

Kenyon College

Digital Kenyon: Research, Scholarship, and Creative Exchange

Interviews

Family Farm Project

10-26-1995

Interview with Chuck Whitney

Mara Bell Mancini

Chuck Whitney

Follow this and additional works at: https://digital.kenyon.edu/ffp_interviews

Recommended Citation

Mancini, Mara Bell and Whitney, Chuck, "Interview with Chuck Whitney" (1995). *Interviews*. 22.
https://digital.kenyon.edu/ffp_interviews/22

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Family Farm Project at Digital Kenyon: Research, Scholarship, and Creative Exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in Interviews by an authorized administrator of Digital Kenyon: Research, Scholarship, and Creative Exchange. For more information, please contact noltj@kenyon.edu.

Mara Bell Mancini
ANSO 67-68
Interview with Chuck Whitney

MB: To start out, my name is Mara Bell Mancini and I'm interviewing Chuck Whitney. This is October 26. I just want to start with some information about you, like, how long have you and your family been in Knox County?

CW: Oh let's see, we moved here in 1960. So we've been here 34 years. A lot of that time I was involved in agriculture. The last few years not so much. But I'd say most of the time we were involved in agriculture since we came in 1960.

MB: So where did you grow up?

CW: Oh. Started out in Michigan and went to Kentucky and then moved to Ohio, and then moved to Texas, and then came back here again in 1977, I guess. But basically our ties have been here most of the time. Most of my productive life has been here in Ohio.

MB: OK. And how long have you been in your current occupation?

CW: Oh right now I'm doing real estate appraising and like that, and that's been about, um, 'bout 15 years, I guess. Real estate and real estate appraising.

MB: Do you work at the Agricultural Museum in your spare time or is that another . . .

CW: I was out there for eight years and headed it up. And, uh, then I left. It got to the point where the committee wanted two or three of us to do all of the work, and I didn't have time so I just left. So I haven't been out there now since, um, '91, I guess. Um, I still have a lot of interest out there as far as that's concerned but I'm not actively working out there now.

MB: But you were working out there while you were in real estate?

CW: Yes. Yes. Yes. Yeah. That was part of the problem. I was putting in 100 days a year out there, and, um, building buildings and hauling in exhibits. We collected 3,000 items in eight years. Everything from full thrashing machines to household items and things like that you know. . . And it just took a tremendous amount of work. And I put on, oh, 400 radio programs over the years for the museum at WMVO with Charlie Kilkenny, and then I'd put on 25 or 30, uh, programs

in the community a year-- Civic Clubs, Grange meetings, Farm Bureau meetings, that type of thing, church groups, and like that, for the museum.

MB: How did your interests develop, in that?

CW: Oh, I've always been interested in that type of thing. Um, years ago, uh, they tried to start a museum at Wooster, Ohio State University did. And, uh, it was well conceived except they wanted to build a million dollar building to do it. And that was just top heavy and it was at a time when funds were scarce and just wouldn't go. And, uh, at that time the group in Knox County, all of whom now have passed on except myself, uh. . . produced the most results to get local interest going than anybody else. And then when it was mentioned that the Fair Board was interested in a museum out there that same group came together and started working at it. And so, one thing kind of built on another. But I've always been interested in this antique/ historical thing. At one time I had a shop out at Mt. Liberty, in a building that I own, where I just handled nothing but antique hand tools. And, uh, in that function I handled a lot of agricultural tools, things of that kind. And so I've always been kind of headed in that direction, and ended up at the head of the committee out there and we rode fast and furious for a while until, just like any group, church group, Farm Bureau group or whatever, you start it and there's a lot of enthusiasm and then that enthusiasm kind of wanes and it comes down to a few people doing all the work.

MB: Yeah. . .

CW: I don't mind working I just want somebody else to do some of the work too!

(both laugh)

MB: Yeah. . . So now you're in real estate?

CW: Uh. . . Basically real estate appraising and building inspections as a specific area. I have had a real estate license in the past but I have it on file right now so I can't actively sell real estate, as far as that's concerned. I've got a full schedule of appraisal and building inspections.

MB: Do you do that inspecting on farms at all?

CW: Basically residences. I can do it on farms, no question about that. But most of the use of that type of thing would be in residences at time of sale or commercial buildings where they're getting ready for. . .oh. . . a change in partnerships and want an evaluation of

the building value and this type of thing. We've done a number of those. But not so much of that done in the agricultural spheres as far as inspections are concerned.

MB: OK. Um, what organizations do you belong to?

CW: International Society of Wood Collectors. . . I guess that's all. I've got a lot of hobbies that take me informally into other groups like the American Timber Framers and, uh, things like that.

And I'm getting ready to be active in a group that's going to publish a journal on old barns and I've done a lot of work in that area.

Uh, I've been taking pictures of old barns for 40 years, and I've put on programs describing old barns and things like that. Then I spent parts of five days with the men that built the new barn up at Malabar Farm, that barn raising. . . and, uh. . .

MB: You were up there for that?

CW: Yeah. I spent three days with them when they were cutting the timbers and doing the joints up in Wayne County and then I spent, oh two days, actually, up there, and then I spent three days on the deck with them up here at Malabar when they were raising it-- taking videos and still pictures and things like this, and making notes on frame procedures and stuff.

MB: OK. So how often do you come in contact with farmers in your work and what you do?

CW: Right now not as much as it has been in the past in my appraising and building inspections kind of take me into the residential sector rather than into the farm area, but I do a few farm appraisals and I have a keen interest in farming and agriculture and I keep check on things that are going on out there in the field and travel and that type of thing.

MB: Did you grow up on a farm?

CW: Oh yeah.

MB: And did you do much farming in this area?

CW: Oh it varied. We had a farming operation of our own when we were in Michigan and then I got into farm equipment associations in Kentucky and Ohio. And then when we moved up here we bought an old farm lot around 3 C and, uh, took it out of. . . it was an old

ramshackled house and brushy old farm and we cleaned it up and got it into production. And, uh, that ended up to be about 220 acres before we started selling it off again. And, um, then we bought a bunch of land in Eastern Knox County and in Coshocton County we bought 400 acres in a matter of about 10 days one time we found out there were some farms that had to be sold and found financing and we bought that. And then we were back into farming in a big way and raised cattle and so forth.

