

This interview with Mr. Fay Hooton took place at his home on Timothy Road near New Carlisle on September 28, 1978. The interviewer was Jerrold Gustafson.

FH: Farming back in the so-called horse and buggy days was an arduous task. They were long days of hard work. The neighbors were careful of each other and watched out that nothing bad ever happened to the man down the road. Us oldsters remember the joyous sides of yesterday and it's easy to forget the hazards and disappointments. As a boy I remember when we first saw the first automobile in our country and the first airplane that ever flew across our countryside. Early one Sunday morning we were getting ready for church and I was a boy of 7 or 8 years old, something like that. Probably about 6 as I recall the date. I was preparing to get the cows out of the back cow yard, bring them out through the fence and the gate through the barnyard and take them across the road to put them in the pasture. I was used to gas engines. I had heard those and I knew what they sounded like but this was an engine altogether different. It had me excited because it was new but still I knew it was an oil or gas run engine. A strange whine that I had never heard before. Now this was about 9 or 9:30 on a summer morning and I looked up over the trees and the woods across the road and here comes this airplane. It was an old biplane, I forgot the cows completely and I ran to the house to get my father and mother and my younger brother to come out and see this airplane. I had seen pictures of them in our weekly newspaper and I knew what I was lookin' at. Well if that wasn't the most interesting event in my life to see this thing flying. I didn't understand aerodynamics at all but the fact that it was flying and there was somebody in the air like the birds - I've never forgotten that picture. And we learned then in our next newspaper that this was a woman flying that plane. Her name was Ruth Wall. I may be wrong but it seems to me this was 1912 and I don't remember where she was even going but I do know that some months later she was in South Bend, Indiana and she was supposed to have a race with an Italian race driver on the racetrack in the county fairgrounds. My dad was quite interested in new and different things. He took my brother and me and we went to South Bend to see this race. Now that was a long ordeal, because South Bend was 20 miles away.

JG: How did you get there?

FH: I don't remember. Well I know in '12 or '13 we had to go in a horse and buggy because we didn't have an automobile until 1914. This could have been as late as that but I don't recall that it was, the race may have been but when I saw her in her plane I know it was earlier. Anyway we watched this race and of course the race driver he was accustomed to the car and the track and he could make the turns nicely but this gal didn't know how to turn her airplane. She could fly straight, but she didn't realize how she'd have to raise the outside wing to bank and make the turn. She was 3 racetracks out of position before she got that thing turned around. But she could fly and she came on in and landed that airplane - old rickety biplane landed it down there on the inland part of the racetrack and many, many people went down and the police had to keep them away from it for fear they'd break it. But I got to see an airplane close at hand. What an exciting bit for a youngster. Course the intricate mechanics had more appeal for me than it did for some. When I was in my first year at high school the Dowagiac Fish Bait Company had an airplane for advertising purposes, it was painted up like a fish. So they came down here and landed. I happened to be in town on my bicycle for some reason or another. This must have been about 1918 or 1919, some years later. They landed in a farmer's field where the wheat had been cut and I got on my bike. I don't believe I ever rode 22 miles faster in my life. I conned my dad out of a 5

dollar bill to ride in that airplane. He knew how I liked that. There weren't many 5 dollar bills in our pockets but he found one for me to ride in that airplane. I appreciated my father's understanding of us youngsters very very much because he probably had wished that he had had the same opportunity as a youngster. We were going to talk about farming, but that was one of the earliest events that stand out so plainly in a young man's life. I was 9 or 10 years old I 'spect when I started driving horses and farming with my dad, being the oldest in the family, and he needed the help. So I remember he showed me how to harness the smaller of the horses, which was quite a task for a little fella - to throw a harness across a horse's back.

JG: Were those big draft horses?

FH: They were draft horses but they were smaller than the big ones. You saw the Percherons, they were too big, a little boy couldn't possibly get the harness on those. We had some - we had 2 of those large horses, but 2 or 3 much smaller horses that would weigh 1200 pounds. Those were the horses we'd use for the buggies. When we'd drive the buggy to church Dad liked one of the light horses. He taught us, he'd show us how to harness these horses, not scare them, walk into the stall beside those great big feet, summers we were always barefooted. He'd show us how to harness them and of course we'd been feeding them and currying them and getting used to them so we could start helping him with his work. One day he took me out and showed me how to hitch them to the plow. This was the riding plow, which was the same model, I remember, invented by a man in this immediate area. He lived out north of Hudson Lake. Oliver Chilled Plow built this - whether they bought up his patent and he had some sort of a royalty - I don't know what arrangement he had but the Oliver was a riding plow, a single furrow plow I'm guessing now - probably a 14 inch plow because it was pulled with 3 horses. I think it was a 14 inch plow and it had controlled depth, all that stuff was built into it. Quite a nice plow, long tongue that stood between 2 horses and then the third horse was off to the left. But they had triple trees hooked onto it so it evened the load for all 3 horses. I hooked up that plow and Dad'd been out in that field the day before and broken the ground and got the plowing started. I was excited to climb on that plow and take up those 2 reins and 3 horses in front of me and I was supposed to be their boss. It was a weakening feeling really because I didn't feel equal to what the demands I thought would be. They were gentle horses, I wasn't afraid of that. Anyway we took off and Dad walked beside and he talked to me about what this lever was for and how this moves forward to make the plow go deeper, pull it back and make it go shallower and I said, "Well, how will I know?" He said, "You want to keep the furrow you're building very nearly the same size as I put in here yesterday. So you can see if the depth isn't coming out right, stop once in a while and look at it and see what you're doing and then make any necessary changes to accomplish it." Oh, I imagine we were plowing 8 or 9 inches deep, something like that, and that's a lot of work to turn that much furrow over. It was very rocky ground and we'd hit stones. That day before noon when we'd come in for our lunch, this plow hit a stone that didn't move. All it did was just lift that plow up and the horses immediately stopped after I became airborne, they stopped. It actually lifted that plow up, raised my seat and just catapulted me up just right down behind the horses. Was I scared! I 'spect I stood there and scrambled out of there and stood off on the I stood there and scrambled out of there and stood off on the side and cried about it I was so scared. They didn't hurt me, they knew, they knew what had to be done. They were gentle animals. Nothing got hurt except my pride, ha. I'll never forget that, that was sumpin' else. Dad looked the plow over in the back and it didn't look like it was hurt so I stayed off for a little bit,

