

Q: The first question I'm going to ask, it's a group of questions, are about your family and how your family came to Lincoln. Could you start by saying who you are, who your dad is, who your mom is?

A: My name is Joseph Cotoni, junior. My dad obviously is Joseph Cotoni, senior. My mother is Sandra (?) Cotoni. I have a brother Arthur, a sister Diane. And my grandparents actually moved to Lincoln in the early 1900s at a farm over on Mill Street which abuts the sanitary landfill. And my dad and his brothers ran the farm quite a number of years until the brothers were old enough to do other things. One brother chose to operate a piggery in Peabody and the other brothers and sisters went on to do their things. My dad stayed at the farm and ran the vegetable farm and the hog farm. And my sister now lives in Waltham, my brother lives in Lincoln, was on the fire department.

Q: Can you describe the farm on Mill Street?

A: It's about a 12 acre farm. We used to raise roughly around 500 hogs. And we used to raise all kinds of vegetables and bring them into the market at Faneuil Hall daily. A couple of my aunts and my mother and my sister and myself used to work on the farm before and after school to get things ready. My

Establishing  
Family Background

IN 00:01:14:00

OUT 24:27

OUT 37:11

IN 00:01:42:00

IN 00:01:52:00  
OUT

IN 2:06:14  
(Faneuil Hall)

OUT 2:18:22

02:34:00 IN - DAD  
(TRASH  
pick up)

dad also had the contract for garbage pickup in the town of Lincoln so he used to head out real early in the morning and get that done before he started his chores around the farm for the day.

OUT 2:44:19

Q: Can you describe what the physical layout of the farm was, the buildings and...?

A: We had a big old farm house which was right at the top of the driveway as you came in. It was a real long driveway. And right next to the house, probably 50 feet away, used to be an old wooden barn. And then later on in years my dad made a big three car cement block garage with an apartment above which one of my aunts and uncles lived in. And then down away from the main house, about maybe 1500 feet was all the pig houses and pig yards and what not. The farm was about 12 and a half acres. And probably the hog area took up maybe two acres or so. And there were all kind of pens and buildings and brooder houses and what not.

✓

Q: You mentioned that you also had another part of the farm which was vegetables?

A: Vegetables. We used to grow corn and squash and lettuce and you name it. Just any kind of vegetable. Radishes, beets, celery. And we used to farm it and used to make up a load to take into Faneuil Hall every night and we used to sell. At first

IN .03:49:00 CLOSEUP  
OUT 03:58:00

when I was real small we used to sell right off the truck to vendors in the market. Then over the years you'd just take it in there and dump it all in one place. A guy would buy it and then after they sold it all they'd send you a check in the mail a couple of days later.

IN: 04:44:00

BACKGROUND

It was about 1900 my grandfather and grandmother came over to this country from Italy and settled on Mill Street on this farm and proceeded to raise vegetables. And then they had hogs and then chickens. And this is how they got their income, was by raising the animals and then selling them off and keeping the family going. Over the years my father worked on the farm and then over the years as my grandparents got older my father actually took over the operation of the farm. And then when my grandparents died he inherited the property and the business and everything.



OUT: 5:27:00

IN 00:05:44:15  
6-7 years old  
chores

Q: Could you just go the one next generation?

A: As children when we were six, seven years old, myself and my sister and my brother-- my brother not so much because he was about seven years younger-- we had various chores to do before school, after school and weekends. It seemed like it never ended. And I must say I really didn't enjoy it that much later on in life. In the beginning it was fun but later on in life, as I got to be a teenager, I thought



TU 05:00:00

Hard work

OK -  
(NOT GREAT)

OUT 6:24:00

Never ended



Went into  
Automotive  
00:06:23:28

it was too hard a work. So when I was 17 I kind of went out on my own and went into the automotive field.

Q: I was going to ask a couple of questions about actual jobs, a description of jobs. Can you tell me what would be your dad's work on the farm? You said his day started very early and he would be collecting the garbage and then he would...?

