

Leonard Lee

Tape 5

Saw Blade. It was a big one. It would not go on the place for a wheel for a car very well, so the hub was taken to the machine shop and turned down to exactly fit. We put that big saw on the place where a wheel would go on the back wheel. Then the way the differentiation is built, we locked the other wheels perfectly still and then that makes this wheel go around twice as fast. We took the rig out. That was our saw rig. Oh you had to put some other wheels in there, in the place to carry the car. Another rear end. We took that back in the woods so we could buzz the wood after we got it cut down. Anything that we could handle we could put on that buzz rig. After while he says, "Don't wanta use it, not gonna use it any more. Nope. Nope. Nope". This place I think he was wrong. But he was the boss of the two of us and I didn't object. He says, "If we hit a knot in that wood with all that amount of force in that fly wheel, it would break a tooth out of that saw and might do bodily harm. Nope, we're not gonna use it anymore." Don't think he was right on that, but we quit using it. But it worked very good for a while.

When he wanted to start the car on a real cold day out in the middle of the woods, this is the way we did it. He always brought a piece of rag along with him and he'd soak it in gasoline. Tie it to the pole, soak it in gasoline and hold it under the motor of the car and that would warm up the motor of the car. And boy there's no hood on it anyway, No body on it anyway. Just a motor. And it worked.

My folks, Fred G. Lee, came to Breedsville in 1903. There was another family moved into Breedsville about the middle of the depression. One of the descendants of him is Robert E. Lee, who married Ruth Deppish. Mr. Lee came from Chicago in the middle of the depression was Ed Lee. He's also got a son by the name of Ed Lee. Did or does live in Mendel. But no relation whatsoever to us. In 1916, I mentioned this before, but I'll repeat it. I went over to Lacota for the new baby who was born. His name was Harold Buck. The son of Harold Buck. About a month ago, I went to a funeral in South Haven and brought the casket back here and buried it in Breedsville. Harold Buck. Harold Buck. Two different people. Father and son.

Just south of Hill Street seems to be a lot there, it looks like it's worthless. It's just a crazy misshapen bank of clay. Nothing worthwhile has ever grown on it that I know of. Again according to Grover Page, they hauled clay out of that bank and hauled it around the county. And mixed it with the sand so the clay and sand together would make a better road than just the plain sand.

This is August 9. This is Leonard Lee speaking, and I want to tell you first of something that my Daddy showed me when I was very very little. He says, "Now this is a keepsake. This is something that really shows what was in Breedsville once. It was a piece of very good oak wood. It was an inch thick and it was possibly eighteen inches long or a little bit less. And when that was square, it was probably four inches wide and the bottom of it was all cracked along. Gone. Just a sliver in other words. He says, "That was out of the car. The passenger car when they had the big wreck down there right near the main railroad crossing in Breedsville." In other words, the cars were all made out of wood then. That was some time after 1904, because that's when he moved in. That wood isn't around anymore. But it does date something. They had wooden cars for passengers in 1904 or later.

Another thing, we can look this up in the history book and this railroad down through here was put in 1870. That's just an established fact. It's from there we go on to some things that refer to people we know. Things that happened. Well, let's look at our map right here and we find a house right there. I want you to write this down, because I want you to refer back. Knickerbocker. The last house on the left before you get to Old Maid's Creek, west of Breedsville. That's the Knickerbocker house. But Mrs. Silva Gilmore lives in that house now. It isn't the same house. The old house is gone. It did not burn. It was just left alone and it fell apart. He owned this and this and how much more I don't know. Either it was Mr. Knickerbocker Sr. or it was somebody before that. And he say's, "Nope, I won't give you a right- a-way for your railroad unless you give me an underpass for my cows." So he got an underpass. His cows went right under the railroad. And they didn't want to have an underpass under the railroad. But that's the only way they could get a right-a-way.

The contract says, we will build an underpass and they built that underpass. Then one Sunday morning, you know Sunday mornings all the legal offices in Paw Paw, authorities and so on where you could call in the law or such, and so on are closed. One Sunday morning, at the break of dawn, a long freight train pulled into that region and every car was loaded with sand. These quick

unloading type of sand. They unloaded one load and another and another. And pretty soon the underpass was not an underpass anymore. Of course you could always get an injunction and have them stop it, but not on Sunday. So it was done. Or in Latin. Fet Accompli. It was accomplished fact. But they did arrange for an overpass, you've probably seen them before. There's a gate on both sides. A fence across the railroad, so that the cows can't get on the railroad. Gate this side, gate this side, and they got a wooden arrangement so that cows will stay in a narrow path if they get up there. Almost impossible for them to walk on the actual track. Not quite, so they always got there cows over there. Worked fine. Of course, once in a while a cow would get killed. Not too often, but there wasn't any argument. Well that was a whole lot cheaper than maintaining an underpass. So that is a piece that comes down by hear say, but it is almost an established fact.

