

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Mörlunda Farms Project

Employee Experience

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TRUMAN LAWRENCE

Interviewed

by

Hugh G. Earnhart

on

March 1, 1980

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INTERVIEWEE: TRUMAN LAWRENCE
INTERVIEWER: Hugh G. Earnhart
SUBJECT: Horned and Polled Hereford Cattle, Purchasing
Cattle, Shows
DATE: March 1, 1980

E: This is an oral history interview with Mr. Truman Lawrence of Mörlunda Farms for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program on March 1, 1980 at approximately 3:30 in the afternoon.

Truman, tell us a little bit about your parents in your early days of growing up.

L: I was born in Elk City, Oklahoma and went to high school and graduated from high school in Lamesa, Texas. My parents are still living in Oklahoma. I have one brother and three sisters. My brother was interested in agriculture and livestock, the same as myself.

I moved to West Virginia in 1949 and started working for McIntosh & Sons in Spencer, West Virginia and worked there until the time of his dispersal. Then I went to work at Double Z Ranch in Durham, North Carolina. I worked at Double Z Ranch until they sold out. From Double Z Ranch I went to Poca Dot Farms in Charles Town, West Virginia and worked there until 1960 when I moved to Mörlunda Farms. When we moved to Mörlunda farms, we had horned Hereford cattle and changed over to polled Hereford cattle in 1965.

E: What brought you to West Virginia to start with?

L: Well, the grass looked a little greener in West Virginia than it did in Oklahoma and Texas. In fact, at times we went through periods of dry weather and drought and it looked like a good future in West Virginia.

E: When you were working for these other ranches, what was your

main responsibility at those ranches?

- L: I started off as herdsman and fed show cattle at McIntosh's in Spencer. At Double Z Ranch and Poca Dot Farms, I was manager of the operations. Poca Dot Farms was a sizeable operation and was owned by Mower Lumber Company; they had farms in Virginia and West Virginia. We ran both commercial cattle and purebred cattle. We showed cattle extensively.
- E: You're showing horned Hereford. Where did you show, local or national level?
- L: We showed state and national. The year that we showed at Poca Dot Farms, we had International champion bull in Chicago, the best ten head, the winning get of sire. After my move to Mörlunda, when we had horned Hereford cattle, we showed all over the country. The last two years that we had horned Hereford cattle, we won as much as any other herd in the country. We had the undefeated bull for two years in a row, won the get of sire, won the three bulls, won the two bulls, and the best ten head at every major show in the United States. We had champion bulls in Louisville, Denver, Arizona National, Eastern National, Chicago and made the whole circuit.

When we started in the polled Hereford business, we were very selective in what we put together. We tried to develop cattle that would do good on grass and do it economically. We spent a year looking for cattle before we purchased any cattle. We looked at different types of operations and how they handled their cattle and how they took care of them. When we started selecting, we selected cattle that would do good on grass. We paid special attention to milking abilities. We were looking for more size, but yet we wanted femininity in our cows and wanted masculinity in the bulls. We tried to get a step ahead of the other breeders at that time.

- E: When you first contacted about coming here as manager to Mörlunda, what did you know about Mörlunda prior to coming here?
- L: I had been to Mörlunda Farms on numerous occasions. I attended their sales from 1949 for years. I knew the Nelson family. I thought it was a nice operation. I liked the way the place was kept up, the buildings were maintained, and the type of people that they were.
- E: Obviously, the switch from the horned cattle, which you were part of, and then the switch to the polled Hereford cattle stirred quite a storm right to the time that the polled Hereford people were trying to acquire identity, the horned people trying to hold the polled people down, and you were sitting right in the thick of it. How did you see Mörlunda's

role in that switch?

