LESTER SWANEY

Amthor: This is a portion of the Oral Histories of Northwest Missouri of the 1940s program. The Nodaway County Historic Society is sponsoring this program in partnership with the Missouri Humanities Council and with support from the National Endowment of the Humanities. Today's date is October 21, 2008, and this interview is being conducted at the Nodaway County Museum located in Maryville, Missouri. The interviewer is Joni Amthor and assisting are Margaret Kelley and Tom Carneal. The interviewee is Lester Swaney, and he was born March 20, 1915. He lived during the 1940s and this interview is his story of life during this time period, including World War II. First of all, we're going to start with some background: where were you born, and when?

Swaney: I was born on a farm and the mail route was Hopkins, Missouri, in 1915, March the 20th. And we lived on a farm out in the country. I guess I was born at home the best I have been told.

Amthor: Tell us about your parents. What were their occupations and whether you had any brothers or sisters?

Swaney: My father was a farmer, and there were eight children in the family. There were five girls and three boys. There are three girls and myself still alive. The rest of them have expired.

Amthor: And what number were you in the family?

Swaney: I was number two.

Amthor: Tell us about your life in 1940, and before you entered the military, some of your concerns and joys.

Swaney: Well, I lived in Lincoln, Nebraska, moved out there in the late 30s, and had the Nebraska state fairgrounds leased. I went to Lincoln with the idea of going to college and becoming a veterinarian. I enrolled in the University of Nebraska early in the spring and paid half of my tuition. I thought I would train horses before and after school in order to pay my way though university because I had no money. But by the time September came and school started, this was in the Depression. I was making money. I had all the horses I could train. So then I decided I could always go back to school. So I never went on to school. So I trained horses there. And then while I was living there, I got married in 1939.

I was fortunate enough to come out with a young horse at that time with the name of Oak Hill Chief, who was three times the world champion. And of course, I was just a farm boy that nobody knew anything about, until I happened to get this horse. This horse made me; I don't think I made him. He got me recognized nationally. I got married in 1939, and so long about that time Mr. F. M. Townsend, he had a farm west of Maryville, Faustiana Farms. I was with Mr. Tapp down south of Maryville. When Mr. Townsend purchased Faustiana Farms, he hired Mr. Tapp as manager and wanted me to go along. But I didn't want to do that. I thought it was time I went out on my own, so that's why I went to Lincoln, Nebraska. Well, Mr. Tapp went out to Faustiana, but when we were together he was an elderly man and I was young. I was doing most all the training and he was doing all the showing of the better horses. So he went out to Faustiana and he couldn't make it out there on his own because he was just too old. And so he went back down to Pastime Stables and opened it again.

Then at that time Mr. Townsend began to send his good horses to Lincoln to me for training. I was at the American Royal Showing, I believe in 1940, and I had this good horse, Oak Hill Chief, and I was,

well, I was beating everybody, and I surely wanted to sell him because he was too expensive for a poor man to keep, but one seemed to want to buy him. Long about Wednesday or Thursday, Mr. and Mrs. Townsend came down to the Royal and had not more than got there and he said, “To what kind of horse do you got there?” “Well,” I said, “I got a pretty good one.” “Well,” he said, “As soon as I got here several people came to me and wanted to know if I wanted to sell him.” You see, the rich people didn't think a poor boy could have that good of a horse.

Immediately I began to get bids on this horse and so I sold him for a lot of money, but you see before that I had leased out a stable for five years in Lincoln, and Mr. Townsend and I made a deal where we're going to a limited partnership, as soon as I could get through my lease. About that time I was fortunate enough that a man came along and I had one year left on my lease, and he and his parents came to buy me out if I would sign a contract not to go back in business in the state of Nebraska. And so then I sold the horse and Kansas City and then I really moved here [Maryville] and take over Faustiana in 1940. Then we had a lot of brood mares and raised a lot of colts. We were a breeding farm and we actually raised them. And then we could start training more colts and that was the operation we had at Faustiana. And we showed and raced horses from coast to coast.