had him go ahead until that plow got back in the ground and then I climbed on again. All of Dad's horses were gentle, he didn't want to have anything that was dangerous, not only for himself but for anyone else. Because occasionally they'd break through the fence and get out on the roads free and go someplace else, go visit the neighbors. I would walk all day behind those horses. The worst sunburn I ever got in my life was on a cloudy day, not realizing the various sun's rays that come through an overcast sky. I figured since I can't see the sun I don't need to put a shirt on. That cost me, I learned on that one. Anyway we'd harrow the ground and we'd go out and help carry some wheat to Dad's grain drill or corn to the corn planter. The corn planter was a 2 row piece of machinery that had the mechanism to plant 2 or 3 kernels of corn every 3 feet. Now to accomplish that there was a long wire stretched the full length of the field and every 3 feet on that wire was a knot. The wire ran through part of the mechanism and when it came to a knot it would trip the mechanism and slide on by and when it tripped that mechanism it would drop 3 kernels of corn in the ground. It was planted in 2 rows 36 inches apart. The purpose was to cultivate the length of the field as well as to be able to cultivate across the field. So it behooved the man running that planter to be sure that when he started that wire that had those knots on, it went in the right place from one end of the field every time, to carefully start that wire from a fence row at the end of the field so that those knots were in line with themselves as you went across the field. That way you can cultivate 2 ways and keep all the weeds out. Nowadays nobody ever bothers with anything like that. It took some doing for the young men to learn how to do that. But it was a nice job to see such a field, they called it "checking" corn. Look down the long rows, see it in line, then you turn the corner and go the other way and see the rows nice and straight. There was some pride in a man's effort to do that well. Wheat planting in the fall wasn't quite so arduous because of the grain drill. All these, of course, were horse drawn. We'd put the grain in the drill and it would plant that wheat a couple of inches in rows, something like 6 inches apart. It was just solid planting, no cultivating of that at all. The life was hard. There were hot dusty days. You'd have to watch over the animals, give the horses a drink and when it was real hot we'd pull the plow out of the ground or whatever we were doing and drive under a shade tree and let 'em stand and rest in the shade for awhile. We'd take jugs of water out into the fields for ourselves but the horses never would get a drink until we'd come in at noontime or in the evening, not unless we were real close to the house then we'd often give them a drink. Those days weren't easy.

JG: What time did you start in the morning, real early?

FH: Yes, because we had quite a lot of work to do in the house, around the house before we'd go to the field. There would be the feeding and watering of all the livestock, which is the hogs and the cattle and then get the horses ready, clean the barn, there was manure always that had to be cleaned up. Cows to be milked, milk to be taken care of. That was all part of the morning's chores. Feed the hogs and see that their watering trough had water. We had to carry the hog's water in buckets from our windmill, from the pump. We didn't have any pipes underground, so it was quite hard work. Then when we'd get the animals fed, milking done, horses harnessed and ready to go we'd go in and eat our breakfast. And by that time you're ready for it, too. And you could eat a big one and a good one. Fried potatoes and bacon and eggs and gravy on the potatoes or on the bread. Oh, we had a real meal in the morning and it's a strange thing, to this day I can't quite forget that first meal. Better be a good one because then I can go through the rest of the day then without too much anxiety. And I still do eat a big breakfast. Many folks think they're foolish

to, but I'm quite active and I burn up a lot of it yet. But at any rate, it was quite a lot of effort in the morning, throw the hay down from the hayloft, feed these animals, carry corn from the corn crib for the hogs and we'd shell and crack corn for the chickens and the ducks. In the summertime we didn't give the horses very much grain, the cattle either. They didn't get much grain 'cause they generally had pretty good pasture green forage out in the fields. Corn would produce too much internal body heat for the horses when they're out having to work in the fields. We generally fed them oats and dry hay and they got along very well. The cattle, they had mostly pasture and a little bit of grain. By this time there were feed mills, the local elevators would often have a mill where you could grind corn rather finely and mix wheat or oats with it, whatever you wish, to prepare what now has become a first-rate industry of prepared feeds having all the nutrients and roughage and things your animals need. In those days they didn't know anything about that, but they could grind and mix their feeds well. The cattle would get a little of this sometimes but the hogs just had ear corn, just the regular ear as we'd picked it by hand. Then into the field and do this day's work and then when we'd come in at night the whole thing had to be done all over again. Cattle brought in from the pasture, which they were enjoying now 'cause the sun had gone down and it's cooled off and they'd like to be out. The hogs would be wallowing in the back yard and when it was hot we'd see that they got water so they could lay in the mud hole and keep cool. Dirty - you'd think, "Oh, I could never eat another pork chop." Ha ha. Well, it was an air conditioning system for them. As boys we didn't think about this, we thought, "Oh, those dirty pigs." But it had a specific purpose. They'd also like to lay in a pond; if a farmer had a pond he was fortunate. It got to be quite a wallow around the outside but anyway the hogs were kept cool and as a consequence, happier, put on more fat, and grew faster. And in the ponds, when we had them, this was where the ducks and geese liked to be. We always had ducks and geese and chickens - waterfowl liked to play around out there with the hogs. About the fowl in the farmyard: those days we had to watch our chickens and the little ducks from the hawks and owls. I've known big hawks to fly down right in the middle of the day - right down in the chicken yard and grab a hen and take off. And Dad would run to get his shotgun but he was always too late. The hawk had gone too far. We had lots of red fox and possum that'd raid the chicken yard, get into the nesting hens, setting there with generally 20 or 21 eggs. She'd set there all spread out, hatching these eggs and that's what the fox'd like to get into. He'd like to come and disturb her and grab an egg and run off with it if she flew off the nest. Weasels would do this. Well, anyway then came the fall and after we'd get done with this grain we'd go off to husk the corn. The wheat was cut with a binder, made up into bundles. We'd set those into shocks. Oh, what did we have, 12 to 13 bundles of wheat in each shock. And the reason for that, the binder would cut the wheat just right so it didn't shell grain out into the ground that wasn't ready to dislodge from the stalk. So we cut that wheat when it was a little bit green, as I'll refer to it, and then we walked behind, my brother and I, when Dad was cutting this and he'd drop these bundles from his binder so he'd form a row as he'd go across the field, he'd drop 'em at the same place each time he'd go around the field and we'd come and set these up in the shock, 11 or 12 of them standing with their heads up. And then we'd bend and take another one in our arms, break the straw where it was tied around the middle with a twine string. Each one of these bundles that was tied by the machine, we'd form that straw to sort of an umbrella shaped thing and we'd lay those on the top of the shock to keep the rain from getting down into these other bundles that were standing on end with the heads up. They called that "capping." So that was hard, hot work. Wow! Here we're barefooted and that wheat stubble that's been cut off just hit our bare legs about halfway to the knees. And we'd get our legs scratched

