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Abstract:

Ruth Hambleton was born September 17, 1953 in Joliet, Illinois. She is a 54 year old Farm Extension Specialist who works with the University of Illinois Extension Program. She is a second generation Illinoisan. Her grandparents came from Germany, and eventually settled in Chicago. When the depression hit, they moved from the city to a farm for the sole purpose of feeding the family. The Fleck family settled on a small, diverse farm in Joliet, Illinois in the middle of the depression. This farm contained cows, chickens, turkeys, a garden and crops to feed the livestock. The farm remained very much the same through the time when Ruth was born in 1953. Looking back, Ruth notes that one of the largest changes on the farm, in that time, was the introduction of government inspectors. Ruth's parents, Frank and Annette, would complain about the new government policies that would require inspection of turkey and other produce sold from the farm. As an adult, Ruth now understands both sides of the dilemma. Ruth married her husband Kenneth Hambleton in 1978 and they purchased a small 40-acre farm approximately 15 miles outside of Mt. Vernon. On this small farm they breed calves and conduct rotational grazing. She explained that her husband is trained in artificial insemination, but decided that it was easier to purchase a bull and let nature run its course. One of Ruth's greatest accomplishments is through the Extension, where she started Annie's Project. Annie's Project is meant to teach women involved in agriculture how to conduct farm finances, run budgets, learn Excel, work in a family unit, and deal with many of the difficulties a woman would faces when involved in agriculture. Ruth's dream is to one day take Annie's Project worldwide, especially to the Middle East.

Keywords: Joliet, IL; Farm Extension Specialist; University of Illinois; Germany; Immigrants; Chicago, IL; Great Depression; Joliet, IL; Cows; Chickens; Turkeys; Garden; Crops; Government Inspectors; Mt Vernon, IL; Calf Breeding; Rotational Grazing; Artificial Insemination; Annie's Project

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Interview with Ruth Hambleton

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April 15, 2008

Interviewer: Mike Maniscalco

(unrelated pre-interview conversation and technical difficulties for first ten minutes)

Maniscalco: Okay, well today is April 15, 2008. It's about 11:15, and we are at the U of I Extension office in Mt. Vernon, and we're sitting here with Ruth Hambleton. How are you doing today?

Hambleton: I am doing very well, thank you.

Maniscalco: Great, great. So we'll start out with the easy question: date of birth.

Hambleton: Let's see, do I get to pick one, or do I have to—

Maniscalco: You can pick one and lie, that's all right. We have the real form with it, anyways.

Hambleton: My date of birth is September 17, 1953, making me fifty-four years old at this point.

Maniscalco: And where were you born?

Hambleton: I was born in Will County—Joliet—Silver Cross Hospital.

Maniscalco: Okay. Can you tell us a little bit about your parents? Who were your parents?

Hambleton: My parents was Frank and Annette Fleck. My dad, Frank, is still alive, and he is living on the farm in Will County. Of course, a lot has changed in that county. Chicago has grown out to the suburbs, so what used to be our farm is now, well, just a few acres left of it. And my mother, she died in November of 1997, so she's been gone for eleven years now. And I have three siblings besides myself—two older brothers and a younger sister. And as far as how many of us settled in agriculture, I am probably the closest to what you would call a "farmer" at this point. My dad is a landowner, and I do have a brother that has ten acres associated with some property that he owns, so I guess you could put him in the farming category.

Maniscalco: (laughs) Good. So can you tell me, do you remember anything about your grandparents?

Hambleton: My grandparents—I had on my mother's side—her father was alive when I was a little girl. And my dad's mother—my grandmother on my father's side—she lived in the same farmhouse with us. She lived upstairs from us. So we was a three generation family living in a farmhouse. And I was in college when she died. And she came from Germany, and my parents—or my mother's grandparents—also came from Germany, so we're pretty much of Germanic blood. And they met while they was here, in the United States, so I am the product of immigration. My father would be what you would call an F-1 immigration; I'm an F-2 immigration. And they met here in the United States.

How we got out to the farm is a story in itself. My dad's parents both immigrated during World War I, when, you know, the Kaiser was arising, and they could see that not good things were happening, so let's go to this new country, the United States. They came over here, settled in Chicago, met, and right about that time, the Depression was really heating up—I mean the major Depression. And being of that Germanic quality, they knew that if you were going to

survive a depression, that you needed to get out to the farm. You need to get out to where you can feed your family off the land. So that is the genesis of how my dad wound up on his farm.

And then, how he wound up in the farm… There was seven in his family. Now, just imagine, these kids were removed from the city, brought out to the farm—pretty small town—they were not necessarily happy about this, as kids would tend to not be. So when World War II hit, the brothers served in the military, and then it was tradition for one to stay on the farm—one son to stay back on the farm, and it was my dad. I don't think he exactly drew the short straw, but it was an escape for some of my uncles to get away from the farm, and my dad stayed, and so that's how he sort of became the heir to the throne, you might say, farming. Small—100 acres, twenty milk cows, chickens, turkeys, just very typical Will County farm at that time. All the neighbors had very… One thing we would not tolerate was hogs. My mother would not bring hogs on the place.

Maniscalco: And why?

Hambleton: Just did not like the smell of a hog. (laughs) And I can still remember her ranting about that, because we had this little shed that used to be the hog shed, and I'd say, "Hey, how come we don't have a hog in here?" and she says, "There will not be a hog on this place." So she just didn't like pigs. You know, chickens—stinky, old, rotten eggs—have you ever shoveled out a chicken house? No, I don't think you have, have you? Because if you have, you'd never forget it. You know, the nitrogen smell will just kill you. But yeah, we had all the amenities of every farm that was there in Will County.

Maniscalco: Now, do you remember what kinds of breeds of cattle you had?

Hambleton: Holsteins.

Maniscalco: Holsteins.

Hambleton: Holsteins.

Maniscalco: Any kind of reason why?

Hambleton: Because everybody had Holsteins. That was just the rule. I think up the road, there might have been a Jersey or two, but it was Holsteins that we had.

Maniscalco: How about the chickens?

Hambleton: The chickens were just white laying hens. Never knew about too many breeds of chickens, just the white ones that would sit down and squeeze an egg out every other day. And turkeys—we did turkeys for quite a few years, until regulation moved in. Because we used to do that in the sheds. You know, we'd clean out the garages and the shed, and then we'd have the slaughtering, and we would chill everything down in water tanks, and people would come out from Chicago and pick up their fresh-killed turkey. And it was a big deal—it was quite an operation there. And then regulation came in, where they said you had to have kitchens and things inspected—and I can still remember the inspector that came out, and he was particularly brutal—and it was shortly thereafter that we got out of that business. So regulation, you might say, did change the base of our farm operation.

