

Pauline Witherby Geddes, Hannah Geddes Wright, and Jennifer Wright

Caption: Pauline Witherby Geddes, Hannah Geddes Wright, and Jennifer Wright.



Transcript of the oral interview with Pauline (Polly) Geddes and her daughter Hannah Geddes Wright conducted by Emily Salvette. Mrs. Wright's daughter (Mrs. Geddes' granddaughter), Jennifer Wright, was also present during the taping.

The interview took place on October 28, 2003 at the Geddes home, 5174 Platt Rd., Ann Arbor. Both women reviewed the transcript in the fall of 2003. The transcript reflects their corrections and additions.

Interview Summary

Pauline Witherby Geddes (pronounced "Geddis") still lives at the Geddes family farm that was established by William Geddes in 1845. Her home is the original farmhouse modified by several additions and renovations. She was born in 1924 in Redford, Michigan and came to the township in 1943 after her marriage to Charles Geddes. She and Charles had six children; Hannah is the second oldest, born in 1947. The interview focuses on farm family life from the 1940s through the 1980s. The women detail daily routines both in the house and out in the barn. They also discuss the challenges the family faced: financial pressures, a 1966 fire that destroyed the original barn, the decision to stop farming, and efforts to preserve their farmland for future generations.

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**Pauline Witherby Geddes, Hannah Geddes Wright,
and Jennifer Wright Interview**

P: Pauline Geddes

H: Hannah Geddes Wright

I: Emily Salvette

J: Jennifer Wright

Side 1:

I: This is...the date is October 28th, 2003, and I'm at the home of Pauline Geddes, and we're doing an oral history interview for the Pittsfield Township Oral History Project, with Pauline, or Polly, Geddes, and her daughter, Hannah....

P: We say "Geddis."

I: ...Geddes [pronounced "Geddis"].

P: Hm.

I: And Hannah Geddes Wright.

H: Um-hum.

I: W-R-I-G-H-T, right?

H: Hm.

I: And our visitor helping here, eating the Subway, here beside us.

J: It's Jennifer.

I: Jennifer...

J: Wright.

I: ...Wright?

J: Um-hum.

I: Well, thank you. And I want to make sure I'm spelling it right. G-E-D-D-E-S, and pronouncing it "Geddis."

P: That's correct. That's correct.

I:

P: So that's for posterity...

I: Yes [laughs].

I: ...I'll pronounce exactly. Now is this the same pronunciation that the other branch, the Washtover in Ann Arbor...?

P: Geddes Road.

I: Geddes Road and all?

H: Yeah, yeah, yeah. That was a brother of the gentleman who built this house.

I: Right, right.

P: Yeah.

I: Okay. Well, um, do you mind if I call you Polly?

P: Oh, please do.

I: Would you like to talk a little bit first just about the general background of your life, where you were born, where you grew up?

P: Well, I was born in Redford [MI] and I just...My father was a salesman and we changed...he changed jobs a lot and so we moved a lot. I never spent more than two years in any school in my whole life. In fact, I never lived anywhere more than two years till I moved here.

I: Right.

P: And that was in '40...that was in '43. So it's 60 years.

I: Um-hum. What brought you...

P: Um...

I: ...what brought you to Pittsfield Township?

P: Um, my husband was born in this house and it was his family farm. And we were married in Detroit and worked there for a while, but then his folks needed help, so...And they couldn't afford the hired man they had, so we came back to do the work.

H: It was during the War, during the War.

P: It was in '43.

H: Yeah. Yeah.

P: Yeah.

I: How did you meet your husband?

P:

I had just moved back to Detroit from Caseville, Michigan, and he had just gone into Detroit from the farm to work in the machine shop, to...wartime, making money. And he worked alongside of my cousin who had come here from New York to make money. And they liked to go hunting. Talked a lot, they talked a lot about hunting and they wanted to go on my grandfather's farm, and so I had my cousin had introduced him to me in order to meet my grandfather, because...in order to get permission to use the farm. So we went, went up to Caseville, and that was our first weekend I'd ever met him. And we...

H:

You went hunting with him.

P:

Uh-uh, I didn't go out hunting with him, no. No.

H:

Oh, you didn't? Oh, I thought you did.

P:

No. Let's see. Then we, then we dated for ten months and we got married. In fact, first date, first date I told him I was going to marry him, and he didn't run very fast [laughs].

I:

Oh, well, honestly _____. Well, did he serve in the Service?

P:

No. No, he was nearsighted.

H:

He tried.

P:

He tried, tried to enlist, but they didn't want him because of his eyes, so...he, we came back and got farm exemptions.

I:

Did you do any wartime service in any way? Were you involved in that? Or you were...?

P:

I took telephone operator training out of high school, and did that for a few months before we came out here.

H:

That was back in the plug in...you put the plugs in.

P:

Um-hum. Yeah. Sure, we flipped the switch and...oh, let's see.

I:

Well, when you got here, and you had to start working in earnest...

P:

[laughs]

I:

...on the farm, what was that like? You knew what was coming and...

P:

Actually, I didn't. I really missed the smelling Hudson's downtown Detroit.

H:

Smelling it?

P:

Smelling it. The store, the stores have a different smell.

I:

Uh-huh.

P:

And I, I really was homesick for it. I'd hear the tree, the wind blowing in the trees and up and down the lane, and I'd...it'd make me homesick for the...my grandfathers lived right on Saginaw Bay. Made me lonesome for the lake and it was hard. We never had any money to go anywhere.

H:

And you were a city girl.

P: Oh, yeah. I spent most of my life in town. So it was different. They were milking twelve cows at the time by hand. And then a lot of those dried up, so we just had enough dur♠mostly during the war♠ we made, made butter and sold it. And then we raised chickens and raised pigs. So it was, it was hand to mouth for sure.

I: Um-hum.

H: But you never milked the cows yourself though, did you?

P: I never milked by hand, no. 1960 why we got milkers and after that I was...anybody could do that.

I: Well, not...maybe not [laughter].

P: But you can learn.

I: Well, what, what are...what did...what was your day like when you...you'd wake up at what time and what would you do first and...?

P: Well, the guys always got up first, my husband and his dad always got up first and did the milking. Then they'd come in and we'd have breakfast. You know, just, oh, laundry. You had to haul the tubs in and pour...haul, haul the water from the sink to the washing machine and...

I: What did your washing machine look like that you had?

P: It was an old Maytag. Maytag wringer washer.

H: Was it electric?

P: Oh, it was electric.

H: Yeah.

P: Oh, yeah. They had electricity since 1930 here.

I: Okay.

P: So there...so we had a wringer washer that I had never used before, because my mother always had an easy spin dryer, which is...didn't...but this way you had to handle all the clothes through the washes and rinses and...

H: It seems like I remember you putting them through the roller up there.

P: I think every one of you kids ran your hands through.

H: Yeah, and your hair. You had to...

P: And caught, I caught my hair one time in the wringer and it went up to my scalp before I got the safety thing shut off.

I: Oh! Oh, my!

P: Yeah, it was scary.

H: But you'd take it out of the...It was like two big tubs, wasn't it?

P: Um-hum. Yeah.

H: And one tub had the soapy water and one tub has the rinse water.

P: The wa💎washing machine had the soap in it.

H: And the wringer was between.

P: And you, and you ran it through one rinse water and then you ran it into the tub with the bluing in it. And then through, and through the wringer each time.

I: What's bluing?

P: It's supposed to make white clothes whiter. It came a little liquid in a bottle. You can still buy it in the store.

H: Yeah.

I: I know my mother had it. I never...and I knew it was to make clothes white, but I've never really understood.

P: Um-hum.

I: Why were you not just using bleach?

P: Ah...

H: Did they even have bleach?

P: I don't, I don't remember ever having any bleach back then.

I: Oh! Okay.

P: Or something. Maybe it was something we just didn't, couldn't afford.

H: Old ladies used it on their hair too, to make their hair white.

I: Oh.

H: My teacher down here at the school would sometimes come in with blue hair, because she had used...left it on a little too long, maybe.

I: Oh.

H: She was trying to bleach her gray hair to white.

P: A little too, a little too strong, yeah.

H: Yeah.

I:

Hannah, where did you go to school?

H: Well, I went to Town Hall School.

I: Okay.

H: Through fifth grade. The one-room country school, over here, through fifth grade. And then they closed it, annexed it to Ann Arbor, and we had to go into town to school then. Went to Pattengill School for sixth grade and then I went Tappan School for two years, Tappan junior high, seventh and eighth grade. And then they changed our district and I had to go over to Slauson for ninth grade. And then I went to Ann Arbor Pioneer High for my high school years.

I: I'm...this may be terrible to ask, but what year were you born?

H: 1947.

I: '47, okay. Thanks for sharing that at all. [laughter] Place everything.

I: That's the problem with being in history, I want to know the historical accuracy.

H: You want to know how...

P: Have to age us, yeah, um-hum, dates, yeah. Let's see, this was in nine....

H: And how long would it take you to do the washing? Would it be like an all-morning or all-day, or...?

P: Oh, it was, it was usually a half day job, because then you had to hang it out...

H: Oh, then you had to hang it out.

P: ...on the clothesline, and then you dumped all your water, and then got the clothes off the line when they were dry.

H: You have a certain day that you did wash?

P: Oh, Monday was always wash day if the sun was shining.

I: Um-hum.

P: If it was a rainy day, why you put it off.

I: Does that kind of -- the neighborhood, this is kind of general -- custom to wash on Monday, so that if you went to visit somebody, you could expect them to be busy.

P: [laughs] Yeah, it could be. I didn't...we never, we never thought about it. We...the only person we went to visit was my mother-in-law's friend -- what was her name? McCalla, was...Maryann McCalla. Mary Lou McCalla.

I: Hm.

P: Mother'd always ironed on Tuesday.

I: Ironed? Wash on Monday, ironing on...

P: Mended on Wednesday. I, I didn't...I never cared for ironing. I was so glad when wash-and-wear came in. I didn't have to iron, think about ironing anymore. It used to pile up and pile up.

H: I remember learning. You taught me to iron handkerchiefs.

P: Um-hum, that's what you started on

H: Something that you started with.

P: And you'd start on those because they're flat and straight.

H: My dad, oh, those old...you know those blue...

P: Bandana?

H: Yeah, bandana style handkerchiefs. When you started ironing, was that electric too? Or were you using the...

P: Oh, yeah. No.

H: ...you weren't using the ones that heat up on the stove?

P: No, it was all, it was always, it was all electric.

I: You did cook with a wood stove, though.

P: Not...no. That's...the time I got here in 19...she got an electric stove in 1940, 1940, I think that...

H: Wood stove came later then, because you used to cook on wood stove when we ...

P: Well, that was, we lived, lived over on, over on Morgan Road, we used a cook stove, yeah.

H: A wood stove. Yeah. Was that wood stove from this house?

P: No-uh. It was in the kitchen. It was the only heat in that kitchen over there.

H: But then it came here.

P: No, it was....no.

H: I mean, well, what was the wood stove that we had here? Because that...

P: That was the one that she used...that used to be in the kitchen here.

H: It was stored in the barn, then?

P: It was stored in the bor...barn, and then we used it in the milk house to heat...to warm...

H: Oh!

P: ...to heat the milk house finally.

H:

P: Okay.

H: Well, back in those days we'd...oh, I'd go...go with my husband to pick out the chicken feed so all the sacks would match. Because you made clothes out of them. You made dresses and...

H: Right, it was paisley, it was like a yellow, wasn't it, or...?

P: Oh, it came in all different kinds of prints. Some of them were quite pretty, some of them quite gaudy. And it was...some of it the cloth was nice, and some of it was sleazy.

