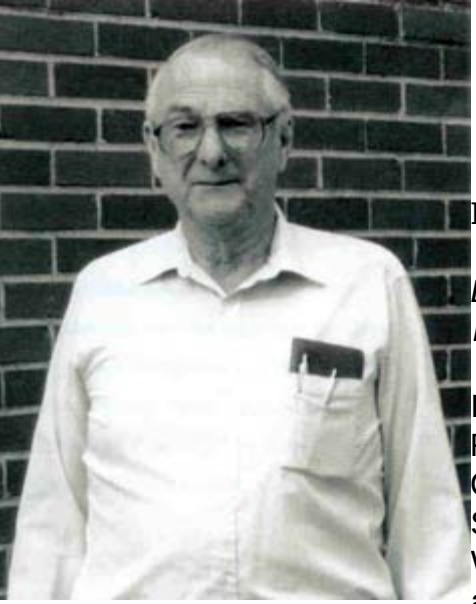

R. DuVal Dickinson -- 5/9/2007

By Tina Mathews, CRRL Intern, editor
Interviewed by Marie Stella

DuVal Dickinson was born May 5, 1921, at Wilburn Farm, the Dickinson "home place" in Spotsylvania County, where he now live & Mr. Dickinson attended Spotsylvania and Fredericksburg schools and George Washington University, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Virginia Tech. In 1942 he became a dairy farmer first working for his father and then as sole owner of a 65-head herd on Wilburn and later Upaway Farms. In 1961 he became president of Dickinson Equipment, Inc., a farm and lawn equipment company. In 1970 Mr. Dickinson and his wife, Anne, moved the farm equipment business into a remodeled dairy barn where they still operate the business today. He is also president of Six D's, Inc., a real estate development company, which was established in 1988. The Dickinsons have a daughter, three sons and seven grandchildren. Mr. Dickinson's brother, Bill, sat in during the interview.

Interviewer: Let me start this by saying I am in the house of Mr. DuVal Dickinson

Mr. Dickinson: And you have been a resident of Fredericksburg for how many years Mr. Dickinson?

Mr. Dickinson: All my life. I've been alive for 77 years.

Interviewer: Your house is kind of hidden in the middle of Rt. 3, the famous Rt. 3. Maybe you can tell me about what it was like living in this house when you were a young man?

Mr. Dickinson: Well, at that point it was wood stoves, oil lamps and pure country living.

Interviewer: How long has this house been in existence?

Mr. Dickinson: We think, the best we can determine, that this portion of the house was here in 1830. We know for sure that it was here during the Civil War and that there are two bullet holes in it: one on the shutter in that window and one in the front of the house. It was really in the middle of the area where the troops camped over the winter on the hill behind us in the Battle of Salem Church.

Interviewer: Do you know if the house was used for anything? Was it a residence at that time?

Mr. Dickinson: It was a residence at that time and like most any major building, home, or church, whatever was available close in the battle area was used as a hospital. There were injured men brought into the house here for medical care and most of the time they were moved out of the immediate area as quickly as possible when they could but (they were) temporarily brought in and wounds bandaged that type of thing.

Interviewer: Did your family live in the house then or did they buy it later on?

Mr. Dickinson: No, no, our parents bought the home, the farm here, at Christmastime in 1919 and moved into it on March 15, that's right Bill, in 1920. I was born a year later in May of 1921.

Interviewer: So this was your birthplace.

Mr. Dickinson: I was born in this room.

Interviewer: How many children in your family?

Mr. Dickinson: Right there in that corner. My brother Bill was born in Stafford County at the home that was named Hollywood between Rt. 3 and 218. My sister was born earlier in Orange County before my parents moved to Stafford. They bought a little farm down there in Stafford and that was truly not large enough to make a living on and Dad decided to move up here and went into the dairy business from that point on.

Interviewer: How many acres did you have originally associated with the house"

Mr. Dickinson: Originally about 100 acres. There was another 67 acres of the farm that he did not buy at that point but one of the neighbors agreed to buy that portion and sell it back to him when he felt he could afford to buy it, and he did a few years later. Seven or eight years later he bought it back. And then later on two more parcels were added to it so that at the maximum it was 225 acres.

