

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF STILLWATER TOWNSHIP
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with Floyd Monroe

December 8, 2012



Interviewed by Rob Jacoby

Transcribed by Maureen Block

Rob: My name is Robert Jacoby. I'm with the Stillwater Historical Society and we're conducting an oral history interview with Mr. Floyd Monroe. The Historical Society collects interviews, memories and recollections from people in town and makes them accessible to the public. It's December 8, 2012 and we are in the Historical Society Museum. It used to be the library and I want to thank you Mr. Monroe for coming down and sharing this with us. First I want to ask, you were born in Stillwater, weren't you?

Floyd: Born in Newton Hospital but all my life I lived in Stillwater.

Rob: When were you born?

Floyd: June 18th, 1949.

Rob: And after leaving the hospital, where did you live as a young boy?

Floyd: On the farm, on the farm in the tenant house - not the farmhouse - in the tenant house.

Rob: Was that along Pond Brook Road?

Floyd: Yeah, that's on Pond - yeah, right next to the farm.

Rob: So your parents ran that farm?

Floyd: My father worked for my grandfather in the beginning and then bought my grandfather out, you know, as the years went on.

Rob: What were your parents' names?

Floyd: Floyd and Lillian Monroe.

Rob: And your grandparents?

Floyd: Andrew and Ethel Monroe.

Rob: Was Andrew Monroe the first Monroe to run that farm?

Floyd: Yes, yes, he bought part of it in 1921 and the other part in 1923 is what the deed said.

Rob: How many acres did he buy?

Floyd: There was 117 and over the years they sold a little bit so there's like 102 acres now.

Rob: Mmm hmm.

Floyd: But yeah, it was about 116-117 acres in the beginning.

Rob: Do you know how old your grandfather was when he bought the farm?

Floyd: No, I don't.

Rob: Had he been an experienced farmer or...

Floyd: Uh,

Rob: ...what - what was he doing before that?

Floyd: Yeah, I guess he was, you know - worked on some farms around and, decided [to] get his own farm.



The Monroe farmhouse with Roberta Wintermute (center) and Helen Monroe (right) in 1938. The woman on the left is unidentified.

Rob: Mmm hmm.

Floyd: So...

Rob: What did he grow? Do you know?

Floyd: Well, he had dairy cows and the hay and the corn and once in a while they had oats, you know, a different crop but mostly dairy cows and the hay and the corn to feed them.

Rob: And where did he sell the milk to?

Floyd: They sold the milk to Borden's down in Frelinghuysen and when Borden's closed they went to Sheffield's. That was also in Frelinghuysen up by the train tracks and that finally closed and the

last place my dad sold milk to was Westbrook Creamery over in, I don't know if that's Green or Frelinghuysen there too, you know.

Rob: Over the years it became more difficult for farmers to run dairy around here?

Floyd: Well, yeah, it's like we never put a bulk tank in. Most farms you know would put a bulk tank in and then the bulk truck would come because all the creameries were closing.

Rob: Mmm hmm.

Floyd: So it's like, if you were going to continue to have dairy cows you were more or less going to have to put a bulk tank in and then they picked up your milk.

Rob: It was very expensive to have a bulk tank wasn't it?

Floyd: Well, yeah, it's like you have to have the room for it and then it was a matter of buying it, you know and it had a big refrigeration unit. That's what kept the milk cold. You know, so, it was - it was an investment but if you were going to continue to farm it - it was really the sensible way to go because then you didn't have to worry about taking the cans to the creamery and you know they came and picked it up every other day, usually the bulk truck.

Rob: So that's what your grandfather had to do? He had to take the cans himself?

Floyd: Oh yeah,

Rob: in a wagon or a truck?

Floyd: Yeah, and a truck and you used to have to, for a while they had a man that came around, Hollinger, had a regular route and he had a big truck and he'd pick up milk at different farms around because he picked up milk at Albert Keen's and he picked up our milk and he picked up Harold Huff's milk and he had a regular route where he went around and he'd charge you so much to do it.

Rob: Mmm hmm.

Floyd: So for a while, yeah, we did take milk to the creamery. So, because actually in the real beginning they took milk over here by the Agway here in Stillwater.

Rob: Where the train used to go?

Floyd: Yeah, yeah, so like I say as the creameries closed you had to go to a different creamery.

Rob: Further and further away.

Floyd: Yeah, well, yeah, pretty much because when I was in high school - I used to take the milk to the creamery before I went to school so it's like - it was kind of interesting - you know you

had to get - yeah sometimes I was a little late to school but you know you had to worry about the roads - the weather and stuff but it was, you know, good.

Rob: Did your grandfather have an outside job as well as running the farm?

Floyd: Actually he did do something for the town. This is before I even remember, he was a tax collector or something. He did years and years ago and that's like, I say I don't even remember it. I mean, I was a little kid but I remember him talking about it.

Rob: Mmm hmm.

