

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

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LL: ...2002 is the 100th birthday. That's official.

HS: 1902. 1902?

LL: I have a feeling that 4-H started during different years around the country.

HS: Yes, and that's why I was figuring that out. No, it started here. Well, I feel it started was when the First World War. Now they didn't call it 4-H yet. I've forgotten what they did call it.

LL: I know they used to refer to them as corn clubs and canning clubs or things like that.

HS: Yes. Now this was something with -we met and we had cooking lessons and canning lessons [Unintelligible] if you're interested in, but it was very much like 4-H, although it wasn't called 4-H then.

LL: Now can I ask you when you were born, how old you are? How old are you? When were you born?

HS: I'm 94.

LL: Ninety-four.

HS: Nineteen hundred [Unintelligible]

LL: When did you start 4-H or this new group?

HS: Well, obviously I didn't know...

LL: From the very beginning, like when you were young?

HS: Of course I was only a child but I was in those clubs. I only had names at the little town high school and it was very much like 4-H. In fact, we have in the fall, when I couldn't [Unintelligible] which year that was, but we had an exhibit out – it was up – now I can't...

LL: It's okay. Is it a fair or some sort of festival?

HS: No, it was little fair we had. A friend of mine called me up a few years ago and she said, "Come on. What do you think, am I crazy or what?" she says to me. "Didn't we have an exhibit out at..." – well, we called it [Lakeview] then – "out at Lakeview," and in [Unintelligible] – it was about 1918 I think. I said, "Yes, we did." Well, she said, "My children are telling me I'm crazy. You're the only one I know that I can call."

LL: Who can say that it happened? [Laughter] Now somebody I think that – well, they just celebrated the 75th anniversary of Middlesex County 4-H fair.

HS: Yes, [Unintelligible]

LL: Now were you at the first fair? The first – was that like 1920, something like that?

HS: What we had first year, it was 1924.

LL: Were you exhibiting?

HS: Yes, I sure did.

LL: You were a 4-H'er and you were...

HS: I was a 4-H'er.

LL: You exhibited in the fair? What was that like? What did you exhibit?

HS: I don't know. [Laughter] [Unintelligible] but...

LL: You were more into clothing and cooking rather than animal type...

HS: Oh, yes. [Unintelligible]. [Pause] It was the first 4-H fair in the country, in the United States and it was a lot [Unintelligible]. Well, it was interesting because we had it all under tents. Know, of course, we were on bare ground, and the night before, it had rained, so it was sloppy and wet. [Laughter] But we [Unintelligible] and of course [Unintelligible]. And different clubs had [Unintelligible] like ice cream and – been so long, I don't really remember, but [Unintelligible]. Different clubs had different exhibits. I've always said I wondered how we ever served their dinner then, but now it's [Unintelligible] in the dinner. It was in the camp, and as far as I know, I don't know if they had more than one and three burners [Unintelligible]

LL: What did they serve for dinner? [Laughter]

HS: They had to cook dinner. They had a nice dinner.

LL: That was served by the Grange?

HS: By the Grange, yes.

LL: How has the fair changed over the years?

HS: Oh, was it changed? [Unintelligible]

LL: [Laughter] Well, it's moved, it's Middlesex [Crosstalk] now.

HS: Well, it [Crosstalk] for years. I think. And yes, so it probably was sold when they came over to [Durham].

LL: Durham?

HS: Durham, and they have it since. The only time that we didn't have a fair was a couple of years when in World War II. Then they had exhibits around the schools, but now of course, we're very lucky to have all those beautiful buildings to have them.

LL: Yes. Do you go to the fair? Try and go to the fair every year?

HS: Well, no I can't [Crosstalk]

LL: Yes, you used to go?

HS: Because they furnished a limousine to take the three of us to when the first 4-H fair, and so I can go back down, and we drove - drive into the new building then.

LL: That's pretty good. What are your fondest memories of being in 4-H?

HS: The friendships that I have made in all my life, and different girls I had in 4-H. I don't know how many I had.

LL: Now you were a leader too, so you were...