Interviewer: Did you and your brother help work the farm?

Mr. Dickinson: Oh yes' and also a younger brother that was two and a half years younger than I. We all had our jobs to do. I started actually milking a cow every day when I was six years old.

Bill Dickinson: About the same and each had the chores. School time you came home and had a bite to eat, went straight to feed the calves or milk the cows, get the silage out of the silo, get the hay in place, whatever else, all these things that had to be done, depending at your age at that point as to whether you had to get up in the morning. You milked in the morning as well before you went to school.

Interviewer: Was there running water in the house at that time?

Mr. Dickinson: There was not running water in the house at that point. The hand pump was inside the back porch. So you would get up and get the water if you were old enough to bring it in. But it was shortly thereafter there was a gasoline driven pump installed so we did have water and that water was piped also out to the milk house to take care of that and on down to the barn so that the cows could be watered.

Interviewer: That must have been incredible, like a life saver at that time?

Mr. Dickinson: Oh it was! And then we were one of the earliest families in the area to have electricity because our parents bought a gasoline powered generator.

Bill Dickinson: The first to be connected to electricity.

Mr. Dickinson: Dad bought a 32-volt electric generator plant. It was put in the basement with a gasoline motor on it and you went down and fired it up. It ran a while and charged a group of glass jars acting as batteries that were full of acid with the cathodes in them. And then after two or three years, I don't remember exactly what year, the power company agreed to run the line from the intersection of William Street and Hanover. That intersection, in Fredericksburg, was where the power line stopped. They agreed to run the line from that point to Five-Mile Fork provided enough people would sign up and agree to pay $3 a month for three years and they asked anyone who had use outside of the home to pay more. And my parents agreed to pay $10 a month for 3 years. They ran the line up the highway but each homeowner had to get the line from the highway and into the house and run whatever lines they needed beyond that point.

Interviewer: So you had the barn and the house with electricity

Mr. Dickinson: Yes, early on basically what you had was a ceiling light in each room. You had a switch on a wall with the ceiling light and some of the ones upstairs had just a pull chain on the ceiling lights.

Interviewer: So you guys were actually pretty modem because you had water in the house and electricity.

Mr. Dickinson: We were, along the way we ended up with lots of little bits and pieces that our neighbors didn't have or didn't do because they chose not to in some cases and because they couldn't afford to in other cases. The dairy farm was hard work, lots of it, always a job to do, seven days a week, 365 days a year and 366 on leap year. There wasn't a lot of play time for anybody, but there was the regular income. Lots of bills to go with it but there was always some money that came in every month. Whereas, if you operated a grain farm or beef farm the money came in a few times a year and you had a long dry period in between. We were more fortunate from that standpoint.

Interviewer: That is interesting. I hadn't thought about a dairy farm in that way. That you constantly had a product you were selling. How about school, where did you go to school?

Mr. Dickinson: We went in the beginning to Chancellor School. The building that we attended, part of it is still in place. Now it's Chancellor Community Center, which is about three-quarters of a mile from the present Chancellor Elementary School at the other end of Andora Drive.

Interviewer: And after elementary school?

Mr. Dickinson: That was elementary and high school both. At that point there were four high schools in Spotsylvania County. There were basically four rooms for the high school and one room for each grade. Chancellor School at the point I started had one room for each grade of elementary except there were two rooms for the first three grades. The second grade was divided between the two rooms.

Interviewer: So did your brother and you go to school together in the classes?

Mr. Dickinson: No we were far enough apart so that we were never in the same classes together.

Interviewer: And you walked there?

Mr. Dickinson: Well we have, but it was not done on a regular basis. By the time I got there, our uncle and his sons, our cousins, who lived across the highway, where Wal-Mart is now, built a school bus. At first it was nothing but a truck body, a flatbed truck body with a bench on each side, so you sat on a wooden bench facing each other, no tailgate or anything to start with. Later on they actually enclosed this and put some windows in and closed the back end with a door in it. But when they first built it, it didn't even have a back in it.

