

SOUTHERN FOODWAYS ALLIANCE

Center for the Study of Southern Culture Barnard Observatory University, MS 38677

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Interview Transcription:

Annette Seay-Hines, THE MANSION RESTAURANT

July 22, 2004 @ 11:30am

Mrs. Hines's home

Oxford, MS

Interviewed by Amy Evans

[Approx. 40 minutes]

Amy Evans: This is Thursday, July twenty-second, and it's eleven thirty in the morning. And I'm at the home of Annette Seay Hines in Oxford, Mississippi. And if you wouldn't mind, Annette, saying your name and your birthdate, if you also don't mind sharing your [laughs] age for the record, please.

Annette Seay Hines: Annette Seay Hines. My birthdate is March the fourth, nineteen forty-five.

AE: Okay. And, um, maybe start by naming your sister and your brother and your parents—

ASH: Okay.

AE: --and where everyone is born and raised.

ASH: My parents were, um, Aubrey and Martha Seay [pronounced *Cee*]. And my daddy was born in Tennessee and moved to Mississippi, um, as a young man. And my mother was born and raised in Durrant, Mississippi. And I have an older sister, Elizabeth, who was born in Oxford, and a twin sister, Maynette, who was born in Oxford, and a younger brother, Jim, who was born in Oxford.

AE: All right. And you are the Seay family from The Mansion Restaurant.

ASH: Yes.

AE: So, um, why don't you tell me a little bit about The Mansion.

ASH: Okay. My dad actually managed the cafeteria at Ole Miss for several years, and then opened his own restaurant in September of nineteen forty-two, and it was called The Mansion. It started out as a ten stool sandwich shop and drive-in, and my dad grew it into

a large restaurant with a huge marble dining--banquet room in the back that literally took up half a city block. And, um, the rest is history as they say. [Laughs]

AE: [Laughing]

ASH: You know?

AE: Well I have a couple of questions.

ASH: Okay.

AE: One is what made your father make the transition from being in the foodservice at the university to opening his own place?

ASH: I think it was just a life-long dream of his. When he was in Tennessee, he managed food services or Goldsmith's and Lowenstein's, and I think he just always wanted his own place. And the first opportunity he saw he took it. But he was just completely enamored and in love with Ole Miss. We—we have football footage before the stadium—the first stadium at Ole Miss was ever finished and completed. And, um, [he] catered enormously to the students. And, you know, of course, that carry-over from having managed the cafeteria, he had gotten to know many of them.

AE: So was he interested primarily in—in having a—a place that could be a cornerstone in the community or was it food? Did he like to cook?

ASH: Um, I think it was a cornerstone in the community. And—and really over time--I think there are letters and testimonies that we have to that. He just never met anybody that he didn't like and didn't befriend from the football players, to William Faulkner, to the governor. Just everyone and anyone. And he—he loved the environment of The Mansion and—and actually probably entertained those people there more than he did at home.

AE: Um-hmm. Um, why did he call it The Mansion?

ASH: Now that I don't know.

AE: Okay. [Short laugh]

ASH: We'll have to ask my sister if she has any idea. [Laughs]

AE: Okay.

ASH: Especially since it was—started out as a ten-stool sandwich shop drive-in. I—

AE: Well—

ASH: --always wondered that. I'm not really quite sure. I can find out.

AE: Okay.

ASH: Perhaps.

AE: And when it was a ten-stool drive-in, what did the physical building look like? Because I know that as it grew, it was this grand, you know, building with columns and—

ASH: [Sighs] I'm not sure about that either.

AE: No? Okay.

ASH: We need my sister for that.

AE: Okay.

ASH: She might know.

AE: [Short laugh] Well, we will ask her. I will ask her, definitely. Um, so how did you—do you have any idea how your father developed the menu? [Short pause] And where he got recipes from?

ASH: Um, well, Dad was quite the baker and quite the cook, originally—himself. And we have pictures of—of several cakes that he, uh, designed. One is an open book that literally has r—real writing and excerpts from a book in it. Uh, and was always experimenting. In fact, we have a wonderful seafood shrimp sauce that my dad invented—made up himself and marketed for many years at the restaurant, and also Krogers carried it.

AE: Really?

