

## Conversation with 30 year old white male, Arkansas (Transcription)

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F: Has the poultry business been profitable for you in the last

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couple of years?

S: Well, yeah it's a, I ain't got flapped up rich at it, you know but it's kind of like anything else there ain't no easy money that I know anything about. Just all kind of hard work and steadiness you know, I think it's something... The way I see it , there's quite a bit of security in it in that people going to have to eat, don't make any difference if they eat rice, chicken or whatever it is, I you know, of course the whole United States has kind of gotten away from down home agriculture and you know home gardens and a lot of things, but it's kind of coming back to that and the chicken industry has evolved into something that's probably the, they can grow chicken for less feed input. There's a better conversion factors than in the red meat, that there is so far, but the turkeys you know have advanced pretty well, they're doing good, People demand you know a certain amount of meat to eat you know, or they would desire it, sometimes they can't get it, but chickens - chickens is the easiest way to and the cheapest way most economical way and it's just evolved in to the point that there's no longer just the barnyard producer like there was back in the fifties, where you catch a coop of chickens and haul them in to the sale barn and you would get fifty cents a piece for them or something like that, you know, and somebody chop their

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heads off and picked them and cooked them right there just because of the amount of feed that's involved and the transportation costs of today, the big producer is definitely what <it's?> come to. They might be many other ways areas of agriculture, but probably won't develop to what the extent that chicken production has.

F: Is your price of each bird tied to is that a varying price or are you protected from are you protected from the market going to fifty-nine cents a pound?

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S: Yeah, right..right. We're not hinged with that. In other words, what the company does with us is they do have, in other words my price varies, but it depends on the competitiveness of my feed conversion. They have a base price, let's just use for instance... and it varies - and it's one price in the summertime and it's a little higher price in the wintertime, on account of the production costs of, you know, the growers experience. We'll just say, for instance, that in the summer they'll pay you a base price of three forty-five. Three cents and 45 hundredths for each pound of chicken that you produce. Okay, and that's the... Then you're compared with everybody that produces that week, all the chickens they catch, and kill and process that week, of how much feed you put into them, and how much vaccination or vaccine or anything... Any cost that the company had concerning that production of that bunch of chickens per pound. And then if you, the average ... in other words its like on a Bell Curve or something, they take the average and that's the midpoint. If you're above the midpoint you've beat it, you get the additional you know I've got four, maybe four and a quarter cents a pound, I've beaten the average that much. And if you come out below the average well they deduct from that so you could get down to see little as maybe two cents a pound.

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F: The company pays for the food?

S: The company pays for your food and provides you with the chickens. Of course they've got a price base that they calculate everything on and the price is the same for everybody, it don't make any difference how far away from the processing plant or the feed mill that you live. In other words there's just a set price on your feed and there's a set price on the chickens that they use to compute the ... you know where you stand at, when they pick the chickens up.

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F: Getting into this.. was it something that was in lieu of doing some other kind of work?

S: No, really I've done a little dab of everything. A lot of nothing, a kind of jack of all trades and master of none. I've done a little, I've worked in industry from manual laborer to supervisor capacity and I've worked technical electronics, troubleshooting and that kind of work. I grew up right up here in these old hills and after I got out of the service and I liked it, didn't much want to leave. It's hard to make a living up here and what you run into is a transportation problem, in other words you go to town to work and wintertime comes along and I've tried a little of that, I've carried the mail some and fought one of these rural routes a year or so and I kind of had my eye on the farm situation if I ever could you know work it out to where I could handle it and that's sort of what happened here. The old boy that owned this place he just .. he liked it, he didn't want out of it, but we just got to talking and he had a .. thought he had a better circumstance a-coming up and he priced the place to me and I worked with a government loan agency and bought the place. It's not easy, ...

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F: How many acres do you have here?

S: About a hundred and sixty-two acres.

F: Do you do any other work there or do you just kind of...

S: Well, I've not worked outside. I still part-time mail rout and, of course I'm a.. I'm in the National Guard, and thats a..

F: Weekend help?

S: Weekend help. Sometimes that will make you smile when that green check comes.

F: For sure. I guess you have to go to Guard in Clarksville?

S: Yeah, Clarksville.

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F: This is the house down here?

S: Uh-huh.

F: How long.. you've lived here for two years?

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S: We moved here in December of '80. When we moved would be two years in December.

F: Where did you live before then?

S: Up here on Highway twenty-one. I was on top of the you used to follow this road all the way up and you'd get up there on the main highway and I lived <gap> Built a little old brick house down the road there from when you first hit the Highway.

F: And is that the area you were born in?

S: Yep, I was born about three mile up the road here and in a little old slab hut, tar paper shack you know. Coal oil stove and lived here all my life. Other than service time.

F: Does your family still live around here?

S: Yep, my Dad and Mom, they live up there on the right real close to where that place was that place that I lived <unintelligible text> joined to their place, but it wasn't ever part of their farm or anything. I built a house up there, Bought that little old piece of ground when I was in the Army. Come back and got started on building and ended up a-getting married and finished it up.

F: And how old are you?

S: Thirty.

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F: And you're married. Do you have children?

S: I got two.

F: Boy and girl?

S: Boy and a girl.

F: How old are they?

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S: Boy'll be six in December, and the girl was four in August.

