Douglas R. Davis

Yokna Bottoms Farm

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Interviewer: Sarah I. Rodriguez

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Sarah Rodriguez: This is Sarah Rodriguez with the Southern Foodways Alliance. It is June 17th, I believe. I am here with—do you mind introducing yourself for the recording?

Doug Davis: Yes. My name is Doug Davis.

Sarah Rodriguez: Perfect. Just for the record, will you state when you were born?

Doug Davis: I was born December 31st, 1960.

Sarah Rodriguez: Perfect. Where were you born and where did you grow up?

Doug Davis: I was born in Boulder, Colorado, and I grew up mostly in Idaho and New Mexico.

Sarah Rodriguez: Who did you grow up with, in your family?

Doug Davis: I grew up with my parents and four sisters. I'm the only boy in the family.

Sarah Rodriguez: What was it like growing up? You say you mostly grew up in Idaho. What was your experience like, or your memories of it?

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Doug Davis: Well, where to start? [laughs] I grew up in kind of an unusual family. My father was a college president, so I was very always around universities, university activities. But I was also in relatively small towns in the Mountain West. At least the first part of my life, I lived in a town about the size of Tupelo. But it was lots of mountains, rivers. A really great place to grow up.

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Sarah Rodriguez: Sounds like it.

Doug Davis: Lots of things to do. I spent a lot of time outdoors. My parents weren't farmers, but both of them came out of farming families. I always had a—my parents used to laugh and talk about how I planted a garden when I was four. There was a pack of seeds laying around the house, and I took them out, unbeknownst to them, and planted them in the yard, and all of a sudden things started coming up in all these strange places. But I always had an interest in gardening and farming.

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Sarah Rodriguez: Nice. What did your mom do for work? Did she work?

Doug Davis: She was a teacher until she became a full-time mom. But it was kind of—it was normal back then for college presidents' spouses to be kind of almost working—they did a lot to provide support, entertaining, things like that.

Sarah Rodriguez: That makes sense.

Doug Davis: She kind of did that, as well.

Sarah Rodriguez: Did any of your sisters have an early interest in farming, planting, or was it just you?

Doug Davis: None at all. My oldest sister had horses, but that was—

Sarah Rodriguez: Tell me a little bit about school, kind of where you went to school, what that was like, and then going into college and that kind of thing.

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Doug Davis: Well, we moved around some. I moved to Idaho when we were four, and moved to New Mexico when I was fourteen. In Idaho, I went pretty much just normal school, elementary and junior high. It was pretty typical. Then when I moved to New Mexico, I went to one year of ninth grade. And then my high school, I went to New Mexico Military Institute—that was kind of unusual at the time—into military school in Roswell, New Mexico.

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I never saw the aliens, so I figured that being in Roswell, we must have been the aliens, the cadets at the military school. I spent three years there. Then I took kind of a wandering, meandering route to my first bachelor's degree, and I spent three years going off and on to the University of New Mexico, and then three years at Southern Oregon College, which is now Southern Oregon University, in Ashland, Oregon. I ended up with a history degree. But during my years in Oregon—it kind of had a lot to do with getting involved in agriculture later—I worked summers at Oregon State University at a cereal grains breeding project.

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It was breeding wheat and barley, primarily. Because it was experimental, they were breeding lots of different varieties of wheat, it was kind of hands-on, small-scale, like organic farming is. Also in high school, I spent summers in Colorado working on my uncle's farm. And so that's really—I ended up with a degree in history, and then that—later, I went back and got my teaching certificate, after I had gotten my bachelor's degree, and became an educator. But again, I always had kind of a love for farming and agriculture, and it was always something I enjoyed doing.

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Sarah Rodriguez: What kind of things do you think you learned, in particular, from the breeding farm up in Oregon?

Doug Davis: Well, a lot of it was—we used small machines. We did a lot of planting and harvesting by hand, because it was just small plots of wheat. We did a lot of caring for them by hand. But I also learned kind of a lot of the science behind it. Learned about plant breeding. Cross-pollinating by hand was an interesting process.

