Q: It is April 27, 1999. I am interviewing Ben Gallup who is the generation today on the Bicentennial Farm. Thank you very much for agreeing to do this. I know this is a busy time of year. Were you born on this property?

A: No, I was born in Norwich in a hospital but my sister was born here. I was born in 1930, July 20th so I been here all my life. I think it’s eleven generations ahead of me; been here all this time. My son is the thirteenth. I can remember what they told me back to my grandfather. My grandfather raised replacement animals plus he was in the timber business. There was about a thousand acres here, then. Then my father came along and he got into the poultry business some and dairy business. My father died in ’35 and my mother took over. Then we had poultry and dairy until the poultry kind of ran...went down hill in the ’40’s. Then we went dairy and we’re still dairy.

Q: Now when your father died, how many children were there to help your mother with the farm?

A: Two. Well, there was none. My sister was nine months and I was five. My mother did it with hired help. She did quite a job. Yep.

Q: And how long did she live?
A: She lived ‘til she was eighty-six. Yep. My son and I bought it from Lionel twenty-five years ago. We kept her right here.

Q: How many children did you have?

A: I have two, a boy and a girl. It’s been that way for three generations. But one generation back, I forgot the year, my granddaughter could tell you, there was nine boys and they split. Some went to Illinois, California, New York, Rhode Island, all over. Yep.

Q: You said at one time that it was a thousand acres. Do you have any records that tell what the land was when the first Gallups came over?

A: No. It was a grant. The first hundred acres was a grant from the King of England and I think that was that Indian War when they fought in the Indian War. My granddaughter could give you that history ‘cause she’s got it all.

Q: All right.

A: She’s looked up quite a bit of it on the family.

Q: What were your days like when you were growing up? You had a different set of responsibilities.

A: I took to farm to help my mother when I was sixteen, I started full-time. You know, I went to school and we run the farm too. So, I been at it quite a few years.

Q: What do you remember about your young days about what farming was like before you had full responsibility?

A: Oh, it wasn’t quite so hectic as it is today. You know, things were at a slower pace. They might have been a little hard...the work might have been a little harder but you didn’t know any different so you did it anyhow. Today is a fast pace. Yep.

Q: Do you remember...you had horses to begin with?

A: Oh yeah, I worked with horses up until...we got our first tractor in ’41. We didn’t have much equipment with it so most of our equipment was still horse-drawn equipment. You know, we milked cows by hand, twenty-five of them. Now we milk about two hundred and twenty-five.

Q: Did you go to milking machines?
A: Yep, yep. My dad had them but he didn't like them so he...he discarded them, milked by hand. This room we’re sitting in...this corner of this room was the milk pantry. They had a separator in there and, you know, summer kitchen and... So they peddled cream and stuff then, my mother and father.

Q: Where?

A: Just locally, you know. They peddled their own until...

Q: To individual people or to small stores?

A: There wasn’t no dairies until the late ’20’s. They never started shipping to the dairies until the late ’20’s. And then they went to Norman’s Dairy, I believe, in Jewett City. That’s the last one I remember. But there was one before that even. Then we went to H.P. Hood and then we shipped to Modern Dairy for a while. We’ve been with Cumberland Farms for thirty-some years and now they just gave up. So, we’re with Garelick right now.

Q: So you contract with them?

A: No. We’re an independent producer. Yep.

Q: When you did your own, did you have a milk route too? Did you deliver?

A: My father did...sort of had a little milk route. Of course, in them days they didn’t have that much milk, you know. They just peddled their cream more than their milk. And lambs, they had sheep. And then, he sold timber. He had a lot of timber.

Q: Back in the ’30’s. Now is the the timber...?

A: Yeah Well, we still have that sawmill over there...

Q: Across the road?

A: Yeah, but we lease it out now. We got all we can do right here. Yeah.

Q: Where does the timber come for that sawmill?

A: Well, he buys mostly. See, Voluntown is mostly State Forest. It’s about eighteen thousand acres of State Forest in the town. So, you know, they should have some sawmills here to keep up with that.

Q: That’s for managing the State Forest?
A: Mmmm. There’s three of them here. Of course, a lot of the timber today goes to Canada. But these guys do some. He does quite well over there. He’s busy, you know, every day.

Q: What was school like when you were growing up?

A: We didn’t have many snow days.

Q: You just kept right on going.

A: Right. I can remember walking up to the corner, my sister and I, with snow up to your knees, you know? Yeah. Oh, I don’t know. We had a lot of fun in school.

Q: Where was the school?

A: In the center of town, down here.

Q: Did you have school buses?

A: Yep. Well, first off we started with an old Cadillac car and then we went to an old, I think a ’30’s... in the ’30’s, bus. But well, we had, you know, sometimes three grades in a room, but that didn’t seem to be no problem.

Q: Who did the car belong to? Did the school provide it to pick up kids?

A: No, it belonged to a private individual and he contracted with the town to haul the kids. I guess he hauled kids for many, many years. He had the bus later.

Q: Was he a farmer also?

A: No, no.

Q: In some parts of the State, that’s who provided the buses.

A: Yeah. Mmmm. I don’t know. There’s only, say two farms I think, left in this town that operate.

Q: And how many acres do you have now?

A: Six hundred. Yeah.

