

Q: Today is April 5, 2008.

LB: And this is Leonard Borden. I've been a resident of Easton all my life and most of it as a farmer. I got my basic education about life. Most people get it from bees and birds. I got it from geese and goats. My, uh, goats make a very excellent pet, uh, pet. And, uh, the only thing I have to say is that if you're going to have one just for a pet, if it's a male it should be altered. 'Cause they have a strange odor about them.

Q: Strong odor.

LB: Yeah. [laughs] And they also can be quite feisty, but my goat was very clever. We had a barn with a partition down through it, inch board wide, 4 foot high probably. And he could jump up on there and balance 4 feet. And turn around very quick, and we had quite a game. I'd go in the barn, and he'd jump up on that thing. And if I went in the door, he'd turn around and go that way. If I went back, he'd turn around. And if I did it several times, he was really up to beat the daylights out of me. And he would.

Q: How old were you about when he, he was playing tricks on you?

LB: Oh, probably 10, I don't know. But, um—

Q: Did he have a name?

LB: Yeah, Dopey [laughs]. But, uh, he, uh, had some offspring. And watching them in the pen one day, one of them standing in the middle of the pen, and jump up against the wall, all four feet on the wall, right back down. And the be—the eyes would be closed, and chewing the cud. And do that, and come back, and I couldn't believe what I saw. And he did it again, or she did it again. And, and, uh, and then I was convinced that I really had seen it. And after a few days, those goats got so they could run around about three sides of the barn, and stay on the wall. Yeah. And they're, they're very clever animals. And make an excellent pet. I know some people who have had them.

My cousin had a pet goat, and it just wandered around the door yard, and behaved itself, and so forth, and so on. My goat wouldn't behave himself. But my—somebody picked apples for my father one year, and they had geese. And for some reason or other, I ended up with a goose. And I hadn't planned on it, but same way with the goat. And, uh, I was told it was a gander, and so I named it Henry. And after it had been there a while, I started finding goose eggs. So the name changed to Henrietta. [laughs] And Henrietta, uh, started laying eggs, and, uh, then she decided to sit on them. But they never hatched, and so I got the advice, I had to have another goose to match up.

And where it came from, I don't know, but we get the second goose. And the next season,

uh, the goose started laying—uh, Henrietta started laying eggs. And she didn't quit, and start sitting on them. So I got the smart idea of, we had some hens that were in the broody mood. And, uh, I set five eggs under one hen. And goose kept laying, and so I had, I think three hens with eggs under them. And the first one hatched out and, uh, chicken accepted the goslings even though they were bigger than any chicks would be. And, and raised them, and, and when they got big enough, they got the urge to go down towards the pond, whether they could sense the water there or what, but they went down to the pond.

The chickens went along, and, and I went down to see what was going on. And they go down to the water. They ran right out into the water, and the chicken went crazy, clucking and trying to call them back. But, uh, they—the geese went right on. And the chicken accepted it, and raised them. Well, I ended up with more geese than I knew what to do with, and worked out a deal at Christmas time. Uh, there's a certain fraction in the Mechanicville area at that time that wanted geese for—a goose for their Christmas dinner. So I made a deal, and we sold I don't know how many geese. And we, uh, [dressed? 00:04:32] off chickens many times.

And my father rigged up a, a tub to, to, uh, scald them in to make the feathers come off. Well when we did it with the geese, there was a lot of pin feathers left. And before we got done with that, about 15, 12, or 15 geese, we were all sick and tired of picking pin feathers. And I understood that my family members wouldn't go through that again. So next time we sold them live. and got around it that way. Now, when I was in high school, tractors had been coming around fairly, but, uh, on the farms. It would have been faster if I hadn't have been for the, the, the Depression. But there's still quite a few farms, and the [ag? 00:05:19] teacher decided that he had to teach something about tractors, uh, being used for belt power.

And that's quite a job to set up a machine, and build a tractor to it. And have the belt stay on, and so forth, and keep it tight. And the question come up, as, as a short belt took more power than a long belt, because there's more [slippage? 00:05:46]. The longer belt had more weight to put pressure on the pulleys. And one kid in the class, which is two, two years of classes put together in one. And he was older than I. And he claimed that the longer the belt, the less power it took. And I said, no. You can't say that. Oh, yes. He was sure of it, and the teacher went along with it. Well, this argument took the whole class, uh, the whole hour, and, uh, the next class we had, right back into the argument again.

[laughs] And this went on for several weeks, and the ag teacher was getting unhappy. He could not keep up with his schedule. And, uh, he blamed me for keeping the argument going, I guess. Uh, finally one day the argument came up. And I said, okay. We'll take the tractor and put it up on Willard Mountain. Put the blower over in Saratoga County, and a good long belt. And if it takes less power than the longer belt, maybe we won't even have to start the motor. And then I convinced the ag teacher that you couldn't say I that way.

Well, that fellow went in the Army. Uh, I went to Cornell. And 15 years later, we were working together, um, building onto a original [Malcom powered? 00:06:57].

And he, he was experienced in carpenter work, and he would work. And when I got chores done, I'd go and help him. I [inaudible] [00:07:04] one day, and he's already to put a timber up. And he says, 'I'll put the timber up and you do [inaudible] [00:07:12] to hold it.' And he couldn't get the timber up in the air. So I said I'd try it. And I said, don't know till you try. I got the timber up there, and he blacked [sic] it up. And we got all set, and then he started to chuckle. And he said, 'to think that a number of years ago, I was going to knock the daylight out of you. [laughs] And, uh, he hadn't been taking care of himself, and he had been nervous, and so forth, and lost a lot of weight.

So that's the way that, that ended. The horses were coming, uh, becoming extinct on the farm before I went to college. But when I came back home, there was no horses there. And of course, I had to harness, [inaudible] [00:07:57] or unharness a horse to, uh, pass exams, and to get into Cornell. Uh, we, uh, and a pair of horses that were not easy to drive, and the, uh, male horse would buck a good many times, wouldn't go. And one time, my uncle, a full blooded Irishman, and they think they're good horsemen, [laughs] said I know just want to do with that horse. And he laced him over the head with a, one of the lines.

