Sherry Becker-Gordy

Interviewer: Michael Kline
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Michael Kline: **0:00:02.6** Okay, looks like we're, yeah. Today is October—

Carrie Kline: Eighth.

MK: —eighth, and we're at the Meadow View Farm kitchen table. And could you say, "My name is—"

Sherry Becker-Gorby: My name is Sherry Becker-Gorby.

MK: And your date of birth?

SBG: I was born in December, on the 30th in 1952.

MK: December 30th, 1952.

SBG: And I was born in Wheeling, West Virginia, across the river from here.

MK: So tell me a little bit about your people and where you were raised?

SBG: Well, I was raised outside of Wheeling in a—the farming—it was really kind of a farming area outside of Wheeling. Right now the high school—Wheeling Park High School—occupies a lot of the land close to where I grew up, but that was all farms when I was a little kid, when I grew up out there. My father's people were not farmers; they grew up on Wheeling Island, but my father had a real passion for working around animals and being outside, and so he moved us to that little few acres outside of Wheeling so that we could have that kind of an experience of what it was like to be outside and to grow things and be around animals and be close to people who did make their livings from farming. So he was a main contributor when it came to that, and fortunately for us, when he moved us to that little area we were nicely placed between two elderly families who were primarily dedicated to farming.

Now both were elderly, so they weren't doing the kind of farming they did in their younger years, but my friend and neighbor Pop Shilling still plowed with a horse and put in two really huge gardens—and so I was always putzing around with him when he was plowing and getting his gardens ready. So before I was old enough to really walk along beside him, when he would

plant his gardens—I would get to ride on top of the horse and hold on to her big work collar while he went and got the fields ready. So I had that kind of an orientation, fortunately, as a gift from my father. My mother's people— My mother grew up in town, so she was definitely an urban dweller, but her father's people were Mennonites from Virginia, and they were predominantly agricultural people. There were some that were ministers and school teachers and the like, but he came from a very large farm in Virginia. I never knew him, so I really didn't know anything about him other than stories that I would hear from my mother, but that always sounded like such a nice way to live—you know—and to spend your time.

So indirectly I had gotten that link to agriculture from my mother's side of the family, too. So just kind of growing up I always just had this passion. I knew I would always be on a farm. Wasn't exactly sure where it would be, but I knew that it would be somewhere here in this region and that I would raise animals and grow my food, and so ever since I was a little kid I just always saw myself as someone who would be outside.

MK: **0:03:43.8** So you got it from both sides of the family?

SBG: I did, I got it from both sides. And then I also got it from what I would call my extended chosen family, because that's how I felt about my neighbors, that they were not just neighbors; they were really part of my family too. And so I really learned—a lot of what I learned about what I know now has its roots—what I learned from Pop Shilling and from Pete and Duff and Uncle Johnny. And none of those were my blood kin, but they were truly kin to my heart.

CK: **00:04:27** (???) (inaudible).

MK: Go ahead.

SBG: Yeah, I just did. I had started my early gardening with Pop, and my first own garden Pop plowed for me, and my tomato plants—that were actually a hybrid that Pete developed—came from Pete. And so I actually even have a photograph of these huge tomatoes that I grew. They took a picture of me with—holding the tomatoes, one on each side of my head, because they were almost as big as my head. And it was put in the newspaper, and that was my first big claim to fame when it came to gardening. But you know those two elderly friends really gave me a good solid anchor when it came to appreciating what you could get by being caretakers of the land, and so that, for me, set a value structure for me that's guided me most of my life.

MK: Caretakers of the land?

SBG: Caretakers of the land—you know, if you don't take care of it—you have to take care of it. If you don't take care of it, then it disappears; it's not here for anybody else. You know—and so—like when we got our farm, it had been unattended for quite a while. It hadn't been—fences had been neglected, fields hadn't been attended to. There was—it looked quite different than it looks now. And so if you don't put back into that ground, it can't keep producing, and so whoever is residing on that ground has a responsibility to take care of it not just for the time that you're on it, but for the next people that are coming along, because you're not going to be here all the time. And it's just not for the people that are here; it's also for all of the other parts of

nature that are here. All those birds, all those flowers—it's the whole picture, and you can't—you can't ignore it, because it'll go away.

