

Interview with John Hart
Tuesday, March 23, 2010
At the American Legion, Trumansburg, NY

JH = John Hart
BC = Bob Crippen
AN = Ann Buddle
AL = Allan Buddle

JH: My name is John Henry Hart, named after two uncles.

BC: John, when were you born?

JH: I was born April 19, 1921.

BC: Where were you born, John?

JH: Ithaca, New York, on Coddington Road which is up on South Hill area, in Ithaca.

BC: John, can you tell me your parents' names?

JH: My dad's was ? Leland Hart. My mother is Margaret Rhoda Terry. To the best of my knowledge, she is relation to the Terry that used to live just outside of Trumansburg, he was a lawyer. He was an uncle of my mother.

BC: And your parents, where were they actually when you were born? Were they in Ithaca, you were living there at the time?

JH: Yes. The actual place where I was born.

BC: What about siblings, John?

JH: I had three brothers and a sister. My next younger brother died about a year ago and the other two brothers are still alive, well, my sisters also.

BC: Do they live in the area?

JH: Basically Ithaca area, yes. Sister lives in Caroline center.

BC: What did your parents do for a living?

JH: My dad did roofing and siding contracting for many years and my mother was just a housewife.

BC: I guess next we're just going to move on. You left Ithaca at some time.

JH: When I was about six years old, the summer I was six year's old. My grandfather had worked for MacPherson Construction Company, not the same one as now-a-days, but there was MacPherson then. And for some reason he got laid off and had no work, so he had a friend in Ithaca that was named Frank MacPherson that owed a farm over near Valois, so they got to talking and MacPherson said to my

grandfather, if you want to move over there and take care of the place, get yourself a couple cows and a horse or whatever and get what you can out of the place. He said it'll be somebody to keep it up, keep track of things so people don't tear it apart. So, my family at that time moved over there. My dad, after a period, he decided he had to come back and do what work he could because there was no work over there, the type he did. So, he moved back to Ithaca with my mother and the kids that were alive at the time. I guess for ? reasons at the time, they left me with my grandparents.

BC: Now, where was this?

JH: The MacPherson farm.

BC: OK. And that was on Dugue Road, right?

JH: Yes. So, they left me there so I started school that fall. Alice Severn was the teacher. And she, I think, had a brother that lived over the other side of Logan, over south of Logan. Because my uncle took her over there one night, to spend the weekend with her own family I guess. But, at the time there were probably 10 or 12 kids total in the school from first or second grade up to eighth. But there were only one or two kids in each grade.

BC: And you said that was about when you were six years old, when you went over there.

JH: Yes.

BC: And how many years were you actually there with your grandparents?

JH: I was there from that fall until the spring I was nine years old.

BC: So, for three years you lived with your grandparents over there on Dugue Road. I'm going to turn this over to Ann in just a second, but on the farm your grandparents had, can you remember as far as the outlying buildings...?

JH: Oh sure. That house was quite unusual. We were told it was there when the Indians used to come from Watkins and bring salt up and trade it for articles that were available at the time. The house was built, quite an unusual house, it was a story and a half and the inside floor had boards that were sometimes 18 inches wide, or so, or there might be some that were only four inches wide in that floor. And they were worn so that knots stuck up ½ inch in places [laughing]. I can visualize the place actually because from the schoolhouse, we just lived a short distance across the fields from the school, and I'd always walk out the door and look up at the house. It was made with a huge...it was used as a kitchen, living room, dining room, the whole string on one side and then the other side of the entrance way was another bigger room, where we lived in the other half of the downstairs at the time. And then there were just two rooms in the upstairs.

BC: What about heating?

JH: Just wood stoves.

BC: Wood stoves. ??? stove in the big family room.

JH: The original room that I mentioned had a bed sink in it, it was under the stairs that went upstairs and a place to set a bed in there, so I guess that people could get up in the night and take care of the fire and so on. I'm not sure why it was there.

AL: A bed sink.

JH: Yes, that's what they called it. And then, if you went out the kitchen door you went into a big wood shed, that was part of the house, then there's a little bit more, a big harness room, and a little bit more was a toilet built on the back end so in the wintertime you didn't have to go across the field like...

BC: That's pretty neat.

JH: And then directly behind the house on the right was a big chicken house and a gate in between, a section of fence, and then there was a wagon shed where you kept the horses and the wagons. Then you went up quite a distance and there was a main barn, there was an annex on that where they kept sheep, we never had sheep, but they kept sheep in there before we were there. And then stored the hay and grain, that was necessary, and a cow barn was there.

BC: Now, what about electricity?

JH: No. [laughing] Hadn't heard of that yet. [laughing]

AL: When you were there, John, you said there was a cow barn, did you have some dairy cows?

JH: Yes, after ??? horse traded, as they called it, he got a couple cows and then my dad bought a cow from a farmer up on the Searsburg Road. ??? was his name. And they called the cow Pete after that. [laughing]. When we left there, I think we had seven cows and a bull. My grandfather and I, my grandfather took a milk pail on his arm and led one cow, I trailed behind with the old dog and made sure that all animals stayed together and walked the ten miles between the two farms. That's the spring I was nine years old.

BC: Wow, so it was ten miles from there over to Munson Road, is that right?

JH: Yes.

BC: Very interesting. Your grandfather was actually a tenant on that farm?

JH: Yes.

BC: I think right now let's talk about a little bit, let Ann ask you a couple of questions about school.

JH: OK.

AN: John, what do you remember about the one room schoolhouse? What do you remember about your experiences?

