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Interview with Andrew Reinert

Kelly McPharlin

Andrew Reinert

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Kelly McPharlin: Okay, so now we'll start… So, tell me… Please state your name and occupation first and foremost.

Andrew Reinert: Sure. Um, Andrew Reinert, I'm the chair of the department of Dance, Drama, and Film here at Kenyon. And I'm an associate professor of Drama.

KM: Great. So tell me about your involvement in the farmers market.

AR: I started, uh, selling stuff at the farmers market about, it's been at least ten years now, about ten years ago. Um, I keep chickens, and so I started out selling hen's eggs. Yeah, yeah, uh… but, which went very nicely… Oops, oh no. Have I come unplugged?

KM: You might wanna just…

AR: Here, here, I can put it up here.

KM: Yeah, that's good.

AR: Alright, there we go. So anyways, I started out selling hen's eggs, which was, which was good, uh, but eventually… For one thing the licensing became a nuisance. Um, it's, I think $145, maybe a little more, maybe a little less a year. $165 is what it is, it comes clear to me now. It's $165 a year to, for the license to sell the eggs. Which affords one the privilege of having someone from the health department come and stick a thermometer in your refrigerator to make sure that you're holding the eggs at the, at the mandated temperature. Um, and so that was a hassle and sometimes in the summer, in the peak of summer when it's really hot, the hens stop laying. And so I was selling eggs and started baking a little bread to sell particularly during the weeks when the hens weren't laying very well. Because even though they weren't laying, they still wanted their nice, organic feed. And sales helped offset the cost of chicken feed. Um, and before long, it became clear to me that selling the bread was, uh, more sustainable activity than selling the eggs because I didn't have to have a license to sell the bread. Um, and so I've been selling bread there for at least eight years now. And, uh, I usually start at the beginning of the farmers market season, which is before classes are over here at Kenyon. So I'm doing two things at once at that point, and I have two jobs at once, and then throughout the summer, and by the time classes resume at Kenyon I usually intend to keep going at the farmers market, but slow down, because by that point I really have to shift gears.

KM: So how did you get started selling there?

AR: Um… I had, well I had the chickens, I started with the chickens because I read about raising chickens, uh, just out of curiosity. I thought it would be funny to have chickens in suburbia, because I live in Mount Vernon, not up in Gambier- well chickens are illegal in Gambier. Yes, within the village it is illegal to keep even one chicken, well, to have just one chicken it's not fair to the chicken. But it's illegal to just have a couple or three hens. Um, so I live in Mount Vernon and I was, I thought it would be funny to keep chickens, I thought, well I'll read a book about it and persuade myself it's too difficult and too challenging, and that way I won't, I can, I can let this dream fizzle. And I discovered reading about it, it wasn't very hard, and I learned more about factory farms. And I thought I don't want to participate in that kind of cruelty. I don't want to be a component of that, even in a passive way. So I, um, got a few hens and to my surprise, they started laying very nicely, and I had more eggs than I knew what to do with. And I was friendly with Art Balduck, who sold really great lettuce at the farmers market. And so a friend persuaded me to set up next to Arthur, because Arthur got a lot of business. People knew that Arthur's lettuce was the best at the market. And so, initially I set up at the far end, I set up way down at the south end of the square, the long, there are two long axes. So I was at the far south end, because I was, I was new at this, and I thought I don't have any business right at the core of it. And a pal insisted, "You need to go move over by Arthur. No one's ever gonna find you down here." And I did, um, and it, and it worked out. So that's how I got started, was just, I had the eggs, and, um… and I had a friend to nudge me, and really, it was that combination of things that got me started. I used to live very near the public square, and so I could walk over, um, and so many Saturdays I'd go and shop at the farmers market. I went to some of the first farmers markets, was it 15-plus years ago, when most people were just sitting on the ground on blankets selling things. It was really, uh, primitive initially. So to see it now, it just, it looks very upscale compared to what it was.

KM: So how did you decide, to kind of, to sell your things there? Did you ever think you would?

