

**Roger Baker,
Narrator**

**Daniela Asenjo
Alex Hiatt
The College of Wooster
Interviewers**

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at Bakers Acres in Wooster, Ohio**

Roger Baker **-RB**
Daniela Asenjo **-DA**
Alex Hiatt **-AH**

DA: Well, this is Daniela and Alex.

AH: Hello. I'm Alex.

DA: We're here at Roger Baker's farm on a beautiful afternoon. Um, so we just have a few questions, um, and answer them as you, as you will. So, when did you start farming?

RB: Well, as in—well I'll take...you want me to take you from the beginning til now?

DA: Yes.

AH: Heck yeah.

DA: We'd love, we'd love it.

RB: Well, okay, here we go. Okay, so, my father worked thirty-nine years at Rubbermaid in Wooster. I grew up on six acres. My wife and I are first generation farmers. Uh, but my uncle—my aunt, my uncle—I had two uncles. One was my Dad's brother and one was married to my Dad's sister.

DA: Okay.

RB: Um, they both had farms and, and Dad would always—we'd go over and help 'em and whatnot and I just took an interest in that. So at age seven, my one uncle, um, said I could help him bale straw. And so they actually put me on a tractor, pulling a baler—a little tractor pullin' a baler—and that was the beginning of the whole deal, really. Clear back to that point. So I'd help in the summer and, as I got older, after school and weekends during school and whatnot. And then, um, uh, spent a lot of time there. I was in 4-H; we had six acres at home, so I was in 4-H and took animals in 4-H, and you know I grew up in an agriculture, agrarian setting. My father grew up on a farm—my mother—

my father grew up on a farm. My, my, uh, my—I guess that would be "paternal" grandparents, you know, they had a farm and my grandfather was a carpenter and they worked the farm. You know, basically in those days, yes it was part to survive but also, uh, for profit.

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: For profit. Now, my mother—and they—that was right here in Millbrook, Ohio. Millbrook Shreve area. Uh, my mother was, uh, from West Virginia. Clay County, West Virginia, one of the poorest areas in the state. They grew—they had a farm. It was—these farm—that farm, actually, in West Virginia, would have been homesteaded by our ancestors, but it was called Indian Knob and it was a hillside. And, uh, so she grew up there. There's quite a story behind that heritage there, um. The Golden Delicious apple—

DA: Mmm.

RB: Uh, as we know it today, the original tree was on a farm right beside them.

DA: Wow.

RA: And, uh, so Mom got to watch—as a kid, she watched the Golden Delicious apple come into its being.

DA: Wow.

RB: And there was this tree there that produced yellow apples and it always produced lots of yellow apples and, uh, so the family that owned the tree would use the apples and then they would let the neighbors come in and get whatever they wanted. And of course, my mother's people wanted those.

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: And somebody sent a letter to Murphy Brothers that was a, uh, uh, orchard people in Missouri about this—they were proprietors of, of trees and any fruit type bearing plants.

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: And, uh, they were so interested—and this is going way back in time—but they, they were so interested in this that, uh, they came—these two brothers came—to see this tree and they took grafts off of it and so now, today, they took it home and they propagated it and then we have now the Golden Delicious apple compliments of Murphy Brothers from Missouri but actually it came from Indian Knob in Clay County, West Virginia.

DA: Huh. Was there any drama about that?

RB: No.

DA: It wasn't like they stole all of it?

RB: Well, see, these people were poor—

DA: Okay.

RB: I mean, like, you know my—no, they wouldn't've known any better. I mean, it was, uh, it was farm to eat.

DA: Uh-huh.

RB: Family, and faith. And, uh, and really not a whole lot of things have changed today—

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: On a farm, other than technology—

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: And social network and social life. Um, farmers today are—our standard of living has risen, you know, but—along with everyone else—but she came from very, uh, tough background, if you look back on it—they didn't know it at the time of course—

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: Like, my mom said they never knew they were poor 'til someone told 'em they were. Uh, but they had to survive. Her father died when she was seven—

DA: Aw.

RB: And, uh, uh, so they—those kids stuck together and they had a horse and one plow and they would propagate whatever they could and then the hills that were too steep, they shoveled by hand. They spaded to plant the crops 'cause it was too steep for a horse.

AH: Mmhmm.

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: So, it's—it's a neat story. I could take you there for hours—that—so, my parents were much better than I am in instilling the history—

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: Of where I came from and that probably has a lot to have shaped where I wanted to go.

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: Uh, so that was a sidebar; that's free. But, uh, anyhow, uh, I worked on my aunt and uncle's farm, growin' clear up through. When it came time for me to—then about eighteen years old, my uncle—my other uncle, my Dad's brother, who had a farm beside the one I worked on—he asked my father if he could rent his farm to me: he wanted to let me farm it. And so, uh, um, so we did—my cousin and I did that together. That was, about, uh, ninety acres. So we did—we did it—him and I did it together. Forty-five acres each, we had. And, uh, uh, and then my other uncle, who I actually helped, he supplied the machinery for me to do this. And we had an agreement—I worked there—you know, I started out working there as a kid, five dollars a week, and then at one point, you know, it went up to ten or fifteen. Then I got five dollars a day and then when I—my last pay setting would've been thirty dollars a day, I would've been in college—and when I took on this other ground, I think I was at twenty-five or twenty (I think twenty-five dollars a day) and the agreement was that, that, um, I—he would let me use his machinery, um, then I could, uh, I had to pay him six dollars an acre annually for fuel and grease and oil and the machinery. He just made that price to make me work for it, I mean, it never covered—that never covered his cost—

DA: Right.

RB: But he was—that was just his way of setting the stage for myself. So then when I—when I got outta high school and I went to college and I wanted to continue to farm, I rented some more ground close by. So he said I could continue to use his machinery, but I had to buy one piece of machinery every year of my own.

DA: Mmm.

RB: And so that's what we did. And, uh, and then, uh, I went to ATI—Ohio State University Agricultural Technical Institute—

DA: Cool.

RB: In Wooster. All my friends went to OSU, main campus, joined the Ag fraternity and did all that. Um, and that's pretty much—I went to Triway High School locally here. Pretty much all my friends, my core group of friends were agricul—you know, off of farms—

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: At that point, at that time. Um, uh, so they wanted to go to the—go down to the main campus. I wanted to stay home 'cause I really wanted to start a farming operation. So, I chose to stay there and, uh, that allowed me to rent ground and raise some cattle. And, uh,

my wife to—today, my wife—er, my girlfriend at that point, she went to North Central Technical School in Mansfield and she's a registered nurse today—

DA: Cool.

RB: She's a surgical R.N. in Wooster Hospital—

DA: Oh, wow.

AH: Hmm.

RB: For about twenty-four years.

DA: That's awesome.

RB: And we've been married, uh, I think twenty-three and a half. Um, so we farmed, you know, her and I even bought some cattle—some heifers when we were dating together—

DA: Really?

RB: And they ended up being a down payment on our first farm.

AH: Hm.

DA: That's so cool.

RB: Uh, we sold those, and, uh, that helped fund our first purchase of our first farm. And then I got out of ATI, I had a degree in Ag business and agronomy and I went to work for Shear Farm Incorporated, which was down by the fairgrounds; it was a machinery dealership. Uh, it was the mother company of what we know as Shear Equipment today and I sold machinery for about one year there, then there was a company in Ashland that the general manager—his board of directors, I had done business with them—and they recommended that he hire me to run their machinery department. So, he came knockin' on my door and wanted to give me a job at age twenty-one—

DA: Wow.

RB: And that was an interesting event. So, so, uh, I took a job with him and then that company bought, uh—I worked in that machinery division for probably a year and then they bought Rutten Amstutz in Smithville and put it into their company, so I had a degree in agronomy so he sent me there to work in agronomy and then in August of 1990, uh, I went to farming full-time.

DA: Okay.

RB: And then we bought some farms along the way and rented more ground and so now we're at 2011, and here I am.

DA: Wow.

RB: So. That's, uh—

DA: That's your...history. That's quite impressive.

AH: Mmhmm.

RB: That's—I mean, I could talk to you for hours between 1990 and 2011, but I'll let you drive this ship now.

DA: All right, well I'm sure we can do a lot of that. But, um—

AH: [unclear]

RB: Eh, we—

AH: Um—

DA: Yeah.

AH: All right. How has the business aspect changed over the years? Like, the—just the business of buying and selling, compared to what it was when you started?

RB: Okay.

AH: With now?

RB: A lot of different, um, uh—a lot of different ways—stop your recorder a minute...

AH: All right.

[Tape interruption]

DA: Yeah, it's good.

AH: 's it good?

DA: I think so.

RB: Okay, repeat your question.

DA: All right. So who are your main—er, yeah—

RB: How things have changed—

AH: Just the business. How's the business changed?