Then I don't remember what year that this was. But we were down in Mississippi, Mr. and Mrs. Townsend and I and Mr. Morgan, who was a very rich man. He wanted me to go over to O'Brien, Mississippi, one morning because he had a mare over there that he had purchased. He couldn't get the mare to canter. So he wanted me to go over with him to see this mare and tell the boys how to teach her to canter. So we went over and I looked at the mare and this colored boy put a bridle on her and rode her bareback up the road. I said, “How's this mare bred?” Mr. Morgan said, “I don't know, I just bought her down at the auction.” “Well,” this colored boy said, “when I went to get her, Mr. Morgan, they gave me some papers.” So he went to his house and got the papers and brought them down. Well, this mare happened to be a Standard bred race mare and I looked at her and said, “Mr. Morgan, she's not bred to canter, she's bred to race.” I said, “She's a Standard bred race hose.” So he told the colored boy, “Take her back down to the auction and sell her.” I said, “Mr. Morgan, don't do that. I'll buy her.” And he said, “You would like to have her, I'll just give her to you.” And I said, “No, we're going to buy her.” So I don't remember – I gave him a dollar or five dollars for the mare. Well, the mare happened to be sired by a horse named Volomite, which was the best standard bred sire in America. And his service fee at that time was $5,000. So we brought the mare home and they couldn't get the mare in foal, that's why she had sold for nothing. Well, I did some work on her and got the mare to breeding and one of her colts – in 1954 Rare Vintage I started 30 times and I think he was 23 or 23 times first. As a result we started racing Standard breds.

Then I bought a mare as I was coming back from Madison Square Garden. My wife and I, we stopped at Kinsim, Ohio. I had a tire that was leaking a little air and I had on this trailer that had tandem wheels on it. And so to make a long story short, this young fellow was telling me he had a friend that had horses and all that. And this friend just happened to come by so nothing would do him but we went out and looked at his horses while they fixed the tire. And he had a lot of Standard bred mare and he wanted to sell them, so a horseman had a habit of being well read on breeding. So he told me about each mare that came by and I paid attention to him. So finally they brought a mare by and she was buck-kneed, and that means that she couldn't stand on her foot legs, they would shake back and forth. And she was 19 years old. And so the next horse by, I asked him the price of. So finally we got around and this buck-kneed mare came by again and I asked him the price again. And he said, “I told you about her before.” and I said, “How's she bread?” He told me, “I told you about her before.” I said, “I don't remember.” So I don't know how he came up with this price, but he wanted 1300 dollars for her. So we went back down to where the filing station was and he owned the motel there and he wanted my

wife and I to spend the evening and have a meal with him and his wife, so we could talk horse. I said, “Well, we'll do that,” but by this time it is around four o'clock. And I said, “We'll do that but we got to eat early because I want to get a good night's sleep.” And so we got in the motel room and my wife put her hands on her hips and said, “Which one?” I said, “What do you mean?” She said, “You may be fooling that old man but you aren't fooling me any. You're going to buy a horse.” I said, “Well, yeah, but do you want to put me in the asylum now or wait until later?” She said, “What do you mean?” I said, “Do you remember that mare that could hardly stand up?” And she said, “Yes.” I said, “That's her.” “Well,” she said, “how are we ever going to get her home?” She was in foal with a horse called MudPuddle, and he was the son of the world's fastest pacer. Well, we got some stuff and tied her to the side of the trailer, and we got her home. Well, the colt she had in her was the horse we call McPhergus. In1958 we started him 29 times and 25 times first and 4 times second and won more races than any horse in America. And that is how Faustiana and I got into the race horse business.

Amthor: Well, how did you get into the military?

Swaney: Well, I got a letter from Uncle Sam that said that I was honored to report to duty. And that's how I got into the military.

Amthor: Do you have any other family members that participated in the war at the same time?

Swaney: Not at the same time. I had a brother that went later in the Korean War.

Amthor: Okay, we're going to discuss some propaganda during that time period. What did you know about the war in Europe or in China?

Swaney: Before I went into the service? Well, you know the propaganda was that maybe we were led into the war on purpose, on account of the sinking of the ships. That was the propaganda for those at that war.

Amthor: How did the U.S. portray the war and the Japanese?

Swaney: Well, it was portrayed that entering the war, in order to get into war you have to portray fear tactics. And I think that was true then and true now.

