

Reel
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MARTHA DE NORMANDIE INTERVIEW,
DECEMBER 8, 1997, BETSY HOFFBERG
AND JOAN SILVERMAN

MARTHA DE NORMANDIE: My own
personal family?

01:00:24:30

MS Martha

MD: Okay. Well, I came
into the DeNormandie family in
1943, when I married Jim
DeNormandie. And he was several
years older than I was, and had
been operating the DeNormandie
Farm, which was established by
his uncle, Charles DeNormandie.
Jim had graduated from college in
1929, went to the law school for
a year, but it was not a happy
relationship for either. So he
really wanted to be outdoors, and
returned to Lincoln, and started
rebuilding the cattle farm.

OUT 01:01:06:18

He lived in the little
farmhouse, where Robert and
Eliana live now, right at the
foot of Trapelo Road. And I came
to the town, as a companion to
his sisters four children. It
was during the war, the war was
going on, and we all lived
together on top of the--in the
house on Weston Road.

OUT 01:01:33:24

Ellen Cannon was living
there with--expecting a third
child. Alice Cope(?) was my
employer. She was living there,
and had her two children, plus
two children from England, who
had lived with her during the
war.

IN 01:01:51:23

I was in the employ of a
DeNormandie family member. And
it was while I was acting as a
companion that Jim would appear
on--
oh, after dinner most nights, and
I didn't realize that he was
coming to see me, but that was
apparently what was happening,
and his family was aware of it.
Anyway, we married at the end of
that summer. So I became a
farmer's wife. And it was the
beginning of a really wonderful
wonderful life.

OUT 01:02:33:01

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MD: I gathered that the farm had just--his uncle was living in this house, in which I'm living now by himself, was a bachelor and no longer able to take care of the farm. So I'm not sure that there was even anything going on at the farm, when Jim came back in 1930.

IN 01:02:38:21

They had always had purebred Guernsey's. So that's what he began to do. And I imagine one of the first things that he did was to tear down a barn, which was in Concord, where the Friendly Restaurant is now. That was a piece of property, which he and Floyd Verrill had purchased. They were in partnership. And the torn down barn was brought to Lincoln, and rebuilt. So that must have been one of the first things that Jim did.

Description of Jim establishing the farm in 1930

OUT 01:03:42:10

And he was a bachelor, very much a part of the town. He was chairman of the school committee. He was working on the reuniting of the churches, so that there was no time for any marriage for him, he was so busy. And he also was renting fields. He rented the land, rented the Codman Farm, and all of their fields. He also was renting--had farm fields down in South Lincoln in the Mount Misery(?) Land. So there was an awful lot going on, but I can't remember much about what was happening before I came.

IN 01:04:06:16

OUT 01:04:19:18

MD: It was right on the end between Robert and Iliana's house, and the pond. The pond was not there when I came. It was the result of I think the first road expansion after the war, when Trapelo Road was widened. There was a new opportunity for towns to do some road improvements. And the road prior to that time came down the Trapelo Road hill, and swung right in next to the corner of the house. It was right there, and then went on through the

fields, and on up to our driveway to this house, and over the hill, and down onto Silver Hill, and then up through the pasture to Winter Street, and it was the back road, the original road that Trapelo followed.

MD: Well, we had the Codman Barn, and then after the barn burned in 1954, and we lost 36 head of cattle, that was when the farming stopped. We put young stock in the barn up where the Peace barn is, and then we gave Warren Flint the milking animals, and Leah had some stock, and the stock was at Codman. The young stock was in a barn, which has been torn down at Codman, where the woodpile is used to be a barn for young stock. And we also had animals underneath the big Codman barn. There was always construction going on all the time. Animals were being moved hither and there.

- IN 01:05:39:11

1954 farming stopped

MD: I think we had around 130, 135 head of cattle, different ages, but they were all purebred Guernseys.

OUT 01:06:35:20

IN 01:06:41:19

MD: It was really wonderful. I'm enjoying reminiscing about it, because Lincoln in 1943 was a very isolated little community. I didn't even know where it was. I grew up in the middle part of Massachusetts, and I'd never heard of Lincoln. And when I arrived and found this really treasure spot, I love reminiscing about it.

