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Interview with Darel, Lela, Dan and Kim Hathaway

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**Family Farm Project
Interview with Darel, Lela, Dan, and Kim
Hathaway
Interviewers: Jamie Wilson and Greg Spaid
March 15 , 1995; 9:30-11:00 am**

Counter: 10

Conversation outside and in barn – bad recording. NOT FOR USE.

Counter: 120

Tractor starts and moves around with Lela talking underneath. Good for sound, not words.

Counter: 224

Talking in barn with sounds – cattle, birds, and chickens.

Darel: ...but when we start to try to put a living together for three families you might as well say, then we've got to really look at the numbers. And, I guess that's where we're at.

Greg Spaid: Well, its working. One of the few places where it is I think.

Darel: But, there's just continually different problems come up every day and every year, you know, we've got something, we think we've got it under handle, and a year later we're looking at it something different...

Lela: Several years ago, they came out, everybody had to have a farm plan. We worried about that, how're we going to do that, you know, we got that conquered, a lot of the environmental things you have to do any more, you know, you work with the people you have to work with, whether its the soil people or the ASC on what you're going to plant where and

you just, anymore we've got to take all those things in stride and just do it, you know. And I think that's one thing we've discovered after several years in agriculture, especially since Dan and Kim's come back. When something like that comes up, new regulation, you just have to find out about it and change what you're doing in order to do what the government says. And I don't think the government is going to totally get out of this farming, I think we've got, we're going to have to look out for the consumer, with cheap food, and they're gonna be in farming someplace along the line. I think they're still gonna set the target prices and there may not be as much programs, but they're going to be there with their finger in agriculture, because they've got to much at stake.

Greg: Would you like to see them, personally like to see them out?

Lela: I think we could farm very well without them if they didn't control exports...

Greg: If they did or didn't...

Lela: If they would stay totally out of everything and agriculture had the right people there to do the job for them, but I don't think that'll ever happen, because...

Kim: Well, you'd kinda have to do away with all the EPA rulings that they're handing down now, you know, if they're gonna get out, they gotta get totally out. They can't start, you know, its just like, we're coming up on next year, we might lose a chemical called atrazine, and if they're gonna do this that's one, a valuable tool to us, so if they're gonna do that, they're gonna have to stay totally out of everything, you know, they're still gonna have to regulate us some, but not just shove it right down our throats, you know, that's what they seem, what a lot of it seems to be doin' now...

Lela: What do you think Darel, do you think

we could farm without the government?

Darel: Well, I think that's probably the direction that we're tryin' to head right now through our marketing programs and our commodities, we're trying, I think we've realized probably that government subsidy check is not going to always be there, or in the amount that it has in years past, and its gonna have to be made up in the free market, and that's where it should be, it shouldn't be on the tax payers. It just shouldn't be there....Well, its like Kim says, that some of the regulations then will have to be relaxed a little bit, its a give and take situation...

Greg: But they take the subsidy away and they've gotta give you something back in return...

Darel: Well...

Kim: Well, just look in the past month with China coming back into the market, you know that market was taken away how many years ago Dad? They didn't give them the, you know, what is it, favored trade status...

Greg: ...most favored nation status...

Kim: Yeah, see once they take something like that away, the first thing that's hit is, you know, beans or corn, whatever they're buying. Well they've come back in the market, talkin' back and forth and how much increase have we seen just in two...two, three weeks. I mean we're talking ten, fifteen, twenty cents.

Darel: And I think that's the thing that, you know, you have to realize is that fifteen twenty years ago we didn't care if it rained in Brazil, we didn't care whether China was in the market, you never heard these things, well today when we look at marketing, you know, its a world wide market and things like this to make a difference, a big difference. The value

of the dollar, there's just all kinds of things that enter into it beyond production.

Lela: And you know, just watch them say on the television that Brazil's gonna have a big soybean market, and I'll tell you, you watch and see what happens in Chicago, I mean, those traders on Chicago, they think really, really strong on that because they've got so much invested with the people they're working for and you'll probably see it go of the limit every day as long as they think there's gonna be plenty of soybeans somewhere else, and the world market really plays a big part in what we get for our products.

