

2-24-1996

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David McCoy

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Recommended Citation

Hatton, Erin and McCoy, David, "Interview with David and Marcia McCoy" (1996). *Interviews*. 27.
https://digital.kenyon.edu/ffp_interviews/27

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Erin Hatton
Interview with David McCoy, organic dairy farmer
February 24, 1996

Today is Saturday, February 24, 12 pm. This an interview with David McCoy and Marcia McCoy.

M: What's interesting is that this farm has been in the family for 130 years, but we're the first ones to actually do the farming.

D: Well not the first ones...

M: Not the first ones but for generations. They've had tenants.

D: My dad was not a farmer, no. Well grandfather was part of the time, and part of the time he was a teacher. It has been registered with the Ohio Historical Homestead Of Ohio's Historical Society. They went to the trouble of. . . anytime you make a hundred years in one family you can do that, and my mother and father went to the trouble to prove it--you have to prove it through deeds, you can't just say it is you have to prove it. I realize history is not your baliwig here, your issue is the environment.

E: Oh that's ok.

D: That's us (shows Ohio Historical Homestead listing). There's only 2 in Knox County.

E: Really, I was wondering.

M: Someone said there may be more but they haven't done it...

D: I'm sure there are many more that are they just haven't done it. There are just two that have done it--that are official.

E: That's really interesting... So this hasn't been farmed by your family.

D: It has all except for '57 to... Even then you have to consider that papa was in partnership with those guys, he helped he just didn't do it every day. From 57 until 73, all the 60's, 3 years of the 50's and 3 years of the 70's it wasn't but other than that it has always been, somebody on my mother's side of the family.

E: Has it always been dairy?

D: There have always been dairy cows, yes. But of course, you have to understand that when people homesteaded here from England around the Civil War time, it was a typical farm: they had hogs and they had chickens, when I was here they had a lot of sheep. You didn't specialize back then, in the 1800's you had a little bit of everything, and most farms were like that. Which from a diversity standpoint is a good idea, so if the price of beef is terrible, which it is right now, then you don't have all your eggs in one basket. But now in the case of dairy, in order to be grade A, it requires specialized equipment such that you can't really afford to... well, let me rephrase that... some people do but they go under trying. We've got a lot of money wrapped up in a parlor out there and the milk tanks and the milking facility, so it's really difficult to go out and spend \$50,000 for a nice fancy combine. So our combine is not that important in the operation, it's much more important for us to have good hay making equipment than the combine. The grain part is such a minor part of our operation. The best equipment we have is our hay making equipment. And our combine is a joke. It's a 35-year old piece of...

M: And the number of days you use it...

D: Yeah, I spend day after day after day in the summer time making hay. And we may only run the combine 2 or 3 days a year. So you just don't have to... Same thing with the pick-up truck.

WE have more money wrapped up in ATVs for our intensive grazing system than we do in our pick-up truck, b/c we very seldom use the pick-up truck just in case take cattle into town, the full trailer, but we use ATV's several times a day, just moving cattle where they belong in different paddocks, feeding calves; besides that they are cheaper and more fun to operate, unless it's pouring rain; then we've been known to cheat and get in the pick-up.

M: AND the younger kids can drive the ATV.

D: Technically you're not supposed to under 16 but...

M: Not on the roads but they've been driving to get the cows in.

E: Do they help out a lot around the farm?

M: NO.

D: No they don't. It doesn't look like there are going to be any farmers in there. That's ... Part of that's the changes in our society, though. When I was a kid, when I came home from school nobody told me but it was expected that I had my own chores to do in the morning even before I went to school. I didn't actually do the milking but I did just about everything else: baled literally hundreds of thousands of square-bale when I was a kid, b/c that was before the round bale was invented, and it was the only way we had of making hay, everone just pitched in and did it. My sister, who's 2 1/2 years older than I am, spent many a day standing at the elevator baling hay and I spent many a day at the other end getting what she sent up to me.

E: So it was sort of expected then, but now...

D: Now, you know we certainly do not have a tv, but we have computers... AND it doesn't do good to force them. They do help with chores, they help feed the calves and clean up the parlor. But...

M: You can't really ask them to help with much but hay-making... except in the summer.

