

## TERRY WELSH TRANSCRIPT

Date August 2015

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Transcribed by Donna Duzan, April 2018

D: Today I am with Terry Welsh on behalf of the Friends of the Library Oral History Project. Terry has lived in Marshall for his whole life and has been a businessman. With that I will turn it over to Terry.

T: I was born here in Marshall in 1958. My dad was Ray Welsh and my mother is Beverly Welsh. I have four siblings, 2 brothers and 2 sisters. We grew up on the farm and by about the age of 5 we had chickens and hogs and were big into chickens and the egg business. I remember at the age of 5 working on the farm. I gathered eggs for 25 cents an hour. It was a lot of fun, actually I worked with my 3 brothers, my dad, Uncle Joe and Uncle Robert. They all farmed together. There never was a dull moment, we always had something to do. We of course got to play and back then there was no video games so we found things to do in the woods or made up our own games. We found things to do and occupy our time. Growing up with livestock was fun.

D: You mentioned the egg business, did you have a route or did you sell them to wholesale or retail?

T: We were actually the only ones that produced, processed and marketed our eggs. I remember when we built our first building in 1962, and that was one of the first automated buildings in the country. We had floor layers, that building held 14,000 hens. It amazes me now, when I look back, at the automation at that time. We sat in front of a machine and that track went 300 feet down through the building and brought every egg to you. So you sat there and picked the eggs up and put them in a carton, then we had coolers and when we were done twice a week we graded eggs. Had to handle them, wash them, and sort them. It was really good for us kids because we all worked at young ages, there was probably six or seven of us at one time. And during the summer we had building projects, and there was always something to do. But the chickens and eggs were really pretty neat. And my Aunt Helen Tingley, she delivered eggs a couple times a week and I remember going into the Sycamore Building and hand deliver to people. We would deliver to business, grocery stores, in a 30 mile radius. But we always wanted to go with Aunt Helen because she had a couple of people who were older and would give out all kinds of candy.

We would go floor by floor in the Sycamore Building and you just walked up to the people's desks and they would tell you how many eggs they wanted.

D: Had they ordered in advance?

T: No, they did not pre-order. She had a pick-up truck and Uncle Robert had a van. And the customers would look forward to seeing you, it was really fun.

D: Did you ever "scramble" any eggs before you got them sold?

T: Yeah, and we would have the occasional egg fight with the imperfect eggs that couldn't be sold.

D: Where did you go to school?

T: We came to Marshall. The kindergarten was down south in the Ohio Building. Miss Claypool was my kindergarten teacher. Then went down to south school for grades one through three. Then my fourth grade year, we got the new school at North School and that was where I went for fourth through sixth grade. Yeah, that was kinda weird because the new school broke up the "north and south" side kids.

D: Did you have a particular area of interest in studies?

T: I always liked math, enjoyed numbers, and I liked to read. PE was always fun.

D: Any particular memories about high school?

T: Went to Junior High out here, then went to high school, played football my freshman year, I didn't go out my sophomore year, I always had an interest in farming and knew that was what I wanted to do. The problem was that when I got to high school, I realized that I had two cousins and a brother who were older than me and I kinda felt like I was the bottom person and always felt like I was at the bottom of the pole.

Back in the early days it was neat because the three, dad, Uncle Joe and Uncle Robert, always had their sections, Uncle Joe did the crops, dad was in charge of the hogs and Uncle Robert was in charge of the chickens and when it came time to farm, they all did that. It really was a family affair. Then in about 1968, Uncle Robert decided he wanted to seek something else so he sold out and moved to Albuquerque, New Mexico and he was all fired up in the silver mines. It didn't work out but just to show you their individual personalities, he got into the business of laundromats and worked hard and ended up with about seven or eight of them. He knew how to fine-tune them and I remember going out there and helping and he ended up very successful doing that.

D: I know he came back to visit, did he ever consider coming back to live?

T: No, and he said he never regretted leaving here but he always enjoyed coming back and seeing what we were doing on the farm.

D: Did you eventually phase out the chicken and egg business?

T: Yeah, in the early 70's, I had an Uncle, Ed See, who kinda took over the chickens, but big chicken farms were coming in and the profitability just wasn't there so we turned the chicken houses into hog houses. No one really wanted to manage the chickens and we decided to invest in the job operation and let the chicken production go. It took us a summer to do it, we poured the concrete slabs and took out the flooring.

D: Did your dad or someone do some research on how to raise hogs?

