

Gina James: This is Gina James. We are in Adena, Ohio. It is June 27th, 2015. I am with Pat Jacobson.

Francie Arnett: I am Francie Arnett. I was born in January 28th, 1952.

GJ: Francie, could you tell me a little bit about your people and where you were raised?

FA: I was actually born in Wheeling, West Virginia. I grew up in St. Clairsville, Ohio. In fact, the house that I grew up in was built in 1952. I lived there until I was 18, until I graduated from high school. I'm a Polish descent, my all four grandparents. Both my grandfathers immigrated to the United States from Poland. Both my grandmothers were born here, but of Polish parents. So, I'm full-blooded Polish. Some of my best growing up memories are the celebrations, the family things, the reunions, just the family together. We grew up with a family. It was an extended family. The cousins were all close, the aunts and uncles. Grandma lived next door. I was baking with grandma all the time. I was making pierogies with grandma. [laughter] Did everything I could with my grandma. I went to a Catholic grade school in St. Clairsville. Then I went to a Catholic high school in a small town, Lafferty, Ohio. So, I had twelve years being indoctrinated into a Catholic religion [laughter] that I no longer practice. [laughter]

GJ: [laughter]

FA: Actually, I was very sheltered growing up too. St. Clairsville was very, very small at that time. Our neighborhood there was no kids to really play with. It was just us basically. Although I had four sisters and one brother, so we made our own fun, I guess. My cousins didn't live far away, so we had them all the time. But there was not much in St. Clairsville, but it was a pretty place to be. I'm not complaining by any means. But I had a good childhood, I think, a lot of fun. We always laugh because we had one bike for three sisters. [laughter] But when we got baby dolls, we each had our own. [laughter] But then after high school, I went away to the University of Cincinnati for two years. I studied community development. Coming from a high school I graduated with twenty-six kids, a town of two thousand people, I was completely intimidated by the city of Cincinnati. I was intimidated by the school. I was intimidated by my classes. I just couldn't do it, so I quit school. Then I met Greg. [laughter] So, after I met Greg, I can remember the first time I brought him home to my parents he had hair to his waist. My dad said, "You're not going anywhere with him." I said, "Oh, yes, I am." [laughter] That's when we were on our way to Connecticut. So, we did and it worked. I think my dad and Greg were their worst nightmares to each other until Dylan was born. Once Dylan was born, it was all okay because Greg was a great dad. [laughter]

GJ: Tell me more about your siblings. What were their names?

FA: My oldest sister is Stephanie. She lives in Iowa right now. She owns her own business. She's a philanthropist consultant. She travels worldwide and does a lot of good work for a lot of people. But she was always that kind of person. She even said when she was 10 or 11, she said, "I'm going to do something to make the world better. I'm going to do something big with my life." She did. She was a very good musician and she actually started to study music when she went to school. Then she switched her major and went into journalism and then she just got the

right jobs, was in the right places. They lived in New York for a while and then Chicago and now she's in Iowa. [laughter] But she married a man who's a professor of philosophy and he got a job at the University of Northern Iowa. So, that's where she is. My next older sister is Cindy. She is an artist. She actually works for Oglebay. I don't know if you've had the chance to go to Oglebay Park while you've been...

GJ: We saw the sign. [laughter]

FA: It's a real pretty place. But she works there right now. She's a floral designer. But she lives actually next door to my mother. She lives in my grandma's house, she and her husband. Cindy's a good soul. She's a good person to have around. Then I'm the middle child. My younger brother, Philip, lives in Westerville, Ohio. He's a retired hydrogeologist. He's actually where we get a lot of our information about the oil-gas industry because that's what he was working in. He was working for Schlumberger when he retired. So, he was involved in a lot of the research.

GJ: Schlumberger?

FA: Yes. It's actually a –

Greg Arnett: Swedish.

FA: – Swedish company. But they're all over the world. It's spelled S-C-H – I don't know.

GJ: But is that...

FA: It's a gas and oil research company. He worked for them for several years. He just retired. My youngest sister is a school teacher. She lives in Cleveland. She's got two girls. Theresa was the baby of the family and always treated differently because she was a baby. She was always that person who always did everything right. She followed all the rules [laughter] unlike her older sisters [laughter] who broke every rule we could find. But I always said that Stephanie paved my way because she really broke a lot of the rules of the Catholic family. She made it a little easier for me. [laughter]

GJ: You mentioned you went to University of Cincinnati for community development.

FA: Development.

GJ: Can you tell me a little more about that path?

