

Ecosystem Services and Idaho's Farmers

Interview Twenty-Five

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: Um, born and raised in this area, and my family has been here since the late 1800s and was born and raised on a farm, and if that's where you're from, sometimes that's what you get addicted to.

I: And how long have you or your immediate family been farming in this area? You said since the 1800s?

R: Yes, over 100 years easily.

I: What do you grow?

R: Uh potatoes, sugar beets, wheat, hay.

I: And how many acres do you farm?

R: five thousand

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

R: uh zero. Urban expansion has not affected our farm, where we're at there's a break in the reservoir. If anything urban expansion is good for us cuz it provides more opportunity, and uh another place for our stuff to go.

I: So, you find some urban expansion helpful? In relation to the market?

R: yes, I would say urban expansion has been good from, we have another home for our straw. You know um, there's a lot of examples, but all the urban expansion, the business, the growth, it's good. It's been good for the state. It's good for Ag.

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

R: No

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

R: Um, I hope that the younger generation wants to continue, but if they don't, I would lease it. I won't sell.

I: Is it important to you that your farm remains an agricultural operation?

R: Yes

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

R: Yes

I: Can you share some of them?

R: Um, there's less tillage than there used to be. Uh, we try to make less passes across the farm, and do the same thing, to try and leave as much of the green manure etcetera, the wasted plant matter from the year before to turn it back into the soil.

I: Okay, any water conservation efforts?

R: Oh, definitely. Everything is about water. Yeah, um twenty years ago you had canal water ordered in and you never took it off. Now, you order it off. You order it off even for ten hours. You can make a water order, and order your canal water off so that we hold it in the reservoirs.

I: So, has the canal company changed their approach with the farmers?

R: The canal companies made it mandatory that as water got tighter, everybody's done what they could. Yeah, I mean there's not water being spilled like their used to be when water was abundant.

I: Have you changed your sprinkling systems?

R: All the sprinkling systems are more efficient. All the irrigation packages, uh they don't leak um when they're pressured up, when they're running the nozzles are different than they used to be. Everything is more efficient. Low pressure systems on the pivots. Um, you know you get the same amount of water and have less that is evaporating. The water droplets are larger and fall farther into the ground, so.

I: Okay, any soil conservation practices?

R: Yeah, um a farmer thinks about that in everything he does. Um, definitely.

I: Any examples?

R: Um you know, I think probably the biggest example we have and probably the thing we fight from a day-to-day standpoint is erosion. You know we live in a windy area, and I think that the growers have gotten a lot better about cover crops, and planting uh something when you know that you're not going to be planting something else, you are planting a cover crop. It's just anything you can to keep the dirt from blowing.

I: What kind of cover crops have you planted?

R: Um usually we just plant like a, like a wheat crop for a cover crop. It works the best. It comes up fast, grows well in our area, and it's cost effective.

I: Any practices relating to the nutrients in the soil?

R: Like I said, we get up every day and we make our living from the soil. So, anything that we can do to protect our soil. There's nobody that watches the soil as close as the farmer. Nobody cares, nobody has as much to lose as we do.

I: What kind of pesticides and/or herbicides do you use on your farm?

R: Oh, pesticides are pretty limited. We have some stuff that is usually treated on the seed, and once the seed has been treated, it is actually systemic and it will control most of the pests that we've had to battle to grow a crop. So that's on a very limited basis. Uh herbicide, herbicide too is just not a. You know there may be one application of a herbicide. That's it and that's just to get your plants big enough to where weeds won't overtake the crop. Um, anyway.

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?

R: Yes

I: Can you tell me more about that?

