

Carlton Hertler

Transcript of the oral interview with Carlton Hertler conducted by Emily Salvette. The interview took place on March 10, 2002 at a meeting of the Pittsfield Township Historical Society held at the Pittsfield Recreation Center, 701 W. Ellsworth Rd., Ann Arbor. Mr. Hertler reviewed the transcript in November 2002. The transcript reflects his corrections.

Interview Summary

Mr. Hertler was born on January 29, 1924 on his father Dan's farm at the corner of what is now Moon Road and Michigan Avenue. He was the sixth of seven children of Dan and his wife, Wilhelmina (Minnie) Weber Hertler. Mr. Hertler, whose Hertler ancestors came to Michigan in the 1840's, discusses many of the familier names in Washtenaw County: Harwood, Weber, Steeb, Finkbeiner. He went to Valentine School and Saline High School. He had , along with his brother, 5 sisters helped with chores on the farm. He remembers "Maude" the streetcar that came from Ypsilanti and went up to Saline. He also remembers hard times during the depression.

Mr. Hertler has worked at various jobs: farming, Assistant Forester for the city of Ann Arbor, tractor salesman, and maintenance painter at the Ypsilanti State Hospital. He has three children. He has an interest in old farm machinery and has donated some pieces from his collection to the Wilson Farm.

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Carlton Hertler Interview

I

Interviewer (Emily Salvette)

R

Respondent (Carlton Hertler)

M or F 1, 2, 3 etc

unidentified male or female questioner

Side One:

I:

...Hertler who is a long-time resident of Pittsfield Township. And we're here on March 10th, 2002 at the Pittsfield Recreation Center at 701 Ellsworth Road. And Welcome. Thank you very much.

R:

Thank you.

I:

It's really nice to have you here. And I am Emily Salvette. I'm sorry. I'd like to ask you first to just go through the basic where were you born, when, who were your parents, what were their names? And then maybe we'll talk a little bit more about getting to the history of the family.

R:

I was born probably three miles from here, corner of Moon Road and Michigan Ave. At the time, my dad was a farmer and I was born, it was Michigan Ave and Moon Road wasn't there. It...New State comes out and there's where I...we still owned the farm. We have owned the farm until, well, probably September. We are...we have sold the rest of my dad's farm, is now going to go to Washtenaw Community ...or Washtenaw Christian Academy. You've probably seen pictures of it. It's a 900-people school. It's going on a back side of the barns. If you've been down that road lately, it's going to be amazing. All that's left is the house, there's one barn left. The other two big barns and all the tool sheds have been taken down. And when they burn the big barn down, probably Monday or Tuesday, then it'll be all bare and then the Christian Academy will set like 500 feet off of Michigan Ave, back in the field.

I:

What was your father's name?

R:

Dan Hertler.

I:

And your mother's?

R:

Minnie, or Wilhelmina.

I:

Wilhelmina, and what was her maiden name?

R:

She was a Weber.

I:

She was a Weber. W-E-B-E-R?

R:

Just a W-E-B-E-R. One B.

I:

And how long had they farmed there? They...did he inherit that from his dad or...?

R:

Well, my...evidently, my great grandfather must have come from Germany in...around 1848.

I:

Um-hum.

R:

And my dad was born in 1881. So there's a time lapse in there of another generation in between. My grandfather's name was Gottlob. And he also had a brother that came from

Germany at the same time. I think is what it was is maybe the parents came first and then brought...the two boys came over, and they settled in the Saline area, and one bought acreage east of Saline, like 400 acres, and the other one bought land on Willis Road by Urania Station.

I:

By what station.

R:

They call it Urania Station. The railroad track that comes from Toledo, and went to Ann Arbor, to Whitmore Lake, there used to be stockyards there. They took in coal. They took in...well, you had...I think there was a station there that you could get rides. You could go to north, you could go wherever you wanted on the train.

I:

How do you spell that?

R:

Um, E-R-...

I:

Eran

R:

Probably another U in there.

I:

Hm.

R:

But Ypsilanti State Hospital always had an address of Urania, Michigan. Or Eurania.

I:

Urania.

R:

And then what it was, was just a railroad track, a siding alongside it, and then all of the...all of the coal and stuff brought in for running Ypsilanti State Hospital was brought from the south and left on tracks and backed in. They burn like probably 12 carloads of coal every day.

I:

Um-hum.

R:

I worked there for 24 years. Of course when I got there the coal thing was gone. It was into oil by that time and then they changed it over to gas. Now it's all empty, except for a forensic unit.

I:

Um-hum. Um-hum.

R:

And amazing, I still have my keys (both laugh). I could write a book on that place.

I:

Well, maybe you should. Well, what...when you were growing up, you grew up on the farm and...

R:

I was born on the farm.

I:

Were you born in the farm? Or were you born at Beyer Hospital?

R:

No, no. There was no hospital.

I:

Oh!

R: Ah, I'm sure there wasn't a Saline Hospital.

I: You were born in '25?

R: Four.

I: Four. Born at...So were you born at home?

R: Yeah. Probably. I don't know. Never asked.

I: Never asked?

R: I wasn't old enough to ask (both laugh).

I: Well, I also read here that you had polled Herefords when you were growing up?

R: Well, I've been in...

I: Or have you had just about everything on the farm?

R: I always...when I was first out there, my...I have to go back just a few years before 1920, my great-grandfather...my grandfather, actually it was my grandfather, not my dad, my grandfather, oh, they had that flu epidemic in 1919, the father, a daughter that was in a wheelchair and two brothers, or two sons, died within two weeks.

I: Hm.

R: My dad and my mother lived in Ann Arbor. They had four girls at that time. And he worked for I don't know if you ever heard of Mac and Mac Furniture Store?

