



Interview with James Truncer

Under the Auspices of the
Monmouth County Library Headquarters
125 Symmes Drive, Manalapan, N.J.
Flora T. Higgins, Project Coordinator

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Name of Interviewer: Flora Higgins

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Mr. Truncer: Good morning.

Ms. Higgins: Good morning. Thank you for being a part of our oral history project of Monmouth County.

Mr. Truncer: Glad to, Flora, glad to do that.

Ms. Higgins: Please tell us how you came to be in Monmouth County in the first place.

Mr. Truncer: Well, my parents moved to Upper Freehold Township in 1951. I attended Upper Freehold Regional schools, starting my sophomore year in high school.

Ms. Higgins: What high school would that be?

Mr. Truncer: This was in Allentown, Upper Freehold Regional High School, which is where I met my wife. We went through high school together. My father had his career with state parks so I was born into the business and didn't realize that's what I wanted to do, but I did have the early exposure in this field.

Ms. Higgins: What did you do after high school?

Mr. Truncer: During high school and immediately after high school I worked on a neighbor's farm. I graduated from high school in 1955, and of course, at that time Upper Freehold was grain, and potatoes, and dairy. After a year of doing various jobs I decided it was time to go on to college, so I started to pursue my studies and eventually completed my undergraduate degree at Michigan State University and also my masters at Michigan State.

Ms. Higgins: In?

Mr. Truncer: Natural Resources and Park Management. So that was the field that I found myself in at Michigan State as a part of the Department of the College of Agriculture.

Ms. Higgins: So you came back then to Monmouth County?

Mr. Truncer: Well, sort of in a circuitous way. I worked briefly for the National Park Service in Virginia, after I was out of college, I spent a year on active duty over in France with the military, and then I worked for the State of New Jersey for two years before I came here to Monmouth County.

Ms. Higgins: How old is the New Jersey Park System and the Monmouth County one?

Mr. Truncer: Well, New Jersey was one of the first states to become involved in preserving state forests, going back to slightly after the turn of the century. Most of the state land acquisition was during the 1920s and 1930s when there was interest and also funding, both state and federal. Monmouth County Parks System really started through the Monmouth County Planning Board studies and reports. Charlie Pike was then the County Planning Director, and as a result of his studies and reports, and the Planning Board's recommendation, the Board of Chosen Freeholders embarked on acquiring land in 1960 from the New Jersey Highway Authority at Shark River. That was really the first county park site, involving about twenty acres. That site was developed using county highway employees, the county engineers office, and county prisoners. Also, the Soil Conservation Service was doing work at that time creating farm ponds, and they created a small lake at Shark River. In 1961 the Board of Freeholders created, by resolution, the Board of Recreation Commissioners, which is a statutory board with seven members appointed for five year staggered terms. They receive no compensation, meet twice a month, and I serve as secretary to that board and also as the Director of the Park System. My first job with the county starting in 1964 was as a park planner. We had no park budget: part of the payroll was in the Planning Board, and part was in the Highway Department.

Ms. Higgins: How did you acquire land with no budget?

Mr. Truncer: Well, the Freeholders appropriated money specifically at that time to acquire the property at Shark River, and in 1962 the first Green Acres program was approved. A referendum was held statewide in 1961, which was passed by the electorate, and in 1962, funds became available to assist the county and municipalities in acquiring land. As a result of that program, lands were acquired at Holmdel, which is now Holmdel Park, as well as Turkey Swamp Park. So Shark River Park, Holmdel Park, and Turkey Swamp Park were the first three properties.

Ms. Higgins: What part of 1962? I don't remember what administration this was.

Mr. Truncer: Well, this would have been under Governor Richard Hughes.

Ms. Higgins: Was there federal money?

Mr. Truncer: Green Acres was state money, state bond issue money. Subsequent to that, federal money did become available through either the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development's open space programs or through the Department of Interior's land and water conservation fund. Two distinct, separate programs, the Housing and Urban Development and Open Space Program, no longer exist at this time. The land and water conservation fund has diminished significantly, but there's a movement at the present time to have it reinstated.