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And then basically just seeing the steps in the process—the planting, the caring for the plants, the harvesting, taking care of the small equipment. That type of thing.

Sarah Rodriguez: How long were you there, about what years?

Doug Davis: I did it off and on for like three years as an undergraduate, and then I did it the two years that I was working on my teaching license. There was a two-year gap between when I graduated with my degree in history and when I started working on my education degree, and certification.

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So I did it for three years, didn't do it for a couple years, then I did it for a couple more years. And then, even after I became a teacher, I wasn't a student employee at that time; I just—I had learned a lot, so when I was a teacher, I was able to come back and do it a couple more summers. I probably did it a total of seven or eight summers, between ages twenty-two and—I think the last year I did it when I was teaching, I was probably twenty-nine.

Sarah Rodriguez: What were you teaching during that time?

Doug Davis: Well, just one year of teaching—well, one year I was substitute teaching in Oregon, and then the next year I was teaching high school in Baton Rouge, and I was teaching high school social studies, and coaching wrestling and football.

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Sarah Rodriguez: All right, nice. What brought you down to the South?

Doug Davis: I had been looking for a teaching job in Oregon, and they were tough, especially in social studies, a lot of applicants for every position. My father took a job at LSU, and so I went—I inquired, and they had more openings. Kind of interestingly, I—the first school I went into, kind of the reason I was able to get in, I think, was because they had a court-ordered consent decree in desegregation in Baton Rouge, and they had to have certain percentages of white teachers and African American teachers in every school.

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And so they needed white teachers who were willing to—or—to go into small African American high schools. So that's what I did. I think that got me in the door of education.

Sarah Rodriguez: What are some of your early memories of moving to Baton Rouge? What did you think?

Doug Davis: Well, I really liked it. The teaching was really hard.

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I had a lot to learn. But I think back of it very fondly. I enjoyed it, and I miss it. But especially the first year, it was—I was thankful for military school because [laughs] it gave me I think some fortitude that allowed me to keep on going and to stay with it.

Sarah Rodriguez: That makes sense. What year did you come down to Baton Rouge?

Doug Davis: It was 1989.

Sarah Rodriguez: Were you still doing or did you do any kind of farming work down here once you got here?

Doug Davis: Once I got down here, kind of, not really.

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The first year I was here, that summer I went back to Oregon and worked in crop science. Then the next summers, the next four or five summers, I was working the summers at a place called the LSU Rural Life Museum. It was kind of a long—it's in Baton Rouge, and it's about 500 acres, and it's a museum. But another part of the property, it's like an experiment station. They do agriculture experiments. But it also had a garden in it. And so that's what I—I did a lot of—I was taking care of the grounds, and the garden, and helping do that kind of thing a lot.

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So it was kind of—it was working outdoors, but mostly mowing and trimming and cutting back, just kind of garden-type stuff.

Sarah Rodriguez: Important stuff, yeah. How did you end up in North Mississippi? Or what was your next step, kind of going out of Baton Rouge?

Doug Davis: [laughs] It's really a—probably not many organic farmers can—while I was teaching, I went to graduate school and I started—

Sarah Rodriguez: At LSU?

Doug Davis: At LSU, and I was planning to be a school administrator.

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And so I went, I got that degree, and while I was getting that degree, a couple professors encouraged me to go on and get my doctorate. So I got my PhD from LSU in I think it was 1997. At that time, I took a job at Georgia State University on their faculty. I was there seven years, in Atlanta. Then, in 2007, I took a job at Ole Miss, on the faculty of the Educational Leadership Program, to prepare school principals.

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And so I came to Oxford in 2007, for that job. When I was in Atlanta, I got real—there's an organization in Georgia called Georgia Organics. I just lived in a suburban house. I had a garden and I was trying to learn how to grow vegetables organically. But I was really just a supporter of that organization. They had fundraisers and events, and you could go and you could meet and talk to farmers, and learn about it. I started going to farmers markets. I really thought, "Well, that would be kind of a neat thing to try to do."

