

James “Harold” Bergey, Jr
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Harold: ...are doing the Pick Your Own now, you can go back a generation or two, they started out, they were far more pounds or tons of strawberries, but then they got shipped, you know, picked and shipped. But, we'll see how long the old Pick Your Own thing lasts. They're...in some ways, that is also fading.

Alan: Really?

Harold: Just because there are fewer who have the daylight time. Many families, mom and dad, are employed and can't just run off to the strawberry patch. Of course, that's why Saturdays and Sundays are so big.

Alan: Did I ask you last time, and I may have, because my memory is getting worse and worse, if Rose ever felt like an outsider coming in from the outside?

Harold: Bless her heart, she was typical Rose, I guess. She had a way of getting along with people, you know, before she moved here and was approached, I guess, initially by Chester Mast, and then Brother Wenger brought her on board and was very kind to her, but he did ask that she wear a covering, and that is not something she had done in her lifetime. Certainly, there were elders like her aunts, for example, wore the covering up in Pennsylvania, but not Rose. Eh, little things like that, but for the most part, I think she felt pretty widely accepted. You know that Francis and Edna gave us a place to live the first year.

Alan: I didn't know that.

Harold: Yeah, it was Rodney's.

Alan: Grandma's house?

Harold: No, the trailer. Actually, it was only a year or so, but still, you know, to be generously accepted by Francis Miller was a pretty good gig. But, yeah, so that's perhaps a long answer, but I would say, generally speaking, Rose felt accepted. We explored it a couple of times, but I wish we had had some way to help Rose connect with her precious roots in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, too. And, you know, other than just visits, we never could pull that off. I even considered a pastorate in Pennsylvania at one time, and she, a teaching job there, although the particular one she was looking at, turned out, they weren't open. So, anyway, it never happened.

Alan: I was curious, and it seems to be a generational thing, because the generation before, everybody I interviewed who moved into the community, who married into the community, said they always felt like an outsider. Whereas the next, our

generation, the women more or less felt pretty comfortable here.

Harold: Yeah, Do you think Bishop Kramer would have had anything to do with that in the early '50s?

Alan: He may have had something to do with that.

Harold: I mean, I've heard some people, my parents' generation, Gordon Wenger, for example, would just be one example of that. Talk with deep dissatisfaction about the way Kramer employed his understanding of what it meant to be nonconformist and all that went with that. Dress, for example, was just way, way tough.

Alan: He left the Amish church because he didn't think that the Amish preached a born-again experience. And he wanted that. That's why he left, but then I don't think he ever got away from the rules he grew up with. You know, at the time. I couldn't understand it. Of course, I didn't care. I was a kid. I'd hear my parents talk and hear stories later. But then reading the history and where he came from, it becomes a lot more understandable why he felt the way he did and how he acted.

Harold: Maybe in prior years, Kempsville Mennonite now, the Beachy Amish earlier, have at different times experienced this same thing. Some ministers there that, on the one hand just like Kramer, felt very strongly about the born-again experience. But in terms of worldliness, there was still a strong guidance, I guess, in terms of abstaining from, well, I don't think it's computers anymore, but certainly TV and radio maybe to some extent and certain kinds of dress and et cetera.

Alan: One other thing that I had never even thought about until I was talking to Roy Winger's children...was your dad a deacon?

Harold: He was.

Alan: When you were a child?

Harold: He was. Well, I was something like, I'm going to say, maybe 1965 or something like that. So not all of my childhood life. A good part of it, yeah. I mean, I'm sure I was a teenager, probably a young teenager.

Alan: Did that ever cause you any problems or feelings of not fitting in or being an outsider or anything negative?

Harold: Looking back, I would say I think that was fairly minor. So I'd have to say maybe yes in a very... but more of it had to do with Dad's personal, you know, like your father. I mean, he was always frugal in spending money for his stuff. Not a matter of, you know, how much was in the bank or whatever, but it was just in terms of the cars he bought or put into his house or whatever. And, I suppose that had

something to do with him wearing a plain coat until I was an adult, 20 or early 20s, that he abandoned that. So a little bit, but not anything that put me under or anything like that. It wasn't something that caused me grief or anxiety in any significant way. Just maybe a little bit of awkwardness as some of my friends didn't understand. Well, for example, I didn't wear a tie until I was like upper teens. You know, that was probably because my parents had just sort of looked askance on that a bit, but it wasn't long until Dad was wearing a tie.

Alan: Well, even if there would have been a few years earlier, but not many, when Dale and I got our first suits, we questioned, are we going to get plain coats or lay down lapels? And we knew if we got laid down lapels, we were going to wear a tie. We were going to be one of the two. And we got lay down lapels.

Harold: Yeah, interesting.

