

# Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Karen Hudson

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

Interview # AI-A-L-2016-047

Karen Hudson, an activist opposed to large scale hog and cattle operations, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Agriculture in Illinois* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: Oct 13, 2016    Location: Elmwood, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Larry Bapst, ALPL volunteer

Transcription by: \_\_\_\_\_

Edited by: \_\_\_\_\_

Transcript  
being processed

Total Pages: \_\_\_\_\_    Total Time: 1:48 / 1.8 hrs.

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The interview is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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# Abstract

Karen Hudson, *Agriculture in Illinois*, AI-A-L-2016-047

**Biographical Information Overview of Interview:** Karen Hudson was born on October 30, 1955, in Cook County, Illinois. Karen grew up in the suburbs of Chicago and attended Proviso West High School. Upon graduation, she went to Illinois State University where she obtained a Bachelor of Science degree in education, and also met her future husband, Howard (Rocky) Rockwell. After they were married, Karen moved to Elmwood, a rural town in West Central Illinois, where Rocky worked a farm that had been in his family for five generations. For many years, Karen worked as a teacher and an inspector for the power company while simultaneously raising two children, Alicia and Samuel, and helping on the farm.

In the mid-1990s, Karen became committed to stopping the spread of concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFO) when Murphy Family Farms sought to establish a large hog farm nearby. She founded Families Against Rural Messes (FARM), a grassroots group in Illinois that opposes CAFOs and their impacts. Karen is also co-founder of Illinois Citizens for Clean Air and Water (ICCAW), a state-wide coalition of family farmers and community groups advocating for sound policies and practices that protect the environment, human health, and rural quality of life from the impacts of large-scale industrialized livestock production facilities in Illinois. A majority of its members are family farmers and rural residents who live near large-scale livestock facilities who have been adversely impacted by the problems those facilities create.

Karen is also President of the Dairy Education Alliance (DEA). She works as an environmental consultant to the Socially Responsible Agricultural Project. Her work has been covered by numerous state, national and local media, including the *Washington Post*, *Chicago Tribune*, and *Los Angeles Times*. Karen is one of three major activists portrayed in the 2010 book *Animal Factory*, written by bestselling *New York Times* author David Kirby.

In 2001, Karen received the Heart of Illinois Sierra Club “Conservationist of the Year” award for her work on factory farm issues. Karen traveled to Poland in 2001 to educate the Polish public and farmers about the negative impacts of CAFOs. Karen participates in public hearings and speaking engagements, networks with grassroots groups, and educates the public by providing health and environmental information about industrialized animal production. In 2011, Karen gave a speech entitled “The Hidden Price Tag of Industrial Agriculture” at TED, a nonprofit, nonpartisan foundation that seeks to make great ideas accessible and spark conversation.

**Subject Headings/Key Words:** concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFO) factory hog farms; Families Against Rural Messes (FARM); Murphy Family Farms; Dairy Education Alliance (DEA); Illinois Sierra Club; Illinois Citizens for Clean Air and Water (ICCAW); Howard (Rocky) Rockwell;

**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

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