T: Yeah, dad was instrumental in most of the things we did and Uncle Joe could always put things together to make it work and they worked really well together. Dad had the ideas on where the hog production was going and Uncle Joe would draw up the plans. They never thought about hiring somebody to get the building changed, you just drew up the plans and did it. Dad was good with carpenter, the pens they made out of wood and they just made everything work. But you know one thing I have noticed about having younger kids work, back then we really took it seriously, if we did something wrong we felt bad, we you did something wrong and they got on you, you made dang sure you didn't do that again. Today, kids just don't care and don't take pride in what they do.

D: There is a word...pride... I don't think kids today do take as much pride in what they do.

T: When we hire younger kids, we try to work with them, but one thing I notice is you have got to have patience. And kids that come in from the farm for jobs, you know they have probably worked hard and will work hard. The opportunities that we had, and we were very lucky, very fortunate to be in those situations.

D: It was that farming generations that kind of set those parameters. So in the hog business what kind of volume do you hope for.

T: When I was in high school, dad ran the hog operation...we probably had about 3-4000 head a year. I graduated in 1976 and at that time we decided to build the north hog unit. I had started Lakeland College, I went up there for ag production and once we decided to put that unit up, we flew to Iowa, Nebraska, several places looking at units and different builders to build them for us. And people were wanting to raise breeding stock so that there was better quality hogs. I went one year to Lakeland and the second year we were bringing in animals and I was getting up at 4:30 AM feeding the sows and then going to school and that lasted about a month, then I quit school and ran that 500 sow farrow to finish building and then production went up to 8 to 10,000 a year. I ran that for a couple years and hired a couple guys to help me, then we let the helpers run the hog building and I went back and to the old unit and we rebuilt it. We moved animals in the 1977 and started marketing hogs the summer 1978. That was one of the first time the sows came in to gestational crates prior to that time the sows were outside in pens. We kept the sows in crates, they were individually fed and as today, a lot of people, they are going away from that. You've got McDonald's and others who put a lot of pressure on. The thing that people don't understand is that a crate in a temperature controlled building the animals don't have to compete for food and they are really very content in their crates. But when you raise these animals and it is your "bread and butter", you take very good care of them.

D: You mentioned the large volume, that is a lot of ham. Did you market that or sell to one packer?

T: Kinda backing up a little. We always grew all our own animal feed. And we used our own trucks to take the animals to market. Oscar Mayer was in Beardstown, Swift was in Louisville, Wilson's was in St. Louis places where we took our hogs to market, also Tyson. We hauled three or four years to Cincinnati. One of the packers wanted you there at sunrise so we would load and drive all night to get there early the next day.

D: You mentioned Tyson, I associate them with chickens.

T: They sell hams too, all kinds of meat.

D: So from chickens to hogs, what do you have today?

T: Well I might go back a little bit. Actually once we got started into farming, I got into farming, I got married. I married Lisa Stinson, she grew up in Marshall too, south of town. We married in 1986, then our son, Cody, was born in 1987 and our daughter, Brooke in 1989. So I guess that is the next generation, the kids grew up on the farm out there. I wanted Cody to grow up on the farm but you know how protective mothers are. We didn't depend on them like my generation. I think back to when I was working for the farm and how the pay just kept going up by how many years you had worked. I would get a check and I would sign it and it would go directly into a savings account.

Then when I was in high school and wanted a car, that money was there. I remember the first car I bought, my junior year was \$5500. I had a good bit of money in the bank by then and they always made you feel kinda bad when you spent any and after I had spent that \$5500 I thought to myself maybe I had done the wrong thing spending all the money but that feeling went away after a while. It was a Grand Prix. My brother who was four years older than me, he bought a car the same year and he bought a new car. Dad told me I couldn't buy a new car, it costs too much. I went over to Bowen to shop and they had one like what I wanted and it was a demo. When dad was it he said I couldn't buy that one but I told him it had 1100 miles on it because it was a demo and so I got that one by him. So I ended up with an almost new car.

So we had the kids and they got involved in school. Cody was in sports, played on a travelling baseball team, and that team his eighth grade year won the Little League World Series, it was a team from Indianapolis. We travelled all summer every weekend that year. And Brook was always a cheerleader so we kept busy with that too. I coached Cody for nine years of Little League and I made a commitment that I would make all his games and I think I missed one game. But those years when your kids are young go by so fast, and I'm really glad that we were able to attend most everything they were in. I remember when Cody was done with Little League, Brook came in and said she was going to play softball and I said "That is really good" and then she told me I was going to coach her. I told Lisa I knew nothing about softball and she said "You will learn" and she said not to get on the girls like I did the boys, because these girls will cry !! I think I got through the third game before I made one cry, and actually I think I enjoyed coaching the girls more than the boys....they seemed more committed. But it was a good time and even today those kids I coached know who I am and have memories of playing ball. Coaches do make a difference in kids' lives.

