PREFACE

This manuscript is the product of a tape-recorded interview conducted by Mary Ann Dillon for the Oral History Office on March 7, 1974. Kathryn Back transcribed the tape and Rosalyn Bone and Horace Waggoner edited the transcript. John P. Moore reviewed the transcript.

John P. Moore was born near Bradfordton, Illinois, on January 14, 1890. His father died when Mr. Moore was thirteen years of age and, from that time onward, he has been involved in operating the family farm. His memoir is comprised largely of reminiscences on this operation--working with horses; raising, harvesting, and storing crops; and caring for the land. He describes the construction and use of the farmstead buildings and recalls the effects of the Great Depression on farm life.

Readers of this oral history memoir should bear in mind that it is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, narrator and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. Sangamon State University is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for views expressed therein; these are for the reader to judge.

John P. Moore, March 7 and 28, 1974, Bradfordton, Illinois.
Mary Ann Dillon, Interviewer.

Q. How old did you say you are?

A. I'm 84 years old, and I was born here.

Q. Oh, you were born in this house?

A. Yes.

Q. Oh, were you? Yes, he's[1] 84 too, and he thought you might be older than that.

A. No, I'm 84 and I was born in 1890. Now, this Moore estate here, the old home place, is down across the road over here.

Q. Oh, I saw the house.

A. Yes. Now, my grandfather, he died before I can remember. But I would say this house--I've got a sister older than me up at Atwood, Illinois, she is 87--so this house is right at ninety years old. That is, all but these two rooms; we put them two rooms on later.

Q. Oh, I see.

A. Yes. Yes. Now, I've been married since 1916. I've got four children, two girls and two boys, and they're all married. Yes. I've got . . . let's see, two, four, six grandchildren and one great-grandson.

Q. Well, that's really something. Did your parents live in this house then?

A. Yes, my father and mother. My mother died in 1942. My father died, I want to tell you that, my father died when I was just barely six years old. Yes. And my mother inherited 58 acres here off of the Moore estate. I liked to work when I was young and now I own 354 acres.

Q. That's really something. Were you the only child?

A. No. I never went to college. I never had more than about a seventh grade education.

Q. Oh, you didn't? So you've been farming all your life, then?

---

[1] Henry Midden, a neighbor. [Ed.]

A. Farming all my life, yes. No, I never went to college or high school. Well you see, as I told you, my father died when I was six, you know, and I really had to make a man when I was thirteen years old. I had to miss school on and off, and when I went back it was hard to catch up and stuff. So I really quit school, I guess, when I was fourteen years old, or something like that, quit altogether.

Q. Do you remember when your father died? What was wrong with him?

A. Oh yes. Yes. Pneumonia.

Q. Oh. So then, how did your mother take care of the farm?

A. Well, she just done it. She hired a man.

Q. Did you have livestock?

A. Oh yes, we had hogs, cattle and chickens, and we farmed with horses, you know, up until--well, I was the last one to give up on horses around here. I bought my first tractor in--let's see, what? . . . I guess in 1943 or 1944.

Q. How many horses did you have?

A. Oh, we worked as high as--finally, when I got to renting land and buying some land, we had as high as eight and ten horses. I got ten stalls in the barn down there. Yes. We got two four-horse teams out of the eight horses, and then we had a nice driving mare for years.

Q. Did you have a buggy?

A. Oh yes. I don't know how many buggies I wore out. Yes.

Q. Where did you buy your buggies?

A. Springfield. I don't know if there was any manufacturers here in Springfield. One Sunday a bunch of us went up to Peoria and looked at some buggies. The agent out of Springfield took us up there, don't you see.

Q. How did you get up there?

A. On the train.

Q. How much did a buggy cost?

A. Oh, all the way from $80 to $130. Rubber tires, now.

Q. Did you have a surrey?

A. Yes, my father had a surrey when he died. He had a nice surrey and he had a set of driving harness. Driving harness was different than work harness; they had an iron hame that came down over the collar. There were some work harnesses in the same style, but most of the work harness had high hames.

You know, they stuck up above the collar. I've got an old set of Briston harness yet, in the barn, with brass knobs on it.

Q. Oh yes, those are really nice. Did you train your horses?

A. Did I train them? Oh, we broke horses. Yes, we raised some horses. I raised a mule here one time and then I bought a mate to her, and when they got to be three year olds, we broke them and worked them. And the same way with the horses, one of the best teams I ever owned I raised. Yes.

Q. Did you ever raise sheep?

A. Yes, we had sheep up until last year. Last year, I tried to buy some sheep and they was pretty high, so my neighbor down north here had a big bunch and he was short of grass and I told him, "Well, bring up some." So he brought up twelve one Sunday evening and turned them out here and all at once, one night--it happened in a foggy, wet night--my wife woke me up and said, "The dogs are barking down there." So I got up and got the gun, but I couldn't see a thing. You know, they had chewed them sheep. They'd killed one and they'd chewed three others so we had to kill them, and then he had to take them home. And I haven't had any since, but I love sheep around here on account of they eat the weeds, don't you see.

I had a few cattle last year. I've got about six acres of grass around the house here, see. My wife don't want the corn right out there, don't you see, and I had four cattle last year. In fact, I bought three cattle yesterday. Yes. So I'll have some cattle, and I may try a few sheep again, I may try it. There's a dog law, you know. If you get a sheep killed, they'll pay you so much; but after the dogs get in a bunch of sheep and run them and excite them, the sheep never does no good. A sheep will give up, don't you see.

Q. Did you used to have that problem when you raised them?

A. Yes, we've always had a dog law. But now, right over here on the east side of my farm there's a new subdivision, and down on the north side of my farm, here, there's a new subdivision. And I don't know how many dogs is down there, but the dogs get in a bunch now, like six and eight, and they roam the country. And that was what happened here, don't you see. Yes. I think virtually we'll have to quit raising sheep on account of the dogs, because I don't think we can raise them unless we go to the barns and pen them up every night, put them where the dogs can't get at them; and that's a big job, to put them up every night.

Q. You liked raising sheep, then.

A. Oh, I like sheep around on account of the sheep likes weeds better than it does grass, and they keep the pastures clean. Now last year, after the sheep was gone, I had to go up there with a scythe and cut some of them--what I call muletails and stuff--out of the pasture there. There wasn't many, but there was just enough it didn't look nice, don't you see.

Q. What did your farm look like when you were about ten years old?

A. What did it look like? Well, this particular piece of ground through here looked just like it is now. There haven't been too much changes in the rough part of the country. Now, we got a farm down north here called Harry Gardner's farm. That's what the township was named after, his grandfather. The fellow that owns it lives down in Salem, Illinois, and he just gets up here two or three times a year. And he's got three patches of evergreens that are growing down there now. I think that maybe he sells a few around Christmas or something like that.

Now, where this new subdivision is over here, that used to be pretty brushy, but now they got a big pond over there and they're bulldozing out that brush and stuff. They're really going to town on this subdivision over here.