- L: You have mixed emotions when you change breeds of cattle because you know all the people. The people you have been associated with for the last ten or fifteen years were mostly in the horned Hereford business. But in the eastern part of the United States, the demand for polled Herefords is much better than horned Herefords. The biggest part of the breeders in our part of the country are made up of small breeders who have cow herds of about 25 or less. These people work at other jobs and they do not like to dehorn. The commercial men sell all their calves mostly at feeder calf sales, and they work away from home. They consign them; then they find out they have to be dehorned before they are eligible to sell. So we decided our future in this part of the country was with polled Hereford cattle.
- E: Did or do you know of any experience where pressure might have been exerted in any way, shape, or form in regards to that switch?
- L: Oscar Nelson, who is president of Oscar Nelson Inc., I would say, made the major decision on switching to the polled cattle after we sold out the horned cattle. We looked at different, exotic breeds of cattle and figured that we could probably make some fast money quick in exotics, but in the long haul, polled Herefords probably had more future than any breed of cattle at that time.
- E: Say you are in the horned business and you sold out for financial considerations. When you were making this investigation as what to go back into to restock the farms, do you know of any heavy lean on the part of the horned people to stay in the horned business? Certainly the polled association, the polled members, were excited about you going in that direction.
- L: There were a lot of people in the horned Hereford association that were not too happy that we went with polled Hereford cattle. When we went with polled Hereford cattle, a lot of the customers who had been purchasing cattle from Mörlunda Farms switched right over and started buying polled Hereford bulls and a lot of them who had registered horned Hereford cattle switched over to polled Hereford cattle.
- E: When you first made that switch, obviously you had to make some adjustments. Can you recall any of those major adjustments that one had to make suddenly to be in the polled Hereford business?
- L: We completely sold out and we started with polled Hereford females. We started showing right after we got into the polled Hereford business, and we showed all over the United

States. We went to the West Coast and were very successful; we had champion bulls at the Cow Palace, reserve champion bull, best ten head. A lot of guys would kid me about how many horned Hereford females we still had and figured the good ones we showed were probably out of the horned Hereford females. I told them that we didn't have any horned Hereford cattle at all and they were all polled Herefords. But any-time you make a change you get a lot of ribbing, a lot of kidding, a lot of teasing, and a lot of guys trying to find fault in it. You do good showing cattle; there is always somebody looking.

E: It goes with the territory, huh?

L: That's right!

E: When you started to put this new herd of polled Herefords together, you mentioned the various traits you were looking for. Do you remember some of the people you were talking to, the types of pedigrees you were looking for, things of this sort?

L: We were not really interested as much in pedigrees as we were in cattle that would perform. We looked at a lot of cattle. We traveled through Texas, Kansas, Nebraska, all through the Southeast, and looked at polled Herefords in general, trying to get a picture in mind of what kind of cattle we could buy, what we could afford to buy and what we could put together. After we sold out the horned Hereford cattle, we had a little money in the bank so we could purchase about what we wanted. A lot of the polled Hereford cattle we looked at just didn't have enough milking ability in them to suit us. We were very select in the cattle that we put together.

The first we bought was a complete herd in Virginia that had some foundation females and some bulls in the herd that we used for a few years. In fact, one of the bulls that came with the herd, the first year we showed offspring, we showed them both in the American Hereford Association shows and the Polled Hereford Association shows. We had two bulls out that year, and we made two bulls gold trophy, and two bulls registered of merit in one show season, which was really a pretty good feat at that time. We split our show string and showed half of them in Hereford Association shows and half of them in the Polled Hereford Association shows.

E: Looking back at some of those days of out-on-the-road, traveling in the railroad car, and trying to hit as many national shows to build a reputation in the polled Hereford business that you had left in the horned Hereford business, can you remember some of those experiences that stand out?

L: In 1968, we probably made as many shows as any herd ever made

anywhere in the country. We started off at the Illinois State Fair, made Illinois and West Virginia State Fair, Indiana State Fair, Ohio State Fair, Tennessee Valley A & I Fair in Knoxville, Tennessee State Fair in Nashville, from Nashville to Memphis for the Mid-South Fair. After we left there we went to Tulsa, Oklahoma, which was a Standard of Perfection Show, and from Tulsa we went to the Pacific International in Portland, Oregon, which was another Standard of Perfection Show. From Pacific International we showed at Sacramento, which was a Register of Merit Show. I'll go back a little bit to Pacific International, which was also a Registered of Merit Show. We sold half of the cattle in the Registered of Merit Show and half of them in S. O. P. Show. In the next week at Sacramento they had the Poll-a-Rama, which was an all-polled show. The following week was the Cow Palace in San Francisco. We had the champion bull, reserved champion bull, and won all the group classes and the best ten head. That was open show so the polled and horned cattle were shown together. We went from the Cow Palace to the Great Western in Los Angeles and we even did better there. We won all four champions in all the group classes, left the Great Western and came back to the Golden Spike Show in Ogden, Utah, which was a Registered of Merit Show, then on into the International at Chicago. That year we showed cattle, the cattle were on the road from the first week of August to almost Christmas. We got back in December and then started out on what we called a grapefruit circuit. We went to Ocala, Tampa, showed at Montgomery, which was a big show that year, the Dixie International and on down to Ft. Worth.

