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Interview with Alva and Mary Hall

Mara Bell Mancini

Alva Hall

Mary Hall

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Mara Bell Mancini
Interview with Alva and Mary Hall
February 15, 1995, 7:00 PM

AH: OK. This was in the *Mt. Vernon News* about 1928, the races in the Knox County Fair. And this is a little paragraph here that tells about me and my pony and some of the other ponies, if you can read it. If you can't I'll try and read it to you--if you don't understand it.

MH: She might be able to read it better without that thing. (*magnifying glass*)

MB: Would you mind reading it?

AH: Sure I'll read it to you as best I can. Now it says, "The first pony race following the conclusion of the harness racing Alva Hall of near Gambier again curtailed the first race despite a bad finish." Then it goes, "The little pony feet went so fast his sixteen year old mount," Sixteen year old mount, now the pony was sixteen years old, "Immediately after the conclusion of the race another was run and some so-called ponies, which must have had a bit of grass blood (?) in them competing against Hall's tiny mount." Now that means that in the second race I had to run against big ponies, and I couldn't beat 'em. "Starter W.E. Wise finally decided that the wee hero of the many battles should have an even break with those big ponies, and the audience screamed loudly in the applause. However, it was too much for the wee one," That was my pony, "His legs functioned perfectly. They moved so fast that they actually looked funny, but they weren't long enough. He was well beaten, although a fluke did allow him to take a goodly second place. All the entries in this classic rounded the northwest turn in the last eighth. They, when in all, started up the road to the barns much preferring the oats and hay that they should have." Now, that means when they come around the curve there instead of coming on around the race track, they run off the race track and run to the barn. But my pony come around and finished up. And we raced that poor pony, as I maybe told you before, my brother raced him at the county fair in about 1921. And I have a copy of that out there, and he raced him two or three years. Then my cousin, Bob Hall, raced him two or three years, and 'course he got too big and then I raced him probably three years old, till I got too big, and then my sister rode him two or three years.

MB: So how many years did that horse race? Or pony. . .

AH: Well, that would be 12 to 14 years we raced him out here. All us kids rode him and, 'course he got pretty old then and we raced three days: Monday or Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, and we'd all start out even on Wednesdays. And we would win the race with the same sized ponies. And Thursday they would put my pony back a hundred feet. And I was back behind a hundred feet when they start, and then when they'd holler "Go," I had a hundred feet to make up and I couldn't beat the one pony. Then Friday the other pony would have to go back with me, and then I could win again. So that's the way it went for a long time, and we had quite a nice pony. I rode him to school.

MB: I bet you got to school on time!

AH: Oh yes. I can remember. . . well I rode him to the old brick school up there at the Eastern Star, and it's about two miles and I rode him eight years up there, through the eighth grade. After that, I rode him two years to Gambier High School. If I, of course we had a place to put him both places, and we had a little shed down here at Gambier next to the High School at the ally there--a pony place, and a little bit of hay there that dad kept there. I'd go down and feed him at noon and then if I'd forget to fasten the door, or tie him good I'd walk home, cause he'd get out and come home.

MB: But he'd always come home?

AH: He'd always come home and I'd walk home.

MB: Well, that's good. Did other people ride ponies or horses?

AH: Oh yes.

MH: There wasn't any traffic.

AH: Yeah, there wasn't any traffic back at that time, and there was about eight or nine or ten of us and we all had ponies or horses and we'd ride on Sundays. Particularly on Sundays we'd go from here--all of us. Probably from here to around Martinsburg--quite a ways. And then we'd come back past my aunt, Lara Wolls (?), and she'd always have cookies and milk and then we'd come on home. But there was no traffic. No hard top roads. And we always had a good time. That was our Sunday afternoon with the boys. My brother and my cousin and our friends all had ponies and horses that we played with.

MB: How many of you would go?

AH: Oh, anywhere from eight to twelve. That's kind of our recreation when we's a kid.

MB: Well, last time I never asked you the names of your brothers and sisters, and ages.

AH: Well we's all. . . course my dad, and his two brothers and four sisters were born here. And then my generation: myself and two brothers and two sisters. I had a brother older and a brother younger.

MB: Bob's the younger one?

AH: Yes.

MB: OK.

MH: She want you to name them.

AH: See he was in the service. And my brother is the oldest one, he's working up at Cleveland now at 82 years old at something like a heritage place that I was telling you about. And then my older sister lives here in Gambier and my younger sister lives here in Gambier and Texas--she's in Texas right now.

MB: She goes back and forth?

AH: Yeah. We were all born here, so there's two generations. Then 'course my kids were born here and that's five generations. My great-grandfather come from England and he built the house, and that's the sixth generation that's had this house.

MH: These's the sixth up here.

AH: Yeah, my daughter is the fifth and then my grandchildren up here's the sixth, who lives not in this house, but on the property 'cause they bought a piece of land from my dad and they built a house. Now, that's six generations that's lived on this property.

MB: So when you were young, did you all go to school together?

AH: Oh yes. We all went 'till 8th grade up here at the Oak Hill School. All through that, and I suppose my uncles and aunts all did. I don't know, but I s'pose they did. We went to Oak Hill for 8 years and 'course I can remember the other kids mostly walked but a lot of times my brother would drive, had a buggy and horse. And he drove the buggy and horse if he felt like it and wanted to. So I can remember that.

MB: And then it would sit outside the school while you. . .

AH: Well, the buggy he'd unhitch and put the horse in the shed up there while we's in school. You'd have to hitch the buggy up and come home. I can remember we come home and he's letting the horse come pretty fast and we come around the corner too fast and upset. That's quite a thing, but I can remember that.

MB: What'd you do then?

