

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Jim Burrus

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Illinois State Museum's *Oral History of Illinois Agriculture* project
Interview # AIS-V-L-2008-050

Jim Burrus, a farmer from Jacksonville, Illinois raising organic cattle and chickens, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Illinois State Museum's *Oral History of Illinois Agriculture* project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: 5/17/2008

Location: Jacksonville, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital video

Interviewer: Charlyn Fargo, ALPL volunteer

Dr. Robert Warren and Michael Maniscalco, IL State Museum

Recording Engineer: Dr. Robert Warren, IL State Museum

Transcription by: Tape Transcription Center, Boston, MA

Edited by: Michael Maniscalco and Rachel Thompson, ISM

Rozanne Flatt, ALPL Volunteer

Video Indexed by: James Oliver

Total Pages: 16 Total Time: 35 min + __ min / .58 + ____ = ___/ ___hrs

Session 1: Sit Down Interview

Session 2: Walk and Talk Interview

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

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Abstract

Jim Burrus, *Oral History of Illinois Agriculture*, AIS-V-L-2008-050

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Jim Burrus was born on January 11, 1950 in Jacksonville Illinois, and continues to live there today. The farm has been in his family for at least three generations and his grandparents lived only five miles up the road. In the early generations, the farm was diversified housing various livestock as well as growing crops. Jim told a few stories of his childhood on the farm. He explained there was a lot of work and fun on the farm. He had numerous friends in both the town and in the country.

Jim has changed the focus of the farm from a diversified operation to raising grass feed Angus. He explained that there is a lot of rolling ground on the farm which made it inefficient to crop. What he has done instead is plant perennial grasses and clover in fields where there once were corn and soybeans. Black and Red Angus and some other mixed cattle are allowed to graze these fields in a certified organic operation. Jim believes that cattle do better eating grass instead of grain and corn – that corn and other grains taste like candy to cattle and their four-stomach system is not meant to process grain.

Jim also raises free range chickens. The chickens are kept in white PVC pens which have an open bottom and a white cover providing shade. These pens are filled with chickens at the top of a hill and every day slid down hill a few feet. This process provides fresh grass and clover for the hens to graze on. When the pens reach the bottom of the hill the hens will average about 4-5 pounds and will be sent to slaughter. The produce from the farm is sold through a website as well as straight from Burrus' own farm. He also sells quarters and halves of beef, sold through a local meat locker.

Topics Covered: Jacksonville, Illinois; Grass fed Beef Production; Angus cattle; Free Range chickens; Hundred-mile diet; Organic foods

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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