

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

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LL: ... And thank you very, very much for agreeing to do this. Can we start first with when and where you were born?

MV: I was born in Manhattan, at the doctors hospital in New York. on February 15th 1930

LL: Okay. And then, did you grow up in New York?

MV: No. I think we spent the first year of my life in Brooklyn, and then moved here. My family had already bought the farm as a summer camp. My father's and neurophysiologist, my mother was a social worker. [unintelligible] run camp Aladdin. And then the depression is what demolished it.

LL: In [unintelligible]?

MV: Mm-hmm. And then, [unintelligible] was demolished, because it's basically ... It's a charity. It's a Jewish charity. We ran out of money. So, we ended up farming.

LL: And had there been any farming in your parents' background?

MV: None at all. No. My mother was born in Manhattan. My father was born in New Jersey. And we lived in the country.

LL: So, what was it like there? [unintelligible].

MV: [unintelligible].

LL: [unintelligible].

MV: Okay then.

LL: All right. Okay.

MV: We had a dairy herd. We had beef cattle. We had sheep, goats, and pigs. Ducks, geese, and chicken. We had ... We farmed, maybe, 15 acres We did all of our haying with a team of horses and of the thousand person and the search looking. Same thing. And we had a commercial there in 1940. And I think for the war effort and heard that Angus cattle. And then, my sister started [unintelligible] riding horse and we had shetland ponies.

LL: The two of you sisters were the only children?

MV: Two sisters and two brothers.

LL: And two brothers. Did any of them go on into agriculture?

MV: No. No.

LL: Mary, can you tell us something? As you grew up in this area, what was it like in the surrounding area?

MV: Well, whipperwill road was a dirt road. There's no electricity. We were the first people to put in poles to get a telephone. And so, of course, everybody else then had a phone line. And we had a delco battery operated system. And gravity feed water system. we have in our house at first pump my water. But as we get older, we had running water in the house and we didn't have electricity for quite a long time. Except for battery operated radio, as we used to go on, we were singing this on the radio. Somebody would run in to your house and yell the balls are down and we got to shut everything off and light lamps because there were balls on the delco system. They went from a lot of electricity when they got recharged again they went back up.

LL: What was it like for your mother and dad?

MV: Oh, they loved it. They loved it. Absolutely. Yes. All of the stonework buildings you see here, my father and my brother built. My father [unintelligible] taught my brother how to do cement work and so on. But everybody worked on that. We all did it. The only house that was here was the old first house you saw when we came up, exactly where you parked at. That was built before the revolutionary war. Everything else here was built for calf holding or for farming..

LL: How had your parents found it?

MV: They took a compass, and they measured a hundred miles from New York City and made a circle. And then, just went on the circle and they found this place. They were going to buy that house over in Saybrook, but it was used to make the movie "Let's Scare Jessica to Death." The one with the tower. They were going to buy that and a hundred acres over there, but, of course, [unintelligible] they didn't, because the highway would have demolished it.

LL: So, then, your father left [unintelligible].

MV: He was [unintelligible].

LL: Okay. Did you happen to know his [unintelligible] at the farm [unintelligible]?

MV: No. He was farming the farm. He was farming. Oh, yeah. It was absolutely a farm right from the start. 'Cause we were looking 20 cows. We had got about 25 or 30 cows, and we have at least 15 or 20 beef cattle. A very good sized flock of sheep [unintelligible]. We lost 27 sheep in one day [unintelligible]. Though we had [unintelligible] some sheep, at least, we had a flock of goats. And we found out very good sized [unintelligible]. So, we were really farmers. And we did everything with a team of horses and by hand.

LL: Now, how did your dad manage his other work at the farm?

MV: They hired the man. They hired two men. And they have a woman, one man named Blackwell, Another named Sweeney When I was a kid and we hired a man named Frank Minehoff of all them and they had all the farmhands. And then a wonderful old guy from my father's place in New Jersey arrived and just lived with us for the rest of his life. He was an old mountaineer bachelor. Strange man named Johnny. And he drove the horses and taught us all about horesmanship in his unique homegrown style

LL: Did that the other men who worked her liver there?

MV: No, Johnny was the only one.

LL: They lived in town and came in?

MV: Yeah.

LL: Do you remember how your dad found them?

MV: No. But it was a comfy town. I'm sure it was no problem to find the people to work with. Also, they probably just asked the grocery store, but they were hardworking guys. I was only a year or two, three. At first.

