

CLAIRE MATTHEWS: Tape 2, side 3: CM, HM, LM, RAD, and JJ 9/2/79

CM: We washed in a big tub.

JJ: There was a shower downstairs when I was a kid.

There was nothing upstairs.

Downstairs, when you came in by the back way.

RAD: That was the long sink where you washed your hands, past that was the toilet. Next to the toilet was a shower head.

You took your meals at the Big House and slept in one of the bedrooms upstairs. What did you eat?

We had quite alot of buckwheat pancakes. Ma Dougan was a good cook. She had Genevieve there to help her. We ate general good substantial farm food for dinner: meat and potatoes, corn in season, fruits. We always had desserts, pie or cake.

LM: Mrs. Dougan was a marvelous cook.

She was the mainstay of the place.

HM: I remember the big wood stove at the end of the kitchen.

Somebody was always splitting wood for the big pile outside.

Remember Skim-it? When you'd separate the milk and you'd get this fluff of skim milk? The men would bring that in and Gramma'd put sugar on that and everyone would have a skim-it on their bread.

LM: Gramma was a Sunday school teacher, I was in her class. We'd go out to the farm.

Remember how everyone would complain about Daddy Dougan coming into the small tool shed and just flinging things down? Everybody would paw through them. You couldn't find anything in that place. But Gramma could go in there and find it!

HM: I remember her hollering at Mr. Dougan, trying to communicate with him. At first she'd try cupping her hands and hollering close to him. After a few years she gave up and began writing notes.

He had an ear trumpet before you were there.

CM: It was funny, when she still would get close to his ear and holler, when she'd finish, he'd always...wipe out his ear! With his handkerchief.

JJ: She was slow to give up! By the time I remember, she'd quit trying to yell into his ear.

HM: He deteriorated rapidly in four or five years and she had to give up.

CM: Grampa would work on all the machines on the farm. He'd come by and say, This machine is not working properly. And the help could not find anything wrong. But he'd climb up there and poke around, in just a little while, he'd feel around, he'd find the trouble and say, This has got to be repaired before you go any further. He was a genius with machines. He couldn't hear it, but he could feel by the vibrations. He'd get on and feel the handles and levers and be able to tell that it wasn't operating right. We always wondered how he did it. He finally told us.

HM: Daddy's main interest was hogs. His personal favorite. He'd stay out with them and sleep overnight in the hog houses with the ones who were going to give birth.

CM: He arranged the naming system out there. The A1, B, C, etc. Old M12 the cow! Everytime you went by she wanted to come right through the fence at you. But she was one of the best milk producers we ever had.

JJ: But she was a mean old thing! She's a legend.

CM: While I was there, she made a record of 12,000 lbs of milk and 500 lbs of butterfat according to the Cow Testing Assn.

JJ: When we'd go through there on the way to the water tank, we'd look for her. You might not see her but all the sudden she'd be after you and you'd have to run like hell and get over the fence before M12 got to ya!

CM: Grampa called us cubs.

JJ: I've got cubbie in here. Did he call you Point, or Jim?

CM: Cubbie was the main one....In the beginning, he only had Guernsey cows, it was Dougan Guernsey Dairy Farm. M12 was a Guernsey. In the 20s there got to be a craze about highfat milk. They were getting higher production figures from the Holstein cattle at the same time. So he made a mixture of the two, he called it blended milk. Guernsey milk was 20c a quart and 15c for the blend.

RAD: I remember working hard to put over Gu milk in town. During WWI, my dad's idea was to hold the price down with the cost of production. Our competition was going up all the time. When the after-war slump came, our price was the same, but the comp was buying it cheaper. It was tough. I gave out pamphlets, went door-to-door. They had pictures of Joann and Pat on them as fat babies. He didn't ride his prices up when he could've and he didn't drop his prices when they did because he went by cost of production. It occurred to us then that we ought to have another brand of milk. We were up to 600 quarts/day of Gu milk. That wouldn't support the men and my and my father's families. So we came up with the blend: Gu, Hol, and Brown Swiss. When the ads came out, we had quite an increase in business.

CM: The keenest competition became Sturnamen(?), Wright, and Waggoner.

HM: It was all because of the butterfat.

CM: Three % was standard butterfat content on Hol milk. They hadn't developed the Hol to have more butterfat yet.

RAD: As an aside, we also changed the milk bottle. I've got an amber one in the car, you're interested.

LM: I'd love it.////

CM: Daddy needed a light team for the milk wagon. We had the larger wagon with a team and two men. The smaller wagon had one horse and one man. The two horses had gotten too old. He heard about a team for sale by Townsend in Portage. The team weighed about 1100 lbs each, light-footed sort. He wanted me to go up there and get that team. How did I get to Portage to get that team? I got up there, I hitched up the horses to the road wagon with the harnesses that came with them, and got home about 10 in the evening. That's a lot of miles. I did that all in one day.

