

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

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Name of Person Interviewed: Mr. Al Gray, Extension Educator, Canr, UCONN
(Retired), Interview #2

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LL: On a repeat visit, Al Gray about his life and his recollections at his work as a 4H agent. So why don't you just go ahead.

AG: Okay, this is Al Gray. In 1949 while I was still in college, there was an opportunity to apply to be a part-time 4H club agent in Tolland county and still be a student at the University. Not having an automobile and being encouraged to apply, I did so and was hired to take on the job. In Tolland County at the time, 4H clubs were primarily agriculture and homemaking clubs. My responsibility was to assist or work with the agriculture clubs. Five members with an adult leader composed a club. Projects that these clubs had were animal projects of dairy and poultry. These were the local clubs in a town. There was a County Land and Shoot Club and also a County BBB Club. In the early 50s we were successful in organizing a Horse Project Club in the town of Somers. This was probably the first horse club in Connecticut, or at least one of the first, as this was a new project for our young folks in Connecticut. We had also garden projects. The local clubs' meetings were held either after school or evenings in members or leaders homes. A standard requirement of the clubs was five or more members. They were expected to have a slate of offices which included a president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, if moneys were collected or handled, and a news reporter. At that particular time the daily newspapers were from out of the county in larger communities. However, the papers did have a local reporter who was interested in writing up the activities of the youth organizations. There were a minimum number of meetings that the clubs held each year. However, at the present time I don't recall what it was. The club was expected to plan a program of education for each meeting which might have been a talk by the leader or by members with assigned topics. It might also have included demonstrations either by the leader or demonstrations by the members themselves. Demonstrations was one of the phases of the 4H program that we encouraged the members to do, to learn any information or skill and to be able to present that information to their other club members or to a 4H event. 4H members at that time were 10-21 years, but that soon changed to 9-18 years. The members were expected to select a project and to join the club. However, we did welcome individuals as members if there was no club for them to join in the area. Each year the members were expected to complete an enrollment card and, the member as given a project record book where they could record accomplishments, the expenses and receipts of their project. We also provided them with a project manual that gave information about the projects. For animal projects, it would be care or feeding management. If it was dairy, a beak animal or a sheep, they would prepare it for show at fairs. The 4H agent position required a college degree in Agriculture or Home Economics. Some facts about Tolland County at the time. Tolland County was the smallest in the state with thirteen

towns. The population in 1949 was approximately 26,000 persons. It had one small city, Rockville, with the population between 5,000-8,000. The county had two high schools, one in Rockville and one in Stafford Springs and the junior high in Somers. The Rockville High School had a Vocational Agriculture Program and the young folks from Vernon, Tolland, Ellington, Somers, Stafford and Union could attend that program. The town of Windham, the high school in Windham also had a Vocational Agriculture Program and the students from the southern towns could attend that program if they wanted to participate in the agricultural opportunities. At the Rockville High School they accepted students from the towns of Vernon, Tolland, Ellington and the Somers juniors and seniors. In the southern part of the county the students from Willington, Mansfield, Columbia, Andover, Hebron and the southern half of Coventry attended the high school in Windham which was in Willimantic. The students from the town of Bolton and the northern half of Coventry attended high school in Manchester, CT which was in a different county. Windham was also in a different county. Stafford Springs had its own high school and accepted students from Stafford and Union. High schools later were built as the population in the towns increased in the towns of Somers, Ellington, Coventry, Bolton, Mansfield, Hebron and a new one in Vernon replacing the Rockville High School.

