

**INTERVIEW WITH KEN DEEDEY, MAY 18, 2018**

**Conducted by Ted Mascott**

Max DelSignore: The St. Lawrence River community and the North Country lost a passionate environmental advocate with the passing of Ken Deedy in the summer of 2018. A long-time Grindstone Island resident, Ken had an unwavering affinity for River area organizations, and was a principal founder of the Thousand Islands Land Trust, based in Clayton, New York. He served as president of the land trust for 16 years, and a board member for 33 years. Ken also maintained a charitable fund at the Northern New York Community Foundation that benefitted River area programs for many years. Ken was a great storyteller. A few weeks before his death, in August of 2018, he reflected on his fondest memories with his good friend, Ted Mascott. The following is a series of stories that capture the personalities and spirit of the many North Country people that, taken together, weave a fabric of caring, giving, and preserving. We hope you enjoy listening to this conversation with Ken Deedy.

***SEGMENT A: When and how Ken first came to the 1000 Islands and later purchased the cottage site on Grindstone Island.***

Ted: I thought we might start by your telling us how you first came to the river, you and your family.

Ken: Well, I was a teenager I think, probably-

Ted: And what year would that have been?

Ken: Either '50, or '51. I never did look it up. My brother was in the army at the time, serving in Germany during the Korean war, and my parents, who both worked, would get annual vacations. My aunt, my mother's sister, and her husband, had come up to the Thousand Islands the previous year, just on a tour, you know, to see the Thousand Islands, like they would see Niagara Falls or any other tourist attraction.

They fell in love with it, and they talked my parents into coming up, so sight unseen, my parents rented a cottage in Spicers Bay, Cal's Cottages is still owned by the same family, not the same people obviously, but the same family that owned them in the '50s and '40s.

My aunt, uncle, and grandmother rented the cottage next door, and the two women, my aunt and mother, were just ardent fishermen and you got a boat with the cottage, and a motor, and they'd go out and go fishing every day. We always ate what we caught. No catch-and-release, it was catch-and eat.

We never strayed too far. I mean, crossing, there was no seaway at the time. There was a channel, obviously, but one never thought to cross that, because that was sort of forbidden territory in a small boat. We came back every year for-

Ted: As renters and tourists.

Ken: ... as renters for a week, two weeks, then ultimately, three weeks, until 1962. One or two. There was a hiatus due to finances, and in that same year, I started looking for property to buy.

In 1964, it was just a serendipitous event. I found a man who had vast acreage on Grindstone Island. By vast, I mean he probably had 600 or 700 acres, in addition to the 300 he owned on his own island, Picton. Called him sight unseen, referred to him by a realtor, and told him I was interested in buying a piece of property, that I was a school teacher, and he said, "Well, yes, he does have some property for sale," which I came to find out was totally untrue, but he invited me over to have lunch with him so he could sniff me out.

In that era, early '50s, there were still a number of people who lived in almost the grand style. He had a boatman. He had a maid. He had a cook. So, he sent his boatman over to pick me up and take me to his island on Picton. We had lunch. I don't recall his wife being there at the time. It was probably in the spring, during Easter week, which I would be off. I was a teacher at the time, and I would be off in recess.

He had a river chart on the wall. After lunch, he showed me the chart, and said, "Well, I own all of this on Grindstone Island, and ...

Ted: This was the foot of the island?

Ken: It was the foot. He bought almost the whole foot, except for state park, which was purchased about 1890 by the State of New York. I think the state bought Niagara Falls, and then they bought-

Ted: I think it was the second state park.

Ken: Canoe Point, yeah. It's sort of historic. They bought basically, a point and a sliver of land that went down the foot of Grindstone, and then Heineman owned the land behind that, which consisted of an abandoned farm owned by a family named Delaney, whose descendants are still floating around.

But, most of the land was forested, rocky outcropping, suitable only, perhaps for logging, certainly not for farming. There was another farm that was owned by the Fitter family that Heineman did not own, but he owned the whole bulk of the foot of the island.

If you look at the island, you'll see that the island's constricted towards the east end by two bays: Rusho Bay and Delaney Bay, that are both Class 1 wetlands, and they almost meet. Were they to meet, they would be two islands, but there's a isthmus that connects them. There's also a bridge that connects them a little bit north of the isthmus, the land bridge.

I think the bridge was probably put in by Emery, C.G. Emery, a man who became very wealthy-

Ted: Cigarettes.

Ken: He bought a patent on automatic cigarette manufacture. People used to roll your own, until Emery came along. He bought the patent on a cigarette-making machine, and formed a partnership with one of the Dukes of Duke University fame, and so on, and Duke Power. It's a big, big name in the Carolinas.

They formed American Tobacco Company. So, he had a lot of money, and ... Emery did. But, I digress there.

Ken: Heineman pointed out the-

Ted: What's Heineman's full name?

Ken: Bernard ... I don't know his middle name. Bernard Heineman.

Ted: He's the owner of Picton at this time.

Ken: Yeah. H-E-I-N-E-M-A-N. Right. He was a textile broker in Manhattan in the garment area. He had married into a substantial old New York family. He married Lucy Morgenthau, which is a pretty famous banking family, who's also related to Barbara Tuchman. Lucy Morgenthau was Barbara Tuchman's first cousin. Barbara Tuchman is a renowned author of *The Guns of August*, and *The Proud Tower*, and a number of other books, so a very interesting family.

They had purchased their island, Picton, in '32, which is a whole other story. I think '32. But anyway, he had subsequently ... I think at a tax sale, purchased the foot of Grindstone, and he had given a piece away here and there, and he leased a piece, but to my knowledge, he had never sold a piece before.

So, where this realtor, who was a friend of Heineman's, got the idea that he was selling property, I don't know, but it was to my benefit. What also was to my benefit. He had just decided to give four acres away to his boatman as a gift,

and so that, I guess, got him into the mindset of getting rid of some of this property. Now four acres, and then I bought four acres ...

Ted: The name of the boatman was?

Ken: The name of the boatman is Jerome Brabant, B-R-A-B-A-N-T, part of a big family in Clayton, and I'm still quite friendly with them. He has one son still alive, who visits me here in the rehab center.

Ted: Which one is it?

Ken: Peter Brabant. Peter is the oldest, and he's the only surviving son.

Ted: Of that branch.

Ken: Yes, of that branch. There are five other Brabants.

Well, anyway, getting back to Heineman, he said I may have anything on Grindstone, but not on Picton. He's never going to sell anything on Picton. So, I was familiar with the property, because we had fished it, although we never went ashore, because you know, it was private property. There weren't very many houses there at all. I think on the whole foot of Grindstone, there is one, two, three, five camps encompassing several miles of shoreline, and 600 acres of area, 600, 700 acres of area.

So, I was very familiar with fishing, by fishing along the shore, so I pointed it right away to a point that I liked, which was-

Ted: Has a nice little bay.

Ken: Yeah, which had a nice cove, a little island in front of it, deep water. I didn't know what I was doing, though. It was just pretty. I never thought about winter ice taking docks out, or anything like that. It was just a very pretty area.

Ken: So, he said, "Okay," and we had a handshake.

Ted: Did you have a price?

Ken: \$5,000, which probably was way too much for the value of the land at that time. But as I said, I didn't know what I was doing, but people who lived on the island as summer people, just several years before, were able to buy up many 80, 100, 150-acre farms for \$3,000, as the island depopulated. Maybe I should explain that.

Ted: But that was interior land.

Ken: No-

Ted: No?

Ken: It came with waterfront and a house, for \$2,500, \$2,800, in 1958, 1960. You could get a 100, 120 acre farm, arable land ... Hard, I mean the soil's not great, but with waterfront and a house, you know, not insulated or anything. These were scabbed together houses for the most part.

Ted: This is the 1960s.

Ken: The late '50s for sure. I'm not so certain about the '60s, but late '50s for sure.

Ted: And your purchase was in ...

Ken: My purchase was actually in '64, but I think the handshake might have been in '62, something like that.

Ted: Did you have the funds?

Ken: No, I didn't have the funds, I say. We had some financial reversals, my family did, my parents, and that changed the situation slightly, and my brother got married.

Ted: That always changes the situation.

Ken: That always changes it, so ...

Ted: That explains the delay between the handshake and the-

Ken: It explains the delay. Right.

Ted: ... actual ...

Ken: Yes. So I called him up and said, "I can't pay for it now," and he said, "Well, I've given you my word and you're a person of honor and I know you'll pay it," so that was it.

So, a couple of years later, must have been 1964 or '65. At that time, when you're a teacher, you could elect either of two methods of pay. You could elect to get pay on a ten-month basis, which is annual salary, but they paid it over ten months, or elect it to be paid over a twelve month basis. Again, same salary, but the school district would retain, for people who can't budget properly, a portion of your salary, and then give you a big check in June, at the end of June. I don't know if they still do that.

Well, anyway, I deposited my big check, \$2,000 or whatever it was, and my brother's ... I immediately sent him off his check for \$5,000, and wouldn't you know, the damn thing bounces.

Ted: Oh, terrible.

Ken: Yeah. Yeah. So, I was mortified, because I got the notification first and it said, "For uncollected funds." Well, at that time I was very naive, even though I was older, I didn't have that much experience. I didn't know what uncollected funds were.

What the bank does when you cash a check, as most people know now, they don't credit it to your account immediately, unless you have a big deposit elsewhere in the same bank, and so they call those funds, Deposited, but Uncollected. In most instances, they will not pay out on them.

Well, anyway, I called him up and explained it and apologized and all that, and he understood, so eventually the checks cleared. They were all governmental checks, and he got paid, and we got the property.

And then we spent our vacations, which at that time now, were three weeks. We'd had dogs at the time, but we'd all go over the family, we'd have a picnic on the property, and get an hibachi, and people still don't know what they are, a little portable grill, and grill something up, let the dogs roam around, yeah. Just sort of up on the beach, because you had a small boat with an outboard, and you could do that without endangering the motor or anything.

***SEGMENT B: Building the cottage – accumulating the money and selecting a contractor.***

Ken: And then in '69, after having worked three jobs for several years, and-

Ted: Which were what?

Ken: Well, I was a teacher full time. I was president of my union, which didn't pay squat, but it was like a full-time job, and matter of fact, it didn't pay anything. Well, I guess squat is anything, is nothing.

I worked at a large discount department store at the time, called S. Klein's on the Square, and I worked in the nursery, and I worked that for a year and a half. Matter of fact, I worked so much, I was getting overtime on top of teaching. Oh yeah.

And my brother worked hard, but by that time, he started to have kids, so he always worked two, three jobs, too, as did I.

And I also got a job with the township after having been politically active, and there was a turnover, and I was given a position of ... Well, it's unglamorous title called Beach Manager, but what it was, I was in charge of eight or nine-

Ted: What town is this now?

Ken: Town of Islip on Long Island, which is from Bay Shore to Bayport, maybe 300,000 residents.

Ted: Hmm.

Ken: Well, yeah. Those Long Island townships are big.

So, we had two public beaches on the ocean, and I supervised the ferry services, all the lifeguards, all the kids who picked up dirt and trash, we called the SPs. You can fill in the blank there, second word being picker.

Then I had two swimming pools to supervise, and five what they called, Bay Beaches. So, I had about 130 lifeguards and another 80 employees.

Ted: That's a big job.

Ken: Yeah, it was, but it was part time, but it was a premium job, but it was big. I kept that for two years, and with all that extra cash coming in, I felt secure in getting a \$9,000 mortgage to build the house-

Ted: On the island.

Ken: On the island, and characteristic of those days ... Well, back up. As I said, if I knew then what I know now, you know that old story, but I didn't know what I was doing. I got a book at a garden center, 30 Summer Homes and their Plans. So the book cost five bucks. It was published by Sunset. They had all the decks and you could buy a book on anything.

Ted: Yes, I purchased them also. Oh yeah, I bought quite a few.

Ken: Yeah. So, I picked out a house that was modest, which it is, and it was a house that designs that you could add modules, which I never did, and so ... What I learned is, after having the house been built, it's very difficult to do anything with a house that's perfectly square, which is what my original house was. Just very difficult to ascribe rooms, or do anything like that.

Well, anyway, I went to Mr. Heineman, from whom I bought the property, and said, "I need a builder," and he says, "I have just the man for you." Well, who he picked, was Pete Brabant, who was his boatman's oldest son, who was an industrial arts teacher, and who was good at carpentry, but he had never built a damn house before, but in any case, I met with Pete and we hit it off very well, and with his family and everybody, and his cousins, and his parents.

I showed him the plans, and he said, "Okay, he'll build it this summer." We shook hands, never had a written contract, ever, between us, and that's what I

said, that's the way things used to be done. Just a handshake. I said, "Do you want any money?" "Nope. I'll let you know when I need money."

So, he set up a charge account for me at the local lumber yard, Wingerath, which is now out of business, and here again, they never did credit checks or anything. Everybody assumed you'd pay your bill. And that's how we built the house, on a handshake. And it was ready that August.

***SEGMENT C: Ken's first visit to the new cottage – and to E.J. Noble Hospital (now River Hospital).***

Ken: It's an interesting story, I guess. I had running the beaches. I was over there every day. I was somewhere every night. I was supervising 170 people, you know. I couldn't-

Ted: Back on Long Island is a long way from the Thousand Islands.

Ken: Yeah, but I had an assistant, but I couldn't mess around. You had to supervise. They were all young people, and everybody needs supervision anyway. People do what you inspect, not what you expect, frequently.

So, I was over there one July fourth weekend, because I partied a little, too, and at the two ocean beaches, I had use of a house, which wasn't bad, which I gave to the chief lifeguard or beach manager, as the case may be, in each case. One was a duplex, so the chief lifeguard got one side, and the beach manager got the other.

I would stay there and the supervisor of the town, who was quite wealthy, and had quite a nice-size ... Well, I wouldn't call it a yacht, but it's probably a 50 footer. He had come over to the marina. I didn't mention I also supervised two marinas, and with the dock masters and so on.

He invited me and a close friend, who was staying with me for the weekend, to have drinks on his ship, on his boat, which we did, and he served clams on the half shell. About a month later, my house is almost ready to be built-

Ted: You mean occupied, or ...

Ken: ... to be occupied. I'm sorry. To be occupied, yeah. And I'm loading all the stuff up, you know, first trip, everything you need, you know, iron, hibachi-

Ted: Sure, you're going to an island, so you've got to-

Ken: Going to an island for the first time. Dishes, you name it.

Ted: No close neighbors in those days.



Ken: No close neighbors, yeah, we didn't have neighbors for years. Even the Brabants, who were neighbors, didn't come over except on weekends. But anyway, we had a full station wagon, and also three dogs and a bird, a cockatiel. Two parents, three dogs, a bird, and a lifelong friend of my mother's was going up to spend two or three weeks, just to help us get settled.

I was supposed to leave Saturday morning. Comes Wednesday, I get sick, which is unusual for me. I'm sort of a bull. My fever goes up to like 104, 105.

Ted: Serious.

Ken: Yeah, very serious. The doctor came to the house even. This was in '69. He says, "I don't know. You must have a virus or something, so just drink plenty of fluids and rest."

So, the fever broke Friday night, and I said, "Okay. We're ready to go Saturday." So, we called up Lillian, packed the dogs, packed the bird, packed the car. Lillian spends the night out in Bayport, load into this car ... I mean it is packed to the gills, just, your knees are up to your neck, you know? And I can only drive as far as the Tappan Zee bridge ... I think it was Tappan Zee ... and I'm just wiped out, wiped out.

