

# UC Santa Cruz

## Cultivating A Movement

### Title

Dee Harley: Harley Farms Goat Dairy

### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2vt7k78k>

### Authors

Harley, Dee  
Rabkin, Sarah

### Publication Date

2010-05-01

### Supplemental Material

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2vt7k78k#supplemental>

# Dee Harley



Photo by Paolo Vescia

## Harley Farms Goat Dairy

*In the village of Pescadero, forty-five minutes' drive north of Santa Cruz, Dee Harley runs San Mateo County's only active dairy. Harley and her staff care for a herd of more than 200 American Alpine goats, crafting the animals' milk into sought-after cheeses (chevre, feta, ricotta, and fromage blanc) that have consistently garnered awards at national and international competitions. An increasingly popular agritourism destination for denizens of the San Francisco and Monterey Bay Areas, Harley Farms also offers leisurely, informative tours of its entire dairy operation, from the birth of hundreds of kids each spring to the on-site sale of delicate white cheeses decorated with fresh herbs and colorful edible flowers grown on the farmstead.*

*A native of Yorkshire, England, Harley discovered Pescadero while traveling in California as a young woman. In the gently rolling coastal landscape and in the rural community's intimate spirit, she saw reflections of her verdant birthplace. When Harley fell in love with Tim Duarte, the local restaurateur who eventually became her husband, Pescadero became her new home.*

*Harley took up residence on a nine-acre farmstead originally built in 1910 as a cow dairy—and shuttered, like many small local farms, after California's industrializing dairy industry migrated to the Central Valley. She worked for a while for Larry Jacobs and Sandra Belin at nearby Jacobs Farm. In 1982, she acquired six goats from a local dairywoman. The herd began to grow; one thing led to another, and Harley Farms was born.*

*Sarah Rabkin conducted this interview with Dee Harley on April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2009, in a private residence at Harley Farms. Outside the small cottage, guard llamas looked on while goats played atop a chicken tractor in the middle of a green pasture; small children participating in a farm tour reverently cradled newborn kids; flowers bloomed in garden beds. Dee Harley described the origins and evolution of her business and the day-to-day life of her small farm. She also articulated the values that inform her choices as a farmer and a businesswoman: deep community ties; a sense of responsibility to the local economy; dedication to the health of the herd and the land; creation of a high-quality product; truth in advertising; a sense of whimsy; a fierce resistance to unrestrained growth, and commitment to the preservation of an intimate, sustainable operation.*

#### Additional Resources

Harley Farms Goat Dairy: <http://www.harleyfarms.com/Home.html>

Michael Powell, "Dee Harley: Head of Harley Farms Goat Dairy Wanted to be a Farmer from a Young Age," *San Francisco Examiner*, May 23, 2008.

"A Goat Farm to Change the World," 1000 Voices: A National Archive. Video interview online with Dee Harley. [http://www.1000voicesarchive.org/video/56/Dee-Harley-1000\\_Voices-Pescadero-CA](http://www.1000voicesarchive.org/video/56/Dee-Harley-1000_Voices-Pescadero-CA)

---

## Beginnings

**Rabkin:** Today is Wednesday, April 8, 2009, and this is Sarah Rabkin. I'm in Pescadero, California at Harley Farms, talking to Dee Harley. So Dee, I'm going to start with the same basic question I ask everybody, which is when and where were you born?

**Harley:** I was born in Yorkshire, England, Barnsley, South Yorkshire, in 1966.

**Rabkin:** And where did you grow up?

**Harley:** I grew up right there in a small village. When I was ten, we moved to a small hamlet with only ten houses. My parents still continue to live there, and I have one brother.

**Rabkin:** Tell me about your schooling.

**Harley:** I went to the local school. We walked to school every day, a very rural kind of setting, and went through high school. I left school at sixteen, which is the age you actually can leave school in England. I didn't choose to go into further education.

**Rabkin:** What were your parents doing in Yorkshire?

**Harley:** My dad was a coal miner, and my mum worked in a bread shop and always had part-time jobs as we were growing up, but basically raised my brother and myself.

**Rabkin:** How did you start being interested in dairying or sustainable agriculture?

**Harley:** Well, I think growing up in England in that kind of rural setting, although we weren't farmers, we were surrounded by farms, and I was attracted to being outside. All my jobs were outside, pretty much. I went traveling from being sixteen to seventeen years old. And my jobs were always geared towards working physically. I liked being outside working with my body. When I moved to the United States, I worked in restaurants and different things, just to make enough money to travel around. And then when I came to Pescadero, I ended up working at a farm, Jacobs Farm,<sup>1</sup> which is an organic herb farm up the road. I was one of their first office employees. I worked there for seven or eight years before starting the farm here, and I met the woman who I bought my original goats from, from working at the farm. I didn't know I was going to be a dairy farmer. It's just that that's how it manifested. That was the opportunity that came my way, and I took it.

**Rabkin:** What kinds of outdoor jobs were you doing in England before you came to the States?

**Harley:** Oh, I did outdoor education. I walked the Pennine Way. I worked with unemployed people. I worked for Youth Services, did youth clubs, things like that.

---

## Coming to Pescadero, California

**Rabkin:** And tell me how you came to live in the U.S., and Pescadero in particular.

**Harley:** When I was sixteen, I went through a selection process and got a position on an around-the-world expedition called Operation Rally, which was run by the Prince of Wales. I was selected over the course of many interviews and selection weekends, which involved rigorous outdoor activities, and I was one of the first people to be selected to go on this trip. I ended up going to Honduras for two months, where we did reptile surveys and archaeological things. We helped put wells in this small village. It was kind of a way that I could get out of England, because I was definitely more than England. I needed to get out. I needed to go have an experience. So this was the stepping-stone. I was very fortunate.

I had to raise the money to go on it. At the time, there was a terrible miners' strike in England, which probably most people know about. It was devastating to the northern part of England. People didn't have food. We were one of those families. So we lived off the efforts of our friends who would come and drop off food. My dad ended up being one of the people that went back to work. So it was really detrimental to the family, because a lot of the mining community were against people that went back to work. So it was a pretty tough time.

I actually won this spot on this expedition during that time. It was a very depressed area. There was no money, and I set about raising the money, which I think was two thousand five hundred pounds or something. I raised it in a

---

year—not only raised it, I actually raised twice the amount. So we ended up being able to pay for an inner-city London person to go on the trip.

**Rabkin:** How did you manage that in the midst of a depressed economy?

**Harley:** People just saw it, I think, as just this incredible opportunity for somebody—and a really wonderful thing to happen out of this bad news every day, people being hit and chastised. People were so generous. We did coffee mornings. I ran a half marathon. I did things like that. But then the Rotary Club in the local town were the ones that pushed me over. They gave me two hundred pounds, which was this enormous amount of money. You know, you can never forget things like that, because really they gave me the opportunity to be able to get out.

So I went on this thing. It was really amazing. I met people from all over the world, and I never really went back to England. I came back, went mountaineering in northern Spain, and then I ended up, when my parents went away for two weeks, buying a ticket to America to come and work at a YMCA camp. They placed me in the San Juan Islands, on Orcas Island in Washington State. I arrived in New York, then I came over to Seattle, got on this little minibus, and I never went home.

**Rabkin:** So your parents returned from their holiday to discover you were gone?

**Harley:** To a little note saying, “I’ve gone at least for the summer.” But I didn’t go home for two years. Now I have a child who’s fifteen and a half, and I think,

“Oh, I can’t believe I did that to my parents.” [laughs] But anyway. So that’s how I originally came out. And then I just never went home.

**Rabkin:** How did you make your way to Pescadero?

**Harley:** I made my way to Pescadero by just meeting people from my job over the summer, and then I would work and raise money to go on to the next place. I ended up getting a job on a tall ship, a square-rigged tall ship. It was run by some English people. It was a replica of Sir Francis Drake’s ship, The Golden Hind. I fit right in, because I had the accent and I was English, and plus I was invincible, you know. I was nineteen or something.

So I worked on that for a year, and I met friends. We ended up jumping ship and traveling around, and I ended up coming down the coast, over the Golden Gate Bridge, coming down to Santa Cruz. But on the way, I saw the lighthouse youth hostel, [Pigeon Point Hostel] and we pulled in there for the night, and I met a man called Three Finger Bill who was playing his (pauses)—

**Rabkin:** Accordion?

**Harley:** Accordion, and followed the music, and we’re lifelong friends. He’s one of my best friends. He brought me to town. I had soup at Duarte’s [Tavern] and that’s where I ended up meeting my future husband. So I never really left Pescadero then.

**Rabkin:** How did you land on this piece of property?



**Harley:** My now-husband lived here. His family owned it, but it was a derelict mess. He had lived here for two years, very basic. I actually lived in a teepee for a couple of years while we were first going out. Then I went home to England for six weeks, and he came out, got me, and then I came back. I've lived here ever since. I've been here for twenty-one years, lived in the house for twenty-one years.

**Rabkin:** My goodness. Did you actually meet him over soup at the restaurant on that first visit?

**Harley:** I was having soup at the end of the bar, and he walked by me, and I said to Three Finger Bill, "Who is that?" [laughs] And he said, "That's Tim Duarte" and I'm like, "Okay, great." [laughs]

**Rabkin:** "And is he single?"

**Harley:** Well, he was married at the time, but a couple of years later, he wasn't. So that worked out for us. [laughs] We've been married for eighteen years now.

**Rabkin:** What attracted you about the landscape around Pescadero?

**Harley:** The landscape around Pescadero is very English. It's very rural. It's got a village life. People know each other. There's a community spirit of volunteerism, connection to the earth. There's a reason people choose to live in a place like this, and I connect with that reason. We all get along very well. It's like an extended family, and it's a feeling of a certain commitment to a lifestyle, which is nice to live around and be around. But the hills and the greenery, especially after the rainy season. And the space. It's got lots of good fresh air.

