

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Morlunda Farms Project

Morlunda Farms

O. H. 215

OSCAR NELSON, JR.

Interviewed

by

Hugh G. Earnhart

March 1, 1980

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEWEE: OSCAR NELSON JR.

INTERVIEWER: Hugh G. Earnhart

SUBJECT: Greenbrier Military Academy; University of Pennsylvania; Wharton School of Finance; Reppert School of Auctioneering; Greensburg, Indiana; Ronceverte, West Virginia; Sweden; Carbon Black Factory; Kosmos Carbon Company; United Carbon Company; Valley View Farm; Knapp Farm--original farm's name; Skaggs Farm--160 acres; Gallager Farm--394 acres; Handley Farm--110 acres; calf at foot; 1964 liquidation of horned hereford cattle, tax purposes; Charlois cattle; Aberdeen Angus

DATE: March 1, 1980

E. This is an oral history interview for the Youngstown State University Oral History Project with Mr. Oscar Nelson, Jr. at Morlunda Farms, March 1, 1980, at approximately 9:15 a.m.

Mr. Nelson, tell us a little bit about your family· your mother and father, your early days of growing up as a child.

N. Well, my father was born on March 2, 1879, on a farm near a small town called Morlunda in Sweden. Dad was the youngest of eight children in his family. In Sweden, as is the custom in many European countries, the oldest son inherits the farm. Dad being number eight in line felt there were greener pastures elsewhere, so he decided to come to America. He came to America without learning to speak English. He settled in northwestern Pennsylvania where he got a job driving a team of horses in a lumber camp, and worked,

earned money and learned the English language. He later changed jobs and became a laborer in a carbon black factory. After a few years with this company, he became the manager of that carbon black factory, and a year or two later, became the general manager not only of that factory, but of the entire company. By this time he had moved into northern West Virginia and his headquarters were in the vicinity of Weston, West Virginia.

The carbon black industry was starting to grow and the oil and gas business was growing at that time in this particular area. Two gentlemen took a liking to my father and decided to try to enter business with him. Mr. T. A. Whelan and Mr. T. F. Kolbegard approached my father and said, "Oscar, we have watched your business dealings and we would like to form a three-way partnership with you." They offered my father a very substantial amount of money to start a new company, with dad contributing his time and effort in the three-way partnership. This was the formation of the Kosmos Carbon Company.

As the carbon black industry grew, this company continued to grow, not only in the production and sale of carbon black in the United States and in the world, but also in drilling for and producing of oil and gas. As the carbon black industry became much larger, with many companies producing the product, there was soon much overproduction and overcapacity in the industry. Through my father's leadership, they combined seventeen of these companies into a new company called United Carbon Company. For many years thereafter, United Carbon Company was one of the principle manufacturers and producers of carbon black in the United States, and in fact, in the world.

Now, as to my mother, Harriet Engstrom, when my father was working in the Weston-Clarksburg, West Virginia area, he met Harriet Engstrom, whose father was a superintendent of one of these carbon black factories. Eventually, in the year 1920, Oscar Nelson and Harriet Engstrom were married in Clarksburg, West Virginia. The company continued to grow and prosper, and in 1921 the offices of the company were moved to Charleston, West Virginia, where my father and mother made their home until my father's death in 1953. My mother continues to reside in Charleston, West Virginia.

Looking back, my father--having come from a farm in Sweden and with his success in business in the United States--always had the desire to get back to the land.

So, in the early 1930's he decided he would like to have a farm, not only for his own profit and enjoyment, but it was his considered opinion that a farm would be the best place to raise his growing family of three sons and one daughter. With my mother, he set out from Charleston in different directions looking for a suitable farm property. After about a year, having gone each direction from Charleston for first twenty-five miles and then fifty miles, and then one hundred miles, he came across a setting two-and-one-half miles west of Lewisburg, in Greenbrier County, West Virginia. As he looked down and saw this old red brick farmhouse on gently rolling ground, he said, "That reminds me of my home in Sweden; I hope that we can make a deal to purchase that farm." After some time passed, they were able to secure the original Morlunda Farm, which was some 285 acres. This was acquired in 1933 in the midst of the Depression.

Dad first decided to get the fences in good shape where they would contain livestock. They then laid plans to remodel the main house where he and mother could spend weekends and later their retirement years, and at the same time, expose their children to farm life. They spent their first night on the farm July 4, 1934.

The farm originally was stocked with dairy cows, sheep, and a few two-year old steers. Dad soon decided that we did not want to be in the dairy business. After talking with interested livestock and agricultural specialists throughout West Virginia and the east, he decided that the Greenbrier County farm was more adapted to a beef cattle operation. We soon made plans to go into the beef cattle business. My father was also attracted to draft horses, because as a young man he had driven teams of horses many, many hours. He soon acquired some excellent draft horses. The initial plan was to go into the beef cattle business with a cow and calf program and to stock the farm with very fine draft horses to perform the work on the farm. As we four children were growing up, it was only natural that we would also have a pony.

As time progressed, we decided to go into the Shorthorn beef cattle business. This was done primarily because our neighbor, Mr. H. B. Wilson, and his brother, Mr. Frank Wilson, were then the owners of Valleyview Farms, a fine Shorthorn breeding cattle operation. It was quite natural that we leaned upon the Wilsons for early advice in the cattle business. It was also quite natural that the Wilsons tried to sell

us Shorthorn cattle. More will be said about this in the future. This seemed to be the easiest route to take because here were people offering us advice. They had a supply of cattle which we were able to buy. The cattle were acclimated to this environment, and it seemed the natural thing to do. Looking back--and we all learn more by looking back--we soon found that one of the things we did not properly appraise was our marketing program for the future. Were Shorthorns as marketable in our area as other cattle breeds? At any rate, we started with purebred Shorthorn cattle, and we went throughout the United States, where we bought the best Shorthorn cattle available in 1934, 1935, and 1936, paying \$1,000 or \$1,500 for many of the bred heifers or cows. As one looks back, \$1,000 or \$1,500 in the early 1930's was quite a bit of money. Consider current inflation and what the dollar has done since then.

We began to spend more time on the farm, primarily weekends, because Mother and Dad and the family were living in Charleston where Dad was working. The children are: Oscar Nelson, Jr., the interviewee, who was then about age twelve; Anna Marie, who was eight; Thomas Arthur, who was six; and Eric, who was four. The oldest son and the daughter showed a definite liking to the farm life. Needless to say, the other two sons, Tom and Eric, later developed the same interest, but at the time we are talking about in past history, they were too young to exert any definite interest in the farm.

Here we were with the original Knapp farm of 285 acres. Dad's original intent having been accomplished, he saw that the family was enjoying the farm life, and he continued to feel that the farm land would be a good investment. He enjoyed the farm and enjoyed excellent livestock. So, the next decision to be made was--is this farm of 285 acres sufficiently large for the future, or should he go about planning to buy additional land?

About two years later, he did acquire the Skaggs Farm adjoining the main farm. The Skaggs Farm was about 160 acres. Three years later we acquired the Gallagher Farm of 394 acres; the following year another farm of 110 acres. Now, we had basically four farms. Since there were four children in the Nelson family and now all were growing in age and in stature and liking the farm, each of these four farms soon were given a nickname. The home farm or main farm was soon thought of as "Anna Marie's farm." The big Gallagher Farm of 394 acres was called "Tom's Farm." The Handley Farm of 110 acres was called "Eric's Farm."

As additional land was acquired, it became necessary to stock said farms with additional livestock, and we took our first turn toward changing the livestock nature at Morlunda Farms. Up until this time, the first two farms had been stocked primarily with the finest Shorthorn cattle that money could buy. But when the additional farms of 394 acres and 110 acres were acquired, Dad met with us and said, "We have a problem. We cannot afford to stock these additional farms with these \$1,000 Shorthorn cows."

