Interview with Leland Sweatman

AIS-V-L-2008-018

January 28, 2008

Interviewer: Mike Maniscalco

Maniscalco: Today is January 28, 2008. We are sitting in the home of Leland Sweatman in Virginia, Illinois, and we are doing an interview with him for the Oral History of Illinois Agriculture Project with the Illinois State Museum. How are you doing today, Leland?

Sweatman: Pretty good, Mike.

Maniscalco: Good, good. Can we start out with your kind of age, date of birth?

Sweatman: Date of birth is September 16, 1927. (phone rings) I was born in rural Virginia, lived here all my life—in the area.

Maniscalco: Okay, so can you kind of tell us kind of a little bit of your family dynamics, the setup of your family? Who's your immediate family here?

Sweatman: I was raised in a family of two children, my sister and myself, and my parents. We lived on a farm west of Virginia, about four miles, and my dad owned the farm. He bought it in 1920, I believe, and he farmed it his whole life. He passed away there at the farm when he was still able to go. I was married to my wife in 1948, and we have five children between us, so…

Maniscalco: Okay. Can you tell us a little bit about your parents' farm? What sorts of things—?

Sweatman: Parents' farm was 120 acres—that's all that my dad farmed for—well, up until about 1960 or so, when he retired. We farmed completely with horses for the beginning of the period that I can remember, and it was 1937 before we got our first tractor.

Maniscalco: Wow. What sorts of things did your father farm? What sorts of things—?

Sweatman: Oh, we had corn—didn't raise soybeans at that time, and this was in the thirties—we had corn, wheat, oats, clover.

Maniscalco: Okay, great. Did you know your grandparents?

Sweatman: I knew my maternal grandparents. They were a great inspiration to me, really, because I spent quite a lot of time with them when I was younger and really loved them both. And my paternal grandparents—my grandfather passed away long before I was born, and my paternal grandmother passed away a year before I was born, so I never knew either one of them. They both came over from Germany in 1846, I believe, and my grandfather actually owned the farm that my dad had, and my dad bought it from his estate.

Maniscalco: Very cool. So now you said your maternal grandparents raised you.

Sweatman: They didn't raise me, no.

Maniscalco: Or they didn't raise you, but you—

Sweatman: I spent a lot of time with them, yes.

Maniscalco: —spent a lot of time with them. Was that because your father was out in the fields?

Sweatman: Yeah, and their home was close to our church, and the folks spent a lot of time at church, at one thing and another, and I'd always stay with my grandparents when they were there. My grandfather was an excellent woodworker; he taught me a lot of points about that.

Maniscalco: Very interesting. What sorts of things did he make, woodworking?

Sweatman: Mostly just ornaments. Yard ornaments and little things. He made a two-wheel cart for my mother. Stuff like that, just small items.

Maniscalco: Very interesting. Now you were mentioning how, you know, you grew up around the church and the community and stuff. Did you have other relatives nearby, growing up?

Sweatman: Yes. In fact, the road that the farm is on right now is called Sweatman Road, so probably five or six Sweatmans lived on that at that time. They were all brothers. My dad's family consisted of thirteen kids. There was five girls and eight boys. And so it was quite a chore to get all the boys settled on a farm in those days, you know, and they practically all did, in that neighborhood. So we had a good representation of the Sweatman family in that area at that time.

Maniscalco: Very cool. So I imagine you probably had some pretty big family gatherings and events like that.

Sweatman: Yeah. The Sweatmans were not a real close family group, but we'd always have a reunion during the summer, and all of them would show up, usually, and had a good time.

Maniscalco: Did you have one particular reunion you remember specifically?

Sweatman: No, I can't say that I do. They were all good, I just can't remember anything specific about one.

Maniscalco: Good, good. So can you kind of tell us a little bit—what kind of child were you back then?

Sweatman: Well, nobody considers themselves a mean child, I don't think, so… I'd like to say I was an average child. I went to a one-room school, country school. It was about a mile and a half from our house. And I didn't walk through snow drifts a mile deep to get there; you know, a lot of people say they do. But we did walk when the weather was good. And my sister is seven years older than I was, so she was almost out of school, in grade school, when I started. There were about sixteen in our one-room school, I think, when I started, and when I graduated in the eighth grade, there was four, so this kind of gives you an indication of what happened to the young people in the community. They just have been going off for a long time. They left the farm. The farm was not a very lucrative business at the time. I was always able to ride with the schoolteacher because she always went right by our house to go to school, so it really wasn't a problem for me, getting to school.

And my sister never actually got to go to high school. It was not a time when all kids had to go to high school, and it was when you finished the eighth grade, you could just do about whatever you wanted to. But I kind of twisted my parents' arms and said, Hey, you know, I'd sure love to go to high school. And my eighth-grade teacher, who was an excellent teacher, kind of come out and parked one day at my parents' house and said, "You've got to let this young man go to high school," and I was very fortunate in the fact they agreed. And even though I rode a bicycle four miles to school about every day, well, I was very pleased to be able to go.

Maniscalco: Very cool. How was it, riding with your teacher to school every day?

Sweatman: Intimidating. (laughs) It was, in most cases, good. I had some excellent teachers in grade school; I really can't complain about any of them. And the last two years, I had an excellent teacher. She continued on with her teaching here in Virginia schools after she quit at the one-room school, and she was an excellent teacher. I won the county spelling contest, I remember, when I was in the eighth grade, mostly because of her. She really helped me.

Maniscalco: Very cool. What did you win?

Sweatman: A dictionary. (laughs)

Maniscalco: (laughs) That's a good prize.

Sweatman: The biggest prize of the deal, I suppose, on that was getting to go to Springfield for the state contest. We got to do it in the House of Representatives State Capitol Building, so that was interesting.

Maniscalco: Cool. How did you do in that?

Sweatman: Terrible.

Maniscalco: Oh. (laughs)

Sweatman: The first word they pronounced, I'd never heard of. (laughs)

Maniscalco: Do you remember the word?

Sweatman: No, I don't.

Maniscalco: That's okay.

Sweatman: I still don't know what it means.

Maniscalco: (laughs) So can you kind of explain to me how your one-room schoolhouse looked. Can you bring us to that, please? What did it look like?

Sweatman: Just one room with a bunch of desks in it, and of course a teacher's desk up in front. And we had blackboards across the front, maps that we could pull down all the way around. Had a big coal furnace in the back, and we had to keep that fired up all the time in the winter to stay warm. And it was a little difficult to do much studying in a room like that because there was always some class that was reciting up in the front. She would call what class she wanted to come up, whether it was eighth grade English or sixth-grade arithmetic, whatever, and they would come up to the front of the room and recite their lessons. And of course, we were sitting there. You know, you wait and you're supposed to be studying, but you're not, you're listening to them. And maybe in some ways, that's good because you get to hear what other kids are learning and kind of pick up on things before you get to it, you know.