I said to my mother, "I can't drive anymore," so she took over. She was tough, and she drove the rest of the way up to Clayton. Now, you've got to bear in mind, there's no Thruway.

Ted: Hmm. Route 17? How do you do it?

Ken: You took Nine, and then you got to Hawthorne Circle, I think, and crossed over Bear Mountain Bridge, and cross over to the other side, and then you'd go up five, up to Albany, and then you'd take five, and ... At least I don't think there was a Thruway at that time. There certainly wasn't an 81, but I know many, many times that I went up there, the Thruway hadn't been built yet. The Thruway might have been built in '69, so I might be wrong there.

But, anyway, we did get up there, and we got to Pete's house, the builder, and the village of Clayton, and I said to him, "Please hire somebody to empty the car. I can't do it." I was just wiped out.

"No, no, no, no. We can do it. We can do it. We can do it." So, he had all the women, everybody, loaded his boat. Now the boat looks like the car did. The bird cage ... This is a big bird. It's a cockatiel. And the dogs. Of course they don't know what's going on, but as long as they're with us, they don't care. I think we were down to two dogs at the time, and yeah, one of the dogs had died the previous year.

And off we go to the island. We get to the island and pursuant to my instructions, they had not completed the inside, because I was fearful of running out of money, and I thought, "Well, I'll use the rest of my vacation time to fix it, put up the walls, put down the flooring, I mean, it's-

Ted: Do it yourself.

Ken: I could do all that stuff myself at the time. So, the only room that was finished, was the bathroom, and that had a curtain on it, an old drape.

Ted: For the door.

Ken: Yeah. Yeah. No sink, no stove, nothing. We had a cooler full of frozen food, and here are my parents, who are city people, right, and the dogs are basically, suburban dogs, and here we are in the middle of the wilderness, and I feel terrible.

So, I go into the bathroom. What I neglected to mention is, they were just finishing up the electricity and the telephone, so there were a bunch of linemen there, having a beer, and telephone workers, just screwing around, having a beer and whatever, having lunch, and I go to urinate, and I notice my urine is brown.

Ted: Oh.

Ken: Yeah, and I looked in a mirror. There was a mirror and a toilet and a sink, and my corneas are yellow. Don't need a doctor to diagnose I had hepatitis. So, I call the doctor up. He said, "You've got to come home right away." I said, "I can barely move."

"Well, there's nothing I can do from here. Just go to a hospital." So, he was sort of abrupt.

And that's what I did. They took me to the hospital-

Ted: River Hospital?

Ken: No, it was E.J. Noble at the time.

Ted: Oh, E.J. Noble, yeah, in Alex Bay.

Ken: Since they didn't know what type of hepatitis I had, they had to isolate me. So, I was put in the prison wing, prison cell, that had bars-

Ted: A lot of us would like to have seen that, Ken.

Ken: Yeah. It had bars on the window. It was really pretty dreadful.

So, I was there for three weeks, totally out of it.

Ted: Three weeks?

Ken: Yeah.

Ted: This was your vacation.

Ken: Yeah. Well, I was out of work until mid-October.

Ted: Oh my gosh.

Ken: Oh yeah. I had lost probably about 40 pounds. I had Hepatitis B. The clams were contaminated, and I called the Department of Health in Suffolk County, and they said they had a number of cases reported. I think it's B, Hepatitis B. It's not the one that you get sexually transmitted. It's the food-borne ... Nor is it C, which is the other one.

So, anyway, there my parents were. Everybody leaves, and they're on an island with the dogs. Fortunately, they had enough dog food. And all they have is a cooler.

Ted: And you're 20 miles away in a hospital.

Ken: I'm 20 miles away in a hospital across river. Yeah. So ... They made it.

Ted: And your brother was there?

Ken: My brother was working. He always worked.

Ted: So your parents were alone.

Ken: They were alone with Lillian, yeah.

Ted: Lillian was left home, yeah.

Ken: My father could get along with anybody. My mother was tough as nails, so for the first couple of days, they ate food. Thank God, we brought the hibachi up with charcoal, and they had frozen food in the cooler, so they ate off that for a number of days.

Ken: And finally, I got out after three weeks, or two and a half weeks, and about September 1st I started trying to finish the house. Yeah. To get the last bunch of mortgage money, and the banker ... Again, things are different then. He said, "No, We can't release the rest of the money, unless you finish the interior of the house," so I just worked like a dog. We all worked like a dog and-

Ted: What period of time is this? So you're out of the hospital?

Ken: This is September.

Ted: So, you go up, and you leave the hospital and start finishing-

Ken: September '69, yeah. I took my mother shopping one time. My father used to like to drink once in a while, and I left him with a chore to nail down subflooring, quarter-inch solid core, over which I was going to put linoleum. So, I told him, "Dad, you put a nail every six inches, all right? Laid out a ruler. You know, all six inches, all around the end, the middle, everywhere.

So, we were in town. Wouldn't you know, it blows half a gale, and we can't get back to the island safely until the wind drops, because it was a very small boat.

Ken: So, we finally got back, and my father was just rip-roaring drunk and you could see the progression of nails. He'd start out six inches, then five inches, then three inches, so finally, as he was into his third six-pack, he had nailed every single inch.

Ken: So, we have one part of the house flooring there, that's all solid metal, because he had put the nails about an inch apart.

Ted: But he had enough nails.

Ken: He had enough nails. We used to buy them in a big bag, five pound, anyway. So, that was opening the house the first time. It was very interesting.

***SEGMENT D: The Thousand Islands Land Trust (TILT) – how it got started, how Ken became President, and TILT's early leaders.***

Ted: One of my favorite stories is how the Thousand Islands Land Trust got started, and your sort of accidental role in that process.

Ken: Fast forward into maybe 1980, there was a couple on Grindstone who had bought a farm, having moved off of Murray Isle. They wanted more room, and they bought an abandoned farm with a beautiful arts and crafts house, which is still there-

Ted: This was near the ... toward the head.

Ken: Towards the head. It's called Rock Ledge. It's sort of across from Bartlett Point, a little west, and it's a big, red, wraparound porch-

Ted: Very distinctive.

Ken: Well, anyway, Allison was a conservationist. She came from an old Quaker family in Philadelphia, called Stokes, who were pretty prominent anti-war ... I shouldn't say anti-war ... pacifists, in World War II.

Paul came from a large family, I think from New England somewhere. But Paul was one of these PhD MDs, and he worked for the National Institute of Health, among other groups, and did very original research on the human brain, left side, right side, women's brain, male brain, and apparently very well-known. What would he be, a neurologist maybe, or ...

Ted: Yes. Yes.

Ken: Very well-known in his field, and very lovely, lovely people. I think they had five kids. They also had a lovely home in Potomac, Maryland, which I think was part of Silver Springs at one time. It got cut off-

Ted: Yeah, it's further out.

Ken: ... into separate, yeah. They had ... I guess you would call it an estate, but I don't ... I mean, it wasn't that big.

Ted: In those days, Potomac was out in the country.

Ken: Yeah.

Ted: No longer, but ...

Ken: And they had about 15 acres, and she loved the woods, Allison. They loved the woods. I shouldn't say, she, and they contacted the Maryland Niche Conservancy about preserving their woods in Maryland.

Ted: In Potomac.

Ken: Right. They ultimately put an easement on the property.

Ted: Conservation easement.

Ken: Conservation easement to protect the 15 acres so it wouldn't be subdivided. If you know the area now ... I went down there. It's sort of horrifying.

They have these mega mansions on one acre lots, or two acre lots. I mean the houses are beautiful, but my gosh, you could connect them with a little bridge and walk from house to house to house

Well, Allison didn't want that to happen, nor did Paul. And at the same time, there was a state agency called the St. Lawrence Eastern Ontario Commission, operated out of Watertown, that the state had set up. And the purpose of the

agency was to look into land planning and to try to conserve open space and farmland in northern New York. There was also one set up in Tug Hill, which it still exists.

Ted: It exists.

Ken: And they had-

Ted: The Tug Hill Commission.

Ken: Yeah. But SLEOC went by the boards. But they had a hearing in Clayton, which I attended. And so we went to this lecture on how to conserve land and what conservation easements were. I don't remember the year. Had to have been '81, '82. But at that meeting of maybe 20, 25 people, Allison got up and spoke about her conservation easement.

Ted: Allison MacLean?

Ken: MacLean. And how they had just placed a conservation easement on their farm called Rock Ledge on Grindstone. About 130 acre farm, mostly hay field, rough pastures, some wood lot. A lot of wood lot, actually. And how she accomplished that is she went to the Maryland Nature Conservancy and said, "Well, now that we have the easement on our house, we wanna put an easement on my property on Grindstone Island." Well, the Nature Conservancy of Maryland has nothing to do with New York, and I think they came to make her understand that they couldn't possibly ... they'd work with her, but they couldn't possibly accept the conservation easement. First, it wasn't in their mission, and it was out of state. But they put her in contact with a large conservation organization that's still around called the Trust For Public Land.

Ken: And they concentrate on, for the most part, on preserving the land for the Adirondack State Park. They'll buy up a 5,000-acre lumber company-

Ted: Or larger.

Ken: Or larger.

Ted: Yeah, they're into big-

Ken: And hold it for two, three, four years until, in this case, New York State is able to appropriate the funds, and then they sell it to the state, and then they move onto the next project. Well, the Nature Conservancy of Maryland got the Trust for Public Land interested in accepting the conservation easement on Rock Ledge. Allison and Paul, in the meantime, talked one of their neighbors, a woman named Josephine Murray, who is a pediatric psychiatrist, who owned an almost adjacent farm called Mid River Farm, which was historic.

Ted: Which is right at the head of Grindstone.

Ken: Right at the head of Grindstone Island. I say it's historic because the original house was built by prominent family named Bohlen.

Ted: Bohlen.

Ken: B O H L E N. Probably 1904 or '05, somewhere in there. And the Bohlens didn't last too long, but they did build a house. To last for the winter they had put in a coal burning furnace, and-

Ted: Who was the architect? I don't know the name, but-

Ken: 00:39:15 Whitmore Meryll maybe? But the same architects who built Grand Central Terminal and the New York Yacht Club, which are two of New York's most famous buildings. And the Bohlens, and interesting family, they are descended through a branch from the Krupp family, which most people in the United States when they think of Krupps, they think of coffee makers and coffee grinders, and microwaves, and appliances.

Ted: How do you spell Krupp?

Ken: K R U P P.

Ted: I think of German when I think of Krupp.

Ken: That's the one. And they were the big armaments manufacturer in the Franco-Prussian war, and World War I and II. And Alfred Krupp, who turned this family business into this huge armaments manufacturer was eerily ... His name was Alfred Bohlen, von Halbach Bohlen. And he contracted to marry Krupp's only daughter, Bertha. He also had the appropriate lineage with the von, and ... but the deal was he had to change his name to Krupp. So Alfred von Bohlen, Halbach Bohlen, became Alfred von Bohlen Halbach Bohlen Krupp. There's a very famous book out called The Arms of Krupp, good read, too, and he's prominently mentioned in there. Well, it's his grand nephew, or great grand nephew, who built the house on Grindstone. And famous American diplomat Chip Bohlen was actually born at that house. And Chip Bohlen was ambassador, I think, to France, and also to Russia.

Ted: I think so, too.

Ken: But he was an aide to Franklin Roosevelt, and he was at Yalta. Very well known diplomat if you follow American history. But he was actually born there. But as I said, the Bohlens got off the island, sold it.

Ted: To-

Ken: And ... They sold it to Josephine Murray's grandmother, which is another interesting family. The Murrays, in part, are descended from John Murray, Lord Dunmore, who is the last colonial governor of the state of Virginia. And he started a war between the British and the Native Americans gratuitously, just to grab land, called Lord Dunmore's War. So if you study American history you gotta read about that. Early American history.

So what evolved with him, when the revolution started he got run out on a rail and had to flee Virginia, and he went back to England. But his descendants are the Murrays on Grindstone. Josephine ultimately inherited half of the estate, and with the historic house and a couple of other houses, and she bought out her cousins. And after years, she lived in a shack, lived very modestly, this woman. Wealthy, but lived very modestly. And she sold off the big house to another family and kept all the land. But prior to that, she had put an easement on the property at the behest of Allison MacLean and Paul MacLean. So now there were two easements on Grindstone totaling maybe 300 plus acres of almost contiguous farm land. A lot of waterfront. And owned by the Trust for Public Land, which is based in New York City. Now one of the thing about-

Ted: Easements were held by.

Ken: Yeah, yeah. What easements are, they're restrictions on property. And usually, they go in perpetuity, which means forever. And easements are very alien to people. Hard to get their minds around what an easement is. But anytime you've driven down a rural area and you see lighting poles, electric poles, going across property, the only reason the poles are there is because the lighting company was able to get an easement on the property, which is usually is a permanent right to cross the property.

Ted: For the specific purpose ...

Ken: For the specific purpose of providing electricity to this farmer, and probably to the next 10 farmers. So these easements are permanent, and it is recorded as a deed of ownership.

Ted: Are Rights of Way, also another-

Ken: Right. Rights of Way as another type of easement. Yeah, yeah. But you see the most common explanation of power lines, they were all either on fee owned, which means you own the property, but a lot of them are just on easement property. I say just, it's still an encumbrance. Real estate is like ... When you buy real estate, you're not just buying a piece of land, you're buying what's under it. You're also buying what's above it. So there are diamond mines under it, unless they've been given away, or sold off, or leased, you own the diamond mines. If there's oil under it, you own the oil. You can lease the air above your head to have them build a skyscraper, and still own the property, which happens a lot in New York City. New York City, a lot of the property-



Ted: Rockefeller's.

Ken: Is owned by one agency.

Ted: Rockefeller Center's a great example, isn't it?

Ken: Yeah. Yeah.

Ted: And I think Columbia University?

Ken: Columbia used to, anyway, own the land, and you had any number of owners owning the buildings. So what I'm saying is property rights can be partitioned off, and there are some positive stories. You can collect royalties for 100 years if you have an oil well, or if your house is built above an abandoned coal mine and the mine collapses and you lose the house, it's tough darts. A sink hole forms, that happens all the time in Pennsylvania. It's just tough darts. It's a real serious problem.

So that's what easements are. They're just property rights that are partitioned off. For the most part, conservation easements are negative rights. By that, it doesn't say I can build a windmill, it says I can prohibit a windmill from being built. It doesn't mean I can subdivide the land, it's I can't subdivide the land, so-

Ted: Or you can only subdivide it-

Ken: You can subdivide it in some ways-

Ted: So many times-

Ken: Yeah, every easement is different. There are no two, that I'm aware of, well, there may be a couple, that are the same. Yeah. So anyway, the Trust for Public Land had these two easements. And part of the responsibility, I was pointing out the complexity of easements, is you own a property right if you own this deed. And the only way you can enforce your property right is by inspecting it.

Ted: On a regular-

Ken: On a regular basis. But anyway, they, being the Trust of Public Land, didn't wanna supervise these easements, but they have to be supervised 'cause they took this obligation on. So they-

Ted: They didn't wanna conduct those regular ...

Ken: Right, annual or regular periodic inspections 400 miles away. So I guess they got ahold of the only conservation organization that was in operation at the time, this would be 1984, and that was Save The River. And they called Save The River, and they said, "Listen, we have to see Grindstone Island because we have

these conservation easements and we're a conservation organization." I was on the board of Save The River, as was a woman named Camilla Smith. So they actually called Camilla, I think, Camilla called me, because she didn't have a boat even though she lived on the island. She grew up in an era when the boatmen took you around. You wanted to go from A to B, the boatmen would take you. Parents didn't think it was proper for you to be driving a boat. The boatman didn't certainly want you driving the boat 'cause you'd run it on a rock and he'd have to repair it. So everybody had the same goal there. Keep the kids away from the boat. We weren't kids, but that's basically how she grew up. Obviously she knows how to drive a boat now, and all that.