Amthor: Were you aware of the propaganda here and abroad?

Swaney: No, not as much as you might think. Local papers didn't carry much of it.

Amthor: How did you learn about the attack on Pearl Harbor?
Swaney: I was traveling with my wife and her father and mother and I don't remember where we had been. But we were in the car and didn't have a car radio and when we got home we heard it over the radio.

Amthor: How did you learn about the progress of the war?

Swaney: Well, by radio and newspaper mostly.

Amthor: Now we're going to talk about your service while you were over there. Were you drafted or enlisted in the service?

Swaney: I was drafted.

Amthor: Tell us about your basic training.

Swaney: Well, I have an unusual story about basic training. I went into Leavenworth and I was sent to Francis E. Warren, at Cheyenne, Wyoming, and we got into Francis Warren, Wyoming about 10 in the morning. You had two story barracks and we were put in these barracks and we were instructed to put on our class A uniforms and stand at the end of your footlocker and the commander would be around for full inspection. So when the commander came up you were supposed to give your name, rank, and serial number. So company commander and the barracks sergeant and the first sergeant came up in front of my foot locker and the first sergeant said, "Name, rank and serial number." And I said, "Les Swaney, 37520281." Well, my first name was William, and that was my name in the Army. Well,, I got a pretty good chewing out because that was not my name. And so then the commander went behind me and tore up my bunk and wanted to know if it was the best I could make a bunk. So I turned around; I was supposed to be at attention, and I said, "Huh? What did you say?" Boy, I mean, I got ate up again.

And so then, once the formulation was over, the barracks sergeant and the first sergeant came and he said, "That soldier doesn't even know his name. The company commander wants to see you." So I go over to the door and they said he was in there waiting for you. So I opened the door and went in, and I started to salute the company commander. And he said, "I'll break your arm." He said, "Did you tell anybody anything?" I said, ""Nothing." He said, "When you turned around and acted like a dummy," he said, "I thought I would burst out laughing." Well, you see, this young fellow, he cut leads and worked on the track and did things like that in Lincoln, Nebraska. He was my company commander. And so then he said, "You don't have to do all bivouac stuff, not in the shape you're in." So he took me over to the ordinance room and he introduced me to Sergeant Darren and told the Sergeant our connection but if I had left the company earlier, I was supposed to tell the Sergeant.

Well, so one day I went up to town after that and I had to fall out close order drill that was every morning. So I went up town one day shortly after that, and I was in the dime store and some lady came up behind me and put her hands over my eyes. And I felt and said, "Pardon me, ma'am, you made a big mistake," so I took her hands off and turned around and she was a wife of an attorney in Lincoln who had been a customer of mine who bought the Cheyenne Abstract and Title Company and she asked me what I was doing out there. And I said, "Well, I'm in the Army." And she said, "You don't have to eat that Army food." And I told her, I had Hennessey as my company commander." And she said, "The kid who used to clean stalls and stuff?" And I said, "Yup." She looked a lot younger than she really was, so she would come out at certain times, five or six o'clock in the evening and she would drive up to the barracks. I would go out and get into the car and we would go over to the officers quarters and pick up Hennessey and we would go out to the ranch and we went out there about every weekend, so finally when it came time for the unit to finish our basic training. The commander called me over and said, "You want to stay here a cadre?" And I said, "No," "Well," he said, "There's a group being shipped out to San Antonio, Texas," he said, "They're going there for ordinance school and you have to have a certain IQ." and he said he could get me in if I wanted to go. I said, "You know what's best." So then they picked me up and got my orders, and the first Sergeant's name was Zenner. Sergeant Zenner and the barracks sergeant put me in the jeep and all my belongings to take me down to the depot. This old first sergeant said, "Who are you?" I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "You're no ordinary soldier." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "You're not on duty roster, you don't fall out for any drills, and" he said, "That rich attorney's wife comes down here to pick you up." I said, "Well, the company commander knows who I am and he'll have to tell you." That was my introduction into the Army.

Amthor: Did you specialize in any kind of training?

Swaney: Yes, I went to normal ordinates depot and learned to be an automobile mechanic.

Amthor: How did you adapt to military life? Like your duties, your physical regimen, barracks, food.