When I started working at the county, one of the responsibilities I had when I started working at the county was to promote the 4H program. The 4H program was carried out pretty much within county borders. I had to locate leaders to serve as 4H leaders, to orient and give guidance to these adults, to attend 4H meetings about once a year and when feasible visit 4H members to see their projects. These were mainly beef, dairy, lamb, and poultry projects and during the summer months, the garden projects. However, as time went on and being a small county with a small budget with financial restrictions on the travel account, visits to members were not often fitted into the program. The agent also gave leadership guidance to 4H town and county 4H advisory committees, which included helping plan and supervise the county or town 4H events. Some of the major areas were fall achievement programs, giving guidance to the 4H teams who were planning and managing the county 4H fair, and planning and conducting county project programs such as judging schools, vegetable judging programs, dairy judging tours, and sheep shearing school. These were carried out with the assistance of the Livestock Specialists and the Poultry and Vegetable Specialists. Also, the agents worked with town 4H committees in organizing 4H clubs, planning and conducting the local events which would include spring rallies, town 4H fairs, town 4H achievement programs. Two agents in the county cooperated in planning and conducting county events. We consulted with the chairman of the county 4H Committee before each monthly meeting and with the chairman we planned and talked over the agendas. The agents planned the county 4H achievement program and at the time selected and presented county pins for outstanding project accomplishments to the deserving 4H members. We planned and conducted reading and training programs, also educational programs for members such as officer training sessions. Agents wrote articles for the county 4H newsletter and participated in State planned conferences and training meetings. In 1952, we started a 4H camp program. Prior to that Tolland boys and girls attended the state 4H short course at the University of CT. A few who wanted to go to 4H camp on an "available" basis might be able to attend camp in New London or Hartford Counties. The first camp program that we had was for three weeks and we rented the facility at New London 4H camp in Franklin. In 1955 the camp program was moved to the Windham County campsite in Pomfret, where the facilities were much improved.

LL: Okay. Now can you think as you went through those years... how many years were you there altogether?

AG: About 30 years.

LL: What were some of the biggest changes you saw in the direction of the program?

AG: One of the changes that did come about in later years was away from the localized clubs and to go into the schools with programs. However, in this county the Advisory Committee folks did not warm up to that idea and it wasn't one of the areas that I encouraged. However, the Poultry Specialist at the time did have an incubation program that was planned to be used in school and we were successful in a couple of schools using that program. That was carried out pretty much by the teacher.

LL: During regular school time or was it an after school activity?

AG: That was during school time. This was one of the drawbacks, as I saw it, it didn't provide some of what I thought of as the in depth facets of the 4H program, such as learning the democratic procedures of being an officer and individual demonstrations. We saw the claims. One of the school projects that we had and was successful in some towns was the "Talking Bike." Through the specialists at the Ag Engineering Program over at UConn, each county was encouraged to acquire a bicycle. Ag Engineering headed it up with a mike and speaker so that the bicycle could be put on stage and somebody off stage talked with the voice coming from the bicycle. The principles of riding a bike safely were at least made known to the audience. This program was carried out in several, several towns. I must say that early on, in the 4H program the 4H work was done in the school. When I started working in the town, in one town there was a two-room school. One of the teachers had her class participate in a health project. She had been doing this for quite a number of years and that continued in that school until the school was closed and the students transferred to a regional school. So we did have school programs when I worked in the county

LL: Were there any other changes in direction as to how the parents participated or where the kids came from?

AG: In the early 60s or in the mid 60s, let's look at it that way, we were encouraged to...

LL: Diversify.

AG: ... well to, to bring minorities in the program. However, Tolland county was... LL: ... Affirmative Action.

AG: ... Affirmative Action, that's the word I was trying to remember, thank you. When Affirmative Action came about we were told that we had to have some minorities in the programs. However, the only minorities that we were aware of where a few in Rockville, but there weren't many. We did not know to reach them to bring them into the program. There were minorities at the Mansfield Training School, which was still functioning at that time and we were encouraged to try to introduce 4H work there, which we did. We talked with some people in the organization but after several talks it was found that it just didn't seem to fit in, in that particular framework and setup, so no further efforts were made through the Training School.

LL: When you had the clubs, were the many individual efforts at that time?

AG: In areas we did have them, but it really was not too encouraged. We did not discourage them, but we didn't overly encourage them, because we felt that the benefits of participating in a group effort far outweighed what a person might do individually. The individual program would depend upon on parental advice and support which you couldn't always rely on. If the parents were 4H alumni, then they knew what to expect and they were more apt to cooperate and see that the members, boys and girls did meet the 4H requirements and participate in the various activities, and hopefully countywide or even state wide.

LL: Were there any changes in getting 4H leaders? How were they trained?