MB: So, it was mainly cattle or did you. . .

CW: Yeah. No, it was basically a grassland operation. We raised a few crops for grain and silage. But basically it was Crossbred Charlie Cattle. To raise feeder calves.

MB: OK. Um, how would you describe farming in Knox County?

CW: It's general farming. . . Uh, let me think a minute. . . In the '60s when we came here it was general farming and at that point there was a lot of livestock of all kinds and a lot of farmers still had their own poultry flocks and they would have dairy cattle and beef cattle and swine and hogs, kind of all mixed in together. And, uh, then as times changed that thinned out so that they kind of let loose of the sheep. At one time Knox County was the largest sheep county in the Eastern United States. And then they let loose of farm hog herds because these big farms came in, confined hog raising, and then it got down to where it was kind of dairy and beef and right now I think probably there's more dairy than anything else. And then all the rest of the farms have become cash crop farms where they just raise crops and sell them rather than riding them through livestock, which changes the whole atmosphere. Whereas Ohio used to be pretty well fenced for livestock you can drive from here to Toledo and you'll be lucky if you see a livestock fence-- it's all cash cropping. And this changes the whole tenor of the picture.

Uh. . . it gets into an area of specialization. . . . It's changed persistently and a lot of the people involved in it weren't even aware that it was changing. They couldn't look ahead to prepare or to expedite their operations to take advantage of the changes. Uh, for instance, about the middle '70s several farmers all of a sudden realized, dairy farmers realized, they could make more money working with and managing their herds than they could in the field so they'd just run their herds, big herds, and buy all their. . . their crops, feed, from somebody else. They could buy it cheaper than they could produce it, and then they could make more money by closer control of their breeding programs and their production records and health control, like that with their cattle. Rather than trying

to work all day in the field and then go in and do chores for two or three hours at night and in the morning and so forth-- they were scattered too thin. And there's going to be more of that, these contract farms that there's so much controversy about right now will become more prevalent clear through agriculture.

MB: What do you think forms your image of farming, like the way you see farming.

CW: How **I** see it? Or how the public sees it?

MB: Um, how, well how you see it first and then maybe how you think the public sees it.

CW: Well, having been a farmer and involved in production of farming and trying to make a living at it, in that role you assume the typical farmer attitude that the world's against you, and you're hard pressed and you're . . . I'm searching for a word . . . which might be cynical, it might be ultra-private about all your operation. Farmers are in grown, spend a lot of time alone. They grunt and they groan as they work. And they feel sorry for themselves while they're making maybe a million dollars doing it. It's the nature of the brute. Uh, better educated farmers would pull out of that rut and realize that they've got a productive organization, that they're making money, and they can talk business with business people and they think "management," and that type of thing. Uh. . . we've got an example just outside of town here, one of the most productive farm families are just the most cynical people in the world. You can hardly talk to them. And the two or three brothers that are involved in it are fairly young men in their 40s and they're the kind that should be leaders, they should be management people and all they see is what they see right out of the front end of that tractor, and to heck with the rest of the world. They fight everything that comes along. Bypasses any improvement or anything if it's going to take a hundred square feet off their farm. It's the worst thing that ever came down the road. They just have that ingrown, cynical approach. Whereas if they were business-like participants in the community and view the community as a whole they would realize these changes have to come. There's a man in Circleville, Ohio that I knew years ago when he was a farm equipment farmer, when I . . . farm equipment *dealer*, when I was with the Dealer's Association running it-- real sharp operator. He got out of farm equipment and went into farming down there on that bottom land which is very rich, very productive, good agricultural area.

MB: Is that down near the Ohio River?

CW: No, it's along the Scioto. Circleville. Just south of Columbus.

And, uh, he has become, in my estimation, a real leader in agriculture. He gets his financing from Huntington National Bank in Columbus, and they're glad to work with him because he's got his records and he lays it right out. He knows exactly where he's going.

They know where he's going. And it works. He has been, I think in Washington on a conservation service staff there-- highly regarded.

But people like that, I'm sure he's one of them, didn't seek an education in agriculture, they got an education in business management, with the theory that you can learn agriculture as you go along but you've got to know how to manage dollars and inventories and financing and things like that, in order to make it pay off.

And that's what a lot of people that are in farming don't do-- they're so tied to cows or hogs or tractors or . . . that type of thing that they never take the time to. . .uh. . .manage. I hope that you're going to interview Joe Brown, former county agent here. Retired. Lives out on Greenvalley Road. He's worked with farmers for years and years. And I was talking with him the other day and he says these guys just will never learn that they have to take two hours a day to manage their business and then they can do their plowing after they get their managing done. Record keeping, inventory, breeding records. . . whatever it may be. It has to be managed.

He says they just [say], "Well I got to get out there and get that plowing done," you know, and first thing you know their management pile is like this and they got their plowing all done but they don't know where they're going to go. Uh. . . he would be a very productive person to talk with.

MB: OK. How important do you think farming is to the Knox County community?

CW: Well, if you take Knox county, just by itself, it's a big part of the county because, for instance, Mount Vernon has about 14,000 people. Knox County has 44,000 people. And if you take the agricultural records, marketing records, it'll show you how many millions of dollars they produce to turn business here in the county-- crops that they sell, livestock that they sell, garden produce that they sell, this type of thing, are all in the Census of Agriculture.

And it gives you an idea real quick that it is very important. And I don't have those figures at hand, but I'm inclined to think that probably the gross dollar sales of agricultural products in Knox County exceeds all the other businesses, including manufactures that are here. That would have to be verified, but I'm inclined to think that might be true.

MB: So you think the local economy is pretty dependent on farming?