Maniscalco: So you said you had to keep the coal furnace stoked in winter?

Sweatman: Yes, yes.

Maniscalco: Did you have any other chores when you were at school?

Sweatman: No, that was about the only chore we had. Teacher would sweep it out every night after school and clean it, and we'd put a bunch of coal in it every night to keep the fire overnight, 'til the next morning.

Maniscalco: How about at your home? I mean, after school, when you got home, did you have chores then?

Sweatman: Yes, unfortunately. We burned wood in our stoves at home, our heating stove and also the kitchen range where my mother cooked. And about, oh, sometime late summer or early fall, my dad and I would go out and saw a tree down, or maybe two, and cut it up into about eight-foot lengths or so and haul them up to the house in our wagon—horse and wagon. And sometime a little later on, we had a neighbor that had what we called a buzz saw, which was mounted on the front of the tractor, and he would come by, and we'd saw the lengths up into chunks about yea long to go in our heating stove. And of course those chunks, some of them had to be split up because the kitchen stove took small pieces. The kitchen range, you had to have real small pieces to put in there. So it was always my job when I come home to school to split enough chunks to put in the range, and then I'd have to carry them in the house. We had a large wood box in the house—and I'd have to see that that was filled every night.

When I was a little older, when I started milking… We had about four cows, and I started helping with the milking then, which wasn't bad. I kind of enjoyed it, especially in the wintertime, when it was cold, you know, and you could get right up next to the cow and lean right up against her and get pretty warm, really, while you were milking.

Maniscalco: Good, good. Was there any chores that you just absolutely hated?

Sweatman: Mm, pumping water was probably the biggest chore I hated. We didn't have any electricity; we didn't have any way of getting any water, only pumping it by hand. And we had, usually, I think, six or seven horses and four milk cows, plus hogs, sheep, chickens. All had to have water every day, and I always had to see that the tank was full when I got home from school at night. And sometimes this took an hour of actually pumping water to get everything watered.

Maniscalco: Wow. What about your friends? I mean, you lived on a farm out in the country. Did you have a lot of friends around, or…?

Sweatman: Oh, I had two close friends, probably, that both lived about a half-mile from where I lived, and we'd get together occasionally. And a lot of cowboys and Indians and all that stuff, you know.

Maniscalco: That's cool. That was the only games you played, were cowboys and Indians, or was there some other stuff?

Sweatman: Oh, we had card games we played and so forth, but in the summertime, it was either baseball or something like that. Played a lot of catch. Loved baseball.

Maniscalco: Really?

Sweatman: Oh yeah.

Maniscalco: What position?

Sweatman: Well, I played shortstop some, and then second base, and done some pitching, too.

Maniscalco: Done some pitching. Cool, very cool. What about, you know, organizations—4-H, stuff like that?

Sweatman: I was in 4-H. Didn't join until I was about ten years old, I think I was, something like that. In fact, you couldn't join until you were ten, then. I was in 4-H (inaudible speech) time, and spent four years in FFA in high school—greatest organization there is, I believe. I learned more in FFA than I learned in practically any part of the school I can think of. (laughs) We had good teachers up until the last year. But anyway, they taught us a lot of how to conduct meetings, and of course the projects we had—I had livestock and hogs and an Anguscow. I don't know, they taught you responsibility, they taught you how to do things, and it was just amazing to me. I still look back on that as… And public speaking. I was doing a section speaking contest when I was a senior that year, and I just think that it was something that primed me for the rest of my life.

Maniscalco: Very cool. What was like your favorite project—the favorite project that you ever got to do there?

Sweatman: I think it was my hogs. I love to raise hogs, and I raised Spotted Poland China purebreds and had pretty good luck with them.

Maniscalco: All right, cool. Did they have names?

Sweatman: No.

Maniscalco: No? You didn't name them?

Sweatman: No.

Maniscalco: Okay. (laughs)

Sweatman: I had some names for them, but they weren't made public. (laughs)

Maniscalco: (laughs) Not nice names? Now, you already mentioned church. What church was it?

Sweatman: We went to a Lutheran church in Bluff Springs, which is about four miles from where we lived. Yeah.

Maniscalco: Do you have any memories from going to church?

Sweatman: Oh yeah, and all good memories.

Maniscalco: Good ones?

Sweatman: Mm-hmm.

Maniscalco: Anything you want to tell us about Sunday School or…?

Sweatman: (laughs) I did teach Sunday School for a while, but that was just—that was gratifying. I taught junior high kids, and a few of them were sharper than I was. Anyway, that was just a tremendous experience. But anyway, I've been on the council there many times and just feel that that's a second home to me. Still is.

Maniscalco: Very cool. Very nice. Now, you kind of grew up through the World War II era…

Sweatman: That's exactly right. All four years in high school were spent during World War II.

Maniscalco: How was that for you?

Sweatman: Pretty trying. We had no gasoline, couldn't go anywhere, everything was rationed. The farmers were in a little better shape than the town people, actually, then, because we had what they called an A card and a B card. The A card got something like seven gallons a week, I think, something like that, and the B cards were you got fifteen gallons a week, but then the farmers had access to as much gasoline as they wanted because they had to grow the crops, you know. So we had some barrels out on the farm that we kept full of gas, and really, we could take a few gallons from that once in a while and put it in the car, you know, if we really needed to go someplace. But I'm sure (Pause in recording) did that, but still in all, it was a trying time.

We had basketball—that was the only sports we had in high school. We stopped football. They stopped football when I was a freshman, and… Just didn't have any way to get kids to other schools to compete. And we did have a baseball team, and I was on that, but we only played about two different schools, I think, and then we had to see our own way to get there and back. And the FFA, again, had many scrap drives, paper drives. I can remember when we had a pile of iron outside of the school that was probably twenty feet high. And of course, then they would come and pick it up and take it and mill it down to use in the war effort. So yeah, it was quite trying. I'm sure we missed out on a lot of parties and such as that that we couldn't have because of the war effort.

I graduated in May of 1945 from high school. I turned eighteen in September. We had to register for the draft at that time, which I did, and December, I was drafted into the Army, so that's how quick they were taking young people at that time. In fact, about three of my classmates had volunteered for the service before we actually graduated from high school and didn't finish school that year.

Maniscalco: Now, you got into the Army. Where did they send you?

