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Mara Bell Mancini
ANSO 67-68
February 6, 1995
Interview with Alva and Mary Hall

AH: I'm going to start out just talking about the old people building the house and then go from there.

MB: That. . .that's fine.

AH: If we start out that way that. . . My great grandfather and mother came here from England about 1950 [sic.] and settled here and built the old brick house. They made the bricks here on the farm--had a brick yard. And made all the bricks and built the house and they raised their children and then my dad and his folks was born here and, 'course, I was born here and my brothers and sisters 's all born here and my kids 's all born here, children, my son and two daughters and my one son lives in Richmond now. He's retired and teaching school down there and my daughter, my other daughter, teaches school in Gahanna, and my one daughter lives up here on the farm with her husband and two--my two grandkids. And that makes six generations that's lived on this farm. And 'course. . .I graduated from Gambier High School and started farming with Dad in 1936 and we started out with. . . or I wanted to start out with registered Ang. . .Guernsey cattle and so Dad says "OK" but we's only going to buy one at a time. And we got that one paid for and then we'd buy another one so we went down to the bank. . .

MB: Were these dairy cattle?

AH: Yes, dairy cattle. So we went down to the bank and Mr. Brown loaned us a hundred and twenty-five dollars to buy a cow with and we went up to Uncle Charlie _____ and bought a cow and brought her here and we had to pay for her and we got her paid for and bought another one. We kinda in the dairy business then and so. . .then 'course my mother left us in 1927 and left Dad and kids here and 'course the other kids kinda got jobs and went to school and Dad hired ladies to help us and we got through and finally I run across Mary here down at Grange and we got married--55 years ago the 26th of this month, or last month I guess it was. And she's been here all that time and 'course took care of my Dad for 'bout I s'pose 37 years always living together and we all got along fine. So in the meantime then we went into the dairy business and we had as high as 22 cows we milked and Mary never milked a cow but we. . .Dad and I was late one night and she come down and says, "I believe I can do that." So she started milking and she milked right along with us--we milked 6 or 7 cows a piece by hand for several years and then in a few years we got the old milking machine and we milked then 'till I got a job in town at the municipal court and I worked up there for 27 years. And 'course back before that then I was Township clerk and Township trustee for 40 years along with that and along with our work. In 1955, then, I got my job at the Municipal court and it just got too much to do the milk and deliver the milk and so we kind of went in the Angus business which we're still in now--Angus beef, and my son-in-law and daughter 's kind of taken that over now. We got 26 or 27 cows and calves--or will have calves in a few days.

MB: Is that less work than the dairy?

AH: Oh yeah, yes. Yes. The only real thing with the beef is that you. . . more than anything else is to be with them when they have their calves. We try to have them in late March and April pretty much and kind of be with them. In fact, we were here last summer, or last spring, I kind of watch them in the daytime and whatever not. I's sitting here and cow had a calf and the first thing I found the run and I had to get my daughter right away and we run down and got the tractor and the rope and pulled it out of the run.

MB: What does that mean?

AH: That means it would have drowned if we hadn't of seen it and got there. In fact we saved two last fall,

or last spring, like that.

MB: And how do you do it with the tractor?

AH: I just back the tractor up and she gets on the back end and puts a rope around its neck or leg or whatever and get it out of the water and then take care of it from there. But you gotta first thing get it out of the water, because the one, now, was laying down in the water and its head was sticking up--just the head--its nose and its eyes was all you could see and my daughter threw a rope around its neck and 'course it didn't hurt it any--you wouldn't allow it there too long--just for a few seconds and we pulled it right up and on the bank and cut the rope off its neck. Got along just fine. So, uh, anyhow. . .

MB: What did you do before you could tie a rope to the tractor? Would you have to go out and pull?

AH: Oh yes. You just jump off, and well my daughter just went down in the water, see, and put the rope around the calf's neck. Of course, if she hadn't of been there and I's able I'd of did it. Anything to get it out of the water. That's all you have to do.

MB: And then would you raise them and sell them to be fed out or. . .

AH: Well for a long time then, for the last 4 years I suppose, I raised them and then I'd feed them out in the winter time and then I sold them all privately. And that way I'd know what I was going to get for them and the neighbors would buy them and I had cattle to go to as far as Florida. I've had them go to Texas, Michigan, Akron, all over the country.

MB: And about how many did you have?

AH: Anywhere from 20 to 25. They weigh about a thousand pounds at a year old, which is very good, and 'course the doctor, veterinary, always got a half of one. And I always called them beef and he said they're baby beefs 'cause they're only a year old. So we've always enjoyed that end of it, and got along real well.

MB: You started doing that when you said?

AH: Well, we started in 1955, that is, in that direction, and then we kind of went into the Angus registered purebreds in 1960 or '65 along in there. We got some purebred heifers and bulls and we kind of got going in that direction. So these are all nice cattle--they're not registered, but they're purebreds. We got a nice bunch of cattle. Hopefully, we'll have a good bunch of calves now in a few days, and everything'll go well.