I: Yes.

R: He was the...he was the horse driver, or carriage or where they hauled furniture to the university and all that stuff. So he's always had horses. So when he came to the farm we...all I remember of the first part of the farm there was about...could have been eight, probably eight or nine horses, maybe one tractor there. But he...my grandfather then...yeah, my grandfather would have had long-horned cattle from the West and they'd go to Buffalo. Him and his brother would take like maybe three, four carloads, maybe six carloads of steers, take them to Buffalo and on the way back they'd pick up, they'd buy cattle in Buffalo and bring them back and feed them. Now you've got to realize back those days, hell, all...like we lived on [US]12. So it had fences both side the road and everybody had a gate. So when they drove cattle, they turned them cattle loose at the stockyards in Saline and drove them down to farm, opened up the gate and put them in the yards. I don't...I have no recollection of how many cattle they had at each time. But I'm going to say they must have hauled, probably that farm supported probably three carloads of cattle at a time, maybe like once a year. They'd feed them up, take them to Toledo...or to Buffalo, bring them back and feed another batch.

I:

R: How many cows in a carload?

R: I wouldn't know. Quite a few.

M: This would be in a train, though.

R: Yeah, on a train. They would spend maybe two, three days. The two brothers would go and take the cattle down and spend the time, buy some more, and bring them back.

I: Um-hum. Um-hum.

R: But then when he died, then the next year my dad came out and we got, evidently got ride of all the longhorns, and he remodeled the barns, or redid the barns into Holstein cattle at that time. He had probably...well, we were one of the first ones in the Michigan area, down in this area, that had milking machines. Because who else had electricity? [US] Twelve is the only place that had electricity from Ypsi to Saline.

I: Was that...?

R: Very, very few wire...like 110.

I: Was that for the cars that went back and forth on...on...

R: Well...

I: Well, why was 12 wired and no places else?

R: Well, because they'd...

M: It wasn't developed.

R: Nobody had lights. No, I've...I've always lived in a house that had lights. It had...it had bathrooms, it had hot water, it had everything else. But a lot of the neighbors didn't have it. But if you weren't on 12, if you were on Bemis Road or you were on Textile Road, you probably didn't have lights and probably for another ten years. But that farm was wired for the first 220, was in this part of the country. To run electric motors.

M: Do you happen to how many Holsteins they'd milk each day?

R: They always milked there about 35. The barns were all set up with stanchions, metal stanchions, where the other would have the wood ones, you know. But this had metal stanchions. We had big...big bull pens. I think he had possibly two great big bulls at one time. And then of course all the calves. Last...last Friday I went through the barn. I'm trying to restore what's left of the farm. So all these metal gates that you had a handle you turned and opened them up. There was only one left out of the whole bunch. The rest of them have all...the bottoms are all rusted off. But I probably will take it home, make a...you know, probably go on the garden gate or something like that.

I:

Um-hum.

R: Just to...it's something...it was my...my folks. Other than that, I've been into antique farm machinery for probably 30 years. If you ever want to see an Altman Taylor Thrash machine, a wooden machine or a cloverseed hauler, corn huskers, silo fillers, I have a whole bunch of them. I just...

M: Are there types of equipment you've learned to at least think about putting out on the Wilson Farm land?

R: Some of that stuff will go there, yeah. I don't know, they...they came over there, stuff that I hadn't probably used for the last ten years sat out in the orchard. I told them to come out and put a tag on it. I think they came and got one piece of equipment, and I haven't seen where it went to.

F:

R: Three.

F: You got three of them.

F: Got three things.

R: There was a rotary hoe out there that was still setting there. That's at my house. I picked it up.

F: Oh, the one they pulled it up to the front?

R: Yeah.

F: They pulled it up to the front to come over there and get it.

R: Yeah, well, I put it there. I have a forklift.

F: Uh-huh.

R: So stuff was setting out where it wasn't supposed to be, it went up in the front. And then of course the Christian Academy, they wanted to clean that place up, and they were about to burn brush next to it and I said, no, we can't do that. So...

F: I know they've got...they brought two pieces over to...

R: They brought a rake home and then a...

F: And a wooden wheel? An axle with wooden wheels on it?

R: That could have been, yeah.

I: Yeah. Well, can you tell me a little bit about your...who was along there on Michigan Avenue? Who were your neighbors, and like when you were a kid, what families did you play? Who'd you go to school with?

R: Ninety percent of them from all the way from Saline, except for the Morton family, were all relatives.

I: Okay, all right. (laughter)

R: They were either Hertlers or they were Harwoods.

I: How are the Harwoods and the Hertlers related?

R: Through my...

I: Which...how many generations back was that?

R: Not too far back. They were...my...well, Amanda Harwood was a Hertler. She married Will Hertler. Er, no. Got that wrong.

F: Will Harwood.

R: Will Harwood, yeah. But there was another Will Harwood...or Will Hertler. Yeah, Will Harwood, but there was a Will Hertler. They are about five generations, they're from Germany but, you know, from a different outfit.

I: (laughs)

R: Now you have to realize too, there was a lot Hertlers on the West side of town. Like George Hertler family that had the polar bear. As you referred to it, the polar bear. Now a lot of those are married to the Weidemayers, the Finkbeiners, the Feldkamps, and the Webers. This is where the Webers came into it. My mother was a Weber. She was born out on Weber Road and named after my grandfather. He had a cider mill that they used to drive the horses around and press the apples. My mother did that. She stood on, she walked the horse made the horses walk around turn this, well, what do you call them?

I: _____

R: Yeah.

I: ___ like a treadmill.

