Interview with Frederick H. Baumberger
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Interview # 1: November 5, 2007
Interviewer: Phil Pogue

Pogue: OK, if we just have you talk and see how you're doing.

Baumberger: All right, while I'm talking, I'll just tell you that last night I called a lady that lives in Pleasant Plains. She's got terminal cancer. She and I graduated from three-year -Reno High School together in 1936 and then we graduated from Greenville High School in 1937 and when I found out she had terminal cancer, I told her I'm going to call you every Sunday night and just visit, and so I still do that and last night I was talking to her and I told her that you were coming and that you were with this museum in Springfield. She said, "Oh, I've visited that museum." She said, "It's wonderful." And she thinks very highly of it. They gave her six months to live ten months ago and she's still, with hospice, she's still at home, takes care of her own house. Something doesn't sound right there. She's still not having anything that would indicate she's about ready to go. Now I don't see that red light that was on there a while ago. Should it be on? The green lights are on.

Pogue: And we don't have the red light?

Baumberger: No.

Pogue: Which red light was it?

Baumberger: Well, I'm not sure where it was. I think up here, but I'm not sure. There was only one red light, but it was very visible.

Pogue: My name is Phil Pogue. We're interviewing, and this is November the fifth, is that today?

Baumberger: Right.

Pogue: That would be the year 2007. We're interviewing Fred Baumberger here in Greenville. At this time we'll be covering some biographical information first of all. This interview is part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Agriculture in Illinois* Oral History project. Mr. Baumberger, can I call you Fred?

Baumberger: Oh, yes.

Pogue: Would you start with perhaps giving us some information about your parents' background, your mother and father.

Baumberger: Well, on my father's side of the family, ancestors came from Switzerland. My grandfather's parents came from Switzerland, both of them, but they weren't acquainted until they got in this country. Then they got acquainted and they were married, settled in Greenville, had twelve children. One of them was my grandfather. There's still Baumbergers in Switzerland; they, at one time, and I think maybe still have, an interest in, a brewery at Langanthal. The house that they grew up in is still here in Greenville on West Main Street in pretty good condition—people live in it—and they owned a farm west of Greenville. There were a lot of orchards around here then and they also had a cider mill. They sold firewood and made cider. My grandfather married a lady by the name of Dressor and her father was Nathaniel Dressor. He was at one time a member of the legislature in Illinois and he owned quite a lot of land. At one time he owned three thousand acres of land and we'll probably get into that maybe a little bit later. The family doesn't own much of that anymore. On my mother's side of the family was German ancestry; I don't know a lot about them except they lived in St. Louis, several of the family. My grandfather and grandmother Weber lived in Reno, Illinois, and I was born near that town. The house that they lived in is still there, in Reno; it's a small house north of the railroad tracks. So that's about all I can tell you about the ancestry.

I could tell you how the Dressors got here from Maine. They came from… I'm going to have to look up here and see what the name of that town was. I think it was Temple, Maine. Well, I don't find it, but anyway, Joshua—I believe his name was Joshua Dressor—came to Illinois by horseback one year to locate someplace to settle. Then he decided on a location and went back to Maine and the next year they came through in a covered wagon. That was in the 1830s. They settled south of Reno and some of that land there is still in the family. My nephew, Curt Baumberger, lives in the house where I was born; one of the barns that Mr. Dressor built when he first came there is still there and it's usable. It was built in the 1830s, so it's pretty old.

Pogue: As far as other siblings and immediate family?

Baumberger: Yes, I had four brothers and sisters. One sister older than me, then there was a brother next younger than me and another sister and a younger brother; their first child died as a baby. There's two of those still living: one who was just younger than I am and Jean who's the oldest of the five of us. And the rest, the other two, have passed away.

Pogue: As to growing up on the farm, what do you remember about chores?

Baumberger: Oh, I remember those. Of course, there were things back in those days we heated with wood. We didn't use coal. We the house where I was born with wood. It was built in about 1914 and they really didn't have a house plan. They found an article in a paper that showed a picture of the house and the floor plan and they turned that over to the carpenter and that's what he worked

from to build that house. My dad wrote a little book about things that he remembered. The wages paid to the carpenters that built that house were a dollar and a quarter per day, so things were different in those days. But, anyway, I was born in 1920 and we had a furnace, a basement in the house with a furnace. My grandparents lived right across the road from us and they had a big house there with a basement and a furnace; both of those houses were heated with wood. So as soon as I was able to chop wood—and not only the furnaces to heat the houses, the kitchen stove to do the cooking was a wood burner in both houses—so that wood had to be split into smaller pieces. So, about the fall of the year—when they built these buildings, there was a lot of treetops left—so they cut those up into poles, hauled them up behind each one of the houses. We had a circular saw powered with tractor power, belt power, and those poles were sawed into chunks that would fit into a furnace, except they might be too big and have to be split with an ax. So that was one of my early chores. Then all that wood had to be hauled in and put down in the basement to use in the furnace, except what went in the kitchen stove and it stayed upstairs and was poked into the stove. This doesn't really have a lot to do with the chores, but I remember it getting kind of cold there at night; because the fire was banked. One of the first jobs for my dad in the morning was to get up and build a fire in the kitchen stove so that when the cook got up, why, she was ready to cook the breakfast. When we went up to bed at night, we knew it was going to get cold. Well it was cold as part of the time I slept upstairs. There wasn't too much heat got up there so they would take sad irons and heat them on the kitchen stove, then wrap them in towels so we had something to keep our feet warm, at least until the heat disappeared in those irons. That wasn't part of my chores.

Then as I got older, we always had a garden and part of my job was to hoe the weeds out of the garden, help plant the garden, do the spading in the garden. Then we also had—in later years—we had a truck patch, we called it. [At that time a commercial vegetable farm was called a truck farm.] My dad and mother thought that we children ought to keep busy, so they fenced in part of that field; it was an old orchard, and we fenced it in and plowed it with a walking plow. We were going to make big money with that truck patch. Well, that was in the 1930s, so I was past ten years old. Then it was real dry weather back at the time. We've suffered droughts since then, but that was a pretty bad one, so that truck patch wasn't too successful and that truck patch disappeared, it didn't stay too many years. We got interested in other things, playing ball, and as we got older we didn't do a lot with the truck patch.

But one of the other things we did was not really—well, it was a chore, I guess—we had a lot of walnut trees in the timber. There was quite a bit of farm. In the fall we'd gather walnuts and then take the shells off of those walnuts—not the shells, but the outside off the shells—and wash them and then we'd sell those walnuts in town. That was a money-making project. Not a big money-making project, but that's one of the things that we did.

Then as we got older, we had a beef cattle farm; a lot of the farms around there were dairy farms, but everybody had a cow. So we had one Jersey cow that produced milk for the two households: my grandparents' and my parents' households; I learned at an early age to milk that Jersey cow. Then when I got big enough for the 4-H Club; the 4-H Club in our neighborhood was a dairy club because most everybody had dairy projects. So my dad took us to south of town to a dairy farm and my brother and I each bought a Holstein heifer; and we kept those heifers and the first year we showed them as a calf. Incidentally, his calf cost twenty-five dollars. My calf was supposed to be a little better calf and I invested thirty-seven dollars and a half and so, of course, I expected to beat his calf at the 4-H show and I didn't. That first year he beat me and I was disappointed. But the next year showing it as a heifer, my calf beat his. In fact, it was the champion dairy animal of the show. We kept those dairy animals until they were in production, but we weren't really too well equipped to milk cows. The most cows we ever milked was five, but we milked those cows and put the milk in the milk can. We weren't very big dairy producers, but the milk hauler picked that up and hauled it to the dairy and we made a little money.

But then we had beef cattle and as I got older, part of my job was to help feed those beef cattle. We had a sixteen foot tile-block silo; that's sixteen feet wide and about thirty feet tall and about five feet under the ground. So part of my job was to climb that silo, night and morning, throw down a big pile of silage and then put the silage in the feed bunks. We had an overhead track that carried a cart overhead and we could fill that to fill part of the feed bunk. The rest of it had to be carried with a scoop shovel. So that was part of my chores. Then we fed corn silage, ground ear corn; it was in sacks and we had to dump about a sack of that over the silage and we fed cottonseed meal for protein and that had to be put on, so I got in quite a few hours of feeding that way. Of course, the cattle had to be watered, but we had a labor saving device to do that. We had a windmill. There were times when there wasn't enough wind blowing to keep that tank full, so then we had to get on that pump handle and shake it up and down to pump water to fill the tank, so sometimes we had to do that. Then sometimes in that dry weather, it got so dry that the well wouldn't make enough water for the cattle, so we had to haul it from a spring in barrels in the back of the truck, scoop it up out of the spring with buckets, put it in open-top barrels and haul it and dump it in the tank and that wasn't a very nice job. Sometimes it got dry in the wintertime and that had to be done when it was pretty cold, too, and that was pretty unpleasant. So that's the type of chore that I did and then I got big enough to do field work. I guess we'll talk about that pretty soon.

Pogue: As far as schools that you attended, where were the schools and what type?

Baumberger: Well, we had a lot of one-room school houses in Bond County and I never attended one. The school we had at Reno—we were about a mile and a half from the town of Reno—and the school was right at Reno. When my dad

attended that high school, it was only a two year high school. Of course, the eight grades and then the two year high school. When I attended that school, it was eight grades and a three year high school. I graduated from the three year high school there in 1936, and there were five in my graduating class. I think there were about twenty-seven in high school. This was a four-room building, two on the first floor and two on the second floor. In the first room, there were grades one, two and three with one teacher. In the second room, there was four, five and six with one teacher. In one room upstairs there was seventh and eighth grade with one teacher and then the high school was all in one room. Well, they had a little office, they called it, and they used that for a recitation room; it was a pretty small room. Anyway, three years of high school were just in that one room with two teachers in high school. You didn't have any electives. We just took the courses that were offered. Then from there we went on to Greenville where the four year high school was and took our fourth year of high school there. Now the way it worked out in the country, there were eight grades in each one of these country schools with one teacher. Usually they only taught four grades out of the eight in one year. So, you might take the second grade and then go back and take the first grade, depending on what they taught the year you started school. I always thought that was kind of strange, but they made it work and there were some students came out of those schools that did real well in life. When they took the final examination to graduate from eighth grade, the Superintendent of Schools of Bond County prepared the examination; everybody had to take that examination to graduate from the eighth grade. So that's the way it worked.

As time went on, the population decreased out in the rural area and some of these schools got to where there wasn't enough students to afford to keep the school open. I should say, too, that at that time they had a school tax for each one of the one-room school houses. They also had a non-high-school tax and everybody that wasn't in the high school district paid that non-high-school tax and that paid the tuition for the students from there to go to high school, but they had to get there. Either that, or a lot of them moved their kids to town and they boarded with a family member, relative, something like that and went to school while they went to town. Their education was supported in high school by that non-high-school tax. Now at Reno—this was after I graduated and after I came back from the Army and I was out on the farm and had a place of my own—I was on the school board out there before the Bond County Unit Two was organized. Some of the one-room school houses around there got so low on kids that they didn't have hardly any kids. There was a fellow out there at Reno who had a van that he used—just a closed van, didn't have any windows in it or anything—and he made a deal with his school district he would haul them to Reno to school. So, they came to Reno and at that time the high school wasn't there anymore; it had been discontinued. But they came there to grade school.