Q: And your primary crops?

A: It’s corn and hay. You know, corn and hay crops. We rent quite a bit of land and that’s disappearing fast. We rent probably another couple hundred acres.
Q: These are people who used to farm and don’t anymore or people who have bought farms and now rent out the land?

A: One of them is a farmer that used to farm and one of them is a person that was in the insurance business, just owned some property. We had two more farms but they’ve gone to development. And that’s what’s happened. We just lost across the road here. I don’t know if you noticed the new houses there. They weren’t there a year ago. My neighbor...neighbor passed away and the children got the house and the land and they sold it. It’s all developed now. One of the biggest problems over there is they put their wells too close to agricultural land. Now there’s no rules against that and they can put it right on your boundary if you want. Then they get nitrates and then they blame us for it, you know?

Q: So does there need to be some kind of...?

A: There should be some kind of a law where they have a set back for agriculture land. They do for water, you know, brooks. They have it for septic systems and everything else but not for agricultural land that I can see. They tell me that they can make us buy them water if they get...have too much of a problem, you know. We’ve been here three hundred years and all of a sudden a house is built and you got a problem. Well, I don’t know. We’ll have to wait and see.

Q: What else did you produce on the farm?

A: Well, right now?

Q: No, back then.

A: It was eggs. My mother was in the egg production, you know. She had laying hens way back.

Q: How many do you think she had?

A: Four thousand. (Oh.) Mmmm. Yep. They all blew away with the hurricane.

Q: Oh! Talk about the hurricane of ’38.

A: Oh, it was terrible. We had wind gusts up to one hundred and seventy-five miles an hour. We lost all our poultry houses and the trees...of course, the forest was flat, trees and the woods. We was lucky, nobody got hurt. We was without power for about a month, no power.

Q: And you had just gotten power?
A: Yeah, just about a year before. Yep.

Q: Now where did you spend the hurricane? Where did you go for safety?

A: Right here in this house.

Q: Did you go down in the cellar?

A: No, no. We was right upstairs here. The house shook a little but it stood it.

Q: How old is the house?

A: It's over three hundred.

Q: I wonder how many other hurricanes it had gone through?

A: Yeah, a lot of them.

Q: You said that there are maple trees down that road and so it leveled everything around you?

A: Yep. Yep. A lot of trees around were flat. Yep. Even the fences, blew everything over. Yep. That was a terrible storm.

Q: How long did it take to get back? What time of the year did it happen?

A: It was a September twenty-first.

Q: So crops were in. (Yep.) But what happened to the hay and then silage that you had?

A: Well it probably spared the silo where the barn stood up because they was loaded with hay and stuff, you know? Yep. But I have had in the '50's, I think it was, Hurricane Carol flattened our corn. We cut it all by hand. Yep, that took a while.

Q: How many acres did you have...?

A: Forty then. That was a lot of corn by hand. Now we plant about two hundred and forty acres but we cut it different with a four row chopper.

Q: When did you get that?

A: Oh, we don’t. We hire it done, custom work.
Q: Other people. You and your son are doing operating the farm now?
A: Right, he's half owner. We're partners.

Q: And you mentioned that when your mother was doing this there was a hired hand or hired hands. Now you contract with other people to help?
A: No, we got four or five hired hands right now. They're getting hard to find. You know, the unemployment's real low and it's hard to find people to work. Yep.

Q: Where did the hired hands come from back when you were a kid?
A: When I was a kid? Mostly locally, you know, the town or within twenty miles of here. Yep.

Q: Did they live here?
A: My mother boarded them.

Q: And now where do they live?
A: Well, we got a couple of them that travel and then my son-in-law is here. He just lives next door. But a couple of them come all the way from Pawcatuck.

Q: They commute daily?
A: Yep.

Q: And had they been involved in agriculture before?
A: Yep, yep. They're all ag-minded. We have one lady that milks and she's ag-minded. She's been in it before.

Q: When you say "Ag-minded,"...
A: Well, she's worked at it before. It's not her first time at it, she's done it before. And I think she grew up on a farm somewhere. Of course, today, milking is not like what you picture in the milking parlor, you know. The machines come off automatically and all you do really is put them on and they come off by themselves.

Q: Describe the milk parlor.
A: A milking parlor...actually it's just a pit you stand in where you don't have to bend over and the cows are above you and in a herringbone position, six on a side.
Then we just keep alternating and, I mean, you average...well our parlor’s old but we can average about one a minute. Yep.

Q: How long has it taken you to build up the herd you have? Do you do any breeding?
A: Oh, yeah. My son does all the artificial breeding. We was all purebreds until a few years ago and then we just went commercial cows.

Q: What’s the difference?
A: Less work...less record keeping in other words.

Q: When artificial insemination...actually had its big beginning in Connecticut.
A: Yeah, it kinda started here years ago. What was the name of that...oh I should remember what that was. I guess it was Connecticut Artificial Breeding Association if I remember. But now they’ve all merged like everything else.

Q: What kind of prices did you have to pay, that you remember, compared to now, for things, and then what kind of prices do you get?
A: Grain, poultry feed used to be grain and we used to get about thirty dollars a ton is all, two hundred now. And of course, you know, cars was fifteen hundred, two thousand dollars and now look at what they are. Way back if you bought a nice car they almost give you a pickup. You know, six seven hundred dollars you had a pickup. Yeah. Our first tractor cost seven hundred dollars with a plow. We just bought one that has three hundred hours on it but if you paid the full price for it, it’d be ninety thousand.

