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Interview with Kokosing Gap Trail Chairman, Phil Samuel

Casey Lewis

Phil Samuel

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Casey Lewis
October 26, 1995
ANSO 67-68
Howard Sacks

Interview with Kokosing Gap Trail Chairman, Phil Samuel

Wednesday, October 25th, 1995, 8:00 p.m., at the home of Phil Samuel, 305 E. Brooklyn Street, Gambier, Ohio. Interviewer Casey Lewis.

CL: Today, the 25th of October, I, Casey Lewis, am interviewing Phil Samuel, chairman of the Kokosing Gap Trail located in Knox County. And my first question to you Phil is how long have you been the chairman of the Gap Trail?

PS: Ah, I proposed the trail project to the Knox County Commissioners in 1985. We created a board in 1987- I was elected president and have been ever since. The first part of the trail was completed in 1991 and the second part of the trail was completed in 1994.

CL: And where does the funding come from?

PS: For the trail?

CL: Yeah.

PS: The construction and the property acquisition funds come from a portion of the Federal Gasoline Sales Tax. Most of the Federal Gasoline Sales Tax goes towards highway construction but a small portion is diverted for alternative transportation projects, ah, light rail, commuting buses and bike trails.

CL: Okay, so most of it comes from this Federal...

PS: We got all the money to construct the trail and buy the property from the Gasoline Sales Tax, ah, although we are the largest, paved, ah, trail in a five state area that's volunteer maintained. Most trails are in park systems.

CL: How long is the trail?

PS: Fourteen miles long.

CL: And the first part of it, how long is that?

PS: Ah, we built from Mount Vernon to Gambier which is four and a

half miles. That's where we got our feet wet and got everybody accustomed to the rules of using the trail and, ah, how much effort it would take to maintain a, ah, skinny park, we call it.

CL: Did you grow up in Knox County?

PS: I did not grow up in Know County- I grew up in southern Ohio near Portsmouth.

CL: Okay. And when did you move to this area?

PS: Ah, we moved to Knox County in December of 1980 and I worked for Kenyon College for five and a half years.

CL: And do you still work for Kenyon?

PS: I work for Denison University.

CL: AAAHHH. You do?!! What did you do for Kenyon?

PS: I was editor of the alumni magazine- The Bulletin, they call it- which you will soon be receiving.

CL: Yes, next year... scary thought. And what do you do for Denison?

PS: I edit the alumni magazine and I also do all the admissions photography for admissions publications. I do all the photography for the alumni magazine.

CL: And how did you end up moving from southern Ohio to this area?

PS: When I graduated from college my wife got a job at Ohio University- she got her masters there- and then it came time to look for work and that led up to Columbus, Ohio. And, ah, both of us grew up in smaller towns then Columbus and we weren't thrilled with the Columbus metropolitan area and so when a job came up here I aggressively pursued it. We really like the very small town atmosphere and we think it is a great place to raise our kids.

CL: And what was the name of the town you grew up in?

PS: Portsmouth

CL: And what did your parents do?

PS: My mom was a housewife so she raised to kids- probably a job

and a half knowing my childhood. And my father was in retailing a large department store and he was vice-president there.

CL: Okay, and was that farm area down there?

PS: It was not farm area. Portsmouth was a town about population 45 to 50 thousand.

CL: What do you see the differences between this Knox County community and Portsmouth?

PS: I guess the biggest difference is that I guess I know more people here. I'm also elected to village council in Gambier. So, I'm involved in a couple of activities that lead me to meet and work with other people and I like that. Ah, I'm sure that same sort of thing could happen in larger communities, and it does, I just prefer living in a town that doesn't have any traffic lights.

CL: I know what you mean... makes it easier. Going back to the Gap Trail, how did you get started on it? Were you the one that proposed the idea?