- E: When that show string is on the road, what's a typical day like from the time you get up in the morning until you can finally get back in that bunk late at night?
- L: We were traveling by rail, something that might be interesting on the railroad car. It was an eighty foot car. It was originally a car built to haul polo ponies in. On one end of the car we had sleeping quarters; we had three bunks, a little cook stove and a heating stove. We had a generator to run fans. You could take care of the cattle just as good on the car as you could if they were tied in the tie-outs or in the barn at a fair. The only thing you couldn't do to the cattle was exercise them, but you could brush them; you could even use an electric blower to blow them all. When you got to the show the cattle were rested; they were frisky; they wanted a little exercise, but they were in good shape. You could lead them out off the car and into the show ring; they would be almost ready to show.

The hours were long, but if you had a good day, it was worth all the time and effort that you put in showing the cattle. You met a lot of people; you made a lot of contacts. You showed cattle all over the country by the people you met and

in the contacts you made. When we won at the Great Western, a fellow there, John Danley, saw and bought about all the females we had in the show string, came back to the farm and bought several bulls and some more females to go with them. The purpose of showing cattle is the contacts you make, and to let people in different parts in the United States see your cattle and see what kind of cattle you are producing. It also gives you a chance to meet a lot of people. It's just another form of advertising, and when you are selling cattle, you need to be selling and advertising all the time. The more personal contacts you make the better off you are.

E: How many people did you normally carry with you when you were at the height of the show string?

L: On the long trip we made, we had 21 head of cattle. We started off with three guys and we picked up a boy in Oregon that helped us the rest of the way with 21 head. So there were four people.

E: What type of or what characteristics did you look for in the personnel who worked with that show string?

L: Well, you need some young boys with a lot of energy because it takes a lot of energy to keep a string of cattle on the road. You like to have clean-cut, young fellows. You like to have people who have nice manners, who have time to stop to talk to the spectators and explain to them about the cattle and tell them about the operation at home. If you can make a few contacts like that, if the boys are friendly and nice to the people, and if they are interested in purchasing cattle, they will make a special effort to come back to your place to purchase cattle. Being friendly to people is one of the most important things I think you need to do on the road. You need to be courteous, polite, and friendly to all of them, **plus**, a lot of hard work to keep the cattle in shape where they will look nice to the people so they will stop by to look at them.

E: Did you ever have any experience of having to give the walking papers to people halfway through a show season because their characteristics just didn't match up or measure up to what Mörlunda thought they should be?

L: Well, most of the crew that we have had on the road have been a good bunch of boys and have all done a pretty good job. We haven't had any problems evolve with the boys that we've had on the road with the show cattle.

E: What about the personnel at the farm over the years? You've no doubt had a string of people who've come in and out in the number of years that Mörlunda has been there. Any that stand out who worked for you as individuals you would like to have

kept or some you wish they would never have showed up?

