FINNISH FOLKLORE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE GREAT LAKES MINING REGION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT 1972-1978
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SUBJECT: The Notorious "Milk Inspector" and his Experiences
With Finnish Farmers in the Copper Country 1940-50's.

SOURCE: Mason Smith, ex-milk inspector in the Copper Country
and now a bureaucrat in the State of Michigan Depart-
ment of Agriculture, Dairy Agriculture Division.

COMMENTS:

I: Well, when did you start doing your field inspection
work in the Upper Peninsula?

R: Well, actually I started in '42...I used to work for
a paper mill down in Niagara and I found that there
was a sanitarian's job in Iron Mountain and so I
applied for that and I obtained that so I worked for
the County Health Department in Dickenson County for
several years and the major portion of the time
spent there was with the dairy industry inspecting
farms and inspecting the local plants.

I: Well, I see that by the cataloging of the different kinds
of laws before 1927.

Stop in tape.

I: I gather from the cataloging of the different kinds
of laws that there was prior to 1927 and probably
after that, a concern with impure milk.

R: Well I, a number of times, have told the story as told
to me that originally when the agriculture laws were
developed, it started off because somebody would put
sand in the grain bag or stones in the potato bag and
sell this to the public and the original was just to
keep everybody honest. Now, that evolved eventually
from just maintaining honesty in the material for sale
to regulation of the quality of the material; and the
original dairy laws were passed back in 1885 or '86,
somewheres back around there. And they just basically
said that you had to have whole milk, it had to come
from clean healthy cows, and it had to be kept cold
and that's about all that they described. From that
we've got an evolution that went on up. The law we
have in this book, this compilation of 1927 of the
agricultural laws doesn't describe the necessity for
a milk house. It just gives the basic composition of
milk, provides for truth in the butterfat testing for
payment to the farmer, and is just a few basics like
that. The overall purpose at that time was more again
not to keep the quality of the product up, but to make everybody sell what they said they were selling. So, as the farms became bigger and the milk was distributed farther, you had a necessity for a better quality product because it wouldn't keep.

I: Due to the larger volume?

R: Well yes, because it took longer to distribute it for one thing and on the other hand you have to remember that every farm is an isolated community in itself; and each farm with a farmer, his wife and kids and the cat and dog and the cows all have a certain group or type of family of bacteria and almost any of us can remember and still to this day when the city cousins come out on the farm and they drink the milk or they drink the water on that farm, they have a tummy ache. Well, this is because they've got some kind of bacteria that they weren't familiar with. So, when a farmer had a half a dozen cows and he sold his surplus milk to fifteen or twenty families or whatever the group number that he might have sold to, those people all had the same immunities. They lived in the same small community and they had the same immunity. But when that farmer started bringing milk into Detroit or Kalamazoo or some place like that and putting it into a train tank car at that time, then the farm who had TB in their cows and who didn't stay clean really made a menace to the public health and because of that, the laws were modified so there was much to control the quality and the sanitary protection of the product as there are for the safety as far as just selling what you said you're selling. In other words, to protect the public health as well as the economics of the thing.

I: I understand. You mentioned that in the early forties when you started your work there, most of the farmers had just four or five cows and were just selling raw milk to their neighbors. Can you describe this sort of operation?

R: Well, when I started doing dairy work, the program on local bases had been improved. Iron Mountain, in the Upper Peninsula, and Houghton and Marquette and Escanaba all had city ordinances which required milk houses and required more specific care of the product and methods of handling it and so forth than the State law did. The State law at that time was basically a licensing law and the State Department of Agriculture who enforced the State dairy laws didn't go enforce
their laws where the locals were working. Now, all localities weren't covered. Now when I started on this, I started as a sanitarian for the Health Department and there was one elderly gentleman who lived down at Powers and he had the whole Upper Peninsula - three hundred plus dairy licenses that were there and he spent most of his time at that time just checking up on delinquent license fees and doing things of that nature which really did not have anything to do with the quality of the product and the protection of the public. Gradually the State law because there were holes in the enforcement on local basises around the State, gradually the State law was improved and in early 1950's a State Grade A law which required very specific handling and care of the milk for sale for direct consumption in the bottles and so forth was passed and at that time the State Department of Agriculture became more active. I think there were seventeen or eighteen people in the State Department of Agriculture when I started; and we've got I believe it's fifty-three or fifty-four total now including office force and everything at this time. But when I started they had two fellows on in the Upper Peninsula and we put several more on so that there were five men and we did go in in many cases oversaw or reinspected the work of the local people. Now, at that time there was quite a controversy between the Department of Agriculture and the State Health Department about who would enforce the State dairy laws. I can remember some pretty hot arguments in some of the meetings concerning that. So, eventually the industry itself got tired of having us one day, a sanitarian from the city another day, a sanitarian from another county another day, and maybe some inspector from some other state looking at some factor because the milk...I'm talking now partly about down state, down here in the Lower Peninsula...because the milk was being shipped out of state and you would have because of the location of the dairy sometimes on one farm as high as seven or eight different inspectors would be there within a week or ten days. Basically they were looking for clean cows and clean dishes; but all would have some different specs on the size of milk house, the distance of the milk house from the barn, how wide the walkways had to be, how much window space you had to have and I didn't, at that time, at all blame the farmer for wanting to take a pitchfork and chase the whole lot of them off.

I: That was the attitude wasn't it in the very early days at least?
Well yes, because...

Were you one of those persons whose responsibility it was to trudge around from farm to farm and inspect?

Oh yes.

How were you received? Describe it...do you recall any of that?

Well, most of the farmers were beautiful people. They were real good. The Finnish farmers in the Upper Peninsula they like coffee and always have hot nisula on the table...maybe have to go home and starve...I couldn't eat at home because you always had to have coffee. Well, if you didn't go and have coffee and have a piece of that lovely hot bread, you were an enemy. There wasn't any half-way measure. If you sat and had coffee and bread with them, they go out and you could tell them anything to do and usually they'd say "Sure" and they'd go ahead and they'd work on it. And if you didn't, you had difficulty talking to them because they wouldn't be as friendly. But, probably at that time, ninety percent of all the names we had on our list to inspect in the Upper Peninsula were Finnish names. And then we had problems in a few cases in language because I didn't speak Finnish. I don't know if I should tell that story at this time or not, but there was one elderly lady who had a dozen or so cows and sold milk around Negaunee, down east of Negaunee out by Eagle Mills, and for five or six years I went there and every time I went there her dishes were dirty and the cows weren't clean and I always balled her out and told her what and wrote all the inspection up and told her what to do and she'd say, "Yo...Yo" you know, and then one day we had a young fellow from Ironwood come to work for us and he came with me to break in...his name was Paara and of course he was Finnish and he spoke and wrote Finnish. So, I took him out on this farm and we wrote the inspection up in Finnish and Paara told the lady, I don't remember what her name was even, but her what was wrong with her place and I explained to him that I'd been telling her this for four years, you know, and I guess he must have talked to her pretty seriously in Finnish because when we got done talking to her and getting ready to go, she pointed to me and she smiled and she said something and she pointed to Paara and big frown and she said something...then she pointed to me and she smiled again and she pointed to Paara and she frowned...I couldn't figure it out. So,
when we got in the car and drove away, I said, "Parra what was she saying then. He said, "Well she was saying, 'he's a nice guy' she said, 'you're nasty'... she said 'He's a nice guy, he never says anything like that to me'." Of course I had told her for four or five years and she never understood it. So there was that kind of a barrier but there weren't too many of those cases. Most of the people understood what we had to say and most of them had children who understood English and we would write the inspections out and when the kids came home from school they would read it to the parents and they were very cooperative and basically we didn't have tremendous problems having the farms have clean dishes and clean cows. Some of the specs like gettin the wood off the floor in the barn...