Maniscalco: I guess so.

Hambleton: Yeah, that was interesting to watch that happen.

Maniscalco: Do you remember your father or your mother talking about the inspectors?

Hambleton: Oh, yes! Oh, my, yes. I mean, "inspectors," as I was growing up, was not a kind word around our family. Now that I'm older and have experienced life, I get what their job is. I truly understand what their purpose was. But they were always criticizing, and, you know, that's hard to take at times. That's one of maybe the flip-flops I've done in my life. Inspectors were bad when I was little, and now I get it. It's another job; somebody's got to do it.

Maniscalco: (laughs) That's great. Now tell us a little bit about your childhood growing up. What are some of your memories from being on the farm?

Hambleton: Memories from being—I was what you would call a blissfully oblivious child. You know, the barn could be burning down, and if I had something to be doing or playing with, I would be off, doing that. I just had this ability to live in the moment, and when you're on a farm, you have a lot of them. You play with the calves, the haymow—the place where we stored our hay—just hours, just sitting up there, you know, pretending I'm in my castle, that kind of thing. Swinging from rafters—I mean, if the OSHA safety people got hold of us these days, you'd wonder how any of us farm kids made it. You know, around livestock that we were… Being chased by bulls—you know, we had bulls that would do the actual breeding of the cows and yeah, just being chased by those things. Chickens—we had laying hens, and so my job was to go out and gather the eggs, and I still can remember, you know, if you can put all your faculties together here, putting your hand under a warm hen just after she's laid an egg. There is no place warmer, softer than under a chicken. Try it sometime!

Maniscalco: (laughs) I'll have to…

Hambleton: It would be… Well, the second-best thing I can remember as a child was feeling the nose of a horse for the first time. You never forget that—or at least I didn't. See, that's what I said, I've got some weird perspectives here. But the touch of that satiny nose… "I want one of these," you know. "Can I take this home?" The problem is, there's a horse that's attached to all that stuff. They eat a lot of hay, and I fall off these things, so if somebody could invent just the horse nose, I would own one.

Maniscalco: (laughs) Now, you mentioned a lot of chores just now. Were chores a good thing or a bad thing as a child?

Hambleton: Well, as a child, they were bad things, but I look back, and I thank my dad now for making us do that kind of thing. When you have a dairy operation, as we did, it was a lot of work to do. Putting up hay—lots of hay. Milking cows is a daily chore. And my least favorite time of the year is when we had to do hay, and you'd put in a hard day's work, and then you had to go milk cows. It was just always there, seven days a week, twice a day. Vacations—didn't do them. In fact, still, to this day, I'm just not a vacation person because it's just not part of my culture. I didn't grow up with that mentality. And when you are away from the farm, you just feel, Ew, this is...icky. You know, it's not where I'm supposed to be. So we had dairy cows up to 1971, so I was a senior in high school when we sold the herd. And then raised a few heifers, but yeah, we've been out of the dairy business for quite a while. And I will say we were not really what you would call top-of-the-line dairy farmers. We were pretty average in our production practices, and because of the labor Dad had—us—you know, he did what he could with us.

Maniscalco: Now, what about crops? Did you grow crops on the farm as well?

Hambleton: We had corn, oats, and hay, is what I remember growing. Soybeans came in a little bit later. In the late sixties, my brothers were in FFA and 4-H, and they would raise soybeans as their project, and it was kind of a new crop for that area, then—at least, in my memory, it was a new crop at that time. And I can still remember looking out—they took us to their 4-H field, just a three-acre thing—and I'm standing there, and these are soybeans; they're saying "soybeans." Well, I'm thinking green beans out of the garden—you reach down, you grab one, you pop it in your mouth, you chew on it, and you know, it's good. Have you ever chewed on a raw soybean pod?

Maniscalco: No.

Hambleton: Ugh. Try it. That's another thing I can clearly, clearly remember—this fuzzy thing that just was stuck in my mouth, and (spitting-out noise). So I didn't have a really high opinion of soybeans, compared to green beans out of the garden.

Maniscalco: Now, were these crops grown to feed to the cattle, then, or were they…?

Hambleton: When you're a dairy farmer—a lot of what we produced was put into the silo. It was corn silage, corn cob—corn on the cob—that we would grind that up for the feed, and oats, and put that into the ration, and of course, purchasing soybean meal, as later on we discovered we could add the protein, and we would do that.

Maniscalco: Now, you live on a farm now as well.

Hambleton: I live on a farm now, yes.

Maniscalco: So what kind of farm do you live on now?

Hambleton: I am on forty acres in Jefferson County, and we have a beef cow-calf operation. And a lot of what we do with the cattle now is rotational grazing. We've come to appreciate that that's what cattle are designed to do, and so that's what we have set the forty acres up to do. There are seventeen acres of woods on our property, and that's where the cattle go for shelter, and a little creek that runs through that will supply them a little bit of water through the summertime. And it's just a very idyllic, well-laid-out operation that my husband has put together.

Maniscalco: So, kind of comparing the farm of your parents to the farm that you have now, what are some of the similarities that, you know… I mean, you're calling your farm idyllic, and I imagine the one your parents had was pretty good. Did it set the standard, would you say, or—

Hambleton: No, no. I don't think my parents' farm was any standard that I want to live by. First of all, it was very labor-intensive. But the farm that we are on right now is not labor-intensive. We do have a small line of machinery, that we do put some hay up. When I was a little girl, putting up hay involved, you know, getting all the neighbor boys to come over and haul the hay, and we don't go through that now. Large, round bales. So we're more capital-intense than we were, my parents, less labor-intense. We do have quite a bit more knowledge about the nutrition of livestock, more so than we did back then. So I'd say there was quite a bit of difference between the farm operations.

Now, some similarities is my dad in the late sixties, early seventies took an off-farm job—very unusual at that time. If you were a farmer, you were a farmer; if you lived in the city, you had a job. And he was stepping across both lines. The reason why they did that was because we weren't making enough money to feed four kids. And my mother, who was the record-keeper in this operation, said that. So she says, "I will stay here, and I will milk the cows, and I will

tend to the chickens," and she really became the swing pin of the farm operation. While Dad was off working, bringing in that paycheck, she kept that farm pretty well intact.

