

CONNECTICUT 20TH CENTURY AGRICULTURAL HISTORY PROJECT

ORAL HISTORIES

Interviewer: Luane J. Lange

Name of Person Interviewed: Robin Chessmir

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Interviewee Address:

Q: You spoke at the farmland conference about the fact that you had entered the agricultural arena recently. Would you first talk about that? I think I'm going to work backwards with you.

A: Sure. I'm not from a farm background but I've always had an interest in agriculture since I was a child in England where I was born. I used to spend a couple of weeks each summer on a friend's dairy farm. He happened to be a milk inspector who lived next door to my parents. Then he moved to a...to a farm and I spent summers...a couple weeks each summer there. It really kindled my interest in farming. We later moved to Canada. Then, we moved to Windham when I was about nine years old and we lived in a...in a subdivision. A very small, small lot. No land at all. Hundred by hundred, foot lot. But I sought ways to have animals. I'd chickens most...mainly. I'd befriended somebody with a bit of land and they...they let me keep chickens there. So I did that kind of thing. Later on in high school my parents bought a place with a couple of acres of land and I got some calves and horses and the like, and had chickens and ducks and quite a menagerie. Then when I got married we started a retail business when I was twenty-one years old called, "The Hoot." This is a gift store in Willimantic which we still operate, today. My wife and daughter are mainly involved with that business now. Then in 1975 we...we looked for a...we were looking for a home. We wanted...I wanted something with acreage. We looked all over Woodstock and Coventry and Lebanon and we finally found a place in Lebanon, look right here on the green, which had forty acres of land. It was a real run down dilapidated house that had been leased for the previous thirty years. We remodeled the house and tore down the old barns. I built a new barn down back and had a few beef cows and some horses and chickens, etc. Then it developed into...I started...I started raising dairy

replacements. I'd buy calves from local farmers and I'd raise them up 'til they were breeding age and 'til they were bred. I'd breed them and then sell them as bred heifers. I did that for a number of years and acquired another ten acres next door to us. Then I purchased sixty-five acres around the corner for...for crops. We raise corn silage and etc. Then in the late '80's a neighbor...neighboring farm, he wanted to...wanted to retire, when real estate values were...real estate market was quite hot. But, he didn't want to see property go to development. So, I worked out an arrangement where I'd lease the cows from him and had a three-year option to buy the property. And, in that...in the meantime in that three years, he sold the development rights to the State of Connecticut. Then we purchased the farm at ag value and then we were in the dairy business.

Q: It's amazing. I want to go back now. A couple of things you've said. What in your family background if any do you think prompted your interest in animals?

A: None. My family is...is totally "unagriculture."

Q: Rural in any way?

A: No, not rural at all. We...I was brought up...In England we lived in a what they call "council housing" which was basically postwar housing; duplexes, very close together. It was...it was not agriculture at all where we lived. It was purely through this neighbor who was a milk inspector that...Actually, my parents went to...when I was four years old they went on holiday to Norway to visit some friends. They left me...I spent the two weeks with this...with the milk inspector on...on his farm, which was a mixed farm. They had pigs and chickens and mainly dairy but they...it was you know. It was early '50's and they were doing work with horses, etc. I can...I clearly have very vivid memories, real clear memories of it all and I just loved it. And every summer after that I'd go spend a couple of weeks on the farm. That's how I developed my interest in farming.

Q: How did you happen to start the retail store? Oh, let me go back. Do you have brothers and sisters?

A: I have two sisters. Two younger sisters.

Q: And no one, no agriculture?

A: No agriculture.

Q: What did your parent...

A: My...my mother was born in London, in Chelsea. My father was born in **Cheltland**. He's a...he was an engineer, very technical person. Not much interested in...never interested in farming.

Q: Now, how did you happen to go into the retail business?

A: Well, it was...I got married in 1967 and my wife has gone to art school. There wasn't any real job prospects in Willimantic. I was attending the University of Connecticut at the time majoring in Business, Business Administration. So we decided...she had gone to school in New Haven and there were some stores down there we liked to go shopping in and we thought that this area with the University and Eastern could possibly use a business like that. And so, with three thousand dollars I'd saved from working in a local factory, we started the business. It was in a four hundred square foot store. Today it's nine thousand square feet and my daughter's involved with the business. It's quite interesting. I have two children. My oldest child is Lisa and then Lincoln who is a couple of years younger and both...both children are involved with us in our businesses. Lisa at the store and Lincoln at the farm.

