

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

Interviewer: Luane J. Lange, CANR, Extension

Name of Person Interviewed: Shirley Ferris, Interview #1  
Date of Interview: June 18, 2003  
Draft #: R-1 January 27, 2020  
Transcriber: Charter Oak Scanning, Adam Smith  
Contract Firm: Charter Oak Scanning  
Interviewee Address:

LL: [Lou Anne Lang] interviewing [Shirley Farris]. We are in Newtown Connecticut and there's snow on the ground on this day in April. [Laughter] A little bit unusual but maybe not. [Shirley], thank you very, very much for agreeing to do this. Only I knew on a farm yourself that you have other reasons why this interview is in play. So, let's talk about first, when and where were you born?

SF: Okay. My birth certificate says Danbury Hospital but the doctor tells me I was born at home, and my mother and I had been rushed to the hospital. She was home working. Tells me that it's the very last home delivery he ever made because he barely nearly lost my mother. So, I really was born in Sandy Hook Connecticut, which was a suburb village of Newtown, maybe five minutes from here.

LL: What were your days like when you were growing up? Were you raised on the farm?

SF: No. We have about a quarter acre. My dad was an assembly line person in a factory working in plastics, and then later on toward the war, he worked on in [Unintelligible]. I'm the last one of nine children, and I always say I think my mom just got tired of raising kids because at the time I was five or so, she decided that they had to be more to life than what she was experiencing and she went off to learning how to do what we call today, a licensed practical nurse. She became very good at geriatrics. When she finished school, she got some very good jobs that at the time and earned very good money. Unfortunately, she became quite ill not too long after that and she didn't last very long. But, for the period between maybe when I was five, six years old to the time that I was about 10, 11, the rule of the house was getting home before dark. That was the only rule at the house. I grew up in a neighbourhood where there was a bunch of kids my age, most of them were boys. I was a tomboy. I spent most of my life as a youngster jumping off, what we call a [Unintelligible] it goes over and there was a tunnel, and I can remember summers, there's a hotdog stand down there, and if we would pick up the litter in the parking

lot, we'd get a hotdog, an ice cream cone, something to drink, and a bag of potato chips. So, we and several of my friends would go down and we'd clean up the yard and we'd get our hotdog, etcetera, and we'd go down and eat it up down by the river and I spent the whole afternoon jumping in the river, and just had a great time. A very independent kind of a time. We learned how to make fun for ourselves. We've learned how to take care of ourselves, to look out for each other. I guess we've had a very independent kind of an upbringing.

LL: When did your first – then you said you've found your way into [Unintelligible] at the time you met your husband or was there another connection there?

SF: Well, kind of. We all have a huge garden and so gardening was always important to us. We had a pig that we raised with the neighbor. We had some goats. My brother was doing FFA, at that time he [Unintelligible], and they had a heifer – Honey the heifer, who, for some reason, couldn't get bred. So we had Honey around and I used to leave Honey and – I have red hair, and she was a Jersey so she had red hair, and we had this dog that had reddish hair, Tarzan is the dog, and so there was a little pasture area that we used to take the heifer to. As I got older and my brothers got bored with this heifer that would never make a calf, [Laughter] they sort of turned it over to me, and my brothers got interested in girls, and so the dog became mine, and the folks used to laugh about the three redheads [Laughter] going down the road. I'd take the cow down to her. She never get to be a cow to help her down through the lot and I'll put her in the fence and that kind of thing, and then me and the dog would go down and head home. So, it was just a good feeling about animals and having a very large garden, and we worked in the garden. Our family worked, the children worked. We had chores to do and if you wanted anything at all extra, we found a job. I remember when I was in eighth grade, I wanted an accordion and my dad said, "That's cute. How are you going to earn a money for it?" [Laughter] I was eight years old or am I 13 years old, something like that, and in eighth grade, I was only 15 years old and – I thought the only job that I thought that I could get was paper route, and right about that time my nephews had a paper route and they didn't want to give it up so I took it over. So, for a year, I was a five-mile paper route, and except those Monday mornings, I walked that every day, and it did quite well. Within a year, I had that accordion paid for, and the lessons too, by the way. I never did learn how to play that thing very well, [Laughter] but it's a beautiful accordion. It's a red mother of pearl with a [Crosstalk]. I have a lot of fun and, even today, I'll be like [Unintelligible] [Laughter] because I'd never did learn how to play it, but I have a lot of fun. That paper route taught me a lot. Some things seems like it's impossible. I've got so that at the agency, I was kind of product, the first-degree human history. You figure out what you want and then you figure out a way to get it. So, that pickle is my way to get an accordion. My sister and I, she was older than me. My youngest, the one closest to me, maybe six years older than me. So, she was that much older. She had a job. So, she was able to pay for her accordion that way, and not too long after that, she got a car, and so I didn't through the place where we both left feet together and it was a lot of fun. Dad took us to Danbury big circuit thing. [Laughter] We've had to learn how to deal with those kinds of guys that would hang out in the big city and those kinds of things. All those kinds of things made me a very independent kind of person.

LL: Among your brothers and sisters, how many girls and how many boys?

SF: Five brothers and there were five girls but one died in stillbirth.

LL: Any twins?

SF: My brother told me that I'm a twin; that my twin died. I asked my dad about it one time and that was after my mother had a series of very severe heart attacks, and his response to me was, "I'm not going

to talk about it. Go and ask your mother.” So, that says to me I must have gotten because, otherwise, he would have said “No.”

LL: Your mother was a twin?

SF: Yes. My mom was a twin. Her twin – unfortunately, the story that I hear is that the two of them were on a blanket on the lawn and a snake bit her twin and he died, but I don’t know. It’s family lore that I had a twin but I never was able to verify with my parents but I...

LL: Now, you have grandchildren.

SF: Then I have twin grandsons.

LL: So, maybe there’s a [Crosstalk].

SF: I think there’s something along that line.

LL: When did you meet your husband? I’m still trying to track [Crosstalk]. [Laughter]

SF: My brothers were always in FSA until I got exposed. I had one brother who worked on a farm – I can’t remember the name of the farm right now. It was a really important farm at that time. It was during the – I can’t remember. I think it was up in Roxbury. I used to go with him and just hang around the barns, and I remember there was one time when there was this really good looking animal and that’s when I went in the pen with him. The next thing I know my brothers got me by the hair pulling me up over the fence. They said, “That’s a bull. Don’t you ever go in there again.” [Laughter] So, I just always liked the animals in - I didn’t like them in a fuzzy kind of way but I just liked the animals and, as I said, we all worked hard in the garden. So, that kind of was kind of natural.