Maniscalco: Now, that doesn't really sound like the job of what most women would have done on the farm then.

Hambleton: Back then, my mom did a lot of the labor. She loved being on the farm—that was her goal, to marry a farmer. She picked out my dad, got him, four kids later, you know, she's milking cows and taking care of turkeys and chickens and everything else, so she got exactly what she wanted. It wasn't always what I would call the most less stressful of life. We had all the stresses you would expect to have, where you've got—from my mother's perspective—the in-law living upstairs—you know, that kind of environment. I could see the stress, but I told you I was a blissfully oblivious child so, yeah, it's okay. People are unhappy, so what? I'm looking back on it, and I get it now; I get the stress that was in the family. And Dad taking an off-farm job was necessary for the economic well-being of our family.

Maniscalco: Now, with your farm now, what sorts of jobs do you do on the farm?

Hambleton: My job on the farm? I take care of the garden, I take care of flowerbeds, I do occasionally take care of the cattle. I help when it's more than one person needs to be helped. You know, if we're working cattle, getting vaccinations or something, I am helping running chutes and herding cattle. My husband will tell you the first that I am not necessarily gifted around livestock. You can sense it. There are people who are meant to be around livestock, and then there are those of us who are there because we have to be, and that would be me. I've been around livestock all my life, but there's something in me that they smell, and go hmm, we can get by with things on this person. And they do. I'm not a good livestock person, but I do enjoy having them around. My husband is just superb with cattle. He's got what I call the "it factor." He just knows how to take care of them, he knows their behavior, and out in our country—our part of the world—you'll see that there are farmers who that's what they do. They may be eighty years old, taking care of cattle, and you go, What are you thinking? That's what they do. You take the livestock away from them, and it's just in a matter of months or a few short years, they decline in health and they die.

Maniscalco: Wow.

Hambleton: That livestock is an important component in their lives.

Maniscalco: Now, did your—was it always your husband's plan to have a farm?

Hambleton: Yes, always his idea. He grew up on a farm as well, and he just knew that that was the life he wanted to raise children in, and I felt the same way, so it was a logical conclusion that we wound up in a farm. The difference between his farming and my farming is just a little bit different in that I grew up on the outskirts, a mile out of town, so I could walk into town. Where he grew up, you had to drive everywhere. And that's sort of the farm we've got now. We're out in the boonies, and to go anywhere, you do have to have a vehicle; you do have to plan time for travel to get there. It's not the convenience of walking to school or walking to church like I did as a child. So my kids have been deprived of that jewel of a memory, whereas his memory's fine because, you know, he always had to get in a vehicle to go someplace. And his culture was you didn't—you stayed on the farm. Everything was on the farm there. You know, you played baseball and softball with your kids—brothers and sisters—and when the family came, you know, then you did the big ball tournament, that kind of thing. So it's just a

little different in the culture between his farm idea and mine. Closer to town, and he was isolated, as we are now.

Maniscalco: Speaking about your children, and you mentioned with your brothers and sisters—the FFA. Are your children involved in that now?

Hambleton: My children were involved with 4-H, and they did a lot of projects. We had cattle projects, we had cats—did cats one year. Oh my goodness, whoever thought that's a good idea needs to rethink that. Take a farm cat, put it in a cage, take it to a show. Let's not go into those stories. Let's see, some of the other things that we did… Plants. In fact, a lot of the plants that I have in my greenhouse that you'll see is from the 4-H projects. They just kept growing. I finally found something that I could not kill in a pot, and so… And actually, it has become a tradition in our family. I have a plant—a philodendron—from my father-in-law's funeral, when he died—and he's been passed now for several years—but I've been able to keep that plant alive. And that plant hung at my son's wedding—because he wanted Grandpa there—

Maniscalco: Oh, wow.

Hambleton: —and that plant is Grandpa. You know, we've always looked at—when we move it into the house in the wintertime, that's Grandpa. And I've been able to keep a plant alive from my mother's funeral, as well, and that's my mother. So, you know, the plant has really taken on some meaning in our family, when we do that.

Maniscalco: That's neat. Now, were you involved in 4-H then?

Hambleton: I was a 4-H club leader for a period of about eight years, while my kids were in it, and organized the community. The kids in the community was who was in my club. Had some horses—horse projects—back to the horse stories again. The only thing I could ever do with a horse was fall off one, but I still love the noses. And yeah, from that club that I had, the horse club evolved from that, so got a little bit of culture in there. Even though I'm not a horse person, things can happen because of it.

Maniscalco: As a child, were you involved in the child level of 4-H?

Hambleton: No, as a child, I was in Girl Scouts. Back then, it was a little bit more boys were in 4-H. They had girls' clubs, but they weren't handy. The meeting nights were hard for us. And all the girls in town were in Girl Scouts, so that's what I wanted to be. And that's where I was. We did camping, and I learned some sewing, and how to melt crayons down to candles—all those useful skill things. But yeah, I was a Girl Scout.

Maniscalco: Interesting. Can you kind of explain to us what your farm looks like now?

Hambleton: My farm looks like now? I think people would be envious of my farm. I have a very nice house, some nice outside buildings that support a lifestyle that my husband and I like. We're not big by any means, but we do feed a few more mouths than just ourselves, so we consider ourselves very productive. It's a place that you can come and lose all your stress. There's a little pond that we water livestock out of, and we also have some catfish floating around back there, so every now and then, he throws a line into the pond and brings supper up. So it's a conveniently wonderful little place to go in life.

Maniscalco: Interesting. Now, what about your parents' farm? Can you explain kind of what that would have looked like?

Hambleton: Parents' farm… When I was a little kid, I remember a lot of chaos. You know, just stuff all over the place. And it's because it was a dairy farm, it was a chicken farm. We had stuff everywhere. And we had dogs and cats, so it was a chaotic environment. Again, as a blissfully oblivious child, it didn't bother me, and then as I grew older, I'm going, "You know, this place needs to be cleaned up. We just need to get rid of the weeds, and just put a plant there or something." So over the years, that's what Dad did to the place, and it's really quite attractive now. He's got lots of flowerbeds all over the place. He has taken all the junk that's been laying around the place, and he's cleaned it up, and he's displayed it on the barn wall. You walk in there, and I'm thinkin, "Dad, that's all the junk that used to lay around this place. That's worth a small fortune now." So yeah, he has done some really remarkable things. You know, the barn where the cattle stayed, that's for storage right now. And when I walk into that place, I remember how huge it was as a child, and I'm going, you know, You can reach up and touch the ceiling in this place. What was I thinking? It was just things like that that evolve in your life.

