

WILMA HANTON
Wilma's Garden – Carrboro, NC

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Location: Home of Wilma Hanton – Hillsborough, NC
Interviewer: Kate Medley
Length: 42 minutes
Transcription: Shelley Chance, ProDocs
Project: Carrboro Farmers' Market

[Begin Wilma Hanton Interview]**00:00:01**

Kate Medley: I'll start this out by saying this is Kate Medley interviewing Wilma Hanton on July 3, 2011 at Wilma's home near Hillsborough, North Carolina. I'll get you to introduce yourself and tell us who you are and what you do.

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Wilma Hanton: I'm Wilma Hanton. I've been living on this farm since the earliest 1970s and I made my first gardening mistake when I was two years old in Northern Indiana. I got spanked for that one by my mother. *[Laughs]*

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I went to Indiana State Teachers College, Indiana State College and Indiana State University and got a-Bachelors in Biology and Art; got a Masters in Biology, Botany, Zoology and Microbiology. Even though Micro-Biology wasn't an approved major, I had enough hours and then I came to UNC Chapel Hill to get a PhD in Mycology in the Botany Department. But I didn't finish it quite. I did the research but it was one of those—ABDs.

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Then my husband and I got married in 1967, bought the property I believe in about 1971, and moved out here in December 1975. Had my first child in June 1976 and we started growing plants in pots. I had a little garden, which got tilled out by *[Laughs]* now my ex. But what year was it we started the Farmers' Market—'79—1979, 1980, somewhere in there. And for three years we actually raised produce and sold it—four years actually—three years before the Farmers' Market was organized and various places bouncing around Chapel Hill and East Gate

Parking Lot where the—across from the Ranch House where the present Crohn Building is at the Church of Reconciliation and down at St. Thomas Moore's Church—wherever we could find a spot to set up our trucks. **[Laughs]** And then the Market got organized, more official, and with a little help from Carrboro, got a more permanent site, their first one being over on what's the name of that street across from Tom Robinson's Fish House and next to the Rescue Squad.

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And then we got the one at the present site over at the Town Hall, which is little short on parking but otherwise it seems to be working pretty well.

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KM: And what do you take to Market now?

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WH: Presently I take **[Laughs]** some bedding plants, particularly now just hot pepper plants. I had 16 varieties two years ago; I think I have about 12 this year. I used to take about 16 different varieties of houseplants, but I don't have many of them anymore because I didn't heat my greenhouse last year; the year before it cost \$2,500 to heat. This last winter would have been \$3,500 because we were extremely cold. And the year before that I had heated with wood, and wood costs almost as much as LP gas. But with wood you have to get up every two hours and fire the woodstoves. So I said I wasn't going to heat it anymore. But I've turned 70 now so I said I wasn't going to get up every two hours **[Laughs]** all winter long. But I have a lot of perennial plants, about seven or eight different varieties of mints, some herbal plants, some shrubs. I have one tree here—sitting here that's about eight-foot tall that not too many people want it unless they have a pond to go fishing with. I have sweet bay trees, which people begged and begged for,

and it needs a little moisture, so the conditions now are not as wet as they used to be 30—40 years ago, and unless you have a wet place it's a little hard to grow them unless you grow them in a pot which they bonsai well.

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I've had mine in pots since the early '90s. The same for ginkgo trees; they bonsai pretty well, but they're very slow growing and aren't as demanding on water supply.

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KM: How do you decide what to grow?

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WH: Well, some of the things I grew up with, and things that people have requested, and things that I like. The problem that a lot of people don't understand with perennials is perennials—very few of them bloom all summer long. So if you want a lot of color you plant some annuals along with your perennials, but perennials have a lot of variety: different types of flowers and different colors of flowers and do different things, draw in hummingbirds and butterflies.

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KM: Take us back to your growing up days and tell us about your first gardening mistake.

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WH: [*Laughs*] My mother had been wanting to grow some pine trees from seeds and she finally had some seed that germinated. And I heard her talking about it and I knew where they were and she was talking about weeding them. And so I thought I would help her and I went out to weed

them, but I didn't know which were the weeds and which were the trees. And I pulled all the little pine seedlings.

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KM: And what did she do?

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WH: She spanked me, as you know you would spank a two year-old. *[Laughs]* But we grew almost all of our own food, canned a lot of food; we even ground a lot of our own flour, cornmeal, we raised buckwheat, ground our own buckwheat flour. Most mornings we had the pancakes for breakfast. We even made our own maple syrup a couple times. But there was seven of us kids and six of us in school for at least six years before my older brother graduated and my younger sister started.

