

## Interview with Jody Heavner

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Maniscalco: Today is June 12th, 2008, and we're sitting with Jody Heavner outside of Pittsfield, Illinois. How are you doing today, Jody?

Heavner: Just fine!

Maniscalco: Great! We're going to start out with asking some of the easy, easy questions.

Heavner: Okay.

Maniscalco: If you could kind of give us your date of birth and the place you were born.

Heavner: Okay. I was born March 5th, 1970 in Pittsfield, Illinois.

Maniscalco: Okay. Now, has your family always lived in Pittsfield?

Heavner: Yes. As a matter of fact, this, where we're sitting right now was actually homesteaded and signed over to our family in the 1800s, so yeah, we've been here a long time.

Maniscalco: Wow, okay. Now, when we say your family's been here, is that your immediate family? Extended family? How...?

Heavner: Yeah, it's my immediate family—my parents, yes, and their parents before them—so my mother's side.

Maniscalco: Now, did your parents have any brothers and sisters?

Heavner: No, it was actually my mother's family, and she was an only child.

Maniscalco: Wow, okay. So what kind of memories do you have of living here as a child?

Heavner: A lot! (laughter) Well, obviously, this is the farm where I was born and raised, and this office was the house where I was raised. When I was young we had

all different types of livestock, in addition to grains and crops. Like everyone did back then, it was more the traditional farm where you had a little bit of everything, you know. We had cattle and we had hogs and we had sheep, and, you know, the 4H projects: rabbits and chickens and whatever else. So all the memories that I think that most of us think about when we think about growing up on a farm are probably the same kinds of ones that I share with a lot of people, so...

Maniscalco: Cool. What about, you know, your grandparents were here. Where were they living in relation to you, and...?

Heavner: Well, there was a house that stood just behind us prior to this one being built, and that's the house they lived in when they farmed the ground. My grandfather actually passed away at the age of forty-two, and my grandmother and my mother stayed here on the farm for a while and then moved to town, and then when Mom married they moved back out here.

Maniscalco: OK. Now, do you know any of your family history of how they came to Illinois? Did they...?

Heavner: Actually, (laughter) one of the things on the wall over here is... My mother's maiden name is Willard, we've had family members who've spent a lot of time and done a lot of genealogical study of our family and have, you know, traced it back to England and the parts of England from which they came. So, you know, the members of that side of my family have been here since the early 1800s and before that, some of them. <y grandfather came from a very large family and his family before that had been here. They just had made their way to Illinois. So yeah, goes back to many generations.

Maniscalco: Very cool. Now, you said you have many memories of your childhood and this farm.—

Heavner: Yes!

Maniscalco: Tell me some of your memories about doing chores.

Heavner: Well, I mean, again, I probably share the same memories a lot of people do share with me, as well. I'm one of three children; I have an older brother, Doug, and a younger sister, Laurie, so much like most kids. I have three sons of my own and we live on a farm, so I'm reliving those moments as a parent, now. Like I said, we had beef cows; we always had a herd of beef cows, and one of my favorite things to do was to go with my dad down to check, you know, check the cows every day and ride along with him. He always talks about when he would leave me... My mom was a nurse and worked nights a lot, so when she'd come home and she'd sleep during the day and get up and help on the farm, so he was the baby-sitter/farmer, so you know, we were always with him when Mom was sleeping. He'd take me down and he'd set me in the big feed troughs and walk the pasture to check cows, and I'd sit there

and play with them. So, as far as having been around the animals, it's just literally been all my life. We, at one time, had almost 400 head of sheep here, so that was a lot of work, and a lot of fun. Really, the chores do teach a sense of responsibility; there's nothing better than that to do that for you. We used to show our livestock. We'd spend our summers doing that when we were teenagers, and that was a great learning and growing experience, and again, teaching responsibility and, you know, meeting lifelong friends that I have that live all over the country now from having done that that I would never have met otherwise. So I have a lot of really good memories.

Maniscalco: What was the one chore that you did that you just hated?

Heavner: Oh, that's an easy one! (laughter) We built this building when I was four, and prior to that we lived in the house that sat just the south of here, and that house was there for a while after we built this one. We had rabbits for 4H, and those rabbits, their hutches, were just on the other side of where that house sat. There was a big tree there, and it was one of those things that as a kid during the summer... Any other time of year you'd put off as long as you could what you need to do, and feeding the rabbits was one of the things I needed to do, and one of the things I liked doing least, because I was convinced every time I was told, it was dark, I mean, go feed the (laughter)... Going around that house, something terrible was going to happen to me, (laughter) so I hated doing it! I was just like one of those things, you just know the boogeyman's going to come out and get you. Never did, obviously, but just going around there to feed the rabbits, because I hadn't done it when I was supposed to, when it was dark was probably the thing that I liked the least. The rest of it, you know, there was a lot of things we did. Always enjoyed working with the cows or working with the sheep, any of that kind of thing, but for whatever reason—I loved the rabbits—I just didn't like going there after dark to deal with them for some reason, so...

Maniscalco: Now you said that there's you and you have a brother—

Heavner: Yes, I do.

Maniscalco: —that's older and a sister that's younger.

Heavner: Yes.

Maniscalco: Now, were there certain chores that your brother was able to do or was supposed to do that the girls weren't supposed to do?

Heavner: Well, it was less about gender and more about age. He's my older brother, so there were things, you know, a lot of things with the equipment and things like that he did because he was older and bigger and it made more sense, and so that's, you know, that's kind of... When he left home and then, you know, I was doing some of the things that he was doing when he was here, so it was kind of a natural progression. So I would say, I guess I would say yes and no,

but it was just more about who was older and bigger and more able to do it at any given time. Just whatever chores suited that person was kind of what we did, so...

Maniscalco: Well, that's cool. You know, we talked a lot about being on the farm; what about friends from off the farm?

Heavner: Friends from off the farm? Well, you know, living in a rural community, a lot of my friends were from farms; it was probably a pretty even mix of friends that were from a farm and friends that weren't. It's always fun to bring someone who's not from a farm down and, you know, there are always things that they find mildly disturbing or somewhat distressing (laughter) when they're not used to things on a farm, things that you don't think about, other people do. You know, so it's just kind of one of those... So yeah, we always had a good mix, but this is a very rural community. Even if they didn't live on a farm, their grandparents did or their aunt and uncle did or someone in their family did and they spent time there.

Maniscalco: Do you have a story about a particular friend that came to the farm with you and saw something they didn't like or just amazed by something?

Heavner: Honestly, most of my friends, not really. My sister always had friends that seemed like they were the ones that were just, just not (laughter), didn't understand the farm, didn't understand why it didn't bother you to walk through a barn that had manure in it, the smell was horrible, that kind of thing. So I mean, no difference in I think most, you know, especially kids that age, younger girls that just, you know, think it's gross or whatever. But yeah, I think her friends are probably the set that was least adapted to it; I guess would be the best way to say that. But my friends were all pretty laid back about it. They didn't—not much bothered them, so...

Maniscalco: Now, it sounds like you're very involved in 4H as a child.

Heavner: Yes, I was.

Maniscalco: I mean, can you expand a little bit about your involvement?

Heavner: Sure, I'd be happy to. Well, 4H was a big part of our lives growing up. Obviously, again, being from a rural community, programs and programming for youth is not, there isn't much. At that time there were sports but not until you got into junior high, so there was the whole span of time where, what is there for a kid to do? 4H was the logical choice because it was an ag community and we were all really involved; so yeah, as kids we were all very involved in 4H. You know, it's a fantastic program. I have a lot of very fond memories from 4H: my 4H leaders, the youth development people I work with here in the county, taking exchange trips to other states and staying with families for a week, going to conferences and conventions, things like that. Yeah, it's a big part of probably, it's another piece to my puzzle as to why I

stayed involved in agriculture, because it kind of gave me a chance to be with other people who had a similar interest, and that was as a kid. I'm still very involved; my own children are in 4H. I'm right now the President of our Extension Council here in the county, so I'm still very involved in 4H. So that was a part of it and then FFA [Future Farmers of America] came later.

Maniscalco: Oh, okay, so you were also involved in FFA.

Heavner: I was, I was in high school, yes.

Maniscalco: (unintelligible)

Heavner: Actually, I spent the day yesterday at the convention in Springfield; that's why I was out. It was, again, just a natural progression. You're in 4H. I had a very heavy interest in livestock; the cattle and the sheep at the time were my big interests, and that was a logical outlet. We had an amazing teacher here in Pittsfield who was here for many, many years and built an outstanding program; he's a gentleman everyone just called Chief. Yeah, it was a lot of good memories.

Maniscalco: Cool, really cool. Now, I know with 4H you get to do different projects and stuff; what are some of your favorite projects?

Heavner: Well, the sheep was, at the time, a thing that we did the best. The nice thing about them as livestock is that even a smaller kid or a younger child can do the chores, can handle the animals by themselves, and you still get that same sense of responsibility, and you understand the life cycle and the growth cycle, and you understand the nutrition and the genetics, and you can learn all that. I have a deep love for beef cattle, which I'm fortunate enough to be able to do on the side now. When we were growing up that was a thing that we spent a lot of time doing, and that was probably, that was by far my favorite project. That was really the thing that got me really involved in livestock, was sheep projects.

Maniscalco: Now, you're a mother who's also involved in her kids' 4H.

Heavner: Yes.

Maniscalco: What kind of projects are your kids doing?

Heavner: Beef cattle, photography, wood working. I have three sons, two of which are old enough to be in 4H, so that's their focus right now. We've done chickens and rabbits and ducks, and yeah...

Maniscalco: Cool. How has the 4H program changed from when you were involved compared to now what you see with your children?

Heavner: Well, you know, at first I thought it seemed like it had changed a lot, but I don't know that's necessarily true. The leaders in our county work very hard. We're trying to take things full circle and kind of get it back a little more structured, a little more hands on than what it had been for a while. There's a lot of very active parents who are my age who now have children who are 4H members, and trying to bring some back of what we had. So I think, yeah, there have been changes, but, you know, there are still 4H records, we do workshops, we go to monthly meetings, they give speeches, they show at the fair, and then we show at the State Fair. All those things that I did as a kid they still do. So there have been changes but we're very lucky here within the county to have a pretty good set of volunteers who've been able to fill in some of the gaps that have been left at our extension office, I guess.