A: He would start out about 4:00 in the morning by going through the town of Lincoln to each individual home and picking up the garbage for the pigs. He also drove a bus for Doherty's garage. So he would be through his garbage route about 6:30, 7:00, he'd go drive a bus, then he'd come home, clean off the garbage he had just picked up off the truck. And then he would start his planting and

harrowing and plowing and whatever they had to do for the day for the vegetables. Then after they got everything ready for the market usually around 3:00 or 4:00 in the afternoon he would go down and feed the hogs and get them all settled for the day. And then around 6:00 we'd head off into Boston after the produce was all packed on the truck. We'd head off into Boston to sell it or whatever, get rid of it. And usually we'd return home around 9:00 at night and go to bed and start all over the next day.

IN 6:52

MORE...  
Garbage



OUT 7:02:07

Father's  
typical day  
(Hard!)

OUT 00:07:56:15

Q: What kind of work did your mother do that was farm related?

A: My mom used to do basically the same stuff my father did. She'd go down and if the pigs had to be cleaned she would clean them. She would feed them, water them, whatever. And then she would work in the fields along with two of my aunts. Same thing. Planting, getting the produce ready to go to the market. What we used to have to do was pick all the produce, what we were going to take to the market that day, and then bring it into a wash house and wash and clean everything and then pack it into wooden bushel boxes and get it ready. Some of the things you would have to put ice on to keep it fresh. Then we'd load it on the truck just before it was ready to go to the market.

Q: Where did your pigs come from that you started with? You just were able to keep your own...?

A: My grandfather bought some hogs from another farmer in the area and I can't even tell you who because I don't know. But as he bought them he would breed his own pigs. And then over the years they would just keep breeding and breeding. And then usually every other Monday they would put about 15 hogs on the truck. When they were raised to about 200 pounds they would put about 15 hogs on a truck and they would truck them to Somerville

IN 08:07

Daily  
Schedule  
(Women)

OUT 00:08:25:14

HOG  
HISTORY

IN 9:28:00

OUT 9:48 INCOME  
59.69¢  
per lb.

packing house where they would be slaughtered. And they used to get anywhere from 59, 69 cents a pound. Some days it was up higher, some days it was a little lower. But that's how they got their income to keep the farm going,



Q: The next section is what we call highlights and lowlights, memorable events at your farm. For example, maybe a really good year or a really bad year. Or just some farm memory that you want to share with us. Some people talked about--

MEMORIES

A: Some of the memories I have, I know we used to have a lot of fun on the farm. But all the memories I have of the farm are really good, to be honest with you. My dad has some memories that he's told me about that they used to have a chicken house with about 4-500 chickens in it and in the '38 hurricane the chicken house just got completely blown away and they lost all the chickens that were in it. Probably that might have been maybe the worst



thing that's happened. But I can't ever remember anything but good. I mean we used to have a lot of fun. Nothing really on the down stroke about it, other than you kind of slaved all day long. But at the end of the day it was fun to just sit back and relaxed.

Q: So in terms of the standard of living, you were able to maintain because in your memory there

TN 10:37:00 138 HURRICANE  
(chicken house)

'38 Hurricane

OUT 10:48:00

weren't years where people talk about bad years for crops or (simultaneous conversation).

A: No, everything was really consistent.

There were a few years that might have been bad but they grew so many things that one thing would kind of weigh off the other. So if they knew they had a bad crop of corn or something like that they would just cut it down and feed it to the pigs as feed and then go on to maybe a good crop of squash or celery or something to that effect. Or lettuce, whatever it happened to be. So one weighed out the other. And they never, the produce they brought to market, they never really brought too much of the same thing every day unless they were notified by the vendors in there that we need more lettuce or we need more radishes, whatever.

They used to call up say, "Bring us this, bring us that. Don't bring us this or don't bring us that because we have too much of it." And many nights we used to go into Boston with a load of produce and come back out with a bigger load of produce that was bad left over from other vendors in there. And they knew my father had hogs so they used to give it to him as feed for the hogs.

Q: I had an experience chasing one of the hogs at Codman that got out on Codman Road one day. And I was the only person there chasing it

IN 00:11:28:25

No real  
BAD YEARS -  
FED CROPS TO PIGS

Balanced

OUT 00:11:51:26

down. Do you have memories of things like that (simultaneous conversation).

