

Interviewer:

Now, we're recording. Thank you so much for agreeing to take part in this project. This is called Earth's Bounty in Iowa, and we are trying to capture some of the memories and things about the lifestyle and farming. Would you please state your name?

Daryl Lawson:

Daryl Lawson.

Interviewer:

And, Daryl, where do you currently live?

Daryl Lawson:

At the Iowa Veteran's Home.

Interviewer:

And your year of birth?

Daryl Lawson:

January 2nd, 1948.

Interviewer:

Okay. Thank you very much for participating. Where did you live on a farm?

Daryl Lawson:

I grew up in Le Grand, Iowa.

Interviewer:

In Le Grande?

Daryl Lawson:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Daryl Lawson:

I started kindergarten there and graduated there, LDF when I graduated. We lived on two and a half acres, and I worked for all the farmers in the community in high school.

Interviewer:

Okay. What did you do for them?

Daryl Lawson:

Well, mostly, I took care of the livestock. I did some field work in the spring and in the fall. We was busy in the field work, but most of the time I took care of the livestock. I was in voc-ag in high school and FFA in high school.

Interviewer:

And you lived on a farm yourself?

Daryl Lawson:

Well, we was on two and a half acres.

Interviewer:

Okay. Okay. So did you have any kind of crops or you raised food or-

Daryl Lawson:

Well, for FFA, I had... My freshman year I had two sows and raised baby pigs out of them and raised them to market. As a senior, I had 10 sows of my own.

Interviewer:

Did you win awards for that, or did you show them or anything?

Daryl Lawson:

After my freshman year, I took them to the fair, but that was the only year I went to the fair, was after my freshman year.

Interviewer:

Okay. It's pretty exciting to go to the state fair.

Daryl Lawson:

Yeah. Went there one year.

Interviewer:

Okay. And did you have chores and things you needed to do around the farm you were living on?

Daryl Lawson:

I took care of my pigs.

Interviewer:

Okay. Okay. Did you have a barn, or what was the-

Daryl Lawson:

I had a barn. It was a two-story barn. It had a downstairs and an upstairs. Upstairs, even before high school, I raised chickens. I'd hatch the eggs under the hens.

Interviewer:

Wow. How many chickens did you have at one time?

Daryl Lawson:

Oh, I probably had a couple hundred.

Interviewer:

Really? At one time?

Daryl Lawson:

I probably had 10 or 12 hens sitting on eggs all the time, all summer.

Interviewer:

And so you were hatching out baby chicks all summer long?

Daryl Lawson:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

Wow.

Daryl Lawson:

And I'd raise them, and then I'd butcher them and sell them to people in the community.

Interviewer:

Wow. Did you do all that yourself by hand?

Daryl Lawson:

Yeah, butchered them. I got 25 cents for butchering them and a dollar for the chicken.

Interviewer:

Cool. That's a lot of work for...

Daryl Lawson:

So a dollar and a quarter. I hatched the chick out from under the hen.

Interviewer:

Wow. That's amazing.

Daryl Lawson:

I didn't buy baby chicks. I hatched them out of the hen.

Interviewer:

Wow. That's amazing.

Daryl Lawson:

It would take three weeks to hatch an egg, so I usually had two batches of eggs, and then I put a new hen in to set for... They'd usually go in six weeks, and then I'd put in a new hen.

Interviewer:

So you had nesting boxes or something?

Daryl Lawson:

Yeah. You'd turn them out twice a day to eat and run around the dirt and whatever they wanted to do.

Interviewer:

Eat bugs, yeah.

Daryl Lawson:

I had a special pen in the upstairs of the barn for just my laying chickens.

Interviewer:

Nice.

Daryl Lawson:

I'd get eggs every day. I'd sell eggs. I started doing that probably when I was eight or nine years old.

Interviewer:

Really? Wow. You lived in Le Grand, and so you sold to other people in your town?

Daryl Lawson:

Yeah, farmers and people in town and whatever. And Dillon. We was close to Dillon too.

Interviewer:

That's very industrious for eight years old.

Daryl Lawson:

Yeah. At about eight years old, I started raising chickens and hatched the baby chick... Didn't buy baby chicks. I hatched them.

Interviewer:

That's pretty impressive. We bought baby chickens. We'd buy 200 of them every spring. And then they take quite a bit of care when they're tiny.

Daryl Lawson:

And the way I started doing that was I worked for a farmer and I told him I didn't want money. I wanted chickens. So he gave me-

Interviewer:

So you got your stock?

Daryl Lawson:

I started out with 20 hens and two roosters. That's how I started.

Interviewer:

Wow. What did you do for that farmer in the way of work?

Daryl Lawson:

Well, he was milking cows at the time, and I helped take care of the baby calves and stuff that he got from the milk cows.

Interviewer:

Wow. So were you doing that twice a day every day because the.

Daryl Lawson:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

Yeah. Okay.

Daryl Lawson:

I'd go there in the mornings before school then in the afternoon after school.

Interviewer:

Wow. That's a lot.

Daryl Lawson:

And I said, "I don't want money. I want..." He had chickens running around. He would just give me whatever it's worth to you. So he gave me 20 hens and two roosters, took me home, and showed me what I had to do to... "Now, you're going to have to work to buy feed to feed your chickens."

Interviewer:

Wow. That's very cool, though. What did you do for work then? You said you helped in the spring and the fall, but what specifically did you do for those farmers?

