

An Interview with

# **Bill and Dixie Kirk**

at their home in  
Raymore, Missouri

**15 April 2011**

interviewed by Jeff D. Corrigan



Oral History Program  
The State Historical Society of Missouri

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*For further information, contact:*

The State Historical Society of Missouri  
1020 Lowry Street  
University of Missouri  
Columbia, MO 65201



## PREFACE

Bill Kirk was born on February 10, 1935, in Pleasant Hill, Missouri. His wife Dixie joined the discussion shortly after we began. Both individuals talk about growing up on small family farms and attending one-room schoolhouses in School District 90. Bill attended the Bethel School; while Dixie attended a different one-room school just west of Harrisonville, Missouri. Dixie also taught one year at the Wolf School, a one-room schoolhouse in the same area. Bill discusses in depth the rabbit trapping he did to earn money as a boy for a conservation officer so they could repopulate the rabbit population in southeast Missouri, in the 1940s. Other topics discussed include farming, fishing, trapping, hunting, and specifically mushroom hunting. Bill also discusses being a U.S. Army Specialist 4<sup>th</sup> Class in the Korean War, where he served as a mechanic servicing diesel generators near the demilitarized zone (DMZ).

The interview was taped on a 1GB CompactFlash card, using a Marantz PMD-660 digital recorder and an audio-technica AT825 microphone placed on a tripod. There are periodic background sounds but the recording is of generally high quality.

The following transcript represents a rendering of the oral history interview. Stylistic alterations have been made as part of a general transcription policy. The interviewee offered clarifications and suggestions, which the following transcript reflects. Any use of brackets [ ] indicates editorial insertions not found on the original audio recordings. Physical gestures, certain vocal inflections such as imitation, and/or pauses are designated by a combination of italics and brackets [ ]. Any use of parentheses ( ) indicates a spoken aside evident from the speaker's intonation, or laughter. Quotation marks [“”] identify speech depicting dialogue, speech patterns, or the initial use of nicknames. Em dashes [—] are used as a stylistic method to show a meaningful pause or an attempt to capture nuances of dialogue or speech patterns. Words are *italicized* when emphasized in speech or when indicating a court case title. Particularly animated speech is identified with **bold** lettering. Underlining [\_\_\_\_\_] indicates a proper title of a publication. The use of underlining and double question marks in parentheses [\_\_\_\_\_(??)] denotes unintelligible phrases. Although substantial care has been taken to render this transcript as accurately as possible, any remaining errors are the responsibility of the editor, Jeff D. Corrigan.



Narrator: Bill and Dixie Kirk

Interviewer: Jeff D. Corrigan

Date: April 15, 2011

5 Transcribed by: Teresa Bergen

**[Begin Interview.]**

**[Begin Track One.]**

10

Corrigan: So I'm going to go ahead and turn it on.

Bill Kirk: You want to talk on the rabbits first. That's what you wanted to talk on.

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Corrigan: Yeah. Well, yeah. I want to ask you a few background questions first, but we'll talk about, I want to hear about your rabbit hunting and that. So this is Jeff Corrigan, oral historian for the State Historical Society of Missouri. And I'm in Raymore, Missouri today at the home of Bill and Dixie Kirk. His wife Dixie is sitting here with us. I'm interviewing Mr. Kirk for the first time today for our Missouri Environmental Oral  
20 History Project. Today's date is Friday, April 15, 2011. Could you start by telling me when and where you were born?

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Bill Kirk: I was born in Pleasant Hill. I actually was not born in a hospital. I was born at home. But it was at Pleasant Hill, on the farm.

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Corrigan: Is that in Cass County?

Bill Kirk: Yeah.

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Corrigan: And when were you born?

Bill Kirk: '35.

Corrigan: 1935?

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Bill Kirk: February of '35

Corrigan: February, 1935?

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Bill Kirk: 2-10 of '35

Corrigan: Okay. Did you have any siblings? Did you have any brothers or sisters?

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Bill Kirk: Yes, I have three brothers and one sister. There's four of us. Four of us, including myself and my sister.

Corrigan: Okay. And what were their names?

Bill Kirk: Bob, Jim, Bill and John.

5

Dixie Kirk: And Viola.

Corrigan: And Viola is your sister's name?

10

Bill Kirk: Mm hmm.

Corrigan: And you said your family lived out on a farm. Is that right?

Bill Kirk: Yes. Mm hmm.

15

Corrigan: And what was your dad's name?

Bill Kirk: Walter.

20

Corrigan: Walter Kirk?

Bill Kirk: Walter Oliver Kirk.

Corrigan: Walter Oliver Kirk? And what was your mother's name?

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Bill Kirk: Ethel Pearl Huey previous to marriage.

Corrigan: Ethel Pearl Huey. Okay. And what kind of farm was it? Could you describe the farm a little?

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Bill Kirk: I would say it was a row crop. That's what they called it back then. You raised a grain and then you had the cows and the hogs that you fed the grain to. It's just a cycle.

Corrigan: So did you have any chickens or anything? Or just cows and hogs? Oh chickens?

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Bill Kirk: Oh, we had chickens.

Dixie Kirk: Turkeys.

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Bill Kirk: That was part of our income.

Corrigan: And turkeys, you said, too?

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Bill Kirk: We had a few turkeys. A lot of farmers had a few of everything. Geese, we had geese. Also had one that was real bad about chasing you and pinching you. (laughter)

Corrigan: I've heard that about geese a lot. Did you have any sheep or anything?

Bill Kirk: A couple of times we had maybe two or three. Not much on the sheep.

5

Corrigan: So primarily just cattle, hogs—

Bill Kirk: Yeah.

10 Corrigan: How big was the farm?

Bill Kirk: I would say Dad, we was raised on about a 40-acre farm, and he farmed all of it with horses until later years. And then he farmed another 150 acres, probably, in row crop.

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Corrigan: Okay. You said horses. Did you have any mules, too, or just horses?

Bill Kirk: Had a couple of mules. They were kind of hard to work with. (laughter)  
Mainly horses. We worked the mules. But that old mule, every time you was working,  
20 when it come twelve o'clock, that's when Dad quit to go in, the old mule would pull  
back because he knew it was time to go for that hour break they got at noon. That old  
mule would do it every time.

20

Corrigan: Now would the horses do that, too?

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Bill Kirk: Horses didn't do it. But that old mule, he knew when it was noontime.

Corrigan: Interesting. And was it just, it was just one mule?

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Bill Kirk: No. We had four teams. Four horses like on a cultivator or a disk. We had four  
for our team when you were breaking the ground.

Corrigan: And then you also had, did you have four horses, too, then? So you'd have two  
teams?

35

Bill Kirk: Yeah. We had like eight horses. At different times.

Corrigan: And what kind of horses were they?

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Bill Kirk: Just bays and mostly all of them were bay horses.

Corrigan: Okay. And was it a typical, couple of outbuildings, farmhouse. Is that the basic  
setup?

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Bill Kirk: Yeah. Farm, farmhouse and a farm. And a barn.

Dixie Kirk: Chicken house.

Bill Kirk: Had, of course, a little chicken house off to the side. But that's about it.

5 Corrigan: Okay. And did you—what was the closest town to where you lived?

Bill Kirk: I would say about eight miles to Harrisonville.

Corrigan: Harrisonville.

10

Bill Kirk: We lived out in the country.

**[End Track One. Begin Track Two.]**

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Bill Kirk: --from there.

Corrigan: Now did you attend a one-room schoolhouse, or no?

Bill Kirk: Yes.

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Corrigan: Oh, you did.

Bill Kirk: Yeah.

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Corrigan: What was the name of the school?

Bill Kirk: Bethel.

Corrigan: And how far was that from your house?

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Bill Kirk: Oh, I would say a mile from the house.

Corrigan: Did you walk there each day?

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Bill Kirk: Yes. If it wasn't real bad. If it was real bad, Dad would take us sometimes. Sometimes he had to take us in a box wagon with a team of horses. But we walked every, about every time, all the time.

Corrigan: Was it a white schoolhouse, or was it—

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Bill Kirk: Yes. White schoolhouse.

Corrigan: How many kids were in the school, roughly? Do you remember?

45

Bill Kirk: Five.

Corrigan: The whole school five or?

Bill Kirk: Yeah.

5 Corrigan: Okay. So it was small. (laughs) Not in your class, five--

Bill Kirk: Had a barn out behind the schoolhouse. You rode your horse to school. Put it in the barn. And then you went to school.

10 Corrigan: So you had a barn there.

Bill Kirk: For horses. We had three stalls. Three people could ride horses if they wanted to keep them in the barn. If not, they had to tie them out someplace.

15 Corrigan: I've interviewed a lot of people that attended one-room schoolhouses. And a lot of them talked about walking or taking a horse. But that's the first time I've heard anybody, usually they've said they just tied them to the fence, or there was a pasture right there a farmer would let them use. But I've never heard of a barn.

20 Bill Kirk: They had, I think it was three stalls. The outhouses were in there, too. Outhouses out here in the barns, in the same.

Corrigan: So there's a boys' and a girls' outhouse on each end, and then—

25 Bill Kirk: Right.

Corrigan: -- and then the stalls in the middle.

Bill Kirk: Mm hmm.

30 Corrigan: You were going to say something?

Dixie Kirk: I was going to say I was raised on the west side of Harrisonville, on the farm. And I attended Bill's school district, 90, which was a one-room school. But it had a basement and a cloakroom. But we had a huge barn. And most all the schools around there did. Wolf and Bybee and us, we all had barns.

Corrigan: For the horses.

40 Dixie Kirk: Yeah.

Corrigan: Okay. I've not interviewed somebody on the west side of Missouri for attending a one-room school. Because I've never heard that. That's interesting. Did you have the same white schoolhouse--

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Dixie Kirk: Bill's school was considered a very good school. It was one room, but it had two concrete porches, one on each side and a big cloak room when you went in. And a basement where we had all of our chili suppers and things.

5 Corrigan: So you did use it for social events for--

Dixie Kirk: Oh definitely. That was our, that was our main meal. (laughs)

10 Bill Kirk: And we practiced every, every year up till Christmas. And then at Christmas time we would have a get-together and perform that practicing that we had. It was kind of a storybook thing.

Corrigan: So it was kind of like the community center where you'd gather for social events.

15

Bill Kirk: Mm hmm. Everybody brought stuff to eat.

Dixie Kirk: Big old oyster dinners.

20 Corrigan: Oyster dinners?

Dixie Kirk: Yeah. Those and pie suppers. It was good.

25 Corrigan: I've heard about pie suppers in the one-room schoolhouses a lot. So did you do it as a fundraiser, the pie suppers? Or was it just as a social gathering?

30 Dixie Kirk: Social gathering. Well, made money, too, and I suppose, let's see. My dad was always on the board. I think they took the money and did things like buy supplies to put in the well. They had to put something in the well to keep it good every year. And things like that, I think they did with the money. And paint.

Corrigan: Do you remember, how was the school heated? Was it a--

35 Bill Kirk: Coal.

Corrigan: Coal. You said the restrooms were outside. How big was the building, roughly, if you had to guess?

40 Bill Kirk: One huge room about, I would say, 40 by 30. All the classes were in the same room.

Corrigan: Yeah. Okay.

45 Dixie Kirk: I started teaching in a school like that.

Corrigan: You started teaching in a one-room schoolhouse?

Dixie Kirk: In Wolf School. It was on the other, west of us, even, little bit farther west from Harrisonville. And it was one room. And it had no basement or anything, but just one room with wood floors and a great big furnace in the back of the room. And that's what it was.

Corrigan: How long did you teach there?

Dixie Kirk: One year.

Corrigan: One year. Was that, had you just, I know your daughter had said you went to teachers' school. Was that before or after that?

Dixie Kirk: I graduated from high school—

**[End Track Two. Begin Track Three.]**

Dixie Kirk: -- as salutatorian and I got a scholarship or I never could have been a teacher. (laughs) And after I went that summer, then I had to take a test at the courthouse at Harrisonville. And I passed the test with flying colors. So then I went over and interviewed with the president of the board at Wolf. And they hired me.

Corrigan: So you went one year, then you went back to school? Okay. That's interesting. Okay. If you rode a horse to school, though, that meant that was one less horse on the farm.

Bill Kirk: No, that was an extra horse.

Corrigan: Oh, it was an extra horse. Okay.

Bill Kirk: Yeah. We had, see, if you had a four-horse team, you had four horses. And usually the one that I rode to school wasn't that big.

Corrigan: Okay.

Bill Kirk: So we had like five or six horses, actually, on the farm.

Corrigan: Did either of you have to do chores in the school? Did you have to fill the heater or bring in water?

Bill Kirk: Bring the coal in and probably go get some water. Had a pump, petrol pump out there and just—

Corrigan: A well outside the building.

Bill Kirk: Well outside the building.

Dixie Kirk: As the teacher at Wolf, I had to carry in the coal, make the coal furnace. And bank it over for the night. And carry in the water. And I had children who were extremely hungry. So I took a little bitty kerosene stove and I would take soup. It was an easy thing  
5 to make. And each morning I'd put on a big pot of soup for all the kids that didn't have anything to eat.

