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### Interview with Tim Norris at the Mt. Vernon Farmer's Exchange

Tim Norris

Courtney Coughlin

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Courtney Coughlin  
Interview with Tim Norris at the Mount Vernon Farmer's Exchange,  
where he works.

TN: Tim Norris  
CC: Courtney Coughlin

February 16, 1995

001-035  
Explaining feed that they sell in the drive thru

(037)

CC: What part do you work in specifically, I know you have told me  
this before but...

TN: I am pretty versatile. In the spring I am in the agronomy. I  
am always in the agronomy department. I was also in maintenance which  
we just hired two new people so I am going to work out of maintenance  
and concentrate more on agronomy and sales and, like today I was  
out on sales all day until about 2:00. And then, just making  
recommendations with farmers and working with them. This is the  
warehouse, we try to keep the chemicals on this end and the seed,  
all soybean seed behind me. to give you an idea, each one of those  
bags is about 16 dollars, there is a pretty good amount of money  
sitting right in here.

CC: One bag would plant how much.

TM: One bag would plant about 2/3 of an acre on soybeans. Right now  
the warehouse is pretty empty, you come in here in the spring and  
it is packed full. And it is hard to walk through all most. But we  
don't have very many chemicals out right now, the only ones are the  
ones that can't freeze, we try not to have a big carryover. Then  
we have the drive thru items...we have pine tree shavings, we get  
these in by the semi load and dog food. So that is basically this  
part of the warehouse.

CC: So when people would order bags of soybean seed, like would they  
order enough, do they do all their planting at once? They would order  
enough for 50 acres or would it depend, how does it work?

TN: Well, they try to spread their risk, and a lot of them will plant  
different company seed or if they will plant just our seed we try  
to get them to go with 50% of a variety they feel comfortable with  
and then based on that variety they will go with a later maturing

variety, like 25% of that, and 25% of an earlier maturing variety so they flower at different times. That way, if you have a dry spell during flowering, or pollination for corn, then that way they, they should offset each other.

CC: Right, that is interesting. I didn't know that.

(067-076) going into the basement

TN: You walked under a dike on your way in so if there is a spill it is collected and pumped back into the tank, so then where ever we load, we have a dike and if there would happen to be a spill you just, if you just have a few drops get by you just hose it down and it goes into that tank and you pump it out and you spray it, so it is all contained.

CC: So how would people come and get you know, how many ever gallons they needed of this stuff. (084)

TM: It would come out of the chemical pump, and there is a different meter and pump, right now everything is messed up because we are not using it. But you just pull the hose and plug the appropriate pump in and flip the switch and it delivers it out the hose and it is metered and those are checked and callibrated every year.

CC: So how would someone carry this back to their farm.

TM: OK in that bulk pack like that one there, we have probably 40 of those downstairs. And then we just pump them into those and they can pull their sprayer up to it and just hit the dial and it pumps the metered amount into the sprayer and mix it up and spray it.

CC: That is cool.

TN: The shop is over here. Now this is the truck that I drive. Now we have the dry box on it to spread fertilizer and lyme. Not a whole lot to say about it I guess. It has got the floatation tires it, they are about 3 feet wide, each tire. On the back, and the benefit of that is less compaction on the soil, less pounds per square inch running over the ground and you can stay up on top of the ground and you can go in wetter conditions without getting stuck or compacting the ground.

CC: So do you feel really tall in that truck?

TN: Yeah, you feel pretty big, the worst problem is the width, 11

and one half feet wide, and driving through town or on a road it is kind of a problem. And some of the gates.

CC: So that is what you would go out if you were bringing fertilizer to someone now you would bring it right out directly onto their field?

TN: This is if we custom apply it.

CC: Oh I see

TM: What we do, is we take it out to the field and we load it with one of our trucks, and on empty we have another tender truck comes in with fertilizer and fills back up and I just keep spreading all day. That way you can keep going and you don't really, that is not designed to haul a load down the road it is really for in the field. But we do most of our own maintenance and we do it out of this shop. It is not very big but it serves the purpose. So.

CC: And it works

TN: Yep.

(118) walking through sounds

CC: Do you have a lot of customers that do the custom spreading?

TN: yea, we do about 27,000 acres of spraying. Probably about 4,000 of dried fertilizer. See if we can find the spreader.

