

GEORGE & JIMMY PAUL
Paul's Bar-B-Q – Lexington, GA

Date: February 27, 2008
Location: Paul's Bar-B-Q – Lexington, GA
Interviewer: Amy C. Evans, SFA Oral Historian
Transcription: Shelley Chance, ProDocs
Length: 51 minutes, 19 seconds
Project: Southern BBQ Trail: Georgia

[Begin George & Jimmy Paul Interview]

00:00:00

Amy Evans: This is Amy Evans on Wednesday, February 27, 2008, for the Southern Foodways Alliance. I'm in Lexington, Georgia, at Paul's Barbecue with Mr. George Paul and his son Jimmy. And if I could get you each to say your name and your birthday for the record, please.

00:00:18

George Paul: George Paul, Jr., December 5, 1934.

00:00:26

Jimmy Paul: Jimmy Paul, December 8, 1959.

00:00:32

AE: Okay. [To George Paul] And we were talking about John T's [John T. Edge's] book *Southern Belly* just a minute ago, and I learned from that, of course, that you learned to barbecue from your uncle. Can you talk about that?

00:00:42

GP: Well I just came to help him because he was getting old, and first thing I knew, he said, "Here—here it is." I didn't really want it, but I thought to make his life easier—the rest of his life—I took it and—and I'm still here. He left me. [**Laughs**] He made it—he was ninety-seven [years old], and he lived next door and he sat up there and watched what went on down here, so—. I—I guess he was satisfied. And I'm still here; I hope to be here a while longer—not as long as he was but [**Laughs**] maybe part of the time.

00:01:36

AE: And what was your uncle's name?

00:01:36

GP: Clifford—Clifford Paul or R. C. Paul.

00:01:45

AE: Was he from Lexington originally?

00:01:47

GP: Yes. Yes, he was. He lived next door to this place. He built it, and his daughter still owns it.

00:02:01

AE: So how long has your family been in this area?

00:02:05

GP: A long time—.

00:02:09

JP: Early 1700s.

00:02:09

AE: Early 1700s, Jimmy says. So do you know where your uncle learned to barbecue and how he got started in that business?

00:02:16

GP: No, I don't. He was just here all—all my life and he cooked right out here beside the building under mulberry tree and slaved out there until the health regulator put him inside.

00:02:40

AE: Was he cooking hams or whole hogs, or what was he doing over there?

00:02:43

GP: What—what was he doing—he was cooking whole hogs and until the fat didn't agree with people and he started cooking hams and that's what we're doing—still cooking hams.

00:03:02

AE: So do you have an idea what year he started his business over there?

00:03:06

GP: [Nineteen] twenty-nine—somewhere around that. I'm not quite sure, but I think that's about right.

00:03:19

AE: And then about what year did he hand it over to you?

00:03:23

GP: Well, I've been here thirty years so they tell me; it don't look like it's been that long, but time is slipping by me.

00:03:31

AE: So how did you get—if he was next door, how did you get a hold of this building here?

00:03:36

GP: It was the—that's where he moved in here after State regulations; health regulations put him out—from outdoors inside.

00:03:55

AE: I see. And so did he—you said he just basically dropped the business in your lap. Did he teach you anything about barbecuing?

00:04:03

GP: No, he didn't. I was disappointed. I thought he'd come down—he was still where he could get about. I thought he'd come down and advise me, but he didn't, and it took me a little while to get onto it. But I had been cooking for senior citizens and the church—barbecuing chickens—and he told me he had been keeping up with me, and it was all the same but it wasn't. **[Laughs]** It was different.

00:04:37

AE: Now Jimmy, what do you remember about—that would have been your great-uncle?

00:04:41

JP: Yes. Uncle Clifford owned a café he ran during the week on the other side over here. And on Saturday he would sell barbecue, like Daddy said, out under the tree, and then they moved to sell barbecue inside here. He didn't open his café on Saturday. But he moved all his operation in after his café partially burned over there in the [nineteen] '70s. And I can see him right now with

his apron on and moving around doing—selling meat and everything. He had a black guy named Fudge Collins that was his right-hand man; I think Fudge knew more about barbecuing than Clifford did but he—Fudge up—Fudge passed a couple of years ago, but up until then—until Uncle Clifford give it over to Daddy, Fudge—Fudge helped him out.

00:05:40

AE: And was there anything that you learned as—as a young man from your great-uncle?

00:05:44

R: No, actually I didn't. I came in and kind of picked up from Daddy and Mama. Mama got where she was unable to come and make the [Brunswick] stew every Saturday, so she kind of helped me, and I worked on the recipe and—and got a consistency on it and so I came to help Daddy after she was unable to come up here, and we've kind of worked on it together. And I've learned everything I know from him and her, and I never learned anything from Uncle Clifford.

00:06:15

AE: Uh-hmm. So was Clifford doing stew also when he had his business here?

