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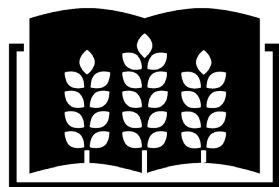
The Life of Pioneering Amish Studies Scholar Walter Kollmorgen: Transcript of the Reschly-Jellison Interviews

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Abstract: On March 20, 1994, we interviewed Walter Kollmorgen. Reschly also conducted a follow-up interview March 8, 1995. Herein, we provide the transcripts of these interviews, which are of particular historical value since Kollmorgen was one of Amish studies' first researchers. Kollmorgen was a native speaker of German from having grown up in a Lutheran family in rural Nebraska. He and his younger sister, Johanna, both contracted polio at a very young age. The combination of German and physical limitations enabled both to establish rapport in a short time with the Amish community in Lancaster County for his rural community study. It seems he communicated more with male leaders than female members, so his observations about women in the community were fairly general. He offered several insights concerning the internal politics at the USDA and the sources of the impulse to research rural communities on a theorized stability-instability continuum. Several officials were quite attracted to the Amish lifestyle, for example. As a geographer, Kollmorgen moved on to other academic topics during a long career at the University of Kansas and he often had to search his memory to recall aspects of his research in Lancaster County. Without much previous work to build on, Kollmorgen produced one of the first scholarly studies of Amish sociology, oriented to the questions of how and why they survived the Great Depression economically and culturally. [Abstract by author.]

Keywords: Rural Life Study series; Lancaster County, PA; USDA; O.E. Baker; Carl Taylor; Kimball Young; Charles Loomis; rural sociology; German Americans



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TAPE 1 OF 3

Date: March 20, 1994

Location: Professor Walter Kollmorgen's home in Lawrence, Kansas

With: Katherine Jellison and Steven Reschly

Subject: Professor Kollmorgen's career, including his research in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania

Walter Kollmorgen: WK

Steven Reschly: SR

Katherine Jellison: KJ

KJ-We just had, really, very basic questions to start out with. We found out a little about your background yesterday, but if you could tell it to us on the tape now that you were born in Nebraska. Could you tell us what year and where you were born and a little bit about your family background?

WK-Well, I was born in Northeastern Nebraska, near Bancroft, Nebraska, in a rural area, in 1907. At the time, my father was a Lutheran, parochial school teacher. There were eleven children in the family, or there are eleven children in the family; and, uh, much of my life is, was conditioned by the, my, the polio that I had at that time. I was almost three years old, my sister was almost one year old in that rural area when polio struck, and we both got polio. And from then on, that time on, of course, all sorts of decisions had to be made on our physical capabilities. The church and the family were mouse poor, church poor. Father developed epilepsy before half of the children were born. Those days there wasn't any social security, no health care programs.

KJ-Right.

WK-The family sank into debt, hopeless debt, and it finally had to be paid off by the children. I come from a very poor background. When it finally came to the university days, there was no family money to send us. It so happens that my sister became a very efficient stenographer and, uh, I looked around at the University of Nebraska, found out that the geography department would hire readers, so she worked her way through school at 35 cents an hour as a stenographer, and editing maybe a dozen or two M.A.s or Ph.D.s. Some of them never would have succeeded if it hadn't been

for Johanna's editing; and I graded papers by the sackfull.

SR-And that's the way you worked your way through school as well, and you both went to University of Nebraska, that's where you studied. Okay.

WK-When Johanna earned one degree at Nebraska, I earned two. When I had my second degree, the Conservation Department at the University of Nebraska hired me. They wanted to do something on the industries of Nebraska; so in one year I prepared four bulletins on the dairy industry in Nebraska, on the milk industry, the butter industry, the cheese industry, and the ice cream industry.

SR-And what year would that have been that you graduated or that you did those items?

WK-It would be about '34. Then I hoped that I could go further in the profession than preparing bulletins for \$80 a month. So, I was lucky in getting a very good fellowship at the University of Columbia. In those days, those things were scarce, really scarce. But I got a \$1,500 fellowship to Columbia; and there I earned my Ph.D., and by that time my sister had gone to Knoxville as a typist. And so I went down to Knoxville to visit with her, and I looked around in the south; and looking around in the south, I found Swiss settlements, German settlements, Italian settlements. There were striking departures from the southern pattern of agriculture. No tenant farmers, not the major emphasis on cotton, but potatoes, strawberries, and corn, and general farming. So I submitted that proposal to the Social Science Research Council and the teachers saw me and they gave me another good fellowship, plus travel money. So I succeeded in getting a Model A Ford for \$80 that only had about 20,000 miles on it. And I traveled in the south from Washington through to Texas, finding cultural/agricultural islands; and I published three or four papers on these islands.

KJ-That's a great topic.

SR-Which was your dissertation topic then also?

WK-The dissertation topic was the German-Swiss in Franklin County.

SR-In Tennessee?

WK-Yeah.

SR-Okay. So this is a publication of your dissertation, this 1940 German-Swiss [settlement] in Franklin County.

WK-Yeah, and I would get some amazing things there. I wanted to also go to the census data, the original census data, historic census data but not the current and then go back, so I went to Washington, to the Department of Agriculture, talked to them, got along very well with them, and they not only insisted to work with the census data, but uh, they say, “When this gets through, you’ll look at it and maybe we’ll publish it.” So when I actually finished, they did publish it. And that saved me a \$1000, because in those days they had a publisher’s agreement. You had to publish it, good luck again. Well, that study caught the attention of not only O. E. Baker, but a certain Wilson, I believe[was] his name. He was a very prominent, very prominent extension.

KJ-M. L. Wilson?

WK-I became acquainted with him, bigshot, and he became interested in that as a career, looking at the agricultural pictures and discern how farmers depend on government support nowadays everywhere. And uh, we were concerned about that, very interested in communities, and didn’t have that support or need that support. And uh, that brought the Amish to mind, and they knew I could speak German, and they thought I could communicate very easily with the Amish, although the Amish German is quite different than the real, my German.

SR-You grew up speaking German at home?

WK-Oh, yeah, spoke German, before English. I should tell you that my sister downstairs, who has been hallucinating and uh mind wandering, is doing this in perfect English, perfect English, because she has a wonderful memory. And uh, she’s the one who studies languages. She is a, for

example, one thing that she says down there is, “Ich kann nicht weiter gehen.” You know what that means? “I can’t go any farther, end this.” But anyway that was a German we had. But with that possibility of speaking German, I came very much closer than most people did to understanding them.

SR-Definitely, that’s still a quick way to gain contact.

KJ-Had your parents been immigrants from Germany, or your grandparents?

WK-No, no, we were third generation.

KJ-So you and your sisters and brothers are third generation?

WK-Yeah, the Amish, when you came up to them, you had to be careful because they resist intrusions, outside inquiries, and that sort of thing.

SR-Who told you that?

WK-We knew that, heck.

SR-Okay.

WK-A lot of people who went up there were, you know, shunned, or pushed aside; so I went up there and I knew that they had problems. Among other things, they were badly in need of land. Multiplying, and land was extraordinarily high, even in those days. At that time prices were much less than now, but land prices were high. So I went around the periphery of the Amish community and found out where there was land for sale; and then I visited these bishops. “You need land. Let’s go over there and look at this piece of land because somebody’s becoming a doctor, somebody’s becoming a lawyer, kids are going to a university. Let’s go over there and see if we can get you a piece of land.” Before I knew it, they had a car full of bishops. *[laughter]* Once you’ve got these bishops in the car, they have to talk.

SR-It was a very good strategy. *[laughter]*

WK-So I gave them their confidence. I went to their religious meetings and ate with them—had rapport with them.

SR-And how long were you actually in Lancaster County doing the field research?

WK-Oh, less than six months, and uh, then you identify more and more closely with them. They had military problems in those days, and they were drafted into the military. I'd say, "Well let's go to Washington and look into this." They were very much interested. And so I get a load of the bishops in my car and drove down to Washington, went to the Pentagon and took these bearded bishops in the Pentagon where everything stopped, and went for Hershey, General Hershey. He was the draft director, and he was a sympathetic party and a one-time Mennonite. He understood it.

KJ-Uh huh, really?

SR-Well, he had Mennonite background in Pennsylvania.

WK-Yeah, so this wasn't a foreign question to him. We had a very nice hearing from Hershey and I think the problem towards the Amish was somewhat modified. They could serve in hospitals and do that sort of thing, and they appreciated that. They also had a problem with education.

SR-That started in Lancaster in the 30s, or late 20s even.

WK-So I wrote some letters to the state there, and one thing or another.

SR-Local school administrators at all?

WK-No, uh uh, I only wrote to the Harrisburg people. I don't know whether I had any effect or not, but I think they were less harsh after that. I sometimes wonder to what extent that anti-educational attitude is not self-sustaining. In one way, you deny children opportunities that I sometimes wonder if you have that right to do. They act all, they participate in technology. Should all the children be denied opportunity to get into that? I didn't worry about that in those days.

SR-Have you read the *Wisconsin v. Yoder* case ever? Well that question was raised by Justice Douglas, the Supreme Court justice when *Wisconsin v. Yoder* was decided and the rest of the

Supreme Court justices decided that the Amish children didn't appear to be especially deprived compared with the rest of the educational system. Even if they wanted to leave the Amish, they were well prepared in terms of work ethic and many other ways to make it in the outside world anyway.

WK-So, that was one chapter in my life.

SR-When did you actually do the field research there? You were there about six months. Which year was that again?

WK-Well, I have to answer that by my memory. I think it was about '41.

SR-What months? Do you remember what time of the year you were there?

WK-Well, mostly in winter and spring; there was snow on the ground.

SR-So maybe in the first half of the year, of '41.

WK-Yeah, Yeah.

SR-And then it was published in the first half of '42.

WK-Yeah.

SR-That would make sense.

KJ-Um, did you have any assistance with you while you were doing the field work? Was your sister able to come and type up notes for you or anything like that?

WK-No, she was working down in TVA.

KJ-Okay. So she was still in Tennessee. So it was a one man research operation basically.

WK-Yeah, right, in Washington, much of the time. They have the Library of Congress, the library sources and the Department of Agriculture library and then the field work I'd been piecing together. It's not the profound study you sometimes make it. *[laughter]*

SR-Well, let's say that I've found it very observant at least. Whatever you want to call it is fine, but I think it's very astute and very observant. Without a lot of previous material to work with, you didn't have a lot of studies of the Amish or anything to read to get you into it. You went and observed and wrote about it.

KJ-Well, it's all the more impressive because it had been my impression that the field work had only been about six months, a relatively short period. And I think Steve's right, I mean, very observant and we have loads of questions about that, but do we want to pursue more some of these more preliminary questions. So, right away you said that the people in Washington said, "Hey, if you're talking about self-sufficiency and lack of need for government support, the Amish are the first group that comes to mind." Do you know anything about how the other five communities were chosen then for this series?

WK-Well, they wanted diversity, written settings and their personal inclinations come into play. The people who made the decision to do a little about this area or that area, and they wanted contrasts and similarities and that sort of thing; Spanish-Americans in the southwest, New England, and that sort of thing.

KJ-When they were choosing the communities then, did they already sort of have an idea that it would cross a spectrum from most stable communities in Lancaster Amish? And I know that the Haskell community, the one in Kansas, was seen as the least stable of the six. Did they already have that preconceived idea that the other communities would fall nicely across the spectrum?

WK-No, the continuum was very much in the mind, from one to the other end, from the stable Amish to the unstable plains people.

KJ-Um, we were curious, are any of these other folks still alive who did the other community studies?

WK-I wouldn't know.

KJ-Yeah, we didn't know if you would know, but we thought we'd ask.

WK-Remember I chased around from coast to coast, focusing on different subjects in different areas.

KJ-Right. While you were working on this you said you made frequent trips to Washington. Were there people in the bureaucracy that you were obliged to check in with periodically?

WK-No.

KJ-They pretty much just left you on your own.

WK-Yeah, that was a very nice thing about that.

SR-You weren't obliged to check in. Did you talk with Mr. Baker as you were doing the study? In this article, you mentioned that Mr. Baker, O.E. Baker, was especially interested in the Amish. Did you talk with him?

WK-Do you know anything about O.E. Baker?

SR-This isn't my period really; she's done more with the New Deal agricultural policy, but I don't [know] very much.

KJ-Not a lot. You know, his name comes up in so much literature that I've read but I don't know a lot about him personally.

WK-He was considered the outstanding agricultural geographer at the time, but he also had a curious outlook on life. He was very much disturbed at that time; the birth rate had dropped very, very low, and the population was not replenishing itself only in the rural areas but not in the cities. And he wanted to sustain agriculture as a viable activity, and he was inclined to be a Quaker or Mennonite at heart. He liked them, and he pushed me to take him up to the Amish community, which I agreed to do, with my sister, a Quaker, and his wife. Then he married a Quaker woman, to the school of idealism. He married her very largely because, "Here I talk about the population declining, and I have no children." Within a short time he had three of them [laughter].

SR-Oh, that's funny.

WK-And we went up to the Amish, and uh, ooh what's that kind of a name?

SR-Well there's a Stoltzfus.

WK-Yeah.

SR-Okay. That's the most common name in Lancaster.

WK-And now let me tell you, you want to be careful about this on the record. Baker was a very conservative individual type. When I picked him up at the office building of the Department of Agriculture, he was there with an overcoat that he had bought at the University of Wisconsin 30 years ago. He had a great big safety pin here, holding it shut with.

SR-Instead of buttons you mean.

