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## Interview with Marcia Brown

Marcia Brown

Lisa M. Groesz

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LG: This is Lisa Groesz interviewing Marcia Brown February 5, 2001. And, um, did you begin preserving with your parents? Or was it?

MB: Oh, very little. Both of my parents were raised on a farm in upstate New York: two separate farms. In two different regions of the state. And they grew up in the depression so they knew what it was like to have to conserve and their entire life they had. They had been very frugal and my mother would preserve things but that wasn't where I wanted to be. The kitchen wasn't where I wanted to be so I didn't really focus on how to do it until I married a farmer. And even then it wasn't so much that I had married a farmer that I started preserving. But more the philosophy that we had that I kept on going back to my mom, say 'Mom, how do I do this.' And my mother-in-law [Kate Brown], bless her heart, oh, she's been a wealth of knowledge to me also. So that's really, I didn't really know what to do until I was married.

LG: And it was because you have a garden.

MB: I have a garden. We have land so that we could have a garden and both my husband, well my husband was obviously raised with fresh produce put up and then he could eat it, uh, throughout the year. But when we started having children, we thought we wanted natural food for them. And our garden is organic. I hardly, now I put some things on it just to control the pests some. I put Seven on it. But otherwise we fertilize with the manure from our dairy cows. It's rather organic. And, um, we were really conscious about putting as pure food as possible to our children and we have four of them. Their age range is from 18 ½ to nine. I had to stop and think.

LG: Oh wow.

MB: So I was making baby food for quite a while. He he he. And from the baby food, you know preserving or pureeing, you know then it was just a continuation. Putting spaghetti sauce up for me, I'm not a pickle eater but my husband loves pickles so I endure doing pickles. Um, and Kelly likes to experiment some so he's tried to grow some different foods. Some different pasta, not pasta, peppers, and then he's made his own salsa. He's much more adventurous with food than I am. I'm just not very adventurous. But he's made his own ketchup before.

LG: Oh wow.

MB: And made his own salsa with some's hot, some's hotter, you know. And he's dried peppers so he, uh, oh the last three four years he's dried our peppers. The excess of them because we always have more than we need. He puts them in a shaker and then he can

shake them on food and add them to our chili for his bowl to be spicier than my bowl. So anyway.

LG: Right, right.

MB: I think that answers your question. I'm telling you more than you asked me, I guess.

LG: No, no, that's perfect. And so with peppers, is that the only thing that you dry? Other than that, do you mainly can?

MB: Uh, we have dried beef before.

LG: Okay.

MB: We don't own a dehydrator but one of our dear friends does and we've kind of had custody of it for the last eight or nine years. He he he. I've tried to give it back to them and they go 'uh no, we've filled up that space in the closet. You just go ahead and keep it.'

LG: Uh huh.

MB: So about once or twice a year, Kelly will dry some jerky from the extra beef that we have. That's homegrown beef, home raised, so, um, and, I'm not a jerky eater but my two oldest sons and my husband eat it right off the drying rack usually. And we've done some vegetables but that's more of a hobby than to nourish our bodies. Just something, 'let's try this.' Hobby is not the right word. An experiment maybe would be a better word for that.

LG: Uh huh.

MB: Um, for the last eight or nine years since I've had possession, custody, of the food dehydrator, um, in my classroom I do a unit in November on the pilgrims. And then we have a feast. And, um, it started with my room and now it's throughout the entire second grade. And we, um, dry food. We dry fruit and in the past I've never dried meat in here just because of the time consuming part of that. Um, but, um, I either, we either do some jerky of our own. This year another teacher had some jerky that her husband had made so the kids can experience that taste.

LG: Yeah.

MB: And then my class for the last couple of years we've sliced fruit. Uh, apple slices, bananas and grapes. We don't slice those, we just dry them whole. So the kids get to experience that.

LG: And I'm sure when they go home they're like, 'Why don't we do it here?'

MB: I think so. They all think, oh gawd, I don't want any of that. And then when we have our feast they have to have a little bit of everything. One class makes corn bread. Hm, what did she do? Popcorn. And then I have the dried fruit. And she also cuts up some vegetables for some people so they do have some nourishment: carrots and celery.

LG: Right.

MB: And then they have, one class makes apple sauce. And then the one class had the jerky. They make the apple sauce and have jerky so that we serve them. And, it's fun. The kids love the experience of it. So many of these children nowadays eat out more than they are probably served homecooked food at home. Um, they think home cooking is to go to Home Town Buffet, you know, because they've got the word home in it. Um, and it's, they don't realize how it is to have quality food.

LG: Yeah.

MB: Um, apple sauce was something that I always have made for my children, you know, from little babies. I never got into making my own yogurt. Although my husband wanted to. We thought, you know, we've got the dairy farm. But we've never saved the cultures and started that. But, I started my own children on yogurt as a plain food and then apple sauce, we'd go to that. The kids didn't here at school, excuse me I digressed there for a moment and went to my own kids...

LG: No.

MB: But my students, they bark about 'Ew, I don't want to taste that,' but once they are part of the process and they see, wow, this is good, and they taste the dried fruit, I never have any dried fruit left to take home. They come back for seconds and thirds and until it's all taken. That's fun.