Maniscalco: Now, it seems like with rural communities there's always some kind of involvement with church.

Heavner: Yes.

Maniscalco: I mean, how has that played a role in your life?

Heavner: I think you're right; I think in rural communities that oftentimes is something and it played a big role in my life. I actually went to church, my childhood, just right up the road in Time. There's a small church there, Time Community Christian Church, and that's where we went every Sunday. (laughter) Mom played the piano, and even if she'd work the night before she was there Sunday morning to play the piano. Currently, we go to church in Milton, my family and I do, the Christian Church there. We're very involved in that church. We have a very active youth group, and even in a small community of no more than 300—our youth group meets twice a month—and we'll have anywhere between twenty and forty kids there. I take care of the junior high, I'm in charge of junior high, and I'll have anywhere between eight and twelve on any Sunday night that will come and do things. So that's, again, something that I think it's kind of coming full circle, because there was a while where that wasn't the case, but now it's more the norm than not. That's changed a lot probably; here within the county it's changed a lot in the last ten years.

Maniscalco: You alluded that it's not just church; you're doing other things, as well, with church. What are some of those other activities that are going on.

Heavner: With the church?

Maniscalco: Yeah, social activities and things.

Heavner: The ministers and pastors within the county have actually formed an alliance—they actually refer to it as that—where, regardless of denomination, they all meet together weekly, and they eat breakfast together every week. They have all become close, fast friends. We actually this past Sunday evening had a gathering with a church from Pittsfield down in Milton; we

played softball and had a cookout and raised money for Relay For Life. You know, our minister has given sermons at their church and vice versa. It's very interesting, and it's bringing a lot more people into it. I think there was a time—probably back in my childhood and farther back—where if you went to this church, that's the church that you went to, and they did things their way and you did things your way. I find it very interesting that they have decided that it's not really about that. We all read the same Bible, so there's no reason to not, you know, fellowship together and do things together. That honestly has made a big change here within the county within the last three or four years. It's been very interesting to watch.

Maniscalco: That's really neat! Now, have there been...? I mean, it sounds like the majority of people are for this alliance and coming together, but have there been some people that kind of through the process were...?

Heavner: You know, I can't really speak to that. I know that within our own congregation everyone has. You can see it, you can see the signs of it within the schools and places like that; you can see that there's a difference. So I think there may have been; I can't say for sure that there weren't, but certainly within our own congregation I think it's something that we all see as a very good thing. We have activities, you know, if we have youth activities, we have lock-ins... I took a group of junior high kids to St. Louis for a conference; it was open to anybody, so we took kids that went to other churches. There's a church in town that has youth activities every Wednesday evening, and kids from all denominations go there to hang out on a Wednesday night, but might worship somewhere else on Sunday morning, so it really has... This has really changed, and from that all the churches have seen growth, so it's not that just one has. It's been a very interesting change.

Maniscalco: That's really, that's exciting actually! (laughter)

Heavner: You know, it is, it really is. It's, I think, at a time where so many other places you don't see that. I'm not sure where the thought or idea came from to do that, but speaking as someone, like I said, who has three kids in the school system and involved in their lives through coaching soccer, and the people in the community, it's very interesting that that is the case now.

Maniscalco: I'm sure it is. Now, what about when you went to school here? I mean, going to a rural school is kind of different comparing it to an urban school. Can you tell us about your experience going to school?

Heavner: Sure. Well, we lived outside of Pittsfield and we attended school all the years in Pittsfield, which meant a ride on the bus every day—an hour to school and an hour home. That's really where you get all of your education when you're a child, is the school bus; the things that happen between the bus rides are a lot of those times! (laughter) I think anyone who ever spent much time riding a bus probably learned more than they needed to. But no, small schools are a

great thing. My husband and I had been gone for many years, and one of the reasons we wanted to move back to the Pike County back home was obviously to be near our families 'cause we're both from here, but also that same small school atmosphere where people watch out for each other's kids, and that's a really nice thing to have. But yeah, I wouldn't change anything about it, you know. The small community where your friends' parents are your teachers definitely makes you pay a little more attention to how you behave on a day-to-day basis, that's for sure. But you know, I think a lot of people assume that there are a lot of downsides to smaller schools, that they may not offer—especially as students get older and get to high school—they may not offer AP [advanced placement] courses or an expanded curriculum, foreign language. We have Spanish in town but that's all that we have right now, so there are drawbacks to that but, you know, I think there's also a lot of benefit to it.

Maniscalco: What are some of the ways—at least when you went to school—that your school was trying to cope with some of those drawbacks?

Heavner: Well, I think back and at the time we were really no different than a lot of other schools in the area, I guess. You know now— obviously, like so many areas—there's been a lot of consolidation; that was taking place while I was going through school. A lot of the smaller towns—Milton, Pearl, Nebo—all had their own schools, and from the time I started in kindergarten to the time I graduated high school they'd all consolidated. Those kids all graduated with me, including my husband! (laughter) He attended the school in Pearl in grade school; that grade school closed, and he went to Milton and attended through eighth grade, and then came to Pittsfield for high school as the schools merged and closed. So it was one of those things that it was less about coping with trying to find ways to meet student needs and just more about getting, I guess, getting to the baseline. Okay, we're going to bring these students in, then we'll determine how to best meet their needs. Over time they were able to offer a wider variety of sports, but course offerings haven't changed much from when I was in high school to what they are now because the enrollment hasn't changed much.

Maniscalco: What about, I mean, your kids are going to school and I'm sure you know what they're doing...

Heavner: I hope so! (laughter) I like to think I do!

Maniscalco: I mean, what is the school trying to do to overcome that issue of not being able to offer multiple languages and things like that?

Heavner: Well, once they get to the high school level—we're in the John Wood Community College District—we have actually an open learning center here in Pittsfield where there are open learning classes offered, as well as evening or day classes and things like that, so working with them it does offer kids

college course credit for some things that we can't offer, can't be offered at the schools in Pittsfield. So that's one way; in working with the Junior College they're able to expand the course offering and get kids what they need. That's probably the biggest thing that they've done, and that's certainly helped. Dual credit for some things, things like that.

Maniscalco: Now, you just said you grew up in the era of when the schools were consolidating and that's how you met your husband, I'm guessing.

Heavner: Actually, yes, we went to high school together, yes.

Maniscalco: I mean, how was that during that time? No longer are you just going with just Pittsfield kids, but other kids from other areas and things like that?

Heavner: It's really interesting because, I guess I didn't think much about it at the time—a lot of us didn't—because we had always gone to Pittsfield, so for us it really wasn't a big deal for those other kids to come to our school. We knew a lot of them anyway because it is a small area. When you're in junior high and you play basketball against each other or you run track together so you get to know each other anyway, so for us it didn't seem like a big deal that they were there. But it's funny, when I talk to my husband about it he talks about his freshman year, coming into a new school, having not been with us all those years. I think you don't really realize at the time what that's like for those kids going through that, so that's been really interesting for me. We'll talk about it now, all these years later; he says, Oh, that was by far the roughest year because you come in and you don't know anybody and you're... And whether it's your own perception or what actually happened, it was pretty rough on a lot of those kids, I think, so it's kind of interesting.

Maniscalco: Now, I can imagine that there's probably quite a few kids in Pittsfield that are kind of more town kids.

Heavner: Oh, absolutely.

Maniscalco: And then you were bringing a lot of country kids into the school, as well. Was there a country kid/town kid kind of rivalry?

Heavner: Oh yeah, and we actually all laugh about that. You know, we all have kids the same age and that kind of thing now—those that still live down here—and we actually laugh about that kind of thing a lot, because even today there are the town kids and then there are the country kids. The country kids are the ones that probably went to school in Milton or wherever else, versus Pittsfield, and so there's still some of that, and we still laugh about it. It's actually something that everyone still jokes about. But yeah, at the time there definitely was the town kid versus the country kid, and whether it was trying out for basketball—the town kids had always played in Pittsfield—then you're bringing in kids from Milton or Pearl to play, and then suddenly the town kid's sitting on the bench and the country kid's playing. It's no different than

anything else. Yeah, there's definitely some rivalry there and some kids who probably didn't appreciate it at the time, I'm sure, to say the least.

Maniscalco: No, that's pretty cool. Your farming career really started when you were born, and you grew up on the farm doing a lot of work, but you also went to school—

Heavner: Yes, I did!

Maniscalco: —for, and I'm talking about college, for agro-related degrees. Can you tell me kind of what degrees did you go there...?

Heavner: I'd be happy to. I went to the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana. I have a Bachelors and Masters Degree in animal science. My masters was focused on muscle biology and meat science, so that's my educational background as far as that goes. Again, my interest in ag all the time growing up is what really led me to that. My involvement in FFA, especially once I hit high school, really was probably what ended up leading me down that path. I knew that was my interest, and I just followed up on that. But my parents were adamant that we all leave the farm and get a college education. There was no staying here; it was not an option. So from birth we were told, "You will go and you will get an education or join the military, but you will not stay here. If you want to come back some day, that's fine, but you need to go out and see things," and we all did, so...

Maniscalco: That's interesting. Now you and your brother have come back to the farm?

Heavner: Yes.

Maniscalco: And what about your younger sister?

Heavner: No! (laughter)

Maniscalco: Really!

Heavner: Yeah, she's five years younger than I am, which makes her seven and a half younger than my brother. Yeah, my brother and I were... Don't get me wrong, she was obviously raised in the same farm, the same house, that kind of stuff, but not everybody has the same interests, and it's not hers. She loves to come back and visit. She has two girls and they like to get out; they like to come visit and pet my son's cows or do whatever, and that kind of thing. She actually lives in Bloomington and teaches at Downs at Tri-Valley, and her husband owns a sign company in Bloomington, and they live there.

Maniscalco: Now, I mean, leaving the farm and going into college life has probably got to be quite a drastic change.

Heavner: Yeah. It's kind of one of those things, and I've been talking to some friends about that lately. That's a very big school, and have to know who you are when you go there or you're going to get lost in the shuffle. I think—I don't think, I know—that the way that I was raised and the things that I did and the confidence that I built in high school did not make... It wasn't that big of a deal for me to go do that. I loved it there, and I wouldn't have thought that because I was always like "I never want to live in a big town," but you know, I got over there and you meet kids with similar interests and built relationships with them and it becomes your home. That's what I did, and I absolutely loved going to school there. So I guess in some ways, yeah, it was drastic; yeah, there's more people, there's more cars. Finding a place to park is virtually impossible; the people at University Parking become your best friend because you get mail from it every day about the ticket that you got. But other than that it was a big change to an extent but, you know, even in a place like that, as long as you find someone with a similar interest it doesn't seem to be that big of a deal. I guess it wasn't to me, anyway. I enjoyed it.