AG: I mentioned the town committee. When I came to work in the county there were a couple of town committees. Town committees consisted of adults in a town who were interested in the 4H program. In one town it was insisted that the adults should not be a volunteer 4H leader. The feeling was that a committee member was already contributing a good part of their time to the 4H program. The committee work was to help find other leaders, find boys and girls to join the club, help get that club going, and under the town plans, participate in the activities that were for them. The training of two agents together did work out in programs and it encouraged the leaders to come through them. Or it might be, if it was a project area then the agent worked with the particular Specialist, whether it was livestock, or poultry or vegetable, whatever, the Specialist would be available to help with the region training.

LL: Was there much done at that time with the judging teams and going up to specifically thinking of livestock and same?

AG: We had what I considered a good dairy program with several clubs in the county with different towns. One of the activities was a dairy judging program. We would have a training session on identifying dairy breeds and an opportunity for Specialists to do the training session at a dairy farm. We would set up a class of four individuals. And, we would get livestock specialists who would go over the principles of what to look for in selecting and judging the animals. The members were exposed to what was expected of them. During the summer months we had a dairy tour which, for many years, was to visit four farms in neighboring counties. These were arranged with the cooperation of someone from that county. We strove to go to pure-breed farms. At each farm we would judge one or two classes. Scores were kept and from the results we selected a County Dairy Judging Team, which later participated in the state Dairy Judging Contest at the University of CT. The high scoring members there, regardless of the county they came from, were selected as the State Dairy Judging Team and judged in a regional dairy judging contest at the Eastern States Exposition, competing with judging teams from the other New England states. As I had been a member of the UConn Livestock Judging Team when I was a student, I knew that experience was the key factor in learning how to become a good judge. So, in Tolland County we set it up to select our county team. It was the high score of participation in two judging contests. This served as an incentive. If they did a good job the first year, they went to participate the second year. We did have success. Some of the members were on the State Judging Team as a result of this.

LL: Did they go on and compete nationally? Was there a national competition at the time?

AG: I don't recall that there was at that time. Because these national events depended upon monies available and there was a limited amount of money for the national or regional programs.

LL: Could they have gone to Chicago for 4H Congress? Were some of the projects judging, or did they have to go on their animal projects?

AG: The ones that went to National 4H Congress were based on individual project work and many went as individuals and not as a team.

LL: Okay. Now would you tell us a little bit about the scope of the animal projects? For example, where did they get the animals?

AG: Okay, I'm glad you brought that up because I thought of this after I made my notes. I think it really should be brought up. In the dairy program, it was after World War II, that WTIC radio which at the time was owned by Traveler's Insurance Company, had a farm reporter, Frank Gadbois. Frank had

previously worked for the University of CT as the agricultural editor and the gentleman who planned and had a program every Saturday. The University of Connecticut had the Saturday programs on WTIC for quite a number of years. WTIC hired Frank to be a farm reporter, early in the morning, getting into the station, I don't know at 4:30 or 5:00. He had a 1 ½ or 2 hour program which was listened to by farmers throughout the listening audience, up until 7:00 a.m. Well after World War II, the manager of the radio station and Frank Gadbois and the State 4H Leader, who was agent Brundage, discussed how the station could assist the 4H work. So they set up a program that was a WTIC Heifer or Calf program where they offered loans to qualifying boys and girls to receive a calf or a heifer of pure-breed background that they would raise and eventually pay back the money with no interest. This continued as long as Frank Gadbois was employed by the station and as long as Travelers owned the station. This was a real benefit for many boys and girls throughout the state and it did expand into the Vo Ag programs eventually. The program was set up with the five dairy breed associations, the Holsteins, the Jerseys, the Asher, the Guernsey's, and the Brown Swiss. When a boy or girl was selected to receive a calf they could choose which breed they wanted and it was up to the breed representative to contact the farm in the state to find out if they had a calf or a heifer that met the qualifications. It had to be from a good milk production dam and it had to be a minimum age, and I can't remember exactly but it probably was over four months of age. (It was beyond the period of time where there was any danger the calf-hood diseases) One way that they could get these animals for the youth program was a dairy calf sale held at the University of Connecticut. It was held in the Hicks Arena, after it was completed. The animals would be brought in and the young folks that were approved for a loan could look closely at the animals and select the ones that they were interested in. When it came up for auction they could bid on it knowing that they were backed for \$200 or \$250. Anything beyond that agreed to loan would come out of their pocket or from their father's pockets or however. Many boys and girls in both 4H did get good animals to raise. The original idea was these would be farm boys and girls and the animals, good animals would go into the regular dairy herd. However, some of the participants did not have a dairy herd to put it in and when it became a mature animal they did sell them to someone else very willing to buy it.

