**Charles Beach "Tim" Shepard Oral History Interview, January 16, 2015**
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**Biographical Note and Abstract**

Charles Beach "Tim" Shepard was born July 16, 1942 and grew up at 585 Main Street in South Windsor, the son of Jean E. "Red" Shepard, Jr. and Mary Beach "Bunny" Shepard. Tim Shepard's grandfather, Jean. E. Shepard, Sr., founded the J.E. Shepard Companies, which family members, including Tim, continue to run. He is married to Sue Shepard and resides in South Windsor.

In this interview, Tim Shepard talks about growing up in a tobacco farming family. He recalls time spent working with tobacco as a kid and exploring the town of South Windsor when its population was about 4,000 and there was unlimited land to "discover." He explains how tobacco is planted, raised and harvested, and the differences between broadleaf and shade tobacco. Upon completion of college, Tim moved into the family business, working with his father, Red Shepard. Tim reflects on his career and life, and remembers the beginnings of the NuWay Company and its impact on tobacco growers in the area.

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**Charles Beach "Tim" Shepard**
Oral History Interview
January 16, 2015
Interviewed by Kathy Kerrigan

KERRIGAN: **00:00:08** My name is Kathy Kerrigan, and today is Friday, January 16, 2015. I'm interviewing Tim Shepard. Tim is a native of South Windsor, a long-term resident of the town and a prominent figure in the tobacco business. He's also been a good friend for over thirty years. Tim and I are here today in his office to talk about tobacco farming and processing in South Windsor and the role the crop has played in his life and in the development of the town. So let's start with some basics, Tim. Can you tell me what your full name is?

SHEPARD: Charles Beach Shepard.

KERRIGAN: And when were you born?

SHEPARD: July 16, 1942.

KERRIGAN: And where did you live as a child?

SHEPARD: I lived at 585 Main Street.

KERRIGAN: And where do you live now?

SHEPARD: Just a little bit away, on 45 Newberry.

KERRIGAN: **00:00:59** Okay. So you've lived in town pretty much your whole life.

SHEPARD: I've lived seventy years—seventy years at 585.

KERRIGAN: Tell me one of your earliest memories of the tobacco industry here in town.

SHEPARD: It's hard to isolate it exactly. I guess it'd be working at Marshall Bidwell's field.

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We all worked there. I say we all did—the kids in the neighborhood. We called it Bidwell's Beach. We were sort of the too young to be serious. We were sort of irresponsible. We'd have sucker fights in the fields. We'd do different things that another farmer would probably kill us for, and I was working with Lefty [Bidwell]. How old was that? I don't know. It must have been in ten, eleven, twelve—something like that. So that was the start of it—it was not on our own farm that I can recall, but with Lefty. **00:02:02** In fact, that's where we live now. That's where our house is now.

KERRIGAN: It was a tobacco field?

SHEPARD: Well, that was the Bidwell farm.

KERRIGAN: Oh, okay. Tell me about your dad and his involvement in the tobacco trade.

SHEPARD: I'm going to be surmising. I just talked about this with Sue [Shepard] the other day—that I wish somehow there was—I wish I could have been 40 when he was 40 and still his kid, because he doesn't talk about these things. But I think that he took over the business when his father passed away. He probably was involved in tobacco as a youngster also. But after the war, he came back. Gramps had died, and he took over the business. Jim Ferrell came in with him and at that time they were growing about 550 acres of broadleaf, and I guess that was your life. **00:03:06** You had one other car in the family and a pickup truck, and I can remember it now—Dad going off in his F-100 Ford pickup truck. He bought five for the different farms. Each foreman had a new pickup truck, and he had some kind of a phone in there—early communications. It took up half the truck, I think, but the number was JL-46742. That was the number of the vehicle. But the routine was in the fields all day, and at night Mom says that they used to throw us in the back seat of the car and we'd drive around the farms and look at where they're going to do what next the next day and so forth. It was really pretty quiet, easy times. **00:03:57** Of course, we didn't have the stress. The parents had the stress, so as a kid I don't know. But that was tough. It was a lot of years of growing where you don't know if you're going to have a good crop—a hailstorm comes in, or it's too wet, or it's too dry, or it's whatever. But it pretty much was growing. They were pretty young.

KERRIGAN: So you could make a decent living and raise a family.

SHEPARD: Yeah, you could. Mom will sit down today and talk about how much that house costs. She said, "Our house cost $9,000." And I'll say, "Well, that's fine. Dad was making $3,000, so it was three times his earnings. If somebody goes out and makes a $100,000 today, it costs them a $300,000 house. So it's all relative." But pretty much all of that farming—they had five or six different farms—foremen on the farms. **00:05:01** I can remember in the '50s we still had workhorses—just in that transition time of seeing workhorses pulling some riggings, doing light work—not doing plowing or harrowing. They'd be pulling riggings at harvest or they'd be pulling tobacco sowers, fertilizer sowers, and so forth. But it was at that transition of horses—probably 1951 or something like that.

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KERRIGAN: You know Joe Vibert can remember the teams going down Main Street, and he can remember being able to recognize the teams by the sound that they made. He said Shepards had the most beautiful team. Do you remember what they were?

SHEPARD: Well, they all wore slippers. That's why.