While I was on the board there, some of those school districts closed their schools and sent their students to Reno. We charged them a proportionate amount of cost to educate their kids, too, but some of them got

to where they were so low on funds that they couldn't pay that. So, we said, well okay, we're going to have a school, anyway. You just give us all the money you get and we'll take care of you. That's kind of an informal way of doing it, but it worked until the unit was formed and then, of course, that changed everything.

After I graduated from high school, I stayed out of school for one year and had a lot of people tell me, "Well, if you don't go to college now, you'll never go." I guess I was kind of stubborn about it and I decided I would, so I stayed out and worked on the farm for a year. Then I went to school at Blackburn College in Carlinville. At that time it was a two year college, junior college, and so I spent two years there. That is a unique school where everybody works and you get paid for the work that you do and the students even build buildings. We had a farm, and there was farm work to do; some of the students worked on the farm and I worked on the farm because that's what I was interested in. The second year I was there, I was selected as the Student Farm Manager, so that was my job the second year, was to manage the farm. It was a dairy farm and we milked about eighteen cows on it—something like that—and the milking was done by hand. As a freshman, I got in on that some. There would be two of us milk and we milked three times a day, so I got to milk nine cows. I'd milk half of them and the other fellow would milk half of them, so that was a pretty good chore then and there were other chores to do out there. I didn't go on to school. Quite a few people who went there would go on to the University of Illinois and finish the four year degree and I didn't do that. I went back to the farm. That pretty much takes care of my chores on the farm and my education.

Pogue: As far as religious activities out in the country, what do you remember about that?

Baumberger: Oh, I have some fond memories of that. My mother made sure we attended Sunday school and church and I became a member of the church at an early age and I've been associated ever since with it. I'm an elder in the church. Its a Presbyterian church and its an historic church. The building that we have there now is the fourth church building. The first building… There was a cemetery about a quarter of a mile north of where the church is located; there's a stone in the middle of that cemetery that shows where the early settlers there before 1820 came through that area and were trying to decide where to settle. They picked that spot as the center of their community;that's where they built the first church and it was a log church. That church they used for a few years and then it burned. It was heated with just a pile of charcoal out in the middle of the church; didn't even have a flue, an opening for the smoke to go out the top of the church. Anyway, it caught fire and burned and they built another church there on the same location that was used for a while. Then the third church was built about a quarter mile south of where the cemetery is. Where the church building is now is right behind the building that's there now and they used that for several years; it was also used

for school before the public schools were organized. Then they built the church building that's there now in 1891. They still had the building behind it for a few years.

One thing that's interesting there about the building, back years ago before the days of the county fair, they had in Bond County a Bond County Farmer's Institute every fall. People would exhibit things that they wanted to exhibit. The schools would have a school parade, and they'd have speakers come from the University of Illinois, educational speakers, and called them Farmer's Institute. The Farmer's Institute was started by a man by the name of John Hartley. He was a native of Reno and the first Farmer's Institute was held in that old church building that still stood behind the one that's there now, about 1900 or somewhere in that neighborhood. It was held there for one year and then it was held in Sorrento for at least a year and then it was moved to Greenville. They had the Farmer's Institute until after the World War II, when the Saddle Club in Bond County decided we ought to have a county fair. They organized a county fair, so the county fair's been operating ever since then.

I was a regular attender of the church there at Reno. We had the Sunday school. I was the Sunday School Superintendent for some time and an elder, and I've also been the person to attend Presbytery meetings. I've been on Presbytery committees; ministerial committee was one of them. Another committee was the one that read the Clerk of the Session's records and checked them to see that they were accurate, so I've been on Presbytery committees. Quite a number of years ago I joined the Gideons—they're not really associated with any church—but the Gideons distribute Bibles all over the world and especially in hotel rooms, that's where it kind of started. So, I've been an active member of the Gideons until just recently. Now I don't walk too good anymore, so I've kind of given that up, but I still keep in contact with them. We have a very active Gideons organization here in Bond County. I think that pretty well covers my church contacts.

Pogue: We covered many of the other activities, like career aspirations and interests and activities, how about hobbies?

Baumberger: My hobby. I guess, one of my hobbies is playing music. I'm not really a musician (chuckles) but I decided I was going to learn to play the harmonica and I got a little book that told me how to start to play it and from then on I proceeded to play it by ear. Back in those days, automobiles didn't have a radio in them, so my family had to listen to my harmonica playing quite a bit when we'd go on trips. That's when I was—I don't know how old I was—but I was a sub-teen-ager, I guess, when I first started. We had a couple of brothers in our community there who were just a little bit younger than I was, and they were good musicians. One of them played a guitar and one of them played a mandolin. They had had an uncle who managed the elevator over at Alhambra and he asked them one night if they wouldn't come over and

furnish some entertainment at the annual meeting. They decided they needed more than a guitar and mandolin, so they asked me if I'd go along and play the washboard. I said I would. They wanted a little more than that, so my younger brother Keith, they talked him into going along and playing the wash tub bass, so we had a band. We had so much fun at that when we played music over there for them, that we just kind of kept it going and we called ourselves the Rambling Rubes. We'd play at box socials [fund raising events where the ladies put fancy lunches in decorated boxes for auction, with the ladies vying to create the box that brought the highest bid] and things like that and we never got any real good bookings that we got paid much for. One time we were playing at the annual meeting of the Bond County Farm Bureau and Service Company in Greenville—this would have been after I graduated from high school—so we played some entertainment for them. After we got done playing, why the Farm Advisor told us, "You ought to call that the 'Polecat Orchestra.'" We decided that was a good idea, so from then on it was the Polecat Orchestra. We had a lot of fun with that and I guess you'd call that one of my hobbies.

We cut a record one time. There was a fellow in Reno that had a Victrola that he could cut records on and he cut a cardboard record. We passed that around and it played pretty decent. I've still got the record. That's the only record that survived that he cut. He decided he ought to keep them and keep them dry, so he put them down in a milk can and put the lid on tight; he didn't realize it, but that drew moisture and that ruined all those cardboard records that he had. Ours wasn't in there, so the only record that survived was that one. He had a band and played pretty good music Anyway, we passed that record around and finally it got lost and nobody knew where it was. One of the boys that was a real musician, he finally moved to Florida and I just figured it went down there with him. My brother said, "No, I think I've got that record somewhere." He was looking for it, he wanted to find it. He passed away with a heart attack suddenly, about three or four years ago now, and when his wife was cleaning out the bottom of dresser drawers, she found that record. I took it and had it put on tape and on a disk, so it's preserved now, but the record will still play. That's one of my hobbies.

I guess playing softball and basketball is another hobby. I really wasn't an outstanding basketball player. When I got to Greenville… Out at Reno, everybody played. It took the whole school, all the boys in school, to have a softball team and so it didn't take much to make the team out there. I decided I was going to try to make the team at Greenville and I did. Back in those days we had running guards and standing guards. A standing guard is the guard that stayed back as a defense in case they got the ball and be there to defend the goal; he wasn't expected to shoot. That was me. I hardly ever scored. The gymnasium was built at Reno in 1934 while I was in school and up to that time, when I was a freshman, we still had an outdoor basketball court. Of course, you played when the weather was nice and when you didn't, you had to go somewhere else to play. One time we made a trip to Alhambra

to play over there and took two cars to haul the students to school. I was a freshman that year and one of the boys that was a sophomore, they'd bought a Model A Ford. They still had their old Model T; it was an open touring car. He drove that Model T Ford to Alhambra and hauled part of us and the rest of them rode with the coach. We got beat pretty bad that game.

Anyway, then the next year the gymnasium was built at Reno; it was built with WPA labor, [Works Progress Administration] that paid for the labor. My dad was on the school board at that time and someway or another they found out they could get this done. They got the WPA labor and that gymnasium cost the school district seventeen thousand dollars. It was the first small school gymnasium in the county. Then when these other schools found out that could be done, they all got busy and got WPA labor and the other little towns, Sorrento and Donnellson and Smithborough, and Mulberry Grove and Pocahontas got a new gymnasium. Greenville got a new gymnasium and the city hall was built in Greenville, so that gymnasium out at Reno kind of started a building boom in Bond County.

But what I was going to tell you about playing basketball. I hardly ever scored. The first year we had that gymnasium we were playing Panama. Panama was a bigger town than we were and it was a mining town and they had some good athletes up there. We never beat Panama. Along late in the game, why, we were behind by one point and I was standing pretty well back to the centerline. Our court wasn't quite as long as most courts, but I was standing pretty well back there and I was wide open and I shot. I thought afterwards, I bet the coach was saying, "Oh, my, what's he thinking about?" It banked off the backboard and went in, put us one point ahead, and we had that one point lead and beat Panama. That was my big night as a basketball player, was scoring that basket and that was probably the only point I made in the whole game. Even when I went to Greenville to play, I didn't score much. One game we had, I shot four times and made four baskets. I was kind of proud of that

And another thing about playing basketball, I played basketball up at Blackburn College, too; I wasn't an outstanding player there, either. Back home after I graduated from college, why every little town had an independent basketball team. We had one at Reno and we had some pretty good players. We had a pretty good team, but I didn't score much, never did. I went back to Carlinville to a reunion and played basketball on the alumni team against the Carlinville team. We got beat by one point. For some reason or the other, the fellow that was coaching us had me playing forward and I made fifteen points in that game. That was the highlight of my scoring career: seven free throws and four baskets, thirteen points. There was an article in the Greenville Advocate about the game that we had up there and it noted I was the high point man with fifteen points. One of the fellows I played basketball with on that independent team said, "Boy, they must not have had very good players

on that team." (laughs) I didn't say anything, I thought, "Well, that's appropriate."

I guess another hobby is softball. We had a good softball team even though we were a very small school. They had a family moved out here from East St. Louis; they had a boy on there was a really good softball pitcher. Back then, if you had a good pitcher and, of course, you needed a decent catcher and that was me. I was just decent, I guess, but I could stop their wild pitches pretty good. Anyway, he was a good softball pitcher and we beat Greenville two games out of three that year and we were pretty proud of that. I guess that pretty well covers my hobbies.

Pogue: Could you tell us a little bit about your current family?

Baumberger: My current family. I've been married twice. My first wife and I were married right after the war and we had three children. She was suddenly afflicted with a brain tumor and she passed away in 1976. So a couple of years later I married again a lady that I'd known off and on for several years, served on the fair board with, and her husband was killed in an automobile accident a few years before that. We were married in 1978; she has two children and some grandchildren. She's still living; she lives here with me in this supportive living complex and her children are here at Greenville. One of mine is still here at Greenville and one daughter is also here at Greenville and works at the hospital. Two of them are here at Greenville. One of them lives in Washington, Illinois and is a retired school teacher. Craig lives here in Greenville; he retired from West Point Military Academy, spent five years in the Army and then flew jet airplanes for American Airlines until he retired in 2008. I guess there's not a lot to tell you about that. I'm sure you want to get into some information about the farm.

Pogue: Now you've lived on the farm—you said you were born in 1920—and you were an active farmer until about 1989?