But anyway, she calls me up, says, "I got these two people coming up from New York City that wanna go around Grindstone and wanna take a look at Allison's property and Josephine's property." So I said, "Okay, I'll pick you up." So we packed a lunch, and I picked up Mike and Barbara Mead, these friends of mine from downstate, and we picked up Camilla, and then the two field reps, young people, from the Trust for Public Land, a male, Richard McDermott. I don't know where he is now. And a female named Rose Harvey, who went on to do many things, but most recently she's Commissioner of Parks, that's the short title. It has a long title. Parks, recreation, cultural affairs for the state-

Ted: And historic-

Ken: Historic preservation for the state of New York. So we picked them up in town and drove around Grindstone, which is six and a half miles long.

Ted: Drove around in a boat.

Ken: So drove around six and a half miles long, two and a half miles wide. We circumnavigated the island, pointed out the two parcels. I don't remember going on the parcel. We might've gone onto one of them. And all they did was talk about former land trust, form a land trust, form a land trust, form a land trust, which Camilla, Mike, and I decided to do. And I met with Josephine, and I met with Allison and Paul, and they agreed to go on a board. And another person, Frannie Purcell, who's now Frannie Mallory, was Frannie Beatle, her maiden name. And Patty Lashomb was a local person.

And in 1985, the Trust for Public Land did all the necessary paperwork to write a constitution-

Ted: And legal work.

Ken: Not a constitution, bylaws, and then we first had to file as a corporation, as a not for profit corporation, with the State of New York. Then you file for a 501(c)(3) status with the federal government, which they did. And following that, the Trust for Public Land transferred the easements to the Thousand Island Land Trust. Now, whoever's listening to this, remember easements, as I said, are

deeds. They're deeded rights. So they can be sold, they can be given away, they can be bequeathed, they can be donated, they can be transferred. It's a deed, it's a property right. Just like you'd buy oil well retention rights. And that's how-

Ted: Or a house.

Ken: Or a house. And that's how, basically, the land trust was started, yeah. And we were a Grindstone Island outfit, we're just Grindstone Island people.

Ted: But you selected a name that was much larger than Grindstone. Encompassed a lot more.

Ken: Right. I was a little ... The obvious name to call the organization is Thousand Islands Land Trust, but I didn't like the acronym.

Ken: Yeah. I don't know why. Must've had a bigger vision at the time than just Grindstone.

Ted: Yeah.

Ken: No. But the acronym for Thousand Island Land Trust is TILT. And I never did like that. But that's fallen to common parlance now and nobody looks at it negatively. Yeah. So that's how it formed, and the Trust for Public Land did all the work.

Ted: Well how did you become the head of it? The president?

Ken: President? Well I did all the work, fundamentally, for the first ... I was president, secretary, even though we had a secretary.

Ted: You volunteered to do all the work, so ...

Ken: I did all the work and everybody let me, yeah. It was just five of us initially, and then we added Frank Cole, who was another buddy from Save The River. Everything's related.

Ted: And he's Murray-

Ken: He's Murray Isle, which is an adjacent island. And very respected man. He's gone now, too, and so he was the first off island board member. And then we started branching out. I think Carol Munro from Bluff might've been either the next or one after that, and Trudy Fidelston from Thousand Island Park, which is on Wellesley Island, was early board member. Allan Newell from Hammond was an early board member.

Ted: Rick Tasue?

Ken: Rick Tasue from Westminster Park, Wellesley, was an early board member. I probably left one or two out. But we quickly got off, in terms of the board, got off Grindstone to give us a better visibility. But the core membership is still Clayton based. I mean we have river-wide membership of 7, 800 people. But Clayton forms a big nucleus, not only of TILT, but of most of the nonprofits, except for very regional ones.

Ted: And they're headquartered there, too.

Ken: And we're headquartered in Clayton, as are most of the other major nonprofits. You have the Antique Boat Museum, you have the Arts Center, you have the Performing Arts Center, the Opera House, and those are the biggies. Save The River. And they're all Clayton based.

***SEGMENT E: Qualities of the TILT Board, plus how and why Ken relinquished the Presidency after 16 years.***

Ken: People ask me, "Well did you have a grand vision?" No, I didn't have any grand vision. When we first started the land trust, we had a board that had a commonality of interest. We were all from the same island even though we might've lived miles apart, and we're in areas that were not accessible to each other because of the terrain. You still had that commonality and bond. So there was a great deal of collegial sentiment, and our treasurer Allison, I mean she's just sit there and say, "Well you just go ahead and you do whatever you want, and we'll approve it. You've done well so far." And that's pretty much the way we operated, although I really tried not to be too autocratic. But founders of organization, even though we had other founders, I guess I was the principal founder, tend to be autocratic and take ownership and possession of an organization, ultimately, frequently, to the detriment of the organization.

Ted: Yes. That's the classic pattern of great entrepreneurs-

Ken: We escaped that.

Ted: Is that there's no-

Ken: We escaped that thanks, well, to my temperament, but more importantly thanks to the board. But that's another story. And so-

Ted: Well maybe that's a good story.

Ken: Well, alright, yeah, after about-

Ted: Sure, sure.

Ken: Yeah, after about 13 years, I mean we grew, basically, like a family. Because I had a premise to sort of ... I don't know whether it's to de-emphasize the corporate nature or whether it was to emphasize the familial nature of the board, but I felt that, and I learned this technique, I guess, elsewhere, helping to build a union, you have to bring people together. And you have to get them together in different environments so that they get to know each other and they get to see the positive aspects of each other's personality.

Ted: And they have a shared experience base.

Ken: And have a shared experience. So what we did from the get go is when we did have meetings, we'd always have it at someone's home. And pretty much we do it to this day. 32 years later. We'd always serve refreshments so that there was some sort of collation at the end, and people could just unwind. And that's evolved into we spread it a little differently. We still meet in people's homes maybe half the time, or better than half the time, and the other part of the time our executive director did a very wise thing. We meet in local restaurant venues during business into the community so that the businesses get to know us and our mission. And people get to know us. Even though we're parts of the community, they still, when you're talking about any type of organization, there's always that standoffishness and alienation.

So meeting in people's homes, having some sort of collation at the end, and a third thing I stressed, which, again, we still do, maybe not frequently enough, is I would provide the board with different experiences, field trips. And some of them were crazy. I mean we'd get small boats and go up a creek in small boats. I mean this is with elderly people that we'd sometimes, maybe not carry in the boat, they wouldn't let you dare ... couldn't dare touch them. They'll get in by themselves. But hay rides, going around the interior of islands and walking tours.

So every easement that I negotiated, and I negotiated a lot of the early ones, in every acquisition we made, we would have field trips to these places with, I would see that lunch was provided. So we'd have these picnic lunches and it's very difficult to get into an argument with somebody over a dinner table. You know? I know they talk about at Thanksgiving the ugly uncle walking in and causing a ruckus, but when you think about it, it's really somebody sat down and had dinner with four or five times, lunch with ... very difficult to ... you try to find compromises. And that's basically how we still run the land trust many presidents later. I think eight presidents later. Everybody's bought into the same concept. Sometimes people wanna operate more "efficiently," but after a couple of efficient meetings people realized they'd lost something. And they go back to the old way of more deliberation, more talk, and more socialization.

Ted: How did you agree or plan your departure from the leadership?

Ken: Oh, so anyway, well I wanted to paint the picture of the collegiality that existed on the board at the trust level among the ... There were no politics. There still

are no politics, and we have a 17-member board now. There's still no politics. There's no factions. No regional factions, no ethnic, no factions at all.

Ted: There easily could be regional factions, could-

Ken: Could, but there aren't.

Ted: It's a natural-

Ken: Yep, yep. There just aren't.

Ted: The environment, the islands ... yeah.

Ken: Well, at the time ... Nothing occurs in a vacuum. We had an executive director who was very competent and very strong, and she and I began to have a few differences here and there in policy. And so she would've been more happy than unhappy if I were no longer president. Because in our model, the president is the CEO, not the executive director. It might be a little unusual, but that's the way it is. The board controls the organization, CEO, the executive director runs it. Alright? And I hope that's the way it stays. You always have to have board check of the employees. Employees will always try to get out from under it, the board should always try to stay on top of it.

So she put together lunch with, I don't think it was the executive committee, it was just three or four board members. And they expressed their concern to me, what I might add was a valid concern, that if something were to happen to me, or for whatever reason I decided I didn't wanna be president, is gonna be one, big, gaping hole. And they're not trying to push me out the door, but they really wanted me to give some consideration to a succession. And I guess, surprisingly, I just totally agreed with them.

Ted: It's unusual. Very unusual.

Ken: Yeah, well, I guess. But I had a lot going on in my life, too. And of course I loved the land trust. But they weren't pushing me out the door. And I had recommended somebody to be president, his name's Bud Ames, very respected. Very competent guy who, I might add, is the only person who served as president of the three biggest organization, land trust, Save The River, and the Antique Boat Museum.

Ted: Served as president of each of those?

Ken: Of all three, right.

Ted: At different times.

Ken: Different times, yeah. So Bud wasn't at the meeting, but he was on the board. He wasn't at this lunch.

Ted: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ken: And I had-

Ted: Who was at the lunch, do you remember? Rhett Foster, maybe?

Ken: No.

Ted: No.

Ken: I know for sure Bud and Rhett weren't, because their names both came up. I brought them both up as-

Ted: As possible-

Ken: As potential president. No, it was Sissy, the executive director who did not have a vote, me, Nancy Breslin, who was chairman of the Nominating Committee, Carol Munro for sure, I can't remember, maybe John Tucker from Cape Vincent. So anyway, in that year, and I don't know what year it was, I approached Bud Ames and asked him if he would consider it. And I told him what the concerns were for the board, and I shared those concerns. And he agreed. So-

I approached Bud, and Bud agreed to serve, and he served for two years.

### ***SEGMENT F: How TILT acquired Potters Beach***

Ken: I wish I had a grand design. But one started to evolve, obviously. When you get two farms on Grindstone you want a third, and a fourth, and a fifth, and so on. So the next really big push, I pushed, and the board pushed, to acquire Potter's Beach.

Ted: Oh, that's a story.

Ken: Yeah, which is just north of Midriver Farm.

Ted: On Grindstone.

Ken: Not contiguous to it, there's another farm in between.

Ted: No. But it's also-

Ken: But it's an old farm.

Ted: Describe the beach.

Ken: Yeah. Well as far as I know, it's the only naturally occurring sand beach on the American side of the river.

Ted: And it's large.

Ken: And it's large. You have to understand these islands are made out of granite for the most part. I think there's some limestone. But there's a granite shield that runs through. But this beach faces northwest, west. And the prevailing winds hit it pretty badly.

Ted: Crescent-

Ken: Coming from the southwest.

Ted: The shape is a crescent. Beautiful crescent.

Ken: It's a crescent shaped beach, and what it does is it's almost a steady run in terms of the wind, from Kingston, which is probably 15 miles away. Or from Lake Ontario, I should say, right into Potter's Beach. So over the eons, it's piled up tons of sand. So you have this very beautiful sandy beach which eccentric glacial boulders here and there, and that came on the market. And I investigated it-

Ted: The entire beach came on the market?

Ken: Well, it was reported to be the entire beach. And I investigated it-

Ted: This is early-

Ken: In probably 1985 or '86. Five.

Ted: Right at the beginning of the-

Ken: Right at the beginning.

Ted: Formation of the land trust.

Ken: And I talked to the realtor, and they said, "Well it's sort of a flukey thing." I said, "What do you mean?" She said, "Well, this woman came in, she listed the beach for sale, but she doesn't own it. She only owns half interest." The original owner, going back, I say original, there were other owners, was a doctor from Canada named Orlando Potter. When he died, he either died without a will or he neglected this farm in his will.

So when that happens, any property becomes the owners of the heirs in proportion to the relationship to the decedent. In other words, I own a piece of



property, I have two kids, I die without a will, they inherit 50% each. But which 50%, nobody knows. It's called an undivided interest. Well, move forward three generations, and we had, I think it was 14 or 15 owners of this property.

Ted: All within ...

Ken: Right. Of a beach, that might be 1,000 feet or more. Crescent shape. No structures-

Ken: A more crescent shape, no structures on it anymore. It had been farmhouses, then there was a back wood lot of 13 acres. Some of it had been parceled off. It was an additional 200 acre wood lot that went right across the island. So I said, "I don't know anything about this. Half interest. Undivided. We're not going to get involved with it." So, I explained it to the Board and they all agreed well prudent not to do anything.

Although again being not solely Grindstone now, but Grindstone-centric, this beach which was getting more and more popular, as boating became more and more popular with the public, became very important as a public venue even though it was privately owned. And it's still, I might add, is privately owned. The land-trusted is a private organization. So about a year goes by and the daughter of this woman, whose name was Ruth George, who had the 50% undivided interest, calls me up.

Her name is Sally Boss, and she lives on Grindstone and Cape Vincent. She introduces herself to me, and I meet with her. She said, "Look, my family, my mother who is elderly, and I and my children, want this beach to be preserved for the public. It's always been used by the Grindstone islanders. Now, off-islanders are using it, but we just want it to remain a public venue. Is there anything you can do?"

So I had a lawyer, I think, look up who owns the rest of it. We found these other people. I think I might have spoken to a couple of them. They wanted to keep it in the public venue as well, and they would be willing to sell their interest. Concomitant with this, one of the cousins, distant, he had 7% interest. He had two siblings, and he bought their interest out. Now, he had 21% interest.

He files a suit against Ruth George and the other cousins-

Ted: Ruth George is the mother of Sally?

Ken: Ruth George is the mother of Sally Boss. She owns 50% interest. So he files a suit against his cousins. It's called a Suit for Partition. He wants the courts to ascribe a value to the beach and do something, but give everybody their fair share of money. Well the courts don't want anything to do with the family squabble. They just don't. Never did.

Ken: So what does the judge do? He decrees, as far as I can recall, that in a year it will be sold at public auction unless the family can come to an agreement, sell it before that. I further check with attorneys and determine that if we buy the 50% interest, we also buy the lawsuit. We buy into the lawsuit, which is a good thing, not a bad thing.

So I went to our board and explained the whole thing as best as I could in lay terms. By this time, I'm halfway to becoming an attorney and I don't remember what we paid, but it was in excess of \$100,000.00 for the half interest, maybe \$130,000.00. We had it in the bank. Or, we started to raise it through our campaign we called A Decade and Beyond. All right, well that gives you the date. It must have been 1995, all right? Because we had been around a decade. 1994/1995.

The wonderful thing about our Board, although they act very prudently, and they're very prudent with the donor money, and certainly we all pay our personal expenses even when we go to Florida for meetings, we pay the expenses of the staff. Although they're very prudent, they do take risks depending upon what the reward would be. There is a risk attendant to this.

I mean, we could get stuck in litigation for years with \$130,000.00 being tied up in court. But anyway, we bought Sally's mother's half interest. In the middle of this the mother dies, further complicating it. But not too badly, because it's held in a trust and immediately went to Sally. As trustee, Sally completed it. I also dealt with Sally's son, Mark. Almost everything we decided was on a handshake basis, very honorable dealings, both of us. I was, too. They were.

Then, within a very short order, we bought the interest of a woman named Janet Ennis, who lives on Grindstone. I forget what her maiden name was, but we bought her interest and her brother's interest, and I think that gave us another 14%.

