

**EMMA LOCKLEAR**  
**Lumbee Fish Market – Pembroke, NC**

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Location: Lumbee Fish Market, Pembroke, NC

Interviewer: Sara Wood

Transcription: Shelley Chance, ProDocs

Length: Eighteen minutes

Project: Work and Cook and Eat: Lumbee Foodways of Robeson County, NC

**[Begin Emma Locklear Interview]**

**00:00:01**

**Sara Wood:** So it's Tuesday, July 29, 2014. This is Sara Wood with the Southern Foodways Alliance. I'm sitting here at Lumbee Fish Market and I'm here with Ms. Locklear. And would you be so kind as to introduce yourself and tell me your name and where we are right now?

**00:00:19**

**Emma Locklear:** Yeah, my name is Emma Locklear. I'm at Lumbee Fish Market and we're located in Pembroke off of Prospect Road.

**00:00:26**

**SW:** And could you tell me your birth date for the record Ms. Locklear?

**00:00:27**

**EL:** August 6, 1978.

**00:00:30**

**SW:** And could you tell me a little bit about where you grew up and what it was like there?

**00:00:33**

**EL:** Yeah, I grew up in Robeson County off of Deep Branch Road, which is now on River Ridge Road. I enjoyed it. I just thank God I was born in Robeson County.

**00:00:43**

**SW:** What was it like there?

**00:00:44**

**EL:** Awesome, it was just—it's just awesome. It was plenty to do and right now it ain't really nothing you can get into to do but when I grew up my grandma and granddaddy raised me. They raised me right. I just loved my life—childhood.

**00:00:57**

**SW:** What were your grandparents' names?

**00:00:59**

**EL:** Roosevelt Jones and Minnie Jane Jones.

**00:01:03**

**SW:** And what did they do for a living?

**00:01:04**

**EL:** My granddaddy was unemployed 'cause he got hurt in an accident but my grandma, she worked at Converse. She was one of the ones that went into Converse when they first opened.

**00:01:14**

**SW:** How long did she work at Converse for?

00:01:16

**EL:** She retired from Converse. She pulled almost thirty years and retired.

00:01:20

**SW:** She left before it closed down?

00:01:23

**EL:** Right, she was out of there about two years before they closed.

00:01:26

**SW:** And can you tell me a little bit about where you went to school and how you got involved in this business, the Lumbee Fish Market?

00:01:32

**EL:** Yeah, I went to school and I started out of school at Deep Branch and moved from there and went to Pembroke Middle and moved from here and went to Purnell Swift High School. My—how I come into this business, one of my aunts owned the Lowery Seafood in Lumberton. My uncle, he passed away which was D.W. Lowery, when he passed away my—one of my other uncles, Uncle Joseph Jones, which is my grandmama's son, he was there helping. Him and my Uncle Matthew Jones—went and helped her out at the fish market and then when she sold her business they come to Pembroke and opened Lumbee Fish Market.

00:02:08

**SW:** And what year did the—the first market open?

**00:02:10**

**EL:** Oh my gracious it was opened way before I was borned, way before I was borned.

**00:02:16**

**SW:** And can you—from—from what you know do you know what kind of fish they sold there and how they got it? Did they go out and—?

**00:02:22**

**EL:** No, they didn't go out and get it. They had Atlantic Seafood, which is my seafood carrier right now, they used the same company. They come out of Wilmington. It's a seafood house in Wilmington, well, fish house in Wilmington. They got their own boats. They go out and they catch the fish and they bring it in. But then when fresh spot season comes in our spots ain't running here yet so we're getting spots from Virginia and we're getting croakers from Virginia. Some of our fresh fish comes out of Virginia.

**00:02:48**

**SW:** So the spots are they—the spots are known around here.

**00:02:52**

**EL:** Yes, that—that's a well-known fish around here. That's people's favorite fish is a croaker or a spot but particularly people love spots.

