in church and all kinds of stuff...I asked about police and he read me that thing from Romans 13 "officers do not bear their arms for nothing". He was predestinationist. He said "that is their destination, that is their calling. They are predestined for that." So that was how he managed to deal with it.

The peace issue, I saw it before I left Warwick River, the leaders were willing to accept almost anything if you were against serving in the military. I said, "wait a minute", I said to Lloyd "it seems to me that intellectualism is getting just, you know..." He said, "Well, Stanley, just...."

But my students, when I taught at Youth Challenge asked "well what about this, Stanley" My conviction. My conviction is that when Jesus said that, that's what he meant. You're not supposed to swing back when you are personally attacked 'cause all throughout the New Testament, Jesus never struck back. But, when Jesus saw other people mis-treated, He took action. Such as when He went in the temple and in the court of the Gentiles and saw it being de-sanctified by the selling of the animals and the money exchangers, crooked money exchangers not giving fair exchange. One day in class I said "and he turned the tables over and the tables were probably planks on barrels" I didn't even think what I was doing and just took my left hand and came up under this table I had in front of the classroom, was a composition board top, a thick one, and it did a complete flip in the air and tore the legs away from the table top. I had done a martial arts thing and didn't even know it because I didn't stop to think, I just went through it and I was pretty strong in those days. It floored me but brother did it make a point. I didn't have any trouble with any student for about three months..."don't mess with Bro. Stan, he's bad."

Like Jesus, we are supposed to live it personally, yeah.

Alan: Well, you know it's ironic in the Mt Pleasant church here, some of our people get in trouble with other Mennonites sometimes, not in trouble, but they kind of look down their nose. Because we live so close to the military that congregation is no longer nonresistant, and if somebody from the church joins the military, they offer prayers and, you know, wish him well. And we've got members of the church now who were in the military, so it kind of dropped it in this congregation.

Stanley: Yeah, I kind of saw that they did. Of course when Harold's son-in-law (Note – actually Harold's granddaughter's husband) became a cop, his daughter married a cop... Yeah, it was a horrible thing the way he was beaten. That was terrible.

Mt Pleasant was, 'cause it was so isolated, very very conservative, but it was a loving community for the most part. Warwick River wound up being the conservative one. When God told me to go back to the Mennonite Church back in the 80's,... 80, 81 maybe 82...I

said, can I go to Huntington? Warwick River was the conservative congregation over here when I lived with Uncle Oliver. I remember the people and stuff and to this day I miss the four part harmony. I know it's just another way to worship but there's just something about that four part harmony, the chords that you form with the voices just resonates.

Alan: Yeah it is. Once you've sung it or experienced it, there's nothing quite like it.

Stanley: Yeah, Sissy or somebody said the family should get together and make an album. I said "I'm ready. I'd love to." Mt Pleasant is very dear to my memories.

Alan: Did you have any interactions with other folks, the Bergeys, the Wengers or the Lehmans?

Stanley: Well, the Wengers, not as an adult because of the distance, but as a child, yeah. I used to play with the Wengers a lot. Marvin worked for the Wengers. He was a milker. At the time everything was milked by hand and Marvin, he could milk a cow, man. I learned that when I worked for Fred 'cause he had a cow come fresh with mastitis and he had strictly a pipeline so I had to milk that cow twice a day. Man, my forearms got up to 15".

Oh, Tommy Tennefoss. Tommy Tennefoss, the Tennefoss's had goats and Tommy had this cart that he'd hook his goat up to and give kids a ride. He wasn't that much older than us, maybe ten years, maybe 5 or 7 years.

Alan: Did they live back beside Uncle Ira then?

Stanley: No, the Tennefosses lived right out on the corner of Mt Pleasant Rd and Wenger Rd, little white house there. The Tennefosses live there and you went down the road a piece and Aunt Ruthie was on the right. That's another memory. I used go to Aunt Ruthie's, Grandma would let me walk down there too. Aunt Ruthie had all these National Geographic magazines, I guess Uncle Tommy subscribed to them, and just loved sitting hours and hours looking at those things.