Ted: Her brother is Rex?

Ken: No, that was her husband.

Ted: Oh, that was her husband.

Ken: Yeah. No, Janice would have been ... Ennis is the maiden name. I don't know, but she was pretty well-known in Watertown, and she would sell popcorn in the arcade. She was sort of like the Popcorn Lady. But I can't recall what her maiden name was. She's a descendant of this Dr. Orlando Potter. Now we had about 64% interest. Now I'm starting to breathe easier.

And then, when it came down just to the final negotiations, we only had the cousin, who had 21, and then had another cousin who was siding with him to try to get more money. So that gave him 24%. By that time then, we must have

owned 76% in fee. The court case is still out there. So I sat down with that fellow, not his cousin, but I sat down with him. The 21% owner. And I basically said, "You know I've had years of negotiating experience." And I basically said, "You do realize that if this goes to court, it's gonna be auctioned off, and there's no telling what it's going to go for. And we'll see who outbids whom. It might go for \$50,000.00. And by the way, if you don't sell us your property, you're going to lose a whopping tax deduction." Because part of this whole construct was based upon buying the property at a value that was lower than the appraised value. So, if we're buying the beach, let's say, for \$300,000, and it's appraised at \$500,000, what that turns into, if it's constructed properly and legally, in line with state and federal law. The people get \$300,000 for the beach. They pay whatever capital gains they have to pay, but since it's value was \$500,000, that \$200,000 difference-

Ted: That they've given up.

Ken: Is viewed by the government as a charitable donation.

Ted: Since it was a charitable organization that acquired it.

Ken: Correct. And why the government does this, in the case of the beach, in the case of a forest, they want public space without direct use of governmental funds.

Ted: Very important concept.

Ken: Very important concept. Similarly, a museum wants to buy a Van Gogh that's worth \$40,000,000, and let's say Ted owns the Van Gogh. Well, he wants some money to put his great-grandchildren through college, and grandchildren through college, but \$40,000,000 is out of the question. He's not a pig. \$20,000,000 is enough. He'll sell his Van Gogh to the museum, and take a \$20,000,000 tax write-off. It's a little more complicated than I'm explaining it, and obviously it has to be above board. Otherwise, somebody goes to jail if they're caught messing around with it.

So anyway, the people who're holding back saw the light, and as much as they would wind up with much less money-

Ted: The risk.

Ken: Under any circumstances if it went to-

Ted: Public auction.

Ken: If it went to public auction. So, they came to their senses, and we signed.

Ted: Where?

Ken: We signed the deed purchasing it.

***SEGMENT G: Zenda Farms was donated to TILT and they hadn't asked for it.***

Ken: At the time, we had a board member ... Again, another early on board member who was added right at the beginning, Susie Smith. Again, recruited from Save the River. She was a Canadian, but her advocacy, her job, was fundraiser. So she put together a fundraising plan for the land trust. I don't know, we had maybe \$25,000, \$50,000 in the bank. Through the generosity of some people who had given us \$5,000 donations, which back in 1985, to me, was all the money in the world. But we had a couple of those experiences. And well people just gratuitously would give us \$5,000 a year. It just absolutely blew my mind that they'd do that.

Well anyway, Susie made two presentations to the board. Again, the board is not flaming liberals. These are pretty conservative people, but they were risk takers. And the one presentation was to raise \$500,000. 00, and the other was to raise a million! And we voted. We discussed it, in terms of what is plausible, what is feasible, and we voted on the million. And we did raise, a variety of the methods, the million dollars. That included outright donations, overtime it included grants. We got a grant from the state of New York to help buy Potter's beach. In the same era, I got a grant. I say I got. I wrote the grant. I offered it. For the purchase of the remainder or the Heineman land.

Ted: Oh right.

Ken: At the foot of Grindstone, and another grant to purchase the Rusho Farm. This all happened within a two, three-year period. So those were all part of the million dollar. The foot of Grindstone was an \$80,000 grant. The Rusho Farm was \$50,000, and the Potter's beach one, I think, was about \$80,000. I think Sissy wrote that one. And so-

Ted: Sissy Dan?

Ken: Sissy Danforth, who was out executive director about eight or ten years. Very effective, lovely, confident woman, person. And so within short order, we added those three big Grindstone parcels.

Ted: Was Zenda Farms was also part of the ... The name of the campaign was Decade and Beyond, correct?

Ken: The name of the part is Decade and Beyond, and Sissy Danforth Beedle mentioned that because Franny was one of the founders for this, Sissy's sister. Sissy's deceased, as hard as it was. She had a quick wit, and you have a timeline

in terms of raising money, and we were getting behind the timeline, so she used to refer to it to me as the Decade and Behind.

But anyway, one of her targets was to get an easement. Again, a protective covenant, on a farm that is immediately to the west of the Clayton village border. It begins at Bartlett Point Road, and then goes west for quite a few hundred yards, a thousand yards. Well, no, maybe half. Well, a third of a mile west. And it was owned by a man who inherited it, named John McFarland. It originally consisted, Zenda Farms, consisted of one, two, three, four, five farms, I think.

Ted: Maybe seven.

Ken: Maybe seven, but-

Ted: And around 700 acres originally-

Gentlemen farmer put it together.

Ken: All right. And so, Carol Munro. Again, a very early board member. And I take out John, the owner of the farm, and his wife Lois Jean Hungeford. I mention that because it's an old Clayton name.

Ted: Lois Jean Hungeford MacFarlane.

Ken: Hungeford MacFarlane. To dinner at a nice restaurant in Chaumont.

Ted: Oh, the Borden thing?

Ken: The Borden thing, right.

Ted: That Borden thing.

Ken: And the purpose of the dinner was to ask John for \$10,000.00 towards the Decade and Beyond, not to get Zenda Farm. Sissy wanted to put easements to protect this wonderful, glorious hayfield which houses a backdrop, ten had as his backdrop. Ten, I think it was dilapidated.

Ted: You're correct.

Ken: Steel Jamesway barns, and then behind that is a hill.

Ted: Which have all gone to-

Ken: Heavily forested.

Ted: You're right, there were ten, and there still are ten.

Ken: Heavily forested wood lot. Mixed.

Ted: Mixed, yeah.

Ken: Mixed hardwood.

Ted: As the backdrop of the-

Ken: As the backdrop. It's just a wall hanging, but it was spooky, because these barns were spread out over quite a few hundred feet, 800 feet maybe? And they were dirty brown, streaked-

Ted: From rust.

Ken: And they're set way back, at the very end of the hayfield. And it was spooky. And it's private property, so you didn't venture in to see what it was. But it was quite clearly an abandoned farm, but it was as bad as rural New York pretty much can get. That's the way it looked. Although rural New York can be very beautiful, it can get pretty bad too. So, she wanted to put an easement on the hayfield to protect the open space, because it is right at the edge of town. I mean, you had reached the end of Zenda Farms, and it says, "Welcome to Clayton."

Well, Carol and I take John and Lois Jean out the dinner. Carol was sitting across from me. And ... No, I guess Carol was sitting next to me. Lois Jean was across from me. And we're knocking down the wine, and feeling pretty good. And I'm trying to build up courage to ask them for ten grand. I mean, once you get the knack of it, you lose the scared part of asking for money. The worst that can happen is people say no. Absolutely worst that can happen is people say no. But quite frequently they say yes, but in any type of negotiation you got to listen very carefully and try to assess what is it the other people want that you're trying to get something from. Two very important things. But most importantly, you've got to listen.

But anyway, I'm leading up to the point, tell them what the land trust is doing. We bought these properties by this beach. We're trying to endow them. We're looking for more property to protect open space, and so on and so forth. Lois Jean says, "You do accept property as donation, don't you?" And I said, "Yes we do, Lois Jean." And easements and so. And so, I go back to John, who has control of the purse strings, and go through my spiel, continue. And Lois Jean interrupts again and says, "But you do accept property, don't you?" And I said, "Yes, we do." And now I'm getting dismissive of her, because I don't know what the heck she's talking about. So John says, "Oh you guys are all the same. You're always after money." And he says, "I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll give you a thousand dollars a year for five years." And I said, "Well, that's very generous. Thank you. Would you consider giving us \$2,000 a year for five years?" "You fundraisers are all the same. You always ask for too much money! No, no, no. That's what I give

in any fund drive. I give \$1,0000 a year for five years." I said, "Well, John that's very generous, and thank you very much." And I feel somewhat of a failure. I'm after \$10,000 up front. So \$5,000 over five years is nothing to sneeze at.

So there's a pause, pour out more wine. And he says, "Well, you know, since he's been after us to give you the farm," Which he wasn't. She was after an easement, but easement are so obscure to people, they don't understand the difference. And he says, "Well, I might as well give you the damn farm." And that's what Lois Jean was pointing toward, because she had primed the pump. She wanted the land trust to own the farm. Well-

Ted: She had been, prior to the dinner-

Ken: Yeah-

Ted: Pushing John to-

Ken: Pushing John heavily, and always did. And subsequently did as well.

Ted: She was a Clayton ... She was born and raised-

Ken: Clayton. She knew what she was doing. Well, so did he.

Ted: Yeah, yeah.

Ken: Well, anyway-

Ted: But this was-

Ken: One might think I would jump for joy and do a tap dance on the table, but I didn't. My heart sank, almost hit the granite underneath the floor. Reason being, he's giving us this farm. He's giving us ten derelict, falling down barns. I already had the experience of buying a farm with a barn. And a beautiful barn.

Ted: On Grindstone?

Ken: On Grindstone, on the Rusho Farm. And when I went to inspect it, it had one wall had imploded. Frost had just kicked it in. It was a pile of rubble. And I said, "This damn way we're gonna get the money to fix this. Damn things gotta come down." And Sissy was going through a phase, the executive director at that time, that we shouldn't own any buildings. So, she got me to agree. I was president. To sell the barn-

Ted: This is the one on Grind-

Ken: On Grindstone. Because I was afraid of the liability. And if the barn fell in, people would say, "You let the barn fell in. It's historic. And if you didn't fix it up,

well what are you doing? Blah, blah, blah, blah." So obviously it was a lose, lose situation, so I agree to sell the barn. Well, P.S., fast-forward 25 years. The barn's still there. Pile of rubble is still there, hasn't moved an inch. Well, anyway, I said, "Now I'm going to get ten of these things? And I just said, "I don't know how I'm gonna go back to the board." This is all going through my mind. And I'm sure Carol's too. How are we gonna go back to the board. We come in and ask them for \$10,000. We get \$5,000, and a liability of a half a million.

So then, he says, "Yeah, and you can sell off the waterfront." And I drew back and said, "Waterfront? This waterfront?" He says, "Yeah, it's pretty much the whole hill. I don't know. There must be 800, 900 feet of waterfront. I said, "John, that's worth about a million bucks." And he says, "Yeah, that's what I figure." So, I just said to myself, "Oh, shit. That's a home run. That the brass ring on the merry go round.

So, it took about two years to consummate the deal. And indeed, we did sell off the waterfront, but not for a million, because we put restrictive covenants on it, which limited development. And we also put a-

Ted: So it couldn't be subdivided up into 100 foot lots?

Ken: It could be subdivided, but into a hundred.

Ted: Four?

Ken: Look, we're very mindful we've taken a lot of acreage off the tax rolls. Now granted, it's agri-

Ted: The land trust, through these-

Ken: Land trust. Granted, it's-

Ted: When you own it.

Ken: Yeah, it's ag-creage, so in terms of tax raising ability, it's nil. But, to take that much waterfront off has a visible impact, so we couldn't in good conscience do that. So, we sold it subject to conservation easements. I think we got about \$500,000 for it, a little less. And immediately thereafter we started ... I don't want to say restoring the buildings, but we started rehabbing them, and had them painted. And it was like night and day. It was spectacular.

Ted: The before and after pictures are spectacular.

Ken: The before and after. They are startling. So now, today, we have the original farm where the buildings are, with the hill as a backdrop. That's protected. A lot of the waterfront is protected from overdevelopment. And we were able,



through the generosity of a number of people, to buy three of the farms of the original, that I know of. Three of the original six farms.

Ken: And it's quite a spectacular vista, leaving Clayton or entering Clayton from Cape Vincent, because you have all this wonderful hayfield-

Ted: 400 acre.

Ken: Or whatever you call it, pasture.

Ted: 400 acres now.

Ken: Yeah, all told. 400 plus acres. Yeah. And we put in, with grants, a walking trail. We've, again not restored, but fixed up the barns, so that they're stable. They're in good shape. Through-

Ted: Repainted.

Ken: Repainted. Through generosity of the Kittles, some of it's been electrified. A lot of people participated in terms of generosity. We are trying to make the farm self-sufficient. We have a farm manager who, I think, is still full-time. And then we had a part-time person that does the grooming. And then we lease a part of the land to a local farmer.

Ted: Local farmer.

Ken: Local farmer. And then we also sell the hay. We're partnering with Coyote Moon Vineyards to put in an acre of grapes, way in the back on the west side of the farm, so it doesn't dis spoil the vista of the hayfield. And so, we're going to have Zenda Farm Red Wine in conjunction with Coyote Moon. And then we're partnering with Waldruff Organic Farm-

Ted: From LaFargeville.

Ken: From LaFargeville. To put in an aged cheddar. Now, we're not doing the milking or the cheese-making, but we're using the creamery, which is one of the ten barns that's all ceramic tile inside. And we're using, in a controlled environment, one of the larger rooms ... It's not a big building, but it'll hold a lot of cheese ... To age cheese. So we're gonna have a Zenda Farm Aged Cheddar. And then ultimately down the road, we will probably have maple syrup and-

Ted: Honey.

Ken: Honey. And who know? Maybe someday make mead of whatever. I don't know. But all of this will be done, I would think, with an educational component, where we're going to ... Well the farm is open to the public. Where people will come in and be able to see the cheese process, honey making, maybe someday

... I mean, maple trees obviously have to get old, but maple sugaring and the vineyard, viticulture. Yeah. And then money from the sale of these things, will help provide funds to run the farm. Which are in addition to the endowment we will be receiving from a generous family in Clayton who is bequeathing a large sum of money for the purpose of maintaining this farm for the public good.

***SEGMENT H: Challenges and responsibilities of TILT's stewardship of land it owns and conservation easements it holds (plus insights into TILT's support of migrating birds).***

Ken: There's a finite amount of capacity, which is a major thing, because every parcel we take, every acre we take carries with it the incombustible responsibility for the stewardship of it, and some of the stewardship can be very difficult. For example, we acquired a number of parcels, including Zenda Farms, and the Rusho Farm on Grindstone. Midriver Farm. These purposes primarily of these preserves now are for migratory song birds that breed in grasslands. And apparently the United States is going through a phase where the largest habitat type that's disappearing, I guess, is grasslands and used to be wetlands, with so many of them gone now, it's grasslands that are disappearing, either through development, as I mentioned before in Virginia, with these mega mansions on these little lots or through just incursion by forests and plant succession. You get junipers coming in first, then willow.

Ted: The loss of the small family farm.

Ken: So it's very important, a lot of these birds migrate to Central and South America, some to Florida, like I do.

Ken: These birds fly back and they have to have a place to nest, some adapt, but they only nest in grassland. So when we talk about stewardship and responsibility, these fields have to be mowed periodically. I guess the rule of thumb is every three years they have to be cut back and that implies you have to have a worker, implies you have to have a tractor, implies you have to have a bush hog.

Now in a perfect world, the hay would be used and baled and used to feed animals and so on, but we don't have that many animals on grindstone anymore, or for that matter, the family farms are decreasing in the north country. But we're trying to keep up with the habitat of the grasslands.