**00:03:02**

**SW:** And can you tell me a little bit about like what it tastes like and what the texture like—for someone who hasn't had it before?

**00:03:07**

**EL:** Okay, the—when they first start running they're sort of on the smaller side. They taste about like butter. They just real good and they don't have no strong fishy taste. And—and the bigger they get it's like they get a little sweet to them.

**00:03:22**

**SW:** And are the croaker known around here or is it more the spot?

**00:03:26**

**EL:** No, it's croaker and the spot—croaker, I mean when spot season might end people eat croaker. But when the spot season is going running it's like a few people still get the croaker but not as like the spots.

**00:03:39**

**SW:** And what are the—what do the croaker taste like?

**00:03:42**

**EL:** Croaker they have a little stronger taste. They sort of got like a taste like a spot but not like a spot. If you didn't know what you was eating you wouldn't know the difference really. If—if it's the first time person eating the fish they wouldn't know the difference.

**00:03:56**

**SW:** And Ms. Locklear you talked about the—the season. Can you tell me what the season for the spot are and what are the seasons for the croaker?

**00:04:03**

**EL:** Uh-hm, the season for the spot is really like the middle of June and they run all the way to um, Thanksgiving, maybe the week after Thanksgiving. That's it, they're—that spot season will be over. You might have some spots but they'll be frozen. They will not be fresh. Croaker you can pretty much get a fresh croaker all year long.

**00:04:24**

**SW:** And what year did the Lumbee Fish Market open?

**00:04:27**

**EL:** Lumbee Fish Market opened in the year of 2007.

**00:04:31**

**SW:** And so why did they decide to open this market do you know?

**00:04:34**

**EL:** Well when they—when they come from Lowery's Seafood like I said, my aunt decided that she was going to sell the business and that's what them boys knew to do, so they got up with Mr.

Raymond Cummings here in Pembroke and got this building—building here set up for Lumbee Fish Market.

**00:04:51**

**SW:** Do you know what the building was before the fish market?

**00:04:52**

**EL:** It was a bait and tackle shop. It was actually a bait and tackle shop.

**00:04:58**

**SW:** Now Ms. Locklear can you for people who aren't familiar with this part of town and the fishing, I mean the—I've seen some bait and tackle shops around. Is there a lot of fishing around here? There're the rivers, I'm just wondering what the culture is like.

**00:05:10**

**EL:** Yeah, a lot of people do fishing and a lot of people go to the rivers and fish or they'll go to the beach and fish. But people only go to the rivers and fish, a lot of people bring fish in and we clean them. We clean them a \$1 a pound. We clean fish that people go to the beach and catch and they'll bring it back and we'll clean them. Yeah a lot of people do a lot of fishing.

**00:05:26**

**SW:** So you use Atlantic Seafood but you also have people come in—?



**00:05:30**

**EL:** Yeah, people will come in and let me clean them. I won't buy them from them. I only can buy from a licensed fisherman. I won't buy the fish but I'll clean them for them.

**00:05:39**

**SW:** Do you know if there's any history of you know you talked about Atlantic Seafood but was there any history of buying fish from people locally at all in either location?

**00:05:48**

**EL:** At one point in time there was but you know every time something changes, new rules and regulations, health food issues, 'cause you got to have health food license, you got to have a license and stuff in case people get sick off of it. When those issues come along and they give you more guidelines and more rules and regulations you had—you had to be a licensed fisherman.

**00:06:08**

**SW:** Do people still do a lot of fish runs here or like they would do fish runs? Do you know—?

**00:06:15**

**EL:** Fish runs?

**00:06:16**

**SW:** Yeah, I heard the term fish runs.

00:06:19

**EL:** I'm not quite understanding what a fish run is.

00:06:22

**SW:** I think it's when—that's why I wanted to ask you that people would go like out down to the beach or to the rivers and spend days fishing and then bring it back.