AR: No, no I never imagined that because, because people doubt this if they don't know me well at all. But I'm really pretty shy, and not comfortable talking to groups of people, and so, I'm a designer and not an actor, I'm not a director. Though I can get up in front of people, uh, and talk, I really kind of prefer not to. So I never imagined I would do that, but I had the eggs, the hens were giving me the eggs, and the eggs were so wonderful. And I really thought more people should know about how great truly fresh eggs from hens who have had, who are enjoying a really good life. Who are not stressed, are not starved, uh, how good those eggs taste, I thought, so I call myself a chicken evangelist, and a bread evangelist. And I really thought it was important that people got to find that, and that mattered so much to me that I decided I would put up with the inconvenience and all of that, of selling things. Because it was so, because it, the food was so good. And, the more I've researched it, it's really, some of what goes on now is the product of World War II. After World War II, we had all this machinery in place, uh, to produce things in massive quantity. But there wasn't the demand for bombs and bombers and things like that, and so we converted that machinery and that technology, and that organization to,

largely to agriculture. So what had been explosives became fertilizers, which is why fertilizers still make perfectly good explosives, and perfectly effective explosives. And we figured ways to treat animals as if they were just additional products. And, uh, and along the way the quality of the food diminished and diminished and diminished, and we've been inured to that to the point that now we accept a grocery store egg, as we think that's all there is. Like Peggy Lee, "Is that all there is?" and it turns out no. When you go back to a genuine, truly fresh egg from a hen who has had really excellent food and I really think it matters that she's had a happy life; that she's enjoying, not that she has had, but that she is having a happy life, that she has not been roughed up, that she has not been harassed, whether through crowding, or rough treatment, or what have you. The egg simply tastes better. A dear friend of mine Tom Turgeon always said, "Adrenaline doesn't taste good." And it's true, and it's funny, I was telling someone from the Ohio Department of Agriculture, I mentioned that, and he said "Oh yes," he said, "I was a pork inspector for many years," and he said he could see the adrenaline spikes in the, in the meat. If he looked at a fresh ham he could see what kind of a life the hog had led, by looking at the meat, cause there are red sort of bursts in the meat that reveal spikes of adrenaline. And he said it's absolutely true, that's why they have to rest cattle for 24 hours or so after shipping them to the processing facility, to the butcher, because the adrenaline will toughen and spoil the meat. So, an animal, a hen who lives in a low stress environment where she can express, as the Buddhists would say, her nature, her essential nature, is going to yield better food, is going to share better food with us. And that was a revelation to me. It, it suited my nature because I just like animals, and I like being around them, so it suited my nature to treat the hens gently. And then to discover that the eggs were exceptional partly as a result of that was, as I say a revelation, and I wanted other people to know about that. So that's why, that's probably the biggest reason I decided to sell eggs at the market.

KM: Did you want people to know about that because of, like, the value of local food or more of, like, the taste or quality?

AR: Both. Absolutely. I mean, and to a degree I, I've been surprised to find that I'm a troublemaker. I hadn't known that about myself, but I really am, and so the idea that I could, uh, disrupt the status quo – that maybe I could take 15 cents away from the multi-, what I call the multi-national death corporations, um, the Montsanto [sp?], and Walmart, and Kroger and so on, that maybe I could just break up that sort of cynical path away from genuine food. And it was, simply, it was appealing to me. And that meant introducing people to really good food. High quality food that also, that was, it's high quality because it's local, and it, local food is almost always going to be of higher quality, uh, whether it's certified organic or not, it's still just by virtue of not being saturated in petroleum. And, one of the things I learned from the hens is that when they are producing new feathers, they don't lay much. Because they only have a finite amount of protein in their body, and they can put it towards feathers, or they can put it towards eggs. And they don't try to multi-task. And when we are raising food, growing food to share with other people… we aren't good as multi-tasking as a people, I don't think, I don't feel that we're

good at multi-tasking. And so we have to choose – are we going to put our energy towards feathers or eggs? Are we gonna put our energy toward making this travel well and shelf stable, or are we going to put our energy toward making it delicious? It's very hard to do both, and we're mostly not inclined to do both because it's more trouble. And so, uh, so local food I think ends up being better by virtue of the fact that we can focus on quality and not on shelf stability. And eggs from one of my hens, will hold, will stay very fresh, remarkably fresh, for weeks, and which rate I have to wonder how old the eggs in the grocery store actually are. I'm sure that, the reason they are so flaccid is that they are, um, that the hens are treated badly and fed badly, and live badly and miserably. But I think the other reason is that those eggs are very old indeed, and they are allowed to be as much as 21 days old and sold as quote-en-quote "fresh egg." But that's, there's no guarantee that they're only 21 days old. After 21 days they are shipped back to the, to the packing facility. How can we be sure they aren't redated and sent back out? I've, I find it hard to, I find it hard to believe that it wouldn't, it wouldn't be economically feasible not to do that, at least on occasion.

