

**DONALD LEONARD**  
**April 25, 2006**

Interviewer: Margo Hunt  
Transcribed By: Shirley Fauber  
Donald Leonard: Donald Leonard  
Margo Hunt: Margo Hunt

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Tape, Side A (1<sup>st</sup> Side):

Margo Hunt: This is Margo Hunt, I am recording for the Chincoteague Island Library (tape squealing) project and we are interviewing Donald Leonard and we are at the home of Donald Leonard on the most northerly point of Chincoteague Island. It is April 25, 2006 and Bessie Hunt is our electronics' assistant (tape squealing).

Margo Hunt: Good morning Donald.

Donald Leonard: Good morning.

Margo Hunt: It's a pleasure to be with you here. Tell us where you were born and about – a little bit about your early life here on Chincoteague?

Donald Leonard: Well, let's start off (tape stopped). Okay, Kendall Jester has recorded some of the history of the Island. He was a livestock grower. Of course, in those days the Island was not so inhabited and livestock had free range of the Island. And I guess it remained that way until the maybe early 30's when they invoked a fencing law which said you had to keep your livestock under control on your own property.

Donald Leonard: So the Islands – Chincoteague and Assateague has had a history of production of livestock, that is sheep, cattle and horses. Of course, the horses become the notable species now, not so much cattle and sheep.

Donald Leonard: I don't know if its heredity or what it is, but I've always been captivated by horses. In my youthful years my Dad's friends used to say, where is Donald and he'd say I don't have the vaguest idea, but if you'll find the horses, you'll find him.

Donald Leonard: I've always been attracted to horses or ponies. I started the roundups – I guess in the late 30's, penning not only on Assateague, but on Wallop's Beach. They had ponies and sheep on Wallop's Beach. They were owned by a fellow by the name of Joseph Pruitt from Greenbackville. He had all the beaches and so forth on these – on Wallop's Beach and Assateague. And pony penning used to involve Wallop's Beach as well as Assateague and I

used to go on the roundup with the seniors as a kid. And my attraction to horses last throughout my life.

Donald Leonard: I started with the fire company when I was fourteen or fifteen. And I was the first president of the junior fire company – which was organized in the late 30's early 40's. So my attraction to ponies prompted me to buy this real estate on the north end of the Island, which was a pasture for Grandpa Beebe's ponies in the winter months. The land was not valuable because it was considered waste land.

Margo Hunt: Um.

Donald Leonard: So I was able to buy at a very reasonable price. Which is not the case today needless to say. (Laughing) For example, I bought the first twenty-eight acres up here for a Thousand Dollars.

Margo Hunt: Whooh!

Donald Leonard: And my friends used to – friends and family said you've lost your damn mind. Pay a Thousand Dollars for that waste land. Well, the rest of the story is generally known now.

Margo Hunt: Tell us a little bit about your grandfather, now he lived here on Chincoteague didn't he?

Donald Leonard: My grandfather, on my Mother's side, was the Jester family, and my grandfather was Lambert Jester. The son of the Jester I was previously talkin' about.

Margo Hunt: Kendall.

Donald Leonard: Kendall, yeah, he was the son of Kendall. And he was quite a character in his own right. He was also the owner of livestock. Not to the extent that Kendall was, but they owned what is now known as Wild Cat. And all of that property to the west of us is Wild Cat, that was all property of Kendall Jester.

Margo Hunt: Uh-huh.

Donald Leonard: But Kendall Jester was a heavy drinker – quite a – which is recorded in some of the written history. And the story goes he drank up the property. My Grandfather reclaimed some of it by paying off his debts and acquired quite a bit of Wild Cat. And later sold it to the DuPont's. The DuPont's had it for a hunting preserve.

Margo Hunt: Uh-huh.

Donald Leonard: So I'm not far from my roots.

Margo Hunt: I'll say.

Donald Leonard: Straight across the marsh here is where my family started here.

Margo Hunt: And how did they get here?

Donald Leonard: Now that's a good question. I'm not rightly sure. I've heard that they migrated here from Delaware, but I'm not sure from where.

Margo Hunt: Well that was pretty early wasn't it?