Maniscalco: You just went right through and got your Masters immediately after your undergrad?

Heavner: I did. I have a strange educational background. I did my Bachelors in animal science and went straight to graduate school after that. While working on my Masters Degree I then took a job for the University as an independent contractor doing work for Eli Lilly and Co on a drug trial. So while I was doing my Masters Degree I did that, as well, and ran some research for them there at the University. So that was something that I did after that. Then after I finished my Masters, I decided that—my husband and I both have Masters Degrees—finding jobs in our respective areas of study, I probably needed to have a little more leeway. I found out while I was in graduate school as a teaching assistant that I loved to teach, so I took the course work I needed to be certified to teach high school, so that no matter where we ended up I would have that to fall back on. So that's the other part of my education, is that I'm also certified to teach.

Maniscalco: So did you teach anywhere?

Heavner: I did. I taught... We stayed in the Champaign area for... Well, it was a total of ten years between college and work. We stayed there for a while with his job. We moved to Monmouth, Illinois, and I taught high school at a small school. It was Union Bigsville then; it's since consolidated. They had an ag program there that had been closed for about ten years, and I went there and I reopened the ag program and started an FFA chapter going and did that while I was there, and actually in August I'm going to start teaching high school here at Pittsfield.

Maniscalco: Oh, well great! What's leading you to making that decision to go back and start teaching again?

Heavner: Oh, a lot of things. Since I've been here and doing what I'm doing, I actually have taught part time for John Wood Community College. They have an actual ag center located north of Perry, and it's a great teaching facility, so since I've been back here it's kind of been what I've done. You know, during one semester I teach a couple courses there because, like I said, I found out that was what I really enjoy doing, so this opportunity came open and I gave it a lot of thought. I've got my sons are coming up, are going to go through school, and that actually made my decision harder because I don't know how my life would've changed had I had my mother for my ag teacher and FFA advisor, but yeah, it's been interesting. I've had a lot of support from the community encouraging me to do it. Our program has not been what it once was, and they'd like to see it kind of, you know, they'd like to see it headed back in the right direction, so come fall I'll be doing that for a while and see how that goes.

Maniscalco: So what courses are your favorite to teach?

Heavner: Oh, because of my love of animal science and livestock I love teaching anything... And actually that spreads over the crop side, too, the science behind the ag stuff, and that's... And I think that's something that people still think, and here within the community, as well, because of the way the courses have been taught parents say "Well, my kid's not going to go into ag, it doesn't offer them anything," and that's really not true anymore. Yeah, there's a production side of things that we teach, but a lot of it also goes back to the science side, and I really enjoy the business, teaching the business side of it, as well, you know, everything from, you know, life cycles of plants and... Everything that you can see, it all goes back to the same place, and for me it's just—I love being able to help kids make the connection between what they may have learned in first grade science to what's happening in the fields that they pass on the way to school in their truck, or taking a town kid that you talked about earlier and making them actually understand that really their life's not a lot different than the kid sitting next to them, and kind of bringing appreciation, despite the fact that they're in a rural community surrounded by agriculture and their parents or their grandparents might farm, they might actually appreciate the science behind it, and ag is such a science based... I mean, it's all science based, so kind of bringing that component to it is a lot of fun for me, for kids that say "I didn't think about that." Yeah, it's not as easy as, not as simple as what it appears.

Maniscalco: That's really neat. Now, let's talk about the ranch here—

Heavner: Yes!

Maniscalco: —and kind of what we have or what you're doing here. Now, this was the farm that you grew up on, and it sounds, at least, like it was a fairly diverse farm. At the time you were growing up, what was here was...?

Heavner: Cattle, sheep, hogs, and corn and soybeans, yeah.

Maniscalco: And now, it sounds like you're doing more with elk—

Heavner: Yes.

Maniscalco: —and it sounds like you have some cattle. Do you grow any crops here?

Heavner: We have a small amount of ground that is, that we actually lease to a neighbor farm, and we have some ground we use for pasture and for hay production, but right now here on this farm it's the elk and the cattle that we do.

Maniscalco: Now, I mean, you had the cattle; what kind of cattle do you raise?

Heavner: Simmental and simmental/angus cross are the primary breeds.

Maniscalco: And those are raised for beef production primarily?

Heavner: Yes.

Maniscalco: And then how many head do you have?

Heavner: Here on this farm right now, we've got about, we'll have about sixty head, not a lot, just a small herd.

Maniscalco: Okay. Now, where in the decision making process did you get to elk?  
(laughter)

Heavner: That's a whole other long, involved story. It goes back to when my brother went off to college and then I went off to college, and my parents always say once we left so did the labor force. That's kind of how they see that, 'cause when you raise livestock it's very labor intensive, so the decision then was to scale back on the livestock, and my father, who my mother always says—and she's not wrong—thinks like an animal in the way that he understands very well the way an animal will react in any given situation, and that that led to getting involved in livestock equipment and handling equipment, designing it, selling it, those kinds of things. So he started kind of doing that on the side and actually working for someone else who did that and, you know, selling it for him and that kind of thing, and then it kind of went from there to doing it themselves, and in that transition they discovered that, you know, there have always been people that kind of catered to beef, cattle, or hogs or whatever those animals are, and they were doing that, as well, but decided that there was this large—at the time there was a big need for someone to deal with exotic livestock and exotic animals, and the decision was then made to "Let's see what we can do to kind of fill that niche or that role." Because you think about it, it doesn't sound like a very big niche or role, but if no one's doing it then it's there to be done, so that's kind of where it started. Designing and selling and finding other people who designed and fabricated this equipment

and getting it in the hands of people who needed it, whether they raised buffalo, elk, deer, kangaroos, wallabies, emus, ostriches, spider-monkeys, yeah, the works. That's kind of where the involvement in that industry started, and then from, it just kind of, as Mom always says, one thing led to another and so then it's like, well, if we're selling this equipment to these people and we think that it works and, you know, they got a few head of elk, and that, you know, design some handling systems and saw how it worked and so it just all kind of grew from there.

Maniscalco: That's really interesting, how you got there! (laughter)

Heavner: (laughter) You asked!

Maniscalco: There's got to be some pretty big differences between handling cattle and handling elk. Can you tell us about some of the differences?

Heavner: Yes, there are. Despite the fact that our elk are obviously born and raised on the farm, they are not what I refer to at all as a domesticated animal. We feed them every day, they're in a pen behind a tall eight-foot fence, but they still have the wild instinct, so it makes handling them a much different situation, and in effect when I have people, we have employees or I have people that come to help, I actually prefer a lot of times someone who doesn't have any experience handling beef cattle because they don't tend to be patient enough. These animals, they kind of work on their own timeframe, and if you're used to working with hogs or beef cattle, you can kind of force them into doing what you want them to do as a domesticated animal. I mean, as far as—and I'm talking about things as simple as moving them from one pen to another. You know, you can get in a pen and you can get several of you in there and you can, you know, holler out, yell out, they'll eventually move, things like that; elk, it's a different story. They have to move on their own in their own timeframe, so you devise ways to make that happen, you know. You connect pins with lanes and alleys, and put gates in places where you know the animals will congregate, and then if you want to get them in the next morning then you have gates open a day or two ahead of time, and you'll put the feeding water in there and then you'll hope that they find their way there, and then if they don't hopefully they've at least seen that the gate is open and been through it (clears throat) and then they'll be wanting to go in it later. It's a very... It takes patience to do those things, and so yeah, that's one of the biggest differences. They also have, their fight or flight instinct is very much intact. They... You'll see them hold their heads up and, you know, they're smelling the wind and constantly watching around them, so it's, you know, if there's a weather front coming through or if the wind's coming from the wrong direction, we'll have no work, we'll have no luck getting them to work the way we want to that day, because if the wind's coming from the wrong direction, we need to be behind them, then they're not going to... They'll scatter. So it's amazing. They're fascinating animals, you know, they really are because of that.

Maniscalco: Now, I've been doing some reading on elk, and I'm trying to figure out, now they are considered livestock or wild animals?

Heavner: Yes! (laughter) It depends upon who you ask. Well, they are still wild animals. They, within the state of Illinois, they fall in the jurisdiction of the Department of Agriculture, so it's confusing from that standpoint where they fall, but they are still, you know, they are still wild animals, wild instinct. I guess to me it's more about are they a wild animal or are they a domesticated animal? So they are a wild animal, in my opinion, being raised domestically, if that makes any sense at all. You know, we raise them for the same purposes that you would raise other livestock, so I guess from that standpoint, yes, they would be considered livestock, so maybe that's a better way to answer that.

Maniscalco: That's interesting. Now, how many elk do you have here now?

Heavner: Well, it depends upon the day. You know, we'll range somewhere, with the locations that we have, somewhere between, you know, in that two to 250 head range.

Maniscalco: Wow. Now, they're not all here.

Heavner: Right, we've got different locations, yeah.

Maniscalco: Can you explain like the different locations and kind of what...

Heavner: Here at the office we've got a few different pens that we're actually—right now this time of year, it's June, you know, so it's calving season, and that's what we call them. The males are bulls, the females are cows, the babies are calves, so we keep those groups here close to the office and check those pens every day, and that's a whole other thing we can talk about in a minute. We have another area that we basically use for raising the young ones, and it's set up similar to what a feed lot would be set up for cattle, where they're in smaller pens, which allows us to kind of see them every day. They get out into a pasture. They're checked every day, but sometimes you don't always notice what's going on, what's wrong, so we have groups of bulls and then last year's calves there, and then we have some over by Berry, Illinois, which you've got groups of bulls over there.

Maniscalco: Oh, wow. So how many acres do you have total, then?

Heavner: Well, that's kind of a... I guess it depends upon what all we include in that. It's not a question that's easily answered. You know, we're probably looking at somewhere around 300, if we include that over there, that we have for them.

Maniscalco: Now, you said something about checking pens that I need to talk about.

