

LEANN HINES
Levee Run Farm - Greenwood, MS

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Date: August 25, 2011
Location: Levee Run Farm - Greenwood, MS
Interviewer: Amy Evans Streeter
Transcription: Shelley Chance, ProDocs
Length: 1 hour, 12 minutes
Project: Downtown Greenwood Farmers' Market

[Begin Leann Hines Interview]

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Amy Evans Streeter: This is Amy Evans Streeter for the Southern Foodways Alliance in Greenwood, Mississippi, on Thursday, August 25, 2011. I'm at Levee Run Farms with Leann Hines, and if I could get you to please state your name and your occupation for the record?

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Leann Hines: I'm Leann Hines, and I'm a farmer.

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AES: All right. And may I ask you to also state your birth date for the record?

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LH: October 8, 1955.

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AES: All right. And we did a little visiting earlier, and I followed you on your chicken-watering tour, and you mentioned that this property belonged to your grandmother. Can you tell me a little bit about that?

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LH: Yes, my grandparents moved to Greenwood in 1940 from Blaine, Mississippi. They—my grandfather was a row-crop farmer. He was farming at that time with forty-head of mules and, of

course, there were several tenant houses on the farm where the workers lived. After that they— actually, when I was a little girl they were still milking a cow. We had a chicken house here. There was a pig, you know, pigsty right out there, and he had a nice heard of Herford cows and—in addition to the row-crop cotton.

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They passed away in the ‘60s, and my mother was able to keep the farm through these years, you know, really more or less for me because in a roundabout way I always wanted to be a farmer, and so here I am. I’m living out my dream, finally—better late than never.

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AES: May I ask you your grandparents’ names?

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LH: Mr. and Mrs. A. P. Haynes, Iva and Percy Haynes. My grandfather was from up in the hills. He was one of those farmers who came down from the hills out into the Delta, and he spent you know, probably the—the late [19]20s and early ‘30s clearing land in the Delta. And you know, that’s all they knew was clearing land in the Delta, building levees to keep back the water, and that’s how I came about in the name for calling this place Levee Run Farm because they're actually—actually do have a levee that runs north and south one side of the farm. And it did break here in 1973. The Flood of 1973 did actually flood here. But so there—we do actually have a levee.

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AES: And your—your grandfather helped build that levee?

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LH: Yeah, they built that along with the Corps of Engineers, of course, and it ran north and south along one side of Pelahatchie Creek, and it was designed to keep the flood from the big sand creek out. And it did that.

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But back in those days I can remember when they built the levee, they—they put old cars in it and all sorts of things to reinforce it. And of course at that time—and as it is now, you have to keep the levee completely cleared. You don't want trees to grow in it because that undermines the—the integrity of the levee.

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So I can remember the—you know, we could ride our horses up and down the top of the levee back then.

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AES: What year did your grandparents pass?

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LH: They—they died in 1967, so, you know, the place has not changed a whole lot since then or at least, you know, the house is still here. We've changed the barns and all that but—.

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AES: Is the acreage the same?

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LH: Well, I have sold a good bit of the row cropland, you know, to settle the estate with my brothers when my mother passed on. But also, I feel like what I'm doing now is leaving part—the land that I have left—I have about eighty acres left back there, and there is a lot of, you know, drainage ditches that go through it and a lot of woodland, and I feel like what I'm doing with it is creating kind of a watershed and I'm—I feel like what I'm doing is a good thing. It's not getting pulverized with chemicals now and—and liquid fertilizer and, you know, eventually I hope to return it to more of a sustainable state.

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AES: Okay. Now to back up a little bit about when this was a really big rolling farm, you say that your grandparents did cotton and row crops and tell me what you mean when you say row crops.

00:04:41

LH: Row crop cotton. They—they were still farming cotton and the remaining—the part, the—the sandy loam land was in cotton, and then the lesser land that had more, you know, woods and trees on it were the cows. And back then you would fence in your land and the cows were a way of clearing—you know, actually clearing underneath the woods. And you know, it was just—I mean people—those were the two principle crops back then: cotton and cattle. And I can remember riding in the car over to Swiftown to see my great-aunt that lived over at Swiftown, Mississippi, near Belzoni, and as we would ride over there, I could just see my grandfather fuming. And I said, you know, “What’s wrong?” He said, “Oh, they’re taking all this cattle land and putting it in soybeans.” So I mean, way—as early as the early ‘60s things, were changing here, you know, the—the scenery was changing.

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AES: Yeah, so people—people turned to more row crops instead of the cattle, because there are not a lot of cattle in the Delta at all now.

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LH: No, uh-umm. It takes a lot of labor for cattle. And the thing about it, you know, the soybeans became a commodity crop under, you know, the Farm Bill that, you know, because it started being subsidized. And—and of course corn now has taken over. But you know, at—at that time, you know, cotton—you raised your cotton and then you had your—your cows. And of course my grandparents accumulated a good bit of rental property also, so, you know, they—that was a time when you were able to actually accumulate some wealth, you know, by those—by way of doing that.

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AES: Did anybody have any dairy cattle in the Delta that you know of?

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LH: I believe the closest dairy to here was in, maybe Tallahatchie County. There was Walker Farms, the Golden Guernseys from Walker Farms, and those—that was probably the closest dairy that I know of around here.

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AES: So tell me about when you were growing up and your interactions with—with this farm and what that was like and what you remember about it.

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LH: Well the most important thing, of course, was that we had horses. My grandfather, you know, loved horses and all—actually all animals. And I kind of got that, you know—followed right along with that from him. But you know, I started with a pony when I was three or four years old and Billy, the pony, and then we had several horses. We always had—like I was—said before, my grandmother was still milking a sweet little Jersey cow when I was young, and you know, you could go out there and sit on top of her while they were milking.

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And then of course we had chickens, but at that time chickens were—were not my friend [*Laughs*] because I had to walk through the chicken yard to get back to the horse barn. So chickens were not my friend back then because, you know, we went barefoot most of the time, and walking through the chicken yard always left you with squishy stuff between your toes. So I—you know had never even thought of having chickens until the last few years.

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AES: So tell me about your growing up and if—did you go to—did you go away to school or college or anything like that?

00:08:07

LH: Hmm. Well back in—when I was growing up, my parents and—and everybody—lots of people believed in summer camps. So I went off to summer camp for a whole month when I was

eight up in Virginia—Holston, Virginia. You know, I was the youngest camper there but you know, I was—it was great. You know, getting—getting to get out and meet new people was just you know—that—that was great.

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And then we moved to Memphis when I was eight years old—that—about that time or a little bit later, and I—so I grew up in Memphis, you know, kind of was pulled away from the farm at that point. So you know, it's kind of like Greenwood is a wonderful place to be able to come back to.

