

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

Interviewer: Luane J. Lange, CANR, Extension

Name of Person Interviewed: Mr. Al Gray, Extension Educator, CANR, UCONN
(Retired), Interview #1

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LL: October 29, 1999, Luane Lange interviewing Al Gray. Al, would you start by talking about where you were born.

AG: I was born in Plainfield, Connecticut and one of the oldest of a family of nine. I'm number three. I have an older brother and an older sister and three younger brothers and three younger sisters. We lived in a rented house owned by a former employer of my father who was a Teamster meaning he drove horses. And probably, and I'm not really clear on this, probably in the early teens my father grew up on a farm, lived on a farm in...originally in Lisbon, Connecticut. Then the family moved to Plainfield, Connecticut and I'm not sure whether my grandfather owned or rented that property. Somehow he was injured and was handicapped in the mid teens and passed away in 1915, six years before my father married. The person that my father worked for was Charles Hopkins in Plainfield who did a lot of logging, lumbering in eastern Connecticut and into Rhode Island. In fact, I can remember my dad saying that he drove teams when Hopkins logged the area where the Scituate Reservoir is in Rhode Island. The Teamster work was a long day because the Teamsters arrived at the barn early to feed the horses and get them hitched up and ready to go out to work before other persons came on the job. And when they returned at the end of the day, they had to groom the horses, water them, feed them and put them in the stall. So it was a long day. I can remember my father telling me that he drove the horses from Plainfield which was located...the farm was located on Hopkins Hill. He would go Route 14 to Westminster in Canterbury in the woods, about 8 mile driving ate am wagon and he would load up a load of railroad ties and go to the railroad depot in Plainfield. A trip in the morning, have his lunch and go back and make a second trip in the afternoon and return to the farm. That was one of his day's works.

LL: Now on this farm, what was the farm like 'cause your dad actually worked off the farm doing this?

AG: This was when my father was a young man. But when I was a lad, we still lived in the house and I might say something about this house. It was small but the house was not wired for electricity. I

shouldn't...it was wired with the wire sticking in the center of the ceiling of each room but it was never connected to the electrical lines in front of the house.

LL: What year was this?

AG: This was in the 206...I was born in 1923 and we lived in the house up until about 1939. So I grew up in a home where the heating was with woodstoves. The kitchen stove and then a parlor stove in the living room and kerosene lamps for lighting and a lantern to see to go outside in the evenings. In fact, the lantern was lit every night because the outhouse was in the woodshed and being an older one of younger brothers, the trip to the outhouse before they went to bed, I would have to accompany them carrying the lantern. Pain in the neck. At any rate, the Hopkins Farm...there was several aspects to it. The oldest son, Harold, was a cattle dealer and there was a big barn and eventually in the '30's he kept adding on cows. The big barn, stanchion barn, and there was an addition for the dairy animals and a second addition was built at...somewhere in ninety to a hundred cows were being milked by hand every day. The farm hands helped milk each morning and at the end of a day work before returning home.

LL: That was a large farm, then.

AG: It was a large farm because there were hired hands. As a lad, when I was old enough to learn to milk, my older brother and I would go up and help milk evenings. And I would milk six or seven cows every evening. And of course, had the experience of doing many of the other chores relating to the...the dairy. Such as climbing the silos and shoveling down the ensilage and going up in the hay mow and forking down the hay. Also, cleaning the stables, hoeing it to go beneath the barn and then in one, pushing it out the end of the cowshed. Also, Harold kept some young bulls and a mature bull and this was before the period of artificial insemination. And at that time, many families had their own family cow, one or two cows that they're milked by hand for the family milk. But they didn't have the services of a bull. So they would call Harold and after the evening chores were done, he would ask me to accompany him and we would go to these various homes for servicing the cows. And this was done throughout around Plainfield, Moosup, Sterling and...that area. Now the vehicle that Harold had for transporting his bulls and cattle...his father, Charles Hopkins, one of his businesses...he was a used car dealer and sold Cadillac cars.

LL: What year again was this?

AG: This was in the '30's and into the...well, through the '30's and...

LL: Where was his dealership?

AG: Right in the yard. No auto repair, just hold the cars.

LL: What town are we still in?

AG: Town of Plainfield.

LL: Okay.

AG: The town of Plainfield. What he would do is he would go into Boston with three or four drivers and he would purchase these used cars and they would drive them home. And they would be in the yard. ...many of the cars that he sought were, I believe were called, Town Cars. They were the ones, Cadillacs with the glass window behind the driver....they would cut off the back of the vehicle and make them into trucks. Put a platform body on it for the equivalent of a pickup truck today. The Cadillac was a V-8 and very reliable, dependable vehicle. Harold had one...the first one he had was made out of a...as I recall, a

1924 Cadillac. And the body in the back was large enough to carry two mature dairy animals. This was...

LL: May I stop you for a minute? Who did the body work to...?

AG: This was done by the Hopkins. They're...Harold's brothers were very handy people. It's amazing the things that were made. V-snow plows and sleds and farm trailers, using the wheels from former vehicles.

LL: Now, go back to the cows.

AG: The second truck as we called it, that Harold had, was on a 1927 Cadillac. As I remember, that was the last year that this type of vehicle was serviceable for making into trucks because they became more modern after that. But the, many folks would buy these used cars from Hopkins for their vehicles. He had other makes that he sold too, but not too many. He had about five sets of dealer plates that could be used for whatever vehicles they were driving at the time.

LL: So you used these truck to transport the bulls and...

AG: The cows and bulls 'cause Harold bought and sold dairy cows. Some cows...probably some people didn't want...they just wanted a milking cow and kept it during when it gave milk and when it stopped having milk they would go and buy another one from him that had freshened...Harold sold animals to local butcher shops who would in turn have them slaughtered to sell the meat in their retail stores .

LL: Now, would you go back? What was the relationship to the Hopkins family?

AG: My father worked there as a Teamster. But in the late 208 he worked at the Aldrich mill in Moosup CT.

LL: And you had housing there?

AG: And then we...we were renting their house. Now this was during the...206 + 306

LL: Where did the Hopkins live?

AG: They lived in the farmhouse. The farmhouse still stands although the big old barn and the three silos no longer exist.

LL: So there were several houses on this property?

AG: No just these two. Since, other members of the Hopkins family have built houses in what used to be fields, orchards and so forth but at the time I knew it, we've just these two houses. One interesting thing about the house I forgot to mention that we lived in, the running water was run probably a half inch lead pipe that came from a spring way up in the pasture and flowed gravity down into the house. And that was our running water. Went to the Hopkins house and dairy barn.

(Tape interruption.)

LL: Would you tell us...tell me about the hired hands?

AG: Some of them came from Plainfield and I believe they walked to work and one did drive in but

Mr. Hopkins would drive them home after chares...in the evening. One of the employees was a...a black. At that time we called them "colored men." George Cross, he must have walked about five miles to come to work and the first thing he did...in the morning was to clean the stables in the barn and then he would feed silage to the dairy cows and the silage was carried in bushel baskets two at a time and distributed in the manger.

LL: This is for a hundred cows now?

AG: Over a hundred cows or more right. Then he was a Teamster and he would spend the rest of the day driving his team and most days he would be on the manure spreader backing under the barn, loading it up and going out into the fields and coming back for another trip.

LL: How many horses did he have on that farm to accomplish all of this work?

AG: He had...regularly he had two teams. Two teams of draft horses and there was one light horse, a Morgan horse that had been a driving horse. The story in the family is that when my father worked as a Teamster...evidently when they were at a saw mill cutting time, my father borrowed that horse and a buggy and my mother. Interestingly, the horse...when it was about twenty-eight years old, I was thirteen at the time.

And I was spent two weeks on a dump hay rake driving that same horse and going all over Plainfield raking hay or raking scatterings. It's...it's amazing the highways that I drove that horse on and safely back in those periods. That would have been in the mid '30's.

LL: How did your father happen to become a Teamster? How do you learn to become a Teamster?

AG: I suspect that my grandfather, when he had his own farm, had his own team of horses so it was a natural progression for a son to learn to drive horses. In fact, my father left grammar school. To my knowledge, he never completed grammar school. He went to work and spent his lifetime as a...as a laborer. The interesting...one other agricultural aspect of the Hopkins Farm...dairy aspect of it...well, there are a couple things. With that number of cattle that Harold had; they were dry animals and young stock and they owned properties in different locations in town. During the spring and summer and into the fall, these dry cows and young stock would be put out to pasture where they would get their own feed from the growing grass and bushes and what have you. One of the things that Harold liked assistance doing was after a days' milking, we would go to one of these locations where a cow was expected to freshen and if she had freshened, try to find the calf. I had a keen sense and could locate the calf and was swift enough on foot to catch it. And once we caught the calf, then we could catch the cow put the halter on it and bring it back to the farm along with the calf. Now Harold didn't raise calves. He just kept them for a couple of days and back at that time there were buyers of calves that would go from farm to farm and they either sold them...well the calves were purchased for slaughter. They either had their own slaughter facilities or they would take them to a place and pass them on to someone else who would slaughter them for the veal meat. So the farmers had a market for their young calves. One other aspect with that number of cattle...a lot of corn was grown and there were three wooden stave silos on the barn.