Q: You said it had three hundred hours on it?
A: It had three hundred hours so it was used a little bit.

Q: How do they show how much...?
A: Meter.

Q: Oh, it’s like a speedometer only different?

Q: Where do you get these from? Where is the local...for your equipment?
A: Now most of our business is done in Pennsylvania. Our equipment and stuff. Yep.
Q: And the person who you contracted with to cut your corn, where are they located?

A: They’re located up on 49 North and about fourteen miles from here. They operate a big farm up there. They do a little custom work too.

Q: Were there cooperatives in this part of the State? And did farmers ever work together with equipment and then go from farm to farm?

A: No. They used to do that some, help each other but there’s not much of that anymore as far as custom work. There’s a few farmers that have big equipment, that equipment’s real expensive. So they’ll buy one and then they’ll do their own work and then do some custom work to help pay for it.

Q: What happens when it’s haying time and storms are predicted, then what determines the priorities of who gets...?

A: Every morning when you get up, the first thing you do is look at the weather. And the weather affects farming, you know, one hundred per cent so you might plan to do something tomorrow and it might, you know, never materialize. You’d be doing something else before night. Yep. And the weather, you just take a chance on the haying. You know, you look at the TV and if it says good for three, four days, you go. You know? If it says it’s going to rain in a day you don’t do it.

Q: What happens to the hay if it can’t get cut before a big rainstorm?

A: Well, it’s all right if it’s not, you know, too late in the season. Like, last year wasn’t bad, but the year before we had just sat still for a month there. A lot of the hay went by, you know, turned brown. We use it but the goodness is not there. Yep.

Q: Do you use any kind of calculations about how to feed your cows?

A: My son does all that, you know, him and the grain company. The company has a nutritionist and they work together with the nutritionist. They take samples of the corn, samples of the hay and see what they test out. Then they go from there. Whatever it needs they put into the feed.

Q: Does he keep track of the milk production too and then compares it? (Yep.) Did you have a garden at all?

A: No, just a little one. I grow just a few things.

Q: And compared to when you were a child...
A: Oh, my mother had a big garden. She used to put up three hundred jars, three hundred quarts of vegetables every summer. People don’t do that anymore. But say we had a catastrophe, I don’t know. A couple days worth of food in this area and that’s about it. You know, they can’t get it here. It’s all shipped in now.

Q: What do you remember about the roads?

A: Well, this was dirt road. If you notice how high up it is, the reason for that is they used to shovel it by hand in the winter, you know, the men would come down through. They raised the road thinking the wind would blow the snow across it. It worked, but today we got equipment to move the snow.

Q: That way too, when they plowed, it would fall off the side further.

A: Well, it wasn’t that way until they raised it up. Yeah, I can remember the men coming down from the town, coming down through, ‘cause that’s a town road, and they coming down through there, you couldn’t see them, you know, the snow was that deep. Yep, bad place here when we have a blizzard. It’s so open, it drifts.

Q: What were your neighbors like?

A: My neighbors?

Q: Yeah, back when you were growing up.

A: All of them just like family. Yeah, they was nice neighbors. We were lucky. We had good neighbors until now, I mean, people a probably all right but we don’t know any of those new people. But we used to...all our neighbors were just like family. Yep, yep, good people.

Q: Did you do things together?


Q: When you had time, because you had long days, what did you do for entertainment or fun?

A: Oh me? I’ve always loved airplanes. I flew all my life.

Q: I saw the little windsock out there.

A: Did you?

Q: Yeah.
Q: As a teenager, what kinds of things did you do?
A: Oh, we had kids in the neighborhood. We used to go ice skating. We’d get together and go ice skating or fishing, you know, trout fishing or something. We found things to do. I was always building airplanes most of the time.

Q: So you built your own airplane too.
A: Well, models when I was small but I rebuild two airplanes. I have one now. I’m thinking of selling it now though, getting too old. Yep.

Q: How has the business of farming changed? I mean, you look at it...it’s a business.
A: Oh, yeah.

Q: So what are some of the biggest changes you’ve seen?
A: I don’t know. It’s more competitive than it was. When it was...I don’t know, just a lot...the work end of it hasn’t changed. It’s a lot of work. My son gets up at 3:30 every morning. He goes until eight o’clock at night. But that end of it hasn’t really changed that much. It’s mechanized a lot, that’s the biggest thing, you know, everything is equipment today. Everything. We feed the cows with equipment, we harvest it with equipment. There’s not much hand labor anymore.

Q: Then, in some ways it doesn’t take the same kind of hired help to run the farm?
A: Not really. They got to be a little mechanical, a little bit. Yep. Yep.

Q: Why do you think your son decided that he wanted to go into farming?
A: Oh, I don’t know. He was brought up with it, you know, for a little boy and he went to Ag at the University of Connecticut. He always liked cows and he showed cows for many years and he...he just likes it. That’s it. It gets in your blood. You gotta grow crops and whatnot. I like clearing land. I’ve cleared a lot of land in my day, you know, and he likes that too. We get along good. Yep.