Ms. Higgins: I'm amazed that the park system is so young. I really am surprised that this has all been going on while we've been here in Monmouth County. It's so much progress you've made!

Mr. Truncer: Oh, yes. In 1961 we had something like eight employees, so in 1964 part of my first job was to create a budget, and to develop a program that was presented to the Freeholders, who ultimately provided funding, both capital funding and also an annual appropriation.

Ms. Higgins: I'm also, I must say, quite pleased to have been a real part of it as a Monmouth County taxpayer all these years. Did you find the public supportive as far as voting? What was the biggest disappointment?

Mr. Truncer: In 1964 many of the municipalities in Monmouth County were still rural; urbanization was limited to the eastern portions of the county. There was not a strong local commitment on the part of the local elected officials in support of the county program. However, subsequent votes on statewide Green Acres issues were always carried in Monmouth County; recently in 1986, the county had a referendum on the ballot to create a county open space programs funding with county dollars as well as using the state money. And each of those votes were issues passed by a large majority, so it's obvious that the people who live

here today are very supportive of preserving open space and saving recreation areas as well as historic properties.

Ms. Higgins: What was your next job with the system?

Mr. Truncer: Well, after serving for a year as a planner, I was made director. I worked with a gentleman by the name of Walter Schoellner, who was a retiree who served as secretary to the board. We developed a plan for the Freeholders in terms of a long-range open space park plan. That led to several subsequent plans for the use of the county and state Green Acre funds. Also, I think, the other important fact is that a number of landowners in Monmouth County over the years have donated properties. We're sitting here at Thompson Park in the boardroom of the Administrative offices, which was Dr. Thompson's study. Mrs. Thompson, Dr. Thompson's mother, donated two hundred fourteen acres to the county upon her death. It was obvious that she felt strongly about the property, because she provided in her will that no additional houses are to be built on the property, that it be a bird sanctuary, and that if at all possible it be oriented towards children's activities. So here was a lady in her nineties, who in 1968 was far ahead of many people. I think as a result of her generosity others contributed properties over the years including Mrs. Elizabeth Durand and Miss Helen Herrmann, who was a very nice lady. Also, the Huber family donated properties in Middletown, so we've been very fortunate that citizens have come forward and made lands available to the public for the public's use and enjoyment.

Ms. Higgins: Was there a feeling in the 1960s that we must hurry and acquire this land due to the rapid development of the county?

Mr. Truncer: No, I think the planners, and a number of other people felt it was going to happen, predicted it was going to happen.

Ms. Higgins: I'm sorry, development or acquisition?

Mr. Truncer: Well, development was taking place. I'm thinking of people moving into the county and the population increase. But I think many of the elected officials didn't grasp what was about to happen, or believed it would happen. It wasn't until, in my opinion, until the late 1970s or 1980s that many of the elected officials realized what was happening; it was evident because the houses were there, the new subdivisions, the increased traffic, just the number of people who were suddenly here in Monmouth County.

Ms. Higgins: When did the park system acquire that huge success, the land for Seven Presidents Park?

Mr. Truncer: Well, that was an undertaking that really was started by the City of Long Branch as part of an urban renewal project, and the city came to the county asking if the county would take over the property and develop it for recreational

use and as a beachfront operation, and we agreed to do that. It was with some difficulty that we did it over several city administrations. Ultimately, we were able to move forward, and we have acquired also some additional lands at the north end that we have added to Seven Presidents as additions to the original property that the city had assembled.

Ms. Higgins: Is it common for a county to have an oceanfront park?

Mr. Truncer: We're the only county in New Jersey that I'm aware of. In other states, such as South Carolina for instance, I know the counties have beach operations, but I'm not familiar with others.

Ms. Higgins: Is the park system involved in any kind of restoration of Asbury Park?