0:06:50.4 And in this region—I mean, I was from West Virginia, so we didn't think about coal mining the same way people think about coal mining over here. Strip mining was something that I didn't really think about a whole lot until after my father had passed away. Because my—we would go on rides with my grandparents, and we would go for rides out in Belmont County, probably into Harrison, but I wouldn't have realized I was going from one county to the next. And one of the things my grandparents would point out—they'd say, "Look at that over there," and it would be like a big high wall or a big huge field that should have been green, should have had animals on it, and it just was a big rocky mess—there was just nothing there that looked alive and vibrant. And they would point out to us that that's what happens when you strip mine. That they took away all of the beautiful things and left that, and that can never be really fixed—no matter what people tell you, that can never really be fixed.

I remember when we—so for me, that left a mark for me, that whenever I would go for rides in Ohio, and I would see this is what coal mining looks like over here. Now, I knew the coal mining in West Virginia; you couldn't really see it on the surface, but you knew that things were happening underground that affected what was happening on top of the ground, but it wasn't so readily visible. And so it gave me this weird juxtaposition of—like—thinking about what mining is in different places.

You can think about—you readily see the damage in Belmont and Harrison counties, and the landscape doesn't look like what it should. And it never is repaired; it's never repaired. And I think about that in relation to what I can't see—in this part of West Virginia, because we don't do mountain-top removal up here—perhaps yet, but you know that the same damage that was done on the surface of this earth is being don't underground. And you'll feel the impact of that someday—it may not be today, but you will feel it someday. You cannot make one change somewhere on this earth without it having a long-term impact. And I think that's what people forget.

So I'm taking detours—I realize that—but—so for me when I think about the farm, I feel like this is my little space that I have a responsibility for. It's not really like my possession. It's my responsibility—and that I need to do what's in my power to make this place stay the way it should—in a healthy balance, for everything that resides here. Whether that's me, other people, the animals that live here, the insects that live here—although there's some of them I would prefer not to see—but you know it's all part of the balance. And so I really feel committed to that responsibility. Sometimes I may do it better than others in meeting that responsibility; sometimes I may fail miserably. But even when I fail, I feel like I need to take a look at what did I do wrong so I can fix it—because I have to fix it before I leave. That's how I feel about the farm.

So anyway, although I wasn't really raised to be a farmer, somehow that got embedded in me, that that's what I needed to be, and so that's what I do.

MK: **0:11:02.5** So—but as a—as someone farming in 2011, you can look around you and see that it isn't all necessarily clear sailing ahead. I mean, anybody who's in farming must be aware

of external pressures on present systems. Can you talk about that a little bit from your perspective?

SBG: Well, we're not full-time farmers. I think I need to clarify that. We're not full-time farmers because—because we couldn't make enough money off of a burned-out farm to sustain ourselves. So I feel like now—with this farm—that we've built fences, repaired buildings, renovated pastures, developed springs and so forth—that if someone walked on to this ground today, they would have a shot at making a living. Of course, I'm not 20 years old anymore, but I feel like it took all of this time to restore this piece of ground so that it could become a productive agrarian unit. So that being said, one of the—one of the pressures for me—as— I've always felt this sense of urban encroachment, and when you are tied to farming, that—when you've got people moving out into your space, they don't understand—you know—like the loudness of machinery, the fact that you're putting up some fences, that there are smells that come with farms.

You know—if you're spreading manure on your field, it definitely has a different fragrance for a few days. And those things are—in some areas have been a real concern, because some farmers have been put out of business because of suits put against them because they are—the noise pollution or the smells and so forth. So we, early on, had ourselves established here in Ohio as an agricultural district. And you might have noticed at the end of our driveway the sign that says, "We're an agricultural district. Anyone thinking about moving into this area—" basically, be aware that there are sounds, smells, etc. that might not be so appealing. So—

MK: Did you word that sign?

SBG: No, I didn't, actually. The sign—it came from the Department of Agriculture, and we have an extra one in the barn.

MK: So it's an official—

SBG: It's an official sign.

MK: —cautionary note.

SBG: It is, yeah, it is. So that here in Ohio there's at least that recognition that—if we don't protect our agricultural lands, that just the urban sprawl can make that go away. So that was one piece, and then whenever somebody starts thinking about selling off their property, they hardly ever think about selling it off like as the whole farm—they usually think about subdividing it into these little lots. Well, that's always a concern, because again, you know you bring in a whole lot of other folks that really don't have an appreciation for what needs to happen to keep an agricultural area productive. So that sense of urban sprawl and urban encroachment has always been a concern to me.