Donald Leonard: Yeah. That was pretty early. I'd say it was in the early 1800's I guess.

Margo Hunt: And tell us a little bit about your growing up here – where you lived when you were young.

Donald Leonard: Well, I was born in what was referred to as the Rolly house. Its latest occupants was the Dennis'. It was a house that was moved from the Coast Guard property further up town. The house still stands. But my Father was a – we talk about “come heres,” if it wadn't for come heres I wouldn't be here. (Laughing)

Margo Hunt: (Laughing)

Donald Leonard: Because my Father was a Merchant Marine. His family moved here from New Jersey and he came here to visit his family and met my Mother. And that settled his ass. So I was one of two children and the eldest of the – my Father's family.

Margo Hunt: And when you were young, tell us about your school here.

Donald Leonard: School?

Margo Hunt: Where did you go to school?

Donald Leonard: I went to school here on the Island. I was a very poor student. I didn't care for school, I'd rather be out in the wilderness with the ponies. So I didn't accomplish much in my school years. I later went to – after we were married which was after the World War II, I met my wife in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, which was her home. I was in the Medical Corp. and they had a hospital there in Tuscaloosa which catered to burn patients for the most part and I was – met my wife while I was station in Tuscaloosa. So . . .

Margo Hunt: You weren't a burn patient though?

Donald Leonard: No. I was in the Medical Corp. and after we came back from Europe they had to have some place to put us so I wound up in Tuscaloosa – in what they called Northington General Hospital. And I was cadre there.

Margo Hunt: Did you get married down there in Tuscaloosa?

Donald Leonard: Yes, we were married in June of '46. And it was just after I had gotten out of the service.

Margo Hunt: So you've been married for quite a while?

Donald Leonard: Yeah, pushin' sixty years.

Margo Hunt: Oh, wow. Isn't that amazing to you, it always amazes me how long I've been married, it's gone by so fast.

Donald Leonard: Uh-huh.

Unknown: What is your wife's name?

Donald Leonard: Martha.

Unknown: Martha.

Donald Leonard: Yeah. Martha (calling her). Martha – she must have gone.

Margo Hunt: So you then – after you were married, did you – you came back and paid a Thousand Dollars for this land, is that right and built a house?

Donald Leonard: Well, my family lived on Cleveland Street. And so we lived on Cleveland Street for quite some time. And I bought this property up here in the early 50's. And, of course, soon after that when I acquired my first piece of real estate up here we built a home up here. And we moved up here in - I think it was 1964, following the '62 storm.

Margo Hunt: Um.

Donald Leonard: There was a hill up here which was relatively safe from the storms so that's where we picked to build our first house.

Margo Hunt: Was that this house?

Donald Leonard: No. This house we built – we moved here in 1990. We moved there in '64.

Margo Hunt: Who lives in that house now?

Donald Leonard: My son, Carlton.

Margo Hunt: Carlton. Uh-huh. It's nice you have your children here now don't you?

Donald Leonard: Yeah! My uncle used to say you don't want your children established to close to you. But I consider myself to be very fortunate in that all the children live up here.

Margo Hunt: That's wonderful isn't it?

Donald Leonard: So – it poses some problems, but not too bad. So we're glad they're all up here and enjoy living in this area.

Margo Hunt: Certainly. That's wonderful. Tell a little bit about the early fire company days.

Donald Leonard: Well, of course, we've always had a active volunteer fire company. Very successful as a matter of - as they say - necessity is the mother of invention. Well, that's the case with our fire company. We - being sort of isolated on this Island, we needed a very active fire company.

Margo Hunt: Uh-huh.

Donald Leonard: And the community has met the charge. They – the fire company has been very active and very successful. The fire company didn't get the pony business until – I think it was 1939 or '40. The ponies were owned by Mr. Joseph Pruitt. He was a very successful business man and he owned the livestock grazing rights on Assateague and at that time on Wallops Beach. At his death it became a problem for the fire company in that if the ponies went elsewhere were bought by someone else, the fire company went out of business.

Margo Hunt: Um.

Donald Leonard: So they - they were forced to buy as many of the ponies of Joseph Pruitt at the settling of his estate. And that's what put the fire company in the pony business.