But I did want to say that back one time, back in 1939, I voted for myself for township clerk when I was 21 years old. I took office when I was 21 years old, in 1940, and then I got married when I was 22, just after I was 22. All in that one month. So when I was 21 things changed there. And then I run for county auditor and county treasurer in '52 and got beat then but then that got me to my job in the municipal court where I stayed for 27 years, and 'course that's kind of what I wanted. I had a good job, worked out fine. We've talked about changing work with the farm, you know. . .

MB: You had time to keep up with both? To keep up on the farm. . .

AH: Yes, I want to go that way too (motions to Mary who is pointing to herself and smiling)

MB: (laughing) Thanks to somebody over there?

AH: Yes, and my dad, and my kids.

MB: Everybody chipped in?

AH: Oh yes, my dad used to do it--used to run the tractor, and help me a lot while I was in town working and when he got a little older and my kids got to be 12 or 13 or 14 years old why they'd go up on the hill, dad would take 'em up on the hill, and stay right up there while they'd rake hay and be ready to bale hay when I'd come home. Then my wife would be right with us and we'd bale hay from four o'clock maybe until dark. That's the way we got our work done. And 'course we had good neighbors to help us and exchange work with them. Mainly it was a family affair, kind of, Dad and my wife and the three kids and when they went to get their drivers license they knew how to drive because they drove years before they's sixteen years old. With the tractors just like Lucie and Rachel did. I asked 'em the other day when they was down here, "Did you ever drive a tractor before?" and they said no and I said, "Well, we're going to start today." So they took a ride and drove the tractor for me out there in the field. But that's the way the kids got started, and that's where I got my help. Now, back in the '40s my neighbor and I we had the first bailer around here and my wife and his wife and him and I was all over this part of the township and we bailed hay for other people. With one of those old bailers you had to ride two people rode on the back. One of them stuck the wire through and wired it, and that was their job--Mary's job. She poked that wire through and I'd sit on the other side and wire it and my neighbor would drive the tractor, and vice versa, see? They were right there helping us and we got ten cents a bale for bailing it. That wasn't very much but. . . we got that. I might say this since we said ten cents a bale, I can remember when Ernest Simms used to have all kinds of machinery and he's the one that did the thrashing, filling silos, shredded corn and all that. But he was here one day and he was shredding corn and I would guess that back in about 1932 or '33 right there close, '34, and we were up here for dinner and we's eating our dinner and you remember what I said? He had his tractor, he had a shredder, and he paid my brother. My brother was working for him and himself. Now that was all his. And he says, we's eating our dinner, and he says, "Fellows, I hate to tell you this," but he says, "I'm going to have to raise my prices," he says, "I can't keep going like I am." and he says, "I'm going to have to have two dollars and seventy-five cents an hour to keep going." Now, two dollars and seventy-five cents an hour--remember what I'm saying--he had his tractor, he had the shredder, himself and he paid my brother whatever it was, for \$2.75 and hour. He had to raise it from \$2.50. Now that's just as sure as I'm sitting here. You can't hardly believe it. But that was back in early the middle '30s.

MB: Did you really notice the Depression here?

AH: Oh yes, yes.

MB: How did things change?

AH: We talk about that a lot. Especially, I can compare myself with the kids today. You don't know, but there used to be a filling station down there about where your bookstore is. And that was the old-timer that you used to hand pump. And I, lots and lots of times, I'd go down there and pump a quarter's worth of gas. Now, I'd get about a gallon and a half. And that would take me rides around Gambier, and maybe around town and up and down a street or two. And if we had a dime extra we could stop and get us a sundae. And then we'd go back. . .

MB: Where would you go?

AH: We'd go to Isleys, dairy place here in Mt. Vernon, old Isley's store. That's up where the Pizza Hut there, pizza place right around Sandusky St. right now. That's where it was. And a big dish of ice cream for a dime. . .

MH: I thought that was Jewels.

AH: Yeah, it was Jewels. It was Jewels, not Isleys, Jewels.

MH: I think it was on Main Street.

AH: Yeah. Anyhow, if we had a dime extra that's where we finished up at, with a dish of ice cream, and

then we'd come back to Gambier. Us boy and girls or whoever would split up and go home. We never thought of, well, we'd never heard of drugs. Little bit of . . . maybe, if one of the boys got some hard cider or home brew or something like that, a bottle of, you know. . . we always had a good time.

MH: Homemade stuff. . .

MB: Did they make that around here?

AH: Well, yeah, once in a while. One of the neighbors, or maybe Dad and I. . . maybe Dad made a little home brew, maybe. Not very much. . . but anyhow, that's all we had. We never thought of drugs or whiskey or anything like that, and that's the way it was. You never dreamt of going to Columbus. 'Bout a quarter's worth of gasoline's about all you could buy and that'd be 'bout a gallon and a half. And 'course cigarettes was ten or fifteen cents a pack but as far as I remember we never smoked any. But our school was small--there was only about, well, when I graduated I think it was about 80 in the high school. Twenty in each class or less. And it was just a big family. Everybody knew everybody and we went all out at night and when we went home we all knew but it's not like that today. Not at all.

MB: The farms kept going even through the hard times?