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So my mother would pack up these six lunchboxes every morning. We'd grab our pancakes and get ready to go to school and get back home in the evening and help weed the garden or pick vegetables. And in the summertime, then of course, we helped weed the garden and pick the produce and helped prepare it for canning. We made loose hay, which meant getting out there with a hay rake and the forks, the pitchforks. And I had two older brothers, so there was always competition to see who could lift the biggest forkful.

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KM: And where was this?

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WH: About 50 miles south of Chicago, about 20 miles southwest of South Bend out in the middle of nowhere.

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KM: And at what point did you decide to start studying plants?

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WH: Well, like I said, I was born into raising plants [*Laughs*] and had my first garden mistake at two years old and I learned some taxonomy pretty quick. And I liked flowers and my mother gave us a little patch of garden. Mine was at—actually in the corner of the field next to the garden, a little triangular space where the tractor didn't like to go in that corner and that was my garden. One sister had one in the other corner of the garden and a couple other patches and my mother always planted flowers in the vegetable garden because it would draw the bees in to pollinate.

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Each of us had a row across the garden of flowers, gladiolas or whatever we wanted to plant.

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KM: What’s the first thing you ever grew?

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WH: I have no idea at this point. [*Laughs*]

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KM: And then bring us up to coming from Indiana to North Carolina.

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WH: Well after I finished my Masters Degree and wanted to go to Graduate School, I looked at various places. I had been accepted at Wisconsin and British Columbia I believe, but I decided to come to Chapel Hill because John Couch was a Mycologist and I had been working on the same group of organisms, actinomycetes, for my Masters. And so I came here to work with him and published a couple papers: two species of that actinomycetes and one other fungus I discovered while I was working in the lab in aquatic Petri dishes under the microscope. And I went to NC State for about two years. And then I bought the farm and I decided I had to get a job and didn't know what to do with school. I never finished it. Even though I had all the research done and just didn't write up a dissertation and finish that.

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KM: And so you got a job doing what?

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WH: Working at UNC Biology Department teaching Electron-Microscopy and Photography and doing research with various faculty and students. And ended that research on the side when I had saw it was interesting and had time for.

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KM: And how long did that last and did you enjoy it?

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WH: I enjoyed it definitely. I'd still be doing it [*Laughs*] but I was there for 21 years; published approximately 20 papers, anywhere from, like I said, actinomycetes through tobacco hornworm and several other fungi and such, played around with tissue culture and even morels. They were easy to grow; they hyphae in the culture but the—a lot of people tried it and weren't able to get them to fruit until they found out you just flush away all the nutrients like a spring rain and they would fruit. [*Laughs*]

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KM: And how did you come to start gardening full-time?

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WH: Well we had a piece of land. And so after work when I got home, I would go out and play in the garden and grew some vegetables and grew some flowers and it just grew from there.

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KM: And for someone who has never been here before, tell us what it looks like.

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WH: A mess. [*Laughs*] Well it's green most of the year one way or another. The cleared area is probably about four, maybe five acres at the most, and it's surrounded by tall trees which makes it a little stuffy in the summertime, and, because it's fairly low, we have Forester Creek behind

us; it’s very cold in the wintertime which makes it hard to get some plants through the winter without heat or makes it cost more to heat a greenhouse.

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But in the summertime—we’re just sitting here right now under a shade tree, which is not bad, but for the plants in pots it’s, like, above 90-degrees—it’s about watering several hours a day every day. You miss a day, they die; I’ve lost some already this summer.

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KM: And when did you start selling at the Carrboro Market?

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WH: Well ’76 is when Tom was born, so 1976—somewhere in there when he was a baby—and ’79 for sure because I had Philip at the Market on my back in a backpack. **[Laughs]**

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KM: Tell us more about those early days at the Market.

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WH: Well it was sort of like almost a family get-together every Saturday. We’d see the other families and some of them with their children. Both of our children would go and for a while they would roller skate and skateboard until they were banned. **[Laughs]** And then, as the kids got, my children got older, I hired a baby-sitter on Saturdays to take them out strawberry picking or do other things because they were starting to get bored with just being at the Market every day.

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KM: And what was the Market setup like then?

