

## Harold and Mary Wilson

Transcript of the oral interview with Harold and Mary Wilson conducted by Emily Salvette and Doug Woolley on April 3, 2001 at the Wilson's home, 797 Textile Rd., Ann Arbor. Mr. Wilson reviewed the transcript in July 2001 and made spelling corrections.

### Interview Summary

Harold Wilson was born on December 20, 1925 at Beyer Hospital in Ypsilanti. He is descended from one of the first Pittsfield families, the Sutherland family, through his mother, Mildred Sutherland Wilson. He has lived much of his life on the farm that was built by his great-great-grandfather, Langford Sutherland in the 1830s. Harold Wilson was a carpenter, and his father, Arthur Wilson, was a contractor, but his maternal grandfather, Ernest Sutherland was a farmer. This interview deals mostly with Mr. Wilson's recollections of life on this farm in the 1930s.

Ernest and Delia (nee Rheinfrank) Sutherland lived in the main farmhouse on the Sutherland property. Harold Wilson and his sister Ernestine grew up in a house adjacent to the main farmhouse. Langford's son Tobias, Ernest's father, built this smaller house for the farm's hired help. Harold Wilson attended the Sutherland school and Saline High School. He served in the Army, going to Germany near the end of World War II, staying on as a peacekeeper afterwards. In 1949, Harold Wilson married Mary Roy who had moved to the Ypsilanti area from Obion, TN. They lived in Saline after they were married, then in Pittsfield Township. For 20 years they lived in a house Harold built on one- acre facing State Rd. given to them by Ernest Sutherland. Harold and Mary Wilson had one child, Neal, who died in his 40s in August 2000. When Ernest Sutherland died in the 1950s, Arthur and Mildred Wilson moved into the main farmhouse and remodeled it into two units, the configuration in which it stands today. Arthur Wilson passed away in the 1970's and Harold and Mary Wilson moved back into one unit of the main house.

The Wilsons have entered into a contract with Pittsfield Township so that this historically significant farm will be preserved for the future benefit of township residents.

### Transcript Contents -- Outline

- Introduction and background
- Sutherland connection and history
- Mary Wilson's background
- Recollections of grandfather, father
- The house and neighborhood
- Farming in the 1930s
- Schools attended
- Hunting
- Maternal grandmother's family
- Sutherland school
- Houses on property
- Other property owned
- First car and township roads
- Work during the Depression and war years
- Recreation

- Township and Wilson Estate agreement
- Family considerations

Harold & Mary Wilson Interview

**HW:**

Harold Wilson

**MW:**

Mary Wilson

**DW:**

Doug Woolley

**I:**

Emily Salvette

**I:**

Can you just say a few things like what your name ... if you could say your name and ...

**MW:**

I didn't get my hair combed, but ...

**HW:**

Harold Wilson. 797 Textile Road. Ann Arbor, Michigan. 48108.

**I:**

Thank you. That's a good test on the microphone. We're doing a test of the microphone for a Pittsfield Township oral history interview with Harold and Mary Wilson. We're interviewing them on the third of April, 2001, in their home, at 797 Textile Road. Is that right?

**HW:**

Right.

**I:**

Okay. In Ann Arbor. It's in Pittsfield Township, and the tape seems to be working just fine and so you can go ahead and ... you can just go ahead and start the interview, if you're ready.

**HW:**

I'm as ready as I'll every be (laughs).

**I:**

Okay (laughs). And also with us interviewing today is Mr. Doug Woolley, a former supervisor of the township and historian extraordinaire of all things.. First, let me start by just asking you some basic questions just so that we make sure we have the information, um, about you. When were you ... ? What was your birthday?

**HW:**

Twelve ... well, December the 20<sup>th</sup>, 1925.

**I:**

And where were you born?

**HW:**

Ah, in Ypsilanti. My parents lived over here in this other house at the time, but I was born in Ypsilanti Hospital.

**I:**

Which ... which other house? The ...?

**HW:**

The house at ... I gave them ... or Mr., ah ... hm ...

**DW:**

Lloyd Johnson.

**HW:** ... yeah, Mr. Johnson acquired when he bought the land.

**DW:** You have his house is right over here.

**I:** Okay.

**HW:** Yeah. That's where I grew up.

**I:** Oh! Okay.

**HW:** I lived there until I was ... well, till I got married basically. I lived there over 20 years. Except for a couple of years at Uncle Sam gave me free board.

**I:** Oh! (laughs).

**HW:** And ...

**I:** In which branch of Uncle Sam's family were you in?

**HW:** (laughs) The Army in the 1940s. World War II, the big one (laughs).

**I:** Oh. Where did you serve?

**HW:** Oh, basically I went in right at the end of the war and I finally ended up in ... in Germany as a ... peace keeper supposedly. War was over at that time and they were trying to straighten the mess up. And I come home back here and ... well, I farmed a little while before I went in the service, after I got out of high school. And, ah, I didn't care for that all that much. So when I come back from the service, I went to work with my father, construction work. Carpenter work.

**I:** Where did you go to school?

**HW:** Saline.

**I:** Saline High? And ...

**HW:** Saline High and that was it.

**I:** Uh-hm. Do you remember any of your classmates from Saline High?

**HW:** Any of my classmates?

**I:** Yeah.

**HW:** Oh, yeah. One of them became my brother-in-law for a while. Married my sister and they raised four children, educated them. And he stops by every once in a while now. He lives in Ohio. They finally divorced.

**I:**

What was his name?

**HW:** Harry Schafer.

**I:** Hm.

**HW:** He ... and we went to high school together. And I went to the 50<sup>th</sup> high school reunion and all that stuff.

**HW:** If I'm alive I'll probably go to the 60<sup>th</sup>.

**I:** Well, all right.

**HW:** (laughs)

**I:** We'll be there (laughs). Well, you said that you were ... you worked for your dad in construction then, as ... when you ... after you tried farming. Did your dad have a construction company, or was he a carpenter working for someone or how ...?

**HW:** No, he ... he had his own business up until, well, World War II and shortly thereafter. Ah ...

**I:** What was your father's name?

**HW:** Arthur Wilson.

**I:** And was he born in the township? Or did he live in Pittsfield?

**HW:** No, he came from Blissfield area. And, ah ...

**I:** How about your mom?

**HW:** Pardon?

**I:** How about your mother?

**HW:** My mother was born right here. And that's where the ... where my history comes through my mother. She was a Sutherland. And Sutherlands lived here a lot longer than Wilsons. In fact, Sutherlands were here in 1830s.

**I:** Really.

**HW:** Yeah.

**I:** I didn't know that.

**HW:** My great, great ... great grandfather I guess was Lang ...

**MW:** Jim Grayson.

**HW:** ... Langford Sutherland. And they're all buried over in Ann Arbor.

**I:** Do you know which cemetery?

**HW:** Yeah. Ah, the one off there off in Geddes.

**I:** Oh, Forest ...

**HW:** For... Forest Hill.

**I:** Yeah.

**HW:** Yeah.

**DW:** Aren't some of them buried in the ...

**MW:** Yeah, some over here ...

**DW:** ... the cemetery on ...

**MW:** ... and you can here.

**DW:** Aren't some of the buried on the ... the road, Morgan Road Cemetery too?

**HW:** No, none of my people.

**DW:** Oh, okay.

**HW:** That's the little cemetery down here, the what we used to call the Harwood Cemetery.

**DW:** Yes, still ... yeah.

**HW:** Yeah.

**DW:** It's still Harwood cemetery.

**HW:** Yeah. No, my people ... my mother and father are buried in Saline. My grandfather and prior to that are buried over at Forest Hill.

**MW:** I think that's the Harwood, ah, funerals.

**DW:** Yes, it is. It's the cemetery, Harwood Cemetery.

**MW:** Uh-hm.

**DW:** They still own it.

**I:**

Let's take a minute to introduce, ah, Mary Wilson to the conversation and make sure that everyone knows that Mary is, um, with us also, and she is Mr. Wilson's wife. Mary, ah, what was your maiden name.

**MW:**

Roy.

**I:**

Were you born in the township also?

**MW:**

No, I was born in Tennessee.

**I:**

Oh, that's right. Where in Tennessee, Mary?

**MW:**

No, we got married at the Methodist Church in Saline.

**I:**

Ah! Where in Tennessee were you born?

**MW:**

Ah, north of Memphis.

**I:**

Oh, okay.

**MW:**

About a 100 miles north of Memphis.

**I:**

How ... what ...?

**MW:**

In Obion.

**I:**

I'm sorry? Say that again?

**MW:**

Obion. O-B-I-O-N.

**I:**

Oh, nice. What brought you to Michigan? Did he bring you to Michigan?