We didn't have Boy Scouts when I was very young, but could have taken it when twelve years of age. But we had it a little bit later. Exact age, I don't know. But I'll say seventeen or possibly even eighteen. I don't know. But we had, remember the name Knickerbocker? It's the son of the Knickerbocker who lived there. He was our scout master. Actually, we didn't do an awful lot in scouting. But we boys says, "Delos", we all called him Delos, by his first name. Oh he's the one I told you about that I interviewed the man that went across the seas from WW 1. Same man, only years later. "Could we build a cabin down there, right next to the Black River where Old Maid's creek comes in? That's where we want to build it." Yes, and he says, "You can use any wood that's down there, as long as it's willow." Of course he's tickled pink to have any old willow out of the way, because they make a mess for a pasture. We boys went down there to build a cabin. There was myself, Leonard Lee, my younger brother, Dick or Richard if you like and there was Lynn Walker. Remember that name because we're coming back to it in a minute. There was Ralph Barr. He was the son of the superintendent of the school here. Emerson Douglas, and there may be one more that I've forgotten. But we started building the cabin right by the river. Oh, we had a big kick out of cutting down the trees, notching them as exactly as it showed us in our scout manual. "How to Build a Cabin." It wasn't a very big one. We got the walls all up. Well we've got to stop the wind and rain from going through. Emerson Douglas says, "Let's just buy some mortar from my Dad." He was in the mason business. That cost too much. We didn't want to spend money on this. So a couple of them went out while the rest of us were assembling. Somewhere they found the big nice back of clay and they brought it over. But it was on the wrong side of the river. Couldn't very

well wade the river each time you needed a pail of clay. So I was at this particular moment, I was catching. They'd make a nice big ball of clay and throw it over and I caught it in a pail and that worked just fine. I dumped it out on the ground. Pail after pail, I mean, I caught it. It wasn't a pail full, but ball after ball I caught like that until the bottom went completely out of the pail. Well we worked out something. We got all the walls mortared in and I have a picture of the cabin. In the course of building this cabin, we as a group of kids are likely to get in any kind of an inclination into our head and we did. We just wanted to build a little damn. See how long it takes to bring that water up four, five, six inches. So we just took sod from the edge of the bank. It's always caving in. We made it up six inches. Made it up a foot. We made it up two feet high. The water from here on up to who knows how far, went up two feet high. Now I want to show you the picture here. This nice big bend in the road that's the way it was at that time. It's changed since. It didn't change from that, but right in there was a nice big grove of evergreen trees. We eventually says, "Well, the water's not come out so let's take it out and see how much force it seems to have." So over on this side, we let that big force of two feet of water rush against the bank and that's good and so as it rushed against the bank, went over a little bit further. Just a little bit. Then we'd take the sod as it came down and re-enforce it on that side. No intention whatsoever of doing what we finally accomplished. It was just one of those things that worked out. Eventually, this river didn't go around here anymore, it went right straight like that. With the first of our hands and the power of the old maid's creek. Why in the world that man didn't climb all over our frame and bawl us out to a fair-you-well, I haven't the vaguest idea. There's one fellow now that's very very interested in the outdoors. He says, "Grandpa, how come that little lake that's way off to one side from Old Maid Creek?" Well, I told him.

That's part of this story. The account of what happened down in this region. But that's not all. Now we're coming back to that fellow by the name of Lynn Walker. Now here's the railroad crossing. Here's the crossing where the cows go across. He came down about an hour later that day than the rest of us. So he drove his car down the railroad track. You know when the passenger trains are coming, but you haven't the faintest idea when the freight trains are coming. And there's many of them coming. When he got down here. "Oh, folks, I'm scared to death." He says. "Old Jud Rea, the depot agent man at that time, he shook his head and he yelled and screamed at me to get off the track. But he couldn't run as fast as I could drive the car and I kept on coming. I got down here. He

was mad! Yelled you round headed nut or words to that effect. Well I know another way I can get it out without going up the railroad track. You help me cross the creek right here, Old Maid's Creek." So with his Model T Ford, we took it across the creek. Took a little doing, but there was enough of us and then we found we had to cross it again. Oh, this is too much Lynn we can't do that. I know we can do it this way. Actually you couldn't have done it, because you had to cross the river and none of us considered that. It was several miles to the place that he indicated where he would've come out. Nope you got in it yourself, you've got to get out of it yourself. Well who's gonna ride with me? Nobody's gonna ride with you. Absolutely not. Well eventually, Lynn opened the gate for the cows. He drove his car onto this ramp and he drove it back up this half mile or whatever. Right down the railroad track. If a train had come, it would've been goodbye car. Maybe goodbye Lynn and maybe a very serious wreck. It came out all right, but we was a little bit exasperated with our friend Lynn that day.

After we finished the cabin that year, we never saw it again. Actually that was the last summer before I went over to East Lansing and went to college. Years later I heard the tale, whether it's true or not, I don't know. There were certain boys of about our age that were not boy scouts. They were not bad boys. But we hear that they went down and just dismantled the cabin, and one by one threw the logs in the river and let them float down the river. We don't know that to be a fact, but it was told to us by two or three people, so it is probably is. It wasn't much of a cabin, but boy, we had a lot of fun out of that. By the way, when you put this together, you will notice that right in here is where the canning factory was. East of the railroad track. Most of the time, we would go right down where the canning factory was on down to where we wanted to be. If you walked down the railroad track you could always get off.