Margo Hunt: I see.

Donald Leonard: But they – they were successful in negotiating an agreement with the Fish and Wildlife to allow the ponies to remain on Assateague. All the rest of the livestock, cattle and so forth, had to be removed. So that's what put the fire company in the pony business.

Margo Hunt: Whose idea was the pony swim?

Donald Leonard: Well, that's – I don't know when that started, but I'm told that they used to have - once't a year on Assateague, what they called sheep penning. And it was generally a roundup of livestock. And then – they called it sheep penning day. Well, that was transformed to what is now known as pony penning day. Because it's been a long time since there's was any sheep on Assateague. But it was sheep, both on Assateague and Wallops Beach. So sheep was as much as a part of the livestock history as ponies or cattle was.

Donald Leonard: It was a lot a cattle on Assateague before Fish and Wildlife bought it. In fact, there were far more cattle than there was ponies.

Margo Hunt: People used it for – a range, grazing?

Donald Leonard: Yes, it was sort of an open range.

Margo Hunt: I see.

Donald Leonard: And, of course, the beach goes from here to Ocean City. And it was a large area and supported a lot a cattle and horses. But when Fish and Wildlife bought it, of course, they forced the removal of all livestock except the ponies. And the fire company negotiated a grazing right from Fish and Wildlife, which stands today.

Margo Hunt: I'd like to ask you about the establishment of the Refuge Inn.

Donald Leonard: Well . . .

Margo Hunt: And when – when did that happen?

Donald Leonard: Oh, we built the Refuge Motor Inn in 1973. It's funny, I've often said I'd rather be lucky than intelligent. . .

Margo Hunt: (Laughing)

Donald Leonard: . . . insofar as success in business. And I'll give you an example. This is just one example, I can give you a lot of 'em where luck played a intrical part in my success in the business world, however that is.

Donald Leonard: Case in point is Mr. Wyle Maddox who owned all of what we knew – what is known as Piney Island. He decided to sell some of that after he built the bridge and he decided to sell some of the property. One of the purchasers of that property was – let's see – (pause), strange, I forgot his name, I should remember – it'll come to me. But one of the people who purchased that property was Paul Hickman. He owned that – where the Refuge Motor is now – for quite some time. And he decided to sell it. And I give him a bid on it. I forget what it was – it was somewhere in the neighborhood of maybe Ten Thousand Dollars for that portion which he owned, and that was a ridiculously low price. Of course, he declined.

Donald Leonard: And later on he got in some problems in his business world and he decided to sell this property. Well, I didn't know it – but at the time – but I was a crossed the street one day down the middle of town and he was passing in his car and he tooted his horn at me. And he stuck his head out the window and he said, "Donald, do you want that property now?" And I said yeah, I'll give you what I was gonna give you for it. He said "You got until two o'clock today to come up with the money."

Margo Hunt: (Laughing)

Donald Leonard: I said, good night, how am I gonna come up with Ten Thousand Dollars today by two o'clock. He said, "That's your problem."

Margo Hunt: Um.

Donald Leonard: But he said – I need that money by two o'clock today. Well, what I didn't know was – he was under the gun in Norfolk to come up with this money by a certain time and he was tryin' to get that money. So, if I hadn't been crossin' that street at that time I wouldn't have owned the property where the Refuge Motor Inn is.

Margo Hunt: (Laughing)

Donald Leonard: So that is why I talk about luck. Another case in point is that I wanted to build a motel but needless to say I didn't have the money. I went over and made application to a bank over on the mainland and I made out a financial statement. And I presented this financial statement to the banker that I needed Two Hundred and Fifty Thousand Dollars. And he said, "Donald, according to your financial statement here, you got Fifty Dollars in the bank. Is that right?"