Alan: And the reason, because I had never considered it because I'd never been in that role. The Roy Wenger children that I've talked to, Lois, Lowell, and I can't remember the older one.

Harold: Yeah, I have a little trouble remembering. I mean, certainly I remember Mary Lois and Lowell the best.

Alan: Ruth Marie was the other one that I've talked to, expressed that they always felt a little outcast, primarily because Roy was a deacon. And the way one of them expressed it was...we'd get on the bus in the morning, and the night before he had to go visit a family to remonstrate with them about something they were not doing correctly. And this may have been during the Kramer era too. And Roy, that family was particularly plain.

Harold: Right, right.

Alan: In fact, even in the early pictures when they were teenagers, before the Virginia Conference, long before Kramer came along, began enforcing the plain dress, the early settlers here wore all kinds, you know, ties, coats, open collars, whatever. But in all the pictures with the Wengers in them, they had plain coats on. Even in groups that nobody else did, you could pick out Roy or Powell very easily. Well, anyway, and they just felt like everybody else was talking about them because their daddy had to go talk to somebody's parents last night, and they're whispering about it. And I don't remember any of that ever happening. But anyway, it was just funny. You started first as an assistant to Robert Mast as a pastor? What year would that have been?

Harold: 1989.

Alan: How did that come about? Did you feel called? I know they didn't have a lot.

Harold: Right, right. It was just a bit awkward, you know, because it initially came about with Robert Mast. He caught me working, I was on a tractor at the Schloss Farm back here, and Robert stopped me, but I understand that also at the same time was contacting Merlin Miller and Chester Mast and asking the three of us in a time of both his and Phil's disability, Phil more physical and Robert more emotional, mental, if we could lead worship some Sundays and just assist the pastors. It didn't have a lot of...it certainly didn't have a large job description or whatever, but can you help us out? So that's how it started.

Alan: So all three of you were...

Harold: At that point, all three of us, and I think perhaps I've told you before, I don't want to run over this again and again, but I've often thought about what, if anything, I might have done differently in the next steps, but somehow I emerged as the one who might transition from that to assistant pastor. And that eventually found its way through to a congregational vote and so on without too much trouble, although I think Chester and, I've never really discussed this with him, but Chester and Merlin might have felt, might have wondered a bit, well, how did Harold get to be the chosen one here? And I really can't even answer that for sure. I guess maybe the one thing that Robert Mast would have known keenly, because he was at that time right there in Harrisonburg with me, I was youth secretary or youth pastor for Virginia Mennonite Conference. So I'd had that experience for a number of years even before we moved down here. That's the beginning.

Alan: When did Phil retire?

Harold: That is a good question.

Alan: Because you said physical. His was the Alzheimer's?

Harold: Well, whatever his dementia was, I don't know if it was classic Alzheimer's or not, but it was a dementia that caused him to operate differently than what most of us had known him for many years and to speak and act differently and so on. So I think that maybe what precipitated that was when Addona Nissly came in the second year following Robert to be lead pastor and I was assistant pastor under Addona.

Alan: What year would that have been?

Harold: 1990.

Alan: Okay, so it wasn't very long after that then.

Harold: Right, right. Phil, at that point, I think still had all or most of his capabilities and was often during that year or two, the early 90s, called on as a substitute pastor for

Methodist Church down there. What's the one that's right next to the development your dad did on...

Alan: Good Hope. Good Hope on Benefit Rd? Yeah, right beside Homestead. It's Good Hope.

Harold: Yeah, Good Hope.

Alan: That's where Linda and I were married.

Harold: Really?

Alan: We were both living there in that subdivision at the time and we both went to church there.

Harold: Well, anyway, Phil was...what was his name, the guy who was pastor there then, Mark Christian, does that ring a bell?

Alan: I knew Mark. He may have been there at that time, because we were there in the 70s, so it was before we were married before Mark, but I knew Mark after that, so yeah, he would have been there.

Harold: Okay, that would have been one example. Another one was the church on Kempsville Road, something Messiah. It was originally Episcopal Church, but Episcopal Church was too a far stretch for them, and Phil would be called on to preach there. And there are others too. I remember those two, and both of those pastors thought very highly of him.

Alan: When Addona was here, you were the assistant.

Harold: Correct.

Alan: Were Chester or Merlin still involved in any way?

Harold: Well, involved certainly. I think Chester would have had some capacity, like teaching Sunday school, that sort of thing. Can't remember for sure, but I think Merlin would have been involved with some prison ministry with my dad at that time.

Alan: How long was Addona here, and did you step up to become lead pastor when he left?

Harold: I did, and again, that involved, I'm not sure when I got licensed, but I guess I was licensed in 1989 and the license continued in 1991, and it wasn't but a year or so until I was ordained.

