

**ERIC LOCKLEAR**  
**Fuller's Old Fashion BBQ – Lumberton, NC**

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Interviewer: Sara Wood

Transcription: Shelley Chance, ProDocs

Length: Fifty-three minutes

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

**[Begin Eric Locklear Interview]**

**00:00:05**

**SW:** This is Sara Wood with the Southern Foodways Alliance. It's Tuesday, July 22, 2014. I'm sitting here with Mr. Eric Locklear of Fuller's Barbecue. We're here in Lumberton, North Carolina. And Mr. Locklear I'm wondering if you would just say hello, introduce yourself, and—and tell me where we are right now.

**00:00:29**

**EL:** My name is Eric Locklear with Fuller's Barbecue here in Lumberton, North Carolina. And my mom and dad, my parents started the business back in [19]'86. And we're still trying to keep it going and everything is going good so far, so—.

**00:00:52**

**SW:** Mr. Locklear, for the record will you tell me your birth date?

**00:00:56**

**EL:** August 14, 1967.

**00:01:00**

**SW:** And for the record what were your parents' names?

**00:01:03**

**EL:** Fuller—Fuller Locklear and Delora Locklear.

**00:01:08**

**SW:** And can you talk a little bit about how—why they started the business? Do you know why they started this business?

**00:01:15**

**EL:** Well, I was raised, we was raised on a farm and it was six kids in the family. We was all raised on the farm and tobacco and cucumbers and corn and beans and all that. And back in the early [19]'80s that's when farming started changing and you had to go big or the middle man got kind of pushed out, so a lot of things went to changing. So and my mom—and my dad was always into barbecuing for the local fire stations and—and the local schools in the area, done plate sales. He always done the barbecue for years and years. All I can remember, so he was always known as barbecue—the barbecue man.

**00:02:02**

So and mom kept telling him you know, “We need to—we need to do something besides farming,” ‘cause she could see in the future it weren't going to be—if you didn't go real big you couldn't farm or make a living off of it.

**00:02:16**

So back in [19]'86 we opened up a little restaurant right down the road from here about three miles down the road here on [*Highway*] 211. It couldn't set about fifty people—forty to fifty people, barbecue plates and sandwiches is all we started off with. And that started doing pretty good and then we added a little buffet bar and I think our buffet bar we had like four items

on it. [*Laughs*] Had a little table sitting out the end of it with a couple desserts on it, and that was Fuller's Barbecue's first buffet bar. And we—it kept growing over the time and we kept adding and adding and adding and now we can sit around 300 people in this establishment here, so—.

**00:03:08**

And we have one in Fayetteville, sit around 200 peoples and both of them is doing real good—real good and the Lord's blessed us. And we just are going to try to keep doing the right thing and we—we always try to give back to the community and help the community in all kinds of different ways and I just think that's the reason we're successful now 'cause we always give back and help and try to keep it a family establishment 'cause we have a lot of travelers come in and they just—they love this whole Southern-style. Feel like they're at home and welcoming and just—I enjoy seeing people leave happy.

**00:03:53**

**SW:** And y'all are right—right by [*Interstate*] 95.

**00:03:56**

**EL:** Yes.

**00:03:57**

**SW:** So I imagine that brings in a lot of people from all over. What—what do you see—what are people's reactions to the buffet? You were talking about they feel like they're home but do you—do you see people from you know say the Northeast that don't—don't normally see these items here that you serve?

00:04:13

**EL:** We have a lot of customers that come in and been coming in for several years and especially the first time like from Canada and Florida and all up North that's going to Florida once or twice a year. [*Background noises from the buffet crew setting up*] We got a bunch of them that will come in and they say they make sure they're coming through Lumberton around the time we open where they can stop and eat 'cause they can't get this food nowhere else 'cause it's—we got all the—about any kind of vegetable and stuff out of a garden and I—we don't use canned stuff. It's all frozen stuff or fresh stuff. When local people can bring stuff to us we use local, but if not it's frozen stuff. I don't like canned stuff. And we have a lot of people that come in—we had to go down the line and tell them each item what it is. They don't know what it is and they go through there and get them a little sample of each thing and figure out what they want to eat and then they'll—they enjoy it then. And I mean they just—I love to see people like that 'cause you can just see the reaction on their face when they go to tasting it, they hadn't never tasted Southern country cooking like that 'cause we still cook like my grandma and them cooked, so—.

00:05:24

And I reckon that's the reason it's still tasting like you're at home, especially in this area. That's the way I was raised up the way we cook now.

00:05:35

**SW:** You said you grew up on a farm. Your parents had a farm. Where was the farm?

00:05:40

**EL:** It was um, right on Saddletree Road, a little Saddletree community area. We was raised—I was raised up on a—a home farm. The farm has been in our family I don't know—I know 100

years or more, a little over—probably a little over 100 years though. But we just tend—like 100 and some acres we had. We still got the land and stuff but we don't farm it. We let somebody else farm it but—and that's what we—we—all us kids was raised up on, so—. I mean that's—'cause I don't remember. When we was coming up we didn't go to the grocery store and buy a whole bunch of stuff 'cause we always had vegetables come out of the garden and all our vegetables come out of the garden and our meats that we always had—pigs and cows and chickens and all that meat would come off the farm.