There was another experience I had when I was much much smaller about the railroad track. My Auntie Carrie, the born manager of the whole family. She says, "Let's walk down the railroad track." We walked down much further than this Old Maid's Creek. Down here it was very very swampy. You couldn't get off of the fill, that means the bank of the railroad track, because you'd go into mush up to your neck, more or less. And here comes a train. Mother, Auntie Marie, Auntie Carrie, and about a jillion little kids and a train coming. Well they said "O.K. now you kids, this is what you gotta do. We're all going half way down that bank and then you just sit there and put your

heads down and don't look up. No matter what." Well the train came and we didn't move. We was scared to death. It's a good thing we were. And nothing happened. But Oh, how easy it could have with that bunch of little kids and no place to go. Couldn't have got off the track.

We started talking about the Landstrom family. The red brick house a mile and half north of Breedsville. We spoke about Olga, who married Bill Frude. Bill Frude was a very influential man in this town. We talked about Gerda Page. Gerda Landstrom married Grover Page. But there was some more Landstroms. There was Roy. He grew up and he worked in Kalamazoo. He used to like to play the slide trombone. He was very good at it and he was very good in the Breedsville band. But the work he did in Kalamazoo, I don't know. He had a difficulty all of his life that handicapped him. It was breathing. Just a little thing like breathing. It was more than bronchitis. It wasn't as bad as emphysema, but it was in between the two. Asthma plus. Well, anyway that was Roy. He never got married. Then there's Art. I suppose it Arthur, I don't know. I'll call him Art Landstrom. He was a carpenter. He built himself a house out here. He worked in Kalamazoo a lot. At what I don't know. He married Blanch Banta. They lived North of town for a long long time. They were not in town, but they were part of the town, if you know what I mean. We spoke about Bill Frude, who was a very influential man in out town. His wife Olga. They were very fine folks in every respect. Now they had some children. Three beautiful daughters. Violet Bouton was just a little bit younger than my age. Lillian Mortenesen. Lillian Frude was her name then, but her name turned out to be Mortensen. She was a fine gal and the youngest was Fern. I didn't know her so well. I wanta go back to Violet Bouton. Violet Bouton was very active in our young peoples group in the church. Now the young people's group in the church was more of a community church than anything else. And down in the depth of depression to take thirty to forty young folks off of the street for one whole evening out of the week at least that was an improvement in the situation that it might be. Most of them were very good devout folks of our immediate church. Some of them were outsiders if you call them that. No, I don't mean they were, they all believed in God. Out of that group there's about fifteen percent of that group that attends this Breedsville church to this day. there's probably about more than sixty percent of that group sill attends church in this county. The other forty percent, I lost track of. Of course a few of those I gotta make exceptions to because they passed away. Violet Bouton was the President of our group. I might just as well tell this because it was so interesting to me and a lot of people neglected. We had our Sunday School class. I was

reading it that few period of years. She was the President. Presidents didn't have anything to do on Sunday, but every week, we had a meeting. We had our religious meeting for fifteen or twenty minutes first and after that we had our business meeting. And she was the President. The main topic on the business meeting is what kind of entertainment are we gonna have this evening. I just want to tell you about one incident. Well two incidents. One was let's go swimming in Lake Michigan. So we all piled into the few cars that was going. Most people couldn't afford cars. But most of us that did have cars, they weren't too good a car because the depression was depression. We went over and we had a lot of fun.

There was another evening. This I want to go into a little more in detail. We says "Let's have a weenie roast down by the river." Straight back by the river is what we call the seven foot hole and they tell me that young folks today still tell me they still call it the seven foot hole. And it is about seven feet deep. I haven't been there in ages. It's on the North side of the river. Straight down from the church through the briars and the brambles and the brush and the weeds and so on. But we went straight on back. But before we went the treasurer of course, that was my brother Dick. He and his friend Howard Garver, they were empowered to go down and buy the buns and the frankfurters and this would come out of the treasury. Only trouble was we never had any money in the treasury. We had to take a collection that evening to cover it. We went down got the fire started while those two went down and got the weenies and the buns and the catsup and the mustard. We had a good time at the weenie roast. Interesting thing from Dick's standpoint. He was the treasurer. He had put up the money to buy that and so we figured out how much it would cost per person to cover the amount of money he had spent. It was six cents per person and the end of the evening or the next day I guess it was, Dick says, "Well I knew they wouldn't, cause some of them couldn't. They just couldn't pay anything. It's just the depression." The depression in other words. They just was impoverished. But it still leaves me thirty-six cents short. So I helped him out with thirty-six cents. There's a lot of those folks wouldn't have been into our company if we'd accessed you must pay that six cents. I think it served its purpose.