I met my husband in high school. He was probably the senior, or junior or senior, and we were both on a talent show together. He plays the guitar and sings, and I play the accordion very badly. [Laughter] Some time or another, we hooked up there. Then we had a mutual friend who – she actually liked Charlie’s brother and wanted to if they could meet his brother, and get a little more tangled up with his brother, and so she cocked up this idea that we’re going to double date, and she had me going with the brother that she actually wanted to meet, and she was flirting with my husband, and all of this is very much looked upon with [Unintelligible] by the two mothers. So, we get to the experience and the dancing and I’m hot and I’m thirsty and Charlie is the one that notices that I’m thirsty. [Laughter] So, he goes and buys a soda and it was right there. [Laughter] My savoir. [Laughter] So, that was the end of the [Unintelligible] [Laughter] with Charlie. So, we just got to know each other, I guess, his last senior year. He was always a very shy kind of guy and kind of come in to himself in that last time [Unintelligible] and I was always too forward and [Unintelligible]. So, they really said I was 10 going on 25. [Laughter] It just kind of grew. It just kind of blossomed then by the time I - I think that was in April of my senior year – it was April of my senior year that we became engaged, and then we were married the following October after graduation. So, it was – he’s like been the one forever.

LL: So now, this is his family farm?

SF: Yes. This farm – there’s not [Unintelligible] Farris Farm. The Farris Family has been involved in Newtown from the very start. There’s no one over that way that was granted actually through the Farris Farm again to [Unintelligible] and thank you for helping us out on this time. This farm was purchased by the Farris’s in 1864, I’m pretty sure. It’s either 1856 or 1864, for some reason, we never [Unintelligible].

This used to be a family named Sheppard. I think that the big light farm house, there's a section of that house, looks to me like that was just the first little part of the house, and then they got added on to, and then that very large section that looks like what everybody thinks of when you think of a New England farm house, that was actually not built until 1848. That's a person named [Heart] Sheppard lived there. This house was owned by a person named William Sheppard. This house is in entirety. It's stable [Unintelligible] house and a lot of people think it's an old carriage house, and old barn, or whatever, but we know it is not because of the [Unintelligible]. Once like the Historical Society got very interested in this [Unintelligible] and they dated it no later than 1720, and there are some people that think it was really more like 1690, or something like that. When - it was not lived in for a long time which is probably was a good thing. I don't know what the history of it was prior to them but I think it was 1903. One of my father-in-law's aunt, I believe, encountered small pox. So, they moved all the rest of the family, and I guess that a year or two, they all went back over there again. I don't know whether she lived or not, I never heard that story. But, except for that time period, as far as we can tell, from say 1900s until when we restored in about 1961, no one lived here. We have chickens live in here, [Laughter] and that place got to be kind of a storage place, and it had gas cans in my kitchen. This room, I had chickens in it. It got to be - garbage got thrown in here, all kinds of things like that. We got married in '69 and, by about a year or so, we lived with my dad, and my dad got old and grumpy. I don't know how I put up with him, but I just said I just didn't want to stay there anymore. So, we were very young and very poor, and we had no hope of building a new house. So, Charlie spoke to his dad and said, "[Unintelligible] little house on the farm, do you think we could do that?" His dad was willing and so we went to the bank and asked them for a mortgage, and I remember the president of the bank come and he would not come in the house because the floorboards were so bad. [Laughter] But, apparently, the lady on this house had died and that they didn't get the mortgage. So, we rented up a guy who restored homes versus remodelling a home, and I had no idea of the value of this place when we started but not too long after we got in, this giant of a man came along and "What they hell are you doing in here?" Kind of thing. [Laughter] I was, "What's it to you?" [Laughter] But, anyway, he says, "I want you to understand what you have here." He took my hand and rubbed it across his palm and [Unintelligible], and things like that. So, then I began to have a feel for - it wasn't just a house to fix up. It was a house to take care of. Not long after that we got introduced to a man named Walter Collette and his wife, and I can't remember his wife's name. But, they were really interested in this. They owned the house which is now owned by David Smith who is the son of Scarlet Smith, the publisher of the Newtown [Unintelligible]. They were so into it. Their whole downstairs had no electricity. The only place that had electricity was the kitchen. Upstairs, most of what we electrified had candles and stuff. They had some of these old paints. They introduced me to the idea of taking paints, which really was a powder that we mix [Unintelligible] and turpentine into to make a paint. So, we did some of that kind of stuff, and they introduced me to the Williamsburg paint which they said were the closest to the true colors that you could find, and just generally got me interested in [Unintelligible] and [Unintelligible] stain, and things like that. So, as we go along, they said, "I don't know that I want to leave it exactly the way it is but we want you to not change anything you can't get just change back easily." So, that's kind of what we did. Since we did this - paint that wall and see across. You can see right here the [Unintelligible] [Audio Gap] got me into the farm and...

LL: What kind of farming did you do?

SF: It's dairy farming. He had been raised in a dairy farm. This was a dairy farm. His parent's farm was a [Unintelligible].

LL: His dad was a dairy farmer?

SF: Up until about 1930 - 1935, his grandfather was an apple grower. The story about of the grandfather who had an enormous hand based on - and I never met him. His [Unintelligible] [Laughter]

but if he could like pick a bunch of apples with his hand. He had enormous hands, a very tall man, and he would pick apples and take them to Bridgeport and sell them down Bridgeport. A lot of the agriculture in this part and a little further south in Newtown went this way. My family has never been particularly good [Unintelligible] but there's a district in Newtown that's called the Palestine district. It is used to be called the Palestine district and there was there a Jewish family, and a lot of them were dairy farmers and they would take enough with the [Unintelligible]. We are now the last dairy farm, not only in Newtown, but in Fairfield County. But, prior, they were calling 20/30; a pretty good size for the time, dairy farm, and some of them even [Unintelligible] but we're the last cornerstone. [Unintelligible]

LL: What you're selling there?

SF: [Unintelligible] or close to [Unintelligible] and most of the goods [Unintelligible] everything else. I think most of the books [Unintelligible].

LL: How many acreage do you have out there? How many cows do you have out there?

SF: We are milking around 70 cows. It's a small farm for Connecticut. It's about average for doing one but it's a small farm for Connecticut. It's as large as this farm will come away. We have less on the farm now, about 80 acres. About 25-30 of that is very rich tillable land. The rest just want to knock things out, which is good to pasture, but not good for a crop. We rent something like between 215-300 acres. Some of it is nearby on the old original farm. Some of that pulled over to us. Until his grandfather died, he left in his will, some pieces of the land and that uncle [Unintelligible] he still rents that land [Unintelligible]. Then we have toward [Unintelligible], there is a lot of [Unintelligible] and they want to pick [Unintelligible] and the way they pick in and help them pat down into your head. So, most of us may have that way. We raise corn on our corn field and then we raise hay in all these other places. So, it makes for a very long summer. [Laughter]

LL: How far away is that? How do you get to that?

SF: Twenty miles at least.