Q: Your parents...are they still living?

A: Yes. They're both living.

Q: What do they think of your entrepreneurial life?

A: Well, they were supportive of the store. They never encouraged me in agriculture. I wanted to go to school to...I expressed interest I'd like to pursue agriculture but they...they discouraged me. They didn't think it was something I should do. So that I was never encouraged to go into agriculture and so I just...just did it anyway.

Q: And now what do they think?

A: They're very supportive now. They...they're totally supportive. They, in fact, my father's retired and he spends a lot of time on the farm. He does our plumbing and he's very supportive. He...he's had his eyes opened to...to the complexities and intricacies of the business and the challenges of the business. I think he's a typical example of what...how people view agriculture. They...they don't view it for the business that it is and for the expertise and for the skills and challenges that are required for somebody in agriculture today. And just had a...didn't have a good view of what it was all about. And today he does.

Q: How did you go about preparing for what has become this second business?

A: Well, I...I just kind of jumped into it. Initially the farm consisted of a hundred and eighty-five acres and about eighty dairy cows. And I had an acquaintance who was working on another farm. Actually, it was one of our employees at the store, her husband was managing a farm. I asked if he'd be interested...he...he wasn't happy where he was so I asked him if he'd be interested in doing this...operating the herd for us, managing the herd. So that's how we started. And I'll tell you, we worked a lot the hard way. I...I...I didn't have a clue of

what it was all about; a lot of trial and error and it's really been quite a process. And you really appreciate what...I...I...I didn't have a clue what was involved with operating a dairy business. We've learned a lot through the years of just what a cow's all about you know, the feeding that you...that you're feeding a ruminant and you're really feeding bacteria...to the crop management. It's been an interesting experience.

Q: And as you branched out into the other elements that support the dairy herd, then this has been a similar learning process? Or have you had other managers or the same manager?

A: Yes. That original manager, he...he left after two or three years. We have gone through several you know, changes since. My son has since come into the business. When I purchased the farm, I purchased it totally for my own interest. I had...had no...no designs or idea that my son would be involved in the business. He was always good help on the farm, an excellent help you know, when I was at the...what I did originally with the heifers. We used to raise a lot of hay and...

Q: How old was he then?

A: He was in high school when I...just eighteen years old when I purchased the farm. And he like I say, he was always a good help but he never...never expressed a real love of agriculture. He...he enjoyed it but he didn't...he wasn't, "Oh, I want to be a farmer." As a matter of fact, he went to school...he was very artistic and he went to school to be a...an architect. He went to Rhode Island School of Design. He went there for three years and then he decided that he really didn't enjoy the politics of the world of architecture and that he thought he wanted to join me on the farm. We were in a transition period then and so he came back to the farm. He's been an excellent partner since and that's really been the stimulus for... since then we've grown quite a bit. We...we purchased two other farms since then with the...with the help of the Farmland Preservation Program. Today, we ha...the farm consists of two hundred and seventy milk cows and six hundred and forty owned acres with like five hundred and twenty acres in the Farmland Preservation Program.

Q: Would you say that when you first started this that you were looking at a rural lifestyle and a kind of...I don't want to say a hobby farm but...Or, were you contemplating how it could be a partial business?

A: I...I've always looked at it as a...as a business even when I was raising heifers. I always...my emphasis then was making it a...starting to...to operate it efficiently. We sold hay, we sold the heifers. I'm not saying we made money at it but...I strived to be...to...to run it efficiently. So it's...I've always run it as a business. I never considered a...It was a sideline in the...certainly, in the initial stages. I spent quite a bit of time at it but it was a sideline. When we purchased the farm, it was my aim to run it as a business although I didn't envision running it, you know, growing it to the size of the business we are today. And, we're still growing.

