

ROBERT "BOB" CROSBY

Wayne: Today is November the 16, 2022. I'm Wayne Summers, along with Glenn Ernst and Rex Ferguson, and today we are interviewing Bob Crosby at his home just south of St. Johns. Why don't you start out by talking about how your family originally got into the mint business?

Bob: My grandfather [James Crosby] was originally from Dayton, Ohio, and he was in the dairy business. They had a flood in Ohio and they got hoof and mouth disease so he had to find another job. We think a cousin had preceded him up here and that's why he came to Michigan. At the time that he came here-- it was 1915--and from that he bought the home farm across from Walmart that has removed since then. East of St. Johns, a mile east, he bought 140 acres of muck. At that time, when he bought that, it had two acres of peppermint on it. I don't think he knew anything about peppermint. I don't know how he learned but they harvested that two acres. They didn't have any way to still it because it takes steam so they put it in the barn. In the springtime, they took it out of the barn, took it by horse and trailer up to Carson City. They had a still up there. I don't know what they were doing with it but they harvested that oil. In the meantime, apparently, they made some money on it. I don't know how much.

They had a lot of land down there that was not broken. It was boggy down there. It's all muck. They had big drainage ditches in there but they had to break the muck before they could plant more roots. So they got the mules out and they had a big plow, probably an 18 or 20-inch blade on it, or plow share, I guess they call 'em. The mules didn't like to go in them very much because, in that muck, there were cracks and if their foot went down there, it'd go to the hip and the mules wouldn't do it. The picture I saw was an old tractor with the big, steel wheels with the spikes on 'em, and on that was chained some boards about, I'm gonna say five foot long, maybe half a dozen on each wheel. They'd use that to break the muck because the boards take it over. They never had a problem going down. I don't know how long it took them. I don't know how they got the ditches so big to do that into. Since that time, we put all those big drains in but they had to drain that muck to plant more.

Rex: Tell me a little bit about that first harvest. Did they have hay loaders or did they pitch it up it?

Bob: Everything in those days was manual and I'm not sure if they cut it with a mowing machine that they had for horses or if they had scythes. Anyway, when they had that on the ground, they either pitched it on by hand most of the time, I guess. In the old days they had hay loaders which would come along. You would cut the mint like you would cut a lawn. You'd cut it like a mowing machine. It has a bar on it, six-foot long probably, and it would pull behind the horses. They would cut that mint just like it came and it'd flop over. They would let that age maybe, depending on the weather, half a day or a day because the oil in the mint is in the leaves. After that, they had a rake and they would come along and they'd turn that over to the wet side up, and they'd age that maybe another half a day or day. Then they would load it onto the wagons and take it to the still.

I don't know what year they put the still in up here on [US]-27 but it was quite a long time ago. I know that. There's a big tub that sits outside the still. I don't know if you've ever noticed it but that tub was buried down in the ground and it was connected to the steam line. The steam line connected it underneath and they would put chains in the tub and hang 'em off the outside at the top; tub was open. They'd pitch all that mint in there. When they got in, there would be like five or six, maybe seven guys would form a circle like a dance and go around that and tromp that mint down so they could get as much mint in there as they had on the wagon. Then they would put a big cover. They had a steam hoist. They would use the cover to lower the hoist and clamp that in place and then they would shoot the

steam to it, usually 80 pounds pressure; 100 was the red line. If it got to a hundred, everybody worried. They had to shoot the cold water in but they did that. I don't know what they cooked that--I'm gonna say probably an hour at least. They had a valve on top of the cover. They'd open that valve up and smell. By the smell, you could tell if you'd got most of the mint outta there or not. It smelled different. It really did. You could tell. We liked to check that when I was a kid. I saw that only because my mother [Esther (Green) Crosby] would make lunch for my dad and she had a big old white dish pan with a red rim around the top, and she'd put sandwiches and peaches and stuff in there and we'd get to go to the still and sit down. They had an old Model A seat there. You'd sit there and relax so that was a treat for us. Being around all that, my brother and I learned to drive real young. My brother was a year and a half older and when he was ten, he started driving tractors. When I got to be ten, I started begging to drive a tractor also. It was fun at first. It lasted my lifetime. In high school it was work in the summertime all over, except for sports.

Rex: You mentioned that there was chains in the tub. What was the chains for?