Q. Did you have a smokehouse?

A. Yes, we had a smokehouse. Every year there was butchering time, you know. There used to be a bunch of us that--like my uncle [Uncle Henry Moore], John Klor, the Langheims, the Rourkes and myself--why, every one of us butchered in the wintertime. Like I'd butcher, say, Monday. Well, maybe a week from Monday, my uncle would butcher, don't you know, and then John Klor would butcher, and then Langheim would butcher, and we'd try to get it all in before the weather got warm, don't you see. We put that meat up in the smokehouse and brine it.

Q. How did you do that?

A. Well, we had barrels, wooden barrels, and we'd fill it half full of water and put just plain salt in there until it'd bounce an egg; put a hen egg in there and when the hen egg would come to the top, she was strong enough to preserve your meat. We'd leave that in there, I forget, I think it was about six weeks.

Q. What kind of meat, beef?

A. No, not beef, pork. Then we took that meat out and hung it up on the rafters and smoked it until it got brown.

Q. What kind of fire did you use?

A. Well, we could use any kind, but we preferred apple wood. Most people wanted hickory. You've heard of hickory. Yes. I liked apple wood. We smoked that until it got brown, then we'd take it down and put it in cloth sacks and tie it up here, you know, and hang it on the rafters there. And when they wanted a ham, they'd go out there and get one of the sacks. Well let me tell you something. You know, your side meat--now, you buy your bacon--you know what I seen bacon sell for in the slab? Three cents a pound, and you had to hunt a buyer.

Q. Oh, isn't that amazing!

A. You had to hunt a buyer. Nobody wanted that bacon. Nobody wanted that bacon. In fact, we used to put as much as we could in the lard, in the render lard. Now there's a another thing; you never heard of rendering lard, did you?

Q. I've heard of it, but I don't know how you do it. How do you do it?

A. We took the same kettle that we heated the water in to scald the hogs and cleaned it out right good. That was always my job, to render lard. We'd have a regular lard-cutting in the house, you know. There would be a half dozen around there cutting them big pieces up, you know; we'd cut them in chunks, oh, about an inch square. And we'd put that in that kettle and pretty soon the grease would start acoming out, you know, and pretty soon she'd start aboiling in there and (laughter) there was a critical point there. There was a very critical point. It could boil over if you weren't careful. Oh, the foam sometimes would get that high. And I always fired up. Most people pulled the fire when they done that; I always fired up. I'd fire it up and get that foam to go down; and then, when the cracklins got so you could hit them with your paddle like that and they rattled, they was ready to take out of there and we'd put it in a lard press.

Q. About how long does that take?

A. Oh, that took an hour or so, maybe an hour and a half. Yes. We'd put it in the lard press, you know, and the lard press was the same thing as the sausage stuffer. We'd put it in the lard press and put them cracklins in a sack and put them down in that little channel, you know. And then a thing would come around here and the lid squeezed down and you'd screw that down (laughter) there and you'd see the grease come out here, you know, it had a funnel off there, you know. And we'd squeeze that just as tight as pretty near we could. I know one of our hired men broke a plate one time for us; he squeezed too hard. And that's the way we rendered our lard. Yes.

And the same way stuffing sausage. We used the same thing to stuff the sausage. Sometimes, most of the time, if you could get the entrails to stuff it in, we'd stuff the entrails. If we couldn't, why, the women would make sacks. Oh, the sack, I guess, was about that big around when they got done, and we'd put it in them sacks. But what I wouldn't give for a good mess of that sausage now!

Q. Did you make the sausage?

A. Mix it you mean? Yes, in a tub. After it was all ground, you'd put it in a tub and then they'd put salt in there and pepper, sage, and they'd mix it up and just stir it up like you was awashing your hands in there. Then we'd put it in this thing and squeeze it down. It would come out in either the entrails or the sacks.

Q. What part of a hog do you use to make sausage?

A. That was the offals of all the trimming. Now, like the shoulder, now a hog has a shoulder and a side and a ham. And when you quartered it up like that, there was a lot of fat on each one, you know, and we'd take our knife and go around, you know how nice a ham is--you've bought hams, you know--well, when they cut that off, there's a square. We'd take this fat off here, don't you see, and cut that up into lard. That was what made the lard. That was it.

Q. Did you use the head?

A. Well, the jowl. We put a good bit of the jowl in the lard and in the sausage. Oh yes, we'd take the jowl--we'd chop the head all up, you know--and the lean meat that stayed on the jowl, that was really nice when you boiled that. Yes. We used to butcher here. God, I'd like to go through one more trip of it!

Q. Yes, that would be nice. I'd like to see somebody do that.

A. You would? Yes, it was nice, you know. We'd generally have those hogs all on a pole, try to. Say we'd kill six and they'd all be on a pole--what I mean by a pole is . . . (looks for pencil) I was trying to find something here . . . (finds pencil) We'll just say, now, that's the pole. We had sticks in the ground like this (interlaces fingers), don't you see, and laid the pole up here, see? And it was pretty to see six hogs hanging on that, laying on the scaffold there.

Q. Did you have to start really early in the morning, then?

A. Oh yes, we'd have them fires agoing before daylight sometimes. (laughter) Yes.

Q. Did you pickle hogs' feet?

A. Yes, yes, pickled hogs' feet.

Q. How did you go about that?

A. Well, to tell the truth about it, I don't know much about how to pickle hogs' feet. That was kind of up to the women.

Q. I see. So that would be an all-day job, wouldn't it?

A. Oh, yes.

Q. Did you ever butcher any beef?

A. No, I never did help butcher a beef. I bought a quarter of a beef here a while back, bought it down at Joe Siliskie's, that's Y&T [Packing Company] I believe they call that.

Q. What about sheep? Did you ever butcher a sheep?

A. No. No, never did.

Q. Well, how long did that meat last that you had hanging in the smokehouse?

A. Well, of course it would make us run from one season to the next.

Q. Did it? So it would last a whole year?

A. Yes. Yes, when that was smoked and put in that sack, why, it was preserved then, yes. The reason the sack was around there was to keep the little bugs out, the little black bugs, those little black bugs.

Q. How did you keep other kinds of meat? Like how did you keep chickens or whatever else you . . .

A. Well, I don't think before we had the deep freeze that we ever tried to keep any chickens. No.

Q. Did your wife can the things out of the garden, the vegetables out of the garden?

A. You mean try to preserve them and keep them?

Q. Yes.

A. Well, we used to always keep sweet potatoes, yes, and potatoes--we had potatoes the year round. We kept them in the basement, in the cellar, yes.

Q. You didn't have a cave?

A. No, we didn't have a cave because we had a basement. A cave was really better for potatoes because it was cooler, and the same way with apples. We used to keep apples in the basement, yes. But after we got the furnace here, our basement got too hot for it. Yes. It got too hot for it.

Q. What about milk? How did you keep milk cool?

A. In the basement. And some people kept it in the well. Yes. They had a little box beside the pump. We had one out there, a little box beside the pump--a little funnel like that, don't you see--a little square box. And we had a string tied to the cream can and we'd lower that in the well, every day.

Q. Oh, I see. That would keep it really cool.

A. Why sure, yes.

Q. How many cows did you milk?

A. Well, we milked as high as five and six here, and that was about as many as we ever milked.

Q. Tell me about farming with horses. I don't know anything about that. Sounds awfully hard. Did you plow in the springtime or did you plow in the fall?

