

University of Illinois Student Life and Culture Archives

Allen Recordings of Agricultural History (Part 4)

UI Centennial Project

Length: 01:06:35

Ralph Allen: Hello Dave. This is Ralph Allen speaking. You're a long way from Central Illinois, but this new gadget that I'm playing around with maybe will bring us a lot closer together. I got your letter telling about the availability of equipment to make the recording in your vicinity so I'm going to mail you this reel for you to fill out and return to me. And I will wait with great pleasure and anticipation to hear your voice and your story, which I know will be very good. Now here's an old friend of yours who will visit with you a while. I won't introduce him or mention his name right now. I'll let him talk with you a while and see if you can guess who he is. Now, here he is right now.

Frank Bill: Howdy, Dave. I'm certainly glad to talk to you, even though I can't see you. I would sure rather sit across the desk as we did years ago when I used to get news items from you for the dear old *Pantograph*. Do you remember those days when you came to McLean County, our first farm advisor for the McLean County Better Farming Association? My, but I remember it. Of course, my brother Eddie and my father, A.J., was the boys at the *Pantograph* then who contacted you most in the very very first years but later on I was the man who got the farm news. This is your old friend Frank Bill. Well do I recall some of those meetings you used to have out in the country here. The old factor school or show when tractors were really novelty and the old McLean County swine sanitation system when we first demonstrated here some of the theories concocted down in Washington at the Bureau of Animal Industry.

Well, Dave, we've progressed a long ways in our farming since then. Still, we have some of the same old problems we had in those days. And right now, we have a little rain today, stopped our speed of oats. It's about when we were half through. And the boys can't agree that the rain was a good thing. Half of them say that, no, should have held off for a couple more days at least. And we have a great big problem ahead of us. This great big grasshopper outbreak is coming.

Perhaps you'll remember back there in the chinch bug days. Well, the grasshoppers promised to

do more total damage than all the chinch bugs ever put together. Unless Old Man Weather sends us the rain right at the right time to get rid of them all. I'll tell you Dave, I'd surely like to hear from you. Any message that you can send us back here in Central Illinois will surely be appreciated. We wish you luck down there in New York City. Goodbye, Dave.

RA: The recording just heard was made last Saturday, March 26th, in Frank Bill's office in the *Pantograph* building, Bloomington. As it was a rainy day and not much to do at home, the wife and I drove to Bloomington to visit our daughter and family who live in the new addition on the north side of Normal. A telephone call located Frank in his office, and he invited me over and took some great interest in my hobby. Of course, he had to take a picture of the whole setup, me talking to you on the microphone. So to make the circuit complete, we would like a picture of you when you make the recording to be returned. Just a historical event, you know. One phase of the hobby is to make projector slides of old pictures that can be projected on a screen, then have a recording made of someone familiar with the history in connection with that picture tell about it.

The date of this recording is Wednesday, March 30th, as you see several days later. And it has been quite agreeable and warm. Yesterday, it got up to about 80 degrees. Quite inspiring to do gardening and other spring jobs. But today is rainy again, which usually is good hobby weather. I had planned to transfer voices of other friends of yours, like Earl Smith, Sam Thompson, E.T. Robbins, Chester G. Starr, [Vernon?] Danforth, Dr. W.L. Burleson, Dr. Joseph C. Blair, and others to this case. But it would necessitate a trip to Peoria to borrow the use of another machine, so decided not to delay mailing this to you and try that trick at a later date.

I discussed with Frank the best method of making historical recordings. His thought was that a discussion or description of separate incidents pertaining to Illinois agriculture would eventually add up to a fairly complete history. What is your thought on the subject? We hope you can demonstrate a standard or pattern for others to follow. But in any event, as I always tell others, anything is better than nothing.

Do you ever get over to Ithaca, New York, Dave? Why do I ask? Well, I just got a bright idea. That's another hobby of mine, getting bright ideas. I've been characterized as an idea man. My ideas most always will fade out like a mirage, but I just go ahead and think up another one. This one pertains to Dr. Joseph C. Blair and what he said in his recording.

