

2-24-2001

Interview with Fred and his mother, Ruth Smella

Jenny Lawton

Fred Smella

Ruth Smella

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Recommended Citation

Lawton, Jenny; Smella, Fred; and Smella, Ruth, "Interview with Fred and his mother, Ruth Smella" (2001). *Interviews*. 26.
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Accession number: ELFS-JCL-A022401.B

Researcher's name: Jenny Lawton

Event: Interview with Fred and his mother, Ruth Smella

Place: at their home in Walhonding

Jenny Lawton: So how long have you been gardening?

Fred Smella: Since, intermittently at least -- but when I was a kid, when I grew up, we had a family garden. In fact, we had a huge garden at one time. And I can remember as a little kid not thinking anything about it: taking the salt shaker out and pick tomatoes and eat them, right there. Or apples. That's just the way it was.

Ruth Smella: One year, we had watermelon, remember that?

FS: And pumpkins and all sorts of things. And corn, we'd pick corn on the cob... and do all that stuff. So when you grow up with it it's rather natural -- you don't look at as some experiment -- it's just the way things are -- it's what you do in the summer.

RS: We don't grow corn anymore down here -- we did at first, but the >coons and the groundhogs...

FS: It's quite a struggle. In fact, with being out in the country, there are a lot of animals around - hungry, looking for something to eat. So it's a challenge -- when we first put the garden out here, they would devastate it. And when I first put a fence up, I had only a 3-foot fence. And you think, **A**Well, that'll keep rabbits and it'll keep things out. **@** Well, the raccoons can climb right up a pole -- they can climb up anything. And groundhogs will climb over that fence -- you don't think about groundhogs climbing but I saw it -- climb up that fence, he gets to the top and it starts to bend over. And they would go in and they would take one bite out of a tomato and go to another one. So it's...it wouldn't be so bad if they would eat two or three tomatoes. But they would just ruin a whole bunch. So then you have to say, **A**Ok. **@** and devote a little more time and labor to defend it against more critters. So you get a higher fence and make it more sturdy and you have to make sure the gate is closed all the time. It's like a bird-feeder -- the racoons will come and knock the birdfeeder to get to the seeds, because they'll eat anything.

RS: You didn't sit where you could see the birdfeeder. A lot of people sit so where they can watch the birdfeeder.

FS: It's hanging around outside that window there. So, you know, we had to scare them off. The dog is a pretty good watchdog so -- she'll smell things before it gets close to hear so she'll go, **A**Rrrr... **@** And then we're like, **A**Oh, there they are, **@** and they'll jump down and run away...

JL: That's great -- what's your dog's name?

FS: Amber-colored, so we called her Amber.

JL: So Amber is really the best way to keep your vegetables from being eaten by other animals?

FS: Yeah, she's definitely chased off deer. It's funny, as my mom will say, we used to see deer around here all the time -- because they're so plentiful. She said, **A**I wonder why we don't see deer anymore? **@** Well, that's because every time you let her out, she patrols the perimeter of the property and she'll chase out anything that's out there.

[more discussion of Amber defending the property from deer, Amber's acquisition]

FS: She's also a mole hunter -- I don't know if you know about moles -- but moles eat the roots so they can do damage in the garden as well as anything else. Do you know what moles are?

JL: I've seen them in cartoons...

FS: Moles are like chubby mice. And there are different ones -- in fact there are voles - V-O-L-E-S - and they have kind of like webbed feet because they're digging dirt all the time, so it's more effective for moving dirt. And they burrow but just beneath the grass. So they go along kind of at the root line and they make tunnels. And for them, it's a tunnel they can run down - except when you look at it, all you see is the dirt puffed up in a little row -- and it's funny how they just curve all over. Some is more productive than others for grubs and other things they need. So you go out and see it in the spring. Well, she goes out and has her nose about a millimeter off the ground, and she smells them. And she'll go out smelling -- she can smell them, she knows where they're tunneling. And she'll get to where the mole is actually working and she pounces on it, digs it out, and plays with it. She plays with it like a cat -- have you ever seen a cat...

JL: Yeah.

[more discussion of Amber]

JL: So you're able to do it with fences... not with pesticides.

FS: Yeah, we don't use pesticides because, well because it's not a good idea to have pesticides around. We'll spray the garden, with water.

