

14_Leonard Borden – Tape 2

Leonard: You got—

Female: Your name and then something about—

Leonard: This is Leonard Borden still talking. Yeah. The city of Troy could be a real mess after a storm and no plows or anything. And, uh, no problem getting out of our road most of the time but not unusual for it to be two or three days before we could get out too but—

Female: Hmm.

Leonard: ...they would be a long time.

Female: They'd be in worse shape being—

Leonard: Yeah. Yeah.

Female: ...in the country.

Leonard: Yep.

Female: Hm-hmm [affirmative].

Leonard: That's right.

Female: And how often would you go down with the truck to sell apples?

Leonard: Once a week.

Female: Once a week, huh?

Leonard: Yeah. Yeah. And, later years, I did it twice a week but, uh, back then, it was once a week.

Female: Hm-hmm [affirmative].

Leonard: And, uh, my father delivered the apples before that with horses. He had a Model TT truck and then, after the horses, and then the, the truck. And he had some great experiences down there because the truck was brand new when he started. It, it came in September and that was the apple season. And he went down there one day and the, uh, cop was directing traffic before the red lights. And he motioned my father to come along. And just then, a drunk stepped off the curb and walked right into the truck and fell right over the hood.

Female: Oh.

Leonard: And my father ran up on his foot, the front wheel, and the other guy was laid out flat. And the cop came up and, and, uh, got my father to finally get the truck started because it was hot and noon. He backed off and, and he told my father, go on the

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other side of the intersection. And then he took the guy to one side. And, pretty soon, he comes on and says to my father, "Go on. He don't even know what happened [laughs]?"

Another time, he was, uh, near the railroad station. A train was coming in. And, uh, he, the traffic had stopped when he was on, on the tracks. And, when the traffic ahead cleared out, the guy, uh—manual gates in those days—he dropped the gates down trapping my father on the thing. And, uh, the truck had stalled and he couldn't get it started. But he ran it in gear out with the starter was going off and the thing took off and broke the gates and he kept right on a going. And, that night, they had it on the news that, uh, they had everything but one number on his license plate number [laughs]. But that's all it amounted to. But, it, it was an old Italian fella and he didn't speak English that was running the gates. And he just—

Female: Set them down.

Leonard: ...set them down without—I don't know what he was thinking of but, yeah. But, uh, one night, we come back from Troy. And, uh, where Dave Beecroft [phonetic] lives now, the, the barn was on fire there. And we could see it from way below Melrose. And my father figured it was lined up for our place and he got kind of excited.

Female: The two of you? Together?

Leonard: Yeah.

Female: And he thought your barn was on fire?

Leonard: Yeah.

Female: But you knew something was on fire?

Leonard: Yeah. He thought it might be. And we come up through Schaghticoke. That's when you had to go down around and cross the bridge by the, uh, what used to be the rectory there. And you come out near the tavern down by Hoosic Valley and then come on up. And it was a, quite a, a deal to get around that, especially in slippery going. I don't know whether it was slippery that night. But, anyway, my father came up and it was that barn. And he pulled over to the side of the road to see if he could help because it was pretty well on fire. Not much for fire equipment

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in those days. And the sparks started blowing over and landed on the truck. Here my father is off somewhere and I was getting kind of worried about it. But, it, uh, turned out all right but the barn was a complete loss and... But, it, that's, that's quite a stretch, uh, from below Melrose up through there. My father was pretty excited about what's burning. That was back before, in Grant Hollow, you know where I mean, below Melrose?

Female: Yeah. Yeah.

Leonard: That's where you had to go down around before the—

Female: Before you could go—

Leonard: ...straight.

Female: So, oh, right.

Leonard: Down the...

Female: So, you had to go down in the hollow and back up.

Leonard: Yeah. And that slowed us down and so forth.

Female: Hm-hmm [affirmative].

Leonard: Yeah. And back when they were building that, everybody was saying, "That'll wash right down down stream [laughs]." And it's still there.

Female: Yeah.

Leonard: Yeah. But what an improvement that was.

Female: I, I didn't even know that. I guess so.

Leonard: Yeah.

Female: Wow.

Leonard: And then, one time we come up through and they were building what they call the Golden Pheasant down where the supermarket is now.

Female: In Schaghticoke?

Leonard: In Schaghticoke.

Female: In Schaghticoke? Hm-hmm [affirmative].

Leonard: That was, uh, kind of a hotel nightclub kind of a thing. And, uh, a guy got the contract to haul the lumber up. And it was pretty long lumber and he had a short wheel-based truck. And he, and, uh, three or four kids and his wife in the cab with him. And there used to be a wooden bridge where the railroad crossing is. And we

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come along. It, it had just happened. And, uh, when he hit the bridge, the front wheels of the truck come up and it swung around and drove right off the side of the bridge down onto a moving train and killed the whole family.

Female: Oh, no.

Leonard: And, uh, to be there and see, see no edge on the bridge. It, and you could look down and see the lumber scattered all down it. I, I was very hesitant about bridges for quite a while.

Female: Hm-hmm [affirmative].

Leonard: And, uh, it's funny because a, a fellow I met in college lived in Melrose at that time. His father worked for a bank that moved him up to Corinth later but he was there. And, uh, I guess he was Justice at the time and he was involved in that accident, called up to it. And my cousin, later, many years later, I was talking about it and his best friend in school was one of the boys of that family. But he was in school and the rest of them got killed.

