

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

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Name of Person Interviewed: Clarence Salmon (II)

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CS: ...But you don't have to become...by the time you pay the Thousand Dollars to the Town for...well, for letting developing and paying the surveyor and paying all the other expenses and on a test and all these things, it's gets quite unbalanced so sometimes it's best to figure out what...what you would have done and then what you had to pay for before and then reduce it to that. You'd probably have to survey it...

LL: This is April 29, 1999. This is a continuation of an oral history interview with Clarence Salmon. Clarence, thank you for agreeing to go on with this. This morning we are going to talk about some of your work going back...because of...to Extension and then going on into your great experiences the length of time you've worked with 4-H. So, if you want to start about Extension Service first?

CS: Yeah. My dad, when came over from Long Island was running the farm. He didn't know that much about how to run a Connecticut farm in relationship to a Long Island farm. And he had some problems in making crops grow right and so forth and, we came over here in 1910 and after Smith-Lever Act in 1914 we had... he heard about the Extension beginning and that they had people in the field that...that would help him out to...to know how to operate the farm; what fertilization was needed and so forth. And so he contacted the Extension Service and in fact, they came to see him and told him that now they had people in the field that could help him out and help all farmers out and so he said, "I could use that help." So he actually started with this and then he kept on going and I, of course, being a farm boy I was with him to listen to what the Agent had to say. You know, I was just big kid but I'd listen anyhow. And so based on that, we liked...what we heard, through Extension and he was able to raise better crops and so forth because of it. So...I was very intense about how it was done and...as I grew older I went to meetings with him to learn...to learn more about it and gradually came along together. And so our

Extension Service as far as we were concerned, the family concerned we started shortly after 1914. Probably around 1917 or 18 and then...then I learned and it was a...just like having a guardian to tell us what to do to make the farm go and after he passed away I had to take the farm over, he passed away when he was sixty-four and I was about twenty-three then and so I certainly depended on Extension work then to keep us going and it's a whole different program, a whole different way of doing things after Extension got here than before because before he was just doing...what he saw his neighbors do but didn't know how to much how to go on then to improve it and Extension taught him that way.

LL: Where did you go to meetings?

CS: Usually the Brooklyn Grange and at that time it was in Brooklyn Center. It was over here where the Post Office was at that time. You see, most of our meetings was held up there. Sometimes we would go different people's houses but for the most part we went to Brooklyn Grange.

LL: And where...did you have one Agent who worked with you or were there several different...?

CS: We had several Agents that came in due time. When they began they had an Extension Agent in the field who knew more about livestock and feeding livestock and taking care of the livestock. Then we had a fellow who...was a vegetable grower who knew more about growing vegetables and crops and then, of course, they had a Home Demonstration Agent that came over also. And then finally, they also had Club Agents in the field. And at that time, they had a Club Agent for the girls and a Club Agent for the boys. They had two Club Agents to help them guide them along. So we had quite a number. We had...oh, and we had a Poultry Agent too, to come in and...tell people about raising poultry and----...it might be whatever. And they worked very long hours about how to take care of them.

LL: ... what size of groups would usually attend?

CS: Well, there's... most of them were involved with the...that were an, Long Island growers and that had...had gotten together here in the Town of Brooklyn and outside the town, and Canterbury. And so then they were the first ones that kind of congregated. They knew each other before they came here and there'd be usually fifteen or twenty different farmers that would...would gather together and they would learn from each other and learn from Extension.

LL: Were there any experimental plots and did anyone need to try a process first before the rest would do it?

CS: At that time, when they first started, they didn't. But after a while they... they would...as new projects came in,...new varieties of crops or whatever...let me...for instance, if...someone created a different type of corn, would ask a few, "I'd like to plant the corn, maybe a few rows of corn where this product...with this variety and see how it affects your new crops." And based on that it would do...well, they worked with.....with the people who were selling the seed. Actually, they'd do this and in doing so there were two things. The Extension worked with them on ...on the different varieties and then they were making the decision whether it was a good...a good new crop or not. So they worked together...

LL: Do you remember much of what the Home Demonstration Agents did, your mother?

CS: Yeah. I remember quite well because I was involved in...I was on the Board at that time and so I was knowledgeable about everything that was happening in the Extension Service and the Extension...the Home Demonstration Agents was did a tremendous job in going from house to house telling people how to improve the way of food, nutrition, to make it healthier for their different farmers and not only different farmers but everyone was entitled to whatever...whatever knowledge they had because it was a funds

from the Federal government funds. It was a...was you might say, was paying her so, or her or him, so they had to tell anyone who wanted some help. Not only nutrition work but they helped with the raising for their food, they helped getting together with people who had some old chairs they wanted to have fixed and they wanted to put new bottoms in them or whatever it might be and they showed them how to do that. I can remember that pretty well. And also to help with their children, with their feeding their children and so forth, what was...what was nutritionally best for them to have. And so they.....well, it was very, very active. They had an Agent there full-time and sometime they had to have an extra Agent there because the demand was very great as it kept getting bigger and bigger and bigger and---. And the different people, different homeowners were just glorified to have that kind of information to carry on the work.

LL: Did food preservation, canning and then eventually freezing?

CS: Yes. They...they did mostly canning at that time, not much on freezing but. Because they didn't have much to freeze with until electricity came in. But...but they would just have ice and so forth to freeze anything else. But by that time it was about...about all the canning they started with and it was delicious too.

They could store it away and cap it down. It was a job to do but it was great in the winter time certainly. And it preserved...you could raise a large garden and then they would can a lot of stuff and eat it through the winter time so they reduced their grocery bills ---.

