

Interviewer:

Okay. Thank you for meeting with me today. I want to start by having you say your name, where you live, your birth year, and if you lived anywhere else during your life.

Anne Darby:

Okay. My name is Anne Darby, and I was born in 1954 in Waterloo. I grew up in Butler County, in Aplington. I live now in Boone County, and I spent a year in Finland as an exchange student. So that was the big move.

Interviewer:

But you were born and grew up in a farming environment?

Anne Darby:

Yes, I did.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Anne Darby:

Yes.

Interviewer:

All right. Let's go into the questions. How did your family come to live on a farm in Iowa?

Anne Darby:

My father grew up on the farm that he then later farmed, so it's a family farm.

Interviewer:

Oh, how far back does it go? Do you know?

Anne Darby:

I should have checked that. My ancestors came from Germany in the 1870s.

Interviewer:

Oh.

Anne Darby:

So the farm was purchased, I think in the 1880s by the Lindemans, and then stayed in the family.

Interviewer:

Okay. So pretty soon after that immigration?

Anne Darby:

Right.

Interviewer:

What is your favorite story about growing up on a farm?

Anne Darby:

I have a passion, a love for horses, and we had cattle and hogs, and my dad had started farming with horses way back, but we had no horses, but I had begged my dad for a horse for several years, probably. So when I turned 12, one evening, he said, "Let's go for a ride." And I had four siblings, and it was just me invited along for the ride, and I thought, "This is really strange."

Interviewer:

Suspicious.

Anne Darby:

Yes, very suspicious. So we drove probably only about 15 or 20 minutes to this farm, and they got this horse out, and I got to ride the horse, and they had a big old western saddle on it. I got on, walked, trotted, cantered, had a great time, and the adults were all a little bit amazed because I was so comfortable. Anyway, we bought the horse.

Interviewer:

Oh.

Anne Darby:

So that's my favorite story of growing up on the farm,-

Interviewer:

Awesome.

Anne Darby:

... getting a horse of my own. Two days after we got the horse, she had a foal. So I walked clear out to the far pasture across a little creek, and here was a little baby foal in the grass next to the mare, and I just haltered her and let her all the way home, and she was so nice. So I got to train that little foal. So that's definitely the highlight for me of growing up on the farm, having-

Interviewer:

That's adorable.

Anne Darby:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

Yeah.

Anne Darby:

The way I got the horse and then growing the rest of my growing up years at the farm, having that horse.

Interviewer:

So did you end up keeping the foal-

Anne Darby:

Yes.

Interviewer:

... along with it? Wow.

Anne Darby:

Yeah, for-

Interviewer:

That's every rural girl's dream, I think. You get a horse, and then two days later,-

Anne Darby:

I have a foal.

Interviewer:

... you get another horse.

Anne Darby:

Oh my goodness. It was wonderful. Wonderful. Now I still... We raise and train horses and teach riding lessons. So that gift from my dad and mom back when I was 12 years old, now I feel like I give over and over and over again. We have 60 students a week coming now to learn to ride.

Interviewer:

That's amazing.

Anne Darby:

So all those little kids who get to come ride now are a result of that little farm story.

Interviewer:

Oh, you can tell me more about that in a second. But before you had the horse, do you do your own research on riding,-

Anne Darby:

Oh, yes.

Interviewer:

... care, and stuff?

Anne Darby:

Yes. The reason I got the horse, the reason my dad agreed to it was I always helped with outdoor chores. My older sister was the indoor person, and I was... Even though I had two older brothers, they were enough older, they were gone by the time I was older enough to really help. So they got me this little calf, and I took care of the little calf until I got the horse. Then the calf was out of the picture.

Interviewer:

Trading calf.

Anne Darby:

Yeah. My dad saw that I could be really responsible, and I think that's what made him make the decision to get me the horse.

Interviewer:

I think that's a really good test.

Anne Darby:

It was.

Interviewer:

If he got you a dog, that probably wouldn't have been the same thing.