LL: And you keep your equipment down there? Do you have to [Unintelligible]

SF: There's one or two places where it's safe to keep these things, but mostly, we go back for it, but they figure how to – they found a place just with doing it – we've got a round baler about five years ago like that living for and that really speeded up the whole thing and we've got the – it's the baling thing we put plastic around here, so you really have grass piles in there. What that means is we don't have to wait for sunshine and weather, if it's a little bit iffy, we can still do it, and that helps you keep the freezing going and keep the nutrition where it should be. So, that's been a great innovation. How I got involved with farming is definitely through my husband. I mean, we did stuff at home, I was used to working hard in the garden. I was used to animals. I was not used to milking a cow twice a day, seven days a week, whether it's Christmas, Easter, or you've got the flu. [Laughter] That was the big surprise as [Unintelligible]. I mean, my dad was very hard and when he looked around the house during the weekend so there was never any poking around and leisure time when you've got these things but there was always a break, not on the farm. So, that took a little bit of adjusting but the [Unintelligible] loves this project. So, by the time Charlie got to high school, the farm has kind of gotten into financial difficulties. When he took it over, he was determined that the farm wouldn't fail, that it was a thing to look good and that it was going to produce good living for him and his father. So, that's kind how we spent our early years. I think that it was 17 years and it was 17 years before we had a vacation. That was two days. I thought it was like wow [Laughter] [Unintelligible] with sister and her husband.

LL: You have how many children?

SF: Five.

LL: Five children and when did they start arriving?

SF: Let's see, Charlie in '61, [Unintelligible] in '64 [Crosstalk] 1961. Okay. He was born in 1961 and [Unintelligible] was our only planned baby. I took birth control pills but here is, and then there was Colleen two years later, almost two years [Unintelligible] two years later, and then there was Brennan like 17 months later, [Laughter] and then there was Aaron, a couple of years after that. We had them close and I would have never done it differently. I have [Unintelligible] because my mom got sick so early in my – I mean, I was seeing to my mother's bed pan when I was 14, those kind of things. So, in a way, I kind of missed out on teenagerhood. So, as my kids were growing up, I had my teenagerhood with them. It was really fun. It was really a lot of fun. I thoroughly enjoyed growing up with them. Just completely thoroughly enjoyed it. [Laughter]

LL: I do awkward, yes.

SF: We had a great time but very, very hard and the farm is now supporting for the family, and also the joys and once they all had [Unintelligible] from the time they were five, six years old. Usually, the first chore was milking – not milking - feeding the cows, and they kind of liked that, and that's the biggest chore that they have to do but I can't imagine a better way to build the finish line. It was important that they did their job because if they didn't do their job, an animal was going to suffer, and if the animal suffered, it wouldn't grow up to produce milk, and then the whole family income was going to suffer. So, it taught them responsibility but we had a lot of fun. A lot of fun doing what we're doing. At one point in time they move the family. So, as the kids got to do more of the chores, I was able to take pictures of them. [Laughter] My eldest son is a comic. I mean, he just is so funny. I had one that I remember he's got a stick in his mouth like it's a big old cigar and he's twiddling around [Laughter] in a tractor, and they could say to them. So, it was always just a lot of fun. Somewhere along the line, this imaginary family got infected. [Laughter] It was always happy, and all of a sudden, [Unintelligible] or something about it. I have no idea where this page – where they go. [Laughter] To this day, once in a while, I slip and call my son Fenwick. [Laughter] It was hard work but it was fun too, and that's just been a little accomplishment. It's just a marvellous feeling of accomplishment. Then as they got older, the first three decided they wanted to into [Unintelligible] no longer has it. My other son is really good with the guitar so I can't see he does everything else he doesn't like to, he can play the guitar with his friends. The second one was very much of kind of introvert, kind of the loner. She had a really hard time getting to her teenage years. Her mom was the most awful person in the world. I thank God that today, we're very good friends but she just really had a hard time. The third one decided that well, because her dad was [Unintelligible]. So, she built that kind of career for herself and she did become president and she was the – what do you call it then – like the prom queen but whatever it is, it did not affect. All those things, she did as she went along. She paid her own way to get through college, paid her own way through grad school, and today she's the administrator of a tutoring company, doing very well. She has a gift for taking a kid that's kind of fallen through the cracks, and getting them back, getting them focused, and getting back in the school. Her job is just – she works with kids who have been expelled for one reason or another or maybe they were sick and they fell behind because they were sick. Her job is to get them back up to speed and get them back until mark, and she's doing – it's giving me shivers - to see how well she does. She's torn between - she's probably the closest family of the five, and she had a terrible time living in the farm. She lives two minutes away and her job is five minutes away but she has so little time now for the farm, and she had a tough time doing it, but I kept saying to her "God gives some people gifts and to be

responsible to use the gifts that he got us. If he had the responsibility to the rest of us, use it.” So, that’s what she does. Brandon, my fourth child, is what I call my partner. He never wanted to [Unintelligible]. Once upon a time, he was two years old, he pops in baking the corn. He just - not that [Unintelligible] he loves to feel for it. He does milk but he loves but he has an affinity of the [Unintelligible]. He had an affinity of the client in the hag. He’ll do the first one and notice that the cow is not breathing quite right. He’ll be the one to – okay, this may [Unintelligible] now. You know, that kind of thing. He’s always had the feel for that. My fifth child, he never liked the farm. He got a job in the city. [Laughter]  
Unfortunately, if you send it for now.

LL: So, as you live and was growing into your family and working in the farm, what part of the farm do you think he wants to do besides [Unintelligible] because sometimes some of [Unintelligible] had specific kinds of duties or jobs to participate. What did yours become and what led you there to be just [Unintelligible]?

SF: Well, I think how I got involved in the actual doing of work on the farm. My father-in-law became ill and somebody needed to milk his cows. My husband had his cows and my father-in-law had his cows. So, there was nobody else to do it, basically. So, I said, “Okay, I’ll do it.” I used to milk the goats by hand so I have a little bit of feel for that. So, I learned how to milk the cows.

LL: No machine.

SF: Oh yes.

LL: With machines? Okay.

SF: We had transfer systems, do you the transfer? They would pick the milk can off the cow and they’d pour it into this big bucket and then the milk goes to the milk can from there.

LL: Okay.

SF: Maybe 10 years ago, we went to around the barn builders.

LL: Oh, yes. I’ve been to some of that. They just plug in [Unintelligible] the cow rotates and then walks in just milking themselves?

SF: No. We still have the cans involved but instead of the milk going from the cow into the bucket and then we pour the milk into something, it just goes directly from the palate, the hose, into the pipeline system. It’s that the hands never touch the milk kind of thing.

LL: How long – how many years ago did you do it?

SF: I milked – I worked full-time on the farm for about six years. Probably from the time period of about 72 to about 80. About 75, 76 a neighbor lady – I don’t know exactly how we met up but she got me going in [Unintelligible], and there, I met some really fantastic women. Diane Spurtle was the first one and she – I have a quote that I can’t think on my head. Her quote was, “Making questions and question everything you can think of.” That was kind of a disturbing thing for someone who – I mean, I’m a Baptist. I’m straight laced. I’m not allowed to smoke, or drink, or dance, or anything. I don’t go to that church anymore but that’s the way I was brought up and [Crosstalk] you don’t question the president, and here’s this woman telling me to question everything I could think of. So, like, wow! Part of that led to being me land use portfolio chairman, part of that, at that time period in the late ’70s was women were

beginning to start on the farmer preservation program, so I got very involved in the farmer and preservation program.