Mr. Truncer: We're not directly; we have been looking at acquiring lands in the Neptune and Asbury area for an urban venue, something different than we've done for other parts of the county. We're in the early stages of that at the present time. There is always a conflict in that the communities tend to think in terms of increased rates. In renewal situations where they have lost rates, their main emphasis is to put the property back on the tax rolls, so they're often reluctant to see additional properties go off the tax rolls for public use. And there are competing interests in terms of economic development, although we feel we have a role to play. One of the things we will be doing is encouraging the state redevelopment authority to be thinking also of open space and recreation.

Ms. Higgins: From what I've been reading and hearing, Long Branch has begun its own revival. Would you say that Seven Presidents Park is part of that?

Mr. Truncer: Well, I don't know to what degree, but there is no question that open space and good schools are attractive anchors in trying to stimulate development. Long Branch has been looking to develop the area between the Hilton Hotel and Seven Presidents Park, and that's what's being worked on at the present, as I understand it. And again, the city is looking at trying to put as much property back on the tax rolls as possible to generate revenue. It's a matter of a balance.

Ms. Higgins: Have you worked at the Rutgers Cooperative Extension at all?

Mr. Truncer: Well, we've had over the years a good working relationship with the county agent's office, also the soil conservation district. Back in the 1960s and 1970s those offices were oriented to the farm community which was much larger at that time, and had a number of programs which were helpful to us in providing services. We use Rutgers today in terms of their Agronomy Department. Also Rutgers provides short courses for our employees for our golf course maintenance and so on, and so we have an ongoing working relationship.

Ms. Higgins: The golf courses have been somewhat controversial. Would you comment on that?

Mr. Truncer: There's a sense that they may not be a necessity; I think that's one of the issues. Although in today's society, golf is a very popular sport and becoming more popular.

Ms. Higgins: You didn't get into any trouble with your tennis courts here at Thompson Park or over at Dorbrook. Why do you suppose golf was an issue?

Mr. Truncer: Cost. It's the cost involved and the perception that you're serving a limited number of people, although that has certainly changed in terms of golf as a lifetime activity, which is one of the things we try to promote. We like to be able to offer venues for people to try something. Without making major investments, they can decide if they find something that they would like to do for a lifetime or find rewarding and relaxing and part of their recreational life. Golf is one of those items, but we provide a number of other activities and introductions to activities that people can choose from.

Ms. Higgins: Like rock climbing.

Mr. Truncer: Rock climbing, or spelunking, or pottery and ceramics, or some of the fine arts, or hiking, camping, cross country skiing, downhill skiing, sailing, canoeing, kayaking -

Ms. Higgins: Where's the sailing?

Mr. Truncer: At the Manasquan Reservoir.

Ms. Higgins: They still have sailboats there?

Mr. Truncer: Yes. And we also do canoeing clinics, and kayaking, and there are rentals there for kayaks.

Ms. Higgins: When did the programs begin?

Mr. Truncer: In a very modest way, we started providing introductory programs in the late 1960s, early 1970s. Many of them were, and still are today, outdoor education, nature education series; both with the schools and outside the schools for groups.

Ms. Higgins: The snakes.

Mr. Truncer: The snakes, hikes, and gathering, and archeological programs also, and gathering of sharks teeth, and a variety of activities to introduce people to the world around them.

Ms. Higgins: When did you become director?

Mr. Truncer: Actually, I sat on the board here for a brief period of time, appointed by the Freeholders as a citizen, and then was hired and retained as a planner with the Planning Board to work on our park plan, and to put together our park organization, and then following that, I was appointed to the position of director. Then we implemented the plan that we had put together, and began the process of not only of acquiring lands and making them available to the public, but also of building a professional staff. We've been very fortunate in attracting highly qualified people, who do, in my opinion, an excellent job - day in and day out. Our board of seven citizens over the years is very stable; we're on our fourth chairman in thirty-five years, to give you some indication of stability and interest. We also have citizens on the board who certainly are dedicated to developing and acquiring and making available open space to the citizens and providing recreational opportunities. Our role is to provide and set aside areas and develop facilities of countywide significance, as opposed to providing local and municipal programs. There's always some gray area that will overlap. But we try to serve more than one community in terms of looking at a region; we try to provide those things which aren't available at the community level. We see ourselves positioned between local services and the local service providers and the state, which provides things on a statewide basis.