Sweatman: I went into the service at Fort Sheridan, up in Chicago. We spent about two weeks up there, doing nothing. And then they shipped us out to the Aberdeen Proving Grounds in Maryland, and I took my basic training there—eight weeks. And of course, the war was over—the shooting war, you know—but there was a lot of occupation troops that had to be sent places. And I was hoping to get to go to Germany, you know. I kind of wanted to go. I always had a desire to go there, I guess; that's where my ancestors are from, from both sides of the family. And the whole company was out there one morning; we had our gear all together and we were ready to go, and they came and picked me and one other fellow out of the company, and they said, "They need some help over at the hospital. You two guys go over and help them over there today." So we went over, and the CO of the hospital interviewed both of us, and he got to me and he said, "You know, we need some X-ray technicians because," he said, "we have civilian X-ray technicians here, and they're going to be leaving pretty quick, so," he said, "we need some GI technicians." So he said, "Would you be willing to go to X-ray school and be an X-ray technician?" I said, "Sure, fine. That beats doing guard duty for two years," you know.

So they sent me right up to the X-ray department then, and I got acquainted with the guys who were there, and they were civilians—one was from Pittsburgh and the other was from New York City, I believe—and they were nice guys. They showed me around, what to do and everything, and the CO of the X-ray department was a nice captain. And I worked there for about two months, I guess, just doing odd jobs—not doing any X-ray works, just watching—and then they sent me to Camp Atterbury in Indiana for four months for X-ray technician school. Well, in four months, you know, you really got to get crammed to learn how to do that. And it was work night and day, you might say. And very interesting. I learned a lot about electricity and of course, a lot about the medical end of it, too. The anatomy of the body—I can probably name every bone in your body right now. But it was very interesting, and we had a good time there while we were there.

I enjoyed it pretty much, except I had a… I was a PFC at that time; I hadn't even made one stripe. And they put me and another guy in charge of the barracks, because the other guys were just privates, practically all of them. And this guy—the other guy they put in with me—was a corporal. But he had been in the 101st Airborne Division—he had jumped over France in D-Day—and he was from New York City, and just a good guy, but he had one problem: he loved to drink. And every night he would go out and help himself and come in about two o'clock in the morning, and then he wanted to sit and talk. And I said, "Well, I've really got to get some sleep so I can go to school tomorrow." But when he was sober, he was a nice guy. But he had a lot of stories to tell.

Maniscalco: I'm sure, I'm sure. Now, during that time, did you go home and visit your family and your farm?

Sweatman: Yes, yes. About every weekend, I was home. Mostly to see my girlfriend, but then to see my wife.

Maniscalco: (laughs) Well, that's good. How were the visits? I mean, how were your parents, seeing your parents and everything?

Sweatman: Well, Dad was having kind of a hard time getting all the farming done by himself, but at that time, my sister had married, and her husband helped him quite a bit to do the farming, too, so they were making it pretty good. But I only came home every other weekend because the transportation between Indianapolis and Springfield is not very good—no trains. They had a bus, but it was like six hours from one down to the other. But I did make it home and enjoyed my visits at home, tried to do whatever I could when I was there.

Maniscalco: Did your mom make you a special meal when you'd get home?

Sweatman: You know, I can't recall that she ever did, but all her food was good. Anything she fixed was good, so I have no complaints whatsoever on that end of it.

Maniscalco: Good, good. Well, let's kind of move into—I mean, we're there now—what about farming, your farming career? When did that start?

Sweatman: Well, how far do you want to go back? Do you want to go back to when I started driving horses and—?

Maniscalco: Yeah, tell me about it.

Sweatman: Okay. I started helping shuck corn—hand-shuck corn—probably was my first experience with the horses, and I would do that on Saturdays when I wasn't in school, when I was about eleven, twelve years old. And Dad would always go out with a team of horses and a wagon, and it would hold about forty bushels, and he would shuck that full in the mornings, and then he would come in and scoop it off at noon, and go back out after dinner and shuck another load, about forty bushels. And many times, he would leave the wagon set in the middle of the corn crib, full, and when I got home from school, he said, "Here's a scoop," and I had to scoop it off, which I guess was good exercise, really. (laughs) A good workout. I'd shuck one row, and he would shuck two, and he always let me have the row next to the wagon so I wouldn't miss the wagon when I threw the corn in. But many times he would kind of miss it a little bit, and he hit me right in the head with an ear of corn. I'll never forget that couple times—wham, you know?

That was the one thing I hated to do, and it was farming. I said, If I have to farm, I certainly won't do it with horses. If I have to farm with horses, no farming for me, because horses and I didn't get along very well. He had me harness some of the horses sometimes when he was busy doing something else and wanted to get going. He said, "You go in and put the harness on a couple of those guys." And we had one horse that was very temperamental. Well, he was not really temperamental, I guess, but he had a mind of his own. And the horses were in a stall about six feet wide, maybe, something like that, and you had to grab the harness and walk aside of the horse and throw it up on top of the horse. Well, this horse finally realized what I was doing, and so he'd just move over to the side of the stall when I'd start to move in. So I'd wait a little while, and he'd move back over, and I'd try to dash in and throw the harness on while he was over, you know. And I usually made it. But then when I'd get in there, he'd move right over against the wall and just pin me right against the wall, against the stall. You know, I'd just have to sit there. I'd beat on him, and he wouldn't move. Finally, he'd decide I'd had enough, I guess, and he'd move over, and I'd be able to finish putting the harness on.

I told my dad about that one day, and he said, "Well," he said, "Now, there's ways of correcting that, you know," so he picked up a little stick of wood, you know, and said, "I'll go with you next time." So the next day, I went out to harness him, and my dad stood back in the corner, kind of, so I grabbed the harness, and he was standing right in the middle of the stall, and I walked in and threw the harness on him—never moved a muscle. Never moved a muscle. So I finished strapping on the harness, you know, and he was just as calm and calm as he could be. And Dad said, "Well," he says, "That horse is smarter than you are." He said, "He knew I was back here in the corner with a stick." (laughs) So you know you have those experiences you don't forget very easily.

And I worked the horses. We got hay, and we used to put hay up loose—I don't know if you're familiar with that or not. But anyway, after we cut the hay and when it was cured, we'd use a rake to go through the field, and it was a buck rake, which was… The teeth would drag the ground, and when you'd get the teeth full, you'd raise it up, and it'd dump, and you'd keep going across the field. Then you'd come around and come back, and you'd try to dump in the same place every time so you'd have a windrow across the field. And I'd done some of that, quite a bit. And then came the hard work, when you had to come out with this rack wagon, and we'd have to pitch the hay up on the wagon. And when we got a load, we'd take it to the house and up to the barn. We had a hayloft which held all the hay, and in this hayloft was a track up on top that had a track up there with a fork on it. And this fork, they could pull down and put it in the hay wagon, and it had a rope on it, which went up and all the way across the barn, down on the other side and out another door, where we had a horse down there that would pull on the rope, and that would pull this forkful of hay up into the barn loft. And whoever was handling the fork had a rope, and whenever it got up to where he thought it ought to be in

the barn, he'd pull the rope, and that would trip the fork, and the hay would fall down.