and cut - gee, that hurt. I remember how I used to dread wheat shocking time because it was too hot to wear shoes and if we'd tie our pants legs, and we often wore knee pants anyway, we figured by the time we got done shocking wheat we had some pretty rough looking lower legs and they were sore. And then when it stood 2 or 3 lower legs and they were sore. And then when it stood 2 or 3 weeks, all dried out, it would shrink a little because it wasn't quite ripe when we cut it. Then we'd start the threshing. The whole community would get together. This was an association. These men had organized themselves and picked certain ones who were most apt on certain jobs. One would run the steam engine and another run the separator into which the farmers would throw their grain and it chewed it all up and separated the straw from the wheat and blew it into a big stack and dumped straw from the wheat and blew it into a big stack and dumped the wheat out into a wagon. The man who ran the steam engine, he'd run it every year, he had to know what he was doing.

JG: Who owned this steam engine?

FH: These were owned by the men in the community, and ours here was the South Woods Thrashing Company because we were known in this area as the south woods as compared to New Carlisle which was the center of the community. We're south of there and with this woods we became known as the South Woods. They built a building to house this steam engine and the wheat thresher, or separator as we called it. These were manufactured in La Porte at the Rumely Manufacturing Company. These were housed in a building the men had got together and constructed in a quarter of a field of one of the farmer's. He said, "Here - build it here. It's not mine, but here it's in the center of our area." These were fun days, too - thrashing. There could be 25 or 30 men working together every day and when the first farmer's grain was all threshed they'd hook the separator onto the steam engine and they'd chug down the road to the next farmer's, pull into his yard and set up all the equipment, get the long belt from the steam engine hooked up to the separator and anchor all this. Pretty soon here comes the loads of these bundles of shocks of wheat that the boys had put together 2 or 3 weeks earlier. They'd haul them up and separate the grain from the straw. Until lunchtime. We called it dinner and if you think a bunch of folks couldn't eat, you should have seen that crowd. There may be a half dozen of the local women get together and come and help this gal get dinner for the threshers. There were always 2 and sometimes 3 tables of men. Now what I'm referring to is a table that would handle 10 or 12 at a time. Generally 2 tables would take care of them. The young men, how they'd run to get washed in time to get to the first table. That way they had some time to rest while the second table was eating their chow.

JG: What kind of food would you have?

FH: My golly! Everything! Chicken, ham, roast of beef, sweet potatoes, reg'lar potatoes, mashed potatoes, lots of butter, plenty of gravy, 2 or 3 kinds of bread. Now this is all homemade, they didn't buy any of this stuff. Green beans or corn, peas - all the vegetables. Then when come dessert time, there'd be 2 or 3 kinds of pies, some cake, coffee, milk, lots of times iced tea. Oh my gosh, what those farmers put away - it was awful!

JG: Did you get any work done in the afternoon?

FH: After about 2:30, ha, it took awhile to get past that, but gracious, was that good. Those men'd get together and agitate one another -aggravate - fierce. Just great big jokes and they'd get each other laughing. Those are the fun things you remember, and the days of blood sweat and tears. Sometimes you forget the sad things. We never had any serious accidents in our threshing group that I remember. No one was ever hurt badly. Oh, there were some times they did get hurt, but not too severely. Then when it come to the corn gathering in the fall, that was done by hand. My Dad and my brother who is the next oldest after me, Dad would husk corn during the day 'cause we were in school, but come evening when we would get home, why we sometimes didn't even change our school clothes. We went right out to the field to help Dad shuck corn. We called it shucking husking is a better word. And then Saturdays and sometimes we were infidels on Sunday, because if it was a good day, there was a lot of corn and every ear of corn had, to be picked by hand and hauled back to the house in the wagon and with scoop shovels thrown into the corn crib. There were times we'd cut corn in shocks. Cut it just a little before it's ripe so the ears didn't fall off and we'd have 100 of these stalks in the shock tied either with a string around it or we'd make our own ties with a cornstalk. See, they were a little green yet. And then we'd let them stand out there and then we could haul those in during the winter time and husk them in the barn when there was bad weather outside. Then also some of the farmers would have the shredder - this same steam engine and that corn shredder - come to the house and shred this corn. Couple or 3 wagons'd haul these shocks in from the field, into the shredder and it would cut the stocks up into, oh, pieces 3/4 inch long and it would blow them out into the man's hay mow, he'd feed his horses this in the wintertime. That's good winter feed, good dry feed for the cattle. But when I was just a youngster the people in the community would often get together and have a husking bee. They'd haul in lots of these shocks of corn, they'd be laying on the barn floor and men and women'd get together and they'd husk corn and throw them in baskets or bags and carry it to the corn crib. And you know the local gossip. Everybody had to tell something on somebody or about somebody and predict the weather and oh, all kinds of things.

