

Larry Beachy

Oral History Transcript
Interview Number 1

Interviewed by Aaron Sawatsky-Kingsley, Goshen City Forester

Also Present: Tanya Heyde, Goshen Parks and Recreation Superintendent
David Miller-Derstine, Videographer of the Community Resilience Guild

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This transcript was created by David Miller-Derstine of the Community Resilience Guild.

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Part 1: Looking at a Map of Larry's Old Stomping Grounds

The Lost Stock That Helped Pay For The Shanklin Park Pool

Larry: I remember when I first came on the board, my first job was to fire the assistant superintendent—a young fella whose name escapes me right now—anyways, the story is that years ago we always wanted a swimming pool, and for many reasons they couldn't put it over here—mainly because they didn't want to. But finally, uh, they decided they were going to put a pool over here at Rogers Park. And so they came to Goshen Rotary and said, Would you sponsor the fundraising for this? And um, so we started right off with the Rotarians, how many would give and how much would you give and so on. And one of the Rotarians gave stock to the company that he owned—and there still may be people alive that this would reflect on, so I'm not going to tell you the name of the company and so on, okay? Uh, but anyways he gave stock.

And it was a success. We built the pool. Everything worked out, and there was an agreement with the city that we could make up to so much money and then after that we could keep the money, but up to—I think it was \$2,000 we had to give to the city. Okay, everything went along fine, and in a period of time, I'm guessing maybe eight to ten years, the liner in the pool needed to be replaced and repaired and so on. And so we came to Rotary again, Would you raise the funds for it? And there were some in Rotary that didn't think it was necessary that they should be involved in it again and some things like that—it wasn't quite as acceptable as it was the first time.

But I got a telephone call from a fella, and he said, “You know, I gave stock and as far as I know that stock was never cashed in.” And I said, “Oh, that’s interesting.”

So we began the hunt to find where the stock was, and there was a safe that was over here in the little building, and no one knew the combination to the safe (laughs).

Tanya: Over at the park office?

Larry: At the park office.

Aaron: At the park office.

Larry: Big old safe, sitting over there in the corner, that various superintendents had inherited as they came along, but never had an occasion to get into—especially since they didn’t know the combination (laughs). So, finally, we traced down the combination from the gentleman that was a superintendent way back a few years earlier, and we got it and we opened it up, and sure enough, there was the stock.

Tanya: There were those stocks.

Larry: The stock certificates were in there, and it had done very well by the way.

Tanya: Amazing.

Larry: It had appreciated, so no one was really unhappy that it hadn’t been found sooner because we did all right on it after it was discovered.

(All laugh)

Larry: But that was the discovery, the story of the safe. What else was in there, I have no idea.

Tanya: Amazing. And that happened while Sheri was here?

Larry: No. No, that was quite sometime before Sheri arrived. Uh, I was trying to think of the superintendent.

Aaron: Rich Faye?

The Arrival Of Superintendent Sheri Howland

Larry: Rich Faye. There you go. Rich Faye was the superintendent that came. He was the first superintendent that came after the gentleman that had been superintendent for many years, but this young fella, who was his assistant, had kind of taken it over. And uh, everyone sort of thought that he was going to take over the Park Department when the other fella retired, but it didn’t work out that way. He and Rich weren’t able to see it in the same progressive light. So that didn’t work out, and then Rich moved on to, I think, the State of Washington—became active out there. And Sheri and a man from Carmel, Indiana were interviewed. And uh, and we

sort of decided—you know, we had to choose between the two of them—I sort of leaned towards the man from Carmel—whoever heard of a lady being superintendent of parks, you know? Back in those days, I was just like the rest of the men. But fortunately that man dropped out of the competition and Sheri took over, and she was fantastic at working out programs with, like, the hospital. They would sponsor building a trail, and then they would have a health program, and this youth olympics program that she got started. She just constantly—we would say, “Oh boy, that’s a great idea, how are we going to—“Oh, I already have somebody who’s going to help us out,” you know, funding wise. She was fantastic and, as you know, I’m sure, laid a good foundation for you.

Tanya: She did. She laid a great foundation for all of us. That’s for sure.

Larry: Well, I tell you, I was very, very pleased to come back and—to see all the new parks. Hay Park, and of course they had new names—some of the parks were named after the mayors and so on, like that.

Larry's Old Stomping Grounds

Aaron: Larry, would you take some time to look over this map and kind of tell us about your stomping grounds as you were growing up?

Larry: Sure would.

Aaron: And just kind of tell us about different places that you see here. What’s different? What’s the same?

Larry: Well, I was very fortunate. In 1944, we moved down here, let’s see, that would be the home I grew up in—1211 Wilson Avenue. And of course there weren’t, well the Murrays, there were some homes on Murray Street, but it was very easy to walk out of my house—this was all orchard. Mom and dad had a big orchard—and I’d go down here and cross the bridge, the Murray Street Bridge, and I had all this area to run in as a young boy. We built rafts in the river and so on.

And at this time, this portion of the river was very active, and this area was just a little stream that would only run when we had floods.

Aaron: Yeah, okay.

Larry: But over the years, with a few log jams ending up in here, this began to open up.

Aaron: It’s shifted now.

Larry: Right.

Aaron: Now, this is the floodway, and this is the main course.

Larry: That's exactly right. And I didn't realize that could happen in a lifetime.

Aaron: Yeah.

Larry: You know, I thought it would take many, many more years than that, but I caught a lot of Rock Bass, and Smallmouth Bass in there because my brother and I fished this all the time, and hunted rabbits along the river. And of course we could find a tree that was down across and go out into the NIPSCO area.

Aaron: Yeah, and this was already owned by NIPSCO?

Going Through The Ice

Larry: Correct, yeah, they were making this. Right along in here there was a real deep ditch, and when the river would flood it would run back into that ditch and flood this area out here, and that's where I went through the ice.

Aaron: Oh, yeah, yeah.

Larry: The river had come up in December and flooded, and, of course, that chased all the rabbits on up on these little high spot hills, and so I'd take my old black and tan hound and we'd go back here and we'd go hunting, and I decided to take a shortcut and go out to Plymouth Avenue and go home that way. And I went through the ice in that ditch, and it was quite an experience.

Aaron: Right in over your head, right?

Larry: Oh yeah. There was at least that much area because the river had gone down—what was flowing into the river, the flood.

Aaron: So there was a gap, an air gap.

Larry: Yeah, and I went down, and I was able to kick myself back up and get some air. I'll never forget how bad that smelled, but I kept kicking and pushing forward because the current had carried me down. Finally, I spied the opening, and I still had my gun, and I was able to get my little 410 shotgun across the hole and then get myself—

Aaron: Pull yourself up?

Larry: You know, spread eagle, and I finally got over to the highway, and uh, I'm sure I looked like an ice-man because I started freezing right away and all that. And where the park department's housed, the little place that was owned by a German fella who was a World War II veteran and he was in the core, first aid, Red Cross, or something like that. Anyways, he saw me coming. Everything was covered with snow, and I was running down Plymouth Avenue. I was hoping I could get cars to stop, but they'd just slow down and, a young man with a gun, they kept going. So finally he [the German] saw me, oh, as I came into the lane, and it was just

less than a few minutes and I was buck-naked in a tub of water. He had my hands and my feet in there as he thought I'd get frostbite.

Aaron: Yeah.

Larry: And I was really, really scared that my father would take the gun away from me—I'd gotten it for Christmas. I was about 12, 13-years-old, and I thought that he would think I was pretty irresponsible and take the gun away from me. So I called my brother, and all he knew was that I had gone through the ice, so here he came, fifty miles-per-hour, with a ladder strapped onto the top of his truck, because he thought I might still be out there. But my dog was still back at the hole. She just stayed there and kept guard on it. So everyone was happy ever after and dad didn't find out about it until some time later.

End of ice story

But yeah, this was all my stomping grounds. In this area, of course, was the Hoke Farm. This was the old farmhouse, the living room of that house is a log cabin—big, thick window sills. They had an old Greenhouse, just north of the house and they started plants for everybody. Everybody got their tomato plants and those things.

Aaron: Oh wow.

Larry: And they had a pretty good business because, I think there's six or seven different types of soil in this area—from muck to Ashimo(??), I think it's called. And they raised all kinds of vegetables and supplied all the stores. But then, the Kalamazoo greenhouses came in and put them out of business. They could raise things cheaper, and they could do it all year long, and so on like that.

But then the place came up for sale, and oh, I graduated from dental school in fifty-nine and I believe the farm came up for sale in, like, sixty, sixty-one, something like that. And we just knew, I just knew that I really wanted that place. It's my old tromping grounds, you know, but it was in deplorable condition—really bad shape. And my wife knew how bad I wanted it, didn't have any money, but her grandmother had decided to give everyone their share of the inheritance, and her father had been killed when she was only 18 months old, so they treated her as one of the boys. And that amount that we inherited was just enough to make the down payment on the farm.

(All laugh)

The Old Hermit Who Lived On The Property

Larry: So that's the story of how we ended up there. Well, there was an old hermit who lived right here on the curve.

Aaron: That was one of the people I wanted to ask you about.

Larry: All I know is that he was a German, and he was kind to the children. Along this area was always where it dripped, leaked through from the canal. And that was where a woodcock would come in the spring. It's a really interesting bird with a long bill, and they needed that soft ground in the spring. So I would do some hunting along there, and if I got any—I was never a very good shot at birds, and if I got any woodcock or anything I would usually stop and give them to him. So we were kinda good buddies. Now, he had moved by the time we bought the place up here. But I think, if he was the same one, he settled right over in this area over here. I think that was the same man, but boy I don't know that for a fact. And I never stopped to visit that fella. I didn't spend any time with him or anything. I was older and going to school and so on. So, I don't know if that was the same man or not, but the fella that was here was sure a nice gentleman, and I think Mr. Hoke just allowed him to squat on that land, and he knew a lot of things—herbs and that kind of thing so he was interesting to talk to.

Aaron: So he was a little bit of, I mean, he was kind of living on the land.

Larry: Yes.

Aaron: As well as maybe handouts or goodwill.

Larry: I think he found things and sold them and so on. Um, I think he was the first one I ever talked to about ginseng, I think it was. He knew all kinds of herbs and things like that, and he knew all of that stuff—really interesting guy. And like I say, he was kind to the children, at least he was always kind to me. I enjoyed him.

The Murray Farm

But this was a wonderful place to grow up. Wonderful place to grow up. I had so many good times on that Elkhart River, and uh, all this area, let's see, here we are. This field here, this was all orchard and this area here, with this field here, was usually corn, but one year, or a couple years a fella planted popcorn in there. And that was right when the automatic shellers, harvesters hooked on the front of the tractor, and they picked their corn that way.

