

BARBARA ANN BRACY
Barbara Ann's Bar-B-Que - Chicago, IL

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Date: March 26, 2008

Location: Ms. Bracy's office at Barbara Ann's Motel

Interviewer: Amy Evans

Length: 37 minutes

Project: Chicago Eats/TABASCO Guardians of the Tradition

[Begin Barbara Ann Bracy Interview]

00:00:00

Amy Evans: This is Amy Evans on Wednesday, March 26, 2008 in Chicago, Illinois. And I am with—with Barbara Ann Bracy here. She has Barbara Ann’s Motel and Barbara Ann’s Bar-B-Que here in Chicago on Cottage Grove Avenue. And Barbara Ann, could I get you to introduce yourself and your birth date for the record, please?

00:00:22

Barbara Bracy: Uh-hmm. My name is Barbara Bracy—Barbara Ann Bracy—and my birth date is November 21, 1953 and **[Laughs]**—.

00:00:32

AE: And well let’s talk about your father because he is from Mississippi.

00:00:35

BB: Yeah, he’s from Ruleville, Mississippi, and he was an attorney by trade and—well I should say profession, and he always from what he told me liked the restaurant business. He said when he was—would be walking to school in Los Angeles, he would see a hamburger place and so when he would see this hamburger place, I would say, “I want one of those.” And so as soon as he got out of law school and was able to establish himself, he bought some land, and first he was in the candy store business and then he went into the cleaners, and then he decided he was going to do a barbecue restaurant. So he bought some land and he built a barbecue place in 1967.

00:01:26

AE: So, if I can back up, I also want to mention that your mother you said was—before we started recording—was from Indianola, Mississippi.

00:01:32

BB: Yes, my mother was from Indianola, Mississippi. Yes.

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AE: And your parents' names, for the record?

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BB: My father's name was Delars J. Bracy and my mom's name was Bertie L. Bracy.

00:01:43

AE: Okay. And how did—how did they meet in Mississippi?

00:01:45

BB: Actually, it was my mom—I have a really unique situation. My mom's family and my dad's family, they all knew each other from childhood. So my mom's relatives, her first cousins and all of them knew some of my father's people were in their classes and so, you know, to have your mother and father's relatives and everybody know each other, it's like you had two first families, you know. I mean—you know. And so they met each other in school, and that's how it happened. They just met each other in high school; it was high school, yeah.

00:02:24

AE: Okay. And so they got—did they get married before they left Mississippi?

00:02:28

BB: No, my mom left with my aunt, who was married to my dad's brother, and they left Mississippi together. And my dad was already here. And but then when she got here, they got married.

00:02:45

AE: So then before that your father went to law school in California?

00:02:51

BB: Actually he went to LA City College and—I think it was Los Angeles City College—and then he came here and he worked at the post office, and then he decided that he wanted to go to law school, and he graduated from John Marshall [Law School in Chicago].

00:03:09

AE: And then, just so that I feel like I have the story straight, and—your father, did he and his entire family move up or did just he move up—move up to Chicago?

00:03:19

BB: Well his brother was already here and basically, I—well then he had a sister here; a lot of his family members were migrating to Chicago—a lot of them, so—yeah. And then a lot of my mom's family members were migrating to Detroit and Chicago, so yeah.

00:03:37

AE: So this was—would have been after World War II sometime or later in the [nineteen] '50s?

00:03:39

BB: Well my dad was in World War II, yeah; so it would have been—they got married—I think they got married after. I think they got married—no, no, no; I think they were married before he went to war. I’m—I’m pretty sure they were married before he went to war.

00:04:00

AE: Are your parents still alive?

00:04:01

BB: No, no, they’re not alive.

00:04:04

AE: Do you have any brothers and sisters?

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BB: I have one sister who is in Detroit, Michigan, and she’s an older sister; and I have two nieces and no grandchildren. *[Laughs]*

00:04:18

AE: So tell me, when your father was experimenting with all these different kinds of businesses and he landed in the restaurant business, did it—was the place downstairs [Barbara Ann’s Bar-B-Que]—was that his first barbecue venture or was it—?