So that's just one example of the type of maintenance and stewardship that is required. Of course, if you have a property right as we discussed earlier, known as a conservation easement, you have to protect that, and that means physical inspection.

Ted: The land trust has to ...

Ken: Yes, when I say we, the land trust. Physical inspection of the property at least annually, including our own properties, but properties where we just have an interest like easement properties, we have had people violating the clauses of the land within the easement. Frequently it's accidental, sometimes it's willful. But sometimes people will cut down trees that are larger than they're permitted to cut down, because they want what they think is a better view, rather than trimming it or they'll cut the tree down.

In other cases, they'll build prohibited structures on the waterfront. Case in point, somebody built a pump house and there was no necessity for him to put the pump house where he put it, other than he just wanted it where he put it. He could have put it in or adjacent to the boathouse, which is already there and it wouldn't be a problem, but it just cuts up the shoreline.

So we do have violations, they have to be policed and the ultimate thing is you get involved in a lawsuit. We belong to an umbrella organization called the Land Trust Alliance, and they provide an insurance program in which we enroll, which helps cover the cost of some of the stuff.

But anyway, we will have-

Ted: Here, today, no lawsuits, correct?

Ken: There have been no actions filed at all, there have been complaints, but no actions. We've been threatening here and there, but no, thank goodness, no.

***SEGMENT I: Public access to TILT's lands, the role of trails, and the origin of the Rivergate Trail.***

Ken: So there will always be the stewardship aspect of it, but one of the main purposes of the land trust as it was constructed was to provide public access. Not so much, I guess you can encompass it in the word recreation, but public access. We do have a lot of trails and some of them are pretty harsh.

So we have a number of trails throughout the North Country, as far away as, well, I guess past Chippewa Bay there are a couple, and then there's one ... I don't think there's anything in Cape Vincent, but right at the western border of Clayton, there's a small walking trail with access to the waterfront by pedestrian ... Foster Blake Woods, and that has a small parking area. And then there's Otter Creek Trail.

One of the projects we had, which was primarily that of our former executive director, Susie Danforth, we were able to buy, well, we were going through an era in the 1980s when the railroads, small railroads were divesting themselves of all the railroad lines. They had sold off the rolling stock and the trains, then they sold off the ties, which were used in landscaping, and then they sold off the

rails for scrap and so on. And they were left with these miles and miles, thousands of miles of straight as an arrow land going through spectacular areas, through the Adirondacks, and put these up for sale. And we came across a mimeograph sheet of all these pieces of property, a thousand feet of railroad line, the Adirondacks, for I don't know, \$5,000. It's unbelievable, they were 100 feet wide, but a thousand feet long or two thousand feet long.

So anyway, we started to reconstruct part of the Rome, Ogdensburg and Watertown, which came off to New York Central. And we ultimately put together, I think, 17 miles of this, at least. Some of which we can't use, it's unusable because beaver dams and just nature taking over. But pretty much from the town of Clayton, Black Creek Road to Redwood.

And most recently, what we're trying to do now with the trail, and this is all part of what I was saying before, as you preserved all the land that's sort of preservable, you have to steward it. But then you have a responsibility and it's also one of the missions of the land trust is to outreach to the public to bring them into open space and let them appreciate nature and in the raw, if you will.

But the most recent one is we're trying to bring this River Gate trail, Rome, Watertown and Ogdensburg, bring that right into the village of Clayton to hook it up to the Riverwalk, which is a village project that goes around Clayton, which is a peninsula. And where you'll be able to start at one end of Clayton and walk almost 3/4 away around the peninsula on the waterfront.

Some of it I think is going to be cantilevered out actually, over the water, and then coming back south, that'll connect with the railroad line.

Ted: From the village to LaFargeville is seven miles.

Ken: The other project, trail wise, is we have a wonderful trail at Otter Creek, which is I guess an interesting story. One of those is on a creek on Alexandria Bay, in the town of Alexandria, and then in the village and Otter Creek is one of the feeders into the St. Lawrence River. And a number of years ago, a family who are supporters of the land trust, two families, Butts and Kiernan, gave us a small island in this Creek, behind the supermarket, or just actually it's to the east of the supermarket. And then ultimately, they gave us another island and a little piece of the mainland.

And then all of a sudden, as I said, some people think you had a grand design. Well, if somebody gives us a little island that's not part necessarily of a grand design, but all of a sudden we have another island and wooded, and then we have a piece of the mainland. Now you say, well, what can we do with this?

Next thing you know, the abandoned scrubland farm adjacent to that comes up for sale, so we buy that, so now we have quite a few acres that runs along this creek bed with two islands. And that starts to be something and we

conceptualized under our current executive director, Jake Tibbles, the idea of putting in preserve and walking trails at Otter Creek. So we were able to get a grant to build an observation platform, a parking lot, and then we have one portion that's handicapped accessible there. We partnered with the Thousand Islands Art Center, craft school, and Home of the Hand Weeding Museum to build a dry stone wall as a whimsy, if you will, which is very beautiful. That's there, the stone being donated by local quarry, Mike Fitzsimmons, and trucked in a lot of people to doing this stuff.

I had almost no involvement in this one, other than perhaps maybe the first donation perhaps, but that trail, it goes out along the creek.

***SEGMENT J: The unique Grindstone Island Trail that links two State Parks.***

Ted: What about the very special trail, always has impressed me is the one between the two state parks? It links two state parks on Grindstone across land trust property.

Ken: That's a couple of interesting stories that are encompassed in the one, of course, this is near where I live on the foot of Grindstone Island and I think I mentioned earlier that after the state of New York had purchased Niagara Falls, which I think was the first state park, they purchased Canoe Picnic Point state park, which was a peninsula.

Ted: And they were pioneering a whole process of the concept of state parks by the state of New York.

Ken: Canoe Point primarily is this peninsula on the southeast corner. I'm sorry, northeast corner of Grindstone Island, right on the Canadian border. I don't know how many acres it is, it might be, five, eight, 10 acres, something like that. But in buying that, they bought a sliver of land, which is mostly wetland that connected with the next point south, which is called Picnic Point and in the era of 1900 or so, they put gazebos on both points. One was on Canoe, which was a little bit obscured from the photos I've seen, but the one on Picnic is pretty prominent.

Ted: It's up on a small bluff.

Ken: The state over the years, maintained these as two separate sites, because they couldn't get from one to the other. They didn't own any dry land, they only owned the wetland that connected the two. So when the land trust came along in 1995 or so, that's the decade and beyond project, one of the things we purchased, primarily with a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife

Foundation was the farm, the Delaney farm that I mentioned earlier, that abutted this property.

I wrote that grant myself. Sissy wrote some of the grants but this one I wrote.

I said what we wanted to do is to put in a nature trail connecting Canoe Point and Picnic Point, so that people could walk from one to the other, and have a self-guided nature trail. And I said that we would also commit to building the gazebo.

Ted: Rebuilding.

Ken: It was gone, rebuilding the gazebo at Picnic Point. Lo and behold, we get the grant for \$85,000 to buy the land, and over the next ... it takes a long time to work this stuff out, but over the next couple years, we hired a fellow who ultimately became our executive director, Aaron Vogel, out of SUNY ESF, for a summer, to come up and design the nature trail. And part of the nature trail, because of the nature of the land, you had to cross these wetlands, he designed two ... well, actually, one environmentally safe bridge. I don't know, environmentally friendly screws that were screwed in.

And the State of New York helped us build this, we provided the materials, and the New York State Correctional Facility at Cape Vincent provided us with their trustees. And they sent the trustees over in a state boat, every day for three weeks, and I went up every day and worked with them, as did Aaron.

Ted: They helped build the trail.

Ken: They cut the trail, it was jungle.

Ted: Honeysuckle.

Ken: Overgrown, you've never been in overgrown farmland, let me tell you. 30, 40 years after the farmer leaves, it's impenetrable because the trees that come in are not trees, they're very densely populated shrubs. And you just can't get through that stuff. So we cut this trail, the convicts and under the supervision of the guard, and we cut the trail through from Canoe to Picnic and the bridges were beautiful. We have wood left over, so Aaron designed another loop, which we call the Bad Root Trail or something, Bear Root Trail, it's aptly named because you have to go over these roots, it's really a nightmare to walk through, but there's another bridge in there that goes over the wetland. And it's pretty neat and it's used by hundreds and hundreds of people.

But then that spun off the gazebo project and what Sissy, and Aaron was Sissy's assistant by this time, what Sissy did is she put together a group of donors. I was one of them, but she focused primarily on the fishing guides, which is a whole other story. We had a history of the river of having these ... shore dinners and

fishing guides, and it's a whole little micro economy. A lot of them are father, son, grandson fishing guides.

Over the years, the guides would have these shore dinners that make a catch and then they'd come and have this heart attack causing shore dinner, where they start with eight or 10 pounds of salt pork, cook it in an outdoor grill and then they'd for an appetizer, they take the drippings or the crispy salt pork and put it on a piece of white bread and that was your appetizer. And then they dip the fish in flour or something, throw that in, then they ended it off with French toast cooked in the same fat. Maple syrup and a shot of bourbon. They still do this, this was a short dinner, but you got to be careful, you can't eat too many of them.

What happened over the years, they would have different guide docks in the area, now remember, population density changed dramatically from the '60s on. And I don't know the real reasons for it. Just general affluence in society, more people could afford boats, but the population density sort of moved into the Thousand Island area and the property became more valuable. And what would happen to these so-called guide docks is the guide who actually owned the dock, but other guides used the dock, would die, and the other guides will say that's our dock and the widow or whomever the heir would say, no, it isn't. It's my dock, I have the deed and I'm selling it for a house site. So all the guide docks, at least three of them at Grindstone disappeared that way, at least three of them.

They had no place else, very few places to have these shore dinners. So the industry was starting to hurt a little, and what Sissy did, one of the really good things she did, she cut a deal with the state. We always got along well with the state parks. And I think Mike Geiss might have been ... but who followed-

Ted: Kevin Kieff.

Ken: Kevin Kieff, they were both outstanding, and we worked with them hand in glove, these guys. They were just wonderful, and we cut a deal with them, we provide the funds for the gazebo, which was not cheap. We provide the funds for the material, the architect who worked on it, I can't recall his name, he's retired, he was a state employee. He found the original design for the original gazebo and kept to it as faithfully as he could. And they found the original pins where it was anchored in and it was within three feet of the original gazebo. And so we built the gazebo and the brilliant thing that Sissy did is, she cut a deal with the state to just spruce up the park, Picnic, and they put in bathrooms, self-composting toilets, and they put in new floating docks, one portion of which was reserved exclusively for the fishing guides, from 11:00 to Ken:00, which I thought was brilliant. So the guides have someplace to go, and I don't know how many people know the story anymore, and then they also put in new places where they could grill, new fireplaces and so on. And of course with the new docks, and it was really a neat package when it was all done.

Ted: A brilliant idea. You and I saw some wild Columbine out there with Bob Quinn.

Ken: Beautiful wildlife, which is the red and yellow.

Ted: First week of June.

Ken: So that was a really terrific private-public partnership and knock wood, it's absolutely problem-free. Maintenance can be a problem, we're trying to stay ahead of that curve.

And after we had the ice storm, but before that, there was the microburst. What was the ice storm?

Ted: In 1998. Mary's brother was still in town.

Ken: The ice storm trimmed all the trees, which made it difficult navigating at night, because all the islands, if you get used to navigating at night, visually, you go by the shape of the island. The shapes of the islands changed. So there's black and black, and black, black. And when your eyes are good, you can see the difference. It's difficult at night because you say it doesn't look like Maple Island, because it used to just be a perfect crescent.

And then we have a brochure, a self-guided brochure, this is a whatever tree and this is another tree and as you go down this nature trail, it wanders from state land back to Tilt land, back to state land. You can see the old barbed-wire fence that lasts for a century where the farm used to fence it off to keep the cows off. You'd never think cows lived on this piece of property, because we've let that particular part of the farm, we don't maintain that as grassland, this farm, the Delaney farm, we maintain it as a successional shrubland.

And the only way you can keep it successional is periodically we go in under a plan, management plan, and cut back 15, 20, 30 acres of it with a bush hog. So that we cut back the 15, 20 foot understory trees, and then let the grass come up and the pioneers come into junipers and stuff like that. Because that attracts a whole different, other set of migratory birds.

***SEGMENT K: Crafty sleuthing creates protection for 25 little islands and helps return three others to their proper owner, the State of New York.***

Ken: But the other story I wanted to tell you that's attendant to the Canoe Point, Picnic Point State Park, the Thousand Islands I guess is an archipelago and technically it has all these little granite rock outcroppings from a point which becomes very convenient when your boat hits it, to an island-like point and that's 17 miles long and supports, I don't know, maybe a 100-round people with dairy farms and whatnot.



And there are many smaller islands that are very beautiful, which is what makes the Thousand Islands beautiful. Some of them have trees, some don't, but there are many of them that might be just an acre, half acre, just lovely. Unfortunately, some of them have fallen to developers' uses and people have put cottages on these basically bare rocks. And as I always said, one of them is quaint, but three are tacky.

So one of the things I tried to do as president of the land trust was try to prevent construction on inappropriate sized pieces of property. I go back and forth by boat all the time, of course I live on an island, and that's how you go visit people to go out to dinner, you go out by boat and so on. So you leave my place and you just go about a half a mile and turn left and run up the foot of Grindstone and that's where these state parks are, as well as some private homes. And there are three little islands that are ... they almost don't even look like islands, they're so close to Grindstone property, but heavily treed, pines, oaks, I'm sure they were clear-cut in 1900, but this is 118 years later, so the trees might be 100 years old.

And I go by them one day and I notice that there are signs that like a dock. So the water is pretty open there, by that I mean it's deep, so I take my boat over and my vision was pretty good at that time. I noticed it says posted, no trespassing and there's a dock on each one of these islands. I said, that doesn't make sense, it looks like part of Picnic Point, how can that be?

So I took pictures of it and when you post something, you're supposed to put the name of the owner.

Ted: Posted as in the no hunting-

Ken: Yeah, the no hunting sign, no trespassing. So I look up the owner and some engineering company, well, I try to track down who owns the engineering company and it's a local lawyer in town and who's no longer in practice. He's retired. I said this just doesn't make sense, because to me, it's state land, it's my land, because it's so close to Picnic Point.

So about that time, which is yet another story, we had this project, we being the land trust, of trying to protect a lot of these rocks, islands and shawls. And my next-door neighbor who was just going to enter law school or was in law school, he did some research at the county seat in Watertown, and he comes across this old chart from 1890. And what the chart was, it was a map of Grindstone Island done by a surveyor named Duke Otter, which showed all the farms and who owned them and so on.

But what it also did is it numbered every single island that was within close proximity to Grindstone, from one up to 80-something. So what I found was in 1880, two of these islands were on this chart, the third one wasn't. But I still felt they belonged to the state of New York. So I was working in the city at that time

and I'd have to go frequently to Albany to represent the university and I'd steal a half-day or whatever and go over to the Department of ... I think it's Office of General Services, which is the state agency that manages the property that state owns.

And I bring the copies, a narrative of these islands and so on, proximity to Picnic Point State Park. And I talked to the administrator in charge and said, I think this is clean state land, because I checked the deeds out, the deed he had wasn't a warranty deed. A warranty deed is ... it's a deed that guarantees ownership of the property. When you give a warranty deed to somebody, you're promising them that you have a right to this property, you do own the property and I warrant that this is true and it's actionable. If it isn't, you can come back and bite the guy, sue him.