It seems that in his late teens he immigrated from Nova Scotia to the United States and happened to go through Ithaca, New York where he became acquainted with Liberty Hyde Bailey, the eminent horticulturist who you probably know about, who hired him to work for him that induced him to enter his classes. Last January 17th issue of *Life* magazine featured Liberty Hyde Bailey, who is now past 90 years old. I thought it would be a good idea to get Blair and Bailey together on a recording, so I wrote to Dr. Bailey about it. In due time, I received a reply but from his daughter, who said her father was in India at that time. But my letter would be called to his attention on his return in April.

By this time, it's probably beginning to dawn upon you what machine is. You're a lot closer to Ithaca than I am. And you would be much more expert at interviewing Dr. Bailey than I would. I wrote him that in as much as Dr. Blair was a student of his at one time. And about 40 years ago, I was a student of Dr. Blair. I thought I had a claim of some kind on him for a recording. What do you think about it? Blair, Bailey, and you on one reel would certainly be getting three birds with one stone. That's the kind of production I like to get into. I believe I can guarantee that you would enjoy the experience. Those kind of contacts have been very enjoyable to me. The radio farm director of WJZ, Mr. Phil [Lampe?] might like to participate in the venture. Well, if I hear nothing from Dr. Bailey that will be just another mirage that's faded out.

If this experiment works out satisfactorily, we'll attempt repeating it with Eddie Neal of Florence, Alabama, Dean Fred Grant in the Winter Haven, Florida and old John W. Lloyd at California, bless his cantaloupe. Then there's Henry Wallace and Albert Einstein. Hey, there's an idea for mirage. I'd like to hear Albert Einstein explain his theory of relativity. I had it explained to me one time. I don't know whether the fellow explained didn't know what he was talking about or not. Went something like this. If you're sitting on a hot stove

for three minutes, it seems like three hours. If you're out with your best girl for three hours, it seems like three minutes. That's relativity which relatively this recording is getting kind of corny.

You remember [Checkly Dave?], used to be a farm advisor in Logan County for good many years. Well a week or two ago he invited me down to open the farmers night of Lincoln Rotary Club. He led the song leading. He was the song leader and the chairman of the program. So he invited me down there to make a recording as I had requested him to make something along that line. Well, if you remember check some of his stories that he told were kind of corny and I was going to transfer some of them on to this reel if I'd have gotten around to it but as I said before maybe we can do that at a later date. Well I must get this or bring this to a conclusion and wrap it up and mail it to you, or you never will get it. We never will see how our experiment turns out. So goodbye, Dave, and good luck to you, and I hope you have a lot of fun with making a recording to return to them.

George Effner: This is George Effner speaking. The date is July the 21st, 1960. I have been playing some of these tapes that Ralph Allen of Delavan has been making over the years, and I find on playing the balance of this tape that apparently Ralph failed to get a response from Dave Thompson. A thought occurred to me that sometime in the not too distant future I might be able when in Indiana to contact Dave and pick up a recording to complete Ralph's tape and I hope I'll be able to do that. If so, the tape will be made and made a part of this collection.

Emily Miller, née Benniman: Here's Dee Starr, the second farm advisor of Tazewell County, now living at Jefferson City, Missouri, receiving greetings from some friends of Tazewell County. Here is Milo Miller, at the present time, president of the Farm Bureau.

Milo Miller: Hello, Mr. Starr. This is Milo Miller speaking. The lady you just heard is Mrs. Milo Miller and is just as interesting as she was 30 years ago. And she was Emily Benniman, daughter of A.I. Benniman. I believe yours is a one-son family as ours is. We have a 21-year-old son who is associated with us in running the old home farm. We have a purebred herd of Holstein cattle and raise several hundred hogs and feed lambs each year. I will remember you as

farm advisor number two driving by in the beauty and waving how do you do, stopping occasionally for a friendly chat. I send greetings from the Tazewell County Farm Bureau with over 2,000 members. We have an assistant advisor. Our county has a few DHIA associations with 56 herds enrolled. [It's bound with?] herds predominating. Tazewell County is known as Little Switzerland, the United States. The county has an active 4-H [club?] program preparing the boys and girls for their place in this old world. Rural Youth is also active and helped carry on the Farm Bureau program. President of Rural Youth is Jonathan Allen, son of Pascal. I appreciate messenger Allen giving me this opportunity of bringing you greetings.