RAD: I bet the horses were tireder than you were!

CM: This was a spirited team! I had to hold those reins. Sharp-looking. He hadn't had them long when he started them on the route. He wanted to take the route to try them. Out on Colley Road, somehow he was dragged on the gravelly road. They started to run or something. The team came into the dooryard without him.

RAD: I think the wagon turned over and he went under part of it. His knees were skinned down to the bone and he was in bed for quite a while. Up till then he thought that no one but he could do the delivery. He was laid up and Ross Martin took over. Grampa didn't deliver any milk after that.

CM: Ben Lintell was an early milk peddler. He's still alive. Ed Path, too. He was in charge of keeping those model T trucks in order.

RAD: After the model Ts went out, he wasn't so good. He did odds and ends.

CM: I remember that one negro boy. He talked all the time, a jolly fellow. The only one I remember. He worked in the milkhouse and helped on the trucks.

JJ: There was also Scotty's brother who worked on the farm later.

RAD: Remember Charlotte?

JJ: I didn't like her at all.

CM: Domer worked on the farm later on.

JJ: Did you lose your finger on the farm?

CM: I lost that since working with my buzzsaw. I ran into a knot in the board, tried to grab the board. It took the finger right off.

HM: Daddy was always getting injured, banging his head. We had the wagon full of hay and a pitchfork shoved down in there. We came racing ahead of a

storm, took a corner too fast, and dumped the hay. Daddy crawled under there to see the damage and stood up before he came out from underneath. He jammed those tines right into his back. He moaned and that was it. I don't ever remember him remarking after he hurt himself....He just got up and kept going.

JJ: I have several accidents down already.////

RAD: (can't hear beginning, but...) We got back about 6 o'clock and the police had been looking for us all day. That's when I heard that Daddy was in the hospital. People we were visiting helped me grab some stuff, we jumped in car and raced to Denver just in time to catch the midnight flight. I was by my father's side at nine the next morning. He was sitting up in bed. He had some fertilizer ads in front of him, and some farm plans for spring. I sat and talked for a while, then Mother came in, and we spent the whole day with my father. He realized that he was over 80, anything could happen. He was resolute in his fate. He quoted some things, "Crossing the Bar," and told us he was ready. But he looked so chipper that we didn't believe he was in a dangerous position. He'd been fertilizing their lawn (they lived in town now). He'd hired some people to bring some fertilizer. He went to grab the first bag. He got to feeling funny and went into the house. He called the doctor who told him to go to the hospital. He bathed and put on fresh clothes and drove himself over. Vera came through on the train the next day. I got up and didn't call the hospital, I went to meet Vera. I was being paged. My father had died early that morning....It was interesting that he was grabbing those bags of fertilizer before anyone else!

CM: I stopped to see him after the war when they were living there.

RAD: He didn't give up anything, he fought to the last inch.

JJ: I heard there was a field at the Hill farm that hadn't been seeded properly. Or there had just been a late spring snowfall. Grampa said that was a million-dollar snowfall. It didn't freeze anything and just lay on the ground. For some reason they couldn't get the machinery onto the field to seed. He went out like a sower of old and was slinging the seed.

RAD: That happened a few days before, or a year before. He would've done that. He showed me how to sow from the pouch.

CM: It was a small area, probably. In my father's day, they seeded everything by flinging it. Not even a hand-cranker.

RAD: You'd control it with your thumb.

JJ: I think he was out there just before he went into the hospital.

RAD: He went to the hospital on the 20th of April. There could've been snow, but I don't remember that story at all.

JJ: Maybe you weren't there. I remember that very clearly. He was out seeding that field, tramping the whole thing, slinging the grain.

RAD: Could very well.

HM: He did a lot of that. Also, that roan, the offspring of Beauty, he made that colt into a pet. It wandered around all over the farmyard. It got into the pigswill. That horse became so round. It got so unruly, having been left alone so much, it had its own way around the barnyard. When he wanted to break it, he couldn't handle it. He blindfolded it, but he couldn't get it to do any work. He finally gave up and sent it over to Elbert Marston who broke it for him.

CM: Elbert Marston made a specialty of buying horses and breaking them. Give him ten dollars and he'd whip'em into working and driving and then he'd sell 'em for fifteen.

JJ: Do you remember once when Grampa was breaking a colt, I was watching him, and he pulled out that one long hair hanging from its belly? The colt just went wild, wild! I seem to be the only one who remembers that story. ///

CM: (Something about mules on the milkroute.)

End of Side 3

Side 4:

CM: They mules wouldn't work on the milkroute, so they tried to see what they could do on the farm. These mules protect themselves to the limit. This one mule got its feet stuck in the mud, and it just lay down. They couldn't get that mule up on its feet. I don't know how long it took them to get that mule out of the field. I don't know what finally happened to the mules. For some reason they didn't work out on the milkroute.