[discussion of the family property and the junkyard]

RS: Now all the grandchildren are all grown up, we don't have any little kids now. Fred says, **A**Well mom, if we put some of these raised beds out here, then you could get at things real easy, and we don't need all that grass. @

FS: When I was a kid, our garden was, I don't know, 50 feet by 100 feet -- it was a good sized. But a rectangular-shaped garden. And now you come a tractor till it up, or you use a garden tiller, you set out your rows and plant them. Well, the reality is that in the spring, early summer, you get a lot of rain. So if you want go out and pick some onion or lettuce or whatever, you sink in the mud. And not only are you leaving those tracks and messing it up, but you get all muddy. And so, if you make a narrow bed, you can reach across from any side, and you're walking on grass so it doesn't matter if it... you can go out and pick onions or radishes or whatever, regardless of that rain. So, it seemed more functional to have it like that. We still have a rectangular-shaped garden, not that big. But we still plant some things that we're not going into frequently and. Of course, we do have snow peas that you have to pick, seems like one every day or one every other day.

RS: You know I told you how we always put a row of snow peas and we had fencing up - they climb up on the fencing, so you pick it real easy. And the beans, the green beans -- I said it's nice if you have plenty of room if you maybe plant to rows of green beans and wait a couple weeks but...

FS: Stagger them.

RS: Before it grows -- so you pick a row or two at a time.

FS: We never had snow peas as a kid -- but once we... Chinese cooking, they're good in stir-fry and things. Of course, my sister likes them with dip -- fresh vegetables and a dip and they're good that way too.

JL: When did you start to put in those flatbeds?

RS: I guess raised beds is what you'd call them. Well, let's see...

FS: Well, we had flower beds way back when and...

RS: But is it 2 years or 3 that we've had...

FS: Oh it=s more than that - yeah. The, um... what we try to do is try to add one every year. But I think, this is at least the third year for the square boxes in front of the house -- and those first square raised beds out there were before that. So probably 4 years.

RS: There are two right in front of the house -- those are for our tropicals -- we have some of the big plants like [??] and a palm. And the one year, we actually took them out of their pots and planted them in there. Now that fall, I had to dig them up and repot them -- that was work and they had big roots.

FS: It wasn=t so much fun - so we just stick the pot out. The idea is that you=ll want them to get sun, and these big spruce trees... when we moved down here, they weren=t as big as the house. And now they=re like three-times as big. Well, they provide shade until late afternoon, really until the evening until the sun is low enough to get under them. So those tropical plants are not getting burned off - they get bright light, but no intense sun. So we pot them so they have something to hold the moisture and to give them outdoor climate - and they do well -- so we just dig the pot up, because some roots come out of the bottom, but it doesn=t really hurt to cut those off.

JL: How did you learn all the practical aspects of gardening? To build raised beds and such -- the tricks of the trade - how did you pick that up?

FS: I guess the idea of the raised beds were mine. It started because mom has been a member of the garden club and interested in plants my whole life, probably her whole life -- and you=ve been in the garden club for 40 years, 30 years or something like that. And so she knows plenty about gardening and plants. But, the engineering or the labor aspect of it, or building something she doesn=t do. So, it was always irritating to me to see that she would have flower beds and, of course, the work is in the maintenance. Everybody loves to plants some seeds and to pick flowers -- same with vegetables. Everybody loves to plant a seed and eat the vegetable. But of course the work of keeping them healthy and weeding them and all that is, for a lot of people, not fun. So it becomes a challenge. My irritation at her always saying, **A**Oh, they=re all getting crowded out by weeds. **@** And you look at the flower bed and... she=s certainly has always had things to plant. So she=ll plant things here and there - and from her point of view its, **A**Where am I going to plant this? Well, it=d look nice over there, **@** so she will. But, from a maintenance point of view you=re saying, **A**Uh-huh -- I have to mow around there, I have to weed-whack... **@** The maintenance of the place is a factor, at least as equal of a factor as how will it look there.

RS: [anecdote of husband weed-whacking plants away along with weeds]

FS: My irritation in seeing plants not thriving because they=re being crowded out by weeds, the reality that there are far too many to maintain, and me not wanting to go pull weeds everyday... you have to find another way of accomplishing something. So, she understands the theory of using mulch and smothering out weeds and having your plants...