---

## The History of the Farm Property

**Rabkin:** What do you know about the history of this property, previous owners or uses of this land?

**Harley:** This farm—it's a nine-acre farm—was originally built in 1910 by a couple of brothers from Portugal, the Gulate brothers. Frank Gulate was the one brother that lived in our house. They had cows, and operated it as a cow dairy farm for about fifty years, forty years. There was evidence of cheese making and butter making, just with the equipment that we found as we were cleaning out the places, but they mainly delivered fresh milk from the cows. There were a lot of dairies in Pescadero alone. It was a very big industry back then. They would distribute it locally, and then, of course, into Half Moon Bay, Santa Cruz. And then a co-op opened in San Mateo, and they would join up forces. All the dairies would pool all their milk and then ship it over there. And then, of course, it ended up being in the Central Valley. A lot of these small family farms started to close in the late forties, the early fifties. And that's what happened to this farm. It just ended up closing. Frank himself didn't have any children, so there was nobody to carry it on. But the integrity of the buildings were all made so well. There's a hay barn, and a tractor area that they used, and then the milking parlor was used for the cows. We use that for the goats now. And we've extended a lot of the loafing barns.

In the mid-forties, Pescadero Road split the property in two, but it's actually the same piece of land. So we actually have an easement that says we can take

---

animals across the road to the other pasture. The creek runs through the property also.

**Rabkin:** So do you have to stop traffic to herd goats across the road? [laughs]

**Harley:** Yes, we do it when the school buses come in.

**Rabkin:** Smart.

**Harley:** So then the kids get to watch that. It's kind of fun.

### **The Only Dairy on the San Mateo County Coast**

**Rabkin:** I think I remember hearing that yours is the only currently operating dairy business in San Mateo County. Is that correct?

**Harley:** Yes, that's correct. I can't remember when the last dairy closed on the coast, but it's been at least forty years. Yes, we're the only dairy of any kind in the entire county.

**Rabkin:** What are the obstacles or challenges for running a successful dairy in this county now?

**Harley:** Well, it's kind of a double-edged sword with that question, because I think for me, it's been difficult. So seventeen years ago, I got the first six goats, but I didn't know anything. I didn't know what I was getting into. I didn't know what was going to happen to my life. It wasn't a business plan. It wasn't something I was on track for.

---

It's been difficult, because I've had to learn everything by myself. I've had no help. There haven't been any resources at my fingertips. But then on the other hand, it's really good, because I've learnt everything very deeply. I've learned how to be creative. I've learned how to do things very efficiently. There's always room for improvement, but in a way, that's actually been really good for me, too, because I've had to think outside of the box on many, many occasions.

But it's difficult, because we're a farmstead dairy, which means that we only make cheese from the milk we've produced ourselves from our own animals. So we're not having milk trucks coming in and dumping off their milk and making cheese only. We have to look after the animals from birth to death—from the food, to trimming their hooves, to taking their horns off, to vaccinations, to fencing, water—it goes on and on and on. That's one huge part of the business, which is very, very expensive, just by the fact that we're geographically far away from feed lots, you know, grain makers. We're just far away.

That entity of just making milk, it could not be viable. Having the cheese making, having the value-added product from that milk has been integral to any kind of success that we would have ever had. So we had to put an incredible amount of money into the farm to renovate it so then we could house a dairy, house a cheese-making room, which we did. The cheese was incredibly successful, and as the farm became alive again from being dead—a dead, horrible, lifeless place—people were driving by seeing this thing going on, and then there was attraction to it, and they came by, and it is now turned into such a huge part of our viability, the fact that people come by and buy cheese from us. We are now are

---

more diversified into soap and lotions, and doing farm dinners, and doing tours of the farm. We sell most of our cheese directly to the customer now.

**Rabkin:** More than wholesale?

**Harley:** Definitely.

**Rabkin:** I wanted to ask you more about that in detail in a minute. But I'd like to jump back briefly and have you tell me how you first became a dairy goat farmer.

### Starting a Dairy Goat Farm

**Harley:** Well, I worked at Jacobs Farm, like I said before, and I used to ride my bike from here to there, which is maybe two miles. I was there when that business was quite small. I was very fortunate to be involved in a growing business. I got to see all the pitfalls, all the successes, all the hard times, all the good times, getting bank loans, whatever. I didn't even know I was learning all of that stuff when I was in it, but I was in it. I was dedicated to it. We went to the airport all night every night. We worked really hard getting that business going. And [then] Larry and Sandy Jacobs just kind of left me, went off to Mexico, and were setting up this other aspect of their business, and so I again was forced to learn it. It was like me, or nobody at the time. It was an incredible gift to have that, when I look back on that.

I was able to learn Spanish, because I had to speak to people over the phone, which [was] really hard, when I look back on it. So I got this ability to at least communicate with people. That was an incredible asset that I came away with.

---

And then the business grew, grew, grew, and then more people came to work there, and then I ended up getting married to Tim, and then we ended up having a baby, and I still worked there part time.

But during that time, I sold dried tomatoes to a woman, Nancy Gaffney, who lived in Davenport, who had maybe twenty or thirty goats. She was making cheese already. She came to pick up her order of dried tomatoes at our house one day. I remember sitting on the front steps, and she said, "What a great place. Why don't you buy some goats from me and you can provide me with the winter milk?" Well, that's a good idea. [laughs] I knew nothing. I hadn't had animals growing up. We had like a goldfish, you know, but nothing, because my dad was allergic to fur. But it was a good idea. I used to look out the window, and it was just such a waste of space. There were beans and artichokes being grown in the field, which was fine, but all the corrals. A couple of friends had horses there for a while, but there was just nothing going on. It was annoying. It was annoying that nothing was going on.

**Rabkin:** Were you leasing the fields to an artichoke grower?

**Harley:** Yes. Phipps Ranch grew artichokes in there. So we just let them do it. They'd done it for years. It was a good use of the land.

So I got these six goats, and I think a week, maybe two weeks later, Tim and I went to Guatemala for nine weeks to language school. Larry and Sandy sent me there to learn Spanish so that it would be easier for me at the farm. When I came back, there were only four goats. Something had happened to them. A couple had died. I don't know what happened to them. Anyway—

---

**Rabkin:** You had left them in somebody's charge.

**Harley:** Yes, somebody was house-sitting for us, and obviously something happened. So anyway, really, from these four goats, when I came back, I learned how to dehorn them; I learned how to trim their hooves. Nancy, the woman I bought them from, taught me absolutely everything.

Then we had to go choose a male to breed with them. So then these four goats had babies. All of a sudden, there's eight goats, ten goats. I hadn't milked them by this time. Those were then bred, and then there was all of a sudden fifteen.

So then I start milking them. All the while, she's down in Davenport with her twenty, thirty goats making cheese and selling them into Santa Cruz stores and at the farmers' markets. She did a lot of farmers' markets with them at that time. She had one acre of land. So not much.

Once I started milking the goats, I had to actually store it. So then one of the original outbuildings, which we assume was some kind of cheese-making room or something, because it had a concrete floor, we renovated it. And a woman who worked at Duarte's, Noreen Sims, who has since passed away, loaned me three thousand dollars. She was an investor. With the three thousand dollars, I put a certified little room. The state inspector came, and he said I needed to do this and that, and washable walls, and a sink and a fridge and things [like that]. That's how I set up my original dairy, which was in basically a 20 x 10 room. I had a cold fridge, and I would milk the goats by hand, cart the buckets over to this thing, wash all the buckets up and store it. I had a friend who still lived next

door. He worked at UC Santa Cruz, and he'd put it in the back of his car, and he'd drop it off at [Nancy Gaffney's] house on his way to work.

So originally it was like five gallons. Then it was ten gallons; then it was twenty gallons. Every morning, I'd go and I'd stick it outside the front of our house, and he'd totter it off down to her.

**Rabkin:** And Nancy was then selling the milk, or making it into cheese?

**Harley:** No, she was making it into cheese. We've never sold milk. So she was making it into cheese. Then as my herd grew, I had to grow with it. Then the roofs started getting replaced, and then I had to plant pasture, which we planted maybe fourteen years ago. Then we needed a perimeter fence. I basically reacted all of the time to the growth of the herd. I still didn't know what I was doing. I didn't have a plan, really. It was just, "Oh, I've got to keep going with this."

### Expanding the Business

I got up to thirty-two goats that I was personally milking by hand twice a day. I would milk them, and I'd wash everything up, and it would be time to milk them again. I got a person to come and help, a part-time person, and I got a little portable milking machine, and I was able to milk two at a time. But at this point, I'm producing quite a lot of milk, and it's becoming overwhelming for Nancy, and we start talking about maybe her not doing it any more and moving the entire operation up here.

At this point I've had a child. (Ben's now fifteen and a half.) So I was at that cusp of, "I'm going to either do it or not do it." It needed to either go to that next level



---

or just not. And with Ben, he was a baby, and I wanted to stay at home. So it was a way that I could still work and stay at home with him. Little did I know it would be way more work than actually going to work, but it wasn't the point at the time. That was the decision I made.

I was able to get a loan because I was a woman in agriculture. I got a low-interest loan from California Coastal Rural Development Agency in Salinas. It was a fifty-thousand-dollar loan, and I started developing—putting the silos in for the grain, major fencing work, beginning to think about doing the lower half of the hay barn into the dairy, and a truck, thinking about a tractor, that kind of thing, and an employee.

**Rabkin:** Did you have your cheese-making facilities then?

**Harley:** No. So then I did all the goat things. I'm still shipping milk down to her. At this point, Larry [the neighbor who worked at UCSC] can't take it [down to Nancy's place on his way to work] any more, because it's too much. It's all in five-gallon buckets, and all of a sudden, she's making a hundred pounds of cheese a day, because it's a hundred gallons of milk coming down there. We've moved all her goats up here by this time, because we have the pasture. Her children are getting older. They're thinking about college. She's getting tired. It's too overwhelming, and do I want to buy that portion out?

