

VenessaHamrick_ArthurMcQuiston_010524_TRACK3b_LEMLEY_STEREO

A FILES

[00:00:00]

[00:00:00] **Lemley:** Okay, I am recording, and I'm just going to say a little read in. So, um, we are now recording. My name is Tasha A. F. Lemley, representing Urban Green Lab and Tennessee State University. The date today is Friday, December 5th, 2024. And the time is approximately 2. 30. It's not even approximately 2. 30. It's exactly 2.

[00:00:29] 30. I am at Tent City, um, near downtown in Nashville, Tennessee. And for the purpose of taking a brief oral history of Mama V, um, could you say and spell your name?

[00:00:44] **Hamrick:** Vanessa. V E N E S S A. Last name Carrie. C A R R E Y.

[00:00:52] **Lemley:** And, um, do you consent to be recorded? Yes. Okay, thank you. And, okay, so, first of all, we're [00:01:00] just going to start out with some of the basics about who you are, where you came from.

[00:01:05] So tell me, you know, when, when were you born?

[00:01:09] **Hamrick:** October 19th, 1969.

[00:01:11] **McQuiston:** Where were you?

[00:01:12] **Hamrick:** West Virginia.

[00:01:13] **Lemley:** West Virginia. Who were your parents? What were they like?

[00:01:17] **Hamrick:** Leola and Howard Hamrick. They was good parents. God rest my mama's soul, but

[00:01:26] **Lemley:** Is

[00:01:26] your dad still alive? No. No.

[00:01:29] And um, yeah, tell me, tell me a little bit about them.

[00:01:32] What, what did they do for a living?

[00:01:34] **Hamrick:** My daddy was a coal miner and my mom was a stay at home mom

[00:01:38] **McQuiston:** Wow.

[00:01:38] **Lemley:** Okay.

[00:01:42] **Hamrick:** Yep

[00:01:45] **Lemley:** And, um. And where did you grow up?

[00:01:49] **Hamrick:** West Virginia.

[00:01:49] **Lemley:** West Virginia. What part of West Virginia?

[00:01:51] **Hamrick:** Webster Springs.

[00:01:53] **Lemley:** Webster Springs. What um, what do you remember about your school years?

[00:01:58] How much school do you [00:02:00] have? First of all?

[00:02:00] **Hamrick:** Ten years.

[00:02:01] **Lemley:** 10 years. What do you remember about those years?

[00:02:04] **Hamrick:** It was good. Stayed in trouble a lot, but.

[00:02:09] **Lemley:** What kind of trouble were you getting in

[00:02:11] **Hamrick:** Fights.

[00:02:13] **Lemley:** You were a fighter.

[00:02:16] **Hamrick:** Yeah, still am. But

[00:02:17] **Lemley:** yeah,

[00:02:18] Yeah. Um, what What do you remember What is your earliest memory, you would say?

[00:02:30] **Hamrick:** first starting school.

[00:02:33] Walking to school in the snow because they didn't have buses back then. You had to walk. So, yeah, it was rough, but I made it this far. So,

[00:02:44] **McQuiston:** So you would

[00:02:45] **Lemley:** walk to school at what age, do you remember?

[00:02:48] **Hamrick:** Up there in West Virginia, you walked, starting in kindergarten, we walked.

[00:02:52] **Lemley:** How far do you think you were walking?

[00:02:54] **Hamrick:** About a mile and a half. Mile and a half? There and back.

[00:02:57] **Lemley:** A mile and a half each way?

[00:02:58] **Hamrick:** Mm

[00:02:59] hmm.

[00:02:59] **Lemley:** [00:03:00] In kindergarten? Mm hmm. In the snow? Mm hmm. So you're, you're, you know, you're what the rest of us tell people we know like, oh, when I was a kid, I would walk back to school, back and forth, in the snow, a mile and a half. and um,

[00:03:12] when did Not

[00:03:13] **Hamrick:** only me, there was six of us in a line.

[00:03:16] **McQuiston:** Six.

[00:03:17] **Lemley:** Six. So you had five siblings?

[00:03:19] **Hamrick:** Five sisters.

[00:03:20] **Lemley:** Five si. So there were six of you. Six sisters in a line. Mm-Hmm. . What's the age spread?

[00:03:25] **Hamrick:** A year between us. All of us.

[00:03:28] **Lemley:** So you would be

[00:03:30] **Hamrick:** 54, I'm the third oldest. It goes Darlene, Patty, me, Debbie, Wilma, and Billie Jean.

[00:03:39] **Lemley:** Oh my gosh. Okay. So six sisters walking, walking to school together.

[00:03:44] Are your sisters still alive?

[00:03:47] **McQuiston:** all of them. Yep. That's,

[00:03:49] **Hamrick:** They all live in West Virginia, except me.

[00:03:51] **Lemley:** except you. Um, What time of year do you remember it starting to snow when you were little?

[00:03:59] **Hamrick:** Up there in [00:04:00] West Virginia it could start from October on, just depending on the weather.

[00:04:05] **Lemley:** Okay.

[00:04:07] And um, and

[00:04:10] **Hamrick:** like right now they've already had their first snow and we haven't had nothing yet.

[00:04:14] **Lemley:** Yeah, we really haven't had anything. We had some rain that should have been on Christmas. It

[00:04:18] **Hamrick:** should have been snow, but it wasn't. So,

[00:04:21] **Lemley:** Um, and how long did you live in West Virginia?

[00:04:24] **McQuiston:** to? I

[00:04:25] **Hamrick:** was 17 when I met my baby's daddy and moved to Tennessee.

[00:04:29] **Lemley:** You were 17. Okay, so that would have been about what year?

[00:04:33] **Hamrick:** 85.

[00:04:33] **Lemley:** Okay. Do you do you miss West Virginia?

[00:04:36] **Hamrick:** All the time. We're talking about going back.

[00:04:39] **Lemley:** Okay. Going back permanently.

[00:04:41] **Hamrick:** Mm hmm.

[00:04:42] **Lemley:** Do you, do you get to talk to your sisters?

[00:04:44] **Hamrick:** All the time.

[00:04:45] **Lemley:** Do they live near each other?

[00:04:48] **Hamrick:** This right here is our communication Facebook.

[00:04:50] Okay.

[00:04:51] We stay in touch on Facebook.

[00:04:53] **McQuiston:** Okay.

[00:04:56] **Lemley:** And let me think, [00:05:00] So you moved here at 17, what would you say the weather, the environment was like when you moved here? You said 1985?

[00:05:13] **Hamrick:** It was sunny and warm when I moved here. It was in the summer. It was nice. The only thing I hate about Tennessee is the bipolar weather, as we say.

[00:05:24] **Lemley:** Tell me, tell me what you mean by that.

[00:05:26] **Hamrick:** One minute it'll be hot, next minute it'll be freezing.

[00:05:30] **Lemley:** Was

[00:05:31] **Hamrick:** never know.

[00:05:32] **Lemley:** Was it that way in 1985? Okay.

[00:05:35] Okay. So, okay, so you move here in 1985, you met your, your baby daddy, and when did you have kids?

[00:05:44] **Hamrick:** I had my first one in 89, my second one in 90, and my third one in 2004.

[00:05:52] **Lemley:** Okay. Okay.

[00:05:54] and, and what do you, where are they now?

[00:05:57] **Hamrick:** One of them is in Michigan, where she is a [00:06:00] pharmacy technician.

[00:06:02] My other one lives in Wayneboro, Tennessee. She's a stay at home mom. And my youngest one, unfortunately, is in prison right now.

[00:06:10] At the

[00:06:10] age of

[00:06:11] 19.

[00:06:11] **Lemley:** That's where my brother is right now. So, yeah, I feel it. She's only 19. only 19. How long is he going to be in for?

[00:06:21] **Hamrick:** Eight years.

[00:06:23] **Lemley:** I'm sorry.

[00:06:24] **Hamrick:** He done it to himself.

[00:06:27] Yeah. We tried to lead him the right path and he didn't want to listen, so. Like we've taught him, for every action there's a reaction, and this is his reaction. He's got to live with it.

[00:06:38] **Lemley:** Yeah. It's so hard to stand by and watch. Try to be supportive, and do you get to talk to him?

[00:06:44] **Hamrick:** Sometimes.

[00:06:45] **Lemley:** yeah. Yeah, I'm amazed that, that, um, my brother's been locked up a few times, and it's been, but it's been a minute, so he's 56 now, and he, so he's been out for A long time.

[00:06:58] And now you [00:07:00] can email. He's got, you know, like, like,

[00:07:02] **Hamrick:** all the good stuff, all this, all this

[00:07:06] **Lemley:** all this stuff that we didn't have, you know, the last time he was, yeah. Um, so yeah, I'm sorry about your son. Um, so when you were, so in 1985, you move here and you said right away there's bipolar weather. Do you have any memory of that?

[00:07:24] Like when you first realized the weather was

[00:07:26] **McQuiston:** bipolar?

[00:07:27] **Hamrick:** I was homeless, like he said, cause he was here with me. Cause that's my uncle,

[00:07:31] **McQuiston:** Okay, real

[00:07:32] **Lemley:** quick, who do we have here with you?

[00:07:36] **McQuiston:** was born and raised here in Nashville. And What was your name one more time? Arthur McQuiston.

[00:07:42] Yeah. And like I said, I was born and raised here in Nashville. I've been all over the world. And the weather here is so unpredictable. Like I said, right now, you see how pretty it is right now? Yeah.

[00:07:57] **Hamrick:** it,

[00:07:58] **McQuiston:** it could be snowing. [00:08:00] Yeah, that's how

[00:08:01] **Hamrick:** unpredictable weather.

[00:08:02] **McQuiston:** weather is. It's fickle.

[00:08:04] **Lemley:** Well, I, I looked at it this morning.

[00:08:06] I looked at it this morning and, um, to check my phone before coming to see you. And it said like 65 percent chance of rain. I was like, Oh shit. Cause I didn't know if we would be able to be indoors. And, um,

[00:08:18] Well, we're not live. Right.

[00:08:25] But you're right. It was like, I didn't, but luckily that's not going to happen till later. And so hopefully you'll be tucked in asleep when, when that happens.

[00:08:32] **Hamrick:** for editors. Yep, exactly.

[00:08:35] **Lemley:** God for editors, he says. So, so he's your uncle. Okay, so you, um, so where, where were we? You, um, you said 1985, you've got some bipolar weather going on, and one minute it could be snowing, one minute it could be hot.

[00:08:51] **Hamrick:** Mm hmm. Okay. Just depends on what?

[00:08:55] **McQuiston:** Weather

[00:08:55] can Yeah.

[00:08:57] **Hamrick:** It's a drop of a hat. Yeah. [00:09:00] And the hardest things out here, being in tents, being out in the open, not having the proper things to survive.

[00:09:08] **McQuiston:** Yeah. my own bed. I've been out here for 30 years.

[00:09:14] And I've seen a lot of people come and go. I've seen people die out here. that's a lot of older gentlemen younger people too. And I just had an ex. Fiancee. My son. Hold

[00:09:34] **Lemley:** on one second. Let me. Are you okay if he's

[00:09:37] **Hamrick:** part of the interception?

[00:09:37] Yes, he's fine.

[00:09:38] **Lemley:** And you're okay being recorded for this? And. Do you consent to be recorded for this?

[00:09:42] Yes, yes.

[00:09:43] **Hamrick:** give me one second, I'm actually going to hook

[00:09:45] up for me.

[00:09:47] **Lemley:** And she passed

[00:09:49] **Hamrick:** Okay, let's, let's hear about that. Um, let me get She's got to get her mic set up. Yeah, I got to get Precious! [00:10:00] Preci, what you doing, pumpkin?

[00:10:01] **McQuiston:** punkin Scratchin her fleas.

[00:10:05] **Hamrick:** Daddy ain't put your flea medicine on you, has he?

[00:10:09] **McQuiston:** She's gotta have a bath

[00:10:10] **Hamrick:** My little fat head. Went to sleep.

[00:10:12] **McQuiston:** I get here? It's gotta warm up enough I can give her a bath.

[00:10:15] **Hamrick:** Oh, I gotta give all mine one when it comes to spring.

[00:10:20] Well Actually,

[00:10:21] I think we can just do it this way.

[00:10:23] Um, I

[00:10:25] **McQuiston:** when we just set us between us and we share it. How's

[00:10:27] **Lemley:** that?

[00:10:27] Well, because I wanna hear you

[00:10:29] **Hamrick:** better than me. Uh,

[00:10:31] **McQuiston:** well, I'll speak a little louder. How's that

[00:10:35] **Hamrick:** see.

[00:10:36] When he's shy, he's got a soft voice.

[00:10:39] **McQuiston:** I'm not shy and I'm not bashful. I'm from East Nashville.

[00:10:45] **Hamrick:** Okay, What is it, thinker? I see ya. I think his daddy might be comin or somebody.

[00:10:57] **McQuiston:** What's. No telling coming back. [00:11:00]

[00:11:00] **Lemley:** Let me

[00:11:00] **Hamrick:** I'm gonna stop recording for one second and

[00:11:03] I'm

[00:11:03] **Lemley:** to check

[00:11:03] **Hamrick:** my car for another cord.

[00:11:06]

[00:11:06]

STEREO FILE BEGINS

[00:11:11] **Lemley:** Okay, so, and I want this nice and close to you, and, um, Okay, so, you were saying you've been here 30 years.

[00:11:31] **McQuiston:** I was born and raised here in Davidson County. Okay.

[00:11:35] **Lemley:** And let's say and spell your name real quick since we're starting a new

[00:11:37] **McQuiston:** track. I'm Arthur, and my first name is A R T H U R, and my last name is McQuiston.

[00:11:43] Spelled M C Q U I S T O N. And I've been here for 30 years, I was born and raised here. Born in General Hospital. And, like I said, I went to high school here. [00:12:00] Didn't graduate. I quit in the 9th grade. And then, took off and went to California, got in some bad trouble there, so, we'll leave that unspoken. Yeah, I'm still flying colors, I wish I hadn't, but anyway, came back, uh, came back to Tennessee and got married, and First wife dies and been homeless pretty much ever since.

[00:12:29] What year was that? And that was back in the early 70s. And that's after I come out of the Marine Corps and all that. It's been a long, it's been a long situation, but like I said, I've seen a lot of people die here. And I was one of the first people in Tent City when they first started camping here. I built a shack down under the bridge.

[00:12:54] It was 30 years ago, and I stayed there for a little [00:13:00] over 10 years, and then I moved to the Woodland Street Bridge. When did you live here originally? Oh God, it was back in 72, I think. In Tent City? Yes.

[00:13:11] **Lemley:** I did not know. So I first came here 2004. So were you around any time around there? Oh yeah. So, so, back, back when I would come more frequently there was Ed, Cowboy, um, Say, Cowboy's dead now.

[00:13:26] **Hamrick:** Doc, I

[00:13:26] **McQuiston:** know Cowboy died. Cowboy, Doc's dead. Doc is dead. So,

[00:13:31] **Lemley:** so how did I not meet you? Or maybe we did, it's just been a long

[00:13:35] **Hamrick:** time.

[00:13:35] **McQuiston:** Okay. Okay. Okay. Okay.

[00:13:46] **Lemley:** So you were at work a lot when the other guys would be around here. Wendell, with his dogs, causing trouble. Yep, yep. And the van. Okay, I have a weird question.