Maniscalco: Yeah, that's interesting. To get onto kind of—get back to what you were talking about with inspectors. I'm sure you have inspectors come to your farm now.

Hambleton: No, actually, there would be nothing that our farm would require inspection for. We have our Premise ID so that—we've identified that there's livestock that lives on these acres. But no, there's no need for inspection. If you're in the dairy industry, that has to be inspected, but in the beef cow-calf industry, no. We never…

Maniscalco: What breed of cow do you have on your farm?

Hambleton: He's got Angus-Simmental crosses—actually, I call them polky-dot herd because there's all different colors in the herd. And let's see, we've got Angus heifers right now that the bull is running with, so… I'm going to call it the black-hided.

Maniscalco: Okay. I'm kind of interested in your parents' farm, with the crops that they were growing. Can you tell us a little bit about how did they decide what to grow, and things like that?

Hambleton: Grew corn for corn silage, grew oats for feed and for straw, and the hay crops, obviously, was bale the hay, fill the haymow—and I say "haymow"—we're in the southern part of the state here, where we don't have mows, here, we have haylofts. I find that to be a little bit of a culture clash. It's kind of like soda and pop. I grew up all my life drinking pop, then I come to southern Illinois to go to school, and I discover it's soda down here. So it's just that culture difference. When you hear me say "haymow," I'm talking that level above the barn where you put all the hay—just in case I need to define my terms for you here. (laughs) But, you know, these are things that come out of my head because this is what I did as a child—played in the haymow, put hay in the haymow. But the crops that we produced was just pretty much for the dairy cattle. The corn, we shelled it as corn on the cob, so when we ground the feed, the cob was the fiber that kept the cattle healthy.

Maniscalco: Now, do you remember your parents using any fertilizers or—

Hambleton: Manure. Are you kidding? When you have dairy cows, you have lots of manure. Ah, there's another memory that just popped up—cleaning out all those sheds with a pitchfork and thinking that the manure spreader would never fill up. And Dad had the manure spreader sitting out the last time I was up to visit him, and I'm looking at that, and I'm going, "That would take me, what, fifteen forkfuls to fill up?" But when I was a little kid, it was—you

thought I was being tortured. So, you know, life gains a different perspective when you get away and then come back. You want to apologize for every argument you ever gave your parents, but… Yeah, I have many things to still make amends, many mea culpas to go through yet in life.

Maniscalco: Were there problems with insects in the crops on their farm?

Hambleton: I don't remember too many problems with insects. I do remember the fungus that came through in '72—'72 or '73—the blight, the corn blight year. I do remember that. That was rather traumatic. We used to have to go through the fields and chop weeds. I don't know if that's how we tortured kids, punished children—but it was effective weed control. And as I would walk through the corn rows, I can remember aphids—oh my goodness, these disgusting little aphids, and Dad would go, "Eh, they don't eat much." So from him, I learned you really don't get excited about insects. Now, black widow spiders—you know everybody talked about black widow spiders out in the woodpile? We had woodpiles everywhere, too, and I would have kind of nightmares about black widow spiders and scary, and as I grow older, I go, You know what, that's not a very big insect. So again, things that used to scare the bejeebers out of me, not anymore.

Maniscalco: Not anymore?

Hambleton: Now it's brown recluses that you've got to worry about, but even them, you can live with.

Maniscalco: Now, what kinds of things do you have to do with the beef cattle, or do you have any problems with disease or any of those things?

Hambleton: When you're in a beef cow-calf operation, your biggest problem is just reproductive problems—not getting cows bred back. Last year was a pretty rough year for us. The first four calves that were born, we lost them. And we'd never had that happen. You know, we'd had these beef cow-calves now for twelve, fifteen years, and we'd never had a year like that. So it was kind of traumatic for us to have that kind of a failure rate. The year before was like a hundred and ten percent because we had twins, so everything produced, and then we had the twins out of the one cow on top of it, so it was quite a jolt. So we ended up culling a bunch of cows because you didn't want to feed them expensive feed and not have a calf to sell at the end. And that's what the new six heifers are that we bought, to bring in to replace those cows that we had. So no real disease problems, mainly because my husband is a very good animal husbandry farmer, so he takes care of his livestock. They get vaccinated, properly nutritioned, and he's got them in an environment where they act like cows. You know, very low stress for them, too. Low stress for us, low stress for them. It's a win-win, huh?

Maniscalco: (laughs) Yeah, that's good. Can you talk just a little bit about the breeding side of it? I mean…

Hambleton: It's easy. You put the bull in with them. We used to do AI. We used to try to do the AI, and my husband is a trained technician, so he knew how to do that, but it's expensive to maintain the nitrogen tank, to maintain the semen that you have to purchase, so we just thought, Let's just go back to the actual service. So he purchased the bull from the SIU beef performance sale, you know, every two to four years, whenever we need to rotate a bull, and it has worked out very well for us. We've always had good temperamented bulls on our farm—so they're not chasing me—and you know, just good reproduction. So when you respect nature for what nature's intended to do, it rewards you with what's supposed to happen. When you try to manipulate it, that's when you start getting really frustrated with it. They're meant to graze—

put them out there and let them graze. The bull is there for servicing—let him service the cows and take the little calf.

Maniscalco: Now you mentioned you had a little bit of equipment on your farm. What sorts of equipment do you have?

Hambleton: We have a large round baler, small square baler, a bunch of tractors—but you have to realize most of those are what you would call family heirloom tractors. My dad—my husband calls it a dowry, but I've got the John Deere tractor from the farm. This John Deere 720, and the Oliver 88—that's the tractor I grew up on. The John Deere, I grew up on. An Allis-Chalmers—again, we've got a unique and rare collection of tractors, all kinds. And again, none of them are huge and big, but all functional. You know, we use them for hauling things and fixing things, and just… Yeah, you'll see some of the line of equipment when we get there.