But we discovered, my brother and I, that when the machine made a turn it missed maybe a whole row of corn. It would knock it down, but the corn would still be on the stock. So we would come down here at night, because we never knew whether it was legal or not, with the boyscout backpacks and we would walk those rows with our feet, and we would feel the corn down underneath, and we'd stoop down and pick up an ear of corn and throw it in there, and uh, we had the best popcorn for a whole year. We stored that in mom and dad's attic, and whenever we wanted popcorn, up we'd go to the attic.

Aaron: And so who is farming this? Was that the Murray?

Larry: Murray's owned it, but by the time I remember these things here, no one there was farming it—someone else came in and farmed it. I think it might have been the Hays(?), but I'm not sure about that. but someone else came in and farmed it. In this field here, there was 11 acres in this area, this had already started growing up into secondary

Aaron: It's pretty low right?

Larry: Right. That area there especially floods over. An uh, they planted corn. The first pheasant I ever shot in my life came out of a corn field in that area.

Aaron: Tell me a little bit about—the Murray Farm was here, or house anyways.

Larry: Yes, that's right. Okay you came across up here on Murray Street. There was Cecil, and I can't tell you the man's name that lived on the canal, but there were two Murrays.

Aaron: You mentioned a Frank once.

Larry: And Frank lived down here at the end of the lane, and there were two houses here at the end of the lane. Frank Murray lived in the larger house. He was an interior decorator, so his house was really neat. Instead of having the ceiling and the walls come together, it was all rounded. Somehow he could do that with wallpaper or something. It was a beautiful home—a lot of gingerbread on it and so on.

I got to know him as a youngster, but pretty much I got to know him because the rules about kids being where his truck pass was and his asparagus grew and things like that, but we were taught that quite early with Frank. But I knew him, and then when I bought the farm here, he was in his late sixties, early seventies, By that time. And I used to go over on weekends, either Saturday or Sunday, he was pretty lonely, he had a lady that would come and take care of his house for him and so on, but I would go over and chat with him. He was a wonderful guy. He could tell all kinds of stories. He used to tell a story about a physician who loved to fish for smallmouth bass, and he would make house calls, but he had a very difficult time coming across this—there is an old bridge here at that time that was lower—And he had difficulty going across there because he always had to stop and fish a while.

(All Laugh)

Larry: And uh, Frank used to laugh about that because he [the doctor] just loved to come and visit patients that lived along the river, so he could fish for smallmouth.

(Laughter ends)

Larry: But he always used to start the conversation, "Beachy why am I still here? All my friends are gone, and I don't know why I'm still alive." But after we would talk for awhile he would begin to tell me stories. I used to tell him it was so you'd tell me stories when I came over, and then he'd cheer up when he began to talk about the stories and so on.

The Creek Connecting the Race and the River

At that time, the creek that flows into the river now, that came behind the houses. Lets see if I can get my bearings here.

Aaron: Houses would have been in here right?

Larry: Yeah, the creek came down and then ran behind the houses and ran into the river back in here.

Aaron: Oh that's interesting.

Larry: And the creek, it had a nice gravel bottom, and that's where we used to net crawfish and sometimes we'd get minnows out of there to go fishing with. But we were in that Creek a lot, it was so nice and clean.

Aaron: So it used to cut along back here instead of straight through as it does now. That's interesting.

Larry: Right. When they came in and the city bought this and took over responsibility to keep that creek open, um, then they just dredged it right out straight to the river.

Aaron: Okay.

End of The Creek Connecting The Race And The River

Larry: And that eliminated this part here, but a Mr. Salt lived at, there were actually two houses but the one house was like a duplex, and uh, Mr. Salt was the one that actually did the farming back in the days that they farmed.

Aaron: Back in through here.

Larry: Yeah. And he evidently was a good friend or worked for Mr. Murray—I'm not quite sure what it was, but the Salts, Mr. Salt and his wife, lived in the front part of the house and the back part of the house was a rental property. There was a boy there by the name of Tom Miller. We used to walk to school together. He'd come over here and we'd go up here to Parkside.

And so Frank had the house on the side of the road, and so if the road would have continued it would have gone into the house where Mr. Salt lived—

Aaron: Okay.

Larry: Kind of like an alley.

Aaron: The Murray house was kind of here.

Larry: Yeah.

Aaron: And the other house where Mr. Salt lived was here.

Larry: Right, that's exactly right.

Aaron: And the barn, there was a barn there, too, right? When we go out on the hike we can kind of look at the remains of the foundation.

The Most Exciting Thing That Happened

Larry: Yeah. That barn was still up when I was a kid, and that was where the most exciting thing in the neighborhood ever happened. That was where someone by the name of Miller—this was a dump over here at this time and just floodplain in there and everybody dumped their trash and cans and stuff over on that side—but somehow they had gone down there. Ernest Miller and his girlfriend, and the one that didn't belong somehow or other—I didn't know if they had started going together during the war when he was gone or what, but you know that was right during the war years—so he shot this fella and then jumped out of the car and ran down in here somewhere. And the state police came, and the Goshen Police came, and they searched and searched and they never could find Ernie Miller. But all of us kids knew he was just hiding back here someplace. For a while our parents wouldn't let us go down there. We absolutely can not go down there.

But then it wasn't long before we would go down there and holler, "Ernie." You know, we thought that was neat.

(All Laugh)

The chief of police lived up on Main Street, and by that time in this area here you could rent space and have a garden—they would give you a piece of land. And he had a garden, kind of, almost below the barn here in the orchard part.

Aaron: The chief of police did?

Larry: The chief of police. Hummel was his name. When he was down there working his garden he got a particular odor that was bad, so he started walking through the brush back here behind the barn, and sure enough, there Ernie had committed suicide, and they found him. Ambulances and all this kind of stuff came down there, and as they crossed the bridge all of us kids were right behind, and I remember climbing up on a fence post behind the barn. I suppose it was Yoder-Kulp, someone with a rubber bag was there, and they had sticks and they were trying to get this fella in the bag, and they zipped it up. Well, rigor mortis had set in already, bang, that arm went back, hit that bag. We all jumped back. I jumped off that post and ran home as fast as I could get home.

(All laugh)

Aaron: Oh my God.

Larry: Yeah, I'll always remember that arm. Whack. Hit that rubber bag and away I went. That was scary. But that was probably the most exciting thing that happened.

Playing And Nearly Drowning In The Race

We did have a boy who almost drowned. We used to always—we'd jump in here—and we'd swim down to the Tilly property. Let's see, this would've been the Hansens. Tilly's would've been right in here.

Aaron: Okay.

Larry: And we would swim from there, down, and we had a little boat that somebody made out of lumber. And we would hang on to that boat and turn it over and have lots of fun. And this fella wasn't as good a swimmer as we thought he was. Anyways, we all arrived and we're pulling the boat up on shore and we realized that Keith Swihart—he's passed away now—wasn't there, and he came floating down. But we had Sprouts Baker and some of the other boys who were good boy scouts, and they gave him artificial respiration and called the ambulance right away, and he lived.

Aaron: That's incredible.

Larry: He became quarterback for the Goshen football team.

Aaron: Wow. Wow.

Larry: But if you really had courage, you climbed up on top of that bridge, and you jumped off.

And that was our plane spotting during World War II. We climbed up on top of the bridge, lay there, and we would see all kinds of Japanese planes and German planes flying over. We had a—that we got from a Wheaties Box Top—a big silhouette of all the enemy planes. And boy they were flying over. We'd see a lot of them every day.

Aaron: Yeah, right. They were looking for Goshen.

Larry: (Laughing) Yeah, that's right. That's right. So it brought back a lot of memories.

Aaron: Oh wow. Wow.

Larry: A lot of activity around that bridge, a lot of fun.

Aaron: Right. Right.

Other Places Around The Land

Larry: But this was all orchard. There was enough spots in the orchard that they had these garden plots, people could have the garden plots. I was only in the barn a few times. And it was later on, Frank had some old Buick headlights that he had stored up there, and he knew that I kind of liked antiques and things, so one time we [were] out there and he told me where they were at and he gave those to me. Big, gold brass lights that you lit—there was a wick.

Aaron: Oh, individually? No kidding, wow.

Larry: Yeah.

Aaron: Boy, I never would've thought of that.

Larry: But I never was in the barn when they had hay or anything, nor did I ever, I don't ever remember seeing the team of horses that they had down there. Now the Hokes had horses and they had big mud shoes that they put on them. It looked to me like they were made out of rubber tires, I don't know, but they put the shoes on the horses so they could work the low spots early in the spring.

Aaron: I'll be darned.

Larry: Yeah, that was the first time I ever saw mud shoes on horses.

Aaron: Yeah I've never heard of that, but it's low and mucky, as I'm sure it was and continues to be, they would have needed some way for traction.

Larry: Yeah, this area right through here where all the Cypress were planted.

Aaron: Yeah, where the Bald Cypress right.

Larry: That was really, I used to—we had a little Ford tractor with a big mower on the back of it, and I would get this stuck many times in the spring. Wheels only had to go around once you know.

Aaron: And that was it.

Larry: But we lived with it.

The Origins Of The Tree Farm

And it was dad's idea to plant the trees. He originally said, his thinking on it was that—at the time he purchased this up here, and then even when we purchased here—we were still in the township, so our kids didn't go to Parkside school. They got on the bus up here and went out to Waterford to school.

Aaron: Oh, no kidding.

Larry: Then, when we got a new superintendent, my wife got to know him pretty well, and we said, "You know, it's kind of silly that our kids walk up here and Parkside is right over here, but they go all the way out there." He said, "Yeah, that is crazy. You can go to Parkside."

And then little by little, you know, the city grew around it. And so here this area was that was in the township, but the rest of it was—you know I had fire protection, everything from the city—so when it came time to annex, I didn't fight it at all, because I had been using all the city facilities, and our kids were now going to school in the city and everything like that. So when they annexed us—we had nearly 80 acres at that time—when that occurred, but I didn't realize that they superimposed all these streets through here and divided this into lots, and I was taxed on the lots. And my taxes just really went up. And I had a friend who is an attorney, and I was talking to him, and I said, "Is there anything I can do about that?"

He said, "Yeah, you can do the same thing I did. I bought a bunch of land west of town and I put it into a classified forest." And he said, at that time, you're taxed a dollar an acre on it. Boy, that sounded good, so that's what we did. As soon as we could make the changes, we put it into a classified forest.

Aaron: And your dad, I remember you saying, your dad really helped to push you on that.

Larry: Oh absolutely. He was really into—when he first was started in the veneer business—into logs and especially walnut logs. He knew that the walnut—because of the freezing and thawing that we had here—made the walnut have the finest grain of walnut, I guess in the country. So if he had had his way, every tree that went in would've been a black walnut.