Ms. Higgins: When you have properties which you can't immediately develop, how do you keep the trees and the vines from taking over what has already been cleared?

Mr. Truncer: It is difficult job, and we have on staff an individual who spends most of his time dealing with the problems associated with the management of our resources. He deals with invasive species, as a part of our resource management plan.

Ms. Higgins: What's an invasive species, besides poison ivy!?

Mr. Truncer: Well, that's a native plant. Most invasive species are introductions, plants that have been introduced, maybe well intentioned, maybe without much thought, but once they have been introduced they tend to displace native plant materials to the detriment of the native vegetation. One example which people don't give too much thought about, but which is and can be a problem, is the Norway Maple. The Norway Maple is an ornamental tree which has its place in the landscape, but it can cause problems; Russian Olive is a shrub-like plant that is prolific in moving into fields and crowding out other vegetation; these are two examples.

Ms. Higgins: What about locust trees?

Mr. Truncer: They're native. The two I think that people are most familiar with are Japanese Honeysuckle, which I think was introduced by the Soil Conservation Service as cover for soil stabilization for control of erosion, but of course, is now a vine that creeps over everything and is hard to eradicate. Another one is the Multiflora Rose, which the Cooperative Extension Service, USDA introduced as the living fence. The birds carry the seeds and this plant invades pastures and open lands, and can be very difficult to control.

Ms. Higgins: We keep fighting brambles, briar bushes.

Mr. Truncer: Some of those are native. Another one which is just at the northern limits, but is a problem or can be a problem south of us, is Kudzu. This is a vine which will actually cross highways if it wasn't for the fact that traffic runs over it.

Ms. Higgins: What does Kudzu do?

Mr. Truncer: It envelopes trees and literally chokes out sunlight from leaves of the trees that are supporting it; and it also runs along the ground. We have some in Monmouth County; there is enough winter kill that it doesn't become as prolific as it might. It has to regenerate itself in the spring and start over again, where in the South it just continues to grow year round.

Ms. Higgins: Does the Park System ever grow crops?

Mr. Truncer: Some of the open space areas that are set aside are currently as farmlands, so we have active farming operations on some of our land. The public still has access to these lands for hiking and nature study, and birding, but this is one of the ways we manage the lands to keep them open, where we would like to keep fields and not have them revert to forest. We want to keep that mix of field and forest.

Ms. Higgins: Farming is tough in Monmouth County nowadays.

Mr. Truncer: Very tough, and becoming tougher. But there have been shifts. Now we have the farm operations that are "pick your own," or that are much more intense operations where they are getting a higher yield per acre. Grain and, of course, potatoes commercially went out of the county back in 1986 and 1987.

Ms. Higgins: Potatoes? I interviewed a former potato farmer, Stanley Orr.

Mr. Truncer: We were one of the larger producing areas. As the crop would be harvested up from Florida, right up the East Coast, New Jersey was sort of in that market between the Del Mar peninsula and harvesting there and Long Island. We were in that window of about two weeks when the potatoes were harvested, and then the choices came after that. Farmers had to decide whether

to store and hold their crop, which was always a problem, because farmers then had to compete with Maine, which harvests in the fall, in September, October, and Maine stored; they could store potatoes much better than we could locally.

Ms. Higgins: Also, Mr. Orr said that potatoes are not native to New Jersey, that they like the colder weather and they like hills. We are flat and a little too warm. On another subject, how do you reconcile here at the County Parks, the need to fertilize and the need not to fertilize?

Mr. Truncer: One of the things is what the pest management industry is moving toward. We have integrated programs of pest management and fertilization so that we're using less material, so that the material used does not move, it stays in place, so you're not getting it moving into bodies of water. As an example, on our golf course, we keep water and the materials that we use on site. This has a positive affect on the environment. So there have been changes, things are improving. It's been a matter of incorporating improvements in pest management and coming up with the best management practices.

Ms. Higgins: Do you have any comments on the county marina?