And that horse reared up on his hind feet, pawed his feet at the—my uncle. And when he come down, he was crossed the pole in a, in a [inaudible] [00:08:36]. And every time anybody went near him, he'd get excited again. And it seemed like forever. I was only a kid, 5 years old maybe. I was on the wagon, and they finally got him going again. [laughs] And, uh, I never cared about horses much. Uh, the neighbors down the road, I understand, and a teen that would buck. And they—a thunderstorm's coming up, and they went into the yard with a load of hay. And the horse stopped, and wouldn't move. And they wanted to get going, 'cause they had more hay to get.

Somebody got the idea of taking a wad of hay and putting it under the horse, and lighting it. And it worked. The horse went ahead just as the load of hay was over the fire, then they had to work like the devil to get the fire out [laughs]. But horses can be—a good horse is very good. Uh, Clarence Buckley [phonetic] told me when he was a boy, he worked—he, he lived with his grandparents in Valley Falls.

And, uh, he would, uh, hire out to the undertaker to pull the horse, hearse with the horses. And one day, he went to Stillwater and back, then to [Schuylerville? 00:09:46] and back. And on the way back, he was getting kind of tired. And he was cold. So he tied up the, the lines, and crawled in the back of the hearse. Rolled up in the blanket, and when he woke up, he was in Valley Falls in his [door yard? 00:09:59].

Q: Really?

LB: Yeah. And, uh, it's not too, uh, hard to believe, because when Freihofer's and the milk companies in Troy had horse deliveries, those horses would make the route. Stopped for red lights, stopped for every house they were supposed to, and the driver never had to do a thing. And when they come around to go change to trucks, I thought the, the, uh, drivers would be happy, 'cause they could move faster. But a lot of them were very unhappy, because on the way back to the plant, they could do their bookwork and the horse would—

Q: The horse would take them, take them home.

LB: Yup. Stopped at red lights, make the turns, and everything. So there was an—the great thing about horses, so when some of the guys started driving tractors, they run into trouble. One guy was just starting to plow the field, I believe. And, uh, there was a hawk right in the [inaudible] [00:10:55]. And he got gawking at them, [laughs] and ran into a tree. And now if that had been horses, they'd have—it wouldn't have happened. Another guy, uh, was plowing, and in those days, those early plows had a wooden dowel pin you put in the hitch that would shear when you hit a, an obstacle. And unhook, and that would be it.

When you had a rope, you had to pull to trip the plows in, and you'd pull it again to pull them out. And he tied that to the tractors, and every time the pin shored, it broke the rope [inaudible] [00:11:29]. And then finally the rope got too short, so he tied it to his big overalls. And the seat was the furthest back on the tractor in those days. And the next time the plow was unhooked, it pulled him off the seat, and the tractor ran away. [laughs] And what [inaudible] [00:11:46] wouldn't do any good. Uh, we had a neighbor that bought a John Deer tractor and that was a right hand clutch. And wheel brakes with either foot, so it was different. Now he had driven a model A car for several years.

Uh, he was a, uh, a good driver with that. But he could never remember to, to, uh, when he was driving the tractor—the first thing you would hear him say, whoa. And then you'd, [laughs] he'd put his foot on the left hand wheel brake. And the tractor, the John Deer would go, put, put, put, put, and, and then after a while you'd hear it stop. [laughs] The first time he went to put it in the garage, he hit the wheel brake and started through the side of the garage. And he got it stopped, and he never put it back in. After that, his boys always start the tractors. [laughs] So some people didn't trouble with tech. Now, uh, at times before my time, they used to thrash—put grain in a barn, and thrash it in the wintertime.

And, uh, it was quite a practice, I guess. And of course, it's a dusty job anyway. And in the wintertime, they couldn't. Drinking water would freeze, so they had other, uh, drinks that would-, wouldn't freeze at that temperature. And this one pla-, place they were thrashing in, uh, they had been pretty thirsty. And they had drank just a little too much, and they decided they would walk home. And the cross lots would be shorter. And then on the way home crossing the brook, there's ice on the side. And he slipped and fell in. [laughs] And

he decided he was, he was so dusty and dirty, it was a good time to wash his clothes, and take a bath, which he did and damn near died of pneumonia over it.

I, I don't think he was 100%, 'cause, uh, he went to Montgomery Wards after that sometime and they had electric razors had just come out. They had them on a bargain counter, and he bought one. He had no electricity in his house, but he had a power pole out front. Somebody come along one day, he had his face all lathered up with shaving cream. And a razor in one hand, and trying to figure out how to climb that pole and plug it in. [laughs] If he'd ever been able to climb it, there'd have been a—he wouldn't have had to worry about shaving after that. My grandmother, I never knew her.

She died soon after I was born, but she evidently had a habit of raking the hay fields with [inaudible] [00:14:19]. And, uh, my father bought a side delivery rake, and she figured she was going to rake the hay. And he started to tell her what that she had to do with the side delivery rake that's different from a dump rake. And she left him know that she had been raking hay long before he was born, and she didn't need him to tell her how to rake hay. So she started off with a rake, and went around the field once. Of course, it's an entirely different operation. Instead of going across the swaths, you went with it. And it made it continuous [inaudible] [00:14:47] with the dump rakes, you made pieces [inaudible] [00:14:51].

And she got around the field and she stopped, and said to my father, 'how do you leave what you don't want to take?' And he got to laughing, so she [laughs] went to the house and never raked hay again. Uh, and then, my father's second tractor was on steel lugs. And he broke the hub on the wheel somehow, and had to replace it. And that—by that time the Goodyear tire company was just coming out with the idea of rubber tires on tractors. And they offered my father a deal where they'd furnish the rims if he'd buy the tires, and, and, and they'd get rubber, both ends of the tractor. And, uh, those new tires, the cleats weren't as—only a little quarter of an inch high it seemed like.

Uh, nowadays, you'd say they completely worn out. But that was the original tread on the tire. But my father made out well with it. And the re-, uh, we got laughed at so much about my father's rubber tire tractor, it was ridiculous. And it's funny, because it wasn't too many years after that before you wouldn't catch some of these fellows that were laughing, driving the lug tractor. 'Cause if you let the wheels spin around more than once, it dug a hole so deep that the belly of the tractor would be dragging. And you were stuck. And you had to go get the horses to pull it out. So it, uh, it really changed tractors, because, h, you'd leave the tractor in the field, and walk home at dinner rather than drive a lug tractor. But when you got the rubber tires, you can drive it home and back. Yeah. What a difference. And—

Q: A lot of difference, yeah. Wow.