D: THEY do the hay raking and hay taving (?) and they do run tractors. At the kids age I had done everything. And he hasn't done any harvesting, hasn't run forest harvesters hasn't run balers, hasn't planted corn--all that kind of stuff. I had done all that at his age. And like I said, I did not intend to be a farmer. The best part of my education--I suppose I should back up--is vocational agriculture at Fredericktown High School. I took it very seriously. I was very involved with Future Farmers of America, State Officer and won a state speech contest. Now we call it "FFA", we don't say "Future Farmers of America" so I guess I was prepared to become a farmer but I didn't really intend to. I went to Ohio State to get a job--which I did do, before I came home to farm I did what they call farm consulting work for a farm coop in Pennsylvania. Primarily did the record keeping, financial record keeping for about 50 farm families, most of them dairy, in preparation for doing the taxes. And then I did the tax returns; state planning, business analysis, trying to see what was working right and what's not working right. In many cases knew more about their business than they did. So I knew what I was getting into when I came home; atleast the number pushing end of it--which is what I trained to be at, an ag-economist, at Ohio State.

E: What did you study? (indicating MARcia)

M: I studied physical therapy. I had never been on a farm.

D: She graduated from Northeastern University in Baltimore. We met in a after highschool/college career type youth group in the evangelical church when I was stationed in the Airforce out there. OTherwise I wouldn't have been in Boston. I was ROTC so I got commissioned...

E: So from being an ag-economist you decided to come home and farm?

D: Well the tenant that was here... most of the tenants were in partnership with my dad. My dad and mother owned the farms, and then they did the farming and then split the--it wasn't always

50-50, but 60-40 or whatever it was--and the last tenant... I found out before I left college, the tenant who was here was leaving and I ran into a guy, as part of my summer job in ag-econ at OHIO State, I had a job interviewing people who worked on farms, and I ran into a guy near Habannah who had brown swiss cattle, and he was on a rented farm, and he then got hooked up with father, and he paid cash for renting instead of in partnership, you know what I mean. Then he just paid a certain amount a month to rent the farm, and then was in business for himself. WHICH is what we have done. AND he was leaving, and I had that job in Penn., they had nobody and I was curious enough to see if I could do it and Im still trying to figure it out, 18 years later.

E: IT's organic now but it wasn't...

D: I did not start out organic, no. In fact I am a typical Ohio State educated establishment person who thought that people who were organic farmers had a few short of a whole deck, if you know what I mean. And came home, started farming, did everything that the establishment, the Cooperative Extension Service said. I believed them like they were the right hand of God. And the person who had been here before me--he was an older gentleman--had turned a lot of the hay ground over into corn ground, b/c you can farm ground easier and quicker with corn than you can making hay. Which is understandable when you are an older person, not wanting to handle the hay, he was still milking cows. So when we came home I wanted to get the farm back in rotation. Do you know what I mean by rotating crops. (Yes.) WELL he had gotten everything pretty well out of rotation so that we needed to get more ground back into hay, and so I came home the first year and spent a small fortune on alfalfa seeds, trying to get this farm back in. Well, what I didn't understand, I had never done it before, is that is you apply certain kinds of chemicals alfalfa won't grow for several years b/c it's designed to kill alfalfa. So we spent a lot of money and the alfalfa didn't take. And so in desperation--we sowed all this from the very spring we came home and it didn't take, and of course we needed this for feed for our cattle, we were in dire straits--so in desperation we went back in in August and tried again with no-till. And the accepted, proper way to do it back then was to go rent a sprayer, get your license and get what they call Paraquat, which is a burn-down chemical--you go out and spray it and it turns the whole earth brown. I had had pesticide training in vo-ag and done demonstrations on it, had handled chemicals when i was in high school, and didn't bat an eye about it. But when I sat down and read the label on Paraquat, and I had my license and had passed the tests and knew the stuff backwards and forwards, I'm a good student, I read the label and I came in--Marcia can attest to this--I sat down and said "There's got to be a better way. This is idiotic!" I went out and did it anyway, didn't have any other alternative, burned the field down with chemicals, put the alfalfa in and a beautiful crop. BUT! Let me tell you the rest of the story. The hay from that field my cattle did not like. And the old brain started kicking in gear. So when Rex Spray came to talk to me about joining the NFO, I skidding him on the way out the door...