Mr. Truncer: We have a marina on the Raritan Bay, not too far from Port Monmouth, on Pew's Creek, which was acquired as we were acquiring lands for the Bayshore Regional Park. It's a facility that has been very successful, one that was acquired from a previous owner as part of a land acquisition and road relocation project. Over the years we have been increasing the amount of dockage, replacing docks, and expanding by providing additional bulkhead so we have both wet slips as well as rack storage.

Ms. Higgins: Can you put a boat in the water there?

Mr. Truncer: Yes. We use forklifts - we don't have a ramp as we do at the Manasquan Reservoir, but we can put a boat in the water for you with a forklift. People who rent rack storage space can just call ahead of time, say what time they'll be there, and the boat's in the water for them.

Ms. Higgins: Any sailboats?

Mr. Truncer: A few sailboats. Not for rental, but privately owned.

Ms. Higgins: Are they in rack storage?

Mr. Truncer: No, they're in their wet slip. There is a limit in terms of size that you can accommodate. But we've been upgrading the facility; we've increased the number of wet slips.

Ms. Higgins: How many do you have?

Mr. Truncer: One hundred and sixty seven.

Ms. Higgins: Wow! That's a lot, isn't it? That seems like a lot.

Mr. Truncer: No, it's not a lot if you compare to say Atlantic Highlands, one of the larger marinas in the state.

Ms. Higgins: There's been so much discussion about the Belford ferry. Would you please comment?

Mr. Truncer: We're not involved directly. We own lands that are in the vicinity, but we are not directly involved with the ferry. There's been discussion that as that facility is developed, the waterfront would be set aside for public access to the bay, and also to provide an opportunity for nature interpretation of the wet lands in that area.

Ms. Higgins: Is swimming a possibility? The water is getting cleaner, isn't it?

Mr. Truncer: We've got probably a little over a mile and a half of beachfront on the bay from Pew's Creek going toward Compton's Creek. You're correct; water quality has improved immensely over the past ten years. Of course we've been cleaning the beach regularly, and people enjoy fishing as well. The water is quite shallow, so I wouldn't say swimming is possible, but certainly wading and sunbathing, and using the beach are.

Ms. Higgins: I sometimes think the Monmouth County Park System is a victim of its own success. When you get a property and you begin a park there, there's a lot of comment: "Oh no, we don't want all that traffic." Well, certainly transportation and traffic in Monmouth County is a problem for everyone. People said Route 537 would get so much more traffic when you developed Dorbrook Park. Has that happened?

Mr. Truncer: No. There are three issues, no matter what the type of change of use happens to occur. They are concerns with regard to traffic, light, and noise. Adjoining property owners and people who live in the community express these concerns with regard to change. By and large, use that is at our facilities is over a period of time; within certain park areas use often peaks on weekends and holidays. Again, this depends on the type of activity the facility is providing. Other facilities, use is spread over a greater period of time. As an example, golf courses may have about three hundred individuals in the course of a day, which could be from five in the morning until ten at night. So you have four hours that an individual is actually there, four, four and a half, five hours maybe at the most, I think no more than that. So there's a turnover which is very slow. As some people leave, there are others who are arriving, and you don't get the same type of traffic pattern that you might get at a beach. At Seven Presidents on a nice Sunday, we might be closed by eleven or eleven thirty. And then by one thirty or

two, some people will have left, and we will have people who come for the later part of the day. Noise, traffic and lights. I think there's always a concern in the community, if it's a parking lot, for example, will the lights be on? Will there be activities? If there are proposals for athletic fields, will the athletic fields be lit? Millstone Township has been going through difficult times in terms of where athletic fields might be located in their community, and if they are lit. Neighbors are complaining about the lights, and how long they are on, and so forth.

Ms. Higgins: I read in the paper not too long ago that there was a neighbor complaining about the airplane noise at Dorbrook.

Mr. Truncer: Yes. We provided the site for model airplane use.

Ms. Higgins: They need mufflers!

Mr. Truncer: Well, certainly the neighbor probably has a legitimate complaint. It's difficult to find an area for that particular type of activity because you have a safety concern as well as noise concern.