H: Hm.

P: But we always tried to get it to match so we'd have enough to make a dress to...

I: Oh, my [laughs].

H: And I remember wearing them, you know. I...the yellow is the one I remember.

P: Hm.

H: But it seemed like there was a red pattern too, like a...

P: Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

H: ...I remember the paisleys, that's...I remember...

P: Yeah. Yeah.

H: I remember the smell of the chicken feed.

P: Heh.

H: I mean, not...

P: Not, not...

H: ...from not after, not when I was wearing it, but...

P: When the bag sacks were empty, we washed them.

H: Yeah. Yeah. But that, that chicken feed smelled good though.

P: Oh, yes.

H: It was a good smell.

P: Yeah, it was a good smell. Grain was a good smell.

H: But that was a good source of fabric. I mean, Grandma was quite a seamstress.

P: Oh, yeah.

H: Did you do some of the sewing?

P: Um-hum. Yeah.

H: And Grandma would sew on her old...

P: Treadle machine.

H: ...yeah.

I: Did you all live together and, and share...

P: Yeah.

I: ...the kitchens and duties and when you...

P: Yeah, we would...when, when we moved here, we, we lived with my husband's parents for ten years. And we had almost four kids when we moved over onto Morgan Road to, just to give, give my mother-in-law a breathing space. She felt like she was being smothered with people.

H: Almost four. So that means you were pregnant with Paul?

P: It was just, just, it was just before Paul was born we moved over there.

H: You moved over there?

P: Um-hum. We lived there three years and my brother-in-law decided that Chuck ought to be here on the farm where the action was, and so he stayed. He built another house on the farm.

H: Actually he lived here too at first, didn't he? He and Aunt Marie?

P: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

H: That was Carl, the older brother.

P: Came back...come back from the War in '45. And he lived here till about...till about '48, because they had...

H: They had a kid. They had Carole.

P: ...yeah, they were...Carole. Um-hum.

H: And you had, had Cholly and me.

P: Um-hum.

H: So there was a big group.

P: There was nine...there was nine of us here, over here for...for a few years.

H: And it didn't have all the extensions on it that it has now. It was just this...the two stories.

P: Yeah, yeah. My parents slept in half of the living room. Or my in-laws. And then we sorted out the bedrooms upstairs among the rest of us.

I:
Um. Did it seem crowded, or just did it seem normal, Hannah?

H:
I don't know. I, I was six when we moved. Was I?

P:
Yeah. Uh-huh.

H:
I was six when we moved over there. So I don't remember it feeling crowded at all. I mean...

P:
No. My...

I:
I bet it was a lot of fun.

H:
For the adults it was crowded.

P:
My, my mother said, "You lived with your mother-in-law for ten years and you're still speaking."

I:
Yeah, that's amazing.

P:
She, she thought that was good because...and we did. We got along well. Everybody was...went out of their way to be nice, I think, just to be pleasant, so. We never had any big altercations.

I:
Well, I think...did it help that you were all kind of working on one little project one project, which was the farm?

P:
Oh, yeah, yeah.

I:
I mean, everybody's being...

P:
Living together was economical.

I:
Right. And without all, everybody participating in, the farm couldn't be worked.

P:
That's right. My mother-in-law would go out on the tractor. And then, then she'd take a turn in the house and I'd work out on tractor. It was...

I:
Can you describe that division of labor a little bit for people who don't know very much about farming. I mean, was it common for women to do almost the same kind of work as men, out in the fields and...or was there...?

P:
When they, when they had tractors, yeah. I only drove one...the one time he let me drive the horses and that was, that was the scary thing. Mostly it was tractor driving. And he'd get me to cultivate the corn and...and then it got so I could run the field choppers and...Did that up until 1937, I...no, not '37, '64. Till 1964.

H:
I think it was different for different families though. You know, I knew farm families where the women only did the housework. And the men only...

P:
Yeah, I knew, I knew a family like that too. Yeah. They were on Michigan Avenue.

H:
But in our, in our little society...

P:
Everybody did everything.

H:
And, and my sister and I, we did it. I mean...

P:
My girls would rather work outside than work in the house.

H:
We had to do the outside work and then we had to the inside work too, which wasn't really fair. My brothers only had to do the outside work. But, you know, there was some of the outside work we didn't do. Like some...the heavier equipment we didn't operate. I was, I was...my main job was taking care of the animals. And I loved the animals, and I worked...milked the cows. That was my big thing. My sister preferred the machinery. She drove a lot more tractor than I did I think. But we, you know, we...girls worked right alongside of them, the boys. And sometimes there would be heavier physical work. Like I could not pitch manure. My brothers, you know. It hurt my back. Well, that...you know...

I:
Um-hum.

H:
...I kind of stayed away from that job, but, you know, the other things, I...you know, carrying the buckets and milking the cows and all that.

I:
Um-hum.

H:
Did that, and then...

P:
Scraping out the parlor.

H:
Scraping, that wasn't, that wasn't as bad as like the old barn.

P:
Pitching and loading it and you always ...

H:
The old barn with trenches, where you had this...you know...

P:
Oh, yes.

H:
And then throw it out in the manure spreader, I just couldn't do that.

I:
You'll, you'll need to describe that a little bit because...

H:
Okay.

I:
...there were trenches and the animals...

H:
The animals, yeah, it's...

P:
Were in stanchions.

H:
...there was a platform, okay, with a row of stanchions, and the cows...and the platform was the length of a cow. So she would put her head, she'd come in the barn. Each one had their own stanchion basically. We'd have grain down for them. They'd come in, they put their head through the stanchion, you'd lock
◆em...

P:
They almost always knew which stanchion to go to, too...

H:
Yes. They knew which ones, yes.

P:

...they always had, they always had their own.

H: Yeah. And then behind them was the trench, which is where, you know, all the manure went, hopefully. It was supposed to go in the trench.

P: Yeah. It didn't always make it there.

H: And then there was another platform behind the trench, which was the walking platform.

I: Oh, okay.

H: That's where we walked. That's where the milk can set when you have...you'd dump a milker into it, it would, um...you know, it'd be setting back behind the cows, hopefully far enough away that it wouldn't get hit by splattering debris.

I: Manure.

P: That's why they had filters in them [laughs].

H: Yeah, they had filters in them, you know. And I think about that milk we drank and what was in it, and what, you know, what filtered out of it, but, you know, still, there had to be e-coli in that milk. You drank it raw.

I: You were just drinking raw milk.

P: Oh, yeah. Always.

H: We were...we were raised on raw milk.

P: Yeah. And up until...

H: So there'd be dead flies in there, and there'd be manure and dirt, straw, you know, on the filter. It was taken out by the filter but it wasn't cooked or anything and it wasn't heated to destroy any bacteria, but...I know we grew up pretty healthy on it.

I: Well, the human body is very resilient [laughter / voices together]

P: Oh, yes.

H: Well, I think, your immune system, it probably helped our immune system.

I: It probably...

H: And the enzymes in the milk.

I: ...you probably in the end were healthier.

P: Yeah, it was good for us. Yeah.

I: Sure, I mean, we may be over purifying ourselves or something like that.

H: [laughs]. Gets our resistance down.

I:

Huh. Well, that's...how many...what...at maximum, how many cows were you were milking? Did you have horses here? How many pigs? How many acres were you cultivating?

P:

We had two horses and...

I:

Work horses, or were the saddle horses?

P:

They were work horses.

I:

Um-hum.

H:

Later on we had a pony and a saddle horse that were mine, you know. The saddle horse was mine. But, but when she came it was the work horses, which were still being used.

P:

Oh, yeah. Used it for light work in the fields. They weren't really plow horses.

H:

They'd pull wagons.

P:

Um-hum. Oh, yeah.

H:

It seems I can remember.

P:

Wagons and did some fitting in the fields with them. Rollers and...drags, that kind of thing, that wasn't too heavy for them.

H:

And they usually had a couple pigs at least.

P:

Oh, more than that. We used to raise, raise them for...and then sell them for...to market for money.

H:

Um-hum.

P:

So is...high as twenty, I think, pigs.

H:

High as twenty what?

P:

Ten, twenty pigs.

H:

Oh, twenty pigs...

P:

Yeah.

H:

...you'd have at a time. And you had a bunch of chickens.

P:

Yeah. I had a lot of chickens.

H:

Every now and then you'd have a butchering of the chickens.

P:

Oh, yeah. Yeah.

H:

We'd spend a day...

P:

We raised, raised fryers and sell them to the stores in town, my husband did.

H:

But we'd have a day here where we'd kill a number of them and...

P: We'd butcher.

H: ...and clean them and I mean, yeah, obviously you sold them.

P: Oh, yeah, because that's the way you sold them. You didn't sell them live.

H: But then we'd stick them in the freezer here. We had to keep some for ourselves.

P: Yeah. Yeah, we had to have them, eat them, to eat them. But...

H: I'm thinking of later on, probably. I don't remember them being sold then, but...

P: Yeah.

H: You're thinking of early on probably, they...

P: Yeah. We'd sell...we'd sell the roosters.

H: I still remember Grandma cooking those chicken feet.

P: Oh, sure.

H: ...to make soup. Used chicken feet.

P: You...you scald the feet and all that yellow skin peels off and the toenails come off so they're clean. Yeah, it added a lot of flavor to the stew.

I: I was at Hiller's this morning, and I saw a package of chicken feet.

P: Oh, really.

I: And I said, "What in the world would you do with that?" Yeah, so now I know.


P: Yeah, they're good flavoring. It's good flavoring. Makes good chicken broth.

H: Now did they...did they have the skin still on them.

I: They had the toenails.

H: Okay. That's how they had them back here.

P: Yeah, because it roll...the covering comes with it, and after they're scalded the covering comes right off the toenails, so...

H: It's kind of like the same idea as ox  oxtail soup. We used to do that.

P: Yeah, skin...

H: Big long tail, cook it in the pot.

P: Yeah.

H: Just the meat. You know it wasn't...

P: You just...yeah, the skin was gone. But it was the bone and meat. Those are expensive now in the stores.

I: Well, I'm sure that that's the thing, that all these things are now very expensive.

P: Yeah.

I: Yeah.

H: Right.

P: Yeah, we used to keep meat in our freezers and used to eat really high on the hog.

I: Yeah, we had good food.

P: Oh, yes.

I: Were you feeding yourselves off the farm?

H: Um-hum.

P: Pretty much.

I: Pretty much?

P: Pretty much. Pretty much. Yeah.

H: Baking bread. You baked bread.

P: Oh, yeah. When everybody was home, all my kids were home, I used to make about a dozen loaves of homemade bread during the week, every week. And, and then...and we'd buy some store bread, too.

I: Where did you...

H: Especially in...

I: ...oh, excuse me.

H: That's because she had four sons and in addition to us two girls.

P: And everybody liked to eat.

H: Well, we worked so hard.

P: [laughs]

H: None of us were overweight. I don't...at least with the kids. None of us...

P: Um-hum.

H: ...were overweight at that time.

P: No. You were growing and the...you don't, don't put it on. You started to ask about the store? What did you say?

I: Where would you shop?

P: Yeah. There was a little grocery store down on the corner of Michigan Avenue and Platt -- Cady's Grocery Store. And we got all our extra stuff there.

I: Um-hum.

P: Because that was before there was Kroger Stores and no Meijers and...

I: Um-hum.

P: So...

H: That was one of those old country stores. You know, with the shelves that go up to the ceiling and she'd have to use a...she called it her "do-me-fochit".

P: Do...do...do-me-clickit.

H: Do-me-clickit?

P: Yeah, do-me...yeah.

