



FCC Knowledge Podcast – Episode: Curtis and Diane Heinen

PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

Interviewer: Marty Seymour (MS)

Guests: Curtis Heinen (CH) and Diane Heinen (DH)

MS: From AgExpert, it's the FCC Knowledge Podcast, a show that features real Canadian producers, real stories, and real good conversations about the business of farming. I'm your host, Marty Seymour.

CH: You've got to keep working at it and try to do a good job of what you do. And then if you do a good job of what you do, it seems like the best advertising is word-of-mouth. Somebody tells somebody and pretty soon you get two or three from the same area.

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MS: On today's show, we chat with Curtis Heinen, a farmer from Craik, Saskatchewan. Like a lot of farmers from Saskatchewan, Curtis is in the grains and oilseeds business. But he also does something really unique. He runs an on-farm business as a machinist. He fixes grain vacs and augurs and other equipment that people bring to him. But this is where the story gets interesting. Curtis does all of this while being visually impaired. That's right. He's a machinist that can only rely on his touch and his hearing to fix things. I'm sure you're going to find Curtis's story relatable, entertaining, and inspiring. Stick around.

Welcome to the FCC Knowledge Podcast where we talk to real farmers about real things in Canadian agriculture. And this morning, we have on the show Curtis and Diane Heinen. Good morning, guys.

DH: Good morning.

CH: Good morning.

0:01:28.9

MS: Now, I love to start all these podcasts with, where are you from, because it's a great way to make your town famous. So, Curtis, maybe I'll ask you. Where is home for you guys?

CH: My home is in Craik, Saskatchewan, Canada. We are halfway between Regina and Saskatoon on number 11 Highway.

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MS: So, you guys are actively farming. Now, Diane, you are Curtis's mom. How long have you guys lived at Craik, Saskatchewan?

DH: All our lives. Born and raised in Craik.

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MS: Good answer. I always want to know what the price of land is, anybody I interview on this. And so, Curtis, what's the price of land in Craik, Saskatchewan?

CH: I would say the price of land is, probably the low end is \$1,500 and the top end is probably \$2,000, \$2,200 per acre.

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MS: Oh, wow. So, you have just invited everybody from Ontario and BC to come land shopping in Craik, Saskatchewan, whether you intended to or not. That's a great deal compared to some people that I get to meet. Today, I want to talk about ... well, actually, I have something fun. I haven't tried this before. I'm going to call it the firing line of questions. And it's a little bit of insight into you, it's a little fun. And Curtis, I'll maybe ask you the questions, and I'm going to move kind of quick, so just say whatever comes to mind. It's not a quiz, and you can't fail. So, my first question, what's your favourite farming season?

CH: Summertime.

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MS: Buttons or snaps?

CH: Snaps.

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MS: Best thing you ever bought?

CH: A lathe.

0:03:09.8

MS: Oh, good answer. We're going to talk about that later. Diane, favourite song?

DH: Tennessee Bird Walk.

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MS: Nice. What's the best sounding engine?

CH: Probably a Cummins engine out of a combine.

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MS: Oh yeah, good call. Last question, if you had a million dollars, what would you buy? Diane, what would you buy if you had a million dollars, first thing, top of mind?

DH: I'd pay off our farm debts.

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MS: Oh, that's so boring. Curtis, what would you do with a million dollars? Something totally wasteful.

CH: Build a great big shop.

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MS: That's good, yeah. There's probably purpose in that to where we're headed with our conversation. Thanks for playing along, guys. It's just a good look into who you guys are as people, and I think what I heard a lot of it is, you are the relatable farming family from Central Saskatchewan. I think everybody can identify with lots of your choices and your picks in there. Today in the podcast, I actually want to talk a little bit about decision-making and adaptability. Our FCC Knowledge Podcast spends a lot of time on transition and business planning and strategy. But you have a really interesting story around decision-making and adaptability. And Curtis, I know you as a famous machinist and farmer from Central Saskatchewan because of a news program on CTV that I saw. And I don't know the proper language to describe it, but I would say sight impaired. So, for our audiences, can you just tell us what that really means? Help our listeners understand.

