

Q1: ...Easton Oral History Project.

A: Uh-huh.

Q1: And we are with Mike Saunders today. It's Thursday, April 17, um, 2008, and it's Mary Jane Conner and Barbara McCarthy with Mike Saunders, who is going to talk about his life in Easton.

A: Well, my memory's not too good. I can't tell you the dates I was there. I was there for, oh, quite a few years until Chet died.

Q1: So, and you were—where did you live when you were there?

A: From then?

Q1: No, when you, when you lived in Easton, where did you live?

A: Right in the house there on the farm.

Q1: On Chet Skiff's farm?

A: Yeah. Chet lived up in Greenwich and I lived on the farm there.

Q1: Uh-huh.

A: And milked the cows. We had a herd of cows. Milked them twice a day.

Q1: Do you remember how many?

A: Oh, there was 20, 28 or so, I guess.

Q1: Oh. Did you have help or was it just you?

A: Did I have help?

Q1: Yes.

A: No. Just me.

Q1: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

A: No. I run the farm, took care of it and we...

Q1: Did you have other animals, um, Mike?

A: I guess we had a couple horses there, but I didn't use them much.

Q1: Did you have to do the field work as well?

A: Well, I spread manure and things like that with the tractor.

Q1: Uh-huh.

A: And cleaned the stables every day and spread the cow manure.

Q2: And when would the milk be picked up, Mike? Was it once a day they picked up?

A: The milk was picked up every day. We had a big tank in there and strained milk into it and cold air and then, one, once a day a big truck come along and pumped the milk out of the tank and we washed the tank out and filled it again.

Q2: During the hot weather, Mike, would you have to keep it cool? Have to keep the milk cold?

A: Oh, yeah. You had the cooler that kept the milk cool all the time.

Q2: You (inaudible 00:02:29).

A: The milk, big milk tank had a cooler that run it, and it was just a big tank that held milk. You didn't put it in cans or anything. You just strained it right into the milk tank and we'd herd the cows then, milk them twice a day.

Q1: Were they, were they Holstein, Holsteins? What kind of cows? Were they Holsteins?

A: No, they were, uh, partly Ayrshires, I think. I don't remember just what all they was, but there wasn't too many Holsteins. Mostly, I guess Ayrshires and Guernseys or something like that.

Q1: Now, who were your neighbors? When you lived there, who were your neighbors?

A: Well, Joe Honeysett lived over on a point of the lot there and the, the Pearsons was on the corner. And Paul Skiff was across the field from us.

Q1: Mm-hmm.

A: And Bill, uh, let's see, John Skiff's son was Bill, I think.

Q1: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Bill Skiff.

A: Yeah.

Q1: Mm-hmm.

A: I remember Bill Skiff was John's brother. Stuart...

Q1: Of course, Stuart.

A: Stuart Skiff was on the farm over there (unintelligible 00:04:07), not (unintelligible 00:04:07) over there.

Q1: Meeting house? Yeah.

A: Yeah. And he, he was on the farm there next to Halls.

Q1: Mm-hmm, yeah. And who was at Pearson's? Was it Hildene and Harold, or?

A: No, it was, uh, George Pearson, wasn't it, I think?

Q1: Oh, George on the corner. Yup. Julie's father.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q1: Okay.

A: And Paul Skiff was across the fields.

Q1: Ah.

A: We lived in the big house there on the farm.

Q1: Mm-hmm.

A: Chet Skiff's home.

Q1: Mm-hmm, yeah. Yeah, the big, it was a big, old...

A: I worked there until Chet had a heart attack and died then we sold the cows out and I left and went to Skylar Farms.

Q1: Uh-huh. How long do you think you were in Easton? How many years?

A: Oh, I don't know. It was five, six years or so that I was down in Easton.

Q1: And were you—is that when you said you were in the fire department?

A: The fire department? Yeah.

Q1: Yeah?

A: Yeah. I helped start the Easton Fire Department there and was in on that.

Q1: Did you have, um, many volunteers? Did many people come forth?

A: What?

Q1: Did many people come forth to join the department?

A: The fire department?

Q1: Yeah.