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AES: When did you come back?

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LH: I came back in the [19]70s when I was around seventeen or eighteen, and I was here for a while and then went back to school—left and went to nursing school, which is something I kind of always wanted to do. So I, you know, came back to Greenwood for a few years and, you know, at that time I was back here at the farm, and I had horses here then.

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AES: Do you think—would you say that you always had an appreciation for the farm or that you appreciated it more after having been gone from it for a while and being able to come back?

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LH: Well, the best thing about going away and getting education was that I had a—you know, I could take an off-farm job so that you know for—for the main living expenses and then the farm is kind of—was kind of a side, you know—great place to live but—. You know, it's—it's always been difficult to make a cash crop out of a farm, so—. That was the main thing that I was able to go away, you know, learn how to have a career, and then come back and be able to keep the farm, because I—I wouldn't have been able to keep it if not for that.

00:10:12

AES: Uh-hmm. Okay. So tell me about kind of how the—the big row crop farming here came to an end. Did it end before your grandparents' passing, or did your parents carry it on some?

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LH: Well at the time, my—when my grandparents died, they were already renting the land out. So you know the—the row crop was already rented out, and they were already starting to take the cattle, you know, the cattle land was starting to be rowed up at that point. And I think they were probably already in soybeans by then. And of course, you know by that time my grandmother had already disbursed all the, you know, the—the—you know, the farm animals, you know, the—the yard farm animals like chickens and things like that because it's just, you know, at that point everybody was buying from the grocery. It was so much easier to just go and buy from the grocery, you know. And they didn't even—they were hardly doing a garden by then, but they were old. You know, they—they had gotten—my grandfather had arteriosclerosis, the old, you know, hardening of the arteries, and so it took a lot of my grandmother's time just to keep up with him, frankly.

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AES: So tell me—oh, I’m sorry.

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LH: And their rental business. See, they had a lot of rental houses.

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AES: So tell me about that. We’re just a couple miles outside of Greenwood, and tell me what this area was like back—back in the day.

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LH: Well this area was called—and it still is called a separate school district, and we rode the bus to school. You know, I just always loved that there was such an uproar of people being bused to school because we rode the school bus every day. And the area, the five or six houses immediately around us are still owned by the same families that were here in the ‘60s and ‘50s when I grew up, and my parents’ house right next door, of course, is owned by someone different, but it’s—it’s pretty amazing that the three families right adjacent to us are the—well actually four because on the other side—are all owned by the same families who were here when we were here back then.

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AES: And was—are those houses—was that part of your family land that was then parceled off or is that separate?

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LH: No, uh-uh. This all separate because our farmland connects to—to where we are right now. We've got about six acres up here that are on the road, but then the cropland connects by going across the ditch back there and then it runs north and south still all back, you know, up and down—behind these residential houses.

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AES: Uh-hmm.

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LH: So it was there, you know, it was that way back when they bought it in 1940, so—.

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AES: And was—I apologize if you already said this, but was Levee Run Farm a name that your grandparents had for the farm, or is that something that you assigned to it later?

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LH: No. *[Laughs]* Actually, when I was a little girl, my grandfather, there were two huge—they had built these two big brick columns out on either side of the concrete driveway and had this ornamental iron arched drive and it said Haynes Oak Ranch. My grandfather, you know, that was his monument, I think, to whatever he was doing. And if you look around in the yard, he had planted all these giant oak trees. Unfortunately, I had to take one down back this spring, but he said that the land was not worth much, but the oak trees were worth—you know, were worth

more than anything, you know, which is still true to me. The shade, I couldn't do without my shade.

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But he called it Haynes Oak Ranch. And the neat thing about it, when you go back on the farm, you'll see almost every kind of oak you can think of—pin oaks, red oaks, white oaks, swamp oaks, I mean it's just really—. It is pretty neat. So I'm trying to get back to having a nice tree farm.

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AES: Well then, *ranch* isn't really a word that you associate with the Delta ever, so it's funny to hear you say that.

LH: No, uh-uh, and my grandfather loved his cattle. You know, and I can—I was telling my husband this the other day. I said, you know, “When—when granddaddy was getting older and people would come around, you know, wanting to buy, you know, the land or buy a lot or buy, you know, this or that other, he would say, ‘You see that bull out there? That belongs to him.’” And so I said, “Well maybe that was senile talk, but maybe it was like his way of saying, ‘No. As long as I'm living,’ you know, ‘there are going to be cows here, and it's going to be—.’” Yeah, I would—that's true, but it said Haynes Oak Ranch of all things, so, you know.

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AES: That's great. So tell me about what took your family to Memphis.

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LH: My father worked for JIK's Tractor Company. He was with them for forty-two years. He got a Masters in Education at Ole Miss [University of Mississippi], and he worked for Barrentine Manufacturing, which Barrentine made implements. They made cotton trailers and all sorts of mowers and that sort of thing. My father worked for Barrentine Manufacturing for, maybe six or eight months, and then they hired him away for—to JIK's Farm Equipment. He was a territorial manager and—which meant that he traveled all over part of Mississippi, Louisiana, and Arkansas and sold the tractors from the company to the dealerships. And which, you know, that was kind of a neat thing because, when my dad would come in at the—you know, he was—he traveled all during the week. And when he would come in during the—on the weekend we would—would say, you know, “Where have you been? Where have you been?” He would tell us, “Oh, I've been to Rolling Fork.” Oh, my gosh. That was hilarious. And then he would—he'd say, “Well, I've been to Hot Coffee.” Oh, we thought that was hilarious. You know, Alligator, Rolling Fork, Hot Coffee; Tomato Plant, Arkansas. I mean, you know, my dad would—he loved to tell stories. He was a great salesman.

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So you know, hearing just the names of all the places he had been was just, you know, that was great to us. But my dad was—was moved to the branch of JIK's in Memphis is why we were—we moved to Memphis. But he continued to work for Case International. It became Case IH up until the time of his death. He used to love to tell my brothers—my brothers were, you know—they liked to change jobs pretty frequently. He said to my one brother, whose name is Jett. He said, “Jett, you know, you've had—I've had two jobs in forty-two years, and you've had forty-two jobs in two years.” So but anyway—oops, that was my way—dad's way of saying, you know, “Get a job.”

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AES: Uh-hmm. So was your dad from the Delta?

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LH: He was from—actually from Byram, Mississippi, which is down below Jackson, but of course, they—they were country people. He was actually the first person in his family to go to college and he—he got a football scholarship to Ole Miss, and he loved to tell the story that for his senior trip, you know, high school senior trip, he got to go to France [*Laughs*] because he was drafted. Anyway, he graduated high school in 1945, so he said his senior trip was getting to go to France.