LL: As a farmer?

SF: As a farmer and I [Unintelligible].

LL: Okay.

SF: There was a time period of about '78 – '79, I was on six different things, and I would get a call from the legislature for this bill is coming up. We need some – and I go and I hit my car. I said, "Okay, now I might be able [Unintelligible]. [Laughter] Who am I here for?" So, most of them, I would just say, "I'm here with the farmers." And it kind of go with that. Then about 1980, somewhere in that country too, I started writing columns for a couple of newspapers and magazines has been, "Oops, there's your talk."

LL: What is that time?

SF: I think...

LL: Go ahead.

SF: Hello? I can't hear you?

LL: Hello? [Laughter] You're talking about when you were there and when you're there at Farm Bureau and you said, "I was there as a farm wife."

SF: Yes. I just kind of said, "Well, I'm a farm wife," and that the whole thing got me involved in the whole legislative thing and the idea that an ordinary citizen can have an idea and bring it to the legislature and convince this body of people that it was a good idea and it would become a law and then it would become positive and you could really – but that just kind of - it got me going on that whole thing, and as I said, in the meantime I started writing for articles on papers in, and at one point, one of the editors said, "You know, you can write really well but you really have [Unintelligible] field of knowledge." At the same time, I had a friend who wrote and he said, "Why don't you go to school?" I play it at my coffee three times, I could go to the school. Well, he said, "It's just this one journalism course to sharpen up your writing." So, I did and my journalism tutor was a man named Arnold Brackman, and when I...

LL: Where did you go for the class?

SF: At Weston. His thing was well, I said, "I have with you. I had to get somewhere within half an hour to go to home and make supper." [Laughter]

LL: That's the goal.

SF: But this thing was lust is the product of desire, and I was thinking about this and I said, "Well, all right, I'll just go for an Associate's Degree. That's all I needed." And then it was, "Well, maybe I might just go ahead and get the BA. [Laughter] It took me six years but I got my BA, and along the line, it was just too hard to do all of those things. So, I left – I was president of Farm Bureau, I take on the Farm Bureau and I really was involved. When I started the Farm Bureau, I was on the State Board of Directions, and I just said I can't do all of this stuff and study and take care of kids, and so I dropped out of all of those kinds of things and just devoted myself again to go to school and [Unintelligible] to go to

school, Dr. Bracken says, “You know, you really could write here. You have a talent here. How would you like a job on a newspaper?” “Why not.” So, I get this part-time job which turned out to be full-time and a half kind of job for peanuts. Finished up college at ’76 - 1986, graduated with honors, I might say, and about to go through, there was this newspaper job and about a year into the Brookfield Journal, there was a young woman who was deciding to run for legislature for the first time, and I was assigned to follow her campaign trail and you know who that person was?

LL: Her name is:

SF: Jody Well. So, Jody and I get to know each other because of my following her on the campaign trail and I really – she goes door to door and I follow her and people would ask her questions and she would be very candid with them and she would always never promised anything because she didn’t want promises she couldn’t do but time and time I could hear her say, “Well, I’m not sure but I will get back to you,” and I would follow-up then say, “Did she ever get?” “Yes, did it back and she did follow-up,” and then at the same time, I was still president of the Farm Bureau and we had this thing called legislative dinner and so you pick the legislative staff. Okay, so Jody would come to those dinners and I may got to relate to her on a different field knowing as a farm wife, and a Farm Bureau person, versus a newspaper person. Then after I graduated and I worked there for – I gave them three years as instead of working for peanuts, it was really a gift but actually they help train me. I owe them a little bit but I went to Newtown Beat for six years. My father-in-law got really ill and I just had to stop and help take care of him, and then I got this phone call. No, then I saw that Jody and John Rowling was running, and we had a commissioner at that time Jet Plum who I really don’t see so I called Jody up and I said, “Jody, if you guys get elected. I would need to see [Unintelligible] and she said, “Probably not.” I don’t know it at the time but I don’t like the man, personally. So, [Unintelligible] and I said, “Jack’s really a great guy. You really would like him a lot,” and then she “Probably not.” Then I said, “Well, how about this one, and this one, and this one?” She said, “How about you?” [Laughter] I think she’s crazy because she asked me to do that. She said, “I want you to try it? I want you to go and do a resume up, and think about a couple of weeks, talk to your family and come back.” So, I did. I sat down and wrote the resume and it wasn’t half bad, so I brought it back to her and I remember it was warm, so it had to be like close after election, maybe it was November, late November, something like that and I heard absolutely nothing. So I said, “Well, nice try. It didn’t work.” Then I get this phone call, where I hear some place down in Stafford where I’ve never been for a benefit. Okay. [Laughter] It’s okay. It might I have left. I haven’t got a single career suit. [Laughter] I’ve got thin clothes and I’ve got – in the newspaper you don’t have to dress fancy. So, I was like, “Oh, my god. I can’t go for a job. I’ve got to go for some career clothes.” So, I go over to Penny’s and there’s this suit. It’s a grey kind of suit and I did this black skirt so that you could implement to. I’m trying to make something to do two jobs and that was a night before and my sister was coming up from Florida and we had to meet her at the airport and so quick I went to Penny’s, I got the stuff, throw it in the back, went and got my sister. The next morning, I put on the suit and it’s got that plastic thing hanging on it [Unintelligible] “Take it off. Do it. Take it off.” And she said, “Tell you what, you come in such and such store and I’ll pick it off for you.” Okay. So, now, I don’t know where I’m going and I’ve got 20 minutes to get there. I made it. I had a minute to spare and I opened the door and this very nice gentleman said to me, “Oh, would you like to [Unintelligible].” [Laughter] So, that give me the chance to kind of – so I had that interview and I thought it went pretty well and I asked for nothing.

And I had two more. Each one was a long, long time in between time. The last one was when the governor left with nothing and then some time in January, at the last meeting [Unintelligible] in the phone room [Unintelligible], and I’m thinking yes, I don’t know [Unintelligible]. John Well [Laughter] so I went and did that. So, smile I get that one [Unintelligible] like I said, that’s how I kind of get from having that little bit of backyard farming, I guess, interest and then marrying a dairy farmer, and then getting involved with the Farm Bureau and [Unintelligible] voters, and then going to school, and then meeting up

with Jody, and then always – I think it's ironic, though, that I called saying will they keep this other guy and it's been a [Unintelligible] kind of stuff.

LL: Yes. When you joined – I forgot to ask you about the Farm Bureau. You went in in the women's group, is that your way?

SF: No. Not at the Farm Bureau. I don't remember how I got involved. I think - we must have probably been members of the Farm Bureau. We've been members for a long time. I really can't remember how I got to start.