R: Well, it has made the crops that we grow so much safer, so much healthier, uh in every way, shape and form. The only people that don't like GMOs are those that aren't educated. Um, we used to grow, growing sugar beets we used to go in and spray somewhere between five and seven times to try to control weeds. And, a lot of those were chemicals that could remain in the actual commodity that were grown, and the genetically modified sugar beets do not recognize the mode of action that Roundup has, and they're not even affected by it. It takes care of the weeds and you're spraying one to two times is all you're spraying, and like I said, it has no carry over. It's a contact, uh, herbicide. Once it's applied, it's done. It doesn't carry over in the soil. It doesn't carry over in the plant. You can't test for it. Anyway.

I: Have you planted any other GE seeds besides that?

R: No, and that's just because of our rotation here, what we have. GMO seeds, you know, sugar beets is the only crops that's affected.

I: If there were some available in some of your other crops, would you consider using them?

R: You know, I would say no. Um, I would say that you take a crop like wheat. I would say that that one is a little bit, uh. It's a higher risk. I think that you definitely have to look at where you have a problem. You know, we can grow a grain crop, and you don't have a problem with weed pressure in wheat. It's very easy to control. So if you go and modify a wheat seed to try to make it genetically modified for the weeds. First of all, the cost the technology, I just don't see, it's not a problem that faces us. Okay, I don't know why we would need to do that. And the other

thing, when you take for example, a bird can land. A bird can eat wheat that's on the ground then a bird can fly fifteen miles and have its bird droppings, and that can start to grow. It doesn't happen with sugar beets. Sugar beets don't go to seed; therefore, the chances of sugar beets just spreading throughout the valley. You know, you're gonna see this, and if you drive around the valley, you're going to see some of the guys that have planted Roundup Ready corn. Corn is starting to show up everywhere, and it's from the geese. The geese are eating the corn, and the geese fly somewhere. Now we are getting corn everywhere. Which, you know, corn I'd rather have corn than kosha, but it's still crazy to see the problem that can happen on what crop it is.

I: So, your impression is based on certain crops? For instance, you see the benefits outweigh the risks for the sugar beets and the corn is different?

R: Yeah. Well, you know, I don't raise corn. So, I wouldn't know. I would imagine GMO corn is probably a good thing for the corn growers. I'm sure it's uh, helps them grow a crop, and I'm pretty sure it's helped the corn grower on their bottom line. I'm sure they're spraying less and all the other benefits that we see, but I do think you have to be careful what crop it is.

I: What is your opinion of genetically engineered crops?

R: My opinion of genetically engineered crops is um, if you really want to sustain healthy agricultural practices in this country. If we want to feed this country, we had better take the knowledge and the education and the technology that we have, and try to use it in the safest way possible because without genetically engineered crops, I really feel like we're going to have a , not just a nation, but an entire planet that won't have enough food.

I: So, you see them as benefitting the world? From increased production?

R: Definitely. Not only to provide for the world, but to make uh less of a foot print to what we're doing. You know, I would much rather on my soils, have something that was treated with a chemical like Roundup to control weeds, to raise food for people, than to have all these other herbicides that have 9 month to 24 month to 36 month carry over in the soil. So, that's not good for anybody. We have a safer way to do it. We need to embrace.

I: So, do you feel like some of the past treatments used on sugar beets were kind of dangerous?

R: Well, a lot of the treatments that we had for a lot of these crops, when you start to look at what the carry over residual is in the soil, and you really pull out and read the labels, yeah. There's a lot of, and a lot of them you know, there's not use for them anymore. There's no demand for them. It has made agriculture much safer.

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: Um, you know, I think on a. The typical person that's tied to weather as a grower, I think it's crazy to listen to people talk about it. It's way hotter than it used to be, it's way colder than it

used to be. Things fluctuate. There's so many things that happen. We all know that you can get a tropical storm off the coast of Mexico, and it will affect us here. But, why we have the tropical storm, everyone wants to have the answer to all of this stuff, but we know the environment's always changing and it always has. And, I'm just going to say, it seems like um, you know, our growing seasons seem like they've gotten a little bit longer, but, you know if you're going to talk about a time frame, typically we just get things done more efficiently. Guys are waiting longer to start, and they're starting maybe a little bit earlier. But maybe instead of looking at what the environmental conditions are, look at what the average size of a farm is. You know, that's made a huge impact on this stuff. Guys don't just have 80 acres to go out and farm any more. When a guy knows he has to go plant 3,000 acres of potatoes, for example, he wants to get rolling, to get going. It's a lot. Even with our equipment today, it's still a lot.