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But anyway, my dad played football at Ole Miss when he came back and—so that’s where he and my mother met.

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AES: So when you were growing up in Memphis, how often did you come back down and visit your grandparents?

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LH: Well, up until the time—up—up until their death, every weekend. There were some weekends when my mother wouldn’t be able to drive us down and me and—I have a younger brothers that’s three years younger—and she would put us on the Southern Airways, and we would fly from Memphis to the Greenwood Airport on Friday afternoon. Can you believe that? [*Laughs*] And I mean I—I look back on it now, and I’m just like amazed. But anyway, we

would, you know, take our little DC-9, I think it was at that time, from Memphis to Greenwood, and my grandparents would pick us up. And then on the way, you know, here we would go by—there was a—a drive-in called Lucas Drive-In and they had ribs and all this great stuff, and they had curb service. And you'd drive up there, you know, and they—they had carhops and they would come out. And my granddaddy would always get a dressed hamburger. And they would always have to bring the little salt and pepper shakers out so he could slather it with salt. I'm sure and—and of course I ate ribs—the best ribs in the world.

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AES: Yeah, people—I've heard talk of Lucas Barbecue for a long time.

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LH: You're kidding? Oh, my gosh. Well that's neat. [*Surprise*] I had never heard—I hadn't run into anybody in a long time who had ever heard of Lucas. But Lucas Drive-in, yeah, we'd stop at Lucas Drive-in on Friday evening on the way here, so—.

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AES: And did that flight take like three-and-a-half minutes? [*Laughs*]

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LH: Oh, no. It was about an hour because we stopped in Oxford. Had to stop. It was not a non-stop from Memphis to Greenwood. But can you imagine? Isn't that amazing?

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AES: That is because that's not more than like a three-hour drive from here, is it?

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LH: Oh, no. It's only 125 miles. You know, on the interstate, but, you see, they were just constructing I-55. To get to Memphis—before we moved up there, my mother used to love to go to Memphis to shop at Goldsmith's—downtown Goldsmith's, of course. And you know, I mean East Memphis was just a twinkle in somebody's eye at that time. But we would go up Highway 61, and we would stay at the Holiday Inn on South Third. Can you imagine? I mean, you know, and that's Elvis Presley Boulevard now.

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But yeah, we would go up to—a shopping trip was going up to Memphis and going to Goldsmith's and, you know, and downtown. It was Goldsmith's, Julius Lewis, let's see; was Gerbers downtown also? But anyway, yeah, we—those—that was a shopping trip to Memphis.

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AES: So what were your mother's thoughts about the home place here and—and growing up on the farm? Did she like it as much as you did?

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LH: Oh, she wanted to get away as fast as she could. My mother had four stepbrothers and sisters. There were two sisters and two brothers, and the two sisters went to MSCW [Mississippi State College for Women, now Mississippi University for Women (MUW)]. And the one oldest brother, Willy Clyde, went to Mississippi State, and he majored in agriculture. And I think he was back here teaching, you know, in the early '40s. But anyway, because he was older—but and

then the—the last brother, Purcell, went to Ole Miss. So my mother wanted to go to Ole Miss because she didn't want—she wanted to get away from here, you know, because she could catch a ride with Purcell to get to Oxford. So yeah, no, my mother wanted to get away as fast as possible. She was totally interested in getting away.

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AES: So tell me how it turned out that she's the one—because I think you said at the beginning that she's the one who basically saved this family farm for you. How did that happen?

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LH: Yeah, well, you know, there was a lot of squabbling over inheritance and whatnot, so we wound up—we got the farm, and my mother just pretty much tried all these years to keep it for me.

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AES: Was that something that you had always asked for or something that she just knew that you would be pleased with?

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LH: Ah, you know, I think I just expected it. And Greenwood was always a safe place to come back to [*Emotional*].

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AES: We can pause. So—so you—tell me about, then, your adult life and going to nursing school and what you did for a time before you really came back to farming.

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LH: Well I—I worked on a cattle ranch for a while. **[Laughs]** And I was in charge of, you know—well, not in charge, but I helped with the cattle and brood cows, and they ran a cutting horse operation. And, of course, I loved to ride, but I had always been an English rider. You know, I was still going fox hunting and all that stuff.

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But anyway, I, you know, since—you know, since I was there to help, I had to—I did wind up learning to ride cutting horses and—and got to do that and made it to the area work-off, so, Jackson and all. But at some point along there I said, you know, “I’ve got to go back to school because I would like to own my own horses and not work for somebody else forever,” because I—you know, this place was sitting here. And—and it needed me. So it was all—you know, it was rented out at the time, the—the cropland and all that—was rented out but everything else was just sitting here waiting for me.

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So I went back to nursing school. That was something I had always wanted to do. But my mother kept telling me, “No, you don’t want to do that.” Why, I don’t know, but you know, you never know what mothers have in their mind. But anyway, so I went back to nursing school and wound up, you know, circuitously coming back here. By the time I came back to Greenwood, I had two little children, Matthew and Anna, my twins, and, you know, was divorced. And then one thing and another, I started working at the Greenwood Hospital, worked there in Newborn Nursery and Labor and Delivery for twenty years up until the time I got sick in 2007, so—.

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AES: And may I ask you about that, when you got sick?

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LH: Sure. [*Laughs*] In the middle of August in 2007, I was working full time. I had—I had just moved my—my two children in for their senior year of college. And I started feeling bad, started, you know, just feeling really draggy, but that was—and the record still stands—those days the record highs those days were 104, 104, 106 and I thought, well, it’s just the heat. Well, that was on Wednesday. On Thursday I had a temperature of 104, 105, and so and I just felt terrible all over.

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Anyway, they—I spent the whole day in the Emergency Room, and they couldn’t figure out. They said, “Oh, well you’ve got a virus.” Well, yeah, I had the virus to end all viruses. The next morning when I woke up on that Friday morning, I couldn’t move anything but my left hand, my left arm. And so and I have not been able to walk since then. That was 2007. As it turned, out they finally got a diagnosis of West Nile Virus Polio, and it’s a demyelinating disease. And what happened is, although I recovered my—some of my strength, right arm, thank goodness, and I can stand on my right leg, but all down my left side there’s not enough enervation to support my weight for weight-carrying, and so I had to go to Plan B at that time. I started going to the [Downtown Greenwood] Farmers’ Market in 2008, was in, you know, my little manual wheelchair, and about all I could do at that time was raise plants. On my back porch I raised lots of little plants and took them to the Farmers’ Market. And the one thing that people

kept walking by asking for was, “Does anybody have fresh farm eggs?” And I’m like, “Eggs, I can do that.”