KERRIGAN: Oh…

SHEPARD: I'm just joshing. It's no different than recognizing someone's tractor—his Farmall versus his Farmall but rather the John Deere versus—you knew who had what tractors. **00:06:03** I can hear Kip [Shepard] walk down the hallway here, and I know who it is. And Tango certainly knows who it is, so it's all that kind of stuff. But it was teamsters. When you think about the Teamsters Union, that's where it came from, I believe, were the guys that drove the teamsters. I can remember going up to the boarding house where the family first came to South Windsor in 1911—going up there as a kid and seeing these old codgers. They looked like they'd come out of *National Geographic*. They looked typical of how somebody would look back in the 1900s—and these guys were old so they didn't change much—just sitting there, and those were the teamsters. Those were the guys that drove the horses. I do remember horses in the field when they had riggings of tobacco, and people would just give them a slap on the tail and they'd just walk off and go to the barn—not the horse barn but the barn that you'd put tobacco in. **00:07:04** So that was an interesting time. And then I don't think things changed much, other than the normal ups and downs relative to tobacco. Dad was—I think the other highlight was, which was sort of representative of his personality, but he was one of the keys of the Harvest Festival in Hartford, which the tobacco industry got together. Every town had a Queen and a big celebration. They had a big parade in Hartford with all the floats. People like John Raitt was the head entertainer one year and Ed Sullivan another year. And I can't say exactly. I know Dad was a mover and shaker in it, and I know the last year they did it they lost money. It was amazing. **00:08:01** Many years later in the '60s—fifteen—well, maybe twelve years later—I remember Mom and Dad being pretty happy, and I said, "What's that all about?" And they said, "We just paid off the loan for the Cigar Festival." It was a $35,000 loan or loss, and people had said, "Well, the devil with it. Let them just write it off, and whoever gets stuck gets stuck," and Dad said, "No way." In the big companies that would have been like chicken feed. So Dad paid it off, and it wasn't until the mid '60s before it all got paid off. So that was something that—

KERRIGAN: So Timmy, at that time, can you describe Connecticut's role in the tobacco world?

SHEPARD: **00:08:51** I was told that the classic cigar was Cuban filler, Connecticut broadleaf binder, and a Sumatra wrapper. And so Connecticut—the Connecticut Valley was all broadleaf tobacco until the turn of the early 1900s, and then they duplicated Sumatra—the conditions of Sumatra—by putting the tent cloth up, and that increased the humidity—I guess the temperature, humidity, cloud cover—and suddenly the valley was known also for shade

wrapper, which people think about. They think the valley is known more for the shade wrapper, but those of us that like the broadleaf cigars say no. It was really the character of the broadleaf tobacco that was really interesting.

KERRIGAN: Can you describe for me the difference between shade tobacco and broadleaf tobacco and the sheet tobacco produced here at NuWay?

SHEPARD: **00:10:02** The broadleaf tobacco, I think, was an offshoot of Maryland tobacco. That was grown here from the middle 1800s on and is grown today. It was used for a binder and a wrapper. It's a much heavier tobacco than the shade, but a cigar would have a broadleaf binder and a broadleaf wrapper. Shade came in, and that's strictly for wrappers. It's very fine textured, a very mild aroma to it. The wrapper has a lot to do with the taste of a cigar. If you take the same cigar—same ring gauge, same length, same tobaccos—and you made it with a broadleaf binder and a broadleaf wrapper and then made that same cigar with a shade wrapper, it'd be as different as drinking white wine and red wine.

KERRIGAN: No kidding.

SHEPARD: **00:11:13** And that's just that little amount of wrapper. It's got a lot to do with the side stream and the aroma of the cigar.

KERRIGAN: Can you describe for me the steps involved in growing tobacco? The steps involved in growing—it's pretty labor intensive, isn't it?

SHEPARD: It's labor intensive. I feel a little hypocritical saying this because I was always the boss's son. We never really had the full responsibility. We always did what we were directed, so for me to talk about farming is a little bit—someone could get upset—a real farmer could. But it's sowing the seed in the beds and then when the plants grow up in the seedbeds—

KERRIGAN: **00:12:01** Actually, sterilizing the soil first, right?

SHEPARD: Sterilize the soil first and then—and that's all part of it. You look out there in the early season and you see these big boilers and running steam pipes down through and sterilizing. Then when the plants are up, of course they take the tending—typical farming. But when they're ready to be planted those plants are pulled, put into boxes, and then you take them out to the fields and put them on the setter. You go along and you set those with a setting machine that spaces them and drops some water and furrows up around them and so forth. And then you're doing the hoeing and cultivating throughout the season. And then, as the tobacco's getting up to size near harvest, you'll top it—or butt it, I guess, maybe first then top it—which gets it to thicken out. It stops the vertical growth.

KERRIGAN: **00:13:00** What's the suckering part?

SHEPARD: Suckering—as soon as you top it you'll get suckers growing, and then you have to go in—today you use a chemical spray. You spray chemical right in that joint of the leaf and the stalk. But in the old days you used to have to go in there and try not to bust the tobacco. You'd have to go down through the plant and take these suckers off which could be—there could be five or six per plant, and usually the first thing in the morning the sucker—you'd get ready to cut it and so forth.

KERRIGAN: Did you have a little knife?

SHEPARD: No. They just reached down—

KERRIGAN: Pinched it off. Okay.

SHEPARD: But as skinny as I was, you'd always hear a leaf snap. And yet you look at — some of the gals were not that slender, and yet they seemed to be able to go through there without busting up leaves and so forth. But it wasn't the most fun kind of a job. In fact, if you could get into something—if you could do anything else—if you could gas up the tractors, if you could go hide—whatever—suckering was not the greatest time. **00:14:02** Really, even in the summer, early in the morning it is pretty cold, and you're soaked, you're wet, you're gummy. So that wasn't a great time. And then basically you'll chop the tobacco—go down and hold the top of the plant and just bend it just a hair. Of course, it'll snap and you get a hatchet in and cut the stalk under the leaves, and then there's a certain way you drop it so you don't break the leaves. Then you lay it there and it wilts, and then people come along afterwards spearing and handing, and that's a beginning job for somebody that's handing—little kids—you just—you're bending down, picking up two plants and you—

KERRIGAN: Handing it to the—

SHEPARD: —hold it up in front of the spear—the guys that's going to spear it—and they always say, "Let go of the damned thing. Don't hang onto that plant because I'm going to grab it and pull it on the spear, and if your hand is still on the plant you're going to go into the shed with the lathe." [laughs] **00:15:00** After the spear, then it goes on a rigging and then into the shed. Then it's passed up to the various tiers and hung in the sheds, and then the sheds generally were fired—had heat put in them to get rid of some moisture. Then you take the tobacco down when it's the tobacco damp—when it's—if there's enough moisture in the air the leaves will be just pliable. If you went into the shed in dry weather it'd just crumble if you touched it.