00:06:33

**EL:** Yeah, a lot of people do that especially like I say when them croaker, a couple months before the spots go to running the big croakers will be coming into Virginia. A lot of them go to Chesapeake Bay, yes, a lot of people go—they bring them by the coolers for us. They sit and—they take their vacation during that time where they can just go get them big croakers.

00:06:54

**SW:** And who are your customers here? Can you talk about the different array of customers? You have some restaurants and people—local people just coming in?

00:07:01

**EL:** Well I have local people that comes in so I've got people that's in South Carolina, people that's in Red Springs, people at Maxton and some people live in Fairmont. I have people come all the way from Fayetteville, I do restaurants. I do local restaurants. If they're local here in Pembroke, we deliver them to them but if they're like in Lumberton like Fuller's [*BBQ*] I've delivered to Fuller's before. We used to do Jimmy's Seafood when they was up in business. We

delivered to them. We have some more restaurants that's coming up now that's locally and they're talking about buying fish so that's a new prospect.

**00:07:35**

**SW:** And you sometimes supply to Miss Callie [*Locklear of Callie's Convenience Store*] you said.

**00:07:37**

**EL:** I do, I supply Miss Callie sometimes and Miss Callie gets them—the majority on Fridays. A lot of the rules of the restaurants—do them on Fridays.

**00:07:45**

**SW:** Ms. Locklear did you grow up with predominantly—I mean you know this business is such a large part of your family but I'm wondering at home when y'all ate did you eat a lot of fish? I mean was it a big part of it?

**00:07:54**

**EL:** Yes, fish was a big part of my family. We had certain days that we would eat fish, yes, ma'am. And spots was the fish that would be on the table.

**00:08:04**

**SW:** And how was that prepared?

**00:08:05**

**EL:** Well you can—the way that we do it, we batter them up in the seafood and put seafood batter. We put Old Bay seasoning on the fish and put a little bit of salt and pepper and batter it up in your Old Bay seasoning and put them on a skillet and fry them ‘til they get a pretty good golden brown. Some—some of them like them a little hard, some of them like them a little soft, but that’s the way we do it.

**00:08:25**

**SW:** Do you know of other ways that people prepare fish when they come buy it from you, some of the different ways?

**EL:** I’ve heard over them several different ways. I’ve asked the question, some of them bake it, some of them broil it, some of them want the head off but left whole so they can stuff different things inside the fish. Some of them marinate their fish, there’s different ways—people like it different ways. Different cultures like it different ways, put it like that.

**00:08:49**

**SW:** When you—since this project revolves a lot about restaurants in Robeson County and stores focusing on Lumbee foodways is the—the first way that you mentioned about frying it up in Old Bay and—and seafood batter is that a—part of a Lumbee tradition?

**00:09:04**

**EL:** Um, pretty much that’s pretty much an Indian style. That’s pretty much the way they would normally do it. Some—one of my cousins, he likes to take his fish and gut it and leave it. Leave

it whole and leave the head on it and he takes his and puts his by the pit and let the pit-fire cook it, leave the juices and everything in it and leave the scales on it and everything and just open it up and let the fire cook it.

**00:09:28**

**SW:** That sounds delicious.

**00:09:30**

**EL:** That's pretty much.

**00:09:30**

**SW:** Is there a lot of people around here that still salt fish or cure fish around here that you know of?

**00:09:35**

**EL:** Well right now I think I'm the only here in Pembroke. I know there's two in Lumberton. I think there's one in Fairmont just closed down. They opened one recently in Maxton and it's been a couple months. But pretty much that's pretty much all I know around here.

**00:09:53**

**SW:** So you cure fish here for people? Do you cure fish here?

**00:09:57**

**EL:** Do I cure it?

00:09:57

**SW:** Yeah, like salt it?

00:09:58

**EL:** No, I don't do no salted or nothing. What I do I will clean their fish how they want it, scale it, cut the fins off how they want it. When they leaves out that door it's ready to be put into some batter and fry it, bake it, however they cook it.