Maniscalco: Great. So what about the market? I mean—

Hambleton: Markets don't affect us as much as if I was a grain farmer. These are beef cow-calves, so we're selling feeder calves, mostly. Last year, we did finish out some cattle. And I have a true appreciation for people who have feed lots where they are feeding out hundreds of thousands of heads of cattle. We just had thirteen, and holy cow. The mud, what they eat—you just never could think thirteen cows—or steers—could stink the place up like they did. You know, they just stomp mud holes because you have to keep them in a relatively small area, and mud, and oh my goodness… Let's see, where were we going with that one? That one just got away from me.

Maniscalco: Markets. How's that?

Hambleton: The markets, yeah. So we are doing the marketing the beef cow-calf off of our farm, and it's not as much impacted as what the corn and soybean folks are going through right now. Anybody who is feeding feeder cattles or hogs right now, they have my sympathy, to be putting up with these feed prices and the livestock prices that they've got that are not covering that kind of thing. This is going to rock Illinois livestock agriculture here, if we don't get something brought down in the way of prices. There is an equilibrium that we are definitely out of right now.

Maniscalco: What do you kind of see happening with that? I mean, what would your dream be to bring it back to center?

Hambleton: Well, fortunately, I don't have control of the markets, so my dream is just that the markets will work. What the market will do now is it's going to bring out the inefficient producer. It's going to bring in new innovations. For instance, we, at one point, were feeding corn because last year, we lost a lot of our hay crop to the early freeze. And we felt, Well, no problem, we'll just feed the little bit of hay that we did get, stretch it with corn. Well, corn's going four or five dollars. No, we don't feed that anymore. We come up with some innovative ways to keep the nutrition going without the big investment in the feed. So innovation comes into play here. There will be the efficiencies—inefficient producers will leave the market. Something will happen that brings the corn prices down. This is not our reality for the rest of your life, my life. That's what commodity markets are. They're up, they're down, markets react, innovations come in, inefficient producers drop out. It's a cycle that has been going on forever.

Warren: Can you hold on just one second?

Maniscalco: Yes.

Warren: We got a cord just a little bit in here. If you could lift your right foot just a second, and I'm going to pull this back. There we go. We're good now. Sorry about that.

Hambleton: That's okay.

Maniscalco: No problem. Well, now there's another reason why we're here. Not just because you're a great farmwife, but also because you work for the University of Illinois Extension. Can you explain a little bit about what that is and what you do?

Hambleton: The University of Illinois Extension is the public outreach portion of our research facility, our land-grant facility, University of Illinois. I have been with the university now close to thirty years, and part of my responsibility has been production, and for the last eighteen years of it, it has been in the farm managing or the marketing portion of it. My job is to work with the adult education portion of it. New information that comes out of the university is put into a program and delivered through extension.

Maniscalco: So basically what you're doing is taking the new findings that the university comes up with and brings it to the farmer?

Hambleton: That's right, because all your land grants have a mission of public service to take that information that we develop at these public institutions and get that out to where people can use that information. Our motto is "Putting knowledge to work." I really like that. That's a good motto to live by.

Maniscalco: Now, within the Extension, there's a problem that you've worked on and kind of started called Annie's Project.

Hambleton: Yes.

Maniscalco: Can you explain a little bit about Annie's Project and what that does?

Hambleton: Annie's Project—education for farm women—started in February of 2003, the first class graduated. Ten women attended six classes over six weeks at the Kaskaskia Community College in Centralia—very much an experimental program at that time. We designed courses for them that would assist women farmers and landowners to make them better business partners, better business managers, and we could have never guessed that the program is today where it is, based off of those ten women. Now, something very magical happened in that room with those ten women, and we knew we had a good program, we just didn't know how far it was going to go. And the impact that it has had on farm women has far exceeded even what I thought was going to happen with it.

Maniscalco: So, I mean, can you explain what Annie's Project does, exactly?

Hambleton: Annie's Project gets groups of ladies together, and we talk about things that are important to them as the farm women. Now, farm women can be anything from operators of the farm operation—we have had women who are the combine operators, they own the farm, they make all the management decisions, effectively they are the farmer—all the way to the woman who is a widow—several of our women in our classes have been relatively recent widows, and it does break their heart because they're there trying to sort out a life now—and then we now have women who are marrying farmers, who have city backgrounds. Even those with rural backgrounds are not prepared to live with farm families. And so what we do in this class is we

take everybody's experience—they share it amongst themselves—so landowner listens to the farm operator, the woman who has nothing to do with the farm listens to the woman who does everything on the farm, and they become a collective educational community amongst themselves.

We interject the things that are good business practices; the best education practices were used with them. So we are teaching them about balance sheets, cash flows, income statements; we talk about business plans, how do you keep things organized. That was where my mother was just real superb at. Now, while the farm might have been a little chaotic outside, her records were pretty immaculate, and that's why she knew Dad had to go get a job, because she was watching the records. So from the records is where I developed the Annie's Project. My mother is my muse for that program because I said, "She had the formula for getting everybody through tough times, enjoying the good times, and it all was just her ability to organize and keep those records," so that's what we work with the women on. Not everybody's a record-keeper, not everybody's a land-owner, but everybody finds something at Annie's Project. Everybody finds a piece of themselves in my mother, and that's what makes the program, I think, effective, because we women like to relate to what we're learning about. And just to give you an example, I told you that my grandmother lived upstairs, so that meant my mother lived with her mother-in-law, and we share this information in the class. And after one of our classes, one of the gals came up, and she says, "I'm doing that too. What'd your mother do to survive it?" You know, just those little touchstones where everybody feels like, Maybe I can ask a question now because it's okay to ask a question. So it's a very interactive and at times intense course that we put the women through.

It doesn't end with Annie's Project. They go through the course, they become very close with the people who were in the class, and the education just continues on. We've got follow-up courses that go with it: record-keeping, estate planning, grain marketing, grain inventory management. We've just continue to expand the program to meet their needs.

Maniscalco: Wow. Now, it sounds like this program has grown dramatically. Can you tell me—

Hambleton: We are taking Annie's Project nationwide in 2009. Right now, it's in twenty states, and we have plans to take it into all fifty. Canada has inquired about the program, we've had inquiries from across the ocean—Eastern Europe has inquired about it—and there is even some talk about taking it into the Middle East, where women—there is quite a lot of agriculture when you get to the Middle East there that you're not aware of, but just the idea of empowering women to make decisions that produce the food and fiber and now the fuel (laughs) that the world is operating on.

Maniscalco: What is the part of Annie's Project that you think everybody's able to kind of latch onto?

