

# Interview with Oba Herschberger

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Interviewer: Mike Maniscalco

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Maniscalco: Today is February 5, 2008. This is an interview with Oba Herschberger for the Oral History of *Illinois Agriculture* project. How are you doing today, Oba.

Herschberger: I'm doing fine.

Maniscalco: That's good. Good. Let's start out with just some general things. Can you just kind of give us your age and date of birth?

Herschberger: Fifty-nine years old. I was born September fourteenth, in 1948.

Maniscalco: And where were you born?

Herschberger: One mile south of Arthur in Moultrie County—whoop, no, Douglas County. I'm used to saying Moultrie County.

Maniscalco: (laughs) Can you tell us kind of about your immediate family that's here with you?

Herschberger: We have one of our sons took over the farm here—the dairy end of it—him and his family. And then three of the boys work across the field at—no, two of them—at my son's cabinet shop.

Maniscalco: And your wife lives here with you, and...

Herschberger: She lives here with me. She does a lot of different things. She's got a lot of hobbies, like raising birds. We also do dinners and farm tours. And I'm trying to think what else she loves to do. Oh, quilting, of course. She loves to quilt.

Maniscalco: (laughs) And how many kids do you have living here with you?

Herschberger: Three.

Maniscalco: Three that live here with you?

Herschberger: That live in the home.

Maniscalco: And your other children live...?

Herschberger: Elsewhere—just scattered. There’s about four of five of them right close in the neighborhood—married and live close.

Maniscalco: Now I know there’s different sects of the Amish. Can you explain the sect that you belong to?

Herschberger: Old Order Amish. Although there’s still many small differences depending on where you were born and raised, we basically all have the same type of church service. But I guess we would call it our rules—whatever you want to call it—are somewhat different from place to place. Sometimes it’s because of geographical, sometimes it’s because of the way the workforce is. They may have to allow something in one area that’s maybe not practical in another area, but the real main thing is, so people understand, is—a lot of people can’t get in their head... In fact, a minister said the other day he had a talk with a non-Amish fellow, and he said, “I guess you all just do as the bishop says.” And he says, “Why do you say that?” He says, “That’s what I hear.” He said, “The bishop has no more power than I do. We all have the same vote—one vote; it’s over.” He makes a suggestion, and then it goes from there. And we have rules simply because, I believe, it’s very important to have rules. I don’t care where you’re at. So.

Maniscalco: Can you explain like some of the rules and things?

Herschberger: Oh, like what? (both laugh) Don’t you know—okay, give me an example.

Maniscalco: There are so many sects of Amish. What makes your sect different from others? How’s that?

Herschberger: We would probably be one of the more liberal Amish in the Midwest, being that we have skid steers; we use skid steers [little tractors] for our manure hauling and so forth. We use a lot of hydraulic airpower for different things, where that’s not so everywhere. We have pipeline for our milkers. There’s really no given reason, other than years ago we tried to promote farming, so we probably introduced more modern methods just so we could kind of keep people on the farms. Truthfully, I’m not sure that helps. We would think it would, but in me watching—and I love to observe different communities, how they work—it seems to me the more modern ones actually cannot hold as well as the others because their overhead is much higher. They replace—you might say child labor—it’s not really child labor, but children that can help—they’ll replace it with something that’s very expensive, and the children don’t learn to work maybe quite as well as we did. So I think it was counterproductive. They meant well, (laugh) but I don’t think it panned out well.

Maniscalco: (laughs) You mentioned the skids with the ox [scoop tractors] and different things like that. What are some of the other changes that you've noticed coming in from when you were a child on the farm?

Herschberger: That exactly. A lot of changes: more modern equipment, like the skid steer—it's a four-wheel-drive thing, you know. That brought on a lot of change. We do a lot of things faster. I'm probably a little more stubborn than some, (both laugh) but I would say we haven't gained. We have actually shot ourselves in the foot. That's the way I feel. A lot of people disagree. We don't talk about it, but I think we've not really gained a lot because our expenses are way up, and as you know how fuel prices are. Every time I can replace an engine with a horse, I will. Of course, I'm a horse lover. But every time you start an engine, it costs. It's that simple. I mean, I don't care what society you're in. In some way, it costs. First of all, it will wear out. You're using fuel that you shouldn't be using. I don't know exactly. I don't know exactly. There's a lot of things same; as far as I'm concerned, dress should never change. Styles come and go, but we try to stay the same, even though we are somewhat influenced, a little bit, you know, by the outside world. But to me, that's a very big no-no. I have nothing against other people; that's not what I'm saying. We were born and raised that way, and in order for us to thrive, we have to keep a sameness. That's just the way it works.

Maniscalco: Can you tell me kind of like what are some of the changes that—the most recent change that you've notice?

Herschberger: Actually, we haven't had many changes in the recent past. I would say maybe one of the more recent things—and that was a good change—and that is most homes today have piped in gas, like for our lights. You used to have the twenty-pound tanks sitting in the house with the lights, and very dangerous. That's something that was allowed. Like that, for instance. Which is piped in. Not near as explosive. Because there have been some explosions. That was a good thing. There's certainly a lot of things that they have changed that are good; there's some things I hope will never change. I think our simplicity of life isn't quite what it used to be because of the changes. Other communities keep it much more, so maybe they have a little firmer set of older people. (laughs) I don't know. It's hard to say.

You know, I never want to compare myself—I shouldn't say that. I'll take that back—(laughs) with the Muslim belief; we absolutely have no ties with it whatsoever, but I can understand much better the ongoing struggles with the people that are trying to do something in Iraq, because they've got kind of the same mindset that we have. We want to stay same as our sect of people; so do they. And someone from the outside comes and tells me what I should do, that would not work. And it's against—we don't believe in violence—that's the difference. I mean, we would never do what they're doing, and we have a completely different set of beliefs, but still, the basic thing is still kind of same. I can kind of feel for them because I'm sure there are some Muslims

that have a very solid belief. Our religion absolutely does not allow violence, so... What I'm trying to say is yeah, we have a lot of different, but we still go back and forth, visit each other, no ill feelings, it's just that's the way we are. We're just a little different.

Maniscalco: Now, between sects there's these differences in beliefs and things. Do you visit between sects and [other communities].

Herschberger: Oh, definitely.

Maniscalco: —and all that?

Herschberger: All the time. I love it. I love it. Sure. We don't even think about as someone comes from Indiana, and they have a little bit different dress code, they have a little bit different this or that. That's no problem at all because that's the way they were raised. Even within our own community we have a tad bit of differences. We are not, you would say, an organized religion. In other words, there's nothing written as far as rules. There's nothing. There's no head, pope. (laughs) Actually, each church district operates completely separately from the church district beside it. And there's many good reasons for that, because there's no power play. We are a church of our own. Although, they have their yearly—or sometimes biyearly, depends—problems come up, the bishops will meet. They try to stay the same, you know. But still, each one works independently. Each church district is independent from the other church district.

Maniscalco: Do the church districts get names and things?

Herschberger: Yeah, geographically. Like ours is Sullivan Township. It's simply so we can understand—

Maniscalco: Who you're talking about.

Herschberger: —who we're talking about.

Maniscalco: Now you mentioned a little bit about childhood and some of the things you were brought up with. Can you kind of expand on that a little bit? (laughter)

Herschberger: Oh, man, that's a tough one. Well, I know one thing: I hauled a lot of manure (interviewer laughs) with the [pitch]fork, and I'm not sure I'd want to go back to that. But I know I loved it. It's funny: a certain amount of pride in how many loads of manure you could haul in a day, how much corn you could shuck a day—by hand, you know. I mean, that was bragging rights. Like one of my brothers was the fastest corn shucker in this area, see. Whatever you want to call it—pride or whatever—there was a certain amount of toughness involved. Today we hardly have anything to compare ourselves with. And that kind of is life. You kind of want to—we say we don't want to excel, but still,

especially as kids, we like to see what we can do maybe a little better than the other guy.

Yeah, there's a lot of difference. The biggest difference is sad, and that is, we went from a farming community to a woodworking and a cottage industry. I shouldn't say 'sad,' because it was forced upon us. Land prices—hard to make a living. You had to farm more and more, milk more and more. So it was easier to go to the neighbor—guy that had a woodworking shop—and work for him. That brings a change of children. A lot of kids don't quite know how to figure things out like they used to. I mean, I was on my own there out during chores. I did my chores—I had my set of chores to do—and as soon as I came home from school, I chored 'til 6:30. Did I hate it? I thought I did, but I didn't.

