

Eliot Coleman, Narrator

Anneliese Abbott, Interviewer

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Location: Remote over Zoom

EC=Eliot Coleman

AA=Anneliese Abbott

AA: It seems that almost every successful organic vegetable grower in the northeastern and midwestern United States has been influenced in some way by Eliot Coleman. Many have read his books or visited his farm. Others were mentored by experienced farmers who, in turn, had learned their methods from Eliot Coleman. Eliot consistently came in first place in my recent survey asking organic farmers and gardeners who they had been influenced by. So it is with great pleasure that I am able to interview Eliot Coleman today, on January 24, 2022, as part of the organic and sustainable agriculture history project. So Eliot, thank you so much for taking the time to do this today.

EC: You're welcome, Anneliese. It's my pleasure.

AA: All right. So your name today is almost synonymous with organic vegetable production in the United States, especially in the northern United States. So could you give a little background on how and why you decided to make organic vegetable growing your life's work?

EC: Well, once I got involved, and I got involved because I read a book that made organic farming sound like an adventure. And prior to that, I had a teaching job. But I mainly had a teaching job so I could have my vacations free to go adventuring. Rock climbing, mountaineering, white water kayak racing, you name it. And I was in my late 20s thinking there should be something more socially redeeming in my future than the next mountain. And organic farming sounded like a wonderful adventure. And the minute I got started on it, the thing was that it worked so well. Everything that I had seen in books about how you could grow plants without bothering with pests and everything if you treated the soil correctly turned out to be true.

And this was the '60s, and a lot of us were trying to build a better world and looking for ways of supporting ourselves that contributed to that better world. And here was organic farming, which was sort of a touchstone for, "Yes, yes you can do all these things." Especially because, back in the '60s when I got started, every single expert, the USDA and every single ag professor at every single university in the country, was saying this was impossible. Well, they were also telling us wonderful old hippies that everything we wanted to try to do to improve the world was impossible, so this was just neat that here was this one thing where we were right and they were wrong.

And as I say, it worked so well that I was just fascinated, like, "My gosh, how far can we take it?" And what made it especially fascinating was, we had no money, and we ended up on uncleared spruce-fir forest on the coast of Maine. So first I had to cut down trees and pry out stumps and roll out rocks. And then try and turn the measly two inches of topsoil into something

that would grow things. And I did it all with locally available resources. Spoiled hay from a neighbor's field, or the leaves from the woods, and things like that. And this was just miraculous that we could start with absolutely nothing, and we now have about ten inches of topsoil that looks pretty much like topsoil ought to look. And it grows absolutely beautiful versions of some 55 different crops. And there may be a tiny nick here or there, but nothing that anybody would call a pest problem. So that was addressed right from the start. It worked. (4:14)

AA: Yeah, that's really great! So is there anything else you want to share about the history of Four Seasons Farm? I'm especially curious on why you decided to settle in Maine, because that's one of the harder climates in the United States to grow vegetables in. And did you realize when you decided to settle in Maine that any methods that actually worked there would probably work pretty much anywhere else with a similar or even warmer climate?

EC: Actually, it was an economic decision. As I said, we had no money to start with. And the book that inspired me to think that small farming might be fun was the Nearings' book, *Living the Good Life*. And I came over and met them. And we got along very well, and the following year, when we decided, "Okay, we're going to leave teaching and go farm," I stopped by again. And Helen said, "Heck, we're not using the back half of our place; we'll sell it to you." And they sold it to us for what they paid for it 20 years before, because they liked the idea of people getting into farming. And so here was land I could afford. We paid them \$33 an acre. And that was for 60 acres. We've since sold 20 acres of that to friends for the same \$33 an acre, because we thought we shouldn't be the only ones on the receiving end of such a nice gift.