Swaney: That didn't bother me much. When you get up every morning and look in the mirror and you say this is the first day of the rest of my life; make the best of it. That's what you have to do when you enter the military.

Amthor: Well, now we're going to talk about war time service. Where did you serve? And tell up about the places and your duties in these places.

Swaney: Well, I left San Antonio, Texas, and there was about - I don't remember how many of us. But we were waiting for shipping orders and so I think there were about 30 of us. And we were going to Shenango, Pennsylvania. But we were waiting for shipping orders and so I talked to the company commander since I was going to be in charge. I talked the company commander into clearing us on the morning roll call and let us come home because we never had the legal furlough. So he cleared us on the morning roll call and we all went home. Then we met at Fort Pit Hotel in Pittsburg, PA. I knew the manager, and we all met there then we went to Shenango, PA, which is up on the Ohio/Pennsylvania border. We stayed there until we shipped out. We knew we were going home, so I said I had been the luckiest in playing cards and I had sent my wife a pretty good amount of money. We got on a train, but we weren't going to Pittsburg, PA, but Petersburg, CA. Clear across the United States. By the time we got to Petersburg, CA, my luck had turned bad on cards and they had picked me like chickens. And so we got into Petersburg replacement depot; and we got there early one morning and soon I got around to a telegraph office and I telegraphed my wife to send me some money. So of course she got the telegram. About midnight that night they aroused us. I went down to the ocean to Camp Anza, and you couldn't get a breath of fresh air out of it. So my wife sent the money but it came back to her. Then we shipped out from Camp Anza. We were 58 days on the water. We went over on a ship that had ten thousand soldiers on it, and 1,100 Navy personnel. It was a captured Italian luxury liner called U.S.S. Hermitage. And so we went back and forth because we were unescorted. We crossed the equator twice and when you cross the equator you have a big ceremony. And you join the order of Neptune and become a Shellback. Then we landed in Bombay, India. And so we went from Bombay, India, to New Deli, India. And there was less than 500 of us that formed the headquarters of the Southeast Asia command. See, when I went into the military I was a quarter master, and when I graduated at San Antonio, I was in ordinances. And on the road over there they needed infantrymen, so when I got over there I was in the infantry. See, this is under British command. And we were under British command and so you see, we were known as Headquarters and Headquarters Company of the Southeast Asia Command. We were not a regiment or nothing else. We were called technically unattached and unassigned - very loose word they use. Then they built the Burma Road, and then you see, we went from there down to an island off the southern coast of India, which is called Sri Lanka now, at that time it was called Ceylon. Then about the time the war ended, another fellow and I were the first - we flew into - we cont declared essential. About twenty-seven of us got declared essential and they flew us into Singapore, Malaysia. We were in Singapore, I don't remember how long, probably four or five months, and then we flew from there, at that time, to Vietnam, which as called French Indo-China, so we flew into French Indo-China and then from there we went into Bangkok, Siam. Very few people know this, but Siam was one of the countries, along with Germany and Japan, that declared war on the United States. So we flew into Bangkok, then we flew into Calcutta, India. And landed at DumDum airport

and then caught a ship back to the west coast.

Amthor: Was there any combat duty or missions that you witnessed or participated in?

Swaney: We had missions.

Amthor: How did you handle emotion in combat when witnessing casualties and destruction?

Swaney: Well, you did.

Amthor: Did you form friendships and camaraderie while you were in service? If so, tell us about them.

Swaney: Yes, I had a boy by the name of Kenneth Lewis and he and I are - he's still alive, and we see each other once or twice a year yet. What we did in our group, before we came home, we got one of the sergeants to get the home addresses of everyone - we were a small group - he got the home addresses of all the people who was still alive in our outfit. Since I was traveling all over the United States racing and showing horses, I saw a lot of my buddies after the war was over; yes, I would say as many as fifty of them, maybe, at different times. But this boy, Lewis and I, we became real good friends; real good friends today.

Amthor: How did you stay in touch with your family while you were away, and how did they communicate back to you?