CH: Well, I was born blind. I have no sight whatsoever. I guess the biggest thing is trying to adapt in a sighted world, so I can buy a lathe and have to adapt it to my own personal need or personal way to make it work.

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MS: Now Diane, you've obviously played a big role. And if Curtis has defined himself as blind, you played a big role in helping him operate in the operating world you have which

is highly complicated. How did you approach that, from a young kid to where you are today?

DH: I never expected any less of him than I did of the girls. He had his chores he had to do, and I never pampered him. I never said, no, you can't try it. If he tried it and he failed, okay, fine. And going to school, they wanted to send him to Ontario, and I put my foot down, I said no. I said, he's going to stay here in his hometown with his community. His community was a big part in helping him to where he is today. My mother used to get so mad at me. She figured I should just put him on a little crystal pedestal and leave him there. I said, no, he's got to get out there and learn, and to do. And he was always a hands-on person. He did graduate with honours from high school, but he was still a hands-on person. He liked to fix things. And Legos was his big thing when he was growing up, he loved Legos. And we just let him find his own way, what he wanted to do.

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MS: Diane is clearly passionate about advocating for her son. Considering how incredible Curtis is at his jobs, it's a really wonderful thing that Diane fought for Curtis to have the opportunity to stay in his community and grow in his trades. I think it's a great example of how important it is for us to have a supportive family and community.

So, you guys are actively farming. Curtis, can you maybe describe your farm for us? Tell us about your place.

CH: We are strictly a grain farm. I farm with my brother-in-law, and collectively we farm about 3,300 acres. We grow mostly canola, wheat, lentils. We've grown other crops in the past, but that's the three that we have at this point.

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MS: And you also have, I'll call it an on-farm business. Tell me about that. So, you're a machinist by training?

CH: Yeah, a machinist and mechanic. I fix grain vacs as well, so the machining and the mechanics go hand in hand. So, it's a mixture of both to make that business work.

0:07:13.2

MS: I'm actually not totally clear whether Curtis is a machinist first and a farmer second, or the other way around. But either way, he's an incredibly busy guy. And obviously, he doesn't run his business entirely on his own, so I was curious about how he divides up the labour and are there specific tasks that he delegates to others. Let's let Curtis tell us.

CH: I guess pretty much all hands on deck. So, for example, in seeding time, Dad and Wayne, my brother-in-law, they would run the air seeders. And then my sister helps out with

running fertilizer and grain. And I'm with her usually to make sure things get to where they need to go. And I'm usually the one on top of the tank that helps to fill the air seeders, and check everything to make sure it's all functioning properly. I'm the fixer guy. If something breaks, usually I get called. I'm called 'the guy' around here, so that's one of my responsibilities.

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MS: So, that's your affectionate name is 'the guy'. I've got a little Bourgault air drill in our small little farm, southeast. I'm trying to envision you filling the drill. I can't see my way through that in terms of, how do you do that with not being able to see?

CH: I usually reach in there to see where the product is and how full it is. And when it gets close then I wave my hand and holler 'whoa', and everybody shuts 'er down and we're good to go.

0:08:46.6

MS: Makes sense. It's actually not as complicated as I was picturing it. It's the same kind of stuff everybody is doing all the time. And so, that's the seeding side of things. And then harvest, how do you divide the work? Because I heard you've got, there's kind of an army of people, Dad, Mom, your brother-in-law, your sister. What does harvest look like?

CH: And then my niece and nephew come out sometimes to help as well. And we've got a retired farmer or two once in a while who helps out. And I've got a fabricator that helps me with the grain vac business, he comes out and helps once in a while too. I'm the one that's responsible for repairs on the combines in the morning.

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DH: The guy.

CH: The guy. And then once the combines are rolling, then I come back to the yard, and I'm the one that dumps the trucks. Wayne usually backs them in for me, I dump them. And then he takes the empty truck and away he goes.

0:09:48.1

MS: So, you've got a division of duty which takes me a little bit to what I want to talk today about is decision-making, and how you guys do this. Because running a farm by committee can sometimes work. Running a farm with one person making the call, how have you structured the decisions, or maybe even start your morning, get your morning coffee for me at seeding. How does the conversation go on what the plan is for the day?