ASH: That our—my sister and I would like to start marketing again. Um, I think uh, some of the recipes, uh, you know, he put together, and a lot of it was just good old Southern cooking. And over the years, we had quite a few wonderful Southern cooks. From peach cobbler to cornbread to fresh vegetables and—we literally had something for everyone. Um, most of the standards were, uh, turkey and dressing and roast beef and chicken fried steak and fried chicken and—and we even had calf's liver, which was—

AE: I saw that on one of the menus.

ASH: --sort of considered a delicacy.

AE: Fried liver.

ASH: Uh, they had a—a—a homemade spaghetti sauce and, you know, that was one of the standards. Most of these are standards on the menu. Of course, fresh vegetables that would, you know, change with the season. Uh, they made all their own rolls from scratch, all the cornbread from scratch, all the pies and pastries. Uh, we really didn't have a lot of cake. Mostly, uh, made fresh fruit pies and, uh, lemon meringue pie, especially. And then peach cobbler. Uh, we blew—grew, uh, blackberries out on our property, where we lived, and we would have fresh blackberry cobbler and that sort of thing. [COUNTER: 06:00]

AE: Wow. Um—

ASH: Now the two main specialties were steaks, and Gulf shrimp from the Gulf Coast was just—with our shrimp sauce. Uh, but we were the o—only restaurant for miles and miles and miles that actually had a walk-in meat cooler and always had whole hindquarter of the whole cow, hanging in the meat cooler. All of the steaks were cut to order. These steaks were not just steaks lying out, they would go in the cooler and drag out off the hook the meat and put it on the big table saw and literally cut your steak and then cook it.

AE: Did they get the—the beef from someone local, who raised cattle—beef cattle?

ASH: I'm not sure about that. I'd have to—there is someone here I could probably ask that used to cook at The Mansion that's still alive.

AE: Who is that?

ASH: Her name is Izetta Barringer.

AE: How long did she work at The Mansion?

ASH: Oh, she actually came to work for my mother when she was about sixteen or seventeen years old—working at the house with—with us when we were small. And then when we were old enough to drive and get about on our own, she went to The Mansion. And she cooked there until The Mansion burned. And then actually cooked out at The Mansion House when Mother moved it out to—they put an addition on our home and served out of the home for many years also. And she was—

AE: Yeah, I read a newspaper article about that that your sister sent, um, that said that like the next day after The Mansion burned, your mother was holding Rotary Club meetings in her home and—

ASH: Um-hmm. We had a large home and we had a huge family room--den—double—two huge double-rooms downstairs, and Mother had a large kitchen in the house that the home economics department from Ole Miss had come out and designed for her. And so it was really not that difficult for her to just pick up and serve.

AE: Wow.

ASH: At the house.

AE: And so what was her role at The Mansion before it burned? At the restaurant?

ASH: Well, she was pretty much, I guess, Daddy's right hand man. I mean she—she didn't do a lot in the kitchen. She just sort of oversaw that. But she was instrumental in, um, the cash register and coordinating and orchestrating and greeting and meeting people and checking people out and that sort of thing.

AE: And do I understand your father passed before the restaurant burned?

ASH: Just weeks before the restaurant burned. Or maybe a month or two. Um, and my—my sister has a wonderful letter that was written by Jack Cofield, who had a very nice photography studio in Oxford. And, um, it's really a wonderful letter about how it actually was befitting that, uh, Daddy should go before the restaurant. So, um, there were just a lot of special people that really had a special relationship with our parents.

AE: Is that what you think—is that what would explain your mother's carrying on, um, the tradition—

ASH: Oh, I think absolutely.

AE: --in her home?

ASH: Absolutely. Um-hmm.

AE: That responsibility to the customers?

ASH: Because we had catered to all of the civic clubs: the Rotary, the Lions, the Exchange Club, um, sorority and fraternity banquets and dances and um, even high school athletic dinners and banquets and dances were held in the marble room. We had a large, uh, that ball that goes around, and the light flashes on it and projects all of the colors off the wall. And we had a—a stage and, in fact, the first black man to eat at The Mansion, performed at The Mansion, was Percy Sledge.

AE: Wow. Hmm. Well, I saw in one of the pictures, too, the ceilings had to have been twenty feet in there. In the Marble Room.

ASH: Oh, I would say at least, yeah. There was actually a balcony room also that you could get to from the Marble Room and also from, uh, the main dining area and the kitchen.