LB: And, uh, my father got the idea, we had a very wet fall, and they were filling silo. And we filled with two neighbors. And, uh, they were having trouble, uh, getting stuck with the wagons wooden wheels with iron tires, and narrow. And, uh, he found a deal at Montgomery Ward's where you could buy a wheel that would go on in place of the wooden wheels on the same axle. And put car tires on it. So he, he did it on this one wagon, and we—the hired man was very upset over it. It was going to kill the horses. Them wide tires would pull hard, and he had more things against it, and he was pretty grumpy. But soon found out that he was the only one that came out with a full load of corn. The rest of them had to go by the half load to get out. But it wasn't because of the rubber tires. It was because he was a better horseman. And, uh—

Q: He could get them to—

LB: Yeah. [inaudible] [00:17:19]. Yeah. But he never, never wanted to admit that those rubber tires were any help at all. And when I was a kid, I don't know, not, not very old. Uh, an old fellow used to come around to chop wood. And he'd chop for six days for so many dollars, room and board. On Sunday, he'd chop a half a day, but he didn't charge for that. He kept the [rack? 00:17:49] axe from rusting. [laughs] And Sunday afternoon, he'd do his laundry with a, a 5 gallon pail, and a stick of wood to dash the clothes up and down. Better than any new [inaudible] [00:17:58] washing machine. But he was deafer than a doornail.

And come to find out that he'd had, uh, some kind of a disease when he was a kid. And he lost it completely. And one day, he was very punctual on the clock. And he come down for dinner, and my mother had been away, and late getting back. And didn't have it ready, and, and, uh, finally, she got it ready. She sent me out to get him. He was walking around the block of wood, chopping block. And the more he walked, the faster he went. He bent over, and his eyes, he's looking down. He laid out just like a speed skater. And I couldn't get his attention, and I hollered as loud as I could. And I tried getting in front of him, but he was looking down.

And so I reached out and touched him on the arm, and I'm glad he didn't have an axe in his hand. [laughs] He swung around. Well, I was pretty upset. I hated to scare the old fellow. But he went in and gobbled down his meal, and got back out chopping wood on time anyway. And then, he came back several times. Uh, you never knew when he was coming. It wasn't regular. He'd lived in Johnstown, we found out. His brother was a doctor, but he chopped wood year round. And he must have covered quite a territory. And the last time he came, uh, he came in [inaudible] [00:19:20] hotel. And he called up to see if we wanted a wood chopper, and my father sent me down to bring him home.

I had just gotten my license, and that, that was a good deal to get a chance to drive. But he came out of there with a box of chocolate. And he was eating them, and he offered me some. Well, I hated to take chocolate from him, and I could see how much he liked it. But

I found out later that if you ate chocolate with him, you could get to know the fellow. And, and he'd relax, and so forth, and I'd wished I'd had. It was interesting. But that's the last time I saw him. But the—sometime in between, he came around and was chopping wood during, uh, spring when my father had parsnips.

And they're coming out of the yard, and, and my mother cooked up a bowl of, uh, parsnips creamed like you would cream potatoes. And the first dish she put down on the table was the parsnips, and he took about half of it. 'Cause he liked potatoes. And he tasted them, and all of a sudden he left—went—left the house. Went down the road, and told the neighbors we were poisoning him. [laughs]

Q: [laughs] He had never had a parsnip.

LB: Evidently not, or he didn't know what they were. But the—he kept his axe and stuff in the corn house. And my father kept the spray materials in there, and some lead [arsenit? [00:20:37] bags in there. And evidently, he saw them, and put the two and two together. But he did come back after that, after a number of years. But I didn't think we'd ever see him again.

Q: Well, I was wondering who—so he, he had his speech even though he was deaf. He had speech.

LB: Yeah. Yeah. But like most deaf people, eh, eh, was hard to understand sometimes. And that time I was bringing him back from the hotel in [Skatikook? 00:20:59], we go by a place. And, and he says, is that so-and-so's place? And it would be two, two owners back from the present owner. So he had been evidently coming around for a number of years. But he had a good memory, and sharp in every way. But, and he—when he swung an axe, the chips flew. Boy, he could chop wood. And he had a very slow but steady pace in keeping up.

Q: And would you guys count on him? Like, would you plan, uh, like, he's going to be the person that would chop your wood? Would you be counting on him showing up?

LB: You couldn't, you couldn't.

Q: No. Okay.

LB: Uh, but what you usually did, you had him chop enough piles so that you had some leeway if he didn't come back right away. And then it had come to chainsaws, and we saw the wood in the [links? 00:21:43] that you could handle, and he split it. And he split fence post for us, and I think it was about 10 years after the last time he was there, we still found fencepost split up in the woods that he chopped.

Q: He had chopped.

LB: Yeah. Interesting, but I had felt so sorry. What a lonely life he had. And not being able to converse very well, that's, that's something. Well, I'm thinking about, uh, things going on in town. There was a fellow in a car, one of the first cars in town I guess. And of course it was all dirt roads then, even 40 was dirt.

Q: When town—was town [inaudible] [00:22:21]?

LB: What's that?

Q: Was town free of [inaudible] [00:22:23]? Like, when you say town, what town?

LB: This town, Easton.

Q: Oh, Easton, okay.

LB: Yeah.

Q: Okay.

LB: Our address is Skatikook, but, no. No. We're Easton.

Q: Okay. I was thinking, like, you go to down—

LB: Yeah. [laughs] No. [crosstalk] [00:22:35].

Q: Yeah.

LB: But, uh, uh—

Q: So somebody in Easton had the first car.

LB: Yeah. I don't remember who it was now, but, uh, the brakes squeaked. And somebody told him take them off and grease them. Take the wheels off, and grease them. I don't know whether it was done as a joke, or whether it was just poor advice. But anyway, the guy did it. And his first trip was up, uh, Fly Summit Road. And he's evidently one of these drivers that would kick the car out of gear going downhill to save gas, 15 cents a gallon. They had to. [laughs] He came down and went across 40, and almost—I don't know whether he got to, to [Wayte Road? 00:23:12] or not. But he had quite a ride. And, uh, it's just lucky nobody was coming down.