A: Pigs used to get out. The pigs used to get out quite often. They'd dig a hole under the fence or they'd break a board or something. But my father had two dogs that would actually, I mean if they got out in the middle of the night the two dogs would actually round up the pigs and they would bark so much we knew something was wrong. And we used to be out there, there'd be mud a foot deep or snow two feet deep trying to corral these hogs back into their pens. But you know, there's a little trick to catching a small pig is you try to kick their feet out from under them and then let them roll over and grab them. And I remember they had a festival or something at DeCordova once where they greased up some pigs and I think my brother and I were the only ones that could catch them. Because if you kick the feet out from under them then you knew how to grab them.



JN 12:49 CATCHING HOGS STORY

FUNNY PIG STORY

JN 13:10 trick to catching HOGS

Good

00:13:34:08

out 13:38

One of the things we used to do for fun on the farm, when I was like seven years old, of course my uncles used to take all their old cars and just dump them on the property up there. And one of the things I used to like to do was to get them running. And we used to just race all around the farm with them and we'd have demolition derbies with my brother and



sister and we just had a great old time doing that. Things like that. And then on Sundays used to be the gathering place when my grandparents were like. We had like 82 cousins and every Sunday afternoon I think all 82 of them would show up and we'd play baseball in the fields and tractor rides and what not. It just used to be a grand old time.

Q: Some of the farmers that we've talked to have mentioned that there was help available from some of the other farmers in town. If you had a problem you might-- do you have recollections of that? Of the interdependence?

A: The other farmers, we'd all help each other out. I can remember especially the Panettas (?) on route 2, they used to borrow equipment back and forth from my dad. And Harry Cook's stand which used to be on 2A where the national park is now, they used to lend equipment back and forth. And if he was short or needed some land to grow something on right away they'd harrow it up for him and let him bring the seed over. They'd just help each other out with all that kind of stuff. It was great. Everybody used to go back and forth and visit. It was fun.

Q: Do you have any recollection of the Denormandy's (?) fire that burned down? I ask that

IN 14:53

Farmers  
Helping  
Each OTHER  
R+ 2A

OUT  
15:34



because there was some discussion about how people did come.

IN 15:41:00 DENORMANDY FIRE

FATHER HELPED

A: I was at the Denormandy fire when it burned. I was probably a little bit young to remember a lot of it. My dad knows quite a bit about it because he was actually there as a fire fighter. And they lost all those cows and everything and it was pretty devastating. But everybody rallied right back and the place was cleaned out and rebuilt back up in a short period of time.

OUT 16:12

Q: The next section is about the farming character of Lincoln, the town. And you already talked about the relationships between the farmers. On Mill Street in your part of town were you the only farm or were there other farms on Mill Street?

OTHER FARMS IN NORTH LINCOLN

A: We were, as I can recall, where the vocational school is now, but that was really Lexington, just a little part of that is Lincoln. Used to be a corn field. Lawson's farm stand, which is on the other end of Mill Street, they used to raise vegetables. Not so much for the market but to sell in their own road side stand. They used to raise turkeys. They used to have a big cider mill and apple orchard. And on the other side, which is actually not on Mill Street-- excuse me. Frank Domicelli (?) used to have a little bit of a farm. Not a great big one but they used to raise corn and they used to have a few

cows over there. They abutted my dad's property. And then Ralph Damico, (?) who owns a home at the corner of my dad's driveway, used to have some acres of land in there where they raised corn and squash and cucumbers but not so much for bringing into the market or anything. They just used to put it on a road stand like type of thing.

Q: Can you talk a little bit about the decision that your family made to stop farming? You mentioned it was in two parts. First you stopped with the vegetable and then...

A: My dad decided to stop the farm when the vegetables-- actually what really started a lot of it was when Faneuil Hall started to change. All the vendors used to start to dissipate in there. There was just nobody left to buy the produce any more. So he was selling to road side stands for a while. And then finally he just kind of downsized. And then finally just did away with all the produce. And by that time he had built up a good-- he was driving a school bus and he was on the fire department and everything. So he still had a good income coming in. And he kept the hogs until he was about 64 or 5 years old.