Q: Were you in 4-H?
A: No, I wasn’t but he was. He had a Club for many years. Yep.
Q: Did you participate in any of the agricultural organizations like Farm Bureau or the Grange?

A: Well, my mother did a lot of work for the Farm Bureau. We belonged to the Farm Bureau but I never participated in it. I've been in Soil Conservation and all them other things. I kinda got out of all that stuff now. I was a Selectman for six years. Still a Justice of the Peace. But I kinda...my wife was sick for many, many years so I didn't have a chance to do a lot of things I wanted to do. She had rheumatoid arthritis since she was twenty-three. Yep.

Q: You had a lot of responsibility on you. (Yep.) You mentioned being a Selectman. What was the relationship of the agricultural area around the town, to the town?

A: Well, when I was young there was more farms but the last...when I was a Selectman it's about the same as now. There wasn't too many.

Q: How did you happen to decide to run for Selectman?

A: I don't know. They asked me I guess. Yep. I was only Third Selectman, I wasn't a First Selectman.

Q: What were some of the issues that you had to deal with as a Selectman?

A: Oh, let me see. We bought that recreation field while I was a Selectman, downtown in front of the school. We built a new fire company, got the land from that. That was during the energy crunch way back there.

Q: In the '70's?

A: Yep. We did everyday stuff. Yep.

Q: Do you remember any banking or insurance issues you had as a business?

A: Luckily, with insurance we'd never, knock on wood, never needed it. So...we have it but we never had to use it. Luckily. Could happen tomorrow but we didn't have to, yet. Yep.

Q: Were there specific companies that you dealt with or you are dealing with?

A: Not really, whatever is the cheapest. Our insurance is quite expensive every year. Yep.

Q: Besides your milk, now, do you sell anything else?
A: Well, we do sell animals, livestock, replacement animals once in a while, not too often. And we have raised beef, forty, fifty head of steers. We don’t have any right now because the steer market is way down but we have done that.

Q: It sounds like there’s a lot of keeping-up-on things, that changes...that changes very quickly.

A: They do, yep. Never know what next week will bring.

Q: Where do you get the information from, you and your son?

A: Oh, I read a lot. I read a lot of magazines and listen to the radio and whatnot.

Q: What particular magazines...? (He handed the interviewer several magazines.)

A: And then we got a lot of friends out West, you know. We got some in Nebraska and Colorado. We talk on the phone so we know what’s going on there and they know what’s going on here. So, that’s the way we do a lot of it. And read.

Q: Had they been from this area and moved West?

A: No, no, just friends.

Q: How did you meet them?

A: Well, one of them, the fella in Nebraska married a girl from this area and he came here and he couldn’t stand it. He lived in the city and he couldn’t stand it so he just drove around until he found a farm. He dropped in and we’ve been friends ever since. And that was many years ago.

Q: And then he went back to Nebraska eventually?

A: Yep. Yep, we go visit him out there now.

Q: And they have a farm?


Q: What kind of an adjustment was it for her if she was raised in this...?

A: She...she’s quite a farm lady. She done real good. Yep.

Q: What do you think it takes to be a farm couple?
A: You have to give up a lot of things, you know. Things you want...you’d like to do, because there’s always something you got to do on the farm, that has to be done on time. And sometimes you’d like to go somewhere and you can’t because you haven’t got your work done, you know? You got to do that first. Yep. Like now, planting season is coming and once we start planting we don’t stop for nothing, you know? Unless there’s a death or something. Yep. You can’t because you miss a couple weeks, you’re behind.

Q: How many acres did you plow up here on the road, that whole thing?

A: That’s sixty acres, that field on the right. I cleared that from woods. Yep. There was fourteen acres of it on this end, the rest of it I cleared.

Q: How long had that woods been growing up?

A: Oh, many years. Way back maybe a hundred and seventy-five years ago, it was open and then it grew up and I had to cut it off. Yep. An old friend of ours told me that when he was a young boy that was just low brush and when I got here it was trees. You know, Connecticut was eighty some per cent open at one time anyhow. Yeah.

Q: How long did it take you to plow that?

A: We just disk it because it’s so stony...stony, you’d be picking stones there the rest of your life. Took us oh, I would say we was up there five days. Yeah.

Q: Somebody today was talking about the stones. So the kind of crops you plant, it doesn’t matter about the stones? (No.) You don’t have as many rocks here as some places.

A: Oh, that was so bad when I first cleared it, you could leave your truck in one place and fill it with little, you know, rocks like that. (Indicating size with his hands) Yeah.

Q: That’s about a two-foot rock.

A: Yeah, well most, you know, I call football size. Yep.

Q: Okay. So did you build new walls or did you...?

A: No, those were all the original made by hand. I don’t know who built them. We go around every year and fill them up. Wild turkeys do a job on them today. They sit on them and they give a jump when they go to fly and off goes the stones. (Oh.) And then we have coyotes. We never had coyotes when I was a kid but we have them now.
Q: Is that of any danger to your cows?

A: Well, we have had problems with them. Especially if you got lambs, sheep, they take them. I think they’ve hurt our deer population. We used to have oodles of deer here and no there’s hardly any. Yeah.

Q: When did you start seeing this change?

A: On the deer population?

Q: On the coyote.

