

LEWIS SHUCKMAN
Shuckman's Fish Company and Smokery, Louisville, Kentucky
* * *

Date: February 17, 2014

Location: Shuckman's Fish Company and Smokery, Louisville, KY

Interviewer: Sara Wood

Transcription: Shelley Chance, ProDocs

Length: One hour, thirteen minutes

Project: Cured South

[Begin Lewis Shuckman 021714 Interview]

00:00:01

Sara Wood: All right. Well I'm just going to introduce the tape here. So it is February 17, 2014. I'm sitting here in Louisville, Kentucky. I'm sitting here with Mr. Lewis Shuckman of Shuckman's Smokery and Fishery—

00:00:16

Lewis Shuckman: Fish Company and Smokery.

00:00:19

SW: I keep doing it backwards. I apologize.

00:00:20

LS: It's all right.

00:00:20

SW: Lewis I'm going to have you say hello and introduce yourself and tell me who—say hi and tell me who you are and where we are right now.

00:00:27

LS: Okay. I'm Lewis Shuckman and I'm President of Shuckman's Fish Company and Smokery in Louisville, Kentucky. We're in West Louisville and we're—we've been established here

ninety-four years. We've been here since 1919. My grandfather started the business in 1919. My father took over in 1954 and I took over in 2001.

00:00:50

And now my daughter is in the business with my other two daughters so it's—we're passing it on. Keeping it moving.

00:01:00

SW: And Lewis could you please tell me your birthdate for the record?

00:01:03

LS: November 11, 1954. So I'm an old-timer. *[Laughs]*

00:01:13

SW: Now you mentioned that your grandfather started here in 1919. Can you talk about what this business was in 1919 because from what I understand it wasn't a smokery? It was an actual grocery store?

00:01:27

LS: Correct. My grandfather met my grandmother in the 1900s. He was managing three supermarkets, big stores in Chicago. And he really wanted to do his own thing, although he loved Chicago and he loved the people in Chicago. So he managed to come down here. He married my grandmother, and he opened up his own grocery and back then it was called Shuckman's Meat Market and Grocery.

00:01:59

The building that housed the grocery used to be a saloon. And it was the Oertel's 92 Brewery, had a—if you would put up a saloon, if you used their beer and served their beer they would build the saloon. So the gentleman that was in there previously, his business was doing so well that he moved down a couple of blocks from 16th and Kentucky to like 18th and Kentucky. And we were at 16th and Kentucky and that's what my grandfather did. He went in there and he built Shuckman's Meat Market and Grocery at 1601 West Kentucky.

00:02:38

And that's where it all started was right there. And my father lived upstairs with his parents and his sister and they would live there 'til late '60s before they moved down outside of the grocery. And during the Flood, the big Great Flood [1937] we had in Louisville, people would bring their rowboats over to the grocery. And my grandfather moved everything upstairs and handed groceries out to the people in their boats. And all he did, there was no money, right; he just wrote their name down and what they got and after the Flood was gone everybody came and paid my grandfather. So that's just the historical story, you know the fact that rather than you know fleeing he stayed there and moved the groceries upstairs 'cause he knew the people in the neighborhood were going to need groceries and there wasn't really anyplace for anybody to go 'cause this water was just filling up Louisville like crazy 'cause it was coming through the sewers. So that's one that he endured.

00:03:42

So you know and we've done very well with the community and people in the neighborhoods. And you know we work very well with chefs and in the supermarkets and

specialty shops and you know people that know the name Shuckman, a lot of them, their family grew up with Shuckmans somewhere either if they're from Louisville and were born and raised here they probably went to school or grew up with some Shuckmans in West Louisville. So that's the beginning of the whole revolution.

00:04:14

SW: Hmm. And before I forget could you tell me your parents' names and your grandparents' names?

00:04:19

LS: Okay. My grandparents was Isia Shuckman. That was my grandfather and my grandmother's name was Sara Shuckman. My mother's name is Beverly Shuckman and my dad's name was Alvin Shuckman. So everybody's gone except for my mother. She's still here and very active.

00:04:39

SW: Now were both – your grandfather was originally from Chicago then? He was born and raised?

00:04:45

LS: Born and raised in Chicago. That's correct, yes.

00:04:48

SW: Yeah? Were your grandmother's people from here?