Corrigan: I was going to ask that. Did you normally take your lunch, or did they provide lunch for you? Do you remember?  
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Bill Kirk: We took it. Most, biggest, I'd say 50 percent of the time we took our own lunch. Maybe longer than that, many more than that. But we'd just take sandwiches to eat. And that was it.

15 Corrigan: But you said there were several children that didn't have anything to eat, so you would prepare soup.

Dixie Kirk: That was at Wolf.

20 Corrigan: Yeah.

Dixie Kirk: Now Bill's, Bill's school, where I went, all of us had plenty to eat.

25 Corrigan: Okay.

Dixie Kirk: It was a different, just like two different situations, completely.

30 Corrigan: Yeah. That's understandable. Getting back to the farm, what kind of chores did you do? Did you do all the types of chores? Or did you have specific chores that you were assigned to?

35 Bill Kirk: In the beginning, we just had enough of cows to supply the family with milk. So we would milk the cows some of the time, and Dad would do it. Later on, he needed some money for the family to live on, so he got more cows. And they had a truck come by and picked up the milk and took it into Pleasant Hill, which is like six miles from there. And he put it in a can. And we would milk the cows, put it in there. And they'd come by every other day and pick up the milk and take it in.

40 Corrigan: Now were these Holstein cows you were milking?

45 Bill Kirk: No. Jerseys and Guernseys. Not, Holsteins, you didn't hear much about Holsteins until later on in years. And then the big farmers got the Holsteins because they gave a lot of milk. But Holstein milk was not rich. You get a Jersey or a Guernsey, you get, I'd say, a third more cream off of that than you would off a Holstein. So therefore we had mostly the Guernseys and Jerseys so that we could get cream, too.

Corrigan: And that was more profitable, wasn't it, the cream?

Bill Kirk: Yes. Yeah.

5 Corrigan: Now did you, you used the milk for yourself at home.

Bill Kirk: Oh, yeah.

Corrigan: Did you and your parents make other things? Did you make butter and cheese?

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Bill Kirk: We made butter all the time. And we'd make it and we had an old drilled well out there. It was there before I, we got there, and I don't know how. But we'd put it in a jar and drop it down in the well on about a 30-foot rope. And that's how we kept it cool. So we'd drop it down in there. We didn't have a refrigerator or anything until I was

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probably twelve, fifteen years old and we finally moved to another place. And then we had that. So we had to keep our butter down there. Or it would just go back to cream again.

Corrigan: So you said about 35 feet. So that would be pretty cool water.

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**[End Track Three. Begin Track Four.]**

Bill Kirk: Oh, yeah. It was cool when you brought it out of there.

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Corrigan: And did you have one of the, did you have one of the butter churns that you cranked? Or was it one that you had to really—

Bill Kirk: We had both. Later on, we had the one that you turned, that was crank. We had both kinds. But later on we had the crank ones.

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Corrigan: And that was a lot easier than—

Bill Kirk: Oh yeah, yeah. Not that we liked to do it, but that was part of our job.

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Corrigan: (laughs) What else did you have to do? Did you have to collect eggs?

Bill Kirk: Oh, yeah. Collect eggs every day. If you didn't, the old hens would get on them and break them and what have you.

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Corrigan: Did you sell the extra? Or did you have extra?

Bill Kirk: In the beginning, we didn't have a lot of hens, but we had enough for our immediate family.

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Corrigan: So since you were on the farm, you spent a lot of time outdoors.

Bill Kirk: Oh, yeah.

Corrigan: Can you remember, what's your earliest memory that you have of being outdoors? Or doing something?

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Bill Kirk: I would say what we really did that we really liked to do, especially if it was raining or something and Mother didn't have anything to do, Mother was always the one that took us fishing. So we'd go fishing and we would look for straight poles all the time we were out that would make a fishing pole. And we'd just get some string and put on there and dig some worms. And she'd take us down to the creek and we'd fish.

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Corrigan: So you'd always be out collecting worms?

Bill Kirk: If we was getting ready to go fishing, yeah. We had big, we had a well out there that we pumped the water out to water the horses. And we would put, we had a big tank that we pumped the water in. So we would go down and maybe we might go fishing and only catch two fish that was big enough to eat. We'd bring them up there and put them in that tank. And they would actually multiply in that tank until we got enough in there that we could have a mess of fish. And then we would catch the tank way down low and we'd dip them out and mom would fry the fish and we'd eat them.

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Corrigan: Now your daughter told me about, she said the fish would eat the oats, is that right, off of the muzzles of the horses and the mules?

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Bill Kirk: They'd slobber in there, and that would be in the tank. And the fish would eat that and they'd actually multiply in there.

Corrigan: So you could get a couple of them—how big of a tank was it?

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Bill Kirk: Oh, it was big as this room, big.

Corrigan: Oh, okay.

Bill Kirk: Pretty good-sized tank.

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Corrigan: So we're talking six feet wide, maybe?

Bill Kirk: I'd say, yeah. Ten feet wide.

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Corrigan: Oh, ten feet wide?

Bill Kirk: Big enough, see, we always had about four to six horses. And they could all get around and drink at the same time.

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Corrigan: So there was plenty of room in there for the fish to grow.

Bill Kirk: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Corrigan: And if you were pumping in water all the time, there'd be—

5 Bill Kirk: Fresh all the time, yeah.

Corrigan: Okay. Now you mentioned straight poles, you looked for straight poles. Your daughter mentioned to me, and I have to be honest, I don't know the term. She said cane poles?

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Bill Kirk: Later on, that came in. But we wasn't rich enough to have cane poles. That's something you had to buy.

Corrigan: Okay. Could you tell me what a cane pole is?

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Bill Kirk: A cane pole is—I don't know how to explain what it is. Well, you've seen the cane poles we have now, haven't you?

Corrigan: Just a regular fishing pole?

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Bill Kirk: Yeah.

Corrigan: That's called, that's a cane pole?

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Bill Kirk: That's a cane pole.

Dixie Kirk: It's a piece of cane that's jointed, you know?

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Bill Kirk: Just trim it down and you have a cane pole about like that. And every place has cane process, still has cane poles.

Corrigan: Okay. I just had never heard it called anything other than a fishing pole.

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Bill Kirk: They would get, they'd bush out that big around. You had to trim all that off and just have one stalk sticking up and that was what you used for your cane pole.

Corrigan: Okay. Now what kind of material were you hunting for when you were looking for your straight poles back then?

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Bill Kirk: Just whatever was real good and straight and not too big, because it would get heavy. But just a good, straight pole. We was always on the lookout for a good, straight fishing pole.

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Corrigan: And you said not too, not too thick. So are you looking at maybe a quarter size you'd want?

Bill Kirk: Bigger than that. Half inch to an inch big. Longer, the bigger, got down at the end.

Corrigan: And how—

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**[End Track Four. Begin Track Five.]**

Corrigan: -- long would you want it?

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Bill Kirk: Oh, ten feet.

Corrigan: Oh, okay.

Bill Kirk: If you could get one that long.

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Corrigan: Okay. So your mom would take you fishing a lot, all of you. You and your brothers and your sister.

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Bill Kirk: Yeah. She loved to go fishing when it rained and didn't have anything else to do, we'd go fishing.

Corrigan: Now a lot of the worms would be easier to get out, right, if it was just after a recent rain?

25

Bill Kirk: Sure. Mm hmm.

Dixie Kirk: Oh, my. There was an abundance of worms. All you had to do was just go dig a little hole in the cow lot. (laughs)

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Corrigan: That's true. What kind of fish were you fishing?

Bill Kirk: Catfish, mainly. They had less bone.

Corrigan: Okay.

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Bill Kirk: If you got a sunfish or a perch, we called them perches, they had a lot more bones in them. But a big old catfish, say if he was ten inches long, he had some good—

Dixie Kirk: Bill, did you and your dad ever go seining for the big catfish?

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Bill Kirk: Same thing. Same, got the same thing, only—

Dixie Kirk: You know like twenty, thirty pounds.

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Bill Kirk: Seine sometimes, we'd take a seine and go down the creek. Get them all at the corner and dip them out.

Corrigan: How would you dip them out?

Bill Kirk: Well, seine is like four feet high. It's just a big—

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Dixie Kirk: Net.

Bill Kirk: -- net that you had a stick on each end of it, and you'd carry that right through the water and get the fish all inside that. And had them and dip them out.

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Corrigan: Okay. Now where did you guys go fishing? You said your mom took you fishing. Did you have a creek or pond—

Bill Kirk: They called it Camp Branch is where it was. River that actually started right up here and run all the way down to Harrisonville.

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Corrigan: It starts here in Raymore?

Bill Kirk: Yeah. Right out here on 291 is where it originally—Lake Winnebago, are you familiar with that?

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Corrigan: Just the name.

Bill Kirk: Lake Winnebago recently was built there. But that went all the way to Harrisonville and [\_\_\_\_??].

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Dixie Kirk: I was raised on the Grand River watershed and my dad would go seining down there. And the whole family would go. I mean, his brothers and sisters and their families and all of us, and have big fish fries down there.

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Corrigan: Is that the only way that you ate the fish was fried?

Bill Kirk: Yeah.

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Corrigan: Okay. So catfish nuggets, basically? What would your mom bread them with?

Bill Kirk: Just bread and—flour and water, maybe.

Dixie Kirk: Salt and pepper.

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Corrigan: And you said you put them in the fish tank, or the livestock tank, and you'd wait until they got bigger and multiplied in that. But are we talking you did that in the spring and by fall they were ready to go?

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Bill Kirk: Yeah, probably, yeah.

Corrigan: Did you do this every year then?

Bill Kirk: Yeah. Usually every year.

5 Corrigan: And did you, you said your family did the same?

Dixie Kirk: No.

Corrigan: Or, I'm sorry, that you, your dad went out and went fishing.

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Dixie Kirk: He was a fishing nut, Dad was. (laughs) He loved to go, he had an uncle called Uncle Millard. And every time it rained and he couldn't be in the fields, he got his boat and left. To Grand River.

15 Corrigan: Grand River. Now, most of the time, did you just fish from the shore?

Bill Kirk: Yeah. Always.

Corrigan: Did you ever go out in a boat?

20

Bill Kirk: Didn't, didn't, couldn't afford a boat.

Corrigan: But later on, though, did your daughter tell me you'd go fishing a lot in a boat?

25 Bill Kirk: Yeah, we had a boat later on.

Corrigan: Later on. Later on.

Bill Kirk: In her lifetime.

30

Corrigan: Yes, her lifetime. Okay.

Dixie Kirk: She's the one. We had an RV and we always had camped and things. And we loved to ski and surfboard. And if I would wake up at five o'clock in the morning, she'd already be out there, sitting there, fishing. (laughs) Kim loved to fish.

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Corrigan: So you spent a lot of time—so if your family had any extra time, which was probably very limited on the farm—you spent it out fishing and hunting. That's kind of the outdoor activities that you did—

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Bill Kirk: Didn't hunt until we got to a certain age. And then we'd hunt, because Dad wouldn't let us have a gun. So at a certain age, and I don't know what that age would be, probably, well, if he went with us, twelve or fourteen years old. And then we'd squirrel hunt is what we was doing then. We'd go squirrel hunting. And rabbit hunting.

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Corrigan: So he wouldn't let you have a gun until twelve to fourteen—

Bill Kirk: Yeah.

**[End Track Five. Begin Track Six.]**

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Corrigan: Now let's talk a little bit about the, I was going to ask you if you worked outside of the farm as a kid. And you were telling me earlier, and your daughter told me about the story of the conservation officers with the rabbits. Could you tell me about when that was, what you did, how many you caught?

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Bill Kirk: I'd say I was probably ten to twelve years old.

Corrigan: So we're talking 1945? Right around there?

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Dixie Kirk: Yeah.

Bill Kirk: I was born in '35. '45, yeah.

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Corrigan: So right around World War Two, right around the end of World War Two. Okay, go ahead. So you were approached or you don't quite remember, but you were approached or you approached them to catch rabbits.

25

Bill Kirk: Somehow I, we had a place where we sold cream. And somebody up there told Dad or myself one that this happened, this guy came around. So I think probably Dad instigated, because I was already interested in catching rabbits. I had heard that you could make box traps and catch rabbits. Thinking we'd do that in wintertime, yeah, and we could eat them. But in the summertime you didn't trap them. Don't know whether the season wouldn't let you or not. Probably wouldn't. But somehow I got a hold of the guy that I wanted to catch these rabbits. So he came out and he brought about a five foot-long screen box made out of chicken wire. And he brought one box trap. Do you know what a box trap is?

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Corrigan: It would be great if you could explain it.

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Bill Kirk: Well, I got a box trap downstairs. But not made out of wood.

Corrigan: Okay.

