

NAME

Larry Thetford interview

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DURATION

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3 SPEAKERS

Claudine Klose

Larry Thetford

Speaker 3

START OF TRANSCRIPT**[00:00:02] Claudine Klose**

Got it. Okay. This is Claudine Klose from historic Red hook. It's February 17th, 2026, and I'm interviewing Larry Thetford at the Story Studio. Would you mind introducing yourself and telling us where and when you were born?

[00:00:28] Larry Thetford

Well, my full name is Larry Caton. Thetford. I was born in Saint Joe, Missouri, on the right on the banks of the Missouri River. The Caton family had a farm not far from the Missouri River. I was later moved to Dubuque, Iowa, which is on the Mississippi River. It you would think that being from Iowa, you're. It's a. It's farm country, but along the the river towns, they are industrial. So it was actually completely different from farm country with large factories breweries, foundries, furniture making. And it was a rough town. So we had gangs and motorcycle groups, the whole nine yards, which I was a member of. So eventually I ended up attending Iowa State University. I graduated with a master's degree in entomology and became employed by a Swiss pharmaceutical company, which, after several mergers, now goes by the name of Novartis, and I was a senior scientist with them for almost 40 years.

[00:02:07] Claudine Klose

Is that what brought you to Red hook?

[00:02:09] Larry Thetford

It was actually it brought me to Nyack and White Plains, to an office job where I had to commute across the river on the Tappan Zee Bridge, only ten miles, which took some times an hour and a half. And for a guy who was used to driving 80 miles an hour in Iowa, that was a little tough to take. So the Tappan Zee Bridge is the reason I'm up here. I told them, get me the hell out of here.

[00:02:44] Claudine Klose

So here in Red hook, we're having this interview to talk about how the elmendorf in a building that we both love was saved. So can you first tell us a little bit about what the Elmendorf Inn means to the town and village of Red hook?

[00:03:08] Larry Thetford

Yeah, it's, I think a, a, a sense of, of pride, a sense of ownership, a sense of connection to what was historic, very historical events that shaped this community. The fact that the inn was the focal point back then of community activity. You know, our founding fathers met there. They made decisions there. They probably had elections there. And I probably even held court there. And the fact that The. One of the largest events in Dutchess County is the Dutchess County Fair. I mean, it's it's known far and wide, attracts what, a million people practically. And it's a very little known that the first county fair was held right here, almost where we sit. So those are important connections that not only we need to expand to the community, but the community reacts to that and, and, and appreciates what's what's there.

[00:04:32] Claudine Klose

So what do you think the community back then saw as a reason to save the Elmendorf in back in the 1970s?

[00:04:44] Larry Thetford

Well, Richard Koons was the village historian. Okay. And he probably had the connection, probably with the Planning board, the Village Planning Board, and found out that the owner of the property, which was the Grand Union grocery store next door, was planning on razing the building and turning the property into a parking lot. So Richard's wife, Rosemary Koon, found this out, and she then galvanized a group of concerned citizens. And endeavored to save the property. And of course, the first thing that they had to do was purchase the property. And the Grand Union actually held the mortgage. We actually mortgaged it through the Grand Union Company.

[00:05:52] Claudine Klose

Do you know if there were any reasons? Other reasons that inspired them to save the. In such as the loss of other buildings in the village of Red hook.

[00:06:07] Larry Thetford

Well, there was a. The loss of the Red hook in. Located there at the corner of Broadway and Market to. Due to a fire. The conversion of the tobacco factory to other uses. And then I, I'm not sure the timeline, but we had an individual who was burning up historic barns in this whole area, and that really had the community up in arms, you know, just the the loss of these buildings. And he had burned up 4 or 5 and was on the march, you know, and nobody knew who this guy was. And then he he made an attempt to burn Cole Palen's house there at the, at the area drome. And fortunately, he got caught up in the fire. And that was the end of him.

[00:07:18] Claudine Klose

My goodness, what a story.

[00:07:20] Larry Thetford

A little history there

[00:07:22] Claudine Klose

So in 1976, the town, the village, the state, the nation was celebrating the nation's bicentennial. Can you tell us how that might have inspired also citizens here in Red hook?