00:04:49

LS: My grandmother's people were from here in Louisville, yes. Yes. And he loved Louisville and he loved Chicago but you know there was just this opportunity of you know doing his own thing. And that came true here in Louisville. So I'm not saying it wouldn't have happened in Chicago but it happened here. So and he's very excited. But you know he still talks about the stories in Chicago 'cause he used to do a lot of the famous and very wealthy people would come to the store he was at because he was a master butcher. And he would do all of the fancy stuff for these people. And he trained a lot of the other people to do what he did but he was very old school.

00:05:33

You know and he made sausage. Back then a lot of his recipes were in Russian 'cause he came from Russia, and we had to have a lot of that stuff translated here when we started making sausage. So a lot of these recipes that we've got for our salmon products are very old. They're over 100 years old and very unique and we didn't want to change them so we didn't.

00:05:58

SW: And do you know where in Russia his family is from?

00:06:02

LS: I do not.

00:06:05

SW: That's interesting.

00:06:05

LS: Yeah. My sister did a family tree and I think she's still working on it. She started this thing like after this year actually. So we're all waiting impatiently to see where this thing takes us so it's quite interesting that she's even doing it. We kind of think it's cool.

00:06:18

SW: And do you know the name of the place he was working in Chicago where he was a master butcher? Do you remember the name?

00:06:23

LS: No. I don't. But I do know the owner of the grocery would pick him up when the weather was bad in his limousine. Yeah. So it was a very predominant upscale, very unique specialty store and there was three of them. And he didn't want my grandfather to leave and he offered him more money and so forth and you know my grandfather just told him. He said, "I just want to try my hand at my own thing." And he understood. He told him, he said, "You know if things don't work out you can always come back," which my grandfather was very honored that he said that. And knowing that offer was there that when he did his own thing I'm sure it helped him move forward doing his own business.

00:07:03

SW: So when you were little Lewis, and growing up with your grandfather and your father, I mean did you imagine that you would eventually become part of the business somehow?

00:07:12

LS: I think the opportunity was there. I enjoyed coming to work with dad. I started when I was like twelve—coming to work with him on Saturdays. And yeah. I mean it was—I just found it interesting what was going on. And you know the proteins and making hamburger patties and cutting steaks and pork chops and all this kind of stuff; yeah I found it very interesting. And it was a very good learning experience for me because it was hands on. My grandfather and my father both, when they would cut things like pork chops and t-bones they didn't have a saw, electric saw. They would cut it with a knife and then use a meat cleaver.

00:07:58

So that was all part of the art of being a butcher you know back in the day. And today the butcher's today most of what they do and the way they do it was taught to them from the old school butchers. So that art of being a butcher is still very relevant and today people should appreciate hand-cut steaks and things of this nature because that's an art that has been around for hundreds of years.

00:08:29

SW: Now at this point when you were younger I'm just interested in figuring out when the fish became—. Was the fish always something that your grandfather did? Did he smoke fish as part of his grocery and meat shop? When did that sort of come into play?

00:08:44

LS: My grandfather and my father both did a lot with fish. And they sold smoked fish. And as we moved forward, you know, in the business—as me coming into the business, it was you know

transportation and cost and things of this nature were not the same as they used to be because back then they used to salt a lot of the fish. And you could put them in a barrel so it was very shelf stable. And as things moved forward and diets were changing and things like that, you know, my dad and I discussed it and we decided that we'd go ahead and we'd try to do our own fish as opposed to buying a smoked fish done from somewhere else in the United States. And we had the equipment. We had the smokehouse. We just had to get it modified. And then I spent a week at the Pacific Northwest in Seattle at a couple of smoked seafood classes and learned from some very well-known people in the industry as far as smoking and curing and things like that.

00:09:57

So I was really honored to be able to go to school and learn from these guys. And then I came back to Louisville and we had already been doing it and—and my father and I were doing it the very, very old-school way. And then when I came back from Seattle from school I learned a lot of really good things that would help us as far as having consistency and being able to turn things around a little bit quicker than we did before because with technology and the curing and smoking the wood as today is a little bit more refined so that you don't have to do extra work. In other words, the wood used to be in logs and now it's a sawdust form. We used to have to cut the logs and go through all of that which is very time-consuming and you couldn't use green wood if it was just cut 'cause it had to sit for a year. So as the technology changed when I came back from Seattle that's the kind of stuff that I implemented. That and then, you know, we got a vacuum machine and started vacuum-packing the fish and we got a little bit more creative with the types of woods. So in other words instead of just using hickory, today we use apple or we'll use alder, so we expanded our horizon.