Bob: The chains in the tub: There was a grate on the bottom of it that attached to the chains and that would bring that distilled mint out of what they call cheese, the residue, and they would drop that on the wagon and then they'd put that chain back in there for the next load.

Glenn: What did they fire the boiler with?

Bob: Fired the boiler with coal and wood. I was young when this happened, but Dad would send us over to the little sawmill here around the corner, which is not there anymore. I think it's Feldpauch's on the side. We'd take the wagon and the tractor and we'd load that thing up with slab wood and that's what we'd start it with. It was green so you had to have a little starter. Once you get that going, then you put the coal in it. Then you'd watch the steam gauge. You could open the boiler door up and look in there and it'd be glowing just right or you'd need some--

Rex: What did your grandfather do with the mint oil once it was extracted from that two acres?

Bob: The mint oil? There was no local place in town so they transported it to Kalamazoo to the A. M. Todd Company and they bought it. They were a wholesaler in mint oil. The neighbor told me one time that, when my grandpa was alive and they still'd, they put the mint oil in milk cans. I think they're 10-gallon milk cans, put the cover on 'em, put 'em on the running boards, and tied them down some way, and went to Kalamazoo. They did tell me--this is before 1930. I know that--and when he come home, he had like \$25,000 in cash, but no income tax or anything. I only know that because he built a cottage up at the lake and that was about the time that he built that.

Rex: So, he started out with two acres and then slowly grew from there?

Bob: My grandpa died in 1944 and so I was four years old. My dad took that over. I had two brothers [Larry & J. E.] that helped him and so they did it. When I was about, I'm gonna say eight years old. I can tell you, because that's when the new highway went, the second lane of 27, the still was up and running. The still had been running for a long time. I don't know when, Dad, for some reason, wanted to get rid of the hay loader and everything. What he did is he bought a chopper and he was gonna chop it, but to chop it you had to have something to keep it all in so he ordered some steel wagons made in Flint. I could remember that 'cuz I used to go to the job shop with him. The welders were welding up

these big tanks you see on wheels now. They just welded the tanks and we had to buy the wagon separately. They come home open-topped.

Then they would put that either behind the chopper or beside it. We always used it behind the chopper so it only took one man to drive it. At that time, a couple of us guys, like kids, would get up there with our rakes and we'd rake it from side to side to fill the tank up so you could get the most in it that you could. Then we had a hood that you put on top of the wagon. It was open-fronted, but it was aluminum and was on two by fours. We'd have to pull the next wagon up next to the one that was full and transfer that while it was up in the air. That's how you started. Then you brought the wagon up by tractor to the still here on the highway and you'd pull it in and they'd just hook it up. They had the steam pipes inside the wagon with holes in them and that's how you got the steam in those things. So you'd hook it up and it would be like an hour. Sometimes, if it was greener, it'd be longer. Then they'd check it and when it was done, they'd pull it out with a tractor and they'd pull the next one in and slap the top on it and start again. This tractor went all the way down to the muck again. They had hydraulic hoses on them and they raised those up in the air and opened the back. The back door had hinges on it; opened the hinges and tip it up in the air and jerk it out. It would fall down and then you'd go and chop again.

Rex: Did you ever have to worry about frost in the spring and what did you do about that?

Bob: Oh yeah. Once we got the steel wagons, we dumped them in the wind break, the cheese. It's just chopped up like weeds. They saved those. In case they had frost, they could make smudge pots with them. The last time I saw one, my brother had bought the farm over here just down the road and he had that going and the smoke went right across the highway. He got worried but there was no way to turn it off 'cuz you put a little oil on at the start. That's what they used the cheese for and then, if that didn't happen, you got so much of that cheese that you spread it back on the land itself. That would, hopefully, renew the vegetation content of the soil.

Rex: So burning the cheese helped you on a frosty night to hopefully save the crop?

Bob: Yep, yep.

Rex: Talk a little bit about when the wilt come along and when you had to switch.