A. Pretty near all spring plowing with the horses. Yes.

Q. How many bottom plow did you have?

A. (laughter) Well, my father had a sulky plow before he died, but I never used it. That was a one-bottom plow you could ride. When I started to plowing, I was starting with a two-horse walking plow.

Q. That's a lot of walking.

A. All walking. Yes. When I was a boy there was only two discs in this country; my uncle had one and a fellow named Milford had a disc. We would generally try to work our ground up with a harrow after we plowed it, with a harrow.

Q. Oh, I see. So you had to walk with the harrow too, didn't you?

A. Well, yes, walk, or you could ride a harrow. Yes. You could ride a harrow.

Q. So then, after you harrowed it, then what? Then you could plant?

A. Then you could plant it.

Q. Well, how did you go about planting it?

A. Planting it? Well, there was corn planters when I was a boy, there was corn planters. Yes. There was already corn planters with wire. You know, the first corn planter that I guess come in this country, they had to have a boy who sat on there and jerked.

Q. Oh, to let the seeds out.

A. Yes, and then they got the wire to do them the same job, you know. There was a fork that the wire went through and it tripped it, don't you see. Yes.

Q. Is that what you used?

A. Yes, we had a wire when I was a boy. Well, our planter had a wire.

Q. So then you didn't have to do anything until it came up and then you had to cultivate it?

A. Well, we generally would roll it and harrow it, then cultivate. Yes. Cultivate it three times. In them days, they all checked corn, what they call checked corn was [planted] with the wire, and you could plow it both ways. Yes. You'd plow both ways.

Q. What kind of cultivator did you have?

A. A walking cultivator.

Q. How many horses did you use to do that?

A. Just two horses for the walking cultivator.

Q. Two horses. Now, did you plant oats?

A. Yes, oats and there was wheat raised. People raised wheat here when I was a boy. Yes. But they didn't raise no soybeans. You know, soybeans didn't come in until--oh, I don't know how long that would be back . . . along in the 1920's, I guess.

Q. Did you start raising soybeans then?

A. No. No, I never raised any soybeans until . . . along about 1930. Yes.

Q. Well, then you used a thresher to thresh the wheat and the oats?

A. Yes, but first of all they had what they called a self-binder. I used to run a binder over a lot of ground; I used to cut for my neighbors. It was pulled with four horses and it was all the way from six to eight feet cut; eight-foot binders would cut quite a bit of grain in a day. You've never seen a binder work, huh?

Q. No.

A. Well, there was a sickle here that cut it off and there was a reel that knocked it back, see. And there was canvas that elevated it up here, and it went against a trigger over there, and when you got so much on there, it tripped and needles come around with a piece of twine and tied it. That was what they called the self-binder.

Q. Well, it tied it into bundles?

A. It tied it into bundles. Then there was a bundle carrier on the right side, and when you got about four bundles on, why, you could trip it with your foot, see. That way you could keep a windrow, and the shockers--the shockers would come behind you--could come to that windrow and set up the shock which was about—all the way from ten to fourteen or fifteen. . . .

Q. Now, this is for corn?

A. No, this is oats or wheat.

Q. Oh, I didn't know they ever put those in shocks.

A. Oh yes!

Q. Well, what would they do with it after that?

A. Well, it stayed there until you got ready to thresh, and here come the man with the steam threshing machine. He pulled on your place and you got your neighbors all in there with your rack wagons and two or three box wagons to haul the wheat to the elevator or the oats to the granary, and you threshed. And the women cooked the meals for that whole bunch that day. Yes. Yes.

Q. Well, that sounds like fun.

A. (laughter) Yes, up until I would say fifteen years ago, if you ever drove to St. Louis, there was some of the most beautiful shockers, wheat shockers, down in that country. They just made a shock like it growed there. I used to always love to go through there to see them shocks. Yes. Now, the Amish people still thresh yet, up around Arthur. They still thresh. You ought to go up there some time.

Q. Yes, that would be interesting to see.

A. In July or sometime. I'd say the last of July. Yes.

Q. But then, what about the straw that's left over. What did you do with that?

A. That straw? We made a straw stack out of it, what they call a straw stack. And before they had the separator, when I was first in the harvest fields, it just had a thing that elevated the straw out. It moved back and forth like this, and you generally had two men up there, taking care of that straw, stacking it. But when they got the old blower, you didn't have to have your men up there. It would just blow that straw wherever they wanted it, don't you see. Yes.

Q. Then did you feed that to cattle or anything?

A. Yes, to a certain extent, yes.

Q. Used it for bedding and things.

A. Yes. Yes.

Q. Did you feed mostly corn to your livestock?

A. Horses and cattle and hogs.

Q. And oats?

A. Yes, oats was great mule feed.

Q. Did you prefer horses to mules? Would you rather work with horses than mules?

A. Well, yes. Yes, I would rather work with a good team of horses. I had a man worked for me for two or three years. He come up here from Missouri and he loved the mules. He had a saying. He said, "Damn a little mule or a big horse." He wanted a big mule and a medium-sized horse. Well, that was his saying. Yes. He wanted a big mule; a big mule is more good-natured than a little one. A little mule was tricky, don't you see. Yes. That was one of his sayings. (laughter) "Dang a little mule and a big horse."

Q. Where did you go to do your shopping?

A. In Springfield. Well, back in the olden days--you know these little burgs like Bradfordton up here? We had the post office up here in Bradfordton. And you could buy most anything there: sugar, tobacco, mittens, or shirts or stuff like that. Yes. You didn't <u>have</u> to go to Springfield, but most people went to Springfield.

Q. How long did it take to get there in a horse and buggy?

A. Oh, about an hour. It's about five miles from here. Yes. Yes.

Q. You didn't have to buy very much though, did you? Didn't you raise most everything you needed?

A. We raised our own potatoes, we raised our own meat, we had our own eggs, we had our own lard . . . and potatoes as I said, you know. Yes, we'd still have to buy sugar and flour and coffee.

Q. How often did you go?

A. About once a week.

Q. Did your wife always go? Did your wife go to town with you?

A. Well, of course, when I got married--see, I was married in 1916--I bought an automobile that year. Yes. Yes, I bought an automobile in 1916. So we could run to town when we got ready, don't you see.

Q. Do you remember the race riot that they had in Springfield? (phone rings)

A. Race track? Was that our phone? Excuse me. Yes sir, I remember that race track, and they've still got a race track in Springfield. I know who built it.

Q. Oh, I see. (tape stopped and started)

A. You're talking about this race track here in Springfield. I was out to the races there one time and I went around on the other side of the track, straight across from the grandstand. I knew a fellow named Denny Gaines and we were sitting there talking and some fellow come along and he said, "They say this is one of the fastest tracks in the whole country." It's built on that slope, you know. Yes. This fellow I was with, Denny Gaines, spoke up and said, "Yes, I built this track." He did too, with horses! Yes, sir!