I:    You mean wood floor?

R:    The wooden floors.

I:    Why was that done?

R:    Well, the liquid manure would accumulate under the floors and become a health hazard to the cows; and it would smell up the barn and when we got into quality control as well as the health and the financial thing then, some of these specs were put into the handling of the milk. We had to have better ventilation. In those days originally when I first started, you could find people out in the barn when it was twenty below outside and they would bank the barn up with manure all around the sides of the barn, closed all the doors real tight and stuffed all the cracks with gunny sacks or straw and it would be seventy or seventy-five in that barn and the farmer and his wife and kids would be out there working in their shirtsleeves and twenty below outside. But when you'd go in there it'd make your eyes smart because the smell of the urine and the ammonia from the urine and manure in the barn, although they would keep it shoveled out, just what was in the bottom of the gutters would give off enough odor to make your eyes smart.

I:    Because it was so air tight

R:    So air tight; now, that would influence the flavor of the milk. Now you can take a cow and crush an onion in front of her nose and let her take four breaths of it and then wait thirty seconds and go milk her and you'll get onion taste out of the milk, she's that sensitive. So, consequently, this barnie manurie flavor would come through.
I: Would it damage the...?
R: Not the keeping quality, no.
I: And it wasn't unhealthy, but it was like drinking a glass of manure.
R: Well, this is the thing. Now the farmer smell that manure, it was on his clothes and he smelled at all times and he didn't notice it in the milk. The kids didn't notice it. But you take that glass of milk and put it on the table in Iron Mountain or Escanaba or Marquette where the people didn't know that smell, where if a farmer came to town with that and sat in a theatre or store with that smell on his clothes, everybody'd walk away from him. So that smell was obnoxious to them. Well, when it got in tasting of the milk, it hurt the sale. You put a glass of milk that had that flavor on it and instead of drinking that glass and pouring another one, the kids might drink most of that glass and then they'd quit. Well, economically that's not good either because then they didn't sell as much milk as they could which was not good for the dairy industry. So, the quality really helps to promote the sales and these laws as they evolved and were changed...really the dairy industry didn't evolve because of the laws, the laws evolved because of the dairy industry and gave us a tool to help mold the dairy industry to the demands of the time. So, we had things like having to keep the...well we had to get the wood off the floor of the barns and that would be way back in '52 or '53 that we had to do that.

I: What about this idea of a milk house?
R: Well, most of the city ordinances required a milk house with wash baths and some means of providing hot water for washing dishes and storage racks for the utensils. I can't tell you how far back that went because it was before my time; but that goes back into the thirties.

I: These are local ordinances.
R: The local ordinances would require that. But that didn't come into the State law until I believe in this '43 edition it shows the requirements for a milk house in the State law at that time. In other words, that Act 169 was pulmigated way back...I'd have to look it up, but it was quite a ways back; but it's been
modified a dozen times until it was repealed in '65 and then Act 233 took over and made our present Grade A law. But, as the size of the farms increased and the drawing distance for the milk increased, then we had to have better quality...

I: You mean the marketing distance.

R: Well, originally you'd have a neighbor...I used to live in Niagara, Wisconsin, right across from Iron Mountain. I grew up on raw milk. They guy that brought it to us just lived about three miles from us on the edge of town and he had about thirty or forty customers and as I recall going out and watching him milk, I'd shut him off if I saw him today. I drank his milk, I grew up on it. Back again to the idea that we were a little island. I already had immunity to the bugs that he was carrying in and giving to us.

I: And island with bacteria boundaries.

R: Yes, that's right. So, if that individual then discontinued a sale to his few customers and went and sold his milk to a dairy say in Iron Mountain and the dairy in Iron Mountain was drawing milk from clear up almost to well, up by Randville or forty miles north, up by Felch, he got milk from clear over almost to Powers and almost to Iron River in a big circle around there. Now, you put the boundaries of all those little islands together into a pretty good sized boundary. And so, the people in order to keep from having a tummy ache off of the products that come from all over, that milk had to be pasturized. Well, at the same time...and the local ordinances required pasturization...the State law said that you could pasturize and discribed pasturization and said that they didn't require it but recommended it and the Department of Agriculture Inspectors which include I and my other four fellows, inspected all these plants in conjunction with the local Health Departments. Now, some of them were doing an excellent job but some of them were doing a fairly poor job and so we tried to make it more uniform. We didn't work as hard in some of the areas that were doing a good job. In other places we did it all and if the local inspector...I can remember one local sanitarian, for instance, who I guess I shouldn't use words and names and places on a thing like that, but he would pick up milk and the laboratory, say Health Department maintained to him, this was when I was a sanitarian up there...and no one for several years...when I knew this gentleman...when I was the local inspector for the Department of
Agriculture...he would pick up milk in a cardboard box in the summertime. He would go around and the several dairies and a half a dozen he'd get, and he'd get a sample of milk, a sample of cream and coffee cream and chocolate milk, whatever else they might be making, put 'em in this box and he would pick these up at nine - ten o'clock in the morning and he would stop and have lunch along the way and he'd bring these down to Powers to the State Health Department Lab. Well, this wasn't fair to the daries involved because all of his bacteria counts showed bad. In the first place he took 'em down there because his local ordinance required that it be done not because he was gonna do anybody any good. He just took those samples in and the Health Department ran 'em because he brought them there...not because they were gonna do anybody any good. All the sample reports were all horrible but nothing was ever done about it because we knew and he knew that the samples weren't valid. So, we resampled everybody in that area, took 'em down to the Health Department and put them in an ice chest covered with ice and took 'em down there within a couple hours of the time we took 'em from the dairy, and the Health Department ran them properly. So, then when we obtained the sample reports from them they were valid and in most cases they were excellent.

I: When did this custom of selling milk to the local people become illegal?

R: Well, it was completely forbidden when we had the original Michigan pasteurizing law which took effect somewheres early in the fifties...that'd be '51 or '52. Michigan's Grade A law required all pasturized milk. It did allow localities to vote themselves out of that. Baraga voted themselves out of it, County of Baraga and the city of Manistique were the only ones that took up the chance on local option and voted themselves...I believe that's the only ones anyhow...and voted themselves out of the control of the State law that required pasteurization.