A: Oh, that was maybe... oh, they been bad now for four or five years. But before that you’d occasionally see one but for four or five years they been bad. Actually, we had a guy trapping this year. He caught thirty just on this place. Yep.

Q: And what does he do with them?

A: Oh, he skins them. We wanted to get rid of them because they get into our heifers, you know. Yep.

Q: I noticed you had cows in different places this morning. I mean, there’s some in the barnyard down here and there’s some here... what difference...?

A: Different age groups. Those out there will be put up there pretty soon and they’ll be big enough to breed, and then they’ll be in --- next Fall. Yeah, different age groups.

Q: Do they have names. Do you name your cows?

A: No, just numbers.

Q: Back when I was growing up, they had names for all their cows.

A: Oh, they used to name them, yeah.

Q: Yeah, they were smaller herds. (Yep.) Are there key problems you remember facing? You mentioned the weather...

A: The weather’s always a problem. You never know, storm can do damage to you like now. We should start planting next week but the full moon’s not until the thirtieth and that’s when it’s going to be the coldest, you know? We don’t want that corn up too much by then. It’ll take a couple of weeks so it peeks through the ground and it’ll be all right if it’s only got one or two leaves on it. But you got... generally the full moon’s more like in the middle of the month, you know but this month’s late. May thirtieth I’m talking about. It’s going to be May here in a few days.
Q: I’m stuck in time here.

A: It’s late next month. (Yeah.) But our Falls have been nicer lately. They’ve been, you know, the weather’s been nice later in the Fall. I can remember we used to get frost in the end of August but last year we didn’t have one until almost December. Yep. It changed that way, you know. Spring’s are colder and the Falls are warmer. Yep.

Q: Where are the people moving into the developments coming from?

A: I think like Groton and New London I’ve heard they’re moving in. First time home buyers. Young people. They don’t know much about the country. They’re going to have a lot to learn.

Q: But they like moving here?

A: Oh, yeah. They like to move here. Just the other day, there’s another lady that moved on the back road here. We never had any houses up there until she bought a piece of land up there and the power went to half-power. Now she never saw anything like that in her life. (Half-power?) Yeah, half-power.

Q: You want to describe half-power?

A: Well, the lights go real dim, you know. It’s not good for electric motors and things. Well, she got...smelled smoke... she had a furnace that was wood and oil so the draft didn’t work ‘cause it was electrically controlled so the house filled up with smoke. So we had to go over there and straighten that out ‘cause she didn’t know how to handle it; but she’s learning. And she’s at the end of the power line, the worst thing in the world, you know, for outage. Yeah. So she didn’t know how to handle that, nice beautiful house full of smoke. All she had to do was open the draft in the chimney, you know, and let it go up the chimney but she didn’t know that. You’d do it probably, you was brought up on a farm.
Q: Well, I used to visit my cousin’s farm. But I’ve had to manage some things like that... (Woodstove?) Yeah. What do you think’s the greatest change you’ve adjusted to?

A: Me? Oh, I don’t know, a lot of them I guess.

Q: You said things are more mechanized now, so you had to learn about machinery.

A: Yeah, they’re mechanized, but I went along with that pretty good. Well I guess, more people around, you know. I guess that’s the biggest change, more people. I go downtown now, I don’t know anybody and the traffic down there is, you know, there never used to be anybody and now the roads are full of people. I guess that’s the biggest thing. Yeah. Lot of people in this area.

Q: And people are moving to rural areas.

A: Now see this looks wooded but were right in the middle of State Forest here, you know, State Forest all around us except for that one place where they are developing. So that’s good. See a lot of our land here is State Forest and out through there.

Q: Do you remember the Depression?

A: When I was a kid I could remember wanting an ice cream cone; my mother wouldn’t stop. You know, a nickel ice cream cone. Gasoline was...I guess, I remember is six gallons for a dollar. Yeah. But I remember money was tight. Yeah. I had another thing I remember when I was a kid, when you sat down to eat your meal you always said a blessing. Thank God for your food, but they don’t do that anymore I notice. But I remember everybody did that when I was a kid.

Q: Were there many churches in the area?

A: Some, some. There was Baptist and the Catholic and the Methodist in our town down here. And, there’s another Baptist down the road here. I got the records of when they started the first Baptist church here in town and they’re all in there.

Q: What about World War II?

A: I remember that. I remember the night Gabriel Heater said we was at war, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. I was in the barn. I remember it came over the radio in the barn. I was scared. And then at night we used to have those air raids warnings. There we had to put our lights all out. Yeah.
Q: Did it change what you were doing? You would have been in your early teens or your teens at the time. Did it change what was happening on the farm?

A: As far as the machinery-wise it didn’t because we used horse equipment. But I remember my mom had trouble getting sugar and things to can her vegetables and couldn’t buy meat, couldn’t buy butter. So, she used to make her own down here but you couldn’t buy any of that stuff in the store. Tires, you couldn’t get tires but a farm could get more than most people. Yeah.

Q: So she still had the cream and her eggs that she sold. Back then the eggs...well, the egg industry is another whole story, isn’t it? What kind of chickens did she have? Did they lay brown or white eggs?