LL: Stave silos?

AG: Wooden stave silos. They must have been about fifteen or more feet in diameter and probably went up to thirty, thirty-five feet or more. And these were filled each fall. The cornfields were a little distance from the barn because the Hopkins bought neighboring farms and used those...the arable land for growing the corn and also for pasture. The corn binder was pulled by three horses and Harold drove the horses in cutting the corn. It was bound together in bundles, and to get it to the barn the Hopkins had designed a trailer using wheels from one of their old vehicles, a sort of a flat bed and a raised projection

over the wheels and Cadillacs being a powerful car, they would hook them to one of the cars he had, or one of the old former trucks, vehicles, and they had a program one time demonstrating cutting the corn and bringing it to the barn where they had at least seven of these vehicles pulling trailers going to and from the corn lot.

Putting on a load of corn, bringing it up to the barn and there it was fed into the corn cutter which was powered by a cleat track crawler tractor that had been used in the woodlots years before. But it was quite an operation to fill these silos.

LL: Did they grow food for their family or did they sell produce? And also what were the women doing, your mother and also Mrs. Hopkins.

AG: Mrs. Hopkins just...she was just a homemaker. There were two daughters in the family but they were old enough so that they worked away from home. They were working outside of Boston area.

LL: So who fed the hired men?

AG: They...they didn't...they came and went on their own. They brought their own lunch with them.

LL: We were talking about the food on the farm. Did they grow...?

AG: No, okay. No, they didn't grow...at the time I remember, they didn't grow vegetables or other produce. It was just the hay and corn for the dairy animals.

LL: And did...do your family grow any food?

AG: Yes. My family, we always had a large garden and if there wasn't room enough on the home place, then the neighbor across the street where we lived was another farmer, he would let us, and plow for us a field so we could have a garden. Putting in the potatoes and the tomatoes and some of the other crops. So it would be a walk, quarter of a mile or more, maybe third of a mile to go do the planting and go and do the garden work and to pull the harvest crops home with small a Wagon. My father didn't have a car at that period of time. So it was all tote and carry back in those days.

LL: Where did you go to school?

AG: I went to Plainfield Grammar School and it was a mile and seven tenths along Route 12 and I walked to school every day except on a rainy day the Connecticut Bus Company hauled school children for Danielson, Killingly, first and then they would come down to Plainfield and pick up the students in the village of Plainfield and then take them on to the high school. And when those buses went by the house, if it was a rainy day, we could flag them down and use the buses to go to grammar school. But that wasn't very often. My experience was that I did a lot of hiking to grammar school. High school was two and a half miles the other direction in Central Village and the same thing. I walked to high school, to and from every day as well.

LL: Did you...were there...the makeup of your class in the schools, were they mostly town, rural? How was the...do you remember the kids?

AG: In...in grammar school, the village of Plainfield was centered around a textile mill (2A) Mill which operated up until the mid '30's. And the workers were asked to take a cut in salary which they resisted and went on strike and this ended up with the mill closing. So there were a lot of unemployed.

LL: What year would that have been?

AG: The mid '30's. The students...classmates in grammar school were basically...they're...I guess I'd better get that phone from the villages near the mill or from the rural areas.

(Tape interruption.)

LL: Okay, we're talking about the...your classmates in school, that they were mostly from the mill you said.

AG: Yes, they were. It was a mill village and this is where most of them came from as I knew them or I'm ...I don't recall any of my fellow students that, in grammar school that were from farms. The...when I was in first grade the...in the village of Plainfield, the parochial school was completed and so mid way through that year, half of the class was gone.

LL: Oh?

AG: They went to the parochial school. So we had smaller classes. I think around today's class size...size of I think, twenty or twenty-five students in the class through my years in grammar school. Of course, high school was different. High school...my graduating class was seventy-two students and two thirds girls and one third males. And there again, I don't believe there were too many from farm families. Although the students from the town of Sterling came to Plainfield and they still do today.

LL: What did you do for fun? Your leisure time?

AG: where I lived there wasn't other young folk to play with. You played with brothers and mostly my brothers. My sisters were a lot younger than me. But we just worked around the place. I...joined a 4-H Club in 1935 and I had my 4-H projects. First was handicraft, then gardening, then poultry and eventually a – swine project and I...we participated in 4-H activities. In high school I was the leader of two 4-A clubs, One in high school and one in the village of Plainfield Ass't Mgr HS Baseball and Mgr two years.

LL: How did you happen to get into that? Did someone come...?

AG: A Girl's Club was started in town by one of the school teachers...elementary school teachers and my older sister was a member of that club and when there was an opportunity to be a member of a Boy's Club, I just became one of the members. And I think it's kind of interesting that I wasn't elected to any of the offices. Each club had its own President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer. However, I usually ended up with one of those positions every year because the person who took the job didn't follow through. I was selected to take over these tasks. So I had the experience of each of the offices while I was a 4-H member.

LL: When did you decide to...well, you went off to school eventually?

AG: Yes. Let me say further with 4-H, in 1935 Windham County was one of the original Counties in Connecticut that offered 4-H camp. And somehow the money was scraped up so that I could go to 4-H camp. And it cost five dollars at that time by the way. And then it was such a great experience that I kept going. I think I missed one year, maybe the next year but the following years, I was able to attend 4-H camp and...as a junior counselor all through...up and through high school. And also when I was old enough, you had to be thirteen I believe, to attend Junior Short Course, a week at the University of Connecticut. And the summers of '38 and '39, I attended Junior Short Course and one interesting aspect of that; the first year it was Connecticut State College and the second year it was the University of Connecticut. In fact, the Wilbur Cross Library was being built at that time. So my interest in agriculture

started through my 4-H experiences. My folks had poultry, chickens, and our own eggs and we raised pigs and also we had usually ducks and at times had geese and guinea hens...guinea fowl which were quite the noise makers as you know. So I had experience with animals. And of course, we had cats and had a dog all the time too. So I had the animal experience early on. Somewhere when I got into poultry, the Poultry Specialist Miles, his wife at the poultry event, I think it was in Ashford, she received twenty-five pullets, baby chicks. And she wanted to give them to a 4-H member and I was the one selected to receive those so I raised them...my folks had a...a brooding coop for brooding the baby chicks and...the heat was provided by a lamp to give the heat for them in a hover. So we used that for those and I think the following year through a County program...as I recall, I was given fifty baby chicks and I...they must have been straight run. I can't remember exactly but that was during 1938, the year of the famous northeastern hurricane and my mature pullets were in a shelter and it just so happened that they were protected from the winds and the rain. However, the coop that they were to go into shortly thereafter was blown over and disintegrated. But the pullets...my neighbor across the street had a chicken house there was no birds in it so he let me use the...his house until the demolished coop could be put back together again.

LL: What do you mean by straight run?

AG: Straight run. Most of the chicks...when they hatch, you can't...the normal person can't tell whether it's a male or a female. Straight run means they're both mixed males and females together. And we just assume and hope they might be a fifty/fifty or...or in that aspect of it.

LL: Okay.

AG: There one ways of telling difference but that could get into the poultry story.

LL: Yeah, we'll wait. We'll get that. So when...when you graduated then...

AG: When I graduated from high school...well, I should say one other aspect of 4-H. I was evidently considered one of the outstanding members of Windham County and in...in 1940 was selected to be the male... 'cause there's a male and female from each County, to spend a week at the Eastern States Exposition in West Springfield in a program called Vail. And our responsibility was to man an exhibit in the Youth Building. It was a state project and we were expected to wear the 4-H uniform. The males in white shirt, green tie and white trousers. I didn't own white trousers. However, my parents were successful in borrowing a pair from someone in town who loaned them to me...this being 1940...well, we stayed in the Horace Moses Building, the dormitory upstairs...

LL: Is that building still there?

AG: Yes. The building is still there and it is still used by the 4-Hers as a dormitory. However, the programs now are just three or four days. It's not for the full week such as it was back in the '40's. There was a dirt racetrack and motor cycle races and auto races were the big thing. So they would whip around the track and throw dirt and dust. So it was a real challenge to keep the whites clean for a week because we had rotating duty there at the state booth. Two hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon so I was constantly going back at the end of duty time to go and change clothes and then get into clothes that I didn't care what happened to them and seeing the fair 'cause we were free to roam and see the fair in-between times. But that was a great experience.

LL: So your 4-H agents then...you had...who was your...your...?

AG: Howard Johnson was my 4-H...well, I had several. First it was Ben Cummings, then Merle Abbe and then Howard Johnson. And Howard Johnson was the agent at the time and I, because I came

from a family that didn't have financial means, I had no thoughts as to what I might do or that I would go to college. However, the County 4-H Agent sent me a letter saying that he was recommending me for a college scholarship at the University of Connecticut. So that got me to thinking that I should consider going to college. So when I graduated from high school, I needed a job. I went to the employment office and was told about a poultry farm in Connecticut that was looking for help. So this farm was about three miles from where we lived so I walked up there and asked for a job. The poultry farm...it was a combination. It was run by a father and son. The father, Andrew Laakso and it's L-A-A-K-S-O.