Ernest Benniman: Greetings to you, my old friend Chester Starr from Ernest Benniman. You'll remember me as one of that group of adventurous Tazewell County farmers who back in 1913 dared to risk spending a whole dollar to start a County Farm Bureau. As I look back over the years, I wonder what was the vision in the minds of the early farm advisors like E.T. Robbins and you. While you were planning demonstrations showing the best methods of cultivation for weed killing or organizing sales of purebred livestock, did it occur to you that in a quarter century, these little farm bureaus would grow into these present powerful state and national organizations of today? Did it occur to you that subsidiary Farm Bureau cooperatives and service organizations rated in terms of many millions would be commonplace matters in 1949? I'm sure that these things have far outrun all of my wildest imaginations of those early years.

And as my thoughts go back to the days when you used to plow through the mud droves calling on Tazewell County farmers, I wonder if you still remember the famous Tazewell County Highway known as Toboggan Avenue, the connecting link between Green Valley and Hopedale, so named by the late Ben McClure, the Hopedale bachelor who [imitating stuttering] stuttered. Well, by this time the old highway has acquired three tributaries, that is Route 121, Route 29, and what is known as the Blacktop Road, making it easily accessible from Chicago, St. Louis, and many other important points.

Not so long ago I was traveling west down this historic highway, and my attention was suddenly arrested by a unique guide board pointing north on which were the words Allen's Alley. Out of sheer curiosity I turned into this Allen's Alley and after a torturous quarter or half

mile I came upon a sort of dugout and thinking I had come upon a hermit's hideout I looked around, and who should I find but our old friend Ralph Allen, Jr., no less? Well, you know, Ralph was also one of those adventurous boys who were stung by the Farm Bureau bugs about this same year, 1913, and risked some of his good money in getting started. So after 35 years in the work, he and I are both well along in our [old age?].

My only son, his wife, and 11-year-old daughter live in Oakland, California, where he is employed in the municipal garage. Ralph has surrounded himself with son-in-laws, daughters, and a flock of grandchildren who take care of the strenuous activities of his farm, with Ralph acting as referee. You know he has always been pretty much of an idea man, and my talking to you into this wire gadget of his is his latest one, I guess, but I believe from my observations out at his Allen Alley hideout where I found stacks of steam pipes, fittings, window glass, and whatnot that he is going to try to outdo Old Man Burbank is one big idea. Next thing you know, he will be crossing hybrid corn with milkweed to produce a cornbread and milk sandwich already packaged right off the stalk ready to unwrap and eat.

As for myself and Mrs., we still continue to live congenially under one roof. We rent the farm on a livestock share lease and live in a cottage in one corner of the farm. For the past years, I have been serving as AAA county chairman, and by the grace of several very capable and efficient office helpers, we believe that we are giving a fine service to our fellow farmers. I'm sure that the host of Tazewell County farmers who remember you as farm advisor who rub elbows with them and talk farmer's language to them join me in wishing for you an abundance of the satisfying things of life.

Jimmy Hoyt: This is Jimmy Hoyt, the Assistant Farm Advisor in Tazewell County at the present time. I think you'll remember that I met you at St. Paul last summer at the Midwest Farm Bureau Training School during one of the meetings there. We had quite a talk. Tazewell County has made a lot of progress in the last 35 years in Farm Bureau work. It's my privilege to work in this county now as assistant farm advisor and organization director for the Farm Bureau. A year ago we had 1,850 members and during the last year and a half we have increased the membership to almost 2,200 members. Last summer the 2,000th member of the Farm Bureau

was a boy you don't remember, but you do remember his father. Pascal Allen's son in Malone Township was a member who joined to make the 2000th member in Tazewell County. We now exceed that by another 200 members. I was very much interested in what Mr. Brennan said on the record preceding me about the very large improvements made in roads in this county. You can travel any part of the county now without getting in the mud.