00:11:13

But the people that were at this conference, a lot of them were from the Pacific Northwest but most importantly they were Alaska. And you know those people up there can do a lot of the stuff with their eyes closed. And for me to be, you know, in a classroom with folks that were master smokers in Alaska was just a super-honor. And I kind of felt that I learned from the masters, and so it was just good for us when I came back.

00:11:39

SW: I was going to ask you that about the smoking tradition here in Louisville if there is one in Kentucky or in your family? It sounds like it was a learning curve, but I just wonder like locally here as this business was growing if there were smoking traditions already in place that were particular to this part of Kentucky?

00:12:01

LS: Traditionally in Kentucky smoking and curing was always done in some form of a pit whether the pit was metal, whether the pit was made out of brick or maybe the pit was made out of concrete. It was always done in that format as a pit. And the purpose of that was because a lot of the meats that were smoked were done in pits. The purpose for the pit was because you could have your firebox adjacent to the fire pit, so therefore when you would burn your wood the wood acted not just as a smoking source, but a heat source. And that is traditionally what was in the Louisville area. And that's how people used to smoke was everything was done in a pit.

00:12:49

What changed a lot of that was with the smokehouses the firebox was separate from the smokehouse so you—back in the day they used to either do it in a cooler for cold smoking like with cold-smoked salmon, not here in Louisville because we're the only ones in Louisville smoking fish for commercial purposes. So we would use ice when we first got into this. We would use ice or what—back in the day they would use walk-in coolers like they did in the Pacific Northwest. But in Louisville we didn't have any of that and we were kind of pioneers in in that field in the Louisville area. So we would use ice and the firebox being separate from the smokehouse would mean only smoke would go into the smokehouse and not heat.

00:13:41

So as we moved on – this is our second smokehouse and this one is refrigerated, we can smoke at below seventy-degrees, so for cold-smoked salmon and for cheese these are perfect temperatures because it's not getting any heat. And the curing and all of that with the salmon and with the trout and things like that. That's an old-school curing technique that my dad taught me because back in the day they used to cure bacon. So all of that salting and brining and all of that was all within our DNA [*Laughs*]. It was part of what we used to do. So we just took it to another level.

00:14:23

And what was so exciting about the fish getting into smoking and curing fish was that all of those products were being shipped into Louisville whether they were you know imported from Europe and came into New York and then were sent to Louisville or if they were put on a boat up in New York and shipped down on a boat. You know all of these things, Louisville didn't

have anything like that here. So when we got into this program that's what was so exciting is that we could provide and offer a smoked product, smoked fish and seafood products to the Louisville community but yet we would do hot-smoked, which came from the Pacific Northwest so folks who were from the West Coast they knew what hot-smoked was, and if they were from the East Coast they knew what cold-smoked was which is locks and the hot-smoked is called alder smoked because it's used with alder wood or a hickory wood or some people even use apple wood.

00:15:19

So all of this kind of came to us as we moved along and we've always been very good about listening to what customers have to say. And when you're self-employed you know the worst thing you can do is be just a hard-head and think you know all the answers when you really don't. So it's nice to listen to other people, get their input whether they're employees, whether they're customers or potential customers. It's great to get their input. And you know we come up with ideas and they either work or they don't. If they don't you move on. You know if you—**[Laughs]** if you get to working on an item and it just doesn't work out then you've got to move on.

00:15:59

One of the biggest mistakes I ever made was we were smoking lake white fish from Michigan. And we had them hanging on smoke sticks in the smokehouse. Well the weight of the fish as it cooks can be an issue. So when I opened up the door to the smokehouse **[Laughs]** the white fish were all over the floor of the smokehouse. You know that's an expensive education to learn by your mistake.

00:16:26

I do know this: that I never did it again. *[Laughs]* So I put that down as experience. And we've had some—when we first got started we had some trout come of the smokehouse that looked like jerky which now is popular but back then it wasn't, so that was another one of our learning curves.

00:16:48

SW: And so I'm curious as to—you mentioned cold and hot smoked and you kind of explained a little bit. But for people who really don't know what the difference is can you talk about what the difference between cold and hot smoked is?