AH: Well, we got the horse and got it straightened out and come home. We didn't think much about that stuff at that time. And then again I rode the pony two years to high school. My one brother didn't go to high school. He quit and got a job. And I had a sister, my oldest sister, that got a job working for Doctor and Mrs. Gahal (?) of Gambier. Now, he was a professor and she worked there for at least four years while she's going to school.

MB: What did she do there?

AH: Well, just a housekeeper. She took care of the house and they took care of her. She did the housework and the cooking and things such as that and they were just like mom and dad to her because . . .

MB: Did she live there?

AH: Yes, she stayed there 4 years, at least 4 years, and as I say they were just like a mom and dad to her because when they went on vacation in the summer she went to New York and Chicago and Massachusetts they took her just like the other kids.

MB: This was your older sister, you said?

AH: Yes. Then my younger sister she worked different places and . . . I don't know whether she worked at Kahals or not, but she graduated from Gambier High School along with me. Again, I rode the pony to school and I can remember getting up and 'course I always wet my hair and combed it before I went, and never wore a hat, and I'd always go to school and hurry to the bathroom and comb the ice out of my hair 'fore I got to class. Never caught a cold or anything.

MB: Would she go with you? Would she ride the pony too?

AH: No, no. Well she rode the pony when he's here, and 'course my brother and sister did too, but when she went to high school she worked. You see, Mother wasn't here and at that time you either walked or got some other way because we didn't have buses. My older sisters, I said, worked for Dr. Kahal and his wife for four years and then my sister worked different places down in Gambier and went to high school. I can't ever remember of any one of us, outside my older brother, and 'course my younger brother--I couldn't

tell 'bout him 'cause he wasn't here--but the three of us I can't ever remember ever thinking about not going through high school. Why I don't know, but I . . . I graduated.

MB: Now where was the Oak Hill School? Does it still exist?

AH: Well, they built it into living quarters. And, 'course you wouldn't know it today if you went by it but it's across the road from the Eastern Star home. On 229 it's on the northwest corner of 229 and Oak Hill Drive. There's a little road that turns to the left when you get in front of the Eastern Star home. And then Oak Hill School is on the corner there. I'll show you a picture of it pretty soon. And what it looked like then. But they I think they sold that, the school board sold that, when we consolidated into Gambier about 1938. And then the _____ boys bought it, they had an automobile dealer here in Mt. Vernon--dealership--and they built it into their home. And 'course inside it's been changed a time or two. It's still sitting there. And that's the one that my dad always said the bricks for that building was made here on this place.

MB: Oh really?

AH: Yes.

MB: Now, I know you showed me the brick maker.

AH: Yeah.

MH: You saw this? (brings out photograph)

MB: No, I didn't see that.

AH: Now that was taken . . . I would say in the late 1880s. But that's the old school house where I went to school for 8 years and of course all my folks.

MB: And you said the structure still stands there?

AH: Oh yes. It's a home now--a real nice home.

MB: It's really pretty, nice building. I'll have to drive by and see it.

AH: Well, that's it. It's in the northwest corner of Oak Hill Drive. No, I'm sorry that's wrong. It's the northeast . . . wait a minute. It'd be the northeast corner of 229 and Oak Hill Drive. You see, there's a drive right down here, see the fence. Now, there's that road right down through there on that side. And then 229 goes down this way, and right in the corner there is where this is at.

MB: The bricks that were made for that, you said they were made here. Could you tell me a little more about the bricks?

AH: Well, really the only thing I can tell you is of course the bricks in this house was made here. And dad always said there was two houses in Gambier and I can't tell you which two, and my older sister might be able to, but I can't tell you now which two was made here. And then the bricks for the Oak Hill Schoolhouse was made here. And 'course the bricks for this house was made here. I can tell you again, I think I've told you, that down here about 500 feet along the road is where my dad always called the brick yard. And when I was a kid growing up we didn't have those machines down there yet and I suppose you could now go back of there and plow it and plow pieces of brick. Cause we always did--half bricks and I

suppose stuff that wasn't any good. But that's what dad always called the brick yard.

MB: Who made the bricks?

AH: Well that I just can't tell you. I suppose my granddad overseen it, but I just can't tell you that. There's some people that it was said that. . . I don't know whether I can show you out here the old deeds, and how it come to our family from way back. Maybe, there were some names there that Dad thought maybe the people that had it before we got it in the 1848 and '49 there, that maybe helped build the house and the bricks, but. . . I just don't know. I would sure like to have known a little more about it. I sure would like to know where they got the sandstone for this house. See the door steps here are sandstone. The top of that door is sandstone. We stepped out in this front yard here all sandstones at one time. And 'course we used those sandstones. I can show you those downstairs. Dad used those for the foundation on our porch. And where they got them I don't know. And of course we have a dug well right here beside the house. We haven't used it for, probably . . . we quit using it when we had the flood in '59, about so, and so we haven't used it since then. But the dug well is here and its 40 foot deep. And if I could get the lid off of it I could show you down 40 feet and it's all built with sandstone outside of it. So they dug that by hand and made sandstone.

MB: Probably the same stone they used for the house.

AH: Oh yeah, they probably got it at the same place.

MB: Did they build the well at the same time?

AH: Oh I imagine. I imagine. 'Course, we had a spring house out here and that's brick just like this house. And of course that was. . . the bricks was made here. But it blew down, you know, 'bout 1980 and . . . well just blew down. We had a bad storm and so I cleaned all the bricks up and I just had a notion to, we even talked about, just getting a bulldozer and levelling it up and bulldozing it in but I got to looking at it and, I suppose my great granddad it would have had to have been, and they did an awful lot of work out there. Cause they dug it out and it's about a 12 by 12 building probably, 12 by 14 something like that. Dug it out and laid it up with sandstone and dug a spring and it's still running. Great big sandstone. Better than probably built today. But I put a cement slab on top of it and put kind of an antique lumber shed on it. To make it look antique I didn't put brick on it but I put antique lumber.