I worked in this county previously in 1930 as a cow tester. And then I married a girl from this county and came back to the county because I was bitten by the Tazewell County bug. The Farm Bureau is increasing in its activities and services to members all the time, which is no doubt had a large part in increasing our membership during the last few years. A lot of activities have added since you left this county of course, our insurance of all types, the service company which puts out feed, petroleum, and fertilizer products. We're busy right at the present time helping farmers make out their income tax returns. That's another service that they appreciate very much at this time of the year because they have plenty of headaches with those things. Mr. Starr, no doubt a lot of these young farmers in the county at the present time who are starting to farm and are joining the Farm Bureau are grandsons of the men you worked with in this county way back in those early days. I want to say that the 22,000 Farm Bureau members from Tazewell County wish to send their greetings and best wishes to you and your family where you are now living.

RA: Mr. Starr, here's another important person around the Farm Bureau building where we're making this recording. He's Paul Miller, brother of Milo Miller. He's been associated with the Farm Bureau in the capacity as an employee for quite a while. Maybe I better let him speak for himself, though.

Paul Miller: Morning, Mr. Starr. Allen has told you that I'm working in the insurance end for the Farm Bureau, and we generally have marriage of three special agents working in this territory to serve the Farm Bureau members. At the present time, we have with the 2,200 Farm Bureau members in Tazewell County approximately 1,900 audit policies, or 3 million of life insurance, and approximately 33 million, 500 of fire and wind. We do a lot of service for these Farm

Bureau members. If they have an auto claim, we try and adjust that satisfactory way. And they always are looking for service, and that is my job.

RA: And now, Mr. Starr, here's the most important person of all around the Farm Bureau building, a very charming young lady whom I'm sure you'll be very happy to hear from.

Eleanor Winkle: Hello, Mr. Starr. This is Eleanor Winkle speaking, and I'm still here at the Farm Bureau office. How are you? Your health must be good, for we see you are director of the Rural Health Service. And how is Mrs. Starr? I don't suppose CG is at home, but I would like to hear about him too. Do you remember the first day in the courthouse among all the pictures? Nowadays, it is not as many pictures, but more people that we meet. This is quite a coincidence talking to you, because just this morning, Louis Moser from Tremont was in the office asking about you. Do you remember him? He was quite a brown Swiss breeder and took a lot of interest in the Farm Bureau when it first moved to Peking. There have been a lot of changes in the Farm Bureau since we first started, haven't there? But we are still all working for the same purpose, to help the farmers.

RA: Now, Mr. Starr, here is the present encumbrance of the office, your last assessor, Mr. Clarence Bales.

Clarence Bales: Mr. Starr, I'm speaking to you in this succession of five farm advisors as the, to you as the second advisor. All of us who have contributed something from our qualification experience through the Farm Bureau program in Tazewell County. The year 1948 just closed, represents the lapse of some time since you were here in Tazewell County conducting the Farm Bureau program. A lot of things, of course, have happened since that time in the field of agriculture.

Our soils are probably more of a problem now than they were during the time you were here because of the additional crops that have removed too many nutrients from the soil. Fertility programs are one of our big projects right now. Since your time too, hybrid corn has come into the picture when good yields can come from even moderate productive soils. Farmers wouldn't

think now driving horses even on their farms doing farm work. They do it all now by truck and by tractor and even extended use of their own personal automobiles. Farmers have radios now in their homes and they hear the news almost as soon as it happens. And they hear news of agriculture and world interest from many different sources which keeps the farm family alert to the things that are happening not only in their own community but in their states and the nation and the world.

I wondered just what will happen to this progress that agriculture has made in the last 20 years, looking forward to the next 20 years. It seems as though our progress might be well halted by the progress that's been made in the past, but it probably won't be. Something new will develop. We have thousands of mouths to feed in this world, and if we can find the finances and if we are a big enough country to get the job done, we still have a big job in American agriculture producing the food that the world needs for a brighter future for many of those who are to be the coming generations and the light of the world. And just might as well conclude by saying that farm advisors will be one of the most important factors in mapping out the progress of the world in the future.

RA: Now, Mr. Starr, the success of the Farm Bureau is due largely to a very efficient guardian of this purse string. And he is here right now taking off his coat and getting ready to tell you the story about the duties of the treasurer. Mr. George Deppert.