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When I came to Mississippi and sold my house in Atlanta, I looked for a piece of property with the idea of hoping to start a farm. It took a while. Actually I really didn't find what I was looking for the first time I searched, so I just kind of was waiting and renting a small place in Taylor,

which is of course just south of Oxford. My realtor called, and this property here had come on the market.

Sarah Rodriguez: The one here, that we're on now?

Doug Davis: Yeah. I came out and looked around, and called my realtor and said, "I want to make an offer." It didn't have any structures on it.

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Sarah Rodriguez: It was just the land?

Doug Davis: Just the land.

Sarah Rodriguez: Oh!

Doug Davis: So after I got the property, I enjoyed having the opportunity to just search for house plans and find what I wanted, and go through the process of building a house out here.

Sarah Rodriguez: Nice! Nice. Kind of going back to being in Georgia and kind of getting to know the farming community there, what was that community like? What are some memories you have of connecting with people there?

Doug Davis: Well, just—one thing was just talking farming. "How do you do it? What do you grow? How do you grow it?" A lot of the farms there were larger than—well, they had a big market, in Atlanta.

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And the farmers markets in Atlanta were, if you didn't get up and get to them by 9:00, they'd be sold out of food.

Sarah Rodriguez: Wow.

Doug Davis: They had a—and usually there would be people lined—kind of went through a line and picked what you wanted, and then you hoped you got there before they ran out of stuff. I just thought—it just made a lot of sense to me, that—one—I mean, there's—it's like there's two myths that are out there that I think they're a result of marketing.

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But also, large corporations really getting into the food production, getting into every part of the process, kind of created a mindset, and it's still very prevalent, that—one, that chemicals are necessary, and two, that it's necessary to—you can grow some things better someplace else, so you should grow them someplace else and then move 'em. One thing I've learned is that neither of those things are true. You can grow amazing food without chemicals, and you can grow amazing food locally.

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And you really see that at our farmers market. Now, you don't have those things all year round, but we can grow—I mean, there's an amazing amount, variety of food, we can grow here in Mississippi that—most of what we eat in Mississippi is grown a long ways away and transported a long ways away. I know on some level, that makes economic sense to some people, but it doesn't make—I mean, I think there's lots of economic issues in terms of the cost, not the direct costs, but the indirect costs, of transporting so much food around the world. I could go on about that a long time.

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But just the damage to the land and communities that often times large-scale corporate agriculture results in.

Sarah Rodriguez: So, you kind of are learning all of this stuff, getting connected to the community in Georgia. What were your early days like I guess putting some of that into practice here? What were your initial plans, obviously after you built your house, on this land?

Doug Davis: It was pretty intentional. It happened—it was in I think, oh, the summer of 2009, so it would have been my second summer—I was teaching a summer class, and one of my students, he had been a—he was a member of the Mississippi Teacher Corps.

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He was recently married. His wife was pregnant. They were living down on the Coast, in Moss Point. He was taking classes up here for the summer, trying to finish his master's degree in teaching and get his teaching license. He needed a place to stay, and so I ended up letting him stay.

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We were talking, and I was telling him I wanted to start a farm but I needed someone to help, and someone to kind of manage it. At some point, he said, "Well, how about if I talk to my wife?" That person was Daniel Doyle, who still lives in Oxford. We're still friends. He helped start the farm and helped with the farm for the first two years of the farm. But we had an original kind of mission or purpose; we wanted to articulate that. And it was really—Native Son's farm started the same year, but prior to that, there really were no organic farms in North Mississippi.

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And there really weren't—there was a retail market, but it was kind of—it was a nice little market, but there wasn't really a local food thing happening in North Mississippi like I saw happening in Atlanta or—other parts of the country, it was really going strong at that time, but it really hadn't developed much here. We wanted to—one thing is just see if it could be done. But we also—we had certain goals in terms of we wanted to really engage the community. We wanted to provide educational outreach.

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We wanted to increase local food production. We wanted to support new farmers. It's a strange business model—increase your competition. [laughs] It really is—it's a different—I think it's a different ethos, of thinking about what a business is—that you can function as a business through service, as a primary motive. I'm still not sure that's possible, but we're trying. [laughs]

Sarah Rodriguez: What were those first initial seasons like, with the farm?