Q: As you entered this new business area, because with any business there's a...there's...I don't want to say camaraderie, but there are certain kinds of systems within any business field, I would guess. Because you...you were coming from outside agriculture, did you notice any kinds of...of special issues when you were dealing with the agricultural community?

A: Well, I've never been...I'm not from a farm background. I'm not viewed as a farmer and it's interesting, I'm not viewed as a farmer from the agricultural community and actually when I go to my other business, the retail business, they poke jokes at me as being a farmer. I'm not...I'm not really, how would you put it, I'm not really an accepted farmer I guess you might say. I...so I...as far as the farm community goes, I think I've developed, I've worked hard at it, I think I've developed a respect. At first people thought I was...it was just a hobby that I, you know, something I was doing as a hobby. But it is definitely a business and that's the way we're...we're growing it as a dairy...as a business.

Q: I've interviewed some people, I run into people who...that have young teenagers. I've interviewed some farm managers of large farms up in northwestern Connecticut whose owners live in New Jersey, New York and so on. As people have talked about it, they said it's almost impossible to get into farming if you want to. Do you have any suggestions you would make?

A: It's a very capital intensive business. It takes an awful lot of...takes an awful lot of capital to get into the dairy business. And that's where I was fortunate, I had another business. I haven't had to rely on the dairy business for...for my...my daily livelihood, right. I think it's very difficult...difficult for somebody to just get right into the dairy business if you don't have other sources of income or the farm isn't in the family. We were certainly, in our...in our...in our situation, the Farmland Preservation Program was a key because we were able to buy the land at agricultural value. If it weren't for that program, we wouldn't have been able to purchase the land that we have. The farm we purchased since, we placed into the program and so we're able to buy that at agricultural value. And, just this year we bought an additional two hundred acres of cropland that was already in the program. Once, again, we were able to purchase the land at its agricultural value. So that's...that has been the key as far as land acquisition goes. The dairy cows and the equipment, the businesses...as the businesses evolved we...we've been able to invest in those, in cows and equipment. But, as far as somebody getting into the business, it's...it's even difficult for somebody who has a farm in the family. Quite often it's the nest egg or retirement of the previous generation and they then pass it on. The tax issues, etc., they're big hurdles for somebody to...to get over in order to purchase a farm. That's why I...I feel the Farmland Preservation Program is key to the future of agriculture in Connecticut. Without a program that levels a playing field with other parts of the country where land acquisition costs are a lot lower, we're not going to be able to preserve the agricultural land base that we need to preserve. And I think that's the key.

Everything else being even...equal, I think Connecticut farmers can be very competitive. There's...there's a lot of skill here. There's...we have good growing condition, good soils, good climate. But it's the land base that is the real...real hurdle in getting into agriculture in this part of the country.

Q: You mentioned leasing it before you bought the other place. I'm finding examples of people who...who lease a variety of plots of land. Two questions. One is, are many of your several plots any distance away? You named a couple that were right contiguous to...to here. Does your equipment have to travel very far between places?

A: We're very fortunate that we don't travel that far. I think we travel four miles at the most for our land that we...that we...We rent several hundred acres of cropland but it's in very close proximity. So, we're very fortunate in that respect.

Q: And the people from whom you rent, do they still live in the farmhouse?

A: Some of them do. The majority of them are in elderly hands. It's...it's all land that's on the edge that's go...something's going to happen in the next few years. It's gonna...it's gonna be transferred in some...one way or the other. But, one farm we lease, the owner has since been placed in hospitalized care and the next generation has purchased the farm. A nephew has purchased it. We are leasing...we are renting that farm now. Whether it continues to be...we're able to rent it or not, I'm not sure. That farm in particular was placed in the Farmland Preservation Program by the previous owner so that one will be in agriculture of some sort. But if we...you know, are able to run it or not is...it will be the question. Or somebody else...or whether the owner does something. But the other pieces of property are all...are all in elderly ownership. Some of them live in the area and others don't. That's what...that's what encouraged us to buy this two hundred acres we did this...this year, just our nervousness about the future of our crop base and needing to secure it.

Q: Have you thought about diversifying beside dairy and the supporting crops?

