

Interviewer: Okay. This is another interview from the Iowa Veterans Home, and we have resident for an interview. Would you please state your name?

David Baker: David Baker.

Interviewer: And would you mind telling us what year you were born?

David Baker: October 12th 1954.

Interviewer: Okay. And you agree to let us publish this on the state's website?

David Baker: Sure, no problem.

Interviewer: Okay, wonderful. Thank you so much. Okay. So I'll just ask you our series of questions here on Earth's Bounty in Iowa: Then and Now. How did your family come to live on a farm? And you were telling me you didn't really live on a farm, but you had family and you visited?

David Baker: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay.

David Baker: I lived in Waterloo, Iowa.

Interviewer: Okay.

David Baker: And Dunkerton wasn't really, well, it was several miles away from Waterloo.

Interviewer: Okay.

David Baker: But in those days it seemed like families were more connected than they are today.

Interviewer: Sure.

David Baker: My uncle and aunt, when I go to see them, a lot of times we'd go and there'd be other aunts and uncles there also.

Interviewer: Okay.

David Baker: And sometimes we'd set up a big dining table made out of little card tables and have dinner, and all the cousins and all that would get together and run around and that sort of thing.

And my uncle was really good with his hands. He did things as a farmer but also almost as a frontiersman. He trapped, he hunted, he fished, he built his own house.

Interviewer: Yeah.

David Baker: He was just could do anything with his hands. Even as he got older, he even made homemade silver and turquoise jewelry.

Interviewer: Really?

David Baker: He did that with his hands and just all kinds of artwork and stuff that he could do in addition to taking care of a farm.

Interviewer: Wow.

David Baker: It was a dairy farm, so they had more cows than I could count, but probably not a whole lot. I don't know. I don't remember how many cows they had, but they had cows and they had calves and they had chickens and they had... What else did they have? A big field with alfalfa and stuff to bale hay.

Interviewer: Okay.

David Baker: We'd bale hay every once in a while. I mean, I didn't do the baling or anything.

Interviewer: You were pretty young when you-

David Baker: I was pretty young at that time. But I'd see him off and on as I grew up.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

David Baker: I envied and admired my uncle. He was so cool. Cool.

Interviewer: Yeah.

David Baker: He was a trapper and stuff. And he'd give me a fox pelt or something that he trapped or made, and he'd even cure them or what? I don't know what the word is.

Interviewer: They'd tan the hide?

David Baker: Tan.

Interviewer: Yeah.

David Baker: Tan the hides and everything. He'd even take deer hides and tan them, make stuff out of buck skin.

Interviewer: Wow. Wow. He really had a lot of skills.

David Baker: Oh God, he was something else.

Interviewer: So you had mentioned to me earlier that you went and stayed during the summer, you would go and stay on the farm?

David Baker: Yeah, a week or two.

Interviewer: A week or two at a time?

David Baker: At a time.

Interviewer: Okay. And that was all through your childhood growing up?

David Baker: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay.

David Baker: I remember getting up early in the morning and milking the cows. And then-

Interviewer: How did you do that? Did you have equipment or by hand or?

David Baker: They had equipment.

Interviewer: Okay.

David Baker: He had milking machines, so you just hook them up to the milking machines and then they'd fill these big containers.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

David Baker: You'd fill these big containers with the milk.

Interviewer: Okay.

David Baker: I don't know. They were about yay high.

Interviewer: Okay.

David Baker: I guess three feet or so.

Interviewer: The milk can?

David Baker: Yeah, by two or something.

Interviewer: Sure.

David Baker: And then load them up, then we'd run down to the dairy and take them to the dairy.

Interviewer: Oh, you delivered them, you?

David Baker: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay.

David Baker: Well, sometimes they would come and get them, but a lot of times he took me to the dairy to show me the workings of the dairy.

Interviewer: Okay.

David Baker: I remember he dumped the milk in his vat, and the guy that was at the dairy showed me how they made cheese, and it would stir and they had these great big vats. And-

Interviewer: Do you remember where the dairy was?

David Baker: I don't.

Interviewer: Okay. Okay.

David Baker: I don't remember where the dairy was.

Interviewer: Sure.

David Baker: It was a few miles away.

Interviewer: Okay.

David Baker: It was.

Interviewer: The next question is what kind of crops did your family grow? And you mentioned alfalfa, do you remember?

David Baker: Yeah, alfalfa. And then I think he just had a little small garden plot. But with the dairy outside of what all the other crafts and things that he liked to do as a hobby, he didn't have much time for much else, but the dairy took a lot, taking care of the cows took a lot of time.

Interviewer: And that is, as I understand it, is a very serious commitment two times a day?

David Baker: Yeah, two times a day.

Interviewer: Yeah?

David Baker: And then I'd gather the eggs, things like that from the chickens.