R: Yeah, like a treadmill deal. She did that until she was...and I think she got out of the eighth grade, went to Cleary College, got out of Cleary College and she was the bookkeeper for Ainsworth, which was down next to the railroad...or the river in Ypsi. You're probably familiar with the Granary Restaurant. It was across from Hobbs.

I: Oh, yeah.

R: Okay, there was a Granary, they called it the Granary Restaurant. That was where she worked.

I:

Hm.

R: But Ainsworth owned a farm south of Ypsi, out on Huron Street, South Huron, and she would go by probably buggy, horse and buggy. They probably went out to the farm and took an inventory because people were buying and selling hay and a lot of it was dropped off at the Ainsworth farm, and it was brought into Saline, or into Ypsi.

I:

Hm.

R: So she was...left high school or grade school, eighth grade, went to Cleary's and probably, she was probably working at eighteen, being a bookkeeper.

M:

Could you estimate the population of the township back as far as you can? _____.

R: Must have been...Well, there's not that many farms in Pittsfield that haven't, have never changed. The 400 acres my grandfather...that, it's always been in one family. Like the Rentschler farm. Now that has been there since about 1910. It happened to be Warren Rentschler is my second cousin by a marriage between the Webers and the Hertlers. Warren's wife was a Hertler, a Fred Hertler, which would have been my second cousin. So now you wonder why I got involved with the Warren Rentschler farm. A lot of the stuff that's at the Warren Rentschler Farm is also mine. But I've had fun, I retired 18 years ago and I've had fun for 18 years buying stuff at different farms. Haul it home, didn't know what I was going to ever use it for, but it's here. Now somebody can enjoy it.

F2:

Bertha Hertler, I knew her way back when, not _____. She was always _____.

R: Mary...Mary and Bertha lived at the old farm house. That was my dad's first cousin's. Now if you're familiar with around Ann Arbor, there was Gottlob, George, Herman, and Emma. Ran the Hertler Brothers store. They were first cousins of my dad's. But that, see, that was my grandfather's brother's family. And that's where, like the Will Harwood family came from. Amanda was a Hertler.

F2:

Um-hum.

R: So Web and Ralph, they split the farm up and they took over the Wilson, or the Harwood farm.

F2:

I knew Web.

R: And partly Web, Web might have not been to the Will Hertler...he...or Will Harwood farm. I think he was from the Sidney Harwood family, which was another relative of the Harwoods.

F3:

You mentioned Weber. Was Roy Weber your...?

R: No. No relation to that. Ah, there was...my grandfather's name was George and I don't, I don't remember too much about the Weber family but they...my mother's side were...could have been Rentschlers or Steeb's. And back, someplace back through the line, Elmer Steeb from Steeb Dodge is a relative.

F3:

R: So Steeb sort of have the meat market, they...?

R: They might have been.

I: Well, you know, this genealogy stuff is getting just, throwing me for a loop here.

R: (laughs) Well, if you weren't familiar around here 60-70 years ago, you wouldn't have remembered a lot of this.

I: Yeah. And you said that almost everybody was from German extraction?

R: Mostly German, yeah.

I: You recall? And your family came from the Rhine area, the Rhine Valley?

R: Some, yeah, I would say mostly farm area, Stuttgart is in the...it's not too far right off the Autobahn now. What they called it before, I don't know.

I: Um-hum. And they came over...your...best you know they first came over in 1840's?

R: In the late 1840's.

I: Well, interesting.

R: I can remember my grandmother telling, she was four years old. Now, she was a Katerer. K-A-T-E-R-E-R. Which is spe

I: What was her name?

R: That was, well, that was her maiden name. But she was four or five years old when Lincoln was killed, and she died in 19...something like '43 or '44. So she was pretty old too.

I: Um-hum.

R: She had to have been close to a hundred years old. The whole family lived forever.

M: Those that are deceased, were they buried in the cemetery on Morgan Road?

R: Ah, well, Morgan or Campbell Road. I think it was Campbell.

M: Campbell.

R: Campbell and Textile. Lot of that was the Harwoods. I think the Hertler were more in Saline. I don't think there was any Hertlers buried out that way. Oh, it's been...if you really want to keep track of this, I would have to go get maps and...where they're actually buried, who's related to who. But you've got to realize now, the George Hertler family that's 16 kids in that family. I don't know whether it was the same husband, same wife, or whether...I think there was a...one of them, one of the women must have died, but they are all Hertlers.

F3: Did you get together with all the cousins, I mean, all these people that you're...?

R: Oh, yes. Years ago we used to get together until...

F3: you actually knew all these people, cousins and played with them....

R: Yeah. My, my dad's brother was a minister. He was ordained here in Saline. Moved out to Wisconsin, hm, LaCrosse...LaCrescent. It's on the Mississippi River.

I: Hm.

R: He had a church on the east side of the river. He had one on the west side, and then he lived on another farm, or another...well, I call it a church farm, way back in the country. So he'd make one in the morning, one at lunch, and one at supper. And they would always feed, you know, it was...when you went to a church out there, you always throw like a potluck dinner deal. Because they came from so far. But he always had three sermons every day, whether it was the same sermon every day or...give us...

F3: That was called a circuit preacher?

R: Not...well (laughing), I don't know what you'd call it. He must have...

F3: He must have liked it.

R: I would say he probably, when he first started, probably it was back in horse and buggy days yet.

F3: Because Doug's grandfather did the same thing...

R: Yeah. No, I don't, I don't think they'd call him. Like...like you're referring to, like Kentucky.

F3: in Canada. So maybe...

R: Yeah, well, Canadians would probably do it that way. They would call it. But you always had a circuit judge, well, like circuit judges or they would be church...or ministers would go by horseback and preach for maybe a month and then you'd go on again. No, I think he was a permanent...

F3: permanent.

R: Yeah.