Daryl Lawson:

Well, a lot of times we'd bail hay in the summer. I'd even mow hay and rake the hay, and then I worked in the barn, stocking the hay in the barn.

Interviewer:

Okay. That's hard work. And it's usually hot when you're doing it.

Daryl Lawson:

And I told him, "I don't want money. Just give me some chickens."

Interviewer:

That's wonderful. So you raised the chickens and you worked for a dairy farmer and you worked making hay.

Daryl Lawson:

And I worked-

Interviewer:

Did you help with harvest at all?

Daryl Lawson:

Yeah. I'd usually run the corn dryer, the shelled corn dryer that dried the shelled corn. It was a batch dryer, like 375 bushel dryer.

Interviewer:

Wow. So the corn is shelled.

Daryl Lawson:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

And how did it get shelled?

Daryl Lawson:

It was in a combine.

Interviewer:

Okay. So it came out of the combine shelled?

Daryl Lawson:

When I first started, the guy had a picker sheller, and then he bought a combine after a couple years.

Interviewer:

Okay. And then this-

Daryl Lawson:

Then I'd run the dryer.

Interviewer:

And what was the dryer like? Is it a big bin, or what does that look like?

Daryl Lawson:

Oh, it was just a batch dryer. You could move it around. It had holes in it, had slots in it so the air would go through. It was run on LP gas.

Interviewer:

Okay. I don't know that I've ever seen one of those.

Daryl Lawson:

Well, they probably don't even have them anymore there.

Interviewer:

Oh, and that's why we're doing this.

Daryl Lawson:

I think it was a 375 bushel, and it would take about three hours to dry the corn. Then you'd put it in a three-ton truck and then drive the truck to the...

Interviewer:

To the elevator?

Daryl Lawson:

They had a steel bin on the farm.

Interviewer:

Okay. Okay. Then it went into the bin?

Daryl Lawson:

Sometimes I put it on the bin at that farm, or he had another farm I'd take it to. His wife would always say she's glad the police don't come around because you couldn't even see me driving the truck.

Interviewer:

Oh, my. How old were you when you were doing that?

Daryl Lawson:

Probably 10.

Interviewer:

Oh, my. Wow. Well, kids really did work hard. Did you have other siblings in your family?

Daryl Lawson:

Yeah, there were seven of us altogether.

Interviewer:

Wow. Were they involved in farming like you?

Daryl Lawson:

No, I was the only one that worked for a farmer.

Interviewer:

Okay. Wow. And so that was through, well, your whole childhood practically?

Daryl Lawson:

Yeah. Even before high school, I started doing that. That's when I did my chickens, in grade school and stuff. That's when I started. Then when I got to high school, I started raising pigs.

Interviewer:

Okay. What did you do after high school?

Daryl Lawson:

After high school, I went into the army because back then you... I didn't feel like I wanted to go to college, so I just went into the army to get it over with. I was in Vietnam, went to Vietnam, and I got hurt real bad in Vietnam. I was home on hospital leave from the hospital, and one of the farmers that I worked for when I was in high school came up to me and said, "I got something to show you." So I went with him. He'd bought a farm south of Grinnell, and I rented the farm from him.

Interviewer:

Okay. So you got back into farming?

Daryl Lawson:

It was a 200-acre farm, and we raised pigs. I farrowed 25 sows, had 125 sows, farrowed 25 sows every five weeks, and then we'd sell the baby at eight weeks old, 40 pounds. We'd sell the baby pigs to farmers in the community.

Interviewer:

Okay. So you were kind of a pig nursery?

Daryl Lawson:

Yeah. Yeah, basically.

Interviewer:

Wow. And how long did you do that?

Daryl Lawson:

Well, I did that till 1974. I had an operation on my stomach from being burnt in Vietnam. He said I'd get an ulcer real bad, and in '74 they said I was bleeding to death.

Interviewer:

Oh, I'm sorry.

Daryl Lawson:

I had an operation, and I couldn't...

Interviewer:

Couldn't farm after that?

Daryl Lawson:

Couldn't farm anymore. I had a hard time before that even because I was having trouble with my stomach. But after my operation, I couldn't farm anymore.

Interviewer:

Okay. So when you were in Grinnell, did you live on the farm there, or did you-

Daryl Lawson:

Yeah. It was south of Interstate 80 on 146.

Interviewer:

Okay. Did you raise any food for yourself when you were living there?

Daryl Lawson:

Well, I raised crops. I had 200 acres. I had some pasture land, had stock cows, and raised corn and soybeans and oats.

Interviewer:

Wow. Okay.

Daryl Lawson:

For the pigs.

Interviewer:

Okay. So you were doing more than just all those tons of baby pigs.

Daryl Lawson:

Right.

Interviewer:

I've always thought there's nothing cuter than a little pig. They're just charming. So you raised them until they were 40 pounds and you grew all the feed to feed them?

Daryl Lawson:

Yeah. Right.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Daryl Lawson:

Had five pens of sows, 25 in each pen, and farrowed 25 sows every five weeks.

Interviewer:

Wow.

Daryl Lawson:

So I sold between 200 and 250 baby pigs every five weeks.

Interviewer:

What'd you get for a baby pig in those days?

Daryl Lawson:

\$40.

Interviewer:

\$40. Yeah, you said that, sorry. So-

Speaker 3:

John Henderson, please return to your unit. John Henderson, please return to your unit. Thank you.

Interviewer:

Sorry about that. Back here.

Daryl Lawson:

And went ahead and-