- L: I think that's true in all types of operations. In other words, you have good people and some that are not so good. It seems like in the cattle business, if you get somebody broken in that is real good, everybody wants to hire him. We have had some real good guys who have left here and gone to other farms and operations and have made good. We are glad to see people who have started with Mörlunda that can go on and manage other places and be a top person at other places and do a good job for other people. For the last 40 years that Mörlunda has been in operation, there have been 35 to 40 people that started out at Mörlunda, who are managing some sizeable cattle operations all over the United States today. That speaks pretty highly of the type of people that Mörlunda has had working for them over the years.
- E: Those old days of out showing on the road, you were right in thick of things when we wanted what we call short and low to the ground. If they weren't low, we broke about five bales of saw around them and built them up and did a lot of doctoring on cattle, trying to straighten that cow out. Some of them could never have a calf; some bulls never could breed any cows. Looking back at those days, how do you feel about those days?
- L: You know the old saying, "The pendulum always swings and never stops where it should." In the cattle business we went through every fad and fancy that you could imagine. In fact, when I first started in the cattle business, we had large cattle, herd bulls, weigh 2,400 to 2,500 pounds in pasture condition. All the extension boys would say, "Well, they're just too big." They started . . . We had judging classes come and they would call them horse ear or coarse. We started breeding these tabby cattle, and so the reason for them was they wanted short head; they wanted them short coupled; they wanted them short legged; they wanted them just short period. We got them short. A lot of people did. A lot of the breeders did not go to the extremes that some of them did. But then they started on the swing again. They wanted them tall and they wanted them long, and I personally think we were forgetting the basics of the cattle business. In other words, when you start measuring cattle, you measure the length of the head; you measure the hocks from the ground; you measure the cannon bone; you measure the hips; you measure the shoulder. They forget that these cattle were made to eat grass and convert ruffage into beef; they have enough constitution to do this, to raise a calf, to carry a calf, and to wean that calf efficiently. You can go to the extreme either way. You should be practical and you should pay more attention to the economics of it.

Probably in the future we are going to pay more attention to feed conversion on all the bulls we have in test stations. In other words, these cattle that can gain or put a pound of gain or five pounds of gain should be in more demand than one that will gain five or six pounds on test. He might eat fifteen pounds of grain for every pound he gains. In the cattle business, it takes a lot of common horse sense to get along with all the knowledge we have. We go to all these clinics, and I heard the fellow say at the last one, "Man, I already know more than what I am getting done. We need to apply some of the knowledge that we already have, which we don't do." I think the type of cattle that we are trying to raise today is probably more on the right track if we don't go too far to the extreme on them than we have had in the last fifteen to twenty years.

E: One thought that has always gone through my mind or one concern is what were all these tricks about? I know why they were doing them, but what were they in the 1950's and 1960's when we were carrying as much beer in the show box, not for human consumption but for cattle consumption? Do you want to talk about some of those old tricks?

L: I'll tell you what I've heard the big boys say about some of those tricks. On these short coupled cattle, they wanted them full and they wanted them filled high. They would give them beer with a little salt in it. It would have a tendency to have a little gas and it would fill the cattle a little bit high. Other people would just give them a couple of salt capsules the night before and let them drink two or three buckets of water the next morning. When you do cattle that way, you upset their digestive tract and they don't do too good for the next two or three days, but they look good show days. To me I think it's a little bit . . . If the Humane Society was as strong back then as they are now, they would probably be on the boys the way they were feeding and taking care of the cattle.

Years ago, they wanted the hair on the tail; they wanted it real big and real fluffy. Today they trim it all off and they put a hairnet around it; they want it small. Back in the 1960's we wanted as much hair on the cattle as we could get; we wanted hair on their bellies and we would comb the hair down. Today we clip all the hair off of their bellies; we clip most of it off of them all over. You can take an animal with a lot of hair, especially a lot of hair under the belly, and you can just clip them up and they will look shorter, deeper bodied. It's kind of an optical illusion to make them look a little taller and a little longer. There has been probably too much artificial in the show cattle business. Even today, there is too much. We make work out of a lot of it.

E: Do you think there is ever a possibility that we will outlaw

everything except a brush and maybe a pair of dog clippers or something just to get the fine hairs?