Bob: I don't know what year it was, but I know I was maybe 10. They got a disease in the mint called "wilt." The variety of mint that we raised at that time was called Scotch mint and I think they had the same kind of arrangements in the state of Washington. I think they had stills out there. They did some mint, but anyway, they couldn't raise the mint. I think they knew they were getting it. I'm not that close to it but Michigan State [College] made, not a clone of it, but they made the spearmint. They called it American and it had about half the growth that the Scotch mint had. The yield on Scotch was maybe 80 pounds to the acre but the new mint was, if you got 40, you were doing very, very good. In a bad year you might get 20. I can't talk about the price a lot but I know that, when I was in high school, the price of mint oil went down to \$4 a pound. This 2022 that we're in, I'm guessing it's probably up around \$14.

Wayne: Did you raise both peppermint and spearmint then?

Bob: When I was young, we raised just the spearmint but they got some roots. We went up to Grant, Michigan, and got some roots and then we planted some peppermint and then we had peppermint,

both of them. The peppermint was stilled after the spearmint because it took a longer time to blossom. The way we knew it was ready, on top of the spearmint, there's a blossom. It's about eight, ten inches long and it's kind of purple color. When it gets that blossom going, why you know it's getting ripe. That was Dad's sign to go out and cut it and get it done. In fact, there were times, when I was young, my brother would get up at 2: 30 in the morning when we had real hot weather. He'd go down and turn the mint in the middle of the night when the dew was on so the leaves wouldn't fall off. When he got that done, they stilled it pretty early in the morning. They'd go down early and cut so they could collect all the leaves that they could in that.

Wayne: Did you get just one cutting a year then from each of them?

Bob: My dad only took one cutting a year in all of 'em, Now, they're farmers who took two but my dad's philosophy was that if you take the second cutting--it's usually gonna be in August, maybe September--and it'll be about half of what you got before in growth. He always thought it hurt your roots the next year. You wanted to keep all the life in the roots that you could so it would replenish itself next year. In the old days, we'd turn it under with special plows, 12-inch mould boards on them. It would make them lay flat in the snow and stuff. After that, sometimes you didn't do it. I don't know why they didn't do it. I guess maybe they figured they didn't help. Some expert will have to tell me that.

Rex: So your grandfather started out with a couple acres. Your father ran about how many acres when you were a boy?

Bob: When I was a boy, close to 100, 120.

Rex: And then your brothers took over from your father and when they quit, they were running--

Bob: 200 acres probably. My father [Lawrence Crosby] died in 1966, so the brothers took over the farm. Bob Harris's old farm here--just down on Parks Road, the first farm on the right from 27--come up for sale and he bought that. He had to put a new still in 'cuz the guy that he bought it from took it to Wisconsin with him. Then he had to get tanks. Another reason they put the still over there, they had just started--my dad died in '66. I think it was '64 they had to find a boiler. Junior Hettler brought it over from, I think it was Owosso. They installed that boiler but my dad never saw that still work is what I'm telling you. One of the reasons was the highway was getting pretty populated. In the old days--I keep saying the old days, I'm sorry--they used to have National Guards come from Indiana, Ohio, and Michigan. They had convoys coming up 27 and we'd have to come across 27 to get to the still because we were coming from the east to west. Dad didn't like it because it was hard to get in between there and he was afraid one of us was gonna bang something up or get killed so they decided to relocate the still. They took some parts of the still and put on the new one. That's another thing.

Glenn: Is that one gone now?

Bob: The new still? It's still there but they haven't used it. They had some financial problems and they sold the land and it still hasn't been used probably, I'm gonna say maybe eight or nine years now.

Rex: You had mentioned to me, when your grandfather started, there wasn't a whole lot of mint growers around here but they grew and grew to--how many did you tell me?

Bob: Well, I think there was 27 in Clinton County.

Rex: That was when you were a young man?

Bob: When I was a young man. I can tell you right now, with the still on 27 here, around the corner was another one within a mile (that was two); on the corner down on Williams and Parks, Nick Zimmerman had one (that's three); going down the road another mile, the Hennings had one (that's four); and Clair Zuker had one (that's five); going back down Parks Road, Dave Lockwood had one (that's six); you come up Colony Road over there by Chandler, the [Rochester] Colony, Pete Kurnz raised mint; then down further west, Martises had a farm that raised it; and around the corner, Otto Kus raised it; and then Livingstons raised it (they had a still); and Tom Irrer over here. I don't remember Tom when I was young. I don't know if he was raised around--I know he was 'cuz there's the Irrer boys.