[00:13:55] This is a completely personal question. You've seen a lot of people, a lot of animals, [00:14:00] but you're an animal lover. Yes. Do you remember

[00:14:02] **Hamrick:** I'm going to interview you right now, but you can come in as long as you're quiet.

[00:14:08] **Lemley:** We're about to have another guest in here. We're starting

[00:14:10] **Hamrick:** a party. He won't speak. That's my husband. My newlywed husband. Newlywed. When did you get married? We just had a year. Come on in. We got married October 19, 2022. Congratulations.

[00:14:26] **Lemley:** On her birthday. Okay, so Arthur, do you remember, this would have been in 2008, a black and white dog named Darla.

[00:14:36] Yes, I remember Darla. What do you remember about her? Do you remember who she was or where she

[00:14:41] **McQuiston:** was born? She was a sweet little dog and I think she was born during the spring here from another female dog. And the mother dog got hit up here on the train tracks. Oh. Yeah. Yeah. And [00:15:00] the guy that raised the puppy, he left Kent City and I think went back home.

[00:15:07] **Lemley:** And someone, it was like Jeannie Alexander, did you know Jeannie? Yes. Jeannie came and got Darla. Yes. Okay. And um, so Darla's my dog, she's 16 now, and she's not gonna be with us, I'm gonna choke up, she's not gonna be with us much longer. She can't hear, she can't see, but she's had a real good life.

[00:15:25] **McQuiston:** I'm

[00:15:26] **Hamrick:** glad you took her.

[00:15:26] Yeah,

[00:15:27] **Lemley:** I'm glad you took her. Someone had fallen on her and she, and it hurt her hip at one point, um, when she was here.

[00:15:34] **McQuiston:** Yep. He got drunk and fell on her. Yeah. You remember it? Yes. He got drunk and fell on her.

[00:15:40] **Hamrick:** Okay. So I

[00:15:41] **Lemley:** remember that. I promise you people, we are gonna get back to the weather. Yes. I remember that.

[00:15:46] Um, what do, what do you remember anything about that sweet girl? So you think maybe she was born in the spring? She,

[00:15:51] **McQuiston:** she was born that her puppies was born in spring. 'cause I got one of the same puppies. Okay. I think I got her brother. Okay. And I [00:16:00] lost him to cancer.

[00:16:00] **Lemley:** Okay.

[00:16:02] **McQuiston:** Okay. Ugh. It's like we're family. I lost him to cancer.

[00:16:09] And, I named him Rocky. Rocky. And, he was, he was the same color as she was. Black and white. Black and white. Had that pretty white chest and her face was kind of, But Rocky was a big old burly booger. But, he got cancer. He got skin cancer. Skin cancer? And, from the fleas and stuff. Okay. And, Bless his heart.

[00:16:33] When they told me, they diagnosed him with cancer, I told him, I said, and he kept telling me to put him down, put him down, put him down. And I said, I can't do that. And I said, I'm going to let him live as long as he's going to. I said, cause he's getting old and just let him do what he wants to do. And when he died, I got up one morning and I found him dead and I just kind of buried him here.

[00:16:59] And [00:17:00] he's been a part of this residence ever since.

[00:17:03] **Lemley:** You know, that, that is not a bad idea. We have tried, my husband and I have talked about where should Darla go when it's her time to go. And we don't own a house, you know, and we don't want to get her cremated. But I wonder if we could even maybe bring her here.

[00:17:18] Yeah, yeah. And you could help maybe. Yeah,

[00:17:21] **McQuiston:** we'll find a spot to put her. We'll find a spot, we'll find a spot to put her in. Yeah,

[00:17:27] **Lemley:** she has been, I'll show you, I'll show you a

[00:17:29] **Hamrick:** picture. This was her home. This was her home.

[00:17:31] **Lemley:** This was her home. And she came so, she came to us so good, um, because of how she was raised here.

[00:17:40] Um, do you

[00:17:41] **McQuiston:** know? Well mannered though. Well mannered. She was well mannered. She was

[00:17:46] **Lemley:** real well mannered. Uh, or she still is. She's getting a little, now that she can't hear, she can't hear you say, uh uh. So, she thinks she can grab all your food, she thinks she can, she can't eat her, um, she is, there
[00:18:00] is nobody like her, um, this one

[00:18:02] **McQuiston:** right here is my third, ah, precious, I had a Min Pin, yeah, and another Chihuahua, and, and this one here is Mama.

[00:18:15] Well, it belonged to my brother, Michael. Yeah. And Michael's dead and gone. Okay. Her mama's dead and gone. Yeah. And, this little, she's been all over the country, bless her heart. She's been to Canada, she's, Buffalo, New York. Yeah. She's been everywhere. Okay,

[00:18:38] **Lemley:** here, here is Darla.

[00:18:43] **McQuiston:** Yep. Yep, yep, yep, yep, yep. Yeah, that's Darla. Yep. I remember her hair when she was smaller. Yeah, she was,

[00:18:52] **Lemley:** I, yeah, I never got to, I wish I got to see her when she was a puppy. Oh, God. That's way back when. That is way back. I think [00:19:00] she was born in 2000, maybe spring 2008.

[00:19:05] **McQuiston:** Early spring. Yeah.

[00:19:08] **Lemley:** Well, then she, the good news is she's a little younger than we thought because we thought she was born in January.

[00:19:14] So she's not going to be 16 until the spring then, you're saying? No, it was

[00:19:17] **Hamrick:** spring. Okay.

[00:19:18] **McQuiston:** I had a brother.

[00:19:19] **Hamrick:** Okay. Uh uh, lay down.

[00:19:22] **Lemley:** How, how many, how many puppies in

[00:19:24] **McQuiston:** that litter do you think? I think there was eight. Oh my goodness. There was eight. What happened to all of them? There was, uh, three males and the rest was females.

[00:19:32] Yeah. And he, Give different people these puppies. And when I got Rocky he was going to the hospital

[00:19:48] and something about his liver, he had to go to the hospital and 'cause he drank quite a bit anyway, he went to the hospital and Darla stayed with me and I kept Rocky [00:20:00] and her. Yeah. So

[00:20:02] **Hamrick:** you

[00:20:02] **Lemley:** helped

[00:20:02] **Hamrick:** raise her

[00:20:04] **McQuiston:** so. And, well, they stayed at the tent, or my cabin, while I worked. But I'd come home, I'd take them out, feed them, water them.

[00:20:15] And when he got out of the hospital, he came back and got his dogs. But, like I said, she was a good dog and she was very smart. That's what I loved about her. You could, that piece of food in your hand. And if you laid it down and told her no, she would not touch it. She wouldn't do it until now. She wouldn't touch it.

[00:20:38] And she wouldn't eat from anybody else.

[00:20:40] **Lemley:** She's still that way. We'll go out. We went to a drive thru once and they tried to give her a big fresh piece of bacon and she wouldn't take it. Would

[00:20:48] **McQuiston:** not take it. Rocky was the same way. He would turn his head. And that's what I loved about her. But that's the way he taught them.

[00:20:59] Not to take [00:21:00] food from other people. Mm hmm. And he wouldn't let nobody else pet her. Mm. Who was it?

[00:21:08] **Hamrick:** Whose was

[00:21:09] **McQuiston:** she? It was his dog. Whose dog? Uh, what was his name? Shoot. If you hadn't asked, I couldn't remember. Well, if you

[00:21:20] **Lemley:** remember,

[00:21:20] **McQuiston:** just let me know. Jesus Christ.

[00:21:25] Carl. Carl. Old man Carl. Anyway. He, he drank a lot. Mm-Hmm. . He was a drunk, but he drank a lot. And like I said, he was a good guy and Mr. Coral and Cowboy were buddies. Okay. Because they drank coffee. Yeah.

[00:21:42] **Lemley:** Jack Adkins was Cowboy. Yeah.

[00:21:45] **McQuiston:** Yeah. And God bless his heart. Me and Cowboy got into it one time over the dog.

[00:21:52] Which dog? Uh, Redarda? Yep, cause she tried to bite him. And he went, he drove back to kick her. I said, you kick that [00:22:00] dog, I'll shoot you. I said, you kick that dog, I will shoot you.

[00:22:09] And he goes, well you better get that different dog. And I said, well, cowboy, first of all, you're in her domain. You're in, not in yours, you're in hers. You're in her house.

[00:22:26] So don't draw back to kick that dog. Yeah. Cause she run out on him. Mm hmm. And she was gonna get him. Mm hmm. Showing every tooth in her head. And he draw back to kick her and I said, If you kick her, I'm gonna shoot you. Yeah.

[00:22:42] And Cowboy just kind of backed off and went back to his camp. And Mr. Carl come out of the tent and I said, Carl, Please put her on chain. Uh, she's a mate. I said, if the [00:23:00] cowboy kicks her, I said, there's going to be a problem.

[00:23:04] **Lemley:** And then Carl was the one that ended up falling on her when he was drunk? Yeah.

[00:23:08] **McQuiston:** Carl was a big heavy sick

[00:23:09] guy.

[00:23:09] **McQuiston:** Yeah. And, and when he was coming down the trail, he kind of lost his footing. Because he had her in his arms. Oh. She was small. Yeah. And he fell on her. Oh. Face first. Pfft. Fell right on her. She was a squealing and a squalling. Oh. And Carl rolled over on his back. And I snatched the puppy up.

[00:23:34] Mm hmm. And I said, uh oh. I said, I think you broke her back leg.

[00:23:42] And he kind of turned and looked at me funny, like. Give me my damn dog! Here, here, take the dog. But he, iffy about her, and he, like I said, he didn't want to let people touch her. Cause there's a [00:24:00] few people he trusted with her. And, cause out here, they, they take dogs, and they shoot them up with drugs. And, it's bad out here.

[00:24:14] And some of these people out here don't need a tango dog. Yeah. At all. I'm serious. They don't need a tango dog. They're like a child.

[00:24:27] Oh, yeah. Thank you, baby. All they ask for is attention. Yeah. A little love and a little food. Yeah. They're like a child. Yeah. They don't ask for nothing. Right. And people out here starving their dogs. Yeah. They want to abuse them. Shoot these dogs up with drugs. Why? Stupidity. Stupidity. And

[00:24:50] **Hamrick:** every one of my dogs that's in here, except for two, which is the one there, her name is Pebbles.

[00:24:57] I've had her since a pup and the little [00:25:00] black one. When we got Hoss, he was abused. His ribs was cracked. His legs, Taz, was abused.

[00:25:08] **McQuiston:** Yeah. Their owners just abandoned them. Yeah.

[00:25:16] **Hamrick:** They asked me, can you watch my dog? Never come back. Yeah. That's how I wined up with Hoss and my big cattle dog, which is outside.

[00:25:24] He'd be all over you if he was in here. Oh, yes. He's a lover. He's a big He never knew love and affection until We

[00:25:33] **McQuiston:** got him. Yeah. And that little black booger right there, buddy.

[00:25:35] **Hamrick:** I've had him since he was this little. Oh, buddy. I love his little face. I had him since he was that little. I brought him home when he was that what that is?

[00:25:43] His underbite? Yeah. He's got the underbite. The chihuahua underbite. Yeah. And his little gray goatee. And he's only two. Okay, so we've

[00:25:52] **Lemley:** got Precious here who's only four and is, he's a

[00:25:55] **McQuiston:** Chihuahua mix? No, she's a Pomeranian and Chihuahua.

[00:25:58] **Lemley:** Pomeranian and Chihuahua. She's [00:26:00] adorable. And then, then him down here.

[00:26:02] That one

[00:26:02] **Hamrick:** is Hoss. He is part German Shepherd and Brindle Pit. Okay.

[00:26:09] **Lemley:** Well, okay, well we derailed. Thank you guys for listening. Listening through this tape. We had a train wreck. Um So, but, thank you for taking care of Darla, for helping take care of her. You

[00:26:22] **McQuiston:** know, I miss her a little bit. Yeah. But, you know, I miss a lot of dogs out here that, I mean, people has died and left their dogs here just Just roaming the camps and Yeah, it's pitiful.

[00:26:35] But anyway, I was telling you about my ex. Yeah. I married, I was in Fremont, Ohio, and like I said, Vanessa calls me and said they found her dead.

Me and her have a son together. Mm. And she was on heroin. Bad. Mm-Hmm. .
And it's just D de, but then this is before Fentanyl. No, no. That was just,

[00:26:58] **Hamrick:** yeah. This was [00:27:00] three months.

[00:27:00] Yeah. Before, four months ago. Three months. No. Yeah. Three months ago. Died. You just lost her.

[00:27:04] **McQuiston:** Yeah. And Oh, anyways, Ms. Moses lives up on the hill. He's the one who found her. Yeah. And. They don't know where it was, the fentanyl, or the cold that got her. Somebody

[00:27:23] **Lemley:** said it was an

[00:27:25] **Hamrick:** OD, and Moses went running with the Narcan to help her, and that's when he said no.

[00:27:35] She's done past

[00:27:36] **McQuiston:** She'd been there for two or three days. Oh,

[00:27:38] **Hamrick:** gosh. And they don't know if it was from a drug overdose or the cold. That's when we had the Arctic, when it was really, really cold. When it was like 18 to 20 degrees

[00:27:47] **McQuiston:** outside

[00:27:48] **Hamrick:** at night. So they don't She wasn't even in a tent. She was just sitting on a blanket.

[00:27:52] Yeah, sitting on a blanket. Out in the

[00:27:53] **McQuiston:** open face down, slumped over. Yeah. Yeah. Face down. But anyway, it's, [00:28:00] that's the reason I said I've seen a lot of people die here. Okay.

[00:28:03] **Lemley:** So you have been. So, how long have each of you experienced

[00:28:07] **Hamrick:** homelessness? Me? This is my second round. I've been out here two and a half years this time.

[00:28:13] This

[00:28:13] **McQuiston:** is my, I guess, 100th time being out here. But, this second time being back out here this year. The new year. I'm in a 12 man tent right back here. Me and that little dog right there. Yeah. And, this has been home for many years. Then home and I've seen people come go They leave

[00:28:39] **Hamrick:** they come back. They leave they

[00:28:40] **McQuiston:** come back.

[00:28:41] I've seen people house and then six months later back out here I've seen people die here

[00:28:50] **Lemley:** It's there

[00:28:51] **McQuiston:** was it's a crying shame .

[00:28:55] **Lemley:** So you first, when were you first homeless? You said 1970s. Yeah.

[00:28:59] **McQuiston:** And you In [00:29:00] 72. I come home from Vietnam in 72. You came

[00:29:02] **Lemley:** home from Vietnam in 72 and you came to Tent City? Yeah.

[00:29:05] Right away.

[00:29:06] **McQuiston:** Yeah, because I wasn't safe to be around, honey. You were a little wild. I was suffering from flashbacks. Yeah. Bad. Yeah. PTSD was kicking my tail. Yeah. And still does. Yeah. And it's just one of them things that. You know, when you're not safe to be around family and people, you're afraid you'll hurt them.

[00:29:27] And, that was my problem

[00:29:29] then.

[00:29:29] **McQuiston:** I drank. Yeah. And I had a drug problem too, so.

[00:29:34] **Lemley:** To cope with everything you've been through.

[00:29:36] **McQuiston:** Yeah. So, I've been clean in the street. How long? For over 20 years. Oh my gosh! And, cause when you have a 7 year old look at you and say, Daddy. Would you not drink no more and I want to keep you around as long as I can.