Violet Bouton, she took an extra year in High School. Her Daddy was on the School Board so she could take an extra year. Because it added some typing and stenography work and so on. So she took one extra year in High School to get this additional training. No credits. Anyway, she went on

piece by piece. She got her degree and she taught school for quite a while. She retired. She had married a fellow by the name of Al Bouton out here north-east, long before she retired. They were both working. Various jobs he had worked at and he was successful. Alvin had heart trouble for the last few years. Recently, he had the misfortune to suffer a fatal heart attack while on his roof working on his television antenna. He fell from his roof to the ground. That was about ten days, two weeks ago. Poor Violet is very very upset.

The next one down in age was Lillian Frude. She married Bruce Mortensen. Now notice the name Mortensen. We spoke about that before. They had a number of children. I'm not going to name them all. They had a very nice family. Let's say that. They lost three children in infancy. They have Mark and Trudy. Interesting thing I was going to bring out about Trudy. She married a fellow. His name is David Sumner. They moved into the old Frude house. They will be there for landmarks for another generation or two it looks like. Lillian Mortensen had a number of children. All of them seem to be doing nicely. There's only one thing was the trouble. Lillian Mortensen had mild or otherwise heart trouble for a long long time and one evening, she was over to her daughter's house. The old Frude house in other words and she got a heart attack and died. So Lillian is gone. But poor hubby is in his beautiful home by himself and lonesome. He's so nice. Poor Bruce. There's his wife Lillian in the grave. Three little ones in the grave. But now he has Grandchildren.

As far as anybody knew nobody knows what lot 11 is or was. But it's still Lot 11 of Block 10. It joins in with the alley that goes back of the stores. That part 11 was part of my Dad's garden, but no division line. Oh, there was, I'm gonna cover the wrong ground first. Well might as well put it in. On the back side of this lot 10 there was a ditch that went from about where back of the stores in general are, right down to the creek, down to the Black River. Reasonably nice deep ditch down there. I was down there about a month ago and it's absolutely level. There's no sign of a ditch there at all. It's just nature's taken its course. It's just leveled off. So at the top end of this block 11 next to the alley there's a concrete structure four walls of a house. Just concrete. There's no roof on it. It's small. I'll guess ten feet square. Probably it's the width of lot 11. It's just a guess. But nobody knows what it was for.¹

¹This little block house was the ice house for Rodenbaugh's drug store.

This is where the Breedsville Hotel stood. There will be people tell me I'm wrong, but I know I'm right. This was the Breedsville Hotel and this was the root cellar. The house on lot 5, Block 16 was built roughly the year I was born about 1907. The house right across the street about the same. There was one or two years difference. This I got from hearsay. When I was zero years of age, I don't remember much. I can just barely remember the barn being put up so it would be in the neighborhood of 1910-12 or so when it was put up. That's a wonderful barn.

Was one day my Dad had had a stroke and couldn't run the welding shop anymore. I knew the business inside and out. So I ran it. He says, "Leonard, what's the chance of borrowing your oxygen?" I had gauges and hoses. I didn't want him to die. So there was two or three fellows there. They hauled the tank up there. Dr. Gano says "Well it won't do any good." My Dad was suffering from heart disease.

The Mortensen kids all died very very young. Within a few months of birth. They youngest of the Frude kids was Fern. She was so much difference in my age so I did not know her very well. The one that was closest to me was Violet because she was closest in age. Fern married Nick Bian. Nicholas Bian Sr., not the one she married, has a garage on the West end of Bangor with a big sign painted on the side of it. The gas station and garage as you headed toward South Haven, you saw this big sign says "Last Chance for Gasoline." Coming from South Haven into Bangor the big sign said "First Chance for Gasoline." Anyway she married the son of this founder of this garage. He has automotive parts.

When we had our Bible study, I wasn't authorized to do this, but the how did I get involved there, oh yes, the little little ones were supposed to go for a pony ride. In other words, the cart and a pony ride and they didn't show up. So they says well we'll just take a rope or clothesline and we'll go for a walk. He says, O.K. I says, how would you like me to go with you? I'll tell you about some of these things that I know about. We went to the west and up and around the corner. I showed where the old dance hall used to be. The old creamery and that's these little kids like this. Pre-school age and told them where I was born. Showed them where my Aunt Marie lived . When we got back to the church, there was the pony ride all ready to go. So there was extra room. Get up there Leonard

and go along with them. Well among other things, I did tell them about various things that I knew about. They won't remember it they are too young, but they might remember some of it.

There's one large tombstone at the South end of the cemetery and midway across it and the name is Snell. Some part of the upper portion has been damaged in the last few years. I said now you folks won't remember what Snell is or did, but he was one of the important business men of Breedsville. He was the one who built the Snell Hotel. That was the big one on the the store. You folks won't remember the Snell Hotel because you're too small. But your Mothers and Daddys will, but they won't know it by that name. They will know it by the name of the Elms Hotel. There was so many beautiful Elm trees there about as big as you could reach around. They had grown up after the hotel was built. But Mr. Snell was the one that had the building built and there's a whole great big history in that one building. But he's the one that had it built and that's all I told them about in the cemetery. I don't know I can't think it been good

We at Breedsville had a full fledged High School and the first graduating class was May 10, 1926. That full school was continued for fifteen years or a little longer. That's all we're gonna say about the schoolhouse for right now.