**00:06:34**

I remember going to the store to get sugar and flour and stuff like that but not a whole lot of other stuff 'cause we always had it in the freezer. And it's just amazing how things change over the years [*Laughs*] 'cause I never thought we'd be buying water. [*Laughs*]

**00:06:52**

**SW:** That's true.

**00:06:52**

**EL:** I know some of my grandparents they—they'd come back and see us buying water and stuff they'd think we was foolish. [*Laughs*]

**00:07:01**

**SW:** I know. You see bottles all over the place.

**00:07:03**

**EL:** Yes.

00:07:04

**SW:** It's standard now.

00:07:05

**EL:** Yeah.

00:07:07

**SW:** I heard or I read somewhere that your father you know grew a lot of different vegetables as you were saying but that he was known for his collards. Is that true?

00:07:16

**EL:** Yes.

00:07:18

**SW:** Could you talk about that?

00:07:19

**EL:** 'Cause collards in this—people love collards in this area and we—if you check around in the community and county you know people love to eat collard sandwiches. And 'cause when we have like Homecoming, Fourth of July, Pembroke at the parade, there's some booths and they sell a lot of collard sandwiches. People love collard sandwiches, but I was raised up on collard sandwiches. We've been doing it all my life 'cause daddy always loved collard sandwiches. He would cook little thin pieces of cornbread and he'd cook his collards and put the collards in between and a piece of fatback and that's a collard sandwich. And it's—it's good.

**00:08:05**

But he don't—we always used just the winter collards. Some people use summer collards too but daddy would never do that because summer collard had more of a—a wheaty taste, when a first frost—when a frost hit a collard that made it sweet. And that's the onliest time we would—we have collards on our bar is during the winter months.

**00:08:26**

**SW:** Do people actually make sandwiches or do you make sandwiches to order here?

**00:08:29**

**EL:** We have done that, yeah. If somebody asks us for it but some people—'cause we have the cornbread on the bar and the fatback is on the bar and the collards and everything, so you know some people go there and just make their own sandwich on the plate with the buffet. So 'cause they can eat the buffet and eat them a collard sandwich if they want to.

**00:08:48**

**SW:** The—the sandwiches that you grew up on Mr. Locklear were the collards sweet? They were more sweet or were they spicy? Do you remember how they were prepared?

**00:08:59**

**EL:** More of a sweeter 'cause we would—you can always add a little sugar to them and kind of make—get the bitter taste. Sometime they have a little bitter taste, add a little sugar to them and give them a little sweeter taste to them, but not real sweet—just enough to get that bitter taste out, so—. And a little—put you a little vinegar and hot peppers on it [*Laughs*]—



**00:09:25**

**SW:** I had one at Homecoming and I kept going back for more. Did y'all put chow-chow on it I'm wondering.

**00:09:30**

**EL:** Some people do. It's according to what that person what they want, but some people like chow-chow on them too and we make our homemade chow-chow too.

**00:09:40**

**SW:** What do y'all put in the chow-chow? I mean we don't mine for recipes but just curious with the kinds of things that people—that y'all put in your chow-chow? If you don't want to share that's fine.

**00:09:50**

**EL:** Well you got—you got vinegar and you got—you cut up your cabbage and you put some peppers and stuff in it and a little of this and a little of that. *[Laughs]*

**00:10:00**

**SW:** Mr. Locklear did—this is a question that people keep asking me, and this is the last question about the collard sandwich, do you know how it started with collard sandwiches? Is it—is it a traditional Lumbee dish?

**00:10:14**

**EL:** I don't really—I really don't know 'cause I was—like I say I was—a lot of people hadn't ate collard sandwiches 'til the last few years but I was raised up on them 'cause daddy always loved them. And I don't know if he—they done it back when he was small or not. I never did ask him that question but our family was raised up on them 'cause he'd always cook them, so—.

**00:10:39**

**SW:** And I'm wondering, I just have a couple quick more questions about the farm that you grew up with. What kinds—you know you talked about the pigs and—and the meat and I'm wondering if there are other—besides the collards were there other vegetables that were particular to this area here, Robeson County? I think I've heard about speckled butter beans and I don't know if I've seen those as prevalent in other parts of the South.

**00:11:04**

**EL:** Yeah, we always had speckled butter beans. Field peas is a big hit. And they just come off like this time of the year but everybody will bag up and put a lot in the freezer that will last most of the year but field peas is still a good hit, I mean 'cause we use them on the bar when they're in season, so—. And cabbage, we go through a lot of cabbage. People love cabbage. We slice cabbage and steam them and put our seasoning in and just steam them a little bit and put them on the bar. And that's a good hit. And—and I—sometimes I make a cabbage sandwich too. I take the cornbread the same thing with the cabbage. That's good if you like cabbage.

**00:11:47**

**SW:** Do you put the fatback in it?

00:11:50

**EL:** Yes. [*Laughs*]

00:11:51

**SW:** That sounds delicious. I wondered you know you grew up six—there's six kids and your parents. And I'm assuming, did y'all have to work on the farm, did you help your parents?

