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Interview with Anna Grassbaugh

Andy Legant

Anna Grassbaugh

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Andy Legant
3/24/95
ANSO 67-68

Interview with Anna Grassbaugh (Anna Grassbaugh is the oldest daughter and currently attends ATI (an extension of OSU) college in Wooster Ohio.

Thursday Afternoon March 22, 1995. 21461 Schenk Creek Rd.
Howard, Ohio 43028

AL: I guess I will start by saying that I am interviewing Anna Grassbaugh who is recently in town from ATI at Ohio State. Why is it that you are in town?

AG: Why am I in town? I'm on Spring Break and I will be taking internship next quarter where I will be working at the Mount Vernon Farmers Exchange. It's a job but I have to do it to graduate from my school.

AL: You have grown up on a farm with two sisters and two brothers. What has that been like?

AG: Interesting. I don't know what kind of answer do you want. We could go in all directions.

AL: I guess I could start of with a couple easier questions.

AG: Alright that one is very complicated.

Counter 15

AL: Having lived on the farm all your life thus far, what were some of you duties as a child growing up on the farm?

AG: I have always had the responsibility along with my two younger sisters, of feeding the calves. We have always done that every since I can remember. We used to have the great big job in the summer time of making lemonade for guys when they were doing hay. Most of the time it was just having fun. We probally didn't start doing a lot of work until we were about, I don't know old enough to lift the buckets and drive the tractor on our own. Probally about 9-10 years old. Mary has been doing it a lot longer than all of us because we forced her to do it. Were sick of doing it, you do it now. It's been interesting. I just recently...When I was a freshman I had to start milking cows. I milked everyday after school because we had some trouble with our help, so I was then put in charge of milking. I don't do much work now since I have been off at school. I come

home and I get relaxation time pretty much. I miss it. When I am up at school I miss it a lot. Some days you just have all those problems come to you and all you want to do is go milk cows and I don't know. You probably don't understand that. It's just like a stress reliever. We do have a dairy up at the school. I go to school with all farm kids pretty much, there are a few city kids in there but most of us are all farm kids. It's pretty much...we just..when we are around people so much we all have to git out and that's the way it is with me.

AL: Are you glad you grew up on a farm?

Counter 37

AG: Yes. I am very glad.

AL: Why?

AG: Because I know so much more and I have so many more responsibilities than anyone else my age. I understand things better. Kids that vandalise and stuff I can't see how they do it. That's because...I guess the only way I can see it is because they have never been in charge and had the responsibility and felt what it's like when somebody does something to property when you worked so hard to get it. I think that's the best thing. I think everybody should experience at least two days on a farm. I think it would do a lot of kids a lot of good. I mean I met people last night that said I have never even seen a cow in my whole entire life and that shocks me.

AL: When you were growing up were there ever times when you wish you didn't grow up on a farm.

AG: Oh yeah. When family vacations get canceled and you can't go somewhere because there are cows to be milked. When you have to leave your grandparents you know...something with your cousins, aunt's and uncles because the cows need to milk. There are some times I hate being on a farm. But it always outweighs it now that I am older and look back.

AL: When you were growing up and basically through schooling I guess. You are in a very small town environment here. Were most of the people you were going to school with city people or farm kids also?

AG: I went to elementary school at St. Vincent and it was mostly city kids. I don't even remember if there was anyone else from a farm real close. All my friends were from the city. I know that. I mean some kids we hung around with had a few acres under their

belt, but nothing compared to a farm.

Counter 62

AL: Was that difficult sometimes? Having friends who were basically city dwellers.

AG: They didn't understand some things, but of course we were so young our parents tried to give us every thing you know. I mean they let us do things. It was hard at times but nothing really so difficult it strained me from my life you know.

AL: What did you do for...because you are on a very large farm you don't have a number of neighbors and possibly neighborhoods in this area. Like you might in the city. So what did you do to keep you busy and pass the time.

AG: I have two older brothers and two younger sisters. I think that explains it all.....I played a lot with my two older brothers. We had some freinds up the road but nothing big. I come from a large enough family that it is nothing real...Mary and Cindy were young enough that I entertained them along with...I was old enough to run around with just Dwayne and Doug. We were driving a vehicle of our own. Like a little lawn mower. So we entertained ourselves pretty much. Mom was there.

AL: Do you feel that your family was tighter because there weren't many people around that maybe you did more within the family than maybe someone in the city might?

AG: I don't know. I don't know. I guess we are just like any other family. Because we all have our friends off the farm and we all do things like that.

AL: What are some of the things you have learned, specifically from growing up on the farm that might be different than what I would learn growing up in the city?

