

**BERNICE COFIELD & MARY WHITLEY**  
**Tabernacle Christian Church – Suffolk, VA**

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Interviewer: Sara Wood

Transcription: Shelley Chance, ProDocs

Length: Fifty-eight minutes

Project: Tidewater Yock

**[Begin Bernice Cofield & Mary Whitley Interview]**

**00:00:02**

**Sara Wood:** I'm going to introduce us and then I'll have you introduce yourselves. So this is Sara Wood with the Southern Foodways Alliance. It's May 21, 2014. It's Wednesday. I'm sitting here in Tabernacle Christian Church on Washington Street in Suffolk, Virginia. And I'm here with Miss Mary Whitley and Miss Bernice Cofield. And if you would—if you wouldn't mind could I have both of you each say hello, tell me your name, and tell me where we are right now?

**00:00:27**

**Mary Whitley:** Okay; my name is Mary Whitley and I'm at 2500 E. Washington Street, Suffolk, Virginia at Tabernacle Christian Church and I'm the kitchen manager of the Shepherd Center.

**00:00:38**

**SW:** And for the record could I get you to tell me your birth date?

**00:00:41**

**MW:** June 22, 1955.

**00:00:44**

**SW:** Thank you Miss Whitley; and you—?

00:00:46

**Bernice Cofield:** My name is Bernice Cofield and I'm the cook at Tabernacle for New Harvest Generation and for banquets and fundraisers.

00:00:58

**SW:** And would you also please tell me your date of birth for the record?

00:01:01

**BC:** March 1, 1945.

00:01:04

**SW:** Thank you. And before we get started could you tell me the difference, so what was the first place you said you cook here for banquets but also there was something else?

00:01:15

**BC:** Oh, New Generation. Daycare.

00:01:20

**SW:** And that's on the other side of the—?

00:01:22

**BC:** Church.

**00:01:23**

**SW:** Okay; I guess what I wanted to start is by asking both of you where you were born and what it was like growing up there.

**00:01:31**

**MW:** Okay; I was born here in this City of Suffolk in the Saratoga Section of Suffolk and with nine sisters and brothers.

**00:01:42**

**SW:** Where do you fall in that line?

**00:01:44**

**MW:** I'm in the middle and we all are like ten to eleven months apart.

**00:01:49**

**SW:** Were y'all pretty close?

**00:01:51**

**MW:** Uh-hm, real close.

**00:01:53**

**SW:** And what were your parents' names?

**00:01:55**

**MW:** James Sherrod, Sr. and Francis J. Sherrod.

00:01:59

**SW:** And did they grow up here in Suffolk?

00:02:01

**MW:** Yes; they did.

00:02:02

**SW:** And you said the Saratoga Section?

00:02:04

**MW:** Uh-hm.

00:02:05

**SW:** What is that for people who aren't familiar?

00:02:08

**MW:** It's um, well it's a family-oriented community you know houses. My daddy built his house from the ground there.

00:02:20

**SW:** And Miss Cofield did you grow up here?

**00:02:22**

**BC:** No ma'am; South Hampton County in the town of Sedley, Virginia. And I went to South Hampton High in Courtland. And my mother's name is Erma Skeeter and I have three children, Laurie—no, Stevie, Laurie, and Wanda. **[Laughs]** Yes.

**00:02:47**

**SW:** And do they all live nearby?

**00:02:48**

**BC:** No. Laurie and Wanda live in Dumfries, Virginia in Northern Virginia, and Stevie lives here in Suffolk.

**00:02:56**

**SW:** So I guess I wanted to ask you the big obvious question is when did you first hear about yock?

**00:03:06**

**BC:** 1970 when I was working at—started working at the Horseshoe Café on East Washington Street.

**00:03:16**

**SW:** And I actually—I went up there today. The sign is still there. It looked like it was pretty empty. Can you tell me about this place? What was this place like?

**00:03:23**

**BC:** It was a nice place but they're out of business now. They went out of business in 1995. And I worked there for um, thirty years, no twenty-five years, eight months, and five days before they closed.

**00:03:43**

**SW:** So how old were you when you started working there?

**00:03:46**

**BC:** Right—1970—

**00:03:53**

**SW:** So I mean was it—was it owned by Chinese Americans, African Americans?

**00:03:57**

**BC:** Well when I started working there it was African American. Now before that I don't know.

**00:04:04**

**SW:** And what kind of food did they serve?

**00:04:07**

**BC:** We had southern fried chicken, fish, pork chops, liver and onions, chitlins, all of the good stuff [**Laughs**] and the yock.

00:04:24

**SW:** Now so they were making the yock when you started?

00:04:27

**BC:** Uh-hm.

00:04:28

**SW:** And so who taught you and what did you think about all that?

00:04:31

**BC:** Um, from the owner, Perry Lambert. She was the owner. And when I first started working there yock went for eighty-five cents a box.

00:04:44

**SW:** Really?

00:04:45

**BC:** It's been some years and now it's \$7.

00:04:49

**SW:** And so how did she teach you how to make it?

00:04:52

**BC:** Well I was working there doing some of everything and I was just watching her do it and it just came natural. **[Laughs]**



00:05:00

**SW:** And so in terms of the people who ate at the restaurant, I noticed there's a lot of factories over there. Was it a lot of factory workers?

00:05:07

**BC:** Yes; yes. Lunch time we had the counter full from the factories and different places.

00:05:15

**SW:** Were there a lot of people living downtown at that time?

00:05:17

**BC:** Uh-hm; yes. Business was great.

00:05:22

**MW:** And then back in the—back in the day as she was talking that used to be the family restaurant for African Americans. When—that was their restaurant where we would come and fellowship and have church banquets there. So that was the thing for African Americans back in the day then.

00:05:41

**SW:** And you said Perry Lambert owned it at the time?

00:05:43

**BC:** Uh-hm.

00:05:44

**SW:** Does—is she still alive?

**00:05:47**

**BC:** She passed in 1999.

**00:05:49**

**SW:** And is that when the restaurant—?

**00:05:50**

**BC:** It went right on down.

**00:05:52**

**SW:** What happened to it afterward? Did it stay in—?

**00:05:56**

**BC:** Didn't the son take over for a little while?

**00:05:59**

**MW:** He didn't; okay.

**00:06:02**

**SW:** So what—when you made yock at the Horseshoe Café what—can you tell me sort of about how you prepared it?

**00:06:08**

**BC:** Oh yes; cook the noodles and you do the pork, chicken, ketchup, onions, eggs, soy sauce, and then you season it with the cayenne pepper.