Another type of deed is a quitclaim deed, which says quit ... type of deed is a quit claim deed, which says quit claim, Q-U-I-T C-L-A-I-M. A quit claim deed is basically it says I give to you any interest I have in this parcel of land, if I have any interest at all. So you're giving away nothing, but it's still a deed, and it's valid until somebody else says it's not.

So this engineering company owned by the attorney was quit claimed to the attorney or vice versa. In any case, he quit claimed it to himself, which you can't do, but he set up a dummy. So I go through this with the administrator, OGS, and he says, "Okay, well, let me look into it." A year goes by. I'm back up in Albany again, doing lobbying or whatever it was. I meet with him again. "Remember me?" Well, he doesn't want to see me. He says, "You know, Ken, let me show you the problems I have."

He takes out a big map, and he spreads out this big map of Oswego Harbor. He has a projector, and he has all these old surveys from 1840, 1830, whatever. He shows me the differences over the years, what's happened in Oswego Harbor. If you know anything about state law, New York State owns most of the river bottoms and fresh water bottoms, and you can't take land from the state. It goes back to what's called English Common Law, which is what our legal system, for the most part, is derived from. There's no such thing as adverse possession against the crown. You can't claim crown lands. In this case, the state is the crown. You can't claim lands.

"So look what's happened in Oswego. There are condos here. There's houses here. There's storefronts here. This is all on state land, and we've got to sue these guys. Now, obviously, we're not going to take the land back and tear the condos down. They've got to pay us. So these are my problems." I said, "What do I do? I don't want this guy getting away with claiming my land, even though it's three small islands."

Ted:

Mine in the sense that it's ...

Ken: Right.

Ted: ... public land.

Ken: Mine, public. Right. Well, I take that view.

Ted: Yeah, I agree.

Ken: He says, "Well, what you really want to do is you want to screw up everybody." He says, "You want to find a descendant of Elijah Camp and get him to donate anything he might have inherited from his ancestor, Elijah Camp." Well, who's Elijah Camp? After the Revolutionary War ended and ultimately the treaty was signed in 1820 or something, you had the War of 1812 in between, well, the border was finally set. The government, as you might guess, has to protect its borders, which is a big thing now they're talking about. They tried to encourage settlement. So they encouraged settlement by doing these big, cheap land sales, usually to politically favored people. Elijah Camp, I think, was a colonel in Sackets Harbor Militia, and he bought all the islands.

Ted: All the islands.

Ken: All the islands, basically from Grindstone down to Hammond, and then he started selling them off. Where the hell am I going to find a descendant of this guy? I mentioned it to the guy who worked for us at that time. His name was Bill Munro. He was really the first executive director.

So I mentioned this to him, because I worked very closely with the executive directors. He goes to a cocktail party. This is a bizarre story. He goes to a cocktail party at Murray Isle. Why he brings it up, I don't know, but he says, "Ken has this crazy idea. He's trying to find a descendant of Elijah Camp, who bought all the islands in 1823 or whenever it was." He goes, "He's trying to get some islands back from somebody he thinks stole them, basically, from the state of New York."

There was a woman who is an attorney there, Daphne Miller, and she was a principal law clerk for a pretty renowned judge in Nassau County. She says, "I have a winter home in Sanibel Island, and there's an Elijah Camp trail at Ding Darling Federal Preserve." So she tells this to Bill. Bill tells this to me. I said, "That's an impossibility."

I'm at work, by the way, in New York City, working for the city university, but I had a loose leash, and so I could pretty much do anything I wanted. So I call up Ding Darling Federal Wildlife Preserve, very famous on Sanibel Island. I identified who I was, and I said, "I'm looking. Do you have an Elijah Camp Trail?" "No, we don't." I said, "Oh, I was told you did by a resident." "There is a state park here, so they might have one. Check with them." So I checked with whatever state park it is. "Oh, yes, we have an Elijah Camp trail. It's named after

Mr. Camp, who is one of our benefactors." I said, "Is he still alive?" She said, "Yes, I think so. He's elderly, and I haven't seen him in a couple of years, but I think he's still alive." "His name is Elijah Camp?" "Oh, yes. We named a trail after him."

Now I have a name and I have a place. Again, in the era of cellphones and all this other miracle stuff, you have to think back. This is I don't know what year now, but it's way-

Ted: It's before I got to the lake.

Ken: Yeah. It had to have been after '85 ...

Ted: And before 90.

Ken: ... and before '93, because that's when I worked for the university. So I figure it was about '88. I'm watching television that night. This does all tie up. United States Post Office ... Now it's postal service ... had just created something called express mail. They had an ad on TV where they had Zeus throwing a lightning bolt. Kaboom, with the power of modern whatever, express mail it today and get it tomorrow. Only \$10.30. Whatever it was. \$9.20. So I figured why not?

I write out this address. Mr. Elijah Camp, Sanibel Island. I look up the zip code. 30176, whatever it is. I'm Kenneth , and I'm president of the conservation organization, blah, blah, blah, blah. Blah, blah, blah, blah. We have this guy who stole these islands from us, and da da da da da. I was wondering if you would consider, if you are a descendant of Elijah Camp, donating to us any interest you may have ... May have, might have ... inherited from your ancestor. I sent it express mail, not knowing where the hell it was going to end. I had once read in Believe It or Not, Ripley, about the post office department that somebody had written, sent an envelope, a letter, a fan letter, to Dinah Shore, who was a famous actress. He wrote it Dinosaur on the envelope, and they delivered it to Dinah Shore. So I figure, well, geez, if that can work, why wouldn't this?

Anyway, a week or two later, I get a letter, handwritten, very shaky, from Elijah Camp. "Yes, I am the direct descendant of Elijah Camp, and I am a conservationist. They did name a trail after me, and I think it's wonderful what you're trying to do. I'll sign anything you want me to sign. Here's a check for \$100." \$100. A lot of money in '85, '86, somewhere in there. So I get my nephew, who is in law school, Matt , and Will, who is thinking of law school, and we, using this whole survey map of Grindstone, and we start looking at all the islands. Then we'd look at the adjacent property and see if they were deeded to anybody. Where they weren't, we quit claimed maybe a half dozen or more islands around Grindstone. Then we finished the Town of Clayton. We went into Alexandria, and then we went to Hammond. So we picked up 20 or 30 islands doing this.

Mr. Camp ultimately gave us two quit claim deeds, which have held up, in most cases. There was one case where somebody had an older deed than ours, and it caused a ruckus. All we did was quit claim our interest over to that person. That ended that, sort of. So we picked up these 30 or 40 islands, but still, there's the outstanding story of the three islands that are attended to the state. Now, this is an older claim than we would have, because if it's a quit claim, you're claiming anything you might own. The older claim usually takes precedent. If you have a warranty, it's different, but if it's a quit claim, it's the older claim that takes precedent, usually.

I'm not at the point of despair, but I just don't know what to do. I go to a land trust alliance conference at New Paltz, and there was a deputy commissioner, named Ivan Vamos. It's amazing I can remember these names. I grabbed him. He gave the lecture. At the end of the lecture, I grabbed him, and I went through this whole tale of woe. He says, "Send me the material." I figured that's another one that's going to get shuffled, so I sent it to him. Lo and behold, about two months later, I go to town. I pick up the Watertown Times.

There, right across the front page, it's Sunday paper, the state of New York sues local attorney to recover property illegally seized. So I immediately that Monday get on the phone with the deputy attorney general who is handling the case and said, "Listen. I have a file on this. Let me turn it over to you." So he took that file, and they were able to show with two of the islands ... It was two of the islands weren't islands.

Ted: They were not islands.

Ken: They were not islands when the state bought the land, so they were not numbered when the state bought the land in 1880, 1890, so that meant they were part of the mainland. But what's happened in between?

Ted: Part of the Grindstone.

Ken: Rivers come up, made them islands. The river was lower then.

Ted: Seaway.

Ken: On average. The seaway, the dam. So that was a slam dunk. They were part of the original purchase. What did he do about the third one, which was an identified island? It was number 33 or what. I don't know. Back 1915 or so, state parks and DEC were the same agency. They were split apart into two different agencies, parks and recreation and whatever, and then DEC. Some of the files went there, some of the files went here.

There's a retired worker who somehow gets a hold of the Watertown Times article, which must have been reprinted in the Syracuse paper. Says, "Hmm. I've seen that file on Canoe and Picnic Point. We have that somewhere in my office."

He goes back to his old office, finds the original docs. Sure enough, there's the bill of sale for island number 33. They had bought it independently. So the lawyer lost the case. He argued adverse possession. Of course, you can't have adverse possession against the crown, so that was it. So the state got the three, and they immediately-

They immediately took down the docks, the state did. So you had these ... Someday when you go by it, you'll see that there's these three separate islands that look like, but one is very distinctly an island, and it is buildable, I think. So they're preserved, very beautiful little places where people just pull up and walk around or whatever.

***SEGMENT L: The Eagle Wings Islands and Shoals acquired and protected by TILT.***

Ken: We bought a number of islands throughout the years. One grouping of which was the Eagle Wings outside of Clayton. They're just a group of rocks.

Ted: Near Calumet, Calumet Island.

Ken: Behind Calumet. Well, behind. I mean north of. They're important. Of course, they were a major habitat for common tern, a type of bird that was in terrific decline for loss of habitat or quality habitat. Owls love baby terns, so if they're near any large wooded area, the owls will come over and eat them. Or once in a while, a mink will get out and just wipe out the whole colony.

How we bought that group of islands, I was tipped off by a friendly attorney that they were coming up for a tax sale as a consequence of a bad divorce. I guess all divorces are bad, but this one was worse than most. I spoke to another attorney, who said, "Why don't you just buy them?" I said, "I didn't know you still could." She said, "Oh, yeah. If you buy it before the sale, you can." So I got the board to authorize her to try to negotiate the purchase. In the meantime, one of our board members at the time, Alan Newell, who was also not only a volunteer board member, he used to do a lot of work researching ownership of these islands and stuff like this. He went down to the county seat. When they auction off property on the steps, they actually auction off property. Item number one, lot so and so and so and so. Opening bid, \$500. \$500, \$ 600, sold. Gone. So he went down I think with the authority to spend up to \$20,000 to buy these five or six islands and gave up his day of whatever he was doing.

I'm waiting. I'm working. He calls me up and he said, "They pulled the sale, because it wasn't advertised properly." Before you sell somebody's property rights away, you have to advertise it and follow A, B, C, D, E. Well, they didn't do it properly. In the meantime, that gave our attorney ... I think she was Marcy Dembs, who lived on Wellesley ... the opportunity to negotiate with the owner. I

think the judgment was for \$8000 or \$7,000 in the divorce. I think we offered them nine. She said, "Look, this is going to cover your costs. It's going to cover the judgment, and you'll walk away with 1,000 bucks." He said, "Okay." But that caused another problem. The other problem was there was a guy who wanted a marina who wanted to buy them.

This is all rumor. I didn't know this firsthand. He wanted to put floating docks on them so he could put up houseboats and stuff like that, which is exactly what we didn't want to happen. Now it's a preserve for common term. I think we do let a kid ... We give a kid the right to set up a duck blind as long as he takes it down, who's been doing it for years.

Ted: Good one. Good one. All good. Good stories.

Ken: In another one instance that didn't work out too well, although it did now. Here again, time wounds all heals. Heals all wounds, obviously. We had quit claimed five islands in the town of Hammond, and the islands belonged to the father of one of our board members. I took him out to breakfast and said, "Bob, we did this out of all innocence. We didn't know you owned them. We apologize. We'll do anything you want. If you want to give us your interest in the islands and take it as a charitable donation, it you want to put an easement, because I'm after protecting the islands. If you want to put an easement on the island, you put an easement on, you can take a charitable donation, or we will quit claim our interest to you, and that will just clear it up." So he said, "Well, I want your interest quit claimed to me." So that's what we did, but he really stopped talking to me for about 10 years.

But we made him whole, but boy, did he get angry. But he's okay now.

***SEGMENT M: The story behind the creation of TILT's Crooked Creek Preserve (now totaling over 2000 acres).***

Ted: Crooked Creek, which is what? Over 1,000 acres now that they preserved, but there must be countless stories of how that got going, and how they got a trail there.

Ken: Yeah. How that came about, my recollection is, if I've got it straight, we were buying Potters Beach, and we had a late fall meeting. I think we had it at the Pier House. We only had about 10 or 11 board members, but everybody showed up. It's when we bought Potters and all this other stuff.

Ted: You had a quorum.

Ken: Yeah. Oh, everybody was there.

Ted: Oh, everybody was there.

Ken: Yeah. We always have quorums, but everybody was there. Kate Newell, who was the spouse of one of the board members, said, "You're buying all this stuff on Grindstone up river. You really ought to take a look at stuff down river." I said, "Such as what?" She said, "Crooked Creek is a parcel for sale." I think that's how that got started.

Not that year, but ultimately, I made contact with the people at Crooked Creek. They were floating idea in the paper that the parcel they had, which let me tell you what it is. A heavily wooded parcel, maybe 600 acres, on a creek that's crooked. It's not only crooked, it's navigable, and it's spectacular, because it has granite rock outcroppings. It has it all. It's just spectacular, just to canoe up and kayak it, even motor up it. It's just a spectacular creek. Two people owned it, two cousins. They were floating the idea about the ideal place for a prison, because they were looking for a prison in St. Laurence County. Sissy and I called them up, and I had to write out a check for \$5,000 deposit.

Ted: Did you have the money in the bank?

Ken: Yeah. No, by this time, we were fortunate we've never been in dire straits. But this is just the way ideal. You show a good faith effort in terms of deposit. We went down. Lovely couple. She made us coffee and homemade cookies that were delicious. I brought them homemade jelly. It's what I do. We made an offer. I had a purchase offer. I don't remember how much we paid for it. It wasn't a terrible amount. Maybe \$100 something, but I gave it with a \$5,000 check right there. He said, well, he doesn't know. He'll talk it over with his cousin. Well, a day or two later, he agreed to buy it. So we had the initial chunk.

Ken: This is another funny story. We bought it. We had it surveyed. Again, we bought it with a grant, I think from the Fish and Wildlife Foundation. I can't recall which foundation. Again, we had spectacular aerial views of the creek, because it is very ... It's like a snake. Well, of course, massive amounts of wetland, but there's also the upland portion, which is, let's say, the dry portion. That dry portion is on north of Route 12, which is the major road. It's bordered by a road called Indian Point Road. Well, what we didn't know, nor did anybody else, Indian Point Road is populated with summer homes almost the entire mile and a half-length of it. Over the years, decades, people ... I guess it's a trail, and the trail became a road. Summer camp became a cabin. The cabin became a three-bedroom house, and then it became a three-bedroom house with a guest house, and then a septic system and all this.

Ted: Garage.

Ken: And a garage. It turns out, we own almost everybody's front yard. The other people in the room here are gasping. Let me tell you, Sissy and I both gasped, because we don't need this political issue.



Again, Sissy Danforth was the executive director. She contacts every single landowner with the survey. Basically says, "Look. We don't want any problems. You cover the cost of resurveying your parcel and filing the deed, you can have it." We did this time after time after time. People were still annoyed with us, which was sort of stupid. In one instance, I think we had to sell it for a couple of thousand dollars, because clearly it was usable waterfront. We're non-profit. Everything has to be above board. So we sold it for a nominal but believable sum of money.