Doug Davis: We originally—we went down—and this property, about half of it is basically in a flood zone, but that means it's a flood plain, and that's where all the fertile soil is.

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Then as it slopes up onto the hill—behind us you can see it goes way up—that's more red clay and not really great. That's why everything you see here is pasture. Then there's some real low land where the stream goes through, and then on the other side of that is land that, back in the 1980s, was a cotton field. Then, our neighbor leased the land for about ten years and raised cattle on it.

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Then it became part of the conservation recovery program, or the CRP program, and they planted pine trees on it. When I bought the property, the pine trees were about four feet high. Some of them, we just went and dug out with a pick axe, and that's where we started. We did that, and we had problems with deer, so we built a fence around it. And it just kind of—at some point, we dug a well. And it just kind of started growin', and addin' to it.

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It grew pretty steadily, oh, up until probably about 2017. And then we've had a—we had some floods, and some things happen, and I had to find a balance between what I could actually do in addition to a full-time faculty job at the University, and so kind of scaled it back a little bit. Now, we grow typically on about four or five acres.

Sarah Rodriguez: How big was the property when you initially got it?

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Doug Davis: The farm itself, the initial property I purchased in 2007 was 19 acres. Then in 2012, 19 acres right next to it came up for sale, and I picked that piece of property up as well. So, the total property is about 38 and a half acres, but we farm on, again, just about four or five of it. But when we started, it was probably more like—I think we had a—our first fields were 50 feet wide and about 200 feet long.

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That's about—probably about a quarter of an acre, I think.

Sarah Rodriguez: What were y'all growing, starting out?

Doug Davis: We grow a lot of things. Not to be flippant; we basically try to grow everything we can.

Sarah Rodriguez: Sure.

Doug Davis: Mississippi, depending on the year, has nine to ten months of growing season, so we can grow a lot of what you might think of as northern crops in the spring or the fall, and then we can grow summer crops. The spring and fall crops are things like lettuce, and beets, carrots, turnips, greens, spinach, snap peas, onions, potatoes.

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The summer crops are things like tomatoes, peppers, okra, squash, beans, cowpeas or purple hull peas. Some corn.

Sarah Rodriguez: Where have you been getting your seeds from?

Doug Davis: In the organic seed industry, there are several seed companies that specialize on that. Probably the most common we use is called Johnny's. I think Johnny's is in Vermont.

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Then there's another group called Southern Seed Exchange. Another group, Sow True. Then sometimes we can't find what we need, and we'll just end up buying some seeds locally. For example, it's hard to find okra seed. But you can go by the local feed store, and they'll have okra seed. It won't be organic, but there's—certified naturally grown, you can use non-organic seed if you don't have an alternative.

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Typically all it means if it's not organic is that it didn't come from organically grown parents. But sometimes it can mean it is treated with fungicide or something like that. We avoid that.

Sarah Rodriguez: Could you talk a bit about the work that you've done kind of being an organic farm? What has that been like? Especially because like you said, when you started, there wasn't really a whole lot of other people doing that around here. What have you learned? What were some of the successes and failures that you've seen of doing that, on your farm?

Doug Davis: There are several challenges, for sure. One is, and probably the biggest one for me, is not being able to be here all the time.

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Sarah Rodriguez: Just because of teaching or—?

Doug Davis: Yeah. Maybe in a few years, I'll retire and get to do it full time. Also, kind of the need for a farm manager or a field manager or somebody to basically handle all the activities, in the production and the harvesting of food, the food we're growing. And then, hiring workers. I'd say most of the—well, the first few years, kind of the first half, I used—there's an organization called WWOOF—what does that stand for?—Worldwide Opportunities in Organic Farms, or something like that.

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Sarah Rodriguez: Something like that.

Doug Davis: But it was a program, it had a website, and if you wanted to be a host, you would apply. Once you were approved, you'd post your information, and then people could come, and basically in exchange for room and board, they would stay and help you on the farm, sometimes

for a few days, sometimes for as much as a couple months. That worked really well, and had a lot of people come through and do that. Really what brought it to a halt was I got married, so—it was not as convenient just to kind of have—kind of changed the whole dynamic of having basically strangers come and stay in your house.

