

**CONNECTICUT 20TH CENTURY AGRICULTURAL HISTORY PROJECT
ORAL HISTORIES**

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Name of Person Interviewed: George Ecker
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LL: This is Luane Lange on April 8, 2000, interviewing George Ecker. George, you had worked for the College of Ag and you had been in Ag economics. This is why I sought you out because I knew of your past. Would you start out by saying where you went to college.

GE: The University of Connecticut, class of '43 and class of '48.

LL: What were your majors?

GE: It was an undergraduate in Dairy and Poultry Husbandry, and as a graduate student it was in Agriculture Economics.

LL: What were your first connections to agriculture? Was your family in ag?

GE: My parents were not: It was my uncle who lived in Vernon. He had no children and I spent all my summer vacations. As I grew older I did more and more on the farm and after I finished graduate school in '48 I went to work for GLF, Poultry and Marketing.

LL: What was GLF?

GE: A precursor of Agway. I stayed there for 8 months and then I came back to Vernon and farmed at my uncle's farm for almost 9 years. That reached a point where neither one was making a living and I decided I had to do something else. I ended up checking with people in Ag Economics who had position in Farm Management Extension. I only had a Master's degree and they obviously wanted at PhD but they couldn't find one, so I was hired

LL: What did your dad do?

GE: My dad was a printer. He was a linotype operator and worked with linotype machines.

LL: What did they think about your interest in agriculture?

GE: Well they didn't really encourage me or discourage me. I found out in later years that coming back to go on the farm was a mistake, not only in my own opinion, but their judgment as well, but they never criticized me. And the reason for the mistake was developmental took place in Vernon very rapidly with the building of route 184. My uncle was an older individual and wasn't interested in relocating and there just was no future.

LL: How many acres did he have?

GE: Seventy-five. He had a dairy and poultry farm and a retail milk route. Of course, as you know, as time has progressed retail milk routes are almost obsolete, although we still have the people in town of Mansfield. I never regretted making the shift to the Ag Extension. It's probably the last thing I ever thought I would do. I enjoyed being able to leave campus and travel around the state with the County Agriculture Agents. Most of my work was with dairy and poultry. There was a limited amount with fruit, a very small amount. An even smaller amount was Christmas tree growers. Basically it was in the area of the tax regulations, IRS, as far as treating sales of Christmas tree growing and harvesting and ultimately retail sales.

LL: Which is a big industry, now.

GE: Yes, it is.

LL: What years would those have been?

GE: Well T started in 1957 and retired in June 1984

LL: So, in the farm management, what kinds of things did you focus on?

GE: Oh, it was many aspects of business management that we concentrated on. Mainly it was changes in technology, the adoption of technology, whether it would pay for the individual even though for others it might not have. It could possibly be very profitable. Record keeping was never any major interest of farm producers. They did have an electronic system called, "L Fact," but it was an uphill battle to get people to enroll. It was in its infancy and people just didn't take to it. As business became more complex, Farm Credit, specifically among the CT Farm Bureaus, set up record keeping systems and tax preparation services that met their needs. It was probably a more sophisticated program in many ways because it was complete from the recording and expenses and receipts and other business transactions, like tax preparation. Although, I did have a major program, tax IRS filing procedures and it helped with the state income tax, which I held for the counties each year. Many people, particularly housewives, kept books and were interested in that. Farmers in general were not great record keepers, as such, it was the wives who were doing the bulk of the recording.

LL: Of the people you worked with, did the farm... had they been handed down or were they people who had come into farming?

