2-10-1996

Interview of Various Issues with Becky and Dennis Shinaberry

Mitra Fabian
Dennis Shinaberry
Becky Shinaberry

Follow this and additional works at: https://digital.kenyon.edu/ffp_interviews

Recommended Citation
Fabian, Mitra; Shinaberry, Dennis; and Shinaberry, Becky, "Interview of Various Issues with Becky and Dennis Shinaberry" (1996).
Interviews. 7.
https://digital.kenyon.edu/ffp_interviews/7
INTERVIEW OF VARIOUS ISSUES: CHILDREN, DEVELOPMENT AND LEGISLATION

Interview with Becky and Dennis Shinaberry during my “Day on the Farm”, February 10, 1996, at the Shinaberry home in Fredericktown, Ohio

MF: I guess one of the things that people in my class wanted to know was, um, how the kids deal with you guys, like, raising these animals for, for slaughter. Like how do they detach themselves from being emotionally attached to them?

BS: I guess they’ve understood from day one- this is what Dennis does for, for a living. It’s just like anyone else holding a white collar job, we, we do it because we want to be able to put food on the table and we want to be able to buy toys for the kids and..

MF: Umm- hmm.

BS: ...and go places and do things. Um, people eat, eat meat. There’s a demand. When there’s a demand, you have to fill the supply and we know we’re part of the, part of the suppliers. Umm... Since-

MF: So you think it’s a conditioning thing?

BS: Yeah. Since both, ah, both Dennis and I were raised on a farm, I guess we never really saw it any other way.

MF: Umm-hmm.

BS: Um. I used to get more attached to the, to the little animals than he ever has. [my laughter] Um, simply ‘cause I, I think I had more pets when I was growin’ up, and, umm, I would spend more time out in the barn just playing with the animals and not really working with them. I was, I was just out there kinda playin’ with them. And I had a harder time lettin’ go of the lambs. When I first married him, we moved here and, you know, I knew that’s what happened, but th’ the first time he said I’m sellin’ lambs tonight, and I had been out there with them for the last five months raisin’ ‘em, you know, and feedin’ ‘em on the bottle..

MF: Umm-hmm.

BS: Ah, that was a little hard for me, ‘cause I always liked to go out and play with them. But the kids understand that they’re there to play with, but in, in order for us to live, this is Daddy’
business, and..

JS: [Jim interrupts] Mom, I let Joshua in my room and he won’t let me in.

BS: Why don’t you stay out of Josh and Mike’s room right now. [Jim points out something he wants] ..Yeah, you can have that. [Jim says something inaudible and I laugh] Why don’t you boys play down here? Jeremy, did you boot up the computer?

JS: Ah, no.

BS: Well, crank her on. We’ll set you up with a game. You can do “My World”. Okay?

JS: Yeah.

BS: [to Jim] So tie this off... So’s far as the kids go, they, you know, i-it’s the same way with us- we were raised that way. Um.. when you go to a restaurant, it’s whatcha have. It’s just, you know, like being a lettuce farmer. You raise it... [we both laugh] Beans, corn, y- you raise it to sell so that people buy an’ live on it. Um, they’ve never had a problem with it. Um, Joshua, this year was his first year in 4-H and he took a lamb as his project- a market lamb. And he kept track of all the feed that it ate and how much weight it gained per day and he had to work with it everyday an’ and ah, make sure it had water and clean bedding and, and basically take care of it. It was like his baby.

MF: Umm-hmm.

BS: Um, and I explained to him when we got into the project that when you take it to the fair, this is a market project- it goes on the market. Someone will want to buy this lamb because you have, you’ve raised it, hopefully in a good way...

MF: Umm-hmm.

BS: It’s got a lot of meat to it, um, [ to Jeremy] yeah, go do it now.

MF: [responding to Jeremy wanting me to play on the computer] In a second.