CW: Yes. Yes. Now, by comparison, Delaware County, south west, is rapidly filling in with houses; farming is dropping out. They're more dependent on . . . say Columbus employment than we would be here. On the other hand, I can't remember now the proportion, but well over half of all the farmers in Ohio spend over a hundred days a year working off the farm in shops and factories and things like that. Which is, to me, an alarming thing. The Farm Bureau talks about it just in general. Because if I have a drug store, or a grocery store, or a hardware store, or a filling station, or some kind of an operation like that and I can't make enough money in those operations to make it go I don't go to the shop to work to back it up. You see, they're business people even though they may be *poor* business people. I mean they're not strong, intellectually, to tell them where to go. But when over a half of the farmers in Ohio have to work a hundred days a year off the farm that says that they're not doing a very good job of farming. Now there are exceptions to that. We've got another family here in town, in the county, that are regarded as some of the best farmers we've got, and yet for years and year and years, I think there are three of the brothers, at least two but I think three of them, have had regular jobs down at Coopers all through the years. They have big equipment. They have good land that they can work fast. And they're the exception. But in that fifty percent that work off the farm are an awful lot of people that should *not* be involved in agriculture. They don't have the management ability. They've got old, run down equipment. They've got old run down farms. They're farming because it's a sentimental thing, not a business operation. And a lot of that fifty percent should *not* be in agriculture. And they're the ones, to a certain extent, that produce the surpluses that can't be controlled because they're in and out, hard to communicate with . . . just tough individualists that would have been in style in the twenties and the thirties but today you've got to be a business person.

MB: Do you like living in a farm community?

CW: It's a good atmosphere. It's a good atmosphere. If you compare the general atmosphere, say, in Knox County with the atmosphere in almost any section of Columbus, where you've got a lot of crime and things like that going on. . . um. . . it's a good place to raise a family. It's a good flavor to have in a community. Basically, I think that is true because you don't have the density of population. You put too many pigs in a pen you have trouble. It's the same way with people. Uh, you have some freedom of space, and like that. Basically, farm people are practical people, regardless of whether

they're good managers or not. And, uh, they. . .they temper a community so it makes a good place to live.

MB: Do you think there's a division between farmers and the non-farmers within the community?

CW: (pause) I'm going to say yes but I'm trying to figure how to equate that. If there is, then I would say that most of that division is caused by farmers and farm groups that keep preaching the old philosophy of family farms and emotional values and one thing or another, rather than a business approach.

MB: How economically successful do you think farmers are in Knox County?

CW: I might not be a very good one to answer that specifically. Some of the farm service organizations, the Extension service or farm credit could relate to that better than I could but I'm thinking that probably not more than a third of the operating farmers are really economically sound. You see, farming is a peculiar business compared with Main Street businesses. If you get in a bind because of some kind of a problem you can live for a long time on your assets by dissipating them. You don't *have* to rebuild a fence. You don't *have* to rebuild the barn. You don't *have* to buy a new breeding stock. You don't *have* to buy a new tractor. So you just let things kind of run down and you draw and you draw and you draw on that thing until someday you get a big wheat crop or something and then you paint the barn and then you trade a tractor and so on and so forth. Uh. . . Good and well oriented business farmers don't let that happen. They produce specialty crops. They produce organic crops. They produce special quality livestock. They have farm market out 'side the road. They do something that'll turn some dollars besides just drudging on and on and on and plowing and planting and trying to harvest when they're not in the show.

MB: How do you think farmers influence politics here in Knox County?

CW: (pause) Well, because of the proportion of population in the county, 14,000 in town and 30,000 outside, they're almost 2 to 1. So if they take time. . .well, that isn't quite an accurate figure because they're a lot of people today and there are more all the time, who live outside of Mt. Vernon than aren't farmers that are, you know, rural residents. That'd be an interesting figure to come up with . . . I wonder if I've got. . .(starts looking through files) Bob Jones the county auditor. . . Yeah. I don't know whether we've got time to search this out or not. . . (starts looking

through.....) Now, I think this may have it, some figures. . . Maybe not. This is more on taxes and handling of county funds. That won't do what we want. Um. . . there are other records. I have an old *Census of Agriculture* here, 1969. And there would be current ones that would give you the number of farms. . .

MB: Who puts that out? The Census Bureau?

CW: Yes. Yeah. This is national. There is a record somewhere like this that breaks down the farms per county, and the income per county. I was thinking this did, but it doesn't. Mark Bennett down at the Extension Office could tell you. (pause) But it would tell you the trend in livestock numbers, and farm numbers and tillable acres and that type of thing. And there should be something like that in the Mt. Vernon Library. Let's see. . . What was your question?

MB: It was about farmers influencing politics in the county.

CW: Yeah. I think in order to get a definitive answer to that we'd have to dig up some of these records and get numbers. And I hadn't thought about it until just when you asked that question. If you subtract the rural residents from the non-Mt. Vernon population in Knox County then you substantially reduce the number of farmers that you're talking about. And so if we've got 14,000 in Mt. Vernon and we've got 30,000 outside and half of those are rural residents rather than farmers then we've got an equal number of farmers and Mt. Vernon people. Now, I don't know how that equates because then we're not talking about this 15,000 rural residents. You know, how are they going to vote. . . what's their thought. It gets rather complicated, but I think you'll find that farmers either in Knox County or in general, state-wide or nationally, substantially affect the politics and. . .to a large extent because of the leadership of the farm organizations. They stimulate them into participation that is politically oriented. For instance, the Farm Bureau does a lot of legislative work and they depend on their membership out here to pull in people that are going to be receptive to Farm Bureau desires in the legislature and political operations and so forth.

MB: Do you think most farmers think alike on political issues? Could you call it a group?

CW: No. No, no more than any other group. Some would be dyed in the wool Republicans, others would be dyed in the wool Democrats. . . From that standpoint they'd be as diverse as any other group, I think, with very little variation from general population pattern. (pause) I was trying to think if there are areas where it might vary from

what I told you. . . Basically, I think what I said is about true.

MB: Do you think any one area within farming would be more likely to vote the same?

CW: Do you mean geographical area?

MB: Or, say, like livestock farmers or cash crop farmers.

CW: No, I don't think there's any correlation there between. . . .

Any correlation in that area would reflect ethnic areas, or ethnic groups more than it would type of agriculture. In a lot of counties one corner will be Irish or German or something like this. Years ago when I worked for the Farm Equipment Association I was having trouble over in Western Ohio communicating with some of our dealers.