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And so, we've hired—but really, in terms of like paid employees, probably almost—most of them have been either students or former students or people somehow related to the University. That's pretty transitional, so there has always kind of been—we've had some great crews, but inconsistent staffing, that's a challenge. Because when people start, there's a whole lot to learn.

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And then people get really knowledgeable, and then they continue on with their lives. So that has been a challenge. Some of the things—there has been lots—as you would expect, lots of weather and environmental-related issues. Too much rain, not enough rain. Too cold, too hot. Long dry spells, long wet spells. Very unpredictable. We have predictable changes in the season, but within that, just lots of variability between season to season.

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I've kind of learned that one of the things that is a benefit to farming like this is you do have a lot more flexibility.

Sarah Rodriguez: In terms of organic farming?

Doug Davis: Yes. Because—I've marveled at this field over here that's typically a cotton field, and it's about 400 acres. This past week, they've been planting sweet potatoes in it. They

planted—oh, I can't even imagine—I'm sure it's like probably well over 100,000 plants, if you start kind of thinking and doing the math of their—which I do think about row lengths, and how many per row.

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It's a very large field. It looks like they—well, I pulled over and looked, and my guess is they're planting them about a foot apart. But they had trucks that were loaded with nothing but sweet potato plants. And then they had, oh, I guess maybe eight tractors with this thing set up behind them, these planting machines, that people would sit on it—they had places, seats, and then they had shade covers, and the people would sit and then feed the sweet potato plants into the machine that would plant them. And they had five buses for all the workers that were planting those sweet potatoes. And if—so I can't even imagine that farmer—everything is invested in those sweet potatoes.

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If something happens—say we—like in—I believe it was 2020—2019, I think—that we—about this time of year, we got 14 inches of rain in three days, and everything in our field was under two feet of water, and it killed everything. If that happened this year—well, I'm sure he has crop insurance—but it would wipe everything out. When that happened to us, we went—we had some potatoes and onions that we had already harvested. Other than that, we didn't have any food to take to market or to give to our CSA program. We didn't have any food for about five or six weeks. But as soon as the water went down, we replanted.

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We ended up having one of our best late falls and—early falls *and* late falls—ever. One was because we had a lot of room to plant things and grow things. But kind of the idea that if something goes wrong, plow it up, plant something new. Just whatever—the ability to adapt and do something different I think is a real advantage.

Sarah Rodriguez: For sure, for sure. Speaking about kids, how did you get involved with the Oxford Community Market? Have you been involved throughout the whole time?

Doug Davis: I have.

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When we started, there was the Saturday market.

Sarah Rodriguez: The Mid-City [Mid-Town] one? In that parking lot?

Doug Davis: Yeah, the Mid-City Farmers Market. But we didn't really think we had enough food. But there was a little farmers market that started in Taylor. That market was on Saturday morning, also. I think we did that market for two years, and then it shut down. So, we were doing the Mid-Town Market, and then we were doing a CSA distribution, mid-week, up at the Powerhouse [sp]. We had a much larger CSA, then.

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CSAs, that was kind of their heyday. And we still do it, and it's a good thing for some families, but sadly, and I'm probably the same way, most people don't eat the amount of vegetables per week that they will get from a CSA. Or if they do eat them, they're not preparing them and—so a lot of people will get a CSA and then they'll end up composting or disposing of a lot of food. So

you'll hear a lot of, “Well, I’m not—we just couldn't eat all the food. We're still going to shop with you, but we're not going to get a CSA this year.”

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I lost track of your question. [laughs]

Sarah Rodriguez: The Community Market.

Doug Davis: Oh, the Community Market, yeah. At some point—oh—don’t trust my—you probably know that in oral history—lots of errors. [laughs] But I’m trying to think of the date. Probably around 2010, 2011, the city—I guess the U.S. Department of Agriculture had sent notification to cities, encouraging them to apply for farmers markets development grant. Oxford decided they were going to do that. Then, as they got involved with that, they asked for local farmers to provide letters of support.