**MW:**

No, I came with my daughter-in-law [sister-in-law]. She didn't want to come alone and we came with another couple.

**HW:**

Her brother and his wife came up here to go ...

**MW:**

I and decided to stay.

**I:**

Oh, good.

**MW:**

(laughs)

**HW:**

They come up here to find work, basically.

**MW:**

My brother was up here, yeah. And, ah, she didn't want to come alone and ... I came with her.

**I:**

He was up here to work, at ...

**MW:** Yeah.

**I:** ... the plants?

**MW:** Yeah.

**I:** Auto.

**MW:** He worked there in Ypsi.

**I:** He worked at the Willow Run?

**MW:** No. He worked at, um, what was the name of that plant?

**HW:** He worked basically in Ann Arbor.

**MW:** He worked at that plant in Ypsi.

**HW:** I was trying to ... yeah, I guess originally he did. I know he worked in a number of places in the area. But he didn't work at Willow Run.

**MW:** I forget the name of the plant that he worked at.

**HW:** I believe he was at King Sheely awhile. I'm ... I'm not sure.

**I:** Uh-hm.

**MW:** But she was kind of ... oh, um, I guess you'd call it kind of ... you know, a little bit on the ... (phone rings) Excuse me.

**I:** Oh, sure.

**HW:** That's our (phone rings) Tinker Bell phone.

**I:** Oh (laughs).

**HW:** I can't hear the stupid thing. Especially when the TV's cranked up high.

**I:** Yeah. Did ... what year did -- I'll let you answer for her -- what year did she come up? Do you know? Do you remember?

**HW:** Ah, probably, ah, three or four years before we married. Ah, we was married in 1949. Probably right after the World War ... II.

**I:** So right after the war.

**HW:** Yeah.

**I:** Uh-hm. Uh-hm. Hm. Okay.

**HW:** And she worked up at the old Argus plant where they make cameras, and stuff. They made various things for the army during the War. She was up here during the War and worked over there and made, oh, optics and thing that were use of the Army.

**I:** Uh-hm. Yeah.

**HW:** And they never did get heavily back in the camera business.

**I:** Yeah. That's right. Huh. Well, did she work ... did you meet her at work or ...

**HW:** No.

**I:** ... where did you meet?

**HW:** No, I don't remember (laughs) how that came about.

**I:** Uh-oh (laughs).

**HW:** Ah, really I don't. No, I didn't meet her at work.

**DW:** When you were farming, did you farm a certain number of years and lease it out, or did you farm the farm for quite a while, Harold?

**HW:** Personally, no. Ah, my granddad when I grew up during the 1930s, my granddad was still farming a little bit. But he was getting towards retirement, towards, you know, not farming anymore. He had a few cows and I remember when I was smaller of three old horses. He never owned a tractor. Ah, I grew up driving those horses for him and helping him with the hay, and things of that nature. But he was winding down. And along the 1940s, he started leasing the land out to people. And eventually quit farming.

**I:** I want to make sure I understand. Was this your Sutherland grandfather?

**HW:** Yeah. He was a Sutherland, Ernest Sutherland. He was my mother's father.

**I:** And his farm ...

**MW:** Grandpa lived here when we were married.

**I:** Here, in this house?

**MW:** Yeah.

**I:** Uh-huh. Ah!

**HW:** Yeah, they lived in this house, they utilized the whole house.



**MW:** He had a family that lived with him.

**HW:** Yeah, there was a ... a ... well, my cousin was in England during the War, and her husband worked for Kennedy, oh, the ... senior Kennedy.

**I:** Joseph?

**HW:** Yeah.

**I:** Oh.

**HW:** And they were over there and he ... when they came back, they brought a girl that had been housekeeper for him back with him, and she eventually ended up out here at the farm. They thought it'd be nice for her to look after grandpa. Well, I don't know who looked after who, but, ah, she got married and started making babies, and she had three or four little kids when she left here.

**I:** Hm.

**HW:** And where she is today, I have no idea.

**MW:** Betty?

**HW:** Yeah.

**MW:** I don't know.

**HW:** But my grandfather finally passed on and my folks came over here and my dad did a lot of remodeling in this house and fixed it up, and they moved over here. And he rented the house where I grew up over there.

**I:** What year was that that he moved back, approximately?

**HW:** Nineteen-fifty ...

**MW:** Fifty- ...

**HW:** Huh?

**MW:** Fifty-eight.

**HW:** I don't ... I think it was a little bit before that, it was around '55, or '54.

**MW:** Well, they've finished it up, and ...

**HW:** Because my grandfather died in 1953 and then ...

**MW:**

Yeah.

**HW:** ... shortly thereafter, my dad started working on this house. There was no bathroom here.

**I:** Oh?

**HW:** And (laughs) a lot of old farmhouses didn't have a bathroom at that time. And he'd put in the ... there was ... he put in the bathroom, and he split the house in two, made a rental for that other side for the other side of this house. And, ah, did quite a bit of work on it. Worked on it for basically couple years. And even had some help, trying to get the old place livable again. So ...

**DW:** What was the total number of acres that they ... in the farm when you're ...?

**HW:** When I was small, in this particular farm that my grandfather owned there was a 140 acres. And, ah, there was a 20-acre parcel that was ... he owned that was split in two, way back and I don't remember all the details of it, but it was ... part of the other farm over here to the west. And finally, that was sold and ...

**MW:** Me and Geyer owned that.

**HW:** Every ... every place up and down this road when I was growing up was a operating farm, the way farmers used to operate, with anywheres from a hundred acres to possibly a hundred and forty acres.

**I:** Were most of them using horses?

**HW:** A lot of them were. It ... during the 1930s, it was horses and tractors. The tractors were just coming in. I never ... I never threshed ... I threshed grain -- helped thresh grain. Never threshed with a steam engine. But my sister and I, you know, we used to call it a steam engine. And when the thing was coming down the road, we were all excited and we ran out and we lock ... watched it until it got here and moved. But it was a Rumley, an old what they called Rumley oil pull.

**I:** No, sorry (laughs).

**HW:** And ...

**I:** But that's important. Rumley ...

**HW:** Oil pull was is what they called them.

**I:** Uh-hm.

**HW:** But they didn't operate on steam. But they were ...

**I:** Gas powered?

**HW:** They were patterned after a steam engine. Yeah, they were kerosene.

**I:**  
Kerosene.

**DW:**  
Now would these be independent contractors that would come through and ... and work on several farms for pay? Or would they be owned by a local farmer?

**HW:**  
This was owned by a local person who lived down east of here. His name was Sutherland. And there were two brothers that owned a number of these ... these Rumleys, and they threshed and did other things. They weren't farmers, I don't believe, but they did have some land there, and they worked at other things, other than farming, as I recall. But during threshing season, they were busy. And that evolved eventually into combines. Which we know about today.

**DW:**  
If you had a farmer that was growing corn, where would he take his corn to have it milled? Was that local?

**HW:**  
Well, ah, I don't know. Most of the farmers back then, ah ... well, it was a ... it was the time when mechanization was coming in, and they had corn pickers, and they would pick their corn. They wouldn't shell it like a combine does today, they would pick it and put it in a bin. And they would grind it up. Yes, they'd take it to the mill, or there used to be fee grinders come through the country. Portable, on a truck, and they would grind it for you, your feed. And ...

**DW:**  
Now this is back in the 1930s.

**HW:**  
Yeah. That's ... that's as far back as I remember, the middle 1930s. I was born in '25, and I grew up during the '30s. And I grew up here on the farm so I don't remember when I was four or five years old, really. Ah, I have to be a little older than that.

**I:**  
(laughs) Did ... did you, ah, did you have cows? Were you milking by hand?

**HW:**  
Yeah. There was cows milked by hand.

**I:**  
How many? Do you remember?

**HW:**  
Oh, seven or eight was the most number.

**DW:**  
Did you sell milk?

**HW:**  
Yeah. Yeah. My granddad sold milk, I remember. During that time.

**DW:**  
And at that ... I suppose the milk went through the cream separators and so on, and ...

**HW:**  
Well, they sold it to the creamery. Whether they separated it or whether they sold it to ... as milk or what, I don't remember. Ah, most of the farmers sold their milk and it was shipped off in cans. Milk cans.

**I:**  
Oh, yeah.

**HW:**  
There wasn't bulk tanks then.

**I:** Right.

**HW:** And I remember them coming in with a truck and throwing the three or four cans off that my grandpa needed and picking up the cans with the milk in it, and putting them back on the truck, getting stuck in the snow in the wintertime and all that good stuff (laughs).