Anne Darby:

Right. You had to go out to the barn. You had to get dirty. You had to be done in the cold and the wet, as well as the warm, nice weather. I did all of that, and the little calf was trained to lead and all the things that you would do with a horse. I groomed it daily and worked with it. That's crazy. But it was fun.

Interviewer:

I bet it was. But tell me more about these riding lessons for a little while and how you came to do that between growing up there and doing that.

Anne Darby:

It's a direct result probably of getting my own horse. Then my dad had actually served for a brief time. He was in World War II for six years. A long time.

Interviewer:

Oh, wow.

Anne Darby:

For about six months of that, he was in the United States cavalry. So he had grown up with work horses, but he learned to ride very well. So that probably was a part of it. And then I grew up as a Christian, and so my faith was very important to me. So my dream as a 12-year-old girl was to use horses to tell people about Jesus. So that's what we do now. We give all these riding lessons, but we always end with a verse from the Bible and relate it to the horses or to what we've just been working on and relate it to the child's life, to what goes on in life in general.

Interviewer:

Sure.

Anne Darby:

So very much from my parents, from growing up on a farm, the hard work, the animals, faith, all those things.

Interviewer:

That's incredible. It seems really personal to you,-

Anne Darby:

Yes.

Interviewer:

... and that you're still doing it.

Anne Darby:

Yes.

Interviewer:

It's amazing.

Anne Darby:

Yeah. I wish my parents could have lived to see it. They died over 30 years ago, so I really hadn't started all of this lesson business or anything that they ever saw.

Interviewer:

I bet they would've loved it.

Anne Darby:

Yes, I think so.

Interviewer:

But onto the next, what kind of crops did your family grow, if any?

Anne Darby:

We were just basic corn and alfalfa. My dad, for some reason, never raised soybeans. I don't know. He never got into that.

Interviewer:

That's the other big Iowa crop.

Anne Darby:

Right.

Interviewer:

That's surprising.

Anne Darby:

Yeah. I don't know. I don't know what it was, but it was corn, oats, and alfalfa. I don't think we even raised grass hay. I think it was alfalfa because hay baling was a big deal.

Interviewer:

Oh, yeah.

Anne Darby:

Big, big deal. Lots of hay,-

Interviewer:

Loose logs.

Anne Darby:

... cattle, and hogs.

Interviewer:

Lots of manually providing these materials.

Anne Darby:

Yes. So I drove the tractor for the baler, and then when we put it up in the hay mow, I drove the tractor that pulled the cable that pulled the hay up into the hay loft.

Interviewer:

I see.

Anne Darby:

So you dare not run over the cable because that jerks, and then the bales fall and you get in trouble, and then there's...

Interviewer:

It's the whole mess.

Anne Darby:

Yes.

Interviewer:

How old were you when you started driving the tractor?

Anne Darby:

Let's see, I'm six years younger than my brother. I probably was only about 10 or 11 when I started doing that.

Interviewer:

You could handle it enough, though?

Anne Darby:

It was a big old John Deere, no power steering or anything. I remember feeling like I was being jerked by the wheel instead of the other way around.

Interviewer:

So your arms had to reach all the way to the edge of the wheel.

Anne Darby:

That's right. It was a challenge, for sure.

Interviewer:

Besides crops, besides horses, did you raise any other animals?

Anne Darby:

Just hogs and cattle. We never... Those are the only two.

Interviewer:

No goats?

Anne Darby:

No goats, sheep, or anything.

Interviewer:

I haven't interviewed any sheep people yet.

Anne Darby:

Oh.

Interviewer:

I guess it's just not as common in Iowa.

Anne Darby:

My uncle raised sheep just down the road from us,-

Interviewer:

Oh.

Anne Darby:

... but we never had any, and my grandpa had had sheep, but I guess my dad wasn't interested in sheep.

Interviewer:

But your uncle, he had his own separate farm and land?

Anne Darby:

Yes.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Anne Darby:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

Who did what kind of work on the farm? You had four siblings, and I'm guessing some relatives and neighbors.

Anne Darby:

The chores were done when I was younger. My dad and two brothers did all the feeding of the animals, the field work, and everything. When they went off to college, I started doing a lot of the feeding and that kind of thing that I could.