Interviewer: Did just the family ride in it or did others ride?

Mr. Dickinson: Children from several families rode on the bus.

Interviewer: Who paid for it?

Mr. Dickinson: Well I don't really know who paid for all of it when we started with it but the children from several families right here in this neighborhood rode in the bus to school. It wasn't big enough to haul very many. About a dozen was the maximum you could get in.

Interviewer: It must have been fun going early in the morning in the cold...

Mr. Dickinson: It was cold going in the winter time but it was better than walking.

Bill Dickinson: Right, right

Mr. Dickinson: A lot of the kids that went to school with us did walk to school. Many of them walked a long ways.

Bill Dickinson: And rode horses

Mr. Dickinson: And rode horses, one in particular rode a pony to school and rode several miles to school.

Interviewer: Did they just leave the horses out roaming or tack them up.

Mr. Dickinson: Tied 'em up. Or had a little shed that they could be in. But the same things were done all over the country. We just happened to have, the Chancellor School just happened to be the biggest one of

the schools. One here, one in Spotsylvania Courthouse, one at Marye and one at Belmont and there was an elementary school at Margo, which is up towards Lake Anna but a long way from Lake Anna. But I guess in those early days many of those kids never went past seventh grade. There weren't enough children to justify operating a high school.

Interviewer: Give me some general feelings about what it was like. Did you go to Fredericksburg a lot? Was Fredericksburg separate from this?

Bill Dickinson: We went to Fredericksburg to sell produce, eggs, whatever.

Mr. Dickinson: Most of the time once a week and most of those years Mother took care of the hens and she sold eggs when they were available and made butter and sold butter, which helped to buy the groceries. We take those to town on Saturday and deliver those around to the regular customers she had. Then go to the grocery store and spend the money at the grocery store and buy those things you didn't have at home, that you had to buy. You didn't buy a lot of things. You ate mostly what you had. We always had to have a garden and grew as much stuff as you could to eat but the sugar and flour and coffee and some of that type thing you can't grow on a farm we had to buy and some meat. We never grew a lot of meat here, but we did grow some hogs and raised and killed those as soon as it got cold, sometime-usually between Thanksgiving and Christmas, when you could keep the meat longer. What you couldn't salt down and keep, we canned.

Interviewer: When did you get refrigeration?

Mr. Dickinson: We had an ice-box early. She asked when we got refrigeration. We got the ice box early. Refrigeration probably didn't come until the 30's.

Bill Dickinson: 1932 or 1933. It probably wasn't the first one bought in the neighborhood.

Mr. Dickinson: And we would not have gotten it then, except my mother's brother was working for a firm that sold electrical appliances in Richmond and he was responsible for her getting the first one. He got it at a discount and brought it up here for her, delivered it to her. Also the first radio we had was a used RCA. It sat on the desk right in

the corner night there. Even then you didn't listen to the radio all day long, you turned it on and we listened to specific programs and then you turned it off.

Interviewer: Were there any stores close by?

Mr. Dickinson: No, nope. But all the area from Fredericksburg to out here was country. The first store at all was at Five-Mile Fork. It was right there on the top of the ridge on the right hand side, this side of what is now the Oak Barn Furniture Store. The oak barn was the dwelling of the man who ran the store, next door.

Interviewer: Was it a little grocery store?

Mr. Dickinson: A little grocery store. Well he sold mostly groceries, it was not as much a full country store as the ones that were further out that sold everything from groceries to shoes to clothing and horseshoes and saddles and bridles and everything else, but more a grocery store type than the others. There was also a little bitty store across the road from the school. The man that owned that had a little covered wagon that he went to Fredericksburg, loaded up the wagon with groceries and items that he sold in the store and also stopped along the way and peddled his stuff along the way home. He had certain customers that he delivered to on the way back.

Interviewer: Was Fredericksburg a big trip? Did you have to go...