00:04:30

BB: Yeah, that was his first barbecue venture. That was the first. He built that building in 1967; he bought the land. And then he built the barbecue restaurant. He used to like to go to this barbecue place not too far from here and, unbeknownst to me, he and—I mean he decided that he wanted this barbecue restaurant and he got with his brothers because he had—he brought his brothers from Mississippi—at least two of them and one worked in the restaurant business. His other brother was already here, so he helped also. And he decided that he was going to open up a barbecue restaurant and he did. Yeah.

00:05:10

AE: And tell me, too, before recording we were talking about Mr. Lemons at Lem's Bar-B-Q, and that's not too far from here.

00:05:17

BB: Yeah, Mr. Lemons came from the same hometown that my mom—and so my mom knew Mr. Lemons. He knew—she knew his wife. I mean, you know, it was like all the Southern people knew each other. It was, you know, I guess they just had this little connection and Mr. Lemons had so many—I think he had like two or three brothers that were all in the business also, so it was like why not, you know? So he did; he just built the building, and it's been Barbara Ann's since—ever since.

00:05:53

AE: Yeah. So he named it after you?

00:05:53

BB: Yes, unbeknownst to me.

00:05:56

AE: *[Laughs]*

00:05:57

BB: Yes.

00:05:59

AE: Did he have a mind that you might carry on the business later on?

00:06:03

BB: I don't know. I—you know, because I went to school, so I don't know, you know. I guess in his mind he figured, well, he'll leave a base or he'll make a base and then from there, he'll hope that I keep it going.

00:06:22

AE: Uh-hmm. So how did—how did you kind of come up in—in your father's shadow in the barbecue business and having this place named after you now and having it yourself?

00:06:30

BB: Well actually, it was—my mother, my father, his two brothers; I mean a lot of relatives used to work in the barbecue place. And then he decided, since he had like two or three other lots, he would build a motel. Well he had bought—he had built another motel in his office about two blocks down, okay, down on 79th. He built an office building, and he put like thirteen units. And then he said, “Well, maybe I'll build the motel right next to the barbecue place, since I've

got this land.” So he did, but he never got to see this place open. He died in 1977; we opened the barbecue—the motel in August of 1977, so he never got to see this place finished. So as a family, we got together; we finished it. And as the years progressed—I mean he died in [nineteen] ’77, then my mother died in ’91 and then my uncle died in ’93 [Homer A. Bracy], and my other uncle died in ’95 [Bonnie C. Bracy], so yeah. So as they started peeling off, then I was away at school. And then I would come back home, and then I lived in California, and then I lived in Colorado and—. So as I would come back and forth, and then it became to a point that I had to come home and help take care of my mother. So that’s how I got here.

00:08:02

AE: And the—the motel is named after you, obviously?

00:08:04

BB: Yeah, he kept it going. *[Laughs]* I am still a victim, yes. *[Laughs]*

00:08:12

AE: Where did you go to school?

00:08:14

BB: I went to undergrad or I graduated from Elmhurst College in Elmhurst, Illinois, and then I went to Colorado State in Fort Collins, Colorado, for my Masters. And now I’m working on my PhD.

00:08:31

AE: Uh-hmm, in business?

00:08:33

BB: Yes.

00:08:34

AE: Like father, like daughter?

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BB: Well [*Laughs*]*—*I mean, if I don't know small business now, at what point will I know it? So I just decided that, you know, maybe I should go and do something to help others.

00:08:52

AE: So—so what do you foresee—how do you foresee using your PhD when you acquire it?

00:08:55

BB: Basically, teaching, you know—teaching and empowering others, that's all—to get into it you know, because [small business] is the base of America. And it's important.

00:09:09

AE: What kind of law did your father practice?

00:09:14

BB: He was a criminal attorney.

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AE: He had time for all these other ventures?

00:09:17

BB: Well, actually, you know, I used to say, “No wonder the man died at 53,” because he had so much going. And being an attorney, I mean, he was just, you know, building here and, you know, working and I’m like, “No wonder he died. Jesus, he had so much on him.” But I mean that’s what happened.

00:09:38

AE: So when he started the barbecue business down there, did he—did he enjoy being in the barbecue business?