H: Oh, I thought it was do-me-focit. Anyway, it was...

I: Do-me-clickit?

H: Taking the long arm...

I: Uh-huh.

H: ... you know, with the little hand. [voices together]

P: Grabber. It was a long handle...a long-handled grabber, is what it was.

H: That always fascinated me. I just wanted to play with that.

P: Oh, yeah, it's just...I've got a short one now and the kids love to play with that, yeah.

I: Now that was at the corner of Platt and Michigan.

P: Uh-huh.

I: How...?

H: It would be the southeast corner.

I: Southeast.

P: Yeah. Yeah.

H: There was a gas station, they had the gas pump.

P: Now it's just the trees that have been...well, they burned the buildings down and...so the trees there look, still look kind of scarecrow-ish.

I: I remember growing up there was kind of...

H: A brick building.

I: ...building and sign there...

P: Yeah. That was it.

I: ...but it wasn't...

H: Um-hum. Well, it burned. They had a fire there, didn't they?

P: Well, no...after it was not...

H: After it was abandoned.

P: ...a store, after it was abandoned, then they burned it down.

I: I see.

P: Yeah, it was a two-story brick building.

I: Okay. I can remember

P: With gas...with gas pumps out in front, yeah.

H: Living quarters upstairs.

P: Yeah. Um-hum.

H: And somebody lived up there.

I: Um-hum.

P: Yeah, she rented it out.

I: But was it...was it hard to, cash-wise, to, to keep the stuff going out and the cash coming in? Or that it was a pretty difficult?

P: It was hard, it was hard during the war years. Because we didn't have a whole lot of cash coming in. We managed to pay all our bills.

I: Uh-huh.

P: But it was...it was rough.

H: I think it was tight even in the years I was growing up. I remember...

P: Only had...the kids only had one pair of shoes.

H: Yes.


P: We cleaned them up to go to church. When we had two pairs of shoes, boy, that was...that was fat city.

H: Yeah. We lived from milk check to milk check.

P: Oh, yes.

I: Talk about the milk check so that I understand that. That's...

P: Well, we sold our milk to the...well, at that time it was to Warner Dairy which is on Michigan Avenue just going into Ypsilanti. And...

I: Used to be McCalla's next to ?

P: No, no. It's farther...far...it...

I: Farther down?

P: ...farther into town. More, more...closer to Maynard.

I: Okay.

P: Yeah. We'd drive right by McCalla's because they had their own stuff. We'd haul the milk into town and then twice a month, why, we'd get paid for how much milk was sold by the pound.

H: At first you hauled it to them, didn't you? I mean...

P: Oh, yeah. Yeah. When I came here, they...we had an old Chevy car that we hauled the milk cans and the dogs.

H: And there'd be like one milk can. One ten...one ten-gallon can.

P: Yeah, well, and then there was two. And as our herd grew, why...we had a truck coming in here and picking up the cans. We picked up as many as, oh, twenty I think, it got as high as twenty cans, twenty ten-gallon cans. And then the...and then we had to bulk in 1960 or '62...ah, yeah.

I: Is that because you were producing so much?

H: '62.

P: So much, see, we had...and the dairy didn't want to monkey with the cans anymore because it was so much extra labor. So we had these big bulk tanks...

I: Oh.

P: And a, and a semi would come in here every other day and pump it out.

I: Oh. So that's the milk check that...

P:

H: And the milk check was our pay. Yeah.

P: And it came, was it every two weeks or every month?

H: Twice a month.

P: Twice a month, yeah.

I: On the fifteenth and first. The first and fifteenth every month.

P: Um-hum.

I: I think the last few years we were doing it, it only came once a month. That was an adjustment we had to make. Because we'd had...we'd had our bills set up so we paid them on the first and the fifteenth when the checks came in, then all of a sudden we had to go a whole month without money. Hm. So there was times where you had a month left over, then no money [laughter].

P: Too much month.

I: Yeah.

H: Well, what kind of...and I'm trying to paint a picture here for people who just don't have any idea what it was like to be on a farm. What kind of incidental expenses would you have? Like doctor, I'm thinking for the doctor bills for the kids maybe. Veterinarian?

P: Dentist. Oh, yeah.

I: Um-hum.

H: Did you have a veterinarian?

P: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Vet got more money than the doctors, the people doctor did. And they...

H: And tractors were always breaking, it seemed like...the parts...

P: Always repair parts. If you couldn't fix it yourself, well, you had to pay somebody to do it. Took the kids to the dentist. Their father protested but I took them anyway.

H: I still have fillings from then, too...

P: Do you?

H: That I got when I was 12 years old.

I: Well, good.

H: I still have those fillings.

P: I've got some that I got when I was...

I: It's good, isn't it. [laughter]. What about...did you make almost all your own clothing, or did...like for school, did you get...?

P:

H: My mother was an excellent seamstress, too. And she used to keep the kids in winter coats.

P: Yeah. She would sew coats for us.

H: Yeah. She took the tailoring course from Hudson's and she'd do...she did snow suits when they were little and...

H: She'd take an old coat and cut it down...

P: Oh, yeah.

H: ...and make another another coat out of it. Little muffs. She'd make me little ...little fur muffs to put my hands in. Would be real fur too. I think it was fox.

P: Sure.

I: Um-hum.

H: You know, the collars on my coats and my little hat that she'd make and the muff that'd be matching fur. And we had a lot of hand-me-downs, too, from cousins.

P: Um-hum. Yeah.

H: I can remember wearing a lot of my cousins' clothes.

P: Or from the neighbor girls. Yeah. Mary Nourse's clothes you wore.

H: Yeah. And the boys would get it...where'd the boys clothes come fr...

P: I think we had to buy the boys' clothes, because..

H: To start with.

P: Hm.

H: And they would get passed down too.

P: Yeah.

H: I mean if they didn't get worn out.

P: Yeah. Yeah. They'd get...they ...wore a lot of hand-me-downs. When I was growing up, we didn't wear hand-me-downs because there weren't any other children in the family, and...But my aunts and stuff would give my mother all these dresses and coats and stuff and...And she'd remodel everything for us.

H: Oh.

P: They were almost like new clothes, made from old...old ones.

I: How many...I didn't...I neglected to ask, how many brothers and sisters you have?

P: I have two brothers and I had two sisters. One of them, one of them's gone.

I:

P: That's a big family to move from place to place.

I: My mother always made a big adventure out of moving. She...I guess moving every two years she didn't accumulate a whole lot of stuff, that's...

P: Right [dog barking]. That's Murphy.

I: Murphy! That's not going to sound very good on your tape.

H: That's all right.

P: That's okay. Good. It's nothing [to dog].

I: Saphira's always ◆ they incite each other. Saphira's barking so she...he's barking too.

H: I don't know who started it.

P: I don't know either. Thought they heard something.

I: Lie down over here. Lie down. It's OK. All the way, now. [to dog]

H: Now how long would your day be at the farm? I mean, would you go to bed at nine, ten?

P: Nine, ten. Nine or ten o'clock at night and be up by seven.

I: Um-hum.

H: You personally.

P: Oh, yeah. Me personally. The men did longer hours than that.

H: I think Dad would fall asleep earlier than that probably.

P: In the evenings, yeah. And sit...

H: And he'd get up at five or six.

I: When he stops moving, why he has to go to sleep.

P: What did you do for social kind of activities? Were you involved in any organizations like the Grange? Did you go to the Grange dances, church?

H: No. Never, never had time. Went to church.

P: Every week.

I: Went to church is about the only thing, because we just, they just never felt as though they had time to go to all the farm meetings.

H: Um-hum. Were you in 4-H, Hannah?

I: Um-hum. Yes. Did a few years. I don't remember exactly. I was sewing. I did only sewing. Oh, I did cooking too.

P: You did cooking too.

H: Maybe cooking first, and then sewing.

P: Yeah. At least two years of it.

H: Um-hum.

P: I don't think any of the rest of the kids ever were interested in the 4-H. You were the only one.

H: I had piano lessons. I took piano lessons from my aunt when I was ten, for a couple years.

P: Um-hum.

H: And then we took them in Saline. I took them for a few more years. But, yeah, there wasn't much time, like she said. There wasn't much time for social activity.

P: Um-um.

H: Just...I mean, even, even at school, we didn't get involved in after school sports...

P: Because they had to ride the bus, they rode the bus in and the bus out and

H: Yeah.

P: ...yeah.

H: And you had to get home and we had work you know, homework, and then we had our work to do out in the barn and

P: Didn't have the energy for outside activities [laughs].

H: Didn't really need it, I mean...We certainly got a lot of exercise as it was.

P: And there was enough people here so there was a lot of social contact.

H: That was...you know. That probably was the biggest social thing. I remember people just...there were constantly people coming through here. This table was the center of our social life, you know. We'd come in and we'd...we'd be...my dad would be sitting here eating and somebody'd stop in, a neighbor would stop in, or...There was always people coming and going. And my dad always made my mom fix extra food, just in case. You know, somebody was to show up, you know. You remember that?

P: You don't want to run out, yeah.

H: You used to complain about all the work you had to do, making all that food. Because somebody might show up a time, you know, when we were eating, so...

I: Your neighbors in this area, who were some of the families that were around here, during the 50's and 60's?

P: Oh, well, there's always been Nalepka, which is the next one south.

I: Say the name again.

P: Nalepka.

I: N...

P: N...N-A-L-E-P-K-A. They had a...he had a paper baling business, the thing was collapsed down there now, though. There was a lot of children in that family. They went to Town Hall School too.

H: Um-hum. Um-hum. And they had the Carl...well, in the 50's, was it the Carltons over here?

P: Yeah. They...and the...yeah.

I: Over to the west.

H: Yeah...

P: Um-hum.

H: ...yeah across Thomas Road.

I: Um-hum.

H: We socialized with them a fair amount. We kids would go over there a lot too. She liked kids and, you know, my brothers and I, we'd just go over there and play in the yard, or play in her house. So we spent quite a bit of time over there. And then we had the Morgans over here.

P: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Occasionally we'd see them.

H: She taught in the one-room school in the 1930's, Jenny did.

P: Jenny Morgan, yeah.

H: And then across...well, we had my uncle Carl, who lived in the yellow house here. Still on the farm property.

I: Can I see it from here?

P: Yeah. It's...

I: If I stand up.

H: Yeah, there's a...

I: Oh, I see it now.

H: ...there's a white house, if you stand where I am and see the...

I: Um-hum.

H: ...the garage or the barn...

I:

H: Yeah.

H: ...with the yellow house. There's two houses there, actually.

I: Right.

H: That white house was built on the farm by my great grandfather. In 1878 he moved into that house. And that was kind of because their family had gotten too big I guess and, and so...

P: Well, he got, he got married and just moved out.

H: He got married in '74. So I think he must have lived here for a little while.

P: Oh. Um-hum.

H: And then, you know, built that house and moved in there. So that's kind of been a, a family house for a number of years, well, ever since then, except for the last...how long Burger's been there?

P: Fourteen, fifteen years.

H: The last fifteen years.

P: Almost, almost sixteen, yeah. Yeah.

H: And then across the road was the McCalla house, which we lived in. We rented and lived in for three years.

P: Um-hum.

H: But we never really... well, we socialized a little bit with them, and you said...

P: And there was the Nourses too, the next the farm just around the corner.

I: Which McCalla was it?

P: Ah, Helen McCalla that ran the dairy on Michigan Avenue.

H: And she was friends with Grandma.

P: Yes, yes. Yeah, her mother and my mother-in-law were real good friends.

I: I see.

H: And then there was the Fiegels, right?

P: Oh, yeah. Well...

