

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Myles Harston

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Oral History of Illinois Agriculture project

Interview # AIS-V-L-2008-060

Myles Harston, owner and manager of AquaRanch, an aquaponics operation that raises tilapia fish and pumps the waste water under growing beds of basil, lettuce and other produce, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Oral History of Illinois Agriculture* project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: September 12th, 2008 Location: AquaRanch, Flanagan, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital video

Interviewer: Mark R. DePue, Director of Oral History, ALPL

Technical Support (cameraman, etc): Mark Suszko & Tony Bateman, IL Information Service

Transcription by: Tape Transcription Center, Boston, MA

Edited by: Rozanne Flatt, ALPL Volunteer

Total Pages: 22 + ____ Total Time: 1 hr + 1 hr 7 min + 17 min = 2 hr 24 min / 2.4 hrs

Session 1: Early life and Harston's path to establishing the AquaRanch business

Session 2 & 3: Walk and talk interview of the AquaRanch facilities

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on 11/21/2008.

The interviews are archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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Abstract

Myles Harston, *Oral History of Illinois Agriculture*, AIS-V-L-2008-060

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Myles Harston was born on April 29th, 1952 in Denver Colorado, and spent most of his childhood years growing up on a ranch in Utah. Following high school, Myles served a missionary tour in the Philippines for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. He returned to the states and started college, majoring in animal science. He graduated from Brigham Young University then helped his father on his farm in Illinois, where they raised and bred Arabian horses until 1984 when a tax law change made the business less lucrative. Over the next several years Myles worked at Agri-Cover Industries, which made tarps for agricultural applications.

He eventually ventured out on his own, and in 2003, bought a property in Flanagan, Illinois and began AquaRanch, an aquaponic operation that raises tilapia fish, and pumps the waste water from the fish into growing beds for vegetables, especially basil, lettuce and tomatoes. Myles markets both the fish and the produce in the local area, to selected Chicago farmers markets, and to a number of local grocery stores. He plans to significantly expand the business over the next few years.

In the second part of the interview, Myles walks through the AquaRanch facility while discussing every step of the operation, from fish breeding, to marketing the fish filets, as well as the sizable grow beds that thrive on the water pumped between the fish tanks and growing beds. The operation also includes manufacturing aquaponic systems for other patrons.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Aquaponic farming; Flanagan, Illinois; growing up on a Utah ranch; missionary work in Philippines for the Church of Jesus Christ Latter-Day Saints; Arabian horse raising & breeding; Agri-Cover Tarp Systems; tilapia fish; Illinois State University; Ringer Foods; Mike Frinsko, Illinois State University; Aqua Ranch Industries; organic farming; basil and lettuce farming

Note to the Reader: Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

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