It’s June 18, 1999, Luane Lange interviewing Dr. Irving Fellows, a retiree from the College of Agriculture.

Dr. Fellows, would you start by telling us where you were born please?

I was born in Guildhall, Vermont and had my early school training and high school training in that area.

And were you born on a farm?

Yes. A dairy farm that was located in the Connecticut River Valley. We had a small dairy unit at the time but through time the herd increased from eight cows about to forty.

At that time, was that considered a large herd?

At that time, that was quite a large herd.

What kind of chores did you have when you were growing up on this dairy farm?

Well, I was very active in the farm activities. The herd itself required feeding and cleaning the stables and milking and so forth. I participated in that and in the harvesting of the hay for the animals. We also got some grain from the farm by planting oats. In those days, we took the oats to a mill nearby to be ground up. They added certain protein ingredients to make a more balanced diet for the cows. This was then taken home and fed to the herd.
Q: Did you go to school nearby?
A: Yes. A little bit of mix-up, although I'm in Vermont, I was on a farm and there was no town or anything there. The nearest town was Lancaster, New Hampshire. The high school I went to was in Lancaster, New Hampshire.

Q: What kind of school was it?
A: Oh, it was terrific. It was a well-developed school in all ways and especially in the teaching program. We had outstanding people teaching. It had been a special school in the area.

Q: It was like a bridge between high school and college, like the College of Agriculture used to be, here, years ago?
A: That's right.

Q: Where did you go to elementary school?
A: In Guildhall, Vermont.

Q: How did you get to and from school?
A: Oh, the family took us. Either by car in the spring and summer or in fall, winter by horse and sleigh.

Q: How many classmates did you have?
A: My class was thirty-six people when we graduated.

Q: So you went all from elementary school all the way up through high school in Guildhall?
A: I have misled you. I went to early school in Vermont in a little one-room grade school with one teacher. There might have been twenty children in there.

Q: And then when you went to high school, is that when you went to Lancaster in New Hampshire?
A: Yes, I went to Lancaster for high school.

Q: Okay. When did you make a decision to go on to college?
A: In 1936, I had completed my high school training in that year and my family encouraged me to go on to college. I went in 1937.

Q: You came to the College of Agriculture as a student?
A: Yes.

Q: Had anyone else in your family...do you have brothers and sisters?
A: Several brothers and sisters. The sisters had college training. They had what was called "normal" schools, and they went into teaching primarily from the normal school.

Q: Had your parents gone to school beyond high school or into high school?
A: No they hadn’t.

Q: Did anyone stay on the farm with your family?
A: Yes. One of my sisters married before I came back to Vermont from Connecticut education. She and her husband took over the farm at that time.

Q: All right let’s go back to you at Connecticut Agricultural College. (Yes.) When you graduated, where was your first job?
A: I graduated in 1937. It was difficult to find a job at that time. So, I enrolled at the University of Connecticut to earn a Master’s degree in agriculture economics in 1940. I was then hired by USDA and stationed in the Northeast region with headquarters in Upper Darby, Pennsylvania. The northeast region was the six New England states, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland and West Virginia.

Q: And what did you do?
A: I was sent to any state in the region to assist the local agricultural economics department on agricultural economic problems and to stimulate food production for the war effort. We were trying to improve the profitability and satisfaction of dairy farming and so I worked in that area for the first several years before the war...war came on.

Q: And were there other people in your department working with you?
A: Yes. We were part of a team for the U.S. Department of Agriculture and there were several...there were two other men representing other States and areas there at the time I represented the Northeastern States. I had an area from Pennsylvania up through all of the States along with the other men.
Q: Oh, boy. And so then what was your job...what did you do with the information you were...how did you distribute it or how did you collect it and then distribute it?

A: Well, we had different problems to help solve. We were stationed at Upper Granby, Pennsylvania. Individuals would be assigned a problem in the regional area. When that happened we would go to that area and set up a home (I was married at the time we lived there) until we had covered that problem and then we were sent somewhere else.

Q: And so how often did you move?

A: Probably once every three years.

Q: Was your wife from a farm family?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you meet her in college?

A: Yes.

Q: What was her training?

A: Let me think, high school plus about a year in WPA obtaining secretarial training in New Haven. She was working in the Farm Management Office when I met her.

Q: How long were you at USDA before...when did you come to UConn as a faculty member?

A: On the staff?

Q: Yes.

A: Can I take a minute to think?

Q: Of course. You were at USDA. Did you come directly from USDA to Connecticut? How many years were you at USDA?

A: Probably eight years.

Q: Now you mentioned the war. Did the war make any difference in what you were doing?

A: Oh, yes very much. The Federal Government had problems that they wanted to help solve as far as food was concerned. They had a motto at that time, "Food will win the war and write the peace." (Oh.) That was an attitude that they would to sell to
people on farms. We were out there trying to increase food production if at all possible. That was difficult because men were being pulled from the labor force on farms into the war effort. So, one of our first jobs was to convince the dairy farmers and other food producers that they could, by improving their operation techniques, continue to get the volume of food we needed, in fact, to increase it. And, that happened.