AG: Well responsibility is a big one. Having to work with people. We have always had at least one hired hand that we have always had to work with. And that is kind of a challenge some days. Especially with me. When I started milking, being a female and a new guy came in they don't like taking orders from a girl. You get that anywhere I guess. Especially being a teenager. I mean I was 15 years old and teaching a guy how to milk it and the best way to do it. They never really understood it completely. I guess I learned a lot of things I don't know. One thing I am not used to is having to drive a...where I can walk places and that's something that everybody in

town does. I am used to always having to get in the vehicle to go everywhere. Because you can't really walk anywhere from here. Well you could but I guess I am not really that energetic.

Counter 113.

AL: Were there any particular games you might have played with you sisters and brothers that might have been different than someone else?

AG: We played in the hay mound a lot. We used to play in there all the time. We used to build tunnels and have corn fights. Take shell corn and throw it back and forth with each. It was fun. We used to jump out of the hay barrels into loose stacks of stuff, of straw.

I guess we always had fun cause heck we had fun...Doug lit a round barrel on fire one day..you know that was fun for us. Wow. We always made fun. Played in the sand box, but everybody played in the sand box. We used to have a big pile of saw dust, we used to play in there all the time. WE just used what we had, plus regular toys. We had all the regular toys too.

AL: Have you seen farming change since you have been growing up.

Basically...has your family pretty much done the same thing from when you were born till now. Or have...what kind of changes have you witnessed in your families operation at all?

Counter 135

AG: It's all modernized. It's more modernized. I don't know about when I was born, but our milking system is pretty much the same as I ever remember it but we do a lot more things. We are more alert about our cows. We feed them so much better than we used too. Heck the cows eat better than we do. Just everything. Tractors are more...I mean we don't have any of the newest tractors but if you look at newer tractors there is so much more modernized that it's just like driving a car.

AL: I know your father was saying that as you were growing up, basically because you had your two older brothers...they were already out driving the tractor and doing a lot of that stuff so you kind of got taken care of the calfs and maybe a little more milking. Did that ever bother you at all? Did you ever wan't to go out and ride the tractor and couldn't?

AG: Well it bothers me now that I don't know how to drive a tractor. I don't admit that to very many people. But I don't. I probably could if I had to get out there and do it. But I don't know how to do it enough to sit there and show somebody else to do it. I would probably kill it a lot if I tried to do it myself. Yeah it did kind of bother me somedays. Especially now that I am older.

Because it was like I see exactly what everybody talks about. Not saying my Dad is sexist or anything but you know the sexist part of it where you know...well they were there so I didn't need to be.

But some days it doesn't bother me because I like working with the cows. I think that is kind of why I went into agronomy because I didn't get to do much with it when I was growing up. Where Doug does all the crop work and Dwayne does all the cow work. I think I went into agronomy because I have never done that.

Counter 162

AL: Are you interested in staying in farming in the future?

AG: Not exactly in our farm. I want to work for farmers. If...well I don't know if you knew, we were talking about expanding. If we did end up doing that I think I could come home and work and do all the book work and stuff. Cause I am very interested in the business part of agriculture. I think there is a lot of stuff that farmers, the family farmer needs to do to improve their operations. Like we need to put all our information on computers. Just so it is more accessible and therefore my Dad...and that so he can go straight to it and get it...the information...and so everybody else know how to get into it and knows what's going on. I see a lot of farmers who say oh we don't need computers they are too high tech for us...and I think that is totally wrong. That's what I would like to do. I want to work with the farmer and the agronomy part and if I don't like the agronomy part I will go into the...probably the nutrition part for cattle. That is why I am going on my internship at Mount Vernon Farmers Exchange. So that I know if I want to do agronomy...because I will be doing all of the stuff that I want...that I think I want to do...there.

Counter 180

AL: So you see farming more as a business today?

AG: Yeah. Farming is a business. It's a very big business. And it's probably the most important business there is. Because it keeps everybody fed and I don't think a lot of people know that. I know a lot of people don't realize it and I think people are going to be shocked one day when they walk into the grocery store and see there is no food to choose from because they wouldn't give the farmer a little bit more money and they don't understand why the farmer is not putting the food on the table.

AL: And you seem eager to adapt to farming becoming a business? You don't have any real concerns...some of the farmers we have talked to have been...most of the older farmers that we have talked to have reminisced a little bit about the old days and how they wish farming wasn't a business. Do you see any other...Do you think there was

any other direction that farming could have gone?