RS: There was an aspect of the mulch that...[muffled]

FS: So it was irritating. So I said, **A**You can=t just plant something there in the yard. It has to have a surrounding, it has to have protection so the grass doesn=t encroach on it. And so the weeds don=t grow into it. Otherwise, your enjoyment is diminished, the plant isn=t going to thrive, and the maintenance is a pain in the butt! So, we started putting surrounds. And we had bunches of locust trees -- and locust trees can be annoying, because they have thorns on them. And they=re very sharp, woody and they don=t break. It=s like raspberries can be very annoying because they stick to your clothes, but they don=t cut you --

so you have to watch what you're doing and wear heavy gloves and knock all those off. But, it's wood that, for centuries, farmers have used for fence building. Because it's a very hard wood -- it lasts, it's durable. So we actually it's probably been... 25 years since this red building was built out here. And we started out building a greenhouse, and I cut the locust woods. So all of these structural supports to hold them are locust woods that we cut here. So all of the vertical supports are buried in the ground and they come up and there's a tie on top of it and you build a roof from there. So the layer was converted to metal plant building. So we used them - we used to have a fence out there and posts and they were all locusts that we grew. So I thought, we can also use them horizontally - so I started cutting them and laying them horizontally to enclose the bed. Well, the engineering of it is you have two choices -- you can bury it so that the bed is equal level to the ground, which isn't really much of a benefit -- or, elevate it. And the part about elevating it is that it's easier to reach. I mean, when you're bending over, you're bending over six inches less or so -- instead of touching your toes. It also gives you something to put your knee on, or to lean out -- you have some functional surface. It also helps drainage. You can tell, if you look from the road, this whole area going 229 is a high ridge -- the ground slopes both ways. The river is over there, so the ground going that way flows down to the Kokosing. Over here, it flows the other way -- so this is like the watershed line. It's a crescent line. Well, from the road, the land moving this way slopes down from the road. So if you're not the highest point around, the water runs down hill. So in the spring it would be soggy out here. So in order to make it more functional you have to keep it out of the soggy ground. So also, if you elevate it, you keep it out from being too wet during the spring -- and you can control it by watering it. Of course, there's another chore, but if you have a way of doing it, you can accomplish two things. So for all these reasons I started enclosing our beds in locus.

RS: He used locus logs first, and then you used planks.

FS: When you're in a rural area and you're trying to make things as economical as possible, you use everything and nothing goes to waste, sort of. I saw someone throwing out these pillars that they used for guard-rails -- they had replaced them and these old ones, some of them were very good, some of them not-so-good -- but to hold dirt in them, they didn't have to be good. So we used a lot those -- and they were treated with salt - the same as treated lumber. There are also old railroad ties - I used railroad ties on a couple of those beds. They are probably safer to use on flowers than for vegetables because of the chemicals used to process them.

JL: [brief banter on garden's aesthetics]

FS: Thanks. It is interesting how you do develop a creation -- and you add to it. So it alters from year to year. And it's always been a challenge because every year, now, mom gets new things. Whether it's from exchanges from garden clubs or at regional meetings -- or from her friends who have a plant that she's never had -- and she's always given away plants. If someone comes to her, a neighbor comes over and she's always like, **A**Come over and see what you like. **@** And so she'll dig up some of her plants to share. And grandkids and nieces and everybody. And so a lot of the plants will reproduce -- some from seed and some just spread and fill in. So you can divide them. It's like, she had one bed out here that was put in many years before, a raised bed, and it didn't have mulch. And so, without mulch, the weeds come up -- and I got tired of looking at it because, if you're looking at day lilies, you want to see day lilies -- you don't want to see weeds. So I say, **A**I'm going to rework that and use mulch. **@** And so, you don't

appreciate how they=ve grown or reproduced until you start to dig them up. But it isn=t as though there were individual plants. It was a mass that were so compact!

RS: Lots of roots. And he would dig out a size of a bushel basket.

[more discussion of this anecdote about bountiful day lilies, and their donation to the Children=s Garden]

FS: Yes, you can=t keep every weed out, but you want to reduce it so that your day is not filled everyday with pulling weeds.

JL: Oh my gosh yeah.