00:12:02

**EL:** Yes.

00:12:02

**SW:** What was that like for you growing up?

00:12:05

**EL:** Make you appreciate things. It'll make you appreciate a whole—I tell my kids now, I have five kids at the house now, but I can tell them, you know, some stories and they look at me like they can't believe it you know 'cause back then I mean it was work, 'cause I started—I think I was like five years-old when daddy put me on the harvest—on the tractor driving tractor, harvester through the field. And I mean it was going real slow. I was so small I couldn't even turn it around at the end of the road. Somebody had to jump on there and turn it around 'cause I didn't have enough strength to turn the steering wheel. And I couldn't smash the clutch to stop it neither 'cause I was so small. But we started young. All of us started young. When you got old enough to be able to do something he'd put you to work.

**00:12:56**

**SW:** Where do you fall in the line of six kids in terms of age?

**00:12:59**

**EL:** I'm the baby.

**00:13:00**

**SW:** You're the baby? And do your siblings still live around here in the area?

**00:13:09**

**EL:** I have one sister that stays in Delaware. She's been up there twenty-some years, probably closer to thirty probably. I know twenty-some years. But and I lost two sisters, I had a sister die in [20]'08 and another one, she died—God I can't remember what the dates was but I had two sisters that passed away. And one was forty-seven and one was fifty-one, so they was young. And my mom and dad passed away, mom died—passed away in [20]'01 and my dad passed away in [20]'06.

**00:13:55**

**SW:** How did they—do you know the barbecue tradition that your father had, do you know where he—did he teach himself like was it something that was self-taught or did he—?

**00:14:03**

**EL:** Family.

00:14:05

**SW:** Family?

00:14:05

**EL:** Family. His—from what I understand his—his daddy and uncles and a bunch of them they always would barbecue and do—around in this area back in the days they'd always—the families would get together and have a—they'd call it a hog killing. So they would cook, they'd barbecue hogs. They would make pudding, chitlings, souse meat, cracklings. They'd do all that a couple times a year in the cold months enough where they'd have enough of that to last all summer.

00:14:42

And we had smokehouses, they—'cause when I was small we still had smokehouses. They'd hang up hams and sausage and pudding and let it air dry. So you know they don't—nobody don't do that now. I don't even know if you can do it now. *[Laughs]* But—I remember all that but—so.

00:15:03

**SW:** And for—for—you know I've been talking to different—from people from different communities around the area and I'm wondering if there is something about Saddletree, the Saddletree community that you'd want people to know maybe people who aren't from here who aren't familiar with the community. What do you remember most fondly about Saddletree or if you have any memories about growing up in Saddletree.

**00:15:25**

**EL:** It must be good 'cause I'm still there. [*Laughs*] I mean 'cause well that's all—I was raised in Saddletree and that's the onliest place I've ever lived is Saddletree 'cause I built a house across from my mom and dad's house and all us—my brother stays right across the road from me. And I have a sister, she stays in Pembroke. But I've always loved Saddletree and always loved the—the people in Saddletree. And I always try to—we always try to give back and help to the community and 'cause we got a community center over here in Saddletree, Saddletree Center, and it's—we have meetings once a month there and we feed the elders every Wednesday at the Saddletree Community—the elders. We feed them every Wednesday and we have seventy, eighty, 100 elders there that go there and eat on Wednesdays and socialize and just talk for an hour or two or whatever they want to do. It's just—I don't know, I just love Saddletree.

**00:16:33**

**SW:** How did your parents' lives change when they went from having a farm being farmers to moving on you know starting a restaurant down the road here? How did you watch their lives change?

**00:16:45**

**EL:** It changed a lot 'cause my mom, she always—she worked—helped with the—you know she had six kids and she always worked—she'd work on the farm too and she could drive tractors, trucks, anything just like a—she'd work just like a man. But she always had a job in the plants too, sewing. She'd—sometimes she'd do that like on the second or third shift and then come home and work on the farm all during the day too to try to make ends meet. And neither one of them know nothing about running a business, so when we opened the restaurant and I

was—I've been with them since day one—it was a whole different world 'cause I mean sometimes we'd go in there and especially mama. She'd go in there sometimes six-thirty, seven o'clock in the morning and it might be twelve o'clock before we'd get out of the restaurant that night. And I mean that was day after day after day and I mean it—for a long time that's the way it was and I mean it was for the first several years there it was struggling and I didn't—we didn't know if we was going to make it or not. And they had put the house and everything up so that would have fail they would have lost everything. And I mean they—they sacrificed a lot.

**00:18:13**

But then over the time it started changing and I mean everything went to—went to growing and the business went to growing and it just—big difference.

**00:18:25**

**SW:** And how old were you when you helped your parents with the restaurant when it started?

**00:18:29**

**EL:** Let's see [19]'86, I'm forty-six now. How old would I have been? [*Laughs*] I don't even know.

**00:18:40**

**SW:** Let's see, you might have been—would you have still been in high school at the time?

**00:18:46**

**EL:** I think I just got out of high school.

00:18:51

**SW:** What did you think of it? What did you think of that experience of you know being that young and jumping right in the business to help your parents?