And then he finally ended up actually, I think, losing the garbage contract for the town of Lincoln. And that's when he decided to get rid of everything. At one point he was the only guy around that would

IN: 17:59

STOPPING FARMING

CHANGE IN FANEUIL HALL

Did away with produce

OUT 00:18:26:07

IN 00:18:42:13

Lost garbage contract



take the garbage. He would go out and pick it up. And then they got to the point where they felt that they could mix it in with the trash and burn it. So there was no need for a garbage collector any more.



OUT 19:11:08

So when he got 65 he retired. He still drove a school bus till he was 70. And he was on the fire department. Still does the crossing guard.

Q: Did you think when you were growing up that you were going to do what your dad did?

IN - 19:30

NEXT GENERATION NOT FARMING

A: Not at all. No, when I was growing up I really, I enjoyed the farm work when I was younger but as I got older I said boy, this is really not something I want to do for the rest of my life. So I went on to automotive school and then eventually started working for Bill Doherty. And then eventually went in on my own business.



OUT 19:40

OUT 00:19:51:00

OTHER PIGGERIES (Research)

The other piggeries in town, Kennedy's was mostly in Waltham but some of his piggery was in Lincoln. And he had a great big pig farm. He used to raise like 3,000 hogs. And he used to have garbage contracts for probably 15 different cities and towns. And the trucks used to just go up there daily. We used to go over there and buy garbage from him at least once a day, sometimes twice a day depending on the need for feed. Another big piggery in Lincoln at the time was Silver Brothers which is just about at the end of Bedford Road where 2A is. Where

Virginia Road, 2A and Bedford Road all meet. That used to be a big hog farm in there too.

As far as other piggeries in Lincoln, there used to be one on Old Bedford Road which was kind of Lincoln Concord. It was called Anderson Farms. And then I think the Boyce's had pigs on Old Sudbury Road. Those are really the only ones I can remember. I don't know too much about their operations but they were a lot bigger than we were, a lot bigger.

Q: The 12 acres that was the farm, is that still your dad's land or has that been broken up?

A: No. My dad sold the land about five or six years ago and they moved to the Ryan Estates. And now it's been developed as two or three great big homes in there. There is still some open land. There's probably six or eight acres that are still open because it was wet land. But the person that bought it put up three big homes in there and it looks pretty nice in there.

TN: 21:21:00

DAD  
SOLD THE  
LAND

3 big homes

OUT: 21:47

Q: I guess we've been asking people if you've got any memories of Codman farm.

A: Not really. The only thing that I can really recollect about Codman farm was that where the Mobil station is now, Doherty's Garage, that just used to be all cow pasture, that whole area there. And the corner where the fire station is. Back in, I think it was

1966 is when Doherty's built that Mobil station there and that's basically when they did away with the cow pasture and put it down the other end.

Q: I guess what I'd like is if there's anything you want to say about farming as a way of life. It sounds as though you felt it was hard. But if you want to say something about farming as a way of life.

A: The farming, it was a hard business to do because you had to really know when to pick the vegetables and when not to pick them. But it was fun, it was interesting. It's not something, like I say, I'd want to do for the rest of my life. But a lot of people do and a lot of people still do it. And at one time there used to be quite a few farms in town. Cooks used to have a big farm with many, many immigrants working on the property. And a guy by the name of Bean used to have a big farm in the back of us and they raised all kinds of vegetables and stuff. But they also only raised this stuff for their own road side stands. They did not sell it in Boston or anything like that. But it was a tough life because you really had to keep right on top of it. You worried about whether it rained too much or didn't rain enough, if you put the right amount of fertilizer so you wouldn't let all the produce die or whatever. But it was interesting, it was fun and we made it.

IN 22:58.00 "WAY OF LIFE"

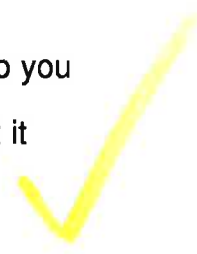
OUT 23:10

IN 23:40

TOUGH LIFE

HARD AS A WAY OF LIFE, BUT FUN (SMILE)

END 24:02



Q: Thoughts about what the future of farming might be in a town like Lincoln?