A: Brown, but all our eggs went to Boston. (See, that god-darned fly’s in here.) New York’s white eggs and Boston, brown eggs. But my mother wholesaled them all and a man came once a week and picked them up. You could make pretty good money with them chickens in them days.

Q: And once they were past laying what did she...?

A: She had replacements every year. She raised her own replacements, yeah, what they call brooder coops out in the field. There was about twelve by sixteen and you put the baby chicks in there.

Q: On the ground?

A: Yeah. And then you raised them all Summer and then in the Fall they replaced the old ones.

Q: And where was her market to get rid of the old ones?

A: Old chicken? They went to New York.

Q: Stewing chickens?

A: Yeah. They were heavy in them days, the old chickens. Today there ain’t nothing to ‘em, you know, they bred them to lay just eggs and no chicken. They’re very light but in them days, they weigh, you know, good and heavy.

Q: So one chicken had multiple uses, where today they raise some to be eaten and they raise some to lay eggs? (Right.)

A: I got some now. I had trouble with them, they got cannibalism in ‘em, you know.
I got ‘em all in a coop about twelve by twenty or whatever it is and they’re made to be in those cages I guess, you know, where they can’t get at each other. And I had trouble, I had to put glasses on them. They have these little glasses you put on their nose so they can’t see forward only sideways. But they lay like crazy, you know, a hundred per cent. I like my own eggs. They’re much better.

Q: So you’re using these for your own use primarily?

A: Yeah, I’ve two poached eggs all my life every morning. My cholesterol’s one fifty. There’s another thing, you know. Milk. Our milk in the tank up there from the herd tests about three/eight or four per cent. So what’s that tell you? It’s ninety-six per cent fat free when it leaves the farm. You know, people don’t realize that. Yep.

Q: There’s an extra charge if you buy two per cent or one percent or...

A: Yeah, after they rob the cream then they sell you that two per cent for a higher price. It’s already ninety-six percent when it leaves here, fat-free.

Q: Do you remember when you were going through the mechanization of milking and you used to put it out in cans that would be picked up?

A: Yeah, we had coolers and the milk truck came and picked all them cans up. Yep, yep.

Q: And then when did the trucks start coming?

A: The tankers? (Yeah.) Oh, probably in the...let me see, I ran that milking parlor thirty, oh, thirty-five years ago maybe. (late 1940’s?) Yep.

Q: Did you have to go by different health standards then?

A: Oh, we have all kinds...we’ve had as many as six states and the federal inspection. Wherever the milk went, years ago, you had to be inspected by. ‘Til today I think, we’ve only got one, Connecticut and the federal. Yep.

Q: So if the tanker supplied several states you’d have to pass those states. (Yep.) That’s interesting.

A: It used to be that way. Now I think they accept Connecticut’s inspection now.

Q: Do you think Connecticut agriculture is different then in other parts of the Country?
A: Different? (Um hmm.) I don’t know. We...Connecticut’s...you know, Connecticut has really some really good farms, you know. They’re world producers. Maybe, now they’re catching up out in California and some of them states, but back a few years, I think Connecticut held it’s own. You know, even today we got some pretty good herds here in Connecticut as far as dairy herds. Yep.

Q: What do you think are some of the biggest issues facing agriculture in Connecticut for the future? Before we turned the tape on, you mentioned supply of food for one thing...

A: Yeah, well that kind of worries me if we had any kind of a catastrophe, we don’t have the food here now. You know, it’s trucked in. I think I read somewhere that there’s a two day supply if we had a catastrophe. Yep.

Q: What were you going to say about some of the other issues that you thought...?

A: Well, I think the worst one is, you know, it’s development. Farmland’s just disappearing. I mean, they don’t think anything about farmland in Connecticut. They’re wasting it. You know, they’re putting houses on it. We only have so much land that we can produce our food on. I think it’s down to one-sixth of an acre for each person now in the world to produce your food and your fiber, there’s only one-sixth of an acre. Yep. That’s scary because in the next twenty years, I think the world population is going up something like eighty million people a year now. There’s a good article in the mag...I think I saved that. (Break in conversation.) I’ve flown all over this State and there were nice farmlands where they’re building and there’s so much wasteland. They could build houses on that and it wouldn’t hurt nothing. But, they’re not using it. You know, farmland’s where they build ‘cause it’s easier. You know, no trees to clear, no stones to get out. If you go up from like Bridgeport up to Springfield, if you look at the Connecticut River Valley, all the buildings on it are in the valley. On the slopes, on the sides is nothing, you know. It’s a shame, they waste their farmland. Yep. So I don’t...

Q: Do you think that it’s because the current generation sells their property when it’s left to them or do you think that the current owners decide to get out of farming? Why is this happening?

A: Well, it’s both I guess. ‘Cause...actually, you know, milk has been so darn cheap that a lot of the farmers just about hung on. Last year we had a real good year but the year before and ’94 was terrible. And they say now it’s going to go down six dollars. It never goes down in the store but it does to us. They say it’s going to go back down next month to six dollars. So that’s going to make it down almost at cost.
Say, anybody's heavily in debt, borrowed a lot of money to mechanize and whatnot, they're in trouble. So, that's one reason. But like you say, the older people die off and the children want no part of it. Like this place across the street, just sold it. And then you get a contractor in there to put the new houses up and he does it the cheapest way he can, you know? So that's why those houses are so close to our corn land because, the further back he put them, he has to run the power in there, he has to do all that extra work and it costs money. So, the heck with the farmland, put the house out there where it's cheap.