Heavner: Yes. Well, it's just an interesting process with them. Since they are a wild animal and people in Illinois, you know, we're used to white-tail deer, and

they do things very similar to what a white-tail deer does, and I say that, just their behavior this time of year, and actually what the offspring look like. When the calves are born, they're brown, they have white spots on 'em, just like a white tail deer does, obviously used for camouflage, and just like a deer those first twenty-four hours they're going to hide that calf in the grass, and it makes them very hard to find, and it sounds silly because you think, okay, you've got... 'Cause a calf will weigh somewhere between thirty-five and fifty-five pounds, and they're mainly legs, but they hide 'em in the grass, and I will tell you from my own personal experience, more than once I've almost driven over them because they lay that still and the grass is that tall that even though the grass may be green... It's amazing what they do, what their instinct is, and that's obviously different than what you're accustomed to with a domesticated animal, so we actually have paths mowed in our pasture, and then every day we use a Polaris Ranger and one person drives and one person stands in the back—(clears throat) excuse me—so they can, the person in the back can be up higher and they can see in the grass and see if there's any hidden in the grass, so it's kind of a spotter and a driver, and then once the calf is found then you check to see where the cow is or what's going on, and they pick up the calf, put a tag in it's ear, vaccinate it, and put it back where they found it. If you don't find them in the first twenty-four hours, you're probably not going to catch them. Once they decide to get up and move, they get up and go and they're amazingly fast right off the bat, so without, you know, having a calf hurt itself, it's really getting him tagged right away is the most important thing as far as that, and then you can leave them alone.

Maniscalco: So I imagine you probably spend quite a bit of time checking pens, then.

Heavner: This time of year we do, yeah. They'll spend... And it depends on the day, you know, if, 'cause you're checking to see if you saw the ones you saw yesterday and things like that, or you're trying to figure out who the mom is to the calf, because unlike a beef cow, for example, that if you're putting a calf in that tags you know who the mom is; she's probably standing right there. It's not a big question. But where they hide their calves in the grass, you don't know whose it is. Sometimes the cow will come running and you'll know, okay, well that's 408's calf, but a lot of times we have cows that will, you'll look at and say "I know she calved," and they will intentionally lead you in the wrong direction. When you come in the pen they'll start racing around at perhaps the opposite side, like their calf is over there, so you'll go over there looking, and we actually, we know we've got a couple that do that so you know when they're, when they're acting like that their calf probably is not where they are because they're trying to throw you off, basically. It's very strange. Sometimes a cow will come up and you'll know who it belongs to, but sometimes you won't, so it does take a while sometimes just to figure out who the mom is, 'cause they're trying to, you know, for the safety of the calf. And the calf, they're very funny 'cause they won't move. You'll pick up the calf, you'll tag it, and sometimes they'll squeal and they'll kick but then when you put it back in

the grass they'll freeze, so you can lay it on its side with its legs crossed and it'll lay like that until you're gone.

Maniscalco: Wow! That is pretty interesting.

Heavner: Yeah, it's just the whole instinct thing. It's very different.

Maniscalco: Now, I mean, you mentioned that you're mowing these paths through the fields, and you have Polaris Rangers that you're going to. What other special equipment are you using to...?

Heavner: As far as, you know, we just... Honestly, as far as other actual equipment this time of year, that's really all it takes. They carry a metal shield with them, similar to what a gladiator would use (laughter) I guess it the best way to describe it, and it sounds silly, I know, but it's... We've got 'em in different sizes. They're usually about three feet tall, sometimes made of a aluminum, sometimes heavier gage stuff, but we'll leave that in the Ranger, and then if we've got a cow who's being aggressive then we've got, there's a way for us or our employees to shield themselves from that. They tend to strike with their front hooves, so if you've got a shield there that you can hold, you know, they'll strike at that, and then you can be behind that or, you know, have the calf behind that tagging it.

Maniscalco: Interesting. So sometimes you might have to fend off the cow to...

Heavner: Yeah, they're being protective. Yeah, they're protecting their calf.

Maniscalco: Wow. So I guess it kind of takes a bit of a special person to get in there and do that! (laughter)

Heavner: I suppose! I suppose so! Yeah, it's not for... Yeah, you have to... If you understand the animals, it's not a scary thing, if you understand why they're doing what they're doing and can kind of anticipate what they might do then it's not, it's fine, but it just takes... Having people that work with you that understand that makes a big difference.

Maniscalco: So how many people do you have that work with the animals, then?

Heavner: Oh, I would say on a day to day basis, to be honest, day in, day out, I've got one young lady here who does the bulk of the, you know, the feeding and the checking of the livestock, and she's, Lindsay, does most of the day to day hands on animal stuff. I have another gentleman here; his name is Mike, and Mike, you know, he's out there with her right now running the pens. Yesterday or a few days ago we cut velvet on bulls and so it was the three of us doing it, so, you know, Lindsay is the main one right now hands on day in day out, and Mike when needed and myself, as well.

Maniscalco: Interesting. Now, you just mentioned cutting velvet on bulls, and that's one of the products that you get from elk.

Heavner: Right.

Maniscalco: Can you explain, you know, all the different things that you get from elk that...?

Heavner: Absolutely, and the velvet, the velvet is the antler that grows, and that is the stage of growth prior to the calcification of the horns, so what we do, and what we just did a few days ago and which we'll do again next week, is we remove that velvet antler while it's still soft and while it's still growing. That actually has glucosamine and chondroitin in it naturally occurring, so it's used for medicinal purposes, so we remove that antler, freeze it, and then sell it to buyers, who will then freeze dry and pulverize it to be encapsulated, sometimes for human consumption, sometimes for pets.

Maniscalco: Interesting.

Heavner: That's one of the products. We do that for two reasons: One is the bulls, their growth plates haven't fused enough really between the age of three that if they get fighting much before that age, if their antlers are allowed to go to hard horn, we call it, a lot of times they'll fracture their skull plates, and then they'll have a difficult time on down the road just because they're just not done growing yet, and obviously it's a management issue. You know, to have a pen with fifty bulls in it, they all have, you know, sharp, pointy antler, from the human standpoint and the animal standpoint it's a management issue, so we remove the antler for that, as well, and then obviously it's an important byproduct for us. The meat is the other thing that we harvest animals for. It's incredibly low in fat and cholesterol for a red meat; in fact, from the fat standpoint, it's as low in fat as a turkey breast is or a chicken breast. It's just that lean, so most of our consumers are health-conscious people looking for a low fat, low cholesterol meat alternative, and that's where a lot of our market is, and as well as a lot of restaurants who are in areas where either wild game or things like that are big.

Maniscalco: Now, where are you—I mean, you mentioned some restaurants and health conscious customers; how are you selling this, getting your products to them?

Heavner: Well, we actually have a web site that people can order online, but we have a whole separate little group, which—these are all family businesses so it's actually my cousin and her husband who deliver, who have developed routes within Illinois and deliver and service our customers from a truck. They're actually retired school teachers, teaching first, second, and kindergarten for many, many years right outside of Springfield, and they do this now together as a team, and so in addition to the elk meat... They also sell Butch's Pizza which is made up in Morton, another Illinois product, so they service a large

number of grocery stores. Our snack sticks are in a ton of convenience stores, bars, places like that, and then individual restaurants that'll buy steaks or burgers or things like that to serve. So that's... You know, but you can buy it in places like County Market and things like that. Different stores that are in Springfield carry our meat frozen. Yeah.

Maniscalco: Now, how many pounds of meat are you producing on a yearly basis?

Heavner: Ooh, that's a good question. I would say probably—let me do some quick math in my head here—you know, we'll probably go through somewhere around 40,000 pounds of elk meat, if you include snack sticks, summer sausage, and then fresh cuts. Yeah.

Maniscalco: Now, what's kind of the life cycle of an elk here on your ranch? We know it's going to be born, and, you know, how many years?

Heavner: Yes, it is! That's where it all starts! (laughter) It starts with birth! They're born, and they have a certain calving time of year and it is right now. They have a calving season and it is the spring, and obviously it's going to go back to the fact that they were once wild animals, and at this point in their evolution, having been moved primarily—I mean, they used to be in all forty-eight states. They were native everywhere. So it's kind of, people say "Well, they aren't from here." Well, actually, they were before we all moved in and pushed them west. If you think about where you see elk wild now, obviously you're talking about out west in mountainous areas and things like that because they can live there, so over time they've kind of adapted to calving during warmer temperatures and that has obviously increased their calf mortality there, so that is the time of year that they do that. We'll wean the calves pretty young; we tend to wean them in September, so they'll be born in end of May of June, we'll wean 'em in September, which is when they're taken from the moms, and then they're put in their own pen and given as much feed as they can possibly eat to get 'em up and going. At a year old they're separated, the bulls and heifers are separated, heifers kept back usually for replacement heifers, breeding stock, ones that we'll keep here on the farm, and bulls we'll keep and raise and some will keep back for breeding or sell for breeding, and then we'll have those that we harvest for meat.

Maniscalco: Now, do you... I know you have a hunting lodge here, as well. Do you have hunters come in to harvest?

Heavner: We don't here, not here at this facility. The hunting lodge that we have is for white-tail deer. Since we're in Pike County and we have so many deer—and we do; despite what some people may think, there are just a tremendous number of them all over the place, (laughter) that's actually for our white-tail deer hunters that come. We lease a lot of ground on the area and they come here to hunt white-tail deer.

Maniscalco: Okay, so that's kind of an interesting diversification of what you're doing, as well.

Heavner: Yes. There's a lot of that within our little group here, yeah!

Maniscalco: (laughter) So what other things are you diversifying to to kind of keep everything going?

Heavner: Well, the hunting is obviously one thing. You know, like I said, we've got our lodge and we do that, and the elk and the beef cattle, and then the part of the company that started the elk, which is JDL or JDL Longhorn, which does livestock handling equipment, now does, you know, post-frame buildings. They do, they build swine management facilities for people, and just about anything you can imagine, you know, selling fence and posts and wire and things like that. So that's, those are kind of the different entities that we have that have all kind of sprouted.

Maniscalco: Yeah. Now, there's one more question about elk that I wanted to ask you, and, you know, being wild animals, they've got to be trying to escape sometimes.

Heavner: Absolutely.

Maniscalco: Is that a big problem, little problem, or do you...?