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So that’s when I started researching the eggs and chickens. I thought, well, you know, I have a beautiful horse barn, so I’ll just—so I started—started researching chickens.

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AES: Now is—am I correct in saying that the Greenwood Farmers’ Market was established in 2007?

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LH: Two thousand eight.

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AES: It was?

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LH: Uh-hmm. We started in 2008, and so I started going. A girlfriend of mine, you know, would go with me, and we’d sell our little plants, and we’d sell our little dog treats and things like that. And, but that was the one that people wanted at our Farmers’ Market were eggs, and so I thought well, heck, you know, that’s something that I could contribute.

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AES: Well tell me about when it first started and what that was like and what you saw the Market as—as far as opportunity or social interaction or anything like that from—from your personal perspective.

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LH: Well, you know, if you think back on, you know, the way society has evolved, the Farmers' Market was—was a huge place for social interaction. I mean that was where everybody got together. It was, you know, that and church. You know, those were the two main places where you saw people and got out and did things. And you know, as a way of building community, I think it's—it's probably one of the greatest things that you can do in a community is have a Farmers' Market, not just from the financial point of view but for, you know, building community, getting out—everybody seeing what's going on, exchanging ideas, talking about what was in the paper the day before or you know just—and generally what's going on in—around the community.

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AES: Do you remember a big buzz surrounding the start of the Farmers' Market when it first opened?

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LH: Um, I—pretty much so—it was. You know, it was because, you know, we were all—everybody was, you know, concerned about, you know, how are we going to do it, where is it going to be, got to get funding and grants and money for this and money for that. But the main

thing was, you know, trying to find vendors. And we're—we're still struggling with that—trying to find enough vendors.

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AES: So how did you decide that you wanted to become involved?

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LH: Well I—it was just something—I've always liked growing things. In fact, the—the year that I got sick, I had, oh, my gosh. I had a huge, you know, area full of peppers and eggplant, you know, when I got sick, and I just you know—that was just something that—. I loved growing things and I think that's—that's what should be done out here.

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AES: So when you—if I could just—to get the timeline straight of—you were a Labor and Delivery nurse, and were you just kind of gardening out here on the farm at the same time or what—? And—and I want to get the horse camps and stuff in there, too. When did you start those?

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LH: Oh, I started—I had always—almost always taught riding lessons since—actually since I was a camper when I was a teenager. I went to—I always went to camps when I was a teenager. I went to Maine to a horse camp and taught riding there and stayed over in the winter, even up there when I was a teenager. But I started actually doing my Levee Run Riding Camps in the summer of 2000. And that was the—the year that my mother passed away, and it was pretty clear

then, I was going to have to do something out here for it to at least not lose money. You know, something that would at least be producing enough income to, you know, pay the taxes and keep things going.

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So I started Levee Run Riding Camps in 2000, and it was a huge success. I can't believe people are still calling me asking about riding camps. So, you know I've got that on the back burner. That's possible that we may do that again someday. But I did—started Levee Run Riding Camps. I provided the horses and taught the riding at the Girl Scout Camp—Camp Cedar Point, which is up in Grenada, and, at that time, I went for the certification to become a Master Instructor. So I'm—I'm still a Master Instructor of riding and, of course, we had—I had been doing horse shows here since the mid-'90s. That's why we had to come up with a name for the farm because we did a recognized horse trial, which a horse trial is—it's a combined competition. It's like the Olympics. You do dressage, a cross-country phase, and then a stadium-jumping phase. And I had been holding little horse shows out here for years, but, you know, with—with great success, but that's why, you know, the riding camps just kind of fall right in line with that. So I would do week-long riding camps and then during the—during the year after—I had After School at The Stables and that was popular and all along with, you know, working full-time, so—you know, and—and raising kids, so—. My life has always been full and I want to be involved in doing things, so—.

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AES: And you mentioned earlier when we were in the barn about having your horse camp kids do some—some homesteading chores.

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LH: [*Laughs*] Oh, exactly. That's part of—part of going to camp is learning to do new things and—but not just learning to do new things, but learning to do things like being a leader, like seeing something that needs to be done and getting up and going and doing it. Like for instance, everybody needed to always—before we would go to lunch, for instance, everybody had to make sure that their horse had water and hay and was—you know, that the horse was properly cooled out and bedded down and everything. Or, you know, if a door needs closing, get up and go do it.

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I really think that my riding camps and the homesteading, you know, of watering the plants and—and all the animals and everything is as much about life learning as it is anything. I think, you know, learning that, you know, if—if you're going to have something penned up, this is my basic philosophy: you know, if you're going to pen something up, then you need to take care of them, like a dog or cat or anything like that. If, you know—and the chickens. You know it's—you know I'm—I'm responsible for them being here, so I need to make sure they have water and food and that the sun is not burning them up and, you know and that predators aren't eating them up as well as possible and—and that sort of thing. So I feel like my riding camps are—are about a lot more than just riding a horse.

00:33:37

AES: Did you—now Greenwood is one of your larger built Delta towns, but it's still a small town. Did you—I'm just curious about the kids who came and what they knew and didn't know about farm life.

00:33:51

LH: Oh, I'm—exciting that you asked that question because Miss Mississippi, Mary Margaret Roark, she was one of my campers, and I'm excited to tell that because she—you know it—it's just exciting, you know, that—that I was able to know—and she's a Miss Mississippi now. But they came over from Cleveland [Mississippi], a little group of them got together. They were all friends and the moms were friends. And you know, that's another—it's a Delta thing to try to find things to keep your kids busy, to invent things, so I'm excited to say that, yeah, I do miss the—the kids at camp. I miss them a lot.

00:34:34

AES: But you might be doing that again one day you say?

00:34:37

LH: Yeah, sure. Oh, yeah.

00:34:40

AES: All right. Well, let's get to the chickens, and I want to ask you as a kind of segue to the chickens, how you first met Taylor Bowen Ricketts [chef at Delta Bistro]? Was it the riding camps or was it Delta Bistro or the Farmers' Market, or how did that happen?

00:34:53

LH: I believe I first met Taylor back probably in about 19—I mean in 2002 or '03, somewhere along in there when they first moved to Greenwood. We used to go in [the restaurant] and she asked me about riding camp—riding lessons and camps. And her daughter, Sela, came to riding camps, and that's how I got to know Taylor. And, you know, Taylor is a—a very interesting

person. She grew up riding horses, and her parents had chickens and—and she wanted her girls to know about that sort of thing, and I appreciate that. I think—I just—I feel sorry for children that never have a chance to be around animals in a natural situation because there’s a lot about building self-confidence, about, you know, learning to—to get along with and—and not—I guess control is not the real word I’m looking for but, you know, to be able to control a 1,000-pound horse and feel confident about it, I think that that’s a good life skill.