LL: What was it like school here?

MV: Well, let's see now. I went to 13 different schools and I don't remember much about them. I was an anti-school person. I'm totally dyslexic. And so school was really in a mess. But yes, I went to the old lyme school part of the time and then we moved on to Illinois. And I went to school out there for well, and I didn't like that. And I went to Pennsylvania's boarding School and I didn't like that, then I lived with my grandmother and went to school in New York City, and didn't like that. But I have no firm recollections of school.

LL: you said you went to Illinois for the winter?

MV: Yeah. My father was working at the university in Chicago, Illinois. [unintelligible]. We went to boarding school. My brother and sister and I went to the good school. I'm the one who [unintelligible] at a private school in New York [unintelligible]. Because he used to drive us [unintelligible] before you became [unintelligible].

LL: Here in Connecticut?

MV: Well, it was ... Yeah.

LL: Yeah.

MV: I was looking at a photograph that I had of my Shetland pony ,and I was sitting next to this young man, and he admired my pictures. And he thought ... Well, he asked me if I wanted to see his horse. And he took me by the hand took me to the baggage car. And there was this big palomino. And I petted him, he told me his name was Roy and so on. He told me his name is Roy. [unintelligible], and I told my mother. [unintelligible]. And then, about eight months later, my sister came on [unintelligible] magazine rearing up on trigger. And I said, "Oh, I know him." She says, "Yeah, yeah, yeah."

LL: I met Lassy one day on a plane one time with my children and Lassy was riding first class.

MV: Well, trigger wasn't, trigger was in the baggage car, he was perfectly content with an unlikely lifestyle

LL: So, then when did you start the horse? 'Cause you had a [unintelligible].

MV: I had a Shetland pony when I was four and I got my first big mare as a gift when I was ten. I've been breeding horses ever since.

LL: You just happened naturally to have this affinity?

MV: I just decided I was going to a horse breeder when I was nine years old, and I. That's what I am.

LL: Can you talk a little bit about what the horse industry was like then?

MV: Not when I was ten years old, because I really don't remember that well. There were a lot of cattle dealers I those years, and that's where we bought the [unintelligible] from. I didn't know any more than [unintelligible]. Finally, in the 1940s, [unintelligible] other people had more than ... The mare that I brought was either all Morgan without papers and Morgan Welch

LL: What do you mean "Morgan Welch?"

MV: Welch Pony. She was very small. So she could have been cross. She could have been. And I gave her first great grandson [unintelligible] a man of war, whose a pinto belonged to [unintelligible].

LL: And how did you find it?

MV: Oh, I have no idea how we found things. People talk to each other. You know what I mean? Everything was done by word of mouth then. [unintelligible] I don't know how to write a letter [unintelligible]. I had a grandmother who was very interested in doing [unintelligible] and helping [unintelligible]. And then, I went to local horse where [unintelligible]. And she had an arrow.

LL: [unintelligible].

MV: [unintelligible] down in Pennsylvania and I was going to school there. And she was [unintelligible] and then, finally, in the 1940s, I got registered.

LL: Did [unintelligible]? was this area of Connecticut, were there were a lot of people?

MV: It was all rural, this was all farming. This was not a bedroom suburb. It just wasn't

LL: But where the many people who were breeding horses or riding horses or?

MV: Riding horses, owning horses. Absolutely. And driving them there. I used my horse to go downtown, to shop, especially during the war when there wasn't gasoline a lot of the year. A lot of horses were used to farm then. People didn't have tractors. [unintelligible].

LL: What were your neighbors like?

MV: Oh, yeah, yeah.

LL: [unintelligible].

MV: I don't remember that we had any neighbors ... I don't remember anybody else except way down the other side of the highway, right over [unintelligible].

LL: It's very good. Okay. Let's talk about Morgan. We were talking about a [unintelligible]. You have a [unintelligible] and a what?

MV: [unintelligible].

LL: [unintelligible]. And they went through the fence.

MV: They got underneath the electric fence and just tolerate the shock from [unintelligible] 'cause they'd never get into a [unintelligible] in order to get it [unintelligible].

LL: Oh, okay.

MV: Then they were isolated in order to restore it. the pastures are over-grazed. They're trying to restore some of the pastures.

LL: Do you think you finally settled on Morgans [unintelligible] this type of business?