Bill Frude, This I got from others. He died at the regular council meeting of the village. He was President of the board and that's when he died. While he was conducting the meeting. This is from hearsay, now. It was the second Tuesday in the month unless it was a special meeting. That I don't know about. It's always been the second Tuesday of the month.

About the carpenter. But I also did something else. They had that display to look at every time they came into the room. I showed the saw. I better say it like this. I've got a beautiful picture, I don't know who painted it, but it supposedly is a picture of Jesus when he was a boy and a carpenter's bench. And of course, many people will say, there's nothing in the Bible says he was a carpenter. Well there is. To every child that was there I passed out a full size piece of paper and it showed one picture from the Bible dictionary and it didn't come out very good on the reproducing and two or three other things. But there was the exact quote. When we say Jesus was a carpenter, we should be able to back it up with what is said in the Bible. So one of these places is Mark 6:3. And if you

folks remember, he went back to his home town. He wasn't very well received but one of the statements that was made was "Is this not the carpenter? The son of Mary, the brother of James and Josie and of Judah and Simon? And are not his sisters with us?" That is taken by the biblical scholars as absolute proof that Jesus was a carpenter. Not only the son of a carpenter, but a carpenter. One of these Photostats of this sheet was given to each child except the little little ones, and they took it home and they can read it if they want to. And also these comments about from the Bible dictionary. We had a successful Bible school. I had not near as much as some of the rest did on the school, but I had the very last of everything.

This maybe you'll say this is fictitious. But this is the way the story went. There was a little boy and he says "God, I would like to make something good out of wood." And he said it so often after a while his Daddy says "Would you really like to make something good out of wood?" "Yes". Now remember he was just a little little boy and his Daddy showed him how to drive a nail and boy that's the first thing about building anything. I'm talking about boys of today, recent past. I'm not talking about two thousand years ago. I'm talking about now. Well he did other things with his hands and after awhile he say's "God, I'd like to make something good out of wood." And his daddy say's "What would you like to make?" I want a dog house. A house for my dog. So Daddy helped him. He made a dog house. He made something good out of wood. He asked God for the ability to make it and he did it. After a while he was up in his upper teens and one of the neighbors says. "Hey Bud, you been doing a lot of things with wood. You suppose you could put one of those lean to type of garages on the side of my house?" Built that to be good. Yes. Remember he keeps on saying "God, won't you help me make something good out of wood." He did it. He got bigger and somebody says, "Will you make me a full fledged garage?" And he did it. But he kept saying over in his mind. "God, won't you help me make something good out of wood." This is what I told all those little kids, about forty of them. I say's, "You know after he got a little big bigger, he began building houses. He build houses all his working life. He built houses and they were beautiful ones. After a while he got old. You know all of us are going to get old after a while. He got stooped, his muscles weren't so strong. He couldn't pick up those big beams and so on to build houses. So he kept on saying, "God won't you help me make something good out of wood." There was a little ornament he had made. It represented an animal. That's the end of teeth and the tongue of the animal. He had found the thing shaped thus and so with four legs. He just trimmed it off and

it was beautiful. He made a lot of beautiful hand carvings. This wouldn't be called carpentry. This was hand carving. He made a distinction. He eventually got older and older. And you know folks after a while he died. You know after he died, he went to heaven. After a little while he was in heaven, God says, "How you like it up here?" "Just fine" he says, "Just fine." Course this is fictional. "Anything you wanta do?" He says, "Yes, God, can I make something good out of wood?" And he did. The end boys and girls. That's all.

There were three or four kids in this group that had the last name of Mortensen. I know that they just transposed this idea that this was Grandpa Mortensen that I was talking about. He was a very well beloved man and he was a carpenter all of his life. Harold. He did do hand carving the last part of his life. The first part of his life he came from out west. He moved in northwest of here. He built himself a new house out there. He moved from there down to the east of town in what we call the E.K. Cassada house. It came right up to the Black River and the Black River was the Mill Pond really. This whole region through here was the millpond till they let the boards down. After Harold and his wife Clara lived there for a while, they moved to this location just adjacent to Scriminger Street. Just East of Scriminger Street. Lot 1, Block 15. Rob Douglas had had a house there and it burned down. Harold built a beautiful house there and it stands today. He did a wonderful job. Bruce Mortensen was one of their children. We've already spoken about Bruce through the Frude's. In other words Lillians side of the story. Then their was Silva Mortensen. She was the oldest. Silva when it came high school time if I remember right, she had one year in the Breedsville High School, then she went to Bangor. She stayed with the superintendent of schools, Mr. Barker. And very shortly she was working in the office of the school. And in reality she had moved away from home when she left about the ninth grade. Then she went on to other places and spent most of her life until recently away from this Breedsville area. Anyway she lives now on the old Knickerbocker farm in a mobile home. This was "The Grandma" written by Silva Gilmore. "When it came to my part, said now Leonard Lee's got a memory of the summer of 1918. The extremely heavy lightning storm. Leonard Lee went down to the church and saw the steeple of the church all in shatter." I will add to that. I with others traced that flash of lightning where it burned. After it got into the outside vestibule. The vestibule will be as big as this room or bigger. It came in one corner and it made a regular burn of six or eight inches wide right across, then down and then across the floor again. Then back here to the side door and then half way down the steps towards the basement and the

