

SHANNON & CHAD BOURQUE
Bourque's Supermarket – Port Barre, LA

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Date: October 10, 2006
Location: Bourque's Supermarket – Port Barre, LA
Interviewer: Amy Evans
Length: 1 hour, 2 minutes
Project: Southern Boudin Trail - Louisiana

[Begin Shannon & Chad Bourque]

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Amy Evans: This is Amy Evans for the Southern Foodways Alliance on Tuesday, October 10th 2006. I'm Port Barre, Louisiana, at Bourque's Supermarket, and I'm with Shannon Bourque and Chad Bourque. If you gentlemen wouldn't mind stating your names and your birth dates for the record, please?

00:00:20

Shannon Bourque: Shannon Bourque, September 14th 1970.

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Chad Bourque: And I'm Chad Bourque, December 21st 1982.

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AE: And y'all were—y'all are cousins—first cousins, correct?

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SB: Yes, we're first cousins—born and raised on the bayou. We live about a mile from each other. We did a lot of things when we were young, but we're doing a lot more things now. We're coming up with more ideas day-by-day. We—we take our time and spend most of our time thinking about putting it to good use on how to produce Bourque better products.

00:01:00

AE: Can you tell me one or both of you a little bit of history about Bourque's Supermarket and your grandfather whose image is—is all around us here?

00:01:08

SB: Our grandfather was a very hard worker. He started this business in 1948 on the bayou bank of his house. And since that store, I want to say we're in our sixth store and he—he never—never tried to put down anybody. If somebody wanted to compete with him he just said, you know, good luck with, you know—he was never bad to anybody or just—he was a very outgoing person as far as for business. He stayed on top of the game, and he was always on top.

00:01:51

AE: What was your grandfather's name?

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SB: Adolph Bourque was my grandfather's name, which he is still living and his birthday will be on the 15th of October, which is in a few days. He will make 91.

00:02:06

AE: Wow. So when he first started his business in the [nineteen] '40s, do you know anything about what that—that store was like and what he carried? Was he working with meat at all?

00:02:16

SB: Actually, he—he raised chickens, he raised his own cows, and he fed them and everything and he—he butchered them himself, and he sold them out of his house. That's exactly what he did.

00:02:30

CB: Eggs and the milk.

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SB: Everything was—was sold out of his house and it was amazing the way from what it is—was then to the way it is now. I mean it's—completely—completely different.

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AE: Can you describe the store now like the square footage and inventory and what all you work with?

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SB: This is a—probably about a 20—20,000—little over 20,000 square foot under the roof supermarket. I probably have about maybe 17—about 17,000 square foot of—of sale area and the rest is—is a warehouse area, but we have a great warehouse where we can stay on top of, you know, keeping our stuff. We buy—you kind of in bulk and we can give out good prices and stuff and compete with just about anybody.

00:03:23

AE: When your grandfather was raising livestock was he raising hogs also?

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SB: Yes, he—he did that for a while but once he—he kind of got away from that, he just stayed with the cows and stuff. He started buying the hogs from, you know—from butcher—butcher shops and stuff. They would butcher them for him and just deliver it to him; it was a little easier.

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AE: Was he making boudin then?

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SB: Back then, no. Actually, the boudin probably started here—let's see, if I had to say, we've probably been making boudin about 30 years over here—about 30 years.

00:04:09

AE: So was your—your father, then, part of this—the market business as well?

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SB: My dad started working in here when he was about thirteen, fourteen years old. He was about a freshman or sophomore in high school. He'd go to school, he'd do whatever he had to do, play his sports and everything and he'd come back in—in the evening and my grandfather would leave and he would close up the store and stay—he would work 'til about 9:30—10 o'clock at night.

00:04:36

AE: What was the store like in those days?

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SB: If I could remember, we were in our—we were in our third store and I was probably about I guess about six years old and—and my dad, he would bring me—he would carry—we would walk to work it was so close; he would walk to work, and he'd carry me on his shoulders. It was only about maybe—maybe about—about a half a mile to, you know, to walk to work. And I'd walk to work with him and he'd, you know—just stay with him all day long and just—. I mean it wasn't—it wasn't too much of a big store. We might have had maybe three or four—three—three gondolas full of groceries, you know, in there and it was—it was just the back then—way back when—when you had price everything. Now everything is computerized which is very, you know, very up to date now.

00:05:25

AE: So who would you say then—it might have been your dad who was responsible for putting boudin in the store?

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SB: For—probably my dad and Chad's dad, Carl. They were the two hard-nosed workers. They—they worked probably for a good ten to twelve to thirteen years, just those two guys. My mother worked here and then those two guys worked together; they would work twelve straight days and they would only have two days off back in the day, you know.

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AE: And what would—what are you parents' names?

00:06:02

SB: My dad's name is Lester Bourque, and my mom's name is Willie Bourque.

00:06:06

AE: And so Lester and Carl Bourque are brothers, is that right?

00:06:11

SB: Yes, Lester, Carl are brothers, and then they have Homer. He came back I want to say—
Homer came in here maybe about—about eighteen years ago. He came back to work for his dad.

00:06:28

AE: And so just so I kind of have the timeline of how the store has grown over the years, when your grandfather was working with livestock and then kind of the evolution of the store, when did it really become a—a grocery store with lots of different items?