I: Houghton County did not.

R: No, wait a minute...no I don't think but you can check on it. But there...it seems to me there were just those two. I don't believe Houghton County did. So, the Maybergs at Chassell and the Copper Country Dairy and all of the dairies up there, Jilbert up at Calumet and oh what was his name, has a little airport out by Pelkie...had a little dairy out there, one on that road.
that goes over to Bruees Crossing...I can't think of his name...anyhow, there were dairies all through there, but those all did pasturize and there were only a couple of farms who did bring milk in...those were north of L'Anse, up on that...up towards Ele...was that Elo up there, I believe...they brought some milk in.

I: But did this custom persist then?

R: Well it persisted until in the early fifties when...in fact the last one just got knocked off about two years ago down here over in...well south of Grand Rapids.

I: You're talking about dairies.

R: I'm talking about the last raw-milk dealer.

I: What about individual farmers?

R: Well, that's what this guy was in...the law says that anybody that sells milk, must have a license. In order to obtain a license, you'd have to...ever since the early fifties, would have to pasturize it. However, we did exempt the milk sold to the people who worked on the farm and we had several old court cases which said that, in essence, I believe they were either taken up to the Appeals Court or to the Supreme Court, I don't know which, but anyhow we always used them as a precedent and that said that if the farmer was selling eight or ten quarts of milk a day that it was too piddly a small an affair to bother the courts, that don't bring it in. So consequently whenever we found somebody who was selling some milk to his neighbors, just a couple people and it was only amounting to that much, we counceled him on sanitation and cooling and handling the product and then we didn't pay him much more attention to him. The other one of that was if a guy was selling a larger quantity of milk and I believe that the figures that the court used at that time was six percent, so if he had three hundred quarts of milk altogether and he was selling eighteen quarts or twenty quarts, why say that that was six percent of his total production, that was too small a piddly amount to bother the court so don't bring it into the court. And consequently we used those two as our limiting factors as whether to require a license and whether to bother the fellow and we still go by that. We have a number of people who will sell a few quarts of raw milk to the neighbors; and if they
do that and it stays down in that bracket, we don't bother them.

I: Because it's still in the bacteria-safe community because they've developed the immunities to it.

R: Well, legally, the precedence to the law which usually almost has the same effect as law declares that it's no used for us to take that to court in the first place if he's only selling six or eight quarts; however if we have a really extremely filthy place and we find 'em like that, we usually put the pressure on 'em and try to have them stop. Now, when you talk like on a TV program or you talk about milk and the dairy industry, it's sort of an industry habit that when we talk to the public we mention what a good law we have and what good enforcement we have and the local basis is the same thing. Nobody ever admitted there was anything wrong with it. We told how good a law it was and how good we were enforcing it...promoting the dairy industry and saying how good this was. Where the fact is that at any given time we take a hundred farmers, there's a couple of them gonna be lousy. Same thing with anything you got. You get a hundred drivers, some of them...eight or ten of them are gonna be terrible drivers...and you give them time you pick out some. And so, as the law developed and we got into our Grade A law that was passed in '51 or '52, that was quite an excellent law and required a milk house and it allowed the local units to still enforce their laws and we still had duplication of effort in many cases and that irritated the industry and the people that were functioning in it, so back in '64 the legislature passed a law that took effect in '65 which used the model ordinance and code that was put out or promoted by the United States Health Service and was written up by them. That also had been the law or model ordinance that was passed by most of the local units over the years in the past. That's where the requirement of milk houses and everything occurred on the farms in the earlier times that I remember on a local basis because in most cases...well I know the city of Marquette, for instance, had the Public Health Service ordinance passed and old Doc Druery the Health Officer used to go out and make farm inspections and inspect the plants and he did a fairly excellent job. And we had some things at that time on the law that I suppose basic to the way the thing is written now and we might frown on it; But still, I don't know as we would. For instance, we'd have a milk house in a sauna combination in the Upper Peninsula. It wasn't hard to get the Finnish people to build their milk house if you'd let 'em put a sauna bath stove on the other end of it...nice tight wall inbetween the two, and you'd have a sauna bath stove which was kept hot at all times; so we'd have them put a coil inside the
sauna stove and run it through the wall to the hot water tank. Well, we always had hot water. Then, I know at that time, they never had hot water in many of the houses so the lady would bring all her clothes and wash clothes in the milk house because she always had hot water there. I couldn't let them do that the way the law is written now and really we shouldn't of the way the law was written at that time. But it was a heck of a lot better to have some wash baths and a washing machine in the milk house and wash clothes there and have a lot of nice hot water to wash then the milking utensils in the wash baths for the milking utensils than to forbid that practice and many of those people couldn't afford to do both; but we conned them or whatever you might say into putting up a milk house sauna washing machine combination where we got nice clean dishes 'cause we had a good place to do it, lots of hot water, they were happy because their sauna still was always hot and they could wash clothes; and I can remember going there lots of times after a fresh snow in the morning and I could see a track from the other side from the sauna doors to the creek where there'd be a hole in the water. I always wondered at the time how they could stand that. I know I got in the habit when I lived in Marquette...I got in the habit of goin once or twice a week over to Second Street where there was a nice sauna and I can understand how they did that because it was fun. I sure miss that down here in the lower peninsula.

I: A lot of the dairy farmers in the Upper Peninsula at the time these laws were passed probably even into the early fifties were very small operators.

R: Twelve to twenty-four - twenty-five cows...twenty-five cow farm was a big farm.

I: And sometimes the capital investment required in a new milk house, in putting a cement floor in, installing a new well a certain distance from the farm was more than they could bear given the fact that many of them were already at a certain age level where it wouldn't pay off from their point of view.

R: This is true. The age of a farmer when he comes to make an investment is something that...well that didn't effect the farms that were changing to Grade A at that time quite so much because they had to cool their milk for the manufacturers for cheese factories and so forth too. The difference in the law was that
they had to get it down to fifty degrees for the bottle milk industry, the Grade A industry, and they only had to get it to sixty degrees for the cheese factories or the powder or butter. Well, in the Upper Peninsula we could drill a well and almost any place and the water that came up would seldom ever go above fifty and most of them were around fifty-six degrees; so if anybody would drill a well and run a little water, they had no problem getting sixty degree milk. And basically we had fairly excellent milk. When the tourist industry would come on in the summer even when we had that Grade A law, there was the habit of getting the best milk off of the cheese factories and allowing that to come in to supplement the milk that was actually being sold to the Grade A dairies; and we always ran bacteria counts on that and back in 1950 or '52 or '53, the milk going into those cheese factories bacteriologically was one heck of a lot better than the average milk going into the cities down state here on the Grade A markets. Now, that was partly because of the quality of the people in the Upper Peninsula and their handling. You didn't have to...well, if you went to a Finnish person and you said, "Hey, Eino, your dishes are dirty," he was horribly insulted. He said, "I alee man"...you nasty to say that to me. Boy, you didn't have to talk to him twice. They went in there and washed their dishes. So, as an inspector my problems weren't as great with the average farm in the Upper Peninsula...now there were exceptions to this believe me, we had some horrible ones and when one of those Finnish farmers was bad, he wasn't half bad, he was horrible. There was no half way.