LL: This was another event wasn't it at the end of the year when they had actual judging, at the end? I mean how did they finish their project and show that they had been successful? They kept records of the...

AG:... well they kept their own records.

LL: And then was there a final time when they all brought them together to sell them?

AG: No not, they were all kept individually. The members were looking for a good show animal, as well as a good production animal. They did a good job in preparing it for show at their town 4H Fair. Some did get together but that was by being selected to represent CT at the Eastern States Fair and the 4H Dairy Program. CT had an allotment of the number of animals that they could send each year. The Dairy Livestock Specialists would go to the fairs and choose the animals by different ages. He would try to represent all breeds if possible. The Holsteins were more plentiful so they had to be real outstanding animals to be selected, for example, the Holstein animal to go to the Eastern States Dairy Program. Some of the members were aware of this and so if they wanted that experience of going to the Eastern States, they would select one of the minor breeds, such as an Asher or Brown Swiss. We had several young folks in this county who did that each year. They went to Eastern States two or three times with that animal and each time it was a great experience for them.

LL: Now, during the animal projects they learned to keep records and they learned to show it.

AG: Show it and the whole care of it. Um, fitting it for the fair meant cleaning, trimming of hooves

and washing and grooming it, shining, well if it had horns as some did back in those days, help them clean up the horns and polish them and so forth. According to the breed requirements for their animals.

LL: Did you get adults to use the new techniques? Did any of this rub off on to the farms where these kids lived?

AG: I couldn't say that. It might have, but I can't say for sure because the County Agent in this town was a very specializing person and there was a good dairy program in this town.

LL: Uh huh.

AG: So the successful farmers were those that participated in the Extension guide. In any CIDA, Connecticut Herd Improvement Association was also very active. Uh, I think there were three milk producers in the county, so a good number of the dairy farms would participate in that program which did lead to improved dairy production.

LL: Did any of those kids that didn't apply for a loan to get their livestock, they could have gotten a calf from their own herd?

AG: Right. They could have gotten one from their own herd and in Tolland county at our county 4H fair, we did not discriminate against a grade animal...

LL: Grade animals were...

AG: That's a non-registered crossbreed. In some of the counties they were going for the registered pure-breed, registered in the member's name. However, we did not require that. With some of the emphasis on good parade animals at the county fair, they placed above those that were registered breeds which was kind of hard to swallow by some folks. We were looking at it from the standpoint of the boy or girl themselves and not because of, maybe, the financial worth of the parents to get them the registered animal. However, to go to the Eastern States it had to be a registered animal, being in the member's name. That was the qualification at the time. However, after I retired 27 years ago now, because there were decreasing numbers of young people on farms, a program was set up where uh an interested boy or girl could rent an animal with an agreement with a farm in the neighborhood. There were conditions, too, where they would have to spend so much time at the farm and caring for that animal and training it to participate in 4H events, probably state or regional. Some of these, the program was changed that so that some of the rented animals were coming to be selected to go to the Eastern States, as I understand it.

LL: Would the same kind of processes be for sheep and poultry and so on?

AG: This County had a strong sheep program probably the strongest in the state when I came to work here. The leader of it was "gung ho" and was instrumental in helping the young students, anyone who was interested in owning a lamb. A lamb by the way... you didn't have to have a large area for the lamb. You could get a lamb in the spring and as long as you had a shelter for it and could coop it up at night so it could be safe, you could raise it in your backyard. And, lambs are not that expensive to get in the spring. However, it was better to purchase them after Easter than before Easter because of, I'm trying to think of the name of the term. Anyway the Greek religious folks were after the early lambs for special Easter programming so the lambs were at a higher price. All through Easter and after Easter they were readily available at a more reasonable price for the member. Then they would grow it and because they were purchasing feed for it, they had to be careful about paying too much for a lamb to begin with. In the fall there was a state 4H lamb sale which is held at three locations, and usually in the central in the part of the state. The members could bring their lambs in. They would be weighed and tagged and uh,

divided by weight classes and as I recall three classes. Then, they would be judged by a commercial judge or a person, given the group award or blue or red or white ribbon. Then these animals were sold at auction to buyers throughout the state, some of the representing packing facilities or stores or individuals. First National Stores was a good buyer at these sales.

