

Ecosystem Services and Idaho's Farmers

Interview Thirteen

I: All right, let's begin with a little bit of background information. Please tell us a little bit about how you got into the farming business.

R: My family ranches in Texas, and we have been on the same ranch since the 1870s. When I graduated from a university in the South, I went to work in California in the vegetable crops for a company and then a different company, the French fry outfit hired me, not too long after that, like about a month after I started. Generally speaking in the United States row crop agriculture in the western United States is the most advanced there is. Have made significant studies in 1984 and 1985 on a farm in Farmington, so I am very familiar also with what they do there. So I farmed as a kid working for, I say kid, you know 22-23, working for a company in row crops, working at an agriculture distributor, and then at another company with potatoes.

I: And how long have you or your immediate family been farming in this area?

R: Since 1982.

I: What do you grow?

R: Potatoes and carrots. Up here, potatoes and carrots actively right now. I've also grown trees and alfalfa. I do organic farming, so the plots are relatively small; but it is less than 300 acres.

I: In what ways, if any, has urban expansion or any nearby construction affected you and your farm?

R: Not at all. Okay, so we can talk about that real quick. I also am Idaho smallest potato grower shipper. There is only like 26 potato shippers left in Idaho. When I started in 1982, there were probably 60; so there is a third of them. We are a little bit different than the other guys. The organic guys really try to find. We find farms that the commercial guys don't want to farm, right, because it does not fit their footprint. So it tends to be smaller acreage and it tends to be kind of obscure. So you find 15 acres down on the Snake River and the Egan area, if you will. You find the valley farms that are small little plots off the canals. Does that make sense what I'm saying? Okay, so then urban expansion in Eastern Idaho is not a problem, not at all.

I: Do you have any current plans to sell or lease part of your farm in the future?

R: I lease everything now.

I: Do you have any idea what you will do with your farm when you stop farming it yourself?

R: The farms in Eastern Idaho, I don't know if my children will continue farming organic or not. I just do not know.

I: Will they farm on your farm?

R: The ranch in Texas has been in the family since the 1870s and we won't ever let that go. There will be somebody 150 years talking to somebody from my university and they'll say, the farm has been in the farm since the 1870s and we will never let it go. It's a little bit different creatures.

I: So you say that they probably won't farm here in Idaho.

R: I just do not know. This son is only 14. My other son is an engineering student. My daughter likes aquaponics. We do aquaponics also. That's what she likes. So I do not know.

I: How important would it be to you that your farm remains an agricultural operation?

That would be important, right.

I: Have you implemented any conservation practices into your farming operation?

R: Oh yes. So here's what we do. This is good chatter now. On the organic farms, we do in terms of water we don't apply any fertilizer. It is really whatever that ground produces that ground produces. So we might plant like radishes in the fall and till them under. In the south, we would call that a green manure crop. Up here, you would call that a cover crop. So that sort of conservation practice we do. So radishes they grow 30 days. It's no big deal. They produce all of those greens and whatnot and you just disk them under at the very end. It breaks down over the winter and off you go. That's probably the number one. And it is incredibly inexpensive to plant and you don't have to do anything to it. Really. You water it once or twice and you have a radish crop in the fall in this area. Does that help you? So that's what we do there.

I: Is there any other that you may think of?

R: So water in Eastern Idaho is as cheap as it is anywhere in the world, maybe cheaper than anywhere in the world. California would trade their whole state for the water that we have in Eastern Idaho. The big commercial farmers that have wells, they have done a lot of conservation with their mainline systems and their pivots and everything; because they are worried about energy. They want to put on just the right amount when they put it on and that's what they want to do. They have removed their end gun so they don't have a bunch of overspray and that sort of thing. They are just really farming underneath the pivot. Then Walmart with the Falls River Coop and I participated on this project but in a different way. Walmart has a grant to the Falls River Coop; and they are doing energy studies and paying a part if the farm would go ahead and upgrade their mainlines and their delivery systems to reduce friction and whatnot. Falls River Coop is doing that. They have been doing that for two or three years. I participated in that project, but in a different way, more in an admin way. That's why I know about it. I call them the valley farms, the canal farms. The reason the big farms have moved away from the canal farms is they don't want to argue with their neighbor over water. They've known this family for four generations, 60 years, and they just don't want to argue about, well I've ordered water on

next Tuesday. Are you going to take my water. You're not going to take my water. I ordered water on Monday. They have to coordinate that with the canal systems. For a guy like me, that's why those small little plots of ground open up, is just because they are just I can't take my equipment in there and farm 40 acres. I like John and I don't want to argue with John and I gotta go to church with John and I don't want to be arguing about water. Idaho with the canal system is very good and efficient; because you order from the canal company what you want and they know exactly what to send you and they know exactly what you want. Any water that the canal companies do not use goes straight back into the river; which goes straight back into the aquifer or flows into the Columbia River and off it goes into the ocean. Eastern Idaho is really incredibly unique about the way we do the water. It's just incredible. What's interesting about the canal farms, and I call them more the valley farms, the canal farms is that your energy expense is nothing; cause you don't have to lift the water more than 4 feet. So you have incredibly low energy. I can tell you to irrigate one acre of ground is probably. Let me think here for a second. To irrigate one acre of ground on a typical row crop up here, carrots, potatoes, whatever, probably takes \$8/month in energy. It is nothing. It is absolutely nothing to do off a canal farm. It is easy.

I: I know you are an organic farmer, but do you use any pesticides or herbicides on your farm?

R: Zero. Zero.

I: So, the use of GE (genetically engineered – also sometimes referred to as GMO) seeds has been in the news a lot recently, but the coverage only rarely discusses how American farmers are being impacted – either positively or negatively – by this technology. Has the use of GE seeds affected you as a farmer, and if so, how? Are you currently using any genetically engineered seeds?

R: God, no. Here's my opinion. I think it is fantastic. There's isn't a Coca Cola sold in the world that does not have GMO product in it right because of high-fructose corn syrup. So everybody is in that game. I have no issues with it at all. Frankly, I think it is probably going to be the future of agriculture. But there are certain markets, mainly Asian, where there is a great resistance to GMO products, and consequently with its primary crop potatoes stays out of that world. Simplot has just recently developed themselves a little potato called the Innate potato and it's gaining traction. McDonalds has said that they will take it. The Simplot guys are out actively looking for farmers to raise this seed, to raise this potato; but they are getting no traction in Idaho. They got guys in Kansas and Nebraska and everywhere else getting ready to raise this seed for them, raise these potatoes. It is going to take a company like Simplot. If it wasn't for J.R. Simplot, the man and his company that invented the frozen French fry, Idaho's potato industry today would look exactly like it looked in 1963. All the growth in the Idaho Potato Industry since 1965 has been because of two French fry companies, Simplot obviously number one and Lamb Weston number two; which is now called ConAgra. All the growth. The fresh has not grown at all. As a matter of fact, it has diminished. Back to GMO, it's the future of agriculture. The issue is not GMO. The consumers, they might be a little anxious about GMO; but only if they think they can get something that's non-GMO. When they sit and reflect, the smart consumer, they realize that their bread, their Coca Cola, Mrs. Butterworth's syrup, anything that's using high-fructose corn syrup, they are applying. They are actually more anxious about pesticides and herbicides and

how they are applied to their crops. If you asked them, if you said rank this stuff, they would say I don't want any chemicals number one. They might not want to pay \$5/lbs. for organic potatoes. They'd rather pay 39 cents/lb.; but they'd probably say I'm worried about that. Then they'd probably say number two maybe I'm worried about GMO. It's not a big deal to them, consumers that reflect. Now what the consumers don't realize either is that the cost of the pesticides and herbicides is so high; and the label requirements are followed to the letter because nobody can afford to get their crop rejected. So all of the commercial farms are erring on the safe side in terms of chemical applications. What the industries need to do is a better job of residual testing. So they are telling people that it's zero. We've tested to parts per billion, parts per trillion and it's zero. There's no trace of it at all. That's what I would recommend commercial farms do. The real issue is more antibiotics in beef and cattle, chicken. That's what we face on the ranch in Texas. It's much more of that.

