

FOUNDING AND GROWTH OF THE BEACHY AMISH CHURCH
OF LANCASTER COUNTY

Transcript of interview of Aaron S. Glick at his home near Lancaster on March 22, 1985, conducted and edited by Daniel Moyer, Paradise, Pennsylvania and typed by Kate Stoltzfus.

Brother Aaron, you were with the Amish Mennonite or the Beachy Church since its beginning here in Lancaster County, weren't you?

Aaron: No, I was baptized in the Old Order Amish Church and in 1923 my parents made a change to the Christ King church, which was called the Beachy church at that time. That group originated in 1911 but we didn't become a part of it until 1923.

Could you give us some information on ~~how~~ how the Beachy church first began in Lancaster County?

Aaron: The way the Beachy church first began in Lancaster County was that among the Old Order groups here they decided to enforce strict ban between the churches. In other words, if anyone was going to make a change to fit with another church they were going to put them in the strict ban, as they called it strict miting. There were some of the members who said that they wouldn't go along with this. At that time there were 8 or 9 groups of Amish here and some of them said they wouldn't go along with this so they separated from the others and here they were without a head. They didn't have any ministers; there were no ministers that went along. There were some ministers who were in favor but they weren't willing to cut off because of the social aspect of it. So here they were. There were I think 39 families, and they needed some help. Now the Mennonite church or the Morgantown church (John Mast) wanted to help them because here were people who didn't have any ministry. They met once on a Sunday afternoon over along the Groffdale Road in an old tobacco shed and John Mast offered to help them and be their bishop oversite. But they didn't want that because they wanted to continue being Amish. In other words they wanted to stay Amish; they weren't interested in anything different, but they just didn't want the unscriptural avoidance, the ban, as it was being put on the people now. And so they were trying to get help from the different Amish churches. There were Amish churches west of here who didn't enforce the ban. They kept it like the Amish used to have it here but they weren't able to help. As soon as those people wanted to help here then the Amish here said you do that and we'll not have anything to do with you so they were scared to come. So finally there was a group in Belleville - 2 churches in Belleville, 2 congregations and the ministers agreed to take voice with their own congregations.

to come and help these people or at least to interview it. They both decided that if they get the voice of their own congregation they would come down and look into this thing. In the meanwhile before they got this done, there was a minister from here by the name of Jake Lapp who contacted one of the ministers of one of the congregations there and he got him convinced that they shouldn't do this so when the time came to take voice of the congregation, instead of taking voice to come down and help, they took voice not to help. So then he didn't get the voice of the church and he didn't do as he had agreed to take voice. But I'm told that he took voice not to help. Well, then there was a division in Belleville and the other group, which was John Zook was the bishop and Sam Peachy was the minister. I think they had several others, but those two came down and investigated and helped the people here. This was how then that this was called the Peachy church because Sam Peachy was the main helper. There were several others but this was called the Peachy church. And these then stayed horse and buggy Amish until 1928. In 1928 by this time it was kind of a transient church.

What year had the Amish split from the main Old Order branch to the 35 or 39 families?

Aaron: I think it was in 1909.

So they stayed horse and buggy until 1928?

Aaron: That's correct. But what happened then because they could make a change many of them changed then to the Millwood church. Many of the members went to the Millwood church because they wanted cars and they wanted other things too. Now there wasn't too much life in the church. It was just simply an Old Order Amish church without Sunday School or anything like that. So many of them - quite a few - I think about half of the young people left for the Millwood church and quite a few of the married folks did also. But then it wasn't until 1928; by this time our leaders felt that the time was here that our people would feel comfortable with cars. Not everyone was interested but everyone felt this way. So John A. Stoltzfus was bishop by this time and the bishop then asked the church one Sunday. He said, "Now the time is here when we think that we should consider having the cars, and we think that in two weeks from today we will take voice of the church as to whether those who didn't want cars are willing to have patience with

those who want cars." He didn't say we are going to take the voice whether to allow them but this is how we are going to do it. So then when the time came they nearly all agreed. There were several families, at least one family, who changed over that went back to the Old Order Amish but their young people are nearly all back with our church again today. But that was in 1928. I think it was in September of 1928, so it wasn't until a year and a half or so later that we finally had church in the Weavertown church house. In the meantime several of the members bought the Weavertown church house because it was for sale. It was a Brethren church.

Church of the Brethren?

Aaron: Church of the Brethren, but it wasn't being used anymore. Here it was standing and an Amish man wanted to buy it for a chicken house or for a tobacco shed or something. They found out about it and were able to buy it for \$1000, but it wasn't being used right away. Already in 1925 when my mother died she had suggested that the funeral be held at that place. That was in 1925 but it wasn't until about 1930 that we got the Weavertown Church. Then we still had our services in the German language. It wasn't much different, we were Old Order Amish now who had a church house.

Most of the people had cars by the time they purchased the church?

Aaron: Yes, about all of them, I think there was about one family or so that didn't. I think there was one family who never did own a car. I know when it was suggested, John A. Stoltzfus said he doubts whether he would ever get a car. But it wasn't long until he got a car too. He didn't advocate allowing cars because he wanted one for himself, but he felt this was for the good of the congregation.