LL: Thank you.

AG: And his son Vak and I believe his full name was Vako but everybody called him Vak. So I was hired by Vak. Now the business had been started by... his father.

LL: They were Finnish?

AG: They were Finnish nationality. The poultry business was started by Andrew probably a broiler operation that eventually included a hatchery and it was Locust Grove Hatchery. And when Vak became older, he...he joined the father so it was a partnership operation. And a feed business was included and was called L&L Feeds. They had their own poultry rations grain mixed by feed mills in New York State and it would come by railroad car to Plainfield. Now Vak...when I went to work there, he was growing broilers and he needed someone to take care of a three story poultry house with thirteen thousand broilers in it. So I was...this was turned over to me to take care of those birds. They were about four weeks old I think, at the time. So my job was to feed those birds morning and afternoon and do whatever else needed to be done such as clean the waterers and so forth. The feed was dispensed in wooden hoppers and a coal hod was available if you wanted it. You could pour the...from the hundred pound bag of feed into the coal hod and use that to fill the feeder., However, experienced poultry people would take the bag, lift it up and pour spoon the bag and it took five hopper to empty a bag of feed so that's the way it was done. So I took care of this flock of chickens and I started working June 29, 1941 and worked up until September 9, 1941 and the salary was eighteen dollars per week or three dollars per day and it was six days a week and expected to work every other Sunday. There was another two story coop on the property and another person had the responsibility of taking care of those birds. So when you work Sunday, you took care of both buildings. So toward the end of the summer, I was dispensing over a ton of grain a day to these birds. That was the caring for the broilers other job being the hatchery, two days a week baby chicks were hatched, on Tuesdays and Fridays as I remember. And on those days, additional help was needed in the hatchery. There's various kinds of incubators but this hatchery had Janesway and Janesway were small individual units that were hooked together and they had the egg trays in the bottom and the...at the eighteenth day, those egg trays had to be taken out and the eggs candled to remove the infertiles and the ones to hatch were put in what's called "hatching trays" and then they went back into an upper portion...of the incubator. Those hatching trays had a wire bottom, basically hardware cloth and they had to be washed and sterilized before they could be reused. So new help, that was the job they got. Hatchery days was to be in the washroom wearing boots and a rubber apron washing those trays in strong disinfectant. As I recall, I think we had gloves but it was a drudgery kind of a job, not one that I enjoyed doing. But it still had to be done.

LL: When did you know you were really going off to school? Or did you go off to school?

AG: Oh, when I...I applied for admission to the College of Ag and because I hadn't taken the college preparatory courses in high school of course, I had to go in and take an entrance exam. And my score on that wasn't high enough to be accepted in the four year College of Ag. However, in 1941, they were starting the Ratcliffe-Hicks School of Agriculture and...were looking for twenty-five students. This was their allotment. And so I asked to be considered for it and W.B. Young, who was the livestock Specialist

at the University of Connecticut was assigned Director of the School and one of his responsibilities was to go to the home of each applicant, interview them and decide whether they would be accepted as a college student. So I was accepted and...

LL: So you were the first class?

AG: I was in the first class and to...I went to the university to start that fall and the residence for the Ratcliffe-Hicks students was called the Holcomb Hall Annex which was the upper floor of the farm machinery building now known as the Klink Building.

LL: Okay. Interesting.

AG: However, when I got there and learned the fee for staying in the dormitory, I realized I didn't have enough money to stay in school. However, Mr. Young knew of a gentleman farmer...I guess you could call him a farmer, in the Merrow section of Mansfield who was willing to board a college student to do some farm work on the place so this is where I lived, for P.G. Merrow on Forest Street.

LL: That's M-E-R-R-O-W?

AG: Right.

LL: I've been to their barns.

AG: You've been to the barn?

LL: Yes.

AG: Well, P.G. was quite a character. He was a graduate of Yale and a member of the Merrow family that designed the sewing machine that stitched, knitted wool together for making sweaters. And they had the machinery or industrial business in Hartford and the family lived on Forest Street in Hartford so when P.G. bought this property, on the dirt road in front of the house, he named it Forest Street.

LL: That's interesting.

AG: So, I needed transportation so my folks bought me a bicycle. So I would get up in the morning, milk a couple cows and have breakfast and pedal the bike to get to campus for an eight o'clock class every morning. Now the curriculum...it just so happens I have these notes from previous summarizations some years ago, but the eight o'clock class, the first semester these were an hour session as I recall. Began with poultry in the poultry building. Second class was dairy in the old dairy building and this was a class in manufacturing of the dairy products, ice cream and so forth. Laughter Gulley Hall now best office. Horticulture in the Gulley Hall which was the horticultural building in those days. And it was fruits and vegetables and a class in dairy production in the dairy building. A class in English which was in the Wilbur Cross Building, a library. Government which was in the library and Ag Engineering in form the Engineering Building and Military Science. Back in those days, all the males going to UConn were expected...were required to take ROTC. Basic ROTC for your Freshman and Sophomore years and that chose and were eligible, in your Junior and Senior could take the advanced ROTC and...and become officers in the Army. But it was required of us.

LL: Where...where was that held at that time? The military training?

AG: The...we had lectures eight o'clock on Tuesdays and Thursdays and it was in one

of lecture buildings. I can't remember where it was but it was one of the regular lecture...buildings.

(Tape interruption)

Major change into center returned to all's recollection of college, later. Dean Kirk's brother ...has a farm near there and I says, "Gee, you should go and visit this." But this time visiting in Ohio has been sort of limited but the Director of that Lake Park is...oh, he was in charge of the agricultural programs at Sturbridge Village. Oh, de...now, now...I think of the name.

(End of side one, first tape.)

...develop this and three or four years ago ALHEAM met in Ohio at Hiram College in Hiram OH in a community not far from Lake Park and Lake Park was one of the field trips. So I had a...that with Darwin Kelsey, he's the Director. Had a chance to visit the park and in to talk with Darwin on his philosophies of what they had intended to do and what they were doing. They cater to school groups coming out of Cleveland so it gives these young folks a lesson in old as well as present day agricultural food producing methods which is what I think you'd like, place to know about.

LL: Well, you know, the...as and I read this information from ALHFAM which is the Association for Living History Farm and Agricultural Museum. I keep thinking about this 20th Century Project that I'm working on. And that when you said about present day issues because I'm ...I'm covering more and more about people who are changing, moving, selling, getting larger, getting smaller. All these things and...and this is the difference in the story that I'm seeing for this...for this century and some of this...some of these pieces that I've uncovered on this one paper off the web, is to get the real issues of a past time. And I'm thinking, well, the issue-s of the past time in way is almost, like this project is, too current and present because we can go back to the 1920's or the 1900's with Commissioner Gold. I was led to one of his relatives recently that is still alive and I'm thinking Okay, I'm going to hunt this man, and...and see if I can speak with him...who is one of the first Commissioners that I have record of in the state in the early 1900's. And I think he...and...and what's happening al...it's almost like everything escalated so quickly in this century for...and I'm not sure what is the history part that may be of interest to people.

AG: In producing food on a family farm...you see, they depended on...on horses and the horse method of farming stayed current until the development of tractors. And some of the early tractors they were expensive for many of the farmers and also they had some idiosyncrasies such as the Ford tractor could upend itself and had a tendency to do that. Under a hard pull, the front end would lift up and if the farmer or the operator didn't throw the clutch in right away; it could come over on top of him and there were farm accidents as a result of that. So some of the farmers stayed away Ford tractors. It probably was in the...in the '30's that tractors began to have an impact on the size of farms. And then into the '40's and then when World War II came about, shortage of labor also had a bearing and there was a need to get the funding to get labor saving equipment such as the tractor and its various pieces of equipment. Now the early tractors had trailing instruments but then hydraulics was being developed so after World War II you got tractors with hydraulic systems which we have today. And it's amazing what these modern pieces of machinery will do. It's just really amazing.

LL: What do you mean by trailing instruments?

AG: Trailing instruments, the tractor had a draw bar or a single point for hitching and the implement was attached with a pin and it was a trailing instrument.

LL: Like a trailer today might be on a car?

AG: Right. So that's for many of the implements. Some of the implements such as the plow could be hooked to the underside of a tractor and plow one furrow at a time. We had two plows, each facing a different way and you plowed one way down across the field with the plow, turned the tractor around, dropped the other one and went back and still plowed with the furrows going in the same direction. Cultivators were attached to the tractor itself, but they had also the mowing machine, the cutter bar was attached to the tractor. However, these had manual lifting levers which took some physical strength to operate them. That's all been changed now. Everything is all hydraulics so very easy to...

LL: How...I...I have pictures...I have pictures of old cultivators pulled by tractors with men still guiding them.---four of them.

(Unable to hear due to movement of microphone.)

AG: It was pulled by horses or oxen.

LL: And four men across.