And at first you could go out to the county agents office and get 75 trees—25 white pines, whatever it was—at a very reasonable price. I'm not so sure if at first they didn't give them away.

Aaron: Oh wow. Wow.

Larry: And we got a couple of those bars—tree planting bars. And the boys were old enough that one would take a bunch of them in a pack, and the other one would step on the hole—push it in. And I would go along—usually I'd make one furrow with a single bottom plow—and then I would go in there with a bar and the boys would drop a tree in and step on it, and that's how it got started.

First thing we planted was this little area right here, because that road wasn't there when we bought the farm. When we bought the farm this road came down and went right by the house—right by the barn—and down to the Hoke's. And then we had the gravel pit over here—lets see the gravel pit was right in here—and we said, That you could have the gravel out of the pit if you'll build a road, and so they did. Well then we wanted some privacy, so that we wouldn't have to hear the traffic, and that's when we planted this whole thing with white pines.

Aaron: Yeah, okay.

Larry: They were quick growing and grew up there. So that was our first trees.

The second ones were over in here, and you and I—when we went on our hike, we found those walnuts down in this area here.

Aaron: Let's see, uhh.

Larry: I think it was, on this side of the creek so it would've been.

Aaron: Yeah, yeah, yeah. That's right. I think maybe a little more over this way. That's right.

Larry: And the boys hand planted that whole thing because it was pretty wet in through there. And that's where we put the burr oak, too, because they like to get their feet wet. So we put walnuts, and those were all hand planted, but that was the last hand planted we did, except to replace or rebuild where they didn't grow well.

The state forester came in with a Kubota, a 4-wheel drive Kubota, they were just kinda new at the time, and he had a machine on the back of that that a fella rode on and as it went along and plowed the furrows, he dropped trees into it, and it just folded them right in. So they planted the whole farm.

Aaron: I mean all the other portions here.

Larry: Yeah, everything else was—well, this out in here, we did some hand planting in there where you and I were. That mostly was cypress in there, and that's where our exotic coffee trees grow.

Aaron: Yeah, that's right. Yeah, down under this here.

Larry: That was just a discovery. Had no idea.

Before you can put your place into a tree farm, you have to clear cut it. Any tree that's cuttable had to be taken down, and that was in preparation so nothing would be in competition with what you planted.

Aaron: Oh, with what you planted.

Larry: And so they would stage those logs on this hillside here, and when I would come home from school for lunch, the tree cutters would be there, and they'd be sharpening their saws and so on, and we used to play a little game. You know, can you identify what we cut this morning by the bark and so on. I thought I was pretty good at it, and one day that had some logs lying there and they said, We've got you. You're not going to be able to figure this one out.

And sure enough, I looked at [it] and looked at it, and I couldn't guess what it was. It was those coffee trees.

Aaron: Those coffee trees. Oh, interesting. And what were the years when you were planting? Do you recall?

Larry: I think I can pretty much tell you when we started. My wife and I put some dates together. Uh, we purchased the farm in '60, '61. We built the new house down on the river in sixty-seven. And so the tree planting would have been pretty much in the seventies—the early seventies.

And, at first, we thought that we really had kind of a disaster because the deer were starting to come in, and rabbits, and any tree except a walnut—they didn't like the taste of the walnuts, they wouldn't cut those—but all the rest of them, they cut them off, cut them off. You could just walk down a row and there was a little sharp cut all the way. And so I complained to the forester. I said, "I've got to have something to spray on those, or do something, so that they don't eat them, because they're killing all my trees."

He said, "They're not. What's happening is like they got a severe pruning and the roots are gonna grow. In about two or three years, those trees are going to take off that you thought had been cut back, because it has such a good root system." And sure enough, that's exactly what happened. It was about three years after they were planted that I could see.

Aaron: Isn't that something.

Larry: I had a backpack sprayer, and I put a funnel on the front of the nozzle, and I would tip it down. I would go around to each tree and spray it, usually in the spring and then again maybe between Fourth of July and August—something like that. And that controlled the weed growth around the tree. Later on, they more or less stopped that. They said, you know, that's not necessary. You don't need to mow between them or anything like that, which made the farm look more messy because the weeds had grown up and so on, but the trees seemed to just kinda take care of themselves.

How The Tree Farm Changed The Environment

And then you could tell, as the trees began to grow, all of the environment changed. You know, we didn't have anything but rabbits and things like that—normal stuff—but, boy, as the trees began to grow, the birds changed. We had oh, four or five years there that we had so many bluebirds—I never saw so many bluebirds. And that was right when that lady wrote the story about the silent spring, DDT and eggshells and so on.

Aaron: Rachel Carson.

Larry: And we were doing fine down there. Every bluebird house I put up had bluebirds in it because the trees were just high enough that they could perch, and that's what they like.

Aaron: And there was enough open space for them to feel comfortable.

Larry: It was amazing how we saw the change. Then the big Spruce trees that I planted along here. In that time you had antennas on your roof for TV, and about 4:30 [to] 5:00 o'clock, I would begin to get shadows on my screen—on my tv—and sure enough, I'd go out and there would be a big redtail hawk up there. And these trees were just big enough that the Doves liked to nest in them at night. And of course they would fly across the road and fly across the road. And when he got the right one, a big dive off of there and the feathers would fly.

Aaron: He'd perch on the antenna?

Larry: On the antenna, yeah. And he really got the velocity coming down from that, and the feathers would fly, and we knew that he got his dinner for that night. And then pretty soon, I don't know if they got big enough that the doves could hide better or what it was, but we didn't see them around much after that.

But there were always things that we never saw before—wildlife that we didn't see before: river otters came down there, a beaver came down there, and the more dense it became the more the animals, the wildlife, were things we'd never seen before. I thought that was amazing that trees brought all that in.

Aaron: That transformation must have been incredible to watch. To go from—some of it was just field is that right?

Larry: Yes, or pasture, or you know, we made hay on it, and that was it.

Aaron: And to see it transform from that into this emerging forest, along with everything else that came along.

Larry: By the way, the transition that took place there—we all had guns back in those days and did a lot of rabbit hunting and things like that—but the tree farm stopped all that. Everybody in the family stopped hunting.

Aaron: Isn't that interesting.

Larry: Because you just saw so much going on. One day my wife called me at the office, and she said, "You won't believe what's sitting in our side yard." And it was a red fox, and we'd never seen fox on the farm. And there it was, just nonchalant out there. And deer. Oh, we had so many deer.

The First (of many) Deer Tracks That Larry Saw On The Farm

Aaron: And I remember you saying that as you were growing up you never saw deer.

Larry: No. Nope.

Aaron: And you remember very clearly the first time you saw deer tracks. Why don't you tell that story, that's interesting, too.

Larry: And you know that was right down here behind the Murray home—yeah, Frank’s place. Right along that creek that ran behind the house. It was soft enough there that I saw a deer track. And I was really into tracks at that time, I think I was working on a merit badge for boy scouts. I saw this and I looked at it, and I thought, Boy, that’s a deer track. I ran home and got my dad and I said, “Dad there’s a deer track down here at the river.”

“No,” he says, “It’s probably a hog because they have a cleft foot.’ Like somebody’s hog got out and was running down there.

I said, “You got to look at it. It looks like a deer to me.”

So he came down with me and looked at it and said, “You know, I believe that is a deer. I can’t believe we got a deer up here.”

And then, you know, it just blossomed—I don’t know how many deer. I had put a little feeder out here in the front yard, and I would drive home—had an old Chevy truck—and would drive home and the deer would hear that truck and by the time I got here—I had cracked corn, I’d get corn and put it out in that little calf feeder—by the time I got over here the deer were already starting to gather out here on the edges of the trees to come in here and eat. We had lots of deer.

And we cross-country skied at night, and when they were bedded down, you could get very close to them. They’d lift their heads up and look at you, but they didn’t get up and run or anything—when there was snow on the ground.

It was a great place to raise children. The things that I really loved were abounding.

End Deer

Larry's Father's Vision For The Land

But dad’s philosophy was, if we put this into trees, and the city grew all around it to surround it, that there would be enough tree huggers that they wouldn’t make it into tennis courts or a golf course, if we gave it to the city. So his dream always was that that would be an area where people in town could walk and observe wildlife and so on.

Aaron: I think that is just an incredibly prescient kind of vision that your dad had. Because that’s in fact what we’ve seen happen, right? I mean, it has turned into—and you can see all the trails that are through there. There are birders out hiking right now, and I mean daily there are so many people who go through there—adults and kids, school groups we take into there.

Tanya: Bikers.

Aaron: Bikers, that’s right, who are using the woods that you planted exactly the way that your dad envisioned. I mean its—and of course it’s part of this larger, kind of, green corridor that extends all the way down from the dam pond all the way up to the edge of downtown.

Larry: And how that's beginning to develop down there, I couldn't believe what's going on.

Aaron: Yeah, along the Millrace.

Larry: That's wonderful. That's wonderful.

Aaron: I mean the vision that he and you and your family had and created decades ago has turned into that reality. I wonder if maybe this would be a good transition to actually go out, unless should we sit down for a little bit?

Larry: Going out would be fine.

A Beaver, A Cottage, And The Bahamas

Aaron: Why don't we do that. Um, and we can—

Larry: Tell one more story.

Aaron: Yeah, yeah, do that.

Larry: I just happened to think about it. You know, we lived in the Bahamas for a while, and one day I actually got a long distance call from Mayor Kauffman, and he said, "One of your beavers cut down a tree, and it put a 72,000 volt line out, and the entire mall doesn't have any electricity. And I want to know what you're going to do about it." (Laughs)

Aaron: Oh my gosh.

Larry: Of course, it was a big joke. I was chairman of the parks department, or board, at that time, and I thought I ought to, I kind of thought he was serious. But then we got a good laugh out of it, because one of my beavers dropped a tree on his line.

(all laugh)

Aaron: That's good.

Tanya: That is good.

Larry: A lot of good memories.

Aaron: Let's do go out and walk a little bit, and that may jog some memories too.

[video cuts out]

Aaron: Let me grab my notes here too. I'm so glad you made it over here too.

Tanya: I am too. This is great to hear these stories and I could just listen to them all day.

Larry: I'm glad that I could contribute whatever. This area, of course, is dear to my heart. And the older you get, the things that you took for granted as you were younger, all of a sudden become really important.

We had so much fun with this pond. When we dug that pond, all the springs from here came down and went through this and went down a little creek bed and went into the river here. Well, we put a levy across that and blocked those and all the springs and everything just went into the pond, and we had a little house, a little cottage there. And we just had so much fun with that, just had so much fun with that—ice skating in the wintertime and swimming in the summertime. We played tennis over here and when we got done we'd all go down and jump in the pond.