[00:07:42] Larry Thetford

Actually, no, I really can't. Can expound on that. However, what I think would be significant is to discuss the 2012 Red Hook Bicentennial and its effect on the community and historic preservation because it involved. A separate events, including not only tours of the Elmendorf, but tours of Maryland. We had. Two times we ran through the play Our Town, which was on a historical basis. And then we had a, a huge event called the Community Day, which was held on the grounds of Montgomery Place. That event I chaired myself, along with a very able assistance of Ellen Phelan, and it was we had to coordinate, I think it was 115 volunteers for that, and it drew over 4000 people and had a lot of historical displays and information booths, a very educational. And that really spurred a lot of people to take a greater interest, I think, in our overall community history.

[00:09:28] Claudine Klose

I wonder if perhaps if because it was a local bicentennial, it was the 200 years since the town of Red hook had been founded. Right. And it felt more relevant to those who lived here.

[00:09:41] Larry Thetford

Correct.

[00:09:42] Claudine Klose

Perhaps. Yeah. So when the N clearly was at risk, it became known that the Grand Union was going to turn it into a parking lot. How did the community respond?

[00:09:57] Larry Thetford

Well, I think a great support both financially and volunteerism. And I think it, it created an identity for them. And I do remember how often that members of the community would just pop in, you know, and want to see what the, what kind of progress we had made. So they were following it. And, and we tried to make sure that we communicated you know, that progress. We kind of updated periodically so they could see what was happening with their input.

[00:10:44] Claudine Klose

I know it did take a while. What were their stumbling blocks along the way?

[00:10:51] Larry Thetford

Boy, I guess So it cost us around \$500,000 to finish the. And early on, we floated a grant through the New York State Parks and Recreation. Okay. For \$60,000. So it only represented, I think, 12% of the total. But having that grant really put us in a long term and expensive bind. Okay. So every project that we proposed. So one, each phase, we had to Up a full report. Document what the plan was, how we were going about go about doing it. The materials you send that up to Albany, get that approved. Okay. Which was also a timeline thing. But even more significantly, that grant forced us to hire professional restorers who were much more expensive than hiring a local contractor. And they took their good old sweet time to doing what they were doing, costing us more, just like they were kind of milking the golden cow, you know? So that was not only a stumbling block, but a real aggravation to to us volunteers too.

[00:12:38] Claudine Klose

I can see that. I can understand. It's the bureaucracy.

[00:12:43] Larry Thetford

Yes, sir.

[00:12:44] Claudine Klose

So we're there in the community. Naysayers who didn't believe in what this cause was all about.

[00:12:54] Larry Thetford

I wouldn't use the term naysayers. Some would question. I think the the amount of time and expense, you know, that was going into this, but I think by and large, people understood as far as volunteers and the board, you know, having diverse experiences there's always discussions regarding what plan of action. And everybody has their own ideas. Sometimes when a person proposes their idea, they think that's the one and only and the best. But. As leadership, you just have to tactfully encourage them that there are other avenues and possibilities and to identify the pros and cons, and then weigh the pros and cons and come out with the best overall solution. So that's, I think I think that's really where it was in a nutshell.

[00:14:22] Claudine Klose

So now we're going to move to your relationship with the Elmendorf Inn and tell us if you want to take a break. So okay. Okay. So what did the restoration of Elmendorf mean to you? Because by now you were here in Red hook.

[00:14:36] Larry Thetford

Oh, yeah. Are. Well, it was a challenge. It was it was a an accomplishment. And I took a lot of pride in, in those accomplishments. It may sound egotistical, but I have no problem pointing to a project and say, yeah, I did that. I think I earned that, that, that. Right.

[00:15:10] Claudine Klose

So why did you feel it was so important? Why did you feel it was so important? I mean, you had other projects. You had a job.

[00:15:23] Larry Thetford

Well, again, identity, you know, here I had three kids at the Red hook school system. We were involved in all kinds of activities, sports. I was the local scoutmaster, so it was a total community identity. And secondly, it's a venue to form lifelong friendships. And and a social thing, you know, just like the firemen get together. And that's, that's kind of social. So know that I, I enjoyed my tenure. It was a lot of work. It was a lot of sacrifice. But that's the commitment that one makes to a voluntary organization like that.

[00:16:13] Claudine Klose

Did you raise your hand to volunteer or did somebody come and ask you? How did you get involved specifically?