AE: Yeah? Was there—I would imagine there was no other facility like that in Oxford at that time.

ASH: Well, there wasn't. And my brother says it was actually the largest, most successful restaurant between Memphis and New Orleans.

AE: Wow.

ASH: And, uh, my father was also president of the Mississippi Restaurant Association, as well as one the governor's—he was a colonel on the governor's staff and was on the Mississippi State Game and Fish Commission. And my mother was, uh, in the Pilot Club. In fact, she was voted businesswoman of the year one year. So they were extremely active in the community. Uh, Mother was a member of the DAR [Daughters of the American Revolution] and they—they loved Oxford. They were here from day one.

AE: Yeah.

ASH: Mother met Daddy when he was at Ole Miss [sound of hand bumping the glass table, where we are sitting], and they got married and lived out at the university and—while Daddy was managing the cafeteria and then, like I said, in September of nineteen forty-two opened The Mansion and were both here—Daddy was here until he died, and Mother was here within just a few years. She went up to DeSoto County to be with—near my brother until she passed away so--they loved Oxford. **[COUNTER: 11:14]**

AE: Well, when they opened in [nineteen] forty-two, some of the menus from that year—or forty-three—have a disclaimer about war rationing and some items might no be available. Do you have some stories that they told you about those times?

ASH: I don't--um, I don't remember anything that stands out, um, but I—while we're speaking of disclaimers, I would like to say that there is a restaurant in Oxford currently, in this year two thousand and four, called The Mansion that has absolutely no affiliation to us, not had our permission to do so.

[Short pause]

AE: Good to have on the record. Um, well, did you grow up working in the restaurant also?

ASH: Well, I did. Um, from the ninth grade. You know, from teenage on all the way up through college, I did work in the restaurant, and my siblings did as well.

AE: What kind of stories do you have from those days?

ASH: Well, I know one day, um, I—William Faulkner and his wife Estelle used to eat in The Mansion regularly, and he didn't like the jukebox. We had a jukebox in there, um, because the students loved the music. And when Daddy would see Mr. Faulkner come in, he would unplug the jukebox and put an "Out of Order" sign on it. And, um, I remember waiting on Mr. Faulkner on night, and I forgot to go back and give him his check. And he was a very quiet, gracious man, and he just casually walked up—got up out of his seat

and walked up to the register where I was and asked for his ticket. And, of course, I was highly embarrassed, but he was very gracious about that. [Annette later mentioned that she also remembered William Faulkner's favorite meal at The Mansion was the barbecued chicken and peach cobbler, and sometimes he would order the cobbler before his meal. She also remembered that he used to sit in the third booth on the right side of the restaurant and faced the front.] Now I do remember when, uh, *Home from the Hill* was filmed here. [The film was released in 1960] Robert Mitchum and George Hamilton and Lee J. Cobb [he was not actually in *Home from the Hill*] and Luana Patten and, uh, Daddy had the contract to feed the whole cast and crew—

AE: My goodness.

ASH: --for that production. So I have memories of waiting on [phone rings in background] and seeing all of these [phone rings again] actors and—

AE: Do you need to catch that phone?

ASH: I do.

AE: We can pause it.

ASH: I'm sorry.

AE: That's okay.

[RECORDING STOPS FOR ABOUT THREE MINUTES - COUNTER: 13:22]

[RECORDING RESUMES: TRACK 2]

AE: All right, we're back to the interview. And you were talking about William Faulkner a little bit before, and I read in one of the articles that your sister emailed me that, um, a group got together and helped plan his funeral in the restaurant. Do you know anything about that?

ASH: I don't.

AE: Okay.

ASH: But maybe, you know, you can talk to her [Annette's sister, Maynette Seay] in detail about that. Um, I—I know that my dad and William Faulkner were friends, and they used to fish together. Um, and when they tore down the post office here in Oxford, where William Faulkner worked, Daddy bought all the brick. And we had a large older home that my parents put additions on and renovated, and it was white frame, and Daddy bought the brick and bricked the entire house with this brick. And they had a brass plaque that—by the door—that stated that the brick had come from the post office where William Faulkner worked.

AE: Is that still standing? The house?

ASH: No. [Short pause] Unfortunately, it's not. Um [short pause] what was I going to say?

