

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

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Name of Person Interviewed: Stewart Johnson, #2
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LL: ...over with people I should went down to do the council meetings and staying at their homes.

SJ: Yes.

LL: This was a whole different kind of the system when – you were a specialist for a third of your job.

SJ: Right.

LL: You went out and took a different kind of role than in your later years with extension?

SJ: Unless continued and I shift a lot of [Unintelligible]. A lot of what I did continued all the time that was on the payroll here and also when the university providing the office afterwards. It was different from some respects. I do this through cooperatives and mostly from CMPA, the Connecticut Milk Producers Association. There were some other cooperatives. I work with them all including the Farmers' Cooperative. I process [Unintelligible] milk and others [Unintelligible]. Farmers came mostly from the Colchester area, small group. Maybe 50 farmers, maybe 75. It was a cooperative in Waterbury. I work with them. Have meetings with the Waterbury Cooperative probably a dozen times. The same with the Torrington Cooperative which process milk and distribute it to consumers. The CMPA was by itself until it merged with Modern Milk where the producers originally all sold to the Brock-Hall Dairy in New Haven and local Dairymens which was in Providence. Then, in the Eastern Connecticut, farmers sold out through the local one. Going with the CMPA rather than spending too much time on those that are on our existence, I would meet with the board of directors frequently. Ken [Garner] would come out here to stores and we'd have an evening meeting with [Ray Brestler] and Paragon and myself, anybody in the department who wanted to come. Most of them didn't want to come. We talked with Ken Garner who'd been appointed to a national committee on rather [Unintelligible] dairy and he wanted to quiz us. When

he goes there, what should he say or not say or what should he support or not support? We don't get that anymore. That stopped.

LL: Then, we still have a Connecticut Milk Producers Association.

SJ: Well, not as a cooperative. The CMPA or Connecticut Milk Producers Association which had 80% of the farmers in Connecticut in it. It merged in and consolidated a producers' association when Modern Milk or Walter Bryant was manager, and most of the milk go into Brock-Hall but not all of it, and local Dairymens which most of the milk were sold in Rhode Island, those three joined in to consolidate it. Then, shortly thereafter consolidated merged with New England Milk Producers Association and United Milk. These were the two united office was up in Morrisville, Vermont. The NEMPA numbers were scattered hardly any in Connecticut but some of the Eastern Connecticut, they formed Yankee Milk. Then, people who are enamored of words thought AgroMart would be better words. They changed the name from Yankee Milk to AgroMart. I wasn't in favor of that. I like Yankee Milk better than AgroMart. They thought we'll be a bigger cooperative and we'll do things other than milk. They changed the name again.

LL: The big tanker trucks that go around, are one of these three large ones?

SJ: The large ones around here are mostly AgroMart trucks and have AgroMart logos on them. There are truckers who work for with AgroMart milk such as Ernie Stagner. He has quite a trucking operation going.

LL: He works for AgroMart?

SJ: No.

LL: He trucks for them.

SJ: He trucks for them. He's also the sawdust kingdom of all of the New England. He holds more sawdust, two nuclear plants and so on than anybody else in New England. I kid him when I see him. I said, "Are you still the sawdust king?" He says, "Indeed, I am in addition to milking cows." They have 200 or 300 or 400 cows and trucking milk.

LL: They have contracts with AgroMart?

SJ: Yes.

LL: Where does he get his sawdust from?

SJ: He gets them from New Hampshire or Maine or other. These plants, it's not just ordinary sawdust. That has to come sawdust from particular trees of a nuclear plant like – what is it? Millstone.

LL: Millstone.

SJ: They want sawdust. They want sawdust that is super-duper sawdust. He takes that sawdust too.

LL: Interesting. I have to interview him too. I'll talk to him about it.

SJ: Yes.

LL: [Unintelligible] a little bit. What were some of the key problems that you face in your role? Because you were walking on [eggs a lot of the time].