I: So, are you saying that you're planting earlier and harvesting later? Trying to stretch out your season?

R: Well, I wouldn't say that that's typical. You know, you do what you do when the weather lets you do it. They came when the sun shines. So you know, my grandfather may have planted potatoes the 15th of May and we plant them the 15th of April. But, I also know that what we're able to do and what we know we can do. There's a lot more science based technology that we use in what we do and we're basing things off of soil temperatures. You know, it doesn't do us any good to go plant a potato if the soil's forty degrees. You know a lot of that stuff is not something they used in their day-to-day decisions.

I: Have you noticed any persistent changes in the length of your growing season, or the first and last frost dates of the year?

R: That's another hard one. I mean I would say that typically most guys will tell ya, yeah our growing seasons are a little longer, but I can tell you that in the last five years, you know, we've had some awfully early winters that have hit us by surprise, and we've had some awfully late springs that have hit us by surprise. Um, go back to 2001 for example, you know we didn't get potatoes planted until June. And, it's just because the weather was cold, and then it was rainy and wet, but no one wants to throw that in to the mix. You know, we know I think we typically know that we have a pretty safe window from May until about the 10th of October, and after that you're on borrowed time. So, plant and harvest as you choose.

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

R: Well, I think last winter was dry and the winter before that was record snowfall, so it averages out and guess what, in the last two years it's been right on average.

I: Many of us have heard about the drought affecting the western U.S. right now. Have you noticed any persistent changes in yearly precipitation?

R: Well, obviously we have short on precipitation. But, I think overall we're not that short. It's just been at the wrong time. You know, six inches of rain in the fall, August 2014. It was just the wrong time.

I: So, did you see a change in the time of year?

R: Yeah, but but that's a one-year deal. I mean it's a fluke deal. 1949 was when they got six feet of snow. I believe that that was almost April when that happened, April 1st. You know, my grandpa would tell me that he, on New Year's Day, he stayed out and he washed his car out in front of his house, and it was almost sixty-five degrees, and he was in a t-shirt. And then they got pounded that, you know people want to explain the weather, but you know, it's a tough job.

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

R: Yes

I: Would you like to say some more about that?

R: Water is everything. Without water there's no crops. With no crops, there's no people.

I: Do you see any threats to your water rights?

R: Um, I would say that the biggest threat to our water is probably environmentalists.

I: Okay, why is that?

R: Um, because it's very scary when different environmental groups and different government agencies want to come out and tell you what's wrong or what's right when it's not even their area of expertise. It's very scary. I worry a lot about our water rights. I worry about a lot of the rules and regulations that they pass, and at the end of the day, they're all a joke because there's no one to enforce them. If they'll let the farmers be farmers, and the pencil pushers be pencil pushers everyone will just get along just fine. But, there's just a lot of things that. You know, they talk about soils, they've never gone out. They've never even kneeled down on their hands and took a handful of soil. They've grown tomatoes that they got at Costco. It's ridiculous. Nobody cares about the dirt like the guy making a living off the dirt.

I: Are there any specific regulatory agencies or regulations that come to mind? That you are concerned about?

R: It's just all of them. We just keep making up jobs because we have too many people. You know, I don't think that having the government come out and tell us that we can't go to the bathroom in our field really needs to be a paid position. You know, where do you think that we get our food that we eat? You know, do you think that I want all my guys using the farm where we are growing food as their own personal bathroom? I mean there's no commonsense to anything.

I: Is there any particular agency that does that?