CH: Wayne and I kind of have a plan worked out beforehand, the order of which we're going to seed the fields, how we're going to do it. So, usually we're pretty prepared in the morning what the day is going to look like. And then we have radios so if something changes through the day, we radio each other or phone each other if something changes.

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MS: In typical farming fashion, Curtis operates a large family affair. He clearly needs a lot of help, considering the size of their farm, and I'm actually really impressed at how well he manages everything. It sounds like Curtis is typically 'the guy', or in other words, the one making the calls. It also sounds like Curtis has spent a lot of time organizing the division of labour in an efficient way.

You're 'the guy', and it sounds like the doers. Who makes the executive decision on which crops we're going to seed, and how do you guys reconcile that down? If you've got Wayne sitting in the trenches with you, who makes the call on what we're going to seed, even grain marketing? How are you driving those decisions?

CH: It's Wayne and I that have the land base now, so we sit down and discuss things, and try to pick our price that we like, and hopefully we make the right decisions, when to sell.

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MS: Now, Diane, do you get a little vote once in a while on some of this stuff too?

DH: Not so much anymore as what I used to. I'm kind of in the background as you speak. My husband and I, we did buy our family farm, so we have a little bit of say to what we seed on our own, but the rest of it is up to the boys.

0:11:42.0

MS: So, you might be moving more to that semiretirement phase where there's a transition starting to happen, is that what I'm gathering?

DH: Yeah, we've left it to the boys now.

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MS: Are you worried?

DH: No. Well, yeah, sometimes. This year Mother Nature kind of pulled a 180 on us.

0:12:03.6

MS: Fair enough. Now, Curtis, are you worried in terms of what it looks like moving forward? You have 3,300 acres. Do you have the right balance of the size of the farm

with your machining business, or do you need to make some strategic investments moving forward?

CH: No, I think we're pretty good that way. We run older equipment so it can handle the size of the farm for now. Maybe moving forward down the road, we might have to. It depends on if land becomes available and we decide to get bigger, well then, we'll have to make those decisions as it happens, but for now we're okay.

0:12:40.7

MS: If you looked at your business, Curtis, would you say growing the machining side would be an advantage, or the grain farming side, if you think of how you're structured with your strength in machining, the rest of the family, the other things they bring to the table?

CH: The grain vac business, it's one of those businesses, that there's not many people doing it, but the market is changing. I think the future of the grain vac business will be more in the commercial side, doing the components for the hog barns and the chicken barns. We also cover that as well, more the commercial stuff. So, I think that's more the future for that side of the business.

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MS: There's that adaptability theme again. Curtis isn't set on keeping his eggs all in one basket. He has multiple entrepreneurial ventures, and within them he's ready to adjust as he needs. I think many of us would agree that as markets change, we have to consider changing as well.

How long have you been doing the grain vac stuff?

CH: I started back in '97. I worked for Glen Haugerud back in '97, and then he retired, and then the salesman and I ran it for a while. And then I took over the whole vac business in 2013, February 1st.

0:14:07.7

MS: So, it's evolving, as you said, and shifting. And I guess maybe a lot of our listeners aren't unlike your situation where they have the primary farm and they're running an off-farm enterprise or some other revenue stream. And if you think about, if you went back to when you started in '13, when you really took control of this or owned it, do you have advice for those people that are maybe in the early days of planning that diversification in their business?

CH: If you want to take over the business, try to structure it in such a way that it's a smooth transfer from one owner to the next. Mine worked out okay, but it took a little while to get it to that point.

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MS: What do you mean by smooth transfer? Where would be some of the speed bumps in a situation like that?

CH: I guess we really never discussed me taking over the business. It just all happened that way.

DH: When he died.

CH: Yeah. But if I had to do it all over again, that's what I would recommend.

0:15:04.8

MS: If I heard you Diane, you said that the person had died that was part of that business originally. Is that what I heard you say?

DH: Yes, he did. That was his mentor, I guess, he passed away.