Hambleton: Just that this is not a superwoman that we're talking about. This is everybody's common person. Sometimes you get a hero put up on a pedestal in front of you, and you go, I can never achieve that. And then when we tell Annie's story, everybody goes, Wow, I can do that. There's no hero worship in the program, it's just we tell women that even the most common of you can achieve what farm women need to achieve: happiness, stability, peace in the family, everybody reaches their financial goals, kids are happy, you know, just that core mentality.

Maniscalco: What do you have to do to be a person who teaches in Annie's Project?

Hambleton: That's a little bit more difficult. And as the program has developed, I have discovered it is tougher to find a lot of women who would qualify as instructors. In the beginning, we had those women who qualified as instructors relatively easy to find, but we soon ran out of that pool of women who have the empathy and the experience and the technical knowledge. And now that I've been through this now for a few years, I'm going, I'm pretty remarkable because I've got all those things. And when you try to go find someone who's like yourself, there's not very many of us out there, and you realize how rare it is. So we're building on that. We are working towards making many Annies out there, making many of mes out there that will be able to help that group of women achieve those seemingly impossible tasks on the farm.

Maniscalco: So do you know how many people are actually out there teaching in Annie's Projects?

Hambleton: Oh, in Annie's Projects, we've probably got about thirty people who have helped us with the instruction. Women who have actually gone through the course—in Illinois, we've had 400 go through the course—so it's very much a team teaching effort. And the core of Annie's Project is we give them four things that we promise them. And the first thing is we promise all women safe harbor. That means no question's too stupid to ask—we encourage that, as a matter of fact because as soon as you get the first stupid question out of the way, then here comes the rest of them, and that's great; that's what we want. So safe harbor is there. And then any conversations that we hold in the room are confidential. Nobody's ever going to come back on you and say, Well in Annie's Project—you know, it's not going to happen to them, so they're safe. It's a safe learning environment.

The second thing we give them is guided intelligence. We realize there are women in that classroom that are smarter than the instructors at times, and the instructor steps back and let that person emerge, so they become mentor to the group. The third thing that we give to Annie's Project is discovery—just that new information, that "Aha!" moment that comes on, that Gee, I can actually do that. And let's see, what is the fourth thing? I always have trouble coming up with all four of them at the same time. (laughs) I'm the instructor in this thing, and it's my moniker, but I have trouble coming up with all four of them at the same time. So it's safe harbor, guided intelligence, discovery, and connection—connection is the fourth one. Connection just means that the instructors that we put in front of you will be able to help you make those decisions. You put teams together, and those teams tend to be local. We try to find instructors local, so somebody from out of state comes in and teaches and blows out of there, you never see them again—that's not what we're trying to do; we're trying to connect them to those professionals that'll help. So there's crop insurance salesmen, there's bankers that'll come in, there are women who have outside businesses that will come in and just teach about record-keeping. Those are what I call the core four principles that we do with the women. And they've served us very well.

Maniscalco: You've had a lot of experience with women involved in agriculture, especially in Illinois. What are some of the more prevalent difficulties that women face in agriculture?

Hambleton: You know, that's kind of an odd thing because you would think that—I've been around for fifty-four years. Women's lib came in in what, the sixties and the seventies. You would think by now we'd have all this solved. We don't. There must be something innate in the principles of men and women in agriculture because the problems that we had back in the fifties, sixties, and seventies are still the problems we have today and, you know, in the next century. So I think what we just do is we take women's personalities and we train them to cope with all the stuff

that goes on in agriculture. Yes, it is a man's world, but women can do it, too. It is a very physical world. We do have to realize that we do have physical restraints, that you know, we're not just going to go pick up 200-pound feed bags. You got to go get some help or get the tractor or something. So just giving women those coping skills. We have run into groups of women who want to come back to agriculture. They've left the farm, and they—you know, maybe my age, getting ready to retire, got a little bit of money put away—and they remember the good time on the farm, so they want to come back to it, and we help them, as well, adapt from what was going on twenty, thirty years ago, and we get 'em ready to deal with it again.

Maniscalco: Now again, knowing that you've had a lot of experience with women in agriculture, what are some of the strong points that women are bringing into agriculture? I mean, you've got to see all kinds of incredible things.

Hambleton: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah, there are some really… Well, first off, ideas. Women are just loaded up with ideas. Women are tremendous decision-makers, more so than, I think sometimes, some of the men I have had the honor of instructing as well. Women are much more open about sharing their information; whereas men tend to act more like kingdoms to protect, women, we'll just share everything, you know? And there are a few women who are uncomfortable with sharing that much information, and we respect them as well, but just as a core group, we are very giving, sharing, open community, which is different from the men's side of things. We have worked with women marketing grain, and they have no problem selling a bushel of corn for four or five dollars. Men, on the other hand, are going to hang on to it until it goes to six, and then when it goes to six, they're going to wait until it goes to $6.50. Men are challenged by a different set of things. Women, we look at commodities as something to turn into cash, and when we see profitability, we tend to take it a little bit quicker than the men do. The men have that challenge inside. I don't know… An athlete wants to win, you know, hits the home run—that's what makes him feel good. We women, we're glad to get to first base with our marketing. And several of the women have just done a superb job with that marketing. In fact, several of the men have turned the marketing over to the women as a result of going through Annie's Project, and just getting the confidence to do this kind of stuff. My mother was a good marketer of grain, and you know, I've been able to pass that along to some of the women. And if you make a mistake, so what, you know? If you made a profit, who cares? Life still goes on, otherwise we could have killed agriculture a long time ago.

Maniscalco: Now you said Annie's Project is hoping to go nationwide in 2009?

Hambleton: Two thousand nine.

Maniscalco: That's a big step. What are the sorts of things that you're doing to get there, to do that?

Hambleton: We're putting the leadership teams in place right now. In fact, we've had a leadership team in place for the last three years of this thing, and that leadership team has taken the project from Illinois and put it in the surrounding states, and now we're going on to that next radius of surrounding states. And then we've just decided to go nationwide with it because this is not just a fluke, now. We see that this is a permanent program that will have implications in Alaska as much as is in Florida. And that leadership team consists of men and women who have brought instruction, structure, and purpose to this whole program. If it was just me here in the state of Illinois, and a program here in Illinois quietly done, put on the shelf, and moved on, but because other states got ahold of it and showed me, showed us here in this state that it could expand, we're going nationwide with it.

Maniscalco: Very interesting. Now, to follow that, what do you see the future of Annie's Project?