H: In the 50's, were they still there in the 50's?

P: Yeah. We traded help...work help with them, but they were really...

H: Grandma was friends with them too, wasn't she, kind of?

P: No.

H: No?

P: Used to hate old John because they thought he cheated them on a cow deal.

H: Oh! [laughs] I didn't know that.

P: They were, they were paying for those cows for a long time after they were dead.

H: Well, what was that story?

P: Oh, he just...exorbitant interest for about...because they'd buy it on time.

H: He bought...who bought a cow?

P: Your grandfather bought cows from John Fiegel.

H: Oh.

P: And then he's always...he charged such exorbitant prices and then exorbitant interest that they said they were paying for the cows a long time after they were dead.

H: Oh!

P: They, they were not...

H: I didn't know that story.

P: Yeah, they were...they were real...I would say "cheap" but that's not a nice word to use.

I: They were frugal people.

P: Frugal. Frugal is the word! Thrifty, yeah. Old German people.

I: And...yeah, well...So, so there was that going on over there. And you said the Nurses were across the street?

P: Yeah, they...they were just around the corner on Morgan Road.

I: Oh.

H: They must have come in the 50's. Because I know Mary spent a year down here at Town Hall School...

P: Um-hum.

H: ...before it closed.

P: Yeah. She was what? seven when they moved here? Bruce was nine.

H: Okay. Well, that was...she came...I think her maybe fifth or sixth grade she was down there. So she would have been...

P: A bit older, yeah.

H: She would have been, what?, eleven or twelve, by then several...

P: But they were city people, and they were real interested in the farm work. How it went on.

I: Did they, what, did they work a farm over there, or it's...not a farm?

P: No. No. He was some sort of an engineer.

H: You know who owned the farm before they got there?

P: Yeah. It was...it was the doctor that...Mabel Lewis. Mabel Johnson worked for out of Detroit. He moved out here. And Mabel Johnson's mother, Mrs. Lewis had, had chickens at the next farm, and these ladies came from Detroit, complained about the noise. Didn't like the roosters crowing. She had to get rid of her chickens [laughs].

I: For heavens sakes.

P: That's what city people do. They move out the country and object to the smells and the noises and...

H: I can't remember. I just heard this recently. I can't remember where this is happening, but such a problem with the city people moving out to the country. But this one place, maybe in Iowa, has made a brochure for city people, and they have a little scratch and sniff [laughs], so they know...

I: That this is what it's going to be.

H: Yeah. This is what you're going to be smelling. Now are you sure you want to move here?

P: Yeah, when we were going to be spreading manure out on our front fields, we used to go and tell the people across the road, that in the prevailing winds they would be getting it all.

H: You'd warn them though.

P: Yeah, we'd warn them ahead of time that there was going to...

H: As if there was anything they could do about it.

I: Don't have your garden wedding that weekend.

P: Yeah. Close the...yeah. Yeah, close your windows and...

H: Especially the pig barns. Oh, was that very pungent.

P: Oh, yeah.

H: And the chickens. The chickens.

P: Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

H: Oh, my goodness. Cow manure's kind of mild compared to those.

P:

I: Yeah.

H: How many chickens were you finally winding up with. Like hundreds or just...?

P: At one time we did. But towards the end there, we just kept enough for our own use.

I: Um-hum. Were you selling eggs?

P: Yeah we were selling eggs. My dad worked at Packard Motor in Detroit and he'd take this farm produce in there and sell it for us, which was nice.

I: Oh.

H: That's great.

P: And then my mother-in-law would pick raspberries and my, my husband would take them into town and sell them to the grocer, Clague's Grocery on the...was on Packard then. And for years we, we grew sweet corn. And, and either come and pick your own or we'd sell it by the bagful to... we'd advertise in the paper. And years after we quit doing it, people would come and want, want corn because they remembered it was a good product.

I: Did you have the roadside stand?

P: Never did the stand.

H: Didn't need to.

P: No, no.

H: No, they'd come right up here.

P: Yeah.

H: I don't even think we even put a sign out, would we? Or would we?

P: We'd advertise in the paper.

H: Oh, in the paper.

P: My husband always wanted you guys to run a stand down there, but...

H: Did he?

P: ...we couldn't get anybody else interested in it. So...

H: Huh.

I: Well, we got that story from Dorothy Leverett.

H: Oh, yeah.

I: How a couple bags of sweet corn and that's how Leverett's market got started.

H:

Oh!

P: Oh, why ____, yeah. My husband went to school with Charlie, I think.

H: Yes, I think so.

I: Well, it was an interesting time. I mean, because I assume a lot of people had grown up on farms, were now living in the city, and in a more urban setting.

P: Oh, yeah.

I: And probably it was just great for them to be able to get the...

P: Fresh stuff.

I: fresh stuff they remembered from childhood. Now, I mean, gosh, most...my kids wouldn't even know what it would taste like, they're so far removed...

H: Oh, they still have the farmer's markets towns, you know, that's kind of a little taste of that...

I: Um-hum.

H: ...the country still.

P: But we've been so spoiled for having our own sweet corn that we don't buy it out of the grocery store anymore.

H: No. Become a connoisseur.

P: Oh, right.

H: How was that you...you put the pot on, it started boiling, get the water boiling, then you run out to the patch, and you tear the husk off as you're running for the house.

P: As you're running, running back for the house, you had to get it in the water when it's really fresh.

H: Yeah, was it good.

I: Do you still have a patch?

P: We always grow corn in the summer. Yeah. And now we have to put an electric fence around it to keep the raccoons out.

I: Deer too. Would the deer eat the corn?

P: Deer didn't bother the sweet corn too much...well, there's...usually there was field corn out there, so the deer would get in there. You don't very often get deer up close to the house to...they came close enough this year though that they rubbed bark off from our little trees.

I: Hm.

P: When they were rubbing.

I:

Hm. Hm.

P: We didn't have a whole...there weren't a whole lot of deer back then.

H: No. You'd never see deer.

P: Uh-uh.

H: You wouldn't see raccoons.

P: There...and never saw...and woodchucks, never saw a woodchuck till I'd been here a couple of years. And that was in...then it was a real novelty when you saw them. And pretty soon you were overrun with them.

H: Remember the geese too. Remember we used to run outside when you hear those geese honking.

P: Oh, you hear the geese honking, yeah.

H: Because that was a sign of spring.

P: Yeah.

H: When you hear the geese. And you'd...sometimes you'd just hear them way off in the distance. It sound like dogs barking.

P: Yeah.

H: But you...and then you'd look and you'd look and you'd see the V go when they were going north and that was spring, you know. And then you'd see them going south in...

P: The other way, you'd know it was winter.

H: Now you can't tell what time of the year it is there's so many of them.

P: Because there's so many resident geese, yeah.

I: That is an interesting aspect that we forgot...We're so overrun by deer and raccoons.

P: Um-hum.

I: It wasn't always that way.

P: Um-um.

H: Not now. Really. They were really driven back by the, the farmers. And so much land now has...has not...is not being farmed.

P: Being all subdivided, they've been forced out of their natural environment and they just keep moving, looking for food.

I: Well, their only predators are automobiles now.

P: Yeah.

H:

Yeah. That's true. We kind of talk about what kind of meals you would prepare.

P:
Always had meat and potatoes and usually a vegetable.

H:
We usually had a certain meal on a certain day.

P:
And a...and dessert. And desserts. Well, yeah, when you kids were growing up, we always had canned beans and fresh-fried potatoes on Wednesday.

H:
Wednesday's yeah.

P:
I mean, you knew what day it was.

H:
That was the first meal I learned to cook, with canned beans and...

P:
Then on Saturdays I'd make what they called soup beans. We just took the regular navy beans and boiled them up there. That was Saturday's meal.

H:
Um-hum.

P:
We always always and we always had a roast or something on Sunday. Always ate together on Sunday. During the week, we very rarely ever ate all together. They'd get their...finish their certain job where they'd come in and they'd eat and so I had...I had to cook stuff that could stay...keep didn't mind keeping warm for hours at a time. Never made soufflé.

H:
Wouldn't have survived...

P:
No.

H:
And if you came in later, it was likely stuck to the pan.

P:
Oh, true. True.

H:
Just scrape it off.

P:
But they always...didn't have many leftovers in those days, really.

H:
We were so hungry, that was the advantage and...

P:
Yeah, didn't have leftovers. Yeah.

I:
Well, that's interesting, because I was...did you prepare a big meal at noon?

P:
No.

H:
Oh, yes.

P:
Well, we did.

H:
At the early years.

P:
We did before the kids started school. We always had it at noon.

H: Um-hum.

P: And then when the kids were gone all day to school, why then we started having our bigger meal at night then, and we'd just eat sandwiches for lunch.

I: Um-hum. Um-hum. Did you have a lot of hired help? Seasonal, I assume, or not very much at all?

P: Not, not very much at all. My husband did most of...he and his dad did most of it.

H: I remember high school boys.

P: When, in 1953, he started driving the school bus and so we needed the help for the chores and cleaning Meadowview. So then he hired high school kids then, that's when Ronny [Hopp] was working the farm then.

H: He was the bus...he was bus driver and janitor.

P: Janitor. Yeah.

H: At Meadowview Elementary School.

I: Oh, was he?

H: Um-hum.

I: That's where I went.

H: Really?

I: Um-hum.

H: Yeah. What years were you there?

I: Well, I don't remember, but it was in the middle sixties. And my brothers went there.

H: Hm. And what years was he working? He was there that...

P: '53 to '58 I think, he was.

I: Okay. My brothers were born in '45 and '47. And they...my family, I think they were involved in actually doing the building of Meadowview School.

H: Really?

P: Hm.

I: Early on. The neighbors kind of got together and built that school, from what I recall.

P: Um-hum.

H: And actually did the physical...

I:

And then...the physical active labor of it.

H:
Wow.

I:
And so it was kind of a community project. It did seem like the Ann Arbor...for the Ann Arbor Schools. They probably Ann Arbor probably told them that they wouldn't put a school there and so they just put one up.

H:
Hm. Wow.

I:
That's how things usually work.

P:
Yeah, right, right.

I:
But they...

P:
You have to do it yourself.

I:
Right. And so they...so I wonder if my brothers...

H:
They might have known him...they were that...

I:
Oh, yeah.

H:
...that age.

I:
That's interesting. But did...was he looking? Did he go out off the farm because of necessity or did he...

P:
Um-hum.

I:
...just want something to do.

P:
Necessity. Just to keep the farm going.

I:
Uh-huh.

P:
Pay taxes, that kind of thing, just to...

I:
Um-hum. Did your taxes really escalate? Have they, in the course of the time...

P:
Oh, yeah.

I:
...because of the development around? How...?

P:
Yeah, yeah. Years ago, I don't remember what year it was. Uncle Cal was still alive when...they were going to put the railroad through, and so it was going to be a big industrial park.

I:
Hm.

P:
And everybody got...went land crazy and...

H:
Back in like around 1980, wasn't it? Early eight...1980's? Uncle Cal died in 80 something, '83 or '82?

P:

H: It seems like he's been gone more than 20 years.

P: Well, he was 65...

H: You remember...

H: ...when he died.

P: Yeah.

H: And he was born in '16.

P: Um-hum.

H: So what would that be? '81, wasn't it?

P: Died in '81? That was maybe in the middle 70's. This railroad thing where they were going to develop the railroad.

H: The railroad was going to go where?

P: Well, the track was already down here and so...by the land...by the landfill where it usu...

I: By the landfill.

P: Yeah, where it used, used to be. They were just going to, just expand the whole thing and make it all a big train yard I guess.

H: And that would put...and then there would be a lot of industrial...