Margo Hunt: (Laughing)

Donald Leonard: I said that's all I've ever had in the bank – except payday. But in the end of the month when we pay our bills I'm lucky to have Fifty Dollars. And he said, "and you're tryin' to borrow Two Hundred and Fifty Thousand Dollars?" And I said, that's right. Well, he said "you have little or no chance of gettin' it with your financial statement." (Laughing)

Margo Hunt: (Laughing)

Donald Leonard: So, to continue that part of the story – I was at a fire meeting one night and they said, Donald you know Wyle Maddox pretty well don't cha? I said very well. They said, well he's got a piece a property where the ponies land and we need that property. So would you go to Wyle and see if he'll sell it to us? I said I'd be glad to.

Donald Leonard: So that was – the following Monday mornin' I was gettin' ready to go over on the mainland to – see if I couldn't borrow some money. So – but I wanted to see Wyle first about this fire company deal. So I went up 'ere and he was under a bulldozer.

Margo Hunt: (Laughing)

Donald Leonard: And he – he had had a problem with a nerve in his neck and he was practically paralyzed. But he was a determined individual. So I saw his car parked 'ere and I could see his feet stickin' out from underneath that bulldozer. So I said Wyle when you get time I'd like to talk to ya. He said I'll be out in a minute. Wadn't long 'fore he scooted out from under that

bulldozer and the first thing he said to me was, “Donald what in the world are you doin’ dressed up on Monday?” Well, in those days you only got dressed up to go to church on Sunday. So I said I’m gettin’ ready to go off to see if I can’t borrow some money to build a motel. He said “How much you tryin’ to borrow?” I said Two Hundred and Fifty Thousand Dollars. He said “Well go off and see what you can do, if you can’t find it, come back, and I think I’ll let ya have it.”

Donald Leonard: So, that’s another streak a luck.

Margo Hunt: (Laughing)

Donald Leonard: Had nothin’ to do with intelligence. It was just pure luck. (Laughing) So he let me have the money. He - he sold part of Assateague up in the Maryland section and got quite a bit a money I guess at that time. And so he let me have the money. And that was in 1973.

Donald Leonard: But then we get back to ponies. It was ponies who – encouraged the Federal Government to declare this a wildlife refuge. The Congressional action involved Maryland and Virginia. But I’ve always – I’ve always thought that the ponies were one of the attractions which encouraged the Federal Government to buy that real estate and create the Refuge and the National Seashore Park.

Margo Hunt: Interesting.

Donald Leonard: Fact of the matter is Representative Tom Doughty who was our Representative, Congressional Representative then, stated at one of the hearings they had relative to the ponies and the Refuge, he said, “I want my great-great-grandchildren to witness the free roaming of those ponies on Assateague forever.” And that was a statement from him. He said, “I want my grandchildren to witness those ponies running freely on Assateague forever.” And that’s part of the Congressional record.

Margo Hunt: Amazing.

Donald Leonard: So (pause).

Margo Hunt: Would you mind going back to your – trying to get Two Hundred and Fifty Thousand Dollars. Where did you eventually get it?

Donald Leonard: From Mr. Maddox.

Margo Hunt: He did loan it to you?

Donald Leonard: Yes. And I ran into trouble which – I overspent my allotment. I overspent the Two Hundred and Fifty Thousand Dollars and I needed additional money. So I went to Mr. Maddox and I said - Wyle, I’ve run into financial trouble and I need some additional money. Would you be interested in lettin’ me have any more money. He said, “No indeed.” He said,



“I’ve got enough invested in it and that’s all I want to invest in it.” So he was a man of few words. He told it like it was. The first year that we were in business, when it came to the end of the year when the payments were due, I didn’t have the money to make the payment. So I went to Wyle and I said Wyle I can’t pay you a penny, not one penny. He said, never mind that he said, sign this note for it, pay me next year. So that’s the kind a man he was.

Margo Hunt: He was generous to you wasn’t he?

Donald Leonard: Yes, he was.

Margo Hunt: So you did build it and was it in 1974?

Donald Leonard: ’73.

Margo Hunt: ’73 you built it. Well, it certainly has been very successful. It has a lovely air about it – the Refuge Inn.

Donald Leonard: Well, it’s another case of ponies being responsible for the building of the Refuge Motor Inn. If it hadn’t a been for the ponies, it never would a been ‘ere.

Margo Hunt: Uh-huh.

Donald Leonard: And I guess the creation of the National Seashore Park and the Refuge all combined is the reason for whatever success we might of had on Chincoteague.