FS: So we use mulch. And I got the idea when mom took me over to see the hasta lady. There is a woman that raises hastas as a hobby but also a side-line, because she did sell hastas. I don=t know -- she had 140 different varieties.

RS: Over there at Apple Valley? Because see over at Apple Valley - they have this tour - they have been having it every year for at least 3 or 4 years. And one of these stops is this lady who grows... and she has a lot of shade. Big trees, all kinds of hastas.

FS: Because hastas do better in the shade.

RS: So yes.

FS: Hastas have become a very popular plants. The leaves are sort of showy -- there=s no bloom to speak of -- a little tiny flower.

RS: [looking in a seed catalogue] The hastas.

JL: I think I=ve seen them...

FS: Usually they usually have nice broad leaves.

RS: For instance, there=s one.

JL: Oh ok.

FS: And so, it=s like -- how do they get so many varieties of them.

[banter on varieties of hastas]

FS: So this lady had leaves -- all these trees produce leaves - and instead of burning them, they mulched them. Y=know, you just leave them work and you just turn them over now and then. And you get leaves that are fairly well matured -- very dark and starting to rot or whatever.

RS: [anecdote about man who grows onions from mulch]

FS: My uncle Gene does the same thing -- and used the landfill out in Richland County. So I=m saying, damn. If it=s free, then let=s try it. So we started using it. I suppose it=s from city pick ups. At Kenyon, when they pick up leaves around town with the machine, they haul them out to that big field just west of the hill in Gambier, right above 229. So when you go to Mt. Vernon on the south side of 229, you=ll see these piles of leaves where they take them out and dump them off. So that farmer is getting mulch to mix in -- every time he plows in the spring, they=re getting mixed into the soil and helping enrich it. But in Mt. Vernon, a machine comes around -- well, the machine, as it=s sucking them up, it sucks them up because there=s a vacuum and a fan, so some of them will get disintegrated or cut up in that process. But then they haul them out to the landfill. They have a forklift or a front-loader out there. And so periodically, they move them and turn them over - which helps to keep them working instead of... because you know, you can have a pile but the rain will never get to the middle. And so, if you don=t turn them, they=re not all getting air or water or anything. But so every time we would use that as a project -- go get a load of leaves and come back. And every spring we=d get a load of dirt and build another bed. But after she replanted that -- if you can put down a layer that=s probably three inches thick, you smother out anything underneath it. So you water it well, but then normally the

sun and rain and all are drying out just the top. And so, underneath, it=s holding moisture. So it=s good for plants because the dirt isn=t drying out. The plant=s not drying out. So when you look at it, on the surface, the leaves will turn light grey, because they=re very dry during the summer. But the soil is not drying out -- so you=re holding moisture and that=s good.

JL: Oh, that=s good.

FS: Yeah, that=s protecting the plants and the roots and everything else. [tells how this process allowed them to grow leaks during the winter]

RS: Well, he=s going to make a new bed this spring. I sent for these rhubarb roots -- and they=re all in this box, square out here. They=ve got to be dug out and planted -- they=re getting too big for that box.

JL: Would you say you get a gardening bug? When you start with one thing you=ll start adding more and more...

RS: I guess that would be one. I think that most people, when they get started...

FS: It is interesting because there is some sort of instinct, or connectedness that gardeners have that not everybody has. I think of people of people who are nurturers being able to grow plants. And a lot of people have friends [for whom] everything dies. You buy them a plant, it dies.

From their point of view, because it=s a mysterious process, or because they get something, they don=t know what it is. But from my perspective, you=re either a nurturer or you=re not.

Y=know and nurturing isn=t applicable in only one area -- it=s sort of a generality. It=s the way you do things. People who are perceptive to other peoples= needs or concerns or whatever, and are helpful to them are the same way with plants. So, they=re more in tune -- they=re paying attention and they aren=t just saying, **A**Gee, I=d better water that, **@** and dump a bunch of water on it and leave it sit in water, because they know it needs water but have no clue as to how you have to do it. Or, if they=re not interested, they might read something or be told something, and not retain it. They=re just not interested. So I guess there has to be that aspect -- I mean, you have to have some connectedness - you have to have some appreciation -- whether it=s because it=s a living thing or it=s because you like it. And if you once feel that or perceive that, then I think that grows -- and the appreciation will grow. And also probably the extent of your interest in plants grows. But I think without that, you=d probably never reach any additional level. I think with kids it=s important for them to have that connectedness early. I know when I was a kid, it was, at home, mom was like, **A**Well, that=s why we raised it. **@** So, you can pick apples off the apple tree -- because that=s why we planted an apple tree. Or we could go out and eat tomatoes because that=s why we planted them. My grandmother, her mother on the other hand, had a large family, with 10 kids, and by the time I came along, I was just one the annoying grandkids. [anecdote of mean grandmother in her garden]

