Oral History of Illinois Agriculture

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Abstract: Deanna Glosser was born on March 27, 1950 in Chicago Illinois. Both of Deanna's parents grew up on farms in rural areas of Illinois and as a child she had a connection to those farms, visiting in the summer. Deanna explained that as a child it was great to visit the farm because the work was fun and different than city life and there were always things to do and play with. She did admit that she probably was not the best at milking cows or collecting eggs, but her grandfather was very patient and taught her well. Deanna eventually went to college at the age of 30 and received an undergraduate degree in Anthropology focusing on what and how people eat. She later received a Doctoral Degree in Environmental Planning and became interested in food planning in cities, which led her to the Slow Food Movement. Deanna explained that the Slow Food Movement started in reaction to a McDonald's opening in the center of Rome, and the plethora of corporate fast food franchises. Now the organization is found world wide and has approximately 183 thousand members. The focus of this organization is to get food on the table that is locally grown in a responsible and respectful way, and to educate people through tomato and wine tastings, farmers markets, and other seasonal events.

Keywords: Chicago, IL; Slow Food Movement; Farmers Market; Anthropology; Environmental Planning

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Interview with Deanna Glosser

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August 21, 2008
Interviewer: Michael Maniscalco

Maniscalco: We're now recording. Say something.

Glosser: Good morning! Good afternoon.

Maniscalco: Today is August 21, 2008 and we are sitting here at the Illinois State Museum, RCC. We're sitting with Deanna Glosser. How are you doing, Deanna?

Glosser: Just fine.

Maniscalco: Great. I'm going to ask you the real easy questions and then we're going to get into the hard ones, all right?

Glosser: Like a test, okay.

Maniscalco: It's just like a test, don't worry about it. How about your date of birth and where you were born?

Glosser: I was born on March 27, 1950 in the city of Chicago.

Maniscalco: In the city of Chicago. All right. What kind of childhood did you have?

Glosser: I probably had somewhat unique of a childhood in that I grew up in the Chicago area—moved all over the city of Chicago, South Side suburbs—I ended up graduating from high school in Hardy, Illinois, which is about 20 miles south of downtown, but my parents families were from small towns in Missouri and my mother's side of the family were all farmers and my father's family—really small towns. Mayberry-ish, you know? Andy Griffith could have been from there. And so I was the only in my Girl Scout Troop, for example, that had the cow badge and the pig badge, you know—all of the farm badges because we went back to my grandparents every year. They were small, poor, but sustainable farmers in the sense that everything they ate, practically, came off the land. So I was raised with apples that I didn't know were going to be non-existent when I grew up and chickens and pigs and cows and fresh milk and… So it was a unique childhood, and that was probably the most important part of my childhood, the time that I spent on the farm.

Maniscalco: Now how was it, as you said, going to Girl Scouts and you were the only one with those badges. What were the other kids…?

Glosser: They thought I was weird. I would describe milking a cow and the other girls would go, "Eww." Collecting eggs… I was never very good at it. My grandfather, bless his heart, was very patient. Because you thought you were doing a good job, but looking back on it, you realize, It took him five times longer to collect eggs with me with him. But it was a learning experience. It was something completely invaluable. As a child, I would not be the same person today if I had not been raised as an urban person but had that rural background.

Maniscalco: What was your grandfather's farm like? Can you explain it, if you were to give us a picture of it?

Glosser: It was very small. It was a forty-acre farm. He raised corn, alternating with alfalfa. It was the tradition at the time–you did a little bit of everything. He had bees, he had an apple orchard. He had raspberries growing out of the front ditch. They had cows for fresh milk and chickens and sheep. They didn't do pigs when I was growing up. When my mother was growing up, they actually slaughtered their own animals so they had their own—Almost everything they consumed came off of their land. Once a week, they would go into town and that's where they would get their coffee or their sugar. Now, it's not a life that you'd necessarily aspire to today because they were very poor. But it was old barns with wonderful hay lofts, you know. Things to climb upon(??). It was the perfect setting if I could think about where I would want to be a child, especially one that didn't actually have to work on the farm.

Maniscalco: Can you tell us the games that you played while you were there?

Glosser: One of the favorite games—there were a lot—but one of the favorite games was there was a root cellar. There was this big mound and we used to always play King of the Mountain and somebody would be defending their position. But a lot of it was just roaming. That was where I learned about things like frogs and what was in a stream, because if you walked down the hill—They had a farm previously that was in what they called "the bottom," which was in the flood plain of the Missouri River and then they bought what they called "in the hills."

You went down the hill and there was a creek that ran through there and so my one brother, who was not quite four years younger than I—we spent every moment we had, no matter what time of the year we went, outside exploring, looking at what was in a creek. My grandparents would take us to what then they called the "dump" because they didn't have garbage pickup in those days and so you took what little garbage you had out to the back 40. You can't even imagine that today, but that's what you did. You dumped it back. And so we loved going there because there would be all the cans and bottles and frogs and giant bullfrogs. It was a really an exploring time. We didn't realize how much we were learning. We would have probably been opposed to it if we thought we were, being kids, actually learning things (laughter). But it was exploring and then things like King of the Hill.

Maniscalco: Those are great childhood strategies that you have. You said your mother grew up on this farm. How was it, as a child, having a mother who grew up on this farm who had to do all these things you said your grandparents had to do to survive, to get their food and things? What kind of person was your mother?