LL: [Crosstalk]

SF: But I do know that my first job from Fairfield County, my first job was representing Fairfield County in the State Board of Directors which is usually – goes the other way. But, I started out in the State Board of Directors, got very involved in farming preservation, and that was a very controversial.

LL: Yes. I do remember.

SF: Mary Portal was president of the Farm Bureau at the time and there were a lot of people that did not like it at all. I had a friend [Unintelligible] and thought it was Communism, and I [Unintelligible].

LL: Mary Portal was the president of the state Farm Bureau?

SF: Yes.

LL: I didn't know there could be another woman president of the state Farm Bureau.

SF: Yes. Mary was – I've been saying [Unintelligible]

LL: You said immediately followed John Well and I did interview him, and he had a scrapbook. [Laughter]

SF: You saw his, then?

LL: I saw his scrapbook, yes.

SF: Good.

LL: When you went in, you were the first woman commissioner.

SF: Yes.

LL: And the feeling on farming was changing too but then there are a lot of traditional viewpoints of agriculture. So, you were addressing a lot of things at the same time. What are your recollections of some of this?

SF: Well, as you know a very short time after the governor nominated me, even as he was going in the department. [Laughter] That was kind of like, "Wow. Thanks. What do I do with this?" and I remember individuals saying to me "Go along with it. It will be good for your career," and I'm thinking, "What career?" I know it's the home and I kept saying to Mary and him, who was the governor's lawyer

at that time. "I think this didn't make any sense. I'm trying to be a good soldier but this doesn't make any sense." And I would say this is why it doesn't make sense and then another time because it's another why it doesn't make sense. So, the first – I think I started like February, the second week of February, I actually was in the office. The first Ag Day at the Capitol was usually third week of March, somewhere. Maybe it was two days before the first Ag Day at the capital, I got a phone call from a gal named [Unintelligible] who was the Department of Agriculture liaison at the Governor's office. I got a phone call and she said, "Shirley, I have a good news for you. The Governor is going to save the agency. I said, "Good. Can I tell the staff?" because obviously the staff was all upset. She said, "Yes, you may tell the staff." [Laughter] So like Faith had a habit of shutting the door when it was anything from the Governor's office because she didn't want anyone to overhear what I might have to say. So, my first thing was like, "Whew." [Laughter] Got that, girl. So then I went to open the door to tell Faith that we could tell this – she was going. [Laughter] It was pretty interesting. I remember she had said – a friend of hers wanted to talk to me. As part of this whole thing, this young gal whom Faith had a lot of faith in. She's a nice gal and I remember her sitting down with me, and it was so funny. I must have been twice the age of this person but in political expertise and that kind of thing, she was twice my age. So she was there to, I think, bail me out. I remember she said to me, "There's two or three ways you can go about this. You can let someone else talk to you or you can speak for yourself, or you can just resign." I'm not a give upper so that actually didn't occur to me, and - what I remember what I said to her was, "Why would I want someone else to speak for me? They might not say what I like them to say." And then she's like, "What kind of..."

LL: What kind of person will speak for you?

SF: Well, I think - I remember going...

LL: Like a public relations person?

SF: No, like one of the governor's folks.

LL: Oh, okay.

SF: No. When we went to appropriations, and this was prior to Ag Day, and I remember Bill [Dyson] asking me a question, and I don't know the answer, so I said, "I don't know." He made this whole thing about, "Wow, someone who actually admit they don't know something." He asked questions about [Unintelligible] and I wouldn't answer. As a matter of fact, I kept it - I think - I finally wrote this thing and I kept it in my pocket, and I put it in here because I think it's important [Crosstalk]. I can't it right now, but what I said to them was, "What happens to the department with your decisions?" This is what I would say to the legislators. "I have been appointed Commissioner of Agriculture in charge with overseeing the orderly transfer of the functions of the Department of Agriculture to the [Unintelligible] at that time, a new department of Business and Community Development. What happens to the Department of Agriculture ultimately is in your hands." That was my way of presenting the governor's plan but not being supportive, okay. I remember Art [Dietrich] was at one of these sessions with me and he took me aside after in [Unintelligible]. It's not enough to explain what the Governor wants you to do. You have to be supportive of them. I was just like, "Nobody in his right mind would be supportive. [Laughter] So, after that was [Unintelligible] came along. He said, "Let Art speak for you or you could speak for yourself." Then, thank goodness, the decision was made and I didn't have to make that decision because – I can get in and out the door right there.

LL: People have attributed you to saving the agency.

SF: I'm not sure that's true. I attribute the saving of the agency to John Anderson's associates from experiment stations. Because they were a group of people that had nothing to gain. They weren't farmers. They weren't politicians. They were people who said, "No, this is not a right way to go." I think they were the ones that changed the minds of whoever minds got to be changed. I do feel that the governor had some bad advisers during that time period. Fortunately, he got better ones as he went along. Anyway, as I said, Sue called me, the agency is saved, so I go out to tell Faith and I said I'm allowed to tell the staff. Then I said, "We'll get a cake or something." The next thing I know, there's a party. [Laughter] We got [Unintelligible] and we got a cake and it says, "Congratulations, Department of Agriculture," or something like that. I'll never forget it. [Unintelligible] I cut the cake. I just cut the corner and took it and I said, "You can continue cutting." [Unintelligible]. Anyway, we're sitting there and Dave [Moclen] breaks out into – because she's [Unintelligible] and just kind of like – because up till that time, I think everybody liked [Jack Brown] and I think they thought I was taking the job from him and that was never my intent. I was supportive of Jack. Jack, bless his heart, when he's realized he wasn't going to retain the job, he just did and that's all. [Laughter] So I just went ahead and winged without any support at all. He did come back though as a consultant for the [Dairy Compact], which is good thing because he was into that [Unintelligible] at that time period. That's kind of how it started. I've given a lot of thought about how things might have been done differently because I was a female. I actually wrote some notes so that I would – I thought about that and I think that generally, women are more nurturing. And I think how [Unintelligible] it goes. I think because of those two things – innately those two things plus my own nature. I'm a [Unintelligible] I'm a team person. I just see someone else as in front of the camera, and so - maybe a different commissioner, maybe a man might have done things a little differently, I don't know. I think it's more just my own fickle personality than my gender, except that I do believe that women, generally speaking, are more nurturing. More giving of an idea to a person then helping them take that idea and turn it into something, versus "It's my idea, we're doing it this way, and by god, I better get the glory part." You know?

LL: Did you find – now, the State of Virginia has [Unintelligible] to several commissioners then?

SF: Yes.

LL: They're there at [Unintelligible] too?

SF: I assume Virginia too. Yes, I guess Virginia too. Yes, I believe Faith started with a guy named Wackman or Wakeman, something like that, way back. She wasn't as far back as [Gil]. Waterman – that was it. A couple of times after Gil, there was a guy named Waterman. He was there – I don't know who was next but she was there for Herman, she was there for [Blunt], she was there for John – [Penny Henderson], the pro guy.

LL: What kind of issues were facing Agriculture? You want to pursue that a little bit further before we get off?