F: Is your wife from here originally?

S: No, she's a transplant.. She moved in here from Washington State. Finished her last year of high school down here at Ozark and we kind of... I had a sister that was still in and I had just come back from the service you know I wasn't .. I thought I was a little bit more mature than these seniors in High School, you know. But I got hooked up with her and went out on a date or two and we kind of hit it off pretty good and been married for seven years in August.

F: How long did you date her?

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S: Oh about three months. I reckon, I don't know who was the most, well I don't know what you want to say there, I guess I was ginning to feel like I was twenty-three you know I figured I was an old bachelor already.

F: Do <gap>.

S: No, I was, I gave it a lot of thought and I was out of the Service you know and I was ready for it. You know you see a lot of the world and I always had it in my mind just to be able to come back up here in these old mountain somewheres. Catch me up some little old girl and keep her pregnant and barefooted for all, if I could

F: Stayin' too damn busy to run away?

S: Yeah, she's changed a lot. You know from being from the West Coast, I imagine she had to do a lot more adapting than what I did.

F: I would imagine.

S: She would probably tell you some you know something, some of the interesting things.

F: The girls tell me you were on the school board here.

S: Yeah.

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F: I would imagine you get to spend a lot of time up there too.

S: Yeah, it seems like you know if a person is interested in people and interested in his community you know and kind of proud of what you are you know you might not be much but you can always find ways to <expend?> what little excess energy you might give by fixing fence or what have you. I decided that well I don't know what the qualifications are for serving on the school board, I reckon it's just a desire you know to give a part of yourself for the benefit of the kids. I believe in public education. My Dad couldn't read nor write , and I guess he'd've wailed the tar out of me if I hadn't've went on to school, and I graduated from the little old school. When I was in the Army, I was told, I graduated from one of the biggest classes in Oark, had fourteen graduates, seven boys and seven girls.

F: When you graduated from Oark?

S: Yeah, and I got in a, well of course I got drafted the old double-oh-six, and I decided I'd go ahead, I'd rather be something beside just pack a gun, you know, I enlisted, and got a pretty good school. I went to school for forty weeks, pretty competitive, pretty tough school, in the service.

F: What were you in?

S: I was a crypto repairman. They <gap> security systems, and lot of the boys I was in school with was, you know, college graduates and engineering degrees and things like that. I had a little trouble with ... I didn't know I had an accent until I went in the Army.  
(great quote)

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F: It didn't take them long to figure that one out did it?

S: No, it seemed like everybody knowed where I was from and I couldn't ever figure out where anybody else was from. It was kind of interesting. You know, working with them, but anyhow what I was leading there on

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was the education. You know it done me good. What little dab I got. I don't think I could have, well I know I wouldn't have been allowed the opportunity to <unintelligible text> in the school that I was if I hadn't've had just even just a high school degree, a diploma and a, so <unintelligible text> there's a lot of kids up in here that don't appreciate the benefits of free and just the ability to learn and it be paid for. They don't understand the cost that's involved or the sacrifices that people have to make. Well that's kind of the basis of what got me involved in the school board. I reckon we've had the same problems as about any school board you know whether it'd be fussing parents or fighting teachers. So you know knocked over a cup of coffee or two, you know just kept a-jabbering. And now out of eight I got on the board and I reckon I had a knack for blowing and going or something, and they put me in the, I served president of the board for pretty near three years. I've been on the Board four years in March, and got involved in that, and of course now I'm campaigning for Justice of the Peace, here in I don't know.

F: You're into politics?

S: Getting deep into politics at a local level. I don't know it's a...

F: Was your Dad in politics? Did you have any relatives in politics?

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S: Oh I got a distant relative, C.W. was of course state legislator, in the state legislature. But Of course I grew up around him but at the time he wasn't in politics, you know, he was just preaching there in the church. I was in the service I guess when he ran. I don't remember just when it was he ran for state legislature. He's not he wasn't very close kin folk, but I guess that'd be as close as you can say. I reckon I was the first one of my immediate family anyhow

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that graduated from high school. As far as my parents, aunt and uncles, none of them's involved in politics.

F: Well if you run for the Justice of the Peace that's with the <gap>, <gap> Are you running against someone from <unintelligible text> this area?

S: No, I'm kinda running a maverick race, See, there's three townships up here that's real sparsely populated and there's five townships in this district. And the two southern townships are closer to town and they're heavily populated and one of the, the guy that I beat in Democratic primary, was a, was from that area. Of course now I've got an <opponent?> in the General Election.

F: A republican? How does it look?

S: Well, pretty favorable, I'm confident.

F: Is it the same way as most of Arkansas here where if you win the Democratic...

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S: Well, see..

F: Primary you're pretty well in?

S: Well, I'd venture to say that yeah, it's that way to a certain extent. <unintelligible text> you know C.W. he was on the Republican side and of course he went to the state legislature from this county. They voted for him big every time. So I think that really and truly and honestly that basically most people in this area are very independent, and they still vote Democrat from Reconstruction Days and you know my great grandpaw was, can remember the bad times you know and then another thing is you know they want to or not a lot of people remember the Hoover days you know and the Hoover Hogs and bad times. The Ozark Mountains were probably hit the hardest of any particular segment of society. The population of the time you know they was hard, no jobs and no money for