These two white trucks are the bulk fertilizer delivery trucks. Each one has two compartments. They can take 8 ton in the smaller one at a time and 10 ton in the big one. So we can have two different customers on there because there are 2 separate compartments. And, so if like one, our fertilizer spreaders hold five tons, the ones that we loan to the farmers and they pull behind a tractor. They hold five ton each so if you take the big truck you can fill two full spreaders up, so you can hit two farmers in the same area. All in one trip. It just gets augered out the back. You can get in the truck and drive around a bit. the pick up over there, it takes a 45 foot pass through the field. It does probably 5,000-6000 acres a year. It is handy to do little jobs and we do not tend it in the field like we do bigger outfits. We just basically take up whatever runs in here and into the chemical bag and picks up like fertilizer and water. We have big water tanks upstairs. And so they are always full and we can load with a two-inch hose so it doesn't take very long. (gettting into truck sounds 142)

(145)

CC: So I know you have told me this before, but how long have you worked here?

TN: 2 1/2 years.

CC: How did your test go? Was it hard?

TN: yes, it was very hard. [laughter]We got, there was probably 350-400 people there and you have to have, they wouldn't really tell me how it is graded. You have to at least have a 7, but they only let so many, so many percent pass. So it is kind of like on a curve. I mean, they say that some tests, depending on how many people are there, how the people did, you had to have a 75 to pass, so, we don't know for 6 weeks. I feel relatively sure that I passed the national, but the state was quite a bit harder. It got into more specifics and I am not sure about that, we will have to wait and see. This is the hardware store.

(162) getting out of the truck to the hardware store.

(164)

TN: We used to have a feed mill was over in there, and in the early 70s we had a fire and it burned it and then we built the new feed mill out on Kenyon Road but that is the old girl. So, up until last year we used it to store grain in, but it is beyond, really beyond repair, and the cost of getting it tore down are very high, so the future of it is kind of bleak. But we don't know what is going to happen to it yet, but it is kind of a landmark, and kind of an eye sore at the same time. [laughter]So we don't know what will happen here yet. But have to wait and see.

CC: Quite a large structure.

178-181 entering the hardware store and being introduced to the employees there.

(183)

TN: We're probably the largest, I think we are the largest paint dealer in Knox County. It is hard to believe out of such a little store, but they sell alot of paint. We have a computer in here that is custom color coordinator, you take a paint chip and you take in out of here and the computer can read that. And it will tell you exactly how much of each pigment to put in the paint to get that exact color. So even if you have something that someone had two cans of a different color and mixed them together and painted the kitchen with it and you moved in, you didn't have any idea of what they used,

you can bring a paint chip in here and we can match a color to match that, so if you only had to paint one wall or just do some repair work on it, it would blend in. So that is a good service that a lot of people like.

CC: Do you think you sell so much paint here because it has this instrument. Do other paint supply places have that?

TN: A few of them are starting to, like WalMart and places like that are starting to get that. But we were the first one in the county with that. so.

(205)

TN: Another thing that makes them unique is this pipe threading machine. And we can take a 20 foot section of pipe and put it in this machine and cut it perfectly, right to the inch and thread it and that way they get charge only for the pipe that they use. They don't have to buy you know, a 20 foot section or a bunch of little sections and try to make it come out right. We can cut it right down to the inch. And thread it, either end or both ends and they just have a small threading charge. For doing that, but I do not know of anyone else in town that does that so I think we are the only one. Kind of out of my department but. Yeah, we sell quite a bit of pipe, we have the plastic pipe of course, you just cut that and glue it, but we sell quite a bit of pipe. (220) Their main thing is service, if a customer walks in they really don't walk around too long before somebody comes up and asks to help. And they are very helpful, which I think they really have to be, you can't hardly compete with like Quality Farm and Fleet or TSE or like Central Hardware or Wicks, it is hard for a smaller store to compete, we buy our hardware through Pro which is a co-op kind of like the Farmers Exchange, it is owned by different hardware stores. And the purpose of it is to get hardware cheaper, buy collectively, and get it cheaper. But still some of these big chain stores are hard to compete with so they emphasize the service, it seems to work, it has been fairly profitable for us.

CC: good

TN: They have pretty much everything hardware stores have. (walking around the store noises)

CC: Tim, do you think that people in the area want to support local businesses?

TN: Yea I think so, with any farming community I think it is a tighter

knit, you know than just with the bigger cities I think they lose that. I think a lot of people come out here from a bigger city and they will go there to do their shopping and but then when they need something in a hurry, they come to a local place or local business, and they don't stop to think about you really need to support them all year long so that they are here. But I think in a farming community people tend to do that more. We also see wood stoves, like that is a gas fireplace. Which this department has, it has gone over real well. We sell probably 40 stoves a year, so it is, for a small store like this it is pretty good.

CC: That is pretty good.