F3: Well, his grandfather was permanent too. He had certain churches he went to. And he did go, like you said, maybe Sunday. Sometimes every other Sunday.

R: Um-hum.

F: I don't know. It's very interesting.

I:
Hm.

R:
But the rest of the family have always been farmers of some sort. Even the...like both farms were approximately like 400 acres each. And right now, I hope...I would like to see what my grand◆ my grandfather and grandmother would say when we put both Saline schools on their property. Actually the two schools are being built on my dad's property. He bought half the farm. We bought the east half, the other half was where my grandfather lived. And when my grand...my grandfather died, he lived where we lived now until 1920, and then when he died, my grandmother moved back with the other family up the road, which are brothers and sisters, or...sister-in-laws and brothers.

M:
We saw some... [together]

I:
Where did you...?

M:
I'm sorry. Go ahead.

I:
Go ahead. Well, I'll just go ahead. Where did you go school?

R:
Valentine School. It's still standing.

M:
Is that a one...

R:
One, once...

M:
I was going to ask you the same question.

R:
Yeah. No, it's a one, one-story...or a one-classroom, eight grades, then you'd go to Saline Schools after that.

I:
Well, do you remember who your teacher was or some of you classmates?

R:
Ada May Harwood, which would have been Web Harwood's wife. But I knew her before she was married.

I:
And she was your teacher?

R:
She was, she was Ada May Bachman at that time.

I:
(laughs)

R:
She was from Ypsi. Or ___ from Milan. North of Milan.

I:
Huh. How many kids in the class? I mean, how many kids in the school?

R:
Hm, I don't know. Probably, I would estimate probably 25.

I:

R: Okay.

I: Maybe 30 kids in one room.

R: So and that goes kindergarten where?

I: Everything. Every...all the way up to...

R: All of it.

I: How did you get to school then? Did you walk?

R: I walked. Well, I only had to walk, yeah, probably twice as far as the fire station.

I: Yeah, some...

R: But some of them had to walk a mile. Some walked two miles.

I: Now what about when you went to Saline High? Did you...?

R: Well...

I: Did you have a car by then? Were you driving?

R: No, I was only fourteen. I probably had a driver's license though. Or I probably drove without a driver's license (laughs).

I: Well, I was going to say most folks that we have been talking to are driving by fourteen (laughs).

R: Well, I figure if you were old enough to drive a tractor, you could drive trac...you could drive car.

I: Um-hum. But, well, anyway, so how...what about how were things...can you talk a little bit about your experience at Saline High and because went...What year did you graduate?

R: I graduated in 1942. There were no school buses. Wherever you went you had...everybody had to furnish a car to go....like I was in, more into agriculture end of it, and of course, we had a lot of field trips. We'd go to Lansing. We'd go to...Howell was kind of a agriculture thing. Or not...no, I think it was Brighton. Maybe it was Howell. I think it was Howell. That was the county seat. I think we used to go up there for classes and, you know, new things coming up and new...new varieties of oats and corn, and this kinda stuff, it never...When I was probably getting out of high school, there wasn't any hybrid corn at all. It was native corn. You went out and shucked corn off near the corn and planted again, and you had just as good a corn as they have now. Now it's eighty-some dollars a bushel, then you picked it off. But when they open-pollinated corn, every...it would pollinate itself. But as soon as you put it hybrid, now you plant like 12 rows of corn and you leave two rows left. The pollination from one does the other. They...then they go through and they take the...they don't have an ear on that corn that pollinates the rest of them. That's cross-pollination. But they claim, of course, now you've got corn will grow a 180 bushels

shell corn to the acre. Back then probably 60, 70 bushels of corn to the acre, that was it, and that was ear corn. That's half of what the other was.

M:

Did you make use of the MSU County Extension Service?

R:

No. Not much.

I:

Were you in 4H?

R:

My mother would have. She was always into that. Pardon?

I:

Like 4H? Were you in 4H? _____ or...?

R:

Ah, I was in 4H, yeah. I don't remember making anything but maybe a bird house or two. I didn't have time. Well, we had...I know there were 35 cows, because we milked...sometime we had to milk some of them by hand. There was 150 sheep. We always raised 200 hogs a year. So that was 50...a hundred in the spring, fifty a hundred in the fall. And you always had a chicken house full of chickens.

I:

Um-hum.

R:

And I hate chickens.

I:

Oh! (laughs)

R:

They're itchy. (laughter) Only got them cleaned when we had to (laughs).

I:

Good. Well, now how many brothers and sisters did you have to do all this work?

R:

I had one...I had one brother and five sisters. Four of them were...Well, the youngest of the four girls is eight years older than I am.

I:

Um-hum.

R:

There were four daughter or four girls born in five years. Then it was skip for four years, then I had a brother and then four years later I was born. Then one three years later.

I:

Well, then can you talk about like what an average day would have been for your chores and who did what and did the girls just stay in the house or were they out there, too?

R:

I remember probably six o'clock in the morning, I think we all got up. Horses got fed first. And I think we fed the chickens next. And then the cows were fed, then we milked the cows. And by quarter after seven, it was breakfast time.

I:

Um-hum.

R:

And for the first...I'm going to say the first 12 years until 1933, '34, Depression time, my dad always had one or two hired men. I can remember going into the house, my mother is frying

eggs -- 12 eggs per man. And fried potatoes. And bacon. And ham. Then they came in at lunch time and ate another full dinner and at suppertime ate another full dinner, but I mean, they worked. And they were from Germany. Some of those...some of those kids were...or my...the hired men I think my grandfather had had on the one big farm was split between the rest of them at that time. He probably had five, six workers for him at one time. Plus, they...six kids of my grand...my dad's family. So it was a lot of...it was a lot of work.

F:

Did the hired hands live elsewhere?

