

Tim Crandall interview

(00:00:07)

Tell me who you are and what you do.

(00:00:13)

Tim Crandall: I'm Tim Crandall, and I teach school and then we have a farm. It's about 15 acres in probably the middle of Orem. As close as you can get to the middle of Orem.

Tell me a little bit about that.

(00:00:28)

Tim Crandall: Well, my great-grandfather came and homesteaded this in about 1887. Started out with about 160 acres and for the first few years couldn't pay the taxes on it, so lost it, and finally was able to farm it. And then my father bought about ten acres, and then we have about 15 acres now of the original farm.

Tell me what you grow.

(00:01:11)

Tim Crandall: We grow pears and peaches and apples. Several varieties of apples, and we usually plant a few tomatoes.

Talk about the advice that your dad gave you.

(00:01:45)

Tim Crandall: Well, my dad was just -- well, he was a farmer. Every spring he also drove a school bus. But every spring it would be issue if the blossoms were going to freeze, and it was really a -- really every year it was such a gamble. And so when I said I wanted to be a farmer, he said, "That's fine if you would like to do that, but be sure and go get a job, and find a job that's more stable. And then if you'd like to farm, that would be terrific." (00:02:13) And so for a long time my dad and I farmed, and it was one of the great experiences of my life to go out every day with my dad and have experiences. And hopefully we've provided that same thing for our kids.

Why haven't you sold the farm?

(00:02:44)

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Tim Crandall: Well, we made a decision early on that if it was an option that's what we wanted to do. And we never know what's going to happen. But it's a great way to raise kids. Our kids work with me. We can do things as a family. I'm around, especially during the summer when the kids are out of school. So if something needs to be taken care of, I can help with that. But it's also a great chance. We work as a family still as we pack fruit. And it's a great opportunity to work with our kids and teach 'em to work. (00:03:14) And one of the things that we've learned through this whole thing is that when we say we'll teach children to work, you have to work with 'em every day in order to teach them that. It's just not because you provide an opportunity they learn to work. You have to teach them that every day. So it's a great opportunity for our kids. And it was a choice that Natalie and I made, realizing that we wouldn't have as much money as if we did some other things, but we have enough.

Do you think the farm will go on to another generation?

(00:03:51)

Tim Crandall: I think so. However, we will never force them because I wasn't forced, nor my dad was forced. If they would like to, that would be great. If not, it's been a great run. And now it seems that there's some interest, but again, my biggest -- as we discuss it, our biggest concern for my wife and I is that no one has to do it just because they feel obligated. We don't want 'em to feel obligated to be farmers. (00:04:20) But if they choose to, it's an opportunity, a great way of life.

Why did you choose to be a farmer?

(00:04:29)

Tim Crandall: Well, for one thing the challenge of it. And oftentimes people say, "Well, you just can't make it farming." And so I guess part of it is just deep down I think maybe we can. And we may not make a fortune at it, but we can make enough. And we try new things and that part of it's fun. And also, we meet so many nice people at our fruit stand. It's a great opportunity. (00:04:58) My wife is there, and it's almost a corner market, the olden days corner market where I'm convinced that sometimes people go and buy apples not because they want apples, but because they want somebody to talk to. And so that has been -- we have many friends that we never would have had had we not had a farm. And we're really a part of the community. We go a lot of places and people say, "Oh, you're Crandall's. Are you the ones who have the farm?" And we're a part of the community. A part that we like to be a part of.

What is it about the work that appeals to you?

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(00:05:42)

Tim Crandall: Well, as I've told our kids often, the work itself, going out and weeding a row of trees really isn't all that fun for anyone, but the sense of accomplishment is really what it's all about. And, you know, the trees are beautiful in the spring, but no matter how much you take care of a tree it's beautiful in the spring. So for me, the most beautiful part of it is in the fall when it has really nice fruit on it because not everybody can do that. And there's lots of challenges. (00:06:13) I think you have to have a lot of knowledge to make that all happen. So the work is rewarding. It's challenging. It's hard work. I've learned to work hard, and I hope our kids have learned to work hard by doing it.