Dad had a friend in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, by the name of Robert T. Wilson. Mr. Wilson, one of the original incorporators of the Shamrock Oil and Gas Company, was a friend of my father through the oil and gas business. Dad knew Mr. Wilson had a large cattle ranch in Arizona. On one of their business trips, Dad spoke with Wilson about his newly acquired farms and said he was in the market for another line of cattle, whereupon Mr. Wilson priced him two carloads of Hereford cows. One carload at \$110 per head and the other carload at \$75 per head, and if we bought the two carloads of cows at that price, he would throw in two good bulls free. This was quite a comparison to the \$1,000 Shorthorn cows that we had been purchasing. So, we bought the horned Hereford cattle from Mr. Wilson and brought them to Morlunda and put them on the two newly-acquired farms.

A year later at Jackson's Mill, West Virginia, there was a tri-breed bull sale in which farmers from all over West Virginia took their best bulls and sold them in this commercial bull sale. Morlunda took one of its fine Shorthorn bulls to that sale and it brought \$250. We took two of our ordinary Hereford bulls to that sale and they brought \$410 and \$435 each. Right away my father said, "Maybe we're in the wrong business. Maybe we're trying to market the wrong product." We then did further study into the marketing aspects of the Shorthorn cattle and the Hereford cattle, and we soon came to the conclusion that we had, unfortunately, started with the wrong breed of cattle for the West Virginia market. That is not to say that the Shorthorn cattle were not a fine breed of cattle, as they have many advantages and do possess a fine market in certain areas of the United States and throughout the world. But within our marketing territory, there seemed no doubt that the Hereford cattle were the preferred product. We then made definite plans to go into the Hereford business in a substantial way and made plans to liquidate our Shorthorn cattle.

Up until this time we didn't have many real fine Percheron horses on the farm, maybe four or five real good Percheron mares. At that time, Mr. Eli Lilly of Eli Lilly and Company, the famous drug producer, was also the owner of a fine livestock operation called Conner Prairie Farms at Noblesville, Indiana. So, we worked up a deal with Mr. Lilly and traded him most of our Shorthorn cattle for some of his very fine Percheron horses and some cash. This deal was quite satisfactory to both parties, and we were now in a better position to go forward with horned Hereford cattle in a big way.

By the year 1939, our Hereford herd was increasing both in size and in quality. Prior to that time, no farm in the eastern part of the United States had ever put on a private auction of their breeding cattle. On April 22, 1939, Morlunda Farms went public with the first private auction of Hereford cattle ever held east of the Mississippi River. As I recall, we sold 70 head of cattle for an average of \$353 per head. The highest priced bull brought \$1500. This was the first of many auctions later to be held at Morlunda Farms.

This first auction was held in a tent. Due to the success of this sale, my father felt that we should consider this as one of our prime marketing tools; and then he built a large sale barn where we could hold an annual auction sale. He felt the auction sale had many advantages. First of all, it was a drawing card to have people come in to see our livestock, see what we were doing and to establish a broader base for future sales. If people could once come to Morlunda and see what we were doing, they would then feel more free to come back in the future and draw upon our experience and purchase livestock from us.

The auction sale in those years was very rare, and there was great excitement and enthusiasm. People would drive hundreds of miles to go to an auction sale, as this was a new thing. Remember, we're talking about 1939. Subsequent sales were held in 1940 and 1941 and every year thereafter. The auction sale prices continued to climb.

Morlunda always felt that we should sell at least 70 head of cattle at auctions, whereas many auctions today have only 30, 40 or 50 head. My father's original thinking back in those days was: Always sell a substantial number at auctions to help bring in a better crowd of interested buyers. If you sell only

35 or 40, people will not drive the distance to attend the sales. Whereas if you sell a large number, you are exposing yourself to a larger group of buyers.

It was also his feeling that the sale should include bulls, young heifers that were open, two-year-old heifers that were bred, and cows with calves at foot, commonly called a three-in-one. A cow would sell with her calf at side and rebred so she had another calf to be coming the next year. By selling cattle in each category, my father felt that we were opening up our marketing to many different types of people. One might want to buy a heifer, or another might prefer a cow and a calf. We did not want to go along with the basis of selling all heifers or all bulls or all cows and calves, but we wanted to have something available from each different category so that all people would want to attend the sale and to share in its production.

The sales at Morlunda continued to grow and prosper, and we were quite happy with our sales. As the years passed by, many other people learned the same thing, and the private farm auction grew substantially. Today, many breeders sell the bulk of their product by private auctions.

There are, of course, pitfalls to the auction method. One is the uncertainty of selling all or maybe half of one's annual production on any one given day. A snowstorm can prevent attendance, or excellent weather could keep the prospective buyers at home to do their planting or harvesting. There's also the standpoint of the added cost of an auction, primarily that of getting the animal fatter, because there is no color prettier than fat in the livestock business. It costs money to put on extra, unneeded fat, but more importantly, we have learned that putting extra fat on the animals and particularly on the females is not conducive to their future usefulness as a breeder or as a producer of milk for their calves. In subsequent years, Morlunda Farms has departed from the auction route of selling its livestock. Today we sell nearly all our livestock at private treaty.

Late in 1940, other business opportunities arose, and Dad decided to sell two of the farms that had been acquired. They were sold to raise cash to be put in other investments. Subsequently, as business conditions changed, farms have been added, and currently, Morlunda Farms owns about 2,000 acres of land. In addition to the 2,000 acres that we own, we rent a substantial amount of property from other people.

Morlunda Farms remained in the horned Hereford business until 1964. In the fall of 1964, we were forced to liquidate the entire herd of Morlunda horned Hereford cattle. This was done for tax reasons. In fact, at that time it was felt that the farms might have to be sold by the corporation to individual members of the family. Later, we were able to find relief, and today the farm properties are still owned by the family corporation titled Oscar Nelson, Incorporated.

We then had to make new plans as to what we were going to do with the various farms and properties owned by Morlunda Farms. A very thorough study was made as to what should be done. It was conclusively decided that Morlunda Farms was designed and could be best used to house a beef cattle operation. All of the family wanted to remain in the purebred business rather than with commercial cattle, because we felt that over the long term we could make a greater impact on the future of the livestock industry of this great country by raising superior seed stock. Needless to say, we hoped to benefit financially in this regard.

We then made a study whether to go back into the horned Hereford business, whether to enter the Polled Hereford industry, Aberdeen Angus, Charolais, or other breeds of cattle. We definitely settled on the Polled Hereford breed as the one for the future. As I look back, I have never felt more secure that we made the right decision in selecting Polled Hereford.

E: Mr. Nelson, tell me something about your relationship with your father, your mother, and your brothers and sister as you were growing up.

N: I'm glad you brought this question up because I have not talked about the relationship of my mother to Morlunda Farms. I think this was one of the important things in the operation of Morlunda Farms. My mother was a true partner of my father in every respect. In his business dealings at United Carbon Company and his dealings at Morlunda Farms, she was always a full time partner at his side all the time. My mother has the wonderful ability to remember names of people. I'm sure this has contributed greatly to the success of the entire Nelson family over the years. My father, having come from Sweden and having spoken with a Swedish accent, found it difficult to pronounce certain words. This, coupled with my mother's excellent and fluent knowledge of the English language, made them a great pair as they would meet with people, talk with people and do business.

Dad was the type of man that, although he kept his business to himself, he nevertheless did, for other reasons, discuss freely with his wife and his children all conditions of business. At the same time, by talking with my mother, my brothers, my sister and me, it helped us develop into people with business knowledge. We felt that our father was one of the greatest teachers in the world. We always appreciated the fact that he spoke freely with us about any type of problem that we wanted to discuss with him. I think this is one thing that meant so much to the Nelson Family over the years. I can see one of the problems in the world today is that so many parents did not do this with their children. Perhaps this is one of the reasons that so many of the younger generation seem to be going off on the wrong track.

E: What was a typical day like as a child? Pick any day, commuted back and forth between Charleston and the farm on weekends, but what was a typical day like out here at the farm for you as a child?

