

[Legal Banter]

Interviewer: First of all I just need to ask you a few legal things

Narrator: ok

Interviewer: would you like any restrictions placed on your interview such as, --

Narrator: no (hand motion wave off)

Interviewer: you don't need any restrictions, alright, sounds good

Narrator: no, I'm fine

Cameraman: ha, I like that full disclosure

Narrator: I'm free. I'm pretty open

[Interview]

Interviewer: What would you say your Job title is?

Narrator: on the farm

Interviewer: well on the farm or any other job titles you also hold

Narrator: ok well I have a public job here at Virginia Tech as first baker at Owens dining hall, that's my public job, on the farm I would be the assistant manager

Interviewer: alright and what would you say your job description would be the assistant manager on the farm probably

Narrator: well my husband is the manager, so I just go behind him with his instructions and take care of the books; I handle all the books, the finances, the paying of the bills,...

Interviewer: MMm

Narrator: so I guess it would just be his helper...as he needs me...- (greeting customer with a smile)

Narrator: -hey I got you ready - (she prepares a fried pie)

[Break in filming]

Interviewer: For the sake of the interview, could you please tell us your name?

Narrator: Tracy Orr

Interviewer: Ok, and what would your family background be as far as farming goes are you first generation or has your farm been in the family for a long time?

Narrator: now I grew up on a tobacco farm and I married into the family farm we're on now, so my personal background is in tobacco farm now what my husband is in we're in third generation

Interviewer: what was it like growing up on a tobacco farm?

Narrator: a lot of work, a lot of work, I remember telling my dad I thought it was child abuse that we had to go out and work in the fields everyday, and he told me when I got a real job I'd find out what real work was. And now that I have worked and had public jobs I know that that wasn't bad off at all but it's a lot of work but families pull together and it's good, it's a good life

Interviewer: so given the choice between the Virginia Tech job and the one you work on farm, which would you rather be doing?

Narrator: uh the farm, definitely ..*chuckling*... hands down the farm

Interviewer: but at the same time do you enjoy working at Owens?

Narrator: I do. Owens is very good in a lot of respects it's school friendly which I need a school friendly job the benefits are great you know farming does not have benefits like health insurance...so I need both

Interviewer: yeah I understand that

[Break in filming]

Interviewer: so when you wake up in the morning what is the typical day in your job like?

Narrator: well if it's a weekday, my typical routine is wake up about 4 and get everything ready for the day to my little boy ready for school get his lunch packed get my husband's lunch packed he has a public job get him out the door get me and my little boy out the door. Um when we come in from our day, from our public jobs, then our chores start once we get off the school bus and out the car we start the feeding. We have to feed the chickens, then we have to feed the rabbits, then we have to feed and water the horses, then we have to shelter the cattle. So once we get all that routine done of course when we're doing the chickens we'll get up eggs and once we get all those chores done... you know we'll come in and start settling in for the evening. But just checking on all that stuff and getting everything fed and watered takes about 2 hours so we get home about 4 and start on our chores

Interviewer: what would be a list of animals you have on your farm, and do you grow anything on your farm?

Narrator: the animals we have on the farm are the chickens, we have rabbits, we have miniature horses, and a pony, we have 100% Angus beef cattle, that's probably it for the animals, now in the past the generation before us they had sheep. My husband's mother raised sheep, she had over a hundred sheep she's in her 90's so we don't do sheep anymore but it used to be a home, home for about a hundred sheep.

Interviewer: wow that a quite a few head of sheep, um had a question set up in my mind lost completely

Interviewer: what would you say would be a highlight of working on a farm?

Narrator: a highlight of working on a farm is you can set up your own schedule and you have your family with you. Like you don't have to send your child to day care or some public childcare facility they can be right there with you, to me that's a huge, huge thing. So you can instill the values you want to instill into your children and you work together as a family is a value in itself

Interviewer: you mention you had a son, how old is your son>?

Narrator: Well we have three boys one is 21 one is 15 and one is 8

Interviewer: and do they all help out a lot around the farm?

Narrator: they do, everybody pulls their weight

Interviewer: what kind of equipment do you need these days for farming; can you keep up with modern demands what has traditionally been used on a small farm?

Narrator: well when my husband and I got married and we tried getting started we didn't have our own equipment. We were share cropping with the neighbor so we depended on our neighbor to help us harvest our hay, which is a huge thing for the cattle, so we decided to go ahead and buy our own hay equipment. Which was a pretty good investment we had to borrow the money, which is why I'm doing fried pies to help pay back that bank note... so thankfully we are able to keep up, we've gotten some equipment since we've been married and this has helped a lot working the farmers market. Everything goes into the big circle of taking care of the farm.

Interviewer: would you say that working your job at Owens is just another way to pay for the farm or do you do it for other reason?