Getting back to where we were a little earlier, how did it come about that they obtained their ministry? I understand you stated that there was no ministry from the beginning, from 1909 onward, and they had some direction from Mast at Morgantown, how did they first get thier ministry?

Aaron: The Belleville people would come and have services once a month for this group. See the Amish used to have their services every two weeks and so they would come and have their services once a month. They would come in

by train. Then on the two weeks Sunday in between they would come together and read scripture and sing. Finally the people from Belleville decided to organize these people as a congregation and hold communion for them. I think then 6 months later they thought that by this time they were organized good enough that they could take voice of the group now as a congregation to ordain a minister. So they did ordain a minister; they ordained Christ King and John A. Stoltzfus. I'm not sure whether Christ King was ordained to the bishop service right away or not. But that's how the church was organized in the beginning and then they ordained a deacon sometime later but it was then in 1924 or 1925 that Christ King and Dan Stoltzfus withdrew. Dan Stoltzfus had been ordained later, and he with Christ King withdrew with a few of the older people but that congregation soon went to nothing.

Why did he withdraw?

Aaron: Well the reason he withdrew as I see it, Christ King wanted to have the group keep on being Amish and John A. was more interested in working with the people. For instance driving horse and buggy. By that time the society around them didn't drive horse and buggy so Christ King insisted that they use collars on their harnesses and John A. felt if they wanted the breast straps that would be no issue because they were different from the world already by driving horse and buggy. There were just things like that. And this young minister then who was ordained, Dan Stoltzfus, was very insistent for those things. He was going to make the people come around but not everybody would do that and because not everybody would go along with him they finally withdrew. It had to do with that type of thing. It didn't have anything to do at all with doctrine. But their group didn't survive long.

They still were different than the Old Order Amish?

Aaron: Yes, the Old Order didn't accept them. I could tell you a little bit who the Dan Stoltzfus' boys are, you know anything of Stoltzfus' - Boom's. I think there are a few of them that belong to Bart and they are just as convinced in their minds otherwise as what Dan was that way.

Was that the main issue - that you explained was the use of the ban for members or people who went to other churches or went to like minded churches like

Mennonite Churches?

Aaron: Yes

And whether they should ban then or not. Were there any other issues at that time in 1909?

Aaron: I don't know of any others.

Now it seems to me that you had indicated that the Amish in Lancaster County earlier had not always had that?

Aaron: That's right. They didn't always have that.

About how long or when did they begin to bring that rule in?

Aaron: Well, as far as I know it was only because of the Moses Hart situation. You see the Amish churches divided I think around 100 years ago. Around 1880's there were Ohio Amish churches who decided they were going to have church houses and were going to baptize in the running water, not by immersion, but in the running stream. They felt that was the way it should be. They didn't have cars or electric lights so there was no issue about that and so some of them would come in and preach for some of the churches in here and some of the Old Order ministers said they are not going to work with those who have church houses or who baptize in the running stream. And they are not going to work with anyone who does. The folks in the Conestoga section and in the Maple Grove/Millwood section, they were Old Orders also but they said we will work with them. So there was a division and that was how the Maple Gove, Millwood and Conestoga groups started. But then they could go from the Old Order if they wanted to get married. Say there was a young fellow maybe from the Conestoga and the girl was from the Old Order church and they wanted to get married, they could get married and then go to either church if they wanted to. There was no ban or anything. And that went on from that time until 1909. Then around 1909 when Moses Hart - his son had joined the Mennonites, not the Millwood or the Maple Grove Church but the Mennonites. I don't know what Mennonite church it was but at least they were English speaking people, and so they decided to ban him. He was in the millwright business and was very good in the job and so he felt he couldn't continue as a member

in the Amish church. He needed to make the change on account of the work he had and the Amish decided to put him in the ban. Then Moses Hart, his father, said, "No, that's not right they are a nonresistant church, don't do that." But the Amish insisted that he went English. They weren't honest enough to say that he joined another nonresistant church and that thing then sparked off this thing of what was a division then in 1909. And then they couldn't go from one church to another anymore and if they did they were put in the ban.

So the Amish in Lancaster County from 1909 up until the present day have kept that ban on other.....

Aaron: Yes, now in 1909 then there were a lot of the Amish who didn't go along with the split but who felt the same way. From what I understand they wouldn't go along with it because it would interfere with them socially. The Amish are great in their social life. It would interfere too much, well they thought the ban would not affect them. But it did because some of their own children were placed in the ban. There were many more who were minded like that but didn't go along with the division.

Were the group that became known as the Christ King group, were they placed under the ban when they left the church?

Aaron: No, that was a part of the church. You see if a part of the church breaks off that's different, that's a part of the church.

Even though there was no ministry among them there were still considered a part of the church?

Aaron: That's right, they were still a part of the church. Well, you see when this New Order broke off there was one minister with them.

What kind of relationship was there soon after 1909 between the two Old Order Amish and the Beachy group?

Aaron: There were some bitter feelings.

On both sides or mainly on the Old Order side?

Aaron: I'm not able to say about the other side because we were Old Order. I remember hearing them talk about it as a boy.

I see, so you were yet on the Old Order side?

Aaron: I just remember hearing them talk about it.