All right.

(00:06:32)

Tim Crandall: I guess the other thing is, is that I want them -- if they choose to be farmers or not, I think maybe one of the things they've learned is to work hard and they'll be successful at whatever they do.

Tell me about the history of the area and orchard farming in Orem.

(00:07:07)

Tim Crandall: Well, it started later than most places because there was no water in Orem. And so my great-grandfather, along with a lot of other men, went up and found a spring, Alta Spring, and they found a way to get the water down to the land. And it's great for farming because it has some rock so the water drains, but yet great soil on top. And so as they were able to find some water, then there was farms in all the area. And then gradually as farmers got older and the price of property went up, many sold. (00:07:39) And for a long time it was a history of just commercial agriculture, and it would be shipped off, Gerber's and many other places. And as slowly as farmers left, it became -- really it became a good idea to build a fruit stand. And so in fact when they put Center Street, Center Street used to end at Eighth East. And when they put that road through, it really took a part of our farm and was very close to our home. (00:08:11) And so my dad, being very optimistic and, well, very innovative in a lot of ways, said, "Well, if they're gonna put a main road right by our house, the best thing to do is to build a fruit stand and sell our fruit here." And so we built a little fruit stand and it worked well. And we'd always sold a little bit of fruit at our home, but because everybody else had fruit also we didn't sell tons. And then over the years, more and more

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farmers have sold out, and so our business has improved and we've done pretty well with it.

What was the area like when you were a kid?

(00:08:49)

Tim Crandall: When I was a kid it was mostly farms. Um, probably when I was ten, the first subdivisions were built, and I thought it was great because finally there were friends closer than a couple of blocks away. But still mostly agriculture. And most of the kids my age, or many of the kids went home and worked on farms. We always thought the kids who worked in subdivisions were lucky, who lived in subdivisions were lucky because they didn't have to work as hard. (00:09:20) So from the time I was a kid was when the first subdivisions came in.

And how has it changed through the years?

(00:09:30)

Tim Crandall: Now there's very few farms. It's been interesting because at our fruit stand, we get a real pulse of what people are thinking. For a long time, people came and came with the attitude that if you had any sense at all, you would sell this because it's worth a little money. And now they come in kind of a different sense of wow, thank you for being here. We appreciate that we can get fresh fruit that's grown right here where we know where it's growing. We watch it. (00:09:59) We feel like our farm has -- we have people stop every once in a while and just thank us for being farmers here and by the way it looks. And in turn, Orem City has been very good to us because it's what Orem is about and there's not many farms left. There's farms similar to it, but maybe not as visible as right on the corner of Eighth East and Center Street.

What kind of questions do your customers ask?

(00:10:52)

Tim Crandall: Well, the biggest is they want to know where it comes from, and when we look around -- and our fruit stand is right on the edge of our orchard. And so when they come and they look and they can see that it's growing right there, that's very pleasing, and we have many who will just say, "Can we just walk out and walk through the orchard?" And, I mean, to us it's very commonplace, but for them to go out and pick an apple or just wander around for a bit is really uncommon. (00:11:20) And they are very pleased that we grow it here. And I think one of the things they like a lot is that they see us pruning and they see us -- I mean, they see the whole process. And I think one of

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the things that happens a lot, and we hope it happens is that they see the work and the concern and the effort that we put into it. And just like anything in life, if there's work an effort put into it, the product's usually going to be pretty good. And people can see that because most of our customers drive by our house often, by our farm often.

So it's really your neighbors who are your customers.

(00:11:54)

Tim Crandall: Yes. But more and more it's becoming people from other areas because there's just not fruit available. In Salt Lake County as far as orchards go there's just not many. And so it's either here or up to Willard and Perry. And so I think our customers are coming from a bigger area.

Did you decide to be a teacher to help you be a farmer?