RAD: Howard Brandt and Jim Pedley (?) were great friends before WWI. Jim was a red-headed, Irish or something. Howard did work with hogs for years. Jim and Howard visited me several times. I remember Jim driving a light team of mules on a milk wagon. They ran away with him. They went around a telephone post on Prairie Ave, one on each side, and they came together on the other side and knocked themselves out.

HM: Daddy paid me \$2.50 /mo when I was 12. He wrote me a check every month. I did more nonsense than work, but I was on the payroll...I did anything he put me to. I stripped cows in the barn for awhile. That was quite a wage at that time. That's the way he was.

RAD: I have some of his old payrolls....I couldn't wait until I was old enough to earn a dollar a day like the other men.

CM: Seems I remember getting about 25 dollars a month.

HM: When I was detasseling I made more. He took a hand in my growing up.

RAD: Craig has a story about Daddy asking if he and his friends wanted to pull the yellow rockton (?), a mustard. He got Craig and all his friends and they worked their heads off. They went to Grampa to be paid and he pulled out a handful of shiny, new quarters and gave them each one all the way round. They thought that was the cheapest thing they ever heard of.

HM: Remember the time we were crawling up the hay shoot? and Tom Freeman fell down? I was crawling up and Tom was right below me. I get near the top and bumped my head, I stepped back a little and stepped on his hands. Down he goes. He hits that trap door. And Claire is milking cows and all of a sudden, in a big cloud of dust, this body hits the floor. It shook him up, but didn't hurt himself.

RAD: I thought I heard a rumor of that sort.

HM: That was us.

CM: There was only a little latch holding it shut. If you stepped on it with any amount of force, there it went.

RAD: The Nesbit boys, Jim and Tommy. Some of them came upstairs in the barn, in the feeding area. There were sacks there. Dammed if they didn't build a little fire. They were a lot younger. Anyway, the men downstairs saw two or three boys racing across the field, west of the barn. Then they smelled something, raced upstairs, found the fire, and put it out. The barn nearly disappeared.

JJ: Tommy Nesbit always had a bad boy reputation. Remember the farmer across town who had no legs?

RAD: His last name was Wieland. He was a baker from Chicago. He came to the farm with legs, but lost them in an accident. He walked on his arms.

JJ: Grampa used to go over and help him out.

RAD: He had a lot of kids. He had this chair seat, with rudders under it. He'd sit on it to milk the cow, he'd finish milking, set the milking pail over across the gutter, his daughter would set it next to the next cow. He would slide under the cow to the next one.

HM: Claire wanted his barn to always be whitewashed clean. Everytime he let the cows out in a group, he'd take his rubber "shillelagh," chase the cows, and try to keep their tails down till they got out the door. One time he overdid himself, slipped and fell in the gutter, and had to crawl out on his hands and knees. His back just killed him. He had a catch in it. It lasted until we went to Whitewater, he was getting out of the car, he banged his head on the top of the doorsill, after all these months of suffering and it was cured--just like that. He was going to chiropractors....

CM: Haven't had a problem since. I could hardly do anything it hurt so much. But I rammed my head in there, I thought I'd broke my neck for sure. I seemed to get over it, and haven't had it since....I remember some stories about the elder Stam, in the milkhouse. He was in charge there. He was an incorrigible something. When he'd really get mad, he throw something big, like a milk cover; or he'd chase a man out of the barn and just go until he cooled down. Lester was very calm.

RAD: The boys were supposed to wash the milk pails down in the barn. They were careless sometimes and he'd stand there on the milkhouse steps and throw that pail halfway to the barn.

CM: Do you remember the cat deal? There was an overrun of mice and rats. Daddy said something had to be done. Every driver was given two gunny sacks and he said, "You pick up every cat you see on the route and we're gonna turn them loose!" So they came back with forty cats, kittens and everything. They'd get under your feet--it was really a mess. Aunt Lillian was there for quite a while. She got in trouble with Daddy. She used to come out and feed the cats, then take the pans in where we washed the milk things, and clean her cat pans. This cat business was terrible, there were cats getting run over, stepped on, and yowling at night. There's 40 cats! It was the worst sight I ever saw! There were dead cats all over, they were fighting and squabbling, and Aunt Lillian mixed in with it. Finally Daddy says, "Take them all." They put them in bags and threw them all over the bridge into the river. They couldn't be the real owners or anything. A cat can swim, you know.

RAD: Were you there when everyone had influenza?

CM: They had that para-typhoid, if that's what you mean.

RAD: No, everybody had the flu in 1919.

CM: No.

RAD: It got so Lillian was running the barn on her own. Two people struggling around out there. I didn't have it very badly. My wife had it at MacMurray College and she nearly died.