Mr. Dickinson: You didn't go any more than you needed to. Going to Fredericksburg for a pleasure trip was just unheard of about the only pure pleasure trips we took was to our grandparent's home. My mother's parents, in the early days, lived on Rt. 20, beyond what then was Locust Grove, not down at the Wilderness where Locust Grove Post Office is now, but four miles up on Rt. 20. Really they were about 6 miles up. Dad's parents lived in the far southwest comer of the county, night on the Orange County line and when our parents felt they could do so they'd finish up all of the work for the cattle on Sunday morning and pile in the car and you would get in a brief visit. Usually eat lunch with them and shortly thereafter you'd go back in the car and get back home in time to do afternoon chores. One time I particular I remember we got three flat tires on the way going and coming from one of those visits. Nothing unusual to have one on a trip, but this particular one I remember three. None of it was paved, it was all gravel road. The material for the highway came out of the ridges or banks in this area, most of them had stones mixed in with

the clay. And the local people got material from wherever it looked like the best material that they could get and put in the roads in the winter. When the roads got bad in the winter time, the neighbors just built them up.

Bill Dickinson: This area here was a rolling road, a plank road, logs in it. It was a tobacco rolling road in the old days.

Interviewer: What does that mean?

Bill Dickinson: You don't know what a rolling road is?

Interviewer: I read about them but...

Bill Dickinson: You know these round hay bales that you see, well they had a cask about that size in which they put tobacco in and they fastened rods on the end of it and they actually rolled or pulled it with horses and rope. Pulled it down the road instead of putting it on the wagon because you'd get mud and this kind of stuff on it, they actually laid logs down and rolled it on the logs. It was called a rolling road - that was before our time. Now this road out here, Rt. 3, the west end part of Rt. 610, was called Plank Road.

Interviewer: That's a very interesting piece of history.

Mr. Dickinson: Most of Plank Road was actually solid timbers about four inches thick, six to twelve inches wide. Some of those stayed there until long after the Civil War and there was a building in the Chancellor area that was still there built out of the material that was taken up out of the road and built a building out of it. I remember where it was and that disappeared in about 1960-70 somewhere in around that time. Nobody knows exactly when the building disappeared but we think that the tenant family that was living on the farm, tore it down and burnt it for firewood, without having any idea what he was tearing down. Because they didn't have to go to the woods to get their wood for the wood stove.

Interviewer: This is what's amazing to me is that people don't seem to value these wonderful buildings.

Mr. Dickinson: These were folks with no education to speak of. Bill Dickinson: The wood on these buildings is so much better than wood in building today. The lumber in this house has been here for about 160 years and more and still solid wood.

Mr. Dickinson: Most of it was what you built the buildings out of, in particular homes, were built with heart pine, from the virgin pines. There is no sap on it, it is only the heart of the wood and it just stays there. It is full of resin and termites don't eat it.

Bill Dickinson: It's so hard you can't hardly saw it.

Mr. Dickinson: You can hardly drive a nail in it.

Interviewer: It's amazing when you think that people were able to do so much .....

Mr. Dickinson: A lot of logs were floated down the Rappahannock to Fredericksburg. As they would have done out west, many of those that for years floated logs up to comparatively recent years. They would cut big trees up stream and get them to the river or in the river and float them down to the tidewater where it's flat and then you get them back out. There were mills, several mills that were in the Fredericksburg area that were never in to anything else. Even when they started with mechanical saws many of them floated the logs to Fredericksburg because they used water power to turn the saws.

Interviewer: When did they start to develop this farm area over here, when did this all start?

Mr. Dickinson: This all started the year after I-95 was built. It was finished in, actually it was completed in, I think, in the first week in December of 1964, 4 or 5. The reason it had not developed before that time was because there was no water or no sewer. Even at that time as late as 1966, the last water line was about 100 yards cast towards Fredericksburg from Westwood subdivision. Keep in mind that is about a quarter of mile west of Rt. 1. There was no water and no sewer line past that point at all. The lines from there to the Five Mile Fork area were done in '66-'67 under the Spotsylvania Service Authority operation for which I served as chairman for the full 12 years the authority was in operation, and we built this line over here up Rt.3 all the way to Five-Mile Fork area. We later built a little system at Spotsylvania Courthouse area and upgraded the little water system in the Sylvania Heights subdivision. And then the need was there to do other things and the decision was made for the authority to turn over the whole system over to Spotsylvania County and the county took over the operations at that point. Making those lines available made it possible for the development to start.