So basically I was providing all the milk, and she was making the cheese, and then we decided upon a contract where I would purchase her cheese business from her. She'd worked hard. She'd done an incredible job. She'd come up with some amazing cheeses. She had an incredible standard, and I was really

---

fortunate that I was in the right place at the right time with the right person, and it was seamless. Our relationship was seamless, and the move over from there to here, the timing was perfect, and again it was just this natural progression that was perfect for her, because she wanted to get out, and it was perfect for me, because I had the energy to get in. And it was either going to go with the new energy, or it was just going to stop with her energy, because she was tired and she was ready for something new. So it was just perfect. The whole thing was right.

So she stayed with me for a year and came up and worked two or three days a week teaching me the cheese and the consistency of the cheese, but by which time, I had got two employees, which I actually stole from Jacobs Farm. [laughs] It was a person, Roberto, I had worked with for the time I was there, and I asked him if he'd like to come and join me here. And him and his wife did. They took a big, big chance, because they had a very secure job there and a home. They took a big chance, and they came to work for me.

**Rabkin:** And this was with Larry [Jacobs] and Sandra's [Belin] blessing?

**Harley:** Yes, they were really, really good about it, yes. They were very gracious about that, and we're friends. So Salud ended up working down at Nancy's for maybe eight months, and Larry would take her down and pick her up on his way back from work, my next door neighbor. So she already had a huge head start by the time we finished the renovation of the lower hay barn, which took just over a year to build.

---

## The Hum and the Flow of Harley Farms

**Rabkin:** Can you walk me through an overview of your year as a proprietor of this farmstead dairy? In particular, I'm curious about what are the busy, intense seasons? What are the major tasks that cycle around each year?

**Harley:** There's a hum and a rhythm and a flow on a daily basis, on a weekly and monthly and an annual basis. And it can change any moment. There's always the variable with farming. Now that we've been doing it for seventeen years, and really we've been making cheese for thirteen, so you add the cheese into that. There's this hum. It starts at half past five in the morning when Roberto and Luis's truck pulls in. The doors slam, and in they go. The lights go on, then the hum of the milking machine goes on. Then you hear the clippety-clops of the goat hooves going into the holding pen, and then there's the milking for an hour and a half. The recycling system goes on, so you hear the fans. And then the dawn breaks. It's light outside. Chickens are clucking away.

One office person arrives. Then all the cheese makers show up—there's three of them—with their little happy chatter, cackling away. And then it's the pressure washer cleaning up the holding pen. And then it's the goats going out into the pasture about nine o'clock, and they're all going out and running around, because they're so happy to be out in the grass.

Then the rest of the people show up for work, and then there's cheese making. The pasteurizer goes on. The pasteurizer gets cooled. The people show up to get cheese in the shop. The phone's ringing all day. Then there's this quiet time for maybe an hour and a half. And then the night milkers show up. And then it's

---

like the same process into the evening until maybe eight o'clock. And then it's quiet until the next day.

So that goes on *every* single day. And you don't even realize you're in a routine, because you're so in it. You're just a cog in that wheel. But then that stops. That goes from the middle of February to the middle of November, and then all of a sudden, it just stops. The goats are pregnant. We decide to dry them up, and then they have a good two months off. So the clinkety-clankety and the clip-clops—all of those noises just go away. Then something else happens. It's just really busy in the cheese making, because it's Christmas and all the orders are in there, and then there's all these smells of herbs, and flowers are everywhere, and the UPS truck comes in and picking up tons of boxes. We're putting Christmas trees up. There's just this other vibe of activity around that time.

**Rabkin:** Do you have a backlog of milk that they're using for the cheese?

**Harley:** We freeze the cheese in spring. We freeze the curd so then we can defrost it at the busy time, which is great, because they don't have four hours of making cheese every day. They can just donate it to packing the cheese to sell.

But then there's this calm in January when it's kind of rainy, and all the goats are inside and they're heavily pregnant. There's this serenity around the place. Everybody is rested. And then the first baby's born, and it's so exciting. Then the next baby's born, and it's like, "Oh, here, we go."

**Rabkin:** Like popcorn.

**Harley:** Then it's like blup, blup, blup, and all of a sudden, there're two hundred babies. All of a sudden, one day, the milk machine goes on, and it all starts again. It happens really overnight like that. It just happens. It's the beginning of our season, and it's exciting.

Then the first three weeks are really tough. The babies are either born. They're four days old. They're a week old. The mothers are being milked, but we have to milk them by hand for four days.

Then the milking machine goes on. Then the pasteurizer goes on, and of course, a pump breaks, or whatever happens. Then we go, and it doesn't stop for another ten months. Then the babies grow up. We keep babies. We sell babies. We retire old goats.

**Rabkin:** Do you ever take a vacation?

**Harley:** Yes, I do have fantastic people who work here. So you have to put time off, or you won't take time off. Because it's very easy to get caught up in it, because it's so exciting every day. You have to choose to live like this. If you don't want to live like this, it would be work. But to me, it's not work, ever. Sometimes when I'm running the business part, the financial part can be very tough. But the actual life is priceless. It's not work.

But vacations are important. I go to England every year. We go as a family, and I try and take another couple of short breaks. But I don't feel like I can't go away. There's certain times of the year that I won't go away, like birthing season is very

---

intense, and the Christmas season is intense, right before Christmas. Those are times when all hands are on deck.

### Raising a Son on the Farm

**Rabkin:** What's it been like to raise a son on the farm?

**Harley:** I do think he understands what a great life he's had. He really does. I remember him walking down the road. Somebody said, "Oh, Ben, you've got such a great life." He was eight years old. He goes, "You know, when you've lived on a farm for eight years, you're kind of ready for a change." [laughs] I was like, "Oh, okay."

**Rabkin:** [laughs]

**Harley:** It's interesting when we go away, because we do try to go to the city. We don't go to the movies. We don't try to do anything like that, because we're just so far away. At the end of the day, it's like, "We're not getting in a car for an hour and doing that." So he hasn't had that kind of type of upbringing where that's been accessible to him, like pizza delivery and things like that. But he's been surrounded by growing your own vegetables in the garden, and my husband, Tim, cooking amazing food every day. I'll go out and get the fresh milk and the fresh eggs. We don't realize that people don't necessarily live like that every day. But now that he's older, he's kind of getting that. Because when we go out of our environment, if we go to England, if we go to Italy, if we go other places, he's ready to come home. He loves this space. It would have been very difficult for him to be in a very small space. He's always been free to run around.

---

He had machetes growing up, knives. It was just very real for him. [laughs] But that was his life, and he loves his life. He's so good with the farm, and he works here on the weekends, as do six other high school students.

**Rabkin:** Where's the high school he goes to?

**Harley:** He goes to Pescadero High School, which is about a mile away. There are 111 students.

### Local Employees

**Rabkin:** Fantastic. Tell me about your employee situation now. How many do you have, and what are their various jobs, and where do they come from?

**Harley:** Everybody that works here is local, as in local to Pescadero. That is our local community, and that's been a very resolved part of how I wanted to run the business, was that we needed to sustain not only ourselves, but the community. The community is a very, very, very important part in my life. We have only one person from Half Moon Bay, which is twenty minutes away, which is stretching it a bit, but we're going to get him to move here soon. So that's good. [laughs] But everybody else lives here, and four of the people that work here actually live on the farm as well. We have housing for them, which I think is a really important part. When you work so hard, you have to go home to a nice environment so you can rest well, live well, and be able to come back and perform well. So we've invested a lot in that.

We have seven core people, and then from that, we have up to twenty people that help us, which we just realized the other day, you know, with the high

---

school students and our tour guides—we do a lot of tours of the farm now, and they're very part-time, one day a week, but nevertheless, there are that many people that are involved in the workings of the farm.

**Rabkin:** In addition to the housing for four of your employees, are you able to provide any other benefits for your core employees?

**Harley:** Right now, we don't have health insurance. We've had one person that has needed help with her arm, and she's been going through a difficult time. So we've paid for all of her chiropractic, massage, things like that for the last seven months. We do things like that. We look after people in that way. One person had to buy a new truck. So we helped him with a few of the payments. Things like that. We do it on an individual basis.

**Rabkin:** Have you been able to supply yourselves with health insurance?

**Harley:** I'm lucky enough to go on my husband's health insurance. And that's another thing. He has a very good job. We're very fortunate that he has a regular income. Without that, it would have been very, very, very difficult to have got to this point in the farming life. I've been allowed to make very seriously bad decisions that have been very costly, and almost hemorrhaged money. Without that, it would have been hard. Because it's definitely my business, not his. He's very happy with what he does.

**Rabkin:** Can you give me an example of the kind of bad decision you learned from?



**Harley:** Well. [laughs] They can be from employees. They can be inefficiency, buying things I shouldn't have done, selling things at below cost because I didn't have a good accounting situation. If I had to do it again, the first person I would hire would be an accountant.

**Rabkin:** Interesting.

**Harley:** I never had a business plan. Like I said before, it was just something that I just reacted to all of the time. I grew with *it*. It didn't grow because of what I did. Now I'm at the other end of that. I understand what I did wrong, but then again, I learnt it, because I did it. So that's invaluable. I've done it all. I have done it all. Now I can make whatever choices I want, and it's an educated choice.