(00:12:42)

Tim Crandall: I had always wanted to be a teacher from the time I was in fifth grade. I had a fifth grade teacher who really made a difference in my life, and so I had always thought that I wanted to be a teacher. But I think at the same time I thought teaching would work well with farming. And I didn't know how long I would be a farmer or what would happen to our farm because at that time, most farms were being sold. And of course, my mom and dad had that option and if they would have chosen to do that, if they would have needed the money, I certainly understood. (00:13:11) And so I would've been fine if it hadn't have worked out that way. But certainly, in the back of my mind I thought yes, farming would work well with teaching school.

Talk about developers.

(00:13:44)

Tim Crandall: We're just not interested. We think that we have a good thing going, and that I enjoy it and my wife is supportive. And that's probably one of the most important things because there's times that I work a lot. And she's very supportive, and I think that makes a big difference. The other thing is, is if we have enough to provide for what we need, that's all we want. And we're not worried about having lots of money to do lots of different things. (00:14:15) We're very content here. But I will say that with teaching school and being a farmer, we can do the things that we would like to do. And I realize that some people who farm, it's really a great sacrifice. And for us, it's a great second income for a schoolteacher. And so as people come and ask us about it, we're just not interested. And the day may come when I'm sick or when it doesn't work out that that's

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an option. (00:14:45) But I like to think that it will never be an option because we want the money. It may be for different reasons because if I can't have a farm that looks very nice, we're not gonna have a farm. Because if it doesn't look good -- we're very proud of it, and so we want a farm that is very productive and very good. And if for some reason that can't happen, then those are the reasons that we would sell.

How often do you get offers?

(00:15:20)

Tim Crandall: Now it's more in the last four or five months. Probably one a month for the last four or five months. Early on in 2005 and 2006 it was probably every couple of weeks. I also believe that we have more than our fair share of developers who come to our fruit stand and buy apples just to see where we're at in life and see if we would be interested in selling. And they come by and buy a bag of apples and say, "How is the fruit business going these days?" And I think that they're interested in what's going on for that purpose. (00:15:52) But I would say probably once a month now, probably.

With the value of land, that would be a nice retirement.

(00:16:02)

Tim Crandall: Would be a nice retirement. It would be more than we need. And quite frankly one of our concerns is what would happen with that much money. We're not sure that that's always good.

You don't feel tempted to cash out?

(00:16:49)

Tim Crandall: No. I mean, it's not what's important to me nor to our family. And I think, again, it goes back to my wife being just as -- feeling the same way that I do. And it's not about -- we have what we need in life. The other thing I think that's important is that it's easy to sell the farm and end up with some money. It's a little more challenging to grow fruit and end up with some money. (00:17:18) But that challenge, if we can do that, that's great because we've earned what we get. And so we feel a bit like we're the stewards of this land for many generations.

What do you think when you hear about farms closing in the area?

(00:18:12)

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Tim Crandall: Everyone has a choice for themselves, and if they don't enjoy it, it certainly is not worth farming unless you really enjoy it because it's a lot of work and for what you get paid an hour, if that's why you're doing it, you should not do it. And so that's their choice. So I guess I really don't have much. You know, if that's what works best for them. For us, that hasn't been what's best, but for them if that's what works for them that's great.

How was it seeing people leave?

(00:19:08)

Tim Crandall: Yeah. It's interesting because among farmers, I'm not sure there's -- at least the sense that I have is there's not really tons of competition amongst farmers, at least the ones that are left in Orem because there's plenty of people to buy what is grown. And so it's a camaraderie. And as you see, especially oftentimes it's those older people who have such a wealth of knowledge, that part I miss because I would spend time talking. (00:19:34) They would stop by and I would talk to them and I would learn a lot. And I miss that part of them stopping by. Although, we will have many of them who are in the area who now come here and buy their fruit. And we always take that as a great compliment when they choose to come to Crandall's to buy their pears and peaches and apples instead of somewhere else.

They know what good fruit is.

(00:19:55)

Tim Crandall: *(Laughs)* When they come and say, "That looks good," we take that as a real compliment.

Give us a description of the space your orchard sits in.