0:14:56.5 The—dealing with the issue of minerals—you know—I talked about the issue of coal, and that was always such a concern, when moving here to Ohio with the idea of strip mining, that when you find a piece of ground in this region that has not been stripped—one, you're

lucky, and two, you want to make sure you can keep it that way. And so that's been kind of always an issue that I think about. I feel fortunate that our ground has never been stripped, and also the farm that borders us has never been stripped. And although they don't farm it anymore, they still have that sense of appreciation that you don't want to disrupt that land balance because of what can happen to your water. So that idea of the minerals in your water—you know—the water is such a critical part, and when you start adding more people to a region, that also depletes the water pool. So the one thing for me has always been that urban sprawl, and I kind of hope that people will still think about retaining their farms in larger lots rather than thinking about subdividing into—like—1-acre plots and what have you, that kind of thing.

The big concern here recently has been this frenzy with the gas drilling, and I just feel like people are reacting to this from the angle of—you know—finally we can make some big dollars, and they're not thinking about the long-term impact of what this can have on their land. You know—and just on a micro level, just thinking about your own farm, and what that—the impact it will have on your farm, one, for aesthetic value, but also the impact on your livestock—you know—the sounds and this disruption to animals. That affects how they grow, that affects how they reproduce. You know—they like stability and constancy. When you bring in any kind of a drilling or mining operation, that's not stable, and that's not constant, and that's not what they know. So that has an impact on them.

But the big—the most predominant concern is the water—you know—what's going to happen to your water. Now I will read things in—like—*Farm and Dairy* and other farm journals, and you see these things, "Oh it's no big deal. We've been drilling—gas drilling—for years and years," but not like this. I just read an article last week in *Farm and Dairy* that I felt was very misinformative. It was talking about, "It's okay to drill; it's okay to drill." Well, they never once talked about the chemical composition of what's used in that drilling. They never once in that article talked about what happens with that water. They don't talk about the fact that all that water that goes down in that well, not all of it comes back. They didn't talk about what happens when it stays there. They forget that people take basic science classes when they're in elementary and high school, and that that is all part of a system. We learn that as children. You can't forget that just because somebody waves some money in front of you. You know—that money will be long gone before the long-term impacts of what we've done to our region really manifest. And what good will that money do you then? It will do no good.

So the important thing for me is protect what's here in the environment. And I feel I have a moral responsibility to do that. And I can't—it's hard for me to understand why someone else doesn't have that same kind of sense of moral obligation. When you signed on to take that property, you signed on a commitment to protect that piece of ground so that it's here for the long run, to do the best that you can with it. And is dowsing it with chemicals the best for it? Is disrupting the undersurface the best for it? I really—I don't think so. I mean—obviously I'm not a scientist. I'm not a geologist, but logically I just can't see how any of this has a benefit, and they would never pay so readily such a high amount of money to people with so little information if they weren't really trying to cover something. You never get a gift like that; it's never a gift.

0:19:44.1 So I feel there is—you know—it's a cover-up of a deception. So what's the rest of the story? Why isn't the rest of the story coming out in the *Farm and Dairy*? That's a tool. People in this region—I feel if you're tied to agriculture, you rely on that as a communication tool. Where are both sides of that story? It's not showing up there. I feel that that publication has done me a disservice by not giving both sides of that story. But I'm kind of deflecting—but a key for me is if you don't have a good water source—and we don't have county water. We don't have city water. We have what comes right out of this ground. And if you—

MK: Not only for you but—

SBG: All of our neighbors—

MK: But for the whole—animals—

SBG: All the animals, everyone—you know—everyone and everything. If something happens to that water source, these animals can't be sustained, none of the houses on this road can be sustained. So what happens then? Who takes care of that? You know, it just goes away. And then when I hear people say, "Well—you know—we have city water—we have county water." Where do you think your water comes from? Yeah, your water is treated, but your water came from the river. Well, where did that water come from? It ran off of these hilltops, down those streams, into that river. Well, it's all related. If on these hilltops we're doing something that is detrimental to the environment, it's going to filter down to even the folks that are those urban dwellers. You know—and you can't filter out, I don't think, all of the toxins that are being put into this water.