JH: Well, it was new to me in a way because I had been a couple of years in Ithaca school and in that school they had just the six grades and you had separate rooms for each grade and then when you were over there of course, all of the kids were in one building. But you only had one or two students in each grade.

AN: So, how did the teachers...how did the teacher, I guess, just one teacher work back then with all these different grade levels?

JH: Well, we went up front, each class was a grade or each grade was a class, whichever way you want to put it, and while those people were up front, the other kids had to be doing their studying on whatever particular item they were working with.

AN: What kind of materials did you use?

JH: Well, most we had...drove me crazy...the rough pads, the paper was not very finished paper, it was always kind of rough. We usually used mostly pencils. There was an inkwell in each desk naturally, well there were double desks too. And it I remember right, the inkwell was in the middle between the two students.

AN: Were your desks screwed to the floor?

JH: Yes.

AN: So were mine in grade school. Did you have any chores?

JH: You mean in school?

AN: Yes.

JH: No, we had a couple Champion boys that used to come up early in the morning and get the fire going in the wintertime and I think they cleaned the floor and wiped it down of course and washed the blackboard, the little things like that.

AN: Was there much of a problem with disciplining the children in school?

JH: No. Only one time, there was one girl...her dad was one of the trustees of the school, and she thought she could run it. Teacher had a rubber hose and straightened her out on that. One lesson of that was all it took to discipline the entire class, we found out she was capable. [laughing]

AN: And you had this Alice Severn...

JH: S-e-v-e-r-n.

AN: She apparently lived with some of the families?

JH: No, she lived another family over...Johnson, Ben Johnson I mentioned earlier. It was her first year and she'd gone to, I think there's a school in Pottsdam for teachers, and she went there, or had gone there. And this was her first year teaching, and then her next year or so she went for the summer back up to school there.

AN: Did you go home for lunch every day, John, since you were so close?

JH: Yes.

AN: Did all the kids go home, or?

JH: No. I think I was the only one. Most of them were at least a mile away from the school.

AN: So, you of course could back and forth to school, what about all of the other children, did they walk?

JH: They all walked.

AN: And how about the teacher?

JH: She walked.

AN: She walked too.

JH: Yes. It was about a mile from where she lived too.

AN: You have such a great memory of the house that you lived in. What do you remember about the physical set up of the school?

JH: Well, if I remember correctly, there were two rows of the double desks down each side and then they had what they called a Heatrola right in the middle of the room. And then the teacher's desk was, as you're going out the door on the right-hand side was the blackboards. And one of the blackboards was slate and the other one was just boards painted black.

AN: Amazing. And was there a swing or anything outside?

JH: Yes. There were I think maybe two or three swings.

AN: And I presume the facilities...the "necessary facilities" were outside?

JH: They were both outside. One on each side of the building and there was a water pump right in front. And there was a kind of an arched driveway you came in, which has been changed over the years. And a flag pole.

AL: That's a good picture.

AN: Yes.

AL: When did you start school in the fall?

JH: Around the first of September.

AL: And did you go all year long?

JH: Yes. Well, until June. I think we had a week of at Thanksgiving or at Christmastime, and I think at Thanksgiving it was just a weekend or something like that. And other holidays it was the weekend more or less.

AL: Do you recall any unusual events that happened while you were going to school there, where you couldn't go to school?

JH: There were a couple times that we didn't go to school because we were snowed in. There was a sort of single wire telephone system there at the time and there was a phone that was in the house where we lived but it didn't work and at that time it was a system where you turned the crank and rung central and she'd connect you with whoever, I guess.

AN: When you went to Munson Road, were you again in a one room schoolhouse?

JH: Yes.

AN: And was it different in any way from the one that was up by Dugue Road?

JH: Yes. It had a modern indoor bathrooms, or toilets.

AN: That is a significant change.

JH: Chemical toilets. It was heated with coal and wood, of course. We had about the same number of kids.

AN: That was 10-12?

JH: Yes. And there again I lived about ½ mile from the school. But I still walked home for lunch because we had an hour so I could make it home, have a quick lunch and back to school.

AN: And how many years now were you at the school on Munson Road?

JH: I was there through sixth grade. When I went to seventh grade it was at the new school in Interlaken.

AN: Was there a name for the school on Munson Road, I mean, what did people call it?

JH: I don't remember, it was just the school on Munson corner.

AN: Same on Dugue, did that have a name?

JH: That was called the block schoolhouse.

AN: Block?

JH: B-l-o-c-k.

AN: And so, about 1935, they started the centralized school district.

JH: Right.

AN: And you were one of the first.

JH: One of the first.

AN: What was that like?

JH: Well, it was different because you had a school bus and rode quite a few miles to get to school. The area where I went, we went over to Ovid center and down around toward Sheldrake and then down on what's now the Boulevard, and wound up back up in school.

AN: So, how long a bus ride was that, John?

JH: Oh gosh. If I said 20 miles, I guess it would be reasonable. I'm sorry I made a mistake there because it changed, at very first it used to go up by our house then we went up by Brokaw people, up in that area and then around a loop to Ovid center and back.

AN: Wow, you had a long ride. Big difference from walking a half mile.

JH: Oh yeah, yes.

AN: So, what was it like in school now, what were the differences?

JH: Oh, it was a lot different because you had of course the new school, long hall and two story building.

AN: Where was it physically located?

JH: The new school?

AN: Yes.

JH: Oh, I'm sorry. I forgot to mention, I went to the old school for the first half year and that was down...then the old school was torn down not long after and they had a building that was a gymnasium and so on, and we went in the seventh grade in that building for the first half year, then they went up to the new school, why we had to...