Q: And there's no zoning.

A: Well we have zoning but, they don't know anything about farmland either. They don't have any setback. It should be a State regulation really, a setback. Or if they want to build next to agricultural land they should expect something like that. But in that...this case it could be because it was a poultry farm, too. That was one of the biggest ones in the town for years and years.

Q: So it might be in the soil.

A: It might be in the soil. But they blame us right away. And also, the fellow that sold the property raised animals there. The water table's very close to the top so the wells didn't have to be over forty, fifty feet deep, so they get surface water. So, there's other things besides a (working) farm, but they don't see that. They see only the farm. Yep. (Tape interruption.)

Q: So, the glacier's left something useful whereas in other parts of the State it's rocks.

A: Like that little valley over there my dad sold his upper end of it, about sixty acres in there to the State back in the '30's. I been trying to trade for that piece of land for years now, but I haven't got it done yet. It's good farmland, you know? Bottomland.

Q: So, he traded...gave it to the State or did he...?

A: My father sold it to 'em.

Q: To the State?

A: Um. They bought...See the State Forestry made it up in the late '20's and '30's they bought up all this land.
Q: Was that when the Citizen Conservation Corp was around in this area? Was it?

A: I don’t know who it wa...well the CCC’s you...they did have a camp here. They did a lot of good. They did a lot of good but the State itself built this State Park up years and years ago. The State CCC’s, they did do a lot of good. They built roads and they cleaned out the forests and they did a good job. Yep.

Q: Where was the closest CCC camp?


Q: North of Voluntown?

A: Yeah, Camp Lonergan.

Q: Camp Lonergan?


Q: Do you have any idea how many camps there were in the State?

A: No, I don’t.

Q: We’re going to have to do some checking because people have been talking about it. Talk about this magazine, “The Furrow.”

A: That’s John Deere puts that out.

Q: Okay, and what other magazines do you read?

A: Oh, I get a lot of them.

Q: Are they from companies, too?

A: Not all of them no, but that one just happened to be a good article so I kept it.

Q: This one is the Cooperative?

A: That’s Agway. (Okay.) Yeah, but I get “Most Successful Farm,“” Farm Journal,“ “Herdsmen,” that’s a real good magazine. Lot of them, I get a lot of ‘em but the trash can fills up with ‘em after a while. Yep.

Q: What do you think has given you the most satisfaction in your life of farming?
A: Farming? (Um hmm.) Probably clearing land. I like to take land and clear it and see a crop grow in it after. It’s a lot of work but it’s nice to see the crop grow after you get it done. I’ve cleared a lot of land in my day. Yep, and it’s nice to look and see along a row of corn, you know, where you worked hard to get the stones out and everything. Yep.

Q: Does your son and his family live on this property?

A: Yeah, his house is right up on the hill. He built his own house out of the lumber on the farm. Then we have another farm down the road that we bought. Of course, it was in my grandmother’s family but it got out of the family. We bought it back. We been building a house down there, too. Out of all our own lumber. It’s kind of a pretty spot down there.

Q: Now, do....

A: I’ll have to take you down there show you it sometime.

Q: Good. The Gallup Homestead, it’s not just that people told me to come and talk to you but they talk about the Gallup Homestead.

A: Well, this is it. This is the Homestead.

Q: Do you have anything where you bring people to the farm to see it?

A: Those come to see the farm, like groups?

Q: Yeah.

A: Oh yeah. They been here from all over. Yep.

Q: How do they know to come?

A: I don’t know. We’ve had school groups and all kinds of, you know. We had field days and all those kinds of things. Not just for the farm but they had oh, a conservation day here one time, years ago. And different farm groups come here.

Q: So they ask to hold their meetings on your property?

A: Well, they come and look...look the operation over more or less.

Q: You said there are only two or three farms left in the area. In comparison to other dairy farms in the State, are your operations different in any way?
A: Well, maybe today it's not, today, but back a few years it was. I had the first free stalls in the State.

Q: Describe a free stall.

A: Well, a free stall is just a four by eight oh, partition, I guess you'd call it. A little stall like where a cow has access to it. She's not tied in there, she's free to go wherever she wants.

Q: It's not a stanchion?

A: No, no stanchions. That's all...they're all free stalls up there now. And I designed and built the milking parlor and everybody looked at that for many years; and a lot of the things I do out in the fields like...I don't know. Some of the things I did...I piled corn, about the first one in the State, under the plastic; that big white thing you see.

Q: That's all corn.

A: Yeah. Instead of putting it in silos.

Q: And that's covered with plastic and tires?

A: Yep, yep. Well, not too many tires but mostly all plastic. We was the first one to...about the first one to do that, me and one other fellow.

Q: And why was that done?

A: Just easier and you...years ago, see, you had a silo. If it held seven acres of corn, you was limited to seven acres of corn. If you had more, you didn't know what to do with it. With this thing, you can grow as much as you want and just push it up there with a bulldozer. And it works, you know?

Q: Because of the plastic covering it, it still keeps the heat in?

