

Interviewee: Ann Starbard

Interviewers: Kirsten Dessert & Mackenzie Papuga

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Abstract: Ann Starbard is a 53-year-old woman who was originally born in Pennsylvania, but found her way up to Worcester County due to her farming skills. This Penn State graduate had grown up on a dairy farm her whole life and when she was ready, moved up to Sterling, MA, in order to find her career in goat cheese making on Crystal Brook Farm. She is a very uplifting and always laughing kind of person, who has a real calling for animals of all kinds; however, goats seem to be her favorite. She spent seven years of her life working for St. Vincent Hospital in the city of Worcester yet found out that her true passion was in the rural life with her farm animals. She understands what it means to take every day as it comes and to not sweat the small stuff with the life she lives. She is extremely experienced in her career and uses that to her advantage in everyday life, allowing her to give her all to whatever comes her way.

Quote:

“You’ve decided this is what you want to do, so give it your all, but don’t be afraid of plan B.”

MP: I’m just going to start with what your full name is and your maiden name and if you’re married. So if you want to answer that question for us.

AS: Ok, my name is Ann Elizabeth, my maiden name is Basehore, B A S E H O R E, and my married name is Starbard, S T A R B A R D.

MP: Where were you born?

AS: I was born in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania.

MP: How did you end up in Massachusetts?

AS: I moved up here for work when I was 25.

MP: And you said you were married?

AS: Yes.

MP: How long have you been married for?

AS: 27 years.

MP: Do you have any children?

AS: No.

KD: What is your husband's name?

AS: Eric Starbard.

MP: Where did you meet him?

AS: I actually met him at a farm auction, at an agricultural auction.

KD: So can you tell us about, a little about, your family background like what cultures and ethnicities do you identify yourself with?

AS: I grew up on a dairy cow farm in Pennsylvania, so the ethnicities of my family are I guess some German background and then some south central Pennsylvania. So I don't really—my ancestors came to the United States in the early 1800's so I'm not sure I really identify myself with any particular ethnicity because we're south central Pennsylvanians (laughs) that's the only ethnicity I would relate to.

MP: Have you lived anywhere else besides Pennsylvania and Massachusetts?

AS: No.

KD: Alright, tell us about your parents.

AS: My parents are hardworking good people [laughs]. My father was born and raised and continues to live on the same property. Our farm in Pennsylvania is very near and dear to all of our hearts. My father, he's a farmer, born and raised. His sense of place is very strong, his belief in the land and the property isn't just a property with a dollar figure attached to it, it's kind of where the families heart and soul is and that's how I grew up. These things are important to me. So that aspect of my father's upbringing is kind of embedded in all of us.

My mother grew up in a similar area but she didn't—she was the youngest of eleven kids. By the time she was growing up, her parents had moved from the farm that they lived on into a smaller place in town where it was easier because her parents were elderly then, or older. And so she also comes from a sense of place and farming, but being raised in town had a little bit of a different feel to it. My mother is this eternal optimist. She always

looked at the bright side of things, she always saw the goodness in people, and that is sort of how I was raised. Instead of looking at people and criticizing them or see what's wrong with them you look at them and you see what's good and these are two strong attributes of my parents that I enjoy.

MP: Did you have any siblings growing up, or do you have any siblings?

AS: I have four siblings. Three, one, two, three sisters and one brother and I am in the middle I am number three. So we are all very close we all grew up farming, we all grew up working together. We milked about forty five cows and our farm was one hundred acres. So we all, we all learned how to work with each other. So you don't squabble about, or our family didn't squabble about little things because we had too much work to do and I think that, that's missing in today's society.

KD: Do they all still farm today or did they go off and do different occupations?

AS: My brother is farming, and my three sisters went off and did other occupations. Two of my sisters live near the family farm and they come back on the weekends and things to help; my brother does a produce business now, so they will come back on the weekends to help or at certain times of the year.

MP: What was it like growing up as a child on a farm rather compared to now? What are the difficulties from then?