00:10:13

**SW:** Now Ms. Locklear were you helping the family work when Lowery Seafood was still open?

00:10:18

**EL:** No, I was young when Lowery Seafood was—well when it was run by our family I was young then. I wasn't helping then.

00:10:24

**SW:** How did you get involved in the business?

00:10:25

**EL:** Well, how I got involved in this business, one of my—well like I say, my two uncles opened this business. One of them was actually the pastor [*Matthew Jones*], he was doing other things outside the business. One that was running the seafood business which was a Joseph

Jones, he become sick and it had—he had to take him away from the business. Then my other uncle had to step up and take it. It was taking him away from his ministry doing what God wanted him to do. He was getting ready to close the business. I decided to come take over the business to keep it in the family.

**00:10:58**

**SW:** Why was that important to you?

**00:10:59**

**EL:** Family is important to me. I love my family and I want to make sure you know that my family was took care of. And it's something that you can just send down to generation to generation. If we keep it going and keep doing what we're doing it's—it's a generation thing. I got children. My uncles has got sons that's coming up. It's—that way we can just pass it down.

**00:11:24**

**SW:** How many children do you have?

**00:11:25**

**EL:** I have three daughters.

**00:11:27**

**SW:** How old are they?

**00:11:28**

**EL:** I have one is nineteen, seventeen, and fourteen.

**00:11:33**

**SW:** Oh my goodness. What are their names?

**00:11:34**

**EL:** My oldest is named Emily Faith Locklear, my second oldest is Cindy Lee Locklear, and my third oldest is Minnie Jane Locklear.

**00:11:41**

**SW:** Do they help you out with the business here?

**00:11:43**

**EL:** My oldest one wants to, but I tell her no because I want her to keep her mind in school. She just graduated and getting ready to go to college. So I tell her no.

**00:11:50**

**SW:** Where is she going to go to school?

**00:11:54**

**EL:** She's going to go start out at Bladen Community College.

**00:11:57**

**SW:** And what were you doing at the time you decided to take the—?



00:12:01

**EL:** I was working for the department of corrections.

00:12:04

**SW:** And can you—I know you told me a little bit about that before I turned the tape on. Can you tell me when you started and what you do there?

00:12:08

**EL:** Yeah, I started in for the department of corrections in March 28, 2005 and I'm currently a correctional officer.

00:12:16

**SW:** So what do you do there?

00:12:16

**EL:** I just make sure the inmates are doing what they're supposed to do and make sure that I do what I'm supposed to do. I listen to my lieutenants, my captains, whatever I'm ordered to do that's what I do.

00:12:28

**SW:** What is it like to split your time between there and the business?

**00:12:31**

**EL:** Um, sometimes it gets hectic but it's something that I feel like I need to do, so I'm going to continue to do it. Long as God gives me strength for my body and keeps me healthy—I'm going to continue to do it.

**00:12:43**

**SW:** And Ms. Locklear I just have two more questions for you if that's okay. You mentioned that your—one of your uncles was a pastor [*Matthew Jones*]. Where was he a pastor? What church?

**00:12:52**

**EL:** He pastors Freedom Assembly in Red Springs.

**00:12:55**

**SW:** And I also wanted to know you talked about you're keeping this in the family. Are most of the people who work here, are they part of the family? Is it all in the family?

**00:13:02**

**EL:** It's—it's a family owned business. It's a family run business, yes, ma'am.

**00:13:07**

**SW:** How many people—how many employees are there altogether?

**00:13:10**

**EL:** Well including me four and then if I need my uncles they'll step in, if like we get a rush order and I got a bunch that I got to get out for like restaurants they all pick up at one time I'll call them and they will come in.