Interviewer: Did he have a lot of chickens?

David Baker: Had quite a few chickens, yeah.

Interviewer: Okay.

David Baker: Yeah. And I think they had one rooster.

Interviewer: Okay.

David Baker: It was pretty much all, but he was loud.

Interviewer: Yeah. So they had chickens for eggs. Did they raise any of their own food? You said they had a big garden?

David Baker: Yeah, they did have their own. We did eat stuff that came from the farm, even fresh milk and eggs. And my aunt would make this great big breakfast, great big lunches, great big... Everything was great big.

Interviewer: Yeah.

David Baker: There was plenty of food.

Interviewer: Okay.

David Baker: I was kind of a fat little kid when I was younger too.

Interviewer: Well, I think at that time you were lucky that you had enough to eat and...

David Baker: True.

Interviewer: So did you do any kind of work on the farm when you were staying or visiting? You said you had to gather eggs.

David Baker: I would help... I forgot what it was that I helped do. I helped with the milking.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

David Baker: Oh, I would put the feed in the little stalls. They'd go into these little milking stalls.

Interviewer: The milking parlors, yeah.

David Baker: Yeah, yeah. Milking. And then I'd go along as they had their heads in this little...

Interviewer: A stanchion?

David Baker: Stanchion. Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah.

David Baker: I'd put the food, their feed in front of them.

Interviewer: Okay.

David Baker: So they'd eat their grain and stuff while they were giving milk.

Interviewer: Okay.

David Baker: And I think it was ground-up corn and other stuff that was in it.

Interviewer: Okay, and that probably kept them calm and busy.

David Baker: Oh, they had hogs.

Interviewer: They had hogs? Okay.

David Baker: I forgot to mention, they had hogs also. Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay.

David Baker: And in those days, you actually took and slopped the hogs, whatever was left over and all that.

Interviewer: Apple peelings, whatever you had left over.

David Baker: Yeah, whatever was went out to the hogs. And I feel-

Interviewer: Do you remember the variety or anything like that about the hogs?

David Baker: No.

Interviewer: Okay.

David Baker: I think they were black and white pretty much, as much as I remember about them.

Interviewer: Do you remember if they did any butchering of the hogs or?

David Baker: No, they didn't. I don't know.

Interviewer: Okay. Well, that wouldn't have happened in summer, so okay. You've mentioned that you had machinery for the milking, so they actually had the

milking machines. Do you remember any other technology or farm machinery that you worked around?

David Baker: After they would bale the hay, they had a conveyor thing that would take it up to the loft, and I would help a little bit, but so much of that was so heavy. As a child I didn't really have a whole lot to do with that. Most of the time they wanted me to stay away from that kind of equipment because it was dangerous, and so I'd pretty much watched them do that stuff, but yeah.

Interviewer: I remember a number of our neighbors would be missing fingers from the early days of moving parts, so I think it's safer now but I think it's still a big issue.

David Baker: Yeah.

Interviewer: So. Do you still have members of your family farming?

David Baker: No. My one uncle was the only one that did that, and he was my Uncle Tom and my Aunt Marilyn.

Interviewer: Okay. What would their last name be?

David Baker: Swanson.

Interviewer: Swanson, okay.

David Baker: They were Swanson's.

Interviewer: Out of Dunkerton, Iowa.

David Baker: Out of Dunkerton, Iowa. Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. And they didn't have children that took over the farm or went into it or?

David Baker: No.

Interviewer: Okay.

David Baker: They left pretty much. They went to college, went into journalism, and my one cousin went into journalism. I didn't keep as much touch with them later on in life when I was at... I used to go out there up until the time that I was a teenager.

Interviewer: Still go out to the farm?

David Baker: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah.

David Baker: But I went in the Navy and all that.

Interviewer: Yeah, and here you are.

David Baker: And then, yeah. So.

Interviewer: Okay.

David Baker: Yeah.

Interviewer: Well, thank you so much for sharing all this. They're nice memories I bet to think about.

David Baker: Yeah. I stayed in touch with them by phone, but that's about it.

Interviewer: Okay.

David Baker: Yeah.

Interviewer: Well, thank you very much. Anything else you remember particularly?

David Baker: Well, I remember, like I said, it seemed like all the aunts and uncles would get together a lot of times. But as we got older, it didn't seem that that happened as much. And it seems like we've gotten into a society where we don't have as much closeness as we used to. It just seems that way to me.

Interviewer: I remember neighbors coming to help my dad make hay, and I would make sandwiches and lemonade and the other kids would come over and we'd run all over and play all day, everybody would eat together at noon and again at supper, and I don't think that's done anymore, but that was a lovely thing to be part of, so.

David Baker: Yeah. Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. Well, thank you so very much.

David Baker: You're welcome.

Interviewer: Okay.

David Baker: My pleasure. My pleasure.