[00:29:55] I set it down and didn't touch it. Again. [00:30:00] And, she lives in Buffalo, New York now. She's married and got three kids. That's who I went up to see and we ended up in Canada for three months. But, that's, that's my baby.

[00:30:13] **Lemley:** Okay, so in 1970s what, what do you remember the weather being like when you were homeless in the 70s coming back from Vietnam.

[00:30:21] **McQuiston:** It was fair. It wasn't too bad. It's like I said, Tennessee's got that thick of weather. One minute it can be beautiful out. Next minute it can be stormy, tornado. It can snow in a blink of an eye. It's just thick of weather. It's like a woman. They don't know what it wants.

[00:30:42] Unpredictable because believe me, I've had one to shoot me twice. I've had one to stab me. You still loved him? Yeah, I've had her had one to poison me. What, how? Okay. How'd

[00:30:54] **Lemley:** she poison you? With

[00:30:56] **McQuiston:** what? Rat Poison. Rat

[00:30:58] **Lemley:** poison.

[00:30:59] **McQuiston:** Not even something [00:31:00] good. Honey, I've been married six times. I'm still married six times.

[00:31:04] Too many . I'm still married to the sixth one. I found out after the fifth one. It was cheaper to keep for.

[00:31:12] **Lemley:** So you're still married to number six?

[00:31:13] **McQuiston:** Yeah. Okay. And she lives in Smyrna. Okay. And I live here. And

[00:31:18] **Lemley:** what, the one that just died, what number was she?

[00:31:21] **McQuiston:** No, I mean, her wasn't married. You weren't married.

[00:31:23] They was engaged. Okay. We was engaged to be married. Okay. And she left me and married another man. Got pregnant by him. Okay. And was doing crack. Got the kid taken. Yeah. Same thing she was doing with me. was doing crack. We lost our son on kind of her drug problem. Yeah. And she got out here and got mixed up with some other, other people and got on fentanyl and heroin.

[00:31:53] Yeah. And

[00:31:54] **Hamrick:** it took

[00:31:57] **McQuiston:** its toll. [00:32:00] And bless her heart. I mean, she was a good person. She was a good person. The only thing that's bad about her, she

[00:32:11] **Hamrick:** would skid mud

[00:32:14] **McQuiston:** to get to drugs. Yeah. I think Kelly was over, the

[00:32:19] **Hamrick:** broken one, but he was over by the generator, I don't know what he was doing.

[00:32:23] **McQuiston:** But honey, you steal from me again, I'm gonna break your fingers.

[00:32:26] No kidding. Remember when she stole her laptop? Yeah. And a hundred dollars worth of daggum money. change that I had saved her. Oh yeah, she was, God bless her heart, she couldn't help it. Mm hmm. That she's selling herself on the streets. Mm hmm. It's,

[00:32:48] **Hamrick:** if it's It's bad out here for young females because they get them It's scary

[00:32:51] **McQuiston:** out here for females.

[00:32:52] Mm hmm.

[00:32:56] **Lemley:** So, there's so much, there's so much I want to [00:33:00] know about.

[00:33:01] **McQuiston:** Um There's our propane back there.

[00:33:05] **Lemley:** Okay, so you're getting some propane? Yes.

[00:33:07] **Hamrick:** Okay. Honey, they got the four tanks of propane and the dog food.

[00:33:11] **McQuiston:** Propane, food, not so much, man. Everybody feeds out here. If you go hungry out here, it's your own day at gunpoint.

[00:33:20] Where's your

[00:33:20] **Lemley:** propane coming from right now?

[00:33:22] **McQuiston:** We

[00:33:22] **Hamrick:** go to Trinity gas we get the big ones like that's there the 20 pound ones. Yeah, there's

[00:33:28] **Lemley:** a big gray one sitting

[00:33:29] **Hamrick:** Right here by those to Trinity gas and they real fit refill them for 20 a tank. And how long does this

[00:33:35] **McQuiston:** last you? week Okay, wait

[00:33:38] **Hamrick:** two weeks depending on how much how cold it is how often you have to use it

[00:33:43] **Lemley:** and right now our weather What are we we're about 30 degrees at night or

[00:33:47] **McQuiston:** 20?

[00:33:49] **Hamrick:** low teens Okay. Because we're close to the river.

[00:33:52] **McQuiston:** Yeah, you are. You get the wind. This morning I think it was like 19 degrees. Okay. It was when Dee left for work. It was cold. And in the

[00:33:59] **Lemley:** [00:34:00] 70s when you were here, how did you keep warm?

[00:34:01] **McQuiston:** I had a wood stove in my little cabin. Okay.

[00:34:06] **Lemley:** That's right. You built a whole cabin.

[00:34:08] **McQuiston:** Yeah.

[00:34:08] **Hamrick:** He had, he had a wood burning stove, windows, carpet. It was just like your

[00:34:14] **McQuiston:** little house. But anyway, when I told you that I left from down here and moved to the Woodland Street Bridge. Yeah. They were talking about shutting down the city down then. Oh my god, they've been talking about it for 50 years.

[00:34:27] Pretty much. Anyway, I built a three bedroom house under the Woodland Street Bridge. Get out of there! Leave him alone! And the mayor of Nashville came out and took pictures of it. Who was the mayor? Cooper? It was before Cooper. It was way before Cooper. Yeah. This was back in the early 80s.

[00:34:46] **Hamrick:** Baby boy, I'll get you some food in a minute.

[00:34:48] I thought we

[00:34:52] **McQuiston:** Anyway, it was so hot and cold running water. Only electric. Like a commercial [00:35:00] generator that I supplied my own electric. Like we do here. And I did not ask anybody for nothing. I didn't go to the feedings. I didn't have to. I was a welder, Nashville Barge. I was making 100 an hour and still homeless because I couldn't deal with people.

[00:35:20] Yeah. Mm.

[00:35:24] **Hamrick:** Like the hardest two times of the year out here for us is in the summer. Oh, yes. And the winter. Talk to me about that. In the summer, the heat. It's just so hot, unbearable, and in the winter, it's the bitter cold that you can't deal with if

[00:35:41] **McQuiston:** you're not prepared for it. And we try to prepare the best we can, and, I mean.

[00:35:48] I went from

[00:35:48] **Hamrick:** being in a tent to getting this, which, my husband works, he bought it, but when you're in a tent, it's just hard to keep a tent warm
[00:36:00] because of the wind and the air. It's just.

[00:36:05] **Lemley:** What? So, okay, when we, we've referred a little bit to this. So tell me what we're sitting in. Describe, describe your home to me.

[00:36:12] **Hamrick:** It is a 42 foot RV, which has a function and shower, bathroom, a bedroom, kitchen area, the sitting area. And we provide all our own power, which we are generators on the other side. And then Junebug's house, of course, is his 12 man tent. But he does stay in here a lot with

[00:36:33] **McQuiston:** me. Yeah, I bring my baby girl.

[00:36:36] **Lemley:** And he's your uncle through what family?

[00:36:38] Marriage. Through marriage, okay. And, um, and so you have generators. You're, you're creating your own energy. Are they gas powered generators? How much does that cost and how

[00:36:50] **Hamrick:** are you filling those up? A day. My husband works five days a week. And it takes us 25 a day to fill the generator up. Oh my goodness.

[00:36:59] **Lemley:** Yeah. [00:37:00] So your electric bill, what we would think of as an electric bill for people that live indoors, that

[00:37:05] **Hamrick:** every two weeks is about 280

[00:37:07] **Lemley:** bucks. So your electric bill is like, like nearly 600 a month. Yes. And what all, what all are you running off of that electricity? We

[00:37:16] **Hamrick:** charge our phones. And

[00:37:18] **Lemley:** other people's phones as well,

[00:37:20] **Hamrick:** someone.

[00:37:21] Yes, I help friends out, yes. We have our TV, we have the lights, the fans, the electric heaters. It's pretty much basically a small home with everything you'd have in a regular house, but it's in a camper.

[00:37:35] **Lemley:** Okay, we got another visitor we're gonna take care of for a

[00:37:37] **McQuiston:** second. Oh, it's Mel.

[00:37:42] So.

[00:37:45] **Hamrick:** Hey there.

[00:37:47] **McQuiston:** This

[00:37:47] **Hamrick:** is another one of our campmates. Hi there.

[00:37:55] **Lemley:** We got a bag of dog food, it looks

[00:37:56] **Hamrick:** like. Yes, she went to get the propane for us and the
[00:38:00] doggy food. She's our helper, go get her. But, you gonna spend some time with your old man before you go to work? I gotta get a shower, I know that. It's

[00:38:08] **Lemley:** just very hard to get showers out here and everything. You're like, that's the emotion for, give me a sip of that without even asking.

[00:38:18] **McQuiston:** I knew which one she,

[00:38:19] **Hamrick:** sure. No problem. Don't gotta have to miss me twice. Yeah, thank you for going to get me. Yeah, of

[00:38:25] **McQuiston:** course, same time. Did you carry this down the hill? No, she's got her

[00:38:31] **Lemley:** car. Okay, you've got your car, okay. Luckily I've got my

[00:38:32] **Hamrick:** car, but sometimes when you don't have that fortunate

[00:38:36] **Lemley:** translation of the situation, sometimes you'll have to carry all of it.

[00:38:38] Yeah. Sometimes we have wagons out here that we get for the

[00:38:41] **Hamrick:** water and everything

[00:38:42] **McQuiston:** and uh, It's just, it's difficult sometimes. Yeah. Especially when we

[00:38:46] **Hamrick:** only have like one working vehicle to

[00:38:47] **Lemley:** all of us right now. All of us being how many?

[00:38:51] **Hamrick:** There is a total of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. 7 [00:39:00] people

[00:39:00] **Lemley:** in this camp. And it's a little obvious, but just so you know, we're recording.

[00:39:03] This is for Tennessee State University. We're mostly talking about the weather. Okay. Yeah. Just so it said on the, on

[00:39:10] **McQuiston:** tape. We're talking about tent livid. Right, yeah.

[00:39:14] **Lemley:** And I didn't realize he, his first time he lived down here, 1970s. And so, um. When it first started off.

[00:39:23] **McQuiston:** Yeah. One of the original founders of this place.

[00:39:26] Yeah, Uncle Junebug. Like I said, I've seen many people come and go here. I've seen People that didn't know what to expect out here. Newcomers that come out here and first time on the streets. And you have to take them under your wing and kind of guide them through. Teach them. Yeah. And I've shared my home with many, many of the homeless out here.

[00:39:57] And I'll give a man the [00:40:00] shirt off my back if you ask us. Don't steal from me. Please don't steal from me. Yeah. Cause I'll go to as much trouble to help you as I will to hurt you.

[00:40:13] And, I'm a good person. I'm a good hearted person. I got an evil temper. But I can't help that. And, and I try to help people out here. Even though, they don't deserve it. I'll help their dog before I will them. Yeah.

[00:40:37] **Hamrick:** There's a lot of homeless pets out here today. Yeah. Yeah, we was telling her about

[00:40:41] **McQuiston:** it. Well, she had to be I've known the dog since she was a puppy.

[00:40:45] But I had her brother. It It It's difficult. It's just The people today That are homeless Have no respect for each other. [00:41:00] They want to steal from one another, hurt each other. And it's not like back in the 70s. Where you could leave your tent door undone. And your tent neighbor wouldn't watch out for you.

[00:41:16] And they watched your back and you watched theirs. It was a brother thing. And it was a family. Today, that don't happen. What do you think the difference is? It's a dog eat dog world. And it's everybody for themselves. And it's the drugs out here. And it, well, that's what I was trying to say. It's the drugs that does it.

[00:41:40] It's not the people. It's the drugs. And the drugs have changed? Yes, went from, back then it was crack and, and, like I said, maybe ice. Yeah. And now it's fentanyl. Yeah. Heroin. Crack. [00:42:00] And it's It's, it's pitiful. It's just, it's sickening. To see these people throw their lives away, and you sit back on a daily basis and you see it.

[00:42:16] But you ask them if they won't help. And they'll whine and cry, why do you do this,

[00:42:22] **Hamrick:** I need that,

[00:42:23] **McQuiston:** da da da da da. When it comes right down to it, they don't want it. Yep, there on her neck, I can't open it. It's like a friend of mine, about a week ago, it was a week ago, we were all sitting up at the feeding and she come down there and she was shivering and shaking and bawling and squalling and she says, I'm not going to make it.

[00:42:46] I'm not going to make it. I just rushed down and hugged her and I said, honey, baby, you're important. A horse needs to go out. You're going to make it. And there was a preacher giving out blankets. And he walked over there [00:43:00] and he said, can I pray for you? And him and I sat there and prayed for her. And she kept saying that all she could say was, I'm not going to make it.

[00:43:09] Yeah. I'm going to spend another night out here. I'm not going to make it. And him and I says, well, let us get you something. So he got on the phone. And the bus, he only picked her up. Mary And she grabbed me and hugged me and hugged the preacher from the gym a couple of weeks ago. Jim what? I don't know.

[00:43:35] Yeah. Anyway, once she got on the bus,

[00:43:47] I told her, I said, you stay in touch. Pest control is a program. It's your program. It's you're program, alright. I'm sorry she makes it. It goes. Go get night for your brother. Yeah. She first [00:44:00] came to us. Sleep. Sleep. Sleep. I don't think she would have made it another night out here. How old was she, did you say?

[00:44:08] She was about 28, 29. Oh gosh, yeah. She was a youngin I'm 64, so, Yeah, she was a child. And, I don't think she would have made it another night out here. Yeah, I know. Okay. Between the cold and the drugs. I don't think she would have made it.

[00:44:28] **Lemley:** So in, in the 70s when you built your, you built your cabin over here, and you had wood burning stove, and it's just you, and you're, you're a much younger man then.

[00:44:37] Oh yeah, I'm a lot younger. Yeah, what, what do you remember about the winters?

[00:44:42] **McQuiston:** They were, they were not too awful bad. We had a few ice storms and trees down and things like that, but it wasn't too bad. Of course I lived in a cabin. Not like everybody else out in the tent. But when it comes to my campmates, I made sure they had firewood.

[00:44:59] [00:45:00] I made sure that they had food. Because, I wasn't going hungry, I was a little fella. Little fellas love to eat. I was in the skin, you know, I like to eat. But anyway, I'm still that way today. But, You know, that's the reason I'm saying, You see so much out here, and we try to take care of people that They can't take care of themselves.

[00:45:26] And she's the same way. She had a big heart. God bless her. She's the same way. Yep. And this one here.

[00:45:37] **Lemley:** What, um, did you have anybody die from the heat or cold in the 70s? Oh, yes. Even back then? Yes, yes. Who do you remember losing back then?

[00:45:45] **McQuiston:** Oh, it was a black gentleman. His name was Charles. And. He lived behind me, and he come in, and it was hot, oh my god, it was in August, it was [00:46:00] bloody hot, it was like a hundred and twelve, it was hot.

[00:46:04] And he come in, and he was sweating, and of course he was a man of drink, and he went into his tent, and died of heat stroke. Oh man. Because we found him the next morning.

[00:46:23] Cause out here it's, like I said, the weather can be unbearable from time to time. And it's just, if you're not prepared for it, you're hurting for certain. And you're aching for a break in a day because it's gonna hurt you.

[00:46:38] **Lemley:** Me, I

[00:46:44] **McQuiston:** come out of a jungle and come back to the city. Well that's true.