dissipated. Did not set the church on fire, but it shattered the steep steeple and they cut it back to a nice little rail around the top. I never realized at the time why couldn't they have just put up a new steeple. Putting up a steeple is a very very extremely exacting science. Now how those two by fours are cut at such and such an angle and it's near on to impossible unless you have studied it for years. To build a church steeple. I never knew that. Harold said that he thought we should put up the steeple and he says I studied night after night after night. I say's I worked on the details of that steeple, but I finally said No we're not going to build a steeple. It's just to intricate. And so they built this little rail around instead. Now let us talk about Eileen. Eileen again was one of these that she wasn't in Breedsville all of her life. She was away for a long long time working at various things. She can tell you as much as she wants to, but now she and her husband Louis Monahan live just west of the church. They are in church nearly every Sunday and usually brings her mother, Mrs. Harold Mortensen, 94 years of age to church with her. Jack is another one of the Harold Mortensen children. Jack Mortensen. Now he has moved out of the community. He's home very very often, but as far as actually seeing him and doing business with him and so on, I don't. Jack is north of Grand Rapids. Exact location, I don't know. Mighty nice boy. He's got a family. That would be better for somebody in their family to tell than for me to tell. Then there's one more. There's Virginia. I better just say Virginia lives up north. I'm not even naming her last name. Sorry to say I should know it, but I don't. Oh to be perfect instead of just trying to be.

At my age I can occasionally cannot remember a person's name. Most people say, yes, yes, that's understandable at your age. A lot of people can't remember everybody's name.

Now this didn't happen often, but it happened at a younger age. We at the Breedsville High school had a literary club. I was president of the literary club. Among other things, we must use Robert's Rules of Order. There was one fellow lived approximately across the street from me. Known him all my life. He stood up. He say's, "Mr. Chairman." I say's, "Mr. uh, Mr. uh, Mr. Douglas." Yes, occasionally I would get so I couldn't remember a person's name instantly. So let's think about Douglas now. As a starting point. Well Douglas is the one that lived where Mr. and Mrs. Harold Mortensen lived until he passed away. Where Clara Mortensen lives now. He had a nice house there and he is the one that we spoke about much earlier. He made vaults. This was in the same building where the last saw mill used to be. He also made cement blocks in that building. His name

was Robert Douglas. He did a lot of concrete work around the countryside. There's many and many a well pit today that you will go out to the farm and you will see the nice smooth concrete top and in one corner there's an imprint. Made by Robert Douglas, Breedsville, Michigan. That was told in rather detail in the earlier part of this. Robert Douglas did a lot of concrete work all over this region. In his later years, he would come to our door for instance, and he'd say "Mrs. Lee, I've got some of the most beautiful onions," or maybe it was radishes or maybe it was apples or something. "Would you like some? They're only so much." He was so nice and polite and I also found that he was doing the same thing down south of Keeler. He must have covered a tremendous amount of area and just selling door to door to door. Fine produce. A small quality, a quart or two of this, a pound or two of that. But he kept right on working to the very last of his life. Then eventually, this is the way they tell me that he was setting at the supper table and he was getting old. I can't say how old. But he was old and he'd served well in his life. He says, "I'm just too tired to go on." He laid his head down and he was gone.

They had one son Emerson. Now Emerson was just slightly younger than me. He was one of them I built the cabin with. He was the one who would not ride down the railroad track with Lynn Walker. We were close buddies. Not really close buddies, but got along very good. I gotta tie this in. This is referring to the Douglas' and the Lee's. There was a man who I have no idea had a shipment of furniture shipped by express or freight or something to the depot. He loaded it all up. He got it on his wagon and he got it all tied up except the last rope across the back of the wagon. He was just about to tie that rope. The train went toot-toot and the horses took off. They went right down Railroad Street and then made the corner and of course, we lived right on the corner of River Street. My brother Bill, who is eight years older than me, saw the team coming. We had a fence all the way around the place. Mother says "Oh don't, don't, don't. They're dangerous." But Bill kept right on a going and he got to that fence post. He put his hands on top of that fence post and in one leap he says "Woof" right over the top of that fence and headed for those horses. And of course you can't take hold of both sides of those horses at once, so he grabbed the bit of the horse next to us. The horse on the other side was still determined to keep going. So one wants to go the other ones gonna keep going. Finally a little farther down the street, Rob Douglas saw them coming and he grabbed the bit of the horse on the other side. Eventually my brother Bill and Rob Douglas brought the team of horses to a halt. So that really tied our family together if you want to call it that. While

the whole thing was going on the man with the load of furniture had this rope and he was hanging on to the rope trying to pull it backwards. And he was yelling "Whoa, whoa, whoa!" He couldn't run fast enough to catch up with the horses. They were ahead of him. It was quite a scene.