00:18:58

**EL:** Um, it was different. I mean but you know they—they put me back there washing dishes and sweeping floors. *[Laughs]* So it was different 'cause I hadn't never done nothing like that. I had always worked on the outside at the farm. And then working on the inside like that it was a whole different world, so—. And I just—I learned—I learned how to do everything in the kitchen and cooking and—'cause I could cook a little bit of stuff but mama and daddy taught me how to cook everything in there where that way I'd—if I had to cook it could cook it or if I had to show somebody. And that's—it was—it was interesting but I enjoy it though.

00:19:49

**SW:** Is there anything particular that you enjoy cooking the most, something that was handed down from your family that the recipe is still going strong and something that you just really enjoy cooking?

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**EL:** We still cook—we still cook the whole pig. You know a lot of people has cut back on ham shoulders or Boston butts and we still do the whole pig and we still cook with wood—oak and hickory wood. We smoke it for thirteen to fifteen hours and then chop it up and stuff. But that's—and that was one of his he wanted it done a certain way 'cause he always said if we had to go to gas or something like that just quit cooking or, "If it can't be cooked with wood I don't



want it," so—. And his cornbread, now he was—I don't know if you ever ate here but the cornbread patties is real thin.

**00:20:54**

**SW:** Can you—I actually have had it but can you explain it for people 'cause I grew up in Michigan so I'm used to Jiffy Mix and it's like cake. So this was a big surprise.

**00:21:02**

**EL:** It's got a crunch around it. I mean you can—it ain't thick, it don't look like pancakes. It's real thin and crunchy and that's the way he wanted it and he was—that was one of his pride and joys is cornbread now. If it weren't right, if he walked in here and it weren't right he'd snatch it off the bar and throw it in the trash. *[Laughs]* He wanted it—and he'd let somebody have it back there if they weren't doing it right. *[Laughs]*

**00:21:26**

**SW:** Would he kind of like walk by and like take a little bit of it and say—

**00:21:29**

**EL:** Yeah, yeah.

**00:21:30**

**SW:** —no way?

00:21:31

**EL:** Or he could look at it and tell it weren't right and he'd just throw it in the trash. So that was one of his biggest things was that cornbread now. He stayed on it. And it—if somebody come in, if we had somebody new, he'd make sure they knowed what they was doing before you turned them loose. *[Laughs]* But that was—that was one of his things was cornbread. He—he wanted that cornbread a certain way and that's the way I want it too. I just—I like it thin with a little crisp on it and—. But daddy loved to cook though. He loved to cook all kinds of—them vegetables and that homemade soup back there. The homemade soup we make that was one of his recipes.

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**SW:** What kind of soup is it?

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**EL:** It's a vegetable soup. So that's one of his recipes he—he done and I mean that's just—

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**SW:** Did your parents cook together or was—?

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**EL:** Yes.

00:22:32

**SW:** They did?

00:22:33

**EL:** Yeah.

00:22:33

**SW:** Do you have memories of watching them in the kitchen together and what that was like?

00:22:36

**EL:** Yeah.

00:22:37

**SW:** Can you kind of talk about that?

00:22:38

**EL:** ‘Cause they loved to argue with one another too. [*Laughs*] You know how that is? But ‘cause well for years there, when we didn’t have so much help I have seen the time when me and mama and daddy would be in the kitchen back there and we was the onliest ones cooking. And we done it for a long time, but ‘cause she loved to cook and he loved to cook too, so—. And she loved to bake—you know ‘cause we still make our homemade pastry. You know what that is right? Pastry and homemade biscuits and chocolate layer cakes and all that stuff, all that is still homemade, we make it by hand every day, so—. And she loved—and she done all that and she helped cook too. She done a lot of cooking and they loved to cook though. But see, daddy always—he loved to cook way before we got a restaurant. When we was at home we—he’d do a lot of the cooking ‘cause he loved to cook.

00:23:40

**SW:** So when did they—when did you move to this location and come up the street? Do you remember—?

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**EL:** [19]'91 I think, yeah.

00:23:49

**SW:** Was that a big change going from a small place? I think you said there were four different sides on the buffet down the street, but here you can seat 300 people.

00:23:57

**EL:** Well before we moved there we had spreaded about—we had probably—probably had like ten items on there or twelve items, something. It had growed a little bit but—and we built on that place a couple times where we had more seating 'cause I think you could sit probably about 100 people when we left there, close to it. [*Mr. Locklear's cell phone rings*] Let me cut this off. But when we moved here it was a big difference 'cause I reckon from being like three and a half, four miles out of town, we done so-so, pretty good. But when we moved here closer to the interstate and town with people on lunch break our business like tripled overnight. And it—when we—when we come here and opened it took us a while to get adjusted to that 'cause having to cook so much more and prepare so much more, so that was a big—that was an adjustment.

**[Laughs]**

00:25:07

**SW:** I drove by here on a Sunday once—wow, I mean I wonder if that line ever—that line was—I think it went halfway back into the parking lot. Y'all do a good business here. *[Laughs]*

00:25:20

**EL:** Yeah, the Lord has been good. And that's what I like to see is a line. *[Laughs]* So yeah, Sunday is one of our biggest days, so—.

00:25:30

**SW:** And you had mentioned earlier that there—there are items on the buffet that you've always made but some people who didn't grow up around here or just you know are maybe driving through and stop by for lunch they don't really know what those items are. Can you talk about some of the things you might have to point out to people—?

