Oral History Collection

Juanita Harris

Interviewers: Dante Curry and Elijah Sanchez

Date: April 21, 2024

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas and Norman, Oklahoma (virtual)

Dante Curry: Hello, Hello, I'm Dante Curry.

Elijah Sanchez: And I'm Elijah Sanchez.

Dante Curry: And we are here today conducting an interview by phone. We are here in Denton, Texas talking to Juanita Harris in Norman, Oklahoma. Juanita is going to tell us a little bit about her early life on an Oklahoma farm. If you want to say hello?

Juanita Harris: Hello, this is Juanita Harris.

Dante Curry: Alright, Juanita, if you'll tell us a little bit about your childhood, where did you grow up?

Juanita Harris: I grew up in Cleveland County, Norman, Oklahoma area.

Dante Curry: Mhm, and how long did you live there?

Juanita Harris: Till I was nineteen -- no, till I was about twenty-four years old.

Dante Curry: Mhm -- How big was your family?

Juanita Harris: I had seven brothers and sisters.

Dante Curry: Um… And, you told me that -- you told me that you lived on a farm till you got married.

Juanita Harris: Yes.

Dante Curry: At that point did you move out? Have you lived on a farm anytime afterwards?

Harris: No

Sanchez: Could you tell us a little bit about the farm? Like, how was it like or what did y'all do on the farm?

Harris: We just do -- did a lot things in farm life at that time. Growing our food, our cattle that we had, would eat. butcher them and eat them, and just live like normal people at that time.

Curry: How like big was the farm? Like how much land would you say y'all had?

Harris: Well, my mother, daddy did not own the property. So, we rented from about 160 acres and a lot of that was wooded acres. It was not all of it farmland.

Sanchez: Mmm, and like what kind of like cattle would you, like, raise?

Harris: I'm sorry?

Sanchez: What kind of cattle did y'all raise?

Harris: Just different kinds. We didn't have a certain breed of cattle that we used. It was just all a mix of kind.

Curry: How many did you have?

Harris: Probably 20, 25, 30 at the most.

Sanchez and Curry: Oh wow.

Curry: Go ahead.

Sanchez: What kind of things would y'all grow?

Harris: We grew all kinds of vegetables on the farm for eating like, course we had to grow corn and hay for the cattle to eat. But the vegetables were potatoes, green beans, corn, squash, cucumbers, watermelons. Just about anything that you can think of that was known at that time.

Sanchez: Mm.

Curry: Wow, that was a lot of different stuff. [laughs]

Harris: [laughs] Yes, it was a lot of work.

Curry: Yeah, and what were your responsibilities on the farm?

Harris: As a child, we didn't have that many responsibilities because some of the things were not for children to do. But the things we could do would be like, help our mother and dad with the chores that was needed at for the kids to do, like feeding the chickens, gathering the eggs, helping with getting the cattle into the barnyard. Just things like that that children could help to do.

Curry: Did you have maybe older siblings that had other responsibilities?

Harris: No, I was the oldest in the family.

Curry: Then what sorts of things did maybe your parents have to do that you and your siblings were not entrusted with?

Harris: Well, daddy would have to do the hay. Like cutting the hay, breaking the hay, the grass to be made into hay for the cattle. So he would cut it, mow it and bale it, into bales that were… they were not big for daddy or an adult to do, but for children they were too heavy to pick up. And then they had to haul them from the hay field to the barn, and stack them in a covered area where they would be protected through the fall and winter. And then just some other things that were too dangerous for children to do. We weren't always involved in everything.

Curry: Sorry, we are going over our questions.

Sanchez: Yeah.

Curry: I don't know, I'll stay on this topic for a moment, umm. You said that there were other responsibilities that were maybe too dangerous for y'all. What sorts of responsibilities?

Harris: Well, just like doing the hay, a lot of times the cattle would be too big for us to be around, you

know as children, and so we weren't really allowed when we were real young to be around the cattle that much. But as we grew and sometimes whenever daddy would need help with milking, my brother -- who was about a year younger than I am -- he and I would have to do -- help dad with the milking sometimes. Just little things like that, that you wouldn't want to be around the hay work and some of the cattle because some of them could get dangerous around the children.