[00:46:54] To me, being in the woods, I was at home. It was your own jungle.
[00:47:00] Yeah, yeah, my personal hell. Excuse me for that. And, of course, I drank too, to deal with it. And, uh, Cowboy was a veteran too, you know this right. He was a Vietnam vet too. So him and I had a lot in common. And everybody in my circle, we're all veterans.

[00:47:26] We stayed to ourselves, took care of ourselves, but yet we would break bread with others. And that's the reason I said, it's so hard out here too. Cause you get attached to people out here. Yeah. And it's hard to Because, you know, you want to help them, but yet they don't want the help.

[00:47:59] They say they [00:48:00] do, but they don't. And it hurts knowing that they're going to kill themselves. And you've got to sit back and watch. And it, like I said, it's just so hard to be a humanitarian, to have a heart, to care about someone. That don't care about

[00:48:25] **Lemley:** themselves and to have seen it so many times over your entire

[00:48:28] **McQuiston:** lifetime.

[00:48:29] Honey

[00:48:33] Dee? No, no, no, no. Behind you. White car.

[00:48:39] **Hamrick:** Excuse me. Yeah, I know who it is. Oh, I can get up. That looks like India's car. India's India. Oh, is it India? India. India. I think it's India. Yeah, it's India. Well, you go

[00:48:50] **McQuiston:** It's India. It is India. Yeah. Oh, is she leaving? No, she's coming in. I don't know if she's bringing Turn, turning around first.

[00:48:57] I don't know if she's bringing Here

[00:48:59] **Hamrick:** [00:49:00] she comes, man.

[00:49:01] **McQuiston:** Come on, India! I don't know if she's bringing blankets, fans,

[00:49:06] **Hamrick:** heaters. Usually she brings heaters, propane, stuff that they can Oh, I love India. Yeah.

[00:49:13] **McQuiston:** I haven't gotten

[00:49:13] **Hamrick:** to see her in a while. Well, you get to see her today. I didn't know she

[00:49:16] **McQuiston:** was Yeah, she's wonderful.

[00:49:17] I love her. Oh, and, oh, sorry bud. I'm trying to find a screwdriver. ARGHH!

[00:49:28] There's India's welcome.

[00:49:30] **Hamrick:** And the worst one I can remember as far as you're talking about weather. Yeah. Is the arctic blast we just had last year. That would have been about a year ago. Yep. It was like, alone. Bye

[00:49:43] **McQuiston:** babies! Bye! Squeeze on in. Squeeze

[00:49:47] **Hamrick:** on in. I didn't know you were here. It's

[00:49:51] **Lemley:** good to see you. It's

[00:49:52] **McQuiston:** good to see you.

[00:49:54] This is my friend, Lauren. Hi, Lauren. Oh, hey puppies. Hello. Good to meet [00:50:00] you. I didn't mean to interrupt on this,

[00:50:01] **Lemley:** but it's good to see you. It's good to see you, yeah. We

[00:50:03] **McQuiston:** just got Brandon his prescription, so. Finally they got it

[00:50:06] **Hamrick:** straight. Yes, they got it straight. I am so sorry because they told me he was gonna That is nothing for you to be sorry about.

[00:50:13] **McQuiston:** Please don't set your leg on fire, baby. Yes. I'm kicking myself out

[00:50:18] **Hamrick:** of here. He's trying to get out. Too many people.

[00:50:23] **McQuiston:** Watch out, Mal. Two men and five legs. I'm getting the heck out of here. That's a pretty good ratio. It's all right. My friend Lauren is in town visiting. Um, so I just picked it up from there.

[00:50:37] You

[00:50:38] **Hamrick:** bring everybody but your old man for a change. I know. For a change. I

[00:50:44] **McQuiston:** would have too much fun. I know. Come on. I've never seen this little dog before. I know. This is

[00:50:52] **Hamrick:** Naga. Oh, she'll just love you to death. Yeah, she busted her thing. There's another one. Uh oh.

[00:50:57] **McQuiston:** Now

[00:50:57] **Hamrick:** we have a new dog visiting too. [00:51:00] Yeah, that's Naga.

[00:51:00] That's our baby husky. She's a year. She's beautiful.

[00:51:04] **Lemley:** She's a good size. Thank you. Well, look at all of your hair. for doing this. I'm glad to see you. I'm glad this worked out. Yeah. Yeah, and I'd love to get together sometime just to, whenever that can happen. No, sure, sure. You have my number. Sure, we can talk.

[00:51:18] Yes.

[00:51:18] **McQuiston:** Okay, we're going to stop wasting your feet. You're okay,

[00:51:21] **Hamrick:** baby. Bye bye. Bye bye, baby. Good to meet you guys. You too. Where

[00:51:30] **McQuiston:** Wow.

[00:51:33] And you're talking about the weather, is that the rain out here can be ugly as well? Yeah, because the flood in 2010 was mean. So you were here for that? Yeah. Worst the way in my tent, . Okay.

[00:51:46] **Lemley:** When did you, so talk to me about 2010. When did you know that

[00:51:51] **McQuiston:** it was serious? Well, we were all, we were all in bed and when your bed starts floating, you know, and you raise up and stick your foot in knee deep [00:52:00] water, you, it's time to go.

[00:52:02] Yeah. Me, her, DC, and all of us, we was scrambling to get dogs and car to get to the top of the hill. To get out. The water was rising fast. Yeah, that's what I heard. I mean, it was rising quick. It was rising a foot about every 30 minutes. Oh my goodness. And before we could get the dogs and stuff in the car and most of our electronics.

[00:52:26] It was already trying to run into the bottom of the car, trying to run into the doors. And that's how fast it was

[00:52:32] **Hamrick:** rising. But you were able to get up the hill? Oh yeah. Okay. We made it up. We was luckier than most, I was. Because a lot of people lost their

[00:52:38] **McQuiston:** pets. Man, we lost, I lost everything I owned at that time.

[00:52:44] We saved my pet. And, you know, my dog was more important than material things. Mhm. But. There's nothing that couldn't be bought back. If I couldn't, I'd bought my dog back. Nope. Had

[00:52:59] **Lemley:** you [00:53:00] seen a flood in your lifetime,

[00:53:01] **McQuiston:** ever? Oh, several. Several. Where were you? Oh, right down there in my little cabin. So, so back in The first flood that happened down here, I think that was in, um, 76, 77?

[00:53:21] That cowboy lost everything. Cowboy was here back then? Yeah. Oh. Yeah. And, well, he left and came back. Okay. He went to Wyoming and came back. But anyway, my cabin was the only thing that survived the dug.

[00:53:44] **Lemley:** In 19, like 1976. Okay.

[00:53:46] **McQuiston:** My cabin was the only thing that survived. And water was ten and a half foot inside that cabin.

[00:53:55] But it didn't wash it away. Yeah, but you know, I was surprised it didn't [00:54:00] wash it away, but everybody else Lost everything they had. Yeah Even cowboy lost everything. He lost a van. His van was underwater But like I said, I've seen so much down here that People don't realize how quick things can happen here Water.

[00:54:25] You could be asleep and not wake up. And,

[00:54:34] it's, it's been miserable. Been miserable at times here. During the summer, the heat can get you. If it ain't the heat, it's gonna be the cold or the drugs. The alcohol. It's just so much out here that people Don't realize how fast things can hurt you here. [00:55:00] And Pete, it's not only that, it's the people that will hurt you here.

[00:55:07] And now it's to the point where everybody's carrying guns. Yeah. Yep. Everybody. I'm talking everybody. And I'm speaking from experience, from the law enforcement side of the aspect of it. And,

[00:55:25] When you get out here and, It's like, what was it, two weeks ago, three weeks ago, Vanessa? Yeah. That dude shot the camper? Yeah, three weeks ago,

[00:55:36] **Hamrick:** someone shot at my house. What? Yep.

[00:55:40] **Lemley:** On, on purpose? Someone who has a grudge?

[00:55:43] **McQuiston:** We don't know. We don't know. Anyway, see where her car is parked right here? Yeah. There was another car parked there.

[00:55:50] And dude was trying to get in her car. And dude camped right here. He comes out and told Duke to get away from my car. [00:56:00] Yeah, and Duke told him Yeah, of course Glenn got to run his mouth and Duke went walking up this way and Glenn went running at him with a Parasault pistol with a BB gun. Okay Dude pulls a Snub nose 38 out of his pocket right there.

[00:56:21] Mm hmm goes Bow! And you hear the bullet hit the camper.

[00:56:26] **Hamrick:** I was sound asleep. That's what I was

[00:56:28] **McQuiston:** sitting right there where you're sitting. You were sleeping? No! He was sitting up. He was awake. I was drinking a cup of coffee when it happened.

[00:56:36] **Lemley:** So he was just being an idiot. He wasn't

[00:56:38] **McQuiston:** trying to get you. Well anyway, I jumped up and ran out the door.

[00:56:40] Glenn's running him up the road. Yeah. Me screaming at Glenn, Stop! Stupid! Stop! That man's got a real gun. You got a play. You got a toy. Yeah. That's it. He turns and comes back and I said, you stay here. I'm gonna walk up the road, see where this dude [00:57:00] went. So I go on up the road, dude's disappeared. He's gone.

[00:57:04] Mm-Hmm. . So Glen calls the police, came down here, they walk all around this camper, can't find where the bullet hit, but it

[00:57:11] **Hamrick:** hit 'cause I heard it. I was in bed. Oh, I bet. And I heard it. It

[00:57:15] **McQuiston:** hit, but I was like, man, you could've killed somebody. You could have got somebody killed with that damn toy you're carrying.

[00:57:22] While they're sleeping. Yeah. I said, if that bullet went through the window and hit somebody, cause man, I was sitting right there where you're

sitting, it could have hit me, it could have hit anybody. And you're out here, stuck on stupid with an airsoft gun. What the hell is wrong with you?

[00:57:40] **Lemley:** So Mama V, you were saying, um, that, This last,

[00:57:44] **Hamrick:** the arctic. The arctic blast was the worst

[00:57:47] **Lemley:** one. And we think that was, is that January 23?

[00:57:51] **Hamrick:** Yep, and it was down to, out here, it got down to negative five degrees. You [00:58:00] were in this camper. I was in this camper. Right here. And I had everybody during the day and at night piled up in here with us trying to keep us all warm.

[00:58:08] About how many people did you put in? It was me, Junebug, DC. I wasn't here. No. It wasn't you.

[00:58:14] **McQuiston:** It wasn't. I was a front row candidate. JoJo.

[00:58:17] **Hamrick:** Yep. BJ. BJ, me, DC, Barbie, which is up that way. Was I there too? Yeah, you was here on and off. But that was the coldest weather and I don't want to go through it again. That was the worst cold.

[00:58:35] I didn't leave this camper until it was done and over. So you had about a

[00:58:39] **Lemley:** half dozen people in here. Were. Did you have the food and fuel you needed?

[00:58:44] **Hamrick:** Okay. We had went and stocked up on everything when we heard the storm was coming, so we was prepared. But like I said, our other friends that was up in here, they was in tents, they didn't have propane, no way to stay warm, no food.

[00:58:58] So they all just, [00:59:00] we brought them here and we weathered it out.

[00:59:03] **Lemley:** And um, did anyone in tent city die during that

[00:59:08] **Hamrick:** freeze? Not that I know of. I know a couple of them went to the hospital from the coldness, but not, no one died that we know of.
Hypothermia

[00:59:18] **Lemley:** or frostbite? What kind of frostbite

[00:59:21] **Hamrick:** did you see? Oh well, one of them, his feet was bad.

[00:59:26] They was like black. Yeah.

[00:59:31] **McQuiston:** And

[00:59:31] **Hamrick:** then, but other than that I don't know of Anybody else?

[00:59:40] **Lemley:** What about in the over your time in the over the 50 years that you've you've been outdoors off and on? What have you seen from the

[00:59:49] **McQuiston:** cold? I've seen people die from the cold. I've seen people just give up, just totally give up. Just because [01:00:00] it was unbearable. They tried to go into warming shelters and they couldn't be around people because, you know.

[01:00:07] But, that's like a friend of ours right now. You can't get him to go into a shelter. No.

[01:00:14] **Hamrick:** He refuses

[01:00:14] **McQuiston:** to. He lives here? Yes. And you can't get him to go into a shelter because he drinks. And he's a wonderful guy. Don't get me wrong. He's a wonderful guy. And if you ever meet him, you'll see what I'm talking about.

[01:00:27] And trying to get him into a shelter is like getting that table to fly.

[01:00:39] He won't do it. He just refuses. He will not. How does he survive? Day to day. Day to day. And he's a veteran too. So

[01:00:52] **Lemley:** he's about your age?

[01:00:53] **McQuiston:** I think he's a couple years older than I am. But Mr. Miyagi is a wonderful guy, but he drinks constantly. [01:01:00]

[01:01:01] **Hamrick:** And just recently, speaking of Miyagi, did you know he caught himself on fire in the tent again?

[01:01:07] No. Yeah, that's why he's got my brand new winter coat on. His coat was literally

[01:01:13] **McQuiston:** burnt to him. Stuck to him.

[01:01:15] **Hamrick:** It was stuck to him. We had to peel it off of him. That was from trying to stay warm? Yes. He had one of the emergency candles that we get out here for light. He had lit it and he fell asleep. And caught himself a fire.

[01:01:32] And that was just last week.

[01:01:36] **Lemley:** Do you remember a man, um, probably about 2008, 9, 10 down here? He had, um, was intoxicated, trying to stay warm, and burned up in the campfire. And I think there wasn't much of him left. Yes. People

[01:01:53] **Hamrick:** were picking up pieces. Yes. Propane tank blew

[01:01:56] **McQuiston:** up. Okay. Yes, it happened right there behind that building.[01:02:00]

[01:02:00] Okay. You know where the warehouse is? Yeah. It happened right there.

[01:02:04] **Lemley:** Yeah, that's where most people were, behind the warehouse.

[01:02:06] **McQuiston:** Right there is where it happened. Yeah. And wasn't much of him left, cause when the propane tank blew up, it said it's Tunafar. Yeah. But they said he was already dead. I don't know.

[01:02:20] Yeah, I don't know. They said he died from a drug overdose. Okay. Okay. Okay. Okay. Okay. The tent actually caught fire, but when he fell over it caught his tent a fire. Were you

[01:02:31] **Lemley:** over there or you were on this side? We were here. On this

[01:02:33] **McQuiston:** side? We were here when it blew up. Okay. Cause we all come running out of the house when it went boom.

[01:02:41] And Vanessa and him was in a tent then. Okay. They didn't have this. Where was your tent? Right

[01:02:46] **Hamrick:** there where mine is. Right there where his is. So you've always been this, this side. No, I used to be. No, you used to be in the bowl. I used to be in the bowl two years ago. I We got flooded out. A 12 man tent was underwater.[01:03:00]

[01:03:00] **McQuiston:** 2010. 2010. Was underwater, but we've been

[01:03:08] **Hamrick:** here two years in this spot. In the bowl. I didn't know that was called the bowl. Yeah, there's the bowl, then there's the middle. Yeah, because I never. Nobody can camp. Ain't supposed to be supposed to be over there, but they are

[01:03:24] **Lemley:** What do you think's gonna happen in this place?

[01:03:26] So they're talking about clearing you out once again

[01:03:30] **Hamrick:** They've been saying Well, you

[01:03:32] **McQuiston:** said they were seeing it in the

[01:03:37] **Lemley:** 1970

[01:03:38] **Hamrick:** anything is the mayor does not

[01:03:41] **McQuiston:** Every mayor that's been in office. Let's talk about shut down to us in Kent City That And it

[01:03:49] **Hamrick:** hasn't happened yet. Why

[01:03:51] **Lemley:** do you think it hasn't

[01:03:51] **McQuiston:** happened?