AH: Yes, it was pretty tough. I know my brother was a-working somewhere and he had a cow--he got to keep a cow where he was a-working and he quit up there and he asked Dad to buy the cow. And Dad says, "How much do you want for it?" and he said, "Ought to have twelve dollars and a half." And Dad says, "I can't afford that." And my brother says, "Well," and Dad says, "I'll give you ten dollars and you can wait two or three weeks." So Dad bought the cow and he gave my brother ten dollars for her a couple weeks after that. I can remember down on the other side of Kenyon there was a man by the name of Shaeffer and we had a Guernsey heifer. Now this was about '36 or '37 and we had a little Guernsey heifer here and she's about ready to have a calf and Dad wanted to sell her and Mr. Shaeffer came over here. Now he walked about three miles to come here and look at her. And Dad wanted twenty dollars for her, and he wouldn't give that. So finally he walked back over here one time later on and he said, "Frank, if you'll take twenty dollars for her yet I'll buy her." So he bought her and gave Dad twenty dollars for her.

MB: Then did he walk her all the way back?

AH: Yes, he led her all the way back. See, you just can't believe those things. Dad hired a hired hand here. I don't know when--it must have been before we was married or after we was married maybe, Louis _____, fifteen dollars a month. And he had to have the horses out and ready to go in the field at seven o'clock in the morning. That means he had to be down there and have 'em fed and watered and harness on 'em and be ready to go at seven o'clock, and worked 'till 5 or 6 o'clock at night. For fifteen dollars a month. You just can't hardly believe it. Now I can remember when one woman worked here and I don't know how much Dad give her. I think he give her 2 or 3 dollars a week to work. Then he allowed her 3 dollars every two weeks to buy groceries on. And she bought groceries and took care of Dad and I.

MB: When would that have been?

AH: That would have been about 1933, bought 1933, I guess.

MB: You were married in what year?

AH: '40. '40? Yeah. And I rode a pony up here at Oak Hill school for 8 years then I rode him down to Gambier to high school for 2 years. Then they got a bus and I got to ride the bus for 2 years. I can remember when a nice looking girl lived over here off of 308 and if I got up here at 308 about 8:30 in the morning well, I could let the pony walk and she'd walk along side of me. That way we'd go to school. That's the way you all went. She's all alone and we'd have a great time. Kenyon's always been good to us. I was talking to a man from Fredrick Town the other day and I said, "Do you remember who I am?" And

he said, "Yes." He says, " You're from Gambier aren't you?" and I said, "Yes," and he says, "Boy, we used to always like to come down there and play you basketball." Because we'd play Fredrick Town every year twice. And I said, "Why did you want to come down there and play us basketball?" and I says, "You always beat us." He says, "Yeah, and we got to play at Kenyon College . . ." at the old gymnasium. Where Kenyon played their basketball games, that's where we played ours. We scheduled where it didn't interfere with Kenyon and Gambier High School played their basketball games over there at Kenyon College and he always wanted to come to Gambier 'cause we played over there. So Kenyon's always been pretty good to us.

MB: Now what were you saying about Kenyon and the land that came up to right near your farm?

AH: Well, Kenyon used to be in the farm business back several years ago and Harold Cane was their manager and he used to come around and, I know, help thrash wheat and other than that I don't know just what they did but I know they thrashed wheat. But Kenyon has the woods over here on 229 that always joined us and we always called it the college woods and back again when I had the pony Dad always had that rented for the cattle pasture from the college and I'd have to ride the pony down there and get the cattle and bring 'em up and so then Clarence Hall owned the property just west of Kenyon College and they bought that probably 6 or 7 years ago, a couple hundred acres there. And that makes them join my land up here now. And, 'course, they rent all that out now. So they're kind of in the business too. And that big corn field there across the road on this side of Kenyon if you remember where it's at, going toward Mt. Vernon from Kenyon. . .

MB: Yeah.

AH: Belongs to Kenyon and they have that rented out. They bought that a few years ago, which I'm glad they did. They'll keep it nice.

MB: Do you think more people rent land today?

AH: Oh yes. They rent more than they buy.

MB: It's cheaper to do it that way?

AH: Well, so many of them can't buy it. Just on the farm program the other day they said now the farm this year, and probably you have talked to some people--farmers--that said we've had a good year last fall and good crops. He said farmers now, and especially the young farmers, want to be especially careful about buying land. He says the land up toward Delaware County now, the farmland, is selling for 3000 dollars an acre and there's land in this direction all through here that's selling for around a thousand or 12 hundred. And he says these young boys must be careful because they won't be able to handle it. Because last year was a good year and they don't want to get excited over it because maybe they buy this land and have a poor year and then they'll be in trouble. That's the reason why they're renting more now than I think buying. And they gotta get big because they can't have this farm boy or farm man cannot buy an 80,000 dollar combine and rent it for three or four days out of the year, he has to run that for a month or six weeks or two months to be able to make it go. He has to have some land to do it to keep it going. I just told my daughter today, or yesterday, that they can take this farm here of a hundred and fourteen acres I guess there is now and if I give them everything I own farm machinery, cattle and everything and if he didn't have a job and if they tried to make a living on this farm they'd sell 'em out in less than five years. Because they couldn't pay the taxes and insurance and eat and send the kids to school. They just couldn't do it 'cause there's not enough land here, and machinery's too high.

MB: How do you think it's different now than it used to be?

AH: Machinery was a lot cheaper. We didn't have to get it all done in just a day or two.

MH: We had horses too.