Swaney: Well, we had an unusual situation. We were going over and we got into a little trouble, and we had to stop on an island called Bora Bora [Clipperton Island, South Pacific Ocean]. And you will hear this on television once in a while that some people consider this to be the most beautiful place on earth. So, anyway, it is a member of the Society Island Group; so I wrote my wife a letter and I told her, "I got so confused, I can't even remember the title of what your job is." Well, our letters were all censored, of course. Soon as they got that letter, she and her father and mother knew I was trying to tell them something. They eventually figured it out that I was in the Society Islands. We got into India, and we shipped into New Deli for a while; we camped on a racetrack. There was a woman from Pickering, by the name of Della McGuire that most everybody knew. So I wrote my wife a letter and I said I am glad to hear that Mrs. McGuire got her new dress; I'm sure glad she likes it. So her and her father and mother took them a long time but they figured it out - new dress and her name was Della, so they figured out where I was at. Several of the family, wives or girlfriends would write Leola and ask her where I was, because they knew she had figured it out.

Amthor: What entertainment did you have in the service? Like the USO, the Red Cross, movies, radios, what?

Swaney: Well, we had some USO, and we had the Red Cross, but see, we didn't have a whole lot, because there weren't many of us. We had some USO, but it wasn't too many - not like the other services had. And then, another thing that was unusual, I wasn't a smoker, but see, the Red Cross gave cigarettes to the boys, and lot of people don't like the Red Cross on account of this, but they don't understand that, but you see, the British charged - the United States Red Cross is a national - worldwide organization. The British were charging their soldiers for the cigarettes, and we were the United States and giving them away. Well, they stopped that. And so, the Red Cross, in our theatre, had to charge for the cigarettes. You see, the British, if you were a corporal in the British Army, they only people you

associated with was corporals. If you were a lance sergeant, you associated with the lance sergeants. If you were a non-commissioned officer in the United States Army, you were welcomed in the British officer's club with open arms, while their own non-commissioned officers were not. But you see, we had a lot of rank. I wouldn't venture to say we had four or five generals. And then Lord Lewis Mountbatten would come down and sit down. After we got over there, rank didn't mean anything. You see, we were all just one big group. General Joe Stillwell, you see - I think this is a fact; this is the way we got it. Joe Stillwell was our American commander; we called him Vinegar Joe. Chiang-Kai-shek was taking all our tanks and stuff that we were giving them during the war, and he was hiding it, getting ready for the revolution that he knew was coming once the war was over. General Stillwell propositioned Washington to let the Chinese government to hold a free election during the war. Washington would not do it. So he told them if they would not do it, to relieve him of his command. This they did. This is the story we got; I think that you will find that this is correct. And us, who were there, often wondered if China would have gone Communist if Washington would have had that election at that time. Nobody will ever know.

Amthor: I don't think that I've asked you this before, but what was the branch of the service that you entered, and what was your rank?

Swaney: I was a staff sergeant, and as I've said, I was in three different branches.

Amthor: Did you ever listen to Axis Sally or Tokyo Rose?

Swaney: No.

Amthor: What did you do for recreation or leisure time while you were there?

Swaney: Well, we'd set up a basketball court or make ourselves a baseball diamond, or something like that. But there wasn't a lot of recreation, no.

Amthor: Well, this is our last section; it is what happened after the war was ended, and you were coming home. What about D-Day? And how did you feel about the dropping of the atomic bomb?

Swaney: Well, you see, they had the ships in the harbor, and they were getting ready for an invasion, we guess, of Japan. Many, many ships; we were on an island in the Indian Ocean, many, many ships out in the harbor with soldiers on them. Now, we were lucky that we had not had to go aboard ship, you see, we were only five or six degrees off the Equator. I guess, on those ships, it was horrible. But we had not gone aboard ship yet, and then we had an assembly the night before the atomic bomb was dropped, and apparently they knew that the bomb was going to be dropped - the commanders did - from what they said at the assembly that night, you understand. So then, you see, they dropped the bomb, the first bomb the next day, and that's how we heard about the bomb being dropped. I still don't know how you felt about it; we didn't know what it meant; we didn't know the destruction of the bomb until later; to us it was just - they bombed Tokyo or they bombed Japan. We didn't know what in atomic bomb was, at that time, no.

Amthor: Do you think President Truman should have ordered the bomb to be dropped?

Swaney: I am not qualified to answer that question.