AE: Um, and I also read that [sound of Annette rifling through some papers] you father kept a lot of books in the restaurant.

ASH: He did and he had, uh, several pictures of William Faulkner in the lobby on a—on a credenza that burned in the fire. Which was really unfortunate. Uh—

AE: Can you describe what the lobby—what the lobby looked like?

ASH: Well, uh, when you—when you came up on the porch where the large white columns were, it was only like one step up and then a step into the door. There was a large foyer. Uh, with antique credenza—buffet-type—with, um, all these pictures of Faulkner on it and a lamp and, um, you know, it was just sort of a gracious entry. And then to the right was my dad's office, and then in that corner was a door that went into the kitchen. And to the left was the main dining room, which was quite large—long. And then you went from there back into the large banquet-dining-dancing-ballroom, called the Marble Room. And the register was there to the left off of the foyer. Um—

AE: Was the Marble Room called the Marble Room because it had marble appointments?

ASH: It did have marble—marble appointments. Uh, the—the—the two or three step-up stage, uh, where a lot of the bands set up to perform, uh, had a banister, and that was made out of marble.

[Short pause]

AE: Um, and what were the hours. I know you served breakfast. Lunch and dinner?

ASH: Oh, they were open—they were open for breakfast through dinner. I think initially probably six until ten or eleven. And then, of course, in the latter years I think they—they closed earlier, but they were seven days a week. That never changed. And they always served breakfast lunch and dinner.

[Short pause]

AE: What were your breakfast crowds like?

ASH: A lot people that worked on the square and—and, um, uh, blue-collar workers would come in and eat before they went off to their varied duties.

AE: And you told me over the phone about a Doctor Brown from the university. Could you retell that story?

ASH: Doctor Brown was an English professor--and I do believe my sister has pictures of him--um, that became a good friend of Dad's, and he was a regular in the restaurant. And when he would eat dinner—he had a key. Daddy would just let him stay after they closed up. He would stay in there and drink coffee—the big urns in the back in the kitchen that made several cups of coffee. Daddy would just--just leave that urn on with the coffee, and Doctor Brown would stay in there and drink coffee and smoke and read and read until all hours of the night, and then he'd lock up and go home. And then—

AE: Is he somebody your father knew from his days at the university?

ASH: I think, possibly. That was probably where the relationship started. And there was a Doctor Silver also that was a professor of history. Doctor Savage. Uh, we really were—were fortunate, um, to get to meet and know a lot of different people through the restaurant, The Mansion, and my father's relationship[s]. Um, in fact, there were occasions when Hughes Rudd and Dan Rather were in Oxford, either doing a documentary on Faulkner and Faulkner's death or, um, during the—the—the, um [short pause]—

AE: Integration of Ole Miss?

ASH: Yes. I was looking for the year. [Heard rifling through papers] And I—I couldn't—I'm not able to find it in my notes here but, at any rate, um—

[Short pause]

AE: [Nineteen] sixty-two--

ASH: Daddy—

AE: --would have been the—

ASH: Okay, in sixty-two. Daddy let, um, Dan Rather use the Marble Room to set up. And all of his, um, news broadcasts were filmed from The Mansion. [Short pause] To the world. Um--

AE: What else was going on during—

ASH: And, of course, didn't charge him--

AE: --that time?

ASH: --anything, you know.

AE: Um-hmm. [TRACK 2 - COUNTER: 05:20]

ASH: Welcomed him with open arms. Um, there was also, uh, people actually came from all over the world to Oxford, and they would come for various reasons. Either with an affiliation with the university or just to see Faulkner's town. Uh, there were two translators that my sister was telling me about—my sister Maynette—that she remembered. One was from Japan and one was from Sweden [Gunnar Barklund], who translated Faulkner's works into their languages. And the wife of the man from Japan actually lived with my mother at Seay's Mansion House after The Mansion burned, while she was in school at Ole Miss. Um [short pause] even though The Mansion and Daddy have been gone since nineteen sixty-seven, you can still see articles written about The Mansion and Daddy's relationship with Faulkner. There's an article, actually, that was written in nineteen ninety. And uh, in two thousand and two, Izetta Barringer, the lady that came to work for us and then worked at The Mansion for many years, was actually considered part of our family, received a letter from someone who was trying to find out what happened to the Seays and wanted the recipe for the peach cobbler.