### Cheese Made By the Ocean

**Rabkin:** Tell me about the relationship between this particular piece of land and the cheese that comes from it.

**Harley:** Our cheese went to Italy three years ago, not with me. I sent it via somebody else who was going to a Slow Food show. They wanted to represent California cheeses. So this man apparently ate it and said, "This cheese was made by the ocean." From that, we really have created a sense of place, as the wine industry has with their terroir. It's the in word in the cheese business now. But we really do have that. We have an essence of place. Everything that we can, we grow on the farm, which is grown in the same soil that the goats graze from. Their grasses are specially planted. They're very mild, high in protein and clover. It never changes. Their grain is specially formulated for them. It complements

---

the grass. So the flavor of the milk never changes throughout the whole year. The consistency of the milk can change, because of the season, but the flavor actually doesn't change. There's a spike in sweetness in the early spring, because it's the first time they've been out on the grass after a while. They don't go out when it's winter, when it's all wet and muddy.

But we're completely in control from beginning to end. And now we're in control of how we sell the cheese, and how fresh the cheese is, and who we're selling it to. If you come to me today and you want a piece of cheese, I know it was just made just yesterday, and it was milked two days before that, and I know that they've been on grass, and I know that they've had the grain, and I know how fresh the milk is and it hasn't been sitting around for two days, and I know that the chives and the parsley that are in that, they were grown in my garden, and I know that that was done organically. We know all that. So then a person—not even a foodie person or a person with an educated palate—you just know it tastes good. And it's so individual. It either tastes good to you, or it doesn't. But you actually are not going to taste those flavors anywhere else. We could move our entire herd up to Sacramento, and it would not taste the same. The consistency wouldn't be the same. The texture in your mouth wouldn't be the same. That's the most exciting part.

### Questions of Organic Certification

**Rabkin:** Are you certified organic?

**Harley:** No.

**Rabkin:** Why not?

**Harley:** We looked into it several years ago. I do know that the certification process has changed, and that their requirements have changed, but at the time, it was difficult for me to justify being organic ten months out of the year. To me, you're organic or you're not, twenty-four hours, twelve months out of the year. You're organic or you're just not. You can't be organic only ten months and then two months, you can have a couple of months off. I had a hard time with that. I just fundamentally disagreed with it.

I do know that that's changed though, and that there are compromises. I just have a hard—I don't need to certify ourselves. I know personally how we farm. I know we don't use growth hormones. I know we don't use antibiotics, but I do if they're sick. It's like you or me. If my kid's sick and he needs antibiotics to make him feel better, I'm going to make him feel better. So if I have a goat that's like that, I'm going to make him feel better. We do have antibiotics on hand for if they get pneumonia for instance, which can spread through the herd. I would be wrong to not treat that goat. But then it comes off the milking herd, and there's milk withholding, and we can't use it, and that's fine.

But the integrity of the way we farm, what we've chosen to do instead is people are allowed to come on our farm. They're allowed to come and hear from the horse's mouth how we do it, and they can make their own choice. The cost involved with organic feed is very high. As we saw last year, the cost of feed doubled. We weren't even expecting that. It doubled for the same amount of feed. That is crippling to a small business, and the organic industry saw it as

well. Some of the compounds that we have to use to clean the milking machine up and things like that are very important to the sanitary aspect of running the farm, which are hard for me to compromise.

People make their own choice. They can see how sustainable we are. They can see how we recycle rainwater. They can see how we use our own compost that we make from goat manure. They can see all that. I don't know. I just don't think that it's—for our situation, it's not necessarily going to bring in more income, or it's not going to particularly make us better than what we are at this point anyway. I'm not closed to it, but at this point, it's not a big issue for me.

**Rabkin:** You haven't needed organic certification. You haven't needed that particular official seal of approval in order to boost your marketing?

**Harley:** No. Well, we can get to marketing later, but we haven't needed to do any kind of certification in any way. I think having an individual come and make their own choice is way more powerful.

### Health Inspections

**Rabkin:** I imagine you do have to be certified in some way by the health board or something like that in terms of cheese production, the dairy.

**Harley:** We're inspected by the state every quarter. He comes—the inspector comes and he tests the thermometers. He looks at the pasteurization charts. He inspects the general cleanliness of the dairy, some of the ingredients, the water. We're on well water. He'll check the temperature of the milk in the vat. He'll take milk samples, take water samples. And then we're graded on that. Then we're

---

inspected by the FDA, and they'll randomly show up. They were doing it every year after 9/11, and now it seems to be every three years. But we're not under the jurisdiction of the local health department, which is helpful.

**Rabkin:** And why is that?

**Harley:** It's a state inspection. So they superseded the health department.

**Rabkin:** You said something a minute ago that I didn't quite understand about the certification process, that there's this possibility of being certified part of the year and not the whole year.

**Harley:** Well, that's for organic certification. This was when we looked into it several years ago, and I do know that that law has changed, or part of that has changed, and I don't know what the updates are on that.

**Rabkin:** So it used to be at least, that for organic dairy certification, it was a part-of-the-year thing?

**Harley:** Yes, it was seventy-five percent. I can't remember the percentage. It wasn't fully organic the full year, and I didn't get that. I don't get that. I had a hard time with that.

### **Weed-Busting Goats**

**Rabkin:** You sell your boy babies, and you retire the milkers who are past milking age. As I understand it, you farm them out to do weed busting. And now, are you developing your own weed-busting herd? Can you tell me about that?

**Harley:** Well, as the farm grows, it constantly grows, because it keeps it interesting, too, because there's such a routine to the farm. You milk the goats; you make the cheese; you sell the cheese. So that's good, that core kind of business is there. But out of that, then you've got all of these byproducts like male goats, which you don't keep any of them, because we don't want to inbreed. So they've got to go. We can have up to 200 male goats, 100, 150 male goats. They've got to go. We were fortunate for the last several years to be able to sell a lot of them to a rent-a-goat program in Bear Valley, or near Bear Valley. Now he's kind of maxed out on his herd.

An avenue that we're going to look down [is], to actually sell some of these males for meat and be able to sell them to restaurants and individuals and people like that. It's just an aspect of the farm that we need to capture. It's what's going to happen anyway. So we might as well capture that. We have a few people who work here, "Oh, no, no, we can't do that. We're a dairy. It's clean; it's white. It's gorgeous." Yes, well, we're not going to be a slaughterhouse, but we can send them to somewhere where it's done humanely, because we're not going to send them to some random person. And why shouldn't we do that? It's food. It's just a byproduct of what we do, and that's not a bad thing.

So that's something I think in the future we're going to look at. But to get to that point, there's the usage of these males to grow them, and why not rent them as a rent-a-goat program? We actually just interviewed for the position last week and hired a woman who is going to be doing it, starting immediately.

**Rabkin:** So she'll work for your farm, organizing and running this rent-a-goat program.

**Harley:** Yes, creating a business for herself, which is what we've kind of done with the farm now. Harley Farms is a pod in the middle, and it's the main life of the entity that's coming off it. There's little pods all around it. One's goat-milk soap and lotion that one person's doing. This rent-a-goat can be another. The farm dinners are another. They're all led by individuals who want to work and stay in the community. They're willing to work really hard and think outside the box, and they're willing to take on the responsibility of it. Then we can sell it, because we have the entity. And they can feed off that, while we don't have to deal with it. So this woman can set up a business plan and just do it. And then we'll rent them out to people.

**Rabkin:** Does she take the financial risk?

**Harley:** She will take some financial risk, yes. Most of her financial risk will be the investment of nonpayment until it makes money, and then once it makes money, then she'll get paid. But she's willing to do it, because she doesn't want to drive over the hill [to the Bay Area]. She's got two small children. It's an opportunity for her, and she recognizes it, and that's key. And she's a local person, which is the other main ingredient.

But the rent-a-goat program is also something we can use our retired goats for. We have a retirement community. Our next-door neighbor has thirteen of our old goats, because they worked so hard for us. We really don't want to send them off anywhere. So we're going to use those first. And we'll start in Pescadero

---

and just do the Pescadero ditches, and hopefully get a county contract to do them full time.

**Rabkin:** Is it true that they'll eat blackberries and poison oak?

**Harley:** Yes, they love that. First they'll browse on that.

### **Art on the Farm**

**Rabkin:** Terrific. One of the hallmarks of this farm obvious to anybody who visits is this proliferation of whimsical, colorful art.

**Harley:** [laughs]

**Rabkin:** Carved painted signs and sculptures and the astonishing handmade wooden table and chairs up in your large gathering room. Can you tell me a little bit about the role of art on your farm?

**Harley:** I think that the farm has become a backdrop for people and their creativity. There's a vibe to the farm, and it's very real. Everywhere you look, it's real. It's not fake. The people are real. They're going to tell it like it is. They're not going to make up stories so it sounds better. The recycling that we do is real. You can see it. The flowers—the things that we grow are all very real. The people who come in and want to share their artwork with us, they have to have some relationship with the farm. Like the goat milk soap and lotion—the milk is from our farm. It's not from the goat up the road. It's really from our farm, because then it relates to the farm.



---

The wooden carvings all came from Three Finger Bill, my friend that I talked to you about earlier.

**Rabkin:** Whom you met at the hostel.

**Harley:** Whom I met at the hostel. He's the reason I came to Pescadero. He's in his late sixties now, and he's an incredible woodworker. He's a folk artist, and the table upstairs in our hay loft was a tree that was in our creek. It's the centerpiece of [the room]. A friend milled it, and we stored it upstairs in the barn. It was laying there. "Oh, we should make a table out of it," he said.

So then on went the legs, turned it over, and then it needed chairs. Well, he had made a chair for me when I was pregnant with our son, Ben, which is the head chair, and it was supposed to be a rocking chair at one point, but he got cross with me and never finished it up.

**Rabkin:** [laughs]

**Harley:** But it's perfect for the head chair, and we ended up making one chair a month for two years. He taught Roberto how to make them, not one nail in them. So they're all very artistically done.

Then from that, it was "Oh, we need some signs." Then he started doing the signs. Then it went from there. We have these little goat girls and goats in town that point their way subtly to our farm, and they needed coloring. So then he developed our own cheese paint.