R:

No. They always lived there at the house.

F:

They lived with...

R:

Yeah. And we had...I think there were three or four bedrooms on the second floor. There had a over the top of the kitchen were the...like an attic and some of them slept there, and then the hallways, they slept some. Well, we don't...I'm sure there were, used to be two. I can remember two hired men that lived at the farm with us. And they are people...people from Germany. My grandfather. I think...I think there were fourteen boys brought from Germany like every...every other year or something. He would pay their passage by boat to United States or to Michigan and they would work for him for one year, and then he would set them up in a farming business. I don't know if you ever heard of the Boutniks, Fred Boutnik in...out on Brown Road. There was a...hm, Paul Nadler was on Shill Road. Now they were all set up through my grandfather to buy a farm.

F:

Did he help them buy the farm?

R:

They helped them buy the farm. And at one time, the beginning of the Saline Savings Bank was George Hertler and Gottlob Hertler only. I don't...

M:

Farming back then was a pretty good business compared to what it is now.

R:

Yeah. Yeah. Well, it wasn't anything. Universal die-casting, that was a creamery at one time, and my dad shipped milk into Saline on Maude. You heard of Maude.

I:

You better explain Maude.

R:

Well, now, you...I can't really explain it because everybody says I was wrong. Or I'm wrong. (laughter). I was born in 1924 in January, and they said that in 1925 or 26 Maude was taken off the track. I'm sure it wasn't. I can remember riding on Maude to Saline.

M:

Oh, was Maude a streetcar or...?

R:

Streetcar.

M:

Streetcar.

R:

Came from Ypsi. Now originally it was supposed to go to Clinton and on west. But they got down as far as the bridge to go through it like where the American Legion is now. They somehow or

other money ran out or they stopped right there. So the track was in the road. They put brick around the track, and my sisters used to go down to...oh, down where the legion is. There was a lady had a...taught piano. What all I remember of it, it used to go up where the Saline Savings Bank is now and there were they...a spur whenever they drove in and they turned it around, backed it up on the track. But when they came into Saline, There was another spur that backed up, and he backed up and went over to where the body shop for...that used to be Fred Weidman or...who was the guy just owned that here not too long ago? There was a used car sales in there.

F:

T&M?

R:

Yeah. T&M was in there. Okay. You backed up there, they took probably six cans of milk off the back of old Maude. Dumped them into the thing. They were weighed and they come out with a steam hose, cleaned the hose...or the cans out, throw them back on Maude, and we'd stay on the...on the train and go over there and my mother would go in and get groceries. At that time it was Tanners. They had a grocery store on the north side of the road. She'd get her groceries and come back, get on Maude, and away we'd come back home. Drop the cans off on this little pedestal out there and we'd all go to the house.

F:

Now what...what does Maude stand for? Is that just a name?

R:

It's just a name of a train. You see pictures of it around. And now I remember going up and down the road and everybody says, "No, you can't, because they took it off the tracks in '26 or '27." I know you remember a lot of things that four and five maybe even earlier than that. Now, I know I was only like...Well, my dad built another new barn because if you wanted Grade A Milk, you had to take the cows, had to be out of the horse barns. You couldn't have horses in barns, or the cows in the same barn.

I:

Oh.

R:

So they built a new barn in 1929. I remember going up the hog shed roof over the top of this thing and back down. On the outside you only had little slots like that. Go up over the top and run around up there. Why we never got killed, I don't know.

M:

For recreation, since you didn't have...

R:

That was recreation.

M:

Did you ever ride the pigs and stuff?

R:

Yeah.

M:

Oh, that was fun.

R:

And after that all I remember...for after '29. Then the Depression hit and the hired men evidently, couldn't afford to keep them or they decided to go someplace else. Then I was...well, I'd a been what? Eleven years old. I think 11 years old, I was put on the farm just like a hired

man was. I had my own team. I , we used to load hay by hand. Always had two teams out in the field, hook onto a hay-loader. They hay-loader's still up at the Warren Rentschler farm.

F:

You go home on weekends?

R:

No, I live there.

F:

Oh, you live there. Hm.

I:

What other affects did you notice from the Depression, on your farm? Did it make a big impact?

R:

Oh, yeah. No money.

I:

Well, a lot of people didn't have money.

R:

But it was bad. I mean, all day long you'd have people walking from Chicago to Detroit looking for jobs. Or they'd walk from Chicago...or Detroit to Chicago. And they...my...the house that sits out there now burned in 1931 and I think that was about the worst of the Depression. You'd see people walking one way, walking the other way. My mother would always bake 15 loaves of bread. She had an old wood stove. She'd bake 15 loaves of bread every day. And she fed people walking up and down the road.

I:

Oh, my.

R:

Of course, we had 15 cows...or 35 cows, we had sheep. I never cared for mutton myself, but we always had chickens, we always had hogs. All winter long we'd butcher four or five cows, hogs a week. People come from Detroit, take a quarter at a time, back quarter, front quarter. Probably never...never probably made ham, they probably ate as raw or fresh pork. My dad always made them this...always had the thing, he would never waste anything but the squeal. They saved everything -- the tail, everything went...jowls, but the bones. I mean the bones, they didn't keep the bones but...

M:

Well, but people didn't have money there. Was it a kind of a trading type of thing?

R:

Um-hum.

M:

They gave you something other than money and you gave them food?