And I ran across a rather . . . in a peculiar way that I won't take time to explain, but I just realized that within a certain area in Western Ohio that I couldn't, uh . . . that I wasn't as effective as I was in some other places. (pause, he draws a sketch of Ohio to illustrate the area) Kenton, Greenville, and Paldon. And I realized that in this area I just wasn't getting membership sold and they weren't as responsive. And it just bugged me because I had it pretty well pinpointed and so one day I sat in the office and it was just musing what was going on and I picked up the phone and I called a man at Ohio State that I knew that was in rural sociology.

He wasn't in and somebody that I didn't know and I've forgotten his name now answered and he said, "Is there something I can help you with?" And I said, "Well, I'm not sure but let me explain my problem," and so forth so I told him about this area. And he said, "Well, I think I can help you with that," he said, "That's why I'm on the staff here." He was born and raised in Swanton, up here along. . . (points it out on his sketch of the state)

MB: Is that along Lake Erie?

CW: No, it's over here in Western Ohio. More right here somewhere (referring to sketch). And came from a very conservative German family. All of Northwestern Ohio basically is kind of German oriented. And he said the Extension service was having the same problem you're having communicating with these people from this area.

And he said the reason is that it's tightly held German farms, mostly small farms, that are controlled generation after generation by the older generation. And he said, our people could go out there and put on meetings on hybrid corn or financing or livestock programs or something and feel they had a real good meeting and things were

going to happen but nothing ever happened. Well, what happened, the young folks came to the meetings when they went home and talked with Dad and Dad said "Humph." And so he said, "Anytime you've got some big change to make you have to go in here and get a hold of the religious leaders. The Catholic priests, which there'd be a lot in this area. The German Catholics basically in this triangle, I call it my magic triangle." And he said, "If you can get them to accept it then the older generation will accept it and then you can make a change."

MB: Hm. That's interesting.

CW: Yeah. So at one time several years back a woman came to Kenyon to talk about . . . I can't remember now really what her talk was oriented on. I believe it was on log cabins in Ohio, or something like that. But when she got all done, maybe she was talking about old barns, I should have kept track of her and I didn't. . . When she got all done she was talking about the same area I was talking about. And so after the meeting we had a long talk about how our two interests just coincided down there. So to get back to the essence of your question, the ethnic groups are more apt to influence political interests than the line of their work, and becomes a real factor when you boil it out. Up here you have a lot of Polish people (points to Northeastern Ohio on sketch) that think a little differently than say some of the more conservative people way down here in the hills (Southern Ohio). And you've got your German Catholics here (Northwestern Ohio) and . . .

MB: What about this area, ethnically?

CW: Nothing real strong. We have a few old German families but they're kind of individual. They're not groups like they would be over here (points to Northwestern Ohio). Communities, you know, where they get together and kind of strengthen each other. Um. . . I don't know of any area. . . When you get down to specific issues, for instance, the school districts. . . . Some of these school districts run clear down to here-- to some of the other counties even, then you get some area interest but it really isn't ethnic. It's just a geographical orientation. That's a little different.

MB: Given the debate on family values, do you think that farms hold certain values?

CW: Typically, farm families are more family oriented. They're more apt to eat all their meals together. They're more apt to go

to town together. They're more apt to go to church together. They're more apt to take an interest in the local school. So that this could be quite a contributing factor to the question you asked a little earlier, how does the farm population affect the county, that family structure may be the key to that. Whereas in town, Momma works and Daddy works and they're on different shifts and the kids go home and there's nobody there and maybe not more than once a week do they have a meal together. And this is a very powerful factor in communicating between generations and knowing what the kids are doing.

In that kind of an atmosphere, the youngster pick up family values quicker than they pick up peer values. And that's always been an important part of American life. And it's one of the things we're losing. Today too many generations think they have to make all their own mistakes and they don't have to learn from their old folks and a lot of pain could be saved if they realize that a little advice is the cheapest way to get it done.

MB: How do you think the farm values are sustained?

CW: When you're talking about farm values you're talking about social values?

MB: And those family values.

CW: Well, just as I just said, they go to town together, they go to church together, they go to community events together, and that ties it together and that helps to continue it as more and more. . . You see there was a time . . . until about the time of the second World War when in a farm community everybody knew everybody else within a five or ten mile radius. And they knew everybody that moved in or moved out and they knew the background and may have known two or three generations of the people that lived in that community.

And today as more and more rural residents move in and buy a five acre lot and another five acre lot and down a little ways another five acre lot. These are people that aren't really a part of the farming community but they vote and they have their influence on what's going on and the kids of the rural residents. . . I'm not sure how specific that term is. . . go to school with the farm kids and then you get a certain breakdown in the typical farm community social structure. . . dissipates it, is the word that I'm trying to find. In saying that that doesn't really mean that all the city people that move out there as rural residents are bad, but it's a different input in the community than as though it was just the typical farm population. (pause)

How did you come up with these questions? Did it come out of your discussions or did Howard, uh. . .

MB: No. We had a big discussion our last class and tried to think of what we wanted to know about the community itself, and we came up with some different topics like, you know, like the values and politics and how successful. . . What people's image of farming is. Things like that. And then we decided to make up some questions about that to ask the people that we were each respectively interviewing. The last topic that we talked about in class was the changes in farming. Let me flip the tape. . . . What changes have you seen in Knox County farming over the years?

CW: Well, I think I'd want to change that question a little bit.

The important changes have taken place over a long period of time so I'd have to precede my Knox County experience. I started out in the twenties and in that case we had horse drawn equipment and very small operations and community threshing rings and all of these things drastically affected the whole community-- socially, economically, and so forth. We had horse drawn plows. Almost everything was horse power, and then towards the end of the twenties tractors started coming in, in a small way, and there was a big controversy about compaction of soil and all that kind of thing.

And then in the thirties we ran into this depression, which was a limiting economic thing. From '29 to '32 you didn't have nothing.

We put pace board in our shoes when they had holes in them rather than getting them half soled, or one thing or another, to go to school.