In another instance, it was waterfront, and we had a real estate agent give us just a letter of evaluation on appraisal. She came up with 15, \$18,000. I said, "Sissy, we better go take a look at this one." So we went down. What it was, it was a piece of waterfront, but it was like a little inlet that was a V, and there was a house here, a house here, a house here. The docks almost touched each other, so absolutely unusable piece of property. I said, "This is worth nothing. Just split it up and give it to the adjacent homeowners," and that's what we did. That was well-intentioned thing, but boy, did we get in hot water with that one. We owned a garage. We owned the septic systems. We owned front doors. We owned staircases. It was awful.

Then over the years, again, once you start with this big chunk of preserve we started buying up, well, there were a couple of islands in the creek. One of the islands had a fishing camp on it. I mentioned Mike and Barbara Mead before. Well Mike had been a member of the board for years, and Barbara might as well have been a member of the board. She was head of volunteers, volunteered, century volunteer of the year. There's not an event that goes by that she's not running or helping with.

Ken:

She would assiduously read the ... Barbara Mead would assiduously read the Thousand Island Sun cover to cover, paying particular attention to the for sale. There was for sale island and camp in Crooked Creek. Well, they lived around the corner from me, as you know. I had just gotten out of the hospital with carotid artery surgery, so I had staples going down my neck. I think I had the surgery a week previously. Barbara said, "We've got to go see this. We've got to go see this." I said, "Okay. Let's go tomorrow or whenever." So we called up the realtor. The realtor had to rent this 14-foot aluminum boat. Mike and Barbara and I set out on a choppy day from [inaudible 02:48:45] Landing, which is on the river, and then we had to go up the creek under the [inaudible 02:48:50] Bridge. I'm holding my neck together with my left hand so it doesn't fall apart and my artery plops out.

We made it back, but I'm just telling you the circumstances. So it's \$12,000, and it's a nice camp. It's a funny camp. We got in, and a lot of different old artifacts, and it was two rooms. Right in the middle of the living room is a toilet, a commode, that empties right into the wetland. That's how they used it. It was a hunting camp. So we just said, "We've got to have this." It was a lovely, lovely, lovely island. I said, "I don't have the board authority." I was on my best behavior. Mike says ...

Ted: I was going to say, it was a rare day.

Ken: Well, they gave me ...

Ted: I'm just kidding.

Ken: They gave me a loose leash, too. Mike Mead says, "If TILT doesn't want it, I'll buy it." So I figured I was covered. So the next board meeting, I do my thing and print it out, show them a picture. Ellen Burt, who is a river woman of some renown, she just chews me up one side and down the other for exceeding my authority. I did my mea culpa. I said, "Mike was going to buy it if we don't, so if the board doesn't want to buy it, they'll say Mike will buy it." Well, naturally the board voted to buy the property. What does Ken do the very next thing is I organized a field trip with lunch for all the board members to go down to Crooked Creek to see this island. Then she said, "You did the right thing," because it's very prominent on a bend in the river on the creek with the island and the [crosstalk 02:50:43].

Ted: Yeah, yeah.

Ken: We almost lost one board member that day, John Tucker, in some sort of hole. He fell in all the way up to his crotch. He just shwoop.

Ted: Off the dock, wasn't it? It was some problem with the dock.

Ken: Yeah, he went down with just one leg. He's lucky he didn't wrench his other leg. It was pretty neat. Then subsequent to that, we bought two more camps. There were a total of three, and we wound up owning all three. One we tore down. One is still there. Sissy bought it, and she ...

Ted: She can't tear it down. Isn't it made of cement or something?

Ken: The first one. No, the second one we tore. Aaron tore one down in the winter and burned it on the ice, because of what ... Aaron and Jeremy, I think, because it just wasn't salvageable. The other camp, I think we still own. How we got that, Sissy bought it from a guy who lived in Texas, who would come up and spend a week roughing it in this camp. He was a trucker, and she gave him life use. Who cares? Ultimately, he didn't want it after a few years, and he signed away his life use. So we own three camps. I think that one is on the mainland. But over the years, we bought up other tracts of land there. In at least one instance, we bought one with a couple of huge barns.

Ted: Huge barns.

Ken: The biggest barns I've ever seen in my life. What we did there is we cut out the wetland and glacial pond and kept the dog leg entry and then sold it to farmers with an easement.

Ted: You kept the wetlands.

Ken: We kept the wetland ...

Ted: And the shoreline.

Ken: ... and some of the up land, including a glacial pond that was behind the wetland and beyond the forest edge.

Ted: And then sold the ...

Ken: And then sold both with the farm.

Ted: Including the buildings.

Ken: Including all the barns, the big barns, biggest I've ever seen, to a farmer to keep it on the tax roll, keep it in agricultural use, which it still is.

Ted: That was the first project while I was president.

Ken: Was it?

Ted: Yeah. '90 ...

Ken: Selling it?

Ted: Buying it, then. Buying it. Fall of 2003.

Ken: Very exciting when these things work.

Ted: It was Aaron's idea to split them. He made the connection with the local farmer.

Ken: Yeah. Aaron did a lot of the work.

Ted: That was a year later.

Ken: Yeah. Then we bought additional properties there, and we partnered with the SUNY ESF, the Department of Fisheries out of the College of Environmental and Forestry with fish ladders and wetland restoration and so on. Most recently, we just bought an upland portion, which is adjacent to Crooked Creek parcel north of route 12.

Ted: Does it border Crooked Creek?

Ken: It borders Crooked Creek at the entrance to the trail, which is named after Dick and Mary Macsherry, the Macsherry Trail. It's right across from that entryway there. But on the other end of this parcel, which contains probably eight or 10

potholes, glacial ponds, maybe more, is I think it's Kring Point State Park. So we about the state park, too. It's a nice ... When it comes to preserving habitat, the rule of thumb is bigger is better. So the more canopied forest you have, the healthier it is for song birds. The more wetlands you have, the healthier it is for wetland birds, and the more grassland you have, the better it is for grassland birds. So it makes a nice uninterrupted habitat. What has evolved over the years now, basically, is we have pretty much, when you count the land trust and the easements we hold, the property we hold, and the state lands, and then the Anthony Common Nature Center Lands, and other public lands, there's pretty much a continuous forest along the river through the islands, from west of the town of Clayton almost to the town of Hammond. It gets a little thin in Alexandria because there isn't that much island property. It's pretty much a canopied forest that's pretty healthy for a migratory birds that stretches that far. That'll never change.

***SEGMENT N: Lessons learned: establishing trust, being patient, and yet at times acting quickly.***

Ken: There may be some things that I think I sort of learned that are applicable I guess to any non-profit or to anybody doing business is that, particularly when you're talking about non-profits, you're talking about people's property. Like we had a visitor earlier today, Sylvia Shultz, who grew up on Grindstone on a family farm. She put an easement on her property. Part of it was a donation and part of it we purchased. It's called a bargain sale.

Ted: Where there's a difference between the appraised value and the -

Ken: A valid difference, difference between valid appraised value and the actual sale. So, it helped her in a couple of ways. It gave her cash and perhaps a right off to offset capital gains, or whatever, but enabled her to keep the farm, but that's not my point. My point is in almost all cases you can't achieve any of this is you haven't established a trust level with the owner of the property. If the owner of the property doesn't trust the organization to do the right thing there's no way you're going to be able to get it. They'll sell it to somebody else or they won't sell it at all.

Ted: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Ken: So these things don't happen overnight. They take years. They take decades.

Ted: I'm thinking the one that the entrance to the Picton Channel, that was a long -

Ken: Heineman?

Ted: No, Baum.

Ken: Yeah, there was another farm family.

Ted: Who had sort of an unease about this fancy non-profit.

Ken: Yeah, it's another Grindstone farm.

Ted: But a tremendously important.

Ken: That's still on a tax roll. Still in their family.

Ted: Yeah, they own it.

Ken: Maybe a hundred years, what's this? 2018? Maybe a hundred years been in the family and man if they didn't know me and Aaron -

Ted: And Aaron Vogel.

Ken: - Who is the late executive director, if they don't know us for 10 or 15 years, they just wouldn't have sold us the easement on the property.

Ted: That's an important wetlands and it borders TILT owned -

Ken: Yeah.

Ted: - Wetlands so together as Ken was explaining earlier more is often better for the wildlife.

Ken: But the lesson to be learned here, these things don't happen overnight. Although, you have to be ready to strike while the iron's hot.

Ken: These old farm families, if they don't trust you, they're not going to deal with you at all.

Ted: No, no.

Ken: It just takes a lot -

Ted: Takes time.

Ken: - just being yourself and being truthful with the people and when you don't have an answer to something say you don't know. I don't know what's gonna happen in the future. That's the best we determine maybe this. But, it's one of the reasons we've been successful, particularly on Grindstone, but also throughout the river valley is people have come to trust the leadership which has been consistent. Consistent in philosophy. Maybe not consistent in people, but on the average our presidents stay about three years. On the average people stay on the Board I guess 12 to 15 years. So that's long service. It's not in

and out like, oh I was on this Board and I was on that Board and so on. People work very, very hard -

Ted: Takes two to three years to learn easement and property law.

Ken: Right, and it takes two to three years just to understand what we own and what we're trying to do. That's why the field trips are very important, but any of these old farm families, Sylvia, Bob Baum, -

Ted: Oh, you know you never finished the, no.

Ken: Bob Purcell is another one. These are all contiguous properties on which we have easements and which are still on the property rolls, and in some instances because we were able to come up with funding to protect wetlands, because that's the type of funding that's available currently, it enabled the people, at least in three instances, to keep the farm, because they're taxed at very high rates. Because even though they're wetlands there's still part of it the town says, well it's usable wetland so we're gonna whack you on this.

Ted: It's water front, water view.

Ken: Water front, water view, all this. Yeah, so it enabled a number of families to keep their farms. Not that they are farmed anymore but their grandparents farmed it. A lot of purposes served, but here again, it's the trust level is the thing. Also, you have to be ready to seize opportunities. Two cases, I had realtor say to me not too long ago, I'm getting a listing tomorrow on a piece of property near one of your preserves. I don't know where it is exactly. It's in Alexandria Bay. I said, what road, and she told me. I said, does it have billboard on it, and I think she said, no, it's next to the one with the billboard. I said, don't list it, we'll buy it.

Of course, I wasn't president, but what it was, it was like the final piece in a jigsaw puzzle in the Otter Creek Preserve. Of course, I knew the tax maps, at least in that area. I called up our president and executive director immediately and said, give her a call, it's coming on the market tomorrow, and just buy the asking price, which wasn't a lot of money. That gave us basically a parking lot for an entry for the preserve.

Another one, a realtor came to me the day before we had a Board meeting. He said Ken I got a piece coming up on Grindstone. I said, where is it? He said, I can't tell you, but it's a nice piece of waterfront. It's 400 feet of waterfront and it's an acre. Well if you know anything about area, if you have 400 feet on one side, it has to be 100 feet deep roughly to get one acre. The acre is 46,000 square feet, roughly. I'm thinking of Grindstone Island where is there a piece of land.

Ted: There aren't many like that.

Ken: Yeah, that's 400 feet long and 100 feet wide. If you've ever looked at a tax map of all these things, this is a long sliver of waterfront and there's only one piece on the island, and this is a piece that abuts Sylvia Shultz's property.

I brought it up at the Board meeting. I said, this is coming on the market. One of our Board members said, we have to tell the adjacent property owners. They've been trying to buy that piece of property for 80 or 100 years. It came on the market the next day. This time I had the authority to buy it. We put full offer down and got a purchase offer on it. Then we gave the purchase offer, transferred it because these are transferrable documents, to the immediate property owner who then agreed to donate an easement on the parcel to restrict subdivision development. So we protected that shoreline. They can build a boat house someday if they wish, but it's not going to be cut up into four lots. That's another one where we strike while the iron's hot.

***SEGMENT O: Outreach trips – the development of “TILT Treks.”***

Ted: When I first came on the Board there were no TILT Treks. There were no Member Mondays. There were no organized activities that outreach -

Ken: For the public.

Ted: - to the public, which is a way of getting the public more involved in conservation and appreciating natural beauty and the things that the land trust is about. You've got to get the people out on the land.

Ken: Yeah, well how that started -

Ted: - that started.

Ken: Yeah, we had a winter Board meeting in Carol Monroe's house in Vermont.

Ted: That was my first Board meeting.

Ken: Was it?

Ted: Yeah.

Ken: She had this wonderful house in the middle of the mountains in Vermont. As I said before we always met in someone's home, but what we had been gravitating towards -

Ted: This is the Board retreat.

Ken: Right, having a retreat in March, the first week in March. Used to be in New York City, but that got to be a little, since we pay for it out of our pockets, got to be a little pricey for what.

Well anyway, this one winter meeting Carol offered her home in -

Ted: Southern Vermont.

Ken: - Vermont, near Manchester. Landgrove I think it was.

Ted: Mm-hmm (affirmative) exactly.

Ken: I don't where I got the idea from, but I put it together with the son of an old farm family, guy named Manly Rushaw, who had an old school bus. He used to like to take -

Ted: Children's school bus.

Ken: - Children's school bus, right. When I say an old school bus, it wasn't one of these big 30 passengers. This was more like what you see taking handicapped kids around. It was a tiny little yellow bus. I think it was one seat per side.

So, I went to the Board and made a proposal that we start an official trek, where I came up with trek, t-r-e-k, that's an African's word, when the Boers in South Africa wanted to get away from the English, they all migrated en masse and that was the Great Trek [inaudible 03:07:21], otherwise they moved. So we started calling it Member Mondays and then it became TILT Treks, was just the -

Ted: You couldn't keep it on Mondays so.

Ken: Well, yeah.

Ted: You had to change the name.

Ken: Yeah, so anyway, Manley, who was a pretty quiet guy, but he loved to interact one-on-one with people, so we advertised this Member Monday Trek. You had to be a member and which we never looked at took closely, because they brought their cousins, sisters, and aunts.

Ken: And I would tell Susie Wood, who ran the office, and who's a former Board member, you know we only have room for 12. Well, next thing you know we'd have 16 people and we really had to cram in the bus, because to my recollection we only had one seat on each side -

Ted: This was tour of Grindstone.



Ken: Yeah, two on one side, one on the other, and there were like five rows only, it was a tiny bus. But one time we had like 18 or 20. I didn't know what the hell we'd do. 18 people show up you can't say, you can't go. We'd dock at somebody's private house.

Ted: Phyllis.

Ken: Phyllis, and they had a good dock, deep water. She and her husband would come down and greet everybody. You'd pick raspberries and eat them as you walked up. Everything's really homey and the bus is waiting there, this tiny bus. It got so crowded this one time Manley had to put planks across the seats and we had to load it by row like they do with airplanes. So the first three people would get in, or four people, then the next four, they'd put down another plank. God forbid if we ever had an accident. Then the next four. We would go across the island in this. I would do a narration, you know explaining what easements are, what TILT is. I had a lot of direct one-on-one anecdotes with some of the people with whom I've dealt over the years. So I had some really interesting stories to tell.

Ken: Going around from farm to farm, there's a road that goes around the head of the island, and I'd have to face backwards, breathing the diesel fumes, on an empty stomach. What was nice though, we'd end up at Manley's house, which was a cabin in the middle of the woods, on a wetland and his wife would put out spread of tea, and -

Ted: Lovely lady.

Ken: - Lemonade and cookies.

Ted: Homemade cookies.

Ken: It was just, it would blow people away. They were members forever, you know. We had some interesting times. One time the road had washed out and the bus got stuck. We couldn't get the damn bus out of the, near Sylvia's where it takes that dip?