00:09:42

BB: Well, yeah. I mean he would come by after court or after the day had—after the day ended and he would come and he would pull a piece of meat off the pit and he’d taste it and he’d say, “Oh, this is good.” And if it—if it tasted good to him without any sauce, then he knew it was tasty once the sauce got on there so—you know.

00:10:04

AE: Did your dad cook at home for the family when you were coming up?

00:10:08

BB: No, no, no, he was never a cook. He was very—no, no; he showed no interest in cooking. *[Laughs]* Strictly the organizer and the—he was the backbone, you know; he was the family backbone. And my uncle used to tell me all the time that it was very ironic because most

families, when the backbone leaves, most families they shatter or they—they can't carry on, but we're still here.

00:10:41

AE: And so your father in the barbecue business just—he knew how to hire the right people?

00:10:43

BB: Well it was mostly family; it was all family, basically. I mean my mom's family, my dad's family; it was all family.

00:10:54

AE: So how did he make a name for himself in—in his barbecue and your links and rib tips and all that?

00:11:01

BB: Well, you know, to be honest, I guess the truth or the—as they say the truth is in the pudding. I mean it's still here and so, since 1967, and we're still here and we've never closed none other than, you know, to clean up or something of that nature, you know, but—. I guess that's what it is—is tasty.

00:11:29

AE: Uh-huh. So over the years—I mean you're spread pretty thin now getting your PhD and managing the motel and everything—but over the years, have you worked the pits and—and been down there [in the restaurant]?

00:11:39

BB: No, no, I've never really been a restaurant person. **[Laughs]** In fact, I had it leased out for like twelve years. Yeah, I leased it out for about twelve years, and the gentleman I leased it to [Mack Sevier] really, really worked it and he really—he really worked hard and he built the name back up and he, you know—I mean and then he decided to—and he got so many accolades from the city and oh my God, and I'm like—he made me recognize. I'm like, “Wow, the barbecue place is doing all this?” And so he wanted to go and do his own thing, and so I had to take it back, and I've had it back now for about two years.

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AE: You don't look too excited about it.

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BB: No, I'm not. **[Laughs]** I've never really liked the restaurant business. I've never been a restaurant person as far as working in the barbecue place. I've never liked it.

00:12:35

AE: Do you like eating barbecue?

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BB: No, I don't eat pork. **[Laughs]** No, I don't eat pork. I—I just recently—I added to the menu turkey hot links, so for those that, you know—and we always keep on the menu barbecue chicken because I don't eat pork. So I added turkey hot links for those that feel the same way I do.

00:12:58

AE: Have those been selling well?

00:12:59

BB: Yes, they have. They are—that was a smart move—smart move.

00:13:05

AE: So tell me about the—the people you have down there now. I met Carolyn and Gwen yesterday.

00:13:11

BB: Uh-hmm. Those are people that used to work at the motel, but I have shifted [*Laughs*] them to the barbecue place. But Carolyn [Hinton] is retired from the Chicago Public School Cafeteria, so she does have a food service license—manager's license. I have my food service manager's license and Gwen—Gwen [Gwendolyn Carter] just got hers and so Carolyn has had her own catering company, so—. And then I did keep two or three of the other people that the gentleman that I had it leased to—I did keep two or three of his people because they had been with him like ten or twelve years.

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AE: So they're the ones that are basically carrying on what the man left behind before, as far as the barbecue?

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BB: He has—he has since opened up his own place now.

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AE: May I ask what that is?

00:14:00

BB: Yeah, the name of his place is called Uncle John's Barbecue, and he's very well known for his hot links. And I hated to see him go, but I am thankful for him carrying on our name and he did, yeah.

00:14:18

AE: So do you still have some people that came when he had the place downstairs that come—still come here?

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BB: Oh yeah, we do; we still have some of his following, yeah. Yeah we do, we do.

00:14:27

AE: So who's cooking the meat downstairs?

00:14:29

BB: Well actually, Carolyn and Mrs. Pace—actually, that pit is really ran by women, uh-hmm. Women are really turning the—the rib tips and they're turning the hot links, and they're really doing the cooking. I think we have like—we have like two men who cook but basically, the women are running it, yeah.

00:14:50

AE: Now was that intentional that you wanted some women down there in charge, or it just worked out that way?