GE: Mainly they were farms that had been handed down one way or the other, either purchased or through inheritance or a combination thereof. There were relatively few that people had started as new novice farmers. In fact we inquire from people about farming. I always remember one day a woman from New Haven County called. She said, "My husband works in a factory as a machine operator and he saved \$50,000, which he wants to use to buy a dairy farm. I said, "Well what experience does he have?" " Oh he doesn't have any." I said, "Well, there are two choices you have. One is either quit working in the factory and find employment on the dairy farm

for several years or, keep your money and continue to work in the factory." I never heard any more from her. But that was common. There is a family down in Lebanon who just recently had a lawsuit with CT Light and Power. They sued CT Light and Power for electrical problems in the barn and determined the effects on their cows in making milk. I remember them coming to me, they were school teachers as I remember, and they talked about buying the farm. They didn't talk about buying a dairy farm, but apparently they decided they would buy this farm and ultimately they became dairy people. They lost a number of animals, apparently. I have not had any contact with them from the day that they inquired about buying a farm. But, I remembered the name when I read it

LL: Uh huh.

GE: ... and I remember their back wounds. They recently had a substantial lawsuit which they won, I think \$900,000, I am not positive, it could be more, but it was substantial.

LL: Was this because of the voltage?

GE: Yes. Yes, stray voltage. Obviously it would affect the animals even though people couldn't realize what was happening. But when they tested, because Keith Fox had quite a program on stray voltage in dairy farms, they would go in and measure the voltage among the stanchions and other metal fixtures within the farm. They would determine whether there was a leak, an appreciable amount of voltage. It didn't have to be very strong, but it was enough to deter animals.

LL: So, out in the rural areas, power lines cross their land. I came across one family who had gas lines running through their farm and they didn't have much choice. I mean, they were reimbursed to a certain extent, but once the company was coming in they couldn't say no. Is that the kind of thing that happened with the power lines?

GE: No, it was something to do with the installation of the electrical system and the grounding of it.

LL: Oh.

GE: There was a man who lived in Vernon who built a house that was down at the end of the power lines, on the main highway. He happened to be the person in charge of engine testing at Pratt and Whitney and he was also aware of what the GB ratio. He had this house and after they (he and his brothers?) moved in they got one of the early televisions. They had it on and suddenly the screen turned dark. Well he knew that voltage was involved so he complained to the power company. They brought in a test that showed and recorded the voltage and they would come back with their results. "Finally," he tells me, he said, "Now I had brought in my own that are very sensitive to rapid changes in voltage and in fact your equipment is not. He said either you put in more power through another transformer or I am just going to cut out and put in my own electrical system. And they admitted they were wrong.

LL: Interesting.

GE: That's what those big companies do. They, they will try to convince you as a consumer that you are wrong and they are right.

LL: Did you as a Specialist travel to other parts of the country?

GE: Not a great deal. I went to several conferences. I used to go to the "Outlook" conferences in Washington and come back with printed material for dairy and poultry. Those were major enterprises and obviously received most recognition, so much of my programs were oriented towards those two, although it wasn't exclusive.

LL: I was wondering if you found that the farmers here were much different than other farmers in the country, by talking with other Specialists?

GE : Well, of course I think many of them in the other parts of the country, where there were bigger farms, were probably more business oriented than our people were in many ways. That's not to say that our people had their heads in the sand. They just had bigger operations, more expenses and obviously when you talk to people, their grain producers were dealing with futures markets. Our farmers didn't even depend on this. So there was substantial differences

LL: Were there... did we have many people who took advantage of any of the special programs that came from the Federal level?

GE: Oh yes. We had the ASC programs, Crop Conservation, later Crop Insurance. I never had very much involvement with Crop Insurance because it was just coming in when I retired, but it became a more important consideration in later years. But certainly the conservation programs of all natures were actively participated in. They had the dairy buyout, farmers appeared interested and some of them did sell out; a period of being out of the dairy business and some of them went back in after.

LL: Some of them became other kinds of businesses too.

GE : Yes.

LL: Do you have any feeling for what they changed to?

GE: I can't think of offhand what they might have gone into. I know of the Steam' s Farm in Scotland they had beef cattle their son' s came home and in fact in the dairy business when

LL: When they came home from college? Or the military?

GE: Well, one worked down in Virginia and I think the other one had a small repair business. One became a lawyer and he is still part of the farm.

LL: This goes back again as to how a farm is passed on. Did you deal much with the estate taxes?