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WH: Well the shelters were parallel to each other. And we’d actually stretch a tarp on to put more shade where our vehicle was. And it was on a hilltop, so there was usually a nice breeze through that area, as is the present Market over by Town Hall. We’re on a hilltop over there and, at about 10 o’clock, the wind blows and blows vases of flowers over and blows plants over. I have to go pick up the plants—well the tall ones. But with the roof it’s not bad if it rains.

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KM: And what’s changed about the Market since then?

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WH: A lot more people, a lot more vendors, and many more customers. But it’s also changed in what people sell at the Market. We did have some baked goods then. We had one lady who did flower arranging. She’d buy the flowers from people, vendors at the Market, as well as some that she would bring in and then sold her flower arrangements. We had, actually, this is, I think it’s very interesting and I think other people should think about it, because I don’t think the townspeople know about it—we had a nuclear physicist who sold produce and a little woodworking. He worked over at Oak Ridge on the nuclear bomb.

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And I know some people know that Dan Graham spent a lot of time in the Philippines after the Second World War and married a Philippine lady and I think they only had Charlene then and then Louie came along and Jonathon was a little later after Mark had been there for four or five years. And so I saw all these other children, vendors' children, grow up there also.

[Laughs] In fact, Jonathon just came by the Market the last couple weeks. Louie's the one who does the produce with his father and Jonathon is off doing other things. **[Laughs]**

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KM: And tell us about some of the other early vendors there.

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WH: Well, we had Sara Lou Ellen who was a retired schoolteacher. We had Pam Oakley's grandmother, who did a lot of cut flowers and she did some plants and some produce and she was a character. She raised—I can't remember whether it was six or so—a number of children by herself because her husband, I think, had got killed in the War. And she'd tell you, "I did it all myself." **[Laughs]** And her daughter, Pam Oakley's mother, Marjorie, is still coming to Market and bringing some produce and helping with the plants. And Pam works full-time over in Durham, but does this on the side as well as some landscaping and keeps herself busy. She has her own sawmill. She's building her own house. So it's interesting in what other people do in their time besides just coming to Market on Market days.

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KM: Tell us about Market days. You were at the Market yesterday so tell us what a Market day is like for you.

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WH: Well I get up at 3 o'clock in the morning. We pack the truck the night before because there's no way of doing it in the morning. And drive to Market, which is a 22-mile drive, and get there and get parked and unload all the plants, set up the tables, and put the plants out and arrange it the way we think they ought to be, if we can get a chance of doing it the way we want to, like put all the mints together and the yellow peppers together and the various other groups together and tall things on the floor.

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And then go around and put labels on everything and wait on customers. But it's a—a lot of customers early in the morning will go do their produce shopping first. So many times I get very few customers until maybe 9 o'clock or so, because I have some early people who want to be sure they get—if I only have one or two of this kind of plant. And we have one lady who comes in at 7:00—6:30—in the morning to get some eggs every other week and she's about the earliest person I know. And when other people start coming, she says, "Yeah, it's about time to go home now. Too many people are here." **[Laughs]** But I've known her since 1965 when I came to Chapel Hill because she used to be over at the swimming pool in the gym.

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I don't know whether she had a car accident or what and lost her leg. That's Carly, but she's great.

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KM: Tell us about the rest of your Market day.

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WH: Well sometimes, like I said, it's just seeing and waiting. Sometimes, a lot of the time, I talk. People come and ask me questions about this plant or that plant or what's the problem here or what can I put there, sun or shade, make me some suggestions.

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One of the most frequently one asked recently is about cilantro. People will say do you have cilantro plants? I say no; they don't do well in cell packs. They get six inches tall, bloom go to seed and die. I said go down to the Weaver Street or Whole Foods and buy bulk coriander seed and plant them where they only get morning sun so they stay on the cool side--as you can keep them and preferably in rich composty soil and I said plant the seeds every couple of weeks. And then what you plant late August or September grows all winter long and makes large Rosetta leaves because they're a cool weather plant. They say, "Oh, good."

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I found that out by accident because we grew cilantro in cell packs when I first started doing plants in cell packs, and they got about six days of—all bloomed, went to seed, and died. I had put some in the garden. So I think it's in late August they germinated on their own, come up volunteer, and the plants were—and I said, "Oh, that's how you need to grow?"

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KM: Sounds like a great tip. What's another frequent question you get at Market?