P: Yeah, industrial.

H: ...park, buildings or plants or...

P: And so everybody was upping the price of their land, and they found out what we thought the land was worth. And so ever after that, the taxes started to escalate and...and just...they're stabilized now, and I'm so glad we've got the township board in there now to stop the subdivision.

I: Um-hum.

H: Just...then the other half of the farm was all going to be...

P: Part of the preserve, part of the pre◆

H: It is now, that's for sure.

P: ◆it was, it was going to be part of that subdivision, yeah.

H: Yeah, it was going to be a huge development over here.

I: That was part that you had sold already?

P:

Well, actually it was...we got divided in the family, got divided up...My mother-in-law, when she died, divided the land between her daughter and her three sons. And...

H:

Yeah, hun...that's the one hundred-and-sixty acres that was still left of the original.

P:

Yeah.

H:

And so...

P:

And then that half of it got left as part of a divorce settlement and ended up with somebody entirely?

H:

Someone we don't even know.

P:

Somebody entirely out of the family.

H:

But she'd...she ended up selling it to the township.

P:

Yeah. She sold it to the township, so...

H:

Yeah. We're...we're pleased with...I think we're pretty much pleased with it being preserved.

P:

Yeah.

H:

I'm glad that they did that.

P:

Otherwise there would have been houses right up, right up on our line to...didn't want that. [pause].
What haven't we talked about?

I:

Well, we've eaten? we didn't go on vacations. Is that what I heard?

H:

Oh!...

I:

Or did you go on vacation?

P:

No. Every once in a while we'd, we'd take an emergency road trip. And when the kids got big enough to do the chores, we could leave them with the chores, but then...then we went south in '59. That was the first time I remember getting away.

H:

And we kids.

P:

Yeah.

H:

And we kids. I, '59, I was twelve.

I:

Um-hum.

H:

I was...I remember being in charge mainly of milking. Jack and I did the milking.

P:

Um-hum.

H:

Jack was my younger brother, he was...he would have been two...I was twelve, he would have been nine. And my older brother, who...who was at the time called Cholly -- he's Chuck now -- but he would, he was in charge of feeding the cows, and doing any machine work around.

P: He didn't care much for farm work because he got hay fever.
I: Oh.
P: And asthma
H: But he still had to get up in the hay mow.
P: He still had to do it 'til he got old en about 17 he got a job off the farm and that was the end of it.
H: But my aunt and uncle came out and stayed with us, my mom's sister.
P: Aunt Susie
H: Aunt Susie and Uncle Jerry came and they stayed with us while we did the work.

Side 2:

P: [...She said I'll] never complain about your housekeeping again [laughs].
H: Mud. We had so much mud.
P: Oh, yes.
I: Hm, I'm sure you did.
H: We had mud season, you know, which was February.
P: And then we didn't have any cement barnyard out there to kind of help clean up...clean up everything so...
H: When we came in, we'd take our boots off at the door, though. We'd come in...the entryway was over there then.
I: Um-hum.
H: Through that door when we'd go.
P: Yeah, that...
H: We had our boots in the cellar way, but our clothes often were covered with it.
P: And the dogs always had mud on them.
H: Yes. The dogs--in this room.
P: I know my mother-in-law used to say, "Your father-in-law is...leaves so much mess around." And then one time they went, they went south to visit a...
H: Her sister.

P: ...her sister, and the house was...just everybody...so much dirt in it. And I knew it was the dogs. It wasn't Grandpa after all.

I: Oh. [laughter]

P: Then we've always had dogs in the house and so that's...blame it on them.

I: Well, dogs are important on a farm.

P: Oh, yeah. Yeah. We've had some wonderful cow dogs.

I: Do you have cats too?

H: Uh-huh.

P: Barn cats. Um-hum. I think my mother-in-law used to have a cat in the house, but the men hated them, and men hate cats in the house so we don't have them anymore. They're just outside.

I: Do you ever get attached to some of the calves or piglets?

H: Oh, attached to every one of them.

I: Were you?

P: Well, they all had...

H: And then we had to eat them.

P: ...they all had names, and...

H: That was the worst.

P: Yeah. We only ate one veal. One, one veal calf that...

H: Yeah. But things grow up, you know.

P: Oh, yeah, when...

H: Grow the steers, you know.

P: Yeah.

H: Tell...tell the story about what I used to say.

P: [laughs]. When I... "Who are we eating today?" [laughs] with a sob in her voice.

H: Oh, it was awful.

P: Kind of hard to swallow it. That's what happened to the...We raised...thought we'd raise a veal calf that was supposed to be...that meat was supposed to be good for people with cholesterol and stuff.

I: Um-hum.

P: And so I cooked it, and it did smell good. My younger daughter says, "Oh, Itsy-Bitsy smells so good, but I can't swallow her." [laughter] They all had names and so...And they all were...they all were hand raised, every...all the calves were always...And it was...we had...

H: Even the pigs. I mean, I tamed the pigs. They were my friends too.

P: I raised a bunch of babies one time, and they'd stand up between my knees and I'd feed them with a spoon.

H: Baby pigs?

P: Baby pigs. Because their mother'd had a sunstroke or something out...and died. And they were too little to...to know how to eat out of a dish. So if I...they'd stand there and I'd feed them with a spoon...

H: Isn't that something.

P: Till we got too big. When we had our barn fire, the cattle had all been like I say hand raised, and they were all tame, and they'd just wander around...and they...well, actually they stam...

H: They stampeded

P: ...stampeded first, but then when they got out north of the house where all the people were, we had...we had some 500 people in our yard that day, that soon as they got there where the people were, then they stopped and started eating and they were perfectly calm after that. But people would see the smoke off the expressway and come by.

I: Oh, my gosh.

P: We had the biggest fire in the township that day.

H: It was a spectacle.

I: Well, that must have been just quite a devastating blow.

P: It was. It was bad. Because we'd had hay in it and we lost seven head of the seven heifers.

H: And we had...we had...the barn was...

P: But there was...

H: ...it was ancient for one thing. Just tinder dry. It was back from the original, like built in the 1800's, the first part of it was, and...and it was full of livestock...

P: Yeah.

H: ...it was full of calves, pens of calves and calves tied up.

P: That had never been outside. They didn't want to go outside either.

H: Yeah. We ran, we saw the smoke. We were having a family picnic here that day. It was in June of...

P: It was, it was Cholly's birthday, so...

H: June 26th, 1966.

P: Yeah.

H: And we'd been...ironically, we'd been having a water fight. You know, just, you know, just playing around in the yard, and we suddenly looked up and there was smoke in the corner of the barn. Several of us, I don't know if my cousins got involved or not, but several of us ran into the barn to...

P: McPeakes were here.

H: ...and we had, we must have had 30 or 40 head of cattle in there, and untying them and shoving them out and opening the fence, the gates in there, and trying to get them to run out and...

P: I know they kept wanting to come back in.

H: There was one little one and I kept...her name was Hot Rod. I shoved her out and then I went in for someone else and I came back and she came wandering back in, you know. They just had this stunned look on their faces and, um, shoved her out again, and...And then I heard someone yelling for me, "Get out, get out!" And, and the hay was...there was a scaffolding between the two barns. It was covered, but hay was falling down beside me, burning, and I started running, you know, toward the house, trying to get to the house, and there was just a crowd of calves in front of me, young...young stock, yearlings probably. And I just had to kind of beat my way through them, trying...they were afraid to go out, because it was all new to them, and they didn't know what was going on. My brother was coming back for me. Jack was coming back in, trying to get me out, and I ran out and I ran toward the house and I turned around and looked and just...and turned, the fire exploded through the roof of the barn at that point. And it was just an inferno after that. But it's amazing that most of the animals got out really.

P: Yeah, and then, then none of the people were hurt. It was a real...there was at least a dozen people in the barn trying to push those kids out.

H: Dad lost a tractor.

P: Yeah.

H: Yeah, dad...dad lost a tractor, and I remember him trying to get the tractor out.

P: But the pedals were so hot he couldn't get it.

H: It was so hot. Yeah.

P: Yeah.

H: He couldn't put his feet...

P: Couldn't get it started and...

H: ...on it. That was a real blow.

P: Hm, yeah.

H: Then what, what are you going to do? I mean, fortunately he'd built the milking parlor, so we could still milk the cows.

P: Yeah, the neighbors were trying to make the electric fence work. They were out there with scissors, cutting the grass under the electric fence. And the neighbors were...then the...and the far◊Webb Harwood was so impressed with our cattle because he says, they just were standing there, letting people put strings around their necks and lead them back to the barnyard.

H: Yeah.

P: And we were able to milk that night. It was late, but we milked.

I: Hm.

H: And our fences were really rotten, we found out.

P: Oh, yeah.

H: Because every night, for several nights after that, the cows would get upset...

P: The wind, the wind would change and so the smoke...they'd smell the smoke and then they...then they'd stampede.

H: And finally...

P: And we'd have to get up in the middle of the night and...

H: ...I finally figured out. They would always quiet down when we came out. You know, the people who'd come, they'd get quiet. So we put our radio out on the fence post. And just left it playing, CKLW.

P: Yeah.

I: [laughs]...

P: They were used to the radio in the parlor so...

H: Yeah. That's what we listen to while we were milking, so...so we...

I: Golden Oldies, before they were old...

H: But that stopped the...that stopped them from getting so upset and...we got the fences fixed.

[dog barking]

P: Jack just drove in. But he's at the house. I heard the doors. So...Murphy! [to dog] [break].

I: Well, that must have been just...just sounds like a terrible time.

H: I think Dad seriously considered getting out of farming at that time, didn't he? I mean, he didn't really know if we were going to be able to recover from that.

P: No, because Edison came in here and he says, "Well, you don't want to rewire this place, he says. It's going to be megalopolis in ten years." Like solid Detroit to Chicago...

I: Uh-huh.

P: ...and never happened.

H: Hm.

P: So we ended up going ahead with it anyway.

H: And we built the...the steel barns. Then we had builders in here to...to do all these. We had the milking parlor. But this barn, that replaced the big barn. That was where the big...

I: Right.

P: ...fire was.

I: Right.

H: We actually had a barn beyond that, which was called the Loafing Barn which is still out there. That, that building remains standing. So we had that for the cows.

I: I'm sorry. I didn't hear that. You called it the what kind of barn?

H: Loafing Barn.

I: Loafing Barn.

P: Because that's where the cows laid down and loafed [laughs].

H: Yeah. They loafed.

I: Okay, I got it now! I get it.

H: That's what it was called though.

P: That's right. Yeah.

I: Is that a common term or is that...

P: Well...

H: ...I think at the time I think that's what they were called.

P: Yeah.

H: It was a pole...it's a pole barn...

I: Um-hum.

H: ...that they could just be loose in there, which opened on one side. And you could go in there and sleep at night and be out of the weather.

I: Oh, okay.

H: out of the wind and...

I: Yeah. Loafing barn. I'll remember that.

P: We had...

I: And so that was there...

H: That's...

I: ...and that is still there.

H: That...yeah.

P: Yeah.

H: The end of it was damaged somewhat by the heat, but the firemen saved it, I think, and kept it from burning and then that summer, after the fire, he had these barns built here for calves...

I: Um-hum.

H: ...it's for the livestock, and there's a shop in one end and...It all worked out. I think when about...by the time winter came, we had shelter for the animals and...Fortunately, I guess it was fortunate it happened in the summer because they spent a lot of months outside...

I: Um-hum.

H: ...after that.

I: Um-hum. What'd you do about replacing the hay?

P: Bought it.

H: We had to buy hay that winter.

P: That was a rough winter.

H: Yeah.