TN: Kind of another neat feature, they have them running and you get to see what they are like. (more walking through the store) Of course we have the animal accessories like feeders and bottle, calf bottles, this is a bottle a baby calf drinks out of when it is a couple days old if the mother doesn't accept it. It holds two quarts of milk and has a nipple on it about the size of your thumb or bigger. It is pretty good size. But, we just have all sort of things like that. Here is some medication and some tact for horses and cattle and things. They also have a clothing section. Which they are starting to make some new shelves so it is a little messy right now. But, they have the pretty much the rough and cheap blue jeans. You know, you can get blue jeans for 13 or 14 bucks and you can't find that anywhere else but, they are not the prettiest, but they wear forever. You have the bib overalls down there on the ends. The carharts in the back, the heavy coveralls, so, it is, they have quite a little bit for such a small area. (walking through the store) Of course electrical stuff, toolboxes and shovels and of course chimney, chimney things so that is, everything is pretty self explanatory I guess.

CC: Do some people sort of like make a morning or afternoon trip out here to get their feed and maybe pick up some supplies.

TN: Yea, a lot of the farmers, well it kind of varies, some people like to come into town as much as they can and you know, and shoot the breeze and talk and others are more structured with their time and you get a lot of people who come into town, if they live far out and maybe once a week and just pick up the feed they need and any supplies they need and if they have to come back in they are kind of upset.[laughter] But they try to, probably, I better not say that I guess, but...probably your animal, your livestock farmers are more structured with their time. Especially this time of year. Now in the spring, I would say the grain guys are, but, like now

the grain farmer has time to come in and talk and figure out what he wants to do but the livestock guy still has to work, it is harder for him to his chores, but he has to work.

CC: Makes sense (304)

[more walking through sounds, and customer voices]

CC: Hi

TN: This is Courtney, she is from Kenyon College on the farm program.

CC: Nice to meet you. It is a family farm project I don't know if you have heard of it.

TN: She is coming in to get a tour of the facilities.

PS [Paul Smith, manager of the hardware store]: Oh good, OK.

TN: Anything you want to add about the hardware or...

PS: Oh, I don't know, trying to think from the farm standpoint you know we are in the some items like the electric fencers and so on like that. [walking through the store again 318] We sell a lot of paint you know for the buildings and things like that and we are in the interior and exterior and stains and so on and so forth.

TN: I showed her the computer.

CC: Yes, Tim showed me the computer, it was great, it is really impressive.

PS: Then we get into you know like barn door track, you know farmers use, and just general hardware and ah, electric fence supplies and like your forks and shovels and rakes and things like that. Pet supplies, plumbing.

TN: What do you think has made this a success with some of the bigger hardware stores around, that you know, what keeps people coming here.

PS: A lot of service. We really working with the customers. We try to be competitive and really work with the customers.

TN: I told her a customer comes in and it is not very long before someone is talking to him and trying to help him and...

PS: No, and what we got in the store, but we will order just about anything anybody needs. Whether it be in heating, well like the customer I just waited on, one customer is wanting a chimney for a new home, and...

TN: Like my furnace.

PS: Your furnace.

TN: My furnace go bad and he one the next day for me, so.

PS: We do the wood burn furnaces as well as gas, fuel, we have service people to take care of those units. Usually they be there within a day if you have, you had one day and you had service.

TM: Um hum (yes)

PS: We gained like gas ...wood burning inserts(?). We can get into zero fire places, we can get into all kind of building outlets as long as, you know, anything in the farming area too. (351)

CC: Great, it is a real nice store.

PS: Thank you. We can get in some clothing. We are really slowing down on clothing really, we are just putting up some new shelves. It is not very neat up here. We are going to stay in the boots and like gloves and so on like that, but shirts and jeans we are probably going to get out of that. And maybe like the heavy coveralls and so on like that, we will probably get out of that also.

TN: Just because it is harder to compete? (361)

PS: Yea, it is and it takes a little while to order them and its, we tried clothing for a while, we have had it twice. and we are giving up on it for a second time. So.

TN: Now where you walked into the office, down there, this used to be the main office, just from here to here. And that was the managers office back in here, the second is the manager's office.

PS: See, for a lot of years we had out general office and feed mill and so one across the street and took in grain and they clean clover seed and timber seed or there and had supplies downstairs, fence, posts and fence. Then we had a fire and lost that building.

TN: Do you remember what year that was?

PS: It is on the wall down in the office, and I was thinking its like 1967 or 1968.

TN: Like the 60s, OK

PS: Yeah, what I was going to say is the reason they came into this office area was when they lost the general office in the feed mill over there and then they moved to our farm equipment division for a while and was just in the showroom. And then they came from there in a general office and this was a large building and I think they got down they had like four or six people working in the office so they didn't need that large building. So they came in here. Then after leaving here then they went to the office you was in today. (389)

CC: Good

TN: That is pretty much everything you need...