**I:** Yeah. Well, who were some of the other farmers up and down the street?

**HW:** Well, the Cody farm across the road was operated by two brothers, two of the Cody brothers.

**I:** C-O-D-Y.

**HW:** C-O-D-Y. At that time, and the Harwood farm down on the other side of State Road was operated by the Harwoods. Mr. Bill Harwood was still alive then and he ... they had a big family. They had 11 children, I think in their family. And to the immediate west was the Geyer farm. And up on a hill was the Paul farm.

**I:** Paul?

**HW:** Yeah. Kenny Paul who has a repair shop up here. His father lived there and farmed on that farm, which is ... oh, the Gunther subdivision. Silo Ridge is there where their farm used to be.

**DW:** Is Mr. Paul still available?

**HW:** Ah, no. Oh, he died a long time ago.

**DW:** Any relative that might be able to give us information about their families?

**HW:** Yeah, his son, Kenny Paul. He ... he's got a machine shop or a repair shop right up here. And he has worked for the last 30 or 40 years in repairing tractors and things of that nature.

**DW:** Somebody like that would know a lot though around the area because they'd have customers and so on.

**HW:** Oh, yeah. Yeah, there's more farmers that bother him all the time. They come there and hang out.

**I:** (laughs)

**HW:** Ha-ha-ha! (laughing as well).

**I:** Well, sure (laughing).

**HW:** Yeah. He knows all the scuttlebutt, you know, about every farmer in the township.

**I:** We better have him come and do a meeting for us.

**HW:**

(laughing) He probably could tell you a lot more than I can.

**I:**  
This is ... we're moving along pretty well here.

**HW:**  
Ah ... and the next farm down was Hartman farm, and that was very functional at that time, during the 30s.

**I:**  
Was everybody raising pretty much the same thing?

**HW:**  
Yeah.

**I:**  
Cows and pigs, some ... wheat and things like ...

**HW:**  
Everybody had a few cows and probably the Harwoods had the most. They had 20 some odd cows. And that was their source of income is a milk check. Then, they had hogs. And sheep.

**MW:**  
The time?

**DW:**  
The time right now is 10:25 [a.m.].

**MW:**  
It's time that I take my medicine.

**I:**  
Okay. Well, then, we're back again. I see the tape worked.

**HW:**  
(laughs).

**I:**  
I'm sorry. And you were saying that there's been an awful change.

**HW:**  
Oh, yeah. Yeah, there's nothing done like it was when I was growing up.

**DW:**  
Well, the population studies now have just been released from the 2000 Census, and Pittsfield as about 30,000, little over 30,000 residents. And this compares to probably a matter of a few hundred when you moved into the township.

**HW:**  
Yeah. Yeah, that's true. I don't know.

**DW:**  
Were the ... were the farms approximately the same size that you've been talking about, were they about 160 acres also?

**HW:**  
Probably the adjacent farm here, the Geyer farm, was less than a hundred acres. And probably the Cody farm over here was the biggest, that one run close to 180-acre farm. But there was always a lot of waste land which wasn't really farmed. And that was about the way farms were then. Ah ...

**I:**  
Were most of them without indoor plumbing and the whole ... the whole thing or ...?

**HW:**  
Well ...

**I:**

So the living conditions were pretty similar?

**HW:** Some of them had indoor plumbing at that time. Ah ... ah, the Harwood farm did, ever since I can remember.

**I:** How about electricity?

**HW:** Ah, yeah, if you had indoor plumbing, you had electricity. Electricity came in the area in the middle '30s, about in '37.

**I:** Okay.

**DW:** How about telephones?

**HW:** Yeah, we had telephone. The old hand crank job, and there was four or five people on the line.

**DW:** And the farmers maintained the line, did they?

**HW:** I don't believe they maintained the line, but you had a phone bill ...

**DW:** Uh-hm.

**HW:** ... to pay. Ah, Mrs. Harwood, I remember every time our phone rang, and, you know, was one short and one long, or two shorts and three longs, or whatever, you know. Ah, Mrs. Harwood would always be on the phone listening. (laughter) And that was a ... that was a community joke (more laughter). She always knew what was going on.

**I:** Well informed woman.

**HW:** (laughs) Yeah.

**DW:** Well, with 11 children, that's one way to keep up with what they're doing, isn't it?

**HW:** (laughs). Yeah, they had, ah ... that was quite an interesting deal with we were younger. We'd go down there and Easter time and have an Easter egg hunt and all that kind of stuff. I don't know ... oh, it was a lot of things. The community was right here.

**I:** Uh-hm.

**HW:** I went to school right down here in this little school, as did all the rest of the kids in the ... in the township. Ah, no, I'm not right there -- in the school district.

**I:** Uh-hm.

**HW:** There was a number of school districts in the township.

**I:** Right.

**HW:**

And, ah ...

**I:** You were the Saline part.

**HW:** Well, we were ...

**I:** There was an Ann Arbor part and a Saline ...

**HW:** Pittsfield Township.

**I:** Uh-hm.

**DW:** No Ypsi. There's Milan, Saline and Ann Arbor.

**I:** Milan, Saline and Ann Arbor schools in the township.

**HW:** Uh-hm.

**DW:** Now.

**HW:** Yeah. Yeah, we went to Saline when we finally went to high school.

**DW:** Might be interesting to note that the next high school and elementary school will be built in Pittsfield Township. And they're going to have a ground-breaking very shortly, so we finally will have some schools in Pittsfield Township in the ... in the Saline school system.

**I:** Saline.

**DW:** Uh-hm.

**I:** Hm.

**HW:** Have they acquired that land that they were ...?

**DW:** Yeah, 220 acres.

**HW:** Yeah.

**I:** Hm. Well, that's the growth of the township.

**HW:** Yeah.

**I:** Well, what other traditions do you remember then? What ... what about Christmas? Did the kids get around and carol or do any other ...?

**HW:** I don't remember any caroling. All I remember about Christmas basically is the relatives came to the farm for Christmas, and my (laughs) mother and grandmother cooked for two, three days

getting ready, and the ... that seemed to be tradition for people to come out here at Christmas time.

**DW:**

What about social events, like hayrides and things like that?

**HW:**

I don't recall any hayrides. Our social activity was in the schoolhouse, and they had what they called PTA meetings, and they had a Christmas play at the schoolhouse. The kids put on the play. And at that point in time there were quite a few kids going to the country school that were up 16, 17, 18 ... high as 18 years old (laughs) that weren't very smart (laughs).

**DW:**

No social advancement at that time, right? You had to earn your grade.

**HW:**

You were lucky if they could even remember their own name, much less a ... anything to say. And they all had a limerick. I know there was one ... one fellow. And my uncle was my ... you used to they come out at Christmas time from Ypsilanti. And Uncle George, he was always kind of ... oh, telling stories and this and that, and they went to the Christmas play down here at the school, and, of course, I was in the play and all this and that and the other and there was one fellow that the teacher assigned a ... a poem or whatever it was. Well, he got up there, you know, just like a great big whatever, stood there, and she started him off. Well, he ... she would say a line and he would repeat it after, but he couldn't remember the next line. And when he came to the end, he had a deep, kind of a bellowing voice that would ... says, 'Is that all?' This uncle of mine set out there and he just cracked up. He ...

**MW:**

George Kaminsky?

**HW:**

Yeah. The building just shook when he started laughing (laughs).

**DW:**

Well, did you folks do much hunting as young people in the area? I mean, with all those crops and so on? They must have a lot of deer and pheasants and ...

**HW:**

There weren't any deer at that time. There were a lot of pheasants. I, I hunted a lot. My dad wasn't a hunter. So I started out kind of alone and then when I got in high school I had friends and we used to hunt all the time.

**DW:**

Did you have bird dogs? Or did you need them?

**HW:**

Ah, yeah. They had a bird dog. I never had a birddog. You didn't really need a bird dog back then. You could walk ... you could walk up pheasants in this marsh, in these marshes, and just keep walking around and around. They had ... get up, you missed them, they had set up at the other end of the marsh, and you'd get back over there and pick them up again, till you got your limit.

**I:**

But no deer.

**HW:**

No deer.

**I:**

They were all in their other better habitats.

**HW:**



Well, deer ... deer weren't this far south at that time.

**DW:** Isn't that strange.

**HW:** I remember seeing my first deer when my son was little, and we lived over there on State Road.

**I:** Uh-hm.

**HW:** And that was in ... being in the '50s. And people got all excited because I saw a deer. And we were out there playing ball one day and a deer ran right through behind us. And I ... I would say that's about the first deer that I saw close. And of course after that one I'd be out pheasant hunting, you know. They'd ... you'd scare up a deer once in a while. But deer weren't that plentiful. In fact, they were nonexistent I would say early during the '30s.