KM: Exactly.

AR: So… what else?

KM: Um, so what were the people's response to your eggs, then?

AR: Oh people loved, people... well, of course they're not my eggs, I always made a point of that, that these are my hen's eggs, I'm just the middle man, I'm just the... It's really true though, the, I always, I always make a point of our hen's eggs, that was, and people were very passionate about them. Um, and when I started making the shift from selling eggs to selling bread, people understood about the licensing issue. And you can, people can buy eggs directly from me. Um, uh… and I don't have to have a license to sell direct from home. But if I take them some place else then I have to go through all sorts of hurdles.

KM: So the market…

AR: Exactly, so, so going to the market requires this $165 a year license. Um, whereas if I sell them just from home, then I don't have to pay that license. And people were, I , I, uh, in all the years I sold eggs at the famers market, no-, I never heard anything but good. The only complaint I ever heard was the eggs were so good, that they were, people found that they were eating more eggs than they had before, and they were concerned that maybe they were going to send their cholesterol through the roof. Eggs, we have scientific data to show that, that eggs from hens who live on, who live outdoors, who see the sunlight and can dig in the grass, are higher in the good cholesterol and lower in the bad. And so it seems that, as long as one is living in moderation, in all things, there's no reason to worry about that. So… yes. People were crazy about them. Yeah.

KM: So what do you think of the public square?

AR: It's, it's a, I think it's wonderful. It's attractive, it's well-kept, it's, the Civil War monument is at once a little silly to me, I'm from Seattle, and we don't… so, so Seattle doesn't go back that far, really. So we don't have Civil War monuments, and we're much too, uh… we have too strong a hippie legacy to have any monument to any kind of a war. So the Civil War monument strikes me as a little silly, and also charming. And it's a, it's one of the best looking places in, uh, Mount Vernon, and it's, and it's alive. And there are other really attractive, uh, towns and cities and villages around central Ohio, but most of their downtown cores tend to be dead, or, um, at least dormant. And this one seems really alive, and I think it's because, I, I think it can't hurt the square is very attractive and people find ways to use it, so…

KM: Have you seen changes in the uses of the square in recent years?

AR: I'm not sure. Certainly the Farmers Market over the years I've been working there has gotten, there are more and more vendors. And, and it goes in a cycle. There's stretches when people seem to decide that this is the next, uh, Tupperware party, or, um, whichever basket company it is, Lana Burger product… So people imagine this is a way to make, to get rich quick. So there will be a lot of backyard gardeners who will come in with a lot of something two or three times, or people who are baking cookies at home and figure they can come here and make a fortune. And they figure out pretty quickly that it's a lot of hard work, and either they decide that's really fulfilling, and they keep coming back, uh, although it's not a license to print money, or they decide that it's too much work and they'd rather do something else. Um, so I see that kind of change, but, uh, beyond that, not, not so terribly. At first, there was some, there seemed to be tremendous concern, and I understood it to be coming from the shop owners, uh, around the downtown area, that the Farmers Market might sell crafts and that that might either turn it into a flea market atmosphere and, and, degrade the quality of the place. Or that it might provide competition and so there was a very strong no-crafts policy. And more recently, well now, there's a Maker's Market set up, set up across the street just in front of the courthouse, and, um, I'm not hearing the same sort of concerns now, so I'm not sure if the concern about, uh, crafts was, was indeed coming from shop owners or whether they've decided that a high tide raises all boats, or just what. But I've seen that change, but I don't know how to account for it. Yeah.

KM: So as someone who sells there, have you noticed a change in the mood or the customers?