P: When you have to buy in hay.

I: I assumed, you know, maybe insurance might help with the building...

H: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

I: ...and the equipment, but will that feed the animals?

H: Yeah. Yeah.

P: Yeah, that's right.

H:

Did we have to borrow money, do you think? Do you remember borrowing money to feed them that year?

P: I can't remember. We may have. And then we had a pretty big mortgage at one time for...that must have for the Quonset barn out there, I think.

I: Um-hum.

H: May...that was the first of the fires.

P: Yeah.

H: There's been like three, I mean...

P: Had three, yeah.

H: ...yeah.

P: Hm.

H: Had a couple more really serious fires. One was a bunch of...those big round bales...

I: Um-hum.

H: ...set up. They were stacked out here north of the house. Accidentally got set on fire, and that was...that was a winter supply.

P: Yeah. Yeah, that was...that one year, and then a drought the next two years.

H: Oh, and then we...and we had one night in the...in the shop in this barn here...

P: Had a calf...a calf...

H: ...we had a little newborn calf.

P: ...in a coop, kind of an incubator type thing with a heat lamp, and it knocked the heat lamp into the bedding and caught on fire and...this...

H: And there were acetylene tanks and...

P: That was the middle of the night and that's what we...that's what we...that's what, that's what waked us up was this tank of gas blow...blowing up.

H: So that, that took care of the shop.

P: Yeah.

H: We all...we had...

P: It melted a lot of stuff.

H: Yeah. We had a lot of equipment in there that he lost. That was around 1980, wasn't it?

P:

H: Yeah. '82.

P: That was the second fire.

H: Yeah.

I: And then this one out here was the third fire. The firemen were getting, so they kind of knew the place.

P: Well...

I: Yeah.

H: ...it's not...

I: "It's the Geddes farm again."

P: It's just like a...none of it is anything that anybody can do anything about.

I: Um-hum.

P: It's just nature taking its course almost. Did they ever find out what started that fire in the barn?

I: We always thought a calf had kicked some straw on...

P: Electric fence came right up to the side...

I: ...it was very hot, dry. Hot and dry. And the electric fence was fastened on the side of the barn. Insulators and all that kind of stuff, but he evidently got some bedding onto the...onto the hot wire. And the barn siding had been painted with paint that had been thinned with fuel oil.

P: Oh.

H: So it was...it was just...

I: Oh, I didn't know...

P: ...it just melted. It's...it's the...it just melted. I always said I never would have any barn-siding in my house, but when they took...when they took the chicken house down, what'd they...put this up here. [indicating divider in the kitchen]

H: That may...had that painted with it too?

P: Yeah.

H: Yeah? Well, did...when was that done? That must have been way early on.

I: He painted everything in 19...

H: Who's he?

P: Your grandfather...

H: Oh, okay.

P: ...John Geddes, had painted everything in 1941.

H: Oh.

P: How...how you got...the house got painted and all the barns got painted.

H: The house got painted with thinned fuel oil too?

P: I...I...I don't know. It was white paint. I don't really know what he used on that.

H: Ah.

P: I know the barn, they always used to thin down the barn paint to make it go farther.

H: Hm.

P: And that was the last time anything was done to the house until they put the vinyl siding on in 1990.

I: Hm.

P: It was...

I: When did you stop farming here?

P: In '89, why we...my son quit farming, it was...he just got called in the ministry. And...

I: Which son was this?

P: Jack. The one that lives upstairs now.

I: Um-hum.

P: And so he was going to leave and take a church and my husband and I didn't want to get back into the big milking business, so we just sold the cows. And most of the machinery that would run why it got sold. That was a funny day. That morning...they'd been out early. It was in February, and they'd been out early in the morning and everything was lined up in the front field, and they had been out there early in the morning and started all the tractors. All...and they...so they were all running. There were six or seven of them. And when the time, come time for the sale, only one would go.

H: [laughs] Out of gas.

P: So that was the only one we sold. No they weren't out of gas.

H: [laughs]

P: They just...it was just, Lord just wanted us to keep all that junk I guess.

H: So you ended up keeping them. They didn't sell.

P: They didn't sell.

H: Oh! Well, you've used them a lot. Haven't you?

P: Yeah, I think...well, since then we've got them going and they've been...gradually gone out one at a time. And I think we're down to just...we have two now, I think. Just have two. Two diesels. But the day of the sale, none...none of those tractors would start. It was really frustrating. No, I guess two of them started -- the Red Bird and the Versatile would go. We named our tractors, too [laughs].

H: We had the red bird, the blue bird, the pig.

P: Yeah.

H: The bull.

P: Yeah.

H: What else?

P: Well, there was the Versatile. Um-hum.

H: Oh, the Versatile. But that was the brand name, wasn't it?

P: Yeah.

H: The Red Bird was the big...

P: FarmAll you're thinking of.

H: With a cab on it.

P: Yeah. Oh, it was a Massie

H: It was a Massie, yeah, yeah.

P: You're right.

H: The Massie, we called it the Massie.

I: Did you ever drive the tractors?

J: I used to ride with my grandfather. They had that little seat hooked up on one of them, and I remember sitting. He put like one of those little rubber--what are those called?--stretchy things as a seatbelt.

H: Oh, yeah, yeah.

P: Oh, yeah.

I: Like a bungee cord?

P: Bungee cord, yeah.

J: Bungee cord. So I'd sit on one end...like over one of the wheels and ride them. Rode on the back of the plow a few times to pick stones out of the field when he was plowing, like he'd stop and then send my cousin and I out to pick up the stones. That's all I remember.

H:

I: Used to help with the milking a little bit in the parlor.

H: Um-hum. I bet it was a fun place to come visit.

H: We actually lived here.

J: It is. Yeah.

I: Oh, you...

H: We moved back here...we'd been out in Vermont, my husband and I.

I: Uh-huh.

H: And all our girls, three girls were born in Vermont. He's a dentist.

I: Uh-huh.

H: And we'd been out there for seven years. Well, then, he wanted to go back to Orthodontic school here at U of M. So we moved back and we moved into the farmhouse here and lived here for four years.

I: Oh, how fun.

H: While the girls were...Jennifer was seven. She was the oldest one. And, and then Rebecca would have been three and Carrie was one. And then we lived here for four years and then moved over to Jackson. So...they got to live on the farm for a few years, and had fun with the cats and...

I: Yeah.

H: Oh, they were cat girls, boy.

P: None of the cats were tame.

I: Oh.

H: Well, that's them, that's because of them probably.

I: [laughs]

P: Right. Well, sure, because they were handled this...

H: Yeah.

P: The only one...the only one they let hold them now is Joe, because he feeds them.

I: Well, I think we've been talking about an hour. Do we...what haven't we covered that...

P: We went through pretty much what happened on the 40's, which you said you didn't have much on.

I: We don't. We didn't...we don't have a lot of information about day-to-day life, from...

P: Um-hum.

I:

P: Especially, you know, from the woman's perspective...

I: Yeah.

H: ...farm life, you know. So that's...this has been very helpful.

P: And we did the washing, the ironing, the sewing, the cooking. What else would a woman be doing?

H: You drove tractor.

I: Driving tractor.

H: Right.

I: That's right.

H&P: Raising chickens and selling eggs.

I: Yeah.

P: Do you get together for...do you have a reunion?

I: Um-hum.

P: Yearly or is it...how does that♦?

H: Every other years we have a reunion with my brothers and...

I: Yeah, her family.

P: ...my fam...my family, yeah.

H: all here.

P: Yeah.

H: We had a Geddes family reunion last year.

I: Oh.

H: And it was kind of a first...first one that we tried doing that, so...

I: And how many people did you manage to round up for that...?

H: I think we had about 35 or 40.

P: Yeah, that...yeah. There were around 50 when they...when the Witherbys come.

I: Hm.

H: And they come from all over.

P:

Oh, yeah. We used...used to be...used to be we were the center. My sister lived in New York, my brothers lived in Detroit, and so every...and they would come here.

H:
Come here.

I:
Um-hum.

P:
And then...then my brothers started moving away. And one's in Alabama now and the other one's in Missouri, and their kids are scattered all over, and they come from Kentucky and Illinois.

H:
And a lot of them spent their summers on the farm too. That's the only thing we didn't talk about is all the cousins...

P:
Oh, yeah. We always had...

H:
That would come and spend summers here...it was like camp, you know, to come to the farm...

I:
[laughs]

H:
...there's some we grew up...

P:
Maybe one or two weeks in it. Yeah.

H:
...grew up with.

P:
[phone rings] You can turn that off ____.

H:
Can shut that off. Yeah.

[break]

I:
Okay. We're back from the phone call and...

P:
Well, anybody that, that can come comes for Christmas, and we draw names. So we're...

H:
Talk about how it was back in the...let's see. It must...it's when...when did we kids start that getting up and milking for dad so he could sleep in? It had to be in the late 50s when we were old enough.

P:
Oh, yeah. It surprised him one...that time.

H:
We planned it, on Christmas morning that...well, we had ulterior motives because the sooner we could get the milking done in the morning, the sooner we could get breakfast done.

P:
And then we could get...and then we could have package...then we'd do our presents.

H:
Then we could open our presents. So we planned this. I...it had to be right around 1960 or so. I think I was probably...

P:
I don't remember what year it started.

H:

Twelve or thirteen or fourteen, along in there. That we secretly thought we would get up before my dad. Which he usually got up around 5:30. So we had to get up at 4:30 or 5, right around in there. And this would be my older brother, myself, my younger brother Jack and my younger brother Paul, and my sister Marti. There were five of us at the time. And we would sneak out, leave the lights off. You couldn't turn the lights on. Set the alarms, go off early. We went out and we started the chores. And Jack and I were milking.

P:

Of course our bed...our bedroom was right upstairs, so soon as the pump came on, why...

H:

I think was so loud. But he knew right...I think he knew, probably knew as soon as we turned the pump on, but, you know, we were...it was so fun. And we were just so excited, you know, to think we were going to surprise Dad and...and he...so he...he obliged and he stayed in bed I think until seven...

P:

Yeah. Yeah.

H:

...seven o'clock.

P:

And he got up and helped me fix breakfast, boy.

H:

Yeah. Well...

I:

Oh. [laughs]

H:

...he came out. And he came out and he...I think he asked us what we wanted for breakfast and...

P:

Oh, no. I just...I think before that...I'd already started the steak thing before that.

H:

Oh, oh, had you?

P:

I think so, yeah.

H:

Oh, yeah. I thought it got started then.

P:

See, now Christmas breakfast we always had a steak and orange compost...compost [laughs]...compote that I make. Orange and bananas [laughs].

H:

Um-hum.

P:

Someone in the family may have just...some, somebody just called it a compost.

H:

Compost, compost.

I:

Um-hum.

H:

So anyway, we still do that. I mean, when...

P:

Every...every Christmas, every Christmas we still do it.

H:

Not the cow part anymore, but...

P:

Do the steak and orange...

H:

We'd try to get everything done by eight o'clock in the morning. It was two [four] hours worth of work out there. We'd get it done by eight and we could have breakfast done and get to the presents.

I:

Oh, boy.

H:

As soon as possible.

P:

Yeah.

I:

Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

H:

But that was...that was a real tradition. It became a real, you know, a real tradition for us, so...

P:

You got, so...yeah, you did it once, and you got to be expecting it.

H:

Yes.

I:

Yeah. Well, sure. He's sleeping in, so right.

P:

That's right.

H:

warm bed.

I:

Did you have a holiday dinner with the cousins from all over or...?

P:

Ah...

I:

Was it just your immediate family or...?

P:

Well, it's...let's see. We...