**I:** Well, that changed.

**DW:** That's something pre-history, isn't it?

**I:** Yeah.

**DW:** Because everybody thinks that deer were here before the people were here.

**I:** And it's not ... yeah. Hm.

**MW:** The Indians were here.

**HW:** (laughs)

**DW:** Yeah.

**I:** Uh-hm.

**DW:** Yeah.

**MW:** And Harold's mother said she can remember the Indians coming in sleeping by the fire.

**I:** Is that so? Wow. What was your grandmother's maiden name?

**HW:** Ah, Rhinefrank.

**I:** Rhinefrank.

**HW:** (laughs) Yeah.

**I:** All right. Well, did she speak German?

**HW:** Pardon?

**I:**

Did she speak German?

**HW:** She didn't, no. I never heard her speak any German.

**I:** Huh.

**HW:** I don't think ... she had a brother that was a typical ... oh, you know, you'd see these pictures of these German guys and he was short and fat and round and poly and (laughs) ... But he was so good natured. He was such a ... And he was Uncle Austin. And that was her brother. I don't think he spoke German. If he did, I never heard him.

**I:** Okay. What ... was she from a Pittsfield family also? Was that one of

**HW:** They grew up ... ah, they ... he grew up in his family south of Saline.

**I:** Okay.

**HW:** And that's where she grew up.

**I:** Yes. Okay.

**HW:** They were down, oh, the Macon Road, as I recall, where they lived.

**I:** Mary, when did she ... what time were we ... did she see the Indians? This is from her girlhood, or when she was young?

**HW:** I would have to assume it would have been when she was young.

**I:** Uh-hm.

**HW:** She died in ... when I started high school in the 1930s ... 1939 I think is when she passed away. So she was born ... she died quite young, in her 60s.

**I:** Uh-hm.

**HW:** She was born probably in 1870s, along in there. Ah, whether she actually saw these Indians or whether it was her mother that it came ... But, you know, there was people in the Sutherland family lived in this house ever since it was built.

**I:** Which was when?

**HW:** I'm not exactly sure. They owned the land in the 1930s, 1830s, on ... 1820s even, 1824, '25, I believe. And she didn't live here, my grandmother, of course. My grandfather grew up here, and his father before him, and his father before him. So it was all Sutherlands back then. And this was the Sutherland school down here where we went to school. Little one-room school. I don't know how many kids that were in there. I don't think there's over a dozen.

**I:** Uh-hm.

**HW:**

(laughs mildly) All eight grades. Two or three in each grade.

**I:**

What was it like going to school in the winter?

**HW:**

Well, see, I didn't have far to go.

**I:**

Uh-hm.

**HW:**

The school is just brick part of this building right down here to the west on the north side of the road. It's been added on to, but the original building is still there. The brick part of the building down there was the school house. One room school. With a stove in the middle.

**I:**

Did you have to bring wood?

**HW:**

They had coal.

**I:**

Uh-hm.

**HW:**

In fact, when I got big enough and old enough my job was to go down there and start the fire in the morning, or if it was still going to kind of spook it up, get it going again. Ah, we used coal. Maybe some wood, if they had any. This house was het [heated] with wood when I was growing up. My granddad had a lot of wood he burnt in the furnace, central furnace. They didn't use fire places at that time very much. If at all. But the big old round oak furnace set down there.

**I:**

Is it still down there?

**HW:**

No. No, not the ... when my dad ... It was there until my dad remodeled this house in the ... in the '50s. Well, it was ... there was electricity here. Everybody had electricity in the '30s, when ... when it came through. The barns of course were wired and the houses were wired, and ... But they didn't ... they didn't have things like they have today.

**I:**

We ... I want to see if I can revisit the date of this house. The foundation, does this date back to the 1850s?

**HW:**

I don't really know for sure. I can't put a date on it. Ah ...

**I:**

Are there parts of it, and it's been added on to? Or is it ...?

**HW:**

Well, it was a different building here I think to start with.

**I:**

Uh-hm.

**HW:**

That was either moved or torn down. And when this ... when my family acquired this land, this house wasn't here. And they didn't build it right away. And when it was built, I don't really know. Ah, maybe the archives would tell you, I don't know.

**I:**

Do you have any idea?

**DW:** I don't have any idea about the building but I might fight out ...

**MW:** Yeah.

**DW:** ... with the county records.

**MW:** The Historical Society in Ann Arbor told me if I went over to Ann Arbor and looked through the historical books I could find out just when it was built.

**I:** Oh, could you?

**DW:** The record of deeds office of the county should be able to tell you too ... What about the house next-door? That was the original one then, was it?

**HW:** No, that was built later.

**DW:** Oh, that was built later than this one.

**HW:** My granddad could remember when that house was built.

**I:** Hm.

**HW:** And that house, he remembered it well enough, it cost less than a thousand dollars to build that house.

**I:** Oh, wow.

**HW:** (laughs)

**I:** You might be able to put on a set of steps for a thousand dollars now or something.

**HW:** Yeah.

**I:** Wow.

**HW:** Yeah. It didn't have a basement under it. When I was young and growing up, I'd (laughs), I remember digging out the dirt under the house and we built a Michigan cellar, what was called a Michigan cellar, under it.

**DW:** Dirt walls and no floor.

**HW:** Well, it had dirt walls and then we come in and underneath the stone foundation and formed it up and put concrete to hold the dirt from washing out from under the stones.

**DW:** It's where you kept the vegetables cold and so on.

**HW:** Yeah.

**DW:** Summertime.

**HW:** Yeah. And my dad put a furnace in it. When I was little we would ... we had heaters upstairs. But no furnace in the basement.

**DW:** You had gas ... no, you didn't have gas.

**HW:** No. We had coal. Coal bin and old stinking coal.

**DW:** When did you ... when you were able to convert to gas? I guess you have gas now, don't you?

**HW:** Yeah. That ... that happened in my time, since I've lived here. When I first came here there wasn't gas.

**DW:** So it must have been in the early '50s, you think?

**HW:** Eee ... well, when ...

**MW:** We've got sewers now.

**DW:** Yes, I see that. That's all right, huh.

**I:** Oh, for heaven's sakes (laughs).

**HW:** We moved here after my dad died and my dad died in 1974.

**DW:** Almost recent then that you got gas.

**HW:** Yeah.

**I:** Oh, yeah.

**HW:** Ah, it was fuel oil.

**I:** Okay.

**HW:** The furnaces were all fuel oil.

**I:** And the tanks for the fuel oil were outside then, is that it?

**HW:** Well, the tanks for this was in the basement. And the tanks for the apartment was in the basement. They were those 225-gallon fuel oil tanks ...

**DW:** Uh-hm.

**HW:** ... that you filled periodically.

**I:**

Yeah, that's what we had at our house, where I grew up. And the oil man would come every once in a while and I'd sit out there and chat with him.

**HW:**

Yeah.

**I:**

And, yeah, that was a big event. Do you have city water out here?

**MW:**

No.

**I:**

No, just the sewer?

**HW:**

It's out in the front here.

**DW:**

Well, that was now because of the subdivisions, so that's recent.

**HW:**

It probably will be in the house eventually.

**I:**

Yeah.

**HW:**

It's stubbed in right out here in the front.

**I:**

Uh-hm. Uh-hm.

**MW:**

And there's a pole or something out there, I don't know what it is. It sticks up out there, and water is brought in to that.

**I:**

Hm.

**MW:**

Now. It won't take much to bring it in.

**I:**

No.

**DW:**

Well, they put the sewer in this spring.

**HW:**

Yeah.

**DW:**

Or winter I guess.

**HW:**

Well ...

**DW:**

Just recently.

**HW:**

About a month ago.

**I:**

So winter of 2001 the sewer was in.

**DW:**

That's right.

**I:**

In fifty years when the people are looking over this transcript, they'll say, 'Oh, that's when the sewer went in.'

**HW:**

(laughs mildly)

**DW:**

What did they do before then?

**I:**

(laughs) Right, right.

**HW:**

Yeah ...

**DW:**

We have two sewer fields. I remember you told me two drain fields, I mean, for your sewer, right.

**HW:**

Yeah.

**DW:**

You had two of them. One out there underneath where you're parking and one to the north of that.

**HW:**

Right. Yeah, that ... there've been problems. They've plugged up and I don't know I think eventually every septic system will give a problem.

**I:**

Hm.

**DW:**

Can you tell us the background of the sesquicentennial sign that you have out in the front yard, how that came about? The farm has been here then 175 years.

**HW:**

Yeah.

**DW:**

And at what ... at what time did the ... the state recognize that and award the sign? It does come from the state doesn't it, that sign?

**HW:**

It comes from the Detroit Edison.