And they weren't too happy with the situation?

Aaron: They weren't too happy with it, no. They felt they were heretics because they felt they just made this move because they just wanted more liberty. That's what they said.

And yet as you see looking back they really were practically no different than what.....

Aaron: That's right, they were no different.

Was there any influence from the Mennonites at all on the Beachy groups at this point?

Aaron: I'm not sure that there was much influence although they had a harmonious relationship. There were times already when they had a funeral when the language was German that they would get a Mennonite preacher to preach part of the funeral service. So that was an indication that they were.

They would preach in German?

Aaron: No, they would preach in English. You could get him to preach in English because there were people there that couldn't understand German. So that was an indication that there was a good relationship.

They didn't seem to have too much relationship with the Conestoga or Millwood groups after they got their own ministers?

Aaron: Yes, there was some. Because there was a time when the deacon had made a rather serious mistake with his deacon work with the alms fund. Since it was on the bench, Bishop John A. Stoltzfus felt unable to handle it

so he contacted Bishop John Mast of the Conestoga Church and Bishop John Kennell of the Millwood Church to come and help them. And they came and helped them to straighten things out. That was back in the 1920's, it might have been in 1927, I can't tell you exactly what year. But that was after Christ King had withdrawn.

And you were already members at that time?

Aaron: Oh yes, we were members there when we got married. So we had the church house for our wedding. But they asked John Mast and John Kennell to come and help so they brought their deacons along. They helped us straighten things out.

Harmonious relationship?

Aaron: Yes, it was very harmonious.

Did other issues develop between the Beachy group and the Old Order as years went by?

Aaron: I don't know of any because they more or less left each other go. Except those of course who had family relationships, why they still socialized if there were weddings or anything like that. They were all invited, except those who were in the ban. Those who were in the ban were outcasts and they didn't invite them.

Could members from the Old Order church come across to the Beachy church without being put in the ban - like in 1918 or 1920?

Aaron: Absolutely no, that's the reason I've been in the ban for 60 years.

So you're in the ban today?

Aaron: I'm under the ban today as according to their idea.

Now that you've brought up that topic would you care to tell us how you decided to leave the Old Order Amish church and join the Beachy church?

Aaron: The reason I decided to leave the Old Order Church is because my parents - My oldest brother had married a girl that belonged to the Christ King church, it was the Christ King church at that time. He had been excommunicated and then he wanted to join church again and the Old Order here claimed they wouldn't receive him. They wouldn't receive him unless she came too and now it wasn't really true but they pretended - they claimed later that that wasn't the case - but they pretended that they wouldn't receive him unless she came. So he got his membership then with the Christ King church. Well, then he was in the ban and our whole family was supposed to put the ban on our brother and my parents on their son. Well, they said they wouldn't do it. So we just quietly, my parents decided to make the change and that we as children should all go along. It was a matter of honoring our parents; at that time I had no idea of making a change. I probably would have later but I wasn't thinking of anything like that at the time. Although there was one thing about it. There was a little more decency so to speak among those young people. They used Church and Sunday School Hymnals in their singings and things like that which the Old Order didn't. They were a little more respectable.

So they sang from the Church and Sunday School Hymnal?

Aaron: At their Youth Meetings - at their youth gatherings.

Would that have included the English section also?

Aaron: All together the English section. Now with the Amish you didn't dare do that. I doubt whether they would want them to do it as yet, I don't know. But that was far out - using English. Singing English, they weren't supposed to even read the Bible. I know of one, when I was with the Amish - a chum of mine - I bought him an English Bible and he had to get rid of it because he was supposed to read it in German.

Was Bible reading encouraged at all?

Aaron: Not especially. You listen to the preacher as far as the Old Orders were concerned. Now there were some who encouraged it by and large I wouldn't say it was encouraged too much.

Lena Glick: It was encouraged to be read at home but not at church together.

You mentioned some of the early leaders of the church, Christ King and John A. Stoltzfus.

Aaron: That's right. Christ King had been ordained bishop but then he withdrew. Of course then John A. was ordained bishop. And then George Beiler - it was John A. and Mose Riehl. Mose Riehl had been deacon but then at another ordination he had been set up as a minister. And then they had another minister ordination and George Beiler was ordained (that's Christ Beiler's father).

Looking at some more influence the Mennonite Church may have on the Beachy Amish by the way how did they get their name Beachy?

Aaron: There was a minister in western Pennsylvania - a church Amish Church - by the name of Mose Beachy and he was instrumental in setting up various congregations it seems in Ohio and Indiana and various places when there was some groups who were dissatisfied with the Old Order Church and they had a minister maybe who had been silenced. I know of two places where there were some ministers who had been silenced. They would call this Mose Beachy to come. He would restore him to his ministry and set up a group. He did this in various places - in Ohio and Indiana - and so they were called the Beachy church from Mose Beachy. Of course we never were Beachy but since we worked with them they called us Beachy too. Those earlier congregations, most of them, did pan out. It seemed there had to be new life come up within those groups. The Beachy churches today are by and large a deep spiritual people but the other ones weren't.

Do you believe that Moses Beachy was a spiritual person himself?