AH: 'Course we had our horses in the old time but I'm talking about just a few years ago. We didn't expect to go plow 30 or 40 acres a day.

MB: Why do you have to do that now? To keep up?

AH: Because your expensive machinery, and big machinery and they've got to get out and do this big stuff where back a few years ago if we planted 20 acres of corn that was a pretty good corn crop for us here on a smaller farm, you know. And if we had 20 acres of corn, and 20 acres of wheat and 20 acres of hay well then we'd get along pretty good with small machinery, light machinery, and again we wouldn't have to go and do it up in three or four days. We'd just work at it and get it done as quick as we could. But if you've got all this high priced machinery you can't do that . . . well just like a big shop, you got to put out a lot of stuff to keep it going.

MB: Do you think people would help each other more back then?

AH: Yes, they help more back then. Oh yes, a lot more.

MB: Would one person, say, have a combine and everybody chip in. . .

AH: Yes, I had a combine and my neighbor up here had a combine and we'd combine for neighbors all around here. Maybe we had the only two combines in the neighborhood. And they'd come here and help us and we'd go help them combine. 'Course they'd pay us more for doing the combining rather than just haul the wheat or something. But I can remember when I bought my first big tractor in 1944. It was a big three bottom tractor and I paid 1400 dollars for it and I plowed 24 acres in one day, and you'd never heard of such a thing. 24 acres, well, my golly, today these big tractors go out and plow 24 acres in less time than I'd go to town and come back. In 6 or 8 hours, see, they can plow . . . it's nothing to plow 24 acres. That's the reason why. . . see a corn planter costs 5 or 600 dollars back then--a two row corn plow--well you never heard that now. It's a eight row planter, 12 row planter for 40, 50, 60,000 dollars. Well you can't buy, well I can't go out and give \$30,000 for a corn planter and plant 30 acres of corn or 20 acres of corn.

MB: That doesn't make sense.

AH: No, you can't do it. A few years ago I could buy a corn planter for 5 or 600 dollars and go out and plant 12 or 15 acres of corn. We got along pretty good, 'cause that planter would last for years. But you can't today 'cause the machinery is too high.

MB: Did any of your brothers or sisters go into farming?

AH: Oh yes, I have a brother now, and you won't believe this, he's farmed all his life. He never farmed for his self. He's got a job today. He's 82 years old, he'll be 83 years old this fall. He works for I think it's Lake County up east of Cleveland. They passed a levy and they built an amusement park or a heritage park out east of Cleveland, with several hundred acres and he's kind of the overseer of it and it's a good deal like an Amish farm. They have 4 or 5 cows and 8 or 10 horses and they plant corn like we did and do a little plowing for people and they do a little bit of thrashing and they have all these dates so people out of Cleveland can come and watch them. And they have a few goats and a few pigs and they do everything that you could think under the sun on a farm that they used to do back years ago.

MB: Is it for educational purposes?

AH: Yes. Now they even have hay rides, what we would call hay rides. They have wagons and horses and trails back through the farm. They bring out children and high school people and they'll charge them so much to take them back through the woods. They'll bring out the mental retarded, they have lifts on the

wagon to get 'em up in the wagon. They bring out the people from the rest home and put 'em on the wagon and take 'em back through the woods, through the swamp lands or wherever, clear back through there. And so he'll be 83 years old this fall, and that's been his lifestyle.

MB: Did he grow up in Knox County too?

AH: Yes, we was all born and raised here.

MB: You all grew up in this house?

AH: Yes, you see I have two brother and two sisters and we was all born and raised here. Then I have three kids that's raised here. Now I'm going to tell you a little bit if you want to hear about my brother.

MB: Sure do.

AH: I'll tell you, I brought my two grandsons here the other day and I took them out on the porch and I told them about it, 'cause I thought maybe somebody might never get to it. But anyhow, my mother left us in 1927 and for reasons I don't know for sure. Anyhow she left us and in their settlement someway, somehow, between Dad's lawyer and her lawyer Dad gave her a thousand dollars and she got to take my brother Bob, who was three years old at that time. He was born in 1924. And I told the boys the other day I can remember just as well as yesterday she come up on the porch downstairs there and got my little brother and picked him up and took him with what he had on. And he just screamed and threwed his arms and legs and didn't want to go at all. And it just makes you almost cry now. That's just exactly what happened and they went down and got in the car and drove away. And then we went up to Ashland then a time or two, I know once we went up to see him and then it wasn't too long 'till they moved out and we didn't hear no more. And years passed and we didn't hear anything. So Bob, as I understand it, mother took him out to Indiana and put him in a home, a foster home I s'pose you'd call it. Those people raised him 'till I s'pose 9, 10, 11, 12 years old, and I'll say this the reason why they left Indiana--she and her husband got in the bootleg business, the law got after them and they had to leave. So they went to Michigan. Well then after that, after they was up there a while, they came back to get Bob and take him up with them and he wouldn't go and so they bribed him and said that if they'd go up there with him for a week why they'd take him back out there. So he went up there with them for a week, but they would never take him back, and they kept him. My mother kept him up in Michigan. And so he went to school up there, but he went to college a couple years in New York and then, well, before that, he knew that he had some brothers and sisters in Ohio, but he didn't know where. But he thought we were in Canton. So he and his boy friend run off one time and went to Canton and was down there for 5 or 6 days, but they couldn't find us. Well then he enlisted in the Air Force and when he enlisted in the Air Force that was when Mother had to say his Dad's name.