And the reason I know that: we have thirty grandchildren, and the grandchildren here are the only ones that work on the farm. The other children, I know, are bored a lot of the time. And I hear my grandchildren outside, feeding the calves, doing whatever. They're whistling and they're singing just like I did. If you would ask them, "Do you like it?" they would probably say no, but they do. Because it's the routine; it keeps them out of mischief. There's nothing like boredom. The others have chores, like rabbits, but not a chore that is an absolute, you've got to do it. Feed the cows, certain... It gets complicated, and they got to learn. They learn a lot of measurements; they learn a lot of things that other children just don't get the opportunity to learn. So I think that has the biggest impact, is the work ethic they learn when they're young. Get home, get those clothes changed, and usually (laughs) sneak a bite to eat, and head for the barn. And other kids don't know that, and that's sad. But what can we do about it? We can't. There's lots of Amish move to other settlements or other parts of the country, kind of start a new settlement where the land's a tiny bit cheaper. That helps, but still the major big settlements, people stay within the settlement. And I like that, too, because I don't want my kids to move. (both laugh) So.

Maniscalco: That's kind of neat. So if we could go back to your childhood, how many corn could you shuck?

Herschberger: Well, the best I can tell you: when I was in eighth grade, on Thanksgiving afternoon, we found out there was a guy down the road that would pay ten cents a bushel to shuck corn. And I hooked up the team and the wagon, went over there, and I started shucking at a little past twelve o'clock, and I quit at 4:30, and I shucked 110 bushels. I got eleven bucks. That was pretty big money, I thought. (laughs) But that would probably be a record for my age. Well, no doubt it would have been way over their usual record.

But my brother would consistently shuck over 200 bushels a day. Now, you might not know how much that is, but that is moving so fast that you can barely see your hands move. And that's not like ten minutes, fifteen minutes;

that's for eight hours. It's unbelievable. It would be compared to the highest sports figures today. I'm serious. Every second counted, and his hands were going like lightning. I mean, you can't imagine the blur. And that included unloading three loads, and chore. And that was unreal. That was unreal. I know that was tougher than playing Tom Brady's position. (interviewer laughs) Maybe not more skilled, but tougher. You had to be made of iron to do that. Just think of your shoulder and your wrist, what that did, that snapping them ears. It was unreal. I could get maybe 200, but I couldn't get—I think 239 was his record.

Honestly I think I could have out-shucked him if I'd have went on. (laughter) But my dad quit farming when I was fifteen years old. And that time, corn pickers were being allowed, and my brother-in-law took over the farm, and he started picking corn. Again, I'm glad he did because I wouldn't want to shuck corn today. We know what wages are and what everything is. But the other thing of it is, there went another part of our heritage down the drain, because that was what kids talked about on Sunday night. "Hey, I heard such-and-such shucked such-and-such, so many bushels of corn," or "You know how much he's done?" It was a thing that was harmless, that was good. A little bit of pride involved, but such is life, I guess. (laughs)

Maniscalco: Now you said your father stopped farming at the age of fifteen?

Herschberger: No, I was fifteen.

Maniscalco: I mean, when you were fifteen.

Herschberger: Mm-hmm. He was sixty years old.

Maniscalco: And did you take over, or what did—?

Herschberger: No, no. I wasn't married yet. Usually the youngest takes over, but not always. I wasn't married yet, and my sister just older took over the farm, her and her husband. At the time, I thought I didn't want to farm. I was working carpentering then, and did for four years. Then later on I got married and decided, I don't want to do carpentry, so I started farming. Farming the rest of my life.

Maniscalco: Now where was that original farm that you—

Herschberger: One mile south of Arthur, Illinois. Straight south of Arthur. Still there. Another nephew now is farming there; it's the third generation.

Maniscalco: Is the house and everything still there and—?

Herschberger: Oh yeah. House and barn.

Maniscalco: So do you go back there and visit it?

Herschberger: Oh, sure. All the time. My sister lives there with her boy—I mean, married. Mm-hmm.

Maniscalco: What kinds of memories do you have when you go back there from your childhood?

Herschberger: Oh, my land. There's too many to talk about.

Maniscalco: What's the best one? Is there a top one?

Herschberger: Yeah, probably. Yeah, probably. Before I was married, on Christmas when the kids come home—I call it “kids”—when all the kids come home for Christmas. Because see, I was the age of my nephews and nieces. I never did really play with my brothers and sisters like my others did because I was a few years behind. And it was two girls just older, so the next brother was quite a bit older than I. And we never had an interaction quite like some would have, but my nieces and nephews, I did have, very much. It was a very, very big event for the thirteen to come home—and I was the fourteenth one, of course. And at this point, when my mom and dad died, they had—I'm not sure, but I think it was—around 700 direct descendants. My dad died when he was one month near ninety-four. My mom died when she was eighty-nine. She had never been to a hospital until she was eighty-two when she had a stroke, had fourteen children. So they were very, very healthy people.

In fact, we wrote a book that I might give to you. All the kids kind of wrote of what they remembered at home, and that probably would teach you a whole lot more than what I can tell you here. We put it together, my wife and I did, and we also helped with a book. Our son Samuel was in an accident. That was over in Springfield. If you had been around then, you would have known, because fifteen years ago, it was the second-top story in Illinois. I guess. He's had thirty-seven operations.

Maniscalco: If you don't mind me asking, what happened to him?

Herschberger: He got caught in the power take-off shaft. All but three bones in his body were broken, and all of his limbs were tore off but one, and he was scalped. And he's had thirty-seven operations. So we've been down a road.

Maniscalco: I guess so. And he's okay now?

Herschberger: No, but he's working over at my son's. He takes care of the books. He can't do a whole lot physically, but he's very, very sharp—very sharp. He's got one arm again, but the fingers are only about 10 percent, maybe 5 percent, I'm not sure. His arm was wrapped backwards around his head, all the way around the front again (inaudible). This leg was put back on two different places, below and above the knee. And this leg was—they were all broke up. All but three bones were broke in his body.

Maniscalco: Now that must have been a very tragic experience for your family. How did...?

Herschberger: Well, I'll tell you what. We went out to chore that morning, and at seven o'clock's when it happened. We didn't see our home again actually for two months. The kids took over, and we left. That's the way it was. He was at the hospital for two months the first time, and then many times after that. We came home, and they said, "He needs to come home just for a while." He really hadn't started healing; they were just trying to put parts together. So we were in Springfield, at Memorial Hospital, for that length of time. We got to meet Governor Edgar, and we got to meet lots and lots of people.

Maniscalco: Wow. Now, the community came together and helped you, or how did—?

Herschberger: Yeah. Springfield did, also. There was a lady in Springfield that started a fund on TV—a lady by the name of Helen Smith—and they raised I think 100,000 in just a very short time. It was the fastest-growing thing that ever happened. It was unreal. Today, we've got letters from forty-four countries and every state have been here. And I think the most letters we got in one day was like 10,000. That gives you an idea. (laughter)

Maniscalco: And how did you work through all those letters? (laughs)

Herschberger: There's a back room there. It was nearly full of bags. It was unreal. I could talk to you 'til tonight and tell you things you'd never believe.

Maniscalco: That's wild.

Herschberger: I mean, you would believe them, but it's unreal. From the Chicago Bears to the Minnesota Twins to Michael Jordan... We've seen everybody, pretty near. The story kind of went nation-wide, or actually, international. We had people here that actually came to visit from Germany, from England, from China, Japan, countries I'd never heard of, forty-four countries. And so we quit being bashful. Before that, I was terrible. (interviewer laughs) I was so gun-shy. Didn't have much choice.

My wife kept a diary. The day it happened, my sister said, "Well, you should keep a diary," and we said, "Well, there's no use because he won't live. I mean, it's impossible. He couldn't live." They thought about not taking him on from Decatur because there was no way the boy could live. But he was conscious through all this. So we went to Springfield, and my sister said, "You should keep a diary." And then my wife started, and she had 407 pages before we got done, and we just left it. Different people wanted us to write a book, but we didn't want to. And about three years later, mind you—three years later—we still have this manuscript and we're talking about it. Finally I said, "I think maybe we probably should. There may be somebody that might get some good out of it." We had no more decided this—I'm talking in days, just a couple days—and we got a call from a man by the name of Bob



Hastings, from Springfield. He was a Baptist minister. He called and said he'd heard that we had a manuscript; he'd like to help us write a book. If he'd have called us the week before, we'd have said no. (laughs) It was one year, getting it together.

And one night he called and said there were still a few details he wants to ask my wife, and we met back and forth. So they got that ironed out, and that night, he had a heart attack and died. (laughs) So. And it's in its fifth or sixth printing; I'm not sure.

Maniscalco: Wow, that's quite the story. That's amazing.

Herschberger: So that's why we did farm tours; that's why we did dinners. We did dinners for nine years to raise money to help with expenses. So that's why we've had a lot of people here. You know, someone told somebody else, and it's just kept on, you know. I figured when we started, we'll be done just like that. Well, before we knew it, we were booked, I think at one point, nine months solid, nine months ahead. I'm not talking about twenty people; I'm talking about 100, 150 people. We sat right here—here and right on into the back. We built a little piece onto the back end where we could sit 150 people. That's feeding a lot of people.

Maniscalco: How did you do all the farm work during those times?