---

## Goat Cheese Paint

**Rabkin:** So the paint on these signs and such is made out of goat milk?

**Harley:** It's made out of our goat cheese ricotta. It's not even milk. Way back in the seventeenth century, lots of the paints were milk-based, with berries and grasses and earth tones, because that's how they colored them. On walls and caves and things, it's all milk-based paint. It kind of lends itself to the era of the barn. And all the colors, all the pigments, are all earth tones from natural environmental things in nature. It fits right in with the tone of the whole place.

So he wanted to go one step further, because he's a little eccentric like that. He's like, "I want some of that ricotta." He made it out of chevre first, and it didn't work. Now he's made it out of ricotta. He's worked for a couple of years on the recipe, and now he's got it to such a great place, where most of the inside of the farm is completely painted with our goat-cheese paint, and the shop is entirely painted with the goat-cheese paint, and we now have had cheese paint on the outside of one of the buildings and the eaves around the buildings for two years. So we're experimenting it withstanding a few of the winters.

**Rabkin:** So far it stands up to the rain?

**Harley:** Yes.

**Rabkin:** Amazing.

**Harley:** Yes, it's fantastic. I had a chef that came into the shop once, and he put his nose up against the wall. He was smelling it. [laughs] It doesn't get much greener than that.

**Rabkin:** Wow. I'm not sure I want to know the answer to this question, but I'm going to ask it anyway. Does Bill's nickname have anything to do with the fact that he's a woodworker?

**Harley:** Yes, he had an accident with a saw, and now he has three fingers. But he's had three fingers for about thirty years.

**Rabkin:** It doesn't keep him from playing the accordion.

**Harley:** No. He plays the accordion very well, a very accomplished folk musician.

### **Recycling Water at Harley Farms**

**Rabkin:** Amazing. Wow. Well, since we're talking about the green aspects of your business and recycling and such, tell me a little bit more about that, as far as the water and the other kinds of recycling that happen on the farm.

**Harley:** Well, I think by virtue of coming from England, I've come from a very practical place. Waste is just wasteful. It's not rocket science. It's just wasteful. And we can only do what we can do, right? So if we drink a bunch of bottled water, if we recycle one, it's better than not recycling any. But for us in our situation on the farm, we're on a water well that has terrible water quality. We have the house running off the well. We have our farm labor housing unit

---

running off the well. The entire dairy, all the goats were drinking from the well. So we were again forced into a corner where we had to think outside the box. It's not really difficult—the plan, what we implemented—they're not difficult ideas to do. It's doing them and making that a priority, and we've always done that. That sustainable aspect to the farm has been paramount for me, and it's really exciting and interesting. I love doing it. I think it's exciting.

So we applied for a grant five years ago, and we were awarded the grant. It's a cost-share grant, an EQIP [Natural Resources Conservation Service Environmental Quality Incentives Program] grant. It was for water conservation, and it came really out of the fact that the fish needed more water in the creek. So over the course of four years, we were basically trying to eliminate our dependency on the creek to irrigate our nine acres of pasture, which were integral to the flavor of the milk, therefore the cheese. So we needed to keep it going all year.

The first year we implemented fencing and a huge, huge buffer against the creek bank. Therefore any goats or cows, or whatever we had in that pasture, the nitrates wouldn't flow into the creek, because there was such a huge buffer. Then we did creek bank renovation. We planted a bunch of willow trees. We knocked down a few trees. We eliminated some of the erosion that was going on because of the flow of the creek. So that's all done. That's established now. And then we then moved on to this side of the road, on to the farm side of the road, and more fencing. We put in a composite type of parking lot area where we could park cars. We then worked heavily for a year and got two tanks which are collecting all of the rainwater from only one of the roofs, the loafing barn. We've collected

---

thirty thousand gallons so far this year. We only put them in in October. Since then, the goats have only had rainwater to drink. We have another still ten thousand gallons left in them, so that will carry them for another month. So basically for half the year, they will have had only rainwater to drink, therefore saving the well.

So now the well feeds our home and the farm labor housing unit. And inside the dairy, we have a recycling system, where there's eighty gallons of water that lives in pipes inside the dairy. We have to cool the milk when it's being milked, because it comes out quite warm from the goat. We want to cool it to store it, and then we need to heat the milk in the pasteurizer. We use water to do that, like an acting double boiler. We also need to cool the milk again after to make cheese, and we do that with these eighty gallons of water that lives in the pipes. We just can change levers on the pipes and direct it to do whatever we want it to do. And we have a refrigeration unit outside of the dairy, which cools the milk, or it cools the water, and it also heats the water, if I change it to go to the boiler. That process used to be seven hundred gallons of water a day, and now it's nothing, zero for five years, nothing.

So we have literally no water waste on this entire farm. All the water that we use to clean up the pipeline system when we're milking the goats, it's a system that kind of curls back on itself. So we can wash all the milk residue out of it and everything. We collect it in five gallon buckets, and then we swill down the holding pen where they're milked, and then that all then goes down into the drain, and it meets all the water that we use to clean up the dairy floor and the cheesecloth bags and the equipment in a large underground concrete tank. And

---

then at a certain height, when all the solids have sunk, and the water—liquid manure, basically, a pump turns on, and it waters a certain part of our pasture.

**Rabkin:** Where did the expertise come from to set up this system?

**Harley:** It was an idea. It was an idea, but it's a simple idea. Collecting rainwater is a simple idea. Everybody in England has some kind of bucket or a tank at the end of every drainpipe around their house. It rains every day there. So it's just a larger concept of that, really.

And what was fantastic about this grant that we got was it was a cost-share grant. Half of it was paid for. So it actually allowed me to do it on the level that I did. So now next year, we need to do it another— There's no reason why we can't collect rainwater on the dairy barn, the original hay barn, and feed the dairy off it, treat it on the outside, and run the entire dairy off rainwater.

**Rabkin:** Wow.

**Harley:** At least for a segment of the year, there's no reason not to do it.

**Rabkin:** What was the source of this EQIP grant? Is that a state program?

**Harley:** It's a Natural Resource Conservation District grant. It came through them, and it's a state grant.

**Rabkin:** Have you received other grant funds for the farm?

**Harley:** I received a water board grant which funded part of the rainwater recycling system. That just went along with the EQIP. Other than that, no, but I am looking into applying for other grants.

### More about Sustainability

**Rabkin:** Are there any other practices that you employ to make Harley Farms a sustainable operation, or minimize your environmental footprint, that we haven't talked about?

**Harley:** Well, apart from our distribution, which has definitely eliminated our carbon footprint in deliveries. We clean out our goat pen probably three times a year. All that manure with hay is now composted, and now we have our own Harley Farms compost, which we have all around the farm, and we're actually going to be selling that this year, later this year. It's unbelievable. It does not smell. It's like you want to eat it; it's so rich and amazing.

And then we also have chicken tractors out in the pasture that are moved every day. They poop; they fertilize the pasture, and then they lay eggs. It also acts as a goat playpen where they run out and they jump on top of it and keep themselves agile. I don't think the chickens are too happy, but the goats are really happy.

**Rabkin:** [laughs]

**Harley:** In fourteen years of that pasture, we have never, ever fertilized it, never. Well, we've reseeded certain areas where they have little walkways that they make. Other than that, we've done absolutely nothing to it, because the goats graze on it, and they poop, and they fertilize it themselves.

---

**Rabkin:** How many chickens do you have?

**Harley:** Sixty-four, I think, now. I did have seventy, but we've lost a few along the way. We have sixty-four now.

**Rabkin:** Layers?

**Harley:** Yes.

**Rabkin:** What do you do with the eggs?

**Harley:** We sell them in the shop, free-range eggs.

**Rabkin:** And tell me about the other animals out there on the pasture.

**Harley:** We have three llamas that protect the goats from bobcats and coyotes, mainly coyotes that might come, especially at birthing time. We have one particular llama, Bart, that is very attracted to the baby goats. They're incredible. He is very protective. We've had very, very little involvement with predators.

The worst one was a human actually. I had sixty baby goats stolen in the middle of the night about three years ago. I never thought about humans. Never thought— It never even crossed my mind.

**Rabkin:** Somebody came in and stole sixty baby goats? [gasps]

**Harley:** Opened the gate, drove a truck in, the whole thing, yes. And they're so friendly, because we spend so much with them, that they probably just jumped right into the back of the truck. [laughs] So that was really, really disappointing, because we're so open and we're so available and approachable. It was really



violating to everybody, not just me. It was really a sad day. Now we have to chain our gates up at a night and different things, things that we didn't do before.

## Cheese Production

**Rabkin:** Let's talk about the cheese a little bit more—making it and marketing it. How much cheese do you produce?

**Harley:** Right now, and we're in April, we're making a hundred and fifty pounds of cheese a day. We have another thirty goats to have babies. So it's possible we'll be making two hundred pounds of cheese a day for a while. It will level out into August, and then as August comes to an end, it will start going down as the season changes. We make a hundred pounds of feta a week. But our main cheese that we make is chevre.

We have over the last thirteen years gone big and small. We've had distributors. We've had wholesalers, retailers. So I can say with an educated, experienced voice that we're in a very, very fortunate situation now where we are in control of our choice in how we sell it. We're also fortunate in the location of the farm—being so close to San Francisco and the Bay Area and, of course, Silicon Valley and that whole Palo Alto area.

Over the years, we've had incredible press. We've had amazing awards given to us for our sustainability, our farming practices, the flavor of our cheeses, to the point where we actually won a silver medal at the world cheese show last year. So we have had incredible accolades, and that's got out. It's got out. People have

---

come to the farm. They've had an amazing experience, and they've gone and told ten of their friends, and now their ten friends have come. So over the course of five, six, seven, eight years, it's built upon itself. Now that we're in this economic interesting moment in our history, people are wanting to come to places like our farm, where it's very real. They can have a connection with the earth. They can understand that that goat made that cheese that I'm eating right now, because I can see it out of the window. There's a wanting of educating their families, their young families. They're staying close to home, and they're not spending the night anywhere, and they're choosing to be a little bit more careful of where their money goes. So they're happy to give money to people where they feel it's helping them, not only with the product that they're buying, but an overall feel good feeling. It's very basic.