And we killed our own meat on the farm. We cut wood out of the wood lot to keep the furnace going. It was really tough. And then there was a resurgence in the late twenties when Roosevelt came in with government programs. And then in '41, of course, we got in the war and we had World War II. And everything kind of came to a halt. It just kind of all pushed together like an accordion being squeezed, because you couldn't buy new equipment. You know, it was a limiting situation, and as soon as the war was over in '45 then it just all broke loose. And then they, farmers, started buying big machinery and spreading out and using more power and that type of thing. In the '50s this just kept coming and in the '60s there was more of it, and then by the '70s we started getting into. . . this was just kind of a growth period, as I recall it now. And then in the '70s we started getting into these management patterns that we're talking about, and specialization and improved livestock-- more so than we'd ever had before. And then in the '80s this was amplified and pushed on and today in '94 it's a completely different world than it was in the '20s. Now you see, what I was saying a minute ago, we came here in 1960 and have been here a comparatively short time, compared with this whole thing. Up to this time, up to the twenties (indicates twenties on time line) agriculture had

changed very little for 200 years. Many of the things that were going on in the '20s were exactly the same, with some very minor changes, since the country was opened up some time around 1800. Just no change at all. And then all of these things have come about since then, including airplanes and missiles and world wide communications and everything else piled on top of these agricultural changes. But a lot of this material that I've put together, thinking about someday doing a book on it, indicates what the patterns were back here and what the changes were through the years and what they've meant and that type of thing. Because it's so dramatic-- there have been more changes since 1930 to 1994 than there have been in all of the years of human history. Up until that time things were almost the same as they were before people came to this country in the 1700s.

Same marketing, same patterns. In the middle 1800s, 1834, they invented the reaper, and then after the Civil War mechanization started coming along pretty fast, that is, horse drawn mechanization.

And tractors started a little bit in the teens but then they were slowed down during the first World War, the same as other things were during the second World War, and then they came on pretty fast following that. And combines and corn pickers and forage choppers and corn combines and all that kind of thing came in this period right in here (points to time line). Somewhere. . . somewhere I've got a big chart that shows all of the changes in agriculture all charted out. . .

MB: In the machinery you mean?

CW: All things. Um. . . (gets up to look for the chart) I haven't though about that for years. This goes a step farther. This is a chart on world history and this opens out 15 feet long. And look at these charts here. There's a date here somewhere. This is the Biblical area in here. It goes way, way back. . . I was trying to get into an area. . . (searches for more modern period)

MB: This is still pretty old. . .

CW: This must be divided somehow. . .

MB: The date's down here.

CW: Yeah. Yeah. I guess that's the end of it. It comes up to 1900. There's the '20s and '30s. So the period we're talking about is just this much out of history-- about six inches out of fifteen feet. Here's mail by coaches, first locomotive steam, television came in, the exploration of space and things like that-- all those things have come in the last six inches of history. But somewhere I've

got a great big chart like this. . . I'll have to search for it (begins to look through stuff on bookshelves)-- I can't find it quickly, that shows all the changes in agriculture. That might be quite meaningful for your studies to get an overall view of what's going on.

MB: Yeah. You don't have to find it right now, but that would be interesting to see. So in the time you've been in Knox County have you seen many changes, say in numbers of people in farming and thing like that? (pause) You said something about the crops. . . that they're going more into cash crops right now.

CW: Yeah. Um. . . I can't identify numbers. Then you'd have to go to these Census figures. It's changed but I can't quantify it, I can't really tie it down. It'd be interesting to have some figures to talk about and I just don't have that. I probably ought to work on that just for my own. . . information. I've got so many balls moving I can't keep them all going. Um. . . I'm sure there have been changes. The most dramatic ones are that livestock has moved out-- cash crops have taken over. Farm flocks-- chicken flocks, sheep flocks, individual swine herds, are just almost non-existent. You're either a dairy farmer a hundred percent or you're a beef farmer a hundred percent, maybe a few hogs with beef. You might have some sheep as a secondary project but I think most of the people that have sheep are a hundred percent sheep, and not very big operators--probably work in the shop and they run sheep at home to keep the farm clean, and that type of thing.

MB: How many would you say-- how many sheep would you have in, say, a medium. . .

CW: Oh, they'd run anywhere from a flock of fifty or sixty ewes to a full time flock of three or four hundred like the . . . Banbury's in Danville have big flocks of sheep, and somebody north here on Mansfield Rd. has got a big flock of sheep-- I don't even know who it is. But, sheep have gone out because there's an awful lot of handwork that goes with them-- they have to be sheared and clipped and tagged and dipped and. . . lambing is a hand situation and most people just don't want to put in that much labor time on it.

MB: Why do you think that Knox County had the most sheep, you said in the. . .

CW: I've never known . . . It's a high-dry county which is good for sheep and there must have been some real good sheep leadership in this county to encourage it, because for many years until just recent

years it was considered as the biggest sheep county East of the Mississippi River. And probably, almost East of the Rockies. In other words, the big Western flocks were on the high-dry ground in the West, but I think they usually termed it East of the Mississippi.

MB: And do you think it has anything to do with the land or the climate or just the sheep leadership?

CW: Well, I was saying it's a high-dry county. You've got a lot of high land, and they do well on hills. When they're on wet ground they have a lot of foot trouble with sheep-- foot rot-- and things like that, so it's a health situation. And I think probably a lot of people worked some bottom land to raise there crops and then had sheep on the hills in the Eastern end of the county. That type of thing that encouraged it, but why this county and not some of the others that are very similar North to South. . . you see the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains start with this hill right here. This is the first hill that has bed rock under it. And somewhere on Quarry Street down here there used to be a marker that indicated that, but this is the first hill that has bed rock on it and these hills just keep going until they grow right into the Apalacian Mountains to the East.

MB: That's interesting. . . . Do you think the fact that there are more rural residents who aren't farming now has changed the farming community, like the networks that farmers have in talking to each other. Like you wouldn't know your neighbor as well.