**00:13:22**

**SW:** What is your favorite part of having this business?

**00:13:26**

**EL:** Hmm, I get to work with my mom and I get to see my mom every day. That's—that's the favorite part about it.

**00:13:32**

**SW:** What's your mama's name?

**00:13:33**

**EL:** Nancy Locklear.

**00:13:35**

**SW:** How long has she been working here?

**00:13:38**

**EL:** She come to be with me March of this year.

00:13:42

**SW:** That must be really nice to work with her.

00:13:43

**EL:** Yeah, it is. It is nice, it's nice to work with her and at least I get to see her every day. Some people don't get to see their mama every day. I get to see mine every day.

00:13:50

**SW:** And what is your least favorite part of having this business?

00:13:53

**EL:** Oh good lord, frustration. Not so much as frustration it's just you have so much you have to keep in your mind to do. You have so much you have to keep up with. That's—that's pretty much it.

00:14:07

**SW:** And you talked a little bit about wanting to keep this in the family. What is—what does the future of this business look like to you?

00:14:13

**EL:** Um, the future of this business what it looks like to me what I want to do, I want to expand. I want to get another one. They're talking about Red Springs don't have one. Right now I'm getting all the Red Springs business. The people likes fish. I'd like to have another fish market, that's what I'm looking forward to.

**00:14:32**

**SW:** What's the busiest time of year for y'all here?

**00:14:36**

**EL:** The busiest time of year is from August all the way slap up to like I said the end of—end of November 'cause spots go to running. So a lot of—that's a lot of business—the busiest season for my spots but from then—from December all the way up 'til June something like that I'll be busy with gas.

**00:14:57**

**SW:** And I'm—I'm just wondering one more thing. You mentioned a lot about the croaker and the spots. What else all do you have here? You can talk about the other stuff?

**00:15:06**

**EL:** Yeah, I sell—I sells brim, perch when they're in season, I sell mullet, I sell flounder, crab legs, frog legs, alligator meat, I sell catfish, just different things. If you want to get it out of the ocean and if you want it out of the ocean I can order it. Some things has to be pre-ordered. A lot of things I don't carry here in the store but if you would like things out of the ocean I can pretty much get it.

**00:15:31**

**SW:** Is there anything else you want to add that you think is important for people to know about this business Ms. Locklear?

**00:15:39**

Anything I wouldn't know to ask?

**00:15:45**

**EL:** Well no, uh-um. No, not really, not really.

**00:15:47**

**SW:** Do you get a lot of traffic in this location here with everyone going up and down Prospect Road?

**00:15:52**

**EL:** Yeah, there's actually a lot of traffic coming through here. They're like I said this is the last store and actually the last place that you can stop before you get out of Pembroke going towards Prospect, so actually I think it's in a good location.

**00:16:05**

**SW:** And for people who don't know—who aren't familiar with the town can you talk about how Pembroke and Prospect are kind of like how—what some of their differences are in terms of—? Are they different?

**00:16:17**

**EL:** Well only—the only difference I see because a lot of people who live in Pembroke are connected with the people who live in Prospect, the only difference is Prospect really don't have a lot of stores. They don't have restaurants. So people have to come out of Prospect and come into Pembroke. That's really only the difference that I see because like I say it's a community thing. You got people who live in Pembroke that's connected to people in Prospect and people in that's connected in Prospect is connected to people in Pembroke. So really the only difference is the stores.

**00:16:46**

**SW:** What do you think your uncles think of—of what you're doing now? How—like what would they say to you if they could see you now?

**00:16:54**

**EL:** Well one of my uncles that's a pastor like I say, sometimes I have to call on him and he says, "Well you're doing a good job," and this and that and the other. And he said, "And if you ever want to sell it I'll be more than interested to get it back." But and my uncle that's sick, he will come in sometimes and he'll—he'll say, "Okay, you need to be doing this or you need to be doing that," 'cause they have been in it longer than me. But overall I'm—I'm trying my best to run it so we can keep it in the family.

**00:17:20**

**SW:** Ms. Locklear I really want to thank you for your time this afternoon. I appreciate it.

**00:17:24**

**EL:** You're welcome ma'am.

**00:17:26**

**[End Emma Locklear Interview]**