00:16:59

LS: Absolutely. Cold smoking is a process where the fish is cured whether it's a brine cure or a salt cure it's cured. And then it's smoked with no heat. So the curing process—part of the curing process is the salt and the sugar and the spices. And then when it's in the smokehouse it's refrigerated and it keeps it under seventy-degrees and the smoke comes and the smoke acts as a natural preservative as well as a flavor enhancer.

00:17:34

Hot smoking is when the fish is cooked to an internal temperature of 150 or above. Therefore it's cooked because it's heat cooking the fish and it's smoke coming from the smoke generator. So those two together make it a hot smoked salmon, which the difference is cold smoked can be hand sliced because it's a very thick firm type of fish, sliced thin. Hot smoked it

breaks apart and it's very flaky because it's heat cooked. So it's cured, cooked, and smoked.

Cold smoked is just cured and smoked.

00:18:21

SW: Thank you. Do you have a preference for which one you like the best?

00:18:24

LS: It depends on what day it is. **[Laughs]** We have a bourbon cured that we do for both the hot and the cold smoked, and we use the Old Rip Van Winkle Bourbon. We use the barrel, the staves, we run those through a chipper and the de-charred material and all that goes into our hickory wood and then we also have one where we actually cure the fish in the bourbon, Old Rip Van Winkle ten year-old bourbon. And that to me is a very unique flavor, so it depends on what day it is. But you know there's days I like white fish. There's days I like trout. And there's days I like salmon. I mean it just—it's kind of all over the board you know?

00:19:07

But what's interesting is when I do demos and I'm in the store and I'm sampling the product, it gives me the opportunity to make sure that our quality control **[Laughs]** is—everything is good. So I'm sampling it almost as much as the customers are. **[Laughs]** But that's just the way it is you know. We enjoy what we make. Let's put it that way. **[Laughs]**

00:19:32

SW: Lewis, I'm wondering if you could talk a little bit about how you decided to come into the business full-time. Was it immediately after you left high school? What led to that decision and why?

00:19:44

LS: When I was a senior it—in high school and went to Wagner High School here in Louisville, I had a couple of choices: I could go, you know, go to school full time like at the University of Louisville. But I was young. I was eighteen and I kind of felt, you know, there was two things I was looking at: If I went to school you know there's four years of working in the family business that I won't be there full-time. I'll be at school. I'll be part-time. And I kind of toyed with that thing and finally dad just told me, he said, "Just do whatever it is you want to do." You know, I felt pressured that I was going to have to go to school full-time. I wanted to go to school part-time which is what I did. I went to Jefferson Community College for a period of time and then I did do some work at U of L [University of Louisville]. But that was what—I didn't want to miss anything because I felt when I got out of school you know all those years that I worked here with my dad, I saw opportunity. I had ideas. And that's what intrigued me about the food industry in general. Chefs I've always admired and had a lot of respect for because they're artists and I mean they—that's exactly what they're artists. These people take food and they make it look just unbelievable and the flavor is just outstanding. And these guys create this with their hands. This isn't some meat machine-made; this is with their hands. And I enjoyed working with these guys and the whole time I was, you know, working here and this, that, and the other, going to school, high school I just saw some opportunities. And when I got out of high school you know I came to work here and it was fun because the first thing I did was I was in sales which was great

because I already knew a little bit about what I was doing. So I just kind of implemented what I had learned all those years here and I moved forward.

00:21:42

And I did go to school part-time and that was great. And then you know after a while it was like things are going pretty good at work and I was going to school and I kind of thought you know, *Well what am I going to do? What am I going to major in*, you know? And marketing was probably where I was headed but I just decided that the family business was what I wanted to do. The only second love that I had besides here was working in radio. And I had some—done some things in radio and I thought, *man this is cool*, you know. But to get your license, again you needed to go to school. I probably could have got an on-the-job kind of thing where I would have gotten you know my license to be in radio. And that was fun. I liked it. That was just—that was over the top but I had to be realistic ‘cause a lot of people I know that were in radio were like, you know, “I’m in this job. I’ve got this here. I sent demo tapes out. I ain't going anywhere.” **[Laughs]** And they go—they said, “This is not what you want to do. You need to do something else.”

00:22:43

So that’s when I decided to work full-time and go to school and I’ve never regretted it. I mean, I’ve really literally never regretted it.

00:22:51

SW: When you talk about radio were you, like, a deejay? Could you talk a little bit about that?