OUT 01:06:52:14

IN 01:07:05:18

OUT 01:07:16:18

About Lincoln in 1943

Nice

It was protected from the outside world by the major roads; 126, 117 and Route 2. And there was not this crisscrossing of traffic, which there is now people cutting back and forth. And in the middle was a little serene community of Lincoln. And I taught kindergarten the first year that I was married up in the second floor of the First Parish Church, David Donaldson was in my

IN 01:07:30:11

OUT 01:07:54:01

class, and Diana Healey Golden and Timmy Coles, a wonderful group of children. It was over at noon. I could just walk down the middle of the road. Of course, there were no sidewalks, no bicycle paths, hardly a car would pass, and it was just a very bucolic community.

IN 01:08:16:03

Very Nice description

There was many farms. And whenever I went out for dinner, there would be other farmers there. And there was always a sort of a scent of farming odors amongst our husbands. And Jim, himself, having worked a full hard day would often fall asleep.

OUT 01:08:49:10

But he had been very much an available bachelor to all of these families in Lincoln. And they just really loved him and protected him and took me in. So that most of my acquaintances were his age. They already had their families, and they were very very good to me, a young bride. But I feel right into being a housewife. Of course, I expected a family soon. And Jim had a big garden, as well as all of the farm activities. We had hired help, and they were coming and going all the time. It was a busy happy life.

IN 01:09:20:09

Farm life

I remember the labor of canning all of the produce that Jim would bring in from his garden. Bushels of beets, tomatoes, I would make garden special. These were all things I had never ever done before. But it was part of the farmer's role.

OUT 01:09:55:09

MD: Well, as I say, many of my friends, that I saw were older women, who had been experienced-- the garden special came from somebody--maybe Mrs. Winchell, someone gave me the recipe. And it was a very popular mix of vegetables.

IN 01:09:56:19

About recipe for "garden special"

MD: It's tomatoes and onions and celery and you stewed it all up together and then bottled it and you could use it

for soups. You could use it on fish. You could use it in a variety of ways. And as we were rationed for gas, I did use it. Looking back, I realize that I was probably very naive. I would invite people; Sumner Smith and his wife. I did a lot of entertaining. And they were so good to always come. I mean I was 15 years younger than most of them, but they also were farming. Sumner Smith had a farm. Adam Grudesky(?) was his farmer. Jane Rizzo lives in Adam's house now. Warren and Margaret Hans Van Leah(?), the Dohertys. I mean there were cattle being taken care of all around us.

OUT 01:10:29:26

Good overview of Lincoln farms. at that time.

We were a farming community. We had Mr. Davis ran the store for--let's see who ran it before? Mr. Rawlins ran the store where the center post office is. And then when he left, Mr. Davis came. I remember my children were fascinated with the ball of string that he had that he'd reach up and pull the string down and tie the packages, and, of course, the penny candy was a great lure. It was safe, safe, safe, that's the--safe for all of us, even though the world was torn to pieces in the Second World War.

OUT 01:11:20:15

IN 01:11:46:07
Good sound bite
OUT 01:11:56:12

MD: I really didn't. I was totally absorbed in my new life, as a farmer's wife, a bride and expectant mother.

MD: When--the milk room was right off my kitchen. So that I could always tell when the day was done, because I'd hear the pulsing sounds of the milking machines. And then they'd be turned off, and then I would hear the water running, so that meant they were washing the machinery, and then that stopped, and then the eating would begin.

IN 01:12:20:20

Milking

washing machine.

I had an old Easy washing machine that was out in the milk room. And how that machine did

work. It had nothing automatic, except that it had a spin dryer, and then I would dry--I had a clothesline right outside. It was cozy, cozy intimate existence, both in the house and outside in the community.

NICE

OUT 01:13:11:24
IN 01:13:16:19

MD: Oh, sure. We had a huge refrigerator, and it was poured--it went from the surge milking machines into big jugs, and the jugs were stored--they had to swing them up into the refrigerator. And then they would come and pick them up and take it out. And take it over to Concord. It was processed in Concord. But prior to that time apparently people came right to the farmhouse and bought raw milk. That was really before my time. I don't remember people doing it.