E: NFO?

D: Yeah, National Farmers Organization--a rather radical group of people who tried to establish their own price for their products, rather than being price takers. It's an excellent idea, but farmers are so blasted independent that it never worked. But anyway, they came and tried to convert me to NFO, and I told them I'd listen but wouldn't bite, which I didn't. But I had heard that they were into this crazy way of farming, so I was prime, I was looking. You know, there's got to be a better way. And literally did it cold turkey. I realized what they were saying. I was kind of their primadonna for a while, b/c here was the establishment kid who went the opposite way, turned around 180 degrees the other way and never looked back.

E: How many years had you done it...?

D: Really just the first season. We have really been... It's a long hard struggle, because that transition period to try to get your farm away from chemicals to convert it back to a natural way takes a couple years. And what I did was... I was very discouraged, it took me 3 or 4 years to get the rotation back to where I wanted it. And I was pretty discouraged, we weren't making much money, I was working my tail off. And uhm, I'm not sure I can tell this without crying but... one spring I had finally, I was trying to do everything like the Sprays were, and I had finally bought an old off-set disk which is what they did their primary tillage with, and the 2nd strip up here by the house I had finally gotten to the place where I could start plowing down an alfalfa crop to plant corn, it was about lunchtime and I had gotten the disk to make one round to make sure everything worked, and then I jumped off the tractor and started running in the house, and this is after 3 or 4 years of struggle, trying to get it to organic, and I stopped dead in my tracks. I'd been on the tractor that morning doing the disking, and then I stopped and I simply smelled a smell I hadn't smelled since I was a little boy--and that's the smell of tilled soil that hasn't been chemicaled. And since that day I've never looked back. It's crazy, but the food you eat could be a lot better if we did not have the cheap food policy in this country. Now I'm going to start sounding like Gene Logsdon, but there's no excuse for farming the way we do in this country. The good Lord designed the system out there of rotation and natural fertilization that doesn't set any records on yields but produces higher quality food. And I'm sitting here today and I don't have to apologize to anyone, I produce nature's most perfect food, nature's most perfect way. What comes out of our tank out there can't get any better. There's no chemicals in it, and as far as I'm concerned that if everyone in this country drank the milk that comes from this farm they would be healthier people. But you walk into a meeting of the establishment today and say that, you'd be laughed out of the room, b/c they are totally convince that... most of the establishment today is on an egotrip for more production. And if you understand anything about biology, biology has only so much to give. When you start cranking the production up, the quality goes down. The Average cow in this country used to be, when I was a kid, 8 or 9 thousand pounds of milk per cow a year, and now we're over 16,000 over the whole country. There's people producing 30,000 lbs--the average is from cows. And you can't get people drinking it. It sits on shelves on 12 or 15 days in a plastic container, and by the end of that time it tastes like plastic, for obvious reasons. If we sold fresh milk in glass bottles from farms that used the natural process today, we'd be healthier people. I think it's ironic that our milk actually ends up at the Tamarack Farm, which is in north Ohio and is owned by the Kroger Co. And I think it's funny--this is not very good advertising, I hate put this on tape--but I think it's interesting today that it's called "Kroger Food and DRug" b/c to me, if you eat our food, the way we produce food in this country, eventually you are going to eat drugs. In other words, if you get on a chemical system, the only way you can keep going is to keep adding more and more powerful chemicals; if you get on an organic system, it will perpetuate itself. You don't need to keep adding more and more fertilizer b/c it is a natural system. It's like the difference between paying interest on a loan and gettin paid interest on your savings. Each year in a chemical system you have to add a little bit more b/c you break down the natural system a little bit more and it fights back and tries to build up resistance. Each year on a natural system it gets just a little bit better, just like getting paid interest. Part of the reason why it's such a struggle for farmers is that they are on their own system, they are going the wrong way, they're on the wrong track. They're trying to say that mankind is stronger and bigger than nature. Well the best illustration I can think of that is to take you up in a small airplane into a thunderstorm--and if you survive, I think I could convince you that you were'nt in charge. I'm not here to tell you who is, but I can tell you that you were'nt.

