

## Transcript

Cissell:

OK, so this is Madison Cissell. Today is Friday the 13th October 13th 2023. And I'm here with you. Prefer Steve King, Steve King.

King:

Steve, yeah.

Cissell:

In Paoli IN. Do you want to maybe first just describe where we are?

King:

Right now, we're sitting in my. I have a working blacksmith shop and this part is more of a. Kind of a assembly and machining so. Yeah, I've just been out here today. Experimenting working on some. Coffee scoops that I'm looking to make.

Cissell:

And we just walked around your property and. What used to be? Is it still your property?

King:

No neighbor.

Cissell:

Looking at the trees.

King:

Managers property.

Cissell:

Do you want to start before we go into like I? I'm really interested to hear more about blacksmithing and everything we just saw, but maybe we should start at the beginning with like where you're from and where you grew up.

King:

OK, I have lived in Paoli all of my life. And I grew up. South of Paoli, almost across Ford County, and. But I never left. I've always been here. Most of my family all stayed other than my sister. She's in Australia, she lives in Australia. But yeah, always been here.

Speaker

Oh wow.

King:

Met my wife. She just told me 34 years ago this week.

Cissell:

Ohh wow, congratulations.

King:

And we've been married 33 years.

Cissell:

OK.

King:

And have. Three kids, mackenzie. Is 28 and Maddie's 24, and Caleb is 20. And I've lived here. On this piece of property for. Since we got married, we. We built the log house that I showed you and. It's funny, we actually this was a funny story. I poured the basement floor. I had the walls hired, but I poured the basement floor of the day of our wedding. June 16th, 1990 and my dad said. You're getting married next Saturday or? You can't pour the floor and I said the wedding's not till late. I said we'll start real early. So we had the wedding rehearsal Friday night and. I kept telling everybody I couldn't stay up late because I had concrete coming at 6:30. So yeah, we got the floor poured, but yeah. We've lived on this hill for 33 years.

Cissell:

Yeah, and. And the log cabin was just you said it took you a year to build. That was just a marvel, I think. To see, I think normally when you see them, they're not that big.

King:

Thank you.

Cissell:

So those.

King:

And what was cool about that one is. That one all the logs come from a local sawmill down here by Patoka Lake and. I just. I just bought a set of House plans for a conventional home and I just went down to the guy that owned the sawmill and I just. I just figured it up and I said I need. 250. 6 by 8. Yeah, 6 by 8 logs 10 foot long. They were \$10 a piece.

Cissell:

Oh my God. That's a great story.

King:

Poplar yellow Poplar because my top all said. Bugs won't bother yellow Poplar like they. Little like termites won't bother harder.

Cissell:

Did that hold up?

King:

Yeah. The only thing we ever had was these little powder post beetles. They would just make a little bitty hole like a pin hole. But we would have someone coming. Spray a little bit, but that's the only thing that. Ever bothered him? Yeah.

Cissell:

When did you get into blacksmithing?

King:

So actually. 20 years ago this spring.

Cissell:

OK.

King:

And last Sunday, I was over at Salem. And they have a museum over there with a little village. And I worked in the shop with a friend of mine. I went over to help him, but. It was there at that spot was the 1st place I'd ever. Done blacksmithing cause? I remember my dad went over with me and Mackenzie and she was 9. Anyway, she was she didn't feel good. And she just sat in the truck. It was a nice day, and I'll just go over and check on her, but. Like a week later, we found out that her kidneys had shut down. So, but that's the final. That's one thing, I guess that's why I always remember when it was. But yeah, it's 20 years ago that I started forging.

Cissell:

Oh my gosh. What was your profession? Like before.

King:

So I've always done concrete work. Commercial industrial.

Speaker

OK.

King:

And I've done that for 31 years and then five years ago, I went to work for, I worked for Duke Energy and like, I'm a construction manager for them.

Cissell:

OK. OK.

King:

And then this is still just a. Hobby it's kind of blowing up a lot of it. There's a lot of.

Cissell:

OK.

King:

Of there's a lot of stuff inside that shop that's. Super old and. Super cool for me, but.

Cissell:

When you said your Duke truck earlier, I thought you. Duke University. Because I'm from Kentucky, you know, we we don't use Duke Energy, which is weird because, you know, like Eastern Kentucky and West Virginia didn't know that's where all that went down. But anyways, OK.

King:

Yeah, you have a lot of LG and E.

Cissell:

So I guess what what was appealing about forging and how did it take off and blow up?

King:

I I honestly got into it. Because I wanted to be a knife maker. And my dad and I used to. My grand when I say this because my wife always and my mom always made fun of us, but we would go. Do 18th century reenactments where. We would dress in. The clothes, the moccasins, the Beaver hat, and we would shoot footlocks and. And part of it was. You know, throwing a tomahawk, throwing a knife and starting a fire with Flint and steel. I always loved the knives, but I could never justify paying for them so. I run into a guy down and he was from English actually and he. I had asked him and he just tell me all. His whole life story in two hours about how to make knives in Damascus steel and. I was so excited that. I asked him. I said, well, could I come down and? Learn from you. And he said no. I'm not into that and I thought, wow. So I was. I was really hurt. I was a. 36 year old man that got shot down and I was. And I finally I was telling my dad about it and. He said don't worry about it. You'll learn it. And I finally walked over to the guy when he got by himself and he always had a crowd around him because he was pretty famous for this and. I just shook his hand. I said hey, I. Want to thank you. And you have inspired me. And I said one of these days you're going to come here and you're going to see Steve King Knives. And I wanted to thank you. I shook his hand and I walked off and in about 10 minutes, here he come. And he goes, that's exactly what I was looking for, he said. Here's my card. You can come up any night during the week. Friday night's mine Saturdays is mine. Any other time you call me? So I called him that Thursday afternoon. I said, are you working in your shop and he goes. I told you, I work in my shop every night he goes. What took you so long? I said well, just talk to you. Sunday he goes. Well, you missed Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday. And so I went down every Thursday night for. I don't know, probably three years and learned and then I. I made a lot. Of knives. And I I learned to. I've been real lucky to get to take classes with. People from all over actually all over the world and. When they travel through the United States, if I if I see they're teaching a class within. 10 hours of me. I go to them.