And of course Aunt Naomi lived a little bit further down the road on the left. The young men would gather at Aunt Naomi's, Uncle Chester's and do blue grass. Chester and Ray both played instruments, one played the fiddle and the other played banjo or guitar and of course one the son's now have a group of their own. That's where I got a love for blue grass. Uncle Marvin would come in there sometimes. But I'd walk down there and Anna Belle was only two years older than me so I'd go see Anna Belle, played with her a lot because we were so close in age.

When I was in the second grade I lived with Grandma awhile and I went to the new school, the two room school. I was in the second grade and was only two of us in the second grade. The other was Phillip Miller. I don't remember who the teacher was...it wasn't one of the Mast girls 'cause the Mast girls were teenagers then and they liked to tease boys.

I remember there was a girl in school and one of the girls told me “she’s part negro”.

I asked “How do you know?”

“You can tell by her fingernails.”

I was trying to find out what their attitude toward peoples’ color was.

We would do shadow grams. The outhouse, we discovered you could actually do like a pin hole camera. There was this hole in the side of the wall and, wait a minute, you could see images there. So we took chalk and chalked it up so it’d be good and white and kids would go out and do things and we’d watch ‘em. Hey, look here, we’ve discovered the pin hole camera.

I wasn’t there very long but I remember they could move the wall and that’s where you had literary and had all kinds of activities there. That was an experience.

The last Mennonite school I went to was Warwick River, living with Anna Mae & Oliver. We took eight academic subjects a year. We took half a year of science, half a year of health which in the public schools was one year. We did a full year in one half of a year. Bible, of course, was one of our subjects.

I finished the year with a 3.9 grade average and Judy was 4.0 and that just galled Anna Mae. She didn’t think anybody was as smart as her kids.

Alan: Were you and Judy in the same class? She was a little younger wasn’t she?

Stanley: She’s two years younger than I am. She was two years behind me. There were eight of us in the 8th grade. I don’t remember them all but Nevin Steiner was one of them and of course Neven and I never got along because were the only two boys who weren’t related to every other girl in the colony. All the other boys were related to all the girls. I had a heck of a crush on Janet Hertzler. She had this beautiful blonde hair and nice figure but she didn’t have any use for me.

Oh, and the sessions at Aunt Naomi’s were something else. I remember going there one time and he pulled out this box, opened it up and there was this lid. By Golly, it was a record player. No, it was more than that. It had these records you could buy and they had two holes, one in the center and one offset. You could cut a record on it, had a horn that acted as a speaker and you could record and you could play back. They made records on that thing. I remember sitting there with Annabelle and they’re playing, and I mean they were good, and I remember Chester, his hips bobbing while he’s playing the fiddle. The harmonies, the music was just....you didn’t do it at church but you sure did it at home. One last thing on that, Marvin was quite a singer.

Alan: Did he play an instrument or did he just sing?

Stanley: No, Freddie played the guitar. I remember him playing the ukulele too. But Marvin just sang. Marvin, he was quite the jokester. He was always in trouble with somebody. One time he and a couple of other guys in the colony, they took a car, they took a loudspeaker and put it on top of the car and hooked it up to a microphone or system in the car somehow. They drove through the colony with Marvin singing country music with all the gusto he could muster.

Marvin was quite the ladies man. Mama was working with Lerner's Shop in Norfolk and Marvin worked some kind of delivery thing. It was multi-floored and he would make a date with a girl on each floor for the same Saturday night but space them half an hour apart. He'd go pick up the first one. If she didn't want to go where he wanted to go, he dumped her and go get the next one. They all knew it but they still would accept a date with him because he was fun. He was a jokester, you know, and he was he was feisty.

I was surprised at his funeral that all three wives were there. His two ex-wives, that rarely happens.

Alan: Indeed. But there was something about him that just attracted people.