00:22:58

LS: I worked a little bit. Yeah I helped some guys and did some stuff at two radio stations, W—let's see what was it was easy listening. I had done some commercials for the company and I ended up kind of going up there on weekends and goofing around with the guys up there and it was quite fun. They kind of let me do a whole lot of stuff and worked the board and all that. And then the guys there was a rock station here in Louisville called WQMF and they were a lot of young guys with great, great personalities and a lot of fun. And I would go up there and cut some commercials and stuff for them, so it was quite fun. I saw these guys my age just having a blast but you know they were all being honest that this is not what we're going to do unless we can move forward. So a lot of them went back to school and did that kind of thing or you know made sure they got their degrees in broadcasting or whatever to make their life a lot easier. But yeah. I mean that would have been—you know [*Laughs*] if it wasn't for the family business that definitely would have been—yeah that would have been the ticket right there. I had been all over that like a cheap suit.

00:24:03

But I enjoy this, so—you know.

00:24:06

SW: So what was it like working with your father when you started—when you decided to come in full—? I mean you had been working with him longer than when you decided to come in at you know after deciding not to do radio but do you have any particular memories of something he said to you or something he taught you or just the day-to-day working alongside him that you want to talk about?

00:24:31

LS: I think what magnetized me to my father, first of all he was my best friend. That's number one. And number two, Dad would take the time to show me things that I either wasn't real interested in or wasn't paying a lot of attention to but the purpose of that was so that I would know what was handed down to him, he wanted to hand down to me.

00:25:06

Taking all that into consideration it really helped me make business decisions in this business that I probably wouldn't have made otherwise. And if there was something I needed to know, if I—you know something I wanted to know you know I could ask him and he would make time to explain it to me. I've tried to do the same thing with Lauren who is in the business full-time. Whitney [Shuckman] and Shannon [Shuckman] who are here part-time, when they're here I show them things as well. These are not just things that Lauren is going to use in business nor was it things I was just going to use in business. It's things you can use in life. It can help you make rational decisions and not get in a hurry and make decisions that you may or may not regret.

00:26:01

So you know once you make that decision you've made the decision and my father always taught me to be patient and analyze things and make sure that you're doing the right thing and when you feel comfortable that you've crossed all your bridges and dotted all your Is and your Ts and so forth then you can move on. But never just jump into something; sit back and take a hard look at it, and that's what been good for the business. And you know when you're in a small business it's not nearly what everybody thinks it is. It's really an awful lot of hard work

and there's rewards that go along with that because you make the decisions yourself. You also make the mistakes yourself, so you try to learn by your mistakes.

00:26:45

But I think today you know here it is 2014. I've got my wife in the business and she takes care of the office and that business—and all that stuff, bookkeeping, then my daughter Lauren [Belanger] is in the back doing her thing. All three of us participate in sales whether seeing customers, talking to them on the phone. That I absolutely enjoy. And listening to what customers have to say whether it's a chef telling me he's come up with a new dish. *Is there something special that I can do with one of our smoked fish products?* Or whether it's a grocery store saying, "Hey. You know we're going to do something special for Lent and we'd like to know what we can work out with salmon burgers 'cause we want to do something for Lent." So being hands-on is very, very exciting for me but most importantly is not only do I get to go communicate with the customer but then to be able to come back to the plant and sit down and draw these things and these ideas on paper and being able to develop that particular product or that idea for the customer. That is just absolutely rewarding. That is very exciting and very rewarding knowing that we were in a position to step up to the plate and listen to what the customer had to say and make things happen.

00:28:04

I as a small business owner deal with folks and voice mail and this, that, and the other like everybody else. And there's nothing worse than to call up somebody or leave messages for someone and they don't return your phone calls only to have them tell you, you know, "I'm too busy. Send me an email." Well I'm like, "What are you? No, you don't understand. I want to

place an order with you right now. I don't want to be getting online and sending you an email.” You know, “Well I'm just too busy.” So that part of society is here. We got to deal with it, but it's part of society that we give a lot of friction to. We want to be able to talk to humans. Yeah. We got voice mail. We prefer you to call us when we're here and if we can't do that—but we always return calls. If somebody calls me on my cell phone I always answer the phone. I don't kick them into voice mail unless I'm in a meeting. And if I'm in a meeting my phone is not on me. It's in the car. **[Laughs]** No phone.

00:29:04

So taking all that into consideration that's you know what's exciting about what I do is being able to be involved in all aspects of the business.