MB: What was the spring house for?

AH: Well, that's where we got our water to drink and for anything else we wanted it for. And that's where we kept a little place out there about 4 inches deep that the water run through and out through a pipe in the road and that's where our older folk kept our butter and our eggs and our milk or cream.

MB: Would it stay cool in there?

AH: Oh yeah. Sure. And it's still out there. You can go out and look at it now. It's still out there.

MH: That was our refrigerator.

AH: Yeah, that was our refrigerator.

MB: Would the water ever freeze?

AH: Oh no. Always run. All the time, and as far as I know it never went dry. I was just telling my grandson today, I showed him out there and there's about 2 foot of grass you can see clear up across from the road up to the spring house. And that water is coming down through there so fast and it's making enough heat to come up through and melt the snow that the grass just looks like it would now in the middle of summer.

MB: All green and nice?

AH: All green and nice about 2 foot wide.

MB: When the weather gets better I'd like to walk around.

AH: Come out anytime and I'll show it to you. It's kind of bad to get down in there but we can get down there. I haven't been down there for quite a while. We can get down in there it's just a nice place. Solid. It's just as solid as can be. You can come out in the Spring if you want to and I'll take you out and we can look at it.

MB: OK! Sounds good. I wanted to ask you a little about school in Gambier. What was the school there like? You told me it was where the Wiggin Street School is now.

AH: When I started to school there it was 1932 I would guess and I think it continued through 1936 when I graduated. About 80 kids, or children, in the high school, 'bout 20 in the class. There was 19 in my class, and go back to our teachers I'm sure that not you but maybe the older people in Gambier remember Novice Fawcet. He walked to school and graduated from Gambier High School. He lived about 6 miles east of Gambier. And he walked backward and forward and he graduated from Gambier High School. He graduated from Kenyon College. He then was appointed principle of Gambier High School when I was there, I think when I was a freshman, at least a sophomore. Shortly after that he was appointed superintendent, and he was superintendent of our school then through my graduation and another year or so. Then he left and before that he married a lady from _____ up here, Maude Fawcet, and then he left and went to down around Canton, in Akron. Now there is a stadium down there that they named after him and is named Fawcet Stadium. And you can look that up. Fawcet Stadium and that come from Novice Fawcet. Then he was down there for several years, and he finally went. . .he was superintendent of the Columbus city schools. And then I talked to him and you can't hardly believe--I can't believe it--he was that kind of a man that when we had our 50th graduation celebration down at Gambier he came. And of course he at that time told me about a lot of things, and 'course he asked me about mine, and what we did and one thing or another. He remembered my name just like we's in--and we did we played with him just like one of the kids. But when we went to school he's the teacher. And when we recessed he's one of the kids. But anyhow, he was called one time the president or the trustees, one or the other, from the Ohio State University and he had no idea, he told me, what they wanted. And so he went to see 'em and they asked him if he'd be interested in being superintendent of the Ohio State University. And he thought it over and he said yes and . . .

MH: You mean president.

AH: Yeah, president of the Ohio State University. So he finished up president of Ohio University and he was over there for I don't know how many years. He retired now and he's in pretty good health but his eyes are in bad shape. And then from there we had a teacher Mrs. Greens. . . Miss McWilliams and then she married Mr. Greensly, Tom Greensly, who come back here a few years ago and he's down at the library for a long time. And even I think when he passed away he did a lot of walking and he was retired and he did a lot of retirement work down at the Kenyon library. He passed away. Mrs. Greensly, then, was

my teacher then and she come back and we got very close to her 'till she passed away couple years ago. We had 5 teachers. Mrs. Christine West was another one. Joe _____ was a cultures teacher and Ralph Purdy was our history and then maybe mathematics or not mathematics but anything that pertained to history and things like that. Novice, Mr. Fawcett, was the math and physics and chemistry, which was great with me because I just loved him, and we got along fine. Mrs. Greensly told me one day, and I'll have to tell you this little story. When she come to school to start teaching down there, course she wasn't very old now, I think she started out for 1800 dollars a year, and she was about 19. You won't believe this, I hardly don't believe it. Now she told me that--I do believe it really . . . Anyhow, when they would go down in the summer and have a school meeting, the teachers, they'd get around a small table, a round table, and Mr. Fawcett would have all the subjects that he's going to teach on little pieces of paper--now mind you this-- on little pieces of paper. And they would draw. And that would be their subject to teach, unless they could trade with somebody. Now if they could trade with somebody that'd be fine, but other than that that's the subject they taught. Think of that! Now she told me that and it hasn't been too many years ago that she told me that.

MB: I can't imagine that. What if you really hated what you had to teach?

AH: Yeah. But I suppose it's like I say, if you could trade, that's fine but they's responsible for that when they drew that paper. So I don't know. We all graduated and I think we all started there. Now I might say this--kind of interesting to me--that I've got a picture out here I can show you sometime from the kids up at Oak Hill School where I started school in the first grade. And I was in it and I can tell you a lot of them. And there was another girl in it named Gladys Hillyer, up here in the first grade they took her picture. And I had never dreamed of it. She moved, her family moved to Gambier. And I got away from them 'course they's going to Gambier School then and I's going up here for 8 years. And then when I went to Gambier, and again I didn't realize it, but she was in my class again in Gambier--freshmen. So we went to school for 4 years in Gambier together. And then just before we graduated I found out that we started school together and we graduated together. So that's kind of a coincidence.