Hambleton: The future of Annie's Project—let's see, it is now, what? Five years old. Somebody described her as a teenager, in the stage of growing up here. She is now a teenager, and we have found that a lot of people want to do things with our teenager. The difficult part of this program is maintaining the core principles of Annie's Project. We don't want anybody to come in and change something and use the name. Now, we want them to adapt the program to their local areas, so when you get to Alaska, fisheries is going to be a bigger thing that we do with the women up there. When you get down to Florida, it's going to be maybe more agritourism and, you know, they do have orchards and fruits and vegetables. And Texas has fruits and vegetables and cattle, you know, just cotton and… We do want them to adapt it to that, but there's that core principle, those four things I said, plus just all women seem to have that common need for information, deal with situations.

In this teenager stage that Annie's Project finds herself now, we've got people coming in and saying, "Oh, we're going to put it online." No, you can't put Annie's Project online. There are things you can share online, but you have to have an instructor. You've got to have people sitting in a room talking to each other. That's what makes this work. Oh, well… And then they still want to put it online. They still want to take the name, and they still want to do things with it. So what we've got is this core leadership team—we're acting as the grumpy old parents right now, you know, beating people away from anybody who would take Annie's Project and turn it into something that is not. We don't want them taking the good name that women recognize now. That's the fun thing about this, is when… We just got through with a conference in Oklahoma City where women would say, "Oh, I was in Annie's Project," and somebody would be like, "Oh, so was I!" And, you know, they're in totally different states, but they had that common experience. And so that's what we want to maintain, is when someone in Alaska says, "Yeah, I was in an Annie's Project," a person in Florida can say, "Yeah, I was in one, too," and they both have the same experience—you know, adapted for them, but the same experience.

Maniscalco: Yeah. What are some of the things you're doing to maintain those four values that you were talking about?

Hambleton: We send instructors to the different states that want to start Annie's Projects, so we train them. We train them in the ways, we show them the website where all the resources are located for them, we encourage them to adapt curriculum, but the most important thing that we do with them is we find somebody who has that same heart and understanding of what it is farm women need. We've had some states send curriculum to us and say, "How can I adapt this to make it work for women?" And it'll be like forty slides in a PowerPoint. Okay, first thing you have to learn if you're going to be an instructor in Annie's Project, if you come with a PowerPoint presentation, you may get the first three of them up on the screen, and then the women are going to take over. They're going to start talking, they're going to ask you questions. It's going to make sense at the time that they're asking those questions to take the program in another direction. You've got to be flexible. So getting those instructors that understand how it is that women learn and are willing to let go—that's that guided intelligence part of the program. If they're not willing to let go—and there are some instructors that aren't—we get some really negative reviews back on them. It'll be things like, "This class wasn't as much fun as everybody told us about." Well, that's because you just plowed through 120 slides on a PowerPoint. You know, that's no fun for anybody.

So yeah, we're working real hard to do the training. We actually set foot in the state where this is going to happen, and then when the state delivers their first Annie's Project, we try to make sure they have a good experience because that's the seed that makes it grow, then. Maryland just got through with theirs, Michigan is finishing up theirs, and they both had some real positive experiences. The women are fired up, and they're ready to go, you know take it to all parts of the state now. So that's what we're trying to do to spread. It spreads by itself. I have to say that it's a little bit of effort on our part to start it, but if we get it started right, it takes care of itself.

Maniscalco: Now, personally, as yourself, what was the hardest part about getting Annie's Project going?

Hambleton: Oh, the hardest part? I'm not a very good organizer. I have ideas. Oblivious child, you know? I still have that element in me. My mind is just cranking away, and I'm in my own little fantasy world. But getting everything pulled together to where you deliver it according to the publicity. So you've got to get the publicity out, you've got to get the curriculum lined up, you've got to train the instructors… And while I had the idea in my head, and I knew the end effect that I wanted, there's all this stuff that has to happen in between, and that was the hard part for me. Now, fortunately, in our leadership team, we've got people who are just really good with the middle part of the program, so we can dream up the ideas, think about our outcomes, and these other people make it happen. So that's been a nice thing to have.

Maniscalco: Yeah. To kind of move forward a little bit with what we're doing, can you tell us a little bit about your experiences with like government programs in farming?

Hambleton: Well, I've grown up with a lot of them. From childhood days, I remember soil banking, and just the joke back then was, "You're paid to not farm?" Yeah, that's right. You banked your soil. You basically just didn't grow anything on it, and the government would send you this check. Lots of changes, as we've observed through the years. In the sixties and the seventies, I would say that's the rise of the horsepower. We went from small farms, small equipment to the big, big equipment. Then we went through safe food policies, we went through environmental policies, we went through fiscal policies—the Farm Program as it is designed right now, where we have a safety net provided by the government, is a pretty effective one. It's not popular right now. There's a lot of money in agriculture, and people are saying, "Why do you need the safety net, someone who is doing so well?" And I think of farming like a flying trapeze act. You're swinging back and forth, and you get to these apexes up here, and you go, I don't need that safety net. Well, then all of a sudden, you know, the swing breaks or something, and now you're crashing down. Yeah, you need the safety net. So to maintain a safety net, I would really like to see that the role of the government, but unfortunately, we have groups of people who get a hold of that government program and try to shape farm policy with it, and I think that's an inappropriate role for the agriculture, for the government. Let the market shape agriculture. Give them the safety net so they can go out and make those investments in agriculture. You know, they're going to fall, but at least they're not going to fall all the way through, and let the markets work where they need to.

Maniscalco: Good. Now, being a farmer yourself, I'm kind of curious—what are the pleasures you're getting from farming?

Hambleton: What are the pleasures I'm getting from farming? It is my life. It's my shot. I go out to my garden. It's very solitude-type life, so very little stress. It's one I hope my children have, although it looks like most of my children are going to wind up in cities, in towns. Maybe one

daughter might wind up on a farm. It's just a lifestyle I realize that ninety-five percent of the population doesn't have it, and I do. So I think it's unique, it's rare, it's wonderful, it's productive—it's my life on the farm.

Maniscalco: Now, working with the Extension, you get to meet tons of people who are involved in agriculture and farming. What sorts of pleasures do you hear from them? What are some of their favorite parts?