Glosser: My mother, as you can imagine, rejected all of those things and she relished the urban life. She didn't—On occasion, we had a garden in the city, but she didn't do jams or jellies or homemade bread. I mean, she just adopted everything that was about current life—store bought bread and store bought food, "Oh my gosh, isn't a grocery store totally wonderful?"

I don't know that anybody at that time actually believed that what they were living was some ideal life. I felt that way because I was a kid experiencing it from my viewpoint. But I asked my aunt one time, after she was in her early seventies and had moved to town. I felt so sad for her that she had to move into town and give up her farm and her garden. I was in my early twenties. I said, "Oh, Aunt Kate, don't you just miss that?"

She looked at me and said, "Are you out of your mind? I wouldn't plant a garden again." I was dumbfounded. I couldn't that she didn't savor every moment of that. But again, I didn't have to do it for survival, so I didn't realize that they wanted to be in town where everything was available and accessible.

Maniscalco: It's interesting that you wanted to be on the farm and they wanted to be in town.

Glosser: It's what you don't have, I guess. The grass is always greener.

Maniscalco: (laughter) That's good. So you had this urban upbringing but yet you had this experience with the rural areas with the farm and everything else and you were about twenty, nineteen, and you went off to college. Can you tell us about what you went to college for and why?

Glosser: When I went to college or when I went back(??). I went to college initially right out of high school. I thought I wanted to be a school teacher. So I went to Eastern Illinois University and discovered that I did not want to be a school teacher. Education was just starting with that experimental stuff and kids be a little more – I'm an orderly person, so expect orderly… Education is no longer orderly. I got married after being in school for a year and I didn't go back to finish my college education until I was thirty. So I did a whole array of things trying to find that magic job that would not require me to go back to college.

I finally discovered that, woe be it, I was going to have to go back to school. So I went back to Illinois State University. When I was 30 and I ended up being an anthropology major, interestingly enough, food ways was my area of interest as an interest. There was an anthropologist at ISU that that was his area of interest and so I spent a lot of my time looking at, other than the required things, looking at why people eat what they do, how they eat, what food customs there are, what it means to be eating in different societies and so forth and sharing food. Then I went to the University of Illinois. I finished my bachelor's degree in anthropology and then went to the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, and got a PhD in environmental planning—urban and regional planning with an environmental planning emphasis. Totally away from the anthropology—

Maniscalco: How did you get into that?

Glosser: I'm being modest—I was an excellent student. I was a straight A student and everybody kept encouraging me, because I love anthropology. I can almost always identify when I'm talking to someone who's an anthropologist that's just—I'm not saying you are one—but there is something about anthropologists that are special people. There's an intellectual thing about anthropologists that I always can identify with. But I thought getting a job in anthropology was like—eighty people would apply for one teaching position that paid nothing at ISU. And I was also interested in the environmental issues. I was active in the National Audubon Society and so forth. So they said, "Why don't you combine your interest in people and your interest in the environment and become an environmental planner," so maybe you can be that bridge the scientist and the people who are making decisions about land use planning and try to protect the environment. Nothing to do with food at that time.

So I ended thinking, That was—It was a practical thing to do. It wasn't where my love might have been. I would have rather been an anthropologist, but here I am all these years later. I got a PhD in environmental planning.

Maniscalco: That's great!

Glosser: (laughter) It's a little convoluted approach of getting here but now I'm back to food, so I think we all come full circle to things that are of interest to us.

Maniscalco: And as you said, you're back to food. So tell us what sorts of things you're doing with food, exactly.

Glosser: I've always been interested in food. I'm about entertaining and sharing food with family and friends, didn't know I was a slow food person all those years that I was liking to have people over and cook for them and so forth. So it was actually four years ago this past Spring—I'm active in a professional organization, The American Planning Association. So my food stuff actually started from a professional standpoint.

There was a speaker at a conference, a gentleman from Wisconsin, retired professor Jerry Kaufman(??)—he gave a speech asking why planners—we're talking about urban planners, the people that decide where things go and where streets go and so forth—why planners weren't worried about the food system. Why did they totally ignore the food system? Who has access to groceries? Where does our food come from? And I sat in the audience and I thought, Wow. I never even thought about that before, but he's right. So I contacted him and we are continuing to work today on major efforts within this national organization on getting food system planning into mainstream planning.

The first thing we did with APA was we got them interested in developing a policy guide, which is one of the big, underlying things that drive what the organization does. So a year ago this past April, the APA adopted a community and regional food planning policy guide. Now we're working with people all across the country on what they're doing in their cities and their counties to help establish local, sustainable food systems.

So that was the first thing, sort of a professional level let's-get-this-going in our profession, which then made me come across Slow Food, the organization. Two years ago this last January, we held our first meetings with local people just trying to find out what interest might there be in putting together some kind of group. We didn't have to be "Slow Food," I said. We could make up our own name. And we decided that having an identity with an established organization was what was best, so we then went about forming Slow Food Springfield, which is one of the chapters within. In 132 countries around the world, there are 83,000 members of Slow Food.

Maniscalco: Can you explain what slow food is?

Glosser: Do you want a note on the history?

Maniscalco: I want it all (laughter).