Narrator: well we try and keep it separate. Like we have... we try and let the farm take care of the farm, which would be what we can sell cattle wise and what we make on the farm at farmers market. Then we take our public jobs and try and put that into our household bills so and I think so far we're balancing it pretty well

Interviewer: what would you say would be the hardest thing about your job?

Narrator: the farming?

Interviewer: yes

Narrator: the hardest thing is balancing everything. The hardest part keeping it all balanced. You know sometimes it feels like the perfect storm you just going going going. But um, to keep everything balanced. And then you have to deal with the weather so what you might plan could get changed by nothing you could control, so you have to totally regroup and regroup quickly to make it work

Interviewer: alright, looks like you have some customers here...- -

[Break in filming]

Interviewer: you mentioned that, was it your mother in law, who is 90 years old now how are you taking care of her now, do you have her in a nursing home or does she still live on the farm?

Narrator: she still lives on the farm and she has seven sheep, ha, that she goes and takes care of and that's her little job. She has seven sheep, one chicken, and a rooster.

Interviewer: how much help do you have to give her in doing that or she do that all by herself?

Narrator: she does 90% of it by herself; we are fortunate in the fact that my husband's sister lives with her. So she and my mother and law and my sister and law live together but she does take very good care of herself so

Interviewer: So you would definitely call this farming a family affair?

Narrator: definitely yeah

Interviewer: a lot of interdependence there?

Narrator: I think all farms are going to be that way yeah, definitely. But for us definitely, yeah, that's the case

Interviewer: do you know in years how long the farms been in the family?

Narrator: yes, I think, *chuckles* well lets see, my mother in law is 90 and as her relatives passed away she inherited more and more of the farm. So she likes to say she's got the farm because she's outlived everybody, but there's 700 acres in the track of land and I'd say they had that for over a hundred years.

Interviewer: Now in hearing that its been in the family over a hundred years are you aware that there's a centennial in family farm fund that the united states government has to protect historic landmarks such as a hundred year centennial in the same family farms. Would you ever consider doing that or do you, because the problem with it is there is a value issue there, would you ever consider doing that and maybe decrease the value of the farm and keep it in the family or retain the value?

Narrator: probably retain the value, but it would be nice to talk to somebody and get some more information but just based on the little bit you told me, probably be keep the farm value.

Interviewer: ok, and where about is your farm, is it in Montgomery County?

Narrator: it is, we're in Montgomery county, we're about 6 miles outside of Blacksburg, take Harding avenue which turns into Blacksburg road, we're past Lester's gate, just past Lester's gate. We're about 6 miles out going towards Catawba

Interviewer: Nice area down there

Narrator: It's pretty; we get a lot of bicyclist, cyclers down on that road so.

Interviewer: Do you feel the amount you get paid compensates for the work you put in, especially for the Owens job too this is definitely a question for that as well do you do more work than your paid to you think?

Narrator: I love what I do at Owens, I love Virginia tech. My philosophy behind Virginia Tech when the students are in, when school is in, it's a lot of demand, you're on go all the time. So I just feel during the school year they just ring you out like a dish rag so by the time graduation roles around we're just ready for a break, but the summers are not as hard so I guess if you take the whole year, take a 12 month period and look at it, it balances out but you do 80% of the work during the school year. But I enjoy my job and would not give it up or say I wouldn't want to do it.

Interviewer: do you enjoy working on the farm more in the summer or do you still have to come into Owens the same amount?

Narrator: I try and take the summers off, I don't always get to do that but I take a lot of time off in the summers and I do dedicate the summers to working on the farm.

Interviewer: I see you are running the fresh fried pies, this is a side job, and how do you like doing this?

Narrator: well the fried pies is something I learned from my mother, I mean I remember my grandmother doing it but I wasn't so interested in it at that time, but I learned it from my mom. I remember one time our little community needed a volunteer fire department and so the women of the community made these little fried pies and sold them like on main street as a fund raiser for the fire department and it went really well so I tried to do the same thing here for our farm and its gone pretty well. The history behind a fried pie it started out as, when ladies just- people didn't throw nothing away- times were hard so people would take their left over fruits and scrap dough and make these little hand held pies and give them out like if you would help me get my hay in or something, help me with my garden. As a way of saying thank you I'd give you a pie. So that's how they got started. And I just liked that story its just such a goodwill comaraderie type thing. And it has done very well; it's been very supportive of what we're doing on the farm.

Interviewer: What advice would you give someone considering a line of work at Owens or on a farm?