Ms. Higgins: Could use rotate?

Mr. Truncer: Well, I think there are different ways it could be looked at. That particular use has been over the last fifteen years - or before that - the last twenty years, probably relocated three different times, and each time relocated because of complaints from adjoining property owners. As the county grows, and as there are more people in closer proximity, and closer to properties that we own, we're bound to have complaints, and part of our job is also to be a good neighbor. So we try to balance those things.

Ms. Higgins: On the water, you have the marina, and of course wonderful Seven Presidents; what's the status of the Fisher property in Locust?

Mr. Truncer: Well, that's one we have looked at acquiring -

Ms. Higgins: I thought you had.

Mr. Truncer: No, we haven't acquired it. It's one we have been talking with the owner and also attorneys for the owner, so hopefully someday that will be acquired. We have lands at Hartshorne woods that go down to the Navesink River at Rocky Point, lands that were originally part of a military installation.

Ms. Higgins: Off Portland Road?

Mr. Truncer: Off Portland Road, yes. We'll be doing an interpretation of that site. It was built in World War II as a coastal artillery installation. We have also acquired properties in Manasquan on the inlet called Fisherman's Cove. Locally,

this preserves waterfront along the inlet as you come in past the bulkhead at the inlet, which we have also acquired as a natural area. These acquisitions will involve doing a plan at the present time for vegetative management. We want to revegetate it with native species. We have phragmites that have invaded it, also called Turkey Beards by some people because they are long, tall, and reed-like. These plants crowd out other, native species. So we're looking at developing and managing that site in terms of native species, both for access for the public to the waterfront, but also for doing nature interpretations. Manasquan Reservoir: we manage that facility which is state owned; we have a long-term management lease so we can develop facilities there. We are in the process of developing an outdoor education center, an environmental center at that location. We are acquiring lands among the major stream corridors, which includes the Manasquan River, and we have acquired probably ninety percent of the frontage along Cross Wicks Creek, between Ocean County and Mercer County, which adjoins Walnford and that historic site. We're acquiring lands along the Shark River; we've also acquired lands along the Swimming River Reservoir and some of the tributaries.

Ms. Higgins: What is the relationship between Dorbrook Park and the Swimming River Reservoir?

Mr. Truncer: We actually own lands that adjoin the Reservoir; such as we do at Thompson Park. The water company, New Jersey American, actually owns the land immediately adjacent to the water, around the reservoir, and under the reservoir.

Ms. Higgins: Oh! Is that why you can't fish there?

Mr. Truncer: It's under the Water Company's control, but it is a tremendous resource that we hope someday will be available.

Ms. Higgins: What are the long range plans for the Park System?

Mr. Truncer: Well, we are still in the process of acquiring lands, both for open space and for recreational use. We presently have almost twelve thousand acres. Our long-range goal is at least nineteen to twenty thousand. We're in the process presently of assembling lands in the Perrineville area of Millstone for a regional park site.

Ms. Higgins: That area is growing so fast.

Mr. Truncer: Oh, it's developing very rapidly. And we have acquired Perrineville Lake, and we're in the process of actively acquiring properties in that area. We're also acquiring, as I mentioned, properties in Englishtown, at Clayton Park, along Crosswick's Creek, along Doctor's Creek, and doing greenway assemblages. We're looking at properties along Ramanessin Brook, which is a tributary to the

Swimming River Reservoir; we've been acquiring lands on the North Branch of the Metedeconk, which is located in the Southern portion of Freehold and Howell Townships.

Ms. Higgins: Most of the land in eastern Monmouth County is pretty much spoken for by now, isn't it?

Mr. Truncer: There is very little left, in terms of any sizable property. The largest single remaining ownership is what was the former Haskell estate, "Woodland Farm," in Middletown. The current owner has not indicated what he plans to do with it; he has owned it for close to thirty years now.

Ms. Higgins: Isn't that where the Hunt took place?

Mr. Truncer: It used to be. The new owner no longer hosts the Hunt. They apparently couldn't work things out with the owner to continue the Hunt.