OUT 01:13:50:18
IN 01:13:56:15

I would just like to speak a little bit about the cattle. They were so beautiful. I don't know as you know, but a Guernsey cow is butterscotch and white. They would be in the barn all lined up. I would only get to know a few cows. But Jim would know each cow by name, and they all had their names up above their stanchions.

Very Nice

The beauty of a barn, which is well taken care of with clean sawdust and bouffant piles of hay in front of them is a scene that I just wish all of my children--the older boys really helped on the place. The farm meant a great deal to them, and after the barn burned in 1954, they took care of the cattle. They would get up in the morning and walk down Trapelo Road before school. They were not milkers. They were dry calves. So that the farm really got under their skin, and it's still there, even though we no longer have cattle.

OUT

OUT 01:15:19:09
IN 01:15:19:10

As young children, to have them go out the door at about 5:00 o'clock in the afternoon,



and stand in the corner of the garden and yell, "Come, boss, come, boss, come boss." And the cows up on this hill, which is now referred to as the ski hill, all the animals would gradually form into a line, and come down over that hill. It just sends shivers down my back. They would come down the lane, and stand outside of the barn door, then move into the barn. Each one knew their own stanchion, knew where they belonged, and then the milking process would start. It is something, which is no longer available.

VERY NICE

Hesitant rooms

MD: Tom and my twins were not the--barn was gone.

OUT 01:16:03:18

MD: Well, we never knew. We don't know. Jim and I were celebrating our tenth wedding anniversary. We had gone to New York, to the New York Horse Show. I had always wanted to see it, and never had, and so we drove down. The barn was never larger or more--it was really packed for the winter.

IN 01:16:26:00

OUT 01:16:38:07

stay of Barn fire

IN 01:16:41:15

And we had a load of sawdust, and whether that sawdust, the sawdust would be blown into the barn. There was a big whole end of the barn that was filled with--was a sawdust bin. And whether it was not dry or whether friction was caused as it blew through, was blown through the pipe, or whether a light was left on, although the herdsman said that he knew the light was not left on. But it started in that corner.

OUT 01:17:20:29

We also had staying with us at that time, a helper, and she had gone out that evening. And whether she was meeting someone and they went to the barn or what, we just never knew. But it was a terrible fire, terrible fire.

IN 01:17:40:11

Betsy talks!

OUT 01:17:45:11

MD: We were staying at the Hotel Roosevelt, and the telephone rang at 3:00 o'clock.

IN 01:17:45:17

And Jim said, "The barn." And it was his mother saying that indeed the barn was on fire. So we just turned around and came home.

More fire pg. 10

Betsy

About the fire

MD: Just a smoking ruin. But it was a quiet night so that the fire stayed right where it was. It could have been--if there had been a wind, all the leaves were dry, everything, it would have just--

MD: That was the barn that Jim moved from Concord. We had had numerous square dances in the barn, Bertha and Louise Chapin was the caller. She was a friend of Mrs. Storrow's, and was a well know square dance caller. And we would have picnics on the lawn, and then go into the barn to dance. It was a beautiful barn.

OUT 01:18:48:03
IN 01:18:48:04

When I first came there were three enormous bulls. Oh, my I never saw--one was named Crusader, and one was St. Nick, and they were outside in the pens that went down towards the back of the property. But with artificial insemination, we no longer kept the bulls. It was all right by me.

Bulls

OUT 01:19:12:23

MD: Oh, my they certainly did help each other. They were a comfortable part of the community. Because there were so many farmers that they had that position as farmers was very prominent in the community.

IN 01:19:22:19

Farms fading away

Subsequently, of course, as the farms faded away, the role of the farmer in the town became less and less obvious. And it was a loss, but that's what happens to time. But certainly at the time of the barn fire, all the other farmers in town just pitched right in and helped us out until we made decisions as to what we would do.

Farmers helped at time of fire

OUT 01:20:07:06

MD: We didn't replace the barn, as it was, but we did replace the barn, because we had young stock in it, and stored hay. Because we kept producing

hay, and selling it. Betty Nevin, I don't know if she takes our hay now or not, but we're associated with Codman Farm. But for years the boys did all the haying themselves, and we had neighborhood kids that would come, and help and get up on the truck. It was a real community operation.