**00:06:23**

**SW:** And did you put it in the boxes?

**00:06:24**

**BC:** Uh-hm, yes.

**00:06:28**

**SW:** And would people sit and eat the boxes at the restaurant?

**00:06:30**

**BC:** Well when they—you could have takeout or eat in. Eat in you used the bowl and take-out you used the boxes. No; she wouldn't let allow—sitting in there eating a box of yock in the café; uh-uh.

**00:06:44**

**SW:** And did she ever tell you how she learned to make it?

**00:06:49**

**BC:** No, ma'am; I don't even remember.

**00:06:53**

**SW:** Did either of you when you were growing up did your mother make yock? Do you remember it growing up at any time?

**00:07:00**

**MW:** No, my mom didn't make it but we would always go to the Horseshoe to purchase it. You know then back in the day you know you had the Chinese restaurants. So when it came to the Chinese restaurant versus the Horseshoe Restaurant it was completely different. So then you stopped buying it at the Chinese restaurant and you would buy it from the Horseshoe.

**00:07:22**

**SW:** So you—your family was buying it at Chinese restaurants before the Horseshoe?

**00:07:26**

**MW:** Uh-hm.

**00:07:28**

**SW:** Can you talk about how the yock is different between the Chinese restaurants and the Horseshoe Café?

**00:07:32**

**MW:** Because the Chinese restaurant it was more bland and they put whole chicken wings in theirs. And you would taste more of the ketchup versus the soy sauce. And with the—with the

Horseshoe and with us it's a combination. It's a blend. The ketchup do not overpower the soy sauce and vice-versa.

**00:07:58**

**SW:** And was the ketchup and the soy at the Horseshoe, did you already put it in for people or did you—because I noticed when I was—I was telling Miss Whitley, I went to Sing Wong yesterday and they actually just give you the bottles and tell you—they just let you do it but the ketchup is already in there. So I'm wondering if that's how—

**00:08:13**

**BC:** No. Well when they order one to take-out we would do the ketchup and soy sauce ourselves. And then when they ate it there we just serve it on the table. And you season it yourself.

**00:08:30**

**SW:** How do you both—can you talk about how you like to fix your yock personally?

**00:08:36**

**BC:** **[Laughs]** Well yes; I cook my noodles, like the night before, and then the next day I will mix my sauce and then after that I will add my meat and my eggs and onions and soy sauce.

**00:09:02**

**SW:** Can you—?

**00:09:03**

**MW:** Well when I'm fixing it at home it's a difference between fixing it at home and fixing it to serve to sell. I cook the noodles the same day and then I have—cook my meats what it's going to be 'cause I like shrimp yock, you know whether it be shrimp, chicken, or the pork and like she said, you know most people they kind of blend their ketchup and their soy sauce together and then add a little sugar and some other—vinegar and some other things. But I don't prepare mine's that way. I heat my soy sauce and then I heat the ketchup separate and then equally put the same amount in.

**00:09:45**

**SW:** And do you know where your mother learned to make it?

**00:09:48**

**MW:** You know I think that you know when—when people talk about yock and how to prepare it you ask other people who prepare it and then they try to mimic from that.

**00:10:00**

**BC:** Uh-hm.

**00:10:00**

**MW:** And then when they mimic from that they kind of—kind of just keep—it's a trial and error until you get it right. And you know she—she—I'm sure that at—'cause she knew the lady that owned the Horseshoe [Perry Jane Davis Lambert] and you know you ask people well how do you prepare it, and you tell them. And you know some people don't like to give you their

recipes or whatever or they'll give you stuff that—don't give you all of it, so that's why it don't taste the same. So you know it's a trial and error until you get it right.

**00:10:29**

**SW:** And is the broth based—I mean when we interview people about food obviously some recipes are sacred so I'm not at all asking for the recipes but is the broth more of a chicken-based broth or is it a beef-based?

**00:10:44**

**BC:** No broth.

**00:10:45**

**SW:** No broth okay; so that sauce is actually what you were talking about a mixture of the ketchup and the soy?

**00:10:50**

**BC:** Uh-hm.

**00:10:50**

**MW:** Because basically at the—at the Chinese place they do use a sauce. They use like a yellow-based sauce.

**00:10:55**

**BC:** Chicken-based.

**00:10:57**

**MW:** Chicken-based sauce and that's what some other people do but you know it doesn't taste like the one that we're used to.

**00:11:04**

**SW:** That makes a lot of sense. I guess I was—when I had it last night I was expecting to have like a—like a broth taste to it and I didn't get that at all, so—. So my next question is you know talking about getting yock at the Horseshoe Café and then I'm wondering—because now the Horseshoe is closed and there are a lot of—like you both are very involved in the yock fundraisers here at Tabernacle. Is there anywhere else to get yock? Can people—you know besides the two Chinese restaurants I talked about? Is it mostly just made in the home and in church fundraising now in terms of the African American community?

**00:11:43**

**MW:** Absolutely; yeah.

**00:11:45**

**SW:** So when the Horseshoe closed that was—was that the one place that you could go and get it in the African American community and buy it in a restaurant?

**00:11:52**

**MW:** Absolutely.



00:11:55

**SW:** And I'm curious as to how you both started with the yock fundraiser here at Tabernacle. Can you talk a little bit about that? Was that here before you got here or did you start it?

00:12:03

**MW:** She [Bernice Cofield] started it because she was an employee of the Horseshoe so everybody who worked—everybody who had gone to the Horseshow know “Florida.” That’s her name at the Horseshoe, “Florida.” Okay. So whenever we have a yock sale they want to make sure that Florida was making it ‘cause we had another lady that made it here and she passed away but hers was not as good as Florida’s. So when we have fundraisers they want to make sure that she’s making it because they know it’s going to be good. So it started with her and then basically when we did fundraisers we made a lot of money and she was the—the main person that helped us do that.

00:12:54

**SW:** Okay; Miss Cofield can you tell me why they call you Florida?

00:12:59

**BC:** [Laughs] That’s a name I was given—nickname I was given when I was in—first started working at the Horseshoe. An old elderly man gave me that name and ever since that day if you said “Florida” they knew exactly who you’re talking about. My name is Bernice.

00:13:18

**SW:** So why did he start calling you Florida?

00:13:19

**BC:** [Laughs] Because he used to be my first customer every morning and then he said, “You are my sunshine. You light up just like a flower,” and this and all of that.

00:13:32

**SW:** What time would he come in—in the morning?

00:13:33

**BC:** Eight o'clock in the morning and get his cheese and eggs and sausage and a cup of coffee. But he's been passed for the last hmm, at least twenty-five years.