Aaron: Well, not very deep. I still say that if he and John A. would have worked together a little more John A. Stoltzfus was not minded to go and help everyone like that without some investigation and looking into things. If Mose wouldn't have been so much in a hurry. It seemed to be a great honor to him to start a church somewhere. Then John A. had to go along later and settle some of the fuss. If John would have been with him in the beginning there wouldn't have been so many churches started so quickly. There would have been more time spent I'm sure of that. More time spent and more looking into because some of those early setups didn't have a good foundation at all.

About what time period did the term Beachy begin to be applied to the church at Weavertown? Not until after it was a church house?

Aaron: Not until after there was a church house. I don't think it was quite right away but almost right away by other people. But in the immediate community with the Millwood people and the Morgantown people and the Amish, they called us the Beachy's.

So that would have taken many years to gradually change over?

Aaron: To gradually change over, yes.

What did they call themselves at the church, what name did they give their church?

Aaron: Nothing more than the Weavertown Church?

When did the term Amish-Mennonite come into use?

Aaron: That term is pretty general; that was before even, you see nearly all the Mennonite churches west of Harrisburg were at one time Amish. Now that's in Elida, Ohio, and Johnstown, Pa. and all those places. Now not Franconia, but nearly all those were at one time and so when they got church houses they called themselves Amish Mennonite. Nearly all the Mennonite churches, now I don't think that's true still in Illinois, but nearly all of them were at one time Amish. It's kind of hard for them to believe. You talk to some of the Millwood, Maple Grove and Conestoga young people and tell them your folks used to be Amish, why they would say no there were never Amish, their folks were never Amish, but they were.

After the church house was obtained with the Weavertown Church, did the Weavertown Church in any way work with the Mennonites? Were the Mennonites interested in them as far as any speakers or any connection or any support or any programs back and forth?

Aaron: I know of very little, even when I was ordained to the ministry and that was in 1953. Our deacon said, now you don't go and preach for the Mennonite people around here. They have their preachers. So there was very little

going back and forth. I don't think George Beiler or John A. or Deacon Aaron ever spoke in a Mennonite Church on assignment.

And they would never have a Mennonite minister come in and speak to them except for perhaps a funeral?

Aaron: Oh yes, they did have someone come in one time and speak on nonresistance. They had a Mennonite speaker who was giving a series of messages. I think it was on nonresistance. That was one case where they had a Mennonite minister come in and talk - I think it was on nonresistance.

Regarding World War II, was there any collaboration between the Mennonites and Weavertown?

Aaron: Not as far as MCC was concerned and also as far as going to the camps was concerned and all that kind of thing. But we had our own program.

Your own program?

Aaron: We had our own program. I was one of those who was called upon to visit . . . Oh, not World War II yet . . . it was later on when I was called upon to visit our boys.

Korean War?

Aaron: Well, during the draft anyhow to visit our boys. No, they went to camp and they pretty much worked with whoever happened to come in. What I mean, if a Mennonite minister would come in he would speak to them or like that. They were in these camps with Mennonites and with the various other groups.

In World War II?

Aaron: That's right.

And later on in the draft then the Beachy Amish formed their own....

Aaron: Formed our own group, yes, our own organization so to speak. We had

units at different places but some of our young people also worked in hospitals and boarded out on their own, which wasn't the best.

Did some of the members of the Weavertown group attend Mennonite meetings in the early days or when did that start?

Aaron: Well, some of the members, some of those who were in the ban would attend Mennonite meetings and that was already in the late 20's. And I know for instance we would go to mid-week prayer meeting and Bible Study at the Sunnyside Mission in Lancaster because we felt very much at home with those people. But generally speaking this was not the case.

Did the Ministers receive any training or any instruction from any meetings or schools of the Mennonites?

Aaron: No, now for myself I got some from the Winter Bible School and I also went to a non-denominational school to get a working knowledge of the Bible. But the others didn't. Now in the latter years they have, but this was before there was a Millwood Bible School. I remember very well when the first Bible School was in Maple Grove, that was in 1936, and there were a few of our people that went but not many. And there were some of them who never attended. But there were quite a lot of them who did go and they were very much benefitted by going.

Would the leaders have discouraged the membership from attending Mennonite meetings?

Aaron: I don't think so, I don't think they would have discouraged them from attending Bible School because I know sometimes they had attended as a matter of visiting not so much they wanted to attend the meeting from the stand point of meeting but as a matter of visiting the other congregation.

I understand that a number of the members attended the Brunk Brothers' Revivals in 1951 at Lancaster. Could you relate that story?

Aaron: Yes, that was kind of an interesting experience. A year or so before the Brunk Revival Meetings Andrew Jantzi had meetings in the community, conservative minister, tent meetings. And Abner Stoltzfus and I thought that

we should get him to have tent meetings near Intercourse so we have something for the Amish. And we discussed it with Andrew Jantzi and gave it some prayerful attention and didn't feel that he was moved for this. Well, then the next thing we knew the Brunk Brothers were having tent meetings in Lancaster. That was outside the Amish community and so of course we didn't know but if we would have had it in the Amish community they wouldn't have come. But now this was, that was for the Mennonites. Most of our people attended and quite a lot of Amish. Some of our people attended there and one man came up sometime in the middle of the night - around 2:00 - to talk to George. He got him out to talk to him and then a day or so later he went and plowed down his tobacco. There was a real awakening among our people. And I know that from October or the end of September of that year, in 1951, there were something like 20 of our people that got up to make confessions or recommitments or something like that and some of the older members. Our church was small at that time so that was a lot of people for us. And from that time on the Weaver-town Church became alive. And we have to give credit to the influence of the Brunk meetings in Lancaster for the life that sprung up in the Weaver-town Church. So the Lord was working, if we would have had Andrew Jantzi to have meetings in Intercourse that would have been fallacy but this one here worked. And there were a lot of Amish that went in there and they got saved.