But basically, we were able to turn that totally unpromising piece of land into a highly productive farm. So that's why we are in Maine. That made a lot of it very pleasant, because Maine was still extremely rural. And all of my neighbors around here didn't think what we were doing was weird at all, because their fathers and grandfathers had probably grown up doing this. So it was just a nice community to move into. (6:22)

AA: Great. So I was reading through *The New Organic Grower*, and it's just great the way you wrote about all these different methods. And your bibliography, I was especially interested in with my interest in the history of organic farming. And it looks like you've included almost everything that's been written about organic farming—I originally thought since the early 20th century, but I see that you've got stuff from the 19th century and even earlier in there also. And I'm sure you've read even more things that aren't cited there. But I'm sure that some of them probably influenced your methods more than others. So could you share a little bit about how you found information on organic farming, and which books and people influenced your methods the most?

EC: Yeah. Since moving in next door to the Nearings, I got to look through Scott's library. And Scott had a wonderful library. And one of the first books I read, which I put right here next to me, was a textbook. And it seems dull, but the textbook was *Soil Microbiology* by Selman Waksman. And I'd been to college, I had science courses, so this wasn't intimidating. But it was just totally eye-opening that we weren't running this system. All these invisible little creatures in the soil were running the system. And Waksman explained it so well and sort of made you think, "Oh my gosh, I've spent my adventuring life looking at mountains and rivers. I need to look

under my feet, because here, under my feet, is where the real excitement is happening in agriculture.” So that book, that was a totally eye-opening experience.

And then there were others. An Englishman named Hainsworth wrote a book called *Agriculture: A New Approach*. And he was a market gardener. And probably one of the best, and this is a delightful story, was written by a woman back in 1956, who wrote it without using her real first name. And her real first name was Rosa D. O’Brien, and she wrote the book as R. Dalziel (her middle name) O’Brien. And it was called *Intensive Gardening*. And she ran the most incredibly organized organic market garden that you could imagine. And I think people today would be surprised because it was not only no-till back in 1956, but it was organic as well. But just the organization, the techniques. She actually did motion-study on transplanting and cultivating. And so that was a heck of an inspiration. Okay, I could do this, but I need to be pretty well organized and have all my systems together if I want it to work out.

Other books. Here’s what came out after *Plowman’s Folly*, it’s a better explanation of what Faulkner had to say. [*A Second Look* by Edward Faulkner] And I learned a heck of a lot out of that. *The Farming Ladder* by George Henderson. Again, he was just organized, he was precise about what he did. Just book after book like that. And you can’t ignore things like *Sand County Almanac* [by Aldo Leopold] because he was so astute at understanding the natural world. And then there was Sir George Stapledon, wrote this book about *Ley Farming*. To a Brit, a ley is a temporary pasture. And this was about what I think people will realize is the only perpetual way to farm. This is growing a grass-legume pasture, grazing it with livestock, and after a couple of years, tilling it up to cash in all the stored fertility. Grow a couple of years of crops, and then put it back into grass-legume and do it all over again. And so from the point of view of carbon, you have already sequestered carbon during the years when it was in grass-legume pasture. And then you exploit the carbon you sequestered for another couple years. And we’ve been doing that here, and it’s just amazing how it maintains the quality of the soil and the organic matter.

So we could sit here and I could talk books for hours, because I am a total book nerd. I have about 3000 volumes in the library here that I’ve managed to collect. So yeah, the information is there. Our predecessors in the organic game were absolutely brilliant. They were intelligent, they expressed these ideas so well. And it’s worth looking up any of those books in the bibliography of my book that you mentioned and seeing what they have to say. (12:14)

AA: Thank you so much. So one of the other things I’m interested in learning more about, I was reading your books, *Four Season Harvest* and *The Winter Harvest Handbook*. And I’ve talked to a lot of people and seen a lot of people who have successfully used those methods that you developed in those, all over the Northeast and in the Midwest, in the United States here. And so I’m really curious about how you developed those. I know you mentioned some about visiting France. I found that really interesting, your stories about going to France. But what would you like to share about how you developed these farming methods and made them work in Maine?