Floyd: So he did you know, he did work a part-time job like, you know, I mean back then, who knows, people maybe came to the farm and paid their taxes because years ago people used to go to Mr. Dowling's and pay taxes.

Rob: Was he the old schoolteacher when this was the school?

Floyd: I don't know if he was ever a teacher. I know he worked for the state.

Rob: Yeah.

Floyd: I know he worked for the state and his son's in the house now.

Rob: Hmm.

Floyd: So.

Rob: Now did your father have brothers and sisters that lived on the farm?

Floyd: Just my aunt, my Aunt Helen. She lived - she lived on the farm for about - you know, until she got married and that's, you know, when my dad bought my grandfather out - you know I mean he had to buy her half out.

Rob: Do you know when that was?

Floyd: Uh, maybe in the '70s I'd say, yeah.

Rob: So your grandfather was still active into the '70s.

Floyd: Oh yeah. Yeah, my grand - my grandfather, he actually got remarried at what?, 77 years old.

Rob: Oh, wow.

Floyd: Yeah, now when my grandmother died and you know he used to go to church and he got, you know, there was a lady at church and she was a widow and... - 77 he remarried. He liked companionship so.

Rob: Did he remain in the farmhouse?

Floyd: No, no actually - he moved. She had a house on Millbrook Road here in Stillwater and he moved - he moved in with her and that's when my parents actually moved into the farmhouse because they lived in the tenant house.

Rob: And where is - is the tenant house still standing?

Floyd: Yeah, yeah. It's the little house right next to the farm...

Rob: Ok.

Floyd: ...going over towards Middleville.

Rob: Ok.

Floyd: So, nobody's in that right now -

Rob: So how old was your father when he took over the farm? I guess he - he worked there as a little boy and...?

Floyd: Yeah, when he was in high school, he - they always said he like drafting and he - back then a lot of people they went to high school a lot of guys and it's like if they had a farm that's what they ended up doing - working. He never did get to do the drafting so... He uh, after high school he started working on the farm because he - he wanted to go into the service and they wouldn't take him - flat feet or something back then. And he, yeah, he couldn't - they wouldn't take him so he ended up working on the farm and, you know, working for my grandfather and it's like - he - he met my mother and that's 'cause my mother used - my mother grew up in Newark and she had relatives here in Stillwater and she used to come up in the summer.

Rob: And that's how they met?

Floyd: And that's how they met, yeah, ...

Rob: And what was her maiden name?

Floyd: Haddow - Lillian Haddow.

Rob: H-a-d-d-

Floyd: o-w. And uh, yeah - she came up here and met - you know, visited and that's - 'cause she - I think she - I think she was 18 when my dad and when her got married. And so she - she moved up here - it's kind of - you know city girl moving to the country and being involved with a farm.

Rob: She must have liked it, huh?

Floyd: Yeah, you know, my mother actually, would do stuff in the summer, rake hay and do different stuff around the farm, she.... and then later on she got so she worked for the Post Office in Middleville for - for Donald Robbins like on Saturday mornings and if he went on vacation or was

sick. And she - she actually worked for the Post Office I think 28 or 29 years she had when she retired. You know, she used to, you know, go around different post offices. So, you know, she liked it, dealing with - seeing different people. So...

Rob: Did your dad have any hired hands?

Floyd: No, no had us kids really, but uh...

Rob: How many kids were there?

Floyd: I had three sisters and we all worked on the farm.

Rob: Uh, huh.

Floyd: We all, you know, I mean none of us got out of working on the farm.

Rob: So tell me what some of your chores were?

Floyd: Well, I used to do like field-field you know field work some. My sisters were in the barn prob- more than I was probably. They helped my father with the milking and stuff and I did more of the field work.

Rob: Did you get chickens?

Floyd: And, yeah, yeah, my grandfather had chickens and then you know then you know after my parents had them and uh...

Rob: Would you sell them locally?

Floyd: Oh, yeah, yeah.

Rob: ...or to stores or people would stop by?

Floyd: People, no, people stopped right by the farm and buy eggs and then later on in years my mother would sell eggs to the Middleville Store to the people who had that after Donald Robbins had it. And they would sell - you know she would sell them eggs and they would resell them and...

Rob: Do you recall how much a dozen were?

Floyd: Uh, back then I think my mother used to get like a dollar. It was under \$2. She would get a dollar - a dollar and a quarter - a dollar 30 cents for large eggs I mean you know and over the years you can see where it's gone and that's partially because of the price of feed.

Rob: Mmm hmm.

Floyd: You know it's like every - every time you turn around the feeds going up so yeah, you got to pass some of the cost on but, it's like yeah, I mean I see eggs now \$3 a dozen - - but I understand

from the cost going up. You know it's with farming - it's like fuel's up - you know feed, your seed - so, I mean you pass some of the cost on. You can't absorb it all.

Rob: Did you always imagine that you'd be a farmer?

Floyd: No, no I really didn't. I didn't want to because that's, well, I got a job for the town because farming is like, you're just hard to make a living - a good living - you know. So that's why, I mean, I've always worked on the farm even when I worked for the town.