CC: Yeah, that is great.

PS: One other thing I might show you we do...

CC: Oh yea, he is showing me the pipes. [walking through the store]

Tn: There isn't anyone else in town that cuts pipe.

PS: Yea, there is. Also you saw that computer in there. But here, this is where we mix our colors. These are all our formulas and so on like that. And then this is where we add the color and we have four paint shakers to shake paint. Sometimes it will get busy enough that we need all of those. And we can shake gallons and smaller containers and also 5 gallon containers.

CC: That is really nice.

[more store noise and walking through 411]

PS: Then one thing that farmers do quite a bit of business with is this in the bolts, light bolts and standard bolts. And washers and so on like that. We also have a good display of pulleys over there. Then that is all our paint sundry items, you know, like your rollers and your covers and your frames. And brushes and so one like that. In pipe we go with your ADS which is your black pipe, we got the PBC which is your white pipe, some contractors and some home owners prefer the ABS and others prefer the PBC and then back here we will

cut and thread and piece of pipe you need. We can go from 1/8 inch up to 2 inch and we can cut and thread any length you want. And they come in 21 foot lengths and then we just cut whatever size you need. We carry supplies of copper tubing, some of this is like your [?] [432] okay to burry for water service in town, other people use it for fuel oil you can use it for water lines and so on like that. They had the rigid copper they use in homes. All types of drains. We can just get about into anything from rolls 250 feet long, 100 footers, then you get into your 4 inch pipe, 20 foot long, 3, 2 inch, inch and a half.

TN: Who, now who made these nice shelves here?

PS: Tim did that, [laughter] Didn't he do a great job. Sure worked out great.

CC: Good. Do you feel that most of your customers are regulars, like do you recognize a lot of the people who come in.

PS: The majority of them. I had a sale yesterday from a Three River, Michigan, a fellow stopped in the store and bought some plastic pipe he needed 50 foot of 6 inch, and after buying the pipe he looked around and he bought about a 48 dollar flashlight that he wanted for his wife. And we are going to UPS that flashlight, we didn't have it. And we are going to UPS that to him.

CC: good

PS: So, you know, it is kind of surprising sometime, we sold furnaces, northeast of Cleveland, we have furnaces go to Kentucky, Columbus, paint products, sometimes they get shipped some distance from Mount Vernon.

CC: Do you feel pretty supported from the local community?

PS: Oh yes. Yes, we do, I would say, I don't know that we know more than half our customers. But, the majority of them is in here like one, two, three times a day. And...

TN: We do alot of business with contractors and...

PS: Yes, we do. The contractors is the ones thats in, you know, repeatedly everyday. Or mostly everyday, you can't say, everyday. But a lot of times you will see men in here two, three, four times a day.

CC: Great.

PS: UM hum (yes)

TN: Then if I fix anything, you see me about five times a day.

[laughter]474

CC: That is great, thanks for showing me around. It was nice to meet you.

PS: You're welcome. Same here.

CC: What was your name again?

PS: Paul Smith

CC: Paul Smith? Nice to meet you. And you are the manager here?

PS: Of the hardware department.

CC: Great, thanks.

PS: Nice to meet you too.

CC: Have a great afternoon.

[486 walking out of the store to the truck]

[494}

TN: You were asking last time about hats, and how people like a hats. Well, like right here I got a shirt that a guy bought so much product and then I got to take this shirt to him. When I...

End of Side A

Begin Side B [000]

TN: But anyway, they can weigh the corn through these hopper scales. And then it sends out so many pounds per dump and then how ever many dumps they send out is how much grain is in their cars. But it just goes up through those legs and then down through the pipes and then you can see those pipes that go back to each bin. And they convey it then they have conveyor at the bottom that conveys it back. And they run it through the scales and then back up to the top and down through the, into the car. And then this is the bulk fertilizer.

CC: This is the bulk fertilizer, so are each one of those big, what are those silos? What do you call those?

TN: Grain bins.

CC: If each one of those are filled with grain?

TN: Right now its, I think this back one is empty.

CC: OK

TN: Then pretty much everything else is full. To give you an idea of like the value, that back one probably has 3 or 400 thousand dollars of corn in it when it is full.

CC: Wow.

TN: I think we can hold almost a million ground and I think 3/4 of a million bushels I think. I am not sure. So multiply by that by the current price and you are talking quite a bit of money that you can hold. This is potash. These are the bulk fertilizers products. This is triple which potash which is your NP and K. Which is your three major nutrients that the crop needs. Nitrogen, phosphorous, and potassium. The potash is potassium, this is called triple super phosphate, and that is where you get your phosphate. And then this is what you call gap. It has nitrogen and phosphorous. Now the number is for how many pounds or how many percent of that ingredient, so it has .....[030] and the rest is just a filler ingredient. It could be a carrier of anything, it is hard to tell.