Baumberger: Yeah, something like that. As I grew up out on the farm, I told you I joined the 4-H club. I didn't stay with the dairy project too many years and then I went into beef cattle. I had registered beef cattle. I don't remember how many I had in the herd when I went into the Army. I was farming with my dad, helping my dad farm when the war broke out. I decided I wasn't going to try for a deferment. Maybe we ought to just go ahead and talk about the Army, because there wasn't much farming going on until I got back from the Army. During the time I was in the service, anyway. I decided I wasn't going to try for deferment. I probably could have gotten one, being on the farm, but I didn't try.

When my time came to go I went and that was February 1942. I decided I was going to do the best I could while I was in the Army and get all the advancements that I could. I took my basic training in Arkansas and then I

was transferred in May that year to Camp Hood, Texas. They were just building the camp there at that time and I was amazed at how quick that camp went up, because when I first got down there, I was assigned to a tank destroyer school and they were using offices that they'd rented in town and there wasn't any Camp Hood. I happened to have an opportunity to ride out there one day with some of the people and there wasn't any camp there. They showed us where the camp was going to be; it was close to Killeen, Texas, it was a pretty small town. By the time we moved out to that camp in July, there were

When I was taking basic training, I could apply for Officer Candidate School, which I did. Well, I'd just got into the Army and there were several people in the cadre there that had been in the Army quite a lot longer and, of course, they got selected before me to go to that; this would have been infantry Officer Candidate School. They told me that I passed all right, that whenever I got to where I was going, to apply again and I should be approved. The tank destroyers organized a tank destroy Officer Candidate School and I applied for the first class. They started a class every week, so I got into the sixth class, which was in July. By that time, I was a sergeant because I'd joined this outfit that was brand new and if you showed any prospects at all, well, you got promotions, because the promotions were there available. I went into OCS as a sergeant and I graduated about the first of November and I was a second lieutenant, what they call a ninety day wonder. There were a lot of people in my class that had been in the Army a lot longer than I had, but, anyway, I was one of them and so I graduated as a second lieutenant. The unit I went into was activated and I was assigned to a new unit. I was the personnel officer at the time and I stayed with that same unit, that same battalion, all the time I was in the Army for four years. I had been in about a year when that unit was organized, so for three years. I was with the same unit when it was deactivated after the war, so I stayed with the same unit all the time. I got to be a company commander with the rank of captain and I kept that rank all the rest of the war.

One thing of interest I think people would be interested in and really impressed me, not long ago they were showing on public television accounts of a lot of the big battles in the war. I watched a lot of that and after watching that I thought how thankful I was that I didn't have to get involved in any of those real tough battles. This tank destroyer unit was formed when we were fighting the Germans down in Africa and they needed something that was a little faster than the tanks and had good fire power to battle with the tanks down there and so they developed the tank destroyers. I got in on it when it was pretty new, but some of those units went on overseas and when they got up out of Africa, they didn't need them that much. What they needed then, they found out the amphibian tractors were a real asset to the people over in the South Pacific. The amphibian tractors were an outfit that weighed about ten tons propelled by tracks with (grousers???) and they could travel on water and on land. We rode on LSTs [landing ship – tank] and when they were

getting ready to make a landing, why they'd drop the ramp of that LST and let us out into the water. We'd carry in the first waves of the invasion. Instead of dumping the troops out at the shoreline, we could go on across the beach where there's more shelter and let them out there. That was the purpose of those units, so they needed more of those. They converted us to amphibian tractors, moved us from Camp Hood, Texas to Fort Ord, California and we took training there before we went overseas as an amphibian tractor unit. The kids were kind of disappointed because this tank destroyer unit kind of impressed them; it sounded like something they ought to be a part of. They got to calling us ship-to-shore taxi. We went overseas and we didn't have our tractors at that time, because we got them after we got over there. Our first landing was as Finch Haven, New Guinea. We unloaded all of our supplies and put them up on the motor pool, stacked them crates all packed up. Nobody knew what we were supposed to do; nobody knew anything about us. So we stayed there about a week before we could find out and they said, "Oh, you're supposed to be over at New Britain Island." Our ship was still in the bay out there, so we got all that stuff out, took it back out to the same ship, put it back in the same hold, went right across to New Britain Island, which wasn't very far. The interesting part about that was, when they invaded New Britain Island, the Marines had amphibian tractors. As we rode along there, we could see some of the places where they landed and there was, I don't know how many, but there was a lot of amphibian tractors that had been blown up; they were still sitting there, tracks off, blown up, and you could just see those kids sobering up when they saw that.

Anyway, by the time we got over there, we didn't get in on any of the bad battles over there like Iwo Jima and Tarawa and some of those other and Guadalcanal. Those were already over. The big landing we made was at Lingain Gulf on Luzon; that's where McArthur returned to Luzon. He landed on the same beach that we did, but later in the day. We carried in the first five waves with our tractors. The battalion that was attached to the division right next to us, they went down overland, about something over a hundred miles down to Manila; they went with that division down to Manila. We stayed there where we landed, unloading ships, so we were what the kids called a ship-to-shore taxi at that time. Anyway, they were real disappointed they didn't get to go down to Manila, but after they heard what happened down there… I think the name of it was the Pasig River; it goes right through Manila, and they were trying to get across the river when they were having a lot of trouble getting across there. They finally brought these amphibian tractors out and crossed the river with the amphibian tractors, but it was tough, and they got shot up pretty bad. So we were fortunate we didn't get involved in that. We did make a lot of landings on islands down there, maybe one company at a time or one platoon at a time. I was company commander of headquarters company, so most of the time the line companies were out making those landings, while we were sitting back in the rear areas waiting for them to come back to service their vehicles. I was fortunate that I didn't get involved in any of them. When I saw those pictures of what happened, and, of

course, I knew what happened, but it was just so impressive to sit there and watch that and see what some of these people endured.

Another thing that impressed me was, they showed a lot of pictures of what was happening back home and how things got done back home. Now, I hear stories about the people that are fighting the war we're in now and they can't get equipment, sophisticated equipment that's (unintelligible) to their vehicles and it takes them forever to get it done. Back there in World War II, things got done, and they got done in a hurry. Of course, the same thing was true back on the farm; I knew about that because I would get letters from back on the farm; people helped everybody else and things got done and that was impressive.

So, I came back home and I knew I wanted to farm and didn't have a farm. I'd left some cattle with my dad and the deal I had with him was that he would keep the steer calves and I'd get the heifer calves and he'd keep them for me until I got back home. That was a pretty good deal, but it just depended upon whether you got steer calves or heifer calves, who got the best of the deal.

Then another thing we did, my grandfather had bought a farm about the time the bottom dropped out of farmland prices and he didn't pay a lot too much money for it, but, anyway, he didn't want to keep all that farm. There was about 250 acres of it that he told my brothers and I he'd sell to us for fifty dollars an acre and we could just pay on it as we had money to pay on it. We didn't have a lot of money ahead to pay on it, but each one of us paid a little bit and then we sent money back from when we were in the Army. The pay wasn't real big when I went into the Army; it was twenty-one dollars a month, and there wasn't a lot to send back, but as I got promotions it got better.When I got my commission, I was getting more money than other people, so I was paying more on the farmland than my brothers were. Anyway, when we came back from the Army, we all had an interest in that land.

I got back in February and was going to get married in May. I knew I wanted to farm, but I didn't have a farm. Well, I heard that there was a farm for sale out on [Route] 127 which was the farm that I ended up buying; it was owned by a veterinarian in Donnellson. I heard he had offered to sell it to the fellow who lived there. I run onto him on the road one day; I stopped him and talked to him and I told him I'd be interested in that farm. I had heard that this fellow wasn't able to raise the money and wasn't able to buy it. I said, if he's still interested in buying it, I don't want to try to buy it out from under him, but if he's not going to buy it, I'd be interested in looking at it. Well, he said he's not going to be able to buy it; he can't raise the money, but why don't I just rent it to you? I said, "No, I don't want to rent it. I'd like to buy it." So, he said, "Okay, I'll sell it to you, sixty-five dollars an acre." So I asked my dad what he thought about it and Dad said it was considered a pretty poor farm; part of it was pretty flat, didn't drain very good, and my dad said,

"No, that's too much money." Well, I had had a chance to buy a farm before I went into the Army for fifty dollars an acre and this was sixty-five, wasn't as good a farm. No, that's too much money, so I talked to a banker in Greenville: No, that's too much money. I talked to two other people: No, that's too much money. The last man I talked to was Rudy Monkee; he was the secretary-treasurer of the farm loan association, it was the Federal Loan Association. He said, "You buy that farm. It's worth it," and he loaned me the money. Of the five I talked to, the only man who advised me to buy it was the fellow who had the money to loan me and I bought it and it turned out to be a good investment. We paid the last of that note off in about two years. I should have kept it because I think it was only two percent interest, but I didn't. I was just so glad to get the loan paid off. So, there was 240 acres in the farm that we bought and there was a barn on it that had been destroyed; I guess it burned one time, I don't know. They built a new silo, but it wasn't very big, a fourteen foot silo, and intended to build the barn back; the barn never got built back. There was another smaller barn that the fellow used to milk cows in that wasn't really equipped to do that. So, that's where we started out farming.

I've got a picture of the house that we moved into. It didn't have any indoor plumbing, no running water, so we got busy on that the second year we lived there and we put in a water system. One interesting thing about that water system: all those waterline trenches were dug by hand. I had a plumber from Greenville that was pretty outspoken. He was a good plumber. He came out there one day and I was digging this trench for the water line. He looked down there, he says, "How deep you digging that?" I said, "Twenty-six inches, that's what the university says it ought to go." He said, "You put that down three feet. I've seen it freeze thirty-three inches. You put it down three feet and you won't ever have frozen pipes." I thought, "Hey, that's going to be another foot almost," and it was another foot. That wasn't easy digging, but I put them down where he said and I never had a water pipe freeze. So, the basement, I didn't know what kind of basement I had until… I had water in it; you couldn't see the floor. I borrowed a pump from my uncle to pump that out. . We did have electricity in the house, and I had an electric pump; I pumped the water out of that and I was surprised to find out it had a good concrete floor in that basement. I figured maybe it was just dirt. Over in one corner of it, it had a place for the water to drain to, so I could put a suction hose down in that and the water would drain to that and I could pump it out. So, I pumped it out, had a foot of water in it, opened the outdoor door and looked in there the next morning and the foot of water was back in there again; it run back in just that fast. The gutters were no good on the house and they would just come down next to the house; there was a brick foundation and would go right through it. So, the plumber was working down there one day. By that time I'd pumped it out a few times and it didn't get back in quite as fast and I was telling him about my problem there and he says, "Oh, we can take care of that." He reached and got his crowbar and jammed it down in the bottom of that little sump there and when he did that, he made a hole in the

bottom and the water just squirted out there. I said, "Oh, my, you've ruined me now." "No," he said, "you just get you a big tile and knock some concrete out of that and put that tile down there and put you in a sump pump." That's what I did and we finally got to where we could keep the water out of there.