GE: I did try a lot with estate planning and that was done primarily through programs that we had on different forms of business organization such as incorporation, partnerships and the consideration of passing the farm on from the parents to the next generation. That became a very substantial program and it kind of ballooned in terms of economics. Elsie Fetterman was a Specialist in Home Economics and she didn't do much work with it so kind of carried the ball. It ultimately ended up with many of the Home Ee. Agents interested in the programs. We had a series of programs over several years, in which we invited in attorneys. We had representatives from the bank trust departments participate and one of the largest names we ever had was in - - - - -when we had over 300 people come They were people not necessarily interested in farms, but just general the laws and regulations, regarding estate transfers and planning and what to do and not to do. So it began a very substantial part of my program, even though it wasn't strictly limited to agriculture, but it started in that way.

LL: Did you see over the years any... going back again to passing on the farms... where there any trends? I've come across people who, men who worked beside their fathers and eventually were taken in as partners and men who worked beside their fathers and their father wouldn't turn anything over to them and they finally left their father' s farm. So there were some distinct differences with the dads.

GE : Yes, you had situations where sons worked along on the farm with their parents and they were never given any responsibility. All the decisions were made by the father or, father and mother. And at such time the son may have taken over, he really just was very much at a loss as to how to keep up the business. In many cases it

was the ultimate failure of those farmers. But, then there were other farms where the parents couldn't do enough for their sons and son-in-laws. It wasn't even necessarily the sons, but son-in-laws as well. There was a wide variation in the changing of responsibilities in time.

LL: Did you see... did you experience any other kinds of changes? You were there thirty. Now you came in after the war, so all those farms' people were coming home from the service.

GE: Right.

LL: Did you see things that happened with all the men coming home from WWII?

GE: Well, many of them probably never went back to the farm. It depended on some family circumstances. Generally if they had been working on the farm prior to during the war years and were of draft age, if the farm was sufficiently large they might have been deferred so they didn't serve in the armed forces. On the other hand there were others here who remained for one reason or another. Some didn't qualify, had not stayed close to the farm. They went into the service and some of them did come back on the farm. Often other types of employment were a factor.

LL: You came to campus in '48?

GE: I came back to graduate school in '46.

LL: '46.

GE: That's when the veterans were all back, late summer of '47, I should say because I, I got my degree in '48. I reinstated in February of '46 to September of '47 and then I submitted my thesis the following year after I left to go into GLS.

LL: What does GLS stand for?

GE: Grange Lead Federation. And that's what merged into the Eastern States.

LL: I think Joe Ruwet gave me some Farm Bureau materials and I think in that, it was the Milk Producer's Association, I have seen something of when the two merged.

GE: It was, Connecticut Milk Producers and there were some other small co-ops prior to that that ultimately led to, CT milk producers who became part of AgWay.

LL: What do you think you enjoyed the most about being in Extension?

GE: Well, I, I think it would be primarily where people had concerns and you had information that would be helpful to them. They were very appreciative. They would come back at future periods, from time to time, if they had more questions. So you felt as though you were really helping people to do what they wanted to accomplish. On the other hand, you find people that at a point in their business, had to do something beyond what I as an individual was capable of doing, such as when a family decided they wanted to incorporate the farm. It was something beyond my abilities and I had to know that it was time to tell them to find a particular Counselor to accomplish it.

LL: Do you find that many of the people were working off farms?

GE: I can't think of too many that worked off the farm, but I'm sure there were some.

LL: Did their wives work?

GE: There were often times wives who worked off the farms, school teachers and secretaries. But I can't say, offhand, people who could be called part-time farmers. I'm sure there were.

LL: One of the interesting things that I've uncovered is that CT has always had a history of part-time farmers because rural areas are actually quite near the cities.

GE: Yes.

LL: So they never had to travel too far. They might have even been night shift people who farmed during the day and then had jobs in the defense industry.

GE: I'm sure there were, but those were not usually the ones I had contact with because... you see if they were working off the farm when I was making the rounds with the County Agents, they wouldn't be home. They would be working, even if they worked the night shift they wouldn't come to a meeting.