KERRIGAN: So you had to know exactly the right time.

SHEPARD: Yeah. You wait until the damp, take it down—get all the tobacco down—and

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covered, and it will stay moist. And then the rest of the season you're going and they strip the tobacco and take the leaves off the stalks and put those into bundles, and then it comes into the warehouse and gets graded and sorted out.

KERRIGAN: Sorted. Sorting was a pretty big job, wasn't it?

SHEPARD: **00:16:00** Yeah, that was a lot of work. That was—I don't know if it was piece work or if they got paid by the hour, but that—you're sitting there just—it must be like knitting. I always thought that somebody like Stanley Waldron—if you went into Stanley's sorting room, all the old-timers—we often thought, we talked about it. We never did anything about it as far as getting Norman Rockwell to do a picture of it because they were all in their eighties—not that far off [laughs]—but the smells—even today if you go into Frannie Bordua's sorting room and you go in there with the heat on and the humidity and the smell of tobacco—

KERRIGAN: Is Frannie the last guy here to do sorting? He's one of the last people to grow.

SHEPARD: Of the group that I know he's the last here because the big thing now is all your—pretty much you might say that all of your cigar making is offshore. **00:17:05** So when somebody sorted here they would sort into various grades, and within those grades there were a lot of different qualities of tobacco versus sizes and colors and so forth. But it was a very rough grading. Once they went down to the islands they had the labor there to really pick through every leaf.

KERRIGAN: Okay. Islands—do you mean Cuba?

SHEPARD: Well, I say the islands, but really in those days Dominican Republic, Honduras, Nicaragua—they can take within a batch of a grade of tobacco they could probably go in and pick out ten different uses for those leaves. They know exactly—the end manufacturer knows what cigar he's making, what size leaf he needs, and they can sit there and look at each one; whereas up here you're just doing fast grading. **00:18:02** So it was really—right now a lot of people just buy the tobacco and ship it to the islands. I say the islands but—

KERRIGAN: Wow. Your mom told me a story once about you and Kip having a personal experience growing a little tobacco crop. Do you remember that?

SHEPARD: I remember it. I can't think of the age. What sticks in my mind more than anything are probably three things. One is that we were young enough that I remember Kip driving one of the state bounty trucks—state bounty trucks which were loaded with fertilizer—and he wasn't able to see much over the steering wheel. And I can remember if you popped the clutch in this thing—you had so much weight on the back, the front end would go up in the air—and so that says he wasn't old.

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KERRIGAN: He was little.

SHEPARD: **00:19:00** He was little. The other thing I remember is all the adults were trying to help us out with the—adults—Mom and Dad—trying to help us out a little bit with the field. It was three acres right—it was the Lasbury farm, right across from the South Windsor Convalescent Home—right where Ken Goodwin's house is. That was all a three-acre field. We had that three acres and then about an acre down in the meadows right below the hill. So I can remember—Dad may have been driving the tractor, and Mom was going to get on the setter and help us. She had never been on the setter, but this was a family thing. In those days they didn't have Coppertone or anything else, I don't think. Mom always liked mineral oil, so of course she was going to be getting this suntan while she's setting the tobacco. She had her hair done up in a—she used to put like a scarf or something—whatever you call it. It was tied up with a bandanna type of thing. **00:19:59** So she was on the back of the setter and, of course, as you're going along very slow in the heat of the day and the dirt's getting picked up on the wheels and the wind's blowing it off of the wheels, and you're sitting about six inches off the ground, and Mom was so covered with dirt sticking to all her mineral oil—it was something else.

KERRIGAN: With white eyes. [laughter]

SHEPARD: And then the other thing that was occurring—I don't know if Dad was driving or what. He probably was. He was probably making it a family deal. But the rows—as I recall—weren't that straight, so Kip drove and the rows were straight. And that's what I remember about the planting part. I know the next—we used to use cultivators. **00:20:58** We called them wigglers—on the back of a Ford or a Farmall, you had two seats sitting back there with handles in front of each seat. They would move cultivators in and out of the plants. And this tractor's going along very slow, and you bring the wigglers in between the plants, then you open up and let the plant go by and back in.

KERRIGAN: So manually there were people sitting back there controlling it.

SHEPARD: Yeah. It would be a three-man team—one driving and two of us sitting on the backside—and you'd be doing the wigglers. And there was always a challenge as a kid to stay awake. It was pretty monotonous. But we were down in the meadow field, and I remember Andrew Augustus, I think his name was, was driving the Farmall, and Kip and I were on the wigglers. We got into a fight about something, and I said, "Fine. I'm out of here." And he said, "Oh, come on." Blah, blah, blah. Andrew was saying, "Come on, boys. Come on, boys." That sort of stuff—because you need the three people. So I said, "The hell with it. I'm out of here," and I left. So a little bit of a contest going on there, **00:22:05** and a couple of other things I remember that growing was that we had a hailstorm come in, and the plants were very small. They were eight inches tall. And Paul Rutherford, with the George B. Fisher Company, had the insurance on the hail. And they came out and he looked at the field. Maybe there was a hole here and a hole over there—not much damage, but he says, "Well, I think it's about a ten percent loss." And so he gave us a check for the ten percent loss which was—he was Dad's buddy and