N: Well, on a typical weekend day here at the farm we would get up and have breakfast as a family group. Mother would then have certain chores to do around the household. When my sister was old enough to help her, she would perhaps help mother throughout the morning. Dad and I, and as my brothers Tom and Eric became older, would get in the car and drive around the farm in company with our farm manager, look at the livestock, look at the fences, look at the buildings, talk about the problems, talk about the future, and make plans for the future, and make plans to correct the problems that we had had in the past.

It was a free-flowing inforamatory session twenty-four hours a day, not only with the Nelson Family but also with the farm managers that we had at the time.

E: Can you remember the days of the Depression here at Morlunda Farms?

N: Luckily my father did have a substantial job in business at the time, which of course is evidenced by the fact that he was able to purchase these farms during the midst of the Depression. But I still do recall that we were in the Depression and that we didn't have steak for supper every night. My mother's planning of meals was very frugal. Of course, families did not have automobiles in those days as we have today, so we didn't have the problem of all the kids jumping in cars and going to town. Our entertainment at night was listening to "Amos and Andy" on the radio.

E: Over KDKA?

N: That might be right. (Laughter) WLW, KDKA.

There was no television then. The trip to the movies every two or three weeks was a great thing. But the evening news broadcast, listening to "Amos and Andy" or "Little Orphan Annie" was the bulk of your outside entertainment. Other entertainment we made for ourselves, discussing family problems, discussing the future, trying to learn from each other.

E: What was your schooling like? Where did you go to school?

N: Well, speaking of myself, I attended public schools in Charleston, West Virginia, through the first nine and one-half years. Then I entered Greenbrier Military School here in Lewisburg, West Virginia. I was a boarding student and entered Greenbrier Military School in January of 1938, and attended GMS for two and a half years, graduating in June of 1940. During this first two years of such military school training I was a student in residence at the military school. But for the last six months, from January 'til June of 1940, at that time being old enough to drive a car, I then moved out to the farm and commuted to school each morning. I was very fond of military school life. I think that military schools taught one discipline and they taught one leadership. These are some of the things that worry me about many of the younger generation today. Discipline is no longer present as we used to think of it. I think that my generation had far more discipline and respect than some of the later generations. I think this is a big problem in the world today, at least in our so-called "free countries."

As far as studies were concerned, Greenbrier Military School was a difficult school. It was rated very high scholastically. Of course, each summer I spent the bulk of the time on the farm.

The fall of 1940, I entered the University of Pennsylvania and was enrolled in the Wharton School of Finance. Having been associated closely with my father over the years, not only on the farm, but also in learning about the problems and operations of a large corporation, I felt that the field of accounting was one which could be used in any endeavor. As I look back, I am quite happy that I decided on the field of accounting, because it has taught me a lot about the cost of running

any type of an operation and planning for the future.

E: What was the typical day like at Greenbrier Military School?

H: Well, the bugle sounded, I believe it was at 6:15 a.m. We had breakfast at 6:45 a.m., and our first inspection was at 7:37. We then went to chapel for five or ten minutes, and we then went straight through classes until 1:10. We had lunch at 1:30 and at 2:00 or 2:15 we would go into an afternoon program. About three days a week, these were military programs normally out in the field, and on the other days we had physical education. Thursday, Saturday and Sunday afternoons were free. We went to school Tuesdays through Saturdays. On Monday mornings the program was entirely military.

All of the cadets were required to go to church on Sunday morning and also to go to church on Sunday evening. One could go to the church of his choice on Sunday morning, but since the administration that owned the school was Presbyterian, all the students would go to the Presbyterian Church on Sunday night.

E: Were there any of the instructors at the academy or at the public school that you attended in Charleston who made an indelible impression on your mind, what you did in the future, or how you thought about things in the future?

N: Very definitely. The first teacher who made a big impression on me was in the grade school of Charleston, West Virginia. His name was Mr. E. C. Richardson, who was a mathematics teacher and later principal of the high school. He also happened to be my scout leader, counselor of my scout troop. As I became active in Boy Scouts, I became quite close to Mr. Richardson. He was a wonderful man and a natural leader. Mr. Richardson was a graduate of the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis. He was a sincere, honest man who tried to make every person do his best in every regard. The impression I have of so many young students today and the impression they have of their counselors or their teachers is quite different than what I had of Mr. Richardson and my other teachers at that time; but I must admit that he was the star in the sky as far as I was concerned. There were a few teachers back then that I didn't have too much respect for because they failed to demonstrate this leadership ability to me, and they didn't seem to direct their attention toward the improvement of society. Even then they were just thinking in terms of working from 9:00 to 5:00 or

9:00 to 3:00 and drawing their pay as more people seem to be doing today.

E: Were there any instructors at the academy who had any pronounced influence in your life?

N: At Greenbrier Military School, I can think of six or seven instructors who had the same attributes that Mr. Richardson had. Perhaps it would be too lengthy to get into that interview today. To me, looking back as a youngster, it is quite evident that I really appreciated those teachers who demonstrated to me that they were trying to work with me or with the group of students, those who developed their leadership and those who showed they were doing more than trying to just collect their pay. Many of the teachers whom I had at the military school now live in Lewisburg, and although somewhat older than I am today, continue to be very dear friends and very highly respected leaders of the community.

E: What happened to your brothers and sister? Obviously, you've been the leader at Morlunda Farms.

N: Well, I'm glad you raised this question because too many people look upon me as the one Nelson of my generation at Morlunda Farms, whereas, it is not that way at all. I suppose I receive more publicity than do the others, as I am exposed to the public more than the others because of my everyday participation and activities here at Morlunda. However, my brothers and sister have always maintained a very active interest in the operation. My sister, Anna Marie Jones, truly loves the farm and would like nothing better than to make her full-time home here at Morlunda Farms. In addition to loving the cattle, she is an expert in Quarter Horses and has in the past owned a substantial number of Quarter Horses.

My brothers, Tom and Eric, who are now located in Charleston, West Virginia, with their investment counseling firm of Nelson and Company, are quite busy, but nevertheless, do spend a considerable amount of time here on weekends, particularly in the summertime.

My brother, Eric, at one time thought he might make agriculture his full-time job. After being released from the Army, Eric's first job was with the American Hereford Association as an employee of the American Hereford Journal. He travelled through several states, making his headquarters in Memphis, Tennessee, and was a fieldman for the magazine for several years. Eric

was also a graduate of the Reppert School of Auctioneering, and to this day, still enjoys going to an auction sale and working the ring as an assistant auctioneer.

Tom and his entire family are also quite devoted to the farm. In fact, this brings to mind a statement I I've heard repeated several times, and I think it is quite significant. That is as follows. My mother and father have fourteen grandchildren. There is not one of these grandchildren who is unhappy with Morlunda Farms. They all love the farm and like to spend as much time here as possible. The age of these grandchildren currently is from about 14 up to about 28 or 29 years of age. All truly and dearly love the farm and love to spend time here.

Today there are four of five of the grandsons who might want to spend their full time there in Lewisburg after finishing their educational responsibility. Each summer several of these young men work here at the farm. For example, last summer my only son, Oscar III, worked here at the farm. Anna Marie has two sons; her older son was in Europe working on a farm last year. Her second son works full-time for a coal company. My brother, Tom, has two sons, Tommy and Robby, both of whom have worked here at Morlunda Farms each of the last two or three summers. My brother, Eric, has two sons, Eric Jr., and Bill. Both of these boys have worked here at the farm the last two or three summers. We at Morlunda are quite fortunate in the summertime in that we do have a lot of young capable boys in the family working on the farm. In the summertime, we have no labor shortage.

E: When you commuted back and forth between Charleston and Morlunda Farms in the 1930's and so on, certainly the roads were nowhere near the condition they are today. That must have been a half-day's trip just to get started and get here.

