

REEL
9
REEL
11 OVERFLOW

Q: Could you start out and just let me know a little bit about the origins of your farm, how that came into being.

IN 00:00:48:26

OUT 57:22

A: To the best of my knowledge, my great grandfather came over here in approximately 1850 from Ireland and bought the farm. And they started it there and raised all of my ancestors as I know them today. And became a vegetable farm mostly, but they had cattle and they had upwards of 500 pigs. Plus all the other animals, I guess, that a farm would encompass in the days of horses.

IN 00:01:04:15

OUT 00:01:12:50

Q: Why don't you tell me again the story of your farm.

IN 00:01:50:07

OUT 02:07:02

A: To the best of my knowledge approximately 1850 my great grandfather came over from Ireland and bought the farm. At that time it then became a vegetable farm plus animals as they did have in that time. When I was old enough to remember they had upwards of 500 pigs, they had 20 or 30 cattle, or cows rather, that I remember them milking. And they used to sell the milk to Hoods which later went to Stone's Dairy in Waltham which is now long gone. It's Polaroid company. And then they completely came into vegetable or truck farm in my later days, or earlier days as it would be.

OUT 00:02:35:25

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14
21

Q: Why don't you tell me a little bit about where your farm was located and how many acres there were and situate it for people as to where in town it was.

IN 00:02:56:14

A: The farm that I'm talking about, the Boyce farm, is located in south Lincoln off of Old Sudbury Road and it's the back side of Drumlin farm. And if you walk through Drumlin farm today and you go down through a field called Boyce field, that was our farm. And if you continued on through that you would come to the Van Leer (?) property which probably most people know where it is. It took approximately, I think it was 100 to 120 acres.

OUT 00:03:11:02

IN 00:03:21:02

And a portion of the railroad track which is on route 117, I've been told by my great aunt that that was sold to the railroad way back. And so then as time goes where Boyce Farm Road is, that was where the piggery was, that was sold for housing. And then the remainder of the farm, except for the few acres I have, is sold to Drumlin farm. So it's always be farming. So that's where the farm was, and is.

OUT 00:03:48:21

Q: Could you describe a little more about what buildings were on the farm, how many barns you might have had. What did it look like if you were describing it to someone? If you know as far back as when your grandfather first bought it.

IN 00:04:27:28

*Description of farm
Too detailed*

A: When I first became old enough to go over to the farm and sort of play around, as I called it, but work, we had several cattles. We had a big barn. We had equipment sheds. We had a packing house. A wash shed which was where the trucks would back in and they'd bring the vegetables and what not. And then behind that there was several houses where the pigs were all living and what not. And they had about 30 or 40 acres that was their part. Then we had horses. My early days I remember the horses. But when I was probably eight or ten years old we became mechanized and had tractors which was then fun to work on the farm.

IN 00:05:20:27

About all relatives living on farm - then farm was sold

He bought back his own house -

OUT 00:05:54:22

So that's about what I remember. The only other thing I remember is my uncles and my aunts and everybody, they all had houses on the property as we were growing up. So everybody kind of lived on the farm. And now that's been sold. One house was sold to the Goldens. Probably everybody knows Diana Golden. She bought my aunt's house. And then the HARRISES live in my grandfather's house. And I have bought back the old house which was where all of my ancestors were born. So that's where I presently live, which is kind of nice. I don't know if that's good or bad.

Q: Can you tell me in a little more detail what crops were grown on the farm in either your

grandfather or your father's time, and what animals you may have raised. You already spoke about the pigs and the cows. Can you tell me a little bit more about what vegetables or crops you had?

A: As I was growing up on the farm and starting to learn a little bit about it we had a variety of vegetables that we grew. And we used to grow all kinds of squashes which would be butternut and blue hubbard and acorn squash and summer squash. I don't believe zucchini was around at that time. And we had carrots and parsnips and corn and spinach. A great deal of spinach. In fact, we were written up at one time in a calendar, I remember, and it had a picture of the spinach field which was really nice with everybody working in it. And not too many tomatoes or things like that other than for our own consumption. But a lot of corn. And beets, I remember that.

IN 00:06:28:11

Crops

Good, concise

OUT 00:06:52:16

IN 00:07:08:19

Nice

OUT 00:07:20:02

Just about any vegetable you can think of that would grow in this part of the country we had. We used to supply, we didn't supply but one of our outlets we went to was the First National stores in Somerville. And then we used to go to both, which I thought was a lot of fun, to a Cambridge market which was down at the end of route 2 in the Cambridge rotary. And then we went to Boston, the Boston market. So to me that was quite a venture

and quite fun, to be able to go into those and watch everybody sell their produce and so-called auction them off in the markets. So I enjoyed that.