George Deppert: Mr. Starr, it gives one a great pleasure when he's been reminiscent and go back to the time when the Farm Bureau really got underway in Tazewell County. I'm referring to the time when the office was moved from Washington to the courthouse in Pekin on the third floor, rooms that are now occupied by the state's attorney, which at that time comprise the offices of this, our organization. I was just commencing in the farming operation at the time, I think about a year or two. You probably wouldn't remember me so much as having an active part. But I never forget the thrill that it gave us when you brought forth that name, Tazewell County Farm Bureau, which we take so much credit for here in the county and originating from your thoughts and ideas, and then that it should have spread to the state and to the national organization.

Another one of the problems that faced us at that time was the liability that was being created due to the fact that we were coming into the automobile age and the insurances in the old line companies was prohibited. And through your thoughtful thinking and the leaders of the Farm Bureau at that time created an insurance that was available to the Farm Bureau members at a very low cost. I think that what brings to my mind the activities of the office more as twice a year I would climb those steps in the courthouse and come up into the room there and pay that fee which usually would amount to about \$3.15 and not over \$5 for our coverage and protection that we received in the insurance way. Of course, we have went or come a long way since that time. The older men, some have passed on to their reward. We younger men have stepped into the picture. I believe it was about 1931 when I was elected treasurer of this organization. That was the time when we entered and come into this new home and building of ours in which I'm speaking at this time.

Just before coming downstairs, I looked over the auditor's statement who had just completed the audit during the past week and find that now as of December 31st close of this year, our net worth is 61,000 some hundred dollars compared to 57,000 a year ago and back when you come into our county, you know, it was a struggling organization trying to get its feet on the ground with not a lot of finances to rely on as we have at this time. Beside our building here, which we are very proud, we have also in reserve this time, 13,000 in government bonds which gives us a pretty good feeling of security.

Unknown [President of Pike County Farm Bureau]: With a great and happy surprise this morning, just as I was finishing my breakfast, seeing a car drive into our yard, I greeted the door of my friend of many years, Mr. Ralph Allen of Tazewell County. He and Mrs. Allen advised me, as they were on their way to Jefferson City, to visit with the first farm advisor of their county, Mr. Starr. Mr. Allen corrects me and says it was the second farm advisor of Tazewell County. Regardless of that, Mr. Starr's service, [spatial?] service, in Tazewell County had to dated the long years of service I later given to the organization. I remember you, Mr. Starr, the advisor in Tazewell County, back in 1921 and '22 when I was president of my home county, Pike County Farm Bureau, and meeting you at a number of meetings of leaders.

Following soon after your retirement to farm advisory work, I was selected to represent our 20th congressional district on the board of the Illinois Agricultural Association in 1923.

After serving on the board for three years, following the retirement of Mr. Sam Thompson as president of the Illinois Agricultural Association. You know, when he became president of the American Farm Bureau Federation, I was selected as his successor and for 20 years was continued in that high office. Naturally, it's not only a great privilege but a great responsibility. Throughout those years, the pleasure of witnessing the tremendous growth of the organization to around 38,000 to more than 120,000. And I retired in November of 1925.

Both you and I naturally take a great deal of pleasure in witnessing the continued growth of this wonderful organization. But just as it has grown in strength and recognition generally speaking for the farmers of this area, the responsibility of an organization of that character is similarly increased. In these days when all thoughtful people recognize the great and at times unwarranted influence of organized labor and influencing national affairs, we must recognize the corresponding increase in the responsibility of a farmers organization taking care of the interests of farmers, and in doing so, to recognize the rightful interests of all other groups of our people. If farmers are to be properly protected, an organization and its leadership must show great initiative, understanding, courage, and determination in trying to properly influence national economic and social legislation. A long line that will continue democracy in the way that you and I in the early days believed that a farm organization should serve. I wish for you many more years of health, service, in these days of great need.