00:29:14

SW: I'm wondering Lewis has that been challenging at all to keep it that way because it's—there's something so rare and wonderful about that and it seems like a lot of people choose to drop out of those values to make things bigger, better, faster. I'm wondering if you could talk about has that been difficult to maintain or has it been just second nature because that's the way it's been done.

00:29:36

LS: I think you have to make a commitment and this commitment is to go through any obstacle necessary to meet your goals. You have to have a very positive attitude. Distraction is the worst thing that you can have and by that I mean you know what your job function is. If there's something going on to the right of you, something going on to the left of you, if it doesn't

necessarily involve you, you need to kind of just focus on what you're doing. You're aware of it but in order to do your job you need to focus on your job and not be involved in some of these other issues.

00:30:27

Unless it's something that needs your immediate assistance you need to focus on what you're doing. It's very challenging. There is a lot to float the boat, trust me. You know there's just—there's so many avenues. You want to make sure your employees are happy and you want to make sure that the jobs they're doing are to your expectation; that doesn't mean to pound on your employees. That means communication is the best thing that you can have in business. And if you've got an employee that's not doing what they're supposed to be doing it's either two things: either one, you've not explained it to him and shown him, or two they're completely ignoring anything that you've shown them.

00:31:14

Chances are ninety-nine-point-nine percent of the time it's you have bad communication skills and you've not explained to the employee what needs to be done. So there's that aspect.

00:31:27

There's other issues. You got taxes to pay. You got to talk to vendors. A lot of times you got to chase vendors down to get things done. Things happen. Hey, you run out of an ingredient you know? You got to scramble around to get that ingredient in here. Okay. You got a customer that's waiting for an order. Yeah. The best thing to do is call that customer up and go, "Hey guess what? It's going to be two days or three days before you get your order." Don't not say

anything and then three days after they needed it go be-bopping in, “Here’s your order.” It doesn’t work that way. You don’t know. That chef may need that tomorrow night. And you’re not going to have it ready for two more days? At least call the guy and go, “Hey guess what? I got a problem. You know, the guy that I get my fish from didn’t get the fish out of the pond. They have—weren’t harvested ‘cause the pond was frozen. What can we do to help you in order to get that product in there for that particular dinner that you’re putting together?”

00:32:24

Most of the time you can work that out but you got to understand they’re busy just like you are. You’re not the only one that’s busy. Everybody is busy. At least be considerate enough to understand that and communicate with your customers and tell them what’s going on.

00:32:39

Outside of that, you know, you do take things home, you know? But you need to look for opportunities to keep your mind busy with other things. As an example, gardening is big with us. Me and my wife both are into that. She’s got her Kindle and she does her thing. My daughter has got her boys to keep her busy and occupied. I on the other hand, outside of gardening, my next little thing is model railroading and I build the little houses and do the wiring all that kind of stuff. And once you get [*Laughs*]
—once you get caught up into that the only thing you’re concerned about is what you’re doing at that time because it takes all of my concentration because you know building the little houses and painting the windows and all that takes a—it’s a real challenge. [*Laughs*] But you know what? That’s what it’s for. That’s why it’s called a hobby. That’s what it is. And so you need these other things outside of the workplace to keep your mind fresh and focused. A lot of times during the holidays we just burn it up. We’ll be

working Saturdays and Sundays and you get in here—I don't know you get here at six-thirty in the morning and you leave at seven-thirty, eight o'clock at night. You know, it's not the most favorite thing. But you know that it's not something that you're going to have to do for the rest of your life. It's because the holiday season, so you really are excited about it. You look forward to it and you know that you're going—you're getting the production done, so you're not going to be calling anybody and going, "Hey. We don't have A, B, or C," because you've got it. It's in stock. You know you look at last year's sales and you can make the predictions.

00:34:22

Another big time of the year for us outside of, you know, Christmas and New Year's is obviously Derby. So you know we have to—you know Derby is the first Saturday in May and the whole month of June—*[Interviewer's note: he means April]* we're doing nothing but preparing for Derby because it's fantastic. We have a lot of people come to Louisville for Derby and they get to enjoy the racing, they get to enjoy all of—everything Louisville has to offer including some of the best food in the country is right here in Louisville.

00:34:52

SW: And I'm wondering if you could talk a little bit about what happened when you decided—you took over in 2001 you said?

00:35:00

LS: Uh-hm.