SF: I just said that I make friends easily and I made with friends with all the staff, and some people have pointed to that as a mistake on my part, but I can't help it. It's just the way I am. I wonder if there was a time period when the men had to step back and say, "Okay, we got a female here. How are we going to deal with her?" At the same time, the women say, "Oh, boy. We got a female here." I can be more forceful. And maybe that made a difference. In my own mind, I don't think I treat women different than men. Some men I think treat women differently, [Unintelligible] a little bit. Some men try not to treat women differently but they really do. They're really happy when she falls on her face or even trips a little bit. We've got some of those, they're everywhere. We've got some that, "She wears skirt a lot." That's the way I always say, "You're a girl, you can carry things as good as... [Laughter]. I don't know if that

made a difference. Another thing, and this is really more me than it is anybody else is I'm really pretty patient. You really have to really, really bug me a long time [Laughter] before I get angry at you. I think that allows for a lot of stamping of feet, a lot of blustering, and it's okay. Somebody else might have gotten and fired somebody. I would say, "Well, he may be having a tough day [Unintelligible]." Maybe that – I mean, there's two or three people who might say, "I wish I had one go," [Laughter] because he just give me a lot of trouble later on. I was like, "I saved your job for you," that kind of thing. The other thing is, and this really isn't a womanly thing except that I came to the job as a farm wife. Harry Truman used to say, "Remember where you came from and where you're going back to." At first, I fear I was going to be there for four years and then I will come back home. Who knows what I'll be doing back home. I'll probably be doing farming again. So I always went at the job as a person who's a partner in a farm family. I didn't go at the job as a business person, although that had infer into it because private people, farm families only have [Crosstalk] . I think probably that thing more than anything else is I really am a farmer. I've done the book so I knew that part of it, but I also had a feel for if everybody kind of pitches in here, we can do the impossible. So, I think more than the gender, it was where I came from. I've always been really very independent. [Laughter] My husband says I'm way too independent. [Laughter] He'd like it if I'd be a little less independent, but always having a mind of my own and always tempered with some patience, I think was more that than being a female. But at the same time, it's really great to say I'm the first female. [Jody Well] said the day that we stop seeing somebody as a first female, we know we've been successful. That's an interesting [Unintelligible]. I got involved with the National Association of -State Departments of Agriculture commissioners across the country, there was Becky Doyle from Illinois. There was Abby Lee. There was Ellie – in don't remember the last name, from Kansas. There was Anne [Desmond] from California. When we go to NASDA on our officials meetings, we were like a horseshoe and we're lined up alphabetically, so California and Connecticut was next to each other. So, I got to sit next to Anne and I could feel the wheels turning in that woman's brain, honestly. She was something, and we differed on almost everything, almost everything.

LL: Well, California is very different. [Laughter]

SF: Yes. And she knew that she was from the farm state, you know, Iowa [Unintelligible] don't tell me, we grow more of everything that you can think of. I remember the first things that I got involved with was the Organic Standards – National Organic Standards because it's important that whatever it is, we all have the same rules. I'm not the person that necessarily thinks that anything organic is better than anything else. I have a great faith in our system where we have the safest food supply in all, for god's sake. So I don't feel that organic food is necessarily better than non-organic food, but whatever the standards are, it's got to be the same standard in California as it is in Connecticut, because if we in Connecticut have a certain standard and we have a product on the shelf, and then organic stuff comes in from Arizona or something and they've got sludge on their lemon, "Yes, it's organic but it's sludge for god's sake, and nobody knows what's in there." And now it's right on the shelf next to organics that's grown in something with dried cow manure, you know? So we went to battle on the National Organic Standards, and I guess she won. [Laughter] Recently, and what is this, seven years, six years later, it's gotten down to "Okay, we have National Organic Standards. Who's going to certify people as adhering to these standards?" So, the Department of Agriculture said, "We'd like to do it. We'd like to do that certifying." Well, here comes this application – I kid you not, the thing was six inches thick, and it had a photo of Jane [Publeki] and Rick [Kasuga] going through this application, trying – incredible, absolutely incredible. And Jane's remark after about two weeks of living with us was, "This is made for the corporate clients." So, that's what I say, I think Anne won. Most of us, when we think organic, we think some little farms somewhere, some little guy who's trying to provide a living. He's such a nice guy, he [Unintelligible]. [Laughter] You go to a stop and shop or wherever you buy organic stuff, this is probably not the case. It's probably some guy with 3,000 acres. So, whatever its worth. Anyway, got to know Anne really well, and then later on, Susan Combs, I think it is, from Texas pushed [Unintelligible]. She's a

good woman, you can see the wheels turning in that one too. I think if you know her quite as well, but because Texas is on the other side...

LL: Are they appointed? Were they all appointed?

SF: Some are commissioners, some are secretaries, some are directors. By and large, [Unintelligible] they are elected on their own rights. So they don't necessarily sing to the tune of their governor or have to agree with their governor. By and large, the northern people are appointed. Some people are appointed by some board or something. Some people are appointed by the legislator. New Jersey has an Agricultural Board and they choose their commissioner – but they're called secretary in New Jersey. In North Dakota, I believe it's likely, but it's one of the very few on the northern side. And it was a very interesting thing to watch. I very rarely would call the governor's office and say, "Would you direct funds?" Almost never. I think in eight years, it might have been three times. I guess – as a matter of fact, a deputy came on board and he saw how [Unintelligible] he said, "How do you operate?" [Unintelligible] [Laughter] But some of the other folks who were closer to their governors would be constantly on the phone, before they make a vote, they'd be calling up the governor's office to see what he thought about it. So in a way, I didn't fit either mold, do you know what I mean? I remember the guy from Georgia, the guy named Sam [Ervin, Erwin or Ervin? Erwin, I think. They called [Unintelligible]. He very often differed with the governor and was quite vocal about it. He's very [Unintelligible] [Laughter] "Why I'm here." The guy from Louisiana was another big, tall guy with [Unintelligible] and he was extremely vocal. Some of the men commissioners that I served with especially in the northeast, I really came in at good time where – I like to hear everybody's advice on things before I make a decision, and I like to listen to what you are saying. [Liam Graves] from Vermont is very vocal. I wouldn't see him as [Unintelligible]. Steve Taylor from New Hampshire has lived to almost six or seven different governors and has been a commissioner for like 14, 15 years. He always gets appointed by whoever's there. I never, in eight years, ever saw Steve make a motion, and only once seconded a motion, and that's [Unintelligible] [Laughter] to fire and he wanted to second that firing. There is a fellow for a time who was [Unintelligible]. Ed [MacLauchlan], I don't know what happened to him but he disappeared. He was a good thinker and a good writer. [Ted Ayers] from Rhode Island. Rhode Island has a division of agriculture within their Department of Environmental Management, they call it. He's a state employee, he doesn't have to answer to anybody, which [Unintelligible] in a lot of direction. Jay [Buick] from Massachusetts, was a commissioner of agriculture, placed in a division of agriculture, part of their Environmental Protection group. He was always having to defer to the government, or defer to his supervisor, what [Unintelligible]. Jay was excellent at bringing together the stakeholders, the non-department stakeholders. Bringing them to the table, bringing them to understand why this or that policy was important. So, listening to all these guys, and some of them have been in politics for a long time, and some of them hasn't been in politics but they've been in jobs [Unintelligible]. Many of them were legislatives first. [Liam Graves] and Jay [Buick] were both legislators before they're anything else, and several others on the national level were – so, just hanging out and just listening to people in this kind of – this is how that one is working at their way. I don't have the grits to do it that way and I don't have the power to do it that way, but maybe someone else does. If I can give my voice to someone else and let them go with it, and then get it done. Is that a gender thing? That may be a gender thing, too. I don't know [Crosstalk]

LL: In organizational development, community development that could be used but it's very hard for people to accept that sometimes.