I: As far as Simplot gaining some traction with the new potato, do you think that's because the type it is, where it is not an HT or BT?

R: That's right. All they've done is they have not added anything to the DNA strand. They've just taken a couple away. Frito Lay, they have developed a chipping variety potato. I think more than one. For Frito Lay, Simplot has. They've got theirs going. I think there are a few others that are going for some other companies. I think that's exactly right. I think the Simplot people are brilliant. They were brilliant in the mid 1960s, when they invented frozen French fries. They are brilliant with this too. Not only is it going to improve farmer returns and improve the quick service restaurant returns, it is also going to open up an entire industry of fresh cut or minimally processed potatoes. What they've turned off is the discoloration, the bruise and the discoloration. Those are the two things you need to have turned off. They are smart. They are incredibly smart. They know what they are doing. Everybody in Idaho should send them a Christmas card every year for what they have done with the Idaho economy. It has been amazing.

I: Turning now to the subject of environmental change, have you noticed any changes in the environmental conditions in your area that seem beyond normal variation from year to year?

R: Here's what's funny. Water testing is hilarious. Here's why it is hilarious. I am not joking. I was in a conversation with a farmer three weeks ago. He is farming at such a level that he has to do water testing. We are just chatting like this. I'm not even sure how I got out there. He is like gosh these government regulations I had to do water samples. I was like oh how's that going. It's going great. How's it going great? I go up to the top of the Snake River and get my samples up there. I'm like really? He's like yeah. These guys ? getting us water, these water samples. Now that to me is hilarious. The organic certification, if I say I got this three-acre farm right here. This is five acres in front of us. We say here's this five-acre farm. I'll have to write a plan that looks like the New Testament. They'll go out there and they'll sample. Then the ditch bank will be going down the side and they'll sample all along the ditch bank. The first time I saw this four or five years ago I was like why are you sampling the ditch bank. Weed control. Because if you are spraying Roundup down the bank then it is probably coming into your field. I was like okay, okay. In the organic world, it is a big deal and it should be. I am listening to this water testing and I'm just laughing. I'm thinking this is so funny. If he's doing it, probably everybody is doing it. That's a little bit of an exaggeration. The guys that are pumping out of wells, they

can care less. There's nothing wrong with their water. The guys that are coming out of the canal I was just laughing. Did I help answer your question. I think that the water testing is an over-reaction to what the boys and girls are doing in Salinas. I tell all of my friends you never ever ever eat a bag of organic spinach. You just do not do that. Because they'll kill somebody. The Salinas leaf crop people will kill somebody in the USA every other year. Y'all can probably see the studies of that. We've had more food-borne illnesses trace back to crops out of Salinas California over the last two years and its leaf vegetables than anywhere in the United States. The cantaloupe business in Kansas or Colorado a few years ago, that was terrible. That was just poor cleaning and those people deserve to go out of business. What the lettuce guys do in the organic world is completely unsafe with what they call organic tea and that fertilizer that they brew and how they apply it and I know some of those people and I am stunned that they do it and I am stunned that they take those kind of risks. But they are all LLC. They'll kill somebody. They'll bankrupt that LLC. Two years later, they reopen that building. They fire off. Their ground goes to commercial lettuce in a name that's not the name of the LLC and they never miss a beat. Even though I grow organic crops, I tell all my friends don't ever eat organic spinach ever, ever, ever. If you have friends that are eating it, tell them to stop; because I have seen how that is grown and that is the most dangerous stuff. Let's go back to regulation. We get these food-borne illnesses out there. Everybody is talking about water delivery, this, that, and the other thing. The next thing you know, we get this blanket regulation everybody has to water test. It's like oh, come on. It's like you are not. We all know what the problem is. Somebody needs to sit down and say it out loud. The thing is the forty people that are in the lettuce industry in Salinas California are all millionaires. They control the California Department of Agriculture. Their voice is such that they can say well it's not my problem it's an industry problem. So you gotta go test the water that the guys and girls are putting on their potatoes in Idaho. Everybody in Idaho shakes their head like are you kidding me. Have you seen the Snake River? Have you seen it? Have you seen how pure this is? It's like, you know, there's like 400,000 people up here, there's nobody. Here's another regulation problem in Idaho. You ready? The Idaho fresh potato industry has not grown. It has not grown since the mid 1960s. In 1959, 1950, there was 20,000 potato farmers according to the ISDA potato statistics. The last census, which was done a few years ago, there is 782 potato farmers. Since 1950, 1959, I can't remember exactly, we've lost 93% of the potato farmers in Idaho. The ?farmers, we've lost 30%. Idaho overall, we've lost 30% of the farmers. Idaho potato farmers we have lost 93% of them. The Idaho potato industry is so Idaho state bureaucratically regulated, they have strangled it. Now if somebody comes up with an innovative potato for an innovative market, they won't be able to get it there in time; because the Idaho potato bureaucracy. It's the state government now. This is not federal. Will tell them that the bag that they are getting ready to put that potato in, the word Idaho Potato is printed too small. It has to have the Idaho potato seal. The bag company will say well look if you can't buy. We'll make you, how many bags do you need? 100,000 Okay, we'll make you 100,000. Oh, by the way it's going to be \$2/bag. If you can buy 20,000,000 bags like Potandan then yeah we'll charge you 5 cents a bag. We are so over-regulated in the Idaho fresh potato industry that the group that they thought the marketing and the advertising fund would save we've lost 93% of them. Now if you go to Simplot, you go to Lamb Weston, you go to McCain, you say you gotta print the Idaho Potato on our bags. Say no. You gotta print it on your box? No. They'd say. You know what if they ever told us we did we'd close this French fry plant and move to another state cause Wisconsin will pay us to go there, and they grow a fine russet there. They say, you know what, we'd expand our plants in the Columbia Basin; cause those Washington potato

farmers are dying for us to get down there. Our RDO is looking for somethin for his farm in Winnemucca. We built a French fry plant down there. He'd build a plant for us. So 60% of the potato products that are sold out of Idaho have no designation about Idaho. It's only the fresh. They've so regulated the fresh that they've killed the Idaho potato fresh farmer. if you look at your prices received by grower across the states, Idaho is consistently in last place. The return to the farmer is in last place for years now. They also have the highest regulation. The other thing is the Idaho potato industry has said we can't sell any potato, those little consumer potatoes. If it does not weigh at least 4 ounces, it cannot go to the grocery stores. What the state government has done, with their bureaucracy, is they have guaranteed a low cost supply product to a particular industry sector, being the dehy industry. So this is where I laugh. I am truly a conservative; but I am incredibly progressive and compassionate on social issues. Where I laugh is I'm like wait a minute Idaho says it is a conservative state; but yet its government regulations are subsidizing certain sectors of the potato industry. If we go to Colorado, we go to anywhere else, they are selling those beautiful little 2 and 3 ounce potatoes, popcorn. Idaho potato farmer has to sell them to the dehydrator. right now, the Idaho potato farmer cannot sell them. So they are literally we call it taking them to the rocks. They are dumping them out there on the rocks and it will be millions of pounds before this is is all done. It will happen this summer. It will happen next summer and it happened last summer. So there was an incredible amount of government regulation, government interference from the Idaho potato Commission and it's ridiculous. They are a quasi-governmental agency.

I: Around your farm, have you noticed any changes in the environment like wildlife or first and last frost dates or anything?