PS: I was the one that proposed it. Ah, I saw an abandoned piece of property that was collecting trash, that wasn't being used for any purpose. It couldn't be used for farming, ah, most of the railroad rightaway was built up so it was worthless for farming. And I proposed to the commissioners that we convert it into a paved recreational area. They thought it was a terrific idea, they supported it a hundred percent and said we don't have a penny to spend on it. So, I went out and found that there were need funds available to purchase these things, they're called Rails to Trails. Um, back in '85 there weren't very many of them in the United States and it took us a long time to get through it. A lot of property owners had concerns about what was gonna happen. It was hard for many people to visualize what a paved trail would be. Um, but eventually, in 1991 we got the first part of the trail done. And true to their work, commissioners have yet to spend a penny on the project. They haven't spent a dime on it. We raise all our own money for projects, the rest room/picnic shelter in Gambier is all volunteer, it's all gifts- parking lots, bike racks, benches, water fountains.

CL: Where do you get most of the gifts from, just people...?

PS: We do a lot of fund-raising sort of things. In about a month I will send out a direct mail appeal to about a hundred people. Ah, we have races on the trail the first weekend of October, skate race,

that brings in about \$2000. We chip Christmas trees the first weekend in January and charge a buck a tree and we clear about \$800 on that, so about four hours worth of work. Um, and then people just send us gifts. We let it be known on our bulletin boards that we're poor, we don't receive any tax money, we could use your help. We propose a lot of ideas. If you go down and use the trail and you loose weight why don't you send us five bucks a pound. If you use the trail quite a bit why don't you send us a buck a week. It is pretty cheap dues for a health club.

CL: Yeah, it is.

PS: So, there are a variety of ways we get our funding.

CL: When you said that... I don't really know a lot of history about the trail. I vaguely knew something about the railroad that was there before... was it just... was all the trail previously railroad?

PS: Yes. It's all built on a railroad rightaway and the line has been abandoned for, ah, ten or fifteen years. I remember a train coming through Gambier when I first came here. There was a sand quarry up in Millwood that had special sand for glass and you'd see a little old diesel freight go chugging up the Kokosing Valley once a week to go pick up a few cars of sand. Eventually they found that not to be economically feasible and they ended the line. But it's fascinating... I mean, there used to be four passenger trains a day through Gambier.

CL: Oh my gosh.

PS: And every once in a while what they called blue ribbon trains would come up through Columbus to go to Cleveland and they would just speed right up through here. Those were the '20s, '30s and '40s. So, we've taken one idea of transportation and turned it into another form of transportation. And the response has been very positive, too.

CL: And who do you... what are the characteristics of most of your clientele, if you can say that?

PS: You know that is hard to peg. We did a trail survey this summer and we asked age and gender, where they lived, when they used the trail, what they used the trail for, and it was all over. We had people in wheelchairs, peoples in their 70s and 80s, we had kids, pregnant women, children in strollers, and its used for everything--jogging, biking, in-line skating, bicycling, of course. So there

isn't one description I can give you of a typical user. Just all over the map.

CL: I know you said after the railroad having gone through it it couldn't be used for farmland anymore, why is that?

PS: Well, because the railroad bed was built up in many places and it wouldn't be economically feasible for a farmer to haul off the ballast and trim all the trees down for a 66 foot wide strip. It would take a big deal of effort to do that. Um.... so it just didn't have any economic value as farmland.

CL: I know that a lot of the farm goes through farmland...

PS: Yeah, our trail is mostly rural.

CL: Because of that do you into contact with farmers at all?

PS: Yeah, we do. There are still people who own property on the trail that are not happy that the trail is there. We tried very hard to be a good neighbor. We make sure that signs are kept posted, that trash is picked up if there is any. The grass is cut, it's kept neat and clean. So, we try to be a good neighbor to the people that boarder along through there. We, of course, would like them to feel the same way. It's a mix. There are people who have property along the trail that truly don't want it there and then there are some who use the trail extensively. They find it a benefit that is so close that they can go out their back door and hop right on.

CL: Do some of the farmers use the trail?

