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# Oral History Conversation with Stepheni Norton


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## ORAL HISTORY CONVERSATIONS WITH CHANGEMAKERS

By Students in PHILOSOPHY 332: Business Ethics | Spring 2018

STEPHENI NORTON  
(DICKINSON FARMS)

Conducted by Rola Adedigba, Alaina Castrence, Evan Morgan, and Mitch Williams

00:00:00.170 --> 00:00:02.720

[Alaina:] First of all, we want  
to welcome you to USD.

00:00:02.780 --> 00:00:07.280

Miss Stepheni Norton-- founder and  
owner of Dickinson Farm.

00:00:07.330 --> 00:00:11.050

And want to thank you  
for having this conversation with us.

00:00:11.050 --> 00:00:12.120

[Stepheni:] Thank you.

00:00:12.120 --> 00:00:16.490

[Alaina:] First, we would like to ask:  
Can you take us back to what your

00:00:16.490 --> 00:00:20.520

childhood was like. Was there any  
specific childhood experiences

00:00:20.520 --> 00:00:21.580

that you might have been able to connect to

00:00:21.580 --> 00:00:29.460

the kind of work you're doing in  
Dickinson Farms.

00:00:29.610 --> 00:00:34.280

--sources of inspiration, motives, seeds

of specific ideas

00:00:34.280 --> 00:00:36.400

or important relationships?

00:00:36.450 --> 00:00:42.400

[Stepheni:] I grew up here in California--  
Orange County. I went to

00:00:42.400 --> 00:00:44.750

a private school like military school

00:00:44.750 --> 00:00:46.450

a majority of my life until the  
eighth grade,

00:00:46.450 --> 00:00:48.960

so my family was military.

00:00:48.960 --> 00:00:50.560

And then my mom was

00:00:50.580 --> 00:00:57.080

a child advocate. So there was--

She was always the person that she would joke and say

00:00:57.080 --> 00:00:57.940

Um,

00:00:57.940 --> 00:01:01.330

Everybody, was like, had something  
to offer. And I'd say,

00:01:01.330 --> 00:01:03.160

"Well, what if they were an axe murderer,  
mom?"

00:01:03.160 --> 00:01:05.400

And she's like,

"We'll feed dinner without knives.

00:01:05.400 --> 00:01:06.260

It'll be fine."

00:01:06.270 --> 00:01:07.880

(Laughing)

00:01:07.880 --> 00:01:12.520

So, she was just always that there was something special in everybody.

00:01:12.520 --> 00:01:16.120

And, I can tell you, growing up like sometimes that was really, like, great

00:01:16.120 --> 00:01:18.500

and other times it wasn't; as you're a kid and you're trying

00:01:18.500 --> 00:01:19.920

to figure out, kind of, how your parents are--

00:01:19.920 --> 00:01:22.220

how their belief systems are founded.

00:01:22.680 --> 00:01:26.670

But that probably was the-- I know that was the main thing

00:01:26.670 --> 00:01:31.140

that kind of stuck with me continuously in everything I've done-- is that you can

00:01:32.130 --> 00:01:36.450

maybe not always see the silver lining but you can see the value in everybody and

00:01:36.460 --> 00:01:40.570

everything they do and how it contributes

to, kind of, the greater good.

00:01:42.950 --> 00:01:46.840

[Alaina:] During the two and a half years of uncertainty of what kind of business

00:01:46.840 --> 00:01:49.250

you had had,  
could you guide us

00:01:49.250 --> 00:01:51.740

to what you were feeling, what you were going through in your head?

00:01:51.740 --> 00:01:56.380

How did you overcome such uncertainty and remain hopeful through the process?

00:01:56.390 --> 00:02:00.520

And do you use this experience as a teaching tool in your current venture?

00:02:00.540 --> 00:02:04.880

And, if so, can you provide an example that illustrates overcoming uncertainty?

00:02:04.890 --> 00:02:10.329

[Stepheni:] Sure. So I actually, um, I got sick. We found out later I got bit

00:02:10.329 --> 00:02:12.470

during pre-deployment workouts.  
So it was a, it was

00:02:12.480 --> 00:02:18.440

a pretty intense op tempo. My symptoms started within about three days so we were

00:02:18.450 --> 00:02:23.840

still preparing, at that point we were

preparing to go to Kuwait. And we were

00:02:23.840 --> 00:02:24.890

going, going, going--

00:02:24.890 --> 00:02:29.600

like sixteen eighteen hour days.

Through that whole time I knew something

00:02:29.610 --> 00:02:32.620

was wrong there were some days that I  
couldn't walk so I knew that there was

00:02:32.630 --> 00:02:37.280

something really major wrong that wasn't,  
um-- as the military told me was like,

00:02:37.390 --> 00:02:41.220

"Well, you just got engaged so maybe, it's  
like, you're going to be fearful because

00:02:41.230 --> 00:02:42.430

you're going to be gone

00:02:42.430 --> 00:02:47.520

and I was like, "No, pretty sure  
that's not it." So through the whole thing

00:02:47.530 --> 00:02:53.000

it was like in the beginning it was, "Oh,  
I'm sure this is just the flu." Like it's

00:02:53.010 --> 00:02:57.300

something just really minor and that as  
things continued and when the military was

00:02:57.310 --> 00:02:58.610

like, "Girl, you got a plane to catch

00:02:58.610 --> 00:03:01.830

so, like, you better figure  
out whatever is going on with you."

00:03:01.840 --> 00:03:02.270

Then it became

00:03:02.280 --> 00:03:07.930

more into this like, "Okay, I'm going  
to be gone for, you know, ten months to

00:03:07.940 --> 00:03:12.980

a year and alone." I mean with your-- you  
know, but basically alone. And then as I

00:03:12.990 --> 00:03:18.860

started to get sicker, unemployment, it  
really kind of hit me that regardless of

00:03:18.870 --> 00:03:22.830

being like surrounded by people you can  
be completely alone when you don't know

00:03:22.840 --> 00:03:28.600

what's wrong, nobody knows what's  
wrong. For me I went through bouts of

00:03:29.590 --> 00:03:36.570

During it was confusion, maybe I  
am crazy, maybe it is just-- you

00:03:36.580 --> 00:03:42.020

know, I haven't been engaged and have my  
fiance. Like maybe they're right. I got

00:03:42.030 --> 00:03:46.530

advanced very quickly in the military.  
I went from a second class to

00:03:46.540 --> 00:03:49.760

a chief. So like from

an enlisted member to

00:03:49.770 --> 00:03:51.410

a senior enlisted leader in less than

00:03:51.420 --> 00:03:58.080

a year. So that on top of it, made it like  
well maybe this is true. Maybe it just is

00:03:58.090 --> 00:04:02.110

because it's so quick and it's kind of  
everything happening. As I continue to get

00:04:02.120 --> 00:04:06.810

more sick and, you know, I'd wake  
up coughing up blood and we found

00:04:06.820 --> 00:04:12.480

I had scar tissue. And kind of all these  
more major life changing things. Anger kind of

00:04:12.490 --> 00:04:14.890

set in, so I spent

00:04:14.930 --> 00:04:20.670

a lot of time during kind of halfway  
through from the time I got bit

00:04:20.670 --> 00:04:24.490

to before I got diagnosed. Which was  
probably like eighteen months to two years

00:04:24.490 --> 00:04:27.490

of just intense anger

00:04:27.490 --> 00:04:32.930

Anger that, as I would tell my husband  
like, "I did the King's work, right?"

00:04:32.940 --> 00:04:37.450



Like I deployed, I did everything that I was supposed to do. I stopped my life

00:04:37.450 --> 00:04:39.250  
to do what I was supposed to do.