00:13:53

**SW:** What was his name?

00:13:54

**BC:** “School Boy” that's what they used to call him. You remember School Boy don't you?

00:13:59

**MW:** Uh-um; I'm not old as y'all. [Laughs]

00:14:06

**SW:** Can you talk just a little bit more because before—'cause I wanted to ask you both about the fund-raising and the yock here but can—are there any other stories or memories you have of

the Horseshoe that you want to share since it's closed now? You know just sort of who came in and what was the atmosphere like and—and I wonder just what it felt like to be in that place.

**00:14:27**

**MW:** When I first encountered, I think I was about maybe fourteen years old and my uncle had his birthday party there. And um, it was about sixty-five of us and—and I wanted steak 'cause I heard they had really good steak. So they let me have steak and everybody else had kind of chicken, but the food was so good. I mean the chicken, the pork chops, the things like that, so that's when I first encountered it when I was about fourteen years old at a birthday party, my uncle's birthday party.

**00:15:05**

**SW:** And was it—'cause I was looking in the window; it looks like it was pretty big in there.

**00:15:08**

**MW:** Uh-hm; I think it held—what about eight to ninety people, about 100.

**00:15:15**

**BC:** The banquet room; yeah. And then the other side—

**00:15:20**

**MW:** Because it was in—it was like—

00:15:21

**BC:** We had three sections.

00:15:22

**MW:** —three sections, absolutely ‘cause you had a section where people just come in and—and order and sit and eat. That was the first part and then the banquet part was over on the left-hand side and that’s where you know we had those—.

00:15:34

**BC:** Had one on the right, too.

00:15:35

**MW:** Yeah; had one on the right too.

00:15:37

**SW:** Was it open all day ‘cause you were talking about how School Boy would come in and get his breakfast but—at eight o'clock; was it open late?

00:15:44

**BC:** From 8:00 in the morning ‘til 12:00 at night. We had two shifts.

00:15:50

**SW:** Was there—

00:15:50

**BC:** From 8:00 to 4:00 and then from 4:00 to 12:00.

00:15:54

**SW:** And what shift did you work?

00:15:55

**BC:** Morning shift. I can't stand no night work. **[Laughs]** I'm not a night person. But morning work; yes. I don't care how early it is—five o'clock in the morning I'm up.

00:16:10

**SW:** Now do you know—do you know when the Horseshoe opened?

00:16:13

**BC:** In 1969 I believe but it was down the street further. That was before I started working there. I think it was '69 and then I started working there in '70.

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**SW:** And what were you doing before that?

00:16:37

**BC:** Nothing.

00:16:40

**MW:** Housewife and raising kids probably.

00:16:41

**BC:** Yes.

00:16:43

**SW:** And were there any other people there, just memorable characters who came in, people that were—would come in besides School Boy every day and if they asked for their yock in a special way? I'm just looking for any other particular memories or stories of the Horseshoe.

00:16:56

**BC:** Well I had a lot of special customers. If I wasn't there they didn't come in or didn't—they'd come in but wouldn't order anything if I'm not there. Yeah; I had a lot of special customers. I miss the place, too.

00:17:10

**SW:** Um—

00:17:11

**BC:** But just about all the old customers is dead and gone on. Well we didn't entertain the young crowd, no way. Mostly it was adults aged—middle-aged people and elderly people and they were real nice. I had some nice customers, real nice customers.

00:17:31

**SW:** Can you tell me about any of them?

**00:17:36**

**BC:** My memory ain't that long. **[Laughs]** It's kind of short. And then I used to um, every morning at Suffolk Iron Works I used to have an order for them every morning. They called 9:30 in the morning and wanted the order by 10:30—10 o'clock. And I had to rush and rush and get their order together. But everybody enjoyed the food that came into eat. And on Sundays after church the place would be overcrowded. And especially—we had a special for each day. On Mondays we normally had neck bones; Tuesday pigs feet; Wednesday—well whatever we had; Thursday chicken pot-pie—chicken pot-pie was the special on Thursdays and Sundays. Friday was fish; that's the special. Of course we had the other menu to go along with it—fried chicken, pork chops, anything you wanted we had it.

**00:18:40**

**SW:** Was there ever a day that yock was the special or—?

**00:18:42**

**BC:** Well we sold that all the time.

**00:18:44**

**MW:** All the time.

**00:18:45**

**BC:** Every day. But of course—

00:18:49

**MW:** Lunch time, Planter's [Peanut factory], Bird Song Peanut [factory], Parker's Peanut [factory] —yeah.

**BC:** Cold Storage; uh-hm. And we sold black eyed peas, Navy beans; in the winter time we had the counter lined up with boxes and bowls of black eyed peas and Navy beans.

00:19:18

**SW:** Is—you said cold starch?

00:19:20

**BC:** Cold Storage.

00:19:21

**MW:** Separate Cold Storage.

00:19:24

**BC:** That was the produce place for peanuts and that's all they had—peanuts.

00:19:28

**SW:** Was—I've heard that this is the Peanut Capital.

00:19:31

**BC:** Planter's.



**00:19:32**

**MW:** Planter's Peanuts but they changed the name to Kraft Foods.

**00:19:36**

**BC:** Uh-hm.

**00:19:36**

**SW:** So were most of these factories peanut factories?

**00:19:38**

**MW:** Yes.

**00:19:39**

**BC:** Uh-hm.

**00:19:40**

**MW:** All within the same block of each other.

**00:19:42**

**BC:** And see Pond Brothers, Cold Storage, Gold Kiss, Parker Peanuts—

**00:19:51**

**MW:** All in the same—.

**00:19:52**

**BC:** Uh-hm.

**00:19:53**

**MW:** So you had factory workers who would just come during lunch break and after work to go to Horseshoe and sit and eat or take home.

**00:20:01**

**SW:** And were—so the customers were mostly all African American. Did you ever have people from the Chinese community come in, or white?

**00:20:10**

**BC:** We had the white folks but not Chinese. We had a lot of white customers.

**00:20:16**

**MW:** The white customer mainly came from downtown from the department stores downtown and the courthouses.

**00:20:24**

**SW:** Okay and I was asking—I was talking to you about Darrell Reid who helped me find some of these stories and he said when I asked him; I said do you know—because there are a lot of the Chinese restaurants and so I wondered if there were particular neighborhoods that—because we were talking back in the '20s [1920s] and '30s [1930s] where everything was very segregated.

I'm wondering if that—if you—were there Chinese communities around here or did you not really see anybody?

**00:20:50**

**MW:** You didn't see any of those. That—that didn't start really coming until in the '70s [1970s] or so. You know not—uh-um.

