Oral History of Illinois Agriculture

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Abstract: Geneva Sweet was born August 28, 1911 in Franklin, Illinois. She is 96 years old and still lives by herself on her husband's family farm three miles north of Franklin. She rents out the majority of the land now, but has retained sixty acres for herself, on which she and her family plant corn. Geneva's mother, Claira Bell, was a schoolteacher who taught school in one-room schoolhouses in and around Franklin during the early 1900's. Her father, W.C. "Will" Hart, was a blacksmith as well as a judge in Franklin. Geneva still remembers her father holding court on the front lawn of their home under a large tree. Around 1930, Geneva married her husband, E. Leroy Sweet, and moved out to the family farm. Around 1945, she and her husband took over the operation of that farm. They did not have any hired hands since they had three children who could accomplish a lot of work. It was obvious to Geneva that there had once been hired help because there is a large room on the back of the house which has its own separate staircase. Geneva also remembers that when she moved to the farm the REA (Rural Electric Association) came through electrifying the barns and other out buildings first, and later the home itself. Geneva stated that while there were some clear roles for men and women there was just too much work to be done to concern oneself with social order. It was for this reason that Geneva fed the hogs on the farm and would occasionally drive the tractor. She also stated that it was her job to cook and clean the home, spending a lot of time dressing chickens for dinner. The majority of her garden was canned and stored for winter consumption.

Keywords: Franklin, IL; Family Farm; Corn; One Room Schoolhouse; Blacksmith; Judge; Hired Hands; REA; Rural Electric Association; Gender Roles; Social Order; Hogs; Tractor; Dressing Chickens; Garden; Canning

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Interview with Geneva Sweet

ISM_40_SweetGen

April 3, 2008

Interviewer: Mike Maniscalco

Maniscalco: Are you ready? (laughter)

Sweet: I can't be any more beautiful than I am now.

Maniscalco: Well, ninety-six? You are gorgeous.

F: Say cheese.

Sweet: Yeah, I see you do.

Technician: There we go. (unintelligible)

Sweet: Have you got my hair combed nicely?

F: You look beautiful.

Sweet: Fine. Thank you. (laughter)

F: You're welcome. I just want to—

Sweet: —push my glasses up, all right. Is that better?

F: That's much better.

Technician: So when you talk, you probably just want to look towards the mic a little bit.

Maniscalco: We'll just have a conversation. Forget about him.

Sweet: All right.

Technician: Yeah, the camera's not—

Sweet: What are you most interested in, besides baseball?

Maniscalco: Besides baseball? (laughter)

Sweet: Yeah. I figured baseball to be number one.

Maniscalco: Well, number two would have to be oral history and interviews.

Sweet: Oh, it would.

Maniscalco: Yeah.

Sweet: Well, you and Harry ought to get along pretty well then.

Maniscalco: All right. Okay, are you ready?

Sweet: I told you awhile ago, he played four years of football for Illinois College.

Maniscalco: Well, we're going to have to talk about that later.

Sweet: And he's on the Illinois College's Hall of Fame for playing football.

Maniscalco: I didn't know we were sitting with a famous guy.

Sweet: That's famous in his mother's sight, that's different.

Maniscalco: Oh. Okay. Well, today is April 3, 2008. We are sitting in the Barton W. Christian home, with Geneva Sweet. And she has been very, very kind, and she's allowing us to sit down here with her and do an interview. How are you doing, Geneva?

Sweet: Just real well.

Maniscalco: Real well. Good.

Sweet: This is a nice place to be.

Maniscalco: Good. That's great. Well, Geneva, let's start out the interview, if you could tell us your date of birth—

Sweet: August 28, 1911.

Maniscalco: 1911. And where were you born?

Sweet: In Franklin, Illinois.

Maniscalco: In Franklin, Illinois. And can you tell us a little bit about your parents?

Sweet: Well, my mother taught school, and my dad was a blacksmith, and also he served as justice of peace in Franklin for many years. And he was always having a trial or somebody was fussing at somebody else, and they'd come to Dad to get it settled. And when he would have a trial in the summertime, he would have it out in our front yard under our maple tree. And a neighbor girl of mine, Bonita Jolly and I, always went to those trials. We'd get our seat and sit and listen. And one day, my dad says, "Now, Geneva, there will be a trial this afternoon, but you are not to come." Oh, I just couldn't understand that, if he was going to have a trial, why couldn't I come? He says, "You and Bonita are not to come to this trial." Well, I wanted a little explanation, but I wasn't getting any. (Whoopee, something blew up.) And he said, "This is not a trial for little girls," so we didn't go. And it wasn't until years after that I had some kind of a notion as to what kind of a trial that was, and why we couldn't go.

Maniscalco: Well, what kind of a trial was it?

Sweet: Well, I'd rather not explain it.

Maniscalco: Oh, okay. (laughter) It was one of those kind of trials.

Sweet: You could use your imagination why my dad wouldn't let us go.

Maniscalco: Okay. We can imagine that.

Sweet: Yup.

Maniscalco: What about your mother being a schoolteacher? Do you have any stories of her?

Sweet: Well, she graduated from high school, I think, in 1902. And at that time, I don't know—you didn't have to have much of an education to teach. Then after she got married, she didn't teach, she stayed at home, until—I think I was about five or six years old, and she went back to Normal for six weeks to get her teacher's certificate renewed. And she taught in country one-room schools all around, and in Franklin Grade School, until she retired.

Maniscalco: Very good. Very interesting. Now, do you remember anything about your grandparents?

Sweet: Well, I remember my mother's mother and dad lived just a few miles south of Franklin on an eighty-acre farm, and farmed with horses. And my grandfather was crippled; he had one leg that didn't work right. But it didn't stop him. He farmed anyway, with horses, of course. And the grandmother helped him. And I remember the people laughing about him, when it was time to shuck corn, by hand, of course, they'd go to the field together to shuck corn. And they always said they went the wrong way, because they were both left- handed, and you had to go the other way, because you used your left hand.

Maniscalco: So—

Sweet: I loved to go out there, because they had a good-sized pasture that was kind of hilly, and it had hickory nut trees on it. And oh, I—and it had daisies that grew around it and their hogs back there, but I loved that old timber. I still like timber. I don't have any, but I like it.

Maniscalco: Neat. Do you remember—you said they farmed corn. Do you remember any of the other things that they farmed?

Sweet: Not my grandparents, no. Well, I expect maybe they grew—well, they grew oats; they had to have oats to feed their cows and their horses.

Maniscalco: They had cows and horses.

Sweet: Well, they used horses. This was before tractor times.

Maniscalco: Yeah.

Sweet: They used horses for their work.

Maniscalco: What about any of your other relatives? Did you have any aunts and uncles?

Sweet: Oh, I had one aunt I was particularly fond of. She worked in the state house in Springfield, and she kept my grandmother with her, and we'd go up there in the summertime and spend a week or two, and Aunt Bess would figure out someplace for us to go, and give us the money, and tell us just what streetcar to get on. And I just roamed all over Springfield in those early days. And I loved it. And they lived on North Walnut, and we could walk from North Walnut to Washington Park, and the other direction, over to Lincoln's monument. So I spent lots of days roaming around in that part of Springfield.