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Bill Kirk: It's made out of metal. I'll show it to you after, before you leave. I've got one downstairs. But the box trap is made out of about eight by eight box right here. And you put a piece of screen or something over this end. You made this thing like eight inches tall, because a rabbit would go in there. And this down here you'd put a wire on it, so it looks like he could go right on through. Over here you'd put a wooden door in the back, here at the back, and you ran a spike up here and put a string on it over here, and put a hole in the center of that box. And when the rabbit went in, he'd trip that. The door would shut behind him and there was screen wire down there and he couldn't go anyplace. They

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brought me one out when they come out to bring this big thing out that I was going to contain these in. Because he didn't want to come, I think every other week and pick them up. But he brought me one box trap made out of wood. And it was up to me to find some material and make some box traps. As many as I wanted. And to catch these rabbits. And  
5 that's how I caught them, and I put them in this big screen thing that he, and he'd come down. And we were just talking earlier. I think it was 25 cents apiece I got for those rabbits when he came. And somehow, someone told me that he was taking these out in the eastern part of Missouri, there was no rabbits. And he was taking these out there and they was letting them go to get rabbits producing out in the southeastern part of the state  
10 of Missouri.

Corrigan: Do you think all the way down by the Bootheel? Is that—

Bill Kirk: I think so, yeah. I think more so down that way. I don't know how far. I probably knew at the time, but that's been quite a while ago.  
15

Corrigan: Yeah.

Bill Kirk: That's what the whole thing was for.  
20

Corrigan: So he brought you this cage or box—

Bill Kirk: Yeah. It was made out of wire. Yeah.

Corrigan: And one trap.  
25

Bill Kirk: One trap.

Corrigan: You had to make other traps.  
30

Bill Kirk: If I wanted more, I'd make them. So I made traps anytime I could get out of school and had time to do it, I'd make more traps. And I probably had ten or fifteen I ran along with steel traps that I had to catch muskrats and stuff like that.

Corrigan: And is that similar to the—  
35

**[End Track Six. Begin Track Seven.]**

Corrigan: Like the steel traps you can see now in the hardware store where it's all wire  
40 and they've got the doors on it, the metal doors.

Bill Kirk: Yeah.

Dixie Kirk: And then didn't you do, like Daddy, the little round steel traps that put the  
45 bait on and they---

Bill Kirk: Yeah. Steel traps that we had out were, they were round, about that big, and they had jaws here.

Dixie Kirk: To catch like mink and stuff.

5

Bill Kirk: You've seen the steel traps.

Corrigan: Yes.

10 Bill Kirk: We had several of those. I don't know, I probably had 15 or 20 of them. But I'd catch muskrat. And I caught one mink. There wasn't very many mink around down by Harrisonville. I got one mink. And I think it was like \$14 or something I got for that mink. That was a big deal.

15 Corrigan: Yes.

Bill Kirk: But I'd seen this mink down there, and Dad had spotted it, had helped me figure out where he was at. And I caught one mink and that's the only mink I ever caught. But I caught a lot of muskrats.

20

Corrigan: What would you do with those?

Bill Kirk: Well, you had to skin them. And you had to put them on a board and hang them out on the shed and let them dry out. And then take them into Harrisonville and there's a guy in there at the creamery where he sold cream and this and that, that would buy the skins. And they would do, sell them to mass producers that made clothes and stuff out of them.

25

Corrigan: Do you remember how much you could get for a muskrat skin?

30

Bill Kirk: Oh, I would say probably three dollars.

Corrigan: So that was a big difference to get that mink at fourteen dollars.

35 Bill Kirk: Oh, yeah. Yeah. I think, I was trying to think, something, a year or so ago I was trying to remember how much I did get for that mink. Seemed to me it was like \$16 or something like that. Because there just wasn't any mink down there to be.

Corrigan: Now with the rabbits, 25 cents apiece was still a pretty good price.

40

Bill Kirk: Alive. Yeah. That was alive.

Corrigan: That was the difference. You needed the box traps to catch the rabbits to keep them alive to repopulate. Anything else you used the steel traps for you were going to eat or sell the hide.

45

Bill Kirk: Yeah.

Corrigan: Now what were you putting in the box traps to catch the rabbits?

5 Bill Kirk: Corn. Just like you set them out. That's what I do with these traps down here. You can set them out here because we got lots of squirrels. Put some corn in there and you can catch them just like that. They smell that corn and in they went.

Corrigan: And just dry kernel corn. Shell corn.

10

Dixie Kirk: He does that now, we have a big squirrel population. And you can relocate squirrels in Missouri. So he does that sometimes here where we live. Catches squirrels.

15 Bill Kirk: I catch them and take them out in the country and let them out. Because they're a nuisance up here.

Corrigan: Now with the rabbits, so he'd just keep coming every other week or so, pick them up.

20 Bill Kirk: Yeah. I think it was every two weeks he'd come and pick them up. And it seemed to me like I'd have, I'd have like, I don't know, five or six every time he'd come. At least. Sometimes more, depending on—

Corrigan: And he was a conservation officer.

25

Bill Kirk: I think so. I'm not sure about that. But I was told that's what they was doing. I was, I remember I was curious what they was doing with these rabbits. And they said they was taking them where there wasn't any and populating that area.

30 Corrigan: That was my next question is, what did you think, knowing at ten you had trapped them with steel traps. You'd sell the hides. You'd eat them. What did you think about people wanting these live rabbits to repopulate another part of the state?

35 Bill Kirk: I believed his story. That's what they needed. He indicated that they had no rabbits over there and they was taking them out there.

Dixie Kirk: People ate rabbits. A lot of rabbits.

40 Corrigan: Now you'd seen, and if people eat a lot, but you didn't have any problem with the rabbit population around here.

Bill Kirk: No. That was only in the wintertime that you ate rabbits here in. You don't eat them in the summertime. They have too much rabbit fever and such.

45 Dixie Kirk: Wobbles.

Bill Kirk: Always in the wintertime. The wintertime, the infected ones would die off. You didn't eat them in the summertime.

5 Corrigan: Now where did you set the traps? Did you have your certain spots? Or did you scatter them around?

Bill Kirk: You could tell where the rabbits was running around through the pasture. They had a little path that they always went. You knew. Wintertime, when the snow was on, you could see right where he's going, so you set it right there.

10 **[End Track Seven. Begin Track Eight.]**

Bill Kirk: Maybe put a little something in there and he would go in there alive. You'd get him in and he's yours.

15 Corrigan: Was it always out in the pasture? Is that where you put them?

Bill Kirk: No, not necessarily. You needed a place where there's brush piles and stuff like this where the rabbits stay. They stay pretty much, they don't stay out where there isn't too much vegetation.

Corrigan: So they need dead tree logs, or fallen down trees, or brush or—

25 Bill Kirk: Yeah.

Corrigan: Did you always use the same spots? Or did you keep tracking where they were—

30 Bill Kirk: If it was a good spot, and if it wasn't, you move on someplace else.

Dixie Kirk: Was it usually by the creek?

Bill Kirk: Not necessarily. No.

35 Corrigan: Did you have any rules that you followed that you made yourself? That you stuck to every time you were out trapping? Did you have any, not set rules, but just things you always said it's a good trapping day or it's not, or it's a good time to do it or not.

40 Bill Kirk: Yeah. If you see a lot of activity around there, you could see the rabbits when the snow was on. And then in the summertime, you'd know the rabbits was around there because they was there last winter. So they would still be there if you wanted to trap them.

45 Corrigan: Now how long did you trap the rabbits for the conservation officer?

Bill Kirk: I'd say for a couple of years, something like that.

Corrigan: He just kept coming back every winter?

Bill Kirk: Yeah.

5

Dixie Kirk: Tell him what you got with your money.

Bill Kirk: I bought a used bicycle. Not tricycle, bicycle.

10 Corrigan: So you bought a used bicycle. Did you use that to go to school? Or was—

Bill Kirk: Yeah.

Corrigan: Made it easier to go that mile?

15

Bill Kirk: Yeah.

Corrigan: And then, I think Kim told me, did you also buy a rifle at some—

20 Bill Kirk: Yeah. I bought a .22 rifle with the money I got from that. And they had them at the Western Auto store at that time. And I think it was like 12, 15 dollars, had to get together that.

Corrigan: So the Western Auto store, was that in Harrisonville?

25

Bill Kirk: Yeah.

Corrigan: So 12, 15 dollars could buy you a .22 gage shotgun?

30

Bill Kirk: No, a .22 is a rifle.

Dixie Kirk: Rifle.

Corrigan: Oh, that's right. Rifle. Sorry.

35

Bill Kirk: You didn't want to shoot a shotgun, because that would blow them all to pieces.

Corrigan: That's right. And do you remember at that time how much the ammo was?

40

Bill Kirk: Oh, golly. I'd say a dollar and a half a box, probably.

Corrigan: Okay. Did you think that, you had a pretty good business going there, kind of, trapping, to bring in some money.

45

Bill Kirk: Yeah. You had to learn to work at it.

Corrigan: Did any of your brothers do that, too, or your sister? Did they do anything like that? Or was it just you?

5 Bill Kirk: No. I don't think they ever—

Dixie Kirk: They were quite a bit younger, Bill. They were younger.

Corrigan: Are you the oldest?

10

Bill Kirk: I'm the oldest boy, yeah.

Corrigan: Okay. I wasn't sure where you, I should have asked you that question, where you fell in order. You were the oldest.

15

Bill Kirk: I was the second. My sister's older than I, and then steps on down.

Dixie Kirk: Things improved and got better as time went by.

20

Corrigan: Did you ever, did your parents always let you keep the money to buy stuff? Or did they need the money to buy stuff, too?

Bill Kirk: No, no. It was mine. Yeah.

25

Corrigan: Okay. So once you got the rifle, did you continue to just hunt the same things?

Bill Kirk: I used it for squirrels. Mother would skin them and we would eat them, when they were in season.

30

Dixie Kirk: When you went coon hunting, did you use your rifle?

Bill Kirk: No, you didn't need that.

Dixie Kirk: You didn't kill anything. You just listened and chased them.

35

Bill Kirk: That was later on. I had some coon dogs, too. But later on.

Corrigan: It's not, this is not when you were a boy. That's later on.

40

Bill Kirk: No, no.

Corrigan: You just mentioned, I was just going to ask that, did you skin the carcasses, or did your mom?

45

Bill Kirk: I did.

Corrigan: And then she prepared them?

5 Bill Kirk: Well, there's not too much to, once you skin them, that's it. You had to make boards and have them stretch the skin out over the boards and put them up on the, outside on the shed or somewhere so that they would dry out.

Corrigan: And what would you do with the squirrels' hides?

10 Bill Kirk: We didn't, we didn't, we just ate the squirrels. We didn't—

Corrigan: Didn't do anything with the hide?

Bill Kirk: Hide was no good. Rabbits is only—

15 Corrigan: Okay. And how did your mom, how did she usually prepare squirrel?

Bill Kirk: Just basically like you would do chickens. Just—

**[End Track Eight. Begin Track Nine.]**

20 Bill Kirk: Skin them, gut them out and put them on—

Dixie Kirk: That's how Dad's boards looked.

25 Corrigan: Oh, the wooden boards that held the—

Dixie Kirk: Turn that around. Let him see. Is that how your boards looked?

30 Bill Kirk: Yeah, basically. Different sized boards for different size—

Dixie Kirk: Yeah.

Corrigan: Carcass?

35 Bill Kirk: Carcass.

Corrigan: I'm sorry. So you were, so you just skinned the squirrel, cut out the guts, and then you just, did you fry them up or did you—

40 Bill Kirk: Yeah. Just fry up the legs, legs and that, and his back had some good meat on it.

Corrigan: You said the rabbits were only in the winter. When was squirrel hunting?

45 Bill Kirk: Squirrels in the summer.

Corrigan: Summer. Okay. Now when you, I'm going to skip ahead a little bit. But when you got older, did you continue to prepare the, did you continue, I guess when you got older, did you continue to eat squirrel and that? Did you prepare it the same way?

5 Bill Kirk: Yes. As long as, oh, until I got into, well, I did it until I got old enough to when I went to work on my own.

Corrigan: Did you, now that you had the rifle, did you ever do any deer hunting? When you were younger.

10

Bill Kirk: (clears throat) Excuse me. Actually, there wasn't very many deer around where I lived. And my folks wouldn't let me have a rifle or a shotgun, either one, until they could go with me. I wasn't old enough. I forgot what the age was, but they would not allow me to go out with a gun.

15

Corrigan: Okay. Now did you go through a K through, I'm sorry, first through eighth grade at the one-room school? Or all the way through high school?

Bill Kirk: Just, I only went to grade school.

20

Corrigan: Okay.

Bill Kirk: And just, I went through to eighth grade.

25

Corrigan: Okay. Those were the kind of outdoor activities you did as a kid. And did you continue just to keep hunting, fishing? Did you do anything else outdoors? Did you and the family go swimming at the lake or on the river?

Bill Kirk: No, we didn't, there was no swimming pools around down there at that time.

30

Corrigan: Would you go in the river at all?

Bill Kirk: Not unless the folks was with me.

35

Corrigan: Okay. But if they were with you?

Bill Kirk: We could go down there, yeah. And Dad knew where we could wade in the water. They wouldn't allow us to go down there. When we went fishing, my mother loved to fish. And if it was raining and we couldn't do anything in the corn field or something, we'd go fishing. And there again, when I went where there was a big body of water, my folks went with me.

40

Corrigan: Did your dad like to fish at all? Or no?

45

Bill Kirk: Some, but not that much.

Corrigan: But your mom really liked to fish.

Bill Kirk: Mom really liked to fish.