A: We've thought about it. We feel that somehow we need to take what...what is a disadvantage to turn it around into an advantage. When I say that I mean, we have a large population base here in Connecticut and the northeast that agriculture should be taking advantage of and in particularly in the dairy business. We don't take advantage of it at all. In Connecticut, there's no identity to our product. We belong to a co-op. It goes on the truck and, once it leaves the farm we don't know where it goes or who...who purchases it. There is...there is absolutely no identity to it. I think that's a area, particularly in the dairy business, we need to address. We need to develop an identity for our milk, develop a demand for it in...in Connecticut. And we should be taking advantage of the population base that's here. So we do have some...we haven't figured out how we went to proceed with marketing our product. We've looked in to a coup...that will be the next stage of our business and that's something that we're

going to be looking at. We are interested in producing cheese. That might be a...that's one of the directions we're going to be pursuing.

Q: What do you know of the New England Dairy Compact and what has happened? I don't know if the President vetoed it or... I don't know.

A: I think it's in limbo right now. (It eventually was approved for one or two years.)

Q: I...I don't...

A: Best to my knowledge, I think it's an excellent...

Q: The Midwest was against it and they were looking at how to...there were certain political groups that wanted it out.

A: Right. I don't understand why they're really against it. It's a known fact that the mailbox price for milk in the Midwest actually exceeds what we get in the northeast here. And their costs of production are a lot lower than they are around here. We just started buying western hay and it cost us a hundred and two dollars a ton for the hay and close to ninety dollars a ton to truck it here. Obviously if you're in Wisconsin or somewhere in that area, you're a lot closer to Idaho than we are and your trucking costs are going to be significantly less. Grain...it...I was told that just to get grain from Syracuse New York to...into Connecticut costs another thirty dollars a ton. So you start looking at those issues of costs of doing business here that's where there's proof that the Compact is needed. There're other areas of doing business that are more expensive here. Labor costs are higher, taxes, a lot of issues and I think that's where the Compact is needed to once again, level the playing field so that agriculture in the northeast can compete.

Q: When you say mailbox price you mean when the check comes in the mail, is that what...?

A: Right.

Q: Okay, I just want to clarify that.

A: Yeah, there's a lot...lot of different little tactics that go into pricing milk. Some areas of the country don't pay trucking costs. And there's premiums, and this and that. So, there's a lot of add-ons after the base price. When you take all those into consideration, the Midwest is actually better off than the Northeast is as far as the price they actually...the farmer actually receives for a hundredweight of milk.

Q: Have you ever been asked to become a spokesperson to Connecticut's Congressional Delegation about this?

A: I've spoken several times to...at the legislature on behalf of agriculture, mainly in regards to the...the Farmland Preservation Program. I have also spoken in regards to the Compact and so I have spoken to the....

Q: Sam Gedjensen?

A: Yes. As a matter of fact, this afternoon a couple of farmers and I are meeting with a...one of the Governor's Aides and we're trying to push forward the funding of the bonding of Farmland Preservation. So it's an ongoing process. I belong to a group called **Very Alive** which is a group of dairy farmers and ag business people that banded together to try and enhance Connecticut Agriculture to show...demonstrate the business aspects of it and the contributions we make to the State's economy. We held a bus tour a couple of weeks ago and we went around the Lebanon/Franklin area. I think the route was in the neighborhood of ten miles. We drove by thirty-three agricultural operations. Even to my surprise, living right here in town, we asked each operation how many jobs they had and we came up with over a thousand jobs. To us, that was quite impressive.

There were all people who were one hundred per cent agricultural employees.

Q: Oh, the kinds of...of skills it took to do their business? These are the kinds of jobs they had, a thousand jobs?

A: There were a thousand agricultural related jobs.

Q: Okay.

A: You know, we have some large employers. We have Prides Corner Farm and Nursery,

they have well over two hundred employees. We have several large poultry operations

which have a large amount of employees. Then there is Blue Slope which is a trucking,

hauling of milk and agriculture products. They have thirty employees. The **Cann** Tractor, eighteen of their staff derive their income totally from agriculture. We have

ten

employees. You start going around to all these operations and add them up and there was over a thousand jobs directly related to agriculture on that tour. And that's just

one

loop.