Sanchez: For sure.

Curry: Yeah, I understand. Did you -- work with growing the vegetables at all? Or was that something your parents handled?

Harris: Oh no, we had to help with that because that was something we could do. Because you could be out in the open garden, and you know planting the seeds, our parents would show us how to plant them. Then of course they would help us, as the plants were growing we had to help chop -- what they call chop the garden which was making sure we keep the weeds and grasses out of the garden so the vegetables could grow alone. And then whenever the vegetables

got to be big enough, read -- ready to be harvested, then we would go pick the beans, and cucumbers, tomatoes, whatever needed to be picked at that time and helped with that.

Sanchez: How big of a garden would you say y'all had? Was it like a huge like -- like farmland or just like a small little area?

Harris: No it was not like farmland. I would say all together there was no more than like an acre.

Sanchez: Okay.

Harris: Because we would have the beans, and then watermelons, and the cantaloupes, cucumbers, and they needed space to grow because they grew on vines, so they would need -- no it was not a huge farm garden, it was more so a local, you know, family garden.

Sanchez: Like so what kind of tools would y'all use to help you grow, like any machinery or fertilizers?

Harris: Most of it, at that time, a great deal of it was done by hand. Because we didn't have the modern things that are available today. We would have to use a hoe, a shovel, and my daddy would have to use a little, what they called a plow, which he would brought behind and just push and then open up a

row, and that's how we would plant the seeds. And just like I said, hoeing when using the hoe, and digging the potatoes when they were ready to be dug, we would do that by hand, using the shovel, so. We didn't have the modern things that are available now.

Sanchez: Mm.

Curry: When you said you were growing things in the garden, you said that some of the plants needed a lot of space. Were there any like, were there any crops that needed maybe particular considerations, like if you had to plant them a different way? Anything like that?

Harris: Yes, the potatoes you would plant on what they called a hill. Daddy would pull dirt up from both sides of the row and kind of make a little hill down through there. And especially the watermelons and cucumbers and cantaloupes and sweet potatoes, needed to be, the soil needed to be prepared like that before you planted them because they needed the hill so they could grow down a little bit.

Curry: So, once you had harvested all of this, was all of this food to eat? Would you sell some of it? What did you do with it?

Harris: Most of it was to eat. We would share it with family and friends, and daddy he was very good at growing watermelons, and his reputation for growing the watermelons was well known around this area so he would sell some of the watermelons, but that's about mostly what we ever sold. Sometimes if we had extra corn we would sell the- what they call the ears of corn, the fresh corn, we would sell that. But the watermelons, mostly what we sold was the watermelons.

Sanchez: The community y'all grew up in, was it all pretty much like just a bunch of little farms and gardens as well?

Harris: Yes.

Sanchez: Okay, did y'all ever like, I don't know, interact with other farms or help each other or what not?

Harris: Yes, especially at harvest time, whenever things needed to come in on a certain time, if you let them go too long then it was what they called

"passed" and then yes, we would have to help each other. A lot of things like that.

Sanchez: How big would you say this community was?

Harris: Well it would just be neighbors. Probably no more than four or five neighbors, close by neighbors, and you didn't always have close by neighbors. Some of the places we lived, it would be a half a mile, three-quarters a mile in between houses. Sometimes even further than that. Most of the time it would be someone you knew well and had known for years.

Sanchez: Mhm. Okay.

Curry: When we had talked about this a little bit before the interview, you told us a little bit about the process of preserving food, could you go over that again?

Harris: Go ahead.

Curry: Oh, could -- could you tell us about how you preserved food?