I: Without mentioning any names can you describe a couple of those cases as you recall the more colorful ones where you encountered a stubborn...?

R: Well, I can't remember specifically cases where we'd have dirty equipment. I remember one that's amusing. We had a fellow out by Chatham that had wooden floors and I guess his name was Eino alright too; so anyhow, when the law took effect saying that we had to have...he had concrete underneath the wood...and I wrote it on there three or four times four - five months apart so this is over a period of several years, I told him, "Eino, you got to get this wood off the floors." And we weren't in a hurry, we were gonna allow everybody the opportunity to comply within reason...in other words, we weren't out to hurt 'em, we wanted to get compliance as near as...as
good a time schedule as we could; but I began to figure that this was as long as we could. And I said, "Now Eino, you got to get this off, this is the last time I'm gonna tell you." I guess he didn't hear me 'cause I came back there the next time and the wood's still on the floor and I said, "Eino, now I've got to shut you off," I said, "now you can go sell your milk to the cheese factory in the meantime but you can't sell it to the bottle plant until you get the wood off this floor." He looked at me and he said, "Ya, but why you not tell me you meant it last time." See, he knew I told him last time, but I just didn't put it in serious enough terms and he said why you didn't tell me that you meant it. When I told him that I meant it, he went right ahead and did it. Well, he wasn't a dirty farmer, but he had this wood on the floor. On the other hand, we would have some people who would just simply not wash the dishes either through lack of understanding or laziness or carelessness and there was sometimes a combination of all three factors and we'd have a farm where the inflations that they milked the cows with...the thing is that back before the war in '42, I would guess that probably eighty to ninety percent of the farms milked by hand. They only had about a dozen or ten farms...I mean cows; but then after the war the younger people started coming back and getting into it and they expanded it to twenty-five or thirty cows and that was too many to extract the milk by hand so they started buying milking machines. Well, if it took two hours to milk by hand and you milked in forty-five minutes or forty minutes with a milking machine you had to give back fifteen or twenty minutes to take care of the milking machine. So you only gained...you cut your time in half. Well some people couldn't see giving back that twenty minutes. On the other hand a lot of the salesmen for milking machines just told these farmers that all you gotta do is whistle in the morning and the thing'll go down and milk the cows and wash itself. And, it was sold to them on that basis which was misrepresentation but I mean we wouldn't know that at the time, so we'd come out there and we'd find the inflation would be so dirty sometimes that you'd wonder how the teat could get into the hole...I mean it'd be from an eighth to a quarter inch thick of just goo that just looked like...I can't use the words that I would use...it's kind of like peanut butter and smells like the stuff that's in the baby's diapers. And then they would milk through that and wonder why the milk didn't have the keeping quality and why it didn't take good within a couple days. The bacteria that are in that kind of material...many of them live through pasturization. Now, with proper
pasturization there's no pathogen lives through this; however, a number of these bacteria that live through it do produce malty bitter horrible tastes in milk and if you get a good population of them in the raw milk then you have a considerable quantity goes through the pasturized milk and if the bottle was on somebody's shelf at store's temperature for four to five days, well you'd end up with something that tasted terrible and we had complaints. So, although with the pasturization you didn't have the public health problem at that moment, you still couldn't have keeping quality and have a salable product for the dairy. And so we had to clean these people up and believe me some of them would get extremely dirty. Now I guess the principle that we work on would be the fact that at any given moment there's gonna be out of a hundred three or four of them that are gonna be bad. So we try to keep that percent to as low as we can and our inspections at the present now evolve to where we do all farms...I think our average is three inspections a year. Now that means that all farms are done at least twice and some six or seven times depending on what it takes to keep them in order. So, that has an evolution in the number of inspections on them.

I: You've mentioned the term dairy industry several times as if it were some coherent organized thing. How has the history of the organization of the dairy industry changed since you started? I know that's such a big question, but just in plain terms of marketing the product.

R: Well, you're thinking more about the Upper Peninsula aren't you?

I: Yes

R: Specifically rather than the whole state.

I: Strictly the Upper Peninsula focusing more upon the Pelkie-Baraga area.

R: Back in '42 and when I started doing this work, there were I believe somewheres around four thousand farms selling milk basically for cheese: at that time in the Upper Peninsula and there were about twelve hundred that were selling milk which went into the bottles. Now, that wasn't Grade A milk. There were this variety of laws relating to the bottle milk that allowed oh some of them without milk houses and without much care and some of them had to have it depending on the locality they were in. The basic milk laws said that
you had to have clean healthy cows and the equipment had to be clean and the milk had to be cooled to sixty degrees shortly after it was produced and held there until delivery to the cheese factory. That was about all there was in relation to the farms. Now you had cheese factories at, I believe, Laurium...what the little town that's next to Laurium up there?

I: Calumet?

R: No, down below. Laurium...there's two little towns down there close together. I'd have to look at the map.

I: That's alright.

R: Well, anyhow, there was a little cheese factory there, he also bottled some milk, you had the Copper Country Cheese Factory at Dollar Bay that was one of the larger cheese factories, and we had a...the Iron River Creamery down in Iron River had...produced cheese, there was a cheese factory at Pelkie, we had a cheese factory at Bruce Crossing and then there was the Ironwood Coop over at...I can't remember if that was in Ironwood or Bessemer...that was in Ironwood.

I: Sounds like the bulk of it then was the Grade B milk for cheese, right.

R: Oh yes, the total quantity of it was, that's right. But today there are about three hundred and eighty farmers selling Grade A milk and about eleven or twelve hundred selling milk for cheese or powder and butter.

I: Boy, it has really declined.

R: But there is just about as much milk being sold.

I: I know it...in terms of they're larger more efficient farms, but what happened?

R: Economics dictated that they had to get larger in order to survive. The price of real estate increased, taxes went up, the cost of feed and so forth increased to the extent that you couldn't make a living for a family on twelve or fifteen cows. There just wasn't that much product going through compared to what you would make if you worked in one of the mines or someplace like that, so they would expand and put twenty to thirty cows. And when I left the Upper Peninsula in '65 and came down here, I think the average at
that time was somewheres...of all the herds, there were some large and some small, but the average herd in the Upper Peninsula was somewheres around twenty-five or thirty cows. I would guess that now it's close to fifty or sixty. I don't know for sure because I've been gone from there since '65; but the number of herds has declined. Now, part of the maintenance of that, part of the problem evolved many of these large dairies back in the late forties, early fifties, supermarketing came in. And instead of the local consumer...the farmer coming to me and saying, "Here, I'll sell you a quart of milk for ten cents", the lady went to the supermarket...