Herschberger: It was kind of tough, but the women actually took care of this end of it, pretty much. I would come in and help with the serving. I wouldn't really serve that much, but I did the visiting and the goofing off and whatever. (laughter) It was evening meals, usually. Chores was usually done, and they'd come in and help. But everything would be done, her and the girls. And then a year ago, the last girl got married, and we started tapering off. We just thought we had to, because it was just too much work.

But would you believe, we're going to start again. (laughter) It was actually tough when we quit because we were used to seeing so many people. And I loved it. And this became very, very interesting because we got to see so many people.

Maniscalco: In terms of the Amish community around here, you said before this, you were kind of bashful, and you had no choice but to not be bashful anymore. How did the Amish community take the fact that you're having all these people to your home and—?

Herschberger: Well, my wife's sister had actually done meals for years and years and years. I guess, off the record—but it will be on the record, I guess—it was nice for us to be living way by the side, because if they'd have seen all the people would have thought, "What's going on?"

Maniscalco: Let's go back to talking about farming—how's that? (laughter)

Herschberger: Great.

Maniscalco: When did you start farming here?

Herschberger: Nineteen eighty-eight.

Maniscalco: And did you start as a dairy farm, or—?

Herschberger: Mm-hmm. That's what I've always done. We were ten years in Bloomfield, Iowa. We were also dairy farmers there. We had lived here, just a mile up the road, and six of my brothers and sisters went to Bloomfield, Iowa. We thought we could buy cheaper ground. And it was cheaper. Hilly, I didn't like—it was right next to Missouri, a lot of drought. I just didn't like it. Loved the people, but didn't like the climate. It would have been fine for a beef farmer, something like that. And then in '88, we moved back here and started farming here.

Maniscalco: Now, you just started with dairy. How did you get involved—I know you're involved with horses as well?

Herschberger: Well, we always were involved with horses; we've just gotten more involved, maybe. I started doing ultrasound work, and shipping semen, and it kind of became my part of the operation.

Maniscalco: How did you fall into doing that?

Herschberger: (laughs) Like you do with things. One step at a time. I always said I would never collect AI, [artificial insemination] I would only do live cover breeding. Well, we had a stud that became probably the most popular stud in the country, and it became impossible to do live cover. So it was kind of a step at a time. And then after a while, it was very much too expensive to have a veterinary out for ultrasound work because we did very much less breeding. So I self-taught that. So it was a stair-step thing.

Maniscalco: Can you kind of explain the farm layout here, and the buildings, and what buildings you do have, and everything else?

Herschberger: Well, we have a dairy barn out this way, and we stable our brood mares out here and heifers out here. Two silos for the dairy cows, a silo for the heifers and dry cows. And then we have a separate barn way out west that takes care of getting horses ready for sales, prepping horses, brood mares that are here to get bred. The stallions are out there. And we also have a room out there—a kitchen and a bedroom if we have horse company, or when we're foaling mares we sleep out there.

Maniscalco: Now, you mentioned feed for the cattle and different things. Do you farm and grow the feed for the cattle?

Herschberger: Oh yeah. My dad always said, “A perfect farm is, you grow what you feed, and you feed what you grow.” So that’s kind of what we try to do. We usually have to maybe buy a little bit of grain in the summer before our new crop comes. Some years, we have to buy a little hay. I think we don’t have to this year. But we try to do that, and that keeps the farm more in balance.

Maniscalco: Now you just mentioned your prize horse that was nationally known. What kind of horse was it?

Herschberger: Belgian draft horse—registered Belgian. They’re like the Clyde, [Clydesdale] if that gives you an idea, but they’re a better breed of horse, in my opinion. They’re the most popular horse in the draft world than all the other breeds.

Maniscalco: Have you always—

Herschberger: He was an All-American, which means like winning the World Series. He’s had quite a few sons and daughters that were All-Americans. This year, he was a high-point merit horse, so... Probably will never happen again. I mean, it will never happen that I’ll have another horse like him.

Maniscalco: What’s his name?

Herschberger: Harbor Haven’s Extreme. Extreme. He was kind of an extreme horse, and that’s why he was named Extreme. Extreme action. Well, you kind of have to be a draft horse enthusiast to know what you’re looking for, but he’s kind of got it all. Very exciting. You know, a draft horse is not like people perceive. I mean, sure, there’s the work horses—and we do work our brood mares, and we do work the horses that may even sometimes go in the show ring—but the draft horse has evolved into a very exciting horse. The action is unreal. The beautiful conformation, much more so than the Quarter Horse or a lot of other breeds.

You try to raise that perfect lead horse for a six-horse hitch. That shows. That’s your ultimate goal. And he is very good at siring those kind, that’s why he’s in demand. Color, everything—he’s kind of got it all. Again, there’s a lot of other good horses, but obviously I think he’s good.

Maniscalco: What color?

Herschberger: Red is the color, with a white mane and tail, and a strip—that’s a must—and a lot of foot. That means nothing to you, probably, but today we’re losing a lot of foot, because they’re going to want to go with more style; then they lose the foot. And the foot is very important in the show ring—a big foot—because you’re distributing all this weight to more inches of bones.

Maniscalco: And now, these are the horses not only that you’re breeding for show, but you’re actually using them as well?

Herschberger: We're using the horses. That's one reason, maybe, for having a more successful breeding program. Because there have been in the past, and even yet today more so, a lot of breeders that really don't work the horse. They're on the farm, they look great, but maybe if they worked it, they'd find out he doesn't have any brains, or he doesn't have enough heart, he doesn't have enough this or enough that. You work them, you want that kind of perfect working horse. So if they're not good, they leave. Even if the conformation's there to be a great brood mare, they may not be, because for us, the first thing is heart. Got to have heart and disposition. If you don't use them, you don't know those two things right there.

Maniscalco: Now in terms of cattle, on the other side of things you're doing just dairy, or you're doing beef as well?

Herschberger: Paul, my son keeps all of his bull calves, and usually kind of sells them when he needs money. (laughter) In the spring usually. No. In the spring when the grass turns green. And they may vary from 600-700 pounds down to 300 pounds. He's got a lot on hand right now.

Maniscalco: What breed of cow?

Herschberger: Holstein. Registered Holstein. He's not keeping up the papers like we used to because it really doesn't pay. It seems a commercial cow brings as much money, except for the real, real high-class cow, and we're not really into that. I used to be, but I kind of burned out on that. We breed our cows AI.

Maniscalco: How about fields and pastures? I can see what looks like some pastures and stuff back there, but—

Herschberger: Well, our farm is a little different from a lot of them. Years ago, I divided every field in the same acres, and there's a reason for that. Now, this is small compared to the big farming, but we're not comparing ourselves to the big farming. Twelve acres is a perfect amount for us, because we can cut the twelve acres before noon. Twelve acres: that's about the limit. We can bale and rake in about a half a day, which is in the afternoon. And this is kind of ironic, (laughs) but our manure pit holds twelve acres' worth of manure that we can spread, so when it's full, we figure that's twelve acres. We don't look at manure as being a bad thing; (laughs) to us, it's a great thing, especially today when it's through the roof.

And same way with planting corn. We can easily plant a field of corn in one day. We can cultivate about twelve acres in one day. It could have been okay an acre one way or another, but that just seemed to divide out everything, so that's the way it is. And we really like it. We have a rotation, and that works out well.

Maniscalco: So now you rotate corn and—?

Herschberger: Corn, oats, alfalfa. Usually three years in alfalfa, and back to corn. We rented a little bit of ground last year, and we may put one field of beans out, just for feeding. Everything would be fed. We wouldn't have to buy beans. That's one thing we have to buy, is soybeans for the dairy cows, as a supplement.

Maniscalco: Out of all your crops that you're planting here, which ones are your favorites?

Herschberger: Alfalfa.

Maniscalco: Why?

Herschberger: I love to put up alfalfa. The smell. It's the most complicated because today, there's so many insects out there—weevil, leafhopper. And rain just before you put it up, and a lot of things. (laughter) But there's just nothing that compares to alfalfa, for smell, for the fun of going in there and cutting a beautiful stand of alfalfa. And then watching it grow back is just awesome for me. But there's a lot more elements. Corn: you plant, hope for rain, and wait 'til fall. That's kind of it, there. And that's why alfalfa is so expensive: people do not like the headache of alfalfa. But we usually get four cuttings, sometimes five cuttings. This year we got five cuttings.

You've got to stay on the ball. The reason we get five over a lot of people is we do our own chopping, so we can get in there early, and we get that first cutting of alfalfa in the silo instead of drying it down. The first cutting of alfalfa is really tough, because we're in May. It rains. It's a thicker-stemmed alfalfa for the first cutting, so it dries harder. You're just ready to put it up, and it rains again, so you lose a week. That happens very often. For us, we go out this morning and cut the alfalfa, and this afternoon, it's up, done. That was probably our biggest—how would I say—is getting our own chopper and wagons so we could do our own chopping. It's very expensive to have it done. Furthermore, when we're doing it, there's about twenty-five other guys see there's a custom chopper. So they've got to work in between this. You call them and he says, "I got three guys ahead of you." Well, when do we mow? It's a headache. We do our own, and it's really been good for us.