Harris: Yes, in most everything we preserved, which was mostly vegetables and a few fruits, there was a process called "hot bath wash" and that's how you would cook -- more or less, heat your water really, really high and hot, and then you would prepare

the food by putting it in the jars, and then you put it down in that hot water bath, and cook it for about twenty minutes at least. And then take it out and let it cool. And then preparing for your, for your like your green beans, you would pick your green beans from the garden, you would clean them, you would snap them (which was breaking them up in one to two inch pieces) and then you would put them in a jar, and put a hot brine solution, which would be a little bit of salt and vinegar and whatever, which would help preserve once they were in the jar. And then you would put a lid on it that had a rubber seal, in that hot water bath, would allow the rubber seal, heat up. And once it cooled, then it would tighten the lid and seal the lid, or the rubber liner thing in it. And then that's how it was preserved. And you did that with almost everything that you preserved, the roots, the vegetables, which would be green beans, corn, potatoes, peaches, anything like that, plums, that you wanted to preserve that way.

Curry: That's really interesting. That sounds a little bit like canning things. Did -- did you ever pickle anything? Did you ever pickle anything?

Harris: Yes, we did.

Sanchez: I was thinking the same thing.

Harris: My mother would pickle the cucumbers, of course, and different kind of pickles. She would make what we would call the "bread and butter chips" we have now. She would use the larger pickles to do that. She would cut them into slices and put onions in it, and sometimes peppers, little hot peppers in there, then she would have a vinegar, sugar brine stuff she would pour on those, and then the same way you would a hot water bath. But when you're making dill pickles, or whatever, you had to put them in what they called crocks, which was a large container, thick container… made out of, I don't know for sure what it was made out of. Certainly wasn't plastic, but they called it a crock. And it had a wide opening on it, you'd put your pickles down in there, and you'd put the salt water bath on that cold and then put a rock or plate on top of that to keep the pickles pushed down. Then they

would have to sit for several days, sometimes a week or so in what was called pickling. And then take them out of that solution at the time they were ready to be canned, you would take them out of that, that conditioning area there and then you would put them in the jars, and put your pickling solution and whatever it was, if it was dill you would have your dill in it, if it were sweet pickles you'd have a lot of sugar and vinegar and stuff. And then you would pour over the pickles in the jar, put the lid on it like before, and then again put them in the hot water bath for a certain amount of time. So it took longer to do pickles than just your beans or your peaches or whatever you were canning at the time. And mom, at one time or two I remember her making sauerkraut, and you'd have it to do it about the same way. You'd have to put it in the crock, and let it more or less ferment to a certain degree, then take it out, rinse it, and then put your brine -- whatever you were gonna pickle it in -- in that jar, and then cook your -- put it in the hot water bath for a certain amount of time needed for that.

Sanchez and Curry: Mm.

Curry: Now like -- go ahead, go ahead.

Harris: It's interesting, whenever you look back at it now, Dante, it was interesting. But at the time it was work. [laughs]

Curry: [laughs] Oh yeah. And of course, sauerkraut, bread and butter pickles, these are things I think about and expect to see at the grocery store.

Harris: Yes.

Curry: But something else I wanted to ask about is, you grew a whole bunch of different foods. What sorts of meals would you all prepare with them?

Harris: Just about what you have for today. I mean like we had our own meat, which mom would fix the roast, or whatever, a stew or whatever like that. But -- then, we grew chickens, and we would butcher the chickens, so we would have like a roast and your potatoes -- we didn't grow carrots, carrots are kinda hard to grow for some reason, for us, so we didn't have that, but we would- she would would fix the roast with the potatoes and things. And um -- we could have okra, we grew okra, so we would have okra and it's -- the green beans, spiced

squash or boiled squash, and just different things that you have today, but they were just- it took you longer to prepare because you usually had to go pick them from the garden, clean them, and take care of them and then get them ready to cook. So. And today, they're already prepared almost for you, so you don't have to do a lot of stuff for it.

Sanchez: Growing --

Harris: Like mom would make meatloaf whenever the beef was butchered, they'd have the ground beef to make your meatloaf. Just different things like that. The roasts, and the chicken, we could have fried chicken, we could make chicken and dumplings, you could have a roasted chicken. Almost like we have today you just had to prepare it in a different way.

Sanchez: At the time, what would you say was, like, your favorite food like growing up?

Harris: Fried chicken, mashed potatoes, gravy, and green beans.

Sanchez: That sounds so good.

Harris: I also like black-eyed-peas, fried okra, and sliced tomatoes.