DA: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

RB: [clears throat] Well, when I, when I started in full-time, you know—margins, uh, it was, well, it's interesting. [clears throat] Because at that point in my life is the start-up site of things, you know, it was capital intensive then, it's capital intensive now. Uh, uh—what we receive for our crops, for our—you know, whether it was cattle or, or grain or forage or hay—whatever product we were selling, prices were much lower than they are today. Our input costs were lower—

DA: Mmm.

RB: But our margins were very tight. Um, and in the early years, the—the economics, a lot of times, sometimes it wasn't, uh, how much you were gonna make, it was almost how—how much you could—what could you budget not to lose. I mean, it was a negat—you're working in a negative, uh, uh, environment financially sometimes.

DA: Hmm.

RB: And probably moreso for us because we didn't have anyone to fall back on—

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: And we were entering a very capital-intensive business and, uh, really we had no, you know—my Dad, he's just as happy as can be, my parents today. But he did try to discourage me from doing this—

DA: Mmhmm.

AH: Hmm.

RB: Because, uh, he said there's easier ways to make a living.

DA: That's really [unclear]...

RB: And, I say this humbly, but, you know, I'm not dumb: I'm an intelligent individual, so I could've went into many other industries and made lots of money. And I think my father saw that.

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: So, my wife and I were—you know—we, we really...I bought my first farm when I had two hundred dollars in my checkbook and I actually bought it and come home and told my wife.

DA: [Laughter]

RB: So, uh, you know, it was—I stacked the deck against...the deck was already stacked because of the business environment, the same as it would be today.

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: To enter business like this, but I stacked the deck even more because I was just bull-headed enough that we're gonna do this.

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: Um, and my wife was behind me. I don't know—you know, she says she always wanted to marry a farmer. She never told me that until this year.

DA/AH: [Laughter]

RB: She got into a dialogue with someone and it came out, she said, "Well, I always wanted to marry a farmer, so I did." Um, so, you know, I—all these years, I've never heard her say this—

DA: Hmm.

RB: But she has always put up with me, see?

DA: [Laughter]

RB: And I always thought that she was putting up with me for, you know, as the—as the lead role in this farming operation, it may be the male side of it, you know. I always—and my perception was that, that she, you know, she wanted to acquire a farm and land and, and, uh, everything that goes with that, but I'm beginning to think that all along, no, she just wanted a farmer.

DA/AH: [Laughter]

DA: She could've had any of them.

RB: So, so, you know, the disappointing factor of that—you know, a lot of—especially the female side of the world will say, "Well, that's just so nice and romantic" and whatnot—

DA: [Laughter]

RB: But, then, from my side of it, it's like, "So, you mean I'm out here, like—where were you at in this whole picture?" [Laughter]

DA: [Laughter]

RB: You, you, you didn't want this as bad as I did—

AH/DA: [Laughter]

RB: However, she invested, um, emotionally. She invested, uh, uh—she prob, she invested more emotionally in it than I ever did because I was, uh, I was never turnin' back. Like when we would get scared or fearful, or like—

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: Okay, this isn't goin' our way, you know, to me, it didn't matter. 'Cause, there wasn't—I'm in it, I'm just moving forward.

DA: Right.

RB: To her, she would've been like, "Are we doing the right thing? This is stupid," you know.

AH: Mmm.

RB: Duh-duh-duh-duh. I mean, you know, I could just see those emotions in the tough years, uh, where that probably took a—an emotional toll on her. Um, and, you know, she committed financially just as much as I did.

DA: Right.

RB: Because, in the start-up years, you know, they want, you know, anybody that you are gonna obligate yourself to for capital, they want everything they can get—your firstborn and everything else, you know—

DA: [Laughter]

RB: So my wife signed papers all the time, where now, you know, most of the time, she probably doesn't have to sign papers.

DA: Mmm.

RB: Um, unless, you know, maybe we're dealin' with some land or somethin', but—machinery and stuff, I don't even get her involved in that—

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: Or inputs. So, takes a special woman, you know to, uh—a married couple that farms, um, to be quite honest about it, the female side of, of the farming operation is probably more directive of where that farm goes—

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: Than the male side, but they don't—but it's not what they say, it's just who they are and how they present themselves.

DA: That's really interesting. And the influence they have on you.

RB: They have serious influence.

DA: Yeah.

RB: I, I liken it to—I can liken it to a lot of different animals, uh, animal segments, um, 'n' course, I would've told you a whole different story 'n' answered this question a whole different, different—differently had I known what you were going to ask me, which, you know, would change this whole interview.

DA: Uh-huh. [Laughter]

AH: [Laughter]

RB: But I liken it to a pride of lions—I mean sometimes I joke when my wife's had enough of me, I poke at her with this sometimes, I say, "Well, it's just like a pride of lions, you know. You know, the, the big old furry male lion, you know, he just, uh, he just sets up on the hill and guards the pride and the female lions go out and hunt—

AH: Mmhmm.

DA: Mmm.

RB: And gather and bring it all in and that's kinda how the Indians did it too, you know, they're—they, they did a lot of that, uh, unless they were going to have the males, were gonna have a big hunt or somethin', they'd go out—

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: But the women, uh, gather and hunt and take care of things and look after the young and, and all the males do is really guard the pride and eat the food.

DA: [Laughter]

RB: Uh, and if you really study this pride of lions, you know, the women snap the males in their place where they need to—when and how. And so we see that—we have cattle and horses, you know, bovine and equine—and we see that in those species all the time.

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: The cow—there's always a boss cow and there's always a pecking order—I don't care if you have twenty cows on a pasture or if you have five hundred cows—five hundred dairy cows—in a free-stall barn, in confinement, producing milk, there is a pecking order from one to five hundred.

DA: Mmhmm. Wow.

AH: Mmhmm.

RB: And a dairyman could tell you how it goes, 'cause you see it everyday.

AH: Right.

DA: That's so cool.

AH: That's interesting.

RB: Um, and the same thing with horses, there is a pecking order. You know, mares rule the roost. The stallions are always the big, grand horse—the powerful horse—but, uh, a mare—the female horse—rules the roost.

DA: Hmm.

RB: So, uh, likens to a lot of the relationship of man and woman—

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: Um, uh, you know, uh, I don't know, my wife and I, we share the roost, how's that?

DA: Okay. [Laughter]

RB: All my friends, all my friends would laugh and say, "Oh, yeah, whatever!"

DA: [Laughter]

RB: My wife rules the roost quietly.

DA: Okay.

RB: Like, I guess I'd say—but how did I get from here to production costs?

DA: [Laughter] Don't worry about it.

RB: [Laughter]

AH: It's fine.

DA: It's what we're looking for.

RB: But, anyway, how has it changed? The risks are much higher. That's tough for me—every farmer's gonna tell that different. My risks were high then and they're high now. The difference then was I was working on a very small margin.

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: I needed, I needed to generate income—positive inco—positive cash flow, positive income: very difficult for me because my costs were high, my start-up costs were high, and, the, the, the margin per acre per head of cattle or whatever was very low. I struggled a lot; that was tough. Nobody ever knew I struggled other than my wife, myself, and the people invested in me.

AH: Hmm.

RB: You know, my, my financiers. Um, my wife has always told me that was my talent: I made it look easy.

DA: Uh-huh.

RB: Uh, took a toll on me, though.

DA: Yeah.

RB: I could share that with you all night, it really took a, a emotional, mental, and physical toll. My, my—I am a totally different person today.

DA: Wow.

RB: No regrets, though. No regrets, but I'm getting old enough now that I recognize how I've changed and now what do I want to do to tweak it again, you know?

DA: Uh-huh.

RB: Uh, so then once we ground through that, you know, then the markets in the last three or four years have changed somewhat to our favor. Um, but I'll tell you that our input costs, you know, what we get paid for, for, uh, a product might be—no, not so

much cattle, but let's just take grain and hay. We might be getting paid, uh, maybe twice as much as what we would've been ten years ago.

AH: Mmm.

RB: Okay? But our inco—our input costs have went up probably three and a half to four times as much. But with, there's a lot of science in this, there's a lot of technology. Our yields—our genetics have improved, um, the way that we protect our crop has improved, uh, you know, our tillage systems, um, our, our plant product that, that—our stuff that protects our crop. Um, the genetics in the seed—the potential in the seeds—um, so, we're able to raise more on less and even with the inversion of the cost of doing business versus what, what we can sell that crop for, you factor in the yield there, so you—I, I would say I enjoy a little better margins today than I did then. On the other hand, there's another—there're gonna be farmers that will tell you I'm wrong on that. That we are not any better off today than we were before.

DA: Mmm.

RB: And I can argue that side of it too, and I will: uh, our risks are much higher. Like, in the early days, if I had a bad crop, I swallowed it and had a bad crop.

DA: Yeah.

RB: Today, if I have a bad crop, if I don't have tools in place to protect myself from that, I will lose everything I have in a whiff, you know?