Even though you may have had the best airplane and the best training in the world, if you get in high enough wind shear it's going to tear the airplane to pieces, no matter how well it's engineered, no matter how good you can fly. But I'm getting ahead of myself--I have written a book. What I'm actually doing is sharing with you some of the ideas from the book. Gene Lodgson has agreed to do the preface to it, I just haven't gotten a publisher yet. I have developed a green manure seeder that establishes a green manure while you're row-crops are maturing, in other words I've done it with corn. Knee-high on the 4th of July you can go in with my seeder and sow a clover and maybe a grass. And when you harvest the corn, you've got this green manure cover crop growing over winter, and then in the spring when you go to till the ground to establish your next crop, you have your own fertilizer for only a few dollars an acre. And I have this seeder patent-pending for both gardeners and a bigger unit for farmers. The book that I've written simply explains the how-to and the why, the philosophy behind the idea. What I've just said are a couple of the illustrations I used in the book. I have not been able to find a publisher, and have not been able to find a manufacturer for the machine. Not for lack of trying. Well I've tried harder to find a manufacturer than a publisher, but Gene has read the book. He agreed with it enough that--he volunteered, I didn't ask him--he would write the preface to it. It's up to you, I don't have a copy of the manuscript, but you would understand me more thoroughly if... the book is not just technical, there is some technical economics in it, but it is primarily directed to people like you who do not fully understand agriculture. And much to Marcia's disagreement, I belabored quite a bit so that you can understand it. But I add a lot to it from a philosophical standpoint. Like I said, when I was in high school I was a state officer of Future Farmers of America, and in that position one of your jobs is to go to mother/father/student banquets involved in the vo-ag program and speak around the state. You're 17 years old and a lot of the audience is old enough to be your parents and suddenly you realize that you're in a predicament--you don't have any wisdom. You're supposed to stand up and say something intelligent, and so you cheat. You start collecting quotes. And it's been my most endearing hobby. And I have injected a lot of my philosophical quotes into the manuscript.

M: That's why Gene Lodgson liked it.

D: Yeah. It's not just seeding rates and economics. It's also why we should do what we are doing. That we are going the wrong way. The way we're farming is we're losing our humanity. We need to get our humanity back into it, we need to put culture--Gene would say--back into agriculture.

E: Are you familiar with Wendell Berry?

D: Oh yes, I've read everything he has written. I'm a Wendell Berry guy. I just come at it from my own point of view, which is a little different from Wendell Berry and Gene Lodgson b/c neither one of them has ever farmed for a living, if I may say. They're both really writers with farming backgrounds. I don't know if we can get a copy of it, if you want to read it. The English is not necessarily correct, it's just a manuscript. But it would... several of the people who read it were mad at me b/c I did not specifically say who my audience was. Well, the problem is that my inventions can go from the smallest gardener to the biggest farmer, and so it's difficult to write a book b/c you've got anywhere from very technically-knowlegdeable people to people who don't know anything about gardening at all. And so I tried to cover the whole thing and in the process, some think, I screwed up the whole manuscript, which I may have. This invention is patent-pending. And could be very useful if we could get somebody to make it.

M: Especially in 3rd world countries.

D: That's actually my motivation. I'm not telling you the whole story. Earlier I talked about MCC and Nigeria. I never go to go, I'm not an engineer by training, but I'm an ag-engineer by birth, if

you know what I mean. I'm very mechanically inclined, I've made half of my own farm machinery. And I developed this seeder.... The big problem in agriculture is that we can produce till it comes out of our ears, the problem is that we can't make any money. In fact that's the first sentence of the book. B/c my training is economics and what I was supposed to do when I went to Nigeria is help the farmers improve their implements; and of course I never got to do that, and so when I designed and built my own seeder for farmers, I was coming in one day from work and I walked by our garden and suddenly I realized that the unit needs to be downscaled for the itinerant farmers of the world. And so I did. The unit I made for gardeners--my purpose, and this is crazy but my dream is to get somebody--Troybuilt is who I'd like to get, do you know who Troybuilt is? They make garden tillers, the world's biggest marketer of garden tillers--and of course this would be like love and marriage, they grow this green manure crop and then they need this tiller in the spring to till it back into the ground. And so I'm trying to get these tiller companies to make the seeder, b/c it kind of goes hand in hand with organic gardening. What I'd like to do is get somebody like them to make it and then I would get the royalties, and then what I would do is train somebody like you who are going into the Peace Corps (and incidentally, the PC has information on this, whether or not they'll do anything with it or not, but they have been given the info on it, the seeder) then I teach you and you would teach the people wherever you're going how to use it. The problem is, it's a very long-term process. You heard me just say that I was farm kid, and I was farming where I grew up, I knew the land, and it still took me 4 years, a very hard struggle to get this place turned around. I almost quit. I had alternatives. I have a fancy resume, I could do other things. So what I'm saying is that if you go somewhere for 2 years in the Peace Corps, I'm sure you could pull it off in 2 years. That's one of the problems in organic farming and one of the problems with rural farm families out here; it's not like putting something in a microwave oven and punching a button. What we do out here, if you make a mistake it takes a year to see it. And then within that year you've got to come up with a solution and apply it, and if you don't then you've lost another year. And that's very slow compared to going into that 386 computer in there and punching a few buttons.