Did some of them end up coming over to the Weavertown Church?

Aaron: There were probably some but I don't know just how many there would have been. Not too many. There was a spiritual group started among the Amish.

Among the Old Order Amish?

Aaron: That's right?

How did they interact with the rest of the Old Order Amish?

Aaron: Well they sort of learned who they could associate with and who they could talk to. And there was a spiritual group among the young people. A very spiritual group which was a result of those meetings there. So the Mennonite Church through the Brunk meetings had a tremendous influence on our people.

Did the Weavertown Church pretty well as a whole then accept and were influenced by the Brunk Meetings? There wasn't much opposition within the church?

Aaron: No, I don't think there was any opposition within the church. There were some of them that didn't condone it but they didn't let it affect them too much. I don't think any of the ministers objected although they weren't as thrilled about it as some of the members were. But I think generally speaking most of the members were benefitted but there were some of them who wouldn't have gone and they kept on in their ways so to speak.

Then the Brunk Meetings brought about a definite change in their way of life as far as growing tobacco and the use of it?

Aaron: That's right and yet there were still some who used tobacco and we didn't really take any stand on it but I remember the first time that I preached about tobacco. I remember this very well. I didn't get up and say, "Well, now if you use tobacco that's a terrible sin." I said something about the Dr. Lambie work in Ethiopia. I said that after the missionaries came back - after the Italians were out the Mennonites came in - they said, "Did you see any effects of Dr. Lambie's work?" "Oh, yes they said we did, they said that in the villages where Dr. Lambie worked as a doctor you could easy tell . . ." well, he was a missionary doctor, he was a Christian, you could easy tell those who became Christians because in the village compound each one had his own garden. And there was one section in the garden where each one would grow his own tobacco. But the Christians then instead of growing tobacco in that section grew flowers. And I said, it seems to me that we should know as much as the heathen in Ethiopia.

How did they respond to that?

Aaron: Well, there was one brother that didn't like that but his daughters then (one of them is Ruth Beiler) [talked to him and] all at once their father stopped using tobacco. Then they said was it maybe something that Aaron said that made you stop using tobacco. He didn't like that but it got in that the heathen at least know that it doesn't belong to a Christian. That was the first. But there wasn't too much, what I mean we didn't get up and preach about it but we got finally to place where they wouldn't accept any members from other churches who would use tobacco or would grow tobacco. And finally they were getting rid of it all together. But that's how it worked.

Were there any other practices that you could think of that changed with the Brunk Revivals that brought a difference to the church?

Aaron: I would think that the young people, that the morals of the young people were entirely changed through that. I know that they young people decided that they were going to be spiritual with high standards. And I know that the day that I was ordained to the ministry the young people were together that afternoon, all afternoon in prayer meeting. And several years before they wouldn't have thought of anything of that, but the Brunk Meetings did something to our young people - it raised their moral standards.

Lena: Bishop Johnny Stoltzfus required that those who made confessions at the Brunk Meeting should also do them at home.

Aaron: I wasn't aware of this, you see I wasn't in the ministry at that time. I don't think there was anything more.

I understand you to be saying that there really wasn't too much influence or interaction between the Mennonites and the Beachy's during this period of time.

Aaron: No, before the Brunk Meetings there was very little.

The Brunk Meetings were the first major impact the Mennonites had on them.

Aaron: That's right.

What would you say were some of the growing pains of the Amish Church before the Brunk Meetings?

Aaron: Before the Brunk Meetings I don't know if they very much, except that some of them wanted some changes, some modern improvements which they couldn't have and they tried to have them anyway, but more than that I don't know that there was too much change. Because among the Amish, now you're talking about the Old Order Amish now?

I really was talking about the Beachys, but we'll continue with the Old Order and then we'll talk about the Beachys.

Aaron: Well, with the Old Order they are very careful because they are interested in "What would the people say ". So you don't kick over the traces too much if you don't want to be looked upon as the black sheep. And that's a very big thing with the Amish, I'm not sure that there was quite as much difference like that with the Beachy's.

With the Beachy's did you see any growing pains in the Weavertown Church after the 1920s to the 1940s - What changes came into the church? They received their church building just prior to 1930?

Aaron: About 1930. I can't say there was too much change except that we had Sunday School.

When did Sunday School come in?

Aaron: Sunday School started about 1929 or 1930 - around the time we got the church house.

Did you have preaching every Sunday at that time?

Aaron: No, we just had Sunday School and then of course we would have a devotional period before the Sunday School. And the Sunday School was just simply you had two chapters and you would read them in the class. Two shole chapters, there was very little discussion. I remember one time I said something about - I don't know where we were - but it had something to do with the rapture and I was told that it's just not that way.