LL: Where did you shop?

CS: Oh, we...just locally in different stores in Danielson as it was because we had a horse and wagon to go to town didn't go too far...unless they were got on the trolley in Danielson and go towards that. And they would do that, but mostly it's around locally, in Danielson and Brooklyn and so forth.

LL: Now, the trolley ran on what kind of power?

CS: ...at that time they had towns themselves, had electrical power and it was out on a power line overhead by the...where they had the thing hit the pole above them and it made contact and that's how they could...travel

LL: But there wasn't power out in the...in the farm area?

CS: Yeah, there wasn't anything for a number of years.

LL: Talk about the clubs. You mentioned the clubs; these are the 4-H Clubs. They became 4-H Clubs. They were com clubs to begin with or what kind of clubs were they?

CS: the Agents that started it as various club; but mostly was a mixture of things of asking their folks if they could have...raise calf, chicken, etc. girls, of course, wanted to make dresses and..and how to how to cook food ...just as a mother would and ...so they all were worked in the same way. ...it was just a continuous thing, you might say and having to know more about how to do things.

LL: And how did you involved in...were you a 4-H member?

CS: No, a...now this is after the hurricane and I had heard of 4-H work but I...it was through Extension...I went to become involved with it. I...especially when I had to take the farm over, I didn't have much time for anything else but run the farm. I had a lot of experience but I hadn't had decisions to make before where now I did. And it was a whole new ballgame for me. So, I had heard about 4-H Club

work and how great people liked it through Extension but to get myself personally involved in it, I thought I was too busy until the Club Agent came home one day and told me he thought I ought to have something else to do besides just run the farm. So he insisted as he said "I know you're taking it tough from...from your loss in the hurricane but sometimes a person has to have a little something else come along in his life too, to overcome his problems." And I said, "Well, I...I just don't have that kind of time." He said, "were we got some." I don't know if I told you this before or not but I will again. He said, "We got five or six different boys in town who are farm boys and," he said, "that they have heard about Club work and they'd like to be a part of it," he said, "but...I can't find a good leader." And he says, "You've had a lot of experience with farming and I think that you'd be very helpful in meeting them." And I said, "No, I can't. I got too much other...other things to do, I just can't be bothered." He said, "Well, give it some thought and I'll come back later." And he says, "You really need it." And so he kind of insisted that...that make a change....

CS: And what was his name?

LL: Paul Latimer. (Paul Latimer.) Paul. He he was a heck of a nice guy and he was conscious about Club work and the need for more volunteers and just felt that when he saw...and saw devastation, he thought that maybe I could...I could get away from things. And he was right, actually. Anyhow, he came back in a couple of weeks and I didn't do a lot of thinking about it and I said, "Well, I know the farmers' boys and I seen them running around, pretty good guys and maybe...maybe I'll give it a try." but...I don't think I can last because," I said, "I got...I got a load here and I got a lot of things to do. But I'll give it a try" .he was very happy with it and he went back to the boys and he said, "I'll go one step further. I'll go to the different families and I'll tell them that we're going a new 4-H Club and we have a leader now and ask if they will allow boys in my case, "to have a project of some kind." That was the main big thing because projects were very, very important and so some of the dads said, "Well, we can't be bothered much either but, yeah, we could...we'll have another cow or calf or something. Yeah, he can raise it." And he said, "What's---do there to do?" And pals said "Well, they have to keep records of what...what they feed them and how much they weigh and see that they get along well." He said, "And they got to have that in their...in the report. They got to keep working at it." So I said, "It's a living program for them." So they said, "Well, we'll give it a try." The same thing with some with a dog that had to be trained and so forth so...and the girls were...were some of it. They had to make things...like dresses, 'cause they improved on as time goes on and felt very proud it...of their improvement and they had the Home Demonstration Agent help them out on that. So that's...how I started I don't know how deep you want me to get into the books for the Beaver's but...

LL: Well, go ahead, go ahead, Busy Beavers? Yes.

CS: I got a story here on the Busy Beaver Chapter that I look at from time to time. They were kids around ten or eleven, right around there and then some were, I guess, a little bit younger than that. I remember they were sitting on a sofa like we had here that they sat down on it and they were just...two of them were my...my nephews that lived next door to us and so when they came in, why some of the kids were...they weren't tall enough to...to reach their feet to the floor so they would just sit on the sofa and kick their feet back and forth and all nervous and giggly and so this is a lovely bunch of kids to get started with but that's all they know how to do is giggle. ...but ...I thought I'd give it a shot, so I gave it a shot. So we...I listened to Paul and talked to them about what different projects they could do and then, "Are you still interested?" "Oh, yes. We want to...we want to try something." "All right then, what do you want to call your club?" "Oh, I don't know any way to start the club." So they started calling it many different names and different things and they finally settled on Brooklyn Busy Beavers and then he said, "All right. Why don't you take over?" And I said, "Well, if we're going to be doing this right why we...we got to organize. We've got a name for them, the Beavers. Now we have to have a President, got to have a Secretary, got to have a Treasurer and a Vice-President. "Well. I don't know. I don't want to do that." So

we had to argue a little while and, "If you're going to have a Club, this is what we got to do." So finally now, each one consented to do different things. I think it was around, I guess, six or seven kids at that time then they increased it to beyond that.

LL: What was the organization of it? Was it something that...that Paul brought in and talked to you about or did this come out of your head?"