**00:20:58**

**SW:** And I have one more question. Darrell said that he—the first mention of yock that he had found in his research was in the '20s [1920s] in Suffolk here. And I'm wondering if either of you know anything about that—if you know how it started here or where it came from at all? I know everyone asks that question.

**00:21:19**

**MW:** Right; no I wasn't familiar with anything in the '20s [1920s]. You know I'm only familiar in the '70s [1970s].

**00:21:30**

**BC:** Not the '20s.

**00:21:32**

**MW:** Did he say where?

**00:21:34**

**SW:** No; he just said he found it in Suffolk in the '20s and that's the first time—that's the earliest mention he had seen of it. So I was just curious; that's why I was asking you if there was any prominent you know—if there were many Chinese people here at the time or if this is actually—. Because it's interesting; depending on who you ask everyone has a different theory on where it came from, and because of the tradition in the African American community and I'm trying to find the traditions in the Chinese community to find out. Do you have any idea where those two communities may intersect when it comes to yock in terms of the tradition, because I know it's sold in the restaurants—in the Chinese restaurants but I don't know if that's something that the Chinese eat at home as well.

**00:22:20**

**MW:** No; I don't know anything about that but you know one particular day we kind of ran out of the soy sauce, so I went down to the Chinese place [China Village on E. Washintgon Street] to get some soy sauce. And he [Tony, the owner] was saying that you know, "Yeah I heard about you all." And he said that, "You all sell more than we sell."

**00:22:42**

**SW:** And that was here in Suffolk?

**00:22:44**

**MW:** Uh-hm.

00:22:44

**SW:** What was the name of the place?

00:22:45

**MW:** What's the place across the track by the police station?

00:22:48

**BC:** Tony's [*Interview's note: The name of the restaurant is China Village. The owner's name is Tony*].

00:22:48

**MW:** Tony's; yeah.

00:22:49

**SW:** Is it still there?

00:22:50

**MW:** Uh-hm; it's still there, yeah.

00:22:52

**SW:** Okay; and so the noodles, where do you—I went to—I was at a factory on Florida Avenue in—

00:23:00

**MW:** In Norfolk.

00:23:00

**SW:** —in Norfolk.

00:23:00

**MW:** No; I get mine's from South Norfolk, Sun Noodle on—right on Poindexter. That's where we get ours from.

00:23:11

**SW:** And you use the lo-mein noodle?

00:23:12

**MW:** Uh-hm.

00:23:12

**SW:** Because in New Orleans they use spaghetti.

00:23:14

**MW:** Right; that is—when you do spaghetti unless you know the spaghetti, especially it is too thick. It's a difference and people can tell.

00:23:25

**BC:** Noodles—spaghetti.

00:23:29

**MW:** Yeah; the spaghetti it's a difference.

00:23:29

**BC:** But some people use sell yock and use the spaghetti noodles but they always can tell the difference the person that buys it—that purchases it.

00:23:39

**MW:** I had a gentleman tell me today that he had purchased some yock from somebody and he could tell that it wasn't the yock noodles. And he ended up throwing it away and said it tasted terrible. He just told me this today.

00:24:00

**SW:** I have one other question for you about that and then I want to ask you about the church fundraiser. When I was at Sing Wong yesterday there was a woman who came in, so I was talking to a woman named Patsy. She's third generation Chinese American and her—she runs the place with her husband. And there was an older woman who came in, African American and I was asking her—she said she used to live in Philadelphia. She said that in Philadelphia they used to put gravy on it. And then Patsy laughed and she said, "Sometimes people ask me to put gravy in my yock." And I'm wondering if either of you had ever heard of that.

00:24:28

**BC:** No; I haven't. No gravy in no yock, never. [*Scrunches her face up.*]

**00:24:34**

**SW:** That's the same expression that the woman—and she was like, “It was the worst yock I've ever had in my life,” but I was just curious if that kind of thing—

**00:24:40**

**MW:** Yeah; uh-hm, I never heard of that.

**00:24:41**

**BC:** But again some people just put the ketchup and then give you the little packs of soy sauce.

**00:24:49**

**SW:** But you mix up the ketchup and the soy together?

**00:24:51**

**MW:** Before we put—

**00:24:53**

**BC:** But it's not together.

**00:24:54**

**MW:** We don't mix it together.



**00:24:56**

**BC:** The ketchup is separate and the soy sauce is separate. But when you put it in the box and put all your ingredients in there then you put your soy sauce and your ketchup. And then the flavor goes through it.

**00:25:07**

**SW:** What is that flavor like? Can you describe it for someone who has never had it?

**00:25:13**

**BC:** Well you have to ask her 'cause I don't eat it.

**00:25:14**

**SW:** You don't eat yock?

**00:25:16**

**BC:** No, ma'am.

**00:25:17**

**SW:** You don't like it?

**00:25:18**

**BC:** I just eat too much of it. I'm messing with food all the time and certain foods that I do a lot I do not eat it. Now I can stand up here and work all day long and not eat amount for anything. Just like chicken, very seldom I eat a piece of chicken 'cause that's all we have for banquets.

**00:25:43**

**MW:** I'm trying to think what word to use for the sauce. It's—it's a unique taste. I can't even describe the taste, but it—it just tastes good with the right combination. You know because you know, you know how ketchup tastes. Soy sauce has a salty—when you combine salt and ketchup it's more like a little sugar and when you add those two together it's just a unique taste.

**00:26:19**

**BC:** Brings out the flavor.

**00:26:20**

**MW:** It's a good flavor mixed together. If you have too much soy sauce it's going to be too salty and you're not going to like it. If you have too much ketchup and not enough soy sauce it's the same effect, so you got to have that well-blended balance. So that's why when you're preparing it if you heat the ketchup and you heat the soy sauce separate and put it together that's that unique blend together.

**00:26:51**

**SW:** So the yock fund-raising—the yock was starting—you started to make yock at Tabernacle when you—you came here? Were you already a member of the congregation and then it was decided—?

**00:27:03**

**BC:** I was a member; before we moved from the old church, we used to be on the corner of 6<sup>th</sup> Street and East Washington right down the road here. And we've been here for seven years. It will be seven years in June.

**00:27:15**

**MW:** And we been doing yock for over twenty-five years.

**00:27:18**

**BC:** Sure are.

**00:27:20**

**MW:** Selling yock over twenty-five years, fundraisers.

**00:27:23**

**SW:** Can you go back and I know I sort of already asked you this but can you tell me how it started and what the reception was like to the yock fundraiser here at Tabernacle?