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MS: This is not an uncommon story in Canadian farming. I've often heard people in the middle of farm transition who suddenly experience a health issue, or something life changing, that alters their transition plans. So, given this reality, Curtis emphasizes the importance of a good transition plan to help you navigate through these tough times. If you've listened to our podcast at all, you'll know that these transition experts we have on the show typically agree with Curtis.

So, you're dealt a curveball, handed this business, and now you have to find a way to keep it growing and make a thing. What do you think your recipe for success was in those early days?

CH: You've got to keep working at it and try to do at a good job of what you do. And then if you do a good job of what you do, it seems like the best advertising is word-of-mouth. Somebody tells somebody, and pretty soon you get two or three from the same area.

0:16:05.4

MS: I used to have an old sales manager that said, the harder I work, the luckier I get. And I never forgot that. It's a bit of a farmer mantra is working hard. What about the business side of it, Curtis? In terms of, you strike me as the, if you're 'the guy' on the farm, you're clearly 'the guy' in the shop. What about the business side of what you did? Who's managing the profit-loss and all of the nuances over there?

CH: Oh, I do that too. Every component, every vac that goes through the shop here gets a sticker on it, my name, my number. So, if that vac needs to be repaired, or somebody

sees that sticker, they phone the number if they need something repaired, and so that's been good for a lot of our work as well.

0:16:56.9

MS: Back to your advertising strategy as word of mouth, the business side sounds like maybe it takes care of itself. If you're selling stuff for more than you're paying, so you've got the component side of it. And then maybe my question around, how do you charge out or value your labour?

CH: Well, vacs is a little bit different. It's usually by the job. So, if I repair, say, a blower for a grain vac, I take a look at it, which takes me five minutes, and I can usually say it costs \$3,000 to repair this blower. I go more by the job than by the hour.

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MS: So, you've got it built in. Diane, I was smiling because I think I saw you roll your eyes a little bit about maybe how he's charging out, or the rates, etcetera. Sounds like maybe there's been some conversations about this in the past?

DH: Oh, yes, there has. He hasn't raised his prices since I think he bought the business. Everything else is going up, but he just stays the same.

0:17:55.8

MS: He strikes me as somebody that's definitely not driven by greed in terms of whether it's \$3,000 or \$3,200 isn't going to change his passion to get it fixed, right?

DH: That's right.

0:18:07.3

MS: After the break, Curtis tells us some of his thoughts around the future of agriculture and gives us some really interesting details on how he's modified his machine shop to meet his needs. Don't go anywhere.

CH: Just because you're not sighted doesn't mean you can't do it. People always find the bad things and never take the good things, so that's been the main reason why I've done what I've done is, don't let people sway you. You do what you think is right and do the best job that you can do.

0:18:37.9

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you get your podcasts. And while you're at it, feel free to leave us a comment and give us a review.

So, Diane, if you look in as the mom, supporting and watching all this go, do you think that Curtis has the right balance of time he spends in the shop, versus time on the farm, and how all that's going?

DH: He's definitely a hands-on guy. He doesn't go into any recreational things. It's just a, from the house, to the shop, to the fields, house, to shop, to the field. Okay, I'm bursting his bubble here, but nothing for him to put in an 18-hour day easily in the summer. Easily. And he's had a lot of people in harvest time, they want a hose. He also has a hydraulic hose business, and there's nothing for him to go out there and fix a hose at midnight so that they can get going again the next morning. So, that's just his forte.

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MS: So, how do you feel about that?

DH: Good, yeah. No, good. If he wants to do it, go for it.

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MS: So, let me recount this. Curtis is a grain farmer, he owns a machine shop, runs a grain vac business, and has a hydraulic hose business. I don't know if I'm missing anything, but it strikes me as I'm quite lazy compared to what this young man has accomplished in his short time farming. Curtis is, by far, one of the most motivated and hardworking people that I've met on this show. And Diane was there to encourage him every step of the way. So, it only makes sense now to get his perspective on what he thinks the future of agriculture looks like.