Maniscalco: So did—

Sweet: And my Uncle Jay, her husband, drove a streetcar. Not the old Rutledge car that came out to Walnut, but he'd go to work, and I think he worked until the late, the owl car, and then he came home. Well, I had this brother that was older than I and considerably different, and Uncle Jay would let him go to work with him and ride that streetcar all afternoon, and I never could understand why my brother could go and they wouldn't let me. But I know now, because I never would have sit down and sit still; I'd have been all over everything. And my brother was different; he'd sit there and ride. But I never got to go with Uncle Jay to work. But I could go with Aunt Bess up to the state house, and she'd let me go down to the dime store. (laughter) There was two dime stores in Springfield at that time.

Maniscalco: What sorts of things did you get at the store?

Sweet: Pardon?

Maniscalco: What sorts of things would you get at the store?

Sweet: Which what?

Maniscalco: What sorts of things would you get at the store?

Sweet: Beads. And I liked to do fancy work, and I was always buying a pillowcase or something, and the colored yarn to work on it. Or I'd just roam around—I loved to go, you know they sold sheet music, and they had somebody there to play it, and I loved to be there to hear that music. But I enjoyed Springfield a lot. And every vacation, Christmas, Thanksgiving, we went up there, and then my uncle Walter lived on Walnut too, he lived a block on down from my Aunt Bess, and he carried mail around the square in Springfield. We never got to go to work with Uncle Walter. (laughter)

Maniscalco: So you went to visit Springfield quite a bit.

Sweet: Oh, yes. A lot.

Maniscalco: What other places did you get to go visit?

Sweet: All the relatives I had lived in Springfield, except this grandmother that lived in the farm south of Franklin, but that was—I do remember her coming, my grandmother Goshel(??), coming by our house in Franklin in a horse and buggy, and she was going to Waverly. At that time, Waverly had this star store that was famous, you could buy yards of goods, clothing and shoes and stuff. And she was going over to Waverly. And she asked me if I wanted to go. And I rode from Franklin to Waverly, shopping, in a horse and buggy. And then she brought me back home in that horse and buggy. That's the longest buggy ride I think I ever took.

Maniscalco: Well, that's cool memory. So did you get to go out and visit your grandmother at the farm very often?

Sweet: Oh, yes. Whenever it was slashing time, back in those days, there was a threshing machine that went from farm to farm, and when it was at your farm, you fed all those people. And the wives would all get together and cook, and my mother always went out to help her mother get ready for the threshers. And something that always interested me, they'd be, oh, twelve, fourteen men to feed, and—I now didn't call her grandma, I called her mamo, she'd fix the bench outside, and she put her three wash pans on it, and hung some towels there, and the guys would all come in and pump them some water and wash and dry there before they'd come in to eat. And I thought that was funny, to watch all of them dirty guys out there washing. (laughter)

Maniscalco: Do you remember much about the men and the threshing?

Sweet: No, because I wasn't old enough. See, I was the last child in my mother's family. My dad had been married before, and his wife died, and he had three children by that wife, and then three children by my mother. And I was the last child of the whole—and I'm the only one left, of course. At ninety-six, you might think that.

Maniscalco: So when you went out with your mother to help your grandmother with the threshing and stuff, what sorts of things did you do?

Sweet: Probably just got in the way. (laughter) I remember one time, if—now, they did have wheat in those days, and they'd haul it in the big wagon into the elevator. And I'd get to ride in the wagon. Mostly, though, I sat on a post, because there was hogs everyplace and there was gates, and they left the gates open so the wagons could get through, and I'd sit on that post and keep the hogs from going through.

Maniscalco: Oh, cool. So, now moving forward a little bit, you and your husband lived on a farm, or live on a farm. And what year did you both move to that farm together?

Sweet: Well, I went out there about, in the 1930s, when we were first married, we were there. And then we moved to Franklin and he worked at the high school, and then we—what year did we move?—'45, we moved—his parents were dead and gone, and Dad always wanted a farm, and we thought we could manage it, you had to buy pretty expensive farm machinery. We went back to the farm.

Maniscalco: Interesting. Can you explain a little bit what the farm looked like, if you were to stand there?

Sweet: Well, it's the same—I don't know what kind of a house the great-grandfather that went to the Civil War built there. But the same house has been built onto, and we were about the third generation of families who had lived in it. And it's still there, and my furniture's still in it.

Maniscalco: What does it look like? Can you explain it to us?

Sweet: Well, you'd better have a picture of it. It's a two-story white house. And I'll tell you one interesting things, it was a big house, up the front stairs, there was four bedrooms in the hall, and a stairstep to come down. And what we called the back stairs was a big room over the kitchen, and it had the stairs that came down, but there was no way to get from the back stairs to the front stairs without coming downstairs and going up, because that back room was where the hired men slept. And the family slept up the front stairs. But when Leroy and I moved out there, we had a door cut, so we could get through. (laughter) But of course, there was no electricity out there until the REA put electricity through the country.

Maniscalco: Do you remember when that was?

Sweet: It would have been in the thirties some time I think. I couldn't tell you just exactly. And I know that after REA started building out there, there was one farmer that would not let them put light poles on his land. You had to donate and you had to give them the permission. So that kept it from coming that far. Finally, he found out that he couldn't have any renters or anything else until he let some electricity out there.

Maniscalco: Wow. Now, before you moved out to the farm, this was your husband's father's farm?

Sweet: Well, it belonged to his mother.

Maniscalco: Oh, it belonged to his mother.

Sweet: Yeah, it belonged to his mother. Their father came up from Scott County and bought that land. And he had, I think, about six children. But she got the home place, his mother did. It belonged to her. And it still belongs to my children.

Maniscalco: Oh, good.

Sweet: To Leroy's children, still in the same family. Now, their names were—the man that came out there was Peak, Jacob H. Peak was the man that went to the Civil War, and came home four years later.

Maniscalco: Now, do you remember that farm before you moved there? Did you ever go see it before then? Never went and saw it?

Sweet: No. Well, just after I got interested in Leroy, of course. (laughter)

Maniscalco: So what sorts of changes did you and Leroy make to the farm?

Sweet: Very little. Very few. He did build a garage and kind of a sun porch on that I used a lot and still do, because there's—there was an old—well, they had scale house—when they shipped hogs or anything, they had a scale house where they weighed their own hogs, loaded them, and trucked them to Saint Louis. And of course that scale house finally got torn down, and there's a machine shed built there, that the renters still use in good shape.

BG person: Put a bathroom in the house.

Sweet: What?

BG person: Put a bathroom in there.

Sweet: Yes, he did put a bathroom in. Put a bathroom downstairs, and finally a half- bathroom upstairs. Because we had—he took one of those bedrooms and that left three bedrooms and this big back room we talk about. That back room is where all this old stuff—everybody that moved in and out left their old stuff up in that back room. And that's where a lot of it still is.

Maniscalco: Now, did you and your husband have any hired help?

Sweet: Yes. He had—but then never any hired help that lived with us. It was just day help. See, we raised two boys, and those boys did a little help too. You never did have to milk a cow, though, did you, Harry? Nope. Fed hogs, though. I fed hogs; I loved to go out to where there was a wagon full of corn, throw ears of corn out to the hogs. (laughter)

Maniscalco: Oh, really?

Sweet: Yeah. That was fun.

Maniscalco: What other sorts of things did you do on the farm?

Sweet: What?

Maniscalco: What other sorts of jobs did you do on the farm?