- L: No, I don't think so. I think you know different guys start different fads and different styles. As long as they keep these cattle attractive and groom these cattle real good and present them real good and they have a lot of eye appeal . . . I still think cattle should have eye appeal. In other words, we can go for records and all of that, but you've still got to eyeball cattle to see that they are structured correctly, correct on the feet and legs. If an animal is well-groomed in a show ring, or if he looks clean and presented right, he is just more attractive and looks better to everybody.
- E: Speaking of show ring, we'll just follow that line for a second. You've judged a lot of big shows and done your share of smaller county fair shows and things of this sort over the years. What do you look for in that show ring? Obviously the animal and so on, but usually the animal has got it or a professional has got their hands on it giving them their eye appeal, but what else is going on in that ring besides just the animal itself?
- L: The first thing I look for is that the animal is structurally sound, in other words, sound on his feet and legs and can move and walk good. Then you look for masculinity in the bulls. You look for bulls that have good feet and legs; you look for some rear quarter, length of quarter, overall frame size. When you are judging cattle, it is really a comparison. In other words, you have a group of bulls in a ring and you are comparing the sorriest bulls with the best bulls. What you do is start with the bull that has the most desirable characteristics that you think will turn out to be the best overall bull. On females it is the same thing except you look for more femininity, maybe upper developments and so forth in the females.
- E: What about this three-man judging system. You have been part of that in a number of shows. Do you feel you are working by yourself or you are working against the other two or, "The hell with them, I'll do my own thing"?
- L: I think the whole purpose of it is that each man should place the cattle exactly like he sees them and not try to guess how the other man is going to place them. Everybody does not see cattle alike and it is a good thing that we all don't look for the same things in cattle. What is important for me might not be as important to the next man on the composite system, and I think that is good. In other words, the reason why they started this with the bigger shows is to try to keep any favoritism out. In other words, there could be some cattle that Mörlanda bred in a big show with a three-man system.

Nobody could say anything because there is a three-man system and you can place them that way and not feel bad about it. You go to a show and there will be just a single judge and the spectators will be standing around saying, "Well, he is a friend of so-and-so's." A three-man system should take care of that. If one man doesn't place them like the other two, somebody may say, "Well, he's a bad judge," but he might be looking for something that the other two didn't see in that animal and he might be the better judge of the two. It's a little slower. It takes a little time, but I think it's a fair way of doing it and I think it works all right in a big show.

E: When you are judging a show by yourself, you certainly can't be void of the comments that are said in the stands. Occasionally, you overhear things walking around and things of this sort. Do these things get to you?

L: Doesn't bother me a bit in the world!

E: We used to do it at the horse shows.

L: "That guy left his seeing eye dog at home" and so forth. No, if you go out there and if you are honest and you do the best job you can; you do not make everybody happy. There is no way in the world you can, and if you start trying to make everybody happy, you try to divide it up and take care of somebody to make somebody happy, you just mess up the whole job of judging and you get into more trouble than you thought you were going to get into. So my advice would be if you are judging a show, just go out there and do the best job you can and don't satisfy anyone except yourself.

E: Have you ever had an experience in all those years out, somebody coming in and really laying into you about something?

L: No, not really. I've had some guys come up and ask how come I didn't put their heifer up and I tried to give them a logical reason why I didn't use their heifer.

E: Do you make any kind of advance preparation for that to judge that show, either just before it starts or the night before by looking over a program or things of this sort?

L: No, I think if you start reading the magazines and try to figure out how somebody else places the cattle you are going to get into trouble. It doesn't make any difference if Doctor so-and-so made this bull a champion a week before; cattle change from show to show. If they are going to be placed the same at every show, you would only need to have one show and forget about it. There was a heifer this last year who stood eighth in the national and later on she was the champion out in Denver. So we shouldn't read too much

or try to figure out where the cattle were shown the week before, or anything else. Just go in there and judge them like you see them and let the chips fall where they may.

E: Moving back to the farm. Certainly your idea of what a manager was was somewhat standardized or at least crystalized in your mind before you came here because you had been a manager at other places. But what do you see as your role here at Mörlunda? In other words, do you have a certain personal goal in seeing things done? Day to day operations are one thing, but in the long range scheme of thing what do you see as your major contributions?

L: Let me go back just a little bit. When you are younger, you think you are a whole lot smarter than you are, and the older you get the dumber you think you are sometimes. But the trouble a lot of young managers make when they come into operations, they start off like a house afire. You know the old saying, "A new broom sweeps clean." I think the manager and the owner should work close together, especially a new manager until the manager gets the ideas of how the owner wants to operate the farm, how much money he wants to spend, what the goals are, and so forth. A lot of managers have got into trouble. They come into operations and try to change everything. All the ideas the previous manager had were no good; they changed the complete operation around; the herd bulls were no good; the cow herd was no good. I think my advice would be that the young managers get the feel of everything before he starts making any radical changes. When you start making changes, spend a lot of time thinking about it and planning and talking over the situation with the people he is working for and try to satisfy everybody before he does it.