Q: Very interesting.
A: “Food will win the war and write the peace.” It was a nice little statement and had a great deal of truth in it.

Q: How was food distributed once it was produced? Were there differences in the way it was distributed because of the war?
A: Not really, not really. The ecosystem had already been developed to handle various kinds of products but they did simplify it. Instead of having ten organizations helping to move milk from the farm to the consumer, they might cut it down to five or six.

Q: What decided you to go from straight dairy to economics?
A: Well, I...I enjoyed dairying very much on the farm but when I saw that there was...are things that could be done to be far more efficient than the farmers who were...who were operating tended to do what their fathers taught them. And the Extension Service was getting active and so we saw that there was an opportunity here to improve efficiency in dairying. That was one of our tasks to go out to the area of dairy farmers and demonstrate that opportunities existed to improve the...the production and income and then we told them what steps could be taken.

Q: How did you happen to come back to Connecticut to be on the staff? After the war?
A: After the war, yeah.

Q: Then how did you end up back here?
A: Well, for a few years there was a...the USDA was going from State to State and helping to improve the production efficiency. But this meant many moves to my wife and myself. We would just get a place and live there for three months and then have to move somewhere else and that didn’t agree with our attitudes so we took up an opportunity to join the staff here at UConn. I was very pleased to do that because I had taken my work here and she had taken her study here. So it was like coming home.

Q: Did you do teaching and Extension? Research and Ec...what was your split of your job?
A: It...actually the work was primarily research and Extension and that was what I did originally. But when I came on the staff for a while then I added teaching as well.
I would say research and teaching was the...was the largest proportion and then very little Extension from then on.

Q: Who were your...who were some of the key people that you associated with when you came back to Connecticut to do this work? Did you work with people in other agricultural areas? Did you work primarily with other people in the faculty and staff here? What kind of associations did you have?

A: My work dictated that I associate with other members of the department here, the Department of Agricultural Economics, but then there was the importance of extending our information so that after a brief period, we brought extending our activities out into the countryside as well.

Q: And how did you do that?

A: Well, I was...I was split three ways; research, Extension and teaching. However, initially I...I did no teaching so it was two and then we went three after several years.

Q: Well, when you....there were more field faculty out there at that time in agriculture so it did...you worked with agents out in the field?

A: Oh, yes. Yes, there were...all Counties had County Agents and then several of them had secondary Specialists.

Q: Out in the County?

A: Out in the County.

Q: Did you work with the Department of Agriculture at the State?

A: Oh, yes.

Q: What kind of connections were there to that?

A: Well, we were...one thing we did on a regular basis was to take...kind of take a picture of agriculture in the State of Connecticut and one thing that I produced over a period of many years was this form which, if you look at the first page there it shows trends and then kind of describes agriculture in the State at that time. This was produced every year. As far as research is concerned, we had...I had specific problems that need to be attacked in order to improve the Extension program. And so one of the big ones that I worked on, was the technology changes in the harvesting of forage for dairy cows. Initially, it used to be very simple. You’d cut the hay and let it dry and then you took the horses and went out in the field and brought it into the barn and then you fed it. But a whole series of technological changes occurred in that period. First of all, tractors pretty much took over for horses.
Q: What years would those have been? I’ve been just looking at some old pictures and I have people with plows and horses and walking and then I have horses and the people with the pitchforks haying and then I have trucks pulling wagons haying that someone must have cut and then I’ve got tractors. So, when did this transition take place?

A: Well, the big impact of tractors was post-war. They were introduced earlier but when they came... when the war was over the number of farms had dropped materially during the war and the larger people had to... had to tool up with the new technology. Instead of horses, tractors.

Q: Did they buy up... did the other farms get abandoned or sold and then some farms got bigger or were they just left fallow during the war?

A: Well, it was some of them... all of those things you mentioned. But primarily it was a... a farmer would take over his neighbor in several directions. It’s just small... small operators and they would go off and work off the farm and the land would be purchased or used by the farmer who was expanding with this new technology of tractors.

Q: Or they could lease it to the... some...?

A: Or they could lease it, yes.

Q: So these... when they brought the tractors in...

A: Very dynamic impact was the tractor because first of all it was expensive. You could only afford one if you had a big business and then the tractor was able to do many, many things. It could even... oh, it could do any of the field work that horses were involved in but then it could plow and harrow and plant corn you know, in rows and a whole... a whole looming technology was swept into the situation because the tractor was so efficient and the output was high. But that didn’t... one thing, you had to be bigger than you were when you had horses. You had to be two to three time bigger in order to afford the tractor and it’s costly equipment that went with it.

Q: Did they grow less hay then for... ’cause they had fewer horses to feed?