AH: Hmm.

RB: If you plant a crop and you nurture that crop for five to six months and you harvest that crop and you have—your, your, your environmental conditions are such that you can't raise a proper crop or, uh, the markets would go south on you, so to speak. Uh, the investment is so high that, uh, I would lose everything I had. So, what has happened: um, a lot of things have happened. First of all, you know, I used to be able to put my crops out in the very beginning—now it was less land, I had less land also—

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: You gotta remember all of that. Um, for maybe fifty-thousand bucks in the very beginning. Well, in the very beginning, my first—the first crop I put out—and I would've been responsible for forty-five acres, my father signed a note for me at the bank—you know, guaran— whatever, cosigned a note for three thousand dollars. Six month note. That was my first operating loan, okay? Now today, for me, I—I—today, I will have invested, uh, mm, to be honest—I'm gonna be honest about this statement, I—I could give you the exact numbers on this, but I would really have to go back and look. But I'm gonna give you some estimations and this could be give-er-take a couple hundred thousand—

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: Or maybe a hundred thousand, I don't know—the numbers are all different today.

DA: Okay.

RB: But you know, I—I could have invested, uh, upwards of a million dollars.

DA: Wow.

RB: Start-to-finish. Seven hundred to a million, I don't know—just, just in my annual needs, um, plus my land investment, plus my machinery investment, plus my billing investment, now we have a cattle investment again, um, so, it gets big. So, it used to be, you know—so when I tell you I bought my first farm and I had two hundred dollars in my checkbook and my wife says, "How we gonna do this?" I said, "Aw, it'll be no problem," you know? So I was managing, you know, two to five hundred dollars in a checkbook all the time, and so now, you know, it—it's the same game with different numbers.

DA: Uh-huh.

RB: It's just different.

DA: Huh.

RB: And you remember that—what makes you—one of the things that makes you, makes it work for you today is your stewardship stays the same because you remember that, you know, it was just that wee little bit you had and now it looks like you have more, but you don't.

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: Somebody—everybody, everybody's in here takin' a piece of it, today. Okay, that's—that's the input side, you know, the fertilizer cost and the seed cost and, I mean, we could get into Econ 101 and I could talk to you all day about it. And it's interesting, if you want to do that sometime.

DA: [Laughter]

RB: But not tonight.

DA: [Laughter] No, not tonight.

AH: [Laughter]

RB: [Laughter] But, but it's interesting on who all's gettin' our dollars.

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: Okay? And why the costs are higher. It's, it's interesting. It's a big world picture.

DA: Uh-huh.

RB: Um, the, uh, the crop side of things is much more volatile, like how we sell our crop because, um, it's a world market today. Um, if you wanna hear—um, I—I'm forty-five years old, I'm just gonna tell you that—so I'm a young fella, compared to alotta guys, but I surrounded myself with a lot of older farmers—a lot of 'em have died now—they were my mentors.

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: You know? 'Cause the guys my age that did farm or had the opportunity to farm, they took it for granted, you know, some of 'em are and doin' well and some of 'em left the farm, but it was something they grew up with. Where me, it was like, candy in the dish, man, I want to do that. So I befriended a lot of older guys—

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: And had great conversations with these guys. Um, just...wow. Wonderful stuff. And I, I liken it to a very—this man's passed away now, but he is a very successful farmer in this county, he was, and his son farms, and their farm is nine generations with his son today. It's, it's the oldest family farm in Wayne County—

DA: What's that one called?

RB: It's kind of a—kept secret. I'm not gonna say.

DA/AH: [Laughter]

RB: Just—he didn't, he didn't sign the papers, see?

AH: Right.

DA: You're right, you're right.

RB: But, uh, it's kind of a kept secret among 'em but it's, it goes way back—lots of history there—

DA: Wow.

RB: But he likened it—they, they were heavy in the livestock business—and he likened it, you know, that they fed, they del—they milked cows, they raised sheep, they fed cattle, they did a lot of things. But the fella that passed away, he likened it to me one day, he said, "When, when farming became difficult for him in his lifetime is whenever Eisenhower built the interstate system—"

DA: Oh.

AH: Huh.

RB: That was, the interstate system as we know it today was—an' I think an Eisenhower deal. And, uh, under his—er, he started that whole process.

AH: Right.

RB: So, what we think, you know, we can hop on this road out here and just roll, you know, he as a farmer said that's when things became hard for him because, in his life, that transportation was easy. And, the way it used to be was, okay, the guys in southern Ohio and even in this area, you know, they raised beef cattle and they, they calved in these calves and then he bought those calves and fed them out. And then there was packing plants right here in Ohio that you took your cattle, you took your cattle to Creston Livestock Barn or wherever and buyers would come and buy 'em and then you would—they would go right here and Ohio and they would butcher 'em and process 'em and then they would sell them to the stores, you know. Um, and we would go to the east coast a lot too.

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: Even with our older roads—

DA: Hmm.

RB: Okay? So he, he—this guy fed lots of cattle—he was President of the National Cattlemen's—er, uh, Ohio Cattlemen's Association, he was very influential and had a lot of cattle. So, this affected him big. All of a sudden, transportation changes. So now what happens is, um, because of our labor laws in Ohio, we drove—our government, the governess and our state—drove, uh, packing plants out of the state. They could not operate profitable because the way we interpret worker's compensation and whatnot, it was, uh, they just did not make a nice working environment for slaughterhouses.

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: So they couldn't make any money. So what happens is they go west. So, there's companies like IBP—uh, Iowa Beef Packers—XL—I could go on with a big list that set up big shops west of here—you know, west of the Mississippi, even—um, and there is a couple in the east, and that's mainly to serve the east coast and koshered beef.

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: Like the Jewish koshered beef and whatnot. So now, a lot of these feeder cattle come off of the Appalachia Mountains of Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, down through that whole neck there. Some are still fed in Ohio, but they are purchased and have to be trucked to packing plants, so, you know, farmers share the cost of that more than the consumer because it's usually you deliver your product FOB—whoever buys it. Well, the packing plant buys it, you know? So, they figure in their cost of freight against their product. So now, you've gotta haul this stuff somewhere—someone's paying for that—then they found that it's cheaper for them to move these cattle there, butcher 'em, put 'em—cut 'em up in boxed beef—it used to be Bueller's would buy it, years ago. And, you know—

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: Uh, half, uh, uh—they'd split a beef in half and they'd buy half of it; they'd do their own butchering. Well now, we cut that all up and they call it boxed beef. Well that's just beef in a box—

DA: [Laughter]

RB: The cuts are already made—

DA: Uh-huh.

RB: And then they come in and the store displays it and then they sell it.

DA: Huh.

RB: So it makes—ultimately, it makes the cost of food to the consumer in the country cheaper.

DA: Oh, okay.

RB: Because they mask—they, they can do that all in one spot.

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: Um, so, yes, our—our butchers in Bueller's don't have a job—there's not as many of 'em as there used to be, but—you know, in Iowa or Kansas or somewhere, they got a lotta jobs.

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: So it's shifted and it's because we have a transportation system.

DA: Wow.

RB: So that was the beginning, okay? In his lifetime. What changed it for me was communication because the Chicago Board of Trade, um—you know, we never knew for sure what was goin' on in Australia with wheat or Russia with wheat or Brazil with soybeans or China with whatever. Um, we didn't know any of this. I can tell you everyday what the weather is anywhere in the world and I can tell you what the predicted, uh, yields are for the crops that they raise. And I don't spend a lot of time on that unless I'm in—really looking at marketing hard, but there are people that make a living trading the spreads at the Chicago Board of Trade, buying and selling grain and, and trading on the spreads and they watch this worldwide.

DA: Wow.

RB: And so what that has done is, yes, it has given us opportunities to sell product—it, it has energized our market, it's put more volume in our marketplace, so now, it used to be if corn moved a nickel or ten cents, you were wantin' to sell corn. Well now corn, you know, might go up two dollars and down two dollars—it's, it might be a two dollar swing in the last two or three or four years because of the volatility in the financial markets, the volatility in the energy markets, and the way that we ha—have the ability in everybody's home computer to get any amount of information you want, so I can tell you that that's an opportunity for us, and I can tell you that that is a huge detriment for us—

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: Both ways, both sides. It depends on which side you're on that day.

DA/AH: [Laughter]

RB: Um, I don't like—I mean...I, I don't know. This country, this world, our culture has moved faster, um, than I emotionally can keep up with it.

DA: I agree.

RB: I'm a traditional person. Farmers are traditional. We are just, you know, it's farm—it's—I'll tell you how it is on most farms, whether they wanna tell you or not, I'm just gonna—this is how it is. It's God, family, farm.

DA: Mmm.

RB: And it's in that order. And nothing else matters. We don't care. It affects us, but if we—we do care—but if we had to, if we were forced to give up ideals and social and whatnot type of things, it would come down on most farms to God, family, and farm.