AR: Not particularly, um… and I don't know how to account for that, because I hear tales from folks who sell produce, from one, from one family who sells a lot of produce at least, that in the past two, three years, customers have been, uh, fussier about prices the way I think they would describe it. [They] have shown more concern about price, and have quibbled about price, and, um, I've not heard much, if anything about that in regard to the bread or when I'm selling the eggs. Once in awhile someone will say, "A half dozen eggs is $2?" and I say, "Yes, it is. It takes a hen 25 hours to lay an egg. They're earning, they're lucky to earn a penny or two an hour. It's a lot of work." And people will say, "Alright," and they go away, they don't complain. With the bread I've never had

anyone, uh, sometimes someone will ask, "How much is a loaf of bread?" and they hear that, that a big loaf of bread is $4.75, and they keep going. But usually they come back, and I've never known anyone to buy a loaf of bread one time, uh, and not come back for more, um, so… There's the part of me that, that suspects that the quality, that no one's complaining about price, even in this rotten economy. And the price of flour keeps going up. And, and so it's expensive, uh, uh, but I, there's the old saying that what's cheaply got is lightly held. And so I've refused to sell things cheaply because I want people to appreciate that bread or that egg, and, and really, um, and see the value in good food, so they may choose good food over bad, because it's so easy to, to eat bad food and assume that that's all there is.

KM: How did you start making the bread?

AR: I've always loved bread and I've always loved baking, and the hens, as I've said, the hens in the, in the peak of summer when it gets really hot, um, they, again, I think they most put more energy towards staying cool. They take more dust baths, and they do things like that, and they don't lay as much. They go through, there's a peak right around the time that, right around the summer solstice, when every hen seems to be laying an egg a day. And then there's a drop off. But summer solstice is pretty early in the Farmers Market season, and so we get to July, and it's hot and miserable, and we're past that crest, and many of my hens are old-fashioned varieties so after they've laid a certain number of eggs, their inclination is to start incubating their eggs. And so they pull the feathers off their breasts so they can get that nice, warm, moist skin against the egg shells and incubate them, and I have to persuade them, gently, to go back to laying. It's a matter of persuading them to turn off one set of hormones, and turn on another, and to do that gently takes time. And so the hens weren't laying, I didn't have eggs to sell, and I knew that market presence was important. I knew that much. I learned that from studying World War II, that certain brands of detergent couldn't stay in production because they couldn't get the oil necessary, that was being sent to the war effort, the fat necessary to producing detergents. So they continued to advertise even though they couldn't keep their product on the shelves, because they didn't want people to forget that they existed. And so I didn't want anyone to forget me in those weeks that I didn't have eggs to sell, so I thought, well I'll bake a few loaves of bread, and that way I can have a cause to be there, and it'll bring in a little money to help pay for the hen's bills. And as I say, the break took off. The eggs still sold well, but eventually the bread was selling so nicely that it wasn't worth buying the license to sell the eggs.

KM: So what exactly do you sell? Do you just sell bread now, or do you sell different types of bread?

AR: I sell a variety of kinds of bread, I sell, I sell, um, sourdough, um, and I sell, uh… a Provencal flatbread called fugasse [sp?], which is painted with olive oil and sprinkled with Provencal herbs. And I sell scones, and then, and then other things on a rotating basis. I do things like danishes, I do baguettes, I do things, I do half-sized baguettes, which sell very nicely because they're the right size for a sandwich for one person, or to make into, or to serve as bread for two people with a meal, and, and people will buy two