Chester Starr:: This is being discussed at Jefferson City, Missouri, on the afternoon of January 14th, a rather dreary day after a very severe sleet storm. But however, the messenger bringing the recordings to me, [tested you a star?] from Tazewell County has arrived with only a few pennies in his pockets, which are partly needed, and Jefferson City definitely ignores. An appropriation of two nickels will serve as bail until he is able to get out of town, at least we hope. In the recordings that I had the pleasure of hearing at this time, there appeared greetings from many of the old-time friends in Tazewell County, including the President at the present time, Milo Miller, a very happy story from Ernest Benniman, who I remember only too

distinctly, and many of the other people who are in the Tazewell County Farm Bureau and are aiding to increasing the ability of the Farm Bureau to deliver service to all of its members. I would like in turn for this to say my very best wishes to Mr. and Mrs. Archie Robinson who was vice president of the Farm Bureau when I first came to the county, and later in a year or two was president, and who I remember very distinctly at one time when I went out to see him in our early experience, advised Mrs. Starr that she might as well get a divorce because a farm advisor was not supposed to stay at home. R.B. Arndorf of Dalwin was the president following Mr. Robertson, and many of the Farm Bureau [inaudible], as I remember them, took place in the administration of Mr. Arndor. After I left the county, Mr. C.W. Ackerman and Mr. H. Scott were present, and I understand at present time, Mr. Milo Miller is the president.

I distinctly remember the 1st of June in 1918 when I arrived in Pekin to take over the position of Farm Advisor of the Tazewell County Farm Bureau. Mr. Robbins, my predecessor, had left the county about two weeks before, and I was instructed by the board that the office would be moved from Washington to Pekin. Upon my arrival at Washington, I found that the secretary of the Farm Bureau, or rather the secretary in the office that Mr. Robbins had been using, was a man, and he had been drafted and within the army before I arrived. The only thing I could do was to load up all of the things that I could find in the two small rooms above the bent arch bench, bring them down to keep them, and dump them in the supposed to be office of the Farm Bureau.

My next move was to try to find somebody to keep the office while I was out visiting. Across the corridor was the office of Ben Smith, [superintendent?] of schools, and I promptly went in to find out what he could do in regards to my trunk. He recommended Ms. Eleanor Winkle and said that she had been working for him at odd times while she was still going to school. Through his recommendation and my persuasion, Ms. Winkle began the position of secretary in the office, which I am very happy to say still continues. And I know that she is able to recall most of the history of the Tazewell County Farm Bureau even better than many of us who had been in at intervals and left for other fields.

When I started, Frank turned over to me a list of around 600 members who had recently signed for a three-year period. Since I had never been in the county before, I knew none of these, and my first work after getting Ms. Winkle to hold the office down and answer the telephone was to put the list in my pocket and start out this. I think the first three months all I did was this, and I certainly began to learn the roads and the people in Tazewell County.

As I left the county four years later, we had a membership role of 1,600 of approximately 2,100 farms in the county. Over the four years of my service in the county, I have five or six things that I think possibly may have been of some aid to the people of the county as a whole.

The first was the pushing and the advertising of the tremendous job purebreeds in the county. As I remember, our letterhead on the back of it carried the notation to Purebred County, and also on the back was listed the various purebred breeds of livestock that was in the county. I know that the other farm advisors that were then in the service in Illinois were rather envious of our cooperation of this title because most of them [inaudible people in the county as being also purebred. As I remember the classes, we had Percherons, Belgians, Shorthorn, Brown-Swiss, Holstein, Poland China, Chester White, Hampshire, Duroc, and some Angus. [Crosstalk]

Probably the most outstanding advertisement that we ever did in the county was the collection and showing of the Brown Swift show herd at the Illinois State Fair and at the National Dairy Show at Waterloo, Iowa. The first year that we attempted this, Professor Rhodes of the University of Illinois aided us in a collection of cattle to be prepared for the show circuit. And it came to my mind that at the Illinois State Fair we had 17 animals and 14 owners. Two of the young men in this county were in charge of the birds, and the record of the showing was that we received more money than we had to pay for the transportation, share the cattle blankets, and everything connected with the showing. The following year, we had the first round for sale, and from there on, we were never able to collect enough cattle together for a sale since the breed of the picture breeds were in the county so often that no one had any surplus.

The fact that when one begins to reminisce that time seems to slip by, and I suppose that's one sign of old age in that we would rather reminisce than to strike out on entirely new paths.