FA: Well, I chose community development because it was a new program in the [19]70s. What I see now of what the community developers do, I really wish I would have stuck it out and stuck with it because I think they do a lot of good work. But at that time, it was part of the school of architecture. In the small high school I went to, I never had any art classes or anything and no graphic design, nothing. So, I was there out of my league even from that standpoint, that I just didn't have any background for. I thought it was going to be more like sociology kind of things,

more economics, looking at needs of people and how to put things together to fill those needs. When I got there, I guess I was surprised to see that there was so much design and art kind of things thrown in there. I'm not an artistic person by any stretch of the imagination. I didn't have any background. I really struggled. So, I just decided that wasn't right for me. But after Greg and I spent time at the farm in Norwalk after our Connecticut jaunt. Then we spent the time in Norwalk on the farm, which I really enjoyed the Norwalk farm because I ran the markets more or less and I learned a lot of things during that time. But when we moved back to this area and we were in the farmhouse in St. Clairsville, I started back to school and I got my degree ten years later. It took me ten years, but I had to schedule myself around kids, childcare, vehicles. I went as slow as I needed to, but I got through it in ten years and I got my degree in accounting. I went to work after that. Been retired for two years now and I'm quite happy about that. [laughter]

GJ: You mentioned your brother has been instrumental in educating or giving you guys a lot of the inside knowledge. Can you talk more...

FA: When they come to our door with a lease, when they come to ask any kind of questions, or when we have to make any kind of decisions, we call Philip, "Is this the right thing to do? Is this harmful? Is this not harmful? What's your take on this? Can you explain this technology a little bit to us?" He was always very generous with his time to really tell us those kinds of things of what was actually going on underground. When they came out and did the studies – I forget what they called it.

GA: Seismic.

FA: Seismic studies to see what was underneath us. We called him right away because they came and they wanted to give you so much money per acre to come and do that. We called to make sure that what they were doing was not going to – because they put those charges down in the ground and they blow them up, we just wanted to make sure it wasn't going to do any harm. So, those are the kind of questions we always asked him.

GJ: What is underneath?

FA: A lot of oil, [laughter] a lot of gas.

GA: They didn't tell you.

FA: But they won't tell us exactly. But by the amount of letters that we get here weekly from companies that want to buy our mineral rights, they know what's out there. They won't tell us after they did the studies. You have to buy that information. So, we don't know exactly what's under there. But from all the offers we get, there must be a lot under there.

GJ: What about your neighbors?

FA: Most of the neighbors followed a similar path of what we did as far as leasing about the same time. Not really sure of it. When they came to sign our lease, we thought it was so far in the future that it wouldn't even affect us and none of this gas and oil. We just didn't think it was

going to happen this fast. But most of our neighbors have followed similar paths of what we have. So, it's here. It's going to be here for a while, I guess, all this activity,

GJ: I am so unfamiliar with the whole [laughter] what it really is. So, everyone in this area has signed?

FA: Pretty much. But it's a lease that when it happens, they'll have the right to that. But as we all know that even if you sign a lease, if your neighbor signs a lease and they can go a mile underground to get that oil, they're going to take it from you anyway. So, that's one of the reasons and even after we signed and we learned more after we signed than what we knew before we signed. But after we did it, everybody else had done it around us. So, we thought, "Well, we're not protected by anything." We have 70 acres and I think there's blocks that they drilled under like what? 500 acres or 1,000 acres? They have to have that much in one area before they drill. So, we have 70, which is a pretty tiny part of that. So, that's another reason why we thought, "What are they going to do with our 70 acres? They won't even mess with us." So far, they haven't. [laughter] We'll see what happens in the next couple of years.

GJ: You said you enjoyed a lot of the time that you spent in Norfolk?

FA: Norwalk, Ohio.

GJ: In Norwalk, sorry.

FA: Yes, I did, because I learned a lot. It was our first couple years of being married, there were no children yet. We were busy. We worked like crazy because that farm was basically – Greg and I did most of the work on the farm except for the kids that came to help Greg when it's time to harvest and whatever. But yes, we worked a lot, but it was fun work and it suited us because we are both outside people. We both liked being out doing that kind of stuff. Even getting up at 2:00 a.m. to build fires under the peach tree. But hey, [laughter] it was an adventure. [laughter] So, we went from that farm, to another farm, to this farm. They've all been adventures. This one's just been a thirty-six-year adventure. [laughter]

GJ: You have two boys, you said?

FA: We have two boys, Dylan and Eric. They're eleven months different in age. Having those kids was just about the most exciting thing. But now I tell them that the reason I had them was so I can have grandchildren. [laughter]

GJ: [laughter]

FA: Because those grandkids are just incredible, every one of them. [laughter] We have five ranging in age from 7 to 17. So, pretty incredible to have that much family of ours, our family. [laughter]

GJ: Now speaking of family, you had mentioned that one of the things that you loved most was the extended family on all four grandparents, the Polish extended reunions, and parties. Can you

describe some of those events or parties?