Maniscalco: You mentioned insects, and you mentioned a couple different types. How do you deal with insects?

Herschberger: We try to never spray, but there has been times when we did. We believe when we spray that we're really in for trouble, because you kill the good with the bad. Last year, I think we sprayed once. Some people just automatically spray after every cutting. They just spray. We don't. We watch. We really watch I, and the real healthy fields, they're not apt to bother them. We discovered that if you put on a real good cover of manure at least once, that discourages them. Why, I don't know. It really has nothing to do, I think, with the manure; it has to do with probably a little higher nitrogen. There must be a smell in the stalk that they don't like. I don't know.

Maniscalco: Today's a wet day, of course, but I know some of those fields can be kind of wet. What do you do for drainage?

Herschberger: We have some tile, and since our fields get a lot of manure and get a lot of humus, they seem to be a little more spongy than they were when we moved here. We also have a deep tillage piece of equipment that we'll use where it's low sometimes. Drainage is not a problem down here, really.

Maniscalco: When you were a kid, how did they deal with the insects and drainage and such?

Herschberger: There were no insects then. Drainage was a lot of tile. There's a lot of tile in the ground. But insects, there were none. The farmers messed up. I mean, that's not a doubt in my mind, using a lot of chemicals through the years has messed up things. So what do we do about it? We can't do anything about it because we're next door to the others that are using it. It's killed all the good bugs, is what it's done, or nearly so.

Maniscalco: How do your neighbors react to the fact that you don't spray?

Herschberger: It doesn't matter to them. Our field's just as clean as theirs. Although we do spray some herbicide for the corn. A little—not a lot—but some. No, they don't mind. They probably don't even know. They wouldn't either if they wouldn't be forced to it. They're forced to because they're big farmers. I'm not talking about the Amish neighbors; I'm talking about the guy farming 5,000 acres. He spends a fortune in getting that crop out, so he can't be out there and cultivating and whatever. He sprays. So what does he do? I wouldn't give a nickel for his crop, but that's okay. That's just the way it is. (laughter) We're kind of forced to do what we're forced to do.

Raising 200 bushels of corn—the ground has not got enough nutrients in the ground to feed good feed. It will raise it—I know it; I've seen it—but it won't... There's not enough good stuff that comes in that ear of corn or whatever, from the chemicals. The ground, in my opinion, is kind of the place for this stuff to be growing; it's not really getting a lot of nutrients from the ground itself.

Maniscalco: In terms of what you're doing with your product once you've harvested it, what you do with the corn now. Are you just storing it here and feeding it to the cattle, or do you sell it into markets?

Herschberger: No, we sell nothing except the finished product.

Maniscalco: Which is milk or—?

Herschberger: Milk, beef. Sometimes the beef isn't quite done, but it's still in the stage of going on the feedlot or whatever.

- Maniscalco: Interesting. When you do sell your milk or beef into the markets—how do you feel about selling it into the markets? Have you always gotten a fair price?
- Herschberger: Oh, yeah. Well, no. (laughs) Right now, we are. Right now, we are, since I'm not getting it. My boy gets it, so I'm glad for him. Many years, you just got by—you just kind of got by. It's determined by the government what the base is. You have zones, and it's priced accordingly. We sell grade A milk—Prairie Farms—the best in the country.
- Maniscalco: Now I'm sure that there's got to be some dairy standards and things that you have to uphold.
- Herschberger: Oh. (laughter)
- Maniscalco: How are you doing that?
- Herschberger: That is ridiculous. There's a lot of things that are ridiculous, but we have no problem with... We have a federal, state, and then we have a survey every other year, I believe, where they come in. They're really, really tough. But we get along very well with our inspector; we have a real good, clean setup, so it works good for us.
- Maniscalco: And hopefully you could give us a little tour later of your set-up and let us see what you're doing, if that's okay.
- Herschberger: Yeah, if we have time. By the way, I'm using too much time. I told them I'd be back down there pretty soon.
- Maniscalco: (laughs) Are they down there, working away?
- Herschberger: Yeah, they're down there, working away.
- Maniscalco: Oh. Now you milk at...?
- Herschberger: Five in the morning, 5:00 at night.
- Maniscalco: And then you feed at...?
- Herschberger: Same time. They're always sweeping up, you know—pushing feed in front of the cows. All day long, off and on.
- Maniscalco: Now, do you have a garden outside?
- Herschberger: Oh yeah. Yeah, mm-hmm.
- Maniscalco: Do you take care of the garden, or is it your wife?

- Herschberger: Oh, I help. The women do it, mostly, but we help with it, especially the big stuff. They do a lot of the planting themselves, but help harvest different things.
- Maniscalco: Now, in terms of extra help—I mean, you have a bunch of kids here to help you out—but do you ever look outside of that?
- Herschberger: No, we haven't. No, uh-uh.
- Maniscalco: Never?
- Herschberger: Never.
- Maniscalco: In terms of farm subsidies, things like that, do you—?
- Herschberger: No, none.
- Maniscalco: You don't take part in any of that stuff. Okay.
- Herschberger: Nope. Government's in deeper debt that we are. (laughter)
- Maniscalco: What's the one thing you find most pleasurable about farming?
- Herschberger: Self-employed. And the biggest gripe is more and more regulations. That's the biggest gripe. And the best one is, you're left alone, pretty much—and that's the way we like it.
- Maniscalco: What's the hardest part about all of it?
- Herschberger: Financial. You have no control over your market. Nearly everyone else in all society can raise, can protest—they can do whatever needs to be done. Like if you're a cabinet-maker, you can always raise that price a little. If you're working for the cabinet-maker, you can complain a little bit and maybe get a half a dollar raise or whatever. You can bounce around, look for better wages. If you're a farmer, you're stuck with what you get. You ask what the fertilizer price is; you ask what you get for whatever you sell. Every input is you ask, and then you also ask what for your product that you sell. So that is the most frustrating. We have absolutely no control over either one of those. We might find a little bit better market somewhere, but usually not much. That's the most frustrating, especially when the market's down. Milk today is very good, but often it's not been. Sometimes you bat your head against the wall and ask why—you know, why are you doing this. Because the other boy goes to work with a dinner bucket and makes twice as much, comes home, no worries at night. But right now, it's pretty nice. That's the most frustrating part. Maybe another thing is—and that don't matter that much—but there's very little free time. But I notice a lot of people waste their free time anyway, so it doesn't matter. (laughs)



Maniscalco: So what do you do with your free time, then?

Herschberger: We have none. (laughter) When we have free time, we fix something, so there's no free time. But to us, it's not divided into free time and other time, because it's all kind of your own, so you take pride in keeping up what's yours. So why do you want free time? If I worked out, I'd want free time, because then I'd want to work on my own house or whatever. Completely different outlook, in my book. No one tells me when I have to get up in the morning—except the cows. (laughter) They don't even tell me that now, because my boy does that. But I don't have to watch the clock. I should be right now. (laughter)

Maniscalco: Well, just a couple more questions, and we'll get you back downstairs.

Herschberger: I should be down there.

Maniscalco: So what do you see the future of the Amish in agriculture?

Herschberger: Bleak. On the other hand, I know we have a settlement in Ohio—we call it the Holmes County Settlement—they have put 200 farmers back on the farm in the last two years, I think. And they did it by innovative things, by a lot of intensive grazing, and lowering their cost like I was talking about, putting guys back that didn't need to go in debt the way the others did. I think that's very encouraging. I think it can be done. In this area, we do not have that put together in any way. I'm afraid we never will because our ground happens to be some of the best ground in the country, so, if I say so, the land hogs have got it. They're not satisfied until they farm 10,000 acres, and then they probably won't be satisfied. If I let myself, I can get very, very angry about that. It puts so many people out of work. The huge, huge, huge equipment that stays sitting in the... Well, let's not get into it. (interviewer laughs)

The interest. I once figured up—shouldn't have, but I did—figured up this certain farmer up the road that farms X number of acres. He had over a million dollars' worth of equipment; today he's probably got two million. I figured how many Amish families would be supported, and I think it was like forty Amish families that could have worked the ground he was working and made a good living. From one guy. So where do those thirty-nine families go? Town. The others could have been out here. See, there's a lot of things; I can really get into this stuff. Like our horses. They say, "Well, you have to feed the horses." A lot of the feed our horses eat is feed you can't sell anyway. Not all, but a lot is. And the minute you drive a combine out the door of the machinery place in town, it's worth how much less? Twenty-five percent less? You've already paid 300,000 for it. How long do you have to work to make that up for what he actually lost, on paper? The economics is crazy; I don't care what anybody says.