[01:03:53] Well the last time they, Tent City shut down was during the flood. And then it washed everybody away. And I think two drowned. [01:04:00] In their tents. And that was in 2010.

[01:04:05] **Hamrick:** And they put the gate up up there. But, Unfortunately, some idiot Crashed through the gate, we won't say who, and everybody started camping out here again, and it's been here since.

[01:04:20] **McQuiston:** But, you know, like I said, I've seen a lot of people come and go here, and it's changed, people's changed, people's attitudes and lifestyles has changed,

[01:04:34] and the younger they come, the worse it gets. And now they've got all these sex offenders out here. Some of them are registered. Some are not. Some are not. And that's a scary feeling. Do people get assaulted? Yeah. Yeah. Oh yeah, they're fighting because [01:05:00] they don't want sex offenders down here. They beat the tar out of them.

[01:05:06] Yeah. And it's, it's the reason I said it's not safe. It's not safe. If you don't govern yourself and stand up for yourself, these people will walk all over you. Yep. And, uh, young females come out here, end up selling themselves and just, it's a crying shame. Selling

[01:05:30] **Hamrick:** herself just to support that drug habit that they got them hooked

[01:05:33] **McQuiston:** on.

[01:05:33] It's a crying shame. You see it. And there's no one, there's nothing you can do to stop it. And you tell, you tell these people. Out here, change your life. If you want to change, change starts at home. You don't change people. Other people ain't gonna change you. You

[01:05:57] **Hamrick:** have to change yourself if you want it to change.[01:06:00]

[01:06:01] **McQuiston:** If you want something better, make it happen. Don't sit back and say, well, good Lord's gonna do this and good Lord's keeping you alive, buddy. Take that for granted. He's keeping you alive. If you want anything better, get a job. Get a job. Make things happen. Quit looking for that hand out. Look for that hand up.

[01:06:37] **Hamrick:** There, for a while, it was like everyday people was running looking for

[01:06:41] **McQuiston:** Narcan.

[01:06:44] **Hamrick:** One dude, they shot eight times in one day to try to bring him back.

[01:06:50] **McQuiston:** Moses and I were up on the hill, and it was during shower up, shower up was up there. And we seen little buddy come [01:07:00] over and sat down.

[01:07:04] And I told Moses, I said, Moses, I said, he's so high right now, he don't even, he's not even on this earth. And Moses kind of looked over at me, you know, he'd be okay. No. He wasn't.

[01:07:20] He was sitting there at the picnic table, and he had it on his hands. Slumped over. And I said, Moses, Moses, I said, he just took his last breath. And Moses kind of turned to me, oh you're bullshitting me, I'm not. Moses, he, I seen him when he took his last breath. I said that man's dead.

[01:07:45] So Moses went and grabbed Narcan. So we dropped him on the ground, Moses started doing CPR, I hit him with Narcan. Still no response. Moses is still doing CPR. I'm breathing for Moses, for this dude. [01:08:00] Still no response.

[01:08:07] He was gone. There was nothing we could do. He, he, he was gone.

[01:08:14] Ambulance had to come get him? Yeah. And that was it? And that was, that was the third that year. In the, almost in the same identical spot.

[01:08:26] And that was the third that year. We were at the World Memorial the night before. And a lady comes up, sets down, and she's going, Uh, Uh, And she camped down here. And

[01:08:47] I walked over to her and I said, Well, what are you doing? Hey, stay with me. Stay with me. Eyes walled back in her head. Uh, I said, What have you done? [01:09:00] Stay with me. Stay with me. Uh, Finally she went, Uh, Just slid on down on the concrete. Oh, Narcan! Anybody got Narcan? Everybody come runnin to me with Narcan.

[01:09:17] Even

[01:09:17] **Hamrick:** at War Memorial? Yeah, we carried it. Everybody carries it.

[01:09:21] **McQuiston:** Everybody come runnin to me with Narcan. They bring

[01:09:23] **Hamrick:** it out here and they give it to us just for that reason. If there's an overdose,

[01:09:28] **McQuiston:** it's on hand. Yeah. I hit her with two liquid vials of Narcan.

[01:09:33] **Hamrick:** Injection or? Yes, injection. They give us the injections.

[01:09:36] I hit her

[01:09:37] **McQuiston:** here with two. No response. It says wait five minutes. That's a lot. Hit her with the second vial. No response. I hit her with the nasal spray. I hit her five times with nasal spray. She goes, and sits up and looks around. And the ambulance just pulled up.

[01:09:56] **Lemley:** And you think she had like nearly 10 [01:10:00] doses of Narcan?

[01:10:01] **McQuiston:** Well, yeah. Yeah. Well I know she at least, at least six to 10. Yeah. Well anyway, they get her in the ambulance, said You owe that man your life. He caught you just as you flat lined. Oh my gosh.

[01:10:16] She gets out of it, comes outta the ambulance, hugs me and I still see her today. And right to this day she'll walk up and hug me. But yet, she's still on the fentanyl. Mm hmm. And the heroin. Ah. Do you see what I'm talking about now? Oh yeah. They want the help, but they don't want the help. And it's a crying shame that You care enough for them to save their lives But they

[01:10:47] **Hamrick:** don't care enough To quit.

[01:10:49] To quit. To get away from it. Mm hmm. Well, you've been through the overdoses here. Yeah, I've seen a

[01:10:56] **McQuiston:** lot. She's seen it. She knows. [01:11:00] But it's a crying shame that humanity And especially down here. We got the ones who care. We got the ones down here that are drug free, that try to better themselves. Yeah. But you got the ones out there that don't give a rat's patootie about anything.

[01:11:20] I'm sorry, that's security mode, huh? Yeah. Yeah.

[01:11:23] **Hamrick:** And hurt both your cars out there. Yeah. That's

[01:11:26] **McQuiston:** security mode. I'm sorry. Yeah.

[01:11:29] **Lemley:** So who comes down and brings the Narcan?

[01:11:32] **McQuiston:** Um, there's different people that bring it. Sometimes, uh The police will bring it. Okay. And we've got a company that comes out about every, about every other month.

[01:11:46] And they'll come out here and they'll bring the liquid Narcan, they'll bring the nasal spray. They bring them in pouches. Yes, and they'll bring us the, uh, the strips where you can check for heroin,

[01:11:58] **Lemley:** blah blah blah. Do they do needle exchange [01:12:00] also? Yes.

[01:12:01] **Hamrick:** Who are they? I don't know who that group

[01:12:03] **McQuiston:** is. I can't think of the name of the people.

[01:12:04] But they're good folks. Also they bring condoms. Everything out here.

[01:12:14] It's, Like I said, You'd have to live out here. You'd have to live here to see what I'm talking about. I think we may need

[01:12:24] **Lemley:** a little restroom break.

[01:12:26] **Hamrick:** I'm gonna go ahead and get a shower. Okay baby, I'll be here when you get back. Oh, watch your hand, baby. Yeah. You move that so it don't melt that crate.

[01:12:35] **McQuiston:** Please be careful.

[01:12:36] I will. There you go. But you never told me. People out here don't care about themselves. And it bothers me. Yeah. It bothers me. Because I've seen too many deaths. Like I said, I went through a country where a guy tried to kill me. And I walked and waded through men's [01:13:00] blood. And And To see that kind of death and then come back here and watch people do it to themselves.

[01:13:08] You're going, what's wrong with you? Had you ever

[01:13:12] **Lemley:** used fentanyl?

[01:13:13] **McQuiston:** No. No. I was a powder monkey. Okay. I was hooked on cocaine. Bad. And drinking. And, like I said, it took me seven years. Seven years. To get off of the drugs. Yeah. And I done this to myself. Yeah, yeah. I put myself in a rehab. And kicked the habit.

[01:13:40] And, My seven year old daughter says, Daddy, The only thing I couldn't drop was my drinking. And I drank a lot. Like I said, I didn't buy whiskey by the bottle. I bought it by the case. And,[01:14:00]

[01:14:01] When she looked up at me she says, Daddy, I want to keep you around as long as I can. Yeah. And I was already to the point where I was having blackouts. Mm hmm. Puking blood. Mm hmm. And that was bad. And, I looked at him and said, baby, and how do you tell your child that, honey, I do this for a reason

[01:14:32] and, I do it to block out memory from the battle, and she didn't understand that. She didn't understand that.

[01:14:46] **Lemley:** But you tried to explain it to her, even at seven years old. I tried to explain

[01:14:50] **McQuiston:** it to her, but she asked me, and it was, it was scary. It, it was scary. We were [01:15:00] sitting at the house one morning, and she goes, Daddy, what's it like to kill a man?

[01:15:09] Seven years old? Seven years old. Daddy, what's it like to kill a man?

[01:15:19] She hears me having flashbacks, me screaming, calling men by name, in the middle of a room, in my boxers.

[01:15:32] And Daddy, what's it like to kill a man? What do you tell a seven year old? What do you tell a seven year old? To take another man's life is hard, honey. You don't.

[01:15:44] So the next morning, she gets out of bed, Daddy, So on Saturday, I get my 22 Magnum out of the gun cafe. I said, come on. Where [01:16:00] we going, Daddy? I said, come on. Don't ask questions. Come on.

[01:16:07] We walk off into the woods and there's a little doe, maybe 50 yards from us.

[01:16:17] I load this rifle and hand it to her and I said, now kill it. Daddy, uh, kill it. She raises the gun up and spats. Shoots the little deer right beside the head. She balls and squalls, oh my god daddy, I just killed a deer. Now you know what it's like to kill a human being.

[01:16:43] Now you know what it's like to kill a human being. I said the only thing is honey, that little deer didn't shoot back at you.

[01:16:57] She never asked again. That was the [01:17:00] end of that, you can't get her touch a gun to this day.

[01:17:05] How's she doing? Wonderful. Good. She's a social worker. She's got three kids of her own. Yeah. She's doing great. She's bought their first, their first home. Yeah. And she's doing great. And I got nine children. Oh my

[01:17:22] **Lemley:** god. Well, you've got enough wives for them all.

[01:17:29] **McQuiston:** You know, that's the reason I'm saying it. She never asked me again. and she won't let her kids play with guns. Not

[01:17:39] **Hamrick:** even toy guns. No she won't. Not even

[01:17:41] **McQuiston:** toy guns. She don't let her husband bring one in the house. And he's a big Italian boy and she won't let him bring one in the house. And she said, I'm gonna tell you what she said.

[01:17:57] My daddy is the only one allowed to drink a [01:18:00] gun into my home.

[01:18:05] And Mike goes, why is that? Cause he's got an up down fence. Tell you know when to use it and when not to use it. Oh, and Amanda, she went, well, it's the truth, Daddy. Yeah. And you've always told me to speak my mind and tell the truth. Yeah. Well, so we are. But you don't have to be that damn blunt about it. But she said, Daddy, you taught me.

[01:18:33] So don't blame me, blame you. But I love her to death. But she won't let my grandkids play with guns. Yeah. And my oldest grandson. He tried to kill himself. He hears voices. He was going to jump out the window. Excuse me. He was going to jump out the window. I don't see nobody.

[01:18:57] **Hamrick:** Unless it's Kelly coming back.

[01:18:58] I'm

[01:18:59] **McQuiston:** stuck in here hearing [01:19:00] nothing. But anyway, around here you have to be. Yeah. You know, she Shush! Called me one night and said, Daddy, your grandson is hearing voices. I said, put him on the phone. And I said, Anthony, talk to Grandpa about it. Who are these voices you're hearing? And he told me some boy's name.

[01:19:27] And I said, Do you know a person with that name, son? He goes, In my head, Papa. In my head. How old was he? Like ten. Oh. And the voices in his head was telling him to jump out that window. And I said, Anthony? I said, you want Grandpa to come up there? And he said, Papa, please? So I ended up in Buffalo, New York.[01:20:00]

[01:20:00] And he comes to me, he sits down beside me, and I said, Anthony? I said, do you know anybody with that name? And he goes, no, Papa. And I said, why is he telling you to hurt yourself?

[01:20:20] And he couldn't answer me. And I said, Anthony, you start hearing these, and him telling you to do these things, You go to Mama. Go to Mama. Let Mama know. Well, they took him to see a psychiatrist. And He's rude with paranoia and schizophrenia. And, when he was born, he didn't start talking until he was 8 year old.

[01:20:55] And, if it wasn't for me, he wouldn't be talking today. [01:21:00] Cause they had therapists coming out there trying to teach him to talk and all this. All he wanted to do was play.

[01:21:10] And, when I came back, came, I came to visit him, he was like three year old, and I came to visit him, within a month of me being there, he was saying mama, daddy, car, train, plane, book,

[01:21:33] and the therapist sat there and looked at me and goes, how can you do that, and I can't get him to do it. I said, first of all, you're bringing too many toys. That's, he thinks it's playtime.

[01:21:50] And second of all, you don't have his attention. Them toys do. And [01:22:00] she kind of looked at me like Who are you to tell me this? That's my grandson. Yeah. I raised nine. Yeah. And I said, you just don't know what I went

through to raise nine children. And they're all grown and gotten married and got kids of their own now.

[01:22:20] And I said, this is her first. Yeah. And you trying to tell me that I don't know what I'm doing? Mm hmm. Honey, I make, you an educated idiot. Mm hmm.

[01:22:35] And she kind of looked at me, I ain't got to take this. Bye, ma'am. Have a good day. Man, there goes Daddy. I went I'm just tellin the damn truth, Mandy. I'm tellin the damn truth. I made her look like an idiot. She's been comin here for over a year. Tryin to get him to talk. And all she brings is a bag of toys.

[01:22:59] Sets a bag of [01:23:00] toys down in front of him. And goin Anthony. Anthony. Anthony. What's this child gonna do? He ain't worried about the toys. He ain't worried about her. Don't bring a bag of toys in if you want his attention. Yeah. Bring one toy in. Yeah. He needed his grandpa's love. Thing of it is, you know what got me and him bonded?

[01:23:26] Mmm. Was a book that I sat and read to him every night.

[01:23:33] What book? The Little Legion That Could.

[01:23:36] **Hamrick:** Aww. Man, that book has saved so many of the kids

[01:23:39] **McQuiston:** in our family. to him every night. He would bring that book to me, climb up on the couch with me, lay on my chest, and I'd lay there and read the book, and he'd go to sleep. Yeah. Every night. Yeah. I'd get up, put him in bed.

[01:23:58] First words was train. [01:24:00] Yeah. Book. Yeah. And that woman looked at me like I was stupid. I said, You get his attention. Don't give him a bag of toys to play with. Give him a story to say. Yeah. Yeah. Read to him. Yeah. Get his attention. Something that, you know, something he's playing with, take it. Yeah. And make him ask for it.

[01:24:22] Yeah. That's like his book. Yeah. He'd be pointing at the book. I'd take it away from him. I'd say, what is this? Can you say train? Yeah. Can you say engine? And he looked at me all wild, say train,

[01:24:45] and the first night he said train, buddy, I grabbed him, I said, ah, I love you, say it again, man looked at me and goes, daddy, did he just talk? I said. Mmm.[01:25:00]

[01:25:00] Don't

[01:25:00] **Lemley:** ruin it. How

[01:25:02] **McQuiston:** is he doing now? He graduated high school. Oh. He's fixing to get married. What? What? He's married. Okay. Dominique, the middle boy. He's fixing to graduate this coming year. Oh my goodness. Jayden. The baby. The baby. She is in ballet. Yeah. And she's also in high school. Yeah. She's right behind Dominique.