FA: My mother's family always got together. Her name was (Pilark?). Every year we had a Pilark reunion. But then when my generation started to move away and it was up to my parents' generation to put it all together, they started slowing down a little bit and then it was maybe every three or four years. So, then the cousins tried to do it a couple times. But we're so spread out. We're just all over the place. So, they're fewer and farther between. But the last one we had we were in St. Clairsville Memorial Park. We had a very good turnout. I think we had about a hundred people there, which was pretty good. But we hired a polka band to come and play music for us. So, we had all the tables in the middle of the shelter. We had a wonderful meal. As soon as dinner was over, those tables went away and we had a huge dance floor. Then we called a photographer in to come and take our picture, the whole big family. So, we said, "It's picture time." We all get lined up for the picture and we look behind us and here's the band, they got in the picture too. [laughter] So, we have this great family photo with five musicians in the picture. We had a great time. That was fun. Everybody danced. It was a really, really fun reunion. But they were all fun. My parents used to own a cabin at Senecaville Lake, which is between Cambridge, Ohio and here on Route 70. We had a lot of the reunions out there. Those were great days too because we'd just slosh around in the lake all day and muddy and dirty. [laughter] The meals were always good and the company was always good. I had an uncle that was married to an Italian woman, so he always had the Dago Red wine. So, as I got older, I used to say 12, 13, that was old enough to [laughter] taste the Dago Red, at least taste it. But he always used to bring peaches from his trees. So, he'd slice up the peaches and put the red wine on them and oh, that was just wonderful. [laughter] But we had a lot of good times, good parties as a family. My father's family didn't have quite so many. It's a smaller family. He only had two brothers, so we didn't have quite so much. But my mother, there were eight kids in that family, so we had quite the crew. [laughter] A lot of my childhood memories are around those kinds of things, the holidays. Just in the summer and the evenings, that would be our entertainment, just to go visit one of the cousins or one of the aunts and uncles or whatever.

GJ: So, living out here, as Greg mentioned, all by yourself with the kids. How was that in terms of what you were used to? [laughter]

FA: Well, it was different. Greg and I talk about that a lot because our boys aren't as close to their cousins as we were with ours. Greg was close to a lot of his cousins too. Because his siblings are away, my siblings aren't too far away. But there's a big age difference between my boys and their other cousins so they never had that. So, it was very different. But we brought family here as much as we could and had cousins try to visit them here as much as we could just so that they would have that connection. That's something that we work on even with our two boys and their kids. We try to make sure that those kids get together enough that they know each other. I think that's got to be one of the worst things in the world, to grow up and not know your family, not know who your cousins are, your aunts and uncles. So, I think it's important. So, we try to keep that. We try to make sure that happens as much as we can. But my work life, I was an auditor for the state of Ohio, so there's not much to tell there. [laughter] It did what we needed to do. But when we moved here, I liked the peace here. The kids never had store-bought bread, I don't think, until they went to school. I baked everything. I baked crackers. I baked bread. I made everything that I could. But when we came to this house, the house was small and

I didn't mind the size of the house. The thing I minded was that the kitchen was in the basement. So, everybody was always upstairs and I was always downstairs cooking. [laughter] It was my choice to do all that, but at the same time I felt away from everybody. So, that's why we ended up building this [laughter] so that I could be part of the family up here. Then when I went to work, I had to give some of that up. But I tried to get the boys at least to realize that there were two sides to how you could take care of yourself. There was a good way and there was a bad way. Hopefully, they're a good mix of that now and they watch what they eat and do the right thing as far as that goes. Because those co-op days when we had the food co-op and my days here just in the farm, I canned a lot. I canned everything I could get my hands on. We made applesauce, peaches. Anything I could do, I did here. I always thought that was very important for me, important for the kids. So, hopefully, they took a little bit of that away. But I think they did. But I got a lot of that from my mother too. Because my mother and I if we didn't have enough, we would buy three or four bushels of tomatoes and we would make tomato stuff all day. [laughter] 8:00 a.m. until 9:00 p.m. or 10:00 p.m., we'd be canning tomatoes. [laughter] So, a lot of that I got from my mother who taught me how to do a lot of that stuff. That was probably my best years, I think, [laughter] before I went to work. Because when I went to work, I guess I did that out of a sense of I had to. Greg did go through the strikes and then I thought once the kids go to school too, I might as well do something and make it worthwhile. So, that's why I decided to go back to school. If I was going to work, I wanted to be worth my while to work. So, we did that. But a lot of good times here at the farm with the kids. I heard him tell you that I didn't like this place when we bought it. When we came to look at it when I left, I said, "There is no way in hell you're going to get me to live out there." [laughter] He got a little bit irritated with me and he said, "Well, you must not really want to live in the country." I said, "Well, country, yes. But my gosh, where are you taking me?" [laughter]