[00:16:21] Larry Thetford

You could just thank my daughter, my oldest daughter, for that. And she had a high school project assignment to do a paper on something historical in Red hook. And she chose the Elmendorf End, and she did such a good job on her paper. It was actually put in the newspaper. So I read the report and said, oh, that looks interesting. So I just stopped over and started to meet the folks and geez, I got hooked. Or one might say they hooked me.

[00:17:02] Claudine Klose

So the next question is what role did you play? And I know you were with the Friends of Elmendorf and you were president for a long time. I didn't look up the dates. Do you happen to remember?

[00:17:12] Larry Thetford

No, not. Okay.

[00:17:14] Claudine Klose

Well, we'll look up those dates because I can't remember how long you were.

[00:17:18] Larry Thetford

Yeah, well, as a role, I, you know, you name it, I did it. Okay. Dug a dirt trench under the under the floor of the south room so we could put posts to support the the floor joists, laid up foundation, drywall, foundation stone replaced it and the, and the basement foundation. I personally reset all those huge blue stone blocks for the entrance to the, to the, to the elmendorf cleaned gutters, raked up wallets and apples and trimmed the apple trees and you name it. We did it. We were hands on in those days. Everybody got their hands dirty.

[00:18:22] Claudine Klose

So that probably partly answers. The next question is how would you like your involvement to be remembered?

[00:18:29] Larry Thetford

Well, Coming back to roles a little bit after my tenure as president, and I accepted the chairmanship of siting and and constructing what we call the thrift shop or now the Carriage Barn. So that was my major role, the one I'm most proud of and the most what probably is actually very significant to the well-being of the organization in terms of financial contribution.

[00:19:05] Claudine Klose

So you helped build it.

[00:19:07] Larry Thetford

What's that?

[00:19:08] Claudine Klose

You helped build the carriage barn.

[00:19:10] Larry Thetford

I was responsible for everything getting it built. I really did. Physically, however. For every siting board on that building, David Brown and I. Stained both sides of every board on that building in the tap room. And it took us weeks after weeks of doing that by hand. So yeah, there was some hands on, too.

[00:19:42] Claudine Klose

Were you involved in operating the thrift shop after to help raise money?

[00:19:49] Larry Thetford

Well, yes. First of all, the thrift shop, the original thrift shop was a concrete block building right there at the northwest corner of the property. It was a concrete floor. It was cold in the winter and hot in the summer and cramped, but it was still our our major source of finance. Okay. They generated about 6 to \$8000, I would say, per year. But finally, the Shirley Brown and Richard Coons, who were the prime drivers of the thrift shop, you know. Right on us long enough that they needed a good building. So that's when we took on the project. Once that building was complete, now we had expanded size and to fill it up. David Brown and I would make trips to, to other homes that people wanted to, to clean out. And we would have to be truckloads of of furniture and whatever, you know. So yeah, I was involved.

[00:21:24] Claudine Klose

Was that original concrete building a restaurant or a pizza place or something. I've seen photos.

[00:21:31] Larry Thetford

It. It was initially a a filling station and then a little pizza place and then the thrift shop.

[00:21:45] Claudine Klose

Can I. Speaking of fundraising, can I go back to something you said earlier, which was that it was a \$60,000 grant from New York State.

[00:21:53] Larry Thetford

Yes.

[00:21:55] Claudine Klose

The cost was 500 000.

[00:21:57] Larry Thetford

That's correct.

[00:21:59] Claudine Klose

All the rest was raised from the community.

[00:22:04] Larry Thetford

Well, not just the community. We we we had significant fundraising within the Elmendorf. So you had the thrift shop, and then we did all kinds of events in the building for fundraising. For example, we had a juried art show where we got a percentage of the of the sales. Arts and crafts shows where we sold. You know, they paid so much for table. We had huge yard sales twice a year. We filled up the whole parking lot area. It took us almost a week just to set it up, load the tables, organize the tables, covered the tables every night with plastic. And then every other year we had a huge auction. So. The thrift shop, we had some furniture in, but we couldn't load it up with a lot of large furniture. So In between the the years of the auctions, we would still pick up truckloads of furniture and we would. David Brown had a double car garage. I had a barn and we would store the furniture for a year, year and a half. And then we'd put a erect, a huge tent there in the parking lot, which is now the green rent a bunch of chairs set up our own food service and hold an auction. So we'd have to drag all this furniture back out and sort it and organize it again. A lot of work. But I have a couple of stories about that if you'd like to hear them.