AN: Was this first school, was that the one on North Main Street?

JH: Yes.

AN: And then the quote "new school" was the one that's presently there now?

JH: Right, yes.

AN: On Main Street.

JH: Yes.

AN: So here you had a different teacher for each grade level?

JH: Yes.

AN: What did your parents think about the centralization? Did they think it was a good idea?

JH: Well, of course my parents still lived in Ithaca, and I lived with my grandparents and they were old enough, I was going to school and that was all that mattered.

AN: Yes. So how long did you go to the Interlaken Central?

JH: I went there until the last year of my school. And then my grandfather got hurt and had to give up the farm so I had to move back to Ithaca, which I hated. So, I went to the high school in Ithaca at the time for a year and the first year I flunked history so I had no job, no indication of getting a job. So, I went back in the fall and was going to take a PG course so I could finish history and midterm, just before Christmas, the industrial arts teacher came around and wanted to see me in the office. I thought I was in

trouble for something [laughing]. I didn't have any idea what. He said that they wanted a tool maker at Morse Chain and they wanted me to go and apply for a job. And I said well I haven't gotten my diploma yet, and he said "I'm not supposed to tell you this, but if you can get a job with things the way they are, take it." So, I went up and applied and then I was hired. So, January 2nd, 1939 I went to work at Morse Chain Company.

AN: That was a tough time to get a job. A very tough time. One more, to go back to Interlaken Central... Did you have an memorable teacher there? I mean you were mentioning some names earlier.

JH: ??? memory.

AN: I bet they do too.

JH: I got along usually with teachers. I had one situation though that a teacher had to have classes during the noon hour in the building where I was going to school in seventh grade and if it was a rainy day or something like that, you didn't want to go out, but she insisted you get out of there so we had to weather it. I got along real well with Mr. Patterson, he helped me as much as he possibly could, in fact, they had a program that started at that time and you could help, like in my case, clean the lab and get new chemicals and so on, stocked the shelves. I got \$3 a month for doing that. He was administration, something like that.

AN: Well, it sounds as if you have good memories, John.

JH: I do. But I forgot what time I came up here this afternoon. [laughing]

AN: All right, thank you Bob...

BC: Very interesting. What was the reason they moved over to Munson Road?

JH: I think...

BC: I was just wondering if it was part of the relocation, you know?

JH: No, it wasn't that. I'm sorry I didn't even think about that. I had an uncle that was actually about 18 or so when we lived in Valois, and he was quite bound to be a farmer anyway, and I don't know how it came about but a real estate agent came one day and took my grandmother over to Interlaken and showed her the farm. So the house that I was born in actually, my aunt and uncle had been living in the house and they traded that toward the farm. So that they, in a sense, were buying the farm I guess then. At that time why money was so tight to get, why I guess they weren't paying off on the mortgage very fast.

BC: And then another thing, that's good to know, because they went from being tenants on the farm in Valois to owning their own farm over in Munson Road. What about your brothers and sisters, did you have a chance to see them?

JH: Oh yeah. My dad would once in a while come up. When it was possible, like if I had a long weekend or something, take me back to Ithaca and I'd run around the neighborhood there with my aunts and uncles. We had quite a large family on my mother's side especially, so I'd stay with my dad and mother then during the day go to Uncle John or Uncle Henry or Aunt whoever, you know...

BC: Growing up with your grandparents, it probably helped them too, having a farm because you were there to do whatever chores you could do. A third hand on the farm.

JH: Actually, when I was nine years old my grandfather, well actually the same year we moved, one day he said “you know boy it’s time you started to do a little to earn your own keep, so you’re going to start to learn to milk a cow.” And that was my start. It went downhill from there.

[laughing]

JH: Seriously, when I was about 16 or 17 years old, I was plowing with a three-horse team.

AL: With a walking plow?

JH: With a walking plow. Three horses and then a three-section harrow, bounce around the ???? all day.

AL: Do you remember the horses names?

JH: Maude, Queen and Colonel.

AL: That’s good.

[laughing]

BC: What did your grandfather have, I’m going to stick with Dugue Road to start with and go over to Munson later, but products did they have there? They basically milked a couple cows?

JH: As I’ve said, they got a couple cows, yes. My uncle had, as I told you, he was quite interested in being a farmer. I don’t know, he had a team of horses when they lived in Ithaca and brought the horses over there. In fact, he drove them from Ithaca to the farm in Valois, it’s about 20 miles, I think. Started out early one morning and drove the horses over.

BC: Did they have a truck at that time?

JH: Oh no.

BC: No, it was all horses, right, horsepower?

JH: Yes. The year that we moved from one farm to the other my uncle had another friend and they took a hay wagon, which you know, loaded all the furniture on the two units and drove by team from one farm to the other.

BC: Now, what about, because you mentioned this before, and now I’m jumping...you said you did visit your family in Ithaca at times.

JH: Oh sure.

BC: Now, getting back and forth back then, you took a wagon with horses?

JH: Oh no. My dad had a vehicle.

BC: He had a vehicle so he’d come and pick you up.

JH: Yes.

BC: But on the farm the main transportation back then was horses...

JH: Horses.

BC: ...or probably a bicycle too, did you have a bicycle back then?

JH: No.

BC: Did your grandfather have any helping hands or tenants on this farm?

JH: No.

BC: So, he did everything himself.

JH: Yes.

BC: So there was no second language in your family either?

JH: No.

BC: Can you remember as a child hearing other languages from other farms that might have had foreigners working on them?