HS: I was a leader for several years - nine years.

LL: What was the name of your 4-H club?

HS: Well, I had lots of them.

LL: Oh, you did? [Laughter]

HS: I had lots of them, and – over the years.

LL: Do you usually do clothing and...?

HS: Usually clothing and [Unintelligible] according to the age. One year we had a number of girls who had just turned old enough to get their license, and so we spent that year talking about driving and things of that sort, how we could avoid accidents. We spent probably the whole year on that.

LL: Well, that's good. [Pause]

HS: [Unintelligible] they were interested in, because you get one group of girls who are going to be interested in clothing and another group of girls don't want to do any of that. They're looking for [Unintelligible]

LL: Well, I guess that's the beauty of 4-H is that you're flexible. You try to find what the kids are interested in and you work with that. So, what are you most proud of in your 4-H career? Was there anything that stands out or...?

HS: I couldn't name all of those I'm proud of.

LL: [Laughter] What about...

HS: I've got 4-H girls that are lawyers and art teachers, and a lot of others to be just as proud of as mothers, proud of their children.

LL: What are you most proud of that you did as a 4-H member? Is there anything that stands out in just being in 4-H and making friends?

HS: As a member?

LL: Yes, as a member. Did you on trips or did you go to Eastern States or...?

HS: Yes. Well, not as a leader. I went to Chicago, but...

LL: You went to Congress?

HS: Yes, I went to Congress...

LL: You did?

HS: Not as a leader.

LL: Oh, as a chaperone?

HS: As a chaperone. But then I came from the 4-H chair, growing – I've gone up to a short course. We used to have a short course, I think, from a university.

LL: I've heard about it. It's before I was there.

HS: I guess.

LL: How was junior short course? Was that just like a conference, a teen conference?

HS: It's like a conference. We then have them, and sometimes we work as club to raise enough money to help out on the expense, and an interesting thing too, when we were going up there, we would hire a truck, just a truck to take us over [Unintelligible]. The state roads weren't in then. They were dirt roads.

LL: When was this?

HS: In 1923, I think.

LL: Say that again? You hired a truck to...

HS: Yes. It took us – we leave over there to come back at 10:00, and we then go home here around 2:00 or so. They'd pack us a lunch [Crosstalk]

LL: Because there were no state roads?

HS: No state roads [Unintelligible] and we're stopping and having our lunch, going over and we're coming back.

LL: What did you do at junior short course? Was it like overall weekend or a few days?

HS: No, it was about a week. It was about a week and you chose your courses. This girl and I chose nursing.

LL: So - I'm sorry.

HS: [Unintelligible] nurse at that time, and we were very fond of over the years. I was very much [Unintelligible] that year. She had a real live baby there for us to play with and take care of. [Laughter] It was I think a baby from – like from some home care or something [Crosstalk] but it was a real live baby in there. We had a chance to bathe it and learned how to bathe it. I've certainly used it all my life. It was really a...

LL: When you went up there, it was more like a career thing. You chose things within the university academic things or career options and you learned about it?

HS: Well, it [Unintelligible]. I mean I liked to, I think. That was [Unintelligible]

LL: Do you remember any other things they offered? You said you took with the nursing – what else...?

HS: I think they had clothing and all that. [Unintelligible] 4-H were there and they took up [Crosstalk]

LL: Agriculture and stuff like that, yes? That was in the '20s. I wonder how long that lasted.

HS: That lasted all the way for my [Unintelligible]. I mean it was in the '20s and then it must have lasted at least [Unintelligible]. It was something we always looked forward to doing. I think we [Unintelligible] 4-H most of it [Unintelligible] over there and it was a big experience [Unintelligible]

LL: You had to pay or were you selected?

HS: Yes, we had to pay.

LL: You had to pay?

HS: Yes, [Unintelligible] be a cost unless you got selected in a scholarship.

LL: A scholarship, yes.

HS: Otherwise, you pay. It was only a very nice [Unintelligible]

LL: Yes, that is. Let's see. What do you think is the most special about the 4-H program?