A: In a town like Lincoln, boy, I don't know. I think there's not much left. It's everybody's just selling off to these developers. Unless there's still some land on Old Sudbury Road that I believe Roy McDowell (?) owns now. And Manley Boyce, I think, still has a little bit of land but not too much. But the Boyces, they used to own a big, big farm over there and they sold that off and made a road and they developed that. The Bowls (?) used to have a big farm. Shumakers (?) used to have a big farm over in that area and it's all houses now. So I don't really see much more farming in Lincoln other than Flints farm. And of course Codman farm. But theirs is not really produce, it's just cattle and what not.

Q: How that must have felt for you when your father basically closed down the farm and sold the land.

A: Actually I was pretty happy when my father did so because I felt he was working too hard. And I understand that he had to, to raise the family and everything. But he was really working too hard and there was enough income from the other jobs to keep the family going. And as we were growing older we were kind of working for ourselves, the kids. So we were kind of self supportive at that point. We didn't

FUTURE OF FARMING

JN 24:07

24:16

NOT MUCH LEFT SELLING TO DEVELOPERS

HAPPY WHEN FARM SOLD

JN 25:48

MADE \$1,000 ALL DAY

make much money when we worked on the farm. We used to work all day long for a dollar. And it was ... (inaudible). We used to save every bit of it. We wouldn't spend it because there wasn't too much of it.

HAPPY  
WHEN FATHER  
GAVE IT UP

But as we got older and we got jobs and we kind of supported ourselves we kind of felt that it was time for him to sit back and relax. So we were pretty happy when he gave it up.

OUT 26:13

Q: Do you think if he were here he would say that he's happy that he made that decision?

A: I'm sure he is. He probably would never admit it but I'm sure my dad was happy he did that too. Because it was tough. I mean he used to get up at, like I say, 4:00 in the morning. And my sister and I would get up and go down to the, and have to clean out the pigs in the brooder house before we went to school. And I mean we used to go to school some mornings, the kids didn't really want to sit next to us because we didn't smell that good. But it was something we had to do. And we had many, many friends that all they wanted to do was to come over the farm and go down and hang around the pig yard. So it wasn't as if they shunt us off or anything like that. So it was good.

TN: 26:25

TOUCH  
WORK  
EARLY HOURS  
BEFORE SCHOOL  
"SMELLY."

"FRIENDS"  
HANGING  
AROUND  
PIGS

OUT 26:58

Q: Is there something else you'd like to say? Any memories you have or any comments you want



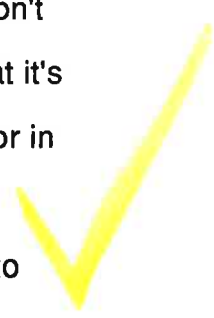
to make that we haven't already asked you, we'd love to hear it.

IN  
27:11/900

Hand  
WORK  
KIDS  
TODAY  
DON'T  
GET TO  
DO IT -

OUT IN RAIN  
OR SNOW

A: Not really. It's unfortunate, I think it's unfortunate that some of the kids don't get to do what we did back then. I mean today everything is-- and there's nothing wrong with it but everything is computers and this and that. And they really don't have to go out and really work and find out what it's like to be out there in the hot sun or in the rain or in the snow. I mean we used to have to, when it snowed we'd have to go down and we'd have to shovel every bit of snow so that the pigs could get at their food. So I mean it wasn't an easy chore. But it was fun. I mean it was for a while. For a while it was fun. We enjoyed it. It was fun.



Q: I think sometimes people like us who never lived on a farm have an idealized vision of what farm life is like.

A: Farm life is a lot of work, a lot of hard work. And I mean over the years when my father started to buy tractors and machinery that was motorized it made things a lot easier. But before that we had a horse and a wagon that used to have to carry all the vegetables and feed all the pigs by hand and with a shovel. Then when he got the tractor and everything we were able to just do it with the loader and it made things a lot easier, a lot simpler.

OUT  
27:56

TN  
28:17

Hand  
WORK

28:35

we had a  
horse...

then got  
a tractor

28:51

Q: I think that's a wrap. Thank you very much.  
That was wonderful.  
[end of interview]