R: Yes, there is. We're monitored by the Department of Ag. We have to complete a mandatory GAP audit to run potatoes through a processor to make French fries, and part of their job in the audit is to make sure that we know that there's no animals in our field. And, you know, we're graded on this. We're graded to make sure there's not animals. So that means that if a goose flies over and happens to go to the bathroom while it's flying over our field, we're supposed to document it. The geese have been flying over the fields and the crops forever and going to the bathroom. You know, I don't know how to deal with that.

I: Where and how do you receive your water?

R: Um, I'm fifty/fifty; half canal system and the other half is deep well.

I: If you have a certain amount of water allocated to you, about how much of that water do you usually use?

R: Well some of the farms it depends because with the canal shares, if you're allocated in one share of water equals so many inches. That is all based off of how much water is stored and carried over for the irrigation season. So, you could have one share of water that is worth ten inches or you could have one share of water that's worth fifteen inches.

I: So it depends on the year?

R: It depends on how much is in this water bank at the beginning of the irrigation season.

I: Do you typically use most of your water?

R: No. I don't typically use most of my water, but you have to understand that you take 5,000 acres and you take a very intensive water crop like uh maybe sugar beets, you know all the acres aren't sugar beets.

I: So, if you have a wheat field you wouldn't use as much water?

R: Right.

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

R: Um bees are always out there and they are always pollinating crops, so you know, I don't rely on them, I don't have bees. I'm very aware that they're there, and I would be very careful. I really absolutely do not like any application of aerial pesticides for that reason. You know, you're killing the good stuff too.

I: So, you prefer the treatment where it goes directly on the crop?

R: It's treated on the seed. The seed is treated. Yes, and there's nothing that's in the air. Nothing that can contact any of the helpful insects.

I: Have you noticed any change in the bee population?

R: I have not, but I never monitored it to begin with.

I: It's a little hard to tell?

R: Yeah, it's a little hard to tell. I don't hang out with a lot of bees.

I: Some farmers have honeybee hives that are put on their fields? Have you ever done this?

R: There's a couple times that we've let the larger bee farms put bee boxes on our property, and it didn't work out so well for our pipe movers or our cows. So, it's not really something that we like to have. I don't mind if they're off somewhere where we're not going to have people working, but yeah.

I: Just a little too close?

R: It's a little too close, yeah. We've had some issues with that.

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

R: Um, I'm not worried about climate change.

I: Do you think that any of the changes to the climate some people are talking about are caused by human activities?

R: Well obviously with every action there's a reaction. We have to be having some kind of impact on our environment, but I also think that for as old as our planet is and for as long as it's been here, um. Our environment and our planet has a way of taking care of itself also. We need to try to do a good job, and obviously you know, dumping radioactive waste in our aquifer is a pretty dumb move. You know, and I love to see. There're mistakes that we've made throughout man-kind's existence, and we get better. But, we need to continually strive to get better, but as far as whether we're ruining the planet because a cow has gas is absolutely insane. I don't believe any of that.

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

R: Um you know, every natural resource we have. I mean the all, you have to have one.

I: Can you think of something in particular?

R: Um clean air. We have to have clean air. We definitely need to be doing what we are doing as far as for trying to find cleaner burning fuels, and maybe going to electric cars. I'm supportive of all of that. I think that's all a huge step.

I: Can you think of anymore?

R: Well, the dirt. The dirt has a funny way of taking care of itself, and some of the best dirt is that that doesn't get touched. It just sits there and lets Mother Nature take care of it. Um you know, when you go up into the mountains and you look at all the green grass and all the green trees and all the shrubbery and all the food that's up there for the animals. Nobody's running a fertilizer spreader over that. Mother Nature has an amazing way of dropping rain and snow and pulling nitrogen out of the atmosphere, and doing her thing.

I: I kind of marvel at that too.

R: Yeah, it's pretty neat how.

I: Yeah, when you plant a garden you have to work so hard.

R: It's true.