of those, where they might be hesitant to buy a full-length baguettes. And frankly it's a little more lucrative to sell two small loaves than to sell one big one, and I'm perfectly happy to do that. And it looks so beautiful. The breads are so… Real bread is so gorgeous to look upon. I like everything about it. I like the smell of it, I like the fact that it starts out with, starts with such humble ingredients: flour, salt, water, a little bit of yeast, and that's all. It's easy to remember the ingredients, the proportions I have to write down, but the ingredients are easy to remember because there are so few. And it turns into this living thing that breathes, and then sort of blooms in the oven. And…. And it seems to have a will of its own, so I shape the bread, but I can't, but I don't control it. I may shape it, I may guide it a little, but which ones blister here, and which ones blister there, and sometimes the growth on the appendages as they rise, and that's part of the fun of it. So it's, it's a collaboration between me and the bread. And some third party that, that breathes into the bread that I can't fully, um, account for. And that's, so it's very beautiful, so I like everything about it. And I tell that story, I always figure that I have no competition. People talk to me sometimes about competition, "As the market gets busier, do you worry about competition?" and I say, "I have no competition." Because I'm not really selling bread, I'm not really selling eggs, or when I was selling, sometimes I sold at least the idea of a live chicken, um, so someone would buy the live chicken from me, I would raise that chicken and then I would take it to the abattoir and deliver it to the customer dressed, because I couldn't legally sell, uh, a processed, dressed chicken. But I could sell them a pet, and when their pet… and then I could as a courtesy, deliver the pet to the abattoir, to the slaughter, and bring it back to them, but that was, that was just a courtesy. They were paying me a boarding fee for raising their pet for them. And, and no one ever wanted to go and meet their pet, but they were happy to eat the critter when all was said and done. But any of that, I was never, I said I'm never selling the product, I'm selling an idea. I'm selling the idea of this funny little German man who is bucking the system, and, and who is bucking the system by being motivated by love and not by lucre. And I say as long as that's what I'm selling, nobody can compete with me. Other people can join, but nobody can compete because no one else is this funny little man, uh, with his extraordinary love of bread, chickens, eggs… the earth. Nobody else can quite do that, and so that's my business plan [laughs]. And uh, and so that's, so that's kept me going.

KM: So do you think that your customers are buying it for the bread, or are they buying it for other reasons?

AR: I, I, I think, I think it's the bread and the floorshow, frankly. I think it's the…though certainly people say that they miss, uh, the bread during the winter. Now I do sell bread at the Farmers Market, um, not at the Farmers Market, at the Village Market in Gambier, and I sell bread that's used for the specials at, um, Middle Ground. Yeah, yeah, it's good stuff, it's very good. And it's fun to bake it in the great big, long loaves that we use there, because I like seeing the great big, uh, expression of that bread. But, um, but people do tell me they miss it, but it's also pretty clear they miss coming and hearing me enthuse about it. Because again, it's rare to find, that's as rare as a truly fresh egg, or a truly fresh loaf of bread, is finding somebody who understands what's going on, uh, on a functional basis with the organisms, the bread, the hen, the egg, whatever it may be. And also, really

loves it. Uh, finding those two things together, I have to admit, is unusual. That's another of my trademark, uh, gimmicks, that's one of the things I've got that nobody else has. And I don't have to worry about anybody pirating that, because it's too, it's too idiosyncratic.

KM: Yeah, um so… What is your relationship like with your customers?

AR: It varies. It's always at least cordial. Casual. I try not to swear in front of my customers, I tell people I swear like a sailor, in fact I can turn it on and off. But casual and playful, and cheerful, and as I say, most of my customers are repeat customers, most of my customers are regulars. And I notice when my regulars aren't around. But, uh, but it's, it's friendly, and I've tried, I try to offer something like old-fashioned service. I can make change accurately and so on, and at the same time, uh, I tend to be a little playful because I think that, again, I think the floor show is part of the experience. I think that, um, that experience of going to, people refer… I, I've, the business is Crazy Cat Farm, and I refer to it as Crazy Cat Farm bread, but people tend to call it Andrew's bread, or Andrew bread, and that's, I think that's delightful, and I think that says a lot about what their relationship is, is that people equate me with the stuff. And I think that's important, and I think, I think, um, the reason we… it's Eric Coleman's notion, that the reason we require national food safety, uh, organizations, is that we break down the relationship between the consumer and grower. And when, so if we knew our baker, and if our baker knew us, we wouldn't need the USDA, we wouldn't need the FDA, we wouldn't need any of those organizations. It's precisely because we opt time again, for big, anonymous providers because we imagine we're going to save something. We save a nickel, but it's at such a cost. At the cost of… hardly a month goes by that we don't learn of something awful. Arsenic in the apple juice, and so on. And part of that's because the folks who are producing the apple juice aren't looking their consumer in the eye week in and week out. Uh, as I'm baking that bread I'm thinking about the people who are going to be there looking for it. And the weeks when I'm not feeling well, or I'm tired, or what have you, and figure I'm going to have to scale back, I think about who's going to be there looking for this or that, that I may not have this week. And so, so that personal connection I think is, is, certainly effects what I do, and how I do it. And if I were in a remote, central office banging this stuff out, it wouldn't have the same impact.

