

Katey Gray

Katey Gray: So I'm Katey Gray and lived here a long time.

So I love our beautiful Hilltowns, and even that we now live in the flatlands, I will always think of this place as my true home, and this is my true family. In 1975, yes, almost 50 years ago, I moved to West Beckett to share a house with a rock band called Shenandoah. Hmm. But, uh, that's another story. Uh, in 1986, we were invited to become caretakers for the **Leonhardt** Estate on Yokum Pond by Fred Leonhardt. His father had been a chemist developing smells and tastes for various food manufacturers, and he hit the jackpot when he and two associates developed the taste of Coca-Cola. Cha-ching, cha-ching. Yeah. All right? The three m- the three of them bought Yokum Pond and the surrounding land, and ultimately, the whole parcel was bought by Fred's father.

Fred absolutely loved it here and there. He'd tell constant stories about his life there. There was an old, little old log cabin that he built. It's gone now, but the, this chimney is still there if you ever, um, kayak around the pond over on the left side. Um, uh, and he would come up in the summers as a kid, and eventually, he built a lovely compound on the lake. There were very... There was, like, no... There was what? Two or three houses across the lake. There was, like, a little camp, but that was it. He owned the whole deal. Um, up the road was a beautiful old red farmhouse high on the hill, and that was the caretaker's house that we had often driven by and always talked about working for Fred and living there. My husband, when we accepted the, the position, my husband kept his business open, uh, the North Becket Auto Body Shop. Anybody get their cars repaired there? And also did, uh, all the caretaking for Fred. Yes, he was known as the czar of the body world- ... just in case you wondered. We happily sold our house on County Road and moved into the red house on top of the hill with my two teenage step-kids, our little daughter, my beloved ancient horse, Mrs. Dream, and an Angora bunny. At that time, there were just, just a few houses on the whole road, um, mostly down below us, and our big red house- ... high on the hill had fabulous views with wide open fields surrounding it. In winter, the road was not plowed below the house, and we could sled almost down to Fred's Snow Road. I got pregnant again and quickly ballooned out into a mama elephant. One morning, as winter was quickly coming on, I went out to feed our bunny and found that the hutch had been ripped open- ... and our poor bunny was gone. We'd been hearing a lot of coyote activity at night and assumed the worst. A few nights later, while we were settling in for bed, I heard some kind of yipping, and then my old mare racing around the pasture that was right across the road from our dooryard. I leapt up and yelled to my husband, "The coyotes are chasing Dream!" I raced down the stairs and ran out to the

pool of light in the dooryard in my long flannel nightie and bare feet, yelling and screaming, "Go on, get out of here!" "Get out of here!" I couldn't see much in the pasture, but could hear my mare, my old, old mare, running, and then yips. I ran out to the edge of the road and started then to whistle my loudest baseball whistle with four fingers to try to scare them away. Um, in the dim light, I could see two sets of eyes shining in the field. Mm. And as I kept whistling, I saw those eyes turn towards me and start moving in my direction. I quit whistling in a hurry- ... turned tail, and began running as fast as my big belly would allow back towards the house. At that point, my husband, the tsar of the body world came racing out of the house in his skivvies and barefoot with his old compound hunting bow and an arrow notched, ready to save the day.

As I turned back to look, I saw two low figures slink across the road and enter into the light of the door yard. There came two small beagles running straight towards where they had been called to come. That's when my teenage son came running out into the frosty night in his skivvies, wielding a baseball bat and yelling his loudest. We all stopped, including the truant beagle dogs and just started to laugh, hopping on our frozen feet under the stars shining down on our raving maniacal family. And that was how we vanquished the fierce and scary monsters and saved Mrs. Dream.

Clapping