00:06:24

GP: Yes. Yes, he did. He cooked it out back in an old back wash pot with a fire around it, somebody standing there with a wood paddle stirring it. Of course we're not doing that now but—that's—that's mainly what I started, coming up building this fire for him and helping him get his meat on and that's—that's where I got started with it. He had always put on at four o'clock in the morning and cooked it till it got done.

00:07:07

AE: And what kind of wood was he using, and are you using the same wood?

00:07:10

GP: Hickory and red oak.

00:07:14

AE: And where do you get your wood? Where do you get your wood?

00:07:18

GP: I cut it off of our farm.

00:07:22

AE: So tell me about your farm. You raise cattle and—and how close is it to town here?

00:07:27

GP: Two miles out and we raise cows and hay, and that's about all now. We used to row-crop, but thank goodness it went on out. [*Laughs*] And we got a pretty good-sized farm. My Daddy left it to me, and I was a disappointment for him. I was supposed to have been a doctor or lawyer or something, and I wanted to farm, and he said, "There it is. Go to it, if you can make it." And so—so far I've made it, but it's getting harder by the day.

00:08:05

AE: May I ask how many acres your farm is?

00:08:08

GP: Seven hundred.

00:08:12

AE: Seven hundred-ninety, Jimmy says. So what kind of cattle do you have on the land?

00:08:17

GP: Just—just mixed cows—mainly Angus. But and we got forty-head of goats, too.

00:08:29

JP: And a donkey.

00:08:29

AE: [*Laughs*] And a donkey. What does the donkey do?

00:08:33

GP: Well he's—he takes care of the goats.

00:08:39

AE: Yeah. So are you ever tempted to barbecue some goat or some beef barbecue out here at the shop?

00:08:45

GP: Well I can't use my own; it has to be State inspected. And I have cooked some, but I had to buy it from—grocery store.

00:08:59

AE: So where are you getting your hams that you barbecue?

00:09:01

GP: Pittman Packing Company out of Sharon[, Georgia].

00:09:08

AE: And so since you're just barbecuing—selling one day a week, how much do you go through in a week? How much meat?

00:09:15

GP: Well that differs. I mean since gas prices is getting so high it's off some, but it's—I can't tell you exactly how much because it varies from one week to the other.

00:09:31

JP: Somewhere around thirty and forty—somewhere around thirty and forty pounds a week and somewhere anywhere from seven to ten gallons of stew a weekend.

00:09:43

AE: And so Jimmy, are you—are you working on the farm with your father during the week and then coming down here?

00:09:47

JP: No, I'm a paramedic for St. Mary's Hospital.

00:09:50

AE: Okay. And what do you enjoy about the barbecue business here?

00:09:56

JP: I like just seeing people every day. Years ago I was in the insurance agent—well the insurance agent with—with my granddaddy and I got used to visiting with the people around town, and then when he closed that agency—well we closed the agency—I kind of lost contact with the—with the local people. You—you travel out of town to work and it's—it's good to see old friends again and they come in—some of my old customers that—that were in—in—my customers in the insurance agency now come back and they're my customers for the barbecue, so it's like old times again.

00:10:35

AE: Uh-hmm. So with being a paramedic, do you always take Saturdays off, so it's just a long-standing rule that you're going to be here on Saturday?

00:10:42

JP: Yes, I have to be here on Saturday. Most of—I've gotten some people in that are able to help me, and I can take a Saturday off every now and then, but I need to be here most every Saturday because I carry all the recipes in my head.

00:11:01

AE: Oh, yeah? You're the keeper of the family recipes?

00:11:03

JP: I am. *[Laughs]*

00:11:03

AE: So you make the stew every week and—and what else do you do?

00:11:09

JP: I make the stew and the sauce.

00:11:10

AE: Can you tell me a little bit about the sauce without giving away any secrets?

00:11:13

JP: It's a vinegar-based sauce—red-based. I think it's classified as a North Carolina sauce as barbecuers know. It's—it's a vinegar-based; it's not a sweet sauce. It's just a regular—once again, vinegar-based sauce.

00:11:36

AE: And so you do the stew and the sauce and then your daddy does the meat?

00:11:39

JP: Yes, he does the meat.

00:11:42

AE: And y'all have beans and slaw. Tell me about those.

00:11:47

JP: Well the beans are my own recipe. We sat down and we worked it out, and the girls came in one day and added some minced onions to the recipe, and that made a lot of difference in the

flavor of the beans. And their beans are very sweet and seem to be quite popular here lately. The slaw is made by a little lady that's been working for Daddy for a while. He's—she is the same age he is, and it's her own recipe, and I don't have any idea what it is. **[Laughs]** She goes back there and whips it up in the back; I think she's got magical something back there—she does it. I don't know what she does. **[Laughs]**

00:12:28

AE: So did you learn the stew recipe from your daddy, or how did you get to be the keeper of that recipe?