CM: I don't know if this is clean enough to tell....Daddy was having trouble with constipation. Aunt Lily heard about it. He says, I can't find the hose we usually use. She says, There's a 3-foot piece of garden hose there. She was going to help him out with a garden hose!....The boys would go into town and bring things home from the drug store, groceries and stuff like that. One day Lester went to Mrs. Croft's house to find out they had gotten all the orders from the farm, and if there was anything needed. Aunt Lillian had given an order for 5 lbs of epsom salts. Lester was ordered to get it. He thought, My Lordy, is this woman gonna take 5 pounds of epsom salts? She must be mixed up. He called to verify and yep, she wants five pounds. She wanted it for a poultice for her rheumatic knee. She wasn't gonna take any of it. Lester was really worried that she was going to gulp it down.

LM: She was quite a character.

CM: She was outdoors bossing Daddy quite a bit. She tried it. He said, Lillian, go in the house! I'm tending my own business here. He had heard just about enough. She went back in the house, your mother could handle her, but Daddy couldn't. She was always outdoors, this needs to be done, why didn't you do this.

RAD: I got my feelings about burdocks from Aunt Lillian. "Cut 'em in May--they're here to stay, cut 'em in June--cut too soon, cut 'em in July--they're sure to die." She was out there in the spud all the time. I finally go so I'll never lick them, so let 'em grow up in the corners of the pastures.

CM: She was out in the fresh air all the time. She'd go along the fence rows

and everything on that weed business. She'd have her spudder right with her and get weeds. She didn't stay around the house. My impression was that she didn't get along well with your mother.

HM: She was a stemwinder. She was on her own all the time.

CM: Oh, she was independent! She spoke with authority on everything. She had her way most of the time. She was Daddy's sister, he didn't want her fussing. Once in a while he'd tell her, You go in the house. That's the worst thing he could say to her.

JJ: She was older than Daddy, he was the youngest of the four.

RAD: Della was the oldest, then Ida, then Lillian, then Wesson.

JJ: Lillian was living with Ida when I was little, by the early thirties.

RAD: Lillian was living with Hazel when she died. Hazel sold the house then and bought one on the corner of Wisconsin and Central, in the little loop. Hazel died a few years ago.

CM: What's become of Trever? We don't hear one single word about Trever.

RAD: Trever's going great guns. ///

(Somebody would fly in and land south of the pasture)

RAD: He and another boy got their licenses. He was flying down to see Gramma. He'd taken her flying even before he had a license. She had so much confidence in him, or she thought she would bounce. He got a job with Wis. Power and Light. He went along there for a few years. He got married. He got a job with United Airlines. He had quite a lot of flying under his belt. They would let him fly as copilot from Chicago to Cheyenne, enough to keep up his license. It didn't work out. In '32 they cancelled the mail contracts. He didn't see any future there. They gave him a job on the ground as a buyer. He stayed 15 years. He was first or second in command for whole Eastern division. ///

(Trever is back on the farm, not wanting to be a farmer, but driving a manure spreader during the Depression).

RAD: He was driving it down the driveway and across the road. One of the men yelled, Hi, Pat! See ya got your old job back! ///

RAD: (on Craig) He thought, that since his grandfather and his father had such good reputations, he was supposed to pick up where I left off. I told him he didn't have to come back to the farm. I said I was good for another 20 years. What do you really want to do? He said he wanted to be a doctor. I said go ahead. He didn't have enough prerequisites to get into med school. He went back to Beloit College for a year. Then went to med school at WI and graduated. He interned in Salt Lake City Hospital and got married. He was in U.S. Health Service for two years, working off military obligation among Sioux Indians. He set up practice in Carson City for six or seven years. Then he joined the Kaiser Organization in Oregon, they built the warships, etc. But

they had a wonderful hospital organization, too. He's been there about ten years, doing well. The first girl he married at 31, leaving two little boys from a former husband and she and Craig had two. He remarried several years later to a woman who had three children. So he had quite a household of children there for a while. I talked to his wife last night, Craig and one of the boys were out fishing. She said that things were going so wonderfully that she worried that something might go wrong! ///

(Homer is remembering when Craig got the okite(?) in his throat.)

RAD: We got to that soon enough and he talked very well.

JJ: He always had a low voice. It never really changed.

HM: It was touch and go for a while.

RAD: He just reached up onto the windowsill, had his mouth open...///

(More on Colette(?))///

CM: Dorothy's(?) brother from Rockford was talking to me about my machine. He says, Claire, you say you can't recondition the (?) because of the conical shape. You should make some kind of a disk with a planatory design on it and it will give you a flat surface to grind it and sharpen it, etc. That's how I changed to the disk idea. I went to Milwaukee to the Cross Milling plant and presented this design. That's all they used. They were about the size of your fingernail. They were called colettes(?). The original one turned out tubes, puffed, about 25 feet long.

END OF TAPE