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

R: Um, if I worried about the health of any of our natural resources it would be water. I just worry that, you know like I said, that there's. I don't understand. I'm going to touch base just a little bit here. Let's talk about spent nuclear fuel. Why are we using this stuff and making stuff that we have no way to get rid of. I understand it's efficient. I understand the amount of power that will come from it is amazing, but sill. If you have no way to safely dispose of it, why are we making it? Why would you make something that you can't get rid of? It's just commonsense.

I: Are you worried about anything else?

R: Well, we are going to have a shortage of farm ground someday because we need to put concrete and a Starbuck's over every acre for some reason. I'm not sure why.

I: Sometimes the best ground?

R: Yeah, and it's frustrating. I mean even when you travel to a beautiful city like Boise Idaho, I swear there is a Starbuck's every two blocks. Do we really need these many Starbuck's people? I mean they're paving over what keeps us alive. I don't understand how we can worry about this and worry about that, and implement all of these conservation guidelines and rules and try to monitor guys like a farmer that lives off the land, and needs that land to produce more than anybody that's out there trying to monitor them, but yet we can go into a beautiful city like Boise and just keep putting down new concrete and don't worry about the old dilapidated parts of town that need torn down or, and could be refurbished, and use what's there. Instead we have to just keep growing and growing and growing. Half of Pocatello could be taken to the landfill. And yet, we are growing and building new business and expanding. It's cheaper for these businesses to expand out of town and have not demolition and no cleanup costs than it is to go in there and take care of some these. Look on Main Street, you know Main Street, Yellowstone, the old Ernst building. All these things, why are all these buildings so hard to get people to come in and tear down and redo instead.

I: So, you think we should be recycling and reusing the land?

R: Yes, recycle reuse. You know, I think that we need to take a good hard look every time someone takes a piece of ground out of production. And it doesn't even, it's not even the United States that scares me the most on that. When you look at what's going out and what's being done in Argentina and Columbia and with the rain forest, and all these other places, I shake my head and go, you know, we can pass all the guidelines and the rules and regulation here, but we still need those areas to also have some respect for the environment. It's all connected.

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: Um, just our tillage practices. Like I said, we try to do um, to get a seed bed ready, we work the crops with less passes. We try to get a little bit more efficient.

I: Do you not till as deep?

R: Um, I would say that we do more tasks with one pass. You know, what used to take a ripper to break open the soil and then you would make other passes, disking, and now we do it all at once.

I: All of those pieces of machinery are together?

R: Yeah, they are all one. You know tractors are bigger and more efficient.

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

R: Oh, education of the consumer. Consumers have to understand that, one of these days they're going to have to figure out where food comes from. You know, the basic why. You know there's a lot of people out there that just don't have a clue, and until people are educated and they understand why it's so important to support the farmers. You know like I said, if you shut the trucks off in this country, I guarantee this country is going to drop to its knees in three days. That's all it's going to take. And then you take like the Great Depression back in the twenties and you take what happened, well 97 percent of the people lived on a farm. They could feed themselves. You have some major economic breakdown in our today, you know that number's flipped, you know 2 percent of the population lives out where they can produce their own food and take care of themselves.

I: So, do you see a vulnerable population that doesn't appreciate farming?

R: Um, I wouldn't say that they don't appreciate. There's always someone that's an exception to the rule, but I think it's absolutely a tragedy that the school system, especially in Kindergarten-maybe K through sixth, why there's not more of an education on the environment

and where food comes from, and farming in general. I mean food's such a big part of our existence.

I: How are these challenges different from what they were in the past, if they are different? Do you think people have less knowledge of food production than in the past?