Look at our industry, Curtis. And Diane, I welcome your thoughts on this too because you've obviously been around farming your whole life. Guys, what do you think the biggest challenge is for farmers? I'm thinking about your 3,300 acres, and grain marketing, and if you looked at just the coffee row chatter, what do you think the biggest challenge for farmers is in the next five or ten years?

CH: Well, making sure hopefully the prices hang in there as far as prices for our product. And being able to justify the balance between the prices of the product and the prices of our equipment.

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MS: Do you think more people will keep their equipment longer? Now back to your business side of it, the machining, is this your advantage? If equipment gets expensive, does it force my hand to fix it more?

CH: Some people can fix, but I've heard that the trend is already that some people are tending to keep their equipment a little bit longer, trying to get a little more life out of it for sure.

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MS: I think of my own self, in our farm, and my ability to actually fix stuff. My dad, not even close. So, I'm faced with two choices is, stay new, or hire you to fix my stuff. I don't know which way the industry is going to go. It's an interesting conundrum we're in.

CH: It depends what the grain prices are as what's going to happen. If they stay strong and we get a decent crop, I'm sure it'll go back to people buying more new again. But then I guess you've got supply chain issues as well, getting parts and getting ... they're sold out of new air drills right now, they can't even get them. So, it's kind of interesting times.

0:22:11.7

MS: In terms of adaptability, do you think that within agriculture that we're doing a good job of adapting?

CH: I think so. Everybody has a different situation, so you adapt the best way that you think you have to, to make it work.

0:22:27.0

MS: You've got some thoughts on grain marketing around is, I'll say, maybe conservative in terms of it's not in the bin, don't forward sell it, etcetera. Do you do any forward pricing?

CH: No, no, I wait 'til she's in the bin and then check things out.

0:22:42.0

MS: So, that's how you've, I'll just say always operated, I'm making that assumption. Do you ever wonder when you're just going to bed at night is, man, should I start to get in that forward-looking kind of marketing?

CH: No. I've heard too many stories with the neighbours that got burnt here the last five years.

0:22:58.9

MS: So, what's your idea of risk? What's the riskiest thing you do?

CH: The riskiest thing I do?

DH: Listen to your mother.

0:23:06.4

MS: Well, I think you sound like you're a good coach, Diane. So, if the worst thing he ever does is listen to you, I think he'll be fine.

Now, Curtis is definitely a little more risk averse than some of the guests we've had on this podcast in the past. But it hasn't prevented him from maintaining multiple thriving businesses, and he's always looking for ways to transform his business. Overall, I'd have to say he's a calm, measured, thoughtful entrepreneur. However, if there's one area where he's really on the cutting edge, I'm sure it's in the tech that he employs in the machine shop.

Are you using some fairly modern tech in the machining side of what you do there too? Maybe if I think about as a blind machinist, is there interesting technology that you've employed because? Did that accelerate some of your decisions on some of your decisions on stuff you buy?

CH: Back when I started with Glen in '97, first must have been year or two I was there, I could never dial a shaft in to make it straight. So, we got checking around, and actually they make a talking caliper. And they made them for people in the mines that couldn't see to measure things. So, that's when I decided that machining was something that I could do because I actually got the technology that I could do it myself, and measure, and do some of the things that I needed to do to machine things.

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MS: Talking caliper, so how does it work?

CH: There's a voice box that I carry in my pocket, and it plugs into any digital machining tool, so a caliper or a dial indicator. And this box reads the numbers on the indicator or the caliper and talks to me and tells me what it says.

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MS: So, someone brings in a shaft, and if you need to machine it and get it to the right size, how do you know what size the shaft needs to be? And then I'm saying you've got the caliper that'll measure and tell you. But how do you solve that without being able to see? I'm having trouble with making the leap on this one.

CH: Usually if a shaft has a bearing size, say, 1.75. So, usually it's worn, so you have to weld the shaft up and then start cutting it down to 1.75. And just measure with the caliper until it gets to that size.

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MS: So, you reverse engineer it from the bearing size, just like anybody would. It's just more the idea that you've got this caliper that'll tell you, versus me looking at it with my eyes. Pretty straightforward.