[00:24:15] Speaker 3

Absolutely.

[00:24:17] Larry Thetford

So. I would, David Brown would be the the auctioneer. And I would organize the volunteers in a line so that they would they'd each take an item. And then when it's their turn, they'd go up and they'd hold the item up and they would auction it. And then the next person. So there was this wicker wicker basket, fairly large with a lid. And Frank Cooper's young son was working with us. He'd about 6 or 7. I said, hey, kid, can you get inside that wicker basket? He did. I said, okay, we're going to hold that basket up. I said, when you when you hear me say, now, you pop your head right out of that basket. Oh boy. He did that in about ten ladies in the front row almost fell right out of their chairs.

[00:25:18] Speaker 3

Great.

[00:25:18] Larry Thetford

So And one time we had finished the auction and there was a whole bunch of furniture left over, including a one of these sectional sofas. So we're all just relaxed, you know, we're really tired from the day's events and we're looking at that leftover furniture, you know, and you know, gosh, we got to load that back up and put it back in storage again. And this pickup truck drove up. Two guys get out and they're looking at the furniture, but they're talking in a foreign language. So Frank Cooper, who speaks perfect Italian, picked up on it. So you go over and she goes, start talking to these guys. And I hear them jibber jabbering. And Frank comes back. She says they're going to be back in about 15 or 20 minutes. Three trucks pulled in about six guys. They took every piece of furniture, including our sofa, and Frank had a big handful of dollars.

[00:26:32] Claudine Klose

Great story.

[00:26:34] Larry Thetford

Thank you Frank. Boy.

[00:26:36] Claudine Klose

That's great story. So you were here before the restoration started. How would you describe what the Elmendorf Inn was like before?

[00:26:50] Larry Thetford

Yes. Very much. There was an antique shop and I went into that antique shop and the entranceway, the foyer area, the floorboards were not even nailed down. They were loose, warped and wobbly. So you had. It's like walking. Walking across a swaying bridge, and inside was all dark and dingy with plaster falling off the ceiling and the walls. Oh, it was a it was a mess. This. This old lady behind the behind the desk there selling these antiques.

[00:27:34] Claudine Klose

And do you know who was operating the antique store?

[00:27:38] Larry Thetford

I have no idea. At that time, no.

[00:27:42] Claudine Klose

So can you describe one vivid memory of the restoration process? You were so involved. You probably have many, but your most vivid memory.

[00:27:54] Larry Thetford

Yes, I certainly do. So the restorers are working in the professional restorers are working in the tap room. And Bob Bielenberg was the innkeeper at the time. So Bob calls me up and he says, Larry, He said the restorers need to replace one of the rotten floorboards. He says by chance, would you have, you know, a floorboard that might match this? I said, well, I've taken down a couple of barns locally and I've got some barn flooring. I'll check. Well, that flooring was stored in the second floor of my barn. It was July, about 110 degrees up there. And I went through this huge stack of of boards looking for the widest, straightest, the nicest, longest board. I found a perfect board. I mean, it was a beauty. Even had the same patina and everything. So I delivered it. Okay, great. So a couple of weeks went by and I stopped in and I said to the restorers, which is my board, and they said, oh, there's a piece here and there's a piece there and there's a piece here. So they cut that off, that cut that beautiful board all up in little tiny pieces. I could have given a dozen boards to cut up, but not that one.

[00:29:33] Larry Thetford

So yeah, that's my memory.

[00:29:36] Claudine Klose

So this, this question is more about what the when you were involved, what it looked like around you, what it smelled like, what it, what the sounds were like when you were.

[00:29:49] Larry Thetford

Well in there. There's one memory regarding that and that is the south room fireplace and chimney. After 100 and some years of burning, we're going to clean out all the the old creosote and soot. And there were squirrel nests and mouse nests and bird nests up in there. So we had to wear bandanas and, and goggles, and there was soot all over the building and the smell of smoke, soot and charcoal.