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SB: Probably have to say—probably around '62—1962 it became a—a pretty—a pretty good-sized grocery store. That's what I'd say in 1962—.

00:07:01

AE: Okay. Now Chad, can you tell me about your father and his involvement in the store?

00:07:06

CB: He was—as—as you heard from Shannon, him—him and Lester were, you know, brothers. They're getting—they're getting into the age now that you know they're starting to get out of the store and—and, you know, they needed somebody to take their place and that's what me and Shannon is doing.

00:07:28

AE: Okay. So let's talk about the boudin now. I know that you've—you've changed it recently, but can you talk about, since y'all have been managers here, what people's demands and tastes for boudin are and—and how you've accommodated that?

00:07:43

SB: People—people around this area would travel away from here to get boudin because it was just something about our boudin that we just couldn't meet their needs, so we took about two-and-a-half to three months to try to get it down to where we wanted it. And I think we did it successfully because we probably had a good 30-percent to 35-percent of this town would leave this town to travel six or seven miles down the road to get boudin from other places. So what we did is well, you'd say we revamped the boudin and we have it probably as—I would say it's excellent now. And the Boudin Link [*website, which is www.boudinlink.com*], who recommended us, gave us an A-plus [*rating on the boudin*]. We had an A-minus, but they gave us an A-plus now, and I think we did it for the better of the business. We're selling probably three to four times more boudin than we were before.

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AE: So can you describe what it is that—that makes—that changes the boudin from an A-minus to an A-plus?

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SB: Well people—people like to have a good spicy taste in their boudin. I mean boudin—you don't want boudin to be overly spicy—you know too—too hot and too peppered because it will

take away from the flavor, so when we re-did ours, ours was—it just had an okay, you know—it was like a mild to medium hot; now it's probably a medium to hot, which one link of boudin is about 10 to 10, 11, 12 inches depending on, you know—it's an average size. If you sit down and eat the whole thing it's just going to be that same taste the whole time, whereas a lot of other people make their boudin—the first two bites it's—you can't taste the flavor anymore, the pepper overcomes it. So when we re-did our boudin, we tried to make it—each bite tastes just about the same and maybe just gets a little spicier each bite but not too spicy to where you cannot eat or taste, you know, the whole length while you're eating it.

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AE: So what did you, Shannon and Chad—did y'all do that yourself? Did you change the recipe yourself?

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SB: Yeah, we—we changed the recipe ourselves. Like I said, it took us about three months to just make little 12 to 25-pound batches because we—a batch of boudin consists of about probably 130-pounds, so we didn't want to make too much at one time to where you know we—we didn't want to—we couldn't sell it or it didn't taste right, so we just took our time and made some little 12-pound batches that we finally got it right and we—as we would call it we brought it in front of the board, which is Lester, Homer, and Carl, and they finally approved it. And the taste, you know, we went ahead. They said it's good, so we started making it and there—from there on, which is probably spring of 2006, we've been selling so much more boudin in the last fifteen years than we sold ever.

00:11:03

AE: So was the drive to change the boudin—update it and make it better—was that—that specifically came from your involvement with the www.boudinlink.com, is that right?

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SB: Well when—when the guys came over here and tasted our boudin, it's not that I was upset that we had an A-minus. Before they came here I knew that the boudin needed some attention, you know, because I could tell—I mean with 20 years of experience just sitting behind a desk and seeing who buys the boudin, you know, seeing who—who likes it and who doesn't like it, comments from around the little small town of 3,000 people—I mean I thought it was time to do something about it, and we went ahead and did something about it and it worked for the better of the business.

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AE: So but for 30 years that you've had boudin here and it's been the same, are there people that have been upset that you changed it at all?

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SB: We hadn't had any complaints since we changed it. We have all the—I think just about all the town is buying our boudin now. And we have people coming from Bossier City, Shreveport, Ville Platte, Bunkie—all over because they heard we have real good boudin. And I think, like I said, changing it—changing the boudin really helped out.

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AE: So can you describe, without giving away any family secrets or anything, what goes into your boudin and how you make it kind of—the process?

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SB: Well before the—the old process was—it was a—a season that we had patented by a—a local—a local season—people that mixed our season which is Targil and we—we got in touch with them, and we tried to get them to help us change it and stuff; but they couldn't quite get it to where we wanted it, so we said well we're going to start doing it ourselves. So as far as for seasoning-wise we—we quit getting that seasoning and we just hand-mixed our own seasoning to the taste that we wanted it. And we put—as far as for meat and stuff, boudin is made with some real good cuts of pork, some lean pork meat, not too much liver because you don't want it to taste too much liver, but you have to put liver in it to—so it will keep its moisture and we put some—some great rice. We use some—some real good rice; we don't use, you know, a downgrade of rice. We use some okay rice and we put our—our ingredients—it's pork, liver, our own special seasoning, onions, bell peppers, onion tops, that's about it and mix it with rice.

00:14:00

AE: And is the primary spice in the boudin, is that cayenne pepper or is that something else?

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SB: Oh, the spicing? It's got a little cayenne pepper, yeah, but it's got—you know, it's got some other—other spices in it too. But boudin before when we—before we changed our boudin we made the boudin with it was—just an old conventional meat grinder mixer. Now we're making the boudin by hand; we don't, you know—and it—it gives you such a better product and it's

stuffed with a—it's called a water-hydraulic stuffer and all the product doesn't get battered and, you know, ground up to—to a—what you would call a minced, you know, it stays all together and it's all full and it comes together better, you know, instead of being a mushy product and that—that's another thing that's helping us sell a lot of our boudin.