Hambleton: Well, when you're talking to the male side of the population, it's ownership. I call it kingdom-building. Men like to have kingdoms. They like to have their family around them, they like things to be going well. Women like being married to people who have kingdoms. That's kind of the way it's been. On the women's side that I have run into, from them, that's where I've learned my gardening skills. I've watched several women—as I was growing up in my Extension career—I took all their good ideas, and I took them back to my farm. So I watched women put together good family environments, you know, good meals on the table, they do the laundry. You'd be surprised how much laundry is a big deal on a farm because you know, you're always dragging in all these dirty clothes, and just a fresh-faced farmer walking out, with his lunchbox in hand, to his shed—his kingdom is intact. He's being taken care of, he's being productive, he's building his wealth, and that's what makes these people happy. And the bottom line is we want to make a living for our families out there, and we want to do it on our terms, so that's what makes us farmers.

Maniscalco: Now, to look to the other side of that, what are the difficulties for yourself?

Hambleton: Oh, geez, there's a lot of those. Well, not for myself. Myself, I've really lived a charmed life; I don't have a lot of difficulties. But for some of the other families that I see, poor health will just devastate a family. If there are divorces in the family, that will be devastating. Kids who are born into farming and then they don't want to farm tend to be a disappointment. And I say "disappointment"—a parent wants their kids to inherit what it is they've put together, so when the kids don't want that farm, they say, "All right, what do we do with this farm now?" So there's some of that aspect. Putting families together, because agriculture, we're just like an octopus out there. We'll start with this one little farm, and the next thing you know, we've got Grandma, Grandpa, nieces, nephews, uncles, aunts—everybody's involved in it. There's no place to carve your own family out, so family stresses can be pretty significant on these farm operations. And financial. I know we have expensive prices right now—good prices for the grain farmer—but for most of my years in Extension, finances has been the difficult part. Just running out of money.

Maniscalco: Yeah, well what about the future of your farm? I mean, you have kids. Do you think one of your kids is going to take over?

Hambleton: No, I don't think the kids will take over our farm operation, and that may be what makes me a little unique. I don't expect my kids to do what I do. I want them to have their own lives. Our farm, probably, when Ken and I get too old to do anything on it, will—well, he's not leaving. He is a farmer. He is going to die with his boots on on that farm. Let's just get that out of the way right now. You know, me, if I'm a widow—and I talk to my kids about this—I say, "You know, there's going to be a day when Dad's not going to be here, I'm not going to be here—just depends who goes first," and we hold the what-if conversations, and we say, "You know where all the papers are, and you know what to do," so it is something that we rehearse. The future of the farm is not one that I think will stay in the family, but that's okay with us.

Maniscalco: Now, I'm really interested in your opinion on this because I see you talking to all sorts of people involved with agriculture through the Extension. What do you see the future of farming?

Hambleton: Huge. I am agriculture's biggest fan, absolute biggest fan. I see commodity production going huge, but I also see the little guy emerging. It's kind of like the dinosaur and the little mammal, you know, running around underneath his feet. As long as the dinosaur doesn't squish the mammal, everybody lives pretty well together. So agritourism, huge—where people who don't have the farm experience, you can actually come out to the farm and get an experience. Those people who live near city populations, like my dad does now, they're not going to do commodity production, but they're going to produce food for those people who want to know where their food is coming from. It's not everybody, but there is a faithful group of people who would like to know that this is locally grown, and more than just food, I'm supporting a cause here. So I'm just very optimistic about agriculture. If I could put my kids into it, I would encourage them to go into agriculture.

Maniscalco: What about, you know, the little family farm? And I mean you mentioned a little bit about it. It seems like a lot of family farmers are having difficult times—you know, the smaller farmers, not the larger operations.

Hambleton: Oh, the larger operations, they have their difficulties too. This is where you try to put agriculture in a box. You think of the little farmhouse with the picket fence, a few chickens, a couple cows, and Dad on his tractor going out to his well-kept fields. That's everybody's image of a farm, but in reality, a farm can be anything from a three-acre strawberry patch out there all the way to, you know, 50,000 acres that somebody runs twenty combines over. So to pigeonhole it and say the small family farm—yeah, there are going to be some changes that have to be made. One that my dad showed us how to do, you go off and get a job so you can keep the farm. It's a lifestyle. That makes a lot of people mad when I say that. They say, "It's not a lifestyle; it should be my job." Well, it should be your job, but it's not. Things have changed, so we adapt. We're the portion of the farm that can adapt. So I don't want to get stuck in that, I don't want to think it's up to me to preserve that, but if you want to preserve it, if family farm is important to you, then you'll do things that you have to do to maintain that operation.

Maniscalco: What do you see for the future of women in farming?

Hambleton: Huge. In fact, that is one of the faster-growing populations in agriculture—women who are coming back to farm operations. Well, first off, women who left the farm operation. There's a lot of value in it now. Land values are high, cash rents are high. They see the value in it, so they're coming back to it for that reason. They're coming back to it because they have fond memories of it. They love it. Like my husband wanted to raise his kids on a farm, there are women who want to raise their kids in the country and teach them about chores, being productive. So the women—it's a huge portion of it. Women will have money. The women that we deal with in Annie's project who want to go out and buy a little ten-acre farm and put a couple of horses out there, do a community garden, and sell their produce at farmers' markets—lots of women out there that do that.

Maniscalco: And, you know, finally, we've hit our last question. (laughs)

Hambleton: Finally. Okay.

Maniscalco: You know, this is an oral history interview, and this is going to be around for a long, long time, and there's the possibility that one of your kids, grandkids, great-great-grandkids could one day run across this and say, "Look, there's Grandma Ruth's interview over there," and you know, what would you like to be included in this interview for them? What would you like them to walk away with?

Hambleton: Oh, just to have my optimism in the world. So if my grandkids are watching… (laughs) Well, a lot of people look at me and say, "Why is it that you just never seem to lose it?" I can get through a lot, and it's because I don't take anything to heart. You know, if you have an opinion about me, that's great. Everybody has opinions. You just don't have to buy into 'em. I'm very optimistic about things. Now, the odd thing about it is my core is negative, but I have learned that negative gets you nowhere. Being positive does. So roll with the punches, tomorrow's another day, and as long as you're not dead, you've got do something the next day. (laughs) And yeah, that's what the grandkids need to know. That's what my kids need to know.

Maniscalco: Well, thank you very much, Ruth.

Hambleton: You're welcome.

Maniscalco: This was a great interview, and it was a pleasure to meet you.

Hambleton: And Mike, good talking to you.

(End of interview)