So there wasn't very much understanding on Escatology?

Aaron: No, there wasn't any. Our old ministers just knew that you stayed here until there was a Ressurrection and everybody would come up then and would be resurrected then and would come to the judgement and find out where you go. You certainly knew a little bit before you died but that was when you really found out then. You might even be surprised because when did you see him and when did this or that [happen]. Understand what I'm saying? It was a little that way. There wasn't even assurance of salvation in the 40s. And this was one thing some of our families had other members that had joined the Mennonite Church and found Assurance of Salvation. They really gave some

of the Beachy members a hard time. You know about this assurance of salvation I am told that Elam Kauffman even once argued against that, against assurance of salvation. I am told that Elam Kauffman even once argued against that, against assurance of salvation, but he finally changed his mind, and found that you do have assurance of salvation because he had it too.

Did the assurance of salvation receive a great boost in adopting that belief with the Brunk Brothers campaign. Would that have made a major

Aaron: No, I don't know whether that had anything to do with it, whether they had it before I'm not clear on that now.

It apparently came in more gradually.

Aaron_: It came in more gradually, that's right. It was probably before that.

By 1950 the Weavertown Beachy Amish were really not too different than the Old Order Amish except they had the church house, they cars, they had Sunday School by that time, but in many other ways they weren't. . .

Aaron: Spiritually there wasn't much difference. I'm sorry to say but that's just the way it was. If you wanted to talk to anyone after church about the only thing you would talk to them about was "Did you get your corn planted, or Did you get hay made, how are your cows doing?" and you couldn't raise a spiritual conversation with the people generally speaking. You just couldn't. But that thing changed and we praise the Lord that it did.

They had some of the modern conveniences at that time as far as on their farms?

Aaron: Oh yes, they had anything that was to be had.

It would have been similar to the Mennonites?

Aaron: Yes, as far as modern conveniences are concerned.

So then the Brunk Meetings really was a turning point for the Beachy Church?

Aaron: Yes, very, very definitely.

Could you detail some of the changes in the church in the 1950s that came as a result of the Brunk Revivals?

Aaron: Well, first of all, as I said before, the morals of the young people and their spiritual interest. They wanted Bible Study now and they wanted a Lord's acre and things like that, a missionary activity and all that kind of thing. And the next thing we had Young People's Meeting and Tract Band and quite a few other things. There was spiritual activity within the group that was unknown but it didn't come all overnight. These things were growing pains they didn't get them all overnight. They had to be approved of by the church first, which was all right - which was all right to have it approved of by the church. So these things had to be approved before they could do that and it was nice that they worked through the church.

Was it usually a unanimous vote or majority vote?

Aaron: I guess it was nearly the majority? Because the way that John A. Stoltzfus our bishop would present the things to the people, by the time he was presenting it, the thing about it was that they had confidence in their leader and if he advocated something it was pretty hard for them, there were always some who were a bit contrary minded, they didn't always voice their contrariness but it seemed there were always a few who were that way but generally speaking there wasn't too much opposition.

So they proceeded with discretion and a little slowly and not too quickly to ruffle the feathers so by the time they had explained it to the people and left them think about it - probably brought some messages which would be in those areas - the people realized that this was for the best?

Aaron: That's right. It took a little time but they needed to get the people's hair stroked down the right way before you would - you can't get their hair to stand on end and then try to get something through. That won't work.

Were there people at times who had left the church because of -

Aaron: The only time that I know of any that left the church was when they allowed the cars, there were several families that left.

And went back to the Old Order?

Aaron: And went back to the Old Order, yes.

Did you continue having some of the Old Order trickle over to the Weavertown Church?

Aaron: Oh yes, there's been that thing for the last years, although it stopped about 18 years ago. About 18 years ago when this group broke off to form the New Order they didn't come any more. I wouldn't say there weren't any - but hardly any. There have been some of the New Order who have changed their membership to our church, but since about 18 years ago when this New Order group broke off they haven't been coming, because they felt more comfortable with the New Order group - those who wanted to make a change.

When did the Beachy church get into any kind of relief work?

Aaron: Well, the first relief work wasn't a church project but happened right after at the end of the World War II. We Glicks, my brothers and I, had German workers working for us. And when they went home - in fact there was one that worked there for two days - and when they went home they wrote to us telling us the awful need, the serious need in their home villages where there were thousands of people there that didn't have clothing to wear or anything like that and so we made the need known among our people and we were able to send small packages as individual families. I think there were over 100 packages sent there and a lot of the people helped. You could send only 10 pounds. But there was a lot of help, you might say it was a small part but it was a real help. You didn't have any clothing and you get something like that. I mean their clothing were about all tattered. So that was the first. A little later then there was relief work, relief packages sent over but there was work in Berlin, Germany with the refugees there

What organization was that?

Aaron: I guess, I have an idea the A.M.A. was organized by that time. I think they called it A.M.A. by that time. But that was later than the first relief packages. I think we have here when the A.M.A. was - yes, the first project of A.M.A. was the mission in West Berlin, Germany. This was in 1956. You see it was already in 1949 when these packages were sent over. So this

was much later. In May 1962 the A.M.A. opened a project in El Salvador.