Amthor: Where and what were you doing when you got the news that the war was over?

Swaney: Before the surrender was signed, there were two of us that went into Singapore, and so we - Walter Stevens and I - were in Singapore when it was signed, but we knew it was going to be signed, but we were in Singapore when it was signed.

Amthor: How did you get home?

Swaney: Came home - I think they called them a Liberty Ship. Going over on that large ship that we went over on, as I said, we were unescorted, we got in some awfully rough seas, and this sick, sick, sick - the seasick people you couldn't believe. I didn't ever get seasick going over, but of course, guess my physical condition wasn't as good; I got seasick coming back. You've never been sick until you've been seasick. I tell you, you want to die, and are afraid you are going to make it. We came back on this Liberty Ship, yes.

Amthor: Were you given a reception from family, and the community, and how did the people treat you when you came home?

Swaney: Well, no, there wasn't any reception; you just came home. My wife and her mother came to pick me up. No big deal. You see, we were declared essential. We had to go into Singapore. We never got home until the next spring. So you see, what they did in our theatre was you had to have so many points in the Army; I think it was eighty-four, eighty-five, and I had a hundred and thirty-some. What they did was they declared people essential and sent them to Singapore. If they needed a mechanic, they took the mechanic with the highest rank. So that's the way you get declared essential in our outfit. So by the time I came home, you understand, the war had been over quite a while.

Amthor: How did you adjust back to your civilian life?

Swaney: Oh, I just started riding horses, that was it!

Amthor: Have you ever contacted or stayed in touch with people you served with?

Swaney: Yes.

Amthor: You mentioned that earlier. Did you ever join the American Legion or the VFW? Are you proud to be a Veteran of World War II?

Swaney: I joined the Veterans of Foreign Wars while I was still overseas, and I am a lifetime member.

Amthor: Are you proud to be a veteran?

Swaney: I think anybody who served in those days were proud to be, yes.

Amthor: After the war were you concerned about the Soviet's spread of communism?

Swaney: Well, after the war was over and communism began to spread, you wondered if it was worth it, yes. Because I don't think anybody ever won a war.

Amthor: Did you ever take advantage of the GI Bill for education, housing loans, homesteading, or home mortgage loans when you returned?

Swaney: Not one dime.

Amthor: What are the differences do you think from the wars now and World War II?

Swaney: Well, in World War II we had the public and the citizens of America behind us. The wars we've had since then soldiers haven't had the public behind them, I don't think.

Amthor: Well, I think those are the only questions that I have for you right now, but I think Mr. Carneal had some questions for you. How much time do we have on our -

Kelley: You've only talked for forty-seven and one-half minutes.

Amthor: Well, okay.

Kelley: Very good.

Amthor: Mr. Carneal, would you have any questions for him?

Carneal: I do have one question for you, Lester. I know you stayed involved with the breeding of the horses at Faustiana, even when you were in service.

Swaney: That's right.

Carneal: Most of this just by mail?

Swaney: Yes.

Carneal: All by memory - which horses were where?
Swaney: Well, you see, I more or less managed it b mail. I would write and tell them what names to breed to what stallions, and then when I came home, the pastures were full of young horses.

Carneal: That was marvelous!

Swaney: Yes, well. . .

Carneal: Were you pleased when you came home and saw the pastures full of breeding that you had planned?

Swaney: Well, yes, you were, but it was a difficult, difficult situation because you had more horses running in the pastures than you could train, so you had to do a lot of quick weeding out and you made some good mistakes.

Carneal: But at least you had some to pick from.

Swaney: Yes, but there's nobody in the world smart enough to go out there with a pasture full of colts and tell which ones would take training and which ones wouldn't. What I would do, I would give a young colt ninety days and if he didn't come up to my expectations, we would sell him. In thirty years at Faustiana, I only sold one horse at auction that we raised. We had enough customers coming to the

farm, you see, the most brood mares we ever had was about forty, and we had enough customers coming to the farm to buy these colts, they would buy them on reputation of the horses we were showing and had sold, and that was doing well. They bought these colts on the breeding reputation of those, you understand.

Carneal: Yes.

Swaney: But I kept a lot I should have sold, and sold a lot I should have kept.