Sweet: Cooked. (laughter) Killed, dressed chickens. Canned stuff that we grew in the garden, and there's no end to work on a farm. The way they were run in those days, of course we didn't have a deep freeze for a long time, until the electricity. And one year, when he was in 4H, what you have is 100—you bought 100 chickens, little chickens, and raised then. And when they got frying-sized, he sold a lot of them, and what he didn't sell, I dressed and put in the deep freeze, and we ate them all winter. I wouldn't want to dress that many chickens again. (laughter) My daughter always laughs, but she and her husband moved to Peoria, and when they'd buy chickens from the grocery store, everybody else bought cut up ones, but she'd buy a whole one. They were cheaper, and she knew how to cut it up. She said all the kids in that end of town would come in to watch her cut up the chicken. (laughter) Because

they didn't know how, but she did. Well, I didn't know how either, until my husband taught me how. But I soon learned. And then, I don't know, we used to butcher our own hogs, you know. They make a whole lot of—families would do that together. We'd have a whole tub of sausage. I can remember frying—what we called frying it down. You fry it and you put it in a fruit jar, and then you pour some grease in there and turn it upside down. And that grease sealed it. And you put it in the basement and you got it out when you wanted sausage, and there it was, ready to eat.

Maniscalco: Interesting. Now, you mentioned you had a garden.

Sweet: Oh, yes.

Maniscalco: What sorts of things did you grow in your garden?

Sweet: Well, you started out with lettuce and radishes and onions, and then you had green beans and beets and sweet corn. And I—them darned old green beans, we'd cook and cold packed them. You picked them and you washed them and you broke them up and you'd put them in a jar, and you'd put them in a big vat of boiling water, and boiled them for three hours. That sealed them, put them in the basement, and they kept, and we ate them in the winter. They weren't as good as fresh ones, but they did serve the purpose. Yeah. We had peas, oh, I don't know. Mostly sweet corn, everybody loves sweet corn, don't they? And I—of course then, we didn't have a deep freeze; I'd cut it off the cob and can some of it. Got to the place where you could freeze it, it's lots better that way.

Maniscalco: Whose job was it to work in the garden?

Sweet: Well, it was Dad's, mostly. We all helped. Kept it hoed and fixed. And I can remember Dad just shooting the rabbits, because they ate stuff out of your garden. You don't have any rabbits anymore; the farmers don't leave any cover for them in the wintertime like they once did. Every Thanksgiving after dinner, the guys would go hunting. (laughter) Take their guns and go out and shoot a rabbit or two.

Maniscalco: Oh, really?

Sweet: And we—there was pheasants and quail there at one time, but not a whole lot ever.

Maniscalco: Now, did you eat the rabbit?

Sweet: What?

Maniscalco: Did you eat the rabbit?

Sweet: Yeah. I didn't dress them; somebody else had to do that. But I could fry them.

Maniscalco: Interesting.

Sweet: Dad never liked to shoot rabbits and eat them, though. He said he always got a mouthful of fur someplace. (laughter) And he didn't like that. So we didn't eat a lot of rabbit like a lot of people did.

Maniscalco: Now, we have some of these pictures here that you gave to the museum a long time ago to copy. And I was hoping that you could take a look and kind of explain what each picture is.

Sweet: Well—

Maniscalco: And any stories that you might have that go along with it.

Sweet: Now that is a guy shucking shock corn. I probably mentioned, when I talk about my father being a blacksmith, he didn't—everybody had horses, and when it was slick and snowy, he shod horses. And in the summertime, he made sleds, these little long sleds that every farmer had, and that's what they hauled in on those sleds. And also, they had to have feed for those horses. And that's what that is; these two guys, there's the corn they shucked. They didn't want to let them have all the corn; this was what they called fodder. It's what we call breakfast cereal now. (laughter) But that's the same farm, same buildings right there. It's getting—only as I say that's gone.

Maniscalco: The cupola.

Sweet: And it don't look quite in that good a shape, but it's still in pretty good shape.

Maniscalco: What color was the barn?

Sweet: Red.

Maniscalco: Red. It had to be red?

Sweet: Now, why do you think they were painted red?

Maniscalco: I have no idea.

Sweet: Well, they held heat a lot better than white. You'd get red hot, it'll hold the summer, the sun's heat a lot better than anything else. And all the barns were red. But those bats were white that was on there.

Maniscalco: What sorts of things do they do in that barn?

Sweet: Well, they milked cows, and the horses had to have protection. As I remember, the horses come in on this side and the cows over here. But you milked by hand, ya know, in those days, and that's—and there was hay up here in the barn loft that was put in there to have the feed. Yep. And now Dad built—there's a driveway right through the middle of the barn, and he built bins over the driveway. And you unloaded beans or shelled corn on this side, and you had an auger to put it in the bins. Then when he wanted some of it, he just drove the truck under and opened the trap door and out it came. They're still there, but there's nothing in them. The only thing in the upstairs of the barn in the loft, there's still an old sleigh. There was tea, but I let woodems(??) gone, but there's still an old sleigh up there. I've got to get it out and sell it someday. (laughter) And also, there's some things in there that—the only Shaw's store that we had in Franklin, and that was back when old stores had yard good and spools of thread and stuff, and I've got a big old table that was in Shaw's store Dad bought when they sold that out. And I remember that old table in the back of the store, and on Saturday night, everybody went uptown, and you visited. And I remember sitting on that old table back there, and somebody told Dad once that it was worth a lot because of the legs were fancy, I don't know enough about it to know why. And there's two—I think I've got two of those cases that are full of drawers that they had different color spools of thread in them. I've got some of those. I don't know what all else I can find in that old barn. But I laughed, I'd tell everybody, when we wanted a new dress, we went up to Shaw's store and bought two or three yards of goods; went home and made it. Or else if you going to real fancy, one you ordered it out of the Sears-Roebuck catalogue. (laughter) At that time there was no concrete road from Franklin to Jacksonville, so you didn't come to Jacksonville

very often. I can remember coming in an old Model T Ford we had, and I don't think we ever came in in the summertime that we didn't have a flat tire on the way. You stopped, you took that tire off, you found that leak and you patched it; then you put it back on and you pumped it up and you come on through town. (laughter) Wouldn't that have been fun?

Maniscalco: (laughter) Well, here's another picture for you to look at. This is your favorite one.

Sweet: Yeah, that's the one I've got framed and hanging on the wall. Oh, I loved that picture. I wish I knew what some of those guys were, but I don't.

Maniscalco: Can you explain what they were doing?

Sweet: What?

Maniscalco: Can you explain what they were doing in that picture?

Sweet: Well, now I'm assuming that that's oats that they were going to use for food, for feed for the livestock. And when an old binder, you've probably seen an old binder, went through and cut it, it tied a string around so much and they shocked it, and they made a little shock about this high. Then the guys would go on with a flat wagon and a pitchfork and pitch it up and bring it in. If there wasn't room inside, they stacked it outside. And it was stacked like that, so you see, it didn't all get wet, and that's what they were doing. They were stacking sheaves of grain. But I don't think they ever did wheat now, but they did oats. So I'm assuming that's oats. See, here's your—they brought this in, see, he's shooting it over there, and they're stacking. But you had to know what you were doing and the how to stack it. And everybody wasn't very good at it, but some of them were. See how perfect those look?

Maniscalco: Now, here's another one.

Sweet: Yeah, well, there was no way to clear the snow, only shovels and mules, you see. And now I think that this picture was taken just south of the house where we still live. But I've seen snow almost that high. We used to have snow every winter. Don't they claim the world's a-getting' warmer?

Maniscalco: So you remember a lot of bad winters then.