JH: I don't know. One thing I would like to add in here, I mentioned the fact that my grandfather got hurt, he fell out of the hay ??????. And I was able to get one of the horses harnessed and we had a stone bolt, I drove around the barn and was able to get him rolled up on the stone bolt. I took him to the house and my grandmother and I got him in the kitchen door and I walked, or ran, from the farm down to the Interlaken village because there were no phones between there. It was three miles. And the operator there, she told me to get in the phone booth and she made all of the connections to let my aunt know that we were in trouble. And I think of everybody's got to have a cell phone now-a-days.

BC: Yes, you're right. Cell phone and computer.

AL: Was this when you were on Dugue Road, or was this when you were up on Munson Road.

JH: Yes, Munson Road.

BC: It's interesting you brought up the thing about the stone bolt also. Probably back then you had to use it quite often.

JH: Not so much. We used it for, I mean it was the idea of stones, we used a lot of times rather than...

BC: A wheelless wagon.

JH: Hitching a wagon, it was low so you could throw stuff on it. If you had, early in the season my grandfather would cut some corn and take it over to the pasture so the cows could get it, and things like that. And then there was one summer when it was very dry and there was a spring on the farm back, so I used to take a couple of milk cans on the stone bolt and go down and throw them in the spring water and take them up to the house.

AL: Can you remember what crops you grew, what was a typical year on the farm?

JH: Well, we raised of course hay for the cows and a lot of corn and had wheat and oats and one summer they tried to raise peas for the Halstead Canning Company and that was a mistake.

[laughing]

AL: In Interlake we have an old cradle factory, and old grain cradle factory. Were there any hand tools like that on your farm, either one of the farms that you were on?

JH: I don't remember much, just pitch forks and cleaning equipment. Of course I mentioned what we called a hand plow and regular farm tools.

AL: When it was time to harvest and cut the wheat and oats, did each individual farm do that or did a group work together?

JH: Sometimes one of the other farmers might have a binder at the time and might bind the grain for you and then they brought a threshing machine around from farm to farm at the time. And also there was another folks that pressed hay, they had a big hay press that was hauled around by three horses and then they had a sweep that operated the machine. I didn't have much to do with that because I wasn't husky enough to do that sort of work.

AL: Do you remember any names associated with that?

JH: Not around Interlaken, but in Valois area there was a Henry Creighton that ran a threshing machine and he used a big old oil pull tractor and hauled that machine around and threshed all around that area. His son just died recently. This lady here Creighton, was married to the young Creighton.

AL: Oh, she's connected to them.

BC: What about what you remember as a child as far as activities? You know, when you did get off in summer, you had some school mates that you...?

JH: Not too much, see they were at least a half a mile away, so you didn't run back and forth all that often. Matter of fact, I hate to admit it, but I don't care a thing about sports because when I grew up I was all myself so much of the time that I did my own thing.

BC: Sure.

JH: When I was about, I figure thirteen or so years old, I decided that...the kid next door had a crystal radio that he bought and I was down the Interlaken Library one day and found a book on radio. Of course, that was way back, so I managed to scrape up all kinds of junk and made a crystal radio that actually worked. And Mr. Munson, his wife was a school teacher down in the Munson School, and he had ??? phones that he dragged out of the attic and gave to me. He sent to a Johnson Smith company and bought the crystal that was the main part you had to buy someplace else and my grandfather thought I was just wasting my time sitting there, "you know you can't hear anything, what are you doing, come on, go do chores" and so on. One noon I got in a little bit early and Italy had invaded Ethiopia. I told him, and he said "ah, you're dreaming" or something like that. That afternoon of course, postcard came in the mail ?????

BC: And you'd already known.

JH: And I knew it.

BC: That's great.

JH: And that was quite a thing to be able to pick up a little radio.

AL: Wonderful.

JH: One station you could get was in Rochester and then the Ithaca station operated out of Elmira somehow, the transmitter was up on Cornell campus and the studio, ESP (Elmira Start Gazette) were the call letters and most of the broadcasting originated out of Elmira, transmitted from Ithaca.

BC: You said that when you did travel you went to Ithaca, on the weekends and some weekends, were they basically your main outings or were there other things as far as church life in the area or grange life?

JH: We went to church from Interlaken, in Valois it was so hard, I guess there it was three or four miles from the village. Of course I was only, in a sense, a little kid. After I got to Interlaken and got older I went to the Baptist church with another family up the road. But there again in the summertime pretty much because we had quite a lot of snow in those days and couldn't always go any further than where you could walk, you know.

BC: I was just thinking of that myself, I'm doing a lot of traveling in the spring and a lot of the dirt roads are really...you swim on them, and I'm sure you had the same problems back in the springtime with the thaw a lot of mud on those roads. It was definitely probably hard traveling.

JH: Yes.

BC: Do you remember anything about the relocation of the Hector area? You know, when the farms were bought and the people moved off?

JH: No, as I say, I moved away from there when I was...

BC: So it didn't affect you because of being away from the area.

JH: Yes. I didn't get back there until I was probably 20 years older, or 19 or 20 years old.

BC: Why don't you tell us a little about that because you spoke a little about it before, but we didn't have the recorder on, when you went back to your old farm, what you thought was different.

JH: Well, when I got back there all of the houses, or many of the houses were already torn down and all that was left, there was a schoolhouse there and this little cemetery I mentioned, and if I looked back this Cronk family lived away from the corner there, that place was totally gone. The old Oakley Houston was the grandfather of the rest of the Houstons and his barn was still there for quite a while but the house was gone. All these other places were pretty much gone. Even the place where we lived, there were just stumps of locust trees that were in front of the house, they were still there and that was the only thing that indicates where that place was.