So, that house: we lived in it for several years. Back, I think it was 1957, we decided to remodel it and we did. We built a bedroom downstairs. Before, all the bedrooms had been upstairs and by that time we had a furnace in it, so it was a modern house then and we had indoor bathroom. We lived in that house until 1972. My wife still decided she wanted a new house. So, I agreed that we would just build a new house. We built a new house in 1972, moved into it the first of January 1973. She only got to live there three years. The house is still there; it's all in the family. My daughter Jan and her husband live there. A little more about that farm. Part of it was it didn't drain, drained pretty poorly, and when I started farming I didn't have any machinery. First I was going to get married and didn't have a farm, now I had a farm and didn't have any machinery. My dad has a Case model L tractor, pulled three plows. He had an International H tractor, pulled two plows. My uncle lived up the road there a little ways had an International H that pulled two plows. So that spring we farmed my dad's farm and my uncle's farm and the farm that we were buying from my grandfather and my farm, all with those two tractors. The third tractor was borrowed from my uncle. I don't know how we got it done, but we did. We worked some pretty late hours. The corn was planted with a two-row horse-drawn corn planter and that's how we did our farming the first year. Early in the year the weather was good and so there was no wheat on the farm, so I planted all the oats I could get planted while the weather was good; I planted fifty acres of oats. It turned out to be a pretty good crop. That was a cash crop that year because I didn't even have any horses to feed; I borrowed the horses that first year and shucked corn by hand. We shucked it by hand and I did most of it; had about fifty acres of corn, and put it in picket corn cribs. Those picket corn cribs, you put a roll of pickets around and make it about three high and it would only hold about three hundred bushel, but that looked like a lot of corn. I had about five of those sitting there. People would see me and say, "How did you raise that much corn on that poor farm?" Well, I was kind of proud of that, but it wasn't really that much corn. Now this is going to lead on into something else.

There was a field right south of the house that drained very poorly. There had been a drainage ditch run back to the west quite a ways, and the railroad track ran through that farm and then there was a tile under the railroad track that drained the north of the tracks onto the south. So, I went to see the soil conservation district representative there in the county to see about getting that ditch surveyed to see what I'd need to do to drain that place on the farm. He said, "Well, you're not in our district." We just have a partial district. They voted on the soil conservation district for Bond County and voted it down. Bond County kind of had a history of that: nothing passes in Bond County the first time. You know about that; the unit district didn't pass the

first time. So the fellows that were really interested in it, they described a district that would include the ones that wanted to form it. They put it up for a vote and it passed. So some farms in the county were in the district and some weren't. He said, "You're not in the district. But I'll tell you what I'm going to do. We'd like to get the rest of this county in the district. I'll come out there on my own time and I'll survey that for you if you will help us get this made district-wide." I said, "You've got a deal."

He came out there and surveyed that back through there and what he found kind of surprised me. There wasn't any place I would need to take more than a foot of dirt out of that ditch that had already been run through there. Whoever did that did it without surveying it. I just happened to be up there the day they run that ditch with a township grader. This was just before I went into the Army. He'd said, now start right here and go to that tree down there; that's all the surveying that was done on that ditch. They graded it out with that township grader and got it that close. I got a two-wheel grader that I could pull with the farm tractor and graded out, made it as good a ditch as I could. It took the water out fairly well. I changed that ditch years later and took it over by the railroad track and went down.

Anyway, he got that done for me and so I did what I told him I'd do. I up and campaigned to get the district countywide and we got it done, so I got elected to the board. For ten years I spent with the Bond County Soil Conservation District as a board member. That didn't take a lot of time, but we had some real good people on the board. That soil conservationist was a fellow by the name Ralph Canfield. He stayed with the district until he retired and did an excellent job. In fact, our soil conservation district got quite a reputation. They used to have contests for the districts to compete in. One year we won a contest that was called—oh, what was the name of that company?—it was one of the big tire and rubber companies, Firestone, I believe it was. When we won that contest, we got to send one of our board members down to Texas to their annual meeting down there of soil conservation districts and so he went down there that year. The next year there were two contests. One of them was by Keystone Steel and Wire Company in Peoria. If you won that contest, they'd come down and make a movie of the activities of the soil conservation district. We won that contest and they came down and made a movie. The other contest was by *The St. Louis Globe-Democrat;* that was the paper in St. Louis at that time. This was the second year they'd had that contest and the winning district got to send eight people to the annual meeting of the national association of soil conservation districts. The first year that they had the contest it was in New Orleans. The second year, we won the contest, and it was in San Diego. That was the last year they had it because—we joked about it—I said we broke them that year. (laughs)

We got there, the winning district in Illinois and the winning district in Missouri. What they did for us, they stopped a Pennsylvania train in

Greenville and picked us up. There were eight people: that's four board members, our wives; no, there were three people and our wives and the two conservation people went. One of the board members didn't want to go and the other one was the one who went last year on the other contest. They picked us up. We went into St. Louis and then went on to Kansas City. When we got to Kansas City, they had a Pullman car waiting for us. The Missouri people got on and we got on; we were all on one Pullman car and we left there. Our first stop was at the Grand Canyon. They put that Pullman car on the siding and we spent a whole day visiting Grand Canyon. That evening we got back on the Pullman car and they hooked it back onto the train. They took us to Los Angeles, our next stop. They unhooked our Pullman car, left it there overnight, and we visited the movie colonies where they made movies. They put us back on the train that night and we went on to San Diego. They put us on the siding again and that Pullman car stayed there until we were ready to go home. We went to a hotel, stayed in the hotel where the soil conservation district meetings were held and attended those meetings most of the week,I'm not sure just how many days, but most of the week. Then we went back to our Pullman car and they hooked us back on the train again. They took us back the scenic route, stopped at Salt Lake City a day, left the car sitting there a day and we visited the Mormon Tabernacle and all the things in Salt Lake City. Then we got back on our Pullman car and went back home. Twelve days, didn't cost us a dime. That was just the most wonderful trip. That was worth sitting on the board for ten years. So, when I'd been on the board for ten years—I never believed in making a career out of anything—I I felt like I'd served my time. We had some good people on the board so I went off the board after serving ten years. Oh, I've done a lot of things since then.

Pogue: What we wanted to do is get into a little bit with the school consolidation. You mentioned that you were a board member at Reno. How many years were you on various school boards?

Baumberger: Probably out there, not over two or three. They got to where nobody wanted to sit on the board and I agreed to do it. Then the unit district came along and I was all in favor of that. Later, I was on the unit district board nine years, three terms. The first time that was put up for a vote to make it countywide, it didn't pass. Well, Mulberry Grove was the first one; they had a four year high school over there and they wanted to keep it. They were pretty sure that if the unit went in there would be one high school in the county and they didn't want to lose their high school. So when that didn't pass, they took the opportunity and they described the district over there for themselves, put it up for a vote, and it passed. So that took quite a bit of the east part of the county, including Smithboro.; they just had a two year high school and they ended up with eight grades. Now the eight aren't there, its just all at Mulberry Grove. They have a four-year high school and that's Bond County Unit #1. I kind of wondered if they'd survive, because of the small school, but they seem to be doing real good over there. Their finances seem to work pretty well and there are some good things coming out of that school. Sorrento, at that time, had a

four-year high school for just a few years; Pocahontas had a four year high school. They wanted to keep their high schools, so they were part of what was left.

Well, I'm getting ahead of my story a little bit. So, then Highland took a little bit of Bond County, helping the southwest part of the county. Carlyle got a little bit of the southeast part of the county. Hillsboro got some on the north part of the county. So the people in what was left of Bond County began to think, Well, some of this county keeps disappearing, there's not going to be enough left for a unit, we'd better get busy. So they did, and described the rest of the county—what was left of it—as Unit #2, put it up for a vote and it passed. After it passed then, Sorrento and Pocahontas could see that they weren't going to be able to keep a high school, so they decided that they'd try to secede from the Unit #2. They tried to do that, but they weren't successful, so now the rest of the county is in Bond County Unit #2. I was a little instrumental, I guess, in helping get that passed, because I was certainly in favor of it.

Pogue: What year did this consolidation take place?

Baumberger: It was about 1957. I'm not sure that's the exact date, but that's about when it was.

Pogue: What towns or villages had schools at that time? You mentioned Smithboro and Mulberry Grove went into #1 and mentioned Sorrento and Pocahontas in Unit #2 along with Greenville. Were there any other schools that were still in existence at that time when the vote was taking place?

Baumberger: Panama is right on the county line; part of Panama is in Montgomery County and part of it in Bond County. I'm not sure whether that school is in Bond County or Montgomery County. Practically all of Donnellson is in Montgomery County and their school is in Montgomery County, so they were close. I think all of Keysport is in Clinton County, but Carlyle had taken part of that anyway. Reno had a grade school when the unit was voted in, and Sorrento and Pocahontas what was left of Unit #2. The rest of them I guess would have been classed as one-room schools. Pleasant Mound is a town and they had a school, but I suppose you'd class that as a one-room school, I think.

Pogue: When consolidation took place, what were some of the arguments that you and the people that were for it used for favoring consolidation?

Baumberger: Well, certainly is the quality of the school that you can afford to have. It costs more to operate several small schools than it would a consolidated school. But the town themselves, no small town, wants to lose their school. You take Sorrento for instance as a small town; there really was no industry there. They had some stores, feeders, farmers, that kind of thing, but there's really no industry there. Pocahontas was larger; I don't know just when the mine

closed there. Well one time there was a mine at Sorrento, but that's farther back than I can remember. The Pocahontas mine closed before that, so they didn't have very much industry there; it was a larger town, but there was more going on there. When you consolidate schools, there's transportation involved; some of those kids have to start out to school pretty early and people don't like to see that. They don't like to see their children any further away from home than they can keep them. So the schools were really the center of activity in these small towns and nobody wants to see those closed. Even at Reno, that was the matter; the school there was not very large, but it was more than a one-room school, but it was one of the first schools closed. The high schools at Pocahontas and Sorrento were closed, but the grade schools are still there and I think by now people are…

Well, when I was on the school board, we still wondered how the best things are to do things. We had a consultant at various times come up and give us advice. We had a consultant come in one time. We thought, We'd better listen and see what they've got to say; we wanted to use our best judgment. At that time we had a high school a Greenville, eighth grade at Pocahontas and Sorrento. Let's see, this was before we built the elementary school, I believe. He recommended that we put in a new school located out by the Greenville Lake area somewhere, in that area, and consolidate all the grade schools. Well we knew that wouldn't satisfy the two communities and we decided that wouldn't be the thing for us to do. So you balance those things and certainly you have to listen to the people in the community, although that doesn't necessarily have to the overriding information that you use to make a decision. So far, the board has saw fit to keep those schools the way they are. I think most of the people in those communities feel like they're pretty safe, that they'll stay there, at least for the foreseeable future. It does present problems in operating the schools. For instance, the baseball team—I believe it was, over at Sorrento—a few years ago, they didn't have enough people to have a baseball team and I'm sure just how they solved that problem. Sorrento has kind of surprised everybody; in the last year they came out of there with a real good basketball team and they did real well.

Pogue: Now you mentioned the first time that the consolidation was voted on, it lost. What seemed to be the biggest reasons for that defeat?