HS: Oh, I was going to tell you about that.

LL: Oh, go ahead.

HS: I was going to tell you what came [Unintelligible] and then at the 4-H fair, they urged us to put on some demonstrations and some of us [Unintelligible] – my friend and I, Kate Robinson and I got the demonstration on dressing a baby. Well, we went from there. We went to the [Pause 00:16:11 – 00:16:23] – what day is it?

LL: Then you did a demonstration in another fair?

HS: Yes.

LL: A 4-H fair or a regular?

HS: 4-H [Crosstalk] from that and demonstrated. At that time, we had a state fair.

LL: Was that in Berlin?

HS: No. No [Unintelligible]

LL: I was going through old photographs and I found some pictures back in 1918 and it said, “State fair, Berlin.”

HS: Well, I think it was in Berlin [Unintelligible] but that’s a state fair, and then we went from there to Eastern States, and demonstrated there, so it took us farther away.

LL: It was a state 4-H fair or it was a state...?

HS: No, that was a state fair.

LL: A regular state fair.

HS: That was a state fair but it dissolved in the year it went...

LL: Well, it’s pretty neat that we had a state fair. I wonder how come it didn’t last. We had a state fair and then we had town fairs?

HS: Then we had town fairs.

LL: Yes. That’s interesting that it didn’t last.

HS: No, it didn’t. I mean I don’t think it was many years after we won.

LL: Do you remember what year it was that you won roughly?

HS: Yes. It was right after the – it was from where [Unintelligible] it was from a...

LL: You had the junior short course you went to in 1923?

HS: Well, '24 must have been [Unintelligible] that we took that course because we went in that course for the first 4-H fair and we put on our demonstration there, and then we went from there and we went to those – I mean the state fair was on Labor day of that year, and then we went from there to the Eastern States.

LL: Well, you were busy. [Laughter] That's a busy summer.

HS: It was busy year.

LL: Yes, that's great. Now Eastern States used to have what was called Camp [Bale]?

HS: Camp Bale, yes.

LL: Now is that what you went to?

HS: Yes.

LL: That's interesting. They don't do that anymore.

HS: They don't?

LL: It's not Camp Bale. We do have 4-H'ers that go up and show their animal projects and then we have space [Crosstalk]

HS: [Crosstalk] different days, am I right?

LL: Yes, and then they also have an opportunity – they exhibit in the New England Center building. They show their projects. They have an activity...

HS: Yes, and I took my girls up there [Unintelligible]

LL: So you went to Camp Bale.

HS: Yes. That happened [Unintelligible] to go for many years. I know it ran into the '50s.

LL: The '50s? What was that? Was that career-oriented where you learned about...

HS: Well, not so much. You usually have something special that you put on like a demonstration, something like that but then we went for the whole week up there, and you put your demonstration on to a few different time. Otherwise, we had different projects and gatherings and it really was wonderful.

LL: You stayed in the dorm up there? You know that dorm [Crosstalk]

HS: No, [Crosstalk] up there then.

LL: Oh, okay. Wow.

HS: I know they had the dorm after [Crosstalk]. We wouldn't [Unintelligible]. It's that type of a build, and it came from – I know with girls from [Unintelligible]. It was in all of [Unintelligible], all the Eastern States.

LL: Because now it's just the New England states that participate so we must have changed that a little bit. That's pretty neat.

HS: Oh, it was really wonderful because we had a chance to meet so many people and we had, as you say, different meetings and – you had some [Unintelligible] to put on part with our demonstration. There was a lot of demonstrations in [Unintelligible] anything like it is today. [Laughter] It was enormous to us.

LL: Yes, I'm sure. [Laughter] I'm sure it was. How did you get up there? Did you all go together as a delegation, or you just got up there...

HS: Yes, we had to get there [Unintelligible]

LL: Yes, that's what they – they used to do that. How do you think 4-H influenced your life?

HS: Oh, a lot because I spent a lot of time [Unintelligible] and I think I've learned – I really would have like to have been a teacher but things didn't work out for me, and I felt [Unintelligible] some of that type of work with the girls.