Stanley: And I remember when you all started coming along. Was you and Dale...and your daddy had kind of sense of humor to him to and he was fun and he could make good decisions business wise. He was dedicated to your Mama. Man, I could see how much this man loved his wife, you know. But he would take you or Dale, flip you in the air and catch you by your heels in front of Grandma. And she was about to have a heart attack.

"Johnny, you gonna kill that child," she'd holler.

"Oh Mama," your Daddy says, "They break a leg? So what? Get up, fix it." And keep going. He didn't baby you.

One of the things I'd wished, I guess, I remember I came over with Mama for a Keffer reunion that ya'll had at Christmas time or something and I had brought some Youth Challenge brochures with me and had been working at Youth Challenge for a long time by that time, 'cause I was married to Betsy, married her two years after I started working at Youth Challenge and I worked there for 27 years. They ordained me and everything. Johnny looked at the brochure and I said "This is what I'm doing with my life." And he looked up at me in shock and he said "Stanly, none of us ever knew anything about this."

See, I'd been divorced and remarried. I had been an alcoholic. And Mama said "Johnny won't have anything to do with you because you can't seem to stay with one woman". Man, I never divorced anybody. They divorced me. I was trying to keep it together. But when you told me that your experience and what you went through, you know that's...that's hard man. Because if you've been through that experience, I mean, death

and divorce carry the same stress points. Two times? Man, I tell you, that almost destroyed me. Actually, the 2nd time brought me back to God. That's where I finally gave up and I was single for nine years before Betsy and I got together.

Alan: How long have y'all been married now?

Stanley: Let's see, I got married in 87, so it's 34 years.

Alan: Quite a while.

Stanley: I'd say that's a keeper.

Alan: What was your impression of my mother?

Stanley: Of your mother.. very quiet. A very sweet. Aunt Dana was very quiet but it was like she'd never lose it with you kids. My impression of her was a very nurturing person. And very dedicated to her husband. But also, she, like she didn't look at world through rose colored glasses. She saw it for what it was, but she did not let it rule who she was. Just a very kind person that's how I saw your mom.

And of course after the last time I lived with grandma when I was out of touch with the area and one of the big regrets is that I didn't keep in touch with my family but I didn't manage.

Alan: Grow growing up my I knew I had a cousin Stanley and my impression of him was that he was tall and in the army somewhere in Washington state and I grew up with that in my mind until we became adults and we became acquainted.

Stanley: Yeah my well my first assignment, first Air Force assignment, I was 17, was in Washington state in a little town, Colville. There was a radar site 22 1/2 miles from town on top of the mountain. And that it was supposedly 8 air miles for 22 road miles, just south of Canada. Very interesting place. The town was like 3800 people, still is. It was like, you know, Western movies when a person first comes into town everybody looks at him suspiciously? Stranger in town? That's kind of what it was. I was used to southern style, you greet a person...

You know my idea, my definition of Southern hospitality was this joke I heard some years ago.

Two men standing on street corner and they're talking. Third man comes up. The two stop, "Well Bill, How you doing uh-huh? How's your family then? And that daughter of yours?" and they're talkin' so sweet and nice..."Ok Bill, we see you later, uh huh, you take care of yourself, yeah?" And when he's gone one turns to the other and says "you know I never could stand that man."

Alan: There's a lot of truth in that.

Stanley: So you you're supposed to be genteel. But out there, nah, nobody'd talk to me for six months. My step-dad, when I think about him, treated me like his own son and that meant he would discipline me as his own son. He was too heavy handed, but every time he disciplined me, I needed it. You know, I needed some correction but he taught me also by example. One was always "Yes, ma'am, No, ma'am, Yes, Sir, no, Sir." Anybody 10 years older than you are. And he did it. And Mrs. Jones was Mrs. Jones, and Mr. Jones was Mr. Jones, I don't care if she was the Jolly Green Giant or black as the ace of spades or white as sheet. I never once heard him call an older black person Uncle so & so Aunt so & so, it was Mr or Mrs. from him. He's from Rocky Mount, NC, but he spent a lot of his time traveling the world. From him and from the Mennonite Church I learned not to be prejudice. I know not to be that way.