N: It's easy to say that, but at the same time one must remember that there weren't so many automobiles and trucks on those narrow roads. In fact, one seldom saw big trucks on the road. Surprisingly enough, it only took us about three and one-half hours by car to travel the 150 miles in those days. Today it takes about two hours and twenty minutes to make that trip. I'm afraid that when you drove up yesterday it may have taken you well over three hours because of the snow. When the roads were real bad as a result of a snowstorm, we would come up on a

train from Charleston to a little town called Ronceverte that's nearby. Back in those days, the railroad charge to come up here was \$2.60 for an adult and \$1.30 for a child. I recall that we would go in the dining car and have a very fine chicken dinner for 75¢. This included dessert with all the trimmings. If you wanted to go all out and have a great big steak dinner, it was \$1.25. Like I said, it was quite different than it is today.

E: What was the name of the railroad?

N: It was the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad, now called The Chessie System.

E: How did World War II affect the farm and the family?

H: Well, when World War II came, I was in the Army and, naturally, the farm continued to operate. Actually, World War II brought about some significant changes in the farm due to our location. Ten miles east of here is the world famous Greenbrier Hotel. During World War II, the government took over the hotel and made it into a military hospital. As was the custom then, Prisoner of War Camps were often placed adjacent to military hospitals so that the better prisoners could work in the hospitals and would also be a benefit to the prisoners.

The prison camp near the Greenbrier (nee Ashford General Hospital) was quite large, and it was occupied solely by German prisoners of war. There were more prisoners than could be utilized by the hospital, and it was asked if anyone in this area could use some of them. The problem was that one had to take twenty and keep them busy. You could not just take one or two of them, because one guard had to accompany each group. Morlunda Farms did take our complement of twenty and tried our best to keep them busy.

Some of the farm buildings that you see on this farm today were built by those Germans without blueprints. I've always felt that they contributed very significantly to our operation. Many jobs were done by them and excellent work evolved, whereas if we had wanted to build the same type of building in that day, we could not have done it because of the shortage of labor, and primarily because the cost of labor would have been exorbitant. In order to keep the prisoners working--for their good and for the good of the country--we were quite happy to take them over and pay them a minimum wage rate. We all benefitted material-

ly, but it was a job to plan work ahead for that many people.

E: Did you ever have any problems with the prisoners or the guard arrangement?

N: I was in the Army at the time and only got home once. I heard of no problem with the German prisoners whatsoever. I've always had a fine feeling for the German people. I think they're excellent workers and very responsible people. Today, I consider them among our best friends and allies in Europe.

E: Has there been any contact? Do you keep up any kind of contact with any of them who worked here at any time, who may have stayed in this country or returned to Germany?

N: Unfortunately, no. I do recall that one of the former employees we had did receive a Christmas card several times from one of the Germans whose name was Frank. Unfortunately, I have no knowledge of any other than that.

E: What did you do during the War?

N: I was in the United States Army and served in the infantry. Having gone to Greenbrier Military School and having had some basic background, soon after finishing my basic training I was sent to Officer's Candidate School in Fort Benning, Georgia. After completing that course, I was assigned to the 63rd Division for training at Camp Van Dorn, Mississippi. After about six months training in the United States, we were sent to Europe, and we went through southern France and up through central France into Germany.

E: When were you discharged?

N: I got a medical discharge. While in Europe, I received several wounds. The last wound was a big one. I spent from April 19, 1945, until November 12, 1945 in the Army hospital and was discharged late in November. In the Army, I was Company Commander of a rifle company, Company K of the 255th Infantry.

E: Who was the Commanding General for that attachment?

N: General Patch was the head of our Army. The head of our Division was General Louis E. Hibbs.

E: You entered the Polled Hereford business in 1965, moving out of the horned cattle. For many people, particularly the small breeder, this was a sign that at

least to them the times had changed. Did Morlunda see it the same way, and to what effect do you think that change had on the Polled Hereford business, particularly east of the Mississippi?

N: We sold all of our horned Herefords in 1964, subsequently, we made the decision to enter the Polled Hereford business. The first Polled Hereford cattle we bought were in October of 1965. We entered the Polled Hereford business thinking that was where we could get the best return on our investment, and because we thought the market was there for the Polled Hereford cattle. Why did we think this? We had been showing horned Hereford cattle from 1940 until 1964. I guess we've shown horned Herefords in as many shows, dispersed as widely in the United States as anyone in the industry. We've shown from coast to coast, and I guess we've won as many ribbons as anybody.

The last two years in the horned Hereford industry, we had a bull, Morlunda Matador 10th. He was the undefeated champion bull in six Register of Merit shows and climaxed his career by being the champion bull at the National Western Show in Denver in 1964 at which time we refused an offer of \$100,000 for that bull. In addition to that bull, in the same two-year-old class, we had the second prize bull, Morlunda Matador 11th. We also had the first prize Get-of-Sire, the best ten head and were the major winners throughout. In fact, at every show that we had shown horned Herefords in 1962, 1963 and in Denver in 1964, we were the major winners.

Now, getting back to Polled Herefords. Where did we see our competition during these years of 1963 and thereafter? Even though we were winning substantially at all of these Hereford shows in competition with great cattle from all over the United States, we had noted that some of our competition was coming from good Polled Hereford animals. There were several real top exhibitors of Polled Herefords. Primarily, at that time, Pennsylvania State University was doing an outstanding job under the careful guidance of Herman Purdy. Also, Mr. Leon Falk in Pennsylvania was knocking at our doorstep all the time. Joe and Walter Lewis of Alfalfa Lawn Farm in Kansas and several other breeders were showing Polled Herefords in competition with horned Herefords.

We had been showing for twenty years, and I must say that in the early part of this twenty-year period, the Polled Herefords were not much competition. In

the last two or three years we noticed that more good Polled Hereford cattle were coming into being and were being shown in competition with us. So, during these early 1960's, it was quite evident that the Polled Hereford breed had made significant steps forward.

When we decided to re-enter the purebred beef cattle business, Polled Herefords were looked upon as a growing breed with substantial improvements in quality. One might quite naturally ask, "What's the difference between a Polled Hereford and a horned Hereford?" Basically, I suppose, the difference is that the horned Hereford has horns and the Polled Hereford does not. But the answer is not that simple. We must recall that the horned Hereford breed has been here for a good many years, whereas the Polled Hereford breed began about fifty years ago from a very small base, back in the days when Mr. Gammon of Iowa had born on his farm a naturally polled calf from a set of horned parents.

Mr. Gammon advertised in the newspapers and found that there were others in the United States that had Polled Hereford calves born from horned Hereford parents. He was able to assemble fourteen of these naturally hornless Herefords, and that was the beginning of the Polled Hereford breed. They were selected primarily, in fact, solely, because they did not have horns. He could not select for quality or for pedigree or for performance or for anything other than the fact that they did not have horns. There a new breed was born.

In this period of about fifty years, the Polled Hereford breed has grown into a major beef breed. As more and more breeders saw the future for Polled Herefords, they joined the ranks as did we in 1965. Additional farsighted breeders with finances available, with the good management practices and breeding techniques, were able to quickly and substantially improve the breeding of Polled Herefords. In the early 1960's we saw this coming. We recognized it and we said, "Why can't we be a part of this forward-looking breed?" We made the step in 1965.

To me, the Polled Hereford breed has developed rapidly and well and on a firm foundation. There is no question today that the Polled Hereford is in more demand east of the Mississippi River than in the west. I suppose this is for several reasons. Many of the breeders in the east are a different type person than the cattle breeder west of the Mississippi River. Most of the breeders in the Great Plains area have been cattle breeders all of their lives, as were their fathers and grandfathers before them. As we all know,

a lot of us do as our fathers have told us to do. It was quite natural for those people in the west or in the midwest to remain with horned Herefords. On the other hand, many of the breeders of livestock in the east and south were kind of a new breed of people. They were people who had gone out of the cotton or peanut business or other industries and wished to diversify into agriculture and particularly the beef cattle segment. As they find their way into the beef cattle industry, they are faced with the opportunity of going into the Polled Herefords, horned Herefords, Angus, or many other breeds. These new breeders were not told by their fathers and grandfathers that the horned Hereford was the only animal or that the longhorn steer was the only kind of steer to raise, but were left open to their own way of thinking. Hence, they had more reason to innovate with different techniques. It was obvious that a few of them would choose Polled Hereford cattle. Thereafter, the Polled Hereford Industry began growing significantly. There is no question that it has grown and prospered faster in the east than in the west, and I think this is one of the primary reasons.