Margo Hunt: We are going to stop right there for a minute.

(End of Side 1 (A) of Tape) (Begin Side 2 (B) of Tape)

Donald Leonard: I was a firefighter over at NASA.

Margo Hunt: Uh-huh.

Donald Leonard: Paid professional firefighter. As a result of my experience with the volunteer fire company is how I qualified. So that was a really good job and it – for a person of my expertise such as it was.

Margo Hunt: Uh-huh.

Donald Leonard: We worked shifts of twenty-four hours on and twenty-four hours off. And that was three days a week which in effect gave me four days with a freehand to do whatever I wanted to do.

Margo Hunt: With your ponies?

Donald Leonard: With the ponies and other ventures. I had a friend of mine and I had built the Island Marina down 'ere in 1959. Again, with no money. (Laughing) But . . .

Margo Hunt: Is that the Town dock?

Donald Leonard: Huh?

Margo Hunt: You mean the Town dock is that what – or Curtis Merritt Harbor or where?

Donald Leonard: No, it's called the Island Marina. It's next to the Coast Guard base. South of the Coast Guard base.

Margo Hunt: Uh-huh.

Donald Leonard: And it's Island Marina which was built in 1959. My partner and I had that because we lost our jobs with the Navy. We were with the Navy and in 1959 the Navy closed down. So we lost our jobs and we needed somethin' to do so we decided to build a marina. Which we did. And it turned out that we paid for it, but it was not a money maker.

Margo Hunt: You're really – you were heavily involved in the building of the Community Center. And helped – isn't that right, Chincoteague Community Center – you established an authority to build that and?

Donald Leonard: Yes, and that was also involved with tourism. We tried to get the legislature to authorize us to devote a portion of our tax base to building a community center which was supposed to help the tourist industry overall. And it may have helped in a very small way, but our appeal to the legislature was that it would help greatly. That was a damn lie. (Laughing)

Margo Hunt: (Laughing)

Donald Leonard: But it helped us get it through the legislature that they would authorize Accomack County to impose such a tax. A percentage of which the occupancy tax went toward the Community Center. We were able to swing it on that – on that note. Accomack County could not impose a occupancy tax until the legislature gave 'em authorization to do so. It was only one county in Virginia who had that authority. And it was an uphill battle because the tourist industry in the state of Virginia was opposed to it. They didn't want anybody authorized to impose a transient occupancy tax. So we had to fight the industry in Virginia in order to get authorization to impose such a tax. Fifty percent of which was to go toward the building of the Community Center. So it was a rather lengthy process, but eventually it went through.

Margo Hunt: It was – it has been very successful.

Donald Leonard: Well, that depends on how you measure success. (Laughing)

Margo Hunt: (Laughing) There you go.

Donald Leonard: I think it has, but it's debatable. We haven't been able to attract as many as conventions and that sort of things that we anticipated, but they've - the Board has made it work with what they have. And in that vain, it's successful, yes.

Margo Hunt: Did you ever have a lot of experience on the water? Did you have a boat and . . . ?

Donald Leonard: Well, I've worked on the water some. I should a been a waterman but I never did like - my Father's family were Swedes - and they were seaman, all of 'em, including my Father. And gettin' back to my attraction to school, I said to my Dad one time, I said, Dad I want to quit school - he said - and go to work - and he said fine. Pack what clothes you think you'll need for a week, you're goin' to sea.

Margo Hunt: Um . . .

Donald Leonard: So he had a two-man schooner that he claimed he'd stay a week. And so I went out and I stayed seasick the whole week.

Margo Hunt: (Laughing)

Donald Leonard: And I said - I said Dad is it all right if I go back to school? And he said you got two choices, you either go to school or you go to work on this - on this ship. So take your choice - take either one you want.

Margo Hunt: (Laughing)

Donald Leonard: I said I'll go back to school. (Laughing)

Margo Hunt: Now did you finish high school?

Donald Leonard: Yes, barely. (Laughing)

Margo Hunt: And you didn't go on after that to school?

Donald Leonard: I went to trade school.

Margo Hunt: Trade School.