AS: Growing up, so I was born in 1962, farming in that time period—and I should say our farm was then and is even more so now, like in the middle of suburbia. Growing up, my schoolmates, I was like the only farmer in my classes and now it's really like that. Our farm is still a farm but it's completely surrounded by houses and condos and developments but growing up it was difficult. Farming nowadays kind of happily, people want to know where the food comes from, people, you know, the whole buy local and at least in Massachusetts area, it's very kind of like farmers are currently riding a wave of being like the rock stars, but growing up that wasn't the case.

There were people in certain ages, people liked to come over and be with the animals and things like that. But then it was farming, it was hard work. It wasn't a lot of income generation. And so it was almost more of a negative in the society if you were a farmer and already there were lots of farmers so we didn't feel that way about each other. But in a general society, it was sort of even still then sixty, seventy, seventies or so who were looked down on if you were a farmer.

MP: And you said that you came here for work, was it specifically to farm here?

AS: I became involved—I'm one of the—I went to college, in Pennsylvania and I decided I wanted to get into international agriculture work. I had worked with Heifer Projects International in our church and I thought that this would be an interesting way of using my agricultural skills and being exposed to other cultures.

After college I had done a little bit of traveling, and really like a little bit of the international scene, and so I actually did some volunteer work for Heifer International in Arkansas for a short while and then I heard that there was a job opening up in this region and so I came up here to first volunteer. Knowing there was going to be a job position opening up, I applied for that job and received that job. So, I came up here for agriculture, but a little bit of a different bent than actual producing on the ground in Massachusetts agriculture [laughs].

KD: So, in reference to Worcester, do you think that, like what are the challenges do you think that Worcester faces?

AS: So from the agricultural perspective, I don't spend a lot of time in Worcester. I try to avoid it [laughs]. It's fun to go in once in a while but I just don't, it's just not my cup of tea. I actually worked for St. Vincent's Hospital for seven years, and went to Worcester every day. For seven years, five days a week for seven years, so I spent my time in Worcester. As far as my field in agriculture, Worcester, is starting to get into its own as far as its appreciation for local agriculture and support. There has always been a certain support of agriculture but Worcester is a little bit of a black hole. Boston and that area, down the Cape [Cod], there are these bi-local programs there, out in the Berkshires and Pioneer Valley there is lots of support for agriculture there, but Worcester has always been like this little bit of an independent little black hole.

Recently there has been a lot of—Worcester, the city itself, from what I understand, is kind of having a little bit of a renaissance with different areas becoming—I'm looking to use the word, gentrified, but they are coming into their own and people are appreciating Worcester city for what it is and kind of carrying along with that I think that there are many people who are certainly supporting local agriculture and local products. And in that sense for what I do now, the business that I run now, it's being appreciated in the Worcester area so I think that there is a lot of improvements for the local good not just the, not just for the local farming but for community as a community which is positive.

KD: Is there anything that you would change about the city?

AS: Yea. [Laughs] I am not a city person. So as far as I'm concerned the city can stay the city and just leave me alone [laughs]. So what would I change about the city? Ah boy. I—it can stay; leave me alone [laughs]. I enjoy the city for its cultural aspects and I mean I think it's kind of interesting that there is a big push for urban farming. I work with some, a couple of people supplying our goat cheese into some of the areas, and I don't mean to

sound like snobby or afraid of the city or anything like that because I am not, but it's just not where I belong; it's not kind of my being. Born and raised on a farm I basically lived out, so if I can't see the stars at night, if I can't feel the wind, if I can't be in those elements, I feel kind of tight inside. So I am always happy to drive into the city, but I am always happy to drive out.

MP: What characteristics of Worcester would you say are your favorite if you had to pick a favorite even though you're not a city person [laughs]?