FS: When she [his mother] became a grandparent, nothing changed. She would take the little kid out and say, **A**Here. **@** Hold them out so they could pick the apple. Or **A**Here, try a blueberry and see what it takes like. **@** That=s why she grew them. It=s like, you want to share that. And I think that perspective, some people don=t have.

RS: Most gardeners, I think, want to share. For the most part.

FS: But grandma=s gardening was, I think, the kids= job. Yeah, it wasn=t anything she was connected to or appreciative of. So the sharing aspect -- it was like, it was one of the chores that had to be done and, to conserve as a parent who had 10 kids, you need to not squander a damn thing. So it became a control issue, a limiting issue, rather than a sharing thing. So I think it

would be nice if the grandkids could also get an appreciation. I like to see that they can go pick blueberries and eat them, and nobody is yelling at them -- and they get to see how things grow - get to go out in the garden and pick a cucumber or pick things and eat them -- and see how they come from. It=s kind of like, I grew up in this rural area but there are kids who don=t know where milk comes from. And so, it=s kind of interesting that kids around here... a lot of them are milk, dairy producers and they knew. When I grew up I worked on a farm -- and it was a dairy farm. So I got to see all that -- and also, since I worked there during the day, when we stopped for lunch, it=s too inconvenient to go away 3 or 4 miles to eat and come back. So the family would have the workers stay there and eat - me and the other kid that helped them. And the milk was whole milk, fresh milk. It wasn=t processed or pasteurized -- it wasn=t from a store, it was from their cows. My first recollection is that it was very different. **A**What is this?!**@** But it was very good. And if you=re a kid growing, you don=t worry about cholesterol or fat or anything else. And, of course, when I was a kid, I didn=t have an ounce of fat on me but... And lots of beef, because they raised steers, they raised pigs... so what you ate was extremely good, no chemicals, no hormones or were injected with things or artificial things put in their seed -- they were fed what they grew - they would grow grain and corn... and grain, wheat.

RS: [anecdote about farm living]

FS: Right, a very different appreciation. So if you grow up with vegetables, if you grow up with those things, it gives you an appreciation of life, kind of -- where things come from. And work is part of it. And it=s important. I think it=s important for kids, that the work not be emphasized so much that they hate it. Yeah, weeds have to be tilled -- but if it=s your chore and you=re made to go do it, I think it=s real negative thing?

JL: So what did you enjoy the most about gardening when you were a kid?

FS: Eating, naturally. [laughs] The product of the work -- I think like all kids, I was real resistant in going out and hoeing. **A**Go out and hoe"-- it=s like, **A**Why don=t you go out and shoot yourself.**@** It=s like, why would anybody want to go hoe. It=s hot and it=s dirty -- but, y=know, you get an appreciation, certainly as you get older.

RS: [banter]

[more discussion of weeds and mulching]

JL: So gardening gives you an appreciation of life, is what you=re saying -- and how to make a good life for your plants.

FS: Yeah I think it=s a fundamental of life. You need things to sustain yourself -- and this is natural. This is the way it always was from the beginning. Like the principle of **A**The Little Red Hen,**@** you get what you make.

[discussion of the **A**Little Red Hen**@** fable]

FS: But I think the life part of it is seeing the whole process.

RS: Yeah, it=s hardest for kids to wait for the progress of time. But that=s part of growing.

FS: I know, when you=re 6 years old and you have to wait a week, it=s like forever.

JL: Oh yeah. I=m impatient - I don=t think I=d be a good gardener. You say that certain people have that nurturing touch -- so can certain people be gardeners?

FS: Oh, I think the capacity is there for everybody. But I think some people are instinctively nurturers, moreso than most other people. Probably everybody, if they nurtured in themselves, could develop it. But there has to be a spark - there has to be something that they are motivated by. It=s helpful to grow up around it -- but people can develop that at any point.