Baumberger: Well, like I say, Bond County is notorious for that. I'll tell you something that is kind of comical, that some people are pretty radical. We've had a couple of farm organizations started here in the county that were pretty radical. The Farm Bureau, of course, is the main farm organization in the state and we've had an active Farm Bureau all the time. But anyway, we were trying to get this soil conservation district passed countywide. We had an informational meeting for people to attend. There were two fellows there that were good friends and neighbors; one of them got up and he said, "Well I'm not in favor of this soil conservation district. You build those ponds around and I just heard the other day of somebody drowning in one of those ponds." His

neighbor, who's really a good friend of his—they liked to jaw back and forth—as soon as he sat down, he got up and he said, "Well, maybe we ought to get rid of bathtubs, too. I heard the other day where somebody drowned in the bathtub." (chuckle) So part of it is just that kind of thing. It seems like there's a preponderance, not a preponderance, but several people in the county that are not in favor of progress when they should be.

Pogue: When the consolidation took place, what were some of the big issues that had to be dealt with?

Baumberger: Oh, (chuckle) one of the big issues was the school custodian strike. Llet's see, I'm not sure when I went on the board, but it happened just before I went on the board. I guess part of this might go back to the controversy on getting the unit organized in the first place, because part of this developed over in the Sorrento area. Those towns are pretty strong union towns. People have jobs in various places and they belong to unions and so the custodians joined a union. It was the Teamsters Union and they weren't satisfied; I guess it was the salaries—I wasn't on the board at that time—so they struck. At that time, it was illegal for school employees to strike and the school board fired them, just fired all of them. There never was any real violence. Some of the school board members and anybody that would volunteer were going in and cleaning the school buildings. Over at Sorrento, they'd go in and clean the school buildings and when they came out, it got to the point where they had the sheriff there to see that they got out of there without any violence. It got that bad. The school board fired them and then it was contested, went into higher courts and went all the way to the state Supreme Court. The Supreme Court upheld the school being able to fire them and they didn't hire them back. I don't think they hired any of them back. They got enough people to take their place and they made it stick.

One thing that disappointed me: I went on the board right after that, and we'd go to these school board association meetings up at Chicago and going to these seminars they'd have, and people complaining about teachers striking. I get up and tell them, "They can't do that. We've got a Supreme Court decision that says that strikes aren't legal. Fire them!" But they wouldn't do it. Now the laws are different and strikes are legal under certain conditions. So far here in Community Unit #2 that's never happened again and it seemed like even the teachers get along pretty well in their contract negotiations.

Pogue: As far as school buildings, when the consolidation took place, did buildings have to be built or added to? You mentioned that Pocahontas and Sorrento went from having a high school to just having grade schools.

Baumberger: Yeah, the first thing that was done was, a new high school building was built here in Greenville to take care of the high school and the old high school was converted to a junior high school. The buildings Pocahontas and Sorrento had

were adequate to take care of the eight grades and both schools had gymnasiums that were relatively new. So that was done. Then—this was when I was on the board, I guess—the old high school building that was being used by the junior high school began to deteriorate and the engineers considered it dangerous, so we tore down the old building, kept the heating plant and built onto it for a junior high school. While I was on the board, also, we built the new elementary school. When we did that, there was building involved at Pocahontas and Sorrento, also, for classrooms. Their old buildings were torn down at that time because they were pretty old. That was before I got off the board.

Pogue: Were there any changes that had to be made because of the school consolidation, like nickname changes or school colors, or anything of that nature?

Baumberger: Yeah, let's see. I was trying to think. When I was playing basketball at Greenville High School, we were called the Flyers and now they're the Comets. I think that was done when the unit went in. Let's see, Sorrento is the Greyhounds, or they were; I don't know what they are now. Pocahontas was the Indians, I believe, and I think they still are.

Let's go back to these buildings. When we built the elementary school and the additions at Pocahontas and Sorrento, I guess I'd have to say that the decision we made to go with the open idea of schools I'm not real proud of. That just happened to be, I guess, at the time when that was the modern thing to do. We hired what we thought was the best school architect in the country. I don't remember the name of it anymore, but they were from Kansas, they'd built a lot of schools and they favored that design. That's what we went with, but I was disappointed that it ended up as open as it did; I didn't think it would. I thought there'd be some partial, not walls, but drapes or whatever there, to separate the pods more than they did. If I had it to do over again, and it was my choice, I don't think we'd have used that method. In some ways it worked real good. In the elementary school here at Greenville, apparently it worked better than in the smaller schools, because there was enough sections of each grade that one pod contained four sections and they were all the same grade, so the interference wasn't that much. Apparently it depended a lot on the principal, whether he was able to coordinate that into the teaching system. Apparently the principal there was most successful of doing that than the other schools. And this worked. A lot of people didn't like it that well and probably still don't; I don't know.

Pogue: As to the board meetings, when you were on the board, did you travel to hold board meetings in Pocahontas and Sorrento?

Baumberger: We started that when I was on the board. It might have been my suggestion—I don't know—but I felt like if we meet in each one of those communities at least once a year that it would give them a chance to attend a meeting and not

travel so far if they wanted to; they still continue to do that, is my understanding.

The main thing that happened when I was on the board I didn't want to see happen. We had at least one board member on there that thought that every vote cast ought to be a written ballot, yes or no, and not be disclosed until everybody voted. He felt that if you start with one person and then get around to somebody else, he'll decide, "Well, I'm going to vote this way, he voted this way," and he didn't think that ought to be. I told him, I said, "That's kid stuff. Anybody ought to have the right to call for a secret ballot anytime they want to, but it shouldn't be every ballot." Most of that stuff is just something that everybody's going to vote one way or the other on, anyway. But he got that passed and they still do it this way, I think. So anytime anything come up for a vote, you had two ballots out there, one said yes and one said no. You'd turn it upside down and put it out there. After everybody voted, then they counted. I never agreed with that, but that's the way it was done.

Pogue: As far as my last question dealing with the consolidation of the district and your role on it and involvement as a board member, what would be one major accomplishment that you think took place because of the consolidation?

Baumberger: Well, certainly, the quality of the education, because you've got it all concentrated in one high school. You've got more flexibility in the way you spend your funds. The other side of that is the transportation issue and that's expensive. Our district is probably unique; I don't know really how many districts do this, but Bond County owns their own buses and they always have. We used to talk about that and we agreed that it would be cheaper for us to lease the buses or to hire somebody to run the buses, to make a contract with somebody, but it would cost more money to do it. It wouldn't cost the district as much, but it would cost more money to do it. We felt like what we were doing was more efficient and we stuck to it. Whether it still is or not, I don't know. We got some figures on that that made it pretty evident that what we were doing was the most economical way to do it, but not as far as the district was concerned.

Pogue: Now, in just kind of closing, a few other things that you've been involved with. You do farm radio. When you were an active farmer, who were the people that you listened to, or did you listen to the radio for farm news?

Baumberger: Oh, yeah, they had a farm man here on the radio, WGEL; of course, I listen to WGEL more than any other station. Their farm reporter passed away suddenly with a heart attack. At the time, I was sort of retired. (laugh) I could tell you even more about my retirement. They asked me if I would be interested in trying to be a farm reporter. He was a farm—what did they call him?—he was more than a reporter; he got out and sold ads, too, and I didn't want to get involved in that. They said, No, just do farm programs twice a day. It doesn't

sound like much when you consolidate it into two minutes of program, but it takes time to put it together and record it and so forth. I said, "Yeah, I'll give it a try," and so I did that and I've been at ever since. But since I got to where I can't walk very good, I've tried to retire a couple of times and they didn't want me to retire. I still do a farm report on Saturday morning and that's all I do, just one report a week, except I cover the Fair board meetings. I used to cover the Kiwanis Club meetings, but now I'm not active in Kiwanis Club anymore. Once in a while I get a special assignment. One of those tonight is at the Academic Foundation Council and they want me to report on that for them. So, that's the way I got involved as a farm reporter; it's been interesting and I've enjoyed doing it. They tell me that my voice carries pretty good over the radio, (laugh) so I've had people that told me that.

Pogue: You also had a role with the Bond County Fair, is that correct?

Baumberger: Oh, yes.

Pogue: What would be one of the changes that you saw with the county fair during your involvement with them? Has the fair changed or has it been pretty much the same?

Baumberger: Its pretty much the same. They tried to start the car races out there. They've tried that twice. One time years ago, why they put in a—I don't know, what is it—a quarter mile track? I think it's a quarter a mile car track for stock cars and they ran those for a year or two and it didn't work. Then, its been twenty years ago, I guess—I don't know—they got some people on the board that decided they ought to have auto racing. They do at Highland and it's pretty successful down there. So they spent quite a bit of money to put in another car track. The old track was already gone. Then they started car racing again and it wasn't successful. Then the city of Greenville people complained about the noise factor and they got the people in town working against them. The track is still there. It is set up to where they can have races once in a while, but not on a regular basis. That's one change that didn't work. As far as the horse racing is concerned: there used to be three days of horse racing and I've gotten involved in that in later years; now there's only one day of horse racing. Quite a bit of that is because of the financial situation. The races they hold now are stake races; the State and the horsemen put quite a bit of money into the premiums, and they're pretty good premiums, so there's one day of racing. They're really good races, but they don't have as many of them. They still have people who train horses there year around. Sometimes there's quite a few there and sometimes not as many. The horse racing industry itself has changed—this is standardbred horses—it has changed quite a lot. There's not much horse racing in this part of the state; it's about all in the Chicago area. There's no standard bred horses race at Fairmont Park anymore. There used to be standardbreds there and there used to be standardbreds at the track at Cahokia and that track is completely gone now. The state fair has sulky races, standard bred races, and so does DuQuoin, and the county fairs, but not as

much as they used to. Otherwise, the fair is pretty much the way it used to be. The state still puts money into it and the county fair board has been able to build some buildings that they needed. Financially they're in real good shape now, I think. When they built that car track, they weren't in too good a shape for a few years, but they're past that now. We have what is considered a good county fair here.

Pogue: The last question I have is that you mentioned you had a book of things that date back to your father. So what years does that cover?

Baumberger: He was born in 1891 and he never really had any training in writing or anything like that; he never went to college. Reno had a two year high school at the time he went there; all he had was two years of high school. He just calls it, "Things I Remember". It is real interesting. As he'd think of something, he'd write it down; I'll just mention a few of those things that are in it. He was born on a farm east of Ramsey right next to—I don't know what the name of that railroad is that goes through there—and his grandfather Dressor owned a thousand acres of land. The railroad went through there at an angle, but it come up to the railroad—one corner of it did—and he was a cattle trader. He owned this land and he leased it to a fellow who that shipped in cattle from Texas. This pasture had a road on all four sides of it. The state law required cattle to be quarantined for a month when they were shipped in before he could sell them to anybody else. So he could unload them from the railroad and put them right in that pasture; they could stay there until they were released so he could sell them.

My grandfather and his father and mother lived on that farm when he was born in 1891 and they lived there until 1896. Then they moved over to where they lived south of Reno from this little town of Dressor. People still know where it was, but its just about disappeared. There wasn't much there. There was a store or two; during World War II, there was still a store building there. Somebody that run a machine shop was in that building and they had a war contract to build something for—I don't know what they used it for—something for the war effort; so as late as World War II, there was still an active business there.