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WH: Just a minute. Hmm, oh, one of the things that a lot of people don't understand—seeds—that the seed has to be mature. Like I said, a little girl is not going to have a baby until she's old

enough. I said the seeds are not going to grow until they become old enough. And I’ve tried to get people to grow their own pepper seeds. I say all you need is—wait until the pepper turns red and you break the seeds out. It’s just like breaking an egg yolk out of an egg and save it until next spring and plant it.

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We even had one vendor several years back who [*Laughs*] harvested these heads of what he thought were seeds, but they were totally green, no seeds, and he was trying to sell himself as a native grass garden landscaper and these were actually of—what’s the name of that plant—*Rudbeckia Maxima*, which has like a four-inch flower—spike in the center of the daisy-like flower. And he had cut them off and put them in a jar and was trying to sell them as seed.

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But it’s a really simple thing; if you let a seed like an old flower become dry on its own, you don’t cut it and dry it, you wait until it matures on the plant and if you look carefully you can open it up and shell it out and look and see the seeds if it’s mature. Marigolds have a long skinny seed, about up to maybe a half an inch long sometimes, depending on which variety it is. But very thin, almost like a little needle-like, but not real stiff, and that’s after the marigold fades and turns brown and the bottom part of what was the flower turns brown and then you can break that open and you can see these silvery black seeds in there.

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So you have to realize what a mature seed is; it’s not just a flower that has become dry.

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KM: What is the most popular plant at Market today?

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WH: For me?

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KM: That you sell?

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WH: Well another week or two, people keep asking about my purple Tabasco peppers.

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KM: Tell us about those.

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WH: They’re a small pepper. It actually started out as a purple Thai pepper. It’s a little larger than the red Thai. And when the immature stage goes from green to purple and then from purple to red, and about three-quarters of an inch long at the most and about a half an inch across. And one year I crossed it with the Christmas pepper basket from the grocery store pepper, which was one of the commercial Tabasco varieties, not the Tabasco Sauce Tabasco; there are a couple different things called it. It has a very dense cluster of upright about two and a half inch peppers.

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And I crossed them and I got larger purple Thai peppers which I call purple Tabasco. And they’re very pretty because they go from green to purple—well actually sort of blackish green to purple and then orange and then red. So all these different colors are on the same plant when the plant is maybe only six to eight inches tall.

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The little red Thai which is in a pot, a three and a half inch pot, only gets about four or five inches tall. In the ground in the garden for a full season—gets two and a half foot tall, so it bonsais nicely; it's one of those pepper plants that you can put on the window sill for the wintertime and have your little peppers sitting there in your kitchen to pick a couple off and throw in your pot of soup.

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And the other interesting thing that people don't understand: hot peppers, you don't need to eat hot. You just use them for flavor; you know, throw a couple in a pot of soup for flavor but not for necessarily heat. You can adjust the amount of heat. If you want it hotter you put more in.

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KM: What does your purple Tabasco pepper taste like?

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WH: Mostly hot. *[Laughs]* There are other more flavorful peppers besides heat and one is a lemon pepper, which actually has a lemon flavor. I think the Scotch Bonnet has a much nicer spicy flavor than Habanero, but some people think they're the same pepper but they're definitely not the same pepper. The Scotch Bonnet is actually a Jamaican favorite. Habaneros to me are just hot and have a strange—the first time I tasted it I said it tasted like it's been dipped in kerosene.

[Laughs]

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Anyway peppers do have different flavors. And for just a basic pepper, cayenne is still, you know, for a hot peppery-pepper flavor it's about as good as any just for that purpose.

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KM: What was your most popular plant that you were selling at Market back in the '80s or when you were first starting?

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WH: Hmm. One of the plants that we sold a lot of were impatiens back then, and marigolds used to be popular but not anymore. The last time I grew marigolds I grew three flats and I sold one six-pack. But the last couple years I've noticed a few people planting them in their garden again. They're a nice bright color. But the impatiens, people wanted some color in the shade. And the other one that's very similar is called vinca, actually Madagascar Periwinkle, for the sun, but it has some of the same colors—that pinkish purple and pinks and now they have red ones and white ones with red eyes, the same color range almost as impatiens but for sun, and the impatiens for shade.

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KM: And tell us about some of your regulars at Market.

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WH: Well some people have been there as long as I've been there. **[Laughs]** In fact, I had this gentleman come by yesterday and he hadn't been at Market for about two years. And he said, "I just thought I'd come by and say hi and see how you're doing." And many times people will come by just to say, "Hi Wilma." They say, "I'm not gardening anymore. **[Laughs]** I just wanted to come by."