Sweet: Yeah. I loved winter; I got out and wallered in the snow and played in it. Now, when I was still a kid, in school in Franklin, right at the back of the cemetery—now that's before Route 104 was built—there was a big hill. You went through the cemetery to get to that hill, and when they was a snow, all the kids had their sleds, and that's where they were after school and on Saturday. And I can remember when we got a little older, some of the boys building the fire for us to get warm by. We'd stay up there and coast down that hill and then crawl up until our derry froze many a time. It was great fun. And I remember so well, one time, this five-year-older-than-me, sister, had a friend that her dad had a special sled built for her, a long one and a way to guide it. And we were down there after school playing, sliding down that hill and back up, and Eleanor was learning how to guide that sled. I was on the back, because I was younger than the rest of them. Started down that hill and she hit a thorn tree of some kind, and we's going pretty fast, and of course, it just shot me up in the air over that thorn tree, and the doggone thing scratched my face. Now, not a deep, bad scratch, but enough that little drops of blood (makes a spurting sound). They thought they'd killed me, I was all bloody. (laughter) Took me home and cleaned me up. Oh, boy, I'll always remember flying through that thorn tree.

Maniscalco: Now, do you have any stories on the farm that you and your husband lived on?

Sweet: I had what?

Maniscalco: Any stories of wintertime, when you and your husband were on the farm.

Sweet: Well, that was mostly flat land, and it was just—and you didn't run to town after a loaf of bread every time; you made about your biscuits. No, you see, by the time we were married, the early thirties, things had changed a whole lot. And the road commissioners got machinery, and they weren't long about opening up the roads.

Maniscalco: How about this picture?

Sweet: Well, that's the one that I think was those people building the railroad. I don't think it could be anything else, but I think they lived in that tent and they cooked—one story I remember now, Leroy's dad told this story, when these people lived there, they'd come up and buy eggs or a chicken or something. And one day a guy came up and he said they'd all been sick, and they wanted to know what was the matter, they were all sick to their stomach. And he said, "Well, what do you suppose caused that?" "Ah," he says, "I don't know. Too much of the big-eyed chick." They'd been eating owls. (laughter)

Maniscalco: Oh, my gosh.

Sweet: And he called them big-eyed chicks. Dad always told that story. I think it was true. Too much of the big-eyed chick.

Maniscalco: So these people were living in this tent while they're building the railroad.

Sweet: Yeah. These were the wives and the men.

Maniscalco: And this bucket you mentioned before, what do you think they were doing with this?

Sweet: Warshing clothes.

Maniscalco: Washing clothes.

Sweet: On the old warshboard. I've done that too. They could heat water on this stove, and see a barrel of water and stuff; they had a way to get along. I remember, now this is back in town, every season, gypsies—you know there was gypsies roaming the country at that time, with a pony or a horse or two and an old wagon. And they'd camp outside town, and lo and behold, if you had anything that amounted to anything that you wanted to take care of, when the gypsies come to town, you'd better watch out, because they'd steal anything they could get their hands on.

Maniscalco: Oh, wow.

Sweet: That's how they existed. And at that time, my dad had a blacksmith's shop uptown, and my brother was old enough that he would be in the blacksmith's shop with Dad, and here come the gypsies. I know they hated them to go in the grocery stores, because you just couldn't trust them. They'd get out of there with something, in spite of all you could do. Well, they came into that blacksmith's shop, and they wouldn't come just one, they'd be two or three. So you couldn't watch them all, you know. And they finally started to leave, and Pete, this is my brother, had been watching them, and he went up, and he says, "Dad, that woman got your billfold." And Dad didn't know it. Sure enough, his billfold was gone. So he went right out of that store, and caught them, and got ahold of that woman—oh, she

didn't have it, she didn't have it. And he says, "Yes, you have. My son saw you get it." And they always said he turned her upside down; I don't know whether he did or not. But he shook her until he shook that billfold out of her and got it back. (laughter) Pete always said he turned her upside down and shook her until that billfold— (laughter). He got his billfold back, anyway.

Maniscalco: Oh, that's a good story.

Sweet: But they'd steal chickens, they'd canvas the town. And they saw where everything was. They'd take anything they could get their hands on. And I don't know if it was the same bunch, but there'd be a bunch of gypsies, they'd camp out in the edge of town some place, and also in the summertime, there was always a—I don't know what we called them, people selling patent medicine, they'd have a show,ya know, everybody'd go to the show and you'd listen to their music and stuff, and then they'd put this bottle of medicine up. Oh, it would cure anything and everything. It was for sale. And people were stupid enough to buy it. (laughter) But we liked the show they put on. Oh, dear.

Maniscalco: Now, how about this picture?

Sweet: I don't know. Now, we never raised calves for sale, because we didn't have any permanent pasture. This farm is still the same farm, it's all plowable, and if we'd—now south of Franklin where they've got some hilly, you don't plow that kind of stuff. But I don't know. Those must have been calves from the looks, though. But occasionally, you killed the beef, and I remember one time canning a beef. Imagine that. It was a calf, I cut it up in squares and seared it like I was going to cook a roast, put it in a fruit jar, sealed it up, and put it in the thing and boiled it for so many hours, and it'd keep. And then you poured the juice over it, so.

Maniscalco: It was good?

Sweet: It was mighty good.

Maniscalco: And it almost looks like that's a goat. Did you have any goats?

Sweet: Yeah, it does, don't it. Well, I—maybe they had goats. Now, this had been before my time. Yeah, I think you're right. I remember Dad saying that at one time, they raised some sheep, but not in my time.

Maniscalco: What about your neighbors? I mean, I was looking in the distance, if there were there any neighbors?

Sweet: About what?

Maniscalco: Neighbors.

Sweet: Well, you had neighbors in those days. You went to the telephone and you talked to them about every day. That was all you had to do for entertainment, I guess. Nobody had a radio or a TV or anything. So, but that was before I moved to the country. See, I didn't get out there til the thirties.

Maniscalco: When you moved out there, what did you do to talk to your neighbors? I mean, you just called them on the telephone as well?

Sweet: Well, you had these old phones that hang on the wall, you know, that you cranked, and there'd be four or five families on one line, and so many rings would be your call. Maybe they'd be two longs and one short, or two shorts, or something. And you knew which ring was yours. And if you wanted to ring a neighbor, that's all you did. You rang their number.

Maniscalco: Do you remember which ring was yours?

Sweet: No. I couldn't tell you now; it's been too many years ago. And it was quite sporty, I think, whenever somebody else was talking, you could listen. They called them pipers, always, there'd be so many pipers on the line listening to what the other people were talking about. (laughter)

Maniscalco: Did you ever do that?

Sweet: I expect. I don't particularly remember, but I probably must have. And I know Leroy's dad would get so aggravated, he'd want to call something about his business, and he'd go to the phone, and the line was busy. And when it was busy, you couldn't—and there was an old lady that lived with her son and daughter down the road—what was her name?—and she was always on the phone. She didn't have anything else to do. And Dad would go back and listening, and she'd still be talking. He'd go back, and she's still talking. (laughter) He wanted to use that telephone line, and he'd get so mad at her. Oh, shoot.

Maniscalco: Here's another picture of the farm.

Sweet: Yeah. Well, there's—that windmill was right over here.

Maniscalco: Yeah. Do you remember the windmill when you moved there?

Sweet: Well, yes. It was Richard that—see, we had some cattle up in the Bateman land. And had a windmill that pumped the water. It was his job to go up there and see that that—if the wind wasn't blowing, you had to pump it yourself. To go up there to make sure there was water for whatever livestock Dad had up there. Yeah.

Maniscalco: How about that one?

Sweet: Oh, look at those big straw hats. (laughter) I don't know what they—looks like they're starting a straw pile, don't it? Well, when the thresh machine came out, it separated, you see, stuff, and then you had a straw pile, haystack, we called them up there.