5 Corrigan: Did she do it when she was a child, then?

Bill Kirk: I imagine probably she did.

Corrigan: I didn't ask you but were your parents, were they from around this area, too?

10

Bill Kirk: Dad was, he was born and raised right where I was born and raised.

Corrigan: Okay.

15

Bill Kirk: My mother lived in Omaha, Nebraska earlier on, and then she came down here. Her folks moved down here and they got acquainted and her and Dad got married and they stayed down here.

Corrigan: Okay. But she was originally from Nebraska.

20

Bill Kirk: She was from Omaha, Nebraska, yeah.

Corrigan: Okay. You were going to say something, Dixie?

25

Dixie Kirk: Well, I was going to just talk a little bit about what I did as a kid in the water. Only I was born in '30, so I'm older than him. But we went seining a lot. My dad and his brothers and Mom's brothers. And the whole families went. And we would go down to our great-grandfather Long's log cabin down on Grand River. And we'd have great big fish fries. And they would seine, but Daddy wouldn't let me come or do anything, because I was a girl. The boys always got to drag the sack. I always wanted to drag the sack. (laughs)

30

Bill Kirk: That was in Camp Branch or what was that river?

35

Dixie Kirk: It was Grand River.

Bill Kirk: Grand River. That was a different river. Camp Branch is where I lived.

40

Dixie Kirk: And once they got a 40-pound catfish. And I remember, 'cause it just really got to me. And they took that head and put it on the corner post. You know how big a corner post is?

Corrigan: Yeah.

45

Dixie Kirk: A wooden corner post. They just opened the jaws and put it on the corner post. Oh, it was a big fish.

Corrigan: And so you spent a lot of time in Grand River, then?

Dixie Kirk: Oh, yeah.

5

Corrigan: Now—

**[End Track Nine. Begin Track Ten.]**

10 Corrigan: Was that on a boat, then? You said you went seining?

Dixie Kirk: Oh, no.

Corrigan: No. Just along the—

15

Dixie Kirk: Just in the water.

Corrigan: In the water, along the shore there? I'm not familiar, but how deep are we talking about the Grand River?

20

Dixie Kirk: Depends on what part of it you're in. You know, it's like any river. It's just shallow some places and very deep in others.

Corrigan: And what about the Camp Branch river here? When you were fishing in it, how wide was it? How deep was it?

25

Bill Kirk: I'd say it was like four or five feet deep. And we usually fished off of a bridge or around where the current came around and dug out a big hole. Mom always knew where to take us to.

30

Corrigan: Did you always go to the same spot?

Bill Kirk: Uh, basically, yeah.

35 Corrigan: And did you guys always go to the same spot, too, in the Grand River? The same area?

Dixie Kirk: Usually we went down to Great-Grandpa's cabin. That area. Well, up and down along in that area. And it always flooded, all the timber. There was a lot of timber back then around there. And it would flood all the farms and the timber. And Dad would let us girls go on the hay wagon. He'd hitch the team to the hay wagon and take us down into that flooded area. And gig fish off the hay wagon.

40

Corrigan: Wait, say that again?

45

Dixie Kirk: Gig. G-i-g.

Corrigan: What does that mean?

Dixie Kirk: It's a big, long metal pole. Everyone did it. And it has two big sharp points.

5

Corrigan: Okay.

Dixie Kirk: And you just take your hay wagon and you ride around there and stop and sit still. And what goes by, wham! (laughs)

10

Bill Kirk: It had a point in it that come out like this. Once it went in, it wouldn't come out.

Dixie Kirk: Yeah. Just like a fish hook, I guess.

15

Corrigan: Same concept with a fish hook where—so you wouldn't just stab and they'd come right out. You caught the fish on there, too.

Dixie Kirk: Yeah. Yes. The fish came, too. Or sometimes if it's a large fish, then he'd have to get in the water and get it out. You know. But most of the time they just gigged, about that long. Not very long.

20

Corrigan: About, was that about a foot and a half that you were saying?

25

Dixie Kirk: Yeah. Just little fish.

Corrigan: And was it always catfish you were collecting? Did your family cook it up the same way? Flour, he said, salt and pepper, water, and fry it up?

30

Dixie Kirk: No water. Just flour, salt and pepper—

Corrigan: Er, just flour.

Dixie Kirk: -- and fried it in lard.

35

Corrigan: Lard. Is that what, your mom would use lard, too?

Bill Kirk: Yeah.

40

Dixie Kirk: 'Cause that's what we had lots of. (laughs) And we had a wooden smokehouse with about foot-wide walls with sawdust in. So we had ice in the summer because Dad would cut thick slabs of ice in the winter and put it in the smokehouse and it would last almost all summer.

45

Corrigan: Really?

Dixie Kirk: So we could put it in our icebox in the kitchen.

Corrigan: And he was cutting, where was he cutting the ice from?

5 Dixie Kirk: From the pond.

Corrigan: From the pond. So there was a pond on the farm then, too?

Dixie Kirk: I think we had two. One down by the hogs, and one for the cattle.

10

Corrigan: And so you had the same kind of farm where you had cattle, hogs. Did you have chickens, too?

15 Dixie Kirk: Yes. And then Dad got into sheep. And that was, my sister Charlene and I had sheep as a 4-H project. And we had to take care of those sheep. And that was a mess, because in the wintertime, sheep can't be out in the cold. So every day we had to go out and run our sheep around and around the barn. (laughs)

Corrigan: Now were you in 4-H at all?

20

Bill Kirk: No. I never was in 4-H.

Corrigan: Okay. But you were. How long were you in 4-H?

25 Dixie Kirk: Oh, ever since I was old enough. I think it was probably eight or nine that you could be. And I started with the sheep. And then I took sewing, learned to sew. And I got a blue ribbon on my blue suit at the state fair.

30 Corrigan: Did they have, I'm not from Missouri. But do they have the same concept here where you first go to the county fair? Or the local fair? And then you work your way to the state fair?

Dixie Kirk: Mm hmm.

35 Corrigan: What fair was the, where did you go, which fair was it?

Dixie Kirk: Harrisonville.

Corrigan: Harrisonville Fair.

40

Dixie Kirk: Uh huh.

45 Corrigan: So you did the sewing, you did the home ec, the home economics stuff and the sheep. Now did you guys just sell the wool? Or did you actually sell the meat of the sheep?

Dixie Kirk: We sold the wool. I don't remember how many years he did that. Quite a few years, wool was a good thing for quite a few years there. So Daddy sold a lot.

5 Corrigan: It was expensive to buy meat and that. But how often did either of you, did you actually butcher an animal, maybe a cow that was—

**[End Track Ten. Begin Track Eleven.]**

10 Corrigan: --wasn't producing enough milk. Did you ever butcher on the farm, then? Or did you sell it to market?

Dixie Kirk: I wish I had that picture.

15 Bill Kirk: We had all the neighbors, not all the neighbors, but say like about four or five neighbors would all get together and everybody would bring their hog in. Usually hogs is when you scalded. And you'd dip them in real hot water and that would take the skin and the hair off of it and you'd cut them up and take a hoist and raise them up so you could cut them up. Then take them and—

20 Dixie Kirk: Scrape the hair off. Don't forget the hair part.

Bill Kirk: Skin them.

25 Dixie Kirk: --because we had good cracklings.

Bill Kirk: That's what they made cracklings out of. But that's a different thing, the skinning. But then you'd take them in and put them in a big barrel or something and pack them in salt. In wintertime, that would keep.

30 Corrigan: Were you packing the whole carcass that was still hung or were you cutting it up and then you were packing the pieces?

35 Bill Kirk: Cutting them. Cut the shoulder off. Cut the legs off. Cut the back off. And put them all in there separate. Separate, so you didn't want to eat them all at once. But you'd put them in a barrel and put salt around them.

Corrigan: And would you, would this be in the fall you were butchering?

40 Bill Kirk: Yeah, in the fall. And it would last for like three months during cold winter. You could go out there and get meat and eat.

Corrigan: And where were you keeping the, where was the barrel kept at? In the barn? Or—

Bill Kirk: In a smoke, we had what we called a smokehouse. You could smoke it in there if you wanted to. But they were right, the chicken house was here and the smokehouse was here. And the house and the barn, that took up most of the farm.

5 Corrigan: And Dixie, you mentioned the smokehouse, too, at your house. If you didn't salt it, did you smoke it?

Bill Kirk: Yeah.

10 Dixie Kirk: Then later on, when I was a little bit older, well, they had a different kind of salt. It was red and had other things in it. And you rubbed down the meat real good with that and hung it in the smokehouse. I remember that, helping rub down that meat. Like hams and things.

15 Bill Kirk: But it didn't, it seemed like it didn't get it hot very long back then. Now it gets hot and it stays hot all summer. But meat would keep in there packed down in that salt in that shed.

20 Corrigan: So it wasn't spoiling. It wasn't—because I know salt is a preservative there. Do you think the summers were milder back then?

Bill Kirk: I think so. And then they went to the—

Dixie Kirk: Oh, I disagree with him.

25

Bill Kirk: --lockers, the lockers where you could take it in, rent a locker.

Corrigan: The meat lockers.

30 Bill Kirk: Yeah. Put meat in there and you didn't have to worry about it then.

Corrigan: But that was later on, though.

Bill Kirk: Yeah.

35

Dixie Kirk: Because I was married when that started.

Corrigan: Did you ever smoke anything—since you brought up the smoked sausage – did you ever smoke anything else? Did you ever smoke fish? Or did you--

40

Bill Kirk: No fish.

Corrigan: Did you ever hang up the—

45

Dixie Kirk: We never did.

Bill Kirk: Fish wasn't good smoked. And we always ate the squirrel and the rabbits as soon as we had them, as soon as we got them. So we didn't have to do that with them.

5 Corrigan: And then, you both mentioned the hogs. What about the old dairy cows? Did you grind them up for hamburger? Or did you—

Bill Kirk: No. My folks didn't.

10 Dixie Kirk: My mom canned them. Canned an awful lot of meat. And so did my grandmothers. They canned meat. And then we always, the hogs, we always made, took the hams and cured them and put them in the smokehouse. And then canned a lot of it.

15 Corrigan: And how would you can the meat? The typical canning process, but was there—

20 Dixie Kirk: I was too little to help her can the meat, but I can see my mom doing the meat. (laughs) But she would, first, a lot of the meat they'd grind into sausage all that they could. Because that would keep pretty good in the basement. We had a basement under the bedroom floor in our house. And then to can the meat, Mother would boil it on the stove and cut it up in little chunks. And can it in half gallon jars, just like you can anything else.

25 Corrigan: Did they can other things? Like did you guys go berry hunting or raspberries or blueberries, blackberries or gooseberries?

Bill Kirk: We knew how to, how much it took to last us till the next summer.

Dixie Kirk: I want to get this thing out here.

30 Corrigan: And you said something about three months. So that could last about, the pork in the salt could last about three months?

Bill Kirk: Yeah.

35 Dixie Kirk: That's the old log cabin. That's Mother and Dad and the four of us.

Corrigan: So you're one of four. Are you—

**[End Track Eleven. Begin Track Twelve.]**

40 Corrigan: Four girls, then?

Dixie Kirk: Uh huh. And this--

45 Corrigan: And where do you fall in the—are you—

Dixie Kirk: Key ingredients, American food came around and I won. That's what I was giving you that for. Because I was really proud. I wrote in there the way Mother made sauerkraut in the summer. From beginning to end. And I won first prize.

5 Corrigan: And this was in the American cookbook? Or no, this is in the, the, what was the title of the book there? Oh, *Key Ingredients: America by Food*.

Dixie Kirk: Yeah, it was a traveling, oh what's the big museum in Washington? It was a traveling museum thing.

10 Corrigan: The big museum? You mean the Smithsonian, or—

Dixie Kirk: Yeah, the Smithsonian had that down at, what town did we go down to for this?

15 Corrigan: So you, so you guys made a lot of sauerkraut and—

Dixie Kirk: Butler, Missouri.

20 Corrigan: Oh, there it is. A traveling Smithsonian exhibition, October first through November twelfth, the Family history center in, Butler, Missouri. Okay.

Dixie Kirk: Yeah.

25 Corrigan: And so your recipe for sauerkraut won?

Dixie Kirk: Won first prize. It was on the computer. And anybody could vote, you know, anywhere in Cass County. Well, and Butler's another county. Anybody could vote, period. But anyway, they voted mine the best. I had a hard run of guys, up against a guy  
30 who had some kind of potato thing.

Corrigan: Now you said you had the basement under the house. Was it cool down there?

Dixie Kirk: Uh huh.

35 Corrigan: Did you keep other, like root vegetables down there? Potatoes?

Dixie Kirk: Yes, we had wooden benches around the edge, and that's where we kept the potatoes and apples.

40 Bill Kirk: Cellars, have you ever seen a cellar outside of a house?

Corrigan: A root cellar outside, yeah. Where it's built kind of dug into the ground?

45 Dixie Kirk: We had that, too.

Bill Kirk: Just mounded up.

Corrigan: Yeah, mounded up. You had that? Did you have one of those, too?

5 Dixie Kirk: When I was little, and that's where they kept the cream down there.

Bill Kirk: It was always cool down there.