00:07:49:25

Q: -- how you sold the produce. Also maybe you could talk a little bit about, was your grandfather still using horses and carriages at that time? Or was he starting to use trucks?

A: We were using trucks.

Q: Just talk about how you sold produce.

IN 00:08:18:25

A: We used to, when we'd bring the produce up from the fields we'd bring them into the packing house or the wash house where we'd sort everything out and pack them into the crates and load up the truck. In the earlier days they had horse and buggies, which I don't remember. But I remember having the horses on the property but not to take them to market. That would be a one to two day venture. They would go to the Boston market in the horse and buggy, or horse and wagon, with a load and come back the next day. And I have a funny feeling that's how my grandfather met my grandmother but I'm not sure. Because she came from in town. She was born in Dorchester.

Process of
bringing crops
to market

OUT 00:08:50:26

But anyway, we'd go and load the trucks up and we'd go to the First National warehouse which was in Somerville and which would distribute to the smaller stores around town. And the other times we

*Auction
at Alewife*

would go to a market in Cambridge which was at the end of route 2, Alewife Brook Parkway area or the rotary circle, and there was like an auction there where they had a Cambridge open air market. And then we'd go to the Boston market, as everybody knows today. But it was a little bit different. It was underneath where the overpass is now of route 93. And that was a great lot of fun.

Boston market

That was a big deal just to get out and go that far away and watch all the transactions of everybody and people coming from New York and what not to sell their produce. And here we were sitting right there so that was quite enjoyable. Most of the produce that we had that we'd take to the big stores would be squash of all kinds and corn, spinach, lettuce and cabbage, carrots, parsnips, some beets. And basically that's about it that I can remember right now. Did I ruin it?

OUT 00:09:51:29

Q: That was perfect. In addition to members of the family you must have had some other (simultaneous conversation) worked on the farm. Could you talk a little bit about who they were and where they were hired from?

A: We had mostly, in my younger days I remember mostly the family members that were working on the farm. But as I was getting older, we'll say eight to ten years old and I start to get out in the

IN 00:10:41:08

OUT 00:10:49:00

fields a little bit there was a lot of children or boys-- they weren't boys, I guess they were men. They would be coming from Waltham and the surrounding towns. We would pick them up to work there. |

Later on as help got harder and harder to get and people were going to school more, and especially during the school days, we would borrow some help from a neighboring farm which was Mr. Shumaker. ✓

And Mr. Shumaker had help that he would get from the different places like Puerto Rico and what not. And we would all kind of share the help | which was really nice. And I remember that. Later on as things went down we started doing away from that because we were downsizing and things were getting too expensive to farm in this part of the country and went back, it seemed to be, to the family. So that's about what I remember on that. I couldn't think of the word I wanted.

Q: Can you talk a little bit about kinds of chores you as children growing up on the farm had to do and what that was like? Do you have brothers and sisters?

A: No, I'm an only child.

Q: Maybe you could talk a little bit about what your chores were growing up and maybe how old you were when you did them.

IN 00:11:02:19

Sharing farm hands

OUT 00:11:28:19

A: When I was growing up on the farm, or actually I lived across the street from the farm at the time, and I would go to school. I went to Lincoln schools. And after I got home from school the normal day would be to go over to the farm and help until dusk pulling vegetables or packing things and what not. I had a little bit of an insight being a family member so I used to get to drive the tractor. Which didn't make all of the other kids very happy. And we had a few kids after me, like the fire chief in Lincoln, Richard Goddard, and Warren Mead across the street and what not. They'd be over there too and do a little driving, do a little work and I think they all had fun.

IN 00:13:05:07

Nice smile

OUT 00:13:39:24

I think most of the kids in that part of town worked on the farm. But mostly we would be getting the vegetables in in the fall. In the summer time or the spring or something after planting-- I didn't do much planting because I was too young and I don't think I could probably make the row straight enough and they wanted to make sure the seeds were in the ground properly. But they let me do the weeding after they showed me how to weed. So I got to do a lot of that. But mostly I drove the tractor and different things like that. So I was quite happy with that job. I hated to see it disappear, have times change.

IN 00:13:41:20

Left farm to
work for Richardson's
Drug - Don't realize...

OUT 00:13:58:07

But I think I kind of left the farm to go to work for Richardson's drug store in Concord for, I'm guessing, 35 or 65 cents an hour or something. And that was big money at that time. So off to bigger and better things, I guess, but not really. You know, you don't realize it till later. So now I'm back on the farm doing the chores that they all did, fixing windows, painting houses. Or painting and doing what not and trying to keep the land from being overrun by coyotes and what not. And here we are. So that's my chores.