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AE: How important is the casing? Is—is there a grade of casing that you like to use?

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SB: As far as for the casing, being as we—we started doing it by hand compared to mixing it with the machine when we used to use the—the machine and—and grind it more than once, the casing would bust because it was just too much pressure on the casing. Now we—we do it by the hydraulic machine and we have no problems with the casing whatsoever and it—when you heat the boudin, the casing kind of cooks a little bit, and it seals around the boudin and that way the boudin can't bust or leak out, which holds—you don't lose too much of your product.

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AE: Can you talk about heating the boudin and—and how that works and what you're looking for?

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SB: Basically, the way we heat our boudin, we have a—probably a 20-cup rice cooker, steamer attachment. We put a little round steamer attachment at the bottom and we put about—oh, we probably heat about 25 links or so at a time, and we put it to where the water is just over the top of the boudin. And you bring the water to a boil, and it probably takes about three to four

minutes boiling to get the boudin hot because the boudin is already cooked. And after you—you steam it for, you know—boil it for three or four minutes or so then you shut it off, and you let it sit for about two minutes in the water. And then we take it and we transfer it to a perforated steamer and it just sits in the steamer, and people just come and buy it as we have it in the steamer.

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AE: Have you ever tried smoking boudin or anything like that?

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SB: Yeah, we—we smoke boudin on occasion if—if somebody on the Internet basically calls in for an order, “Do y’all have smoked boudin?” And we go ahead and say, “Yes, we have smoked boudin. We can smoke it. How many pounds would you like?” And we’ve smoked—we’ve smoked five, ten, fifteen, twenty pounds at a time already, you know, for customers—online customers. We don’t—we don’t—I mean people around here, for some reason, they just don’t like—they like the regular boudin; they just don’t like smoked boudin. But people all over the country, they want smoked boudin; they want crawfish boudin, shrimp boudin, which I’m in the process of making crawfish and shrimp boudin right now; so—.

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AE: You’re just—you’re developing those products right now, you mean?

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SB: I already have it—the recipe is already done; it’s just the idea of crawfish season is only, you know, certain months of the year and crawfish season starts hmm, probably about February,

you know, to the mid-February, late February, you know, into the early March and we're just not in the season right now and just waiting you know—waiting on some good crawfish.

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AE: Now your Internet customers, if they're ordering, you know, like this order over here on the wall that's ten pounds of boudin to Hawaii, do you have any idea if those people are native Louisianans [*Laughs*] and they have a taste for boudin and they live somewhere else? Or are they people that have come through? Do you have any idea what their story is?

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SB: Well basically, this order that you're talking about to Hawaii it's a customer—another customer that's buying it and purchasing it and sending it to these people in Hawaii. But no, not really. We just try—we first started this probably in February, we started shipping boudin and all our specialty meats all over the country. We—we had to advertise on Google. We had to advertise on Yahoo. We got a hold of the—the great site of the www.boudinlink.com, which is that's what we're on now and it recommends us, you know, and we—we first started out, we—we would get an order and we would ask them, “How did you hear about us?” you know? And we did that probably for, I guess, a good four to five months we'd ask, “How did you hear about us?” But our business has grown so much on the Internet, you know, on—online sales on the website we don't have time to ask how—how did they hear about us. So we just don't ask anymore.

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AE: But that's so interesting to me that because boudin is so localized; I mean it's so specific to this part of Louisiana—that you can have that large of an Internet business. Can you explain that at all?

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SB: Well if you—if—you know yourself—computers, what you can do with computers these days is unreal. I mean you can get on a computer in Louisiana and start surfing the net and type in “boudin” on Google or—or boudin on Yahoo and it—when you type boudin on Yahoo you come up and we're on the first page and you can see *Buy Boudin at Bourque's*. Well if somebody—somebody in Mississippi sees that, “Man, let us go to this site and click on this site and see the great Cajun atmosphere,” and how we got the Cajun music playing and we got the great pictures and, you know, I mean everybody likes our site. I think that's why we're selling a lot of boudin and we also have a very good—very excellent boudin.

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AE: How long has your website been as it is now with the music and the history and all that?

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SB: Oh, we started I guess—we built it probably October, November, and December of 2005. And we had it up and running in January of 2006. But when we first started, we had problems with the shipping management on shipping our products and we couldn't get a hold to—we were trying to get a hold to FedEx to have a regular pick-up and I tried for two—a good two, two-and-a-half to three months and finally, I got a hold of somebody that wanted to help me. And we had to work out hard on shipping out the packages because we had to drive to the post office three,

four, five, six miles, you know, every time we'd get a package; we'd—we'd have to load up four or five packages and go to the post office because UPS—we had UPS Shipping Management and that's—it was kind of—it was kind of steep and we needed to get a hold of somebody so they can give us some discount shipping so we can get—we can take that discount shipping offered to us and give it to these—the customers so we can get this great product to them at a lower cost. And nobody was buying hardly anything on our website because it was too high to ship. Well we finally got a hold to FedEx and they—we got a regular pickup and we get packages picked up Monday through Thursday with discount shipping; that way we can give the discount shipping to the customer.