Glosser: It's not even very old. It's not even very old. Slow Food was founded in 1986 in Italy and that's where maybe forty percent of the members of Slow Foods are in Italy. It was founded in Italy by Carlo Catrini(??) in 1986 as sort of a revolt. The name of it is Slow Food because it's a revolt of the fast food industry. McDonald's was establishing putting in a restaurant in the historic district of Rome and a lot of the Romans were just outraged that they would allow a fast food restaurant to invade the bastion of the gastronomic splendor of Italy. So they got together and formed this organization and, initially, the focus was fairly narrow. It was about, We have to maintain the way we develop our foods, the way we eat our foods, the fact that we have two hour lunches which Americans would be appalled by a two-hour lunch. They work later in the day. But eating is a very social, a very important part of many Europeans lives, but particularly in Italy. And so, but now slow food has really expanded well beyond that. It's only been since 1986, so it's only been twenty-two years. So in twenty-two years, to have grown to 132 countries, 183,000 members…

Now they're really about envisioning a food system that's healthy to the environment, healthy for humans to eat, more nutritious, and getting into things like social equity, where you have access to goods by everyone. A lot of our inner cities, even Springfield for example—they have what's called "food deserts," where low-income people really don't have access to quality foods. They have convenience stores, they have fast food restaurants, something that's become a real concern to planners and inner cities. Chicago has already mapped the location of all their grocery stores that have good produce and good meat selections as opposed to—I don't want to name names—convenient food stores that focus on chips and other kinds of junk food.

So Slow Food is about all these other things. About sustainable food systems, it's about saving livestock and plant or crop species that are almost extinct. It's amazing to think that, according to the Slow Food material, ninety percent of our crops and livestock—those individual species or breeds—have become extinct or nearly extinct since 1900. Our global food system now is focused on such a narrow range of crops and breeds that it really does put us at risk. If you only have a couple of strains, like when you think about potatoes in the grocery store, you might have four brands of potatoes, four different breeds. There are hundreds, and yet we've selected just a few. The reason for that is they transport well. When you're transporting food—in fact, they say the average distance a morsel of food our typical plate, American dinner plate, travels 1,500 miles to get to that plate. We're trying to be more local for lots of reasons—energy, nutrition, taste, supporting local farmers, there's a local economic issue of buying locally, a dollar circulate within your community.

So there's a whole lot of things that now Slow Food is about. They have all sorts of programs for education. They've got Slow Food organizations organized on college campuses, school garden programs. I had a teacher here contact me and ask if we have anyone that could help them get a garden in their school. It was nothing that I could take on, but I tried to put her in touch with some people that could help them get a garden in their school. So there's a whole range of things now that Slow Foods is about. But it's basically about having sustainable, healthy food systems available to everyone and enjoying food with our family and friends.

Maniscalco: What is the Slow Food movement that you're involved in in Springfield, what are they doing to kind of back this sort of… What sorts of activities are taking place?

Glosser: They seem like mostly fun activities, but in a way, they're educating consumers about what the local food system can be about. Things have changed dramatically, just in two years. I think, with people, with all the concerns with food that has come from China, salmonella, all the different food outbreaks in—what was the most recent one where they thought it might be tomatoes and they didn't know? We've got a lot more people now that ask to participate in our local events because, as one woman said, "I don't want to eat food anymore that I don't know where it came from."

So, tracking your food. In the summer months, we almost exclusively do farm tours where we go to local farms. In June, we went to a farm just south of Williamsville, which is not very far from here, and she was relatively new. This was only her second year. We've got lots of new local producers in this region, now, as there is everywhere in the country. And so in the summer months, it's all farm tours. In the end of August, we're doing a tomato, wine, and cheese tasting. We've got a new wine store in town that is working with two women and the farmer, to match wines that would go well with the tomatoes, because the one thing we don't think about—We think of tomatoes as this one thing that comes from the grocery store. Well, maybe plum tomatoes and then these other things that mostly aren't very good tomatoes because, again, they're transported from so far away.

If you ever get to do a tomato tasting—and I strongly encourage you to do that—We did a tomato tasting last august at the same farm, Jubilee Farm on the west side of Springfield, and he had like twenty-one different varieties of tomatoes for us to taste, which really ended up being too many because you just got to the point of, like, one more tomato that you had to taste. But the taste ranged anywhere from—The same is true of apples. You bite into these vegetables—or actually fruit—you would never believe the taste. They range from sweet to sour to tart to—They just tasted like no tomatoes that you get from the grocery store and then even the ones from our garden. The ones we're talking about now are heirloom tomatoes, which are non-hybridized, so they're very different than the tomatoes. They've been around for a long, long time. Some of these were here when our great grandfathers were farming. So we do farm tours and then we do others.

Two of our big events: September, we do local harvest potluck and so that's where everybody comes and they bring some sort of dish that's been made primarily with local—you can't make everything with local foods—but mainly local foods. I made a butternut squash lasagna which was really quite a hit. We had wonderful dishes being brought. And in November we cosponsor with Illinois Stewardship Alliance, another local group that works on food system issues, to do a "Meet Your Local Producer Event," where this year we're holding it at one of the buildings at the fairgrounds. Last year was our first and we had twenty local producers come and have booths where they could explain to the public what they do, what they grow, some had samples, some had things to sell.

This year it's really exciting because we're doing it the Saturday before Thanksgiving and they're actually going to have packages with things to sell for Thanksgiving because, surprisingly, there's a lot of stuff still available to sell in November, mostly root crops—carrots, sweet potatoes, potatoes, I'm not sure what else will be there. Probably not lettuce, which would be unfortunate, or tomatoes, that would also be unfortunate. But we'll be selling Thanksgiving dinner packages at this event, some of the farmers will.