End of Side 1

I: Now this thing about the supermarkets coming in and how that affected the dairy industry situation up there.

R: Well, I can't tell you exactly when that started, but was primarily after the war that supermarkets started to expand. Red Owl was one of the big factors in the Upper Peninsula and the A & P as major outside concerns that came in in the central area. Now, the big dairy, the Fairmont Dairy in Green Bay became the supplier for the supermarket and the Red Owl chain. Well, it didn't make any difference if it was the Red Owl, A & P or some of the other marketing agents, after the ladies got in the habit of buying the major portion of their milk in the grocery rather than having it delivered because they found they could get it a little bit cheaper, what it amounted to was the grocery chain didn't own stock or equipment or anything in the dairy industry. They just owned their soul because Red Owl could say to Fairmont, "I want milk to sell at so much per unit so I can sell it out here." And if Fairmont had because of the sale for several years through Red Owl got to where they were selling probably sixty or eighty percent of their production through that chain and the chain could say tomorrow, "Lookit, I'm gonna go get Veryfine out of Cheboygan down there to do my business or Consolidated Badger" or one of the others down there...

I: And they did it on such a volume scale that they could very easily do that and it would be an attractive offer to someone else.

R: Right. One of our major dairies in Detroit right
today has ninety percent of their product is sold through the A & R. Well now, the A & P doesn't have a cent into that dairy; but boy have they...like I say they don't own anything, but their soul. Okay, so whatever the A & P says to this dairy, the dairy just does it and you can understand why. In order to survive the way the milk is marketed today, they almost have to do this.

I: That in turn goes back to the farmer. Then.

R: Okay, you can't increase the price to the farmer beyond what the consumer will pay for it; and if the chain store controls the price, the industry has lost its control at that point.

I: When did this start to really get critical? When did the industry begin to recognize that because of the actual dairies dependence on the large supermarket chain they no longer had pricing control and therefore very little control over the industry?

R: Well I'd guess that'd be the late forties, early fifties that that factor really began to show up.

I: And they began to talk about it.

R: That it would be noticeable.

I: What was done then?

R: Well, I can remember one thing. For instance, in order to keep their business and keep prices down, Fairmont in Green Bay there would put a nickel on a container of milk and set a price that was the same as their milk price in Green Bay and then they would set a price same in Houghton and this did occur in the Houghton area...Frank Madasky the County Agent up there, he's down here now, but he was the County Agent at the time was the pushing...was the instigator of this what I'm gonna tell you about...the dairy down there would have sales practices like that that would amount to them selling milk cheaper in Houghton than they were selling it in Green Bay...the same milk. Well, this was carried across the State line and...

I: How could they do it though with their transportation costs?

R: I don't know how they did that, how they worked out. Apparently they were coming out better some how or other because of the marketing factors somehow, they got a bigger cut off it up here or something, I don't
know exactly how it did work out; but this is what they were doing. So, they got together and they got some Federal investigators in there and Frand Madasky was the instigator on this and they had a bunch of investigations and it ended up that they had Fairmont out of Green Bay hauled into the Federal Court there in Houghton; and those people had had several minor violations where they'd made errors, I suspect that they weren't deliberate, but when you sell a product and our local people had done this too, I'm not picking on Fairmont I don't mean, but they were the one involved in the story, and we'd had warrants for different ones including Fairmont people and this gentleman that was in charge of the place had come up and said "We did", so "Short fat...I'm sorry it was an error" and paid a fifty dollar fine. Well, he came into Circuit Court and I think he thought he was into the same...not the Circuit...the Federal Court...and they charged him with violations of their (???) and Pattman Act and one other one there...there was two charges.

I: And that Act is with the...

R: The Federal Law. And I never forget because the guy said, "Yeah" he said, "we're guilty of this," and he, you know he was thinkin a fifty dollar fine or something like that and the judge looked at him and he said, "Well, on this one charge here," he said, "that will be five thousand dollars and " he said, "on the other one this will be fifty thousand dollars" And the man almost died right there in his shoes. But I'll tell you, we never had any more problems with practices that were shady as far as the marketing practices was concerned.

I: What's specifically shady about it? It's competition.

R: Well, the law required that he couldn't sell to affect competition, he couldn't sell cheaper at a distant point than he was selling at home...when it went across the State line. In essence that is what the law required...it's still on the books and a factor in marketing. And one of the other factors that affected the marketing completely or an awful lot was during the war they had these Federal Market Administrators. Now, the law was originally passed in order to hold the price of milk because of some of these other factors, to hold the price of milk to farmers to where they would make a living off of it and would consequently increase their production, so that you would have cheese and butter and drinking milk...you keep 'em on the farm. That was the basic purpose of
it. Well, that also evolved into a protection of the farmers' market and today we have Market Administrators the law is under the U. S. Department of Agriculture and we don't enforce it, we report to them and they determine who is on their market through who complies with our law... who we say complies with our law. The Market Administrator works out of Detroit... we have one market in the Upper Peninsula, the... originally we had an order that included only the Upper Peninsula, but now the Upper Peninsula is included in the Duluth order and I don't know the personnel there. Then the Lower Peninsula is all covered by one order; and what this fellow does is he determines the basic price at which milk can be sold... or must be... not can be sold but the basic price which dairies must pay for milk.

I: To the farmer.

R: To the farmer. How does he do this?

I: How does he do this?

R: Well, it's based on... there's a formula and they take every month, they take the price at which an uncontrolled product that is powder and butter in Wisconsin and Minnesota is sold, average price for the month, I believe something of that nature anyhow because I'm not to familiar with it, but they take this average price and then there is a formula that they multiply that by which is the Class 1 price for the given order. In this case, we might say the Duluth order would affect the Upper Peninsula or that the order down here it affects the Lower Peninsula. That Class 1 price then has to be paid by the dairies for all milk which is used by the dairies for drinking milk, for buttermilk or yogurt and cream and the so-called dairy products.

I: What organization is this person in now?

R: This is a Federal... it's a... it's supported by the dairy industry... there is a check off from the farmer that pays for this operation and it's voted in... the order is pulmogated... I guess that's the word I want, by the U.S.D.A... United States Department of Agriculture and it's allowed for two or three hearings to the public and to the industry, most farms, the selling Coops, the purchasing Coops and the purchasing buyers all have a chance to comment and to say what they feel is written into the order. Then it goes
back and is rewritten several times until it seems to be in the consensus amongst...as close as they feel they can get to a consensus, then it comes back and all the farmers in the locality in this order vote on whether they want this put in or not. It's not...the dairies have nothing to say about whether it takes effect or not. Michigan Milk votes their farms as a lump...as a group. Independent Coop of Grand Rapids will vote theirs. Michigan Milk in the Upper Peninsula would vote theirs as a group and...

I: Michigan Milk Producers Association?

R: Yes, in the Upper Peninsula. They got approximately I would guess three hundred farms in the Upper Peninsula in that order...and three hundred...three hundred and a quarter, something like that.