Q. What year was that?

A. I can't tell you, but it was when they built that track they got right there now.

Q. Do you remember the Depression?

A. I'll say I remember the Depression!

Q. (laughter) How did that affect you?

A. Well, I'll tell you . . . it was tough. (laughter) I wish you wouldn't record this.

Q. You don't want me to record it? Okay. (tape stopped and started) There were two banks in Springfield that closed, weren't there?

A. No. No, Ridgely Farmers was the only one.

Q. The Marine Bank kept open?

A. The other banks kept open, yes. The reason all the banks was aclosing was everybody was running in and drawing their money out.

Q. Yes, they didn't have any money.

A. I didn't have much money in the Ridgely Farmers Bank; just before the bank closed, I was in St. Louis and I bought a truckload of cattle and I wrote a check on the Ridgely Farmers Bank. A fellow got a book down there and looked in the book. I thought he was checking on me; he was checking on that bank, don't you see. But the check went through, the check went through.

Q. Well, you were really lucky, then.

A. I was lucky, yes.

Q. You sure were. How did they get cattle up here from St. Louis?

A. In a truck.

Q. My, that must have taken a long time.

A. No. No, it's . . . it's one hundred five miles about from Springfield in to the stockyards in St. Louis.

Q. But the roads were very bad then, weren't they?

A. Well, back in 1932 they had a hard road coming through there.

Q. Oh, they did? I didn't realize that.

A. Yes. Yes, they had a hard road coming through into St. Louis then.

Q. Oh, so then it was after Roosevelt got in in 1932 that they . . .

A. Yes, it was in 1932 that he was elected and put in the moratorium on the banks and things began to level off then, don't you see. Everybody was getting their money, taking it out of the—you couldn't buy anything, you know. There was people--if they had money, but they wouldn't loan you nothing.

Q. So it was hard for farmers, too wasn't it?

A. Oh, that was an awful thing! Awful thing! And a lot of stock companies and everything went broke, don't you know. Yes.

Q. Do you remember the riot that they had in Springfield in 1908?

A. Yes, I remember the riot.

Q. What do you remember about that?

A. Well, not too much. My mother was uptown that day and she come home and said, "They're having a riot up in Springfield. It ain't really safe to be up there." Yes. Yes, they cleaned out a lot of them niggershacks, you know, and they really didn't do things too good, either, don't you know. The reason they had that riot, I think . . . some nigger had committed a crime and they had him in the jail. They was going to make a raid on the jail and a man named Loper--ran a restaurant here in Springfield--and he had an automobile. They got him to take the nigger away from Springfield. They just smashed Loper's restaurant all to pieces! The mob, don't you see, that started the riot up there. Yes. Yes. Yes, that started the riot.

I was uptown a few days after the riot and I was talking to our blacksmith who used to own the blacksmith shop here, and here come a poor colored fellow down the street, him and his wife and little child, and they was carrying a picture about as big as a television place there. I guess they got cleaned out, don't you see.

Q. Yes, that's terrible, isn't it?

A. Yes, it was. Yes.

Q. So you had a blacksmith here in Bradfordton?

A. Yes.

Q. So, did he do all your work?

A. Yes, he done all our horseshoeing and plow-sharpening and all that stuff.

Q. That's what I wondered. What other kinds of things did the blacksmith do? Other than horseshoeing?

A. Oh, we've had two or three blacksmiths here in Bradfordton. They could fix a wooden wheel, make spokes or felloes; they were handy at that. Yes. And they could weld iron and stuff like that. Set wagon tires when the tires would get loose, you know, and would dry out. They could draw them tires back up tight on them wheels. Yes. Yes.

Q. Did you have a tinsmith?

A. No, no, no. But some of them blacksmiths was pretty near as good as a tinsmith. I had a ten-gauge shotgun and I broke the stock. The blacksmith got a piece of copper and put it around that stock and pressed that together and glued it and pinned that down there and that stock was just as stout as it ever was.

Q. Did you go hunting?

A. Oh yes, I still go.

Q. Oh, do you? What do you hunt for?

A. Well, I'm about trying to walk out now. (leaves the room and brings

back a picture) This happened five years ago. Down in Cairo, Illinois.

Q. My goodness! They're geese, huh?

A. They're geese.

Q. They're really nice, aren't they? Where are you? This is you.

A. These two fellows here are dead, these two fellows.

Q. Are they? What was his name?

A. Phil Harrison. This is Herbie Slayton. This is Ivan Hartfield--he's still alive.[2] He just lost his wife a week ago.

Q. Those are nice fat geese, aren't they?

A. Oh yes, each one of us had two apiece.

Q. Did your wife cook them for you?

A. No, (laughter) she hates wild game. Wild geese, though, as a rule, unless you know how to cook them, they're not good. You have to know how to cook them. You know, they live on green stuff as a rule, yes.

Q. Well, what did you do with them?

A. Well, I give my two away, that time.

Q. Oh you did? What else do you hunt?

A. Well, as a rule I was a duck hunter. But that's about played out, too.

Q. There's not very many ducks around here, are there?

A. No. (laughter) I went once last year down to Beardstown, never got a shot. Never got a shot. Back on the old place that twenty of us used to own, oh, thirty some years ago, I helped kill ninety ducks--twice on the lake I was on. And I never got a shot this last year. There wasn't a duck come in, yes.

Q. I wonder why.

A. Well, they claim they wasn't in the bottom this year. This fellow that lives in Beardstown took us out. He said there was less ducks in the bottom this year than there ever was.

Q. Did you ever go fox hunting?

---

[2]During review of the memoir, Mr. Moore indicated that Mr. Hartfield had died since the time of the interview. [Ed.]

A. Oh, yes, yes.

Q. Why did people kill foxes then?

A. Why did they kill them? Well, the reason they killed foxes is for the fur. A fox, they tell me--I didn't get any this year; in fact, I never tried until way late. I got a couple of young friends in town wanted me to catch them some foxes here three years ago and I caught them--I caught them three right out east of the barn here--but an old trapper told me this year that a good fox was worth $35. They're worth catching, don't you see.

Q. Yes, I didn't know that. Do you have a trapper friend around here?

A. Yes.

Q. What's his name?

A. Homer Dodd.

Q. Oh, where does he live?

A. In Springfield someplace. He's a painter. He traps in the wintertime. He's a professional.

Q. Is he? Well, I'd like to talk to him sometime.

A. Well, you just hunt him up in the telephone book. Homer Dodd.

Q. Homer Dodd. Yes, I'll do that. How old is he?

A. Oh, he's in his fifties.

Q. Did you ever do any trapping?

A. Oh yes!

Q. How do you go about that?

A. Well, it just depends on what you're trapping for. If you're trapping for mink, you want to hunt up tiles, where the tile goes out. If you're trapping for foxes, you want to try to get out where they cross from one timber to another--like from the river down here to the crick--and make you a set. I generally made a set out of threshed bean straw. Take a mound up--something about that high, you know, and set my traps, three traps on each side. After you catch that first fox there, you're good for quite a few.