A: Yeah, we had a good crowd of people in the fire department there.

Q1: Mm-hmm.

A: We, uh, got Jack Lundberg on the roof one day and then we took the ladder away and left him there.

Q1: Oh, so Jack was stranded on the roof.

A: And Jack Lundberg was a friend of mine.

Q1: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

A: He's married to my niece now. That was, they was married years after we was down in Easton.

Q1: Ah, fortuity.

A: Duty, yeah.

Q1: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. Who else was in the fire department back then?

A: Oh, God, now, let's see. There was Bill Conners.

Q1: Mm-hmm.

A: What was Bill's brother's name?

Q1: Well, there's Gerald and Robert, so it was probably Gerald.

A: Robert, I guess.

Q1: Oh, Robert? Okay.

A: Robert Conner.

Q1: Okay.

A: And Smitty Lundberg was in the fire department then.

Q1: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. (Unintelligible 00:06:44) for people that need to get through. Excuse us. Did you, did you have the fire department building there, down—was that building there then?

A: The fire department?

Q1: Yeah.

A: Yeah.

Q1: It was?

A: Yeah. I remember when, when we built it. It seems as though I helped them some when they built it.

Q1: You did? Yeah?

A: We had the fire department building there. It just seems—although I forget now whether I helped them build it. It seems though I did.

Q1: Yeah, I didn't know how long that building has been there.

A: Oh.

Q1: And the town, did the town give you money or did you have to around and fundraise?

A: Oh, we got money from the town, I guess, and the (unintelligible 00:06:44) around.

Q1: Now, where did, um, where did your kids go to school when you lived on Chet Skiff's farm?

A: Greenwich.

Q1: Oh, so they were already centralized.

A: School bus.

Q1: The school bus.

A: Picked them up and took them out to Greenwich, yeah.

Q1: Now, when you played cards, do you have any memories of the card parties and get-togethers?

A: Oh, we played down at the Easton Fire Department.

Q1: Yeah.

A: Every Monday night.

Q1: Every Monday night.

A: Yeah.

Q1: Was there...

A: I belonged to Stillwater Rod and Gun Club, too.

Q1: You did?

A: And we used to play cards down there once in a while.

Q1: How were you, how—did you win?

A: Oh, yeah.

Q1: Yeah?

A: Always good.

Q1: Did you play in tables and then move around (unintelligible 00:08:33)?

A: No, just one table with a bunch of fellows around.

Q1: Mm-hmm.

A: Five, six, seven fellows together playing cards at night. We'd go down on a Sunday and play cards down in the Easton Fire, uh, the Stillwater Rod and Gun Club.

Q1: Was that when you were living at Skylar Farm?

A: Yeah. I was (unintelligible 00:09:07) to Skylar Farms after Chet Skiff and Easton. When Chet died, why then the, the farm was sold and I went to Skylar Farms and worked on their farm for, for years for them.

Q1: So you've farmed most of your life?

A: Well, no. I went into real estate. I tried with Chet Skiff, yeah.

Q1: And sold real estate?

A: Sold real estate.

Q1: Around Greenwich, right? In that...

A: Yeah, Greenwich, Salem. Sold John Pemrick (his house.

Q1: You did?

A: The teacher that lives in Greenwich there?

Q1: Yes.

A: Sold him his house on Cutty Street.

Q1: I know the house.

A: He was always really pleased with what he got.

Q1: It's a great house. Yes.

A: Yeah, I was a real estate salesman as well as working on the farm.

Q1: Are there other, are there other people's houses that you remember, like people being really happy that they got their house from you?

A: No, I don't remember nothing.

Q1: But you remember John, that stands out to you, right?

A: Who?

Q1: John Pemrick.

A: John Pemrick, yeah, yeah.

Q1: Yeah. Mm-hmm. Was he married to Roxy then, when they bought the house?

A: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. That was, that was after I was working for Skylar Farms. I went in to real estate.

Q1: After that.

Q2: No more milking cows.

A: Well, I went to Skylar Farms after Chet Skiff. When Chet died, then I went to Skylar Farms and worked for them for a few years, but then went in to real estate.