CH: Yeah. I can do a visual with my fingers to see, well, it's close. You get machinist hands after a while.

0:25:55.2

MS: I picture those as greasy, and grain tracked this time of year. Am I on the right track, Diane?

DH: Yes, you are.

0:26:04.4

MS: So, back to, this adaptability thing is kind of interesting to me. What do you think your advantage is, Curtis, in terms of ...? I have to think you have better sense of touch than I do, but I actually don't know. I feel kind of dumb in this space. What do you think your advantage is?

CH: I know my other senses take over. My sense of touch is better. One of the reasons I started with the grain vacs back in '97 was Glen wanted me to hear with blowers. My sense of hearing is better. He wanted me to listen for certain noises that they make and pick out certain problems inside. So, sense of hearing is definitely better as well.

0:26:49.6

MS: If I've got a gearbox that's going a little bit, would you pick up on that sooner than I might?

CH: Yeah, I drive myself crazy at harvest time when the combine rolls by because I can hear things that sometimes don't sound quite right to me.

0:27:04.7

MS: This likely isn't the first time you've heard a mechanic tell you that they can hear something is wrong with a piece of equipment before looking at it. Although in this particular case, I think I fully believe what he's saying. I know we're hammering this point home, but Curtis is always adapting and using his skills to the fullest potential. I think it's just another really good example to never let things hold you back.

So, now you're taking me down the path here. I'm just insanely curious because you raise a good point. Combine operators, I always tell my kids, you operate with your ears

as much as your sight on that one. So, you hear something squeaking on the combine that maybe I don't, or just grinding. How do you even start to find that?

CH: Well, we've been running the same machines for about 15, 20 years now, so you get to know them inside out and backwards. After working on them for that long, you get to know the sounds and different noises it makes, and if something's off you can ... I guess being non-sighted, your senses can pick up on that stuff a little easier.

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MS: Sure. And then, if I'm connecting dots, then you've got Wayne, or you've got your sister, and collectively you guys can get to the root of it. But I've got this strong sense that you can fast track that diagnosis, just because you're 'the guy'.

DH: That's right. Correct. We're always calling 'the guy' on the radio. Who's he riding with?

0:28:29.7

MS: So, Diane, did you see that as a kid early on? Because you had a choice and could have probably went into many different disciplines, Curtis. But as a mom watching, and I'm coaching my kids right now on what they should study in school. Did you see that early?

DH: I could just see that he did his schoolwork, and he did his homework, but he was so hands on that we never pushed him towards the university side of it. We let him find his own field to what he wanted to do.

CH: That was one of the challenges growing up is that the teachers didn't really understand that I was a hands-on person, so I got pushed towards university a lot. And of course, not really understanding it when I was young, I knew it wasn't for me, but I didn't really understand how to explain it at the time.

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MS: I have a theory that our disciplines tend to find us too. That if you take enough of the antibodies out of the system forcing us to do certain things, you find your way to what you love, and you find your way to what you're good at. And they tend to align pretty fast. I hear in your voice that you certainly loved the machinist side. If you had to pick, would you rather be a farmer or would you rather be in the shop?

CH: I kind of get tired of being in the shop, so like going out into the field once in a while too. It's a good balance.

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MS: And it sounds to me like your business model is balanced too where you've got the right amount of income coming from the shop.

CH: You learn a lot of things doing the machining side as well, so you can fix your own equipment. And they work really well together.

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MS: It strikes me as a really natural marriage and it's probably your competitive advantage over your neighbour that if you're running 20-year-old equipment, your repairs and maintenance bills are probably a little higher. But you're doing that work yourself, so you're winning back on the labour.

CH: That's right.

DH: Correct.

0:30:20.3

MS: Curtis has a lot of diversification built into his business and that strategy benefits him in a several ways. Not only is he a little more secure if one side of the operation is performing poorly, but he also gets to use his talents in different ways too. I think it's important to keep yourself engaged and interested in your business, so having good variety of things can really help with that. He also has a clear competitive advantage in that he can repair his own equipment.