00:25:49

**EL:** Well we have one of the main ones is rutabaga. We have the rutabaga where we—and we use the fresh rutabagas. We—we peel them, cook them, and then chop them up and it kind of looks like apple sauce 'cause we chop it up pretty fine. I don't like it chunky. And a lot of people put—travelers think it's applesauce *[Laughs]* until they taste it. And then they love it 'cause they hadn't never ate no rutabagas like that. And that's a big—pretty big hit 'cause I have a lot of people they love them rutabagas. But it's fresh rutabagas 'cause people will say, “Well what brand is that? They think it come out of a can. I say, “You ain't going to find that in no can that tastes like that.” *[Laughs]*

**00:26:32**

But the rutabagas and like the fatback, the chitlings we got up there, a lot of people don't—they ain't never seen it and I just—I tell them just taste a little bit. And I have some people—a lot of people—we go through a lot of chitlings. It's surprising how much we go through. And what else is a big item? There's a few more up there, I can't even think of what it is. But it's—the people that they're not familiar with it and they just—you have to explain to them what it is but a lot of times them travelers they'll get—they'll take them a little pinch of it and taste of it and then go back and get them a plate, so—.

**00:27:18**

And the barbecue, sometimes they have a lot of people come in and they don't—they're looking for—especially travelers—barbecue covered with the thick sauce and stuff. And that's—that's not us, so I've had some people like—especially from around Texas and stuff, they want it covered with the thick sauce, you know and I try to explain to them we don't do it like that. We—I like—we like the flavor of the meat 'cause you cover something with a thick sauce that's all you're tasting. You're killing the meat flavor and daddy wouldn't—'cause this—the homemade sauce, our barbecue sauce that's one of his recipes and we still make that. It's vinegar-based and so—.

**00:28:04**

**SW:** So it's kind of tangy? It's got a tang to it?

**00:28:06**

**EL:** A little, a little hot, medium-hot. But that's one of his sauces he's made for probably fifty years or longer.

**00:28:19**

**SW:** Do you sell it here?

**00:28:20**

**EL:** Yes. Uh-hm and we have a lot of people come by and buy a gallon or two at the time, so—. And I have travelers that will buy a gallon to take home with them.

**00:28:31**

**SW:** That's good.

**00:28:32**

**EL:** Yeah, and we do—we do fresh skins that comes off the pigs that we barbecue. We'll have some skins that won't dry out on the grill too good so we'll bring them in and finish drying them out and we'll bag them up and sell them. That's—that's a big hit 'cause I have sent a bunch to Maryland, New York, I sent some—furthest place I sent—I sent some to China one time.

**00:29:03**

**SW:** Are you serious?

00:29:06

**EL:** Military was—some military folks was over there and they had been eating with us and they called wanting to see if I could send them and I mean it was—. I sent them but it was costly. [Laughs] I think it was \$60 just to get them there.

00:29:23

**SW:** How much did you send, do you remember?

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**EL:** I can't remember. It was like—it weren't that many bags, probably about six bags—five or six bags. But it cost more to ship them there than what the skins cost. [Laughs]

00:29:36

**SW:** That's wild.

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**EL:** But he was wanting them, so—.

00:29:39

**SW:** Did you learn how to barbecue from your father? Did you—did he teach you?

00:29:44

**EL:** Yes.



00:29:45

**SW:** What was that like for you to learn, do you remember?

00:29:49

**EL:** It was—it was interesting. And I enjoyed it. For a long-time I had barbecued—I had done all the barbecuing for several years there. Now my nephew barbecues the pigs. He kept hanging around when he was a young boy up there, ten and eleven, I said, “You keep hanging around I’m going to break you in,” so when he got old enough—. And then we opened up—that’s when we just had this one restaurant and I done all the barbecuing and stuff then and then we opened up a second restaurant and I was having—I was having to go to it a lot and he had got old enough he had been helping me for several years, so I turned him loose on it and he’s been doing it ever since.

00:30:35

**SW:** And how old is he now?

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**EL:** John is thirty-two, I think.

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**SW:** And his name is John Locklear?

00:30:41

**EL:** Yeah.

00:30:44

**SW:** Is—the pit is out back here? Is that where—?

00:30:46

**EL:** No, it's at the home place.

00:30:48

**SW:** Oh you do it at home?

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**EL:** Uh-hm.

00:30:51

**SW:** That's—it was funny. When I had lunch here one day I was just curious, so I was walking around the back just to see if I could catch a glimpse of the pit and I was going to ask you, where's the pit?

00:31:02

**EL:** Yeah.

00:31:03

**SW:** Why do you do that?

00:31:05

**EL:** I don't know. That's—that's where we always had it. That's where we built it to start off with and one time I was thinking about trying to move it out here on the location but I really ain't got enough room 'cause like on the weekends, the parking lot will be full and all around the building is full. Of course I don't want to take no parking space up. *[Laughs]* It would be nice to have it right here where it would be smoking and you could really smell it when you got out the car then 'cause it—it be will a lot of smoke, especially with that wood. But it has a good smell to it and that's what gives our barbecue a unique flavor is we smoke it with wood instead of—we don't use no gas or charcoal, strictly wood.