AS: Historically speaking there is some nice, a lot of really nice architecture in Worcester. A lot of nice buildings, the history as far as the manufacturing: the Morgan Company, and Norton Company and the Armory, the Higgins Armory. When I've learned about some of the historical figures of Worcester. It's really quite amiable, like the canal, the Blackstone Canal and bringing the goods from Worcester, you know, down into the water to be shipped, I think all that is really very interesting. I don't spend a lot of time in the city now, I know there is a whole resurgence of the arts and you know the restaurants, and all those things now and I'm happy to see that, I'm not a part of that scene to really know what's happening there. I think it's great for younger people, I don't like to age differentiate because everyone can enjoy everything.

But I think it's kind of nice to see this rebirth, this resurgence and a lot of this is I work with restaurants, and I think it's so great to see so many independent restaurants in Worcester. That's one of the things that I really enjoy about Worcester right now is there aren't necessarily a lot of chain restaurants. There is McDonalds and all of those but as far as the opportunities to enjoy a good meal in Worcester, its mostly local owners, local chefs, that are providing that service and I don't know that you see that in a lot of cities. A lot of them are maybe higher end chain for the nicer restaurants, but I think that Worcester's great; it really has a lot of proportionally a lot of independent restaurants. I don't really know anything about the retail industry in Worcester or anything like that because I don't shop. I don't like to shop and if I do shop I'm not getting anything [Laughs]. It's not my thing, so, yea it's not my thing.

KD: What do you think women's experiences in Worcester have been generally?

AS: Women's experiences in Worcester—so I'm going to use Worcester in a broad topic versus the city, I think that there are a lot of strong women that have brought about good changes in society. And in Worcester, I mean I've read information about other people, when I can't pull them out of my head, but I know that there have been just a lot of strong business women, like authors, and the historical people, musicians, things like that. Then from my point of view, a lot of the agricultural people there's a lot of women who are really making a difference not only in their little area, but because of their work and their involvement with the communities in the colleges and things like that, whether its

different professors I've heard about or even presidents and things like that it's really a strong, a strong effort, a strong connection, with women and the positive changes.

MP: Okay, we are just going to kind like of segue into education. Tell us about your education experience starting with your childhood to college and how you ended up at the college that you ended up at.

AS: So I went through public school and I like being a student, even I use that present tense because I am in a class right now [laughs]. So I am one of those perpetual student people. I mean I'm not working, because I am, I really like learning, so for me, education is important. Even at my age, I think that keeping your brain active and learning and enhancing, helping other people is part of why we are here. So, education, public school and I went to Penn State. I wanted to take some kind of agricultural form of education. And so there was a little bit of limitation of what schools I applied to because not a lot of schools had agricultural venues back then. I applied to three colleges, I got accepted at Penn State, which is kind of the premier agricultural school in Pennsylvania. And my major was animal bioscience, which is basically the pre-vet program. No intentions of being a veterinarian but, my grades, my knowledge, put me in that vein. And it was good, I got a very good education at Penn State and I went to a branch campus. At that point in time, the branch campuses were like the first two years of schooling and it was good for me because it was smaller class size. A smaller campus versus the large university part of campus.

I went to the University Park for my junior and senior year. So it was great because I got a nice small setting for my beginning classes and then I went to the main campus and I was in my smaller major classes so it worked out well for me. And I still use, I feel fortunate that I have a bachelor's, but I use my college education, as old as it may be, I use it all the time.

I actually wrote a book last year on dairy goat management. And I had to relearn my 30-year knowledge; I had to go back to my 30-year knowledge, I had to go back and update things. For a book, you need to have current information but I've always kept going to educational seminars and things like that. So I do use kind of the base and I relearn stuff. They've changed things since those dark ages of when I went to college, but it's the way that you guys learn today, is so different then how I learned. Just between computers and your phones and instant access to all kinds of information. I'm not saying it's better, I think we had to do more memorization and more brain stuff. You guys know how to access information, but the way that I learned was different then the way that people learn today.

MP: What classes are you taking now, you said that you were taking a class. What are you taking now?

AS: I'm taking an Ag-Business training class. I've been running my business for 17 years and I took a small—I actually took the same class like 16 years ago and it's things like legal structure finances, I'm writing a business plan is what I am doing. I've written a business plan x amount of years ago and I've updated the business plan every so many years so I've done this before, but I really like getting new information. There's new tax stuff all the time, legal issues change all the time. So I like to stay informed on kind of the current information.