RS: Sometimes they just need an introduction to some of it.

FS: Yeah.

[discussion of Fred Smella=s unemployment due to health troubles]

FS: I was a social worker -- I got a masters from Case and I was a social worker. Is that a nurturing role?

JL: That=s definitely a nurturing role! I=m so amazed by the engineering mind you have. You=re able to garden and understand it in logistical terms.

FS: I enjoy that aspect of it too -- the engineering aspect. Figuring out how to do something - laying it out. So we were looking at these beds -- and there are some problems that you have when you have the wider railroad ties or the locus posts - not the least of which is that you=re wasting that much room. So, y=know, part of me [says], Acan we get a raised bed without taking that much room around it -- if it=s 6 inches wide, then you=ve lost a foot...@

[discussion of passion for building passed down through males in family and independent character of home work]

FS: So kind of, just the creation of it, I guess the architecture or the landscaping aspect of it... mom is thinking of what plants she wants and I=m thinking about how to lay it out - or about the maintenance aspect. Like, you don=t want to interfere... I can=t push a lawn-mower but I ride a riding-lawn mower -- so you don=t want to create unnecessary turns and unevenness. You want to have it... you want to be able to have a whole bunch of straight lines. And while these straight beds out here are functional, she doesn=t want everything boxy in straight lines -- she=d rather have curved lines where you can=t see everything. So we worked at laying out a lot of them that aren=t straight lines. So we worked a flower bed that encompassed a couple of smaller beds around trees to give her a lot of room. So this year when she says, AWhere am I going to plant this new plant?@ Now you have a place to plant this new plant. And they are curving shapes rather than straight lines. But these elevated beds make it easier because you can use these little mini-tillers - what she=s got is a mantice, but most of the manufacturers make them. They=re like a little toy motor and they=re only about 8 inches wide. They=re perfect for that because they=re light-weight, you can do it real easily...

RS: So you can get right in those beds with the little tiller and till the ground up.

FS: And since they=re elevated, they dry out before the surrounding ground. So in the spring, even when you have a lot of rain, you can still till it and get seeds and plants put in there early.

JL: So practical -- and you get better plants that way.

FS: When we grew tomatoes when I was a kid, part of the maintenance of the tomato plant is keeping it off the dirt, staking it up, tying it up. And when I was a kid, it was like Ahow did we have so many?@ And they would just run along the ground. So getting into them was touchy -- you don=t want to step on them. And for kids, they=re not as coordinated, even though they have littler feet -- probably a lot of the plants got stepped on. And the tomato, when you get it is, is always shaded in one side -- sitting in the dirt makes a different color than the part not sitting in the dirt. When you get a rain, the dirt is wet and holds moisture... so it=s not as good a tomato, so you have more waste and the tomatoes don=t look as pretty. But tying them up is labor intensive. So, when we started this, it was like, they sell these little cages and you can put them around... those are fine if you have one or two plants and they=re only going to get 2, 3 feet tall - those are fairly good -- you can put a stake beside it because those will not hold a real plant. It will be too heavy and it will fall over -- so you have to have something supporting that cage.

That cage is sturdy enough to hold the branches so the tomato doesn't fall off of that, but not the plant itself. So when we put these in... what we had to do to support these -- I built this structure using scrap barnwood and things - and pipe. We had this heavy steal gas pipe and we replaced it with plastic -- so I cut up the steal pipe that would be 8 or 9 feet tall to drive down as posts -- they're not going to rust off, they're just heavy steal. And then we ran horizontal pieces about every 18 inches. So 18 inches off the ground was the first one, then you're talking about 3 feet, then 4-and-a-half feet or 5 feet high. And our plants would get taller than that -- they'd get 6 feet tall.

JL: That's big.

FS: The branches have to be tied up or they'll fall down. So we had tomato plants in those boxes out there, the square ones. And then that one long bed, that's a lot of time.

JL: Oh my gosh.