I never got to all those other stills. My dad, if he had a rainy day or the cut wasn't ready yet, he might skip over and see someone. I know my cousin on Juddville(?) Road had one and my uncle had one down in Stockbridge. I think Walter March—I dunno if Walter's right--the March family had a still over southwest of us.

Rex: The mint buyer that you went to Kalamazoo, did he ever open up a store here?

Bob: Yeah, they got so many people growing it in the Midwest and it was kind of a nice commodity to have.

Rex: Do you know where that was located in St. Johns?

Bob: Yes, it was down there right beside the library. The building's gone but it's between the library and Paul Automotive that used to be on the corner or the yoga school.

Wayne: Did they transport some things by the railroad then?

Bob: No, none by the railroad. They had so many different areas that they had to go to, different locations, that they had their own truck. They stilled it anywhere and they probably started in July and went into August and maybe some before and some after with the peppermint but they brought their truck down. The farmers would take it to that locale. They had guys there working and they had a big glass tube they'd put in that barrel. It was a 55-gallon drum and it was a steel one and it wasn't a tin foil and it was heavy. They'd put that tube in there and put their thumb on it and they'd bring it up to see the content of the oil and the water at the bottom. They wanted to see what the oil looked like because, if you had weeds in the oil, they had to distill that. They wouldn't be getting as much oil out as they liked so they were kind of fussy on that. Talking about that, in the mint, the old days you used to have to have people hoe the weeds, the pigweeds, and pusley, and those type of weeds out of it. It took crews. When I was in high school, we had a crew of kids that worked from high school and probably eight or ten of them.

Mother told me way back, in the early days, they used sheep in the mint 'cuz sheep wouldn't eat the mint and they also used tame geese but something happened to that. I can remember one time, when I was older, we had the crews from the sugar beet factory come in, when they had Mexican nationals that would come up for the summer to take care of the sugar beets. You had to block the sugar beets so it

took a lot of them. When they weren't busy, Dad would call up and try and get 'em over. He got 'em over and they went down through those fields, maybe 25 people. So that's how they did it. Then along came a spray. I wasn't on the farm when the spray happened but the spray took care of all that. When you look back on it, I don't know how many people they use on a still, but I'm guessing they have to have one at the still, one transporting, and one chopping, and another one. They probably can still with four. In the old days you probably needed 10 altogether so that's big.

Rex: Your brothers got out the mint business how long ago?

Bob: Well, my brother died in 2005, so that would be 17 years ago, J. E. my oldest brother. My brother, Larry, had a stroke in 2006 so they've been out of the mint since then.

Rex: On your ground, do they grow any mint at all, the Crosby fields? They're all switched to other crops?

Bob: When my brother had a stroke, they sold that land. They put it into soybeans and corn, rotated it. All the muck is gone. There's 80 acres here. There used to be but that's still in the family.

Wayne: Was it your family that at one time, about a dozen years ago, tried to do some organic mint?

Bob: They might have. I thought you was gonna say mint mulch. I don't know if they tried the organic or not but they did make the mint mulch. They had the cheese that we get from the stilling and then put it in piles. I don't know what they did with it, if they put fertilizer or how they did it, but they bagged mint mulch for a while. That was the youngest son of my brother.

Glenn: You were marshal one year of a mint parade, weren't you?

Bob: No, not me. I rode with my mother. My mother was quite early in it. You might see me in a car in a picture. I got one in there, but she was so happy.

Rex: How about Larry?

Bob: Larry was the Mint Marshal and J. E.

Wayne: How many mint farmers are left in St. Johns area?

Bob: Livingston, Larry Kus, and Tom Irrer. I don't know of any others. Most of the mint farmers that I know of used black soil. Tom Irrer raises them on the upland and he's done real well.

Glenn: What did you work at, Bob?

Bob: I left the farm when I was, basically, 18. They had this farm. J.E. had his own farm in the family and Larry had Dad's farm but Dad was still alive and Mother. So he told me that there just wasn't room on the farm for another family.

Rex: You were the youngest?

Bob: I'm the youngest so I went to work. I got in at Oldsmobile, worked 32 years there, decided it was enough, and retired.

Wayne: Did you farm any of this land here then at the same time?

Bob: No, we have a farmer farm it now. My brother, Larry, farmed this until he died.

Rex: Then J. E. had his farm across the highway.

Bob: Yeah.

Wayne: Which elementary school did you go to?