WK-The buttons were gone, and he had a hat with a safety pin in there. And we drove up to Stoltzfus and there we were received by an elegant family. They were neatly dressed, as elegant as you can imagine. They had wonderful food you know; and here was this contrast between the guy with the safety pins, and these proud and elegant Stoltzfuses. Now he taught at University of Maryland in the later day. He left the Department of Agriculture. He had a house right at the edge of the campus there, and uh, he wanted to teach his girls, family to be diligent and to do work and earn their money, so he kept the chicken house, their eggs, and the daughter was told to gather eggs and earn her money. She did. And then they wore simple clothes; they made her very simple and out of date clothes and the girls became very frustrated about that; and she finally became so frustrated that she somehow managed to get better clothes, hide it in school, and change clothes before she appeared publicly. And that's the type of conservative approach they had toward life, and uh, is this relevant?

KJ-Oh sure.

SR-Oh sure. I'm interested in him and I'm thinking I need to go learn more about him because he was one that was very interested in the Amish and

encouraged you to the study; and maybe had some influence on which community was selected.

KJ-Well it sounds like in many ways that the Amish were almost role models for him, right? Especially the fact that they had large families, I'm sure, and the work ethic and the simple way of life. You know when you said that he was almost Amish, or Quaker, Mennonite, at heart, it fits.

WK-And the night when we drove up there, he was up on the other side of town. We lived in south Alexandria. My sister already went up to his house the night before, for some reason or another and they had very simple cots, and the carpets; well they weren't real carpets but they painted the floor brown to have the appearance of carpets. And the blanket, they must have had trouble staying under it because the blankets had all been split in two.

SR-To make two instead of one, oh my, that really is frugal.

WK-Now I don't want you to reveal all that.

KJ-No, no, but it does give us insight into his value system.

WK-And then he had one boy, and he wanted his boy to grow up in the proper way with the work ethic and be a rural resident rather than the city because the city was dying out anyway. So he bought a rather nice dairy farm in Virginia; he put a lot of money in that and set up his boy in the dairy business; but that went broke in two or three years. You know this idea that professors have; that they understand things. Farming is much more complicated than that, much more complicated. And unless you've grown up with farmers and know them firsthand, I happen to know them that way, some city slicker just looks at it and says they know everything about agriculture.

KJ-Did we want to talk more about methodology?

WK-Sure.

SR-Oh, um, I'm backing up just a little bit because it occurred to me earlier, when did you actually start for the USDA, or say again how that connection was made, how you became a bureaucrat?

So you graduated from Columbia, you did the dissertation.

KJ-Yeah, what year did you get your Ph.D.?

WK-I got the degree in '42. That was when the German/Swiss was published you see; I had to have that published first. So I got the Ph.D. in '42, although I had gone to school there from about '36 or '37.

KJ-And so did you actually get the job with the Department of Agriculture before your degree was officially bestowed? I guess you did.

SR-Well you mentioned that you were a social psychiatrist. That was a job you had before you did this community study. Was that in another department or...?

WK-Well wait, they planned these community studies; they had a Kimble Young there. Now he was an outstanding social anthropologist and part of the department there at that time planning these studies. In other words, they wanted the way of life, the values, the social values, they wanted that developed in these studies. And, in the preliminary sections we had, Kimble was always there when we would plan the outline, and the approach, and the emphasis to give. Kimble Young was there, the social psychiatrist. Now I was an outsider but since I had done the studies in the south. M.L. Wilson and Baker and the head of the department there, they wanted me, see, so he didn't hire a social psychiatrist.

KJ-And was Carl Taylor there?

WK-Taylor was in the department, yes. Carl Taylor was a good man.

KJ-Yeah that's what I've always-anything I've read about him; it's been very complimentary.

SR-So you were hired to work with Kimble Young...

WK-Not by Kimble Young. I was hired largely because of Taylor and M.L. Wilson.

SR-And because of the studies you did in the south. And you were hired specifically from the first moment to work with this community study project?

WK-They had the community studies in mind, they apparently had the Amish in mind, and I had just come out with this German/Swiss study in Tennessee, so I seemed to be prepared for it.

SR-Good, good. So when you were hired, they hired you with the idea of the Amish community study. Okay. You were a good fit, I must say. I didn't know how good; because of your farm background, rural background, and then speaking German, and studying Swiss/Germans yet. You picked up a little Swiss dialect maybe in that study, I don't know. Okay. And you were able to communicate with the Amish community, with people in the Amish community quite well.

WK-Do you speak Amish/Deutsch?

SR-Uh not very well. When I hear a Lancaster County sermon I get anywhere from 50 to 75% of it perhaps. High German I can do pretty well; my wife and I spent a year in Germany 15 years ago.

WK-You did? What part of Germany?

SR-Uh, Limburg, close, northwest of Frankfurt; we were there six months working on a farm. And then six months by Karlsruhe in a retirement center. This was through Mennonite Central Committee, the trainee program. So that's where I learned some German.

KJ-Uh, this side of the tape is about to go out, but one question that I was just thinking of; and again we might be asking you questions about some of the strategies here that you can't answer; but on the off chance that you can, uh, is it your impression that the other people chosen to do the other community studies, that as much thought went in to getting the right person to do that study as in your case?

WK-Well the, I forget his name, the one that did the Mexican-American; he came from that area; he spoke that language, and he seemed to fit. And Bell, he did the test in Kansas. He taught at the

University of Nebraska, and he went to Syracuse later on but he was in that Nebraska background. They had a Mormon named Moe.

KJ-Moe. Yes that's right, he was a Mormon. I did not know that, someone had told me that previously.

WK-He was a Mormon and he was very much interested in that way of life; by the way, when I finished this Amish study, sometime shortly after that, O.E. Baker wanted me to go to Utah, and I was actually sent there. We established ourselves in Richmond, Utah, not very far from Logan, and we eventually began to absorb with the Mormons. But then the war came along, and everything diverted to the war program. You made little opinion surveys and one thing or another.

SR-It's too bad that couldn't be completed. I'd learned about that for the first time just reading ahead a bit in the bureaucrat article. I didn't know you had been sent into...

WK-Nobody had done a good study of the Mormons.

SR-As far as an ethnographic or a community study like the one you did.

WK-You may find some there because they have their library; and some of that material they think is a little touchy.

KJ-Well, you had just said that on the other side is where in your case, that when the war came this kind of research fell by the wayside. Could you tell us a little about that. For instance, when these community studies were finally published in '42, was there much response, much of a notice of them since the U.S. was now in a war and there were these other concerns?

WK-It was a very popular study. As a matter of fact, these Amish studies proved to be the most popular study the BAE put out up to that time.

KJ-Very good, we want to hear these kind of things, this is great. They're considered classics now, I know. I mean, I think they are very popular with people doing rural history, and I think still

rural sociology, too. But, uh, so there was great interest when they were published.

WK-Very much so, yeah. And the part of that also; you have to give Wallace credit for that. Wallace was berated and criticized, but Wallace was a wonderful, genuine man. And he believed that every community could contribute much to solving problems. He opened up the Department of Agriculture to academic workers, and he had a big float of academics to go to Washington.

SR-See, that was a question that I had about the impact of the war. Part of the purpose of these community studies, and many other studies the USDA sponsored in the thirties, was to affect public policy, to help make public policy toward such things as helping farmers to be more self-sufficient to where they wouldn't need government grants and so forth. It seemed that after the war started—and these were published and they were popular—but did they have an impact, or was there an impact on public policy making as the original intent may have been?

WK-Well, certain senses change, but I attribute this emphasis on academic, social problems largely to Wallace and M.L. Wilson. Wilson came from Montana. He was identified with the agriculture up there. He was a prominent man and published quite a few things, and they opened up the doors to the academic world of things in Washington. And as you know, during the Depression there had been a lot of economic, all kinds of planning studies. You know, you pile them yea-high, and I don't want to confess all my sins, all my problems, but I have a little faith in planning. At that time the assumption of the Department of Agriculture was that the economy would go right back to where it was after the war. That you will have to be prepared, that a great absorption of people in the rural areas; now how are you going to accommodate them and where should you accommodate them? And so the Department of Agriculture put out studies. I have some of them; farms in the south should essentially be 40 acre farms, so they had the emphasis on subsistence you see. They had the emphasis on subsistence, and livestock should be an important part of it because of the manure and recycling of fertilizer and that sort of thing; get away from these cash crops you see. So, fur-

thermore, have you read that book, *Migration and Economic Opportunity*?

SR-*Migration and Economic Opportunity*? I don't think so.

KJ-Who's the author?

WK-Oh, a prominent economist. You know they were going to pull people out of the north, out of the Great Lakes area. They were going to pull them out of there. They urged, encouraged the withdrawal of about 900,000 people from the plains area and shipped a lot of other people somewhere else.

SR-And sent them to new, irrigated areas among other places in the west.

WK-In the meantime they built in a lot of subsidy irrigation.

SR-Okay.

WK-They built in a lot subsidy irrigation, and those subsidies have never been removed; and you go to a lot of farms nowadays, single farms that are costing over a million dollars.

SR-I read some work on that. I'm not familiar with this particular book but it's one I'll look for now. I think that's an interesting story.

WK-Once you've got it embedded in the law and it has a lot of pork in it, you can't remove it.

KJ-Yeah, that's what you were saying yesterday; just layer on, layer on, layer on.

WK-Layer it different. And so we have many cases in the west where the development of land is subsidized in the growing of crops, and then you subsidize the export of crops.

SR-All for individualistic western farming.

WK-The capitalistic system.

SR-That's what western historians realize. Now this is one thing Kathy and I have in common. We both were trained by Malcom Rohrbaugh, a

western historian at Iowa. We've gotten that point I think, especially the twentieth century west, but already the nineteenth century is. How did you say floating on government subsidies, how did you exactly?

WK-Yeah, big water prices, heavily subsidized.

SR-Oh back to the railroads and the mining frontier.

WK-And yet the paradox is they think they're the most rugged individualists.

SR-Oh I know, I know; they want the government off their backs, until the checks come. I know, or until they're doing some major road project, or a, yeah that's for sure.

KJ-Yeah, this meeting I was in Chicago the day before yesterday; setting up a series of discussion programs for rural libraries. We were taking myths about rural life for each section of the country; and the one for the west was individualism, that it's a myth in many ways.

SR-Maybe individualism, but certainly not independence.

KJ-Yeah. Um, we wanted to ask you a few more questions about the methodology here. You said that there would be these committee meetings. What kind of things happened at those committee meetings? Was there a sort of a list of the questions that you were supposed to be investigating?

SR-And who was there? Give sort of an outline of your approach or what you were to do. Who was in on the planning?

WK-Mostly Kimble Young.

SR-And that's what you were referring to?

WK-He was a prominent sociologist.

KJ-I'm sure I've seen his name before but I don't know much about him.

SR-So Kimble Young was the one that was in contact not only with you about the planning but with the other five.

WK-And O.E. Baker and Taylor.

SR-So when you had meetings to plan these, those were the people that were there essentially, Young, Baker, and Taylor. Was Wilson in on those then also?

WK-No he didn't.

SR-He didn't participate in the planning, O.K.

WK-He kept in touch with me.

SR-I'm sure he did.

WK-It was wonderful that he had.

KJ-So did you pretty much outline what you thought you were going to do and just discussed with them?

WK-They had no problems with me. It seemed to be the natural thing to do. I always felt that geographers wear blinders. You can't explain an agriculture area unless you know the traditions and the background and the cultural backup of things.

SR-Well, your cultural geography pretty clearly does that, right? Not a physical geographer, I don't know what other sub-fields there may be. It's not a field I know very well.

WK-I suppose; well I think you can't teach geography nowadays without studying government programs, in view of the government's support of almost anything. I can't think of anything that doesn't have its hand in the government pot. So unless you go to the program you don't really know why the irrigation projects are there, why this is there.

SR-You characterized some of the people you've worked with. I think you told us some things about Baker. I don't know very much about Kimble Young. Could you talk more about what kind of person he was, what his interests were? I mean Baker, you said clearly was interested in being Amish or being a Mennonite himself; but what were Kimble Young's interests in this project?

WK-You know Kimble and I never became very intimate. We always kept our distance. Some of them I got to observe and notice, but we didn't communicate very much.

SR-Why do you think that was? Did he communicate with other people more that were doing the other studies, or was he just that kind of person?

WK-Oh, I [was] just some local-yokel from out west.

SR-He was more of a city-slicker or more of an elitist...

WK-He was a jackass.

KJ-Well okay. There we go.

SR-Did he have that effect on other people doing the studies, or did Baker not? I mean, Baker wouldn't get along with a person like that, would he?

WK-No.

SR-A conceited person wouldn't necessarily get along well with a guy who closes his jacket with a safety pin.

KJ-They sound like they were kind of opposite personalities.

WK-Yeah, yeah.

SR-Do you know why, from himself or from other people in the study, why Kimble Young was even interested in these studies or was it just a job or something?

WK-He had written a book of some kind that a, I forget what it was, he must have written something. He was discerned as somebody who might take part in this sort of thing.

SR-Okay.

WK-And I don't know too much about that.

SR-So he was selected by Carl Taylor or Baker, or someone as the person to lead this?

WK-But remember, the whole army of academics came to Washington during the war.

SR-He was one of the foot soldiers.

WK-The academic missions never had it so good.

KJ-Oh, I know. Now I'm jealous. Yeah, we can look up some of his publications and ideas.

SR-Yeah.

KJ-Um, once you got to Lancaster County, well you talked about the bishops and the car you know, that was a great strategy. How did you choose other people that you talked to and made contact with and became informants on the project, because I remember several great quotes from various farmers?