Donald Leonard: I went to Philadelphia and studied air conditioning and refrigeration and radio repair. But when I came back and tried to go in business, I had plenty a work but nobody had any money. They said I'll pay you Sat'day and Sat'day never came. They didn't - they didn't have the money. It was a very poor situation around here until we got involved in tourism.

Margo Hunt: Now what - what years are you talking about - that was very poor, was it the 30's?

Donald Leonard: Well, I – it's always been poor up until we got involved in tourism, until they created the National Seashore Park. For example, the first job I had we – we hear a lot about what's happening to our waterfront. Condo's which is considered a bad thing. Well, when I came along one of the condo projects goin' down was the tomato factory and that tomato factory paid boys Ten Cents an hour. So I worked in 'ere in the tomato factory for Ten Cents an hour. That was the goin' wage in adults. Heads of family – wage of Fifteen Cents an hour. So when I hear people complain about what's happening here, they should've experienced the times that some of the old timers have and then they may not be so opposed to what's happening now.

Donald Leonard: Ever body around here - as I know it is engaged in their trades and doin' pretty well. Ten Cents an hour is not much, but that's all there was so you took it.

Margo Hunt: Boy.

Donald Leonard: Wanna the best jobs that I ever had as a youth was shoe-shine boy. I – I was workin' at a grocery store on Saturdays and the pay was a Dollar from seven in the mornin' 'til eleven. You got One Dollar. So when this shoe-shine job came open I thought I'd died and gone to heaven.

Margo Hunt: (Laughing)

Donald Leonard: 'Cause I made pretty good money shinin' shoes.

Margo Hunt: Now you were a young man during those jobs?

Donald Leonard: Oh yeah, that was when I was early teens.

Margo Hunt: Uh-huh.

Donald Leonard: Fifteen, fourteen, somethin' like that.

Margo Hunt: You've worked all your life?

Donald Leonard: There's no question about that!

Margo Hunt: Uh-huh.

Donald Leonard: I've all – I never remember bein' without a job for more than one day in my life. Some of the jobs I took were bad jobs, but they were jobs.

Margo Hunt: Uh-huh.

Donald Leonard: They were somethin'.

Margo Hunt: Uh-huh.

Donald Leonard: Yeah, I've been very fortunate in that respect. I always had a job.

Margo Hunt: I want to ask you a question about storms.

Donald Leonard: About what?

Margo Hunt: About hurricanes and storms.

Donald Leonard: Yes.

Margo Hunt: What was it like up here when . . .

Donald Leonard: Well, the storms that I remember was '33, '36 and '62. They were what we call bad storms. Of course, we had storms almost every year. But the grandfather of storms was '33, '36, and '62 in which the Island was literally covered with water.

Margo Hunt: What – what were you doing during those times, during the storms?

Donald Leonard: Well, during '33 and '36 I lived on – it's Cropper Street now – and the house that we lived in was well up and the water never come in our house.

Margo Hunt: Good.

Donald Leonard: In '33 or '36. But it was a lot a water around 'en. In fact, the street in front of my house – it was over my head. In '62 we lived in my – our – my parents' house on Cleveland Street. And there again the house was above the tide level. That's the reason when I built here we got the elevation we have. We don't think we'll ever be bothered with tidal water here because of the elevation.

Margo Hunt: How high is this house?

Donald Leonard: Huh?

Margo Hunt: How high is this house?

Donald Leonard: Well, it's about eight foot off of the ground level.

Margo Hunt: Uh-huh.

Donald Leonard: And, the fact of the matter, it's probably is ten foot now. I don't think we'll ever get water in this house.

Margo Hunt: Uh-huh.

Donald Leonard: We may get it on the first floor, which is the garage and so forth. Of course, you never know, but I'm not worried about it. We have a generator and so I'm reasonably comfortable and feel somewhat safe as far as tides comin'. We'll have another bad one some time.

Margo Hunt: You are still actively engaged with your ponies in retirement aren't you?