One of the things he mentioned was, he had but one sister and he had a foster sister who was actually his cousin. Her parents had died and my dad's parents were raising her as their daughter. So this would have been in early 1900s, I don't know just when, but she got sick one morning and they called the doctor from Donnellson and he came down. All these little towns had doctors back in those days. He said, "Well, she's going to have to have an appendicitis operation. I'll be back this afternoon with another doctor." So that afternoon he came back with another doctor. They had a bay window in the house where they lived, and they moved the dining room table over in front of that bay window and that's where these two doctors operated on her for appendicitis. It was successful and she lived to a ripe old age.

Another thing he mentioned that was interesting, I thought; he remembered the first washtub that they ever had. It was in one corner of the kitchen and there was a lid that was hinged to the wall and when they weren't using the bathtub, they'd fold that down and use it for a table. When they got ready to take their Saturday night bath, they'd hinge that up to the wall; this bathtub in the corner of the kitchen, that's where they took their baths.

He mentioned a lot of things. He loved to hunt and he told a lot of stories about hunting. Back in those days there was a lot of game. He especially liked to hunt quail, but also rabbits, and he said back in those days there wasn't any limit on how many you can get. He said the most quail he ever killed was in the creek bottom out west of Greenville; he got forty-five in one day. He told about him and two other fellows: this farm sold and the fellow that owned it had never allowed hunting on there, but he told this one fellow he could hunt in there a couple of days. My dad and another fellow that hunted with him had good dogs, so he got them to go with him; they hunted there two days. He gives the figure—I don't remember what all it figures out—they got a hundred and some the first day, the three of them, and the second day they got almost that many. So those are a couple of hunting stories he told. Rabbits. We lived west of route 127, two miles down there to where we lived. One time when he was younger, he and a neighbor of his hunted together a lot and they were going to hunt rabbits. He shot a rifle and a shotgun.

There's a road that goes straight east from our house to 127, two miles, and this friend of his had a Model T Ford and had kind of a box on the back of it. So they'd go park their truck and they'd walk, one on each side of the road, and kill rabbits for a while. Then they'd go back and load their rabbits in this box, and then they'd move it up and then they'd go up farther. He said when they got the two miles out to the highway they were both out of shells, so they loaded up all the rabbits that they had, took out to the store at Reno and sold them for fourteen cents apiece. He said that was the most they ever got for rabbits; right after that, they shut them off, they couldn't sell them anymore. He said they were loading a truck up there that day—it was probably a Model T with stock racks on it that wouldn't have been a very big bed—and they loaded a whole truckload of rabbits to go into St. Louis. He said they sold ninety rabbits that day for fourteen cents apiece. That's the most they ever got for rabbits. He had a lot of stories like that.

He told about the labor of building their house. They built the house where I was born when they got married, about 1914, and the labor to build that house was a dollar and a quarter per day. He quotes the price of the lumber—I don't know—it was two dollars and something a hundred, so prices were a lot different in those days.

I can remember the horse power days; the first farm work I did was with horses. Probably one of the first things that I did was cultivate corn with

a one-row horse-drawn cultivator. My dad remembers the day when they did all their plowing with horses. He first learned to plow with a walking-plow, two-horse walking plow, [the farmer walking, horses pulling] and then a gang-plow and then a four-horse hitch. Then they got their first tractor in 1917, I believe he said. It was a three-wheeled tractor. Then they bought a Model K Case tractor; he had three of those and I can remember one of those. I wasn't big enough to drive it, but that was big enough to pull a thrashing machine. That was before the days of combines. Incidentally, when I came home after the war, before I went into the Army, we had a combine. Our first combine was a twelve-foot pull-type combine; they had an engine on the combine and it was pulled by a tractor, so I got in on some of that. I was the tractor driver and my dad was up on the combine controlling the header height and checking things up there. We'd always open up the fields with the binder, because that twelve foot combine would mash down quite a bit around the edges. So, when I came home from the Army, they were still using that thrashing machine to thrash some. I thrashed my first crop of oats on that farm with my dad's thrashing machine—well he run it—but it was thrashed with a thrashing machine. Then I bailed the straw and sold the straw and that was the last year that thrashing machine was used.

Oh, let's see, I think I told you about he was on the school board when the gymnasium was built at Reno with WPA labor and he remembers that. He also remembered getting the roads graveled with WPA labor. This was when I was in high school. He had a farm truck; it was a one-ton truck at that time. They were getting the gravel out of the creek north of Reno. He was so anxious to get that road graveled, that he wanted to get started before the WPA labor got there. They got there, I guess, at eight o'clock—maybe only nine, I don't know—and they quit pretty early. So my next younger brother and I would go with him and they had a pile of gravel pulled out on the creek bank. We'd go up there before school and we'd shovel on—there wasn't loaders, they'd shovel it on with scoop shovels, sand scoops they were—and load a load of gravel on that truck. He'd haul that down there and unload it before the WPA people got there and he'd be going back for his second load. He'd drop us off at school, and he'd be going back for his second load before they got there. By then, there'd be a crew up at the creek to scoop it on and then there'd be a crew to unload it. So he'd haul gravel like that all day. Then, when they quit, why, he wasn't ready to quit yet. So he'd pick us up at school and if he had a load on we'd go unload it; then we'd go back and get another load before time to do chores at home. He said in that book that that was the first road in the county to be graveled. That was about a mile and a half from our house into Reno. Anyway, it was a big improvement on the road, even though it still got muddy after that sometimes. So that's the kind of things that he had in there and, like I said, he just called it "*Things I Remember*."

I've got another little book and I'm going to give you these, but I want to be sure and get them back. If you want to record them you can. It was written by my step-mother. My mother passed away when I was 17 years old;

I was a senior in high school. Then after I got back from the Army, my dad got married again. This book was written by her and she calls it "*Memories of the Past."* It is mostly about the one room schools, so it's pretty interesting. So you can take those with you and make copies of them, but I want to be sure and get them back, because I'm not sure I've got anymore of these. I probably have some laid away somewhere. When we moved, everything didn't get put back in the right place.

Pogue: I want to thank you for taking the time to talk to us.

Baumberger: I really haven't finished everything I wanted to say. We could spend a little time after dinner, if you want to. I'd like to tell you about the 911 system getting installed here in Bond County. I think that's something that's pretty interesting. And the horseracing days: that has to do with agriculture, because we raised everything we raced. If you want to do that? It probably wouldn't take an hour. We could just leave this stuff right here if you want to.

(pause in recording)

Pogue: Okay, we're back on. At this time, if you'd like to tell me a little about the 911 program and how it got started here in Bond County, since it is somewhat unique to Illinois.

Baumberger: Yeah, I think it is and I'm real proud of our accomplishments to get that done. Here in Bond County, as I mentioned before, it is hard to get things passed on the first time around. We still didn't have a 911 system here in Bond County; they decided they'd get that done and they appointed a committee to plan a 911 system. They had some good people on that committee. They planned the system that would operate on a surcharge of two dollars and nine-five cents per month and put it to a vote, and that was one aspect of it. People didn't agree with because they thought that was kind of high, and it was higher than a lot of counties have. The other thing they didn't agree with: all systems have to have a back-up system and at the time before this was voted on, there was a dispatch system in city hall and there was also one right across the alley in the sheriff's office, and had been for years, just because they couldn't agree who was going to operate the dispatch system. So they had two separate systems. So they had this 911 system set-up: one of them would be the dispatch center and the other one would be the back-up. They were right across the alley from each other and this didn't make sense to a lot of people because, if one of them went down, they probably both would and then you wouldn't even have a back-up system. So, they voted it down. The committee decided they'd put it back to a vote and they put it back to a second vote, just exactly the same way they did the first time. It was voted down again.

About that time, a cousin of mine who had been an employee of General Telephone Company, retired from General Telephone Company out

in Washington State; he moved to Greenville and he couldn't believe that we didn't have a 911 telephone system. He got to looking into that and thinking about it. He and I got together one time and he said, "You know, I believe if we'd change that proposal a little bit, we could do it for a lot cheaper than that and get that thing passed and get volunteers to work on it and do a lot of it with volunteers." So, we got together and we figured on it. He did most of the figuring because he'd been employed by the engineering department of General Telephone Company; he knew how to read maps and draw maps and this kinds of thing, so he knew a lot about that end of it. I knew the people here, who we could call on to help. So we proposed to the county board that they form another committee and we'd see what we could do. They put us on the committee and we got about four or five other people who had been employed by telephone systems to work with us.

We started with the budget that the other committees had had and that made it a lot easier for us because we could eliminate the things we thought we could eliminate with people that donate their time. The first thing we decided was that we didn't want to have but one system in Bond County and the back-up would be outside the county, which is a lot cheaper, because we could be the back-up for them and they could be the back-up for us. We also decided we wouldn't be using both of those dispatch centers and we were going to try to get them to furnish the dispatchers. They're already doing that anyway. We worked on those angles. The county and the city both agreed that if we got this to go, either one of them we decided would be the main dispatch center and the back-up would be outside the county and they would furnish the dispatchers. That would relieve us of the cost of the dispatchers. We had that agreed upon before we put it to a vote and we come up with a surcharge of a dollar and forty-five cents, about half of what the other committee was working with and it passed.

So the next thing to do was to appoint a committee to implement that. They informed Bob and I right quick, "You guys are going to be on that committee." Well, we didn't object (chuckle) because we knew that would happen and they told us right quick—those three people who were on that original committee—"You guys can't do this. You just can't do it." I give them credit. We'd been working on it two weeks and they begun to come back and tell us, "Hey, we see that you can do it. I believe you can do it." They saw the volunteers we were getting were competent people who were willing to help and they began to see how much expertise Bob had with the planning part of it.

We had a goal of getting it done in five years. You can't do it overnight; it takes time, because all of the county has to be mapped and the telephone numbers recorded and all the addresses changed and there's a lot to it. We got the cooperation of the county highway department. They had a secretary down there that was familiar with computers and they made a deal with us: If you'll buy us a computer, we'll do that computer part of it for you,

make out those lists of telephone numbers to change, send them into the post office. So they cooperated; that was part of our volunteers and we got it done. But, we didn't do it in five years because we couldn't get the telephone company to move as fast as we were. As far as I know, I don't know of any other county in the State of Illinois that did that with volunteers the way we did. We cut the surcharge in half and it's worked great. I stayed on the committee. Bob moved on to Florida before we got on line, but he had all the work done by then.

So I stayed on until we got it on line and the budget for the first year made out, and then I got off the board and have been since then. But its worked great and they have about a half a million dollars built up in the fund. They could lower the rate yet below that dollar forty-five if they choose to do so. So far they haven't because they're looking at maybe spending quite a lot of money to implement a different telephone system in the county. Anyway, it worked great and Bob and I both decided that of all the things we've done in our lives, we got the most satisfaction out of getting that done than anything we've done. It took about seven years instead of five, but it was worth it and its working great.

Pogue: Now you were also a Master Farmer.

Baumberger: Yeah. Before I tell you about that I'd like to say I was a 4-H club member, I may have mentioned that, but I give the 4-H club experience great credit for helping me in my later life, especially with learning how to keep good records and learning how to speak to other people. In 4-H Club we had to make talks before the club and that give us good experience. In my later years in 4-H I was selected as an outstanding 4-H Club member, and for that I got a free trip to the 4-H Club Congress in Chicago that lasted about a week. I appreciated that and we had some top notch entertainment up there. One of them was Fibber Magee and Molly in person, we got to see. A lot of people had that experience and it was a great experience.