CW: Well, there are other changes that have contributed to *that* change more than that. Back here (points to time line) during the '20s and '30s all of the threshing, a lot of the haying and all of the silo filling was done by changing work with your neighbor. And they would come in and help with your work and then you'd go back and help with theirs so that you were in their homes and they were in your homes and you ate at their table and they ate at yours. It wouldn't be anything to have anywhere from 12 to 20 men for threshing, at a time. And then in the late '30s combines started coming in and everybody did their own harvesting and the old trading work, we called it, dropped out and then you didn't have the interchange of conversations or knowledge of what was going on when you were trading work. You knew what the other man had in his barn. You knew what his house looked like. You knew what he had in his tool shed. You got a chance to look at his swine herd. And when combines came along everybody worked alone, and it just slowly dissipated. Until, at that point, the agricultural society became

almost like the rural residents' society. We're talking about just individual people living out there without any community tie ins.

MB: Is that the way you think it is now?

CW: Uh, yeah, and more so all the time. You just. . . you can go out here and call on a farmer and I'll bet you he can't name fifteen percent of the people that live within five miles of him. He's got a big farm here and someone else's got a big farm down here and he'd know him and in between there's horse farms and hobby farms and big lots and one thing or another and then there'll be another big farmer over here and those three might know each other but I'll bet you that you can't call on a farmer in Knox County that can name more than fifteen percent of the people that live within five miles of him. And today I can go back in my memories of the '20s and '30s and name you almost all the people that lived within five miles of our old farm just by memory. It was almost like a second family to have that many people that you knew. We had one area in our neighborhood, down there what we called a swamp-- just kind of a marginal area-- and there were two or three houses down there where people would move in or out, and aside from that we knew everyone within five miles of us which would be a ten mile diameter. Take in a lot of territory. But I think that this work arrangement-- change in work arrangement-- has done more to change the social side of farming than anything else. Several years ago, I think it was in '90, the Ag Museum here took a big exhibit of antique farm equipment down for the Farm Bureau annual meeting at the . . . big hotel on High Street. . . What is it?

MB: The Great Southern?

CW: No, north. Up by Nationwide.

MB: Oh, the Hyatt.

CW: Is that a Hyatt?

MB: Yeah, I think it is.

CW: Yeah. OK. And there were people there I'd known through the years in farm equipment. And I wasn't just down there showing equipment, I was there to talk with people to find out what was going on. And I visited with these people as they came along and pretty soon a man came along that had been in Farm Bureau work for many, many years. And I said, "What do you see different about this meeting

than about one that might have been held 25 years ago?" And he thought for a moment and he said, "You know, it's like the difference in black and white." He said, "These people that are here," it was there annual meeting, "are followers. They're softer people. They don't have any real determination. It's just a complete change in the people that we had back in the '40s and the '50s." And here was a man that was at the head of the group, or, you know, in the upper leadership of the organization, and I don't know whether he really realized what he was saying in the same context that you and I are talking as to how it affected what they were doing. He just was quite elaborative in his discussion of the fact that if it'd changed so much, and without actually saying so, was telling me that it was changing for a weaker, lesser organization. Another bell weather of change in farming is the change in the Grange, which would be a sister organization to the Farm Bureau. They were an old, old fraternal organization, had closed lodge meetings and passwords to get in and all kinds of pageantry-- almost like Masonics or Eastern Star, so on and so forth. And they're almost gone-- and admittedly so. There was an article in the Columbus paper when they had their meeting some short time ago, within the last few months, indicating that the Granges were just dying out and going because modern people aren't interested in pageantry and passwords and things like this. And at one time it was a massive force in American agriculture.

And whether the Farm Bureau realizes it or not they are in somewhat the same situation. They're a little more progressive because they're a business oriented deal, but. . . their membership overlaps with unions by, I guess now, fifty percent.

MB: Meaning that people are. . .

CW: These people that work off the farm more than a hundred days belong to unions and this makes a lot of difference when they go into legislative halls in representation. They have things they can't defeat, uh, can't. . . fight unions on because half their membership is unions. And this is another phase of amalgamation of the total population, and there are very few people, I'm sure, that realize all the consequences of these changes and have any vision of what lies ahead or what can be done to control it or capitalize on it or live with it or change it in any way. It's just. . .

MB: Well, along those lines what do you think about the youth in farming? Do you think they're very interested in farming today or are they headed elsewhere?

CW: Again, there probably are figures somewhere that would verify really what's going on but my thought is that most of them are headed

somewhere else. A few will stay, but whereas their dad was willing to work with cattle and hogs and beef cattle and so forth, they're more interested . . . and in saying that, he was . . . didn't object to long hours and hard work and so forth . . . They're more interested in being a part of an office operation where they can work eight hours a day and have their weekends off and freedom like their city cousins. Um. . . I'm sure that even within the ranks of the FFA that a lot of those people, young people, are thinking of leaving the farm. A lot of them will go into farm related operations-- farm machinery manufacturers, chemical producers, seed corn raising, farm buildings, farm insurance, something like that so that they're farm background would be of value to them, but they would not be involved in farming per se. Uh. . . another equation in that same sphere. . . I'm sure that for the most part the smarter more aggressive young people are looking about moving out, and the lower I.Q.S, the less intelligent and ambitious are going to stay behind and then you get a demoralization of quality of leadership back on the farm and in the rural areas. In other words, if I was an "A" student in high school, and I went to Ohio State and was the top of the class, I very likely would be thinking about looking for a job with some of the big grain marketing firms or big manufacturers or somebody like that rather than going back on Dad's farm and hauling manure all day. Whereas if I struggled in high school, probably spent some time in welding class in G.V.S., I'd tend to go back and work on the farm and build some of my own equipment and muddle around and complain about affairs of the world.

MB: How important do you think education is to farm management?

CW: Well, today education is important to everybody, and like I indicated a minute ago, thinking young people will go to higher education to learn business management, economics, accounting, computer control, that type of thing rather than school of agriculture. And this is almost legion. It takes the same kind of training today to be successful on the farm speaking of management and controls and things like that than it does to go down here and operate a Main Street business. You see, we don't have any schools to teach hardware retailing, we don't have any schools to teach clothing retailers, we don't have any schools to teach restaurant operation. You learn business management and then you go into business. Now, there are certain basics in agriculture-- soil management, crop and livestock types, health situations that are minuscule, as important as they are they are minuscule, compared with the necessity for economic control.