BC: And the cemetery has been completely...

JH: eliminated.

BC: Eliminated.

JH: Totally, yes. And I've gone down to Hector, the lady that was supposed to be the historian, and she had a book there that theoretically listed all of the cemeteries in the area, but that is not listed in that book.

BC: Can you remember, were there a lot of stones or do you think it might have been a family plot?

JH: There were quite a lot of stones.

BC: It would be interesting to find out.

JH: It was smaller now than it was then, the area, because they widened the road a lot from the time when we lived there. The road was basically, it probably would have been hard for two automobiles to pass on it.

AN: Was this the Logan Road, John, or the Dugue Road?

JH: Dugue.

AN: Dugue.

JH: There were five maple trees that separated the cemetery area from the school area, I mean it was just the trees there, and there was quite a lot of stones in there and there was nothing what you'd consider modern, they all were fieldstone, I mean cut out of shale or something like that.

AL: Whatever you picked up from the field to get it off.

JH: Probably, yes. Some were tipped over. Ivy covered ground, you didn't have to mow it, it was a nice little cemetery.

BC: Did you ever have cousins or anybody come up to your grandparents' farm where you lived with them?

JH: Yes, we did some.

BC: And how about Christmas, did you go down to Ithaca to spend it with your [parents]...?

JH: Usually, my dad would make me go down to Ithaca to be with the rest of the family, yes. I always didn't like to go because I know my grandfather and grandmother would be there by themselves.

AL: How old were they at that time, roughly?

JH: Probably fifties, 55.

BC: Were they your father's parents?

JH: Yes. It was actually my dad's mother and his stepfather. My real grandfather disappeared at one point and he was finally declared dead so my grandmother married a second time.

BC: Do you remember his last name? You must remember it.

JH: S-e-l-a-m Hart. He was a...

BC: Ok, that was your grandfather.

JH: My real grandfather.

BC: What about your step grandfather, what was his name?

JH: Richard Henry Liddington. L-i-d-d-i-n-g-t-o-n. He was born in Speedsville, NY.

BC: And what about the depression, that's one of the reasons your father didn't have a job back then. It's one of the reasons...it was the biggest affect that it had on you, but at least your grandfather was a farmer and farmers were pretty self-sufficient, they were one of the fortunate things about being a farmer.

JH: That grandfather was a carpenter but he grew up on a farm. In the days when they used oxen in his case.

BC: Is that one of the reasons you grew up with your grandparents, is because of the depression, and it's easier to feed...

JH: I'd say that was a lot of it, yes. But dad had a couple other kids at that time. I can remember he told about buying, what we called a picnic ham, for nine cents a pound.

BC: Seems a good deal.

JH: And he'd once in a while bring one of them and we had a cabbage and that was a Sunday dinner. We didn't have many of them.

AL: No.

BC: You were young during the depression, but the effects of it you understood, but when you came to age the World War II was just getting underway, I'm sure...

JH: I was old enough to get in there, yes. I went when I was 21, or 20.

BC: So, you were working at Morse Chain then?

JH: Yes.

BC: And were you drafted, or was it volunteer?

JH: A volunteer for draft. They were getting close to me anyway and I decided I'd rather than wait. I thought maybe if I volunteered for draft maybe I'd get something a little better than average, you know. It turned out to be that that was the case. September 15, 1942 and was put on a bus from Ithaca to Syracuse, that was induction center at the time. We were there most of the day. I can't remember if we went by train or bus from Ithaca to Syracuse. We went by bus to Syracuse...OK. Ithaca to Syracuse by bus, then train from there to Fort Niagara. Got to Fort Niagara quite late in the night and they issued all of our clothing and so on and we got a little sleep the first night. The next morning of course had breakfast, and the first thing you do is get out and just take orders, you know. It turned out that the second day, that day we had to have our shots and all that sort of thing, the second day we had to go and

have different tests, so that night after the day we slept, we were told in the morning they would be separating us. Well, it turned out I was one of a few that got on the train that evening and came right into the post at the time and we rode all night long. Steam locomotive, no air conditioning in the cars of course, and we woke up in Maryland, we didn't know it.

[laughing]

BC: Surprise.

JH: We left up there with our uniform on, got down to Maryland it was about 100 degrees. [laughing] We looked like a bunch of black boys with coal dust on our faces. So we stopped in Baltimore and had breakfast. After breakfast, got out on a platform and they called out names—you go to a room, you go to another room, whatever. The first group, I found out later my brother-in-law was on the same train with me and a guy from Quinlan. Matter of fact, this other guy belonged to the legion in Dryden post. Got down, found out we were at the proving ground, I spent all my army time right in Aberdeen (?) Maryland. It turned out that being a machinist and so on... I got basic training and I was one of the first group that period of training was cut from eight weeks to six weeks and then the first pay I got was \$10.50 because I was there for two weeks and it was \$21 a month then, a pay period. The next period we got raised to \$50. When I was down there, well I was sent to a technical school, but I knew enough that they didn't need me there, they just put me to work.

BC: You knew what you were doing.

JH: I spent all my time working alongside civilians with their pay and I was still getting \$50 a month.

[laughing]

AL: What did you physically do while you were there as a machinist?