This Emerson was a very nice guy, and very unassuming and he took seems to me it was Parson's Business College. But he took some advanced training. He went out in the world and he was so unassuming that he never did get a good job. He was capable, but he never did get a good job. He did odds and ends. He could have done, I can say this whether it's true or not, he could have gone right on in his Daddy's footsteps and worked in mortar. But he didn't. Eventually after his Daddy died

That was what we as kids called the Rob Douglas place. The barn I know was there then. They had a beautiful house there. The house burned. When the house burned, one part didn't burn. It was interesting. It had a beautiful bay window in the front. It was wide and it was deep. And that didn't burn. I'm going to divert for just a minute. Douglas house did burn, but I'm going to go back a long long long time. There was a house one mile East of Breedsville on the corner. The south-west corner of the road. They called it the Hall house. But we called it something else too. We called it the haunted house. It was empty for a tremendously long time and naturally seeing it was called the Hall house, it must have belonged to Hall at sometime or another. Anyway Mr. Douglas bought this Hall house, as we kids called it anyway. Rob Douglas lived there the rest of his life. And eventually the property was sold and Harold apparently bought the lot with the burned house from Rob Douglas. And then living there, he didn't live right on the Mill Pond anymore, for his grandchildren to fall in and get drowned. Well, remember Rob Douglas was a mason. He wanted a small building for some purpose on that piece of land and he built it. I don't know, he must have been getting old because it was not a neat job. It was built out of bricks and it was very un-neat as far as the way the bricks went together. But it was as solid as the rock of Gibraltar. The house was sold by the state. It was eventually bought by, the owners got acquainted with Emerson. He was over in, I believe Detroit, and they said, "Well Emerson, if you want to you can come over and stay with us," and he came over. But he stayed with them in this way. He stayed in this little building separate from the house. And he's still there. It's a small building. It's all right. It's adequate. Everything that's needed is in that building. And he lives there alone, seemingly apparently happy,

snug and content.

September 6, 1985

I've already mentioned about going down the railroad track, telling how we boys re-routed the Old Maid's creek. I won't go into that. I'm going to mention now about the maintenance of the railroads. Every day, they went down the tracks for a fourteen mile stretch, two men on a hand car. They would get on there and push the handle up and down. Then that would propel them down the track and they would look over every inch of the track while they were going. That served it's purpose for a long long time. After a bit they came up with something different. Essentially, the same thing, only they had a little gasoline engine on it connected directly to the wheels. You turned off the mortar and the thing stops. You wanted to start it, you turned the switch on and you pushed it and it turned the mortar over and it started the gasoline engine running. O.K., that was for the purpose of examining the track every day to be sure it was in good shape. Now, today they have a nice little truck, you don't notice it at all. It's a nice little pick-up truck. Only the wheels are spaced differently than they are on an automobile. They are spaced to exactly fit the railroad tracks. I've seen them at our crossing in Breedsville drive up to there, drive in place and then push a lever and down comes extra wheels to guide the wheels of the car onto the track and keep them there. Then drive it just like a car only you can't turn the wheel. And that is for the same purpose. Inspecting the tracks. As they are inspecting these tracks under the same set up, they take care of all minor repairs of the track. We'll say a bolt out of this particular place or something like that.

I was small I got this by hearsay from the kitchen table. There was a derailment probably three quarters of a mile south of our Village of Breedsville. They didn't have modern devices to pick up the wreck and put it back on the track. There device was, there was a crane stuck out and they'd hook on to what they want. But for the sake of pulling, there was a cable came out of that and the locomotive pulled on the cable and that would raise the boom on the track. But to do that, they had to have it anchored. If it's something light, they'd just anchor it to the tracks. If it was something heavier, they would anchor it to the closest thing they could find. Which was apple trees. In one case, at one place at least, they pulled up Mr. Knickerbocker, yes the one who wanted the underpass; he lost trees two or three time. No argument. They just paid him up for them. That's

just one of the things that took place. Then I'm guessing, I was six years old or so and we kids, that means all of us in that little block. All of us kids, cousins and neighbors. We were playing and we heard the Wham! There was a crash on the railroad track. All of us, we just rushed over and here was a train. It wasn't supposed to stop. It was a through train and it had stopped. The whole train was just South and clear of the crossing. We went through, beyond the crossing. There were three beautiful young ladies, let's call them anyplace from eighteen years on up, laying in the grass over here. Their clothes were all neat and tidy and there was nothing wrong with them except one thing. They were dead. The train had hit the car they were in. And they were dead. Then part of the same story was that there was a fourth person in that accident. That person was in an automobile by the side of the road and a doctor was treating her. There was a doctor on board the train when the crash took place. After it was all over with, the railroad took every piece that car and there was about ten million pieces, so it seemed. We kids said there was nothing bigger left of that except the license plate. That may be exaggerating, but it was in many many pieces. They took that and stored it in the Breedsville depot in the baggage room. Stored it for years and years and years. Probably for some kind of evidence. Lawsuits or something. That was the first dead person I ever saw. It didn't bother me. Not in the least.