Heavner: Well, even tame animals, even your domesticated beef cattle, if there's a gate open they're going to walk out it. It's not, you know, yesterday Lindsay spent time trying to get a cow who had gone across a fence where a tree had come down back in with everybody else, and that was a beef cow, so it doesn't matter if it's your pet dog that gets out and runs the neighborhood. Even tame animals try to, so you know, we have the fences that we have here are eight foot fences. These animals—we didn't really talk about it—are very large animals. I think a lot of time to think about elk we think about deer; well, yes, but an elk will be the size of a deer when it's about three months old. Height-wise, they're the height of a horse; they're very tall. They'll tend to weight, the cows weigh between 5-600 pounds at maturity—a lot of that's leg; they're a very tall animal—and then the bulls are somewhere between 800 to 1,000 pounds, so the fences that we would use to keep beef cattle in, they'll just step over them, basically. It's not really a challenge for them at all, so we have to use eight foot fences, and like I said, our system is set up so that we have gates that lead to alleyways that go from place to place to place, and you try to remove as much error as you can, and if it were to happen it would strictly be a human error issue. Well, I shouldn't say that; I mean, there's always the joys of giant storms coming through and putting a tree on your fence, which we've had happen before, but, you know, you just try and minimize that chance.

Maniscalco: Yeah. So have you ever gotten the dreaded call from a neighbor that says that there's an elk out?

Heavner: Yes, we have. And again, I mentioned earlier about being a patient person; if you have beef cows out, you go out there, you get a couple four-wheelers, you get really irritated, (laughter) and eventually with a bucket of feed they'll probably come in within a short amount of time. The difference with elk is they have to come in on their own timeframe. But they are funny animals and they are a creature of habit, so if they've been in that pen or whatever for very long, they will make their way back to it, and ours have. We have had that happen; it just takes time, and they'll be out for a few days before you get 'em back in a lot of times. But they will come back, because they're like "Okay, that's home, okay, and I'm going to go back in there." But actually catching them in there is always the big thing. If they see you coming they'll take off, so it's interesting. But yeah, I even hate to say it, (knocks on wood) it hasn't been something we've had to deal with recently, so... (laughter) I mean, I don't ever want to utter those words because anything's possible, especially with the spring we're having and the storms we're having.

Maniscalco: I mean, in the community you're in now in the recent times, elk aren't exactly common in nature, as a natural occurrence. How are your neighbors dealing with the idea of having elk right next door?

Heavner: Oh, for the most part they really enjoy it. If they've got family that come to visit them from out of town they'll drive by to see the elk. Or you'll see them in town, like "Oh, I saw the bulls and their antlers are really growing; I can't believe how much they grew from yesterday to today." You know, I think they truly enjoy 'em, because they're just amazing animals. You don't see 'em run very often, but when they're out in the pasture, if someone happens to spook 'em and they run, it's amazing. They're unbelievably graceful. If you're watching the Triple Crown, watching the thoroughbreds run... Bug in my face! Wow. Watching those animals run. I mean, they are beautiful and they are graceful and they run, but it just looks like they're laying it all out there. Elk are so different because you'll watch them and it'll be from one end of the pen to the other before you realize it, and they don't ever look like they're trying. They're just, they're very fast. They run forty miles an hour; they can get up to that speed within three steps, and I've seen it happen so I believe it now! But they're just a beautiful, graceful animal, and so the people get a kick out of seeing 'em. I mean, you get to watch the antlers grow and the elk calves; it's a little bit different, so people do enjoy it.

Maniscalco: And now it's a totally different animal, so I imagine you have totally different diseases and other things you need to look out for.

Heavner: Actually, you'd be surprised. A lot of it's very similar, as far as from a disease standpoint, what you would deal with with beef cattle. You know, we vaccinate for the same reproductive diseases. We vaccinate our cows for the same things that beef cows might have from that standpoint. You know, elk can founder just like a beef cow can. There's any number of things that are similar. There are some different things, but honestly, I don't know if it's part

of it being a wild animal or what it is, but they're a very resilient animal. Once you get the calves past that weaning time, you just have very few disease problems.

Maniscalco: Working with elk out here now, there aren't really very many gender roles. I mean, it's both men and women are doing the same things and it doesn't really matter anyway.

Heavner: It doesn't.

Maniscalco: And you mentioned earlier that there's a certain, you know, you don't want people to be coming to you with knowledge to get a job. What's the thing, I mean—

Heavner: I don't know if I should...

Maniscalco: —if I wanted to come here and work here with elk, what would you want?

Heavner: Well, first of all, you'd have to be fearless! (laughter) I mentioned patience earlier, and I think, as we've had a lot of different people here with us through the years, the ones who have done the best job have been patient and willing to listen. So if you can give me someone who's patient and willing to listen, and in fairly good physical condition—I'm in pretty good shape—because you can train 'em to do what you need 'em to do. I don't want to sound gender biased here, but sometimes it's harder with the guys because, depending upon what their background is, because they may not have the patience for it sometimes, to just kind of wait, relax, let 'em go where they need to go, then we'll go from there, and it kind of takes that. My primary herdsman, her name is Lindsay, so at this point in history that's the case. She's been with me for a while now, and she loves what she does and she's very good at and very patient. So yeah, gender roles really... yeah, it's really inconsequential. Just someone who's patient and willing to learn and listen. There are people who can understand animals, or begin to, and that makes a difference, too.

Maniscalco: Now, are there any government regulations over elk?

Heavner: Mm-hmm.

Maniscalco: What kind? Can you tell us about a little bit of that sort of stuff? (laughter)

Heavner: I'd be happy to! I don't know if "over elk" is the best way to say it or not. There is a tuberculosis program, just like there is for beef cattle, that you're a part of and you test for TB. We have blood drawn every few years on all the animals and they're tested. Chronic wasting disease is the other disease that there is a concern with in elk and white-tail deer, so any animal that is either slaughtered or dies over the age of sixteen months is then tested for chronic wasting disease to confirm that that wasn't the cause of death. So those two

things are the primary things that we deal with as far as what programs we're involved with with the government.

Maniscalco: Okay. And finally, I mean, there's lots of work that you're doing here; what's getting you to get up every morning and come out here and do this?

Heavner: The alarm clock! (laughter) You know, it is a family business, so a lot of it goes back to that, you know. Whether it's the beef cattle or the elk, I just... the whole thing is fascinating to me, so I mean, it's no different than anybody. There's parts of your job that you like more than others, and I really enjoy being out, whether it's working beef cows or doing whatever. I really enjoy that part of what I do. Everybody has their thing and their niche, and sometimes your niche shifts a little bit, but yeah, I do, I really enjoy that.

Maniscalco: Interesting. You know, you've really diversified your family farm and changed its whole role almost; what do you see for the future of other family farms or family farms in general, I should say?

Heavner: Oh, that's a loaded question. You know, I think it's like a lot of businesses, because it is first and foremost a business. It was when I was a kid, but I think people thought of it less as a business then, even though that's exactly what it is; it's a business, but it's a business where you're raising your family, so that makes it different. You know, I don't know. I think that it's no different than most businesses where you have to have your own... A small business owner either has to have a niche, or if it's not a niche he has to be able to compete with the bigger boys, and I think that's exactly the case. If you're a small farmer who wants to stay a small farmer, in order to support your family you're going to have to find a niche. Now, whether it's raising elk or growing things organically or, you know, the list goes on and on and on about the things that people will try to do with a small amount of ground; it's either that or find ways to increase your size to compete. It's the economy of scale. It's a business. So I think as time goes on—well, and that's already happening; in the last fifteen to twenty years, you know, a lot of farmers rely upon off-farm income. My husband and I talk about our 200 acre hobby farm that we own; we both work full-time to support our hobby. His family farm's over that way, but our own ground—we work to support it—so it's a change.

Maniscalco: Now, what do you think of the future of this family operation?

Heavner: Oh, I think it'll change a hundred more times.

Maniscalco: Really?

Heavner: Oh, yeah. Yeah, it will. Again, the one thing leads to another thing, you know. I don't think twenty years ago anyone thought that we would be having this conversation right now. I don't know. I think it'll change. I'm sure it'll change again. That's just how things go. I don't know where it'll all end up. I really don't. So it'll be interesting to see.

Maniscalco: Yeah, it will be! (laughter)

Heavner: You know, I can't sit here and tell you that it'll all be... Yeah, I don't know.

Maniscalco: Well, this has been really great sitting and talking with you about your farm, about your ranch, and I have one more question for you—

Heavner: Yes.

Maniscalco: —and then we're done. This is the question I ask everybody. This is an oral history interview and it's going to be archived, and it's going to be around for eternity. There's the possibility that your kids' kids' grandkids could stumble upon this interview and say, "Hey look, there's great-great-grandma Jody in this interview!", you know? (laughter)

Heavner: Great-great-grandma Jody, good grief!

Maniscalco: It's kind of, it's difficult to think that way, but what's the one thing you'd want them to find in here?

Heavner: Hmm... Now that's tough. One thing...

Maniscalco: It could be a couple. I'll let you have a couple! (laughter)

Heavner: I don't even know if I can get down to a couple! Hmm... Just keep your options open and see where things lead you. I think sometimes we all get into a niche and a groove and can't see what's going on around us, so always keep your eyes open; you don't know what's going to be around the next corner, and be ready for it. Things change, you know, and learning how to deal with change and take it as it comes is a pretty important part of life. So know where you came from, but understand you don't know where you're going to end up, so...

Maniscalco: Great!

Heavner: I don't know! (laughter) I have no idea!

Maniscalco: Well, thank you very much, Jody. It was great to sit here and talk with you.

Bob Warren: I've got one little follow-up. You were originally in animal science.

Heavner: Yes!

Bob Warren: And if I remember right, you were on the last Livestock Judging team?

Heavner: Yes, I was.

Bob Warren: Could you tell us a little bit about that?

Heavner: Oh, sure. I was on both the meats and livestock judging teams in Champaign. That goes back to what I was saying about meeting people and developing relationships and bonds with people that you have a common interest. That was really where I found my niche, were those people. The faculty there are amazing, you know. The gentlemen I worked with, Tom Carr, Doug Parrot... It's one of those things; you're like, Oh, I hope they stick around, but I know they're both looking at retirement in the not-so-distant future. So I know my kids won't be there when they are, which kind of makes me sad, but, you know, great experience. It's probably some of the best decisions I've made early on in life was to get involved in that. We went places I would never otherwise have gone. You're loading up in a van at 4:00 a.m. with way too many people (laughter) and way too little stuff, and driving across the country, and amazing stuff, you know. Saw, met people I would never have otherwise met, and just been and done things that I wouldn't have done. That's the kind of thing that—with my own kids, I say—just keep your options open. You don't have any idea where you might end up and what might lead to something else. Yeah, I loved every minute of that, but...