JG: What were some of their ways to predict the weather?

FH: Oh, the color of the wooly-worms, just them little caterpillars and that's carried on to this day. Lot of times you'd hear this - if he's all black it's one thing and the neighbor down the road knows if he's all black it's sumpin' else. I think that their accuracy in predicting the winter was just as good as it is today because somebody always had to be right. We had a lot of things, social activities going on every week. The church, of course, was the center of most of the social gatherings. We all went to church and Sunday school in the mornings and that could be a 2 or a 2 1/2 hour ordeal because when we'd get the morning chores done in the wintertime, well in the summer, too, well this was pretty much a church-going community. Get the horse and buggy or the surrey fixed up, we needed a surrey later as my brothers and sisters began to arrive in due time. Dad and Mom'd sit in the front seat and try to keep the kids in back from fightin' while they're going to church, keep their good, nice clean clothes from getting all dirty. Mother used to be so particular about that. At any rate it was an interesting morning deal. Then often in the evening they'd come back to church again for another session. Wednesday nights was always reserved for prayer meetin'. Well, I don't know really how serious the religious philosophy of these people was, I suspect sometimes it was the get together was the most important feature of it all. The preacher often lived on donations, very little more than donations. Gracious sakes, I've known the folks to tell about in the early days and some of my later days, when if the preacher

got as much wages as 4, 500 dollars a year, that's all the people could afford. That's all the money they had. But gracious - chickens and fruit and vegetables and the parsonage that was furnished - everything but salt and pepper was brought to 'em in lieu of dollars. So when we read the statistics of money, why the poor man was starving. Well he didn't do too bad in a great sense because everything he needed to eat and if the kids needed some clothes there was always somebody that outgrew some pretty nice knee pants and things like that the preacher's boys and girls could have. The church was oft-times the center of activity because everybody went to it and it was a good excuse to go back again whenever there was an opportunity. The young folks always enjoyed the box socials or "sociables" as we called them. That was part of the sparkin' days of the teen- age. We'd have to have one of these at least twice a year. Sometimes I think we had more than that because the young folk wanted more of them. This is a case where a young lady would fix up about a shoe box sized thing full of her goodies, the things she liked to make: cookies and real nice sandwiches and have that box decorated just beautifully with crepe paper and ribbons and flowers in the right place and everything. She didn't tell anybody what it was going to be about because this had to be a secret. There was a dozen or 15 of those teenage girls and some of the mothers would put their pretty little boxes into the deal and nobody knew about this except the mothers and the dads. Well then we'd all get together, generally at the church, and they'd have an auction - sellin' these boxes, and nobody's supposed to know who belonged to the box. Well, those boys, they had a long way of finding out from the younger brothers what Mary-how she wrapped them up. They found out. And the bidding! Those young bucks would bid on those boxes - 4 and 5 and 6 dollars and in the meantime you could look at the young lady and her face was just as red as the sunset. Her boyfriend knew it was her box and as you got to eat with whoever's box you got, well she would want her boyfriend to get it. Some of the other boys who would bid would want to buy her box. Oh, it was fun. And then once in a while they'd bring in one of these mother's pretty boxes that had been fixed up. Now she had things to eat in hers! Now you can believe me - she'd know from years back. And they'd get going, and you'd watch the eyes of some of these young men, they didn't know, now they were lost, the word hadn't got around. Whose box was that? And one or 2 of them would bid a little bit and then one of the older men he'd throw a bid in that would aggravate and antagonize the young men. It was fun. Aw, that was fun. And then whoever bought your box, you ate your supper with her. So Tommy, he wanted to buy Mary's box, and by George they'd force Tommy to pay through the nose to get Mary's box. This all went into the church coffer or something of that sort. It was a fun thing and people enjoyed one another. They made their own fun. You couldn't buy anything, you couldn't get out to anyplace to spend money. In the summertime we had what you call a Chautauqua. That name originates from a town in New York state up in the Finger Lakes region, Chautauqua, New York. How that was put together - it was maybe a week or 10 days every night of some kind of entertainment. They'd pitch a big tent and sell tickets for this system of programming. One night could be a lecture on some very interesting subject, next time a soprano from Chicago would come out and sing songs all evening. Beautiful voices that nobody here had ever heard before. And then a couple of clowns would put something on another time and then maybe there'd be a dance team. It was a sort of vaudeville, really. Of course by today's level it was probably quite a simple thing but to the country folk those days it was a tremendous thing and they planned for a long time ahead to go to Chautauqua. And there's still one of those being operated down here in Remington, Indiana. I believe that's the only place in Indiana. That was a big event. Then of course was the local fair in the summertime. There was horse races and races for the kids and balloon ascensions and all kinds of things like that. That's long before the

livestock shows began to enter into the county territory. The merchants began to enter into the county territory. The merchants would have special booths a little like they do yet today. They had horse-pulling; they tried competitions with each other to see who had the strongest 2 horse team. Course the local taverns were going and flourishing in those days and the constables had a lot of fun with those who over-indulged, ha ha.

JG: Did you go into town much?