Rob: What did you do for the town?

Floyd: I worked for the DPW [Department of Public Works].

Rob: For how long?

Floyd: 40 years and 3 months. 40 years and 3 months. So it worked out well because it was right here in town so, I would get out of work and then go to the farm. You know it's like people used to laugh. It's like I'd go to work, go to the Post Office at 3:30 when I got out of work and then go right to the farm and it was kind of funny. Different people would say if I wasn't at the farm or home I was at work. You know, one of three places you could find me.

Rob: Do you think the farm wouldn't have survived if you didn't have the town job?

Floyd: Well the farm - I really had - the finances I didn't really have anything much to do with them until my mother died and then she left it to me.

Rob: Ok, who ran it?

Floyd: Uh, well my parents, you know, my parents. My parents were the ones - it was their farm. They were actually - you know but like I said I worked.

Rob: Mmm hmm.

Floyd: You know I'd go down there and work and my sisters helped out and...

Rob: Did you get a salary from your parents?

Floyd: No, no, not really. It's like well yeah in the end I ended up with a farm.

Rob: Yeah.

Floyd: You know, but it's like my sisters they didn't. They're not involved with the farm but my mother - my mother took care of them in other ways you know so. You know, it's like we all worked for - you know we all worked on the farm - grew up on the farm and... You know it was - it was a good life you know. I don't regret it, you know it's like - even today it's like I look at the farm and it's like it - it's a good life. You know - you're outside - it's like - I look at the land and it's like you

know you can go on the land and nobody's going to stop you and it's like, to own a chunk of land like that it's nice so...

Rob: What's the toughest thing about farming?

Floyd: It's - it's kind of a gamble - you know, it's like the last couple of years the weather's been crazy. You know you get the dry weather and your crops don't grow right and the fact that everything's going up. It's like fuel. I can remember buying fuel for under a dollar a gallon. Now it's like almost four dollars a gallon. So it's like - I understand when you go to the grocery store that prices are going up because I'm involved in it kinda...

Rob: Mmm hmm.

Floyd: ...you know in a real roundabout way. It's like everything is going up so it's like naturally they're passing the cost on.

Rob: Did you have all the corn in before Hurricane Sandy hit?¹

Floyd: Yeah, oh yes. Yeah, oh yeah. I'm glad.

Rob: Did you have any damage from the storm?

Floyd: Yeah, yeah, a couple of roofs on the - the metal roofs got beat up a little bit and some trees down on the farm you know but other than that not really, you know, a lot of damage.

Rob: What are you growing this year on the farm?

Floyd: Uh, corn. I planted corn and hay - the hay you don't plant every year but the corn you have to plant every year and it's like now the bear. It's like when I got done with the corn, it's - I had to end up buying some corn from a local guy.

Rob: You mean because the bears....

Floyd: Well the bear and the dry - the dry weather. I mean we had - we had like six weeks of dry weather so that put the corn back some.

Rob: Is it a bear that you've seen many times?

Floyd: Oh, yeah, well yeah, oh yeah this past year there was a mother and three cubs and two other bear in the cornfield and they just destroy.

Rob: Was that ever a problem for when your father and grandfather?

Floyd: Not - not really, not really, it's - when I talk to people -when I talk to people and you read in the paper - they were here first. Well, I grew up on that farm. I was in the woods, in the field. I was around - around there all the time - my whole life and there was no - the first time I saw a bear

¹ Superstorm Sandy struck Stillwater on October 29, 2012.

it was in the early '70s. I was over 21 years old. I was on my way to work for the town one morning, coming down Middleville Road by Vosper's and there's this big black thing running down the road and I - I thought it was a dog and here it was a bear - the first bear I ever saw in my life in Stillwater and I'm over 21 years old. Grew up right there on the farm and I'm not saying there maybe wasn't bear around but I never saw them and as far as now if you grow corn - there's bear damage - there's bear damage. And my grandfather always grew corn - my father always grew corn. There was no damage. Years ago you would have raccoons and some groundhogs. They would do some damage but not like the bear. I mean not - not destroy big areas and this is why when people talk about the bear hunt it's like the bear are not - the bear haven't changed. If - if they like corn today, they would have liked corn 30 years ago, 40 years ago but yet there was no bear damage in the cornfields so how many bear could have been around? And you try to explain this to people and they think you're just a killer.

Rob: Did you participate in the bear hunt this year?

Floyd: No, no, no I don't, I don't shoot them. I'm not saying I - the guys on the farm I - I don't know if they'd shoot them but I did get a few years ago a guy I had - he did shoot one in the - in the cornfield and so I'm not against it because I know they have to be controlled...

Rob: Mmm hmm.

Floyd: ...but there's people out there that think you're just a killer.

Rob: Now you mentioned that you grow corn and you cut the hay. Is that all dedicated to the cows that you - that you raise or do you sell some of that to others?

Floyd: Um, the corn no, the corn all goes to the - to the beef animals. The hay we sell - we sell a little bit of it, yeah.