every—so maybe Dad gave him the money. I don't know. And then the next part was selling the tobacco. And Barney Rappaport—one of the old buyers of tobacco in the valley—he was a business guy. **00:23:08** He was there to make money. So Dad says, "Okay. When he comes in, no matter what, you've got to ask for 53 cents a pound. But whatever you do, don't take less than 51 cents." So Barney came in [laughs], and he said, "This doesn't look very good. What do you want?" And I said, "We want 53 cents." He said, "I don't know." I'm making this up now, but it was that dialogue about no, it's not that good, and blah, blah, blah, and so forth. So in my brave way I offered up and said, "Well, I don't care what you say about the tobacco. My father said, 'Do not take less than 51 cents.'" So the transaction was done, and Dad said, "What did you get?" I said, "I got 51 cents," and he says, "How'd that happen?" I told him, **00:24:00** and he said, "Oh, God." [laughing]

KERRIGAN: The last time you do any negotiating. [laughter]

SHEPARD: And I think that's all the memories on growing the—so really that was—maybe it was Lefty Bidwell's field. Maybe it was growing some of our own tobacco. We obviously could drive equipment at that time. I always tell people with a Ford, the clutches go down versus being pushed forward like a car or a Farmall or something. So when people say, "When did you start driving a Ford?" I say I think that—you know—when you're heavy enough to stand on the clutch and push it down was when you started driving. And I know we were young because one time up on—where Willow Brook [Golf Course] is—**00:24:58** you had to do it like a—they call it a spring tooth, I believe—before they set tobacco, they'd plow it. They'd harrow it and roughen it, then you'd go through with a spring tooth and really smooth it out, and then the next day they would set. Well, I was up there doing the spring toothing where Willow Brook is. There was one little corner lot that went down into the woods a little bit, and it started getting dark. I remember getting a little nervous being down there, and so I just stopped and said that's enough for today. Well, the next morning they went there to cultivate, and I don't think I ever told my father. Then he said, "Why the hell didn't you finish the damned field?" I didn't want to tell him that I was a little nervous because it was getting dark down around the woods. The other thing I remember about that area is where Topstone [Golf Course] is, if you go from Brookfield on to Griffin Road and take a right like you're going to Topstone, about the first shed on your left, about a hundred feet past that, **00:26:03** I was plowing across the field towards Griffin Road with the Ford, and I fell asleep, and I woke up in the middle of the road with the plow down and I had enough—so I obviously was fairly young. I had enough presence, enough maturity to leave the plow down as I backed out, and then I rode back and forth so if they didn't do some black topping I'm sure I could pick out some ruts in that road from—

KERRIGAN: The marks are still there, right?

SHEPARD: The marks are still there.

KERRIGAN: Tell me about smoking your first cigar. When did that happen?

SHEPARD: You know, again, when we were pretty young. It was—and we just rolled some leaves out in the field and started smoking. **00:27:02** I got pretty damned sick, and so I went home blowing lunch and being sick. In those days Dr. Goddard was the—Goddard lived right across from Louise Evans' driveway, and in those days the doctor came to the house. So Mom called Dr. Goddard, and she was mad. She told Dad, "The kids are too young to be in the field. I think he's got sunstroke."

KERRIGAN: Oh! Because you didn't tell them.

SHEPARD: No.

KERRIGAN: Oh, oh, oh.

SHEPARD: So the doctor—

KERRIGAN: They're too young. I told you, Red. [laughter]

SHEPARD: So the doctor came and we fessed up. Or I fessed up that we were rolling some leaves and smoking cigars. That was—I don't know if you'd call it a cigar, but that was the first encounter. [laughs]

KERRIGAN: Geez. Tell me about your decision to join the family business.

SHEPARD: **00:28:00** You know what? It says something about my personality, but we just didn't think of anything else.

KERRIGAN: It didn't occur to you.

SHEPARD: No. I never even thought—when you think of other people or you think of people that took off— like say Anne [Shepard King] and all the traveling she did back then—we never—it's in that plain vanilla stage. You knew you went to school, and in the summer you worked in tobacco. You went to college—you know—a semester abroad. What the hell is that all about? You went to school and you stayed in school. Then you came home and you worked in tobacco. So it really was never—it never was a question.

KERRIGAN: It was a pretty easy transition. Yeah.

SHEPARD: That says a lot about my personality maybe or whatever. Who knows? But that's—

KERRIGAN: **00:28:58** I'll bet it was true for lots of people then. Tell me about the start of NuWay.

SHEPARD: NuWay started up—let me go back to one thing about going into the business. It probably was easier because my whole life was working in tobacco. It wasn't that say the conflict or the decision—it'd be like one of the family members today that has never driven a tractor—getting out of college and deciding should he go in the family business. Is there a slot for them? It wouldn't cross his mind. Maybe it would. Maybe it wouldn't. But this was just—this was your life. You were in the town. We didn't move around. You were here. I thought about it this morning. **00:30:00** What was so different about growing up in town? And when we grew up in town, it was a few people and a lot of space. If you go to Town Hall and look at the aerial maps and then think about being Bob Starr or Tim Shepard or Peter Bossen and a Donnie Burr—the people around here—you had no restrictions because there wasn't anybody else, relatively speaking. I mean it just was—openly—go raise hell. Go do things. Whatever. Four thousand people—4,500 people in the town of South Windsor, and now it's a total flip. Now the people are as common as the land, and the open space—

KERRIGAN: You have to fight for.

SHEPARD: **00:30:59** Yeah. The open space has shrunk down now. They've just reversed. You've got—the amount of open space today equates to the amount of people before. They've flipped roles and it makes—

KERRIGAN: Yeah. In a lifetime. A single lifetime.