00:35:01

SW: How have things changed in the handover from your father to you?

00:35:06

LS: We got completely out of the distributing side of the business. We were distributors and we were protein-oriented which means we handled a lot of beef, pork, veal, and lamb—value-added products like bacon and hams and things like that and dairy products and so forth.

00:35:26

And we took that particular opportunity and we saw that we could be sustainable by manufacturing our own products. So we knew what we were doing as far as the smoking of the fish but we came to a crossroads as a family; you know we sat down and we were—you know we were kind of like going all over the place. We didn't have distributors. We were selling direct, which is fine, but the only problem with that is you know you—it's unfair because you can't be everything to everybody. And we decided we would be good at something, so we had to pick one thing we were gonna to be. And that was either going to be a really, really good distributor and offer a lot of great products to customers, but that takes an awful lot of cash and it takes a lot of warehouse space, especially if you were to move forward in the direction of disposables. That takes a lot of warehouse space, okay? And then you've got your specialty side of things. And so you know it's a big task. It's a big undertaking. And the truth of the matter is we enjoyed manufacturing, hands-on, the smoked fish and the seafood products, seafood spreads and things of that nature. And of course our Kentucky Spoonfish Caviar was our guiding light. I mean that's what helped guide us down the road was because you know well if they're using caviar then they're going to be using smoked fish or they'll be using smoked salmon or they're

going to be using seafood spreads or what have you. So that was kind of— we let that take us in the direction that we're at.

00:37:06

And it was a good decision. You know we really are excited to be doing what we're doing. And it's—we're in control here. You know as opposed to what we were doing before. We're in control now because we can—you know if a customer wants something special you know instead of saying, "Well, we can't have you." We go, "Well, hey not a problem man! I'll come out and visit with you and we'll sit down and we'll see what it is you need. And hey if we can make it work we'll do it." So that's what we enjoyed. It's working with people.

00:37:37

And so that's a decision we made and we've never looked back. You know we have been very happy with the decision that we've made to do hands-on.

00:37:46

SW: And you mentioned the caviar and the Spoonfish caviar. Can you tell the story of how that came to be and what the reception was like and how that's changed?

00:37:56

LS: That was probably the most exciting part of my life and I really learned an awful lot from that. We got into that because it's a freshwater species and it's indigenous to Kentucky, and we knew this was out there but we didn't know a whole lot about it, and it wasn't a lot of people really chomping at the bit to get into this game because it was unchartered waters because

freshwater caviar was basically non-existent, and we'll put all freshwaters caviars in that category because at that time it was either the Caspian Sea or the Black Sea, and it was either Iran, Russia, or Romania that was calling the shots when it came to caviar. So anybody that decided to get into that program was really wasting their time because you know caviar has to come from the Black Sea, I mean or the Caspian Sea. That's where it came from.

00:39:01

So when this whole thing came about you know we got sturgeon which are grown in North America. We got paddlefish which indigenous to North America, both prehistoric fish, both boneless, both produced caviar. And although it's a freshwater species it's still caviar. And presented and, you know, displayed nicely and served with a caviar service it could be just like any other caviar on the planet. So when I got into that there was a tremendous amount of resistance because it was like a joke. You know, *Caviar from Kentucky? Are you serious? You know?* And so finally I got some chefs to listen up to what we were doing and some chefs literally you know said, "Hey you know what? We're going to try it," and once one chef tried it and another chef tried it and another chef tried it they all realized not just our caviar which is an American caviar but all caviars whether it be trout or white fish or salmon, American caviars all started to get a little traction and people started to get a little adventurous and realized that caviar does not have to be expensive to be good.

00:40:18

One particular story that I've got that probably was the most educational story. I'd been seeing a chef and I'd been seeing this guy for oh six or eight months. And I go, "Man, why don't you just let me show you this caviar? I just want you to taste it," you know. And he's like, "No,

no, no, no.” And this went on. And finally I went in there one day and I said, “Why don’t you just try it?” I said, “What do you got to lose?” He goes, “Look,” he said, “you keep coming in here. I keep telling you I’m not interested. I’ve already got my vendor set up for all my provisions. I’m not interested.” And he said, “The best thing for you to do is to take that can you’ve got of those Kentucky beans [*Laughs*] and hit the door.” You know caviar. He thought it was like baked beans being a little silly.