Rob: To whom?

Floyd: Um, well there's a guy up on Middleville Road. He's got, I think, some sheep and he stops and get 10 bales every so often you know. As far as selling a lot - we really don't have, you know - there's maybe one guy that buys quite a bit and when I say quite a bit you know maybe 400 bales a year - 300 bales a year.

Rob: What kind of grass is it?

Floyd: Uh, broom grass. It's got a little Timothy you know, yeah. It's not alfalfa.

Rob: Uh, huh.

Floyd: It's not Alfalfa.

Rob: What would that mean if it was?

Floyd: Alfalfa - alfalfa is a better quality hay...

Rob: Ok.

Floyd: ... but it's more expensive to grow and it's like, you tend to get bugs that bother it so you have to have it sprayed different times.

Rob: So are you growing a different hay than your father and grandfather grew?

Floyd: Uh, actually my father did have some alfalfa on the farm in different fields for you know... but it tends to run out and you have to replant it and we just never did. We seeded it down with different uh, like I say, orchid grass.

Rob: What do you have to do to maintain it?

Floyd: Uh, fert - you got to fertilize it and you know it needs the pH of the soil has to be you know - so it needs lime once in a while which is hard to get now because Limecrest - Limestone closed up. You know, you can get lime but it's a lot more expensive now because your local place is gone. That was a big, you know - we used to get Ed Grange from Blairstown - he'd spread - he'd get - spread lime for us. I mean he's out of business now and Limestone is - doesn't make the lime anymore.

Rob: Interesting, because Stillwater has a lot of examples of the old limestone kiln.

Floyd: Yeah, yeah.

Rob: Stone kilns would cook the limestone for lime.

Floyd: Yeah.

Rob: There's still limestone in town, but no one's getting it.

Floyd: Yeah, yeah. No, like I say limestone uh, used to have that - I mean that was a big thing for them. I mean, you know they'd have - they'd have a guy up in Sussex used to have trailer trucks and he'd haul a lot of limestone and you know farmers would have him spread their fields you know because, yeah, if you keep the pH the fertilizer works better. You know, I mean your crops - certain crops need the pH pretty good and it's like I know a lot of the farm needs lime but it's like...

Rob: Do you take those measurements yourself - the pH or...

Floyd: Uh,

Rob: ...is there a county agent?

Floyd: Yeah, yeah, you take soil samples and take it to the - to the county and they - they can - they I don't know if they send them to Rutgers or what but they can tell you.

Rob: Is that a pretty helpful program?

Floyd: Yeah, yeah over the years I ask them different questions, and they help you out with, like if you don't know what a weed is. No, it's a worthwhile thing for the county to have.

Rob: Are you seeing more invasive weeds and other kinds of...?

Floyd: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

Rob: Like what.

Floyd: Um, well there's - the guy that does my spraying he says there's a plant called mudwort and that is in different areas and it keeps spreading. He says it spreads through by the root and I've had - I've had some of my - just this year I had some fields sprayed for that and horsenettle. There's - there's different weeds that are getting a little bit out of control so it's like I had some fields sprayed this year and they said it might take a couple - couple of years of spraying to get rid of it so we'll see what it looks like.

Rob: Is this a problem that didn't exist at some point?

Floyd: Uh, you know you've always had problems with weeds. I wouldn't say the weeds is just a new thing. I mean, years ago - you know certain weeds - my grandfather would go around early on and dig them out before they got too bad. You know that's when you had more help - more people could do stuff like that.

Rob: What about pests and insects and things like that?

Floyd: Yeah, with the corn crop, yeah that's, you tend to get some - 'cause we spray for - we spray for weeds in the cornfields, yeah.

Rob: How many farms are left in Stillwater? Do you know?

Floyd: That's - if you go to the town and look at the records there's a lot of farms, but as far as farms with like beef animals or dairy cows - the last farm, and I'm not sure he was all in Stillwater - Jackie Westbrook was one of the last farms that had dairy cows - some of the farm was actually in Frelinghuysen but it's like you had Rivera's up in Swartswood on Millbrook - or on Mount Hol - uh, Mount Benevolence Road. That's an old chicken farm and the parents have died and the sons they do hay. They farm and they do a lot of hay and they do a good job - they do. I mean they're aggressive. They keep after their fields and uh - but yeah there's a lot of farms but you know some of them are hay. It's like Ed Chammings and his daughter Lisa I mean they do different - you know corn and hay. But there's a lot of farms - horse farms. There's a - if you look at the town, there's farms but not many with beef animals or cows.

Rob: Are farmers uh cooperative with one another? If you need something or...

Floyd: Oh, yeah.

Rob: ...a piece of equipment could you ask Ed Chammings?

Floyd: Oh, yeah.

Rob: or someone else?

Floyd: Ed - Ed - is a very helpful person. Ed's helped me out over the years and uh, actually he helped me out this year. You know, I mean, Ed's very helpful. He does a lot for a lot of people in town and, yeah he's starting to show his age now though and it's kind of a shame 'cause like I say he's helped me out over the years.