Maniscalco: Now, this reminds me of another picture that I saw of some men digging some tiling.

Sweet: Doing what?

Maniscalco: Doing some tiling.

Sweet: Tiling. Oh, yeah. They did a good deal of—there's several pictures of—well, now you'd say that land's flat. But it's not, according to the way the water goes, of course. And there's a big tile that runs, well it's a mile from this road to this one, and it drains that direction. You've got to know—you can't make it run uphill; it won't do it. It drains, and they tiled their land, which took the water from underneath, kept it from getting too soggy. Yeah, there's pictures of that old tiling. And they still tile one in awhile.

Maniscalco: Do you remember tiling on the farm when you lived there?

Sweet: No, no.

Maniscalco: Do you remember any of your neighbors having it done?

Sweet: No. Well, there's still a family that lives—got a regular tile digger; they don't dig it by hand anymore. But not in the part of land where our farm is. 'Cause you don't have to go very far south until you get into some hilly, hillier country than ours. But water's going to seek its own level, and you're not going to change it unless you've got a pump or something.

Maniscalco: How about this picture?

Sweet: Well, that's old Plymouth Rock hens. I don't know how come they let them out, because you usually kind of kept them shut up. But you had to carry water to them, feed, hope they laid eggs enough, and you had to get out there and get those eggs, if it was real cold, because they'd freeze. Those were Plymouth Rocks.

Maniscalco: And why did you call them Plymouth Rocks?

Sweet: Well, that was the name of this breed of chicken. They had some chickens that were red; they called them Rhode Island Reds. They weren't real red, but they were—and let's see. We always had Plymouth Rocks. And there was white chickens, and there were several different breeds of chicken, but this was the most common. I don't know how come they dug a path and let them out there. I guess they thought they needed a little exercise. Yeah, those are good old pictures.

Maniscalco: Yeah, they're very good. So on the farm, when you lived there with your husband, you guys grew corn and oats? And, anything else?

Sweet: Well, we didn't raise those then, because you see—well, we just had one cow. You had an old separator, you know what one of them was, you brought your milk in and you poured in the separator and you run it through, and it took the cream out of the milk and put it—and then the man comes through the country picking that cream up and taking it to a place where it's made into butter and stuff.

Maniscalco: (laughter)

Sweet: Back in them good old days. And you had that darned separator to warsh every day, you had to take it all apart and warsh it. The milk would thin and get sour if you didn't. And the milk that was left, there was more than you could use, you fed it to the hogs.

Maniscalco: Now, did you sell cattle to the markets at all? Or the cattle was—

Sweet: We didn't raise cattle. In order to raise cattle, you've perty nearly gotta have pasture land. Now, I probably—well, I had an old cow or two, and they'd have a calf now and then, of course. But after the corn was picked, Dad would put an electric fence around, and put hogs in there, and they'd pick up the corn that was dropped and stuff. And then you pulled those old electric fences up the next year and went at it again.

Maniscalco: So then you raised hogs.

Sweet: What?

Maniscalco: So then they raised hogs on the farm.

Sweet: Oh, yeah, we always had hogs.

Maniscalco: And what kind of hogs? Was there a specific breed or something?

Sweet: What kind of hogs did you have, Harry?

Harry: Durocks.

Sweet: Durocks? They were kind of red, weren't they?

Harry: Yes.

Sweet: We did have some dark with a white band around them though at one time. I don't know what they were.

Harry: (unintelligible)

Sweet: Something to that effect.

Harry: They were raised for market.

Maniscalco: And what market do you sell them into?

Sweet: Saint Louis.

Maniscalco: Into Saint Louis. Do you remember how much your husband would get for them?

Sweet: Well, the price went up and down. It wasn't the same twice, two days in a row hardly. And you tried to top the market. If you'd topped the market, that meant you had hogs in good shape. There's lots of difference in 'em; how much you had fed them and what you'd fed them. The markets varied every day, just like the corn and beans market does now, on hogs and cattle both. And you'd kind of watched and kind of knew when it was going up or down, and hoped you topped the market. If you topped the market, you had the best hogs.

Maniscalco: Now, how did you get the hogs into Saint Louis to sell them?

Sweet: A big truck.

Maniscaclo: In a big truck.

Sweet: There was a guy that lived in Franklin, that's all he did, was truck the livestock back and forth.

Maniscalco: So then did he hire them to—

Sweet: What?

Maniscalco: Did he hire this man to truck the livestock?

Sweet: Oh, yeah. You paid him so much to haul them down there. 'Cause you had to load them, and you get them down there, and of course they had chutes and places to unload them and weigh them. You sold them by the pound. Yep. That's the way we made our living, wasn't it, Harry? That probably put Harry through Illinois College.

Maniscalco: (laughter) So then you raised the crops to feed to the livestock essentially.

Sweet: Well, yeah, but you had—of course when you picked corn in those days, you picked it in the air. You don't do that anymore. And you stored it in a corn crib, and you usually let it stay there until spring, and then you hired somebody to come in and shell it and sell. But those days are gone forever too. And always when it comes time to shell it out, there would be rats in it.

Maniscalco: Oh, really? How did you deal with the rats?

Sweet: What did you do with them? You killed them if you could, or you had a dog or something to get rid of the rats.

Maniscalco: Now, you said your husband would hire day labor? To help on the farm?

Sweet: Yeah, he hired men to help in the busy time when you needed it. You remember Ed Boule acomin' out? Harry's my youngest child.

Maniscalco: And who was Ed Boule?

Sweet: Oh, he was a man that lived in Franklin and needed part-time jobs. Busy time, Ed'd come out and work a day at a time.

Maniscalco: And what sorts of jobs would these men do?

Sweet: Depend on what they were doing. Now, not usually—your ground had to be plowed, it had to be worked down, it had to be planted, and then after it come up, it had to be plowed. You plowed it and then you crossed it to get the weeds out. Then you hoped for rain and sunshine enough to grow ears, and then you started picking, this way. There was always—and then we had hogs. Well, not only Ed, I forgot that other guy's name who used to come and help. And now, I just mentioned we raised hogs; he raised baby hogs, and they had to be vaccinated, you had to catch them, and he'd vaccinate them. Just work.

Maniscalco: How many hired men did you have on the farm at a time?

Sweet: Never had but one at a time, unless in a special—like that picture there. Because we didn't—and machinery got to the place where it did a lot of the things you had to do by hand before.

Maniscalco: Now, your husband probably had a tractor.

Sweet: Yeah. What kind of a tractor do you have, Harry?

Harry: Oliver's.

Sweet: What?

Harry: Oliver's.

Sweet: Oliver.

Maniscalco: Oliver Tractors?

Sweet: Yeah.

Maniscalco: Now, was there a big thing when he got his tractors, was it big deal, a little bit?

Sweet: Well, it was a big expense. Yep. But it was the coming thing, just like everything else, people got rid of their houses and got their tractors. And this year, it's really hurting them.

Maniscalco: Is it?

Sweet: Well, you know what gasoline prices have done, don't you? Well, you can guess what oil to run a tractor has done too; it's gone up so.

Maniscalco: What other types of machinery did you have on the farm?

Sweet: What did we have, Harry? We had an old plow.

Harry: (Unintelligible)

Sweet: And you kind of worked it down with a harrow. And then you planted. (laughter) It was much simpler, but you had to have—and nowadays, it costs —one machine will do a lot more work, but it costs like the dickens too.

Maniscalco: Speaking of costs, I mean, how did you afford to run your farm?

Sweet: How did we what?