MV: Yeah, I settle on Morgans because I like what goes on in their I tried try to work with Arabs for a while and life is too short to deal with those quirks. I mean, they just they were so busy thinking about everything but what you wanted to think about, couldn't get their attention long enough to holler at them to do anything, and they're just frustrated me. And then I look at their brains and they're pretty squirrely too, too. Every time I work with Morgan I just like their mouths. And I also like the fact that they can do any, whatever you want to do. They'll say [unintelligible]

LL: What was it like [unintelligible]?

MV: [unintelligible]?

LL: Yeah. [unintelligible] what you call it? And how you [unintelligible] people showed the stages of changing [unintelligible]?

MV: Well, I wrote a book a number of years ago called "Along with Your Horse," and when people buy the horse [unintelligible], they get a copy of that book [unintelligible]. They still do. They train by the book, and it worked.

LL: Now, you said you were disruptive.

MV: Yeah.

LL: How did you write the book?

MV: Badly. Somebody else had to edit it [unintelligible]. I scrawled it down, and then somebody else patiently straightened it out. What will it take [unintelligible]? [unintelligible] whenever I have a horse that's really a terrible nuisance it's one that somebody's already bought from me and reboarding again. I'm stuck with it I can't sell it. And I figured when they're a total nuisance I failed.

LL: And then you get them back and you're stuck with them

MV: Exactly.

LL: How has the horse industry changed? Is it [unintelligible] in itself?

MV: Well, yes, of course. The horse industry was an industry of utilitarian animals that people really used to [unintelligible]. And the Morgan horse was the useful horse. The Morgan horse, before the tractor and the automobile, was the source of transportation and riding and driving and sport and work. And people didn't have to have five horses to do five different jobs. They had one horse, so they were, at the turn of the century; they were the most valuable breed.

LL: Where did they originate?

MV: The First Morgan horse was born in West Hartford, and he west Springfield, Massachusetts. He left. Yet in both Hartford and Springfield he went up to Vermont which is where he became famous.

LL: Really?

MV: And West Springfield, Massachusetts. He looked [unintelligible] in both [unintelligible] and Springfield [unintelligible] just when it became famous.

LL: But where did the breed come from?

MV: Oh, well, the breed came from horses that had been imported from Europe. I mean, people brought their best horses with them. It was terribly expensive to import horses [unintelligible]. And so, they brought good horses from the [unintelligible]. A lot of them [unintelligible] work horses. And the King of England decided that all horses under 15 hands tall should be slaughtered. So, many, many smaller horses came over here real quick to save them. Thank God. Because they saved some very important [unintelligible].

LL: So, this [unintelligible] compared to a [unintelligible]?

MV: Perchuron was originally riding horses too because it was the French armored knight's horse for jousting. The other draft horses the Flemish gray and they Suffolk pumps, and the Clydesdale which is the Budweiser horse. All of those. Those were bred to draft horses. and if you look at the perchuron, its very pretty horse. [unintelligible] because it has for generations bred to ride

LL: How many Morgan stables are there?

MV: I'm sure there are at least five or six hundred people who own Morgans in Connecticut, people like me, breeders who have 10 or more mares becoming non-existent. Mostly now that people have one or two mares and they breed by artificial insemination sometimes shows horses to breeders, [unintelligible]. Very few of them really do any kind of in-depth study. The breed is really heavy for the loss [unintelligible]

LL: So, is it because of expense?

MV: No. It's because of the whole change of attitude in why people have horses. People have horses now for the fun of it.

They don't need them. And so, for some of them, it's for shows, for [unintelligible], for Olympic riding, racing or gaming or something.

LL: It's a hobby.

MV: Yeah. It's more of a hobby that the reason that people buy horses. And then everybody wants to be a breeder. Everybody wants to raise a baby They don't know how. And they don't raise very good ones very often and they very often get cash payments for having babies away from handling an adult horse. And so we have people who do something, horses on the market, all the time, because they have no use for them, which is a disaster. That's one of the reasons why there is a lot of horse meat in the world. People just don't know how to breed good horses. Yes, very much like Christmas presents. I think the whole fact is there are not breeders. they're very few breeders of Morgans left the Satterberg people working difficult Satterberg people who are a group of breeders. And then the people buy some of those violent shodan and have professional trainers and so on. [crosstalk].