**DW:**

Detroit Edison.

**HW:**

They ...

**DW:**

Can you give us some background about that?

**HW:**

Ah (laughs), if she could hear you, she could tell you more than I can, because she went with Web Harwood when the signs were presented. And I didn't go because I was working. And I didn't take off and I don't remember when it was. Ah, I probably could look it up and find out.

**MW:**

I forgot what year that was.

**HW:**

That was a 150 years.

**DW:**

A hundred and fifty.

**HW:** Yeah. And ...

**MW:** You held one end of the sign and Edison held the other end. And they took a picture of it. And I thought we would get a picture of it, but we didn't.

**DW:** Well, Detroit Edison might have it on file.

**HW:** They might.

**I:** Did you have to fill out an application to be ...

**MW:** No.

**I:** ... just award it? Or they just came to you and said, 'Gee whiz, you have a 150-year-old farm.'

**MW:** We were all at the picnic ...

**I:** What picnic?

**MW:** They had a ... they had a carry in picnic. People brought in stuff.

**DW:** Like a potluck.

**MW:** Well, it was furnished by, um, some outfit.

**HW:** Catered, I think.

**MW:** Yeah.

**HW:** Yeah. There was quite a few people.

**MW:** Chicken was the base

**I:** Uh-hm. Uh-hm. So maybe in the '70s? Maybe ...

**HW:** When that happened?

**I:** ... when that happened? Maybe in the 1970s?

**HW:** Ah ...

**MW:** I think it was before that.

**I:** Really.

**HW:** I imagine the 100 year was before that.



**MW:**

Yeah.

**HW:**

And, of course, the sesquicentennial would have been ...

**I:**

A hundred and fifty.

**HW:**

... 150. I think that was based on when the family first acquired the land.

**I:**

That's my understanding of it.

**DW:**

That would probably be around 1830 when they acquired the land perhaps, because the township became a township in 1834.

**I:**

Uh-hm.

**DW:**

Saline became a city in 1832, I believe it was. And so there was a lot of movement in the area I think right about that time.

**I:**

Uh-hm.

**DW:**

Of course, the farm could have existed already.

**HW:**

I've got some old abstracts that I've hung on to that tell what year the Sutherlands acquired ... There was one individual who acquired it from the government prior to the Sutherlands.

**I:**

Uh-hm.

**HW:**

And he acquired a lot of land and then sold it off, probably and made money. Huh.

**I:**

What are you going to ... What ... are ... do you have any plans for the abstracts? I'm sure the archives in Pittsfield Township would be delighted to have them.

**HW:**

Well, if they were complete they would be better, but, yeah, I have no qualms about donating them. They aren't a complete abstract. And ... but they go back with the history.

**I:**

Uh-hm.

**HW:**

There was an abstract that I think I got when I acquired...

Side 2:

**HW:**

... the heritage, you know, the ... traced it back.

**I:**

Uh-hm.

**HW:**

But it wasn't for the whole farm. But it's just finally centered on that one acre which I acquired. My grandfather actually gave it to me.

I:

Hm.

HW:

And I built that little house over there [on State Rd] and we lived there 20 years.

I:

Uh-hm. When you were first married?

HW:

No. No. We lived ... we lived in Saline, and then when we first married. And then I bought a little place over on Platt Road and we lived there for about three years. And then I built this house over here, and we lived here almost 20 years till my dad died.

I:

Uh-hm.

HW:

And then we came over here.

MW:

Had ten acres of beech property.

I:

Uh-huh. Beech property?

MW:

Yeah. And beech trees on it.

I:

Oh, I see (laughs). I thought you were talking about Miami or something (laughs).

MW:

No.

I:

Hah. Wow. Ten acres over there. Hm.

HW:

No, we only had one acre.

MW:

How much?

HW:

Over there. One acre.

MW:

Twenty?

HW:

One [loudly] acre. Where we lived ...

MW:

There was ten acres in that.

HW:

Where we lived on State Road?

MW:

Yeah. Oh. Yeah, on State.

HW:

We had ten acres on Platt Road.

MW:

Yeah.

**HW:** Yeah. That's right.

**I:** Was that in the township too? Platt and what?

**HW:** Oh, it was right on Platt Road over there by Makielsky's berry farm.

**I:** Oh, okay. Sure.

**HW:** I don't think that ... I don't know if that's Pittsfield over there or not. I guess it'd be ...

**I:** Yeah, I think so.

**HW:** ... yeah.

**DW:** Pittsfield goes all the way to Bemis.

**HW:** Yeah (coughs).

**I:** Well, what was your first car?

**HW:** My first car?

**I:** Yeah. This is a question that everybody always likes to hear the answer to.

**HW:** The car I drove to high school was a Model A Ford.

**I:** All right! (laughs)

**HW:** (laughs)

**I:** Did you have a lot of flat tires?

**HW:** No, not really. I don't re ...

**DW:** You had to crank that one, didn't you, to get it started?

**HW:** No, it had a starter.

**DW:** You had an electric car?

**HW:** It had a self starter when battery was up.

**DW:** How did you keep it from freezing up in the wintertime?

**HW:** Well ... the radiator?

**DW:** Yeah, did you have to drain it every night, or ...?

**HW:** No, no. We had ... we had antifreeze.

**DW:** Did you have antifreeze?

**HW:** Yeah. Lot of it was alcohol.

**DW:** I got back a lot farther than you do I think in that sense. In that sense.

**HW:** A lot of the mixes were alcohol and if they got a little low they boiled. Steamed and all that good stuff.

**I:** How were the roads?

**HW:** Ruddy, muddy. Terrible.

**DW:** Remember when the ... Textile was paved here?

**HW:** Oh, yeah. I remember when State Street was paved. I was just learning to drive and my dad had a 1937 Pontiac. And I remember driving over that road when they was working it. And it was just a soupy mess. You always thought you was going to get stuck. That's when they was building it up to get ready to blacktop it.

**DW:** Do you remember what year?

**HW:** Oh, well, let's see. That was a '37 Pontiac. I ... I got my driver's license when I was 14 years old, and that would have been in ...

**DW:** Thirty-nine.

**HW:** ... '39. And that would have been ... that would have been right along in then, '39 or '40, when they were fixing that road up there.

**I:** When did they pave Textile?

**HW:** Hm ...

**I:** I always remember it paved ...

**MW:** Gosh, it's since we've been here, since we ...

**HW:** Yeah.

**MW:** ... here.

**HW:** Since we've lived here.

**MW:** Yeah.

**HW:** Fact, they paved it twice.

**DW:** What was the reason for paving this part and not the other side?

**HW:** I ... I don't know.

**DW:** It seems kind of strange because farms on both sides, unless it was because it was the closest lane people were driving this way to get to State Street or something.

**HW:** My ... my guess would be that more people lived on this section than did down there, but I don't know. I don't know. It still isn't paved.

**DW:** No.

**I:** No.

**DW:** No.

**HW:** No.

**HW:** Ah, probably will be. No, I don't know what the reason for that was. This was kind of a through ... you know, from State Street to Saline Road. Even back then it was kind of through street. Through road.

**I:** Uh-hm.

**HW:** Yeah, I remember a lot of holes where people got stuck in the mud, and a lot of snow. It always seemed to like ... just east of here, between this farm and that one down there, there was a area that used to drift.

**I:** Uh-hm.

**HW:** The road would be full of snow. In fact, sometimes it's so full they'd drive out in the field to drive around the drifts because they didn't get ploughed up for two, three days after it snowed.

**I:** Who takes care of that? Who took care of it? The county?

**HW:** Yeah. Yeah, county trucks.

**I:** Did you used to have to get your tractors out and drag people out of the mud and things like that, or ...?

**HW:** Ah, anybody that had tractors.

**I:** Or horses or ...?

**HW:** Even horses they used to call on the farmers if they was stuck in the road, they had to go out with a team of horses and pull them out.

**I:**

Well, what do you remember about ... about your work, your work as a carpenter? Did you work around in the township? Or were you doing industrial, commercial type stuff?

**HW:**

Well, I started out in a carpenter business with my father.

**I:**

Were you building houses or ...?

**HW:**

And he had built maybe one or two houses a year and everything else was remodeled work, from wherever he could get ... get work. Ah, his work during the Depression times was out Saline Valley Farms. And they were building that at that time. And he worked out there an awful lot, and he always, you know, said that if it hadn't been for the Saline Valley Farms, she probably wouldn't have had much work during the Depression. Because a lot of people were out of work.

**I:**

Uh-hm.

**HW:**

I don't remember any hardship during the Depression, but a lot of people did.

**DW:**

That's because you grew your own food probably.