LL: Uh huh, right. What was your association like? How many County Agents did you have?

GE: Well there was a County Agent in dairy, one for poultry, in each of the 8 counties. It was only in later years that they began to merge county programs to regional programs and it was more or less after I had left. As you know now, we have what, two dairy agents and no poultry agents. Anybody in the poultry business today, they work directly with the poultry section of animal sciences, Mike Darre.

LL: Now you said they have a connection with the industry... some I found go, if they produce for a particular company, they go to their consultants.

GE: Oh, absolutely. They are under some sort of a contract with the large poultry companies. These companies control how management practices are conducted. Really the individual producers are laborers in all practical purposes. Yes, they do have the best facilities but you really have no control....

LL: Why do you think people stay in farming? You mentioned your uncle, did he eventually sell his land for development?

GE: He sold it to the town. He had a life lease of the house. A portion was sold by the town to a Baptist church which is on _____. And part of it is used for community gardens. Some portion of it is on a steep hillside so that is used for skiing and sliding and its right there in the center of Vernon. So I'm quite familiar with what happened in land use. Probably eight left of fifty-seven. I'm quite committed with Rockville and Vernon areas. My parents originated in Rockville. But I could see when I moved there in 1948, for many years, I could see what was happening. One of the neighbors who was a very good friend of my uncle had another dairy farm, he kept talking about his son and grandson and their futures on the farm. I said, "They won't be here." "What do you mean?" I said, "You are not going to have a farm." The reason I stayed as long as I did was, my uncle had spent a considerable amount of money for remodeling a house where we lived. I just hated to "pull the plug" and say, "It's time to go," because he wouldn't have agreed and didn't really agree with me when I left. I tried to pull him out, there was no future there.

LL: How many head of cows did he milk?

GE: Maybe, about twenty-five. He had his milk processed by another dairy. He had to obviously, along the way, go to pasteurized milk. But it was very hard to convince him, there was just no future in dairy at his size.

When there was land that was available for sale he wouldn't take advantage of the opportunity to buy it so it went into development.

LL: So this is before development rights were...

GE: Yea, oh yes. "Development rights" came later. Even that, while it's been popular in terms of application, there's just in a very limited amount of dollars appropriated. And even though open space... I was reading the other day in the local paper where many people never heard of the open space program. Some subsidiary committee to the Parks and Recreation called the Agriculture Land. What we have been doing is surveying the property owners that own the land and classifying it for what its potential might be. Well, this has not been published. I think its being formulated in records and mailed and may be the cornerstone of the program in the future. I don't know what it entailed. But, it evaluated different farms and the size of them, whether they are being pressured from development, looked for physical capabilities of the land and so on. I'm sure there are other things that would be the same.

LL: I've heard there are a couple of towns that are focusing on trying to maintain the rural "feel", if you will.

GE : Uh huh.

LL: Lebanon has a big program.

GE: Yea. Well Bolton is going to, from what I read in the paper. I know the farm, those in Bolton are supposed to consider. The town was supposed to be buying the farm for 1.2 million dollars, but it's a matter of where the town is going to get the money to supplement what the State can contribute.

LL: Uh huh.

GE : As you see, one of our farms here in town sold for development rights and more recently one was purchased by one of the sons of one of the . It's now being rented to a dairy farmer. Whether this renter will buy it, I don't know. He is obviously not incorporated to any out the operation there with accreditation.

LL: I was surprised to hear how much leasing there was done...or extra parcels bought. How that came up was Rich Minert had talked about how difficult traveling becomes on the road between pieces of property in a developing area.

GE: Yes it was. Well, you see as an example, when Steams came down these narrow roads with a big harrow, there is just no way there is two-way traffic, it's one- way.

LL: Between fields and?

GE: Yes. Yep. And they have had opportunities to rent land elsewhere, but the problem with transportation is the limiting factor. Trying to transfer some of the different equipment.

LL: How expensive is some of the equipment?