H:

It was kind of a breakfast, was the big deal.

P:

Was...the breakfast was the big deal, yeah.

I:

Um-hum. Um-hum.

H:

And it would be...it would just be basically the immediate family. I mean, Grandma and Grandpa, I remember early on Grandma and Grandpa would always be here. Grandma and Grandpa Geddes. But that was when we were still doing pancakes for breakfast. That'd be in the early 50's, I would guess.

P:

Yeah.

H:

Early to mid-50's. But then we...we switched over to the steak thing.

P:

Then they were living over across the field then.

H:

Yeah. But they might have come over. Do you think they came over for that?

P:

I don't think so. I don't think so. Um-hum. They never did much at Christmas. They never even had a tree until I came here.

H:

Um-hum.

I: Did they not celebrate Christmas?

P: They just couldn't afford it.

I: Well, I know a lot of sects don't. I mean, certain...certain Christian sects do not celebrate Christmas.

H: Oh. No, that wasn't it...that wasn't what it was then.

P: No, it wasn't...no, it wasn't a, it wasn't a religious thing.

I: What was it?

P: It was just, they just didn't have the...have the money to buy presents and that kind of stuff. So they...

H: And we would often...I remember, we would only get like one or two presents.

I: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

H: And it would often be clothes they made you...

I: Something you need.

H: ...clothes.

P: Yeah.

H: Something you need and a toy.

P: Um-hum. Yeah, one toy. Yeah.

I: Well, that was...that's what I remember too.

P: Um-hum.

I: It wasn't the...

P: Lavish thing that a lot of them make of it now, they...

I: You wouldn't believe it.

J: I remember oranges and walnuts in our stockings. A hatful practically. Tradition.

H: Yeah, yeah, with orange in the toe.

P: Um-hum.

H: And the nuts, you then put the nuts in there.

I: Uh-huh.

H: Then...fill it up with other stuff after that.

I:

H-huh. Yeah, that...

H:

But that orange, I remember that orange being such a treat.

P:

It was a treat back in those days. Yeah.

H:

It seemed like we only got them at Christmas, it seems like to me.

P:

Yeah. Think so.

I:

Well, what other...were there other holiday celebrations that...Did you do anything at Fourth of July do you recall?

P:

Sometimes you'd have a family picnic out in the yard.

H:

Um-hum. Picnic. Our picnics used to be big though. No one would...like the family reunion, there's be like the tables. Remember the tables Dad would make? It would be like a big sheet of plywood with a couple saw horses. You know, that would be our picnic table.

P:

A couple of years we dragged the hay wagons out there.

H:

Hay wagon [laughs]. It's unbelievable.

P:

Ate out...used them for tables.

I:

[laughs]

P:

A flatbed thing.

H:

Yeah.

P:

Yeah.

I:

Did you...did you have much contact? You said cousins came over. Were cousins from the other branch of the Geddes family? The Ann Arbor...?

H:

Mostly they were from Mom's family, I think.

P:

Yeah, yeah.

H:

Okay, they were.

P:

Yeah. Bro◆my brothers' and sisters' kids.

H:

Well, my cousins, Carole and Joan, my Uncle Carl's kids, I mean, we grew up together. I mean, we were like brothers and sisters, all of us. We went to school together and played together hours on end and...

I:

Um-hum.

H:

You know, they were the closest cousins we had. The rest...there weren't that many of the others and then they lived away.

P:

Um-hum.

H: So.

I: But summers must have just been a wild time here then?

P: Yeah. It was always...

H: Well, then, they learned to work, they...cousins came and they learned to work.

P: They would, they would come, be city kids for a day and then they'd pitch in and start doing things, because they wanted to be with you guys, so, they were doing what you did.

H: Yeah.

I: Was this kind of a...did you reciprocate? Did you go to the city...

P: No.

I: ...for a week or something or...?

H: Not really.

P: No, uh-uh.

I: They just came out here.

H: No. I think...

P: No. They preferred coming to the farm.

H: Oh, yeah, that. Um-hum.

P: They still...every once in a while, you see them and they...now they'll...they'll talk about their memories of coming to the farm.

H: Um-hum. Um-hum.

P: We've got cousins of, your father's cousins that still remember coming to the farm when they were little to...

I: Um-hum.

P: Eating cookies.

H: Oh, yeah, the cookies. Grandma's in her...Grandma, my grandmother was a great cookie baker.

I: Oh.

P: We would make them by the crockful.

H: Yeah.

P: We always had cookies.

I: Well, that's...that's what makes summers memorable, I guess.

H: Um-hum. Um-hum.

P: And when my grandchildren come in, they go right over to the cookie boxes.

I: [laughs]

P: And my sons-in-laws.

H: And your daughters.

P: Oh, yeah.

H: I still get over there. [laughter] Yeah, yeah.

I: When did your husband die?

P: In December 1st, 1993.

H: Yeah. Be ten years.

P: Yeah almost ten years.

H: Uh-huh.

I: Hm. Do you have plans? Is this property just going to keep...stay in the family or what...?

P: Perpetuity. The kids don't want me to sell it and...

I: Okay.

P: ...and as long as they can manage the taxes, why I think it will just stay in the family.

I: Um-hum.

P: We're signed up for that PA116, they call it, where they...you get a rebate on your taxes.

H: Yeah.

P: For being farmers.

H: You rent the land out. They rent it to...

P: Yeah, we rent it.

H: ...a local farmer to work.

I: Um-hum.

P: Rent some of the buildings so we're...solvent.

I:

P: And you have diverse use. I know you said your grandsons have their...their house.

I: Place full of...place full of carpet.

H: For their business so...

P: How much of the...how much...many acres do you still have?

I: Eighty-three.

H: Eighty-three.

P: Yeah. There was another six on the back end of the farm that we sold to my grandson and he...he moved the old Harwood house from Textile Road.

I: Um-hum.

P: He moved it...moved it over there and he fixed it all up nice to...

I: Oh, how great...

P: Yeah. So...

I: ...yeah, they do...

H: So is it 83? It seems like it should be 74. He...wasn't it 80 acres total that...

P: No, it was 80...83.

H: Oh, really.

P: So maybe it's 86...83, what do you do...

H: Minus 6.

P: Yeah.

H: Eighty-six...83 minus 6 would be...

P: Yeah.

H: ...77.

P: Yeah, okay. That's what I own 77.

I: Well, is there anything else that...

H: Can you think of anything...

J: No.

H: ...else, Jen?

J:

H: Well, the arrowheads.

H: Oh, yeah. The...she'd like to see those. They're in here, aren't they?

P: What, what's that?

I: These arrowheads?

P: Yeah.

H: And a meteorite.

P: Yeah. It's all on the shelves there somewhere. Our son Jack says be sure and tell her the crow story.

I: Oh?

P: Yeah.

I: The crow story.

P: Yeah, back in 19...well we first, when we first came here, '43, husband was down in the woods one day, and he found this baby crow on the ground. It had fallen out of its nest and didn't know where it belonged, so he brought it up to the house. And our dogs at the time were birddogs and they wanted this crow. So he put it under a crate and it lived under the crate for a while, and we'd feed it bread and milk and hotdogs. It loved hotdogs. And...and then it got so it could fly, and by then it was tame, and it would...it would come and sit, it would ride on my mother-in-law's shoulder down to the mailbox. [laughs] My niece would yell that...yelled, "Get that black chicken off Grandma." [laughs]

I: Get the black chicken off Grandma.

P: It would steal...I'd be sitting on the tractor and he'd be by the shop there and he'd...he'd take cotter, he'd bring me cotter keys. One day he brought me a little dead frog.

I: [laughs].

H: Thank you.

P: Yeah. He was a very "people" crow. And he would walk on the porch up here and call in the window, when the Winnie kids were visiting, getting them to wake up in the morning, and just...

H: She probably doesn't know what the Winnie kids are.

P: No. My, my nieces...sister-in-law's children would come and visit in the summer too to..

H: And her name was Winnie.

P: Yeah.

H: So, her kids...her kids were the "Winnie kids."

P: That's what...that's what my children called them was the "Winnie kids."

H: Is that what we called them?

P: Yeah.

H: Oh, I wondered where that name came from.

P: Yeah.

I: Families have their own...

P&H: Yeah.

I: ...vocabulary, don't they?

P: Hard to remember all those names. So we just called them the Winnie kids.

H: So anyway, these are the Indian artifacts that have been found in the fields.

I: Um-hum. Um-hum.

H: And my dad when he was plowing, oh, probably with the horses mostly.

I: Um-hum.

H: Would find, you know, you'd look down and there's something laying there so...a neat collection.

I: Are they doing an archaeological survey...

P: Yeah.

I: ...on the property?

H: Yeah.

P: Yeah, over...over...

H: In fact, over in the schoolyard they found similar stuff.

I: Right.

H: Not, not anything as intact as this.

I: Um-hum.

P: Pieces of them, hm?

H: Yeah, they found...and they...they found evidence that, you know, that there was an Indian encampment nearby.

I: Yeah.

H: So didn't have any...

P: I don't know what kind of Indians were here then? Did they, did they say?

H: I think, wasn't it the Hurons that were around here?

P: I don't know.

H: The Huron River was named for them?

P: That's what it should have been, but like I don't know whether it was like...

H: Something like this is a piece of jewelry, they told me.

I: Oh.

H: With this. So they put like a thong...a leather thong through it and hang it around the neck.

I: How interesting.

H: The rest of these are arrowheads or that. This might have been a...

I: Like a...some scraping tool or some...?

P: Yeah. It was longer. It broke. We found that when they were doing the basement over here for the wing, west wing.

I: Hm.

P: Yeah, there's the other end of it, yeah.

I: Hm. Interesting.

P: Or is it the half of this one?

H: Maybe these two...

P: Yeah, those two went together. Yeah. And it broke when we...when we handled it a little. I think it was a scraping tool.

I: Hm.

P: Yeah.

I: Kind of looks like it.

H: Um-hum. And see how that one's got a...

I: Yeah! To go on a...

P: Piece of wood, maybe.

I: ...piece of wood. Um-hum.

H: That's that.

I:

That's interesting. Well, it would be interesting to have the archaeological results from this.

P: Um-hum. And this, we also want to know about the meteorite.

H: You know about the meteorite.

I: Yes.

H: You've heard about that. Okay. All right. Well, you know, we had a guy out here, from the University.

I: Yeah. I read about that.

H: Okay. And he said that he didn't think it was a meteorite.

I: That I didn't know.

H: He said, if...he...just looking at it objectively, he said he thought this was an earth rock.

I: Well, then why did it come out of the sky?

H: That's what...[laughter].

P: He said, if it...he said it was molten lava off some...he said some...

H: Well, this is my...

P: Yeah.

H: ...this is my wild theory that...

P: Why not.

H: ...Krakatau exploded in 1883. But it's on the other side of the world. But it was a...you know, incredible explosion.

I: Um-hum.

H: What if it shot something up in the air so hard and so high that it...and got caught in a jet...

I: Went into orbit.

H: ...yeah, went into orbit, and it came down. I mean, sometime around 1880 this something...there were three pieces that he found on the ground, that he'd never seen before in his life. I mean, where did it come from?

P: Because it looked...it doesn't look like any stones we have on the farm.

H: But the guy from the university said a meteorite generally will be molten. I mean, it's just smooth from the heating. He said he'd never seen anything that...that was so rugged looking, that people thought was a meteorite.

I: Um-hum.

H:

I: But this guy...but my great grandfather saw this come down, he saw something fall out of the sky.

H: Um-hum.

H: Oh, another theory was, well, maybe the real meteorite is buried down there, and maybe this was under the ground, put there by a glacier, you know, because there were...