00:12:36

JP: Actually, we took Uncle Clifford's recipe and improved on it. Mama improved on it, and I've improved on Mama's recipe. And it's pretty much consistent every week now and everybody says it's good.

00:12:54

AE: Now is that a recipe—you say they're all in your head, but is it something that you'll write down one day and either share or put in a safe deposit box or something?

00:13:02

JP: It's written down but only parts of it.

00:13:06

AE: **[Laughs]** So no one is going to be able to reproduce it.

00:13:11

JP: That's probably right; I'll pass it on to somebody.

00:13:14

AE: And you have three kinds of meat in your stew, is that right?

00:13:19

JP: Yes, we—stew in the past has been made out of byproducts. We don't use any byproducts in our stew; we use good cuts of beef—usually chuck or a top round—eighteen to twenty pounds and a couple hams and some turkeys.

00:13:42

AE: Okay. And would you say that would be a signature difference from other Georgia Brunswick stews or—or what makes y'all's a standout?

00:13:51

JP: The secret ingredient is the standout; it's a difference between my stew and every—and other people's stew. Some use vegetables in their stuff and you—you're going to get a different taste on a stew anywhere you go because everybody has their own old-timer recipe that they use.

00:14:09

AE: Uh-hmm. Do y'all ever participate in any like church stew fundraisers or stew cook-offs or anything like that?

00:14:19

JP: No. I've never participated anywhere. I would—was thinking a couple years ago about going down to the pig-out at Vienna but I can't—I found out that they had done away with their stew competition, so I didn't—didn't bother with it.

00:14:34

AE: So and when do you start cooking the stew? The day of? Early?

00:14:39

JP: The meat is cooked and cooled on Friday, and then everything is put together on Saturday morning. It takes me about three hours to put it all together.

00:14:51

AE: [To George Paul] And you, sir, you're barbecuing out at your farm? You make the barbecue at your farm?

00:14:59

GP: No, at my house, yeah—on an open pit, the old-fashioned way, not a fancy smoker or nothing. It's just on an old pit and put the coals under it and that's—that's about it. It's hard work—regular work. You got to stay with it.

00:15:23

AE: Can you describe what the—the design of the pit is and what it looks like?

00:15:27

GP: Well it's eighteen inches—sixteen inches deep and it's about twelve foot long. Cooking lots of hams on it and we normally—the Fourth of July and Christmas we fill it up—cook a bunch of them.

00:15:49

AE: So how many hams could you fit on there at one time?

00:15:55

GP: About between twenty-five and thirty.

00:16:02

AE: And you do that many every week?

00:16:02

JP: No.

00:16:03

AE: No?

00:16:04

GP: I wish I did. *[Laughs]*

00:16:05

JP: No, not me.

00:16:09

GP: No, that's just on special occasions we cook that many.

00:16:14

JP: We'll cook about—we'll cook about thirty hams on the Fourth of July, probably about fifteen to twenty for Christmas. We'll—Christmas orders are special orders and—but the Fourth of July is—is special orders and pick-up.

00:16:35

AE: Now how did you build the pit that's at your house? Did your Uncle Clifford help you at all?

00:16:41

GP: No. No, he never did see it. I'm disappointed. I wanted him to come out there and look at it but he—he just give it up and sat up there and wondered. I told my wife, I said, "Uncle Clifford can tell you to the penny how much money we took in down here." [*Laughs*] And—but he never did come out.

00:17:01

AE: Hmm. So how did you know how to build it—just—?

00:17:05

GP: Well it's just common thing through this part of the country. I mean you—he's got one out here, but his is in the ground. And I built mine above the ground because you don't have to bend over and—as far and it's easier.

00:17:29

AE: So is Clifford's original pit still back here somewhere?

00:17:31

GP: Yeah.

00:17:33

AE: Do you ever use it for anything?

00:17:38

GP: No, I don't. I use it mostly for storage.

00:17:45

AE: So have you enjoyed serving barbecue just on Saturdays?

00:17:51

GP: Oh, yeah. I, like Jimmy, I enjoy the people and got lots of friends since we've been in this business.

00:18:03

AE: And has it been a lucrative for you to maintain one day a week? Has it been a good moneymaker one day a week?

00:18:11

GP: Well, it's fair.

00:18:14

AE: Yeah? Good enough.

00:18:17

GP: Won't get rich at it, that's for sure.

00:18:18

JP: Not a half a day week, that's for sure. It could possibly be a very lucrative if we moved into the city of Atlanta or even into Athens and do it more than one day a week. We have people come from all over the nation to eat with us—California, a lot of folks up around north. I think some of the guys that have read John's book [*Southern Belly* by John T. Edge] have been in, and somebody did a nice article on the Internet barbecue site for us and we have travel—we have people that regularly travel from throughout the state here to eat. And—but, yeah, I think we could probably do something else with it if we really pushed at it and was willing to—to put a little forth—a little more effort on it.