Cissell:

Oh wow.

King:

So I've taken a class with a guy from England. A guy from Germany. Another guy from England. Yeah, I've taken classes on tool making to sculpture, which is the latest I guess. Which is kind of what I'm. Really interested in this is 1 Darren and I made. That's a peace dove.

Cissell:

I feel like now that you said it, I'll have you talk about traditional arts, but I feel like I've, like, seen a picture. Of that or.

King:

Oh yeah, one.

Cissell:

That that looks so familiar to me.

King:

We made one of those. I mean almost identical to it off of Darren's sketch. He's so good at that. And then we did one. At a Public Music festival called Paley Fest shout outs, Paley Fest. Very good. It's a free music festival and it's really good. But.

Cissell:

OK.

King:

We've donated one and put it in an auction silent auction. And then during the day of the music festival, Darren myself. And one 2-3 other blacksmiths, we all worked. And made this one and you can see. On the top feather there. This has all the different people's stamp touch mark on it. It was really fun because we had the sketch. On a rusty piece of steel with chalk. And then we had the one that was being auctioned and then we were putting together and. That was. What I liked about it was the folks always come by when you're forging, making noise, beating on hot steel. But when they come by and see what you're doing. They would just come back every hour or so and they would say, oh, they're working on the tail feathers and. So it was super cool and we're actually going. I'm going to give that one too. There was two women that were really bidding on.

Cissell:

OK.

King:

And they were like. Ready to throw down over it and. The one lady was volunteering and she had to step over to help with something on the stage. And she come back and the time was up and we had to stop it. So I'm going to, I'm going to give that one to her. And the. I talk so much about my neighbor Phil, but.

The copper. That's an olive branch, and he showed Darren and I how to solder the copper leaves onto the copper so.

Cissell:

OK.

King:

That was pretty cool. About the time Phil passed away this spring, I was moving it around and I knocked on the leaves off of it. So I just laid it. I'm just going to leave it right there.

Cissell:

Yeah, well, I thought it had been like. You know, soldered to the drum because it was.

King:

Oh yeah, that's a good idea. No, no, it's just loose.

Cissell:

It was like poetic to me.

King:

Yeah. Phil, come over here and. He would always come over on Friday and visit because Darren and I would be doing our traditional arts Indiana thing.

Speaker

OK.

King:

And it was funny. We would we always eat? I have an extra forge back there and we would clean all the coal out of it. We'd put charcoal in it and we would cook whatever.

Speaker

But it's.

King:

But Phil would always come over and he loved hot dogs and Mary would not. Did not like him eating hot dogs and. But the last time I'll never forget. We sit right here. And he was in terrible pain, and he couldn't hardly sit still and. He just walked around in circles, but. We all had hot dogs. He gave us a hug and. He said this will probably be the last time we ever get to do this and it was, but it was. It was really, really good to have him.

Cissell:

Yeah, yeah. And he had they they bought the log cabin from you. How long ago was that? 24 years. So, yeah.

King:

The time he was here, you know. 24 years. So we were building this House, OK. Actually, the vocational school kids were building it. And the neighbors walked down. And they said. We're just being nosey who's building the house? And I said, well, we're building it. And they said, are you going to sell this? And I said, well, we're going to maybe put them both for sale. And they said, well, we have someone. That would be interested in your log house and I said. Well, the next Sunday they showed up Sunday afternoon and it was Phil and Mary. And they walked out. We let them go in the House. But they said, well, do you have a price? And I said no. I said we're. Not ready. It'll be full. And he just kept talking and kept talking. And. And he finally said, well, what are you looking at? And I finally just shot a prize out there thinking he would leave. And he goes well. I'll have to double check with Mary, but we'll take it and and we we ended up settling for on a price and we actually. I don't know. It was months. I mean, it was well, Maddie was. She was born. In June. We didn't move in till November and they just they were in a rental house and they just said whenever you get ready.

Cissell:

Yeah, feel just the way you've described him sounds so special and.

King:

Oh yeah. Always helping others. And never he. Was in charge of habitat and he just worked tirelessly on that. And when he got sick. Some friends of mine. Said we're going to put a sidewalk in. And because Phil always wanted to and he never got it and he just sat down there and wept. While we did it and I was like I said, you've done this all of your life. Just sit there and let someone do something for you. But that's just the way he was.

Cissell:

And it sounds like he had, like, a knowledge of, you know, plants and trees and. So that's how this kind of groove started, right? It was Phil.

King:

Yeah, Phil said. I have bought too many trees. Can I plan a couple along the driveway? And I said that's fine. You mold around him and he said sure. Well, then the next year. He said hey. I have a few extra trees. Could I and I said you can plant them. And finally, the third year, he said, hey, I don't want to be a bad neighbor. So you just tell me if I am. And I said, Phil, as long as I can get into my blacksmith shop, I don't care where you plan them. And we actually had to cut 1 Apple tree down.