LL: Okay. And they're bred for the ...

MV: And they're bred for the show.

LL: Now, if you were to think about ... There's Morgan Horse Association.

MV: Right.

LL: And what does that do in Connecticut?

MV: Unfortunately, Morgan Horse Association is the most professional [unintelligible]. There's nothing they're supposed to do. It's supposed to be a breeders' organization. But they've sort of forgotten about breeders completely. And when I say anything about that, they say, "Well, there's only ten of you left in the country." So, you know, we're no longer important. Of course, when we stop breeding horses, then all the [unintelligible].

LL: So, the lines have suffered.

MV: The lines have already suffered dramatic, drastic, because there were some very outwardly, opportunistic people who brought horses in that were very poor [unintelligible] urban settlements, but they weren't careful about which [unintelligible] they brought in, and then [unintelligible].

LL: I'm thinking about, you know, you thinking of [unintelligible] humans that are inbreeding.

MV: Inbreeding is nowhere near as much of a problem [unintelligible] for us and do just whatever.

LL: Oh, okay. All right.

MV: But you look at dogs, and a polly dog. Just have a bald head and short face. And then we had Lassie who had the torpedo head and now they breed dozens of puppies who can't believe their eyes. So they have to destroy them. Look at what's happened to Irish Setter, who used to be a marvelous breed of rugged working dogs, and now they're so diffie and strewing. Terrible dog, absolutely stupid animal. And they've done this to everything. Michelle Friesen suffered terrible folds of skin that gets infected And people put up with that. I don't understand trends.

LL: Yes. Exactly.

MV: It's a yuppie trend.

LL: It's a yuppie trend.

MV: And that's what happening to all breeds of animals. Even for a while, they had a problem with the Aberdeen Angus, because they breed them for shorter and shorter and shorter legs. So that's now what they call the pony breed, and it was dwarfism. And of course, that's true of the breed [unintelligible]. And they have to start over and, you know, rethink the whole horse -- cow showing. And almost all of the [unintelligible]. But people didn't go to shows who would not [unintelligible]. Because the people who come here, they want horses. They want horses to use. They don't come here to buy [unintelligible]. Nobody comes.

LL: Because of your reputation?

MV: Because of our reputation for breeding horses people can use.

LL: Talk a little bit about how your business has evolved. The [unintelligible] people have not ... They thought of it as a farm or [unintelligible]. They haven't really transferred the image of the [unintelligible] into the [unintelligible].

MV: Oh, [unintelligible] our business. I don't do it as a lifestyle. I was business breeder right from the start. I've always been trying to breed a saleable animal, a usable animal, an attractive, sound, and reliable animal. And I think that's why I'm still in business, because I set my parameters. When I was 10 or 11 years old, I knew what I wanted. I didn't know how to get there. It took me a long time to figure out how to get there. But I've always wanted the same kind of animal. I wanted a horse [unintelligible]. I wanted [unintelligible] to do with a horse [unintelligible]. That's one of the sad things is to [unintelligible] specialization. You lose the flexibility in the horse's mind and physical ability to do whatever. And so, I've always looked for the same kind of horse year to year. And that's where our reputation lies. And that's why I've remained in the business. It's not a [unintelligible].

MV: [unintelligible] in the country. How far away do you eventually ship?

LL: Oh, well, I've shipped to England and France. But I deal with one man in the Nebraska and another man in Wisconsin, and a third man in Indiana. And [unintelligible] we're using each other's horses. We've now [unintelligible] with a woman in North Carolina and with other breeders over the years. There are still some very dedicated breeders who come very far to maintain original bloodlines [unintelligible]. There's a woman up there in Maine who's still a very breeder. She bred two [unintelligible] ... from my friend in Nebraska. She [unintelligible], and she's used my horses for [unintelligible]. That's really the only way to keep it together, is to make bloodlines available to each

other. There's a woman in New York who breeds very, very fine horses. She's had so many problems with her farm and her husband and her whole setup, but she kept actively trading horses [unintelligible].

LL: Without going into the [unintelligible] of those situations, you'd have to have a [unintelligible] your family and whatever you have [unintelligible]. She had problems with her husband and the farm. But this must have multiplied, because it's a 24-hour job.

MV: That's right.

LL: So, then how did that sit still [unintelligible]?