00:19:12

AE: Well, that said, what would you say is—is the future of Paul's Barbecue? Are you going to keep it and maintain it in the future here?

00:19:21

JP: Well I think it's part of a Southern tradition and definitely a part of this area's tradition, and as long as I'm able to—to push forward, I think we'll keep it here. I mean it's—so much has—we've lost so much heritage as it is, we—it's time to keep this particular heritage alive, if possible.

00:19:40

AE: Uh-hmm. Do you have children of your own?

00:19:44

JP: I have a six year-old little girl. She's the barbecue princess, she tells everybody.

00:19:50

AE: So what might you say to her if she comes to you when she's older and says she wants to take over the family business?

00:19:56

JP: I hope she's got a good enough man to work it [*Laughs*] because I don't think she'll be able to. She's a girly girl; I don't know whether she'll be able to do the cooking like that. She's not much on getting dirty, but I think she's going to be definitely a good cook, so she might be able to handle the other end of it.

00:20:13

AE: Have y'all had time to travel around and—and sample other barbecue in Georgia or in the South?

00:20:20

JP: I eat a lot of other people's stuff. Some I like and some—some, it's just smoked meat. I really haven't felt anybody's stew that I like as well as ours, though.

00:20:39

AE: [To George Paul] Have you—sir, have you had many other people's barbecue?

00:20:43

GP: Well not many—I used to—down at Gray, Georgia, I used to stop in there a lot. I don't even remember the name of the place, but I enjoyed that. And I don't even know whether it's still open or not.

00:21:04

JP: That would be the Old Clinton Barbecue, and it's still open, and I like it too.

00:21:06

AE: Say that again. I'm sorry.

00:21:08

JP: It's the Old Clinton Barbecue, and I've eaten there too, and he's got good food.

00:21:13

AE: So tell me about the hams and why you like to work with that part of the pig and—and what kind of end product you get.

00:21:23

GP: Okay. You don't get as much fat with the ham as you do a whole hog, and the Health Department came out and said fat is not good for you, so people kind of shied off of whole hogs. Really, I think a whole hog is better barbecue but general public would rather have—they can't

stand to see that little piece of fat in there, and that's where your flavor is at but if they don't—
don't want it, we don't give it to them.

00:22:01

JP: Our meat is—we cook a lot of the fat and water out of our meat; it's real fluffy and not greasy. And a lot of people that eat it say that they don't get the associated heartburn with—that they had gotten with meat that has fat in it. We are particular about the hams that we get. Here a couple of years ago we discovered that we were getting hams out of Indiana from Indiana Packers, and the meat was real, real white and sweet and fluffy, and we've pretty much told our packer that we're not going to accept anything but that.

00:22:38

GP: It came to—that Indiana Packing meat came through Pittman Packing Company. They was brokering for them.

00:22:48

JP: Right. But that—that's the particular ham we like, and it is far above anything else we've gotten from—from the North Carolina area or from the Midwest area. It's just a good breed of hog and it's good—it's a good—good meat.

00:23:07

AE: Now, Jimmy, do you ever help out with the cooking of the meat?

00:23:09

JP: Yes, I can do it. I mean Daddy has got a man that works for him, Ralph Turner, and Ralph has taken over the—the cooking, so if Ralph is there cooking, I don't really need to be worried about it anymore. And he and Daddy can take care of that. Ralph is a good—good fellow.

00:23:29

AE: So can y'all tell me—one or both of y'all—how you cook the meat and if you season it or pre-season it and—and turning it and those kinds of things?

00:23:39

JP: We don't season the meat. We just wash it and put it on the pit, and all of the seasons come from the type of wood and we just, you know—you can't cook hams like you cook everything else. You can't rush them; it's got to be a slow process, and it's going to—the meat has to—the bone has to get hot and transfer the heat inside and then it needs to cook from the outside—from the inside out and that's—you know, it's not on the—on the rotisserie or anything. It's just—it's just hand-turned when the skin starts to brown, and then we turn it another way just to keep it from burning.

00:24:19

AE: Uh-hmm. So you generally—can you say that you generally turn it once or twice or as—as many times as needed?

00:24:24

JP: We turn it four times.

00:24:31

AE: And then when y'all serve it, do y'all just you know pull the ham apart or do you serve like chopped ham or—or sliced or anything like that?

00:24:39

JP: We used to hand-chop it with a meat cleaver; then I discovered a wonderful invention called a buffalo chopper, which is sitting right back there, and the buffalo chopper takes care of it now for us.

00:24:53

AE: Okay.

00:24:55

JP: You can set it to whatever length you want the meat to do and it—it does real well.

00:24:58

AE: Now do you still have your uncle's chopping block?

00:25:05

GP: No, the original chopping block was wood, and it's a huge tree and my uncle used it and—it didn't look too clean to me. It'd sit in here and get real hot in the summertime, and the grease would run out of it and so I didn't use it. And I've chopped back down on a pad on the table. So Jimmy come along with that, and that was a great help.