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AE: Well since the Internet business is such a recent thing, have you been surprised at how popular that's been?

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SB: Yeah. Like I said it's—it's—it's such a large growth. I mean compared to starting in January. And I can tell you exactly what I was just telling you just now—we started in January and we shipped out one package in January because we just couldn't really understand what—what these people were looking for. We had our accounts set up with Pay Pal, and you had to have a Pay Pal account to buy our stuff. So me and Chad were sitting down and I said, “Chad, I know what we can do.” I said, “Let's wipe this UPS Shipping Management off and let's buy us a 1-800 number.” So we bought us a 1-800 number, which is 1-877-4BOUDIN, and we put it up there: To call in and place an order call 1-877-4BOUDIN. And after we did that, it just took off

like a space—space rocket. It just every month kept going up and up and up, and we're still going up and up and up.

00:23:28

AE: But so y'all make other sausages and—and whatnot. And on your business card here it says—and outside on the building it says *Home of the Original Jalapeno Sausage Cheese Bread*. So what was it about boudin that you really wanted to generate some Internet business and—and kind of highlight that product?

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SB: Well as you were talking about our world-famous original—actually, it's called original jalapeno sausage cheese bread. My mother, when she worked here, came up with this recipe and she—she saw this probably about like that's a good—a good 30 years we've been making that bread, too, and what makes the bread so good is our homemade smoked sausage that we make over here. It's you know—we have a great homemade smoked sausage seasoned to perfection. We have mild and we have hot and we have extra hot, you know—we have all kinds of smoked sausage, but it's the smoked sausage and that cheese bread that makes it really good. I mean there's multiple people that try to make this bread, but they can't make it because they don't have our sausage, you know. It's—it's the sausage that we've ground up and so I mean they just can't—they just will never get, you know, never get their hands on the recipe. But as far as for the boudin, the bread was a—an outgoing thing. It just—you didn't have to push the bread like we had to change the boudin and—and I thought that the—the boudin needed to catch up with the bread. And the boudin has caught up with the bread and that's why we—we place it on the—the building, we call it “World Famous Boudin” because we built this website and we're

shipping it all over the country. I mean, as you can see, you've got some boudin going to Hawaii; I mean—.

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AE: Do you ship a lot of your other products—sausages and—and the bread and whatnot?

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SB: Basically, we ship—everything we have in this store, we ship it. We ship cracklings—hog cracklings; we ship the boudin, the bread; we ship our homemade dressing mix—rice dressing mix and we ship stuffed chickens. We have stuffed chickens and stuffed pork chops, boneless stuffed chickens, stuffed pork roast, stuffed quail, stuffed ducks, stuffed chicken breast; we have a lot of, you know—a lot of stuff that, you know, we try to stuff and put out for sale. And it's like people that's traveling on the highway and they see our sign and they—they pull off—it pulls them off the highway anywhere from a mile to six miles, because our—our store is six—six to seven miles from Interstate 49—I-49 or whatever. And we have a sign on I-49 and they—when they're traveling, you know, north and south going back to Shreveport and the Shreveport, Bossier City area or whatever it—they—they stop in and come get all these great specialty meats that we have.

00:26:36

AE: How long has that likeness of your grandfather been part of your—your PR campaign?

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SB: I didn't understand the question.

00:26:44

AE: This—this drawing of your grandfather, *The Boss*. How long has that been part of what Bourque's is?

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SB: That picture was made by a friend of mine that I went to school with. He was—he was a pretty good artist. And he was sitting down one day at school, and he drew this, and he brought that to us and he said, “Her. Here's a picture I thought that you might like.” And we looked at it, and it was a nice picture of our grandfather and it was a good image, you know. It was—it looked exactly like him. So we took it and we framed it and that was probably in the—see if I can remember—about 19—about 1985, I'd say—since '85—'85, '86—that's when we had that picture drawn up and that's been, you know, been a while.

00:27:43

AE: What did your grandfather think about that?

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SB: Well as far as for my grandfather, my grandfather wasn't—he wasn't a person to brag. He just—he—like I said, he—he stuck with the game and he made sure everything was done correctly. When you worked for him, you had to do it the way he wanted to do. And back then he—he knew all the obstacles—ups and downs, you know, he—he's been—he worked—he worked in New Orleans before he moved to Port Barre and he—he was kind of like, you know, a boss in New Orleans, and he worked with a bunch of employees over there. And then when he came down to Port Barre and he—he saw that this little town needed a grocery store—a little supermarket—and that's how he started out of his house, you know. And then ever since then he

kept building it up and building it up. And then when he brought his boys in, they built it up and then it just kept growing and growing. And we came in here and I mean as far as for the—the older generation to the younger generation, things change and we—you know, me and Chad can see that we're always looking for something to make more money or better your business, as you'd say. You know, that's what we try to do day in and day out.

00:29:01

AE: What does your grandfather think about all this Internet business that you've generated?

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SB: Actually, my grandfather, he—he's in a wheelchair so—he's got Parkinson's and Alzheimer's, and he really doesn't know that this is going on. But, you know, he's—he still has his right mind; he's—he's bed-kept from the bed to the wheelchair and he just doesn't have his strength anymore. I mean, if you want to say somebody has been through it all, he's been through it all. I mean from falling out of a 25-foot tree stand flat on his back and he broke about five or six ribs, you know, and he just—after—after that it slowed him down and stuff and he couldn't get around as much. And once this Parkinson's and Alzheimer's set in it—it slowed him down a lot, but he still has his right mind and you can hold a conversation with him. And it's kind of hard to—for—for you to understand him but he can understand you so—.