AE: [Laughs]

ASH: Said he'd never found anything like it anywhere! [Short laugh]

AE: [Laughs] Wow.

ASH: And then in nineteen eighty-nine, Maynette met a girl in Atlanta, and in conversation learned that her parents had gone to Ole Miss and she—this girl knew that her father had proposed to her mother in The Mansion.

AE: Oh, my goodness.

ASH: And I was talking to someone, just having moved back here in the last year, who mentioned that he grew up in the [Mississippi] Delta and he said that he—he said, you know, he decided to come back to Mississippi and to reside in Oxford, in particular. He said, in fact, “you know, when I was just in junior high school, I can remember coming to Oxford and—to go to the doctors because there were so many doctors here. And we always met and we always ate at this huge wonderful restaurant called The Mansion. And one day we were in there and—and my daddy and I—and we were talking and—and my dad said, you know, ‘Do you know who that is sitting behind you?’” And he said, “Of course, I didn't know, and I said no.” And he said, “When we got out in the car, my dad said, ‘Well, that was William Faulkner.’” And I [Annette] said, “Well, guess what? That was my parent's restaurant!”

AE: [Laughs]

ASH: So we hear things even when people don't know who we are.

AE: Yeah.

ASH: Um, of course have never heard anything but interesting and good things, which makes us feel real good.

AE: Sure. Well, it's a legendary place in this town.

ASH: Uh—

AE: Definitely. What else was around The Mansion at the time? It was located now, I think, where Elizabeth Christopher Interiors is on South Lamar?

ASH: It was. And—and just up the street on the same side of the street, uh, maybe two doors towards—closer to the square—there was a grocery called Tatum & Smith's And across the street, just north of The Mansion, there was another little grocery called Fudge's. I can remember—Tatum & Smith's wasn't open as late as Fudge's, so I can remember running to Fudge's to get lettuce or tomato or something if we ran—if we ran out of that. But, um, most of our, um, foodstuffs, like the shrimp and the seafood came from the Gulf. It was delivered in fresh daily. And the larger that produce that was purchased in bulk came from, uh, the local markets. Uh, and then my dad had a wonderful relationship with Krogers, and I think he, you know, bought a lot of things there. Um, but I can remember, the day my daddy died, I was—came in from class at Ole Miss, and I was in a rush to get something to eat and get back to class, and Dad was sitting in his—that first booth, that was his—his spot, when he wasn't in the office or the kitchen. And, um, he said, "You've got to get—oh, we have some wonderful fresh tomatoes and cantaloupe. You should make sure, you know, you get some." And so he—he really [short pause] loved to build a relationship with the people that—everybody from the customers to—to those that, uh, worked there and those that he purchased his foodstuffs from. So he was a real special man.

AE: Do you know where his, um, seafood came from?

ASH: It came from the Gulf Coast. Um, Biloxi and Gulfport.

AE: Okay.

ASH: Down in that area.

AE: Um, and I notice on one of the menus that Pompano was one of the fish that was served. I wonder how that got on the menu?

ASH: I don't know. I'm not even know—I'm not sure where that hails from. I don't know if it comes from, you know, the Gulf Coast—you know, whether—in a—in the Alabama, Mississippi, Florida area or maybe it came from Florida. You know, anything o south down from Mississippi, Alabama, down to Florida coast, I'm sure—

AE: Yeah.

ASH: --he purchased his seafood.

AE: Well, the reason I ask is because Lusco's and Giardina's [restaurants] in Greenwood, Mississippi, serve Pompano, and it's a—it's one of their trademark items on their menu. And so it's interesting to see it on The Mansion menu.

ASH: great. Well, I didn't know that. That's good to know.