**00:27:30**

**BC:** It's always great.

**00:27:32**

**MW:** You know people has always been receptive to it because number one, she [Bernice] was down at the Horseshoe preparing it at the Horseshoe. So when we prepared it here that's what

boosted our profitability up for it because she was already experienced and they had already had it. So we just kind of opened it up, opened it up to the schools and other people. I'm going to give you a perfect example then. When I was working at Smithfield [Ham] and my boss, I had you know gotten about maybe fifty or sixty orders there. And he was—he was—came in the cafeteria and he said, "What are y'all eating? Yock?" He had never heard of it.

**00:28:15**

So I said, "Well you know you ought to try it. It's really good." I said, "The next time we sell it I'll make sure you get one." He said, "I'll buy one." So I think about a month later we sold it again. So I made sure—so I asked him, "Do you want chicken or pork?" So he told me chicken. So I took it to the office and he says, "This is some nasty looking stuff but it sure tastes good." And he had started buying ever since.

**00:28:42**

**SW:** Now this is—

**00:28:43**

**MW:** And he was from Texas. Yeah; I worked at Smithfield for thirty-three years.

**00:28:47**

**SW:** So was—I'm assuming, and this is just because of the reactions I got when I went in to order yock yesterday. Was he white?

**00:28:54**

**MW:** Who? Yes; yes, yes.

**00:28:56**

**SW:** Yeah; when I went in to order it yesterday they would say—they would wait for me—I think they were waiting for me to say—and I said, “I’ll have chicken yock,” and she looked up and she was like, “You eat yock?” And they were like, “Where are you from?” So that’s—so you know I don’t think it’s known outside of the African American community, which I think is interesting—.

**00:29:16**

**MW:** Not that—not that much.

**00:29:17**

**BC:** Not that much.

**00:29:18**

**MW:** But you know probably a percentage of African—I mean caucasian that was at Smithfield was about ten percent and of the ten percent probably eight percent bought from me.

**00:29:30**

**BC:** And there’s a few white people now that come when we do the yock—have the yock sales.

I had one call me the other day and he was from Baker’s Funeral Home.

00:29:42

**MW:** Yeah; yeah. Now when—

00:29:44

**BC:** Mr. Brinkley.

00:29:45

**MW:** Okay; now when—

00:29:48

**BC:** Excuse me.

00:29:47

**MW:** I'm sorry.

00:29:48

**BC:** And I had orders for the Commonwealth Attorney Office last Friday right?

00:29:53

**MW:** Last Friday; yeah.

00:29:54

**BC:** Uh-hm.

**00:29:55**

**MW:** And I was getting ready to say that when the lady from the newspaper, Miss Eaton [Lorraine Eaton of the Virginian-Pilot], when she wrote the article up the next month we sold oh my God; we had so many caucasian—excuse me—coming to purchase and calling. We had—that—right after that article we sold out before three o'clock. And we started at nine o'clock that morning and we sold completely out. I had one guy calling from the Eastern Shore. He was going to bring his cooler. He wanted fifteen boxes. So now when we have it we put it in the paper and we got standing numbers of caucasian that we have to call them and when they come they get five, ten at a time.

**00:30:52**

**SW:** Had that ever happened before the newspaper?

**00:30:54**

**MW:** No; no. We had a few here in Suffolk but not Portsmouth, Norfolk, Virginia Beach, Eastern Shore, oh my God.

**00:31:05**

**SW:** So can you tell me how the yock fundraiser works? Do you—you put it in the newspaper and then you said—for instance you said next Friday you're going to be doing one for the youth group?

**00:31:11**

**MW:** No for the Sunday school.

**00:31:14**

**SW:** For the Sunday school; so how does it work? Do you take orders beforehand? Can you tell me how that all works?

**00:31:18**

**MW:** Okay; we—we do a combination of both. We take orders and then—and then we put it in the newspaper, *The Suffolk News Herald*, and then we take orders and then from church you know our members get other people to do because we—we service John F. Kennedy School, the school—some of the schools in the City of Suffolk, Overseas Hospital, Commonwealth Office, you know so we—we pretty much got it kind of wrapped up in Suffolk.

**00:31:50**

**SW:** So what is a typical sale like? I mean how many boxes of yock do you usually make for—for a regular fundraiser?

**00:31:57**

**MW:** Anywhere from 200 to 300.

**00:32:01**

**SW:** And so you start at nine o'clock. What happens? How do you do that?

**00:32:05**

**MW:** So what we do is if we come in and start at nine o'clock we take all our big orders, like you know when we do the Planter's or Lipton Tea or the Smithfield, we try to get those orders on



Thursday night so when we come in on Friday morning we got all those orders already lined up to go out at a certain time, because when people have lunch at eleven o'clock and twelve o'clock we have to make sure those orders get there and get there on time, because like with Smithfield, if those people go to lunch at 12:30 and I get there at one o'clock they done missed their lunch. So we try to make sure we have all those orders. So sometime before ten o'clock in the morning we've already prepared 150 or 100.

**00:32:46**

**SW:** Wow; so how do you—how do you do that? Do you have—you must have an order down to this thing if you're making that much yock. What—do you each have your own responsibilities and what you—?

**00:32:56**

**MW:** Yeah; her and I kind of work closely together. She does all the cooking and I does—I do all the putting in and boxing them up and then somebody else delivers. So we kind of got it packed. You know the two of us can—can pretty much get it all done.

**00:33:13**

**BC:** And not only do I do yock for fundraisers here; I do it for the community and other churches.

**00:33:20**

**SW:** So would other churches have fundraisers and they would have you guys make it for them?

00:33:24

**BC:** Uh-hm.

00:33:26

**MW:** Her. I don't go—I don't go outside of Tabernacle to do the yock so if another church is going to have it they secure her and then they do it at their church. They don't do it here. Okay; now like when—when my daughters were in contests and—and—and you know 'cause I'm very competitive. I got to win at everything that I do and—and they was in the Sororities of Delta and all that I would have her do the fundraiser and you know make what \$2,000—\$1,500 off that and—and you know so—yeah.

00:34:06

**SW:** And how much do people buy? I mean if I wanted to buy a box—a box of yock from Tabernacle how much does it cost?

00:34:13

**MW:** Seven dollars a box and if you want it mixed or extra meat that will be eight dollars. Now you know back in the day and still right now with the Chinese they use those paper Chinese boxes. Well we have graduated from those boxes and we use plastic containers. And we do that because when you're at work you can't put those wire things in the microwave. If you want to heat your yock up you can heat it in the plastic containers. So we graduated from that and—and people love those containers better 'cause sometimes you can use them over again.