KD: What was your first job?

AS: My very first job... that I got paid to do [laughs]? Well I will say the first job I had, I grew up on my parents dairy cow farm milking cows, so that was my first job and when I was thirteen or fourteen instead of sleeping in for the summer I got up to help my father milk the cows so that my mother could stay in the house because she always helped my father. So I got up and milked instead because I loved doing that job. And I earned however so much money that summer by helping my father. And, but my real outside of the farm job was at a Kentucky Fried Chicken when I was sixteen or something [laughs], it was my first job being the sales girl at Kentucky Fried Chicken [laughs].

MP: Have you had any besides that and farming? Did you ever think and want another job or did you always know?

AS: Well I did my international agricultural thing with Heifer [International], which is a little different. At that time, Heifer sent animals internationally overseas to project sites; they since then have changed their delivery service. Anyway, my job was to go around New England and gather up primarily goats and then I shipped them overseas, wherever they were going. Kind of did all their paperwork, their passports, health permits, organize animals to JFK airport and put them on a plane and send them to wherever they were being sent.

My job, after I got married and we bought our property, I had an off-the-farm job to help pay for our mortgage and that was at St. Vincent Hospital in Worcester in the pathology lab. So again I was using kind of my sciences and that was actually a really interesting job. I enjoyed my job, not as much as I enjoyed farming, but it was an interesting job and now I am a professional problem solver (laughs). So I run all the aspects of my goat cheese business between animal production, feeding the animals and milking. I mean I have helpers making the cheese, packaging, advertising marketing, running the business. I had you guys stand outside as I was trying to fix my You Tube embedding website which I don't know anything about. Maybe I should get you guys to help fix the embed because the embedding broke [laughs] on the website and I'm trying to figure out how to re-embed on the website. So that drives me crazy, but you got to do it. So these are the various jobs, the roles that I do when running my business.

MP: What do you think the biggest problem or struggle would be with farming?

AS: The biggest struggle.... [sighs] the biggest struggle with farming, that's a broad question that has more than one answer. I think to make a living, doing it in modern times—it's not just modern times, it's always been like this—farming, it's difficult to earn a prevailing wage, in that industry. Even going direct retail, it's very difficult. The number of hours that you put in to produce your income, it doesn't come out at a prevailing wage for all the knowledge that you need to do. I mean if I was doing what I am doing every day, let's say, for a real business, I mean I should be earning an easy one hundred, one hundred twenty thousand. I do all these various jobs and I don't earn anywhere near that kind of money [laughs], that's one thing that is a problem. It does work in some aspects, but most every aspect of agriculture, there has to be another way of earning income. So, that's the financial aspect of it that is very challenging.

The weather, animals, insects, you know eating crops, you're at the whim of so many things, hail comes through. You know it can be a five minute storm and it can set you back sixty thousand dollars because it destroyed this crop and it doesn't matter. You're out, it happened and that's the way it goes and you always have to be ready to bounce. That's, that's, a big challenge with agriculture. Then you don't know people's whims, like right now people want to buy local.

I make goat cheese. When I started my business in 1998, I could barely give goat cheese away. People would run away from my table; five percent of the people would look at it and say, "Oh, I love goat cheese," eighty percent would run away saying, "Eew, goat cheese." I mean this is true [laughs]. And now it's just a flip where I have eighty-five percent of the people, children, everybody coming to my booth saying, "I love goat cheese," and five percent of the people saying, "Oh you know I don't like goat cheese". So it has really flipped on its head, but I'm fortunate that I kind of happened to ride that wave.

MP: What do you think your favorite aspect would be about running the farm? Like would it be the animals or the business part of it?