AG: Or...or...okay. What you may have seen a picture of was in the tobacco fields on the Connecticut River Valley farms or the vegetable farms which there were a lot of them I understand, years ago in the Valley farm areas. And particularly at some of these who were tobacco growing they used a tractor and pulled several hand cultivators at the same time. But the...I don't know of any of the dairy farms that did that.

(Tape interruption.)

LL: ...you've got --- programs in history museums...

AG: Yes. The Sturbridge Village, Massachusetts and the University of Connecticut did have a cooperative graduate program a few years ago. And some of the directors and past presidents of the Alhfam Museum Organization went through this program. In fact, the President, Past President of Alhfam, John Patterson who is now with a museum in Tennessee, he was in this graduate program in 1970 when Alhfam was organized.

LL: Interesting.

AG: But for some reason, this program didn't continue. Whether it was pulling out by Sturbridge or the University, I never knew and never asked. I...I know Fred Cazal quite well. Fred Cazal was a history professor, retired professor of the University of Connecticut whose primary concern I understand, is the English history. Years ago I talked to him about Alhfam and even though he is a member of the Mansfield Grist Mill Management Committee, he wasn't interested in knowing anything about Alhfam. See, I'm one of the original members of the Gurleyville Grist Mill Committee and have talked to other members of the committee. Many of them are in one way personally or have been connected with the University of Connecticut. None of them have been interested in Alhfam. I tell them I'm going to a conference and show them the conference information and at a follow-up meeting I tell them I've been and...and that I have been distributing Gurleyville Grist Mill information and by putting the mill my name tag, the gristmill is known by museum people and throughout the U.S. and Canada, through my attending this conference.

LL: I have...I saw your name on the list that I...well, I found the association of Agricultural History which right now is housed in Missouri.

AG: Yeah, you mentioned that but I don't...know about this.

LL: Yeah, and I got your name from their mailing asked them, "Who, were there Connecticut members?" And they said, "Yes." And I found the list, I didn't bring it and there were four of you. And...and two...there's you and there's someone else at UConn and I don't think it was a person in the History Department. It was a different department. And there was a woman elsewhere in this state and so I have no idea when...and I don't know how old their list was either. And so...so what I find myself thinking about, is that this one paper that was on the web talked about the...the multiple --- view of you and past experience which is I am collecting. But it also talks about whether it's a site location or whether it's a representative or if it is a documentary type of site or whether it's a representative type. So in other words, Stur...if Sturbridge Village is still on a real farm site then that's a documentary.

AG: It is.

LL: Whereas Mystic Seaport...well part of it probably documentary but Greenfield Village is representative. That they brought the buildings in.

AG: What's that?

LL: Greenfield Village in Michigan.

AG: Oh, oh, Greenfield Village. That is just a collection of historic buildings...

LL: And that's what she called representative. And they're starting an agricultural section of it. She said...

AG: There is an agricultural section of that, yeah.

LL: I was raised neat Greenfield Village

AG: Okay. Oh, Pete cousins. He..he's recently passed away about three or four years ago. He was one of the key persons that helped Alhfam get organized. And he represented the agricultural exhibits at the Village there in Michigan and it is based around a farm set up and they have scads and scads of farm equipment. And he had a philosophy of putting just about everything on display. This position has been filled by a young man been Terry Sargent who was completing his graduate program when he was hired. And he has a different philosophy of the exhibit and has been, from what I understand, is focusing a specific phase of agriculture. Meaning, rather than show fifteen or twenty hand plows, show one or two that represented a particular period of time.

LL: Well, as...as...I think about the 20th century history. I keep thinking that it will be representative. I mean, you go from as you mention, from horses and oxen to the tractor. Then we go from water gravity fed water into a farm to...to wells. And we go to electricity and I found records of electricity coming to Connecticut in the '20's and I found it coming into Connecticut in 1947 after the Second World War one the eastern part of the state...northeastern part of the state. And so we have those major technologies that came in and then we have the lifestyle pieces of people working off farm and being close to towns and industries that they could do part time farming either by choice or by need. Some of each. And so I keep thinking about, well, what will...it's almost like too much of it is too new to be of interest to people. I mean, what is it...I keep thinking of...of...of farming as entrepreneurship. It's a business --- expand their farm. When I'm thinking, well what is it that...that people are interested in what happens to other people. And I'm thinking of people...what would they be interested in knowing about this century's farmers? Because they're pretty much like a lot of people who

own businesses and there's other...other kinds of businesses.

LL: Okay. Is this on?

AG: Yep.

Q It's on. This goes back to my memory of growing up and also my early experience of working as a 4H agent in Rockville area. Many of the small dairy farms were producer dairies. They may have milked, had milking up to twenty cows a day, which one man or one man and a hired man could take care of. The milk...they had the capability of cooling the milk in their milk house and keeping it cold and bottled it themselves or would take it to a larger dairy to bottle and sold the raw milk retail in the nearby communities. And this seemed to continue until there were evidently State regulations that raw milk could not be sold or it would be a person's choice if they chose to drink the raw milk. And then the farmer had to find a market for his milk or find a cow pasturing then to replot must which...or go out of the dairy production business and some of them no doubt were able to find a market in the nearby city and their milk would be picked up in twenty or forty quart cans and taken to the dairy for processing and redistribution or distribution. And that phase of farming went out when dairies required the farmers to put in a bulk tank which happened in...in as I recall, in the early to mid '50's. So then farmers...farms became larger. By buying or leasing nearby farm land.

LL: How much did a bulk tank cost in investment?

AG: The figure that I have...that I was told by some of these smaller farmers was eighteen hundred dollars up. And that was more money than what they could arrange to acquire at that particular time. They evidently didn't see how it was going to pay for itself Vs other expenses that the farmers had. Now in the Rockville area, many of these small dairy farmers also had a broad leaf tobacco growing allotment of seven to eight or nine acres and would grow tobacco as a cash crop which helped supplement the farm income. But that didn't hold either.

LL: So do you think that...as I've met people and talked with them, it's almost like those that were doing farming either had to get bigger, they had to keep improving, had to keep up with changes in technology or you had to find different kind of work. And then you chose to live on the farm for your family's subsistence but you worked elsewhere. And then those that treated it and continued either take the risk or to improve its technology or get larger are the ones it seems, are able to stay in business.

AG: That's right. But some of these farm families, if there were sons or daughters whose husband wanted farm that wanted to stay farming, they did increase the size of the herd, the dairy herd and if also sought other lands if their own land property wasn't large enough. The eastern Connecticut as I know it, the typical family farm is about eighty acres which is not...it's enough for a herd of twenty or twenty-five or thirty head of cattle but not large enough to expand. So you either had to purchase more arable land or rent it. And if you rented it away from the home farm, then you had to have equipment to travel on the road. Tractors went on the road pulling equipment and you needed the trucks to bring back the hay or the silage that was produced on this rented land.

LL: So...and this is still happening? I've talked to people who have been going...just as you described it, only now it's hundreds of cows and hundreds of acres.

AG: ...that's right. In order to come up with the income to take care of today's cost of farming, they continued...had to get bigger and they have rented more land or acquired more land so there are hundreds of acres today that they're farming. And they have employed help that has been willing to work

the farm hours.

LL: Oh, yeah.

AG: Some of the larger dairies that milk hundreds of cows a day have people, all they do is milk cows maybe twice or three times a day that is the farm practice.

LL: So, if you were going to tell a story of Connecticut 20th century agriculture, there's actually two stories. There's the stories of those farms that became like a mom and pop grocery store. A business and then got larger and larger and larger. Or those that got out. So then, what is the tradition of the family farm? Where does that fit?

AG: To me, the family farm was run such as my mother grew up in. She was the oldest of eleven children. On my grandfather's farm they had Jersey cows and they...the milk was used to make butter, cheese and vegetables were grown during the summer and the produce was peddled in the nearby community. And each of the children...the mother of the family to begin with would peddle the farm produce with horse and wagon and then each of the children did it as long as the peddling routes were maintained which went up probably until the outbreak of World War II which would have been in the early '40's. My mother, the oldest in this family, she handled the peddling beginning when she was sixteen years of age in horse and wagon. And I can recall her telling of taking the horse and wagon and going to the nearby community for...to peddle the produce.

LL: So is there room today if...there's a tra...there's something I read about that you just described, that a family farm by definition was in one of the Rural Sociology booklets I picked up, is a farm that can be handled by family members to maintain themselves.

AG: This was...this is right. Now the farm eventually...this farm eventually went to my mother's youngest brother. After the peddling stopped, then he enlarged the dairy herd and began producing milk and it was...his farm is located in Sterling, Connecticut...the milk was transported to the city of Providence, Rhode Island. And my uncle continued to farm there however, he felt he had to sell the farm because the...a small river went through the farm and the Soil Conservation Service was undecided or couldn't make up their mind on how they were going to put a flood control dam in that area as flood control for the Moosup River which went into the Quinnebaug River which ran into the Shetucket River which run into the Thames River, flood control for the city of Norwich, Connecticut. So, before the Soil Conservation made up their mind as to whether they were going to acquire this property, he had found a farm in mid New York State and moved his farming operation up to New York State. Once there he converted the stanchion barn into a free stall barn and the first thing he did was to put in some bunker silos regardless of the fact that that wasn't a practice being followed in New York State.