Counter 195

AG: I don't think there was any other direction it could have gone. I think there are some different things that you could do to make it a better...make sure that the farmer is more equipped to be ready for...the older farmer to be ready for his farm to be turned into a business. It just takes education. um...on the part of the farmer to have someone come in and tell them how to do it and put them on a program. Or even not put them on a computer program just get them where they are more accessible and know more things. Because I have watched my Dad and he can sit down with three figures and come up with information that you didn't even know you could come up with from these three Math figures. He does it all in his head. He doesn't use a calculator and that is quite amazing to me. I mean I even depend on a calculator for everything. I don't think I mean. I think you have to be really smart to be a farmer. Everybody always said farmers are stupid and I totally disagree with that. I have never met a stupid farmer, I have met people that aren't very intelligent but never stupid.

Counter 212

AL: I agree with you there completely. In fact that is something that I was amazed at the first day I came out here. I have never had a real math sense or science sense or any of that and I was just completely...not so much shocked...but I was...because I never had a stereotype of farmers or anything but I was just amazed at the technology that you had to know and the skills that you had to have.

AG: Even growing up on a farm I am impressed by things that my Dad and my brothers can do, because I can't do them. I haven't been that close to working with the feed and stuff where I can talk that technical. I mean I just recently learned the difference between two different kinds of tractors. I thought they were just the colors were different. You know. Being up at school, being around kids I learned the difference. I never had to learn the difference here I just knew. Hey we got the green ones I mean that's all I need to know. I admire all farmers really and I think people don't give them enough credit.

Counter 229

AL: I agree. You mentioned education. I understand that you did 4H and FFA, how helpful was that. What kind of things did you do?

AG: In 4H I did just about everything possible along with FFA. I took sewing. My mom taught me how to sew. That's always useful. People say it's not but it is. Some day its nice to be able to do that on your own. I have taken every kind of miscellaneous project from managing your money to how to do the laundry. All in my moms club. I was in two different clubs. In the dairy part I was...I

took heifers for all ten years. And I never took a cow, but we didn't have any good enough. I guess it was a learning experience when I took the animals. Because we didn't have the greatest animals. We went in there and we had fun. And you watched your friends and stuff go in there and get all tense and everything and it was like this is for fun you know you have to relax and have fun. But I think FFA was the biggest thing for me. I went into it because my brothers were in it. I mean they got to travel, and I got to travel more than they did because I saw how much they traveled and I wanted to do more. I loved traveling and that was just another incentive to do it I guess. We went...we did everything and I enjoyed it and I think it was a...I don't know if it helped me understand it more but it was just something that I could relate with. I don't know 4H was the same thing because I got to do junior fair board and...where I worked with the county fair and all older people. I did camp counselor where I was working with younger people. I think I know more people in our community than a lot of people my age do. I mean I can walk into a grocery store and see more people that I know than my friend that is in three activities. I can walk in and talk to an older person and I think that is something I learned on the farm too. Is being able to talk to an older person and not let them intimidate me. And that because they are older than me. I can sit down and have a conversation with anybody. And I guess I have the farmer B.S. in me. I think it is a qualification all farmers must have.

Counter 271

AL: Was there ever another occupation that you considered outside of farming...or maybe you do know but away from the kind of rural life and agricultural scene?

AG: All the time I was growing up I always wanted to be a pediatrician because I loved kids. Always did. Then I found out how many years of school I had to go to and I said no. Said agriculture is where I want to be. And because I grew up on it...I mean just being away from it the short time that I am at school and stuff, even though I am with kids in agriculture, being away from actually being on the farm and dealing with my parents and brothers where we can sit down to the dinner table and talk about how the cows are doing or what the crops are doing. Its kind of...I guess I kind of miss it. I think my main focus is agriculture. Not farming but agriculture. Its...I guess I refer to it as that because it is a much broader and I guess more people can understand it. Because everybody thinks everything in agriculture is farming where it's not. Where you can...I mean there are people that work at Dow chemical, and there scientists and they are still considered in the agriculture field

because they work with chemicals that go on plants and stuff and even in food marketing they call it an agriculture job. I don't think...a lot of people don't understand that I mean I just learned that a couple years ago that that's...I used to think farmers are farmers there is nothing else. And even living on a farm I thought that.

AL: Do you feel that farming and agriculture is something that you are born with or that was kind of put into you or socialized into you as you grew up?

Counter 305

AG: I think to be a farmer it's kind of born into you because there is so much stuff you have to put up with. I think you can learn it. I think people can come from the city and work on a farm and learn agriculture but I don't think they have a...unless that's what you really really want to do and I think that's just kind of I guess born into you I don't know. I don't think it was born into me. I can't handle everything. Milking cows 365 days a year I can't...I can handle it when I am this age but I don't think I can when I get older. Although I do want to have beef cattle some day but I want a career of my own. I want to be able to say I did this, I had a career and I made something of myself. And I think that's what you can do on a farm to but I guess I need somewhere out somewhere else where other people see me. Not just on the farm...where there are more people than the animals that see it.