AS: That's a very hard question, you're asking me very hard questions [laughs]. That's good [laughs]. I really enjoy the animal aspect of it. I really like being with my animals. I love milking. I'm one of those weird people, I just love milking. It's one thing that I've done since I was eight so it's a very comfortable place for me to be and it's kind of, there is a nice rhythm, it's very peaceful and calming to me and then I'm working with the animals which there are challenges there. So that's the calming, really kind of innate, peaceful aspect of the agriculture that I like. The business aspects of it are a really big challenge and I enjoy challenges so that has its own little aspects of enjoyment for me which are kind of a different scope than the animal being on the land type of care.

KD: So how do you balance everything that you do? Like including if you have interests that you do, do you go away or is it always just here working?

AS: It depends on the time of year. And, I sleep very well [laughs]. When I sleep there could be something that went off and I wouldn't even wake up. It's difficult. And I run my business seasonally so the goats all give birth in February which is this crazy silly time, and then kind of run crazy basically May through October when our farmers markets are happening. Come November things start to slow down, I get to reconnect with my friends. December, the goats stop milking in December. I kind of have January and February off.

So currently in my life I tend to do my vacations—I do go away, I love to travel believe it or not. I'm a Gemini, so I am two people in one [laughs]. That's how I balance things. I'm an organized, plan kind of person, but I like to goof off too. So it is work hard play hard kind of thing. It's hard to balance it and people don't understand. I have good friends that understand, but others are like, "Why can't you come to supper at five o'clock?" Because that's milking time. I have had people get upset with me and people who don't understand and don't want to be my friend and I understand because this is what I do. It's really hard in many ways. It's almost kind of worse.

Many years ago there were more dairy farmers so nothing was scheduled between five and seven because that's when everyone milked their cows. But now there are so few people even in agriculture things agricultural meanings. There are very few people that milk animals anymore. So things are at five thirty, six o'clock so people who work in agriculture have day jobs and then they agriculture on the weekends or in the summer, or whatever so. Their schedule now starts at six o'clock so they can get done with their five o'clock job and go to the six o'clock meeting and then go home and have dinner or dinner in between or something. Because the agricultural community has shifted from a lot of dairy farmers to very few, the timing of things has changed things considerably as well. It's interesting. Like planning meetings, I am like, "Can we plan this now because I got to know?" Everyone is like, "No, Ann just come now." That's just the way it is though.

It shifts with where the majority of the people are coming from so I actually took a year off in 2010. I planned a sabbatical for like a year and a half, you know planning and saving money. And if I gathered enough and I budgeted everything and I traveled across the country and visited cheese makers and stayed on goat farms and things like that and then had a great time with myself and I really wanted to go to Mt. Reiner and the Badlands, so I kind of just blocked off a year of my life and did all that. Then I went to Provence in France and worked on the farms over there. So I got criticized by a lot of people, but I just needed to do that and I am happy I did that. It was a great experience, but I did get a lot of criticism for it from different people because I was leaving. [laughs]

MP: Do you have any regrets in your life? Since you took a year off, do you regret any of anything?

AS: Sure there are regrets. You can't dwell on them. You think of things you would probably do differently. I think anyone would probably say yes, I mean I can't speak for anybody else. There are certain things that I regret, decisions made, but at the time they seemed the decisions that were okay. As far as trying different things and if they work out you keep them going; if it doesn't work out you do a ninety, a one-eighty, what's the next thing a two-seventy or whatever [laughs]. Kind of do what you have to do to get back to where you need to go to. So yeah, that's how you learn and grow [laughs].

KD: To totally take a one-eighty, do you consider yourself active politically?

AS: No. I vote [laughs] I find politics to be—I am farmer I shouldn't have said that. I like to see results from my actions, and I find with politics, results that are achieved seem minimal for the talk or it's just something I don't have interest in.

MP: For like, any type of community work what would say would be the experience you ever had?

AS: Community work. [pauses and thinks] I am involved with an agricultural group called Worcester County Conservation District. It's actually a national organization, it's a national committee. Every county in the United States has a conservation district which was enacted after the Dust Bowl in the 1930s so the conservation districts have been around for a long time.