WK-Well, when you get there, you don't have to be there very long before you spot the leaders. All you have to do is keep your ears open, and your eyes open, and you'll go to Stoltzfus; Stoltzfus was a very good source; and they had a son who went through college somewhere and he became very close. And then there were certain Amish who became very trusting; one of them wrote to me for years, oh, two page single-spaced letters; this problem and that problem. He confided to me and what to do about it and it was a little bit difficult for me to respond to these letters in a way that he expected to because I'm not exactly brought up in a sacred mold.

KJ-That's something we wanted to get on tape, too. Maybe now is as good a time as any. When you said yesterday that doing a community study that's organized around the sacred, or around a certain religious principle, is easier than doing community studies of secular societies. Would you mind commenting on that a little for us?

WK-Well, for example the early Lutheran community that I grew up in, if you had a problem you went to the preacher; you immediately got a structure. And after the preacher, there were the elders of the church. There weren't any government officials around. So whenever you were sick, when you wanted to buy land, or problems, or somebody had an operation, the preacher was there. So he

was the source of all wisdom and encouragement; so you had that to go by. Nowadays when you go to a rural area, who are the leaders? They go to this man, a specialist, that specialist, that specialist, and you make such a diverse picture. You have to structure that somehow. We wrote, there's a paper in there on the search for a rural community that develops that theme pretty well.

KJ-Okay, okay.

WK-It's a little bit nasty.

SR-One of your papers?

WK-Yes.

SR-The search for rural communities?

WK-Yes, it's in there.

SR-Okay, I'll find it. Which you make that point about secular, sort of scattered culture that doesn't have, maybe one might say, a natural structure.

WK-Well, some of that, yeah, yeah, yeah.

KJ-So in that respect, I think you were hinting yesterday, but correct me if I'm wrong, that your community study was sort of, already had its natural components there, and was easier to undertake than some of the other community studies that were done as part of the B.A.E.

SR-Because there was coherence there; there were leaders that were clear.

WK-It was an object that you could express and publish.

KJ-And right on the surface.

WK-Right on the surface.

SR-Now you approached the bishops first with the land question. At what point did you explain to them, or did you explain to them, what you were doing, what your study was, what you were trying to accomplish? Did you talk to them about that?

WK-Oh, I said that Washington was very curious about how independent you people are and where you farm. It was a dark spot and they needed to know more about it.

SR-Did they like that?

WK-Oh no. They said they come to us all the time for advice. That's the way it should be.

SR-Okay, I see. *[laughter]*

KJ-They had no problem with that.

SR-That's the way it should be, I like that. Well, from the bishops then you talked to them first, did they refer you to people, like you were interested in farming and they said, well, go talk to so and so that runs this great tobacco farm?

WK-They gave me full cooperation. They were very open about that and I appreciate that.

SR-Do you remember some names, like the Stoltzfus family; what was his first name, do you remember that at all? I mean, I don't know if you want to say or not.

WK-I'm getting old, I'm getting old in my head. I have difficulty remembering names. See, we moved again and again. My assistant and I lived in twelve cities and twenty communities where we did work. And we had to throw things away, throw things away. So I don't have a file that some people might have that's more stable.

KJ-Yeah, this of course was one of our questions too, you still don't have your field notes?

WK-They had to be thrown away. I regret that very much. I've often thought how it would help if I had those things.

SR-Or say the correspondence files from this person who wrote to you all those years.

WK-I had beautiful letters from one of the old Amish men who trusted in me, confided all of his problems and his troubles, and I threw it away. For example, when we moved to this place here in '88, I gave truckloads of books away. I gave truckloads

of tools and garden stuff away; and truckloads of furniture away; and remember that after I left the Department of Agriculture, I worked for the War Labor Board for a while; and after that I worked for the Mining Commission for a while with the research director there; and after that I went back to the Bureau of Agriculture and Economics in Little Rock. And there the interest was a lot of share-croppers concerning the results of the lower Blue Hill plains there developing ten acre farms for cotton; and uh, they were flooded out and had a lot of trouble with that because they went in there prematurely, because the drainage problem hadn't been resolved. And so we had three or four publications on drainage problems of the lower Mississippi valley.

SR-Well, I asked you about this on the phone I think a long time ago, whether, I asked you about your own field notes first, but whether any of your field notes made their way to the U.S.D.A in their records, whether—there's that article, series of two articles by Jane Getz who said she used your field notes; did she just borrow them from you and give them back to you? Do you think she deposited them somewhere or anything like that?

WK-I remember Jane Getz, but I don't remember many details.

SR-Well, she published two articles about the economic and social life of the Lancaster County Amish, I think they were called, in *Mennonite Quarterly Review*; and it just says in that article that she used your field notes, and I just wondered where those came from.

WK-I don't even remember that.

SR-Well, there may be some in the U.S.D.A. archives, I don't know.

WK-Yeah maybe, I don't know.

KJ-Yeah, apparently, it seems to me that she worked in some capacity or subsidy with the U.S.D.A, and possibly worked for Kimble Young perhaps, because she apparently was some kind of assistant to the whole scheme of the whole series of the six community studies, as I recall, so something filtered back to her apparently.

SR-Oh well, I dream about your field notes, being able to use them again but so it goes. Moving around is something that happens, so...

KJ-Well, apparently any of these field notes. Now the only other two studies that I know well are Haskell County, you know the Sublette, Kansas, and then the Irwin, Iowa. And I checked around to see if there were any of those field notes and no one seems to know. They seem to be gone, too.

SR-Well how much did you, when you were talking with the bishops, you visited families, did you stay overnight in Amish homes? You went to church services, I guess. You were invited to other events, maybe weddings or funerals or some things like that. How much did you stay, say for example, in Amish homes?

WK-To begin with, I stayed in a home in Lancaster, but I soon found an Amish that was one of the more progressive, the type that used automobiles without any decorations or ornaments; and that's where I boarded; and I don't even remember their names. But I always remember you come to Lancaster County and you go to Bird in Hand, and then sometime finally you get to Intercourse. In Intercourse, there's not much people, you know.

SR-It's a crazy place. *[laughter]* When were you there last, by the way?

WK-Oh, about fifteen years ago and I wanted to get out of there. I don't want to see any more of this.

SR-Yeah, I believe that.

KJ-Yeah, were you really struck by the differences between the early '40s and I guess that would be the late '70s or early '80s?

WK-Of course. I'm rural oriented. When I came to Kansas, I bought a tract of land about a mile south of town here. I had the Lone Bull ranch. Put it all in grass and had Angus cattle.

KJ-And this was in 1946 when you came to Kansas.

WK-Yeah. But we had a beautiful site there on a hill with an escarpment in the distance. So the picture went all over it, you see. I believe when the outside was the inside, you were there; this business of the city is to be corrupt.

KJ-Yeah, so the commercialization there in Lancaster County now is the tourist trade. I take it that was probably a real turn-off for you.

WK-Yeah, yeah.

KJ-That was about the first time I went there, was the fall of '79, and it was quite the tourist attraction.

SR-And it's much worse now. It's one of the most rapidly urbanizing counties in Pennsylvania. Um, another question we had about methodology. I've been asking about your circulation among the Amish and you said you stayed with a Beachey Amish person. How much research did you do with non-Amish people around there, bankers, maybe lawyers, people that worked that especially had contact with the Amish?

WK-You don't exclude anybody when you go there. You get many admirers and some of them are critical, of course. It was very interesting. I wrote a second paper, you may or may not have noticed, that how public church is historical there, how the Presbyterians, and the Anglican church, and the Lutheran church are historical sites now because the Amish people took over; because these other people were open to the temptations of urban jobs when they wanted to escape the high-priced land; and that's when the Amish moved in.

SR-When you did the study, the Amish were just one of many Pennsylvania Dutch groups and now they're almost the only one that, they're almost co-terminus with the Pennsylvania Dutch any more. You had that sense at that time, didn't you? That the Amish were one of many, you know. There were Lutherans and all kinds of other Pennsylvania Dutch.

WK-I wrote a chapter in one of those books, and mentioned the variety that there had to be.

KJ-I take it that most of the people who were your contacts were men, right? Did you talk to many women, or was that very feasible?

WK-I don't remember many conversations with women, I don't know, I don't know why.

KJ-I imagine it was easy. Well, men being the leaders of course in the community. When Steve and I visited there, we stayed with an Amish family and went to service. I was struck by the very gender segregated nature of things. Women pretty much stay together and the men stay together.

WK-And they wash the dishes, see, but the men ate first, so you were alright.

KJ-Yes.

SR-Exactly.

KJ-Um, go ahead if you had other questions about methodology.

WK-I always remember, there's a lot of things I admire about those people, even if I was somewhat critical of how they restricted education of children. When I was there, the mother died of the family, and the oldest daughter was about fourteen years old; and they had thrashing bees, a group of people that moved around thrashing, yonder. And, of course, the custom is that they eat a sumptuous dinner wherever the thrashing takes place; and that fourteen year old gal asked if you needed sweet and sour and all this right there. Now you find a girl like that today.

KJ-I was just telling some folks about that the other day, I mean just colleagues there at Ohio University. Somehow it came up about when you and I stayed at the Esches' house. We finished a cup of coffee and the girl would run in and take the coffee cup. Those girls were busy all the time. Remember, they washed the floor after every meal, took all of the furniture up. I mean, it's incredible.

WK-I think the food has deteriorated some. I mean, maybe it's just because of old age, but I don't think the food tastes nearly as good as it used to; all this packaged stuff.

KJ-Yeah, right.

WK-Au gratin potatoes out of the package, they look like warmed up garbage.

SR-You sound like my children talking about school lunches, too.

WK-Yeah.

KJ-Um, one question that we had, and then I think we just want to ask some more of your observations of the Amish community, including more of your observations about women there. But you wanted to ask about Hostetler and specific names of people who have subsequently studied the Amish.

SR-Did John A. Hostetler, who's done the key book on the Amish—now gone through three editions, you know, *Amish Society*—did he come and talk with you in the early fifties, or...?

WK-No.

SR-He never talked with you?

WK-We never met.

SR-You never met.

WK-No, we corresponded later.

SR-Like Don Kraybill, did he come talk to you, or Trudy Huntington?

WK-I met Don.

SR-Did you meet Don?

WK-Yeah, Yeah.

SR-But did anybody come and interview you like this at all about your experience? I mean, you said people had talked to you about the study and I took it that was more on an informal basis at conferences, or people you met or whatever. Has anybody come and grilled you, so to speak, or interviewed you about your methods and what you remember about it and so forth?

WK—Hardly, I wouldn't say so. I must tell you that the study is, geographers consider it a somewhat foreign effort.

SR—Because of the cultural component?

WK—Yeah, yeah. And I think they're badly mistaken. Unless they get that dimension in there, they don't know what they're talking about. They're getting closer to that now.

SR—Yeah, that's what I was going to say, my impression is.

KJ—Yes, in fact, David Wilhelm, who is the head of the Democratic Party, this is his father, Hubert Wilhelm. He is a geography professor at OU and is very much into the cultural geography, and has done some interesting work on the different influences there in south...

TAPE 2 OF 3

KJ—This is our second tape of our interview with Professor Kollmorgen on March 20, 1994, and it's still the same personnel sitting here. And at the end of the last tape, our official tape one, I had asked what Professor Kollmorgen thought was the chief contribution of his pioneering study of the Lancaster Amish that was published in 1942, and we're waiting for his response; and then we've thought of some other brilliant questions to ask him, so if you could comment on what you think that the major lasting contribution of this study was to the larger literature, to the discipline of geography or even rural sociology.

WK—Well, I think it has alerted the geographers, you mentioned geography; that largely north they were too largely physically oriented environmentalists; look at the climate and the soil and you get the product, or you don't get the product. So, I think it has done that, but it has taken a while for that to soak in, so we have more of those cultural geographers now.

KJ—It's almost like two generations later, like it skipped a generation.

WK—Yes, yes. They were steeped in this simple idea, the [Ellsworth] Huntington idea, that the environment tells you the story, the physical environment; and you have to be aware of the other dimension, so I think it has done that. And I think it shows something of the cultural diversity of this country; that there are vast differences among people, how they live and how they treat the environment; and they deserve respect and consideration, and also invite investigation.

SR—Which makes me think of a question. In your study, I think you say that there are problems that the Amish are facing, and land pressure is one, but you were cautiously optimistic about their continuing as a distinct ethnic group in this country. Did the people who assigned this, say Kimball Young or Baker, were they expecting the Amish to be assimilated some day? Were they hoping to formulate public policy to protect ethnic enclaves like this, or did they say that the Amish will die out soon and you better get up there and study them? Where were they on that continuum? Were they optimistic about the Amish surviving or were they thinking that this is something that is under a lot of pressure and it's going to die out soon?

WK—Young and Baker's opinion[s] on that would be the opposite. Baker would insist that everything should be done to help them, to perpetuate them, and help them to multiply because that is a way of life that is self-sufficient, and has values, and law-abiding and all that business; he liked the Amish very much. He loved them. Kimball Young was what you call a secular type; this was just another phenomenon, like these animals, and these animals and these animals. You have to look at them and see what they're like. He didn't have any concern about the social implications.

SR—You said about Baker wanted to help the Amish multiply. Do you think he expected that they would expand their own community by birth essentially, or was he hoping or were you hoping that other rural communities would pick up on some of their values that worked to sustain rural communities? Was Baker really hoping that other rural communities would follow the Amish path?

WK—Oh, yes he did. We gave a lot of talks and he used the Amish as an example to be followed;

they should be looked at. He bought a farm in a Mennonite community and hoped to encourage them; and then his enterprise collapsed. It was sort of a sad situation.