Haying

OUT 01:20:43:29

MD: Well, in 1950, we had three children. And this house had been for several years rented to the superintendents of schools, as they came and went. And one February, while the superintendent was away, the pipes froze. And the house was in very poor condition. So, my father-in-law--oh, I had wonderful in-laws. It was his house, his father's house, and there was the possibility that they would tear it down or what they would do with it. They didn't know.

Too much detail.

But he offered it to us. And I had grown up on a hill, and I missed it living down in the valley. So, I was eager to come up on the hill, and Jim was not as eager, but we did make that move. So we were not living down in the farmhouse. We had turned it over to our herdsman, and they were living down there. They had a family of five boys, and they lived in the farmhouse. So, we weren't as closely tied to the farm, as we had originally been.

And the barn burned in the fall of 1953. And in 1954, that winter, Jim decided not to go back into full-time farming, but would run for the state legislature. So our life took a very different turn, and he ran for the legislature. And we kept the young stock for a while, and then my youngest son, Philip, developed a real allergy to cattle dander, and that was the final step in the moving the cattle out, the young stock.

IN 01:22:12:08
GOOD - Jim gives up

OUT 01:22:38:19

OUT 01:23:03:29



✓

MD: They were living in the barn--the rooms were out into the barn upstairs. Mrs. Murray woke up, and thought it was raining. And went out to shut the windows, and lo and behold there was the fire. So we were very very lucky that they got out, and they couldn't save any of the barn, but they saved the house.

IN 01:23:11:01

Fire

OUT 01:23:36:28

MD: I can't understand why he did have--I'm just suddenly remembering that he had a bull and young stock over in Concord in a pasture, and why he did that? I would have thought we would have had enough land. But the animals were all around the house. They were down at the farmhouse. They were down below us, and they were always being rotated.

IN 01:24:22:21

Corn/Silos

And then he grew corn down at Mount Misery. He also grew corn in the field behind Lincoln Woods, that big field, which is conservation now, that was--he grew corn there. And we used corn silage. We had both an upright silo, but we also had a low silo on the ground that got covered with black paper. That's an awful lot of feed. But it was always gone when summer came around, and we'd do it all over again.

OUT 01:25:08:05

IN 01:25:08:06

NICE
Very animated

One of the things that I remember so vividly was the first time I went to hear the bailer. It was enormous, and the rhythm of it, ch-tung, ch-tung, as it would--the rope teeth would go down and wrap it. And the children and I were all lined up on the stonewall watching this great big enormous creature, spanking red, you know, going around the field. We were so proud of it, behind a great big H tractor.

OUT 01:25:49:27

MD: Well, you just would have one person driving the tractor. And we didn't for years have another attachment that

would throw the bail up onto the trailer. That's what I think they do now still at Codman Farm. Of course, most farmers now are rolling their hay and wrapping it. I don't know the details of that process.

It was so much fun. We had one herdman's wife who made a simply marvelous chocolate cake, and almost every afternoon during the summer, she would make the cake and a big jug of lemonade. And I would be the one to come and pick it up, with the kids all in the car or the truck, and take it to the farmhands in the field. It was just the way you imagine it, a lovely life.

MD: Well, of course, when it was busiest, I was living down there in the farmhouse, and Jim would get up at 4:00 o'clock, and get dressed and go and milk the cows. He really was doing milking almost every morning, as I recall. Perhaps on the weekends he didn't participate in the milking as much. But he had two brothers, the Moody(?) brother, and they shared the milking. But I remember Jim getting up when I was first married.

So, the day would begin at 4:00 o'clock, and then breakfast. I was teaching. Robert was born a year after we were married. So, then, of course, we're beginning the same pattern that all mothers face of taking care--

MD: No. But we did have come once a month, we had the milk tester come, and he would have to test the milk and measure the amount of butterfat in the milk. Of course, Guernsey milk is very rich. Most people don't even know what it takes like today, because it's not so rich. But it was used--Jim used a lot of it in ice cream. He produced ice cream at the dairy in Concord.