Q. Oh really? How do you know that?

A. Well, they leave the scent there, don't you see. Yes, yes, you're good for quite a few.

Q. Did you trap rabbits and things like that?

A. Well, when I was a kid I used to catch rabbits, you know, in these box traps. That was mostly for fun. In fact, I made my little grandsons a box trap this last fall. They live right straight east here, three-quarters of a mile on the east side of our place. I made a trap and took it over there, and they set it but they never caught a rabbit. I just wanted to show them how it worked. They got quite a kick out of it. It's got a little door on it, you know, and then there's a stick over the top and then there's a plunger down here. You bore a hole down here and when they hit that plunger, it knocks the door hold down, see. And they'd stick a stick up in there and hit that plunger and watch that door close down there. Yes, yes.

Q. Did you ever eat rabbit?

A. Oh yes, yes. I haven't had a rabbit though for a long time. After that disease got in them here a few years ago, why, I just quit. But I think they're all right now.

Q. What about quail?

A. Quail? They're beautiful eating, yes. That's one of my favorites, that and a mallard duck is my . . .

Q. Does your wife cook those?

A. Yes. Her favorite, though, is a pheasant.

Q. Yes, that's good. Do you get those very often?

A. Well, I didn't kill any last fall. I generally kill a few pheasants.

Q. There just aren't very many of those things around here anymore.

A. Well, now we had quite a few pheasants here this year.

Q. Oh, did you?

A. Yes, we had quite a few pheasants.

Q. What about deer?

A. Deer? There's a good many deer north of here. I never tried to kill a deer. No, I never tried to kill a deer. I just don't like the idea of being off in those woods when there's a whole bunch of fellows out there shooting. I would go on a deer hunt where you went on a stand and where they're driving. They do that down south, down in some of them counties down there. But to go down through the brush here . . .

Q. What about fishing? Are you a fisherman?

A. No, I'm no fisherman.

Q. You're not? How far away is the river?

A. Right straight north here. It's a mile and a half.

Q. Oh, I didn't realize it was so close. Does your property run near the river?

A. No, my property runs . . . a half a mile here and then it jumps on that side of the road and it runs another quarter of a mile and then it jumps back on that side of the road.

END OF SIDE ONE

Q. Tell me, what is it that you want to talk about.

A. Well, do you want to talk about planting corn?

Q. That's fine, that's fine.

A. Well, you know in the olden days we plowed the ground with the horses, you know, and harrowed it. I made that statement that there was only two discs in the country when I was a boy. We'd harrow and drag and get a seedbed.

Q. You did all this in the spring, right?

A. Well, yes, we always tried to plant corn around the first of May. The 10th of May was really the day that a lot of them started.

Q. How did they pick the 10th of May?

A. Because the ground was warm. The white man asked the Indian when it was time to plant corn and he says, "I'll tell you in a minute," and he sat down on the ground to see if the ground was warm enough. You understand? Yes, they still go by that. They use a gauge now. We don't; we just use our own judgment on it. We planted with a corn planter, a two-horse corn planter, and we checked the corn on a wire, see.

Q. What does that mean?

A. Well, instead of drill. We drill now. We checked so you could plow the corn each way.

Q. Oh, you mean so you could plow it like east and west and north and south.

A. Yes, that's right, yes. And a good checker could get pretty near as good a row crossways as his rows was the longways.

Q. How did they accomplish that?

A. How did they do that? Well, they had a wire, roll the wire out through the field, and they had a stake on that end and a stake on this end.

Q. From one end of the field to the other?

A. The wire, yes. Sometimes we had half-a-mile rows; the wire was half a mile long. And there was a fork on the corn planter and there was buttons on this wire, see. Every time the fork would come to a button, it would click, click, click. That let the corn out. In the olden times--I jerked already clear across the end. The olden times when they didn't have any wire, they had a fellow sitting on there ajerking the lever. Yes. But the people don't check corn no more. They drill it. They don't use no wires, you know, they just drill through the field and plow it one way. In fact, some people don't plow corn anymore; they trust to luck through the weed killer.

Q. Well, why did you want to check it?

A. Well, the reason you wanted to check it was so we could plow crossways to get the weeds both ways. Instead of going one way all the time, we went crossways.

Q. Oh, and that gets more weeds.

A. Yes, for the centers out here. See, I planted three foot four [inches]. Most of them planted three foot six at that time.

Q. What does that mean?

A. That means the wire tripped the corn every three foot four. My planter was set for three foot four.

Q. You mean three feet four inches?

A. Yes. Now, some of them's got it down to 33 inches. We plant 36 on Wayne's outfit now. Yes, he's got an eight-row planter now.

Q. Quite a difference. (laughter)

A. Yes, (laughter) quite a difference, I'll say!

Q. Well, so what kind of seed corn did you use?

A. Well, in the olden days we pretty near would use our own. We'd start with a good brand like Yellow Dent or Lemming or Big Star, and the white corn was--what white corn I found--was Boone County White. It comes from Iowa.

Q. And you got it in Iowa?

A. No, bought it here off a dealer. And we plowed our corn at least three times: first the way we planted it and then across and then what we called laid it by.

Q. What's that mean?

A. That means throwing the dirt to it. And a lot of times we'd cross it twice if we had plenty of time.

(section of tape not transcribed)

Q. What's the difference between yellow corn and white corn? Why would anybody choose one over the other?

A. Well, people used to think that on thin land that the white corn done better. Now, there's a demand for white corn right now, but people ain't araising it.

Q. Why?

A. Well, because the majority of the people raises yellow corn. And if you'd pull in here at the elevator with a truckload of white corn, then you'd have to wait till all the yellow corn was out of the pit before you could dump in the same way. That's the reason that they don't raise it, yes.

Q. Okay, so now you've got it in the ground and you cultivated it.

A. Of course, the corn we planted the 10th of May, a lot of times we'd roll the ground after the corn was planted and harrow, and then we'd aim for Decoration Day. If your corn was big enough to plow by Decoration Day, you was lucky, yes. Generally about the first week in June.

Q. How many rows could you cultivate at one time?

A. Cultivate? Just one row! Just one row with the horse-pulled. That is, the cultivators I had. They did have a two-row cultivator in my time. They pulled that with three horses, yes. That was the biggest horse-drawn cultivator.

Q. Well, that would take you a long time to cultivate.

A. Oh yes, ten acres was a big day's work! Generally if the weather was warm, if you cultivated fifteen acres a day with two teams, you were getting pretty good.

Q. You mean you'd change teams?

A. No, no. I mean two men out there. Seven and a half acres apiece. Yes, ten acres was a big day. Yes. If we'd strike a cool time so we could keep agoing. These horses would suffer in this hot weather, you know. Yes, things have changed a whole lot. My son's got that eight-row planter and an eight-row cultivator, yes.

Q. You said you rolled it after you planted it. That's before it came up?

A. Well, yes, especially if the ground was a little cloddy.

Q. What's that mean?

A. You've seen clods, haven't you?

Q. Oh, yes.

A. Yes, if we'd get a nice shower of rain after we planted and them clods would start to mellow, we'd take and roll that and then follow with a harrow, and then . . .

Q. Oh, while the ground was kind of damp?

A. No, no, we wanted it dry when we worked it, wanted it dry when we worked it. That's the worst thing you can do with ground is work it wet, yes, yes.