However, to continue the story of the Tazewell County Farm Bureau, as I remember in my period of service, in addition to the Brown Swiss, we had association sales of Shorthorns, Poland Chinas, Chester Whites, and Durocs. I do not remember of any association sales of Hampshires, although we had some of the most outstanding herds of Hampshires in the state represented by Clarence Moore and others. Shortly after we began the purebred sales, the question of having a suitable place for these sales arose. And as a result of the combined effort of most of the farm bureau members in Tazewell County, the sales barn at Morton was [involved?], built, and used. During the period of time when I was in the county, the sales barn was one of the most popular places in Tazewell County. And I remember very clearly one sale where Louis Welk, who lived east of Morton, had a scotch tough yearling bull that brought \$1,000 cold cash.

The interest of the many people in the Tazewell County in the production of corn produced the idea of having a hundred-bushel corn club. This was before the days of hybrid corn, and the club was started even before the utility type of [reed gel?] that was very common in the county. The bank of the county agreed to finance the necessary funds for gold medals for those who produced 100 bushels of number two corn as an average of 10 acres, silver medals for those who produced from 75 bushels to 99 bushels, and bronze from 60 to 74 bushels to the acre. This corn club was operated for several years, and as I remember, every year we had at least one person who was able to grow 100 bushels of number two corn as an average on 10 acres on his farm. Richmond Robinson, the son of Mr. Archie Robinson, was the one who usually got the largest yield. And I remember he had at least two gold medals in the period for producing 100 bushels of corn or more on an average of 10 acres. Later on, when hybrids came in, I understand that he produced still even more corn.

The next service that was specially appreciated by the many purebred breeders of the county was the arrangement with the United States Department of Animal Husbandry, under which a cooperative agreement was made between the Tazewell County Farm Bureau and the Bureau of Animal Industry, and Dr. Lyons came to the county for the sole purpose of testing cattle for tuberculosis in the county. Dr. Lyons fulfilled his mission wonderfully well. He was a likable chap. He had the reactors brought in to Peoria and took the owners of the cattle over to the

[inaudible] houses and showed them the actual lesions in the cattle that he had found in the cattle. As I remember, he saved several purebred breeders many, many dollars by testing the cattle that they had bought outstate or in other sales out of the county. And if these animals reacted, he was able to get refunds made. In one [piece?] in a Holstein breeder, I remember him saving the Holstein breeder several thousand dollars.

Probably the most outstanding farm bureau service that happened when I was farm advisor was the origination of the idea that farm bureau members would have their own automobile insurance. I remember very keenly, one rainy day, when I was in the office on the third floor of the courthouse in Pekin, that Dave and Fred Allman of Delvin came into the office, and following that entrance, the air was blue, from both of these gentlemen in discussing their experience with a certain insurance company in trying to dodge the payment of collision claim on their automobiles. After we had discussed the question of some of these claims, they asked the question, "Why can't farm bill members have their own insurance?" The answer came through the Farmer's Automobile Insurance Association, to the primary automobiles, which was originated by the Tazewell County Farm Bureau Board, plus the aid and advice of many of the directors of the county fire company at Delavan.

And in setting up the first voter trust team, there were about as many of the board members of the Delavan Fire Mutual as there were of Farm Bureau members. Probably John Schwarzenkraub of Morton was the most distinguished person to aid in the origination or rather the during of the first application. Mr. Schwarzenkraub lived about a mile north of Morton, never owned or operated an automobile, and his major convenience was a horse and buggy going back and forth from his house to Morton. However, Mr. Schwarzenkraub was known by every person in Morton Township, and when he and one of his sons came down with a shoebox full of applications and dumped on the, if you've guessed 110 applications for the new automobile insurance company, my eyes broke out. At that time, there were 90 farm bureau members in Morton County. They had bought insurance from Mr. Schwarzenegger because he said that he was reminding the Board of Trustees that the fire insurance company in the county of which he was a board member was successful. And he saw no reason why automobile insurance owned and operated and for Farm Bureau members would not be as successful as anything else. And as

time went on, that idea has been prudent time and time again because almost all of the Midwest Farm Bureau now has their own automobile insurance company, including the one that I'm associated with at the present time, which in a two-year period has written over 20,000 applications.