If he had done that today, it could have been something [laughs]. But, but they, uh, had, uh, quite a time. And another accident that happened just out of the Town of Easton. A fellow in a Model T, I'd seen the guy driving the Model T. It was one of these big high touring cars. And he was going, uh, down and, and hit a slippery spot. Skidded around, and went into the driveway, and, uh, right between the, right between the house and the outhouse. And the clothesline ran between the two buildings. The top of the car caught that clothesline, and pulled the outhouse down on the door with a woman inside [laughs].

Q: Oh, no. Oh.

LB: And this old guy was a pretty old proper fellow, and he was pretty upset. And a baby was crying in the house for the mother. [laughs] He couldn't pick it up, of course, along with her laying in there. And he had to wait for somebody to come along to help him out. But, uh, what an experience that was for somebody.

Q: Yes. That's, that's a lot of problem [laughs].

LB: And it's just lucky that he didn't hit the house, the outhouse directly. It could have been real damage, but she got banged up and bruised a little bit.

Q: She did.

LB: Yeah. [laughs] Quite a [inaudible] [00:24:32].

Q: Oh.

LB: Now the Easton Telephone Company, my grandfather had something to do with, uh, forming that company and so forth. I don't know how much, and my father worked for the—and as a lineman. And when he was 12 or 13 years old, he got knocked off the pole once. And they rang on the line, and he got the shock and fell. And he used the, the spikes to climb the pole. And I've still got the spikes around, and, uh, so forth. Uh, they hired somebody to come in. I don't know whether they covered the whole Town of Easton, or not. But they had quite a bit, and, uh, uh, central office was where Gracie Snell [phonetic] lives now.

And, uh, they hired this fellow to come in to take over, 'cause the business was expanding. And, uh, he wasn't there too long before he engineered a deal with New York Telephone to buy the company out. And then he got a full-time job with the telephone company. And that was the end of the telephone company, but some of their tools are still on—around our farm for digging holes. And I—as I say, I don't know how far they went with wires, but my father told about being down near Stillwater hooking—uh, working on wires. So it,

it—they must have hooked into them.

Q: They must have gone pretty far then, right.

LB: Yeah. In that direction, I don't know about Greenwich. Of course, when they put—

Q: [crosstalk] [00:26:00] towards Greenwich, yeah.

LB: ...put the telephone, and New York Telephone took over, Greenwich's line ended before our farm. And we were in the Valley Falls end of it. And we had the old, uh, ringer, 14 party line, I guess, and so forth. And one day, I went to call up my sister who was living down in Valley Falls. And the operator said—asked if it was me. And I, hmm. What's this? [laughs] I didn't know an operator, and it happened to be a girl just a little older than I, that I was acquainted with, had taken a job. She was working part-time as an operator in the evenings after school. And she could study, do her homework, and in between calls, and, and get paid too.

And it was kind of interesting to talk with her, because, uh, uh, she's doing—it was fairly simple to understand how to run the switchboard. You know, that was a very simple machine in those days. But one thing she had to learn, uh, as a woman called up and said she wanted to talk with Mable. She had to recognize that woman's voice, and then know which Mable of the three she wanted to talk with. [laughs] And they, they would ask for all kinds of advice, and, and of course in an emergency, they rang a, a steady ring. And the [inaudible] [00:27:22] would be on the line that there was—

Q: Something—

LB: ...a fire, or something or other. So, and, uh, the nighttime, uh, operator was the, the lady in a home—her home there where the switchboard was. And she went to bed, and if the phone rang, she got up like anybody else would, and go to it. And, and do the calling, so it, it was quite interesting. And, uh—

Q: Isn't that something. That's amazing.

LB: There's been a lot of changes in that—uh, when they first came out with the dial phone, George Sizon [phonetic] was joking about it. He says, you, you had to have your finger on the, uh, directory, so you could see the number. The finger in the dial, you had to put your foot up on the table to hold the phone while you twisted the dial. [laughs] But you had to know the number and, and, uh, with the operator, a lot of times people just told—

Q: Just asked for the person.

LB: Yup. So progress isn't always as, as great as it might be. Yeah. Well, uh, for a good many years, Albert Pratt [phonetic] picked apples for us. He enjoyed handling the fruit and so forth. And he was just as much at home on a ladder as anybody could be. And, and he—we had this one, uh, basswood ladder that was very light, 18 foot long, and easy to handle. And he latched onto that, and, uh, every once in a while somebody'd get there first, and get to it. So he'd put a piece of tape around it, and make it look like it was patched. [laughs] Nobody would touch it after that. But one day, we had a school tour there, and, uh, he was picking.

And he picked everything you could reach and of course after you pick the branches, they start to go up a little. And you never know what's going to happen. And he looked around to see where he'd go next, and, uh, the ladder did a shift. And it was over there, and he kept right on picking. And the teacher said, now there's a professional apple picker. He can move a ladder without getting off it. [laughs] And I never dared tell her the difference with—in front of the kids. I was afraid it would embarrass her. But after he tour left, I told Albert what happened. And he got laughing so hard I thought he'd fall off the ladder. Um—

Q: So we're going to run out of tape. I, I guess we're good, but just know [inaudible] [00:29:52] what we'll do is say that we'll stop it here. And then fast forward it [inaudible] [00:29:59]. Okay. But we don't know if it—

LB: Okay.

Q: So, okay.

[END OF RECORDING]

[NEW RECORDING BEGINS]

LB: And, uh, and I also did birds. I had pigeons I locked up. I caught them, those little ones, and I had them in a coupe. And made them pets sort of, and then my mother—brother made me get rid of them, because they made such a mess around the buildings. But I had bees, because pollenating the orchard. And, uh, you buy bees in the package to—

Q: Now did your father have bees, or did you bring bees to the farm?