Bob Warren: Can you kind of talk a little bit about the judging team process? I mean, you're—

Heavner: Sure!

Bob Warren: —in a pen with four feed cattle—

Heavner: Correct.

Bob Warren: —and you have to decide how to rank their placement and give reasons for that. Can you kind of describe that for us?

Heavner: You bet. Right now the way livestock judging contests are set up, it's three species: it's beef, sheep, and swine. I look for them to add the goat thing, and they already have in a lot of contests: the meat goats, the boar goats. It used to be—back in the day, as the guys used to say—that quarter horses were a part of this contest, but that's a separate contest now. But yeah, you've got four animals, and they're either market animals or breeding animals. Based upon which one of them they are, you rank those animals in order of best to worst. In breeding animals you might have a pen of heifers or ewes or gilts, and you'd look for characteristics that you would want to see in a breeding female: structural correctness, body capacity, femininity, things like that, as opposed to what you would look for in a market animal. If you're talking about barrows or wethers or steers, then structure correctness is still important; however, growth, muscling, correctness of finish, how much fat they carry, things like that, and you rank them based upon that. Then you take the information from your ten minutes of standing there, and you develop what you refer to as a set of reasons: why did you place this class this way. Then you go into a little room and you explain to judges why you did what you did, and they rate you

based on how correct you were in what you saw. Amazing experience, you know. I encourage my own kids, if they have any interest in it at all, to get involved in that because you have to—your powers of observation and your ability to think on your feet and speak in front of people, it's a great crash course in that. It truly is, so...

Bob Warren: You don't have much time to prepare.

Heavner: No, you don't have a lot of time to prepare. If you're given four sets of reasons, you have ten minutes to look at that class of animals and write down notes. Then you're given a few minutes to look over those notes before you go in and tell them why you did what you did. There's not a strict format but there's a pretty basic format that you follow, four paragraph format, to describe what you're doing and why you've done it, and then you hope that what you saw is what they saw and hope that they agree with you. So yeah, it's an adrenaline thing. It's an interesting thing to do. I think people who don't understand it don't quite grasp what you can get from it.

Bob Warren: So there are judging contests that you went to with your teammates on a judging team?

Heavner: Yeah, we went to, oh, contests in Louisville, Kentucky—I'm trying to think of everywhere we went, 'cause I did both livestock and meat—so everywhere from Texas to Pennsylvania and places in between. We attended contests for both those doing that very thing. But it's decision making skills; you don't have a lot of time, you know. You develop ways to do that very quickly and evaluate things very quickly and it's, yeah... But traveling with groups of people that you don't really know until you're crammed into a van and spending twenty-four hours a day with them and staying in cheap hotels and being frightened by the people in the room next door (laughter), and eating McDonald's every morning because your meats judging coach loves McDonald's and owns stock in it so you're going to eat there every morning. It just, you know, all the stories that you go...

You know, they have reunions every year at Champaign, and every five years the team, if it's—I'm sorry, every ten years—so on ten and twenty those teams get up and talk about their judging experiences and stuff. It's a lot of fun just to go listen to people and hear how things have changed since they started doing it to the way it is now, and what hasn't changed, you know. The relationships that you build with those people that you're just there with, that's a really cool thing, too, and how far and how different your lives are after that, and where people end up. It's the people that I judge with, and yeah, it's really neat. Still stay in contact with a lot of them, so...

Bob Warren: Was Doug Parrot your coach?

Heavner: He had a graduate assistant that traveled with us named Stan Tar, who I will actually see tomorrow. But yeah, Doug was the primary coach then, and he... And then when I did meats, Tom Carr was the one who—and still does—travels with the meats judging team. Then my senior year they do what's called meat animal evaluation, which is a combination of livestock and meats contest, and Doug Parrot and Tom Carr were the two coaches for that, so yes. I spent time with Dr. Parrot, yeah. He is a character. He cracks me up. I thoroughly enjoy the—I always see him at cattle shows and stuff, and I always get such a kick out of seeing him. Yeah, great experience, one of the best I've had, so...

Bob Warren: Thank you.

Heavner: You're welcome. Why didn't you ask about that, Mike?

Maniscalco: (laughter) I don't know! You were supposed to bring it up! How's that?

Heavner: I'm just teasing you!

Bob Warren: I had to ask... My dad was an animal craft professor at Nebraska—

Heavner: Oh, yeah?

Bob Warren: So I grew up in animal science...

(Break in tape)

(End of audio file 1 – move to next page for Part 2)

## Interview with Jody Heavner

AI5-V-L-2008-051

June 12, 2008

Interviewer: Mike Maniscalco

Part 2 – Walk Around

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Maniscalco: Okay, Jody, so we're standing here in the pen with the elk. This is the grass that they're grazing on. Can you explain...?

Heavner: It is. The pastures are a mix of grasses and clovers. In this one, they've really gone through and picked out a lot of the clover, but we'll rotate our pastures. Each pasture has paths mowed in those, and that's where we drive when we come through to check the pens for calves; that way we don't inadvertently drive over one because they hide them in the tall grass, and it's difficult to see them otherwise. The cows, their diet right now is pasture, but they also get a little bit of supplemental grain; it's just shelled corn and dehydrated alfalfa pellets; it keeps them in pretty shape without making them fat, because don't want them to be overweight. It actually causes problems at calving if they're carrying too much condition, so we try to keep 'em pretty lean. As you can see, this time of year some of them have lost all their winter hair; some have not, so the ones that look a little scraggly are the ones who are still working on that; over the next few weeks they'll all be nice and dark brown and pretty and sleek.

Maniscalco: Now, I was doing some reading and I saw that elk have two different teeth, or they have a couple different types of teeth that are in there than most other animals. Can you explain?

Heavner: Are you talking about their ivory teeth?

Maniscalco: Yeah.

Heavner: Yeah, they actually have teeth in the back, kind of molars. In the front they only have teeth in the bottom. They're like other ruminants that way, but in the back they've got molars, and part of them are actually ivory. Do a lot of times, people who hunt elk out west or people who want... They'll save those teeth

and they'll make jewelry out of them, because it actually is technically ivory. Yeah, people use it for decorative purposes like that.

Maniscalco: Do you sell the ones from here, as well, or do you...?

Heavner: We have at different times. Yeah, some people buy 'em. The jewelry itself is actually quite expensive, but it's more the obviously labor going into doing that that creates the high price, so...

Maniscalco: So now I'm noticing you have some pretty heavy-duty fence.

Heavner: Yes.

Maniscalco: What are some of the specifications that you have?

Heavner: The fence that we have is all eight-foot fence. Again, tall animals, they'll go right over a normal fence you build for beef cows, so all that's an eight-foot fence, as are the gates and all. Like I said, all these pens are joined together with gates and corners and alleyways, so we can move the animals from one place to the other without having to load them up or without having to let them out to go from one place to another. They're all interconnected.

Maniscalco: Okay, and I notice you have one group here and another group over there. What's the differences and why are they...?

Heavner: Within these two groups there's three separate breeding groups. We have three different bulls with the cows. We have a rotation of three pastures right here that we use during breeding season, so I split 'em into two groups so I can let one rest at all times, but they're grouped by what bull they're bred to normally.

Maniscalco: So then there's no bulls in here at all.

Heavner: No bulls in here right now. The bulls go in during breeding season. They get put in with the cows in September and get pulled out in January, or December, January, yeah, somewhere in that timeframe. And the bulls during the breeding season, or what's called rut, just like it is for white-tail deer—it's called 'rut' for these bulls, as well—all they really do is just that; they chase the cows. They'll lose as much as twenty percent of their body weight. I've had 'em lose more than that in the breeding season where they just work themselves to skin and bones, so...

Maniscalco: So how many cows do you have out here now?

Heavner: There's, I think, thirty-one on one side, thirty-five on the other, is what we've got right now.

Maniscalco: And this is their calving season, so—

Heavner: This is their calving season.

Maniscalco: —so have most of them had their calves?

Heavner: No, we're really just getting started. Normally, we've had a few more on the ground by now, but I'm thinking from the look of 'em we'll have quite a few over the next few weeks. Let's keep tabs on those cows back there. I don't like it when they come on behind you. So, you know, we'll be done the first part of July usually. Once they start they really kind of... once it kicks in they get going. We've only had... I guess now we've had ten that have calved, so we've still got most of 'em left to go. I found three new ones today, so I'd say we're just getting going. They're getting used to us; as long as we don't make a movement that frightens them, we should be okay. Hello, girls! Yep, we're right here! You don't need to come any closer! Stay put!

Maniscalco: Now, will they listen to you, or...?

Heavner: Well, if I'm talking like this they may not want to go ahead and come on over here, but if they start wandering closer grazing and one of us makes a movement that startles them...

Maniscalco: They could just run all over the place! (laughter)

Heavner: Yeah, so it's best if we remember that we're here, and with the vehicles shut off it's pretty quiet and they're going to kind of get used to us being here. But then if somebody suddenly takes a few steps that way then they'll... Yeah, so I just want to remind them that we're still standing here! Yeah, you have to be very respectful of them in their space. They're very curious.

Maniscalco: They're all tagged.

Heavner: Yes, they are,.

Maniscalco: Are they numbered or named or...?

Heavner: They're tagged and numbered, and actually the color tags that these cows have, I can tell you who their sire is based upon the tag color. That's how we had been tagging them. So the ones that all have green tags all come out of the same bull; his name is Champ. If they've got a red tag, they came from a bull named Champ's son. If they've got a yellow tag, that's a little more of a grey area because we've got a few different bulls they could be out of, if we bought them or if we raised them, so orange and pink, same way, different bulls, so...

Maniscalco: Now, do you register them, or...?

Heavner: There actually is a registry for elk, just like there would be for beef cattle or dairy cattle or sheep or anything else.

Maniscalco: Okay.

