

Felix Ramon

July 2, 2014

Jarmoc Farm in Enfield, CT

62 years old

14:15

00:30 I am from Puerto Rico, it started in 1968 when I came over to the United States. I started in '69 on a tobacco farm that does not exist anymore, the Hathaway Farm in Massachusetts next to Agawam. From there I moved to Pennsylvania to work on mushrooms for one year and then I came back and worked tobacco for Culbro and then I jumped to Consolidated, I like farming. From there a couple of years ago I worked I jumped to Connecticut in furniture in Hartford. I stopped tobacco for about 18 years in 1974-1989 and then I was laid off and then I started working on the farms again. I worked at Imperial 1999-1990 on trees and flowers. Then I went back to Puerto Rico in 1990 for four years. I had a vacation in 1994 from roofing and I came to see my kids in Massachusetts and from there my sister brought me to the Jarmoc farm where and I worked for a month of my vacation. I liked it so much, they were good people. I decided to go to Puerto Rico and quit my job and come back here and work on the Jarmoc Farm For the past 20 years I have worked on the Jarmoc farm. I have been farming for almost all my life.

3:40 I have worked in the field, hoeing, setting, setting over, chopping, picking tobacco, driving tractors, helping with carpentry, building the tobacco barns. Have built about 14 of the barns. The last one on Broadbrook, we called it Bigfoot, the biggest barn we have ever built, 15 Bents. And then I keep working with them. 16 feet by 32 is a bent. 15 bent is about 100, 150 feet long by 32 wide. A bent holds about an acre of tobacco. So a 15 bent is good enough for 7 acres.

5:30 We grew shade for a couple of years here. The difference is that we don't chop the whole plant. We pick it leaf by leaf. So they sew it in the barn, hang it in the barn and drying it is the hard part. You have to put fire on it and you have to make sure the temperature is just right. The humidity has to be right. If the barn is too hot you have to open it to the outside to cool it. If it gets to cold you have to heat it up a little bit more. It is a lot of work on shade.

6:30 It is hot under the tents. With broadleaf you chop the whole plant and then hang it on the hooker. Then you fire it because it can get moldy, you fire it for 2-3 days. On a good day you open the sides on the barn so that you can get a lot of air on it and for rainy days you close the barn so it does not get wet, moldy. Like I said I have been working farming almost my whole life. I love it. You are out there free. You are not in a building with a couple of windows on the side and you can see nothing. Out there you are like a bird, free. You know. It is hot too, but if you don't get the heat you don't get the cold either. We do outside work in the winter and it is cold like hell.

8:00 In the winter we go to all the barns and get the bundles that we packed. We take those bundles and put them in the truck. It is cold but we have got to do it. I like farming especially here. Big foot is the last barn that I built. I like that barn. They are all alike. Except for shade tobacco. All the four by fours have to have wire so you can hang the laths. Broadleaf you do not need the wire because you hang the laths on the four by fours. I have two children already grown up. By daughter and son live in Springfield.

I lived in Springfield all my life but I moved in 2000 to the farm. I rent a house from Stephen. My daughter works in medical and my son is a cab driver. They are both working. When they were kids they used to come over here and worked but they did not like it too much. You have to like it to do this job.

10:30 All the days are different. Almost every day is the same but then you have to do something different. Right now it is all hoeing by hand, not with a machine. It takes a couple of weeks to weed all the tobacco. If you go faster the better. Not too many weeds to pull most of the time you have to put dirt on the plant so the fertilizer gets closer to the root. Havana is almost the same as broadleaf. You have to sucker Havana. Broadleaf you don't have to do that. When it gets flowers you have to top it so that the plant don't grow no more, only the leaves. We don't have to do a lot of irrigation here. Right now we are waiting for the rain. The plants need it. Helps them to grow better. I think tomorrow it is supposed to rain. I like this. I work seven days I don't stop. I don't like to be home. I like to be working better.