00:35:58

And but anyway, that’s how I met Taylor is that her daughter Sela came to camp and took riding lessons from me, and that’s how I got to know her.

00:36:08

AES: And tell me the story you told me out in the chicken yard about the sign at Greenwood Fresh Market when they had that.

00:36:15

LH: Um, Taylor and [her husband] Darby had Delta Fresh Market, at that time, on Park Avenue, and there was a sign up in—in Delta Fresh Market that said, “Local—Wanted: local farm eggs and local produce.” And Taylor told me one day that she had—had that sign up for, I think, three years, and no one had ever offered her any local produce or local farm eggs. And I just—I just thought that was just awful, just, you know, it’s just such a shame to lose that identity of our community you know, for—I mean for it to be—. I mean we’re in the Delta and—and we’re still a farming, you know, and agriculturally—an agriculture community and for nobody to offer any produce or eggs, I just thought was awful, so—.

00:37:13

AES: So when you got the inspiration—when you first started selling small things at the Farmers’ Market and people were asking for eggs and you decided that—that might be something to get into, did you know immediately that you would run straight to Taylor with your eggs?

00:37:28

LH: No, not really. You know, that was not really my thought. I really just was thinking about the Farmers’ Market because, literally, everybody who came by the Farmers’ Market that first year was looking—“Does anybody have fresh eggs here?” So I really thought, well, you know, I’m going to sell my eggs at the Farmers’ Market and—and that was about as far as it went.

00:37:52

I had some other ideas about doing, you know, heritage breeds of chickens for conservation and that was—you know, plus—plus the eggs, but that was really about where it started.

00:38:07

AES: Did you already have some chickens on the farm, or did you just start from scratch?

00:38:10

LH: No, way. I didn’t—did not have any chickens on the farm. I had always only kept horses in my barn and was going to keep it that way forever. And so like anything, though, I had—I had plenty of time on my hands, so I did—I started researching the fall of 2008 and I bought my first chicks in March of 2009.

00:38:38

AES: Where did you buy them from?

00:38:39

LH: I bought them from Ideal Hatchery, and just like they—they've been doing—sending chicks through the U. S. Mail for probably 100 years—well, they used to send them to Sears & Roebuck. People would pick up their chicks at Sears, but I—I bought my chicks from Ideal Hatchery, and they came into the post office and, you know, and I brought them home, and that's how I got started.

00:39:03

And it—it's amazing to me now. I think nothing of getting in 100 or 200 chicks in one day and—and at that—my first little order of chicks was thirty chicks. And I thought that was just overwhelming, so—.

00:39:18

AES: What kind did you get in that first order?

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LH: The first chicks I bought were egg-laying chicks. Some New Hampshire Reds. And then I bought some Egyptian Fayoumis and then Silver Gray Dorkings, and these are considered rare breeds and—but unfortunately, I had some bad luck with some of the first chickens that I had. Dogs—neighborhood dogs got in the yard and turned the cages over and—and killed my chickens.

00:39:48

However, after that happened, I said, “Well,” you know, “maybe there—maybe there’s another angle to this whole thing.” So I put an ad in the *Market Bulletin* and, you know, I was just advertising pullets and, by that time, I had probably thirty pullets, some New Hampshire Reds. Well the first day that the *Market Bulletin* came out, I sold every chicken I had. So I said, “Oh, fun. This is going to work.” So, you know, at that time, everybody was mad to have pullets, so it was—you know, it was great. I love commerce.

00:40:24

AES: Well tell me, what you think that is—that—that—excuse me—that happened there when you say, you know, nobody had access to farm fresh eggs at the Market and that’s what everybody wanted and nobody was raising their own chickens, and how—how that got lost and how you’re reviving it and without really knowing there was that need until you got into it?

00:40:48

LH: Well I—I think it’s just chickens have fallen prey to every other—every other thing on the farm that—that, you know, the eggs are produced on these factory farms, and when you open up your paper and eggs are eighty-eight cents at the grocery, which is not—that’s below what it costs to raise them, people say, you know, “What’s the use?” And you know, older people that know about chickens are dying or they’re getting too elderly to—to fool with them.

00:41:23

So I think it’s something that—that’s part of our Southern culture that we need to kind of rekindle.

00:41:31

AES: And you said earlier when you were coming to visit your grandparents that chickens weren't your friends because they were in the way of your horses. Were chickens your friends when you got that first shipment in?

00:41:41

LH: Well, to be frank, they were because I was—you know, I was a Newborn Nursery and Labor and Delivery nurse for so long, [*Laughs*] so I used to tell my friends I was getting my baby fix [*Laughs*] by taking care of my little chicks.

00:41:58

AES: Yeah? And when we were going around the chicken yard this morning you—you know every chicken that's walking on this property. Tell me how your—how your—your farm and your chicken raising has grown just in the three years that you've been doing it.

00:42:11

LH: Ah well it's—it is just a matter of—I joined the American Pasture Poultry Producers Association, and I read Joel Salatin's book about, you know, how to make dollars with pastured poultry [*Pastured Poultry Profits*, 1996], and I read that and digested it. And I thought, well, you know, maybe that could work for me. I don't know because you've got to admit that financially, the eggs—just eggs, it's very difficult to justify doing all this for just eggs. So I—you know, I read through that and I thought, well, you know, I can sell my pullets any time, you know. People are always calling me looking for laying chickens.

00:43:00

It grew because I—I consider myself an entrepreneur and, you know, it just grew by saying, “Well, let me see if this works. Let me see if that works.” You know, not everything you try is going to work. And, for instance, I raised some ducks. And I—you know, we—we processed the ducks, you know, to eat, and they were great. But processing ducks is a very—it’s—there’s a lot—it’s labor intensive. So anyway, here comes Taylor into the picture. Taylor had started buying chicken eggs from me at that point, and she said, “Have you ever thought about duck eggs? Do you have any duck eggs? Where can I get some duck eggs?” So I thought, ah, I’ve—you know, the message finally got through—duck eggs, okay. Well, I’ll see what I can do about that.

00:43:49

So, you know, some of my—I kept this little group of Rouen ducks. They’re non-flying mallards, and they’re beautiful. I sold most of them, but I had these five of them left. And a friend of mine who owns Mississippi Bees [a Mississippi business that specializes in all-natural honey and beeswax products] was going to come and get those ducks. All right, so he didn’t come and get them and didn’t come and get them. Lo and behold, first of January last year—or was it this year? Yeah, it was this year. The first of January, a duck egg. I said, “Oh, my goodness. I’m in the duck egg business.”