Bob: That's interesting. I went to East Ward, which is Dollar General, and then I went to Central and both those schools are gone. Then I went to Rodney B. [Wilson High School].

Rex: There wasn't a one-room school out here when you was going?

Bob: There was [Arnold School] just down the road, but it wasn't open, I guess. My dad went to that one down there.

Wayne: I would have thought you would've gone to a one-room school to start out with.

Bob: Dad lived over here on the -?- farm on Lansing Street, right up here, Loomis Road. There's a white barn right next to the big subdivision now. There was a girl there and they went to that little school and Dad had a mule. They'd go pick her up, put her on the mule. They'd go down to the school. The school is just before Dewitt Road on the left-hand side. I can't remember the name of the people live in there but it's almost across from Bingham Farms in there, but it's torn down. There's a house in there now. He used to tell me that when it [school] got snowed out, that snow would be up to the fences and they'd just go right over the fences. We don't do that anymore. We don't have snow like that.

Wayne: How did you get to the East Ward School? Was there a bus that picked you up?

Bob: I think, when I went there, Mother took us. The only reason I remember that is my brother went a year ahead of me and I snuck in the car to ride with 'em and didn't tell anybody in the backseat. That's how we did it. They took us to school. I got on the school bus after that, I think. I spent kindergarten and first grade there and then I went to Central. I remember I used to sit with Katherine Barnhart, Neil Barnhart's sister. She was a senior when I was probably eight years old or so. She always had a seat saved for me. She's like a big sister.

Rex: Red, white, and blue buses?

Bob: Red, white, and blue buses. I'm glad you mentioned that because I tell people about red, white, and blue buses and some of 'em are my age. They say, "What are you talking about? Where'd you go to school at? That's no such thing as that." I said, "Well, they converted to yellow for safety."

Rex: I rode on red, white, and blue buses too.

Bob: I'll tell you a story. I played baseball, football, and basketball, but I didn't play a lot. We went to Ionia for a double header in baseball. We got over there and we won a double header and were on our way home on that red and white school bus, which was the one they didn't use much, I think. We got at the curve just outside of Ionia. There's a big curve, the Maple River, and the bus conked out. Coach got up and looked at us and said, "Fellas, it's every man for himself. You're gonna have to hitchhike home," and that's what we did. That guy I got in the car with, a Chrysler, had a shaggy dog. He sat right between us in the back seat, older couple. Had to, there wasn't any such thing as payphone back then, I don't think.

Bob: You imagine what people would say to the school now if that happened?

Wayne: Lawsuit city! Do you have any other interesting things that happened then?

Bob: I have to think about it. I got something interesting. This is hunting season and I talked to a guy who told me that his son went bow hunting and someone was sitting in his stand so he went back home and his dad says, "What are you doing here? I thought you was going hunting." He said, "There's someone in my stand, Dad." It was his land. He says, "Follow me." He went out, stopped at the garage, picked up the chainsaw, and went down to the stand. He looked up there and he says, "huh!" He revved up the old chainsaw and the guy says, "Hey, I'm up here!" He says, "You won't be for long," and he starts sawing tree down. He did saw the tree down. I said, "If that happened to me and it fell on him and killed him, I'd be in prison."

Rex: Oh really? The guy was probably down on the ground.

Bob: Oh no. He said, "He jumped outta that tree before it hit the ground. Never saw him again." That's funny!

Glenn: Jeanie, from here, your wife?

Bob: She's from Lansing. She was born in Lansing.

Wayne: How'd you happen to meet her?

Bob: She come to St. Johns as a freshman in high school.

Jeanie Crosby: I asked him for a date.

Bob: She really did. She was on the homecoming court and she didn't know anybody and she knew my cousin, Marilyn. Marilyn said, "Well, go ask Bob Crosby. He's a good guy." So she did and I said, "Yes."

Rex: Next thing you knew you were married. How many years you been married?

Bob: 63.

Glenn: Three boys?

Bob: Three boys.

Rex: I need to go back to the muck story for a minute. The lines of trees, did you folks plant those?

Bob: No, those are wild.

Rex: Why are they there?

Bob: Oh no, the small muck fields, they planted them.

Rex: What were they?

Bob: They're willows and you know why they planted 'em? That's interesting because they planted sugar beets in those days on the muck, vegetables, and they planted sugar beets. I dunno if you've ever seen a little sugar beet seed but it's just about the size of a BB maybe. The wind would come along and blow it out of the furrows so they planted the trees in there so things wouldn't get wind burnt.