CC: So people generally mix these?

TN: Yes,

[walking back through 040]

TN: We put the product in here and we turn the mixer on [mixer noise 044] It is spinning around and mixing and you mix things in and this dial will read how many pounds you have put in and you have a blend ticket that tells you how many pounds of each to put in to get the analysis you want. Then you just hit the conveyor and auger it into the truck. Then they can take it right out to the farmer or if the spreader is in here we can just auger it in or convey it into the spreader. And, but that is how we mix our custom order, you know, if a farmer's soil test is calling for so many pounds of each ingredient we can blend exactly that much and they can spread it per acre. Instead of getting an old triple 18 which they use to do in the past and you may over fertilize on one nutrient and under

on the others. So this we can custom blend exactly what they want.

CC: I see, that is great.

TN: We might run out of time but..

CC: yea, I know that is fine. Anytime you need to go just tell me.

TN: My wife has class tonight. I can show you in there but it is real dusty.

CC: So these cars are to be loaded out tomorrow?

TN Yes.

CC: Someone decided they wanted to buy so much grain and then they tell you.

TN: We have different buyers we can sell to. I will let Emily explain this process to you because she is our grain merchandizer. She can explain it better you know. Who buys it I know ADM buys quite a bit of our crop. [072]

And Country Mart buys quite a bit of our crop. Other than that we send some crop down directly to farmers through our feed mill. [truck noises] But the majority of our corn gets shipped out on rail. And beans also. We have, we have one client from West Virginia that comes up and buys corn probably three semi loads a week for a big turkey farm down there I think it is. Turkey or chicken I am not sure. But, they come up and get two or three semi loads a week probably and we have, we are the source of the best corn for the price that they can find between here and West Virginia. But if you are familiar with the territory down there, it is pretty rough and there's not many crops grown. so, to try to find someone who would always have 3,000 bushels a week was kind of hard for him too, so. And the quality might not be very good because a lot of the farmers down there aren't as up on the chemicals and keeping weed seed out of it. And you know if you feed your livestock contaminated corn with weed seed, then after they digest it it gets spread back onto the fields and that weed seed will still grow. So you really, you kind of want to be careful on how clean your corn is too. Now in the process, the long term plans is to move the agronomy, the grain will stay up there and the general office will stay there and the hardware will stay up there but our agronomy will be moved out here to the feed mill area. To meet the new diking laws, I should have shown you our 28%, which is our local fertilizer facility, we have now. We have it diked which we didn't need to, but we felt it was a good idea to have a containment system in case a tank leaked, so we got a containment

system, a dike around our tanks, probably six or seven years ago, well they passed a new lay that goes into affect this January which makes our dike obsolete. You have to have to have a dike that is at least four foot away from the edge of the tank. And ours is only one foot away. And the purpose to that is they figure if there is a leak sprung in the middle, with a full tank, the head crusher would cause the nitrogen to, could cause the nitrogen to squirt up to four foot away. They were afraid that if you get a puncture in it half way up and it would be squirting the nitrogen pass the dike. So we had to build a new dike out here and we are putting in, we just got the last new tank in here today. And I will show you that. But it will probably be a 5 year period before we get everything moved out here. We are planning on building a new warehouse, the warehouse we currently have will be for the drive thru and for hardware items only. Which right now we have very little hardware items down there, they have some upstairs but not very many. So.

CC: So when the government tells you that you have to have this new dike system do they give you any sort of, so they subsidize it all?

TN: No, it is not subsidized. It is just, they just tell you do it. We were given like two years to come into compliance. So, right now, this year we can still use our old facility but next year we will have to have a new one. But we are going to go ahead and have our new one up and running this year and all of the problems should be worked out of it so next year we should be able to have no problems and go full bore with it. This is the feed mill. There is dirt piled everywhere and stuff now, the construction is down below. My job is I put a new roof on. The feed mill, a couple years ago, well 2 years ago. And we do a lot of work like if a leg breaks down I am the lucky to climb it sometimes and fixed it or , it gets interesting.

CC: Do you have any idea how many people the farmer's exchange employs?