00:44:20

So I decided—I went back to the books and researched what were the best duck eggs—best egg laying ducks and they’re Khaki Campbells. So I have a small flock of Khaki Campbell ducks now and so, you know, the—the—this has evolved. It—it has really evolved. You know, if someone asks me for something, I’ll see if it’s doable and, if it’s feasible, I’ll do it.

00:44:43

AES: So do you still have any of the Rouen ducks? I didn't see any out there.

00:44:48

LH: No, I sold the last of my Rouen ducks a few weeks ago. A little family came through. The daughter wanted some little pullets and the father said, “Oh, I’ve been looking for ducks. And do you have ducks?” And so, you know, I’ve learned not to become attached to any single thing. So I said, “Fine,” you know, so they bought the last two ducks that I had.

00:45:12

AES: Now and I—

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LH: Of those breed of ducks, yeah.

00:45:17

AES: Now I’ve—I heard in Ripley, Mississippi—I had a farmer tell me that Rouen ducks are good eating and that a lot of the—the Asian people in Asian communities in the Delta and North Mississippi like the Rouen ducks, in particular, because they get so big and fat. Do you—have you heard that?

00:45:34

LH: Not particularly. The—I have had people to come and looking for Muscovy ducks because they’re so much larger. The Rouen ducks that I had were pretty much a hatchery egg-laying variety. So their forte was really egg laying and, you know, I kept records on them. My

goodness. I had three hens, and I got two or three eggs almost every day. They were excellent layers.

00:46:00

AES: And you said earlier those Khaki Campbells can lay, what, 300 eggs a year?

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LH: Supposed—they're supposed to lay. And I'm keeping my records, so I'll check against that but of—of—I have a dozen hens right now and most days I get nine, ten, eleven eggs. They're excellent layers.

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AES: And tell me about some of the breeds of chickens that you have here.

00:46:24

LH: Well my favorite breed I suppose right now would be the Ameraucana. The Ameraucana lay a tinted egg. You know they—olive, blue, sometimes they lay pink eggs, but I don't have any like that. But the Ameraucanas are—they're just real friendly. They're excellent egg-layers. They can stand the heat. Enough said about them.

00:46:45

My next favorite would be my Plymouth Bard Rocks. The Plymouth Bard Rocks are—they are almost identical in looks to what people used to call a Dominicker or a Dominique. The Plymouth Bard Rock have a single comb, and I mean they're excellent egg-layers, and they do get—they get big enough to eat also, but mainly they're wonderful egg-layers. You know, if you

turn them loose in an area they, say, “Oh, got some grass here. We’ll take care of that.” So, you know, they love to forage and, you know, when they—I keep them in the pen when I’m growing them, and when they see me coming, they’ve got their little chest, their little breast pressed up against the side of the cage just waiting to get over to the fresh grass. So I’ve got Ameraucana, Plymouth Bard Rocks, and then I have a meat bird that are called Rainbows. And the Rainbows are—they’re an American breed that are similar to the French Poulet Rouge. The Rainbows that I have are in their fourth generation without antibiotics, which, I think, you know, I’m moving towards, you know, having all sustainable heritage breeds.

00:48:01

The Rainbows, they’re good layers. They’re not excellent layers. People always ask me about a chicken and how they lay, and I said, “Well, they’re a good layer, but they’re not an excellent layer,” you know. There—there are stages of how they lay. But I have the Rainbows, and then I have the Delaware chickens that I have are a—you know, they’re a heritage breed that are—you know, they’re on the watch list for conservancy. So I have a rooster, and I’m keeping those hens to try to keep that, you know, to have a small flock of those.

00:48:36

Other than those, then I have meat birds. I have the Cornish Cross, a few of those and then I have the Freedom Rangers, which are a French meat breed.

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AES: When did you start doing meat poultry?

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LH: Well, any time you have chickens, you're pretty much in the meat poultry business because, if you had your own chicks, you're going to get fifty percent roosters and fifty percent pullets, or males and females. So you pretty much have to have some outlet for your roosters, and so that's how I started out, you know, in the meat—you know, processing chickens for meat because I had a dearth of roosters at one time.

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So that whole thing has evolved, as far as, you know, the type of birds that I use for that.

00:49:35

AES: And tell me about how that has—from that has evolved connections with or greater connections with Taylor, of course, but also Nick Seabergh at Giardina's [Restaurant] and what it means for them to be able to source meat locally.

00:49:47

LH: Well I've—I hope that it's a good thing. The—the chickens that I raise, I—you know, this is a very hands-on operation, so they—they have all natural feed, no antibiotics, they get plenty of sun, good water, and they're, you know, treated with respect. So the chickens, you know, it's a great thing to be able to raise chickens on the farm because I haven't eaten a store-bought chicken in years and years, and I used to all the time. But there's just such a difference in the taste. And when you think about the fact that—that chicken is able to walk out and stretch its wings and walk around and do what it wants to do it's—it just—I don't know. It's—I hate to—it just—it's meaningful to me because it's just, you know, I'm showing—I feel like that we're showing respect for the—the bird. I know that's—that's—that may sound a little bit corny but it's, you know, it—it's important to me.

00:51:03

And that gets back to the eggs. The next thing I knew after the duck eggs, Taylor was asking me, “What about quail eggs? Can you get quail eggs? What about quail eggs?” So I said, “Well, I’ll see.” So I bought seven or eight—I bought eight little quail hens, and I think there was one rooster. There may have been two roosters with them. And so they were—you know, I put them in the barn with the lights where my chickens were, and they started laying eggs. So I’m in the quail, you know—I was just doing it for eggs to start with, and then I started hatching them. And, you know, the—the quail, it’s been a good thing, you know, to add to the farm.

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AES: And is it—are—are those local demands? Are those something that now that people know you’re here, are you having a demand for eggs and meat outside of Greenwood?

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LH: Absolutely. And that’s the neat thing about it. I started going to the Farmers’ Market in Jackson because I met a—I have a friend down here who raises grass-fed beef and lamb. So we have a booth together, and we just have a big time visiting and selling our eggs. And she sells shares in lamb and beef, and I take orders for chicken.

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People have to pick up chicken off the farm because we can only process under a poultry exemption. So people come and—and they’re always amazed at, you know—it’s kind of a neat way to get them here, you know, to tell them they—you know, “Well you have to come and pick up your chicken at the farm,” so that’s the way it works.

00:52:46

AES: And tell me about the processing and that—finding that outlet for your chickens.