KM: What do you think is the overall mood or ambience at the market?

AR: It's hard to know, because I'm there behind my table with my bread for however long it takes to sell it all, and then I go and look around. It's, I mean it certainly seems to me cheerful, on the whole, um, the customers are often, well early in the day the customers are very, um, seem to be out to make a targeted strike. These are the people who know exactly what they want, and they want to, they know that this or that is coming into season, they want to make sure they get it before it sells out. So there's that, and then there are the, the, uh, as the hours go by then we see more tourists and, and people who are bringing their children around for a, for a cheap field trip, and so on. But it's, but it's hard for me to get a real sense of the place because it's, because as a salesperson I'm behind my table. So, and so I think of myself as my own entity, my own fiefdom, so I

only know what prevails where I am, which is the thing I've hoped I've described, which is courteous and thoughtful, but also Puckish, and, and troublemaking, in a friendly way.

KM: Do you have relationships with the other sellers?

AR: Yes, oh sure, there are folks who set up next to me, because we have, we tend to, uh, set up at the same spots, week in and week out. So there are people to the left and right of me who I know pretty well, and we're chummy and we help each other out. If somebody is running short on change and is going to the bank, uh, they might ask if someone else will watch their stall while they're going to the back, "Oh and since I'm going to the bank could you use any change? I could bring back change for you." And so we, so we look out for one another. Folks more often than not have helped me set up my, on a day when it's drizzly or really hot, I put up a big canopy, there are folks who I can count on to help me set that thing up. It can be done single-handed, but it's much more efficient and much easier and less miserable to do it with another set of hands. And there are folks who will not take no for an answer, if, when they offer to help, and I'll say "No, that's okay," and they'll say "No, I'm going to help you," so that's, so that's lovely. And I do think there are these sort of, there are almost neighborhoods within the market, and of course I think I'm in the very best neighborhood because I like my neighbors.

KM: That's great. Do you think selling at the market is accessible for people who want to sell?

AR: It's, well, on the whole, yes, it's increasingly regulated. Uh, one has to go to a quality assurance training session, which consists in large part, some of it's a matter of, everybody being told the rules and regs so that, so that no one can claim later, "I didn't know I had to have a license to sell eggs," "I didn't know that I had to put a label on this or that." Um, but much of it is a three-hour session on hand washing, and so that's a, I find that a little bit of a nuisance, but then again… well I don't know, my suspicion is that the people who really need to be told that they must wash their hands while preparing food will not be influenced by three hours of, of hand washing lecture, and those who know enough to do that, uh, wouldn't dream of doing otherwise, and that's three hours they can't have back. And so I'm not big on that. And so I do find that's an accessibility hurdle, but it's not insuperable by any manner or means. And so, on the whole I think it is. And I think maybe increasingly so, there was awhile, maybe five years ago, when there, when there was a kind of, there seemed to be a move to close ranks. Those who have been selling at the market for some time should be allowed continue and we've gotta keep anyone else out. This was at the point, that the market was first, that the economy was first going south. And I think there was real paranoia that somehow disreputable people would come in trying to make a quick buck and devalue the Farmers Market as a whole. And I don't think that a. that didn't happen, I don't think it was likely to happen, but there was a kind of an us and them thing, which I think made it less accessible for awhile. It was just not a very friendly place to try to come as a new vendor. And I in my troublemaking way tried to operate against that, and would try to be cheerful and friendly to people. And when I would catch myself being exclusionist, I would strive to act against that, and try to go very far to the other end of things. I bought a couple of

products that I knew I didn't like and wasn't going to like, and wouldn't accept my change in my return, because I thought it's hard getting started and it makes such a difference to have somebody extend that hand early on and give you a vote of confidence, so...

KM: That's good. So what have you gotten out of your experience there?