[00:30:26] Speaker 3

That's very vivid.

[00:30:28] Larry Thetford

That was vivid smell.

[00:30:32] Claudine Klose

So how did the project get off the ground? As you said, the initial grant of 6000. Is that really what got it off the ground?

[00:30:42] Larry Thetford

No no no, that was before that. Yeah. It was going before that. That was but that was earlier in the process. But I don't remember exactly the timeline on it.

[00:30:55] Claudine Klose

Yeah. Well probably when the Grand Union finally decided to that to sell.

[00:31:00] Larry Thetford

Oh no. The grant was much after that we they were already, you know, in the process, but they were just looking for another source of funding. So, you know, they just went ahead and applied for a grant.

[00:31:12] Claudine Klose

Yeah, but the Grand Union finally, as I recall, Elliot Lindsley finally convinced them to sell to the Friends of Elmendorf.

[00:31:22] Speaker 3

Right?

[00:31:22] Claudine Klose

Yeah. Were you on the first board of Friends of Elmendorf? Were you one of the founding members?

[00:31:30] Larry Thetford

No. No.

[00:31:31] Speaker 3

You weren't?

[00:31:31] Larry Thetford

No, no. I came on board. I mean, I came in as a volunteer about mid 70s, I would say. It was already in the in process. Yes.

[00:31:47] Claudine Klose

So the timeline is hard to reconstruct. But if you mid 70s is when you got involved. So it had been going for several years before that.

[00:31:57] Larry Thetford

Yeah. Yeah.

[00:31:57] Claudine Klose

Early 70s.

[00:31:59] Larry Thetford

Yeah.

[00:31:59] Claudine Klose

All right. Okay. And then finally the restoration took place over stages. So it wasn't completed.

[00:32:07] Larry Thetford

Actually we did room by room, you know, so that, you know, we had one complete. Now we go to the next one. And I believe we actually started the south room in the middle room, tap room. The old kitchen and then the modern kitchen and then went upstairs and did what we needed to do up there.

[00:32:38] Claudine Klose

And it finally was completed in the 1990s.

[00:32:41] Larry Thetford

Was it about about in that range?

[00:32:43] Claudine Klose

Yeah. So 20 years. Yeah, yeah, yeah. So can you describe some of the other people who were involved in the restoration and what their roles were?

[00:32:57] Larry Thetford

Oh yeah. I've already mentioned Richard Coons and Shirley Brown. They were the prime operators of the thrift shop. Bob and Barbara Bellenberg. Barbara had both pre experience and some training in, in restoration, so she lent a great deal of expertise. Bob was the innkeeper and honestly, they were so involved, I thought they were practically living in the Oberndorf. Ellen Phelan, she not only served as treasurer, but as an educator and fundraiser. Doug Stravinsky with his expertise in, in construction and, and carpentry and certainly David Brown, who Will surely. Brown's son and gave an extreme amount of effort and time with this organization. I might mention even Linda Kealing. Linda's a questioning type of person. You know, she makes you, you think and consider alternatives so that we come up with a maybe a better decision. So yeah, a lot of people.

[00:34:47] Claudine Klose

So there were professionals to who you said had to be hired because you couldn't just hire locals. Some of these were local, like Doug Stawinski, but there were some other professionals that were hired. Can you do you remember those names? No, no.

[00:35:05] Larry Thetford

Not at all.

[00:35:06] Claudine Klose

All right. Okay. So what were the biggest obstacles to the process that eventually were overcome?

[00:35:20] Larry Thetford

I guess financially, you know, it was the, the biggest obstacle and challenge. I've already mentioned the problem with the, with the grant. Bottom line, I think those were the, the two biggest obstacles that we had to, had to face.

[00:35:49] Claudine Klose

Was there a time when you were frustrated by the process?

[00:35:57] Larry Thetford

Yeah. When when when I was heading up the the new building construction. We assumed that because of that, again, because of that grant that we would have to do archaeology before we made a disturbance that the state would require that. So I hired Chris Linder out of Bard College to, to do it. He gave us an estimate of \$2,000, which I presented to the board, and that \$2,000 turned into \$20,000 and a great deal of time lost in terms of starting the project. So needless to say, neither I nor the board were too happy about that situation. And in retrospect, you know, that was a new building. That was that was not a restoration project. So I'm not sure that we really did need to do the archaeology in. But anyway.