Of course, in our world, we do this because—the big universities aren't interested, but we do have professors, and actually very smart people, that are showing this on paper—not Amish people—showing how ridiculous the tractor has got us into trouble, because of... Well, we can't get into it, but they've messed up the farm. Because we can farm so much, we don't have to rotate, we can wear the ground out if we want to. And I'm not really saying that we are. But we're living on fertilizer and chemicals. I mean, basically, that's it, because you can't do it otherwise. There's no way a large farm can do without the poisons that they're dumping on the ground, that you guys are eating. It's not possible. You can't farm 10,000 acres the way I can farm 200. I try not to, but it makes me halfway mad, because if I say so, they are screwing the farmers—the farmers that really like to farm. See, those are businessmen—agribusiness. They don't want to be called farmers; they're agribusiness men. (laughs) It gets me worked up a little.

Maniscalco: Where do you see the future of the Amish going now?

Herschberger: It's kind of scary. You wonder. I'm one of the few guys that maybe looks at it kind of bleakly, but I think that the farm actually is what was the backbone of why we could be who we were. I'm not sure. In my generation, yes; in the next generation, yes; in the next generation—I'm not sure where we're going. Because when we start mingling—and I'm not saying this to be rude; that's not it. But when we start—not in our community so much, but I'll take Indiana, for instance, working the trailer factory. He's working next to this non-Amish girl from town. Bit by bit, there's certain things breaking down right here. He's not thinking like the guy does out on the farm, taking care of his own business, being around his own family, thinking clean thoughts. That all goes with it. They bit by bit start thinking a little different. Now I know there are a lot of non-Amish people who are very outstanding, in my opinion. We have lots and lots of non-Amish people that are great friends. But we all know that the average—that the world is kind of headed toward a cesspool—or I think so.

Where are we at? I'm not sure. I wish I could say we're going to be like this 100 years from now. First of all, I don't think we'll be around that long. But I'm scared about it somewhat, because I think the backbone—not because I'm a farmer—but I know from my parents' viewpoints, the way they lived, what they thought, how they thought... Not only the Amish remember—the non-Amish, also. They worked side-by-side, and they were great people—the non-Amish and the Amish guys—because they had basic beliefs in basic things. The soil was kind of the mom, you know. (laughs) But we don't think that way anymore. We get kids here—and again, I don't want to be negative—but I think some of these kids are going to be some of our leaders someday, and they are so squirrely. They know nothing. I just can't believe it. They come on farm tours. All they know is that cell phone that they've got hanging on their side. Absolutely not interested in learning anything. It's discouraging. I'm getting way beside the point here.

But that's what scares me, is that we're kind of sliding along that same path, just a little farther behind. So I think we need very much to keep warning our people, you know, the basics, because I'm just as happy, probably, as you guys are. And I don't have what you guys have got, but I don't need it because I didn't grow up that way; but if I did, I needed it. If you understand what I mean. And I don't begrudge anyone anything in that respect; it's just there's so many things we really don't need. So—and we've got a lot more than we need, (laughs) so I don't know what I'm talking about.

Maniscalco: Can you think of something that I've missed, that I should ask?

Herschberger: No, I think we hit everything. (laughs)

Maniscalco: We hit everything? (laughter)

Herschberger: You might wonder... There are some things that some people have asked that we haven't talked about. They'll ask us, since we don't have TV or radio, "What do you know about the outside world? How do you know what's going on?" A lot of people don't. Some do. A few do; some do. Since I write a lot, I get many magazines, like *U.S. News*, *Time*, a lot of them—more than I would recommend my kids getting, more than I would recommend a lot of people. But in order to write, you have to kind of know what's going on. And I don't touch politics much, but I guarantee you I read the daily newspaper every day, and I know what's going on.

When our son was in the hospital, there's TVs everywhere, and by listening to people, I discovered that they see the news on TV but they don't know what they heard. But if I read it, I know what I read. And the reason I knew that is I would listen to what they were saying, and I could tell they're used to garbling up the facts so bad. And the news was so fast; they got the highlights, filled in the gaps. And you could not depend... That's why I think there's another reason for the great confusion in the world, is because so much information going about that's not true. And newspapers are bad enough, but I think probably not near as bad as TV. From the little that I've seen, I could tell why people are confused.

So we know what's going on, yeah. We don't know everything that's going on, and I don't need to know, but we know enough to know... We don't vote in big elections, but we're to pray for our government. And I know who would be my favorite if I did vote.

Maniscalco: Who would it be? [This is about the time of the 2008 primary elections in Illinois for President and Congress.]

Herschberger: Probably, on the Republican side, probably McCain, because he's more common-sense, in my opinion. And on the other side, it's tough. Definitely not Clinton, just because she's Clinton. (laughs) I mean, I shouldn't say that, but I believe in good morals, and I don't think they have any. I would vote for

probably—I don't know what you guys think—Obama to start with. I thought he was kind of a kid, you know, but he seems to have a lot of sense, and we really need more sense than we need knowledge, don't we? Because we'll get the knowledge if we've got sense. What do you guys think? I'd like to hear your opinion.

Maniscalco: (laughs) He's turning the tables on us, now.

Herschberger: Got yourself in a trap.

Warren: Well, I voted this morning for Obama, but... (laughs)

Maniscalco: I would have to go with—probably—maybe Obama, probably. Yeah. [Obama did win the Democratic primary, and later, the election.]

Herschberger: We're not Democrats or Republicans. As a rule, the Amish people would be more Republican-minded, probably, because of the beliefs and such, but lately, it seems to me, the Republican Party has really leaned more toward the money end of things. I mean, the rich get richer, and they've kind of went away from what I used to think Republicans stood for. But Clinton, I shouldn't say, but I can barely stand them, because I know they're cheaters, and I know they're liars. I don't know that about Obama, he might also be. (laughter) I guess the second thing is, I'm not sure a woman—I have nothing against women—I think they're the heart of the home, I think they have more power in the home than the man does—but I don't think a woman has got what it takes to be a president. I mean, we all know a woman is more excitable, we know they are more flighty. I mean, studies show that. Not that we're better, it's just... I just can't imagine a woman president. Can you guys? You probably have to. (laughs)

Maniscalco: Yeah, yeah, think about it at least.

Herschberger: Yeah. And that's nothing against women. I'm not saying that. It's just her going, having talks with some tough guy from Russia, I just can't imagine that. (interviewer laughs) Not that they'd have to get in a fistfight, but it just scares me. And I guess we go farther than that. In our belief, we would say a woman's role is not to be the head of something like that. So it's more than that. I didn't want to get into that, but that's really the main reason. I think the man is not superior, but that's just the way the good Lord intended it to be.

Maniscalco: You know, we're kind of talking about the world outside of your farm. (laughter)

Herschberger: I thought so. We get off track.

Maniscalco: Definitely. And that's really great, because I was actually wondering, What is it like for you to go into town?

Herschberger: I've got a lot of friends in town. But I get around a lot more than some people. I don't think anything about it, you know. Used to be, years ago, I hated to go to Mattoon, Decatur, the big towns. Even when our son was in the accident at first, I just hated it, because you could bet that when you're walking by a group of people or whatever, they're going to stare after us because we're different. Today, everybody's different. There's not that much—well really, there is. Your society is different—all the walks of life. So we don't stand out as much, and it doesn't bother as much. But it did bother me. Now, I don't think it did my dad, but I was younger, and you know, you don't like to be different. So yeah, it was a strain. But now, let them think what they want to think.

Maniscalco: What about your kids?

Herschberger: Nah, I don't think it bothers them. They grew up in a different era. Because when I grew up, the Amish were such a minority—they still are—but they still kind of got pushed to the front page a time or two. So if we go somewhere, they might ask, "Are you Amish?", and that doesn't bother me. Before that, they thought we were from Mars. (laughter) I mean, it was funny. I remember once going to Springfield, and this little guy comes up to me, and he says, "Are you a Pilgrim?" (laughter) I said, "Nope." I said, "I'm Abraham Lincoln" (laughter) He went, "Oh!" (laughter) You know, he couldn't put two and two together yet; he was that young. But we pulled good ones, different times. A little guy come up to a guy by the name of Adam Schlock, and he was a shriveled-up little fellow with a lot of humor. The guy comes up, and he looks at him. "Are you Noah?" He said, "Nope, I'm Adam." (laughter) He was. Yeah, used to be, there was a lot more difference, or whatever you might say, but now, it's not that much. There is, but...

The only time I'm really conscious of things—and I shouldn't say this, absolutely not—but because of the problems in Iraq, you know, and we see the guys with the long beards, and we see them maybe even with something besides the turban, maybe with kind of like a hat or something like we might wear, I get a little concerned about that, because I'm afraid someone from Chicago (inaudible) Amish, they link that with we believe the way they do, as far as being violent. And it's exactly opposite. But they did keep a lot of the Old Testament type of dress. Well, we really didn't. If you look back in history, we somewhat dress like your great-great-great-grandfather did, or great-great-grandfather did. We just kept it. We said, "No change." But they kind of kept an Old Testament look. (laughs) That does bother me a little because I'm afraid they'll think we would sympathize with all the murdering stuff that goes on. I'm not sure our country's any better, but anyway, that's the way it is.