MB: Yeah. Did that happen with anyone else or was she the only one who started up there?

AH: That'd be the only one I know. Now there's another little thing that's kind of a coincidence. I just know of one other person besides myself that never moved. See, I's born here, raised here, and I expect to die here. And my first cousin lives down below Gambier. He was born in the house he lives in today, and he's 72 I think, and he's never moved so he and I's the only 2 I know of around. If you can find somebody else you should let me know. He and I's the only 2 I know of that has never moved from the house they's born in.

MB: Where do they live?

AH: They live on the Wolf Road, east of Gambier 'bout 4 miles I suppose.

MB: Is that off 229?

AH: Well, yeah it could be. I don't know whether you know where the Grove Church Road is or not.

MB: Yeah I think I do.

AH: You go down east of Gambier on the Grove Church Road and you turn to the right there and there's Grove Church--did you ever go past it?

MB: Yeah I think I did.

AH: Well, Wolf Road is right there. And you turn to the right and he lives back up that road.

MB: They have a farm there or just a house?

AH: Oh he has a big farm--pretty good sized farm. Yes, he has a lot of cattle and sheep.

MB: So you had a lot of cousins around or just. . .

AH: Yes, most of my family lives pretty close around here.

MB: 'Cause you said your father was one of 7 kids?

AH: Let's see. . . Yeah 7 kids. Most of 'em of my family. 'Course, now my older brother lives in Cleveland we'll say and my other brother lives in Michigan or Toledo. But my other 2 sisters and I been in Gambier all our lives and 'course their families are away from here and get scattered around. But all in all I would say Dad's family and my family are here--pretty much Knox County people.

MB: How many relatives would you say you have in Knox County?

AH: Oh my. 100? 125?

MH: I'd say 100.

AH: Now, we have a reunion here every two years or have had it every two years, we don't know how this year will go. We have anywhere from 100 to 125, pretty much from Knox County.

MH: 'Course they're not all here.

AH: Well, pretty much. 'Course my sister and my brother comes from Cleveland. And let's see, his family don't come much anymore 'cause they're up there and . . .

MH: See, there's a bunch of them.

AH: Well, I mean what comes here. Some out of the county but I'd say 80 percent of them are from Knox County, that comes here. And, 'course, there's an awful lot of 'em that I wouldn't know anymore, you know, like my brother's kids and . . . I think he's got about six or something. He's got four kids and then he's got his grandkids and great-grandkids. See, he'll celebrate his 65 wedding anniversary one of these days, I think. It's a . . . goes right on.

MB: Now did most of your friends go to the same school in Gambier?

AH: I would say so. Yes, uh-huh. The little school. Again I go back and I think of . . . that again that's the trouble with our schools today--they're too big. Now we had as I say 'bout 80 in our high school and there wasn't a one we didn't know. And there wasn't a one we couldn't call by the first name. And if we had a basketball game our little old gym of about 300 was full, and everybody was there. If we had an athletic meeting everybody was there. I mean, it was just a big, happy family at that time and nobody got in much trouble, and if we did we went to Mr. Fawcett and he would help us get out of it pretty quick. And he wasn't mean at all. He was business as I say school, and a playmate after school. But I think that's the whole

trouble with the country today--or a lot of it. Particularly with the kids because you can go to Mt. Vernon today and when school's out you'll see 4, 5, 8 or 10 together, and when Gambier School was out they was just all together, and they left together and we all knew everybody. And you all knew where that person's going to be that night almost. And if you wanted them you knew where they were at. And we all had a good time and I still had one of my old classmates out the other day. I talk to him every _____.

MB: What kind of social activities did you have outside of school?

AH: Well, I guess that was about it, what was in school. Although we go back to when I was in school I guess the main thing when I was in high school was that I would say most of my class were most of the kids that went to Grange. We were Grange members. We had juvenile Grange. And we went to Grange.

MH: 4-H, you was in.

AH: Yeah, we had 4-H, of course. 4-H club. And we had that.

MB: Would those be social as well as educational?

AH: Oh yes. Oh yes. Your 4-H you see, we'd . . . we would have our advisor and we had our project that we had, and I'll go a little farther with you pretty soon on that. I usually had sheep. Maybe my neighbor would, classmate or neighbor, would have a horse or colts or calf or something like that. Probably 20, 25 of us in that and we always had an advisor and we always took care of our own animals and we tried to do a good job and we'd take 'em to the fair in August and show 'em at the fair.

MB: That would be the Knox County Fair?

AH: Yes. Knox County Fair. And the people would come around and congratulate us on how they looked, even though they didn't look that great. But that's the way it was and everybody thought they did a good job and . . .

(end of side one)

. . . including the Ohio State Fair, that people were tampering with their animals using drugs, filling out their muscles so they'd look better, and that was causing contamination in the meat. Again there's 11, and one of those indictments was a well known judge that judged the livestock. Judged all over the United States. He has been indicted but I don't think he's been convicted yet.

MB: He was indicted for tampering or for letting the tampered animals in?

AH: No, I think tampering. Yeah, tampering.

MB: Makes you wonder how many times he's done that before.

AH: That's right. And there's been some other well known people's did the same thing. They had one, they sold one, or showed one I think it was over in Columbus at the Ohio State Fair, that one of the fathers got from further about son, who's animal kind of went wild. So he went to Illinois and got the grand champion out of the Illinois State Fair, and brought it here and showed it over at the Ohio State Fair. And they're in trouble. And hopefully, they'll get a lot of penalty out of it. And just today, I heard on the telephone, on Ed Johnson, that they're talking about eliminating the grand champion. So nobody'll have a grand champion anymore if that goes through with. Which maybe alright.