Maniscalco: How did you afford to run your farm?

Sweet: How did we afford it? Well, if we needed some money, we borrowed it from the bank, and then we paid it back whenever we sold a crop or some livestock or something. Of course you paid interest, but that was just part of the turnover. Businessmen do the same thing today.

Maniscalco: Now, you mentioned before that you would sell the cream from the milk. Were there other small things that you would sell on the side? Kind of to—

Sweet: And every little town had a place in the town where they'd buy your cream; you'd take it to them and they'd buy it. I don't know whether they tested it or bought it or how they paid for it. Or some people made butter and sold butter. I've made many a pound of butter. You worked it out with your hands and patted it and washed all that buttermilk out of it so it'd be sweeter, salted it, and there was your butter.

Maniscalco: Interesting. Do you remember any times on the farm when it got really difficult? Were there some times when money really became tight?

Sweet: Well, I think money was always tight, because we didn't see a lot of money. We traded. Now, I don't remember this when we were on the farm, but I remember this going to my grandmother's. There was a guy that lived in Franklin that had a spring wagon and an old horse, and he made regular trips certain places through the country buying eggs, people would save their eggs and whatever they had, they'd sell to him. Or, if—oh, say they wanted a little money, they'd go out and catch an old hen or two, take them in, and he'd put them—well, they'd wrap their feet up, and held 'em up and weighed how much they were, and he'd pay them so much for it. But he had a regular route, and they knew on what day he'd come, and that's just the way they operated. Mama wanted a new dress; she'd sell a couple or three old hens, and then she'd go to Franklin to Shaw's store and buy two or three yards of goods, go home and make herself a dress.

Maniscalco: Now, did you make a lot of clothes?

Sweet: No.

Maniscalco: When you were with your mother? Not at all.

Sweet: You made what you needed, and that was it. Money wasn't as loose in those days as it is now. I guess loose is the word. And they're trying to make us think we're going back that way, don't they?

Maniscalco: What were some of the good—what were some of the best memories that you have from when you were farming?

Sweet: The what?

Maniscalco: The best memories.

Sweet: Oh, I don't know. We liked it. I liked the outdoors. And of course, there was two big old white horses when I first got out there, Peanuts and Bess, that they used in the field. But we never rode them or anything. I don't know. It was life; it was the way you lived. There was no school bus to take you to school. Lots of times, a family lived in the country, and one—the oldest one had probably been through the eighth grade, and he was ready for high school.

But his dad had to furnish a way for him to go in, or else they had to get some place for him to live in Franklin. And this child probably had to go an extra year to school until somebody else got old enough so two of them could go in together. They didn't think anything of holding them home until—of course, now, that never happened to me, because I lived in Franklin. But I had friends that it did happen to.

Maniscalco: What was the difference between some of the town kids and the city kids back then?

Sweet: I don't know that there was any difference, much to speak of. We didn't get out of Franklin. We had—there was a picture show in Franklin in an old hall, it had a concrete floor and folding chairs, and one woman played the piano and she could play just like this, that was all the music you had. And they had to trade reels with Waverly and back. I can remember sitting—every Saturday night we went to the movie. And I'd sit clear up on the front row, and here's the screen, (gestures) and I had to go like that to see the movie. I'd sit there until my neck was nearly broken watching the movie.

Maniscalco: What types of movies did you watch?

Sweet: I don't know. I couldn't tell you what they were or what they were about or anything. There was movement—I guess there was a story in them, but I don't know whether I knew what it was or not. (laughter) But that's what we did. And there was two old men that lived together in town, they were kind of crippled, and they sold bags of peanuts. In the shell, you know. And you'd get a sack of peanuts and go to the show on Saturday night. That was great.

(laughter) That was doing something. Then later on, there was a big old building in Franklin, and they had skating rinks, where you could go and skate around and around. Oh, we loved to skate. We skated on concrete all over town anyway. I spent a lot of time on rollerskates. And I remember many years later, my Leroy was going to take his Sunday School class to a skating rink in Jacksonville. Well, I was quite an expert skater, and I thought, Oh, shoot, I could skate. Got a pair of skates on, went right out and fell down.

Wasn't near as smart as I thought I was. (laughter) Oh, it was fun. We did— and there was one strip of concrete sidewalk that was newer than the rest, and we loved to skate on that because it was smoother. But we skated all over town.

Maniscalco: When you lived on the farm with your husband, what was the job of the man? What was his job while he was on the farm?

Sweet: What was his job? Oh, to take care of the land and plant the corn and feed the animals and keep the manure cleaned out of the farm and plow the garden and plant it and take care of it. It just went on and on. Feed the hogs, and when butchering time come, the men got together and did the butchering, did their own butchering. That was the way you fed his family.

Maniscalco: What about for a woman on the farm? What was her job?

Sweet: Keep house, cook, make your own clothes, wash the—keep the house as decent as you could. And many times, we helped outdoors too. Whatever needed doing, you did.

Maniscalco: What sorts of jobs did you end up helping with then?

Sweet: Well, I come to the place where I hauled corn. Now, that's after we got pickin' it with machinery. I remember we had a pickup truck, and I don't know whose else pickup truck we had. But anyway, we had about twenty acres of wheat. And he wasn't old enough to drive on 104 to Pisgah, we was going to haul the wheat to Pisgah. So he'd take one truck, and he'd go down there where they were combining and fill it. And then he'd start out, and he'd come out and he'd meet me just before you got onto 104. And he'd take my empty truck and go back, and I'd take his filled truck and go on to Pisgah with it. Then I'd come back, and we did that all day, until we got it all hauled. It worked, didn't it, Harry?

Maniscalco: What sorts of things—I mean, when you live on a farm, you're kind of tied to that farm, because of all the work that you needed to do. So what sorts of things did you do to relax?

Sweet: (laughter) Oh, every so often—back when there was these little schoolhouses, they kind of used them as a center, and that's why people were so upset when they did away with those one-room schools and made them consolidated. Oh, they thought that was terrible, because the schoolhouse was your center of activity. And now I've got pictures, if somebody had a wedding anniversary, or some something, they'd invite the whole countryside in, and everybody would bring food and they'd have a big picnic. Now, that's what they did for fun and the like, I guess. Only most of that was before my time, but I do have some big old pictures were they was having that kind of a meeting.

Maniscalco: Now, in your time, what did you do for recreation?

Sweet: Gosh, I don't know. When I lived in Franklin, I was a schoolkid. And my dad, I told you he was a blacksmith and a wheelwright, made us a wagon, a big wagon. He took old buggy wheels and cut them down the middle and made a big—and this wagon just barely fit on the sidewalk, and all the kids in town played in that wagon, pushing one another around. And I have wondered and wondered what become of it. Somebody told me once about having a picture of it but, I have it in my mind but I don't have any actual pictures of it. The whole town played in that wagon. And not only that; Dad'd take an iron ring that was off of a wheel, and he'd take it, make us a long lath and a crosspiece, and we'd push that—you've probably seen. And we'd run all over town pushing that darn wheel. (laughter) That was fun. And I was a rope jumper, I was a pretty good rope jumper. Well, I had this older brother that was two and a half years older than me. He taught me how to do everything. I was the better athlete than most of the boys, because Pete taught me how. Things he couldn't do, but he'd get me to do them, and I'd do it. I was limber and agile, and I have said oftentimes it must have been good for me, or I wouldn't have lived this long. And I'm still able to do things. It's funny, when they take me to these exercise classes, I can do things that people running the class can't. And some of them poor old women, they just can't do it. But I never quit doing, I guess. Anyway, I'm still kicking around.