Sanchez: Mmm, yeah that sounds really good

Curry: Now I'm hungry. [laughs] Now, you said that the garden space was maybe about an acre?

Harris: Yes?

Curry: That sounds like not very much land to feed an entire family, so um -- I guess I'll ask, like how much were you -- sorry let me rephrase that, like what kinds of foods were you getting that you weren't preparing yourself? Was there, like, a market? Go ahead, go ahead.

Harris: Very very few honestly.

Curry: Mhm.

Harris: Because, well, honestly, there weren't -- if you go to the grocery store now, there are so many things available to you that were not available to us. Like we didn't grow lettuce. Now you can go to the grocery store to get a head of lettuce. Yes people grew what they called leaf lettuce, but- and it was just a leaf, but it was only available for a short time because it was called a cool season crop. But those things like that, most everything we grew. We'd have to go buy flour, cornmeal, sugar, syrup, you know some of the specialty type

things but most everything else we grew. It was grown on the farm for us. We had pork, my daddy would butcher a hog in the fall, so we'd have the pork. And sometimes they would butcher a beef. Not every year did they butcher a beef because beef was harder to, well there was more of it. And then, you had to have a locker or a big deep freeze in order to hold all of that, because that was a lot of meat. With the pork, when he killed a hog, it was late in the fall, early winter, in the cold weather, he would take salt and the pieces of the hog he had cut up, he had on a big table in what was called a smokehouse, and he would salt those pieces of pork down and that's how they were preserved over the winter. The salt helped preserve that meat. So we could have ham, we could go out and cut off a piece of ham, he could go get a piece of bacon, make your own slices of bacon and we could grind some of the meat, and did grind quite a bit of the meat, and it was seasoned with your sage and salt and pepper, and all those kinds of spices that you wanted for making your sausage. So we had sausage patties. And my mom would make a

lot of those up at one time, and then she'd also can them. She'd cook those after they were cooked, she'd put them in a jar and then she would pour the hot grease that was formed after making the sausage patties, she'd pour that on top of the jar and it was so hot that it would seal the jar. She would turn it upside down and the hot grease would come down to the top of the jar and then that sealed it, so that's how those were preserved.

Curry: Wow

Harris: Yes, yes, mhm, so.

Curry: You mentioned a smokehouse, I'm not really sure what that is.

Harris: Well my daddy did not --

Curry: Uhuh --

Harris: But years ago, it was a small out building and people hung their meat on rafters or whatever that was in the smokehouse. And they would make a fire, or have a wood stove, or something out there, and they smoke the meat to preserve it. That was also a way of preserving the meat, but daddy just used the salt. Rubbing the salt into the fresh meat.

Sanchez: With the cattle that you raised, umm like, so you said the farmland itself was about an acre, but the cattle, um -- like did they stay, like, in pens, did they stay in like a barn? Like what kind of area?

Harris: They just were out in the pasture. No, we didn't keep them in a pen unless there was a reason for it. There were sometimes where they would need to, one might be sick or something and they'd have to isolate it. But no, all the other times, the cattle just ran free in the pastures. There was a creek. Some people had creeks for their cattle to drink from, some people had ponds for them to drink from, but they just ate the grass and drank from the pond or the creek. And just more or less roamed free. But you know, it was fenced, but yeah, they could still get out and move all over the property.

Sanchez: Oh okay.

Curry: Were a lot of folks in your area keeping cattle like that?

Harris: Yes, most everybody did.

Sanchez: You said earlier that like y'all didn't sell that much when it came to, like, fruits or vegetables,

but how much would you say, did y'all ever sell any meat? Or like as much as you would say with the vegetables?

Harris: Okay, I'm sorry, say that again?

Sanchez: Um, like you were saying how y'all would, like, rarely sell fruits or vegetables, is this the same for meat?

Harris: No, we did not sell the meat either because it was, pretty -- well the, the cattle, we might sell half of the cow to someone that was, we butchered -- have it butchered, because it had a lot of meat. But as far as the hog, once they were all butchered and they didn't put off that much meat for a family as large as ours was. So, yes we'd share some of the meat with our neighbors or friends or family, but no we didn't really sell it unless daddy sold half of the beef, planned that before it was ever butchered.