Carneal: There weren't many operations that were that large, with American Saddlebreds?

Swaney: No, and we weren't that large; for too very long, you see, the Boyt Harness Company, they had a bunch or Saddlebred horses, and they decided to go into Arabians, and so they asked me to help tem sell them, you understand, so instead of helping them sell them, we just bought them. That's how we got so big, right there at one time.

Carneal: So Faustiana Farms was really very good for the businesses of Maryville - all these people coming to buy horses, and staying and being here?

Swaney: Oh, yes. Mr. J. C. Penney sold him several horses. In fact, when we got ready to get out of the Percheron business, I sold him all the Percheron mares. He had a farm back in New York and they were going to raise hunters and jumpers and in order to raise good hunters and jumpers, you crossed a Percheron mare with what they called a remount stallion. A remount stallion was a Thoroughbred stallion and that's the breeding you got a good jumper and hunter form. So, he happened to be back here, and I was ready to get rid of the Percherons, and so I sold the tail end of the Percheron brood mares to him for that purpose.

Carneal: I'll be darned. I never knew that. That was the end of the Percherons.

Swaney: Yes, well, I kept a Percheron team to chore with, but outside of that, yes. We had a mare named Faustiana Gardenia, and she was the best, so I advertised her for sale and all I could get was 2750 dollars for her, so I - that's why we decided to go out of it, but the Percheron market went to pot four or five years after that; well, people thought that we were smart. Well, we weren't smart at all, because I could get a couple thousand dollars for a Saddlebred colt, so then I just decided we'd go strictly Saddlebred. So that's why we sold the Percherons, not that I could see anything coming.

Carneal: You were just early in closing out that market, weren't you?

Swaney: No, well, I'm just lucky.

Amthor: Before we close, is there anything else you would like to tell us about your experience in World War II or life in the forties?

Swaney: Well, I guess - nothing that I can think of.

Amthor: No special story that you haven't mentioned or anything?

Swaney: Well, I could tell you about selling Oak Hill Chief, I guess. We were showing at the American Royal, and getting ready to show him in the Stake, and my wife and her mother and father and I were

sitting there, and a fellow touched me on the shoulder, and said, “That gentleman back there wants to speak to you.” So I got up and went up there, and this man’s name was Walter Grant, he was an oil millionaire, and he knew me and I knew him, but that was about it, and he said, “I have something for you.” I said, “What’s that?” He reached inside his pocket and handed me a check. I said, “what’s that for?” He said, “That’s for that spotted horse you’re showing.” And it was a big check. Of course, it was know what I asked for him because several people had tried to buy him, and it was a little less than what I was asking for him. I said, “Mr. Grant, he’s a better horse than you think he is. Let’s go down there and look at him.” So we went down, and he had a little spot on one hind leg, which is called a splint, and it had to be called. So we went down and I showed him this splint, and he said, “That don’t amount to nothing.” And I said, “Ni, it’s been there as ling as I’ve owned him.” And I tried to get him to give me more money, and he said, “Mr. Swaney, you can hand me back that check, you tear it up, or you can put it in your purse and the horse can be mine; whatever you would like to do.” So I opened up my billfold and put the check in my purse and told Mr. Gant that Red Richards was working for me. I said, “What did you want to do with the horse?” “Well,” he said, “Go ahead and show him, he can win the stake tonight; keep the money.” I said, “No, Mr. Gant, he’s your horse now.” So he took him down and put him in his stall, so we went back up and sat back down.

A couple of classes before the show, Leola said, “Aren’t you going to show tonight? Aren’t you going to warm him up?” I said, “No.” I showed her the check, and said, “We no longer own him.” She wasn’t very happy, but that was the only horse in her life that she ever fell in love with, but you see - we only had one car, and she would come out to pick me up of an evening. I never knew when I was going to get away, and I had this horse in an isolated place, so she and he became real good friends. But that is how I happened to sell him.

Carneal: I believe she said she would never fall in love with another horse after that.
Swaney: That’s right. She said that was the last time she was ever going to fall in love with another horse after that.

Amthor: I believe our time’s running out, but I appreciate having you here today, and listening to your story, and just want to thank you for being here today.

Swaney: You bet.

[clapping]

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