Let's see, and then, I was fortunate to be chosen as a Master Farmer in 1969. *The Prairie Farmer* does that every year and that year they selected more than they had in several years. So I figured they just ran out of prospects and maybe I was the best they could find, so I was lucky. But I think the thing that impressed them about my farm—they came out and visited the farm—I consider mine a very practical farm. It wasn't as big as a lot of operations, it wasn't as sophisticated, and didn't cost me as much to do a lot things that some people had done, but it was a modern farm. I had a silo unloader, I expanded my feedlot by quite a lot and I'd made a lot of improvements, but I used a lot of used machinery on the farm that didn't cost as much and still did the job. Anyway, I'm kind of proud of that and I always considered myself as a practical farmer and did things the way they could be done without spending too much money.

That was 1969. We skipped one thing that happened before that. It was about the time I got off the Soil Conservation District board. I need to tell you about the hospital we have here and how it got here. I was part of that and proud to be a part of it. Sometime in early 1950, one of the undertakers here in the county was contacted by a lady that lived in St. Louis. She and her husband were born and raised in Bond County, then they moved to St. Louis; he was a streetcar conductor. They only had one son and he was handicapped; I'm not sure just what his condition was, but his health was not good and they didn't expect him to live a long life. But his mind was alright and they were very practical people; they left it to him to invest their money and even though he was handicaped. They had money to invest and had over several years. Eventually the man in the family passed away and that left this mother and this boy. He's still living. They talked about it. They'd accumulated some money and they bought apartment houses in St. Louis with it, so they were worth a substantial amount of money.

They decided they wanted to do something with their money when they were gone to benefit the people in Bond County, where they were raised. So, they told the son to pay for that and asked him to come up with some ideas. They first started talking about a nursing home; we didn't have one of those. Well, we had a couple of smaller ones that were privately owned. Then what they decided what we really need is a hospital. Maybe we could do that. And so she donated, I think to start with, fifty thousand dollars cash and pledged another hundred and fifty, I believe was the way it was, but there's nothing in writing. This undertaker got four more people to work with him and that made a committee of five; they decided they ought to go for a hospital. She'd give us a start and we'd try to raise the other money locally and see if we can't build a hospital. They'd go down and meet with her every once-in-a-while. One of these people on that committee was a banker. The five of them would go down there, and while they were down there, why she'd take the banker into the back room, into the kitchen, and "I want you to look at these investments." She'd only let him see them. The other four, they had to sit out in the other room and they couldn't get in on that discussion. (chuckle) So this went on while we were making plans out here to build a hospital. Still we didn't have anything in writing with her and she wouldn't put anything in writing. She said, "When I'm gone you'll get everything that I've got." In the meantime, the son passed away. [You said in a previous paragraph that he was still alive?? Editor] He was only about thirty when he passed away and she said, "You don't need to worry about it. You're going to get everything I've got."

But here's a lady in St. Louis. Probably other people know she's got money and probably are going to be talking to her and here we haven't anything in writing. So, we were kind of living dangerously, but it all worked out. We were going to build a hospital for $800,000 and she was going to contribute quite a bit of it. So we had a fund-raising campaign and that's when I got on the board; I believe it was fifteen people they put on the board,

ten besides the original five, and I was on the fund raising committee along with several other people. We hired a professional fund-raiser to help us raise money and then we got to do it. We got out in the county and started raising money and pledges, and we did get the hospital. We raised enough to get it going. We didn't do it for $800,000. It cost $1,200,000, the way I remember it, to get it operational. When the hospital opened, if I remember right, the room rate for a semi-private room was seventeen dollars and a half a day.

Well, its gone up considerably since then and the hospital's a lot bigger since then. It's been built onto two or three times, one time just in the past few years, and that was a $5,000,000 addition. So, I don't have an idea of what that hospital's worth these days. I remember one of the early days, the committee was meeting and we were getting ready to get started going. We had more than one banker on the committee; one of them said, "Now the first thing we need to do is to get this tax supported." And nobody agreed with him and we didn't. At that time, one of our neighboring towns had a hospital that they'd had for a few years and they were tax supported; they were having financial problems and we were hoping not to get into that. So nobody agreed with him and we went ahead trying to raise money to do it on our own and we did. So that hospital was built with all private funds.

The only government money that went into it was from what they called a Hill Burton Fund that comes out of Washington, and I think there was a $120,000 maybe, that went into it from that fund. My understanding is, when you take money from the government, then you're committed to furnishing free care to a certain extent for people who can't afford it. So that's in place, and because of that, why there's people who get free care that can't afford it. The hospital is doing great and I think this it a tribute to the people of Bond County that raised the money to build that hospital and keep it going the way it is now.

They built a retirement center, Emerald Point, that's part of the hospital complex. They built a nursing home, the Fair Oaks Nursing Home, which is part of the complex. In the past few years they built duplexes which—let's see ,they've got a name for those—anyway duplex housing for retired people; they have to put up quite a bit of money to get into one of those and its not for low income. None of these facilities—well, the nursing home, low income can get into that—but Emerald Point is not low income, and several places around Greenville, the thing they charge people for living there is based on their income. So I just wanted to be sure and mention that hospital. I'm proud to have been a part of it. That's part of the philosophy that I've had through the years: if I'm going to enjoy the benefits of this community, I need to do my part to support them and I did with being on the hospital board.

One other thing interesting about that, we got the hospital going and I decided I was going to move on. So my turn was up to leave the board; five

would be elected each year and I decided I was going to go off the board. There must have been three reelected that year instead of five; I think it was three. Anyway, one of the fellows that was on the board was an engineer and he told them he was going to go off the board. They said, "Oh, we can't spare you. You're an engineer. We need your expertise on this board." So, he said, "Well, okay, I'll stay on." So one of the other fellows said, "Well I'm going to go off the board. If he's going to stay on, I'm going off the board." He lived in Mulberry Grove; he was a car dealer over there and he was very well respected. "No, we can't spare you. You represent Mulberry Grove." And so they talked him into staying on the board. And I said, "Well, now, these two people are going to stay on the board, I'm going off the board." "We can't spare you, you're a farmer. We need you on this board; we need a farmer." I said, "I'm going off the board. I'm not taking no for an answer." By that time I'd been on five years or so, I guess, so I went off the board. I was the first person to retire from that board that didn't die first. (chuckle) I had other people tell me, "Well I'm going off next time." Well, it's hard to do, its hard to talk them into saying, "Yeah, okay, we'll replace you." So that was the extent of my experience out there except that I supported them financially when they had their fund drives and that's the way it ought to be.

Let's see – the Academic Foundation. I served my time on the school board and then there was an effort made to organize what they called an Academic Foundation to help support the school, support projects that there wasn't money to support and maybe some things that had never been a part of the school system before. So I was involved in trying to get this Academic Foundation going and I believe in it very much. We had a committee—I believe there was fifteen people on that committee—and we started talking about how we were going to raise money. I'd had this experience on the hospital board where we set up voting member criteria. If a person donated or pledged a thousand dollars, they were a voting member of the hospital board. I said, "Now why don't we do that same way with the Academic Foundation? I'm going to do that. I'm going to pledge a thousand dollars over four years and I'd like to see all of the board members do the same. We'll have that much money raised then." This was along in the spring of the year; I didn't get any of them to agree to do that, and they were all younger than I was. They said, "We've got kids to raise. We can't afford to do that." So I didn't get anybody to go along with me. We got up into the fall of the year; we were going to have our first annual meeting along in the fall and we still hadn't raised any money except this pledge that I'd made. They told me they couldn't afford to because they were parents. So I said, "Before we have this meeting, we've got to raise some money some way. How about you give me permission to see if I can raise ten thousand dollars, get ten people, ten grandparents, to either pledge a thousand dollars or donate a thousand dollars to become voting members and see if I can raise some money that way." "Oh, yeah, go ahead."

At that time there was a restaurant in Pocahontas—the restaurant's still there.. Some of us used to gather there on Sunday evenings just to have a snack and visit. It was country people, most of them. My wife and I were down there one Sunday evening and I started telling some of these people about what I was trying to do. There was one man standing over at the other side of the room and I didn't know he could even hear what I was saying, and no reason why I wouldn't be talking to him. He just wasn't in the same area of the room, but I guess he must have heard what I was saying, because the first thing you know, I saw him take a pen out of his pocket and start writing something. Before we left the room that evening he handed me a check for a thousand dollars and that was my start. So then I took it to Kiwanis Club; we have some real high class people in Kiwanis Club and I got the rest of the ten from the Kiwanis Club. It wasn't that long until I had my ten people and most of them were thousand dollar checks. So, we had some money to go at the first meeting and we had approved a project. I think the first project cost six thousand three hundred dollars if I remember right. These people were called "The Grandparents' Club."

But a little more story about that fellow that gave me that check; he's noted for giving to about everything. He supports the college real well. As long as I was on the Academic Foundation board, he'd write me another check for a thousand dollars every year. And I'm not sure how long that was, three or four years. I don't know whether he continued after that or not, but I really appreciated him. That's the way we got that thing started and started raising money. We have a meeting tonight and I've looked over the list of people that are going to benefit, the teachers are going to benefit, school rooms that are going to benefit and it's a lot more than that this year. So, that's been very successful. My wife and I have believed in that very much and especially in some things the school doesn't ordinarily do. I had some insurance policies that I'd set up with the Academic Foundation as beneficiary that would have amounted to something over twenty thousand dollars when I was gone and I got to thinking about that and I thought, "Well, now, I can afford to do that now. I believe I'll just give them that money and let the kids have the insurance money when the time comes." So, my wife and I donated $22,000 to the Academic Foundation to be used for character education programs, self esteem, patriotism, teaching kids not to use drugs and that type of thing; the income from that over the years has been used for that type of thing and I think that's real important in the school system. Now we have what they call a character education program in the schools; they get other money to help fund that, too, and they're doing a lot more now during the past few years.

That's kind of interesting, too, because I'd had some contact with Senator Simon down at the Southern Illinois [University] at Carbondale. The way that developed, our little church out there in Reno is a Presbyterian church. Senator Simon wrote a book about the life of Elijah P. Lovejoy. [a friend and supporter of Abraham Lincoln] I have a cousin that lived at Troy when Simon was in Troy, years ago when he first started in the newspaper

business and they were well acquainted with Simon.and kind of keep in contact with him and he found out that our little church out there at Reno was visited by Elijah P. Lovejoy just two or three months before Lovejoy got killed, and that we have a session record book with Elijah P. Lovejoy's signature in it. Senator Simon wrote to me and wanted to know if I could send him a copy of that signature and I sent it to him. When I sent it to him, we had just had a meeting out there at our church by the historical society that year talking about the history of one of the small churches and we had a full house. I told him, when I sent him that signature, "That little church is still in existence; We have church every Sunday morning and we had a meeting out there just recently and we had a full house. I believe that if we could get Senator Simon to speak to us on some Sunday morning, I believe we could fill that church again." He intended to do that, and the last contact I had with his secretary she said, "He intends to do that, but he wants to do that when he's on his way to Springfield so he can stop over on his way to Springfield." He passed away before he ever got a chance to do it.