GE: The tractors go for \$100,000. The field harvester is \$25,000 and more. It's a great deal of money.

LL: Do people ever share buying equipment?

GE: Not a great deal. There are a few custom operators who come in and work on a custom basis for the

owner who doesn't feel it's justified to own the equipment. I am not aware of what the circumstances are of those people. There were some big time custom operators who never however, we still have it and

LL: You mentioned before that, you said that we lived upstairs at your uncle' s. When did you get married?

GE: 1947.

LL : ' 47. And did you have a family?

GE: I had a daughter and a son. My wife died in ' 81. My daughter currently is a lending officer in a business and makes loans all over the country.

LL: She was an economics person?

GE: She majored in economics at Lunenburg College.

LL: In business?

GE: And then she got her master ' s degree at the University of Hartford in (major?) __. My son went to the University of Maine. Married a girl in Maine. When he graduated he was supposed to be in Wild Life So he worked part-time in the Forest Service as a Fire (Forest?) Ranger. That was seasonal. Other times he worked on construction. He had one more year of school and then he was married. His wife had completed school and she taught school. He went back and finished his degree in forestry. Then he worked for the Forest Service and got laid off with a budget cut. So he went to work for a paper company doing mapping. Finally a Public Lands administrator called and _____he asked him if he was interested in a position in Penobscot County in Maine, which is where he lived. He took that. He has been with them for twenty-two years. He more recently went to ask for a transfer back to forestry, as opposed to services. Whether that would go through I don't know, but he'd had difficulties with his supervisor. He has gotten along very well with other people, it's just the supervisor who is not a good supervisor.

Personally, my son said he's a fine many, but not a good supervisor. So he is deciding on making the transfer. It will still be in forestry, but it would be more working with the land owners whereas his current work has been, for a number of years, working with contractors that bid on the harvesting of pulp wood and timber from public lands that are owned by the state.

LL: Uh huh.

GE: In the last, oh five to seven years they have begun to expand in the area for camping facilities. So he has had a big track up here, backs the state park. Another phase, which he is not involved in is with the recreation department.

LL: When you were in Extension, did you have many opportunities to write?

GE: Short articles. So much of it was just estate planning.. There were two bulletins published on the estate planning. The first one uh, was about 1980 I think. Then later, (Leon Vance or Ed Vincent...cannot hear this clearly) of UMass cooperated with another upgrade of it. He wanted to get it out and if I remember, this might be in the records. It was the first publication according to Arland Mead; it had the greatest circulation of any publication produced to date. I have no idea what the volume was. It was very popular. Then, I think of some other issues. The first year was into reviews, extensively. I wanted to get a grant for the feasibility of the Port of Stonington for fishing. I am talking about whether it would be feasible to have a fish processing plant there. Basically it would be producing fish meal. And so we almost succeeded in getting a grant in some northeast regions here. He came to me and wondered if I would do it. I talked to George Whitham, who was administrator at

the time, and said I would do it if he would have control of the money, not the university. There were circumstances there. So, I did the review and of course it was not feasible to do the processing plant. I received a lot of publicity in terms of people from the outside hadn't seen much of me, before. That was kind of an offshoot style of the College of Agriculture.

LL: Applying the same kind of principles there.

GE : Yes.

LL: Like business planning.

GE: Right. And, I was intent on not having the funds in anybody else's hands, because there were other occasions.... They had a foreign program of bringing, uh I forgot just what agency it was, but anyway the Dean was involved and of course we worked for twelve months. In many cases the other faculty members worked nine months and then they would hire on to special projects sometimes. We couldn't do that.

LL: That was an Extension regulation?

GE: ... there were groups of foreign students would come in from foreign countries and uh, set up some portion of their program so, the Dean had that. That always provoked me because it really was money that belonged to Extension personnel and not to the Dean's kitty to do what he willed. That's why I was so insistent when they had this grant for the Stonington Project and that George Whitham was to be in control because George was an excellent administrator and would tell people like it is. He didn't like to do that.