Sanchez: Mmm

Harris: We would be sharing the beef with some other family maybe.

Sanchez: Okay --

Harris: They would pay like, we would have to have cattle butchered, so they would help pay for having the cow butchered, and then they would do with it whatever their half was. And then my family would do it with what our family wanted to do with our half.

Sanchez: Mm

Harris: So, most of that was putting it in like a commercial locker, that was in town, and there were big lockers where people rented these lockers especially to put the frozen beef, or chicken, or hogs, or whatever they wanted to put into that commercial locker. But you had to pay a fee to do that, and then because we didn't have a lot of refrigeration, a lot of ways to keep the meat or whatever, that was one of the only ways you could do that unless you could afford a huge deep freeze, that's what a freezer was called back then. It was called a deep freezer.

Curry: Alright, we are going through our questions, just a moment.

Harris: Okay. I'll go back --

Curry: Go on --

Harris: On the preserving of the beans and stuff like that. On the beans, like -- Dante, you know what pinto beans are, don't you?

Curry: Yes.

Harris: Okay, those beans would be like what we would plant in the spring time, just like a bag of beans that you buy from the grocery store. We would plant those and they grew and then made the green beans, well if mom had too many green beans, she left those green beans on the vine to dry, they would continue to grow till they matured, and then they would dry, well once they were completely dried, we'd pick the dry beans and shell the pinto beans out of the hole, and that was our pinto beans, our dried beans, that we had during the winter time. And that's the same way we did the black-eyed-peas. You would harvest the fresh pea, and then if it was -- you had a lot more than you needed, you left them on the vine and let them dry and harvest them in the fall and then had your black-eyed-peas or any kind of bean or pea if it were a different kind of pea you could harvest and then dry out like that, so.

Curry: You, you mentioned the winter time, this is something I always think about is -- like winter time and growing all your food must be kind of difficult, um. Did, did y'all -- how did y'all prepare for that? Prepare for winter?

Harris: That's why we preserved everything because there was really nothing you could grow over the winter time unless you had a protected area like a hot house or something like that. People didn't really have those then unless they were able to make one, you know just put a shack together or whatever with plastic and stuff. But, and the plastic was not all available like we think about it nowadays, so. That's why all the beans, you'd dry the beans, you'd can the green beans, you would have your potatoes and whatever you'd have a special way of keeping the potatoes, like. You'd put those out on a bed of straw and then just kinda keep them as long as you could, because they wouldn't last all winter long either. So you kept them as long as you could and you had to be sure to put them where they could not freeze, because if they froze then they were no good. So, that's why we did all the

preserving over the summer time and the fall, to keep stuff for over the winter.

Sanchez: How would y'all like, take care of like the cattle specifically over the winter? Like, would that be a time when you would, I dunno, I dunno how would you do it?

Harris: Um, they just had to tough it out. Even in a bad snowstorm or rain, and sad to say in hail, or whatever, plus there, if you had a huge barn, then you could get them in the barn but most people didn't have a barn big enough to handle that many heads of cattle, so. Sorry to say they just had to tough it out sometimes. And the winters were worse back then than they are now. And sometimes we would have snow and, course the cattle would have snow on their back from that and freezing rain and stuff, but just really nothing we could do for them.

Sanchez: Right. I mean it makes sense though, like that's how they were in nature, um, but would you just like --

Harris: [coughing]

Sanchez: Was.

Harris: Sorry.

Sanchez: You're good. Was it a common occurrence I guess to like, lose like an animal during the winter?

Harris: Oh yes, yes, definitely that, and also, in calving times when the cow would be having her babies sometimes things would go wrong and the baby would die or maybe both of them would die. And that even happens nowadays. Y'know. There's, sometimes there's just nothing that can be done.

Sanchez: Right.

Curry: Now, this all sounds like a lot of hard work. Here's a question. Um, what sorts of things did y'all do for fun?

Harris: Well, we got to play out, course kids at that time, we didn't have all the toys

Curry: Mhm.