[01:25:33] Yeah. So, I'm like, please let him graduate. Please let him graduate. Okay. Let me see, uh. But like I told you, I've seen so much out here that it's unreal. Yeah. That after 30 or 40 years out there, you see everything. Yeah, you don't miss nothing. Yeah. That's for sure.

[01:25:58] **Lemley:** So, Mama V, you, we're, you [01:26:00] know, we're sitting here in January and we're about to, Get into some of the coldest days, probably.

[01:26:04] I mean, they haven't forecasted it yet, but it's gonna, it's gonna happen. What, what are you thinking about as this season approaches?

[01:26:12] **Hamrick:** Not looking forward to it. But all we can do is batten down the hatches and do the best we can to prepare for it. Yeah.

[01:26:19] **Lemley:** How many winters have you lived outside?

[01:26:21] **Hamrick:** This is my second.

[01:26:22] This is only your second? This go around.

[01:26:25] **Lemley:** Well, previous go arounds, how many? One. Okay. Okay, so you've done about three, um, What changes, when was your first time outside during this season? When I had

[01:26:38] **Hamrick:** my son. So that's 1980. Back in 2004. Oh, 2004. Okay. I winded up homeless out here, but luckily, I was only out here a week.

[01:26:48] Okay. She showed up at my camp. I was like, open up! I'm holding him. I

[01:26:53] **McQuiston:** had just got home from work and she shows up at camp. Bang on the door. Look at you move. Look at [01:27:00] you move.

[01:27:04] So,

[01:27:04] **Lemley:** it was only about a week and then you were indoors again.

[01:27:07] **McQuiston:** Yeah. I said, what the hell are you doing out here, girl? She said, you just had that young'un. Yeah. And she goes, I have nowhere to go. I said, get in here.

[01:27:16] **Hamrick:** I lost everything, had nowhere to go. I can't even get him out here.

[01:27:20] **Lemley:** Over, so over, um, so these last two years, you've seen every season, you've been out in it every season.

[01:27:27] How was it? How is it the same or different from when you were a kid in West Virginia and even in the 80s when you were here?

[01:27:36] **Hamrick:** It's the cold, mainly. It's not really the snow, because I'm used to the snow. Yeah. It's just the bitter cold that gets into your bones and you can't get warm from it. And that's different

[01:27:47] **Lemley:** than your

[01:27:48] **Hamrick:** West Virginia winters.

[01:27:48] Yeah, because I could deal with that cold. I used to run and play in it like it was nothing, but now, I, it's just When it snows, it's just too cold. I can't [01:28:00] even I hardly go outside in the winter. This is where I stay 90 percent of the time. Till it gets warm again, and then I'll go out. Is that the same

[01:28:10] **Lemley:** or different than it was

[01:28:11] **Hamrick:** in the 80s?

[01:28:12] Different. Cause back in the 80s, I was outside all the time. I could deal with it. In Tennessee, in the 80s, you were outside. But now, I can't deal with the cold. It's just We're

[01:28:22] **McQuiston:** getting older. Do you,

[01:28:25] **Lemley:** do you think it's, it's, it's that we're all getting older? Do

[01:28:28] **Hamrick:** you think there's some of it? It's just body, different body types deal with it.

[01:28:36] Cold weather, different. Do you think

[01:28:39] **Lemley:** the weather itself is

[01:28:40] **Hamrick:** changing at all? Yes. Yes, I agree with that. Like Junebug said, it's unpredictable. It could be, like today it was 50, tomorrow it can be 20 degrees. You never know, it just, whatever they throw out there, that's what you have to be

[01:28:54] **McQuiston:** prepared for.

[01:28:55] **Lemley:** And that feels different to you than, than when you first

[01:28:57] **Hamrick:** moved to Tennessee.

[01:28:58] Yes, and like he said, the [01:29:00] worst fear of everybody that's out here, in Tent City, during the weather, is the rainy season. Because, we don't know if we're going to get flooded out again. So it's mostly

[01:29:13] **Lemley:** flood that's your

[01:29:13] **Hamrick:** fear, it's I can deal the snow, sun It's the flooding that scares all of us. What about tornadoes?

[01:29:23] We'd just sit here and watch the tornado go. Oh, that one go right over us. When the, when the tornado just hit. Yeah. We was sitting right in here watching it. It went right over us. Oh, it tore Madison over. It went right over us. We sit right here. And I got all my friends calling us. Are you guys, what you doing?

[01:29:38] I said, what can I do? All I can do is sit and wait it out. If it hits, all we can do is get up, pick up, clean up and move on. Because that's all you can do. There's nothing really you can do about it. What about the

[01:29:52] **Lemley:** 2020 tornado? Did you were you here for that? I

[01:29:55] **Hamrick:** was in a tent on the other side. We [01:30:00] watched it go over us and touched down in front of Napier School.

[01:30:03] Oh

[01:30:03] **McQuiston:** my gosh. Yeah. All that dirt will shook the

[01:30:06] **Hamrick:** shit out of her. We was sitting in our tent. It was all of the time. It was me, D. C., my daughter, which is no longer out here, her boyfriend and six other people and just watching my tent close in on itself. The wind just blowing back and

[01:30:20] **Lemley:** forth. You were in the tent all together?

[01:30:22] Mm hmm.

[01:30:22] **Hamrick:** Were you scared? Yeah, but like I said, all you can do is just sit and wait it out. There's nothing really you can do. But the rain you dread. Yes, because that, the flooding. Everybody out here will tell you they're scared of the flood. The rain. The

[01:30:38] **McQuiston:** flooding. It happened so

[01:30:40] **Hamrick:** quick. It'll, that river will come up on you before you know it.

[01:30:43] You see,

[01:30:44] **McQuiston:** look out there

[01:30:44] **Hamrick:** right now. I can see the river from where I'm at right

[01:30:47] **McQuiston:** there. It's three feet. It's

[01:30:50] **Hamrick:** three feet from that river bank. It's like this far below the river bank right now. Three

[01:30:55] **McQuiston:** feet below that river bank right now. If they was to open them floodgates, [01:31:00] water would run all the way up

[01:31:05] **Hamrick:** to that first tent that's over there on that pallet.

[01:31:08] That big tent you see, it stops right behind my big fire pit when it rains. So you

[01:31:14] **Lemley:** see that water come up and you just watch it?

[01:31:16] **Hamrick:** Yeah. There's nothing you can do. You can't stop it. You can't stop it. You can't move. And the thing is Oh yeah, you better run. You better run. But the thing is, we got it marked off.

[01:31:26] If it starts flooding, a lot of people out here don't mark the river. Well, we got that river marked. If it gets up to this point, get your shit, pardon my language, and get out. So many minutes to get there. Yeah, that's why we got it marked on this camp where we know if it hits here, you got this much time.

[01:31:47] if it gets to this one, it's time to get your stuff and start going, yes sir. Evacuate. It's like we got it marked and everybody knows you carried her out. Yeah. So she was whimpering

[01:31:56] **McQuiston:** it just all potty. Boo boo.

[01:31:59] **Lemley:** So you've got it [01:32:00] marked. So that's one of the things you guys do is you've got it marked to, to know, like you said, like like how much time, like what line is how much time.

[01:32:09] Mm-Hmm. . What's an example of one? Like when that

[01:32:12] **Hamrick:** first line, when we had, when we had to stake it out two years ago here. We staked the, we moved, we got flooded out over there. Our 12 man was underwater. It was me and Dee at the time. We had to grab our dogs and our stuff and get them to the truck. Cause the water was coming in.

[01:32:29] Too fast. Within 5 minutes the water was already up to my dog's cages.

[01:32:35] **McQuiston:** Yeah, waist

[01:32:35] **Hamrick:** deep. It just in here. No, at the tent. Okay. And then we moved over here and we was in a six man tent. It was me and D. C. And our

best friend, Misty and and Aaron and everybody was terrifying because the water was coming up.

[01:32:54] I'm like, all we can do is watch and we had it staked out and they're
[01:33:00] all like, well, we got to get out. We got to get, I said, No, It's okay. It never reached a point at that time with us.

[01:33:08] **McQuiston:** What?

[01:33:11] **Hamrick:** I'm doing an interview, hold on. But it reached a point that it got maybe four feet from the line that we had. It was four feet from the last line to get out.

[01:33:23] So,

[01:33:24] **Lemley:** okay, so you've actually got stakes in the ground marking it? Markers. Okay. And then how much time do you have

[01:33:31] **Hamrick:** when it gets to that stake? When it gets to that stake, you better have everything together and get out, or you're going to Within an hour or so. Within an hour, okay. About an hour, hour and a half at the most.

[01:33:38] No, you better get out of here. Get out as quick as possible when it hits that. It's not going to stop? Nope. It's going to keep coming if it passes that last stake. Luckily, we haven't hit that point here yet. In this, in this spot.

[01:33:52] **Lemley:** And you've been in this spot two years? And, um How? How often [01:34:00] are you seeing?

[01:34:01] How often are you seeing

[01:34:03] **Hamrick:** the floods? Well, we haven't seen one in two years. The river hasn't came out of the bank. It's come up to the bank. Now, when it

[01:34:09] **McQuiston:** flooded downtown Nashville, the water, let's say

[01:34:15] **Hamrick:** that big fire pit. If you look out the window right there. Yeah, there's a big fire pit. Yeah.

[01:34:20] **McQuiston:** What

[01:34:20] **Hamrick:** I got up to the edge of that got up to the edge of that and it stopped.

[01:34:23] Okay. And we knew we was safe. But if it comes past that, you better get, you better get, because all this will be underwater in a matter of minutes. We've seen tents down here from the other ones that camped here before us. You could barely just see maybe just the top of the tent that was underwater.

[01:34:43] **McQuiston:** Last year we watched a house float down the river.

[01:34:45] Yep. A house?

[01:34:47] **Hamrick:** A house. A full house. A boat. A full house just floated by. That's

[01:34:52] **McQuiston:** 2010. You can see the second story

[01:34:54] **Hamrick:** window. And everybody's like, there's a house. Yeah.
[01:35:00]

[01:35:01] **Lemley:** And that was 2010.

[01:35:02] **Hamrick:** Okay. But it ain't got that bad since that one, but we have, it's came up out of that bank. Oh,

[01:35:09] **McQuiston:** a couple times almost and it's kind of scared us

[01:35:11] **Hamrick:** a bit.

[01:35:11] But we, like you said, we staked it out and we just sit and wait it out. It's all you can do. It's a matter of the weather here. It's just a waiting game with it.

[01:35:22] **McQuiston:** And

[01:35:22] **Lemley:** when you were in the bowl, though, you would get

[01:35:24] **McQuiston:** rained out more. Well, it's the same weather. It just depends. It's in a, the bowl isn't, that's why they call it the bowl.

[01:35:34] Yeah. A bowl.

[01:35:35] **Hamrick:** Yeah, it

[01:35:36] **McQuiston:** is. And what holds water? A bowl. And when it rains
But

[01:35:43] **Hamrick:** see, when we got flooded out over there, what happened first was It was another camp. It was Pops, Miyagi, Gary, James, all them got flooded first. And they sit [01:36:00] in the cold for two weeks, waiting knee deep water in and out in the winter.

[01:36:09] staying in their tents before they moved. Well, we moved their camp behind our camp in the other open area we had on the other side. And I'd be darned, three days after we moved in, we got flooded out. Yep. What year was that? Two years ago. Okay. When it was just all that rain and melt off from the snow.

[01:36:30] Yeah. I was in a 12 man tent and you could see that much of the top of my tent by the time it was about a couple inches.

[01:36:38] **Lemley:** And so you said that was in cold weather also. Yeah. That's not a

[01:36:42] **Hamrick:** spring rain. No, it was cold. That was a winter flood. It was from all the ice melting, the snow, and then the rain on top of it.

[01:36:51] It just That's when

[01:36:51] **McQuiston:** we had that snow in October,

[01:36:53] **Hamrick:** I think. Yeah, and it all hit us and melted at one time.

[01:36:58] **McQuiston:** And then they opened the floodgates [01:37:00] too.

[01:37:01] **Hamrick:** Yep, and it just like, like I said, we, it was raining and our tent had already flooded once. It was me, Dee, and another friend of ours, Beast, we had dug a trench around it and got all the water out, got it dried up, just went inside to sit down and have coffee.

[01:37:22] And within a five minute span, they was three feet of water in my tent. What? I barely had time to get my dogs and stuff out. That's how fast water rises. I mean, it rose that fast. That was the river. Yep. Okay. That's how fast water rises. And it was like, And I called my friend, Missy. She was working at Waffle House.

[01:37:40] I'm like, don't go down the hill. Meet me at the top of the hill when you get off. You don't have a tent no more. She goes, what are you talking about? I said, your tent's gone. Ours is gone. They're underwater. And it was still pouring. It took us three weeks before we could get back over there to get, do anything.

[01:37:57] And water was rising afoot. [01:38:00]

[01:38:01] **McQuiston:** It would rise afoot about every 30 minutes. So that tell you how quick that you better get out of here. You don't they don't give you no warning You better get over high ground and that's a couple of years ago. Yeah. Yeah

[01:38:14] **Hamrick:** It's you better when it starts like that. And if you're in a spot where you know, it floods We tell them head for higher ground the higher the better

[01:38:22] **McQuiston:** Wow,

[01:38:25] **Lemley:** so and what time of year do you

[01:38:28] **Hamrick:** have to worry about the floods between now and spring because

[01:38:31] **McQuiston:** depending on if it snows That snow melts, what's it turn into?

[01:38:38] Water. That also runs off into the river. And the rain adds to it. You hear me? Right after a snowy day it rains. So guess what? It's

[01:38:52] **Hamrick:** that time of the year that you just have to , watch out for it. You just, it could be be where, beware. We could [01:39:00] have a flood. We may not. It's up to mother nature. It depends on what she has in store for us.

[01:39:06] 'cause we're at her Grace Hot summer. You might as We're at God's grace

[01:39:09] **McQuiston:** this day. April, what were you saying? Well, the hot

[01:39:12] **Hamrick:** summer, you might as well say we're gonna have weird weather rights in the middle

[01:39:16] **McQuiston:** maybe. Yeah. Because it's unpredictable. That is unpredictable. A hot of summers make cold winters.

[01:39:20] **Hamrick:** Mm-Hmm. . And we had a hot summer this year and with the ozone messed up. You never know what a hurricane. Yeah. And then we get all the backlash from the hurricanes in Florida, the

[01:39:31] **McQuiston:** tornadoes, I mean. Totally. That's why this is facing that way. Yeah. Back a few things.

[01:39:37] **Hamrick:** Yeah. Out we go. Whatever is left, do what it will

[01:39:44] **McQuiston:** with it.

[01:39:45] And you can drive up the hill. Yep. Pick up pieces as long as there ain't a lot of ways. What, um,

[01:39:50] **Lemley:** and then, Mama, I'm someone that Doesn't like the heat.

[01:39:55] **Hamrick:** Oh, I can't stand the heat. Okay. I sit in here in the summertime, there's an air conditioner [01:40:00] that sits right here. Okay.

[01:40:02] **Lemley:** That's what I would be, like

[01:40:02] **Hamrick:** your own personal air conditioner.