R: That's an excellent question. Idaho has gotten all this weather, all this great weather. We look like Portland right. We've gotten all this rain. So the climate studies that I have read have said that the long-term thing, and I read this about two years ago, is that the drought that is occurring in California and Arizona and parts of Nevada, that that weather system is going to bring more rain to Washington and Idaho. I think everybody in Washington and Idaho would agree with that. It does look like the growing season is longer. Certainly, over the last two or three years, all of us are like we've never planted our potatoes this early. We've never had these kind of long falls. We've never had this little snowfall. Everybody is saying that in eastern Idaho in the last 24 months. Science tells us that it is this weather system. The drought that is coming to California is bringing us more water and we're elated. I nearly took a picture of Palisades about a month ago; because I have never seen it that high. The water was within ten feet of the top of the dam. I was like I gotta take a picture of this. I gotta take a picture of this. Now you go look at it, it's like maybe 40 feet. But you can see where the water level was; cause you can see the debris that's up there and you can see how far it is. Wildlife. Here's what organic farmers do. You got bunnies. You got little bitty rabbits. You have to decide. Particularly when you've got a bunch of carrots. Potatoes are a little bit different. These people. Animals really don't eat potato leaves. Bunnies love carrots. So what I do is I plant a four-row band of corn around all of my organic farms. I'm just hoping that that is ample. I'm hoping that the creature that is not in there when we are planting. The creature is on the outside. The creature believes that that corn is plenty nutrition and does not need to make its way out into the field. I've got videos of bunnies running around at the side of the fields and the rows and we don't shoot 'em and we don't poison them. It's like it's okay. That's how I handle it. I have had

guys ask me and I'm like this is my tradeoff. I'm hoping. It costs nothing to grow bad corn. Really. Corn is another one. It's like my gosh you can give it no water, it will get to 18 inches all by itself. Then just the over-spray alone will produce scabby-looking corn. I'm not selling it. I'm raising it for food. I've not noticed a change in wildlife. Actually, even our ranch in Texas, which is not organic. We now have deer down there. It's several thousand acres; but for the first time in my life my son out there saw a deer down in one of the wooded sections last week. I was like wow. The ranch is like 90 miles south of Dallas. Wow. This is incredible. I don't know if it getting pushed that way because of urban expansion or what.

I: The climate, the rain you mentioned.

R: I love the rain. I might be the only one. Last year it rained so much in August, that it really kind of stunted the growth of the potato industry, the fresh potato industry, stunted the growth of the potato. It really has troubled the commercial farmers. Is that what you were getting ready to ask?

I: What do you think is causing these changes?

R: I think it's whatever is this weather pattern. Do I believe it's man-made? I think that man has contributed to it. I don't know how we could pump all this stuff in the o-zone and something not go wrong or we are not contributing to something. I think that senator from Oklahoma is an idiot, who took the snowball into the senate floor of the house or whatever he did in February and wanted to talk about the snows. I thought what a complete idiot. He ought to go to California and look at what climate change or whatever cause it's climate change regardless of whatnot who is causing it is doing to those agricultural folks down there, and is doing to the non-ag folks down there. He's from Oklahoma. He probably graduated from Oklahoma school and everybody knows those schools are idiots anyway. I heard that the University of Oklahoma had to close the other day. You know why? Cause somebody checked a book out of the library and didn't return it. You know why Texas didn't fall in the ocean? Cause Oklahoma sucks.

I: Have you noticed any persistent changes in average winter temperatures and average yearly snowfall?

R: Yes. Here's what's hilarious. Y'all would know this better than I. It seems to me that we are getting about the same amount of moisture in the winters; but it's more rain versus snow. Is that right? Y'all know the science. Y'all universities. Y'all can look this stuff up. What I would say is it seems to me we are getting more rain, less snow, but the moisture level seems to be about the same and the reservoirs are sky high. Where were we just five or six years ago we were worried that the reservoirs. I looked at Pal. We go to Jackson a couple times a week like everybody in eastern Idaho does. The drive alone is gorgeous through Swan Valley and everything. It seems to me that I remember like two or three or four years ago it looked like I could walk across Palisades. Now it looks like I'd drown in the first five feet. It looks to me like we are getting lots of rain, lots of snowfall, lots of moisture somehow. But I don't think the winters are as cold. Here's what's hilarious, right. I'm going to do this again this year. Last year I was like you know what? Let's get the snow blower all tuned up. Let's get it ready to go. Let's put it in the garage in October around Halloween. I didn't use it one day. It seems like every

year that I don't get the snow blower ready, I'm using 10-15 days. I'm saying to myself. My wife and I are laughing. I'm going to make sure that snow blower is ready to go again this year. Because hopefully we won't have to use it. So I would say it seems to me that that's the case. I've talked to some of these guys and gals that have been up here since the 1950s. They are like this is the warmest I've ever seen. This is the wettest August I've ever seen. I think last August, that 60-day period in July and August, we set a record up here for rainfall. Is that right? Y'all are at the university. Y'all have access to this. We are just folks out here on the sidelines; but it seems to me that's the case.

I: Do you worry about water availability or maintaining your water rights?

R: Water rights are fascinating, right. I don't mean to point at you. Water rights are fascinating, right. So when there is no water. The quick answer to your question is yes. So when there is no water, the big fish farm down there in Twin Falls, who's got, you know, the oldest water right, I guess, in the state, and that's the oldest canal company in the state, right. I think Aberdeen's canal company is like the second or third oldest, right. So they obviously have all of the first calls. But it's the Twin Falls folks, that fish company down there, that gets things stirred up, right. Okay. I know that the big commercial users, it concerns them greatly, okay. Now, the smallest potato shipper, grower, shipper in Idaho, who is me, right, it does not worry me. But I know it concerns the big guys a bunch. And they watch that. I also know, though, in the last 24 months, it is not the topic of conversation that it was three plus years ago. Okay. They have really backed off of that. It's more like, you know, why did my barley sprout. You know, it's probably cause of all the rain, right, last August and July. What are my potato returns so low? You know, that's much more to the forefront. Corn prices really dropped. Is the grain price gonna drop with it? The alfalfa price has dropped, right. So. Does that answer your question? Okay.

I: You mentioned you receive canal water, on all your farms?

R: Yes, all of them are canals.

I: So that's how you receive your water, the canals?

R: Yeah. Every single one. The plant pumps water. The fresh plant. We have wells, honestly, in the bottom of the plant. And the water table in in this area. The water is only 9 feet below my basement floor. We pay. I have something like. My water right is incredible. I have something like 0.64 acre feet per second that I can pump under my plant. My water bill per year is \$30. I am seriously thinking that if I would've known Tom Selleck was stealing water for avocados, I'd have driven to his house in Swan Valley and said I'll sell you the water and we'll load it up on rail cars and ship it down to ya.

I: How much of your rights, of your allocation do you use in a season, do you think?

R: One percent. It's nothing. It's nothing, right. I mean, it's an incredible number. I mean 0.6 acre feet per second. I think I did the math and I want to say I either got 9,000 gallons per minute or 90,000 gallons per minute. I mean the number was so big I was just laughing.

Because I only run about 60 gallons per minute and that's it. You know. And so. Then for \$30. They just, this year is the first year that they've done this. So something must have triggered. You know, it takes the government a while to get going, right. So there must have been something three, four, five years ago and they thought we'd better start measuring, and they've sent somebody out. They've checked my two pumps and they said okay well this is your water allotment. I was like okay. Nice lady. She asked me. She says how much do you use. I said I think my two pumps can pump 90 gallons a minute in total. I said one of them is intermittent, you know, and the other one runs all the time. So I said I think I probably use about 60. She was like okay. When I saw my water allotment, I was just laughing. I just thought it was hilarious. Now my property, I'm a little bit different. Here's where I'm different. Here's where fresh potato company is different and I'm the only owner of it. To the best of my knowledge, all of the Idaho potato shippers rent their ground from the railroad. The railroad actually owns the property but the potato company owns the buildings and obviously the equipment and all that sort of stuff, right? Okay. And then they do like 99 year leases with the railroad. I do not. When my little warehouse was built in the 1950s, it was on the, literally on the wrong side of the highway. Okay. And so the guy who built the plant, he built his own spur and his own crossing and his own switch. And he owned it. So when I bought it four years ago I got it. So I own my own rail, my property, my utilities, my switch, and my crossing. Okay. And I rent nothing from the railroad. Now my utilities, so, because the rail sits between me and the city, right. I use a septic tank, so I have no sewer connections, right. The wastewater goes out the side of the building just like all the potato plants do that are in the country, not like the guys that are in Rigby, and the big outfits that are in the, like Circle Valley, Eagle, you know what I mean. They're, a good portion of their water goes right back into the city sewers, right. So I have a septic tank for my sewer. I have my own wells, provide my own water. Obviously, I get power from Idaho Power, or electricity from Idaho Power. Let's see, there's another. And I own my own railroad. I own my own property. Okay. And so I might be. My company might be the only potato shipper in Idaho that does that. Okay. So, it's a little bit. Is that what you are kind of asking? I know I divvy it a little bit; but just give you a little background on that.