IN 01:26:22:06

Nice description

OUT 01:26:56:21

IN 01:27:10:22

Typical day

OUT 01:27:31:12

IN 01:28:06:00

OK, not great

OUT 01:28:41:20



Then he would come home at noon. That's another thing that was so wonderful, many, many many of the farmers in Lincoln were still around. I mean they showed up at noontime. It was a real three square meals. And then the milking took place again at 5:00.

IN 01:28:40:14

①

One of the things about the cows I do remember is that periodically you would have really exciting times. I remember giving the children baths upstairs in the bathtub.

IN 01:29:02:00

Robert and Alice, and looking out, and the yard was full of heifers. They'd gotten out somehow or other. Well, of course, then we had herdsman, but it was hard to get those animals back in. You know, they're ornery creatures, and they don't do what you tell them to do.

OUT 01:29:10:20

②

My mother was with me one spring. And Jim had gone away, and he had left messages with the grown boys at this point that if it was a nice warm day, we were to let the animals out. Well, my mother had a dishcloth, and Alice was maybe six, and I had a dishcloth and Robert and Philip were there. And we did let the animals out. Well, it was a terrible mistake, because we had an awful hard time getting them into the pasture where they were supposed to go. And, of course, we were hysterical with laughter. When a cow leaves a barn in the spring--

IN 01:29:29:05

29:34:12

Very nice story!

IN 01:29:41:27

OUT

Cows got out

IN

[END OF SIDE A]

MD: --they really are eager to get out, and they literally do kick up their heels, and their tails are flying, and they slip, and it's a wild scene. So, I remember those episodes. Now, they appear to be fun, but at the time they were hair raising.

OUT 01:30:40:11

MD: I don't know whatever happened. The boys did something or other. Anyway it all got under control.

01:30:46:26

MD: The day would end--Jim often had meetings, school committee meetings, official greeting meetings, a lot of meetings, and it would--well, it did not end early. It was probably 10:00 o'clock again, and then start again the next morning at 4:00. That's why he would fall asleep. He'd be there and often fall asleep right after supper.

MD: I don't think so much have dreams about farming, but I do find myself wishing that--I'm so proud of the conservation movement that Lincoln has been involved in for a long time. That it was possible to really ingrain in the children, and in their parents, people who have come from out of town into Lincoln for the very reason of its conservation and open land to be more involved in it. To--well, I keep thinking that I would love to have a program in the town, where we all pitched in on the trails that we--and also clean the roadsides.

There was a group of those people who want to seem to want to save every single tree, every single twig. It's tragic, because Lincoln is not necessarily a beautiful town. It's less beautiful when all the trees and the brush grow up, but if we could trim along the walls, and not plant trees, but have vistas all through the town.

I feel badly when I go down Codman Road, and turn to the right by St. Ann's. You used to be able to look right across the field to the Mount Misery Hill, and you can't do that anymore. We all get attached to a healthy looking tree, and feel we can't cut it down. Around our town hall and Pierce Park, not very far in the future, we're going to come in to the center of the town, come down Lincoln Hill, and

IN 01:31:25:08

Too Rambling

IN 01:32:33:25

Vistas

OUT 01:33:12:16

want to go across in front of the post office, and we're not going to be able to see Pierce Hill. I mean the park. It's going to be cut out, and we lose these vistas of open sky that really I remember very very vividly when I first came. It was much more open.

OUT 01:33:45: -

MD: Oh, right. You see my family was stretched out. My twins were born when Robert was in college, and the barn was gone. So that Codman Farm is the closest that they are ever going to get to farming. And it means an enormous amount to them. Tom, with his boys is able to take Sam and Cole to Codman. They can see the cows. They can see the calf born. They can get up on the tractor. They can ride the wagons. They can see the hay being brought in, and we had chickens also, but unsuccessfully, but they really get a sense of what a farm is like. And it also is the woodpile, all the aspects. I think it's wonderful, but it's a terribly hard work.

LN
01:33:52:07

about Codman

And I think they have a hard time financially. Townspeople don't really know what we have. So many people's lives, all of our lives are far too full and busy, sad. But, if we could-- whether it's through the school or whether--I don't really know. I talk with Misty(?) Donaldson about it, and I know it's a hard hard work to make ends meet. And we ought to recognize it as such a treasure, that we all almost have a part of our tax maybe goes to Codman Farm. Some innovative idea needs to make it.