[00:37:28] Claudine Klose

But the restoration of the building of the Elmendorf in. There was some archaeology involved as you worked on some of the the walls, the rebuilding the walls and the foundation.

[00:37:42] Larry Thetford

I think there was a. I think it actually might have involved of. Out of New Paltz, the Joe Diamond did some work. They brought All this. This fellow down from I can't remember. He had built a little village up there around Nassau.

[00:38:14] Claudine Klose

Greenfield village.

[00:38:16] Larry Thetford

Greenfield village? I've forgotten the guy's name, but he had expertise that they brought him in. But actually, most most of the archaeology and and that type of work. I think we really did ourselves.

[00:38:33] Claudine Klose

I know the attic has a bunch of boxes with artifacts from the archaeological process.

[00:38:40] Larry Thetford

That's all that was all for from the.

[00:38:43] Claudine Klose

From the new building.

[00:38:43] Larry Thetford

Really new building.

[00:38:45] Claudine Klose

Interesting.

[00:38:46] Larry Thetford

Correct.

[00:38:46] Claudine Klose

Interesting. So do you have any stories to share about disagreements among the team? Did people disagree about how to go about the restoration?

[00:39:00] Larry Thetford

Not really. I would say disagree. But, you know, as as I mentioned before, you know, it's a discussion type of thing to come. However, I can tell you one little story. This is a story that not too many people are aware of. The Egbert Benson Historical Society, which was separate from the Friends of Elmendorf, had had their room up at the. North second room floor. Okay. And Barbara Bielenberg was probably the president at the time and very involved with the historical society also. So remember now we're trying to bring the Elmendorf Building back to period, and plaster and lath that was present at the beginning was not period. So most of that had been removed, but there was still a plaster ceiling in that Upper North room. And Barber was in a quandary as to whether we should repair that or take it out. But she couldn't make up her decision, and we kept asking her, well, what are we going to do? And she would wobble back and forth. So one Sunday morning, Jack Lewis, who was the principal of the elementary school, and I showed up. I parked back my trailer right up under the window of that room, We went upstairs with crowbars and hammers, and that ceiling went right out the window and into my trailer and off to my dump. And when Barbara returned to the room, it was a done deal.

[00:41:11] Claudine Klose

Decision was made for her.

[00:41:15] Larry Thetford

Not. She was real happy, but she did accept it.

[00:41:21] Claudine Klose

So lastly, I'm sure you may have other things that you want to fill in the gaps, but were there any surprises as you were going through the restoration process?

[00:41:31] Larry Thetford

Yeah. There we found a pair of old shoes in the walls. This is a, an old world thing that, that they did to, to. Scare away the evil and and provide good luck. So we found those and they're on display.

[00:42:04] Claudine Klose

Do you remember where you found them? Where they.

[00:42:08] Larry Thetford

No, I do not. Which wall? Yeah. I think the the the post and beam construction of of that gambrel roof. If you go up in that attic and look at how they built. That was really amazing. That was a surprise to me.

[00:42:33] Claudine Klose

You were impressed.

[00:42:34] Larry Thetford

Yes. And on the south room, fireplace. Chimney. How, how they joined a double flue that that connects up in the upper South room. That was Really impressive also. Oh. And. From my experience, you know, floorboards are either joined by tongue and groove or lap joint. But in that period of time they joined him in a, in a manner that I've never heard of before. And that's what they call splines. So each of those floorboards has a groove on each edge, and then a little board is inserted into that, those two grooves called spline moving. And you know, that's pretty tricky. And that that was a surprise to me.

[00:43:37] Claudine Klose

Interesting. Very interesting.

[00:43:40] Larry Thetford

And, and the method of grain painting. You know, the central hall was initially great painted. And that was a little bit controversial because we had to find a specific person who could really reproduce that green painting, and they were expensive. So that was a little bit controversial. But again, you know the old adage, you know, if you're going to do it, do it right or don't do it at all. So we bit the bullet and went ahead and had that green painted.

[00:44:22] Claudine Klose

You know, I think you're the only person who's who was involved in the restoration sort of beginning to end to this.

[00:44:29] Larry Thetford

Almost.