In this connection, I remember very clearly that Mr. R.B. Arendorf, who was president of the Farm Bureau at that time, and I spent one whole day in the office of the Illinois Agricultural Association trying to convince George Fox, who was secretary, of the IEA at that time, that automobile insurance for Farm Bureau members was a possible proposal both from the standpoint of the membership and from saving money. However, no one in the IEA office took us seriously and in fact told us that we had no business going in ourselves. That just naturally got our ire up and we came home and started the company with \$10,000 borrowed from the Tazewell County Farm Bureau treasury and \$15,000 borrowed from the American National Bank that [ordered?] and had the \$25,000 needed to start in the insurance business in Illinois as of that date.

The personal history of myself as I look back over it, there seems to be a succession of moves. I was born in Ohio, but was transplanted at an early group to Missouri in Audrain County, graduated from the College of Agriculture at the University of Missouri, operated the home farm for several years, and then went over to Purdue University in the animal husbandry division, first as extension worker in [inaudible] control and the last two years in charge of the livestock research work for the animal husbandry section of Purdue University. In 1918, when Mr. Robbins was going to leave Tazewell County as the first farm advisor, Mr. Dave Thompson, who was farm advisor in McLean County, suggested to Mr. Robbins and Mr. Harndorf that possibly I might be interested, and I received a letter asking me if I would not come to Bloomington as the very convenient place to meet with a committee of the Tazewell County Farm Bureau Board. I met at the McLean County Farm Bureau office with the committee, and before I left, I was hired as Farm Advisor. I came to Tazewell County June 1, 1918, and left for a place in Colorado in August 1, 1922. Then I was in Colorado about four years and then came back to Bloomington, Illinois, first in insurance and later in the [fee?].

In 1930, when all the banks in Missouri were either broke or about that position, I had to come back to Missouri to take care of some of the family affairs. In order to give service to a group of people in an area around Centralia, Missouri, we organized a credit corporation using the discounted service of the [inaudible] credit bank. After we operated for two years, the Missouri Farm Bureau Federation made a proposal that we would move the office of the Credit Corporation to Jefferson City, be a part of the Farm Bureau, and in turn the Farm Bureau Federation would purchase a block of stock in the Credit Corporation. This was done and the Credit Corporation is still operating very successfully with about half a million in loans most of the time. And next Monday, January 17th, will be the 19th annual meeting of the Credit Corporation. I happen to be a member of the board and president since it was organized.

Shortly after I came to Jefferson City within the Missouri Farm Bureau, the person who has been operating the purchasing service corresponding to Illinois Farm Supply Company left the Federation and I assumed that responsibility in addition to the credit corporation. This continued until we added a service that of the Blue Cross Hospital Service. The Blue Cross Hospital Service began growing too rapidly. The medical service of the Dr. Bills with [inaudible], the hospital situation arose, and about two years ago, to my request, our board of directors removed me of the functioning service, and to the present time, I'm director of the Rural Health Service and president of the Missouri Agriculture Corporation. The size of the Blue Cross enrollment may be of image to some people in that the report on January 1st showed that we have 43,000 on-billed people enrolled in our Blue Cross service and about 9,000 enrolled in our new medical service, which is only two years old.

The son, Chester Junior, of who, is [inaudible] and quiet, is married, has three children, including one pair of twins, and is Associate Professor of History at the University of Illinois. In the war, you went in as the first lieutenant in the village and came out as Lieutenant Colonel in charge of the historical branch of the Fifth Army and the historical experience was of great value to him since he is the author of the *History of the Fifth Army*, which seems to be a rather popular war book.

I very much indeed to ask Mr. Allen as my messenger on the way back to Tazewell County when and if he sees anyone in the county, even a yellow dog that looks like that he remembers me to either whistle to the dog or say how did [you find?] to the human. I'm just reminded that the better half of the Starr family was left out, but she is still around and still the better half and usually bought in her own home.

Unknown: This ends the Starr recording. Run the rest of this reel off and start in from the other end in order to get the recordings that were made at the Tazewell County Farm Bureau.