**00:34:49**

**SW:** Yeah; I noticed that. I'm not trying to—but last night they had the box and they put the two plastic bags around it and by—that's hot stuff and the bottom starts to disintegrate.

**00:34:58**

**MW:** And your—and all of your liquids, the stuff that you're supposed to like has dissipated all to the bottom. And sometimes those bags—I don't know whether those bags are clean. You're going to take the juice and put it back in your—your box—no; so that's why we've gone to the plastic containers, the two-quart containers.

**00:35:18**

**SW:** I have another question for you because when I started asking people around Norfolk and Portsmouth about yock I hadn't even—this is after I called you and I was really excited to talk to y'all here. But people when I said you know there's a church in Suffolk; it's called Tabernacle Christian and there are women there who make yock for the church fundraisers. And then people started saying, "Well yeah my church does that too and my church—we do that once in a while." I'm wondering, twenty-five years ago was this—this fundraiser here at Tabernacle was this one of the only yock fundraisers? Did this sort of set things in motion for that kind of—the fundraising?

**00:35:57**

**BC:** Yeah; yes because the other churches or organizations would get me to fix yock. And most of the time—and here recently some of them don't call me. And recently they're standing around and looking to see how I do my yock and then—then they start doing it for their self.

**00:36:19**

**MW:** Because I think they—they realize that the—the yock is not that hard to prepare and it—it would generate lots of funds for your organization. So everybody is trying to mimic that and it may not always taste the same, you know like I said—about that gentleman that said he bought some but it wasn't good. So but most of the people always come back here because they know the taste and the quality of it.

**00:36:47**

**BC:** And anywhere you stop up and down East Washington Street and you tell them—say, “Tabernacle is selling yock,” they'll buy it—if I'm fixing it. **[Laughs]**

**00:36:57**

**MW:** Right.

**00:36:57**

**BC:** That's the first thing they're going to ask, “Is Miss Florida doing it?”

**00:37:01**

**MW:** Usually when we do the yock sales you know we'll put the sign out to let people know passing by but here lately we have not even had time to put the signs up because you got so many standing customers and so because of that article, too, people coming in that you know we don't put the sign out because we want to make that. And usually it'll be one box we'll go

through and now we go through almost two boxes per event and they're fifty pound boxes of yock—noodles.

**00:37:30**

**BC:** Noodles, that doubles after it's cooked.

**00:37:35**

**SW:** So you know I imagine it's a good thing but is there a point where you're going to have to be like, "we can't possibly make that much yock if it keeps growing to be so big?" I mean do you ever think about that?

**00:37:44**

**MW:** Yes; we—

**00:37:45**

**BC:** We hadn't gotten there yet. **[Laughs]**

**00:37:46**

**MW:** —but when we do the fundraisers and we'll cut off at 2:30—3 o'clock because we sold out I mean we feel kind of disappointed because people come in and we don't have it.

**00:38:00**

**SW:** Do they line up for it?

**00:38:01**

**MW:** Yes; and when you walk through the fellowship hall when we sell it we have chairs so they can sit until because a lot of times you know like I said we try to get the orders that's already prepared. But then when you have people coming in, ten and fifteen at one time that want two here, three here, five here that's a lot and you know you want to make sure the customers don't wait a long time for it.

**00:38:24**

**SW:** And you both mentioned—you talked about the Sunday school fundraiser which is happening next Friday. And then you even mentioned when your daughters were in the sorority. What—can you tell me some of the other kinds of fundraisers like just as an example that you'd have a yock fundraiser for within the church or even outside?

**00:38:42**

**MW:** Yeah; as far as the church um, the youth department I was very—for twenty-five years I was the fundraiser for the youth department and we would sell yock and we would take the kids away for a whole week and you know nothing for us to raise \$20,000 and \$25,000 so the kids would not have to pay because a lot of times you know parents don't have the money to take their kids on a vacation. So our—our church was very instrumental on making sure the kids got out for entertainment, educational, religious, whatever. So when we took them on trips they didn't have to pay anything and they would be gone for a whole week. And they would go to recreation, they would go theme parks, they'd go to black universities and some of our kids has graduated from Bethune Cookman, A&T because we took them. We traveled and took them you know all those places. It would be the Sunday school. There would be the church itself. Like I'm

part of the pastor's aid ministry for us to raise funds for that group we'd sell yock, you know. So everybody wants to put their little data in because we try not to do it especially in the summer because it's hot and it's—it's tedious or whatever. But we start maybe in September and work our way all the way up until May—May, June. So July and August we try not to do too much then.

**00:40:09**

But, other than that, just about every month or every two weeks or so, we're selling yock.

**00:40:16**

**SW:** And I know that you guys have said so much about this but—and you talked about how the newspaper article sort of you know there's people from the Eastern Shore calling you. Is—are most of the—the orders from within the community though would you say or has that changed since more publicity's happened?

**00:40:34**

**MW:** It's changed because you know in—and I used to do Portsmouth because like I said I used to work at Smithfield, so it wasn't nothing for me to get anywhere from forty to sixty-five boxes to take there. But since that article people are you know just you know it's opened up to different localities you know for it, so—.

**00:40:56**

**SW:** And I was just thinking of something just from what you were saying about you know your boss having it at—your boss at Smithfield having it for the first time. How do you think, you know you've been making this for such a long time and you've seen things change, I'm

wondering in terms of the tradition of yock if seeing all these new different communities like having you know when you have a yock fundraiser you're seeing more white people show up, I'm wondering how does—does that change anything for you about the—the tradition of yock when you see people from outside the community come in and they're all interested in it? Like what—do you think about that at all?

**00:41:34**

**MW:** Yeah; I think that you know it's the culture and everything is changing so I think people just like good food and when you have good food whether it's African American, Chinese, Italian, or whatever it's—if it's good people want to try it. And if they try it and they like it then they're going to be susceptible to purchase it more.

**00:41:59**

**SW:** Mmhmm; and I'm also wondering do you get a lot of people asking you like I'm asking you all these questions about it right now but are you getting more people since you're having different customers and more—in bigger numbers come and order the yock from the fundraiser do you—are you starting to get more questions about it, like “what is this and where did it come from?”

**00:42:17**

**MW:** Yeah; they ask the question and then of course they want the recipe, you know and then when they want the recipe they want the recipe so they can utilize it to make a profit too. And I guess that's anything that you do really.