A: Yes.

Q: So they could have changed their... did their crops change?

A: Yes, but primarily it was hay and corn silage and then the... the change came that hay was hard to cure. You cut it and let it dry and the rain got it before you could get it in usually. So, eventually corn silage dominated the roughage that the animal, the cow or an animal needed. This... this animal is a ruminant and she can... she can cope and live
on roughage and it used to be a small farm the roughage would be hay. But then when
the tractor came, we moved into corn...field corn to make silage. The cow could cope
with that too because of it’s being a ruminant and it was much easier to...to get a good
quantity of TDM, that’s Total Digestible Nutrients into the animal with corn rather
than hay because hay if it gets wet, loses a lot of it’s beneficial characteristics.

Q: So there was also research going on the food, the TDM, with...with the animals also at
the same time that the tractor was coming in. There was other research going on with
...with the food required for the animals?

A: Um hmm. Um hmm.

Q: Interesting. Well, then when you did that...after that research, where did you go next
‘cause wherein some of this research came from the needs of the farmers and some of
it was your own idea. How did you...I want to jump to how you got to the...the farm
development rights ‘cause I know you were the father of a lot of that work.

A: Yes.

Q: We’re jumping quite a few years there aren’t we? But that’s all right. Yeah.

A: The jump was there...

Q: You can talk about the little hops in between if you want to but...

A: Well, we...we learned how to...to cope with the horse problem, the manpower
problem on the farm and the introduction of new technology. These all came together
and required a lot of imagination and change on the part of farm operators. They had
to get rid of their horses and this was...

Q: Become mechanics. They had to learn...

A: They had to become mechanically inclined yeah. The horses left some land that they
needed to live on to somebody else and so they...if you have a new tractor and no
horses, more land is available and you start increasing the size of the dairy herd. So
the tractor technology was...was crucial and very dynamic. As these machines were
perfected, they could be...they could do most anything. The early tractors could
only...only...were big and awkward and heavy and they could only do plowing and
harrowing...which is a difficult job but the newer tractors after some adaptations, were
very flexible. They could do most anything and they could...you could cultivate with
them, hoeing down rows. They were on rubber tires which didn’t damage the...the
earth as much. The tractor was saddled with machines hanging on it or pulling it. It
became a...a key...keystone to the changes that occurred in agriculture and it...it swept
the...the whole country. You know, not only the dairy farms in Connecticut but also
even more so in the west. All the land was plowed, harrowed, seeded, harvested by tractors.

Q: So...and what differences did our soil conditions and our rocks make to the use of this?

A: Yeah. That’s a very...a very good observation. The small farm with rocks and poor location simply disappeared. They went out of the business and the larger farms were a combination of the best land of the small ones plus the home farm to begin with and they then would buy farmers next door. This is pretty dynamic here. We had...we had twenty-two thousand (22,000) farms in ’44. ’54 it had been cut almost in half. I can’t read the...’64 it was down to...

Q: A quarter almost. Six thousand (6,000).

A: Yeah. ’74 was three thousand (3,000)...

Q: Then it leveled off there. (Yeah.) And then between ’78 and ’82, it even went up.

A: It’s staying just about there now although we’re somewhat lower than that but not much. That is the...an incredible technological change.

Q: It took less manpower. (Yeah.) Which was happening at the same time. Now, you wonder which came first, the chicken or the egg. Like after the war, did people not want to come back to farms?

A: Well, there was that because manufacturing was making change as well and so the farmers couldn’t depend on a particular group of people that would hire...you could hire. Getting the workers and training them was...was difficult but there was enough carryover usually from the periods before so that the...the fewer needs of...of hired men were met and the farms, although there are fewer their production is greater.

Q: Oh yeah, because what you’ve got here is the value of the farm products in millions of dollars. (Looking at a publication) Does this, corrected with...with inflation

A: No, I haven’t...no.

Q: All right. So, 1944 was ninety-six million (dollars) and in 1982 it was two hundred and eighty-five million (dollars). So, you’ve got fewer farms producing more things.

A: Yeah, but if you wanted to, it could be corrected for value of the dollar.
Q: Very interesting. So then...so then...go on with the road to your...your...the work you did when you went from that kind of development after the war of preparing farmers to have different methods. Then what did you do next as your major area?

A: Well, they had to change methods, as you said, and drastically. So there was an Extension problem there of teaching them how to cope with the new...new developments. And that has been a real major adjustment that dairy...all farmers have made. You'd see this same number reduction of farms in...throughout the entire country. Especially in an area where...New England area, where there were alternatives that farmers could go to. They could stop farming and go work in a factory and a lot of that occurred.

Q: I was reading something from an old Experiment Station bulletin in 1935, that at that time two-thirds of our farms were part-time farms and we've had a long history of part-time farms. And someone, I don't remember who wrote it but it was suggested that it was...part of the reasons was that we were in such close proximity to towns and mills and industries. They had the defense industry and so on and so people had the choice of living in a rural area, living on a farm and then also working off the farm.