Q: Some of these folks I've talked to already, some of their memories of what we call highlights and lowlights, particular things that might have happened on the farm. Anything that you can recall from your own experience or from stories that you might have heard from your grandfather perhaps or your father about anything that had occurred on the farm that was particularly great or particularly disastrous. Some people have talked about the hurricane of '38 which was fairly destructive on some of the farms or again about the fire at Denormandy's barn or anything of that sort that you can tell us about.

IN 00:15:08:26

A: Growing up on the farm was probably very rewarding, I think. You got real good work, you got fresh air and my grandmother would always make dinner and breakfast for everybody. Whether you're

OUT 00:15:21:16

a neighbor or working on the farm or if you came down to mow her grass, whatever you do she always had something for you to eat. One of the things I forgot during the winter, we had what they call a box mill. We used to cut down the pine trees and we'd make all the boxes in the winter. So you'd be outside and you'd have something to do at all times. You'd really feel good. Plus if you paid attention you could learn a little bit of a trade no matter where you went because after they finished making the boxes they'd be fixing windows or doing something else.

IN 00:15:31:24

*Chores in winter
Making boxes*

OUT 00:15:54:19

And then you'd meet all the interesting people in town that would come to visit or you would visit or your folks would know. One thing I kind of forgot was when I was real young, when we still had the cattle, or the cows rather, can't call them cattle, they were milking cows, we used to get the hay. And we'd use the pitchforks in the field, bring the hay in and after the horse we had a tractor that would pull the hay up in and push it up into the hay mow (?). And then just as I was old enough to drive a tractor and what not Mr. Flint, Warren Flint, used to come down. He had his fancy new baling machine and that was really something to watch that. So I got to meet the Flints real well, which are great people.

OUT 00:16:39:06

And then we had got rid of all of our cows and what not, I believe, and then I had some friends that I

was growing up a little bit, I must have been 16ish or so, or better, and there was a tragic fire in Lincoln at Denormandy's barn. And the people that were living in there at the time were Murrays. And I had just got to know them. That was a real tragedy. All the cattle died. I remember them just taking care of that. That was just a terrible scene and it was so fortunate that nothing like that ever happened to us. Other than that all the other farmers around town, there was Sherman, Everett Sherman, who was a neighbor and became the dispatcher on the Lincoln fire and police later in his life.

As I mentioned before, the Shumakers and the Cotonis on the other side of town. There was the Kennedys which is now Polaroid or something like that. And there was Griggs and Briggs, there was all kinds of people I got to meet which all now people know the names because of some development of some nature but maybe they never knew the people.

But there was just, I think, a real full life growing up on a farm. And it's something you'd like to do all your life if you could support yourself properly. It was just very good. I have no bad memories other than maybe hard work. And now that I think about it, it was good work, so it's not a bad memory.

Q: Thank you. That was really nice.

A: Hay and all of that.

IN 00:16:53:06

De Normandie fire

OUT 00:17:14:25

IN 00:17:49:15

*About quality of life
GOOD*

OUT 00:18:08:15



Q: You did already talk a little bit about the other farms. Can you talk a little bit about the relationship that your father might have had with some of the other farmers in town, how they helped each other and what kind of things you would do for each other.

A: When we were in farming, not that I farmed forever so I'm not talking like an old experienced farm hand, but when I was a kid riding around with my grandfather and working on the farm and what not we'd visit all of the other farms to see what everybody was doing. Whether it would be in Concord, we went up to Concord and everybody knows the farms on route 2, Mendeliers (?) and what not. And we'd see how their things are growing and then we'd go over to Nine Acre Corner where the golf course is which was Andy Boy (?) farms at the time. And that would be a great big celery field and all kinds of things like that.

We'd make the corner and come back to Shumakers and, like I said, Everett Sherman and see what's what. And if he had a broken down tractor or plow my grandfather would have a plow for him to use. And then when we'd have a problem Gus Shumaker would send a man in his tractor down to help us out. So I think you learned how to share and get along with everybody and so it was really a

IN 00:18:51:22

OUT 00:19:01:13

IN 00:19:28:00

About helping each other
GOOD



learning experience right there that should have been paid attention to. And I don't think people do that today. If somebody seems to have a problem they say, "Good, you'll go by them." And before it wasn't. You gave a hand and helped out wherever you could. ✓

OUT 00:19:59:07

There were a lot of other farms. In Waltham there was one by the name of Connie Smith who eventually moved to Lincoln and he lived on the corner of Fair (?) Road and 126 and he probably had the nicest little farm and flowers. Everybody probably knows who I'm talking about if you've lived in Lincoln the last 30 years. You just met the nicest people. And he used to, he has an insurance company now in Waltham now. But things like that. There was just great people and great experiences. I don't know if that was enough.