Q. Is your land tiled?

A. Tiled? Yes, ma'am.

Q. Is it? You tiled it then, haven't you?

A. No, most of this tile was in. I put in several strings. I was talking to a tiler this morning. He was supposed to come here last fall and put in about--well, pretty close to a quarter of a mile. But he never got here and he told me this morning, he said, "I've got you on my list. I'll be down some of these days." And I said, "I'd rather you do that in the fall." You know, if you tile now, you mess everything up, don't you see. So we kind of agreed that we'd wait till fall. That tile is very valuable. You know, we've got to watch it. A lot of these tiles empty out on somebody else and we've got to watch the outlets. When the water come through, they cut . . . one, two, three--they cut three of my tiles, but they fixed them, all but one. One of them, we had to dig it up last fall and re-clean it, yes. And the telephone company, you know the underground wire? We got to watch that. Tile, you know. I don't know what it would cost you an acre to tile a farm now. I bet you it would cost you anyhow a hundred dollars an acre to tile a farm.

Q. It's very expensive, isn't it? But it's well worth it. You've got to have it.

A. Yes.

Q. Then after you picked your corn, how did you store it? Did you just have corncribs?

A. Yes. Rail, mostly rail.

Q. Rail corncribs, I see. Did you build them?

A. Yes, we built them as we scooped the corn into them. My uncle over here had ten in a row one time, rail cribs. That was a pretty sight. You know, they're ten foot long, the rails is as a rule. And he had ten in a row. That was beautiful. But later on, I built some permanent corn-

cribs, don't you see. Slats, board slats, yes. This rail business, every year you have to build over, don't you see.

Q. Why? What happens to them?

A. To the rails? Well, you have to take the rails down pretty near to scoop the corn out of the crib.

Q. Oh, I see. (laughter) So by the time the corn's gone, the crib's gone.

A. Yes, yes. Well, you know, we tried to run these rail cribs nine and ten foot high. Well, if we had built one ten foot high, we would have had to scoop corn ten foot high. If you built it to start on just four foot high, you had easy scooping, don't you see. (laughter)

Q. So then you built the corncribs.

A. I built a Morton crib out here. Oh, I guess it's been over fifty years ago and it's still in good shape.

Q. Is it? What kind of wood is it?

A. It isn't wood; it's metal, a metal crib. Morton. Yes. But it's setting empty now because we shell the corn in the field and take it and store it at the elevator.

Q. Did you used to clean any of your grain?

A. Well, not to amount to anything. We'd fan seed oats once in a while and clover seed, something like that, yes. We'd always fan our seed wheat and sell it, but as a rule, we'd take that to where there was a pretty good outfit, you know, like Stone up here or Richling. My neighbor down here had a fan mill and I fanned there several times, yes.

Q. Did you rotate your crops?

A. Rotate? Oh yes, yes.

Q. How do you do that?

A. Well, you know before the fertilizer come in, we used to raise red clover and we raised red clover and timothy. Timothy was for the horse feed and red clover was mostly for the cattle and sheep and stuff. But the red clover built the soil, yes. That's the only soil building we had, was our legume that we raised and what we got from the barn loft, yes. Now they put it on, you know, with them applicators, yes. I don't know, Wayne's got a 150 acre spread already [during] that little dry spell, and he's been out since. That's going to cost like everything this year.

Q. Yes, terrible. It's going to be more expensive this year than last.

A. It's going to cost; I think they said two hundred dollars.

Q. Okay, so with the red clover, you would grow it and turn it over, plow it under?

A. Well no. As a rule, we'd always take off the first crop and if there was seed, a lot of times we'd hull the second crop. But some people did turn under both crops, yes. I've turned under both crops already. It's quite a soil builder, yes, yes.

Q. So then the only fertilizer you had was that and manure.

A. That's right. That's right. And plowing under cornstalks, yes. Plowing under cornstalks. Back in them days if you could raise fifty bushels of corn you was a good corn raiser. Sixty was good, awful good! A lot of corn went back to forty.

Q. What does your son raise now?

A. Well, we've got up to a hundred and fifty, high. We generally raise around, oh, between 130 and 140. But now your fertilizer ain't going to do all that; you've got to have a rain at the right time. Your fertilizer ain't going to do all that, no. And that's the same way back in the horse days. We had to have our rain at the right time, yes.

Q. Well now, how did you go about rotating your crops?

A. Well, take a piece of ground that was in corn this year. We'd generally put it in oats next year. And then from oats to wheat, and sow legume in the wheat, red clover in the wheat. That's the way we rotated.

Q. Oh, I see. And the next year it would be corn again.

A. Well, after the clover, it would always be corn, yes, yes.

Q. So it would go about four years, every four years.

A. Yes, from corn to oats to wheat to clover. Yes.

Q. You didn't raise beans, did you?

A. No, not in my early days, we didn't raise beans. No, no.

Q. Well, what about your buildings now? Did you build your barn?

A. I was seventeen years old when we built that barn. I hauled the lumber, the frame parts, from the sawmill down in Richard's Bottom. They cut the trees down and sawed it.

Q. Where is that?

A. Where's that at? You've heard of Koke Mill, haven't you?

Q. Yes.

A. Well, you go up the hill and you know the hill kind of leads off that way after you go on up past Koke Mill. Well, the old mill used to be right on the crick, right at the foot of the hill. There was a gate that we went in and a pasture there and down through the woods there and there was a big timber down in the bottom there. They cut that off and had the sawmill there.

Q. I see. Do you know what kind of wood it is?

A. Well, the frame, the sills and everything is oak. And there's some ash in it. The siding is pine. It come from the lumberyard in here. The sheeting—the sheeting is the stuff you nail the shingles to, you know--it's ash and that kind of wood, yes.

Q. So it has a part for the cows. How many stanchions did you have for cattle?

A. How many stanchions for the cows? Well, the cow barn was built later on the east side. We had ten stalls for horses. Way back, we never had any stanchions for cows, way back. We had what they call the straw shed.

Q. What's that?

A. (laughter) Well, we'd set poles in the ground and put timbers across here and then thresh on that, thresh on that. That was the beautifulest warm place you ever seen in there, but we generally got so much weight, before long you was mashing it down, don't you see.

Q. By threshing on that, you mean you'd throw all the straw on it.

A. Yes, yes.

Q. So that's where you milked the cows.

A. And that's where we used to milk the cows.

Q. Did you just tie them up in there or something?

A. No, no, that was built on the ground, just like your garage.

Q. I mean, how did you get the cows to stay in there? Did you just tie them up?

A. (laughter) No, they generally stood pretty well for us. Oh, once in a while you'd get a wild one you had to put in the barn, yes. Then later on I built that little cow barn on the east side of the barn, put stanchions in it. As I told you the other day, we never milked too many cows, you know, five or six, something like that, because we never had the rough land here to graze them.

Q. Before you built the barn, did you draw a plan of how you were going to build it?

A. Well, yes. We had quite a time. The old barn was standing there. My mother went in one day to the lumberyard and she didn't have the plans drawn, you understand, and she didn't get any place. So this fellow had this sawmill over here, that was Mort Hineman, and he drawed the plans of the barn and he said, "I'll saw you out the frame that'll make it." And he did.