LB: No. No. Uh, the Lumberg's [phonetic] had bees. Smitt Lumberg, and he wanted to get away—rid of them. So I bought his—some of his equipment, and stuff, and, and the bees. And then I bought some packaged bees, which come in the mail in a box with screens on it. And inside, there's a little box with a screen on it with a queen bee in it. And there's a hole drilled into that wooden part of the box, and a sugar mixture stuffed in there to plug the hole. And a paper over it, so when you wanted to introduce the bee—the queen to the

main bees, uh, you pulled that paper off. And when I pulled the paper off, the sugar came, and outcome the queen, and I caught the queen in my hand. I didn't want to squeeze her, and I didn't want to lose her either. And I just had short sleeved shirt on. And all those bees that came out of that box—

Q: [inaudible] [00:01:19] your arms.

LB: ...all over my arm, and they were three or four thick. And I had been told that a bee sting, 100 bee stings is the same as getting bit by a rattle snack. It's the same poison. And 100 stings would equal if you let them, the stinger work. Well, I looked at all those bees, and I knew there was more than 100 there. And how was I going to get out of this one, nobody else around. So I final worked around, and got, uh, the cage that the queen came out of, and held it up to my hand. And got her back in, and then put the plug in, and so forth. But then I still had all these bees.

And I had to brush them off with a bee brush, and get away from it. And, uh, you know what, it took me a lot of effort to hold my cool, and not just fling my arms, because you, you—it's a funny feeling to feel those bees on you. And you could feel the weight, and to feel the air moving, 'cause they were flapping their wings, and so forth. And I was very glad when I finally got them back in, and got it—and, uh, I kept bees for what, quite a while.

Q: So you got stung, didn't you?

LB: No. No. No.

Q: You didn't get stung.

LB: No. It—

Q: 'Cause you did it the way you did it.

LB: I didn't hurt anybody. If I had squeezed a bee, or something, but, see, a honeybee, when they sting, the stinger comes off. And that's the end of their life, and so they—it's a last resort for them to sting. But that doesn't mean that they won't do it. One time the bee inspector come around, and I had been sheering my sheep. And I just got through sheering the buck sheep, and he had given me a rough time. And I—oh, all grease, and sweat, and so forth. And I said, well this is a good time for a break, so I went down with the, the inspector to check the bees.

And he went up a hive, and I was back about 20 to 30 feet. And just as soon as he opened that hive, they blasted the back of my neck. And he counted at least 20 stingers in the back

of my neck just like that. And he scraped them out with a hive tool. And if you do that, and you scrape them out, you don't squeeze the poison out of the, the sack, he stinger. And—

Q: And why'd they go for you that day?

LB: 'Cause I handled an animal.

Q: 'Cause the—

LB: Grease on me.

Q: [inaudible] [00:03:35].

LB: Yeah. And sweat, bees don't, don't like either one, and when you—especially when you're scared, you give off an, uh, an odor from your perspiration that bees especially hate. And so, I was lucky that I, I, uh, I mean, it was really—

Q: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. But just—what'd you do to tend to yourself? [inaudible] [00:03:58].

LB: Nothing. He, he, he got the stingers out before they did much. The only time I ever had trouble was when my, uh, nephew was born, first nephew. And, uh, I was, uh, down working with the bees. And I went up to—I had some young chicks come in at the time. I came up, my vail on and everything there. I get up to the chicken coup, and I took the vail off. And, Jesus, there's one bee on my hat, and it went right into my mouth, and wanted to sting me in the—under the lip.

And I brushed it off twice, and the third time he was faster than I was. And stung me, and it hit a nerve, and my mother was down with my sister. And she had come home in late, and I had been to bed. I had my supper, and I had gone to bed. And I get up, and my nose—my lip was swollen up, so it plugged my nose. And she hollered at me to get up and go to school. And I said, I'm not going to school. And, oh, yes. You are. And I said, [laughs] no. I'm not. She come up and saw my face, then she decided I wasn't.

Q: Then she was freaking out.

LB: That's the only time a bee sting really bothered me, but it hit a nerve. I knew it when it hit, and it hurt more than an ordinary. Yeah. Well, the next thing to discuss is the things that different generations lived in as farmers. They have different experiences. Uh, my father was quite progressive, and he had a tractor, and so forth. And he converted most of the horse draw mater-, uh, equipment with, uh, he pulled with a tractor and so forth. He especially did that, because horses ran away with a reaper and binder, and smashed it on him. And he wasn't too happy with horses after that. But, uh, uh, I come along, and, uh,

we had the rubber tire tractors, and rubber tire wagons, and we learned to back up four wheel wagons where some farmers never could.

And, uh, my boys had the same experience. Now, the next generation has come along, and they've never had any experience, 'cause we don't use four wheel wagons anymore. And they just haven't backed up. And, uh, I had hooked up a, a tractor and belt to, and belt it to equipment. Uh, my boys never have. They've never seen a team of horses on a wagon, I don't believe. And it's just such an, an abrupt change in, in the way things are done. And each generation has done things, and—

Q: And you're, and you're the middle, so you've seen—

A: Yup.

Q: ...you've seen it from both places.

A: Yup. I, uh, never saw a treadmill in work. I've seen them in the museum, but when I was small, they had a, a, a baler come in to bale hay out of a—one of the farmsteads back years ago. And they pitched the hay out the upstairs down into the, uh, baler. And they called it a jump press. And the man would fork the hay down into the press, and jump on it to pack it in. They'd make [inaudible] [00:07:09] 200 pounds bale. And they had the horses. They were walking around, and around. And that turned [a year? 00:07:16] that turned a shaft that did whatever the baler did. I couldn't remember what that was. But they would turn out fairly heavy, heavy bale.

And you—a man couldn't pick it up. But they could roll them, and roll them upstairs, I'd say steps of bales. And those bales, this fellow that lived near the district five when I went to school, he would buy a bale from my father. And he would deliver it. He never could pay for it then, uh, for some reason or other. Of course, he probably was short of money as everybody else was at the time. But he'd always bring it up to school and leave it with me to, to pay my father. And he'd always be five cents or a dime short. Tell your father, I think he'll understand. And I said to my father one time about it, and he says, well, I understand.