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I think that was kind of my first—I wrote a letter of support for the farmers market grant. Then the city got the grant. It used to be—and it had the same acronym—the Oxford City Market—and the city hired a market manager. That went either two to three years. But we were at the first market, and I think we may be the only vendor that has been at the City Market/Community Market ever since. When the first grant ran out and it was being renewed, the city basically said, “Well, we don’t want to be in the business of running a farmers market. It needs to be a non-profit.”

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So I was involved in that process, and the re-grant application, and I was involved with the selection of Betsy. In fact, Betsy worked out here for three years, prior to becoming the Market manager. The Market changed its name from the Oxford City Market to the Oxford Community Market, and we set up the non-profit. I was a board member at that time.

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That has gone pretty well. The Market has grown. It has done amazingly well. I don't think any city anywhere has a market manager like Betsy. She's absolutely amazing. And she really has realized her vision of community engagement. We very much had a goal of trying to provide access to healthy local food to all our community members, and really developing a local food economy and a local food culture. It always seems like things move slow, and we wish more would happen, but when we step back and take a look at it and see where we are now, to where we were ten years ago, to where we were five years ago—and now that our Market is becoming—I mean, we've won national awards, and we're I think exceptionally good at our community outreach and engagement.

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So I've just—I stepped down as chair of the board. I served in that role for three years. I stepped down from that role basically because I figured—I think it's healthy to transition those roles. It's also healthy to have a stable market director, but I think it's—you really want to build community; you bring community into the—and make it a part of what we're doing.

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If the board members just get on and stay on, and the board officers just get in and stay in those roles, I don't think that's good for an organization. So, we're rolling into something new and different.

Sarah Rodriguez: Sure, that makes sense. Do you have any specific memories from kind of the early years of the market as y'all were getting started up? Any interactions that stand out? Any specific kind of things that y'all were trying out, or changes?

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Doug Davis: We were over on West Oxford Loop to start with. I think we were there for three or four years, in a big tent. I don't know if you ever saw that?

Sarah Rodriguez: I think I saw a picture.

Doug Davis: It's a medical office building now. [laughs] Events that stand out—of course, I remember being out there in snowstorms, in heavy rainstorms, and tornado warnings. I remember being out there on extremely hot days.

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But it has always had a special—there's a sense of community you see there and experience there that is rare, I think. It's important, and I think we need more of it. It's one of the few places where you see the full diversity of our community coming together in a space, and interacting in very positive ways. I mean, I think we've had a market that has been by and large conflict-free.

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I'm trying to think of anything that would really stand out. But basically I think it has just been a good market that has steadily grown over the years.

Sarah Rodriguez: What do you think are some of those changes that have led the market to keep growing? Or aspects of the market that you think have helped it thrive for so long?

Doug Davis: I think it's always—the market has always had a commitment to its vendors.

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The vendors have always had a large role and voice on the board. I think that's one aspect. Certainly moving to the Pavilion—I mean, the Pavilion is just a wonderful space *for* it. Unfortunately, we're starting to outgrow it. This past Tuesday, around 3:15, it was just—it was really crazy. And we're starting to have people tell us, "Well, I was there, but I drove by, there weren't any parking spaces" or "it was too crowded." And it's not really the size of the Pavilion that's the problem; it's the parking, the traffic flow.

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We're very concerned, because a lot of people are parking across the street at Chaney's or Walk-On's parking area and coming across the street, and there's no crosswalk. One thing we—we're fortunate that our mayor meets with us regularly, Robyn Tannehill. She's very supportive. So, the city is well aware of the issues. They're struggling with—they want to preserve the green space, and also they don't have long-range plans for that space. I wish they would say, "Well the long-range plan, it would be a wonderful market space." [laughs]

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But as we grow, we try to increase our political capital and put positive pressure to keep that a community space. But we need better disability access. We need better restrooms. We need better lighting. We need better entry and access. All down the list, we have some challenges. But they're challenges that come with success. We're also—I'm really excited about the partnerships that we are developing with the University.