FH: No. Not till we moved into this house right here when I was 12 years old. And when we came in here we got to town about once a month - now that's 2 1/2 miles. Money - as such- there just wasn't much. And we'd get a quarter and we'd go to town with Dad. Oh, he'd go to town often - but he had to keep his kids occupied because by this time there was getting to be quite a bunch of us around here. It started out with me and when they got done there were 11 in our family, so you can see he and Mom had their hands full, just feeding and keeping shoes on that bunch of youngsters. So Dad would go to town and go to the bank, do the necessary buying, harness repairs or maybe take 2 horses in to have their shoes put on for the fall work. Us boys, we kept busy out here. He kept us busy so we didn't get to town too often. But when I lived in the house prior to this which is just diagonally across this next 4 mile, well gee whiz, 2 or 3 times in the summer we'd be in town. We didn't know town - we really didn't - and we were struck with awe to be in town where these other people lived. Different. The boys and girls didn't have jobs to do and they played together more often than we had time to and we were just out in left field and that's where the term "hayshakers," you know, "Farm boy don't know anything." Well, in those days, by George, he didn't know very much. I remember one time buying a new pencil, and that was a nice pencil, cost a nickel. And that was the prettiest thing I'd had in a long nickel. And that was the prettiest thing I'd had in a long time. I don't know how long I saved that before I even sharpened it. It was too pretty to spoil. It had a nice soft lead and I liked to write and I liked to read. I'd read everything I could get hold of, sometimes to my father's dismay 'cause he thought I ought to be working and here he is with a book in his hand. But at any rate it was joyful. Life in the country was hard work, but it was joyous. People looked out for one another and watched out for one another very, very closely. And if there was going to be a baby born down the road a little bit, the womenfolks in the neighborhood watched for the mother, see that everything was right, and of course when the baby's born, there weren't telephones those earlier days so one of her kids would go on up and tell the neighbors, "Well, I've got a little brother at my house." Immediately they'd ride down and they'd come in and see what they could do about sharing the youngsters. "Well, let Mary and Jenny come to our house and Tommy and Bill go down to the other house with those boys. We'll take care of the kids while you're getting back on your feet." They watched out for each other very carefully. And those days are gone, pretty much gone except in case of emergencies. Nowadays it's got to be something very serious or they don't interfere. There wasn't much money made. If a man was frugal and watched himself and didn't buy too much, kept the machinery he needed and watched out that he didn't sell good horses to get one just a little bit better, he could acquire more land, new land. Several farmers in this area became quite wealthy as land owners. Parts of what is now the park and the Bendix Development Center, that land that makes that was owned by Mrs. Crouch, Mr. and Mrs. Newton Rogers and Oscar Hooton.

JG: Is that your dad?



FH: No, he was my, let me think, he must have been my father's cousin, my father's 2nd or 3rd cousin. He lived just south of what is the Bendix Woods County Park. He had a large holding I don't know what his acreage was 300 or something - 350 acres.

JG: Was that a typical size?

FH: No, it was larger than normal. The other farm we lived on over there was 80 acres. When my father moved here and bought this from his father, my grandfather, this was 100. Across the field and across the road here was 160. Immediately east of us was 40. Now those were very frugal people who didn't plan on doing too much of anything spectacular. North of us here was another 160 of which half of it was in woods, which was helpful because most of the homes were heated with wood in those days. When there was quite a little of it yet and they were clearing land, it was nice to have. Coal then came into the picture for home heating a little later. An interesting backup to the home we lived in before 1918 - the German family Hostetler - Alvin Hostetler - lived across the road and he had quite a large family in later years, in the corner of his wood lot - we called it Alvin's Wood - it was probably 15 acres - but in the corner was all this old farm machinery. 15 acres - but in the corner was all this old farm machinery. As I remember now I wish I'd known what the future would hold and that I had that old stuff in there. I was just a child then, but I remember seeing one of the old McCormick reapers - one of the very first McCormick reapers sittin' in the corner of the woods rusting away. Oh! It seems such a pity to not be able to forecast the future. I think of that now, that old reaper with its big arms that could sweep down. I have pictures of that and I know that's just what set out there in that woods and I haven't seen one since in any museum. I know there are some but I've never seen 'em. The farm children, the neighbor children went back and forth. We lived together, worked together, played together. Imaginations of us youngsters just built up the futures - aw - our minds just wandered and we had a great time.

JG: What kinds of games did you play?

FH: Duke on the rock. Now this is a little bit rough - it's comparable to today's hockey, not quite but almost as dangerous. We'd choose up sides depending on how many there were in the crew - 3 or 4 on each side. Out in the center would be a stone. Somebody was "it." He had to be the culprit. So he put his stone on the big one, that's the duke sitting on the rock and the gang from this side would toss their rock to try to knock duke off there and if they could knock it off they're supposed to run quick and grab one of them other kids and bring 'im back before the guy got his duke back on the rock. Now those darn rocks were as big as your fist - the bigger boys would throw a bigger stone because they wanted to be sure to get duke off. Aw, I'll tell you we got some men that really got hurt but it was fun. Then in the evening there were regular house games, now what could some of those? Old Maid was one of them - we played Parcheesi and then the older ones that liked a little sparkle in life, they'd spin the bottle and whoever got it pointed to would run and get a kiss from the girl who'd spun the bottle, you know this kind of thing, that would build a little excitement into them. I don't know what all we played. Baseball, and in the community pretty good men played, it was comparable to sandlot, and later in the era of travel, when those men began to have automobiles they began to get into traveling. They'd go 20-25 miles on Sunday after-to get into traveling. They'd go 20-25 miles on Sunday afternoons to play a ballgame. Of course there were some wagers put on them too, they didn't go for

nothing, they hoped to win. But that was big man's stuff to me as a little fellow. I'd gone with Dad to some of those - he liked to play ball. Basketball hadn't entered the picture- football was unheard of.

JG: How about hunting and fishing?