LL: Uh huh. Were there any other frustrations that you remember during your time? GE: Well, it became very difficult, of course you couldn't get promoted. I got promoted from an assistant to an associate in five years. And that was because of Paul Putnam. He was the Department Head. He had forty years or more as the Extension Economist. Then he became department head and it was...

LL: That's when you were hired ?

GE: Yes. He wanted to keep a foot in the door yet he had other responsibilities. When I first came it was very frustrating because you really couldn't sign your name without asking permission if that was all right. He always did the income tax work and set up the programs and so forth. He did for a couple of years. And as I recall he finally came to me and he said, " I can 't do it any more, you just have to take it over." I said, "Okay I will. I would be glad to." But for a long time he really, he had his finger on everything. Then he put me in for tenure at the end of five years. The rule book says you must have tenure by the end of the seven. I did not know what he did and it was rejected, because I hadn't served long enough. He called up, he went down to the Dean and he told Young, who was the dean, he said, " I want to resubmit his name." And the dean said, " I'm gonna call Al Wall and tell him.

LL: Al Wall?

GE : Yea, he was the Provost. And, Al said, "He hasn't served long enough. He 's got to serve longer. The "rule book" says by the end of the seventh year. But he said to him, " I don 't care what the rule book says, it doesn't say he can't have tenure at five years, it says he must have it by seven, " and he said, " I'm sending his name down." And he did and it was approved.

LL: Because all the committees up until Wall had said, "Yes." I guess that was the policy.

GE: And then of course to get promoted to full professor was a different story because there was no way I

was going to make it. Some of the people in the department favored my promotion without a PhD, others didn't. And the Dean, in my opinion of course, insists what he wanted to accomplish. In fact he was pretty insistent consistent. That was quite obvious. So it ended up I took a sabbatic leave in '63 for one year...thirteen months. I went to North Carolina State and did the course. I had talked to the department head there before I left. I had applied to several other places. The response usually was, resign your position with the university. I wasn't about to do that. I had two small children and I wasn't going to resign what I was satisfied doing. I talked to the department head at NC State and he said, "Well why don't you come to an interview?" So I went down, talked to the person who was to begin as my advisor. I didn't say anything to him, but he apparently was told that I was going to stay there one year. And he pretty much said, "Well if you think you are going to get through the year at NC State I will see what I can do." So I stayed for the thirteen months. The first summer session I had B. King as one of the courses. B. King was a grad student when I was a grad student at UConn. I had told him what I had planned to be doing and he didn't say that I couldn't. And he didn't tell the advisor I had. I never told anybody else in the department. I took my courses as prescribed and we had to do written exams. There were three of us that did these exams. I was sandwiched in between one who was outstanding and one who the department head hired. So, if they were going to flunk me, they would have to flunk the other person that they had hired. I passed. Then it was a matter of doing the thesis and taking the oral examinations. The oral examinations came after the written examinations and of course I never had the counseling. So I talked to another grad student who was working as a county agent in NC who was on the PhD program and I told him, "I told the advisor," I said, " I don't know if I'm going to waste my time fiddling around with this nonsense, or not." So, I talked to this fellow. He said, "Don't be foolish, you passed. And he said "What happened?" I said, " There was another fella that in a year. He didn't pass the orals and never came back. He said, " You come back." Well that's what happened. Then I had to do a thesis.

LL: You came back to CT and then went back to Carolina to take it or you stayed and took the examination ?

GE: Well, I had to go down to take the orals and I stayed a couple of days. I didn't even schedule anything. So I came back after the orals and decided on a thesis topic. I didn't know quite what to do, I was working. So in '73, it was nine years later, I uh finally had the thesis. I had taken a six months sabbatic leave and I wrote the thesis. It was on the Feasibility of Learning Standard Size. Well, I sent the manuscript down there and I waited and I waited and no reply. Finally I wrote them and said, "Time' s a wasting, my time is going to be up. Because there is a time limit on the years and those years had lapsed. Finally I got a meeting with the committee, the same because everyone was there that had been there nine years earlier. They wanted some alterations in it, which I made. So finally in 1974 I got my Doctorate. And if I had looked upon it, like I told many people it was like a union card. It made no difference in what I did or didn't do. At least what I could get promoted.