He says, I've upped the weight a few pounds to make up for it. [laughs] That same guy, uh, my aunt, uh, Helen Lumbert [phonetic]. They owned a store, and they—during the war, they closed it. And they had these customers that had been coming for years. And they didn't have cars or any way to get to Greenwich. So this gentleman, she used to take him to Greenwich to do his shopping. [laughs] And they're going up the road one day, and he leans over and says, 'do you have insurance on that car?' And she says, 'yes.' And he says, 'well, it's a good thing, 'cause if we have an accident, I would sue you.' And that's showing appreciation. [laughs]

Q: Oh, isn't that something. Yeah. And what else with the generations? I mean, what do you think about, um, the things about, like, from your father to, to your time? What, what were the thing that you would say were the most significant improvements, or [inaudible] [00:09:12] about farming?

LB: Well, I think it was when they started, uh, uh, field choppers, combines instead of thrashing machines, and so forth. It changed things a lot, because before that, uh, we had two neighbors we worked with filling [inaudible] [00:09:29]. And my aunts, and, uh, mother's, uh, brothers, each aunt's farm is down next to the river, the McCauley's [phonetic] and the Rice [phonetic]. And we thrashed together. And when we got the combine and the—

Q: [inaudible] [00:09:48]?

LB: It all—so we never had that group to—and then those things, uh, every place that you went, that's where you, you had a new meal. And, uh, it was always quite a meal. And the, uh, Mrs. Dalerie [phonetic] was a great cook. But she had a problem after her third child. She would, uh, go off her mind—out of her mind. And, uh, she—you were awful careful that you didn't get her excited. And we went down [laughs] to the field outside with her one day. And it was a hot day, and she made three different kinds of pies. And 10 inch pies cut in quarters. And she wanted each man to have one of each three flavors. Well, it was too hot to eat, and that—too much. And, and so they didn't eat too good. But she was pretty upset, and Don, her son and I—

Q: You better eat it, right.

LB: ...figured we'd better eat it. [laughs] And then, go out and try to, uh, work in the sun when you're over stuffed like that. But we didn't dare not do it, but, and we had some great meals. And that was kind of the thing. And you don't, you don't get that exchange anymore so much now.

Q: So there's a, a gain and a loss, right.

LB: Yeah.

Q: A gain of the technology, but you don't have the social support. When you were talking earlier about the apples, like, you said there were all these little orchards. You want to just name those people? I mean, when I think of orchards now, you're it, right.

LB: Yeah.

Q: Borden's are the only orchard—

LB: In Easton, yeah.

Q: ...in Easton.

LB: Well, the—every farm had it. Uh, uh, the Henderson farm, which is where the lambs are now, Siss [phonetic] and Zanet [phonetic]. Uh, but they weren't selling apples. The ones that were selling was Nelties [phonetic] down on the River Road, uh, Havard Pettus [phonetic], uh, Ed Lumbard [phonetic], uh, McGraw's. And that's—I, I don't know. I can't think of the rest of them right now, but—

Q: Yeah. That's—I mean, you had a number in your head. You said, I think you said, like, 14, or something.

LB: I think so. Yeah.

Q: Isn't that something. So that was like—

LB: Oh, Brigg's, Brigg's had an orchard, Charlie McHart [phonetic].

Q: So that was at—see, I, I was curious, 'cause it was much more common crop than. So most people, I was thinking, you know, that their products, what, what were the common products? So apples was really one of the—

LB: Well . . .

Q: ...things that people—

LB: ...originally, the most farms had a few apple trees for their own use. And, uh, we, we, we never sold apples locally, 'cause everybody had their own apples, it seemed like. And that's, that's changed quite a bit. And, uh, that may change more, because they're getting so many complications in regulations that it's difficult. People are so afraid of chemicals. And the thing is, if you eat a product with a chemical in it, all you have to deal with is what you ate. But if you eat it—any, anything that's got an organism on it, or a virus, and that hits your system, it expands. They multiply, and you're dealing with a, a lot, instead of that little. So people are worried about chemicals.

When I dealt with chemicals since I was 12 or 13 years old, uh, that [arsenit? 00:13:28], uh, nicotine sulfate, lime sulfur, and lime sulfur is the worst one. And that's one that, uh, they claim organic growers can use, because it's supposed to be natural. But lime and sulfur never come together. Man put them together, and, and the [boiling? 00:13:47] made the lime sulfur. But that would burn, so that we had to wear hoods over us. But tried to see out through a plexiglass that's all plastered with spray, uh, and if you didn't, it would burn like,



worse than any sunburn. And, uh, my father, he had an old sprayer with a gasoline odor on it. And, like, the early mowers, it didn't start on a good many times.

By the time you got it started, the wind would be blowing, and you couldn't spray anyway. So he had changed it over [to power take off? 00:14:20]. And, uh, that was when the first power take off machines, and, and he bought the power take off shaft. And those shaft, you could put them together in any, uh, four positions. Uh, but you—they didn't work good that way. We could—uh, we didn't find out for a number of years that we put it together one day. And you could turn short, and it wouldn't hammer. And the next time you put it together, it would hammer. But if you didn't have the yolks lined up the same, it would cause that, uh, vibration.

[laughs] One day I was over to the truck shop getting the truck fixed, fixed. And I was leaving it, and curiously, the mechanic was looking like he was upset. And he had a truck that just pulled in from testing it, and it hadn't worked out right. It was a tractor trailer tractor. And the—they get going down the road, and it would vibrate, like the blazes. And I looked at it, and I seen the universals weren't lined up. And I had said to him, I said, they're not lined up. He says that's the way the truck come in, and it all was bent now. I—and I said, well, well how come it just started a while ago [inaudible] [00:15:32] bothering? I said, probably shook apart [inaudible] [00:15:35] now.

Well, the—his boss come along, and he told him what I suggested, that he line that up. And the boss says, we've tried everything else. What in the devil have we got to loose, do it. So the next day, I went back to pick up my truck and that mechanic wasn't there. And I asked the other mechanic. He says, well, he got kind of upset, 'cause when he found—took, took your suggestion, and took the truck out, and tried it. It worked. He says [inaudible] [00:16:01] when you have to have a farmer how to fix it. [laughs] But there was so much to learn about that kind of equipment, and changes. And, and you learn the hard way is what it was.

And my father had started doing custom work filling silos when this first tractor was a, an 816 international. And today, the environmental people would have a fit with a tractor like that, because there was no crank case on it. The underside of the motor was wide open. It had a tank for oil. And it pumped the oil down through, and through the bearings, and then out on the ground. [laughs] That didn't last long. It—the, the third year, the crank shaft broke, and my father had to buy another one. But, uh, there wasn't any mechanics or—in the early days with the equipment that, that, that understood it. But we were lucky to have a man live down in Barker's Grove that he had worked for a dentist.