[00:44:29] Claudine Klose

Level of detail. Amazing.

[00:44:31] Larry Thetford

Yeah. 50 years is a while.

[00:44:37] Claudine Klose

So is there anything that we missed that you'd like to fill in to flesh out the story? Oh, is there on the back. Oh, yeah. Yeah. That's right. Anything else?

[00:44:55] Larry Thetford

Well, I'd like to tell you a couple of funny stories, a little humor. So. Come the yard sales. Okay. And one of the things we had were what we call box lots, which are just laid on the ground, and people rummage through them. So this fellow who had, like a foreign accent came up to me and he had found a single metal shoe last. You know what? You put in a shoe to stretch it. So he says, what do you want for this? I said, well, how about a dollar? He goes, oh no, no way too much, way too much. I give you a quarter. I said, it's not for me. It's just for this building restoration. Okay, I give you \$0.50. So I said, fine. Give me your \$0.50. So he went about his business and so did I. A little while later he came running up to me and he found the other matching medal won. He says, look, look, I find the other one. What you want? I said, I got you now, buddy, five bucks. Oh, no. You five bucks. And he paid it.

[00:46:19] Claudine Klose

You were a fundraiser par excellence.

[00:46:23] Larry Thetford

So then with the thrift shop. So. Now you have Richard Koons and several elderly ladies that help him out. Okay, so I get a call from Richard at home. He says, Larry, we have this painting and we really can't display it did in the thrift shop, he says. But you might be interested in it. So I come down and sure enough, it's a painting of a naked lady. Okay? So I said. He says, oh, you want it? And I said, well, you know, it'd go good with my. Hudson Bordello lab, you know. So he says, well, what'd you give us for it? Richard's a little rough. Okay. So I said about \$0.50 and he goes, \$0.50. He says, how about \$50? And in front of those old ladies, I leaned in to Richard and I said, Richard, for 50 bucks, I can have the real thing. And they probably fell over.

[00:47:31] Claudine Klose

I'm sure they did.

[00:47:35] Larry Thetford

He got all red in the face and started stuttering and gave it to me for \$0.50.

[00:47:43] Claudine Klose

So I do have a few more questions, which I just realized. So what do you think the Elmendorf means to people today? This, this was, you know, quite a few years ago. What about today?

[00:47:57] Larry Thetford

I think a historical connection, a sense of pride a, a possibility of, of renting a, you know, a historic site to, to, to have private activities or parties then. I think just, just that, that that, that feeling of of accomplishment and, and, and now, now you're using what you've accomplished. So yeah.

[00:48:40] Claudine Klose

If there were a group doing something similar today. What would help them in the process that maybe you didn't have? Help on back then? What kind of advice would you give to people who are trying to save a building now like this?

[00:49:00] Larry Thetford

Well, number one a commitment. I mean, just a tremendously strong commitment. You're going to have to have a tremendous amount of time available on your hands. And if you do make that commitment, you know, follow through and, and keep the commitment, you know, we have seen volunteers who came on strong, but, you know, slowly fizzle out. And that doesn't work when you're halfway through, and now you don't have enough commitment to finish it. So you want that, you know, almost in writing, you know, that that commitment. And, and then to investigate what would be the means to generate the funds, to be able to accomplish what you're going to do. You know, if you don't think that the contributions are going to be out there, that you're going to have the community support behind you or industry behind you or the state grants behind you, then maybe, you know, give up the ship and not do that.

[00:50:29] Claudine Klose

So what are your hopes for the Elmendorf in in the future when we're all past tense? Where do you. What would you hope that the Elmendorf End would be for the community?

[00:50:45] Larry Thetford

Oh, honestly, I, I can't see anything basically different than. Than what direction that it has arrived at at this point in time. I think the, the goals, not only just the restoration, but the goals of use the goals of the, of educating people and preserving what documents and information that you have that it's being done now. And I don't, I don't see any. Huge potential in the future to, to expand on that just main maintain doing what you're doing. For example, the 2012 Bicentennial. I would hope that, you know, the HRH has that now well documented because 88 years from now, when they're going to run the tricentennial, they're going to want to know what they do for the bicentennial.

[00:51:57] Claudine Klose

Exactly.

[00:51:58] Larry Thetford

As we did. Looking back at what they did for the Centennial.