CS: No...well, from the book, I only knew what Paul told me about...he might have given me some information on...that he knew in my work with Extension but at the meetings we went to. And so I knew that you had to have a process and so I...I've forgotten whether Paul had told me to do that but either way, I knew we...we had to get it started and so ...I gave them a book for Secretary Report to the Secretaries and then we got...I told them they only had to be a President for one year and then they can have a new one each year, if they wanted to. So anyhow, they didn't know anything about it so I had to explain each...each job that was involved and they had never been to many meetings, I guess, if any meetings. So, we...we got them organized and ----even set the date for meeting and we started off at about a month at a time, one meeting a month first off and as time goes on I said, "If we need more meetings why ...we will consider." We tried that and after a while...we got to know each other better for these farm boys, usually just take care the farm and didn't know each other, only in going to school or whatever. So they really hadn't been close to each other one of the boys used to raise goats and pickles or cucumbers. That was it...in fact, I got a picture of the boys somewhere. they had a load of cucumbers ready...ready to go to market and one fellows as dad was a dairy farmer.

He still lives over here on the hill a couple miles away and then the others, their dads worked in some shop or something as a part-time thing. So it was all different some had quite a number of cows or maybe a few cows or raised crops or whatever. And a couple of them were...were just local people who were not on the farm but...well, one, his dad was involved with the...with the Commissioners, which is what used to own the present Extension Office, ---now.

LL: That's when it was an orphanage?

CS: Yeah.

LL: Are there other County offices there, is that...?

CS: At that time, of course, at that a...it was just a place for...for orphanage and then when they gave up the Commissioners, they discontinued with the Commissioners and ...and that's when the building was...was empty and it wasn't used for a while Extension there and we heard about it not being used and so we...we wondered if it could be, our Extension Office was in Putnam at the time in the Post Office. And so we asked, "How about letting Extension or some of us use it?" And the Extension Office was looking for a place then where they were and so we...said, "Well, it's for sale." "And so we were non-profit organization, how about letting us have it?" And so the Commissioners, the State decided to give it to us for a Dollar and so it became the Extension Office.

LL: And it's still now a State Office. What year would that have been, do you remember?

CS: Oh boy. I don't...I don't think I can remember.

LL: In the '50's?

CS: Well, it was...was it before...around the early '50's I believe. Oh, I would have to back to see because I...

LL: And I don't have a date. I know that...I remember we used to be part of the Farm Bureau and I know that we split with the Farm Bureau in the late '50's.

CS: Well, the Farm Bureau...there were several divisions there. There was the Farm Bureau was there. Of course, the Farm Bureau is part of Extension.

LL: Back then it was, yeah.

CS: And it was until the Farm Bureau decided to go into insurance and that broke it up. But there was other groups that were there too...so they got the rental out from both people who rented the place top.

LL: So what happened then to the Busy Beavers? How many...how long did you stay with them and how many kids went through your...?

CS: Well, there's about up to ten in the Club. They were very...a couple of them had to move and when the Commissioners gave up I would...two of the boys, I believe they moved somewhere else so I didn't see them anymore. But they...these kids stayed up to around...around about fifteen, sixteen years old and until the time that came that they didn't want to do any more project work and so I would say...I think it must have been about seven or eight years,...it was quite a while, somewhere up near sixteen or seventeen. But...when they got to the point where they wanted have...do something else then they went out into service clubs and kind of dropped away from the Brooklyn Busy Beavers. I got some questions...some good stories to tell about this Beaver I had on my book it would take too long to talk about it now but some of the episodes that we had. Like, for instance, we...we decided that they wanted to raise some money for a person...that they want to do and so...I had a truck farm and delivered grain and so forth and they...they said that they knew where we could pick up newspapers 'cause there was a shortage of paper at the time, and we'd take it down to Versailles's and where they would recycle it and so forth. And they say they pay about Twenty Dollars a ton. And I said, "All right. we can do some advertising on weekends and go around and pick up some papers and take it down to Taftville or to Versailles." So they got quite excited about that, that they were going to be riding in the truck, you know, to get to Versailles and so anyhow, we wrote little ads in the paper saying...the Busy Beavers were going to be picking up some paper and please tie it up and have it ready for us on Saturday morning and such and such and to get them on the sidewalk. And we did and usually we got a little over a ton or so of papers and at Twenty Dollars a ton they took it down and we got Twenty Dollars a ton each and so we kept on doing that every Saturday for quite a long time. And they got themselves up and sometimes we had more than a ton. We...after a while...they had around Twelve or Thirteen Hundred Dollars or so for...for their own...their own business and...then they decided..." What are you going to use the money for?" And they said, "Well...we can take a trip somewhere. We can go down to the lake or go down somewhere to have fun. So I said, "Fine." And they got quite a lot of money. The next thing they decided to do," Let's have something...at...at the Brooklyn Fair." To make money 'Cause that was every year in September.

LL: When did the Brooklyn Fair start?

CS: That was in September and that was when...I forget how many years it is. That's one of the oldest fairs in the United States...so they say. Anyhow, so when...What do you want to have?" And we thought of many different things and they said, "Why don't we sell some cider? We have apple trees around here and cider."