IN 00:20:24:29

OUT 00:20:28:28

Q: That was just fine.

A: I can't think of all the names of people I want to when I'm speaking.

Q: I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about the circumstances that led to your father deciding to give up the farm or give up farming. What contributed to his decision and what was that like for your family and for you personally?

A: As time grew on and like I had mentioned that I went to Richardson's drug store for my big job.

This is right at the end of high school. Things in the farming industry in Massachusetts, I guess, and the surrounding states was getting more expensive to operate and equipment was getting more expensive and people were starting to move in and raising the tax rates a little bit and what not. So it was getting kind of costly to stay in the farming. And I know my grandfather-- you're probably going to say I shouldn't be telling you this but my grandfather at one point, this is, I forget, early 60s, and I had just opened up a service station in Acton at this time, and he said, "Manley, would you like to have the farm?"

IN 00:22:05:25

Story of
grandfather
offering farm

He says, "I'm getting kind of old and it's getting pretty expensive." And he said, "I'd like to know if you'd like it." And I said, "I'm doing pretty good in the service station." You remember the farm as being hard work. You don't remember it as being saving the beautiful land that it is and everything and what you can do out of it. And I said, "No, I'm pretty content now." So he said, "I don't want to see it go to development," he said, "So I'm going to see if Aububon society will buy a piece of it." Which he did. But prior to that he sold about 30 acres where Boyce Farm Road is for houses in order for him to continue farming for several more years.

OUT 00:23:00:06

And then as time progressed that's when he offered the farm to myself who said, "No, I don't want

IN 00:23:09:19

to farm any more, I'll stay doing what I'm doing." And it went to Drumlin Farm. Which was the best thing that could have happened because the space should be always conservation type land or farm use of some nature. It shouldn't be built on. It should be open for people to enjoy. So that part of it I'm very happy. And I'm fortunate that I was able to buy back a portion of the farm and the old farm house and live there and enjoy the land that's out back. So I'm pretty happy on that. But I wish that, you always say if you could look ahead that you'd be doing something different. And I certainly would have kept it if I could have. But you just don't know what's going to happen down the road. But I think I've got the best of everything right now so I'm pretty happy.

Buying back the house

OUT 00:23:36:14

OUT 00:23:52:18

IN 00:24:01:08

OUT 00:24:06:25

But it was really going to disappear. Then when it did disappear it was too late.

Q: Can you repeat that for us again because I actually paused during that.

A: I was thinking when it was offered to me and I didn't take it because I was happy but I never thought that it was not going to be there or that my grandfolks were going to pass away. I just all the time thought that it would still be there. So in a sense it's a rude awakening. But it's just something that I really didn't expect. So like I say, I did have, or I had the opportunity to buy back the farm house and a few

IN 00:24:16:11

OUT 24:32:28

MOVE TO END THIS SECTION

OUT 00:24:51:02

of the acres and what not so I'm very fortunate on that. I didn't say it the same way. First time was better.

Q: You're not the only family that's had to give up their farm. It seems like there are very, very few left in Lincoln. And yet people are still moving to Lincoln because they love that it's a rural town. I mean that's what's attractive about it to them. And I guess the big question out there that we've been asking everyone and no one seems to really have an answer for is, is there any future for farming in this town? And if so, how can it be preserved, how can it be maintained?

A: Farming today, if you're going to farm now, you're kind of doing it in a different way. Going back several years ago they did large amounts of farming. They would take all the produce in and, like I said, sell it to a warehouse or a First National store in Boston. And the way you do farming now, if you could preserve it and have a smaller farm, would be to have it pesticide free, the whole show like it is, and have an outlet of a road side stand or something. I don't know if anybody is familiar with where I live, Old Sudbury Road and 117 where the railroad tracks are but if I had had some thought going way back there wouldn't be a house there, there'd be a road side stand there. And that would have been part of the

farm that I would have kept instead of selling. And that was the part that unfortunately got sold first because it was attractive and easy to build on.

But you have to, if you're going to continue farming, I think, anywhere in the state in small acreage you have to have a farm stand and you're also going to have to have other things to go with it in order to survive. You can't have a large scale farm and just get rid of your produce quickly and expect to pay your taxes, your heat, your help, and live. You have to have an outlet for your produce and have some kind of something that's going to be attractive to everybody and which seems to be chemical and pesticide free vegetables and fruits and what not.