Last year, I remember, when we were sitting there, we had everything all set up and we thought, Oh, what if no one comes? This took so much effort to put together… We were packed from the time it opened at 10:00 am until it closed at 2:00. The public came out in droves to see what this was all about. In fact, the producers said, "You need a bigger location," because it was way too crowded. So we've moved it to a larger venue for this November.

And then we do other things like in January, we're doing a food film festival at the Illinois State Museum as a co-sponsor. So we're going to do an all-day film festival focused on food, ranging from fun stuff about Cajun cooking to serious stuff about maybe genetically modified organisms or some other serious part of our food system.

February, we've always done a Mardi Gras event to celebrate something different, it doesn't have to be local, but we do a Mardi Gras event. And in December we do a holiday dinner somewhere. We've gone to Maldener's(??). Last year—and we may do it again this year—we had a specialty chef come. Auggie's(??) a burner(??) and cooked a meal for us at the Passfield(??) House, so we combined a historic thing with having a local chef come in and cook for us.

So a whole bunch of things we do, and a lot of it's focused on educating the consumer, or as Slow Food said, "None of us are really consumers." We're all co-producers. We all have to educate ourselves. We're all a part of that food system, and so we're all a part of what the farmers are doing. So if we think of ourselves only as consumers, we're kind of distancing ourselves from the land and from any responsibility towards being good stewards of our land and good stewards of our food system.

Maniscalco: That's great. That's a lot of stuff to do, holy cow!

Glosser: We do something once a month, so…

Maniscalco: I have a couple questions to go along with all these things. First of all, we're talking about eating locally and these local foods. What sorts of answers are you coming up with or ideas are you coming up with for these food deserts, as you called them? I can imagine in the center of Chicago, there's a problem with finding a grocery that's going to supply you with good foods. What are the answers to that?

Glosser: The city of Chicago is one that has worked on this and part of it's an economic development program to put together packages to encourage restaurants to site(??)—It is difficult. It is a challenge because restaurants have location criteria. But the city of Chicago put together a

package to get Dominic's, a major food chain, to come into just south of the downtown. I mean it was a major coup because it was not an area that you would expect a big chain like Dominic's to come into. So the cities have to work with their economic development teams to put together those kind of packages, but other things that are happening that are not happening here—Los Angeles just passed an ordinance that is quite controversial and certainly will be challenged that will require convenience food stores to start selling produce and actually healthier foods as opposed to just selling potato chips and soda, that they're going to have to bring in fresh produce to the stores and some people are not happy with this, like the convenience store owners (laughter). But that's the kind of thing that cities are looking at, trying to put packages together to bring in good grocery stores or, now, this effort to trying to get the ones that are there to sell good stuff.

Maniscalco: What about farmer's markets?

Glosser: It's interesting, of course there are lots of farmers—I was just thinking of some other things that don't necessarily affect the entire population of the city, but… City gardens are becoming hugely popular. Chicago has had some areas that there have been city gardens around, but they're becoming more common. Vacant lots that there's not building that people come in and put together a garden. The risk there and the controversy in Chicago is that then when the owner wants to build something on it, then you lose your—It ends up being very controversial. So there are other things that are in the urban areas, not necessarily the deserts. Some of the newer developments in suburban developments are incorporating farming as a part of—not corn and soybean farming but urban farming. That's becoming much more common, to incorporate urban farming into your subdivision setting. There's only one that I know of in the Chicago area right now, but it's much more common on the West Coast and becoming more common on the East Coast. Prairie Crossing and Gray's(??) Lake is a big subdivision development that has all sorts of incredible features to it, but one of them is it has a 120-acre organic garden that is actually privately operated and a CSA—community supported agricultural—operation for Prairie Crossings as a first priority, whoever lives at Prairie Crossings can buy into this so they can get their produce right from behind their homes, I mean right in the same subdivisions.

So there are new things that are being tried, but I would say that's part of what the excitement of this is. It's new enough, there's probably going to be a lot more answers in five years than what there are right now, but people are trying different things, they're trying approaches that haven't been tried, ordinances that haven't been tried before, and I think we're going to see more happening in the next two or three years.

Maniscalco: Now, my other question is—When you're eating food locally, here we are in Illinois. We have multiple seasons. December, there's not going to be a lot of growing, and as American citizens, we're very used to having strawberries and cantaloupe and different fruits and vegetables on our table year round. How are you answering that question of the public when they say, "But in December, if we eat locally, we can't have strawberries."

Glosser: Well, obviously, living in a climate like ours, you can't be what they call a "localvore." You can't be reliant on food within a hundred miles all year round. Realistically, you can't. Our grandparents did it and our great grandparents did it by working very, very hard canning and

they didn't have freezers then, so they were canning beef and putting things into the root cellar. And that is becoming a more popular way of putting food up.

My stepdaughter has got two young children and she's terribly concerned about the food that she's feeding herself and her children. So her and her husband , they put up corn, they're canning tomato juice, their freezer's getting stocked full of fresh peaches and we're both going to do both applesauce and apple butter in the fall. So there are more people becoming interested, but it's a time issue. That can't be the solution. I know for me, I can't put all my food up in July and August so I can survive all winter.