Worcester County celebrated its 70th anniversary this year. I have been a district supervisor the last twenty-six years. So it's a group that I assist farmers at a grassroots level, in connection with some USDA funded programs. So it's a way of attaching local information into the federal programs and I really enjoy that association. I got started in it initially at like 26 or something like that when I came a part of it, maybe 27. But when I became a supervisor it was a way for me, to have come up here from Pennsylvania and not knowing a lot of agriculturalist farmers in the area, I wanted to meet people that did what I do, and that was my way of meeting the agricultural community. That served me well personally and now I have been the person that has been there for a really long time, I have a lot of historical perspective on the agriculture in the area and so now I am in that role of the person who knows something. So that's a really fun way for me to give back because that's a way lots of people gave to me. So that's probably, that organization and

my work, I lead meetings that I organize with other community-connected events through my work, with the Worcester County Conservation District.

KD: Would you ever want to move from here? Or would you like to move your farming anywhere else in the United States or would you stay here?

AS: Hmm, that's an interesting question [laughs]. I enjoy my agriculture community here, I have watched it change. I am an active participant in the community here and so for that aspect I don't really want to leave. There is the area in Sterling; we are becoming a little bit of that anomaly that was when I was growing up because the number of farmers in our community is dwindling. And so in many aspects I would enjoy going to a community where there is more agriculture so that there is more than the normal person versus—people are very nice, don't get me wrong, but it is hard for me to relate to.

My life is so different than my neighbors that it would be kind of fun to be in a community where I can go to the diner and talk to someone else about maybe not milking goats but some sort of aspect of agriculture. The number of farmers around us keeps dwindling. There are some young people coming around that want to farm and that's great but I think it would be really fun to be in a community with other agriculture and so [pauses and thinks]. I am a Pennsylvanian not a New Englander [laughs] after being her for so many years, I have been here more than half my life here so I don't know. I actually loved Washington State and the Pacific Coast. I spent some time in the Southwest I bicycled down there, years and years ago and that area is kind of nice. Colorado is great so there are lots of other parts of the country that I would enjoy visiting, but I don't know if I would ever want to move there and farm.

MP: Do you have any religious ties? Or does it take a big role in your life?

AS: Religion does technically play [pauses to think], I believe in God and I believe that I have my religious beliefs. So I have my own personal daily religion that is important to me. I am not active in a church. I was growing up, but I didn't involve myself in that as an adult, per se in this area. I have my personal religion; I didn't mean to say that. I have my religious beliefs [laughs] that I practice personally instead of being very active in a church community. I believe in myself, [laughing harder] Sorry had to make a correction there, good to believe in yourself too but not to elevate yourself to a higher power.

KD: How do you go about selecting the goats you have here? Like how long have you had the ones you have now? Do you have any favorites? Do you name them?

AS: I am going to answer them in reverse. I do name them. Secretly we have favorites, but we do not announce which ones they are. That's because of this old farmer thing: the best cow in the farm dies or your favorite animal always gets sick, so you don't announce to the world which one is your favorite. You just keep it inside of yourself; you will get that special look in your eye, but you don't tell anybody. [laughs] Keep that in mind.

And how do I select the goats? [Pauses and thinks] I am a commercial dairy goat farmer, so I have to have animals that are productive and efficient so my business can run successfully; I have a bit of breeding program. How I select my animals? I pick my better production animals and I keep their offspring but it's not just about milk production for me, but what's equally and almost more important is their strength and immunity or health system or in general, their well being. I want strong, independent; I find strong animals that when they get sick will pull through with better end results, good longevity. So I pick animals a lot based on their—what's the term? Not composition, but their being. You know, looking at the health aspects along with the milk production. Their structure, if they have weak structure they are not going to live long, they are not going to be productive for me. So there are a lot of aspects that go into selecting animals.

The cute factor does come in sometimes along the way [laughs] but I cannot let that come in too often; the cute ones are often the ones that don't produce well. Having said that, I have workers come here and say this is my favorite goat, and I am like, "Okay, we will keep it." And those goats often times can turn out to be good milkers; sometimes they don't and I have to sell that goat after the worker leaves, but we do have a couple others, I am not strict on that, we do have wiggle room for things. But it is a commercial farm; I do have to make decisions based on business. That has to be the forefront, it's not always—I do have some favorites that stay longer than they should, but I do have to have make decisions based off of the business aspect.