And they called him Doc Elding [phonetic]. And he, uh, was quite clever with [inaudible] [00:17:09] even though he wasn't a dentist. He had worked in a dentist office, and that was his job. And he moved up into Easton for some reason. And, and he got in trouble, because

people were come—bringing him their, uh, false teeth. And then he would refit them for them, and make them happy. But he wasn't approved to be doing it. But he was quite talented with fixing automobiles or anything. And—

Q: He was just a clever guy—

LB: Yeah. Yeah. And, uh, he also had a tow truck. And when I was small in 1928, a mile away, my mother was coming up the road right in front of where the Lan's [phonetic] live now in the old Henderson place. There was a patch of ice, and she slid over, and tipped over against the tree. And I hit the shifting lever with my nose, and I had a bloody nose. And I laid over, and Ton Henderson was up on the roof of his house doing something. And he saw it happen.

Q: He saw the whole accident happen.

LB: And then he come down the ladder, and I don't know how fast he could do it, and he jumped up on the car. And opened the door, and reached down, and picked me up, and sat me out. But then he couldn't get my mother out of the car. [laughs].

Q: [inaudible] [00:18:18] a ditch. Yeah.

LB: Well, yeah. Right completely on its side, and the only thing, the corner of the roof held—

Q: Just the two of you?

LB: Just the two of us. And the, the—it knocked a little bit on the corner of the roof. Otherwise than that, the car wasn't hurt. But Doc Elding came down with his tow truck, and tipped it back over. And—

Q: Did you get your mom out before it got tipped up?

LB: Uh, yeah. They got her out somehow. I don't know. I think he had to get help, because she was a, a fair sized lady. And it was up—

Q: She had to climb out. Yeah.

LB: Yeah. [laughs] Yeah. And then she was pretty shook up. And I never rode well on slippery roads after that unless I was driving. I learned to drive on slippery conditions, because, uh, we raised our chickens in the orchard, young chickens. And they ranged out under the apple trees. And they thought that was a good process, but that wasn't, because it over fertilized the ground. And anyway, chicken manure all over. And I was the I drove a 28 international, which we still got, up to haul chicken feed up.

And when the—one of my first times when it had been raining, I came down, and I—it—and a two speed rear-end differential. I put it in the lowest gear. I figured that was the safest thing to do. Well, it wasn't, 'cause I started down the hill. The truck slid, and the wheels wouldn't go. And of course, the hind end would skid around, and I learned how to drive on slippery going. It's slipperier than any ice you ever saw. Yeah.

Q: Yeah. Now, did you sell eggs, or did you just use the eggs yourselves?

LB: No. We sold eggs back in those days. Uh, you'd go up to Skiff's store in Greenwich, and take some eggs. And they'd credit your—towards your grocery bill, and that was it. And then, uh, during the war we, we—before the war, we had a peddling route in Troy. My mother had lots of relatives down there to help us get started. And we delivered eggs there for several years, and, uh, then we got hooked up with Frier's Hatchery [sounds like], or Hatching Eggs. And that worked out pretty good. You had, uh, premium for hatching eggs. You had, uh, had the chickens inspected, checked for health, and so forth, a little extra work.

We were producing cross breed between Plymouth Rock and [Hensen Rhode Island Roosters? 00:20:42]. And, uh, the Plymouth Rocks developed some kind of a disease they weren't quite sure of. And the guy that come around to inspect the chickens, provided Plymouth Rock's that he sold the [inaudible] [00:21:01] Friar [phonetic] that he had sold us, and so forth. And he was telling me how he was in a lot of trouble with them. And I said something to Henry about it. And I said, well, can we go for another breed? No. He says, either that or nothing. Well, the, the mortality was so high that we, we had to quit on the Plymouth Rock.

So that was the end of the chicken business. That was my main interest of coming back on the farm. I, I like chickens better than I do cows. They're a simpler brained animals. And, uh, I don't know whether you realize it, you can take a chicken and stick their one—their head under one wing, and rock them back and forth. And then, lay them down on that wing, and they'll sleep there for an hour or two, or you can lay them down, and take a stick and scratch it lying in the dirt. And they're hypnotized for a while. It might be quite a while unless something disturbs them. [laughs] They're a lot easier to handle than cows. And they don't kick.

Q: So after the Plymouth Rock thing, you didn't continue with the chicken business [inaudible] [00:22:06]—

LB: No. Yeah.

Q: ...[inaudible] [00:22:08] end of it.

LB: Yeah.

Q: Now, when we were gathered here, somebody said one day, who could talk about the chickens in Easton. Like, were there, were there more than the Friar's [inaudible] [00:22:19] involved with the chickens in Easton, like, raising chickens? Was there a lot of—

LB: Oh, yeah. There's—and, uh, there's quite a few people who work for Friar. Now, one of them is, uh, Phylis Pearson.

Q: Oh, uh-huh [affirmative].

LB: And Bea Stein [phonetic] worked at Friar's, and so forth. And they had quite a business going. And—

Q: Did Mary Ellis work for Friar's too?

LB: Her father did, I believe.

Q: Okay.

LB: I'm not sure.

Q: Oh, okay.

LB: But, uh, that was, that was a real good strong business for a number of years. And, uh, they used to have, uh, just—this is before the war of course, uh, Japanese come into, to, uh, sex the chickens. And separate the roosters from the pullets. And some people brought the roosters raised for meat. And then people wanted them just for eggs by the pullets. And that was, uh, going—that came about early. But when they first started hatching chickens in synthetic hatching, I guess you'd say, in an incubator. Some people didn't—thought it was going to be the end of the chicken business. The chickens wouldn't be right, and this wouldn't be right, and so forth [laughs], But it, it really made the chicken business go with the hatching. Yeah.

Q: Um, when you—um, we talked about the war a lot. Like, what was—your experience, what was the biggest event in history that, like, made an impression on you? Like, in the history of your time, like, what was the biggest event?

LB: Pearl Harbor.

Q: Okay. All right.