SHEPARD: And in '58, I think it was our first subdivision. So it's really—it's changed. Exactly. What kids do with their time—it's totally different. It's not all their fault either. It just is totally different.

KERRIGAN: They don't go down into the meadows. They go into a dark place and play video games. [laughs]

SHEPARD: It really is just—it's a totally different thing. You could take a tobacco jalopy and drive around. I remember Charlie Jurgelas stopping Bobby Starr and myself one night up on—**00:32:00** we were taking a tobacco jalopy and going up the railroad tracks, and we were just ready to cross Griffin Road, and Charlie Jurgelas drove by—the town cop—and said, "What the hell are you doing up here? Get that goddamned thing home before I call your old man!" We didn't think about that. Today you'd have to go to jail. But anyway, NuWay started up in 1955. We were told by some of our friends in the industry—because the industry is pretty small. Some of the—I'm sure some of the people that we sell to now—I know somebody who we sell to now my grandfather sold to their grandfather. But I can always remember one—Carl Berger. He used to have the Berger farm. They were growers and then buyers. They owned National Cigar Company in Frankfort, Indiana. They were from Cincinnati. **00:32:59** Their farms were—well, the south ones were—the old south ones were the Connecticut Bank of America. The fuel cell was their property. And South Windsor Tobacco Farms was their more recent years' operation. But Carl would always say, "I could have had that business. They came

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to me first." And I said, "Yeah, but you didn't take it." And it was back when American Machine and Foundry and American Tobacco were one company, and as I understand it the government separated them because not only were they a large cigarette manufacturer, but they pretty much had a monopoly—not by design, because that's just the way it was on all the tobacco, the cigar and cigarette making machinery. So the government split them up. So I think that the same evolution—you look at automation. If you make a cigar by hand maybe you make 300 a day. **00:34:02** Then you go to a machine and maybe a long-filler machine—a machine that still takes two people on the machine with a long filler—versus a short filler that could maybe make 4,000 cigars a day. And then a short-filler cigar—and using and getting in homogenized—I'm sort of jumping a little bit there, but the idea was how can we automate in some way and get rid of the labor cost of making these with a machine.

KERRIGAN: So, Tim, who was the person who actually sort of invented this homogenized process—the rolling?

SHEPARD: General Cigar had the first process out. They came out in the early fifties—'51 or '52—something like that—with a process of making homogenized tobacco. Then AMF came out. **00:35:00** They apparently went through the industry saying, "Who can we pioneer with?" Because they're machine people but they weren't in the marketplace. They didn't want to get in and market this new technology, so they went through people, and they finally came to Dad. I think Dad probably realized that growing is a tough way to do it. You don't know what your future is, and I think that he felt like somebody's going to do this. Obviously, he was aware that General Cigar was already doing it, so he jumped in, and he pretty much had some assurances from AMF. In fact, there's a story that his accountant—company accountant, not outside accountants—had been voicing an opinion like, "You're crazy to get into this thing," and blah, blah, blah. And he went with Dad and Shorty [Farrell] down into New York to have a meeting with the heads of AMF. **00:35:59** He heard AMF say, "Red, we'll guarantee you that you will not lose money on this project." So riding home on the train, which is the way they went to New York in those days, I guess, the accountant decided that if Dad needed some money that maybe he could throw some money together, too and get a piece of the action. And I think Shorty says that by the end of the trip he was not the accountant anymore. So it started off in Rockville—the first effort at making homogenized tobacco. AMF had a lot of technical people. They had the guys in the white coats and the PhDs and the chemists and engineers and so forth, and they started up with different technologies for making the sheet, and it was a couple of years before they started to get product off the line. **00:37:02** There was a lot of—of course, Dad was young then, too. That's 1955, so what was he—about 40 years old—38 years old. So a lot of late nights, a lot of hours. Don Driscoll was the plant manager, Charlie Neilson was a key person there, and they had to do battle. The church was right behind them. The early technology was making a sheet—make a film of the gum system and spray tobacco on it. They'd get it to stick to it. And something would go wrong. There'd be a cloud of tobacco in the air, and all of a sudden the church is downwind. So there was always a conflict with the church and the smell of tobacco and all that sort of stuff. But eventually they got it where they were making sheet, and then they eventually moved over to South Windsor and sold that plant off. **00:38:03** So it's a process of

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taking tobacco by-products from the cigar manufacturers—all the tobaccos they use, so it's good tobacco. It's not taking the junk. It's the junk because it can't be used anymore but not because of its original quality. And you grind that into a talcum-powder consistency and mix it up with gums like guar gum, methyl cell gums, and make a slurry out of it, cast it on the belt, run it through dryers, and bring it off in a sheet form. Then that goes back to the cigar manufacturer. So instead of a person spreading a leaf on a dye, now a roll of tobacco rolls across that dye. It's not—I don't prefer to smoke a—**00:39:02** (cell phone interrupts)

KERRIGAN: Timmy, what was the impact on local growers here? Was there any?

SHEPARD: Oh, yeah. Because suddenly now you're not having—you don't need to have a good leaf. You don't need to have sound leaves. So think of—it just—I think that that was responsible, as much as anything, for a change in the agricultural aspect of South Windsor.

KERRIGAN: No kidding.