"By the way, we can buy a big barrel of cider and then break it up into smaller lots and we can sell that and make some money." And based on what we could sell it for, fifteen cents a glass or whatever it might be and there were that many glasses, that many barrels, got it all figured out how much money they'd make. They'd make quite a lot. So I said, "Well, that's a big t...you got to...you got to do a lot of this on your own because I'm busy but I'll try to help you out all I can. But I said, "You go to the farm up there

that has an apple orchard and tell them you want a barrel of cider...keg of cider, and..." And they said, "Why don't we get a couple of kegs? Let's make sure we have enough 'cause there's a lot of people there." So they went over to ask the guy for a keg and he said, "I can give you a keg," he said, "I also got --- a couple of kegs." He said, "Only one of them has to be washed out 'cause they been used before and...and I'll give it to you." So he gave us the two jugs of cider and then we asked for a booth at the Fair, which we got and I took the cover to my...my truck I had and used that for display to put it in case it rained or something, put it in the place where we could sell the cider. And I said, "Well now, you got to be very careful if this cider 'cause we'll be there about three or four days and...and we gotta do it right." I said, "We have a Commissioner that checks that cider and you have to be very careful because if it gets working, we're in trouble." And I said that I knew the guy pretty well and I said, "Just be very careful." "Well, it's no problem. We'll take care of that." So that was fine. And then I said, "We got to get to do it ahead of time." So I said, "Well, you get the cider a few days ahead of time and put it in gallon jugs." So they did that. And so I...I said, "Well, you got to keep it at your house and keep it as cool as you can." And we did it, I guess, so...the day or two before and so we had the two jugs...yeah, two kegs all filled up ready to go. And the day before the Fair, I got a call from the kids that had the jugs and had the kegs and he said, "Got a little problem." I said, "What's the problem?" He said, "Well, one of the kegs seems to be foaming out." And I said, "Well, what happened?" I said, "Which one did it?" He said, "The one you told us to clean out...wash out." I said, "Well, did you wash it out?" "No, I forgot." "Well," I said, we might be in trouble, you might be losing it 'cause if you can't sell it at the Fair then...then you're out. You'll make only half as much money. So we'll change it right now if we put it in gallons right off, to change it." So I went up there and put that keg ...all in gallon jugs and then kept it. I said, "Be sure and ...keep this separate now because you...you can't...you can't sell it have cider. So they said, "We'll take care of it. Don't worry. Don't worry, I'm going to care of the whole thing." And so they changed it all over and when it came time for the Fair that morning, the next morning, they had it all lined up. Jugs here and some jugs here and some jugs here. And then when I looked at it, I tasted it. I said, "Boy, is this a little strong." I said, "This is worked out. This cider is kind of working and it's getting kind of hard cider." And they said, "Well, we can't...we can't lose that money. We can't lose that money." And I said, "The only thing you can do then is watch for the Commissioner when he comes over," and I said, "he's got a red nose. He...he likes his cider and likes a good-morning." So anyhow, I came over and I said those house...you look whoever is going to be buying...coming to buy some cider, it looked like they like to have a drink or two now and then why see what they say to the hard stuff. But if...if it...it's a lady or something just be sure and give them the other one. You've got to be very, very careful." So they, "Well, take care of it. No problem." I had some more work to do on the grounds and...so I left. And then...they were out selling it and then they began selling the cider and boy, people began coming to the cider came back after a while, "How are you doing boys?" They said, "Well, we're doing great. We are watching everybody." And he said, "You know what? We're getting a lot of men coming down here drinking that cider." I said, "Which ones are drinking?" They says, "Well,...they're selling beer down at...down at the other end of the Fairgrounds," he said, "but, they're all coming up here instead." So I said, "They like their stronger stuff." I said, "We're illegal but...I didn't want to see it get that strong but be very careful and watch out for the Commissioner whatever you do." And so I came...the next time I came back, I said, "How's it going?" "Oh, it's going great...great. The whole thing is," he said, "one of us is going give some...give some cider to the wrong girl not a lady and she'll be very insulted cause it's very strong." And he says, "So I took one from the other end...I took another bottle up then people got them and put it on the stand and then it popped. The bottle popped right off, the top. So that was strong too, then I got some good cider and said a lot of nice things so she was very happy and she went away." I said, "Did the Commissioner come along?" "Oh well, yeah. He came along..." I said, "Well, what happened? Did he close you down?" He said, "No. He came up here," and...and he said, "he's a pot-bellied guy wasn't he?" I said, "He's a pot-bellied guy with a big red nose." So I said, "Well what...what did he say?" "Well, he gave him a glass full and he looked at it and smacked his lips and said give me another glass. So we gave him another glass and he drank that all down". I said, "What did he say then?" He says, "Boys, you need another day on it." (Laughter) So...so he just walked away and was gone. It was not hard to be...to be

really tough but he... They sold the best part of the whole two kegs. We made good money on that but I'll never do that again and...but that was some of the instances we had.

LL: So the Service...when the Service Club began then, what kind of things did they do?

CS: Well, first off, the...we had to visit different clubs. The boys would visit boys' clubs and tell each other about their different experiences and we would take them to Eastford, Ashford or where ever it would be in the truck and we would have get-together meetings. We'd play ballgames and something afterwards and some competition and discuss about 4-H work and discuss what they...what they did in comparison and I got some of the Brooklyn Busy Beavers got quite notorious and...and because they were go-getters. They just was very active and Paul Latimer was very pleased with them and so we got...said, "Well, you folks have got an example here to give to other kids and I think we should do this." I said, "Well, --- we were good together." One thing about these kids...they were very good at making decisions. They ran good meetings. I could just turn it over to them and they would run the show until it got to the what the topic was going to be for the evening then I'd have to take over from there and talk about what...what they might need.