PS: Yeah... it's an interesting one up- it's a good, small community. Near Danville, there is a McLee family and the father runs a cattle operation and is very much opposed to the trail although when we constructed the trail we put in probably \$30,000 worth of fence, new fence, on both sides of the trail for his benefit. Improved drainage from one piece of property to the other. We put in gates to his cattle could be moved across the trail, um... and yet he is very much opposed to that trail being put in. I think most people feel that they've lost some privacy they thought they had when the railway left. On the other hand, Mr. McLee's son owns a house that is very close to the trail and he built a little bridge so his kids can get right down and get on it and go. So, there is a conflict even within that family where one doesn't like it and one really likes and has adjusted whatever adjustment they need in their lifestyle to accommodate the trail. We all don't live forever so

eventually we'll all be gone and somebody can either not like the trail or... but it's been shown in other places that these kinds of trails increase the value of the property around it. Actually, people do want to live close these things.

CL: So they can they can use it?

PS: Yes.

CL: Was the entire trail, the fourteen miles, all railroad before?

PS: Yes. One small piece of the railroad property was sold off in Danville so we had to get off of the railroad property and onto a village street. But it's probably about a quarter of a mile.

CL: That was a village street before, it wasn't farm property or anything like that?

PS: No.

CL: And do you know what that was used for, the property that was bought?

PS: The fella who bought it owns a fertilizer company and he bought it to expand his operation. We approached him about buying the property back from him but he was nervous about having chemicals and fertilizer that close to the trail. He didn't want people wandering into that operation, justifiably so. So, he was not willing to sell off that piece of property. It was a minor, minor inconvenience. No big deal.

CL: Okay, since you've been here... in 1980, have you seen any changes within the community concerning, not only concerning family farming, but development in general? Or do you think it has remained this small town?

PS: Well, a good story is this recent proposal, this super two-lane highway they want to put around Knox County. Ummm... I do believe there is a problem and a solution needs to be made up. This was a very poor proposal and it chewed up a great deal of valuable land that doesn't need to be. That's quite different from the bike trail. People new how wide the trail was- I mean the railroad was there- they knew that railway existed. With this highway, I mean, we're taking property that is now private property. And that's caused a lot of problems in this county. Poor planning on the part of some people in Mount Vernon is putting pressure on the family farmer in

Mount Vernon and Knox County. And so I think that needs to go back to the thinking process. Need to come up with some other solutions.

CL: Yeah, what do you think some other solutions might be? Have you thought of other solutions?

PS: Yeah, I think that Mount Vernon will have to start converting some two way streets to one way and eliminate parking on those streets. They may have to buy up some property and, ahhh, make the streets wider. I think they could expand existing rightaways to better roads.

CL: Do you know if they've passed anything concerning that bill?

PS: That by-pass will die. It's hard to find somebody that is in favor of it. It's too bad. They presented it as here's Plan A and Plan B is to do nothing. Well, not in my opinion. I mean, I think you'd always have Plan B as a back-up. I mean, you brought more than one tape to record with so you have a back-up. This was just a poorly conceived and presented idea- it's either this or nothing. Well, that's not the case. We know that there are other solutions to the problem. I think though that they'll come up with some different ideas.

CL: What are your main concerns behind building this by-pass?

PS: Well, this by-pass will not be built in my lifetime so I'm really not concerned. But I did recently... we got approval and established a park district in Knox County. Not many people knew about it and I'm concerned about green space being gobbled up by developments and housing and that we're not preserving places to, ah, enjoy. So, a park district was just recently established in Knox County and I'm a park commissioner. Now, we don't have any money but we have the authority to put a tax on the ballot if we want to and raise funds to buy property and preserve it.

CL: Do you have any property in mind?

PS: You bet I do!

CL: And where is this property?

PS: In fact you might know this piece of property. It's right off the bike trail. It's the old abandoned quarry that right down there off of Gambier. I don't know if you've ever been back there? If you just go out Zion Road here a little bit and you turn right and you go back and you go down a hill a there is this huge, abandoned

quarry on the left.

CL: Yeah, I think I know where it is.