EC: Well, I first got to go to France and visit French farmers in 1974. There was an international organic farming conference in Paris, I think was one of the first ones. And I met farmers there, and I speak enough French to wander around France. And so after the conference I made arrangements to go visit their farms with a couple of other Americans who were at the conference. And this was great. And they were doing things unbelievably well. Their world had not been taken over by something called California where all the food was grown. They were growing it right where they lived. And for winter they had certain crops that they used that were

not summer crops. And that was fascinating. However, I was always stubborn and determined. And so when I got home, I said, “Heck, let’s see if we can’t extend our seasons.” And so we started going later into the fall, and then started earlier in the spring. And soon these two things came together, and voila, the end of winter!

And it was just trying stuff out. You never know if it’s going to work unless you give it a try. And so we tried all sorts of things. And I just remember once during that time, when we were developing this, my trial plots, I might come in just before dinner, and I’d say to my kids and Barbara, “Wow, you wouldn’t believe what’s going on out there!” And they’d heard it all before, and they’d say, “All right, all right, shut up and make the vinaigrette, for Christ’s sake!” But there were plenty of failures. And my kids give me a hard time about some of the experiments we did with the different chicories. And somehow, in the wrong type of cold, they become so bitter that one leaf in the bowl will send its bitterness through the olive oil and destroy the whole salad. So there were times when we looked into things that didn’t work.

But basically, it turned out that all these crops were hardy enough to stand up to the temperatures if they were moderated a bit by being inside a greenhouse and then under an inner layer in a greenhouse. And we came to realize the thing that was really killing crops in the winter was the cold, dry winds out of doors that were just sucking the juices out of them. And Barbara and I took a journey across France and Italy back in—I forget whatever year that was. And it was just fascinating. You could hardly drive anywhere—and we were there in January—without seeing leeks in people’s gardens. There were always Brussels sprouts and the other hardy crops. And we didn’t see, once we got above a certain elevation where there was snow on the ground. And we realized that what had kept people here from investigating winter was that when there’s snow on the ground, it just looks, “Oh, forget it!” And that was true. You could drive in the hilly, mountainous parts of France and see no leeks left in the garden or anything when there was snow on the ground.

So it was just that we have to create a climate that was modified enough. And we obviously wanted to create it without using energy. And one day we put a cold frame inside the greenhouse. And well, a great leap forward! We had Georgia. And we had Georgia for free, without spending money on heat. So it just took off from there. And we looked into everything that we could do in the unheated. And we still have one minimally heated house because of economics. The winter sales to keep our markets, there are certain less hardy crops that need to be kept just above freezing. And we succeed by keeping them just above freezing, and just enough of them to make the difference. But there are other growers, like Paul and Cindy Arnold, I think, who do everything totally unheated. And we heat that greenhouse with wood, so we don’t have to feel bad about it. (18:18)

AA: One thing I thought was fascinating was how you talked about how you figured out how to grow artichokes in Maine. So what inspired you to try that?

EC: Well, I like to eat artichokes. And this was long ago, the first couple of years here, I got some seed and I planted them. And got these nice little seedlings. And we put them out. And half of them made artichokes the first summer, and half of them didn’t. And these are great puzzles. I thought, “What’s the difference?” And I realized that I hadn’t had room in the cold frame for all of them. So I’d left a lot of plants in a little greenhouse that was at the front of our house. And the ones in the cold frame had gotten a cold treatment. And so what studies have shown is that you start the seeds in a warm climate, and six weeks along, they think they’ve been through their

first summer. And so then you move them on about the first of April to a cold frame or someplace where they aren't warm, where they are going to experience cold. And that next six weeks makes them think they've been through their first winter. And so all of a sudden they think they're two years old, and they start producing artichokes the first year. And we succeeded at the beginning with all the old-time varieties. There's a variety now called Imperial Star that has been bred to make that easier to react in such a way, you don't have to work so hard to vernalize them. But it was just a case, nature has all sorts of neat systems. And I'm curious about all of them. So we just started investigating them. (20:18)

AA: That's very cool. So is there anything you want to share about your philosophies on organic farming, and how you've developed them, and then how they've changed over the years?