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AE: Well with you and Chad being the third generation here at Bourque's Supermarket and advertising the way you do and using your grandfather's likeness, can you talk about the importance of a family business in this area and to you, personally?

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SB: Basically, to be—for this business to keep growing and being strong as a family business—I went to college. I tried to go to college. I was—my dad wanted me to be an athlete; I had the chance to be an athlete, but I just chose to stay into this business and help it grow. I learned from my uncles and my dad. And each year in and year out as I got older, it's like I got smarter in this business and learned how to do things. I mean this is a business to where you can't leave this business alone more than one or two days. You have, you know—you—you have to stay on top of it and have to make everything, you know—make sure everything is running smoothly. I mean if one wheel falls off the, you know, the car will wreck, so you have to keep it together and make sure everything is running up to—up to par.

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AE: Do you have anything to add to that, Chad?

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CB: I very much agree with that—everything that Shannon said. Like he was saying, he was talking about how the family needs to—how whoever is working over here, whoever is in the family that's working over here, they have to stick together. If they stick together, then I guess you could say good things will always happen. And that's about it.

00:32:06

AE: Now with the—the boudin that you've reinvented and you're really promoting that and you have, you know, an established meat business here with the sausage and all that, is the grocery

store part just something that the—is a need of the community that's kind of grown along with the meat?

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SB: The grocery store, the grocery business is—we have a week in and week out, as you'd say, an advertised—we have an advertised ad that we run and we compete with most any supermarket around. We—we strive to keep the prices at reasonable prices. We—we had a Super Wal-Mart Super-Center that—that was built about three years ago and it was—it's only like six or seven miles down the road and first things first, everybody got nervous. Well what are the—what is—what is going to happen you know? So we all—we all stuck together and said, “It's not a big deal.” For probably three to four months we noticed some—some—a little bit of decreasing in our—in our sales, so that's when you—like I said, that's when you try to come up with new things, which we—we—that's what we've done. We've stayed together, and we came up with a few more, you know, better ideas to stay with the ballgame and we stayed—we stuck with it and after that fifth—sixth month, seventh month, I guess, we overcome—we overcome our losses and our little bit of loss we had, which wasn't much but it was—it was losses and basically to—to overcome—what we've—what we've done, what we have offer compared to a Super Wal-Mart is fresh meat cut daily like you want it; you can have it cut just like you want it. We have all those specialty meat items, whereas Wal-Mart has pre-packed items, where you don't know how long it's been in that pack. It doesn't tell you, you know. Our stuff is packed that day; it says when we can sell it, when it's packed, the shelf-life of it, which not too much you know—not too much of our stuff stays on the shelf long enough for it to go past the shelf-life, but I think all in all overall a good—a good shopper in South—South Louisiana is looking for, number one, they're looking for courtesy, and that's what we have over here. We—we have a logo of

“Courtesy costs nothing here. We give it freely.” And we—we try to give as much courtesy as we can. We know pretty much everybody that walks through the door by first name. If we don’t, we’ll—we’ll learn their name, which as when you go to one of these big stores like Wal-Mart there’s not too much—you know, I mean you just don’t get the courtesy that you get when you go into a local—local supermarket like we have.

00:35:36

AE: Where do y’all get your meat, if I may ask?

00:35:38

SB: Well we get our meat from Associated Grocers Warehouse; it’s in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. It’s about probably 50—50 to 60 miles down the road east of here. And we get three shipments a week and that’s how we—we keep everything fresh.

00:35:59

AE: And do they—do you know if they process Louisiana livestock?

00:36:05

SB: That’s a good question. I’m pretty sure they do process—you know, they process some around Louisiana but they probably get it from, you know, all over, probably Texas, you know which is a big—big area of livestock and stuff but I think they do—they do—you know they have some people that raise—they have some cattle. I think it’s Dominic’s Stockyard around—around here that probably they get from—from there you know and all around Texas and stuff like that.

00:36:39

AE: Now back to the boudin a little bit, do—do y'all have an idea about how that food item came about, how it was developed—the history of it?

00:36:49

SB: To my knowledge, I was—I'm—I'm 36 years old. When I was a kid growing up, I was probably three—four years old when I started going to LSU football games, and as far as I can remember, everybody would—everybody over there had—always would bring boudin and stuff and that—that's—that's 30 years—over 30 years. I mean boudin has been around for a long time. But I think what people have done in the past is they just made—they just tried to keep making their boudin better and better and better and it—over the years, I guess, boudin was harder to make because they didn't have the—the products that they have to make it now—the machines. They had to make it all by hand—hand-grinders and stuff like that. But—because I mean we make thousands and thousands of pounds of boudin a month, and I couldn't imagine making as much boudin as we make by hand. It's—no way.

00:38:05

AE: When y'all were growing up in this—in this area, were there or are there still hog killings around Mardi Gras and that kind of thing?