SHEPARD: It really did. I don't know specifically, but when you think of all the effort that you go through to have a good crop of sound leaves and then you sit down and take homogenized, which is going to grind up the tobacco, **00:40:05** we would never—we'd never buy crop tobacco because that's going to sell—if that sold for—broadleaf tobacco—$6 a pound, say, today—$6 or $7 dollars a pound—we buy our by-products for $.50, and it's just because the manufacturers have done everything they can do with that tobacco, so they have to throw it out. They can't use it anymore. Or we buy it and grind it into a powder. And they don't mind. They can charge anything they want. We're just going to put it in our price to go back to them, so it's a little bit of the market and so forth. But if you—to make a thousand cigars took about eight pounds of broadleaf—finished broadleaf— **00:41:02** and that might equate to fifteen pounds—but may equate to ten pounds of field tobacco. So say it's ten pounds of tobacco. It takes two and a half pounds using homogenized. So you're going from ten dollars a pound—ten pounds per thousand cigars to two and a half pounds to do the same thing. So right there—just take that reduction requirement. Then the fact that we're using by-product. That really knocks the devil out of the growing. But it was going to happen. General Cigar had their process out in '52. It's going to happen like it did happen. It just so happens that Dad did it. **00:41:59** I don't know if that makes any difference if Dad did it or if Bayou Cigars did it or somebody else did it. Somebody was going to do it. And it's been good because—oh, it's relative.

KERRIGAN: Is anybody else doing it now?

SHEPARD: We were the first licensee of AMF. We were—we used to say that AMF were all the technical people in white coats and we were the chicken farmers. So even today, getting something online—somebody can have an idea. Somebody technical can have an idea. It usually turns out that you don't get the bugs out of it until it's on the line and the guys are

playing with it, and they learn how to tweak it and so forth. So we were the chicken farmers that brought it into fruition.

KERRIGAN: Willing to go through that. Yeah.

SHEPARD: And then—so General Cigar had their own process. We were the first licensee for AMF for the right to produce and sell. **00:43:00** The next company that had a right to produce for their own use was Swisher—King Edward Cigars—in Jacksonville. And then Consolidated Cigar Company was a general cigar licensee, and they switched over to AMF's process. They had a license to produce for their own purpose but not to sell. And so we were sort of in a catbird seat. It was—evidently it was regarded as a better product than General's because Consolidated left General and went to AMF. And then somebody like General Cigar or a cigar manufacturer—back in those days cigars—there was no love between manufacturers. They may be friends at a cocktail party, but if somebody—I always remember General Cigar was advertising a certain cigar for twenty-five cents—well, for twenty-six cents—and Consolidated or vice versa was advertising one for twenty-five. **00:44:02** And why pay twenty-six cents when you can buy this for twenty-five? So nobody wanted to buy General Cigar's product knowing that the profit from that indirectly is going to come back and be advertising against them. So I think our success has always been that it's a better product, and I guess that's just a given because there's general processes in Europe, and yet people still don't want to use it. So it's that, plus we were never a competitor to the cigar manufacturers. We were just making sheet.

KERRIGAN: I remember your dad. I first met him when I was twelve years old, I think. And I remember him as being sort of larger than life. He died really suddenly in 1970.

SHEPARD: **00:44:58** In 1971.

KERRIGAN: In 1971. Can you talk a little bit about how his death changed your life and your role in the company?

SHEPARD: I got an immediate promotion. [laughter]

KERRIGAN: The good news.

SHEPARD: [laughing] The good news. That's what bothers me sometimes. I wish I was more aware of a lot of things. But as a kid—you know—you're just a kid. I think about it. We just came back from Maine last night going to see the duck camp that Dad took us to from nine years old on, and trying to recall some of the memories. He was alive but we all were pretty God-darned alive. You know. When you think about it, he died at 53, I think. So when you're 40 years old you're alive and doing things. **00:46:00** He did some awfully big things, so he was larger than life. He was—I think he certainly—not to say he's more spectacular than somebody else, but he certainly ranks among the people that really reached out there. He

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was on the edge all the time of doing things—whether the military or whatever. He really was. When he was Potentate of the Shrine, he chartered the Queen of Bermuda, or whatever the big ship was, and said, "Let's go." And he even brought Catholics, too. It didn't make any difference. So I don't know. The obvious thing was the promotion—the thing that—he had Don Driscoll here and Jim Ferrell, so I can remember the day he died. **00:47:02** I don't feel I—I can't believe I feel all emotional about it. I remember calling Don Driscoll's son and saying Dad died and— (pause) maybe we ought to change the topic. [laughs]

KERRIGAN: I know it's tough.

SHEPARD: It was.

KERRIGAN: Since that time, Timmy, how has your role here in the business changed and grown?

SHEPARD: I think when you start off—I think I was 26 or so and maybe if you're out—I think generally I was pretty protected, being in the family business. You are. It's an easy—

KERRIGAN: **00:48:00** Well, and having good guys around you, too.

SHEPARD: Yeah. And you're semi-protected. But I can remember making some stupid decisions once in a while and whatever else, and then suddenly you get to a year—you get to a certain point where you say, no, this is what I want to do and you say—you suddenly come click with a confidence now. If I was working for somebody else in another company with certain maturing and so forth—

KERRIGAN: When do you reckon that happened? How old do you think you were when that sort of clicked and felt good?

SHEPARD: I think 30 or very early 30s. You're involved but there was a difference between click and not click—when suddenly you didn't go against Shorty and Don by any means **00:49:00** because they were pretty darned good people for us. But there was a little click where you said, okay, no. This is what I want to do, or this is what I want to take responsibility for—so nothing that ever changed the company into a different direction because I walked into a company that was in a primary position in the industry, and you had to maintain that position. So it wasn't like we're going to run in a new direction or anything else. It was merely sort of in-house decision-making on procedures or whatever, or just saying, I want to do this or I think that and so forth. It was a little bit of click, but it wasn't right away. I remember Don Driscoll coming to the house the night Dad died, and he said, "I just want you to know I'll be here for you, and I'll back you any way to the best of my abilities." **00:50:02** He was an unbelievable guy for the company. I think he gave too much to the company. I don't think his own family got as good a shake as the company got.