There was competition between some of the buyers to buy the champion lamb and then after the sale they would put them in the pens according to the buyer. They usually had made arrangements with a slaughter facility to come to be slaughtered and then to the market and so forth. So this was a good project for boys and girls because they could get the animal in the spring have the care and use of it through the summer months, in May through fall. The parents don't have to be concerned about care in the winter months. With the leader that we had here in this county he saw to it that the members participated in events as appropriate for the projects.

LL: Uh huh.

AG: Some of the members with experience, older members, would start their own breeding block, which they did. That presented different management kinds of procedures. One of them was to get the wool off the sheep in the spring. So with the assistance of the Livestock Specialist we would call the Sheep Shearing School in the spring. What we needed to do was find an individual who had some sheep to be shorn and we would set up this school at that place. This went on for a number of years and was quite successful.

LL: Now I have talked with Jane Grant about the wool and...

AG: ... yes. Yeah, Jane's husband Don came into the program later. Plus, he was trained in college. He was the Sheppard at the university so you wouldn't have to worry about his members going to sheep shearing school. He would do the training himself He, of course, knew how to trim the animal to fit it for show which is quite a technique in itself

LL: What about the sheep, what kind of transition... what about having the animal go off to become food? Did this, did they have to include any of that in the educational scope of the animal project?

AG: This, most of the members in the sheep program were not from farms.

LL : So then how do they feel about the animal leaving? If you will...

AG: If it was young girls there were tears, a lot of them, the first sale they went to. But they soon got over it and they were back in the program the next year and with a strong desire that they were going to... if they had a red ribbon, they were going to get a blue ribbon the next year. And they would also be better in some selection techniques so that they were more selective in who they bought their lamb from.

LL: Okay.

AG: Because some of the breeders had produced better animals than the others. Uh, so it was a learning experience for them.

LL : And where did they buy their sheep? You mentioned that the... with the cows and cattle they had to be registered. Do the sheep have to be registered?

AG: No, they didn't have to be registered.

LL: They could buy them anyplace they wanted to. People who knew people who knew people who referred them.

AG: Right or the leader knew this particular person who was probably outside of the 4H program who had some sheep and some lambs and the 4H members were able to take the lambs off their hands; the ones that they did not to keep themselves.

LL: Was there much crossover of people actually doing anything with the wool like learning to weave and learning to do any of the hand crafts?

AG: Not to my knowledge. The ones who had sheep and wool they could bring it to the CT Sheep Breeders Association wool pool and be credited for it but I don't believe it was very financially rewarding.

LL: They do it... they still did it last year so they...

AG: Yea...

LL: So, they take in and sell it here.

AG: I don't know We had the one sheep club and then we had one of the towns one had its own sheep club members, sheep club which, from the office standpoint, we agreed to. However, this leader who had the County program was quite upset.

LL: Oh.

AG: And anyway, there was some, some resentment. I'm not sure say feelings. When we did have more sheep clubs, three at one time in the county. That was one of the strong projects that we had. We also got involved with a pig project in this town through the cooperation of the CT Swine Breeders Association and a pig farmer who had Yorkshires. He was willing to sell the, I've forgotten the terminology, to the 4H members. So we would sign up uh members and these were individual projects. I had as many, I think, as twelve or fifteen one year in the county. The program really did not go over. The idea was that the project would coincide with the sheep project and that the mature pigs would be sold at the sale in the fall with the lambs. That really did not go too well. Pigs, a pig is ready for market at about five weeks.

LL: Oh, oh.

AG: As I remember, it's anything above 180 lbs.

LL: Okay.

AG: Up to, over 250 were too fat.