FH: Hunting and fishing were very important. I remember Dad taught us how to use our guns. When I was 12 years old I was hunting squirrels, had traps out, had dreams of catching foxes. We'd catch rabbits and possums and raccoons, mink once in a while and those are pretty wily guys but my brother, next'n younger'n I, we had a lot of traps out. There was a lot of game then. We'd see lots of geese flying through the country- side in those days. And they'd land in here. I saw my father shoot a goose one time, way up in the air, beautiful bird shoot a goose one time, way up in the air, beautiful bird flying through. He wanted to get a goose and he fired away and, by George, if one didn't fall out of the middle of that flock, fell right on a hillside and rolled down into a pond. Now this was right on our farm, across the road from a neighbor's house and when we retrieved that goose, one pellet had hit that goose in the head. One of the many pellets in that shotgun. So it was strictly an accident that the goose ever was in that place at the wrong time. Until later years ever was in that place at the wrong time. Until later years I never shot a goose but lately I do enjoy goose hunting- more to see the geese, listen to them and watch them play than anything else. Squirrels, lots of squirrels, rabbits. No deer. There wasn't a deer in this county those days. And now there are lots of them. The fathers taught their boys how to hunt and how to fish. We'd go fishing with Dad back in the country lakes and if there were no people we'd go swimming. Didn't think to take the swimmin' suits, we'd go swimmin' anyhow. But there wasn't anybody around, nobody to be embarrassed by us or be bothered by us. It was fun catching sunfish and a few bluegill. Dad wasn't enough of a fisherman to be a bass fisherman or to have the equipment to go into things like we have in the Great Lakes now - salmon - there was nothing like that. Lots of living off the land. Bees, find a bee tree in somebody's woods, go and ask the farmer, "What about going along with me and let's cut that bee tree this winter." The man that owned the woods didn't realize that it was there. Some of us youngsters hunting found it. So the 2 dads would fell that tree in the wintertime and we'd have honey all over the place.

JG: What other kinds of activities would you have?

FH: Yes, we had to take care of the animals and do our chores and as I mentioned a bit ago we had the husking bee where people would get together. There weren't too many other outdoor activities, there was skating. Yes, the folks would get together on these ponds, like this pond where the goose fell into. We'd get skates; somehow or other our fathers would find some way to buy us some skates - probably a dollar and a half a pair of skates, clamp on, and we'd go down and shovel and sweep off the snow off the ice and everybody'd skate. And on the snow hill up on the flat ground we'd play what they called Fox and Geese. A great big circle, oh maybe 50 feet in diameter and the boys would walk around scuffin' their feet to get the snow cleared out and make this big circle and then cut like an 8 piece pie. Somebody again was "it" and you were supposed to catch this guy or girl, the only place they could run was on these lines, paths in the snow. If he was smart, the "fox" the guy who was it, would get a bunch of these people-the "fox" the guy who was it, would get a bunch of these people- the geese - all plugged up. If you'd get a little slow girl in front who couldn't run and get the big ones behind who couldn't go by, the "fox"

would catch one. That was Fox and Geese, the "fox" would stand in the middle and try to catch one of the geese on the outside. There were a lot of tricks. It was fun. The kids would get together and make their own fun, formulate rules for some game and just have a lot of fun. Skating was fun. Sliding downhill with sleds, lots like that. Nobody had any skis, didn't know about them.

JG: What would you say would have been your favorite chore, the work activity you enjoyed most?

FH: That's a hard one to say. I haven't thought on that for years. I imagine handlin' the horses. They seemed to be intelligent and understanding - more so than cows. Horses wouldn't get out - they'd reach over the fence and they'd break the fence down a bit but they didn't intend to break it down so they could get out. Cattle will do this - they seem to find a hole in a fence and they just keep making it bigger so they can get through. My brother and I got a little switching one day. In the dry summer weather when the pasture was down, it was up to the boys to herd the cattle on the roads to get them to where they could eat the grass or what- ever was available on the roadway. Well this often would happen in the latter part of the summer when the new wheat was coming up. Earlier in the summer the wheat hadn't gotten ripened but it was big - we didn't pay attention and the cows could get away from us and get into the neighbors' wheat. He could just raise a ruckus about that sort of stuff. Well, John and I didn't pay enough attention one day and we were playin' too much and instead of having a boy on each end to watch the cattle, we got together to talk and play and the cattle then were unguarded on that far end. They got in our neighbor's wheat and I don't know how long they'd been in there but pretty soon here comes Dad and when he found us the cows were still in the wheat and we didn't know it. And I'll tell you what - the backs of our legs got some pretty good switchin' all the way home because those cows had spoiled a lot of Amos's wheat and we were directly responsible for it. We deserved a switchin' for that. Another of our boyhood friends who lived down the road - talk about poison ivy. "Oh, that stuff isn't poison," John told us, "look here." He reached up into the stuff and got a whole handful of leaves and rubbed them on his arm to show us that it wasn't poison. In about 4 days I never felt so sorry for a boy in all my life. He was swollen and blistered from hand to shoulder. It was poisonous and John found it out in the worst way. He's still living - in New Carlisle. I see him once in a while. The winter entertainment, we talked about maple syrup in the springtime. Right across the road from here was the maple syrup evaporator, a real nice maple grove. Oh, there were a lot of those then because that was a good source of sugar through the season. Sorghum - now in a few days comes quite a sorghum festival in St. Joe County. We grew the sorghum which was planted in rows much the same way corn is now. They called that gridding about 36 inches apart - but cultivated only the one way. And those stalks were oft times only 3 or 4 inches apart, they grow quite thickly. But way up on top of the stalk would be a whole head of fine small seeds. Well, anyway the boys and girls would take sticks and break off those blades. And then my brother John and I, we'd go along with a corn knife And then my brother John and I, we'd go along with a corn knife this got to be quite hard work, cuttin' these tops off. Then we'd cut the stalks in bundles and lay 'em on the wagon and take 'em to the neighbors and run 'em through the sorghum press, then cook the sorghum down and make some awful nice molasses. Pretty good stuff. Again, learning to live off the land. Let the earth produce the food from the same place as we come from. Fundamentally we all come from the same spot. At any rate, in the wintertime the sorghum cookies and the maple syrup festivals in the spring