M: And that's why the chemicals are so popular...

D: Because you can get instant results and there's no doubt that it will work. There are short term solutions but they don't solve any longterm problems. They do work, don't get me wrong. Actually I'm not that much against the chemicals. I think the greater problem is the commercial fertilizers, kills the bacterial life of your soil. To take the establishment... you see, today the way we do it is we go out and we soil test--analyze the soil, find out what we need to do to grow the crop we want to grow, we set our goals and we go out and buy the fertilizer to do it. In most cases it works--production-wise. Economically, nobody ever considers it, and in most cases it's economic suicide. In other words, the ag economists at Ohio State cannot talk to the engineers; and the engineers can't talk to the agronomists, and the dairy scientists. They're in little cloisters everywhere, and they never talk to each other. I just had a communication here about my seeder from an agronomist out in Iowa who found out what I'm doing. And I told her, "we don't need to know how to grow more corn, we need to know how to make any money at it. My problem is that you don't know how to talk to the economists. You're on some ego-trip trying to produce more corn per acre. We don't need more corn per acre! We need to know how to make maoney at the corn we are growing." It was like water off a ducks back; she's probably out there swearing at me right now. But we don't communicate with each other. And so to take philosophy...the ag establishment has been with this soil test, set your goals, go out there and farm for production--only for production--and then they come back in and say they didn't make any

money. I say the reason you didn't make any money is you set the wrong goals. If you'd set goals to make economics--to make profit--rather than for production, you could've done it. The point is that agriculture today has been on an ego trip to produce more per acre, get more milk per cow. The problem with that is, that it's never... with that as your goal, you're never going to make any money b/c you've set the wrong goal. In other words, where it's most efficient to produce, economically, where you can make the most profits, is always at a lot lower production than trying to set high production goals. Because when you set high production goals, you start to become very inefficient. But you can't convince people of that b/c you can read magazines in agriculture--there's a huge amount of material out there--but none of it ever addresses the real issue and that is economics.

E: It seems that they are starting with the assumption that they won't make money so they have to produce more.

D: The best joke we have in agriculture is that they have 2 brothers and they produced a crop and, your mother would love this, and they shipped it to California and they lost money so they went out and bought another truck. That's the mentality in agriculture today. Totally missed the point, right? But that's the way we think in agriculture today. The nice part about organics is that it's economically viable, and the reason is that you don't have to spend a lot of money, because the good lord designed the cycles of nature in order to do it itself. So here you are taking an agriculture that should be using their own labor and their knowledge to use the biological cycles, and what they do they go to town and buy fertilizer, and they can't figure out why they can't make any money. They can grow that themselves, but they aren't smart enough to do it. And so, if my idea ever works, this green manure cover crop, it's probably 30 or 40 years down the road. Because that's how long it takes... I don't know if you know what's going on down in Washington right now, but they're going to rewrite the Farm Bill. If they get out of agriculture, they are some guys if they still want to farm, are going to have to adapt to what i'm suggesting, b/c Uncle Sams pocket is going to be handing out the hundreds any more.

E: Are you for the rewriting of this Farm Bill?