LG: That's really cool. So when you began to can, what did you find the most difficult in beginning?

MB: Trusting the directions and having faith that what I was putting up was going to be safe to eat.

LG: Uh huh.

MB: That was probably the biggest thing. Um, as I already told you, I wasn't the biggest fan of the kitchen when I was single and when I was, when Kelly and I became engaged, both my parents asked my husband and his family several times, "Are you sure Marcia is going to make it as a farm wife? Are you sure? This woman doesn't do anything." I was 25, my husband and I were 25 when we were married. So we weren't youngsters. But still my parents were like, they had been raised on the farm, and they were thinking, 'I don't think Marcia has got what it takes.' So throughout my experiments with cooking also, my mom would say, what do you think. And so I didn't have the faith in myself

either. Um, and my mother-in-law, bless her heart, she's just a wonderful, she and I were good friends before we became in-laws. And, before I started dating her son even, we were friends. We taught together.

LG: She's amazing.

MB: Oh, isn't she, isn't she though. Oh, gosh, she was my mentor by choice when I first started teaching.

LG: Yeah.

MB: Uh, I taught up in the big building and she did too. And she was just such a marvel and something to look up to, you know. Anyway, she would invite me down in the summertime and I would say, I want to do this but I don't know how and she would say, well come on down and we will do it together.

LG: Yeah.

MB: And over the years she weaned me, so to speak. I, we would parallel work, we would partner up work. And then I would say I think I can do it this year. I think I can do this. And I would go home and I would call her, "Oh, Kate, I don't know." Not ever batch that I did was good. I have made, oh, what kind of, blackberry jelly from the blackberries that grow out in our alley way

LG: Yeah.

MB: and it was more like a syrup to pour over ice cream, you know. I don't eat jelly, my husband and my kids like jelly. I don't eat it but I can't remember how I goofed up on that. And one time the pickles were like sponges. You could bend them and they still wouldn't crack. So there were failures definitely

LG: Right.

MB: But your time is valuable and it isn't inexpensive to put up preserves, but it's a learning process. It worked. And I would just say, I chalk this up to experience. And next year I would know better and I would make notes in my recipes. You know, remember to: or I would highlight if I skipped a step, I would highlight a step in it. So I would learn and do better.

LG: And, well, there's such a feeling of satisfaction too.

MB: Oh yeah, there really is. Eighteen years ago, nineteen years, because we didn't have any children yet, I had put up a lot of stuff that year. And Kelly said, "why don't you enter it in the tomatoe show. Fredericktown has a street fair. Oh, you said you had been here.

LG: Oh yes, it's great. I love the bathtub races!

MB: Oh yeah. You know, in all the years I have never made it down there.

LG: Oh it's fun.

MB: By Saturday night I am so sick and tired of it. And I am either working in, we have a booth where we sell our maple syrup, and I'm either working there or I'm home with the kids doing chores before we come back in. And I've never seen them. I know I need to.

LG: That's cool.

MB: Anyway. That particular year, Kelly said you have put up so many things, why don't you enter them in the tomato show. And I'm going, yeah right. Well I won all these blue ribbons and that just gave me so much self confidence. You know, in a community with, at that point, it was still a community of a lot of agriculture and a lot of people living on the farm, who had been raised on the farm, who should have been smarter and knew better than me. But for some reason I won all these blue ribbons. And, um, I made a homemade coffee cake and won a blue ribbon for that also. And I thought, this is great.

LG: That's wonderful.

MB: And that's what everyone's ego needs: a little bit of stroking and, heck, I can do it next year. And I haven't, I guess the ego part of me wouldn't let me enter it again. Because I thought, no it's somebody else's turn.

LG: He he he.

MB: We'll let someone else...

LG: You don't want to take the chance.

MB: That's right, that's probably it.

LG: And so, when you do tomatoes, do you usually do the tomatoes straight or do you do spaghetti sauce or?

MB: Both, um, and this is one of those things that you hope is going to work out this way. We make it a family venture. And my mother-in-law, with money from the farm, bought a Victorio strainer. And, I just was overwhelmed a couple of years because of course the tomatoes are always ready once I've just started school. And so how do I teach all day, go home and cook, and do the tomatoes too? This is my third son Neil.

LG: Oh.

MB: Neil, can you say hi to Lisa, she's from Kenyon.

Neil: Hi.

LG: Hi.

MB: He's a fourth grader.

LG: Oh.

MB: And, um, so, so much of the family fun is really work we make fun experience. And grinding up, pureeing, what do I want to call it, processing the tomatoes, is something that I made into family fun so that we could spend time together even though it was drudgery for me to do by myself. Well, it worked. Um, this past year, my son's a freshman at Cornell, and when he wasn't here in September. Before he left, my second son said, "Carl, you are going to have to miss making the tomatoes." And Carl went, "Oh, isn't that a shame, ha ha ha."

LG: He he he.

MB: But you know, he called and he says, "Boy I miss that idea. I miss being out there." And we take it out on the picnic table on our screened in porch where we can hose everything down afterwards and I cook the tomatoes down in the kitchen some just so they can go through the processor better and then take it out and each of my kids have a responsibility but it's just a communal time.

LG: Right.

MB: And they, it's memories.