Maniscalco: (laughter) So on the farm, when you first moved to the farm, did you have a television?

Sweet: Heavens no.

Maniscalco: When did you get a television?

Sweet: We didn't even have a radio. What do you mean, a television? Well, I remember the first television we ever had. Do you know what year that was?

Harry: 1954.

Sweet: 1954. Yeah, I remember getting that—it had a light around the edge—what was—

Harry: (unintelligible)

Sweet: He was just a little boy, and boy, I tell you, we thought we had something. And I can remember though, before we had that television, when we had a radio. Every Saturday night, Lulabelle and Scotty. Have you ever heard of them? They'd put on a Saturday night program from Chicago. And all the neighbors and everybody would come in to hear Lulabelle and Scotty sing on Saturday night.

Maniscalco: So they would sing.

Sweet: What?

Maniscalco: They would sing for their radio show?

Sweet: Yeah, they would put on a little show of some kind. It was great fun.

Maniscalco: It must have been a lot of fun.

Sweet: Yeah. Yeah. You didn't go to the movies every Saturday night then. (laughter)

Maniscalco: Did you ever get together with your neighbors and, you know, play cards or anything like that?

Sweet: Not very much. Occasionally, later, when that game of Hearts come out. But I never was much of a card player. Lots of people like it and still do it today, and it's good entertainment; it gets you together. But—and you know, they have Bingo around here for you. Once in awhile, I go, but not very often. And then yesterday, we were something, and they wanted to play Bunko. And I had forgotten what Bunko was. It's dice, you know, you throw them. So, and there's lots of people that really enjoy those, but I'll take a book.

Maniscalco: (laughter) What sorts of books do you like to read?

Sweet: They've got a whole library down here. You can get any kind of book out of it you want. It's—where is it? Where am I? It's down towards my room; you can pick it up and take it or bring it back or anything. Oh, I like older stories; I don't care for modern literature. It's not for me.

Maniscalco: What sorts of old stories are your favorites? What's your favorite?

Sweet: Well, I have looked and looked for a book, it was a classic, Tale of Two Cities, Robert Louis Stevenson, and everybody that went through high school at one time. And I have—I surely could get it—I'd like to get another copy of that book and read it again. I remember it well. It was London and Paris, back when they had the old guillotines, ya know, chopped their heads off. I'll get one some of these days from some place. Harry's helping me huh, he likes that stuff too. Tale of Two Cities.

Maniscalco: Now, did you read a lot when you lived on the farm?

Sweet: Well, yeah. I remember this fellow had a lot of books of Western stories. Hairbell Rice(??) stuff. And I remember borrowing books and reading them.

Maniscalco: Did you guys ever go away on vacation?

Sweet: What?

Maniscalco: Did you ever go away on vacation?

Sweet: Oh, heavens, yes, Dad and I, but not until our kids were grown and gone.

Maniscalco: Where did you go?

Sweet: Well, I've been in every state in the union. I have been in Hawaii (pronouncing it Huh-why-ya); I've been in—I would say almost all of the countries in Canada, and I've even been to Europe. In 1990, we went to Oberammergau to the Passion Play, and while we were over there, we rode 3,000 miles in a bus. So I've been around, but I always come back home.

Maniscalco: What is it that when you go away and you come back to Franklin, what is it that's there in Franklin that just makes it feel like home?

Sweet: Well, I never was much of a buyer to have things to remember. But Dad took it from his dad, I guess, liked pictures, and I've got slides galore. I don't know what's ever going to become of them, but I've got a whole mess of them at home. And I've got the old machine, I don't get them out and look at them. I think I'm going to, but I don't do it.

Maniscalco: Interesting. What about your kids? Were your kids involved in like 4H?

Sweet: Yeah. Harry was a 4H'er. Anne wasn't. I don't know if they didn't have it—I was a 4H leader for several years, and Dad was a 4H leader in the agricultural standpoint. Dad was also a Boy Scout leader, after we moved to Franklin, for several years. And I can remember when Harry was little, Leroy would be getting ready to take the Scouts out to camp all night, and he was just old enough he'd like to go, but he wasn't old enough to be a Scout. And he'd come to me, "Mom, would you ask Dad if I can go along?" And Leroy would let him go with him. But he wouldn't go ask his dad; he'd come and get me to go do it. But it was great fun. There was some timber around Franklin; there still is some good timber. Not like there used to be.

Maniscalco: What did you have to do be a 4H leader?

Sweet: Well, I don't know. Just volunteer your help. And then the University of Illinois would send somebody down to the Farm Bureau thing every so often to give you some instruction and some help in how to manage and what to do. And of course, they had books to fill out, and then at the end of each year, they had at the country fair, they had a showing, you had to show what you had done through the year. It was quite involved, and it was a good thing. And there's still 4H today going on, but not like there was then, because there's too many things to be interested in. And there wasn't then.

Maniscalco: Now, you told me before you were involved—or you are a member of the Farm Bureau.

Sweet: Yeah.

Maniscalco: Can you tell me about the Farm Bureau?

Sweet: Well, I know very little about it now. After my husband died, I remember getting a bill, and I thought, well, it was $65 a year. And I thought, Well, shoot. What do they do for me now that I needed to do that? So I didn't pay it. And it wasn't long until I got a letter letting me know our farm insurance, our barn insurance, our—every insurance we have is in Farm

Bureau insurance, and if I didn't belong, that insurance was not valid. So I changed my mind right quick and paid my interest. And I've been doing it ever since, and I'll have to continue, because I've never moved any of the insurance.

Maniscalco: What other things did the Farm Bureau do besides insurance for your farm?

Sweet: Well, if you needed advice on something, the Farm Bureau manager had to have a certain amount of education, they'd just talk with you and help with you and if anything new would come out, teach you about it. And also, they'd get together, farmers and every so often, and they have a yearly meeting, they still do. Anything new come up, why. And anymore, money has a good deal to do with it. How to handle it, what to do with it, if you've got any to handle. Any extra, that is. So they do—and the women, of course, have this home bureau —they don't call it home bureau, they call it extension, anymore. And they send the women in the university down to help with—they meet monthly and they have a lesson on something or other. Besides social, they also try to teach you a little bit as you go along.

Maniscalco: What about like government programs, while you and your husband were farming? Do you remember any?

Sweet: Well, there was a time when the government sent out word that you can plant so much of this and so much of that, according to how much you have had before, and that's when Leroy got aggravated and quit planting wheat. They cut him down to nineteen acres. And he divided his farm at least into twenty- acre lots, and it aggravated him. I don't know if it was seventeen or nineteen was all. To heck with that; he just quit planting it. And that's why we kept it going until—of course, we didn't have livestock to feed, so we didn't plant oats anymore. That's when we went to corn and beans, and we're still in corn and beans. We've got the farm divided equally, right down the middle. This year, corn and beans; the next year, we'll go back and forth. You don't plant corn too many years in a row, or you'll wish you hadn't.

Maniscalco: Oh, really?

Sweet: Yeah. Well, beans put stuff back in the soil that corn takes out. You've got to look at a lot of things nowadays. So we just switch, even we've done it so much that my insurance agent, which is Farm Bureau-oriented, knows what we're going to plant the next year, and he just trades my hail insurance—we have always paid hail insurance—

Maniscalco: Really?

Sweet: Yes, really. Because if a hailstorm comes, it can destroy a crop.

Maniscalco: Mmmm. Okay.