JH: Well, we got captured equipment quite a lot. Like three or four whatevers, that were smashed up. So we had to try to get a part so we could field test it and stuff like that. There was a period where they had 155 guns that were on a huge mount and they decided they wanted to make it more mobile so we had to build a special trailer and all the equipment to cart it on you know. That was a situation to where they decided to make movable targets for rifle training, machine gun training, and so on. I was involved in that to help design and build the parts for these traveling...and we wound up, I didn't do this part, but they got a hold of an old jeep motor and had to overhaul it to make the power system to operate the target and so on. Then we were sent to help auto repairs and equipment any place on the proving ground.

BC: Interesting. Do you remember when the war broke out what affect it had on...how you all reacted? Were you still living with your grandparents at that time?

JH: Oh no. I was in Ithaca at that time.

AL: You were working for Morse Chain at that time.

JH: [inaudible]

BC: Before you entered, right.

JH: I was working at Morse Chain but the war had already pretty much started.

BC: I think a year later, right? You've got 7 [December] 1941 was Pearl Harbor.

AN: But it had started in Europe several years earlier.

JH: Matter of fact, I had an uncle that had some relatives that lived up ??? New York and I went up there with them one weekend and they took a lady that went on over into Canada put her on the Canadian National Railroad because she lived in Michigan at the time. And I had quite a time getting back out of Canada because I didn't really have much ID with me. You know you didn't...and they were at war at that time.

BC: What about the flood of '35, did that affect you up there?

JH: Yes, we had quite a rough time there for a couple days. It didn't bother us all that much because we were higher elevation but I remember that section of railroad track right at the end of Munson Road, I guess that's Munson Road...

AL: Down on Route 96?

JH: Yes. That whole section was hanging right in the air where the water washed the...

BC: Took all the dirt and everything.

JH: Yes.

BC: Anything special you recollect? Any special recollections you want to talk about?

JH: I could add when I was on the farm in Interlaken I helped other farmers to a degree. We traded work as they would call it. I worked quite often with Charlie Beardsley down on the main highway there near Sheldrake Creek. That farm, Mike still lives there I think. Charlie had his own threshing rig and so my grandfather allowed me to go down, because I could make a few dollars. Well, I got a dollar a day [inaudible] One time there was a guy up near there, Clint Townsend, had a farm up...I don't know how to explain it...it was between our farm and Beardsley's farm, and he had a guy that ran the farm but Clint lived down in the village all the time and he used to come up and check the farm and so on once fall filling the silo and there was a guy named Earl Rodman, he was a little more than ???, maybe 20 years old, 21 years old. He and I ??? silage that day and Clint sits behind his rolltop desk and men walk up and "how much do I owe you?" And they would tell him and he paid for the team sometimes, or just a person. So Earl steps up and I can't remember it's so long ago, but "how much for you Earl?" oh, so much money. So I stepped up, "how much for you John?" "Same as Earl." "Well, he's a young man and you're just a boy" and I said "I walked every step behind him too." And all the other guys started laughing. Clint pays me, he's kind of red about it, but he paid me the same thing he did Earl.

[laughing].

JH: Here again. This I blacked out. But Charlie Beardsley was a hard person to work for. He really didn't do much himself except boss the rest of the people who worked for him. You really worked when it was with him.

AL: When we talked on the phone you mentioned that you helped somebody deliver mail. Do you recall what that was about?

JH: Deliver mail?

AL: Somebody that...

JH: I'm sorry. My memory slips me.

AL: If I can find a name. [turning pages] Maybe you need a little break.

JH: Well, I could stand that too.

BC: Yeah, sure we can stop any time.

AL: I had in my note here that you helped Bob Houseneck.

JH: Oh, that was delivering newspapers.

AL: Oh, newspapers, ok.

JH: Sunday newspapers. Bob was a [inaudible]. I think that he was old enough that he had his own vehicle anyway. A Model A Ford. And he used to work with Charlie Beardsley a lot too. But on Sundays he'd come up and pick me up and we'd deliver Post Standards all around. We'd go down, when you are going toward Ithaca, instead of making the curve, go straight out there's some corners out there.

AL: Kelly Corners?

JH: Kelly's Corners. Go out about that far and then go west, hit all the back roads up to Townsendville, then wind up around Ovid center then wind up in Interlaken about noon. My big pay was get a malted milk, milkshake. That was my pay for helping for that morning. It was something I wouldn't have had otherwise. We didn't have...

AL: Where did you get the milkshake?

JH: I can't remember the name of the drugstore, but it was as you go into the village, it was at the time a hardware store. ??? hardware store. I think there was a drugstore next to it, if I'm not mistaken.

AL: Would it have been Wicke's by any chance?

JH: If it was the next building it was.

AN: Yes, it was.

JH: Yes, it was Wicke's.

AN: John, did you have to physically take the paper to the house? What did you do?

JH: Yes. Ran up to the house in most cases. Couple of places there were dogs there that we wouldn't get out of the car...

[laughing]

JH: ...we'd leave them at the mailbox.

AL: You didn't lose the seat of your pants anywhere, did you?

JH: No, never did that.

BC: [inaudible] was there a dog there when you were growing up?

JH: Well, my grandfather had a dog. He didn't have much to do with me. One time we were headed for the barn, my uncle Ryan, it was in the wintertime and I had the heavy mittens the kids had, and I was probably maybe 10 or 12 years old at the time, and I don't know what happened, whether one of us kicked a little stone and scared him or what, but he turned around and jumped at me and if I didn't put my hand up like that [indicating] he was headed right for my throat. I couldn't milk for a couple of weeks because my hand was swelled up so bad. He never associated with anybody but my grandfather.