Bob Warren: (unintelligible)

Heavner: (laughter) It depends, you know. If they're posturing—I guess is the best way to say that—they'll make themselves very tall. They'll kind of get up on their feet, their heads are held very high. That's kind of their posturing position. That's what they do to kind of tell you that they're not too pleased that you're there. If we're working them and we're up in the barn and we've got 'em in the handling system, they will do that and their hair will go up kind of on their butt and along their back, and they'll pop their teeth from side to side as a threat. You'll see 'em pop their jaws and you'll hear the pop of the back teeth when they do that. Out here in this situation where we're standing now, really not a lot of warning because—they're not feeling cornered at the moment, hopefully—but when we're out here with the calves like that, it's just kind of one of those things that you just always know, that that's kind of what they're thinking, that they may decide at any minute that's what they want to do. They're not going to give you a lot of warning out here. Sometimes they'll stomp their front foot, but usually if they're feeling threatened during calving they're not going to give you any warning. Like I said, that clicking is movement, yep, calf over there. Yeah, stay close, 'cause if a calf is up running they're all going to be on alert, so get close to one of the two Rangers there. You might want to step up close to that one—or even hop in the back of it if you want—might be a good idea; it makes you taller. Because if there's a calf moving, they're all going to be... Anyone who's got a calf is going to be worried and anyone who doesn't will be, too. Don't come over here, calf. Okay, go the other way, baby. Got too many people here to deal with a bunch of cows standing on top of us! They're so cute! As long as it doesn't make a noise we're okay. Go the other way, calf, go on! Go on! Yep, you're cute. Go over there so they don't come over here. It's okay, girl. See the second one over there with the red tag; I'm guessing it's hers, the way she's acting, so hopefully he'll follow mom. But they're very cute. But all the cows, if there's... you know, it doesn't necessarily matter if it's theirs or not.

Maniscalco: They'll protect it.

Heavner: Right now we don't have too many calves so it's a little easier, but if you've got twenty calves out here and somebody does that, then you'll have twenty-five cows racing around worried about what you're doing, and that's when it actually is dangerous, because you don't want to be out when they're doing that because they'll come at anything that's out there, so... And if they squeal, then you've got a problem. If you squeal, they all come running, so...

Unknown Female: Are the calves always this curious?

Heavner: Always. The cows are, too. The calf, a calf will be... Now, if we start at the Ranger, that will change. We should go the other way, Lindsay. It would be nice if you went the other way.

Lindsay: (unintelligible)

Heavner: Did it? (laughter) Trying to figure out what it was?

Maniscalco: And how old is this calf that we're looking at?

Heavner: It's number four, so it'd be about a week old. No? About a week, yeah, so it's not a full two. It's hot! It's been laying in the sun. That's it! See, good baby, going the other way.

Maniscalco: Just wanted a photo opportunity!

Heavner: That's right, and now it's ready to move on! New opportunities! (laughter)

Maniscalco: The tongue in the air—it's trying to cool off a little bit?

Heavner: The calf with the tongue in the air? Yeah, it was panting a little bit. I think it might have been a little warm for the sun. You see that cow walking the fence down here? They do that a lot of times when they're getting ready to calf. They're trying to find a spot away from everybody else. During calving season if you see a cow walking the fence line of an afternoon, you're probably going to have a calf the next morning waiting for you. So sometimes they do it if they're stressed or they're out here and they're just trying to get away from you, but sometimes this time of year it's usually a sign that sometime in the next twenty-four hours they're probably going to calf. Not always, but sometimes. That's like sign number one we look for when we're just trying to see if anybody may have calved or if we should be looking for one.

Maniscalco: So now, they have a strong herding instinct still, where they kind of keep the calves all together and all look out for it or no?

Heavner: No. Well, they all look out for it. If there's a squeal, they're going to go no matter what. There's usually one cow in each group who deems herself the mom, or what we call the watch cow, so that when we've got a lot of calves in the pen, there'll be one cow, and it's usually an older cow, who decides that she's going to make sure that everything's okay, so you'll pull into a pen and you'll have one cow come racing into you right away. Once we get further into season, those are the ones you really have to watch out for 'cause they'll be there and they're kind of like making sure that all the calves are okay, but the calves are, a lot of times, when they're young or real young they'll be spread out everywhere. The cows might be in one area and the calves will be on the other end of the pen, because they hide them then leave them to go eat like they would do in the wild. As they get older—the the calves become a couple, three weeks old, something like that, they'll start staying and hanging with the

herd a little better, but up to that point they get left and hidden, which is why they've got the spots for camouflage, because they—

Maniscalco: How long will they keep the spots?

Heavner: You know, these calves will have their spots through most of the summer 'til that haircut grows out, so it's about the same. By then, they're up and they're moving pretty fast. If you think in terms of what they would do in the wild then they'd be able to escape a little better anyway. But yeah, once that haircut grows out they lose it.

Bob Warren: Do all the cows give birth every year?

Heavner: We keep the ones that give birth every year. We actually preg check the herd, and those that aren't pregnant or haven't been for a couple years, we'll go ahead and cull and get rid of. The ones that are here have all been preg checked and are all bred. That's no different than if you're raising any other kind of livestock; you're not going to keep something that doesn't produce, so we do the same thing. It's expensive to feed something for two years to get one calf out of it, or if it doesn't breed one year it may not breed the next; you don't know what's going to happen.

Maniscalco: Now, where do they get their water from?

Heavner: They actually get their water from a waterer; there was a blue waterer right where we came in, and then the one where we were standing out there by where we got the other Ranger, there was a waterer there, as well. There's also ditches that run through, and to be honest, they spend most of their time drinking from the ditches and drinking that water. They'll come up there; they'll drink from those if they're by it. Otherwise, they could care less. Wintertime's the same thing; if there's snow on the ground, they won't ever hit the waterer; they'll just eat snow. So we got to be careful; our waterers freeze over 'cause they don't get used enough a lot of times, when it's snowing, anyway.

Maniscalco: Do you supplement their food at all throughout the year, or...?

Heavner: We do. Like I said, right now they're getting a little bit of grain. This is actually the least amount of feed they get because we don't want the cows getting too large. Any nutrition they take in now will go straight to the calf and make it bigger, and that can be a problem during calving. These calves very quickly from the time they're ready to have a calf. The time 'til the calf is up is usually less than thirty minutes, which is quite a bit faster than beef cow or something like that, because, again, they're built to have babies and move very quickly, so they'll calf and clean up the afterbirth and move right away, so... They're fairly content this afternoon. It must be the right time of day and the right sign of moon, I guess. We've had a week for it. Monday we had the storms go through and then Tuesday we cut velvet at what we call the feed lot.

We did that, and the bulls were about as well behaved as I would've anticipated. They were good boys.

Maniscalco: Now, that's got to be a heck of a job, to cut velvet. I mean, what do you...?

Heavner: (laughter) It's a messy job, yeah, because it's what's referred to as a blood pulp. Their antler, which is, you know, that big around and that tall is filled with... It's got a great vascular system, so it's actually filled with blood, so it's messy, so...

Maniscalco: And you just cut it with...?

Heavner: With a hand saw. We basically put a tourniquet around the base of it to restrict the blood flow, and we get them in the chute that we use. It's a squeeze chute; it squeezes their body and holds them still, like a little kid throwing a fit. It keeps their head above, 'cause if you try to catch their head like a beef animal they'll fight and they'll break their neck trying to get away, so we just hold their body and their head goes up above. Then we cut the antler off and, you know, vaccinate and worm, anything we need to do when we've got 'em in at that time. But we use a hand saw, little tourniquet thing around it, and cut it off as quickly as we can and put the blood stop on 'em. The faster you do it... There are people who like put halters on and hold their heads down, and then, I mean, they'll have 'em in the chute for ten minutes. The longer you've got 'em confined like that, the more their heart rate increases, the more stressed they are, the more blood they're going to lose when you're done, so my theory is kind of the opposite. You know, we get them in there and they're only in that chute for, you know, tops two minutes. I mean, it's like they're in, we cut 'em off, and they're back out, and it keeps 'em calmer. By keeping them calmer their heart rate is lower and they bleed less. I mean, I think they think that they're, you know, and that's fine that they're... But I just think that the sooner you get 'em off and get 'em out, the happier and better off you are.

Maniscalco: Now, the antler won't regrow at all for the whole season.

Heavner: No, not until the following year, right, and then they'll shed what we call buttons 'cause it's just what's left at the base. Those will go hard, just like a horn would, and they'll rub on trees and that kind of stuff, and they'll shed those in the spring, and then the new antler will regrow. It grows very fast; actually, they've seen it grow as quickly as six inches in one day, so it's one of the faster growing tissues that we have in nature, on an animal here in the States, anyway, because you'll see a bull one day, you'll see him two days later and he'll look drastically different because of the growth. They grow in spurts like that sometimes.

Bob Warren: Do all the bulls pasture together?

Heavner: Right now they are, yeah. Our big herd bulls are together and then our other young bulls are held together. Like I said, we cut the velvet off all the younger

bulls, so herd bulls get to keep their antler. Those three bulls get to keep those every year, and then they'll drop their hard horns in the spring, but they have a pecking order pretty well established, so as long as you don't put 'em together during the rut. If you do that then somebody will wind up dead because they'll fight and... Yeah, it's a bad deal. We've had it happen before, so we don't ever group bulls together or change the pecking order during... 'Cause even if you pull a bull out that's not top of the pecking order—we had it happen up there—we sold a bull one year at what we thought was the beginning of rut. We sold him out of there and he went to the other place, and the next day we had a dead bull. That bull was not at the top of the pecking order but it affected everybody else's place in it, and they didn't have antler on. They just had their little nubs or buttons and they just beat him to death, so the instinct for territory is very strong, again, you know. You'll have beef animals fight, hogs fight. I mean, all males do, so it's not that different, but... She is really walking the fence. I think she's thinking seriously about becoming a mom.

Maniscalco: Now, is there a certain time of day that they'll give birth, or just...?

Heavner: I don't know that it necessarily matters. You know, during the heat of day they don't usually lay down and calve. It's usually, you know, you'll find a new calf of a morning. I think it's usually evening or nighttime or first thing in the morning, but you just don't usually see them calve during the afternoon. So she's walking now; she might have a calf later today or this evening, or maybe not. I don't know. I mean, it's just one of the signs we look for. She's pretty serious about it 'cause she's been back and forth with us standing here several times, so... That's the other nice thing, 'cause it kind of also gives you a clue as to who may have calved. They don't all do this, but some do, and if you see one walking the fence then you at least have an idea, if they're not by the calf, who it may belong to. She's trying to get away from everybody to find that spot. So what's the end result of all this footage that you guys are shooting, all these interviews? What's the actual...?