SF: Some people have a hard time. So, I can – maybe one or two women like that, but most of them are men that are like that. I really do think there's something biological about not having to be the center. Not having to be the person whose idea it was and whose plan it was and whose strategy it was. I can

[Unintelligible] think of any one or two women that I've met in my life that are that way. [Crosstalk]  
[Laughter]

LL: And then, many times people say that they think like a man. [Laughter]

SF: Yes, exactly.

LL: All right, let's go back to issues. With you and Anne, what were some of the issues facing Connecticut at the time in agriculture? And then you started a whole new consumer product, your whole – the store. [Laughter] That was all new. And they said they haven't been done that way. So there were some different directions introductions that you took under your...

SF: Oh, absolutely. I think I went back over my letter [Unintelligible]. They told me when I was about to write [Unintelligible] it would be okay to talk about [Unintelligible] agency. So I took advantage of that because it's one more time you could educate. When I look at them, they boil down into two areas, I think. One is developing public-private partnerships. A really visible example is over at the regional market where when I first got there, there was a guy who has been there for a long time. He was kind of a guy where I go for [Unintelligible]. People there probably knew each other. People were going to the governor for this and that. That's where I think my patience came in because I realized they've been doing it for a long time that way and I wanted to budget but let them find that out kind of thing. As he retired, we got a new guy in, and he [Unintelligible] different. He would not accepting any favors and he wouldn't give any favors. This is the way the rules [Unintelligible] the blue book thing. You could see where his fingers gone over those statutes.

LL: And he comes from within?

SF: No, I think he's from government. His last job prior to that I believe was in federal government, he was [Unintelligible]. But he had a vision for the market and unfortunately, that's mine. [Laughter] When I first got to the regional market, there – you know, the Connecticut Marketing Authority used to [Unintelligible] regional market. They appointed somebody governor, somebody speaker of the house, et cetera. They tried to make it so that there are some farmers, some business people and some others. During my time, I don't think I would – anybody that was put in place for purely political reasons. When I got there, one of the Department of Agriculture staff was representing [Unintelligible]. Two salaries that were within the agency were coming out of the regional market, but there was only one tenant on the board. The whole thing doesn't make any sense, how – it just didn't make any sense to me. So the first thing that I did was take those two salaries away from everything in the market budget and put it back in the department where I felt they belong. And then the next thing was if we're trying to reach out to economic development, if we're trying to build within the state an understanding of agriculture as an economic engine, don't we want to have somebody from economic development sitting at the table? So I asked our staff person, [Unintelligible]. [Laughter] Anyway, then we got an economic development person sitting at the table who had a completely non-agricultural point of view. He was dollars. That was it. Along the way, some of these guys who figured there's a woman, I can see she's shaking in her boots, I can get it down to her, began to learn that yes, I'm shaking but I'm not going anywhere. [Laughter] At the same time, they didn't really want to get with the governor's office [Unintelligible] to deal with this, girl, so let's deal with it. When I took some things away, put the money back in the budget where it belongs and did some other changes, they began to feel a little more confidence on me. At about the same time, my personal look with the governor's office changed. I got this really wonderful, young lawyer who was – his family [Unintelligible]. So he didn't know anything about vegetables and fruits in the regional market, but his heart was from agriculture. He was just this kind person, and he wasn't adversarial, you know? "I see where you're trying to go. Let me help," that kind of thing. So, right about that time, one of

the governor's chief of staff wanted a plan for the future or something, for the regional market. All this is happening in that time because when they're looking agent [Unintelligible] and I interpreted those messages to being, "You better show me why the regional market should continue, and you better show me how we can continue with no money," or "It's going to be a parking lot for agency plans [Unintelligible]." So once I got people realizing that might be what was out there, and that horrible presentation isn't all that horrible, work with it. Pretty soon, we'll have the major tenant there saying, "All right, the state is not going to build my building for me. I'll build my building if they'll give me a long land lease," kind of thing. So we began to work that way and eventually, that's what came about. I think there's that three things I'm really proud of, and I think that's one of them. Just [Unintelligible] with this guy. They're not my folks. They're okay, they're lawyers [Unintelligible] and they really thought they were going to be [Unintelligible] me and I was going to [Unintelligible]. It would not stay in the ground, that's just not related. So that was the best example I think of a public-private partnership because it's private dollars on public land and the money from that building, the lease dollars from that building. We're taking and we're renovating the whole market. That was the one area that I felt bad about leaving as a commissioner because I won't get to see that the regional market has a business plan for the first time ever. The place is 15 years and it's got a business plan now. I'm leaving, David [Carrie] is going to take another position and are ready to star in the fight. They were already going back 10 years and I feel bad about that. I wish it wasn't going to happen, but – and the plans there, it's all laid out, if they just follow that plan and not worry about their own little piece of the world. But anyway, that's that. Then, down at Noe, and I have said that deputy was mostly responsible for that. Noe is an aquaculture facility down on the [Unintelligible]. The university used to own it, they want to sell it for \$500 million, and my understanding was somebody was going to build a private arena there or something. Folks in the area said this is a public place and it will stay public. They want to legally make it stay public and somebody got a bright idea around [Unintelligible] offices of the Department of Agriculture. Probably don't have enough staff now, [Unintelligible] worked with the [Unintelligible] Shellfish folks and they, with their own money and their own time, renovated that place. It's really nice. Eventually, I guess, we got \$250,000.00 from I think the state and the [Unintelligible] shellfish people got two or three [Unintelligible] from USDA and used their own money and their own [Unintelligible]. Now, there's a very nice facility. There's an algae growing thing to feed oysters and there's oysters [Unintelligible] production thing going on down there. I really didn't have much [Unintelligible] for that.

LL: Was one of the tribes involved in that one, too or was that a different thing you're trying to do?

SF: That was one of the very few tribes that I did call the governor's office and asked for direction because I kind of heard ripples of some non-agreement in philosophies between the governor's office and one of the tribes. I wasn't sure which tribe it was and so I called and I said, "Help me out here. I don't want to step in the wrong direction," kind of thing. So that went that way and that was the one of the very few times when I did ask for direction. I did it really more for the deputy because he was kind of new and I didn't want him to right off the bat, get himself in trouble.