R:

Sometimes. And then some...now, I can remember my mother'd take like a basket of eggs in on Maude and trade eggs for groceries. But it wasn't a...it wasn't that they didn't have money at the...before that. They had money to redo the barns. They had everything, but all of a sudden, here we...we had a fire burn, that burned the house completely to the ground. Luckily they had about \$6,000 insurance on the house. Well, that was a lot of money at one time. The house didn't bring that. And they...it die...it burned on April the 12th and October...er, November the 12th, they built a brand new house. It sets there now. It took them six months. But I can remember laborers out there only worked for 26 cents an hour. The heavy carpenters were like 34. The bricklayer, I think he got 38 cents an hour. Now that's two dollars a day. That's what it cost. It was six...something like 64 hundred dollars they built that house out there.

I: Where did you live while they were building that house?

R: In the house across the road. And that was an old barn, or an old house. It was not really...well, I guess it was abandoned at one time. The Heinigers owned it, next-door neighbors. And they used to, rather than sell their grain, they would store it for one year, two years. They'd open up the windows and throw the wheat in the living room floor. The day that the house burned, they went over there and they'd unloaded all that wheat and took it to their other farm, the next-door, where Jerry Helmer lives now. Jerry was the next-door...well, it was the Heinigers at that time. That night we moved in, mice...mice, rats, woodchucks in the basement. Well, we never expected to ever have that catastrophe at one time.

F: Did you have big vegetable gardens?

R: Big one (laugh). Grapes. I think we used to pick like 24 bushels of grapes every year. We had asparagus. We had all them onions. Green onions, and then they had the other onions, you know, like they were...you'd pick them off in the fall. Now, I don't know, they must have been wild ones because it wasn't like we have wild onions now. That's a little tiny thing. But these were never replanted. The next spring or next summer they'd have onions again.

M: You make your own wine?

R: Oh, yeah. And cider. And then there was probably...I'm going to say there must have been at least 30 trees, or apple trees, every kind you could think of. I can remember the neighbors all coming over there, the basement was always damp, cool, because they had, you know, no cement on the floor. The neighbors, they'd get through milking cows and they always ended up my dad's farm, they'd drink it. And when it came lunch time, they didn't go home. My mother fed them. They probably weren't able to walk home or drive home (laughs).

M: _____

R: I shouldn't be talking about my relatives (laughs). But there was neighbors from all over came out there to the farm.

I: Now what about the War? How did that affect the operations there? First of all, did you serve in the military?

R: I didn't serve because of the fact I came out in '42. I was in 1A when I left high school. All my...I think there were three out of probably 20...no, it wasn't that many. There was 42 of us graduated and I think there might have been 18 boys. There were two boys didn't go. I was one of them. But every time I'd go down, I'd go down for a physical -- 1A. Nothing wrong with me. And they'd say, well, you go out that door, or you go that door, and they'd say, go out that door, and I went back home. I was in 1A four times during World War II. Every six months, I got taken back. But every time I got back there, the draft board would say, "No, we can't send him. He's too much..." You had to have so many units of cattle or so many acres of property that was into...Because they needed the grain.

I: Um-hum.

R:

And here were a lot of kids, you know, they were...lived on a farm, but they didn't do any farming.

I:

What about the operations of the farm during the War years? Was it difficult to...did you...were you using gas tractors at that time, and could you gas and...?

R:

Well, you'd gone back to like to the old Fordson tractors, the old John Deere Dees were out at that time. Ah, you didn't see, hardly ever saw a...well, yeah, you would see a tricycle type tractor. One thing that you could...you could mow hay, you could cultivate, you could cut grain with a grain binder. I didn't have a combine until early 50's. They was all pull-type combines running off power take-off shafts. That's what I...that's what I've been picking up for 18 years. There's not...there wasn't much left. It was almost to a point at one time, you'd go to an auction, they knew who was going to buy everything. They quit bidding.

M:

You sold your milk then wholesale. You didn't have a _____...

R:

Yeah. It was...it would...but they...when I finally quit, I got out of high school, I think I quit milking cows probably in '48 or '49. And what we did is we bought a horned Hereford cow, a bull, and bred him to a Holstein. We had black and white cows. Looked like Holstein, but they...or a Hereford, but they were black. And so my dad didn't like that. He didn't like the horns. I...okay. So little by little as the cows got older, I was buying polled Hereford cows, and then I'd buy a polled Hereford bull. And some of the cows then got intermixed together and they were kind of a reddish...a reddish black. And as soon as I got down to where the better bulls that I bought, then they were all red. Some of them had a little strain probably of Holstein in them, but...

M:

Were there any Guernsey's?

R:

Nope. Nope. And towards the end of it, I used to separate the milk, or the cream from the milk, and with 200 hogs walking around, they liked skim milk. You guys buy skimmed milk to drink. I fed it to the pigs. All you had to do was mix...ma or wheat and oats and corn ground together and you ought to see them explode (laughs). Six months, 210 pounds (laughs).

I:

When did you finish up operations on the farm? How...when did you sell off the last pet?

R:

Well, the first part of the farm was sold in, I'm going to say my mother went into rest home. She fell and broke her hip, and she never did be able to walk on it again. So she was in bed quite...about the last ten years. I think she died in '84? '82, '84. I kept on farming. Of course, you've got to realize now, I never quit. I never...never quit farming, but I'd been...I was City of Ann Arbor Forester for six years, I went to work for Fred Weidman in Saline as a tractor salesman. Then I went to work for Ypsilanti State Hospital and worked another 24 years there. So I've always had a full-time 80...40-hour week. So I've had...my farming was done from 4:30 till 12, 1 o'clock in the morning. Go home, and get six hours sleep, back to work again. I've...I guess to keep me going, I don't know.

F:

When did you let the sheep go?