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: That's where we're at. Um, now, there's one thing you gotta realize: we're business people.

DA: Right.

RB: So, when I say "farm," that doesn't mean that I'm just gonna survive for nothin', no. Um, we have enjoyed the last few years—couple three years—um, probably a little easier environment than what we have over the last twenty and my opinion is we should.

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: You know, my counterparts—my peers that're out here, making their sixty, seventy, hundred, hundred and fifty thousand dollars a year, and they—what they have invested is a vehicle, their time, and their mind. Um, I—uh, uh, why do I need to work for less?

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: You know? Now, it's my choice to do what I do and I will work for less because I love what I do but loving something doesn't pay bills.

DA: That's true.

RB: So, you make sacrifices in your life for it.

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: When it—whenever you have to. But we are business people, agriculture is a number one industry in Ohio, it's the number one nation-wide. There is a saying by Thomas Jefferson, and I won't get it right—

DA: [Laughter]

RB: But basically, uh, an, "If, if a nation is not agrarian-based, it will die."

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: And we flirt with that because policy setting and ideal setting is not done, uh, we're outnumbered. We are efficient enough that we are a very minute chunk of the pop—just a small sliver of the population, so, our voice used to be the influential voice. The people that won the, um, the American Revolution were farmers and independent business people. The people that, that fought the Civil War were farmers and independent business people. The people that served in our, in our Founding Fathers', um, governments were land-owners and farmers and independent business people. Now we have entrenched professional politicians and crooks and put that on tape.

DA: Just [unclear] things up. [Laughter]

AH: [Laughter]

RB: Uh, and they are manipulators, um, they have lost ideals. We—the, the people before us were statesmen. You came, you served, you went home, your neighbor went and served and come home. You know, that's, that's—they learned that beha—that's why we have townships—

DA: Mmm.

RB: And Granges and, uh, community settings because our social network was with one another. So I challenge you guys as a generation and your college—as a, as a model that—when people come out here because they wanna see your farm and they wanna interview you and they wanna talk to you, there is a level of excitement with them, because I think this is really neat, okay?

DA: Sure.

RB: And I, I walk away from that, saying to myself, "Why are they missing this everyday?"

AH: Same.

RB: "Because they go home and shut their door—" like, you go home and shut your dorm door and you relax. Like, get in your chair—"aww"—it's like—you kinda, if you wanna shut your world out, you can, um. When you go home to your life, when you get through school and you start your family—whatever you're gonna do, you know—you will hit a button and open your garage door and you will pull in that garage door and you will hit that button and that door will shut and you'll never see your neighbors.

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: Maybe once a year, if you have a block party. But when you come to a farm, majority of the farmhouses, what do they have on 'em that are being used and working? They have porches.

DA: Ohhh. [Laughter] Aww.

AH: Mmm-mmm.

DA: I wanna have a porch. [Laughter]

RB: Okay. And see, see, this is a dialogue I here from non-farm type folks—and I don't, I don't saying that you are, but I mean—

DA: [Laughter]

RB: We use our porches: that's where we talk to people.

DA: Absolutely.

RB: You know, we visit, we do whatever. Um, uh, it's a small, little thing—I mean, believe me, we don't all just sit on a porch all the time—

DA: [Laughter]

RB: But in the evenings, that's where we, we enjoy the earth. We enjoy what's free to us. It's free to you guys too—it's free to non-farmers too but they don't see it. And so, um, you know, there's just a lot of things in this world that's messed up and agrarian society can fix it.

DA: I agree.

RB: Um, it just can. So, that—that's the broad s—you know, you asked me the difference between my life, beginning and end, so I've given you a little picture of that, but then all this other stuff comes up in between in my mind, so I'm gonna let you ask me another question.

DA: [Laughter]

AH: That's fine, that's great. Yeah, hmm. Mmm. [Laughter]

DA: So, you mentioned some of these older guys that you kinda befriended in your life, like your mentors. Do you feel like you have that farming community around here? Like, do you feel like you have—

AH: Hmm.

DA: That farming community around here, like, you feel like you're part of a farming community?

RB: Oh, yes.

DA: Yes.

RB: Yes, we, we talk—we, we have different venues, you know, uh, farmers—okay, this is how we do it now. Like, I'll—

DA: [Laughter]

RB: Okay, we're no different than you guys—I'll get a text message—

DA: [Laughter]

RB: From one of the—one of my farming buddies: "Uh, it's a rainy day, meet me for wings," or, "We're meetin' today for wings."

DA: Nice.

RB: Or whatever. So we have venues. Um, farmers are organized.

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: Ohio Farm Bureau Federation: it's the largest agricultural organization in the state of Ohio. Arguably one of the best. Every state has what we call "Farm Bureau." Ohio Farm Bureau's arguably one of the best in the nation, um, and if you paid attention, you know, uh, HSUS—Humane Society, uh, it's the national humane society—

DA: Mmm.

RB: You know, they came to Ohio to fight their battle.

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: Because, you know, in California they were successful at some things they set out to do and so, Ohio was another big livestock state, so they came here. But they didn't win with us—

DA: Uh-huh.

RB: Um, we feel that—

DA: What was their goal?

RB: Their goal was to shut—their goal was and is to shut down animal agriculture.

DA: Oh wow.

AH: Hmm.

RB: Period.

DA: I didn't know that was their main goal.

RB: Uh, they—they won't tell it that way to ya.

DA: Uh-huh. Not truly.

RB: But, uh, they, they are vegans is what they are.

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: And, um, they—which is okay. We're fine—you know, it takes farmers to, to support vegans, okay? But here's the catch: it's, it's—I'm not smart enough to get into this dialogue probably properly with ya, but I'll talk to you from my farm mind, you know. Um, it's a religion to them.

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: It's like, "This is what I believe. I am right, you're wrong, you will now stop doing what you're doing."

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: And, um, no, that's not what's gonna happen here. Uh, we are commanded to be sovereign over the earth and—and what's in the animals that're on the earth. We are to take care of this earth, we are to look after 'em—look after the animals and our creatures and, and our soils and our plants, and we're to enjoy them. And the part they don't want you to believe is I raise my family here. So, what am I going to—let's just say I raise chickens, er, I produce eggs or I raise chickens or I raise hogs or whatever my venue of agriculture is. If I don't do that in a proper manner, number one—number one, you know, it's not our nature—

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: To not do it in a proper manner; number two, economically, we would be dead.

DA: Right.

RB: You—we, we couldn't function. So, this is our home. We live—it's not like, you know—the name of my farm is Bakers Acres, okay?

DA: [Laughter]

RB: So it's not like we have, uh, Bakers Acres Incorporated sittin' over here and then we have our personal life off-site somewhere and so we can just bankrupt that company and move on like, you know—

AH: Hmm.

RB: Wallstreet or, or, or leftovers from business that go to Washington—

AH: Mmhmm.

RB: And support us or whatever or represent us. I mean, you know, if we lose our farm, we lose our home—

DA: Right.

RB: So the stakes are so much higher.

DA: You're invested.

RB: So they are very good at getting people to buy into, um, getting people to buy into a situation here—

AH: Yeah.

DA: [Laughter]

RB: Into an environment that's not true.

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: Um, and it's just not true. Uh—first of all, anyone that raise livestock, okay, you don't invest money, time, and livelihood and family into something you don't wanna do. We're talkin' about major investments here. We're talking about not only investments of money and investments of time. It's like—we're not talking about six or eight hours a day, we're talking about long days and you gotta like it. So if you're not—if you're doing something that isn't right or not proper, it's—you're not gonna like it, you know? That's just normal and, uh, but they've been somewhat successful in convincing people otherwise.

DA: [Laughter]

RB: So they came to Ohio and we organized and we fought 'em and, and [clears throat] we, we feel like, at this point, we have kept them in check. Did we beat 'em? No, 'cause they're gonna continually keep coming at us. They have literally millions of dollars to work with—

DA: Huh.

RB: And we do not have that kind of money to fight 'em. So if you look at their coffers and you look at ours, man, we won big time. But, we—it's a battle we have to engage everyday in a positive manner toward consumers—

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: Um, it—really that's the only way we're gonna beat 'em.

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: Uh, because, they're dealin' with a different belief system and we don't understand it, I think—

DA: Yeah.

RB: Is what it amounts to.

DA: Were they successful in California?

RB: Um, short-term they were.

DA: Oh, okay.

RB: For, for some certain thing—I would say yes in, in some things they were successful at, but I think the pendulum will swing. See, when they come to Ohio, the whole country was watchin'—

DA: Uh-huh.

RB: And, you know, I would get phone calls from farmers in Kansas and Nebraska that I know that I hadn't talked to in years and they would just call me and say, "Boy, Roger, you guys keep it up. Keep that fight up out there," you know? Everybody was watchin'.

DA: Wow.