MB: Because there's too much competition?

AH: That's right. Well, too much . . .

MH: Too big.

AH: Well. . . I don't know what you would call it. . . . Tampering. Everybody wants it because that animal might bring, if it's the grand champion, bring \$30,000, 34,000, 35,000. And then your other ones if they're not a grand champion might bring 5000, see, which is not fair. And so I think they're going to eliminate that.

MB: Would they split it up more evenly--split the prize money?

AH: I'd hope they would. I've always said that they ought to take all that money and split it up with all the kids. And, 'course, the kids that did the best work would get a little more, but not that much more. But that certainly ruined it because, as I said before, when we took our little animals out there to the Knox County Fair our neighbors and friends would come out and say what a nice job you did even thought that some of them maybe didn't look that good. But then after that, why, 4-H club and 'course we had the Grange. And we went to Grange and we had our drill team and . . .

MB: What would you do on the drill team?

AH: Well, that's a good question. We'd go around, install officers, and have drills, I recall it, to music. And something like they do in the lodges. And then I don't recall that too much. It's been a long time ago.

MB: It would be like marching and stuff like that?

AH: Yes, marching and things such as that.

MB: Was there a little band or drums?

AH: Was there a little what?

MH: Just piano.

AH: Yeah, just piano. And she knows about it 'cause she was well, I think I told you. We went over to Miller Grange, over in Brandon, Pleasant Grange did, and we put the works over there and Miller Grange did too and she was in the Grange team over there, over at Miller Grange.

MB: She's from Brandon? You're from Brandon?

AH: Yes, Brandon, Miller Grange. And that's where I met her. And as I told you, she paraded around over there in nice white suit and black hair and brown eyes, black eyes, and I got right after her and here she is 55 years later. So that's where I got that, got her, over there. And we came here then in 1940. I graduated in '36, and she graduated from Mt. Vernon High School and we got married and she came here in 1940. She's still here and she took care of Dad for 37 years. We had our few little fights, I guess, but we got along pretty good, I'll tell you that. Not many girls would do that. I'll say that for her, you know. They can take care of your. . .

MB: Your parent?

MH: One parent.

AH: Yeah, just Dad. Mother wasn't here.

MB: How do you think the schools suffered during the Depression?

AH: Well, I don't know that it really suffered that much. If we wanted anything I think we got it. It was a little harder to get. We didn't have the competition at that time with clothes.

MH: Mother made the clothes.

AH: Mother made the clothes and then . . .

MH: My mother did mine.

AH: At that time, you know, if your girlfriend now gets a new dress you have to get a new dress. You know, or if your boyfriend gets a new pair of pants you've got to have one. But back at that time you might have had two pair of pants and you wore one one week and a pair the next week, or something like that. But we got along and as I say, if we needed it we got it. If we didn't really need it you didn't get it. That's the same way with your pencil and paper. You took better care of your pencils, and better care of your paper. And maybe used both sides of your paper instead of one and throw it away. I think that's. . . and again, now, see they built the gymnasium on the Wiggin Street School. They finished it up in the fall of '35 and our basketball team was part of the first games there in '35 and '36. And before that time I . . . the Gambier High School did their practicing and playing over at Kenyon College at Rosse Hall. And, 'course, they had to schedule the games when Kenyon didn't use Rosse Hall and if I remember correctly, most of the time, the boys got to go over about 11:30 and play basketball, and eat their lunch from 11:30 to 1:00. We had to be back in school at 1:00. That's where they played their, or practiced their basketball.

MB: So that would be their time during the day?

AH: Yes. See they couldn't, at that time you didn't go back at night to play basketball. You couldn't get there.

MH: And your chores.

AH: So that's kind of our school days.

MB: What was your farm like then?

AH: Well, go back to the old time, Dad had his. . . we had a few cattle and he had 4, 5, 6 horses and we had our hogs and a few sheep. I can go on and tell you some more about the sheep at that time and when we got out of school at 4:00 we come home and we had to get--we didn't have gas or coal--we had to get kindling. Go get the wood and get it in for the next day and do our chores. I can remember Dad used to bring fodder, corn fodder, in and put it down in the barn during the day time and . . .

MB: What's that?

AH: Well, that's your . . . they'd cut the corn and put it in shocks. If you been down around, anytime in the fall, down around Millersburg where the Amish are. They do that now yet. But they'd cut corn in the fall and shock it and in the wintertime they'd bring it in and husk it. Then they'd feed the corn, or put the corn,

in the corn crib and feed the fodder to the cattle or horses. But I can remember we had it down here in the barn. Dad never swore very much but I can remember one night down there when we had the old lantern and 'course if the chimney got a little bit smokey and it wasn't very good anyhow, and you couldn't see very much. But I can remember I's holding the lantern for him to husk corn and I's 'bout two-thirds asleep, I suppose, and he says, "Alva, can you see what I'm doing?" And I says, "No." And he says, "How in the hell do you expect me to see then?" So I wasn't paying any attention and I was holding the lantern for him to husk corn. But I can remember that very well. (laughs) Now, next time I see you, I just run across a picture the other day and I got it in town and I'm getting it enlarged. It's about 1930 and there's a lady working for Dad then. Her name was, at that time, Noreen Cherryholmes. And she was on our old grey mule, which we called Toby.

MB: Was that the mule in the races?

AH: Yeah. They raced him there in town.

MH: Oh did they?