Female: All in that accident.

Leonard: And his whole family was wiped out in that. And it was—

Female: A tragedy. Hm-hmm [affirmative].

Leonard: And, after they tore that bridge down and put in a steel bridge which has been replaced since, they had trouble with the kids in Schaghticoke going down there when the workers weren't there. And they had one-foot wide timbers across there. The kids would ride their bicycles across those timbers.

Female: Ah. One foot wide.

Leonard: Yeah [laughs].

Female: Oh. Terrible, right? Yeah. Hm-hmm [affirmative]. Now you said earlier that you were pruning this morning—

Leonard: Yep.

Female: ...before you came. Has pruning changed or is that stayed the same? Is pruning the same way it used to...?

Leonard: Well, it, it's changed quite a bit. But, uh, we've got two, uh, self-propelled pruning towers we call them so you don't have to climb the trees which is a big help. Because, when you climb the trees, you spring the branches down so you don't

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know just what their normal position is. And, uh, it slows you down. But, when I started, uh, picking apples, we were picking with a 40-foot extension ladder to the top of the trees. And those were common apple tree roots. The dwarf trees now are on a different root than an apple tree root. That's why it dwarfs the tree. And, uh, those trees had grown to their full capacity and were not very vegetative so it didn't take so much pruning at that time. Oh, once in a while, a broken limb or a dead limb. But, with these younger trees, they, they'll grow vegetative and then throw out, send out a lot of suckers. And so, there's more pruning that way. Excuse me.

When I first come home, we had trees that were 20 years old and never been pruned. And that was quite a challenge. Uh, Cortland trees were the worst ones. And, uh, we used to joke about it. How, when do you know to quit? And we said that, when you cut a branch off, if it fell to the ground, then it was good enough [laughs]. But lots of times it was hard work to get the branches out of the tree it was so thick. Cortlands are especially a vegetative apple. And every variety is different in the way it grows and makes a, you have to prune accordingly. Spice that grow up. Cortlands grow down. And you have to change direction.

Female: So, you have to know what tree you're working on.

Leonard: Yeah. Well, you, you know a Cortland when you get to one [laughs].

Female: You'd know. Yeah. Hm-hmm [affirmative].

Leonard: Of course, the Cortland is a McIntosh, uh, Ben Davis cross.

Female: Oh. Hm-hmm [affirmative].

Leonard: And, uh, it, I never saw a Ben Davis so I don't know, but that was an old standby apple that, uh, you could put in the cellar and it be still good by spring. And it made a firmer apple than the, than the McIntosh itself, the Cortland. So, it's good.

Female: Hm-hmm [affirmative]. And are the trees, uh, do you know how long the trees—
Are some of the original trees there or...?

Leonard: No, the last that my grandfather planted are gone.

Female: They're gone.

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Leonard: And, uh, the dwarf trees that were planted aren't going to last as long. And the other thing is, we're coming out with new varieties and, uh, people are changing what they want. Uh, the only thing is they, too many people still like McIntosh and they're a hard apple to grow. They're very susceptible to scab and other diseases. They don't color well and so forth. But some people, that's all they want is a McIntosh. And now the, we're changing varieties because they're coming out with new varieties.

And a few years ago, they come out with, uh, Liberty and, uh, Redfree apples that were resistant to scab so you didn't have to spray for scab. And so, we were, people, at that time, were becoming sensitive about spray so we set out some of them and they didn't pan out. People don't care for them particularly. And the funny part of it is they're resistant to scab but there's other funguses that their susceptible to so you don't save anything on the spraying. And we're taking some of them out and top working them.

Female: Well, what, in your opinion, what would be your apple? Like, if you were going to say, "This is my favorite apple." What would it be?

Leonard: Well, I like Spice very much for pie. Empires are a nice apple. They color well and they're a cross between the Macs and a Delicious. And, uh, they're a much nicer apple than the McIntosh as far as I'm concerned. Now, this last few years, there's Honey Crisp that's become very popular. And we've top worked over some of the Liberty trees into Honey Crisp and I guess we're going to do the rest of them this year. And Honey Crisp is an—

Female: And those trees do better than the Liberty?

Leonard: Yeah. Yeah. And it's surprising. You take it and top work a tree over. You, you can, uh, get it in production in a short time. It grows rather fast and so forth and it's been, uh, very satisfactory. Uh, Tom and Michael, Tom's son, topped worked those. Well, Michael's in high school. And that's funny because a Cornell extension specialist for apples come around and helped them at it. And he wanted to do a tree because he'd never actually done it. And that's the only tree that didn't come [laughs].

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Female: Was the one he did?

Leonard: Yeah.

Female: Oh. That's bad [laughs].

Leonard: But, it's, it's a touch, touchy job because you've got to have the green member of the scion that you put in touch the green at the trunk that you've grafted it into. If it don't touch, it won't grow. But if you get it to touch, well...

Female: Yeah. Do you want to join us, Phyllis.? No? No.

Phyllis: Any idea of the time?

Leonard: Yeah.

Female: I've been keeping track of the time. Yeah. Um, where are we at? We're, we're only... Are you ready to go? Because we can stop and do it. We can finish it another time. Or add to it.

Leonard: Yeah, I'd better go home and feed calves.

Female: [inaudible] Okay. So, we'll, we'll continue.

[End of recording]