00:25:47

AE: So you said your uncle never saw your pit at your house, but surely he tasted your barbecue, yeah?

00:25:52

GP: Yeah, I think he did. I had a little trouble with it for a week or two, and my mother lived right down the street here and I'd take it by—down there after we'd close up and—some of it and she'd taste of it and [say,] “You better cook it just a little bit more.” And [I] finally got it down pat, so—.

00:26:20

AE: So tell me about this building here and how it's maybe changed or not changed over the years.

00:26:26

GP: Okay. It's been a little bit of everything in this building. This front part up here was a drive-thru filling station, you might say, and had a grocery store, meat market, and barbecue. And—and my Uncle Clifford, if it was a dollar out there, he saw fit to get a quarter of it. He had business every which a ways—traded mules and sold mules, had a truck delivering ice back before people had refrigerators, and he—he was just a good businessman. And I reckon he did mighty well. I don't know.

00:27:19

AE: And so since y'all have been in here, has—have you changed anything about the building?

00:27:23

GP: About the building, no, it's just like he left it.

00:27:28

JP: Painted the floor.

00:27:31

GP: Yeah, well, painted—painted the walls and ceiling and floor. But other than that, we hadn't changed the building structure.

00:27:39

JP: No, we haven't changed the structure.

00:27:41

AE: So what do you think a place like this means to a community like Lexington?

00:27:46

GP: Well it's been here so long and it's kind of—folks look forward to coming right around, I hope. I said something about doing some work on the inside here and fixing it up a little, and I had one or two that said, “No, leave it like it is.” They said, “That's—that's—that's what it's supposed to look like.” Okay. It suits me. [*Laughs*]

00:28:21

AE: So do you have the same people coming in every Saturday?

00:28:25

GP: Just about—yeah, lots of the old customers have died off, and I miss them but still got people local.

00:28:37

AE: And a lot of people, I imagine, who bought barbecue from your uncle and now you?

00:28:42

GP: Well not too many—most of them gone on.

00:28:47

JP: I have people come in quite often that says, you know, “I ate here when I was a little boy with my Daddy and he’s—,” and they’ll say there’s nothing changed and it—sometimes we—I had a guy that just drove through here one time, and he said, “I haven’t been here since I was small, and I was just out riding and I thought I’d come by and see if it was still here.” And he sat and ate and he talked, and it’s just part of a little bit of nostalgia; brings back some good fond memories for a lot of people that’s loved ones have passed on that used to come here with them.

00:29:26

GP: We got a fellow out of Augusta that stops [here] going to the [University of] Georgia football game and he always brings a load [of people] with him. They have a big time—good fellow and he grew up going to the Georgia games with his daddy and stopping here from—and they’re regular customer on football days. Look for Jake; he’s coming.

00:29:57

AE: [*Laughs*] So do you sell out of—of stew or the barbecue first?

00:30:05

GP: Well it both goes about—about the same.

00:30:10

JP: I get—a lot of times they'll get a lot of stew before they'll get the meat. If somebody comes and gets a gallon or two and it's not—not anticipated, then we'll end up with just beans and meat and—and but it's usually, like he says, runs hands in hand with each.

00:30:28

AE: Do you have that a lot, where people will come and order a pound of meat and a gallon of stew?

00:30:34

JP: Usually they're running a pound and a quart, or if they order a gallon of stew they'll get a—a gallon and five-pounds of meat. It's according to how big a family they're feeding or what they're going to do with it, but we routinely have orders—large orders with stew.

00:30:52

AE: Have y'all ever missed a Saturday?

00:30:53

GP: Well we're—we're closed the Saturday after Christmas, Saturday after the Fourth of July.

00:31:04

JP: And New Year's and Thanksgiving.

00:31:08

AE: So those—those scheduled Saturdays are the only Saturdays y'all have missed?

00:31:10

JP: That's correct.

00:31:13

GP: Try not to miss—so far we haven't.

00:31:17

AE: Wow. Well do you foresee—staying—you said you want to stay at this a long—while more but not quite as long as—as your uncle. Do you—are you happy to leave it in your son's hands?

00:31:28

GP: Oh, yeah. I think he can handle it all right—so far proved out pretty good.

00:31:38

AE: What do you think would happen to this community if—if your place wasn't here one day?

00:31:42

JP: I'm sure they'd find somewhere else to eat but we have—people that live in the county, when they have farm visitors—we had some guys from Australia here, and we've had people from Russia and they just—it just—they always bring their guests here to give them a touch of—I guess a taste of the Old South. You can see it, but you haven't tasted it. And we've fed some Englishmen that were here doing some studying of early 1800 homes here about last summer and

they were all—it's just part of—part of like they're stepping back. They're getting a taste of how things—how old-fashioned barbecue was done while they're looking at the—the old late 1800 houses. It was all just part of it.