And...they were... they were quite hilarious. So that after every meeting they had a touch football or something like that and knock each other down and that was all things kids do. And sometimes they'd be all--- tough with falling into the side of the house---some branches and we would tear their clothes---and that sort of thing and they'd come running out and ...it was just...they put their heart and soul into having a good time. And so, I remember that after one --- in Eastford, and I went in some to talk to the leader and the boys were outside with...with other Eastford kids too. Void after a half an hour, they came in and properly started the meeting. I said, "What the heck have you guys been doing?" Their shirt tails were out and everything else and I, "What have you been doing?" "Oh, we had a little talk with some of the kids." I said, "Talk huh?" "Yeah, we had to mess'em up a little bit." So what they had...wrestled with the other kids and they won so the other kids came in. Well, it was pretty quiet, they were pretty well tapped out so we had kind of a good meeting. And but we did go from one place to the other and all over Windham County and then when it came...when I first talked to them, I said, "You know, it'd be nice to have a...you're getting...you're getting---it'd be nice to have group of boys and girls." And I said, "So you get more acquainted with the other 4-H's in the County." "Oh, no, no. I have nothing to do with girls," he said. He said, "They're too stuck up." I said, "Well, you'll change your mind some day." So in another year or two and so I approached it again and they'd say, "Oh no, no. I don't care about it." I said, "Well, let's give it a try." So...so I got hold of Paul again and said, "We're going...thought they'd make time to have the two together so they can get more acquainted with the girls of the County." And so they decided to go to the camp and that was a good place to start so I remember the first time we had a meeting with, I guess it was around twenty boys and twenty girls, about that. So I got them there and, you know, then they'd walk in. The boys sat on one side of the room and the girls sat on the other side of the room and they'd look at each other and "Tee heeing," but they didn't dare look at them. So I told the leader there, I said, "This isn't going to work. I think they're just going to stare at each other from the other side of the room. And so he said, "Well, let's...let's have one of these rounders...rounds, you know, and they had...it got to be boy, girl, boy, girl, boy, girl and they'd sit there like...and I'd drop the handkerchief and all that sort of stuff to get it going. And so I told the kids, "This is what we're going to do." "I don't want to do that." I said, "With all due respect to the girls that are here, just come up and do it and give it a try." "Well, all right." They would just scuff up there and bashful as bashful could be. When they started to gather together, I said, "---boy, girl, boy, girl, boy, girl." And so that's what they did, tee-heeing and kind of hanging down and not looking at them. I said, "All right. Now introduce yourselves." Well, they introduced themselves finally and they got to know a little, who each other was and we started playing different games; spin the platter and all these other things that we got them going and that seemed to be going pretty good so ...then the leader there, she says, "Now, let's try just a couple of dances, a two-step or something." So we started to do that and the kids, once again, was very shy. But they got them going on it. They had some music there going and...and they said, "This is kind of nice." So they said, "It

seemed kind of good.” I said on the way home, I said, “Well, what did you think?”
“Oh it was all right,” he says, “Yeah, kind of nice, kind of nice.” So we’ll try it again sometime. From that point, after a while we formed a Service Club because they decided this was the way to go ‘cause I made a good thing....

LL: So, how old were they then about that time?

CS: Well, they was up around sixteen, seventeen.

LL: Did any...did you go to Congress out in Chicago at all with your 4-H kids?

CS: I went...to was...National Club Congress? (Yeah.) Yeah, I forgot ---. It’s fifty-five, fifty eight. I was asked to be...to go out with the group. (Chaperoning?) Chaperoning, yeah. And a...a leader from the other side of the ---State and they asked me if I would go. Well, once again I had to worry about how... to see if my man could take care of the place while I was gone. But I was going to be gone for a week. And that was kind of unusual but I said, “Yeah. I’ll go.” And they said, “You’ll have to get on the train”, And that was the last train that took them to Chicago. (Oh, yeah?) National Club Congress --- And after that, they...they flew but that was the last train that went out. So we organized and we went in the sleeper for overnight because it takes so long to get there. I got acquainted with the other staff members and went we met different people---and we got together, I think it was in Springfield, and then we...it was in Fall of course, and we had an awful snow storm.

LL: While you were in Chicago?

CS: No...no. On the way to Chicago. And when we got up there to Springfield, they said, “The tracks are all loaded up. We can’t get through to go to Chicago.” He said, “You’ll have to stay her for a while.” So we stayed in the station there...there for a while waiting and...but the boys had...had a guitar with them. They asked the, the Station Agent if they could have a little dancing or have moon...and he said, “No way. You just sit quietly.” There was about 20 of us to get through out there. And so we waited about three or four hours and they finally said they were going to reroute us. We were going to go through Canada. To go up and come down in Chicago. They’ll be taking the Northern route. And...so went through Canada and came back...came out ---the right way, above all the heavy snow storm---. And so we got up there on the way up, the kids did well. I slept in the upper booth and...(End of side one.) I couldn’t sleep ‘cause...on account of the doors shaking back and forth and pounding away and I kept hearing some noise outside and so I opened up the curtain to see what the heck was going on and a couple of guys were playing marbles on the floor, rolling marbles back and forth. And I said, “That’s a good way.”

LL: I have the history that you gave it but how did...how did...you know...?

CS: I can...can I give you a little bit more on the Congress?

LL: Sure, on the Congress? (On the Congress.) Sure. Of course.

CS: Anyhow, we went to...and got to Chicago and I never had seen such a greeting for people in my life as was in Chicago. All of there...there was banners all the way up and down the street, “Welcome 4-H. Welcome 4-H.” And whenever we...we went out to walk in the street to go to the hotel, they stopped all the traffic. The whole crew was there from at the Staley. Off where we went and then that...that day and also the day when it would be, I guess two or three hundred people walking down that street. Whenever they came to a signal light, they just walked with us and motioned us on. This is...all the traffic stopped. I never saw such a thing in my life.

LL: How many young people were there altogether, do you think? Several hundred do you think?

CS: Oh, yeah. Four or five hundred delegates altogether.

LL: About five hundred?