It just brings back memories. I just wrote a book about when we lived in the Bahamas, and how we built a cottage and so on. The river came up and froze ice all around this, and finally the Pond house gave up, and we lost the footers and so on. But that was all made out of treated lumber, and I salvaged that, and that was what I used to prefabricate a little cottage that we sent down to the Bahamas.

Aaron: Shipped down to the Bahamas.

Larry: Made our Cottage down there, so the Pond house lives on.

Tanya: That's great, that's great.

Larry: I'll stick this in my pocket in case we need a date.

Aaron: I've got some notes here too.

Stories From The Legal Side Of Buying A Tree Farm

Larry: Oh, I didn't tell the story. Two things that we need to point out. One, when we decided to put it into a tree farm, this was in the city limits, and Mr. Pressler, who was the county treasurer, said that he would not allow us to put it into a tree farm because he was going to lose that tax base and because it was in the city limits and that classified forests are not allowed in city limits. So I took for granted that it wasn't allowed.

But a fella that I had served on with the county parks, Francis Datena had a brother who was a state forester, Frank Datena, and he called his brother and asked him about it, and his brother said, "That doesn't make sense. That's not true."

So he then called me, and he said, "You go back up to that office. How long does it take you to get there?" And I said, "Oh, ten, fifteen minutes." And he said, "You go back up there and you tell him to register this, because if he doesn't—I think it was the mayor or the governor, the fella that was a physician from Breman—will talk to him directly."

And I went up and he wouldn't talk to me, but he sent his receptionist or something out, and I signed all the papers and so on. I don't think he ever talked to me again, but that was a conflict that we had.

(all laugh)

Aaron: Oh that's interesting.

Larry: The other thing that I wanted to point out, not that I anticipate any difficulty at all because he's a good fella—a good, cooperative fella. But when we turned this, let's see, Jim owns this land. And when we signed the agreement on that, there is a lifelong agreement that he can determine wherever the path is that the people get from here to here, but he must always provide a path. I don't think you'll ever have a problem, but if one of his children should take it over, or two children or something like that, it's good to know that that exists. That the owner of this property has to always provide a passage. Now, he could, if he wanted to, bring that clear around here like this, but he does have to provide a passage on it—or whoever owns it.

Usually those things never have any difficulty with the first owner, it's when you get to the second or third owner [who] doesn't even know that it exists. And that's important. We wouldn't want to get that path cut off.

Aaron: Yeah, that's right. Okay.

Larry: And we didn't talk about how that came about. This Murray property came up for sale, which included this field, well, it included all of this and all of this. That came up for sale, and all kinds of people wanted to buy that—there was a big, big turnout for the auction. And a lady from South Bend just bid it up and bid it up, until finally nobody could pay that kind of money and knew it wasn't worth that kind of money. But anyways, she got it, and then she never made a deposit or did anything more with it. And obviously didn't have the money to buy it, but the city of Goshen had to go through all kinds of court action and so on to finally get the reversal that she wasn't going to have that land. When they did that, they never advertised it. They never put it up again.

Phil Barker came to me and said, "You still want that north field?" And I said, "Yeah, I sure do." He said, "Okay, here's how much it is." And I bought it. It was never put up for auction.

Aaron: Just like that.

Larry: Noone else got a chance to buy it or anything like that, and this down here, they decided they were going to make that part of the park program—give that to the parks, and their main reason was that they wanted to close this bridge—they didn't want to maintain that bridge anymore. But I suppose somebody could have really raised some static on that if they wanted to get in on buying the field.

Aaron: Yeah, yeah that's—

Larry: I don't remember what I paid for it. It was reasonable, but it was not unreasonable at all. It was just the process.

Aaron: Let me ask you this to before we head out: were portions of this property used by the highway department, either the county or the city, as a holding ground for like gravel, or salt, or those kinds of materials?

Larry: Not that I can ever remember. No, no, uh. No, the only thing I can remember is when they started to develop Shanklin Park and they put posts, or light posts, or ran electricity, we came up with all kinds of white-wall tires.

Aaron: Back in through here?

Larry: No, in this area here.

Aaron: Oh in here?

Larry: Yeah, that was all junk, and every so often with the swimming pool you have an area settle. Because that was just a dump.

Aaron: It still happens back here.

Tanya: It does still happen.

Larry: But I think that's all the things that I had down.

Aaron: Okay, well let's head out and we'll walk a little bit and we'll see what jogs your memory.

[Fade to black]

Part 2: Walking Through The Larry Beachy Classified Forest

The Value Of Investing In Parks

Larry: I'd always been told, when I was hooked up with the board and went to some conferences, one was down in Indianapolis, and I remember them saying how Parks and Recreations Departments would improve the entire real estate of the town.

Aaron: Yeah.

Larry: And especially the real estate next to a trail. And of course, at that time, we were fighting with everybody to try to put a trail in, and they didn't want it in their backyard you know and all that stuff.

Aaron: Is this the Pumpkinvine in particular that you're talking about?

Larry: Well, that and the one down 8th Street, we really had a terrible time with that.

Aaron: Yes, right.

Larry: So it has really, really paid off—just really beautiful.

Aaron: There's just no doubt that the trail systems that were built initially and then those that have followed, have really contributed so much to the way the city thinks and feels and operates.

Larry: Yeah, no question about it.

The Current Park And The Former Orchard

This was the area that was all—from that big old wolf oak there—that was all orchard.

Aaron: That was all orchard back there?

Larry: Yeah, down over the hillside and down here. Pretty flat ground and that was all different kinds of apples—wasn't anything in it but apples. Apple trees and then of course the river bank here, and then this is where we did all our fishing and so on.

Aaron: Yeah, right. Okay, Okay. And what you just called a "wolf oak," I mean that's been there for quite a while.

Larry: Yes.

Aaron: You remember that one from your childhood?

Larry: Yes. Well see, it never turned into a beautiful oak tree. I mean, it's a beautiful oak tree but it's what we called a "wolf oak" because it just spread out. They would never make a log or anything like that.

Aaron: Yeah, yeah. I mean, that's a white oak, and I often point this one out to kids when we come on walks.

Larry: Yeah, good point. Good point. Yes, and tell them the difference between the white oak and the red oak.

Aaron: That's right. And then this is a shingle right next to it, and so we always point out the differences between those two.

Larry: Yeah, you said that was a shingle oak the other day, and that was kind of amazing to me because I didn't remember that that leaf was an indicator of a shingle oak. In fact, I would have had trouble identifying that.

Aaron: Okay, okay.

Larry: But isn't that beautiful and restful. Couldn't ask for anything—

Aaron: It is, it is. And this whole area back here is—I mean people have weddings back here—

Larry: Oh yeah.

Aaron: You know, it's such a lovely little corner, and this is where the orchard was, that's right?

Larry: Yeah. Up on the hillside was a chicken house—a small chicken house. And I think I might of mentioned one time you and I were talking, that's where I got my first dog. There was a wild dog down here, and it crawled under there and had puppies, and as those puppies got old enough, I got one of them, and another neighbor boy got one, and that was my first dog.

Aaron: That was your first dog? (Laughs) A pup of a wild dog that lives under the chicken house.

Larry: Yup.

Aaron: Well, here are these other white oaks at the tops of the bank, and these are pretty old—

Larry: These look like shagbark hickory.

Aaron: Yeah, if you follow them out to the leaves, then you will see that there are white oaks.

Larry: They sure are.

Aaron: They are quite impressive too, the way they spill out all the way this far—

Larry: Yeah, boy, look at that.

Aaron: They are something else.

Larry: There's one sycamore. I remember this area being all sycamores.

Aaron: Okay, oh interesting—

Larry: I don't remember oaks being along here.

Aaron: Well, the sycamores are in there for sure.

Larry: Yeah, I see them through there.

Aaron: That's right, and a bunch of dead ash, too, now.

Larry: Oh yeah, I see them—

Aaron: Standing dead. But, I'd like to stop at the foundation—the barn foundation.

Larry: Okay.

The Ruins Of The Murray Barn And The Former Creek

Aaron: The weather's turned out really nice for us today.

Larry: Yeah.

Aaron: So, a lot of this, then, has transformed also since you were a kid?

Larry: Yes, amen. Yeah, of course, none of those trees there. That was all open.

Aaron: Right, right.

Larry: And I remember that the level of the barn—this was cut down just like it is now,—so when you drove a hay wagon in here, that was almost at the level of the barn, so it was easy to unload and load things.

Aaron: So there would've been a door, an opening of the barn, at the top of the foundation there? What's left of the foundation?

Larry: Yeah, and that would've been the first story of the barn. It was a two story barn, uh, and I think, you know, it seems to me that there were sliding doors on this side of the barn, the front side of the barn, but then again I remember walking out into the yard and seeing doors. So they must've been on the other side too. I'm not sure exactly how the doors were arranged on the barn.

Aaron: How big a barn might that have been?

Larry: Not large, not large. Yeah, it started from this corner here, and I suspect—maybe where those—kinda bushy area was. It wasn't much deeper than that, if even that much. It was not a large barn at all.

Aaron: Yeah, but it served a purpose for what was needed.

Larry: Yeah, for what they did. Now, the creek was just over that rise—down there at the bottom. It wasn't out towards the river, it was more back—just right at the foot of the hill there.

Aaron: Of the hill.

Larry: The creek ran right there into the river.

Aaron: Okay.

Larry: And like I say, that creek was—it had kind of a gravel sandy bottom in that area, and that's where we used to get crawfish and things to go fishing with. We'd take a little seine and get minnows and things like that out of there.

Aaron: And back down behind there is where Ernie was?

Larry: Well, that was, yeah, right out in this area here. Right out in this area here. I suppose he saw the buildings and so on here and decided his time was up and something or other, and over in there is where he shot himself. And there was a line fence—went right down through there—so I suspect right in here someplace is where I was on the fence post.

Aaron: Jimminy.

Larry: Well I couldn't see you know. I was a little kid so climbed up there—

Aaron: And you needed to see.

Larry: Oh gosh, yes.

Larry: Then the house.

Aaron: Yeah, right.

Larry: The Salts lived in that end of the duplex, and the renters lived in this end.

Aaron: In this end.

Larry: Yeah. This would've all been part of the barn.

Aaron: Yeah, right. You can kind of see the corner right there. So the barn would've extended over this way?

Larry: Yeah, I'm trying to think. Boy, the hill starts right down over there doesn't it?

Aaron: Yeah it does.

Larry: So the house sat right in here, and the barn must've been—I think it was a bit of an angle—but it wasn't too far away from the house, but there was distance between the edge of the house and where the barn was.