D: I don't think the govt has ever produced one ounce of food and I don't think they ever will. For 60 years they've been stringing us along. The only way to get farmers to act right is to make them act right, and you can't do that when there's free money out there comes in the mail box. This is the best illustration I can think of: if you look where the innovation is in this country, it's not the people who get a govt check every 2 weeks. It's the people like me out there struggling. It's called "necessity is the mother of invention." A lot of the farm around us is idle, what we call the CRP program, the Conservation Reserve Program. They are paid not to farm.

E: How do you feel about that?

D: Oh, the stupidest thing anyone ever dreamed of. But it keeps a lot of beaurocrats in jobs. And they people do it; they drive a lot nicer equipment than we do.

E: Does it help conserve the land at all?

D: Well it's supposed to, yes, it does. They have to put a cover crop on, or they have to keep it mowed, in theory; and there's lots of ways to beat around that cane. And so, you asked the question earlier, are we in good relationships with our neighbors. Oh no, just like Rex Spray isn't down there. We're oddballs. We're people who don't play the game. Absolutely not. WE're considered idiots, strange idiots. And from the standpoint, if this country is indeed run by the majority, we are the minority, yes. POint well taken. One thing you're going to find out when you get out of the ivory towers down there is that, this is a little philosophy on the side no extra charge, if you do what you ought to do...most people if you look at the bell curve, the majority, are going to sell their souls in order to get the easy money when they get out of college and get easy jobs. You obviously aren't one of them, very few people even think about the Peace Corps. But if you do what you ought in life, you're going to be in argument with the establishment, it's going to try to get you to sell your soul. The question is will you succumb. When you got your loans to pay back, are you going to go help the needy? It's a big question to ask. Most won't. Most will go buy a new car, rent a nice apt, get a nice job, and in many cases not pay their loans back, b/c they are all out in the unseen. Rare is the person who lives a simple lifestyle in order to pay their loans back, though I'm sure they exist, but they are few and far between. Most of the people who sign up for the agricultre enrollment programs mumble to themselves, first under their breath, all the time. They know it don't make any sense, but everyone else is doing it, so they sell their souls along with everyone else. And agriculture welfare is a life. It's the easier way to go, no doubt about that, like old Annie said "on easy street."

E: Do you have a pretty good market for you dairy?

D: We did at one point get certified organic, we were the only certified dairy in the state, and took it to a cheese factory in Minerva. They wanted to do this and we wanted to do it, and we tried it for a while. Part of the problem was that I was doing some of the experimentation which led to my seeder, and b/c of that--if you know anything about experimentation, sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't--I have really stuck my neck out around here, put my money where my mouth is, and as a result I had some crop failures, did some things wrong. And could not feed my cattle with what I had grown, had to buy corn from neighbors and so it was not certified organic and I had to withdraw my certification. As it turned out, and I need to make this... Are you familiar with the Alar scare? You may not. Was it '89? 60 Minutes, somebody in the press, made a big issue about a minor chemical called Alar, which is used to for apples. And all of a sudden, half the articles in this country were about the terrible chemicals used on food. The point is that it was media frenzy. It wasn't that what they said wasn't true, it was blown way out of proportion. It wasn't even an important chemical in agriculture. And so, instantly overnight, everybody wanted to eat organic food. In fact they did a gallup pole, and since I happen to love statistics and I've done a lot of it and have been offered jobs in statistics even, just after this thing came out they did a gallup pole and 84% of Americans said that if they could get organic food, they would buy it. That's what you call a fad. That's the biggest bunch of crap that ever happened in this country.

M: Only if it was the same price as normal food.

D: Yeah, what they didn't realize is that... The alar chemical on apples---people want an unblemished apple. And most organic apples have blemishes on them, and that's the way the