Q: There is that organic farm that's right up at the end of your road. (simultaneous conversation)

A: That was Umbrella's (?) farm at one point. There's another farm I forgot. Umbrellas had a farm there. And I don't know that fellow's name but that is organic, to my knowledge. He does quite well, I would say.

Q: He rents that.

A: Yeah, that's conservation land, is it not? Yeah, town of Lincoln.

Q: His name is Keith Shields. I don't really know his arrangement.

IN 00:26:45:00

Farming today

OUT 00:27:24:01

A: I should stop in there and say hi. I don't know him myself.

Q: I wanted to talk to him. He's a young guy.
(simultaneous conversation)

A: Yeah, Rural Land Foundation.

Q: I wanted to ask you just to reflect a little bit and see if you could recall any stories or memories or comments you might want to make about Codman farm now that it's a community farm. And that's one way that we can continue farming in Lincoln without having to depend entirely on the crops to support it.

A: Codman farm, actually that new barn is fantastic. When I was growing up and younger, much younger, I used to go to the Codman house and I'd had a couple friends that would live there as caretakers and what not. One of them was Mr. Mayo (?) and I think one of-- I can't remember the other one. Corrigan, Jim Corrigan or something. I just forget exactly who it was but we used to go over there and play in the house and everything like that, in the yard. And then I don't remember too much about the farms that they had. But I do buy my hay there and I think it's fantastic. And even though they used to bail the hay beside me in my own field and part of the one and then sell it back to me, it's just so nice to be able to have a place that will do this service and have hay.

*Codman
Farm*

*Drumlin
Farm*

One thing I do want to say about Codman farm is that they have seemed to have gotten the best managers, the friendliest people, and they've always taken care of me so great that it's appreciated. And we had another farm, it's now Drumlin farm, which was Hathaway estate. I remember going over to the Hathaways when I was a little kid. We sometimes had to jump the fence because they didn't always want us there. But we'd run over there and visit with them and see what they were doing and what not. The other farm was Umbrellas that I didn't mention before which is now being farmed organically, I believe. And that's about the farms that I can remember or anything.

A lot of the farms earlier on were gentlemen farmers at that point, though. And people had farm land which was part of Codman farm and everything like that but they had other interests as well. So it wasn't strictly just for the farming for themselves. Which is the way it has to be now. And it's good.

[end of tape 2, begin tape 3]

Q: -- about the Boyce farm. It really was considered, I think, one of the most successful.

A: I think they did very well up until times changed.

Q: Would you want to tell the hearse story or (simultaneous conversation).

A: No.

Q: I guess the only other question I have is ... (inaudible) any thoughts you have about what you learned as a child growing up on a farm that perhaps you wish your own children or children in schools today would know.

A: I suppose in conclusion to our little chat here that if I had anything to do differently or to do over it would be to do anything I possibly could to maintain a farm or have a farm. Just to give everybody the opportunity to work on it, to produce something and grow it and get the rewarding benefits. One of the things I didn't mention is when I look back as a kid, I look out there today and I have four acres which is growing in and it's quite a job to keep it clean, to cut the brush down and everything. And I looked out at the hill which went up to Drumlin farm, which at one point was the Nike (?) site at the very top, but there was 100 acres of open land, no trees, no brush, no weeds, just vegetables. And they didn't have any of the equipment that we have today. And you say, "Wow, how did they do this?" I mean they really, really had to work all the time at doing something.

IN 00:15:55:00

Conclusion

OUT 00:16:13:06

IN 00:16:19:16

About keeping fields open

Wow, how did they do this?

OUT 00:16:47:29

IN 00:16:53:29

All family members
had one part of
the farm

OUT 00:17:23:26

IN 00:17:27:17

Wish he had
saved land

OUT 00:17:44:04

In my family there was my grandfather and his two brothers and then there was a couple aunts and then there was some more but they all had a different job. My grandfather would be the vegetable end of the farm. I had an Uncle Mike who lived in the Golden's house who took care of the dairy cows and the barn and all the chickens and things like that that they had, for mostly the dairy cows. And then I had an Uncle John who took care of the piggery. So they all had their own thing but they all worked together.

But each one is responsible for a certain segment, which was kind of nice too. But I just wish that I had thought ahead a little bit more and maintained just a little more of that land than I did just so my children and everybody else could have an opportunity to grown something on it and reap the benefits. That's about all.

Q: Very nice. Thank you. I really appreciate your coming over today and sharing these stories with us. Actually before we stop tape you brought some photographs, I just remembered. And if you would be willing to just talk about what's in the photographs and if you're willing to let us borrow them (simultaneous conversation).

A: I brought a couple photographs which I will kind of explain quickly to you. I don't know if you can see them or not but this was a back side of the farm