A: Correct.

Q: Whereas out in the midwest you couldn't...you weren't in such close proximity that you could do that.

A: That's true.

Q: So then what happened? So what's some of the other work that you did then? You were showing (the interviewer a publication) farm and home development in Connecticut and....

A: This is a...this is a product that I produced and it won a second prize in an annual judgement of...of literature for farmers. This is called, "Farm and Homeplanning," because we realized there had to be home adjustments as well as the farm adjustments. So we tried to teach these people how to evaluate the problem, how to find a problem and once you found the problem, then how do you solve that problem. And all of the technology that you see today came along in about a forty-year period. I told you about the tractor being a fundamental change but there had to be a coordinated change in the management of the herd at milking, too. Because where before they used to have twelve or fifteen cows to milk morning and night, now they have fifty to a hundred and they have some problems. And that...the milking process was subjected to many changes to the point nowadays that we have a farm down here in Lebanon that milks five hundred and fifty cows morning, noon and night.

Q: Which one is that? Is that Cushman?
A: Cushman, yeah. Nate...Nate was a student of mine, Nate Cushman.

Q: I haven’t talked to him yet but I plan to.

A: Okay. He should...he’s a very, very capable man and he understands the flow of these problems because we worked together here at...in the department to teach farmers how to cope with change, technological change particularly.

Q: How did...how did the wife fit into this as far as farm management went?

A: Well, we tried to...we recognized a severe problem there. The wife and the family had to make adjustments as the farm changed and this was one of my objects here was to...to show her that she had alternatives, too, that the house and children or problems shouldn’t be just thrown away or forgotten. We had to solve problems there and that brought about greater importance in the area of the home...home problems.

Q: I was reading a book, “Mixed Harvest,” and it talks about this century being the third great transition which was the whole consumerism piece. When everything became a cash crop or you bought things. They called the whole agricultural movement in this century a consumer issue which I thought was very interesting. So what you’re saying is that they were using their home consumerism and the nation was going into more products and buying things. (Uh, hmm.) What about the women...I talked to one farm family and the man said, “You talk to her about that because I take care of the outdoors and all the...like the herd and the land. She manages all the books.” They were almost partners in a business.

A: Yes, yes. Very much so.

Q: Did you find that often?

A: Of the superior ones, yes. The man that was not considerate of the impact upon his family was not doing a good job and we tried to bring that to his attention. This was...I got that...you may have that if you wish (indicating a publication).

Q: Yes, thank you.

A: And this was...was one of our publications here but the Federal Government utilized parts of it in their...in their work with people.

Q: Now, I noticed about ten years a...maybe shorter than that, where we had a computer workshop here for farm management and how many couples came in together to attend the computer workshop on farm recordkeeping. And I thought, “There is the woman again, coming in with her husband to look at other ways of keeping farm records.”
A: Well, in order to have a happy family, we have to have an understanding between the wife and children and the husband and children. They have to understand what's going on on the farm because their life is based upon that. We...we tried to show them...

Q: So even within...even within the farm family, those people who are part-time farmers and so on, the fact that it's a business (and now people are saying more that it's a business) there's always that tension between living on the farm and having...having a farm life, the farm business and the two the way they fit.

A: Well, that's the...that's nicely stated. You...you put it in very fine words.

Q: Well, I guess I want to go back to...did you find cases where the wife actually kept the farm business books?

A: Oh, yes. Yes, we...in fact, working with them with our account book system. We...the Extension had a program that taught farmers how to keep records. And that was taught to the man and the wife, not to just the man, because oftentimes, she was the one that kept the records rather than he. But we insisted that there be an understanding of what was going on here on this production unit. The farm contributed the...the material to sell and get income, but that income was used by the farm family for their lifestyle.

Q: So, then when did you move off more into looking at this change of land and the fact that the lands were being brought up by other...?

A: Well, if you...you saw the number of farms there...

Q: And this publication was...was from 1987, '86, '87, okay.

A: Uh hum. I think...

Q: The trends piece was '86, '87.

A: I don't think there is any more than that. I retired and they didn't keep this going. But this too was...

Q: This one was in '56. So tell me about the farm development rights. Buying development rights. What year did you start that, do you remember?

A: Farm areas for farming...the good land was good for building houses and so many of the bigger farms when the operator got old he decided he'd cash in on...on his holdings and he would sell to a builder for...to take care of the housing problem.
And we were losing many of our better farms unfortunately.

Q: On good soil because it was cleared and...and...not rocky or ledge or whatever else?

A: They could go right in and start building and they were doing it. We were trying to preserve agriculture in an urban area. This is a little flyer that I produced that was trying to tell people that farming was more than just what they put on the table; it contributed greatly to the quality of life and we were losing some very fine land to houses. So I put on a real drive to see if we could alter the program and make...make it easier for farmers to keep their farms because the taxing at that time was based on the...the value of the farm.