Then what you try to do is you try to do as local as possible. Most people are not aware that a lot of our lettuce is coming from Africa. It's grown in Africa, it's shipped to New Jersey, and then it's shipped across the country. What's the mileage on that? I don't know what the mileage from Africa to Springfield, but what, it's got to be 6,000 miles. So as opposed to that, look at where your stuff comes from and don't buy strawberries in January. There's no reason why we should be guaranteed strawberries in January. They're terribly destructive to the ground and to the waters off the coast of California. There's a tremendous amount of runoff. I've been out there and seen strawberry fields that are right on the edge of the ocean. All those pesticides and fertilizers that are washing off into the ocean. Huge dead zones off the coast. So I think we should be responsible and realize, Strawberries are nice but they're not even all the best strawberries in January. We should be responsible—no strawberries in January. We'll wait until strawberries are in season or they can be brought in where they're not as difficult to grow in the winter months. They don't have to be shipped 2,000 miles.

I tell people I don't have a commitment to the hundred mile—I eat foods as locally as I can. I mean if there's sweet corn in season and it's right down the road, that's where I get it. I don't go the grocery store and get it from Colorado, which is where a lot of it comes from. But now it's December and I need corn, I'm going to buy a bag of frozen corn. I mean, we have to eat. So, "As local as possible," is my line.

Maniscalco: I'm thinking about grocery stores also and grocery store chains. What are you doing to try to get local produce into those grocery stores when it is in season?

Glosser: We're seeing more of that this season. In fact that last couple of times I walked into Schnucks and lots of times they'll have a little display and there will be a few little tomatoes and sign that says "Locally Grown Tomatoes," and I always think, I don't know what that means. Locally grown somewhere. Not that you don't want to trust your corporate America, but they get these play on words like Locally Grown in Arkansas. Well, no, I want locally grown here.

So there have been meetings Illinois Surgic(??) Alliance and others have worked with the grocery stores and they are bringing more foods into the stores. I went into Schnucks and they had a huge display, a big sign saying "Illinois Locally Produced Foods" and they had different foods with the name of the farm where it came from – Jubilee Farm… So I think we're going to see more and more of that because it's now not just an issue of, you know, Wal-Mart's getting a

lot of attention because they're bringing in organic food, but it's organic food being brought in 2,000 miles away. It was organic lettuce there a couple years ago that had the salmonella problem because it gets processed in the same facility that non-organic does, so it has the same risks to the food system that other stuff does.

So now people are not as worried. They want organic food, but they want organic local food because they don't want the food that has come 2,000 miles away to end up on our plates. I would say that you're going to see more and more local foods in our local grocery stores.

Maniscalco: What would you recommend to somebody who's the normal, average American that's going to the grocery store once a week and they're buying just whatever they see and all of a sudden, they have this – Let's say they've heard you speak about the Slow Food movement. Where do they start? What should they start doing? What should they be looking for?

Glosser: If they're in the grocery store, I would look to see if they had what was in season, see if the carry locally—And even ask, "Do you have any locally produced food?" But then I guess it's going to be hard to learn your lesson at the grocery store. I would suggest going to the farmer's market. Get to know a producer. Farmer's are becoming celebrities. Farmers growing corn and soybeans are anonymous producers of a commodity crop. But we have a local producers here that are really becoming celebrities because they're really well known, people love getting stuff from them, they love being a farmer because now they have this real connection not just to the earth but to the consumer and their buyer, and so going to the farmer's market, you can actually get to know who grows your crops. You can ask, "Can I come out and see your farm?"

They love to have people come out and look at what they're doing and how they're growing it. Almost everything that I buy at the farmer's market, I've been to their farm and I know how it's grown and I know something about the farm. So I would say the farmer's market. They have the farmer's market downtown and now they have the farmer's market at the state fairgrounds, and so you have lots of opportunities to go and talk to the person who's growing the food that you'll end up putting on your table.

Maniscalco: For you, what are some of the things that you look for when you're going out to buy food?

Glosser: Where am I at when I buy food?

Maniscalco: Let's say you're at the farmer's market, first?

Glosser: What do I look for when I'm buying food?

Maniscalco: What is it you're looking for? What are your criteria?

Glosser: I would say—and this is probably not fair to the farmers that I don't know—I first go to the places that I know, so I know the farmer, I've been to their farm, and so I gravitate to those booths first to see what are they carrying? But other than that, you're looking for the freshness of the produce. I don't know that we have farmers at our farmer's market that are bringing produce from outside our region. I don't know that that happens in other markets, like the big market down in St. Louis. They bring food in from all over the country and sell it. It's not local foods. I mean, it's a produce market, but it's not a local… I don't know that that's happening here. It's more familiarity, for me—who do I know and that gives you an element of trust.

I had one farmer, a man that sells grass-fed beef and he was upset about this whole issue of ban on industrialized meat production and the risk of mad cow disease and so forth and have it take so long to figure out where the meat was produced and who all bought it. He said to me that that's the thing with locally produced meat. He said, "If anything happened, if anything was wrong with one of my cows that I sold, I can tell you the name and the address of everybody who bought from that cow." I mean, you know your buyers, you know your consumers. So if there is a problem, it's much easier to track back instead of this last scare where how many people were sick from an unknown produce. First they thought it was tomatoes and then they thought it might be cilantro. And it ended up being, I think, jalapeno peppers from Mexico. But it took them three months to even guess. I don't even know if they actually—and I don't know, almost 1,000 people I think were sick. So that is the problem with the scale of agriculture and how we've become reliant on this hugeness of our food system, that if something goes wrong, it's very difficult to do a correction, as opposed to more locally.