I: And they would vote on this estimate.

R: They would vote on whether they wanted this order to go into effect. Now, if that order passes by whatever percent the law requires, I think it has to have a sixty percent or more...

I: Again Federal Law.

R: Then it becomes a Federal Law...it becomes a Federal Law at that point.

I: How often is this done?

R: Whenever somebody objects to the local situation and asks for hearings...enough people ask for hearings.. if the (???) Coop which has sixty-five or seventy percent of the milk in a given area would ask for a hearing on it to change it, I'm sure they would get one in a very short time.

I: So the farmers if they feel they're not...

R: The farmers actually control it

I: Un huh...if you're a farmer let's say in Pelkie and you're not getting enough, what would you do?

R: Then you would ask your Coop...through your Coop, for a hearing on this order and the order if the consensus was that they needed more pay for the milk in order to keep that milk in the market sufficient to supply what's needed for that local market, then the order would be polmugated with that change and the farmers would have
a chance to vote on it and it would again be a consensus of...one individual farmer can't change it.

I: But now the jurisdictional area for such a change in the Upper Peninsula includes Duluth...

R: It includes part of Minnesota and Northern Wisconsin.

I: Oh

R: I believe that's how it is anyhow...I'm not a hundred percent sure of that...the Market Administrator comes out of Duluth.

I: Okay, so now you have a peculiar mix. On one hand the government...the Federal Department of Agriculture sets the price through this bargaining procedure through the dairy cooperative...local dairy cooperatives, in this case the Superior Region We'll call it; and also...

R: I guess they do call it the Lake Superior Order, I guess that's what they do.

I: Then there's also this...the fact that the supermarkets still must control the price too somehow. So, how does the situation look now?

R: Then the dairy is the one that gets into the squeeze. The dairy gets into the squeeze itself then because the Market Administrator says, "Look, you've got to pay at least this much." and the union in the dairy says, "We strike if we don't get this much." and the sales organization which you in many cases is somebody who doesn't care whether you sell milk...or any individual sells milk or not or any individual company sells milk, in other words the big supermarket chain says, "I'll only give you so much for it." So, everybody has to get bigger in order to...because the overall...what's the word...profit margin is smaller on everybodies all from the farm on through to the dairy and I assume with the supermarket chain too. So, the whole this is...and this is what you mean...I think when I tried to explain the industry, goes all the way from the farmer through to the supermarket. It all affects each other...they're all tied together. Now locally down in the Lower Peninsula now down here, the dairy cooperatives have gotten together and they have what they...the A.M.P.I., it's a big nationwide dairy coop to which the local coops also subscribe and belong and they are the ones that are presently in the controversy about furnishing Nixon with money for price favors.
I: That's the American Milk Producers Association, I think.

R: Yeah...now also involved the U.S.D.A. sets this parity price which is a limiting bottom factor for this price on the Wisconsin and Minnesota average manufactured milk price which is used as the basis for the Grade A Class 1 formula base, you see.

I: Oh so it's...in a sense then it's still then the market price as set by the supermarket that provides the base for the calculation of that.

R: Right...if the value of that container of dried milk or that container of butter goes up so that the value of that manufactured...I might explain my term. In Michigan at least we class everything that goes through the Grade A Plant except cottage cheese as a Grade A material, everything else is what we call manufactured milk. It comes under another basic law which is almost the same as Grade A but not quite...it's a little more lenient in some respects; and the manufactured covers all that stuff. Now, I lost my train of thought...

I: Alright, let's stop her for a second.

Stop in tape

I: Well, if on the one hand you said that toward the fifties with the evolution of large-scale supermarkets dairy industries became dependent on them as a retail outlet and they in turn charged whatever price they wanted, the dairy industry has had to supply to them and the farmers were then left with whatever the dairy said.

R: The dairy farmer is the one that gets squeezed in-between the Market Administrator's price and the cost of or what the supermarket would pay; however, the dairies have been squeezed down to where there isn't much left to squeeze in that factor there and so consequently you see the price of milk going up. It has changed and evolved lately. Now there's one other thing that's evolved...I started to tell you...this big super coop deal also controls enough...throws enough weight and everything so with the people that belong to that whole group which means everybody in Michigan, everybody in Illinois, everybody in Wisconsin and everybody in Indiana and Ohio...the Midwest...maybe the whole...I don't know how far they go to tell you the truth, I believe...I think
It's divided into groups and I think we have a Midwest group here; but anyhow, all of those guys get together and agree that they're gonna raise the price of milk fifteen or twenty cents a hundred or two or three cents a quart, however you want to figure it, the supermarket almost if they want to have any milk to sell have to go along with it and this again has gotten down to...at this point now, we've seen in the last few months the milk prices have just gone up and I don't know who is helping or hurting at the moment. But, you can go out there and find gallons of milk for a dollar and a quarter almost now.

I: It seems then as these marketing cooperatives get larger and larger and you were talking about the United States Dairymen Association, that the marketing of the milk increases in geographical area...that is where it is finally sold. So then the sanitation requirements should become stronger and stronger.

R: Well, this is exactly what happens because of the keeping quality. Now, in the Upper Peninsula, Bancroft up there gets milk from clear over there by Ingadine which is a hundred and twenty - thirty miles away; and there's a truck that makes that round every day and hauls milk in. Copper Country gets milk from almost up by Superior and clear down south and west of L'Anse. So, I mean, they cover a good sized area. The Karney down in...now they don't have a Grade A production, they don't make Grade A milk, but they do have a Grade A supply which they sell. Now some of that is sold in Wisconsin and some of that is sold right here in Lansing. Now about once a week a truck from Karney is over here at the local Lansing dairy and bringing milk from up there. Well now, back about the early or middle fifties the use of bulk tanks on farms started and in the Upper Peninsula that really started just about the early sixties so we were ten years behind the rest of the state in putting up bulk tanks in the Upper Peninsula; but all of the farms selling milk for bottled milk were changed over to bulk not by law but by economic necessity...

I: Who was the main impetus of this? Was it the dairies?

R: Well, it was profitable for the hauler if he could go to eight or nine farms and pick up a thousand pounds or fifteen hundred pounds each on each of eight or nine farms and fill two thousand...I mean a twenty thousand
pound tank and haul it into the dairy. It was much more profitable to him than it would be to go to forty-five farms and pick up two cans a piece and bring an almost comparable amount of milk in a van.

I: So the advantage is not in the sheer bulkness of it but in the keeping quality too?

R: Well, now it's a combination...the whole thing is tied together. It's not...none of it's isolated, it's all one factor pushes another. I guess it's all...I guess the word tied together is as good as anything I can think of at the moment. When the...say if a dairy has thirty farms. Of those thirty farms, ten of them had thirty to forty cows and twenty of them had ten to twenty cows...way over half of that dairies milk came in from those ten farms. So, it became profitable in the hauling...it was profitable to the farmer because when he put in a bulk tank he only had to have his milk...he put a tank in big enough so it only had to be picked up every other day. He could have his hauling cheaper because the hauler only had to come there every other day. He didn't have to come every day and it cost the same amount to stop that truck and pick up a thousand pounds as it does to basically to pick up two thousand pounds. The cost is driving in the yard, driving to the farm, driving into the yard and the time involved. Well, it takes about six minutes to run...six or seven minutes to run a thousand pounds in so all you got is an extra six or seven minutes per farm involved to pick up double that amount.