Rob: Was there someone other than your father or grandfather that you would ask questions of about farming or maybe Ed or someone else?

Floyd: Oh yeah, you talk amongst yeah the local people. Yeah, no, the Castners on Fairview Lake Road - they're uh - they're pretty involved with the farming.

Rob: Was there a gathering spot that you would go to drink coffee...

Floyd: No, no, a lot of times...

Rob: ...or chew the fat?

Floyd: A lot of times you run into them at the feed store...

Rob: Mmm hmm.

Floyd: ...or something, you know but, no over the years it's like and that's what's a little more difficult now is over the years you had all these little farms and yeah, if you were baling hay and your baler broke down, you'd go to your neighbor. And you know you'd help each other out. And, now there's not that many...

Rob: Mmm.

Floyd: ...people

Rob: Mmm hmm.

Floyd: ...not that many people, you know. Like I say Ed - Ed usually has something. He can help you. Ed usually will bail you out.

Rob: You mentioned earlier that the farm used to be a dairy operation. When did it move from dairy to beef cows?

Floyd: Uh, '70 - in the early '70s. It's like, my sister - yeah, my sisters you know they - they got - went to high school and the grad - they went to - to Dover Business College - my two older sisters and they got jobs and, you know, off the farm and then when I got the job off the farm it's like my dad... My dad still had the dairy farm for a while but it got too much for like one person you know to be milking the cows, so he - he sold the dairy and he put on some beef.

Rob: Was that a big investment to get the beef cattle?

Floyd: No, not really. I mean, he bought some beef and you know and then you do your breeding and you build your herd up.

Rob: What's the biggest difference between dairy and beef cattle in terms of their personality?

Floyd: Dairy cows are probably less... they don't get out as much. They're a gentler breed. You know beef cows especially some breeds are, I mean it's like you know they kind of tend to like to wander, so... The dairy cows you had to milk them twice a day. The beef animals I mean you feed them something in the morning. You feed them something at night. They're not as demanding as dairy cows.

Rob: But you've got to keep your fences.

Floyd: Yeah, well yeah, you know that could be - you know, believe me there's lots of times the cows are out at the farm -

Rob: Yeah.

Floyd: - the beef animals.

Rob: How far have any of them wandered?

Floyd: The furthest - the furthest they - they wandered a couple of years ago some of them got out and they - they did actually go not quite all the way to Stillwater Firehouse which you know was just the next farm down - Huff's old farm. They got in one of their fields but that wasn't - . But I know one time 'cause we have - we farm farms off the farm and my son-in-law took some cows that he kept over on [Route] 619 at Keen's old farm. He took some over there and they got out right away. They ended up getting one at Castner's on Fairview Lake Road.

Rob: Wow, they wandered up the road.

Floyd: Just one of them. I mean, he got a couple of them pretty early after they got out. He actually got one by the millpond by Swartwood Lake because from Keen's - they went over the hill towards [Route] 521 and the one they just couldn't get it. It ended up going through Jones' old farm, up over the hill, past Jay Fredericks, and ended up on Gerald Castner's farm on Fairview Lake Road and they got it in their barn or it would probably still be wandering, so. It was probably the change that this - these particular animals wasn't you know keen on.

Rob: What - what - variety of cattle do you have now?

Floyd: They're Angus. At one point we had a white-faced Hereford bull so there was quite a bit of the white face in the herd and that's kind of gone and he's breeding with like an Angus. He breeds with a couple different animals. It's like right now he doesn't have a bull so if he has to breed something it's artificial.

Rob: Now when you say he, who are you talking about?

Floyd: My son-in-law, Harry. He -

Rob: He runs the farm?

Floyd: He does the animal end of it. I let him take care of the beef end of it. He likes the animals so good.

Rob: So tell me what's the basic operation of a beef farm? When do they get slaughtered or when do they go to the slaughter house?

Floyd: Um, he - he raises them - he raises them from a calf to -

Rob: They all give birth on the farm?

Floyd: Yeah, yeah, yeah. If a cow's pregnant it will give birth on the farm or like I say one of these other farms that we have animals at. And he raises them and when they're about a year and a half old maybe you know, 1600 pounds - 1800 pounds - you know, it depends on how well they put weight on. There again it's like the one year we run out of corn silage and so we didn't have it all year like he usually does and so the animals didn't put the weight on as well that year so, but he likes to get - he likes to get them a certain weight before he sends them to the slaughter house because if you don't you're not - you're not really making as much money.

Rob: Do you send them one at a time...

Floyd: No.

Rob: ...or in a group or once a year?

Floyd: Uh, no, - matter of fact he sent a couple of animals last week to the slaughter house and he's got two, or three more to send after the beginning of the year because sometimes the slaughter house is busy. A couple of years ago it was months before he could get an appointment to have some animals slaughtered and some animals he doesn't send to the slaughter house. There's a guy that comes around in the fall or this time of year and actually will buy this year's animals. He trucks them down to Virginia...