Maniscalco: We're going to put together a website that'll be called the AV BarnWe're able to take this footage, as well as the interview, and put it into a piece of software that indexes it; then it's going to allow you to search interviews across the indexing, so you could search across indexes. So let's just say, we talked about fencing, and let's say we talked about fencing with four or five other interviewees; you could search across fencing and learn things about fencing all the way across agriculture.

Heavner: From chickens to elk, right. Okay.

Maniscalco: So it'll be things like that. There will be photograph galleries with this; you could look through the photographs from the interview. Some exhibits are going to be made out of this sort of thing for the Museum, so you could be in an exhibit! (laughter)

Heavner: Well, there you go, then I would be... Although not in the big museum. I mean, nothing against Springfield, but I mean, let's face it... Lindsay still, she's got me on that one! (laughter)

Maniscalco: You'll be getting closer, though!

Heavner: That's true! You know, that's a good point. Maybe I will. (cell phone ringing) Yes, ma'am. Yeah, that'd be fine. We're out here out north right now getting some footage of the cows out here, but yeah, that'd be helpful. Oh, okay. I don't know, that may be. Not the folks with me, anyway. Yeah, okay, that'd be great. Thanks!

Maniscalco: Now, do they kind of have a pattern to where they are in the field during the day? I mean, do they move from one spot to another?

Heavner: You know, as you can see this time of day, all afternoon they're going to be in the trees. You occasionally see a cow out grazing, but for the most part they're either grazing what they can. Like the cow down there, see her? She's lifting her head, she's eating the leaves off the trees. You can see that there's very few leaves elk height, and as I mentioned, they'll go up on their back legs to eat 'em, so if they're hungry for a snack they're likely just to eat what's there during the heat of the day. If a morning or an evening then they're out moving where it's cooler this time of year, but this is their—

Maniscalco: So you kind of push this group out of the trees here.

Heavner: Yeah, 'cause they would otherwise be in the trees hanging out. Yeah, we've been rude that way. They're all right; they'll get over it! That's just good that we don't have a lot of calves in here, 'cause that's... When they're squealing and running, it's a little chaotic. So how many more of these do you have to do?

(break in audio)

Heavner: ...and he has been in a wheelchair since then, but he's still an avid hunter. So yeah, the guys that do, they usually have their own setup. And honestly, with the hunting, the way we do it here it's semi-guided, so guys bring their own stands, anyway, and put 'em up themselves, so that kind of falls into that. But yeah, we do what we can to help, but it's... Yeah.

Maniscalco: I just think people with disabilities, why should they be denied things to do? In fact, they're looking for things to do!

Heavner: Yeah, it didn't slow him down a bit, so...

Maniscalco: I think that's great! That's just fantastic.

Unknown Female: (standing far from microphone, hard to hear) And this kind of room is kind of (unintelligible), too. That actually came from Winestone Foundation of Art(??) we took down, and we saved all parts there. We still have all parts there, but it turned into (unintelligible). Amazingly, I know there's rocks all over the floor, and I'm going "That's just not going to work out," (unintelligible). There's a guy that did it, and that was (unintelligible), so that turned out very, very well. And with the game table sent, we have (unintelligible) and the kids kind of like this. We have air hockey and foosball, and that's worked very well. But it's kind of an evolutionary thing. We started—we're hunters, and we did (unintelligible) so we, you know, should probably not limit ourselves, you know, so we kind of made a cross between having lunch at Grandma's house. So we always, you know, walk through the doors of the dining room, they just \_\_\_\_\_(??) a big hug. My fringe(??) in here and my cabinets there were actually done by an Amish guy. He's a friend of ours and a good customer and actually summer vacations with us. He has a very upscale shop. This is like lower into him. But I wanted everything \_\_\_\_ (??) white, so I sent the doors, I sent this furniture all to his shop for the finish, 'cause I want it to match the cabinets, and, you know, staining just is really tricky. So after I had these done I realized I wanted to protect the tables, so I went out and bought a gazillion place mats, which were cloth to be laundered. I kept coming back and the place mats were not being used, so I began to ask customers, "What do you want to use that you can get dirty?" So then I was struggling again because I wanted to protect my tables. (unintelligible) sat down the restaurant, and right before my eyes was the answer. It was a paper place mat that told the story of the area. I turned to John, I said, "A-ha! Now we have our solution!" So we have our own place mats made which tells the story of the community, because people ask what went on here.

Heavner: And it's fabulous, very well written, very well written. (cross-talk and noise, not transcribed) All right, let's get 'em upstairs! Chop, chop! The hot tub's in there. I saw you pointing to the hot tub thing... (break in audio) So it works out, yeah, this works out great. We actually use this place on Thanksgiving, and we used it on New Years this year for family stuff, but we... (laughter) You know, down to this floor back here, this actually is part of the high school gym floor when they took it out a few years ago. Doug went to the auction, bought—I have these giant pieces in my basement that I still don't know what to do with, 'cause they had to take this apart piece by piece and put it back together because it had warped. So yeah, everything in here has something. And of course, the antler is all our antler off of our bulls that we collected that made the lamps and the chandelier.

Maniscalco: Is that one of your bulls over the door there?

Heavner: There's two representatives, Ken Duncan and Chuck Jefferson, from the Chicago area. We work with a guy that does hunts, and they came and they took this bull, and I think at the time they thought it would fit somewhere. It's

still here! (laughter) It's not a real big one so it's not like "Ooh, look at the giant elk," because it's not, it's a smaller elk bull as far as antler and mount go. So now he sits there until... I don't really know when! Indefinitely. (cross-talk, unintelligible) ...are from the bulls that we have now and they shed them. We keep the antler off of our herd bulls, and I told you they keep 'em and they drop 'em every year, so we pick 'em up and we keep 'em. So some of those, they're like off of the bulls that we use for breeding right now, so anyway. We've got a few more guest rooms down the hall. The porch goes all the way around so all the rooms open up to the porch. Yeah, it's really nice.

Maniscalco: How many people can you have stay here at one time?

Heavner: Well, you can cram a bunch in. Mom, technically how many beds do you have?

Heavner's Mother: About twenty-six. Again, we've had family groups of more because some people put kids out here on air mattresses and whatever, and I don't care.

Heavner: Couches, whatever, yeah.

Heavner's Mother: And other people want to have their own room to themselves.

Heavner: Yeah, we've got beds...

Heavner's Mother: So, you know, there's a variance there. We have twenty-six beds. Thirty people can easily stay here. And some families just want to lie together, and some just really want their space, so it's their decision. This is \_\_\_\_\_(??) in the high school.

Heavner: That's what I told him that, yeah.

(break in tape)

Heavner: Oh, I've got some fabulous pictures of (unintelligible, whispering).

Bob Warren: Oh, this is great!

Heavner: Yeah, it's really good!

Bob Warren: So you've got an urge to do this kind of stuff.

Heavner: I enjoy that kind of stuff. I think it's time. I bought a, well, a Rebel XTI, but I haven't gotten a different lens for it yet, so I just do it for fun. Oh, Uncle Yo's school bus, so...

Bob Warren: This room is really incredible.

Heavner: Oh, it's great. You know, the kids, you can just sit in here and be quiet and relax and drink wine or whatever.

Bob Warren: (unintelligible) I've got in here.

Heavner: Oh, that's a good one. I like that angle. You know, we're always trying to get better pictures.

Bob Warren: That was the one I just took.

Heavner: That one turned out nice!

Bob Warren: I want to get just a little bit of the window just to show where the light's coming from.

Heavner: (cell phone ringing) I am so popular! Everybody's calling me today!

Bob Warren: Here's the best one, I think.

Heavner: There you go! Good one, good one! I like that!

Bob Warren: I think this other angle was better.

Heavner: Yeah, that is a good one.

Bob Warren: It really shows the room and the skylight.

Heavner: Yeah, that is a good one.

Bob Warren: Yeah, it is kind of cool. And I like the idea that the head can get in there, 'cause all those windows can be kind of boring. Big blank white, oh, yawn! But this worked out real well. Nice place you got here!

Heavner: Well, thanks for visiting us!

Bob Warren: This is really, really something. I can just see families in here just going nuts!

Heavner: Yeah, we do Thanksgiving and after Thanksgiving Day it's rented out for other families to do theirs.

Bob Warren: Good for you! You got a real success going here. This is... And the view! I mean, look out these windows!

Heavner: Well, that's what—we get some really cool pictures.

Bob Warren: I bet the fall is stunning.

Heavner: It is, of an evening... Even the summertime, once everything gets really green, once the corn comes up and stuff it really is nice because it's just, the sky just goes pink, you know, and it's a great place, it's a great view for that, so... Yeah. (break in audio) So we have several buildings. This is the main lodge. We've got other houses that we have done, and all of them have a couple

mounts in it with a score so they can look at it before they go out, hopefully, use their best judgment and not have to pay the fine that we'll put on them if they don't shoot one big enough.

Maniscalco: Oh, so you guys will ended up fining them.

Heavner: We fine them, we personally fine them. It's part of our deer herd management, you know. We're happy to let them kill as many of those as they want; we don't want them... And if they kill an older buck that's small, you know, if it's like an older buck that needed to go then that's fine. What we don't want them doing is shooting the young ones yet, so we fine them for that. It's our own policy; some of the guys in the County, I mean, they'll fine them \$1,000. Ours is not that steep, but we actually let them apply it to, if they want to come back; all of our guys come back here. If they want to come back then they can apply that to their next year's hunt. But anyway, that's kind of how that works. (crosstalk, unintelligible) It's the one that shot it. It can go either way on that! (laughter) We did have up there, there was this beaver that showed up, this mounted beaver, and I think it might be in the... It was in the conference room? Is it still in the conference room on top of the cabinets? Yeah, and you know the weird thing about the beavers, if you're sitting here like really late drinking a whole lot of wine, it speaks Spanish! We found that out one holiday when we were here together as a family! Suddenly it started speaking Spanish! So it's a Spanish speaking beaver mount. I would not have believed it had I not been here when it happened, but I was here and I saw it, so it's a fact! It's a done deal! Don't know, haven't heard it yet. It's a recent addition, so I don't know. I don't know if it's like one of those talking houses that Mom was talking about earlier that you have to have a radio...

(End of Interview)