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LH: Oh, you mean where I do it? Oh, well we process on the farm. We started out with, you know, again we went to Joel Salatin's book, you know, about how—how to bleed the chickens and do all the scalding and everything. But you really don't know how to do it until you just jump in there and—and start trying to learn how to do it. And a friend, Hal Fiore [of Last Resort Plantation] came out and helped us the first few times that we processed chickens, and then it kind of evolved. I mean it—it started out. I mean we—we would do five in one afternoon, and we would all be exhausted, you know, from doing that. And now I pretty much do it by myself. I have a, you know, a scalding tank and then I have a—a picker of—and then a place to eviscerate them and, you know, throw them in the ice chest, and they're done, so—. It's—it's evolved; it's—it's a process. It's—anybody who talks about pastured poultry will tell you, you know, the hardest part is just getting started, you know, to just try.

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AES: Is there anything that you learned from your grandparents or by visiting their farm that you make use of in your chicken business?

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LH: Well, not really. When I was a little girl, things were different. You had, you know, they would use—usually wring a chicken's neck and then you usually had—we had a cook, and she did the scalding and picking. So I don't think I ever saw any of that done. Now I do remember

when I was a little girl when they would kill hogs because my grandma—they canned everything back then. They made sausage. They—you know, they—they canned everything, so I—I guess the most important thing I would say is that to make use of everything, you know, because I—I try to save my water from the runoff, and I try to keep that to a minimum, to not use a whole lot of water. We use the—the blood and all the offal for compost and fertilizer and, of course, the feathers, too.

00:55:16

So we try to use it all.

00:55:19

AES: And you were saying earlier how hands-on this whole operation is, and it's very obvious after following you around today. What kind of learning curves and adaptations have you had to do, since now you're going around in this little scooter?

00:55:33

LH: *[Laughs]* Well since I started the chickens, I've not been able to walk. Well, first of all, I designed my chicken pens so that, you know, they have a little hatch that I can pull up and, you know, I carry my water around in jugs, and we recycle those. And pretty much everything—because the way I move the pens is to just hook a rope to them and—and drag them, you know, one way or the other, and that works fine. Most people have some sort of system of—of pushing a dolly underneath the pens to move them, but I can't do that, so I do that.

00:56:13

Inside the barn I had to redesign a way to get my eggs out of the nest where that I could drive my scooter in there and do that. People always ask me, “How do you get those chickens

in?” And it’s just a process of training them with feed and, you know, chickens, of course, will come into the roost at night, anyway, so the main things is making sure everything is closed up at night so that predators don’t go in and get them.

00:56:39

AES: Is there anything that you found that you can't do as well or things that you have had to do differently that work out better, surprisingly enough?

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LH: Well, I feel like [*Laughs*]*—*I think it’s a lot easier for me with my feeding and watering the way I’m doing it from a scooter because it always seems to just really be hard for people to have to do all the bending over when they’re, you know, able-bodied people who help me. There are a lot of things, obviously, that I cannot do, but I save up those things that I need an able-bodied person for—for when I do have help. And I have been able to find—I have a good helper who comes over. He lives in Itta Bena, and he, you know, comes over and helps me with the chickens, and he’s been with me pretty much since I started.

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He doesn’t have any other job. I would love to be able to expand enough so that I could have him full time.

00:57:37

AES: How often does he come out now?

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LH: Once—one day a week, maybe twice. He comes on Saturdays when I go to the Farmers’ Market in Jackson and feeds for me then and, of course, he knows his way around. But it—you know, he doesn’t do any of the mowing or anything like that.

00:57:53

AES: Yeah, tell me about how your tractor has been updated to accommodate you.

00:57:59

LH: Well, that’s another miracle in itself. I used to go for physical therapy. I have a friend who is a physical therapist in Florence, Mississippi, who does Hippotherapy [therapy using horses] and, you know, they would get me up on the horse, and it did help me with my upper body strength. And just the emotional thing of being able to get back on a horse again was huge. I don’t even need to go into that. But anyway, I drove up one day down there for therapy and someone—someone drove up, and they said, “You know what? She needs to get together with the AgrAbility people.” And I had never heard of AgrAbility, but, at that time, it was part of the Farm Bill.

00:58:44

Well anyways, it’s part of the Department of Rehab Services. And they came out and they said—and—and they come from the T. K. Martin Center [for Technology and Disability] over at Mississippi State, the MDRS [Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services] people come, and they all work together; they put a little team together to help disabled farmers keep working and farming. So they have—they put a lot of these on tractors. It’s—it’s a motorized lift. I get over on the little seat, and I have finger controls, and I can get up in the tractor. And fortunately, I can use my right leg, so I mean that’s huge because I’m able to drive **[Laughs]**. I’m

able to drive my car, and I'm able to drive the tractor with—you know, since I have one leg that works. So I'm able to, you know, to mow all the grass, and that's huge. That—that means a lot to me.

00:59:38

AES: I'm sure. And you keep a great little garden scattered throughout your property here with different plantings everywhere. Say a little bit something about that, if you would.

00:59:48

LH: Well I'm kind of evolving into my organic and—and just biodynamic farming, and I'm working on it. I don't know much about it yet, but I plant a little bit of salad here and there everywhere for—for—that's in the shade, and I sell a lot of my salad mix. I grow little yard-long green beans on anything that they'll climb on to add to the salad. I've got cucumbers growing here or there. My fig tree put out lots of figs this year. I've sold lots of figs to the local restaurants. You have a real narrow window of when they're ripe, so I had to preserve some of those. But I'm trying to integrate all these things because any little bit that brings money into the farm is that much better—it makes it that much better.

01:00:43

AES: So do you think you would have been able to do any of this without the Farmers' Market?

01:00:47

LH: Well, I wouldn't have had the impetus to really get it started. It's—that provided—and I go to Jackson to the Farmers' Market when our Market is not open and I have—I mean it's just an

amazing emotional boost, self-esteem, because people are lined up to get our eggs, both Lisa's and mine. She buys all of her laying hens from me. But I mean it's just—it's just huge, and I mean, to have people walk up and say, "Oh, if you don't have eggs, I'm not going to buy eggs from anybody else." I mean it's just—it's just huge.

01:01:25

AES: And do you think if—with people being so dedicated to you, do you think it's you or do you think it's the quality of your product or a combination of both?

01:01:31

LH: I think it's the quality of the eggs and it's just the—you know, I have a little sign or I used to on my other van as—you know *Who is your farmer?*, and I think it's just important to know where your food is coming from. I just think that's very important. And I think it's just—it's sad that we're getting away from that, but I just think that's—that's really important.