LL: What is a bunker silo?

AG: A bunker silo is where you...put up concrete walls on three sides and then your cut corn or hay is dumped in this channel, so to speak, and packed down with a tractor of some sort and gradually it's built up to the top and then covered over with plastic covering.

LL: Oh, all right. So that's what we see out here now only it doesn't even have cinder blocks around it.

AG: Yeah. There was a period when they made these bunker silos and they used concrete or wooden sides for them. However, that practice from what I gather, is no longer followed. They are just piling the cut silage whether it's grass or corn and on...outside of the barn and packing it down and building up a big

mound and eventually covering it with plastic and the way of holding the plastic on is to cover it with old rubber tires from cars and trucks. You drive by these farms you'll see these mounds of silage and where the end is usually open, because that's the end they're taking the silage from and being exposed for the twenty-four hours or so doesn't affect the quality of the silage. It doesn't spoil as it's exposed to the air.

LL: Why didn't they do that sooner? We had silos, these tall silos. Does that have a name too?

AG: I don't...New York State as far as I know there's still some high silos and...another change came about probably in the '50's or thereabouts.

I'm not sure. You'd have to check with an ag engineer the story to know this. But the Harvest or silo, the blue ones that you see as you travel rural country areas and see dairy farms, you will see anywhere from one, two, three or the big farms, you see four of them. They...a technique was developed by the company so that the silage was blown into the top of the silo and it is fed out the bottom. And these are air tight so that they are the silage it doesn't spoil.

LL: And so the old silos, the ones that are made of block...

AG: Blocks or wooden staves.

LL: The tall ones I mean.

AG: Right.

LL: And the spoilage...how were those filled and how were those controlled.

AG: Those were filled from the outside with a chopper blower up to the top and there was a ladder, enclosed ladder, on one side of it. And to get the silage out of those, originally, an individual had to climb up with the silage fork and shovel down or scoop down, throw down the silage for the day's use.

LL: From over the top? Or from the side?

AG: You threw it down the chute where the ladder was. The chute was attached to the

LL: Oh, oh. All right. Oh. Oh. So there's a ladder and the chute in the same enclosed area?

AG: Right. It's a little enclosed area...

LL: Inside the....inside the silo?

AG: Oh no. It's outside of the silo. You can see it on barns where the silo is attached to the base of the barn, you see this chute go up the side of it.

LL: But once the silage comes...am I missing something? Once the silage starts getting used up...

AG: You take it off the top. I worked on the dairy farms as a teenager.

LL: How do you get...you go inside the silo?

AG: You climb the ladder and to into the silo.

LL: And you're standing on top of the silage?

AG: You stand on top of the silage and you throw it down. And as you...you work it...seethe...when you fill the silo, you fill it up to the top. Taking off a four inches and it level.

LL: Right.

AG: And then you work from the top and you gradually work it down. And there are doors that you would put in and...

LL: Different levels of the chute?

AG: Right. As you fill the silo, you would add a door. And then when you were taking the silage out, when you got down to the bottom of that door you took it out and you would take off two...well, three or four or maybe six inches of silage even as you, by day, throw down and that way the corn silage didn't spoil.

LL: Was it dangerous to work inside that silo?

AG: No. No. Supposedly there was some danger if you were in the silo when they were blowing it in because you would level it off and there was danger of carbon dioxide or monoxide or something.

LL: Suffocation of some kind?

AG: Yeah, but that ...I personally don't know of anyone who was succumbed as a result of that.

LL: Let's go back for a minute to the quality of family farms. We're talking about our younger generation understanding family farms or the...people now can buy twenty-five acres of woodland and get them at for certain regulations for tax purposes.

AG: Local tax relief.

LL: All right. But there...if I had a family farm and truly now a family farm that's just to support me and my family, are people saying that it's not possible to do that?

AG: Local taxing...taxes is one of the high costs of owning a farm because the local board of assessors, they are interested in a high evaluation of property. So every farm is taxed for, if my memory is correct, at least two home sites, two home properties. The present farm plus one other one. And...

LL: There's one house but there might...but even a blank area?

AG: Yes. So...and the farm along the highway...the lands along the highway, if it's used for agriculture production and the farmer can prove that to the board of assessors, then he can get an agricultural assessment of a certain value. If it's pasture or woodland, it's assessed at a still lower value. So this in some communities, this...it's been a bone of contention on the assessed value of the farm fields along roadways. Some of the members of the board of assessors could look at that and say that is all potential development property and should be taxed as such.

LL: Instead of taxing it as pasture?

AG: Instead of taxing it as...as agriculturally worked land. So a hay field or a corn field is producing

some income to the farm. That has a tax value but the woodland or pasture...on a pasture they don't use it too much for...it's just could be a field with a rocks in it and brush and not much good land to it. That has a lower tax assessment.

LL: So the local tax assessor uses his or her own judgment as to...it's a judgment call?

AG: Each of the...yes, the local town assessor. Now, there are some state guidelines that they follow. But you'll see...you could see...let's put it this way, you could see differences in town-by-town assessed property values.

LL: By interpretation?

AG: Or practices. Interpretation and practices.

LL: I need to go back again to this family farm business. What's going to be the future of the family farm?

AG: Okay. Now, there's another...a definition of a family farm could be producing food for yourself but you need other income in order to exist today so that's where the owners of these small farms, if they're producing for themselves, that's where they have sought income from some other area and working for somebody else or in another locale. That is one of the ways that the family farm is continuing and probably the way it's going to continue. Unless there is a market...

LL: Like if I were to plant...let's just say, pumpkins. Enough pumpkins to...

AG: Or as a cash crop.

LL: As a cash crop to get...to give the additional income for my family to stay on that piece.

AG: Now, as a family farm...I'm going to give an example of a one that I've seen developed. Elaine Crooke used to work with me as 4-H Agent. She and her husband Richard have developed an orchard in the town of Ashford where they bought an old poultry farm. And Dick, even though he was a dairy manufacturing graduate at the University of Connecticut, when he grew up in West Hartford, his father had a few apple trees and evidently Dick was interested in raising apples so when the two of them were married, he worked at an orchard in Massachusetts until they could acquire their own property. Then he set about developing this apple orchard which now includes peaches, plums and pear trees. But along the way, see there's a delay from the time you set out your trees until they begin to produce. So they went through small cash crops such as pick-your-own strawberries which I'm not sure if they still do that or not. And pick-your-own blueberries. And in recent years they've developed a greenhouse business where they have their own greenhouse. Greenhouses that produce bedding plants to sell on the market. All to give them income to support the orchard business. The cider has been a good portion of the farm income but that could be in question as to how long they will continue to do that because of the state recommendation that it be pasteurized. Selling apples retail at the farm is the main income.

LL: So when they have their orchard producing, will that then be considered cash crop?

What is your definition of a cash crop?

AG: Cash crop would be short term. Yeah, such as strawberries only last for several weeks in June, three or four weeks. Blueberries probably start maturing in July, August when they're all done. The

Crooke's also have vegetables that they sell in the fall; squashes, winter squashes and pumpkins. Pumpkins are now a big cash crop and Christmas trees that come into the picture as well.

LL: As a cash crop?

AG: As cash crops.

LL: But there are huge vegetable growers along in the Valley area. Do they consider their business all cash crop then.

AG: No, I would say that they're...that's their main business.

LL: So cash crop is something done beside what you're main business is?

AG: Right. It's to...

LL: To fine you over?

AG: It's to give you some supplementary income to help meet the total expenses of the farming operation.

LL: So it...let's go back to your...your thoughts on history. I know they're generally your own but your...you...you have this wealth of knowledge in several areas that I keep going back and forth. Historically, what do you think are the most important stories to tell about this century?

AG: Well, growing up in Windham County, I know that there were immigrant families that were in agriculture for a period of time. As for example, the Finnish families, many of them had broiler farms or egg producing farms or farms producing hatching eggs for local hatcheries. But then as the...there's probably a couple of reasons for there no longer existing. One would be loss of market and another the need for more income than what the size of the farm operation would produce so then they took jobs and probably industry as it was available to them. Connecticut used to be quite a broiler producing area. It had the broilers were produced on the farms and when they were...the birds were twelve, thirteen weeks old some buyers...and most of the buyers were Jewish merchants, would buy the birds on the farms and these would be taken down to New York City where they would be sold, slaughtered and sold as meat. But that...

LL: So..I'm...so we look at---people from different immigration patterns. Some Romanians that came in in some parts of the state. I haven't done it yet but I will get to them. So really what we're saying is in Connecticut there is this interplay with --- tapestry of commodity groups, people, locale. All these things. If you were John Q. Public walking in off the street what story would you most like to hear?

AG: I don't know. In the poultry I...because of my background experience with them. Most of it is on commercial poultry farms and the poultry branch of the University of Connecticut. Poultry major. The...Connecticut had quite a history in...in early poultry. They had small hatcheries that produced broiler chicks that were sold locally to farms here as well as sent down to the Delmarva broiler growing area. That's Delaware, Maryland and Virginia which still grows poultry but there's competition to that area from Georgia, Arkansas and other places in the south which has resulted in Connecticut no longer produces broilers and these small hatcheries no longer exist either.