[Short pause]

ASH: Um—

AE: Do you have any other stories about customers that would come in or— **[TRACK 2 – COUNTER: 10:29]**

ASH: Well, I was just remembering, that, um, my sister—and it's really unfortunate that she can't be here. She lives in Asheville, North Carolina. Because she really is the historian. [Laughs] I mean, I have memories, and I certainly have experiences working in there, but she's more factual with the—the dates and the data. But, um, she was telling me a story, um, that, uh, Hughes Rudd, who my daddy also befriended, wrote a book entitled *My Escape from the CIA and Other Improbable Events*. He wrote a chapter in that book about the time he spent with Daddy. And he was in Oxford, uh, after Daddy died, and he called our house looking for Daddy. And my sister had to tell him that Daddy had passed away and so he talked to my mother, and Mother was serving out The Mansion House. And so he came out to eat and—and visit with Mother. [Sound of pages turning as Annette looks at her notes] Um, there also was another book, um, written where several people—Mr. Cofield and Bill Harmon, who had a men's shop, and my dad and several people actually each—compiled of their chapters, uh, about Faulkner. I'm honestly not sure of the title of the book, but I can probably get that also. Uh, which of course, talks about The Mansion and Dad's relationship to Faulkner. [The book she is speaking of is called *Faulkner's Oxford*, edited by Webb & Green, and is out of print]

[Long pause]

AE: Would you mind if we, um, went back to the integration of Ole Miss in nineteen sixty-two and James Meredith and what memories you have of that time in Oxford and at The Mansion?

ASH: Well, I just remember that Daddy did let Dan Rather set all of his camera and crew up in the Marble Room to keep the nation apprised of what was going on there. My—my memory is that it wasn't quite as horrible as—you know, as far as the violence. I mean, it was—it was, um [short pause] I'm—I certainly don't mean to demean the situation but that, you know, some of the damage that was done was actually from outsiders, not necessarily people that actually resided in Oxford. Um, but, uh, other than that—I was in high school, so I wasn't on the campus, per se. I just remember that, you know, our

environment in The Mansion was one of peace and, you know, just wanting to report the facts and, you know, try to do anything we could to help the situation.

AE: Well I wonder, were there a lot of people on the square? [Sound of Annette shuffling papers] I mean, I know the National Guard was here. Did you have a lot of activity and feed a lot of people during that time or—

ASH: Um, well yes, we did. Um, The Mansion certainly didn't close. It was still open and operating and—with the exception of the Marble Room, which Dad reserved for Dan Rather.

[Short pause]

AE: And so the restaurant burned in [nineteen] sixty-seven.

ASH: Um-hmm. Yes.

AE: Um, and your father had recently passed. I wonder how the rest of your family felt after this—kind of an end of an era of that part of your family and in Oxford and—

ASH: Well, it was, you know, it's always sad to lose your dad, especially at such a young age. He was only sixty-four. Um, and certainly just one of complete horror and shock to see something that you've know, you know, as a small child, burn to the ground. Um, it's really quite devastating. I—I don't know, uh, how to explain it. Um, and certainly even now, not even being able to ride by and—and see it.

AE: Yeah.

ASH: you know, you just sort of always—you think it'll always be there. Um—

AE: Was it ever discovered how it caught fire?

ASH: Not to my knowledge. Uh, [taps fingers on table as she thinks]. Um, I don't know if it was ever, uh, a—you know, defined in a definite way, but I think there was speculation that it might have been an electrical [short pause] problem that started the fire or an electrical situation. Um, I—I have remembered the name of the author, um, who came—I believe from New York. His name is Martin J. Dain. D-A-I-N. And his book is actually—and I'm—this is not a plug for Mr. Dain. [Laughs]

AE: [Laughs]

ASH: But his book is on sale at Square Books. Um, that's, um, called *Faulkner's County*. [The Dain book is actually entitled *Faulkner's World*, and is not the collection of essays that Annette referred to earlier] Of course, Yoknapatawpha. And, um, again, you know, they all came to The Mansion to eat. I mean, that was just the place, you know. And Daddy befriended him and he—this man wanted to try to find a car. And, of course, back

then Oxford had no—and I don't think has many now—rental cars to drive around the county to take pictures for this book that he was riding. And Daddy let him—we had a blue Cadillac. I'll never forget it because it was the first one that air conditioning, and they had these plastic tubes in the back corners in the back windows, um, for the air conditioning. And Daddy let him use that Cadillac to ride around the county and take pictures. And he was there for the week. And then on Sunday he was to go back and fly out of Memphis and, um, he came back to The Mansion to deliver the car, and that was—Sunday was always a busy day. It was so busy that he just walked out. He couldn't—he couldn't find a parking place, so he'd left the car out in the street, and you couldn't leave it there, so he just drove it down to the square and parked it. [Laughs]

AE: [Laughs] [TRACK 2 – COUNTER: 16:25]

ASH: [Laughing] And left town and Daddy couldn't find the car at the end of the day! And so he called the police and reported it stolen. [Laughing]

AE: [Laughing]

ASH: And they found it on the square and realized what had happened so—that was kind of interesting. Um—

AE: Well, one of the pictures that, um, Mr. Dain took in that book [Faulkner's World] is of the B—the old B&B Café that's on the other side of the square, um, where Mr. Wiley's Shoe Shop was and is in the back now. Um, do you know anything about that café when it was in operation?