TN: 23  
(141)

TN: OK this is our new, this will be our new dike. Which is the area right down there, and those are four of the tanks we have two more uptown that we are going to haul up here. Which is quite a process. You have to get a special trailer, then we will have a crane that comes in and sets them, they will pick them up and set them in the tank, in the dike for us. But we will have a total of 6 tanks in there and then we're you can see the pallets in the blue tarp and it is like dug out on the side that will be our loading pad. And that will be sloaped and their will be a sloap in it. And we will

have a containment tank like we did in the basement if there is any nitrogen spilled. It will just all run into that drain and pumped into the tank you know, here we have a problem with rain water, rain is going to go in there and go in that sloap system and get put into the, this will all be automatic, and put in the containment tank. You know what we will do is we are putting the nitrogen on the fields but you don't want it in concentrated in one area, so we will just, if we have a job that calls for water, we will just spray that, pump that dank out and we can spray it and if there is a little nitrogen in it, it is not going to hurt anything because you know, it will just be free to the farmer really.

CC: So those red tanks are just like those other tanks that we saw that have the chemicals.

TN: Well, these are for chemicals and these are for fertilizer see.

CC: Oh right.

TN: I said on that truck that I use, I run, we have the dry box on it for fertilizer. This is the liquid outfit which is the sprayer, the actual chemical application. When what we do is we take the bed off and put this bed on and the spray. Then after spray season over we put it back on but we have another sprayer, a brand new one, that is not here yet. They took out old one or I would show it to you. But there is tanks down there, that we have loaned to the farmers for liquid fertilizer. They can pull it their pickup truck and take it right to the field and they have 7 or 8 of those tanks that, most of the bigger farmers will have a truck set up, with tanks on it, but for the smaller ones, you know, they use our tanks and there is no charge for that. Just take it out. We will go in here [the feed mill] and see if we can get one of them to give you the tour or I can either way. It is better not to step on their toes sometimes. [laughter] Just walk in and start talking.

(192)

TN: All the grain and bulk products are received through here you just dump the truck up into the pit and then it goes up that leg and then there is a distributer up there and there are four pipes up there and you can put it in this bin which is for oats or this big one for corn. Or you can put in this set of overhead tank in here, which has all the bulk, soy bean meal, or you can send it over to this distributor over here, and there is I think 12 bins over there that can be hit all from that one main. Then things are picked up from this leg and dump into the mixers. And it is you will see ...and then these tanks is feed already ground waiting to be delivered.

In a truck like that.  
[walking to the feed mill][206]

RESTART COUNTER AT ZERO

000

CC: Great.

walking noises and swinging door open to feed mill (004)

Unknown voice: I don't get anything from them til...

TN: This is Courtney from Kenyon. She is working on the family farm project. I don't know if you have heard about it or seen it in the paper. She would like a tour of the feed mill and maybe you could explain how you mix the feed and...

FEED MILL PERSON: OK

CC: Thanks

FM: When we start making feed we start right here.

CC: OK

FM: This has 12 bins up here, it has got different ingredients, soy bean mill this is 38 45 varied depending on what...and this is hog supplement, this is oats and basically we got the scales right there and we can drop them down mix em whatever. Here it comes over to the mixer, then we can send it out, if it is bag feed we can bag it up right there or if it is bulk it comes out here. We have three different bins and we load it up to the truck. Back here in the back part of the mill, we have base mixes. This right here is a sow feed, where you would put corn, soy bean mill in the mixer and add two of these per ton. that is for small pigs over there. That is a dairy feed over there. In the green sack over there that is big finishing hogs.

TN: What do people look for when they want to feed a hog?

FM: Well, this right here is a starter. That is for the little pigs, soon as they are wiened. That has got a lot of dairy products in it. Then we they get off that they probably go to this one right here, this for a little bit bigger pig. Then we got that, they get up to about 50 60 pounds and then they get one that is just made out of corn and hog supplement. Then we finish them off with a 15 percent. Which is the same thing, just a little more protein in it.

TN: Do you test the quality of their hay or some of their...

FMP: Someone will go out and take samples, we take it out to hogs lab and then probably goes to the nutricist over at ...they have five or six PhDs in dairy nutrician over there. Then they make the ration up and we can either, sometimes if you are lucky you can make it up...(nutrian information)

(061)They custom build it for individual farmers depending on his...

TN: Sometimes if a farmer has lower Ph and lower fertilizer levels, sometimes that will...

FMP: Oh yea, definitely. Especially on the hay. The hay might be anywhere from 10 to 22 23 percent protein depending upon how well the guy made the hay and how good the quality of the hay was to start with.

TN: So you are pretty much having a complete diet program for the livestock.

FMP: Yea

TN: They eat better than we do.

FMP: Oh yea. Yea, they do. And well, I don't know what else you

CC: That is great.

FMP: These big bags here, the one on the outside its a....That is where people come in and have their own corn on the farm, and they come in and buy that and make their own feed on the farm.

TN: And they will buy these bags too, to mix their own feed.

FMP: Yea, uh hu.

CC: So how many people come in here a day, do you have busier seasons then others?