R: Well, every generation gets further and further away from the actual necessities of life. A necessity to a sixteen-year-old today is having the newest iPhone. And, the necessities to someone that was growing up in you know 1925, was jeez am I going to get a meal today. You know, we're blowing through our natural resources, the consumption rate of every person alive today. I mean it's, oh boy, you know we just consume and consume, consume. It's going to be very interesting to see what happens down the road. There's going to be so many implications from that. You know, we, and I'm not saying I'm from that generation because obviously I'm not, but I still look at it and I go. When someone's building a 15,000 square foot house, for what? You know for what? Because they can? I mean there's no rhyme or reason why, as to the amount of waste. It makes me sick. I think that in the United States we have three times waste of any other country. It's crazy.

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

R: Oh, that's tough. Farming is so satisfying. It can be such hardship because you can, you can work so hard. You can go backwards so fast. And, I've seen a lot of people lose everything in a heartbeat. Um, but to go out and do a good job, grow a good crop, um you know, it's very satisfying. It's very satisfying to know what you've done and how many people are going to get a meal off of what you've done, and it's so nice to be able to work with the ground and the land, and you don't get a better community than this. I mean you work, it takes a community. I don't care if you have a gas business. I don't care if you work at the drug store, you know. It's a way of life. It's not a job, it's a way of life.

I: You definitely are connected to the community.

R: Definitely.

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

R: Uh, it's definitely all internet.

I: Are there any particular websites you use?

R: Um no, I think I probably bounce between three different weather sources, and you know I'm on the weather all the time just looking, trying to plan.

I: Where do you find information about new technology, new seeds, information on farming practices?

R: Um, you know I would say that most of that stuff is word of mouth. If somebody has a good product it spreads fast.

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

R: All of them.

I: All of them?

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

R: My experience has been that generally you have someone that is trying to tell you what to do, or what you can do and what you can't do that has no idea. So, that's been my experience. It's a joy.

I: It's a joy?

R: uh huh.

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

R: Um, you know I'm a pretty firm believer that the more government that's involved the more they screw it up. You know, from social security to the post office, I think that they should just leave it to private individuals. To people that actually understand how to run a business. So, I'm going to say no. They just scare me. They scare me in every way, shape, and form.

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

R: Um, you know farming's a funny beast because one farmer is actually in competition with another farmer. So, even though we all actually kind of compete with each other, at the end of the day if someone has a problem or if somebody needs something, we're also a community where everyone helps. And everyone can look the other way and not worry so much about what something might cost or the fact that they went and helped with something. It was more about being a good neighbor at the end of the day. But, you know, for anybody to come out and help me with what I do as a whole to make me a better grower? You know, that's really tough. You know we have a lot of crop damage from the county. They drive around with their pickup and they spray everything, and they spray on windy days and it will go out into the field fifty, sixty, seventy feet. It's frustrating because you spend all this time and money growing a crop, and then they drive around trying to do weed control and you know.

I: Not following regulations themselves?

R: Yeah. They think they're being helpful. I'm just saying that you know they do a lot of damage, and you know but I can see both sides to every story. I mean I get really frustrated about all the water on the roads, and I'm a grower and it drives me nuts. If I go by something that we farm and we're watering the road, I will whoever's in charge and say you need to fix that. You know, I wish they would enforce that. I think it costs the people in this community and the surrounding areas a lot of tax dollars on damage to roads. They don't need to be watered like they are. And trust me, I totally get it if we get a forty mile-per-hour wind and the water's going clear over the highway. I get it, it happens. You can't run around and fix that every time the wind changes in Idaho.

I: Yeah, when you see an end that's right at the fence line.

R: Oh yeah, and a lot of times it's the same growers. It's the same growers that water the road. When you drive around on these back roads and you look at who cares and who doesn't care, it's the same growers, but there's no one in the county to enforce anything. Like I said, they're too worried about whether a bird crapped in our field, so.

I: So, if they could provide someone to enforce those regulation?

R: Well, it's, you know, like the department of water resources. You know, we're in a drought. The aquifer is being depleted because there is too much water being used, but yet we are still our issuing water rights and letting people tweak the system a little bit, and develop new ground and I just don't understand why it's so hard as a department to put a stop to all of it.