00:38:13

SB: Um, yeah, they did—they did that. They don't do that—they don't do that as much anymore. Lot of people think it's cruelty, you know, to—they get most of their stuff done by you know—by butcher—butcher shops around here and stuff but yeah, that was a big thing—having a what you call a boucherie, you know. You—you would butcher the hog and you would clean it

and skin it, clean it, and cook it in what you called a Cajun microwave, we called it, cooking a pig in the ground is what you call it. And that back then was—it was a big deal. You know there's still a little bit of people that do it around here but not as big as it was back then. It's like people got out of doing that, you know.

00:39:04

AE: Well what about Cajun culture and boudin; can you maybe talk a little bit—how those things go together?

00:39:11

SB: Cajun culture and boudin, hmm. All I know is a—a Cajun seven-course meal would be a six-pack of beer and a link of boudin. That's one thing everybody looks at it as but—around this area for the 25 mile radius, I mean if you were in my supermarket on a Saturday or a Sunday, there's people that drive 25 to 30 miles to come buy our boudin and they're waiting—they're waiting in line. And like I said, we're off of the highway. No telling how much we would sell if we'd be on the highway but they—they—they know we have a good boudin, so they're going to drive; they're going to come get it. And it just—it's like people—some reason they have people that eat boudin for breakfast, you know. I mean boudin just—it goes—I know it goes way back past 30—35 years; I know that. I'm only 36 and it probably goes back 50—60 years plus but it's just something about that boudin, I guess. People—if you had to take a—a—I'd say like a ratio on how much people eat pork to beef, people eat more pork meat than they do beef meat for some reason around—around South Louisiana. They're going to eat beef—they're not—they're not going to go to a supermarket, they're going—if they want a steak, they're going to go to a restaurant and eat a steak. But as far as for pork, we just sell a little more pork than we do beef.

00:40:44

AE: And what is it about boudin—I mean before we were recording, I mentioned that I had some boudin in New Orleans, which is not [*Laughs*] boudin in y'all's eyes. But what is it, do you think, that—that can't be replicated? Like you—you have to have boudin here in South Louisiana? What is that?

00:41:01

SB: Well if—if someone is going to stand by—by their boudin and say they have a good boudin, you have to take pride in your boudin making. You can't just—you can't just—I don't know. I guess. For an example, if you were at home cooking a steak on a pit and you left that pit, eventually that steak is going to burn, you know, if you don't watch it. So the way boudin is made, the way we make our boudin, it's step-by-step. Everything has to fall into place every single time you make it for it to be the same consistency over and over and over again.

00:41:46

AE: What do you love about boudin?

00:41:50

SB: Boudin to me, I guess I'd say I like the flavor—I like pork better than I do beef for some reason. I just—I like—as far as for the liver that we put in there, you can't really taste the liver; you—you won't taste the liver because it's just there to keep the moisture. I just—I like—I like to cook more or less and that's why I try—I thought that the boudin needed some attention and, you know, some great—that's what I call it when you put it in—in your mouth; our boudin gives

you an explosion, you know, from the time you take that first bite to the last one—it's going to give you that same—it's the same consistency bite after bite after bite.

00:42:37

AE: And Chad, what do you like about boudin?

00:42:38

CB: Oh, I love our boudin. I probably eat boudin probably four or five days out of the week to—anywhere from two to four links each day. That's—that's a good bit of boudin. But I can tell you this, there's—there's a lot more people that eat—eat a whole lot more boudin than what I eat because, you know, I could see it. And they got a little boy—they got a little boy that every—every evening he gets out of school he comes—comes to the front butcher counter and asks us for two or three links of boudin every day so—. But you know, I think it's a good product and it's like Shannon was saying, you know, we sell a lot of it and all—all I want to do is sell—sell more, you know—just keep selling more.

00:43:44

AE: What is it that you like about it so much, the—the taste or the flavor or the warmth or the—
?

00:43:49

CB: I guess you can say the taste, you know, it's just good. It's—plain and simple, it's good on crackers. That's how I like it—on crackers.

00:44:01

AE: Is there—is there something about it being a warm portable food that—kind of a to-go food that people like a lot?

00:44:10

SB: Yeah, that people who just walk in the store, and there's a lot of people that get off of work and they drive back to—to their town you know they're working 15—20 miles away or so in the area and they—when they drive back to town, if they don't have time to cook supper, they just walk up to the counter and buy five, six, seven pounds of boudin; that's supper because it's—it's like a whole meal. You have rice, you have your meat, you have onions, your bell peppers—your vegetables and stuff; it's just like a meal, you know.

00:44:45

AE: What would you say is the most important thing to strive for in making boudin?

00:44:51

SB: Basically, like I was telling you before, it has to be—it has to all fall in line. When you make boudin, you can't just throw the meat in the pot; you can't throw the seasoning in the pot; you can't throw all the water; you can't just put it in there and just say, “Go cook yourself.” You have to—you have to take care of your meat, and you have to brown it to perfection, and you have to sear the meat and keep the flavors inside, which we season the meat probably 24 hours out before we cook it, and that's why the seasoning gets in the meat real good. And after the searing of the meat we—we add our—a little bit of water to cook down the meat and we add the liver and all the seasonings, the rest of the seasonings and the onions and bell peppers and then once it's cooked you—you pour it into the machines and we—we actually pour it into machines

and we—we grind it out one time and it's—from there it's made by hand; we mix it up by hand. We mix the rice into the meat by hand and we mix the—all the meat and the rice with the juices it makes—all mixed by hand. And then it's put into a hydraulic stuffer, and it's linked from there.