Corrigan: Oh, because you kept the cream in the well.

10

Bill Kirk: Well.

Corrigan: But you kept the cream in the root cellar there?

15

Dixie Kirk: Yeah, we had—

Corrigan: Or that's what I call it. Is that what you call it?

20

Dixie Kirk: It's mounded up dirt and it has a wooden door. It's just dirt. You just go in there and it stays really cool. And that's where we took the cream. We had one of those separators. Oh, about that tall, about that big around. And you put the milk in it and then took the cream off, you know. And we kept it in there.

25

Corrigan: And how deep is the inside of that? Maybe four or five feet into the ground? The root cellar?

Dixie Kirk: Oh, no. You could stand up in the root cellar. It was like it was deep into the ground, and then it was mounded up over the top of the ground.

30

Corrigan: So maybe six, seven feet tall, you could get in?

Dixie Kirk: More like maybe that. It might be mounded up that tall.

Corrigan: Okay.

35

Dixie Kirk: Because I know it was fun climbing on 'em.

Bill Kirk: You're digging the ground and plus putting it on top.

40

Corrigan: Plus to put on top. So it's enough for you to stand in there.

45

Dixie Kirk: Yeah. And I have pictures, or Kim has them, too, of our root cellar. It's still in existence on the Atkinson Farm. She went down there and she took pictures. Because it looks so much just like it did when I lived there. And she has a picture of the root cellar.

Corrigan: Bill, you said you, not too long after that, you got a job at some point. You said fourteen, fifteen, is that right?

5 Bill Kirk: I'd say I started helping put up hay and stuff like this at various farmers around, and kind of gradually got bigger and got a job of my own, just working for somebody, putting up hay or whatever when I was fourteen, fifteen years old.

Corrigan: Same area here?

10 Bill Kirk: Yeah, same area.

Corrigan: Now when did you two get married?

15 Bill Kirk: When did we get married? Seventy—

Dixie Kirk: Nineteen sixty-five, wasn't it?

Bill Kirk: Sixty-five. Yeah, that's right.

20 Corrigan: Now when you got, when you got a little older, I guess my question is, when you got into adulthood, did you do the same type of outdoor activities?

25 Bill Kirk: Not really. We got more, when I got a regular job was after I, I don't know, I was probably sixteen or eighteen years old when I got a regular job. I'd have to count back to see just exactly how old I was when I—

Dixie Kirk: Then you got your car.

30 Corrigan: So it was less—

**[End Track Twelve. Begin Track Thirteen.]**

Corrigan: --less time to go fishing and hunting.

35 Bill Kirk: That cut that out, yeah.

Corrigan: Now your, let's move a little bit forward. Your daughter was telling me about different things that you guys would do as a family when you guys were both older and had children. Now how many kids do you actually have? You have Kim—

40 Dixie Kirk: And Linda.

Corrigan: And Linda. So you have two daughters? And is Kim—

45 Dixie Kirk: Actually, Linda's my first husband's daughter. And Kim is our daughter.

Corrigan: Okay. Okay. Now she said what she remembers doing was going cane pole fishing at the Harrisonville North Lake.

Dixie Kirk: Ooh, that, and a lot of times with my grandma. (laughs)

5

Corrigan: So that was a family outing to go, was that mostly on the weekends or—

Bill Kirk: Yeah.

10

Corrigan: And is that still what it's called today, the Harrison North Lake?

Bill Kirk: Yeah.

Corrigan: Okay.

15

Dixie Kirk: Harrisonville. Are you saying Harrisonville?

Corrigan: Oh. Actually, no, I don't think I did. I have it written down Harrisonville.

20

Dixie Kirk: Okay.

Corrigan: I think, you're right, I did call it Harrison. So Harrisonville North Lake. And so that's when you had cane poles. So that's when you would have purchased at a store then.

25

Bill Kirk: Yeah.

Corrigan: Okay. Got you. And then she was telling me about, that you attempted to teach her to rabbit hunt? Do you have the same recollection? Because she seems to remember she was not very good at it. (laughter)

30

Bill Kirk: Well, maybe I better not say anything. I don't remember ever rabbit hunting with her much.

35

Corrigan: She says it was tried once or twice and it didn't really work out.

Bill Kirk: That's probably why I didn't remember it. (laughter)

Dixie Kirk: I've got to tell you, my first try, the first time Dad let me go with him, and he had a .22 and I had no gun, of course. But I was twelve. And my first shot, I shot at a rabbit right through a fence. And the thing ricocheted just, zoom, back beside me. I learned a hard lesson fast.

40

Corrigan: Oh, the bullet shot back to you after you hit a fence.

45

Dixie Kirk: I did. It scared me half to death. Scared Dad worse.

Corrigan: Did you, did he allow you to go do it again? Or no?

Dixie Kirk: Oh, yeah. But I got told a lot. (laughs)

5

Corrigan: You only had to do that once. One other thing she mentioned was mushroom hunting.

Bill Kirk: Hmm. Yeah.

10

Corrigan: I'm really not familiar with that at all. Like I said, I'm not from Missouri. But she was telling, many, many a times, family mushroom hunting. Can you tell me a little bit about that? Where you'd go? When you'd do it? Any tips? Or how did you go about doing it? I know there's a lot of, I've read on Missouri mushrooms there's a lot of

15

poisonous mushrooms. There's a lot of mushrooms that are safe, but some of them can be very similar. So can you tell me about—did you, and I guess I should ask, too, did you do any mushroom hunting as a kid, either of you?

Bill Kirk: Not until after the folks taught me how to, what the difference was in them.

20

Corrigan: So that was handed down to you.

Bill Kirk: Mother would go mushroom hunting and take me along so I'd learn what to get. Naturally if I got something that wasn't good, she wouldn't cook it. Because they had to be cooked before you could eat them. But there was a mushroom—

25

Dixie Kirk: Morel.

Bill Kirk: And they stood up like that tall.

30

Corrigan: So four or five inches tall?

Bill Kirk: Yeah. They were actually just kind of some spore in the ground that it, after a shower rain they would pop out of the ground. You would be there today looking for them, there wasn't any. You'd be back tomorrow and there would be a whole bunch of them.

35

Corrigan: So you had to have rain, right after a rain.

40

Bill Kirk: Right after a rain.

Corrigan: And where did it grow? What did it grow on?

Bill Kirk: Under some old elm trees. Or in a timber where there's some old vegetation.

45

Corrigan: And would you, was this on your farm or near your farm that you would go?

Bill Kirk: About every farm had some on it.

Corrigan: Okay. So it was quite, everybody, did everybody do it?

5

Bill Kirk: All the old-timers did it.

Dixie Kirk: But oh, yeah, it was quite a treat. They are delicious.

10 Corrigan: And you said they're the morel mushrooms?

Dixie Kirk: Uh huh.

Bill Kirk: Mm hmm.

15

Dixie Kirk: And, but with me, I lived close to that Grand River timber. And so we found a lot down there.

Bill Kirk: We've got a dictionary that's got that in it.

20

Dixie Kirk: What?

Bill Kirk: Dictionary that's got the morel mushrooms in it.

25

Dixie Kirk: Yeah.

Corrigan: And how would you prepare them? How do you eat them? Just like a regular mushroom?

30

Bill Kirk: Wash them in, I think Mom put a little salt water or something.

Dixie Kirk: Soak them in salt water all night.

Bill Kirk: And then that would get the bugs out of them. They'd have little bugs in them.

35

**[End Track Thirteen. Begin Track Fourteen.]**

Bill Kirk: But that was natural. And let them soak and then roll them in flour and fry them. And oh—

40

Dixie Kirk: Rinse them off.

Bill Kirk: They were absolutely delicious.

45

Corrigan: And your family did the same? You would go out after rain. Is this the spring you would do this, right?

Bill Kirk: Yeah.

Corrigan: Okay.

5

Dixie Kirk: Everyone did that, I think. I think everyone did that.

Corrigan: Is it really this time of year right now? April? Is that—

10

Bill Kirk: Any time from now on.

Corrigan: And for how long? Would it be throughout the summer, too?

Bill Kirk: No.

15

Corrigan: No.

Dixie Kirk: Just a short time.

20

Bill Kirk: Just a short time. There would be a span of about three weeks or a month. They'd be there and then they're gone.

Corrigan: Okay. And mostly April is the month?

25

Bill Kirk: Sounds reasonable, I'd have to—

Corrigan: Depends on the weather, but—

30

Bill Kirk: Yeah. Depends on, they want a real humid day, something like that, the sun pop out. They would not be there now, and 30 minutes later there'd be one that tall there. They just--

Corrigan: They can just grow that fast.

35

Bill Kirk: Yeah. And the next day, it would be gone, because it just shrivels up.

Corrigan: And how many, you go out mushroom hunting, I mean, I'm sure it varied each time you went hunting, but how many would you collect?

40

Bill Kirk: Oh, you could collect, in a good year you'd collect a five-gallon bucket full of them. But then there's the other year that you might not get but about a half a gallon of them. Depending on the weather and time you was there.

45

Dixie Kirk: Or you could buy them. If you went down around the Lake of the Ozarks, a lot of people hunted for them and put them in refrigerators. And you could buy them down there. And then they did have them at the market at Kansas City, too.

Corrigan: Oh, the Kansas City Market.

Bill Kirk: Yeah. They would be down the Kansas City Market every spring.

5

Corrigan: Now if they were so short period of time span there, were they expensive if you had to buy them?

Bill Kirk: Oh, yeah. A pound of them would, a pound of them would probably cost you ten dollars. They're expensive. But some of the old people down around Lake of the Ozarks, I know an old man down there, he's down there all the time. And he hunts them all the time and he has them in the refrigerator. And her dad, he got to where he couldn't hunt them, you know. And I told her let's take him down there. So we went down to this old man's house and I pulled in there and he had a refrigerator on the back porch. And her dad and I got out and went up there. And the old man came to the door. We told him what we wanted and he opened the door. That refrigerator was completely full of mushrooms. And every year in the spring, her dad did say, "Bill, is it time to go mushroom hunting yet?" (laughter) But that old man would pick them out, he'd sell them by the bushel. He knew where they was at. But the markets know where they're at, too.

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Corrigan: There's a lot more, do you think they grow better down by the Lake of the Ozarks?

Bill Kirk: Yeah. Definitely.

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Corrigan: Definitely?

Dixie Kirk: Better around timbers and things like that.

Corrigan: And so it was, she had talked about that family outings. She remembered a lot of the mushroom hunting. So I didn't realize it was such a short time period, though, about three weeks. If you had any spare time then, it was mushroom hunting?

30

Bill Kirk: That might be five or six days it was just right and you'd find a lot of them. Other than that.

35

Corrigan: And is it easier to go out early morning, late afternoon, does it matter?

Bill Kirk: Early, early morning.

40

Corrigan: Yeah. I've heard a lot of people talk about mushroom hunting here in Missouri. And it's just not something I'm familiar with. But I think it's very interesting. But very expensive if you had [to pay] ten dollars a pound. That's a lot.

45

Bill Kirk: I bet the dictionary would have mushrooms in it.

Corrigan: So your parents would teach you which ones were the okay ones? Is that the only ones you hunted? Because I know there's other edible mushrooms in Missouri that people—

5 Bill Kirk: There is. But not for me.

Corrigan: Okay. So morels was just—

10 Bill Kirk: I want to live a little longer. And some of them were deadly poisonous. (Dixie laughs)

15 Corrigan: Oh, yes. And some of them look very similar to other mushrooms in Missouri that are not, I mean, I have seen some books and it can be very difficult. If you're looking at them, you've really got to know what to look at. So you, both of you strictly stuck to morels?

Bill Kirk: Yeah, morels is the one.

20 Dixie Kirk: And Charlie, our neighbor across the street, he got some different kinds, didn't he? But I didn't trust myself to do that. (laughs)

Corrigan: And did you do, so when you got older, did you continue to hunt at all? I mean, you said you had a job—

25 **[End Track Fourteen. Begin Track Fifteen.]**

Corrigan: --when your—

30 Bill Kirk: Mushrooms.

Corrigan: Actually, anything. Do you still mushroom hunt now?

35 Bill Kirk: Oh, yeah. If I get a chance, I go look. I'm not as fanatic about it as I used to be. Yeah. And I still hunt some. Not like I used to. When I was down there, you'd just get up in the morning and didn't have anything else to do, you'd go squirrel hunting, rabbit hunting. I rabbit hunted a lot.

40 Corrigan: Did they have to—well, how far, we're in Raymore. How far are we talking about to where you both lived in the farms? Is that--

Bill Kirk: There's about 15 miles down there.

45 Dixie Kirk: He lived that way and I lived that way, toward Freeman, Missouri. And he lived toward East Lynne, Missouri.

Corrigan: So a lot more rabbit hunting when you were younger. Did you ever, when you got older, did you ever get into, I know now there's all these seasons for deer and geese and other wildlife. Did you ever get into anything else? Or did you strictly stick to your—

5 Bill Kirk: Squirrels and rabbits.

Dixie Kirk: And fish, and mushrooms. (laughs)

Bill Kirk: Fish and mushrooms, that's about it. Squirrels. I used to hunt squirrels a lot.

10

Corrigan: Just as a kid? Or even when you were older?