I: To the new expansion?

R: Yeah, the new expansion. When we're not sure how we're going to maintain what we have right now with where we're at with the water situation, why is there just not a ban on everything right now?

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

R: Uh, I am not.

I: Would you ever consider using them in the future?

R: My grandfather always told me if I wanted to be an outstanding farmer, I had to be out standing in my field. So, I love the fact that with technology we can do all these things and never be there, but I like to be there. So, I use what's called a pickup, and a lot of times a shovel, and I'm everywhere. I drive around a lot. I live in my pickup.

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: Four

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

R: Uh, I can't say I'm democratic or a republican. I think I'm on a case by case basis, and it's funny how our political agenda or our views might be skewed a little bit depending on what it is. You know, I'm a grower and the immigration thing scares me to death, what the Republicans want to do. Even though I probably tend to go Republican, I'm pro-business and I'm less government, but the immigration thing. You know, maybe the way they approach it and the way they come out and have some radical views about, you know, everyone needs to go back, blah blah blah. Well, you know the Hispanic culture is a huge part of my business, and they are some dang good people, and I wish everyone would quit with the black and white. You know, you can't feasibly come in and deport everybody that's in this country whether you're from Finland or Mexico, you can't come in and deport them all, and get everyone out of here any way and keep this country running. So, we're just going to have to deal with the fact. Fix the hole, then we can deal with what is here. You know, my approach is definitely, like I said there is two sides every story, but it just depends on whatever the policy or the law, or, each things different. Like I said, I disagree. I think you really have to take a stance on each thing depending on how you feel about it and how it affects you.

I: Have you had any experience with regulatory agencies in hiring immigrants? How has that experience been for you?

R: Excellent. Ya know, the difference between the guys that work for me that are Hispanic and those that are born and raised and grow up here, is the guys born raised and grew up here call me and say hey, I need somebody to come out here and move this hand line. The Hispanic guys call me and go, I moved all the hand lines when I got to them so they're out of the way, so you can start that pump any time. You know, we've really gotten to be a lazy culture, and you know it just goes to say, it's just survival of the fittest. You know when I hear someone say, I can't believe the Hispanic culture, they're buying all the businesses in town. They're buying all these old houses and I don't understand it. Yet, I'll see these guys and they'll eat refried beans and a tortilla for lunch every day, and everybody else goes and spends twenty dollars at the local café. You know, they make sacrifices. They're just flat our earning it, and uh, I guarantee that you're gonna see a huge shift when they fix this immigration thing, you're going to see a huge shift in the competition. You know, these people are willing to go to school at night, and to become doctors and lawyers and do what they have to do to get to the top because they've been hungry. They're hard workers, and you know that being said, there's always an exception to the rule.

I: And what is your age?

R: Forty

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

R: Um, I just think as a whole, it would be really awesome for the state and all the people in the state to be proud of agriculture. We are so lucky to live where we live, and to have all the opportunities that we have, and to embrace it, celebrate it. I think agriculture is very much low balled when it comes to, you know a lot of people especially that have had nothing to do with agriculture. That don't understand how wonderful it is. It would be truly nice to shed a whole new light on it. Let people understand, we do a good job. You know, the reason why food might cost you a little bit more grown in the United States, is because it's safe. The people that are out there, that are working to help produce that food, they abide by law. I mean there's things that they use in Mexico that we haven't used since 1980 on their crops, and people don't understand the regulations. There's a reason why we don't use that stuff. There's a reason why it might cost, you know, three cents more a pound for strawberries grown in the United States, but with that you can have the confidence that what you're eating is safe and healthy and has been checked. You look at almost all these e coli cases, they've come from food that wasn't produced in the United States. It's scary, and they don't. There's a cost associated with all these things that we have to do, and I just think it would be great if people had the attitude: you know what, I know where it came from, and I'm willing to pay the extra penny a pound because I know where it came from.