Q: As a farm?

A: As...no...well, no. As a...as a unit thing sitting there. It's a farm, yes but it has a...it had great value for...for housing.

Q: How was it taxed?

A: It was taxed according to the market value of it.

Q: The market value?

A: That's right. So, if you owned a farm and you inherited it from you family and it was in a lovely area as far as agriculture is concerned and it's near a little town, it would be picked up quite often by someone who wants to build houses there and you want me to...?

Q: No, that's...go ahead, it's almost to the end.

A: So that was the problems that we were having. Our good land was being swept away because the builder can pay more for that than the adjacent farmer. And good land in good areas were being swept into development. So we saw the problem and we tried to do the best we could.

Q: About what years did you start working on this? In the '70's?

A: Yes, late '70's, late '70's.

Q: And there was no other legislation in this State. Was there legislation in other States at that time?

A: No, no. We were one of the first two States and in the Northeast Region was one of the first Regions to see the problem and do something about it.
And it's right up to date now. In fact, there's very, very strong pressure to put anything on a good...good land. We have some that have gone into golf courses.

Q: So what kind of research did you have to do to start setting up this program and what did it take to get the legislation passed?

A: We had to show the movement out of agriculture to development and we had to show the fact that the farmer...the taxation in our method of taxing was...was encouraging it because we had ad valorem tax base. It was how much is the land worth and...

Q: On the open market?

A: ...on the open market and we will tax you that much.

Q: Even while it was being used as a farm?

A: Um hmm.

Q: So farmers could be paid...paying a lot.

A: Oh, yes. Their tax bills were driving them off the farm so we had to come up with something, again the Federal Government was working with us on this problem. We are in the Northeast Region so we had meetings regularly and one of the things that happened was, I'll give you this bulletin if you wish, "Preserving Agriculture in an Urban Region - Northeast Regional Research Project No. 90." And this covered the Northeast area so that there's a man here writing for his particular area so we put this out at Cornell but my...my contribution is on page 16 and I guess, 16, 17, 18, 20, or something like that. It must be four pages. Sixteen. Okay, I start here, "Government Acquisition," and we go several pages. Summary is on page 20. (Okay.) So rather than take the time now and be superficial...

Q: So this group of people went into it and covered different topics. Part of it, for example, the one was tax policy; one was how districts could facilitate the saving of land. One was zoning and then yours was on government acquisition and the other one was special development controls. Um hmm. So you became the known person in government acquisition and it wasn't that the government was buying it, it was how they were going to support it in other ways?

A: That's right.

Q: So, do you want to talk about that a little bit?
A: Yes. Historically, the value of a farm or property owned by anybody is taxed according to its market value and that has come down from England and we adopted it here as we grew as a country. For years and years, it didn’t make hardly any difference because the demand for land stayed approximately the same. A little bit here for building and towns but the big areas were in agriculture. And then all of a sudden that changed greatly. After World War II, development began to be extremely active and they could outbid a local farmer for adjacent land that he might want and so this...this book was...shows how we can hedge that...that fall of land into ..or farmland into non-farmland use.

Q: After the Depression, when there was a lot of vacant land, abandoned land, the State and Federal Government bought up land for parks and so on?

A: Correct.

Q: This plan that you came up with was how to temper the...the ability of it...for the taxation and the purchase rights of farmland by having the government step in and do something beside buying it outright.

A: Correct.

Q: So how did you come up with this? Where...was this something that you had been exposed to, did you put it together in your own head? What pieces came together to...to point you in the direction of having the State...is the State Government doing it not the Feds? The State Government is now, if I understand this right, a farmer can decide that they will sell so much of their land for development rights and they agree then to keep it in farmland and the State pays so much, the difference between market val...? Can you explain it better than I am?

A: No, no. You have it down. There is a market value for land at all times and the market values reflects development for non-farm purposes as well as farm purposes. So what we wanted to do was to take away the opportunity to develop the land for non-farm purposes. The builders can buy...can pay much more than a farmer can for adjacent land or he would sell his own land if...much higher than living on a farm. So we investigated the legality of the technique and we found that you could separate what land is, into several parts. You could separate the right to develop land and to use it as a farm or to use it for any other purpose. Those...the development rights then are...are available and the State has the right to step in and buy the development rights, separate them from the rights to farm the farm. This goes back to our, I comment on this a little bit, but to our English legal system. We...we took over the English system of...of farm rights from England and meaning farm rights and any other rights. And we can separate them. You can go in and buy the right to develop that land and pay the farmer so many dollars and he will sell that to continue using his farm as a farm.
Q: And agree to not get the larger price for that land.
A: That's right.

Q: Or he agrees to keep it for so many years and then he can sell it?