Aaron: Okay, so maybe the barn was oriented a bit more this way? Okay, okay. And then the house, kind of in here.

Larry: Yeah, the house was, again the house was right on the—

Aaron: On the top?—

Larry: —The top, yeah. Because I remember the Millers threw junk over the edge of it. And, my brother and I didn't like that. But, then it flooded, you know, and carried it all away.

Aaron: That's right. That's the brilliance of throwing your trash in the river.

Larry: (laughs) Yeah, oh my gosh. Yeah, the house went right in this area here, and the Murray house was right over there.

Aaron: Okay, so the Murray, um, so this is the track that would've been the road down to the bridge—

Larry: Yeah, this lane went between this house—I'm not so sure that the lane was this far back. I think maybe it was up a little more this way. But the Frank Murray home was right in here. It had a nice porch on it with a lot of ginger bread around it. And it was a nice house. Not a big, spacious home, like the Culp home [Larry clarification: Now the Rieth Rohrer & Ehret Funeral Home on South Main Street] or something like that, but it was a nice house. And you could tell it had a lot of love and care put into it. It was nice.

Larry: And then, where all the secondary growth is, that was all a truck patch. That was all garden right up to the edge of the canal.

Aaron: That the Murray's were maintaining?

Larry: That's right. Yeah, they could look out their window and see us if we decided we wanted to borrow some of their asparagus.

Aaron: (laughs) Okay, that's what you were referring to.

Swimming At The Murray Bridge

Larry: Yeah, yeah. And what fun we had with that bridge. They told me that that bridge came from somewhere else. That it had been taken out, but I don't know that for a fact.

Aaron: Yeah, that's right. I'm sorry I can't remember off the top of my head. I think there's maybe a plaque on it that says. Somewhere else here in Goshen that it was moved from.

David: From state road somewhere.

Aaron: Yeah, right.

Larry: Is that right?

David: I don't remember which one.

Larry: Well, I was always told that that bridge wasn't made for here—that they salvaged it from somewhere else.

Aaron: That's right, that's right.

David: How deep was the race when you were jumping off of it?

Aaron: That's a great question, how deep was the race?

Larry: Yeah, well, let's see, it was over our heads. We were probably, most of us five feet, so it was, oh gosh, my guess was that it was somewhere between, not ten feet deep, but more probably in the five to eight feet—eight feet I would say it would've been deep.

Now there were some holes that were bigger than that down by the old ice cream plant—well it was the Kossnoff Junkyard then, I think. Down in that area where it widens out, that's where the ice house was—where they made ice. And they had a big ice house there that they supplied ice to the town.

Aaron: To the town. They'd cut it out of there in the winter and store it in there.

Larry: Yeah, in the winter they'd cut that out, and then they had huge piles of sawdust, and they put a layer in of sawdust, and then another layer of sawdust and so on. And along in August that would get pretty low.

Aaron: Yeah, okay. Okay. Anybody need any?

David: I could use some spray.

(Talk about bug spray)

David: Did you ever get any river-rash or any weird sickness from the water?

Larry: Swimming in that? No, you know, back in those days NIPSCO was generating power, and we had a swimming hole behind our house back there, and what would happen about one o'clock or so—and I remember that time, because in those days if you went swimming within an hour after eating, you would definitely have cramps and die, no question about it—and we used to keep asking my mother, you know, What time is? What time is it? Because we wanted to go swimming and we didn't want to die.

And so a lot of times, right around 1:30, the canal would get really high—I guess they closed the gates down there. But the canal would get quite a bit deeper than what it was. It would be up closer to the edges, and then all of a sudden the current would start up, and then, boy, there would be really strong current, and we kind of loved to swim in that—fight that current and so on. And that would pull all the weeds and stuff out. It would wash out any weeds that were growing or anything. So, unless it would be where there was a curve or something, there was no silt. It was all gravel from being washed out, and they would do that once a day.

Trapping Muskrats

And then they had a man. A fellow by the name of Dorsett(??) that used to walk the canal. And I think he walked it every day, from the headgates to the gate down there, and he looked for things that would clog up the canal, or if there was a muskrat hole they put poison peanuts in the muskrat's hole and things like that.

And then that was where our kids trapped. They'd get anywhere between, oh fifty-sixty, muskrats between this bridge and the headgates.

Aaron: Jimminy.

Larry: They ran, I don't know, thirty-forty traps, down to here. Then, they walked down here, and sometimes they would have traps in the creek, and sometimes they would have traps in the river. There weren't nearly as much muskrat activity in these areas, so they would change the line. But they could walk it in a circle that way. So every evening, usually right after dinner, they'd run the trap line. It was a good experience for them. They made some money.

Aaron: Did they?

Larry: Sure.

Aaron: From the pelts or something?

Larry: Yeah, back then muskrats were selling, oh five bucks a pelt.

Aaron: No kidding.

Larry: They met a fellow out here on Plymouth Avenue that bought the fur at a sale barn. And of course, year after year they found out that if they kept all their fur until the season closed, then that would be the highest prices. So they would stop and see him and find out what the prices were and so on like that. And he loved the kids. He would show them how to skin and all that kind of stuff, and then they would put them in a big cardboard box and sell them.

Aaron: This is your kids?

Larry: Yeah, yeah. It was the two boys. So one would run it one night, or one would run it on the weekend or something like that, then they split it. They were pretty good. They could skin a muskrat pretty fast.

Aaron: (laughs) Do you mind if we walk in a little further, Larry?

Larry: No, no. I'm ready to go. Whatever you want. Of course, I enjoy every minute of it.

Aaron: Let me know if anyone needs more spray, or spray at all. Be careful Dave that you don't trip.

Enjoying The Trees And The Landscape

Larry: I kind of lose my bearings here. This has changed so much. I'm sure the houses—I don't think this lane was this far over. I think it was more over in there.

Aaron: More over in there? Yeah, okay.

Larry: Because I think the houses actually spilled out here a little bit on this flatter ground. And then this is a road.

Aaron: Yeah, and Larry, I remember you last time noting the large sycamores over here, kind of on the ridge here., you would recall those?

Larry: Yeah, yes.

Aaron: They are really pretty dramatic specimens—those back in there.

Larry: Yeah, boy those are big.

Aaron: They're big.

Larry: We hunted lots of mushrooms in here.

Aaron: Lots of what?

Larry: Mushrooms.

Aaron: Mushrooms, yeah, okay.

Larry: As I remember, the sycamores kind of stood out by themselves, you know? They were really towering.

Aaron: Yeah, well, they continue to be. They're something else.

Larry: Well, we've got plenty of walnut down through here.

Aaron: Yeah, there is quite a bit of walnut down through here. And you and your family planted these? The walnut down here?

Larry: Yeah, most of this stuff in this low ground here was hand planted. If we could get the tractor in with a single bottom plow, we would lay down the sod, and then in that furrow is where we'd plant the trees. Yeah, and I try to make those furrows six feet apart. They plant them six on six. You got the white pines to make the hardwoods grow, and then they die out—which is what's happening now, the pines are gone.

Aaron: Yeah, that's right. Maybe we can walk down—

Larry: Do you know what's going on that we get the blue water in the creek.

Aaron: Yeah, it's uh, as I understand it, it's some effluent from the dairy processing plant here—Dairy Farmers of America—where they are processing powdered milk, I think is how I've heard it explained.

Larry: Okay, over there at the milk condensery?

Aaron: Yeah, right, over on New York Street. Um, it's monitored pretty closely, and as I understand, it's not supposed to be, you know, toxic or detrimental to the ecosystem. But it does have a distinct hue doesn't it?

Larry: Yeah.

Aaron: It definitely has a distinct hue. Okay, so Larry, you were saying that the channel was cut through here. Originally it went back, kind of along the bottom.

Larry: That's right. It took the lowest spot here, and then turned and went right behind the houses, over to the river over there.

Aaron: Yeah, yeah. Okay.

Cement, Rubber, And More Natural River Debris

Larry: And then we looked at the old pile of stone out here.

Aaron: yeah, that's right—down this path, you're right, and around. Say again that was stone—

Larry: That was old WPA days during the depression, and what they did was stream improvement. They piled those stones on top of each other, made kind of a copper dam, and fish and so on was attracted to that. With all the floods and everything, most of that has washed out, but when we were kids, you could walk out there, you know, barefooted, and you could feel where the rocks were.

And there's another place where they've done that—right down by the plymouth avenue bridge—about half a block up. And that one was still standing when I was a kid—that still had a bunch of raised rocks.

Aaron: Because that would have been, WPA, that would've been the thirties right?

Larry: Right.

Aaron: And so Larry and I found some of the remains of one of those rubble piles down this path around the corner. That would've presumably been dumped as part of that project.

Larry: Apparently they didn't finish the project, or they left that there to add more to it later on or something, but for a long time there was quite a pile of Riff Raff and concrete and so on—no trees or anything through there because it was a big enough pile.

Boy, this is beautiful.

Aaron: It is gorgeous. It is just, it's incredibly gorgeous, Larry. Uh, and it is just about impossible for me to imagine it as field.

Larry: Well, in the wintertime when we would get a snow, all the rabbit tracks would lead to that pile of rocks, because that is where they had their little hutches inside.

Aaron: Well, okay Larry, so that pile back there makes me think of what we also looked at last time we hiked, back in the far, far corner where the rubber is.

Larry: That's right.

Aaron: Can you tell us a little about how that came to be there?

Larry: One of the Hoke boys, there were eleven children in that family, and one of the boys owned a rubber company, and he needed a place to get rid of his scrap rubber, and John, who was running the farm, needed something to block up where the river was trying to block through on that northwest side of the farm.

Aaron: Oh, okay. Where it's so low and there's a bit of a natural channel.

Larry: So they would haul this rubber scrap and pile it up across these wash-outs and try to keep the river from cutting through there, and now what we have is still that old rubber being strewn around by floods and so on.

Aaron: Yeah, that's right.

Larry: And it doesn't disintegrate. It's just—

Aaron: It's just there. That would've been, what, forties?

Larry: They were still dumping when we built our house.

Aaron: Oh, they were, okay.

Larry: And they started dumping there on what we called Murray's hole, right on the bend to the river. And as soon as we bought the farm we stopped that—no more dumping on the farm. That was kind of an eye-sore in front of our new home, where that rubber was exposed. Little by little I got fill-dirt over the top of it and grew myrtle(??) on it, and it looked a lot nicer after that.

Aaron: We should be keeping an eye out for some of the walnuts, and in fact, here are two of them. I suspect those must be some of what you planted.

Larry: Yeah, I always call this, (unintelligible).

Might be some tulip poplar scattered around here too.