SR-Oh, I see. Well, you said he bought a farm in Virginia. But I didn't know it was in a Mennonite community. He wanted his son to settle in a Mennonite community, Shenandoah Valley?

WK-Yes, there are Mennonites there.

SR-Oh yeah, oh yeah.

KJ-Is that one of the reasons that your study was so popular, then? Was Baker particularly encouraging people to read it?

WK-Well, that I don't know.

KJ-Would you mind speculating on why your study was the most popular one that the BAE published?

WK-It is so out of order for what they would do. It was the first time that they recognized the human factor in a way of life and an agriculture situation. It seemed to be the first one that had appeared that way. It seemed to be rather significant, you see. And the Amish people were interested in the Amish and that subject matter. Anything that has the Amish name on it, goes.

KJ-Exactly.

SR-Isn't that the truth. Now I'm intrigued by Baker's response, though, that he wanted to spread this message. Do you recall that he proposed specific policy initiatives at all at the federal level that he thought would help other communities follow this path? How did he, or Taylor, or anybody else for that matter; did they try to translate your learnings into public policy?

WK-Well, if you want my opinion, the way I see that, Baker was recognized as a sort of a queer, an outsider.

SR-Eccentric.

WK-Yes. His idea that we should maintain a good rural population in terms of not dying out, that was important. Farm agriculture, he was interested in that, but beyond that I don't see it. Well, when he comes in with an overcoat with a safety pin this long.

SR-I love it. I want a picture of that.

WK-Well, it was real yellow.... *[laughter]*

SR-Well, were people actively opposing Baker's vision, shall we say, his idea about spreading the Amish way? Were there people saying, "He's a nut! We want this study, but we don't want the rest." I mean, were there people actively going against that, that you remember?

WK-Well, let me tell you this story. He was elected president of the Association of American Geographers, and you had to give a speech at the end of your term. And for the first time he was confronted to have a good suit; a tuxedo; all the cockamamie that goes with being president and sitting at the head table. He didn't have one. At the very last minute there, he discovered that he was supposed to have that. The others discovered that, and they thought they would have a president that wasn't properly suited up for the occasion. So somebody actually went out and found a tuxedo type suit and Baker put it on. And somehow or other the tuxedo was not properly secured and when he got up, his pants fell down.

SR-O.K. We are doing a little bit of a test period here.

KJ-And another thing to keep in mind, watch for that light and if that goes off.

SR-Was that off?

KJ-It was; I just now realized that that was off.

SR-Oh, so, I think before that we were probably okay. It sounded like it.

KJ-Yeah, so we had a bit of a technical problem here, but we're back and we're going to pursue some more questions about O. E. Baker.

SR-I think we got the rest of the Baker story where you said that his pants fell down at the tuxedo event when he was the president of the Association of American Geographers, was it? And you were there?

WK-No, I wasn't there.

SR-Oh, you weren't there, but you probably heard the story many times from people who enjoyed telling it. Yeah, then I was pursuing Mr. Baker's situation in the USDA and we established that he wasn't a very effective internal politician in terms of pursuing the Amish lifestyle or say, trying to spread the Amish lifestyle through policy to other parts of rural America. Um, then I was just asking whether there were other people in the USDA or in the BAE or other departments, who were pursuing the same goal as Baker or would have supported him, that you recall?

WK-Well, M. L. Wilson would be the one that comes closest. He was definitely rural oriented, and he was looking for examples of communities that seemed to function independently of support; and he was also rural oriented in terms of, at that time they had a big population scare that this country was going to die out.

SR-Oh, isn't that funny, I mean it sounds funny now.

WK-Yeah, but the cities were short of perpetuating themselves at that time; about thirteen per thousand. It was the rural area that was replenishing the population. So here America was dying out, so that was a very common theme. So in that he basically had a lot of support, but beyond that, of course, it had to be rural. If it's rural, why then you have to have values, so here is an example of what values need to be; and then out of that, the result of this interest or byproduct, the Department of Agriculture started the subsistence programs, you remember them? Culverton Farms. I made a study of five communities that circled Birmingham. The iron plants were closed up, high unemployment. They had to be supported for every bit of food they bought. Get them back on the land, give them five to ten to fifteen acres and make them subsistence farmers. That was sort of a byproduct of that.

KJ-Yeah, I've looked at some of those letters at the National Archives, clients of the subsistence farm program. I was directed toward them by the guy I was working with at the Smithsonian. He said that those were some of the best letters in terms of people really explaining their economic situation, you know, how desperate their economic situation was.

WK-I wrote, if you look at that bibliography, I wrote the one on, "The Home on Earth." That's a larger publication. "The Home on Earth." That covers five communities near Birmingham. It's in there somewhere. By the way, that was rather something of a failure, too. You can't begin to understand how quickly people lose the work ethic and don't know how to farm. And here, for example, just to give you a little illustration: Eleanor Roosevelt was a big favorite at that time. She had a daily column and spouted off her wisdom.

KJ-"My Day."

WK-You remember that? Well, she came down to Birmingham and she was going to give some publicity to these homesteaders. What a wonderful thing this was. And at that time, I was making a study of these communities there. The office down in Birmingham was all excited about Eleanor coming. Very, very few people were farming their land. They'd get a Negro and put them in a barn and that would be the work for them. Or they found some way to get some outsider to take care of their five acres. They were supposed to have a cow and a mule, their own garden, their own orchard, like the garden of Eden. Pick their own fruit. Where can we find an example that will illustrate this? Well, there was one good example, in one family the grandfather used to be a farmer and he worked and would do all these things. And he maintained a perfect acreage of flowers and truck farm. He had all the paraphernalia that goes with about five acres that would self-sustain you. So they diverted Eleanor's attention as long as possible around the rural area, and then at the last minute they cut through the angle and took her to that place. And here was a fine example of how people can live off the land. It appeared in her column pretty soon after that and she extolled the wonderful program of subsistence farming. Now, of all the hundred or so subsistence farming projects they had, the only

one that really succeeded were the berry farmers of Oregon, because those are intensive by nature.

SR-Well, I wanted to ask that; if Mr. Wilson, then, had any specific programs or proposals to follow up on this? But you would say that the subsistence agriculture or subsistence farm program was one that tried to sort of use the insights from the Amish studies?

WK-He published a number of papers on subsistence homesteads.

SR-Wilson did. Okay, was there, that's a very good example I think, is there anything else like that comes to mind that, in your opinion, built on or followed up the study of the stability, the study of the stable rural community and ways to recreate that?

WK-Well, keeping them on the land, the irrigation projects tried that. They wanted to expand those wherever they could. At that time they didn't anticipate the surge of industrialization that came right after the war; no expectation of this heavy migration to the cities. That was completely unknown and not anticipated.

KJ-And in the population shifts, just the demographic shifts, like blacks out of the South into the industrial north. I mean, it's amazing now to think about that. I mean, what a turning point World War II was.

WK-Just tremendous. Unanticipated. That's why I'm rather skeptical about planning. In war or peace.

KJ-Exactly. I can see. I can understand your skepticism.

SR-We were listing some questions about internal USDA politics that we wanted to pursue a bit and I have been asking along those lines actually. Maybe we can just finish that and move on to another topic. I guess we've asked this, maybe, but to be more specific, did you sense any expectation or pressure from Baker or Young in terms of finding specific things in Lancaster? Like what if you had come back and said, that's not as stable a community as we had thought; it's actually very

unstable, they're going to fall apart in ten years. What if you had come back and said that?

WK-They were remarkably open. Now for example, on subsistence, my report on the subsistence project near Birmingham was almost completely negative. No questions were raised. They published it that way. Carl Taylor was a true academician.

SR-That's a good example.

KJ-Yeah, so was the BAE unique in that respect?

WK-Yeah. I don't think it has too many people like that today.

KJ-Do you know Richard Kirkendall's book about the social scientists in the Department of Agriculture? It was published in the mid-sixties and he pretty much makes the case that that kind of freedom was there in the BAE under Taylor, but you couldn't really find it elsewhere in the USDA.

WK-These agricultural colleges are rather narrow, very narrow and self-centered. For example, you have the idea that you have civil service. They plan a survey of the Africans and you can just tell what they can get. But I know it was always the practice there. You needed a certain type of person with a certain kind of experience and those always turned out to be they came from the same college that the head of the department came from.

KJ-Yeah, I mean, there is that kind of criticism of Iowa State, for instance; all the time in Iowa, and I think Kansas State is the same.

WK-It's not civil service at all.

SR-Nepotism, eh?

WK-You write the specifications so you can get the man you want.

KJ-I'm amazed at how well we've covered points just sort of one related to another.

SR-The things that the BAE was promoting, we have the impression that there was opposition elsewhere in the USDA. There is a sort of policy

thrust toward business farming, toward fewer people on the land, toward more productivity, more labor efficiency and so forth; and then there is this other thrust that maybe your study represents and Wilson and Baker, that was more oriented toward sustaining rural community, keeping the people on the land and so forth, and less towards business orientation. How much of that was clear to you at the time? I mean, that's something that historians have talked about later that I have read. Did you sense that at the time, was there even something as extreme as a siege mentality in the BAE towards the other? I mean was any of that being discussed or was it clear to Wilson?

WK-When I accompanied them in the migratory worker studies, I had these commercial farmers were operating, and the threat that they posed, that was pretty well understood. But most of the agriculture workers had a rural background and were sympathetic to maintaining the atmosphere of the rural community. Another little incident, I think they always explain something. I have a very good friend; he worked for the TVA. I had a good friend, he's gone now. He was a rural sociologist. And he went down to Mississippi to study the family structure; and he had been down there somewhere, Jackson, in that area or somewhere, and he recorded very carefully the family structures of them; and he noted among them of how many of those big planters had mistresses. And it was released as a preliminary report and it was circulated. But that Eastman, I think it was Congressman Eastman from Mississippi, got a hold of that and he raised the dome off of the building, cut out that damn agency. And the Bureau of Agricultural Economics never quite recovered from that.

KJ-Yeah, there was a real, no, I didn't know that specific story; but I knew there were strong enemies in Congress and especially the southern conservatives.

WK-That tells you something, doesn't it?

SR-It certainly does.

WK-It shows you how the government's hands are tied. It can't be open about things. It's got to cater to interest groups.

SR-Well, and what's comical is that those would be some of the same people talking so much about family values and then he's really there protecting their right to have mistresses or their right to control people around them really or to dominate in a community; and it's completely different from what one would say about an Amish community, I suppose; much more egalitarian, more participatory, and so forth.

WK-Completely anti-academic, you see. Must be some sort of communist.

SR-Yeah, at least.

WK-By the way, I knew quite a few communists in those days.

KJ-That's what I was just thinking. I know one charge against both the FSA and the BAE was by right, people like Eastland, that they're commies.

WK-For example, my sister worked for the TVA at the time; and I knew that personnel pretty well; and there were quite a few commies there. Not that I was concerned about them, but they, the impression of course was this disastrous experience. And it had a lot of abuses in it. Society had a lot of abuses in it. And to escape that, of course, you have to look for another method. And communism at that time, biblical communism, what's wrong with it?

KJ-For many people of your generation, they saw that as a very viable alternative.

WK-It almost surprises me how Congress goes up and down the land and damns these third world countries because they turned communist; and then spends a lot of money and blood trying to keep them from becoming communist. What they don't remember is that in the Third World, property is owned by maybe 10% of the people. Finally, the people that learn they are getting the short end of the stick revolt. So they talk about some distribution of values of property. Immediately, those are the symptoms of communism, and then you go in there with a sledge hammer.

SR-Protecting private property is a big part of what our government thinks it's about. Which has

a question occurring to me. Did people expect, say the communists you knew, did they expect that the Amish were really more communal than they really are?

WK-They didn't even know about the Amish. I don't know of many communists that knew the Amish at the time.

SR-Sure, but say you yourself or people that were interested in the study, did they expect that the Amish owned land in common like in a Hutterite way, or did they understand that the Amish are really based on individual households based on private property?

WK-I don't know that they knew enough about that. Hutterites, of course, are a good example more or less of common property. I don't know if they knew enough about that. They weren't that smart.

SR-Okay. It's kind of interesting. You know, a lot of people look at the Amish and say they are oppressive and they are so communal that they must own everything in common. But it's very much private property.

WK-Do they take Social Security now?

SR-No. And I think the Social Security exemption has been extended. They won it for self-employment when they're farmers or when they run their own business. I think it's been extended, or they are working on it; to Amish who are employees of other businesses, that they wouldn't have to pay Social Security taxes either because they don't accept any benefits, anyway. So yeah, that's still the case.

WK-No Medicare either?

SR-Nothing.

WK-That's going to be rough. That's going to be tough.

SR-Well, something we wanted to ask quite a few questions about was Amish life and your observations at the time. But in the meantime, we were opening James C. Malin a little bit. Maybe we

want to take a break and pursue another topic for a while and then come back to the Amish, if that would be okay with you. I'd love to hear your experiences with James C. Malin. I was fascinated by him. I wrote a historiographical paper on him for Mac Rohrbough when I took a class, and read as much of him as I could get my hands on; and it was very difficult to understand. And I don't think historians or environmental historians or anybody else has really incorporated his work very well yet because it ranged across so many disciplines; it was so complex, so creative. It may take another generation yet for him to be, for someone to be equal to the task of incorporating his work. I don't know. That's my first response. I don't know when he came here. How long did you know him?

WK-I got to know him shortly after I came here. Somehow or another, he became interested in me...

SR-Was he here already? Because it was in the mid-thirties that he did his first population study in Kansas, I believe.

WK-I'm sure he was here. I'm not sure when he came here.