Donald Leonard: Well, we've got ponies up here. We sell colts around pony penning time. So I guess, yes, I guess you'd call it a business, but it's a very poor business. (Laughing)

Margo Hunt: (Laughing)

Donald Leonard: It's like many other farming endeavors. Farming is not too prosperous a occupation anymore. It costs as much to feed 'em in the winter and other expenses – related expenses - than you make out of the sale of the ponies and stuff. A labor of love I guess you'd call it.

Margo Hunt: (Laughing) That's right.

Margo Hunt: Well, I think - we are very grateful to you this morning for having answered all of our questions.

Donald Leonard: What is that?

Margo Hunt: We are grateful to you this morning.

Donald Leonard: Well, thank you.

Margo Hunt: Thank you very much for answering some questions we had.

Donald Leonard: What might be of some interest – it used to be when pony penning evolved, penning the ponies on Assateague and Wallops Beach – after they finished penning the ponies on Assateague they'd load the riding horses on a barge and take it to Wallops Beach, pen the ponies on Wallops Beach, all the same day!

Margo Hunt: Wow!

Donald Leonard: So they'd finish their pony penning and it would be late at night on pony penning swim day before they finished.

Margo Hunt: Now did they auction them, all of them then?

Donald Leonard: No, they did not auction. The auction came later. They used to sell 'em – I think it was- well I can remember when they sold for anywhere from Ten to Twenty-five Dollars

each. That was I guess – in the late 30's, early 40's. They didn't start auctioning 'em until maybe sometime in the 50's.

Margo Hunt: Well, what was the purpose of their penning them then?

Donald Leonard: To get rid of the young colts.

Margo Hunt: And what did they do with the colts, did they . . . ?

Donald Leonard: They sold 'em.

Margo Hunt: They sold 'em, but they just didn't auction them?

Donald Leonard: No, they sold 'em privately.

Margo Hunt: I see.

Donald Leonard: In other words – you'd go there and pick up one and they'd say, well that – that's Twenty-five or Fifty. Then they got up to a Hundred Dollars. And that was considered big money. So I was a strong advocate of auction and I had a lot of opposition in the fire company people who did not want to go to auctions. So the rest of the story is kinda self-evident. Now they are bringing as much as Four Thousand – Five Thousand a piece as a result of the auction. The average price is now around Sixteen Hundred Dollars.

Margo Hunt: Shew.

Donald Leonard: So.

Margo Hunt: And people come back year after year don't they?

Donald Leonard: Yes.

Margo Hunt: Isn't it amazing?

Donald Leonard: Yes.

Margo Hunt: And from the early days, did the fire company get the income from the sale of the ponies?

Donald Leonard: Not in the early days not when Mr. Pruitt owned 'em they didn't.

Margo Hunt: And they'd go to Mr. Pruitt.

Donald Leonard: No, they went – to – when Mr. Pruitt – when they settled his estate they had the horses penned – they penned them on Assateague and took ‘em over to Greenbackville and put ‘em in his corral over there and that is where they sold ‘em off.

Margo Hunt: Uh-huh.

Donald Leonard: The fire company bought a lot of ‘em at that sale.

Margo Hunt: I see.

Donald Leonard: And put ‘em back on Assateague.

Margo Hunt: Do you have any other stories you can relate to us?

Donald Leonard: Well . . .

Margo Hunt: You are looking at your ponies I see.

Donald Leonard: Yeah. I used to – as a kid I used to go with ‘em on the penning of both Assateague and Wallops Beach. And I was ‘bout maybe ten or twelve years old then. But I been following the ponies all my life, including having ponies up here.

Margo Hunt: (Laughing)

Donald Leonard: Of course, the children now take care of ‘em. They’ve been brought up all their lives around ponies and their familiar with ‘em.

Margo Hunt: And you have quite a small grandson I understand who comes up and visits you regularly and walks home?

Donald Leonard: Well, he’s a – all of our grandchildren have been sort of low-temperament and not to active, but he’s a – he’s a terror. (Laughing)

Margo Hunt: (Laughing)

Donald Leonard: He’s into everything and constantly on the move and has very much a will of his own.

Margo Hunt: We want to thank you very much. We are gonna conclude our interview with you this morning now.

Donald Leonard: All right.

Margo Hunt: And we are grateful to you.  
THE END.