Speaker

OK.

King:

And when I built this addition, because my shop used to just start right there.

Cissell:

Oh, it was.

King:

He said, well, it's your tree. Do whatever you want to, but I know it broke his heart, so I had a friend of mine. Turn a bowl. Out of a piece of the wood and gave to him. So he. But yeah, he just planted him and he took care of him and.

Cissell:

OK.

King:

I would be up. There mowing and he would bring me a. A pine of. Raspberries or blackberries or mixture, he said. I'm just paying my rent, but he would always the fruit. We would pick. The fruit and he would always insist that I take at least. Half and I said, well, they're your trees, you know. But it was good because we could just. Share them with everybody you know. We were going to have the. This year was the first year, of course, that he wasn't here for fruit harvesting, but. I had plans I was going to have a bunch of friends over and we were going to make cider but. The more I thought about it. You know, Mary's still grieving, so we just. My family and Mary. We took the fruit down to her house and we made cider outside her were Phil and I used to. And then we just took the cider and shared it with all the neighbors.

Cissell:

Because that was another thing too. He had the cider press.

King:

Yeah, he has. I think he had like 4 and he restored them.

Cissell:

OK.

King:

And he would come over here and I would make him a little piece and. He had cider presses and he had, I think it's White Mountain ice cream makers. So he's got three daughters and all three of the daughters have ice cream makers and cider presses that he's restored and. Yeah, he, he he loved his cider presses, but he's the kind of guy that would. Come apple season. He if he didn't have enough apples, he would go out and buy just bushels of apples from the Amish and he would take them to the farmers market in Orleans on Saturday. And he would just sit there and make gallons and gallons of cider and give it all away just because he wanted people. To know. What fresh squeezed cider tastes like? And if you've never had it? While it's not even cold. Right out off the press. It's. It's out of this world. It's crazy how good it is. But he said I. People were coming over there and they were. How much is it? And he goes, we just got poor. I helped him one. We just kept pouring it in a big igloo. For the spout and he said, just fill up your cup or if you have a travel cup, fill it up. We just keep making it. But that was bill for sure.

Cissell:



And I think maybe you were talking about people coming out here at some point and you were telling me, like, you have an open foraging. And then.

King:

Yeah, so Thursday nights. I took a class A7 day class in Mississippi. To learn how to make tools. And part of that class was to teach me how to teach the class.

Cissell:

OK.

King:

So I had big thoughts of coming home and teaching classes and maybe trying to do that as part of my income, but. I had several one-on-one classes with people from all over but. I don't know. I would just get real nervous. If you're charging people they have, you want to make sure they can perform their piece right and and you know, I was always worried about is my insurance covering this. So I finally.

Cissell:

Right.

King:

I will still do it occasionally, but I just started opening it and I've done it. Friends of mine. In central IN do it. And I met a guy in Florida one time while I was on vacation, and he was a full time artist blacksmith, and he opened his shop up on one night a week and I got to go over there. And I thought this is so cool. And it was just local, I mean from. 15 years old to 75. And that guy said, go home and do it because you'll get more out of it than they will. So I did and we've done it for quite a while. So Thursday nights. I always put it on my Instagram and Facebook, you know.

Speaker

Hey there.

King:

Just to make sure I'm around that you know, but I tell them not to come unless they see it posted. But anyway they come and. Just a few counties near here, but. Last night I think there were seven of us.

Cissell:

It's a good size.

King:

Oh yeah, and then it might just be too me and another person. But we have a good time.

Cissell:

Yeah. So I mistakenly heard you. I thought you had said foraging like. No. No, that's my. That's on me. But it's funny, you know, the two things we're talking about forging.

King:

Oh, I'm sorry.

Cissell:

But for open forging.

Speaker

Makes a lot more.

Cissell:

Sense. And you said you don't charge for those classes or?

King:

Now I just have a. Donation jar.

Cissell:

OK. Yeah.

King:

Just to help pay for the steel and coal and propane, but. Yeah, the actually the, the. The orchard is pretty much open foraging. We just, we just tell people. You know, hey, the Peaches, the Peaches are about ready so. Mostly my family will come up and. I don't know. We've put some of it up, you know, frozen. We've froze a lot. We've I made. A couple years ago I made so much Apple Jelly and Apple. And uh. But I don't know it's. It's a lot of work and. It's so good when it's fresh, so we just. We just called and my sister-in-law, she she cans a lot so she would come. Up and. We would just load her up with apples or Peaches and she would always bring fill and I. A couple jars. You know jams and jellies and Peach butter apple butter. Feels there's just. I mean, there's no way. My family could consume it. You know what I mean?

Cissell:

Yeah, yeah. And then you have so much and then. I don't know what to do with it. What what came first? Papaws or persimmons?

King:

So the persimmons have been here for a long time on this property. Uh. Paul poultry. I bought it. At the farmers market, I'm a guy from Marengo IN sells Persimmon and Paul Poultries mostly mostly Persimmon, but I see it at the farmers market and I bought it and I come home and I'm telling Phil because I'm all excited.

Cissell:

OK.

King:

And I don't think we had any trees out there then. So this has been a good while ago. And he said, well, you can't plan it right now. And I said, what do you? Mean. He goes. It's too hot. And I said, what do I do? So it said over there underneath the Persimmon tree, by the driveway, kind of in the shade. And it was in the sleeve. It looked like a paper box. So I stacked a couple concrete blocks up. So it hold it. And I watered it every day and fill the check on it. And finally that. He said it's time to plant, so we planted the biggest one down here and then the next spring he went and bought another one. Because he was afraid we needed to. To tango, the Paul Pals, I guess. And. So yeah, now we've got. Some volunteers and I always throw the seeds down in the woods, so we have. I think there's three more down there and one near the other two that should be producing maybe next year.