I: As these tanks were installed, were the farmers who installed them having better milk prices as a result?

R: Most of them farmers got a lower hauling rate for it

I: Which was reflected then?

R: Oh no...the farmer pays the hauling.

I: Oh, I see.

R: The dairy doesn't...checks it...makes a deduction and pays the hauler, but it comes off the individual farmers milk price. If the hauling is thirty cents a hundred and the farmer has three hundred pounds, well there's nine...no it's ninety cents, isn't it. Well nine dollars...but it's figured on that basis so the dairy takes whatever the hauler is charging
and multiplies it by the number of hundred pounds that farmer sold the dairy for that period and that would be the price that would be given to him. Now, the can trucks were getting anywhere from thirty to sixty cents a hundred at that time and they found they could haul it for about twenty cents when they could pick it up every other day. So, it was profitable to the farmer just on the basis of the saving in hauling to put that bulk tank in. He got better cooling, basically better keeping quality so the dairy would give him a few pennies more, maybe ten cents a hundred so he come up with twenty or thirty cents a hundred maybe as his increment; so if he's selling a thousand pounds a day, thirty cents a hundred is three dollars a day. Well, that doesn't take too long to amortize a bulk tank. It's one of those things that lasts ten - fifteen - twenty years if you take care of it, so it wasn't too hard to sell the large farm on getting the bulk tank. Alright, now we got have to two-thirds of that dairy's milk being picked up there. Now the price of hauling to the little guy...the hauler doesn't have that...maybe he was hauling all of them for thirty cents. Now when he's lost...the can hauler...now he's lost the profitable ones so he raises his hauling price to sixty cents.

I: Right, because he has to driveout in the country and instead of picking it all up, he picks up only a few.

R: He picks up only a few of them. So, it isn't very long before the few of the larger ones of those has switched over to bulk and now you only got ten out of the thirty left who've got twelve or fifteen cows and the hauler says"I can't afford to pick you up anymore. Go bulk or I won't pick you up." Now, it's just as simple as that. It's nothing that the law did, economics did this. So, half of that ten went bulk and the ones that were too old to afford the fifteen hundred dollars for a bulk tank and couldn't amortize it within the time that they were going to stay on the farm, they either sold the milk to the cheese factory or they bought a plant, powdered plant, or they sold the cows and went out of business.

I: This was a rough one for a lot of those old farmers.

R: You aren't kidding...that was a rough period during that time.
I: In fact it was...the bulk tank innovation and investment required for that that was the big pincher for the little man out there.

R: The same thing right now is happening to the manufacture farms selling milk to the cheese factory or to the butter and powder plant. Down here in the Lower Peninsula the big cooperative Constantine over there just this last fall picked up their last cans. The same process that occurred through the manufactured milk. The Lower Peninsula down here hasn't had any can Grade A milk for ten years or more, maybe more than that. It's all been bulk. But now, we got almost all bulk in the manufactured also because the same same factor involves. You get the larger farms it's more profitable for them to sell in bulk. So they go bulk willingly. Then the hauler pressures the next few by raising the price, pretty soon you get down to where it isn't profitable to run the can truck at all, so they say, "Hey, go bulk or quit." And so, I know probably thirty or forty farmers went out of business at the...last fall on the manufactured farmers that were selling to Constantine because of that. Now I do believe that the Karmey milk products at Karmey in the Upper Peninsula, my understanding at least is that they have all bulk on their manufactured milk.

I: There still is in the Upper Peninsula some can hauling out to Bruce Crossing Dairy.

R: Bruce Crossing still picks up some in cans?

I: That's the only one that I know of.

R: And I don't...I think that probably Copper Country has some cans yet too. I don't think they've gone all bulk on their manufactured stuff.

I: And the only way they can survive by doing it is by giving smaller and smaller prices to those farmers and that makes it pretty unattractive.

R: Well, the price gets smaller in the hauling cost, not in the price paid for the milk but in the cost to getting it to the dairy. That's where the change in it goes and it forces the change. Like I say, this is an evolution...it's not now...when you go into bulk then they write a law that specifies how you shall have a bulk tank and how you shall handle that, so those are done in an optimum manner. Because in most
cases it's just as cheap to do it right when you're doing it as it is to do it wrong. What hurts is when it gets done wrong to start with then you have to change it. So, if you have a pretty good law telling what is required of a person selling with a bulk tank, the requiring hot and cold water to wash it and so forth and the kind of location it can be in, why it improves the quality of the thing without costing the actual farms any more. Although they cry and they moan when they do it, I mean an awful lot of them do, basically a farmer just hates to have anybody tell him to do anything. He wouldn't be a farmer if he wasn't that nature of a person. At least this is my observation. Most of them are extremely honest rugged individuals who don't want to be told anything. But here you come along with a spector that says hey you gotta put a wall thus and so, you gotta have a floor thus and so, you gotta have a sewer and outlet, you can't have a certain kind of trap in it and you gotta have your well so far from this thing, and it just irks the daylight out of them to have to do something because he's told to do it. Primarily on the other hand, his biggest complaint on that type of thing is treatment anyway the same as me. And I have had more people mad at me over the years where I've been accused of not treating the guys neighbor the same as him than I did about picking on him and making him do something he didn't want to do. He thought I didn't make the neighbor do the same thing.

I: Can you give an example? You don't have to mention names, but just describe a situation.

R: Well, we'll take a well for instance. The law says that you've gotta have...it's been changed now, but at that time it said that you had to have fifty feet from any source of contamination. The casing on the suction line has to be enclosed to protect the suction line if it's in an area where there's contamination. Well, the ground water for ten feet down is considered to be contaminated. Okay, I had a farm over...a set of farms over by Norway...two brothers. One on top of a hill...half a mile away was another one down at the foot of the hill with a swamp right by the edge of it. The guy on top of the hill had a well that was about forty feet from his house, it was about an eighty foot well, the water table was down about forty feet in clear beautiful clean sand. Now, the suction line from that man's well into his house was through clean beautiful dry sand. If he got a pinhole in it he'd a sucked air, the well wouldn't have functioned and he'd a been out of business on his
water. From a standpoint of practicality, I couldn't see anything wrong with that well; but the law says he's gotta have a suction line incased if it's within ... and it was about four-feet down. So, I told him he hadda have it incased and he cried and moaned. Well, I went down to his brothers and his brother had about a hundred a fifty feet from the pump and his milk house to where the well was along the edge of that swamp. The well was located okay but that suction line ran two feet below the surface through that swamp and all that swamp water. If He'd ever got a pinhole in that he'd a sucked swamp water which by definition is contaminated. So, I had no choice whatsoever but to tell the one brother to either incase it properly with a pressure system so that there's no chance of suction or change your well or change something so that it will comply with the law. Well, I told them both. They were both mad at me, of course, but the one on the bottom of the hill was completely logical and the one on top of the hill... but if I didn't make the brother on top of the hill change it, I'd a fought 'til dooms day to get the one on the bottom of the hill to change his where it was really logical and needed. However, the law specifically said that both cases had to be. Now that brings in another factor, that I got into more trouble over the history letting somebody off on something like that than I ever did enforcing the law the way it was written. Now we try to use good judgement, but I mean basically... 