Ms. Higgins: Another victim of its own success.

Mr. Truncer: Well, I'm not sure. Apparently there didn't seem to be the same sense, or feeling toward the community that had been there with the previous owner.

Ms. Higgins: It used to be a wonderful family thing to do in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Mr. Truncer: It was really a Monmouth County tradition. The site is a major property holding in the County. There are people I know who would like to see it preserved. Whether we will be successful someday, I don't know.

Ms. Higgins: Whose idea was it to put that path around Dorbrook? That's so wonderful.

Mr. Truncer: The paved trail. We're doing more of that type of trail in various locations. One of the things that, very frankly, trails provide is opportunity for a variety of users. I know you've said you and your husband have used it. And the fact is that you can have all ages use it. You can have youngsters learning how to ride a bicycle, to teenagers on rollerblades, to older citizens who just enjoy getting out and stretching and strolling and walking and doing their daily exercise. People have come to recognize that exercise is an important part of one's life and routine, and many of us who had become sedentary found out that isn't such a good idea. The fact is that there are more opportunities to exercise, and as more opportunities become available, people are now using them. It amazed me that the Henry Hudson Trail has been so well accepted in the Bayshore when the County acquired that. Complaints are minimal. We're now in the process of working with New Jersey Transit to reestablish the rail corridor as a trail from

Matawan to Freehold, along the old rail bed. When that happens, it will offer an opportunity to walk or to ride a bicycle from Freehold all the way to Highlands, and eventually to Sandy Hook, and eventually to Sea Bright and down along the coast.

Ms. Higgins: I hear so many older people talk about how easy it was to get around the county on trains and trolleys, and we've let them all go, and now we're driving. Even as a person so instinctively opposed to paving, I'm happy you paved that trail.

Mr. Truncer: It isn't without debate, even internally, and even with professional staff. There are those who would like to see us sometimes leave things in a surface that you can ride horses on.

Ms. Higgins: Are there any plans for an equine county park?

Mr. Truncer: We are currently looking at plans to relocate our riding facility that is at Huber Woods, where we do riding programs for the handicapped as part of therapy, and recreational activity, to Sunnyside Recreation Area on Lincroft Middletown Road. We work with a non-profit organization called SPUR - Special People United to Ride - that has undertaken the funding and construction of an indoor riding facility and we have decided that since there isn't room for that type of facility at Huber Woods, we would accommodate it at the Sunnyside Recreation Area.

Ms. Higgins: Would it be limited to SPUR riders?

Mr. Truncer: Predominantly. Although we do provide lessons for the able bodied, and of course, people who are involved in the equestrian program feel that the indoor facility will allow them to do lessons during inclement weather and also it will extend the season when now lessons are either cancelled or curtailed because of weather. We're looking forward to that, and we also work with a Friends of the Parks, which is a non-profit organization that raises funds and takes on projects, whether it's improvements, or scholarships, or providing transportation services, and we also have a good working relationship with the Monmouth Conservation Foundation, which is a non-profit entity that acquires and holds lands for a municipality, or for the county. They've been very helpful in making things happen, particularly when time is of the essence. Government can't move as quickly as it would like to. These three organizations have been excellent supporters for the Park System.

Ms. Higgins: Would you tell us about the historic sites?

Mr. Truncer: As a part of our acquisition of properties we included Longstreet Farm, where we preserved the farmstead. Longstreet is a part of, and adjoins, Holmdel Park. And we set aside about eight acres of the original farm with the

buildings and the house with the idea that we would do an interpretive and restoration to the turn of the century. We know that the County Historical Association buildings have been of revolutionary or pre-Revolutionary period in their restoration and their interpretation. We felt there was another story to be told in another different time period. So we've been working on the restoration of those buildings and the house over the years, and it's an ongoing program of protecting those buildings and also of developing interpretive programs introducing people to that time period. We have children's programs; we work with the schools in tying them into their classroom program. We also had a donation of a property and a mill at Walnford. Ed and Joanne Mullen donated the property and forty acres, and we've since been able to add to that. We now have the mill operating, we're in the process of finishing restoration on the outbuildings, and we're concluding the interior restoration on the house. We will open the interior of the house on October 1 of this year, not as a museum house, but for exhibits.