On the operation at Mörlunda, I worked here three or four years and I still was hesitant about doing certain things. But the longer I have worked here, the better the understanding the owner and the manager have; we know how each other operates. We kind of . . . Oscar kind of knows how I am going to operate. I kind of know what he wants done, and it works out real good, but it takes time to do that. I don't accomplish everything today that he would like to get done. It seems like you never . . . Progress is slower than it should be a lot of times. Our goal has been to try to improve the polled Hereford cattle every year. We try to keep fertility up on the land; we tried not to rob the soil; we try to keep maintenance up on the buildings and on the farm. In the wintertime it looks like we're doing more tearing up and destruction than we are improving, but when spring comes we try to get the sod back in good shape; we try to get our crops in.

I think on a purebred operation, you need to kind of run a neat ship; you need to keep your fences in good shape. One

of the most important things is you need to keep a good set of records and we try at Mörlunda to keep an accurate set of records. We try to make sure that every calf is registered, his ancestors are all correct, there is no juggling around of the pedigrees, and we try to register every animal on the farm right. We try to keep accurate records on weaning weights and so forth. When you start juggling records, you really don't fool anybody except yourself. Purebred breeders ought to be honest with themselves and try to keep the best set of records they can.

- E: What's a typical day for a manager here at Mörlunda? Just pick a day. What's the first thing you do in the morning? What's the last thing you go at night?
- L: Well, as a manager you don't look for the good things; they take care of themselves. He's really a troubleshooter. He just goes through pastures looking for trouble. It seems like the typical day some days is being a parts man, especially in the wintertime: picking up parts that broke down, keeping equipment running, keeping affairs in order, shifting with everybody, being a jack-of-all-trades and really being a master of none. Guys on the place say, "You never ever see anything that is good," and I say, "The good things take care of themselves. I am just looking for trouble." I go through a pasture looking for an animal that is sick. I'm looking for something that needs to be doctored or a fence the needs to be repaired or a gate that is broke down; you just look for trouble.
- E: You're used to finding plenty of it, huh?
- L: You can find it, and sometimes without even looking. They will be running and tell you about a lot of it.
- E: You probably ought to say something about the individuals who have worked for you in some detail. Any that stand out over the years?
- L: We are very fortunate. We have a real good cow herdsman, Bill Burlton, who has been with us for several years now. He takes care of the cow herd and is as good as any if not better than most as a technician. He's good at doctoring and nursing cows. Whatever he tells you, that's the way it is; he's honest with you. It's important being a manger; when you ask a question, he should tell you the truth. In other words, if you say, "Did you doctor this animal?" and he says, "Yes," then you don't worry about it. I consider him one of the better ones you'll find anywhere.
- Cammy Caffendaffer is in charge of the sale cattle. He is an excellent herdsman and keeps abreast of things most

of the time.

Farming anymore, the biggest problem is finding real good farm help that will take care of equipment, maintain it, and take care of it right like it belongs to them. It's getting harder to find real good farm help.

E: Everybody wants to work with the show cattle.

L: Sale cattle and so forth. They don't like to do the farming, and yet, there is no work. In fact, there is less work, less headaches on the farm than there is working with cattle. Because when you park that tractor in the shed at night, it's there; you have to worry about the cows getting out at night. You can never predict what time a cow is going to calf so you have to be checking on her different times of the night for calving season and so forth.

E: Your long years here, there certainly have been a number of animals that have stuck in your mind as being outstanding, ones you may have watched to go on to do something somewhere else. Can you go through that?

L: Well, you know the most satisfaction you get out of selling cattle is repeat business, and we have been very fortunate here, having a lot of repeat business. We sell as many bulls in private trades than any polled Hereford operation in the United States. I think we sell more than the other private traders, in fact I know we do. We have a lot of repeat business. It gives you satisfaction knowing that the bulls are making your customers money and doing good for them. We very seldom ever get a bull back for any reason. We stand behind the bulls we sell and guarantee them to be breeders and hope that we can improve the bulls we have been selling. That's our aim; we try to improve the cattle every year. As long as you keep repeat customers, you'll stay in the cattle business.