MB: He didn't know that before?

AH: No, no. And she had to tell him about his brothers and sisters. And as near as she could she had to tell him where we lived. Now that was under federal law. She couldn't get out of that or she'd be in trouble. So a few days after he got in the service he wrote my sister a letter, Helen Hall. And she had been married for 2, 3, or 4 years. But the letter came here because it's the old Hall place and we got it to her and that's the first we hear from him since 1927. So anyhow, he got in the service and he was a bombardier, I believe it was the B-52, and they had taken their shots in 1944-45 and ready to go across to warfare. So the day before they's gonna go they took one more excursion trip and they went from Texas down the coast line to Florida, up Atlantic Ocean to New York, and back through here toward the base in Texas. And when they got up over Knox County, they knew where they's at--I don't know how in the world they did, but they knew where they's at--and Bob told him, whoever, that down there is where his brothers and sisters live and he hadn't seen them since 1927. So I don't know what their conversation was then but anyhow they got in towards Columbus and whoever was in authority come over the microphone and said, "We're having engine trouble, and we're going to have to land." So they landed in Springfield, which is,

you know where it's at, just a little bit east of Columbus, or west of Columbus. And maybe it was Dayton. And they landed down there, and then when they landed, whoever, the spokesman or whoever had the authority to, they told Bob that we can't take out until 8:00 in the morning and you be here. So at that time it was about as easy to hitchhike a ride as it was to have an automobile. So he jumped out and got out on the road and hitchhiked and he come to Mt. Vernon on a Saturday night and I s'pose he was kinda bashful and he went to the pool rooms and I know that, 'course, Mary and I and Dad would go to the town on Saturday night to buy the groceries at that time.

MH: Big deal. . .

AH: And we went to town to buy the groceries and while she's buying the groceries I went to the pool room with my neighbor up here and there's no doubt in my mind that he went in there looking for us but he didn't ask and he didn't recognize us of course, and so he got a hold of a police man and he asked if he knew me and he said yes, and he told him about his situation and he said, "I'll take you out." So he, Earl Evering, brought my brother out here, and we wadn't here, 'course, we was in Mt. Vernon. But anyhow, they waited here on us and when we come in the house here my brother Bob was and Earl Evering and. . .

MB: You didn't expect it at all.

AH: Oh no, not at all. He just come out of the blue sky and was sitting here on the davenport. So we got pretty well acquainted there in a few minutes, you know, and then Mr. Evering got up and said, "Well, you don't need me any longer." So he left and Mary and I and my Dad and we talked here with Bob for a little while and then he wanted to know about my brothers and sisters and my bother's up toward Cleveland and we couldn't see him, but my one sister's was down here below Gambier, just south and east of Gambier, and we went over to see her about midnight, a little after. And while we were there we got talking a little while and he said, "I'd like to go down and see my other sister," way down in Coshocton, that's about 30 miles. So my brother-in-law spoke up and said, "I'll take you down if you want to go." So we all got in his old car and took that ride to Coshocton 'bout 1:00 in the morning and went down to see my sister and then we got back here about 5:00, or about 4:00 we got back here, and we had to have Bob in Dayton at 8:00. So I says to Bob, I tell him, "My tires aren't too good on my car. I believe I'll see if I can get a hold of Ike _____ and see if I can get a tire." So we went to town and got a hold of Ike _____ and he says, "Alva, I don't have a tire in the store." That's when the war was on and you couldn't buy a tire. But he says, "My wheels on my car'll fit yours," and he says, "I'll just go down and take my wheel off my car and put it on yours and you can use yours for a spare." So that's what we did. We took off here about 5:00 toward Dayton and that's when you had to go through little towns and through the stop lights and everything else, you know, to get to Dayton. And we just got out of Columbus and it sounded like somebody shot us. And so we stopped and got out and there that tire that belonged to Ike _____ got a hole in it as big as your hand. So we got back and got the jack and we changed tires and . . .

MB: Put your bad one back on?

AH: Yeah, put the bad one back on and took off for Dayton. And we got down to the airport and if Bob was talking to you today he'd tell you this. I stopped and they had that airplane warming up. Now they had a fence there about 12 feet high and how he got over that I don't know but he got over it.

MB: He just jumped the fence?

AH: He jumped the fence and he'll tell you today how he didn't come to get shot. That he'll never know because they had all kinds of guards around and he jumped over that fence and run down and got in the airplane. And he didn't more than get in and they took off. Well then the next day when they's supposed to go to Germany they had a hold up call for a day and the next day the war was over, and he come home and stayed with us for a week.

MB: Wow. Is this the one that lives up in Cleveland?

AH: No he's retired now. He lives up in Michigan, up there at the lake. He's got a lake home.

MB: But you still keep in touch?

AH: Oh my yes! Every year, two or three times.

MH: He worked in television for many years.

AH: He come back and he was an engineer for a television station up there for several years. So he turned out real good. But that was the story of my brother.

MB: Something was talking about your family reunions that you have every year.