D: Did you or Cody take ag classes when you were in high school?

T: Yeah, and that's interesting, my freshman year Truman Spittler was my ag teacher. It was very easy for me, a lot of it was mathematical things. He was a character and a heckuva good guy. So I did one year of ag class. I decided to take the science and mathematical classes because I was more interested in that.

I had a partnership with my dad. Uncle Robert left in 1968 to go out west, then up to 1985 was my dad and Uncle Joe and my brother and two cousins. We started going separate ways, I mean there was all of us working together, but some same we had too many chiefs and not enough Indians, but we all had our own sectors, like I did the hogs and we each had our own place out there. So they/we decided to start buying farm ground and there were good people who believed in us and we were just very fortunate.

D: Most people today when you say the word "farm" they think of corn, beans you haven't said much about the farm business.

T: When the brothers all came back in the 1950's, they all went to the military first, Jessie, their mother put everything together, they lost their dad at a young age, and one boy could stay on the farm, and that was Uncle Joe, it was something how they held it all together. So then in 1985, they split the farm and Uncle Joe and his boys went one way and dad and I went another way, so that was the start of our partnership, my dad and I. And that continued until 2008 when he retired I bought it and have ran it ever since then. We have expanded into several different things, we started tiling the farm ground, and did some improvements. Then Lisa thought that on down the road, we needed something for the kids and so we bought the greenhouse in Terre Haute. They raise tulips and have grown that business into a couple garden centers. We have a florist there and are working in doing landscaping. Cody and his wife, Lindsey run that business. I might mention that both our kids got married. Cody got married in 2013, they met while in school and Edwardsville, SIU. And Brook went to IU and met her husband, Jeff Fatal there. They live in Chicago and he works for GE financing and Brook works for BonTon stores. And has developed a company with her cousin. They make a tee shirts with positive sayings on them and each shirt sold, they donate one shirt to kids in need. And it is really starting to grow, its exposure and that is what they are looking for. I guess it goes back to our roots and how we were brought up and I am tickled to death that both our kids have that desire in them. They are both hard workers and want to improve this world and that is something my dad always wanted too.

D: Are the shirts they donate only in Chicago?

T: No, it's all over, they have been over to Peyton Manning's Hospital and St. Jude's, all around. It makes us proud that our kids are doing such good things with their businesses.

D: About how many acres do you farm?

T: We just added a pretty good chunk this year, we are at about 5,000 acres now. I just love it, there is nothing like farming, it just really is in our blood. And we are out of the hog business. We no longer have any hogs on the farm, putting all our energies into farming. We have got a good crew of people and I just love it. I can't wait to go to work every day.

D: How many employees do you have?

T: Five or six full time and then some part-time as needed.

D: What about the tulip company, is that a cyclical business?

T: Yeah, the bulbs all come from Holland and in the first of September they are cooled for six to eight weeks and then we plant them. You have to plant them in stages so that you have them at the appropriate times, Valentines, the Mother's Day is about the end of tulips. It's a quick cycle and there is a lot of work to it, very labor intensive.

D: You have got a beautiful facility there. And some very classy ads on TV.

T: Yeah, the kids have put them together.

D: You mentioned the landscaping, is that for commercial and residential?

T: It's both and they just started that this year. And Cody and a buddy of his are doing hardscapes too and getting into learning that. They do retaining walls and retention walls and that kind of stuff. It's amazing how they can improve the outside of places. So that is something Cody really enjoys.

D: Does Cody do most of the actual design work?

T: Yes, even the first job that I went and checking, was just perfect and precise, he did an amazing job.

D: Do you have thoughts on the changes that have taken place in farming in the last thirty years?

T: Yeah, there have been amazing changes. They have quit plowing, that is one thing I always felt I got deprived of. Through the years, the herbicides, the genetics, the equipment, guidance. It's just all grown in leaps and bounds. I remember when we drove tractors without cabs, then in the early 70's the cabs came in but the air conditioning never seemed to work. And the guidance, we have probably had that for fifteen years now. We were one of the first to put the guidance on the tractors. You have so much less fatigue nowadays, you turn at the ends, shoots arrows through the fields, if you rows are long enough, you could read a magazine! And the hybrids now, I remember when top production was 100 bushels an acre and now top production can go to 300. And bean production has improved too. We encourage people to come out and ride with us. A combine is probably the most amazing piece of equipment on the farm. The work a combine does is just amazing.