A: I think...I think you can. Oh, I don't...I don't think I can answer that definitively. I...yeah, yes...yes I can. Once you sell the development rights (in CT), nobody can develop it. So that's forever. And if we do that then we can take a farm out here that's surrounded by somebody that wants to buy some acres to build on, we can take that building opportunity away and you can't build there. So, this is what we worked on in the development rights. I was very careful and thorough in getting the legal atmosphere cleared up on that. Once you have development rights and sell them, they're gone. You cannot develop them.

Q: Now...so when the farmer does sell that land someday, or his family does, with it goes the fact that it is now still to be kept into farmland?

A: Correct.

Q: Where does the money come from?

A: Well, there we ha...well, we get...we get it from the State. We ask the State to pay Mr. Jones X number of dollars for his development rights and then there is a legal transaction that shows that the State owns the development opportunities there and the man owns it to use it for other purposes, primarily farming.

Q: And how did you get the State to agree to this? Were there any politics involved?

A: No, I don't think so. I think the people in the Legislature were worried the way we were to see our best farmland going to development. We pride...pride ourselves on lovely farm vistas and...and farming opportunities and it was the best vistas and the best farming opportunities were being drawn away.

Q: Was there ever any mapping of the State done as to which parts would be the priority areas to save?

A: Yes, we did that. We...we had a big committee on this problem and we found areas in particular Counties, we went by Counties, that were being subjected to at the current time, being subjected to pressure to sell for development. Then we saw if we could get enough support locally and for...and State-wise because the money comes from the State and we would ask the Legislature for X number of dollars to buy development rights on five farms or something like that.
Q: How did you communicate this to the farmers to let them know this became available to do or did the State Department of Agriculture do this? How did this go about?

A: Yeah, the State Department of Agriculture was the one that, in the final facet, was the final one that was doing this work. The College was not doing it. And I worked very diligently with the...the Secretary of Agriculture in Hartford. We were fortunate to have some very well informed people in as the Secretary for quite a few years and he went to bat for us to buy development rights. And then he would apply to the Finance Committee in Hartford for X number of dollars, we’ll say ten million dollars, for the purchase of development rights.

Q: Now, would...would he have applications already in line and that’s what he would ask for or would he ask for a certain ten million dollars and then they would put out the call that...that there was this money available for those who wanted to take part in it?

A: I think it’s a little of both but primarily we were...we were cognizant of the farmers that were under great pressure to sell and some of them went ahead and sold in spite of development rights.

Q: I was wonder...I was going to ask you, what kind of time lapse is there because you know, you have the government system. Sometimes it takes a while for it to actually happen?

A: Well, it took some time to happen but the farmers themselves assisted us, not in...their attitude. They say, “I got this chance to sell my farm here for devel...to a developer. I want it to stay in the family. What...how can we work this out?” And he learned about the development rights and he put a figure on (it) that he wanted and we tried to see if that estimate that he wanted was realistic or not.

Q: I went to a workshop last week on land and there was a speaker there, who I don’t remember at the present time, but he talked about the fact that Connecticut is not...even though we were one of the first to develop this, that New Jersey and other States are actually committing more money to doing this. Why do you think that’s...do you have any idea why that might be happening?

A: I...I really don’t know why it’s happening. The other States have out...out maneuvered us. Not out maneuvered, out achieved us and they’re using the same techniques. (Yeah.) We have some very powerful people that want to use...use the land otherwise and they know the ropes of working with the Legislature a little better than we do, I guess.

Q: Do you know of any States, and I know you...you’ve been retired for a while, but have they changed any of the...of the parts of how to go about doing this? Do other States use...have they adapted the model differently?
A: Yes.

Q: So that it's easier to get money than it is with our model? In other words, our model goes through the Bonding and Finance Committee you said and that committee can decide, even though it's in the regulations to be able to do that, they can at that level stop or approve particular amounts of money. Do other States have different systems where they...they go through a different process to get the money? Maybe they don't have to go through a committee or they have to go through a different way of doing it?

A: I don't think I can...I can answer that. They have different methods and those are discussed in this booklet.

Q: Oh, okay. All right.

A: They have some differences between this...this is put out by Cornell. (Right.) New York has a little bit different program than we do but for the most part it's the difference between market value and the conse...conservation value.

Q: I see here Nelson Bill's name. Now he's at Cornell. I've met him in recent years. At this time, he was working for USDA. (Um hmm.) That's very interesting, very interesting. Okay. Now, let's go back to you...your own particular type of thing. What do you think were some of the best memories you have of...of you time here at UConn? What did you enjoy the most about your...

A: I think I enjoyed most the personal touch of when you are working with a man and you can see that if he has a little luck and he uses the discussion you're talking about that he can improve his lifestyle and the lifestyle of his family. This has always an effect in addition to that as a side effect, you're improving the...the lifestyle for...and conditions in the State as a whole. If you can get just one man to do something and of course, we wanted to get quite a few.

Q: Do you...what about the students you had? You mentioned before that you'd working on certain projects with students and graduate students?