01:01:57

AES: Well but, you know, getting away from it but also moving back to it with things like the Farmers' Market here in Greenwood. What—what would you say the Farmers' Market has meant to this town in just the past few years that it's been in operation?

01:02:08

LH: Well I think it has—it's meant a lot, as far as bridging a gap between the—the race, racial community. I think that's important. And—and in any kind of small way, I think that's important. I mean we have, you know, black farmers, white farmers, you know, both. Customers,

you know, I have—I have one man who comes and buys chickens from me all the time, you know, and wherever I see him, you know, that’s just another friend. I can say, “Hello. Hey,” you know, “how are you and when are you going to come and get some more chickens and—.” You know, all that. And—and I think it’s a community builder.

01:02:53

AES: Do you think that was one of the ideas behind starting it, or do you think that it was really driven by—by vendors of—of local food?

01:03:02

LH: I think a lot of it came from our having downtown Greenwood being a part of the Main Street Community system, but I think it’s also—I think it’s also need-based. I think it’s really—I think it’s—it’s great that the restaurants come and buy from us.

01:03:27

AES: And what would you say, if anything, and maybe that is unique about the Greenwood Farmers’ Market?

01:03:33

LH: Well, um, I think our Market is good because it’s—it’s—we have some of the best food available anywhere. I mean we’ve got artisan bakery in Mockingbird Bakery that, you know, they bring their food, and then we have some of the best tomatoes anywhere in the world. And we—you know, and all sorts of canned food. We have great barbecue there. Spooney brings barbecue, and we have live music a lot and, you know, we—we have a lot to offer.

01:04:14

Our hospital comes a couple of times a month, and they do health screenings. And, like I said, the music is great. We have fresh seafood a lot of times and, you know, it's just important to have a variety of food.

01:04:31

AES: And can you talk a little bit about—this is kind of a big question but a little bit about kind of the evolution of Greenwood in the past ten, fifteen years with Viking [Range Corporation] and—and the Alluvian [hotel] and people coming here as tourists and visitors to the Cotton Capital of the World and how it's—how it's kind of reinvented itself?

01:04:56

LH: That's a huge question. That—that is a huge question, but we have seen Greenwood, we kind of reached a low point, say, you know, we—we reached a low point maybe in the early '90s, I would say. And then Viking started picking up. We had a Balloon Festival in the early '90s that was great. We started, you know, putting—we started focusing more on tourism and on the Blues and, you know, Viking started building up and creating jobs and—and, but at the same, time we were losing in other areas.

01:05:40

So all of that is—Greenwood has evolved and, you know, it's just so sad when you see things closing downtown. I mean back when I first came back here, I was a Home Health nurse, and I had patients who were living—or clients rather—who were living in the Irving Hotel and now that's the Alluvian, so I mean I've seen a huge change there, and it's a change for the better, because, you know, where I worked in Labor and Delivery I met of—of—people of other races.

And I realized back—way back in the ‘90s, you know, hey, there’s a rising group of really nice middle-class people who are coming along.

01:06:27

In fact, people, you know, who I’ve delivered their babies, you know, I still see them all the time, you know. “How’s Lauren?” You know, “How is X,” and you know, “How are the—,” you know? And I think the things that have happened in Greenwood are for the good, and I think it’s good to remember the past in a way but not to dwell on it because I think, you know—and—and I tell, you know—I have two sons and the one—my one parting shot to them not long ago was, you know, well I just—I wish one of my sons would come up with some great manufacturing thing that they can do in Greenwood, you know—not another Viking range but maybe something else.

01:07:10

So you know I worked on Cotton Row back in the ‘70s. I worked for a cotton factor, Mr. D. T. Sayle, and I remember them when they started Cotton Row on Parade or Crop Day and, you know, it evolved into a different sort of festival thing. And, you know, change is good; change is a great thing. But, you know, it’s good to keep some of the old stuff, too.

01:07:33

AES: Well what do you think your grandparents would say now if they could look in at Greenwood in 2011 and see you raising chickens and—and how Greenwood has changed?

01:07:41

LH: Oh, you know, I think they would be pretty much amazed. I think they would be amazed, because I think the real reason they came to Greenwood, because Greenwood was such a huge—

I mean Greenwood was a real prosperous town at that time, and I think that there's evidence that we could be again. I hope.

01:08:08

AES: Well and what do you think that, you know, food having a lot to do with that with the community building, you were saying, with the Market and Taylor and Nick having these great restaurants here, how—how you have a new—if you do—I don't want to, you know, lead you here, but how food factors into that kind of new future for Greenwood?

01:08:32

LH: Well I think it's important to realize that, you know, technology and everything has changed our lives so much that anything to do with food today is—is something that sells. Anything to do with food or technology so, and we've got food here. We've got some of the best chefs, cooks, food in the world right here, and it's important to preserve that. So my brother lives in Washington State, and he says that—he says, you know, anything to do with food is a good thing. So, you know, that's why I said, "Well, you know, I'm in the right place at the right time, and I'm you know doing in my small way what I can, so—."

01:09:17

AES: And what about—I know we need to get going here, but I want to ask you, too, about the—the health component, about, you know, people being more conscious about eating and health and you having a medical background and what that means for you to be contributing to that?

01:09:30

LH: Well I think, you know, knowing that Mississippi is the obesity capital is something to think about because, you know, I think that raw food is really good. I mean, when I grow okra I usually munch on little tiny okra as I'm going all around the farm, so, you know, I think unprocessed food is—is good. And you know, that is more of the cooking style now is not to cook things so much. So I—you know, and good fresh eggs are—it's important to buy food that's not been raised with a lot of antibiotics and—and insecticides and pesticides. So I think all of those things are important.

01:10:12

AES: Would you tell me quickly about your chicken [named] Sela?

01:10:16

LH: Oh, Sela, my chicken. Sela, my chicken, is named after Taylor's daughter Sela. She and Lola, her sister, I don't see—you know, Lola is kind of in the background, usually—Lola, the chicken. Lola and Sela—Sela was the first Ameraucana I had that ever laid eggs, and so that's why she's special. She—she laid—she lays big blue eggs.

01:10:42

AES: *[Laughs]* All right. Well we've spent a good amount of time here, and I thank you so much for visiting with me. I do want to ask you, though, if there is anything that we didn't cover that you want to make sure to mention or anything about what you do that you want to—a thought you'd like to end on?

01:10:57

LH: Not really. It's just, you know, I'm—I'm glad to be a part of this and I'm just—I'm happy that I can keep on keeping on. [*Laughs*]

01:11:07

AES: All right. Well thank you so much for visiting. This has been a real treat. I appreciate it.

01:11:12

[End Leann Hines Interview]