KJ-That was '35 or so. I know what you are talking about.

WK-Malin was one of the first men that I came to know well and...

SR-Did he pronounce it Mallin?

WK-Malin.

SR-Malin. Oh, I was going to say...

WK-I went to his house now and then and I was always struck about the whole walls of 3 x 5 cards. They didn't have any Xerox machines in those days. Oh, whole walls of it. There must have been thousands and thousands of 3 x 5 cards. He was in the library all the time. He would have a little bag and walk over to the library and copy more and more and more material. And then he wrote on a great diversity of subjects, as you know, and threw light on it, but he never synthesized it and never organized it right and that was his big problem.

SR-I think he could have had an amazing impact if he had written one thing that would synthesize what he was trying to say. You know, Swierenga did that for him; finally pulled together some of his work and wrote a lengthy introduction and tried to present his overall case; and that has really helped, I think. But at the time it looked like people must have just shrugged. How do you follow this?

WK-He got in trouble with two groups of people. In the first place, he felt that he was martyred because the New Dealers were out there to change everything, and they didn't like him because he questioned some of the New Deal things.

SR-That's right, he did. In fact, he was quite conservative in that sense, I think.

WK-So he was being fought by the Washington Hierarchy. In the second place, editors always shuddered when a manuscript came.

KJ-I can imagine.

WK-As I shuddered when I got his manuscript on a topic. But I didn't want to take time to rewrite it. Fairchild did. And after we rewrote it, he had some good ideas about arid, semi-arid, and so forth.

KJ-What do you mean by semi-arid?

SR-Exactly.

WK-False implications.

KJ-Yeah, that term is still used very loosely. In fact, I'm guilty of that myself.

SR-He almost got it chased away, I think. Not quite.

WK-He was a piece of work; a bit of this, a bit of this, a bit of this.

SR-Is that the way he was in the classroom, as well?

WK-Where is the synthesis? Where is the theme? Where are we going?

KJ-Yeah, so what kind of relationships did he have with students here at KU? Did they find him rather frustrating?

WK-Well, they were indifferent towards him. They tried to avoid him because he was a harsh critic, and his performance was not the kind that students welcomed.

SR-He trained some graduate students, though, didn't he?

WK-Yeah. Those that got to know him, they respected him. But you had to work on that barrier.

SR-Was he in the Geography Department? I don't remember.

WK-Oh no. History.

SR-Oh, he was in the History Department, that's right. He just crosses; he was a scientist and all this other stuff; and I couldn't remember what place he hung his hat.

WK-I published my paper on the woodsmen's assault on the cattlemen there, and he was over the next day. You forgot this, and you forgot this, and you forgot this.

KJ-He sounds like a problematic person. Anything else about Malin?

SR-Uh, not that I think of.

KJ-Well, let's talk more just about your observations of Amish life. Of course, we both read your study and we don't want to tread over territory that we've already crossed in reading your articles, but some things just came to our mind as we were driving out here yesterday, things that we wanted to follow up on. I guess one thing that Steve brought up and that people always seem to react to is the issue of growing the tobacco. If that was such a major component of their agriculture economy there in Lancaster County, and that comes out so clearly, you know, in your studies, very, very clearly. Was there any discomfort on the part of the Amish depending on this particular crop? Could you tell us a little bit more about their

attitude toward tobacco, why they had adopted this as a major cash crop?

WK-Well, they were a little uncomfortable when you asked about it. But they made it clear right away that God created all plants for a purpose, and the tobacco was a very good insecticide, and that's why we are growing it. And if the world abuses that and smokes it, then that's their problem. At the same time, some of them did smoke cigars. It was sort of a torn question.

KJ-I remember when we were there in '89, at the Esches'. This was still coming up about its purpose as an insecticide, that there was still some emphasis there.

WK-Well, prior to all these artificial insecticides, tobacco was one of the more common things. The rationale for it was two-fold. In the first place, the land values were very high. Tobacco is a high input crop for labor; it was a way to work in the winter time. It was a way to keep the kids busy.

KJ-That comes out so clearly in your work. Keep the boys out of trouble.

WK-Now relate that to the physical environment. You see, you say, well, they raise tobacco. That was because the environment was such, but that's just part of the answer.

KJ-It's so cultural. Yeah, so you were just saying the choice to grow tobacco was culturally determined.

WK-Oh yes.

KJ-Not having anything to do with the physical environment.

WK-The tobacco was not particularly high quality. It made cheap cigars.

SR-Well, culturally determined and economically determined, as you said. To keep up with the land prices, you needed a cash crop that was valuable. The cash crop there now, one might say, is dairy, dairy farming.

WK-That created such a dilemma in North Carolina today because all that land is fragmented.

Now what's the alternative; that if you extinguish the tobacco industry, where do you go from there? And Jesse Helms has a real worry there.

SR-Well, some farmers will be; it's like consolidation in the Midwest with corn. There will be ways to consolidate the land. Some people will lose out, I guess.

WK-Yeah, but a lot of that land is fragmented by erosion and you've got tracts here, tracts there; and with tobacco you get along with two or three acres. Where if you grow corn, you want fifty acres, big fields. You may have that on the coastal plain, but in the Piedmont you have a lot of defection. I could take you to where I was in the South, to a county, I could show you a ravine that you could bury a car. I could take you to one where you could bury a railroad car; and I could take you to one where you could bury a church. That's the Piedmont, the slope. One thing, again, that the Americans don't realize very much is that they refer to the laws of farming in say, England. There you have records of farming for eleven hundred years and it sells pretty good. It is rather flat and the rain is gentle for the most part. In the United States, we have soil in many places that is compact, has a deep slope, the rains are torrential, and the wind is powerful. So we have forces that destroy here that are much stronger than they have over there. So to say that you can use that land a thousand years is a little bit short of what the facts are.

SR-It doesn't look very hopeful around here. A lot of different soils; to think that those will go a thousand years is hard to imagine.

WK-I have that 140 acres down there south of here. I would say about 20% is down to the sea horizon. It took me five years to get a grass established.

SR-Oh my.

WK-Five years; and I could do it because I had the income. I also established 15 acres of prairie and I am very proud of that. But it is just one little segment of what we have. And then you know in recent years, the Department of Agriculture had a double-barrel conservation program; the usual

one and the special one on slope areas where the erosion was high. So for a period of ten years they would pay you to not grow crops but plant grass and trees and use the land so that it will be conserved. Well, the ten years are over now and the pressure will be to go back to crops to erode again. Now, if we would have congressmen who were worth their salt, they would keep that in the preserve state and furthermore and let them graze on their land and withdraw the heavy grazing, the heavy cropping in the plains area and let that go back to natural grass. But we don't have any statesmanship in Washington. It's the next election, the next election.

SR-Well, with irrigation, if the water is more difficult to find eventually, that is going to slow down some of the cropping on the plains.

WK-Yes, we have practically exhausted the...

KJ-Ogallala Aquifer.

WK-That's the pump irrigation.

SR-Even the river potential, yeah. Now I'm trying to recall if you said very much in your study at that time about Amish land use practices and tillage and fertilizer and erosion control and that sort of thing. That was, of course, a concern after the dust bowl years of the '30s. The Amish were a kind of model on that too, I think.

WK-They did very well.

SR-You know they are under attack now in Lancaster County for using manure...

WK-You mean artificial manure.

SR-No, manure. It's said that that's helping to pollute the Chesapeake drainage area through the Susquehanna Valley.

WK-Ah, I see, I hadn't heard about that.

SR-It's very strange.

WK-Well, you've heard of the chicken farms down in Arkansas.

SR-Yeah, yeah.

WK-They have a lot of pollution down there.

KJ-They got a lot of publicity about that.

WK-You can't have it both ways.

SR-Okay, of course, you know from the article I sent to you that we published, you remember that I sent to you last summer, one of our interests is Amish women, and Amish gender relations and Kathy asked you earlier about the amount of your contacts with Amish women and that you didn't have a lot of conversation with them. But we'd like to ask you a few things about your observations about the work Amish women did, family life, things like that. Like how much—you were there over a crop period over planting and over the summer at least, did Amish women work in the fields quite a bit or not very much?

WK-It wasn't conspicuous. I should also say that the day of feminism had not arrived in those days.

SR-Had not arrived.

WK-Now that you raised the question, the role of women never came up in the discussions in Washington.

SR-Yeah, I'm sure.

WK-These roles were fixed, permanent.

KJ-Yeah, that's good to have that on the tape, though, that it never officially, on the tape, that it never came out.

WK-It was just not a matter of academic interest at that time.

SR-It didn't come up as something that was a problem. Did it come up as something that was to be preserved, that part of the reason these were stable at all was because women...?

WK-It didn't come up, it didn't come up.

SR-No, it didn't come up at all, okay.

WK-But suppose it had come up. I often wonder how I would have gotten close to those gals. The men would have suspected. You talk to a gal, for example; now what are you up to? Or you talk to a woman, and the women were very, very modest, almost pathetically modest. I don't know what kind of response I would have gotten from the women. They really...

KJ-So, first of all, as you say, this is before gender was an issue, that academics were dealing with, so it didn't even come up. And even if it had, it would have been a major methodological problem because you couldn't have approached these women to be asking them questions.

WK-I don't remember any woman that ever came forward to talk to me.

KJ-Yeah, I'm sure of that.

SR-Well, say more of what you mean by modest; in their behavior, in their speech or what, how do you mean that they were so modest?

WK-Well, they were reticent. They didn't ever put on a show of inviting you or to come close or talk to you. They did their work quietly, unassumingly, and were occupied, but they never really took notice of me.

SR-Did the men say anything about their wives, the men that you talked with, about their contributions to the farm or that they were a great housekeeper or anything like that?

WK-They didn't flatter them very much, no. They took them for granted.

SR-In your conversations, they didn't even talk about women very much or the Amish women, their wives or daughters or mothers, or anything?

WK-No, no. Sometimes they gave them a problem and they had to resort to shunning. These women would have to be at a separate table and that sort of thing. That was quite a problem.

SR-Were there some shunning things going on at that time?

WK-There was one, yes.

SR-What was the issue there? Do you remember?

WK-The man ran a radio wire down his water spout *[laughter]*.

SR-Okay.

WK-That was a powerful method of control, I want you to know.

SR-Oh yeah.

KJ-Shunning.

WK-Yeah, the women, the wives and the children eat at one table, and Papa sits over here. The wife cries. The children cry. Separate beds and that's hard to take.

KJ-Yeah. But he basically was trying to sneak in radio into the house, right?

WK-Yeah, he was trying to get more information about the market, natural curiosity.

KJ-Yeah.

SR-So did he make it back into the church, so you remember?

WK-I think he relented. He had to kind of back in there again. They cut off so many things.

SR-Yeah, I imagine.

KJ-That brings up another issue, though. You know, in my research in the Midwest during the time period I was looking at, from 1913 to 1963, over and over again people talked about the radio as an agricultural tool just for the kind of thing you're talking about. Get the market reports, get the weather reports. The Amish didn't have the radio. Were they pretty prolific newspaper readers?

WK-Yeah.

KJ-I think this came up in your study.

WK-Yeah, they read papers.

KJ-And were they pretty well-informed on world events? For instance, were they keeping up with war news in Europe at this point, that kind of thing?

WK-Moderately so. Everything had a biblical interpretation. They would quote all sorts of prophecies, doomsday, last days.

KJ-Did that come up a lot, the last days interpretation?

WK-Oh yeah.

SR-From Old Order or from Beachy Amish?

WK-Old Order.

SR-I'm surprised it would be Old Order as much. They tend to, most, I think, tend to stay away from the millenarian kinds of interpretations. I don't know. I would have said you would run into that more with really conservative Mennonites and Beachy Amish, probably. But Old Order Amish were doing that as well? They were talking about end times and apocalypse?

WK-Now I can't identify or separate the two at the moment. I know that I heard a lot about the biblical interpretations, about biblical warnings, about prophecies.

SR-And would they be as specific as saying the European war, the European confederacy, the ten nation confederacy?

WK-It was the last days.

KJ-Did you get much insight into the organization of the Amish family in terms of just very basic things about who disciplined the children and mothers' relationships with daughters in terms of socializing them into the appropriate women's role, and fathers' relationships with sons in terms of socializing them to be good Amish men? Was there much observation on that level?

WK-That doesn't come to mind. You know, of course, how they liked to go to these summer camps and then meet somebody from a remote area and maybe marry them, you know, their way

of bringing people together. They go drive through Indiana or very far to find a mate maybe or they don't say they do, but they go there for camp purposes, but that's usually where they find mates.

KJ-And did you observe some of these arrangements, the camp?

WK-At the time I knew several of them, yeah.

KJ-Is this one of their ways of ensuring exogamy in terms of larger gene pool as you were talking yesterday to meet up with some folks, say, from Indiana?

WK-I never heard them talk about the gene pool. *[laughter]* But there were some six fingered children there, and that worried me a little bit. The doctors were very sympathetic with them that were working with them on the question, but what do you do?

SR-They have more access to genetic counseling now than ever before. Johns Hopkins University has done a lot of genetic studies and some, I mean, it's available to them for Amish couples who are engaged to go talk with a genetic counselor and try and trace family lines to see if dwarfism or some genetic diseases would be likely to show up in their children. So that is less of a problem now than it used to be, I think.

KJ-But at the time you didn't get that there was much awareness of that or concern about that?

WK-No. I stayed up with some of the Hutterites in the Dakotas at that time, and I told you that they had eye trouble. They had these thick lenses. It was very conspicuous there. And then in town where I stayed, they knew that I was looking at the Hutterites, and they said, "You know, now and then a traveling salesman finds these gals and then she becomes pregnant; but you know they don't criticize that very much. That's a good thing because it gets some other blood in here."