E: When you made that decision to go to the Polled Hereford breed, did you have established horned Hereford breeders contact you in any way to ask why you made that decision? Did you notice that impact at all, of sudden interest?

N: Oh, to look back, I suppose there were several horned breeders that asked us why we went into the Polled business. I would view it more like amazement by the horned breeders that we made this move. I think it raised a big question in many of their minds.

E: What about the acceptance of the Polled Hereford breeders? Certainly, they were struggling for identity, and trying to scratch out a position of respectability. Did you see a lot of flag waving and hurrahs that Morlunda had recognized the opportunity and had made the switch?

N: There is no question that this was one of the big turning points in the Polled Hereford business.

When we made the decision to go Polled Hereford, I called the Secretary of the American Polled Hereford Association, Mr. Orville Sweet, and told him that we were thinking about Polled Herefords, asking him if he would stop by and see me the next time he had an opportunity. Mr. Sweet was then in Kansas City, and

his reply was, "Would tomorrow be convenient?"

E: (Laughter) That's enthusiasm.

N: He jumped on an airplane and was here the next afternoon. I was quite happy with Mr. Sweet's enthusiasm, and his statement that they would do anything that they could to help us. Our conversations with him that day were quite helpful. We wanted to develop our plan for going into the Polled Hereford business. This is the policy we developed at that time. When I say, "we," I say that this policy was developed by myself, my brothers and sister, and our farm manager, Mr. Truman Lawrence.

Morlunda Farms at that time would require about 400 top mother cows to operate the farm in its most efficient manner. We knew that we could not go out overnight and buy 400 cows of the right quality, as this many top cows were not available in the Polled Hereford breed. We decided that we would try to acquire the top portion of several herds. We made the policy decision that we were willing to pay extra to get the top end, and we would not buy the bottom end, even though it looked like a real bargain on the short term. This was our first policy decision, that we would go to 400 cows, but it would not have to be done quickly. We realized that it would take two, three or four years to acquire this number of top-quality cattle.

What was our first step in seeking out these cattle? First, we asked the American Polled Hereford Association and several of our friends in the Polled Hereford business for help and told them what we were looking for. We received a lot of good help in this regard. We spent many months travelling and trying to put together a group of cows. We bought several groups of cattle, two or three at one place, five or ten at another place, and sometimes buying an entire herd. We knew that it would take time, but we were determined not to be in a hurry as we did not want to buy a lot of cattle that we would have to turn around and cull (weed out) at a later date.

E: When you started to put together your projected number of 400, where did you look for your cattle and were there any particular bloodlines that you were anxious to obtain?

N: Our first decision was that pedigree would be secondary to conformation. We wanted an animal that was

going to be substantial in size, have good feet and legs, and have a good udder that could raise a big, growthy calf. We felt that the beef cattle industry was trying to produce beef for the housewife and that was the end product. We had seen, over the years, the many different and changing types of animals. In years past, the industry looked for short-legged, short, blocky animals, as were promoted by some of the college professors in the early 1940's. We saw a trend toward a larger animal. In the middle 1960's, most people were looking for a middle-of-the-road animal or a middle size animal, but we came to the decision that we wanted a bigger animal because we were raising beef. The end product was to market beef by the pound. So, our first requirement was going to be an animal with substantial size and with good mothering and milking ability.

Now, where did we seek the first cattle? Here we had a good stroke of luck. A friend called us and told us about a small herd in Virginia that was owned by a very prominent New York banker. He said this herd was for sale and was located only some ninety miles from here. So, Truman and I got in the car and drove over to Raphine, Virginia, to look at this herd. We had tried to call the farm manager the night before, but were unable to contact him, but we knew the directions to the farm so we went. We got out of the car and started looking around the barn lot. The first thing we saw was a group of young bull calves that were about six or seven months old that looked good to us. While Truman was going through these calves, I climbed one fence, looked across another fence, and saw a bull that was about three years old. I couldn't believe my eyes! I called Truman and I said, "Come over here and see what I've found. He crawled over, and he, too, could not believe his eyes. Shortly thereafter, the farm manager did arrive and he showed us through the herd. There were fifty cows and fifty calves. All the calves were uniform and substantial in size. The cows had good udders and were productive. Without looking at each other, Truman and I knew right away this was a herd of cattle we wanted. We determined the owner of the farm and got his address in New York.

Truman and I headed home. I called the gentleman in New York and asked for an appointment with him the next morning. I flew to New York, was in his office for a period of twenty minutes, and we bought the entire herd of cattle. Morlunda was in the Polled Here-

ford business.

These cows were primarily of lamplighter breeding. The bull that was very impressive was named R. F. Domestic lamplighter 19th, and Morlunda soon made him a Register of Merit Bull in the American Hereford Association and also a Gold Trophy Bull in the American Polled Hereford Association. We showed his calves at state fairs and national shows in the season of 1967 and 1968. That particular year, we started off at the Illinois State Fair in early-August, then to Indiana and back to the West Virginia State Fair. Then, we went to the Ohio State Fair, several fairs in Tennessee, then to Oklahoma, Kansas City, several fairs in the midwest, then to the west coast for six weeks, and home in mid-December.

The crew had a brief rest, and on Christmas Eve, we loaded up and took off for Phoenix, Denver, Ft. Worth, Tampa, Houston and Baton Rouge. I think we made twenty-eight shows that year, and at each show where we exhibited, we were the major winner. I suppose this set some kind of record for showing throughout the United States.

We were new in the industry, and we wanted to get our cattle seen by the public. We determined that the best way that we could get advertising and have our cattle seen and also get acquainted with the public was to make a large number of shows. In those days, we could show cattle and almost break even or win a few hundred dollars each week, as expense was kept at a minimum. Our boys would sleep in the straw with the cattle. We did have a room in the end of our cattle pullman with three bunks, a refrigerator and stove, where the men could stay. Our MFX60 was the only private cow pullman in the United States. It was 84½ feet long and provided a good, cheap way to travel.

In those days, the railroads offered incentives to livestock exhibitors. Railroads took an active part in agriculture and did their best to promote the improvement of livestock. The railroads, in those days, had a good sense for public relations, and they wanted livestock improvement for the future good of our country. Railroading of livestock was the minimum expense method of transportation. Certainly, it took us a little longer than it would by truck, but we weren't worried about the time, we were worried about the cost.

Since ours was the only privately-owned cow pullman in the country, we sent out pictures well in advance

of each show at which we stopped, and the newspapers were good to us. Many people would come out to see the cattle car and we received much good publicity. Later, other breeders did buy cattle cars, and this became 'an in thing' for a period of years.

As time progressed and more breeders began to show cattle, some of which did not look at the cost factors involved in showing cattle, there again began a trend of going by trucks because they could get there faster. This, coupled with the demise of the railroads and the very poor scheduling of railroads over the years, forced us to sell the cattle car. We then had to go by trucks as did the others.

Our cattle, as I said before, left home in August, and except for about two weeks during Christmas, we were on the road until the end of March. This put away the old fallacy that cattle could not be away on the show circuit continuously for many months. They continued to thrive and do well and were always presented to the public in a fine manner, as was evidenced by our winnings. I guess this came about because the cattle car was quite heavy. That car weighed forty tons empty! Again, to save expense, we put about forty tons of sand in the car whenever we approached the coast or any place that cheap sand was available. We had a bedding of about eighteen inches to two feet of sand. So, the forty tons of the car and the forty tons of sand, plus the cattle made us a very heavy load, and this would tend to make the car ride quite easily. This should be compared to a new car built in the 1960's of aluminum which had a weight of about twenty tons for the car. This lighter weight car had many shakes and vibrations, and the cattle and people had a rough ride.