Alan: What was the most difficult thing you found about being a pastor in a church you grew up in?

Harold: What was difficult was that I was very naive in coming into that kind of setting, and what I was naive about was that a large portion of the Mennonite church, maybe in particular Virginia Conference, were beginning to move away from having the good old boy from home be the called pastor, but instead looking for a seminary-trained pastor with experience and so on, and I didn't realize how many implications that had.

Well, just one example: when we had an interim pastor for one year, the first year that I had stepped down, that would have been 2007, I guess. All of a sudden it was about...and Phil had to do this too...about my exiting, the call for me to exit. Well, a good example, you would understand this because you know the history here...all of a sudden now I'm forgetting a first name. This would have been my, and I guess in some ways your, Aunt Helen...her mother was, what was her first name? Dickerson?

Alan: Sylvia.

Harold: Sylvia, thank you, yes. See you're a step ahead of me there. So, you know, Donnie was my friend, my peer, you know, same Sunday school class, Bible school, et cetera, and the same age. So when Donnie drowned, I think without ever saying it explicitly, I think I kind of became the son that she had lost. At least we had a good rapport, you know, for all the years after that, and later as pastor, you know, had many visits with her and that kind of thing. The day she died, Shirley (Castellow) was with her, and Shirley called me to come over, and already, what was his name, Meador?

Alan: Jim Meador.

Harold: Yeah, Jim Meador was here, and so I did, you know, without giving much thought to anything except what I just told you about the long friendship and connection and that kind of thing. Well, you know, included in that was a conversation about would you have some kind of eulogy, and my standard response was something like, you know, I'm not in charge of conducting funerals, but, yes, I'd be glad to say a few words. Jim Meador wasn't happy about that. Then having served seven years in an oversight capacity for seven other congregations following that, I realized the best thing you could do before you exit a pastorate is work with your council in having a probably written understanding about what your role will be or will not be as the new pastor or interim pastor comes in. We never had that with Jim Meador, and it was just really an unnecessary tension.

His wife would...I saw this happen...look over and, you announce to Jim that I was present the few Sundays that I did show up for whatever reason, something

special, and I said, this is ridiculous. But, nevertheless, I've worked with some other pastors in other congregations where, if the interim pastor did gripe, the counsel could pull out...This is our understanding about what we have here, and, you know, just chill, you know.

Alan: And perhaps solve it before it ever happens.

Harold: Yeah, exactly. So that was the most difficult thing. It was actually post-pastorate, but, you know, okay, so this is the thanks I get for serving the church as pastor, that the interim guy that comes in takes offense.

Alan: Was Merlin the assistant pastor at some point during this?

Harold: Yeah.

Alan: When did that happen?

Harold: That would have been very shortly after Addona went to Deep Creek then. Addona was at Deep Creek for a number of years following that. Following his time at Mount Pleasant. Well, let's just say 1993,1994, something like that.

Alan: More in the early 90s.

Harold: Yeah, early 90s.

Alan: And he was here how long?

Harold: Merlin? I think he was four years in that capacity.

Alan: Where did he go when he left here? Did he go to Landstown?

Harold: Later, but not initially. Initially he and my brother Daniel, Daniel and Dorcas and Merlin and Linda were starting, they had a name for that church. It was...*(Dove Fellowship)*

Alan: Yeah, I wasn't even aware that it ever happened until Kelly was telling me about it.

Harold: Okay, yeah, she would have known about that, right.

Alan: I think she and Brent went there.

Harold: Perhaps, perhaps, I didn't remember that.

Alan: Didn't Dini Shahini also go there? That was the first time I'd ever heard about it

when we were in Albania last year. Because Dini was talking about it, they went because your folks went because...

Harold: Well, mom and dad definitely did attend there.

Alan: And Dini Shahini's were going where were your mom and dad went. The admiration he had for your dad is just immense.

Harold: Yeah, well, I always appreciated that. He did see dad pretty much like dad was, you know. But anyway, so that's where Merlin went. And then Keith came on. A year or so later. Interesting, he's back on now as associate pastor. But I would say, well, I think Keith also was four or five years.

Alan: Did he leave before you did, or was that simultaneous?

Harold: No, he left before I did.

Alan: Merlin did, but Keith was, no, Keith didn't leave until after Sam left.

Harold: Well, yeah, well, since you asked, I want to be completely graceful here and recognize that I, too, made many mistakes. But after Meador, he was here for what, a year?

Alan: A year, I think.

Harold: Yeah, he might have extended that a little bit.

Alan: Can we hold that thought and back up one little teeny bit? Because Meador didn't come here until you had resigned, right?

Harold: Correct, right.

Alan: And Keith was still here then at that time, or had he...