I: Oh, okay.

H: ...volcanic, apparently UP had some old volcanic rock and it may be...

I: Um-hum.

H: And glaciers shoved rocks all over the place. Maybe the glacier shoved these rocks down. Maybe the meteorite landed on them, popped them out of the ground. I mean, maybe that's...that's probably as far fetched as...

P: Well, it makes a good story.

H: ...as the volcano, but...[laughing]

I: Well, but...but the...the upside for us from a historical perspective is that there's documentation that he saw this come down from the sky.

P: Yes, he did.

I: He saw something come...

H: But it's oral tradition. There's nothing written. I mean, he didn't write about it. It's oral tradition. But it's not that long ago.

I: No, it isn't.

H: And it seems just so...just three generations...

P: Yeah. Hundred years.

H: ...of oral tradition.

I: And it's not like it's an odd oral tradition like...

H: Right.

I: That...that makes him sound really heroic or

P: It could have happened, yeah.

I: Yeah, very easily it could happen. There's no reason to make a story like that up.

H: Right, right. Exactly.

I: Hm. Well, who knows?

H:

I: Yeah.

H: But that's...but that's interesting. Is that the only piece that...

H: No, it...no, there's another...there's supposedly two other pieces. Well, we know there's one other piece...

I: Okay.

H: ...in Pennsylvania. It's with family out there.

I: Oh, okay.

H: Who I've written to and asked if we could borrow that piece for a while.

P: That young girl?

H: Yeah.

P: Um-hum.

H: I haven't heard back from him, so I don't know if he's going to let me do it or not, but...

P: But supposedly the university has a piece of it too.

H: Yeah, the university got a piece...

I: Oh, that's right.

H: ...but they've lost it. They don't know...they have no idea...They're looking for it but they have no idea. I mean, he said the basement is full of meteorites and things, unlabeled stuff. When they moved from the original building, they've moved into, you know, over the years, they've moved into a new building and that caused things to get confused, so... I don't know that they'll ever find it. But he said, now that he's seen it, you know, it may be somebody looked at that, and said that's no meteorite, that's a piece of lava and they put it with the earth rocks. Or maybe they even just threw it out.

I: Oh. Oh.

H: So, I don't know.

I: Which is a cautionary tale about giving things to the University of Michigan.

P: [laughs]

H: He said, "I don't suppose you would want to lend that to the University, seeing that we lost the first one."

P: [laughs]

H: I said, "Ah, I don't think so.

I: Oh, now being an alum of Michigan, you know, we should not be badmouthing them like that. I'm sure they try their best. And it was a long time ago.

P: Yeah.

H: But I was kind of surprised when I went over there and looked and they didn't have it on display. I thought, you know, something from Pittsfield Township...

I: Local like that.

H: ...yeah, should be on display.

I: Um-hum.

H: I guess they have one from Chelsea. Came down in Chelsea over there. I don't know when that happened. That was fairly recently.

P: Well, to get back to it...

H: Went through, landed in a garage, came through the roof of a...

P: Oh, I haven't heard that, yeah.

H: And he said, it was interesting, because you'd think it would be really hot, but it was cold.

P: Hm.

H: He said they're so cold from outer space that even though they heat coming through the atmosphere, that they cool down very quickly.

P: Hm.

H: So they're not hot to touch.

J: So I just have one more question.

H: Oh, you do. Okay. Good.

J: The last thing...I just wanted to know, did anybody like get injured at all from the farm equipment? Like, like what sort of injuries. You know, because lots of times, you think about people being killed.

H: Oh, yeah. Yeah, we only had one bad accident. Janis Rae...

P: And Janis...Oh, yeah, my husband used to take the kids on the tractors like they...he did you. And he had...

H: And we were coming down the road while we were riding on the tractor.

P: You were....yeah, you were down on Platt Road, and he had, what?, about four kids on the tractor.

H: No. Three. I think Janis was on one fender...

P: And he was...yeah, it was drag...

H: ...and Jere Beth was on the other.

P: And he was pulling the cultivators, and this, this niece fell off the fender and underneath the cultivators, and it sliced her, oh, all up her side. Yeah, they had to do something for it.

H: It was just under the skin. It wasn't deep enough to hit the internal organs.

P: Yeah, yeah.

H: She was so fortunate. But nasty, dirty cultivator. Well, actually, we weren't...he wasn't cultivating at the time.

P: No, no. He was just...

H: He was driving down the road, and the cultivator was up, so she went under it, and it just slit her side open.

P: Yeah. What?, 40 stitches on the inside and 40 on the outside or 400 something, it was a lot. It was a exorbitant amount anyway. Her folks had just left her here. They'd gone back to Indiana, and get this phone call, your kid just...fell off the tractor, so...

H: I don't remember how...I think, I think he...of course, he stopped the tractor immediately, and I think he went back and he picked her up and I think her sister, her younger sister, Jere, Jere Beth was her name, I think she had to drive the tractor back up to the yard.

P: Was she that big?

H: Well, Janis was 14, wasn't she?

P: Oh. Oh, so Jere was 12 or 11.

I: Oh, my.

H: Hm, I think he told her, he held Janis, I don't know...I don't remember exactly. I was little.

P: Hm. Hm, yeah.

H: When did that happen? Fifties? What?

P: Oh, if Jere was eleven, you were maybe six.

H: Okay.

I: Wow.

H: Yeah, that would be about right.

I: Terrible thing to witness.

P: Hm, yeah.

H: But after that, that was the last time...

P: Yeah, after...yeah, after that...

H: ...more than one sat on the tractor.

P:

...no more kids riding the tractor. They let them do it one at a time.

H: Well, no, one...one at a time, with an adult, until we were old enough to drive.

I: Um-hum.

H: And he was always very adamant about machinery

P: Oh, yes.

H: "You shut that off."

P: Say, always, always preaching safety.

H: Yeah. Shut it off. Don't get sleepy. If you get tired, get off the tractor.

P: Read in that paper about that fellow over by Milan that lost his foot. Thought the number of times that I unplugged that corn chopper with it running.

H: You did.

P: I did.

I: Oh, oh. Oh.

H: You? You disobeyed the rules?

P: Yeah. I was...it was easier to unplug it running and...

I: Hm-hm-hm.

P: ...Lord blessed me, I never got caught. It happens so quick, I wouldn't have...

H: Yeah, and it would be like your hair getting caught in a wringer.

P: Yeah.

H: It just pulls you in so fast.

P: And just out in the middle of the field all by myself, too, so it's a...it wasn't a good...it wasn't a...

I: It was dangerous work.

P: Oh, yeah.

H: Sure is.

I: You're...you are very fortunate then that your family...

P: Yeah, yeah.

H: It was the...it was the eternal...

I:

H: Yeah, good record.

H: ...eternal vigilance, I think that...

P: Yeah.

H: ...and the way he taught us that...

P: I fell in the yard and broke my leg one time, but it had nothing to do with the machinery. Yeah, it was...nothing to do with the machinery.
[Addition by Hannah Geddes Wright:
There was one other accident when my 6-year-old brother, Jack, (along with the rest of us kids) tried to jump from the hay mow into a high-sided hay wagon full of hay. He didn't jump far enough and hit his shin-bone of one leg on the side of the wagon, breaking it severely. No more jumping into the hay wagon after that!]

I: Oh, no. That's terrible. Really. Yeah. Yeah, I think I had a great grandfather who was killed by a team of horses, when they were working with horses.

P: Oh, my.

I: And so...

H: What happened?

I: Just the horses...

H: Ran away?

I: Ran him up into a wall or something, you know, how horses do.

P: Oh, my. Oh.

I: You know, things happen.

P: Sure.

H: Especially with the...

I: When animals...

H: ...animals, too, they're unpredictable.

I: Absolutely. I know, so...

P: Yeah.

I: Questions?

J: I just want to know how old you were when you were learning to drive a tractor? Because you were pretty young, right?

H:

I don't think my dad would let me drive a tractor by myself until I was twelve. I remember wanting to and he...

P:
Usually...usually with the boys is when they could reach the clutch.

H:
Yeah, the boys he let drive sooner. He let them drive around the fields at ten or eleven, but...

P:
Because they were stronger maybe, because they were stronger and...and bigger too.

H:
Yeah. And bigger, and maybe he was more protective of me because I was a girl too.

P:
Um-hum.

H:
I was twelve before I could...I could run the Ford tractor. But I think I learned to drive the Ford pickup truck about the same time.

P:
Um-hum.

I:
I was going to ask when you learned to drive.

H:
We learned to shift, you know, you learned to double clutch and all that stuff. We...driving that, that little pickup truck, that was really fun.

P:
Um-hum.

H:
I liked driving that thing around the fields.

P:
Hm.

H:
Yeah. And by the time we got to driver's ed, we were...we knew how to...there was no problem.

P:
Yeah. Because you'd get in these cars that the kids nowadays have never seen, that's back when they never seen a stick shift, so they didn't know how to do them.

H:
Yeah.

P:
You were ahead of them there.

H:
Yeah. We learned how to back machinery out too. A lot...girls especially that can't back up a...

I:
Um-hum.

P:
That too.

H:
My sister and I both are...are champion backer-uppers. I think I can back anything up. Oh, the two axles. Four axles is a lot harder but...When I learned, when I took my driver's ed, I of course drove around town with this deputy that...he was an older guy and he just harassed me constantly about, you know, you kids, you think you're so smart. You know every...and blah-blah-blah. And I was just, you know, little mouse, and I didn't say anything. I was just driving. We got to the end and I had to parallel park, and I just...just backed in there, and said, "I never saw anybody park a car that good." [laughs] At the end.

P:
Whenever you'd get your driver's license or take their test, why he...the deputy would always come in, say, "Just let them practice." They knew everything to...

H:
Yeah.

P:
"Just let them practice."

H:
They still say that. But you have to practice with the parent in the car.

P:
I remember one time I went to renew my driver's license and I had her along. She was most unhappy and screaming her head off. Sheriff filled out the whole form for me, took my money, didn't have to do anything.

I:
He took the test for you.

P:
Yeah, he took the test for...sheriff himself just to shut you up. Used to get in the doctor's office sooner that way, too. She was a little unhappy child.

H:
Everybody...I was an unhappy child?

P:
You had...you had your moments.

I:
Well, didn't we all. [laughter]

I:
Well, I...thank you very much to all of you for...

H:
Now what will happen to this?

I:
Ah, what we'll do now is transcribe it.

P:
Needs to edit it.

I:
Yeah. No. It won't be edited.

P:
Really.

I:
Every "um" and...

P:
Really?

I:
... "ah", you know...

P:
Dog bark?

I:
...will be on. A dog bark will be on, the...on the transcript. But that way we have a written record and a computer, electronic record...

P:
Hm.

I:
...of the interview, so that it can go into the archives.

P:
Oh, yeah.

I:
And then it goes in with the original source, with the original source tape. And it'll go into the archives. It'll go up on our website.

H:

Oh, I was wondering about that.

I:

As soon as we get it done. Sometimes it takes me a little longer than others. And...and then it'll just be available for people to use for educa And we have a display monitor about being...having it used for educational purposes and not for anything else. So that's what happens.

H:

Hm. But I did see one other interview on there of...was it the Sutherlands?

I:

Ah, yeah, we've done both Harold Wilson and his sister, Ernestine Meehan.

H:

Um-hum. Okay.

I:

But we have...I think we have eight or nine loaded up there.

H:

Oh, good. Oh, yeah.

I:

This will join that. And...thank you.

H:

Interesting.

P:

Um-hum.

I:

I appreciate it and I'm going to turn it off.

The End