LG: Yeah.

MB: You know, we've made memories that way. And then the cooking down part they know is mine. My responsibility. That takes days. I have three kettles and I'll cook them down during the day for the spaghetti sauce because I like it thick. Excuse me, I cook it down during the evening when I'm home, and then I turn it off and put the lid on it and then the next morning when I get up I know it hasn't become contaminated but I can scoop off, it's separated and a lot of water is apt to be on top and I scoop it off which conserves some energy. I don't have to boil it down quite as long. And I add spices. The kids help me chop up the onions and the peppers and to put in it. It's turned into a family tradition.

LG: That's wonderful.

MB: And I don't know whether Kate mentioned the way our family puts up corn? That's a wonderful family tradition too.

LG: Yeah, no that sounded wonderful.

MB: It's neat. And very seldom have I taken photographs of it.

LG: Uh huh.

MB: And I should but we are all so busy and involved in it that I'll take my camera down to the farm to take the pictures and we are all up to our elbows in corn and I don't. But I really, I took pictures when some of my kids would be in a play pen next to us while we were working and I need to get some more current pictures of that.

LG: And how much corn do you do?

MB: Oh, let me think. Oh well we try, and this isn't an accurate measurement, but we use pint bags, ziplock bags, and we try to do a hundred easily.

LG: That's crazy.

MB: And more because that will divide between one sister-in-law, one of my husband's sisters that lives in Green Valley and then our family, my mother-in-law, and a brother-in-law who's part of the farm partnership, so that's covering four families. And so 100 pints divided into four isn't going to be a lot to last through the year so we try to do as much as we can. And, um, over the years we've discovered, ways to keep the raccoon out of our corn patch. My father-in-law, my sons, will go down and put electric wire around the corn patch.

LG: Oh.

MB: The raccoon, I didn't know, they don't jump.

LG: Uh huh.

MB: I didn't know that. I knew they didn't fly but I didn't jump. So you just put electric wire, I forget, five inches above the ground, so that they can't crawl under it and they can't jump over it without getting ZZZZ.

LG: Right.

MB: And that really keeps our corn from being devoured by the coon.

LG: Right.

MB: So that's, you know, through the years, our process has evolved. He he he. But we still do it the old fashioned way yet. One year we tried to do it on a gas grill outside and that was too tedious so my father-in-law just builds the fire. You know, wood and fire in a fire pit out in the barn's drive way and we husk it from our pickup truck and put it in.



Now, we do think of sanitation. We put clean table cloths in laundry baskets. And of course there, the tub that my father-in-law boils the corn in is cleaned out first. And then we keep them covered up with table cloths once they've been boiled to keep flies off of them. Because it's always, it's apt to be such a sticky day when we do this and the flies are everywhere. So we work as quickly as we can to keep it as sanitized as we can. And the kids, they growl, "Ew, we have to husk all the corn," but yet they're right there doing it. And it's, a farm family is a good community. We have fun. I'm babbling.

LG: No, this is wonderful. This is great. This is exactly what I need. And so all of your children are involved with the canning then.

MB: Oh yes. Even from when, I have the youngest children in our farm family. And, uh, when Maggie and Neil were, nine and ten years old, when they were just in diapers, if they didn't do anything else but help, oh, I know the first job that they do. They tear the twisties apart. This was before we had ziplock bags and they tear the twisties and put them in a pile. So that was there beginning job and if they dropped them on the ground, who cares, you know, they could get dirty. They could have cookie crumbs on them. You know, that didn't interfere with the process. And of course, they try to husk the corn and that's a mess to have pre-schoolers husk, you've got all this hair, well that's what we call it, hair in the corn. So that's, so then the adults have to redo it once they do it. But they want to be involved and we don't shun them.

LG: Yeah.

MB: Um, because then that's the way they feel resentful and then they're not a part of it. Um, so we find something that's age appropriate for them so that they are within us and yet when their attention span is gone, because it would be because they're young, somebody else can certainly carry over and take over their job. Their position won't go. Um, the next age level would probably be pulling the wagon from Grandpa with the corn on it back to where we're working under the tree. And one of the young ones is always the gopher for Grandpa. He needs another pepsi or go get him a drink of water or something like that. So they're all a part of it. The men, my husband and his brother, come and go. But they still have the farm work to do. So this is mostly women and my semi-retired father-in-law and the children. But the men help pick the corn in the morning and they come and raz us and, you know, we all eat a meal together. Some years, depending on what's going on in our life on that particular day. Some years we all pitch in and bring food. Or one year, golly, what was going on? Maybe my sister-in-law, who's in education also, at the career center, she's a guidance counselor. She may have been at a seminar and I may have been taken a class. At any rate, we did it in the evening and we just ordered pizza. So it doesn't always have to be home cooking.

LG: Right.

MB: But it's, we're doing it together, and that's fun. And then, in the winter time, I'm still pulling out these bags of frozen corn. It's, it's wonderful to know that it's homegrown and I know what's in that bag. The kids kind of, "Oh yeah." Just the other

day I cooked some and there was some extra hair in it and my husband said, "Ah, Neil, you must have husked this ear of corn." So it brings up memories that way. Oh, shoot, I thought of something while I was talking. Hmm. I don't know.