good lord made them and they are not perfect. We have gotten to the point where we want every big mac exactly the same, tastes like sawdust, they're all the same taste, same in Tokyo and same in New Dehli, Moscow. And so we've sold our souls again. We have tried to sell watercrests to the local McDonalds. NO way, not unless we can spot the whole world, the whole McDonalds system with watercrests. They cannot accept local entrepreneurship in the big systems today. So, to make a long story short, we tried this organic cheese, but the problem is that we didn't have the right kind of cows. If you're gonna make cheese, you should have jerseys, higher protein, higher butter fat. Because you get more cheese per pound of Jersey milk b/c its richer, than you do from the watered-down stuff you get from the Holsteins. So that was the first mistake we made. WE did try if for a year and a half, almost two years. And it did help, it did pass the premium and we're glad we tried it; but we had to add another bulk tank b/c they were shipping it 90 miles, just our milk, just in one truck, which is very inefficient, b/c we were the only ones in the state. We had to add on to the milk cows and do some things to meet the certification that were kind of a pain, and we finally concluded that it wasn't worth the effort. In addition to the fact that we had to w/draw out certification b/c we couldn't feed organic feed to the animals, again it wasn't b/c we couldn't it was b/c of my experimentations. Again, from the marketing standpoint, there wasn't near the demand for the organic cheese as they thought there was. They got rid of what we produced, but they thought there'd be a horrendous demand and there wasn't. So, our milk goes in with the other milk. We are not specifically marketing our product, we do not get a premium for it anymore. We don't have a roadside stand or any of that stuff.

E: SO your milk is combined and sold along with non-organic milk?

D: Everyone else's, yes.

M: If you bought cottage cheese from Krogers it would probably have some of ours in it.

D: YEah, but we're not a big operation, so a very small part of it.

M: I did not offer you milk b/c we do not pasteurize it, it could give you diarriah very easily b/c you're not used to it.

D: There is a family in Wayne County, near Wooster, there's 4 brothers and a couple sisters and a mom and dad, that have built a store, they are going to have 4 or 5 dairies connected in the family. And they are going to set up their own store to pasteurize the milk and bottle it in glass and they are not necessarily certified organic, but they're close. They probably could be if they went to the trouble, I just talked to them a couple of weeks ago. And I've looked into doing that, but I don't have the brothers and the sisters and mom and dad involved, there's no way i could do it time-wise. I'm so busy producing, I don't have time to market. That's what we ought to do. We do sell water out here, I don't know whether you noticed it or not. But we have spring water, we just put in our own water system out here and people pay a quarter a gallon in their own containers. Some people come b/c they know we dont use chemicals, other people just b/c its good spring water. So we have a market built in already, we could probably convert a lot of them to buy our milk. But we're on a busy highway, and theres no room to pull off out there, and you have to pasteurize it, and to me pasteurization destroys part of the flavor, in fact I know it does. And if we could have gotten in on the Grandfather CLause, there's a dairy called Young's over

by Yellow Springs Ohio that got in under--you know what I mean by the Grandfather Clause, before they passed all these laws, they were already selling milk and so they couldn't force them to pasteurize now b/c they were already doing it before. We didn't get in before that so we have to obey all the present laws. They're doing good business; and there used to be a dairy up in Mansfield called Ray Milton Farms, that used to do it, but they've since quit. But for an individual like me to actually pull this off by myself to actually produce and then try to market, there isn't enough hours in the day. We've looked into it. There's a small dairy down in Utica, called Flemings, which sells milk here locally. We talked to them about bottling just our milk for organic. Then we talked and argued about it, I'd have to buy my own milk truck and haul it down to them. There's just got to be some time for some fun. Speaking of fun, shall I tell you what were going to do? Well, I'm a pilot and were looking into the possibility of buying an ultralight and flying off the farm here, maybe teaching people how to fly. Trying to diversify a little bit and have some fun....

E: I don't really have any other questions. What else are you thinking about, what else do you do?

D: We could go on for hours. It would probably help if you read the manuscript. Parts would bore you silly, but atleast, as one guy said, when you get done with it, atleast you understand where I'm coming from. And there's a couple chapters in there that I think is right down the alley of what your Farm Family thing is looking at: things that we could do to keep more families in the farm. It's going to take a networking system. You know, I have roots. I'm like Huxley, I have roots very deep here b/c it's been in the family for 130 years. But a lot of people who are going to farm in the future dont have those roots, and so you're going to have to come up with a suurogate root system. I know it sounds crzy to put it that way, but you really are. You going to need a networking system to support them b/c things are tough. One thing I could help somebody else do is the financial end of things, since I used to be a farm consultant and still do my own tax work, am very good at numbers. I could help young farm families budget. But we really dont have systems to do that today. There are systems set up, maybe you're not familiar with it, Ohio State have programs that I think are called FarmLink, it has different names in different states. But say an older couple is nearing retirement, and they don't have heirs or don't have children interested in farming, but there are people out there, young couples who would give their right arm for a farm. But since they can't farm with one arm, well they dont give up their right arm, they are looking for a surrogate set of heirs. And they work out financial arrangements. And there is a program at the Ag Econ Dept at OH State that helps link the people who have the farms and those who want the farms, even though they are not related. And there have been some horrendous success stories and some horrendous failures. Several of the farm states have these set up in the state universities. And some states I thinks it's even a private entity. This is what I was suggesting to Beth at Focus 2100, are you familiar with that?