Let's take a little different direction now. You were ordained at the Weavertown Church?

Aaron: I was ordained at the Weavertown Church on November 15, 1953. I was 50 years old.

So was there a previous minister that had died or the church was growing?

Aaron: No, well, what had happened was the minister John A. and George Beiler were old people and the deacon was - well I'd say he was up in years. And Elam Kauffman was the only young man and John A. thought that the time was here when they should think about ordaining another bishop and he had said something to George Beiler and George felt he was too old to be bishop. It was just around the time when his wife died. And so John A. said that maybe we should have another ordination. Then Elam said he didn't want to to to the lot alone for bishop and so they were going to have an ordination. So they decided to have an ordination and that's how I got ordained to the ministry there. They didn't ordain bishop then right away for obvious reasons.

How were the Pequea and Mine Road congregations started?

Aaron: Well, what happened the Weavertown congregation got pretty filled up.

Had most of the Weavertown Congregation in the beginning come from that immediate area around Weavertown?

Aaron: Yes, pretty much so. But then there were also some from Honey Brook area and some from the Gap area and so they decided to build a church to accomodate both the Gap people and the Honey Brook people by building a church at Pequea. And so we didn't have it very long until one day we took 40 people - families with their children. So the Pequea church got filled up but these folks were mostly from the Honey Brook area. Well, now this church was over near the Old Road and yet there were a lot of people in the Gap area. It was decided that we need another church because Pequea was getting full; They had to use side benches. So they decided -

- they settled on a site along Mine Road to build a church there. And that is then how the churches got started.

Pequea was in what year?

Aaron: Pequea was built, started in 1962 and the ministry was established in 1969. We used to have a rotating ministry but it was established in 1969. And it wasn't long after we had established the ministry that we began to use the English language.

So up until about 1970 German was used exclusively?

Aaron: No, up until 19 - yes pretty well into the 60s.

But they were using the German language almost exclusively at Weavertown?

Aaron: Yes, pretty much, but it got to - I'm not sure what year it was - they decided to have the Sunday School in German and then of course it changed over when those folks came over from the Honey Brook area. - Lena says there were 7 families but around 40 people.

They hadn't taught the German language at home and here there were young people who didn't understand so it was senseless for us to try to preach to those people in a language that they didn't understand.

So you from the time of your ordination up until the late 60s preached in German?

Aaron: Mostly, it didn't make any difference to me, either language, and it still wouldn't although I have practiced using English more now because of quotation of scriptures. I couldn't quote them all anymore in the German. But at that time it didn't make any difference.

How did the Refton Church fit into this picture?

Aaron: Now what happened to the Refton Church, there were some folks living in that area and they wanted to start a congregation there and they did. There were some ministers ordained but the Refton Congregation was never

cohesive; they were never the kind of congregation that stuck together. If there were special meetings, say if they had a speaker on a Sunday evening, they didn't all come. If a church wants to prosper when there is something they need to all support it. And it just went that way and finally they were less and less interested. They just didn't hold together.

Did some go over to the Mennonites?

Aaron: Yes, when they closed the doors some of them went over to the Mennonites. Some of the young people and some of the young marrieds changed over to the Mennonites soon after they were married. The Refton Church never seemed to prosper. I'm not just sure really what the reason was except that I feel that they were never too much interested in working together as a congregation.

No enough unity there?

Aaron: Yes, I guess that would be the thing. I think that is pretty much the situation there and finally they just dissembled.

How would you consider the relationship between the Beachy churches in Lancaster County today with the Mennonites?

Aaron: Well, you have a question that's a little hard to answer because of the drift in the Mennonite churches as far as throwing the covering away and things like cut hair. There's no fellowship with them because of that. No fellowship at all. Now we're not condemning them. That's not the issue but we just wouldn't - well those who don't have cut hair, etc that of course we would fellowship with them in pulpit ministry - exchange pulpits with them and have at times. But those who have thrown those things away we wouldn't that's just all there's to it.

The Beachy's do work with the Conservative Mennonites that maintain these distinctives?

Aaron: That's right, Conservative Mennonites groups we are willing to work with them and we do some. There isn't much need but there are times when this is done.

An example is probably with Faith Mennonite High School which was jointly established?

Aaron: Yes, that's right. And you take the Weavertown Christian Day School. There are Mennonites and Amish, even Old Order Amish. One thing they do, I understand that they won't accept any children from families that have T.V. I'm told that although I haven't heard that directly. I think that is a very good rule.

I'd like to ask you two questions regarding this area: 1st) What do you believe is the distinctives of the Beachy Amish today as opposed to the Conservative Mennonites? 2nd) What direction do you see the Beachy Amish going today as we are seeing more of a change among the Mennonites and a small change among the Beachy in the last few years?