MV: Well, she had two people like my friend in Indiana and my friends in Nebraska, too, who were both into horses. It's not a problem. It was a problem for me, because my husband works. He [unintelligible], and my son [unintelligible] became farmers. But with the Indiana couple and Nebraska couple, they're [unintelligible] and horse breeders way back. So, they are a combined effort, working together, too.

LL: So, you hired more [unintelligible]. How did you find jobs [unintelligible]?

MV: I had a horse rider years ago.

LL: Did you work [unintelligible]?

MV: No. Not for [unintelligible]. But we had a horse [unintelligible]. And we taught kids. And one of the kids we [unintelligible], a local girl, and [unintelligible] nephew. And after I had knees replaced, then I have trouble with my eyes and my [unintelligible] I will say he had just got to find somebody who can do some of the heavy work. I'm 72. We'll have to find somebody who is able to lift the things I can't lift and do the things I can't do, 'cause my son wasn't [unintelligible]. Anyway, [unintelligible] he's ADD, because [unintelligible]. He needs help. [unintelligible]. Very nice horse. Very [unintelligible] as you know. And [unintelligible] works at the post office, and she hung around. She [unintelligible] ... hung around Mr. Brooks [unintelligible] who was a horse breeder. She used to hang around here when she was a kid, and she just would listen [unintelligible]. And she showed up for [unintelligible].

LL: [unintelligible].

MV: I do. And [unintelligible] and teaching her how to [unintelligible].

LL: Oh, okay.

MV: And Carol down there [unintelligible] but she worked very hard then. I don't know if you remember. [unintelligible] beautiful wife. That's Carol. John's [unintelligible]. And she just came and walked in, because I've got one woman who was willing to take him and train him [unintelligible] to become a world competitor in the US [unintelligible].

LL: [unintelligible]. If you were to [unintelligible] that person of interest [unintelligible].

MV: She was in competition.

LL: Okay.

MV: Yeah. And [unintelligible].

LL: And does she have other horses?

MV: I have not ... Yeah. She has one that she just retired.

LL: And is she in Connecticut?

MV: No. She's in New York. And I told her that I loved the [unintelligible] stallion, and she said, "I have no problem with that."

LL: [unintelligible].

MV: Almost all the stallions, I produced with her. [unintelligible] ... everything they produced was [unintelligible].

LL: How ... Without going into particulars, to have a horse and to [unintelligible] and breed them [unintelligible]?

MV: Sure.

LL: And they [unintelligible] a horse is forceful.

MV: Yes.

LL: And many times, they don't have their own horses.

MV: No. But they're supposed to.

LL: But a lot of the young people, and girls in particular, [unintelligible] and there were all these toys [unintelligible].

MV: Of course.

LL: [unintelligible].

MV: It's one of the places where girls have not been put in the backroom with any sports. It's one of the few sports where girls can compete [unintelligible], not just jocks. They have a bad time. This is not a man [unintelligible].

LL: But with regular horseback?

MV: No. They can go out and do as well, if not better than men. We are Olympic riders, all women. Champion drivers are women.

LL: [unintelligible] do you think it's worth it?

MV: Well, it's amateur sports.

LL: Oh. All right.

MV: Jockeying as much as much as men [unintelligible].

LL: Were you ever part of the grange of the current [unintelligible]?

MV: I was part of the grange for about three [unintelligible]. And we had our insurance, which [unintelligible], but nothing else. And as far as I'm concerned, the farm breeder's only [unintelligible] didn't do anything in agriculture.

LL: How long [unintelligible]?

MV: [unintelligible] I was married. So, it was in '67. [unintelligible].

LL: Did you ever show [unintelligible]?

MV: I showed various [unintelligible]. I showed every weekend [unintelligible].

LL: It doesn't happen [unintelligible]?

MV: Oh, no. Everybody in my family was a [unintelligible]. My son is [unintelligible]. Others had [unintelligible].

LL: Everything in riding [unintelligible]?

MV: [unintelligible].

LL: Do you remember any key problems that you faced since you were [unintelligible]?