MK: Do we know anything about what's—what the chemical issues are here?

SBG: Well, there was some—what did they—? Oh, I'm trying to remember the last article that I read about it. First of all, it's a proprietary mixture, so it's not all divulged. We know that there's hydrochloric acid in there. Oh, I wrote down some of these names, and unfortunately I can't remember them all right now, but there were some known carcinogens that are in this mixture—this proprietary mixture that's used in fracking. Well, where does it go—where does it go? You know, it just doesn't go down there and they pipe it right back into some little tank and then haul it away to seal it up somewhere so it never hurts anybody.

All of this stuff—there's evaporation—you know—when things evaporate it goes back into the air. Well, we learned in grade school, when it evaporates it comes back down in the form of rain—you know—and when it comes back down in the form of rain, it absorbs into the ground, and then those nutrients that are in the ground now get absorbed by the grasses and the other plants, and then the animals come by and eat it, and then that gets absorbed into their systems. It's like, how can people forget that? That was such a basic piece of information. So—I don't know. So the whole idea of the demand for resources concerns me, because it—that demand is usually done without any kind of—to me, it appears to be done without any kind of consideration of long-term impact on the region where they're taking resources from.

MK: **0:23:33.4** So this is all associated, in my mind anyway, with the Marcellus—

SBG: Marcellus and Utica shales. We have two layers here in this region. And so what we're starting to see—you know—here— When you hear people talk, it's mostly about, "How much are you going to get for an acre?" instead of, "What's really going to happen to your ground?" You know—what's really going to happen when they bring on a crew to drill? What's going to happen to all of that topsoil? What's going to happen—where do your animals go? It's not just that there's this little hole drilled in the ground and you get to go about your daily life with no sounds or disruption, and then everything goes on the way it always has. It can't, not with that level of mining happening. So—

MK: Don't most people supposedly have clean air and clean water laws that will protect us from these things?

SBG: Well, you know that's an interesting pickle in itself, because people do make that assumption, and then you hear—

CK: What assumption?

SBG: That there are regulations that control the mining, and the language in articles that you read is that there is—it's legislated and highly controlled, but they—

CK: It's in mining and drilling?

SBG: Uh-hunh (affirmative). Yeah.

CK: Can you say that—?

SBG: That there's a legislation that controls the drilling practices that are in place, but in 2005 there was an exception made to the oil and gas companies in terms of the EPA guidelines. So they don't really have to adhere to them, so in their language practice, when they say they're not in violation of any of the EPA standards, well, they're not. They were excused from them. So if you're excused from something, then you can't violate it. It's like getting absolution from the pope. So they're not in violation because they aren't held to the standard, but that's not clear to people. You know—when they read the articles in the newspaper or hear some of the other folks talk when—what do they call them—the land man comes around. The land man, yeah, it was an interesting term for me. I was—like—wow, I don't think I want to see the land man.

MK: (s/lJean Ritchie's) **00:26:20** song talks about the man stands and talks with his hat in his hand while poisonous waters run over our land.

SBG: Oh my gosh.

MK: The land man.

SBG: The land man. I will have to remember that if one shows up on my porch.

MK: **0:26:36.6** You need a double barrel hanging over the top of the door.

SBG: Yeah.

MK: No, you don't maybe. So what happened in 2005 then to the actual technology once the gas companies were given this green light to go ahead?

SBG: Well, in my opinion they didn't do anything but to accelerate their ability to drill rather than focus on how they do it safely. And for me, I'm real interested in going to this session with the **00:27:13** (???) (inaudible) County action group, because I'm interested in hearing about what they've experienced over these past 4 years, because I think that they have been living a picture very differently from one that was painted for them when people were selling their rights. And so I'm real interested to hear what they have to say about that lived experience now with the mining companies, the drilling companies, because I don't think the lived experience was what was presented to them when they were hearing about how it's going to really happen. You know so—

MK: By lived experience you mean—?