LL: What is his name?

SF: Deputy Bruce Gresczyk, G-R-E-S-C-Z-Y-K. [Unintelligible] fellow by the way. He is now acting commissioner. I call him deputy because his name is Bruce, and we have Bruce Sherman.

LL: It's easier to call him deputy than Bruce Gresczyk? You think there are two generic areas to that. Actually, there were three things, it boiled down to two areas. The other area was education. Maybe you want to call that marketing, or education like agri classroom education or the radio shows that we did, that's more marketing I guess or public relations. I think those are the two...

LL: Was that done as much before – the education, the marketing from that kind of philosophical sense?

SF: The Ag expo, it's never been done before. That thing was born out of pure guts. There was one person in the world who could see where I was going with that and agreed to help me out. One person in the whole world. [Laughter] It came in the time period where there was an Ag summit and I agreed that people were unhappy with the way I was doing business and I was faltering, and people were worried about what was going to happen to the agency. Nobody was saying anything to me but you hear all that out there. I was going back to two things. The governor wants to eliminate this department, definitely he didn't understand the value of that department. So the legislators are even considering that they only think [Unintelligible]. The second thing was I've been for all my life. I [Unintelligible]. I thought I understood agriculture of the state and I didn't. When I got there, I realized how much more diverse it was than even I thought. I said, "Okay, here I am a person of agriculture and I didn't know what [Unintelligible] don't know about it. Those two things was saying to me, "You need to do something." You are dramatic and different than anybody else has ever done, and something that's going to pull everybody together and start on the mandate that I was given when they finally decided that we were going to have a department. Then, the mandate that I was given from the executive [Unintelligible] was to showcase [Unintelligible]. At that same time period, where the Department of Agriculture has more or less run the [Unintelligible] building of public buildings, economic development was checking in. Governor's representatives were saying, "No, we're going to run it. And by the way, agriculture, you get one booth over here. And they didn't want to give us that booth until I showed the law, but at the same time there was discrepancies between time sheets and travel sheets for my staff that were up there for 17 days of the year [Unintelligible]. So I said, "Well, this might be a good time to do something else." So we pulled back from that. There was the grit upon grit of don't tell me I can't do something. Bob no longer was king of the hill [Unintelligible] and he was looking for something new to do. I don't know what exactly but anyway he said – I don't remember his name, and he said, "Yeah, it's a lot like [Unintelligible] [Laughter]. Where are we going to get the money? I said it we would not [Unintelligible]. So he said, "One day, [Unintelligible] if it falls on his face, we're done." If I can tell you how many times I've [Unintelligible] people. [Laughter] So we set out on the day after that one and he said it's Saturday or Sunday, because Sunday was family day, so we didn't want to – or whatever. Do you remember that weekend there was monsoon in Connecticut – something happened. It poured and poured and poured. I had talked to a local reporter and filled it filling up and covering it for me. So [Unintelligible]. We were going to meet at a parking lot down by [Unintelligible] Hills, okay? There's a little book [Unintelligible] that goes under the road there, where the parking lot is and where I am. So I'm going down, an oh my word, so I had to go backtrack all the way over here, go over the big [Unintelligible] all the way around, so I'm there 20 minutes late [Unintelligible]. But anyway, we get in the car and – she didn't believe, I don't think. As we got to the exit, I said, "Look, [Unintelligible] back home soon." [Laughter] But anyway, we go up there and they've done a great job. They've set up the booths, and all the nay sayers – well, a lot of the nay sayers says, "Well, let's give her a chance." [Unintelligible] was one of them. Let's give her a chance, and I don't know. One kind of favors, Bob got with people, but he got people, and we had 2,500 people. We thought we were really doing really well with that kind of weather, we said, "Well, it was a nice day." But outside he said, "Our first try wasn't bad." So okay, then we had a meeting after where I sat down with the marketing staff, and I said, "Okay [Unintelligible]. What do you think? Would you do it again?" Well, if we do, we can't do this [Unintelligible]. But if we do, we could lose [Unintelligible]." So we did a real formal, if we're going to do it again, this is what we'll doing. And we had [Unintelligible], what could we do better? Well, if we should do it again, what could we do better and what should we never, ever do again? [Laughter] We made it on a blackboard, and we got really business-like about it. Then you would say [Unintelligible] [Unintelligible] all that work [Unintelligible]. And the second year was like 6- or 7,000 people. The last one, it was 7,221.

LL: Oh my gosh.

SF: That we counted. And I saw people coming back to us so I say 50, 60 – 7,000 points left. But we counted, [7221]. So, was that a good idea? It did all those things. I said we need get the public to understand agriculture. Not just the guy up the street who's selling a cow, that's not all of agriculture. When I came in, [Unintelligible] a lot less than the gasoline. A lot because of the compact [Unintelligible]. I think what they say it's around 500, now I think it's like 215 or something. It changed dramatically. But what I began to see was people would sell their house but they wouldn't sell their lands. The next generation who comes along says, "I don't want no cows," but I'd like to have animals on [Unintelligible] to them, I could keep my teaching job and we could do this during summer, or I don't want no cows but I like to have animals on them, so let's keep [Unintelligible]. It changed a lot and I could see that there is all these people in and I was going to the NASDA meetings in the meantime and they'd be talking about [Unintelligible]. [Laughter] So it was like, "Why am I here? Why am I selling to these [Unintelligible] if they don't talk about [Unintelligible]?" I think the northeast group kind of said, "You know what? This Fertile Farm policy doesn't have anything to do with agriculture in our area." We need to fix that. Then here comes Senator [Unintelligible]. You get a senator lady and you get [Liam Graves]. And boy oh boy [Unintelligible] now both of them are politicians and their partners [Unintelligible]. Liam decided he was going to make the best buddy out of Bob [Odem] from Louisiana. [Unintelligible] I don't know how many dairy farms they have in Louisiana, but I bet not too many of them. Somehow, Liam got him to think that the compact [Unintelligible] [Laughter] and we tried until we got to work [Unintelligible] the current farm bill, and with the whole [Unintelligible] and we tried to put dairy in there and they started yelling about the WTO, and it was going to put [Unintelligible] and all those kinds of stuff. And the guy from Montana was screaming, and the one from South Dakota, and – I mean it was – and the lady from Iowa, I bet you, she acted like a man. [Laughter]. How do you judge? She wasn't [Unintelligible]. Well, we knew our committee [Unintelligible] we knew that we had to [Unintelligible] in front of our committee to come out of that thing, because we had said at the start that NASDA has got to come out of here where everybody [Unintelligible]. Nobody is going to go to a congressman saying, "Well, it's all right [Unintelligible]. We had to come to a compromise. The whole country had to come to a compromise. And we knew that we're going to have problems in our committee, so we said, "Give us a five-hour block of time." So they scheduled a five-hour block of time for our committee...

(End of Interview)