MP: How did you get into the goats per se? Your parents, were they goat farmers too or how did you decide that goats were the one?

AS: I did work with goats with Heifer Project so I got familiar with that animal when I worked on the farm in Rutland. So that was my initial exposure. I was born and raised with dairy cows, worked with cows all through college. We milked cows here for years and years. What got me into goats as my current profession is that I wanted to make cheese. I didn't want to work off the farm, I wanted to work on the farm and we were milking cows at the time so I was actually looking into making cow cheese. So I went around to the few cheese makers that were around here at that point in time, and one person that I knew, she was milking goats and making goat cheese. So I went and visited her just to see that aspect. And as fate would have it she wanted to sell her business, she

had about 30-35 goats and the cheese-making equipment and a small business set up. So, it was, in many ways, it was more attractive to buy her business and bring everything here and sort of just go from there. And so that's what I did and that is how I landed into goats.

We built the goat barn and brought the goats here and started milking goats. They are sort of like small cows in some ways. They are not really, but I can take care of animals; particularly ruminants, like goats and sheep that I know basically inside and out, literally inside out. But that's what I know how to do and so it worked out well for me. I liked the smaller animals for many reasons and they are very clever, goats are very clever animals. You always have to stay one step ahead of them because they are usually two steps ahead of you. So in some ways they are easier to take care of instead of cows but in other ways they are harder, even though they are smaller. They are just very clever, very clever animals and that makes it challenging.

There is an adage: there is no such thing as a sick sheep or goat, and they are either dead or alive. And that is very true, they are very much survival animals so they don't show a weakness or that they are sick until they are almost past the point of no return. So you have to be right on like "this one's eyes look funny" or "this one is standing in the corner longer what's wrong with that one"; then you have to act on it too. It's not just observing you got to be like, "Well can I watch this for another day or do I need to act now." So some of that is experience, some of it is just curiosity. And those are all aspects of goat farming that I really, that are really frustrating as it is. It is challenging and enjoyable all at the same time to me. See my grey hair [pulls on her hair and laughs].

Goats equal grey hair [continues laughing]. And that may be one regret, when we talk about regrets because it was kind of crazy, we milked cows and goats at the same time for about seven years and it was not really good for any aspect for two people to have that much work, so one regret is that we didn't just make cow cheese and keep the cows. Cow cheese is easier to sell because as a population we are used to it. I tell people all the time this is cow cheese verses goat cheese; they are like "What, I have never eaten cow cheese before" I say to them, "Yes you have!" [Laughing] "All you ever eat is cow cheese." [continuing laughing] In some ways cow cheese is easier to sell than goat cheese, so that is one regret business wise, we should have kept the cows. Because it was a lot of stress on our marriage and on our farm to have both going on, so that was difficult.

KD: Have you ever had any health issues that impacted your life or those in your family?

AS: Health issues that are happily known, no, I don't have any. I mean, I have broken my arm before, I banged up my knee this spring and laid on the couch for two days but, health reasons I mean health concerns, like chronic illnesses and things like that, happily, knock on wood, thankfully I don't have any. I drink goat milk everyday [laughs] that's

my cure all. It is difficult in this profession, I mean there are farmers that have chronic illnesses and I applaud them to the hilt because it is not an easy livelihood period, it is not an easy livelihood when having a condition that weakens your system.

MP: I am trying to think of how to word a question; do you think as of right now you have been successful in your life based off of what you wanted to do as a child? Does that make sense?

AS: It does make sense, I am not sure I had a definition of success for myself as a child [laughs]. [pauses and thinks] I would say, yes. For me, I feel very fortunate to have grown up on a farm. I had amongst my extended family, my grandparents lived right next to door, it was our cultural farm. We were members of the community my family was very well known there, so for me growing up, that was always an important aspect and I was very proud of doing that. I am happy to fall into a similar community here in Massachusetts here as an adult.