Maniscalco: Well, this is kind of the last thing, and we'll let you get back to your work.

Herschberger: Yeah, I need to.

- Maniscalco: This interview is going to be part of a collection, and it should last on for time immemorial. It's going to be part of something for a long time.
- Herschberger: Oh, gosh. Probably shouldn't have said what I said. (laughter)
- Maniscalco: You want to go back on everything now?
- Herschberger: I'm just kidding. (laughs)
- Maniscalco: Well, you know, one day down the road, maybe one of your kids could be strolling around, looking at something, and come across this interview somehow—or come across somebody who knows of it. And what would you like to leave in this interview for them, for your kids or your grandkids?
- Herschberger: Stay where you're at. You know, that doesn't sound right to some people, but to me it does, because I know it holds out. I know it's the foundation of a good life. And the reason I know that is many people leave the Amish—not a percentage many, but I'm talking about 10 percent, 15 percent—and history tells us it doesn't work. They become—well, we won't get into that, probably because they're kind of like turned loose—different than it is for you. But they don't know when to stop. And it's usually not a great life. Ours is, because it all is, you might say, tied in with church. If you don't have TV or radio, and not a lot of outside entertainment, what do you do? No one really wants to be alone. You go visit. When you visit, what happens? You make a tie with someone else. If I had a TV, nosy as I am, I know what I would do. I would be glued to it. I know I would, because that's who I am. But I go to church on Sunday, and we visit in the afternoon. That's our culture. That's the whole thing, is people interacting with each other. And we don't need that anymore because of the way things have went. And don't think that we don't have temptations.
- Maniscalco: Well, thank you very much, Oba; this has been a—
- Herschberger: So it's tough. Some things are tough. I'll admit, some things are tough. But you think beyond that.
- Maniscalco: Well this has been a great interview. Thank you very much for sitting down and talking with us.
- Herschberger: (laughs) And I got out of butchering. (laughs)
- Maniscalco: Yeah, see, we got you out of some work, too.
- Herschberger: I should be down there.
- Warren: Are they finished downstairs, do you think?
- Herschberger: No, they're not finished, but they're closer than they were.

Warren: Would you mind if we took this down and kind of record some of the sounds down there?

Herschberger: (laughs) No, not unless they cut somebody. (laughter)

(pause in recording – resume in walk-around)

Warren: So you're butchering a hog today?

Male: Yep.

Warren: What all's involved with that?

M: Killing it and hanging it, and cutting it up.

F: tenderloins.

Warren: So everybody has a different part of the anatomy to work on?

M: Not really. We're not really that organized; we just dig in and do it.

F: What would they call that—what I call a *fishly*, what would they call that in English? It's a real tender piece, but I'm not sure what it's called.

Maniscalco: This right here?

F: That's the tenderloin, but—

Maniscalco: Okay, which part?

F: This small piece right here, or that one. It's a little cut up, but—

Maniscalco: That's a tenderloin.

F: —you slice it like this, and it's really tender. But I'm not sure what it's called.

Maniscalco: I think we'd call that a tenderloin. I think.

Warren: How often do we butcher hogs?

M: Usually, we just do it in the wintertime. A couple of pigs.

Warren: Now, do you preserve it after you butcher it?

M: Freeze it, or—

F: Can some of it.

M: Can some of it.

Warren: Can.

M: Whichever's the quickest and the fastest because we don't like it that much.  
(interviewer laughs)

F: Now, I cut my finger.

Warren: Uh-uh. (laughter) Is that the first cut of the day?

F: Yeah. (laughter)

Maniscalco: What sorts of things are you going to make from this, besides canning and...?

F: Like hamburgers, except it'll be sausage burgers, and we can the links. We're not going to make any this time; Saturday, we stuffed the links and canned those. And freeze the tenderloins, and—

M: Meatballs.

F: Yeah.

M: Not much to it.

F: So this will all be run through that machine there and be ready to freeze.

Warren: What happens to the bones?

F: Actually, we're going to cook those, and pick off the meat, and make headcheese.

Warren: Do you enjoy doing this, young man?

Boy: No.

Warren: It's a pretty big job.

F: At least it's not out in the cold.

Boy: Yeah.

Warren: You got six people working on this, right? Or five, I guess.

F: Five. Oba's supposed to be down here, too.

Warren: Oh, okay. (laughter)

F: Well, what did he go do now?



- M: I don't know, but he likes to kind of find something else to do when we're doing this. (interviewer laughs)
- F: It's all right, but it's nice, too, when we're done. (interviewer laughs)
- M: A lot of people do this in the wintertime. A lot of people.
- Warren: Now, how old was the pig? Was it a yearling, or...?
- M: Little over a year, probably. About 250-260 pounds. (some background talking in the dialect?) No, but I'm going to. I will.
- Herschberger: All right. I'm glad to stay out of the way.
- F: You have to .... there.
- M: I'm making (inaudible) shorter and smaller. Huh?
- Herschberger: I'll have a great big piece of that.
- M: Here, the way you do it—you're going too fast. See that, Matt, you're going to (inaudible). Like this. So you can still get that right there, and then you go down to the cook. (pause) Is this actually the last one?
- F: Yeah.
- M: Well, hallelujah.
- F: Get your knife back there.
- Herschberger: Where'd I put my apron?
- M: Up there. I think you took it up there.
- Herschberger: Where'd I put my knife?
- F: It's in that box.
- Warren: How old do the kids have to be before they're old enough to work on butchering?
- M: Just so they don't cut themselves. (laughs)
- Warren: It's a safety issue, huh? (laughs)
- M: It's a safety issue more than anything else. They always want to. They usually start out—
- M2: For a while, then they want to quit.

- M: Yeah, they start out with a knife that really doesn't cut. She's the expert on the—
- F: No, Clifford was doing that. That's what he likes to do.
- M: Who did that?
- F: He was doing the good job.
- M: Okay, that's the loin—sirloin.
- F: I found a little bit of ours that got in Paul's there.
- M: Did you keep it out?
- F: Mm-hmm.
- M: See, there are some cuts that we don't worry too much about. We mostly make sausage.
- M2: You're probably thinking it looks kind of gross, don't you?
- Warren: It's making me hungry, frankly. (laughter)
- M2: Well, it's better than the store bought, I'll tell you that.
- Herschberger: It's not that it's better; they just add a lot of water to it.
- Warren: Yeah, I was at a big slaughterhouse one time when I was a kid. Everything was done by machine, (sawing sound) and it was a lot different from this. (laughs)
- Herschberger: I don't really like to butcher beef because it's so big. It's just a lot of heavy lifting. (sawing) But I know, what was it, a year ago? How many hogs did we do that day? Six or seven.
- M: Five.
- Herschberger: No, it was six.
- M: Five.
- Herschberger: Was it?
- F: Five, and then David had a small one.
- Herschberger: Well, that's six.
- F2: Somebody had a deer. Was it Mark?

- M: Gwen had a deer.
- Herschberger: It was quite a few, and we did it all in one day. We had it all packaged by night. I mean, we started in the morning and got it all in the packages and wherever by evening. That was moving along.
- F: It was how many that was at it.
- Herschberger: Well, we won't talk about that. (laughter) Just us and the kids, but there was quite a few of us.
- F: More than these.
- Herschberger: Yeah. Did you want to take anything out of...?
- F: That's hers, so I think it's just hamburger. I mean, sausage.
- Warren: Now, are the pigs raised on this farm here?
- Herschberger: He got them from a guy... Actually, it's kind of a long story. We've got a feeding floor out there, but we quit raising hogs some years back. We built a school down the road, and we had kind of a benefit thing going, so he got ten pigs, and they were going to be used for the meat. What did you do anyway?
- M: Pork.
- Herschberger: You grilled—
- F: Pulled pork, I think—
- Herschberger: —roasted. They weren't quite ready, so they just bought other pigs, and now we're taking care of this end of things. So yeah, they were raised here. They were growed here. Usually if you're raising hogs, there's always some that, for some reason: runts, you butchered it something a little bit wrong, not... But I understand hogs are fairly cheap. Did he show you that grinder? Now that is plenty modern for Amish people, like we was talking about, you know. Just kidding you, but I should show you. (interviewer laughs) Got to show you that thing.
- Warren: Turn the crank, right?
- Herschberger: No, no. My son-in-law made it. No, this here is a sausage stuffer. But it has nothing to do with this part.
- Warren: Oh, I see.
- Herschberger: But see, when we dump it in here, we feed it in here. It comes out of there, drops right into there, because it's a finer screen down here than this one.

Then you put an attachment on that shoots it right in the bags, you know, and you just...

Maniscalco: So then you're double-grinding.

Herschberger: Double-grinding in one shot.

Maniscalco: And then how's it powered?

Herschberger: Hydraulic.

Maniscalco: Hydraulic? Very cool.

M: It works pretty nice.