EC: Yeah. As I said earlier about being an old '60s hippie, we loved the fact that we are totally involved in this business. And the aim of the business is to produce the most nutritious, best-tasting, finest food anybody has ever eaten. And that is such a satisfying situation. And we've experimented around with a number of crops. Probably our most popular crop in the market are our winter carrots. And these are carrots that we don't plant until the middle of August. And we use a sweet, early variety like Mokum. And then just before hard cold hits, we slide a greenhouse over that field and put an inner layer inside there. And when you leave carrots stored in the soil rather than digging them and putting them in a cellar, they continue getting sweeter. And these are known in our local market as "candy carrots."

And some of the experiences, like Barbara was delivering early one morning to the local co-op. And the produce manager came running, and he said, "Oh, I'm so glad you're here early! There's a man waiting in the parking lot. We're out of your carrots, and his daughter won't go to school without one in her lunch box." This was a neat story. And I was in there a couple of days later, and there was this tiny little kid that I could see his mother talking to him. And he walked over to me and said, "Are you the carrot people?" As if I was from another planet. The kid just loved our carrots and was pleased to meet the carrot people who were responsible for them.

And the same goes for growing anything correctly. You get enough calcium into your spinach, and it's sweet, and kids love it. Parents have told us, kids ask them to go buy our spinach, and stuff like that. And that's the most satisfying part of it, because we're surrounded every day by sad stories of how poorly people are nourished in this country. And one way to get people eating better, if you want them to eat more vegetables, is to make the things taste good.

An even better story was the woman who told Barbara that her husband, who used to sit around all weekend and drink beer and watch football games and eat snacks. And she said, "Life is so much better now. He still sits around all weekend watching football games and drinking beer, but now he eats your carrots." [Laughter] Great improvements in the world. (24:06)

AA: Well that is great! So I've heard a lot of stories as I've been talking with people and interviewing people, and they've mentioned how you and Barbara have welcomed beginning organic farmers to your farm and helped them get started. And I've heard a lot of different people who have just really commented on how welcoming and friendly you've been. So is there anything you want to share about your experience mentoring and helping these beginning farmers? And then anything you want to share about your philosophy of education in organic production.

EC: Well, first off, by passing on this information, I'm just paying back all the really nice people I bothered and visited 60 years ago when I was first learning this. And there were some of these small European farmers, they were so hospitable. They'd give us meals and a tour of everything, and show us all the things they were doing. And that's the best way to learn. I don't want to put the university ag schools out of business, but I've never had anyone come work here who, if they had been to ag school, didn't say after about two weeks on the farm, "I've learned more here in two weeks than I did in four years at so-and-so." So if you want to learn how to do something, the old apprentice programs of the past were really good. Because you get to work with people who know how to do it, and you get to see the hard times and the good times.

So George Henderson, who wrote one of those books I put up here, he did that when he was learning farming. He'd tell all these wonderful stories in that book. But he says the key was, he wanted to choose really good farmers or really poor farmers. Because with the really good farmers, you learned what to do. And with the poor farmers, you realized why you didn't want to do what you didn't want to do.

And how do you get to work for a good farmer? Just write him a letter, and say, "Hi, I'm really interested in learning. I think the systems you're using are systems I'd like to know. I'll work for free." We've never taken people on for free; we always pay. We pay a decent salary, because we think this should be a business rather than some Ponzi scheme. And in George Henderson's day, this was really interesting. If you want to get taken on by a good farmer to learn, the system was that for the first three months or six months you paid the farmer a fee to teach you. For the second six months, you were trained enough, the farmer would pay that same amount back to you. So you got a year's training for absolutely no cost. But you have to be willing to put up the money up front. And this way, if you were a double loser, the farmer had your first six months of money, and you can go away. But if you stuck with it, you learned what you wanted to learn.