Harold: Yes, I can't tell you for sure if at the time I left, if Keith still had a licensed assignment or not.

Alan: I don't remember. Meador was here when we came back. To back up to that again, what was the reason for you leaving?

Harold: I think, and again, I'll never be sure this was a call from heaven or anything, but I think for me it was a combination of having felt I had done my best and had reached some, approached some goals where I got stymied, in particular, and I made many mistakes here, but moving the church and the school to one location up here.

Actually, in 2004, some of us had a dream that the school would look very much like it does now, and that would include recreation availabilities, recreation space availability beyond the school, a church or maybe several, using the facility, and I think for understandable reasons that failed. Some people asked me, well, okay, why can't you just kick in again now and go forward. But that, coupled with the fact that... see, it was 2005 that Bergeys Dairy Farm collapsed. Perhaps you know this or I've told you this before, I don't know, but mom and dad had looked to rental income on the property here as their basically social security supplement, and they didn't have it.

So I did, along with some of my siblings, felt some obligation, compulsion that this was a time we needed to step in and do something. So those two combined, I guess, the failure of 2004 and then the demise of Bergeys Dairy.

Alan: Okay, and Jim was hired just for one year or for whatever the short time he was here. He didn't expect it to be a long-term sinecure?

Harold: Well, that was certainly the way he was hired, but at the same time, he was unemployed as a pastor when he was hired. Although he'd had a pastorate previously, at least it seemed to me, even though I was outside of the loop a little bit there, that it wasn't hard for him to make some noises that he'd be open to stay longer. The church stuck with, whatever it was, a year, year and a half arrangement. But then at this point, Sam and Keith and Jim Meador all kind of come together.

Alan: How did that happen?

Harold: Well, I think even though I was on the outside, I think I have a pretty good understanding of what happened. So following Meador, the search committee, pastoral search committee, had made several contacts, you know, I don't, maybe all over the...

Alan: Who was on that committee, do you know?

Harold: Robert Mast, chaired it. I can't name all the people on the committee.

Alan: It'll be in the minutes.

Harold: There was a candidate who was interested in Mount Pleasant. He had made a quiet visit here, as I understand it. I still was not attending here at Mount Pleasant at that time, but he had made an initial visit that didn't introduce him to the whole congregation. And he, along with the search committee, had reached a point where he was ready to come for that trial sermon, and more generally and more widely meeting the congregation...still not voted in or anything. But at the same time, Keith and Sam together had said, you know, the committee's searching, and

we would be glad to take the assignment together, the two of us. I think, again, definitely strongly preferring the homeboys, it sort of left that guy hanging, the candidate who was ready to come, and basically nodded to Sam and to Keith that they would be delighted about that, even though, again, there hadn't been a vote yet. But as far as the committee was concerned, they were thrilled about this. And so that's how first the...

Alan: Was Sam still at New Life then, or had he left New Life?

Harold: Well, he certainly had contacts with New Life. I think, you know, he was pastor of one of the New Life churches. I think he had already discontinued that. Better not quote me on there because I'm not absolutely sure. But at any rate, whenever he was free enough..

Alan: I've already interviewed Sam, by the way. I was going to talk to him again, but...

Harold: It depends on who you ask as to how well that went initially when Keith and Sam were together. Maybe I'll just leave it there.

Alan: No, no, go ahead.

Harold: Well, my observation was that the idea of having Keith's place of business be the only place where you could access the pastor directly, face-to-face...initially, they weren't keeping any pastoral hours in the church. So, you know, that was awkward for any number of people. Maybe not everyone, but, you know, who wants a confessionary or whatever in the insurance business location?

But there would have been some other things as well. But at some point, Keith moved out of that situation. Maybe you already know about...well, actually, maybe Keith didn't move out of that situation until Sam said he was leaving.

Alan: So it was six years later?

Harold: More or less, yeah, something like that. I'm actually not sure about when Keith left.

Alan: I haven't talked to Keith yet. And I'm fuzzy in my own mind.

Harold: Keith stay on a little bit, or who went first?

Alan: When I talked to Sam, he didn't remember. He just went through and said, well, you know, he resigned because they had the vote, and it was 50-50, and he knew he couldn't remain with that kind of stuff. So he resigned.

Harold: Sure, and that's understandable.

Alan: How involved were you in the original setting up of Landstown? Were you involved in that at all? And what was the impetus for doing that?

Harold: To start with, I would not have been involved with the inception. Do you know what year that was?

Alan: 1978, '79.

Harold: Yeah, I guess just, you know, encouragement, support. I knew everybody who was involved initially in that, Ray and Debbie Bergey and the Zooks, Dave and Pauline.

Alan: I interviewed him yesterday.