SJ: Well, the way I looked at it, which was different, was in working out, me working with Connecticut famers and with Connecticut dealers that I visited the offices of the 20 biggest ones within when I was here, two years, that in order to help them, I need to be recognized in the Northeast, in the country, in Canada and then Great Britain. I spend a lot of time. I was on the Advisory Committee of the Ontario Milk [Unintelligible]. They only had two from this country. I was in Toronto many times there and in Winnipeg and Montreal and Vancouver. My objective when I came here was very simple, that I would be the number one milk marketing person in the country. I may not make it. [Laughter]

LL: That was your mission. [Laughter]

SJ: That was my mission. [Laughter]

LL: Yes.

SJ: The mission is that you learn as fast as you can. Then, you get involved in any problems that come up whether they're as small as a gallon jug being sold in Connecticut or the bigger problems of what you need to do internationally with selling butter to the Russians or giving butter to the Russians. That was my goal. I think I ended up by not that I was number one but I probably was in the top six. I figured I could be more productive that way than by having completely meetings with local farmers. I met with a lot of them in many occasions, and a lot of cooperatives talking about the CMPA. Frequently, I meet with their board of directors. They have about 24 directors there including [Unintelligible] then some over in Coventry. Probably to have more [Unintelligible]. It then included Jack Tiffany because he was a member of Modern Milk in those days [Unintelligible]. You knew all these farmers and hardly sold their milk. I'm in cooperatives. I help them device a milk cooling plan for the CMPA. I do have a big map and the rate that the CMPA would try to get the milk cold as cheaply as possible. The deduction from the farmer would vary according to the township where his farm was located, his farm [Unintelligible], I had to have a big milk, a big map. I got that map and I solve and bought it there at a loft at a map making place on 42nd Street in New York City. It cost not too much as \$150.00. I paid for it myself. Then, the CMPA gave me back the \$150.00. Now, the [Unintelligible] that we see we had circles from Hartford City. We have had a big compass. There wasn't as big a compass around here. The one who had it was Jack Stephens or Stephens from Engineering was retired for now. The consulting work where he used the big compass and he lend it to us. We have that big map one from almost the end of that one to over here when we laid it out. We had to find a room, a classroom, and take all the chairs out and draw the map.

LL: You could put it on the floor.

SJ: On the floor?

LL: Yes.

SJ: Oddly enough, I have thought that some town were shaped like [Morris] and maybe that will make an exception, but the director isn't cooperative. We're going take it just the way it does in the map. That's the way the deduction will come from [Unintelligible]. Then, we work the legislator. At that time, you could pass anything you wanted.

LL: That's where there were real people in the legislator.

SJ: Because of this, every town had two members. We passed in '47 a milk shed law. We passed a take-out and payback plan for seasonality where it would take money out of Hammerberg in the spring period, when the cows gave the most milk. We had to put it in the state treasure, but we had it earmarked enough, we could take it out of the state treasure. They wouldn't leave within Hammerberg's [Unintelligible]. It had to be with our state treasure. We had to pass that by the legislator. I wrote parts or some large parts of both the milk shed law and the seasonality take on, payback, planner, whatever. So that in most days, what you're worried about as Ken Garner said, "We can pass anything." The courts are different. They will take it to court, the dealers, right, in Chapman and Hartford sale test. The judge will decide it's illegal because before I came, a law that a milkshed where the farmers live would expand them and contract in accordance with the law of supply and demand. The judge said, "He confined the law of supply and demand anywhere." [Laughter] Therefore, this act is illegal. In those days, we knew, I knew and Ken Garner, I knew it would pass almost anything you wanted to relative to milk but maybe it won't last when it's taken to court. The milk shed law say when we passed it in 47, Ken Garner said, "Let's when we pass something of it that will stand up in the courts." This take on payback plan and this milk shed law stood up in the courts. It was contesting. The one who was contesting it would lose. We have that being able to pass anything but being careful of what we can pass will stand the court action, the trials against it.

LL: Did you continue to be split three ways with teaching research and extension through your whole career here?

SJ: All the way through.

LL: Did you ever change the focus of your classes? Which kind of classes did you teach?

SJ: The first one was in Price Analysis. That's undergrad.

LL: Yes.

SJ: Then, it was Marketing in the graduate. Those were the two courses I wanted. I asked for a three-way split when I came.

LL: Did you continue to teach those particular classes on...