I: Yeah. That's good.

I: Do you rely on bees to pollinate any of your crops?

R: No.

I: Have you noticed any changes in bee populations around here recently?

R: No.

I: Thinking specifically about changes to the climate, how concerned are you about climate change?

R: You know, I actually am real concerned about climate change. Okay. Now, here's the other thing. So the ranch in Texas. Let's talk about that for a quick second. Alright. So Texas has been in a horrible drought. And this ranch is 90 miles south of Dallas, right. It's 20 miles outside of Waco, right. So it's right down I-35, right. Okay and this year we have had so much

rain that we could not get the sorghum crop planted. I mean we got the corn planted. So we raise cattle; which means obviously we raise hay. It's a Bermuda grass or Johnson grass sort of hay. Right. Or sorghum grass hay. And um um. And we have had to reduce the herd size; because we do not buy any feed. We produce all of our hay ourselves. Okay. But we've had so much rain this year and starting last fall that we carried over 25% of the hay inventory, okay. I have never seen the pastures. Like I say, I was just down there just last week for ten days and we worked a few of the herds. Some of these pastures still have waist-high grass, three-foot high grass, right. And I've never seen it like that on July 1st. Some of these pastures. We have a standing herd of about 400 Angus Brangus mama cows, right. So we're classical cow-calf operation. Some of these pastures we have not even had to graze yet and we have other pastures that are just dedicated hay producers or dedicated corn or dedicated sorghum, you know. And, um, the theory is you get two crops off of that, right. You get the corn and then we bale the stocks, right. You can graze the sorghum and after you harvest it and then you just feed liquid protein during the winter right and so your animals are well nourished okay and so um like I say I've never seen I've never seen so much grass. And the thing that amazed me is we got there July, June 27th and we left on July 8th and the other thing that amazed me was typically when you travel the gravel roads down there your car, your car, your truck is just dusty as it can be after two miles. And the cars took three days for the dust to accumulate on the cars, right. Okay. So back to your question, yes, incredibly concerned about climate change. And while I am a conservative in terms of my finances. I believe obviously from my little rant on the Idaho Potato Commission I believe that less government is more. Ha. I'm not a big fan of standing bureaucracies or bureaucracies created by the government to "help" the business; because I think their first concern becomes the perpetuating of themselves and the stats would tell you that's exactly the case with the Idaho potato farmer and the loss of 93% of the farmers since that agency was created, potato farmers. So, but, because I did graduate from a university, and because I do believe in science, right, I think there is something to this climate change, right, and I can say at the very least I know man has contributed to it. Okay. I can say all of those things. And it doesn't trouble me at all. Okay. So I'm greatly concerned; because you know when we talk about, you know, again, you know since we don't rent that fresh company from anybody, that property, you know, one of my off-spring will be sitting here 200 years from now saying, you know, we own everything, you know. We don't lease nothing from nobody and that's it, right. And that's why we decided to keep it because, you know, whoever, me left it completely debt free, right, and it's just like you know pay the property taxes on, you know. It's no big deal. And you know. And they'll say the same thing. And I would like for it to stay around. Okay. So. And these farm families and these communities. The other thing too is that the farmers particularly in eastern Idaho, they're great stewards of their environment, right. I mean really they are. So somebody might say well you you spray for weeds. I yeah, yeah spray for weeds; but he or she keeps the weeds down on the ditch bank, you know. You know, they may go duck hunting, right, but you know they're not wiping out the population. You know what I mean. And they are great stewards of their property. And these properties around here are gorgeous, right. And so. And I would like to say you know I'd like for it to stay around for them you know too and they are great economic drivers. For all intents and purposes, they are extremely nice people. Ha. Ha. You know. And so. Yeah. Right.

I: For you, other than water, since we know that is extremely important, what is the most valuable natural resource for successful farming?

R: Oh, uh. You know, that's. What is number two? What is number two? Natural resource. It's probably weather. But the weather in eastern Idaho is almost ideal, right. I mean, like look where we are. You know, it's great crop growing temperature. What is it 78 degrees, 80 degrees. The soil is probably 55 to 60. You know. I mean the plants are producing so much today it's not even funny. They don't have to spend a lot of their energy keeping themselves alive. You know. So. I mean. The weather is perfect. But the weather would have to be number two. And eastern Idaho weather is perfect. And I'll give you this too. Um. You know. We're raising carrots up here. Um. You're gonna see more and more farms displaced out of California moving more and more into Idaho and Montana and Washington. The other big carrot outfit. I don't know if it was Bolt House or Grimm Way that was up there first. But now they're both up in the Columbia Basin. And it'll only be a matter of time before they move into Idaho. Cause Idaho can grow fabulous carrots.

I: Are you seeing maybe the crops becoming more diversified?

R: Excellent question. Okay. Not so much. Right. But let's talk about that. Right. All of the farmers want to diversity. Right. But we have so much capital invested in the potato industry, the barley industry, the alfalfa industry, and the sugar industry, right. For all intents and purposes, the commercial farms are profitable with those four industries, right. And they have huge amounts of capital, gigantic amounts. At Idaho State. I think at the potato school this last year. It was either Idaho State or University of Idaho professor that gave a presentation. Said you know it costs a million dollars to grow the first acre of potatoes. Now every acre after that it's less expensive per acre. But the first acre is a million dollars, right. Ha, ha. And then inside the Idaho potato industry, we talk about the ten-million-dollar farm, and I can go over that in just a second too. Okay. All of the farmers want to diversify and they want to see something. The challenge is it's difficult for them to grow and grow ten acres. Right. It just doesn't fit their footprint. You know. I've had these huge farmers say to me stuff like, god, my wife wants me to grow a garden. And I'm like sweetheart I can grow 125 acres of potatoes for what it'll take a 20x20 garden. Right. But you got to these gardens. You see every crop in the world in that garden. They're growing zucchini. They're growing peppers. Right. They're growing corn. They're growing tomatoes. They're growing lettuce. Right. They're growing carrots. They're growing every vegetable except for maybe broccoli, right. That California is growing and it's beautiful, right. But we don't have the distribution systems up here to market that out. But some of these farmers markets that you go to. They've got a wide array of vegetables. And they raise those vegetables. And they run their farmer's market now until October 1st. And they bring in their produce. And that works for them. Right. I think is it the Sorrensby. I mean there's one that's kind of you see their stuff all around Idaho Falls. And it's all the stuff that they produce on their own farms. And so we can raise all of that. We don't have the system to get it there. And the other thing is now the old days I could have gone to WinCo and any one of these local grocery stores, Atkinson's, whatever, right. And I can say hey I got five acres of purple potatoes over there. Can I sell you some potatoes. Say yeah that sounds great we'd love to have some purple potatoes. You can't do that today because of the food safety, right. And they have to say well you have to have your primace audit or you have to have your AIB audit, right. And you know and I need all your certificates and it better be inspected right because I can't take the liability. The grocery store is like I can't take the liability, right. And then the produce buyer is