AH: Oh yes. Cliff Hall drove him. Cliff rode him. He, in one year, looped over and just an old grey mule we called him Toby. That was our main work horse. And right down here Noreen was on him and then my younger sister was squatted down with our dog named Spunk. And he was a German Shepherd with a black nose. And then, I told Mary the other day, I said, "Do you see the big electric pole?" And she said, "Yeah." And I says, "There's only three wires on there." And she said, "Yeah." Now there's three wires there. And that's 1930. Well those three wires's so full of electricity that you couldn't put a transformer on it. It was too much for a transformer. So when President Roosevelt was elected one of his first things he did in office was that everybody in America was to have electricity, if you remember that or if you didn't it's in the history. And everybody in America's to have electricity. Well then, just a short time after that, then, that they put four wires on this line and then after they got that done they put a transformer on, just like it is right now, and they put electricity in this house. I can remember it was me and my sister, particularly the younger sister I suppose, because this had to be in probably in '33 or something like that. '33 or '34. That she would be upstairs and I'd be down here and she'd turn the light up there and I'd turn them on downstairs and we couldn't understand how you could do that. See those two way switches turn on or off upstairs and downstairs. We just had the biggest kick over that. We couldn't believe it. You just couldn't believe it, but that's when we got our electricity.

MB: Did you have running water?

AH: To a certain extent we did. Again I can show you that some day when it's light. Right back of the house here there's a cistern right now that would fill up with the water on the roof of the house. Whenever it would rain they'd run it in there. And then they used it downstairs. Used that. But 'course they had to have a pump on it to get it upstairs here. And then there's a cistern up here on the hill back of the house and the windmill, the old windmill is still here but the wheel isn't on it. It blew off in I think '33 when we had a hurricane through here and Dad never put it back on. But that would run the water. They had a well here I told you about being dug by the old people. And that windmill would pump the water up to the cistern up here on the hill. And then they would pipe it back down and they had running water. And then I can show you down at the barn the old pipe sticking in the barn down there where they had running water down at the barn. And then after we got married, Dad put the running water in the house here and if we kept the cistern full, why, we had running water. If we didn't have the cistern full we didn't have very much pressure.

MB: If would kind of drip out when you were trying to wash the dishes?

MH: Right.

AH: Yeah, and 'course reason why you did that, see, because there was several years there that we didn't have water up there because the windmill had blowed down, or the wheel on the windmill, and electricity. We didn't have any electricity. So after we got the electricity and we got married, well, Dad put an electric pump in the well here. Pumped it up there, and then we had running water. As it was. I mean again we didn't have much pressure if it got down a little bit. But we had running water. 'Course at that time Dad took one of the bedrooms and made a bathroom out of it. And we had the kitchen out here in the dining room. And then in the summertime, now maybe I told you, if we's doing something around here that we had 4, or 5, 6 men around why we'd carry the kitchen cook stove downstairs. They'd take it down around the house. They'd take our kitchen stove downstairs in the basement and that's where we had our summer kitchen.

MB: So it wouldn't get so hot up here?

AH: Well, I suppose. And had more room. And then in the fall when they's shredding corn or something and there's a bunch of men around getting kind of cold, why, they'd carry the stove back up and we'd move the kitchen back upstairs.

MB: What was that like, switching from. . .

AH: Well, didn't think anything about it. We's just happy we could do it, I guess. And 'course then we had the old hot water reservoir on the stove and had pipes through that and we had a hot water tank and we had hot water then, if we kept wood in the stove.

MB: Would that change if you took the stove downstairs? Would you still have hot water?

AH: I don't recall. . . . No, no. We didn't have the hot water then.

MH: No that was. . .

MB: So during the summer you. . .

AH: That was after. That was when we moved up here entirely.

MB: Oh, OK.

MH: Yeah that was. . .

AH: That was up here entirely then.

MB: OK.

AH: And anyhow, I can remember we didn't have much wood and you don't. . . I forgot Mary did--go out and get a log maybe 4 feet long. Just so it'd go in the stove, you know, you'd put the end of it in and burn it a while and then when it'd burn off you'd push it back in a little farther. And finally it'd burn enough and you could shut the door.

MH: And that's where you'd cook too.

AH: That's where you'd cook too. Didn't have any wood unless you went and cut it.

MB: Would you put things inside there with the wood to bake? Or. . .

AH: Well, you had an oven there, yeah.

MH: You had an oven just like on an electric, but you did it with wood and coal. And baked your bread down in that.

AH: Well that's the way it was. We had a neighbor up here, out toward Gambier there, that helped us thrash and work around again. And he was here one time and just a little story. He said that, "I get up in the morning at 4 o'clock and go get the kindling and build the fire and get the house warm for my wife." And someone asked him one day, "Why in the world don't you get your kindling the night before?" And his answer was, he says, "I might die and I won't need it." (laughs) So he never got the kindling till the next morning.

MB: Did you have much contact with your neighbors?

AH: Oh yes, all the time. Anytime you wanted anything, or any little thing, you's right there and . . .

MH: You always's borrowed. . .

AH: Yeah, you was always borrowing something or taking something home.

MH: . . .cup of sugar, cup of flour.

MB: Where were the closest neighbors?

AH: Well, one neighbor lived right up here on the other side of where Jim and Sherry 'bout couple thousand feet. Then the other neighbor. . .

MH: Not too many neighbors. . .

AH: Wadn't too many but the other neighbor up here 'bout a quarter of a mile or something like that. But we didn't think about distance at that time. You see, when I went to Oak Hill School here we had our functions just same as they do today. We had our class plays. We had our little operettas, and little things like that. And my dad and mom at that time, Mom wasn't there later on, and Dad would get his clothes changed and get his chores done and clothes changed and walk up there two miles to the programs. And walk home two miles and go to bed. And think nothing about it. Us kids would walk with him or I'd ride the pony and the kids'd walk with him. Didn't think nothing about it.