LL: Laughs. Are there any particular events with the 4H that best stick out in your mind, experiences with particular projects?

AG: Well, the horse project was one. I'm not a horse person, per se, but the horse program caught on. We had a number of horse clubs throughout the county. The first one we organized in Somers had a good number of members and several leaders. The leaders were interested in their members uh, uh, becoming a drill team. So they set about and did form a drill team. They had all kinds of problems because they really didn't have a place to practice and the horses had to get used to each other. And there was a big difference in, shall we say, the quality of the horse. The members without the financial means just had one that was available at the moneys they could pay, but then somebody with more financial means had one with better breeding and more potential. But, they did have success in getting a drill team. They had, uh procedures that they would go through. They put together the semblance of a uniform and they were able to get the transportation of the horses to events and they would put the drill on in several different places. In fact, when Willimantic opened its Stop & Shop originally, this was in the store parking lot and a slight sloping hill. Anyway, the Somers' club was asked to come down and put on a drill which they did.

LL: Uh huh.

AG: So these were different kinds of experiences for those particular young folks. They learned how to manage, train their animals for the particular single events, double events, whatever the routine was that the drill composed of So that was one activity. That club and others that performed wanted to have their own horse shows. Basically the horse club members were about 90% girls and a few boys. They had started with a western saddle, but that did not last very long. They wanted to get a better animal and go into English. Their goal was to become a hunt rider, which meant jumping over jumps and over all kinds of things. But anyway, the club that they had in the town of Vernon after the Agricultural Center property was purchased and the facilities relocated there, they used space in the back lot for a horse ring. So this club, with permission of the Agriculture Center folks, was able to set up a horse ring. It was used for horse shows and the County Fair and also other events sponsored by the club and members from throughout the county. Their families would come in and participate in these classes, which included both English and Western. With the interest in hunt classes they set up a hunt for us which was separate outside the ring. That was successful a number of years. Then the space was available and they decided they needed a second ring. So a ring was built for Western classes and English to go on at the same time.

LL: What year did this horse club get started, approximately?

AG: The first club was in the early 50s and it was new for the state of CT and if I'm correct, the club we started in Somers was the first one in the state. Although other counties soon picked them up and it became a strong program here in CT. The Livestock Specialist was also interested in horses, a few times in New York???? or

LL: Oh.

AG: He did both, he did the beef and sheep, swine and horses at the New England Center, the whole "kit and caboodle." He set up meetings of horse club leaders throughout the state. I saw to it that the information was made available in the counties and encouraged members to go. And, they did go to these meetings. So these horse, discussions and information traveled between counties and a number of horse programs.

LL: Um, without going into names, are there particular leaders or kids...

AG: I can go a little further on the horse program...

LL: Okay do ahead.

AG: After Mr. Gaylord retired, the University of Connecticut, added a Horse Specialist on the University College of Agriculture staff. He was interested in horse judging teams and participating in horse judging regional programs. So folks in this county were interested. So, the Council would buy some 4H Units. Each year in May, late May, we would plan a Horse Judging School at a place in the county where we could get a class of four horses or two horses and bring in two

LL: Uh huh.

AG: And we had a person judge the classes in _____ regions, explained how to do it and so forth. The members are given the chance to also select _____ and _____. So this was done for a number of years. There was a Horse Judging contest, I think, at the University of Connecticut. I can't recall how we selected the County Team. There was a Regional Horse Judging event at The Eastern States as well. A State team was selected and we had members from Tolland county who were successful in being a member on the State Team and the Regional Team who I knew I. I called upon him in later years to also assist in training the younger members so there was some experience for that.

LL: Okay, now let's go back. Do you remember any particular leaders that stick out in your mind as being...

AG: ...yes I could give you a good example. Have you heard of Foster Richards?

LL: No.

AG: Okay, Foster Richards was a dairy farmer in Mansfield with four daughters. The older daughter wasn't interested in animals, but the three younger daughters were all interested in animals and had dairy projects. They were members of a combination Dairy and Poultry Club in the town of Mansfield. Their leader at that time that I started working at the county was an agronomist on the University of Connecticut staff. Within the first year he left the university and went to North Carolina so the club was losing a leader. I was never even was informed that the original leader left. The members had amongst themselves chosen two parents to become leaders. One could handle the dairy and one could handle the poultry.

