

10-25-2000

## Interview with Sam Gilardi

Sam Gilardi

Lisa M. Groesz

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### Recommended Citation

Gilardi, Sam and Groesz, Lisa M., "Interview with Sam Gilardi" (2000). *Interviews*. 51.  
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Accession number: ELFS-LMG-F102500.A

Researcher's name: Lisa M. Groesz

Event: Interview with Sam Gilardi

Place: Lannings Foods, 1033 Newark Road, Mount Vernon, 1:00pm

Co-workers present: None

I, Lisa Groesz, interviewed Sam Gilardi, part owner of Lannings Food Processing Company, on the specific history behind Lannings, on processing procedures, and on Lanning's role within the community. When I walked into Lannings Food Store, I first noticed the grocery market. They were selling many local foods such as apples from Glen Hill Orchards and Velvet Ice Cream. They were selling several things bulk such as peanuts and pistachios and they had the meat that they process all wrapped up in saran wrap: beef and pork.

Tucked away beyond the market, near the processing room, was a room of cubicles. Gilardi's office sat in the back. Once Gilardi more fully understood the purpose behind the Rural Life Center, he became much more warm. I think he had been questioning the interest of a college student in his company but he better understood my goals when I explained the Center's examination of rural life to be able to promote it.

We began by discussing the history of Lannings. Bernard Lanning founded Lannings in 1969. Sam Gilardi and his brother, Steve Gilardi, purchased the company in 1989. It had had three employees at the time and Lannings now supports 40 employees. With the recent move two months ago to Newark Highway and access to bigger and better facilities, 11 new employees were added on recently.

Lannings processes cattle and hogs. They process a total of 3000 pounds of pork and 5000 pounds of beef per week. The killing actually occurs at different processing companies. A guy in Ashland kills the cattle and most often orders them from around his company. The hogs are purchased in Mount Vernon, often at the auction, and DJs in Fredericktown kills them.

Because Lannings is part of Ohio Proud, they only purchase their beef from in-state, most often in the Knox County vicinity. Ohio Proud is private organization pushed by farmers to encourage a local food network—

highly relevant to Rural Life's current goals. This keeps money in the community rather than importing beef from Nebraska or Wyoming. Gilardi's biggest suggestion for the program is louder advertising. Many of the consumers that come to his market are unaware of what participating in Ohio Proud means. There has been a big increase in Lanning's sales but it is difficult to tell whether that is due to the move, to expanded hours, or to participating in Ohio Proud. Because of his inclusion with Ohio Proud, he does not see the Rural Life Center's Food Web project making too much of a difference in his method of working. He is interested to see how it works and he really recommends heavy advertising to make consumers aware.

Lannings chooses good quality beef to process although any farmer can contact the company. The whole process from pick-up, to killing, to processing in the plant, takes three weeks. As of now, they do not have room for new orders until January.

Due to licensing restraints, Lannings only sells within state. They sell to local businesses such as restaurants and to schools roughly within a 75 mile radius of Mount Vernon. Aramark uses Lannings meat. The quality is especially good due to being able to dry age process in the new facilities and because the meat to be processed are not transported over long distances. Dry age means that the carcasses hang. In contrast, a wet age process means that the carcasses are vacuum packaged. Dry age looks nicer and doesn't bleed off. There are meat carcasses hanging

in a window behind the butcher counter which are eerie but not unattractive.

The state inspects Lannings for three hours every morning for a total of fifteen hours per week. They make sure temperatures are right, that the plant is sanitary and that they follow all of the programs exactly, such as food safety. Inspections have become more cautious recently due to diseases caused from E coli. Although Gilardi has a quality working relationship with the inspectors, it is difficult being examined so regularly. He has not had problems yet but they can be costly. A current line can be completely stopped or, if the company is not on good terms with the inspectors, the entire operation can be shut down for the entire day. It is costly.

Gilardi did not have any further comments so I stopped the recorder and we discussed life in more general terms briefly.

I talked too much. The problem occurred primarily when he would ask questions about the Rural Life Center and I spent too much time explaining. Also, in listening to the tape, I could hear myself preparing to jump into his conversation. This is something I will have to work on. I did allow him some lengthy pauses and several times he did include additional information such as when he added the 75 mile radius specification.

I did like how this was much more focused than the site visit. Because Pam Leonard easily dominated 90 percent of the conversation, we received a larger quantity of information due to ratio of speaking. Yet there was such a jumble of information, it took me a little while to synthesize everything and type it coherently. There is a much more clear goal in this interview which simplified and strengthened the write-up.

I am especially interested in the Ohio Proud project and want to learn more about it. I called him Monday and asked for contact names on the Ohio Proud program which is something I did not think to ask during the interview. Although he did not have a name, he had the number of the main office: 614-466-2910.