SBG: What I mean by that is—you know, you hear one picture when they come to buy your minerals, or to buy your rights, or lease your rights—and what they tell you, they know that they're telling you—painting a picture for you that's leaving out critical pieces of information, and so then what actually happens once they start bringing their rigs on board, and their trucks, and their work crews and so forth, that experience of the day-to-day reality, I don't think really parallels closely to the verbalization that they give people when they're trying to secure the lease to the minerals. So that's what I'm talking about, is you hear one story but then when the reality comes into play—that reality or the lived experience of having those drilling companies now on your land is very different than when they came to give you—try to get you to take a check.

MK: So these companies bring their crews with them?

SBG: Yeah.

MK: Can you talk about that?

SBG: Well, I haven't lived through that experience, so for me I'd have to say it's hearsay, and I don't intend to have that lived experience, but some of the folks that I have talked to—and it's just only a few in West Virginia, you know. They were saying they bring in quite a number of crew members—you know—you've got problems then with what do you do with wastewater from all of these people that are working in a particular area? And I'm not talking about the wastewater that goes down into the drilling site itself but wastewater of having a whole lot of people floating around a work site. That's a water drain also. So then you have port-a-johns around on your property. You know, where does that go? And then, I hate to say this, but some people are not very respectful of even using that, because they're not particularly an appealing place to use. It's not a nice facility—so how much then do people really maintain personal sanitation? So just having a lot of extra humans in a workspace, in your own space, is not very appealing to me either. And it's also very disruptive to the agricultural process. So I can't attest

to the lived experience from a personal side of it because I don't intend to live it—you know, I'm intending to protect our space. I'm not willing to give it up.

MK: **0:30:40.6** But you can protect your space and still not be able to protect your water.

SBG: You're right, you're right.

MK: With this—when did this lateral drilling really begin to accelerate? They say we're drilling just like we always have but—

SBG: Yeah, that one article that I just read said that we've been drilling—we've been hydro fracking since—it was either 1953 or 1958, but we've never drilled this deep—we've never drilled this deep. There is—they can drill 2 to 3 miles straight down before going horizontally. That's a big hole, it's a deep hole—you're going through a whole lot of layers of earth. That in itself has to make a difference. You can't change one space without it causing a change elsewhere. It's just not possible—it is not possible. So the image of the fracking from that last article that I read was like, we've been living with it all along here in Ohio, what are people so up in arms about?

We haven't lived with that kind of fracking here. The wells were not that deep in the '50s. They didn't have the technology to go that deep. They weren't using the same kind of chemicals. You know, so how can they even compare it? It's not the same comparison. So what are they not telling us by trying to help us to an erroneous conclusion? Because that's what they've done with that article. When I read that I was like, this doesn't make sense. This information doesn't seem to hang with everything else that I've been reading. And you know for 50 to 60 years, we haven't been doing hydro fracking, not like this. So why didn't they say it that way in that article? Because they wanted the people reading the article to make the assumption that, "Oh, I didn't notice that it was a problem before. Why should I think it will be a problem now?"

CK: What sort of 'they' authored the article, or who were these specialists referred to?

MK: You want to take a minute and look for it?

SBG: Yeah.

MK: You can start that "the article—"

SBG: The article was in the *Farm and Dairy*, and like I said, that's a publication, and I read it frequently. I find it to be a very valuable resource. And this particular article says, "The Farm Bureau and Ohio Department of Agriculture prep farmers about what's to come in gas exploration." Well, that little leading line—in the beginning I was like, "Oh great, I'm going to get pros and cons, because I trust these two organizations. I trust this publication." So when I read the article, I felt like I was being led down a path that wasn't telling me the whole story, because one of the statements in this article was, "The first hydro fractured well in Ohio was done in Stark County in 1953." Well, maybe they did call that hydro fracking, but is that the same kind of hydro fracking that's being done in 2011? I don't think so. So if I didn't take time

to really think through this article on what was being said, and if I was feeling pressure to take this check, I would go like, "Well, what's the big brouhaha about? You know, of course we've been doing this for over 50 years—over 60 years—nothing's happened so far." That's how I would be inclined to think about that from this statement. I know that's not true.

MK: **0:34:50.4** That's how they want you to read it anyway, or so it seems.

SBG: Exactly, that's how I feel they want me to read this, exactly.

CK: But one of the—who is the *they*? What's the interest of the players you mentioned?

SBG: Well, all I can think of is that they must all be in bed together. You know—

MK: So that would include the—?