LL: Yes, you did.

HS: As I say, I always try to find something that the majority of the girls were interested in. It wasn't always clothing, but usually we had [Unintelligible]

LL: I found the picture of a dress review and all the caption said was, "First state dress review," and then the back said "North [Stonington]." Do you remember that or do you know? [Pause] I mean it looked like it could've been the '20s or '30s.

HS: Well, I would say – I'm not sure if it was one of those, because my daughter and those girls were all - they competed [Unintelligible] session. They went from the accounting dress review, you can conclude that the state – the same it is now.

LL: Yes, [Unintelligible]. Yes, it was a nice picture. I was making up an exhibit for the Centennial and I included it in the exhibit. I just was curious because there was no date on it and it said the "First state dress review," so I thought that was neat. Let's see. How do you think 4-H has changed and how do you think it – has it stayed the same, too?

HS: [Unintelligible]

LL: How so? [Unintelligible]

HS: I don't think [Unintelligible]. [Laughter] I think I'm too old for that.

LL: Well, it changes with the times and...

HS: It changed with the time with the youngsters.

LL: Yes. With the times.

HS: [Unintelligible] them for quite a few years but the last time it was too hard to get them to sit around. They didn't sit around [Unintelligible]. [Pause] We'd get a feeling [Unintelligible] but many of them didn't.

LL: How do you think 4-H has survived for 100 years? What is it about it that you think – I don't know.

HS: Well, I think the idea of the 4-H will always [Unintelligible] is to help the individual to find themselves. I think that's what 4-H is really primarily for.

LL: Yes, and they certainly developed skills that help you throughout your life, that's for sure.

HS: Oh, you [Laughter] [Unintelligible]. Were you a 4-H'er?

LL: No, I wasn't. I don't like to tell people that. [Laughter] I wish I was because I see a lot – I don't work at the county level but I work at the state level and I get to see a lot of the kids. I help with selection for congress and some of the kids, they're really great. I certainly see what it can do. You know, one other thing...

HS: And of course the parents got to help out, too.

LL: Yes, it's big thing.

HS: It's very hard if the parents aren't interested.

LL: Do you feel like if there was more parent involvement years ago?

HS: Oh, yes.

LL: Well, times have changed in that respect too. [Laughter]

HS: Oh, yes. And I saw it fade too over the years.

LL: The parent involvement?

HS: Yes. Well, that and other signs. They didn't have so many of the interest that parents do, and the average mother stayed home and her idea was to look after the children and help them in every way she could. I don't say that the idea isn't that now but the time is different.

LL: Is different, yes. People have to work more and both people have to work – both parents. What else do you remember? Any other events or things that we had back then that we don't have now? I don't know. The junior short course and [Camp Bale]. Anything else that comes to mind that maybe happened back then that we don't have now or that's different?

HS: Well, the involvement is so different now. We were a group [Unintelligible] and we did all things together. And as you grew older – I think we'd have the same group that would put on dances. I remember one time, and it was one club in East [Ave], that's what they were interested in. They were interested in orchestra. They had their orchestra and they'd put on the dances and we had a wonderful time.

LL: Do you remember roughly what year that was?

HS: No.

LL: No?

HS: [Unintelligible]

LL: We had a club – I think they've since kind of disbanded but there was a swing club. They were dancing. It was a teen club – teenagers, and they were learning how to swing dance, and that was pretty popular for a while. It was a few years ago.

HS: Oh, yes [Unintelligible]

LL: Yes? That's pretty good. [Pause] How old were you when you started 4-H? You were like seven or eight? You were a child?

HS: Yes, [Unintelligible] if you count that back World War I which it wasn't called at that time, I was about 10 years old then but I didn't go on to 4-H until I was about 14.

LL: Yes, okay, so you were sort of a teenager. Okay. But you said when it started out it wasn't really called 4-H. It was...

HS: It wasn't called 4-H. I can't remember what it was called.

LL: Okay. And you did that when you were a child?