Cissell:

Well, yeah, we were talking earlier. You didn't have. A lot of or the papaws were fine, but.

King:

Yeah, we didn't have much damage to the pothole. The persimmons, three of the biggest trees. We're broke off completely so. And we do have a couple of small ones over there and they'll they'll be OK, but they were just never as good because they're smaller and they didn't all ripen as well as the three big trees. They're they're falling right now. It's funny, some people will say. Well, you can't pick a Persimmon up. You can't or you don't have persimmons till a frost. But ours up here always fell before frost, and we have had one frost. Three days ago we had a light frost but. I don't know. I don't know where that thing come from, but ours would always fall before the frost.

Cissell:

Yeah, my grandfather said something like that last week. But yeah, I was at Darren's, like a couple weeks ago when we were eating person and yeah.

King:

And our potholes have been falling for probably. Two weeks or so.

Cissell:

OK.

King:

And they're just, well, I think we saw maybe 3 left hanging out there. The one tree was loaded this year, loaded, loaded. And the other tree didn't have much. I say that was Phil's tree. The smaller than that's what I would always say. And he said, well, they're your trees.

Cissell:

OK. Yeah. That's also interesting to me because. You know when Louisville my grandfather's trees, you know, they're done by like early to mid-september. So he hasn't had any for a while. Yeah. And I told him I was like, I'm about to go, you know, an hour NW of you, you know, not that far away and you all still have them. So that was always interesting to me because yeah, I I just always grew up. You know, by the time it's September, they're gone basically.

King:

Is is his. Like these are kind of in an orchard setting or or his like in the woods.

Cissell:

They're kind of in the woods, but they're kind of just sun and they were there when he bought the property. But they're kind of just like in two lines on a path by a a pond. That. And then there's a Creek down off like a ravine near.

King:

All right.

Cissell:

Five. But and he told me he's like they're way too close together for what people would say they should be because they are kind of just like in a straight succession of each other. And it's a kind of small group. But yeah, not in an orchard setting at all. Yeah. Kind of like a hybrid wooded area, I would say.

King:

I'll tell you another thing Phil planted is ramps. So where he grew up in West Virginia, they had ramp festivals. And people would. Make all these crazy dishes, but he said his favorite was homemade butter. On bread with Rance bottled on it, but he he found some in Lawrence County. And I guess this time of year you can go out there and harvest the seeds and they look like poppy seeds, but. He scattered them in the woods. So now these woods are just in the springtime, are full of ramps. I found some across the road. There's a. Forest at the high school loans and I come home and I told Phil I said you're not gonna believe this. I found some ramps. And all my years, I never even knew what they looked like. And he goes right by the big white oak tree. That's down. And I said. You planted them over there and he said, Oh yeah, he would just go all through the woods throwing ramp seats.

Cissell:

Did you like were papaws and persimmons part of your like vocabulary or like were they part of your lifestyle? I guess before you planted them.

King:

No, popals weren't. I mean, I knew what they were. You know, when I would see him for Simmons. I have always been big in my family. My. Pepple kings, the family farm he grew up on, had an actual Persimmon Grove like I've never seen anywhere else. Everybody would always go down there and. And collect persimmons and make Persimmon pudding. And that's just. One of my longest memories from childhood was. Always lots of percentage.

Cissell:

Where did you say that was?

King:

That is kind of between here and French Lick. It's near. Tucker lake. Family when they put Tucker Lake in. They put it in for flood control of French Lake. Where my dad grew up is now underwater.

Cissell:

OK.

King:

But there's still. There's still 80 acres or so of the family. But you know, we always. I don't remember ever eating Paul pals, though I remember my papal talking about eating them and my dad, but. I don't know that I'd ever ate one till we had these.

Cissell:

How would you describe a person in putting?

King:

It's well, it's kind of a. It's kind of like a really wet brownie. It's a head. It's the thickness of, like, a brownie, but it's more of like a. I don't know. It's not cakey at all. It's more like a. Pudding, you know, or a gel, but. I remember my. Both of my grandmothers. Always made it and they were real particular about the. Persimmons, because the some of them would be a little bitter and it would ruin the whole pudding.

Cissell:

Would you ever help make it or?

King:

Yeah, and I. One year I would take persimmons to my wife's mammal. Who just turned 102 and she still lives right before you get to the highway in the brick house. The last house on the left when you.

Cissell:

Oh my God. OK.

King:

We would take persimmons through her. We'd take them to my mom. My mom would run them through a calendar, which would take forever. But she claimed it made the best Persimmon pudding because you didn't grind into the skin or the seeds. I bought a food processor. And read online where you could take like a screen for grapes. And the Algar for some other fruit and cut like half inch of. It off and. I remember I. I just made so much pulp. It was like a it was like a river of pulp in the house and and we froze it and we gave it away and we we ate so much Persimmon pudding that we bought didn't like it anymore. So. And you know what? I haven't. I haven't made any since then. I'll just. We'll get enough. To work for like 1 pudding because it was like. I don't know. It took the. The greatness away from it when you make so much of it.

Cissell:

Yeah, yeah. I feel like, well, you know, we're in like. What I think is you know the best region for persimmons, and so the Persimmon putting recipe is interesting to me. And then I was going to ask them, you know, Mitchell's nearby, and they have the Persimmon festival. So have you ever gone to that or?