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BB: Yeah, it happened like that, yeah. It just happened like that.

00:14:59

AE: So now how—how long has Carolyn been with you?

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BB: Carolyn has been with—I would say the whole corporation for about six or seven years. But I just recently got the barbecue place back for the last two years and ever since then, she's been with me.

00:15:16

AE: So what do you think the future is of Barbara Ann's Bar-B-Que?

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BB: Well, right now, I'm in the process of putting together a sauce to market, and now that I've got some good people in position and now that I've come to an acceptance level that it appears that [*Laughs*] I'm part of this, I'm ready now to put forth a little energy. So I've sought out some people in regards to putting together a barbecue sauce and bottling it.

00:15:56

AE: So can you share a little bit about what your sauce is and what it's like, without giving away too many secrets?

00:16:02

BB: Well it's—it's tasty; it's spicy. And we're going to do a mild and we're going to do a—a mild and a hot, you know—yeah. They should be pretty good.

00:16:17

AE: Uh-hmm. What do you think your father would—would say about you carrying on the business and—and marketing the sauce?

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BB: Well I would hope that, since I've kept the business and I've maintained the business for this period of time—because the motel was built in 1977, so since we still have it, I would hope that he would be proud to know that I didn't just throw it away and—. You know, my godfather has a saying; he always says, when you look in the mirror, you may want to look like Lena Horne, but you work with what you have, so you know—.

00:16:59

AE: So is your sister in Detroit—has she been kind of—I'm trying to think of the right word here—well, active and—and also interested but then also kind of relieved of—of the pressure of carrying on the family business because it's not in her name?

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BB: [*Laughs*] Well now that's a question you would have to ask her but—because she's older and she's come over and she's worked and—hmm, interesting. I really couldn't answer that question.

00:17:35

AE: Okay, that was—that was a lot of pressure to answer that question. So tell me about the motel and what you do here and—and what goes on here.

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BB: Well the motel is a pretty—it's—we have thirty-four units, and it was built in 1977, as I stated, and it's a pretty easy-going business. I mean, you know, we try to keep—in fact, I just renovated all the rooms and I was renovating—I'm renovating the lobby. That's why the lobby looks like it looks—and trying to bring it to the 21st Century, you know—just trying to keep things going, that's all, yeah.

00:18:13

AE: And so when you get your PhD and you—well first let's back up because you said that you were—for your dissertation you were thinking about traveling to some small businesses around the country.

00:18:22

BB: Yeah. I'm thinking about—I'm—I'm focusing on small businesses, and I'm a real estate broker by profession, and I know that it's all business related and properties and you know—and so I just—it dawned on me that small business is going to be my focus. I would like for people to understand; I want to go around and I want to find out information. I want to do surveys on what

has kept you in business, how long, how many small businesses there are, regarding either minorities or just—just the base of the small business. I'm going—I'm going to narrow it down, but I have in my mind of maybe even doing a documentary about small businesses, you know, based in the Midwest or maybe in—in America. I don't know how I want to, you know, put it together, but I do know the focus is going to be small businesses, yeah.

00:19:19

AE: Well, seeing as—as you're so entrenched here in this family, a set—set of family businesses, have you ever thought about documenting your own?

00:19:29

BB: Yes, I have. In fact, I had started a book called *The Family Business*. Oh God, and I haven't had time to really work on it, but I have—I'm hoping that—that will come into play with the small business—with the dissertation—because the name of the book will be *The Family Business*, yeah. You know, because there's no longer really the ma and pa businesses; they have—cities have basically taken them away. So it's interesting to see the ones that have lasted, the ones that are still here, and I want to know: what have they done to stay alive? I know what I've had to do, so it's interesting because I—I mean, you know, from 1967 to now, I mean that's a testament so—. And we're still here.

00:20:22

AE: So has there been a kind of healthy competition over the years between your barbecue place and Lemons' [Lem's Bar-B-Q]?

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BB: No. Actually, if it has, I didn't know about it, you know. Everybody—because there's enough here for everybody. Chicago is a great city and that's one thing, I've been blessed to live in a great city. I've done a little traveling, you know. So Chicago is a great city and if you can make it here, you can make it anywhere. So you know, the competition—we never even really, you know—I never really thought about it. No—no, I never really gave it any thought.