A: Oh yeah, no air in there. Yeah, there won't be any spoilage when we open that. Then you can load it with the payloader instead of have to shovel it by hand. So I do a lot of things, first. Yep. This year, well, I might have something first, again. I sprayed all my rye I don't know if you noticed that field on the...on the right, it's so brown? (Um hum.) Well, I sprayed that with Round-Up to get rid of the rye before we disk it We should save a couple times disking it by doing it. Yep. That stuff gets ahead of you. It gets like a mat, you know, on the ground. You can't disk it good. I'm probably the first one to do that.

Q: Where do you get your corn seed from?
A: Oh, this year it came from Pioneer Seed Company out West.

Q: And now there's certain kinds that you're growing that they've developed that...?

A: That do better here than other places? Sometime you find one that does better here but we try to change them every few years yo a different varie...different kind. Yep. I'll show you another thing here. (Shows a framed award.)

Q: What was your connection with the Jaycees?

A: I guess somebody filled an application out for me, or something. They send that out every year for them outstanding young farmers.

Q: Are they done across the State or in different parts?

A: Oh yeah, from all over the Country. (All right.) We went to the National down in Birmingham, Alabama.

Q: This was in the '60's, 1965?

A: Yep. That was interesting. You meet 'em from all over the Country. Oh, I can go to all their meetings now, you know, being a ex-Outstanding Young Farmer. I haven't but I should because they're interesting.

Q: Do you go to any other kinds of meetings with other farmers?

A: Not too many. Not too many.

Q: What about your son?

A: Well, they try to get him in but he avoids them because he gets up at three-thirty in the morning. Yeah.

Q: And what is his name?

A: Byron. My grandfather's brother was Byron. My grandfather was Origen.

Q: Was...?

A: Origen. O-R-I-G-E-N.

Q: That's unusual.

A: Yeah, they had some funny names. Ben Adam, was another one?
Q: So basically they’re all English?


Q: Is there anything else you’d like to talk about related to any of your recollections?

A: Way back? Oh, probably a lot of them but I don’t know if I can think of them all right now. You’ll have to come out again.

Q: I will come back. I’d like to take some pictures. I don’t want to borrow these pictures but if you could keep them separately, at some point it would help. What I’m trying to do, too, is to get pictures of a place that was a certain way and then take a picture of it as it is now. So, as you think about this...

A: Oh, I got lots of pictures. If I get in that old butler’s desk, the bottom drawer is full of ‘em.

Q: I want to thank you very, very much for taking the time. I know when I arrived you were out in the...

A: I’m supposed to be plowing.

Q: That’s right. I know and so I appreciate...

A: My...my son, he lets me do these things.

Q: Thank you very, very much.
(Tape interruption.)
We were talking about the Experimental Station...

A: Well, look what work the Experimental Station did on Lyme Disease. You know, if we didn’t have that all these different insects and diseases that come to our crops, what would we do? I think it’s an important thing.
Q: So you think that the political climate is not in support of agriculture?

A: Of agriculture, no. I think there’s only one Senator or Representative up there with an ag background.

Q: John Mordasky?

A: Yeah, yeah. We had Jack Tiffany but he’s not there anymore.

Q: What about John...is it John Savage that was up there...?

A: I don’t know if he’s still there.

Q: He’s not there, he’s not.

A: He was...he did participate in agriculture. But it’s kind of sad because we need more of them up there. Yep.

Q: When the State did away...the one town, one vote kind of thing, they changed the political makeup of the Legislature?


Q: It became less rural-oriented...I don’t remember what year that was. I just heard about it.

A: No, I don’t either. They need to get some more in there to, you know. Now I guess they got a new...I think May first, sixth or something there, they got a meeting at DEP where they’re going to control forests on private land, you know. I don’t know if that’s the right thing to do either. You know, you pay taxes on it and we planted a lot of trees. We ought to be able to manage ‘em without having to ask the DEP what to do. Yep. They don’t go with you when you pay your taxes. We got quite a few acres of forest. We planted pine in there. We’ve harvested a lot of it. We built two houses. We never sold a lot of timber but we used it ourselves. We built all our barns from our own lumber. Yep. Well, the floors in there are all our lumber. (Oh, um hum.) This wainscoting here, you know, that’s original. That’s three hundred years old chestnut.

Q: Oh. There used to be a lot of chestnut trees...

A: See, those cupboards are made out of chestnut. Made out of the old boards that was in this room. Yep. Chestnut was our main lumber. Of course, that got disease and we lost it.

Q: When did that happen, do you remember?
A: No...when I was a kid back, you know, in the '30's we had dead trees so it had to be in the '20's. But we got so many new things. Now the maples are getting some kind of a bug that's going to kill them. You know, we need that Experimental Station to work on those things. The red pine's dying. It's got some kind of disease. It's not the greatest lumber anyhow but I'd hate to see the maples go. Yep.

Q: The people across the street with the sawmill, how long have they been there?

A: Oh, twenty years. You see, we get all the sawdust. We use that for bedding in the barn. You know, to soak up moisture. If we didn't have that we'd have to buy probably six yards a day. So it's kind of nice to have it there. Plus, the deal was he had to do all our sawing, any lumber that we needed. I'll have to take you down and show you that house we were making. You've got five minutes?

Q: Sure.

(And a riding tour of part of the farm and the new house, followed.)