I: Troubles from official sources?

R: No, no, we just get into trouble with the neighbors and complaints and so forth for unequal treatment... unfair treatment. And if you want to get your bosses mad at you all you have to do is just not have one farmer say, "Hey"...or you get a coop that's got fifty farmers and their boss writes a letter and it says, "How come that inspector makes this man do it and he doesn't make that man do it?"

I: That has happened to you?

R: Oh...lot of times.

I: Can you describe a couple incidents of that...what about...you don't have to mention names, but just the details of one of the more...ones that stands in your mind.

R: Well; that one with the well is an excellent one I mean, the fact that it got up to the top and was reported back never occurred. I can't think of any offhand...I know it has occurred where those kind of complaints have come in, but I can't think of one offhand. But that type of situation of the well was the
type of thing I was thinking of. Now the other one that we would have would be...oh on the size of a milk house, for instance. I can't tell you of anyone specifically, but I know we've had cases where the law used to say you had to have twenty-four inches clearance all the way around a bulk tank when you installed it which was good because some of the farmers had a wife she couldn't walk back of the bulk tank to wash the wall unless it was at least twenty-four inches. Well, we had a few fellows that would have to because of the size of their tank and the size of their milk house, would have to move one wall out and they would get extremely perturbed. Well now I'd come along and I'd measure one wall to the bulk tank on a farm and we find that we could get twenty-four inches all the way around and we could only get twenty-three inches in one place. Well, gee whiz...twenty-three inches... the farmer had a skinny wife and they can get back of it and clean it so we'd say okay, put the bulk tank in that way. But the neighbor down there he could only get fourteen inches on one wall and he had a fat wife so he had to move his wall or change his milk house. Alright, right away he's in doing what I was saying, it's the same kind of thing...but basically we try to stay pretty close to the rules and we use a rubber ruler once in awhile on things like that, but...

I: But it's hard to use the rubber ruler because the word gets out in those small communities.

R: If that man that I use the rubber ruler on would only keep his mouth shut, there'd be no problem; but they never do. They always go brag to their neighbors. "Why, he let me get away with it." And right away, the neighbors, "Oh boy, he made me move mine." Okay, then we're in trouble.

I: And you're caught in it; and so the tendency is to enforce it even stronger because of that.

R: This is right. We stay pretty close to the rules and to the specs as they are written. Some of the rules, for instance on the well code allows us the supervisors the way the thing is written, if I got a man out here and his well is five feet short of the isolation distance, he's down in sixty feet of clay, the source of contamination we're trying to isolate is downhill from the well, and things like that, I...in my judgement I think it's a safe well, I may write a special dispensation and put it in the guy's file and approve that and survey officers from there on
won't unless they disagree violently with my interpretation of whether it's safe or not, won't argue about it; but basically we try not to get those kind of variations because they get us into trouble.

I: We were talking about how leniency displayed on behalf of the enforcing agent being an inspector or some sort of field supervisor creates because one neighbor will perceive inequality and will register a complaint, the complaint will come back up through the administration, enforcement administration, and the field officer himself will get in trouble through his boss, then he's in the other dilemma of applying even more strict controls and then getting in trouble with the local people because he's perceived as being oppressive and you mentioned that this might be one of the reasons for the increasing detail in the specifications. Will you elaborate on this.

R: Well that very evidently is one of the reasons for the increasing detail. Like I've said, I've got into trouble more often in my history in just about thirty years of doing this...I got into more trouble more often from leaning over backward and not enforcing the law on somebody I know quite as closely as I did on somebody else. So that we tend to try not to lean over backward in cases like the well I was talking about or the milk house and distances and locations and so forth that I was talking about. There isn't any problem on a farm with cleaning. Now if the thing is dirty, it's dirty and the fellow...there's no argument about it. You stop the milk from sale where it is and so forth. If the farmer has a physical problem that is affecting him, if you don't treat him the same on that type of a thing as you do to the neighbor, it's evident to the neighbor that you didn't. The neighbor doesn't see the inside of the dishes to know whether you saw a little film and let it go or he doesn't know what other small things like that are there. But he does...

I: And you said that this might be one of the reasons for the increasing of detailed specifications so that enforcement person will not have to make individual decisions. There will be very little left up to his discretion so that he can avoid these disputes...local dispute problems?

R: Well, I would assume that this is one of the reasons
why the law is so specific. It works that way at least because you know, for instance, our present law spells out the size and shape and the activity and the temperature for practically everything that goes on from the time the cow is started to be washed preparatory to be milking until the milk gets put on the table for some kid to drink and the dairies are also involved...that doesn't only apply to the farm end of it, that applies to the dairies. I mean the law is very specific on structural items and procedural items and on the quality of the finished product actually. But the way it has ended up, the law being so specific, it makes it fairly simple to enforce it if you just go down the line and do it just exactly the way the laws is. Now, the Enabling Act, Enabling Section of the law say that it shall be enforced with reasonableness...not too firm and not too lenient and we do have some difficulty with some individuals...and that's what makes a good inspector basically, it is in knowing where that break point is. Anybody can read the book and find out pretty well what ought to be there, what the book says. But how close to enforce it, how close to come to it is the difference between a good inspector and a mediocre or poor one. Most of our people are pretty good on that. We do have a few where we question their judgement occasionally.

I: Do the inspectors ever use the strategy of when they are lenient of telling the farmer to keep it to himself and just coming right out and making him aware of his own problems as a worker...you know, in a position of a double dilemma?

R: I would say that would have to be an extreme case such as the one I can think of was an old fellow that was sick, sore legs, and ready to go out of business and we found him one day and he was in terrible shape and we should have shut him off, took him off the market, he had a sale bill out and was gonna sell his cows in a few days, so what we did, we washed the dishes for him, cleaned him all up and got him going and got him clean for the rest of that period and well told him "Well, now for cryin' out loud, don't go tell your neighbors this, you're gonna spoil our image...they'll all think we're nice guys and first thing you know why they won't do anything we tell them." That's a rather extreme; but things like that do occur and once in awhile it's advantageous to point out to the farmer that "Lookit, I'm gonna give you a break today, for cryin' out loud don't go spreading it around to your neighbors." And we do do that kind of thing occasionally.
But like I said, that would be an exception rather than the rule.