00:04:39.250 --> 00:04:43.420  
And, like, nobody cares that I'm sick. And nobody cares what's going

00:04:43.430 --> 00:04:44.850  
on with me. So there was

00:04:44.860 --> 00:04:51.370  
a ton of anger when I came back from deployment. I would say I was angry and

00:04:51.380 --> 00:04:57.840  
then that kind of toyed with suicidal like back and forth continuously. And it took

00:04:57.860 --> 00:05:02.690  
us about another year after I got back before we got diagnosed and again bouncing

00:05:02.700 --> 00:05:06.780  
around. Military medical is really really good for bullet wounds. You know they like

00:05:06.780 --> 00:05:10.520  
pack your bullet wound, they break-- they like fix your broken leg and then they

00:05:10.540 --> 00:05:14.030  
send you back out. For illnesses their, their attitude is like,

00:05:14.030 --> 00:05:19.830  
"Well, well...we're not really sure."  
--Yeah. So, in their defense they

00:05:19.830 --> 00:05:21.080

don't know how to treat it.

00:05:21.080 --> 00:05:25.720

They don't know what to do. But it didn't,  
it didn't-- in the moment, it didn't feel

00:05:25.730 --> 00:05:27.710

like that. It felt very much like ignoring

00:05:27.720 --> 00:05:33.490

a problem or saying, you know, refusing to  
deal with it. When we got the diagnosis,

00:05:36.400 --> 00:05:40.550

It was probably one of the most amazing  
days because it was something. It was

00:05:40.560 --> 00:05:43.480

like tangible.-- Yeah. My doctor is

00:05:44.110 --> 00:05:48.890

a stoic Russian so he just like comes in.  
You know, like, everybody else would be

00:05:48.890 --> 00:05:53.370

like, "Mmm, maybe just made that way."  
I'm like, "Yeah! Maybe like it's perfectly

00:05:53.370 --> 00:05:57.320

fine that my leg doesn't move." Like, I  
could see how all the sudden that would

00:05:57.320 --> 00:05:59.340

be right. So my doctor

00:05:59.340 --> 00:06:02.600

came in, and he laid open my medical  
record and he was like,

00:06:02.600 --> 00:06:05.600

"This is what this test is,

00:06:05.600 --> 00:06:11.270

and as you can see, you're positive.

And in remission we would consider alive at the

00:06:11.280 --> 00:06:15.380

activity rate of late two hundred in Europe  
twenty seven thousand so you're kind of

00:06:15.390 --> 00:06:16.590

a Petri dish.

00:06:16.590 --> 00:06:19.090

[Alaina:] So during that time was it, like  
building up that it--

00:06:19.090 --> 00:06:21.890

[Stepheni:] Yeah, basically--Lyme, if you  
get it

00:06:21.890 --> 00:06:25.180

within it-- if I would  
have gotten antibiotics right when I got

00:06:25.180 --> 00:06:29.300

bit, which the corpsman that  
was with me, knew I got bit and reported

00:06:29.310 --> 00:06:31.900

it if they were to give me antibiotics  
right then, it would have been

00:06:31.900 --> 00:06:34.010

two to four weeks.

00:06:34.010 --> 00:06:38.200

And then it would just kill the--it's

bacterial infection. Failing to act means

00:06:38.200 --> 00:06:40.220

it settles in your bones, in your tissues.

00:06:40.220 --> 00:06:45.570

So I'll have it the rest of my  
life. So my doctors my doctors thing was

00:06:45.580 --> 00:06:49.570

like we can we can get this to go into  
remission we can't fix it it's never going

00:06:49.580 --> 00:06:54.260

to go away we can get it to go into remission  
but it's kind of like really stuck

00:06:54.270 --> 00:06:58.160

before it gets better. So that that I would  
say was kind of the beginning of being

00:06:58.170 --> 00:06:59.510

able to see a light. To be like,

00:06:59.510 --> 00:07:04.000

"Okay there's somebody that  
cares about me and cares about helping me."

00:07:04.000 --> 00:07:09.940

And then that coupled with, you know, we  
did treatment for-- I say "we" because my

00:07:09.950 --> 00:07:13.850

husband had duty at night and he would  
like to take me every day and sleep in

00:07:13.860 --> 00:07:19.860

a chair next to me and then take me home.  
Yeah he definitely was like-- and this was

00:07:20.850 --> 00:07:24.230

we did the blood work a week before  
we got married, and we got the diagnosis

00:07:24.240 --> 00:07:29.080

a week after. So I was like, "'In sickness  
and in health', babe! That's what it is, right?"

00:07:29.500 --> 00:07:36.380

Yeah, exactly I was like, "Hmm, I got  
it on video." But he was like

00:07:36.420 --> 00:07:40.480

a huge trooper and just really supportive.  
The first day we started treatment,

00:07:41.650 --> 00:07:44.330

He said to me he's like,-- he took my hands  
and he put him them on my lap.

00:07:44.330 --> 00:07:45.430

And he was like,

00:07:45.430 --> 00:07:48.580

"It's going to suck and it's going to hurt and  
you're going to get stuck every single day.

00:07:48.980 --> 00:07:52.370

and I want you to know"-- And I'll get upset--  
"I want you to know that the people that

00:07:52.370 --> 00:07:56.330

are in this room are the only people that  
care if you live or die. All the people

00:07:56.340 --> 00:07:59.160

you deployed with, all the  
people you reported to, didn't give

00:07:59.170 --> 00:08:05.170

a \$h!T if you lived or died. And these people do. So on your worst day, you just smile

00:08:05.180 --> 00:08:09.500  
and nod your head and they'll know and on your best day like you just give them

00:08:09.510 --> 00:08:12.160  
all love back because they're the only people are going to make you not be in

00:08:12.170 --> 00:08:18.400  
a wheelchair the rest of your life." And we did, and that everything that the doctor told us to do

00:08:18.410 --> 00:08:23.540  
and told me to do I did. And we found out fairly quickly that National City is

00:08:23.550 --> 00:08:27.740  
a food desert. We had bought the house right before I deployed as our kind of last

00:08:27.750 --> 00:08:30.540  
move and forever house.  
And National City has like

00:08:30.550 --> 00:08:33.100  
convenience stores which doesn't seem like it's

00:08:33.110 --> 00:08:36.300  
a big deal until you're spending seven hours a day in

00:08:36.300 --> 00:08:40.669  
a treatment chair you're nacious coming home you can't stop anywhere your husband has

00:08:40.679 --> 00:08:46.730

to get to duty it's like all these things.  
And yea you think there'd be something

00:08:46.740 --> 00:08:48.940  
besides like seven eleven but now there's

00:08:48.950 --> 00:08:54.170  
a couple more near us but they're actually  
not within our city limits and yeah so

00:08:54.180 --> 00:09:00.010  
we found out that he couldn't cook either  
so. If he was just like I don't know what

00:09:00.020 --> 00:09:03.200  
to do and we got like we  
got a personal chef for

00:09:03.210 --> 00:09:06.620  
a while and we really were military family  
and like we're not going to be able to

00:09:06.630 --> 00:09:13.530  
afford this. So I am pretty type A and I  
walked into my doctor's office I was like

00:09:13.580 --> 00:09:18.250  
I'm going to grow my own food like how hard can  
it be right. Cause it's seeds and dirt and it

00:09:18.260 --> 00:09:24.770  
has to be like super easy. And my doctor  
like, was very stoic that day and just

00:09:25.350 --> 00:09:29.950  
nodded and pat my husband on the shoulder and  
said "Don't let her kill herself, keep her out of

00:09:29.960 --> 00:09:36.520  
the sun". And we did and they built me

raised beds and I started that way and

00:09:36.560 --> 00:09:41.050

about halfway through our second season  
the military decided that my two year

00:09:41.060 --> 00:09:47.190

treatment protocol wasn't getting done in  
one year so medical retirement was the

00:09:47.200 --> 00:09:53.790

best choice and so they medically retired  
me and then it was kind of all back to

00:09:53.800 --> 00:10:00.400

that anger and everything. [ Alaina: You wanted to go back?]  
[ Stepheni: It was my like, I had, even though I was sick I

00:10:00.410 --> 00:10:04.780

had like my next three deployments planned  
out like I was going to go help shut

00:10:04.790 --> 00:10:10.180

down the Afghanistan bases and bring all  
the equipment home like I knew what my

00:10:10.190 --> 00:10:15.980

plan was and even sick I mean  
it's crazy in hindsight to be like no

00:10:15.990 --> 00:10:20.850

I'm just going to transfer that unit and  
it'll be fine I'll feel better. But yea I

00:10:20.860 --> 00:10:26.260

already had it planned out so I didn't and  
I was a reservist that went so I was

00:10:26.270 --> 00:10:32.490

a reservist that joined late in life I



was in my thirty's and when I joined

00:10:33.160 --> 00:10:34.060

I had been volunteering

00:10:34.070 --> 00:10:37.910

a lot for the Coast Guard just as there  
were different events and they

00:10:37.920 --> 00:10:42.420

were put on for families that I would help  
them with. And I had this commander at the

00:10:42.430 --> 00:10:44.360

time that said like you're young  
enough like you should join,

00:10:44.370 --> 00:10:50.400

you should get paid for this. I kept going no, no, no it's fine I'll just volunteer and she's like no just join  
the reserves it's

00:10:50.410 --> 00:10:50.820

one weekend a month

00:10:50.830 --> 00:10:55.770

but then every time you volunteer  
like you can get paid for that too.