**HW:**

Yeah. Yeah, that and there always was ... well, there was always enough to eat.

**I:**

Was that pretty much the case for your neighbors up and down here?

**HW:**

I would imagine it would have been. Ah, and people on the farm, they always ate (laughs).

**DW:**

That's right. They didn't have any money, nobody had money, but ...

**HW:**

(laughs).

**I:**

Yeah.

**DW:**

... you had food.

**HW:**

Yeah.

**I:**

Well, that's ... that's just a totally foreign concept to everybody now.

**DW:**

Thank God.

**I:**

The whole concept of not buying everything or going to the store to get everything that you want and need.

**HW:**

I remember helping with the butchering. I used to butcher hogs. Of course, you had pork. Ah, I don't remember ever butchering any cattle.

**DW:**

Lot of chickens though.

**HW:**

Lot of chickens. Ducks, geese (laughs) ...

**I:** Uh-hm.

**HW:** ... and hogs.

**I:** You all had a garden?

**HW:** Oh, yeah.

**I:** Yeah.

**HW:** Yeah.

**MW:** Did you ever eat any capon?

**I:** Yeah, I think I've had capon.

**MW:** I used to capon chicken.

**I:** Oh, did you?

**DW:** That was a trick, wasn't it? That was ... that was tricky, wasn't it?

**MW:** Yeah, you had to do it at twelve o'clock.

**I:** At noon or midnight?

**HW:** (laughs)

**MW:** In the daytime.

**I:** Okay.

**MW:** When the sun was straight up.

**I:** I'm going to ask. Why was that? Why did you have to do it noon?

**MW:** Well, so the sun shines in ... in the cavities when you opened it.

**I:** Ah, okay.

**HW:** (laughs).

**HW:** They didn't have fluorescent lights then (laughs).

**MW:** I don't know what happened to my tools that I had.

**DW:**

I've never met anyone that's ever done that before, Mary. I've never met anyone that's ever done that before.

**MW:**

Oh. Uh-hm. It wasn't a bad job.

**DW:**

Well, did ... did you ...?

**MW:**

Mom used to tell them by the truckloads on the trains, so ...

**I:**

Oh, did she?

**DW:**

So ... so you did a lot of it then, didn't you?

**I:**

Oh, yeah. I did all of the capons for her.

**DW:**

Where did you learn to do it?

**MW:**

Oh, I don't know. 4H I guess.

**DW:**

Was 4H big around here at that time?

**MW:**

I was raised in Tennessee

**DW:**

Oh, that's where you learned it, there, huh?

**MW:**

Yeah.

**I:**

How about you, Mr. Wilson, were you in 4H?

**HW:**

No, I was never in 4H.

**MW:**

Oh ...

**HW:**

But I can remember, hah, a veterinarian. My, my grandfather never did a lot of the things that most farmers do, like castrating his own animals, his own lambs and pigs. He always had a vet do that. And I remember we had a bunch of pigs out there and I was helping catch the pigs and the vet was there castrating the pigs and he says, 'There's no reason for me to come out here and do this. You can do it.' 'Me?' So he made me do it.

**MW&I:**

Oh! (laughter)

**HW:**

And I remember that first time, you know. Things like that stick in your mind.

**DW:**

Yes, I bet.

**I:**

How old were you?

**DW:**

Oh, I probably was in my teens. In high school or out of high school.



**MW:** My dad took care of it at home.

**I:** I think most farmers did.

**HW:** Yeah.

**MW:** Yeah.

**HW:** Yeah, you didn't pay a vet fee if you could help it (laughs).

**I:** Sure.

**HW:** I don't even remember that old vet's name. But I never castrated any lambs. I didn't graduate to that point. Oh, there were a lot of things you did then, you know. Lambs were born with long tails and they had to chop the tails off and that always was kind of a ... they called it docking the ...

**MW:** Cut the tail off and clip that fur, um ...

**DW:** Stop the bleeding, yeah?

**MW:** Yeah, around there ...

**DW:** Stub...

**MW:** ... where you cut it off.

**HW:** They'd pour some disinfectant on it.

**MW:** Oh, yeah. You had the tools in a container with disinfect ...

**DW:** Would they do that immediately when the lamb was born? Or would ... they'd have to wait or what?

**HW:** They didn't do it immediately. They did it when the lamb was still little. I don't remember what age.

**DW:** Why would they dock the tail and not let it... ? Was there some sanitary reason for that or what?

**HW:** Oh, yeah. If you left the lamb and didn't do that, and he grew up, you know, he had a long tail and he was always ... lamb ... lambs and sheep were inclined to get awful dirty in the back, and you had to keep cleaning them out. And if it got too bad in the summertime, flies would lay eggs in there and they'd hatch out in, oh, what was it?, I don't know what you call them. They would eat into the flesh.

**I:** Oh!

**HW:**

I've seen them, you know, was way down in the flesh, and my granddad used to pour turpentine on there and boy, they'd come crawling out, you know.

**DW:**

Well, it sure didn't feel good for the lamb.

**HW:**

Oh, no. No. And it's easier to take care of them if they didn't have a long tail. Yeah. That was a time gone by.

**I:**

So were all your summers just spent doing work on the farm and that's what all the kids did, or did the kids sneak away and ...

**HW:**

When I got in high school, I worked for my dad in the summertime. He always had something going and I could make some money. I think my first pay was 10 cents an hour, if I remember right. Oh, that was 80 cents a day.

**I:**

How about when you were young-young, like a kid?

**HW:**

No. No, I was in high school before I started working with him. I was probably 12, 14 years old.

**I:**

Uh-hm.

**DW:**

Were you able to get a driver's license when you were 14 because of the farm equipment that you had to drive?

**HW:**

Not necessarily. Anybody could get a driver's license at 14. You took the test and ... and it was, you know, went to Sheriff's Department and they'd get in the car and make you drive and park and all that stuff. If he approved of you, you got a license.

**I:**

Hm. I'd like to point out to all the 14- year-olds that might be listening to this tape that driving's a lot more complicated now because there's a lot more traffic.

**DW:**

Yes (laughs).

**HW:**

That's for sure. Yeah, you think of that and you see a 14-year-old kid today, and you thought, my gosh! (laughs).

**I:**

I don't think so.

**MW:**

Yeah, right.

**I:**

Well, we talked a little bit about the Depression years. What about the war years? Remember anything real ... very specific about that?

**HW:**

Oh, there was a lot of specifics, yeah. Shortage of this and a shortage of that, and everything went into the war effort.

**DW:**

The rationing for gasoline kind of slowed the farming down a little bit perhaps.

**HW:**

Ah, farmers could pretty much get gasoline. Ah, if you weren't a farmer, that's another story. You had the stamps and you could go get the quota of gas, but that didn't take you very far. I mean, you didn't make any long trips. Like today.

**DW:**

Did the government want you to grow a lot of corn versus other types of crops?

**HW:**

I don't remember anything of that nature. Ah, any farm produce, there was a ready market for it.

**DW:**

Well, didn't they use corn as part of the fuel? Wasn't that some part of the fuel they used during the war or not?

**HW:**

I don't remember during the War. No, and of course late years they've developed ethanol and all of that. But I don't remember back at that time ...

**DW:**

I bet that had something to do with something during ... during the war that that was very important.

**HW:**

I, I don't recall that. It might ... I'm not saying it wasn't.

**DW:**

Well, I'm from western Canada. I worked for a grocery store when I was kid during the war and if you wanted a can of corn, you'd have to take five cans apiece, because it was ... the corn was so ... so hard to get.

**I:**

Oh, no kidding.

**HW:**

Oh.

**I:**

Hm.

**HW:**

I don't remember that. I worked in a grocery store when I was in high school for two summers before I went to work for my father. Oh, I guess it was a half ... I don't know when it was. I remember working in a Kroger store for two summers up in Saline. And that was when people brought in a list of groceries and laid it down and left. Well, you took that list of groceries, you went around and got the things, and put them in a bag, and added it all up with a pencil, and wrote down what they owed you. And when they come back, they would either pick up their groceries, or they would ask you to carry them out to the car. And that's the way it was at that time.

**DW:**

Yeah. Yeah.

**HW:**

Twenty some bucks a week, and you worked like hell on Saturday.

**I:**

Uh-hm.

**DW:**

Ten-hour days.

**HW:**

Right (laughing). Well, that's about the most any ... any kid made.

**I:** So the grocery store was not bad pay, relatively speaking?

**HW:** Relatively speaking. As I recall, at that time, you could make a little more working in a gas station. But ...

**I:** Where you pumped the gas.

**HW:** Yeah.

**I:** Another thing a lot of people ...

**DW:** And cleaned the windshields.

**HW:** Washing ... oh, and you're darn right. You didn't forget that (laughs).

**I:** Checked the tires.

**HW:** Yeah.

**I:** Did all your friends work?

**HW:** Ah, most of the time. If they had any money they worked. Hah, there were no allowance much (laughing) at that time.