Interviewer: We are going to jump back a little bit in time because I didn't realize you would go all the way into the sixties. After the school did you stay in the area? You (Bill Dickinson) moved away I gather.

Mr. Dickinson: Bill?

Interviewer: After school when did you leave the area?

Bill Dickinson: I graduated; I actually changed from Chancellor to a high school in Fredericksburg, Fredericksburg High for a year and graduated there. The following year I went to Virginia Tech. After Virginia Tech I was there for one winter. Came back one summer and spent a winter here. Never been back there since. I lived in Houston, Newport News and also San Francisco area of California and moved east of there in 1950. I've lived down there ever since. But I was two when we moved here and the walnut tree sat right out here and I had watermelon when I was three years old right under that walnut tree. We had just moved here. It probably wasn't on your birthday.

Mr. Dickinson: It probably wasn't on your birthday. It had to come later than that.

Bill Dickinson: First train ride from upper end of Spotsylvania County.

Mr. Dickinson: St. Just in Orange County, near our grandparents' home

Bill Dickinson: To somewhere down to Smith Station, then to the Salem Church Road area.

Mr. Dickinson: The train ran up to, I think, 1936.

Bill Dickinson: From the Fredericksburg area to Orange.

Mr. Dickinson: The passenger rate had dropped off before that, they ran one freight a day from Fredericksburg to Orange and return with one passenger car.

Interviewer: Now what did you do after school, you stayed in the area?
Mr. Dickinson: I first went to George Washington University for two years and later went to Virginia Tech. When I left Tech, I came home and stayed on the farm. I was here from '42 on, about the time my brother died.

Interviewer: Is that why you left school?

Mr. Dickinson: It had a major effect on my decision to do so, yes. That was June of '42 after Pearl Harbor. I really came here and stayed through the war. I really don't know how my dad could have kept the dairy operation going with a lack of help. He might have done so without me but it was part of my reason for leaving Tech was I really wasn't happy at it for various reasons.

Bill Dickinson: You didn't know what you wanted to do.

Mr. Dickinson: Well that was part of it. I had started out with the idea that I was going into medicine, went to George Washington University for about a year and a half and found a combination of things, and I had a terrible time during that time frame with bolls and also I just made a decision it was not what I wanted to do.

Bill Dickinson: My father was told when he bought this house that he would never have this farm, that he would never pay for it. He paid too much for it. His brother was living over by the river and the other brother was living up in Chancellor and he had been in some business. But our parents did get the farm paid for, a friend had helped with some of the creditors and Dad kept this thing running all the way through the depression and paid it off in '39,'40, somewhere in there.

Mr. Dickinson: He paid it off in '40.

Bill Dickinson: But he did it, with a tremendous amount of labor and hard work. Instead of farming as the other people were doing he went into the dairy business And started raising Golden Guernsey cattle, which not many people did and he went all over the country to develop stock to ship across the country. One year he came out to visit me to receive some of the cattle that was shipping out not far from where I was.

Mr. Dickinson: Yeah, we sold the Guernsey milk, kept it separate and never had anything else to mix with it. I did, when I was operating it, for a very short time have one Holstein cow in the herd for about 90 days, then I sold her. I had to buy her in order to get what we term "base", at that point, increase my allowed production. I kept the cow for a while until I got a good price for her and sold her. But Dad kept up with the breeder's association. We showed cattle over at the Fredericksburg Fair and in Richmond State Fair and one year we took some animals to the North Carolina State Fair.

Bill Dickinson: I had a State Champion. I got to go to Tech because I won a scholarship. But Dad was well recognized in the business and he kept up with modem things. He and other people were involved in the Virginia Tech Agricultural Extension Service.