A: Oh, yes. I've had I think, seventeen grad students in my time.

Q: And have any of them gone on, as you recall, into academic work or have they gone off into other directions? Well, I'm sure they've gone into all directions but are there any that you recall particularly, the work that they did?

A: Oh, yes. Many of the people that are working for agricultural...on agricultural problems in the northeastern States are people that we worked with, not all the time myself, but we worked with on this project and the benefits have been considerable.
We were very lucky in having a Chairman of the Agriculture Committee in at the State level, came up through our classes and he knew what was going on and that’s where we got our biggest boost in...in moving land into the development right area. He was...he was dynamic and he knew what was happening and he got a lot of farmland held out.

Q: Which Commissioner was that? Do you remember his name? We can come back to that because I know...I don’t remember names well either. What were some of the key problems that you faced? You can look it up.

A: I was wondering if I could find...
(Tape interruption.)

Q: What do you think were some of the key problems that you had to face as either a teacher or researcher or an Extension-type person?

A: I guess...I guess a problem that we had to...to correct in some way was...or get data out to the people of the State. You see, farming is very small relative to all the other activities in the State of Connecticut. It’s a highly developed State so I...I had to sell it to them. For example, I...I made this one sheet so that a lot of people and a lot of in...this is Connecticut agriculture. Well I say that we grow a lot of food and then I have a few little sentences saying that and I say, “We not only produce food but we have services and goods and services from that activity.”

Q: As an economic impact?

A: Yeah, and then we have the opportunity to alter the water cycle and now that’s getting more and more important every day because we do things to our land and in our buildings in concentrations that cause problems. But I said that with the agriculture you pretty much improve the environment at all times. And then we’d talk about recycling waste because that is being done and although we don’t like it, it has to be done and re...you can recycle with...with very few negatives and some positives as you work with farms. And then down here are the recreational activities and I said, “Now this is what we mean when we talk about agriculture in Connecticut.” Is, we mean this, we just don’t think of just cows and milk and eggs and then...

Q: When do you think you make the transition? It must have come about gradually from working with the dairy industry into land use. It kind of evolved as you saw lack of land and then you...your interest went into how to preserve just the fundamental piece of it.

A: This is exactly what happened to me. I saw that we were losing some very fine land to development and it broke my heart to see a good farm go down the drain. So I tried my best to get...get something done to preserve agriculture in an urban area.
Other States beside Connecticut are faced with exactly the same problem. We happened to be tiny and not much area to go to so if we lose something, it’s gone.

Q: I think that’s why New Jersey has jumped on this...because...

A: Yeah, New Jersey is the same thing.

Q: When I read that or heard that I thought that...that makes sense. You have some other publications there too.

A: This is the final one that I did here, “A Food Production Plan for Connecticut, 1980 to 2000.”

Q: Oh, okay. We’re getting there, aren’t we?

A: Yeah. It simply shows that we can approach these needs of our...not all the needs but a substantial need of our food products for our people that live in Connecticut with wise utilization of land and we have actually followed through by taking each major food group and work with them.

Q: Now, I notice that...that Patrick Cote was your research assistant then. Was he a graduate student?

A: Yes.

Q: What did he do when he went on? Do you remember he may have done?

A: No, I don’t know what happened. I had one man though, that I was so proud of. He...he became worldwide active in helping to solve food problems in India, in other Asian countries, in Egypt and some related countries there. You may had heard of him, oh...my best grad student and I can’t think of his name.

Q: It’ll come back to you. (Hmm.) We’ll add it at the end or you can tell me later and I’ll add it to the transcript again.

A: Yeah. I’ll think of it. Back page...I thought you might...might like this. Oh, another attempt...attempt of this kind, except in more to it. “The Many Faces of Agriculture.” When we talk of agriculture, we’re talking of something more than just milking and dairy products and so on. I got that for you if you wish. We’re trying to show the changes and this shows what’s happened over time. You don’t need to take it...you...

Q: I will take everything because you’re giving me ideas for other things.
A: Well, this was the...you started by saying, “What did you do first?” This is the first bulletin that I ever wrote.

Q: Okay. This is, “Production Efficiency on New England Dairy Farms.” And this was 1952. Okay.

A: That’s the beginning of...it, if you wish it.

Q: “Cost Reduction Opportunities,” that’s what you were talking about. (Yep.) That’s right. Wonderful. Is there anything else you’d like to add about any of your memories of being here on campus or any big changes that you haven’t already talked about? What about changes at the University?

A: Oh, my.

Q: A whole ‘nother tape, right?

A: Yes. Of course, from my standpoint, the changes are outside of agriculture here. It’s...we’ve been able to maintain our level but when the rest of the areas expand why you become a lesser part of the whole. And it’s correct, it should be that way. You see, we started as a...an ag school and added this and than and so on. I can even remember when they added Economics as opposed to Ag Economics and that’s...that’s quite a...quite a big thing to do at a little Co...College of Ag School because we were a primarily an Ag School for years and years. And then rightly so, they blossomed in almost all of the other areas that are relative to living in Connecticut as opposed to expanding, here. We are holding our own and that’s about it.