Aaron: You're asking two questions that are a little hard to answer. As far as the Beachy Amish are concerned, we find that with some of our people I'm afraid they don't have the conviction for separation in dress as we think is biblical, especially having to do with the importance of the covering. This is one of the things which I'm having some concern about. Now of course all the members wear the covering but there is a difference between wearing it from a conviction or wearing it because you need to as members. And this is something that I have some fears about because we have a few who, members who have left (of course we can't use this as a guide) but there are some members who have left and joined more liberal or progressive Mennonite Churches and they were ready to throw their covering and cut their hair immediately. Well, that doesn't sound very good for us as ministers and teachers. We ought to be able to instill in the conscience of the people the importance of the doctrine or the things which we believe as doctrine. Not necessarily that we believe that our way of dress is the only way but we do believe that it does have real value. We believe that when the covering is thrown away then there are a lot of other things coming in like divorce and remarriage and things like that. I don't know whether I'm answering your question or not but this is how we feel about it.

Especially as you would think that what you have seen in the Mennonite Church has followed that pattern.

Aaron: That's right. What we have seen has followed that pattern. And that scares me.

Perhaps you would like to comment a little more on what you believe is unique about the Beachy church today. Are they just another branch of various conservative Mennonite churches particularly as they're increasingly called the Amish Mennonite Church? Will they finally become another Mennonite Church or are there specific distinctives that make them unique?

Aaron: You're asking a question there that is a little bit hard to answer. I feel at the present time there are distinctives [we have] as a people - after all we're Amish and if we give our lifestyle or our spirituality (I'm not necessarily talking about our lifestyle in dress) but if our spirituality is such, should be such, that we as a people could be a light to the Amish groups around us - a light to them to show that it's possible to have a nonconformed lifestyle and be spiritual. This is one of the things - this is our purpose I believe in existing, part of our purpose of existing as a distinctive church different from the Mennonites because the Amish people around us have gone so far out into materialism and this is very sad. They used to be a deep spiritual people. When I was a boy they were. But in World War I they changed. I can still remember - I can see as a boy as I see things how they change from a spiritual people to a people that are very materialistic and if we as a Beachy people, I don't know whether we are getting it done or not, are able to help, to live that kind of a life so that these people can see that materialism is not the answer but that spirituality is first. Maybe we can fill the place that the Lord has for us here between the Amish and the Mennonite churches. This is as I see it.

So the Amish before the World War I as you knew here in Lancaster County among where you lived were a rather very deep spiritual people?

Aaron: They were a deep spiritual people, they would - well they didn't have Sunday School but they only had church services every two weeks but on the in-between Sunday each family, as far as I know they had their own little Sunday School. And I still remember my parents, I was a little boy, I might not have been more than three, but I remember my Father was sitting there and explaining John 3 to my brothers how Nicodemus came at night time.

This type of thing was supposed to be true among the Amish people and not only that - the folks when they retired moved into the "daughty-hause" and they spent a lot of time - they didn't get a job carpentering - they spent a lot of time reading the Bible, reading the Martyr's Mirror. And then they would go and visit their families and visit other people and discuss the things which they read and the younger people would sit in and listen to this thing. They were a spiritual people but after World War I and during World War II they came together - it was easy to make more money, it was easier to get jobs and make more money and then they would, instead of getting together and discussing the things which they read - things that they had learned, well they hadn't read them anymore, they would discuss how this one makes so much money and that one makes so much money doing this or doing that or doing the other thing and from then on things changed. I've spoken to folks who lived through that time and I discussed this thing with them - Old Order Amish people - folks who really knew the Lord and they said, "Yes , Aaron, you're right" - they said that's what happened.

And it's never been the same since?

Aaron: It's never been the same since. So these people need our prayers in our family altars. Hardly a day when we don't pray for our people, because after all we are Amish. Pray for them that the Lord might raise up among their leaders more spirituality. That's sad but that's what happened.

Is there any relationship between the Beachy and the Old Order Amish as far as communication on religious or church matters?

Aaron: I don't think there's any. I think they would say that we are too worldly. And on thin we have Bible Study and when their young people used - I used to spend time with someone in the hospital and so I'd spend time to go and visit them. (When I was Old Order it didn't matter - folks would ask me to go). And if different people would say "If Aaron gets a hold of him, if he gets him started in Bible Study or something like that"... they felt that was a bad influence. You take for instance there was one of our families - - Omar Beiler's. Omar's brother Levi grew up Amish here in the Strasburg Area and then he left the Amish and joined the Mennonites. He went into the army during World War II; he came back and finally he was divorced, remarried and divorced again and landed in the hospital with TB

of the bone or cancer of the bone or something like that in a hospital down in New Jersey - a verterans hospital. I went to visit him and through the various visits he found the Lord before he died. Through that contact Jonas Kauffmans' and Omar Beilers' and a few others also found the Lord. Omar Beiler was a very good Amish brother near Strasburg. He never made any trouble as he dressed right and all that. But when he found the Lord he decided to make the change because he couldn't go to Bible Study and things like that and stay members there. You see that was the catch. They wouldn't have minded staying there provided they could have had Bible Study but they couldn't. And so they left. So folks blamed that on me but I don't mind, because it was all the Lord's work and if those people found the Lord that's what counted. But those kind of things - so the Amish have, no, I don't think the Amish feel quite as bitter towards this New Order Group as they did towards us because there were more people - more families involved with the New Order than there were with us. There was just occasionally a family who left and that was different. There was 500 members who broke off, you see that was a little different.