ASH: I don't. In fact, I don't even remember a café over there.

AE: It was behind—the shoe shop was in front from what I understand, and the café was in the back in the alley there.

ASH: I guess I just never ventured out that much, you know.

AE: Yeah.

ASH: I mean, we just always ate at The Mansion.

AE: Yeah.

ASH: you know, before we could drive we could eat and then walk up to the—we had two local movie theaters. Um, and when we were very young, we rode the bus home. When we were in high school we walked because our high school was on the—right there at the bridge, um, adjoining the Ole Miss campus. And we would just walk down University Avenue to The Mansion.

[Short pause]

AE: Did you have a—a—favorite thing to eat at The Mansion when you were working or eating there?

ASH: Well you know, [sighs] I guess when I was younger, and I mean—by younger I mean elementary school. You know, you really don't appreciate what you have there. Um, you know, I was just typical: hamburger and French fries, you know, that sort of thing. [Laughs] But, um, when I was in high school and—and certainly as a young adult—um, the steaks and the seafood, I'd have to say. Especially, the shrimp and the seafood. The—the shrimp sauce. I mean, to this day, I don't think I've ever had shrim—the Gulf shrimp are sweet, you know? I mean, they just have a wonderful flavor, and I've never had anything—any shrimp like—not even in Florida or, you know, coastal seafood areas. And certainly not anything like the shrimp sauce. It was not your typical tomato and ketchup and horseradish, you know. It was quite an elaborate array of ingredients in it, and my dad put it together.

AE: Yeah?

ASH: So, uh, and that—and that seems unusual to me because I was probably the most finickiest eater of all four. Um, don't have that problem now.

AE: [Laughs]

ASH: But, um, but I—even as a child I liked that—that shrimp sauce. And had one girlfriend in particular from probably sixth grade junior high on, who lived on—just up from The Mansion on South Lamar, and she's still here, and to this day she says, "I can remember making my mom go down to The Mansion and get shrimp sauce and bring it home." Because we—they sold that in the bottle, you know. And, um, just loved it to this day. And I've had her out here [to the house] since I've been back and served her some. And she said, you know, "Let me know when you start bottling this—"

AE: [Laughs]

ASH: --because I want to get some!" So, that's probably my—my favorite.

AE: Do you and your sister have a collection of other recipes from The Mansion?

ASH: We do. In fact we're—we're going to put a cookbook together.

AE: Wonderful.

ASH: We have a lot of—we want to include a lot of the history and the pictures and—and all and just make it more than just a cookbook.

AE: That would be great because your sister has a treasure trove of documentation, from what I can tell. She just sent me a few things, so that would—

ASH: Yeah, she really does. [TRACK 2 - COUNTER: 19:58]

AE: --be really great to see. Well, any final thoughts or [sound of Annette straightening her stack of papers]—or things you feel like you left out? [Papers being shuffled] Or that I left out?

ASH: I can't think of anything. Um, I'm sure I will think of a million things later but—

AE: [Short laugh]

ASH: Um, [hits hand on table to think] I can't think of anything at the moment.

AE: Um, well I—I think I, after sitting here, might want to ask a couple more questions about the interior of the restaurant. You know—

ASH: Okay.

AE: --kind of get more of a feel of what was on the walls and what the floor looked like and how the tables were set. Well, the floors were, um, sort of a speckled—I—I don't—I don't think they were marble, but they were of—of, um, some sort of material like that that certainly coordinated, um, with the marble. Um and with the exception of the foyer, which was more of a tile, it ran through the main elongated dining room and then back into the Marble Room. Um, the Marble Room always was set up wither with individual tables—if there was not a party booked, we had individual tables because we utilized that *especially* on the football weekends.

AE: [Laughs] I can only imagine.