Harris: That are available now. We had bicycles. We could ride a bicycle. In the creek in the summertime we could go play in the creek, and we had games that we could play like marbles and jacks, little hand games that we could play, and of course read the books, and, but with my family, big as my family was, we couldn't afford to do a lot of things other

than what we could think of there at home. we weren't able to take lots of trips, we did visit family and that was something that was done more frequently at that time than now. We would go like on Sunday afternoon and visit aunt and uncle, and my grandpa lived, oh probably ten or twelve miles from us and we would go see him sometimes and then… that side of my family, that was my mother's side of the family, I never knew my grandmother from that side. From my daddy's side of the family I never knew my grandpa from that side. So my grandmother lived with, alternated living with the kids, and then my grandpa, my mother's dad, had a daughter that was -- and a son -- that was still living at home so he was able to stay home, but my grandmother on my daddy's side didn't have anyone left, so she had just to live with the kids alternately. She didn't have anyone that could stay with her. She had to move with them. So we would go visit with them. And, cousins, we would, like, get together on the Fourth of July and stuff like that because we lived in the country and fireworks weren't allowed in town. Well people would come

out to the country to shoot off fireworks and we'd have ice cream, make our own ice cream and have the fireworks and stuff like that. And that was some of the things that we did, and then, course, in the wintertime most of the time we were in school and not really able to travel that much all weekend if it were cold, so.

Curry: Hm.

Harris: Just types of things like that. And we didn't have TV till… probably 1964, 65, so. No, sorry about that, it was earlier than that, so, um, but it was just a little bitty TV. And sometimes we'd go over to the neighbor's house to watch TV because my sister, brother and I would because they had a little bigger TV than we did, and we'd go watch TV with them, so.

Curry: Now, you talked about your family a little bit. Um, something I'm curious about. So, were both of your parents, did both of your parents basically live on the land their whole lives, at least up until that point?

Harris: Yes, yes, mhm. My mother grew up on a farm. My daddy grew up on a farm. My daddy's daddy died when my

daddy was like seven years old. So he had to more or less take over and help my grandmother with everything, so yes, they both lived on the… both sides of my parents lived on the farm.

Curry: Mhm.

Harris: When my daddy passed away, he still lived on the farm.

Curry: Mhm?

Harris: When my mother passed away, she had moved from the farm to town, so. Until 1995, they both grew, or, had lived on the farm.

Sanchez: Does your family still own that farm?

Harris: No. No.

Sanchez: Mhm.

Harris: No, my grandmother sold it in 1995.

Sanchez: Mm. Um…

Harris: Or my mother, my mother sold it in 1995.

Sanchez: Alright. Um…

Curry: Go ahead.

Sanchez: Well I was gonna say a question I had just have, um, do you like, do you still garden now that you don't live there anymore, or, um, I dunno, Hm.

Harris: Um, Grandpa and I have… a little bit of garden. Like, we have a bunch of onions growing right now. We

have some tomato plants out, and um some pepper plants out but no we don't garden. What you really say "garden." We just do a few little things.

Sanchez: Hm.

Harris: There is a man that lives out about 5 or 6 miles from us that has a garden and we go out and buy fresh okra and tomatoes and stuff like that from him. So we don't grow enough here in town, we don't have enough space to grow that much garden.

Sanchez: Right. Hm. Almost there.

Curry: Alright. So, here is a question, and you can approach this however you want. Now that we've talked a little bit about what it was like for you growing up, um, is there anything that you wish people my age knew about agriculture? About raising food, about raising cattle, growing food, anything like that.

Harris: It would be nice for people your age to know about it. It's like kids nowadays have no idea that… where eggs come from usually. They don't know where you get the hamburger meat that you have a hamburger from. And they don't really know that some things grow on the vine that you can go out

and just pick it off and wash it and eat it. There's just a lot of things that the kids do not have any idea that you plant a seed and watch it grow and it makes a fruit or a vegetable that you can eat.

Curry: Mhm.

Sanchez: Um, hm.

Curry: Yeah, you know, when I was in high school, um, I knew someone who kept some chickens. Um, and they would send me pictures sometimes of them out with the chickens, like picking up batches of eggs, and I would always just think, like, wow. It's kind of, it's cool but it's kind of, like, surprising to see people my age doing stuff like that.