Rob: Mmm.

Floyd: ... to a market and then he'll find animals down there you know and bring back different, you know, animals so it's like sometimes he'll buy six or eight animals so I mean that - that takes away a bunch of this year's animals because if you could sell them right now if they've been on pasture and what you've been getting you know some corn silage so you don't have to feed them all year so you're not feeding - 'cause once you're in the barn and the pasture's outgrown whatever they're putting on in weight is something you're giving them so if you can sell them for the right price before you have to keep them all winter then you know you're doing good.

Rob: So if you're delayed - if the slaughter house is busy that could cost you some money?

Floyd: Oh yeah. Oh, yeah.

Rob: You keep feeding them and they're not getting that much bigger.

Floyd: Yeah, yeah, as they're bigger you're feeding them more to maintain their weight. And every once in a while an animal will get older you know and then you just send her into the market and somebody buys her for meat you know.

Rob: So your - your son-in-law and daughter are running the farm?

Floyd: Well they help me. Yeah, no, they help me. Like I said my son-in-law does the beef end of it pretty much, you know, I don't really get that involved with it anymore - the beef end.

Rob: Your mother passed away when?

Floyd: In '93.

Rob: And the farmhouse has been empty since then?

Floyd: Yeah, yeah.

Rob: Have you tried to get tenants in there or - ?

Floyd: No, not really because to get a CO [certificate of occupancy] you need to do a lot of fixing up. You know the town - town's gotten so they want something pretty nice before they give you a CO. So it's like that farmhouse needs a lot of work.

Rob: Would you need a CO if you wanted to live there?

Floyd: I don't know. Yeah, probably.

Rob: Don't you own the house?

Floyd: Yeah, yeah. I don't know if I'd need a CO if I wanted to move in there because at one time my son-in-law and daughter talked about maybe moving in you know because it would be closer for them dealing with the animals but that for whatever reason never – I don't know why but they couldn't.

Rob: Do you know when that house was built?

Floyd: No, I don't. I don't know when the farmhouse was built.

Rob: Or the barns?

Floyd: No. I don't know so..

Rob: Before your grandfather bought it.

Floyd: Yeah, I would imagine. Yeah, it was there before he bought it and like I say he bought the first part in 1921 is what the deed said so.

Rob: So you see a lot of farms now that have preserved farm sign...

Floyd: Yeah.

Rob: ...on them, what's your feeling about that?

Floyd: It's - it's a good deal - it's a good deal if somebody wants to farm it and keep it - keep it going because once you put it in farmland preservation that's - it's got to be a farm. You can't - you can't basically get out of it that I know of.

Rob: Mmm hmm.

Floyd: And it's like, you know, if you have a family that wants to continue farming it or you figure - because if you sell it you've got to find somebody that's going to do something with the agricultural end of it and uh, basically what you're doing is they're giving you the difference between what it's worth as a farm and as - what a developer would pay for the land - you know the development price, so.

Rob: Have you been offered anything by a developer?

Floyd: Um, years ago people used to talk to my dad about buying the land - you know selling it and he - he never really - towards the end I guess he maybe would have considered selling it but he, you know, I don't think my mother was too keen on it so that's probably why it's still there so uh....

Rob: Do you feel a responsibility to keep it as a farm?

Floyd: Well, that's - that's a pretty - pretty big issue. It's like it's been in the family you know for how many - three generations and it's like for me to sell it - it would be a big decision. And it would be like once you sell it - it's gone - it's gone so it's kind of like your family's history being gone. So I, yeah I - I thought about it different times but it's like, you know, being that my daughter and my son-in-law are interested and help me out with it - it's like right now I'm not interested in selling it. And eventually I would kind of like to turn it over to them if, you know, but then I don't know what they'd do with it. You know, I mean it's - I see how much tougher it has gotten and it's like I know they both got jobs so it's - it's like you know I - I don't know if they'd have the amount of time to - that you've got to put into it because, like I say, I used to get out of work at 3:30 and- and it was kinda like by 4:00 I was at the farm.

Rob: Mmm hmm.

Floyd: And it's like my son-in-law works for an excavator and sometimes if they're running, you know, a job he doesn't get out so it's like if you got hay that needs to be raked or baled and you're still working it's like it's not always as easy as it seems.

Rob: So are you putting in more time at the farm now that you're retired from your township job?

Floyd: Uh, not really probably it's like I used to - I used to be down there until what time at night and now it's like I'm not. You know in the hay season, corn season then I'm there more but like this time of year that I'm not involved with the animals I'm not there as much.

Rob: Mmmhmm. Mmmhmm. How many head are there?

Floyd: Uh, 40, right now there's 40 animals. He got rid of those few last week. Matter of fact he just had a calf born two weeks ago - the last one and that was only because he had artificially bred it - the first calf heifer you know and uh, 'cause he doesn't like to have them this late. You know, usually you want them more in the spring so, he probably won't in the spring you know have... Well right now he's got a bunch of cows pregnant - assuming they're all pregnant so...