Q1: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. Did you miss the cows?

A: Oh, yeah.

Q1: You did?

A: Yeah.

Q1: You liked farming?

A: Yeah, I liked farming. It was good.

Q1: Mike, when you, um, when you mentioned Joe, anything you want to say about Joe Honeysett? Any memories about him?

A: Joe was a good egg. He was a friend of mine.

Q1: He was?

A: Yeah. Why? Did you know Joe?

Q1: Yes, I did. Yup. He was, uh, a friend of my father's and my uncle's and he would do like, you know, he would help build—they built on the Conner farm, they had a little barn and then they expanded. And Joe was...

A: Yeah, helped build it.

Q1: Yeah, Joe helped build it.

A: Yeah, Joe was a good carpenter.

Q1: Yup. Mm-hmm.

A: Yup. Joe was a friend of mine.

Q1: And did you know Mike and John?

A: Oh, yeah, yeah.

Q1: Mm-hmm.

A: I belonged to the Easton Fire Department for years there while I was down...

Q1: So they might have been in the fire department too, right?

A: Oh, yeah.

Q1: With the Honeysett boys?

A: Yeah.

Q1: Yeah. Did you know Ed Pearson, too?

A: Yeah.

Q1: Mm-hmm. He was quite a hunter. He liked to...

A: Stuart Skiff...

Q1: And Stuart Skiff.

A: ...was on the Skiff Farm over there.

Q1: And he lives there with—Stuart and Carol live on that farm now.

A: Yeah. When I worked for Chet, of course, Chet was up in Greenwich to the store.

Q1: Uh-huh.

A: Then Chet had a heart attack and died.

Q1: Yeah.

A: And I quit work for him. I went to Skylar Farms.

Q1: And then did you...

A: (unintelligible 00:12:42) and worked for Skylar Farms for years.

Q1: And then did Bill take over the farm, um, the store? When Chet died, did Bill start?

A: I think, probably. I forget when. When Chet died, why then I quit working for him. That's when he died that I quit working for Skiffs.

Q1: Mm-hmm.

A: They sold the farm out down there.

Q1: Boy, that was a big house you lived in.

A: Oh, yeah.

Q1: Wow. That—right? That it had that big staircase in the front?

A: Had the what?

Q1: Am I thinking of that house? Is that the house you lived in?

A: The one on the farm there in Easton.

Q1: Yeah. With the big staircase going upstairs?

A: Probably, yeah.

Q2: How did you heat the house in the winter, Mike?

Q1: How did you heat that house?

A: Oh, you had the furnace in there.

Q1: Did it? Oil?

A: I guess so.

Q1: Mm-hmm. Yup, probably. Probably did.

A: I think that's what it was. And I forget how many years I worked there, then when I quit there I went to Chet Skiff's.

Q1: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

A: And worked for Chet on the farm up in Greenwich there for a little and then Chet died, I guess.

Q1: Yeah. Now, Dale was telling me about potatoes. Like when you were young, did your parents, did your mother and father, did they grow potatoes?

A: Oh, they used to have potatoes, yeah. Never did grow any big crops like the regular potato farmers or anything like that.

Q1: Just for yourself?

A: Just for themselves.

Q1: Mm-hmm.

A: Yeah.

Q1: Did you guys have a garden down when you were down on Chet's farm?

A: Oh, (unintelligible 00:14:36) I had a garden there.

Q1: Mm-hmm. What did you grow?

A: Oh, beets and radishes and carrots and green beans and things like that.

Q1: Mm-hmm. Grow sweet corn?

A: Sweet corn? Yeah, yeah.

Q1: Yeah. Mm-hmm. Sounds good.

A: Yeah.

Q1: Well, it's great to talk to you. It's great. I'm so happy that we found you and that you could—you're so nice that you were willing to have us put you on tape. Do you want to listen to yourself on the tape?

A: No, I'm all right.

Q1: Okay, okay. Well, thank you very much.

A: Well, thank you for everything.

Q1: We're going to have this in the library, so thank you very much.

A: Oh.

Q2: Thank you, Mike. That was great.

A: Good, good talking to you.

