

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Brian Duncan

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
TUMULTUOUS 2020 Oral History project

Interview # __ T20-A-L-2022-046

Brian Duncan, a farmer facing challenges during the Pandemic, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Tumultuous 2020* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: June 1, 2022, rural Polo, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital audio/Digital video

Interviewer: Philip Pogue

Technical Support (cameraman, etc):

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

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Session 1:

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The interview(s) is/are archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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Interview being
processed

Brian Duncan, a diversified farmer in Ogle County and Vice President of the Illinois Farm Bureau, discusses how the COVID-19 Pandemic impacted the

diversified farming community and the rural area in northern Illinois beginning in March 2020 through May 2022.

Abstract

Brian Duncan- *Tumultuous 2020*

Brian Duncan was born in Polo, Illinois, in 1964 and grew up on a farm established by his grandfather in the 1950s. He graduated from Polo High School in 1982, where he was active in FFA and Student Government and earned a State Farming Degree. He later obtained an associate degree in social science from Sauk Valley Community College. Currently, Brian is involved in diversified farming, managing 3,850 acres, 70,000 hogs, and 1,000 cattle annually. He has been the Vice President of the Illinois Farm Bureau since 2017 and previously served on the Illinois Young Leaders Committee, won multiple state awards, and was the Ogle County Farm Bureau President. Brian is also a Board of Trustee member at Sauk Valley Community College and has held leadership roles in various organizations, including the Ogle County Pork Producers and the National Pork Producers Council.

This interview explores the challenges Brian faced as a diversified farmer in northern Illinois during the COVID-19 pandemic. It covers the typical farming challenges such as weather, grain prices, and operational costs, alongside pandemic-specific issues like high input costs, worker shortages, packing plant disruptions, and global problems including the war in Ukraine. The discussion also touches on federal assistance programs (Paycheck Protection Program, CFAP Food Assistance, and Economic Injury Disaster Loan), state programs, legislative efforts by the Illinois Farm Bureau, and how Sauk Valley Community College adapted to remote learning. The interview concludes with a comparison of the pandemic's impact to past economic challenges in farming over the last 40 years and potential issues for 2023.

Subject Headings/Key Words:

- 1) Description of the Diversified Generational Farm located in Ogle County (crops, hogs and livestock)
- 2) Impact of the Pandemic on farming operations (March 2020-May 2022)
- 3) Importance of the farm economy to northern Illinois
- 4) Challenges faced during the pandemic (supply chains, high costs on fertilizer, and fuel, decline in small town community businesses, property taxes, consumer food adjustments, few school activities, worker availability, packing plant problems, & farm equipment costs)
- 5) Funding assistance from the federal government (Paycheck Protection Program, Economic Injury Disaster Loan, & CFAP Food Assistance) & some small state grants

6) Legislative Objectives of the Illinois Farm Bureau and the Illinois Pork Producers Association

7) Personal impact of working during the Pandemic (considered essential)

8) How did the Pandemic compare to other periods impacting farming from 1980-2022 (draught and flood years, farmland price collapses, economic recessions)

9) Expectations and challenges for farming in 2023

10) how the local community college functioned over the past 2 ¼ school years

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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