King:

Yeah, we used to go when our kids were. Smaller and yeah, they really, I mean they have all kinds of cooking contests for different Persimmon. You know cookies and puddings, of course. And it's funny when Phil and Mary moved here. They lived in Mississippi, and then they lived in Goshen. And they had been around for Simmons, but they didn't know anybody ever ate him. And I told him so. We need to make a pudding. And he said that doesn't sound very good. He was thinking like a vanilla pudding, you know? But. I tell you, I've had two different times. I've had Persimmon wine.

Cissell:

OK.

King:

And I was just. Last week, Saturday, I was at a blacksmith festival and the farmer that was hosting it, he had. All kinds of wine and he gave me a bottle of Asian pear, but he had Persimmon. And I was telling him he was telling me he just loves making it, he said. I don't hardly drink it, but. And he said it's really pretty simple. So. I was telling him I would like to make pothole wine and he said I saw you have potholes and I said yeah, and he said. Well, you need to set me up and I said with paw paws and he goes. I want the tree. And I said, well, get with Darren and I'll go down and I will. I'll get you a couple. He said I'll pay you for them. And I said no, I said I want you to show me how to make the wine. And I said, I'll get you some trees in the spring. And then next fall, I'll bring you potholes and we'll make Paul Pole wine. And he said that sounds outstanding, so.

Cissell:

It's a good trade off.

King:

Yeah. And I I just think it was. As sweet as they are, it would have to be.

Cissell:

I've actually had paw paw wine. There's a winery like in basically the backyard of where I grew up kind of out in the country, near Lexington, KY and they have a paw paw wine. And yeah, it was so sweet.

King:

Have you? Really, the Persimmon I've had was. It was good. I haven't tried this guys, but a friend of mine made it and it was almost. Like pancakes or it was so sweet. And I did buy Paul Paul. At Upland Brewery, I'm trying to think what they call it is that a salad, cider or?

Cissell:

Side of it, I thought like a cider. Maybe it was a sour.

King:

Boy, I I was in there one day for lunch. And I saw it and I thought, Darren, I mean Darren Darren used to have a sticker on his old truck that said I'd rather be ball ball hunting. And I sent that picture of that to a guy I know in Tennessee who's was big into Paul Paul's but the.

Cissell:

OK.

King:

I saw it and I thought I got to get this, so I got it and Darren cover on Friday for our blacksmith and get together. And we had lunch and I opened it and we poured it, and it was awful. It was so. And he said no, no, that's the way it's supposed to be. And I said, no, I think there's something wrong with it. And I finally I sent it home with him and. The next day or so he texts me and he goes. I think you're right. I think there's something wrong with it because he said even three said that stuff. It was so sour. I think you could. Or it was so. I don't know. It just tasted like apple cider vinegar. I mean, it was just so it was terrible and I would like to try it again because I kept thinking, I think I got a bad bottle.

Cissell:

Oh, OK. Yeah, maybe that's. Yeah, yeah.

King:

Because there's no way they would ever sell it. Or I don't think it would, you know.

Cissell:

That's funny. I got just at a place in Bloomington. It wasn't upland like a paw paw. I think I got a cider because I remember it being sweet. But that was good. But. And it didn't taste. You know, you don't get, like, the papaya flavor. You just get the sweetness that is is what? When I've done the like drinks.

King:

Oh yeah.

Cissell:

But yeah, that's really neat, I hope. You're able to. Make wine.

King:

Yeah, I'll have to. I'll let you know how that goes.

Cissell:

Yeah, I'd be. Good to hear.

King:

Because Jim. Jim has a full I mean, he says it's a foolproof method method of the way he makes it and. He said it's all all he makes is a sweet wine, but. He just makes it about every fruit. I met a couple from. Middletown area and they. They have a farm that's been in one of those heritage it's been in over 100 and. 50 years and. And they they make wine and they have a pretty extensive orchard and. And it was. Pretty neat. I never had pear. And they had pear and Peach and apple and grape. And that was all it was all good. So yeah, I'm kind of excited about the. Try to make some pal pal wine.

Cissell:

Yeah, what's like? One thing you think people don't realize. It's about pawpaws and persimmons.

King:

I think. Well, it was like I said while ago, like my, my family won't even hardly try. Paul, Paul and I don't. I don't know why. I think it's because they don't know what it. Is, but there's a lot of people. That you know, I told you I shared Paul. Paul's. Over in central Ohio, with a bunch of folks from all over the country and even in Ohio, they have pop balls. And half persimmons, but. No one. Eats them. I shared a Paul Paul with a guy from Ohio that I worked with and. He said. I want to come and hang out with you, Indiana folks. He goes. I need to learn about these persimmons and these Paul Pauls. And I said. Well, it's just, I mean to me it's really odd that. They have them, but they don't need them.

Cissell:

And it's like this area, I mean that's kind of what I find so special about them. You know, it's like Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana and, you know, they can grow other places too, I think. Darren was telling me. Like, maybe as far north as like Vermont or something was? I can't remember if it was papaws or persons. Probably persimmons. But yeah, that is interesting. I feel like just from what I've heard, Indiana seems to be such a Persimmon, appreciator like I've heard of people in Kentucky, you know, they, like, grow up knowing about them or eating them. But I feel like. That's more just in, like the Louisville area. Like, I don't feel like people in the other parts now.

King:

Yeah, I've had guys tell me. I've had people tell me that they only picked them up to. Put them out for the deer, like where they were hunting, you know, like a like a bait feed station.

Cissell:

OK. Yeah, yeah.