SR-That's interesting.

WK-They were more or less sensitive to that.

KJ-Yeah, those are all interesting questions. So you say at the time there was a doctor there who was concerned.

WK-No, he came kind of as common sense.

KJ-As common sense, I see. I wasn't straight on that. Let's talk just a little bit, sort of following up something you said before, about the relationships between husbands and wives. You said that it was just kind of taken for granted by the man. Well, this is just expected of women, the kind of work they do, and the role they played in the family economy, in the farming economy, for that matter. You never heard a husband praise a wife, for instance.

WK-No.

SR-And you would never have heard a wife complain about anything.

WK-Well, they get to these women, you see.

SR-Yeah, yeah.

WK-That was a dimension that was beyond their horizon.

SR-I was curious when we were thinking about questions to ask, whether your sister may, if she had gone with you.

WK-Oh, she would have.

SR-She would have had access much more...

WK-But she was working at the TVA, you see.

SR-Right, right.

KJ-It certainly would have been interesting had she come along.

WK-Then she would have stayed with the females.

KJ-Right, right and seen...

WK-She's bound to pick up things.

KJ-Sure. Did you ever hear, I assume that if you didn't hear men praising women, you also didn't hear them criticizing their wives?

WK-No, but I got the impression that they were highly dominant. Although, you know, there are exceptions to that. There are women that are dominant, too, in their more subtle way.

SR-What gave you the impression that the men were especially dominant?

WK-When you posed problems of one kind or another, or activities of one kind or another, if it wasn't a women's domain, why it was taken care of.

SR-Someone else was doing it. They didn't have to worry about it.

WK-Well, the women are expected to do it, and they'll do it. There's no question that they didn't have the responsibility to take care of it. For example, they use pay telephones. They hoped the women would stay away from that and not get mixed up with outside women, you see. Women didn't count. I doubt that women made any calls on telephones. Well, maybe some from this place, but the men would go there for practical purposes to get some fertilizer delivered or this and that while they went there. But I never saw a woman come to one of those, and yet women liked telephones.

KJ-Yes, that goes for other farm women. Looking at the advertising of that era about rural phone service, it was very much played up that the women in the family would particularly appreciate having a phone, you know, and much of the advertising from Bell Telephone was focused on the farm wife, on the farm woman, in the non-Amish communities. That's interesting.

SR-Part of the phone discourse was easing isolation, though, and supposedly the Amish with their close knit community and kin network and so forth would have had less experience with isolation than the woman on the plains. At least that would be the ideal.

WK-Now when you prepare big meals and have a substantial family, there isn't much slack time there for a telephone.

KJ-That's true. Did you get a sense of any leisure activities among the women? You know, we have the stereotype of the quilting bees and that sort of thing with Amish women.

WK-I must admit that the female side is rather void. I didn't see much, nothing really comes to mind.

SR-You didn't observe them doing quiltings or frolics to can vegetables?

WK-I was supposed to give a report on farming.

SR-Yeah, we understand, we're just probing.

KJ-We're just pushing to see if anything else comes.

WK-I grant you that women are very important in farming, but at that time, that was taken for granted.

KJ-Yeah, yeah.

SR-Oh, I understand that we're probing the edges a little bit.

KJ-Yes, that wasn't the focus of your research.

SR-Yeah, yeah.

WK-For example, I never had an Amish woman in my car, or a girl.

SR-Well, that would have been a problem, I understand that. I mean, that would have been a problem to them. I don't think if you had offered them a ride all alone, they probably wouldn't have taken it.

WK-I doubt it. You never felt that they really trusted you or that they wanted to get close to you.

SR-But you had such success in gaining the trust and confidence of the men that you were with, or many of the men you were with. That's quite a big

contrast. I mean, you spoke the language. You had a farm background. You not only spoke German, but you spoke the farm language. You could talk field and soil and things like that with them. That went so well for you, it sounds like.

WK-Yeah, there was an old man by the name of Byer. Does that strike you as an Amish name?

SR-Beiler?

WK-Beiler, yeah. And he was always waiting for me. Talk, talk, talk, he wanted to talk. He was a good source of information. He was one of the elders in the community. He knew everybody else. So, you could use that, you see.

SR-Oh yeah.

WK-He needed and wanted company.

SR-He was an older man then?

WK-Oh yes, he had foot trouble and couldn't move very well, just sitting there; and he just loved it when I got on the place.

SR-Yes, because I know a Beiler now who's the same way.

WK-He is?

SR-Oh yeah. They've started a library finally there. They are gathering some of their own materials to preserve. And he had it in his home for a long time and now they've put up a separate building for it just in the last year or two.

WK-Where are they locating it?

SR-It's by the Gordonville bookstore.

WK-Oh.

SR-The Gordonville publishing thing. It doesn't have its own heat supply, of course, but they pipe in a little bit from the neighboring building. And so, that's where *The Diary* is published, too. Anyway, he very much enjoys company and enjoys talking, so it must run in the Beiler clan maybe.

KJ-My impression is that it was the more successful farmers that you mainly talked with, right? And people acknowledged as leaders or particularly successful farmers?

WK-Well, they usually refer you to somebody. Well, I suppose they have a drunk somewhere and they don't refer you to him.

SR-That's a good point.

KJ-So you didn't see sort of in Lancaster, the Amish version of a class hierarchy of people who were maybe struggling a bit with their agricultural operations?

WK-Oh, there was a lot of them up and down the scale, from watchmakers in town to the farmers. I covered them.

SR-Now you mean a scale in the county, was there a scale within the Amish? I mean, there is a scale in the county, clearly, I mean there's fairly wealthy people in Lancaster City even at that time and so forth; but what about within the Amish, did you have any sense that some were more successful than others, and some had better farms than others, and some were more respected than others?

WK-Oh yes, very definitely, yeah.

SR-What was the basis of the difference?

WK-You just look at the bishops and leaders. That would be one index. They were successful people.

SR-So I've always heard that the bishops were the best farmers or the biggest farmers.

WK-They did well. And beyond that there are near bishops. They are considering bishops. There was a lot of talk about that. And those often didn't have enough time to read the Bible. You get a sense of values there and attitudes.

SR-It was based on farming, this hierarchy of success. Was there any sense that you got that it was ever based on biblical knowledge or spirituality or religiosity, anything like that? I'm kind of asking an off the wall question, perhaps.

KJ-And there seemed to be a direct connection between the level of religiosity and the level of material success. Did they make that kind of connection? Like, oh, if that person is successful, then they must be in good shape spiritually, you know, that kind of goes back to the Puritan model, actually.

WK-Well, spirituality, well [I] remember those sermons were long and rambling dissertations. I sat there for two hours listening to them and I didn't find that especially exciting.

KJ-Yeah, we went to one.

WK-So they didn't have to show a particular talent for that.

SR-Well, you don't audition there. The lot falls in and you do the best you can. When they were preaching, did you understand quite a bit of the sermon?

WK-Oh yeah.

SR-You do better than I did.

KJ-So your language skills did prove to be a real benefit. What else?

SR-Um.

KJ-We're almost done.

WK-Went up the street and turned the corner around.

SR-Yeah. You know, actually, there is that stereotype of Germanisms in English that the Amish supposedly use, but there's a linguist in Texas who is arguing against that, that they are functionally fully bilingual. They're perfectly fluent in English and perfectly fluent in German as well. But yeah, throw Papa down the stairs his hat; and turn the switch, no how does that go; make the light off.

WK-Make the light off, yeah.

SR-Mach das Licht aus. And so forth.

WK-I will be surprised if they perpetuate. It takes quite a bit of time to be reading and studying

the Bible with all the other pressures they have nowadays.

SR-Oh, I see. You'll be surprised if they "perpetuate" *the language skills*, you mean?

WK-Yeah. It must take quite a bit of time and energy, but that's just a question I have, I don't know.

SR-German school, they still have German school in a lot of...?

WK-Now why does it have to be in German?

SR-No, I mean all of the school is in English.

WK-Yeah.

SR-But they often come to school having spoken only or...

TAPE 3 OF 3

Date: March 8, 1995

Location: Dr. Kollmorgen's home in Omaha, Nebraska

With: Steven Reschly

Subject: United States Department of Agriculture during the New Deal, and Dr. Kollmorgen's research in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania

SR-Okay, Dr. Kollmorgen, I'd like to ask you about the people you worked with in the Department of Agriculture. One of those was Henry Wallace, who was the Secretary of Agriculture during much of the New Deal period under Franklin Roosevelt. We discussed Mr. Wallace some and Mr. Wilson some. Did you ever meet Henry Wallace or hear him give speeches? What was your contact with Henry Wallace himself?

WK-I never met Henry Wallace. But I knew of his presence, of course, and there was much discussion about him in the Department, you know. Most of it favorable.

SR-And you said he set the atmosphere of being open to academics in the government.

WK-That's right.

SR-And he invited quite a few himself to come into office.

WK-Yeah, yeah.

SR-He would have been the one to recruit M.L. Wilson, for example.

WK-Yeah, definitely.

SR-He brought Wilson to the government. And we talked about the atmosphere of experimentation in the Department as well as the government as a whole; and Henry Wallace helped set that tone in the department. But you also said he was somewhat distant.

WK-As far as I was, I never had occasion to call on him, of course. Of course, he had a big department. He had a lot of other things to do, so it never bothered me. I never thought that I was forgotten.

SR-Mr. Wilson was an assistant of Wallace, M.L. Wilson, and you said he had spent time in Montana as, he worked with extension there. But he was also with Montana State in Bozeman; and he was in Rural Sociology, or what department would he have been in?

WK-I suspect he was more of an agricultural economist. That's what I suspect, but that I don't know.

SR-O.K. Then he was connected with the Department of Agriculture through extension work in Montana and that's perhaps how, or that's the reason the connection that Henry Wallace saw, to bring him to Washington D.C.

WK-That's right.

SR-Okay, what kind of person was Wilson? What do you think was his intention? What was he involved with in the USDA?

WK-Well, all of the people in the Department of Agriculture felt a certain amount of intimacy with Wilson. He was a very personable man, a friendly man, and a relaxed man and listened to people; and he was also academically inclined. He liked to discuss academic subjects. Furthermore, he had

various ideas on how to address this problem of the Depression, or how to experiment with it. Not only was he in support of these rural studies, to which I contributed one, but to the subsistence farming program, which was experimented with on a rather grand scale for a while.

SR-That's right. We talked about the subsistence homestead projects which we read about further in the correspondence files; and he had some affinity with the back to the land movement apparently as well.

WK-For example, there was a project in New Jersey, I think. They needed some opportunities for the unemployed Jewish garment workers.

SR-From New York City.

WK-Yeah, from New York City, mind you. And so in New Jersey somewhere, they built a huge building and filled it with garment workers; and they were supposed to get in some subsistence thinking in operation, you see. And so they gave them land and put up this huge structure and they were supposed to produce their own eggs and have a dairy, and have a garden, and have an orchard; and then you were supposed to work for that; and that was almost comical. Because no sooner had the Jews begun occupying that building, why they put pressure on them to have people go out and do the work. They did not know how to plant trees. They did not take care of eggs or chickens. They knew nothing about agriculture. So, they had this constant pressure. They thought someone would produce for them. They would eat it, but they needed somebody else to produce it.

SR-Which is a good urban approach to how you get through it, right? I'll buy it in a grocery store. Didn't you? You talked about visiting one of those. You did a study of the subsistence projects.

WK-I did do one of those studies. I studied five subsistence projects near Birmingham.

SR-Alabama.

WK-Alabama, right. Yeah, I worked out of Alabama. What's that other big town in Alabama?

SR-Tuscaloosa?

WK-No, no. Birmingham, right near Birmingham. They had a steel industry there. They had quite a big steel industry there. They had, well as I remember, they had five furnaces there, but only one of them was operating. And so here were all of these stranded steel workers. They recognized that they all had rural backgrounds, rural talent, rural ambitions, and so here was an opportunity to put them on tracts from three to fifteen acres. So they provided them with these acres and a little structure for a cow and some chickens, but they never quite solved the problem of how to plow. They didn't want to give a mule to everybody. You don't keep a mule for one farm of four or five acres, you see. So they were supposed to do that collectively and there was nothing but a hassle about that. Who gets that mule when they needed it? And they had a lot of trouble like that. And again, it was not a big success.

SR-Well, your study of these subsistence homestead projects, and other people's studies, too, contradicted what Wilson thought they should achieve. Was there any problem with that?

WK-Yeah, it is surprising how quickly, when people leave the farm, how quickly they forget, or become indifferent towards farming. We may think we all have rural roots, and in rural areas people like to do that sort of thing as a hobby, and as an adult they will do it. But those people, there were only about a half a dozen of them that functioned properly, and they had a Grandpa living with them, and he did the gardening. I don't know whether I should record this for you, but there was Eleanor in those days and she always had a "My Day." They planned to send her down to Birmingham, and she was going to write a column in "My Day" about these subsistence projects. And so the office in Birmingham was all excited. Here comes Eleanor. And she's going to make a tour through these subsistence projects to see how these people are flourishing amidst their orchards, and their chickens, and their gardens, and all of that sort of thing. And they were in a sort of dilemma because very little of this was taking place. So this was very carefully planned. They delayed the arrival of Eleanor at the projects until the very last moment and took her to one house where that Grandpa was. He had a beautiful garden; he had a cow; and he had an orchard, and all that sort of thing. So

she saw that and so in a few days we learned about it in “My Day,” how wonderful it was how these people were living off the land. You get the point of that.