sitting there and they're like look if I don't get these six standard things from you you can't sell to us. And if I allow you to sell to us after they fire me and the next person that replaces me is gonna say well the guy before me got fired because he didn't get the six documents from you and I can't buy your stuff either, right. So it is. There's a huge thing to diversification. We're not capitolally well-aligned to do that. It's difficult for these big farmers to grow ten acres and to test the stuff our right. And they generally lose money on it. And so they're asking themselves why am I doing this. Because my sugar beets. my alfalfa, my cattle, my potatoes, you know, everything else is making money for me. And why am I. I can't deviate. I've got to be an expert at my four primary things, right. Does that answer your question? But there's a great desire and so um you know. So it's really the little guys like me that do it, right. And so my niche is with the giants you know is I have a service for them and that is my little plant washes their bad potatoes. So if they hit a bad spot on their storage or they get a load that gets rejected from the dehydrator honestly it's like call me. Run it over to me. He charges 25 cents a hundred weight. He'll wash that truck load of potatoes for us. He'll do it right there while our truck waits. We'll unload 'em. We'll park him underneath this piler. They'll run him through and an hour later that truck 'll be out of there and he'll get out all the rot, get out all of the stinky stuff and we can deliver it to a dehydrator or if we think it's got the quality that we need then we'll bring it in our own fresh plant and we'll see if we can pack it right. Now, the reason they can do that with me is because of my water. Right. Because I recirculate no water. Why? Because I get 0.6 acres feet per second for \$30/year. Right. So I use only fresh water, recirculate nothing. Okay. Now. Those, the big outfits, they have to recirculate water. They can't pump like I can pump, right. Cause they're more in cities, close rent. Their water is regulated. Okay. So I just spray for free. Now this truck. if this truck gets rejected from a dehydrated it's 500, 100 weight of potatoes. They get \$4 a hundred weight it's worth 2 grand, right. If that dehydrator rejects it, they can't take it back to their own plant because also when they recirculate the water they get the bacteria in the water and they spread it on their good potatoes, right. And so they can say well we can deliver it to a cattle operation, right. Maybe gonna get 50 cents, right. So that \$2000 truckload of potatoes is now going to be worth \$250. Right. So then they say okay you know what send it over to me because for \$125 and an hour and a half of truck wait time. They got a driver at \$10/hr, so you know \$30-\$40. No big deal, right. So for less than \$200, this guy can upgrade the value of that truck for us \$1500. And that's the niche I live in. Okay. And you can go. You can take the largest grower/shippers between Blackfoot and Rexburg. You can name em off and you can say that's my top four customer list. That's what I do. Okay. That's how the plant runs its everyday expenses. Then we do our little carrots. We're gonna start harvesting the carrots here in about a week. We do our little carrots. We do our little goofy potatoes and that sort of thing and we'll make enough money off of that to you know do it again next year. Ha. Ha. Okay. Does that answer your question?

I: Yes. Absolutely. Are you are worried about the health or availability of any natural resources in this area?

R: No. Just real quickly I'll just say these Idaho okay the Idaho agricultural operations that I'm surrounded by these people are great stewards of the land and the water. Okay. They're excellent.

I: Have you changed any of your farming practices or decisions in recent years, such as the type of crops you are growing, when you plant or harvest your crops, how you manage pests, or other major changes, and if so, why?

R: Yes. I got completely out of commercial about four years ago. Okay. Does that help? Yeah. Gone completely organic. Okay. And so what I decided was that Idaho didn't need another russet potato grower/shipper. They got plenty. Okay. And I can do better in organics and then being a service to the large grower/shippers. You know. Find a solution for them. Okay. And that is wash troubled spots.

I: So that's what brought you into this?

R: No. So okay. So I work for a regional company for a decade. I worked for another farm/distributor for eleven or twelve years and then worked for the another farm/distributor for ten years and then I worked for another regional company. I was one of the owners of another company down in the region in the mid 1990s and then just decided to kind of strike out on my own. Okay. The owners are great friends of mine. They had some significant economic challenges in 2008 with a lot of other families. And so you know we got them through that and then I left in January of 2012 when I bought this other potato warehouse. And I just didn't feel like I could be working for them while I'm setting up a competitive operation. Okay. I don't know if that answered your question. But then I decided I'm just going to do all organic. I'm gonna do organic and I'm gonna offer a service to the giants. Because, back to your question on crop diversification, sometimes they do try five acres of this kind of red or ten acres of that kind of red and I pack those for them too. Okay. And so because they've got big plants. Right. They run. Gosh. You know. Twenty truckloads of something right. And they can't take one truck load and run it in that plant and interrupt that operation. It's just so expensive for them. So I do do some of that with the giants also.

I: What are the biggest challenges you see to farming in southeastern Idaho?

R: Okay. I think farming itself does not have. Okay. Step back then. The biggest challenges for anybody to start farming in eastern Idaho is the big commercial farmer that if it's a good farm that comes up for sale you're not, you know, you're not going to compete with them to buy it, right. You know. But I don't mean that in a bad way. Those families have worked hard. They have invested a lot of capital. Okay. And so if it was a farm in Osgood that came up for sale, there would be four of the largest farming companies in eastern Idaho all bidding on that farm. And very rapidly that thing would be \$4000 to \$7000 an acre, right. And you know so that is I don't mean to laugh. That is probably the biggest hurdle okay for anybody to say I want to go be a farmer. I don't mean to laugh. In eastern Idaho. Right. And so. And that's also why the little guys like me is like look we are gonna go on these little canals. We're gonna basically kind of find these little farm sets that are now owned by people that 70 years and older; but they've had these ten acres or they've had these thirty acres and their patriarch when they died left five kids 150 acres and they all divided it up this way. Right. And you know some of them got it in pastures and they got four or five cows out there you know and you know what I mean and everybody's kind of doing something different and so that's where you find it okay. Does that answer your question? Okay. So the biggest obstacle is you gotta compete with these large

commercial farms and you're not gonna compete. And only the large commercial farm is gonna compete with commercial farms. Okay. And if you don't marry Warren Buffet's daughter, you know, you're not gonna go play in that game.

I: So the capital to start up?

R: Yeah. It's the capital.

I: How are these challenges different from what they were in the past, if they are different?

R: Oh excellent question. Now that is the. All your questions. Actually I'm getting excited about this. So when I go talk to my friends. I'm gonna use some specific names here for a minute. When I go talk to my friends like John Doe of a regional company. I think is a very progressive individual and a solid person, right. Or I go talk to these other farmers. I talk to another John Doe, whatnot. They're all like you remind me of my grandfather cause that's the way he started. He started with a little bitty potato plant. He started with one or two loads a day. He had to figure out what his niche is. You know, he had to go get the small plots of land. He had to work in the valley. He had to do all of that stuff, right. And And And so. Tell me your question one more time cause I want to make sure I answer it.

I: How are these challenges different from what they were in the past, if they are different?

R: Yes. Okay. So now. So now. Look. And the John Does are great friends of mine. Okay, so now let's talk about these John Does. So they started like in 1947 or 1949. Right. And they might be the second or third largest oldest Idaho potato growing/shipping operation in existence today. I think John Doe, John Doe down there at a regional company and whatever he calls the shit in south Idaho and the John Does from another regional company. Can't forget them. They're probably the oldest, right. Okay. And they all say to me you remind me of the way my grandfather started. You know. You kind of just scrap it out. You know. That's kind of what you do. Right. And scratch it out and scrap it out. Okay. So So now their worries today are economic sustainability, right. They need to produce a certain amount of cash. They've got a certain level of fixed costs, right. They've got things that they just simply have to keep doing. So they're not so worried. They're big change now. Their big focus now is capital. Capital, labor, you know, try to minimize government influence, right, how do I stay up on the latest in research and this, that and the other thing, right. Where me or you know or that same farmer, well 60 or 70 years later they were worried more about do you have the manpower in your family, can you do this on your own, can you boot strap yourself up with this. You know, you have barely limited capital. You know, these guys have got great capital. Now they might not have all of the money that they'd like but they have great capital resources. Does that answer your question?

I: Yes.

R: Okay. That's what I would say is the big change.

I: It's like the dynamic of.

R: Yea. These guys today. These guys today, they want to tell themselves that they're great farmers. If John Doe was sitting here and he is a fabulous farmer and successful farming family and he's got a lot going on and if we sat down here with John and he was sitting right here. If you asked John this question, he would probably say you know I gotta be a good farmer, right. He'd say that. I've gotta be a good farmer. But what he really has to be is a good capitalist. He absolutely has to be a good capitalist. And so. Okay?

I: What is your favorite thing about farming in southeastern Idaho?