LL: Did...did UConn have a strong breeding program to support the poultry industry?

AG: A breeding program?

LL: Yeah, I'm...I'm think of...I've talked to people who have said that UConn used to breed horses, breed Devon cattle and other kinds of cattle. Did they also do...?

AG: Yes. Okay. UConn had a very positive role in the development of present day poultry. They did experimental work on the poultry farm. They had the egg laying contest which was those fifty-two small coops and those coops held I think, each of those little coops if memory serves me correctly, held twenty-six pullets. The contest started in the fall and these pullets or hens, they become hens a year later, came from poultry breeders throughout the U.S. Many of them from New England.

Some as far west as the state of Washington. And they were various poultry breeds. The contest, what it was a Poultry Department employee...see I worked there weekends when I was a student. The birds were trap nested. That is when they went into a nest, a door...a little door closed behind them. They would produce their eggs. The bird had leg bands on them with their number and also identification from the farm that they came from.

LL: So they couldn't leave their nest and so you just keep identifying the eggs.

AG: They couldn't leave their nest...

LL: Until they had been identified...

AG: The egg was identified and the individuals, man in the coops, would write the number of the egg...the number on the egg and then they were produced and went to the Poultry Building where they were...

LL: Incubated?

AG: No, they were checked. They were keeping a...what they were doing was...there was a really a...they were identifying the hens that laid...recorded the daily record of their laying of eggs which was called a "clutch". A bird might lay seven days in a row. It might lay ten days in a row, skip one or two days and then have another clutch for a certain number of days. What the breeder was looking for was a hen that would lay clutches of twenty, thirty or so eggs a day without stopping. And these records were kept on these birds and then after the end of the year the birds went back to the breeder and the could keep those hens a second year and...and have chicks from them, to sell. And this through experimentation, they found that this tendency to and how their hen laid was an inherited characteristic. So the...naturally, you would want...if you were producing market eggs you would want to get as many eggs as possible from the chicken in order to pay for the food and labor. So you were interested in...so this was during a research type of project for these poultry breeders.

LL: But UConn didn't actually do the interbreeding to try to produce these chicks?

AG: No. They didn't produce them. This is really kind of a service for the poultry industry and there were some top breeders in New England who would have Rhode Island Reds or New Hampshire Reds or Barred Rocks that would depend on this record keeping on their birds that they would send each year to this contest.

LL: A good marketing tool for their...? baby chicks.

AG: Oh yes. 'Cause they could point out...so that was one sort of service the Poultry...the

Department did. I mentioned earlier that it took twelve to thirteen weeks to grow a broiler chick. That was a long period of time and if the bird wasn't marketed at that thirteen weeks or so, the bird would go into a different growth period. It would stop building flesh and begin to develop bones and body size. So it wasn't a marketable bird until it was mature at eighteen or nineteen weeks. So it was important to market them at thirteen weeks. So the desire was to try to get the birds ready for market at a younger age, less number of weeks. And there was...the University of Connecticut did some experimenting with the broiler feed. And it was known that corn meal was

(End of tape one.)

A...way of adding body weight to the bird. However, I'm not up on the ins and outs of it but they would say that if the feed had too much corn in it, it would burn up the body of the chick. I don't quite understand that. So the University of Connecticut through their research with Dr. Ed Harold M. Scott as a graduate student and Head of the Poultry Department. He worked on this research backed by the Yantic Grain Company in Yantic, Connecticut...

(Tape interruption.) (High energy high efficiency diet)

The experimental high corn ration was...supplemented with niacin and the result was that the birds could be produced at a...could be ready for market at a younger age. And this and other research done in the poultry field, like pin feathers, which were a drug on the market. Home housewife didn't want the black pin feathers. So you wanted white pin feathers. So another poultry farm where I worked down in Oceanview, Delaware, a new breed of chickens was developed called the Delawares which was a white male and he had the rapid growth characteristics and early feathering characteristics and a good body size. White pin feathers was what he transmitted. So that was a plus and that was a top male bird up until the time crosses were produced with the Cornish chicken which was an English breed, broad breasted but slow growing, slow hatchability and so forth. But all these characteristics was eventually improved upon so that they now are producing meat birds of six to eight weeks which is quite an amazing development compared to my early work in the poultry field.

LL: We used to have quite a turkey industry in this state.

AG: Yes, there was a turkey industry in...in Connecticut and there was a turkey farm in Vernon where they produced turkeys and they did their own slaughtering. But then this development moved in, that farm moved to Ellington on a dairy farm and produced there but slaughtering the birds was a problem. However, the poultry dressing plant that had been developed in Plainfield...over in Plainfield, to fulfill the need for a broiler dressing plant when the broiler industry decreased so that it was no longer functionable, this turkey breeder tied into that dressing plant and used it for a couple of years. But they for some reason, They went out of the business totally. I think that they just couldn't compete.

LL: Other parts of the state had turkeys too at one time.

AG: Yes, there was turkeys in Hartford County, Glastonbury. In fact, there still is one that produces to some extent. But you just can't compete with turkeys produced in Virginia or the Carolinas. There would be labor costs and the cost of the building is far less down through the south than what it is here in the north, for one reason.

LL: After the war there was a song, "How you gonna keep them back on the farm after they've seen Patee?"

AG: Right.

LL: And after the war, did...did people come back to the farm? What...what...do you think...well...well I noticed in...in the Pomological Society Hundred Year Booklet that a lot of orchards were...that's in that book, that are in that book began with...they were bought out and changed ownership in the '40's, '50's, early '50's, late '40's. And I keep thinking I wonder if it had anything to do with people coming back from military duty? I mean, how come all of a sudden there was a change? Do you recall what changes have happened after the war to the agricultural industry?

AG: Well, that's when there was a...the big change on labor saving devices. That's when the bulk tanks for the dairy farmers came into being. And for one thing, labor saving devices, the barn cleaners came out during that period. Cleaning the manure in the freestall was easier than the stanchion barns. But then the trend went into free stall which you didn't have the problems there. No, I...I...I'm really not sure that I can respond too well to your question.

LL: Yeah, yeah, that's okay. I just was wondering. Okay, so what's the future of agriculture? I keep thinking, you know, if you already have this...I keep hearing people say --- the family farm is going out. I mean, but as I've done this, there's agriculture all over the state. It's just not the family farm. And so how we balance this because is it a lifestyle or is it a business?

AG: It's a business. The market for the agricultural products is very important. Also, another factor is you have whether it's poultry or dairy you need grain...for feeding those animals to help improve the production from the animals and you need to have that at areas on able cost. Now back prior to World War II and after, there were feed mills outside of Connecticut but the feed came to the state in hundred pound bags by railroad cars. Probably in the poultry industry it was started was to have bulk feed. Today's poultry houses, you'll see what looks like a tank outside the poultry houses and in it is the bulk grain that is fed to the chickens and is fed through an automatic feeding trough. It is either dragged by a chain or an auger down through the poultry coop so that that's a labor saving method. Well, eventually bulk feed has become available to the dairy farmers so that the...that's available to them. Now, there had to be a source of this bulk feed and there are two areas that I'm aware of in Connecticut. One is the co-op in North Manchester which was one of the early ones in developing the poultry feed supply then they're into dairy.

And you see their trucks running up and down the road constantly. Then because of the high concentration of poultry in New London County, there were a couple of bulk feed mills, mixing plants outside of Norwich in the Yantic-Bozrah area. Now one important aspect of those is they have to be near a railroad siding. There is a railroad siding in North Manchester and the grain from the west comes via bulk. And the same is true in those feed mills in Bozrah and Yantic. It's right along the railroad track. So from those areas, the bulk feed goes out to the producing or dairy farms that we have today.

LL: When you say bulk feed, you don't mean loose feed? You mean, it's still bagged?

AG: No, it's not bagged. It's all loose.

LL: Oh, it's really bulk?

AG: It...these...these delivery trucks are tanks. They look like an oil truck. They go down the road...

LL: And they have a hose that feeds it into the...?

AG: They have a metal pipe arrangement in --- and auger from the truck that goes up into the feed bin at the barn or the poultry house. So that's a change that has come about in recent years.

LL: So, let's go back now and hook this all into history. So what is it that our future generations need to know about agriculture? Do they need to know how we progressed or do they need to know how we used to live?

AG: Well, there's a couple of ways of looking at it. They eat the same way we do when we grew up and where their food comes from is a part of coming to realize I think, that today many of the things they eat are produced somewhere outside of the state at a cost. Previously, when we grew up it was produced very locally. Smaller farms and less transportation cost added to it. I...during the winter months, I buy boxes of grapefruit at the Farmers Market in Hartford and I've talked with the individual that I buy from and he has told me that they can get produce from California in three days, or less guaranteed delivery via truck. Which means that that truck, once it leaves California there's two drivers...

LL: 'Cause legally they have to have them.