AH: Yes. . .

MB: Everybody comes from wherever they are and gets together?

AH: Pretty much so, yes. We have what used to be the Callwell-Hall reunion. The Callwells kind of faded out and they got older and passed away and there was only a few of those left, there's only two or three now left.

MB: What relation would they have been?

AH: Well, they'd of been first cousins. And then they got away from us, but they still come, one or two or three of 'em, if they're around. Anyhow, we call it the Hall reunion now. My wife and I have it here. We've had it for I don't know how many years. (To Mary) Do you have any idea? 30 or 40 years I s'pose, every other year. And my cousin up near Fredrick Town has it the other year. Now we've had it two years in a row because he couldn't have it last year. We have anywhere from 100-125 or 30 a year. And it's nice to bring 'em around to home place, and get 'em here.

We enjoy it but it's getting more of a job now than it used to be. Well, we have good help. That's where my brother comes in again. He got married and he had 2 girls and a boy and they all always come. They kind of missed the last little bit last year or so, for one reason or another, but ordinarily they're always here and they're always big helps. They always help go get the tables and help take 'em back before they go home and help clean up. They've always been a great help to us. 'Course my brother and his wife both. This is where we usually have the Hall reunion. But they're all getting older now so I don't know. . . hopefully we can keep going.

MB: It's nice to stay in touch with everybody.

AH: Oh my yes! And hear about them. And hear about the kids and where they're at.

MB: Tell me a little bit about the house. You were showing me pictures.

AH: Oh yes. My great grandfather, 'course, built the house here and when they first built it the front was just an open front porch (phone rings) with lattice on it. And we had grape vines around our front and the back. (phone rings again) 'Course anybody wanted a bunch of grapes they's there. (loud noise) You had the grapes you could get and eat grapes or grape wine or grape juice or whatever. And of course they built the house here and we stayed here. Now, one time right here back of me there was a fireplace here. Right here (pats wall). And we'd sit around here and this is where we'd keep warm. And out in the other room was a fireplace.

MB: There was an opening on this side too?

AH: Oh yes. Open right here. Well, the fireplace in the other room was on the other side of the room.

MB: Oh, OK.

AH: There was a chimney right here. And this is where the fireplace was. Eventually the fire place kind of. . .we didn't use it, then we used a pot bellied stove right here. This was our room here, and 'course out there was the kitchen. And we had the two bedrooms and upstairs and two down here. And 'course we didn't have any bathroom back at that time--you went outdoors. But we always got along fine. And I think a lot of times today even talking about the kids getting in trouble so much, and we'd go to school at 9:00, we had to be there at 9:00. We got out at 4:00. We'd get home here about 4:30, well, we had our chores to do. We had to go get kindling. We had to get wood in. We had to help Dad with the milking or feeding the cows or we had a calf or two of our own. And when we got our chores done and got our lessons it was time to go to bed. But today it's all a different ball park because the kids get out at 2:00 and they have so much time from then on. They don't have too much to do, a lot of them. There's no farm work for kids anymore. I just hate it so bad because I got two grandkids here and I wish I could hire 'em to come down here and work everyday. But there's nothing here like we used to do, you know, there's just nothing here.

MB: Do you still have cows and animals or is that. . .

AH: Well, we have our Angus cattle, yes.

MB: And then your daughter and her family helps with that?

AH: They do it all now. Pretty much all of it. I help them as much as I can, see, but other than that he does it. And he just fed 'em tonight and checked the water and real good.

MB: How do they like this cold?

AH: The cattle?

MB: Yeah.

AH: Oh fine.

MB: They don't notice?

AH: No, they stay over there in the corner and the only time the weather bothers your cattle--really bothers 'em--is if it's wet and cold. If it rains and gets cold, or if it's real cold rain.

MB: Do they ever get sick because of the weather?

AH: No, no not if they're outdoors. When they get sick are indoors.

MB: Yeah, that's what I heard.

AH: Yeah, that's when your cattle get sick.

MB: Why is that?

AH: Well, you get your draft and they breathe so much on each other, close together. . . but you keep 'em over there in the field. And sometimes you feel sorry for them. It's going to be zero but they're over there, back of the woods, together eating hay and. . .

MB: They don't even notice.

AH: Not really, no. Plenty of water. But you put 'em in the barn and you're going to have troubles.

MB: That's interesting.

AH: Yes. I know one time I had--out in the barn--I had the doctor, a vet, down here to look at a calf or something. Well he says, "The first thing, Alva, is get this door open, and leave it open." See I closed it up too tight, and you don't do that.

MB: 'Cause the moisture gets in the air?

AH: Well, the moisture and ventilation and it just makes them sick--pneumonia is what they get. Keep 'em out doors and they'll be alright. (pause) But, it's an all new ball game today from what it has been, and I'm sure glad I've got Jim and Sherry and the boys up here to help me, and do the work for me. If we didn't have 'em I just wouldn't do it.

MB: What kind of community get togethers would there be?

AH: Well, we don't do that now. My wife, she belongs to _____ Sisters and now that's a . . .

MH: We belong to Grange.

AH: 'Course we belong to Grange.

MB: Did the Grange groups do more when you were young? You said you met at a Grange dance?