And the good thing about it is that we haven't changed. We're not like, "Ooh, this is great. Let's really capitalize on this." Because no matter what, our place is farm first. So if you see something you don't like, I'm sorry, that's just part of our farm, and this is how we do it. Or if it's muddy, and they don't want to go out, well, too bad, that's just the way it is.

People get that, and they're very, very appreciative of it. I think so many people are kind of bullshitted in their life—pardon the word, but I think they are—or they're sold to, and we're not selling to anybody. You can come in our shop. You can taste whatever cheese you want and walk out and not buy a thing. We don't care. Because that's not the way we operate. And in return, people understand that. So therefore, they're happy to do something for us, whether it's buy a piece of cheese, tell a friend, or whatever. That's what we are benefiting from now.

---

We're definitely benefiting from that level of integrity. But it doesn't change, and it hasn't changed, and it's not different from the way it was seventeen years ago.

**Rabkin:** What proportion of your cheese now are you selling out of the shop right on the farm?

**Harley:** We are selling eighty percent of our product through the shop and online sales now. It was very, very different even three years ago. We had distributors in Boston, for the East Coast; Chicago, for the Midwest; L.A., San Francisco. We were selling thirty tons of cheese through distributors, and we were selling twenty percent to our local retail shops, deliveries. I had delivery trucks going out three days a week with a delivery person. I'd diluted myself to the point of losing the business.

One day I woke up and said, "I don't need to do this any more." What I was doing was I was reacting to the phone calls. "I want cheese; I want cheese." "Oh, we've got to make more cheese. We've got to keep more goats. We've got to milk more goats. We've got to get more people to milk the goats." We had three hundred and fifty goats at one point, and it was awful. It was beyond capacity for the people that worked here, the machinery. The goats were compromised. There was no space for them, and it was just over. One day, I woke up: "It's over." I sold one hundred and fifty of my goats to the rent-a-goat program. That's actually what got it pretty much started up.

It was the best decision I'd ever made, because at that moment, I realized I was in control, that actually my decision controlled how I wanted to run my business. I didn't know that I had that control before then. But I think it just came from

---

experience, and now I can make a decision, and I know how it's going to affect everybody. I know what the trickle-down effect is. I know that I'm not going to compromise the health of the animals by stuffing more animals in there. I know I'm not going to compromise the team of seven people that we have by diluting them with more people. I know that I'm not going to overrun the building, because this is what it is. It's not bigger than what it is. This is what it is, and this is what works for us, and my life, too. I have to really look at my life with my husband and my son and see the impact that that has on my family, and none of that, none of those are compromised any more, ever.

So we made a very, very big decision and a very scary decision last July. The first of July, we decided to come out of every store, apart from four. So we had come out to the distributors slowly, because the only thing I was thinking was: I'm a local person. I was sustainable, but I'm selling our cheese to New York, which is fine if you buy it [as an individual], and you're living [there]—because you're going to get it the next day. It's going to be Fed Exed to you, but it doesn't need to be sitting in a shelf for two weeks before it goes into a store and then it's a compromised product that we've spent so much time—from blade of grass to baby goat to people to their living situation to recycling everything to the packaging of it—everything is done so beautifully with so much thought and art and work that it just made me sick. It made me ill.

So we decided to come out of all of the stores, because we could see the rise in the [on-farm] shop. We could see the rise of online sales. We knew that we would run out of product by Christmas. We just knew it. Plus, I had less goats, because we'd cleaned out the herd a little bit. So I was making a little bit less. It was like

---

we had to do it or we were going to be completely screwed. [laughs] So we were forced to do it, but we'd been thinking about doing it. We came out of everything. We basically got rid of eighty percent of our income in one day.

**Rabkin:** Wow.

**Harley:** And it was very, very scary, because my payroll was the same. I wasn't going to not have people work. My bills are the same; my mortgage is the same. I still have to feed all the animals, which was twice as much. I just have to say that I have a very, very amazing bank that I work with. I've had a ten-year relationship with them. I have a daily relationship with them, and if we didn't have them, I wouldn't be in business. I consider them a partner. They're our local bank, First National Bank here in Pescadero. I know everybody from the top to the bottom, and it's an absolute partnership.

**Rabkin:** That sounds like a story from a hundred years ago. Wow.

**Harley:** I think we're getting back to that. I think it's about relationship and integrity and saying what you're going to do, and doing it. I have a history with them. I call them every day. I tell them what's going on. I do what I say I'm going to do, and so when I'm in a really bad situation, they know I'm going to do what I say I'm going to do.

**Rabkin:** So they have helped you bridge the gap between that moment of losing eighty percent of your income and compensating for it by building up the local sales.

**Harley:** Yes. And I'm not afraid of talking about money. I'm not afraid of money. I'm not afraid of people knowing. I'm not that kind of person that way. I just use it as a tool like a spade and a hammer. It's part of what keeps business going. And if it stops, if money stops somewhere, it doesn't work for anybody. It's got to constantly move in and out of people's hands. It's got to be used effectively and again with respect.

But even a good relationship with a bank doesn't mean—it was still very, very difficult. People had to go on reduced wages. Fortunately, I own the house where the farm people live. So I just reduced their rent to the bare minimum to pay for the mortgage on it. So I was able to help them that way, because I knew their income was dropped. Two of the people I kept at the same wage, and they just took on a bit more responsibility. It just unbelievably worked out as it was going to work out. And then Christmas came, and we had product in the freezer, and we were able to sell it all. We could have sold twice as much. But we sold it in our shop, so we got the retail value of it. We made profit on it. So we were able to pay for at least a couple of those months that were really, really tough.

And then going into January [2009], this whole economic thing happened. The world changed, and we benefited from it. From January 1st to now, we have done better than we've ever done in our entire existence, because people were, "Oh, let's go to the farm, because we want to feel good." So for every person that walked through the door and bought a piece of cheese, that was three pieces of cheese I was selling to a distributor. So now everybody's back to work. The milking machine—plus we weren't milking and all of that. So the milking

---

machine went on. Everybody came back to work. Everybody's working harder than they've ever done before. [laughs] We're actually hiring people.

**Rabkin:** Fantastic.

**Harley:** It's exciting. It's a thrill, and you realize out of what you consider bad things—it's not even bad things, tough times, you do prevail, but you have got to be able to get up in the morning. It's not for the faint of heart. If you choose this kind of life, it's going to happen to you, and it's not about getting rich. You have to feel the richness in your day-to-day life.

**Rabkin:** I have to just say for the record that we're looking out your window here at a whole bunch of baby goats frolicking.

**Harley:** [laughs]

**Rabkin:** And grown-ups playing around on the chicken tractor and the llamas hanging out with the goats. [laughs]

**Harley:** They're best friends. It's pretty nice, huh?

**Rabkin:** Yes, it's lovely.

**Harley:** And you're looking out at the soil that's all our goat compost, and we're about to—

**Rabkin:** And for the record, it looks like coffee grounds.

**Harley:** I know.

**Rabkin:** It's black and rich and gorgeous.

---

## Eco-Tourism

**Harley:** We're putting an edible garden in there, and we've changed my original dairy into a kitchen, and we're doing farm dinners, growing all the food that we grow for our farm dinners upstairs in our hayloft.

**Rabkin:** Tell me about that. Can the general public attend those?

**Harley:** Yes, they've got to make reservations obviously. The other thing that we're huge into is the ecotourism. There was no name associated with it, but when we first had our first baby goats seventeen years ago, the local schools came up. We're a half a mile away.

**Rabkin:** Across the street.

**Harley:** Yes, and so the little kindergartners would totter up, and they'd come and play with the baby goats. So we've been doing that for seventeen years. Now it's turned into a big, huge, major part of our viability.

**Rabkin:** Tell me how that agritourism started, and how you manage it.

**Harley:** Well, as the farm became more of a desirable place, we painted the barn. It was so idyllic and beautiful. People would drive by, and then they'd pull in, and then they'd knock on my door, I'd be having my dinner. They'd be coming in the back door. They'd be coming in the front door, closing the door. I'm like, "What? Who are you?"

**Rabkin:** [laughs]



**Harley:** “Oh, I just want to see the goats. I want to buy some cheeses.” Oh, my god. So we opened a little shop so people could buy cheese. We opened it away from the farm, which is about three miles in town. As you come into town, there’s a big barn with our logo on the front. We had the shop there in the hope that it would just get people away from the house, because it was so intrusive. And the local health department closed me down, because—I don’t know—it didn’t have this and that, you know, a sink and different things that a retail shop needed. But if I sold it within a hundred feet or where I produced it, I just could be under my state thing. So it would eliminate the health department, which was the most important part.

So the original birthing stalls in the lower half of the hay barn, we had it as a toolshed for about ten years, and that’s what we decided to use as the shop. And it just started with—I don’t know—a 5 x 5 thing, and we put some cheese in there and a cooler. Then it expanded from there, to the point where it’s almost beyond capacity on the weekends. It’s heaving with people. And it’s just so real. Talk about real. It’s so gorgeous. It’s the original redwood floors. They’re all undulating where the cows used to champ around and probably nosh on the beams and things.

**Rabkin:** [laughs]

**Harley:** And all the original redwood beams are there. You know, it’s in its bones. You can feel it when you walk in it. It’s not—we haven’t interrupted it. We haven’t changed it. That’s in honor, homage really to the people that built it, because I’m sure it was such an incredible, vibrant place, and then it was just

---

sadly destroyed, really, just by no life. So now there's *life* everywhere, and that's just the most exciting part for me. I can look out—everywhere you look, there's productivity. People, animals, vegetables. Artwork. It's alive again.