Rex: So that really was for the sugar beets, not the mint?

Bob: I think it was dual because they always went with the sugar beets to the field that had the closest wind breaks.

Rex: What'd you say the trees were?

Bob: Willow trees.

Rex: Why didn't you use pines or anything? Wouldn't grow in the muck?

Bob: You could plant the pine trees or the willow trees yourself. You take a sprig off a live willow tree and you stick it in the ground about that far and it'll grow and it was cheap. I mean, they could do that themselves. In fact, Nick Zimmerman down here talked to Dad and wanted to get some. That's how he planted those. They just, in the last couple years since they sold the farm, they've taken a lot of those out.

Rex: Are those black willows then?

Bob: I don't know. They're just willows. I think they must be only good for 50, 60 years because most of them come over and die and fall over. Pine trees are very good against the wind but I don't know if they're high enough. My brother planted some of those. He got some free ones from the government. He planted them. Look at my pine trees here. They die after a while too. The needles fall and everything.

Rex: Maybe they don't do well on muck.

Bob: Oh, they do well on muck alright. I can't remember but I think Livingston's have some on theirs.

Glenn: Did you ever have a muck fire?

Bob: My uncle, -?- , owned this farm, Willowbrook, right down here in the corner, and that's muck on there and he had a fire down there one time. I think it burned for a couple years, smoldered. He couldn't put it out 'cuz of all that vegetation. I don't know how they ever got it out 'cuz I was too young but I remember the smoke. I remember Mother telling us to be careful what you do down there.

Rex: I think I told you that little couple-acre piece of muck that's behind my house, Dad blew the stumps there when I was a little boy. The next year we burnt that brush pile and stumps and it got down in the muck. All winter people would stop by you, "You got smolder above the smoke there." We go down and shovel and shovel and shovel and think you had it out and then a couple weeks later, here it's smoldering again someplace else; finally put itself out in the spring when it rained.

Bob: I will tell you, the muck that we had, some fields that only had like eight inches of muck on. I mean, it was clay underneath. Some of 'em are deep. I never knew which one was deepest 'cuz I didn't plow much. I was too young at that time to do that.

Glenn: Did you ever have to plant and replant the mint?

Bob: Yes, the first year you plant it, it's called "row mint," 'cuz it grows in rows like corn and peas and everything else but after that first year, it comes back into "bed mint," they call it, which is like a lawn.

Rex: When you say rows, these are a foot apart or 8 inches apart like corn?

Bob: They're probably 18 inches. You don't mind that so much because the more you got in there--. We used a manure spreader and they put some flanges on the back of it.

Rex: Like we got up the museum.

Bob: You dig the roots first. You have a breaking plow and now a regular plow. You leave it plowed like this and you go in with an old potato digger and you dig those roots out. They go on a conveyor that goes in here and it goes into a wagon. Then you take that wagon and where you want the roots to be next year and you dump those roots and you cover it up with a little dirt to protect them from freezing all the way to death. Then you take a big knife. I can tell you what it looks like but I can't describe it to you. It's got a handle crossways and it's got a big blade on it. I don't know what they used it for to start with, but you'd saw through those and cut those up.

Glenn: Maybe a sod knife?

Bob: It was about that long.

Glenn: Teeth in it?

Bob: Anyway, they would cut through that. When they dumped it in a pile, they'd smooth it like a piece of pound cake. Then they'd take that knife and they'd cut across that and then I think they'd go down the other way. I never had to do that. I was gone.

Rex: Was it a straight knife or was it an angle?

Bob: Straight knife.

Rex: The handle and everything was straight?

Bob: No, the handle was offset.

Rex: The knife was about that long?

Bob: Oh, it was longer than that, I think.

Glenn: Didn't it have teeth in it?

Bob: You rivet the blades on to the bar, sickle bar. You get that cut and then you come along, you put those on the manure spreader or the planter and then you made with two troughs on each side. That would go down through and get to the beaters. The beaters would go like this and break that stuff up and they'd drop down into the ground and then they'd cover up with the coulter on the end. That's how they planted it. That would be good for four or five years, maybe longer. Then you'd go in that fall, if you knew you needed roots, wanted to replant, you'd take 'em out of the field and then you'd start that whole process over again.