AG: And that truck just rolls twenty-four hours a day and it comes into the market. They guarantee that they'll get this delivery at the agreed on period of time which is really amazing and these are refrigerated trucks today where there is a need. So that the whole farm industry where food sources are dependent on transportation.

LL: When children seeing their orange juice coming out of...you know, plastic bottles... AG: Plastic bottles or cartons.

LL: ...cartons, etc. Except that I keep going back in history. What is going to grab them historically? Why would they care?

AG: That's a good question, I guess?

LL: Why are you interested in history?

AG: I always was. (Laughter)

LL: You're not a typical person.

AG: I notice that many people are not. They really don't care.

LL: So I keep figuring, if I'm going to develop this...this...this exhibit, these things that get around in different stories, what is it that's going to get a population who's not a historian necessarily and not interested in ag, what will make them...what will be the carrot that says, "Oh yeah, I want to know."

AG: Okay, I was thinking...I'm thinking of a food producing markets. We've got another thing that interwove here and that is state regulations on the quality of the food. They want the --- pretty much required that to be an almost perfect item that is sold in the store and that is very hard to come by naturally. It requires it to be insect free or...or damage free, no bruises on it or what have you. Which to produce this kind of food it's produced in concentrated areas, big farms and that's trucked in. I mean, that's to me is one of the factors that affects our...our family farms. This again, market for the product.

LL: Someone said that to me in passing about the potatoes. That one of the reasons why we had difficulty with our...with some of the New England potato industries, maybe not just Connecticut was that we didn't sort them as carefully and market them as a...a product that was a consistent product that people could have...and I thought, that was an interesting statement.

AG: I don't know if people I know would agree with that. Tolland County used to have a lot of potato farms and I believe in east...in...yeah, eastern Hartford County, east of the river potato farms...in fact, they could still be some potato farms there. The potatoes...this goes back into the '50's, were marketed through a potato co-op or association and a...the potatoes were stored in cool storage there on the farm. The association would hire a broker whose office was in Rockville in the same building the Extension Service office was and the broker was from Georgia or Florida...anyway he's from out of state.

Connecticut was now promoting potatoes in corn like other areas, ie Main, Long Island, etc.

But anyway, during the winter season he would come to the Rockville office and he would find buyers for potatoes from these Connecticut growers and sometimes talk on two or three phones at the same time. Once he found buyers, then tractor trailers, independent operators who were trucking citrus crops to Boston would come up with a load to Boston, come over to Rockville and wait for a load of potatoes to take south, purchased by someone as a result of this broker finding a buyer. When this truck went to the...to the farm to pick them up...pick up his load of potatoes, the Connecticut Department of Agriculture assigned a potato inspector of which they had three, four or five on their... employment and these fellas would go out and from what I understood, every so many bags they would inspect them for the size of the potato. And I think it was Grade One was two and a half inches in diameter which meant it could be no smaller than that to be considered a Grade One. So to my knowledge Connecticut had graded the potatoes that they were shipping out of state. Now, there was a very big potato producer in Somers, Connecticut. He was of French decent and grew up on a farm, a potato farm in Maine. And eventually had as many as seven hundred acres in the Somers area. They had a big farm. In fact, he operated the two farms together. And...

LL: Do you remember his name or the farm by any chance?

AG: It slips my mind right now. He just passed away couple years ago but he had his own airplane to fly back and forth and he was on the Board of Directors of the Federal Land Bank, the Springfield Office and I think he was Chairman of the Board for a period of time. And I can remember visiting his farm at one time up in Somers. This is where he did live and at that time, one of his customers was one of his potato chip companies. But something happened. Whether he lost his market or what, he went out of...actually, he went bankrupt. Tommy LaChance, that's the name.

LL: You do very well.

AG: It did come.

LL: I think you know, I wanted to go back to the history piece. I keep thinking of having something that a young person who was interactive...if it were Here's how milk was produced beginning the century Vs now. Here's how vegetables were produced. Here's where they come from and here's the --- now. And that's more of a...of a learning experience about process than it is about the historical cultural thing. It is history but it's not the social culture of what was happening in agriculture. And part of what we're...part of what people are interested in is...is the lifestyle of agriculture.

AG: Okay, I'm just...a little thought comes to my mind. Cholesterol. Which is a state regulation or a health regulation more or less. Take milk as an example. The four common dairy breeds, your Jerseys, Guernseys, Ayrshires and Holsteins had different levels of cholesterol in their milk. That is the amount of butterfat in the milk that they produced. Jerseys and Guernseys were high butterfat producers.

Ayrshires not so much and Holsteins, they used to be the saying if you put a half a dollar in a quart milk bottle you could read the date on the bottom of it.

LL: So they automatically gave skim need milk? (Laughter)

AG: No butterfat. When I grew up...cream was an important item. You put cream on strawberries and whipped cream on various dessert dishes and...and so forth. And you could make butter from it. In fact, the Guernsey producers, they had a special milk bottle that had a bulb like enlargement at the top and a special spoon that the homeowner could have and the housewife would insert that spoon into the little jar and make sort of a semi-seal and pour off the cream. Then that could be used for cereal or whatever use they might have of it and the rest of the milk was also very good. But today, people are interested in cholesterol so the dairy farmers today have Holstein cows. The results are another factor that goes into...the standardization of milk. Had you heard that before?

LL: I had no

AG: Okay, the butterfat in milk was standardized. Some of the dairies were interested in some Jersey herd farms as well as...they got the bulk from the Holsteins but the Jersey farm milk could upgrade the butterfat from the Holstein milk, they could get the standardized portion of it.

LL: It's like making wine.

AG: I'll get this out of your... (Sun through window)

LL: It's that one.

AG: This one?

LL: No, one next to it, that one. Yep, thank you very much.

AG: The...so that had a bearing on the dairy farm operation and now...this isn't...another item that has come in here is the availability of artificial insemination.

LL: Yeah, I've talked to some people...

AG: And that came about into the '50's.

LL: Yeah, um hmm.

AG: Now the...each of the Counties had an Artificial Breeders Association, did you ever hear of that?

LL: Basically, I knew there was the...that the main barns were in Woodbury I think and they eventually bought their own...

AG: In Connecticut, they had their own bulls. But originally the bulls were UConn bulls that...particularly for the and if I understand, for the Tolland County and Tolland County had two inseminators...the farmers would call...they'd call the Farm Bureau office which the Farm Bureau was responsible to Cooperative Extension so the Extension phones that were ringing and the farmers were calling in so their technicians would stop in the office to get their list of farms to visit for that day. So we saw those fellows all the time. Eventually they had the farm in Connecticut but the Co-ops had competition. Curtis, I guess Curtis Foods got into this artificial insemination business and they had their own bull farms. And...

LL: Where were they located?

AG: I'm not really sure but then they were National

LL: Out of state someplace?

AG: I think so. And they had their own inseminators who were competition to the Co-op and plus they were interested in...in sires or bulls from high producing cows so that they in turn would transmit the genes to their...to their calves. And it was a way for farmers to keep improving the dairy production on their herd. Now one of the first no bull, say it this way, no bull herds in Tolland County was the Bradway Farm up in Union. Wesley...well, it was Wesley Bradway, he was my age, his father's farm. And one of his sons still runs the farm at the present time.

LL: Bradway?

AG: Yes, Wesley Bradway and I guess Walter Bradway is the one that runs the farm now.

LL: And I appreciate you going back to this because actually, one of the things that's happened to farming is the consumer choices and the consumer values that the people have passed on they were manipulated by the marketing of the industry or whether they bought them is debatable. Going back again to history, what is it that, do you think, is the best set of... when people do these enactments of these museums, they enact the day-to-day lives but are people attending these because their interested in actually seeing what was done on a farm or is there an underlying kind of thing about the values or mores that that represents?

AG: These history museums are...

LL: There are Living history museums...

AG: Living history museums, okay I'll use Sturbridge as an example, when that was originally set up the format or the period of years was 50 years following the War of Independence. 1790's or whatever it was up until 1845. Now Sturbridge Village prided themselves on being a accurately portraying the lifestyles of the period they represent. They found that fifty years was too long a period to try to accurately depict so now they are focusing on the 1930's.

LL: Really?

AG: No not the...

LL: The 1830's.

AG: Excuse me, 1830, 1830's. So you...

(Tape interruption.)

...Sturbridge Village and in the Village proper itself, the Colonial section, it's the 1830's. Now the Pliny Farm is a little bit prior to that and they stick to that period of time, about that farming period which was basically producing the food and fiber that the family needed for their own livelihood.

LL: So, it might be worthwhile to look at this from decades in the 20th century to show...

AG: Periods of time. Maybe twenty year periods. Then you would have five segments. It could very well be you know. This...this...you see, you've got another factor that comes in here and that is transportation. Not only for the farmer but for the human element as well. At the turn of the century it was horse and buggy. And with a horse and buggy there was a limit to the distance you traveled for the...for the farm living. If you went five miles, that was a long distance. If you went five miles to a store and back or five miles to the gristmill for grinding your flour and back home again that was...could be a day's event. But then you get through the early teens and you began to get motor cars. You got your Model T's that were selling but then...well if the farmer had enough money to buy the automobile and that made a big change in the way of living. Where I grew up, there was public transportation. The Connecticut Bus Company which was owned by the New Haven-Hartford Railroad.