**Rabkin:** Tell me about the tour program and how you've built that up.

**Harley:** So we did a lot of school groups for many years, and then we started adding adult tours, where people paid to come on. Now we are completely booked months in advance. We take twenty people, of adults. We do them eleven o'clock and one o'clock on Saturday and the same on Sunday. We've now added a Friday. People pay, and they get two hours of our time looking around the farm. They go from the very beginning to the very end, and then they taste the cheese.

It's a fantastic tour. We have five tour guides now. They're all local people who live in Pescadero. One woman is the schoolteacher. She was the principal at the elementary school. Another woman has a high school. Another woman works with special needs students, and she lives here in town. These are real people that live in this real village, and there's a reason why we picked them. We picked the people, asked them to come and work at the farm. They don't need to be theatrical and they don't need to be a showman. They need to just impart their story. It really is about a connection with that type of person, not just the farm. "Why do you live here?" is a big question. "What's the school like?" It's a real connection with somebody, and why they want to work here and do this. And they love it, because it's completely different to their regular job throughout the week. They're paid very well, because that's our marketing. We pay them to

---

market our farm to the person. We don't advertise, never have done, and we have done it from the inside out.

**Rabkin:** So people find out about the tours through your website, or through word of mouth?

**Harley:** Many through word of mouth: "We're here because a friend came here last year and loved it." And now what we're seeing, is we're seeing tradition. So we have this family that comes from L.A., and they call up, "Are the babies born?" "Yes, the babies have started to be born." They come up; they spend the weekend. They stay in the same place, and they just sit in the baby goat pen for like three hours. That's what they do every year.

**Rabkin:** [laughs]

**Harley:** It's like, "Oh, they're here. Okay. They can just talk to people as they come in." So now we've got this tradition of people. It's an annual visit to see the babies, of course, because they're all so cute. The school groups, they book a year in advance to come now. It's like every third grade goes to Harley Farms in April, or whatever it is. So we're so ahead of that, that actually the tours don't interrupt the flow of the farm. And as I said before, it doesn't matter, because the flow of the farm is first anyway. We've had dead babies out there. If we didn't see one and it's just dead, "Oh, there's a dead baby!" It's an opportunity to say, "Yes, it's a dead baby, and this is probably what happened."

I had this terrible birth in the middle of a tour. I could not get this baby out. It was dead. It was huge. The mother was having a hard time. And these little girls,

they must have been four years old, they're on the tour, and they couldn't stop watching. I couldn't move the goat. It was there. And the parents were having kind of a bit of a hard time, "I don't want my kid to see this thing." The goat was like bleating and—

Anyway, they're coming in from the pasture, and they broke off, these two little girls, and they came over. And they're standing over, and I'm having a little break, wondering what I'm going to do. I've got this goat half hanging out, and this one little girl said, "Excuse me," and she said, "My friend wants to ask you a question." [laughs] I said, "Oh, yes." She said, "Is that baby dead?" and I said, "Yes, the baby's dead, and it's really important that I get the baby out so the mother will be okay. That's all I'm really concerned about now, because she needs to be okay." At which point, the mother and father came up behind, and they were really afraid, but we had this really nice conversation on a very basic level with these two little girls about death, and the fact that what was important right then and there was this mother. And they went, "Oh, thank you," and off they tottered. They just needed to know. They wanted to know the truth. And I said, "You're going to go in [to the loafing barn] right now, and you're going to see two hundred babies, and you're going to have so much fun." "Okay, bye." And then the parents went, "Oh, thank you. Thank you."

We have the opportunity to show something that's real and not be afraid of it. It's what it is. Things like this happen all the time, and it's pointless sheltering people, because then you're sheltering them from life. I would say everybody on this farm is capable of having that conversation with anybody, like I did. "How are things going on the farm?" "They're not good." I mean, what's wrong with

that? “They’re not good.” [laughs] It’s okay. We’re not so idyllic that things aren’t not good sometimes. So we’re very real that way. I keep bringing real up, because I think it’s really important that people are not idealistic about it. You have to be realistic. Goats are going to die. Goats are going to get sick. You’re going to have to make some really tough choices. You’re going to have to put your finances on the line. You’re going to have to fire people if they’re poisonous to a team. You’re going to have to make hard choices. And it’s not, again, for the faint of heart.

**Rabkin:** Thank you. How do you protect your sense of privacy and peacefulness?

**Harley:** It’s compromised at the moment. You know, we’ve almost created a monster, because we choose to live like this, and we have people in our space. People want what they want. So we have to teach them that they can’t go through certain gates, and we have to do that by physical barriers. So we’ve put fences up. We have a big landscaping project going on this year, with trees and things like that, so then we can have private space where people can’t see. That’s really all we can do. We have thought about moving completely. We’ve thought about closing the public part of the farm down, but it’s on a train track now. It’s just rolling. And plus, it’s our income. It’s our income that is keeping the farm alive.

**Rabkin:** The tours.

**Harley:** Actually it keeps the farm small, because we would find a different avenue to get income if we didn’t have tours. They are the reason why the farm

---

can remain small and have integrity and be good quality. It's more about quality now than quantity—well, it always has been, but we were diluted there for a few years. But now it's just everything we do is primo, everything. Nothing is compromised.

So we have to balance that. It's hard. When you come around the corner and there's no way to park in front of your own house, it is very, very difficult to cope with, especially when Tim comes home after a long day at work. It's like, "Oh, my god, there's like fifty thousand people here. Ah!"

So we hide in the house a lot. [laughs] And we put "Private" signs up and fences with gates and things like that that lock. So we're trying to be living in different areas of the farm, so then people are not allowed in that spot.

And we're looking at a bigger location. We're looking at our next door neighbor's, and seeing if we can strike up a little bit of a deal with that, and moving into a bigger spot where we can move maybe the shop. And parking. Parking is the biggest problem. So we're exploring options without getting too big.

**Rabkin:** What advice would you give to a farmer who was interested in launching an agritourism element on their farm?

**Harley:** You're going to answer the same question fifty thousand times. You have to have a personality that likes people, and your employees have to, because every single person that comes on to your farm will leave with the first impression. If you're not happy to see them, it's not going to work, and you have

---

to make a choice. It's either you do that or you don't, but they are going to interrupt your day until you get the right people to take those on. And your privacy is going to be compromised. They're just going to be in your space. And you've got to make sure it's viable. So have an accountant. Always have an accountant.

And you have to have your own boundaries. I didn't have boundaries. So I'd be, "Oh, yes, come on in. Oh, yes, I'll spend an hour of my time talking to you about that nice plant in the garden." Well, I can't have that time. I have to know that my time is more valuable in other places and put somebody else in that place, because you're a detriment to the business if you do that too often.

### Farming in Community

**Rabkin:** You've talked about the ways in which you are deeply a part of this community in terms of your relationship to the place and your employees and your connections in town. I wonder if there are relationships we haven't talked about, in the farming or business community, that have contributed to your farm's success?

**Harley:** Oh, I think that every business in our village contributes to our success, because we're all talking about each other. So we're all helping each other funnel people that come here to go to their stores, their stores to come to our stores. We have a really good working relationship with all of the business owners here. The bank, as I mentioned before, is an integral part to our success, and the community as a whole. They go to work. They work in businesses in areas outside of this community, or they're teachers, or whatever they're doing, and

---

they're talking about how proud they are of this farm, and how they've seen it grow from nothing. So really they're all marketing in a way subtly, and they're using our product to take to places, because it's this sense of local pride. They're really the backbone of our success. I mean, we're in a beautiful place, too. That helps as well. But they're on our side. People are on our side. So it's important to reciprocate.

I think a lot of our receiving of local accolades is because of what we've done in the past. Even before I had a farm, before I had a child, we were very, very involved with the community. It's just, you're either that kind of person or you're not. I just feel like you give, you receive, and you receive from other avenues. And that's what's happening with us now, for sure.

**Rabkin:** You employ local people. Are there other concrete ways that Harley Farms contributes to the community?

**Harley:** Our barn is used constantly by local organizations for meetings. We do an annual cheese-and-wine event up there. We donate pounds and pounds of cheese to whatever anybody wants. We're very involved with the school. The math tutoring goes on upstairs. He tutors high-school and middle-school students upstairs in our barn every day. I sit on a board—two boards—in the community. I have done that for many, many years. And then, we're an avenue for work for the high school students. We have six high school students. Two are going to graduate this year. They've worked for three and a half years for us. It's their first job, their first experience. We're not easy with them. We don't let them get off with stuff. When they leave here, they know how to work, and they know



---

how to take responsibility, and we give responsibility to them. We treat them like adults. They're a big part of the fun of doing the shop and the farm. I love having those guys around.

I do the local Pescadero Arts and Fun Festival. I'm the emcee for that. I'm kind of an advocate for the town. We get a lot of press. We're very fortunate. I always mention the town. The town is paramount. It just is.

**Rabkin:** Do you have interns or apprentices?

**Harley:** We get lots of calls for interns and apprentices weekly, e-mails as well. It's too hard. It's too hard to stop to train somebody. I think [people] go through a tour of the farm, or come and see it for an hour and think, "Oh, that's so easy. I could do that. I'll just help."

**Rabkin:** [laughs]

**Harley:** No, it's a feel. It's a knack. It's an ambiance. It's a part of the rhythm, and to stop to teach somebody that, we just don't have that kind of ability right now. But there's more and more interest in it, so we might have to do that at some point. I don't know. That's another avenue that we haven't really gone down yet.

We went to a Spanish cheese-making class. I took the three girls and a guy up there to the College of Marin. It was put on by the California Artisan Cheese Guild, of which I'm a board member.