were all part of the winter activities, and the box socials we mentioned earlier. Other than that the church was the center of our community activities. Families would have different kinds. Mom would read to us children. She read to us very, very much. Dad was often pretty tired when he'd come in from his days of being out in the woods helping the neighbors cut wood and he'd come home tired and he could sit down by the stove and fall asleep. Mother didn't have much time with 11 of us to look after. Up at 4:00 in the morning and she didn't get to bed till 11:00 at night. That was a 7 day ritual. Course most of us admire our mothers; I think if anyone deserves to be sainted our mothers deserve it. My mother was one of them. Sew the dresses for the girls, patch the boys' socks, patches on all the overall's knees. Dad would take the shoes when they began to come apart and he'd sew 'em together, he had a cobbler's knack for the different sizes of shoes. He'd cut out a leather sole and nail it back on. Self-sustaining. Very much. These attachment, I think, these things hold people together. If we could have more of that, our crime wave, I think, would be much, much reduced. Families today need more of that, its good. I remember in 1918, speaking of farm activities, what was called then - hmmm, I can't think of the name now, but it was the forerunner of what is now the 4-H.

JG: The Grange?

FH: No, it was youngster's activities. It was young folks like the 4-H workers, all youth work. 1918, this was being started in South Bend. It had run awhile and I remember a county agent had come to the farm and I got to know him. I liked him. Dad was just startin' in on dairy cattle and I said, "Dad, I'd like to take a calf to the fair." So we looked around at all the little heifer calves that Dad had. Now these were Holsteins- dairy cattle - and I picked out one that looked good, had a pretty good temperament and had good conformation, the back was nice and straight and it looked like it had a pretty good chest and rib cage. So I groomed her, she was a pretty little gal and I got to kinda liking her and whether Dad had somebody with a truck or we put her on a wagon and took her to South Bend, I don't remember. But anyway we got to the fair and it was a big thing for a country kid - this was 1918 in the fall. Well, anyway I won 1st prize and I thought I was really some-Well, anyway I won 1st prize and I thought I was really some- thing and I won a free trip to Purdue University and I stayed a week with other youngsters who had won 1st prize in their various categories. Well, down there we were exposed to the Department of Agriculture as it was in those days. It gave us a pretty fair insight on what higher education is about, so that was quite something else. But to back up just a little bit: the reason I won 1st prize, my calf was the only entry. Ha, ha. The only entry in that particular feature, Dad laughed about that, so did I. Nobody else had a dairy calf so all I could do was get 1st place. Things changed, didn't take long before that got changed around. I don't know what the records down there show but I'd like to look at that sometime to see what they look like - 60 years ago this fall. 60 years ago! Who'd ever think so much time'd pass? But some things are so indelibly implanted in our minds we just can't forget them. The weddings. Aw, that was something else. Anybody getting married, that was bedlam. How they'd get together and give those young folks a send-off. The noise and the harassment was terrible. The things that these young farmers would think about and the things they'd do was sumpin' else.

JG: What'd they do?

FH: Oh, one I remember so well, this young fellow was a little fiery, he had a feisty temperament anyway and the gal he married was the most beautiful gal to me; they were some 10 years older than me. They were married here at the church right here on the corner. He knew that for him this was going to be a rough go because he'd poured the oil on too many people in the past. And he knew they'd get to him. I don't know how he got away but he took that gal of his right out of the churchyard, over the fence, right out into the middle of this field - great big rock sittin' there. There he stayed. He wasn't gonna let anybody get him in a wagon. And they gathered round and tried to talk him out of it. "Come along, have fun with us." Hnuh-uh. And he was just big enough that nobody was gonna tackle with him. He was afraid they were gonna take her away from him and keep them separated for a while. He didn't want any of that. I'll never forget that. A friend of ours that was in my Sunday school class, still one of my best friends, lived over here on this hill in the Bendix Woods County Park, the only son of the Rogers family. He was a prankster but he was gentle about it. Nobody ever did mean things. But they were kind of aggravating once in a while. He was married and had a couple of kids and moved on down south of us here toward Walkerton. And this gang of ours went down there - everybody liked Clark Rogers so well and they still do, Clark and Ruth are pretty swell folk to us oldsters. But anyway he moved down there on a farm and he rented the farm and was trying to make a simple living like most all the farmers did back then, oh we were beginning to be grown up now, this was gettin' in the latter 20s, early 30s. So anyway we go down there to visit him and he wasn't home, so what do we do? The whole gang of us, we pick all the wood that he had cut, this was in the fall. We gathered all of his wood piles and load them on his porches at his house, in front of all his doors. He couldn't get in his house when he got back from wherever he was, didn't make any difference. And the wood we carried, there were 5 of us and I 'spect we worked an hour and a half to get his house plugged up. When the guy come home, he knew who'd been there. And of course he was part of one of the crew one Halloween time when we went to visit one of the neighbors-one Halloween time when we went to visit one of the neighbors- pull a prank on them really. And they were gone when we cased the place. We knew when to go. We disassembled his wagon, took all the wheels off, took the wagon box off, took it apart and with ladders some of the men got up on top of the barn and pulled those parts up there, put 'em all back together again astraddle the peak of that man's barn roof. Now this was just plain darn mean. Didn't destroy a thing, but I don't know how in the world he ever got it down again. These are the kinds of things that we used to pull on one another. They never hurt anybody, but they aggravated them something fierce once in a while. Oh, the Halloween deal was upsetting "johns" and this kind of stuff. Go into New Carlisle with a bunch of farm boys and pull a dozen of those things and set one right down in the middle of the street. This had been done. Course the poor gals in the morning that might need the use of this house might not get any. That's another story. You see they never destroyed anything but they were right on the verge of it sometimes. And you can imagine tempers would jump once in a while. They'd like to pull tricks on the man who'd get mad. It wasn't fun if he didn't fly up about it, it wasn't worth doing again. They never hurt anybody, there'd be a fight every now and again but not much.