Sweet: And I remember one year that we had to collect from it. Now, most years, if they don't have to pay too much, they'll rebate. Now, not your full amount, they can't do that, but some, anyway. Oh, farm business is complicated anymore.

Maniscalco: You know, there's lots of dangers out there for farming.

Sweet: What?

Maniscalco: There's a lot of danger out there with farming.

Sweet: Oh, my, yes. And there will be more. But your soil has to be taken care of. You don't just plant and plant and plant; you have it tested and see what it needs. There's people smart enough to know what kind of soil you have to have now to grow a crop, and you better take care of it.

Maniscalco: What about like droughts?

Sweet: Well, what about it? Nothing. You can't do anything about it. If it don't rain, it don't rain. And you bear the—whatever happens because of it. But now there are places down cross the river where they have irrigation, you know, but there's nothing up here that you can get any water and rain down, so you just put up with whatever happens.

Maniscalco: Do you remember any really bad droughts, any years?

Sweet: Well, now I remember one year, now it seems to me this was around '56 or something, that we just almost didn't have a corn crop. But for the most part, this is an excellent part of the country to live in. The soil's good, and it's just a good, a good place to be. And we have enough rain that we always have a crop. Sometimes a big crop; sometimes it's not so big. Depends a lot on what the Lord does for us. So—

Maniscalco: Now, what about bugs?

Sweet: What?

Maniscalco: What about bugs?

Sweet: What about what?

Maniscalco: Bugs, and insects?

Sweet: Oh, well, yeah. I don't think we have as much of them as we used to have, but you've got to watch. And there's also things that'll work on the roots of your plant. Some years you have to spray extra because of insects, but not near like you used to, because things are more under control than they were. But you don't know what next year is going to bring. There's root worms and there's bugs, and everything wants to live, you know.

Maniscalco: Do you remember one year when there was a real bad infestation?

Sweet: That one year, seems to me like it was about in '54 or something, I know that was when Dad was still shucking corn by hand. And I remember him saying, going through the field, you put a buck board, you know, on the big wagon, and he'd say, bang, and you go on, bang, instead of bang-bang-bang, picking the ears off the corn. That one year is the only year I remember it really hurtin'. Lots of people didn't have any, hardly.

Maniscalco: Do you remember what kind of insect it was that was causing that problem?

Sweet: No. I think it was lack of rain mainly. Insects, you can control. Rain, you can't.

Maniscalco: That's true. That's true. Well, you know, you've experienced a lot of farming through your life. And you know a lot of changes in farming. What are some of the most drastic changes that you remember?

Sweet: Well, really, I think the most drastic changes had come before I cause—and I remember my dad sharpening plows, they had these big old plows that—oh, I don't know what they

called them, that they'd bring into him, and he'd heat and hammer and make them sharp, and of course, that's gone now. But that's when I was a kid at home.

Maniscalco: What about while you were involved with farming? Were there any big changes?

Sweet: Yeah, but having been raised in town and not knowing much about it, I wasn't too interested in it, because I—it's just one of the things I'd grown up with much. Leroy evidently knew what he was doing, he got the farm paid for anyway. (laughter) So things worked out pretty good. Just takes patience.

Maniscalco: What sorts of changes do you see for the future of farming?

Sweet: Oh, I don't know. It's going to be out of my hands to be here. (laughter) Well, farming will always be an important part, because—look at the things we're making out of corn nowadays. And it's not going to go backwards. It may go forwards, but—and now you know they've saved so much in the papers this year about men raising more corn. Well, and then look what all we get from soybeans. Oil and the stuff. Now we have always, as I've said before, divided the farm in half and just going back and forth. And I think we will continue.

Maybe one year, one of them will be higher than the other one, but over a period of time, it pays off to do that. That's my opinion, of course. And I don't—I have never held my crop. Now you can hold it, you see the people that held from last year, if they sell it now, it's a good deal higher. But if you don't have your own storage, and you take it in, you go sell it, then you pay the elevator for every bushel that they held all those months waiting for you to sell it. And I've always kind of figured that it takes, that it works better for me to sell it earlier, maybe the price is not so good, but I have been able to put that money in a farm account that grows interest. And that interest makes up for what I'd have to pay in storage. So whatever happens, I'll make the best of it. I'll get enough to pay the taxes, you've got to do that. The farm tax is pretty high, but the Lord's letting you use that land, and you've got to take care of it and pay for it. So, I don't object to it a bit in the world. I'm glad I've got it to think about.

Maniscalco: Well, I have one last question for you, because you've been so great going t hrough this interview, and I know it's been a little while. I have one last question for you. This interview is going to kind of be around for a long time, and hopefully one day your grandkids and your great-grandkids might stumble across and say, "Hey, look, there's Grandma Geneva when she gave an interview."

Sweet: I don't think they'll be too interested, because they've not been raised on the farm. And people that have not been raised and know how it handles, they don't understand the way farms work. Did you want something, honey?

Woman: I have to go run vacuum down here. Is that gonna pick it up?

Maniscalco: We're going to be finished in just a minute.

Woman: Oh. Okay. I'll just wait here.

Maniscalco: Thank you.

Sweet: What did you say?

Maniscalco: We'll be finished in just a minute. She's got to to vacuum. Well, if—the last question, then. What message would you like to leave in this interview for your grandkids and great-grandkids?

Sweet: Just stay alert. Be interested in what's happening to your farm that's been left from years before in the same family, because year to year, know what year that farm was purchased—

Harry: 1867.

Sweet: 1867. That's a lot of years for it to stay in one family, and it has stayed in one family all these years. So. Well, at one time, you know, they put out those signs that this is a family—well, we've got one of those. Yeah.

Maniscalco: Cool. Cool.

Sweet: But if they're not interested in it, if they don't care enough to watch the prices, you better let somebody else have it. But I doubt they ever get to that place, because farm products are pretty important, and they're not going to lose their importance. If there wasn't a crop, a corn crop one year, look at the things that could be almost a failure, and food is one of them. We have no idea how much food comes from a corn crop. And not only that, but what would they fatten the cows and their hogs on if there wasn't a corn crop? And even this stuff they use to—instead of sugar, it comes from a corn crop. We have no idea how much stuff comes from a corn crop. They've got to feed the cows; they've got to feed the hogs corn. Corn is a big thing in this country. And I don't think that we have trouble with other countries with corn like we do soybeans. You know, South America raises lots of soybeans now, and the oil from soybeans is pretty important. So, no telling what will happen in the future. I'm not worried about it. I figure my tenure must be getting close to the end, don't you think? I had a half-brother that was born to my dad's first family who lived to be 100 years old.

Maniscalco: Oh, wow.

Sweet: Well, I'm just four years away from it.

Maniscalco: Yep.

Sweet: I have always said I didn't particularly want to live to be 100, and I don't. It's not an incentive to me. When the Lord says go, I'll go. (laughter) And I'm not going to worry about it, and I hope the kids don't either, because I've had a good time, I've enjoyed life, and I still am. Lots of people think when you get into a nursing home, it's the end, but it's not if you don't want it to be. That great big word: attitude.

Maniscalco: There you go. Well, thank you very much, Geneva. This is a great interview. It was really a pleasure to sit here and talk to you.

Sweet: Well, I hope I've helped you a little. I'm not the smartest person in the world about farm life, but what I know about it, I've enjoyed, and I still enjoy. So what more could you ask for?

Maniscalco: Well, thank you.

Sweet: Thank you much for coming. (background talking) You can cut in or put out whatever you want to. And if you want to go to the newspaper and get that—

Maniscalco: We will.

Sweet: I think you'll enjoy that—

(End of tape.)