SR-A Potemkin village. Did she ever learn the truth of it; that these things weren’t working?

WK-I doubt it. There were a lot of things Eleanor didn’t know much about. You know, when she flew over the Amazon basin, she said there were over ten million people there.

SR-Well, the next person I wanted to talk about was Carl Taylor, who would have been working with Wallace and Wilson, on the one side, and then he was head of the Rural Population and Welfare Department, I believe. And he had these projects and other things under him. What kind of person was Taylor? You spent some time with him, I believe. How did you find him to work with?

WK-Very congenial, very congenial, and he was a productive academician. You know his work on Argentina, don’t you? You know a rural sociology type study of Argentina. The different types of holdings, and classes and activities, and that sort of thing; and he did a very good job. And so that gave him stature and called attention and interest to his talent. And he wanted to multiply that sort of thing in this country and he tried to do it in his department. You’ll have to look that up sometime, his study on Argentina. It was a very good study.

SR-A number of these people, we need to read their works much more thoroughly than we have so far. Taylor, what was his interest in rural life, I mean, what was he trying to accomplish? We talked about Baker and the population problem and Wilson and subsistence homesteads; and they were looking to academicians for solutions. But what was his orientation?

WK-I would say that I don’t know too much about that, but he was very much interested in the class structure, and the income structure, and the organizational situation in rural areas. At that time, they were looking for what you might call agricultural leaders. They thought if they could find the agricultural leaders in places, and then could use them as funnels to bring ideas to rural areas and

update them and modernize them and get them to be efficient, you see. And I should tell you that Robert Harris and I wrote a rather nasty paper on that, the search for the rural community and that sort of thing. Do you remember that?

SR-Yeah. Well, that’s the idea of extension, essentially, is that you bring efficient farming into a county and then the extension agent extends that to the leading farmers, and they teach their neighbors.

WK-But they look for the traditional leaders. They thought the preacher was a leader and rural people were the leaders; but you know, by that time the leaders, the farmers, were more oriented towards the extension people and the government. So the story of that, the sense of community for leadership, they looked outside for leadership.

SR-What’s your favorite memory of Carl Taylor?

WK-I would say that I was in his office maybe a half a dozen times, and he always, we always regarded each other very highly. We got along very well. We discussed our business, and then I went on my way. But, I can say nothing but good things about Carl Taylor. I respect him. He performed well of himself and he expected others to perform well. By the way, the only subsistence experiment that really succeeded was in the Northwest where they raised berries. They already had five acre plots. They knew how to do it, and they did very well with it. But that was one fine example of what they were doing where they could see.

SR-Well, as we said, one of the things they were trying to do was find a cushion for the cycles of a capitalist economy. And a marketplace economy relies on surplus production; and you need more land for that; and they were really going against the grain, we can see in retrospect, by trying to encourage small plots and subsistence farming.

WK-Yeah, the whole trend was just bigger and bigger operations and they were thinking of subsistence. They were really moved by the subsistence idea, that farming should first feed the family. And beyond that, you would sell what you had left over.

SR-And that would maintain rural population and you would have people there and there would be a viable, permanent, sustainable rural community. Well, the next person I wanted to talk about was Charles Loomis. He did some publishing on the Amish, I remember; and he was a rural sociologist himself and he worked in Carl Taylor's department. He worked pretty closely with Taylor, Charles Loomis?

WK-I shouldn't give you, for an answer on that. I don't know. I know he was perhaps the most, well, farming was always a religion to him, sacred. He was really moved; he could really be moved by rural situations. You could see that he was a devout believer in rural life. In that sense I respected him.

SR-Now where was Loomis from?

WK-Michigan.

SR-He was from Michigan.

WK-He died quite a few years ago. He died not many years after I left.

SR-I think I remember that. I think he would have done some interesting publishing, some interesting writing, later in his life. He had some good groundwork laid, built up.

WK-He went to Germany for a year, I remember that.

SR-Well, the next person might be Kimball Young, who was a social anthropologist, I remember you saying.

WK-Anthropologist, he was a social anthropologist, I think.

SR-He was a social anthropologist or an anthropologist?

WK-Well, he was a physical anthropologist, and social, the social kind.

SR-And he is the one that actually planned, or put into operation, he and Loomis, maybe, put into operation these...

WK-Yeah, when we came there, we had five studies in mind. The persons to make the studies were selected and we would have these meetings; and we would outline the study in a way. What are you supposed to do? What are you supposed to look for? And what are you supposed to record, you see? So there was some attempt made to get some similarity in approach for these studies so they could be compared.

SR-Who was in on these planning meetings?

WK-Well, essentially those that did the work, and Loomis, and Kimball Young.

SR-So Loomis and Kimball Young are the ones who really gave the most direct supervision of the planning process.

WK-Well, there really wasn't much supervision.

SR-Okay. Well, at least supervision of the planning process.

WK-Yeah. I was surprised how they never interfered with me. They never came out. They never looked at anything. I appreciated that.

SR-Yeah, they waited for your results. Um, what was Kimball Young's goal, do you think, in wanting to pursue these rural studies? What was he interested in?

WK-I saw very little of Kimball Young outside of these meetings. He was not the, what you might say, the intimate type. He was distant; he was always distant. He struck me as being a little bit high hat, and aloof, and a little cocky, a little self-centered. I didn't have nearly the respect for Kimball Young as I did toward the others. Sure, I think he was an able man, but not the kind that develops any intimate friendships with those that he thinks are below him.

SR-Right. Now, out of all of these people, it sounds like you might have known O.E. Baker the best. Is that right?

WK-I suppose, yes.

SR-Who else was there at the department that you would have known fairly well, or that you worked with? Am I missing some people?

WK-No, no. When you come to O.E. Baker, why, that's about it.

SR-Okay. Well, Baker. You've told some stories before about him, some of his interests and perhaps unusual interests at times, or this passion for population.

WK-I hope I didn't give you a bad idea of Baker because he was a dedicated man.

SR-Not at all.

WK-He was sincere. There was nothing false about him.

SR-Well, you wrote in your letter that these are all complex figures and need more than just simple stories about them. If you were to explain Baker to someone, you just said he was sincere and so forth, but as far as his role in the department, what he was trying to accomplish? How would you explain Baker to someone?

WK-Baker became pretty well known in the field of agriculture because he wrote a series of articles on the agricultural regions of the United States; and those became almost standard teaching tools, so he had a good reputation on that score. But by the time I met him, he had gotten into the population subject and that really stirred him up; and that concerned him; and that was the area that really motivated him to look at all sorts of things. He wanted to find out how to keep people in rural areas, keep them satisfied, and improve their lives and living conditions. And he was sincere to the extent that he tried to participate in it himself.

SR-Now he was interested in population and sustaining the population. Was he involved very directly in the actual community studies?

WK-No, other than he was so much interested in the Amish; he was very much interested in the Amish; and I arranged to take him up there. I told you about that.

SR-Yeah, that was an interesting story. Well, Baker was especially interested in the Amish and, I think, for reasons that make sense. These other people like Kimball Young, Loomis, and Carl Taylor, and so forth—were they interested in the Amish? I mean, they were a good anchor for this stability/instability study, but as far as a model of some kind for how rural communities should work, were they interested in the Amish in any way like Baker was?

WK-No, no.

SR-Why did they pick the Amish? I mean, if Baker wasn't involved—and he would have picked the Amish no matter what...

WK-These studies were supposed to be done on a continuum, stable to unstable. The one in Western Kansas was unstable, you see. The Amish were the most stable. So in that light, you would have difficulty finding the Amish. What would you have taken if the Amish were a stable community?

SR-Well, you were starting to study the Mormons.

WK-That was after that.

SR-Right, but the Mormons might have been an example, or could have been an example perhaps. It might not have been as palatable for political reasons, perhaps.

WK-I went out there. No study like that has ever been made of the Mormons. It should have been done, but I realized when I went out there that I would have problems because their records are sealed. You can't get to them. I was interested, for example, in the evolution of those clustered settlements. They live in the city and farm out in the country, you know.

SR-Like a European village.

WK-Yeah. They have a lot of that out there. I wanted to get the genesis of that, the changes in that, how they evolved and succeeded and that sort of thing. And I knew I'd have trouble. But then the war came and took care of that.

SR-Well, it sounds like Baker was most interested in the Amish and Mennonites. And perhaps more than anything because of the idea that they were sustaining their population, and they were sustaining a healthy, viable, vital rural community.

WK-And they wouldn't move to the cities.

SR-And they wouldn't move to the cities. He was sort of anti-urban.

WK-Like [unintelligible] was.

SR-Yeah, right. They owned the farms. It sounds like Baker was the most positive in that direction; and that most of the other people who were more directly responsible for the studies weren't looking to the Amish so much for those reasons as a model for other people. As if, in a more abstract way, they were saying, "Well now, how does this work for the Amish? What can we pull out of their experience that would be applicable to other people?" Am I getting to what you're thinking about that?

WK-It was purely academic to them.

SR-The Amish were purely academic to them.

WK-To the others. Baker was much more, and Loomis.

SR-Loomis was like that?

WK-Yeah.

SR-How did Loomis and Baker attempt to take that idea of the Amish; their admiration for the Amish, their sense that this was a real, workable model for other people to follow? How did they try to put that into practice in terms of making policy? Did they try to take that study of the Amish or their sense of the Amish and make it work further?

WK-Well, the role they played in translating that into practice is difficult to say. But then I told you before, the attitude at that time was that farming would have to be able to continue where it left off. There would be pressure on the land. There would be poverty. There would be stress. And therefore divide the land as much as we can, and

have as many people on the land as possible, and give them a sense of security. I have some of those materials. Would you like to take some of them along?

SR-About the planning notion?

WK-Yeah, the outlook at that time.

SR-Sure.

WK-It's something that's very interesting, very interesting.

SR-Perhaps a little depressing.

WK-Well, look at the pile of studies they made of the Great Plains. What did they do with the Great Plains? You know, it's all interesting reading, but that's about all there is to it.

SR-So at one point in the Depression there was a great openness to academics and planning, and rational study to find out what to do in public policy. Did you sense during the war perhaps, or toward the end of your service in the government, that there was some disillusionment with that?

WK-I'm not sure what you mean, "disillusionment with that."

SR-Disillusionment with the academic approach to finding solutions to social problems?

WK-Well, I'm inclined to be a little bit more skeptical than most people. I never had all the faith in so-called specialists that some people had. They had their quota of nuts just like any other field. The kind that would, you know, practically everything for them they couldn't leave alone; that whole range and gamut of outlooks.

SR-Was there some disillusionment with the government people you were working with about academics such as yourself at some point? I mean, they weren't as willing to listen to you, or anything like that. Did you get a sense of that before you left government service?

WK-No.

SR-There was still an ongoing interest in...

WK-At that time I was in Little Rock, away from Washington. And I was working on the land down there. They were trying to settle the swampland.

SR-Was there anyone else in the government that you worked with that you could recall now, other than the people we talked about, that made an impression on you or that had particular involvement in these rural life studies?

WK-No. I remember Leonard made the study down at El Cerrito. And I remember the fella that went to New England, and I remember Earl Bell. But we saw very little of each other. You must remember, I really wasn't a Washington man. I was out there in the sticks somewhere. And I was very happy to be left alone.

SR-Right, okay. It sounds like we've covered most of the information you have about those people who were there in Washington and you worked more traveling, doing studies outside of Washington. Baker seems especially interesting in that he was so intrigued by the Amish. But on the other hand, he didn't have that much to do with the study, so it's hard to know where to put him. Would he have been talking to Loomis, I wonder, in the office about the study? Or how can we make the Amish more effective as a model to other people? Would he have been talking, would he have had Carl Taylor's ear for something like that?

WK-I don't know that they did that. I don't know.

SR-I'm just speculating at that point, trying to think through what Baker did with that quite passionate interest, really, in the Amish. Okay. Well, let's take a break.

Break

SR-Okay, so far we've talked about your memories of people you've worked with in the government in the Department of Agriculture. I'd like to ask you about your experiences when you lived in Lancaster County doing the field work for the community study that you published in 1942. Just for starters, what's your favorite memory about living there? You lived there for about six months, I believe, more or less. I'd have to look it up.

WK-Somewhat less.

SR-Somewhat less. And you first lived in the city, I remember, and then lived with a Beachy Amish family, I believe. What's your favorite memory about that time period?

WK-Well, I was fascinated by all sorts of interesting ways of life. I had to be a little bit discreet, a little bit careful to explore all the reasons for that, why did this, this sort of thing, but I think I did better than a lot of others have. Somehow or another I got along with them.

SR-Why do you think you got along with them? I mean, the language is one thing, but...

WK-Yeah, language, and they knew, I think they knew that I would in no way betray them. I think they gained confidence in me. I told you before, they had trouble finding land, you know, how I hauled around, those bishops, found land, and then how I took them to Washington, and they accepted me in the Church, and I ate with them; and so I participated fully in their life, and not many people had done that by that time.

SR-Now you lived with a Beachy Amish family, but you studied Beachy Amish and certainly Old Order Amish, as well. You went to the Old Order church services.

WK-Yeah, I went to the Old Order. I just stayed with the Beachy.

SR-Right. What about their way of life did you find especially fascinating?

WK-Well, I was always impressed that people who limited their education were so versatile and so ingenious in making a living; how they could launch out and become gardeners, or mechanics, or watch repairmen, or make buggies, or do anything. They had all sorts of talents in a practical way. They were very practical people. They had to be because they were circumscribed in certain things what to do. You know, they couldn't go to town. They had to stay out there in the country; and I was always amazed how many varieties of things I found out there, and how well they did it.