Bill Kirk: Both.

15

Corrigan: And then now you just trap them and you release them?

Bill Kirk: To get rid of them here, yes.

Corrigan: Yeah. Yeah.

20

Dixie Kirk: Because they eat up, they'll even eat your wood off your house. I mean, they destroy things. And if you have too many. A few is all right, and they're cute, but—

25

Bill Kirk: But if you take one and, you can catch, I kept track. About three years ago, four years ago, I put traps out for squirrels. Live traps. I took them out. And I got up towards 50 and I quit counting them. And didn't have any squirrels for three or four years, and all. And I quit trapping them. And then some other squirrels moved right in. Soon as they see an open area, they move in.

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Dixie Kirk: But the thing is, now, he got that many. And then our neighbor across the street got almost that many.

Corrigan: And you're talking right from here, at your house.

35

Bill Kirk: Yeah.

Corrigan: So we're not talking a very large piece of land.

Bill Kirk: No.

40

Dixie Kirk: No, but lots of trees. (laughs)

Bill Kirk: We've got big oak trees out here. And those acorns attract the squirrels. They'll just come in back. I bet you can see two or three around here right now.

45

Corrigan: But that's a large, that's a large percentage. Fifty squirrels. And you're talking not a very big area you're catching them in.

Bill Kirk: You can step out here any day—

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Dixie Kirk: That's a reason we like to take them out to the timber.

Bill Kirk: You can step out here and you see three or four squirrels.

10 Corrigan: And where would you go to, you said you release them in the timber. Is that Harrisonville or—

Bill Kirk: Just halfway between here and Harrisonville or somewhere.

15 Corrigan: Okay.

Bill Kirk: Somewhere where there's some trees. Never kill them in the summertime. Just take them down there.

20 Corrigan: Did you notice, this is kind of a broad question, but did you notice any changes in the environment from when you were a kid to now? And that could be anything from the cleanliness of the rivers, the lakes, or the populations? Did you notice, it seems like, that you're saying the squirrel population just keeps going up. But I didn't know, back when you were younger, you said you rabbit hunted and rabbit hunted, but I  
25 just was curious, what observations can you make now looking back? Did you have things, you know, how have they changed?

Bill Kirk: Rabbits are just about the same population, I think. They don't really hurt much, rabbits don't. But we got three or four like, you see three or four a week here in the  
30 yard. You see a lot more squirrels. But these rabbits don't really hurt much right now, it don't seem like.

Corrigan: Now would you say the rabbits, are they bigger today? Or were they bigger back then when you were a kid?

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Bill Kirk: I'd say they were about the same.

Corrigan: About the same?

40 Bill Kirk: Mm hmm. Yeah.

Corrigan: Okay. And what about, do you still fish?

45 Bill Kirk: Very seldom anymore. We don't fish like we used to. And Kim, Kim loved to fish. So if she wanted to fish, we went fishing. Every time we went to the lake we'd go fishing.

Corrigan: Now did you notice any changes in the, did it just change year to year? Or have things changed over the last, say, 40, 50 years about the fish population or the—

5 Bill Kirk: No, I don't think so.

Dixie Kirk: I think so. I don't think Grand River has, the catfish aren't as large.

Bill Kirk: Well, that did. I'm talking about—

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**[End Track Fifteen. Begin Track Sixteen.]**

Bill Kirk: I'm talking about the lakes.

15 Corrigan: The lakes, you think they're the same, but you think—

Bill Kirk: We don't have the rivers we used to have.

Corrigan: Okay. How so?

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Bill Kirk: Like Lake Winnebago, which is over here, was not there.

Dixie Kirk: Catches the water.

25 Bill Kirk: And I was born and raised down by Harrisonville. And it fed off of all of this area here. And every time it would come a hard rain, we'd have a flood down there. Now you very seldom have a flood down there because Lake Winnebago was put in up here and it controls the water.

30 Corrigan: So that's a manmade lake.

Bill Kirk: Yes.

Corrigan: And when was that put in?

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Bill Kirk: I'd say 15 years ago. Something like that.

Corrigan: Oh, so not that long.

40 Bill Kirk: Twenty, maybe. Yeah. Maybe longer than that.

Dixie Kirk: It's been there longer than that. It's been there—

45 Bill Kirk: But that's what took care of the water down there. You didn't get the water. Places where we used to fish all the time down there now has no water at all now.

Corrigan: Okay. So when they put in the lake, Lake Winnebago, that pretty much took care of the fishing south of here?

Bill Kirk: Yes. Because there was no—

5

Dixie Kirk: You mean, ended the fishing?

Bill Kirk: --no deep water.

10

Corrigan: Yeah. Yeah.

Dixie Kirk: No. It doesn't--

Corrigan: Well, not ended, but—

15

Dixie Kirk: Ended a lot of the flooding. And that's their goal, you know, to end the flooding.

Bill Kirk: Flooding made the rivers bigger.

20

Dixie Kirk: Yeah. The rivers were bigger.

Bill Kirk: And there was nothing down there.

25

Corrigan: But do you think it's affected, if there's a lot less water there, do you think it's affected the fish population? Is it a lot less or do you think it's the same?

Dixie Kirk: I think it's about the same, probably, but—

30

Bill Kirk: Fish probably moved on someplace else.

Dixie Kirk: I think they're not, what I meant was, I don't think the, like I don't think you could catch many 40-pound catfish in Grand River right now.

35

Corrigan: Okay. Well that's kind of what I was wondering about. Maybe the same kinds, but maybe they're not the same size of the fish anymore.

Dixie Kirk: Yeah.

40

Corrigan: And that's why I'd asked about, I didn't know if the rabbits were a lot, you know, hardier now, or—

Bill Kirk: Rabbits, I think, is somewhat the same. We'll see. If you're out here all day, you'll see two or three rabbits. It's about what it used to be.

45

Dixie Kirk: And boy, one of them is big! But we just have to put screen around the flowers. You know, they don't harm anything.

Corrigan: So you haven't heard of anybody pulling out a 40 pound catfish then lately.

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Dixie Kirk: Not lately.

Corrigan: So those times are—

10 Dixie Kirk: That happened, I was about 14. And I'm 80. So that was, what, 70 years ago? (laughs) Gee whiz, that sounds funny.

Corrigan: And Kim mentioned to me later on you worked at the, is it the Manor Bread Company? Is that what it was called? And then she said, is it G&K Services?

15

Bill Kirk: Yes.

Corrigan: What is G&K Services?

20 Bill Kirk: That's a linen supply. Uniforms.

Corrigan: Oh, okay.

25 Bill Kirk: Uniforms. All these guys running around here at all these garages and everything. All those uniforms they're wearing are rented.

Corrigan: And they would take care of that service?

30 Bill Kirk: We would take care of that service. Furnish the uniforms and everything to them. And I'd make the deliveries.

Dixie Kirk: And rugs.

35 Corrigan: Okay. And is that, would that company launder them, too, and everything?

Bill Kirk: Yeah. If you worked five days a week, you had ten sets of clothes. And two, one you'd have on. So you'd have eleven sets of clothes. And I'd have five clean and five dirty and the one you had on. So every week I'd go around and deliver those.

40 Corrigan: Okay. Now I didn't find the Manor Bread Company. That doesn't exist anymore, does it?

45 Bill Kirk: I think it still does. It may, it hasn't been very long if it did go under. But I don't know. I think they were bought out by some of the other bread companies.

Corrigan: Yeah. I looked it up a little and it looks like it's owned by another company. But—

Dixie Kirk: And they don't deliver door to door.

5

Corrigan: Well, that's what I was going to ask you about. What I did find on the Manor Bread Company, it wasn't very much. But there was a little note, I found it on the internet, that said that company, what they did was they, and maybe you know this or not. When did you work there? How long ago?

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Dixie Kirk: We got married '65 and he quit that job and went to the linen company so he could have Saturdays off.

Corrigan: Because it said originally, I believe it said the Manor Bread Company was, it was horse carts that would—

15

Bill Kirk: Right. Yeah.

Corrigan: Can you tell me about that? They would deliver on, I'm sorry, the horses would pull the carts and they would deliver that?

20

Bill Kirk: Yeah. They'd go down the street. And someone would go out and solicit the business. And you go down the street and you had an old cart full of bread, cakes, whatever.

25

**[End Track Sixteen. Begin Track Seventeen.]**

Bill Kirk: --and every week you went to that house, be it be ten houses or 50 houses, whatever amount you had. And go in and some of the people weren't even at home. And they'd leave you a note as to what they wanted, how many cakes they wanted, how many loaves of bread they wanted. And you would go around and leave that amount there and collect from them. Either they'd leave the money or you'd collect once a month from them.

30

Corrigan: And that company was in Kansas City, right?

35

Bill Kirk: Right.

Dixie Kirk: But did you, you didn't ever do it with horses, did you?

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Bill Kirk: No. I'm not that old.

Dixie Kirk: I thought it was always trucks.

Corrigan: But that's where the, it said that company started with a couple of horses and carts. And then it got bigger. Then it moved to the trucks.

45

Bill Kirk: I had the trucks.

Corrigan: Is it kind of the same concept today like with the Schwann man?

5

Bill Kirk: Yeah. Same difference, yeah.

Corrigan: Where you had your regular customers and you kept going back to them and they would put in their order. And you would do that while they're there.

10

Bill Kirk: Yeah.

Corrigan: Yeah, I couldn't find too much about that, but I thought that was interesting that it had started with the horse and the cart. But I believe it is a different name now. It seemed to be still in existence, that it just had been consolidated with a bunch of other bread companies. But I thought that was interesting.

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Bill Kirk: When they consolidate or got rid of that, they went all of it in stores. So if you wanted Manor Bread, you had to go to the stores. Wonder Bread, you went to the stores. Wonder Bread never was door to door. Manor was the only one that, basically, that went door to door.

20

Corrigan: That's what I thought. That's what I wanted to make sure I asked you about was because it was a different concept. It wasn't, they didn't go to the grocery store. They came to you.

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Dixie Kirk: I have a little story about that—

Bill Kirk: Cookies, cakes, bread, all the different kinds of bread.

30

Dixie Kirk: About him and the company. When we were going together, well I was going to the University of Missouri nights. And I'd stop by his house and he'd have dinner ready. And he's have fruitcakes because he had Manor cakes, you know. And the fried chicken. I always said he caught me with these Manor cakes. (laughs)

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Corrigan: Now you said the University of Missouri, is that what you said?

Dixie Kirk: Mm hmm.

40

Corrigan: Is that the one in Columbia or—

Dixie Kirk: It was, you know UMKC up here?

Corrigan: Yes. Yes.

45

Dixie Kirk: That one.

Corrigan: Okay, okay. That's what I thought, what you were talking about.

Dixie Kirk: Yeah.

5

Corrigan: So you did the deliveries, then?

Bill Kirk: Yes. I've never had the horses.

10

Corrigan: Yeah. Yeah.

Bill Kirk: They started out with horses. I—

15

Corrigan: I just thought that was interesting when I read that a little bit about how they started their delivery system and never to the grocery stores. But then, yeah, then they moved on and modernized to trucks and that. Would that, would they be baking them fresh daily?

Bill Kirk: Yes, every night they had—

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Dixie Kirk: Oh, they were good.

Bill Kirk: Once a week—

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Dixie Kirk: Good as homemade.

Bill Kirk: --you'd go to each individual house once a week. And every other week they'd bake them and you'd go there. You'd take in maybe, a big family you'd take eight, ten loaves of bread in.

30

Corrigan: So they were buying for two weeks or one week?

Bill Kirk: One week.

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Corrigan: One week. So you went every week to--

Bill Kirk: We had some two-weekers, but not very many.

Corrigan: Mostly one week, though.

40

Bill Kirk: If they had bread, usually one week.

Corrigan: It was always baked goods, you said fruit pies, or fruitcakes?

45

Bill Kirk: Fruitcakes. Oh, they had wonderful fruitcakes.

Corrigan: And how were these all sealed? Were they in tins? In plastic? In—

Bill Kirk: Just in plastic.

5 Corrigan: Just like you could buy bread today, just plastic.

Dixie Kirk: Well, the fruitcakes—

10 Bill Kirk: They was in the grocery stores for about five years after they quit delivering to individuals.

Dixie Kirk: But they had some fruitcakes in tins.

15 Bill Kirk: Oh, yeah. It was a round, we got—

Dixie Kirk: Because you got me some.

20 Bill Kirk: A couple of round, tin, tin cakes of it. Their fruitcake was one of the best made. Everybody will tell you that if they ever had one. It was just like candy. But they put them in tin. But the bread was all wrapped, just like it is now.

Corrigan: So when you would deliver, this was back in the '60s, '50s, '60s? Was that the right time period?

25 Bill Kirk: Yeah.

Corrigan: By then you went to the G&K, G&S—

30 Bill Kirk: Yeah.

Corrigan: I'm sorry, G&K Services.

Bill Kirk: It's the same local. And I just transferred in. Kept a little—

35 Dixie Kirk: Because he got Saturdays off.

Corrigan: Because the bread company would deliver on Saturdays, too, then?

40 Bill Kirk: Oh, yeah. We were six days a week.

Corrigan: Six days?