RB: And so, California—I interviewed some farmers in California when I was out there at a farm show—some locals—and I said, "How'd you guys let this happen?" And one old boy said to me, "Well, when you got San Francisco and Los Angeles"—he was funny, Nancy Pelosi was from California, see?

DA: Uh-huh.

RB: And, and this had nothing to do with HSUS but he was a comical guy.

DA: [Laughter]

RB: He said, "Well, we got San Francisco and we got LA, you know what's livin' there." That's all he said and then he went on and then he says, "And then, you've got a woman in Congress from this state, you know what she's like," and then he grinned and then he says, "And then we have a movie star for a governor"—

DA: [Laughter]

RB: "So, what do you expect comes out of this state?" [Laughter]

DA: [Laughter] Oh.

RB: But what's funny is, is that state is the number one agricultural state in the nation.

DA: Right.

AH: Yeah.

RB: And it is a wonderful place to b—if you go to California, just don't go—I'm no—San Francisco and LA, I'm sure there's—I been to both: they're fine. But if you wanna see agriculture, you go to California from top to bottom and it is a romance that you have never dreamed of.

AH: I'm sure it's beautiful.

RB: I mean, they raise everything. I mean from forages to grains to milk to, to wines and nuts and fruits and—I mean, it's all there.

DA: It's pretty amazing.

RB: It's, it's, it is arguably the number one agricultural spot in the world. Period, um. So, you know, it was obviously a place for them to—and everything's big in California—

DA: Yeah.

AH: Right.

RB: So, like HSUS can play games with that whole size thing—

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: But, you know, farms are big, but we're still fam—it's, it's efficiencies, you know. It's like, you guys aren't driving Henry Ford Model T vehicles, so why are we supposed to still operate like it's 1930 Dustbowl?

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: You know. That's the part they don't tell you.

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: Um, what was your question?

DA: [Laughter] What was our question? Oh—

AH: The farming community.

DA: So, the farming community.

RB: Okay, yeah, so yeah, we get together then through—Farm Bureau's an interesting one, we're organized. I just came back: our annual meeting for Ohio Farm Bureau was just this past week: Wednesday, Thursday, Friday. Now, each county, um, does policy. Now, I'll just tell you how that works. There's eighty-eight counties in this state. Each county—here at home, we have members—and, uh, and of course we have a Board of Directors and officers and whatnot and then we have committees from outside of that, but we do public policy—

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: And we engage our farmers and, uh—through committee, we engage our farmers—and then we also engage, uh, our local commissioners and trustees of townships and, uh, cities and municipalities and we, we develop a working relationship on, on, um, things that they would like to see, uh, through government, um, or through regulation, you know, that may have an impact on agriculture. W-we have, we develop a dialogue among all of this and so we develop our own policy at the county levels and then each one of these counties is in a district through our federation—through our Farm Bureau federation, so like in, we are in district eight, which is Wayne, Ashland, uh, Medina and Summit county, and so, uh, we have so many delegates out of each county, based on the number of active farmers. Anybody can join Farm Bureau, but the decisions and the voting and all that—

[Phone rings]

RB: Is done by, uh—[turns phone off] that's the other farmer there—

DA: [Laughter]

RB: The, the, the decision and the voting and all that is done by, um, uh, strictly the active farmers that are members because it's a farm organization and so we have a lot of people who, uh, like what we stand for—

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: Uh, or maybe land-owners or whatever—just, people that, that like us and, and maybe are from the farm or whatever and they're members. And there's a lot of reasons to be a member of Ohio Farm Bureau. So, um, so that does—like our four counties get together and we have our own caucus ahead of this annual meeting and we talk policy and decide strategy and then we go down, and each of us sit at our own table, based on the number of delegates—there's twenty-two delegates in district eight—and, uh, we vote on policy and make policy, just like a regular congress or whatever. And, so then, our

Board of Directors—then Ohio Farm Bureau has, um, a legislative team, um, and they have a center for animal and food industry team, um, and they take our policies and they engage those, um, where it needs to be. You know, they have our policy, year-to-year so they can act. If something comes up and we need to act on it, they're in a position to know where we stand—

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: Or if there's something we wanna act on, we make a policy and then they can. Um, it takes a lot of money to do that, but, uh, but we get it, we get it done.

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: And we're very organized, we're very successful at that. So, there's a lot of community; it's different—it used to be if you go way back in time, it was the Granges. You had the Granges and everybody got together, then the Granges are very weak because our social venue has changed. Some farmers have Facebook—I don't—'cause I'm—it, it just scares me, 'cause I don't understand it, I guess.

DA: It's pretty terrifying.

RB: Yeah, and then, um, uh, you know, and we—there's a lot of tweeters.

DA: [Laughter]

RB: Um, and I don't understand that either: that's another language. I never was good at language, anyway.

AH: I don't have one either.

DA: [laughter]

RB: But texting is something we use, and cell phones and we carry smart phones—

DA: For sure.

RB: And, and, uh, you know, we're very advanced in the computer world and our, our equipment—one of the challenges on a farm—this was brought up to us in one of our side meetings—you know, look at the amount of money that you invest in technology on the farm, you know: we have tractors that drive themselves, steer themselves, uh, planters and sprayers that shut off via satellite at corners and ends of fields and waterways and stuff, uh, we track yield and population as we plant and harvest: all via satellite.

RB: I mean our technology's phenomenal stuff; it's phenomenal.

DA: Wow.

RB: So, we spend a lot of money on that because there's a return, okay? And they, they always say, "And so, how much money do you spend in your office, say, on your computer?" And you know, we put—you know, it's—we really should be tradin' computers, you know, like we say we trade machinery. We should be on that every couple years or somethin'—

DA: Yeah.

RB: But none of us usually are—

DA/AH: [laughter]

RB: And it's just funny. Somebody was kinda challenging us to, to engage the whole new Smart phone and iPads and this whole new venue that's comin', you know?

DA: Yeah.

RB: So, that was talked about, um, but yeah, we're close. Our farms are bigger. We don't talk to each other, you know: the generations before us it'd be nothing to see each other a couple a times, three times a week or somethin'. We go longer—

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: Than that 'cause our kids are just as involved—

DA: Right.

RB: As other kids—

DA: It sounds like it.

RB: So, we live the same social lives that non-farmers would but the difference is, uh, when there's somebody in need in the community, we like to think that we can take care of that.

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: Um, if there's a problem out here, you know, we pull together as a community and we give and help whatever we can. Whether it's for farmers or non-farmers.

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: Um, one thing that farmers do: they tend to give a lot of food to a lot of needy people, quietly—

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: Because it's what we produce. I know farmers that take food to Salvation Army all the time—it's not just Christmas, you know?

DA: Yeah.

RB: And the Salvation Army doesn't even know who they are—

DA: Yeah.

RB: Or that they farm. So, there's a generous giving among farmers. Um...

DA: That's great.

RB: We have a problem with hearing statistics that people are hungry or are in need because we produce a surplus—we know we do—

DA: Yeah.

RB: So, we're community oriented.

DA: Cool.

AH: Alright. [unclear] Um...

DA: So, so who are your main buyers?

RB: How do we sell our products?

DA: Yeah. How does the distribution work? I don't know; this is a huge process to it.

RB: Our grain is, uh, sold, um—I sell the majority of my grain through a pretty large co-op that's part of our area here, but it's part of the large area—

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: Um, most of my grain—my corn and beans pretty much all would go to Mansfield Terminal. Then they would, uh, the corn would more than like—well, you never know. When it gets to Mansfield Terminal, they have big rail sitings, so. Used to be, it always stayed within this state to feed the livestock industry—

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: But now we have ethanol plants everywhere. Uh, we have large concentrational livestock in the Carolinas—

DA: Oh, wow.

RB: You know, chicken and hogs, uh, so it may or may not stay here. It could go to ethanol plants, it could go to, uh, where the hog and chicken industry is, it—which we have that here in Ohio too. It could stay here. Um, that's on like, corn for grain and, uh, and soybean—soybeans for grain. Um, soybeans more likely stay right here.

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: Corn would be the only thing that maybe would go out of state. Um, wheat—most of my wheat goes to millers within Ohio. I usually ship it direct to the mill—like Kent, Kent has a mill. They make—in this area, we raise a soft, red winter wheat, which is, uh, mainly for crackers and cookies.

AH: Hmm.

RB: The, uh, breads is hard, red winter wheat, which is only grown west of Mississippi.

DA: Mmm.

AH: Mmm.

RB: Um, but anything with crackers or cookies or baking-type stuff would be soft red—baking, as in, that kind of stuff, not so much breads.

DA: Mmhmm.

AH: Sure.

RB: Okay? So I'll ship direct to the millers. Uh, I'll let my co-op bargain my price—usually they can do better than I can.

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: Um, the uh—my hay is sold, uh, I would say currently, probably seventy percent of it is sold in Wayne, Holmes, and Ashland county...uh, Medina county, also. The rest of it is either in Ohio or surrounding states. Um and it'd be livestock people—

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: Um. What else?