ASH: I mean, I can just remember the place being packed, but the—the—the elongated main dining room that was open for breakfast lunch and dinner, uh, was constructed of booths. And, uh, those tables—we didn't use tablecloths out there, but we did use tablecloths back in the Marble Room on the individual tables. Or sometimes they'd be set up in a horseshoe shape for banquets, so that you could have your speaker across the—the unopened end of the horseshoe and then have the two ends coming out for the participants. Um—

[Short pause]

AE: And what was your waitstaff like there? A big staff?

ASH: Well, in—in the early years, um, I can remember, Daddy had a lead waitress, uh, it was really very well organized I thought. Especially for its time. Um, and her name was Louise Bratton. And then there was a Martha Stewart and a Louise James, um--I can't remember all the names, but they were a real team.

AE: um-hmm.

ASH: I mean, they all wore white uniforms, and they all had their section, you know, that they were responsible for. And I can remember having Christmas parties back in the Marble Room for the cook staff and the waitstaff, uh, because The Mansion would close. When Ole Miss closed the two weeks of Christmas, that was the only vacation we ever had. And, um, just big Christmas tree and exchanging gifts and lots of food—and music! I know there was one in particular, Martha Stewart, used to love to dance and, you know, they always would get up and dance and just re—had a—Daddy always had a real relationship with *everybody*. It didn't matter if it was the bus boy or the head chef or customers or celebrities or professors or local businessmen or whomever. Um, and my mother did too. Um, I think she did a lot more behind the scenes than a lot of people realize.

AE: Yeah.

ASH: So that was always real special. And then, of course, we had out time at home, and—and my grandmother died when I was in the first grade, so my great aunt became my grandmother, and she and her sister and my other great aunt would always come. And my granddaddy would come to our house. And, of course, you can imagine the food. I mean, just everything and anything. And Izetta was always there; she would help prepare. And Aunt Daisy and, um, and then they would stay all the way through New Year's, and I remember every New Year's morning at breakfast with eggs we'd have fried oysters. And that or a ch—even as a small child, you know, that was something else that remarkably, I liked.

AE: [Laughs]

ASH: So, um, we were really blessed, I think, to be not only exposed to such wonderful food, but also just the relationships that were fostered and the exposure that we had to such culture at the university was really quite remarkable for a little, small Southern town. I mean, when we were growing up here, it was probably less than half the size. And certainly the university as well. But the--the people that came to the university! It was—I mean, Doctor Silver, I think, came from New York. And, you know, people that came from all over to—and were here for *many* years as professors. They weren't here just for a year and left.

AE: Um-hmm.

ASH: So they also must have really loved the university environment and Oxford.

AE: Well it sounds like your father did a good job of hosting and entertaining.

ASH: I did think of one other thing, when I was thinking of the university and the footage that we have on film of the unfinished football stadium, my dad actually designed the Colonel Rebel [the University of Mississippi mascot].

AE: Really]

ASH: And a lot of people are not aware of this, but we do have an article that was written by Moon Mullins from the *Oxford Eagle* that gives Dad full credit for the Colonel Rebel.

AE: my goodness. Well that's a surprise in the interview. [Laughs] **[TRACK 2 – COUNTER 25:46]**

ASH: And he had that also on a lot of his cakes and, uh, it was, um, on the chimney at The Mansion. There was *huge* drawing of the Colonel Reb. Um, of course, Daddy just loved Ole Miss. And they had a con—actually had a contest. And my sister knows more about this than I do. I think originally, believe it or not, the team was called The Floods. I don't know where they came up with that. But they had a contest, and somebody submitted the Colonel Rebel, and then Daddy did the design. He drew it out.

AE: Huh.

ASH: And, uh—

AE: Imagine that.

ASH: So, we're real proud of that.

AE Well, it's quite a—a history your family has in this little old town. So, I think that's all a good note to end on.

ASH: Okay.

AE: If you agree.

ASH: I do. And I—

AE: Okay.

ASH: I'm just most grateful for your coming and, you know, having the opportunity to impart this information. And see, once again, if it weren't for the university, we might not have this opportunity to leave this legacy [short pause] if we were in any other town, so I think this is just a wonderful idea.

AE: Well thank you so much for spending your time.

ASH: Thank *you*.

AE: It's been a pleasure

[TRACK 2 – COUNTER: 27:04]

[END]