Bill Kirk: For years.

45 Corrigan: Was it more, was it roughly the same price that you would buy in the grocery store, or was it—

Bill Kirk: Same price.

5 Corrigan: Same price. Just different business model to deliver it. And then Kim had mentioned to me that you served in Korea.

Bill Kirk: Yes. That was after—

**[End Track Seventeen. Begin Track Eighteen.]**

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Bill Kirk: --after I was there, no, when did I go? When was I over there? I'm getting my dates mixed up.

Dixie Kirk: That was before I knew you.

15

Corrigan: Korea would be the '50s.

Bill Kirk: Yeah. That's when I went over there.

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Corrigan: So before the Manor Bread Company?

Bill Kirk: Yeah.

25

Corrigan: Okay. And did you, I just want to make sure I got this right. You were a U.S. Army specialist—

Bill Kirk: Mm hmm.

30

Corrigan: Fourth class. And you were a mechanic. Is that correct?

Bill Kirk: Yeah.

Corrigan: Okay.

35

Dixie Kirk: Worked on heavy machinery.

Bill Kirk: That's north—

40

Dixie Kirk: And when he came home, he did that for the, was that the state of Missouri?

Bill Kirk: Here and there.

Dixie Kirk: Worked on the highways.

45

Bill Kirk: When I was over there, I was up in North Korea, right up on the DMZ [demilitarized zone].

Corrigan: Okay.

5 Bill Kirk: Worked as a mechanic and I was supplying, they had no electricity over there.  
So I worked on the generators that supplied them with power in North Korea.

Corrigan: And that's all you worked on was generators?

10 Bill Kirk: Yeah.

Corrigan: Did you get that training just in the army? Or did you always, on the farm, did you work on—

15 Bill Kirk: I piddled with it. But I went, they sent me to school for diesel.

Corrigan: When did you enlist in the army?

Bill Kirk: They came and got me. (laughter)

20 Corrigan: Oh, okay. You were drafted.

Bill Kirk: Yeah. "We need you." (laughter)

25 Corrigan: That was my next question. If you didn't say enlist, I was going to say when were you drafted. So you were drafted in. Okay. I didn't know, did you, I guess I didn't ask that question earlier. With your dad's farm with the horses and the mules, did he eventually get a tractor?

30 Bill Kirk: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Corrigan: Do you remember roughly when that was?

Bill Kirk: Oh, gosh.

35 Corrigan: Were you still there on the farm when he got one?

Bill Kirk: Oh, yeah.

Corrigan: Okay. So you experienced both, then. The horses, the mules and the tractor?

40

Bill Kirk: Yeah. But mainly the horses.

Dixie Kirk: 1940s is when we got the tractors.

45 Bill Kirk: I did the horses right up till time and then he just got a tractor for a few things. But it didn't get popular until the horses went out.

Corrigan: Do you remember what was the tractor? What kind?

Bill Kirk: A little B John Deere.

5

Corrigan: Little, okay.

Dixie Kirk: Big Farmall. (laughs)

10 Corrigan: And did your dad get the same time period, '40s, get a tractor?

Dixie Kirk: Do what?

Corrigan: Did your dad get a tractor in the '40s, too? About that time period?

15

Dixie Kirk: I was probably about 16. And so he told me to drive the tractor because the horses were too dangerous. (laughs) Which I find funny now. But you know, that was his feeling. Horses ran away. You could control the tractor.

20 Corrigan: Did you ever drive the horses? Or he didn't want you to do that?

Dixie Kirk: He didn't want me to do that.

Corrigan: Okay.

25

Dixie Kirk: I went and I shucked corn with him and all that stuff. But he wouldn't let me drive the horses.

Corrigan: Okay. But you did get to drive the tractor when it came.

30

Dixie Kirk: And I did their dirty jobs like clean out the combine. (laughs) You know you have to crawl up in the back of it and clean it out. They'd give me a dime, the neighbors would.

35 Corrigan: Was it one of the, you said combine, but was it a picker? Or was it a—

Dixie Kirk: A combine.

Corrigan: Oh, it was a combine. Okay. I didn't know—

40

Dixie Kirk: You didn't have to clean the picker.

Bill Kirk: You just put a different head on it for corn and another head on it for oats.

45 Corrigan: I didn't know, you had cattle. Did you ever put up silage or anything?

Bill Kirk: Oh, no.

Corrigan: Okay.

5 Bill Kirk: Then they used to just dig a long trench here and mound it up and put it right in the ground.

Dixie Kirk: In fact, this house sits on an old silage. This was, at one time, right here—

10 Corrigan: This house here was a farm here—

Dixie Kirk: Right. And there was a silage—

Corrigan: A silo here?

15

Dixie Kirk: A big hole in the ground.

Corrigan: A hole in the ground. So that's what you would do. So you didn't have on the farm, you didn't have what today some farms have would be the big, tall silos. You just dig a trench in the ground?

20

Bill Kirk: Yeah. Silos was just coming in. In fact, I helped put up three or four of them before I went to, before they got them up. But they made silos—[phone interruption]

25

Corrigan: Hold on one second, I'll pause it. [pause] Okay, we just took a brief pause there, the phone rang. Okay, Dixie, you were going to talk about, we were talking about silos.

30

Dixie Kirk: Silos, yeah. In the 19, I was born in Kansas City, Missouri, in 1930. And my dad was a steel worker and he got laid off because everybody got laid off. There was no work. And kids were stealing my milk off the steps. So they moved down to Grandpa Wagner's farm east of Harrisonville, Missouri. And Dad was really, I don't know, he was before his time. Because we had a lot of farm animals. Everyone did. Because we all had horses and cows.

35

**[End Track Eighteen. Begin Track Nineteen.]**

40

Dixie Kirk: And they were starving. And Daddy, and nothing was growing. It was the drought in the '30s. You don't remember that. But it was really, really bad. Bad, bad.

40

Corrigan: The Dust Bowl and the—

45

Dixie Kirk: So my dad, his corn was about a foot tall, I'd say. And he put a corn knife, just a hand corn knife, made a little wooden sled and put that on the front of it and took one horse and cut all that corn and dug a great big hole in the ground and buried it. And then we kept all the neighbors' cows and horses that winter and we got, in the spring they

gave Dad all the calves and colts for doing that. So my dad was really, in the beginning, part of the silo business. I've always been proud of him because he could always think of something. He made a buzz saw, put about a six-foot buzz saw on an old Model T chassis and cut wood for people. A dollar a day. And that was a lot of money in the 1930s. But  
5 anyway, that was my silo story. That Dad, even before silos came in, he did that.

Corrigan: And so the crop just wasn't that good. And you said the corn only grew about a foot and a half.

10 Dixie Kirk: About a foot. About maybe that tall.

Corrigan: Was there even many ears on there?

Dixie Kirk: Oh, no! No ears yet. It was just green corn.

15 Corrigan: And that's all that was growing?

Dixie Kirk: Yeah. (laughs) But he cut that and buried it in the ground. Just in a big long hole. Covered it up.

20 Corrigan: And then just kept uncovering pieces of it throughout the winter?

Dixie Kirk: In the winter. And feeding.

25 Corrigan: And then all the animals made it, or the animals made it through?

Dixie Kirk: And in the spring, we got our newest car we ever had. The mailman sold us his 1935 Chevy. It was used one year.

30 Corrigan: And Bill, you said you got into it a little bit, building the silos? Three or four, you said?

Bill Kirk: Yeah. Building them up. And we filled in. Before that, you had to dig a trench down here and put silage in there and cover it up and then uncover it in the wintertime.

35 Corrigan: I know today in a lot of places instead of building anything, they're just putting them in these sacks, just big huge, just massive plastic bags that will run 40, 50 yards. They'll just blow right in there and just keep peeling back, it's thick plastic, but just keep peeling back the plastic and using that to feed the cattle now.

40 Dixie Kirk: That's interesting. I didn't know about that. But that would work.

Corrigan: Yeah, if you see, yeah, they tend to be dairy farms, mostly. The cattle. You'll see them running along the sides of the farm now. Because a lot of the old silos, they're  
45 hard to maintain, too. Their height. The mechanics in them, if they go out. It's a lot more to shoot it up that high and then have it come down than it is just to fill these bags. And

they just blow right in. And they're probably a little bit bigger diameter than this table here. So maybe five foot around. They just blow, and they just start at the end, they just blow it in. They just keep moving it down. Same concept, silage. Silage hasn't changed. But different. But I didn't know about burying it. That's interesting.

5

Dixie Kirk: Well, when Dad did it, it was before anyone buried it. (laughs)

Corrigan: That was early, though, 1930s?

10 Dixie Kirk: He just thought about that. Yeah. Well, it was 1935, because I was five years old.

Corrigan: Okay. Okay. Oh, skipping ahead a little bit now. When did you retire?

15 Bill Kirk: When did I retire? I can't remember. It's been about twelve years ago.

Dixie Kirk: Oh, I think it's been longer than that.

20 Corrigan: Okay. I was going to ask you what did you spend your time in retirement doing. And I wanted to tell you, Kim was telling me about your vegetable gardening. And she mentioned you had tomatoes and you made it in the paper for that. So I'd like to, if you could talk about, she said you restored some cars, you do some boating and vegetable gardening. But I just, both of you, well, when did you retire, Dixie?

25 Dixie Kirk: You ask these questions.

Corrigan: Roughly. It's okay, we don't need a specific date.

30 Dixie Kirk: [\_\_\_\_?]. Nineteen ninety something.

Corrigan: Okay. Okay. But yeah, if you want to talk about, I'd like to know what, you know, did you always vegetable farm, or grow vegetables?

35 Bill Kirk: Yeah.

Dixie Kirk: No. We just had them, you mean—

Bill Kirk: Down on he farm—

40 **[End Track Nineteen. Begin Track Twenty.]**

Dixie Kirk: Farm or us?

45 Bill Kirk: Yeah.

Corrigan: Well, that's what I wondered. Did you always, she said you're gardening today, vegetable garden. But I wondered, have you always done that?

5 Bill Kirk: Somewhat. Not as heavy as, I got excited, I had the whole backyard.

Dixie Kirk: Little patch maybe now.

Bill Kirk: And I put it back to yard and quit doing it.

10 Corrigan: Okay. So you've tailored it down some now.

Bill Kirk: But I had some pretty nice tomatoes out there.

15 Corrigan: Now what was, she didn't tell me, but what was in the paper? What was it about? She just said you had some—

Dixie Kirk: (laughs) He had one tomato plant out here. And we fertilized it with cow manure that we went and got from Dick's barn, our son-in-law. And he had prize-winning tomatoes on there. I mean big ones. So the paper sent somebody out, a reporter.

20

Bill Kirk: I don't remember-

Dixie Kirk: Took his picture holding that cow chip, right in front of the tomato plant. (laughs)

25

Bill Kirk: How it got in the paper, probably somebody like Kim put it in there. (laughter)

Corrigan: So cow manure was the secret, then, to—

30

Dixie Kirk: That was the secret.

Corrigan: To get the tomatoes to grow?

Bill Kirk: Cow manure is good for tomato plants.

35

Dixie Kirk: But he's famous. He was famous for his cow chip tomato.

Corrigan: Did you, you said prize-winning. Did you take them to the fair or anything?

40

Dixie Kirk: No. But they were that size. He could have.

Corrigan: People knew about them.

45

Bill Kirk: They was tomatoes like that big. They was—it was probably eight or ten feet tall. I had them staked up.

Dixie Kirk: We've got that picture somewhere. I wish now we'd dug out those pictures.

Bill Kirk: But it was, it was talked about.

5 Corrigan: And what kind of cars did you restore?

Bill Kirk: I had a 1923 Model T Touring, you know what the Touring is? It's a convertible nowadays.

10 Corrigan: Yeah.

Bill Kirk: It was a three-door. They didn't put in a door on the driver's side, because they didn't want him falling out. It was a three-door. And I've redone that and had it around here for, I don't know, ten years, probably. Put it in a lot of parades. I got a little mark-up pull-type camper and put a hitch on that Model T. And we was down to the American Royal parade they have every year. We was in that parade with that little place over on 40 Highway had a markup, a camper that you could buy, only it was a little one for the showroom. I borrowed that and hooked it on that Model T and went in the American Royal parade.

20

Dixie Kirk: We were in a lot of parades.

Corrigan: With the Model T, you were?

25 Dixie Kirk: It's so much fun.

Corrigan: Where did you pick up the Model T?

Bill Kirk: Somehow I got found out about, must have been advertised in the paper or something, over in Kansas.

30

Dixie Kirk: Was it from the [Scoboozoo boy?]

Bill Kirk: I don't know. No, it was down, it was over in Kansas.

35

Dixie Kirk: Oh, he bought it. (laughs) When we finally sold it.

Bill Kirk: It had to be redone, though. But I bought it. But anyhow, I took my mother when she was still living down to Harrisonville. She was in the parade, and I hauled her in that. Put it in several parades. It was fun doing that. And then I had a '68 El Camino that I bought new and had over 100,000 miles on it and I redid it. Had them both in the basement down here. I got another garage around there.

40

Corrigan: Okay.