My step dad told me, said, "Stanley, always take a man just as he is as a person as they are until they prove themselves to be otherwise. Treat them well until they prove themselves not to be. And that was the way I lived my life, you know. Another one of his, "Stanley, you're not always gonna like the job you have but if it's important, if your job is putting food on your table, clothes on your family's back and a roof overhead, do it your best. This is a man with a third grade education. Yeah, I'm saying it's just work. You always do your best at your work or hard at it because someday you might get a job you like and the way you've been working at the job you have that you didn't like, it's the way you gonna work at the new place. So if you got good work habits, you'll carry good work habits. You got bad work habits you gonna take bad work habits into that. So do your best always. If you're not the best, be one of 'em. He wasn't about superiority or anything, just always give respect. I always give respect.

The question somebody might ask, why didn't I keep in touch with families? I moved 17 times in 20 years in the Air Force. Remember now I bounced from pillar to post as a child. When I came into a different environment, I had to change. I had to learn how to adapt to that environment, and so it became a habit. When I left an environment and going into another one, I left that other one behind.

And I'm adapted to where I am and the people I'm around, which served me well in the military because too many people would come from one organization to come to a new one and they didn't like the way something goes and say "Boy, back in my old place you did such and such and such." I never did that.

Alan: Yeah, not what anybody wants to hear.

Stanley: No. You adapt and you do your best. So I did, and when people asked me about my background, I'd say, well, as a child and living with my Grandma and she's a Mennonite

so I got a lot of cousins and I guess Uncles praying for my lost soul while I'm in the military 'cause I was under the impression that military people were rejected and couldn't go to heaven, you know. But I still love the faith in the people. And I think it was because you could change and it was accepted because you really believed God could make a difference in a person's life.

Alan: And does.

Stanley: Right.

Alan: Well I gotta run Stanley. I got some things to take care of and you have given me more than enough to chew on here now. I'm sure I'll be calling you back and asking some more questions, and if you think of any more stories give me a holler. I'll reach out and send it to you for approval before we put it in in the book.

Stanley: All right. Love you, man. We don't show it very much but I appreciate you Alan. I love your way of raising controversy in discussions on Facebook so I would let it go just so far and then I'd have to bring in the scripture.

Alan: That's not fair, you know.

Stanley: You know I have to say, that's where my ethics come from. You know that's my convictions and I told the guys, "Look. Ultimately you really can't prove the existence of God, except for what the Bible says about Him. So it comes down to this. He believed the Bible by faith, which by the way comes from God according to the Bible. So therefore, if you really believe in the Bible and you believe this bit that God spoke it and it happened. Trust me, you got faith because that's the power to look past that which I see, yeah. It becomes your life. That was the thing I got from the Anabaptist theology growing up, is that our faith is not just a Sunday thing. That the faith is supposed to govern our entire life, business and everything.

Be blessed, take care and happy New Year.

Alan: And to you, Sir.

Stanley: Actually, don't take care. Just go with God and you won't have to take care.

Alan: There you go.

Stanley: Yeah, hey how's that relationship going?

Alan: With my wife?

Stanley: Oh, you re-married?

Alan: I did.

Stanley: I didn't know that, congratulations my friend.

Alan: Actually, she's a widow. She was working for me and she was the widow of one of my cousins, one of Ivan Miller sons, and so we've kind of known each other for a long, long time, and we seem to think alike and do alike and we were both going through the same sorrows of having lost a mate, and that was helpful and, well, you know what? We're getting older. Let's just do it. So we did, and it's been nice.

Stanley: That's awesome. That's awesome, I'm very happy for you bro.

Alan: I really have a good Christian woman.

Stanley: That's good.

Alan: One of our daughters is a missionary or getting ready to be a missionary. Life is strange and does some strange things sometimes, but so far it's still here and I'm looking forward to waking up every morning.

Stanley: There you go. Be blessed.

Alan: You too.

Stanley: Talk to you soon.