

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Philip Nelson

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library & Illinois State
Museum's *Oral History of Illinois Agriculture* project
Interview # AIS-V-L-2009-004

Philip Nelson, a central Illinois grain and livestock farmer and President of the Illinois Farm Bureau since 2003, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library & Illinois State Museum's *Oral History of Illinois Agriculture* project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: January 16, 2009 Location: IL Farm Bureau Pres. office, Bloomington, IL

Date: February 13, 2009 Location: IL Farm Bureau Pres. office, Bloomington, IL

Interview Format: Digital video

Interviewer: Mark DePue, ALPL Volunteer

Technical Support: Tony Bateman, Gregg Lipe and Mark Suszko, IL Info Service
Videographers

Transcription by: Tape Transcription Center, Boston, MA

Edited by: Rozanne Flatt, ALPL Volunteer

Total Pages: 72 Total Time: 2hr. 1 min + 1hr. 1min. + 1hr. 3min. = 4hr. 4min
/4.08hrs

Session 1: Fourth generation dairy and grain farming in central Illinois

Session 2: Service as President of the Illinois Farm Bureau

Session 3: IFB President addresses current agricultural issues

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on 08/04/2009.

The interviews are archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in
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Abstract

Philip Nelson, *Oral History of IL Agriculture*, AIS-V-L-2009-004

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Philip Nelson was born on June 12th, 1957 in Lake Charles, Louisiana, and grew up as the fourth generation on the family dairy and grain farm near Seneca, Illinois. Philip became very active in the 4-H and FFA as a youngster, never considering any other profession than farming. After high school, he attended Joliet Junior College, then returned to the farm. Over the next two decades Nelson managed a thriving farm operation while also becoming increasingly involved in farm organizations, often in leadership roles. Over time, the family got out of the dairy business, but continued to finish hogs while also growing corn and soybeans on what grew into a 1,500 acre farm. He discussed the farm crisis of the 1980s and the 1998 collapse of hog prices.

In 2003, after many years of involvement in the Illinois Farm Bureau (IFB), as well as various commodity organizations, Nelson was elected as president of the IFB by the membership, and has since been reelected. As such, he is passionate spokesman for the organization, as well as taking on various roles with the many businesses and corporations affiliated with IFB. These include Prairie Farms Foods, Country Financial, GrowMark and others. The IL Farm Bureau has long promoted the expansion of markets for its members' products while seeking to limit the government's direct involvement in agriculture, preferring the government to act more as a marketing partner than as a regulator of agriculture. In his capacity as president of the IFB, Nelson addressed the IFB's views on many of agriculture's most pressing and controversial issues, including the food vs fuel debate (ethanol production), genetically modified foods, globalization and marketing challenges, and several others.

Subject Headings/Key Words: grain and hog farmer in northern Illinois; Future Farmers of America; 4-H; Illinois Farm Bureau; GrowMark; Country Financial; Prairie Farms Dairy; ethanol production; Genetically Modified Organisms; Mad Cow disease and ability to track livestock; globalization; *Partners* Magazine; RFD Radio; Harold Steele; Orion Samuelson;

Note to the Reader: Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

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