Q: Well, we’ve had the differences again in technology and in the majors and how they’re...I’m looking at the dairy farms. I haven’t interviewed many of them yet but the dairy farms that have gone into nursery/greenhouse. They’ve kept some land, they’ve sold some land but they can do it with less acreage by doing certain things.

A: It shows up in this...in this trend.

Q: Does it? Okay, all right, in the ’80’s? Okay, all right. Good, all right.

A: And it shows up in this 19...2000 one.

Q: This one?

A: Yeah, that one. That...that shows what we can do.

Q: All right. All right.
A: We don’t have to have a tremendous amount of land.

Q: Just what we have has to be productive land.

A: Yes, it has to be productive land. And as a point, I didn’t know...didn’t emphasize enough, you can build buildings on land that’s not level or that is rocky and so on. It might cost a little more but the...the houses might look better. My son lives in a development area down in...near Washington and they have developed a little community here and here and here and a brook and a lake and so on inbetween. It’s lovely. It’s beautiful. If the builders would be like that, take the land that is not very good or precious for...for agriculture use and put houses there they’ll have a prettier community and just as good as far as their concerned, to operate.

Q: The GIS mapping that they do with the...the rock and the soil and so on, GIS, the information methods that Dan Cifco works with...some of the Extension people are using this with planning commissions and so on where they help them map their community and then the town makes their own decisions; but they point out what it is exactly they’ve got to work with and they’ve got to make a decision whether to save it or use it. And so this mapping thing is becoming a teaching tool for community development. We don’t know where it’s going to go yet, They’ve got all, I think, all these towns mapped now in the State with these maps so maybe...maybe we’ll see some of that happening, I don’t know. Are there any anecdotes you’d like to talk about, any kind of little stories about the College of Agriculture that you remember since coming here?

A: Um hmm.

Q: You haven’t told any personal stories. It’s just sometimes people remember something that happened or an event or something that...that kind of was special in their mind.

A: Well, of course, when I came here the College of Agriculture was a greater portion of the whole than it is now. I remember coming from Vermont, that the field trips we took to go see some farms, both here and in adjacent States were very interesting and very helpful really to broaden your...your mind. The...we enjoyed the field trips.

Q: Someone told me that they used to go out and they would stay overnight at other people’s houses where they were going to do a presentation or work on a project... that they might be invited locally to stay overnight at someone’s home and that’s definitely a different change now, too.

A: Yes, yes. Of course, Connecticut’s a little State. You’ll have to realize that...that for an Extension worker out in Iowa, you’ve got to find a place to stay overnight...
Q: In other States out there, there is even a time change. The State's have two different time zones so you have to plan for that when you’re doing your work and I thought that was amazing. I just couldn’t quite picture that. Yep. Are there any personal friends or friendships that have developed since you’ve been here that stick out in your mind? Colleagues from other States?

A: Oh my yes. Yes, I missed that. We have a Northeast Regional Agricultural Economics meeting. In fact, it’s going to be out in West Virginia in just a few days. Those were highlights as far as I was concerned because we would get to this...it was a land grant college where it was held and you meet people that you have known personally or if you’ve only known by the name under the article or work he’s done. So it was a very worthwhile thing. It was called the New England Agricultural Economics...NEAEC.

Q: Oh, um hmm. How did this group from this bulletin on preserving agriculture, a regional grant research project from USDA. How did you come together? Did one person have the idea and then call all the rest of you? ’Cause that’s the way you used to go for those grants is that the people would put together the idea for the research project. So these people somehow gathered or did somebody gather you?

A: Somebody gathered us. It was a Chicago group that did this throughout the country and they in part financed it. Not...not all of it. Oh dear, I can’t remember the name of that organization.

Q: So it was someone with an interest in the production of food and how then to keep the agriculture going. In the Midwest....
(Tape interruption.)
Now is there anything else you’d like to add about anything or you can call me and tell me. I want to thank you for making the time to do this interview. You’ve...you provided a lot of information and I appreciate you going through your files too.

A: Well, I’d...I’d do almost anything to help agriculture.

Q: Wonderful. Thank you very, very much.

A: Well, thank you for coming and bearing with me.
(Tape interruption.)

Q: ...want to talk the committee, go ahead. Who supported this work.
A: The Farm Foundation...

Q: Out of Chicago.

A: Out of Chicago. It supported a great deal of work throughout I guess, the country but I know it only as it supported the Northeast Region they called it.

Q: Yes, okay.

A: And it'd be about the twelve States in the Northeast corner and they would bring us together two times a year to attack different problems, agricultural problems.

Q: All right, good, wonderful. Thank you very much.