Mr. Dickinson: Virginia Polytechnic Institute.

Bill Dickinson: And they worked with them. This farm he turned around and put manure back on the farm and he put lime and fertilizer on the farm. This farm produced crops that no other land around here produced. Right back of the barn back there was 25-foot high corn. I cut it, I know what it was. The stalk was that big and went in the silos there that are no longer there. But no one here could raise that kind of crop, and that's what our father did.

Mr. Dickinson: His first business was the conservation business; he was in that business before many other people. Dad stopped growing row crops such as corn. and wheat on hilly land and grew hay and pasture on the hills instead.

Bill Dickinson: We contoured land out here.

Mr. Dickinson: One of the first families that got involved in it, in the farm conservation process with assistance from the Department of Agriculture. With the planning, I guess they came in around 1935 or 1936 when they were operating the soil conservation camp, which is a part of the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) program. They had one group in Stafford County. They were designated soil conservation camp rather than just Civilian Conservation Camp. They came in and learned to build fences so we took the rolling hills, the steeper hills out of row crop production and made them all hay or pasture land. So that land never got plowed up, it stayed in grass. That's the beginning of this whole process. And he always used more fertilizer than most of the neighbors did and grew a lot more alfalfa than the neighbors did. Where they were trying to grow corn and wheat he was growing alfalfa and better quality hay crops. This all helped to increase the milk production both by improving the breed and by better feeding operations. I stayed here after getting out of college. I did not go in service. I stayed here and helped operate the farm itself until 1958. At that point I bought the cattle and equipment from my parents and rented the farm and took over the operation. For the next several years Dad helped me some, and physically what he did was to take care of the calves, the young cattle. But he did various other things, he liked to rake hay and do certain jobs on the farm operation. And

he'd come out, he might work for two-three hours, he might stay out all day depending on how he felt and what the weather was.

Interviewer: Did he live here?

Mr. Dickinson: Well, yes, in that time frame he did. In 1961 Anne and I were living on the hill behind Sheraton Hills two miles west of here. We bought up there in 1948, after Dad had had a heart attack and after two winters of bad snows, bitter cold weather. Anne and I had gone to Minneapolis for a meeting. One of those conservation director's meetings and the second time two years later I went to another meeting in Louisville. I came back and the snow was getting deep, I had to get the bulldozers to get in and out of our driveway. About two weeks after that Mother said that she and Dad were planning to build a new house but "we don't want to do it unless you and Anne move back into this house." And that's when we came back, that year. They built the house that year. We came back to this house. We've been back here since 1961. We kept the cows until 1968, ten years after having bought them We couldn't grow the herd larger because they just wasn't additional farm land available around us to buy or rent. The growth was beginning to come. The best thing to do was to get rid of the cows. In the meantime I had bought the equipment business in Fredericksburg, and operated it in Fredericksburg in 1961. The same year that we moved back to this house. And after we got rid of the cows, in 1971, we decided to move the equipment business out here. We didn't have enough space to operate it in town as it was growing. The equipment was getting bigger and it wouldn't work well on a small lot. But all this time frame in here, like Bill had said, my parents were very active in community affairs. Somewhat with the church, in early years, more so than they were later. But all kinds of community activities-they were responsible with a couple of other people for getting women's extension program started in Spotsylvania County. My mother did more towards that than anyone else in the county. And Dad was always calling on the extension agent for advice and counsel whenever he had any question or anything, and encouraged others to do the same thing. He was a member of the Guernsey Breeders Association from way back in the early years, 1925 approximately.

Interviewer: What association was that?

Mr. Dickinson: Cattle - Guernsey Cattle Association. He helped to organize the Spotsylvania County Farm Bureau. When it was organized in Spotsylvania County he was the charter member of the Spotsylvania

Ruritan Club, which is a civic organization, a rural civic organization that was started in the late 1930s and now is all over the country. There were any number of other things that happened in the community area. The PTA as we came through school, Mom was always a participant in that, and sometimes Dad. So they were very much involved in county activities and taught us to be the same way. We followed through, the whole family. All of us were participants in whatever went on in the community and that was where I got my involvement in community affairs

Interviewer: Where did you meet your wife, she mentioned to me she was not from around here?