CS: Filled the whole great big auditorium. It was amazing and we had to...they...really heck of a schedule. They had to start around six o'clock, seven o'clock in the morning and to go to your different meetings that early. And the different businesses would invite these different people, boys and girls, to a meeting of theirs early in the morning to tell them all about their product and so forth. Like if they're insurance or if they're like knowing that they're farmers why sometimes they would...that talk tractors and so forth would want talk to them about...about their machines and so. They would pay for that...for that tip for the breakfast that they gave them and...or the dinner or whatever it was, they would take care of the whole thing. It was amazing there and to see...all the people come in especially at night when the there is...the whole auditorium all ...different tables and they come up, it must have been about fifty different--- what is & what use that would come in with would come in with candles lit...come in and it was just a great show to see them bring in their food & set it down to different tables. And then after they would have music and then after the thing why they would have some special person from Hollywood or whatever and...and be there... never saw such great kids and that. I got acquainted with some kids from Montana and one of them had, I guess, around twenty-five, thirty horses that she owned and ran. But we had to go in groups to different...different hotels to go to different meetings and there was a reason. Well, I guess, toward the last of it the girl or the leader that came with us said, I got to go to a meeting today. I got to go to such and such a meeting. It's a...it's a meeting of all the Agents in the United States to get together." And I said, "Oh." And I said, "Oh. I probably won't see you until tonight..." And so that night she said, "Got something to tell you." I said, "What?"

And she said, "Well, the meeting was to try to find out...to try to select a Father of the Year...National Father of the Year." I said, "Yeah, so." And then she says, "Well," she says, "You're going to be it." I said, "You're kidding." I said, "I haven't even belonged that long." She said, "Nevertheless," she said, "you must be one heck of a father." And she said, "Well,...you're going to be...it's going to be announced and...and you'll have to be ready for it tomorrow night." So I...I just couldn't believe it. But anyhow...the next night, they invited everyone up and had...had different choices and then there came this loud noise, a bang---and all these things and then my name was placed---. Of course, some of the...some of the kids were from my own...Service Club here that...a couple of them had gone to Chicago too. And so, when they...they...they beat the drum and all that sort of stuff and I...?" And he presented me with the National father of the Year and so I didn't hardly know what to say but then..., and then afterwards when the newspaper reporters came rushing over and...and said, "Well, now we're going to write a story about this." And he asked me what my story was and he said, "And we're going to be sending this to your town so they will...your townspeople will know before you get back that what's happened over here and congratulations," and so forth. And so I guess...well, that was the thing. It did get out in the important papers and got the whole and...I have to admit...it...it was kind of decent. Some new respect and kind...I guess, as a result of that, I felt kind of good about being a Leader 'cause that's such a great gang of people to be with, to...and they...and the philosophy and the moral issues and the moral attitude of working with people and then leading the kind of life that people should lead and all these things, just got me because being with the boys' club, I felt like I could see where I was going to in difference to what other countries were doing and so forth. Even though I know the club work was involved in a lot of foreign countries. But this...this had been an outstanding year and..., there was a lot of good salesmanship in it but I enjoyed it.

LL: So how old would these "Busy Beavers"...I mean, they have children and grandchildren now?

CS: Yeah, I...I don't...they're all separated all over. We had as a result of what we did going to Chicago, I said, "We ...we got to meet once in a while, at least once a year." So they said, "We want to do that. All us kids that can make it...people." And we used to meet in a central place in Hartford or somewhere every year and then...but, gradually they got married and had children so that died down after a bit. But there's...a member of the Brooklyn Busy Beavers, there's a guy over here that's still running a farm.

LL: This is a dairy farm. What is his name?

CS: Rudy Rzeznikiewicz.

LL: Oh. I thought his name was...okay.

CS: And another fella by the name of Whitman. He...he's out...he didn't just stay into farming. Just a goat farmer, you know. But he got into business in Hartford and I believe he's still there. He has some personal problems of his own but I think he's all right. He had a certain voice that...I came to his brother's funeral two, three years ago, and I walked, the funeral parlor and I could tell right off he was there by...just by his voice and talking. He has this personal voice that just...a brogue or...you might say that...--. I haven't seen him since then and one of the girls lives down near the University. And she was ...I see her now and then. Every time she gives me a hug and so forth and talk about it.

LL: Talk about if you will, about the other, and you can go to Eastern States or you can talk about the camp.

CS: Well, we had some that did go to Eastern...most I remember is the...activity of the camp.

LL: Okay, go on then.

CS: I don't know how much you want me to tell about the project.

LL: Well, there wasn't a camp but there was felt to be a need to do something for youth for camping experience. They had gone other places before?

CS: Yeah. What...what happened was that I was on the...the committee, the 4-H committee that was the hub of the wheel of 4-H work in the County and we would plan different programs for the kids...for the different clubs and so forth. And one of the things they...they had a demand for camping. We had no camp of our own. And so we used to rent the 4-H...the Boy Scout Camp in Woodstock. We also had a camp in...the County had a camp on Eastford that we visited and one...and gradually those camps got tied up ...with the owners of them and they were using them more than they would before and we...one was Camp Alders gate over in Rhode Island. And that was a...was a...what's that camp?

LL: Church camp.