00:10:55.830 --> 00:11:03.650

I was like hmm, I don't know. They convinced me to join I go to boot  
camp I come back I check in my unit I

00:11:03.660 --> 00:11:08.320

go to London for my civilian job, I came back  
turned on my phone and they're like you're

00:11:08.330 --> 00:11:10.210

deploying I was like I haven't even been

00:11:10.220 --> 00:11:15.140

to A school I don't even know what you're talking about right now and they're like no

00:11:15.150 --> 00:11:17.830

it's not a joke and literally probably ten minutes, I'm like no it's

00:11:17.840 --> 00:11:21.820

a joke they're like shut up, pack your stuff, you're deploying and I left for ten

00:11:21.830 --> 00:11:25.000

months the first time I came back drilled as

00:11:25.010 --> 00:11:28.490

a reservist really two months and then they called me and said , "You're doing the

00:11:28.500 --> 00:11:33.380

critical fill and you're propping for Kuwait. So from the time I joined I was only

00:11:33.390 --> 00:11:35.230

a real reservist like

00:11:35.240 --> 00:11:38.840

a normal reservist for like two to three months so the whole time I was in, I was active

00:11:38.850 --> 00:11:44.390

duty which is hard because when you try to go back to your civilian job and you've

00:11:44.400 --> 00:11:49.990

been active duty that long there's no direct transition back. My civilian job was

00:11:50.000 --> 00:11:53.390

regulatory compliance and in the period

I was gone there was over three hundred

00:11:53.400 --> 00:11:57.980

changes to the regulations, you can't catch back up right

00:11:58.630 --> 00:12:04.700

right right and then. Your civilian job is  
like required to give you time to train

00:12:04.710 --> 00:12:10.770

but they're like, there's no way we can get  
you back up this quick. So for me it was

00:12:10.780 --> 00:12:15.110

like I don't even know what I'm supposed  
to do, like I can't really go back to that.

00:12:15.110 --> 00:12:17.980

I intended to have

00:12:18.040 --> 00:12:23.600

a couple more deployments so that was that  
plan. And then it really was like well

00:12:24.030 --> 00:12:30.230

the foods are growing well. We'll see how that goes.

00:12:31.550 --> 00:12:33.750

[Evan: Do you feel that your long years of experience in the military

00:12:33.750 --> 00:12:38.390

has greatly helped you go about your day to day managing responsibilities with Dickinson Farms.

00:12:38.390 --> 00:12:43.300

Um I wouldn't say yes, but every time I talk to people

00:12:43.310 --> 00:12:49.370

they're like really, like everything how everything is. It kind of goes back to that

00:12:49.380 --> 00:12:52.760

mission focus like we have a goal  
all that every season we have a goal

00:12:52.770 --> 00:12:55.350  
every week we have  
a goal, and every day we have a goal.

00:12:55.350 --> 00:12:59.600  
and that's very much aligned  
with how you move a unit to go through

00:12:59.640 --> 00:13:01.850  
a deployment and kind  
of come home safely from

00:13:01.860 --> 00:13:06.550  
a mission so I wouldn't have thought so but  
it's kind of ingrained in you that you

00:13:06.560 --> 00:13:11.600  
work that you kind of work that way right  
right right and people either love it or hate it.

00:13:11.610 --> 00:13:14.350  
Thankfully our employee loves it so it's fine

00:13:17.520 --> 00:13:24.260  
[Evan: With no farming experience at all, you must have been a little unsure starting your own personal  
organic farm.

00:13:25.210 --> 00:13:30.230  
Because you already had an entrepreneurial  
spirit, how did you feel about taking this on,

00:13:30.630 --> 00:13:34.430  
and was there anyone you and your husband went to for  
guidance when you first started farming?

00:13:34.500 --> 00:13:39.520  
Because we started growing for us, it wasn't that. We've

started businesses before,

00:13:39.590 --> 00:13:44.600

I've started businesses before, before I even met my husband. and they usually start very traditionally with

00:13:44.610 --> 00:13:48.730

a business plan and you know evaluating the market. This was very much started for us

00:13:48.770 --> 00:13:54.250

for me specifically to have access to food so when we made the transition from kind

00:13:54.260 --> 00:14:01.150

of private gardening into commercial farming. For us it was the private

00:14:01.160 --> 00:14:04.510

garden was like easy or like what happened like worst case is the wind comes in, which

00:14:04.510 --> 00:14:08.480

Which it did and kills plants and that's kind of freaky because you see like frostbite in

00:14:08.490 --> 00:14:15.040

plants which is weird. But it wasn't there wasn't like this big business

00:14:15.050 --> 00:14:19.830

heavy weight kind of emotional commitment to this because it was like well this is food for me.

00:14:19.860 --> 00:14:26.680

When we made the transition, I was still in treatment so I took all the time I was sitting

00:14:26.940 --> 00:14:30.830

a treatment chair and just started planning out and researching as much as I could

00:14:31.190 --> 00:14:35.230

so we went with my treatment protocol was  
four to six weeks on and then two weeks

00:14:35.240 --> 00:14:41.060

off so your liver and kidneys can refresh.  
Kind of recover from that med we would

00:14:41.070 --> 00:14:44.670

take that time to go to either Web in ars or drive to Phoenix and take an

00:14:44.680 --> 00:14:46.430

agriculture class or there was

00:14:46.440 --> 00:14:52.130

a class here we would take it so it was  
more or less traditional kind of business

00:14:52.140 --> 00:14:57.980

planning perspective and more like we're  
in this. My husband's

00:14:57.990 --> 00:15:04.190

attitude was it makes you emotionally  
happier so even if it doesn't become

00:15:04.200 --> 00:15:07.050

a business I think it's something that  
you need to do, while we're going through treatment

00:15:07.370 --> 00:15:11.130

because gardening like, being  
out there and like going from

00:15:11.140 --> 00:15:15.950

a perspective of being told that if I  
did nothing I would die and it would be

00:15:15.960 --> 00:15:19.840

a painful death and it wouldn't you  
don't just die from Lyme like your body

00:15:19.850 --> 00:15:25.240  
basically rejects everything and then you  
die so yeah it's a really awful it's

00:15:25.250 --> 00:15:31.800  
a really awful way to go. So knowing that  
I had to take treatment and with Lyme to

00:15:31.810 --> 00:15:37.230  
you can't sit too long or stand you can't  
not move too long so it's like when

00:15:37.240 --> 00:15:42.060  
you sleep, I can everybody's  
different I can sleep eight, ten hours maybe

00:15:42.400 --> 00:15:46.280  
anything longer than that you can't walk,  
like you can't get up to move your body

00:15:46.290 --> 00:15:51.670  
kind of freezes up so being outside and  
being gardening as long as that was out of

00:15:51.680 --> 00:15:57.130  
the direct sun. That's amazing on your body, your body  
moves really well it kind of fights back

00:15:57.140 --> 00:16:01.280  
the deterioration that's happening from Lyme, so we knew that regardless that's

00:16:01.290 --> 00:16:04.790  
what we were going to do or that's what I  
was going to do through Lyme treatment just to

00:16:04.800 --> 00:16:10.500  
make myself feel better. And

then when we decided to make it

00:16:10.510 --> 00:16:17.290

a business you really saw that that was  
an opportunity. Scary but not as scary as

00:16:17.300 --> 00:16:20.120

everything else we've been through that  
kind of seemed like the easy part.