00:31:54

**SW:** And y'all serve it chopped right?

00:31:57

**EL:** Yeah, chopped and pulled. Sometimes we'll have some pulled also, so—.

00:32:04

**SW:** I'm wondering, you know you said you started working—they had you washing dishes when they opened the first location. I'm wondering Mr. Locklear why you decided to stay and—and make this you know—to stay working for the restaurant with your parents?

00:32:22

**EL:** I don't know. I just—it was something I enjoyed doing and I reckon family ties, we just—we always have been a close family so—. We always try to help one another and we still do.

And that's—you know mama and daddy back then started off, like I said earlier, I mean they was struggling—it was struggling there for a few years there trying to—. I mean I know—I remember the time and we worked—we would work for weeks and we wouldn't get paid nothing. I mean we just would try to pay the bills and what bills you had around home pay them and that was it. And you know but that was part of trying to make it. You got to stick together through the tough and the good. And that's—and it paid off in the end 'cause like I say, when thing turned around it turned around. And that's—mama had a—mama was a praying woman. She—she believed in the Lord and she done a lot of praying. And I still think to today that's the reason we're still doing what we're doing 'cause it was some rough times there for a while but she had the faith that it would come out on the end—it would come out on the good side, so—. It all worked out.

**00:33:54**

**SW:** Did she go to church?

**00:33:56**

**EL:** Oh yeah.

**00:33:57**

**SW:** Where did she go to church? Do you know?

**00:33:59**

**EL:** When we was small we went to Mount Olive Church right there from the house, a Baptist Church. We're Baptist, so that's where I was raised up at. Now I attend—'cause I'm in church—now I—I got saved back in 2010. And I—I attend—well right—the church still in my area, Bethel Hill Church Baptist Church. That's where and my family goes now.

**00:34:28**

**SW:** What made you decide to get saved in 2010?

**00:34:35**

**EL:** I don't know. I just—I had—like I told people in church I mean the Lord has been good to my family and I mean I have a house, car, motorcycle, wife, kids, but it just—a void there I couldn't fill, something and I just like I had something—you ever been like something just weren't right and you just couldn't put your finger on it? And I went to church one Sunday. We had got—me and my wife had made a pact we was going to take our youngings to church every Sunday somewhere. We weren't saved then. And we was taking them—we had a couple of churches we was going to in the community there. Then that Sunday I don't—the Lord got me back there and I don't even remember getting up. And I realized I was up there at the altar with the preacher and still there. And I feel a whole lot better. That was the void I was hunting but I was running. *[Laughs]*

**00:35:41**

**SW:** That was at Bethel Hill?

00:35:43

**EL:** Yes.

00:35:46

**SW:** Mr. Locklear I'm wondering you know what would your parents think of what you're doing today? If they were here what would they say to you about what you've done with the business?

00:35:55

**EL:** I think they'd be proud 'cause you know we had—you know how kids, families is nowadays and it's been like that for a long—every probably though but especially when your parents has worked hard and established something and then you got kids and something happens to the parents and they get a bickering and fighting and fussing that this one got this and this one got that and—and I'm pretty sure we had some people sitting back waiting for us to go to doing that but we haven't had that problem. And that's been daddy died in [20]'06 and everything has still been going good. And people will ask me something like that and I say, "Well we was raised better than that. We weren't raised to be fighting over no material things. You know, family comes first." And I just—I thank the Lord for our parents the way they raised us.

00:36:52

**SW:** So both of your parents still work in the business, but did they ever retire or did they work?

00:36:59

**EL:** No, they never retired. My daddy always said he weren't retiring. *[Laughs]* He weren't going to retire until he left here. *[Laughs]* And he didn't, he was seventy-two when he died. But I mean he didn't actually do a lot of physical work but he still would stick his head in and go through and if something weren't right he'd let you know. *[Laughs]*

00:37:17

**SW:** Like the cornbread?

00:37:19

**EL:** Yeah, that was his main—that's the first thing he would look at when he'd walk through the kitchen is the cornbread. *[Laughs]*

00:37:27

**SW:** Now do you—you said you know you have—you have five siblings. Did they—do they help with the business to at all, like did they get involved?

00:37:38

**EL:** Yeah, we—I'm getting them involved a little bit. Now my son, he's back there working now. So we got him on the cornbread.

00:37:46

**SW:** And how old is he?

00:37:47

**EL:** Fifteen.

00:37:48

**SW:** And what's his name?

00:37:49

**EL:** Ethan.

00:37:51

**SW:** Ethan.

00:37:51

**EL:** So—

00:37:52

**SW:** Did you teach him how to do the cornbread?

00:37:54

**EL:** Well my wife was—was teaching him, she taught him how to do it. And I went back there the other day and he was cooking and I was making sure he was doing it right, so—. So far he's been doing pretty good.

00:38:09

**SW:** Do you other kids—you said you have five kids—do they all help out?



00:38:13

**EL:** And my daughter, she helps some and they help with caterings. We do a lot of caterings too. I got them where they'll help with caterings some. She's starting college this year, so—.