**DW:** Did you know anything about the grange that's up here on Ann Arbor-Saline Road? The Pittsfield Grange. Does that ring a bell with you at all?

**HW:** Oh, it rings a bell to the extent that when we got older, we used to go over there and dance every Saturday.

**DW:** Uh-hm.

**I:** Oh.

**HW:** Ah, but I was never a granger. I never joined the Grange. Lot of people in the community did belong to the Grange.

**DW:** Was that something to do with a farmer's group? Was that what the Grange meant...?

**HW:** Yeah, yeah. That was supposed to ... supposed to be farmers. They had an organization. They had their meetings. And I don't really know much about it, because I never belonged to it.

**I:** I think they still do meet. And ... yeah.

**HW:** Yeah.

**I:**

That ... that facility gets used quite a bit for dances. And I'm interested ... tell me about the dances, because Dorothy Leverett met her husband there ...

**DW:**

Is that right?

**I:**

... in 1937 or something (laughs).

**HW:**

(laughs)

**I:**

That's what we found out at the last meeting. So, ah, now what ... was there where a lot of the fellows and gals met up in ... on a weekend night and ...

**HW:**

Yeah, quite a few, yeah. Yeah. That was a ... that and the Polar Bear out there were the two dance places in the area.

**I:**

Where was the Polar Bear?

**HW:**

Well, that was out there by Harry's Furniture. You know where that is.

**DW:**

That's on the other side of the Saline on Michigan Avenue about two miles west of Saline.

**I:**

Okay. Thank you.

**HW:**

Yeah. Yeah.

**I:**

What kind of dancing? What kind of music? What kind of ... who ... who played the music, or ...?

**HW:**

An awful lot of square dancing. I enjoy square dancing as much as anything. Square dancing then was probably the same as it is today, I would imagine. You know, you had a caller.

**DW:**

Would that be a local person? The caller be a local person, or just ...?

**HW:**

Ah, I don't remember. Possibly, yes. I don't know. There used to be people kind of made a ... a job of that, and you'd see them at all square dances doing the calling. They'd call the dancing. And, of course, they had the round dancing, too.

**I:**

But it would be musicians from the area ...

**HW:**

Yeah.

**I:**

... would be playing?

**HW:**

Yeah. Basically.

**I:**

Well, people must have come from all around, because Dorothy Leverett was in Dexter, and I think that these communities, I think that was almost kind of meeting spot.

**HW:**

It was a ... it was packed Saturday night. Yeah. Which of course the buildings weren't very big.

**I:** No, they're not.

**HW:** Ah, yeah, that was something to do on Saturday night.

**I:** What other kinds of things did you do? Go to movies or ...?

**HW:** Oh, yeah. I went to movies a lot more then. I haven't been to a movie in 20 years, more or less.

**DW:** Well, you can watch them on television now.

**HW:** Yeah.

**I:** What movie theaters were around?

**HW:** There was a movie theater in Saline. And of course Ann Arbor had two or three.

**I:** Yes. Yeah.

**HW:** And that was generally where we went, either Saline or Ann Arbor. Ah, I guess there's still a theater in Clinton. There was a few years ago.

**DW:** Harold, did you use any other type of transportation other than the car to go from here to Ann Arbor?

**HW:** Horses.

**DW:** You'd use a horse and wagon.

**I:** Inter-urban?

**HW:** No. No, that was a little before my time.

**DW:** Well, you always had the automobile then.

**HW:** Yeah. Yeah, we always had an automobile.

**I:** Because the Inter-urban went down Michigan Avenue.

**HW:** Uh-hm.

**I:** And did it go down State Street?

**HW:** No.

**HW:** No. You had to walk over there to get on that. My mother went to college on the Inter-urban. And she used to walk over there and get the ... the trolley.

**DW:**

That about a mile?

**HW:** Probably.

**DW:** Yeah.

**HW:** Ah ...

**DW:** That trolley went from where?

**HW:** Think she went to Ypsi, went to Normal.

**DW:** Hm.

**I:** She teach?

**HW:** It was ... no, to ... to school.

**I:** No, I mean, did she ... did she teach after she...?

**HW:** Yeah, she taught.

**I:** At one of the country schools?

**HW:** She taught down here I think ...

**I:** Or Sutherland?

**HW:** ... for a while. And my dad's sister taught down here. My grandmother taught down here in this country school.

**DW:** People didn't move around so much then, did they? They pretty much stayed in the same location.

**HW:** Well, you didn't ...

**DW:** Stayed married and settled there.

**HW:** You didn't have the transportation and the roads and everything you've got now.

**I:** Well, we've been talking about a little over an hour. Um, how are we doing?

**HW:** (laughs).

**I:** I want to make sure I'm not tiring you out. We can come back and if you have other things to talk about. You have some more questions?

**DW:** No, I'm fine.

**HW:** Well, I don't know how we're doing.

**DW:** Do you think we covered most everything?

**HW:** Everything I can think of (laughs).

**I:** Well, I'm really interested in this Sutherland history, especially as it pertains to this house, because ... and I should point out for the record that you've made provisions to donate this house to the Pittsfield Historical Society you said, or Pittsfield Township or how is that working?

**DW:** There is a contract between the Wilson estate and the Wilsons ... and the Township.

**I:** Okay. I'm sorry. I got it.

**DW:** Yeah.

**HW:** That's already been done.

**I:** So it will turn over to the Township and be used for ...

**DW:** There is a mortgage. The Township has entered into an agreement with a land contract.

**I:** Uh-hm.

**DW:** And it was the last ... well, the last thing I did while I was in office was to sign that agreement, on the 17<sup>th</sup> of November.

**HW:** Right. I got a copy of that.

**DW:** That's ... I've got that here for you today. And do you have a copy of what I've got or is it ...?

**HW:** No, I just got the one page of the ...

**DW:** One page. Well, I've got the rest of it here.

**HW:** Yeah.

**DW:** It spells out all the things. And the Township has made certain agreements over a period of ... phase of five years of ... we need to bring the barns and some of the other buildings up to usable things for the Township residents. I think it was a great thing the Wilsons have done to make it available to the Township, just great.

**HW:** Well, the alternative would have been it would have been sold and who knows what would have happened.

**I:** Yeah.

**DW:**



And, you know, as we've talked here, the Township has a very rich tradition of farming and it's important to maintain that so the people in the future know just what the town of Pittsfield was about in the early 1900s and all the way up to the '50s actually...Or '70s.

I:

That's right. It was really the '70s when population influx really ...

DW:

Well ...

I:

... took over in terms of taking up the farm land.

DW:

Well, we're ... almost in the '90s.

I:

Oh, really?

DW:

Yeah. The population in 1980 was 12,500, something like that. And then in 1990 it was 17,688. Now, since then, it's 30,000. So you see where the impact is coming.

HW:

I ... I had a lot of remorse in selling this land because of the long heritage. But I could see no alternative. When we are gone, we have nobody to leave it to. And it would have been sold. A trustee in the estate couldn't leave it the way it was. It would have had to been sold. And the opportunity might not been as good at that time as it was when I did it. I don't know. But ... when you do things you look back and say, 'Well, I wonder if I should have done that.' But I think I did the best I could do.

DW:

Sometime you don't have many alternatives.

I:

That's right.

HW:

No.

I:

And you ... I ... This is a beautiful farm, a beautiful house, and it would be a great treasure ...

DW:

I think so.

I:

... for the future.

HW:

It couldn't go on as a farm, based on the things that were happening around it. Fighting with the farmers, try to get a little bit of rent, didn't even begin to pay the taxes (laughs).

I:

Yeah, the taxes are horrible.

HW:

I don't know. I used to think farming would have been wonderful, but it's changed so in the last, oh, 25, 30 years. It has just ... I don't think it's a very good thing for any young man to get into.

I:

Well, it's a big business.

HW:

Yeah.

I:

So, you have to be a businessman. You hardly go outside I think.

**DW:**

Well, a lot of the people who own the farms over a period of years have had to have second jobs. You know, they talk ... call them gentleman farmers, but they work their tail off on the land, but you also had to have a sup ... another job to supplement the income.

**I:**

Right.

**HW:**

Yeah, every once in a while you read an article about people still doing it the old-fashioned way, more or less. Family way, you should say -- father to son and on down. And I don't know if a young man can really ... could start in very easily without that help from his dad and his grandfather. That's a big thing.

**DW:**

The tremendous capital investment now to have the equipment that you need to mark ... to run a farm.