AR: Well, for one thing I've… got to exercise my love of bread to a degree I never would have. I cannot eat the amount of bread I'm happy to make, uh, and so that's part of it, that's one thing. And I also got to exercise sort of performance muscles, that I wouldn't have said I cannot sell because I don't enjoy public appearances, and now I recognize that's absolutely something I can do. It takes something out of me. It doesn't necessarily, uh, it doesn't necessarily make me feel energized, it makes me exhausted, but in a good way. And so, I, I've, I'm a lot less fearful, I am more fearless than I was when I started ten years ago. Because if I can do that, if I can go and become, and make a bread of myself without selling my soul in the bargain, which seems to be the American way, is to sell your soul so you can become a brand. If I can do that, what can I not do? So that's, so that's probably the biggest thing. And I've made some, I've made some wonderful friends with people I never would have talked to, never would have had the occasion to get to know people whose, whose interest is raising really good turnips, or people who raise beef cattle, or what have you. And so there again, um, uh, what's fearful, what's frightening is usually the unknown. So I've gotten to know a lot more kinds of people, so fewer people intimidate me now. And that's a happier way to live.

KM: Do you see anything, or any changes in the future of your selling bread there or the farmers market in general?

AR: I don't know, I don't know what the future holds. I look forward to continuing to do the stuff that's fun, and scaling back on whatever proves to be burdensome, but exactly how that goes, I'm not sure. I never know from one day to the next. I'm figuring out that, that, at least committing to a long-range plan doesn't suit me. And so I'm trying to live a little more day-to-day, I certainly, it seems, that the market on the whole seems like a really viable enterprise, though. It seems as though, uh, I saw a reader board once out front of a church that said, "Graveyards are full of irreplaceable people." And so there are folks, my friend Arthur doesn't sell lettuce at the Farmers Market anymore, and I still miss Arthur's lettuce. And yet, I can find, uh, the makings of a good salad there. And there are, there have been folks who were cornerstones of the market and such fun to be around, who've moved off to other places or taken up other interests, and still the market goes forward, so I think that, that some change has taken place. I think that people are not willing to, while they're not ready to toss Kroger and Walmart off the cliff yet, and put them on the ice flow and ship them off, they're also not willing to settle for that and that alone. I think that the demand for the auction of fresh, local food, uh, is, is here for the time being, anyways. So I think that this will, so I think, I expect that this will go on, but exactly how or where its emphasis will be, who knows.

KM: What do you think makes the market sustainable? Do you think it's the great products, or the atmosphere, or a combination of both?

AR: Yes [laughs]. Yeah. I really think it has, I think once it teeters too far to one or the other, I think if it, if… you have exquisite products, exquisite food, but nobody cares, one thing, I don't know how you grow really wonderful food without caring about who's going to eat it. I don't, now there must be people who know how to do that, I don't. I don't know how to bake a really great loaf of bread without imagining somebody enjoying it, even if it's me or the cat. The cat loves bread. But, uh, so I don't know how that works, but certainly I have, we've all seen people who are terrible cooks, or bad gardeners, who just love hanging out with people. I certainly see that at the Farmers Market some. Folks who make very nasty food indeed, but just love to chat, and sell, and um, and that doesn't hold up very long. That, those, those folks will come back year after year thought they're not selling much. And then eventually, they, before very long, they never seem to last more than about three seasons. It's just, there are too many other ways to have a conversation with people and sell stuff, if what you really like is doing that. So it has to be the combination, I think. And I think that the beautiful surrounding, they talk about re-, they talk about, from time to time, moving the Farmers Market to some other setting, some other venue, with the idea that they could accommodate more people. But I think that, there's something about the beauty of that place, that, uh, draws people in. And it's so visible, too, that I think draws people in. So I think that it's that chemistry, that if the market were to relocate to Foundation Park, wherever that may be, which is often proposed, I think if it were to do that, somehow a rump market would turn up at the square, because something about the square draws people to it.

KM: And how long have you lived in Mount Vernon?

AR: Uh… let's see. I've worked at Kenyon, this is my 22nd year at Kenyon, and I, so I've been in Mount Vernon 16 years at least, maybe a little more, I've lost track.

KM: Great. Anything else to add?

AR: No, I'm, I'm talked out.

KM: Thank you so much.

AR: Thank you so much.