00:16:20.130 --> 00:16:24.470

[Evan: Was there a certain point when you were like, wow we should really make this into a business?

00:16:24.480 --> 00:16:30.610

[Stepheni: It was it was really the kind of alignment of being medically retired

00:16:30.610 --> 00:16:33.880

and then looking at it that we had so much excess

00:16:33.880 --> 00:16:38.960

in a very small area cause we weren't even growing the  
whole quarter acre yet and we are giving

00:16:38.970 --> 00:16:43.130

it away and we are donating it and more and  
more people are like "Oh here let me pay you".

00:16:43.140 --> 00:16:48.190

I was like We can't take your money that's illegal.  
So then it then yeah then it was like

00:16:48.250 --> 00:16:53.560

Hmm, we need to look at this yeah so it really  
was kind of looking at that and saying

00:16:53.910 --> 00:16:57.650

well if I'm here there has to be  
other people like me and they want access

00:16:57.660 --> 00:17:02.890



to food so it was kind of kind of the  
stars aligned and put us on that path and

00:17:03.260 --> 00:17:06.359  
really quite honestly the worst thing you  
do is pay for seeds and then figure out

00:17:06.369 --> 00:17:10.520  
nobody wants it you just don't grow them the next season. So I'm not saying.

00:17:10.530 --> 00:17:13.700  
I'm playing it off like it's super easy it's not that easy  
but it is really like when you look at

00:17:13.710 --> 00:17:14.359  
it we're not building

00:17:14.369 --> 00:17:17.460  
a building or you know building  
an app or something that takes

00:17:17.500 --> 00:17:19.359  
a lot of money and time it takes

00:17:19.400 --> 00:17:23.060  
a season and if it didn't work out  
we would have just stopped growing.

00:17:27.170 --> 00:17:33.640  
[Rola: So what personal values has been most influential, in driving you to pursue your business venture,

00:17:33.650 --> 00:17:37.810  
and have any of these values changed since you've started Dickinson Farms

00:17:37.860 --> 00:17:42.090  
[Stepheni: I believe really strongly that you give of your strengths freely

00:17:42.090 --> 00:17:45.810  
and you admit your weaknesses really really quickly.

00:17:45.810 --> 00:17:52.020

And that's with anything so for me my background was regulatory compliance,

00:17:52.030 --> 00:17:58.070

project management, software movementation like that was really my focus.

00:17:58.080 --> 00:18:03.380

And they happened to be in biotech and government relations but those two things helped me

00:18:03.390 --> 00:18:06.940

significantly when we had to go down to get our permitting and all that stuff

00:18:06.950 --> 00:18:10.070

because I knew how to read the municipal code I knew how to follow the law I knew

00:18:10.080 --> 00:18:14.880

about where to go to get the law to be able to make sure we were in compliance

00:18:14.890 --> 00:18:20.730

But the things I didn't know were growing so we, we really looked at it inside my my

00:18:20.740 --> 00:18:23.030

husband once we figured out like this is going to be

00:18:23.040 --> 00:18:26.700

a business he's like ok the business plan has to include an employee it can be

00:18:26.710 --> 00:18:31.060

a part time employee but it has to because for him to feel comfortable.

00:18:31.070 --> 00:18:33.570

That I could be working on this business and if

00:18:33.670 --> 00:18:38.750

a day I couldn't walk or if I fell that I  
wasn't like alone outside until somebody

00:18:38.760 --> 00:18:44.380

came home so to me that kind of give of  
your strengths was very much like I can

00:18:44.390 --> 00:18:45.000

feasibly teach

00:18:45.010 --> 00:18:51.040

a person the business of farming which  
oddly enough is not in any school or like

00:18:51.080 --> 00:18:55.140

a thing that's kind of thought of it's  
labor Oh your It's altruistic it's

00:18:55.150 --> 00:19:00.020

constantly which is fine except at some  
point you have to make money to keep the

00:19:00.030 --> 00:19:04.780

farm going so I can teach somebody the  
business I can teach somebody project

00:19:04.790 --> 00:19:11.230

management, logistics management I mean  
I've moved units all over the world.

00:19:11.720 --> 00:19:15.860

And put software in place to make that easier for all of us what I needed help with is

00:19:15.900 --> 00:19:22.610

physical lifting for the days that I can't  
do it and knowledge on growing so being

00:19:22.870 --> 00:19:26.350

having a value that I would tell people like hey  
this is all I bring to the table in the

00:19:26.360 --> 00:19:31.530

business and like now I need a farm hand  
that can teach me as we go to make me

00:19:31.540 --> 00:19:33.020

a better farmer and I'll make you

00:19:33.030 --> 00:19:37.420

a better business person, project manager,  
manager those type of things so it's and I

00:19:37.430 --> 00:19:41.420

mean it still today yeah.

00:19:41.760 --> 00:19:47.430

[Rola: So your website states that you give the excess food that you grow

00:19:47.430 --> 00:19:50.220

to an organization named dreams for change

00:19:50.230 --> 00:19:51.730

Although this is a very noble act have you ever considered

00:19:51.730 --> 00:19:54.730

donating any profits that you made to the American Lyme Disease foundation

00:19:54.730 --> 00:19:59.510

or similar groups in order to spread awareness to people about the first

00:19:59.520 --> 00:20:02.140

stages of Lyme Disease and do you think there is a

00:20:02.150 --> 00:20:06.970

need for more doctors in California who are more literate and in terms of Lyme Disease?

00:20:06.980 --> 00:20:13.310

[Stepheni: Is there a need for more doctors in California and everywhere, absolutely. The we never knew

00:20:13.320 --> 00:20:18.580

that Lyme was, an unbelievable illness for lack of

00:20:18.590 --> 00:20:21.760

a better word like it's kind  
of phantom illness that that

00:20:21.770 --> 00:20:25.210

a lot of doctors if they're not especially  
if they're from California or places

00:20:25.220 --> 00:20:30.040

where California has Lyme disease but most  
people don't realize it does. Yeah yeah

00:20:30.040 --> 00:20:36.240

We have a ton of ticks here, there are actually six hundred tick born illnesses

00:20:36.370 --> 00:20:41.980

when you get bit by a tick here, they're just like meh, we'll  
just pay attention, eh no

00:20:41.990 --> 00:20:48.920

So absolutely more need for doctors. Related  
to donating to somebody, like lyme awareness the unfortunate

00:20:48.930 --> 00:20:54.480

part right now is that it still is really  
considered this like the difference between the CDC

00:20:54.510 --> 00:21:00.350

and the insurance systems and civilian  
doctors we've had people that have literally

00:21:00.360 --> 00:21:07.250

said to my face it was Earth's karma

that I had Lyme and I was like so

00:21:07.580 --> 00:21:13.630

based on my life practice which is I'm not  
certainly like zero waste but you know

00:21:13.720 --> 00:21:20.500

like I don't destroy the earth and I don't pour oil  
on the ground. Yeah like of everything

00:21:20.510 --> 00:21:26.450

that I've done in my life, do I think that  
the Earth would come after me hmm ok

00:21:26.770 --> 00:21:29.940

but exactly but it was so interesting because everybody has

00:21:29.950 --> 00:21:34.610

a different belief in it and it's  
ultimately it's the same as syphilis it's

00:21:34.620 --> 00:21:37.310

a very similar spiral key it's

00:21:37.350 --> 00:21:41.690

a bacterial infection, and is cured by antibiotics  
and it's just how quickly that you get them

00:21:42.070 --> 00:21:47.220

so the Lyme a lot of the Lyme associations are fighting that battle which is

00:21:47.260 --> 00:21:52.400

a noble battle but we would rather in our donations and kind of as

00:21:52.410 --> 00:21:57.300

a family we choose this to make direct an  
instantaneous impact so that's a

00:21:57.380 --> 00:22:01.110

long term impact which needs

to be there but I think there's

00:22:01.120 --> 00:22:06.430

a lot of direct impact and today impacts  
that get missed in donating

00:22:06.940 --> 00:22:12.310

like I want to know that if you're hungry I can feed you and that's going to make you

00:22:13.000 --> 00:22:16.220

be a stronger person and you're going to get back to our community just by the nature

00:22:16.230 --> 00:22:23.210

of doing that and to me that impact is  
greater than getting people to believe you

00:22:23.220 --> 00:22:27.560

know that the world isn't flat anymore like those type of things I'd rather not

00:22:27.600 --> 00:22:31.960

take money and put it there I'd rather make  
somebody feel their belly and smile and

00:22:31.970 --> 00:22:35.500

know that the world is an ok place and people care about them

00:22:35.500 --> 00:22:38.370

and to me that seems a little more important.