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KERRIGAN: Yeah. Wow. Where has the tobacco business taken you in the world? It's taken you places.

SHEPARD: Really not that much. [laughs]

KERRIGAN: East Windsor.

SHEPARD: No, because the tobacco industry is very, very small. I think in the days before homogenizing, before automation—when it was growing tobacco and where you had to sell every crop to some place. **00:51:01** Every, every crop, every sale was a new sale. I think things were—when you had—you know. You go back far enough and there were just thousands of cigar manufacturers when I got involved. Maybe if you look at the old warehouse on Main Street—and the board might still be there for shipping and receiving—maybe back when I first got involved maybe we had 50 customers—not that many but 50 or something like that would be the most—and those were in specific areas—hot spots—that were still doing something with cigar manufacturing. It would be like Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and Red Lion, New York. It would be Philadelphia. It would be Jacksonville, Florida. **00:52:01** And it would be Tampa. And then Frankfort, Indiana. But basically that was it. So all of my traveling for business was there. Sure, once in a while I went to Europe for something, but it isn't even worth mentioning. It was really geared to where cigars were being made. The islands weren't really into it. Cuba is off bounds, and Honduras wasn't involved. Dominican and Nicaragua—those places weren't involved, so there really wasn't that much traveling. I can remember the first time Sue and I went to California. I'm on a plane flying over the Rockies saying, "Oh, my God! California!" So I haven't—where did it take me? It didn't take me anywhere. It was just those places, and that was the extent of it. It was like go to California and see unharnessed women hiking up and down the shoreline. **00:53:02** That was like—you know—the kid just got off the farm. [laughs]

KERRIGAN: Looking into the future, what do you think is going to happen to this business?

SHEPARD: Well, I think the company rides with the industry. I think Ray Voorhies has done a fantastic job as far as relationships with companies because one thing that's changed—not that it was easy but there isn't that three-generation contact with manufacturers any more. Now it's people that have come in from other industries. You used to think of them—the first guys that came in—these hired guns that came in—well, they came in from other industries. They're not caught up in all the emotionalism and personalities and give you a second, third, and fifth chance and all that sort of stuff. **00:54:02** These guys are coming in from UTC [United Technologies Corporation] or the blah, blah, blah, and it's boom, boom, boom. And so that's been the biggest hurdle for me—not currently, but that was the same as that time when you suddenly realized, okay, I want to make this decision and I'll take responsibility for it. The next real hit in the industry was the first time we had big customers bringing in outsiders with a whole

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new approach to the point where some of the old timers in the company would apologize. After a meeting they'd just apologize and say, "I'm sorry that so-and-so acted the way he did."

KERRIGAN: You've seen some pretty big changes. Starting with the transition of horse teams to automotive stuff in the fields to—

SHEPARD: **00:55:02** Yeah.

KERRIGAN: A big shift.

SHEPARD: And I don't know what's—we've changed some not so much new—well, NuWay still is doing—as I say, it's going to follow. We don't drive the business. The customer—we give the customers, I think, we've been a great supplier. I don't think there's a customer that's ever been caught short of inventory. We know almost as much—we know, in some cases, more than they do about what they need. You get all the young hot shots and this big effort about just in time inventories, and we can't operate like that. Sometimes I don't know if people are smart enough to handle all these sects. If everything's perfect, we can really make things—I don't want to be that tight on margins or tight on anything, so to us just in time is to have enough inventory here **00:56:03** so that when somebody has screwed up he can call up and say, "I've got a problem. We didn't order. How soon—?"

KERRIGAN: Their issue, not yours. Yeah.

SHEPARD: I can say, "Well, it's out the door this afternoon." And we've done that, and that's what it's—I think that's what helps our position. We've gone from tobacco into the NuFilm—a different company but still the casting technology of making the gum arabic, cake decorations, and so forth, and films. You can—this process, as far as mixing something up and casting it on the belt and drying it—you can do that with anything. We've made—over the years experimented with vinyl for seat covers, wallpaper. **00:56:58** When things were slow—really slow—back in the late '60s, we had guys that'd get out there and mix up some eggs and throw them on the belt and see how they came out dry. So it's whether you can do it competitively with some other industry. I mean right now—we're not at the moment doing it, but I could see some day—if marijuana keeps going the way it is—that we might be involved with something that—for instance, I think medical marijuana—I think we could take—if I was younger I could see taking the NuWay technology, being able to take marijuana in a whole bonded environment, not this plant but this kind of machinery on a small scale—**00:58:00** and being able to take marijuana, have it analyzed as far as what the content is, put it into a sheet—so if you want to have medical marijuana with a specific level of THC or whatever, you could do that. I don't know. People say that they can do marijuana synthetically, and so I don't know what all this deal is about freedom to smoke. If someone needs medical marijuana, why don't they get a pill? But other people will say that there's something in natural marijuana that takes care of their problems on the medical side. But the whole—it could very well be that we're making a legal marijuana sheet here.

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KERRIGAN: Sure.

SHEPARD: It has no—it's no different than if—we're dealing with a legal product here with tobacco, and yet South Windsor wanted to disallow any kind of tobacco use on any town properties. **00:59:05** There's a big—you don't know where the regulatory agency is going. If they're trying to stop flavorings from being in cigars. Well, if somebody smokes a cigar and kills themselves, okay, it happens. Whatever. But you can sit down and say flavors flavor our society. Everything moves on flavors. You've got vodka with forty-eight flavors. It's almost like the politicians get going down a path trodden, and meanwhile society is miles ahead of them. While they're fighting on tobacco—oh, wait a minute. We've got flavored marijuana cookies and vodka with all kinds of flavoring, and you're still over here trying to—so we don't know. If they came along and said that the mass market cigars couldn't have any flavors in them at all—**01:00:01** even though rum-soaked Crooks have been around for a hundred years, and even though Tampa Jewels have always had vanilla in them for a hundred years—what would that do? That would probably do a pretty good crippling of the whole industry.