The policy of showing cattle, of course, was a great thing for Morlunda in our early days, because it did give us the chance to let the public see our cattle. We got exposure to people all over the United States, through the fairs and shows. Of course, the magazines wrote this up, because we were fortunate enough to have the right type of cattle and were major winners at each show. This gave us a great opportunity to establish the name of Morlunda Farms as a quality producer of fine seed stock. We were able to spend a few dollars and reap many dollars in return in the way of advertising, goodwill, and future sales.

In recent years we have not done as much showing. This has come about for several reasons. One reason is cost. Today it is quite expensive to hire a truck

and haul your cattle to the shows. Secondly, the boys no longer sleep in the straw like we used to when I was a boy. Now, the men stay in hotel rooms which is costly. In the past, our boys prepared a lot of their own meals, and we were able to cut costs substantially. Another reason, and perhaps the prime reason that Morlunda is not showing as many cattle today, is because we do not like to get our cattle as fat as is required to show them. Extra fat on an animal costs money. Extra fat, particularly on a female, hurts future breeding, usefulness, and its ability to produce milk for its calves. Our showing today is extremely limited because of two reasons: costs and the usefulness to the animal.

Luckily, because of our reputation, we are not forced to show as much as a new breeder might be today. Just coming into the business, he may be forced to show cattle to build a reputation. I guess this is fortunate for Morlunda. We entered the business at the right time and had a good policy which is carried over to the present.

E: Obviously, you took a lot of precautions to transport the cow and, of course, the old adage that they can't stay on the road for a long period of time and so on. How did you prepare that car to start this road trip? Where did you have to put the cattle on to . . . (Interruption)

N: Because of your interest in the railroad car, I'll give you a little history. We purchased the car through a friend of mine who was in the railroad business. Having asked him to find a suitable car for us, he found the car which we purchased for \$3,000. Our railroad car was originally built in 1929 by the Nickel Plate Railroad for its president. He had the car specially built to haul his polo ponies. There were stalls in the car for the polo ponies, and at one end of the car there was a built-in ramp, an opening door where his automobile could also be driven into the car. Along the side of the car there were two big sliding doors. One the other end of the car there was a seventeen-foot room for its attendants. When we bought the car, it was pretty well equipped for us. All we had to do was to install several water tanks up near the roof of the car so we could water all of the cattle by a hose with gravity feed from the tanks. In the room where the attendants slept, we installed a propane gas supply. The car also had a large generator which picked up its current and generated

its own juice as it travelled along the railroad. This generator ran the electric fans which we used when the train came to a stop. We would normally run the car along the railroad with the doors open so as to get the better ventilation. Of course, if we got into very cold weather, like in the Rocky Mountains, the doors could be closed part way.

Initially, the first year we bedded the car with straw, and then we decided to buy sand which was a great cost-saver, safer from fire, and also a great labor saver. We would replenish the sand supply for bedding once or twice a year, whenever we came upon a cheap source of sand. In the car we also had the great advantage of carrying large volumes of food and hay overhead. As one travelled from show to show these prices were considerably above a realistic market price. We were able to buy feed and hay at good prices at certain locations and would stock up and carry these along in the car for several weeks at a time.

Now, how do we compare this to the individual who at the beginning of the show season rents a car from the railroad and outfits his own car, as we had done several times in the past? I recall when I was sixteen years of age, a young friend of mine and I went to Texas. On the way to Texas, we went down in the Pullman car, and had a Pullman drawing room on the way down. We got to Texas and then picked up two loads of cattle to bring home. We left Albany, Texas, at noon on a Wednesday and arrived home at midnight on Saturday.

We built a deck in one of the cars made out of timbers; big two-by-six timbers, and on this deck we placed our bedding for ourselves, our food supply and also a certain amount of feed for the cattle. To build this one deck on the car cost quite a few dollars. Of course, this expenditure was made just for a three-day run, because we did want to be with the cattle while they were being transported, as several of the cows were calving while en route.

Along the same line, other people showing cattle would build decks in their cars and they would lease a 36, 40, or a 50 foot car from the railroad for a regular show circuit season each fall. If they were going to be out a long time, they would build a rather long deck in the car where they could store their feeds and other supplies overhead. They would have several barrels of water on the floor where they could water

the cattle from time to time,

In those days, many of the trains were pulled by coal-burning engines. As one would go through a tunnel, if you had sufficient notice, it would be fine. We would take a towel and dip it in the water and then put it over our head, and we could breathe and wouldn't get too dirty. At least we could breathe until we got to the other end of the tunnel. Some of the tunnels were a mile or two miles in length. If we didn't have notice, all of a sudden we would be in a tunnel with all of the cinders coming up, and it wouldn't be too comfortable. Luckily, out west they didn't have too many tunnels, and as time progressed back east, we went to the diesel locomotive and there weren't so many cinders being thrown around. This is just one of the things we think back about the old days when I was a kid and traveling on the show circuit with the railroads.

- E: How did you get your cattle from the railroad to the fair site? Now, in some fairs they could stop the car right there in the fairgrounds.
- N: Well, here again, we must not think of today, we must think back. What was our country like at that time when the railroads were of importance to our livestock transportation system? Nearly all of the major fairs had railroad sidings. Consequently, our car would be put right on the siding at the fairgrounds. I think this was done with very, very few exceptions. Today, of course, this is not the case. First of all, there aren't many railroad trains and, secondly, new fairgrounds have not been built near railroad sidings, but are built on super highways on the interstate system. The situation is quite different today.
- E: Do you care to say something about the personnel? Obviously, your manager has been with you a long time. There have been other personnel who have come and gone, either with the show string or working here at the farm itself. Do you recall individuals and maybe a story or two about them that worked with you over the years?
- N: Our first manager was Mr. H. B. Wilson, who owned a neighboring farm. He was a part-time manager here at Morlunda. At that time Morlunda was a small operation of 285 acres, and Mr. Wilson was quite capable of handling his own farm and our small operation here. A year or two later, as we bought additional farms

and additional cattle, it became quite apparent that we had to seek our own full-time management. From that time until the present, Morlunda has had seven managers. They were all men who were most capable and of whom we're very proud.

E: What are their names?

N: The first manager we hired on a full-time basis was Kenneth E. Litton, a very able cowman. Many of you would know his brother, George Litton, who is a professor of animal science at V.P.I. in Blacksburg, Virginia. Succeeding Kenneth Litton was Adam J. McWilliam. Adam was with us here for a period of four or five years in the early 1940's and did a wonderful job of running the farm. Adam was a real cowman. He left Morlunda for a better job with the American Hereford Association as the area manager in charge of the entire eastern United States.

After Mr. McWilliam, we began another search for a manager, and we were extremely fortunate in acquiring Colonel A. W. "Ham" Hamilton. Ham worked here at Morlunda for a period just prior to the time he was breaking into the auction business. My father and Ham agreed that Mr. Hamilton would come to work for Morlunda and would manage the farm, but that Morlunda would permit him to have a certain amount of free time to conduct auctions. Ham knew then that it would take him a certain amount of time to develop his auction business. So, for the next year and half or so, Ham was manager at Morlunda and would pick up an auction sale here and there. After a couple of years, he became well-founded in the livestock auction business and as all the industry knows, went on to become the top livestock auctioneer of the entire industry--selling not only Polled Herefords, but all beef cattle. He will later be interviewed today and will add, I'm sure, many interesting stories to this oral history of Morlunda Farms.