Q. That was great. That was a big help.

A. Yes it was, yes.

Q. So then you built the barn. In your first barn, what did it have in it? Did it have places for horses in it?

A. Oh yes.

Q. And sheep? Did it have places for sheep?

A. No, not the first one. It was just a horse barn. It was kind of a place to store hay and the barn connected. See, there was a kind of a hay barn and then there was a row of stalls north of it there and a hallway in there so you could put the hay in the hallway from up in the loft and then put it in the mangers.

Q. Did you have cats in there?

A. Oh yes, yes. Them cats, yes.

Q. What about chickens?

A. Always had chickens, always had chickens.

Q. Chickens like to be in the barn, don't they?

A. Well, yes, yes. We used to let the chickens run, you know, never put them up. Finally we got too many foxes in the country; we had to put them up at night, yes. I used to feel sorry for some of them chickens, you know, they wouldn't . . . in zero weather, you'd have to go around and get them out of the trees and bring them in. They'd sit in them trees. They was used to roosting there in the summertime, don't you see.

Q. They're not too smart, are they? (laughter)

A. No. (laughter) I got something I want to talk to you about.

Q. Okay, go ahead and tell me what you wanted to talk about.

A. Well . . . you know the Sangamon River is just about a mile and a half straight north here, and there was a fording place there, Rowl's Ford. They had a ferry there and when the river was too high to ford, they'd use the ferry. They had a ferry that was big enough for a team and a wagon, and it run on a cable. It was a big cable across the river. And you could put your team and wagon on there and go across the river there.

Q. Was there somebody there to run the ferry then?

A. No, you run the ferry yourself. So one day a bunch of us boys wanted to go rabbit hunting across the river over there and the ferry was on the other side. So I got up on that cable and I pulled myself plumb across that river and got the ferry and brought it back.

Q. (laughter) That was quite a trip, wasn't it?

A. (laughter) Yes, it was. I slid across that. . . . That was quite a little distance there, but I really went across on that cable and got that ferry.

Q. Well, that was nice to have that ferry, wasn't it? Who paid for it? who put it there?

A. Who paid for it? I think the township put that up.

Q. Oh I see. So now is there a bridge there in that place?

A. No, no. Finally that cable busted and the ferry went down with the high water and that was the end of the ferry down here.

Q. But that was really fun for boys, wasn't it?

A. (laughter) Yes, yes.

Q. That must have been a nice place to play.

A. Well, we wanted to go rabbit hunting over in the bottom over there and the ferry was on the other side, so I said to the boys, "I believe I can go across on that cable." And I did and got the ferry, yes. Now you want to talk about grain storage, I guess, or have we talked yet any on that?

Q. No, we haven't.

A. Well, we don't store here on the farm anymore, to my way of thinking. I store some beans here, but all the corn goes right out of the combine to the elevator and they dry it and then they store it. Oh, my son has talked about putting up storage, but he has been so busy at harvest time, he said he can't be in two places at once. He's ought to be on the combine and he ought to be where the storage is, so he hasn't built anything.

Q. How did you used to do it?

A. Like I told you, in them rail cribs, you know.

Q. Yes, that's the corn, but what about the wheat?

A. Well, we had one wheat granary here, one wheat granary. We did keep wheat once in a while, but generally we'd haul our wheat right to the elevator.

Q. Oh you did. And what about oats?

A. Well, we generally kept all the oats that we had room for, yes, because at harvest time oats were generally awful cheap, yes, and we'd generally fill the granaries. We had two oats granaries and we'd fill them, yes.

Q. Oats keep all right, don't they? They get moldy, don't they?

A. Well, not if they're put in there dry, they don't. They've got to be dry when they're put in there, otherwise they'll heat, yes, yes. Wheat is worse than anything. You got to have wheat dry, yes.

Q. Now what about fences? Did you build your own fences?

A. The other day I forgot to mention that. Back in the horse days, you know, we had to have a pasture for these horses to run and we had to have a fence plumb around there. In the wintertime, when we'd get done shucking corn by hand, we had a good stalk field and we'd have to have a fence plumb around that stalk field. Now you can drive plumb across my place here and drive right out on the road. There's no fence.

Q. You fenced those so that you would have a good stalk field?

A. Yes, that's right.

Q. You mean cornstalks? Why did you have to fence cornstalks?

A. Why, we turned the cattle out there to eat them! Yes, that was quite a feed saver, that stalk field.

Q. How long did they stay out there?

A. Well, if we got done shucking around Thanksgiving, why, we'd leave them out there till the first of February, yes. As soon as it began to get muddy, why, we didn't want to tromp the ground, don't you see? Yes, yes.

Q. So what kind of fences did you build?

A. Well, them was mostly barbed wire. There was quite a bit of hedge fence on this place when I was a boy, but we got rid of it. I've still got a hedge down on that north forty, big hedge. We was talking about pushing it out this fall, but we didn't get at it. My son bought a forty right next to it.

Q. I wish people wouldn't cut down all the hedges. They look nice, and they're also a good place for birds.

A. That's true. They're a windbreak, too.

Q. My father's completely cut down all of his hedges, too; so they're

aren't any anymore. That's what makes the country look so strange, you see.

A. Yes, that's right.

Q. We don't have the hedges anymore.

A. It seems like there's a certain bunch of builders that like to get on this rough ground.

Q. Well, people like to have hilly--you know, with trees and things . . .

A. Yes, yes. They're talking about bringing water up this road now.

Q. Oh are they? You have a well, don't you? Do you have a spring around here?

A. We have a spring in that forty acres of pasture down there.

Q. Oh do you? That's nice. Is it a good spring?

A. It's a good spring. I've seen it dry I think once. You can just go down there now and see the water coming out of the bank, yes.

Q. Yes, that's good water. So did you ever split rails?

A. No.

(section of tape not transcribed)

Q. You never made those stake and rider fences?

A. I never made the rails. I put up a lot of fence.

Q. Of those kind? Oh, have you? That's what you used before you had barbed wire?

A. Well, a rail fence for around the feed lot or something like that was nice. But as far as putting a rail fence out going a mile and a half, look at the rails you would have to have there. You got to have it about six rails high and then when the stake and rider comes in--here's what a stake and rider is. (interlaces fingers) There, see? And then you lay your rail in there, don't you see?

Q. Yes, so that would be a lot of stakes, wouldn't it?

A. Oh, a lot of rails, yes.

Q. Well, what did you use then way back?

A. Barbed wire and woven wire, where you wanted to keep cattle next to the corn field or something like that. Especially hogs, you had to have a woven wire fence or a board fence or a rail fence for hogs, yes.

Q. Did you raise many hogs?

A. Oh, not too many, no.

Q. You mostly just raised grain, didn't you?

A. Yes. I used to put up a lot of hay.

Q. Did you sell hay?

A. Oh yes! I sold hay to the mines.

Q. To the mines! You mean the coal mines?

A. Coal mines.

Q. What did they use hay for?

A. They had mules to pull the cars down below. I really furnished this Spring Creek Mine down here with all the hay they fed.