**Rabkin:** These were your cheese-making employees you took with you.

**Harley:** Cheese-making people, yes. This lecture was coming from a science perspective. He said in the middle of it, “The thing I can’t teach you is the art of it, and the art of it comes from years of doing it.” We have people that have done it for thirteen years. You can’t learn that overnight. It’s a seasonal thing. It’s a temperature. It’s, “The weather is like this today. Oh, I know in a month, the babies are going to be born. I know we can make ricotta. I know we can’t make ricotta.” It’s like just some feel that we have, and it really is from just doing it and being around it and smelling it and tasting it and feeling it in your hands. You know if there’s something wrong, which they catch in a millisecond. So it was just nice to have that be confirmed, that when every day they come to work, they know what they’re doing.

We’ve applied for this producer’s award put on by the National [Resources] Defense Council.<sup>2</sup> We filled in the application incorrectly, and we had four hours to redo it. I had to call all these local people to say, “Can you do a”—it was particularly about me, because it was a food producer’s thing, which was a bit odd, because it sounds a bit conceited. It was very strange to have to do it. But everybody did it in four hours. They not only did it; the things they wrote were just incredible—from the community thing from working with the grant to—it was so humbling. It was so humbling.

We e-mailed it off at this certain time, and it was like, “I can’t believe we just did that.” That was the most amazing act of loyalty to us and to what they believe we’re doing, and what we’ve done for them. Not just me, everybody here.

I asked one of the girls to write something, and she did it all in Spanish. Translated, it was just the most beautiful—it was what I would want them to feel about me, just this: “I never would have thought that we would put flowers on cheese. It’s an art I never thought I could ever do. I never would have thought about it. And every day, I go to work, it’s like working for a family.” You just wept, because it was honest and it was—you know what I felt? I felt successful. When I read that, I felt, “I’m successful.” It was beautiful.

### Defining Success

**Rabkin:** What is the hallmark of success for you?

**Harley:** [pause] Feeling happy and content. I can feel successful in many ways like that. Reading that was a success to me. Watching my child pull a baby goat out of a mother is success to me. Having people show up to work happy is success.

And then winning an award is successful. But it’s not me. It’s all the people that do it. That’s what’s successful and being able to bring it home and giving it to them. That’s successful. It can be many things. It’s certainly not anything to do with financial, though. But I do want everybody to make more and have a better life. That’s important.

The end of the day is successful. You know, when the milking machine stops and everybody goes home. It’s eight o’clock. That’s like successful, every day. But the thing that keeps me going, my favorite thing is having coffee in the kitchen and

---

all the goats going out to pasture. You just can't buy that. That's why I do it. One little thing every day.

## Challenges

**Rabkin:** Are there aspects of this life and livelihood that keep you awake at night?

**Harley:** Yes. When I can't find money from somewhere. That's hard. We've been growing for seventeen years. When you're growing, it costs money, and we are now more in control of it. So we only grow at our own pace. But nevertheless, when you're forced to grow, it's hard to keep finding money. That gets very old.

When the goats are sick. We had a bout several years ago of a pneumonia. We wormed late. We lost some goats. We didn't know what was wrong. And then you just think, "I'm going to wake up and all the goats are going to be dead." That's really awful. That feels really bad.

When an employee, or part of our town is not happy, I think that is very draining on me. I have a hard time with that, because you always have to get to the reason, and maybe sometimes the reasons are not very fun. So that can be very draining.

I definitely probably had my most stressful time this last year when we got rid of all of our customers. Actually telling the customers was very stressful, because they were very disappointed. But then that looming six months of nothing was very scary.

**Rabkin:** Do you see things catching up?

**Harley:** Yes. Yes, we are almost caught up.

### Organizations of Farmers

**Rabkin:** When we were talking about community, there's one question I didn't ask you that I should, and that is whether you've relied on the services of any local farming-related organizations—the Farm Bureau or Ag Extension...?

**Harley:** Well, we're the only dairy. So there's very little help locally for us, but all local people have built the farm. They maintain all of our pumps, refrigeration, plumbers, all of that are Pescadero local people.

**Rabkin:** Veterinarians, too?

**Harley:** We have one veterinarian down in Santa Cruz who is learning about goats, and she's completely on board with us. It's very exciting. And then we have another vet that we know over the phone, and she's been here once, and she's very helpful with getting us medications or vaccinations or just, "Hey, this is happening. What do you think?" But a lot of it we've done ourselves, because we had to and we know a lot ourselves, and our farm manager Ryan is educating himself all the time about it. So we're doing a good job with that.

But the Farm Bureau, we're a member, of course, and I'm on the Ag Advisory Board for San Mateo County. I'm on that board. So I'm learning more about the other farming operations, but I'm just not part of it. I'm not a fisherman; I'm not a vegetable grower. They have very different situations than I do, but we're all a

---

part of the same big picture. We know what it's like to have money problems. We can talk to people. We have very good relationships. There's an understanding that goes along with it, for sure.

**Rabkin:** Are there any kind of alliances or community-building activities that are happening among farmers along this stretch of coast, or in the county?

**Harley:** Yes, definitely. Like, we're talking to a farmer in Half Moon Bay now to grow some of our flowers in the winter months and basil and things like that. There's meetings—food-system meetings. There's collaboration with CSA, maybe using our cheese or selling their vegetables in the shop, making sure that we send people to produce stands, things like that.

I would say it's a pretty tight community. I can borrow people's tractors. They can borrow my tractor. "Have you got this implement?" "This is broken. Can you help me?" That's all done in our town, yes.

### The Future of Harley Farms

**Rabkin:** What are your plans and dreams for the future of Harley Farms?

**Harley:** I'm being forced to ask that question at the moment, because to maintain a sustainable business, you have to sustain your business, which means it has to pay for itself. Now I'm older and a little wiser. I am surrounding myself with people who are smarter than I am and who are better at certain aspects of the business than I am. These are people that are choosing to compromise maybe working at an office every day, to come and work for somebody like myself in this situation. It's very, very exciting, but one of the biggest questions is I have to

---

decide what I want. I have to decide on a goal, so then we can work backwards from there, and then everybody is a part of the goal.

It's an interesting situation for myself, because I've just been, "La, la, la, la, la," raising my family, "It's my home." But now it's a serious situation. We have a serious business here. We have a serious entity that could go lots of places. And I think for me, as I sit here, I look at us as being a cog in the community situation where Pescadero is raising its own label name brand, and we just go underneath that label, and we create not only a sustainable farm and future for ourselves here at Harley Farms, but for the entire community as well, where the community is employed. The produce and the products that can be derived from the earth are sold and distributed by local people and grown by local people. I can see that.

I definitely am more towards doing that than working by myself. I don't work by myself. I like doing things with other people. I like new, exciting ideas.

So I can see it being something like that more than it's just, "Harley Farms is going to be this big, and it's going to be doing this and this and this." I love the fact that we are now an established entity and we can have pods of businesses where people can have their own cottage industries, feed off that structure. I think that's exciting. I love looking at that evolve, and it's evolved, and it's evolving more. So I can see something like that, just more of it.

**Rabkin:** You mentioned a while back that you're still selling your cheese in four retail shops. Are those all local?

**Harley:** Yes. In Pescadero and Half Moon Bay, and then in San Mateo, Whole Foods Store, because that's our county. So we've kept it within that.

## Goat Eggs

**Rabkin:** Dee, is there anything that we have not touched on that you would like to address?

**Harley:** I don't know. I think I've been talking for a long time. I don't know. It seems like there's always so much to say. We have so many classic moments here on the farm. But initially you—I don't know whether we were being recorded, but you mentioned a sense of humor.

**Rabkin:** Yes.

**Harley:** You have to have a sense of humor. I think that's the only thing that keeps me alive. We have fabulous people here that get my humor [laughs] and I get their humor. But if you can't see the funny side, it would be really, really tough. It would be very, very tough.

**Rabkin:** Tell me about the April 1st entry on your blog, just for the record.

**Harley:** [laughs] Well, it's April 8th now. On April 1st, [April Fools Day] we—we have goose eggs in the shop and chicken and duck eggs. We've had several people in the past several months say, "Are those goat eggs?"

**Rabkin:** [laughs]



**Harley:** So we were like, “Oh, you’re kidding me.” [laughs] But seriously, actually saying that. So it led us to think, “Oh, we’ve got to do an April Fool’s joke with these goat eggs.” So my friend Kate, who does a lot of writing for the farm—she’s English—she made this huge nest. It was phenomenal, really, really good. She brought it over. We stuck these goose eggs in, and then Three Finger Bill, he made these plasticine horns, little horns, and we stuck them on the outside and painted them. We had second-grade tour over that day from Woodside Elementary. So we’re like, “Oh, something’s happened. It’s the most intact nest we’ve ever had. It’s just unbelievable. Do you want to come and have a look?” So we’re like egging them on about the fact that these were goat eggs. “I think I saw one move. I think I saw one crack.” We were really having so much fun with it.

Anyway, we left it up on the blog. We had some blog comments, “I had no idea they came from eggs. That’s just amazing.” We were like, “Oh, my god, that’s scary.” [laughs] We were like, “Should we tell them it’s an April Fool’s?” So we just decided to keep it going, because then more blogs came and said, “Oh, excellent joke.” Now we’re going to have to do something really fun every year.

**Rabkin:** So this was your first April Fool’s Day—

**Harley:** That was our first April Fool’s joke.

**Rabkin:** You’ve set the bar pretty high. [laughs]

**Harley:** We have. That was good. We might have to do something with the llamas next year or something. [laughs] But nevertheless, it’s a bit of fun. We’re

---

definitely having fun with the farm now. A lot of the structure part has been done over the last ten years or so. So now we can have a bit of fun.

**Rabkin:** Well, thank you very much, Dee.

**Harley:** You're welcome.

---

<sup>1</sup>See the oral history with Larry Jacobs of Jacobs Farm in this series.

<sup>2</sup>See <http://www.nrdc.org/health/growinggreen.asp>