Q: Very interesting way to present it.

A: Yes. I...like I say, it impressed us. You know, we live right here and we never even looked at it that way. And you multiply that by a simple factor of a modest twenty-five thousand dollar a year annual income and you've got twenty-five million dollars a

year going into the economy of Con...of Lebanon and Franklin. Just on that route, that's not all of Lebanon or all of Franklin. That's over twenty-five million dollars a year going into the local economy.

Q: What did your wife think about going into this aspect of life?

A: Oh, she supports me. She's not a farm girl and she...she doesn't really get...she doesn't get involved with the farm but she appreciates it. She enjoys the, you know, she enjoys the land, etc. She can support it.

Q: Have you had any other connections in town since you've been here? On any kinds of commissions or boards or...? One person said well we have been before the Zoning and Planning Board quite a few times but not as a member only as a person trying to get something heard, you know.

A: I am a member of the local Planning and Zoning Commission. I've been a member for close to eighteen years now. I'm active on the Plan and Development Committee that was just...We wrote the Plan and Development for the town of Lebanon which was an interesting process. The group was made up of a cross section of different members of the community and we were one of the few towns in the state to have section of the plan developed devoted to agriculture. And it was not at my...at my personal encouragement. It was...it was done by the other members of the Board. They really recognize the importance of agriculture to their town and support agriculture. It was a real rewarding experience to be on a Commis...a group of people that were so enthusiastic about agriculture.

Q: Have you had any connection with the Farm Bureau?

A: Yes. I've...well I belong to the Farm Bureau and actually that's who I would go, who I've testified for quite a few times before the State Legislature. And, I'm active now on several committees that are working towards enhancing Farmland Preservation and agriculture. I'm active on a Save the Land Committee which is...which is organized by a group of people that is interested in the future of agriculture. I just became a member of the Quinnebaug-Shetucket Heritage Corridor. I'm on their Board of Directors and they've taken agriculture as a prime...as one of their targeted areas that they want to enhance in this coming year. So there's an awful lot going on. I see a ground swell, really, of people that have recognized that we have to do something to maintain this industry which is so important to our quality of life, and at the same time, is a business that has important economic impact to the...to the state and to rural Connecticut.

Q: Are there particular business skills that you've seen that you've transferred from your other business to this business that you think are...are more important than others?

A: The actual dairy business. I don't know if they are skills but I think I had a real advantage on the farm of not being from a farm background. I didn't have any preconceived ideas and I didn't have any...another generation telling me how I should be...should or shouldn't be...shouldn't be doing it. So, I was totally on my own and I was able to take advantage of a number of seminars. I joined the Northeast Dairy Producers Association which is a group of dairy farmers based in New York. They have farm tours and seminars and...and that's where I really had my eyes opened onto what the potential for farming, dairy farming in particular, could be. That was a turning point in how I viewed agriculture and the dairy business. The business skills I think they were definitely an advantage. I...I...I have a lot of respect for dairy farmers. I think they have a lot of...they're very intelligent and they have excellent business skills. I certainly wasn't one up on them in the business skill department. I've been involved in promoting agriculture and as I've mentioned, these various groups and, Very Alive. That has been a real advantage I think, my business background. I was a Promotion Director...I did the promotions for the mall where we're located for ten or twelve years. So, I really had an understanding of public relations and advertising and promotion in general. That's been a real asset as far as...as far as working to promote agriculture.

Q: What do you think's been your greatest satisfaction of what you've been doing?

A: I really enjoy the business of agri...farming. I enjoy the land. I like land. I like owning land. And, the daily business is exciting. It's a real exciting business that...there's not a day goes by where there's not something new. We're always looking to the future. We're constructing new buildings all the time, growing the business and...and looking for new solutions. We try some things, they work and some things they don't. We're not afraid to discard what doesn't work. It's...it's...and my son will agree with me, we talk about it. It's just an exciting business. We...we really enjoy it. There's so many aspects of it. The cropping, we enjoy...it's almost like an art in a way. We enjoy how...how things look. We enjoy making...designing the facilities. We enjoy laying out fields on a contour which worked...has a side benefit as far as we're concerned. Well, the main benefit of conserving the soils from erosion, etc. But we just plain like looking at it.