HS: Yes. [Unintelligible] and everything. [Laughter]

LL: Okay, [Unintelligible]

HS: I can remember my mother going to – reading this too.

LL: Anything else? What about your club members, any of your club members go to National 4-H Congress or the National 4-H Conference or anything that really stands out?

HS: Well, I had [Unintelligible]

LL: Citizenship Washington Focus?

HS: Yes, Washington. I guess [Unintelligible] and I had to come and [Unintelligible]

LL: It's always exciting to see them going about. They're so excited when they get there and find out what's it really like. It's not. [Laughter] Okay, what else? Anything else you want to share? I'm trying to just get a little perspective from different people on 4-H and somebody who experienced it back in the 1920s, 1917, and maybe I'd like to speak to one of our teenagers and see what they think of it and just get some different perspectives, something for the newsletter. Anything else you'd like to share on 4-H? Were you involved in the fair? I mean helping at the fair, the Middlesex County Fair? Like once you were a leader, did you work with fair associations and everything?

HS: Oh, yes. [Unintelligible]

LL: You're involved in everything. [Laughter]

HS: [Unintelligible]

LL: Well, I think one...

HS: [Unintelligible] 4-H is that you [Unintelligible] and some of them fell by the roadside and some of them did very well.

LL: Did you like being involved in the fair?

HS: Oh, yes.

LL: Is that like one of your most favorite things? Anything else you're involved in or you were involved? Any sort of advisory committees or extension council or anything like that?

HS: Oh, yes, I worked on all of those.

LL: Really? Okay. So you were in the Middlesex County 4-H Advisory Committee?

HS: Yes, definitely.

LL: And the extension council? Yes, I guess once you really get into 4-H, you do get involved in everything. You really do. [Laughter] And I think we found out we have a dedicated volunteer, you don't want to lose them, [Laughter] you just ask them to do everything. I want to know if anything you would've like to see different about 4-H or – I don't know.

HS: [Unintelligible. Everything is free, yes. And I'd say it changed [Unintelligible] and it has changed. Like now, you don't see any – I don't know. I shouldn't say now, but the last [Unintelligible] for meetings some of the time. And as I say, it was a different [Unintelligible] and that of course with a lot of parents' loss of interest.

LL: Well, I think life becomes much more hectic and...

HS: That's right, yes.

LL: Yes, and it seems nowadays kids have so many things to choose to do.

HS: They have so many things that they get involved and...

LL: Yes, that it's hard to – yes. Well, we do have a conference at the university. We're going to be doing it this summer so it's not like a junior short course but we do bring them up to the university and...

HS: You're going to do that?

LL: Yes. We do it every other year and then it rotates with Citizenship Washington Focus. One summer they go to that and then the next summer we'll do the Teen Conference and so on. We certainly don't send as many but we do send kids to National 4-H Congress and the National 4-H Conference and so – the numbers are a lot smaller but at least we're still sending some.

HS: Oh, yes.

LL: I know some states send a lot of kids to some of those events.

HS: I think that 4-H has come a long way with changing times.

LL: Yes, and that's a good thing.

HS: I think they did – what I mean is that they haven't lost their aim and that they still are doing a good job.

LL: Well, that's good to hear.

HS: I still think the game is what it was [Unintelligible]

LL: Well, that's good. That's a good point to make.

HS: An example, we don't know if people [Unintelligible] stores like we used to.

LL: Like you used to. [Laughter] What's different about that? Is it that you...?

HS: These special [Unintelligible]

LL: Came out?

HS: ...and go for the different clubs. And years ago, we have different women that we would just [worked] with. We thought they were just grand, it was – and we'd sit down with the nurse and [Crosstalk]

LL: Oh, Elsie [Unintelligible]

HS: Yes. I have a medal or an award that she got that she wanted me to have that she sent down for me...

LL: Oh, wow.

HS: [Unintelligible]

LL: Do you remember A. J. Brundage?

HS: Oh, yes. I just thought Mr. Brundage was the most wonderful person in the world. [Laughter]

LL: He was god. [Laughter]

HS: Yes. He was just grand.