Harold: So, yeah, I would have been much more involved later when Noah Staltsfus was the pastor there.

Alan: What was the reason that..from my understanding from just reading history and talking to some other people, and to Dave Zook, the Virginia Conference at that time was really strong on founding new churches.

Harold: That's true.

Alan: And that that was one of the pushes and that Harold (Buckwalter) was asked to head it up. But what was the reason that he left there?

Harold: As far as I know, the congregation...I don't know if it was ever done in an official vote or anything like that. Maybe so, maybe not. But the congregation was expressing, the small congregation was expressing a lot of displeasure with how Harold was giving leadership at that time. I'm pretty sure some of it was undeserved, but nevertheless, that is the case. Harold was...it was a pretty hard time for him to have. It wasn't like he was making big bucks or anything like that. Maybe outreach would have been a big one, and of course, I'm not able to say what might have been legitimate complaints and what was really just unrealistic.

Alan: Yeah, Mount Pleasant had not had very good luck with Norview either.

Harold: Yeah, yeah.

Alan: Were you involved with them when Sam was there for the year he was there?

Harold: Just not directly at all, no. I mean, I was in touch enough to hear some things and that kind of thing, but I wasn't really directly involved.

Alan: They left the Virginia Conference long before Mount Pleasant did, right?

Harold: Oh yes, yeah.

Alan: What were the reasons, from your perspective, that they left the Virginia Conference?

Harold: I was in the semi-annual conference assembly when they removed themselves, and I was very upset. I likened it to your parents raise you and feed you and clothe you all in your growing up years, and then rather suddenly you decide, I really don't like those parents. There was a lot of money that went into that project that came through the larger Virginia Conference. In my estimation, they never acknowledged that, I guess, and think, well, I don't think this is true. So the United States Navy and Regent University became the two sources for adding to the fold. Some really wonderful, wonderful Christians. Did you know...

Alan: I don't know anybody over there. Other than Dave Zook and Jerry Miller, that's it. I've never been in the place.

Harold: Anyway, any number of fervent Christians, and maybe a far lesser number that came off the street or whatever, and that suited Noah very much. He was a Methodist pastor before he took this assignment, even though he'd grown up Mennonite. So, you know, it was no problem for him, but neither did he have any Anabaptist loyalty or anything. There was no compulsion or even, not even, in my view, not even a theology that emphasized the Sermon on the Mount or pacifism.

Alan: That's core Anabaptism.

Harold: Well, it is, right, right. And don't hear me saying that Noah was a... in fact, actually, you know, for a couple of years, his wife taught at Mount Pleasant. Noah and his wife and Rose and I got along fine and, you know, often talked, that kind of thing. But that mentality, I think, had more to do, I'm not saying it's all just Noah's fault, but, you know, the people who came in. In fact, there was a Navy officer, ranking officer, who came in, Jim...

Alan: Was he a Captain?

Harold: Yeah.

Alan: I know who you're talking about. I don't remember his name.

Harold: He was on the council later, and he too, you know, a fervent Christian. But I heard him say, prior to the congregation leaving. He was asked the question in a smaller council setting. Well, what kind of obligation does Landstown have to Virginia Mennonite Conference? Jim said, none. Of course, there's a lot of history that came along before he ever became a part of it, but that was his answer, and I think he's very sincere about that.

Alan: Well, how did they get hooked up with, what's the name of the outfit in Harrisonburg? They had a bunch of churches, and Sam was part of it for a while.

Harold: Oh, yeah. Well, that's right.

Alan: I don't remember their name yet. I don't know why.

Harold: And that's what Sam was a part of, too. It's another story, but....

Alan: Oh. We're a mess. Anyway, we both know who we're talking about. How did they get hooked up with them?

Harold: This is the weirdest thing. When they left Virginia Conference, they determined that they didn't want to be non-affiliated. Gerald Martin is the...

Alan: Gerald Martin...Cornerstone!

Harold: Yeah, exactly. Thank you. Okay. We each contributed a part. So, Cornerstone was their choice. It took a while. I mean, it was a process, but... so, then, you know, there were multiple visits by Gerald Martin, but their next pastor, and it might have been in that... I don't know exactly when Sam was there.

Alan: I don't think he had anything to do with it. I think it was after Sam.

Harold: Yeah. It wasn't long until they had a Cornerstone-supplied pastor, and that's been the case ever since.

Alan: In fact, they said that when they hired Sam, they sent a delegation, and I guess Dave (Zook) was among them, to go visit Gerald Martin to ask his advice. He told them, that he was too independent and would, how do you put it, kick over the traces of authority. You know, he was just...

Harold: Yeah, right. And you know who the authority was. It was Gerald. It was Gerald. Yeah. So, please don't write this down, but this is...