00:22:38.990 --> 00:22:40.930

Alaina: which kind of goes back to your mom's

00:22:40.930 --> 00:22:43.930

Stepheni: yeah yeah everyday

NOTE Paragraph

00:22:43.930 --> 00:22:45.480

everyday man and i can tell you as

00:22:45.490 --> 00:22:50.970

a kid it drove me nuts but now I'm just  
like yeah like yeah you're right you're

00:22:50.980 --> 00:22:57.060

Rola: they're always right  
Stepheni: right they are damn them. So.

00:22:58.120 --> 00:23:04.620

Rola: You have endured very many different lifestyles and excelled in all of them  
even being named Lead Yeoman of the Year and being selected as the

00:23:04.630 --> 00:23:07.390

Reserve Enlisted Person of the Year. Which  
accomplishment,

00:23:07.390 --> 00:23:10.390

including founding Dickinson Farm, do you feel has impacted the

00:23:10.390 --> 00:23:16.840

way you live most?  
Stepheni: It's not an accomplishment,  
but quite honestly it's Lyme.

00:23:18.300 --> 00:23:25.180

I wouldn't have. I hate  
everything about it I hate

00:23:25.190 --> 00:23:30.830

that it changes everything about you  
know. I might as well have early onset

00:23:30.840 --> 00:23:34.220

Alzheimer's I mean like your  
brain when I said do you like I'm

00:23:34.230 --> 00:23:40.190

a little turned around yeah it is it destroys  
your brain it destroys every bone



00:23:40.200 --> 00:23:46.420

in your body and every muscle  
destroys your heart. But without that

00:23:46.430 --> 00:23:52.930

catalysts I would have been, my husband and  
I, when we met we were very are we are

00:23:52.940 --> 00:23:59.450

both are in very kind of powerful career  
paths not with the company we, he was with

00:23:59.460 --> 00:24:03.950

the government I was owning I owned companies  
and kind of went around the world I

00:24:03.960 --> 00:24:08.950

traveled about three hundred sixty the  
year and my husband ran in places all over

00:24:08.960 --> 00:24:14.370

the world which is kind of cool but it's  
also that means in thirteen years we had

00:24:14.410 --> 00:24:18.570

two years counted total in months not to  
your straight but we were in the same

00:24:18.580 --> 00:24:25.010

location so if it wasn't  
for Lyme I wouldn't have

00:24:25.020 --> 00:24:30.890

stopped to see that my community is around  
me every day that they're that there's

00:24:30.930 --> 00:24:37.780

people here that need just as much  
help and support and. Love and

00:24:37.790 --> 00:24:41.630

endurance all that stuff that when you're in the military were you when you're doing

00:24:41.640 --> 00:24:47.270

a job or why you kind of always focus on what's out there so I think that. That's

00:24:47.280 --> 00:24:50.190

certainly not an accomplishment I would tell somebody go out and get themselves

00:24:50.200 --> 00:24:56.980

Lyme. But I think that it's definitely what has got me to this exact moment and

00:24:57.800 --> 00:25:01.100

even on the days I can't walk I really like this exact moment so I'll take it.

00:25:07.160 --> 00:25:13.740

Mitch: I saw on your website that he so Farmacy boxes that match diabetic, anti inflammatory diet,

00:25:14.980 --> 00:25:21.020

Lyme diets with other various diseases, are these options the market you

00:25:21.530 --> 00:25:26.850

want to sell to more as opposed to farm markets or onsite or is that like another

00:25:26.860 --> 00:25:32.310

way of giving back to people you that you'd like fresh produce to get healthier?

00:25:32.320 --> 00:25:36.830

Stepheni: so when we first started our business plan was to sell within a mile of our farm

00:25:36.840 --> 00:25:40.640

a mile of our farm that we didn't want to transfer the produce we didn't want to

00:25:40.650 --> 00:25:45.170

have it be cut early and shipped all over and we actually got an offer by Amazon

00:25:45.180 --> 00:25:46.890

before we even opened our doors to buy

00:25:46.900 --> 00:25:51.930

a hundred percent of our food every day. And we walked away from it I didn't want

00:25:51.970 --> 00:25:56.190

these tomatoes that you know I was spending all this care and feeding and love with

00:25:56.200 --> 00:26:00.610

to go to someplace on the Eastcoast and then go this isn't even good. Well of course not because

00:26:00.620 --> 00:26:02.250

I picked it green and you're getting it

00:26:02.260 --> 00:26:07.630

weeks later. We found out very quickly that there wasn't

00:26:07.670 --> 00:26:11.710

a market for that although we didn't have access to produce and food there people

00:26:11.720 --> 00:26:15.730

would kind of already condition themselves to pick up on the way home from work or

00:26:15.830 --> 00:26:20.990

what they can get it at a convenience mart, get milk and

eggs stuck there which can produce so we

00:26:21.000 --> 00:26:25.920

actually never even looked at the patients  
that I was sitting next to. It felt

00:26:25.930 --> 00:26:29.990

really intrusive to talk to them about what  
I was doing and be one more person that

00:26:30.000 --> 00:26:33.920

told them one more thing that they should  
do to take care of themselves when you're

00:26:33.930 --> 00:26:38.820

in treatment people I love them all to  
death but people they poke you and prod you

00:26:38.830 --> 00:26:42.210

and tell you and other patients tell you  
and it's just like you know what I just

00:26:42.220 --> 00:26:46.570

want one moment where somebody isn't telling me all about my life and what's

00:26:46.580 --> 00:26:49.850

coming next and what's happening so I felt  
that it was really really intrusive to

00:26:49.860 --> 00:26:55.790

do that. Last November I was in  
remission for eighteen months and last.

00:26:56.990 --> 00:27:01.070

November we went out to dinner for the  
holidays with my infusion nurse who when you

00:27:01.080 --> 00:27:06.560

spend two years every day with her, for seven hours,  
we became pretty close. So we went to

00:27:06.570 --> 00:27:10.280

dinner and celebrated her recent engagement. We were just talking about farming kind of

00:27:10.290 --> 00:27:15.230

everything and, she's said I need to ask you, who is you who is your customer basically

00:27:15.240 --> 00:27:19.380

like how are things going, who is your customer. oh well now we're with chefs, we never went to

00:27:19.390 --> 00:27:23.250

farmers' markets just we never went there but

00:27:23.250 --> 00:27:26.250

it was to shops in the local community. We have farm stands

00:27:26.250 --> 00:27:29.630

Kind of around our community and she's like OK, why? I'm like, well that's our

00:27:29.640 --> 00:27:34.810

community like your community it's right here it's close and she was like mhmm, your community is the

00:27:34.820 --> 00:27:39.060

people that sit in chairs, just like you your community is the people that need

00:27:39.100 --> 00:27:44.740

exactly what you need and can't have it and don't know where to get it. We aren't

00:27:44.750 --> 00:27:49.770

just an organic farm were one hundred percent heirloom organic farm. So we have seeds from

00:27:49.780 --> 00:27:52.620  
the 700s to the early 1900s. We don't have anything