LL: Now, was he like the state program leader? State [Crosstalk]

HS: He was a state leader, yes.

LL: He was the state leader, okay.

HS: [Unintelligible] assistant leader. And then you see what we girl felt – most of us, we went from 4-H into homemakers and they used to have the specials that came down. It was [Unintelligible] and she was on [Unintelligible] and we had to come down to just [Unintelligible] I would never have been able to make my [Unintelligible] over 20 years ago.

LL: Oh, wow. [Laughter]

HS: [Unintelligible]. It wasn't much like [Unintelligible] 4-H. As I say this to Ms. [Unintelligible] when we had her children. We thought she was wonderful because she would just tell us what [Unintelligible] [Laughter]

LL: Well, it's neat to find out what has changed and how...

HS: We don't know the personalities and everything. Of course I'm past it now, but [Unintelligible] I felt we were slipping there but we weren't – we didn't know as well.

LL: No, there were some rough years there. I think we've been able hire a few people to kind of help more so there were some rough years there when there wasn't very much staff at all.

HS: We realized we couldn't [Unintelligible]. We had to [Unintelligible] a lot more people that needed it.

LL: Yes, definitely.

HS: We would just [Unintelligible] a few will often stay. [Laughter] Around the end of my homemaker's group, we've been together for – I don't know – since 1930. The staff [Unintelligible] we had five left [Laughter] but we still try to meet once or twice a year with the help of our children. We always say that we went from 4-H into homemakers and most of everything we did in our home, we learned in homemakers.

LL: That's good to hear. Yes, that is the amazing thing about 4-H is that it teaches you skills you use.

HS: Oh, yes.

LL: Time and time again kids talk about what they learned from 4-H and what it did for them, and they got into college or work or their career or whatever because of it so that's really good to hear – help them decide what they wanted to do with their life. And that's pretty good. Any other comments? Anything else you wanted to share or...

HS: I don't [Laughter] know of anything else.

LL: Okay. Well, you gave me a lot of good comments.

HS: I hope I helped a little bit.

LL: Oh, yes, definitely. Yes, you made some good comments about 4-H. I think that was good as well. I've been going through a lot of old photographs, so it was kind of neat to talk to you about some of those things. Because I've heard of junior short course but I wasn't

really sure what exactly happened. I saw a lot of pictures of Camp Bale and everything, so it was kind of neat because it definitely has changed at Eastern States, but we don't spend a week there, we spend a few days.

HS: I know we [Unintelligible] we were. [Laughter] I'll tell you, that was the way from school and...

LL: Well, that's a big change now. The schools don't really look upon that. It's time away from school and so kids have problems getting away from school to go to the Eastern State.

HS: We never had any of that.

LL: Yes. Well, I'm sure it was seen as an educational...

HS: Back then they felt that we would learn more [Unintelligible]

LL: Yes, it's somewhat of a change. They don't...

HS: Oh, yes. [Unintelligible]

LL: Yes, it is and it's still going on, and it's a good thing. Okay, anything else? Anything else you want to – no?

HS: My great granddaughter, she has [Unintelligible] a year old, and she's still talking now about she's going to be a 4-H leader when she gets old enough, and she's going to 4-H.

LL: Well, that's good. [Laughter]

HS: I mean she still loves 4-H.

LL: How old is your great granddaughter?

HS: [Unintelligible] and she get judge down at 4-H fairs. She has [Unintelligible] four years and she still is one that's all [Unintelligible]

LL: She has a daughter who's a year-old?

HS: Yes, she's a year old.

LL: Well, that's good. I think that's the beauty of 4-H, it has such an impact on people.

HS: Oh, yes. You see, I've taken my own children [Unintelligible] and my grandchildren and...

LL: Yes, and take their children...

HS: ...great grandchildren. [Laughter]

LL: Yes. And the legacy goes on. That's pretty good. Okay, I think that's good. Yes, you gave me some really good points and stuff. That would be great. I hope the recording came out okay. [Laughter]

(End of Interview)