BC: My mother's got a cat like that.

AN: John, I forgot to ask you, at the Munson Road school, who were your teachers?

JH: Mrs. Munson. Mertha Munson. Her husband was Darwin. And I don't know much about them, I think he came from Ovid pretty much. I may be wrong, but I think he...and I don't know where she was from. Are we still recording?

BC: Yes, but I can turn it off any time. Are you ready to turn it off?

[recording suspended].

[recording resumed, part way through a conversation.]

JH: This Seneca Road, that ends up right here doesn't it?

AL: Yes. This is Seneca Road right outside the ...

JH: From here you could go right over to that area.

AL: Right, yes.

JH: Over round the corner here, just a little ways around the corner was an old guy named Charlie Granger and he used to go around and pick up dead animals, you know, cows, horses whatever. Had an old team of horses that looked like you could spit through them???? Flog down the road and he'd ride along there sitting on the side ????

BC: We were wondering before, do you think he did it for hides?

JH: That was what it was for, yes. There again, I said an old guy, I don't know, he looked old to me but I was twelve years old at the time.

BC: Young kid, yeah.

AL: Everybody's old at that age.

JH: Yes, right.

BC: Can I tell you, you were weathered back then too, you know with the life...

JH: You've heard of Sawmill Gully over there maybe?

AL: Can you tell us about Sawmill Gully?

JH: In my time it was just a deep gully over there, but 1920 I've been told the town of Hector bought a new Caterpillar tractor with a deep hoe on it and that winter, I don't know if it was that winter or the next one, but we had an awful lot of snow and they came up Dugue Road and turned right and went toward Logan this one morning, and they had a bunch of guys that were packing snow with shovels and breaking it up because it was ??? I mean it was almost like a cube of ice all the way to the bottom. And they went all day long and they come back that night and they had gone just the next mile there section, took all day to plow that one strip of snow. And the same year, I never got that far, but they said that there was a barricade so you couldn't get in to Saw Mill Gully they said it was so deep they were afraid if anybody would get in there they'd go out of sight 'til spring.

AL: Now is Sawmill Gully just past where Ball Diamond Road intersects?

JH: Yes.

AL: I know where that is.

JH: We used to go, my uncle and I as I told you he was ???, I'm not sure he was even twenty years old then at that time, but any event of course you just had a horse and buggy, and we'd go over to Logan's sometimes to the grocery store there and then most of the while go on down to Hector, I think there was probably a feed mill and grocery store and there was a big combine there in a sense. In Logan itself went over there I remember a couple of times because there was a blacksmith's there that shod horses and so on and I was over there they said last spring when that shop is all gone and the house next to it was a guy name Birge Veeley ??? and his brother was a lawyer in Watkins at the time. Birge was crippled and so my uncle used to go over and help him do some things once in a while.

BC: I'm sorry to interrupt. What about the fair, the Hector fair has been going on a hundred years, hasn't it?

JH: I don't know.

BC: Your parents never took you, or your grandparents, no?

JH: I've never heard of it.

BC: OK. Do you remember going to any fairs growing up with your grandparents?

JH: No really. We didn't do much. Later though one year my uncle and I went to the State Fair. Because by that time he had a car too. But that was about it.

BC: That was another question for you, was your first car, do you remember that?

JH: 1931 Hudson straight eight.

[laughing]

BC: And when was this, how old were you? I mean were you at Morse Chain then?

JH: Yes. I would guess I was probably about twenty at the time and a guy that an ad on the bulletin board, car for sale. So I happened to be down, the first one to see the sign and I went right to him and asked him about the car. He wanted \$35 for it. Of course I was making a whole sum of about \$20 a week at the time, you know. So, I paid him \$5 a week until I was able to get the car. And the thing was, was his in-laws had bought it brand new, they drove it to California and back, and when they come back the old man had a heart attack and died and the car was put up on blocks and it sat there for, not until I got it.

BC: It was probably in good shape.

AL: Yes.

JH: Yes.

BC: What about gas price, do you remember that?

JH: I don't know. Actually, not long after that time, there was a place down in Ithaca that the barges used to come right up in the inlet and there were big fuel tanks down there on the boulevard. Can't remember the name of the company right at the moment. Anyway, they had one big tank with their name on the side of it, maybe I'll think of it before we're out of here, and you could buy gas, five or six gallons for \$1.00. Hamilton Oil. And they had just a single pump and there was a little place there to sit when it rained, for somebody that sold gas. And the pumps, maybe if you remember, there used to be little disk there...

BC: [inaudible]

JH: Well, sometimes it would be red, sometimes it would be green, but still gasoline.

[laughing]

JH: I was told he bought what they called ???? the place where they make gasoline, like if somebody ever, just for numbers, a hundred gallons of gas and he made 105 gallons he'd get that five gallons. You know he bought the tank...

BC: That's interesting, interesting, definitely.

JH: And he could sell it cheap like that. Because [inaudible]. Put a different color dye in there or something.

AL: Why did they use the different color dyes do you think?

JH: I don't know, it's just a trademark I suppose.

AL: Identify the company that made it?

JH: Yes, Gulf always had kind of a gold colored gasoline. And then there was one company here called Betty Blue.

AN: Blue?

JH: And that was naturally a blue gasoline. That one was a pump that you pump like this [indicating] and it went up in the tank and then you pulled the hose...

BC: Yes, it filled it up.

JH: Yes.

BC: Interesting.

AL: I have to come back to the car for a minute. You remember that car so well. Did you ever take any young ladies for a ride in your car?