Maniscalco: Now, to kind of go back, what if you're in the grocery store? What are your criteria when you're in the grocery store?

Glosser: That's a lot harder. If you're in the grocery store, things that I avoid—See they don't have to mark where things come from. I was in the store last winter one time and it's the dead of winter, it's cold, and they had this big sign up that said, "Asparagus from Chile." I would dare say that most asparagus that comes to our markets in January from Chile, but somehow putting this big sign up that advertised that it came from Chile. I wanted that asparagus so bad because it was January and I wanted asparagus! But I couldn't buy it. I mean, buying something from Colorado, buying something from Florida – I mean the closer you can get to where you are, the better it is. But you know, in the dead of winter, it's all coming from someplace else and it's all industrially produced and processed. So it's just harder. I just try to avoid the out-of-country things.

Maniscalco: What about the organic foods? Do you look for organic over non-organic?

Glosser: I'm not opposed to organic, but I just don't—for me, the choice is rather local versus organic. I would support a farmer that was local that didn't grow organically over buying something at the grocery store that was organic. But at the grocery store, I don't necessarily buy organic. A lot of stores don't carry a good selection of organic foods to begin with. You don't have much of a choice. I would say my biggest thing is avoiding asparagus in January, strawberries in January, trying to avoid those things that we really shouldn't be eating in January anyway. We've become so spoiled. But it is hard.

Maniscalco: Now you mentioned something earlier—CSAs. Can you explain what that process is?

Glosser: A community supported agriculture operation—which I think that's really a bad name because it really doesn't tell you anything when you hear it—but you buy into a farmer's operation at the beginning of the season by buying a share or half-share. So you might give the farmer 250 dollars up front at the beginning of the season and that gives the farmer a little cash to operate with instead of, as in most farming operations, you do all the investment and then get your money when the crop is done. But as a CSA participant, you're acknowledging that you're taking the risk with the farmer. I mean, if tomatoes end up not doing well, then you're not getting money back because tomatoes didn't do well.

So you invest at the beginning of the season and then when the crops come in, you get your share of the produced on a weekly basis and they deliver to you. You'll get a basket of produce every week, or a half-basket.

And so that's becoming much more popular and another that I think is just totally, to show you the capitalist spirit and the entrepreneurial spirit of the United States of America, we now have—this is happening in the New York area and in some of the bigger cities on the West Coast—where people that live in urban areas, they want a garden but they don't have the time or the knowledge to plant a garden, so they're now are businesses starting that actually come to your home, put your garden in, and come out once a week to weed your garden and pick your produce and put it on your porch. It's actually now a new business enterprise for establishing small gardens for homeowners. Now, that may not happen in Springfield ever, but I did tell my one friend who's in Slow Food. I told her about this and she said she would hire somebody to put in a garden. Maybe not to take care of it all summer, but she doesn't know anything about all the work of turning your sod and all this stuff. She said she'd hire somebody to come in every year to get her garden ready and plant it. So that's another interesting thing about this, is that we're seeing businesses crop up like that. I wouldn't have expected that.

Maniscalco: That's really amazing.

Glosser: One gentleman in New York says he spends 100 dollars a week. He said, "I can't get…" (well obviously some people have more money than others—I can't imagine spending 100 dollars a week). He said, "You can't get fresher, more local food than from my backyard, with a crate setting on my back porch when I come home from work." And it's like, you know? That shows you how committed some people are becoming to just wanting the food locally grown.

Maniscalco: Just to go off of that, it's a real commitment to just seek out the locally grown food because it's so convenient for us to go to the grocery store. What do you think the future is of this? There is that extra step you have to take to make that commitment. What do you think the future is for it?

Glosser: There's some criticism too of the local food issue that you do have to drive around. Like when I leave here, I'm going to the market that's open all during the week, which is the one good thing—that you don't have to wait until the farmer's market is open. So there is some criticism that we are driving all around. We're picking up tomatoes here and we're going there and picking up… But I think that we're going to see –If this trend continues, because another business opportunity that's now happening even in the Northeastern part of the state already, is that people that have larger agricultural land are entering into lease operations with a local producer. Say if you had fifty acres and you divided it up into five-acre parcels or three acre parcels because you don't need a lot of land to do the local production.

And a new farmer—This is particularly for people for new people who want to get into the business but farm prices are such that it's very expensive. So they lease the land, they do this common sharing of equipment, and then the next step would be to have a common place to sell the produce that came off this land. So you would have maybe more of this market that's very near here, that you could be selling your produce more than just the two times. That's my

dream, to sort of have instead of an antique mall, it would be a produce mall. A fresh produce mall, where you might have this building that actually has the different stalls from all your different producers, but they don't have to be there. Because that's the hard part of being a local producer. You can't be everywhere selling your produce when you're back at the farm raising the produce. So farmer's markets, those days are very long for these poor people. I mean, their Fridays are from 4:00am until dark getting the produce picked and crated and then Saturday is a very long day getting to market. So they can't do that but a couple times a week.