GA: [laughter]

FA: I did not like it. Then one of the first nights we were here – we moved in January, in winter. Greg was on midnight turn. I go to the bathroom, I look out the bathroom window, I see flashlights down the woods. I go, "Oh my god, they're here for me." [laughter] Greg comes home in the morning, every light in the house is on. "What happened?" Because that was days before cell phones, I couldn't call him in the mill. I couldn't get in touch with him. I couldn't do anything. I had no vehicle. I told him what I saw and he said, "Oh, those were coon hunters. You didn't have to worry about them." I said, "I had no idea that coon hunters came out at night with flashlights." [laughter] Oh, I got used to a lot of things. Now, you're going to have to drag me away, I guess. It's a hard decision that we made, but I think it's the right decision for us right now.

GJ: When will you go?

FA: When we sell. [laughter] Hopefully, before the snow flies again. I would really like to have it done and settled by fall.

GJ: Are there any issues with selling? Is it complicated to sell?

FA: Well, we're trying to sell it by ourselves. It's more work than I had anticipated selling by

ourselves. The right person has to come for this place. It's not for everybody to live back this far off the road, to have this much quiet and solitude. People say, "Oh, I'd really like to live where it's nice and quiet." Then they come out and say, "Oh my gosh, I don't even see a house out here." So, it's going to take the right person, the right family, or the right individual to say, "Yes, I want that place." So, yes. We've had a lot of people come look, but it's just got to be that right one. It just takes one. They'll come along. [laughter]

GJ: Has it been more difficult with the lease and everything or does that not come up until –

FA: It was a problem for one of the potential buyers, that they did not like the fact that it was leased. Then one of the buyers asked us if he could buy the mineral rights and he said, "Well, if you got that much money, yes." We're not greedy, but it's something if we can leave it for our kids and our grandchildren. It's here and they're going to take it and it's worth something. So, we'll leave it for them if that's a possibility. So, the gas and oil really hasn't been an issue except for the one couple and they just didn't like the fact that it was leased. That's fine. Like I said, it's got to be the right person [laughter] with everything in line the way they want it, the ways it's going to work for them.

GJ: Did you have any questions?

Pat Jacobson: I do not think so. Francie, you have really given a wonderful picture of your life. [laughter]

GJ: Is there anything you would like to add or anything maybe you left out you would want to...

FA: Not particularly. I don't think that I left out – Greg and I share a lot of the politics, so we can leave that. You heard a lot of that. One of the things when he was talking about the union, my grandfather worked in the mines. He worked in Willow Grove, Ohio, which was very close to Neffs. He was one of those men that was in the fight for the unions where there was bloodshed. He fought very hard for the unions. So, seeing things the way they are now, sometimes it just makes me feel really sad because he fought so hard. He worked so hard for workers' rights and for what? How long did that last? Seventy years? Now, it's all going away. That bothers me a great deal even though my father was a boss in the Wheeling-Pittsburgh mills. So, he was on the other side of the unions and the union guys were writing bad things about him on the restroom wall. [laughter]

GJ: [laughter]

FA: Greg was reading some of them. [laughter] But dad was always very supportive of the unions at the same time because he knew that it was important to be able to take care of your family and to live well and to earn an honest living. So, he was not really a horrible anti-union person except he was the boss. [laughter] So, that made a difference. But I guess as far as that whole thing with the unions, that's why it's more of a personal thing with me, I think. A lot of my uncles too were in that fight. My grandfather was in the Willow Grove mine when it exploded or he had just gotten out right before the explosion occurred. So, people talk about coal mines and things and sometimes they have different thoughts or different opinions of them.

But it was a big part of my family. They were all coal miners and there's a pride there. There's a bit of a sorrow there because of what they went through, I guess, and the kind of conditions that they worked in. You think, gee, it was all just to take care of yourself. It's not a very pleasant thought. I don't think any of us would want to do that, but they did it. My grandfather was always happy. He was always smiling. He had a huge garden. That was one of the other things, I always liked to go to his garden and pick whatever I could [laughter], sit under his apple tree and eat green apples and read books until I was sick to my stomach. [laughter] But it was at grandpa's house. So, [laughter] it was all good. Anything else you want to know? [laughter]

PJ: No. Great interview.

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