Another incident on this railroad track. I heard the train coming from the South. It was a long freight. It had been raining and as it rained, it froze right on everything it hit. Every twig, every leaf, every railroad track, everything else. If you have noticed, the railroad track goes gently up hill to the North. That train had all the speed it dared get, going around the numerous curves between here and Bangor. It would get slower and slower and slower and then the wheels would just turn around without doing anything. He'd stop momentarily and try again. Then he backed that train up, long long train, about a mile or two and he did the same thing again. He got further this time. Almost to the top of the hill, but not quite. He had to do it a third time. Then he went over the top. Just interesting.

Another incident. We have mentioned Jud Rae, the depot agent. This day there was a group of possibly thirty to thirty-five people around to see people off on the train or going on the train themselves. There was a lady by the name of Mrs. Nordinstand. They lived North of town here. She was standing, oh, she wasn't really close to the tracks, but she had her back to the train as it was

coming in to a halt. Jud Rae came out the door and he says, "Get back lady! Get back lady! Get back lady!" He was shouting. He realized that the locomotive, the cylinder that actually does the pushing sticks a long ways out. A long way beyond the track and she didn't allow for that. She moved back. Nothing happened. But boy so easy to have happened.

In and among our pictures somewhere, we have a picture of a Model T truck. Oh, I'll say maybe a 1916-1920 Model T truck. That belonged to Frank Nelson. He was the one that used to take the mail from the Breedsville station to the Breedsville Post Office. I've seen him take the mail and put the sack or two sacks or whatever it is onto the mail car and take the mail in the sacks for Breedsville. Take them and take them out to this truck.

Another interesting thing I will just say the clatter of the telegraphs. We in the station would hear them click click clicking and it didn't mean a thing to us. But old Jud Rae, he knew his Morse code. He knew exactly what to listen for and if something important to him in regards to controlling the railroad or stopping or starting or something, that all came in right on the telegraph. He was just instantly alert. If there was a telegram came in, he would stop everything and take down the telegram and write it out all ready to be delivered.

We can definitely remember the pot bellied stove. This wasn't like a modern stove. This whole thing from except the legs was all cast as one solid casting all the way. It fascinated me so much then but it fascinates me more when I think about making that casting with all the intricacies of it in one piece. Just one of the insides of the depot. Also the long benches for people to sit on. Yes the depot was one of the centers of activity for Breedsville. The United States Geological Survey has special specific marks to show the elevation. In other words, the height of that marker above Atlantic seaboard mean level. I've got it written down somewhere, but it's so many feet north of the depot. There's no depot you can't measure that now. And then it's so many feet east of the east track of the main line of the railroad. And there is a marker. I remember reading I don't remember seeing it. I don't know if it's still there. This is interesting I do remember. The elevation at that spot is 699.927 feet. In feet they don't say feet and inches. They say feet and lengths of a foot or hundredths or in this case thousandths of a foot. That's the elevation at Breedsville. 700 feet above sea level. Here's something that's interesting to me it's because I did a little studying in it recently.

Breedsville is 700 feet round figures above sea level. Jerusalem is 2620 feet above sea level and that's within a matter of a few miles. Here all the way from here to the Atlantic Ocean is only 700 feet up.

Nearly everything I have said on these tapes is what I have seen or heard from our own home kitchen table. Here's an exception. Emerson Douglas tells of the final end of the depot. You remember his dad used to make vaults in that building not too far East of Breedsville. He used to make cement blocks and previous to that that was a big saw mill there. Well anyway, this night it was dark and he happened to be outside the door of his place of business and a freight car came by. He was looking at it when it happened. Usually you have all doors on the freight cars shut, but this one freight car had the door open and just inside the door was a huge ball of burnable material. I'll say maybe it was all cotton. Maybe it was all twigs and fluff. But it was tied up tight. Apparently just before they got the to depot, they put a match to it and then gave it a shove. That bundle of whatever it was made of, landed underneath the platform where they unloaded freight from the freight train to the depot. Well that was the end of the depot. This was far enough away so the depot did not set fire to anything else, but that was such a beautiful solid all wood building. This is a quote from Emerson Douglas and his is a quote from his dad. The depot did burn. I can't say what year, but anyway that's one of the things.

Here is something that Emerson told me also. This you might be very interested in. How to follow up on it I don't know. But Emerson Douglas says the Stickney girls; I can't place the Stickney girls in my mind. But they were down to the town hall the day it was opened. A sort of a celebration, and they taped everything that Rob Douglas could remember. Rob Douglas was an old old man then. These tapes are now at the Van Buren County Museum.

The general schedule of the passenger trains when I was growing up was, 9:15 train going South to Bangor, to Chicago. 11:15 stopped here coming back from that direction. 1:15 in the evening going south and 9:15 is interesting to me. This is probably reversed here. This isn't coming out right. 9:15 train in the evening it's dark, especially in the winter time. It's very dark. The train is coming by from the north. There's a whistle post. Every time the locomotives comes to the whistle post. It's just a round wood post with a W painted on to it. They come to that. They blow the

whistle. Just at the instant they come in line with that whistle post, they're making a curve and just exactly at that instant when the whistle blows, the light from the locomotive which is a very piercing light, flashes right across our windows. Whistle, flash of light, both at the same time.

[end of tape 5]