Mr. Dickinson: She was from Michigan, raised in the Detroit area, and was living just outside Detroit when she came to Mary Washington College. And I met her in the fall of her junior year of school but we really did not date at all until April of her senior year and we got married in January of the following year. She finished in '45 and we got married in '46. We hardly got to see each other but for three weekends from the time she left Mary Washington until the time we got married, until the end of January. End of the war, no gasoline, couldn't drive, you had to take the train to go. In the six months after Anne graduated, we had built this barn in which we now operate the equipment business. In fact, we milked the cows in the barn for the first time on the Friday after we got married.

Bill Dickinson: And you tore down what had been a horse barn that had been there from almost the beginning of this farm. There was an addition added on that had timber from the church. ... They were remodeling the Wilderness Baptist Church and they took all these timbers out and they built a new church and so forth. Dad took those timbers and brought them down and added to the barn out here when he built the section out there for the cattle that was added to the old horse barn. And so that's what you all took down when you rebuilt this new barn.

Interviewer: So when you first got married did you live here or did...

Mr. Dickinson: We lived here for about two and a half years and then moved into the house we bought two miles west and named "Upaway." We changed the house a year after we got here. That area was a porch and it was converted, really torn down, and we built it into a kitchen. The porch on the other side was torn down and built into a second kitchen and bathroom and added a bedroom on the far

end. This big room behind me here was the original kitchen, but we ate in this side of it and the kitchen stove was on the far side. And we spent more time in that room than we did anywhere else in the early days. In cool weather, the only heat in the house may have been in that room. Then this room got used probably next most. From the far side of the steps, the parlor. You didn't go in there, unless you had company you didn't go in that room because you had to have an additional fire. An old wood stove. This fireplace was not here, just a wood stove. That wasn't built until 1939 or '40.

Bill Dickinson: Rebuilt

Interviewer: Is this the original chimney?

Mr. Dickinson: Yep

Interviewer: Then you bought a farm, was that the farm you bought on Sheraton Road...

Mr. Dickinson: Where Sheraton Hills proper is and the area behind it, which is now Sheraton Hills South, and there's still another block behind that, that has not been developed, there was 131 acres up there. We sold the front parcel of that off in 1967/68, and that money put our kids through college.

Interviewer: And when did you start Dickinson Equipment?

Mr. Dickinson: 1961.

Interviewer: And what year were you married?

Mr. Dickinson: We married in 1946. I bought an existing business, which was operating at that point down on the old Virginia Central tracks, southwest of Princess Anne Street. The building still belonged to the Virginia Central Railway Company and we only stayed there six months ....and then we moved .... to where the McDonald's is now, on Rt. 1. That triangle where the McDonalds is on right now is where we were for 10 years. Then it got to be too small and we moved it to out here to the farm..

Interviewer: When you first got married did you just run the farm, is that what you were doing, and did your wife work at home on the farm?