BS: And he, yeah, shoo, go on! [Becky laughs] He didn’t have, he didn’t have any problem with it. Ah, and I told him the stories about when I, I used to have hogs- my dad was a hog farmer. An’ I always took hogs to the fair. And I,.. hogs are a lot harder to work with than sheep because they, you don’t hold them, you have to manuever ‘em, you have to, they have to train- you have to train the hog to be with you all the time for the hog to stay. It’s somethin’ like a dog kind of training. And then when you let them go, i-it’s a little bit tougher, an’ you just kinda have to chase them away from you, ‘cause they stay pretty close. Ah, and then I told him a couple of the stories about when I took my animal when, when I was young, but, um.. If he wants to buy something, like he wants to buy a new computer program, ah, to help him with school..

MF: Umm-hmm.
BS: ...with his math projects and things. And I said, okay, how are you going to buy that? “Well, I’ll use part of my lamb money.” You know, it’s a way of getting what you want. Um.. Working for, working for a purpose. Being able to acquire the things that you require in life. So, that’s the way we view it. That’s, you know - that’s life! Ah.. We were put here ah,, Dennis feels the same way- we were put here in charge of the animals to take care of them and to take care of our friends and our families an’ and the other people. So we don’t have a real problem with raising them to maintain the people. ‘Cause that’s kind of what they were given to us for.

MF: Do you ever, do you ever slaughter them here?

BS: No. [laughs] No! Um, we did have, no, I won’t allow that, not on the farm. It’s not sanitary conditions. Ah, not for our own use. It can be done.

MF: Umm-hmm.

BS: Ah, it has been done. Yes, it has been done. We had, ah, some people come from, ah, we don’t know really where they were south of Columbus, I think, in a, in a van one day. And they were of the Jewish faith and they were looking for lamb. And they wanted to buy.

MF: Umm-hmm.

BS: They could see them out runnin’ around. And we said, sure we had some market weight. We’d be happy to sell. Um. They didn’t have an appointment at a butcher shop or anything, so they chose to butcher here on the farm. Ah. I was--

MF: Did the kids see that?

BS: Yes. Two of the kids did, my oldest two did. I kept the youngest one in the house. And I didn’t really want the other two to go out an’ see that because I didn’t think that- seven and nine- were they really ready to understand how, how they were butchered out, exactly.

MF: Umm-hmm.

BS: But they did. It didn’t bother them. Um, Dennis went out with them. He was out there most of the time when it was happening. And, um, they understood. We talked about the different cuts of meat, the kinds of things they like to eat, why, where it comes from, and that sort of thing. The men that were doing the butchering knew what they were doing and did it very well, um..

MF: Umm-hmm.

BS: So I had no problem with that. It’s just that I don’t usually [laughs] We’re not used to butchering straight on the farm.
MF: Right.

BS: ...straight on the farm.

MF: So you, you never keep any of the, the meat for yourselves?

BS: Oh yeah. We’ll make an appointment at one of the-

MF: Oh, okay.

BS: -custom butchering shops and, yeah, I’m about outta beef in the freezer, so, Dennis has a couple of steers that are ready to go as soon as we can get an appointment.

MF: Umm-hmm.

BS: And, we’ll take them there. They’ll butcher ‘em out, make sure the meat is thoroughly inspected, you know, that whole nine yards. Um, and then we’ll go pick up the meat. And that’ll be fine. So, sure, yeah, we eat- I have, usually, half a beef, half a hog, and a lamb or maybe two butchered every year for meat we eat here in the house. For our friends, you know-

MF: Umm-hmm.

BS: We kind of share it around. Not everybody is real into eating lamb.

MF: I never liked it when I ate meat.

BS: S-sometimes... I-it’s different. Now Joshua likes it. He’s a very, very finicky eater. He doesn’t eat very much... very much meat and it has to be very plain, very dry, you know, do it on the grill and he loves it! But do it here on the stove and he doesn’t like it. Um, he loves lamb chops. [I laugh] I can fix lamb chops any day of the week, breakfast, lunch, supper- whatever, and he will eat at least three lamb chops. [I laugh some more] So, if he needs a good meal [Becky laughs], if I know he hasn’t had really good food for a couple, three day days, I’ll pull some lamb out of the freezer, and say, “Joshua, we’re havin’ lamb”, and he’s at the table, ready to eat.[ more laughter] He doesn’t, he’s not a food mixer, like the chili today? He won’t eat the chili because it’s different kinds of food mixed together.

MF: Huh.