Alan: With this history, I consider it's going to be 1,500 pages long at least. And this section of it is a small part of it, but I want it to be complete and dispassionate without pointing any fingers, but just to explain here is what happened and the personalities involved. I'm not looking to grind an axe.

Harold: Well, yeah, and this is more like a personal, private observation, just like the answer that the Zooks got from Gerald Martin. You know, for everyone with an opinion like Gerald's, there would probably be ten that would say, Sam's a wonderful preacher. So, while I was still pastor, Sam had left Cornerstone, and that's when he and Bev first moved back here to, you know, Wenger Rd. Sam

came to me... Well, I'll just insert this real quick.

So, you know, James's good friend was Dave Wright, who was later the idol of New York Mets.

Alan: He was also the nephew of Linda's best friend.

Harold: Really? Okay. That's cool. Yeah. Well, yeah, fine folks. But anyway, for some reason in that move from Harrisonburg, Sam thought of my boys, which was fine, and Dave Wright happened to be playing volleyball on our front yard when Sam came over to ask my boys if they'd help unload his stuff. Anyway, James to this day just laughs that Dave exited himself appropriately, I guess. He was here to play volleyball, not to get into furniture moving.

Jjust weeks later, Sam came to me and talked about how inappropriately and unkindly Gerald Martin had been to him. And Sam said at that time, and I knew some of the other guys too, but it was seven or eight promising young preachers who Mr. Martin had recruited, and in some cases trained, and then rejected for whatever... they didn't please him. These guys were really hurt, and for a while they had a regular lament session.

I happened to be very, very disappointed when later I heard, of course, not mentioning the exact name, but Sam from the pulpit talking about how unkindly he had been treated by the former pastor, and I'm still not sure why he felt it was important to tell the whole congregation about that. But the more troubling thing for me is I saw some behaviors in Sam that seemed to me to be very much like Gerald Martin. And so, you know, there you go. I'm not perfect. I've made a lot of mistakes in my life, and I wish I had shut my mouth sometimes. But it was unfortunate, and it is true.

Gerald actually...the Virginia Conference, the last executive, what do we call him? Executive something. Anyway, he was the CEO of the conference, and in his evaluation of Gerald Martin...there were, again, a number of small congregations that had been started in Virginia Conference, all of them probably less than 100 members, and for whatever reasons decided to join with Cornerstone. I think as Cornerstone was itself breaking away from Virginia Conference. So the executive director said, you know, Gerald has actually confiscated Virginia Conference property. He didn't just, in some formal fashion, say you're now a church of Cornerstone. You know, this property is ours now. Everybody was too kind or naive, one or the other, to contest that. So that did happen several times, where a lot of Virginia Conference money had gone into starting that church, but it wasn't theirs anymore.

Alan: So they're hierarchical enough that the church property actually belongs to Cornerstone?

Harold: Well, I don't know if that was across the board or just some unique situations. I'm not sure about that. There was a church in Elkton that I know for sure that happened, but I don't know how many others.

Alan: So they're not affiliated with the Mennonites at all anymore?

Harold: Depends on which Mennonites.

Alan: They're not affiliated with Virginia Conference?

Harold: Definitely not affiliated with Virginia Conference, not affiliated with MCUSA or any number... I mean, if they are affiliated, it's some kind of group that has Anabaptist in its name, but in my estimation anyway, not much more than that.

Gerald's still living, but he's, I think, retired now. I don't think there was anybody following him who was as assertive and dominating as Gerald himself was. So, maybe things are better now, more Christ-like.

Alan: Well, they couldn't be too Anabaptists if, you know, I mean, we ran into this at Mount Pleasant also just because of the community we live in, but true Anabaptists would be non-resistant, otherwise it's not Anabaptist in my eyes. It doesn't fit the definition anymore. It might still be Christian, but it's not Anabaptist.

Harold: Which reminds me, I'm deviating a little bit, and then I've got to stop rambling. So there is a worldwide organization now that's just in its beginning stages. It's called Anabaptist World. It's basically a weekly publication that gives little excerpts, little stories of Anabaptists in every country around the globe. So there's a small fee to join, but they're soliciting members now. You can check it out. You might be interested.

Alan: I used to get Mennonite Weekly. Was it Mennonite Monthly or something? .

Harold: Mennonite Weekly Review Well, there was a newspaper Mennonite Weekly Review. Is that what you're...

Alan: It could be. I used to get it for several years, and then I've dropped... I don't know why I did now. And I've gotten some advertisements in the mail from this Mennonite... Anabaptist World and I've thought about signing up for it, but I just haven't yet.

Harold: The leadership is not the same people that were involved with Mennonite...What did we say it was? Mennonite Weekly Review?

Alan: Weekly Review or Monthly Review or something.