AH: They had. . . I s'pose you've been in organizations you had degrees to go through. And we had in the Grange now there's four degrees. You go first, second, third, and fourth and back in the '30s now that was another thing we used to do in our little Grange over here. In the young people there was about 14 of us and we were on the installing team or drill team. We went to Grange. I belonged to Pleasant Grange and she belonged to Miller Grange over in Brandon, at that time. We went to different Granges and put to work on the Granges. And that's where I met her. I forget just exactly what we did. Our Grange was over to her Grange and she was over there and she had her black hair and black eyes and white dress on and . . . I kind of got after her and wanted to take her home and she wouldn't go but I finally kept after her and got a date with her. Kinda sad--the first date I had with her I remember very well. I went over to pick her up and it would be her future sister-in-law there come to the door and she said she's sorry that Mary can't go tonight. She says her brother passed away today. So she lost her brother. What was he about 18, 19? He had a brain tumor and passed away.

MH: 21 I think.

AH: But anyhow, she couldn't go that night so . . . I don't know how I got another date with her but I did. So that's where that kind of ended up.

MB: But did the Granges have more social occasions?

AH: Oh yes. I think more than they do now. Well, they're older people now. You don't have young people in the Grange. It's a good deal like your churches. See your churches consist of more older people than younger people, as far as I'm concerned. I know the Grange is that way. But back at that time we had our youth Grange. We's all in high school, and we's all there at the Grange hall at least twice a month at night. Either did our practice or did our work. As I said, we went to other Granges and put our work on for 'em. But they're getting weaker all the time. Some are going out and closing up and then joining other Granges close to 'em.

MB: Why do you think that is?

AH: Well, it's the kids aren't staying here.

MH: No young people.

AH: The young people are moving out, and the old people are passing on. Just like we were talking about the other day, you could go to church several years ago for Valentines Day, or Mother's Day, Father's Day or something like that. The kids 'd all come home to their mother and father in Gambier and 'course I was here, but a lot of 'em left, you know. They come home and see their mom and dad and they'd always come to church and that way the rest of us would get to see 'em at least once or twice a year. But all their mothers and dads is gone and they don't come back anymore and even if they did they're getting pretty old, like the rest of us, you know. They don't get back and they're going to have to have new members all the time to keep going.

MB: So are you still members of the Grange?

AH: Oh yeah. We're still members of the Grange.

MH: We don't go.

AH: We don't go much anymore, but we're still members. That'd be the last thing I'd drop out of. . . 'cause it's a farm thing and I want to support it. In fact, we got to pay our dues now right away. And again Mary belongs to the _____ Sisters.

MH: Farm Bureau, we're part of that.

AH: Farm Bureau. And I belong to K.P. Light (?) in Gambier. Don't go much anymore, but I still belong and support it. As I say, the young people just don't. I suppose it's for jobs, maybe. They just don't stay around these smaller places.

MH: It's just not farm country anymore.

MB: What do you think it is?

MH: I don't know.

MB: Maybe it's country that's being farmed but it's not farm country? Or do you not think the land's being used?

AH: Oh the land's all being used. But again you go back to the old timer and I told you one other time, if we wanted a dozen eggs, if it got cold like it is now, or a real bad storm and you run out of eggs--you need eggs--you only had to walk down here a few hundred feet to your neighbor to get eggs or milk or whatever. Every farmer had a cow and a team of horses and a pig or two or whatever, you know.

MH: You made your living.

AH: You made your living there.

MH: Cooking and feeding the kids.

AH: You just don't have it anymore.

MH: Everything was right here.

AH: And, see, the kids can't make a living at it so they got to get out and go somewhere else, even though they do live on a big farm. They just got to go--they can't do it.

MH: We get our milk in the jug too.

AH: Well, I've always said since I quit milking that I'd never complain what a gallon of milk cost me. 'Cause we worked hard--Mary and I and my dad worked hard. Get the cows in and wash their udders and keep everything clean and haul it to town and we worked hard at it and then we did even after we quit milking. Mary, we kept a cow, what we called the family cow and Mary milked her for a long, long time--several years after that. Just for our milk and she'd get a gallon or two of milk and we'd have our cream and butter and got along that way.

MB: You'd make all that yourself?

MH: Uh huh.

MB: And now?

MH: You buy it.

AH: You buy it. The way she used to do it, Mary'd milk the cow and bring the milk in and put it in a jar or something and then she'd skim the cream off it. And when she'd get a quart of cream you put it in a quart jar, well, you wouldn't want a full quart of cream. Say three-quarters a quart and put it in a quart jar and put a lid on it and just sat here and shake it. And you'd come up with a little bit. And you'd come up with 'bout a pound of butter and a glass or two of buttermilk.

MH: I had a churn too. I had a . . . there was a crank.

MB: When did you stop making those things?

MH: When my cow fell and broke her hip, I said that's it. When was that?

AH: Oh yeah she fell down on the ice or something. . .

MH: I said no more.

AH: And broke her hip and we had to destroy her and

MH: I got tired of it.

MB: That was in the '60s maybe?

MH: I imagine.

AH: Yeah that would be in the '60s.

MH: He was working in the office. So I. . .

MB: You were still doing all the farm chores?