00:38:23

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

00:38:25

**EL:** Pembroke, so—. She went yesterday. She had to go yesterday for orientation and stay overnight so—.

00:38:35

**SW:** That's exciting.

00:38:37

**EL:** [*Laughs*] But I'm going to try to—and I'm going to try—that's what I put—we put him back there in the kitchen where it's good and hot, where if he—if he thinks he's just—if he don't want that kind of work you better go job—you better go to school and get a good education. If not, you're going to be doing something like that, so—. And it don't hurt to do—to break them and work them some and do some hard work 'cause it'll make them appreciate things.

00:39:09

**SW:** Now did your—was your—did your wife start working when—when you all first met, did she start helping with the restaurant right away or what was that like for the two of you—?

00:39:20

**EL:** No, not—not right away, but later on. She come in and started waitressing, she was helping out waitressing and that's where she started at. Then we opened up—we opened up the second restaurant [*in Fayetteville, NC*] that's when we went down there and I put her in the kitchen then. So she had to learn to go to cooking, so—. We taught—taught her how to cook all that food and stuff and—and now she helps with the business part of it. I mean she does all my secretary stuff and keeps up—keeps all the bills straight and all that now.

00:40:05

**SW:** What's her name?

00:40:06

**EL:** Karen.

00:40:08

**SW:** And what—what did she think of all this coming in when she—went from waitressing to moving in the kitchen?

00:40:16

**EL:** A whole lot more work. [*Laughs*] And a whole lot more hours 'cause we had to put in a lot of hours.

00:40:25

**SW:** And when did y'all open the Fayetteville location?

00:40:28

**EL:** Two thousand and—I think it was 2001.

00:40:41

**SW:** I just have a couple more questions for you Mr. Locklear. Is that okay?

00:40:44

**EL:** Yeah, that's fine.

00:40:45

**SW:** One of the things I wanted to ask you if you felt like talking about it, is you know I've been going to a lot of the restaurants in Robeson County. The restaurants that are owned—you know we're talking about Lumbee foodways and—and entrepreneurs. And I'm wondering, you know I know the history is—there's an intense history here in the county in terms of race relations. And that for a long time we're actually talking to the folks, Mr. [H. Dobbs] Oxendine who is at—well there used to be a restaurant called the Old Foundry.

00:41:20

**EL:** Yeah.

00:41:20

**SW:** And—and I know that for a while there were you know during the civil rights era people you know—Lumbee Indians weren't allowed to eat in certain places, mostly in any restaurant in Robeson.

00:41:32

**EL:** Or the stores.

00:41:33

**SW:** Or go into the stores and sit down and have a soda.

00:41:36

**EL:** They couldn't.

00:41:37

**SW:** Do you—did your parents ever talk about that? It's sort of a two-part question. I'm wondering if you have memories of the—that time and how things have changed and what this restaurant—?

00:41:48

**EL:** I don't—I don't have no memories of that time 'cause that was before my time. But my daddy, now he—he brought it up a lot 'cause he come through that era there and he come through that time. And I mean he—he said he remembers going to the store or go—they'd be downtown or something and he—certain stores you couldn't even go into, certain bathrooms—you couldn't go in the bathrooms. You had just certain bathrooms you could go into, movie theater. You had a certain section you'd sit. And then the whites sat in another section and it was—and he remembers all that, so. But I don't remember none of that and you know but times is changed. But you know and daddy made the comment, I remember him making the comment a

bunch of times after we got here and got to going good. He said—he'd sit back at somebody and look. He'd say, "Now look, I couldn't even—a lot of these people coming in here I couldn't even go in their place of business and now they're coming in my place eating." [Laughs] But it's like everything else I reckon, nothing stays the same.

**00:43:02**

And that was a good change 'cause I reckon if I come up during that time I'd—I don't know how you'd take that 'cause that ain't—it ain't right 'cause I think—I think my race of people was done wrong way back but you know and I tell people now, "Don't harp on the past. The past is over with." It's what we do in the future from now on out. I mean what happened 100 years ago or fifty years ago there ain't a thing we can do about that. And harping on the past is no good for nobody. I don't care what color you is, what race—it doesn't matter. You get along and get along, so—and that's my theory. I mean 'cause I'm—my brother-in-law stays in Delaware he's white. I have some white blood in my family. I got some aunts and stuff. You'd swear up and down they weren't Indians 'cause they're blond. Well my wife is blond-headed and bright skin. [Laughs] so and I ain't got no hard feelings with nobody—white, black, Indian, it don't matter to me. I mean I try to treat everybody the same. When they come in that door and I tell my workers, "I don't care who it is, you treat them like they're the first customer that come through the door 'cause they're a paying customer. Treat them like they're at home," and that's what we try to do.

**00:44:42**

**SW:** I'm wondering—I just have one more question about that, what do you think—you know I know that you didn't grow up in that time—what do you think this restaurant, you know thinking

about what your parents started, what having this restaurant means to the Lumbee communities of Robeson County or just to the—I just wonder if you ever think about you know with your—how your parents came up and what they had to deal with, like what having this restaurant might mean today for them even they're no longer around. What—what is the importance of having this restaurant or starting this restaurant?