Mr. Dickinson: She did some things to help out, however she really has not done a lot of work on the farm. She raised four children largely by herself because I didn't have but so much time to spend and she was responsible for their nurture. Without question, she spent many hours up on the hill with all four kids there and saw me sometimes 30 minutes at breakfast time, sometimes didn't see me at lunch, and then didn't see me again until 7 o'clock at night. Summertime frequently went back and mowed the hay or something after I had supper. It was just a matter of what I had to do to get the job done. But meantime, we participated the same as my folks did in the community activities. I almost can't remember from when we got married when there wasn't reason to go to PTA meetings. From the very first time our oldest child was in first grade all the way through elementary school, until the children all went to high school. I started to go to PTA's at James Monroe High School, when they were talking about doing something about playground equipment and I told them that was exactly the same thing that I had heard at the first PTA meeting I went to at Chancellor, that they had to have some playground equipment. I said if that's the only thing we need then I don't think we need this organization. A month later they disbanded the organization. Anyway, we, I've spent a lot of time over the years in community activities probably more than was good for my family life, in that respect sometimes too much. But I served on the Tri-County Soil and Water Conservation Board as a director, a voluntary job for 33 years. I was on the board of directors for the Guernsey Breeders Association for 10 or more years. The state association, I served as chairman of it. I was chairman of Spotsylvania Service Authority and installed water and sewer projects in the county. I was active in the Spotsylvania Farm Bureau for several years. I did not stay largely active in that after I got into the equipment business. I backed off of that this much but served as secretary for about two, three years. Then after I got into the equipment business I followed through and got into the Virginia Equipment Dealers Association and followed that all the way through. Served as committee chairman of a couple of committees, and worked the way up and was president of that organization in 1976, I believe. I also served as officer and finally chairman of the Fredericksburg Chamber of Commerce. I served six years on the Mary Washington Hospital Board. And as chairman of the building committee when the nine million dollar addition, the last addition to the old hospital was done before they decided to build the new one. And the other big thing that come into my life that I enjoyed as much as anything else was the time I spent, a total of 17 years on the Virginia Diocesan Homes Board, which is the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia Parent Board responsible for putting together the continuing care homes for the

aged. When I went on the board to start with, we had the Goodwin House in Alexandria, which is the main thing that that organization did. The Westminster Canterbury at Richmond had been just built. But then we later oversaw, because it was set up as a separate corporation, but we still had close ties with the home and the one in Winchester and the one in Charlottesville and one in Irvington. And all of this was accomplished in that year period. And also the second house - Goodwin House - in the edge of Fairfax County.

I served as chairman of the building committee or property committee for Blue Ridge Westminster Canterbury at Charlottesville. I made that trip back and forth to Charlottesville at least every ten days and some times at least once a week and sometimes twice for two years while it was under construction. The man who should have done that job, when the contract almost was ready to be let, had a heart attack and died. The chairman of the board called me and said you're the only person on that board with the knowledge and capability to make it happen. Will you do it? I said," I'm not going to tell you now, I may sleep on it and pray on it But I did call him back and tell him I would do the job because I knew it had to happen. It was right. All of these facilities have come through beautifully. That's something I can be proud of.

Interviewer: When you were raising your children here, when you first got married, this area still was not developed, this still was farm land?

Mr. Dickinson: Bragg Road and Green Gate Road, that little subdivision, was done actually in the middle 50's. The plan came out for it I am pretty sure in the early '50s. And a house was built, once in a while, around us. There were actually two houses and a blacksmith shop directly up at the other side of the road. When we grew up there were 14 houses in a circle around us that basically we could see or see the grove of trees that the house was in. You might not be able to see the building because of the leaves. That was it, it stayed that way for years, until after World War II.

Interviewer: About the time you decided to downsize your cattle business, your dairy herds, that was about the time we started to see building coming in?

Mr. Dickinson: Yep, in the '40s and '50s, almost every farm operation of any consequence, from 95 West to Chancellor, was a dairy farm, almost every one of them. One where the Sheraton Hotel is, there was a little farm at Green Gate, that's where the Green Gate Road is, which

that house set back pretty close to where the new WAWA is - but a little bit further back from that but not much. The Masons had the farm right where the mall is, right where the Belk store is. Where the parking lot is now, was their house and barn there. My uncle's farm across the road, which was always a small operation. He never got that very big. The piece of property before you get to Five Mile Fork on the right, and on the left where the cancer center and Chancellor Village there is was not much in between that and Chancellor School, my uncle had the first farm the right beyond Chancellor Elementary School. The Thomas's' were next. Ashley farm was next. Over on 610 Mr. Zekiel owned a little place over there. He really never sold any milk much, he bought and sold cattle more than anything else and butchered some meat over a number of years. Then you get back over on the other road, over on Chancellor Road, over where Hazel Company is doing Salem Fields right now, there were three small dairy farms over at that side. There were more down that road, going around Chancellor Road itself on the opposite side it was all dairy country.

Interviewer: I could spend another two hours here listening to both of you but I think your wife wants you guys to get ready to go to Mineral.