R:

The sheep probably left in about '65. They would have still been there. We had three dogs that came from Bemis Road. One day...one day I went over to feed...well, we had the steers, or the cows and calves and the sheep were all in the same pasture field. They had a 15-acre woods. They had a little field down in the back about 10 acres that they could separate if they wanted to. But I always figured that I had enough livestock there that if a dog got in there they were going to kill the dog. Every now and then I found dogs out there in the field dead. I didn't say anything about it. I just got a shovel and buried them -- whose they were, who cared? They weren't belonging there. But went over there one day and there was 43 of them died. Either laying or breathing but couldn't get up and walk. The dog, they just grabbed them by the neck and tear a hole in their throat.

I:

Oh!

R:

And so we thought, well, we buried the first bunch, and we thought, well, maybe somebody's locking their horse their, you know, they're locking their dog up, and next week, another thing. It was an airplane pilot got home at about 3:30 in the morning. He lived over on Bemis Road, and he'd let them out at 3:30 and then go to bed. Wake up maybe at nine, and they've had enough time to go a mile, get into the sheep, come back home. I walked from the pasture field, they had a track, went right on across 12 and down over the creek and over at the Bemis Road, so the sheriff, when I got there, the sheriff's department was standing over, he says, "Well, where'd that track come from?" Right from the sheep pasture field, right across 12 and right on over here. So they checked the dog they checked the teeth of the dogs and they all had wool in them so. He pulled out his revolver and shot three of them right there in front of me. I mean, that was sickening. I'm back here, you know, I...what am I going to do with these? So I finally had to buy...I rented a back hole and we buried them. But that's where, you know, on your taxes that you pay, they have a dog tax. That's what paid for the sheep that got killed. Now, if a ewe got killed, didn't make any difference where her lamb was, they considered that lamb died because the ewe was not there to feed the lamb. I never lost a lamb. Why didn't kill the lambs I don't know.

M:

That law's still on the books.

R:

Yeah. It's still...it's still on the books.

M:

And it reimbursed that.

R:

But you... you can have chickens killed by dogs that...

F:

What kind of dogs were these that would...?

R:

Pardon?

F:

What kind of dogs were these? Big dogs?

R:

German Shepherds.

I:

German Shepherds.

R:

Yeah. No, we...well, somebody had probably seen them off and on, you know. They never mistrusted the...we never had any trouble, I'd...I wanted to keep it kind of quiet because, you know, if...I didn't want anybody else. Now, Rentschlers had a farm that had sheep. Alfred Hertler, my dad's brother had sheep. Never bothered them. They were just that one...that one family of dogs that came to us over at that one farm. But it stopped in a hurry when they pulled a revolver out. There was no more dead sheep. So I don't know, I should be writing a book of my history. My kids always say, "I don't know why you don't." But I'd have to...I'd have to go on...I could probably talk for 14 hours.

M:

When we talked to Harold Wilson, we talked about hunting and so on.

R:

Yeah.

M:

And he said, he does...as far as recollects there were no deer on this area until the 50s. Was that your...?

R:

About 50, yeah.

M:

Wasn't that...?

R:

It was kind of shocking, you know. We...we had all these sheep, you know, and every once in a while, you'd see it going up and down, you know, like after a rain you'd see like footprints of a sheep, but they were bigger. And then all of a sudden, I got...after we got rid of the sheep then, then I started noticing deer in with the Hereford cows. Of course, you know, Hereford got a big foot. But they would...I'd go out there to feed them, go out there and hook onto a wagon to give them green chopped hay, while they waited for me to green chop it they had all the hay they wanted all over the fields. They'd go from first cutting, second cutting, third cutting and all winter along, eating my...

I:

Your hay.

R:

...my hay. My corn, my beans (laughs).

I:

Well, it's easy (laughs).

M:

Well, you'd just think the deer were here forever.

I:

Yeah, I know.

R:

No, there was not...

M:

That's strange.

R:

I can remember...well, I think the first deer I shot was probably 19...the fall of '42 we went up north. My brother-in-law had a brother up there, and we went up to Eipplefet, just west of the...where the bridge is now, that was the...that's where the boat went across. But that was the first deer that I really shot that I realized that it was a deer.

I:

R: Hm. Did you hunt when you were a young guy? Did you go pheasant hunting?

R: Oh, yeah. Pheasant hunting, and rabbit hunting.

M: Probably carried your gun right on the tractor.

R: Most of the time. Well, horses. No there are not many...there weren't many fox running around either. I love sheep...

Side Two:

I: You think that. Okay, now you...you...

R: How much time do we got? (laughs)

I: Now the fox with the eggs, that was where you stopped.

R: Yeah.

I: Okay.

R: Well, you're out mowing hay, you have...used to be a lot of eggs, you know, nests of eggs, the mower would go, run over the top of them sometimes. You'd go back there through the pheasant, you know, just cut the legs off a pheasant or you cut the head off. You didn't know they were packed down in the hay. You couldn't stop them. So all of a sudden then you've kinda realize, you know, what happened to all the eggs? Well, the fox ate the eggs and probably ate the bird too. So, it was death on fox. One never heard of a coyote. That was...that's all...well, they've been imported in. Now it's all, im or, you know, I don't, I don't see, I've seen one fox run through my yard in the last 30 years. But there are a lot of coyotes running around.

I: Um-hum. Hm.

R: And they shouldn't really be left out there that long either. Should have run a...run a...

I: They shouldn't be left out...you feel they're detrimental to the...

R: They should...well, I realize what they're trying to do is deer that are...had been shot during deer hunting season maybe didn't kill them, but they're...maybe they died. I think that's what they got them here for, to kind of clean up the sick and disabled animals.

M: The road kill probably.

R: Yeah. Well, road kill, yeah.

F: I saw one walking across our farm in a field.

R: Um-hum.

M: Coyote.

F: Coyote. Um-hum. I thought it was a dog at first.

R: No, they...they run different. They, they squat down and they...they...

F: This was walking to something.

I: It's not a turtle.

R: Yeah.