[01:40:04] And then I have portable fans that run off battery packs.

[01:40:07] **McQuiston:** Uh uh. You know what my air conditioner is? She stays warm and she stays warm. Yeah. Yeah. You

[01:40:12] **Hamrick:** know what his air conditioner is, seriously? Unless he comes up in here and then he's like All of them walk in here and they'll stand in front of the air conditioner, pulling their shirts out, letting the cold air out.

[01:40:22] **McQuiston:** They're like, ah, relief from the heat.

[01:40:25] **Lemley:** Yeah. So, um, have you always been sensitive to the heat or more so? Always. Always. Me too.

[01:40:33] **McQuiston:** Cold is worse with me. Spend 20 years in Florida and then come back here. Yeah, right. You're gonna get good kicking up a seat at the Bruch's. I'm from

[01:40:41] **Hamrick:** New York.

[01:40:41] **McQuiston:** I came here in January with a t shirt.

[01:40:44] Yeah. Yeah, that's right. I went to Buffalo, New York. I gotta grab the wagon and go get ours. And a tank top and a pair of shorts.

[01:40:54] **Hamrick:** I thought he was getting ours,

[01:40:55] **McQuiston:** too. Huh? What? [01:41:00] You're doing an interview. Don't get me started. The language will come out of my mouth. That's

[01:41:05] **Hamrick:** what I said. I'm trying to be respectable.

[01:41:07] **McQuiston:** There's another lady here. My wife's used to it. And trust me, when I get started, I don't shut up until I

[01:41:13] **Hamrick:** calm down. It could be 10 o'clock tonight and I'll still be going.

[01:41:19] **McQuiston:** So

[01:41:19] **Lemley:** with the heat, um, What do you remember, what do you remember temperatures being like when, when you were in West Virginia when you were little?

[01:41:28] **Hamrick:** 70s, 80s. Okay. Because I lived back in the country so we was in the shade. Yeah.

[01:41:33] **McQuiston:** Yeah.

[01:41:35] **Hamrick:** After moving further into the city, it's like the heat index just, and with me having COPD and asthma, it just like sucks the breath out of me.

[01:41:46] It's like, and in the cold, I choked to death from it. Because of my breathing cold air, it's like gasping for air. Yeah. It's just. But I've gotten used to dealin with it. [01:42:00] But I would prefer heat over the cold any day. You do. I'd rather it be warm and hot than cold.

[01:42:11] **McQuiston:** You think it's bad here. Go down to Florida.

[01:42:15] I have. I I said, I just came back from down there too. I left Florida and went, like I said, to Canada. But, down there, they don't wanna help the homeless. They told the homeless, you got to leave. Me and a friend stayed in the truck, and I got her with me. And we're, we're at a truck stop, we're in the back of a U Haul truck.

[01:42:39] And it's like, eh, maybe 80 degrees. It's comfortable out, you got the breeze coming off the ocean, it's comfortable. We're in Orlando, Florida. It's pretty nice. 103 gets police. Bang, bang, bang. Florida, Florida Police. I raised the, raised the door [01:43:00] up and said, Yeah, can I help you? How many of you's in here? I said, How many do you see?

[01:43:06] Are you been a smartass? I said, No, sir. I said, How many do you see, sir?

[01:43:15] You want to step out of the truck, smartass? Yes, sir. I'll step out of the truck. So I stepped out of the truck and he goes, Got some ID on you? I said, Yes, sir. And he had my driver's license. Yeah. Okay, Aaron gets out of the truck. Of course, Aaron's got his license, or his ID in his hand.

[01:43:38] Now somebody at the truck stopped and went and called on us. For what? For us sleeping in the back of that truck. Well, anyway,

[01:43:49] This cop is being a rude asshole. He's being just, A cop, a typical cop, being an ass. Well, you know I could take you to jail, [01:44:00] blah, blah, blah. Look at him, I said, we ain't there yet. Three cot, three squares and a dare. We ain't there yet. Okay. Well, they call SPCA on me. On account of my dog. Her being in the back of that truck.

[01:44:14] It was precious? Yeah. You know, my mom right there, in danger of this dog's life. Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. I said, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. Hold up, swole up. Hold up, swole up.

[01:44:28] I said, see that fan running right there? That dog has air. That dog has food, she has water, there's her bowl. Check it! Take a picture of it! And I said,

you called SPCA on me? Yeah, you son of a bitch. Yeah. I'll take you to jail, buddy. I said, I'll tell you what. I'll be out before the damn ink dries on the paper, buddy.

[01:44:54] So go ahead and let's get us there. If that's gonna be your little routine, let's get there. Yeah. [01:45:00] Well. He runs back to the car. He's running check on me. He comes back and says, Why don't you tell me you used to be a cop? I said, You never asked, you smartass. I didn't know this

[01:45:15] **Hamrick:** was a date.

[01:45:19] **McQuiston:** I said, He said, You didn't tell me you used to be a police officer.

[01:45:23] I said, Yes, I was a police officer for 18 and a half years. I said, I've done security for 23, for 27 of that. And I said, now, you tell me I don't know my, don't know the law, brah, and you're trying to tell me that I can't have my dog in the back of this truck? I think you need to step back, brah. Yeah. So he gets pissed off.

[01:45:43] Goes back and slams the car door and leaves. But before he leaves though, we gotta leave the parking lot.

[01:45:53] We gotta leave that truck stop. That means I can unhook my van. Right? Mm hmm. [01:46:00] Don't wanna lose my dog's hair, right? Yeah? Tell her in the cab of the truck. We driving off. I guess we go maybe a mile and a half, two miles and get stopped again. And it ain't the same cop. And the SPCA's trying to take my dog out of the truck.

[01:46:22] I told that

[01:46:27] SPCA officer, I said you're reaching this truck one more time or I'm gonna shoot you sir. Oh my gosh.

[01:46:37] They were trying to get her. I said, yeah, he was trying to take her. She was in between the seats. He was trying to reach over me to get that dog. I said, you're reaching his truck again. I said, sir, I'm going to shoot you in the side of the fucking head. In exact words. I said, I'm going to shoot you.

[01:46:56] **Lemley:** And you said, you already said you're always carrying to keep your family safe.

[01:46:59] Yes, sir.

[01:46:59] **McQuiston:** [01:47:00] I'm legal to carry mine.

[01:47:02] **Hamrick:** Yep, he's legal. Well,

[01:47:04] **McQuiston:** I'm legal. I'm legal, I'm carrying mine. What is it? Security. Arms security. Oh, I meant 9mm. 9mm. Same as mine, 9mm. Anyway, I told him, I said, Sir, you reach for my dog one more time, I said, I'm gonna shoot you in the side of the head. Yeah. He said, I'm gonna get that effing dog.

[01:47:21] I said, sir, over my dead body or yours won't. The second you reach and touch the hair on her head, I said, I'm fixing to kill you. Do you understand me, sir? And that's not a threat. That's a fact. I said, she is a registered

[01:47:36] **Hamrick:** service dog. Lay down doggaroo. It's okay baby, lay down.

[01:47:41] **McQuiston:** I said, you're not taking that dog.

[01:47:45] He said, well, you're best best to get the fuck out of Florida and don't come back. And this cop is standing there with him, hearing me telling him, I'm gonna shoot you, sir. Mm hmm. [01:48:00] And this cop hadn't said a word. Yeah. He's just standing there. Well, I reach and pick Precious up, and I got Precious in my hands.

[01:48:09] I get out of the truck and I walk over to the other SPCA officer that was standing there with the cop. I said, you see this dog? She's healthy. I said, see her service tag? Mm hmm. I said, the little, little service tag. I said, she's not only an emotional support animal. She's for PTSD. Yeah. And I said, You're not taking my dog.

[01:48:36] I reached and got her paperwork. I said, Registered. I can take her anywhere in this damn country. It's not a damn thing you or anybody else can do about it. It's federal law. Yeah. Says I can take her. That cop says, Sir. Sir. Sir. Get back in your car and leave. Mm hmm. Get in your car and leave. And I [01:49:00] asked that officer, I said, why did you stop me?

[01:49:04] What was your probable cause to stop me? The SPCA wanted me stopped because they wanted her.

[01:49:16] Oh, man.

[01:49:19] **Lemley:** She's wanting to tell her side of the story right now. Well,

[01:49:22] **McQuiston:** we went to Canada. They kept her ten days in quarantine. Yeah. They had to. Okay. Anyway, we crossed the border. They kept her for ten days. Yeah. And the lady calls me. She goes, Sir, you want to come and get your dog? Yeah. I said, Yes, ma'am. I'll be right there.

[01:49:39] Yeah. We showed up to get her. She was, boy, a squealing and a squawking. Uh oh! The lady sets her down and she comes right to me and I pick her up and boy, she's all over me like white on rice. And we walk out the door and one of the Canadian officers [01:50:00] goes, what kind of dog is she? And I told him, I said, she's a Chihuahua and a Pomeranian mix.

[01:50:07] Damn, he didn't come out with another Pomeranian. Full, full blooded little Pomeranian. And I said, Whose dog is that? He goes, we're waiting on the owner to get here. Okay. I went, I'll take her.

[01:50:26] And he said, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. No, we're waiting on the owner to get here to get it.

[01:50:38] Get off the track.

[01:50:42] **Hamrick:** Somebody's on them.

[01:50:45] **Lemley:** Anyway. Oh, you think someone's on the, that's

[01:50:47] **McQuiston:** why it's that loud. Well, we've had two or three to get hit up here. Yeah, so they don't, they don't make it. We have one keel right down here and the other one, the lady that was hit down on the other end

[01:50:57] **Hamrick:** of the She survived.

[01:50:58] She survived it. Okay. [01:51:00] She survived. But anyway. Hold on, Nagi. I'll get you outside in the pew when we're done, baby. We're not gonna

[01:51:05] **McQuiston:** be much longer. We walked out the door and the lady showed up to get her little dog in. She thought I had her dog. Yeah. Oh. But you're like, no, no, no,

[01:51:14] **Hamrick:** she's

[01:51:14] **McQuiston:** in there. She thought I had her dog.

[01:51:18] And I said, no, honey. And she's speaking French. Yeah. And I said, no, no, no, no. Mine. This is mine. Yours is right there. And the officer come walking out with her dog. And he handed her. And me and this lady was letting the dogs market each other. It was so funny. And then we went back to the hotel. And this one here runs and jumps up in my granddaughter's lap, and she don't like kids.

[01:51:49] Okay. Okay. She don't like children. Yeah. And she runs and jumps up in Jaden's lap. And you're like, what's going on? And I went,[01:52:00]

[01:52:00] what'd they do to my dog? Yeah. What'd they do to my dog? Used to, she wouldn't let you pet her, she wouldn't let DC or anybody pet her. Mm mm. Now you can.

[01:52:14] **Hamrick:** I could pick her up and hold her now before I could, before he left, nobody could touch her. But now all, as you can see, Dee just came in, picked her up, took her outside like he owned her.

[01:52:25] Before, she would eat you up.

[01:52:27] **Lemley:** You've talked a lot about like, like keeping them safe from floods and you know, in the car in the heat. What are some other ways you, you prioritize your pets when, in the weather?

[01:52:36] **Hamrick:** Well, if it's too cold outside for us, it's too cold for our pets outside. Exactly. So everybody comes in.

[01:52:42] Yep. Yep. They go out potty, brought in. Yep. Cause if it's too cold for us, it's too cold for them. That's like I asked,

[01:52:51] **McQuiston:** I asked this woman one time, I said, would you put your child outside in the snow? She said, no sir. I said, well why should I put my dog out in the snow? [01:53:00] Yeah. And she said, that's a good point.

[01:53:04] You didn't see it that way. Yeah. I did. You poke in your nose. I said, well why should I put my dog out in that snow? She don't deserve that. Yeah.

[01:53:15] And I've

[01:53:16] **Hamrick:** seen animals out here die. And ours, in the summertime, mine alone go through at least 15 to 20 gallons of water a day. In the summer, in the

[01:53:27] **McQuiston:** summer, yes. Okay. How do you keep them in that much water?

[01:53:33] **Hamrick:** We'll go fill those 5 gallon water jugs and fill them up

[01:53:38] **McQuiston:** and fill them up and bring them back and we'll water them.

[01:53:40] Is there still a spigot on the side? No. We're

[01:53:43] **Hamrick:** gonna have to have a wrench. You open up the hydrant. The fire department said as long as we don't leave it wide open. We can get water, and that's how we get water to cook, clean, dishes, shower, the dogs, all of it. Can you control

[01:53:58] **Lemley:** how, how [01:54:00] fast it's coming in?

[01:54:00] **Hamrick:** Yeah, it depends on how, it depends on how, how hard you open the, the thing on the top? No, the side. Well, you

[01:54:07] **McQuiston:** open, you turn the top of it, and that opens the water valve. Okay. And then you open the side. But the water comes out the side. Yeah. But you can control that water flow by how far you open it at up.

[01:54:19] Okay. So, yeah, you just open it up just to where it's, just stick a jug under it, stand there. Give it about five minutes or less. Go to sleep while you're out filling up. Or if you can turn it wide open, this will blow the jug back down to the bottom of the hill. And you with it. Yeah. So,

[01:54:36] **Lemley:** so, okay, how often are you going down to get water?

[01:54:39] **Hamrick:** Now that it's winter, we do it twice, maybe three times a week. But in the summer, it's like every other day. Every, yeah. Every

[01:54:46] **McQuiston:** two days. Every two or three days. That we go. We're on fire. And we're full of small jugs, big jugs, whatever we can fill up and bring back. Because

[01:54:56] **Hamrick:** nobody,

[01:54:56] **Lemley:** including the dogs, can

[01:54:57] **McQuiston:** drink the river water.

[01:54:58] No. That's nasty. [01:55:00] No,

[01:55:00] **Hamrick:** no. That is toxic. All that oil, gasoline, the chemicals from, which they don't want to admit, across the river. Well,

[01:55:11] **McQuiston:** look at all the silted tanks that's flooded.

[01:55:13] **Hamrick:** That's what I'm saying. All that's in that river. Nope. I know

[01:55:16] **Lemley:** in 2010 all the buses

[01:55:18] **Hamrick:** that were

[01:55:18] **McQuiston:** under the water here. Yeah. What did you see?

[01:55:20] Did you see the truck stop? T. A. truck stop? It was on, on It was underwater. Yeah, that's right. You could see this much of the tops of the trucks. It was so weird. It was so

[01:55:28] **Hamrick:** weird. It was really weird. You could play hopscotch across the trucks. Trucks. Yeah. Literally, you could hop from top to, the trucks, top to Oh

[01:55:35] **McQuiston:** my gosh.

[01:55:38] And I was living behind that truck stop when that happened. In that T. A. camp? No, I was right behind the truck stop. Okay. I had done security for T. A. Okay. No security there for 10 years and live right behind them. You know where the, uh, Raleigh Parkway sign is? Yeah. [01:56:00] My camp was right there at that sign.

[01:56:01] Okay. Raleigh Parkway. Yeah. Okay. And the police and the railroad said I was on public property. You know, ma'am, I was on private property. The guy that owns the parking lot, that owns that big parking lot on the back side

toward Main Street. Yeah. On the property that I was on. Okay. And they kept trying to tell me that I was on public property.