00:27:52.630 --> 00:27:56.210  
genetically modified or mainly  
hybridized and what that means for

00:27:56.220 --> 00:28:00.570  
a patient that has no immune system is  
that you, you are significantly less

00:28:00.580 --> 00:28:06.160  
likely to have an anti or inflammatory response  
to something you're eating so you're not having

00:28:06.390 --> 00:28:10.330  
a histamine response because you're not you  
don't have pesticides on it. You're

00:28:10.340 --> 00:28:14.600  
not getting fed a pluot and then you find out  
you're allergic to plums which is a plum

00:28:14.610 --> 00:28:19.400  
and an apricot. So it's just not there so  
she sat there dinner and she was like

00:28:19.450 --> 00:28:23.180  
that's your community and she said I'm not  
telling you to sell to you but I'm just

00:28:23.190 --> 00:28:28.340  
telling you Don't forget how you got right  
here, and we drove home and like I can

00:28:28.350 --> 00:28:32.330  
tell you I was really upset the car. I was  
like, I, you know, I never wanted to be

00:28:32.340 --> 00:28:35.860

disrespectful to anybody else going to treatment or be intrusive in their life and

00:28:36.240 --> 00:28:40.720

my husband was like, I have faith that you will do what you feel is right for for

00:28:40.730 --> 00:28:46.110

yourself and us and the business and everything. The next day I text her and I said, Hey

00:28:46.120 --> 00:28:50.620

can I meet you again and just they go over an idea that I have. She was like, yeah. So we met

00:28:50.630 --> 00:28:55.260

and I was like, I want to do this Pharmacy thing and I want to have the stages of

00:28:55.270 --> 00:29:00.750

it where if I think through what I needed when I went through treatment and like

00:29:00.760 --> 00:29:06.220

your very first diagnosis like even though I was sick for so long. When my doctor

00:29:06.230 --> 00:29:09.380

gave us the diagnosis, that day he was like, you're going to the infusion chair. I was

00:29:09.390 --> 00:29:13.230

like I can't. I've got to go to my base, in Long Beach, because we lived here my base

00:29:13.380 --> 00:29:17.160

is in Long Beach and tell them, I'm starting treatment and I'm probably going have to argue

00:29:17.170 --> 00:29:19.950

with them over it. He was  
like that's fine. This was

00:29:19.960 --> 00:29:22.700  
a Friday. He's like Monday morning you're  
going to be in my chair or I'm going to

00:29:22.710 --> 00:29:29.310  
put you in the hospital so that is your  
choice. That day, when we started I.V.

00:29:29.320 --> 00:29:32.540  
He's like, I'm going to tell you're probably  
pissed. You're probably going to go home

00:29:32.890 --> 00:29:36.700  
and eat like shit and drink and if you smoke you're  
going to. I was like well I don't smoke. He's like, you're going to do all

00:29:36.710 --> 00:29:37.840  
this and that's fine

00:29:38.260 --> 00:29:41.890  
and he said that you can keep on doing that until  
your anger subsides but I promise you it

00:29:41.900 --> 00:29:46.870  
won't. And all you'll do is make your treatment  
last longer. So he's like, if you can

00:29:46.880 --> 00:29:51.620  
eat clean and do your best even if you're  
at restaurants to make sure they're super

00:29:51.630 --> 00:29:55.010  
clean and you don't catch anything because  
somebody didn't washed their hands. He's like

00:29:55.020 --> 00:29:58.670  
I'm going to kill your whole immune system



to kill this.

00:29:58.670 --> 00:30:01.670

That moment, I couldn't even stand up after treatment.

00:30:01.670 --> 00:30:06.120

We had to lay the car seat down  
every time because I couldn't I was too

00:30:06.130 --> 00:30:09.350

dizzy from all the medicine it would  
have been unsafe to stand over

00:30:09.360 --> 00:30:14.890

a stove and cook myself dinner. so that is  
the late hundred percent we will take our

00:30:14.900 --> 00:30:17.660

produce with a private chef  
who knows how to cook with

00:30:17.670 --> 00:30:22.660

heirloom varieties and heirloom grain and she will cook one  
hundred percent of your meals and then

00:30:22.670 --> 00:30:23.320

you go through it for

00:30:23.330 --> 00:30:27.120

a little bit and now you're like able to  
deal with the fact that you're getting all

00:30:27.130 --> 00:30:30.810

this chemical in need for medicine you're getting dizzy anymore, you're feeling

00:30:30.820 --> 00:30:34.860

better and you still need meals to take  
with you to treatment because you have to

00:30:34.860 --> 00:30:38.650

Pre-em post. But you want to cook a little bit more, you want to be able to have

00:30:38.650 --> 00:30:41.750

a salad with your family  
you want to be able to eat

00:30:41.770 --> 00:30:45.970

a meal with your family. I can tell you I ate alone for so long because Mike would

00:30:45.990 --> 00:30:50.410

come home and drop me off to make sure I had food. and then he would be like, Babe I got to go to work so

00:30:50.420 --> 00:30:54.190

we wanted this, like back to being able to sit and have some sense of normalcy and

00:30:54.200 --> 00:30:55.030

then eventually get to

00:30:55.040 --> 00:30:59.270

a point you're back into cooking for yourself and that you can do all those things

00:30:59.580 --> 00:31:00.830

and that's our C.S.A.

00:31:00.840 --> 00:31:04.550

Part of it so it was really kind of breaking it into these three chunks and saying if

00:31:04.560 --> 00:31:09.280

I had to take somebody through treatment. I don't I never wanted to and I can't

00:31:09.290 --> 00:31:11.800

imagine that somebody wants to say for the rest of my life somebody is going to

00:31:11.810 --> 00:31:14.680

cook for me, somebody's going to tell me  
what to eat, somebody's going to put

00:31:14.690 --> 00:31:20.760

a needle in my arm but they're, these are  
life threatening and they're life changing

00:31:20.910 --> 00:31:23.740

but you don't have to  
succumb to like being in

00:31:23.750 --> 00:31:27.760

a dark corner and just taking everything  
that is thrown at you. And I was like

00:31:27.770 --> 00:31:34.020

this is what I want to do. She's like, I think it's  
wonderful and we launched it in January on

00:31:34.030 --> 00:31:36.260

the exact same day that I  
found out it was no longer

00:31:36.270 --> 00:31:43.210

a mission and started I.V. treatment again.  
So it was it

00:31:44.180 --> 00:31:49.330

it was amazing. And we, we announced it and we expected. We have

00:31:49.340 --> 00:31:53.640

a max of twenty based on, that we can take  
twenty patients we can take based on the

00:31:53.650 --> 00:32:00.460

chef that we work with and we  
expected to maybe hit two or three or

00:32:00.470 --> 00:32:04.050

four by summer and then by the end of the year we'd probably be eight it would take

00:32:04.060 --> 00:32:10.950

about two years and we're up to eight right now. We did like three instantly now

00:32:10.960 --> 00:32:15.170

we're up to eight. We have a couple more people coming so we expect by summer to be fully

00:32:15.180 --> 00:32:21.950

at capacity and it's patients that are just like me that need it just like I said

00:32:21.960 --> 00:32:28.360

Evan: Do you ever get to talk to?

Stepheni: Every day. yesterday I walked into treatment and I walked in and.

00:32:29.860 --> 00:32:34.210

My nurse that oh Stepheni talked to this person and she was like, Wait you're

00:32:34.220 --> 00:32:38.360

Stepheni? and I'm like yeah. and she like turns around her laptop. She's just like, I'm ordering right now.