FS: Tell me about it. Y=know, it isn't a vocation. If we were doing this as a commercial operation, we could get someone to do it and use it to sell tomatoes. But that was never our intention. So you don't have so many -- mom wants to give, everybody that comes by, **A**Let me give you some veg...**@** My sister, my brother, nieces, nephews... and that's fine. Except, if your day is filled with terrible, annoying work, it's a successor. Especially as we're getting older, let's keep it within reason. Yes, give some tomatoes away, but let's not have 30 hours of work a week in order to give away some tomatoes. Because tying them up, we've tried tearing up sheets or rags into strips, about 18 inches long, and you tie them around these horizontal pieces and around the plant.

RS: Let me see if I can find one of the albums and show you a picture of one of the ones that was so big. [discussion of photos of past springs, random banter of flowers]

JL: So when does you work start?

RS: Well, it starts about now... [more discussion of missing photos]

[side B]

JL: [banter about not being **A**connected**@** because from a city]

FS: It's true, I mean, if you're never exposed to it and you live in a metropolitan area

JL: Yeah.

FS: what other opportunity do you have?

JL: Do you sell any of the things that you grow?

FS: We have, except never by design. We have set out our tomatoes to sell. But that we've every had any commercial interest at all, we don't. It's just that we got to the point where really, all the tomatoes that she was giving away, this last year (not typical) but I had planted way too many. And it was just too much work and we had all of these tomatoes and it was like, **A**Well now what are we going to do?**@** So, when we had this farmers= market on the square we said, **A**well there=s an opportunity to makes something.**@** And we sold them.

RS: We even had a few cucumbers at first.

FS: And we had peppers - I planted a bunch of peppers -- and we like hot peppers, Hungarian wax peppers. My father=s Hungarian and he=s always liked hot peppers.

RS: [more photos]

FS: We had some tomatoes that weighed two pounds? This huge tomatoes. Now those make

great sandwiches. Just a thick slice of a beefsteak on toast, it's an incredible. Most of our lunches during the summer are tomato sandwiches. It's kind of a challenge to get some early. Around here, tomatoes aren't ripe until the beginning of August. And your summer is, y'know there's only a third of it left, especially kids who are starting school - even college, some of them - the end of August -- it's like, AGee we only have 3 weeks until the end of summer?@
JL: Exactly.

FS: So, it's frustrating -- so I've tried getting early tomatoes. One way of doing that is getting some of the cherry tomatoes because it matures early and it keeps producing. So those are great for salads and things, for popping some in your mouth when you're out there working. But, you can't make a sandwich out of them, or anything.

JL: No.

FS: So, we try to grow some plants early -- we use grow-lights. Mom has a lot of house plants, but they don't do well with the heat in the house during the winter, and so the basement is the coolest spot. So I built some shelves in the basement and she's got grow-lights -- because without it, they used to winter over so poorly. You bring them up in the spring and they're spindly and they just didn't do well - they need light.

JL: You have those here? In the basement? Wow.

FS: So they come upstairs looking like they've been in the light all the time - or in the summer. In fact, some of her blooming plants continue to bloom. Of course, you don't see them everyday so it's hard to remember to go down and manage them - water them and... each one of them has a different container so whole problem in and of itself having a proper container under it to hold water. So those that have a bigger container hold more water - so you don't have to water as often as those that have almost none. So it would be much easier if we could buy standard containers.

JL: Yeah. So there are plants down there right now?

RS: Yes. So when the plants are in bloom, that's when you really like them -- the azalea, the rhododendron. Now the new little...

[more discussion of photos]

JL: Even though nothing is growing right now, the garden still looks very beautiful because of those raised beds and the chairs...

RS: You can tell that there has been an effort in laying out something, I guess. Yeah, we put a bench out there and I put another one out there down lower because... it's nice. My brother gave me this poem that was about appreciating. It's like, y'know you can appreciate gardening and you can appreciate making something look pretty, but you need to also just absorb it or be in it. Yes, the hoeing, the cultivating and the planting, those are good in themselves. But you need to sit down and just enjoy looking at it and being there. So yeah -- we put, I had this old crock that's cracked (so it's not good as a crock) sitting out there, but it's big enough to sit on -- it's huge and that and a couple of benches, so when you're out there, you can sit and just look at it or just enjoy it. And it's shady, because of the trees. So it does make it like a little park area. So even when she's had people out, walk around sometimes, because you know you talk -- you talk about the plants, you talk about this, and they ask questions... so it's a nice break to just sit a little and have a bench to sit on.

[banter and end of interview]