Aaron: Yeah, yep. And I know without a doubt that over on this side, that there is burr oak.

Larry: Yeah, we found some the other day.

Aaron: We saw some out there, that's right.

(pause)

Larry: A fellow by the name of Schrock here in town, I think he was a city councilman at one time, somehow organized a group of people—the river was getting a lot of debris and logjams—and he got some, I don't know if it was indiana wood or who it was, but they came in here with what they call tree farmers. They have a motor and driver, but there's a big universal joint in the middle of it, and they can haul trees and all of that kind of stuff. And they came in and actually drove down the river. They were so elevated that they could—

Aaron: They could get right into the bed?

Larry: And uh, they dumped all the logs out. They pulled them off to the side and wired them to other trees and so on. It really opened up the river. The idea behind it was that it was going to flow faster and so on like that, and they could run canoes down through, which, you know, didn't last long. It wasn't long until, bang, there was more logjams.

Aaron: It doesn't take long at all.

Larry: Yeah.

Aaron: Before it clogs up again, that's for sure.

Winters And Turning The Race Into A Skating Rink

Aaron: When you were young, did the river freeze over?

Larry: No. I never saw the Elkhart River freeze over. I guess there were enough springs in it that it kept that water warm enough that it didn't—now I saw ice out on it, you know—but almost always there was an opening in the middle where the main current was. The temperature of the water and the current kept it from freezing.

Aaron: Enough to keep it from freezing.

Larry: Now it was a different story with the canal. In fact, we tried one year, when one of the other superintendents were here, we tried, I think we had a child drown down by Rieth-Riley, through the ice. So we drained it down so that it was just a few feet deep, or very shallow. And

the idea would be that it would freeze solid and we would have this huge long ice-skating rink, so it would give recreation, and it would be safe—if anyone fell through they could touch bottom.

Well, what we did was kill off all the animals. The turtles, the crawfish, all those things that dig into the mud for the winter, and boy when the water came in, when we let the water in, in the spring, it was like dealing with skeletons.

Aaron: No kidding.

Changes In The Forest + Taking Kids Into The Forest To Play

Larry: (to passerby) Good morning.

We learned our lesson that the detriment was much worse than it was what we tried to cure. So we didn't—now here we still have some pines that managed to get enough light that they survived.

Aaron: They're hanging in there yet, but, you know—

Larry: It won't be long.

Aaron: It won't be long. I mean, you look at a tulip tree like this one, I mean, its beginning to over-top those.

Larry: Yeah, and when that covers, it won't be long. That one came out pretty good. A lot of the tulips lost their tops when that, not hurricane, what do you call it?

Aaron: Tornado.

Larry: Tornado, when a tornado came through down here it took the tops out of the tulip poplar—they're so soft. But that one came through in pretty good shape.

Aaron: Yeah, that one did. Well, and that guy who just came walking out here with his dog, you know, he's one of these folks who, he doesn't realize.

Larry: What it took?

Aaron: Who made these woods for him.

Larry: Just so they can enjoy it, that's the important thing.

Larry: Should we walk down this way?

Aaron: Yeah, let's walk down this way a little bit.

Larry: This one okay with you, Dave?

Aaron: You need some more spray?

David: No, I'm good.

Aaron: No, okay.

Taking Kids Into The Forest To Play

Well, and Larry, just so you know, one of the things that I'm working on with Parkside Elementary, with second graders for this fall—well this entire school year—is to spend time actually in this particular part of the woods, hopefully as much as like three hours. They'll do some hiking. They'll do some kind of sitting and observing, and then, what I'm especially excited about, is providing them some time to play out here in the woods.

And I'm so excited about this. The teachers are excited about this. I've talked to the Wellingtons about using this portion. You can see right here, I think it's probably some of the Wellington kids who've done this.

Larry: Yeah, yeah, good.

Aaron: Right, very good. And so many kids, unlike you, don't have that experience of just, you know, playing out in the woods.

Larry: That's right.

Aaron: It's going to be so interesting to observe these kids. They're not going to know what to do.

Larry: Oh, this is fantastic. That's great.

Aaron: That's what we are working on for this year, and hopefully that's something we can grow. Get them out in the woods and let them figure it out.

Larry: That's great. You know, we used to call this area down here, especially on the other side, Mendy's woods. A fellow by the name of Mendenhall used to teach shop in the old junior high school. And in the spring—no in the fall—we had to collect so many leaves and identify them. And he would bring us down in his truck or car and turn us loose. And we were supposed to be at a certain spot at a certain time, and then he would take us back to the school, and we all would collect our leaves and paste them in a scrapbook.

Aaron: Identify them.

Larry: So we always called it Mendy's woods.

End of Play

Larry: I've got my orientation a little better than when you and I were out the other day. I really got turned around quick.

Aaron: Well, I'm not surprised. It has changed.

Larry: You can see the cottonwoods peaking out up through there.

Aaron: You're right, you're right.

Larry: That low ground always had huge cottonwoods growing in it.

Aaron: Okay. Yeah, right, it is decidedly lower out that way from where we are isn't it?

Larry: Mhmm, yeah. And when we planted, we followed that low spot. It runs on a curve, starts at the river, comes out, kind of comes back. Actually, the final end of it is out in the front field out there, by the old house—

Aaron: Oh yeah.

Larry: That's sort of where it ended.

Aaron: Adam Scharf who owns the homestead there, he has dug a pond there now. I don't know whether you've ever noticed that.

Larry: I think I had seen that there was a pond there. A few years back I drove down through there. (pause) Well, it should hold water. They used to have a spring house out there, where they kept their butter and everything.

Aaron: Oh, did they?

Larry: Yeah, it was on the road that came down—about halfway down between the bridge and the house—they had a little building built there. I think they'd taken some field tiles out, and the water ran through that, and that's where they kept their milk and stuff to cool it.

Aaron: Was that still there when you bought the property?

Larry: No, the foundation was there, but not the building anymore.

Aaron: Not the building anymore. (pause) Look at this tulip tree here, Larry. Look at that.

Larry: Oh gosh, wow.

Aaron: Isn't that something?

Larry: Yeah, I guess so. What would you guess that—how tall would you guess that is?

Aaron: Oh goodness. At least sixty, it's got to pushing seventy, maybe more. I mean you can't even really see the top of it. That is, what a log buyer looks at.

Larry: I suppose eventually those cottonwood trees will die and then these will take over.

Aaron: That's right. Right, I think your right.

Larry: Somewhere in here I planted a burr oak tree for my dad—I think I might have shared with you that time.

Aaron: Yeah.

Larry: And I thought I would come back here and I would find that burr oak and see how's it doing—boy that was wishful thinking.

Aaron: (Laughs) Hopefully it's still in there.

Larry: Yeah. Oh my. Hey, I noticed—and I supposed the park department did this—planted, is it uh, crabapple, along the canal bank.

Aaron: There are some crabapple, yeah, that were, and I think some serviceberry maybe. Those were planted—actually those were planted like fourteen years ago—shortly before I started. The hospital began to donate trees to the city, and those were some of the first trees that were planted with that donation. That was just before I started.

Larry: Well they're pretty. It looks nice. I'm kinda surprised because they always are trying to keep trees off the levy because the roots would cause leaks.

Aaron: Yeah, right, so we didn't plant any more since then.

Larry: Grandfather those in.

Aaron: That's right, that's right.

Larry: Now, if I was going to turn my body so that I was looking at the corner of the house, would I be about right here?

Aaron: The house that you built?

Larry: Yeah.

Aaron: Um, it would actually be back more this way.

Larry: More this way, okay. Alright.

Aaron: The Hoke house would be kind of out this way more.

Larry: Okay. Up that way, okay.

Aaron: Yeah, yeah. So yeah, I mean the pines are hanging in here, but it's not going to be for much longer I don't think.

Larry: Well, I can remember very clearly at one stage where there was hardly any ground growth at all. It was all needles from the pine trees.

Aaron: Yeah, right, okay.

Larry: And you'd look through here and it was like a shelf, the pine trees had leaves above so high, and you could see through the whole thing. And now, they've opened up.

Aaron: It's really opened up, hasn't it?

Larry: Boy, the woodpeckers have found the dead pines.

Aaron: That's right. Right, and I mean, you can see where they are petering out. I mean, this one, (knocks on tree) that one's done right there, as is the next one. But that's just as it was designed.

Larry: There's a wild cherry.

Aaron: Yeah, right. That's right. You didn't plant that.

Larry: I might have planted a few wild cherries, but they got in by mistake. I never planted a thousand wild cherries or anything like that. Maybe twenty-five at the most or something. I think they came twenty-five in a bundle or something like that.

Aaron: Well, it's totally possible that it just volunteered.

Planting The Classified Forest

Larry: Yeah, yeah. In fact, when the forester came down and looked the place all over to clear cut it to go into the classified forest, he didn't spend a great deal of time here, but he said, "you're not going to make any money off of this at all, because there aren't any trees here of value." And then, when they came down and actually cut it, and they got back here on some of the low ground and so on that he didn't look at, they found a lot of wild cherry. So we made pretty decent money off of the clear cut.

Aaron: You did?

Larry: Yeah.

Aaron: Okay. I mean, there was some fairly sizeable cherry?

Larry: Yeah. I would way that, oh beside cottonwood, cherry was probably the dominant. You know we had huge red elm, but they had died already from the dutch elm disease.

Aaron: So they required you to clear cut everything before.

Larry: Everything. Everything that was twenty-four inches chest high had to come down.

Aaron: Had to come down, okay. And that was simply to be able to put in the desired species for the plantation?

Larry: Yeah, and then they took soil samples all over the place, and then from the soil samples they recommended the type of tree that should go into it. So it ended up red oak, tulip poplar, and some cypress, and a few cherry that I stuck out around the house and so on. But it was pretty much walnut and red oak—no white oak. I didn't plant any white oak at all.

David: Who's the they, when "they" came in and took the samples?

Larry: What was the date?

David: Or who's the they? Who?

Larry: Oh, the forestry, the state forestry.

Aaron: D-N-R.

Larry: Yeah, they're well organized. They've got it all pointed out. And you have to abide close by it. You've got an inspection every—I think back then it was every two years.

Aaron: Was it every two years?

Larry: Yeah, and the big thing that I was always cited for and needed to do more work on was the vines. I had a lot of vines growing up, choking the trees and so on.

Aaron: Grape vines or other things too? Virginia creeper?

Larry: I think all type of vines. And I would come out in the wintertime. And finally I bought a little—it was an axe—but it had a hose running somehow to the blade.

Aaron: Yeah, okay.

Larry: And there was some-kind of blue liquid. A container of that went on my belt, and I would take the axe and whack that vine. Whether I cut it in two or not, I deposited that blue stuff on it, so it died.