[01:56:27] Yeah. Railroad police said, you're on federal land. I said, you're full of shit. Yeah. I said, I got, here's the marker. Yeah. I said, from the center of this road to them tracks. And I've got permission. It's 30 feet, okay? That's the border. That's the line. Okay. I'm eight feet past the center inside that. Yeah.

[01:56:56] I'm on private property and he's trying to tell me I'm on federal
[01:57:00] land. Uh. I'm on state property. Yeah. You gotta go. I said, man, you're full of shit. Yeah. Kept arguing with me. I just called the owner. I said, hey, man, can you get over here? Well, I'm parking cars right now. I said, I think it's best you get over here.

[01:57:14] Yeah. So he comes through the back parking lot. Mm. On his golf cart. Opens the back gate and drives right, right up into my camp. Yeah. He goes, what's going on? I said, the federal cops are saying that I gotta leave. Mm hmm. I'm less than 50 feet away from them tracks. Yeah.

[01:57:37] He said, where's that paperwork I gave you? I said, this is a concern. I wanted it in. Got it. Wrote it out to him. Now this was his property marker. Yeah. His own survey are coming up. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah. Mr. Michael Copeland. I don't think such stupid fool could read a blueprint. [01:58:00] Yeah. I'm serious. Right. I don't think he could read a blueprint.

[01:58:05] And he says, well, this is my land. Okay. He said, I own from here, from the center of the road, 500 feet. Yeah. From there, from that fence all the way. Main Street. He said I own it. Yeah.

[01:58:28] Oh, well sir. Check your air off somebody. Yeah. Go check your deeds. Have 'em come out and run. Run the marker again for you to satisfy your 14 carat mind. Yeah, he'd be an asshole too. and I had permission to be where I was at. Yeah. Yeah. Written permission. Okay. Well anyway. The week before that flood happened,

[01:58:57] my security company that I worked for [01:59:00] sent me to Clarksville.

[01:59:04] When they had that big tornado in Clarksville, tore Clarksville, tore Clarksville all to pieces. Well, the building that we were protecting up there, it started raining like frickin crazy.

[01:59:23] I get a phone call sayin I seen your truck in the flood, blah, blah, blah. You didn't see my truck in no flood. We seen that red Ford Ranger floatin down the river, blah, blah, blah. Wasn't mine, brother. I'm in Clarksville. Are you next to a TV? I said, no, not right now, I'm not. Why? Turn it on. So I go in the main office, and I said, Can I turn the TV on?

[01:59:55] T8 was under water.

[01:59:57] **Hamrick:** Wow, in a matter [02:00:00] of 45 minutes.

[02:00:01] **McQuiston:** It was underwater. The

[02:00:03] **Hamrick:** whole thing was gone. Well,

[02:00:06] **McQuiston:** there was a Red Ford Ranger sitting on the side of the road. They thought it was mine. They thought it was you.

[02:00:11] **Lemley:** They thought you were

[02:00:11] **McQuiston:** dead. Well, it was a little Red Ford Ranger with a camper on it. Yeah. Just like mine.

[02:00:16] Yep. They thought it was me. Turn on the TV. You're gonna see yourself. Yeah, I'll see your truck. Oh, no, that ain't my truck. Yeah, I'm in Clarksville So this is the 2010. Yeah, okay. I'm in Clarksville Well, I get back And I'm thinking oh god, I've got a mess to go to yeah, I had nothing left. Yeah gone. It was just forced away and Thank God Mary the girl that died Took my dog, well, my Min Pin and my Chihuahua, Sweet Pete, and went to a hotel.

[02:00:56] Oh, she got him out of there. Yeah. [02:01:00] That's the only thing that saved my dogs. Didn't save nothing else. Didn't save no clothes. I didn't save all my dishes.

[02:01:08] **Hamrick:** You can always replace that. You can't replace a pet. No, you can't

[02:01:11] **McQuiston:** replace them. But I had a 12 man tent there too. Yeah.

[02:01:18] And had sixty three, had sixty four other camps there, too, that lost everything. Yeah. Mmm. One good thing come out of it, there's a friend of mine, God bless his heart, the day of the flood, he leaves and goes to Kentucky

to visit his mama and brother. Now he's married. Got a double wide trailer, workin every day.

[02:01:53] That's what they think that came out of that.

[02:01:57] **Lemley:** So to get away from the flood, he [02:02:00] went up to some family, and it worked

[02:02:03] **McQuiston:** out? When the water started risin he leaves. He goes and gets on Graham Bus. Yeah. Leaves his camp. Yeah. Gets on Graham Bus. And he goes to Kentucky.

[02:02:16] And loses everything he had here. But God

[02:02:20] **Hamrick:** blessed him. Start a whole new life.

[02:02:22] **McQuiston:** God blessed him. What

[02:02:24] **Lemley:** about the other 60 something

[02:02:26] **McQuiston:** camps? They all ended up scattered out everywhere. Yeah. And most of them ended up here. Yeah. Most of them ended up here. After the water came back down. I ended up back down here.

[02:02:39] Yeah. I ended up back down here. Because I had nothing left. I had to start over again. Yeah.

[02:02:49] **Lemley:** When's the last time you've lived indoors? Last

[02:02:52] **Hamrick:** year. Oh, okay.

[02:02:53] **McQuiston:** For how long? A year. A year. And then Section 8 quit paying my rent. [02:03:00] I got an eviction notice. You gotta leave. Blah, blah, I said, thank you very much. Have a good day.

[02:03:07] I said, ain't no big thing. Ain't no big thing. I've lost it all before. Ain't no biggie. Thank you. Have a good day. If you can live with it, I can live without it.

[02:03:21] **Lemley:** What do you, what do you guys want next? Mama, what do you want? What do you

[02:03:24] **McQuiston:** need? I want a piece of property. You

[02:03:26] **Hamrick:** got a piece? Thank you, we want a piece of property.

[02:03:28] That's what we're wanting. You got a piece of property? I wish I did. For this family, we want a piece of property. I'd, I'd, I'd settle for two and a half, three acres. Three acres at the most is all we'd need for our family. Cause you don't want

[02:03:40] **McQuiston:** I want to put me a tiny house on it.

[02:03:43] **Hamrick:** Start a garden. Start

[02:03:45] **McQuiston:** I just want to be That's the loan pretty much.

[02:03:50] I don't want the police breathing down my neck. I don't want somebody

[02:03:53] **Hamrick:** saying People shooting at us. Happen to wonder if we're going to be

[02:03:57] **McQuiston:** robbed. I'm going to shoot back. [02:04:00] Me too. If I could have got out that door that morning, little buddy would have been a dead man because I would have

[02:04:07] **Hamrick:** returned fire. But yeah, that's our goal.

[02:04:11] Mine, my husband's and Uncle Junebug's is we want a piece of property just for us. That we can call our, ours and nobody can say, Hey, get off of it because right now we're breaking the law. Yeah. Well, by being homeless.

[02:04:26] **McQuiston:** Yeah. It's a felony. It's a felony to

[02:04:29] **Hamrick:** be homeless. Yeah. It's a felony to be homeless. And they say they'll give you affordable housing.

[02:04:36] Well, won't they stop relying? How can you afford rent when it's like, for a one bedroom, it's going anywhere from 1, 600 to 2, 200 a month. How are you supposed to live? And

[02:04:47] **McQuiston:** you can't have your dogs?

[02:04:48] **Hamrick:** Yeah. They told me to get rid of my dogs, they'd put me in housing. I said, well Why won't you get rid of your kids?

[02:04:54] Part of my language, they can go f themselves. It's basically what we told them. Why won't you get rid [02:05:00] of your kids? They told him, how about you go to work and don't collect a paycheck? Why won't you get rid of your

[02:05:04] **McQuiston:** kids? That's what he told them. And when I told them all, I said, you're one paycheck away from being my client.

[02:05:10] It's

[02:05:11] **Hamrick:** like we said, you never know. You're one paycheck away. One paycheck away from being where we're at, so don't judge. Or one illness. Don't judge. One tornado flood. Don't judge us because we're out here. You don't know our circumstances. You ain't walked a mile in our shoes. Don't judge us. Right.

[02:05:26] **McQuiston:** Only God can judge me.

[02:05:27] Exactly.

[02:05:29] **Lemley:** Well, I won't keep you. You've been so generous with your time. I won't keep you much longer. I'm gonna just ask you two more questions. I'll start with you, Mama. Describe how Nashville has changed or developed since you've been here and how you feel

[02:05:43] **Hamrick:** about it. I hate it because the fact is they're tearing down what used to be affordable housing to build these high rise apartments that is so high nobody in our circumstances could afford the rent.[02:06:00]

[02:06:00] Yeah.

[02:06:01] **McQuiston:** What about you? Well, like I said, I mean How's it changed? You've been here a long time. I've seen Nashville grow from A little bit of nothing. I've seen pasture lands turned into housing developments. I've, I mean, like I said, I'm born and raised here. And I've seen Nashville grow and grow and grow to where it's ridiculous.

[02:06:26] And trying to live here, back in the 50s and 60s, was a piece of cake here. You could live on 150 a month. Feed your family forever. A month on 50. Today, 50 wouldn't buy you a loaf of bread and a pack of bologna. I go through

[02:06:45] **Lemley:** Burger King and it's 36

[02:06:47] **Hamrick:** for two people. Thank you very much. I'm like, when did this, when did this

[02:06:50] **McQuiston:** happen?

[02:06:50] You just said a mouthful. Well, anyway, it's ridiculous that Nashville's gotten to the point to where they don't care about the little man. But, [02:07:00] the little man is the backbone of this damn country. Yep.

[02:07:05] **Lemley:** Okay, so last question, I'll start with you since you, you're, you, you've been talking. If you could tell decision makers one thing about the weather changes and events that impact your community, what would it be?

[02:07:17] **McQuiston:** Well, they need to build more shelters and more housing to get a lot of these homeless off the streets and to hear more about the citizens of Nashville, not their damn pockets.

[02:07:34] Because they don't care about us. We're trash to them. We're an eyesore on their beloved Nashville. Most of them are not even from this damn state. And trying to tell us that we're violating the law by being on state property. We're doing this and it's wrong. [02:08:00] What about the Right to Live Act?

[02:08:03] **Hamrick:** But they don't stop and think, and June Bugle say this, what they do not realize in the state What about our rights?

[02:08:12] Yes, exactly. In the state of Tennessee, the Homestead Act is still on the

[02:08:17] **McQuiston:** books. But the thing of it is, the thing of it is, if you own a piece of property, you have to make it better than it was when you moved on it within a year. And show progress thereof. State of Tennessee, you don't recognize that anymore.

[02:08:37] Nope. They'll tell you this. What would

[02:08:41] **Hamrick:** you tell decision makers? Basically what Junebug said. They don't care. Affordable housing for people like us to get us off these streets. Instead of just making it ridiculously hard.

[02:08:55] **McQuiston:** They're making it for the rich and famous. Okay? We got all these country [02:09:00] stars that out here are raising money for, for the homeless.

[02:09:04] Well, we're going to say the Titans for instance. Titans fed me Christmas dinner one year and served it themselves. Cheerleaders and the Titans. With the cheerleaders. Titans cooked it, cheerleaders served it. Alright. Okay? Yeah, yeah. But the Titans. donated almost a quarter of a million dollars toward the homeless.

[02:09:31] Where did it go? Exactly. Where did it go? We haven't seen it. Where did it go? Hmm. The federal government gives the state of Tennessee several million dollars a year for the homeless. Whose pocket is it going in? Who's pocket is it going in? The big [02:10:00] officials. Oh, you kick them, kick their asses out of there.

[02:10:02] They don't need to be there. Mmm. They don't give a damn about us. We're trash. On the Isle of Nashville. Yep. We're an eyesore. And it's been that way since 1972. You would know. I was here. And me a veteran. And they won't treat me like shit. Yeah. I can't give blood, I shed blood for this damn country.

[02:10:28] **Hamrick:** He should be able to live anywhere he wants to,

[02:10:30] **McQuiston:** any way he wants to tell me that I can't do this, I can't do this.

[02:10:34] Jump on that and spin. And Like a bird, jump up there baby and crawl. Um. I made them 16 to your ass and tromped through a jungle. Tell me I can't, I ain't got the rights to live here. Well, thank you. I mean, I'd do it all again. But the thing of it is, I care so much about my country. And I try to [02:11:00] help other people, just people to look at me and say, you worthless piece of shit.

[02:11:09] Sorry, but you can edit that out if you want to. But it's a crying shame. It's for That

[02:11:16] **Hamrick:** they treat our veterans the way they do.

[02:11:18] **McQuiston:** Davidson County, over a period of 40, 50 years,

[02:11:28] to treat human beings the way they treat us now. When, uh, when you could sleep on your front porch and your neighbor would watch your house and watch you to make sure you were safe, today, your neighbor

[02:11:46] **Hamrick:** will kill you or rob you blind.

[02:11:49] **McQuiston:** It's a cryin damn shame that people don't give a damn anymore. [02:12:00] I came back, like I said, 1972, disco was a big thing.

[02:12:04] I come back, what the hell is going on here? What the hell is going on here? I left here when bebop was going on. Hip hop was, you know, wasn't even a thing. I was like, well, R& B, what the hell is that? But, Motown, you know, come back over here to see all the changes. See how the people, it's the people that changed the growth of the city, because they just act like they stop caring.

[02:12:41] And, it's, I don't know, how would you say it, I mean, and be, and be nice about it. You don't have to be nice about it. Well, I'm trying to be nice about it, the way I see it. Let me grab one of these big [02:13:00] politicians and drag his ass out here and let him spend the night in my tent. I'll go stay in his mansion and eat his steak dinners.

[02:13:09] Let's swap roles for a little bit there, buddy. See how you like it. How you like me now, you S. O. B.? Mmm. You can sit there and eat your hundred dollar meals and, Oh, you piece of shit, you're an eyesore on Davidson County, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. Well, come on down here and spend the night in my tent, baby.

[02:13:31] Yeah. Let me spend the night in your big old mansion. Eat your hundred dollar meal. Well, I might've heard Not knowing when my next meal's gonna roll in from.

[02:13:45] It's the truth. I know it's the truth. Yeah. I ain't got no lies to tell about it. Exactly. I live here. I know. But the thing of it is, the moral of the story. What happened to the heart [02:14:00] of Nashville?

[02:14:04] What happened to the heart of Nashville? All we got now is a pulse.

[02:14:11] **Hamrick:** Money and greed is what happened to Nashville.

[02:14:13] **McQuiston:** All we got is a pulse. A pulse of Nashville. Goes forward. Ah, well

[02:14:19] **Lemley:** thank you guys so much. Um.

[02:14:24] **McQuiston:** I'll just

[02:14:24] **Lemley:** say this concludes the climate related brief oral history of, if you'd say your name one more time.

[02:14:29] Vanessa

[02:14:30] **Hamrick:** Carey. And Martha McQuiston.

[02:14:32] **McQuiston:** Beautiful. Of Tent City.

[02:14:34] **Lemley:** Of Tent City. Off of Hermitage near downtown Nashville, Tennessee on January the 5th, 2024. And the total running time, my guess is approximately, uh, two hours, twenty minutes or so. Thank you.

[02:14:50] **McQuiston:** Feel free to edit. You messed

[02:14:53] **Hamrick:** it up. You're supposed to say this is

[02:14:55] **McQuiston:** the rich section of Tent City.

[02:14:58] **Lemley:** We're in [02:15:00] the rich. Puttin on the

[02:15:03] **McQuiston:** rich. Puttin on the rich.