So, guys, as we wind down our conversation, thanks for being good sports with me here too. To people listening, what's the biggest thing you want them to take away from your experience running a mixed business, how you guys look at decision-making and adaptability? What do you want people to really take away?

CH: Just because you're not sighted doesn't mean you can't do it. People always find the bad things and never take the good things, so that's been the main reason why I've done what I've done is, don't let people sway you. You do what you think is right and do the best job that you can do.

0:31:19.1

MS: So, does it motivate you if someone says you can't?

CH: Usually, yes.

0:31:23.1

MS: What's been the biggest can't that was dealt your way where you proved otherwise?

CH: I was a little nervous when I took over the machining business because I wasn't sure how people were going to accept me. Because I was the owner of the business then, but I didn't know how people were going to be when they brought their blower or vac to get fixed and they see a blind guy, what they would think. But it's been good so far. I haven't had any drive away on me yet, so things are working out. Also, you have to be self-motivated when you're ... I guess you're basically in a sighted world as far as the machining thing. There's not many blind machinists I don't think out there, so you have to be pretty self-motivated, being able to learn how to do it.

0:32:08.3

MS: Yeah, that's a great point. Now, Diane, from your standpoint, what's the biggest can't that maybe, from a mom's standpoint, that you would have watched come at Curtis in his life, that clearly, he's overcome?

DH: Oh gee, that's a good question. He's never been afraid to try anything. We encouraged him to do whatever he wanted to try and didn't say, no, you can't. Go for it, try it. If you fail, well, you fail. Pick yourself up and go onto the next thing.

0:32:37.6

MS: I love that. I think that's advice that everybody can use. In leadership today we talk a lot about fail fast. Try stuff, if it doesn't work, try something different. And I think more people are accepting of that. And obviously if you're running a farm and you've got \$1 million of crop inputs experimenting, there's a balance between failing fast and putting yourself out of business. But I just love your approach to life on that one, Diane. I think it's inspirational. Last thoughts, guys. Anything else that maybe you're thinking that the average farmer in Southern Ontario maybe should look at, that maybe you've learned, that you want to pass on your wisdom?

CH: Well, one piece of advice that Glen gave me, he always said, if it was easy, every would be doing it, and I never, ever forgot that saying. He always used to say that whenever things got tough, and that's what he would always tell me.

0:33:28.7

MS: And for a lot of us that's motivating, isn't it?

Well, Curtis has an incredible story, and frankly, I find him inspirational all around. I really don't think any of us has any excuse not to give it our all in everything we do, and I think Curtis would agree. So, here are a few takeaways I had from my conversation. I think the first and most obvious is that adaptability is a key component in agriculture. Over the years, I'm sure many of you listening have had several changes at your work or at your farm, some for the better and maybe some for the worse. But through it all, we have to adapt. We're a resilient community, and Curtis is a really good example of resilience. He's found a way to build a thriving ag operation with diversification built in,

and his idea to keep his eye on the big picture. He's also modified several aspects of his shop to suit himself, making machine work even possible. This is coupled with his ability to effectively organize and process the labour needs of his farm. He seems to have found some really efficient ways to complete some fairly complex tasks. Number two, carefully consider your business structure and the changes that you might hope to adopt some day. Curtis strikes me as someone that's very calm when it comes to business. Because if he is stressed, he certainly didn't let on at all. But what he is not doing is jumping around and chasing shiny things, and adjusting his business all the time, and creating this disorganized chaos that we sometimes see. He seems to find what works for him and runs with it. Now, my last key takeaway might seem rather obvious to agriculture people, but it's really anchored in Curtis's willingness to work super hard. Thanks to his mother Diane who is a huge advocate for him, he didn't grow up thinking that he was disabled or limited in his thoughts. She pushed him and opened doors for him, and even also had the willingness to lean into those opportunities and take advantage of it. So, hard work coupled with persistence can take you a long way in this world. And if Curtis can do anything for us today, it's inspire us to not be limited by the world around us. Well, that's it for today. I hope that after listening to our show that you're ready to put your best foot forward and continue to carefully grow your farm business. Thanks for listening, and until next time, dream, grow, and thrive.

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