Aaron: It was an herbicide, okay.

Larry: Yeah, it was something that killed trees, or vines. Killed vines yeah.

Aaron: And that helped you to kind of get on top of it?

Larry: Well yeah. I kind of learned a hard lesson too. I planted the circle in front of the house all with nuts—some kind of nut tree around there, had quite a variety of them. And weaseled in between there was a mulberry tree, a couple mulberry trees. So I took my axe, and, boy, I circled that entire mulberry tree, and I did it rather early in the fall. I couldn't see any change in the tree at all. I thought, well, those mulberries, they're hearty. So seemed to me like I may have treated it two or three times and really chopped into it. The next spring, not only did the mulberry not come out in leaves, a couple tulip poplars about twenty-five feet away—evidently travelled through the roots.

Aaron: Yeah, right.

Larry: So the stuff worked better than I thought it would.

Aaron: Better than you had hoped.

Evidence Of Tornado Damage

Larry: There's a tulip poplar, and something bent him over.

Aaron: Yeah, that's right. You can see actually where that one's kind of heaved.

Larry: Wanted to pull out the root there.

Aaron: Yeah, right.

Larry: Oh yeah, it hit hard here.

Aaron: It sure did.

Larry: See right down where everything is leaning over. That was the one that came down eighth street I think.

Aaron: I think it was, yeah, and really did a number on eighth street.

David: In like sixty-seven?

Aaron: No, this was.

David: Newer one?

Aaron: Yeah, right, more recently. This would've been in ten or eleven—twenty-ten or eleven.

Larry: Yeah, I was gone already, because I got letters from friends back here who told me what happened.

Aaron: That was, boy, that was a big mess.

Larry: There's a cherry coming up.

Aaron: That's part of what's exciting for me to see too, Larry, is how the secondary growth is starting to catch in here. I'm sure you didn't plant these hackberries.

Larry: No, no.

Aaron: But here they come too.

Larry: That's a line, that's a marker on the survey of the farm, that tree.

Aaron: Okay, the really big oak back there?

Larry: Yeah, that marked that corner, that particular corner, so that is actually on the survey map. I guess they thought those trees would last forever.

Aaron: Sometimes call those witness trees.

Larry: Yeah, that's right.

Aaron: Yeah, that's cool. That's a big one.

End of Tornado

Aaron: What if we [go] up to this path, and we'll circle back towards the house? And then back again towards the reith center?

Larry: Okay.

Aaron: That sound all right?

Larry: Sure, however it works for you. I've got plenty of time. I've got one place I'm supposed to be in the middle of the afternoon, but I'm in good shape there.

David: I have to go do something just from 11:30 to 12:00, so I could come back.

Aaron: So it's like ten-till eleven right now, so what if we do circle back? That sound good?

Larry: Let me get my paper out, see if there was anything that I thought was important?

Aaron: Yeah, I got mine here too.

Larry: I wanted to be sure that we got a reminder about a crossing here.

Raising Cattle On The Farm

Aaron: Yeah, I appreciate that a lot. Yeah, you did talk about the muskrat trapping. One thing you'd mentioned about was, how early on when you'd bought the property, you had cattle out

here. There was some story with that, or how the cattle hadn't really been your intention, but you abided in them for a time or something like that.

Larry: Yeah, the old farm house of course was for sale when we moved back on the river, and my father-in-law decided that we would like to buy that, and I thought, well, that's a pretty good deal for the children to have their grandparents close by and all that kind of thing. And then when he came down he said, "I want half the farm." And he liked horses, and he wanted to have horses in the barn and so on.

So I thought, well it isn't going to hurt anything, and it will help keep things cleaned up. But then he went from horses to cattle, and boy the cattle and the trees that I had planted just didn't mix at all.

Aaron: Oh, you had already started planting.

Larry: I had already started planting. And we had a big asparagus patch on the side of the hill over there, and that worked out just fine with the trees until the trees got too big, but even then it survived. But he ran cattle on that, and boy, just in two years it was done. They ate the roots and everything. So we had a little conflict with that, and he started going to Florida in the wintertime, and I had the job of taking care of the cattle.

But my daughter had her horse, and my wife had a horse, so I was taking care of things for myself, also, but I got tired of that pretty quick. One winter the jockey came down that bought our steers, the males that were born in the spring. He would come down, and we would fatten them up and then we'd sell them. So he came down to give me a price on the steers, and that particular time instead of giving me a price like he usually did, he said, "I'll call you tomorrow." Well then, he called me back and he said—by that time we had maybe twelve-fifteen head, including the steers and heifers and so on—and he said, "I'd like to buy the entire heard."

And I said, "Sold."

Aaron: (laughs)

Larry: So when my father-in-law came back I told him that we aren't going to raise cattle any more. We're going all the way into the trees, and by that time he was older and they went out to Greencroft and it worked out.

Aaron: He was ready to be done with that too.

Dueling Visions Of The Value Of The Tree Farm

Larry: Yeah, it worked out. But there was a period of time there, where we really were at loggerheads between the trees and—he just couldn't understand why anybody—and I tell you, the people that were really against it were the Hokes.

Aaron: The Hokes.

Larry: Yeah, the sons lived down here at the end of the road. And Ron bought our house to have his mother-in-law in it and some things. And he just couldn't understand why in the world we would plant trees when his ancestors worked so hard to clear this land, and how hard they worked, they'd just roll over in their graves if they knew I was planting all these trees. And I didn't listen, so it all worked out.

Aaron: I mean, that turnover is so remarkable, and so I mean, Larry, tell me, what it is like for you, then, to walk into this woods now, forty-some years after you planted it. Closing in on fifty I suppose. What does it feel like?

Larry: Well, I tell you, I'm eighty-four now, and the greatest joys in my life have been some things that we really had to work hard—trails, rails to trails, just trails in town, any kind of a trail. Had a terrible time trying to get people to see the advantage of having these things. But what a reward it is now to see that, not necessarily that we were right, but at least we had a concept that's going to survive.

And the same way with the trees here. It was amazing, the previous owners were really opposed to doing this. My father-in-law was never happy that we did this. But I always had my dad, although he died very young, but he was really the instigator. He could see what this would be and what it would mean to the people and what it would mean to the city of Goshen. He wasn't a real tree hugger or an environmentalist that was out carrying signs or anything like that. It was just good common sense, and he preached that to me, so I was able to carry it on.

Middlebury Trout Stream

Those two things, and we had a trout stream. There's a trout stream over in Middlebury that my father and I and then Jim and my boys, and I had fished for years. And he was afraid that eventually—it went through Amish country—and he was afraid that eventually the Amish would peter out and then that stream—people would start building on it, and they'd dump sewage in it, and we'd lose the only trout stream we had. And he really preached to Mike, my son, the dentist, and he and Jim—he wrote for the United Press and came back to Goshen retired, I can't think of his last name, Walsh?—anyways, those two put their heads together, and there's now thirteen miles of that that is catch and release. The only catch and release stream in the state of Indiana.

Aaron: And it's that stream?

Larry: And it's that stream. And the people come from all over the United States to fish a catch and release stream because they know they're going to get fish!

It Wasn't Easy, But It Was Worth It

Larry: I guess those three things are the really big things that happened in my life, and they were all things that—the county park board asked me to write some articles about what it was like to be on the first board that the state actually mandated, park department, for the state of Indiana, and the title of everything I wrote was, “It was hard.” Because we had so much, oh we don’t have any money, people who don’t want this, and then people didn’t want things in their backyard and all of that.

But it turned out, you know, look at Ox Bow Park and Bonneyville Park and all those things. So those have been very, very satisfactory in my life and played a big part. And therefore it makes it easy for me now to hug a tree.

Aaron: Yeah, right.

Larry: Because I’ve got the experience of something turning out really good. And plus, I’ve got people like you, at a young age, that are going to perpetuate it, and it’s just going to multiply more and more and more.

Aaron: You’ve left quite an inheritance.

A Beech Tree On The Farm

Aaron: I stopped here at this spot because this is one of the things I wanted to point out to you. I’ve been watching for about four years now. This is a beech tree.

Larry: You’re kidding me.

Aaron: Naw, this is a beech tree. And you probably know that beech trees—this is a climax species.

Larry: That’s right, it’s a climax species.

Aaron: You don’t get a beech until you’ve got a forest that is mature. And so, here it is.

Larry: Well, that’s answer to prayer.

Aaron: It is an answer to prayer.

Larry: I mean, that’s a religious tree right there.

Aaron: It is. It is. This is the thing that indicates, to me, that what has happened here, is coming into full fruition.

Larry: Man, that’s exciting.

Aaron: It is very exciting.

Larry: Oh man, I'm glad you pointed that out. You don't know how important that is. Gee-whiz. Boy, I tell you, that made my day.

Aaron: It's a real indication to me of your vision and your dad's vision.

Larry: That's absolutely fantastic. And as far as I know we never had a beech tree on the farm.

Aaron: Okay, right and so, how did it get here? The wildlife that followed the forest that you planted, somebody, some squirrel I suppose, travelled it in here and it found that it was the time now.

Larry: Isn't that fantastic. Well, good for you. Man, you know your business. We're very, very fortunate to have you as our forester, I'll tell you.

Aaron: The day that I first noticed it—realized what it was—I went back and I wrote about it.

Larry: Did you? Good for you.

Aaron: I did, I did.

Larry: Oh wonderful, that's fantastic.

Aaron: Here it is, here it is.

Larry: A beech tree on the farm. Wow. That's fantastic.

Aaron: It is. It is.

Larry: Well, that will be going out on the emails today.

Aaron: Yeah okay, good, good. I figured that you would have an appreciation for what that means.

Larry: I wouldn't have recognized it.

Aaron: There it is.

Larry: Oh that's great.

Larry: What do we have growing here?

Aaron: This is a hackberry. And again, you probably didn't plant that one I'm guessing.

Larry: No, no.

Aaron: But that's become an impressive tree, too, hasn't it.

Larry: Yeah, it would've been fairly good size. I should remember that one, because it certainly would've been in existence.

Aaron: It seems like it probably would've been. I don't know if maybe this is an old fencerow along here. There's something about some of the other trees along here that make it feel that way. Some of the mulberries.

Larry: Yeah, there was a fencerow in this.

Aaron: So maybe—

Larry: Yeah, and there's a wild cherry.

Aaron: Yep, (unintelligible) cherry, mulberry, and then that hackberry is kind of right in that line, and so maybe they weren't really big, but they were kind of hanging out in there in that fencerow.

Larry: Huh, a beech tree. By golly that's wonderful.

Aaron: That's exciting, and exciting development. Of course, we've also got some tree of heaven.