E: I was thinking in terms of the acquiring of the Canadian Fantastic, for example.

L: We have been very fortunate in the bull we used in the mating of the Fantastic, and Mörlanda Fabulous. We sent semen to Penn State University, and they bred a random group of their cows. Canadian Fantastic made a hundred percent golden certified meat sire. Also of the Mörlanda Fabulous and the Canadian Fantastic bull, we had over a hundred daughters put in the herd. The daughters we sold to other people were considered the tops or at the top of all the cattle they had in the herd. They mate really well with about any blood line. They have adequate size; they are very sound, muscle cattle and they are awfully good mothers; they are real good milking cows. The Fabulous bull, we have probably fifty daughters now in the herd. They've

made really outstanding mothers. We have another bull, S. R. Victor II, who on test, was the top gold seal sire in that test. He was tested with some of the top bulls in the country. We have probably seventy daughters of his that will be in the herd this year and we expect to have a hundred by next year. We have sold a lot of semen on him. His sons are on the top high at the test stations and a son was top on the test station last year in Oklahoma. It makes you feel real good when you sell semen to a breeder and he gets a calf which will top the test. We sold sons and daughters all over the country. We exported them to South Africa and South America. We are still breeding him. We are also using three sons and two grandsons. Most of the bulls we use here are top end of the bulls that we raise. Occasionally, we buy an outside bull. We have not added any outside females to the herd for about ten years. In fact, we want to keep the cow herd closed. What I'll possibly do is pick up a bull. We also breed a few outside bulls.

E: How did you acquire this bull that did quite well for you, Canadian Fantastic?

L: I bought him in 1969. I really do not prefer to buy a calf that I do not know too much about his ancestors. We were looking for cattle with a little more size, a little more frame. We went up to Canada and traveled about 10,000 to 12,000 miles looking at cattle. I saw this bull; I saw daughters of the bull that were in production. I saw how they milked. I found some sons in another herd that were doing a good job. So I started negotiating trying to buy. I bought the bull and brought him home. So we were very fortunate in finding him. In this cattle business, you have to have a little luck to go along with a lot of other things.

E: It has been said that Mörlunda does not sell at auctions for possible extreme dollars, but attempts to sell at a fair price. What do you mean by a fair price?

L: Well, you know the old saying, "Purebred cattle are worth all over beef price you can get." I think that you can overprice any merchandise and you can underprice. What we try to do is to figure out a fair price where we can make money and the guy that purchased the cattle from us can make money too. If you sell cattle too high, the first thing you know, you knock the customers away from your door. The only way you can have a satisfied customer is both of you to think you made a good trade. I don't think we should overprice cattle, but I still think we ought to get a fair price for them.

E: What about this commercial herd, which is very much a part for the Mörlunda operation. Who do you sell these commercial bulls to? What type of customer, around the east?

- L: We sell commercial bulls all over the southeast. We sell in Virginia, West Virginia, and the Carolinas, and on down to Florida and Tennessee. Really, the purebred operators, that's one of the main reasons he is in business, to improve the quality of the commercial cattle. The better bulls we can turn out and sell to the commercial man, the better off we are. What we try to do is to sell a man a bull that is sound; that will sire some feeder calves; that will gain fast and make him money and also some replacement heifers and bulls and turn into good, top commercial cattle.
- E: Is this commercial man that comes in here usually looking for one bull or is he looking for two or three at a time?
- L: We get all types; we get them looking for one bull; we get people who buy one bull from us every three or four years. We have others who will buy three or four bulls, five bulls. Some customers will buy as high as fifty, sixty bulls at a time. That's a really large commercial operation. You have to have all types of them.
- E: If an individual would come into Mörlunda on a given day, a commercial man, and say he wants to buy a bull, approximately how many bulls can he look at that day?
- L: Well, it kind of depends on the season. We sell about 225 bulls a year. I would say 85% to 90% of all the bulls we sell go into the top commercial herds. We have some commercial men who would pay as much money for a bull as a lot of little purebred breeders would pay for them. They want to raise top feeder calves and they want to top the market, and they do it.
- E: What about the purebred female trade? This is the other side of the Mörlunda operation.
- L: We keep about 75 of the top females every year for replacements. We sell all the rest of them at private treaty. We sell a few of them to show at junior fairs, the junior national, and local shows and state fairs. The biggest part of the females that we sell, we keep them and breed them and sell them as bred. Now we will sell them the other way, but that's the way we carry out operations for this kind of deal. We think a man gets more for his money if he buys a good female bred to a good bull. He gets a little better deal that way.
- E: Something has always interested me whenever I have heard the Mörlunda name. Whenever you think of Mörlunda you certainly think of Truman Lawrence because the two are almost synonymous in the years of longevity. You probably have one of the best track records of a manager. What's the secret?
- L: As I said earlier, to be a good manager you've got to work with the owners. He has got to make the owners feel like they