MV: Well, one of the problems is this business is [unintelligible] change, because it used to be, in the 1950s, I could take one of these horses off the ring and the best horse won. The best horse doesn't win anymore. The [unintelligible] and the best professional trainers. Most of the time, the professional trainer who is the judge [unintelligible] at the next show. That kind of thing. And, of course, that just [unintelligible] seriously. And then, of course, all the regulations. We gave up on the area, because of all the regulations [unintelligible]. Every time we turned around, there was a new regulation that didn't exist. Screen door had to open a certain way, and they're just regulated [unintelligible]. And then, of course, for a while, [unintelligible]. Now, they've got [unintelligible]. Of course, my brother and sister and I put this farm in the Nature Conservancy [unintelligible]. So, it is protected, and our kids can live here and not [unintelligible]. But the land [unintelligible].

LL: How close [unintelligible]?

MV: Well, right across the road. And behind the [unintelligible] is right behind us. And the lake [unintelligible] ... they can't get in.

LL: [unintelligible].

MV: Yeah. Right away. They left right away [unintelligible]. It was the [unintelligible]. And my brother just gave it to the land [unintelligible].

LL: So, how many acres [unintelligible]?

MV: Probably 600 where the highway cut off [unintelligible] ... We had about 150 acres [unintelligible]. I think we [unintelligible] 450 nature conservancy [unintelligible].

LL: What do you think [unintelligible]?

MV: Oh. I think raising horses is very, absolutely as exciting as anything [unintelligible]. It's a wonderful life to be. [unintelligible]. She comes down twice a week to replace [unintelligible]. What's the matter, Jenny?

LL: Did she just [unintelligible]?

MV: Yeah. She had [unintelligible].

LL: [unintelligible].

MV: She's a Brittany spaniel.

LL: Yeah.

03: [unintelligible]. The water over there [unintelligible] quicksand.

MV: Yeah.

03: [unintelligible], but I'm working on it.

MV: Well, the horses used to walk across that lake all the time.

LL: [unintelligible] white waters right there?

MV: This is the lowest we've had water since 1963. [unintelligible].

LL: [unintelligible] with this weather now, we're not getting our winter.

MV: No.

LL: [unintelligible].

MV: [unintelligible] with me. I don't [unintelligible].

LL: Oh, yeah. [unintelligible].

MV: But we can use some snow in January and February, I guess.

LL: Yeah. You talked about how things have changed, and you've kept up on it or you taught yourself. How long have you taught yourself?

MV: I've found the people to teach me to deal with this. I met another breeder up in Massachusetts. She said to me, "Now, look here, young lady. If you're gonna breed horses, you'd better be [unintelligible] horses." Teach me how I want them, you know.

LL: Would you think similar technologies that come up in either with medicines for horses or the care [unintelligible]?

MV: Oh, there's been tremendous strides in there. Absolutely tremendous strides. [unintelligible]

would be easier [unintelligible] work that's been on horses. And yet so, we have a lot more disease now. We didn't have Lyme disease. We didn't have [unintelligible] disease. We didn't have a ton of horse [unintelligible]. We didn't have a lot of them since. We didn't have the African horse sickness or CEM or EPM. None of this stuff when I was growing up. And matter of fact, we didn't have any of this when I wrote my book in 1978. And the huge number of diseases, mostly from globalization, from animals and people and everything moving so much, has been almost impossible to keep up with. And they can't make vaccines fast enough. But the strides that they've made in medications [unintelligible]. And I have a [unintelligible] absolutely [unintelligible]/

LL: Is it hard to find a large animal vet?

MV: Not hard to find a large animal vet, but it is hard to find a good one. And there are some [unintelligible].

LL: But how hard has it been?

MV: [unintelligible].

LL: [unintelligible] even Morgan [unintelligible] or [unintelligible].

MV: I think the horse industry will thrive, because there are more and more people who want to live in the country and have leisure time and have horses and so on. I think it's growing. There are more horses now in Connecticut than [unintelligible].

LL: And we have of the highest per capita horses.

MV: Yeah. We have more horses per acre than ... I think it's per acre, not per capita. I think we have more horses per acre than any other state. Well, this is horse country. It always has been horse country. And I think there's room for everybody. If you see, there are lots and lots and lots of [unintelligible] horse newspapers. There's at least three that I get. And in fact, with ads for horse trailers and horse property and tack and equipment for them. It's an enormous industry. Billions and billions of dollars in the industry. Just for horses alone. And then, of course, there are also the thousands of sheep in the [unintelligible] and all the rest.

LL: What are the three tabloids do you have?

MV: Oh, the Horseman's Yankee Peddler, the Equine Journal, the Horse [unintelligible] ... I like that, but I'm just starting to get. [unintelligible].