I don't have children, which is difficult; it is kind of a difficult story. And so I really wanted to share these aspects of my life with a family and that is a difficult aspect. But I do have part of a success for me as a woman, as a person, because of my business. I have met lots of people that have worked for me for a summer. People who have no connection to agriculture, but needed a job, and their sister, their cousin, their neighbor worked here for three months and said go see Ann. And I know that I have touched many many,many,many. Often times they are younger adults that would have had no exposure to farming, would have had no exposure to animals to the care not just dogs and cats, that's one thing but once you have production animals, when you have animals that have the intensity of goats or even cows, when we had cows. The responsibility for these animals, especially dairy animals, it is a lot of responsibility, a lot of care; it is a lot different than a dog or a cat. And then just the aspects of the work and the aspects of us producing of food, that quality controls an important amount of the taste, the safety issues, food production safety issues. So I know that I have touched many people, and it is a part of their lives that, an aspect will infiltrate the rest of their life. And I feel a joy in that sense, and in that sense I feel success in my life.

MP: And if you had to give advice to a single person, like a young woman, our age, to someone what would the advice be?

AS: [thinking] Can I give two? [laughs]. The first one, which I think, is hard and easy to say, but they need to be true to yourself. And I think that is hard as a young person to understand what that means. But if you go with what's in your heart I think it is difficult for everybody, but to try and stay true to who you are. I think that is really important and I think that is hard, it's really hard to do that. You get a lot of avenues as you go

through life and I think you young people are exposed to a lot more than I ever was with these contraptions [pointing at the cell phones]. Exposed to so many of everything that isn't how you grew up, it is not part of your base. So how do you know what to put in and what to put out, I don't even know you guys do it, I really don't. I admire the young people that I see, who seem to follow, not a straight path by any means but it's interesting for me to see that.

And then the other little piece of advice, when you decide on something, when you make your decision, I have always been a believer in giving 200% to plan A. You've decided this is what you want to do so, give it your all, but don't be afraid of plan B because even though you can do your best, sometimes things don't—you need to recognize when it is not working the way you feel true to yourself, that it was not working and you need to kind of say, okay I can feel good that I did what I can do for this, and that it is not itching me inside and that I need to go a different direction and see how that goes. So you can be afraid of plan B, but you better give your damndest to plan A [laughs].

KD: Since you have lived around here has anything major historically happen in Worcester that may have impacted you personally or just a memory of you being up here and something happening?

AS: Certainly 9/11 which was certainly not just Worcester but it was certainly an impact, you know, September 11th. Worcester... anything significant... hmm... I guess I can't think, there were certainly weather events there was an ice storm, because I am more weather conscious, more time outside than I spend culturally in the city. So you know, I don't really... demolition of the Alamo was probably a good thing [laughing] I'm just kidding. I guess I can't, I don't know of... I guess the Asian Long Horned Beetle, again I am more of an outside person, so you know the Asian Long Horned Beetle identification and all the trees being cut in Worcester because of that and having to replant and being concerned that this beetle will go along further and it will harm more trees and things like that. That was sort of an event that didn't personally affect me but there were concerns, if had come this far and affected my woods or my—and I know people whose land was just eliminated of trees and things because of it and to me that was a significant event.

MP: Was there anything that you wanted to talk about personally that we just never touched upon at all?

AS: Well you have had some good questions [laughing] I think that the project is admirable, so I guess I applaud that. I hope it's a good experience for you, as well as young women, to interview other women and to get the historical perspective, I think it is

interesting as the project goes along to see how women's participation alters, changes, enriches, moves through the time, so I applaud who ever came up with it, and the conception of it and for those who are carrying out the interviews, as it gets edited and moved along to Harvard. So I think all those aspects are why I said sure I will participate in it, because I think it is great to have a wide, good audience, cross section of women in the area. So I applaud the effort.

MP: I think we are done here, thank you very much

KD: Thank you

AS: You're welcome; thank you.