LG: And so you find, with a lot of kids in your class, they've never dealt with, like, freshly canned goods.

MB: Oh yes. Very much so.

LG: And so do you feel like a lot less people are canning and freezing than in the past?

MB: Hm hmmm. Um, and I think that's evident with, um, well, my mother is just, my parents are 82 years old. And just this winter we have had to move them out of their home into a condominium. So they're downsizing. So my two sister-in-laws, who are, my parents are suburban people and so are my brothers. And neither of them wanted the canning jars or the freezer jars. So I said, "I'll take them. If I can't use them, I know a few people who can." And I thought, hmm, I don't know as many as I used to who do this anymore.

LG: Right.

MB: But, um, there was a trend for a while. In the sixties, you know, mother earth, sixties and seventies, get back to the basics. And then life becomes busy.

LG: Right.

MB: And careers and eating isn't, how do I want to say this? To my mother-in-law, eating is an art form. She makes beautiful food and the presentation is just wonderful. I cook to eat. You know, there's a difference there? I just, here it is okay, eat it. Um, but my mother-in-law and my sister-in-law, they fix beautiful meals. And I think people nowadays, if they want a beautiful meal, they go out and have a chef do it. Otherwise, it's here it is, eat it. Now I don't want to stereotype and make everyone sound that way.

LG: Right.

MB: I know the thought I had before. Back to another reason for freezing corn or doing our own, there have been some years when the raccoon got into the corn more than we wanted or it was a bad year, it was a drought or whatever. And so we didn't have enough corn to last through the winter. And, uh, or green beans or anything like that. But I can't find canned green beans, frozen green beans, any commercially made green beans or corn that my family likes.

LG: That's really interesting.

MB: And I've tried generic, I've tried cream of the crop, you know, the top brand. And they'll say, "This isn't yours is it? We didn't do this one, did we?" And I go "No, no."

LG: That's awesome. Because I know because with big supermarkets now, you can have any food, any season. You know, you're not limited by...

MB: That's right. That's right.

LG: location.

MB: But I couldn't, oh about 2 or 3 years ago we ran out of corn early in the winter and I tried everything. I would buy mixed vegetables and they didn't seem to mind it as badly.

LG: Uh huh.

MB: But if it was a bowl of corn, it needed to be mom's. You know, or, and they call it mine even though they're a part of it.

LG: Yeah, right.

MB: They're in on it too. And last year, my oldest son was, um, I don't know how to simply say this. He was a part of a project, anyway, he met in the summertime for a week long conference with kids from all over the state. And then in February, they had a reunion, got back together. And it was down in Columbus and three or four people from the Cleveland came down and picked up Carl and took him to Columbus and came back. And I said, "Come here and have lunch on Sunday." And for lunch the only thing I had to buy, that I hadn't put up, was chicken. Knowing, well chicken and pasta, because I made some pasta salads, but knowing that these girls were, well what it was was a group of gifted children, the Martinesque (sp) school for gifted children and, uh, knowing them a little bit I knew that they were very into health things for themselves. They took care of their bodies. So I thought, "I bet one of them is a vegetarian so I better have several salads", you know and everything. Well, they were in awe of the fact that I put up all of my food. I had homemade strawberry jam, I had apple sauce, uh, the salsa that we had before we ate. And I didn't have beef because I thought about the red meat issues so I had chicken. What else would I have had? Oh, I made the rolls. I can't think, there were a couple other things and they were going, "I can't believe you did this, this is so delicious." And I said, "Well come back." Last summer they had another reunion and one of the girls called and said, "I wish we were able to take time and come and eat with you again, Mrs. Brown. Your food was delicious." And I thought, well, that's nice. But they were all from a very urban area from around Cleveland and their parents didn't have room to garden, didn't have time to, or the desire, I don't know what, but this was new to them to think that people would actually do this. So that was, that was kind of neat.

LG: Yeah.

MB: You know, it made me, both my husband and I feel like, we had a basic goal to give our kids healthy food, and along the way, they've learned too, not everybody gets it.

They've learned to respect what we eat and learn that, wow, it does make a difference. People do notice. I don't know.

LG: And how many children do you have?

MB: Four.

LG: Okay. So how do you find time to can when you teach and you have four children and?

MB: Well, thank goodness most of the canning is done in the summertime, most of it.

LG: Right, right.

MB: The tomatoes get to be, to do, tomato sauce and spaghetti sauce are about all I do. Just, the tomato sauce, more like juice, and um a couple of seasons my husband went ahead if we had an access of tomatoes and made ketchup or salsa he uses. But, um, it's hard, it really is hard yet I know that it is something my kids like and they still deserve the best so I work at it. And snapping the beans out on the patio. For one thing, it is a good excuse and do nothing during the day. "I've got to snap the beans, honey."

LG: Right, you can just let your thoughts wander.

MB: Oh, I do, I do. And I love, um, kind of like an insect repellent. If mom goes to the garden, the kids scatter. You know, "Ah, I'm staying away from mom, she'll put me to work." Unless it's to run the rotatiller. Then my second son who's a machine fanatic, he'll do that. "Mom, do you want me to rotatill?" And I'll go, "Yeah, Ross, that sounds good."

LG: He he.