AH: Um, maybe we should—

DA: Yeah. Are we running out of time? Let's prioritize.

AH: I have no idea.

AH: Actually, we're at fifty-seven minutes, which is great, but I don't know how long they want us to go—

DA: Yeah, let's keep going.

AH: Um, let's see.

DA: [Laughter]

AH: We've already touched on a lot of these—

DA: Yeah.

AH: How 'bout that?

DA: What's your next purchase?

RB: My next purchase—well, I've been rollin' that around in my mind.

DA: Oh yeah?

RB: "What's my next purchase?" And it's going to be probably one of, uh—well actually maybe a Christmas present or two would be—

DA: To yourself?

RB: My, my next—not to myself—

DA/AH: [Laughter]

RB: Would be my next purchase. Um—

DA: Oh, okay.

RB: That'd be my very next purchase. Now, are you talking about in the farm side of things?

AH: Yeah.

DA: Yeah, yeah.

RB: Yes, okay.

AH: [unclear]

DA: Or otherwise—

RB/AH: [Laughter]

DA: We're interested.

RB: Um, I think, uh, it's going to be one of three things. Um, well something I—that needs to do, weather permitting and when my roofer guys can do it, I got a couple roofs that need replaced.

DA: Uh-huh.

RB: Okay. It's pretty capital intensive—

DA: Yeah, new greenroofs.

RB: So, that's gonna have—that's gonna have to happen. Uh, purchases other than inputs, you know, we'll be buyin' seed corn—

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: And all that kinda stuff but, uh, like, say—you're probably interested in machinery or somethin' like that.

DA: Yeah. [Laughter]

RB: Yeah. So, like, probably one of three things, uh, uh, could be a tractor, um, could be a baler, or it could be, uh, a UTV—utility vehicle.

DA: Uh-huh.

RB: Like a side-by-side, like a John Deere Gator or a Kawasaki Mule—

AH: Right.

RB: Somethin' of that—

DA: Cool.

RB: Nature. So probably one of those three and I'm predicting that to happen maybe in the next sixth months.

DA: Okay.

AH: Yeah.

RB: Maybe one of those three things.

DA: That's exciting.

RB: Not real exciting for me.

DA/AH: [Laughter]

AH: It's not?

RB: Uh, it's—it's, uh—

DA: It's money.

RB: It's an expense, you know?

DA: Yeah.

AH: Was it at first?

RB: Yeah, it was a first, but that wears off after a while.

DA: [Laughter]

RB: Now it's just, uh, uh, part of doin' business—

DA: Yup.

RB: You know?

DA: The fact of life.

RB: And expense—and I could probably get by, um, another year without. I thought I was gonna replace one of my—the one tractor that—I'm considering. I thought I would do it this year—I didn't—and I might not and my baler, I'm on the fence about and the side-by-side, the utility vehicle, my other one's in the shop, I'm supposed to pick it up Monday.

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: So if it—it's starting to agitate me. It's a 1988, it's been in the shop twice this year—

DA: Mmm.

RB: So we'll see how we get through this. If it's a problem, that might be something I'll have to do.

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: So.

DA: Do you remember what your first big investment was on your first farm?

RB: Yup.

DA: [Laughter]

RB: The first thing I bought was an 880 Oliver tractor—

DA: Uh-huh.

RB: And that—and it had a three point on it. And I believe that tractor was either sixteen-hundred or eighteen-hundred dollars—

DA/AH: Mmm.

RB: Something like that. And it was a gas.

DA: Mmm.

RB: I didn't have it very long. I traded it in—

DA: [Laughter]

RB: On an Oliver 1655—

DA: Ah.

RB: And then, uh, I don't know, I just went from there.

DA: [Laughter]

RB: I guess I could go through all that, but I'd have to think awhile. But that was my first machinery purchase—

DA: Mmhmm. It was probably really exciting, then, right?

RB: Eh, I needed a tractor, I mean it, it—

DA/AH: [Laughter]

RB: It was—I bought something that was like, like, I would've bought that—like, to put it in perspective, I would've bought that in like, the eighties—

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: And it was built in the fifties—

DA: Uh-huh.

RB: Or maybe sixties—maybe about nineteen sixty—

DA: Old sucker.

RB: So, it's just what I could afford—

DA: Right.

RB: And how I got by, but now, we run state-of-the-art equipment.

DA: Absolutely.

RB: Yeah.

DA: Mm.

AH: I don't know—you pick one.

DA: Alex! I'm picking all of them!

AH: Well, uh, I don't know. Um—

DA: Some of these aren't even relevant anymore, now that we've looked at them.

AH: Yeah, that's what I'm thinkin', and we came up with all of these before, like, we even—

DA: [Laughter]

RB: So I've taken you down a different road, or—?

DA: Yeah, which is wonderful.

AH: Yeah, which is great, exactly what we want.

DA: Umm.

AH: [unclear]

DA: Sure, go for it.

AH: Okay. Um, uh, well this—just so you know where this question is coming from—our class is called "Sustainable Agricultures"—

RB: Uh-huh.

AH: So that's kinda the angle we're comin' from. Um, how do you feel about the organic movement?

RB: The organic movement? It's a marketing—uh, it's purely marketing.

DA: Right.

RB: The organic people won't tell you, but they will tell me, it's purely marketing.

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: Um, I am not against it whatsoever. If they can market their product that way, and get the price that they get, that's a business move—

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: You know? It's a little bit like, uh, uh, people that would be connoisseurs of beer, you know?

DA: [Laughter]

AH: [unclear]

RB: Uh, if you wanna drink Budweiser beer all your life, you know, they're gonna look at you and say, "Well, Budweiser is good marketers but these European beers or whatever, they are so much better and you are just not educated," you know?

DA: Even though they're the same thing.

AH: Yeah.

RB: "You haven't developed the right palette" or whatever—

DA: [Laughter]

RB: Um, but, uh, the organic movement, I have no issue with the organic movement whatsoever until they—if they can market themselves on who they are, and stand alone, I will support 'em a hundred percent—

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: But when they market themselves on the fact that you need to buy organic because what a non-organic farmer does is wrong or dangerous—

AH: Right.

RB: Then they—to me—to me, I give them no respect and no credibility.

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: Because we produce the safest food supply in the world, bar none. Absolutely the safest. And that is one thing that I will bet my entire livelihood on; I know it's true. Um, so for them to allude to anything like that is a lie. I'm not pointing fingers but I'm just saying, it is. Um, what I will tell you about sustainability is every farm is sustainable because if it isn't, it will not stay in business.

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: You have to do things right. You have to take care of your land and your livestock and your machinery and your family in the right manner or you will not sustain yourself or your business. Um, we can dive into a chemical side of thing—crop protection products, you know—uh, we use less today than we have ever used in our life—

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: The technology is all changed. Um, my fields, my farm, my environment is the safest place to live. It's just a safe place, it's a healthy place to live. The movement to try—it, it's a romance or an ambience is what it is because I will give you a model of sustainable agriculture. I'll give you an example: if, if the movement in this country went to—we can argue sustainable, I mean I already alluded to it. I'm sustainable, but let's just take "sustainable" in the viewpoint that I think where you're coming from, with the organic and the, and the small-plot type farmer—

DA: Right.

RB: That sells at the local market his fresh picked whatever, you know? Um, if our country, uh, would go to that movement, our people would starve to death. We cannot do that and support this country and the world. We can't do it. We're not supporting all of the world, but if the whole world was sustainable as in that movement is interpreted—

AH: Right.

RB: It would not succeed. Um, the research that has went in to the types of plants and crops that we raise today are truly God-given. I can give you an example: there are Third World countries today that people—well, there are Third World countries fifteen years ago—that people that were born there would not have proper eyesight because they do not have carotene in their diet.

DA: What's carotene?

RB: Um, carotene is what your eyes need—

DA: Okay.

RB: To, um, function properly.

DA: So, carrots?

AH: [unclear]

RB: Well, that's where carrot—carotene comes from carrots. You, you got an A! Star on the refrigerator for that one!

DA: [Laughter] Thank you.

RB: Hope the professor picks up on that.

DA/AH: [Laughter]

RB: But carotene is a vital nutrient for eyesight—

DA: Uh-huh.

RB: There are Third World countries that have raised generations with blind or poor eyesight because as we—as researchers studied that—and a lot of those come from our country—

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: Realized that there wasn't carotene in their diet. Now, they live in an environment that their soil types and their weather patterns, um, dictate the type of crops that they raise, okay?

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: Um, so what we have done is, through biotech—which the organic movement is totally against—um, we have taken the, uh, native plants of their country that they—that their diet relies on—

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: And developed, um, strains of those plants that have high level of carotene. And now the generations being born have perfect eyesight.

DA: Hmm.