So I got in on running the horse down there on the rope when I was real young, probably eight years old or so—eight, nine—but then I got a little older and I had to go out and pitch the hay on the wagon, so… It was work either way, and we done a lot of it that way. It was probably early forties before my dad started getting a baler in to bale the hay. And then, of course, we had to buck the bales and get them up in the barn loft, but that was easier than the loose hay.

Maniscalco: Well, cool. Now, when did you kind of come back and take over the farm?

Sweatman: Well, my wife and I were married in 1948, and I had rented a farm for 1949, so we moved… Well, we actually lived in a little house—didn't have electricity from June of '48 'til March of '49. We moved to another house on this farm that I had rented that didn't have electricity either. But anyway, I farmed it for three years, and the landlady died, and the farm changed hands, and we had to move. I rented another farm which was close. Now, this is east of Virginia—I was raised west of Virginia, but this farm was east of Virginia. And I rented another farm close to the same area, about a mile away, and we moved there in 1952. We lived there until we built this house in 1993, so we had quite a long tenure out there. It was a big old house, and had a good landlady. But I started farming, then, in '49 and kept going every year. I took over Dad's farm in 1960, I believe, when he retired.

And I might add while we were on that line—along the electricity line—REA never came around. Well, they started to come around the area before World War II, and a few farms got electricity. My wife's happened to be one of them that did—she was raised with electricity—but where I lived, we didn't have electricity. But right after the war, then, REA started building lines out through the country again. And my father-in-law had wired his own house when he got electricity, and he knew how to do it, more or less, and so when this electricity started coming around the area, there was quite a demand for electricians to wire these old houses, you know, over the countryside. So he said, "If you'll help me," he said, "we'll wire to help some of these people out." So I said, "Yeah, I might as well be doing that." I had a small farm; I rented 120 acres. And I said, "Yeah, I'll be glad to help you." So we started wiring some of the old houses around the farms, and it turned into quite a business. I mean, it was about three years there when we weren't farming, when we were doing nothing but electrical work. I wish I'd have kept track of how many we wired, but I'm sure it's in the forty to fifty range. This was in about a three- or four-year period of time. Well, as I said, this was a supplement to my farming. Otherwise, I probably couldn't have continued to farm because I didn't have enough acres and prices in those days weren't too great. I was thinking the other day, the first crop of corn that I raised in 1949, I got $2.20 a bushel for the corn. And gee, a year or two ago, corn was $2.20.

You can see in a fifty or more year period here that the prices haven't changed. Of course, that's different right now, but… It wasn't a money-making business at the time, I'll say that.

But anyway, going back to the electrical business, my father-in-law decided—I think about 1953 or so—that, Hey, I don't want to do this anymore. He said, "If you want to take over, you can," and I did. But most of the houses had been wired by that time, but I did wire some new houses along the way. And then about 1957, they started putting corn heads on combines. Well, this allowed the farmer to shell his corn right out of the field, you know. But there was a problem when they done that because it had to be dry, and they couldn't put corn in right out of the field into a bin; it would spoil. So they had to dry it somehow. So then farmers started putting up these dryer bins and also buying portable dryers to use to dry the corn. And when that happened, why, there was another call for electricity to wire all those bins up—fans, dryers, so forth—so I started getting into that, and I've done a tremendous amount of that over a period of years. As I said, that was an extra supplement to my farming, which I really appreciated.

Maniscalco: Yeah, so that's kind of interesting. So you were—just to be clear—you were farming and working as an electrician most of the time through the forties and fifties?

Sweatman: Yeah.

Maniscalco: Forty-nine, fifties?

Sweatman: Forty-nine and all the fifties. All the way up to the time I retired, really, I was an electrician. I was like a contractor.

Maniscalco: Now, in '49, when you started farming, were you still using horses then?

Sweatman: No.

Maniscalco: No.

Sweatman: My dad bought his first tractor in 1937. I have a model of it right here. This is a model of the tractor that he bought in 1937. It was a F-20 Farmall. I think it was a '35 model, if I'm not mistaken. A neighboring farmer had passed away, and they'd sold his stuff, and this tractor was on there. He bought a tractor and a plow and a disk on this sale. So, as you can see, it had steel wheels on it, which was fine out in the field, but you tried to go down the road or something like that, you better hang on because you're going to get bounced off the seat. But it was a good tractor, and we used that all through the war. And then this little tractor, we got in 1941. This was a C Allis-Chalmers. That was more or less to do away with horses. After he got this Farmall tractor, he still had to plant corn with horses, and mow the hay, and all that. Well, this kind of solved that problem because this little tractor was very easy to handle,

and we had a two-row cultivator—corn cultivator—for it. So then we kind of done away with the horses in—well, actually, when I started high school, we still had horses, but then he done away with them after a couple years.

Maniscalco: So then when you started into farming—

Sweatman: I had no horses. Never did intend to have any horses.

Maniscalco: (laughs) Not after you got pinned, huh?

Sweatman: No.

Maniscalco: Well, cool. So what kinds of tractors did you have, then, when you started?

Sweatman: Okay, I bought a Massey-Harris in 1948, mostly because, I guess, they were available. You know, after the war, the farmers had made some money during the war—could buy no machinery whatsoever. Well, each machinery dealer had a list about that long of who wanted a new tractor. So the John Deere, International, and Allis-Chalmers dealers were all—you know, when they got a tractor, it was sold before they got it. So you had no way of getting a tractor if you didn't have your name on the list. But Massey-Harris seemed to be able to… They didn't have a list, anyway. And the dealer had this one Massey-Harris '44 in his showroom, and my dad helped me, and I bought it. So that's what I started farming with.

Maniscalco: Do you remember how much it cost you then?

Sweatman: Nineteen hundred dollars.

Maniscalco: Wow, very cool. So that was your first tractor that you started farming with.

Sweatman: Yes, yes.

Maniscalco: Did you have any others after that?

Sweatman: Yes, I traded it in 1953 for an Allis-Chalmers WD45, and I farmed with it, then, up until 1959. I had a D17 Allis-Chalmers, too. In the meantime, I'd also bought into an Allis-Chalmers dealership, so I was an implement dealer interest in one for about five years.