(00:20:28)

Tim Crandall: Well, first of all, one of the things I enjoy about farming is being in a place where we know people who are walking up and down the street and people who come by and people who stop by. And every day, most every day, I guess, there's people who stop by who some I know and some I don't know who are just interested in farming. And I guess one of the things I like best is not only farming, but being here where people coming and being really a part of the community. (00:21:05) And there's disadvantages as we try to get across Center Street at 5:00 in the afternoon on a tractor, and so we try to plan that a bit. We have to be very careful with some of our procedures and things. But the benefits certainly outweigh the downside of being here. And I would say

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probably one of our favorite parts is just being around so many people that we think so much of, and hopefully like being around a farm. (00:21:37) And they do. In fact, when we went to the city to have this as a agricultural overlay and the city sent out these letters because it was a zoning change, and we wondered what people would think. And most of the people -- in fact, all of the people who contacted us said, "What does this mean? Does this mean you're gonna quit farming?" And we said, "Oh, no. This is so that we can continue to farm as long as they would like." And they had great relieve that that's what it was about. (00:22:06) And so we're limited in some ways, but in other ways, there's lots of positives to it.

Talk about what this place is now compared to what it was.

(00:22:34)

Tim Crandall: Well, in the early 1900s they had just started growing fruits and vegetables, and in those days it took a long time to get trees up and bearing fruit and so they planted strawberries. In fact, all of this right through here, they planted fruit trees, but then they put strawberries in between the rows because they needed a cash crop. And so they would plant strawberries mostly. Some raspberries. (00:23:02) And then most of the work was done with horses. My great-grandfather had a corral right at the bottom of our farm right here, and he had horses in it. And one of the reasons that the rows were so wide was because they had to get up there with horses, and they also had -- the first tractor they had was one with -- that was a caterpillar tractor with tracks on it, and so the rows had to be wide. And water was really an issue because they couldn't get enough water. (00:23:31) And trees were a long ways apart because they had more ground than they had anything else. There was plenty of land. That wasn't an issue. We kind of are limited on the other end where we're not gonna be purchasing any more land in Orem to farm, and so we've gotta make the best use of what we have. So in 1900, it was very much -- everything was sold to a coop. There was very little individual sell. (00:23:57) Well, my grandfather used to go up to the market in Salt Lake where they would take a load of fruit up. And so very little was sold right here. And probably we have as many trees on our 15 acres as my great-grandfather had on 60 acres just because of the way the farming has evolved over the years.

Talk about how much Orem has changed.

(00:24:50)

Tim Crandall: Well, Orem to begin with was just a farming community. And so other than State Street, there were very main roads. And it wasn't planned. There's not a business district planned. And so it was very much an agricultural area. And so my first perspective was, you know, along State Street there was some fruit stands, some busi-

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nesses. But other than that, you would get two or three blocks off and it would be mostly orchards. And clear to the edge of the hill, well, all four ways to the edge of the hill was really a farming community, except right on State Street.

Talk about how you spray in order to be courteous to your neighbors.

(00:25:39)

Tim Crandall: Well, we try to be courteous all the time. I mean, we're aware that we're farming in a city. And I think that's one of the things that's made it a good relationship for anyone is that I'm very careful not to go out on the tractor earlier than I need to. And sometimes at harvest time, that's pretty easy. But I try to stay away from homes and be as courteous as we can. And in turn, our neighbors are great. We spray most of our farm with a speed sprayer, but around the edges we always spray with a hose so that -- and even though it takes much longer, we try to be courteous to those around us.

Tell me that again.

(00:26:21)

Tim Crandall: We try to be courteous to those around us because many of them, well, they're our friends and they're our customers and it's the right thing to do. And so we make a special effort to spray around the edges with a hose. We try to do it when it's best for them. We do it during the day rather than the evenings when families are either to work or something like that. We want to be as good of neighbors as we possibly can be.

(Background)

Tell me the whole story.