Shortly after "Ham" left, a young man was hired, Topper Largent, from one of the great cattle families of the United States. Topper did a fine job, and we started off showing cattle. Unfortunately, it turned out that Topper's family was not entirely happy in the hills of West Virginia, as they had all been raised in the West. We then employed Mr. Dallas Russell, a very hard-working, loyal, wonderful employee who did a good job at Morlunda. Because of his age, his time was somewhat limited here.

In 1958 or 1959, we had to seek additional management. It occurred to me that Truman Lawrence might be available. I had known Truman Lawrence for ten or fifteen years, as he had managed several operations in the area of which we were familiar. He had worked at Freddie Macintosh's Farm in Spencer, West Virginia; capably managed the Double Z operation in Durham, North Carolina, and was later the manager of Poca Dot Farms at Charles Town, West Virginia. We approached him on the basis of coming to Morlunda, and Truman decided to come. In the fall of 1958 or 1959, Truman, Melba and their family moved to Morlunda. We're making this interview on March 1, 1980, and I'm happy to say that Truman has been with us now over twenty years, and all of the Nelson family consider Truman and Melba part of the family. In my opinion, Truman has no peer as a manager of a beef cattle operation in the United States.

Truman is also an expert judge of cattle. He's an excellent salesman, but more than these things, the one thing that is dear to my heart is his ability and desire to work with young people. As I look back at my younger years in the beef industry, back in those days, when most breeders employed herdsman, the popular herdsman in those days was a Scotsman, and these Scotsmen had many secrets. I well remember here at Morlunda when we had our own Scotsmen, Bill Lawrence, who would mix the feed for the show cattle and even I, the son of the owner of the farm, would not be let in on many of the so-called secrets that he had. This was the standard procedure for Scotsmen in those days.

When I look back on this type of arrangement and compare that to the operation that we have here, where Truman Lawrence is happy to work with young people and try to teach and develop them and will share his experience and knowledge with them, I think in retrospect, our country has come a long way. I'm sure the country and the beef cattle industry, as well as the people associated with it, have gained immeasurably with the change in operating procedures.

Truman has done a wonderful job for Morlunda and is well respected throughout the industry as a leader, as a manager, as a judge, as a salesman, as a real man and a good friend. I think his working with young people is the greatest asset he has. While we're on this theme, I must say that I think that one of the greatest advantages that Morlunda Farms has in its

operation is the fact that Truman working closely with other members of the Nelson family has attracted people to work with us.

Because of the type of management we have at Morlunda, there are many young men and women from not only the United States, but from many foreign countries who desire to come here and work for a period of weeks or months as trainees. We have had people here from South Africa, Venezuela, Guatemala, France, Canada, and, of course, many from the United States. At Morlunda, we have no difficulty whatsoever in acquiring and holding the top young people wanting to learn about the cattle industry. This has been helpful, not only to the young people, but also giving Morlunda a continuing source of good personnel for our cattle operations. As these people go out in the cattle business, they look back on their associations at Morlunda. There is no doubt that this has helped us and will continue to help us with our sales and our sales in the future.

I only wish that it could be said that from the standpoint of our farming operations that we also had the same advantages. Unfortunately, the problems of putting up hay and building fences, hauling manure and other many menial jobs on the farm, other than the cattle, do not seem to attract these bright, willing young men. Morlunda, as well as everyone else, has a very definite problem in regard to labor for the farm work in its operation.

- E: Mr. Nelson, one thing we can clear up before we go any further, how did the name Morlunda come to be associated with this rolling, gentle land of West Virginia?
- N: My father was born on a farm in Sweden. This farm was adjacent to the very small village of Morlunda, which is located in the area of Smoland in central Sweden, about 150 miles southwest of Stockholm, average type farmland in Sweden. In the early 1930's, when my father bought the initial land that now encompasses Morlunda Farms, he said, "Well, we have to have a name for this farm. What should we call it?" Then he said, "How about calling it Morlunda after my homeplace in Sweden?" My mother, naturally, agreed with him. I was twelve years old and had been taught to say what I felt because our family always discussed things openly. I said, "To me, Morlunda doesn't mean anything. Why don't we call it Valley View, because we have a great valley here, or let's call it Green Pastures because we have

lots of nice green grass; let's call it something that denotes this particular area." My father, in his kind and able way, did not say, "No," and let me speak. He finally came out and said, "Well, maybe they don't recognize Morlunda today, but if we all work together and build this farm into what I want it to be and produce top livestock, they will someday recognize the name Morlunda." I think we can say today with a great feeling of family pride that most of the people in the livestock industry do associate Morlunda with good, sound seed stock. We are all happy that my father persuaded us to name the farm Morlunda.

E: Obviously, with the growth of Morlunda over the years and your show activities, sales activities and so on, you personally have played a wider role in the industry, whether it was in the horned AHA Association or after 1964 in the American Polled Hereford Association. How do you see your role in these years associated with Morlunda as well as the industry as a whole?

N: I don't like to talk about myself. I like to talk of Morlunda Farms, but I suppose I can't dodge your question. Over the years, I personally have been quite active in many associations, serving on various boards, such as the West Virginia Polled Hereford Association, the West Virginia Hereford Association, the State Fair of West Virginia, the West Virginia State Fair, the Atlantic Rural Exposition, the Eastern National Livestock Show, and in the early 1960's was elected a director of the American Hereford Association. When Morlunda liquidated its herd of horned Hereford cattle in 1964, I resigned from the Board of Directors of the American Hereford Association. Recently, I have been elected to serve as a member of the Board of Directors of the American Polled Hereford Association, and as Chairman of its Finance Committee. I think the Polled Hereford Association has a wonderful staff. It knows the direction in which to go, and it has a very active membership, a membership with enthusiasm. I think the Polled Hereford breed, based on its ability to perform and compete against others will continue to grow and prosper.

E: Let us shift gears, if we can, and say something about the show experience that Morlunda has had over the years and the important cattle that have been associated with Morlunda.

N: Well, as we've talked a little bit earlier, Morlunda has a different viewpoint about showing cattle. Many new breeders show cattle primarily for the purpose of seeking advertising and introducing their product to

the public, just as Morlunda did in the early 1960's. I think that the show ring definitely has a place in our industry. It's one of the ways in which we can compare our product to the product being produced by other people within the same breed. The show ring also lets us compare our breed to the other breeds of cattle.

To me, one of the significant things about the Polled Hereford breed, when one goes to attend a large show, is the large number of Polled Hereford enthusiasts witnessing these shows. At the recent National Polled Hereford Show in Louisville, Kentucky, in November of 1979, I believe it was estimated that the crowd viewing the Polled Hereford Show was in excess of 6,000 people. Other breeds of cattle were exhibiting at that Livestock Exposition, and their crowds were also quite good, but none as large as the Polled Hereford crowd. I think this speaks well of our industry. It shows the enthusiasm that our industry has toward Polled Herefords. Certainly, the show ring has a place in the future, if properly directed.

We have taken another look and note the importance of the performance ability of livestock. Perhaps this is parallel to the show ring. The animal might be shown and might do well or he might not. He might still produce desirable offspring. Most of our teachers are now stressing greater importance on the performance of an individual measured by various traits. Morlunda has been very active in establishing performance records. When we entered the Polled Hereford business in 1965, we immediately began entering all of our records into computers so we could establish performance records. Today, we have as fine a set of records of anybody in the industry. As we view our records we can see the constant improvement of our cattle's performance through weaning weights, yearling weights, carcass cutability, marbling, weight per day of age and various other standards by which performance is measured.

Coupled with performance, we want fertility in the cow and the bull. A dead bull or a dead cow doesn't produce calves. Perhaps one of the most significant costs in any operation is the percentage of calf crop weaned as compared to the number of cows bred. Through proper management techniques, one can strive for greater and greater efficiency. We have found at Morlunda that by keeping proper records and by giving the proper incentives to certain individuals responsible for our production, that we have continued to increase our productivity and our performance in many respects.