LB: Yeah. I, I can remember that day very plainly, because it was on a Sunday. And we usually had cus-, uh, uh, uh, cousins and stuff up from Troy on a Sunday. We'd sometimes make ice cream, and so forth, and so on. And, uh, the news come apart about the Japanese attack. And, uh, somebody tipped one of my mother's tea cups over, and it said Made in Japan. And they started throwing those things around. And I, I think they broke the handle off of one. They were the strongest little China things you could ever expect, [laughs] but—

Q: They were throwing them, and they didn't even break.

LB: No. They, they were trying to break them, but they couldn't. [laughs] Yeah.

Q: Oh.

LB: But, uh, from then on, of course, we were—everything was going for the war. Uh, the other thing is, I [inaudible] [00:24:52] sheep. And, and I shored the sheep in the spring, and, uh, the government froze the wool where you couldn't sell it till they told you to—you could. So I stacked the wool in an old chicken coup. And when—August, they said, okay. Now you can take them over to this guy over in Cambridge. I went down to load the truck and it was full of bumblebees. And—

Q: The fleece—the bees were in the fleece.

LB: They had made a nest right in the fleece. And we had a, a closed truck body. It was an old meat body, so it shut up real tight. I put on the bee veil, and stuff, and, and threw the fleeces in the truck. And shut it up, and the next morning, I went to deliver it. I was hoping by then the, the bees would be dormant maybe. I don't know what I was hoping for. [laughs] Got over there, and backed the truck up. And the guys says, 'put it over there.' He went someplace else. And I let them out just as fast as I could. Of course, they were—couldn't see in the dark truck body too good. And I got them all stacked up where I was supposed to before the guy came back. And, boy, he says, I—where did all these bees come from? And I says, I don't know. [laughs] I got my paperwork done, and got out of there. But—

Q: Yeah. They got a little extra [inaudible] [00:26:15].

LB: Yeah. [laughs] Yeah. I don't know what he did with it. But I, I was, I was rid of it anyway.

Q: Now what was your, um, breed of sheep that you raised?

LB: Um, Hampshire's.

Q: Wow.

LB: Yeah. And, uh, the Dell's [phonetic] helped me get started with it. And then, most of my sheep come from—every farm had sheep in those days and, uh, if they had a, a yule that couldn't take care of the lamb, or that she died, or that—another trouble or something, they didn't want to feed it on a bottle. They'd bring it down to me, and I'd have several bottle lambs to take care of. And, uh, the lambs would go to Easton Market, the, the males, and the females I kept for breeding stock. So I got up to around 40 or 50 sheep, which isn't much. Some, some of them had four or 500 around at that time.

Q: Wow.

LB: And over in, uh, [Shushan? 00:27:18] area, there was a factory there at one time that handled, uh, special wool. And the sheep, they imported a bunch of sheep from Europe, I guess to supply that market. And it was quite a, quite an industry there for a short period of time.

Q: Wow. Now, what would be, um, what would your mother need for, um, like, [inaudible] [00:27:45] like, put together a meal? Like, what—would it be everything from the farm?

LB: Mostly.

Q: Would you raise just about everything that was on the table?

LB: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. We, we'd do potatoes, and my father kept a big garden. We had, uh, uh, squash and stuff that he'd grow and sold too. And then, we butchered pigs, and cows. And my mother would can meat, and so forth.

Q: [inaudible] [00:28:15].

LB: Oh, and, um, chickens, yeah. The best part about chickens is you could slaughter them in easy time, and any time you'd—not such a big operation as slaughtering a cow. Yeah.

Q: And were the kids, um, in the garden, or was that an adult? Um, did, did you guys as kids have to work in the garden?

LB: Somewhat, but it was kind of hard to get us there, I guess. My father enjoyed garden work, I guess, and he—

Q: So he—

LB: . . . he did the main—most of it. Yeah. And we had a strawberry patch, and cherry patch,

and, and all that kind of stuff. And, like, parsnips, and stuff in the garden, and, uh, in the spring of the year, uh, cow slips. If you got them before they blossomed, they weren't too bad.

Q: What'd you do, like, boil them or?

LB: Yeah. Like, spinach.

Q: Like, spinach.

LB: Yeah. Yeah. And that was a real treat, because that was a, one of the first fresh green things you could get in the spring.

Q: [crosstalk] [00:29:18] first thing you could see, right.

LB: And otherwise than that, you, you, uh, had just about what was in season. And the same way in the grocery stores. They didn't have vegetables in the wintertime. There's one, one, uh, story down in Skatikook that they used to come and, uh, the [inaudible] [00:29:38] company in boxes about that square with a window in front. I guess with the window, it stayed. They had these cardboard boxes go back in these little glass doors, and, uh, you'd open the door and take out what cookies you wanted, real sanitary type of thing [laughs]. This, this one grocery down there, I'd find some broken cookies in the, there in the bottom of the box. So he put them in another box, and, and put a special price on it. He had such a demand for them, he had to break up cookies, and supply the demand [laughs].

Q: [laughs] Oh, that's crazy.

LB: And then, Jargas [phonetic] down there, uh, somebody went in to get something, a very common thing. And he didn't have any. He said, 'when you going to get in any?' So I quit stocking that.' He says, 'I can't keep it on the shelf. It goes out so fast.' We were merchandising. [laughs] But—

Q: Would you have gone to Skatikook before you'd go to Greenwich if you needed, um, like, if you were looking for your dried goods, and things like that?

LB: Yeah. There was a dried goods store down there and so forth, and, and, uh, we'd go down there to get feed grounded [inaudible] [00:30:47] valley. And my father was, uh, involved—invested in that. And so went there, and so forth to—

Q: When you would go to visit Troy, like to your mom's relatives, would you go on the train, or would you drive?

LB: Drove, yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Uh, my—I rode in the 28 International for delivering apples down there when I was 5 years, uh, 5 weeks old.

Q: Down in Troy, yeah.

LB: Yeah. And in the wintertime, that could be quite a trip, but in those days—

Q: You were 5 weeks old, you said.

LB: Yeah. The, uh, my mother went along too. The City of Troy didn't plow streets in the early days.

Q: They still don't. [laughs]

LB: And the bus company used to—but they, they spread out sand, and it plugged up the sewers in the city. Troy sued them for—