Greg: We're all really interconnected these days.

Lela: Yeah...

Kim: Well, you can go down there on the DTN right now whether its raining in Brazil or not, I mean, you know, I don't know what kind of satellite, you know, system it is, but we could tell, we can pretty well pinpoint it down there right where we're standing right now, whether its sunshining or raining...And you can tell probably within two hours whether it'll being raining here or not, you know. And, you know, shoot, well five years ago you never had that tool.

Greg: And what is that?

Kim: It's called a DTN...Its like a database system, like, that we can get board of trades, you know, we can go down and see what corn is trading for right now, and I don't know how long that system's been around, how long we had, we just got the upgraded system about three years, that has the weather and now they've upgraded it even higher to where you can go to your own county, you know, I mean, you can actually see how hard its raining right where you're at, I mean, its something.

Greg: You have this here at the house?

Kim: Yeah, down there at the house, but, you know, its probably something like that, something like this new, I don't know what its called with computers, you know, where you can talk and send messages, its not quite that refined, but its got e-mail on it and, but its something like that system, its updated just, boom, boom, boom, I think its about every thirty seconds.

Greg: Do you get that through a dish or through the phone lines?

Kim: Yeah, that little dish out there and see, you can hook it up to your phone line to, it just depends on how much money you want to spend, but you can even buy cattle off of it, well the bidding goes on on it and they have that other satellite and we can turn it on and we could hear them bidding the cattle of that one time out in Texas, and you could've bought cattle right of that screen, if you wanted to, but ten years ago you'd never thought about that, even when I come into it you wouldn't...

Darel: And then the other thing here, we take a long range weather report out of California, based for this particular area right here where we're standing, this part of our county. And between the two of them you can gel this together and we actually determine a lot of our plant populations, a lot of our marketing moves according to this long range forcast.

Greg: Are they pretty accurate?

Darel: Very accurate. We've been on it goin' on what five years now...

Kim: You can mow hay by it, you know, we're not big hay farmers, but we mow hay by it, we told the one neighbor, that was kinda funny, we told him no to mow, down the road here,

and he says 'why's that?' and we says 'its gonna rain that week.' Well, he mowed, and it just rained and so he started comin' up here and asking when he should mow hay, it was kinda really funny, you know..

Darel: But a lot of times with the DTN we can track these storms out of Indiana, and it'll actually, you can almost tell how many hours you've got to do, to finish something before it reaches here. I mean we've watched them come across country a good many of times.

Lela: Well, one important thing with that weather forecasting is the type of seed corn we might use that dries down quickly, if its gonna be a cold or cool summer and we have to think about the heat units, how much the corn needs, so a lot of times that'll save us buying gas in the fall for drying the corn, and...

Greg: Are they pretty good at long range?

Darel: It is a long range report, it updates every month, six months in advance.

Greg: So, what kind of a summer are we going to have?

Darel: Well, lets not even answer that question. (laughs)

Lela: You see, farmers are great at, they're great at having this information, but have you noticed that they really don't like to tell you anything. (laughs) We wouldn't wanna share anything with you that you might share with...

Kim: We've actually had people that are planning weddings, just close friends of around, call us up as ask us what's it gonna be like this weekend. Well we had one guy up here on the back road had a graduation party for his son, he called and wanted to know what it...And we said, well you're lookin' good Saturday, but you'd better stay away from

Sunday, and by gosh it rained, you remember that Sunday, Dad, it just poured... (laughs)

Darel: It gets to be funny after a while, but...

Lela: But there are tools out there that people in agriculture can use and they're available, but I'll tell you, its much easier for people to do things like they've always done, without getting into these other things, you know, the way grandma and grandpa did it, and I think that day has come to where and we found out several years ago things have to change and we change with the times. And if you don't they're gonna eat you up.

Greg: Well, it makes me wonder, things like this technology, whether it might actually in the long run, be something that will help the individual family farmer if they can adapt to the new technology and get that competitive edge.

Counter: 420

Chicken sounds.

Pig sounds.

SIDE B: Pig sounds. Birds in the barn.