Maniscalco: To get back to your farm a little bit, can you explain kind of the layout? How would it have looked to us?

Sweatman: The first farm I had was all level, black ground. And then the farm that my dad had was a lot of lighter soil and hills, clay ground. So this black ground was something new to me, to be able to farm. The first year I was there, I know I didn't farm it right. I knew I didn't because you can't farm that by plowing in the spring. Of course, you couldn't plant a crop then unless you

plowed the ground—that was just a no-no—a lot different than it is now. But we plowed the ground in the spring, tried to plant corn in it. Had clods, you know, didn't come up very well. So I think the corn that year made fifty-five bushels to the acre, which was not good. The landlady wasn't pleased, either. But after that, we plowed everything in the fall and done a pretty good job then, I think. We had a rotation of two years of corn, one year of beans, and then wheat and clover—until we started putting anhydrous on in 1954, then we dropped the clover.

Maniscalco: Was there one crop—

Crew: Mike, you want to stop? Want to stop for a second and take a drink?

Sweatman: Yeah.

(pause in recording)

Maniscalco: Okay. Now you were kind of telling us about the crops that you planted and stuff on the farms. What was your favorite crop out of all of them? Was there one particular one that you really liked?

Sweatman: Oh, I suppose I like wheat, really. You could plant it and forget about it, more or less, in the fall, you know, and you could plant it when you weren't busy doing too much else, and it would grow all the winter. Spring, it would come out and look great, you know, be real green. And I love to cut wheat with a combine. It was always a good time. You want to hear about the threshing machines?

Maniscalco: Sure.

Sweatman: Okay. I got in on some of that, too. (laughs)

Maniscalco: Okay. Tell me all of it.

Sweatman: My dad started hiring a combining done for his crops in about 1938, so as a farmer on dad's farm, I never got into the threshing. But some neighbors weren't quite as open-minded or something, I guess. They still thought the old binders was a way to harvest wheat, you know, so they continued to cut with the binder and make bundles and stack it—in shocks, I should say—put about a dozen bundles in a shock, and then they'd come along with the threshing machine, maybe around the first part of August, and thresh all this grain for the farmers. One guy had the threshing machine, and the other farmers were the guys that run the rack wagons, would haul the bundles to the threshing machine.

Well, the neighbors done a good job at that, but they found out they needed some pitchers to pitch the bundles onto the wagon. So when I was a sophomore, I think it was, in high school, my buddy and I—his dad was actually one of the farmers that was in the threshing run, and he was going to pitch, and he said, "Hey, why don't you come along and help pitch?" He said, "I need some help. I can't do this all by myself." So I said, "Okay." It was during July, when we weren't too busy on the farm. So we did. He and I pitched. We had four wagons, and four farmers running the wagons, so we would pitch a load on the wagon, and they would take it up to the threshing machine. And while the two were unloading up there, we would be loading the other two out in the field. And it was a job. I mean, you throw bundles on a wagon all day with a pitchfork, you know, you know you've done something, and especially when it was around 100 in the shade.

But the great part of that was every noon we'd have to quit and eat, you know. Well, the neighbor ladies all tried to outdo each other as to how big a spread they could put out for the threshers, you know, and oh, they'd have two or three kinds of meat and all the trimmings to go with it. So we'd all gorge ourselves at noon, you know, and then we'd get out after lunch and oh, we couldn't hardly pitch a bundle up on the wagon, you know. Oh yeah, it'd take us an hour or so to get back where we could do a good job. (laughs) And we always had a water boy that would come around with a horse and a buggy, and he'd have a bunch of jugs in his buggy, and he'd go to the local well and fill all the jugs with cool water, and then he'd come around and bring them out to the field for everybody that was working out there. It was a good time, but it was a hard time. But that was something I enjoyed because otherwise I never would have had a chance to see how the threshing machine works.

Maniscalco: Sounds very hard. Did anybody ever pass out of exhaustion?

Sweatman: Yes, yes, yes. We had a couple guys that got too hot. Some of the older farmers that just couldn't handle that anymore, you know. Of course, I didn't know anybody ever got old in those days, but they did.

Maniscalco: What did they do when somebody got sick out there?

Sweatman: I don't recall exactly, but I know they'd get a damp cloth from the water boy—usually a burlap sack—and just wet it with cool water and put it on their forehead, and they'd usually come out of it. I don't recall anybody having to go to the hospital or anything like that.

Maniscalco: Can you kind of explain to me, you know, the buildings and things that were on your farm?

Sweatman: Well, of course we had a barn—every farmer had a barn. We had a corn crib, a double corn crib. We had a machine shed, we had a woodshed, we had a

smokehouse, we had two chicken houses, an outside toilet—I think that's about it. A brick house.

Maniscalco: What colors were they all?

Sweatman: Red. (laughs)

Maniscalco: Red. Classic farm red.

Sweatman: Farm red.

Maniscalco: Awesome. Good. Let's switch a little bit, and let's talk about markets a little bit. You know, I mean, we've talked a lot about the different crops that you farmed and everything else, but I mean, you have to sell them eventually. How did markets and things work for you?

Sweatman: When we started out, the only thing we done was haul it to the elevator. Most of the time we would store it at the elevator and then sell it sometime during the year. And of course they'd charge you storage on it, as long as you kept it. But that's the way we handled it up until '57, when I said they started shelling the corn with the combines. And my dad was practically one of the first ones to put up a dryer bin on his farm, and it didn't work very well. (laughs) The heaters weren't perfected by any means in those days, and it was either too hot, or it wasn't working, or you know, something. But he managed to get it… I think maybe we had one bin-full at one time that was maybe a little bit out of condition, but otherwise, that was the way to go. Right now, my son is farming the farm, along with quite a bit of other ground—my youngest son—and I think we figured last year we had 32 bins to fill, so it's gotten to be quite a thing to have storage on the farm. That, plus the fact that in this area—it's a little different, maybe, than some others—if you store it on your farm and haul it to the terminal elevator, which in this case is at Beardstown, to the terminal elevators down there, you gain about thirteen cents a bushel just hauling it down there, so that makes it a little more lucrative for storing on the farm.

Maniscalco: Hmm. How much did you store back when you were first starting?

Sweatman: The first bin we put up was 3,300 bushels.

Maniscalco: So you've really increased quite a bit, then.

Sweatman: Yeah, a lot of difference.

Maniscalco: Very cool, very cool. What about prices?

Sweatman: Well, I gave you an example a while ago about corn prices, and it's been the same with all of them, really. Beans—we didn't start raising beans on Dad's farm until 1938 or so, '39.