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KM: So is a lot of your role at Market not only selling the plants but teaching people what to do with the plants?

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WH: Yes, I try to teach people to do the plants themselves because I'm not going to be doing this forever. I tell them how to make cuttings and root them. They don't believe when I say just cut a little piece of it and stick it in some moist soil or put it in water. A lot of people don't understand. They want a fresh tomato plant around the 4th of July. And I say do you have any tomato plants? Yes. Go cut about a ten-inch piece off, you know a sucker or whatever, put it in a couple inches of water in just a Mason jar or a drinking glass and it'll root and then you can go plant it in a new spot. But they do root.

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Things like squashes. People don't know that there's an insect that lays its eggs right at the base of the squash plant. And then the little larvae develops in there and eats it up. But if you take that squash vine a foot out and two-feet out and put a little soil over it, it'll make roots at that point and then, if that original root part gets killed, the plant still can keep on growing and make squashes.

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KM: What's your favorite thing about going to Market?

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WH: People. It's sort of a social, like I said. Originally, even when I first started, it was sort of like a family get-together every Saturday. I go around and say hi to people and see what kinds of things they have and then we, sometimes myself or others, have interesting produce that isn't normally available all the times of the year but just at certain seasons, like the jerusalem artichokes in the fall, and now some people have been starting to grow things like the so-called husk cherry, which I grew up with as a wild plant in Northern Indiana. It's a nice sweet fruit about a half an inch across; you just pop it.

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KM: And what's your least favorite thing about going to the Carrboro Market?

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WH: Loading up and going home [*Laughs*], just the loading up because you're getting sort of tired at that time of day, especially in the summertime when it's very hot. And sometimes the plants are so dry that you have to water them before we put them back on the truck and go home even. So I get the little watering can out but mostly it's just, I think, because you're, you know, a little tired by that time of the morning, been up since 3 o'clock in the morning and here it is noon.

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KM: What do you do when you come home from Market?

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WH: Go sit down sometimes for a little while or sometimes we'll go ahead and unload the truck or at least the big things so that we can water them, which are usually the driest. Occasionally the

things, the plants, sit in the truck until Sunday morning before we unload them depending on how tired everybody is. But I have done it all by myself but at present my one son usually helps me.

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KM: And what's an average week like here?

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WH: Well this time, like I said, above 90-degrees, it's like out there with a hose watering plants two—three hours a day. And then our plants have weeds in them. Earlier in the summer, in spring and summer, you have to plant seeds and then you have to take care of them and then you have to transplant them, usually into cell packs, and then after they get well-rooted into that, then they go into larger pots, either into three and a halves or usually—three and a halves or fives, depending on what kind of plant they are and how big they're going to get.

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And then deciding where you're going to put them to rest until they're ready to take to Market.

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KM: Is it a hard job?

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WH: Well it's somewhat demanding because you have to be consistent. You can't say, "I don't feel like watering plants today." You have to do it every day [*Emphasis Added*]. And some

plants, if you don't transplant them at the right size, they're more difficult because roots will be too long and they're really hard to stuff in those little cell packs. Or they might get a little spindly because they're pretty tight in the seed flats. So you have to sort of stay on top of—semi-schedule. I mean, you can have a little leeway but you can't wait—"Oh, I'm not going to do them until next week"—unless they can wait.

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KM: Take us on a tour of your property, like I'm looking at a couple greenhouses, an old barn, and where you live, and where your sons live—tell us about it.

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WH: Well I haven't lived in the house in what 40-some years. [*Laughs*] I raised my two boys in basically what started out to be a barn in the upstairs part of it and then we decided it's time to do something else and we built a greenhouse, which was supposed to have been temporary so we could tear down the old barn. And I'd had enough in savings at that time that we could have built a house. So in the new greenhouse that we were going to live in temporarily, we built a bathroom. And my younger son went in and flushed it six times. I said what are you doing? He said, "I can't believe we have one."