MB: But, um, otherwise I get my garden gloves on and everyone skedaddles. So I have peace of mind. My five minutes of quiet time out there where I can collect my thoughts and think over things. So that's a benefit. It's my meditation time, kind of.

LG: That's cool.

MB: Yeah, I don't mind it. Plus I get a little bit of sunshine. He he he.

LG: Yeah.

MB: So I don't mind it at all. And my husband, my husband and our neighbor just laugh at me. Because, oh, when we were first married my husband would plant the garden. He did the manly thing, you know, and I would come home. And then he got busy and he realized, well, he didn't really need to do that, I was capable of it. But, um, I don't know, I guess I'm right brained. I'm very abstract, random and abstract, in my personality and

thinking. And I do creative plots. Like I'll do an arrow formation. They're not rows. I do different things with them.

LG: He he he. That's awesome.

MB: And the kids will plant, they'll have their little section if they want to. Each of my kids growing up had their own little garden, flower garden, and sometimes they'd plant lettuce in there and take care of it themselves so that they were nurturing and learning how to, also.

LG: Uh huh.

MB: And they would go out, I would say, well we need some lettuce tonight, and Carl would say, "I'll go pick it from my garden." A couple of years, his lettuce was in the shape of a smiley face, you know, when he was little, he could do a circle. And it's fun. And it's hard work too.

LG: Yeah.

MB: But, I don't know, it's rewarding to change and grow and you've got food, you've got food. So, anyway.

LG: Yeah.

MB: And it's taught my oldest son in particular, who's friends aren't agricultural at all. My second son, now he's hands on, and his friends are more interested in working with their hands. Carl wants to read about it. Just different personalities. And Carl used to be so impressed with, uh, summer, it used to really tick him off. But when he was in high school, his friends would call him and say, "Carl what are you doing? We're just hanging loose today, why don't you come over?" And he'd go, "Oh I've got to weed the garden or I've got to do this on the farm. Or I've got to." And then he says, "You know, town people, they just don't know what to do with their time, now do they?" He he he.

LG: That's awesome.

MB: Yes! For junior high years, it was "It's so unfair, my friends have all this free time."

LG: Uh huh.

MB: But then once he got to high school, he was like, "They don't know what to do with their time, now do they? They're watching dumb TV, playing Nintendo."

LG: Right.

MB: He says, "That's not."

LG: And it's a good physical tired too, you know, when you've done something that's active and productive.

MB: Very much so. Hm hmmm.

LG: That's cool.

MB: So anyway. Canning, I can but I prefer to freeze as much as I can.

LG: Oh, okay. Do you like, do you prefer the taste, or?

MB: Oh yeah. And I think it's what I was raised with. My mother would freeze more than can and I don't really know why. It wasn't, my father was always, I say he's a frustrated farmer. He was raised on a farm and then he chose to be a career airforce officer so we moved around and he didn't garden until he retired. Didn't garden much. And then he retired while I was in high school and each year for a number of years his garden would get bigger and bigger. And it's like, what are you doing with all of this food, Dad? And he would give it away at church and whatever, and my mom would end up putting food up. But she really did freeze more and I don't know why that was her preference and so I think that's part of why I freeze.

LG: Yeah.

MB: Because I was used to the green beans being crunchy like they are when you freeze them instead of out of a can and thank goodness I have a very adaptable husband because he just goes with the flow or whatever, you know. He'll eat my frozen green beans instead of his mother's canned green beans or vice versa. He doesn't mind. So that's worked out.

LG: That's cool. And so you can tomatoes? And what else do you can?

MB: Peaches. Neil, my son who's in here, loves peaches. And he could eat, I put them in quart jars. In one meal he could eat almost a whole quart jar if I let him.

LG: Uh huh.

MB: Uh, we've done some, we've put up pears before. We don't anymore. We just eat fresh pears instead of canning them. Uh, pickles, pickle relish, which is really expensive. You know, it's cheaper to buy your own pickle relish you know. But on those years when we've had a surplus of zucchinis, I've done zucchini pickles too. I don't eat the stuff. I don't eat pickles at all. But, um, like down on my shelf right now, I think I have two bottles of zucchini pickles, oh from the early nineties. But they're still good. They still crunch as much as they would have the first day.

LG: Uh huh. Why are they so expensive?

MB: Well, the zucchini pickles aren't so expensive but the pickle relish is because you add a lot of spice to it. And it's not just pickles that you grow. You add pomentos, gosh, sugar, just the extra ingredients that you buy from an unknown source.

LG: Right.

MB: So you're paying them. And therefore you're not really controlling your quality either. My kids love pickle relish. They really love their grandmother's pickle relish. Oh my. That's, every year she'll give a couple of jars...

[end of side A]

MB: And my mother-in-law is apt to put up canned beef for us.

LG: Okay.

MB: At first, I was kind of like, "why do I want this." It's in this slimy stuff and all it is is congealed fat. But, uh, and water. But it's like, oh, but boy is it a time saver. If I come home from school late, I go down and get a can out and shred it for beef and noodles or.

LG: Fajitas or.

MB: Hm hmm. Because it's already cooked. And all you have to do is take off the extra fat if there's some on it or.

LG: Yeah.