Q. What kind of prices? Do you remember the prices you got for it?

A. Yes . . . I think the highest I ever sold hay was thirty dollars a ton. But generally the price would run between fifteen and twenty, twenty dollars a ton or a cent a pound. Twenty hundred is a ton, don't you see? Yes.

Q. What's the lowest you ever sold it for?

A. I don't know. During that Depression, I don't think . . . I don't remember really what it was. But it must have been cheap because everything else was cheap, you know, and corn was down as low as ten cents.

Q. Corn was? Ten cents?

A. Ten cents a bushel.

Q. Did you sell it at that?

A. Well . . . I filled my cribs and I had, I think, between six and seven hundred bushel I hauled to the elevator. And when I finally settled, I got fourteen cents for it, fourteen cents a bushel. I had a young man work for me that summer and he shucked corn for me that fall, and he shucked 3200 bushels for $32.00, a cent a bushel.

Q. A cent a bushel! Wow! That's terrible. Did he live here?

A. Oh yes, he stayed here with us, yes. We boarded him.

Q. So he didn't have any expenses.

A. He didn't have no expenses. Well, yes he did because he wore out a pair of mittens every day. Yes, you can wear out a pair of mittens every day and

they'd cost you. Well, years ago you used to buy them for a nickel a pair. Now they're a dollar a pair! Yes, yes.

Q. So can you tell me other things about the Depression? Like, what about food? Did your eating habits change at all? Well, you didn't buy very much food, did you?

A. Well, back in the Depression days, the only thing that kept us agoing, you know, we had our coal oil lights and our coal stoves or wood stoves, and we had our own meat, we had our own eggs, and we had our own milk. We didn't have to buy too much, only the flour and the sugar and the coffee and stuff like that. But the times was hard, don't think they wasn't hard.

Q. So the worst thing that the farmers had during the Depression was the fact that their goods that they had to sell were so low. They didn't have very much income.

A. (laughter) No, like I told you, fourteen cents a bushel.

Q. Yes, so you didn't have very much income.

A. No, no, fourteen cents a bushel. Why . . . I sold hogs as low as two-and-a-quarter cents a pound. Yes, two-and-a-quarter cents a pound.

Q. So then it would be hard for you to raise the money to buy seed, and to buy any hogs or cattle that you needed to buy.

A. I'll say it was hard. Of course, yes, I bought cattle during that time. When things got just a little better, me and my neighbor was in St. Louis and we bought a truckload of cattle and we gate cut them--what they call gate cut them, the first eight that walks out is yours or the other fellow's. And we give three cents a pound for them in St. Louis, yes, three cents a pound.

Q. Do you remember what you sold them for?

A. I think I got a nickel for some of them, five cents a pound, yes.

Q. So do you think you made any money?

A. Well, of course they grew on the grass and I didn't feed them too much grain . . . oh, I don't know, it's just hard to go back and think about all them times, especially if you was in a bank that closed. We was, you know.

Q. Yes, that must have been really bad. Well, you know it seems to me that it would be more difficult for the city people because they had to buy their food. At least you had your food, and you had food for your animals.

A. It was, it was. You know, the St. John's Hospital . . . they had what they call a bread line. I've seen that line up to the hospital, yes. They fed. They had what they call a bread line. They'd feed these people that didn't have anything to eat.

Q. So farmers had it pretty good in that respect.

A. Yes, I'll say. They had something to eat anyhow. But you know, if anybody had any mortgages that they had to meet and stuff like that, that was pretty near impossible.

Q. Did a lot of people lose their farms, then?

A. Well not right around here, but there was people that lost their farms. And then the worst part of it, a lot of these stock things folded up. That hurt a lot of old people that had money loaned to them, yes. Oh, that Depression. . . . I joined a duck club--I like to hunt--in 1925, and when the Depression come on--I think I mentioned this to you the other day--one fellow's wife was sick and she was in bad shape and he had loaned. . . . Well, before I got in the club, they'd bought 160 acres of land down there with a good lake on it. It was a good buy; they gave sixteen thousand dollars for it, a hundred dollars an acre. And they figured on selling enough shares to pay for that, but they didn't. And this fellow here had loaned the club a thousand dollars and he wanted to get it back. Well, they elected me president of the club right at a critical time, and I and the secretary went to the bank and you know that that bank wouldn't loan a thousand dollars on that whole 405 acres.

Q. Why? Because they didn't have the money?

A. They said it was a swamp, don't you see. There was 105 acres of farming land though. What I'm trying to get across to you, that's how tight things was.

Q. So what did you do?

A. Well, we held several meetings and finally a fellow there in Springfield that was in the insurance business come to our rescue. That's the way we pulled through the thing. I could go into details about him, but I won't. But you wouldn't think, you know . . . that a thing that they'd give sixteen thousand dollars for, for 160 acres out of the 405, and then when the Depression comes that the bank wouldn't loan one thousand dollars on the whole 405 acres. Now that's how tight things got!

Q. Well, what did people do when they had their mortgages to meet and they didn't have the money? What did they do?

A. They just had to turn over what they had mortgaged.

Q. Then they'd lose their land? It must have been really terrible. What was it you wanted to talk to me about? You said you wanted to talk to me about something else.

A. Well let's see . . . Well, I got here about Rowl's Ford and the fence and the grain storage and the water situation and the changing of . . .

Q. Oh, I wanted to ask you, did you find any pictures?

A. You know I forgot to ask my wife when she left whether she kept them things. I might take a peek. I seen a picture here in the last couple of years where I was on a binder, driving the binder before I had the horses and mules, and I don't know whether we have that picture or whether my niece has it.

They're thinking about bringing the water up this road here and . . . oh, that's a great thing, but at my age, I don't know. I signed up to take it to start on and they went the other road, see, and they gave us back our money. But then, it seemed like where the water is going, people want to buy to build, don't you see. Like over here, at this here place over here that they're building now and this rough land of Gardner's down there, that would increase that, don't you see.

Q. Why would you want to get water?

A. Well, of course water is the main thing, you know. If the well ever goes dry, you have to haul water, don't you see.

Q. Has it ever gone dry?

A. Oh yes. One year I hauled a tank of water every day for the cattle. I had to go to Springfield to get it. Yes, yes.

Q. Have you had to do that lately?

A. No, no, that was just one time in my whole life that I had to haul water.

Q. You must have a pretty good well, then. So you think you do want the water to come up here?

A. Well, I would take it, yes, but I've got two cisterns and two wells and for me and my wife, we don't really need it now, don't you see. But for the good of the country, you know, we signed up for it so they can get started, don't you see. And then they went the other way. Now, they've come in down here along this rough land down north here, this Gardner land and the Melchoir land, and got a subdivision down there. Then they want to go on up this road here and connect that to the main up here so if anything happens wrong over there, they can pump water around back over there. So, I think they're going to come anyhow.

But then, it's a great thing and then there's a drawback, too. Now, I was talking to the fellow that was on the . . . water board here last fall. He said that the head of the tax board here in town said, "Where the water goes we ought to increase them taxes." Well, this fellow that was on the water board said, "Not necessarily." Just use my place, for instance. I've got a mile of road over here and if I want to use that water I'd have to go three-quarters of a mile across the field to get it. So that isn't beneficial.

END OF TAPE