PS: I mean it's overgrown now... I mean the quarry operations have left many years ago. But know it has become a nice stopping point for birds. I think that piece of property should be preserved and tied into the bike trail so people then can go down in there, make trails around the lake. I think that will happen. I'm working on that one. You come back in ten years and I think we'll have it done.

CL: Besides having slight connections with the family farm through your work with the Gap Trail, do you have any other connections?

PS: I certainly will with this park district. I will with the park district because that obviously property that we would be looking at. Know we may be more welcomed by the family farmer than the developers, that sort of thing. We can actually come and say, "Look, we want to preserve this piece of property forever and would you make a donation or can we buy this from you. We would never take property from someone like a highway... they come in a take your.....

CL: So, when building parks through the park district is there any possibility that you may ask family farmers to buy there land? Is that what you're saying?

PS: Absolutely. But being a poor park district we would obviously ask for a donation first and we would be in a position to accept property as a donation. We attempted this with the landowner of this quarry and he's had offers of \$150,000 for this property....

CL: From who... from developers?

PS: Yes, people who would like to build houses out there.

CL: From family farms at all, do you know?

PS: Well, I don't know. But this one particular person owns quite a bit of property just east of town which would be good for developments, it's very close to Gambier, it's right on the edge of Gambier, the bike trail goes through- he can promote that sort of thing. But he's had a lot of selling. Property has been in his family- it's been passed down to him. And he told me he likes to go down to the quarry and fish. And I propose that we keep it that way so that he and his grandkids can continue to go down to this quarry and fish. And he's not opposed to the idea and he said that

he'd give us first option if he's ready to sell. In that case I would go hustle a quarter of a million dollars.

CL: Just like that.

PS: It can be done. I can probably ask one person in Gambier and that person can write that check.

CL: Nice. I know before you said that one of the reasons you and your wife moved to this area was because you like that small town atmosphere, that small town feel. Ah, do you think by getting rid of the family farm that would diminish that small town feeling? Do you think it is a part of the small town feeling, the family farm?

PS: Well, you know, I don't know. You know, Mount Vernon is just a small town. It's not growing by leaps and bounds. Gambier is even tinier. You know, I don't think so. I mean, Knox County is very rural. There are many farms here. I think that with development pushing out of Columbus some people are going to be walking up to these farmers doors and waving enormous amounts of cash and these people will say, "You bet! I'm outta here." And you can hardly blame them. I mean for years these people have held on to property that's skyrocketed in value and then plummeted in value and it's costing probably just as much to put crops in and harvest them as it is for the money you get. So when somebody comes in and waves a big check in your face you might say, "Honey, it's time to get out of the farming business." And of course then that property is lost. So, I am in favor of keeping these farms cause they essentially preserve green space.

CL: Do think that by getting rid of them and just having Mount Vernon and Gambier as they are now will keep that small town feeling?

PS: No, obviously if the small family farms are being sold off to a person that wants to come in and build a housing tract then that small town is getting a little larger. So, yeah, I have a problem with the way housing is being done now. If the person has twenty acres of property and he puts one house on each acre he's got twenty houses on this thing... I would rather see fifty houses put in a ten acre lot with ten acres of green space as a common area. So, you have cluster tight housing- I mean who wants to cut a 3 acre lawn these days, who has time. So, tighter housing and keep green space for people. I hate to see these small things being sold off but you know who can resist the power of the dollar.

CL: I know before we talked about some of the changes that have

occurred here since you've gotten here in 1980?

PS: Well, at least the changes have been fairly small and subtle. I think the Kokosing Gap Trail is a big change for a lot of people although that essentially that rightaway existed so that we didn't disturb any new property. We now have a lot of people going through somebodies back yard that didn't happen before and I think a lot people think that they've lost their privacy... they've thought they've been encroached. So, the trail is probably one of the biggest changes since come to Knox County in along time.

CL: What are some of the complaints of the farmers? I know you mentioned property... or privacy. Are there any other concerns?