E: I was there, our whole class went.

D: Oh ok. Then if agriculture, and it is, the largest industry in Knox County, then, and if the backbone of that industry are the family farms, then one of the most important things--one of the things I think should be in the top 4--would be to, instead of seeing a new town just over that hill where one of our farms has been subdivided into houses, b/c you make more money selling lots

than you can farming any known crop to man (no, not maybe marijuana, but since marijuana is illegal, you're not going to get away with it in this county, not with Sheriff Barber--I'm just kidding, don't tell your mother i said that, but anyway...) To me, one of the problems is that we ought to have our own Knox County Land Link, we ought to have a list of people who are getting near the end of farming, maybe even 10 years from now, start planning... people who are coming through the vo-ag program at Fredericktown, even though their parents aren't farmers and they want to farm someday, and start getting them together; start getting that young man working with that family, early on. B/c the number of farm families that can count 5 generations like we can--and I'm probably the last one here, my kids don't seem to be interested, of course at that age, though I was very busy around here and very involved in agriculture, I wasn't planning on coming back, but I did; so they may change to, but i doubt it--but at the same time, what really is important is that thought families are important, we are going to have to be more open minded in the future, families are going to have different last names even though it's no divorce case, totally different blood, in order to continue the farms instead of setting up a new town. We've had people beg for this land across the road to build houses, and we say it's not for sale. Well to them, they want to build a house out here in the country, any land ought to be available if you name the right price. But it's been in the family 130 years, we want to farm it, not farm houses. But land use is a very big issue. Up in Elyria, they've got a major land use problem there b/c they've just built ranch houses here and high rises there, and all the farm land is going bye-bye.

E: Did you hear about or go to the regional zoning meeting last week? Our class went and it was very interesting, they shut down...

D: No I didn't go to it, they had an editorial in the paper trying to get people to go to it. ANd it's tempting, we know some realtors and we could make a lot of money if we sold out here...

M: WHat's funny is this realtor used to be a dairy farmer...

D: And whats even more interesting is he was hear the other day saying that he really misses the cattle and he really misses farming. Well, I says, you knew you would, but you had to make a decision, you couldnt do both. And there again, supposedly the guy who bought that farm is a tax write off for Syndicate Holders, whether or not it is, I don't know, but there's some rumors to that effect. So you go a lot of issues here. To me, one of the big issues is cheap food and I don't think--how do I say this nicely--Gen would probably agree with me, I don't think Gene Lodgson's technique of arguing with the establishment has gained anything. I don't disagree with him and he's probably true, but the world's not ready for the truth, as you'll find out. What I'm trying to do with my invention is a little more subtle--with my seeder i can get people into organic farming and they don't even know it is organic. If I can get them into some ecological game of recycling and they dont' even know it's organic gardening, but it is, just didn't use the terminology, didn't try to bias them upfront, can't quite pull it over the farmers eyes that quickly, they know immediately what I'm up to. Of course most of them that know about it know me and know what I'm up to.

M: Trouble.

D: Well, its just the way...

M: DO you want to tape what he was saying about parody and stuff?

D: What it basically means is that we have to be 3 times as efficient as everybody else just to state.

E: Oh that's right, you were getting \$12 per...

M: And if you figure parity, we should get between 30 and 40. And so our tractors are all 30-35 years old. TO replace our tractors today would be 80-90,000, just for a tractor. Its tempting to go out, you know a lot of farmers have \$25-35,000 wrapped up in a nice truck. OURs we paid \$150 for b/c nobody ever uses it, so we really dont need it.

[phone call to go help sister about 1 mile away, set of farm houses on each farm, David goes out to help son start scooter so that he can go help his aunt]

E: So what do you see as the future of family farming?