LL: When people [unintelligible], the young people who have parents who can afford to do this ...

MV: [unintelligible] go back to get a second job to do. This is [unintelligible], and he almost [unintelligible]. I would work in the summertime seven days a week and 365 days a year.

LL: [unintelligible] ... So, you're saying is that retirees are people are decision to change to lifestyle?

MV: And the other thing, most of the people buy horses [unintelligible] are women who always wanted a horse when they were kids and their family didn't get them a horse. And now, they're complete grown up [unintelligible] horses or have left for school or something. They have time to do it. And more and more people who ride [unintelligible] which is done entirely in the ring, you compete with that. But there's also a huge number of people doing competitive trail riding and [unintelligible] pacing. It's the one

where you simply put your horse [unintelligible] someone to do it. We're losing our trails horribly. [unintelligible] problem with that, because the snowmobile people and all the rest of these people are organized, and they've just kicked the horses out. And the Audubon Society and the Sierra Club [unintelligible]. They keep riding me. They asked me to support them. And I write back and say, "No way. You're cutting my throat."

LL: How does Connecticut differ from other [unintelligible]?

MV: Well, Connecticut has more of them. But I don't really know how it would differ. People that write books can tell you [unintelligible]. But all the other states that I've been in, there are lots of horse people [unintelligible] and plenty of them. And I've been in New York state and across the country. I was just in Idaho. [unintelligible] ... But the horse industry is [unintelligible]. And the thing is, in so many ways, the horse industry is not [unintelligible] ... We don't get the breaks. We don't get tax breaks. [unintelligible]. We're considered a luxury or sport [unintelligible].

LL: Even a working horse?

MV: Even working horses are treated way. Even draft horses that are working draft horses and working ranch horses, they're still treated [unintelligible]. They don't treat them as though they're really working, which is really something [unintelligible]. And you pay tax on all the horse stuff and [unintelligible] stuff, but on cow, sheep, goat stuff.

LL: So, horses are considered personal properties?

MV: Yeah.

LL: And they're taxed [unintelligible].

MV: Taxed individually as personal property. Right.

LL: And there's nothing that'd be cause for exempt of you as a breeder?

MV: Oh, as a breeder, I can do something. I can get a tax exemption [unintelligible].

LL: But if I owned a horse, and then you [unintelligible].

MV: [unintelligible] ... Well, you pay a tax on your dog by getting [unintelligible].

LL: [unintelligible].

MV: No. But you get [unintelligible] for cats. And cats are one of the most destructive creatures that are in the world. And I happen to like birds and butterflies and chipmunks and [unintelligible] people turning these cats [unintelligible], hundreds of them every year. They get them when they come out here to the country, in the summer and they keep their little kitties, and then when they go away, they turn them [unintelligible] ... We recently had a beautiful long-haired cat [unintelligible].

LL: Oh, no.

MV: It's a sign of starvation during [unintelligible]. Scrammed. [unintelligible].

LL: [unintelligible]. If you had anything that you would change about what you've done [unintelligible]?

MV: Oh, I would have done more traveling earlier [unintelligible] my horses more and more. Like everybody else, I started out [unintelligible]. I learned an awful lot the hard way by just trial and error. And it was ... Anyway, I mean, the one woman that I did have as a mentor, obviously, saved me years and years of trial and error. But I would have been [unintelligible].

LL: [unintelligible]?

MV: Yes. Massachusetts. Yes. I would have learned a lot more had I listened and didn't come back [unintelligible]. See, I didn't drive a car until I was 18. And my family weren't [unintelligible]. So, a lot of this done by letter. I began to finally start making contacts. This friend of mine in New York, when she was kid, traveled all over and saw some of the great horses and the breed and talked to a bunch of old men [unintelligible] her area that she found really [unintelligible] ... The original horses are far better educated than [unintelligible] Morgans and [unintelligible]. When she was younger, she saw a lot of [unintelligible] old system [unintelligible], because she got intensely interested, and she also has a visual memory of [unintelligible].

LL: As you were growing up ... How old were you [unintelligible] ... 'Cause your family was living here. The children and the horses, and they were doing the other. [unintelligible].

MV: Well, I was doing the other [unintelligible], too.

LL: But then you branched out? What then, after they sold the [unintelligible], is that when you really took off into the [unintelligible]?