Q: What's been maybe your greatest frustration if any?

A: I...I...I get real frustrated when I see a town like Lebanon. When we moved here there was thirty plus active dairy farms and today there's eleven. I know that in a few years there'll probably be three or four, maybe six. And that's a frustration to me to see the number of agricultural businesses dwindle. I think the biggest frustration is the fact that you'd like to buy this land and you know you really can't afford it.. It's...it's hard and...and you know that the value it places on the local community and indeed the state as a whole. And, it's real frustrating to see a Governor...an administration like we have and the Governor's office like now, right now, has no...not a clue of what agriculture is about and won't take the initiative to try and understand what it's all

about and is totally negative to agricultural programs. Like I said, when I...when you know that these programs are such a benefit to the residents of Connecticut as a whole, and know what...and he's totally blind to it, that's my biggest frustration. (Tape interruption.)

Q: What do you think prompts...would be the most compelling...I don't want to say argument but yes, point to make to a community decision maker about maintaining farms and agriculture in their locale?

A: I think that point could be made on...from several...several different points of view, actually. First of all, as I've already mentioned, there is...there is the direct economic impact from agriculture in the jobs that are created and also the money that goes into the local economy. Farmers traditionally might not be the richest people in the world but an awful lot of money passes through their hands on an annual basis. That money for the most...for the largest part, stays right in the local community, in the community and indeed, the state of Connecticut. So that's one important point. Another important point is the quality of life issue. I think it's relevant, not only to the community but, to the state as a whole. We take it for granted just the simple things; where you take walks; where you...when you want to go for a ride whether it be a car or bicycle or motorbike or whatever it might be, you...for the most part people take those excursions into the country. They don't through downtown Hartford for a Sunday afternoon ride. I think that's a very relevant issue of what kind of state we want to live in. The...the environmental issues are very real also. You know, the fresh air and the oxygen replenishment, etc., that comes from agriculture and forests, etc. Very real and very important to the quality of life that we enjoy is the fact that we produce fresh food you know, market food, orchards, etc.. That's very important to the quality of life that we enjoy when you can go out on Sunday afternoon or whatever day and buy...purchase fresh apples or maple syrup or whatever product at a farmers market. That's all part of our quality of life. From an economic point of view for a town, it's a proven fact that houses don't help your tax base and I think municipalities need to understand that. That when you have a house, you're typically you're going to spend much more in services than the...than the taxes that are generated from that property. Whereas land in open space and agriculture, for every dollar contributed, it...it...it requires about a third of that in services. While for every dollar that's contributed by a typical residence, you're going to require an additional third in services. So if you collect a dollar, you're probably going to spend in excess of a dollar thirty for services needed. Every dollar collected from agriculture, you're going to require like thirty...in the neighborhood of thirty some odd cents in services. So that's an important issue and that's what...an issue the towns need to understand. So you have the quality of life which is very important. You have the economics. You have the jobs that are created. You have the money that goes into the community and these all are very important reasons. Of course, the ecological reasons are very reasons to maintain a viable agriculture in Connecticut.

Q: I'm going to play devil's advocate for a minute. Back in the '50's our legislature changed from two representatives for every town to being based on population. So in today's environment with a primarily urban legislature, why should they care?

A: They should care because we don't live in a microcosm. We live in the whole state and because you live in...in New Britain or Bridgeport, it doesn't mean you can't or shouldn't enjoy what the whole state has to offer. I think that's the issue that has to...need to be got across, that we're all in this together and we need to...we all have benefits and we all...we all have our problems but agriculture is an important part of what make Connecticut a desirable place to live. I think that, you know, as the state comes to, if the state wants to attract new businesses, etc., whatever they might be, high-tech or whatever, people move to an area because of the quality of life. And...and that's a proven fact that the high growth areas of the country are around areas where there is a perceived quality of life benefit. The Rocky Mountains, the west coast, whatever it might be. New England and certainly Connecticut, we have that quality of life to offer but it's made up of that fabric of...of all parts of what makes Connecticut unique. That...that includes agriculture, it includes our coast, it includes our...the "ops" that we have to offer, it includes the benefits of the cities, the universities, etc., but its' that total fabric that makes it unique and we need to maintain the total fabric.