JH: Ah, I wasn't quite old enough yet.

AL: Oh, you weren't old enough yet.

[laughing]

JH: No, seriously I didn't even think of going with a girl until I was, almost the time I went in the army. Then I got acquainted with a gal that...I was working at that time, I did have to get a job Friday night and Saturday at the Market Basket store and she was working there checking out groceries. We just got acquainted and nothing serious for quite a long time, and then eventually she did become my wife.

AL: Do you remember what Market Basket store it was?

JH: Other than the location you mean, or what?

AL: Do you remember the name of the owners of the Market Basket stores?

JH: It was a chain.

AL: Oh, Market Basket was the name of the chain.

JH: Yes.

AL: OK, alright.

JH: My wife's family, more or less, lived in Lawrenceville, Pennsylvania. And so we did, even before we were married, went down there quite often.

AL: What was your wife's name?

JH: I don't like to repeat it. Iona Guggenheim.

AL: The reason I'm asking now, we have some good friends that their families were in the Lawrenceville area for a long time. Iona?

JH: Oh, OK. Let's call her Poole (?) her mother married a second time to a Claude Poole and so she took that name.

AL: P-o-o-l-e?

JH: Yes. The family in Lawrenceville was Glover, Charlie Glover.

AL: Glover?

JH: Yes. Are you familiar with that at all down there?

AL: Just a little bit.

JH: When you go from, I don't know the Route number, go straight south out of Elmira...

AL: Fourteen.

JH: ...to Pine City.

AL: 380, 336 or 3-something.

JH: As I say, I don't know the number. But you go down that road and you come to a place where there used to be a railroad station and I think they called it a creamery there, and you turned right and went up and then went to Sagetown.

AL: I know where Sagetown is.

BC: Right.

JH: And then far up on top of the hill, I call it, is what they call Browntown's Cove (?). And you turn left on that intersection and it takes you right back down into Lawrenceville. Charlie Glover's father took care of horses for the Bower Fuel Company at the time. He lived right on the fairgrounds in the horse stables more or less, you know.

BC: I want to go back to one thing that you said earlier. When you said you did the march from Dugue Road over to Munson when you guys moved and you said about that time you had about seven cows, now by the time you left home in your senior year, how many animals did you have?

JH: Didn't have any more.

BC: You didn't have any more? You were stuck with that number?

JH: Yes. When we moved that farm the barn hadn't been finished and the basement. And my grandparents had concrete put in it and stables were, how do I want to say it, passed by the milk company.

AL: Milk inspector.

BC: Inspector, yes.

JH: Yes. And that's all it had room for.

AL: Is that barn still there?

JH: No. They tore that down. Matter of fact, after we left, there was a guy named Bill McCoy that bought the place and he changed everything. They even tore the house down and put up a different

house. There's a place there where the Sodus Bay Southern Railroad came across the corner of the property. And there's a portion here that was a cut, like a higher elevation, a cut there and over here was a ????? [inaudible]

AL: Balancer.

JH: And then on Sheldrake Creek is still the big abutments on both sides of the creek where it was going to go.

AL: Where it was going to go, yes.

BC: One of the questions we had that we're looking to get information on is a smallpox epidemic in the Backbone area. Do you remember anything about, I don't know what the year was when they had that problem, you know that's when they talked about they had to have guards on Seneca Road.

AL: On Seneca Road. I think that was late 1800's.

BC: Late 1800s. Yes. I've still got to figure that stuff out.

JH: This Henry Creed (?) I mentioned they said that he used to in the wintertime take his rig across Seneca Lake and would go over on the other side of the lake.

BC: Oh, because the lake froze over.

JH: Because the lake froze over, yes. But that's pretty heavy equipment to drag across that ice.

BC: That is something. When you think about how cold it gets here now, it must have been some really cold spell to freeze that lake over.

JH: That house where we lived, there were days that you couldn't see the schoolhouse even though it was not that far away. You couldn't see the schoolhouse from our place or vice versa.

AL: Because the wind was blowing the snow so hard?

JH: Yes. From up there you can see clear to the North Pole.

[laughing]

JH: No, but right across the lake, you know, for miles.

BC: Do you remember fruit trees being on your property?

JH: There were ????? some sour cherry trees that lined the driveway, but around us at that time peaches were a big item down on lake road, 414 there.

BC: Right.

JH: And now it's all grapes of course. Very few peaches over there anymore. And there again I was going to mention, my uncle and I would go over to the store, or wherever we were going, you know with a horse and wagon or buggy, and of course it was against the law, but we'd sneak out and get a couple stems of grapes and eat them on our way...

AN: [inaudible]

JH: ...a peach or two, something like that you know.

[laughing]

BC: I'm a little bit confused, you mention your uncle quite often, now did he live in the house?

JH: Yes.

BC: So, it was your grandparents, your uncle, and you?

JH: Yes.

BC: OK.

JH: He was their son, you know.

BC: OK. So, and how old, you lived there probably until you were seventeen, right?

JH: At least, yes.

BC: Did he maintain the farm?

JH: Oh, he worked, yes.

BC: What was the age difference between you and your uncle?

JH: Well, as I was saying, when I was probably, I'm trying to think, when I was nine years old, thereabouts, he was eighteen or nineteen. But, I hate admit it, but he's one that we don't talk about.

BC: I had an uncle like that, he's passed away, but...

JH: No, after we lost the farm up there and so on, he kind of went astray and wound up in prison actually.

BC: We've all got ghosts in our closets. Well, again, I think we're at a pretty good stopping point, you think so?

[recording ended.]

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