(00:26:56)

Tim Crandall: When I was a kid, a fellow came to our house, and it was just during one of the booms. There's kinda been booms and then down times when people really didn't wanna buy property, or not as much anyhow. And one of the times it was really a time when people really wanted property, and a fellow came and had a briefcase full of money and came to the door. And my dad opened the door, and he said, "I'd like to buy your farm, and I've got the money right here to pay for at least a down payment for it." (00:27:25) And the interesting part of the story is if you would've known my dad, it was just an insult. There was nothing kind, clever, anything about it. It just didn't work for

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my dad at all. If my dad would've thought about selling the farm, that wouldn't have been the one he sold it to because of the way he approached the whole situation.

What happened?

(00:27:58)

Tim Crandall: Well, so my dad just said, "No, we're not interested." And over the years, people have called and said, "We were interested in buying your farm." And I have no problem with people calling. There's the ones who call and say, "Your property right there is worth quite a bit an acre." And those kind I wonder about because we know that part of the story. For someone to just call and say, "You know, we're just in the area. If you're interested in selling would you please give us a shot?" I have no problem with that. (00:28:29) When people call and say, "Do you realize," almost to the point of, "Are you really smart enough to figure out that this is really worth quite a bit of money?" They say, "Don't you want to at least know how much property is worth?" We say, "No, because it really doesn't matter because we're not selling it anyhow." And so that's kind of where we're at. And sometimes they'll say, "Well, you know, it's worth so much an acre." And we say, "That's fine. We know that." And we could take a pretty good guess. (00:29:01) But it's never -- we enjoy it. And not to say that there's not those days that are discouraging and, you know, there's those days that we feel like doing that, selling it. But by that night, we've reconsidered and decided it's a good idea to keep it. *(Laughs)*

Where do you get your water from?

(00:29:26)

Tim Crandall: Our water comes from Deer Creek through the Murdock Canal, and we water every eight days. And water is not really an issue. This year because of the drought it's a bit of an issue and we're working on it and we've got some things in place. But ours comes from Deer Creek. In fact, when my great-grandfather and the group of men who found the water here in the Alta Springs sold the water, sold Alta Springs, and in turn it was when they built Deer Creek in the late '40s, I think, and they sold it and as part of the deal they receive shares of water from out at Deer Creek.

So there's a canal that brings the water down.

(00:30:17)

Tim Crandall: Yeah. It's now an enclosed canal. They just enclosed it the last couple of years.

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There can't be that many farmers pulling water now.

(00:30:25)

Tim Crandall: No, there's not. But there's lots of people who have one acre or just a bit, but there's not a lot of farmers who -- in fact, on our ditch we have a little over half the water that's on our ditch is ours. Typically, maybe one farmer on each of the ditches, and so it's left, yes.

How farmers are there left in Orem?

(00:30:55)

Tim Crandall: I think it depends on how big does it have to be to be a farm, I guess. So I don't know. I don't know.

Is there a club?

(00:31:10)

Tim Crandall: Not officially get together, but, I mean, we know most of the farmers. Especially those who -- there's probably five or six or ten who are my age or so who are -- they'll stop by or I'll stop by them or I'll call. There's kind of this group who very much get along well and are willing to share ideas. And sometimes since none of us have very big farms, you'll have to buy a certain amount of boxes or something and we'll get together and do that together kind of thing.

Can you share any stories of having kids on the farm?

(00:32:11)

Tim Crandall: I'll tell you, because I teach school most of what we do is -- most of our family time on the farm other than just being around all the time, which really makes a difference because early on I thought about being a principal and that took you away from home all summer, and so being around. But most of our stories, most of our experiences have been in the fall packing fruit because we start at 4:00, the same time that I get home the kids get home. And in the fall we start at 4:00, and with pears sometimes it's 8:00 and sometimes it's later. (00:32:42) But our whole family is there. And we now have two -- our daughter is married and our son is married, and they come and help us, too. And so in the packing shed, we provide almost all of the -- all the help that we need in our packing shed is from our family. And it's a great time. We have lots of