45

Bill Kirk: And the guy down at, one of my customers that I was furnishing uniforms for knew I had these. And he said, "Bill, if you ever want to get rid of those cars, I want them." And I didn't believe he would do that. And it went on for, I don't know, a year, maybe. And I went into the office one morning to go to work and they said there's a, call  
5 this number. Well, it was him down there. He said, "I want to buy those cars." He said, "You've still got them, haven't you?" This was like four or five years after he knew I had them and said he wanted to buy them. And I said, "Yeah, I still got them." So he said, I said, "Come on over and look at them if you want 'em." I'd already told him a price. Ten times what I'd give for them. And he bought both of them and I'm out of the business.

10 Dixie Kirk: Came home and there was a pile of cash laying here. A big pile. (laughs)

Corrigan: But he wanted both of them. Two completely different cars. I mean, we're talking a Model T and an El Camino.

15 Bill Kirk: '68 El Camino that I had redone.

Dixie Kirk: Oh, that was slick.

20 Corrigan: But I meant two completely different types of cars, and he wanted both of them.

Bill Kirk: He wanted both of them, yeah.

25 Corrigan: So was that just a hobby you did to just restore them?

Bill Kirk: Yeah. I was just restoring cars and this and that after I—after I quit working.

Dixie Kirk: Oh, I cried when the Model T left. The only saving grace—

30 **[End Track Twenty. Begin Track Twenty-one.]**

Dixie Kirk: --this was, this guy had two little boys. And they were just in seventh heaven. They were crawling all over that thing smiling. (laughs)

35 Bill Kirk: But it was fun doing it. And I had, when I built this house, we built this house brand new. And I could put cars in there and work on 'em downstairs. I even put a place to pull engines downstairs here.

40 Corrigan: So you had a little shop in the basement then that you could work on them all.

Dixie Kirk: So Kim can work on cars. Not having a son, she—(laughs)

45 Bill Kirk: She worked and stayed here for several years before she got married. It was her, I had to move over and she parked her car down there.

Corrigan: And she said you did some boating, too?

Bill Kirk: Oh, yeah. We've done a lot of boating.

5 Corrigan: Now where do you go for boating? Same places you've always been fishing?

Bill Kirk: Lake of the Ozarks and Truman.

10 Dixie Kirk: Ever since we've been married, we've had some kind of a boat. But we had the best boat when we quit, of course. But we've boated on lots of bodies of water.

Corrigan: So not just around here? You'd go down to Lake of the Ozarks?

15 Bill Kirk: Yeah, a lot. Truman Lake, a lot. See, Truman's quite a bit closer than Lake of the Ozarks.

Dixie Kirk: We never took the boat to Arizona, did we?

20 Bill Kirk: Oh, no.

Dixie Kirk: I don't think so. We used to go out for winters to Texas or Arizona then we got tired of that. (laughs)

25 Bill Kirk: She loves to ride in the boat.

Corrigan: So you've been keeping busy in your retirement, then.

Bill Kirk: Oh, yeah.

30 Dixie Kirk: Yeah.

Corrigan: She was telling me different things here and I wanted to make sure that I asked about them. I especially wanted to ask about the car. Because she said that when you were a mechanic in the army—  
35

Bill Kirk: Yeah, I went—

Corrigan: I was putting those together.

40 Bill Kirk: I went to Fort Belvoir, Virginia, and went to diesel school when I was drafted.

Corrigan: Say that again. Where were you at?

45 Bill Kirk: Fort Belvoir, Virginia.

Corrigan: Okay.

Bill Kirk: That's out in the D.C., right south of D.C. It's across the river. And I went to six months out there as a mechanic. And I thought I was set for staying here in the States. And I got my papers to leave there and I wound up in North Korea working on  
5 gen[erators]. See they have no electricity over there. So they had General Motors, I mean, diesel generators for us, all the installations over there and that was my job was to keep them up all the time I was in the military.

10 Corrigan: And you were in two years?

Bill Kirk: Yeah.

Corrigan: So you did six months of training then you spent the entire rest of the time in Korea, in North Korea?

15 Bill Kirk: North Korea. I was right up off, I had one of the generators was at the DMZ where, the bridge of no return, we used to call it. You went across it, you're in North Korea. And they'll get you. So we had had generators at that point.

20 Corrigan: So you were right up at the front.

Dixie Kirk: He was within rifle distance. Let's put it that way. Which is scary.

25 Bill Kirk: So, keep the generators running so we could see whether they was coming or not.

Corrigan: And they were all diesel?

30 Bill Kirk: Yeah. All the power. Big generator. They had no electricity in Korea.

Corrigan: And what kind of generators? You said big, but give me an approximation. How big were they?

35 Bill Kirk: Oh, they would be ten feet long and stand about six or eight feet tall. They were big, big generators.

Corrigan: Do you remember how many, how much output they were putting out?

40 Bill Kirk: No. If I give you a figure, I don't remember.

Dixie Kirk: When you came home and worked for the highway, did you work on generators there, too?

45 Bill Kirk: Well, some.

Dixie Kirk: Or just heavy equipment? He's such a little guy, and he was a heavy equipment guy.

5 Bill Kirk: Midwest Precoat was who I came, they gave, I knew somebody that worked for them and I had a job soon as I got home in diesel.

Corrigan: When was that? Two years? When did you start? Or when were you drafted? We're talking the '50s here? Because did you come home, you didn't go right to the Manor Bread Company when you got home, right?

10 Bill Kirk: Shortly after that. Because the guy I knew—

Dixie Kirk: No, you worked for the State Department.

15 Bill Kirk: Yes, but they wanted me to come to work for Manor. The guy that worked for—

Dixie Kirk: Easier job.

20 Bill Kirk: --over there got me to go to work for Manor.

Corrigan: So not too far after you got back from Korea.

25 Bill Kirk: Well, let's face it, I was working, as soon as I come back from there, I got on with a company, and they don't work in wintertime. They build roads and stuff like this. So I was laid off--

**[End Track Twenty-one. Begin Track Twenty-two.]**

30 Corrigan: Okay.

Bill Kirk: In the meantime, the Manor bakery, I knew a guy at Manor bakery that took fresh bread to Harrisonville when my folks lived down there. He'd take it out there and he'd put a waterproof box out there, because we lived on a dirt road. And he, he got to be vice president of Manor bakery. So I called him and he gave me a job. And that's how I got into the Manor bakery. I never did go back to [unclear]

35 Corrigan: Did you, you drove the trucks. Did you ever have to work on them?

40 Bill Kirk: Manor Trucks?

Corrigan: Yeah.

Bill Kirk: No.

45 Corrigan: Or any of the trucks, you just—

Bill Kirk: No. I just drove them and sold—

5 Corrigan: Okay. Because I knew you were mechanically inclined. I didn't know if you had to drive them and service them.

Dixie Kirk: He's also a good salesman.

10 Bill Kirk: I've been in sales ever since. I went from there, Manor bakery went to the stores. See it used to be in door to door. They went to the stores. And when they went to the stores, I got out of that.

Dixie Kirk: And went to G&K Linen. No, it wasn't G&K then, was it?

15 Bill Kirk: It was the linen company. I knew a guy there, again, that worked for the linen company. And he put me right on. And I retired from there.

20 Corrigan: Sounds good. Is there any, like I said, Kim tried to fill me in on a bunch of the rabbit stories and the fishing and the mules and everything. But is there anything she missed that she didn't tell me or tip me off?

Bill Kirk: Sounds like she's been pretty good, pretty well versed on that.

25 Corrigan: Paying attention? (laughter)

Bill Kirk: Yeah. I didn't realize you had that much information on me.

30 Corrigan: She had, she had emailed me, she had called me. I had asked some questions, and then she had emailed me back.

Bill Kirk: How did you get a hold of her? Or she—

Corrigan: She got a hold of me.

35 Bill Kirk: Oh, yeah?

Corrigan: She attends church with one of my coworkers.

40 Bill Kirk: Oh, really? Oh, yeah?

45 Corrigan: Yep, in Columbia there. And she asked about this project, the environmental project. This was started in the, 1997, 1998, they started collecting, well before I got to the historical society. And there's a description on the internet that Kim read about just collecting information about the Missouri environment. Lots of different things. Fishing, some of the interviews in there are about lumber, mining, the wild horses I had mentioned at the beginning when I first sat down. So it's a wide collection of the

environment. And there's a bunch of interviews with conservation department people. Conservation officers, conservation department people. And Kim had saw that and said, it triggered her mind to remember the rabbits that you got paid a quarter apiece for. And I thought that was very interesting because Missouri is always seen as a leader in the  
5 environment and conservation. They had the first conservation, the federation. And then the commission was the first in the country. And a lot of those people, they're all passed now. Not all of them, but a lot of the early people are passed. And I thought it was interesting that back in the, what we determined, the '40s, that they were already  
10 repopulating. So I, I mean, that is, that does show how they were kind of ahead of the game in a lot of places. And so when Kim told me that, I started asking a lot more questions. Because I wanted to make sure I got that story told. Because you know, I don't know if they hired anybody else. Or if there was, you know, how many other kids were hired to get rabbits, what the process was. And so when she started telling me all that, I wanted to make sure I came and got it documented. Because that is proof, or at least an  
15 example, of the way the conservation officers, what they were trying to do back then. I mean, we know what's in the official record, but—

Dixie Kirk: They were really helping hungry people when they did that.

20 Corrigan: And oral history's always trying to fill in the gaps that aren't in the official record.

Bill Kirk: I wish I could give you, you know, some more exact things. But 30 years from now, if I see you, I'm going to ask you if you remember what we was doing today.  
25 (laughter)

Corrigan: No, I think you both have done great.

30 Bill Kirk: It was fun. I enjoyed my work. I'm serious. I enjoyed every job I got. I enjoyed it. Some guys, if I was, some of my customers, every time I'd walk in there if I felt the way he felt, I'd quit in the next week. But I always researched my jobs before I got them, and I enjoyed every job I had.

Corrigan: That's great.

35

Dixie Kirk: And-

**[End Track Twenty-two. Begin Track Twenty-three.]**

40 Dixie Kirk: And he was always top sales and we had many, many lovely, beautiful vacations. Such as ten days in Hawaii, because of that.

Corrigan: That's great.

45 Bill Kirk: Yeah, I wish I'd have kept track of the vacations we had. And they were all like for two weeks. Well, we had a lot of weekend—

Dixie Kirk: For top sales.

Bill Kirk: --for top sales, but I--

5

Corrigan: A lot of weekend—

Dixie Kirk: Like Reno. That was fun to go.

10

Bill Kirk: I was—

Dixie Kirk: They'd give us \$500 spending money and the trip. (laughs)

Corrigan: That's great.

15

Dixie Kirk: So that was great.

Bill Kirk: I had, those trips, I wish I'd have kept track of them. But any number of them, we've been to Grand Cayman. We've been to Vegas I don't know how many times.

20

Dixie Kirk: New Mexico lots of times.

Bill Kirk: They always gave us big spending money. There again, I appreciated it.

25

Corrigan: That's great. No, that's great.

Bill Kirk: And I went, when I went in there and got established, and they mentioned something about they was going to make some changes or something, I said, "If you take my, what I've built up" I gave them, I said, "When you want to cut my route, you let me do the cutting and you can cut my route." Because I'd built it up where I had so much. And I was on the same route 30 years later when I retired. I was still on the same route.

30

Corrigan: Before I forget to ask you, how big was the route? How far were you traveling?

35

Bill Kirk: Well, when I first started here, I covered all of the state of Missouri, over to Warrensburg, Sedalia, down to the Lake of the Ozarks, across over to south 71 here where it goes straight south, and back up here. And I'd work one week here in Kansas City and then all the rest of next week I'd go all over the state of Missouri.

40

Dixie Kirk: And, when Kimberly Ann was born, he had to go down to the Lake of the Ozarks in the winter of that year. She was just a baby. And he couldn't find any place to stay. He had to sleep in his truck. (laughs) Of course he had lots of rugs and things in there to cover up with.

45

Bill Kirk: I felt, I told them that, if I built it up, come and ask me. Don't take my— because they didn't. They treated some guys, I didn't think, right. They'd pull the route on them. They didn't play their cards right.

5 Corrigan: That's a big territory to cover, too.

Bill Kirk: Yeah.

Corrigan: I forgot about, I wanted to ask you that and I forgot.

10

Bill Kirk: They pulled me back in from every time I would build it up. I mean, I went out there to sell. Once again, we got bonuses for sales. I told them, "When you want, if I get big enough I can't handle it, I'll tell you, and you can take some off of me." So we got along fine, anyway.

15

Corrigan: That's good. Well, if you don't have anything else to add, and I appreciate you sharing these stories, I think they're great. Kim's been a huge help to giving me some of these tips. But I really wanted to, and I know it's the environmental project, but since I had you here I thought we'd do more of a full oral history of your life and that and talk about some of these things. But this will be a great addition to the environmental project because, I mean, I don't know how many people actually heard about, you know, hiring a young boy to collect rabbits. I mean, I think--

20

Dixie Kirk: Or how much it meant to that young boy.

25

Corrigan: Well, and how much you were paid, and that you bought the rifle. So no, I'm glad that Kim contacted us and got that. So let me shut off the recorder first.

**[End Interview.]**

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