

Donald Schoen  
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Rolling Acres, 7380 NW Groveland Road

“Tell me a little about how your father got this land.”

00:57: Don’s family was all bakers, and his dad was the owner of Perfection Bakery in Hillsboro for 40 years. As he got older he always wanted to go back to the farm. He was looking for property around and saw in 1952 the orchard they’re at now was for sale. He bought the orchard from the owners and began growing hazelnuts. He promoted his hazelnuts to all the local bakeries. He would fill up his truck with hazelnuts and drive around to all of the bakeries in the area with his hazelnuts and sell them to the bakers (who were all his friends.)

2:44: Don’s older brother bought the bakery from their dad so he wouldn’t have to worry about it anymore. With this freedom he went to the east coast to conventions and set up a booth to promote hazelnuts. Most of the people at the conventions had no idea what hazel nuts were because the Willamette Valley is one of the only places in the country where hazel nuts are grown. Don always helped out in the orchard at 12 years old harvesting the hazel nuts.

3:57: When Don’s dad started getting into his 80s, Don approached him about buying the farm from him. He didn’t know his son was interested in the farm so it meant so much to him. In 1999 Don bought the farm and has been farming hazel nuts full time since then. He had already retired from his previous job in 1991.

“What did you do before?”

4:50: He was a baker just like his dad. He had a bakery out in Lake Oswego for many years. He developed allergies of several things in the bakery, so he was forced to sell the bakery. Then he started working for the baker’s union for 22 years.

“What did your father teach you about growing hazel nuts?”

5:53: He was involved in getting better and bigger nuts from the trees. A lot of the hazel nuts were sold overseas, a lot to Germany. Now most of the crop goes to China- 60% of the yearly hazel nuts in the valley go to China, they are a very big customer.

7:05: Don’s farm belongs to Oregon Hazel Nut Growers, a co-op. They buy a lot of the nuts from Don’s farm, then they process the nuts, and sell the nuts too. There are also a lot of local customers. Burgerville’s hazel nut milkshakes use Don’s hazel nuts.

13:22: Don’s orchard is in the process of putting out blight free trees. They require extra care, and they’re all planted by hand and watered and fertilized by hand. More work and more expense.

“What does a year look like for growing hazelnuts?”

14:42: The year starts when this year's crop is harvested, in October. Then in the rainy wet season the first thing that happens is the trees are all trimmed. The trees have a certain amount of dead wood every year that has to be removed. The blight infected limbs have to be removed. Two months are required to trim 3600 trees on Don's orchard. Next, the grass grows under the trees, and has to be sprayed to get rid of the grass. They grind up all of the weeds and churn the ground to keep the grounds looking nice. Trees bud around the 15<sup>th</sup> of March. Around the bottoms of the trees are suckers, which are starts of new trees. If you don't spray and kill them, they take energy from the tree and deprive the trees of valuable hazel nut nutrients.

17:36: Next you fertilize the whole orchard, and sometimes depending on the soil you put in lime. That's done every five or six years. Then you start inspecting the trees, trim a little more, any branches taken off with blight have to be burned. (More information about blight)

"How are you graded on nuts?"

21:23: The nuts are graded on their meat, in inside of the nut- how big they are, the taste. The larger varieties of nuts don't have the same quality of taste. Turkey grows a lot of hazel nuts. They grow totally different, though. They grow the nuts in bushes, and pick them instead of letting them fall to the ground like the trees.

25:23: 40,000 tons of hazel nuts are produced in Oregon and southern Washington.

"What does it mean to you and the valley to have this hazelnut orchard?"

28:21: Don's the grower, and he provides the nuts for market. Any time he can export his product overseas to China that's a good feeling to him. "They must like our hazelnuts because they keep buying more and more every year."

(Lots of information about blight free, self pollinating trees from Europe)

38:10: The trees start pollinating before the crop is harvested in October. The trees have little bunches that contain the pollen, and when the wind blows the pollen circulates around the trees and pollinates everything. When there's bad weather the crop suffers because the pollen does not get spread around as much. Four months of pollination. Because this year was really cold a lot longer than usual, the trees just stopped budding because it was too cold. So the hazelnut crops all along the west coast are not doing as well this year as they have in the recent past.

"What's the significance of the growers' association?"

41:32: They're the ones that run the co-op. The co-op gets their money every year off of a stipend off the crop. They use that money to run the processing. That comes back to the grower eventually as "retains." When they don't need that money any more they re-fund it to the growers. The co-op comes out and harvests your crop, takes it and processes it and sells it, and then you get a quarterly payment from them on how much money your crop earned. So it's a little bit risky.

44:34: "Growing hazelnuts is a family situation. It draws everybody closer. It goes from one generation to the next. Like I said, my son works here and his son, my grandson works here. They really look forward to it."

45:38: Don remembers starting out working in the orchard. One of the first things he learned how to do was drive the tractor. His dad would smoke cigars. When it got to the point that you could drive the tractor without his help he'd stick a cigar in your mouth and light it, and you reached manhood.

47:02: Don talks about a time his youngest son came out to visit and Don had some latinos working in the orchard. His son asked how much work was going on there, and Don said they needed a lot of trimming done. His son said he knew a bunch of kids that would love to come out to the orchard and work. His son worked for a Catholic Community Center which took in abandoned and foster kids and gave them a home, and so they brought all those kids out to the orchard to do work, and they kept coming back again and again, for many many years, and a few of them still to this day come back and work in the orchards.

"What's the difference in the quality of life between baking and farming?"

52:02: Don says the life of a baker was extremely demanding, going to work at three in the morning and wouldn't go home until seven at night. Farming is a little different, because there are certain things that have to be done at a certain time. This is the kind of life that you can't find in the city. Don loves having birds all around his house, taking care of them.