Q: One of the pieces I've found is that we have the situations of a small state, our proximity between rural and urban is so close. Even during the industrial revolution, people could commute back and forth very easily and that this was an advantage. Now it's one of the issues facing it, agriculture, because of the interface. But, basically having it close was always an advantage before. It provided a market for production and it also provided places for people to live. Either, whatever their choices were, urban or rural. And that it wasn't 'cause they had to, it's what they chose to do. Can you just talk about finally, what you see as the future?

A: The future of agriculture? It's changing. You can see a more of a concentration of...of farm. You can see larger farms, I believe. Not to say there's not a...there's going to be small farms too. There's going to be part-time and there's going to be smaller farms but there are going to be larger farms. That's a real challenge. It's a challenge for our business in this town, operating an expanding dairy business. We have to be very sensitive to our neighbors. So that's a major issue. But, agriculture is going to be changing. I think the real challenge like I've said before, is to maintain that land base. That's the challenge that faces us all right now.

Q: Thank you so very, very much. Is there anything else you'd like to add. Anything that's tickled your fancy?

A: No, I think you've...

Q: Okay, wonderful. Thank you so very much.

(Tape interruption.)

We're were going...oops, wait a minute, we need the unit on. We're going to talk more about agriculture.

A: Yeah. I think an important misconception is that people don't view agriculture as a business with a future. They view it as a business with a lot of elderly ownership and indeed a lot of the land is owned by older...an older generation. But the fact is that there's an awful lot of youth that's involved in agriculture. On my farm in particular, my son, he's in his late twenties. Our herdsman is in his early twenties, college educated, very interested in agriculture and enjoys...enjoys working in agriculture. We have people right in town here...there's a farm down the road where the operator is in his early thirties. He's in a situation where the farm is owned by four brothers who were his uncles and grand uncles and grandfather. The estate is a big mess. It's a perfect example where the Farmland Preservation Program could help a fella like that stay in agriculture and purchase the farm. The farm across the street from his is another young fellow in his late twenties who's started a dairy farm and he's milking fifty cows there. A few miles down the road we have another fellow in his mid-thirties who...who has started a dairy milking around forty cows. He won the highest quality milk award in the State of Connecticut this year. And right around the corner from him is another farm where the fella's...the owner is twenty-two years old and has purchased the farm from his...he was able to work out an arrangement and purchased the farm from his grandfather. So there's a real nucleus of youth that's involved in agriculture and that's...I've highlighted just a small example.

Q: It takes a lot of preplanning of these people who are getting out or aging to be able to do that because of the tax problems.

A: That's exactly right. It takes good estate planning so you can transfer the farm from one generation to the next. I think that's an area that we need to address. We need to educate farmers on what the options are and the fact that selling the land for development isn't necessarily all the...always the most profitable.

Q: How long is the pro...is the process...let's just say, once you sign up for the Farmland Preservation, how long does the process take?

A: Right now, it's very slow 'cause they're simply not bonding any money. Right now we have eight million dollars that's been appropriated by the State Legislature but is not being bonded. It comes before the Bond Commission and it...it...and the Bond Commission is not...just not putting it on the agenda. So there's a real political holdup there. So it's taking a...it takes...We put a farm in and it went through the approval process. It took us well over a year before we were able to see the...after is was approved to get the...have the transaction finalized.

- Q: Do you have any idea, is the block in the Bonding Commission because of other priorities for money or other priorities hidden or open for land use?
- A: I really can't answer that. I do think that agriculture is not a priority program for them...or the present administration. I think that's where the real problem is.
- Q: One final question that came to me while you were talking; where does your help come from if it's not these young men you've talked about? Your help is...is diverse.
- A: Right, we do have quite a diverse labor force. We have...currently we have three Spanish employees that constitute half of our milking staff. The other half is part-time local people. The...
- Q: A lot of farmers have talked about how hard it is to hire help.
- A: It's very hard to hire help. It's hard to find...to find the adequate staff for these daily...
(End of side one, end of tape.)