RB: So, uh, for every story that they want to present, I can give you three more. First of all, if they wanna go down the avenue of crop protection, they're just wrong about that. Um, my family lives on a farm where we use crop protection products to raise our crops. My family is very healthy. I am not an athlete: I am short, fat, and bald.

DA: [Laughter]

RB: That is because—I'm healthy—but that is because, um, you know, I just like food.

DA: Oh, sure.

RB: Um, but my daughter's an athlete—

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: And, and she's a good one and she lives on this farm and she is—I would put her up against any person her age, um, and she eats what we produce and what we buy and she, uh, she lives in an environment that we have a traditional farm.

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: Um, I, I like to see plants thrive, I don't like to see sick animals. Um, I will tell you first hand, I am not—I wanna say this again—I don't want this ever taken out of context or that little piece of paper I signed will go at—attacked on that—

DA: [Laughter]

RB: But, uh, I am not against the organic movement—I do business with them—but I'm gonna tell you some real stories, some real life farm-gate stories. First one: straw becomes a shortage. Straw is a bedding: wheat straw or oat straw is a bedding.

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: Um, so they don't feed that, quote, "feed it." But when you put straw, uh, in an animal's pen, they're gonna eat some. They just do, you know, they just nibble on it or

whatever. Um, they're ruminant type animals—they, they eat it. So, when straw becomes short in supply and high-priced—there's not a lot of organic straw produced—

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: Uh, because you have to raise organic oats or organic wheat, and not many people do that—it's not easy to do and they don't do it—so, it becomes hard to get organic straw. So, the organic movement, they have these—there, there—each, depending on what association that—I can join this association and my neighbor can join another one, and the rules are different. So there's things that I can do that he can't. It's kinda like the order in an Amish church, you know, depending on what level order you're in, it's kinda what it's like.

DA: Huh.

RB: To be honest about it. So, what, what he, uh—how do I say this? Okay, so straw. Straw became hard to come by, so these organic guys'll call me and say, "Do you have any straw for sale?" Okay, so, they'd like to buy some straw, so then I'd say, "Well, where do you live? What's your name?" so they'd tell me—well, I'd knew I'd done business with them, and I, you know, we kinda know everybody or know each other—and I says, "Well, I don't have any organic straw." "Well, we may—because of the straw situation—we're allowed to buy non-organic straw now." Okay, so tell me where that works.

DA: Right.

RB: I don't say anything to them, I sell them the straw; I don't say a word about it. I don't ever tell my—say a word to my customer—but I'm telling you, from my perspective, tell me where that works. That would be like an alcoholic that's went to AA and, well, okay, now, if you're real good for six months, you know, on the seventh month, we'll let you drink.

DA: [Laughter]

RB: You know, there is no difference in my mind to that.

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: Um, especially when they attack traditional-type farming—

DA: Right.

RB: I have an issue with this—

AH: Right.

RB: They're, they're not telling the truth, um...

DA: So, you think they should be all or nothing?

RB: Um...

DA: Organic or nothing?

RB: Um, well I think if they're going to participa—now if me, it is marketing. I don't care what they are—I don't have a dog in the fight—

DA: Right.

RB: Uh, I just say, that if they wanna be organic, that's great, but then, don't sell their product based on—don't tear down non-organic people to sell it—

AH: [unclear]

RB: Sell it for what it is. Let it stand by itself. Most organic farms today that are producing milk and meat and eggs and cheese are doing that on, on a level of, uh—anybody that has enough size, that has efficiency—they, they're business people.

DA: Right.

RB: They're, they're, so they're doing that. Many farms are, um, "many" as in m-a-n-y have a traditional operation and an organic operation separate.

DA: Uh-huh.

RB: I know a lot of people know that might have an org—an organic dairy and a non-organic dairy.

DA: Yeah.

RB: And it depends on—and, and here's the reason for that: depending on where you live and what the rules are in that area, if the organic cows need treated—they get mastitis—um, and they need to be treated, say they can remove those cows—now listen to this, guys—they can take those cows out of their organic dairy, put them in the traditional dairy, treat 'em and they have to stay there for three months—two or three months—and their lactation, get healed up, treated—treat 'em with all the medicines that they use in their traditional dairy—and then they can bring them back into the organic herd. Now they weren't ever able to do that before—

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: But somebody figured out, "Well, this is a—" because if a cow gets mastitis, there's not much they can do with it organically, um, so they either producer a lower quality of

milk, higher cell counts, higher PI counts, not as good a milk at all—milk you wouldn't want to drink, really—

DA: [Laughter]

RB: That's not as good a milk, or, they have to ship the cow or sell the cow or well, somethin', do somethin'—so they figured out, "well, if we run two dairies, then we can just roll these out over here—"

DA: Wow.

RB: "And treat 'em and bring 'em back in." And sell organic milk still.

DA: So how widespread is something like mastitis that—?

RB: Well, mastitis is something that cows in the dairy industry will get—

DA: Uh-huh.

RB: Um—

DA: Pretty, pretty frequently?

RB: It's just an infection in the udder—

DA: Yeah.

RB: That creates, uh, like—I'm not a dairyman—but creates, like, chunks in the milk or whatever—

DA: Uh-huh.

RB: It's like a, it's like a bacteria or a—it's probably a bacteria. I'd just have to ask a vet, 'cause I don't—a dairyman could tell ya. I don't know but it's an infection in the udder, it gets into milk—

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: And, uh, and the cow is not healthy at that point; it doesn't produce quality milk.

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: So you have to treat that. So, uh—

DA: It's pretty absurd until y—

RB: So, you know, and I'd ask this question to anybody that asks—you know, it's common sense to me: organic versus non-organic. Most of us live—if you wanna talk marketing, I would say, you know, "Oh, I produce a natural crop." Now I—we have a traditional farm—but our crops are natural. I mean, even the products that we use are part of the plant physiology, I mean, you could argue that point all day. But look at organic—I challenge you to look at organic in your own life. You know, you are what you eat. But when you get sick to the point where you're really unfunctionable, do you begin to think, "Well, I'm going to continue to treat myself organically or maybe I'll go see the doctor and see what he says?"

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: And, uh, medicine—all types of medicine, whether it's natural or traditional—is so advanced in our world today, it's phenomenal—

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: Um, so, I would challenge anybody to say, well, if it's your own body, there will be a point that you will—if it's your life—you will go to the hospital or the doctor and say, "You know what? I need help." So, the reason I bring that up is for that industry to tear down the traditional side is not a fair statement.

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: Um, it's a very, very minute—oh my gosh, probably less than one percent—there's a lot of organic farms but in the total picture, it might be a couple percent, it's not big. But there is a lot of money being poured into that—the USDA, the federal government—is pouring money into that and the reason that they are—and I can prove this to you. I'm on a lot of boards—you never asked me that, but I'm on a lot of boards—agricultural type boards—so I see a lot of things.

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: I see things that the average public person doesn't see. And, uh, one thing in our bureaucratic organizations like the USDA and the people that fund the organic movement that, that, uh, these organic people get funding from to help their research and their movement and stuff—one of the budget requirements—now this is goin'—this gets deep; this goes back to "where does the money come from?" You know, one of the budget requirements for any of these programs—whether it's organic or not organic—is they wanna know what the public impact is.

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: So then they have to list, um, radio, television, magazine—they have to give percentages, they have to put numbers to it, and they have to put dollars to it. Um, what the impact is. So, it's pretty sad whenever I'm involved with something right now, on a

board that, you know, would help organic, dairy-based farms, uh, that they're, they're—we're in major bud—budget cuts in our country. And so there is some budget cuts going on and there is a group of people arguing for their piece of the pie and one of the tools that they're using is that this would affect—you know, this—and, then they're, this is the impact, and it is something that would help organic dairies. Well, I have a black and white mind, you know, and it's like, so, the decision now becomes do the organic dairies need help because they don't have—can they sustain these budget cuts and still thrive on their own—

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: Or do we need to help them and is it because they need help to get started up or learn a new way of doing things or is it because they need to subsidize to do what they're doing, uh, and really, it's tax dollars—it's people's tax dollars—that are being used to do that—

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: And they're using impact studies to decide and that is political—

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: That is—that has nothing to do with production, and so, you know, at that point you start to influence, um, a consumer group or a nation on organic versus inorganic or—

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: Or organic versus traditional or whatever. I don't produce an inorganic crop—my pro—my crops grow out of the soil. The, the—what I put back on 'em is what comes from the soil.

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: Um, if we would've—there're things that traditional agriculture has not done everything right, but we have changed that—we recognize that and we change it. And it's a, it's a moving target. We learn. And there are people in the organic business that are not good operators and there are people in the traditional business that are not good operators. There's also an argument out there, you know, "well, if you would go organic, you could make more money for yourself," and whatnot. I say, if you aren't good enough business-person to make it traditionally, you're probably not going to make it organically 'cause it's a management issue—

DA: Right.