D: What I remember is a corn picker and that it just picked the corn off and the corn was still on the cob.

T: I can barely remember eared corn. I remember when I was in junior high we traded combines over at Wild's Farm Equipment and we traded combines every year for a \$1000. And today you wouldn't even touch that. I do remember in 1964 we bought a new 1040 and a 806 and we got delivery about the same time and I think the John Deere cost \$6400 and the International was \$6200. And those were pretty big powerhouses at that time.

D: And people who aren't around the farm, don't realize the cost of the equipment and the cost of seed and herbicides, all that farming takes.

T: And farm ground has really increased in value. But still when you look at the American food source, it's the cheapest food source and it is all because of the American farmer. The American

farmer is one of the most efficient in the world. But they are the first to get whacked when it comes to government policy.

D: So with all the farm programs that have been in the past and most of them have been X'ed out, do you see that continuing?

T: Yeah, you know crop insurance has played a big role, years ago you never thought about taking out crop insurance but the risk now is tremendous and that is what a lot of people don't understand, we don't dictate the price of what we get and you don't know what Mother Nature is going to do. Mother Nature pretty much lets you know what you are going to do happen and there is a lot of variance from year to year. We have seen a variance of \$3.00 corn to \$8.00 corn in the last four years and the same with soybeans and the volatility in these markets, it's now a world market. There is just a lot of factors in farming, people don't realize how many areas you have to have knowledge in. Mechanical, electrical, financing, marketing, your ability to fix things. American farmers have to have a lot of different talents.

D: The last several years we have heard a lot about ethanol and that's a great source of corn and all, do you see that continuing?

T: Yes, to be honest with you, ethanol is a cleaner burning fuel, the efficiency is there, the need for foreign oil, that was the whole key to this. Remember when ethanol plants first came on, corn did go up and people did blame those ethanol plants but at the time with the money being spent on foreign oil, we have everything we need in this country we don't need everything else out there in the world but I guess our politicians decide that. But the ethanol plants are good, good for the farmer and good for the public. They have been around for ten years and it's a good thing.

D: We think of soybeans, soybean oil, and I see a lot of other things that beans are used for do you think other things will be developed like ethanol, from soybeans?

T: There are a lot of different things out there, there is biodiesel, other items that will come down the road, going back to the ethanol plants, the byproducts out of those, there are six or seven different things you can get out of a kernel or corn.

D: The use of computers must be a big part of your business nowadays.

T: They are, you've got your iPad, guidance on planters, and they are recording all the information on planting and what they are doing, and I can read that on my iPad. And there is a lot of discussion about the GMO's we are using now, its creating a safer environment. Technology has to keep moving because the population of the world keeps growing.

D: And there is a lot of discussion about the use of antibiotics in our plants and our animals. What is your take on that?

T: There is but I go back and say that we have preservatives in all our foods. When you see how our goods are packaged today, there are a lot more harmful additives put into our food. I think the amount of antibiotics put into our meat is minute. We have guidelines set and most farmers go by

that.

D: There is also discussions, in other countries, about the amount of woodlands being taken away to make farmland.

T: South America is the biggest one. Here a few years ago, they became the largest soybean producer. They are clearing their forest and making farmland out of it. It's a big deal down there. But their infrastructure is not there, their governments is not a sound environment. But the rainforest is an important part of our planet its being destroyed.

D: Terry, is there a particular historical event that has influenced you?

T: I would have to think about that. One thing in ag and in your life that is a constant in change. Change is always good, as life goes on a person has to be open and that is just the process of life.

D: Is there a modern day convenience that you just could not live without?

T: Probably my cell phone, to be honest, it's amazing how many calls we get a day. It has made us a lot more efficient.

D: If you were in a foreign country and asked where you are from, what would you tell them about Marshall?

T: I don't know, Marshall is a small town where you know everybody. We have a lot of organizations that help people out when needed. I remember playing Little League and staying all night with one of the town kids and it was cool to get to ride your bike all over town. Marshall is a good little town, just a good place to live.

D: It's been a pleasure to talk with you this afternoon, thanks for taking part of the Oral History Project for the Marshall Public Library.

T: Thank you