00:46:19

AE: How often do you make boudin?

00:46:20

SB: We probably make—we almost make boudin every day—almost every day. And we used to only make boudin maybe—maybe two to three times a week. It's gotten to where during the week and maybe once on the weekend, we make it almost every day.

00:46:40

AE: And how much is in a batch that you make?

00:46:42

SB: A batch—we make one batch of boudin, which as far as a batch—if we could make a batch bigger we would but there's no—they don't sell a bigger pot so a batch consists of about 100—125 to 130 pounds in one batch, and we usually make a double batch when we make it every day.

00:47:03

AE: And how many links would that produce?

00:47:07

SB: One hundred and thirty pounds—we try to put it to where it’s about—I would say a pound and a half of boudin is probably about three to four links.

00:47:22

AE: And then how much does one link cost here?

00:47:25

SB: One link averages about hmm, we sell it—we don’t sell it by the link. What we do is we sell it by the pound—\$2.99 a pound. And we—we think that’s—we think that’s a good price, you know. A lot of people go over \$2.00—\$3.00 a pound but for the product we push out we—we’re thinking right now that \$2.99 a pound is a good price for the product we have.

00:47:54

AE: With all these new developments—the Internet and the new recipe and everything—what do you think is the future of Bourque’s Supermarket and your—your boudin?

00:48:01

SB: Future-wise, like I said, they’re always coming out with the—with the new—these computers. You can do so much with these computers. I mean somebody in Minnesota can be sitting down and type in *boudin* and say, “Oh, man look at this—look at this site. I have to have some of that boudin.” And I mean they’ll call in and say, “How—how do I do—how do I go about ordering ten pounds of boudin.” Or some people say *boo-DAN*, but the way to pronounce it is *BOO-dan*. But anyway, and like I said, from—from Minnesota to Alaska to Hawaii, Kentucky,

Tennessee, Wisconsin, Alabama, Georgia, we've shipped almost all over the United States in the last six—six to eight months. It has grown enormously for a two-man operation.

00:49:06

AE: Do either of you have children of your own?

00:49:07

SB: I have a—a 12 year-old. Whitney is 12, my—my oldest daughter; Hilary is nine; and then I have a set of twins—they're going to be six on the 20th of October. Their names is Zachary and Jolie—a boy and a girl twin. And my little—my little baby is going to be four on December 3rd and his name is Oakley.

00:49:38

AE: Chad, do you have any children?

00:49:40

CB: I have a couple of kids. I've got a son. He's—he's two, and he's going to be three on November 7th and his name is Lane. And I have a little girl and her name is Caroline, and she'll—let's see, she's a year-and-a-half and she'll be—she'll make two April 8th.

00:50:06

AE: Now do y'all have hopes that your children will follow your footsteps in the grocery business here?

00:50:12

SB: Hmm, as of now this business is—it's not a hard business but it's—it's a tough business to cope with. And when I was growing up my—like I said, my dad he—he brought me—he was a sports—big time in sports—played football and baseball, you know; I did all the sports. But he didn't want me to stay around here, but I guess he couldn't stop me, so I went ahead and stayed here and been here for 20 years. And if—to answer your question, if I wanted my kids to come in here this is a—a business to where you have to be able to work with the public, you know. The public is—is what makes your living; you know, you have to be very nice and stuff and you—I wouldn't recommend my kids coming to work in here. I mean I'm going to—whatever they want to do they can do but my—my children as far as for the Bourque name, I have Zachary and Oakley and I mean, if they want to come in here, they're more than welcome to come in here but I would—I'd rather see them go to college and get an education, which everybody—everybody in—in this era is going to college now because I've noticed in the past people—you know, these people that go to college and stuff, that's the first thing—if somebody gets an interview for a job, if they have a college degree, right then and there they're going to make thousands more dollars a year than the person that doesn't have a college degree. So I would recommend them going to college first, and then they could come work for, you know—over here for me; that's what I would recommend.

00:52:14

AE: Is the boudin recipe and—and the sausage recipes and everything, are those things that you've written down that you'll—you'll pass onto your kids?

00:52:22

SB: The—the boudin recipe and the sausage recipe is going to be there for years, so we try to—you know, we're going to try to keep it going, you know, for years to come and it—it should be there, you know, by the time they get here. But if not, it will be even better. You know, we might come up with a better recipe. But as of right now, the recipe we have is pretty—pretty—pretty good so yeah, they should—the recipe should be here, you know, for them to take over.

00:52:58

AE: Do y'all ever go around tasting other boudin to see what your competition is doing?

00:53:04

SB: We—in the process of revamping our boudin, you know, there was a couple of places that had, I would say, some good boudin, you know, and we did go all over and taste it. And I don't want to say we tried to copy anybody's boudin, but we did go all over and try to get some ideas on how we should make it taste. And we probably—if you would say—we probably maybe took about two or three different boudins and said, "Man if we could just put all these boudins together and—and put them all into one link, we can have a good boudin." And I think that's what we've done; that's why we have such a good boudin now. We've—we've probably took tastes of probably two or three different boudins and put them all in our link, and I think that's why we are very successful right now.