Ms. Higgins: How old is the house?

Mr. Truncer: This, as I recall, probably dates to 1774. It was the largest house in Monmouth County at the time. It was built over a period of a year and a half, and it was in existence at the time that the British and the Hessians came through on their evacuation of Philadelphia en route to Sandy Hook and the Bay.

Ms. Higgins: There are so many roads here that are named for mills. Tell us about the history of mills.

Mr. Truncer: They were a very important part of rural life. Walnford, and Walnsmill were really developed by the Waln family at an outpost as a point of commerce. The Walns were merchants out of Philadelphia, Quakers, and they shipped products from Walnford, down Crosswick's Creek to Bordentown and then down the Delaware. This, unfortunately, or more fortunately, I guess depending on your point of view, was not a success as a commercial venture, but they did have a number of other mills. In addition to the grist mill, they had a saw mill, and they had a foiling mill, and they had a smoke house. They shipped hams from Walnford to Philadelphia. They also had a post office, and they had a cooperage. There were a number of things happening in that site as well as people in residence, but it just never developed into a major point of commerce or grew as a community. Fortunately, the property remained in the Waln family for generations, and it was kept intact until we were fortunate enough to acquire it as a gift from the Mullen family. We also have acquired the Sea Brook Wilson house, or what locally was known as the Spy House, in Leonardo in Middletown, to which we will be doing structural work and restoration.

Ms. Higgins: Is that in cooperation with the local Historical Society?

Mr. Truncer: No, the property was conveyed to us by the Township, who was the owner, and we'll be using it as part of the Bayshore Park property as a visitor center and a point of contact. It is a very prominent structure as you approach the park and the bay. So we're looking at what we may be able to do with the structure in terms of restoring the outside fabric of the building, but also in adaptive use, so it has practical use.

Ms. Higgins: Is Monmouth County Park System the best county park system in the country?

Mr. Truncer: Well, we'd like to think so. It's sometimes very difficult to rate because there are larger systems in terms of acres and budget and employees. We like to think that one of the things we've been successful in doing is setting the standard for quality. Private golf courses compare themselves to our golf courses; country clubs compare themselves to us. Others compare themselves to us as to programs and program quality and content. So we like to try to set a high standard of quality for our maintenance. In terms of our overall plan for the County, we'd also like to think that we are setting a high standard. Certainly other parts of our country have excellent park systems. Some of them are much larger and doing a variety of things which we may not do. Again, we tend to be unique to the community where we're located. But I think that we have been fortunate because the citizens of Monmouth County have wanted us to provide quality and the Freeholders have been very supportive. I think this also goes for other county services. I've always felt that quality is important and needs to be a priority in what we do here in Monmouth County.

Ms. Higgins: If you had any advice that you would like to leave to people who will be hearing or reading this interview in fifty, seventy-five, or one hundred years, what kind of advice would you like to give?

Mr. Truncer: I guess I'd say that what happens today was thought about and was based on what somebody did twenty years ago, good and bad, and I think you have to think of that horizon of twenty plus years. If we don't, opportunities are lost, and it's a very difficult thing to do. People are accustomed to thinking in terms of their immediate needs and what's happening now, and not thinking in terms of what we need to do today to prepare for what may inevitably happen twenty years from now.

Ms. Higgins: Well, certainly our park system has had the benefit of your foresight, commitment, and expertise.

Mr. Truncer: You're very kind to say that, and I appreciate that, and I would again say that we have been very fortunate to have had support from our Freeholders who have really been interested in seeing these things happen. Without that support they just won't happen, and we all realize that. The other is our ability to attract and retain highly qualified professional people who certainly

don't work here because of the salary, they work here because they want to do a good professional job, and that's been very beneficial to all of us.

Ms. Higgins: I thank you very, very much for the interview.

Mr. Truncer: Anytime.