Maniscalco: So really, the market's basically stayed the same—

Sweatman: I'd say so.

Maniscalco: —while kind of the world around—

Sweatman: Well, you have the spikes once in a while where they go way up, but in most cases, nobody has any to sell that time. (laughs) But basically, they've been pretty much steady. It's certainly not improved very much. Now, of course, the yield has improved. You get into the technology part of it, and it's a tremendous difference. Well, anhydrous ammonia is one of the things that simply made the corn crop. We started putting it on in 1954. And my father-in-law and I bought an applicator together, and instead of a nurse tank—well, we did have a nurse tank, but we had to put it in our truck—we didn't have any on wheels at that time. And we had to go about fifteen miles to get it filled, so we would put a load on in the field, and we'd have to go fifteen miles to get it filled up again, to get another jag. So it was pretty slow going. I mean, you didn't make the big acreage like you do now, and we only took five rows at a time. We side-dressed it all, and we never put any on ahead of the planting or anything—it was all side-dressing. And we done a lot of custom work with that, too, over the years, until the local service companies finally decided, Hey, this is the way things are going. So then they started getting their own applicators and their own nurse tanks and so forth. But anhydrous—when I started farming, if you got eighty bushels to the acre, you had one heck of a good crop. Most of the time, it was around seventy—sixty-five, seventy, seventy-five. Soon as we started putting the anhydrous on, we hit 100 bushels, just like that. Every field would go 100 bushels or better. So it didn't take long for the farmers to pick that up. I think I better quit.

Maniscalco: (laughs) We can take a break for a little—

(pause in recording)

Maniscalco: Okay, Leland, you mentioned something a little earlier that I wanted to ask you about. You said it was actually cheaper for farmers to store their crops on their farm and then drive them to the grain elevators, or…?

Sweatman: The terminal—

Maniscalco: To the terminal, there you go.

Sweatman: —grain elevators, yes.

Maniscalco: What was the price of gas around then?

Sweatman: Well, when I started farming, it was like twenty-five cents a gallon. Of course, we didn't have the storage then, but later on, as we did have storage, then you

go to a diesel truck… Diesel was a lot cheaper. It was less than a dollar a gallon most all the time we were hauling to the terminals.

Maniscalco: Very cool. Now, in your home, did you have gardens or any like personal things?

Sweatman: Yes, yes. My folks always had a big garden. They always had chickens and cows, so we really were self-sufficient as far as having food. Mother always canned everything that was in the garden. And we had no electricity, so we had no freezers. We didn't have any refrigerator either, so our system was we had a round metal container—it was about five feet long, maybe, something like that, it had a door in one side—and we would put our milk and eggs and whatever we wanted to keep cool in that. And we had an old well right outside of our backdoor, you know, at our house, and we had a frame which went over the top, with a winch up here. And this winch had a cable on it, and the cable was on that container, and it would drop down into the well, and that's how we would keep our food cool. The temperature down in the bottom of those wells is, oh, I don't know, approximately fifty degrees, in that area. So most all our neighbors had iceboxes, and the ice man would come around maybe twice a week and leave them twenty-five or fifty pounds of ice. But the folks couldn't really afford that during the Depression, so they rigged this deal up, and it worked fine. Whenever you got ready for a meal, you'd go out and crank this thing up out of the well, and get what you needed, and drop it right back down. And it worked fine for them, what they used it for.

But times were hard. I mean, you didn't have any excess money. (laughs) We even had to take the telephone out because we couldn't afford to pay the bill—and it wasn't very high, but they still couldn't afford to pay it back in the Depression. And we had trouble with other things, too, at that time. You always had bug trouble with your crops, you know, like we do now. And I can remember one time when we had an infestation of chinch bugs. I don't know if you've heard of chinch bugs or not.

Maniscalco: No, I can't say I have.

Sweatman: It's a little black bug. I haven't heard of them for years now, but we had them back in the thirties, especially when we had the bad weather. In 1936, it was so dry, we raised hardly anything. They'd come out of the grass, the side of the roads, and go into the cornfield, and you could drive by a cornfield, and the stalk would be plumb black rather than green like it's supposed to be because it was just covered with these little black chinch bugs. They would just suck all the sap out of the crop, and it would die. I can remember my dad making a trench between the road and the cornfield, and we'd get a barrel of creosote and pour some creosote in that ditch, and that would keep the chinch bugs from going out into the cornfield.

Maniscalco: What other types of things did you or your father do to try to protect from bugs and things?

Sweatman: Well, that was about the only thing I can remember. I don't know if we had corn bores back then or not. If we did, it didn't make any difference because you shucked the corn by hand anyway, and if one corn was down, you just bent over and picked the ear up is all. So that's the only real bad infestation I remember. After I started farming, in about '55 or so, we had a bad infestation of armyworms. They eat a lot of wheat, up in the middle of summer, in June. We actually had to spray with an airplane to control those.

Maniscalco: In more recent times, did you have airplanes come and spray your crops and stuff?

Sweatman: Over the years, we've had to spray for corn bores a time or two, and aphids are a real problem, now, sometimes. We've never sprayed for them, actually, but they are a problem now. They're getting more prevalent all the time.

Maniscalco: Now, I'm sure one of the other real large problems that you've dealt with is probably drought.

Sweatman: Yes.

Maniscalco: Do you remember any real serious droughts?

Sweatman: Well, I said, like back in 1936… I don't really remember a lot about that, but I know it was terrible. The corn only made like fifteen bushels to the acre or something like that. The other time that I remember—and that was right after I started farming—that was in 1954. We had a temperature of about—it got up to 113 degrees about the first week in July—and this was the time when the tassels were just coming out for the corn—and they had a little wind with that heat that just burned those tassels to a crisp. And of course, without any tassels, you don't have any pollination. That's when we were still picking corn in the ear. And I recall that fall, you could go—I had a two-row corn picker on my tractor—you could pick for half a day and never get a wagon-load of corn. And then the quality was terrible, too. It was musty and moldy and all. I think our corn made sixty-eight bushels to the acre that year, which was not too bad, really, for what we had, but I remember the sun coming up in the morning and going down at night, and you'd never see a cloud in the sky, and it done that for two months, I think. So that, I won't ever forget. That was probably my most trying year as a farmer.

Maniscalco: Really. Huh. Now, you said you raised pigs as a kid, for 4-H, and you said there was all sorts of other livestock, self-sufficient. What about on your farm? When you started in 1949, did you have any livestock then?