Rob: When you were a kid, Stillwater was a pretty small town of only about six, seven hundred people.

Floyd: Yeah, I mean...

Rob: Now it's like four, five thousand.

Floyd: Yeah.

Rob: How do you see the difference in the township from when you were younger and now? What's the primary difference?

Floyd: Well it's like back then you had a lot of farming. You know so I mean you didn't have - you know now it's like you have a lot more traffic. You know, it's like so when you're out in the road with the tractors and equipment it's like you know. A lot of people are pretty good but you get people that tend to seem to be annoyed that you're going down the road with a piece of trac - you know with a piece of equipment and you're not doing 50 miles an hour or you got to worry about like the cows getting out because a number of years ago we did have a bull get hit at night one time and I mean...

Rob: Is there any insurance?

Floyd: Yeah, no my mother - my mother that's like I say how long ago my mother had the farm yet. Yeah, she had insurance but you know it was kind of an odd story because not much was done about it - not much was done about it. I mean, the bull - the bull lived and the vehicle for whatever reason there wasn't, you know - it wasn't an issue. It wasn't an issue so whether the person was supposed to be out with this particular vehicle at that time of night because it kind of got swept under the rug for whatever reason.

Rob: I would imagine a car hitting a bull, the car would be pretty beat up.

Floyd: Well it was a van, it was a van and it was at leased van and like I say there was - there was a story to it...

Rob: Mmm hmm.

Floyd: ...and it yeah, it kind of got swept under the rug so, but my mother did have insurance so I mean it wouldn't have been a problem, but oh yeah, it did a lot of damage. You hit a bull that weighs like a ton, so, and luckily there was a guy that was a witness basically that told the police officer at the time that yeah, this van had passed him going down the road a ways...

Rob: Mmm.

Floyd: ... seemed to be going kind of fast. So, you know there was this big long story to it and it got swept under the rug which I mean we're thankful for that and you know the bull lived.

Rob: Have you ever had problems with theft of your machinery or other items?

Floyd: No, not really. Not really and you do have that problem. You do have that problem. I've never really had the problem and I don't think father really had the problem but you do, you do, hear - hear about it. I know in Fredon this one farmer a number of years ago had a hay wagon stolen and I don't because if he ever did find it because it's like in the auto parts store he had this picture of it and I mean ...

Rob: I just want to ask you a couple more questions. You went to, Stillwater Elementary School?

Floyd: Yes.

Rob: And then to Newton...

Floyd: Newton High School.

Rob: ...High School. And where were your kids born? Were they born in Stillwater? Or in Newton?

Floyd: No, Newton. Yeah, my one daughter. I have one daughter.

Rob: How old is she?

Floyd: She'll be 42 in April.

Rob: Mmm hmm.

Floyd: We only had the one daughter. She was born in Newton Hospital.

Rob: Did she - did she enjoy doing chores on the farm?

Floyd: Yeah, yeah, she's kind of an animal person so, like I say she finally went to college to be a vet tech and that's what she does now. She works for one of the local vets. Oh yeah, she's - she's always fooling around with the animals. As a matter of fact a couple few years ago one of the

cows got bloat in the fall and when we first found it I kind of thought it was going to die and she got on her phone and she was talking and something and next thing you know she's got a big needle and she's poking a hole in the side of this cow and it's like and you would not believe the gases and fluids that came out of this cow and the cow is alive and well today.

Rob: What are some of the major diseases that cows get?

Floyd: Uh, right now we haven't really had too much problem with any sicknesses but a cow can get pneumonia - oh yeah, cows can get pneumonia and you know when they're milking you know sometimes they get what they call mastitis in their utters.

Rob: What does that mean?

Floyd: You got to give them medicine and you can't sell the milk.

Rob: Oh.

Floyd: So you got to milk them, you know, by hand.

Rob: So does a vet look at them each year or not necessarily?

Floyd: No, no, the only time we have a vet usually is if a cow gets sick you more or less need them and it's like now that my daughter is involved and gone to school and works for a vet she'll talk to him and sometimes you know she'll be giving the cow needles and stuff but cows can be interesting, I know one year a cow was having a calf and some of the inside of the cow was coming out

Rob: Oh.

Floyd: Oh yeah, no it's - and so they had to have the vet there and they pushed it back in and had to sew things up.

Rob: Was she ok?

Floyd: Yeah, yeah, she was ok - it's just that like humans, cows can have a variety of different issues.

Rob: Sometimes do they trip and break a leg?

Floyd: Uh, yeah, yeah we never had too much problem with that - with breaking legs but you know you kind of worry about groundhog holes.

Rob: Yeah.

Floyd: Because yeah they get you know - they can step in a groundhog hole.

Rob: What do you do to contain that - to control it?

Floyd: What, the groundhog hole?

Rob: Yeah.

Floyd: Sometimes you know you have guys that are willing to shoot them.