Glenn: 'Cause they'd get so thick after four years?

Bob: I think the yield goes down. Maybe that's the reason why, Glenn. I don't know. I know some of 'em have gone longer. My brother had some that went longer than that.

Rex: It's probably a lot like alfalfa where the number of plants decrease over years so you don't have the stand that you had the first couple, three years.

Bob: When I was a kid, they raised a Scotch mint. It would grow almost up probably, well three feet maybe, and they got good production. If you get American mint like that, that's a good thing. I don't know what the yield is now, but when we had 30 and over, we felt good. Some of it would always go less but that's way back in the beginning of the strain and the fertilizers were different.

Glenn: I was just thinking you probably didn't have to fertilize too much because of the muck. Did they fertilize?

Bob: I think potash was one of them, not so much nitrogen, I don't think. He used 10-10-10. That's what he used on it. How's that? That's pretty even, isn't it?

Glenn: Did you have farm animals?

Bob: When I was little, we did. I can remember we had a Jersey cow that my brother milked and he'd always make sure that he got ahold of one and squirted milk all over us and the cat if we got a little close. We had two cows and that's just about it. A little later on, he and another guy went in on the bull. Dad bought, I'm gonna say probably 25 Angus cows. He and another guy did the same thing and they bought an Angus bull together. That's how they replenished the herd. I always wanted sheep; never had sheep. You probably had sheep and didn't want 'em.

Rex: Hated sheep!

Bob: We always had a little dog that was nasty to other people than us. We had a pony at one time. In fact, the local guy owned the Sinclair dealership--we got our oil and our gas from him--had a daughter and she wanted to have a horse. So we talked dad into bringing the horse out. The old horse's name was Thunder, pretty. He was an out-west horse and he had a white blaze down his face. She had an army saddle. So they come out there and I guess Dad said the deal was that he'll house him if he'll let us ride it once in a while. So Dad would go out and I'd say, "Let's ride the horse and get on him." I forgot my dad was raised with mules and horses and everything and so when he saddled that old horse up--I don't know how old the horse was, but he'd get on. He'd just run him to death, take him round the field two or three times. I think once I'm gonna ride but he did that, take the pep out of him, you know because he had didn't get ridden very much. He tried to keep him a little tame for us.

Then we got a pony. Guy had a pony that was 25 years old and Larry, my brother, wanted that pony, so my dad bought him. That pony, he never would run. He might trot a little bit when we first got him. They used to have rodeos up here at the ranch behind McDonald's, that field up here in the next road, Townsend. They called it the -?- farm. It was white buildings and so forth. They had rodeos up there on Sundays. I can tell you the years 'cuz what I'm about to tell you is that my folks come home from Florida. Larry and I would take the pony up to the rodeo and just ride him and sit and watch. When we get ready to come home--Dad come by one time. We were driving home and he said we were sleeping and the old horse was bringing us home along the fence, the new highway. So we were quite young.

Rex: I rode to school on my bicycle when I was about third grade, Prairie School, you know. We walked back and forth to school during the fall and spring rather than ride the stupid bus for a half hour, 45 minutes.

Bob: Yeah. I didn't ride it all the time, but I mean, in the summertime.

Wayne: From here?

Bob: From the house.

Wayne: Right here? That's about two miles, three miles?

Bob: Yeah.

Wayne: Did you go along 27?

Bob: Yeah, we had to go along 27. Sturgis St. up there was gravel and that's where 27 went by at the time. It was called Scott Road on the other side of [M]-21. I call it old 27. That's 'cuz I'm so old. A lot of times we'd go up to the first corner by Bees [Sports] and then we'd turn left. Everything was gravel. The yellow barn on the corner always had a Collie dog and he always come out to chase us and we hated that but that's how we went. None of those subdivisions was there at the time. It was just wheat fields.

The funny thing is, my aunt told me that my great-great-great grandfather came from County Down, Ireland. He came here in 1794 and he come through Cape May, New Jersey. We don't know how he got here but she said that there was three boys that come together. One stayed in the east, one stayed in

the Midwest, and one went west. So I got Crosbys, probably, all over the place. I know Dayton has a lot of Crosbys. I think my grandpa was one of seven or eight kids.

Wayne: Thank you.

Bob: You're welcome.

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