And yeah, if you think a production system is exceptional and valuable to the world, you want to pass it on. And I think the quality of food that's coming from small organic farms around the country is the only truly organic food available today. Ever since the USDA totally sold out organics by letting in hydroponic and the CAFOs and everything. It's too bad. I feel bad for the people that are going to the store and not realizing that this and that and the vegetable thing are all grown hydroponically, with no mention of that anywhere. And that all that milk from Horizon and places like that is coming from some massive confined animal feeding operation with 20,000 dairy cows out in the deserts of Texas. It's not coming from the beautiful little farm in the picture on the front of the milk container. So people need to work very hard to search out their local, small-scale producers and purchase from them if they want real organic food. (29:25)

AA: Yeah, that really ties in a lot to one of my other questions. Because I've been curious, as you've been involved in organic vegetable farming since before there was any kind of certification, through the patchwork system they had for regional certification, and then it took twelve years to discuss the USDA organic standards. And then since those were implemented in 2002, organic production has really skyrocketed. So I'm very curious to hear your perspective on how you viewed all those changes over the years and how you feel about the current certification system.

EC: Yeah. We've never been certified. I refuse to certify because I knew we would have the exact problem we have now. You can't give an idea over to people who don't believe in it in the

first place and put them in charge of it. That was just ridiculous. All the naïve organic spokespeople who gave away organic to the USDA should be embarrassed. And so I'm pretty belligerent about this.

There's a sign at the end of our driveway, in large letters on our signpost with the rest of it, that says, "Guaranteed Realorganic." And "realorganic" is all one word. And people have said to me, "You can't do that. You're not certified; you can't use the word organic." And I said, "I'm not using the word "organic"; I'm using the word "realorganic." And they said, "What's the difference?" And I said, "Realorganic, spelled R-E-A-L-O-R-G-A-N-I-C, is a neologism." And they said, "What's a neologism?" It's always worth throwing big words at people; it scares them. And I said, "Well, you remember your Greek, don't you? In Green, 'neo' meant 'new'; 'logos' meant 'word.' And you put them together, neo-logos, and a neologism is a new word." And so I invented this word, and so I can certainly use it. The black helicopters haven't arrived yet to drag me off.

But I think organic farmers who are doing it correctly need to be right up front and challenge the USDA. If they want to say that their farm is an organic farm, then they should say that it's an organic farm. And if everybody who's doing it right out there did that, there'd be too many people to stop. And it would be a great way for the press to realize what's happened, and that we need to unattach organic to the USDA. And I tell people, "You don't need the USDA certification. Just go talk to the grower. You know what you want. You look at their farm. Your good growers don't have cans of DDT hidden in the barn, I guarantee you."

So that's a battle I'm fighting at present, because I'm just dismayed what's happened. But unfortunately it happens to all good ideas. It happened to organic once everybody noticed, "Oh, these guys are making money. We need to co-opt them." That's just what they did. (33:14)

AA: Thank you for sharing about that. So have you been involved in organizations related to organic farming over the years? And if so, is there anything you want to share about your perspective on how those organizations have grown and changed over the years?

EC: Well, I don't want to make any of them mad at me, but I was involved with the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association, which is fascinating. In a state like Maine, this is the largest organic group in the country. I think the fact that they have farmers and gardeners in the name has made a difference. And then there are all the NOFAs, the either Northeast or natural farming associations. There's one in Vermont and New York and Connecticut and New Jersey and New Hampshire.