MB: What do you think the future holds for farming in Knox County?

CW: Well, there will always be farming in Knox County. And again, I wish we had some figures to talk from here about the number of farms and one thing another, but. . . I don't have a thing that tells me how many acres in Knox County or anything. . . But in the overall, probably . . . I have to make a broad assumption on this . . . but I'm thinking that fifty or a hundred big productive farm operations could take care of all of Knox County's agriculture. I wish I had something that would give us numbers . . .

MB: Do you have anything from the Extension Agency?

CW: Well, they would have it, and I should have it and I haven't used it in so long I can't think where it might be. I've used that kind of thing for years in the work and I've been away from it recently. (He looks around his study.) The Extension office would have it and it should be available in the library, maybe in the Kenyon library but I'm not sure about an agriculturally oriented survey and that type of thing. But, it would be real interesting to have the record of farm numbers through the years and with that we could very easily just kind of calibrate where it's gonna go from here. And the sad part about agriculture is very few people make any projections on things like that. I always did when I was in farm equipment. They go too much on the emotional, and the Extension people and university people dodge telling John Doe out here, that's not a very productive farmer, that he better make plans to do something else because he's not going to be with it through the years. When I was in farm equipment, which would be running right parallel with agriculture, in the middle '60s we had about 800 farm equipment dealers in the state. It had been as high as 1100. And I got concerned about what was going on because I was calling on a lot of farm equipment dealers that weren't very good managers, they were kind of grease monkeys. They knew how to fix machines but they didn't know how to manage. And I did a lot of research and I came up with the fact that instead of having 800 dealers in the state all we needed was 604 was the figure I came up with (laughs) as I figured it out. And I wrapped that up in a package and I started taking it out to our dealer meetings and telling them exactly what was going on. Knox County might have had at one time 15 farm equipment dealers, maybe 20-- Danville, Martinsburg, Centerburg, Fredericktown, Utica, Mt. Vernon-- just there's one on every corner. And then if this is Knox County (points to sketch) and Mt. Vernon is here I started talking about the fact that corner county towns, Centerburg, Danville, Fredericktown and so forth were dying as business towns and all the business was coming into Mt. Vernon. And if they were out here in these corner county towns, unless it was a very unusual situation, they'd better start

making plans to get out. These figures said that twenty-five percent of the dealers, every fourth dealer, was too many. Well, when I started doing this the manufacturers, who didn't love us anyway--they kind of viewed us as a labor union for the dealers, just jumped all over my back. I was telling them how to run their business.

We kept right at it and before we got done they were inviting me to come into their dealer meetings and talk to their dealers about this type of thing. And today they're way down below 600. And when I went to the dealer convention the year before last I stood there with the man that was the head of the association, I'd hired him back through the years and he was head now, as I was back through the years, and here were all these people sitting in this meeting--maybe a hundred, a hundred fifty people. I said, "Dave, get out a piece of paper and make me a list of the people in this room that are capable of doing business the way it's supposed to be done today." He says, "You mean right now?" I said, "Yeah." I said, "I've got my list made. Now," I said, "You make one." So he started making a list and when we got done we came up between us with twenty five people.

MB: Out of how many in the room?

CW: Oh there were probably a hundred. And the rest were just hanging on by their fingertips, you know trying to keep going. And this is the same thing that's going on in agriculture at the farm level.

And there is nobody telling them information like *that!* They just let 'em die one at a time. And they could just as well get out and show some leadership and some decision and tell 'em what's going on.

MB: Who's responsibility do you think that should be?

CW: Well, I feel that it's the responsibility of the university but particularly Extension people that are working with these farmers.

And it's just as clear as looking out that window what's going to happen. I tell Mark, I said, "Mark, I don't know whether you know where you're going or not but," I said, "I know. And if you want to know I'll tell you." And we just laugh about it and go on, because they don't want to hear it. They don't want to hear it. But that it's. . . that same formula will work on the farms just the way as it did with farm equipment. Some of the best friends I've got today are people that I helped get out of business, rather than helping to perpetuate 'em when they weren't equip to do the job. But when you go to a state convention and there are a hundred people in the room and only twenty-five of them are obviously capable of coping with today's business challenge, something's wrong. The Farm Bureau

should sing this song loud and clear, and the closest they've come to it. . . when this controversy came up about the big poultry farm and a big hog farm that they want to put in up north here in Harden County and Seneca County, I think. In kind of an offhand way, and I've got clippings in here that back it up, they've said, well, there's going to be more of this. But they ought to be right out there in the front line and say, "Hey, this is where we're going. And there's no use fighting it because this is it." And instead of that, typically, not completely, but typically, they talk about perpetuating the family farm and one thing or another which is emotion and sentimentality, rather than business management.

MB: What do you think our project, our family farm project, could do to serve the family farm in the community?

CW: Well, properly organized, oriented, and documented it could highlight exactly these things that I'm talking about. They are so clear, if you want to stand out and take a broad picture of it instead of looking at these things with blinders. Now, I don't know whether your information coming from Kenyon, which is not an agricultural school, which has some benefit to it because you're not blinded by these emotional forces in the farm front. I don't know whether it would be accepted or not. It ought to come from the Dean of Agriculture, it ought to come from the head of the Rural Sociology department, it ought to come from the Agricultural Economics department and just say, "Here's the picture, and if you don't fit then let's do something else."

MB: Do you think the farmers listen to people in those positions?

CW: Again you get back to the emotional side of it. Thinking farmers will. Those that don't want to think are going to condemn the man that says this message trying to help, and he's just going to keep struggling out there 'till he's dead. Economically, if not physically. It's really kind of a sad situation, because there's need for leadership out there and . . . typically people would talk about these machinery changes and one thing another and the little changes from the trading work deal to individual farmers and so forth, but they don't get into the actual guts of the whole matter, pardon my French, they always dodge the issue before they get to where they can really tell somebody what's going on. Somebody ought to just do this same kind of a thing that I've done here so quickly and so crudely that it hardly means anything but back it up with farm numbers and sales numbers and livestock numbers and that type of thing and you can just chart it so that, my gosh, it would just be so clear. It would be so clear.