King:

And they do with the persimmons. Now they say the deer will eat the paw paw. I've never. Quite witnessed that, but every evening. Or mourning the the deer will just bed out here by the Persimmon trees. And they eat a lot of them. But the the paw paws. I've noticed if I keep them picked up off the ground, but boy, if I let them. Get really ripe on the ground. The raccoons find them and then they'll be climbing the tree, knocking them off. So this year I never even noticed.

Cissell:

OK, OK.



King:

In a raccoon. But I would. I would check every evening and I would pick him up off the ground. Mary has got. Passion fruit. I was going to show that to you just cause I I never seen seen them but they're little melon looking things but they're.

Cissell:

OK.

King:

They're not. They're they're when you. They're like hollow, and I said, well, maybe they're just not right and she goes, she said no, they're just. Doughy, you know Dottie, like, like rotten wood. But she said a raccoon climbs up the corner. Of the long house towards the garage every night, she said. And I said, well, it must be good if the raccoon is eating your passion fruit. But I said they're staying out. The pals, at least.

Cissell:

I know there's like some kind of debate or controversy over whether, like papaws are poisonous or like kind of toxic. And I guess like, yeah, like some animals won't eat them. And so people are like, if the animals aren't eating them and then I know, yeah, like. I I I don't know enough about the science, but I know you know some people are like, no, they're not, you know, toxic or poisonous and then. I'm going to talk to someone soon who does research with like the Angel Mountains like the like, ancient Native American, you know, remains and historical grounds. And they've been able, you know, to prove that, you know, those early Americans were eating both. But then. They maybe also knew that they weren't great for. You. So I didn't know if. You knew anything about that?

King:

I know last night at open Forge we had. I cut one open and asked if anyone wanted it and one guy. And he's in his. 60s. He said he hadn't had any for years, but he said they used to eat them all the time when they were kids. He grew up out here in the country on a on a road called grease gravy and.

Cissell:

OK.

King:

He grew up across the road, I think from Lotus Dickey, who is a famous musician, and. They actually have a Lotus. Festival in Bloomington. But anyway, he said, his brother, one of his brothers, was allergic to him and he said, but he wouldn't stay out of him. He said he'd go out there.

Cissell:

Yeah, I was wondering if that's.

King:

And he said he'd beat one. And then they'd get to the house and they said he'd swell up and his eyes would close and he would itch all over. But and his mom would say. You have to stay on the paw balls and he said Ohh. But they're so good and I thought that's funny.

Cissell:

There is a story you shared earlier about your father or grandfather. When you first introduced your wife.

King:

Yeah. So he was an old countryman and we I introduced. I took my wife down there and my girlfriend at the time and introduced him to my mom on PayPal and. UM. He asked Sean. She was real small. If she was healthy and she said, well, yeah. And I am healthy and she's, he said, well, you look like a sucked pal. And she said, oh. And she got up and went to the bathroom and probably cried or wondered what in the world she was doing here. But I had Papa. All I said, you need to explain. I mean, what are you, what are you doing, man? Of course. My mom all just jumped all over him when she walked out of the room. But. And he when she come back and he goes, we love paw paws. But we always just cut the end of them off and we would suck all the fruit out, squeeze them, leave the seeds. And we would suck all the fruit out. And he said just looked like a great big old wrinkly. You know, real skinny. And he said I didn't mean to say anything bad and I was like, how do you mean? You don't mean to say 6 you. Look like a suck ball.

Cissell:

I think that description almost makes it worse.

King:

Yeah, it was like I shouldn't have had him explain it to her. But that's funny. Yeah. Anytime anyone mentions my papal king as Sean brings that up. Oh, yeah, some Popo, she goes. I must have really loved you to stick around after that.

Cissell:

And those were the same grandparents that had the Persimmon Grove. Any other like stories like that, I guess about persimmons or papaws?

King:

You know, we had a we had one tree on a farm. I grew up on. That was beautiful. Set up on top of the hill for symmetry. And it was a beautiful tree, and it would be loaded with persimmons every year. And you could go out there in January and there'd be snow on the ground and all the persimmons would be hanging on the tree. And I don't know. If it was. Needed cross pollinated, you know from another tree, but there was no other tree around but. It was really weird because the tree was just a. Super beautiful tree. And the persimmons look good. But they just stayed on until spring. And then when they started bugging out, they would fall off and they would. Would come on. No, I don't know. I think that's about all I got.

Cissell:

Yeah. Anything else about Paypal's or persons that you think we didn't cover?

King:

I think it's cool that. I think it's cool that you're. Grand polls. Got some award-winning Paul pals?

Cissell:

Yeah, yeah. And he's humble. I was trying to ask him about this stuff, I guess. Oh, I I did ask earlier about grafting and so Darren has done. Grafting out here, or he's just taken some?

King:

Darren Darren has helped and Phil has done some.

Cissell:

Of the of Zion one.

King:

But I do have the one small Persimmon tree. And Darren saw it and got all excited. So he said I'm going to. Do some drafting on that and bring you something. I don't know if he's going to. Try different kind of Persimmon variety. I'm kind of like for him to put the Asian because. That one, when he brought it to me and we tried it. Was really a shocker because it was more like a. Orange apple.

Cissell:

More citrusy.

King:

Kind of like a yeah. Kind of like the Asian pear, you know, it's more like an apple than a pear to me, but.

Speaker

OK.

Cissell:

We were also talking about Papaws in people's preferences, I guess for eating them, but we opened up one that was like Brown and we decided not to eat. It but the one we did open.

King:

I know it and I usually let them get.

Cissell:

And they're good, OK.