Herschberger: Because as a rule, through the years, that was always a stumbling block to grinding. You know, you butchered once, maybe twice a year, so you really didn't have anything great. You might have had this one grinder in the home you did, and then you just went and got the weed mower and block and tackle and tried to get everything tight, and belts all tightening around your meat. It was always a pain. But more and more, people are using something that's pretty nice.

Maniscalco: And you said your son kind of put that together?

Herschberger: My son-in-law made it.

Maniscalco: Oh, he made it.

Herschberger: He's kind of a genius with that kind of stuff. No, I can't put anything together. I tear it apart. (laughter) (pause)

Warren: Do you mind if we walk around and take pictures of the buildings—

Herschberger: No.

Warren: —and maybe some horses and cows.

Herschberger: No.

M: You may need some boots.

Warren: I've got some boots. Did you bring boots?

Maniscalco: Yeah, I've got some boots on, actually. See?

Herschberger: Actually, you could—Clifford, do you want to, or should I? You can take them out to the dairy barn if you want to. You want to?

M: No, he doesn't want to talk.

Herschberger: He doesn't have to talk. They want to just take pictures, now. Okay. We can go out there.

Warren: Well, have fun. Thanks a lot.

M: We're going to try. (laughter)

Maniscalco: Thank you very much.

(pause in recording)

Maniscalco: Okay, Oba. Where are we standing now?

Herschberger: In the dairy barn.

Maniscalco: In the dairy barn.

Herschberger: There's four box stalls up here for problem cows or problem animals of some sort, and then this is where they're housed. They're laying on mattresses; deep, foam-filled mattresses. (mooring) They also sleep, eat, get milked, same place. There's a gutter cleaner underneath. They know we're in here; we should get out pretty soon again. But there's the pipeline for the milk—the stainless steel is for the milk. It's very easy to keep clean.

Warren: Would they be bothered by a flash?

Herschberger: No. Strangers do kind of stir them up a little, but not... See, they're all standing up now.

Maniscalco: How many cattle do you have, Oba?

Herschberger: There's probably 100 head total.

Maniscalco: And now, not all of them are milking, of course.

Herschberger: No, no, all different stages. There's room for forty-seven in here. (pause, running water) It's very warm in here in the wintertime, and in summertime, it's the coolest place. We have tunnel ventilation. Those two four-foot fans on the other end pull this air through here. Everything's open, and it pulls air through. Really makes it pretty nice. Of course, at ninety degrees, ninety degrees is still ninety degrees (interviewer laughs), but at least there's air movement. You'd think they'd get bored standing in here, but a cow can't think like we think. They do not like to leave. They don't like to get out of here. When they're dry, which means not milking, two months out of a year, they go out in free stalls, and they don't like that. They'd rather be in here,

where they can get their water, all their feed, those mattresses are soft—they kind of have it made. Never cold, never hot.

Maniscalco: Living the good life.

Herschberger: Yeah, they are. (interviewer laughs) Smells good. I always love the smell right here.

Maniscalco: You have these little rakes over top...

Herschberger: Those are actually if they hump up to take a crap, (laughs) They back up.

Maniscalco: Oh, to make them back up. Okay, okay.

Herschberger: Otherwise, it'd be a mess. Usually if you see a heifer that's not quite clean, it's because she's not learned it yet, quite. (mooring) Otherwise, it wouldn't be that clean. See, that's as clean as could be up front there. (mooring)

Maniscalco: Oh yeah.

Herschberger: They just automatically step back.

Maniscalco: So you have them potty-trained basically? (laughs)

Herschberger: Mm-hmm. That's what it amounts to. (mooring)

Maniscalco: When I was a kid, I grew up playing on a dairy farm in Connecticut. Theirs was a heck of a lot dirtier than yours. Yours is very clean.

Herschberger: Well, there's not a lot of them that are as clean as he keeps this. Yeah, you associate dairy cows, especially housed in the winter, with being nasty and such, but it's not. They're in here summer and winter.

Maniscalco: It's amazing. Now, you do let them out?

Herschberger: Only when they're dry, not milking two months of the year.

Maniscalco: Only when they're dry.

Herschberger: They're in here twenty-four hours a day. Like I said, they don't want to go out. You turn her out, and she wants back in. She's bawling. (interviewer laughs) She'll bawl for a couple of days, and then she'll kind of give it up. Then they go out in a building out to the side here.

Maniscalco: Amazing. Now, do you have names for them?

Herschberger: Oh, they've all got names, yeah. Names or numbers—mostly names. Go by DHI records, so they have to be identified. (mooring)

Maniscalco: You know, I heard there's a new federal program about tagging them?

Herschberger: Not tagging.

Maniscalco: Or not tagging, but putting a chip or something. How do you feel about that one?

Herschberger: I think it's a no-no. Well, even the chickens. You tell me how we're going to do that. A staggering cost to the country, but not only that—here we go again. (laughs) The cost, in my opinion, is much, much bigger than that one outbreak of cow disease in the last twenty years. You know, we have an outbreak of Mad Cow Disease—one cow. They trace her. Yeah, yeah, it's tough, but imagine—that was once in—just how safe do we have to be? You know what I mean. I know we want to be. Still, sometimes it's ridiculous. And we're not going to do it. I mean, we're just not going to be able to... Who's going to do the chickens, who's going to do the hogs, who's going to do all that? And the bookwork. I know computers are smart, but... It's unreal. (mooring) And even then, in the mess of things, are they going to be able to do it a lot quicker than they were? Does it justify the cost? I don't think it does. And the headache. We're really opposed to it to start with.

But I think they're going to force us to do it. I think we're going to be forced, (mooring) if for no other reason, let's say, I understand you don't have to do it, but you don't get to show a horse if he doesn't come from a farm that's got it on. So what do you do? You have to do it. They got you one way or the other. And again, on horses, especially. Why? We don't eat them at this point. Why do we need to know where they come from, except, again, bureaucracy? Let's get back to what I said about common sense. There is no common sense involved. And I don't think they've got in their head actually how complicated it would be. They're thinking all their livestock stays here—we're talking about the identification program—but they're moving constantly. And who's going to record where they went? Who's going to record all that stuff?

Heifer calves. The calves are housed in there the first two months of their life. We call them calf huts. Here's where the heifers are—some of the heifers.

Warren: Oh, we're going to... (laughs)

Herschberger: I'm going to run this down to the basement.

Maniscalco: That's fine. We'll wait for you.

(pause in recording)

Maniscalco: Okay, Oba, so where are we standing now?

Herschberger: We're standing in the brood mare barn. Brood mare, work mare, whatever you want to call it. It used to be a dairy barn; we graduated to the other when we needed more room for the horses. Each horse has got like a twelve-by-fourteen mock stall. They come in and eat every morning and evening. They're harnessed. Here's where our own mares are stabled, not other people's, where we do the breeding. It used to be. We can go over to the other barn and I'll show you.

Maniscalco: Oba, you have tin ceilings in the other barn and then in this barn. Is there a reason for it?

Herschberger: One reason is because of fire. It's much safer with tin than anything else. Wood, something might happen, whatever. Tin doesn't burn. Easier to clean. The white reflects better.

That's a standard-bred horse in there that my daughter drove down from Arthur. So he's not seeing a Belgium if he thinks he is. (laughs)

Warren: I'm not seeing anything; I'm just shooting in the dark right now.

Herschberger: This barn is harder to keep clean. We don't spend a lot of time in here. It's a necessity, but...

(pause in recording)

Herschberger: We're getting to be very expensive, I'll tell you that.

Maniscalco: Okay, Oba, well, we're standing by one of your buggies here. Can you kind of explain what we have?

Herschberger: Well, this is what we call a single-seater buggy. We've also got two-seaters, one or two three-seaters, maybe. But this is kind of the one you'd use if you're just husband and wife and a child or so would be going; otherwise it'd be a big buggy. We have LED lights. Brakes: see those brakes there. Used to be a fifth wheel; now they've changed to auto steer. See, auto steer. That's a new thing. But all that costs money, so they get more expensive. It's all insulated, and we have a heater in ours. This is my daughters, and they don't use this buggy much, so they don't have a heater in it, but we do in ours.

Maniscalco: And how much do you pay for a—

Herschberger: Too much. (laughs) Probably around 4,500 for that one.

Maniscalco: Forty-five hundred. Wow.

Herschberger: But if you take care of it, it'll last you—

Maniscalco: How many years?



Herschberger: —twenty-five years. I mean, it'll last you kind of like forever. We've had our big buggy now for thirty-something years. It's just as good as it was. Take care of them, inside, they'll last a long time.

Maniscalco: We should get a picture inside, Bob.

(pause in recording)

Herschberger: We thought we had too much work, so we put on siding—it was tin—put on siding. Then it tried to burn down two weeks ago, and I had to redo—can you see the side right there?

Maniscalco: Yeah, yeah.

Herschberger: It was burning in the attic. Too bad. Had a lot of damage. Floor, seating, everything.

Maniscalco: So it's wood heat, obviously.