MB: So, that was really nice to have, when she does that, to have it available. We're out of it right now. I should have told her, "Can you can for me". Uh, I'm not a good pressure canner. I'm afraid of pressure canners I think, and I don't know, I think again it's a fear my mother passed on to me.

LG: That's interesting because I feel that the hot water is more, not dangerous, but like, because like, yeah.

MB: I don't know, I feel safe and secure with the water bath. They don't. I think my mother used to say that pressure canners would explode. You know, they break inside or something. And they're, I know that they are refined and work well, but I don't own one so that would have been another piece of equipment to buy. I have big kettles.

LG: And you don't have a neighbor who gave you one, like the dehydrator?

MB: That's right. That's right. I haven't custody of something like that. But I did just inherit my mother's canner, hot water bath canner. So I have another one of those. So that's probably why I use that process more than pressure can. But the meat needs to be pressure canned because of, I don't know why,

LG: And I think it's the acidity too. I think that really determines.

MB: Okay, all I know is that I let my mother-in-law do that. He he he. That's one less thing that I have to do. Well, I'm trying to go down my shelf. Oh, jams and jellies. Uh, I do freezer jam with strawberries. And, uh, the rest of the jams and jellies that I do are, if the fruit is there, like my father until this year, he had blueberries so I would try to do blueberry jam. I try not to go out and buy much fruit because that defeats the purpose. You're paying for the fruit, again you're losing control of the quality of fruit that you've grown, and the purity of it. So, I, the blackberries that we grow wild along our alleyway, I'll pick those. Or raspberries, we had raspberry bushes for a couple of years and I did those. Blueberries for my father. Um, grapes. Grape jelly when we had our arbor. But it went sour. The hybrid part died and it went back to the natural grape and it wasn't as good. And we just haven't taken the time to plant more grapes. And strawberries. I do buy the strawberries. Um, and I try to do twelve, I do them in freezer containers. And I do twelve containers of strawberry jam. And my family knows, you are only allowed to do one a month. And we've, we're not big bread eaters but somehow, each month, I'm down one less. They've used up that container.

LG: He he.

MB: We're not big sandwich eaters, I don't know where it goes. Well, my husband does have english muffins in the morning. And, uh, occasionally, well my son that's away at school used to also. And, uh, but, so I've got that in the freezer but everything else is canned and on the shelf. Jelly, jam, tomatoes.

LG: And you have a basement?

MB: Uh huh. And I have a canning shelf where I store everything. Um, and that's where the empty jars go back to too.

LG: Uh huh.

MB: And this time of year, it's getting, there are more empty jars than there are full ones.

LG: Right, right.

MB: You kind of know, well it's getting close to spring. Uh, I think I've named everything. I don't can and put up the great variety that a lot of people do. But in the freezer I have green beans and corn and jam, and meat, lots of meat. And on the canning shelf I've got spaghetti sauce, tomato juice, pickles, different kinds of pickles, peaches. Jams and jellies. Hm. That may be all I did this year. That may be it for this year.

LG: That's a lot.

MB: Well.



LG: And even for the summer because you must be creating lesson plans for the year and stuff.

MB: And going to classes.

LG: So it's not as if you have a completely free day. I'm so impressed.

MB: Well, and this year it was really hard. Um, I know which date because what happened. Well, July 31<sup>st</sup> or July 30th, whatever the last day was, I bought peaches and then they needed to set so I decided on August 2<sup>nd</sup> I would be able to, they would be able to can. And August 1<sup>st</sup>, my mother had a massive stroke. So I up and left and there was this, 15 dollars worth of peaches I had bought. I never gave it a thought. The whole week I was down with my father, they live around the Dayton area, I was down there, never gave the peaches a thought. Came back, my shelves were full with peaches. My mother-in-law. My kids had helped her peel and she had put them up for me.

LG: Aw.

MB: You know, I thought, it wasn't the fifteen dollars that I would have wasted but just that they needed to be done so my mother-in-law did them for me. That's just how the Brown family works at least. When something needs to be done, they do it. So I was very relieved. So every can of peaches we open up, I'll tell Neil, "Now who do we need to thank for this?" He he he. Not me this year.

LG: That's so sweet.

MB: Yeah, yeah. I really lucked out with the family I married into. They're wonderful that way. And do it without expecting a thanks or anything in return.

LG: Right, right.

MB: They do it because it's the right thing to do.

LG: Right.

MB: So anyway. I think that's my story. Or do you have other questions? I don't know what else to tell you.

LG: No, no, I think that's covering almost everything. Um, do you see your children as continuing when they grow up and start their own families?

MB: Oh, a couple of them I do definitely. My oldest son, the one who likes to read about things, I have always seen him more as someone who will live in a city and hail a cab versus knowing whether his oil needs changed in his car. And I don't see him, he's good in the kitchen, but I don't see him carrying this on because I don't think he'd want to

garden. Um, and I don't see him being attracted to women in that way. That may be stereotyping. I see him more with an academic type person. My second person, yes, he will definitely be in the earth one way or another. We are not really encouraging him to be a farmer

LG: Yeah.

MB: But he'll farm on his own scale somehow.

LG: Do you think he will stay and help out with the farm?

MB: I don't think. We are not really encouraging that because we know in this time period, it's a rough way to earn a living.