Sweatman: Yeah. I guess it was bred into us or something, but both of us, we had that very same thing that our folks had, practically. We had a big garden. We'd

always raise chickens. We'd get 300 little chicks in the spring, and of course, half of them would be roosters and half of them would be pullets. And we'd butcher the roosters and eat what we could, and the pullets, we would keep for layers for the next year. And raised hogs—didn't have a large operation by any means, but we'd always butcher a couple in the wintertime. And we had two milk cows. We only had two, we didn't have four. I said, "Two's enough for me to milk." (laughs) But we raised five kids on two milk cows, so I guess that's not too bad. (laughs)

Maniscalco: Whose responsibility was it to take care of those things?

Sweatman: Well, I took care of all the animals. Dennis, my son, he liked hogs real well, and when he got big enough, he helped a lot with the hogs, but I could never get him to milk. I ended up doing all the milking.

Maniscalco: And now, what did your wife do on the farm? What was her—?

Sweatman: She raised kids.

Maniscalco: She raised the kids. (laughs)

Sweatman: (laughs) Yes. Actually, she was a very excellent housekeeper, and an excellent cook, and she was wonderful with the kids. And she did help me in the field a few times, later on, after the kids were partially grown. She ran the tractor for several years, to help me out.

Maniscalco: Cool. What was your favorite meal she'd cook for you after you'd come in out of the fields?

Sweatman: She'd want me to say fried chicken, but I wouldn't say that. I love steak. (laughs)

Maniscalco: All right. Let's see. Now, when you had your farm in the 1940s era, did you have any hired hands or seasonal workers that would come and help out?

Sweatman: No. No. Periodically, I'd hire somebody if we were going to do a big job or something, I would hire somebody to help a while. But I didn't have a big enough farm to warrant a hired man for that purpose. I did hire people to help me with electrical work, but not on the farm.

Maniscalco: What sort of wages would you pay if you did hire somebody for like a big job or something?

Sweatman: Oh... I started out working for a dollar an hour. It probably would have gotten up to maybe five, six dollars an hour by the time I was—in the seventies. My son-in-law actually came to help me farm in the seventies, and we rented some more ground, so I didn't have to pay wages. I'd just give him one of the farms to farm, and he did that, and so he took the income off that for helping.

Maniscalco: Interesting. Let's talk a little bit about finances and keeping the farm running. Everybody knows that money kind of keeps things rolling along. So what were your experiences—

Sweatman: Always a problem. Always a problem. We had no cash to start out with at all, hardly. I'd just come out of the service and had no money, only what I had made as an X-ray technician, which wasn't much. That was only $2.50 an hour at that time for that job. But we were able to borrow enough money from the bank to buy what machinery we needed. I even tried to buy a farm or two in the fifties. Couldn't get the money from the bank for that purpose because I didn't have enough collateral. But actually, I tried to pay everything off, as near as I could, in three years, which we accomplished, I think, every time. When I bought a new tractor, we'd have to finance that for three years, and I was always able to make the payments on it; I never had to back down. I know my dad had problems with his farm when he bought it because of the poor prices on the farms then. He bought, like I said, bought the farm, I think in 1920. It was 1947 before he was able to get it paid off. We never had that kind of problem with finances. When we first started buying land—the first farm I bought was eighty acres, and I think we paid four hundred dollars an acre for it, but as yields went up, prices went up, then, and we paid it off in two years. You've got to have money to make money. I mean, you've got to have collateral to borrow the money to continue to improve your (inaudible speech). And then we were able to do that. And as it turned out, there were about three neighbors that quit farming intermittently along in late seventies and eighties, and as finances be, we were able to buy each one of those farms, so the Lord has been good to me on that respect.

Maniscalco: So by the end of it, how big of a farm were you farming, then?

Sweatman: When I quit, we were farming 600 acres, which wasn't a big farm by any means.

Maniscalco: Now, you just mentioned the eighties and the late seventies and how it was difficult and a lot of your neighbors, you know, gave up—

Sweatman: Well, they didn't give up, they retired.

Maniscalco: Or they retired.

Sweatman: They were older farmers. Yes, they retired.

Maniscalco: How about those times for you?

Sweatman: Well, we had to not buy any new tractors or cars or nothing for a while, but we always made our land payments, and it really wasn't that bad. I have no regrets, and I am now on 540 acres debt-free, so it's been good to us. My dad was always fussing every time I'd buy a farm—when he was still living—"Oh, you'll never get that paid for; you'll never get that paid for," you know?

But he lived through the Depression and he knew what he did with his farm. But times are different, and we're different.

Maniscalco: You know, the federal government's really come in and taken a lot of different steps in working with farmers—and not working with farmers in some cases. What has been your experience with some of the different federal acts that have been passed?

Sweatman: Oh, we hated some of the farm bills they had back in the sixties because they required us to leave land—lay out, you know. You could only plant so many acres of corn and so many acres of wheat, and that, we didn't like. We agreed with it—I mean, we had to do it—but we certainly didn't approve of it. I guess if I were to look back on that, I would say it was maybe a learning experience not only for the farmers but for some of the politicians, I would hope, that could look back and see where that wasn't really the thing to do. The programs they have now are a lot more flexible and much more easier to handle, to get along with.

Maniscalco: Do you remember instances of—you know, after things, just like where they required you to leave your land unused—do you remember instances when farmers would get together and talk about this or, you know, complain about it, or…?

Sweatman: No, I don't think we ever had an organized… Of course, we were all members of the—most the farmers are—members of the Farm Bureau, and the Farm Bureau had meetings along those lines, and you could come and voice your opinion to the leaders of the Farm Bureau, and of course, they took it to Washington and then would lay it onto our representatives. But as some kind of a rebellious group, no. Nothing like that. My dad tells me this story… And going back a little further, when Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected president back in 1932—and he was of course the one who started the farm programs, really. And when they first came out with the Farm Program, it was in the early thirties, maybe '34 or somewhere along there, they called a meeting of all the farmers in the county to come to the courthouse up here in Virginia to talk about the new Farm Program. Well, the way it was to be done was to leave some land lay out, like I said we did in the sixties, which was actually the same Farm Bill, just a continuation of it. Anyway, this was when they were first implementing it, and my dad said he went to the meeting, and there was quite a few there. And when they had finished explaining how the bill would work, he said there was a calm over the farmers, kind of, and one farmer got up and he said, "Well," he said, "I can tell you what this room is thinking: How can I screw the government out of some money?" (laughs)

Maniscalco: That is pretty cool. That's a good one. How do you feel about the Farm Bureau? I mean…

Sweatman: Well, what can I say? We're going to have it; we have to put up with it. I'm satisfied with it now. The new one that they're coming up with, I'm not sure how it's going to work out. The biggest hassle seems to be the limitations on how much a foreign farmer can get per farm. I don't think that's really a good criteria to use because if you set a limit of 200,000 or 250,000, whatever they want to do, the farmer just brings in the rest of his family and, My wife gets this, and my son gets that, and this son gets that. They can each one get that amount of money, and that's happened all over the area right now. So unless they put some real teeth into it to make that stick, it's not going to amount to nothing. But the Farm Bill as it's written, as long as allowing us to raise what we want to, it's working great as far as I'm concerned, right now.