00:54:00

AE: Well there seem to be such variation in boudins with, you know, the casing being really tight or really loose or the spiciness, the texture—do you think that's—that difference happens

from person to person or region to region within South Louisiana, or can you describe that difference at all?

00:54:19

SB: Well when you—it goes by the way you heat your link of boudin. If you heat your link of boudin too long, it will cook the casing and it will dry out the casing. And, depending on loosely packed or tightly packed, we have what you—what the Boudin Link says we have is an excellent packed link of boudin, not—not too tightly packed---and juicy. And the casing is not stretchy; it could be broken if you tried to break it. So the Boudin Link says that we have an excellent—you know, an excellent link, as far as for the, you know, the casing. Most people that come around here, they don't like their link of boudin to just break; they like to—they like to squeeze it out—squeeze it out. Most of them like it cut up; that way they don't have to worry about squeezing it out the link. But as far as with our casing we try to stay—just like making the boudin, I try to stay on top of the game about heating the boudin. You cannot heat it—it has to be heated a certain amount of time, it cannot sit in the—the water too long; you have to—it's all about timing. Just like making the boudin, heating it is—is the same way; it's about, you know, the timing that you put towards it.

00:55:49

AE: Do you ever have many people who come in here or through your Internet website who've never had boudin?

00:55:55

SB: If we ever had anybody come in here that never had boudin—through the website? I got a call from a lady in California; she said, “I was looking at your website. Do you have smoked boudin?” I said, “We have smoked boudin by—by order; we can smoke you some.” And she—I said, “Where are you from?” She said, “I’m from California, but I have some kinfolks in Lawtell, Louisiana,” which is about seven or eight miles from here. So—so the lady then proceeded to ask the question, “Well can you smoke me some?” And I said, “Well sure, how many pounds would you like?” She said, “I’d like about 20 pounds.” So I said, “Well how do you—how did you hear about us?” She said, “Well I was looking on your site and I have some—some relatives in Lawtell that drive from Lawtell to go get your boudin, but they don’t know if you have smoked boudin or not.” So I said, “Sure, we can smoke you some.” So she said, “I’m going to be coming down there to visit, and I’ll pick it up on a certain date.” So we smoked her 20 pounds of boudin and she came down from California to visit in Lawtell. And when she got ready to leave, she picked up her 20—20 pounds of smoked boudin and brought it back to California.

00:57:28

AE: Well do you have anything else to add—final thoughts about your boudin that you’d like people to know about Bourque’s and your family and what you do?

00:57:39

SB: All I can say is day in and day out we always try to think of a new idea or some kind of extra way to make an extra dollar, you know, to—to be successful and as—as of right now it’s—there’s no use to touch—touch our boudin right now because we’re selling so much of it. You know we—we can’t keep our boudin; as we make it, we sell it, and we’re not going to mess with

the recipe as of right now. If—if we see that it needs some attention, we'll give it some attention but the only attention that it needs is making batch after batch after batch; so—.

00:58:29

AE: Chad, is there anything that we haven't talked about that you'd like to add?

00:58:33

CB: No, not really. But I'd just like to say this—I'd like to say, you know, we're just going to continue to stick together as a family and we're going to continue to try and come up with new ideas, you know, to better the business and sell more and more boudin.

00:58:56

AE: And I did want to ask you one thing—it's what the music on your website was playing?

00:59:01

SB: It's—he's a Zydeco Cajun artist from right down the road. His name is Travis Matte and the name of his band is the Zydeco Kingpins and he's—he's gotten very popular in the last six or eight months. He's played right down the road from here maybe two or three miles; he's going to be—he's going to be coming to a festival that Port Barre has. We're—I think we're in our 21st year of a festival that is called the Cracklin' Festival and me and Chad is going—we're going to go ahead—we're going to go ahead and do this festival. We—as of this year it will be the first year we did the festival in a while, but everybody is telling us that we have enough, you know—as far as what we did with our boudin, we have great cracklings, and we're going to go ahead and produce our product and sell our product over there, too. A lot of people come to that

festival. You know, people all over the country come to that festival and that's—that's going to be November—November 11th maybe—11th and 12th; it's the second weekend in November.

01:00:13

AE: Are there going to be a lot of vendors out there selling cracklings and whatnot or—?

01:00:19

SB: There's—there's various people. They probably have about a good 15, 20, 25 people that, you know, go out there with their boots and try to make cracklings and they judge them and, you know, stuff like that and they'll have a good time—listen to these Cajun bands. They have—as of right now, all I know is Travis Matte is going to be there, but they have other Cajun bands that go there and stuff and it's—it's usually a big weekend, you know, and it brings a lot of—a lot of people from all over the state, you know—the other states come over here and see, you know, how cracklings are made and you know—.

01:01:02

AE: All right. Well is there anything that I didn't ask you that you wanted to add?

01:01:05

SB: I just want to—I just want to thank the Boudin Link for recommending us. In the last six—six plus months they did a real good job of recommending our good boudin; we have real good boudin, which they recommend us, and they've been here a couple of times in the last few months and I just want to thank—thank them for doing a good job of what they did.

01:01:34

AE: All right. Well I sure appreciate y'all sitting with me here, and thank you for participating in our—our documentary project.

01:01:42

SB: Thank you.

01:01:45

CB: I sure appreciate it, too.

01:01:48

[End Shannon and Chad Bourque]