King:

Pretty dark, but I think. Yeah, I let that one go. And then last night, somebody said you throw that out. And I said I'm I'm saving. That I said this. Lady's coming tomorrow and the Arthur was right. I think it's

too far. But Mary said that she likes to. I took her. Two or three the other night because. She was going to have to go out somewhere and try to find them. And I said well, just walk over here, I said and look. And so I took her a couple before she went on vacation and. Yeah, she loves them. But I the one we ate to me was perfect. I think it was just.

Cissell:

I think so too.

King:

It was so. Creamy and custardy yet yeah.

Cissell:

Yeah, and.

King:

It's got me determined I'm going to I'm. Going to force. All of my family, and I'm telling we're not going to Florida until some everyone tries to bite. In the fall fall.

Cissell:

Apocalypse with God. Yeah. Thank you for saving those for me. That's really considered.

King:

Oh yeah.

Cissell:

Yeah. And I was it was cool to, you know, find some still on the ground because originally you had thought that. There wouldn't be. Anymore. By the time I came, yeah.

King:

I know I didn't think there would be. But there and you should. The ones we picked up today is going to be several days, but you should take those. Maybe you can. At least share a photo of them to your PayPal, since they're kind of obnoxiously large.

Speaker

Yeah, yeah.

Cissell:

Yeah, yeah, I would like he, he. He does not know how to text or anything, but I'll try to take a picture and send it to like my aunt or someone didn't show it to him, you know.

King:

Well, and I've. I've got a couple three in the house that are ready. And but I've about had my. I used to be a one paw paw year. And now I've got to where I eat more of them, but. Yeah, I'm. I've about had my fill. So you're welcome to take those ones we picked today.

Speaker

OK.

Cissell:

I wanted to ask about like your network or people your you have like relationships with or contact with. As far as pawpaws and persimmons go.

King:

Actually, it's just Darren.

Cissell:

OK.

King:

And uh, I gotta I gotta get with him because. I don't know if he mentioned the guy from Marengo. Or if he would be interested in visitors.

Cissell:

OK.

King:

There's a guy that's probably. 15 minutes from here. That is a.

Cissell:

OK.

King:

I mean his place. It's all it is. Is persimmons. Different varieties. And of course, that's where I got my paw. Paw trees was from him.

Cissell:

OK. It seemed like I had talked to a professor at IU, like people will be a little. Secretive about like where their Groves or orchards are, I guess, or even that they grow them. But has that been your experience?

King:

Yeah, and. I have. I had a neighbor to the South. And when we bought this piece of property. It was surveyed and. It went over. Pass the fence. Well, he was super upset and you know, I I never could. Be friends with him and and we. He moved the survey stage. And I was fine with it. And his adult children were apologizing, I said. I said I don't need a 30 foot strip. Over a neighbor under there a neighbor, but

right on the line. Is a beautiful Persimmon tree. And I was out there on the tractor one day mowing and it was this time of year. And they're picking up for Simmons and him and his wife and. I said, do you have plenty of persimmons? And cause I wanted to be I want to be friends. And he said, we've got plenty. Real snappy and he's leaning on his cane, and his wife was just so sweet. And she said, well, thank you. And I said, well, if any of your kids or grandkids want more. I said there's by the time those four big trees over here in this field. And he said, these are our persimmons. And he stopped. These came down. And he's like. And I was like I said, I don't want any. I'm just. I'm just offering. We don't need your persimmons. We have persimmons on our property. And this is on our property. And I said, I know. It is and. And I stopped piling. He was just getting upset. So I started a tractor and said have a nice day. And it's funny. I know he's several of his boys and they were always real apologetic. And I go. No, no, no. I said it's. It's totally fine, but yeah, he was very possessive of his. It is a beautiful tree, yeah.

Cissell:

It's property on the street. Thank you so much. I wanted it just before we end. I guess I feel like I kind of glossed over the forging part in your involvement with like traditional arts, Indiana and I wanted to make sure I got the name of the first mentor you mentioned because I don't know. If I got this.

King:

My first mentor was Billy Merritt.

Speaker

OK.

King:

And he's from English.

Speaker

OK.

King:

And he passed away a few years ago. Really a super quirky guy. But so knowledgeable. Actually, I may go. They've invited me to come to 1st Thursday. Next spring and.

Cissell:

OK.

King:

Actually, Ford's meteorite. Which is something that Billy. Started this. You know, I've never heard of anybody doing it. And we did quite a bit of it with him and we would. Use the meteorite. In the steel to make a knife and we made. Jewelry and earrings with it, but. Anyway, John Kay and spoke with someone up there and they was like, oh, well then someone else contacted me from the. And they were asking about maybe coming up. When is it an April? When the when the eclipse is?

Cissell:

I was gonna ask if you're gonna come for the clips. Yeah.

King:

Because they said. That's when he needs to come. And Can you imagine forging meteorite in the dark? During the eclipse and I was like. That sounds really cool, but I. I I kind of lost. My contact with the guy that.

Cissell:

OK.

King:

The guy that Billy used to buy it off of is from Ohio and he died and this all came from. Campo de Cilio, in Spain in the 1500s, it's like one of the biggest meteorite showers in the history and the. So we used to buy it. And it was like 100 bucks a pound. So I have a little over £2.00 of it in two different rocks, but. But now they sell it by the. Gram and it's like crazy expensive and I can't find. The the guy passed away and Billy's family. He still had. Quite a bit. And he had one that was like 7 pounds. And they have offered. I might be able to get it and forge on it with a couple of guys. Which would be pretty cool, but I told him I said I'll come and do it. And you don't have to paint me, but you have to help me find the rocks because they're. Super high. Expensive but yeah. So I we did the. Traditional arts, Indiana. A few years ago, Darren. And I did. And we had a blast. And I've really. Try to push that to. Ask other people to apply to. To do it because I just. I really liked. Everything that everyone was doing. Whether it was net making or bold carving or. File in making it's just a. I'm just interested in a lot of that or I'm not interested in doing it, but I'm interested in it and interested in seeing.