LG: Yes.

MB: A meager living. The pay has not increased in years so it's not something I would encourage somebody to do. And by no means do Kelly and I think our kids have to make money to be happy. We don't feel that way. Yet I would like them to have a little bit more than we have. Just to be able to enjoy life a little bit more.

LG: Yeah.

MB: You know, feel more at ease every month. I guess that would be a good way to put it. And not that we're poor.

LG: Be able to go to a play, you know, without debating and?

MB: Yes, yes. Oh boy, oh boy, yes.

LG: That's how I feel. I'm graduating this year. So I'm totally. Because I don't want to worry, I am thinking about the peace corps at first

MB: Yes.

LG: I don't want to worry about having to make money but I have loans and I want to be able to go to a movie or go to a play without having to skip a dinner.

MB: Yes, I know exactly what you mean. Hmmm, I better buy shoes for you this week so I guess I won't buy this at the grocery store. You know. We'll economize some. My third son, I don't know, I don't know whether he'll,

LG: And is that Neil?

MB: That is Neil. I don't know whether he will continue and expect this. To tell you the truth, he's such a picky eater that he might expect himself or whomever he's living with

at the time to do that. Because, uh, he's at the stage where food can't mix. Better not bleed into each other on the table or on the plate. And my daughter who is a third grader, she is a nurturer. She has always nurtured: kittens, baby dolls, all the way up. And she loves to work, to raise things. Neil loves to work in the garden too. In his garden or their row of carrots or whatever. I could see where Maggie likes the kitchen and would probably value something like that. Ross, our second child, really enjoys being in the kitchen and cooking also.

LG: And you said Maggie, she was in the Brownies. And do they encourage that at all? Gardening and 4-H stuff or is it more?

MB: Well, um, if they choose to.

LG: Okay.

MB: You have such a large range of badges that you can go for in Brownies. And in 4-H, the projects that you can choose are the full spectrum. And, um, she's going to be a first year 4-Her, and she is questioning, "Now what should I do?" Well, the obvious one is she is going to take a dairy beef feeder calf which is a calf that's manageable for a child. And so she's going to do that. And then that's a nice project for children because they get a nice cash reward at the end when they sell their calf. You know, \$500.

LG: And that's a lot of money.

MB: Oh boy, it is. Neil didn't like the project last year. He was a first year 4-Her. He liked it in June. My husband and my second son went out to New Mexico for a couple days to hike with the boy scouts. And so while they were gone, I was in charge with helping Neil learn how to lead his calf.

LG: Uh huh.

MB: And we did fine. And I don't know what happened. The calf grew overnight or something. And all of a sudden the calf was bigger and stronger than Neil. And he had trouble with him and, oh god, he said "I'm never doing this project again," and I'm just thinking the same thing. "You're right. You are never doing this thing again."

LG: He he he.

MB: Until he got his check and, Ross kept telling him, "It will all change when you get your check Neil, you will want to do this again." Now he loves his check. And we have it in a CD and we are trying to make as much money as we can. He doesn't want to take it again this year. He's a nervous Nellie. And he's like, "Uh uh. I am not getting out in the show ring again this year."

LG: Yeah.

MB: Where my daughter Maggie, “yep, she’ll do it.” So she’ll do that this year and she’s questioning whether to, well just yesterday she was like, “I still don’t know if I want to do a cooking project or a sewing project.” And I thought, well how stereotyping of you. This is just what little girls should do. And she’s going to do the calf too.

LG: Uh huh. That’s cool. And I’m sure nowadays they have more options too.

MB: Oh, oh yeah. There’s lots of things she could have done. She was considering taking photography for her first year. One year, oh the year that I had, my third and fourth children are 13 months apart, both summer babies, and the year I was due with Maggie and so Neil was only a year old, we encouraged Carl to take vegetable gardening as a 4-H project before we read the vegetable gardening book. But he went to the state fair with it. But I think that was the last time he’s set foot in the garden too. It just isn’t his cup of tea. Hopefully Maggie will branch out. Maggie is such a, oh she’s a wonderful, she’s just a gift, she’s such a wonderful person. But she’s very typical in her behavior, girl behavior. And I don’t know whether it’s because she’s around, now she can fight with the best of them, with her three brothers. But, yet, right from the beginning she’s wanted girl things.

LG: That’s interesting, especially having the three brothers. Because it seems like she would model them more than anything.

MB: Oh yes. I thought so too. And I told the pediatrician, she’s going to have match box cars around and John Deere trucks around and that’s what she’s going to learn to love because that’s what our house is. We had, with my boys, they all had baby dolls around

LG: Yeah.

MB: And they all had a kitchen center that, so that they could have that exposure. The kitchen center they would choose to play in, the baby dolls no. Maybe fling it across the room but they were so typical boys.

LG: Right, right.

MB: And finally, Maggie was about a year old, and oh maybe older than that, anyway, my pediatrician said, would you knock it off, “God made girls differently than girls, oh than boys. They were created differently and they act differently.” And I said, “Maggie, nine years of age has gone maybe vroom vroom with a matchbox car maybe once in her life. He he. And the house was full of them. She always went to something she could nurture. Always.