are a part of the operation and they have to be a part of the operation. They have to be interested in the operation. You've got to work close with each other. I think any successful operation of any business, whatever, the management and the owners have to work together to make the business a success. A lot of managers forget that.

- E: A lot of managers can do that and they still don't last. I'm sure that people have called you up on the phone and said, "Hey Truman, how about coming to work for me. I would like to have you over here." They may have even offered you more money. They might have, as they would say, "Sweetened the pot to do something else." But Truman has always stayed here at Mörlunda. There has got to be something that is magic about that combination of the Nelson's and the Lawrence's.
- L: You know that old saying, "The grass always looks greener on the other side of the fence, but after you get on to the other side of the fence it is not as green as you thought it was." I think on management-labor relations, or whatever you want to call it, if the people you are working for treat you good and you treat them good and you have a good working relationship and you like what you're doing and you think you are making progress, there is no need of jumping over and working for somebody else and starting all over. What I like to do every year . . . We've got a project going; we've got something going. We look forward to seeing what the calves look like. We keep trying to improve every year and if you are jumping around from one operation to another, you cannot make much progress.
- E: There is something else that I observed and that is that there is some sort of a special relationship between you and young people. I think that it has something to do with the Nelson kids too. What is it?
- L: Well, you know young people, especially young people interested in Hereford cattle, are going to be the breeders of the future. It's kind of a challenge to try to teach them something and trying to get them to learn how to do things the right way. If you work with young people you kind of stay young yourself too, you know, or something about it that kind of works that way. Here at Mörlunda, we have had plenty of young people around here. We have been very fortunate that most of the Nelson grandchildren have been interested in the farm, interested in livestock and are not afraid of work. If you take some young people who are not afraid of work, you can do a lot with a group of young people like that. If they are interested, if somebody is interested, you can teach them a whole lot easier than somebody you have to just keep pounding it into their head all of the time. Some of the children are getting more interested in working with show cattle more. The way the labor situation has been in the last few years, you can

get some who are really interested in showing, then they get out of college stuff. Then we'll put a string of cattle back on the road again.

E: Where do you go from here, March 1, 1980? Where do you see Mörlunda ten years down the road? Where do you see Truman Lawrence ten years down the road? How do all these grandchildren and so forth fit in?

L: The way it looks, we have some promising young bulls coming on. We have two young bulls right now, the Generator bull and the Moonshiner bull, who are probably the two best prospects we have had in a long time. We have a new herd bull that I am very excited about. We are going to breed him to about 200 cows this year and breed him clear across the board on all different blood lines and find out what he is going to mate on and concentrate the following years on the cows he really makes on. If you are going to stay in the farming operation and the polled Hereford business, improving is what you keep on trying to do. You keep trying to get cows who will milk a little better; cows that are a little more efficient. Here at Mörlunda we want cows that will do it on grass and cheap roughage; that's how it goes. We've been working on it and we think we have cattle that will do it now, but if you don't keep trying to improve you're going backwards.

E: Is there anything else you would like to . . .

L: No, I think we pretty well covered it. I hope you got some information out of here that will do somebody some good sometime or another.

END OF INTERVIEW