MH: Like the Amish do.

AH: Yeah. Same thing.

MH: There still doing it. You see that buggy go past this morning? On the ice.

AH: Yeah.

MB: Do they go out on your. . . oh, on the ice?

MH: Just coming on the ice, the Amish.

MB: Were they sliding or was it OK?

MH: They was going right along.

AH: Well they, yeah.

MH: Might have been letting up a little bit. About 10 o'clock.

MB: Did your brothers and sisters help out on the farm too?

AH: Not that much. See, again go back to the old times, my mother left. . .

MH: They worked.

AH: Well, my mother left in 1927, and I was nine years old. 'Course my younger sister she's three years younger than I am. And 'course my younger brother went with my mother. And I think that's one reason Dad let her have him, because he was so young and he couldn't take care of him. And then my older sister kind of kept house then 'till, for a little bit.

MB: How much older is she than you?

AH: She's four years older. But she went to work pretty quick after that down at Kahals. She wasn't here very much. Then my younger sister, she was pretty young, and she helped cook and work. And I did too. And, 'course, Dad did too. And then he had these. . .we had women come in. And then my oldest brother, he got married then pretty quick in 1930 and left. Then my younger sister worked closer to Gambier so she could get to high school. But I stayed right here and I rode the pony. Dad hired women. And we got through. That's the main thing.

MB: Did your older brother go far away when he moved?

AH: Not too far, no. He lived right around here for several years.

MB: Was he farming?

AH: Yes. In 1940, then, he moved toward Cleveland and he stayed up there then pretty much the rest of his life.

MB: Did he have a job related to agriculture?

AH: Yes, he always worked in agriculture. He still does today. He really never owned anything much. He always worked for somebody else, but he got through good. He just loves his job today. He's 82 years old and goes to work everyday, 6:30 in the morning and don't get home sometime 10, 11 o'clock at night. He just loves it and I don't know what he'll do when he has to quit. He's going. . . Then my other brother and sister, or two sisters, they were farm girls pretty much all their lives. My older sister was until she lost her husband a few years ago--1980. And then she kind of quit. Then my other sister, she was a farmer for several years but she kind of worked in Gambier at the store. Then she lost her husband and got married

again.

MB: To another farmer?

AH: No. No, he was a shop worker. Then he retired and then they kind of go to Texas in the wintertime and stay here in the summertime. Play a lot of golf and run around.

MB: Do they have relatives in Texas?

AH: Not very many.

MH: Just their daughter.

AH: Their daughter's there now but not close enough to say that they go there.

MB: They just like it there?

AH: Yeah. Yeah they like Texas. But I like the _____.

MB: What changed on the farm during the Depression?

AH: Well, I can remember when we got our first tractor. I can remember, I had a little F-12, a little FarmAll tractor. It had steel wheels, steel lugs. And I could pull what they called a 12, 14 inch plow. Now that would only plow 14 inches. That was about as little of a farm tractor as you could get ya. I got that.

MB: When was that?

AH: In 1936 I believe it was, just when I graduated from high school. That's when I started in farming with Dad and we got our Guernsey cattle, or started in. Give you a little example of what a 14 inch plow'll do. A man down here by Gambier wanted me to plow 5 acres for him. And I went down there and I got there early in the morning and I plowed all day. Took me all day to plow that 5 acres. I just never hardly stopped for lunch. Clear up to dark and I got done. And went up past the house when I got done and he come out and paid me. He gave me 12 dollars. And I worked all day with a tractor and plow and made 12 dollars. Now today if . . . most of the day now compare that today they wouldn't have a tractor like that. They got a big tractor. And if they plow 12 hours they'd probably plow 60 or 70 acres. Or maybe more. It's altogether different world. That's the way it was then. A steel tractor and wheels. 'Course you didn't have black-top roads. Today, well even then, if you had a black-top road you didn't dare drive over it.

MB: Why is that?

AH: Well, you had to have steel lugs on you, about 6 inches long. You had steel wheels, then steel lugs on so . . . like chains on an automobile tire, or something similar to that.

MB: So what would happen if you drove on. . .

AH: Black-top'd tear it up. You see, they'd stick right . . .

MB: They'd go right in?

AH: Yeah. So you'd have to go around that someway to get to another place if you had that. But a gravel

road, 'course, that didn't make any difference at that time. You could drive. . .

MH: Most of them were gravel.

AH: Yeah. Most of 'em were gravel and dirt at that time. Once in a while you'd hit a black-top road but not very often. But then times went on and . . .

MB: What was it like during the war? Did much change?

AH: Well, yes. During the war you couldn't buy. . . you had to have stamps for most everything you had. You had to have permits to buy almost anything really. 'Course we had food stamps (phone rings) to buy food. You could only buy so much sugar, and so much coffee.

MB: The rations? (phone rings again)

AH: Yeah, the rations. You had to have stamps. You had to had to have gasoline stamps for the farm. You had know how big your farm (phone rings again) was, and how much gas you had to have. You had to go get gasoline stamps to get gas.

MB: Did farmers have different ration stamps than regular people, like the town people, would have?

AH: Oh yes.

MB: You'd have more gas?

AH: You'd have more gas.

MB: What other things would you have more of on farms?

AH: Well anything that you needed for a farm. Tires, for a truck. We could get tires for a truck if we needed it. Or, if you lived in town and how a truck and didn't need it you didn't get tires. You had to show and prove that you needed that. And getting gasoline and oil and groceries you had, 'course everybody had that, and I don't know just anything else that we had but it didn't bother us too much because what you had to have you got. But you had to show that you needed it. You had to show how big your farm is. How much corn crop you're putting out. How big a tractor you got, and all that sort of thing to get gas stamps.