R: This lifestyle. I've got these kids out here. Carrots are growing. You know what I mean? The plants gotta. I gotta be up there at noon, one o'clock today cause we're shipping a special truck off to my four-billion-dollar conglomerate customer, which is the truth. And they rake me over the coals if it shows up with one potato out of site and I'm not joking about that either. I ship these trucks off and I can't even sleep at night. And so but the lifestyle is fantastic, right. And you know so I can. How old am I? Fifty five years old. You know, I've been in the potato industry since I graduated the university. And this is what I can do. If I need to take two hours cause I gotta group of boys that want to do some soccer. I'm also a US national soccer coach. So if I wanna do something with them or whatnot I can do it a couple days a week four hours a day in the middle of the day, right. I got two phones with me. I got the blue tooth. You know. The house is just two miles away. If the whole world falls under, falls over I need to get and look at something real quick and but it's absolutely that lifestyle and I can look at this and I can see that I got my order here from Eagle cause I do business with Eagle every day and I'm like I been waiting on that and it's like great, right. And so but it's truly the lifestyle. Laugh. Everybody laughs in eastern Idaho and says that the only reason you like your car in eastern Idaho is so your neighbor won't fill it up with zucchini out of your garden. But you can go to any of these little towns, you go to Aberdeen. You go to American Falls. You can go to Menan. You can go to Roberts. You can go to Lewisville. You can go to any one of these little country stores, probably even Ririe, Ririe certainly, probably even Rigby although it's a little bit bigger and you can go there on any winter's day and there will be eight pickup trucks still running with the keys in em because they want to keep the heaters on so they're warm when they go out there to their truck and they're all in their drinking coffee. And if they're LDS, they're not drinking coffee, they're just shooting the breeze and their having Mountain Dew, right. I'm LDS and I laugh and I always say you know we don't have to drink coffee because God invented Mountain Dew. Okay. So anyway. I always this joke too that if you're. If you voted Democrat then you can make fun of the Democratic president because you voted for him. Otherwise, if you didn't vote for him it's just mean-spirited, right. So only tease, only tease the groups that you're a member of. Okay. Don't tease a group that you're not a member of cause then it's mean-spirited. Okay. But I did throw some stones for the Salinas people window but truly don't eat that spinach.

I: Where do you go to get news about weather, regulations, or other farming-related information?

R: Okay. Excellent question. Okay. I read Google news every day. Okay. Doesn't everybody? I read Google news every day and I have weather alerts just like everybody and their brother and it sends you email alerts as to what is getting ready to happen with the weather. Doesn't

everybody do that now? I think everybody does that now. Don't they. It just tells me. It's gonna rain in Menan. But I do. I read Google news every single day more than once. And then you know, we all get these alerts on these phones, right, and it's just crazy. Another thing I say is that um 500 years from now, maybe 300 years from now they're gonna say. There's a couple things that happened in the 1800s and the 1900s and the 21st century that really contributed to the, to making man equal, right. Everybody is gonna talk about the Colt revolver, right. You know, the Colt revolver revolutionized equality amongst people, right. The other one that is gonna get that sort of thing is Steve Jobs. Because what he has done with these iPhone and the ability for all of these kids. All these kids have iPhone right. Their ability to get those out and video tape something in a heartbeat we have seen in the last six months has put power in the hands of the people and truth versus government establishments. If it wouldn't have been for that Apple phone, cause I cannot do that on the Samsung phone, but I can do that on the Apple phone and I know how to do it and it's been amazing. But truly those two items I know will be on the top ten. People might talk about jets and all this sort of thing and that is a equality amongst nations, right, but equality amongst people is gonna be. These devices that contribute to image capturing so quickly, social media, and that crazy six-shooter are gonna be two of them. Okay. I'm sorry. I've deviated a bit.

I: How about the regulations.

R: I hate the regulations. Okay, who doesn't hate the regulations. Okay. It's not so much that its regulations it's that the government. Let's just talk about the state government, right. You know, sometimes when you talk about the federal government we're all like coyotes howling at the moon. Right. The coyote can howl at that moon all day long or all night long and that moon isn't gonna change. But state governments, right. Local governments. City of Idaho Falls. These people all live in these neighborhoods. They're doing the best that they can to provide a comfortable environment, whether it be Pocatello or here, you know. So people can have nice parks. They can be quiet. They can have playsets. Pocatello and Blackfoot and Idaho Falls and Rexburg, Rigby are all the same. Right. Really conscientious neighborhood folks. Right. Okay, the state government, the state government gets particularly in Idaho and particularly in agriculture. The state government has to over-regulated the potato industry on the fresh side they've almost killed it. Okay. That's the bottom line. Alright. And then the other thing that they do is they send out notices. Idaho Potato Commission sends out notices and it's like oh my god we've got potato psyllid in Idaho. Oh my god, we've got late blight in Bingham County. I've got both of those emails in the last week. Now here's what's interesting. Wal-Mart gets those emails too. So if we were buyers for Walmart and we heard. You gotta be careful. You gotta live in the world of the giants.

I: Other than technology and emails, do you attend any conferences or anything to get?

R: I attend a lot of conference, right. Okay. I love the Idaho Potato School. You don't need to keep putting that off. Right. You need. Really and truly, make sure y'all play this. The University of Idaho and Idaho State University do an excellent job supporting the agricultural industry in Idaho. They really do. The Idaho Potato School is fantastic. Right. And they need to keep that going. They could probably offer more sessions, smaller sessions, more breakout sessions, and they could probably add a day or two to it. But I'm sure it's fairly interruptive to the

university for that week and there are people that come in from all over the world to go to the Idaho Potato School in January, or whenever it is. Right. And it's better attended than Washington. And it's better attended than the Red River Valley. I've been to both of those several times. Right. So in terms of the school, they do a great job. Okay. Then I go to the Idaho Eastern Oregon Fruit and Vegetable Convention in McCall. I go to the Idaho Grower Shipper thing in Sun Valley. I go to the Western Idaho Ag Expo in Caldwell. You know. So I go to a lot of them. Right. The Idaho Potato School is by far the best one. By far. Alright. And that's why it has international attendance. Does that answer your question?

I: Which regulatory agencies, such as the USDA or other government agencies, have you been in contact with in the last few years?

R: Well, you know, everybody talks to the federal/state inspection system folks every day, right. I don't mean to laugh. You know. And oh my gosh the Idaho Potato Commission has evolved from you know we're gonna spin your marketing dollars on marketing to you know we're gonna spend your marketing dollars on regulating. We're gonna do blast emails out saying that we've got late blight and the potato psyllid. That's what we were following up on; which is you know just might as well blow our brains out. You know, they broadcast the troubles to the world and you know so unfortunately we all have contact with them. Okay. So let's get back to this. So they just sent out notes. Idaho Potato Commission just sent out notes. So they take our marketing dollars and now they tell the whole industry that we found late blight; so now they're in the crop protection, right. Which is ridiculous, right. So somehow our marketing dollars have not got diverted into crop protection stuff and they don't know. John Doe couldn't raise ten acres of potatoes if Warren Buffet financed him. Okay. And they don't know what they're doing, in terms of cultural, right. So now we have the Idaho Potato Commission sending out these emails on cultural stuff; which I honestly thought their deal was marketing. But let's say that we're buyers with Wal-Mart. Right. And they buy a lot of potatoes from Idaho shippers. They buy a lot of potatoes from one Idaho shipper in particular, and they do a great job of supplying Wal-Mart. Okay. They're a great outfit. I bet the Wal-Mart people said hey we hear you got late blight in Bingham County. Do we need to be concerned about your potato supply? And the big farm folks are gonna say no. We've had late blight before. We'll have it again. And you know we've got a program and we're not gonna have an issue, gonna have a wonderful quality of potatoes that you've always had from our company and would you like to have more cause we're gonna have more. You know. And they're gonna say oh okay. Now it's unfortunate that the Wada organization. And I've said they're a wonderful outfit. It's unfortunate that the potato organizations has to answer that question from an Idaho potato buyer, right. It's because the Idaho Potato Commission sends out these blast emails. So it's more like rhetoric. We've got late blight in Bingham County. Well, big deal. You know. Is it. Is it one acre? Because, you know, we raise 30,000 acres of potatoes in Bingham County. You know. So what is it? Right? And you know oh we found a psyllid in Twin Falls, so you found one bug, right. I mean one bug? I'm just like oh gosh you know we're over-reporting, right. It's not that. It's not that big of a deal and we need to not make it a big deal. Because the rest of the world, when they do blast emails, when Goodyear sends out a blast email and it's about some tire that's a big deal. Right. And everybody's like asking themselves do we have Goodyear tires on our car? So relative to what the rest of the world does and how they communicate their problems, when people see these

global emails like that they're like there must be some sort of problem. Because it was just one bug or if it was one spore it'd be no big deal, right?