SJ: Not all the time. I taught on the graduate one right away in Price Analysis. I taught it for 15 or 20 years. Then, I didn't teach that any longer. Then, the graduate one, I started later, but taught it longer or I taught the undergraduate one was in over the old library with [Unintelligible]. We had the room right up near the ceiling. It was in a little room under the small classrooms, and that way you have to walk up and it was at the very top of the building. It was a secluded spot. I like to go over there. Nobody else came up there.

LL: How many graduate students do you think you had over your time?

SJ: Ones that I helped, I don't know whether it was 50 or more. It's hard to tell. You take Dorothy Goodwin was our first PhD.

LL: All right. Okay.

SJ: I wasn't on her committee. I went to her final exam and her oral exam when she got the PhD. I looked over her thesis different times. I wasn't a member of her committee. Harold Halcrow, who left for Illinois in the early 1950's, the head of the department out there was the chairman, [Unintelligible] Taylor, was a member of the Economics department. I was very glad in many respects. In that department, he was on Dorothy's committee. The committee really was a small group of maybe could be three or four or five. In between times, the whole department knew exactly what was going on.

LL: What would you say brought your greatest joy in your career?

SJ: That's hard to tell. [Laughter] I wouldn't know what you say it was.

LL: Or satisfaction?

SJ: Well, it was the whole works. I wouldn't point the finger of the stands out above as [Unintelligible] above me.

LL: What did you think motivated you to keep going in this direction?

SJ: Well, I like the work and the people. I continued in it. I should mention one other thing because a lot of it had to do with milk marketing. In finance, I truly then particularly help dairy farmers except that was on some of the problems of AgroMart and CMPA. I was on a commission of money and credit, a consultant. I didn't have to take leave in 1959 and 1960 for 17 months. The university at that time agreed me to take one day a week on that consulting. There was – George [Unintelligible] and I were joint consultants. I got a book out of it because - it's called Federal Credit Programs by Prentice Hall, which is a hard-covered book in most libraries. It was very difficult to work in this because on the committee, we had so many name people who didn't do too much work but they went to committee meetings. David Rockefeller was on my committee. He was the brother of Nelson. He was chairman of the Chase Manhattan Bank. He's still alive and active, David Rockefeller is. There were others, formers US Secretary of Commerce, Sawyer from Ohio. We had the national president of the American Farm Bureau, who had to know [Unintelligible] went to our meetings. There were some Robert Nathan's, Robert Nathan and Associates, who would work with labor unions and groups all his life. The problem was we would have these meetings and between when I was working, many of the committee members hadn't done very much work. It was hard as far as getting to policy. I had very good write-ups by – we have lots of money. I hired Guinevere and I hired Gail Johnson from University of Chicago, who is very well-known. Neil Hathaway from Michigan State. Fox, who was the head of the department at Iowa state. We would hire and rate monographs on certain parts of it. The whole thing never quite fit together. That was 17 months. While I was working on it, I had one full-time assistant in an office in New York City working for me and one who was working for me full-time in Washington DC. In addition to the committee meetings, I had one day a week to go either to New York City or Washington for 17 months. I don't call that a highlight in my career. It was a main group that had a lot of people who were important and had prestige and name. We didn't really have a policy group like we had in that 10-person committee in 1947 to 1949. This was 1959 to 1960. Now, one of the highlights was really my six months in Great Britain which I had all sorts of money, which helps. I had all sorts of introduction to people. I had people that help me there in Great Britain so that I ended up – I had not only my [Unintelligible] I hired an assistant professor from the University of Nottingham to work for me full-time while I was in Great Britain. He had a car. That was handy. I didn't have to worry about when he went to Glasgow or Edinburgh or Bristol for employment. It ended up they invited me to the last board meeting, when I was there, of the British Milk Marketing board. That covers England and Wales. It doesn't cover Scotland. To give my views to them as what somebody from the US thought could be done better in milk marketing in Great Britain. I wouldn't hardly put that at the top but, it's cost.

LL: Is there anything else you'd like to say now before we bring this to closure? We've gone longer than I anticipated. This has been wonderful.

SJ: I think we've gone long enough. I don't have any closing comment.

LL: Any closing comments. Well, thank you very much for making the time and coming in. We'll fit this into – I like the idea of the monographs.

SJ: Yes.

(End of Interview)