SR-So even at that time, they were moving into many other businesses besides farming.

WK-Yeah, and I was impressed. Little things. For example, there was a family—and they still had community threshing bees at that time—and here was a family, the mother died. And this one girl, she was fourteen years old, was in the house. And here came the threshing gang. This sort of thing sticks in my mind. Here comes this threshing gang, and they eat like threshers. And by gosh, she had three kinds of meat, three kinds of sweets and sours, three kinds of cake, three kinds of everything. And she prepared the whole damn thing. Now how many girls do you find nowadays that could even think about that? They think if they learn to cook in high school, they've learned how to cook.

SR-And this was a fourteen year old girl?

WK-Yeah, a fourteen year old girl. I tell some of these people around here, that's why they can't cook anymore. That's learning by example, you see. I was impressed how automatically kids fall into place. There are jobs for them. The minute they get old enough there is something to do. And when they get a little older there is something else. So each one fell into an activity and a challenge, and learned something; and so contributed to the household and the community. They didn't have to go clear across town to a basketball game and band and sporting events and that sort of thing. There were plenty of activities right on the farm.

SR-When you observed that, was someone supervising them or telling them what to do? Who organized the children to do that work?

WK-It seemed to be spontaneous. You didn't have any plan or any design there. It was spontaneous, a way of life.

SR-What do you tell people now? You said the story of fourteen year-old and the threshers. What other stories do you tell about Lancaster County to people these days when you talk about that study or that period of your life? What are some things that stick in your mind?

WK-The church services, the church services. They would all gather there before and clean up the place and set the benches, men on one side and women on the other side, the children in the front so they can be watched. And then they don't change the dinnerware.

SR-You always got to eat first, you were the guest.

WK-I was with the old people.

SR-I have appreciated that also, eating first as a guest.

WK-And Intercourse, there, that's an interesting name, you know.

SR-True enough.

WK-How they gathered there weekends, paired off, go off to this home or that home for the singing. There are some things that I couldn't quite find out that maybe you have an answer to. They told me stories that when a boy wants to see the girl during the week some time, that he would drive on her place very quietly and take kernels of corn and throw it on the window, and that would alert the girl and she would come down. Was that actually practiced or was that just a story?

SR-I don't know too much about that. I've heard stories. I've heard stories like that in Norwegian communities and other kinds of immigrant communities. I wouldn't doubt it, I think that it is entirely possible.

WK-I wouldn't doubt it either. I assume it is ninety percent correct. And of course there were also reports that they did bundling. The outside people usually talk about these Amish here. I don't think there was much of that any more.

SR-I think the gossip and the outside opinion had convinced the Amish, if not by then, soon after, that they should not practice bundling anymore, just as a matter of public opinion. But the story of the kernels of corn, did you hear that more than once?

WK-Oh, yeah. And then I was always interested and fascinated by the manner in which the old

people are not discarded. I saw a good many of those houses that had many sections to them. Many generations, and they were all busy, and they were all tied together. I thought it was a wonderful system. When I look at these arrangements here, people are torn away. Some of these people are never visited by their relatives. It's a warehouse here.

SR—And you called it the, and they called it the grossdoddy house at the time.

WK—Yeah, and they were always ready to visit me, to talk you know, and I had a lot of visits and that is the way I learned a lot of these subtle things.

SR—Well, if they told you about courtship practices, they were pretty open with you, I think, if they told you stories about how boys and girls got together. Now when you mentioned the young people, the young people would gather from church districts, several church districts perhaps, they would gather in the little village of Intercourse and then go to someone's house.

WK—Pair off, pair off.

SR—They would pair off in Intercourse...

WK—And then they would go off to the house, wherever the singing was.

SR—I see. You got to go along on the singings?

WK—No, I never went to a singing, but I heard a lot about them.

SR—The church services, you understood the sermons pretty well.

WK—Oh yeah, I understood every word; I could understand it, I couldn't talk it, of course, very well.

SR—Did the content of the sermons make, do you remember anything of that? Did what the preachers said make an impression on you?

WK—Oh, it was very, it was quite repetitious, a lot of biblical quotations. Quotation after quotation. Not too much interpretation, no speculating

about it, it was all given, all straight. Of course, admonishment, always admonishment, be careful, because that world out there is bad, and then, of course, some of those young people had to be disciplined.

SR—Did the preacher read from the Bible or quote from memory with all these quotations that you said?

WK—No, they selected by lot, you know, by a slip [of paper]. And when they needed to fill a position like that, there was a lot of speculation as to who was going to get it, and I talked to some of them. They were just scared to death they would be picked, because how can I preach for an hour or two? But when it came their way, they would repeat and repeat, there was nothing elaborate about it, but they performed.

SR—Did you get to see an ordination?

WK—No, I don't think so.

SR—But you just heard about it.

WK—Yeah.

SR—You were there when one took place, when men told you they were afraid the lot would fall on them?

WK—Yeah.

SR—Well, that dates back, fear of being ordained, or fear of the lot hitting you, as the phrase went.

WK—Do you think there is still a viable community?

SR—In Lancaster County?

WK—Yeah.

SR—Yes.

WK—You think they will be corrupted by the commercial temptation all around them and the free association with outsiders?

SR—Well, what does being corrupted mean?

WK-Well, they depart from the traditional, there are the tempting movies or television or radio, and of course the telephones have been accepted now, haven't they? In the barn?

SR-Or in a shanty at the end of the lane.

WK-Yeah.

SR-I think they are a viable community as long as they filter technology through their own community values which includes things like being small scale and face-to-face community, those kinds of values. As long as they don't allow something like the telephone to interfere. When that starts to happen, when genuine interference happens, then it may be more of a problem. But they have changed a great deal over the past century, and I think they are still Old Order Amish. The thing about maintaining boundaries with the world, and the thing about maintaining tradition unspoiled, has never been, those two factors have never been as pure as sociologists have made them out to be.

WK-No, but you know what's happening in farming. Dairies are getting bigger and bigger, crop lands are becoming bigger and bigger.

SR-Right.

WK-Chickens are gone, milk cows are gone in little farms. It will be interesting to see how they adjust to that.

SR-And that varies by community, by Amish community. There are some Amish communities, and Lancaster County would be one, where not that many people farm anymore. Under half of the Amish in Lancaster County don't farm. How did I say that? Fewer than fifty percent of the Amish in Lancaster County farm. They have been able to move into other businesses, cottage industries and retail businesses, or home manufacture, like quilts and such, and they have been able to make a living that way, and in northern Indiana they are working in factories pretty heavily.

WK-Factories in the rural areas?

SR-Yes. They bike into town or something and work in the factories. That has worked for them,

thus far. I guess there are dangers in that, or opportunities as well. I think, as you pointed out, they are very sophisticated in understanding the economic basis of rural community. And they have been able to be quite flexible in finding ways to make a living even while being quite conservative and even rigid in some other social issues, and that balance is one thing Kathy and I are talking about and tracing.

WK-How serious is that genetic problem?

SR-Oh, it's very serious.

WK-Very serious.

SR-Oh yeah. Johns Hopkins University has done an entire series of studies on Amish genetics, especially in Lancaster County. They do genetic counseling for couples if they request it to see if their recessive genes might appear, and so I think it is...

WK-So do they give them advice on pairing?

SR-Well, exactly. Say a couple wants to get married, and they will come and say look at our family lines and...

WK-And they check for them?

SR-Oh yeah. Johns Hopkins has mapped the whole bloody community almost, to know what family lines have certain recessive genes.

WK-That almost tells you who to marry; do they follow that?

SR-Well, I'm not up on that. I think to an extent, at least it's something, it's a factor to take into account.

WK-I visited the Hutterites in the Dakotas years ago, and you could spot them, they wore glasses this thick.

SR-I've never had that much to do with the Hutterites. I'm not very familiar with that.

WK-Away from the Amish question, by and large, and as far as the world is concerned, I am very

much concerned about population. I think that may be one of our main world problems. I grant you that we could feed all the world if we weren't spending all the money for cannons and military things, but of course that won't happen. But the problem still remains and a lot of people are in areas where they cannot support themselves. Take for example the desert margins of the Sahara. There you bring that ecological situation, plow that you ruin it in a generation or two, and you'll have the desert expanding and contracting and here you have the people having famines every so often. In this country, we kept them out there in the plains area by subsidizing them from Washington. But they haven't got anybody to subsidize them, they have to feed them.

SR-Well, so, in O.E. Baker's case, he was worried about underpopulation, population decline, you are concerned with overpopulation, or maybe more specifically population growth.

WK-Big growth in the third world countries, you see. In this country here, where we are seeing people who get into the professional line having small families, and these immigrants, illegal immigrants, have the big families, so you are having a very big transformation there, with which I'm not completely comfortable.

SR-Well, one of the quickest ways to effect population decrease, or smaller families, is having a good job and a little more prosperity.

WK-Now that is questioned because, the record shows that when people have good incomes they will have more children, and if they have bad times they will have fewer children.

SR-Well, that's more of a peasant economy.

WK-Well, it has historically been pretty well, by the way on that issue I've got, did you read that article in the *Atlantic*? That's a very good article, I'll have to show it to you.

SR-I think that's more, a peasant economy will do that. The industrialized economy I think prosperity and planning for the future and that kind of thing actually leads to smaller families.

WK-Yeah, it does; but collectively in large societies, any time people have had foreign aid for example, many times when they see foreign aid coming, you'll have another batch of babies there.

SR-O.K. I'm wondering what other stories you may remember from Lancaster County, the one about the fourteen-year-old girl was especially interesting. Any other incidents like that or that stand out in your mind right now? What happened in the family that you lived with while you were there?

WK-I wasn't very intimate with them, I just slept there.

SR-You were just rooming there. Oh, O.K.

WK-Well, the one incident that I think about is, of course, the disciplining, shunning business. There was this fella, I think they were raising chickens at that time. And he was very interested in the market. He put his radio wire up and down a waterspout, and that led to a disciplining action, and I didn't see the end result of it, but I'm told that the home scene was very sad at that time because she and the children sat in one corner and he in the other and no speaking and no sharing the bedroom and all that; but it becomes a major, major test.

SR-So he was banned and shunned, but you don't know whether he was restored or brought back into the group?

WK-He eventually went back.

SR-He did go back. Were there any other incidents of discipline while you were there?

WK-Not that I remember. There was, of course, always a way out. You could break loose and join one of the more liberal groups there with the Church Amish and that sort of thing, you could escape that situation if you wanted to. But if they had strong financial ties, and family ties, not so easy. I remember too, I may have told you this, but I think I influenced the Education Department in Harrisburg pretty well. You know, they were passing laws at that time, you got to go so far, you got to go to high school and so forth. And they were treating the Amish just like a bunch of hicks, you

know. Have to teach them how, you know, have to make them go to school. When they saw my study, they saw those people in a whole different light. Even in Washington. That I think I did accomplish.

SR-Well, you said you wrote some direct letters to...

WK-Direct letters to Washington, Harrisburg, too.

SR-But even more, did you arrange for your study to be sent to them?

WK-No, I didn't.

SR-But they did see it.

WK-Oh, yeah. Well, you know, they were these haughty bureaucrats, they think these hicks up there, we have to get them educated. They never saw any of the interviews of this community, the values. And also the military, I met with Hershey. So I think I left a few footprints there.

SR-Good. From your perspective now, how would you put the Amish values that you just talked about in terms of what they were preserving or what they were representing that would then communicate to Harrisburg, what kind of values did the Amish represent?

WK-I don't quite follow that, what are you asking me?

SR-Well, from your perspective now, how would you put the Amish values, what do you think that they represent?

WK-Well, if you look at society as a whole, where society has gone, it is a sort of antiquarian society. That doesn't reflect adversely, does it? In the larger society, all of the social ties have been dissolved, more and more. We lean more and more to government. That's one of the big problems. It used to be that the community took care of its own poor, and a lot of the other problems. But nowadays, it has to be approved by the community funds. We have more or less destroyed the sense of compassion on the local level. They still have it. How long they can hold it I don't know. Do they join agricultural societies? Do they get Social Security? They don't

get Medicare either. Now that's going to be an awful strain.

SR-Medical expenses keep rising.

WK-Medical expenses are outrageous.

SR-Or if national health care, some kind of national health care system ever comes into existence, they'll have some tough choices then.

WK-I think they'll have to yield here and there.

SR-Oh sure, that's something that has happened all along. Yield somewhere, hold on somewhere else.

WK-Another thing that I remember very well, you could see very well there how here was a group dedicated to farming and to stay in farming, perpetuate their way of life, and you go outside the community and you immediately see the interests were off farm. Get an education, get away from the farm. And you could see that in the neglect, of barns and buildings, one thing or another. Fewer and fewer people perpetuate that high respect for rural life that was perpetuated among the Amish. And we are more or less on that issue nowadays, about the family farm. Do we still have family farms and are they worth perpetuating or not? I don't know whether we have or not. A farm is something you don't make, a farm is something in the blood that is handed down. You cannot take the Jewish kibbutzes and make, you know what happened to them, they hired another fella to do the work. The idea of working long hours and doing things in the middle of the night, that's not for these eight hour people, and so in that sense, I think farmers, they deserve special consideration, to perpetuate some of that independence and the variety of skills they have, and they survive. But the pressure on them is terrific. For example, the cattle farms and dairies are getting bigger and bigger, and now you're getting thousand animal dairies, and thousand unit hog farms, and you have a few directors and the rest of them are minimum wage people.

SR-Well, what's good news for the Amish is that there are plenty of spaces in this society, plenty of places for them to go, where the land is...

END OF TAPE.