00:42:34

**SW:** So do you give the recipe out?

00:42:36

**MW:** We try not to.

00:42:37

**BC:** I don't. **[Laughs]**

00:42:40

**MW:** But she don't give it out, but with me, you know I just say—I'll say, you know, what you need to prepare it. Now but you got to make sure that you kind of equal it out to get that taste, that flavor like I said. So you know—but it's—it's—I don't have a problem with it but you know just her expertise. I know how to prepare it and I prepare it pretty much like her because I'm there all the time to see it.

00:43:16

**BC:** That's what happened while you're doing it for somebody else. **[Laughs]** They—they try to get your menu too.

00:43:22

**MW:** Yeah; they do.

00:43:22

**BC:** Recipes.

**00:43:23**

**MW:** And you know like my—when people ask me about crab casserole, I mean because I’m pretty good at that and I don’t have a problem giving them the recipe because I know nine times out of ten they’re not going to prepare it exactly like I do it. You know ‘cause a girl told me, “I did it just like you said but it didn’t taste like yours.” It’s the same thing with—with yock and any other thing.

**00:43:49**

**SW:** And kind of like along the lines of that do you think that there—I mean there is a difference because people come back for this particular yock because it’s made in your style—like this is your signature on it.

**00:44:01**

**BC:** Uh-hm.

**00:44:01**

**SW:** Is there a difference when people make it at home do you think between the yock that’s made at the church here and the yock at home, like do people mix up the variations and do they talk about like when they come pick up their yock do they say, “Oh I make mine at home sometimes and I have to try this,” like do you get people talking about the different ways that they make it at home?

00:44:18

**MW:** Yes; and like I said, you tell them and they said, “Well I made it at home and it didn’t taste like this. You sure you didn’t leave something out?” No; I didn’t leave it out. I think what they try to do is take the ketchup and the soy sauce and pour it instead of heating it up you know and stuff like that. So yeah; they—they do—do that.

00:44:43

**SW:** Is—is yock like because the fundraisers don’t happen every week; you know they happen when they happen—is yock kind of considered like a special dish like for a special occasion here or is it—could it—is it—? *[Both women shake their heads no.]* No?

00:44:58

**MW:** Uh-hm.

00:45:00

**SW:** Just curious.

00:45:00

**MW:** Yeah; it’s just whenever they want to—to make you know get the funds to do what they need to do.

00:45:08

**SW:** And oh Miss Cofield, I wanted to ask you about this because when I read Miss Eaton’s newspaper article it’s I think she said you are known as “the yock lady.” Is that true?

00:45:19

**BC:** Yes, ma'am; the yock lady.

00:45:22

**SW:** Can you talk about how did you get that name? Who gave it to you?

00:45:25

**BC:** Because everybody know I make yock. They see me on the street somewhere and, “That’s the yock lady.” **[Laughs]**

00:45:32

**MW:** And she did it so long that—she did it so long at the Horseshoe.

00:45:34

**BC:** Been doing it for years.

00:45:35

**MW:** Yeah; she did it so long at the Horseshoe and you know and—and they affiliate her with that. And when they come they’re going to look in the kitchen to make sure she’s here. **[Laughs]** Yeah; yeah you know ‘cause like I said you have other people who—who makes it but it’s not the same quality and it’s not the same taste.

00:46:02

**SW:** And so you don’t eat it. You’re very clear about that earlier but do you make it—

00:46:07

**MW:** I do.

00:46:07

**SW:** You do?

00:46:07

**MW:** I eat it and I make it at home. I eat hers you know.

00:46:12

**SW:** How do you fix it at home?

00:46:13

**MW:** The same way she fixes it here. **[Laughs]** The exact same way she fixes it here.

00:46:19

**SW:** Do you like—you like yours with shrimp you said?

00:46:20

**MW:** Yeah; yeah. I do shrimp. I do chicken. I do pork. I mean I do all of it but I'm—you know I'm a—you know I'm a shrimp person. I'm a seafood person and like when I go to the Chinese restaurant I don't buy anything I can't identify. So I—most of the time if I get stuff at the Chinese I get shrimp 'cause I can identify that.

**00:46:43**

**SW:** Do y'all ever put—I saw that—I think Sing Wong had sausage and you could get it with sausage or maybe it was Mama Chans. Somebody—no? I just—

**00:46:52**

**MW:** Uh-um.

**00:46:53**

**SW:** But that was the only time I had ever heard of sausage.

**00:46:54**

**MW:** Uh-hm; I never heard of sausage.

**00:46:56**

**BC:** We do chicken, pork, and beef, and shrimp.

**00:47:00**

**MW:** Back in the day shrimp was too high so the Horseshoe probably didn't buy shrimp, but I buy shrimp and I put shrimp in mine's. And I don't eat—I used to eat back in the day at Mama Chan but uh-hm. The last few times I ate there I got sick, so uh-um.

**00:47:22**

**SW:** I just have a couple quick more questions is that okay with you guys?

00:47:27

**MW:** Yeah.

00:47:29

**SW:** Oh okay; all right. I wanted to know you know I was driving down—I'm not from this area and it seemed like that you could tell it's like very—just driving downtown on Washington that there are still a lot of factories. There's trains and—but a lot of the buildings, like the Horseshoe is closed. It seemed like you know it's—there are all these old beautiful buildings but they're all closed. And as a person from the outside just driving by that's what it looks like, but I'm wondering what Suffolk is like now and how it's changed at all. I mean is it a town where you just see boarded up buildings or is—what's going on in there you know because I think that there's a perception of it but people from outside don't really know what it's like. And just to see the Horseshoe empty I wonder what—what still remains from those days when the Horseshoe was still opened or what Suffolk is like from that time to what Suffolk is like today.

00:48:25

**MW:** Uh-hm, okay; now East Washington Street where the Horseshoe is those buildings they have renovated a lot of those old buildings you know back in 1915, 1920. They renovated those buildings and they're trying to—to get it back to the course because as you seen as you was coming in you saw probably Social Service, those buildings and apartments. And so they're trying to make that back active and trying to preserve all the old buildings and the old fair grounds. That's what they used to call that area the old fair grounds.

**00:49:06**

So you had the pool hall and you have all these barber shops along with the Horseshoe.  
Now I don't know who—and the drugstore—

**00:49:16**

**BC:** The first black drugstore.

**00:49:17**

**MW:** —the first black drugstore is now a church. So they're trying to keep—preserve that area and keep that area you know going you know keep the area up. But by the main restaurant that was the main black restaurant in Suffolk and everybody went there. You know especially African Americans you know so they're trying to—to get the old fairgrounds back intact so it can be more alive, 'cause as—as you see further down you got a lot of buildings that they got little bar and grill and they—they're opening up some things in Suffolk. So that's what they're trying to do there, revitalize that back.