MB: (pause) Do you mind if I ask a little about the Agricultural Museum?

CW: No.

MB: I was just wondering. . . what kinds of things do you have? Do you have different exhibits that come through? Do you have some basic things that are there all the time?

CW: Everything we've got is permanently placed in there. A very few are loaners, we call them. A real nice man out here loaned us an old hearse, which is kind of an interesting thing to have but he's a collector and so he just kind of put it in as a loaner. But of the three thousand items that we have out there probably twenty-nine hundred and fifty of 'em are permanently there and all tagged with the names of the donors and in most cases an explanation of how those things were used back through the years. And I outlined all that when I started it so that everything is registered in and numbered and identified and I've seen people go through there when it was fairly young, you can hardly do it now 'cause they've got everything up on shelves and you can't get to it, but I've seen people go down through there and literally read every one of those tags to see who gave what. And only a handful of items out of that 3000 did we pay anything for at all. All the rest of it was given, outright, to the museum at no cost what so ever.

MB: And so how much contact do you have with them now?

CW: Not very much, but if your group, or anybody in your group was interested in taking pictures of say antique equipment or like that, I would like to go with them, and there'd be no problem in doing that, to explain where these machines came from and how they were used, and what it's all about.

MB: I think that would be really interesting. I think a couple of us might actually take you up on that.

CW: Yeah. I would like, if it fits at all, and we mentioned this the other day when we were visiting, to talk with your seminar group, because I think this is a very important area. And again, I can't quite answer your question, you know, *what can you do* as a group, but it's an area that needs to have some attention. And . . . my memories go back into the twenties and come into 1994, and I've just covered the whole thing almost from ox carts to airplanes. (phone rings) And I think it takes this comparative (phone rings again)

charting and observation on it to really make it meaningful you can't just look here and know what's going on. . . (picks up phone and talks for several minutes) I wish we had, and I could scrape 'em up if I. . . I don't think I've got 'em here, these numbers I keep talking about. On livestock and farms and marketing, numbers and so forth would be real interesting. . .

MB: That would be interesting to find out.

CW: It could be charted out and then if you tie this in with these more humanistic things that I've talked about here you could come out here and just put your binoculars right on the future and say this is where we're going to go. This is where we're going to go.

MB: Well, if you came into our seminar what topics would you talk about? Would you talk about what you've told me-- about the time line kind of idea or would you talk about machinery?

CW: I think I would start right here and describe this and then go from there. I think for that purpose, unless you do it, I would scrape up these figures we keep talking about for historical records and then tie the economic force into it, into this. I call it the Humanistic changes in here, and try and get them up to this 1990 point . . . another thought comes to my mind. I don't think that your group is qualified to make projections. I say this respectfully, but from a practical standpoint. I don't think they're qualified to make projections. But they could do an awful lot in this area that we're talking about and particularly these trend of figures. And then *these* could be used to talk about the political forces that you asked about and the community structure that you asked about and these could be drawn off with these population figures to back it up.

MB: Well, I will talk to the class tomorrow when we meet and, you know, mention your ideas and we'll talk about it. I would like to go to the, you know, museum and see the machinery and maybe take some people-- there are some photographers in the class so I will ask if anybody wants to go, and then, you know, talk to you about that. Do you know the names of any other people you think we should talk to? You mentioned Joe Brown.

CW: You should talk with Joe Brown, and you should talk with Dave Mussard.

MB: Could you spell the last name?

CW: M-u-s-s-a-r-d. He lives out on Miller Road. His name's in the phone book.

MB: And what's his. . .

CW: Oh, he's a top notch progressive farmer. His wife teaches at the career center and he does some teaching of agricultural classes, and he's a They've raised four boys out there and I think two of them are in Ohio State, and I don't know where the third one is, and the other one is getting ready to finish up high school here pretty soon. Just a wonderful family. But he moved up here from Delaware County where he got squeezed out by the population push, and so he's got a different viewpoint on these things than most people that you talk with in the county who have been here all their lives, because they look around and don't see any change. But it's changing and they don't know it. The other thing that might come out. . . Suppose to save time and to kind of cross check all these things you'd have Dave and Joe Brown and I and maybe a fourth panel member come in.

MB: That could be interesting. . .

CW: And we would make some basic comments on thoughts on agriculture and then we'd ask for questions from the class and toss it around.

MB: Could you think of a fourth? Did you have somebody in mind or. . . (pause) You don't have to think of anybody right this minute but if you do. . .

CW: I know some people but they're in this classification of status quos. Do you know what I mean? They're not free thinkers and Dave and Joe both are. . .

MB: Maybe it would be interesting to have somebody to offset that-- somebody who is, as you say, a status quo thinker.

CW: The one thing you don't want is-- maybe somewhere along the line you do-- but for the purpose of this kind of discussion you don't want the Farm Bureau leaders in the county-- they're all politically oriented. And, uh, you want good practical people. . . and I'm just trying to think. . . I can't come up with a fourth person.

MB: That's OK. I'll be in touch about the. . .

CW: Either Joe or Dave might have some thoughts along that line and know somebody that I'm not thinking of. There's a good dairy farmer

out here but I don't know him well enough to know how he would fit in this kind of a group. And there's a good cash crop farmer out here but he'd get mad at everything we said. And what we want, if this would transpire, would be a productive group.

MB: Of course three people is, you know. . . it doesn't have to be four.

CW: Yeah. Three would be alright. I remember years ago, I don't remember what the session was, they had some kind of a meeting at Ohio State and at the time I was in beef cattle and I edited a magazine for Charley Kettle (?) people. And I can't remember all the people they had but they had a tremendously good cattle feeder from Western Ohio and I was an editor and I think they had somebody from animal husbandry there at OSU and about four or five of us on there. And we did that, and we just had a ball. It was. . . the beef industry at the time was in a changing pattern when European breeds were coming in and being crossed with the English breeds and so forth and it was a whole new ball game and we just had more fun. We just had more fun. And I think the group got a lot out of it. And I told the fellows on the platform afterward, "You know we ought to do this once in a while just for recreation." Here was this cattle feeder that was feeding. . . (The tape runs out here. We talked for a few more minutes and then I left.)