**00:45:36**

**EL:** It's a good—I mean 'cause they started this restaurant and it's a good thing 'cause all—like you said, all races eats here. And 'cause I have—and it's good for our people and some—not everybody but there's a lot of our people that's stuck in the past. [*Answers call phone and tells them he'll call them back.*] And like I said while ago, stuck in the past is not good for nobody. And I mean there's some people they harp on racial, racial, racial. And I'm not one of them. I just—'cause when they come around me whining about it—shut up. There's something else to talk about. There's something good you could do instead of whining about something in the past. And I mean that's just the way I feel and that's—and mama and daddy were like that and daddy was brought up in that era. But he didn't—he didn't harp on the past a whole lot 'cause like I said he—he said, “It's amazing how I couldn't even go in some of these people's stores and they're coming in my place eating now and spending money in my place.” He was just thinking about the way he was brought up and the way it is now, that's—well I mean that's a lot—that's a big change especially when you was brought up in that world.

**00:47:12**

And this restaurant is—it's good for the community and good for the people 'cause I have a lot of people that's moved away and I mean all races, it ain't just the Lumbees, all races

that moved away and when they come back and when I see some of them when they come back in they'll be bringing the families and people they know from all—that hadn't never ate, bringing them in here, you got—they say, “When you go into Robeson County you got to eat at Fuller's.” That's what a lot of them—making them comments 'cause that's part of Robeson County, part of the history of it and the culture 'cause the food we got is—that's the way most Lumbees was raised. The food we got down there that's what we was raised on. And you can't go nowhere in the country and buy that food at a restaurant. You can go to a steakhouse, seafood houses, and pasta houses and I mean that's all over the world, but you can't go to any places and get Southern food like that the way it's cooked.

**00:48:08**

**SW:** How does that make you feel today?

**00:48:11**

**EL:** It makes—it makes me feel real good about it.

**00:48:14**

**SW:** That people are coming together over this food?

**00:48:18**

**EL:** That's—that's good and I—I enjoy it. I love people when they come in here and they—like I have—I talked to a group yesterday that was from Pennsylvania. They said they'd been here in like one—it had been like two years since they had been here, but they were back in here yesterday. And they said they just—they love coming here when they can come and that makes

me feel good. I mean 'cause I mean get a group of people together and that's—I tell people when you want to get a crowd together have some good food and they'll come together. [Laughs]

00:48:54

And that's just—I don't know, I enjoy it.

00:49:00

**SW:** I wanted to ask you one more thing about the food specifically. Can you talk about this chocolate cake because this is an elaborate thing that I haven't seen in other places and I've asked around about it and the—a lot of people told me, “You need to go to Fuller's and get that cake.” Can you talk about—it's like eight—there's several layers in it.

00:49:20

**EL:** Yeah, [Turns cell phone off] it's—it's seven—seven or eight layers, sometimes eight—seven and eight layers. It used to be more than that but they cut it back to a couple layers 'cause it was—the thinner it is—the thinner it gets the harder it is to get it just right 'cause you got to stand right there with it. But I got a lady—well I had a couple ladies that worked with me for several years way back and they used to make all them cakes for us. And now I got a lady back there now, Vicky Locklear, she's—she makes all my cakes back there. And she does a real good job. But it's real thin—thin layers and they cook—cook them in an old black iron skillet. That's the way they cook the layers in that skillet. And they—she makes our chocolate up and layers it together.



00:50:17

**SW:** So she's cooking one layer at a time? In the skillet?

00:50:20

**EL:** Yeah.

00:50:20

**SW:** That sounds like it's very intense.

00:50:23

**EL:** Yeah, and you got the—you can overcook it. I mean it can overcook real fast 'cause it's real thin, so you go to have it pretty much—you got to be there and get it out right when it's ready to come out. So it's real intense but she does a good job with it though.

00:50:42

**SW:** How did you get Vicky in on the cake? How did she come in, do you remember?

00:50:46

**EL:** I had another lady that was working and Vicky was back there helping cook and cooked vegetables and stuff like that. And she got back there and was helping that lady and training where I could have a couple people doing it, so another lady had to—something happened and she had to give up work but—so Vicky started doing it a few years ago.

00:51:14

**SW:** Was she known for the cakes or did y'all kind of teach her?

00:51:17

**EL:** No, we taught her. That's about the same way we had it for years and each one we get come in we'll train them exactly the way we want it done.

00:51:28

**SW:** And did your mom make the cakes or did your dad?

00:51:30

**EL:** Mom, dad couldn't—he weren't no baker now. He was—he loved to cook but he weren't a baker—vegetables and meat and stuff like that he'd cook. But any kind of pastas and baking and cakes, pies, and that—no, he—he wouldn't even try it. *[Laughs]*

00:51:53

**SW:** And then so she made the pastry as well as the chicken and pastry—

00:51:56

**EL:** Yeah.

00:51:58

**SW:** Before I turn the tape off I'm wondering if there is anything else you want to talk about or add that I didn't ask you or something that I didn't know to ask you?

**00:52:14**

**EL:** No, I think we about covered everything. I just—I appreciate what the Lord has done for me and my family and I just appreciate all the business we get and the customers 'cause I—like I said, I enjoy seeing customers come in and eat and leave happy.

**00:52:39**

**SW:** Well thank you for your time this morning.

**00:52:40**

**EL:** Thank you.

**00:52:43**

**[End Eric Locklear Interview]**