AL: If you could be where you wanted to be in the future where would you be? As far as a career.

AG: Oh I'd like to be...I think I would like to be a president or a manager of a company. But my Uncle is the president of Blue Seal Feeds out on the coast and I would like to be in his shoes where he can...He goes out he sees the farmer he talks to the farmer, and he also spends time at an office and makes the business decisions. He can...He's just...He gets pretty much to do his own job where he decides what he wants to do but he gets to be with agriculture and he still gets to go out and see the farmer. And I want to be where I can see a farmer. Go out and ask a farmer what's going on, what do you want different. And then go back to my office and get it all done and then take it back to him and say is this what you want. Because if it's not what you want we'll go and we'll change it so that you can get the best that you can. I'd like to do that.

Counter 348

AL: Where do you see farming going in the future?

AG: If people wake up I see farming being one of the biggest industries.

If people wake up that's the whole thing. ANd they are going to have to some day because we can't...The price of tractors goes up but the price of milk goes down you can't...there is no way possible to do that because you can't buy a tractor when your milk prices go down or your corn prices go down. You can't do it and there is no way you can. And people are going to go out of business or the whole entire farming industry is going to go into companies. And I don't want to see that I want to see the family farms stay. Just like right now the hog market is going into...Well the price of the market hog is so low right now because there are so many being produced in a, we call it up at school at factory farm. And I don't know I don't want to see that. I want to see a family farm.

AL: You see farming becoming a bigger industry. Does that mean more people involved or do you see it becoming a corporation which you don't want to happen. It seems like as the farms get larger the less people that are involved. 20 years ago or 40 or whatever there was 60 percent of the people were farmers. No there is 2 percent. Do you see that number going down? Going up?

AG: I think I kind of see it staying the same. I guess I just don't...As long as...It's got to be, the industry has to be. Well it is just going to be a big business. Which it really is right now but we don't call it that. We call it something...I mean we don't call it the farming business, we just call it farming. I guess. I don't know. I guess it takes really thinking about that question. I just don't want to see it turn into big corporations, where corporations own all the farms. And I don't think it will because there is people like my Dad where it's born into my Dad. My Dad is completely a born farmer. Completely. And I think my two brothers are. I know my one brother is Doug. I see it in him everyday. He complains but he won't leave it, and I guess you have to admire people like that.

Counter 409

AL: You also mentioned you wanted to stay on family farms to be more prevalent to, a bunch of us in the beginning and everyone seems to have a different opinion of what a family farm is and it obviously represents many things but in your mind what is a family farm.

AG: I live on a family farm. My Dad owns the farm, we grew up on the farm, working on the farm. My brothers now work on the farm and I think they are going to continue working on the farm. Though if they continue working on the farm they will take over it. And my Dad is just a first generation. Everything we have my Dad did on his own. And Doug and Dwayne would be a second generation and that is kind of what I see as a family farm. We have hired hands. And

even with hired hands I consider us a family farm because we are totally supported off our farm. My mom doesn't have a job my dad doesn't work somewhere else. I work off the farm only because there is not enough stuff to do really. With haveing other people here. But I like working off the farm to. It's a good escape

Counter 443

AL: Is there anything that you have been dying to say that I haven't asked you yet?

AG: I don't think so.

AL: If there was one thing that you could tell as many people as you wanted about farming, people who may or may not understand or who aren't clueless about farming what would it be?

AG: Wow...Um

AL: Or many things even.

AG: Yeah. There's a million things you'd like to tell people that don't know anything. I guess the biggest thing is to animal rights activists I would like to tell them we will go out of business if we are doing the things wrong. If we are doing anything wrong or are animals are being abused we will go out of business. We don't abuse or animals on purpose. There is no way we can afford to. To people in the city I would love to tell them just to wake up and come out and be on a farm for a few days and they would appreciate it more. Maybe they wouldn't. Maybe they would totally find it discusting. I've had friends who who will come out here and there like wow you know you have a big farm. They expect an old rinky dink farm with a few cows running in and out of it. They come out here and see the mass operation we have. I am not saying we have a huge operation because we don't. We could be bigger, we could be a lot smaller. Just people in general I think that they should just wake up and see that the farmer needs help. We need not government. We need people to understand. And to support us. And spraying our chemicals, a lot of people don't understand our chemicals. Why we use so many chemicals, but in reality I read a magazine add where people talk about that there is more chemicals applied on someones small yard to kill the dandilions than we put ono our acres and acres of corn. And people don't see anything wrong with that. But they see so much wrong with doing it to the food. But their yard looks pretty so you know I guess that's important to them. I don't know I guess people just need to...I mean I think if they just...every city person just went out onto a farm for a day all would be fine.

Counter 500