But anyway, in the contact, I found out that he has what he called down there a Public Policy Institute and one of their projects was to establish a character education program in the schools. In that school region they had put that program in the Harrisburg school as a trial project to see how it worked. So, by the time I got back to them and trying to get some information about it, they had it in all of the schools in that region and it was working very well. So that's information that eventually got up to our school system here. Carol Knight got interested in that. Her husband and I are pretty good friends; he's the county judge now. He was telling me that he and his wife went to Chicago for some kind of meeting one time and she was all gung ho about getting a character education program started. She was wondering about getting information and he said, "Well, if you want information about that, talk to Fred Baumberger. He knows where to get it." So then Carol Knight took a real interest in it; she's head of that program now. Its doing great and is supported by the Academic Foundation. My understanding is that Highland—I don't know whether this is the same system they had—but it's a character education program; they've got some ideas from there and its working great. So that's the Academic Foundation and it's something that's really benefitted the school system.

Let's see now, I was going to retire from farming some time. Well, my son Craig graduated from West Point Military Academy, went into the service and was in the service over in Korea. By then he was a company commander, a captain. When my wife got the brain tumor and he came home on emergency leave, he stayed until she passed away. By then somebody else was taking over his company and he couldn't get that back. They wanted him to go to a staff school of some kind and he didn't want that; he wanted to be out in the country. So, he said, "My five years is just about up; I'll just get out of the service and I'll come back home and farm." So he did. He had a private pilot's license when he came home; he'd got that when he was in the service.

He kept upgrading that and farming, too, and the first thing you know, he's an instructor. Then he had a twin engine license and an instrument license. Then he got a job flying twin-engine planes between Springfield and Chicago and I kept telling people, "He's flying more and farming less all the time." (chuckle) And about that time he got a job with American Airlines flying jets, so that was the end of his farming career, except that he stills lives out on the farm and he owns most of it now. When I got to be sixty-five years old, it was time to retire. He was still farming with me; he didn't have this jet flying job then.

So we decided to have a sale because he wasn't going to continue farming when he got on with American Airlines. We lined up our machinery out there and I looked at that. Quite a bit was machinery we bought used. The only thing that we really knew had a lot of value, he'd bought a new self-propelled combine. I didn't want to go in on it because I was going to retire right away, so he bought it and then I'd just pay him for the combining that he did for my part. We'd been doing that for about three years, I guess, so it was about three years old. The rest of it was old, had some age on it. Then I told Craig, I said, "People are going to drive by here and they're going to look at that machinery lined up there and then they'd say, 'Is that what those guys been farming with?'"

By that time, we'd rented quite a bit of ground and our farm grown to three hundred sixty acres. We had rented enough more 'til we were farming a thousand acres, and that's what we were farming with. I think that's an example of my philosophy out there on the farm: if it still did the job, we used it. So, I had a combine, too; it was several years old. It was a gleaner, model K combine. When he got his combine, I kept it just to combine clover seed with, because it was good to combine clover seed. So he had twenty-five acres of clover that was going to make seed to cut and I said, "Well, that combine's not going to bring much at the sale, I'll just keep it and I'll combine your clover seed." So I did. Well, a neighbor sold a combine at our sale just like the one that I kept and it brought six hundred dollars. So I combine Craig's clover seed, twenty-five acres of it, and I didn't charge him anything for that. Then the neighbor came. I'd done custom combining before; you combine it on the halves and it works out pretty good a lot of times if the crop's good. He came and said, "I've got twenty-five acres in clover seed I'd like for you to cut on the halves." I said okay. So I went over there one day and I cut half of it—I thought I had half of it—in one day. I had a full tank, a sixty bushel tank, and that clover seed was doing real good. I went home that night and told my wife, "You know, I made enough money today combining clover seed to bring as much as I'd a got for that combine if I'd a sold it on the sale." I went back the next day and I thought I had half of it. I guess I just barely did, because I got it all on the tank, but it was piled up just as high as I could get it without losing some of it. So, in two days, I got two big tanks full of clover seed. Then for about five years, that combine stayed around there and I combined quite a bit of clover seed, so I wasn't completely retired until I

finally wore out that combine. The last day I had five acres to cut. The combine wasn't running very good;, the engine was running alright, but the rest of it was about to wear out. I told my wife, "This is the last day, that clover seed I got left isn't too good anyway, if I don't get it all, the rest of its going to stay there." I got it done, but it took me about all day to get through it. I went home and told my wife that was the last day. She was tickled to death, because when I come home from those days combining clover seed, I was pretty dirty and she was tired of washing the clover seed dust out of those work clothes. So that ended that. By then I was about seventy-five and so I was about out of the business.

Oh, yeah, you know, I forgot something else that I think is pretty important. I raised race horses for several years, raised them and raced them. That came about because my father-in-law had a couple of race horses and my wife's brother had race horses, so my kids got interested in race horses. They just liked horses in general, but they also liked race horses. They said, "Dad, why don't we get a mare and raise a colt?" I said, "Well, okay. You kids have got a little money." They'd been in 4-H club and they'd had some steers that sold pretty well. I said, "If you want a mare, you kids buy the mare and I'll feed her and take care of her. We'll raise the colt and then we'll be half owners of the colt." So that's what we did. Her brother was going to a sale down in Kentucky, a big sale, Tattersall's; they have good horses down at that sale. He bought a mare and brought her back; paid a thousand dollars for her. He said, "Now, if the kids want her, they can have her. I don't need her, but if they don't want her I'll keep her." They looked at that mare and they said, "Oh, yeah, we want her." This was in November, I think, and she was going to have a colt the next spring. We did and that put us in the race horse business.

That one didn't turn out to be very good, but the mare we got was really a top-notch mare. We were lucky to get her for the price we did. The second colt we had turned out to be a pretty good one, but poor temperament; she was a good race horse. The third one we got was the one that really put us in the business. As a two-year-old racing at the county fairs, she won her first twelve races that she was in; she was doing real well. The first race was a matinee race, they call it, its just kind of a practice race. So my wife and I went over to Jerseyville and watched her race as a two-year-old. We expected her to win because she'd won the two matinee races and she won both heats over there that day. So the next day we went back to watch the three-year-old race. She had gotten to where she was racing pretty good and she won both of her heats. I could remember my wife, the first one we had didn't turn out any good and the second one didn't do any good as a two year old, didn't do much good and she said on the way home, "You know, I can't believe this. We went over here yesterday and I thought maybe we'd win. We came over here today and I didn't believe we'd win again." I said, "Well, I thought we had a chance, but it's nice to do that." So, it turned out real good and since then we had another real good one.

The kids by that time were up in college. They were needing their money to go to school, they were away from home, and they kind of lost interest in the race horses. So I told them, "Well, if you want to sell me that interest in those race horses…" They were paying the stud fees, they paid for the mare, and I was paying for the feed. We were really just beginning to get something back. I said, "I'll pay you everything you've got invested in them and you'll be out of it. You'll be even with the board and then if I ever sell one real good, I'll split with you three ways." Okay. So I paid them some money and they used it to go to school.

Well, about two years later than that, I guess—something like that—we had this horse that turned out to be real good. He won one race in Springfield. His name was Howitzer and if you can win a race in Springfield, you're doing real good. Then we went on to DuQuoin and the Governor's Cup Race down there; he was second in that race, so he showed a lot of potential. By the time he was a four year old, he'd won quite a bit of money for us.

When you're racing horses, you can put them in conditioned races where there's so much money. Once you've raced them for awhile, you have to put them up in such good company that it's too hard for them to win, so you go to claiming races. And so we had him in claiming races. He was in a $20,000 claiming race. What that means is, when you enter a horse in that $20,000 claiming race, you are willing to take $20,000 for the horse whether he wins, no matter what he does. Whoever claims it has to put in a claim before the race goes off ; the owner gets what the horse makes in that race and then he belongs to the fellow that claimed him. So this is December and he still had a $5,000 allowance because he was a three year old; after the first of January he's going to be a four year old and that $5,000 allowance would come off. So, if somebody claimed you in December, they'd have to pay $25,000 for him. If they claimed him in January, it would only be $20,000. A fellow who was racing in Chicago told me, "Oh, nobody's going to take him now in December. They wait a month; he'll be in for $20,000. I don't think you stand any chance of losing him." So I said, "Okay, go ahead and put him in." So he put him in. He won the race and he got claimed for $25,000. The kids each got a third of that, so they came out pretty good on that deal.

I raised about thirty race horses out there during those years. Finally, when I was sixty years old I got my license to drive in the harness races at the county fairs, because I had an orphan colt and she'd try to kick anybody else off the cart. She was mean, but for me she was fine; so I thought, well, if I'm going to have to train her, I'm going to get my license to drive and I did. So for several years, I drove some of my own horses and that was a lot of fun. Those days ended when I was—I don't know—something over seventy years old; I got out of the race horse business. Anything else that you think of?

Pogue: No, I think we've kind of covered it. You have given us a good history of your life on the farm; you talked about the school consolidation. In addition, you told us how the county fair developed, the hospital locally and the 911 program and some of the other activities you were in, so I appreciate the time you've given us.

Baumberger: I'd like to do one more thing, and I'm going to call this kind of philosophy. This is pretty much what I ended my life history with and some of it I'm just going to read. When I was a teen-ager, the *Greenville Advocate*, at the top of the first page of most issues had a statement, "The Advocate covers the news like the dew does Dixie." Occasionally they replaced that with something more significant and this is one that got my attention. This was after I was out of high school. This was such good advice that I cut it out and pasted it above the mirror of the dresser in my room at my grandparents' house where I was living after the death of my mother. It was still there when I went into the Army at age twenty-two and must have burned up with the house in 1945. This is what it said, "The reward is in righteous living, not for righteous living." I decided that was good advice and I've tried to live by that ever since. There's some people that don't agree with that philosophy. When I was in the Army there was several people I was acquainted with that didn't believe in that philosophy. One of them one time said this to me—I was the company commander—and he said, "Sir, you don't use profanity, do you?" And I said, "No, I don't." He said, "You don't drink alcoholic liquor, do you?" And I said, "No, I don't." And then he said, "You don't run around with wild women, do you?" And I said, "No, I don't" And he said to me, "What in the world enjoyment do you get out of life, anyway?" (laughs) He didn't agree with my philosophy, but that didn't change it any. You know there's this song that ends,"When we leave this world someday, the only thing we will take is what we give away." That means not only money, but community service to make this a better world. I'm leaving my family and to future generations a farm that is better than when I purchased it, and have tried to contribute to society. I've enjoyed financially supporting worthwhile projects and hope I have accumulated enough finances to pay nursing home bills if that should be necessary. What is left after I am gone will go to my family, with a portion of it designated for benevolent causes, with my three children to decide which ones to give it to. In all of my years at WGEL, I ended my farm programs with, "And now from this time until next time, this is Fred Baumberger from WGEL and let's all enjoy this day that God has given us," and I expect to continue to do that until God calls me home. I think that's it.

Pogue: Thank you very much.

Baumberger: Well I appreciated this opportunity.

End of interview (later addition follows)

Later, Mr. Baumberger asked that this statement be added to the record.

"Between February 1946 when I was discharged from the Army, and December 2004 when I had a heart attack, I donated 186 pints of blood to local blood banks."