SBG: Farm Bureau, Department of Agriculture. You know, so I always thought that these would be agencies that would be on my side.

MK: Protecting—

SBG: Protecting, yeah giving me good guidance. And when I look at this particular article, I didn't feel like there was good guidance other than there was a statement that says, "A water test is also an important first step," although that happens about a third of the way into the article. So that important first step wasn't even addressed. And there's a statement in there—basically instead of—I feel like what has happened is instead of saying, "Let's learn about this and understand it so you can make an informed, good decision for your own farm and your own community," I feel like the reaction now is, "Wow, this is so far down the road and all this money is being shelled out. You better come in and figure out how to get a good lease so that you don't get burned in the process, because you're not going to be able to get anything else."

MK: Or left out—

SBG: Yeah, or left out.

MK: And they will come and get your gas anyway—

SBG: Anyway.

MK: Isn't that the idea?

SBG: That's the idea, and that's the—

CK: What is that?

SBG: **0:36:23.8** They're going to come and take your gas anyway—you know.

CK: Can you talk about that?

SBG: Well, that's just the—some of the things that you hear people say, "If you don't—you might as well sell it because they're going to take it anyway. You know, once they're underground, they don't know where your land really starts and ends." And okay, I understand all of that kind of stuff; however, you know if the drilling is so sophisticated then they should be able to figure out where my land began and ended, and they shouldn't have the right to take something that's mine without my permission. You know, and so the language practices or patterns that seem to be floating around people are—you don't really have a choice, that you might as well get the money while you can, because they're going to take it from you anyway. And I don't feel that that's really the right way to think about it. I feel that what we really should be getting is information about what really happens with fracking, not some kind of generic kind of statement that's, I felt, meant to sway your thinking to the accepting of the drilling practice at all.

I think what should be happening instead—you know—what should be happening is, "Here's what's good, and here's what's bad about it." And then you weigh it into your own mix, like I said, for your own farm and for your own community. But that's not how the articles are reading that are coming out, and that's not the way people talk. The way people talk is that you might as well get the money while they're here, because they're going to take it from you. They're going to ruin your land anyway, and you're not going to have your water. And so when they leave and you haven't gotten at least the money, then you have nothing. So it's kind of presented—the language pattern is presented in such a way that it's an all or none deal. You don't really have a choice. You might as well go ahead with the gas company and take what they have to offer, because you're going to get burned anyway. And I think that's the wrong way to think about it, and so I have a problem with that. And when I read that particular article, I was feeling like the entities—meaning the Department of Agriculture and Farm Bureau and my favorite farm publication let me down—I felt like they let me down, because I depended on them for information that I feel I could work with. I already knew I needed a water test. There was nothing in that article that said it had to be from a certified lab.

MK: Does it?

SBG: Uh-hunh (affirmative).

MK: Would you say that?

SBG: It has to be from a certified lab, and to get your water tested by a certified lab is not—it's a pricey enterprise. I haven't been out pricing it myself yet, but what I had heard at one of the last meetings that I had attended was that it's going to cost you on average $1000.

MK: What farmer has that?

SBG: **0:39:27.6** Right. And if that's just for your well, what about all your springs? You know, on our farm we've got—one, two, three, four—five springs that feed the livestock, so I need to

get all of those tested to be able to—yeah. So—and then the well—six—so do I need to do that just to make sure that I'm covered in case something—?

CK: How does cover you? I'm sorry—

SBG: The idea is to establish that your water is safe and clean before they come in and do their drilling.

CK: And so what happens if then it's contaminated? What do you do with that information?

SBG: You mean if it's contaminated after the drilling?

CK: Yeah.

SBG: Well, then you've got something to go into litigation with.

MK: And then what?

SBG: More money.

MK: And then what?

SBG: More money.

CK: How does that—

MK: How does that—what's that going to do about your contaminated water now?

SBG: Well, it has—you still have contaminated water, and you have less money to work with.

MK: But you can afford to buy little plastic bottles of water now.

SBG: I don't think I can afford to buy enough plastic bottles to feed all my—water all of my animals. So, but it's the idea of establishing that you had a safe supply to begin with, in case something goes awry, so that you have some legal ground to stand on if you choose to go to court.

CK: Do you know if that's happened yet? Have people been—

SBG: It has not happened here. It has happened out west.