CS: Church camp. And then their demand got bigger and so...and they said, "Gee, this is the last year you can use it." So our committee said, "Well, we got to have a camp. We have the men for it to find it." So they asked us if it was kind of... I said, "Find us a camp." So we formed a committee and looked all over for a...for a camp facility somewhere and we went to civil sites and...but were...they weren't feasible. And ...one of the people that was on the committee was a fellow who used to be a mail carrier in around Pomfret. And he kept watching and talking and answering questions and then one day--he came saying, "I think I got a possibility for you." That was after about a year or two years into checking for camps. And he says that the camp is owned by a Developer who's got just one cottage there and he says, "But I

don't know if it's for sale or not but we can...we can give it a try." It was a nice place. So we said, "Well, we'll try anything." So a group of us went out to see him and...and he met with us and we met with the owner and he said, "No," he said, "I bought this camp turn he around a lot of land all around that. I guess five or six hundred acres all into woodlands and so forth." He was...he said, "But if I would turn around and sell it and we loved the woodlands and so forth and beside, my wife and I decided we want to stay here." And he said "What you want to use it for?" I said, "Well, a 4-H camp." "Oh, well," he says, "Well, I was bought as her in the club." He side, "But how about if my wife and I talk it over?" He said, "And we'll see." ---so he came back and --- and he said, "Yeah, I love this place. It's a beautiful place. But, I know 4-H work. I know its value," he said." He said, "I'd like to see you folks do something with it." He says, "I'll sell you ten acres and a six acre bond" And he told us how much he'd sell it for, Fifteen Thousand Dollars, you know. We said, "Well,...we don't have any money but we think we can raise it through people we knew." We didn't have a nickel as far as the Extension Service was concerned. So...but, we need it. I said, "Just give us some time." So he said, "I'm not going anywhere, take your time." So we went out and talked to Grangers. We talked to business people and we talked to many individuals and we...we raised the Fifteen Thousand Dollars. So we...that's what we paid for the camp and we got paid, a lot of them didn't. He marked it out and surveyed it out and so forth and we got with the pond. And that one building's right by the...by...by the waterfront there. So we...got that and we said, "When are we going to organize?" And we organized it as the New London County 4-H Foundation and we asked them if we could ask a question about that type of... and some involvement. By that time, I was backing up, you just keep on going. So we got organized and we started --- on Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer and we...we had to get lined up with the State.

LL: As a non-profit?

CS: Yeah. As a non-profit. Which we did. We went...we told them...what our goal was and...and we weren't having any trouble. Well, we had some people acquainted with the State before that---. And so, we were able to put...put that through. And then we got bonded. Then we said, "Well, how we going to get started?" And so, we got to find someone who knows how to start a camp, I mean, how to build buildings and lay it out. Then a fella says, "Well," he says, "There's a fellow down the road here in Chaplin. He said that he used to be working for the State of Connecticut building roads and putting up houses and so forth. He is John Smith just retired. Why he's a Boy Scout Leader." We said, "We ask him?" And...so they went over...a couple of fellows to do it. Well, they went and asked him and he said, "Well, I'm just...I've just retired from being a Boy Scout Leader but I thought I'd retire for a while." When we told him what we wanted he said, "Well, I help you out some." He was an older man but he was...he was a crackerjack in everything, very meticulous, very careful. "What's your plan?" "Well, we had...we made a basic plan we wanted; the size of the main building a forty by forty building. We needed about ten cabins and all the rest of it and... So we had it laid out and he said, "Where are you going to get your money?" I said, "Well, we're going to try to raise it." we said we're not getting money from people who are builders, who were if they interested in wages and a great lot of business people. But...if they gave us a Thousand Dollars, we put plaque the building we built it that way. And we kept on going and we said, "If you haven't got the money, you on a building that can do the same thing." So we'd either ask for cash matters, or else, help build it. So, based on that, we raised. total value of Fifty Thousand Dollars. And...and with that we...we built the building. We had some... at that time, everything was quite slow in the building business and the carpenters' union was on strike and they said...they heard of our problem and they said, "We'll...we'll come...we'll send a bunch of people to you and you just pay just a regular wage per hour. (It was forty cents an hour) and we'll help you out." So they...they built the lodge and we used to have fifteen or twenty laborers there some worked upstairs putting the roof on and some of them downstairs,...putting the first floor on; the basement and so forth. And, of course, this was under...under the direction our man that...and now we have a stone to. His name is John Smith and we have a stone in his memory guide everything right straight through. And he'd lay everything out, be there at seven o'clock in the morning and stay there until six, seven at night and sometime there are two, three

people there; sometime you had fifteen, twenty there. And so every once in a while he'd say, "Come on, you got to get this thing started. You got to get it going." And he said, "We won't be able to have a camp here unless you get it going." So we'd all struggle some more. We do the first shovelful as birth on April 1, 1954. And camp opened July 1. We had three months...we just kept it going. We had a fella who was a carpenter and we him a plan for our cabins based on his plan for the cabin, and made all the other cabins that way. We had one fella looking to make money for cabins who worked at a lumber yard and he was a 4-R Leader. He was a guy that---was very conscious about 4-H Club work' cause he had a lot of feel me for it. He was always saying by guy, by guy. He said..., "By guy. I been working for my boss, my lumber man," he said, and owes me something. You know, I done a lot for him too." He said, "By guy, I'm going to get some lumber from him." I said, "If you do, that would be great." So he went and talked him, into giving us all the lumber and the material for a cabin. And so he came back and he said, "Ha! I got him. You know southing else? I'm going to go to his...his competitor and I'm going to tell him,' My boss is putting up lumber for a cabin, and you better give me the same you've not going to do much more business." So as a result he went to one, two, three, four lumber people and he got the material. So then we asked the different carpenters from the Grange or whatever it might be to work together and leaders that sort of thing that we got them.

LL: What have been some of the biggest changes you've seen in the camp then in the intervening thirty years?