So I envision that they can bring their produce in, someone is there to sell it like an antique mall. People have their little booths and then they bring it up to the front counter. I have not seen that happen yet, but that's sort of my fantasy for Springfield, so I don't have to wait. I'm not tied to that Wednesday morning, Saturday morning and I say, "Oh darn." It's like today. I mean I need something for tomorrow. I've got company coming, I want my fresh food for tomorrow night, but the farmer's market isn't until Saturday morning. So luckily, we have this market very near you that's open Monday through Friday so I can run there and get tomatoes.

Maniscalco: That's good. What sorts of effects do you think this movement's going to have on this agriculture?

Glosser: In Illinois, probably none because most of our land is in soy beans in corn which is not what you would—I certainly don't call it a food crop. It's a commodity crop. It's used for producing other things—bio-fuels, high-fructose corn syrup. It may end up becoming a bad food additive, maybe I'll teach you about high fructose corn syrup, which we're getting from corn. It would take a long time to put a dent in industrial agriculture. It's not subsidized by tax subsidies. So that's another criticism is that it tends to be higher priced, but it's higher priced because they're doing everything themselves. The farm bill doesn't have a subsidy for locally produced food.

So I would say I don't know. Maybe eventually it will change. It is changing the agricultural market in the sense that, look at Wal-Mart. Five years ago they wouldn't have even thought that they would be calling in and selling a lot of organic foods. So I think it's changing maybe how farmers are thinking in Woodbury County, Iowa. It's industrial agriculture, that's what they've always been. But they're shifting to an organic focus. It's still going to be a big agricultural operation, but they're trying to do something different. They're trying not to do the traditional agriculture, but they're using their expertise in agriculture to shift that into organics.

So I think we're seeing a shift in the agriculture system. In the real food system, not the commodity crop. It's just that I can't imagine that locally grown food is going to overtake the market and we're going to see no strawberries in our supermarkets in January, or only locally grown lettuce in our grocery stores. I hope that happens someday but at this point, I can't see it.

Maniscalco: I'm also thinking, globally as well, let's say the slow food movement really takes off to the point where there's very few consumers anywhere that want to go and buy their asparagus from Chile. What are your global ideas on agriculture? How would that change agriculture globally?

Glosser: It could actually lead to improvements on the environmental side. I mean there is the producer's side. In Africa, for example, the locals are in some areas mining their groundwater

to grow lettuce and they're giving up land that they would be growing their own food to grow lettuce so they have a crop they can sell. But I have a hard time understanding the sustainability of this particular operation. While, though it is giving the locals some sort of income, I think it's actually a challenge.

Off the coast of Chile, the vast amounts of land devoted to salmon—the areas of the sea devoted to captive salmon, I forget how they put it…

Maniscalco: Farm-raised?

Glosser: Yeah, farm raised salmon—Destroying the oceans. Just an incredible amount of pollution coming off the coast of Chile. That would be an environmental plus to get us out of that kind of farming. But then there would be the impact of the producers. I mean there's obviously somebody that's going to end up losing some money. So I don't know. I can't say that I've studied the global situation well enough to know what—I hope that we don't see a continued increase in other countries raising food products that are clearly for the American market and destroy their environment and their own life ways as a result. I hope we at least stop that trend.

Maniscalco: Is there anything that I've forgotten to ask you about the slow food movement? I think we've covered quite a bit of it.

Glosser: I guess one other element of slow food that I hadn't said yet because it's probably not as much a part of our life here because we're so homogenized here in terms of a culture, but another part of slow food is actually preserving ways of making food. Cheese making in Europe is a big issue. Use of fresh milk, un-pasteurized milk, is another big issue. There's a whole movement in some states of people that want un-pasteurized milk and there's whole science and debate as to the health people saying you have to have pasteurized milk or you could die and the other people are saying it takes away the nutrients, it takes away the flavor, and "I want fresh cow milk."

And so, interestingly, a business has come around that we have dairy farmers—local producers—that sell cow shares to get around this being illegal to sell milk, fresh milk—un-pasteurized milk. So people buy a share of the cow, so they get some of the milk products from the cow. They're not buying the milk, which is the illegal part. They bought the cow. They bought 20 percent interest in the cow.

So people are being creative about trying to find ways. I think the whole issue of how we do our food, how we produce our food—Slow Food USA has a program RATH(??)—Renewing American Traditional… I'm not sure what it stands for. But it's basically about renewing our traditions here and maintaining our cultural traditions—Cornish past heason(??) and tasties(??) in Michigan. Here, it's harder—the sweet corn festival. Things that are common to us—I think we've lost a lot of our cultural heritage here or we've become so homogenized that we don't notice it, but Europe is filled with… So maintaining your food ways is another important element to Slow Food.

Maniscalco: Coming down to the end of the interview, I always ask people, This is going to be an oral history interview and it's going to be archived and kept around for hundreds and hundreds of

years, hopefully, and maybe somewhere down the road, one of your great great great grandkids could walk into the museum and say, "Look, there's grandma up there on the shelf!" What would you like them to find in this interview?

Glosser: I always tell my one step-daughter that she knows what good food is. I want them to know something beyond microwaved macaroni and cheese. I want them to know what a real tomato tastes like. I want them to be curious about food and search out those things that are special and unique and not go with the store apple. Go out and find something real and just explore it.

Maniscalco: Great. Thank you very much.