00:20:59

AE: Uh-hmm. Well where do you—competition aside—where do you think Barbara Ann's Bar-B-Que stands in the tradition and culture of Chicago barbecue?

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BB: Well I've been told [*Laughs*]*—*that's the only way that I can go by—I've been told that traditionally, we're right in the top five, you know. I've been told. So I mean Lemons and Barbara Ann's and I—I'm trying to think of a couple other ones that, you know—we've been written up a lot, you know, and I'm just pleased to be there, you know, in the top five. So that says something. And it's ironic because people tell me they can go out-of-state and they'll say—you know, somebody will mention Barbara Ann's or my—my god-daughter went to Nebraska and she told me she was in, I think, Day's Barbecue or something like that, and she saw a picture of the barbecue place in—in the restaurant. She said it had a lot of different—. And I'm thinking in Nebraska, you know? So I don't know. You know, I've been told we're in the top five, so I can't complain. That speaks for itself.

00:22:16

AE: Yeah, indeed. Indeed. So what do you think about being—even if your father was, you know, started the restaurant and was primarily associated with the restaurant while he was alive, but he named it after you, a woman, and what kind of—you know, being a barbecue restaurant that's named for a woman and now being that woman in charge, what is that like being in a woman in business today?

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BB: Hmm, I'll thank my mother for that [*Laughs*] because I'm sure she had quite of influence on his decision. I just think that it can—you know, women today can do it; I mean not that I'm this big women-libber, but women can do it; women can do it. And I just think anyone in today's market should think of doing for themselves, seeing what they can do, stretch their ideas and—and how they feel and how—how they think they can make—you know, make a way and how—what can they give back or what can they do make themselves feel better, you know. So as far as it being a woman, I just think it just happened that way.

00:23:25

AE: Do you think that you get more female customers or anything like that because you're a woman, or is that just kind of made up?

00:23:35

BB: No, not necessarily. I don't see it because I'm not over there. [*Laughs*] But I—you know, I do know that one of the organizations that came—and they interview us every year—she made a big thing out of the fact that there were all women running the pit and we have—we still use a

wood-burning pit. In fact, that pit that's there is the pit that they started out with; we've never changed our pit. We've had it redone quite a few times, but we've never changed our pit so—.

00:24:01

AE: And that's one of the Chicago aquarium-style pits.

00:24:04

BB: Yes, yes, it's an original. Because when they built that place, that pit was put in there, and it's never moved.

00:24:15

AE: And the wood combination you use, do you use a little charcoal also or—?

00:24:18

BB: No, actually, they use different types of wood. If they do use charcoal, it is to prolong the wood but basically, it's all wood—it's all wood.

00:24:29

AE: What kind?

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BB: Oh, good question. Hickory, and I think it's another kind that they use.

00:24:36

AE: Oak, maybe?

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BB: Perhaps, but I know it's hickory—is one of them but I couldn't tell you the other one right off the top of my head, but I know it's another kind, yeah.

00:24:48

AE: And so being in the hotel business and the barbecue business, is one better than the other?

00:24:52

BB: Well I, specifically, like the motel business because it's not a hard business. A restaurant business is very hard because you're dealing with so many different objects and so many different entities, you know. So I, personally, like the motel business, you know—friendly service and I like the motel business.

00:25:14

AE: Do you?

00:25:17

BB: Yeah.

00:25:17

AE: So do you have—your clientele in the motel business, is it a lot of like travelers or local folks, or how does it work?

00:25:24

BB: We have local people; we also offer weekly rates, so we have a lot of single people that work and basically, that's it. We have travelers and in the summer; we get a lot of family

reunions, yeah, in the summer. You know people block off eight or nine, ten rooms because they've got family coming in. In the summer that's big—family reunions, yeah.

00:25:46

AE: What are your rates, if I may ask?

00:25:48

BB: Overnight is seventy dollars and traveler's rates during the week are fifty dollars and basically, that's it. Yeah.

00:26:02

AE: So did your parents ever go back to Mississippi after they were here in Chicago?

00:26:06

BB: To visit only. Yeah, because my grandmother was still there, yeah—just to visit.