JG: How were the county agents accepted when they first came around?

FH: Let me think now. I don't remember when they came in because it was before this man, but E.C. Byrd was his name. Okay. E.C. Byrd, he was a very likeable man. Diplomatic, stable and he helped the farmers - he'd come out and talk to them. That's how we got acquainted with him and

I liked him, that's what got me into this 4-H thing. In those days the county agent came out to the farms instead of the people going in to see them. And the county fair back in those days was pretty much more of a commercialized entertaining deal and for the youngsters, bringing that calf like I did, there wasn't too much of that yet. It was strictly done for the farmers and there was nothing for the kids. But it has grown. Oliver Chilled Plow Works would have all their plows out there. Rumely's would have the steam equipment and the Oil Pull Tractor on display. Threshing equipment, corn huskers, quarter haulers, forestry, the wood workers tools that were being developed. It was pretty commercialized and we'd like to go through them because everybody used that stuff - it was part of our everyday life. And nowadays it's probably 90% of the people who go to the county fair are not farm people. When Mr. Byrd would come out from his office to see my dad it was an event to me. The county school superintendant would come to our county school house down here. All the youngsters looked at him with fear because he was the big boss. He was the teacher's boss and the teacher was a very boss. He was the teacher's boss and the teacher was a very important person to us. But when Mr. Longfield would come out, everybody would sit up straight in their seat and nobody would whisper no how. He had a bearing that seemed to do this to kids. He was a good man but just his stature and his position was awesome to the little folk. I had several schoolmasters while I was going to this one room schoolhouse but probably the most notable of them all was Mr. Brown - Bill Brown. Big man, tall fella, wore a black derby and a black suit always. Lived in New Carlisle but he'd drive his horse and buggy past here and go on down to the school which was right across the road from the entrance to Bendix Woods Park, probably a little more than a 2 mile south of the intersection here at Highway 2. And the big boys would vie with one another to see who could take care of his horse. We'd carry wood into the schoolhouse, he was often there ahead of us but once in a while we'd be there ahead of him and we'd have wood carried in the school- house, just sittin' beside the fire - he'd built the fire. We'd carry water in from the pump just out here beside the building. Everybody loved that man. The community loved him. He was special and he couldn't have served humanity any better, I believe, in any way better than the philosophy and the respect for one another that he taught his pupils. For many years that school, and even after it was abandoned and shut down, we had a Mr. Brown Picnic. We'd meet in the schoolyard; until he died there was a Mr. Brown Picnic every year. So his influence, the memories of these people, he was a big part of our lives. It's good there are people like that - you can live long enough around them to absorb some of what they have to give. The average man has so much to give his neighbors. So much by being thoughtful, helpful, go down and see, "Well, how's it comin'?" I'm caught up here - got somethin' that needs to be done?" - offer to help one another. Nowadays you can't get help even if you pay a good price for it. They're not willing to work.

JG: You mentioned some of your Halloween activities, how would you celebrate some of the other holidays?

FH: Christmas was a religious holiday to us in those days. It was a church day, maybe never a full day, but church at Christmas was special. Actually it grew up - we began to celebrate in a religious point of view- religious philosophy and thoughts before the holiday got there, but then when Christmas was over, it was quick, get ready for next Sunday, because that's New Years! And that was another kind of celebration altogether. But we never passed up a single holiday without making some kind of festival of it. Fourth of July, that was fireworks and firecrackers and noise and the taverns got a run on that day. Oh boy, everybody that needed a drink got there,

much to the dismay of the mothers. Halloween, it was a thing where, not too many masks unless they were homemade things because we couldn't go out and buy them, but the ghosts, the ghost stories. People would get together and fabricate stories and see who could tell the worst one. Many of them were built right there that evening, it wasn't a written story. We had one man in the community that bought our old place and he was the best story teller, very dry humor, just the way he used words was fabulous. Could he tell a story, strictly right out of his head. Right out of Orson's mind. He was special. The youngsters liked to vie with one another tellin' ghost stories. I don't remember any of them because they were never written down and over the years they seemed to have vanished from my mind.

JG: Would you have big family get-togethers, dinners, at Christmas?

FH: Always. Always. And our family does that yet to this day. And my gosh, there'd be 150, 200, 250 and some people. Folks that I didn't know at all. I didn't know them at all but they were part of that gang. Some of my cousins want to get that started here again, because this is grandma and grandpa's place and it's a nice spot to have a get together. We try to keep the yard up and keep it pleasant looking and nice. Sometimes the folks have commented on how nice the yard looks and I say, "Well, I keep it cut so you can enjoy it, I don't have time to." I rarely have time to look at it. But if it brings a tinge of contentment and pleasure and satisfaction then that makes it worth it. I don't mind spendin' a whole day cuttin' my grass then, and that's about what it takes, too. But its fun, I've got time to think and con- template a little bit while I'm riding that mower. I think now about what will I do when it comes time that I can't take care of it so I'm thinking about taking about a foot off the little fence in the front so the sheep can't get out and I'll just have myself about a 2 dozen sheep, let them cut my grass. Ha. And I'd think, "Why you old goat, you're gettin' too old to have a flock of sheep." I say "No, no, you're never too old to try something new or different or change what we do to a more adaptable system for tomorrow." And after all, who likes green grass better than a bunch of sheep - let them enjoy life too.