- E: I think we need to say something about some of the important cows that you had here as part of your pure-bred operation.
- N: When we started in the Polled Hereford breed in 1965, our initial entry into the breed was to be based on not pedigree, but on the quality of the cows and the bulls. In those days, we looked at performance and productivity as the tools and the pedigrees were less important. The first bull we acquired was R. F. Domestic Lamp 19th. Through the show ring, we made him a register of merit sire, and gold trophy sire. The next year, we made Superol a register of merit and gold trophy sire. Subsequently, we added additional bulls and perhaps the most significant move was when we went to Canada and formed a close and lasting association with Johnathon Fox, prominent Canadian and owner of Justamere Farms at Lloydminster, Saskatchewan.

We talked with Mr. Fox and explained the type of program we were trying to set up at Morlunda Farms, and said we were in need of a good, young, growthy, productive bull. We said, "Johnathon, the type of bull we're looking for is not often found for sale." We prevailed upon Mr. Fox to help us, and we came away from Justamere the owners of a bull we later renamed Canadian Fantastic. Fantastic's dam was the very noted cow, Mandy 39N, one of the breed's greatest producers of herd sires. In addition to Canadian Fantastic, whose calves we showed so successfully, Mandy was also the dam of Justamere Anxiety Murphy 286Y, used so successfully at Falklands Farm in Pennsylvania. After Fantastic arrived at Morlunda, many people came to see him, and they were impressed with his enormous size and the way he could move. Fantastic soon became a standard of perfection sire, but more importantly, a true breeder of outstanding livestock.

Last year, we had 100 daughters of Canadian Fantastic in our herd and also several granddaughters. Over the years we have used several of his sons, and they have gone on to be recognized internationally. We have exported his sons throughout the world. The semen from Fantastic has been used throughout the world. When this bull died a few years ago, it was a great loss not only to Morlunda, but to the Polled Hereford breed. To show how far ahead of his time he was, based upon our records, but more importantly on the records of the daughters of Canadian Fantastic, two years ago we went back into our semen bank and again started breeding cows to Fantastic. Luckily we still had a large bank of semen still on hand. We again used him after three or four years of nonuse. We used

him again because our production records showed his daughters as good mothers. The daughters of Canadian Fantastic have left and will continue to leave an indelible place in the Polled Hereford breed.

Over the years we have purchased many bulls from Canada and several will go down in history as the better bulls and the improvers of the breed, but certainly, Canadian Fantastic will go down as one of the true breed improvers.

In the early 1970's, the Polled Hereford breed was becoming interested in the bloodlines of R. W. Jones and his Victor Domino cattle. There was no question that R. W. Jones was the premier breeder in the industry insofar as performance records were concerned. He looked for performance in a cow or bull more than anything else. He did not care anything else about the animal other than his performance. He was looking for a high weight per day of age at weaning and at one year of age. The R. W. J. cattle became quite popular throughout the United States and Morlunda Farms was extremely fortunate in acquiring what since has proved to be one of the great Victor Domino bred bulls of the breed, SR Victor 2nd. He was the first senior performance sire of the Polled Hereford breed. In fact, to this date, no other bull has gained such a title. We have almost 100 daughters of SR Victor 2nd in the herd today, and the bull is still alive. We are currently using three sons of SR Victor 2nd. The semen of SR Victor 2nd is being shipped worldwide.

E: We've talked pretty much about the purebred business at Morlunda. There is another aspect at Morlunda that is just as important and commands just as much attention, this is the commercial herd. Would you like to say anything about your commercial herd operation?

N: Well, Morlunda Farms is owned by Oscar Nelson, Incorporated, and all the stockholders are members of the Nelson family. Morlunda Farms owns all of the Polled Hereford cattle, the purebreds. In addition to the operation of Morlunda Farms and its purebred Polled Hereford cattle, there is also an operation in Virginia which is owned by me personally. My personal operations are staged primarily in Virginia about fifty miles east of here. We currently have at that location about 400 commercial cows and a good many yearlings. These cows are wintered in Virginia and many are pastured on leased farms here in West Virginia. I think it is significant to say that for the past fourteen years, all of our production of commercial

cattle has gone to the same buyer in Illinois, as he knows the consistent quality of these cattle. The cows in this herd are of crossbred variety to some extent, but many are Polled Herefords. All the bulls used in this operation are purebred Polled Herefords having been raised at Morlunda. This gives us a great opportunity to test out some of the young bulls at Morlunda in the early stages of their life by using them in our commercial operation. We can get more performance data through these channels. So, when we think of Morlunda Farms, one should keep in mind that we're not only a purebred breeder of seed stock for the Polled Hereford business, but also have a very close relationship to the commercial breeder. The management of Morlunda Farms is in the commercial industry and knows the problems of the commercial breeder. This has been a great help in our purebred operations.

E: One last question. What about the operation of the farm itself here, the lay of the land, so to speak? Do you run mostly grass? Do you do any grain farming? Do you purchase most of your feed? Do you try to be a self-sufficient operation?

N: As Morlunda Farms is currently constituted, it owns about 2,000 acres of land here in Greenbrier County. Of that 2,000 acres, the bulk of it is in pastures, which we try to keep as highly productive as possible. We put up about 300 acres of corn silage each year and also have about 150 acres of good hay. We like the corn silage because it is cheaper for us to put up corn silage than it is for us to put up hay. Because of our location here in Greenbrier County and the fact that nearly every morning we have dew on the ground in the summertime, it is very difficult for us to cure hay, and we seldom can bale hay until after 1:00 in the afternoon. Our production of hay is curtailed by weather conditions and then we do get some rain in the afternoon, losing a good bit of the quality of the hay that is on the ground. Over the long term, we do think our corn crop, through silage, is a better economical venture in raising feed. We can put up a good corn silage crop with a minimum amount of labor and likewise when we feed it, we do it with a minimum amount of labor.

In talking about the acreage of Morlunda, I think that it also should be brought out that coupled with our Virginia operations, the two somewhat mesh together. In Virginia, I personally own about 1,000 acres of land where a lot of corn silage and some hay is also raised. The Morlunda operation and my Virginia com-

mercial operation both rent several additional farms here in Greenbrier County. We have something like twenty different farms under lease. Most of these house the commercial cows from Virginia, but some of the better farms with better fences and close by also house some of Morlunda's purebred cattle. The farm in Virginia has its separate management group and handles all the day-to-day operations in Virginia. Truman Lawrence, the manager of the Morlunda operations, is also the manager of the Virginia operations. Morlunda tries to be self sufficient in crop production. We raise corn silage and hay, and we buy about one carload of oats each year. The only other feeds we buy are salt and various other minerals.

The primary goal of Morlunda Farms is to raise sound outstanding Polled Hereford seed stock on grass. We think that the beef cow was put here on this earth to consume grass. She wasn't put here to consume feed, because over the years corn and other feeds will be needed to feed the entire world population. The cow is a scavenger of grass and our entire policy is directed toward the cow that will produce its best calf based on a grass concept. Grass is the cheapest and best feed we have, and we are keying our entire program at Morlunda toward the production of cattle that will perform basically on grass.

E: Where do we go from here?

M: That's a good question. The world today has many problems. Many scientists and government leaders wonder how we're going to feed the world in the future with its increasing population. This certainly is a problem. I think it behooves us to try to produce the animal that will produce and perform most efficiently on the cheapest feed available. We must also remember that we have to compete with other producers of pork, fish, and fowl, maybe even the soybean substitutes. As long as we cattle producers can competitively produce a product with good taste and nutrition, the people will buy that product. If we produce this on a competitive basis, the cattle market has a great future. We must strive continually to produce a better product as cheaply as possible.

I think the beef cattle business and, particularly, the purebred Polled Hereford business has a great future. We look forward to mastering the challenges of the future.

NELSON

35'

E: Is there anything else from your list you think we ought to . . . ?

N: I might think of something later on, but that's good enough for now. (Laughter)

E: Okay, I think we've done it. Thank you very much.

N: It's been my pleasure.

END OF INTERVIEW