00:26:13

AE: Did you go down to visit with them?

00:26:15

BB: Sometimes but not often. Sometimes but—I mean we took the train a couple of times and you know—yeah. I mean I remember going, you know, to visit Grandma; and I remember my mom and I going to grandmother's house and fixing her house up and, you know, I remember all of that. And you know but—not a lot; I—I wasn't—I just wasn't a big fan like—. My other

cousins, they really like going to Mississippi and I just—there was just something about Mississippi I wasn't just—.

00:26:42

AE: You're a city girl?

00:26:45

BB: Yeah, you—well you know what? I'm a country person at heart, though. I am a country person at heart, yeah. I—I enjoy Colorado. I lived in Colorado for about three years, and I am a country person at heart. I just like having access to a city; that's what it is, yeah.

00:27:01

AE: So what else can you tell me about the barbecue business—anything that I wouldn't know to ask or something special about that building down there?

00:27:12

BB: It's just something about barbecue. I don't care what ethnicity you are, I don't care who you are, it's something about barbecue that you say “barbecue” and people just like oh, well, yeah. You know it's—. I don't know but it's—it, you know, it's just the strangest thing. It's just something about barbecue, so I enjoy that aspect of being a part of that, you know.

00:27:37

AE: And speaking of some of the recognition you've gotten, the IA—IACP [International Association of Culinary Professionals] group that came through here, you were on a barbecue

tour. It's an organization of culinary professionals, and I found some of that information on the Internet. What was that like having all those folks come visit you?

00:27:53

BB: Oh, God. I mean [*Laughs*] and this is like they've been coming like for the last two—actually, the last two years. I just think that's great; I think it's interesting. I—I fought with the gentleman, I can't think of his name—about the picture he put on the Internet of me. I was a little disdainful about that. [*Laughs*] What—okay—but you know that is interesting because, like he said, he likes putting different places all over the city that ordinarily people wouldn't come to, and yet they still have quality and good food. So I think that's very interesting. I'm not a real out-front person, so I don't really—I'm more of—you know, in the back, and so I usually try to send Carolyn or somebody else out front. Because me sitting doing this is really a little different for me, you know, because I'm really not a front person. I like sitting in the background and as long as everybody is happy and enjoying, you know, good food, quality food, fresh food, that's the key to it. You can stay alive with—with fresh food—you can stay alive.

00:29:06

AE: So since your father opened the barbecue restaurant, but he wasn't really a restaurant person—he was more of a businessman—is there anybody who taught you anything about barbecue along the way?

00:29:14

BB: Yeah, actually, my parents were influenced or I should say not influenced but Leon's Bar-B-Q, he—old man Leon really helped my mother and father. I mean, he really did. I remember

Leon coming around, and I remember him helping my uncle [Bonnie Bracy]. And I remember that, you know, because my father brought my uncle from the South, and he lived in Jackson. And he used to work for Sears, and he left his job in Jackson and came. In fact, he was the overseer while the barbecue place was being built, and he used to live at our house and I—until his family came and then he got his family a house. And after about a year or two, then his family moved up and they moved into their house, and I remember my uncle going to Mr. Leon's barbecue place and Mr. Leon coming, you know, to their barbecue—to our barbecue place, so oh, definitely. I remember that. Oh, yeah, they definitely were—were—helped, yeah.

00:30:16

AE: And before your parents passed, do you remember them talking while you were growing up about their choice to leave Mississippi and come to Chicago and—and the opportunities that they had here over the years?

00:30:32

BB: Well, yeah. I—you know, as I grew up, I remember they always wanted me to have more than what they had. Education was key; you know, when you graduated from high school, it didn't matter where you were going but, you know, you were going to college. And the, you know—their—my uncle [Homer Bracy] used to say to me all the time that if I was—that it was very hard to get your name on a piece of paper; he would tell me that all the time. And he would say to me that they would never see anything from this because they worked so hard to get it, but if I would hold on, then, if nothing else, I would have a base. Naturally, it's not a trust fund [*Laughs*]*—*but a base. And I didn't understand that at the time that he made that comment because my thing was, you know, I was young. I was enjoying life and, you know, let's—well