The thing that disappointed me about them is that there is now a group called the "Real Organic Project." And they came about because of the problems I was just describing, of how the US is not defending organic the way it should. And all of those organizations, because they have become far more concerned with raising money and running programs—which I'm sure are wonderful programs, teaching people things—totally ignored the fact that the concepts that they were teaching about had been so taken over and cheapened by the USDA. They weren't even paying attention. So Dave Chapman, who started the Real Organic Project, had to come out of nowhere and start a whole new organization to do what all of the present organic organizations should have been doing. They should have been down in Washington picketing on the front steps of the USDA. I mean, some of them have million-dollar endowments, and huge budgets. But they weren't paying attention to protecting what they should have been protecting.

And it all goes back, the old hippies were idealists. They had integrity. They were trying to create something that was going to be honest and wonderful. And that's what was created. So that spirit probably has a hard time lasting in organizations that have been around too long. They get hidebound and lazy and don't have the revolutionary drive that they had to get them started. You know, you read a lot of the old books about the pioneers. The organic pioneers, did they ever need drive and strength! My gosh, they were being trashed by all the agricultural experts.

And yet—and this is the thing. We're growing 55 different crops with no pesticides, and have been doing it for years. No entomologist from the University of Maine has ever come down here. You would think they would be at least slightly curious. So that's sort of the thing. We were a threat to their systems. Oh, dear, some of the articles that used to come out in the paper. The defenders of the agricultural status quo should be embarrassed if they were to look back on the '60s and '70s and the ridiculous ways they were trying to pretend that the truth didn't exist. Because the truth was right there in front of them, all they had to do was look.

So yeah, that's my attitude towards all of those programs and the organizations that started out as very, very in-your-face and then have sort of dissolved. They lost their drive and their integrity. (38:07)

AA: Thank you. And then related to that, you already mentioned a little bit about it, but what is your perspective on the relationship of the agricultural universities, especially the land grant universities, to organic farming? And how have you seen that relationship change over the years?

EC: Yeah. It used to be just, we were totally unacceptable. And then as organic became slightly more notorious and successful, there would be the occasional professor at the university who would invite me to speak. And I thought he had a lot of nerve to want to do that. In many cases, one of these guys would say to me, "Oh, boy, this was really difficult to do. Professors Smith and Jones were just outraged that we would bring an organic farmer in here." And I said, "So here's the deal. If you will round up Professors Smith and Jones and six-pack of beer and give me an hour together with them, I will convince them that this isn't crazy." And it was easy to do, because what I'm farming on is simple agronomy. The importance of organic matter in the soil has been known since people started farming. And nothing we were doing was breaking any of the rules of agriculture.

And all of the experts who were saying this was impossible back when I began, they weren't ignorant. They were merely under the assumption that what they had been taught at the university was correct. And what they had been taught at the university was so influenced by the large companies selling inputs that it was completely biased toward chemicals. Now chemicals have definitely done good, and all the people who say that millions of people wouldn't be alive today if we didn't have the Haber-Bosch process making nitrogen and things like that, I'm sure those are true. But the fact that you can grow all this food without using all those expensive artificial inputs and still succeed, that was ignored. Because I've often said that the biggest problem with organic farming is that it only makes money for the farmer. We don't buy inputs. We grow the materials for our compost, we grow our green manures, we run crop rotations, we grow cover crops, we use legumes. I'm the most frightening thing that a large agricultural input company ever heard of. And that's the difficulty.

There was an article by a woman named Lola Smith years ago in an ag magazine. And she said, and this was very true, that she felt bad for all the old entomology professors who were now close to retirement age, who had spent their lives developing pesticides. And to admit that it

was possible, like the organic people say, to grow plants without them successfully as they were doing, was to admit that their whole life and career had been a failure. And she said, “That is something people are not going to do.” And it’s very understandable. So organic, even though it works so well, and those of us who do it are so successful at it, we were in dangerous territory by going up against a totally established pseudo-truth and showing that it was not truth. (42:39)

AA: Yeah, thank you very much for sharing that. So as you look back on that past half-century of organic farming in the United States, what strikes you most as having changed since the 1970s? And then what has stayed the same? And are there any overall trends that you find interesting and want to comment on? And what do you think are the most important aspects of this history to preserve and teach to the younger generations?