KERRIGAN: Do you have a favorite story from your work over the years?

SHEPARD: Yeah. Not a favorite but it is [laughs]—NuWay never had a price increase until 1975. We never had a price increase.

KERRIGAN: So from when?

SHEPARD: From when it started to the end. It never had—from 1955 until 1975—never had a price increase. **01:01:03** We always found a way to do it faster, cheaper, more efficient, or something, which was, to me—if you talk about a business that employs people—we have an average employment of 30 years, 35 years. Fifty years is not an unusual thing. If you really never lost a customer other than through consolidations—we're on a—we've made a profit. We're in this la-la land if you've never had a price increase. So most of my—until I came in in '65 full-time, so until '75 I didn't even know how to ask for a price increase. So I can remember going down to Bayou Cigar, and there were two fellows that headed up the company at that time—Bernie Seltzer and Archie Michigan. **01:02:11** Jim Ferrell and I went down and we were looking for a nickel a pound.

KERRIGAN: From what?

SHEPARD: You know, I don't know what the price would have been. I don't know.

KERRIGAN: I'm just trying to figure out what percentage increase.

SHEPARD: Well, it could have been five percent. Don't forget the oil embargo. We used the equivalent of a tank truck a day of oil here.

KERRIGAN: Wow!

SHEPARD: So they were talking about—we burn about 6,000 gallons of oil a day, so when you go from 11 cents up to 70 cents—this is not by choice. It's like that's what happened. So we went in and I can remember Shorty and these fellas were—one was an old tobacco buyer, like Barney Rappaport, **01:03:04** so he knew how to wheel and deal. And the other guy was just like the—business was business. So we got in there and Shorty and I mentioned the nickel. What are you? Nuts? You can't—yelling back and forth and we were arguing back and forth and they said—I may have said to Shorty, "Well, let's go talk about it for a minute." And we'd go out of the room and then come back in and we'd talk. Then they would leave and go out and come back and so forth. So we finally settled on four cents. So I was saying, "God damn it. All we do for these guys—and we talk about these circumstances and we've got to go through this kind of stuff?" So we're driving back to the airport with a—I don't know if he was Cuban. **01:04:01** It probably was a Cuban that—Mardonio Santiago. So I said, "Mardonio, we've never had a price increase. Just a nickel. A goddamned nickel. What is the big deal?" He says, "Tim, you have to ask for more because they're always going to want to cut you down." This is their man. Their driver who's—so we came down the next year and we went through and said we were going to have to have a 7 cent increase. Oh! They were out of the room arguing. We went out of the room talking it over. Back and forth and everything else and they beat us up and all we got was a nickel. So I remember driving back to the airport. **01:05:00** I said, "Mardonio, all I wanted was the nickel." [laughs]

KERRIGAN: And your dad was looking down and saying, "Yes! He finally got it."

SHEPARD: [laughing] Mardonio says, "I told you so. You've got to give them something!" [laughing] I think about that more than—I probably could think about some other ones, but I think of that more times than—that was really something.

KERRIGAN: That's a great story. That's all I've got. Do you have anything you want to add or any direction you want to go in?

SHEPARD: What's that going to look like on paper?

KERRIGAN: You know what—

SHEPARD: When I think the things—just the way of life was back then when it was more land than people. **01:06:00** I can remember down in the garden in back of 585 [Main Street]. We had a Studebaker pickup truck there that Bill Wilson—he used to drive for my grandfather, then worked in the warehouse—used to drive that when we decided to trade it in or whatever. That was sitting down there. And I remember asking Mom, "I want to be able to drive this thing. How do you drive it?" And I know I was young enough that Mom—and all it was was—it was a shifting lever on the column—so just lift it up and up was reverse, down was first,

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second, and third. But I was either too stupid or too young to handle that, so I had her put a diagram for me. And I can remember getting in the truck with the diagram alongside me and just heading out over the field. And then I can remember the other thing we used to do **01:06:59** with the tobacco jalopies is at the end of the day many times we would drop the riggings off, and then we would go down to the meadows racing around. Most of the older kids—Howard Jorgensen and I'm sure Kip and whoever else—and I'd always—I could never keep up with the guys because I'd always forget to take it out of first gear. [laughter] But to think that every time I see the kids going down the meadows with their dirt bikes and I think I'm sorry. Right now—back then we only had a few screwballs. Now there are too many screwballs.

KERRIGAN: It's dangerous. Yeah.

SHEPARD: But we used to go down with those jalopies and there used to be fields that we weren't growing that had this Japanese bamboo—tall stuff—big weeds. I don't know what kind of weeds they were but they were—they'd be like ten feet tall. And we'd be running through that field with these jalopies, and you didn't know where the other guy was. **01:08:03** You had to just look at weeds coming down. [laughs] And it was—that's just what we did. I'm sure that other more sensible families—that wasn't done.

KERRIGAN: You lived in a giant playground.

SHEPARD: That's exactly what it was. A giant playground and people just can't comprehend it. I guess you'd have to go—I've often wondered how you could recreate that and maybe you have to go back to—maybe you've got to go further up north or down south to some little town that's 4,000 people and a bunch of land and a little sleepy and a little whatever just to—

KERRIGAN: Or New Zealand, that still has that ratio of land to people to sheep to—oh, gosh.

SHEPARD: **01:09:01** Yeah, it was fantastic. It really was.

KERRIGAN: Magical. Yeah. Well, thank you so much, Tim.

**01:09:11** (end of audio)

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