MH: And then the chores. . . whatever happened be at. Then there's Dad. . .

AH: When I started working in the '50s clear up 'till my Dad passed away in '77 Mary and Dad would

always feed the cattles in the morning. I never had to go out of the house--only to go to work. I'd get ready and go to work and I had to be at work at 9:00 and they always took care of the. . .

MH: We quit milking when he went to work pretty quick cause that was just too much.

AH: Yeah that year. But they always fed the cattle for me and . . .

MH: Beef cattle--wasn't too much work.

MB: Then how often would you sell?

AH: Once a year.

MB: Just once a year? Would you get rid of most of them?

AH: Most, all the calves, yes. I'd keep one heifer or something for replacement.

MH: See, the trouble with the dairy cattle--we had to clean the stables every morning. Night too, well we'd turn 'em out too, I guess. There's much more work to them.

AH: But our Angus cattle, you see, in a few days we'll have our calves and then in November, raise them up till then, and I'd get a man and wean the calves and treat 'em. Get the vet out and treat 'em for worms and lice and every other thing you can think of. And I'd put 'em in the barn and feed 'em 'till last week in April, first of May, and that's when I'd sell 'em and then I'd be done with that.

MB: Did you take them to an auction?

AH: No that's when I sold them privately.

MH: We butchered them and sold them.

AH: I sold them privately, either a half a beef or a whole beef, and then I'd take it up to the butcher shop and they would butcher they'd go pick them up and pay for them. I was very fortunate because I sold a lot of beef over a number of years, and I can only remember of three instances where I ever lost any money.

MB: That is fortunate.

AH: One person never paid us for half a beef, and that was in the family. And I had two other parts of a quarter that maybe they owed 40 or 50 dollars but that's all I ever lost.

MH: You didn't tell her about how you did here on the farm. Raised you own beef and butchered it and hung it down here.

MB: For you? That would be your private beef?

AH: Oh yes. We used to butcher our own beefs, and own hogs, and even, in fact it's on the tape there, the hooks right here in the barn--you can see it--where we used to hang it.

MB: How long would it last if you did, say, one?

MH: Probably a winter.

AH: That's a good question 'cause you could butcher a 500 pound beef or 1000 pound beef. So you see. . . and the same with a hog. You can butcher anywhere from 150, 175 to 250 pound hog.

MH: And you rendered your lard. You had your own lard you didn't have this oil stuff.

AH: Now the old time, back years ago, when you'd butcher a beef, Dad would take a quarter and I can remember he brought it downstairs here, what we called the pantry downstairs, and it had hooks in the roof--in the ceiling. And they'd take a quarter of a beef in there and hang it up out there in the winter time and the temperature'd be alright, but anytime you wanted a stake or anything, just go down there in the next 3 or 4 months and cut you off whatever you wanted.

MB: But in the summer you wouldn't be able to do that. . .

AH: You wouldn't do that. Not when it warmed up.

MH: In the summer you canned. Canned meat.

MB: How would you treat it before . . .

MH: You stuff it in cans and cold pack for about 4 hours. Put a little salt on it . . . it was good. Better than nothing.

AH: Well, it was good then because. . .

MH: The Amish do it yet. Even in the restaurants they sell, a lot of times, their canned beef.

AH: But you take that quarter beef and cut it up in little hunks, oh 'bout 2 inch squares something like that, and put it in cans, a little salt and boil it for about 4 hours. That'd be your meat then.

MH: Hot water bath.

MB: Did you can vegetables and fruit too?

MH: Uh huh. I've always canned and I still do.

AH: If it weren't for that I don't know what I'd do. She's canned thousands of cans of stuff since we've been married.

MH: I freeze a lot of stuff too.

AH: Bake bread. Homemade bread--all that sort of thing.

MH: Never got away from that.

AH: Still haven't.

MB: I suppose it makes it easier when times get hard when you can take care of your own food for yourself.

MH: It helps!

AH: Oh yeah.

MH: One thing you could do on the farm when the Depression hit was stay alive.

AH: Well, not only that. Time after time we have company come here 4:00 or 5:00 in the evening or 11:00

in the daytime and Mary'll say have you had your lunch or dinner or whatever and they say no but we're not going to stay and she said well, just stay and I'll get you something. And she'd go to the basement or the refrigerator or the freezer and . . .

MB: There'll be something there.

AH: And before a little bit she'll have a pretty good meal for us, for 4 or 5 or whatever. We never had to worry about that. (pause) But anyhow the farm is . . . there's just about 2 or 3 different kinds of farms today and you got your grain farmer and that's what he does. You have your, like us now, I suppose you'd call us a beef farmer, although we don't feed 'em out. Most of the people would feed 'em out, but they got several hundred acres of ground, you know, and they feed 'em out. And then you have your hog-swine or hog farm. They have hogs and that's about all they have. Sheep farm down at Danville and that's all he has--hundreds of sheep.

MB: I heard that Knox County used to have a lot of sheep farms.

AH: They used to be the top sheep county in the country, but not any more.

MB: When did those start going?

AH: With the rest of the farms.

MH: Well the wool. . . you don't sell much wool.

AH: Well, go back to the old farmers and again as I told you. We had dairy cattle and some sheep and hogs. We had horses. . . (tape ends)