RB: If you can't manage tradit—that's why your farms that have traditional production and organic production are usually very successful because they're good business-people.

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: They understand it. So, I challenge you to say that or—I challenge you to start to look at, at these different systems not from an emotional standpoint, but from what they really are.

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: Now, they're marketing 'em to you from the emotional standpoint and you have to be able to differentiate that in your mind.

DA: Definitely.

RB: As far as a, uh, you know, people feeding themselves, now, I think there's a lot to be said for a generation that doesn't know how to raise a garden or doesn't know how to feed themselves—

DA/AH: [Laughter]

DA: Absolutely.

AH: Yeah.

RB: You know.

AH: Yeah, if you wanna talk about that, I'd love to hear about that too.

RB: I mean—

DA: We really gotta wrap up a bit—

AH: Yeah—

DA: A future [unclear]—

RB: I mean, you know, that, that's—you're talkin' to a farmer here that I make my living, this is my business. You know, I make my living—I, I, I am a production-oriented farm, um, I have created an environment that I work in that I really like. I've created a job that I like, you know? I've—that's what I do. Um—

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: It has to be farming but I love the land. The soil is just—the letterhead on my, my, my uh, stationary: "Our soil, our strength." That's what we are. Um, actually, I can show

you. This is like a—I can give you—this isn't my letterhead but this is like what we do our billings on and stuff—

AH: [unclear]

DA: Oh, cool.

RB: Our delivery—that's our deliveries.

AH: Cool.

DA: Thanks.

RB: But—I can give you a blank one when you leave. But anyway, um, but I will tell you that we as a nation need to know how to feed ourselves—

DA: Yes.

RB: Um, if you wanna talk about somethin', I've got a, uh, perfect argument, um, for organic versus traditional. I'm not against organic: they can organic all they want. They can all do natural all they want, but let the traditional people thrive too, and I'm gonna tell you why. We live in a time—since the Gulf War—we live, uh, some people say 9/11, I'll say the Gulf War—we live in a time of national security in a whole different venue, you know. The Japanese hit Pearl Harbor—I think that's comin' up here pretty soon, whenever the anniversary of that was—

AH: December—

DA: December 7th—

AH: 7th, yeah.

DA: Yeah.

AH: Mmm.

RB: 7th, is it? The Japanese hit Pearl Harbor but they never came to the mainland, but that's a whole generation there—you know, why didn't they? Do you know?

DA: Mm-mm.

RB: Do you know—this is on record, this is on historical record—can't tell you the guy's name, but the, the, the commander, the leader of the Japanese—either the army—I think it was the army—or it could've been their, their so-called dictator-president, whatever. It's quoted in history, you can go look it up—

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: They never came to the mainland because they were not gonna invade us. We didn't know this till after the fact. They were not going to invade us because they knew that we all had guns and they knew that from the standpoint of Western movies and whatnot—

DA/AH: [Laughter]

RB: Um, you know, Hollywood, probably, had something to do with that, but also we claimed that land and whatnot, and they knew we all had guns, and they were afraid of that.

DA: Hmm.

RB: And, and he made—you go look this up sometime—he made a comment about this. So, let's fast-forward to our generation. 9/11 or whatnot, you know, now we can communicate, you know, we can googlemap the Middle East or whatever you wanna do, we can see things and our "Big Brother" government can do it in real time, and uh, uh, so now we have all these venues, and all this biotech and all these things that we can—we're bottling water which is just crazy to me for one reason: that's a marketing scheme.

DA: Yeah.

RB: Who would ever give a dollar for a bottle of water twenty years ago?

AH: Right.

DA: Absolutely.

RB: Your generation thinks nothing of it. You buy a bottle of water, you know. My daughter—you buy a bottle of water. My wife, it's convenience for her.

DA: It is convenient. Yeah.

RB: I'm just like, "My lord! I produce water here!"

DA/AH: [Laughter]

RB: I—I harness it, you know? I have like, wells, and I have filters and I have all this stuff—we have good water!

DA: Just put it in a cup. [Laughter]

AH: [Laughter]

RB: Exactly! So, but you wanna talk about national security, I've always said to every—every, every time I drink out of a bottle of bottled water, I say to myself, "They could poison me now."

DA: [Laughter] Absolutely.

RB: Do you know how many people they could poison in a day? It's phenomenal. Um, so, I'm going to talk to you about a couple of different things. You started in about gardens—that's kinda where we're headed, or feeding ourselves—but, but, uh, the first thing I want to tell you is national security, we need to always produce our own food supply. We are at a point right now with, because of regulation and their—if, if we're not allowed to produce food in a manner that we know how to, it will come from other countries. Now, it already does, you know, convenience, you know—now, I love Bueller's Milltown grocery store. It's the only place in the—I know of, you can buy anything from anywhere in the world in there, any given time of season. You know, you get your vegetables from Mexico in the winter, wherever, you can buy cheese from Switzerland, whatever you want to do. Well, um, it all comes with a price—

DA: Mmm.

RB: But, if we cannot produce our food—staple food here—it doesn't matter how big our army, it doesn't matter how big our technology is, how far our missiles can go, we're done because the borders are protected here, better than anywhere in the world. But when we start to import food from unsecure areas, such as China or wherever else it could be, you have just opened yourself up to be at the mercy of an enemy. That is a very—I, I look at that as if there's never one reason why a farmer shouldn't thrive in a country, right there it is. The Battelle, the Battelle Institute, they live—they're an organization—number one research company in the world—uh, southwest of Columbus—they, there are nineteen known pathogens that can be put into the air to kill us from a terrorist standpoint. They developed these boxes—this is not a real highly known deal, but one of the organizations I'm in, the leader of Battelle came and talked to us and it was somethin' he started to talk about. He said, "I shouldn't tell you this, but I'm going to."

DA/AH: [Laughter]

RB: But I found it very interesting. Um, they have a contract with the government to develop these boxes to sense the air and what's in it. They surround our borders—you can't, you see 'em, but you don't know what they are. I mean, you don't even—they blend in. They're not very big and they just look like something and you just walk right on by.

AH: Hmm.

RB: When the Superbowl is put on, they move these boxes to surround a major area of the Superbowl to—this goes on twenty-four/seven in our nation—

DA: Interesting.

RB: Okay? Because there's nineteen known pathogens that can kill us in the air, we could just start dying and not know it. We live in a good country—I don't care. You wanna listen to the crap everyday, you go ahead, but it's the right people—you know, our military is still protecting us. Um, so, if something like that—that's something I never thought about. I never thought about nineteen known pathogens that could kill me. This guy, you know, I was just like, "Wow." So, I look at our food supply as how important that is—we need to be able to operate in a business environment that we can produce a healthy, affordable food for our country. That's national security. Now, we also need to know how to grow it at our house because if there ever comes a time and you'll be able to feed yourself, and I think—

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: That's a personal responsibility: that is not a responsibility of our government or anybody else. That is your own personal responsibility. You need to know how to survive yourself. Period. If banks are shut down, if you go off the grid, if you can't go to the grocery store, whatever, you need to know how to survive without taking advantage of someone else. It's here to do it—

DA: Mmhmm.

RB: It's just a matter of changing your thought process. You know, farm kids can certainly survive. They know how. You asked me the question about the organic thing; I want you to look at that wall there. "Everyday is an Earth day to a farmer—"

AH: Huh.

RB: There's a picture there of a farmer—he's holding a soybean plant—there's a picture of a farmer holding a pig—

DA: [Laughter]

RB: He's a nutritionis—a, a nutrinit—a nu—nutritionist, bio-engineer, environmentalist, but he's a farmer—

DA: Nice looking guy. [Laughter]

RB: "Keeping our land a great place to live"—that's a picture of a farmstead. And there's a picture of a farmer in a wheatfield. When you make your living from the land, you take care of it, 'cause you have to. And then, there's another one behind you that shows a farm family—husband, wife, and two children—"Our farmers—Ohio farmers are naturally resourceful." That's our resources, you know, is our family and our farm. So, we're not gonna do anything that's going to endanger us or anyone else and that is, that's our message, you know. We wanna, we want you to eat affordably and eat safe. And I think there's a whole mix-up sometimes that out here that that's not what we stand for.

DA: Mmhmm. Cool.

AH: All right.

DA: Well, maybe we should cut this already?

AH: Yeah, I guess so. That's a good place to—

DA: [Laughter] Yeah, thank you so much—

RB: Okay.

DA: For talking to us. We really appreciate it.

AH: Yeah.

DA: It's been really interesting learning about your whole operation and your thoughts on everything.

RB: Okay.

AH: Absolutely.

DA: And we can't wait to share it with our class.

RB: I didn't get into the business side of things—

DA: That's [unclear].

AH: That's okay.

RB: As deep as I could, but—

AH: That's alright, I mean, we got—

DA: We got plenty of—