Narrator: Well dining services is good. If you're considering working at Virginia Tech, dining services one of the good things is your working for the state and you've got, I feel job security, you know in such economic uproar, I do feel job security at Virginia Tech. So I would definitely tell people that wanted to pursue dining services career you might consider yourself a little better off than if you were applying at a Wendy's or a little Mom and Pop. And as far as the farm is concerned you can't like it you've got to love it. And you've got to love it every day. You've got to want to do, you've got to want to work, and you've got to be able to work together. And if you can do all that then you would enjoy farming.

Interviewer: All right so you've got to love farming, are there any personality traits that you'd say are important to farmer?

Narrator: You have to have a good work ethic, that's crucial, have good work ethic. You also need to be smart, you have to be able to figure things, you have to have a lot of common sense and you have to have good knowledge as well. Does that answer your question?

Interviewer: yeah I believe it does. Do you mind having two jobs, how does it affect you having the two jobs is it stressful?

Narrator: I don't mind it because I grew up working hard and so to me its just a way of life, its not a way of life for everybody. I don't mind it because I do enjoy the farm so much. This is probably not a good scenario for you all but it's a whole lot like having a baby the labor sounds

so horrible going through the 9 months pregnancy and the labor but the love is so great that you don't mind the hardship of it. So that's kind of the way farming is we enjoy it and that a way of life for us so we're willing to put up with some of the hardships.

Interviewer: As a farmer do you feel any big back pressure from the new way of farming like these big corporations out west and the big corporate farming. Do you as a small farmer feel any of the tension from that?

Narrator: My particular situation I would say no, because we are not trying to be just a farm, we are farming as an enjoyment type thing ...(turns smiling to greet customers)

Narrator: how are you guys - -

[Break in filming]

Interviewer: Has there ever been a time that you just wanted to walk away from what your doing or have you basically wanted to do this all your life?

Narrator: I've never felt like I wanted to walk way. I have felt overwhelmed, I felt... I think I said earlier it's been the perfect storm, but I've never wanted to walk away

{8-year-old son comes up dressed Cub Scout gear asking permission to play}

Interviewer: where do you see yourself in 5 to 10 years?

Narrator: well I'd like to move up with in the dining service chain; I'd like to be able to move up to a management position. And as far as the farm is concerned I can see us expanding with our cattle, trying to get a little bigger in that respect. Yeah just get moving forward one day at a time.

Interviewer: how is the market for beef cattle around here again with competition out west with the cheap cow are there any coops around here for it?

Narrator: The cattle industry kind of goes up and down, the prices are never stay the same. You try and catch it when the market is good sell our cattle when it's good. But as far as ... no we don't feel like we're hurting by what is going on out west we just don't have the big expectation, it's all just we're happy with what we get.

Interviewer: and you say you are raising Black Angus?

Narrator: mmhmmm

Interviewer: so there is definitely a quality thing you guys got going there, correct?

Narrator: right.

Interviewer: All right, now this is the big thing for the class we've been talking a lot about the American dream, which is you can pull yourself up from nothing if you need to in America. Where do you stand on that, do you think that's true, or do you think that's still alive and well, that we're doing all right in the way our society is going?

Narrator: I think there is a lot of satisfaction in a job well done and anybody that is willing to work will succeed. So it doesn't really matter where you are or what country you are in, if you have got it in here (gesturing towards heart) you will succeed and you will be ok. So I think, yes, this country, I think we're good.

Interviewer: Doing all right. For one last quick round up, does Virginia tech take good care of its employees would you say or is it lacking things like health care, like we heard the story earlier how you burned your neck?

Narrator: yeah *ha* I think Virginia Tech is very fair, I think that it is good, I would give them a good rating, there fair to their employees. And I think that they employ a lot of people so for the economy of Blacksburg and the job security aspect it's good.

Interviewer: how do you feel about the whole buy local, eat local, be local thing that downtown Blacksburg has going cause that's fairly unique to this area?

Narrator: Well local is great; of course I'm a local farmer so for me I love that whole scenario. Buying local and supporting local is a very good thing and I think that every town every city every suburban small big should do that because your just taking care of your own and that's what we need to do so I think its great and I think Blacksburg does a very good job of it and the people of Blacksburg do a very good job of it.

Interviewer: is there anything you think I may have missed in this interview, anything you'd like to state, that I may have missed just out of ignorance?

Narrator: I guess one thing, a comment that I would make is, folks who farm generally it is passed down. The Land is passed down, the equipment is passed down, and the knowledge is passed down, just like the knowledge of frying a pie is passed down. You really don't have folks come out of college and say this is what I want to do I'm going to go out and buy a three hundred acre farm and then I'm going to buy all this equipment. I would say its very much so passed down generation to generation

[Break in filming]

Interviewer: Well thank you for your time and once again is there anything else you'd like to say for posterity sake

Narrator: I think you guys have done a great job and I've enjoyed it as well

Camerman: yes, thank you... for your time