PS: Well, some farmers... Many years ago when the railroad bought property it wasn't done in a business-like manner. They just came down through here and if you were home they struck a deal with you. If you weren't home they probably just left a check on the door step, you know, and came through. They had the power to take your property. So, those people tried to make the best of that situation. In some railroads, there was called reversion clauses. That was if the railroad no longer used that property it would revert to the adjoining property owner- it would go back to him. There was only one reversion clause in the property that we used and Kenyon College had it. And we came up with an agreement with Kenyon and traded certain things so that reversion clause didn't kick in. There are other people who own property along this line who feel that the property has reverted to them and that is not the case. But they feel that way. One person has gone so far as to sue us and he lost at the lower court level, he lost at the appeals court level and the supreme court refused to hear his case. There are no reversion clauses on this stretch of railroad line. There are in other cases in Knox County reversion clauses- if they're there you deal with them, you buy the property back. So, there are some people along here who feel they own that property. That's not a good feeling especially when you spend \$80,000 when you go to court with that and you lose.

CL: When was the railroad built?

PS: It came through in the 1850s to the 1870s to buy the property and survey it and then the line was put in about 1875, right in there.

CL: So I wonder if a lot of these family farms now belong to the same families that they belonged to then.

PS: I doubt it. I don't think that is the case.

CL: Through your work with the village council do you come into contact with farmers at all?

PS: No, cause we only deal with people who are within the village corporation. We have no authority outside of it. Occasionally, we will get somebody who owns property that borders the village and they want that property annexed into the village. Ahh, and of course Kenyon is the biggest landowner.

CL: I would think so... what are the limits then, the corporate limits? Are there no farms within the corporate limits?

PS: No... There may be right here out on Wiggins Street there might be just a small portion of property in corn or soy beans- very tiny.

CL: You wouldn't have any interaction with them?

PS: No. Township trustees though would.

CL: How would they be involved with them then?

PS: Well, the township, College Township, then spread out over a larger area and Gambier is part of that township. But it is mostly farm now. They have a restriction on homes in the township. You must have five acres of property. Well, if you are a developer five acres per house is a lot of land that's not getting used and there are developers who are fighting that.

CL: Are you involved or do you go to the state fair at all or any of the 4-H...?

PS: Yeah. Well, my oldest son is the president of a 4-H club. My little son went to the state fair this year with a dog- dog training. My little son got.. did photography and got outstanding of the day at 4-H. My wife runs three 4-H clubs- she's the advisor for. And my daughter is old enough next year to join. So, yeah my kids... my wife was involved in 4-H when she was grew up. I wasn't because Portsmouth was too big.

CL: Did your wife grow up on a farm?

PS: No, she grew up in a very small town, though- smaller than Mount Vernon- in West Virginia. Future homemakers, 4-H, Eastern Star- that was all big where she grew up. She picked up a lot of sewing

skills- she knows how to weave. She wove her wedding dress out of linen.

CL: Oh my gosh.

PS: She made this thing here on the wall. Fabric- she probably did that wreath.

CL: Handy.

PS: So they're involved that way. And they're out at the fair of course every year with their exhibits.

CL: So, do you go see them there?

PS: I don't go there.

CL: You don't go. Why not? What do you have against the fair?

PS: I don't know. For one thing they struck a deal with Coke and I drink Pepsi. I don't know. My kids love it and they are welcome to go out there. If I go out there I eat those crazy elephant ears and junk food...

CL: Gain five pounds?

PS: Yeah, and here I am skating everyday trying to loose that weight. I just stay away from temptation. But they love it and they get passes. I mean they're in 4-H, they get all the stuff to go with it. I think I may go out there one night and meet them for dinner or something. But I don't like the carnival aspect.

CL: So, do they have more contact with the family farm then, do you think?

PS: I doubt they have much contact at all.

CL: Even participating in 4-H clubs and...

PS: Yeah cause my oldest son did photography and my little son did dog training and that is mostly people from Mount Vernon. You know the farm 4-H(ers), you know, they do cows and sheep and horses.

CL: A little different from dogs.

PS: Yeah, it's quite a bit different. I think 4-H is a great program.

CL: Yeah, I wasn't aware that it was more than just farm animals and farming activities.