00:32:38.370 --> 00:32:43.350

I was like well, I guess I'll be at your house on Monday. But yeah and she and

00:32:43.360 --> 00:32:48.780

then she was just talking and she's got some pretty pretty extreme medical issues

00:32:48.790 --> 00:32:53.740

that has landed her with like steam chicken and broccoli and she's like I can't eat

00:32:53.750 --> 00:32:56.870

with my family and I can't  
do this and I used to be

00:32:56.880 --> 00:33:00.890

a gourmet cook and I would make big meals  
and have dinner parties and she's like my

00:33:00.900 --> 00:33:05.120

goal was to get back to that, So what can I  
do to get from here to there and if that

00:33:05.130 --> 00:33:09.390

means eating right and listening to what  
Doc says that I'm going to do it and she's

00:33:09.400 --> 00:33:14.930

there and we, every single patient that we  
have that's in our program, whether like

00:33:14.940 --> 00:33:19.720

it or not, they have to talk to me and talk  
to them every week. Because we, yeah we

00:33:19.730 --> 00:33:23.210

just want to make sure the everything's  
right for them, you know, when they're

00:33:23.220 --> 00:33:28.230

we don't we don't like work with doc to get  
their info, they tell us their info but

00:33:28.240 --> 00:33:33.820

with that also becomes like OK how does you  
feel actuate that because it's not just

00:33:33.830 --> 00:33:38.050

like no I can't have gluten. Well that's  
not necessarily true you can't have

00:33:38.060 --> 00:33:43.060

commercially grown gluten that is dried in the field with geo-phosphates but

00:33:43.100 --> 00:33:47.780

you can probably have an heirloom varietal. So if you want to try it, we'll try that if

00:33:47.790 --> 00:33:51.540

you're too afraid and you don't want to do that, that's fine too. There are some

00:33:51.550 --> 00:33:56.180

people that will find out that they actually can have gluten or they can have

00:33:57.210 --> 00:33:58.260

sugars. Just not

00:33:58.270 --> 00:34:01.970

a lot of it but they can have natural sugars instead of process sugars. Those type of things.

00:34:01.980 --> 00:34:05.320

So we talk to them every day every Monday.

00:34:11.020 --> 00:34:17.040

Mitch: From working with people you give Farmacy boxes to, what's the most rewarding

00:34:17.139 --> 00:34:18.690

part of just like

00:34:18.699 --> 00:34:25.260

sharing your story, and then seeing how they progress through their various diseases.

Stepheni: I think the

00:34:25.710 --> 00:34:29.130

the most rewarding part of it is for them

to realize

00:34:29.130 --> 00:34:32.130

they're not alone. Like you can sit in

00:34:32.207 --> 00:34:35.207

a treatment center, and there's like rows  
of chairs right so like

00:34:35.630 --> 00:34:38.630

obviously, logically you know you're not alone.

00:34:38.630 --> 00:34:44.440

Right, there's somebody on set half of this  
but it's still this kind of, it's like the

00:34:44.449 --> 00:34:49.710

rain cloud that follows you, it's like your own right  
you're like what did I do to deserve this

00:34:49.760 --> 00:34:54.880

When I was still on active  
duty I reeled in my sailor mouth

00:34:54.889 --> 00:34:59.290

a lot but when I was still on active duty  
I had some really interesting conclusions

00:34:59.300 --> 00:35:03.960

about, what I could have done to get sec  
and how the military would have treated me

00:35:03.970 --> 00:35:09.420

for that and they were very colorful and  
inappropriate but, you do walk around like

00:35:09.430 --> 00:35:14.680

what do they do why is it here nobody  
understands, and food is something that kind

00:35:14.690 --> 00:35:17.770

of we're all raised regardless of culture  
that like this is how you get back to

00:35:17.780 --> 00:35:19.350

community break bread together you have

00:35:19.360 --> 00:35:23.980

a conversation and when you're all of a  
sudden you know you're sitting in

00:35:23.990 --> 00:35:24.950

a treatment chair with

00:35:24.990 --> 00:35:29.490

a tray and you're eating and you're just like, are  
you kidding me like this is my life this

00:35:29.510 --> 00:35:32.190

is I'm back in trip now  
and I'm at four hours

00:35:32.200 --> 00:35:34.340

a day which is way better than  
seven but it's still four hours

00:35:34.350 --> 00:35:36.920

a day and that's from the time  
I leave my house to the time

00:35:36.920 --> 00:35:41.380

I get back so its certainly way shorter than it used to be  
but there's still this like when I get

00:35:41.400 --> 00:35:42.060

back four hours

00:35:42.080 --> 00:35:46.770

a day this can be amazing and being able  
to connect with them make them realize



00:35:46.790 --> 00:35:53.560

that there's other people out here  
you can be OK you don't have to

00:35:53.560 --> 00:35:56.900

sit in this... there's

00:35:56.910 --> 00:36:02.600

a mental part of it that will keep you from  
healing and when you feel alone it gets

00:36:02.610 --> 00:36:06.100

worse and I think being able to talk to  
people and having them realize that there's

00:36:06.110 --> 00:36:10.810

somebody else that gets it and there's  
somebody else that experience it and then

00:36:10.810 --> 00:36:16.540

they meet me and like realize that I'm  
the crazy person even though I'm not

00:36:16.550 --> 00:36:20.320

supposed to still goes on you know like eighty  
mile hikes with my husband because I'm

00:36:20.330 --> 00:36:24.120

like well what's the worst that's going to happen  
my body is going to give out and you'll take me out but

00:36:24.160 --> 00:36:27.380

if not I'm going to sit here and I'm going  
to be resentful because I haven't lived my

00:36:27.390 --> 00:36:32.250

life. Yeah so I think that that part of  
it being able to talk to people and get

00:36:32.260 --> 00:36:35.760  
them to realize that like  
this isn't the rest of your life, this is

00:36:35.770 --> 00:36:40.720  
a damn bug that bit you know and bite back, right  
like you just have to push it back.

00:36:44.590 --> 00:36:50.440  
Mitch: How much of the recovery process do you think  
has been helped by the eating healthy

00:36:50.450 --> 00:36:57.310  
foods or versus being able to work at the  
farm and then being able to help people

00:36:57.490 --> 00:37:00.520  
with Farmacy boxes or just  
like getting back into

00:37:00.530 --> 00:37:07.080  
like a daily routine.  
Stepheni: While I was undergoing my first  
round of treatment I would say that

00:37:07.950 --> 00:37:11.030  
when we first started growing we were just  
growing food so we got seeds at like Home Depot

00:37:11.150 --> 00:37:14.020  
and just growing food and I was still  
having sensitivities to it, I was still having

00:37:14.030 --> 00:37:18.930  
anti-inflammatory responses or inflammatory  
responses. When we moved over to

00:37:18.940 --> 00:37:23.290  
heirloom and completely organic  
but organic seeds in their

00:37:23.300 --> 00:37:29.660

own bridles. My treatment protocol was like almost textbook working better like there's

00:37:29.660 --> 00:37:30.790

a treatment protocol, there's

00:37:30.830 --> 00:37:36.090

a couple different treatment protocols for Lyme my Dr., when he asked me basically like how

00:37:36.100 --> 00:37:39.800

much I can handle when it because that's how they determine like if you mentally

00:37:39.810 --> 00:37:42.640

can't handle being in there seven hours late there's no way because you're going to

00:37:42.650 --> 00:37:43.120

go with it in

00:37:43.130 --> 00:37:46.270

a month in the year and walk away and it's going to be like not finishing your

00:37:46.280 --> 00:37:50.190

antibiotics that actually makes it way worse so for me I was like, you can put me in

00:37:50.200 --> 00:37:53.720

a coma, take out all my blood and put it back, whatever you have to do I want to be

00:37:53.730 --> 00:38:00.510

done in a month like I got shit to do. He was like, it's not going to be a month. So for

00:38:00.520 --> 00:38:06.120  
me making that change it helped my treatment protocol  
like literally step down textbook like

00:38:06.130 --> 00:38:07.330  
we say expect this much of

00:38:07.340 --> 00:38:10.740  
a reduction in activity but this day and  
it was doing it and we can tell the

00:38:10.750 --> 00:38:16.420  
difference and I can also tell you when I  
went back and had family dinner the first

00:38:16.430 --> 00:38:20.500  
year because all my family was like super  
supportive so big holiday dinner right.