I: How was that experience for you? For example, was it a positive or negative experience, and why?

R: Overall negative.

I: Have you ever, you know, had to deal with like environmental quality or?

R: I love the DEQ. Okay, you ready? The DEQ. So when I bought this property I had to I had to you gotta check out all of this stuff right. Right. You can hire an environmental engineering firm, pay em 50 gran you can call the DEQ. I just call the DEQ. I say what you got on this property. They say we ain't got nothing. They're like oh you know we got something. Fourteen years ago somebody called and complained that the smoke was black; so we ran out there. I said what was wrong? They were like oh, you know, they were burning some oil in their trash. That's it. I got any issues with water? No. Got any issues with water runoff? No. But they would have said had they had something. So strangely enough with the DEQ it's fantastic. Right. Okay. Now and generally speaking if the DEQ shows up on your door okay and they've got some samples that are a little goofy you've probably done something wrong. Right? And okay. With the water group that came out A-OK. What do you use? This is what I use. This is my pumps. This is what I look like, you know. And like okay. You know. Whatever. Eight months later you're bill is \$30 a year. Like okay fine. I'll take it. You know 90,000 gallons a minute. Yeah. I'm all on board. Okay. Now. With the Idaho State Department of Agriculture, the Idaho Potato Commission. I mentioned earlier that I was with Walker for eleven years, right. Walkers, remember when the potato cyst nematode came around in 2004, 2005, whatever, and it was found in Basic American Foods. It was found in the ISDA inspection service inspection area in the Basic American Plant in Shelley Idaho, right? And John Doe's had delivered that day to Basic American Foods and so had 71 other potato entities. And the Idaho Potato Commission and the ISDA quarantined the John Does. They never found that nematode. It was never on those farms. They locked that John Doe farm. They locked us down for six months. They had no science supporting their deal. The ISDA people themselves told us that they couldn't trace that nematode back to our stuff. They found it finally in another farm right down here in Shelley Idaho. Right. Even after they found the other nematode the Idaho Potato Commission, the Idaho State Department of Agriculture did not release them. Okay. Even though they never found it. And they took the high school band out there and they sampled these fields. Right. And the ISDA told us in our first meeting with them that they couldn't trace it and actually wrecks you on even set. So that's why I remember this stuff cause Walkers, we hired attorneys. Rex Young said that that dirt sample could have been in that inspection system forever and just simply fell out. When was the time? They also use the phrase hair in a barber shop. Okay. Okay. Now. But that night the USDA quarantined us and it was directed by the Idaho Potato Commission. The reason the Idaho Potato Commission had to get somebody under quarantine was because the other states, Colorado, Maine, Wisconsin, Washington, and Oregon, were going to shut off Idaho exporting its potatoes out of the state. Okay, not out of country. don't worry about the country. The other states fight with each other gruesomely if somebody gets nematodes. Can't ship that potato out of there cause they could spread that nematode all over the

United States. So because Idaho had treated the other states so poorly in the past that when the other states had a chance to retaliate they let us have it. right. The Idaho Potato Commission needed a sacrificial lamb; and they picked us. Okay. And they had no science to support it. And the Walkers sued them. And so but then the Walker attorneys backed off. Okay. And they did that to protect the Idaho Potato market. Okay. And so it's been incredibly negative. The industry would be better off if they went away.

I: Is there anything that the local, state, or federal government could do or provide for you to help you do your job?

R: Get rid of the Idaho Potato Commission. Ha. Ha. Get rid of it. They don't need it. The French. I was with Lamb Weston for eleven years. The French fryers pay their taxes, the Idaho Potato Commission, and they could care less. When you sell to McDonalds you don't say. Cause I have sold to McDonalds personally. Okay. And I have sold to Cisco personally. And you don't sit down there and you don't talk about boy I got these great Idaho potatoes cause you got plants in Washington and Oregon and Wisconsin. Right. And yeah you got plants in Idaho too. Right. We got plants in Canada. And you say nobody can meet your spec more consistently at a better price than we can. And nobody can give you the service that we can. And McDonalds says you're absolutely right. You're number two behind Simplot. Ha ha. Okay. And that's how McDonalds sells, Simplot's sells to em. And they say you know this is what we're gonna do. And they're like nobody's gonna provide you more consistent, nobody's gonna more consistently meet your spec at a more competitive price with better service than we are. So you're gonna know exactly how you're, how my food product performs in all of your operations. So they will tell you that they pay those taxes to the Idaho Potato Commission and they don't ever want to hear from them. They don't want them in their marketing French fries that came from Idaho. They don't want to hear about it; because that's not what they're selling. You know. They're international manufacturers and they don't want McDonalds San Diego saying I only want potatoes from your Idaho, I only want my French fries from your Idaho plants. They don't want to be constrained in that way. McDonalds and Burger King and Cisco and Wendy's and Hardees and Kentucky Fried Chicken I'm gonna keep going. Carl's Junior, Food Maker, of course Jack in the Box, Outback Restaurants, which has now switched over from the Idaho Fresh Potato to now a frozen French fry. None of them say that that's what we're gonna do. Okay. So we don't need 'em. And we've lost 93% of the potato farmers since they've been established. We've had all of this growth in the French fry industry that they've not had a part of. And the one part that they have had a part of they've strangled it to the point where it's gettin ready to die. The other thing we have is we have national labels now, right. So we have Green Giant which is huge and they're successful and they're selling Green Giant potatoes. Right. We've got the freshest, best, highest quality potatoes we've got. We've got WADA farms and they're there with their Dole label. They're doing the same thing. Eat a Dole pineapple. It's fantastic. Oh, you know what? Those Dole potatoes are pretty dog gone good too. And they are sourcing potatoes from all over the country, right. And so it's like yeah you know we do this in Idaho but you know we're getting paid less than we get paid in Texas or we get paid in Colorado or anywhere else. Okay?

I: What about other people or organizations in this area, can you think of anything they could do to help you farm?

R: No. Okay, here's what's interesting. Actually, we talked earlier about conservation. I did do a grant with Rocky Mountain Power and my power bill on my plant is \$100 a month. Right. Phenomenal, right? And so when I bought the building they did a grant with me. We upgraded all the lights. We upgraded all the electrical. And it was fantastic. So we can get grants like that from private industry. I think what the USDA does in terms of grants and whatnot it's difficult for the common man to get hold of those grants. Those are more for the universities and you know if you look at the grants most of the grants go to the university professors right and the USDA and they're working on things and that's perfect. That's where it should be. Right. And And you know. We have to have a strong academic system right. And that's a great place to help get funds into that. You know. Honestly, I'd rather spend. We spend as a country we spend 120 million dollars a day in Iraq. I have still yet to figure out why. Okay. And I think we've probably spent 10 million dollars on the American universities a day, right. And I think we oughta reverse that. Right. It's not just because y'all are here. I would rather see that. Right. While I love Israel and they're a great democracy I can't figure out why we are refereeing all of their fights either okay and so because I think sometimes the only thing that unites the Shia and Sunni Muslims is having American soldiers standing there that they can shoot at. Because then we go they shoot at each other which they've done since the day Mohammed has died right. And so anyway okay so I digress. We don't. The local agencies and everybody these people are incredibly considerate if they're just treated politely. I could I could call the Water Board guy up and I could cuss for ten minutes and he could slam the phone down and he could say I gotta do what I want to do but that's the last SOB I ever want to do anything nice for. Or I can call him and I can say hey John how's it going how's life treatin you, you know, you doin' okay. When you get around to it I could use this amount of water. Wednesday, Thursday, Friday is okay with me. You know, I'm pretty flexible. So okay Mike. The government and the local agency people they have no problem. If somebody had a problem they're creating it on their own. Okay. I mean with the local folks, right. You know. Right. Yeah.