Harris: Right, right, and you know, right now there are… growing chickens then… and having them and, there are several of 'em here in town.

Curry: Mhm?

Harris: That have little chicken houses and whatever. So, yeah it's, it's, it's fun to watch em. To grow, you know, um in fact going back to my early life.

Curry: Yeah.

Harris: My mom and dad would buy like fifty little baby chickens in the springtime which would be about

now, when the warmer weather was warmer, and they would let them grow. And then we would butcher some of them. Like you would go butcher a chicken and you would have, clean it and whatever and have a fried chicken lunch.

Curry: Mhm?

Harris: And then some of them would grow, those would be like roosters. The rooster. The ones whose -- the hens we would keep. And then that's where we got the eggs, to do you know for the hens to be hen layers, lay the eggs and whatever and then the roosters we would usually butcher, or they would just roam around. So. But, no, mom and dad would go buy some at the early springtime and then we'd just watch em grow and then, as I said we'd eat some of the chickens and then the others we kept for… the eggs.

Curry: Mhm. Now when you say you had to go buy some in the early springtime, did they, did they just tend not to make it through the winter?

Harris: Right. Yeah, well, and most of the time we didn't have the facilities to keep them, over winter. But um baby chicken over winter. So no most of the people who, um, hatched the eggs into the little

chickens would have y'know the facility where they could do that. They would probably start like in the wintertime. But then the, the reason why we did it over the springtime was the grass and whatever would become available for them to eat.

Curry: Mhm.

Harris: So they would just eat bugs and grass and table scraps that you would put out for them to eat. But, by that, by wintertime those chickens that you bought in the springtime would be full-grown chickens.

Curry: Hm.

Sanchez: Hm. So like, as um, you know, I guess we as a culture I guess, move more away from farming in like the traditional sense, right, um you know for better or for worse, right, probably for worse if I'm being honest here. Do you worry about, like, food security and, like, safety in your area? Or just the country as a whole?

Harris: I don't worry that much about it, Dante, because I think, we -- there are ways to provide for it. It is becoming more um -- sometimes you feel not as safe eating some of the things because you don't know where they came from or how they were

produced, or where they were produced. So yes in that way it is kinda scary when you go buy your food because you know, you got reports of salmonella poisoning and all of that, so. But that can happen anywhere, but it seems that there is more so that type of thing happening nowadays than you ever heard of growing up on the farm. Um -- some of the insecticides, and whatever that they use nowadays, to keep the fruits and vegetables healthy, clean, or whatever are not good for our bodies. But, you know, I still think providing for the family is not a scarcity or anything like that, so. I do think that some of the commercial farms or whatever could probably have a few more security in the insecticides and whatever it is that they use.

Curry: Hm.

Sanchez: Hm.

Curry: No -- I think that that's a really nice perspective. I think -- I think sometimes it is very easy to be maybe doom and gloom --

Sanchez: Right --

Curry: -- about the future of food, especially with what we just talked about; a lot of young people maybe feeling a bit disconnected from where they get food, how they get food, how it is even grown at all.

Harris: Right, Right.

Curry: But, y'know. Of course there are still folks out there doing that.

Harris: Right. You know, there are a lot of kids, probably ninety percent of the kids, don't know that a potato comes from the ground. You know, it's down in the dirt. A sweet potato is in the dirt. They've only seen them like in the grocery store, they don't know where they come from. You know? So? Those are little things that I wish that the younger kids growing up knew more about. Where their food comes from, how it is produced, but um -- a lot of that depends on parents wanting to teach their kids about it too.

Sanchez: Um -- so the -- the city that we are currently in, and a lot of like more cities like Denton and um- like I don't know, more urban like areas um that are spread across the country, I feel like there

are more- I'm sorry I'm stumbling over my words here. But I feel like, um- we are entering more into more like, a food desert area, which is essentially just an area where like all the food that comes in is like bought or shipped in, and nothing is being really grown anymore. So how would you say like, we, let's say as college students or whatnot right, how could we like um- I don't know like what's something we should keep in mind to like stay kinda food secure I guess. I don't know if that made sense but I'm sorry [laughs].