Harold: But, you know, some of the stories are the same. I mean, the type of stories.

Alan: Who are the powers at Lansdtown? Is it Dave (Zook) and Jerry (Miller)? Because they're the original members left.

Harold: You know, I'm not sure I can answer that. I don't know. I certainly see a lot of good things happening in that congregation.

Alan: One of the best things is that Dennis Miller has rededicated his life to the Lord and has become a firm attender and involved.

Harold: Wow. By the way, I got to tell Sharon Kephart-Gowdy this. I didn't get to tell Richard Sunday. But I was so moved by Richard and Diane. Their comments. And I thought about how pleased Jerry Kephart would be. I'm not able to say whether he was watching or not. But I know he'd be pleased. And then Sharon said, and her mother too. But anyway, that was just, for me, it was a wonderful thing. Wonderful thing to see that.

Alan: How much influence do you think it had on some of Sam's problems at the church...the fact that he was with New Life for seven years or six years before he came here.

Kelly and Brent went to New Life. And there's somebody that went to church with them, got married, and we were invited to the wedding because he was a friend of Maggie's and Maggie was in the wedding. At the reception they put us with the old people who happened to be the deacons and the preacher's wife from New Life. So I took the opportunity to ask them how they were organized. Who has the power? Who does what? Who does this? And I was just amazed to find out they have no members. They don't have a membership role. You come, you pay your money. But the church is run by the board. Period. Who are self-appointed.

Harold: Self-appointed?

Alan: Self-appointed. If one of them leaves, the board picks a replacement. It doesn't go to the congregation. The congregation has no say. And I, because I couldn't believe it, I kept...Wait a minute, congregation, none whatsoever? The response was, we are ordained by God.

Harold: Now, so this is one group that manages all of the...

Alan: Each congregation.

Harold: Oh, each congregation.

Alan: Now, this New Life is on Johnstown Road, they split away. Apparently at New

Life, all churches have these problems. We're all coming together to split apart.

Harold: Well, my brother is one of those too. Dan was originally a member of that church, but no longer, even though he still has, I think he still has New Life in the name down there in Coinjock. But anyway.

Alan: I was just amazed. How different is that? You know, Sam coming out of an organization that is ruled by the preacher and a board who are generally, at least from what I've seen from these people, pretty subordinate to the preacher...and comes to another situation where at one time was ruled by bishops, but over the century, the power has devolved to the congregation and this congregation has been there so long that, you know, the grassroots has got to be pleased or it doesn't happen. And he came in thinking, well, no, you know. And it struck me again when I was talking to him that he mentioned that Mount Pleasant's were not followers. He thought he was free to run it. You know, he would say something and it wouldn't happen. Well, between that and his absolute lack of empathy. I mean, Sam, he is a great preacher and a great evangelist, but his perception of others is severely lacking.

Harold: I've got to hand it to Sam. A couple of...well, one of them was my horse accident. You know, I was in the hospital just overnight. So it wasn't like a life or death tragedy. But, you know, Sam came to see me and there have been a couple of other occasions where, certainly Rose's death, where he extended his sympathy. So I just have to acknowledge that. He's very, very kind to me in some of those situations. So I think you've hit on one, the kind of the dominant leader that, you know, tells everybody else what to do.

Alan: Which could also explain some origins of differences with Gerald.

Alan: Yeah, right, right, exactly. I won't go on and on about that. The other is that, you know, those who maybe knew Sam better than many and would quickly acknowledge him as a gifted evangelist, and, of course, preaching could go in. That's basically how the Shahinis' came to the Lord, Dini in particular. But the Bible designates between evangelists and pastors. There are two different assignments.

Alan: Real life would.

Harold: Yeah, I think that was always another factor too. To Sam's delight, if he could jet off to Indonesia, you know, in the midst of a congregational crisis or something like that. He had to be on the move and moving around. Bev, bless her heart. I think she's pleased to see him at what he enjoys and feels most gifted.

Alan: Yeah, she is. In fact, he said that when he first started talking about coming to Mount Pleasant, that she told him, "don't do it, don't do it, don't do it. I know you,

I know them, it won't work. Don't do it, don't do it.” And she kept telling him, don't do it. And when he ran into problems, he said he was fussing to her about it one night when they were laying in bed and she looked at him and said, I told you so.

Harold: I can totally agree. I've become so impressed with Bev. She's just amazing. Yeah, so I would say those two things. And can you say either of those are a sin?

Alan: No. Well, but they're just lackings. And all of us have different gifts and all of us have different blind spots.

Harold: Yeah, yeah. I've certainly found too many of mine along the way over the last 50 years.