LL: The parents didn't know this yet?

AG: Yes they knew it...but they had reservations. They wanted to keep the club going and both of them said, "We don't know if we could do it." So I encouraged, "Yes you could, we will help you." So this was one of the things that I endeavored to do and the club was...in fact Gene Whaples was a member of that club.

LL: Oh.

AG: And you know the results of that

LL: Of the, of the poultry or the horse, the dairy?

AG: Poultry. But you know one of the poultry members eventually became Associate Director of Extension at the University of Connecticut so that gives you an idea of that... well anyway the dairy leader...

LL: This is Foster Richards?

AG: Foster Richards from farming. He had come from the state of Massachusetts and he had had one or two years in a agriculture school at college in MA. He was a good thinking man. Uh, he... anyway he took the dairy part and followed the guidelines that we suggested. Any questions he raised, we answered them for him. In the town of Mansfield within a year or so, a town committee was formed that was these adults who would help plan town activities; fine members, fine leaders. This one included breeders as well as other folks and the parents. The committee selected Foster to be chair.. So this was a new role. We gave him guidance as to how to chair a meeting, prepare an agenda and carry it out. And he was successful in doing so. We had a County 4H committee and its basic members came from the Farm Bureau organization that sponsored Extension. The Farm Bureau had three directors of their membership in each town. One was designated agriculture, one homemaking, and one 4H. Foster Richards being a Farm Bureau member was presently the 4H representative and on the 4H Advisory Committee. So he would come to the meetings and within a couple of years he was asked to be chairman, which he accepted and did a very good job. The Homemaking Agent and I worked with him and advised and counseled him in filling the role. Not long after that this political party asked him to run for School Board, which he did. He was elected to the School Board. Within a year or two he was on subcommittees. When the town of Mansfield was planning where to locate another grammar school, whether they would build an expansion on the grammar school in the Storrs area or build in the rural community. A committee was selected to analyze and come up with a plan. Foster was named Chairman of that committee. When the committee gave its report to leaders in the town, the President of the University of Connecticut was in the audience, as well as a lot of other professors, Foster gave the report. He told me afterwards, he said, " The President of the University was in the audience and all of these professors. I gave the report and there weren't questions. They said they accepted it. So we felt real pleased with satisfying them." It wasn't long after that, well shortly after that that the legislature in CT was changed. The makeup of it, prior to that, every town had a representative and some of the early towns had two representatives. Mansfield had had two representatives. Anyway, one of them retired Smith and Foster was with the same political party. So Foster was asked to run for representative in Smith's place and he said, "Yes." So he was elected as the town representative and continued to serve, I think, for fourteen years.

LL: Oh.

AG: As the town representative. He' d run his dairy farm at the same time. One of the things about Foster was that three of his daughters had mature dairy calves. When those cows came into production, Foster credited those girls accounts with the money from the sale of the milk money to use for their college education or advancement in employment. It did not go into his account which would hindered his own operation and so forth. He was told by the other farmers that he was foolish for doing that. But he was interested in his

daughters futures." After he retired I met with him several times. He told me his successes all came through his involvement with the 4H program. So to me that's one of the big

accomplishments. We not only train young people, boys and girls, but we also give leadership training and experience to adults who were willing to participate in our program.

LL: Wonderful. Thank you very much for, for meeting with me again. Is there anything else that you want to add?

AG: Well we, I don't know. I can't...

LL: You've done well. Thank you very, very much.

AG: Well, forgive me... Why I mentioned about the conditions in the County when I started because that had a bearing on the 4H program. In comparison to the other counties in the state, which were larger in population, we didn't have the numbers for...

LL: Uh huh.

AG: ... or the finances to do the kinds of things that were done in the other counties. The county budget was, back in those days, was less than \$20,000 and it came from, about \$5,000 from the county government, whatever the Farm Bureau could contribute and State and Federal moneys. So we were always tied up for moneys. The County budget was the county commissioners, I think there were three or four. which came from the State Legislators and the state, county senator was the chairman on that committee. They were the ones to set up the county budget, which included...

(End of Tape)