Cissell:

Right.

King:

Other people learning it.

Cissell:

And I was going to ask you because it seems like you are interested in like, tradition when you mentioned like doing the reenactments and then, you know, I think there is something kind of romantic or idyllic about, you know, Papas and persimmons, that it feels like, you know, you're kind of connected to, like, a past time. The like nostalgia.

King:

My my wife used to to. Well, friends that I was born 100 years too late and I said well probably like 200. But I do I like all of the. Whether it's woodworking or. You know, blacksmithing, I love making things. Out of things or making. Making things that. 100 years ago. Were only made in a blacksmith shop. You know, like garden tools and. This piece over here. Was a. We had a blacksmith conference and we had a competition where we gave everybody a 12 inch long piece of steel, half inch square. And they had 15 minutes to forge it out as long as they could. So I had all those pieces when I was cleaning up from the conference Sunday afternoon.

Cissell:

Kind of thing.

King:

I brought them home and I had them here forever and I finally. But it was a bundle. This bigger end and I forge welded them all together into one piece and set them in that old rock. As I say, an old. Refractory brick from the hearth of a furnace. And anyway, somebody had brought that over and dropped them off thinking I might need them sometime so.

Cissell:

OK.

King:

I made that little sculpture out of. And so all this year, I went to the conference. That I've got all the pieces from the year before and I just put on the card there, that this was leftover scraps from the forging contest in 2022. Just made a little sculpture out of it. So I don't know. I like that kind of stuff.

Cissell:

Yeah, I wanted you to thank you for reminding me about public sculpture. That's what you're kind of getting into.

King:

Yeah, I. I really want to. Participate in. Public sculpture and. There's a town not far from here, and I talked to some of the folks there, and they're like, oh, they're all in. So we have, it's a river town, and there used to be a mill. I never heard of it, but. The wheel for a male. I thought they all went this way, you know? Vertical and then this one was actually spinning this way. So anyway they have a. I have a bunch of these old wheels. And old buggy parts tires, steel. And they showed me this big pile and they said, hey, can we use some of this? And I said. And I really have to get Darren because Darren, I can sit and draw for two hours and I'll tell him what I want and then he'll draw it on a piece of rusty steel in like 5 minutes with a piece of chalk. But anyway, we're going to do something. We were hoping to do it this year and it just didn't. Didn't happen. But next year, for sure, we're going to. And I'm trying to get them to help me. Design it. And I don't. I don't care if. It's something this big. And we can tie it down where it doesn't get swiped or if it's a bench. But my interest is having other blacksmiths join in. But also inviting the public. Now I know they can't come out there and forge with a sledgehammer, but they can come and do something, whether it's helping set rivets in a bench. So we're going to start off kind of small, but. Friend of mine or acquaintance and Louisville. He's a full time blacksmith and he did one for the city of Jeffersonville.

Speaker

OK.

King:



And it's a wind. Motion piece and. He just had out there at the park one day they advertised it and. He had these wooden bowls and these wooden hammers and they took sheet metal and they dished these pieces of sheet metal. And maybe they even put their initials on them, stamped them on them, but he took them all back to his shop in Louisville. And he tuned them sized them. And then he made this big sculpture and they did the unveiling and. All those cups. The wind catchers are on a big wheel. And it was so cool. Because I saw people there that said. I made one of those with my grandkids, you know, and I thought, man, that's really cool. And then I just. I don't know. I think it's cool when I see a piece of sculpture somewhere. In town, you. Know where people can see it, but. So hopefully we'll. Get some of that started not too far from here next year.

Cissell:

Yeah, yeah, I'd love to hear more about that and. See it in action, hopefully.

King:

It's funny, they were like. Wow sculpture is very expensive and I said, yeah. But I'm just thinking. We can do a fundraiser to pay for the steel. And they're like, well, what about your part? I said, well, we're just. We're just in it to do it, I said. You want to work for hot dogs, you know you want to pick some hot dogs. Today we work on it. That'd be great.

Speaker

That's it.

King:

But it's. Pretty cool. It's Milltown and they're just really. For a town of 800 plus people. It just seems like they're doing a lot down there and it's a it's just a such a cool town. The dams there and the blue rivers there and blue rivers. Like the cleanest stream in Indiana, I think I.

Cissell:

OK.

King:

Did one so. But yeah, it's. It it just takes a lot of people like Darren has to do the drawing. I haven't quite figured that out yet, but. He adds so much to that. And then. A friend from Branchville, he come and helped us on this and he was really good at. You know. Like some of the layout of the scroll work or the? The traditional joinery of it, but yeah. I don't know. It's just really to me, it's one of those things that's. You know, the older I get, it's harder to get excited about things, but when I. See a piece of sculpture or something? That's, and I don't care if. It's wood, you know. I just, I think it's cool. Mostly the bringing people together.

Cissell:

Yeah, I think that's there's something special.

King:

Is the. Really cool about it.

Cissell:

Well, thank you so much. Is there anything else? We didn't cover.

King:

I don't think so.

Cissell:

OK. Well, thank you again. I'll stop the recording.

King:

All right. You're very welcome.