Ted: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Ken: Where there's a culvert now. Fortunately, a guy who worked for Bob Purcell comes along, Tim Nielson, with a tractor, so he hooks up the tractor to the bus and we yank it out of the mud hole. Another time we pull the bus into Manley's yard and get a thunderstorm. We can't get the bus out. Slight incline and it's on wet grass. So we had everybody get out of the bus and push the bus up this hill. So it was always an experience when you went out on these. Then ultimately the bus died and we weren't able to really take people around anymore and we had our stops. We'd stop at Sylvia's. She'd just opened the store and her sauna.

She sells little embroidered stuff and things, crafts she's makes over the winter. She's Finnish descent.

Ken: Yeah, so we stopped using the bus and I think well we gotta do something. By this time we had started an outreach program. We started to have kids' activities in the farm and canoe and kayak excursions and partnering with other land trusts to do moonlight kayaks. I had purchased, my first vehicle on the island I purchase in 1994, I think it was, which gave me access to the island, it was an ATV. Reason I didn't buy one earlier, because it was the only, they only started developing four wheelers. Before that it was three wheelers and they were very dangerous. One wheel in front, two in back, and to ride through the terrain that I have to go through to get out of my place -

Ted: You'd flip.

Ken: You'd flip it.

Ted: Too easily.

Ken: Way too easily. So I had bought ATVs and then I had a very generous friend who was a house guest and used to come up several times year. But they came up one year in secrecy. Also as a surprise they bought a Kawasaki Mule as a gift.

Ted: Which was a four wheel utility vehicle.

Ken: Four wheel UTV they call them, and this was a single seater.

Ted: Bench seat so you could take two or three of your friends.

Ken: Yes, three people and you'd throw a couple in the back.

Ted: Because it always had a little truck bed in the back.

Ken: Well, anyway, after only three or four years I bought a two-bench seater, a bigger one. So we're still using the bus, right. So the bus dies.

Ted: At this point in time.

Ken: At that point. I said, what the heck are we going to do. I hate to just stop this very popular activity. So I went to a few friends who had also purchased some of the vehicles. Some were one bench seats, some were two. We decided to call it a mule trek. Then I had hats made up for everybody with ... I downloaded a picture of a mule head, and I put Mule Drover, of course drovers are people who drive cattle, but a play on words, so they drive mules, drove mules. So I gave these hats out to these half dozen friends of mine who had these machines. Well, that started out, that year with the mule trek I think we probably had six or eight machines, and I don't know how many people,

probably 20, and now we have I think 25 drivers and we have close to 100 people on these treks. What we lost is the intimacy of the narration.

Ted: The intimacy of the children's school bus.

Ken: The children's school bus, but also the narration. I couldn't talk for a day because I talked steadily for hours, because I had so many anecdotes dealing with these different families. But what we gained was, we were able to take the ATVs and the Mules and the other UTVs, Bob Cats, Polaris Rangers, and all these things, we were able to take them on the trails. We have a lot of trails, that I didn't mention, on the island that just go through wetlands, hay fields, and -

Ted: Informal trails.

Ken: - informal trails, dirt trails, and they are absolutely spectacular.

Ted: Going through the fields.

Ken: Going through the fields, yeah. We make a stop at Sylvia's. So what we do now is we pick them up, now is a lot more organized. We have a tour boat from town pick everybody up. All the Mules are lined up at the public landing on Grindstone. The people get on their different Mules and vehicles, I call them generically all Mules but they're not. Mule is a proprietary name of Kawasaki.

So we have about 30 of these and I put out an email Calling All Mules and give everybody the date, give them six weeks' notice. They all automatically come down to the landing and some people take two, some take six. We never know how many are going to show up. What's happening now is a lot of people on the island are just joining to get in on the trip. So we have ATVs and kids.

So this whole Mule Train now we take off. Then we stop at the school house and one of our Board members or somebody else will explain what the school house is, which is a Grindstone Island Research and Heritage -

Ted: Center.

Ken: - Center, which is a restored one-room school house.

Ted: The last.

Ken: That's the last one-room school house to operate in New York state, and again, they, I'm on that Board too, just got added. They work in very close cooperation with the town, Town of Clayton, which is wonderful. They own the school house and they keep it in good repair and they work very closely with the non-profit which has a scholarship fund, but they mostly record histories of the different families and people on the island, and genealogies, and preserve the heritage of the island.

So we stop there. Give them a tour, then we go to Sylvia's, which is a couple of miles away.

Ted: Tell them, Sylvia's farm. What was the -

Ken: Yeah, Sylvia's farm, I think you said it's 70 acres.

Ted: Beautiful. Sits up on a high -

Ken: Yeah, you go through a spectacular -

Ted: - Land that falls away to the south to Flynn Bay.

Ken: Yeah, as you come over the rise where her house is you get this commanding view of a huge bay called Flynn Bay which is the vast wetland, which is all protected by conservation easement. The whole thing now.

Ted: The whole stretch of river behind it.

Ken: With Clayton in the background. Seaway in the background and a wonderful old barn. And we stop there and I hope people buy a thing or two, but she talks about growing up on the island. She likes to talk too, and she'll give maybe a half hour talk and answer questions. So we leave there then and we make a stop on some easement property that the Land Trust had purchased and then sold for residential use to keep it on the tax rolls, but also the non-residential portion is grass land and is maintained as grass land.

Ted: For the birds.

Ken: Yeah. Then we'll stop at a couple of historic houses very briefly. Historic in that they're odd. One of them is a squash court. You have a squash court in the middle of an island in the middle of nowhere. Sort of interesting. Then we stop at the public beach, the beach we opened to the public, Potters Beach, where we just put a beautiful staircase in donated by a local carpenter, Kevin Garnsey. We had actually contracted with him to build it. When it was done we asked for the bill and he said, I'm donating it. So he donated the whole damn thing. We had a wonderful -

Ted: His family has a lot of ties to Grindstone.

Ken: Yeah, it's an old -

Ted: To Grindstone.

Ken: Yeah, see Grindstone was settled primarily, well there was some French Canadians, but primarily Scots Irish who came over from Scotland, not from Northern Ireland. I think they came from Scotland and the hamlet, which is

nothing more than a church and a dance hall now, and a house or two, it's called Thurso, which is -

Ted: There's a Thurso in Scotland.

Ken: There's a Thurso in Scotland, yeah.

Anyway, we'd stop at the beach. Then we go up, down to the bridge that connects the foot with the rest of the island, and if it's dry we'll go through a 130 acre hay field that's groomed. It's a hay field for bobolinks and other types of birds. You can see almost anything there because it abuts a wetland and a wood land. Then we wind our way back up to 600 acre easement property owned by Junie, which is very beautiful because it's a hill going up. Then we wind up on one of the newest addition to the islands and that's a vineyard and winery owned by Mark and Maria Purcell who let us come there and they'll provide wine tasting and we have lunch there. Then the people get back and get on their boat.

Ted: It's an institution now. It's an institution.

***SEGMENT P: "From the Burning Barrel to the Wild Asparagus Patch" – Mid River Farm***

Ted: I wanted to provoke you to talk about the parcel of land that was, the one that whose boundary corners was the wild asparagus patch.

Ken: Oh yeah.

Ted: That's okay.

Ken: It's one of my absolute favorite stories. As I had mentioned earlier there was a woman who was very instrumental in formation of the land trust who was a pediatric psychiatrist. It was Dr. Josephine Murray. She lived in Boston and had a condo and an old Victorian house there and had a beautiful farm there I think in Boxford, Massachusetts.

Ted: Boxford.

Ken: Boxford that she left to another, I mean one of those farms that you see on a calendar that you buy from an insurance company, just a spectacular thing. She owned this big farm on Grindstone. She loved the land, loved the land, but she was very, very eccentric. Very lovely woman. She became a friend of mine. She sold off the big house.

Ted: Where the Bohlens live.

Ken: Where the Bohlens live, yeah, the Bohlens. Yeah, she sold off the big house to a woman who later became a TILT Board member. Her name is Joan. She's 90.

As it turned out Josephine, Dr. Murray, had no interest in keeping the big house. The big house was owned by her aunt Virginia, I gotta get the name straight, Virginia Murray Bacon. Remember Murray old Scottish nobility, Lord Dunmore? She married Robert Lowe Bacon who is the congressman from Long Island, I guess when Long Island, when I say Long Island I mean Nassau and Sulfur County, not Brooklyn and Queens. When Long Island had one congressional district. He was a very famous congressman. She became a very famous hostess. Both on Grindstone, this big mansion, and in Washington, DC. The house in Washington, DC was built in I think 1810 and it's near The White House.

She, I think during the Eisenhower years, came into her own and was like a perle mesta in Washington in terms of Republican fund raising and stuff like that. She had her own eccentricities. When she died, she left it to a foundation for, it's called the DACOR Bacon House. You can look it up anywhere. Very historic house. John Marshall lived in it and a lot of Supreme Court justices rented rooms there and so on over the years. They contacted me once about Mid River Farm to straighten some things out because they had it screwed up.

Anyway, Mrs. Bacon used to entertain grandly in her house and with a full set of staff.

So, Josephine rejected that whole type of lifestyle into which she was born, and she lived in a shack that did not have a shower, did have a toilet. It was her father's study-

Ted: She took a shower, her shower was a swim in the river-

Ken: In the river, yeah.

Ken: Her father was a renowned psychiatrist who helped to found the Harvard Psychiatric Clinic, and developed the thematic apperception test, the TAT test, Harry Murray.

He lived to be the age of 95 or so, Josephine his only child, never married. He had a mistress and they wrote a book about that, it's called Love Story Told, it's boring, but he kept the mistress separate from the family, they didn't know about it for years.

Well anyway, Josephine grew up. She was pretty eccentric. Very generous woman. She sold the house, the big house, to Joan, who grew up on another island. Joan was born into the family that started Phelps Dodge copper mines.

This house was filled with Victorian antiques, I mean, just chock full, late Victorian stuff, big rooms. Joan, who's very different of mind, is a minimalist.

She lives a very simple life, very Spartan life. And she just took everything and called this pretty prominent antique dealer who lived ... Who had a shop in Gananoque. As a matter of fact, the guy was so prominent, he had the order of Canada, which is nothing to sneeze at.

Ted:                   Whoa.

Ken:                   Yeah.

Ken:                   So he came in and bought everything lock, stock and barrel.

For some reason Josephine got furious, because Joan ... had sold the bed on which Charles Bohlen, the famous diplomat was born and she carried on and carried on, to the point that Joan had to go to the antique dealer and buy the bed back, okay? And give it to Josephine. And I think a piano was involved somewhere there, too.

Well this does fit into the story. Josephine had been on our board for nine years and then she got off the board and she relates to me that she's going to sell part of her property, Mid River Farm. The part she wants to sell ... Well you have to picture starting at one end of the Mid River Farm is a farmhouse, there's a barn, then there's Josephine's uncle's house, cottage ... Pretty cottage. Three-bedroom. Called Le Roche. Probably built in the late 20's, early 30's ... Then there's the great house, build by the Bohlen's. Then there's a vast empty space of hay fields and waterfront, and then there's the shack where her father lived and where she lived after her father's death.

When she sold the great house, she wouldn't sell Joan any land with it. She sold her the house, a sliver of land-

Ted:                   A minimal amount of land on which the house stood.

Ken:                   Minimal. Minimal. And the tennis court that's adjacent to it. That's all she sold. So Joan essentially had no back yard.

Well, Josephine tells me she's going to sell Le Roche, which is her aunt's house, alright? Remember, there's farmhouse, Le Roche, and so on. So, I say to Josephine, who was a benefactor of the land trust and early board member ... And I might add also, a friend of mine ... And I said to her, "Well Josephine, let me give you something to think about. You put an easement on your farm and the land trust wants to take care of the farm and the hay fields should be mowed and if there are no cattle, nobody's gonna mow them, so let me give you the thought. I don't want to put myself in your wallet, but you probably don't need the money and what I think I'd like you to consider, is give the land trust Le Roche. We'll sell it to Joan, her neighbor. We'll get more money than you could ever get, 'cause I'm a better negotiator than you are. It'll take you off

the tax rolls, which you like to hear, and we'll use the money to endow the easement so that we can always keep it for grassland migratory birds."

She looks at me and she says, "Where do you get these ideas? Now what'll I do with the beds?"

And I said, "Beds?"

She says, "Yes. There are a lot of good beds in that house."

Now understand, she never said "yes" or "No". She said, "What'll I do with the beds?"

So I said, "I don't know."

She says, "I know what, I'm gonna call up Mike tonight."

Well Mike was a fellow who had married into Joan's family, then got a divorce, which is okay, and Josephine let him live in one of her houses, which was on the next estate that she had bought as well. But he lived in this one that was the squash court. Very intriguing.

Ted: Former squash court.

Ken: Yeah, it's called the ... But it was a squash court. I mean, can you imagine having a squash court in the middle of the St. Lawrence river.

Well anyway, she says, "I'm gonna call Mike," with whom she had a very close relationship. Younger man, but they cared for each other greatly, and I said, "You're gonna ask Mike whether you should donate the house to the land trust?"

"Oh, no, I'm gonna ask him whether he needs the beds or not. They have all sorts of company at the squash court, and he might be able to use the beds." So, she never said, "Yes." She never said, "No." All she did was fixate on the beds, so I assumed that was a "Yes." So I said, "Okay, I'll have a deed drawn up." Alright, so I had the deed drawn up ...

She had Le Roche surveyed out already, so it was a fairly easy thing to do. I didn't have to order a survey for the land trust, all I had to do was issue a deed, provide the survey ... Well I take a look at the property and sure, it's surveyed. What the surveyor did was this rectangular box, legal lot and next to it ... I didn't mention the contour of the shoreline ... But next to it is like a 14-foot strip of shoreline, 14 feet wide, that's 250 feet long, or 100 feet long. You know, 150 feet long. I call up the surveyor and I said, "Darren, I'm calling about Josephine Murray's survey. Didn't you know that you cut this rectangular house parcel out and left the peninsula that's 15 feet by about 150 feet long on the shoreline?"



He said, "No, when Dr. Murray had me survey it out, along with some other parcels, No Hawkers, her father's house, she told me she didn't want me to make a site visit and she just wanted me to do it as cheaply as I could. So I did it in my office." I said, "Well you left this finger sticking out of shoreline that's totally unusable." So I had to pack up and I went to Boston, drew a map for Josephine and said, "Look, you're still gonna be stuck with all this waterfront property you're gonna have to pay taxes on. It's totally unusable because it's only 80 to 100 feet wide, so I think you ought to give it some more thought and maybe ... What I suggest you do is just donate all the land that is west of the old cattle fence."

You're looking at a picture here of the barn. You could see a fence and there are apple trees in the photograph. So it's from the fence over to the main house. And she said, "No, no, no, no, no, no. I don't want to get rid of that much property. Urma Slate, a neighbor picks the apples and she puts a vegetable garden in there."

I said, "Well you can't leave this silly peninsula of land on one side of Le Roche sticking out. So, you should just draw a straight line across the property somehow, that will go with Le Roche."

And she said, "Well, alright. How about from the burning barrel." There was a burning barrel there ... "To the wild asparagus patch."

Well I had no idea where the wild asparagus patch is, but at this point I'm on the ropes, and I'm ready to agree to anything and I said, "Okay." So that gave this straight line, continued out to both shores from the burning barrel, which I had a flag so the surveyors could come over and do an actual siting, and then I had to find this wild asparagus patch, which I did with Joan and Fred, who bought the property and we have it in the stake and put a flag on it and that became the parcel ... Second parcel she gave to us. The first one was the house lot and the second one was this little squivet of land, waterfront and then a few more ... Another acre or so of the backyard from the burning barrel to the wild asparagus patch.

Max DelSignore:

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