MB: I think that's so interesting. It's hard for us to imagine.

AH: Oh yes.

MB: I remember my grandma kept all the books that they came in. You know, the stamp books that even had some of the old stamps. I thought that was incredible.

AH: You just can't imagine that. Now I remember one time when Dad had a woman here and I think he paid her something like 3 dollars a week to work for us and then she got 3 dollars a week for groceries, and that's all. I mean, if she couldn't buy groceries that was it, but again you turn back. We had our own potatoes. We had our own milk. We had our own butter. Own meat. Pork. Butchered own beef. We never bought a pound of meat, you know. That would be the last thing you'd buy. And, 'course, when you'd thrash in the summertime you'd always take your wheat to the flour mill and get your flour for all year and put it in here.

MB: So what would she have to buy for groceries?

AH: Well, you go from there. I suppose, sugar and coffee and I suppose. . . well, whatever. I don't know. Anything that you need in that line.

MB: But you had . . . Did you have fruit and vegetables here?

AH: Oh yeah. Well, we had our fruit and we had vegetables, 'course, and a lot of it canned. 'Course all kinds of fruit in the summertime. Did all kinds of canning and that sort of thing. And then that's another thing. Back at that time right here on the farm there used to be five acres of orchard right here. We had pear trees here. We had plum trees, prune plums. We had green gage plums. Anything you wanted and back at that time you didn't have these insects. You didn't have to spray your trees. We had bushels of things we'd give away. All kinds of pears, apples. And you just didn't have. . . but today you don't have that. No spray or no nothing.

MB: Where do you think the bugs came from?

AH: I have no idea. (laughs) I have no idea.

MH: Now you're talking about bugs?

MB: Now we're talking about bugs.

AH: Yeah. I have no idea. Just one of those things like I suppose, you get the flu or something. It comes from some place.

MB: I guess so.

AH: But that's. . . If you had an apple tree you got apples. Today, if you've got an apple tree and if you don't take care of it you've got nothing. See, you got to spray it and you have to prune it and you have to spray it about 10 times. For this thing and everything. And again, you can't do that with one tree, but you could, maybe, if you had 40 or 50 trees. Fix up a sprayer and spray 40 or 50 about as quick as you could one.

MB: It just seems weird that you didn't have to do that before.

AH: That's right.

MH: Well, it was new. New earth, and everything.

MB: The bugs hadn't gotten here yet?

AH: No. But that's the way it was, just like everything else. I can remember, you see you don't buy a bushel of seed corn today like you did then. You buy so many grains in the sack. Like 50,000 grains in a sack now. I don't know how much it weighs.

MB: What would you do before? You'd buy a bushel?

AH: Well, we'd go buy it by the bushel.

MB: Why'd they change?

AH: Well, times change. As I can remember, I went with Dad down to Martinsburg one time and we bought seed corn, or we bought the corn for seed corn, and we went to the corn crib. Now that's where the farmer put all of his corn in the fall of the year. In the corn crib. And we'd go down there and pick out nice big ears of corn. Biggest ears and the best looking corn we could get. And then we'd get Dad paying 2 dollars a half a bushel for it. Well then we'd bring that corn home here and we'd shell it and we'd run it through what we'd call a screener. And that way it had a . . . Yeah it was a grater or screener, or whatever. And that would take out the little grain, let them go clear through, and keep the big grains on top. And then the grains that you want to plant was in the middle. There's three classes at that time. And that's where we got our seed corn.

MB: And then would you grind some for corn meal?

AH: You could. Oh yes they used to. Oh yes. A lot of it.

MB: Which would you use for that?

AH: Well, either one. Any of it.

MH: When you grew it.

AH: Yeah. You could use any of that for corn meal. Now, 'course down at Gambier . . .

MH: And flour.

AH: Down below Gambier there was what they call. . . We used to have a mill down below Gambier there. Just a mile or so out of Gambier. It's still there, in fact. But it, 'course, don't operate. But we'd take our wheat down there in the summer, as I told you, and they'd make our flour. And then we'd bring home a sack, we'll say, of bran. Now that would be the outside of the wheat. That would be the cover of your wheat grain, your bran. Great feed for your cattle, or hogs or whatever, and make our flour. Then we'd get several sacks of what we'd call middlings. Now that would be your stuff that they couldn't use for flour. Then they would take the best part of that and grind your flour.

MB: What would you do with the middlings?

AH: Feed it to the hogs. And then they'd grind the rest of it and put it in flour sacks and we'd bring it home and put it in the pantry and. . .

MB: Have flour.

AH: Have flour all next winter.

MH: We always baked our own bread.

AH: And the mill is right there by Gambier yet today. If you want to look at it. Down by 229. Off of 229. It joins Kenyon College.

MB: I heard a little bit about that at the Agricultural Museum.

AH: Yes.

MB: We went to visit that.

AH: Did you see my name there up on anything?

MB: I didn't look that closely at the tags.

AH: Well, I've got several things up there.

MB: You do? What do you have there?

AH: I've got a washing machine in the little building out there. That little building when you first come in. On the outside. An old washing machine I used to use way back in the '30s. I've got what they call a foot warmer to put in a buggy. That's a little box. Wooden box with holes in it. Little holes. Then it's got a metal box in there. And then when you get ready to go in the buggy you would fill that metal box up with hot coals out of your stove and put it in the wooden box, the metal box, then put it in the wooden box then put it on the floor of your buggy and that's keep your feet warm. I got that up there. I've got another washing machine up there, but it's way up high. You can't see it very well. And then I've got a meat block that I got way back. . . . (end of tape)