**HW:**

Terrible. This fellow that worked this land, I don't know, he's gotten ... I think he's gotten awful soured with farming. I remember when he bought his first real big tractor. And he came around, he said, 'Yeah,' he says, 'I've got the four-wheel drive tractor,' and he says, 'I got a payment book that thick.' (laughs)

**DW:**

How long has he been farming your farm for you?

**HW:**

Well, since my dad was alive. He was farming it at that time.

**DW:**

That would have been when?

**HW:**

Well, he died in 1974. Probably for five ... I don't know, maybe five or ten years before that.

**DW:**

So it's been 30 years that somebody else has been farming it, planting and harvesting the crops.

**HW:**

Oh, yeah, at least that long. Or longer.

**I:**

Because your dad didn't farm.

**HW:**

No. No, he didn't farm. And there was a mish-mash of various farmers that worked maybe one or two fields, and somebody else would work another field or two, and things of that nature. So it got worked after a fashion.

**DW:**

Well, I think I'm going to have move on. I don't want to cut you short, and you're welcome to stay as long as you like.

**I:**

Well, um, let me do this for a second...turn off the tape for a moment ...

[break]

**I:**

What was your son's name?

**HW:** Neil.

**I:** And when did he die?

**HW:** Last August.

**I:** I take it he was sick.

**HW:** He had MS ...

**I:** Oh.

**HW:** ... for about 10, 11 year prior to that, and MS isn't necessarily a fatal disease, but he just got so down that he was just miserable, miserable shape.

**I:** Uh-hm.

**HW:** And it got hard for him to breathe, and ...

**MW:** He couldn't swallow, he couldn't eat.

**HW:** And they wanted to cut into his throat, you know, so he could breathe and ...

**I:** With a tube?

**HW:** Yeah, and he didn't want that, and ... finally they just let ... kind of let nature take its course.

**I:** Uh-hm.

**HW:** Ah, I think things could have been different, but they weren't. That's the way it was.

**I:** And he was your only child, right?

**HW:** Yeah. Yeah. He's the only one. You hate to see somebody suffer.

**I:** How long had he had MS?

**HW:** About 10 or 11 years.

**I:** Because I know it can ... people live with it for a long time.

**HW:** Yeah. Some people live with it all their life, and it doesn't affect them as bad. I know people with MS that drive.

**I:** Uh-hm.

**HW:** And he hadn't driven for years.

**I:** Yeah. That's a sad outcome. Because it does kind of ... you know, farming has always been a family endeavor. And to keep the farms going, you have the kids working and you have, you know, somebody to pass it on to, and ...

**HW:** Yeah.

**I:** But he was a handsome young man.

**I:** Well, what ... what other memories can we end with? And anything else that you think we haven't covered that we should?

**HW:** Well, if I sat here and thought about it all afternoon, I probably could think of things, but ...

**I:** Okay.

**HW:** ... ah, right off hand I can't.

**I:** Well, here's what I'll do, is, um, what I do is I take this tape and I give it to somebody who transcribes it, and types out the written transcript of the interview. And then I can bring it back here and have you look it over. And at that time, if there are things that you want to add, or if you want to correct things, or delete some things, then, um, we can ... we can do it at that time too. So if you think of things maybe to jot them down.

**HW:** Yeah, I almost have to do that. I want to call my trustee, I have to write everything down or else I forget half of what I want to ask him.

**I:** Oh, right. Well, we're ... we've all got a lot on our minds and that's why it's ... I do the same thing is I get home, and, well, I should have asked him about this, and I should have made sure to find out about that, and I ... So if that's okay with you, we can end for today.

**HW:** Yeah.

**I:** And, um, and then I'll let you know. It'll take about a month to get the thing finished. Then I'll get back over here, but if that's okay with you, we'll do it that way.

**HW:** That's fine with me.

**I:** And I want to thank you very, very much for sharing everything with us. It's ... you were a great interview (laughs). You have a lot ... you had a lot to tell. I can't believe you thought you didn't have anything to talk about.

**HW:** Well, that was part of life, you know, growing up here. It's hard to give up. I don't believe we can stay here for another year.

**I:** Because of your health?

**HW:**

Yeah, basically. I've been thinking real seriously ever since I come home from the Evangelical Home of doing something. I got all the information I guess you can get on this Brecon thing in Saline.

**I:**

Uh-hm. Uh-hm.

**HW:**

Ah, I've been a mason for 40 years, almost 40 years, and I always thought if I ever went anywhere, I'd go to the Masonic home in Alma. But I've rethought that. I thought that if I went to the Brecon place up here that I'd be close by, and as long as I can function I could come out here and ...

**I:**

My sister's in-laws live there.

**HW:**

Yeah.

**I:**

And they've been there for about, well, over a year. And they like it very, very well. They are having a very nice experience there.

**HW:**

I know a few people that live there.

**I:**

Well, their last name is Heller. They're a Saline family.

**HW:**

I don't know them. I didn't ... I didn't fall in love with the Evangelical home, but it wasn't a bad experience for me. It was a lot worse experience for Mary. She was there last summer for about six weeks. She didn't like it.

**I:**

Were you able to stay home, Mary, when your husband was in the Evangelical home?

**MW:**

When Harold was in the nursing home?

**I:**

Yeah.

**MW:**

Yeah.

**I:**

Oh, good.

**MW:**

I had help ... I was supposed to have had help around the clock. But they come and then they sit.

**I:**

Uh-hm.

**MW:**

And didn't do anything.

**HW:**

That's another reason why I'm thinking about changing. That cost us \$25,000.

**I:**

To have the home care?

**HW:**

To have the home care for two months. A little ...

**MW:**

They got their money and they didn't do a darn thing.

**HW:** And we couldn't go through that again, or for a longer period of time, you know, if I was laid up. So something would have to be done different. Just what, I don't know. But I thought if we were in a facility like that, that it would be easier for her to be cared for.

**I:** You're right, I'm sure. It would be.

**MW:** There's supposed to be aides that help, but that outfit didn't do anything.

**I:** Uh-hm. Yeah, that ... trying to piece together the care in emergencies or ... for a situation like that is really, really tough. Nobody wants to work.

**HW:** Yeah (laughs).

**I:** And there's ... there's no help anywhere.

**HW:** We have a cleaning lady, she's al ... she works like the devil. She's coming this afternoon. But none of those girls were very ambitious. I think partly it was our own fault, because we didn't have chores listed for them to do, and they don't do things unless you're told. Some do and some don't. Some people come in the house and if they see things disorderly or need to be cleaned or something they'll go ahead and do it, but a lot of them don't.

**I:** Well, it's kind of the way of the world nowadays.

**HW:** Yeah.

**I:** Nobody does anything unless they're told to.

**HW:** I don't know what'll happen outside here this summer, since the Township has it ... there was a young fellow come here and he was looking around and ... and thinking about the mowing of the grass. Well, it's such a mess since the snow last December, I don't know how in the world anybody could mow it. I've been mowing it ... fact, I bought a ... a new mower two years ago. I got two big mowers. But I don't know whether I'll ... it should be cleaned up before anybody tries to run a mower in it, you know. You wouldn't want to ... I paid \$6,000 for my last mower. You hate to run into a bunch of stones and stuff.

**I:** Uh-hm. Yeah. Because it is a mess...

**HW:** Yeah.

**I:** Everywhere from the ... this crazy winter.

**HW:** Yeah.

**I:** Uh-hm.

**HW:** So what'll happen, I don't know. I don't know if I could or not. I ... I've lost a lot of my ability.

**I:** Well, it's time to let other people do stuff.

**HW:** Well, you like to do as long as you can.

**I:** Yeah

**HW:** And that was a job I always enjoyed.

**I:** Oh, did you?

**HW:** Oh yeah

**MW:** I had one aide who would played cards--solitaire--and when she got tired she laid down on the couch she went to sleep, and she slept the rest of the time.

**I:** She got tired from playing solitaire? (laughs) She wouldn't have lasted very long at farm work, would she?

**MW:** The day, the night I went up to the hospital I told her `get your things together and get out of here.' I said `Go home.'

**I:** Did you have a church affiliation?

**HW:** Well yes. (laughs) To say we're church people anymore is not necessarily a fact. But we belonged to the Methodist church, I belonged ever since I was 12 years old.

**MW:** You know Betsy was saying last night whenever they went to school, church they always went to the Methodist church, and now Jason's going to college to be a minister in the Baptist church.

**HW:** Well that's strange. She was raised strict catholic.

**MW:** Yeah, and they were raised catholic.

**HW:** That wouldn't make her father very happy. (laughs)

**I:** (Laughs)

The End