(both laugh)

Larry: Yeah, they kind of come with it.

(unintelligible)

Larry: You know, at the time these were planted, John Mansville had a big shredder and after so many years they were supposed to come in and cut all the white pine down, and shred them up.

Aaron: Okay, I thought I remembered you saying something about that too. So what happened?

Larry: So they went out of business. They made chipboard with them, and then it no longer existed, so we didn't have any way to market the pine trees, nor did I care to. You know, it really was something to see the pine trees.

Aaron: Well, it is.

Larry: Yeah, that's the old fencerow.

Aaron: Okay, okay, the old fencerow there.

Larry: Yeah, I recognize that.

Aaron: I mean, the pines, I would like to imagine that some of them will survive, because there's something really remarkable about them too.

Larry: The one's on the edge.

Aaron: Yeah right, the ones on the edge, that's right. Some of these, right along through here, are really pretty gorgeous.

Larry: Yeah, there's a line that the electricity came in on that followed that fence row.

Aaron: Okay, that makes sense.

Larry: A beech tree, that's really fantastic. Gosh, that is really something.

Aaron: Boy, I'm glad that you appreciate that.

Larry: Oh, that really means a lot. Boy, that's something.

Aaron: So that's the house there.

The Largest Brown Trout Of 1962

Larry: All right, this would've been what we called Murray's bend here.

Aaron: Okay, on the river here?

Larry: On the river, yeah. That was a good—because the river came down and made, sort of an 's' curve, it dug out a hole and that was where pike lived in that hole.

Aaron: Okay.

Larry: Yeah, I had a pleasant experience with that. My dad and I were out trout fishing, and we'd had a cut morning. We'd caught some brown trout and the sun was up and the fish had stopped hitting, and so I said, "I'm going to go up this little creek." It's called Rowe Eden Ditch, I'm going to go up this creek, and I know a spot where there's a big culvert under the county line road, and I'm going to catch some shiners, and we'll come home and fish for pike here on the bend.

Well, we thought that was a pretty good idea, so I took off and left him where he was trout fishing. Crawled out on this big cistern and still had my waders on. I just tied on a little tiny bluegill hook, put a little piece of nightcrawler on it, not very big, dropped it down there expecting to get a shiner to bite really quick, and the doggone thing hooked on the bottom, and it kind of provoked me. So I decided, well, I'll have to break off to get out, so I just really horsed that thing, and well, here you know, the stick that I was hooked on apparently started to come up. And so I thought, well, I'll just pull the stick out and unhook my hook.

Well, it wasn't long until a big tail with big orange and yellow spots on it—it was a huge brown trout! And then I got buck fever. Oh, what in the world. How was I ever going to land it up on the culvert and all that kind of stuff. And I finally jumped off the culvert down into the creek, and I jumped as close as I could to the side because I didn't know exactly how deep the hole was. And fought him and fought him, and boy, I really had to talk to him to get him not to go where he wanted to go.

And finally got him out of the hole, and the stream was quite shallow, it divided, and I ran him down stream and beached him up on a sandbar down there because I didn't have a net big enough for him. And you know, that was the largest brown trout caught in the state of Indiana in 1962.

Aaron: No kidding.

Larry: Yeah, I won the state award for biggest brown trout.

Aaron: How big was it? Do you remember?

Larry: Oh, it was six pounds something. My wife was pregnant, and the baby weighed more than the trout did, I remember that. But you know, all the conservation clubs and things like that, they wanted me to come and give a talk on how I caught that trout, and the exotic baits they thought I used and all that kind of stuff. And I would have to say, "No, I just caught it on a little piece of nightcrawler."

(laughter; unintelligible)

But when I finally did land him and get him out of the water, I heard people clapping and saying (unintelligible). The Amish were going to church, and it was on Sunday morning, and here they were parked up there by that culvert, and they were all watching me land that fish. That was quite an experience.

Aaron: Did you get like a certificate or a—

Larry: —Oh yeah, I got a patch to put on the shoulder of my fishing vest. I got my picture in the paper, oh my. Claim to fame. Fifteen minutes and it's over with.

Aaron: Meanwhile, your dad was still waiting for you.

Larry: (Laughs) As soon as I went back to pick him up he said, "Hey, I've got a friend that runs a grocery store in Middlebury We're going to go in there and weigh this because I think you may have a record fish here." So we did.

Aaron: And he was right.

Larry: But I never had it stuffed or anything like that. I kept it in my freezer for a few years, but then it got to looking pretty tough.

Aaron: (Laughs)

Amish Roots

Aaron: Well, your dad grew up Amish, right?

Larry: Yeah, right. Yeah, he was old-order raised, Bontrager Amish. But when he was sixteen, then he refused to join church. And when that happened, they asked him to leave home. I gave you the book?

Aaron: Yeah, I've read a little bit in it there.

Larry: I don't think his father ever meant to have him leave home and stay away. I think his father thought that when he got out into the English society it wouldn't take it long for him to realize that the Amish society was better, and he would come back home. But dad was a free thinker, and he was kind of ahead of himself. He seemed to be an environmentalist before that word—I even knew what it meant.

Aaron: Yeah, right, right. Well, what you told me about him makes me think that he was kind of seeing some trends in our society and maybe that's partly because of his Amish background that he was able to see some of that.

Larry: Yeah, he was the youngest of—how many were there—six or seven children, and there was quite a bit of space between him and the next male. So I think he had quite a bit of time alone, quite a bit of time to think and contemplate and so on.

Aaron: Well, I mean, it's an interesting kind of cultural interplay in this part of the world isn't it?

Larry: Yes, it is.

Aaron: It's not necessarily unique to Elkhart County, there are other spots throughout the U.S., but it is an interesting—

Larry: Friday night I'm going out to a ride-in. You know they have a socialistic health system—the Amish. They all take care of each other. And now the operations are getting to be so expensive that even though they all get together they can't afford it. So they have fundraisers, and one of the things that they do is they have "ride-ins." There are some pretty nice paths from Middlebury up to some of the Amish farms in LaGrange county. And they'll have what they call a "ride-in" and then they'll camp out overnight, and they use these big apple butter pots, make stew out of them and so on.

Of course, I just got to know my relatives, my Amish relatives, just a few years ago.

Aaron: Okay, wow.

Larry: So Friday night I'm going out to a "ride-in" and get to see my cousins and we'll chat about wild turkeys and things like that.

Aaron: Will you stay overnight?

Larry: No, not this time. The last one I went to, they asked me to take photographs of it because they wanted to make a calendar for a young fellow that was addicted to drugs, and they were sending him down to a place to clean out. But mom and dad just didn't want me to mix with them, so I never got to meet any of my relatives or anything while they were alive.

When they died, then a friend from Mississippi had sort of a similar situation with his father, and you'll see in the book, when he came back and asked me to come along with him to help plan a Beachy reunion. He wanted to make peace with his aunts, who would be his father's sisters. And it was an interesting get together because that was the first time I'd ever been with any of my relatives. And come to find out there were just living a few miles outside of Goshen.

Aaron: All this time.

Larry: Yeah. By the way, one of the things we did during the reunion was come down and look at the tree farm.

Aaron: Oh you did? Oh wow.

Larry: Yeah. There were ever so many of them that wanted to—they had read about it in the paper—and they wanted to see the tree farm.

Aaron: And had never seen it before?

Larry: No.

Aaron: Oh, that's pretty cool. I'm aware of some different Amish folks, well, there are two Amish guys who come in here regularly to bird. On Wednesday mornings there's sort of an informal birding group that meets there.

Larry: Yeah, they are great birders. I understand they really are into that.

Aaron: They are. Oh my goodness they are incredible birders. Occasionally, very, very occasionally, I, you know, take a half-hour to go out with them, and kind of train my eye and ear a little bit. But man, talk about seeing the world in a different—or hearing the world in a different way. Those guys, they pick up stuff that I just never knew was there. I don't know if that's unusual among Amish or maybe you know some others who are really into that.

Larry: There were so many things that when dad was a young man, his father, the youngest male of the family inherits the farm. And so he was supposed to inherit the farm.

Aaron: That was supposed to have been your dad?

Larry: Yeah, and the father gave everyone some livestock to contribute when they got married, but instead of giving a hog or a cow to my dad, he gave my dad a riding horse. Riding a horse in the saddle back in those days was a pleasure that Amish weren't supposed to take part in. So, in some ways it seems to me that he kind of helped my dad develop his own thinking, you know.

Aaron: He set him on that horse.

Larry: Yeah, that horse played a big role in his life. He used to race trains with it, and people around there got to know Sean(??) Beachy because he—

Aaron: —Train racer—

Larry: Raced trains, yeah.

Impacts On Future Generations

Larry: Boy, this is nice.

Aaron: Yeah, yep, this is a nice trail—the story trail.

Larry: Yeah, I really am proud you guys are, like the program you're talking about at Parkside school and things like that, because those are our adults coming up.

Aaron: Yeah, that's right.

Larry: The things they take for granted now are going to be so important to them later on in life.

Aaron: They're going to be so important, and I got to say that Jeremy, our mayor, he has got the vision for that.

Larry: Good, I'm glad to hear that.

Aaron: And he is pushing for these kinds of things too, and just recognizing that we've got to find ways to inspire kids to become the adults that we need them to be.

Whew, there comes the heat.

David: Yeah, that's amazing.

Aaron: It is, that is just—

Larry: Well, we were in Oregon, and they had the most rain that they had ever received in a certain period of time, just a terribly hard rain and then it got cold. It reminded me of the days when I backpacked in the mountains and it would be so cold at night, you'd roll on a part of your sleeping bag that wasn't warm and it'd wake you up.

Aaron: Laughs.

(Video Fades out)

Larry Is Proud Of Goshen

Larry: I'm so proud of Goshen. We don't have near the solar panels. I don't know a single person that has a solar panel on their roof in Palm City, Florida. The electric company has made it very, very hard to put panels up, but still, there were a lot of incentives from the federal government, but no one took advantage of it. There just wasn't much publicity given or anything like that. It's too bad, but, boy, things are, I couldn't believe driving down College Avenue when I saw all the solar panels. Over there, there's panels up on the roof. Gee whiz.

Well, this has been a real pleasure for me, you two.

Aaron: Yeah, thank you so much, Larry. I'm so appreciative of your time.

Larry: Well don't hesitate, you've got my email now, and we'll stay in touch.

Aaron: We'll definitely stay in touch.

Larry: I want to know how that beech tree is doing. I can't tell you how happy I am to see that. It's just exactly like you said, that's the climax species. Boy, we didn't have any. When I moved here, there were none; none the whole time that I was here.

Aaron: There are so few in town, that when I see them or notice them, boy, I mark it down.

Larry: Latch onto it.