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And I'm still living in it. The kids finished high school and I went ahead and provided them with trailers out here because they're unemployed at the moment and they need someplace to live and it's cheaper than paying rent. But it's breaking me. I'm paying their electric bill. They're mostly taking care of their food at the moment—various ways. But we had a problem with our one well the week before last. We had to rebuild the whole thing. This is our 160-foot

well; it's a shallow well compared to the other one. And the pump was okay so far at the moment, haven't had to replace it, but the tank had rusted through the bottom and it was starting to leak. The air bladder inside apparently had broken. And I had been getting dirt into my water every time I turned it on, especially in the morning. And it was just leaking so bad we had to get on with it. So we had to rebuild all the fittings, all the valves and the pressure switch and everything, and rewire that in a new air tank.

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But now my system is still clogged up in the bathroom and I get a dribble of water. The kitchen is running okay. So that's the—you know, all kinds of constant mechanical problems. Every spring, after winter is over, there's usually a hose leak here or there because of freezing with water in it. I still have several leaks, so that means if we leave the water on overnight, we have a bit of a puddle in the morning sometimes. So we go turn the main valve off or we have about three different valves that we can turn off for different parts of the system. And we're watering the plants off of our deep well, which is a 400-foot well with a—the pump is 300-feet down. And I rebuilt that in 2004, I believe. We had to pull the pump all the way out and replace the pump and all the wire.

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KM: Lots of expenses.

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WH: Oh gee, yes. It's nothing but expense all the time it seems like and not making money. People thinking I'm making money selling plants, but ever since the Food Lion and Wal-Mart and Lowes and Home Depot all started selling plants basically at cost or even below cost—I

can't imagine they're making anything off of them; They sell them like that so they get people in the store to buy gardening supplies. And it's no way of competing with that.

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One of the other mistakes that beginners do, and I've seen this at our Market, we had a new person come in a couple of years ago and I guess he hadn't grown plants before. I don't know whether he had horticulture courses or not, but apparently he was growing his plants under too much shade so they're spindly and floppy and just don't look too good and making the same mistake that's been talked about for years that new—beginners think they can sell them cheaper and sell more. But they're undercutting themselves because in a couple years they realize they're not making any money doing it. The price of soil goes up. The price of fertilizer goes up. Electricity goes up. Fuel for heat goes up. And they're making nothing or less than nothing.

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KM: So how is business for you at the Market compared to 20 years ago?

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WH: Not as good just because of the competition from the major local stores. Even though I've noticed that people like Food Lion have quit carrying near as many plants as they did eight, ten years ago, but you still have Home Depot and Lowes and Wal-Mart to deal with.

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But they got a lot of variety that I don't carry anymore because there's no sense in me growing them anymore. And Southern States is doing a good job and we know one of the people who grows for them and then they buy in from I don't know how many different places. So they get a lot of variety. The one person that we know, he's done a lot of the perennials for them. He

used to go just groundcovers, just wholesale—well, he's still wholesaling to them but he has a good variety. I think he has one employee per greenhouse and he has about 20-some greenhouses. But I talked to him two years ago and he said he had to lay off some people just because of the economy. So gas prices are up and the weather is dry and people aren't planting as many plants as they used to. *[Laughs]*

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KM: Do you have competition within the Market? Are there other people selling plants?

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WH: Yes, other people sell plants, but we all sort of—well the majority of us actually sell different groups of plants, like Joe and Louise sell beautiful herb plants and because when I grew basil I water with a hose and they get black spots and don't look—do nice. So I just—people ask me for basil and I said go see Joe and Louise. I said I let them do that and parsley. But they don't do flat Italian parsley which I did do and I should do it because other people aren't doing it. I don't know why other people don't do it. But I haven't done it.

00:35:16

And another—well two other people, one person sells miniature shrubs which actually with age will get to be large trees but they're nice and bonsai-ed. Another lady does a lot of flowering shrubs. I do some flowering shrubs. But hers are totally different shrubs than mine most of the time. Then Pam Oakley grows various perennials also but most of them are different than the varieties I grow.

00:35:42

KM: If a young person came to you and wanted to go into this business, if they wanted to start growing plants, what would be your advice?

00:35:50

WH: Don't. Philip has asked me. My son has asked me if he could take over the business. I said you don't want to—not with the weather and the fuel prices and the competition and all the rest. I said leave it to somebody else to do that unless you can specialize. **[Laughs]** Joe and Louise aren't going to be doing herbs forever. And they have a really nice line; you know a lot of people want them to set on their deck and they look nice and they can nibble on them and cook with them, so there are, more use for plants than just flowers out in the garden and people don't want to go out and water their garden and take care of it and maintain it and only see flowers two to six weeks a year.