**00:50:03**

**SW:** And two quick questions with that; what was the name of the first black pharmacy?

**00:50:08**

**MW:** Richardson, right?

**00:50:10**

**BC:** Uh-hm; Dr. Richardson.



00:50:14

**MW:** Suffolk Pharmacy. You know I'm—it's been—

00:50:21

**BC:** Where the drugstore closed before the Horseshoe did.

00:50:24

**MW:** Right, I know it did but I'm trying to think of the actual name.

00:50:27

**BC:** Me, too.

00:50:30

**MW:** You know I was about fifteen, fourteen years old.

00:50:33

**BC:** And the old building there on the left-hand side, the bank, the first black bank.

00:50:38

**MW:** The first black bank and then the first black movie, but they—they renovated those buildings and—and they preserved it.

00:50:46

**BC:** A museum, all black community but they haven't done that yet.

00:50:51

**MW:** But they have—they have done those buildings over and they're just standing there. They haven't put anything in there. You can go in and—and look and things like that but I can't—I can't think of that pharmacy. I was like thirteen, fourteen years old; it's going to bug me. Okay but go ahead with your other question now.

00:51:08

**SW:** Do you know why they called the area the old fairgrounds?

00:51:12

**MW:** No; I don't know why they call it the fairground.

00:51:18

**SW:** And I'm wondering—this is my last question for y'all. I wonder how it feels to be the women that people go to for the yock? You are the people that people want to buy yock from. They want your yock. How does that feel? I mean you've been doing this for a long time Miss Cofield and how does that make you feel that you're the one they go to?

00:51:45

**BC:** Well, it— *[Thinks about it for a little while.]*

00:51:51

**MW:** While she's thinking let me do it. It makes me feel really good for the simple fact that people are coming back because they like the taste of something that we produce. And we can profit from it. We can make money for our organization so that's how it makes me feel. You

know when somebody wants something from you I mean if—if they didn't want it, if they tasted it and didn't like it then you wouldn't be able to do anything. So it makes us feel good that people are exposing us because it can be more profit for us in the long run.

**00:52:32**

**BC:** Uh-hm. That was enough.

**00:52:39**

**MW:** And then also you know back then you know over twenty-some years ago—I'm sorry over twenty-some years we—we started out and we were making like \$500 and we're in the thousands of dollars making yock, you know \$3,000—\$2,000. You know that's—that's good for—for less than eight hours worth of work.

**00:52:57**

**SW:** Are there any other fundraisers in the church? I mean is this the best fundraiser that you—?

**00:53:01**

**BC:** Yes, ma'am; the one and only.

**00:53:04**

**MW:** This is best but I'll also do another fundraiser that's really, really good and I do it for my sorority and whatever and that's with Home Interior Candles. You know basically we sell candles for \$10 and we make a \$5 profit. So I—I sold eighteen—I sold \$4,000 worth and made \$2,000 profit.

00:53:27

**SW:** And that's—was that for the church?

00:53:29

**MW:** Uh-hm, the church, my sorority and then now you know I'm a grandparent so I'm the President of the PTA so you know we sell candles and stuff for that too, so—. But I'm trying to get them to do a yock sale but they do yock—but it's not—I tasted it and it's not like ours so I don't really want to, you know, get into anybody's turf, you know. So I told her, I said, “When—when we do some on Friday I'm going to make sure I bring you one so you can taste it so you can compare what your person does and what we do.” So next Friday I will be taking her that.

00:54:06

**SW:** Is there anything else that either one of you want to add about yock or this church or anything that I might have missed that you think is really important for people to know about this tradition?

00:54:17

**MW:** No pretty much—

00:54:17

**BC:** A great church.

**00:54:18**

**MW:** Yeah; this is a great church. Basically I think we pretty much covered you know everything as far as fundraisers, the—you know how we got started and how we have an original person from the Horseshoe who started it.

**00:54:35**

**SW:** Outside Miss Lambert and yourself did anyone else make yock at the Horseshoe?

**00:54:40**

**BC:** Oh yes—

**00:54:43**

**MW:** One other person, Terrance, right?

**00:54:44**

**BC:** Terrance yeah; but he's passed.

**00:54:48**

**MW:** He was really good at it, too because when she wasn't there the—those two must work side-by-side because basically he—you know everybody went to him, too. It's both of them. You know they was really you know good about producing the yock. It was really good.

**00:55:03**

**SW:** And what's Terrance's—?

**00:55:05**

**MW:** Terrance Britt—B-r-i-t-t. As a matter of fact some of his parents and aunts and things go to this church but yeah uh-hm.

**00:55:13**

**SW:** Did he ever help with the fundraiser here?

**00:55:17**

**MW:** No, not here; he only produces it on his job at the Horseshoe 'cause he worked at the Horseshoe.

**00:55:21**

**BC:** He did outside fundraisers, too.

**00:55:24**

**MW:** Oh he did, okay see pretty much he did just like she did. You know whenever anybody asked him to do yock for fundraisers he did his side and she did her side.

**00:55:38**

**SW:** So people can choose. And I just wanted—how did the two of you first meet? Was it through the church?

**00:55:46**

**MW:** Through the church; uh-hm, yeah.

**00:55:48**

**SW:** Were you both—I mean were you working in the kitchen at the time as the kitchen manager or how did—?

**00:55:55**

**MW:** No; I wasn't. We was in—we didn't—we didn't do a whole bunch of banquets back in the day when I first started. I started back at the church almost thirty-eight years ago and I met her through the Parental Club working with the youth so that's how we got together.

**00:56:14**

**SW:** And then I mean were you still working at Smithfield when you came to work here, when you became kitchen manager?

**00:56:21**

**MW:** Oh yeah; I been at Smithfield for thirty-three years and—

**00:56:23**

**SW:** You're still there now?

**00:56:25**

**MW:** No; they shut down their plant that I worked at in Portsmouth and that was nine months ago, so I haven't worked in nine months.

**00:56:33**

**SW:** Was that when they sold to the—?

**00:56:35**

**MW:** No; that's when they—they built the top of the line facility in Kingston, North Carolina and I didn't transfer with them and I didn't stay on with the company. Thirty three years was enough. I was like a shipping manager, plus I acquired my BS degree in food and nutrition from Norfolk State, so—.

**00:56:55**

**SW:** Oh wow. Well I don't have any other questions and I've taken a lot of your time and it's your [Mary Whitley] husband's birthday today. So I really appreciate you doing this. Thank you very, very much.

**00:57:03**

**MW:** Okay; you're welcome.

**00:57:06**

**[End Bernice Cofield & Mary Whitley Interview]**