Maniscalco: Just to get back a little bit to farming and stuff, and contemporary farming… Now, you've driven tractors with GPS and things like that that I've heard…?

Sweatman: I probably stretched that a little bit. I have not driven one. I have been in one. My son-in-law has one that's that way. My son doesn't, but he's waiting on the price to come down on the GPS system a little bit (laughs) to invest. But my son-in-law does have one, and I've ridden with him. I have not driven it, but I have ridden with him.

Maniscalco: It seems like they've really changed farming into a science, you know, almost a real scientific, very precise occupation. How do you feel about these changes that have occurred?

Sweatman: It takes all the fun out of it. It's going to be robotic farming pretty soon. The paces we're going, it's not going to be long before you can sit in the house at a computer, and your tractor will be out in the field, doing the work. You won't be anywhere around. That's coming, I don't have any doubt about it, but like I say, that takes all the fun out of it. I enjoyed being out and driving a tractor all day. That's a farm life. That's why we farmed.

Maniscalco: What is your like premier moment or most enjoyable memory of farming?

Sweatman: You should have given me some time to think on that one.

Maniscalco: (laughs) It's a big question.

Sweatman: I guess being able to have enough ground to really feel like I was a viable farmer. That was my problem to start with. I didn't have enough ground, couldn't buy any ground, and only could rent ground. I rented a couple little farms besides. But when I was able to buy a larger farm, and then in the early eighties, I think that was most gratifying, and being able to send my children to college. I think those two moments, I'd say, were the most gratifying part of what I've done.

Maniscalco: Now, you've mentioned a few times that your son-in-law is still a farmer.

Sweatman: Yes.

Maniscalco: Now, did you pass the farm on through to them, or how…?

Sweatman: No, no. He helped me in the early seventies. When I had rented more ground, he came. He had been through a junior college as a mechanic, and he was working for a local implement company here in town, and I said, "Well, if you'd like to farm"—he wanted to farm. He wanted to get out on a farm; he was raised on a farm. I said, "If you would like to come and help me for a few years"—otherwise I would have had to have hired a man, probably, because we were getting up there in acres—I said, "If you want to help me for a few years, then that's fine." And he did. He came and helped me for about six years, and then my youngest son was getting out of high school and wanted to farm, so my son-in-law then rented another big farm, so he went there, and my younger son has taken over the farming operation that we had.

Maniscalco: Great. So he's still farming the same things—

Sweatman: Yes, yes.

Maniscalco: —you farmed—

Sweatman: Plus a lot more.

Maniscalco: Plus a lot more? What's new that he's doing?

Sweatman: Pardon me?

Maniscalco: What's new that he has done?

Sweatman: New that he has done?

Maniscalco: Yeah.

Sweatman: Well, I suppose the machinery end of it. I mean, he's went into a lot of cash rent, which is very prevalent around here now. I never cash rented any farm in my life. I think the old people always said, You never want to cash rent a farm; you'll go broke every time. But it's paying off now. Some of the cash rents are getting pretty high. But he's up, I don't know, 2,200, 2,300 acres, something like that, and the cash rent's a pretty good item. But the last few years, when your corn makes 200 bushels to the acre and you're getting four dollars to the bushel for it, how could you lose money?

Maniscalco: Good point. So do you go out to the farm, then—

Sweatman: Oh yeah.

Maniscalco: —and reminisce, walk around?

Sweatman: Oh yeah. I still help a little bit. I'll run the auger, you know, in harvest or something, like I'll watch the auger for him, and I have run the grain cart a few days, too.

Maniscalco: Is it fun—

Sweatman: Yeah.

Maniscalco: —to get back into it?

Sweatman: It scares me.

Maniscalco: Does it?

Sweatman: Yeah. To run a grain cart, it does. I'm not too sure of myself anymore, as far as depth control and one thing and another. And then these four-wheel tractors, they're completely run different and they drive different than the old two-wheel tractors. You turn one one way and it jerks you that way, and then they just—it turns the wagon the wrong way for me every time. (laughs)

Maniscalco: That's cool. If you could think back again to some of your neighbors. Do you remember any real interesting stories about your neighbors, or did you have any real great neighbors or bad neighbors?

Sweatman: Oh, I had good neighbors everywhere. Farm neighbors are all great. We done things together, and I remember when I first started farming up there, there was a group of farmers that would spread lime on their farms every year—the ground that they were going to put in wheat, they would spread lime on it. And each one of them had a truck, and each one of them had a hired man, too, but unfortunately I didn't have a hired man nor a truck. But when they'd go to Florence or somewhere down south and get a load of lime and bring it up, and then when they got to the field, their hired man and myself would get in the back of the truck, and we had a little spreader that we tied on the back of the truck, and they would pull that around the field with their truck, and we would scoop lime into it so it'd spread all over the field. So we had some good times doing that.

Maniscalco: Did you have one neighbor particularly that you have real fond memories of and really enjoyed—

Sweatman: Well, we had a family that was—well, actually, it was a gentleman, and he had two sons that were farmers, also, and all three of them—we'd work together, we'd visit together, we went to ball games together, and things like that. We never helped each other too much doing farming, unless one of us got stuck in the mud, then the other one would go and pull them out, but other than that we didn't really do much inter-farming.

Maniscalco: Very interesting. Now, I know you have a huge hobby. Can you tell us a little bit about your hobby?

Sweatman: I presume you're talking about collecting toys.

Maniscalco: Yes.

Sweatman: Oh. Oh, I started in approximately 1980, I think, in that area. My sons both had toys to play with, and then I did too, when I was younger, and I had some of those left, and they had theirs left, and so I was talking to a nephew of mine that runs an implement company, and he was telling me, "Hey, you know, some of these old toys are getting pretty valuable." So I got to checking around, and yeah, they were. And he said, "I'm going to a toy show next week," he said, "you want to go along?" I said, "Sure, I'll go along." And so we went, and that's when I got hooked. (laughs)

Maniscalco: (laughs) You got hooked?

Sweatman: I got hooked.

Maniscalco: Well, maybe—

(End of file; end of interview)