00:32:40

AE: Uh-hmm, yeah. And how about that for y'all's place, where, you know, the atmosphere contributes so much to—some of the experience of eating here? You know, like—like this old building—eating here instead of, you know, getting barbecue and taking it away; coming here and—and being in this building adds to the experience of the barbecue?

00:33:02

JP: I think so; I think they like the old rustic building. Like Daddy said, the Health Department is not really excited about it, but it's just part of the—part of the charm. Like he said, a lot of folks said this is part of the charm, the—the exposed wood—is part of the charm and the floor is part of the charm. So yeah, I think it's part of the—the area's—part of the experience to come in and sit down and—and they—a lot of—excuse me—a lot of—we get a lot of University of Georgia students. Pete McCommons, who owns the *Flagpole* [magazine] up there, is a good friend of ours, and he brings his friends down and they come back, and it's just part of something they haven't been exposed to before.

00:33:52

AE: And tell me about your pies.

00:33:55

JP: It's an old recipe that's been handed down; my wife has it now, and we usually try to run some pecan pies or—or red velvet cake once in a while.

00:34:12

AE: And you—you sell a lot of pie and cake?

00:34:15

JP: We usually get rid of the pies pretty quick, yeah. [*Laughs*]

00:34:18

AE: They're whole pies, then?

00:34:19

JP: We do sell it but we like to try to—to sell them by—by the piece because if we sell the whole pie—the guys from Australia bought the whole pie last week and there wasn't any—any pie for anybody else when they got here, so they were kind of ticked about that.

00:34:37

GP: That fellow I was speaking about from Augusta, Jake, you better have him a whole pie so he can take it home and eat it during the ballgame. [*Laughs*]

00:34:47

JP: Jake gets upset about his pie if it's not here.

00:34:52

AE: [*Laughs*] Was your uncle selling pie?

00:34:55

GP: No, I don't think.

00:34:59

JP: Talking about tradition, Jake comes by and he gets a pound of sliced meat to eat because that's what his daddy always ate, so he eats that pound to kind of be reconnected with his father and he—they get two or three other pounds for his friends to eat but he—it's only the sliced is only for him and that's just part of his—his reconnecting with the past, I think.

00:35:26

AE: Yeah, food and memory is a very strong connection, definitely. So do you have—being on the highway here, do you have people just stopping in who had never been here before and never heard of it?

00:35:36

GP: Yes, we do. Yes.

00:35:40

AE: I imagine they're pleased they found you?

00:35:43

JP: They come back.

00:35:42

AE: They're pleased they found you?

00:35:45

GP: Yeah.

00:35:47

AE: They come back?

00:35:47

JP: They come back, yeah.

00:35:49

AE: Tell me about this old icebox refrigerator back here.

00:35:52

GP: Well that was part of the meat market. That's where—I'm really amused at the time how it's changed. You see those hooks?

00:36:08

AE: Yes, sir.

00:36:09

GP: I've seen my Uncle Clifford have goats—dressed goats hanging up there, no refrigeration, no fans on them, just—just hanging there. And if you was to hang one up there this day and time, you wouldn't be able to tell what it was in an hour's time. It would be covered up with flies, but you never saw a fly on it when he was—back when he was doing it. Of course he wouldn't leave them up there all night; he'd put them in the refrigerator but it just—I think about it pretty

regular. How did he get by with—I don't know. We just didn't have the insects back then we have now.

00:37:11

AE: Uh-hmm, different times. So you—y'all have both been talking a lot about health regulation and—and changes and—and things like that. Do you think that the tradition of Southern barbecue is in jeopardy at all?

00:37:27

GP: No, I don't think so because we're pretty much following the rules and getting by with the inspectors. I think, in fact, the business—I'm right proud. I was rating—we got a double 100 over there on the last inspection. So I'm not—I don't think the rules and regulations are going to hurt barbecue. You just—you just got to do what they want you to do.

00:38:04

AE: Yeah, do—oh, go ahead.

00:38:06

JP: If anything, it's probably—might improve the Southern barbecue because years ago you could get food poisoning up under those pecan trees somewhere if you went and got some, and a lot of people quit eating stew and stuff because like they had gotten sick from it. If—by everybody adhering to the health codes and making sure everything is properly heated and properly cooled, I think that experience of food poisoning from stew is eliminated, and people are more reluctant and not—not as reluctant now to eat stew now as they used to be in the past.

00:38:46

AE: Has it ever been—or do you foresee it being a problem that everything—or that the barbecue is cooked offsite?

00:38:52

JP: No, the pit was inspected years ago by the—by the Head Inspector of Georgia, and he's told her—he said everything is great. You need to be sure that—that everything is transported in the right warmth but other than that, it's okay.

00:39:09

AE: And what about—since you are cooking offsite, then, that makes this a cleaner establishment because there's not all that smoke and whatnot; because a lot of barbecue places feel like they're in jeopardy because the smoke is an issue and Health Inspectors are not liking the smoke and—and all that mess?