MV: No, no. It was a gradual thing. [unintelligible] ... So, when I got married, I sold everything [unintelligible].

LL: Did you live here right after you got married?

MV: Yeah. We lived here. We lived in South Carolina for a while. We would [unintelligible].

LL: If had to give any advice to someone about the horse industry, the Morgan horse industry ...

MV: [CROSSTALK] and learn about the laws of the state and get educated about the medical problems and the availability of [unintelligible]. There are some wonderful magazines about horses. One's called "The Horse," which is [unintelligible]. And [unintelligible] sport ridings or something like that. I think the lack of education is serious. And a lot of people [unintelligible], but horse care is so different from being a rider. I don't ride at all. I haven't ridden in 20 years. [unintelligible] different aspects. And [unintelligible] professional trainers now, and they are the ones who advise people [unintelligible]. There are kids who grew up as equitation leaders and were successful equitation riders [unintelligible] training, and they are [unintelligible] trainers. I mean, they know a bunch of tricks and stuff, but they don't really understand horses that much. But there are [unintelligible] permission to [unintelligible] people like John Lyons and [unintelligible]. They can teach you how to train horses. And there's some good people with [unintelligible]. I think you have to pretty much know enough about all the different aspects of horses, so that you know what [unintelligible], because no matter breed you have, you're gonna get some horses that are better suited [unintelligible], others that are better suited for riding, and others that are better suited for backdoor [unintelligible]. And a lot of people [unintelligible] can't look at the horse's legs and tell if they're straight. They can't look at the whole [unintelligible]. They can't look at a [unintelligible] stallion and pedigree and know what's [unintelligible] and know what's [unintelligible] disaster. You know? They just aren't educated. I think that's a very serious problem with all [unintelligible].

LL: [unintelligible]?

MV: No. [unintelligible] with the Morgan horse breed, [unintelligible] hiring somebody else to take their horses [unintelligible] pay the bill. More and more and more people say, "I wanna do things with my own horse, and since I can't [unintelligible]." So, this has been great [unintelligible] Connecticut. We have lots of [unintelligible]. We have lots of [unintelligible]. We have lots of carriage. We have lots of raining. And you can go into whatever you want to do with a horse [unintelligible].

LL: And after day [unintelligible].

MV: Probably worse.

LL: Are they?

MV: [unintelligible].

LL: I know up in northwestern [unintelligible] Connecticut.

MV: You have the [unintelligible] up there with the [unintelligible]. It's great. [unintelligible]. He's been [unintelligible]. His father was one of the great driving people [unintelligible].

LL: Well, I want to thank you very much.

MV: You're welcome.

LL: I know that this is a little bit different than the other interviews [unintelligible], because, as you've said, it's not exactly ... People don't think of it as agriculture.

MV: No.

LL: That it's [unintelligible].

MV: I mean, the horse people need land, so they're doing what they can to make sure that I mean, the horse people, go out and fight to keep trails open and so on.

LL: how much, is there a formula for how much land per horse you need?

MV: Well, in Connecticut, a horse can't live just on the land. They have to have supplemental feeding. I think you're supposed to have an acre of land for horses to give them pasture that doesn't turn into a mud because you have to rotate pasture. they eat them all the way down. You've got to pick up the manure. get it out because otherwise they keep recirculating worms

LL: More?

MV: A lot. But now in old Lyme , you have three acres this year, because three acres you can have 15 horses. And sometimes you only need a half acre to have a horse. And other time, I think for somebody you have to have an acre per horse, which makes more sense. Really. The town, in their zoning decision

LL: So, then if they haven't half an acre for a horse?

MV: See a lot of horses are never put out on grass, a lot of horses live in a barn. Go out and work and go back in the barn. They never get loose on grass, except sometimes they're turned into a little tiny paddock so that they can run around while we clean the stalls. But there are plenty of horses that never go out on grass. They don't see the light of day. except [unintelligible]. We're just standing there with a solitary confinement so that the horses can all see each other.

LL: [unintelligible].

MV: [unintelligible].

LL: Are there any horses you remember more [unintelligible]?

MV: Oh, my [unintelligible] horse.

LL: [unintelligible]. Yeah. That was the one that [unintelligible] a lot.

MV: He was one of the [unintelligible] big and [unintelligible].

LL: Well, thank you very much.

MV: We don't get too many of [unintelligible] in your lifetime.

(End of Interview)