OUT 01:34:46:00

MD: It's been fun.
MD: Yes. Once when Jim was renting Codman Farm, we were asked to come and give a report on the farm, and so we would go to the big house and Dorothy and often Tom, her brother, would be

there, and it was--I always loved going. And it's strange, but what I remember almost more than anything else was the tea. Because Jim would talk with Dorothy. It was a semi serious conversation. It never really lasted very long, because everything was going smoothly, and the whole place was being used one way or another.

Nice, but not relevant

But the tea was a very elaborate tea. Dorothy had a specialty, sort of a flat corn cake. It was in the shape of leaves, and she would make those herself, but somebody else did all the rest. For years, I would also make those. You had a special cast iron pan, and you would pour the batter into--she told me how to do it, and what pan to have. I think I still have it somewhere, but I don't do it anymore. So, we would transact the business. Jim would do the talking. And after the report we would have the tea. And then socialize a little bit, and then we'd leave. And we did that.

In the farmhouse we had Byron Clemens(?), and Mrs. Littlefield kept house there. Byron Clemens was a very interesting man. I don't know what happened to him, but he and Mrs. Littlefield lived across the reservoir in a small house where there are a block of houses now. And I go by to see if I can see their little house that they live in. I don't know whether it got torn down or not. But Mrs. Littlefield told me that--when we knew Byron, he was a hunchback. He helped us, and he lived with us. You asked me if we had anyone living in the house, and we did have Byron Clemens living with us for a while.

She said he was over six feet when she first knew him. Now, what happened to him,

whether he just had a form of osteo or whether he had a paralysis or what happened, we never knew but one Sunday afternoon when you go down Trapelo Road, before you get to the farmhouse, you'll see a group of pine trees. Well, one Sunday afternoon Jim and Byron Clemens brought those pine trees from down in back of the farm, and planted them.

He wouldn't come home. I want him to come back, it was late, but he and Byron did it together, and then Byron planted a peach stone, and so on the other side of the trees is the peach tree that grew from Byron Clemens' stone. But they lived in the Codman farmhouse, and what their story was--she was always known as Mrs. Littlefield, and he was Mr. Clemens. I would loved to have know what their relationship was, and how it developed and what happened to him, but it was never something that one felt could be asked.

Not relevant

MD: He worked, and he was very very loyal, and it was extremely said, as a matter of fact, the time came when we could no longer--Mrs. Littlefield died. And Byron stayed there by himself a while, and then it was necessary for us to make a change. He couldn't--we had to get somebody else in there. And so he went to live at Billerica, not Billerica, that's where the prison is. There's a hospital. I'll have to get the name of that. He hated to go. I had three children. I couldn't take care of him. And he said, "I'll never leave this place. I'll never see anyone." And the director told us not to come for two weeks to let him settle in, and he died during that two weeks' time.

MD: Oh, she was a prim old maid. Yeah. And the place was

shabby, really shabby, but, of course, you couldn't deny the handsome qualities of the house. But she was not a housekeeper. And she was penurious, and she dominated her brother. Tom was a lovely guy, and he would go into Boston. They had a residence in Boston. He was a great moviegoer. He loved to go to the theaters. That was his escape to go into town to the movies.

About Dorothy Codman

But Dorothy, I think, it was almost too bad. She obviously had a very deep love for the community, and was generous hearted, but it didn't show during her life, as it has been shown to us since she died. The swimming pool and the good will of their trustees, they are very generous. But she was pretty straightlaced, and kept very much to herself, somewhat of a hypochondriac too. But I can't go too deeply into--

MD: Not that I know of in the town, no. The garden was abandoned, and it was not in good shape.

MD: Well, the brother, Ogden Codman, was a pretty gay blade, I think. He was in Paris quite a bit of the time. I don't know. I think it's very easy for people not to marry if they get to a certain point, and Dorothy, as I say, was quite often ill. I mean our appointments would be canceled--this is all coming back to me now--would be canceled because she was not well. But the Codman house, and the family didn't feature very much in the town to my recollection.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

✓ Exterior shots/pans of house, hill