LL: Is there something else? Let's talk about... what kind of personal friendships did you hold as a result of your job?

GE: Well not real close friends, I saw people at meetings. and I always made an effort to go and visit with them to ask them how they were.

LL: Did you, did you ever stay over night when you went out-about the state? When you went out with County Agents did you come home or did you ever stay at people's homes?

GE: I would come home.

LL: Some people stayed at people's houses.

GE: No I used to, when I had day meetings and night meetings in Litchfield, with Jeff, I often times stayed at his home for dinner and then I would go home. Often times I would come home like at 1:00 in the morning having an 8:00 class.

LL: What percentage of your time was Extension what percentage teaching?

GE: Well it was 100% originally and then when I took on teaching in the two-year course it was supposed to be ninety and ten. Then when Irv Fellows retired and I took over his farm management course it was forty percent. Mark Kottke was the Department Head at the time and I said it should be eighty and twenty. And he wouldn't put it in as 80 and 20 and uh, Ann Rideout complained. She and Mark Kottke told her he said you just _____
_____. So that's what it, I used to report on less ____

LL: Laughs.

GE: It was a farce. I told George Whittman from the start I said it's a joke and if you want numbers I will give you numbers and so I did.

LL: So if you had to do this over again, would you have stayed in the same profession?

GE: Yea, I grew up in CT and had a nice family, good kids, all my relatives lived here. I never had the urge to go elsewhere.

LL: Something just occurred to me. When was the circus fire and Paul Putnam's...

GE: 1944.

LL: So then, so she died before you came.

GE: Oh, yes.

LL: I have talked to Mrs. Putnam, the second Mrs Putnam.

GE: I remember reading about the circus fire.

LL: You were in the service, then?

GE: Yes.

LL: We haven't talked about that.

GE: Well I left school in March of 1943.

LL: While you were at UConn you left.

GE: Yes. What happen...I can go back, uh you probably won't want this on tape.

LL: Let's just see. You graduated in the spring of '43.

GE: Yes. I wanted to stay in school and I got drafted in my last year. I joined the enlisted reserve corps in July 1943. That was only to allow me, along with many others to stay in school until you finish school. Well, I came back in the fall of '42 into '43. This was my last semester and they called us to active duty in March, the spring semester.

LL: You had three months of classes, to go?

GE: Yea. I had taken the courses and I went to Bob Johnson and said, "I need nine credits." And, they gave me three special projects, three credits each. Bob Johnson said, "You come to class." So, I did the special projects. When we had to leave, other fellas, they just left. My parents never knew, my father happened to go over to the little print shop in Rockville where they were printing the graduation program. His friend said, "I see your son is graduating." He said, "I don't know anything about it." He said, "Here 's the program. I graduated on time in 1943 and many of my classmates didn't. And so that's why, when I came back in ' 46, I went in as a grad student rather than an undergraduate.

LL: When the war ended you were at Duckow?

GE: Well we were at a ----- --. I came back to the states in the fall of 1945, I was 33 years old.

LL: Your first wife is deceased. You have remarried?

GE: Yea. In ' 93.

LL: You were going to say that Paul Putnam, too, was, since he had already been widowed at the time you moved here...

GE : Yes. He was married two weeks after we were, in 1937.

LL: Anything else you want to add to the tape? We have gone through everything that was on my list of questions. Did you have any key mentors in your life?

GE : One or two. I always enjoyed going up with different agents to individual farms, not part of a -program, but a particular problem. Jeff Nye, it was easy to work with him. Jeff was-always interested in learning. He would have me come out doing income tax programs and he would be there for every minute of the program so that he could have his own program in other parts of the county.

LL : Uh huh:

GE: Which, no one else did. And then of course he did a lot of income tax returns...

(End of Interview)