PS: Oh yeah, it's quite evolved. My oldest son has done electricity projects. I think Cory did bread, baked bread. So, it's more than just home ec and sewing and large farm animals.

But they interact with those other programs at the fair obviously.

They know kids that are doing other projects in 4-H cause those kids are in their schools. So, not much contact with the farmers.

CL: Well, my final question for you is, I don't know what your opinion would be on this, would you live on a family farm if given the opportunity? If given 200 acres and a plow, a tractor?

PS: Probably not. I mean I like some elbow room but I definitely don't want to maintain it. Essentially I am in charge of 150 acre park- that's enough for me to maintain plus my own house. So, I don't want to spend every Saturday and Sunday cutting the fields and that sort of thing. I wouldn't think it would be so bad... plus I like a little more interaction with my neighbors that are close.

Not to say that doesn't happen but it only takes me ten seconds to get my next door neighbor where on the farm it might take, you know, a couple of minutes to do that. So I kinda like... I mean Gambier is very unique, I mean, it's very, very small. I feel I have plenty of privacy here. It takes me two hours to cut the lawn here- that's enough. When I cut through the grass at the trail that takes me seven hours to do.

CL: Do you do that all by yourself?

PS: Oh no. We have a board that helps out all of the summer. We have more than just cutting grass- we have more than just cutting grass. We had a lot of storms and rain this summer. We had about thirty trees come down. I was lucky my oldest son could drive and operate a chain saw for he went down and cut many of those trees out of the way to keep the trail open. Surprising... I mean most people, you know, go down the trail and expect it to be ready to use. And with the volunteer staff it is not always the case. So, I was lucky this summer to have some, a lot of help, to take care of that. I thought at one time I would like to live on a 200 acre spread. As you get older you get involved in so many activities that I don't have time to do that sort of thing.

CL: What made you want to live on a 200 acre spread?

PS: Ah... well, I kinda like the rural aspect of it. I like the views- there are plenty of nice places around Gambier that have nice views. I always thought I wanted a pond. As I said, we just don't like city life and Gambier seems to fit exactly what we're looking for- not too rural, a lot of neat things going on at the college, nice having young people around all of the time. I mean, I enjoy working at a university- a lot of high energy all around.

CL: I lied, that wasn't my last question. What problems do you think Knox County faces in the future.

PS: Well, certainly Columbus is gonna come towards us. Centerberg is gonna start getting hit up pretty hard for the farm land. And Knox County needs to enact regional zoning so that housing subdivisions are tightly clustered, like I had suggested, with common green space that's protected. Transportation needs to be looked at. The one solution that has come up pu. You know, there are other solutions to that problem and they're not gonna take any better but something will have to be done. I see green space being eroded and I hope that the park district can eventually help protect that property. We got a guy here in town who is working on the Kokosing River getting it designated as a scenic river so he is getting that river cleaned up which is nice. Kenyon is not growing- it has set its student population base- so we are not worrying about it expanding, dormitory space, which increase city services for water, sewer. So you know, I think that is the biggest problem- Columbus is pushing its way up here and we better be pretty tough when push comes to shove.

CL: Do you think it is important to maintain the family farm, as it is, or do you think that moving into bigger agribusiness type things....

PS: No, no we've got a farmer that's on our board. He farms about 400 acres- I think he owns most of the property. He has been... he is one of the original no-till farmers. He hasn't put chemicals down in years. He is very, very good at what he does. He will routinely sell his corn two or three times a year. Sell it, buy it back and sell it again. He has a computer at home which is hooked into the Chicago Board of Trade for corn and soy beans. He monitors that every day and he makes a living at it. He can certainly be proud, and his wife can be proud, of the efforts they've done. They've raised two kids, he's a great volunteer in the community, he's as worried about chemical run-off in streams as anybody in the farming community, he practices good farming agriculture. You know, no, I don't see it as an advantage to go to large agribusiness although

there are people saying, why in fact Richard Luger, who's running for president now, say why are we giving break subsidy to farms when we are not giving the guy who owns the shoe shop a subsidy. Dick Luger is a Denison grad... he won't become president but it's interesting. He's also a farmer and he's saying do away with farm subsidies. That's probably gonna have to happen. But this fellow I know- Neal Springer's his name- he makes a living and he does it very, very well. He's a smart farmer.