BS: He’ll eat a plain hamburger. When we go out to eat? It’s a plain hamburger- nothing on it. No pickle, no ketchup, no mustard, nothing! And then he mushes [claps her hands to make a smacking noise] the bun down and he usually eats it. That’s it. He’s a very, very finicky, picky, picky eater. As long as I know that he gets a little bit every now and then. [laughs] Takes his vitamins- he’s fine.

MF: I guess another question was from the, the environmental people, and they were just
wondering how you dealt with manure and all that kind of stuff. I mean, I guess Dennis said that you just put it out in the fields?

BS: Manure is, ah, is, is the best kind of fertilizer there is, um, for the ground. We put it out on our fields- we have a rotation cycle, we don’t put it all in one spot in one field. Um, Dennis has a rotation cycle on the farm about what field gets corn, wheat, beans, and then it goes back to hay. It’s a four year rotation cycle. So, we spread that manure over the entire farm and every year, a different field will, will get that manure. So it, it has plenty of time to decompose, and basically it goes back into the crop that is planted on that field, um, to help make it a better crop. So, no, we don’t dump it all in one place. It doesn’t cause-- maybe a half a day of smelling [laughs], but it’s not nearly, you know, the kind of animals that we raise, it’s not like hog farming. Hog far- hog manure and chicken manure are the two worst, strongest smelling. They’re wonderful for ground- chicken is quite so good, but, hog manure is very good supplements to go back into the ground. Um, but, hey, it has to be dealt with. An’ it’s the best way. It’s bio-degradable- we put it back out there on the field and we just, like, recycle it around and around and around. It goes through life cycles, so, we have no problem with that. Saves us a little bit of money too. ‘Cause what he puts back out on the field, he doesn’t have to buy in fertilizer. ‘Cause we have the fields tested every year to make sure that there’s enough, you know, enough pot ash in the, in the field to maintain that crop that we’re going to put in it and, ah, enough, ah, nitrogen- whatever it takes to raise the crop. Um...

MF: How do you test for that?

147

BS: The, um, local man that we, he deals with, that he buys his fertilizer from, comes out and takes, um, soil samples.

MF: Uh-huh.

BS: Y’know, walk over the field and take eight, ten, twelve soil samples, you know, down to, I think twelve, ten/twelve inches deep. Puts ‘em all in little plastic baggies an’ carts ‘em back to his office and runs analysis on them-

MF: Huh.

BS: -on what kind of components are in the soil to tell us that there’s too much of something, not enough of another thing. Um, so we can putever- put what ever we need onto the field to make it a real good soil, enough nutrients to plant the crop.

MF: So, you have wheat, corn, and what else?
BS: Soy beans, and hay

MF: And hay is what?
BS: Hay is the grasses th, is the green stuff thatcha bail up, that they [the animals] eat during the
winter time when-

MF: Right, but it’s what, what’s the actual plant?

BS: Umm, it’s a combination of clover, grass- mostly grasses, different kinds of grasses with a
little bit of clover mixed in. Ah, Dennis could give you the exact components of what he puts in
when he sows, sows wheat, or, um, sows grass seed. That’s one of the things he does. I don’t
know exactly what all he puts in it, but, it comes from the shop that he buys all of his other
materials from. Um, they know exactly how much to buy for whatever acreage they want.
[laughs]

MF: Hmm.

BS: Yeah, it’s a real mathematical calculation sometimes.

MF: What about pesticides and stuff like that?

BS: Um, he uses pesticides on the crops just to help them produce better, so we, one, make sure
we have enough, like, corn to, um, enough corn to feed the animals, because most of the corn
and hay and, well, we sell, we sell the wheat. But the corn and hay stay on the farm. I mean-

MF: Right.

BS: They don’t, we don’t sell ‘em, they don’t go off the farm anywhere. Um, we grind ‘em back
into feed. So the pesticides, we hav-, we do apply pesticides. Um, he was just at a certification
testing, Thursday I believe. He had to take an all-day test- an all-day class, an all-day test to
make sure that he knows exactly what kinds of pesticides are out there, how they’re supposed to
be used, how they’re supposed to be applied, how much you put on per acre, and that sort of
thing.

MF: Umm-hmm.

185

BS: Um, he has to do that once a year.