FMP: Oh no, it is pretty steady. Now we have days that are a lot busier than others.

TN: Certain days of the week tend to be busier than others?

FMP: Ah, yes and no. Of course yesterday with the rain and the ice,

we didn't do anything much. Today we have been fairly busy. I think we probably had five or six customers over there and we have five or six bulks and one of those went into Zanesville. That is where Mark's at now.

TN: So how far away is that?

FMP: I think it is 48, 45 miles to...

TN: So you have quite a territory.

FMP: Oh yea (090) That is the way agribusiness is going, look how many farms around here don't have any livestock on them anymore.

TN: You can remember Danville used to have a feed mill. I mean there were several around here.

FMP: We used to have a feed mill, and every farm used to have some cattle, some hogs, anymore there are very few. Few and far between. (100) Then when you do find one they are a lot bigger. Then what they used to be.

CC: Since people are being more specialized, do people come in for just hogs or just stuff for...

FMP: There are a lot of part-time farmers...the day of the family farm is gone. I hate to say that, but it is. They are either great big farms or they are small parttime farmers. The day of a man taking 200 acres, 30-40 milk cows, and something, that guy is gone. It is all the big farms now, or the guy that works in town. And that is the way it is going to get even worse. And so like I say, for us to stay in business, we have to keep going out farther, cause we have had probably five or six guys quit in the last year because they either retired or...whatever...dairy farm or something that is sold anymore it never goes back into dairy.

TN: It gets split up for houses or...

FMP: Houses, or the neighbor buys it and starts farming it.

TN: The buildings go down

FMP: The buildings go down, the house is sold off.

TN: Out of the employees here, how many of us used to farm? Do you know? It is a high percentage isn't it.

FMP: Well, you and me.

TN: Steve

FMP: Steve Durbin. Mike grew up on a farm and still helps his Dad. Jim Sheply.

TN: Did Abe ever farm or not?

FMP: No, his Dad managed some farms, but he was never actually in farming himself.

TN: There is quite a few, at least 4 or 5 who were full-time farmers and now are not. Just kind of goes to show you, out of 23 people, 4 or 5,

FMP: Well, I bet if I set my mind to it, I could name probably 30 farms within 10 miles of this feed mill that used to be dairy farms at one time and there is no livestock on now.

CC: So, how does that affect your business? (144).

FMP: Well, it is more competitive than ever. We have to go out farther, we have to be better at it. That is for sure. When we do find a guy, we got to be able to provide the goods and service when he needs them. That is the biggest a lot of times.

TN: Here comes Mr. Feed now.

FMP: Here's \_\_\_\_\_, he is off the phone, he is the boss. (152)

TN: The feed to get bagged at the hardware, that is where it gets bagged.

FMP: That is the job we don't like, but that is part of it. You know

TN: Just stand there all day and put bags on there and sell them.

FMP: Usually that only involves a couple hours a day a lot of times, when you are...but everything is tested. The corn is tested. When we bring the corn in last fall, the only way you would figure the corn at 8 and half protein the last one or two years it has been low in protein. It is has been 7 1/2 to 8. The year before that, I think it was 6, a lot of it. Just depends on the growing year. And I think corn anymore is, the hybrids are developed for yield and not for quality.

TN: There are some high protein corns available. For the dairy people. If the guy is into feed, has livestock and needs feed, then that might be a bigger concern than yield to him. (grain sounds) (176)

[finishing up but hard to hear over machinery] (176-192)

FMP: So we can really custom blend to whatever the farmer needs.

CC: So it is really up to the farmer to figure out what he needs before hand.

FMP: We can make it about anyway that he wants to do it. To fit his operation. Different farmers do things different, have different needs. So,

CC: That is great, thanks a lot, nice to meet you.

(199)

[hard to hear due to machinery again, 199-210]

[211] Back in the office of the feed mill. Others voices.

215-233 introducing myself to the leader of the Fredericktown's Young Farmer's Group who we spoke to one evening.

Another worker: Tell me how far and few. [people understand farming]

TN: They don't understand even where the farmer is coming from. I mean it is, this is Dave.

DAVE: I could take you down the roads and really show you how few they are anymore.

TN: Like Wes was saying there used to be livestock on practically every farm, now there's...