LG: That’s interesting because I don’t believe in biological gender differences. Like, I don’t want to. I want to believe that I have the same opportunities and that I can do anything I want. But it’s really interesting when you have that because here she was in an environment where it would have been totally acceptable to do a boy activity.

MB: Oh very much, very much. And she goes out with her brothers and will play.

LG: Yeah.

MB: We have, oh gosh, in both of our families, my side and my husband's family, and in the neighborhood, we're predominately boys. We have grandsons more than granddaughters. We have neighbor boys more than neighbor girls and, uh, so Maggie has had exposure. And she's certainly not a feminine "Ew I can't do it girl." She tries it and she chooses not to.

LG: Right.

MB: And, you know, at least she's tried it. She thought she wanted a scooter because her brother had one. But she tried it a couple times and she thought, I don't know what the big deal with this. She'll try football for a while and before you know it, she'll be on the swingset swinging or doing her own thing.

LG: Yeah.

MB: Uh, it's been interesting in the neighborhood to watch the boys. Two boys in particular who are, as an educator, I would say that they are probably attention deficit children. One is now in junior high but he has, he can be wild and just out of control.

LG: We call it OOC.

MB: What's that? Oh, out of control.

LG: We refer more to drinking.

MB: Oh yeah, I can see that.

LG: But I'm sure for him, it's a little bit different.

MB: But, yeah, I can see that. Different perspective. But, yet he would be wild and just climbing all over Neil. And Josh is in 7<sup>th</sup> grade and Neil and Maggie are in 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> and then Maggie would come out and immediately Josh would be a protector. And I would say, "You know, Josh, Maggie can take care of herself." And Josh would say, "Oh, I know." But, and his whole attitude, up to that point you would think oh that child is ADD or ADHD, he's out of control, cannot control himself. And Maggie would enter in on the scene and he would be like, "come on guys, we need to include Maggie." Or, it's been very interesting to watch the dynamics in our neighborhood at least. Josh is kind of an only child. His mother has children by another marriage and a sister that's old enough to be his mother. So, and then the other boy that lives on the other side of us is an early child. So I think sometimes they think it is kind of cool to have a girl around. Not, that is, pretty much as an equal. They're not like, oh here's a girl, a chick. It's not that type of attitude.

LG: Right, right.

MB: It's more, here's my sister. But, my sister I need to protect not my sister I need to spit at and pull her hair.

LG: He he he.

MB: And do all those brother sister things with. Anyway, that's a whole 'nother subject, the way she's been raised. And the way she is. She likes bath and body works but she's comfortable in her barn boots and her bibbers, her overalls.

LG: Yeah, yeah, that's I'm a psychology major so I'm really interested in all of that.

MB: She's not lace, she's eyelit. If you know the difference. That's just the way. And even when she was just a little girl, or a baby. I think she's the fourteenth grandchild and three other girls and two of them live in South Dakota so they weren't around. And the other granddaughter is the oldest one. So there hadn't been a granddaughter in a long time and I had all these hand me down clothes that were boys. So we sewed eyelit on her bibbers or put lace on the sweat pants or something so that when people looked at her, they would know, this is a girl. You don't have to guess even though she's in a green sweat suit. Anyway, Maggie is a dear, she's a sweetheart. My kids are cool, I love them all.

LG: I think that's it.

MB: Well you've caught me on a talkative afternoon.

[started tape again when chatting turned informative]

MB: And it doesn't matter if you're not there. You are a part of the family so you get your fair share. One year, I was home with a newborn or pregnant and due, so they said, "Oh, you can't be out in the heat, standing and do all that." So I was inside and taking care of food and doing something but I still got my fair share. One year, my sister-in-law was at a conference so she couldn't do it at all. It doesn't matter. We take care of you. You're a part of us.

LG: Yeah.

MB: When my sister-in-law married my brother-in-law, hmmm, about three years after my husband and I were married. And when they became engaged, I sent her a card, a handmade card, and I said, had some cows on the front of it, and I said, "Welcome to our herd. You may be marrying Dan but you belong to all of us" or something like that. Or "we're all in this together." And at the time she thought it was cute and then she went through the part as we all have, "No, I just married one person, I don't want to be a part of it." And then you grow to realize that it's a valuable deal. I had a Aha moment oh, I don't know, 5 to 10 years ago, where I thought, "You know, I always wanted to marry a

person with rich ethnic background.” I’m middle America white anglo-saxon protestant, you know, just the whole deal, not very exciting. And I really wanted some ethnic background. And just about five to ten years ago, I thought, “Marcia, you have a life style that most people don’t have. You are an ethnic group here: middle american farmer type of thing.” We do things differently. We have our own rituals, our own customs. And that’s helped me.

LG: Yeah.

MB: And when my son went to the school for the gifted and he’s like, “Uh, I’m from Podenk town,” and now up at Cornell, I’ll say, “You know, I’ve bet none of those people milked a cow before. They may have gone to Japan and gone over here and traveled all around but you can bring a lot of richness too with what you’ve experienced. And he’s finding that to be true. People think, wow that’s cool when he tells them certain stories. So we’re adding richness, educating the world in our own little way.

LG: You are. I am loving the stories. Yeah, it’s great. And um, I’ll stop the tape.