00:38:21.680 --> 00:38:26.840  
Kept on going down the next year when they  
were like Oh she's fine now. And there was

00:38:26.850 --> 00:38:31.140  
a whole bunch of crap in the food like  
my activity levels go back up because the bacteria

00:38:31.150 --> 00:38:35.210  
actually feeds on processed sugars and  
things like that so I could definitely see

00:38:35.220 --> 00:38:39.780  
it there the farm work my husband would  
tell you it's the only thing that kept me from

00:38:39.820 --> 00:38:44.470  
eating a bullet, flat out. Like he's like, I  
didn't think that I would have you for

00:38:44.480 --> 00:38:50.940

a full year. So there's  
something very very

00:38:51.830 --> 00:38:55.120  
it's probably anecdotal because I don't know  
how much data is around there but

00:38:55.630 --> 00:39:00.940  
there's something, very truthful about  
putting your hands in the dirt and seeing

00:39:00.950 --> 00:39:04.490  
something when you feel like you're dying  
you just make something grow like that

00:39:04.530 --> 00:39:10.720  
there's something very emotionally important  
that happens there. And that still I

00:39:10.730 --> 00:39:14.880  
can tell you I can have my worst day in  
treatment or in work with you know

00:39:14.890 --> 00:39:15.910  
a chef that's being

00:39:15.920 --> 00:39:21.430  
a chef and walking outside and just digging  
in the dirt and pulling weeds and all

00:39:21.440 --> 00:39:25.360  
that stuff,  
like that will change your perspective because  
you don't get to walk away from the

00:39:25.370 --> 00:39:30.310  
garden you don't get to ignore it I  
mean it's not you can't send it to

00:39:30.320 --> 00:39:33.520

a babysitter it's like every day for the  
rest of your life somebody has to pay

00:39:33.530 --> 00:39:36.980  
attention to it and I can tell you  
when we're gone like if we go take

00:39:37.020 --> 00:39:37.870  
a three day and go to

00:39:37.880 --> 00:39:41.880  
a class or something when we come back and  
all of a sudden, I'm like,  
oh my gosh, the fig tree

00:39:42.110 --> 00:39:48.160  
like it was nothing and now look at it  
I mean it's,  
or you go what just happened and like

00:39:48.200 --> 00:39:52.270  
you know all your melons are  
rotten. But it kind of gives you

00:39:52.400 --> 00:39:55.620  
a different focus that's like bigger than  
yourself I mean I assume that's what

00:39:55.660 --> 00:39:59.260  
people that have kids said too right, it  
gets, this is bigger than yourself and you

00:39:59.270 --> 00:40:03.400  
have to take care of it and then you realize  
that actually if everybody did it we

00:40:03.410 --> 00:40:09.470  
could resolve the hunger issue right it  
doesn't take much I mean you can grow in

00:40:09.480 --> 00:40:16.480

your front yard and resolve your family's fingers so now.

00:40:16.490 --> 00:40:23.360

Mitch: I know you talked earlier that you weren't doing farmers markets have you ever thought about maybe expanding, doing a farmers

00:40:23.370 --> 00:40:23.670

market in like

00:40:24.340 --> 00:40:31.140

little Italy, like in San Diego closer to National city. Because I worked at to farmers market during the summer.

00:40:32.170 --> 00:40:32.380

We

00:40:32.390 --> 00:40:39.410

had an organic farm too just branch around and share the food more what are your thoughts on that? Stepheni: The reason we don't

00:40:39.420 --> 00:40:44.380

do farmers' markets so for all the farmers' markets in the area and the data shows

00:40:44.390 --> 00:40:48.710

that this is across the board that within the last five years the purchasing of

00:40:48.720 --> 00:40:51.690

actually fresh fruits and vegetables has gone down significantly it's almost been

00:40:51.700 --> 00:40:56.950

cut in half so farms that have that as their main source of income have gone

00:40:56.960 --> 00:41:00.450

from like a million dollars a year

to less than five hundred thousand dollars

00:41:00.460 --> 00:41:03.570

a year especially on the East Coast that's  
very much California it's that way too

00:41:03.840 --> 00:41:09.520

becomes a tourist attraction. Yeah  
exactly I mean you go and pick up like

00:41:09.560 --> 00:41:16.090

a bunch of herbs and you feel very empowered  
that experience right. But it's really

00:41:16.100 --> 00:41:20.230

costly at the back end to go to farmer's  
market insurance is really high, what you

00:41:20.240 --> 00:41:23.550

have to have related to packaging  
and storefront type things as

00:41:23.560 --> 00:41:26.860

a high. But more importantly  
you have to have

00:41:26.870 --> 00:41:29.590

a full table especially around  
here you have to have

00:41:29.600 --> 00:41:30.840

a full table when you start and

00:41:30.850 --> 00:41:34.160

a full table when you end and we  
started the farm because we're in

00:41:34.170 --> 00:41:36.630

a food desert right it was for me but it's



00:41:36.640 --> 00:41:42.240

a food desert so we don't feel that it's  
really aligned with our values if for me

00:41:42.250 --> 00:41:43.130

to make

00:41:43.140 --> 00:41:49.120

X Dollars, I have to take produce that is now  
completely it's not even I refuse to

00:41:49.130 --> 00:41:52.620

donate produce that's like wilted and nasty  
just because I want to feel

00:41:52.630 --> 00:41:57.170

better about myself, like if it's been sitting out for  
four hours and it was picked at either

00:41:57.180 --> 00:42:00.000

four am or the day before  
and I have to have

00:42:00.010 --> 00:42:04.340

a whole table from start to finish that  
produce that there at the finish isn't usable

00:42:04.350 --> 00:42:11.090

anymore. And when you look at that it's  
it's literally not worth the money. If you

00:42:11.100 --> 00:42:14.690

are making there are some that makes  
thousands and thousands of dollars but they

00:42:14.700 --> 00:42:19.040

also have you know ten twenty thirty one  
hundred acres that they're producing on.

00:42:19.470 --> 00:42:20.040

We're producing on

00:42:20.050 --> 00:42:25.170

a quarter of an acre so when you when  
you break down the cost it's the most

00:42:25.180 --> 00:42:30.920

financially viable when people come to us  
or when they buy online, so either they buy it at a

00:42:30.930 --> 00:42:35.490

farm store or they buy online and we  
deliver to them. But it's hard because getting your

00:42:35.500 --> 00:42:39.490

name out there is farmers'  
markets they don't people

00:42:39.590 --> 00:42:43.540

a lot of people don't understand that there  
are farms that don't attend farmers'

00:42:43.550 --> 00:42:47.540

markets, I talked to the Department of  
Agriculture today and we're like Oh we're

00:42:47.550 --> 00:42:50.770

having our quarterly  
meeting are you going to come it's on

00:42:50.780 --> 00:42:55.070

a Monday because that's the only non  
farmer's market day and I was like. Ms. Winters

00:42:55.080 --> 00:42:57.890

we don't go to farmers' markets  
and that's our chef delivery day

00:42:57.900 --> 00:43:04.370

and shes like, oh I always forget that. That's OK, so

yeah so it's hard because you want to get

00:43:04.380 --> 00:43:08.710

your name out there. But you don't want  
it to be your marketing dollars that are

00:43:08.720 --> 00:43:09.070

taking

00:43:09.080 --> 00:43:13.320

a farmer's market and for me personally  
I can't be on my feet that long so it's

00:43:13.330 --> 00:43:15.720

balancing what that is  
we took once we got to

00:43:15.730 --> 00:43:18.770

a point that our yields were  
so high that we could go to

00:43:18.780 --> 00:43:24.130

a market if wanted to we took.  
That basically income and we built

00:43:24.170 --> 00:43:29.030

a store on our property and then  
we're open every Monday and as we get more

00:43:29.040 --> 00:43:33.390

people than will be open another day  
another day so to really keep the keep it

00:43:33.430 --> 00:43:39.410

within our community the way  
that we wanted to. Mitch: I think we

00:43:40.190 --> 00:43:46.840

talked for the allotted time.  
I'm really inspired by your story.

00:43:46.850 --> 00:43:53.130

Thank you so  
much for coming and talking on here  
and sharing all your info.

00:43:53.640 --> 00:43:55.910

Stepheni: Absolutely thank you so much.

— End of Transcription —