00:36:37

KM: You said you grew up growing your own food. Do you still?

00:36:41

WH: Oh not nearly like we did at my parents. At my parents we grew almost all of our food. We bought in sugar and maybe a little more than half of our flour. We raised our own wheat and ground our own flour. Like I said, we grew buckwheat and made our own buckwheat flour and ground our own corn and made cornmeal. We grew popcorn, several different kinds, pop sorghum and all kinds of things—variety. A lot of people in Northern Indiana don't know what an okra is; we had okra. We had pumpkins. We had squashes, many different kinds. So every

year my mother would buy something different and then we would save our own seed and we’d have it as long as we’d save seeds.

00:37:17

The same for flowers; we’d buy new flowers every year except one year we all got together. My mother asked us—we got together and decided to buy a fig tree, brown turkey fig, and I had more figs in Northern Indiana than I can grow here in north of Hillsborough because we had the little shrub in a large pot and we put it in the root cellar for the winter. And when we’d take it out of the root cellar there were little figs on it already.

00:37:44

But here they freeze to the ground every winter and they’ll grow up, make figs, but before they ripen it freezes again and they’re back to the ground. So north of Hillsborough you can’t grow a fig unless it’s very protected. I may put some in the ground in my old greenhouse I’m not going to be heating for plants anymore.

00:38:06

KM: Who is this hanging out beside us?

00:38:09

WH: That’s Daniel, my five and a half year-old grandson.

00:38:15

KM: Daniel, what do you grow?

00:38:17

Daniel: I have over there—I don’t know all my plants. I know one.

00:38:25

WH: What is it?

00:38:25

Daniel: Tomato, and that’s all the plants I know over there. I don’t know the other names. And I have a garden with squash and watermelon.

00:38:54

KM: Who taught you how to plant your garden?

00:38:57

Daniel: My dad. And I know very much about putting in a garden.

00:39:04

KM: You know a lot about putting in a garden?

00:39:06

Daniel: Yeah.

00:39:07

WH: What’s around your garden?

00:39:09

Daniel: Fence.

00:39:20

KM: There’s a fence around your garden; why?

00:39:22

Daniel: Because deer.

00:39:24

KM: What do the deer do?

00:39:27

Daniel: Eat it. They eat it and eat it.

00:39:38

KM: Do you have anything else to tell us?

00:39:45

Daniel: What is that?

00:39:53

KM: Wilma, do you have anything else to tell us about your business or about your time at the Carrboro Farmers Market?

00:40:06

WH: I think it would be a good idea for the people to know that people aren't just—I've had it said about me—she's nothing but a farmer anyway, but like I said we had a nuclear physicist as a vendor to Market and worked at Oak Ridge and helped develop the A-bomb, and had people who have had coffee plantations, Dan Graham, and a lot of things that the other farmers have done that the public just doesn't know. They just think they're farmers.

00:40:40

KM: What do you think the future of the Carrboro Farmers Market looks like?

00:40:46

WH: Well it seems to be lately going to more and more prepared foods. But I'm not sure it should go too much further in that direction because there are people out there growing produce, but a lot of people like to come by and snack there in the morning because it's a lot of good baked goods. And apparently people like the hotdogs [*Laughs*], which are made from locally produced meat.

00:41:14

KM: And if there was one thing that you could change right now about the Carrboro Farmers Market what would it be?

00:41:19

WH: About the Market or about the procedures of the Market?

00:41:25

KM: Either.

00:41:28

WH: Well we have this rule that everybody gets inspected every once in a while to be sure that person is growing their own produce or making their own things. And it's supposedly a random drawing but I think it should be that—such that a person who has been inspected, their name goes in a different hat for like a length of two or three years because sometimes when you draw it at random out of the same pool all the time some people never get drawn and how do you know what they're growing?

00:42:02

KM: What else would you change?

00:42:07

WH: Well not a whole lot that I can think of. It seems to be working pretty well. I'm glad that they've blocked off—well actually not that they've blocked off the other end of the parking lot, but to make it one way so the traffic only goes in from the one side and out the other side instead of people having to turn around and cross traffic.

00:42:27

KM: Okay. And is there anything else that I haven't asked you about that you want to tell us?

00:42:31

WH: I can't think of anything right now. *[Laughs]*

00:42:37

KM: Well thank you for sharing your stories with us.

00:42:40

[End Wilma Hanton Interview]