CS: Well, we started off with fifteen acres and, as it grew and expanded, we had to try to buy more land so we...the first thing we did was, contact the fellow who owned the camp in the beginning... we went to him and he said, "Land? There's more of this land yet and all ---around it." I said "We need more land and we'd like also if you'd...be on our Board of Directors." And he said, "Well, it'd be kind of nice to be on the Board of Directors." So as a result, you maybe ...you'll say we were trying to influence him. To be honest, we probably were but we...we wouldn't like to have him too---little land and how to do it and he was...he liked what we was doing and he became...he became on the Board. And so we bought another, I guess it was hundred fifty acres. Anyhow, then we bought some more later on and altogether we have two hundred and sixty-five acres. And our camp has increased from our forty by forty building lodge and ten cabins and the emergency buildings and so forth and was...was increased to a forty by sixty building to increase that size and we went up to fourteen cabins. We had some Directors' cabins put up besides and...and then Tolland County who was, you know sending a boys and girls to our camp, Tolland decided that we needed a building up there for a Nature building and they...they put up the building there. And so what we have now then is the two hundred and sixty-five acres. We got about forty-two buildings in all and...and we are looking for further expansion now 'cause it's enrollment has gotten bigger and bigger over a period of time.

LL: How many...how many young people come in a year?

CS: Well, last year...last year I think we had... four or five hundred and now we have about twelve hundred this year. And it's continued in expanding and going to more occupational work too things. And I, I think I told you before that for a while the Extension Service and the different areas were not working together very well. We had some problems. And...because of this we weren't getting agents either, to help and as a result we went way do very, very small in number became from the Camp Committee separate from the Foundation that ran the camp program. And Extension would run the Camp Committee who would rent the camp for themselves and they'd pay us so much money for the use of the camp. But we hadn't...at that time we had nothing to do with how the camp was run so...until they changed it in the last couple of years. So anyhow, we felt the need that should be one whole unit...if you're doing 4-H work, you should be complete and ...I worked on that pretty hard for quite a long time to see if you couldn't get this changed so that we was all working together. And...the division has finally begun narrowing down and with it, the first thing we wanted to do was to have whole unit and we finally got to

that point this last year. Where now, the camp Committee is under the umbrella of the 4-H Foundation and the...the fellow who is President of the 4-H Camp Committee is now President of the 4-H Foundation and I'm the Vice-President as I stepped down this last year. And now we've changed from two Treasurers to one Treasurer. So, now we got all the way. So, I guess, the goal we was reaching for, as far as I was concerned, we...we made it and to me, it's great 'cause now we're working together in unity. We got a lot of important things working together. We...we were never on different sides as far as the camp was concerned or the camp program was concerned. Because we knew the need of boys and girls to having a camp we were with them a hundred per cent all the way. The problem was in trying to work together with Extension. And we're so pleased that...that the changes has come about and to me that's one of the greatest things we could ever happen. to have a...unity of...of the people who are volunteers to...to the people who are in Extension.

LL: What would you say is your greatest, I want to say satisfaction with the, work you've done with 4-H? What have you enjoyed the most working with 4H?

CS: Well, through the years with...with 4-H, I found that as I worked especially with the Service Club, that those teenagers and teens, seventeens or eighteens, like most boys and girls they had their own problems. There...they have their family problems; they have...they have the unsurely problems and in talking to some at different meetings...sometime they come and sit down beside me and talk to me about...they seem to be down-hearted and I'd say, "What's the...problem?" They said, "Oh, I'm having a problem." I'd say, "Would you care to talk about it?" And so forth and I guess, based on that, I'd had my own experiences, personal experiences and I knew how they felt and so I'd labor to talk to a lot of them about, "Well, why don't you do this and do that?" Suggest different things and it got so, I guess, that you might say I was kind of a person who would try given them...advisor, you might say,...and they seemed to appreciate it and there...there was a closeness of those boys and girls towards me and now there's an awful lot of satisfaction in being able to work them out of a problem. Some of the problems were, for instance, on boys; they grew up on their dad's farm and getting on up to seventeen or eighteen and they can think about having a family sometime and I said, "Have you got...you got any interest in the farm?" And he'd say, "Yeah. I like the farm." And I'd say, "How'd you get paid." He said, "Oh, my dad gives me a couple, few dollars now and then." "How you going to live on that?" And he said, "Well, I don't know." I said, "Go to talk to dad a little bit maybe have... having a little have a share in that---term." He said, "Well, I haven't thought much about it." So somehow, I said, "Why don't you talk to him and see if you can't in his will or whatever it might be, that," I said, "you got some other members of the family. How do you know if when something happened to him maybe you won't have any interest in it?" So he said, "Well, I never thought of that." So anyhow, I was able to do that and that was kind of important. And the girls too. Sometimes they would have trouble with their mother or they have trouble with friends and they felt...they were not being treated well or they had something whether they should do or not do and they...I was able to give what information that I could. That was an awful lot of satisfaction to me. The boys...they would whenever I see them and course had their own children now growing up and they're going to the camp and they always come up and say, "Remember the good old days? You know, the days that...when we was in 4-H together?" This...neighbor on the hill here...I happened to talk to him the other day. I...I guess it was over...about a year ago and I needed something that he had. And I...he'd say, "Yeah, you know Clarence. I remember what...those...Busy Beavers. He said, "That was the best years of my life." He said that, "That was the best thing I ever did was to go into the 4-H." "4-H," he said, "was the best thing I ever, ever remember." And it gives you a good feeling about that, I think, to realize that you have been able to help along possibly trying to go through life.

LL: Thank you very, very much for taking this additional time to talk to me. And I'll probably see you again sometimes.

CS: Oh, I hope so.

LL: We'll keep going on with this. Thank you very, very much.

(End of Interview)