I: Are you using aerial drones or unmanned aircraft systems at all for your farming operations?

R: No. No.

I: Are you interested in using drones in the future and if so, how do you think they will be of benefit?

R: Not really. And I'll tell you this story too because of one of these conferences I went to PMA. I had a chance last year to sit in one of the conversations where one of the investment capital groups was putting on a talk about the use of technology in drones, right. Okay. Let me back up. In the 80s, when I was with a regional company one of the things I worked on was the Land Set Satellite project where we would get in data and we would check acres and we would do all of that sort of thing right. And there was a theory that you know we could get aerial photos and that could do real well right. Okay. So. But now there's. You know, there's all of these technologies with Google Earth and all this, that, and the other thing. And the guys I think can have aircraft fly over and look at their fields and take pictures and they can look at that. But, you know, there is that deal about the out-standing farmer. The outstanding farmer is outstanding because you can find them out standing in their fields. Right. And And there is so much

technology available today with the crop support industry, you know your chemical guys. they do a great job. Right.

I: Okay, before we finish here, I would just like to ask you a couple of brief demographic questions. Including yourself, how many people live in your household?

R: Five.

I: In the simplest terms, how would you describe your political views?

R: You know what. Okay. This is an excellent question. I'm a conservative. Financially you know I believe less government is more. I think that the federal government, bless their hearts, couldn't organize a two-car parade. I think the United States military could organize a two-car parade; but I don't think congress could organize a two-car parade. I think the Secret Service can organize a two-car parade. Right. But I think when it comes to the elected officials. Oh, gosh, I don't know what the founding fathers had in mind; but I don't think what we got is what they had in mind. Okay. Now, I vote. I'm an independent; which means I am attractive. Right. Which is amazing. Right. Because we have 40% of this country is gonna vote democrat no matter what and 40% of this country is gonna vote Republican no matter what, and regardless of what. If a democrat does something nice you'll never hear it out of a Republican's mouth or vice versa, right. They cannot find anything nice to say about each other. I can argue with one of my neighbors over water forever and I can still find something nice to say about him, right. But somehow. And his family and his wife and his kids or whatever. Right. But somehow in our American political system we have just gotten to the point where it is just 100% bickering 100% of the time. Right. Okay. Now I am extremely progressive. Okay, we're gonna talk a little bit about socioeconomic factors. If you look at those three boys that are behind us that are still my soccer kids only one of them is Caucasian, right. If we were to look at that group that was out there of those five boys only two of them are Caucasian, right. And my older team ? were the boys that graduated in 2010. I sent seven of those young men off to colleges and universities on soccer and academic scholarships and only one of them was Caucasian, okay. And so, uh, I talked to. We could walk over there and ask these young men. I talk to young men about your age and I say let me tell you why. Here's the deal. My parents broke through the civil rights barrier, right. And we've gotta all be incredibly thankful of Martin Luther King and President Johnson. There's just no two-ways about it. Okay. Now. And my parents needed to be non-racist, non-biased, non-prejudicial. And I am a southerner. And they had to do that. So when I am here at the age of 50 and 55, I can build upon that effort and so then and then I can support those that have found themselves in difficult socioeconomic situations and I can support and scholarship those young men, right. So that when those kids ten years from now are 24 years old they will truly be color blind. Okay. And they truly will not evaluate people based upon anything but what's inside of them, right. Not what is their exterior. Right. And and so I am incredibly progressive in terms of social equality. Right. And I actually believe that there are segments of our population that need more help than others and we need to give that to them. Now I talk to young men about your age and I've got young men that just graduated in 2010. When did you graduate high school? Okay and they're graduating colleges right now. When they were this age I told them I said guys here's the secret to life, here's the secret to the business professional life. You have to know how to manage the middle manager middle age white guy,

and you've got to know how to handle that entity. If you can manage that entity, you will have an incredibly successful career. Those companies that you're working for, they are gonna promote you and they're gonna reward you like crazy. But you have to learn how to get along with that guy okay. And then I said to em now when it's your turn okay we will not say that anymore. Okay. But right now we still have to say that and they're like oh okay. So my friends tell me, cause I listen to Rush Limbaugh cause I think he's funny. I mean I think he's just the best comedian on day-time radio, right. And but I don't listen to Sean Hannity cause I think he's a hater. Right. And I think Chris Matthews has got some interesting opinions. And Rachel Madol. Right. Okay. So my friends often say to me, they say Mike we can't tell if you are a Republican or you are a Democrat, right. And that's how conversations go. And I'm like you know what I can't either. I say I'm somewhere in the middle. It bothers me with President Bush. I always call the presidents President Bush, President Obama. It bothered me under President Bush that we started two wars and we lowered taxes. Cause that's the first time in the history of America that we've ever been at war as a nation and we've reduced taxes. We've got an incredible budget and we've got a first-class recession. Okay. And TARP was the largest transfer of private wealth, public wealth to the private industry in the history of the United States. We never had that sort of wealth transfer. That was done with President Bush and Secretary Poulson and you know Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernake and you know. They did that to keep the lights on. Okay. I think that. So that would be my political views. Incredibly conservative when it comes to finances. I truly believe that less government is more. But I believe in terms of certain socioeconomic groups we have to do more for support. And I'll give you the strangest view on Food Stamps that you'll ever hear. We get the Food Stamps. We go at Food Stamps the wrong way. We need to give everybody Food Stamps; and we need to just simply say spend it on food that was manufactured and grown in the USA. We look at Food Stamps wrong; because what we really want is we really want people to eat more potatoes. We want em to eat more apples. You know what I mean. We want em to eat more corn. Right. We want em to eat more grains and produce and proteins that are grown here in the US. And we need to spend less money being the world's policemen and more money making sure that these little ones and those seniors are eating more healthily. Okay. And that will contribute to the reduction in medical expense. Alright. And so. I look at Food Stamps. You hear there's 49 million people on Food Stamps and I say well we got 311 million people in this country so we gotta ways to go. I look at it completely different. And the agricultural world and the food manufacturing world those that people like are gonna do just fine. Those that people don't like well you know they're gonna maybe not do so well. So I look at completely different. Our ranch in Texas we gotta you just go to the FSA and you sign up for all of their programs. You don't have the slightest idea what you're signing up for. But you go into the service agencies and you do it every January or February cause they tell ya to do it right. You report your crops and off you go right. Two years ago at Christmas we're sitting down there for Christmas open up a letter from the ? I'm not kidding there's a 94 thousand dollar check in there for drought assistance. We had no idea it was coming. The ranch didn't need it. We cashed it. We spent it. We gave 40% of it right back to the government. Right. But we still came out 50 grand ahead. Right. And so. I was talking to my Dennis, you know, they're doing this wrong. They need to give people Food Stamps and if they want to spend their money on beef then they can buy beef; but if they want to buy fish or chicken or pork well that's their business to or beans you know if they want protein. That's how we do this instead of sending checks to an individual farming operation; because the government just sent us 100 grand and the ranch didn't need it and you know what they sent us

the same check this last Christmas. You know the difference? This year we are looking for it. Ha Ha. You know. Because Texas was mired in that drought. You know. For the first time in the Farm Bill you know they put livestock and range in the farm bill. Particularly before it had always been row crops that had been programmed you know supported not the livestock industry, not the hay and pasture guys. Okay. Does that make sense? Or help, whether it makes sense, but yeah, so I think they do it wrong.

I: And what is your age?

R: Fifty five.

I: Finally, is there anything else you would like to share with us about farming in southeastern Idaho that we have missed?

R: Don't tell everybody, because it's a great well-kept secret. Ha ha. Okay. You know. And play down that business about ample water. Ha Ha.