Glosser: We'll go back to this reel fifty years from now look back at the local food thing, because my fear is that it's a trend. It's one of those hot things right now and that we're going to move on to the next hot thing and we're kind of like, "Oh well that was last year, this is this year." That's what my one concern is, that it won't be a sustaining. It's exploded in the last two or three years, but look at the things that we've had happen. We've had antifreeze in some food product in China. We've had three or four horrible produce outbreaks. We've had mad cow disease, we've had other… There's a lot of reasons, but is that going to continue scaring people and making them think we've got to be careful about our food system? Or are they going to get that under control or publicize it less so people can go, "Oh, it's safe now to go back in." I don't know.

But right now, people are worried. People are worried about what they're getting from the store. But people were worried in the seventies about the price of gas and then the price of gas and then the price of gas came down and then everybody got an SUV (laughter). So we didn't learn, you know?

M1: People aren't the most intelligent…

Glosser: Our lessons are really short-lived. Lessons learned, it's like, "Oh, today it's different? Oh, okay!"

M1: You were talking about pasteurization of milk. Do you know Jacqueline Jackson(??)? She's one of our interviewees. She writes a poem for the *Illinois(??) Times* every week. Actually, we've had two interviews with her because she filled our hard drives, eight hours in total. Her poem this week, or I guess it was actually last week—she has a new poem this week, I haven't seen her new poem—was about how mad her daughter in New York is that she can't get un-pasteurized milk. It raises the point that, the next thing you know, they'll require mothers to pasteurize their milk that they give to their own… (laughter)

Glosser: Yeah, that that's not safe. We'll have these impurities, you know? There actually is a farmer locally. He will tell you the whole story, just go on and on telling you about how why, at the time, people were getting sick from drinking cow's milk. I mean conditions were altogether different than they are now. We had typhoid fever and diphtheria and all the different diseases from poor water quality and all sorts of sanitation issues that don't exist today. Then there were other factors. The end result of what happens when you pasteurize milk is that you remove—which is why a lot of people are lactose intolerant today—you remove the enzymes that help you digest milk.

M1: So they _____(??).

Glosser: So there are more people today that are lactose intolerant than there were fifty years ago or maybe seventy-five years ago. But I know when I was a kid, my grandparents served un-pasteurized milk. When we were kids, we didn't like it at all. I mean I remember having this glass and there were clumps of yellow stuff floating around, which was the cream. And it wasn't pure lily white like what we were used to from the store. We were like, "…." Now I can taste it as an adult to know what—Because they would say, "You have to taste it" and we were like "Ooooh!" (laughter) Whereas everything else, I liked. But I didn't know the difference. I just knew it was yucky, off-white milk with chunks of yellow stuff in there.

M1: Those two don't really go well _____(??)'s house down in southern Nebraska. I'll have to try that again.

Glosser: Yeah, I know. It's the things that we'd like try again. Like, for instance, my grandfather had an apple orchard and I remember eating apples when I was a kid and it never occurred to me that all the apples I'd eaten since then, as an adult, were not of the same variety. He had heirloom apples. He had old apples. So when I first started becoming aware of this and I ate my first heirloom apple, I took a bite into this apple and there was this interesting, psychological thing where, for that second, I was back as a kid on my grandparents' farm eating an apple off the apple tree. It was like, whoa. I never did do acid, but that was sort of weird. I suddenly was a long way away!

M1: You got that from that apple!

Glosser: It was like I remembered that was the apple I remembered eating when I was a kid and nothing tastes like that now. The junk from the store never has that kind of flavor. So once you realize what something can taste like, you wonder, Why do we eat Red Delicious and Yellow Delicious that are nice big round things with waxy coatings, which is not common and that's all been brought into it because they want to be able to ship them from Washington? Why do we eat it when it doesn't even taste all that good? Because we don't know what a real apple tastes like.

M1: Middle Engel's(??) Orchard, down in Union County and of course we all brought home a basket of peaches. But even the peaches that came out of the basket weren't quite as good as the peaches in the orchard. What was the serials(??)… Waynesfield's(??) last name?

Maniscalco: Betty?

M1: Betty. She showed us what a real peach is. The best way to eat it is just pop it in half, the seed pops out. "This is the real way to eat a peach," she said. In fact, they did an advertisement for her son, Wayne. Wayne?

Maniscalco: Ran(??).

M1: Yeah it was Terrain(??) and Wayan(??) _____(??), anyway. They filmed their son in the orchard with a peach, pop it open, and he's eating this peach and the juice is running down his arms. People started flowing into the orchards, like, "I want a peach just the one we saw on TV."

Glosser: People don't really realize it, until you actually experience it, that there is a difference. Same with tomatoes.

M1: It's amazing.

Glosser: It's amazing. Now, to defend industrial agriculture, you've got to get potatoes from Idaho and apples from Washington to here. Most of the heirloom stuff doesn't transport. If you get into heritage apples—they're much thinner skins, some of them are kind of gnarly looking, which maybe the consumer wouldn't want as opposed to this nice round shiny thing with four little points on the bottom so they sit up perfectly on the table. I think it's amazing how we've engineered our food to be this perfect little red apple with this thick skin and they've got these four points on the bottom so they sit right up, you know? If you look at real apples, they do not look like that. They're gnarly, lumpy, irregular-shaped things that sort of sit there….

M1: Like anthropologists(??) (laughter)

Glosser: Do you need anything else?

Maniscalco: I need you to sign this form… _____(??)

M1: This is super. Really glad to get you over here for this.

(end of interview)