EC: The trend that I find curious at the moment is the fact that nobody uses the word “organic” anymore. Everyone has been conned into using “regenerative.” Even though “regenerative” has no real definition. Your regenerative farmers—I’m glad to hear that they’re growing cover crops and protecting their soil, which organic has been advocating for the last hundred years—are still using glyphosate. And so how that has become the word to use indicates how effective the owning the press is at changing people’s thinking. And so I even know old-time organic types who don’t even use the word “organic” anymore. And that’s truly dismaying, because there are people who aren’t paying attention to the fact that the word they’re using has no real meaning.

And I also am bold enough to say that the majority of the large Midwestern farmers using the word “regenerative” are hiding the fact that the reason they need to *re*-generate their soil is because they spent decades *de*-generating it with chemicals. And rather than admitting that that was a mistake, they are proudly charging ahead and claiming to have found this wonderful new system. And I’m glad that so much of that soil is being protected and that new ideas, which are ideas that organic has protected for the last hundred years, are creeping in to large-scale agriculture. But the quality of food is nowhere near what the honest organic farmer is and has been producing forever.

So that is a modern trend. Is the takeover by industry anything new? No. Industry takes over any idea that comes along if they think—look what happened to the word “sustainable” and everything. And possibly, because there is a definition of organic, they haven’t been able to take it over in the same way they took over sustainable and regenerative. But the other option was to bribe the USDA into letting them sell their junk under the organic label even though cows were not out on pasture, the vegetables and fruits were not grown in soil. That’s dismaying. And as I say, I tell people, “You want the real thing? Go to your local organic dairy or your local organic vegetable grower.” (46:52)

AA: And what do you think are some of the biggest lessons, maybe, if people are looking back in 50 years? What would you want them to remember the most about your experiences and how you’ve seen things change? What would you like people to know if they’re listening to this in 50 years?

EC: Just simply that there are no impossibles. Everybody was told that what we do is impossible. I was told, “Oh, you can’t grow all winter long in Maine with no heat. That’s impossible.” Well, it wasn’t. And if you look at the impossibles, I used to do a talk entitled, “Nothing is impossible.” And it opened with a picture of a guy in a whitewater kayak going over

a hundred-foot-tall waterfall. And then the next shot was a climber on El Cap in Yosemite. Looked like he was practically running up this vertical face. Well, the first time El Cap was climbed, it took some of the best climbers in the country about 40 days, I think. The record now is 2 hours and 32 minutes. So human beings are able to accomplish all sorts of things. And they just need to not be intimidated by somebody who tells them that it's impossible. As an old hippie, I always thought things like world peace were a nice idea. Hopefully we will find out that that is just as possible as organic farming.

AA: Yeah, I sure hope so. So is there anything else you want to share before we wrap up, anything else that you want to be on the recording?

EC: Well, I think it's wonderful that you're getting your PhD researching what you're researching, because there is a great history here. And wonderful people who, they're old enough now to have been forgotten. I think it's great you wrote a book about Louie Bromfield. But then there's people like Paul Keene at Walnut Acres who was really one of the first people shipping whole food around the country. And he was just a marvelous gentleman with great integrity. The stories about how the peanut butter Walnut Acres was producing was made only from peanuts. And the Food and Drug Administration definition of peanut butter said it had to contain 10 or 20 percent of some sort of fat. And he had to battle the Food and Drug Administration to be able to call his peanut butter "peanut butter." These are heroes who did a lot to help the food world be just as good as it could be. So if you do nothing but bring a lot of those forgotten heroes to light in what you read or write or turn out, that would be a victory in itself.

AA: Thank you so much. Is there anything else you want to say before we end?

EC: No, but thank you very much for being interested in what this old farmer has to say.

AA: Yeah, I'm very interested. And thank you so much. (51:11)