Herschberger: Yep, but it wasn't because of that, I don't believe. It started in the insulation somehow. There's a solar panel that charges our batteries. Okay, this is the barn we built last year. We moved all of our breeding program out here. This is a bridge. We don't have a patent on it yet, (interviewer laughs) but we're working on it. Soon as the guy first dies that falls in, we'll know what we'll call it. (interviewer laughs)

Maniscalco: Oh, it's nice and warm in here.

Herschberger: There's the stallion we were talking about.

Maniscalco: This is Extreme?

Herschberger: Yeah. He bred—I don't know how many mares this year. Year before, he bred 120 outside mares. That's a lot of mares.

Warren: Actually, if we can get a picture...

Herschberger: Then we have assorted horses in here, right now, getting ready for the big sales. This filly here will be going to a sale. This gelding will be going to a sale in northern Illinois. It's called the Mid-America Sale.

Maniscalco: How much do you get for a...?

Herschberger: Oh, there's such a terrific difference. Tops usually are around \$30,000 area. I mean, the top Belgian horses or such. But this mare here will bring a lot of money. She's a huge girl. (clanging)

Maniscalco: She is a big horse.

Herschberger: She'll probably be one of the biggest mares, maybe the biggest mare. She's a wheel horse prospect. She'd be one on the wheel, which is in the back, rather than the lead.

We do our own shoeing here. The feeding of these type of horses is very complicated. We use a lot of different things. Right now, this is all mixing and soaking for tonight's feed.

Maniscalco: So what sorts of things are you mixing together?

Herschberger: Well, this is for the horses that are going to sales because we use different stuff. There's oats, there's beet pulp, there's yucca, different kinds of minerals and vitamins. And they've all got their different reasons why you use them. (interviewer laughs) Not everybody goes to all those pains, but we do.

(pause in recording)

Maniscalco: And what room is this?

Herschberger: This is where we loaf.

Maniscalco: Loaf?

Herschberger: Loaf. This is probably the least-used room. (laughs)

Maniscalco: So is this kind of where the guys hang out, and—?

Herschberger: Yeah. When we have people coming to talk about breeding their mares, we'll come in here, visit, sign our contracts. You can pull that door if you want. Sign contracts. In the back is a bedroom, and the reason for that, we sleep out here when mares start foaling. There's a little machine that tells us when they actually start foaling. A sign goes off. Those are some of the horses that we raised and showed. Actually, you probably didn't see this, but at Rantoul this year, there was a forty-eight-horse hitch there. It was on TV different times, and it was fifty years. We put that together. There's a picture of it.

Warren: Wow. (laughs)

Herschberger: There's forty-eight horses in that hitch. It was a world record.

Maniscalco: Wow. And how many of them are from here?

Herschberger: They were all from this area, but twelve of the mares were from here, and that was quite a deal.

Maniscalco: I bet. (laughs)

Herschberger: And those are all show horses that...

Warren: I think you already mentioned. This is natural gas that's coming through here?

Herschberger: Yeah, propane. (pause) Yeah, I enjoy coming in here.

Maniscalco: This is the guys' hangout.

Warren: I'll take a picture of this. It's a little humid in here. My lens is fogged up.

Maniscalco: Yeah, it is. (laughs)

Warren: My glasses got fogged up when I first walked through the door.

(pause in recording)

Herschberger: Oh, it's too high. There's very, very high, too, you know.

Maniscalco: For your natural gas?

Herschberger: Well, it's propane. Yeah, it would be natural gas, I guess. Oh, in the summertime, it's near zero, but in the wintertime... We'll probably spend \$1,500 total for the year, maybe more—and that's unusual--just because it's tripled in price. Actually, this winter, we bought a wood cookstove, just about two weeks ago. My wife always loved the wood cookstove, and we do all our cooking on the wooden stove. (horse whinnies) I'll show it to you, (inaudible).

Maniscalco: Yeah, we'll have to take a look.

(pause in recording)

Herschberger: There's fresh stuff anyway.

Maniscalco: So this is the—

Warren: Oh, wow.

Herschberger: That's the new type of cook stove.

Maniscalco: That's awesome.

Herschberger: Yeah, it is. It's amazing. It's airtight, you know, so you can... You start that, and you just shut that down, and it banks all night long.

Maniscalco: Wow.

Warren: (inaudible)

Herschberger: You can put that over 350—we can do that over 350—and just hold it right there.

Maniscalco: That's pretty cool. My dad had an old one—you know, one of the big old ceramic ones.

Herschberger: That's what we used to have. We used to have one like that. But those are mostly fire bang and fire out.

Maniscalco: So has she done a lot of cooking on it, or in it?

Herschberger: Yeah, quite a bit in the last two weeks. She did all of her meat—canned all of her meat on there and stuff. And you know what? Like picking off meat, you know, from the bones. I always said before you can't afford to do it because the gas costs just as much as that little bit of meat to pick off. But this year I said, "Go ahead, because it won't cost you nothing." (laughs)

Warren: Could you open that door again, so I can see the wood?

Maniscalco: So now this is where you and your wife live?

Herschberger: Yeah, and three boys.

Maniscalco: And the three boys.

Herschberger: Did you want to take a picture of that, or is it that...?

Warren: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Herschberger: And you know what that runs off of?

Maniscalco: The little fan?

Herschberger: Yeah.

Maniscalco: The heat?

Herschberger: Heat.

Maniscalco: That's pretty neat.

Herschberger: I can tell by the fan how much fire we got going.

Warren: Oh yeah? (laughs)

Maniscalco: That's cool.

Herschberger: Now, in weather like this, she's drying her clothes in here, too, and I don't like that. (laughter) That's a pet peeve of mine. I don't like clothes hanging around. This is the new part. You see, the fire was up overhead, and that all had to be replaced. See, all of this had to be torn down and redone. And then

here, where the two join together, that's where it got its air and really started to burn. But we've not got it all done yet, so back....

Maniscalco: How did you find out it was on fire?

Herschberger: Well, for a week or two, we'd come in the house, and it felt so warm in here.

Warren: Oh really? Wow, so it was just smoldering?

Herschberger: It was smoldering up there. All that thick ....

Maniscalco: Oh, wow.

Herschberger: Well, on a Thursday night, before Friday when we found it out, these cabinets had about a half-inch gap. There was about a half-inch gap all the way across here. I went to bed, and about midnight, I'm going to say, I hear this shotgun blast. I jumped up, and I figured somebody's playing a joke on me, you know. I knew some guys was out hunting coon, and I figured... What had actually happened, things had burned out enough—the trusses had burned out enough, it let this whole ceiling come down and plop on top of those cabinets, and that's what the shotgun blast was—it wasn't no shotgun blast.

Maniscalco: Oh, my gosh.

Herschberger: Now, if we'd have been real sharp, sitting at the breakfast table, I should have looked up there, and I'd have seen that gap's gone. Then I'd have known, hey, something's going on. But see, there's real heavy metal on top of this—underneath the trusses—on top of the sheetrock. That's what kept us from smelling anything. It burned right on top of that sheetrock—I mean, on the top of the—

Maniscalco: Amazing.

Herschberger: And then of course, everything kind of collapsed. It was that afternoon. He seen smoke coming out of the roof. And then, I'm telling you what, things—

Warren: Sort of (inaudible).

Herschberger: I wouldn't really want to do that again. (laughter) I mean, that drives you nuts.

Herschberger: Did you have to haul buckets of water, or how did you...?

Maniscalco: Well, we had, what was it, seven fire trucks out here. We didn't need them. They actually probably done us more harm than good, but we didn't know that at the time, because it was mostly smoldering fire except at the edges where it got out to air. Actually, most of it, we done ourselves, didn't we? But then when they got here, you know what they do with them. Oh, man, they make a mess of things.

Warren: Just blasted it, huh?

Herschberger: Just blast. Just go up there and blast, and knock holes in the ceilings and the walls and the roof. They're looking for fire, (laughter) if there is or if there isn't. That's a new thing there. (canaries chirping) I bet you've never seen that.

Warren: This floor?

Herschberger: That's concrete.

Warren: Really?

Herschberger: Yep. It's a new type of floor, epoxy-coated. It'll last forever. (canaries chirping) And we're not done with this, yet, but...

Maniscalco: Now, are these some of your wife's birds?

Herschberger: Yep, yep. Sometimes nearly drive you crazy, but there's some more. Hey, here's something you might want to take a picture of. I don't know if it would do you the same charge it give me, but see that thing there?

Warren: The auction sign?

Herschberger: Auction. Read the date.

Warren: Nineteen twenty-eight.

Herschberger: My wife's dad. And the reading on there—you probably won't be able to see the reading once you take the picture, will you?

Warren: I might be able to, if I'm going to—

Herschberger: Because on the bottom, one of the terms, I remember, says, "All sums over five dollars not paid today will be charged an interest rate of 5 percent." (laughs) "All sums of five dollars or over..."

(end of interview)