Dave: Well, you can take the main farms out of Mount Vernon, you take 661 between here and 62 and there is two people with livestock, 13 has got zero between here and Utica, Martinsburg road has got one between here and Martinsburg. And you look at the barns and it gots the square hole at the end of it that we used to put feed in the holes. Some of them man-made and some of them of was truck(?) made. LAUGHTER

(257)

[We leave the feed mill]

TN: This truck, he is getting ready for a delivery, probably in the morning. But if you just slide these hatches off, the augers swing around and like he said that had the holes in the barns, they just back their auger in and put it into the wagon, like my brother had that you were, or a bin, some of the new ones get bulk bins. That insulated tank there is fat. And, you know you are required to have a certain amount of fat in your diet and you can pump the fat on to the grain and the feed and then the other tank is molasses. And it is kind of, it is basically a taste additive so that they will eat a little bit more. (289)

CC: So what did we figure out, out of the 23 people that are working at the Farmer's Exchange, how many used to farm in the past?

TN: At least five that we could name right there. You know, that is like 20%, a little over 20, which I think is a pretty high percentage.

End of tape 1, side B

Same day, February 16, 1995 Tape 2 Side A  
(000)

CC: what are some of the things, I know we talked before when I was at the grower's meeting a little bit about environmental issues, I know you wanted to make that clear, and if there is anything else that you think that people aren't aware of that you think that people should be aware of in regards to farming.

TN: Well, I think, one thing. I feel that farmers, people in agriculture are a lot of times, when people defend agriculture or put the blame on people that are complaining about the rivers or the water quality and everything, they are...I am tongue tied for the word, they say, environmentalists. Well, I think the farmer is the true and the first environmentalist and like the Grange organizations, they always stress how the farmer was the steward of the land, and I think they need to realize that the farmer's land is his living and that they are not going to do something that, to destroy that. It would be counter-productive to go out there and try to be eroding land and to try to spend extra money on chemicals and have them leak into the ground water. I mean, I think they need to realize that the farmer is a true conservationist. And like the, there is a big scare, people are really scared of, have a phobia of chemicals and modern farming. But if they really do their research

on it, they will find that we have the safest and most abundant food source in the world. And I feel bad that farmers are having to defend that. I think they should be proud of that. And I think if we would have done our job instead of trying to hide, be secretive, not wanting to talk to people, I think if we were doing our job, every business has to promote their product. And if, I feel that if, if we would have done our job better that we wouldn't have some of the problems that we have today.

CC: Do you mean done your job as far as explaining what you do do and what you have.

TN: Yes, I do have to admit, in the early 70's and maybe mid 80's, people were abusing chemicals, applying too much. The prices were tremendously higher and some of the farmers had the conception that if one guy puts one on, let put on two, cause it will be better. What we are really is the problems of that. That that has cause, like with the actrazine (sp), we have been doing the MP or better management practices like with conservation tillage. Things like that. The amount of residue in the creeks and in the ground water has tremendously dropped. Its, but, just because there is presence there doesn't mean there is an exposure problem or a diverse affect to that. Like with actrazine, I am not sure, but I know you have to consume almost twice, okay there is what they call ALL-D 50. I will explain it more in here when I get the pamphlet. The All-D 50 of aspirin and table salt, they will cause cancer or death, consuming lesser amounts than most of the chemicals. What most of the people don't realize is that to have an affect, like with actrazine, to kill 50% of the people, they have to consume I think, it is like 900 pounds or 1200 pounds a day to have an adverse affect. And people are worried about one part per billion in their ground water, so that is you know, I mean, I think you have to look at things, realistically. And {truck door slam, 061} someone has the right to light one up right beside you, you know, [regarding somking].

CC: Do you think it is just people's ignorance on what farmers do to the land and things like that, that make them worried. Or just their ignorance on chemicals in general, how they are used and how they work?

TN: I think most people view farmers as just a person that goes out there and does anything. You know, wears a hat crooked and all dirty and has the bib overalls and you know just, not too intelligent, just goes out there and works hard and that is about it. I think that is most people's view of a farmer. All the science that is involved in today's agriculture, so.

CC: That is probably true, and how much farmer's need to know in order to make a living.

TN: Do you want to talk some more or?

CC: Lets see, what time is it. Yea, I should probably get going. But definitely another time would be great. (077)

Tn: We are a co-op, we are owned basically by the customers and if we do make a profit it goes back to them. Like if we make a profit of a couple hundred, we will keep a hundred thousand or so much to put back in, but then a certain percentage goes back to the stockholders. so, it is a pretty good deal for them. they have a board of directors and they actually run the show. They hire the manager. they give the manager directions and goals to meet, and then we go in the direction that the stockholders want us to go in. So that is, that is a unique part of our company versus independent guy who is out there to make some money. Plus, people also say that fertilizer and chemical dealers are geared just to make money, but we are not, we are here for the farmer and to give quality service. And if we do make money it is going back to them anyway. so, I mean we are not geared on making money, we are geared on a service. So,

CC: That is impressive. Not too many things like that these days.

TN: No,

CC: Well, good. End of interview (097).