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About seven or eight years ago, the food service contractor, Aramark, who has the contract with the University, they were resistant to allowing local food into the University food chain, if you will. I think a lot of it had to do with faculty and student pushback, but now they've flipped almost completely. They are now really supporting, so we're working with them. Their new chef is purchasing a large percentage of food they use from the market.

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But they're also—we may have pop-up markets, or they're looking into getting a food truck that is—vendors would provide the food from the market that would be taken to the University and sold, like out of a food truck. Another program that is really, really neat is, we—Betsy—I think we're providing several thousand pounds of food a month to the community that is purchased—well, the Market receives donations from churches and various other community groups.

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They take those funds, and they purchase food from vendors at the Market, and then distribute the food to people in need around the community. It's unfortunate—the Oxford Food Pantry is only open one day a month now, so if you need food, you've got to wait a month. Again, that's

unfortunate. But the Market is really kind of stepping into that—we're becoming more and more involved with meeting the food needs of the entire community.

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Sarah Rodriguez: That's awesome. What do you think you see moving forward with Yokna Bottoms Farm? What do you think is some new directions you're planning on going in, or what you see for it?

Doug Davis: You know, I worry about it all the time. I wouldn't—it's an investment, is the way I view it. I can't say that the farm is making lots of profits. We are not. I'm worried because our employee costs are—we want to maintain our values in everything we do, and one of that is we want to be sure we're paying our workers fair and equitable wages, and that's really expensive. One problem we have is, in this local food economy, there's not really—there's not a higher market price for organic food. Basically if there's a tomato in the booth next to us selling for two dollars a pound that's not organic, and I've got an organic tomato that I'm selling for three dollars a pound because it was more expensive to produce, I'm not going to sell my tomato. People are going to buy the two-dollar tomato that's not organic.

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Whereas if you go to a market like Atlanta, or even Memphis, people are willing—there are a lot of customers who are only going to buy organic, and they're willing to pay more for organic because they realize that it costs more to produce. But they don't have the external costs that—so when you're paying that two dollars, you're not paying the cost of the environmental damage, of the chemicals, of the transportation, of the social costs, all the other things, costs associated with

our food system that in a lot of ways is subsidized—I don't want to go too deep in the economic arguments, but the—so I wonder how I can make it more sustainable in terms of its costs and its returns side of it.

1:03:33

I would like to see it develop into something that is more—that is permanent, that is—but it's really hard to make that transition. Depending on just circumstances in the School of Education where I work, and at the University, I might work three or four more years before I retire; I might work *ten* years before I retire.

1:04:12

I think when I do retire, then I'll be able to focus on the farm, all the time, and hopefully create something that outlasts me. But I—this is a really unique piece of property, I think. It has—there's a lot of history in this area, including this road here, which is now kind of Road 471, it used to be the main highway between Oxford and Bruce.

1:05:05

About a quarter mile from here, there's a bridge that's laying in the river that used to be the main bridge acrost. People who knew William Faulkner have told me, and it has also been documented, that this area was a special place for him, and really it's down at that river crossing where—again, this is documented—that the river crossing scene in *As I Lay Dying* took place. This also—it's Native American history. The Chickasaw people lived in this valley.

1:06:02

We find arrowheads, various other cutting—we find those from time to time. There's Civil War history here, including a Union Army camp was in this area for a long time, or for a time. The Central Mississippi Railroad Campaign of 1862 was centered in this area for a while. So, it has a lot of historical value. So I hope to someday—I'd like to find a way to put it in a conservation trust that would protect it over time.

1:07:11

I don't really know the details of how that's going to happen, but that's kind of where I'd like to go with it.

Sarah Rodriguez: Sure, sure. Is there anything that I haven't asked about that you'd like to talk about? Any stories or anything in your head you'd like to mention?

Doug Davis: I'm sure I could keep talking about a lot of things but [laughs]—nothing is really jumping out.

Sarah Rodriguez: Okay! Awesome. Thank you so much for chatting with me. I'll go ahead and stop the—

[End]