MK: With those legal cases, did they get anywhere?

SBG: **0:41:01.6** No, they didn't get anywhere, not from what I have heard. And you know, I'm not an attorney. I haven't researched all of that stuff either, but the things that you hear back is

that, "No, they can't establish that the contamination of those water sources were a result of the drilling." Well, how do you—

MK: Duh!

SBG: Yeah, if it was fine one day and bad the next, and the only change—the only variable that came into play was drilling, wouldn't you think there would be a correlational relationship? There should be, but that's not how it seems to work. And then if you don't have the financial resources to fight that, where do you go with it, what do you do? So to me the clear answer is, keep them out of your area. Keep them as far away as you can. I'm feeling like that, but I'm not among the majority in that perspective, because most of the folks that I hear talk are like, "Have they been to talk with you yet, and what did they offer?" Well, I'm not interested in talking, so it doesn't matter what they have to offer, because I'm not interested. Because they can't offer me anything that's better than what I've got. They can't offer that. They don't have the ability to offer that. And they certainly can't offer me anything that's better than what I'm proposing to hand off to the next generation. They can't top it. They don't have the ability to top it. So I don't see it as welcome, and I wish there were more people who thought that way. Maybe there are. I just haven't run into them.

CK: How do you help people to see that?

SBG: Just talk—you know—if somebody asks the question, answer it. Ask them a question, "What do you think about it?" I hadn't shared with you—I had talked briefly with one of my neighbors, and he'd said although the money seems really appealing that he didn't think that they were going to do that, because his father had always told him that without water your land isn't anything—you have nothing. And I think that his father taught him well. I actually even remember his father saying that exact same thing to us when we moved here. He came over to see who we were and what our intensions were with this land, and one of the things that he expressed right from the beginning was, he said his big concern is water. He said, "I wanted to find out what you intend to do with that farm over there, because what you do with your land will affect mine." And he reiterated that same phrase, "Without your water, your land is nothing." So I agree with him. It isn't—it's nothing.

MK: So how would you summarize this whole issue for yourself and others?

SBG: Well, one of the things is that I feel that we shouldn't be put in a position where we have to make such a rapid decision about something that has such long-term, far reaching effects, and that it would be appropriate, I feel, if our state government would take leadership in slowing down some of these actions, so that there would be time to really study the impact of this kind of drilling on our—on the resources, on the communities, and on the agrarian structures here in our state. This is an agricultural state, and if you disrupt that— The land masses, that's one of our major economic contributors here in Ohio. So I feel that our legislature does have a—our government does have a responsibility to take a look at how this drilling will affect agriculture—just if you want to look at it in that narrow of a vein.

CK: **0:45:45.4** Doesn't the whole nation rely on agriculture?

SBG: It should, but just this state in itself, looking at the impact of drilling in the state of Ohio. Ohio—given that agriculture is one of its driving economic bases, should be paying attention to what drilling will do to that one major economic faction in the state. If they want to keep it all tied to money, then tie it to that angle of money—agriculture is a driving industry in this state. If that's all they can think about is money, then let's link it back to money then.

CK: Well—but agriculture is food, and that means they're feeding people—

SBG: True, but do you really think they care about feeding people if they're willing to destroy the air and the water? They don't—I mean, I really don't believe they care about feeding people. But our legislators will look at their tax base, and if agriculture is a big part of the tax base, then why would you invite in another industry that's going to actually destroy—or potentially destroy that industry in your state?

CK: Well, they'll get lots of money from people's taxes if they lease their land. They're going to be wealthier than they've been before, right? I don't know for how long.

SBG: For how long, yeah.

MK: Depends on how you measure wealth.

SBG: Yeah—yeah true. So I feel like the government here should have more of—should take more leadership instead of inviting in a group to just basically ravage our state. They should be taking leadership to say, "How can we do this responsibly? Or should we do this responsibly?" Because I'm not really convinced *how* is really the right question. I think *should* is the right question. "Should we ever really do this?" And take the time to understand what really is the impact, because there's a lot of misinformation floating around on both sides, I'm sure. You know—I mean, obviously I have leanings on one side, which is to not do it, but there's misinformation all around. I feel like that *Farm and Dairy* article is a good example of misinformation because of lack of information.