CL: Is it completely family owned and operated?

PS: Yes! Absolutely. And the reason he's on our board is he can fix anything and he can build anything. And that's where you find a lot of skills these days. You know, a farmer can't call the guy in- he can't afford to do that. So he's very self-sufficient. Agribusiness comes in those skills will be lost.

CL: What do you think the consequences are to that? By losing those skills...?

PS: I don't know.

CL: Do you think that would... I know I've asked you this before and I don't want to be repetitive but do think that by getting rid of people like Neal?

PS: Well, Neal will be a farmer until he retires. Now, what you're say, 'Gee, if someone comes in and either offered truck loads of cash to either put in a housing development or truck loads of cash to put in a large agribusiness on his property. My guess would be that Neal would say, 'No, thank you' only because this is what he loves to do and he's very good at it. I'm sure he could go to a factory and work. But he rather enjoys being his own boss as many Americans do. Well, I think it would be a shame, yes, if that farm was lost to housing developments or a large agribusiness because then we would lose Neal from our community. And Neal does other things besides farming and other farmers do to. Their involved in their church, their involved in 4-H, and if they moved away then their lost, their gone and that's no good.

CL: Do you think Neal is unique in that sense?

PS: I don't know. You know, we had another farmer that was on our board and he quit cause he got a lot of pressure from his farming friends to leave the trail board because the trail was bad- bad trail.

And he farms just right outside of Gambier- his name is John Norris- and he's an okay neighbor. We tried very hard to be a good neighbor. I know John's brother, Tim, loves the trail. And Tim is a big farmer.

CL: The Norris family was involved in the project last year.

PS: Yeah. And, this can't be off the record, but I think Neal is probably a little better farmer than John. But they both work extremely hard in what they do. And there's nothing wrong with hard work- it's satisfying. When you're working for yourself you put in that extra effort instead of working for the boss.

CL: What kind of images come to your mind when you think of the family farm?

PS: Well, certainly I think of Neal because I've been to his farm and he invites us out when he's harvesting and the kids ride in this huge corn combine. We've been out there when he harvests at night and it's just a wonderful feeling. Not only do you smell the dust of the corn and stuff and you hear this huge machine and then you see this corn being dumped in the back and it's a wonderful experience. And I'm sure that's why he enjoys it because of that visual and sensory experience. He has a very modest home- most of that he built himself- and, you know, I can call Neal and say that our tractors busted and I can't cut any grass and the next day it's fixed. He takes time out of his operation to come down and do that. If he were working for Denison University or Kenyon College he couldn't do that. He couldn't take the day and come down and do that volunteer work which is why my wife just said, "I will see you Saturday. I know you're at the trail all day cutting grass, trimming trees or whatever." So, the images that I see are this very good family. I know both of their kids- they're grown, married and gone on. And he's a productive member of the community.

CL: So, is that what springs to mind when you think of the family farm?

PS: When I think family farm I certainly think of Neal. I mean, I don't know if 300 or 400 acres is a typical family size farm in Knox County. He does corn and soy beans. I don't know if most farmers routinely buy and sell their crop two or three times a year. He has a meticulous farm, I mean, there's no trash, the grass is trimmed, the barns are all painted. It's just meticulous. So, if you said, "Gee, what do you think of the family farm?", I could just visualize Neal's farm right away- the dirt road that leads from one barn to the other. It's a nice scene. It's certainly one of the reasons

I came here.

CL: What kinds of feelings does that evoke in you?

PS: Well, it's good. I mean, it's certainly one of the reasons we came up here because we didn't like the asphalt, the heavy traffic, the houses that were ten feet apart. One of the reasons we came up here.

CL: Well, good. That sounds like a good place to end.

PS: Are you sure?

CL: Yeah, I think so.