Rob: Mmm hmm.

Floyd: But then they make these gas bombs that you put down the hole and gas kills them, it's like now you got to - years ago you could shoot them you know a lot of people - but now with so many - it's getting built up so now if you - it's just like deer hunting. You got to watch where you're shooting because years ago there wasn't a house down the end of the field in the woods you know.

Rob: Yeah, yeah.

Floyd: Now it's, you know - the area's grown so you've got to watch it.

Rob: Do you enjoy hunting and fishing?

Floyd: Uh, I used to fish a little more. I used to like to go ice fishing. I haven't been ice fishing in a couple of years.

Rob: Did you go to the lake?

Floyd: Yeah, I used the Swartwood Lake and Fairview Lake. I used to ice fish at Swarts -Fairview Lake and my uncle used to - I used to go with him. He liked to hunt and fish and, so it's like my son-in-law he - he goes fishing some and hunting but yeah, I kind of don't hunt as much as I used to. I went out a little bit this week deer hunting but you know.

Rob: Did you get one?

Floyd: No, no, no I didn't. They got five - five so far and I was talking to my son-in-law before and he said, you know, he hunted for a while this morning they didn't see nothing. It's been kind of a bad year really. It's like down around the farm you always heard shooting even if it was from a distance and I haven't really heard a whole lot of shooting this year.

Rob: Mmmhmm. Mmmhmm.

Floyd: So.

Rob: I live closer to the mountain and I...

Floyd: Yeah.

Rob: ...on Monday I heard - the first day of ...

Floyd: Yeah, well Monday - Monday is opening day. Monday it's like I was down the farm today and it's like Saturday usually you got more people in the woods and more hunting and it's like I didn't

really hear any shooting so you know it's gonna... well, like they say the - the bear hunting is even off. Well, it's like Monday and Tuesday was foggy.

Rob: Mmm hmm.

Floyd: Today is foggy - somewhat foggy so it's like it all plays a factor in the hunting.

Rob: Mmm hmm.

Floyd: So but it's pretty warm too. I remember as a kid hunting deer hunting week there was usually snow on the ground and you were cold.

Rob: Mmm hmm.

Floyd: ...you used to be in your t-shirt just about so I don't know. You know, it's changed you know, things are changing so but, Stillwater is a nice town yet but it's - it's developed like I said. You used to know your neighbors now you see people coming in and out by your house and you don't know them and you know they go off to work in the morning and you know it's - it's a different - a different area you know as far as that you know but. A lot of kids are into the recreation you know. Down next to the farm is a park and it's like in the fall there's kids down there all the time playing and it's - well like you say how many kids were in Stillwater years ago. Now it's like you see the school buses going by in the morning and at night and it's like when I was in grammar school there's was I think 4 school buses - now there's 10 or 12 lined up there in the afternoon. You know it's just a lot of development over the years so lot of land is gone but that's happening all over - that's happening all over. Stillwater kind of didn't get it - get it as bad as some towns so which I'm glad. You know, I hate to see - I hate to see farmland gone to developments and you see it and the state they take over land and they just let it grow up which is not what I kind of think the state should do. You know so, but there's a lot of people like my neighbor there - they - they put that farm in preservation and like I say I don't have anything against it. You know, I know my mother looked into it years ago. She looked into and she really never did anything with it 'cause there's several different ways you can do it. There's several different ways you can do it. She just never did it and I've never really... I know when she was looking into it you know she talked to me about different things and I just never did it either and different people think I should but...

Rob: But you're right, you've got to find someone who's willing to keep it farming.

Floyd: Well yeah, yeah, because that's the thing it's like once you do it you're involved with it and it's like - I'm sure my - my daughter and Harry would be interested in keeping it going but then they don't - they don't have any kids so it's like and they're 42 - both of them are going to be 42 in the spring so it's like after if they took it over what's going to happen when they decide you know what to do you know without having kids you know - and my - any other family members they've all got their own lives you know. My nieces and nephews - they've got their own - they're all moved - none of them live around here. They're in Pennsylvania. One is in the Army

yet so he's all over so...I mean they helped out on the farm as kids a little bit during hay but they - they've all moved on.

Rob: Mmmhmm.

Floyd: So.

Rob: Well, Mr. Monroe, I want to really thank you for coming down here today and talking about your farm and farm life in Stillwater.

Floyd: Yeah, it's a good life. Like I say I don't really regret it's just that like I say when I was in high school I could see that it was hard to make a living, you know, so that's why I got a job off the farm, you know, 'cause after high school a little while I was - I worked a couple of places for a short time and then I met a girl, you know, and wanted to get married and it's like I know you're not going to get married and have a good life especially my father had to be supported by the family - you know my parents had to be there - just wasn't that kind of money to be made to support how many families on the farm, so it's like the farm is still there and it's like we're all working at trying to keep it going and you know we'll see where it goes. But, uh, it's it's a good life - it's a good life, it gets you outside in the air so.

Rob: Well thank you again.

Floyd: Ok.