00:39:24

JP: Well I never quite understood how they cooked inside, anyway. I've seen that done, but it's like, I don't know—because we generate a lot of smoke—a lot of smoke when we cook.

00:39:38

GP: Of course our pit is up to State standards; it's screened in and, as Jimmy says, lots of smoke, so the insects can't—they can't stand it.

00:39:57

AE: Now you said that you just use the old pit back there for storage and whatnot. Is there anything to go look at; could we go take a look at it?

00:40:03

GP: Oh, you can look at it, yeah.

00:40:05

AE: Yeah? Will you walk back there with me?

00:40:08

GP: The people next door [are the] ones that storing stuff in it; we're not, I mean but I—I'll be glad for you to go out there and look at it, so—.

00:40:19

AE: Okay, can we head back there, and I can carry this [recording equipment] with me? Okay.

[Dogs Barking]

00:40:37

GP: Well he had a hole dug out right in there. He put—got his coals from out there and put it up under it—I'm sorry there's so much junk in here you can't see it but—.

00:40:56

AE: No, that's fine so this—this building would have been original, too, that the pit is attached to?

00:41:02

GP: Well after State regulations it had to be in a screened place and this—this is the way it came, but at one time he just cooked it out there under that mulberry tree.

00:41:16

AE: So what time—about what year would this pit and building have been built?

00:41:22

GP: I'm sorry, I don't know. I got no idea.

00:41:25

AE: Okay. Okay, now Jimmy was just saying that the old pit back there was an old mule barn.

00:41:35

JP: Right?

00:41:36

GP: What?

00:41:36

JP: Uncle Clifford's old storage was a mule barn. That was Uncle Clifford's old storage and mule barn?

00:41:45

GP: Hmm?

00:41:47

JP: Right. Well then, no, it's not the old mule barn. What is the building behind the house here?

00:41:56

GP: That's where had the barbecue pit and—and—just a storage building. The old mule barn was on back further than that.

00:42:10

JP: The mule barn doesn't—doesn't exist anymore.

00:42:14

AE: Okay. So tell me quickly about your little logo, the flying pig?

00:42:18

JP: That's some of my mother's doings. She picked out the flying pig and years ago, and we got sort of kind of accumulated flying pigs over the years, so the one above the cash register actually does fly. If you put a battery in it, it will go way out.

00:42:39

AE: So do people give you pigs? You have a lot around here.

00:42:40

JP: Well the dressed pig over there was given to us, and the flying pig over the register was given to us and the—.

00:42:53

GP: The flag.

00:42:53

JP: The flag was given to us by the Farm Credit Association after we catered a meal for them, and the other pig we just bought.

00:43:06

AE: So I don't see y'all pushing any t-shirts or anything like that. Is that something you've thought about doing?

00:43:13

JP: No, not really. We—I've thought about getting the girls [employees] some—some shirts to wear here but they just—we just haven't got around to doing that yet. I don't—I thought once upon a time something about selling round stones as—as stew stones but I forgot about that and we didn't really get to anywhere near that. But no, we don't do any kind of souvenirs or anything along that.

00:43:38

AE: Do you do any advertising at all?

00:43:42

JP: Very little. I did buy a sign that I put out on the side of the road. I live about a quarter mile up the road, and we did put out a sign back in the summer when business got so terribly bad, and it did help. But we don't do much advertising—very little.

00:44:05

AE: And about—you were talking about the girls who work on Saturday. About how many people do you have working here on a Saturday?

00:44:09

JP: It's usually run by about three girls: my sister-in-law and a good friend of mine, and then we have another girl that's a good friend of mine and she works relief when somebody else can't be here and Ruby Nell who is Daddy's age is—.

00:44:30

GP: Don't forget Ruby Nell.

00:44:31

JP: That's right. She takes care of the slaw making and—and the washing of the dishes and the general aggravation of Daddy wherever she can.

00:44:40

AE: [*Laughs*] Your father just said don't forget Ruby Nell; has she been with y'all for a long time?

00:44:43

JP: Yeah, I think Ruby Nell has been about over ten years.

00:44:47

AE: Yeah.

00:44:50

JP: Maybe even longer, I'm not sure.

00:44:50

AE: And you say now she makes the slaw?

00:44:53

JP: She does make the slaw.

00:44:55

AE: Is it your recipe or is she adding some of her own stuff to it?

00:44:57

JP: That's her magic back there. I don't know what she does. She takes all the stuff back there and it's—slaw comes out. *[Laughs]*

00:45:06

AE: All right. Well is there anything that I haven't asked or known to ask that you'd like to—to contribute to the recording here?

00:45:19

JP: Not that I know of.

00:45:20

AE: Any final thoughts about your life in the barbecue business?

00:45:24

GP: No, but I've enjoyed it—lots of work to it but—.

00:45:32

AE: Is there one thing you enjoy over the other—raising cattle or making barbecue?