I: Are there any questions? We've been going about...

R: How long's it been?

I: ...almost an hour.

R: Well I didn't know exactly what you...what you want to find out, or what...what I could tell you.

I: What did you do for fun as an adult? Did you go out to the Grange? Or did you get together with neighbors to play cards or...?

R: Well, we used to...My mother and dad belonged to the Farm Bureau. I didn't belong to the Grange. But I spent my Saturday nights was at the Grange, over here on Saline-Milan...or Saline-Ann Arbor Road. I was quite a dancer at one time. I haven't quit.

I: Ah! That's why you're so healthy.

R: (laughs)

I: Yeah. Did you...Now you have three children. Is that what I read?

R: I have a son that has been into farming, out of farming.

I: Um-hum.

R: He worked 30 years for Fords at the Wixom Ford plant. Ended up being the robot controller for the spray booth. They built a brand new, I don't know, 30 million-dollar building, and he was the man that sat there, turned the button for black, turned the other one on for red, and kept on going.

I: Okay.

R: He finally retired. He's in Arizona now, retired, can't sit still, he's 50...he retired at 51 years old. So he's out there, he worked for Home Depot until he don't want to work anymore, and he'd come back and he wanted to bring us...take us both back, and they told him he can't take...can't

come back to Michigan get his boat, and he says, "I told you when I came here I'm retired." And he takes off, goes back there, and two days later they call him and said, "We saw your boat going by here one day and are you ready to come back to work?" He said, "I'll let you know when I'm ready." (laughter) That's the way I am. I haven't had a job...I haven't had a paid job for 18 years. I retired from the state, and they told me and said if you make too much money you have to give some of your state retirement back, and I'm not going to do that. I'd rather donate it.

I:

Um-hum.

R:

I work for Bobby Morton for about 10, 12 years, drove 4-wheel tractors for him. We farmed over 4,000 acres. I put it all...I...I worked the ground up. His brother planted it all. So for 6, 7, 8 weeks, that's all we did is we planted corn. And then when it came wheat time, I was working the ground up, and they were planting behind me. And then when they combined wheat, I drove the trucks. So my farming has been less and less, but I put in some 14, 15 hours a day on tractors. Plus, you know, I still had 88 head of cattle that I fed every day, make sure they had water and they had grain, and I'd have to grind feed for them, and...No, it...hard work has never killed anybody. You've got to know how to do it.

F:

Where do you live now, in your...?

R:

I live on Moon Road south of...I in my own house.

F:

Do you still have animals?

R:

I have one horse left.

F:

Do you still ride it?

R:

I did ride him up till about five years ago. He's about nine years old. He took off once one day and, you know, and the cinch straps that you put around the girth, I pulled back on them and my body went forward and I tried...and I had him stand right up and he took off across the field, dumped the buggy upside down, we went one way, the horse went the other way. I ended up with a cracked cartilage in my knee.

F:

Oh.

R:

So I have a metal knee. And it still aches.

F:

But you still have the horse.

R:

I still have the horse.

I:

What about your daughters? I noticed that they live in...

R:

Well, my daughter has lived with me at times. She's been divorced twice. This last one I'm sure she'll stay with. He's super. She has four daughters. She sent them all through the university. Some went to Michigan. One of them went to Michigan State. Two of them came out as

registered nurses. They are in South Bend. They live in Mishawauka, outside of South Bend. They are probably in surgery, you know, as RN's.

I:

Um-hum. But they didn't marry farmers.

R:

No. Heaven no! (laughter)

I:

They learned (laughs).

R:

I had something to say about that (laughs). They always told me when they came out there, we're going to pick our men. We're not going to work all of our life. I, I didn't...I...there were times I never got a vacation in the summertime.

I:

Yes.

R:

I always figured my time was better making hay.

F:

The ___ you gave us _____.

R:

Pardon?

F:

Did you work on Sunday just like any other day?

R:

Oh, yeah. What difference is Sunday from Monday. Right not, it still don't make a difference. I don't know what's is which, up until, well, two years ago, I took over, I was the vice president of the Senior Citizens of Saline. So I started driving the van. And there were times I was putting on...in two weeks time I'd put on 600 miles on the van taking them to...We had it...called it Dinners with Friends, take them all over. I've been all over Ohio. As far...we used to take them up gambling up to Mount Pleasant. Where you have the big bus, we did it with little buses. We had a 24-passenger and a 14-passenger. And then we'd go to concerts, we'd go to Hill Auditorium, we'd go...anything that was any of value of any information, they went. Took them up to see the...They wanted to go down to Detroit to see the tall ships last fall. Million people in Detroit and I'm going to take 14 older women that are...no way! Charlie Brown. We will come back and we'll do that some other day. So we waited for them to go to, what was it? Mackinac Island or did they go to Chicago?

I:

They went to Port Huron for a while.

R:

I know that's...that...well, they went...they went into Bay City and they went into Saginaw. You could have gone there, but it was closer to go to Port Huron. So we took the 24-passenger bus and the 14-passenger bus and we took them over there. Here they could walk down the ramp, walk into the water or walk on the boat, talk to the boys and girls. That's set up with boys and girls that know a lot about that boat. That's their summer. And some of them come back on, they put them in dry dock and then they work on the boats in wintertime, so...

F:

It's late. We know...I've got a 2:30 appointment.

I:

Bye-bye.

F:

Bye-bye.

I:

Does anyone have any other questions? We can talk informally.

R:

I don't know what else.

I:

Well...

R:

I kind of...kind of hits the area.

I:

Yeah, I think we got all the highlights and we'll...I appreciate you taking the time to talk with us today.

R:

Okay.

I:

And thank everybody for asking great questions and keeping the conversation going and thanks again.

R:

Okay.

The End