LL: Go ahead.

AG: I can shut this off, I want to...I got to get some pills(Sun, again). That's better. And that continued right up until after the war. As an example, we...in Plainfield where I lived, we lived on Route 12, Connecticut Bus every hour would go by the house north and every hour it went south.

LL: Did you have to flag it down at your driveway?

AG: You could flag it down. It was...and they had zones and you'd get three tokens for a quarter or it was ten cents in .the zone. So if you're traveling within the zone it's just a dime and you just dropped it in the and back in those days if you didn't have change, the driver would make change for you.

LL: So then when after the war and people got cars then the trolleys left?

AG: This wasn't trolleys this was..

LL: Oh no, I meant the buses left?

AG: The buses left. But prior to the buses there were trolleys.

LL: I talked to a woman who was ninety-three who...in Middletown, who remembered the trolleys.

AG: Now there's a trolley...I know in my hometown, a trolley went from Moosup to Central Village and then caught on to the railroad that exists now, could go to Danielson. But there were trolleys between Plainfield and Norwich at one time.

LL: And who were the companies? They were the railroad companies still?

AG: I really don't know. I haven't got into that page of history and here in...there used to be a...I think there was trolleys in Willimantic that...I'm not sure where we connect and I don't know if there's a railroad...a railroad passenger went up to...went from Hartford through Willimantic and then beyond toward Boston and there was...passenger service between New London going up Springfield and on to Vermont RR. In fact, they...was a resident of Columbia who went to UConn...well, that is Connecticut Agricultural School about 1915, he was in the two year Ag School. He took his bicycle to school. He would catch a train in Columbia, go to Willimantic, transfer and then go to Eagleville and from there ride his bike.

LL: He took his bike on the farm.

AG: . Up through to the Storrs campus.

LL: Interesting. Is there anything else you'd like to add? We've wandered back and forth today.

LL: But that's all right because I know that last time I had to prescribe some questions. But I wanted to speak to you about the history piece particularly.

AG: I made some notes here. You wanted to know the commercial agriculture. Poultry farms where worked. In the summer of 41 in '42 I worked at the Locust Grove poultry farm in Plainfield, Connecticut and it was owned by Andrew Laakso and his son Yak who also had L&L Feeds which they sold...they had poultry feed produced at a mill or mills in New York and shipped by railcar to Plainfield and then they delivered it to poultry farmers. But the work that I did included caring for broilers, working in the hatchery and driving truck or assisting as a laborer in the delivery of grain to customers and then other jobs as assigned.

LL: When did you decide you wanted to go into Extension? I want to get this on before the tape runs out. How did you make that...?

AG: I fell into it. In 1949 when I was a student at campus I was President of the University 4-H Club. One of the social clubs was a 4-H Club. And of the meetings...someone from the state 4-H office was an advisor to that group. It was Warren Schmidt who worked as Assistant State Club Leader at the time. So one day that I was there in the 4-H office, the Brandags State 4-H Club Leaders Secretary, she said, "Oh, there's going to be a part time 4-H position in Tolland County. Why don't you apply for it?" And she says, "Here's an application." So I thought, oh, I'll look it over and my roommate and another friend, college friend, knowing my 4-H experience, they encouraged me to fill out the application and submit it. So I did. I owned a car. That was the criteria at the time the previous year I had bought a second hand car. So I had means of transportation. So I applied and then through interviews, there was a grad student also interviewed and the County people selected me to come in on a part time basis while I was a student. The 4-H Agent Henry Sefton had returned from service in World War II and decided he wanted to go to grad school and so he went to Missouri, did his graduate work and when he completed that he was asked to go to Washington D.C. with the USDA assisting with one of the international programs.

LL: IFYE?

AG: No another one where brought in professional people. So he was down there and the county people seemed to be content with my part time and when I completed my degree requirements in 1951, Sefton was asked if he had any intentions of coming back to Connecticut and he decided that he wouldn't, resigned and stayed in Washington and the Tolland County job was offered to me which I accepted. So that got me into 4-H work.

LL: What was your greatest satisfaction as you worked with 4-H?

AG: Working with people and helping the young people with their project work and the kinds of...having of successful experiences the 4-Hershad and the 4-H activities. Whether it be the 4-H Camp or the 4-H Fair.

Organizing it, running it, showing at the fairs...one of the things that I promoted was individual 4-H Clubs...which provided an opportunity for several of the youngsters to learn how to become an officer ...of the organization. Club Serving as President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. And basically, they learned how to make the decisions. And with the local clubs many of them had this sort of experience which was important to them.

LL: Well, about that time is when Extension separated from Farm Bureau. Were you...?

AG: I...the mandate came through in the early '50's. Sometime during the Truman administration. Farm Bureau nationally and state wide were involved in politics and in some states some of the County Farm Bureaus which sponsored Extension, were also dabbling in politics and that was a no-no. So the edict came out to separate and Connecticut mandated that Farm Bureau be separated from Extension and the Extension Councils were set up in the place of Farm Bureau.

LL: During that transition time, did Farm Bureau also keep its own structure?

AG: It...I think in this County, Farm Bureau had kind of a problem because their administrative work was done in the Extension office. The County Agent kind of supervised or looked after their affairs and...his secretary did the Farm Bureau mailings, this sort of thing.

LL: So they did more of it?

AG: Too much so really. And then when they had to be on their own it was a learning experience for them. It probably hurt them more than it hurt Extension. They...

LL: ---

AG: Okay, well I wanted to say about the Locust Grove Hatchery. Basically, I worked for the son Vak and one of the interesting things I said historically is that he produced broiler chicks on his own farms in his own coops. But that he also owned a small mill in Pineville, Connecticut where he grew broilers. And he also rented a large one story mill in the city of Putnam where he grew broilers which I can't remember the name of it but I know where it's located but it was a...I...

LL: So that was unusual at the time to be located in the these places.

AG: He used the mills for the growing of poultry was but the Pineville was two stories and the elevator still operated and we used that for taking the feed up to the upper level and...and of course, when the chicks were ready for sale and crated and they were brought out and also it had to be used for cleaning out the coop as well which is a lot of work. That mill I understand is...he's...'cause he no longer is living. Someone else acquired it and it's used for some other purpose I understand now.

...that one you could successfully produce broilers because it had adequate ventilation but from what I recall hearing, in Putnam, the areas were so large that ventilation was kind of a problem, moisture and so forth. It wasn't as successful up there but today they have controlled ventilation in poultry houses --- that circulate the air in coops ---. So with air circulation probably could have been done in that large mill but that wasn't the same at that particular period of time. When I completed my two year ag course at UConn, I had an opportunity and did go to work for a poultry farm in Oceanview, Delaware. Indian River Poultry Farm which was owned by a graduate of the University of Connecticut, George Ellis. That was a very interesting experience, they grew broilers and also had a hatchery in --- to producing their own breeding flock and I had the experience of working in all areas while there.

When I came out of the service in 1946, I worked on a neighbor's poultry farm in Plainfield, Al Planchon, Five Spring Farm. And he has a breeding flock which I took care of and also one coop of broiler chicks which I took care of from the time they were a day old up until the period of time that they were sold and received the bonus of half a cent a pound when the chicks were sold. In the summer of '48, I worked back at Locust Grove Hatchery and also there during college vacation periods.

LL: So then you went back to school then? You went to school for two years, then you went in the

service then you came back here?

AG: I was in the Ratcliffe-Hicks School of Agriculture and received a certificate. And when I came back, I went back to get a four year degree.

LL: I see.

AG: And the Poultry Department, there's only two of us that took poultry classes when I was in two year and a different head of the department and my two year ag efforts were not recognized so I...I did four and a half more years of college plus when I was doing part time 4-H work, I took the minimum credits, twelve credits, to be a full time student and plus during that period I was on the...on the GI Veterans Bills which helped cover the school costs.

LL: I don't remember if we covered the first time, when were you married to Arlene?

AG: 1962.

LL: And she was a 4-H Agent then...?

AG: She was a 4-H Agent in Litchfield County.

LL: In Litchfield County.

AG: Yes, and we met in the summer of 1949 when I went out to my first 4-H assignment which was spending eight weeks in the summer at 4-H Camps or junior short course. And the first four weeks were spent out at the Litchfield 4-H Camp which was the first year that Litchfield county owned the camp site at Warren, Connecticut.

LL: Oh, all right.

AG: And it's a 4-County Camp program at the time western CT 4-H Camp and an Extension Agent from the 4 Counties spent a week at the camp sometime during the summer so one of the weeks Arlene came and that's where we met but she was just another person...and she says now, I'm just a young college kid. But she worked in one end of the state and I worked at the other. So, and in different fields. She was Homemaking and I was Agriculture.

LL: Is there anything else you'd like to add to this as we've wandered back and forth between history and agriculture today?

AG: I can't really think of anything right at the present time.

(End of interview)