00:45:38

GP: Huh?

00:45:39

AE: Do you like raising cattle better or less than making barbecue?

00:45:44

GP: Well I don't know. You don't get to meet as many people out there in the pasture as you do in the barbecue. And I—I like people.

00:45:54

AE: Do y'all have any funny stories of things that have happened over the years on a Saturday here?

00:46:03

JP: I'm sure there's some somewhere, but I can't recall them.

00:46:04

GP: Not really. **[Laughs]** No. I had one fellow came in one day about the time we opened up and said, "I got to have some stew." And I said, "Well I don't know—how much you want?" "All you got." I said, "I'm sorry, I can't let you have all I got." He said, "Well we're giving a

benefit barbecue for a fellow down the road, and I left last night and the crowd let my stew spoil, and said I got to have some.” **[Laughs]** I said, “Well I’ll share it with you, but I can’t let you have all of it.” So—.

00:46:58

AE: And tell me about your prices real quick and what they are now and do you have—do you have an idea of what your uncle was selling barbecue for in the early days?

00:47:09

GP: No, I don’t.

00:47:12

JP: It’ seems like to me he was getting five dollars a pound for his meat—maybe six—I’m not really sure, and—.

00:47:25

AE: And y’all have a barbecue plate for seven dollars, a sandwich—small sandwich for \$3.25 and you sell skins—pork skins—for \$3.25 a pound. Tell me about that.

00:47:36

JP: Well, if you’re going to get the skins, you got to be here at seven-thirty [in the morning] or you’re not—you’re not going to get any because they’re lined up waiting on them when they get here. It almost comes to blows sometimes about skins. **[Laughs]** They—they take them home and crisp them up and eat them and then some—some people actually—I have actually a woman that’s all she eats is the skin; she doesn’t eat anything else but the skins.

00:48:07

AE: Okay, so—but so you open the restaurant really at nine a.m., right?

00:48:11

JP: We're open at nine a.m., but to really be in the swing of things probably ten, ten-thirty before we get everything that's ready—ready to go. Usually, [there's] something here to eat around nine but ten-thirty is—I have everything completed.

00:48:28

AE: And then when is it usually all gone?

00:48:30

JP: Around [two] o'clock—twelve, eleven-thirty, twelve, one. It's just—it's—it's—we haven't sold out in so long that the economy is working on us pretty good so it's—it used to be we had been completely empty at twelve-thirty, and the economy has been bad for the last year or so—it's around two or so before we get cleared up here.

00:48:57

AE: So what do you do if it happens where you don't sell out? What do you with the leftover barbecue?

00:49:01

JP: Well we can carry it one—one week but that's it and then you—of course, you have to throw it away after that.

00:49:09

AE: Do y'all enjoy eating barbecue?

00:49:14

GP: I have just about lost my taste for it for some reason. I don't know why. [*Laughs*] I—I occasionally eat some.

00:49:22

AE: How about the stew?

00:49:26

GP: Yeah, the stew too.

00:49:28

JP: He eats more pies than anything. I said he eats more pies than anything else.

00:49:31

AE: How about you, Jimmy. Are you—are you a fan of the barbecue and the stew?

00:49:35

JP: I taste everything throughout the morning. And I usually eat a sandwich or two during the morning. It's according to how hungry I am, but, yeah, I like the meat.

00:49:47

AE: Are there some other family-owned restaurants here in Lexington?

00:49:52

JP: I don't think so.

00:49:53

AE: Really?

00:49:55

GP: Chicken Express.

00:49:56

JP: That's not family owned; that's—that's a chain.

00:49:59

GP: Subway.

00:50:00

JP: That's a chain too.

00:50:03

AE: So have—have there been some over the years that you've just lost in the area?

00:50:06

JP: Yeah, I think so. It was just little mom and pop—there was a place down the road here that some guys opened up selling home cooking, and I thought when they opened that they were kind of too far out of town, and they lasted about a year and then they—they had good food. They

were just out of town. And then we had Granny's Kitchen up the road and—and Leroy was running that for years and years, and then when he died they couldn't—couldn't match up the health—new health regulations with the building that—once you transfer from one—one family to another then they have to adhere to the modern and they couldn't—couldn't come up to—to code so they just bulldozer(ed) it.

00:50:54

AE: Well that's a loss. Well congratulations to y'all for having staying power.

00:50:58

JP: Well we'll hold on as long as we can.

00:51:01

AE: Yeah. All right, well I sure appreciate y'all sitting with me. Thank you very much.

00:51:06

GP: Thank you for coming by and talking with us, and I'm sorry we haven't got any barbecue to serve you.

00:51:13

AE: I know. I'm sick that it's a Wednesday and not a Saturday, but I'll be back. I'll definitely be back. Thank you, Jimmy.

00:51:19

JP: Thank you.

00:51:19

[End George & Jimmy Paul Interview]