Interviewer:

Yeah.

Anne Darby:

It was still... But I do remember throwing hay down from the hay mow and falling through the chute at one time. I'm pretty sure I cracked my tailbone.

Interviewer:

Oh, no.

Anne Darby:

Things like that. I totally enjoyed it. So it wasn't a problem. Then my dad cut back on livestock, I think, and got modern conveniences. There was more machinery, came over later. So chores got easier.

Interviewer:

Did he had his own combine at one point?

Anne Darby:

By the time I was in high school, I think we did.

Interviewer:

But there was no other outside help coming in on some off day?

Anne Darby:

I often think, back in the day, the county home for mentally challenged adults was not too far from our farm, and he would go and pick up a man or two from the county home to come and help with farm work sometimes, like-

Interviewer:

Oh, how would that go, usually?

Anne Darby:

... corn shelling. Very well.

Interviewer:

Yeah.

Anne Darby:

Nice men who... They knew how to work, and it worked out well.

Interviewer:

That's a good setup.

Anne Darby:

It was.

Interviewer:

Yeah.

Anne Darby:

I think back on that. It gave them a purpose, they enjoyed getting out, and my dad could use the help.

Interviewer:

Yeah, I bet. So speaking of combines and machinery, what kinds were used as time went on?

Anne Darby:

I am probably not a good one for that. I don't pay much attention. We always had John Deere equipment.

Interviewer:

But you had tractors from when you were really little, though?

Anne Darby:

My dad started with a John Deere A, but he also had a team of horses when he came back from the war. So this is not when... I wasn't born until after that. But he told me stories afterwards. We had a neighbor who had about the same age, but he had not gone to the war. So he drove past in his new car, and he had his new tractor. That caused a bit of bitterness in my dad. He went to the bank, I think it was the year I was born. It might have been 1953, and said he needed a new tractor, and the banker gave him a loan for the tractor without a down payment, I think, in appreciation of his service in the war.

Interviewer:

Oh.

Anne Darby:

Because some of the men, of course, from our little hometown have been killed in the war. People appreciated that.

Interviewer:

Yeah.

Anne Darby:

So he got a John Deere 50 at that point, so that was a big step-up.

Interviewer:

But this was motivated by that bitterness?

Anne Darby:

He needed the help on the farm,-

Interviewer:

At some point, yes.

Anne Darby:

... and he really needed a tractor. But he never said that. It was just the way he talked about it to me that I sensed that there was some of that about men who had stayed home and bought land, made a lot of money, and had their fancy tractors. He comes back from having served all those years and still has his team of horses and the old John Deere A.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Anne Darby:

So that's my assessment.

Interviewer:

Good on the banker.

Anne Darby:

Right.

Interviewer:

Yeah.

Anne Darby:

That's what I always think. Good for him.

Interviewer:

So are any members of your family still farming? How many?

Anne Darby:

My brother, who stayed on the home place, is 76 now, and he just retired.

Interviewer:

Oh, does he have kids that are going to keep it going?

Anne Darby:

No, he had two daughters, and they went off and did different things. So the land actually was divided up among the five of us siblings.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Anne Darby:

The other four siblings have sold it off. I think we did the land swap to Boone County. So we have 50 acres in Boone County that our son now farms. So we just changed it from Butler County to Boone County.

Interviewer:

Okay. So that land swap, it's just a relocation?

Anne Darby:

Right.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Anne Darby:

It's a tax thing.

Interviewer:

That's where you do your lessons?

Anne Darby:

No, we bought our own little farm before that. So over by the Des Moines River, we have timber and pasture for horses.

Interviewer:

Love it. Is it horse-exclusive? Do you have anything else?

Anne Darby:

Just horses.

Interviewer:

Just horses?

Anne Darby:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

Lovely.

Anne Darby:

Yes.

Interviewer:

I suppose that's all the questions I had.

Anne Darby:

Okay.

Interviewer:

So thank you so much for participating in this. We really appreciate it.

Anne Darby:

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Okay, perfect.