Harris: Well a lot of kids, college kids, high school, middle school, and all of that, they can learn what we call community gardens. I know some of the towns are beginning to have those where an area is given to a group of people to guide others and how to plant the food and harvest it and keep it going. So I think, if a lot of more communities got involved in it then it kinda keeps going from this community to see how well this one is done, so someone else would want to try it. So I think if we got more people involved in types of things like

community gardens then it might help a lot as far as not having a food desert, so.

Sanchez: Right.

Curry: Yeah --

Harris: You'd have a lot of fresh vegetables, you'd have a lot of things that would probably have to be thrown away too because people won't harvest them whenever they need to but you would have availability there.

Curry: Mm yeah. And I, I think that this in particular would be a good community to do that in. I didn't know this for a while, but here in Denton we have the biggest community garden in the United States.

Sanchez: and --

Harris: Really?

Curry: Yeah! Shiloh Field, we learned about this in our class --

Sanchez: Oh, Shiloh's the biggest?

Curry: Yeah.

Sanchez: That's wild.

Curry: I think we are gonna go there next week.

Sanchez: We're going Thursday.

Curry: Awesome. But yeah, I appreciate that note on community gardens because that's something that I think

especially something here in Denton we can pay attention to.

Sanchez: That's also like, a focus of the class and whatnot, because that we've been talking about like -- and this class specifically our professors or what not are trying to set up a way where we can have more community gardens around campus. So I think that ties in really well, yeah.

Harris: And a lot of the schools that are more agriculture inclined would probably have a little community garden. But when you have just a regular college, they may not you know think about a community garden. But to me that's a good idea. There's a small one down, not too far from us, I don't know who all is allowed to be there you know, to get the produce, I don't that much about it, but it has just within the last four to five years came about, you know. So some of the areas do have it, some churches will have it, and some of the schools are beginning to teach the children about little community gardens.

Curry: Hm.

Sanchez: Hm.

Curry: Alright, well we appreciate your time, um -- do you have any like last thoughts on anything that we've discussed? Anything that you feel like is left unsaid?

Harris: I'm gonna look over my notes and see.

Curry: Yeah of course.

Harris: Pretty much I think we talked about everything that I have, let's see. I think I did make a statement about how ninety-five percent of the food that we ate when I was growing up, came from the farm, so we didn't have to go out and buy, except those that we could not produce, you know like the flour, the cornmeal, cereal, and stuff like that, the sugar that I talked about earlier. So pretty much ninety-five percent of it came from the farm and pretty much we ate the same as we do today, we have different types of vegetables available that we didn't have at that time, so, I think that's about -- so many, I don't know, there are so many varieties of food available today from when I was growing up. And people today go to the grocery store and buy food that is sometimes already, or completely repaired, or prepared. And on the farm

we had to plant the food, we had to let it grow, we had to pick it or dig it, and clean it and then prepare it before we could eat. And Dante, and Isaiah, I know that you know going into the grocery store you'll see packages of mashed potatoes already done, you'll see a lot of things that are already done. And those things were not available to us at all, and even they've only come about in the last ten years or maybe less than that. So, I think a lot of people complain about the food insecurities and all of that, but this prepared food makes the prices so much higher. If people would go buy a bag of potatoes, peel them, mash them, in their homes, they'd have ten meals compared to what one little bag of mashed potatoes, already made and frozen for you costs.

Sanchez: Hm.

Curry: Hm.

Harris: A lot of people make their own food preparation harder than it should be. Or buying the food more expensive than it should be.

Sanchez: Right.

Curry: Alright.

Harris: That's about all that I have, my comment, so.

Curry: Alright, excellent! Well thank you very much for agreeing to this interview.

Harris: You're very welcome, Dante, happy to do it.

Curry: Yeah of course! And we will go ahead and end it there.

Sanchez: Yeah!

Harris: Okay.

Sanchez: Thank you so much!

Harris: Thank you! You guys do good!

[End of Interview]