Alan: I'll tell you one thing that I have found during all these interviews, which is over 40 now, of Mennonites and just people in the community. The people who have long Mennonite backgrounds are much more self-effacing and try to be, well, you know, there's two sides to this. You know, the humility angle, that old Amish... you can't stick your head above the level there, you know, you gotta be humble down here. Whereas the folks who don't have that are much more...

Harold: Assertive?

Alan: Assertive or covering themselves with glory.

Harold: Yeah, ok. Well in a little bit I've got to get back to work here. Is there something else that...

Alan: One more thing real quick. Deep Creek, when it closed down over there, I understand it closed down simply because they ran out of members. Everybody left Deep Creek and it was done. Kenny Kurtz, Dave Zook, our Dave Zook, and somebody else, it's Brown, were the trustees and wanted to sell the building. Do you know anything about that whole transaction thing there?

Harold: Well, I know something about it. Robert Mast... I was very closely involved with him at that point, would have understood the district council to be responsible for its next step. And I'm not sure how Ken and Dave were....were they involved with that understanding the district council had...or had they already maybe attempted some efforts at selling the property or whatever?

Alan; They had somebody who wanted to buy it. The Methodist preacher down here who split off and was renting the church wanted to buy it.

Harold: Oh, who was that... Mount Pleasant Methodist. Again, I can't say his name. I know who you're talking about. Don't know that I was aware that he had

expressed that he wanted to buy it, but...

Alan: I think that as far as it got, I don't think they ever named a number or anything like that.

Harold: If the district was pulling something out from under them, I feel badly about that. I wouldn't have been aware that that was... that that was happening. I was pastor when Mount Pleasant welcomed back into membership a number of people whose membership had...including the Kurtzes and the Zooks who had been members at Deep Creek. So I'm...I'm not sure if my... well, I say my... mine and Robert's conversation would have been within the district council. Whoever was on the council.

Alan: I interviewed Kenny, but we didn't cover this, but I'm going to go talk to him again. From Dave's perspective, they wanted to sell the church and he said Brother Phil wanted to donate the church to the Church in Newport News, .

Harold: Right, right. Calvary.

Alan: And they opposed it, so they were fired and just put off to the side. And he thinks it's because Brother Phil was going senile. I'm going to talk to Kenny to get his perspective on what happened. But he said his objection was we already had a church there that was operating. Why are we going to... and they want to pay us money for it. Why are we going to give it to a black church on the other side of the water in the middle of a white community? It doesn't make sense. He attributed it to Phil being determined and everybody else just went along with Phil. Apparently left a little bad taste in his mouth.

Harold: Well, of course, sure. I know there's a cemetery thing, too, which at least Amos and Rebecca Layman had some loved ones in that cemetery.

Alan: And two Zooks and Roy Payne.

Harold: So, is Dave's mother in there?

Alan: No. His...Dave's father is actually buried in...

Harold: Up in South Boston or somewhere up there, right?

Alan: His gravestone's in our cemetery, but he's buried in south Boston.

Harold: Yeah, bless his heart.

Alan: It's been interesting being the graveyard monitor.

Harold: Well, there were a lot of glitches, I think, in that whole process and some things that looked initially too good to be true. So I can't really comment on that and I wasn't in on any conversation that Phil would have had with Dave and with Ken. But I certainly was in on some of the conversations with Calvary. Robert Mast, I think, was leading the council at that point in that thing. And what I do know is that, for reasons I don't fully understand, but it was an exciting kind of movement, Calvary had become involved somehow with South Africa and some churches in South Africa. Don't know about all of that, but there was a guy, a very fervent pastor, who was coming to the U.S., wanted to be somehow a part of what Calvary was doing. Well, I guess the church was given to Calvary just in time that he was able to...his assignment, his Calvary-related assignment was to pastor what had been the West Road Church.

And initially, it was just really exciting to see, you know, this guy was on fire. He soon got a lot of rapport and it was a small church that seemed, I mean, church building, that seemed very appropriate in terms of the size and all that. And then you know what Chesapeake did, cut off West Road. And suddenly, these urban folks, wherever they're coming from, whether it's Deep Creek or Suffolk or Newport News or wherever, if there was an evening meeting, they couldn't find their way and it's understandable, I can't find my way over there anymore.

Alan: You've got to know how to get there. You've got to really want to go to be there.

Harold: Yeah, exactly. You've got to wind around back there behind Grassfield High School and all that. Anyway, you should hear the folks that have the flowers over there on Shillelagh, Christina Tewin, she's just so upset with that whole thing. She would just be a couple of blocks from where the church was. So long story short, not only did that begin and then on top of that, of all things, the brother and his family got into some kind of immigrant snag. They didn't have the right papers at the right time or something. And they got sent back to South Africa. So the whole thing blew up. I mean, it wasn't as feasible.