So take the time to really understand what's going to happen with these kinds of processes. Really inform people as to what will happen in their living space, when the drilling comes in, because I don't think people really have a clear picture of what that means. And what's going to be the spinoff in terms of all of the environmental factors, not just from land erosion, but also from the water perspective, from your air quality? You know, living here in the Ohio River Valley, we understand what it means to have bad air quality. We lived with that growing up with the steel industry. We had the same impact with people.

MK: So you're talking misinformation based on too little actual information?

SBG: **0:48:54.4** Yeah. I don't feel that there's a clear information base in terms of pro drilling or against drilling. I don't feel there's really good, clear information on either side. And so I feel that one of our government's responsibilities should be to help provide good, clear, accurate information, and not just information to sway public opinion. And that's what I feel like happens

now is that we get information to sway public opinion. And then you know how people are. You get one little piece of information, and then you start filling in the gaps and adding other misinformation to create a complete picture. Whether it's accurate or not is irrelevant. It's just that you end up with a complete picture, and then people make their decisions on information that's not correct. So it would make sense to slow down the progression of the activity of signing leases and so forth and set a base in place for people to become well informed in terms of what it means even to lease your property.

I don't even think people understand what they're giving up, you know, or what they're permitting. So there's a lot of education and learning that should happen all the way around before anyone ever makes the decision. And what's happened now is high-pressured sales. It's, you have someone come in there offering a whole lot of money to people who aren't used to dealing with that kind of money, and they don't really get any good information. So although I'm not a real advocate of a lot of government intervention, I can see that this would be one place where it would make sense for the government to say, "We have resources to explore what it really means to have this kind of activity on a long-term basis within a certain region of our state." And then do that kind of environmental impact study, and also look at community impact studies. What does this really mean? Not just sinking a hole in the ground. That's not all it—that's not what it means.

MK: And are our regulatory agencies staffed sufficiently to oversee these things?

SBG: They probably aren't.

MK: Not in West Virginia they aren't.

SBG: Yeah, I can't imagine that they would be here either. I mean, I'm just looking at what's happened in terms of just the—like soil and water conservation offices, and our extension offices, just looking at those support services for agriculture. They've all been reduced. If they've reduced those, what would make me think that they'd have this big army of folks available to monitor any kind of well sites? I can't imagine that they would even be there. And who would be hiring them to monitor those well sites anyway, and who's training them anyway? So I'm skeptical all the way around. I don't think that there's good preparation for any of this, and it's just been bulldozed in on people so that later they go, "Oh sorry, it's too late now." Well, I think we should slow down and take a look at it before we say, "Oh oops, sorry too later." Because that's not an easy cleanup.

CK: Can you address that question that you were—you were saying you know people are really pressured—it's going to happen anyway, so you might as well take the money. What's your feeling if it—God forbid if it happened all around you, how do you address that, and what do you say to folks, and what do you say to yourself?

SBG: **0:52:49.9** I'm saying, "I'm not going to sign." That's what I say, and I hear people around me say they're going to sign. I hear friends say they're going to sign, and people that I never thought would ever sign are talking about signing. I have a friend that I thought would never sign, over in West Virginia, and she did because she said every window she looks out of her

house, she can see a potential well site, because of all of the other neighbor's surrounding farms have all sold off. And so she finally felt she had no option. I'm not so sure I'm willing to do that. I feel like—you know—this may be a naive statement, but at this stage in my life, I feel like I've made a major commitment to care for this piece of ground, and that's what I'm going to do. So I don't feel—I don't feel pressured to say yes. I feel a staunch obligation to say no.

CK: Didn't you talk about it from a spiritual perspective too?

SBG: I did—I did.

CK: You said you were not a church person anymore, but—

SBG: No, I'm not a person that belongs to any organized church, but I believe I'm a deeply spiritual person, and I feel that this whole issue for me is what I consider part of my soul work, that I cannot sell out on something that I feel obviously has been placed before me as a moral challenge to work through, and I feel like I can't be bought out on something like that. There's a bigger picture beyond just this physical entity, and whatever challenges I have on this plane will carry with me through those next ones, and I am not going to sell out on this.

CK: Thank you.

MK: Sherry, that was wonderful.

CK: You said it all and so beautifully. Won't you press the stop button?

MK: I did.

(end of audio) **0:55:26:4**

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