why don't we sell it you know and—I got degrees now. I can go do something else, you know. And my uncle used to say to me all the time—he says, “You know, that's very easy.” He said people—and I used to sell real estate out of—up here in this office because my uncle had—I used to be in a real estate office and my uncle came down with bone cancer. So I moved the office here because I knew I needed to be, you know, closer to the business; and my uncle used to see my clients coming and going. I used to sell—all I sold was foreclosed properties; I've never sold regular property. I've always sold foreclosed properties, tax properties; that was just my thing, my niche. And my uncle used to see all these clients coming and going and he would say to me—he would say, “Barbara, do you see how many people are trying to get their name on something?” And I'm looking at him like, “Yeah, as I'm rubbing my head like, you know *[Laughs]*; and he told me, he says, “If you hold on,” he said, “we're not going to be around but if you hold on, this will be your base.” And he said, “And if you have a base, you can springboard and do anything you want.” And now I understand what he meant; now, after all these years, I understand what he meant now.

00:32:46

AE: And now your name is not only on a piece of paper, but on a lighted sign out front.

00:32:49

BB: Oh, God. *[Laughs]* Oh, God. *[Laughs]* But, you know, it's—it means something. You know, they worked hard, you know, and each generation—I was telling my little goddaughter; she's a resident at St. Luke's Presbyterian now and I—she's been with me. Her mom—her dad died very early, and she was with me. I have been with her ever since was like nine or ten. And I was telling her that each generation does better than the other generation, you know. Our parents

did what they could do to put us here. Because she made the comment to me that she knew she was going to be wealthy, you know. She says, "I'm going to be wealthy." I said, "I'm—and I'm happy for you," you know. And I said, "But that's expected because it—it follows each generation," you know. We didn't start out with trust funds, so they—my parents, coming from the South, did the best that they could, so they established a base. So I instilled in her and did the best that I could with her. So now she's saying, "Well, I know I'm going to be wealthy," you know. And I'm saying, "Well that's great because that's the generation moving on," you know. And she's early thirties you know and I—I was telling my cousin, my little revelation I should say. But it's interesting; it's just really interesting you know—it's really interesting. So yeah, coming from the South and where they started, how I have maintained because I learned how to live life very early in life, and what was difficult for me was learning how to maintain it. And so in doing that, I think, you know, my dad and my mom would say okay, job well done, you know. My godfather tells me that all the time, yeah.

00:34:41

AE: And so I asked you before about the future of Barbara Ann's, but do you feel like it will always be in the family?

00:34:47

BB: Well, actually, not, you know—my nieces aren't really that interested and—which is okay because I'm looking at it more or less like a 401K, more or less. And, you know, and in two to five years, who knows, you know, what will happen and—it's okay; it's okay. You just work it and do the best that you can while—while you have it. And that's all, you know. So you never know—you just never know what happens.

00:35:20

AE: Anything else you want to add before we wrap it up and I let you go?

00:35:24

BB: Well no, that—no more than small businesses, family businesses are the base of America and what we have going on in this country now, you know, I think is very important. And I think that, because the way things are going now with prices and, you know, I think America is going to see things that it's never seen before. And I think that it's going to be important; it's going to be really important. I think Americans are going to see a new—they're going to see a new America. They're going to see things they've never—Europeans have known and, you know, people of other countries, they've known differences in their countries. They've had to leave their country or they've had to make changes or—but I think America—I think America is really in for a real big change, and I think people are going to come closer. I think that they're going to get back into the—you know, even though technology has it so that you don't have to be close, but I think that it's going to come back where everybody is going to have to you know—you're going to find more than one family in a house now, you know. Even with foreclosures and—I mean, if you just look at America totally it's getting—it's changing; it's changing, and you've got to be aware of what's going on around you, you know. You—you must and so hey, I just think that, you know, as long as you keep improving yourself, it'll—it'll work out, you know. You'll make a change; you'll make things better because what does Oprah say? *When you know better, you do better.*

00:37:04

AE: All right. Well that's a good note to end on. Thank you, Barbara, for sitting with me today; I appreciate it.

00:37:09

BB: Oh no problem—no problem.

00:37:12

[End Barbara Ann Bracy Interview]