[00:52:03] Claudine Klose

Absolutely. Well, clearly, the community was lucky to have you, Larry, involved in this process because you were the most committed of anybody I know of as far as getting this building saved and restored to where it is today. So.

[00:52:23] Larry Thetford

Well, it was.

[00:52:23] Claudine Klose

I think the community needs to thank you.

[00:52:25] Larry Thetford

Yeah. Thank you. And it wasn't all work.

[00:52:30] Claudine Klose

It was fun.

[00:52:31] Larry Thetford

Right. You know, you as a volunteer, you should look to enjoy what you're doing and have some fun at it. And the the leadership should certainly look to acknowledge those volunteers and thank them. You know, a pat on the back goes a full, long way. And you do not want to snub volunteers. I have seen two good volunteers who didn't feel that they were acknowledged. And they went looking somewhere else and joined the community center. So it's really important to maintain that relationship. And just keep things rolling along, basically.

[00:53:26] Claudine Klose

Well, you did a great job, Larry. So I think we're almost at an hour. Anything else you want to add as a final word.

[00:53:39] Larry Thetford

Well, I really feel I should tell you the story of the trees. The apple trees.

[00:53:44] Claudine Klose

Tell us the story of the apple trees.

[00:53:48] Larry Thetford

Well, Reverend Lindsay planted two apple trees, one on in front of the Elmendorf, one on either side of of the entrance. Okay. And when they were small, you know, six, eight, ten feet, they were okay. But over time, they grew to 35, 30ft and a huge expansion of foliage. And the elmendorf was they were shading the siding of the elmendorf with the paint was peeling and siding was warping. And they were generating beaucoup numbers of apples which were falling on the sidewalks and our entrance. They were rotting and slippery, and those rotting apples were attracting a gazillion yellow jacket wasps. So I'd get out there and I would rake these apples up by the trailer load, prune those trees. But. When we built the the new carriage barn, we finished it. Now it's a sign. Okay. For we need a sign for the the the thrift shop. But the zoning board said no. Only one signpost per parcel, but we got to have the other one, so. We pulled up the Elmendorf post and left the thrift shop post. Well, they went out there and one of those apple trees had a branch that was perfectly horizontal and sticking out toward route nine. So I looked at that and I said So I hung the Elmendorf sign from that apple branch, and we left it there for about two years. And then one evening we came back with a posthole digger and we reset the post.

[00:56:22] Larry Thetford

We rehung the sign just as you have it out there now, and nobody ever said a word. Anyway, coming back to the apple trees, that was a positive for the apple trees. But now let's look at all the negatives. So finally, you know, I approached the board. I said, look, these these apple trees are really getting to be a problem. L and I did research on old ends. They did not have any ornamental materials out there. The stagecoach came right up the front. The people embarked, disembarked, and that was it. So I said, really? They got to go. No, no. Reverend Lindsay planted these. We can't touch him. So one Sunday morning, I showed up with my trailer and a chainsaw. And that was the end of the. So about what? 2 or 3 years ago, the friend, the HRH honored Reverend Lindsay. Okay. For the dinner. And he got up and made a little acceptance speech. And in that speech he made, Mitch, he said, somebody cut down my apple trees. So when he finished, I stood up and I gave a little litany on the problems that the trees were creating. And I turned to Reverend Lindsay and I said, so, sir, I'm your culprit. I'm the one that cut down your trees, and I'm proud of it.

[00:58:01] Claudine Klose

You confessed.

[00:58:03] Larry Thetford

I did.

[00:58:04] Claudine Klose

Thank you. Larry.

[00:58:06] Larry Thetford

Okay.

[00:58:07] Claudine Klose

Very entertaining, a wonderful interview. Really appreciate it.

[00:58:10] Larry Thetford

Okay.

[00:58:11] Claudine Klose

We may even have you back for part two. You probably think of other things that you forgot.

[00:58:18] Larry Thetford

And if so, yeah, that was quite a list.

[00:58:20] Claudine Klose

Well, tell.

[00:58:20] Larry Thetford

Us stuff that you have, questions that you submitted to me.

[00:58:25] Claudine Klose

All right. Thank you so much.

[00:58:27] Larry Thetford

Okay. All right.



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