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discussions. It's just quantity of time, and because of that some of it is really quality time as a family. (00:33:11) And we spend some time picking cherries together and things, but most of our experience as a family, the way it's set up of me teaching school and things, most of our experience has been packing fruit and sorting fruit and helping, those things. It's a great way to raise kids, and we hope that one of the things that's happened is that they have learned how to work and the value of work. That's one of the reasons that we continue to farm. And one of these days we'll have grandkids, and we hope we can teach them the same principles. (00:33:42) And I guess that's one reason that we keep the farm is -- among other things. There's quite a list. But is that we can teach our grandkids and those who are around us the real values of life. And I think that a farm teaches you a lot of values that you can learn in other ways, but it's a great way to teach our youth values.

Start that over.

(00:34:15)

Tim Crandall: One of the things that we like the most is it's a little bit of a throwback to I believe what teachers were really a part of the community a generation ago is that they were both teachers and they were farmers and they were really a part of the community. And when I'm going up and down the road on our tractor, there's lots of kids who wave and families who wave, and we really feel as a part of the community. And then those same people who I teach, the students, they come and buy fruit from us. (00:34:42) And we have a group of friends and acquaintances, we believe they're our friends, who in a different situation we would never have that. And really, that's the very most important thing in life is those relationships that you have that some of them we would have if we had a farm or not or if I taught your school or not, but many of those it's that relationship that's what's very most important to us in life. (00:35:10) And this provides a vehicle for us to have those relationships that are so important to us.

Aside from family and community, what inspires you to run the farm?

(00:35:50)

Tim Crandall: I think one of our biggest ones is the challenge of it because oftentimes as farmers go out of business, one of the things that they say is, "You just can't do it anymore. A small farmer just can't compete anymore." And we think we can. And as a family and a business, we think we do. And we may not be able to do it forever, but we believe that there's a niche. We realize that we're a small farm, but we believe there is that niche of where you can harvest it and grow it and sell it right here, that there's a niche that we can be successful. (00:36:25) And sometimes we kinda like that bit of a challenge when people say, "Well, you can't succeed in that anymore," because we be-

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lieve we can and we keep working at it to do that. And some years not as successful as others. But I think another reason is I like that challenge. And where I've been stable as teacher, sometimes you need an extra challenge in life. (00:36:56) And so we plant new trees, we try new things. So I think the challenge of being a successful small businessman in the world that we live in today I think is another reason that we farm.

Is there anything else you'd like to share?

(00:37:21)

Tim Crandall: I think we appreciate the support of our civic leaders. And there was a time years ago when there was lots of farms, that they were pleased to see farms become residential areas or businesses because it's better for taxes, obviously. But we really appreciate the support of the city and those around us. (00:37:48) And we feel of their support as we go on. And of course, if we didn't make money we wouldn't do it. You've gotta make something on it or there's no use doing it. But if you're gonna lose money every year, it just doesn't work. But we feel of the support of our customers, the people who come. They're not really our customers. They're our friends who come and buy fruit from us. And we hope that we always provide a good product for them. And we feel a bit of an icon, and we feel a bit of a stewardship of this land that has been a farm for 150 years or so, 120 years. (00:38:28) And we feel that and feel of that responsibility, but the success that we can have and the opportunity that it provides for us and our family. And we hope our community, we hope Orem -- we hope it's a good thing for everyone.

[Break in Tape]

(00:38:59)

Tim Crandall: One other thing that's important to us is that it's a great place as a family gathering place for not only our own family, but also for our extended family back to my --

Start again.

(00:39:21)

Tim Crandall: Another reason that we continue to farm and one of the things that's very important to us, it's a great place. It's a great gathering place for our extended family back to not only my brothers and sisters and their kids, but also a generation back further than that will come. And it's just home. And we have my aunts and uncles, and my cousins and my cousins' kids who will come back, and this is home to them and that

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means a lot to them. And because it means a lot to them, it means a lot to us.
(00:39:47) And every year we have a hot dog roast with my brothers and sisters and their families, and that is maybe 80 people who come to a hot dog roast. And those are the experiences that we enjoy so much.

[END TAPE]