00:41:06

But anyway so I walked out the door and I just say, “Hey you know maybe some other time I will go in there.” Well I went to an event, to a fund-raiser and we had donated some product and I was there. And a gentleman came up to me and he said, “Hey,” he goes, “I’m such and such. I’m the food and beverage manager of this restaurant.” And so I went, “Really?” He goes, “Yeah.” He goes, “I love this caviar and your smoked trout and everything you do. And we—I’d really like for you to come down and meet my chef.”

00:41:36

So I go down [*Laughs*]—I go this is not a month later – so I go into the food and beverage manager’s office and he’s looking at everything and he goes, “Come on. I want you to go downstairs and meet my chef.” So I go down there and I see the chef and he sees me but he didn’t see the food and beverage manager because the food and beverage manager was kind of behind me. So then he came around and he goes, “Chef,” he goes, “I want you to meet a friend of mine, Lewis Shuckman. He’s here in town and he’s got caviar and he smokes fish and I think you need to talk to him ‘cause he’s got some great stuff. And I’ve actually tried all of it and he goes here’s some more samples.” He goes, “I think you need to sit down and talk to him and let’s

get some of this stuff on the menu.” **[Laughs]** And the chef is like deer in the headlights.

[Laughs] And I—you know what? Listen I just was in the driver’s seat. And I thought *you know what? The best thing for me to do is to act like I’ve never met this guy.* And I just—you know I got up and shook his hand and, “Hey! Nice to meet you!” And that kind of thing, and it wasn’t any of that, “Haven’t I seen you before?” I just let it go. And he did too. And as a result of that whole ordeal the chef and I became very good friends. But I never, never brought it up **[Laughs]** and they were sitting—but that was you know that was something that I will take to the grave with me ‘cause that was funny. I mean and it was **[Laughs]** just the expression of the chef when he saw me I’ll never forget it—his expression but it was a lot of fun. So that’s kind of what I was dealing with, okay? And yeah I was the salmon swimming upstream but I got it done. And you know there was a lot of chefs that got in this thing and helped us out and they got a lot of really good press because of this caviar and us and then you know they started talking about what they were doing with the caviar. So we had an awful lot of fun with this caviar. So we felt good because it was a Kentucky product, okay, and that Kentucky was now competing you know we don’t ship worldwide but Kentucky was competing in a world market of caviar that was—that’s been dominated by Caspian Sea or Black Sea caviar and I thought *this is fantastic* because once people start finding out about this Kentucky Spoonfish Caviar they’re going to get excited about and then they’ll get excited about salmon caviar and white fish caviar and all these other American caviars and it will just be a win/win for the United States and the food industry. We’ll finally be in a position where we ourselves are into caviar.

00:44:11

So now the way it is now the caviar in the United States, sixty-percent of it is American and forty-percent of it is not. So all of us as a group and a team and people working together to

strive to the same thing and of course we owe it all to the chefs because they've listened to us. They've taken a shot at us, you know, because they didn't know whether it was going to work or not. And it's just been great. So that's basically how we got in the caviar business. It was definitely uncharted waters and it was step and fetch and learn as you go. And we have absolutely no regrets. I mean it was probably the most challenging thing I've ever done in my life. It was a lot easier to sell smoked fish in this town than it was caviar but you know one thing led to another, so hey you know no complaints on this end. **[Laughs]**

00:45:07

SW: Could you say who the chef was or would you rather not say?

00:45:10

LS: I don't want to say **[Laughs]**. I don't want to say but I'm sure at some point in time I will say, but right now I won't. But he was amongst a lot of chefs that listened to what we had to say and they believed in our story and they took a shot at our story and I will always owe these chefs for bringing us in and putting us on their menu and it's just been an honor and I'm really appreciative that they've done that. And that's something that I will never forget.

00:45:48

SW: And I do want to talk about some of the people you supply to, but before I get into that question I just wanted to ask you before you decided to do the caviar was it something that your family— if it just seemed like a good opportunity or if there was a tradition of eating it in your family?

00:46:09

LS: My father when he would travel with my mother when they would go on vacations and stuff like that he—I can't speak for my grandfather 'cause I don't know but my dad when they would go on vacation they would always go you know like if they went on a cruise or did this or that or wherever they traveled if there was caviar there yeah; dad would try the caviar. And he loved it. He really did.

00:46:33

On the other hand I had never had it not until we got into this. And then actually you know I enjoy it. I love it. I mean I'm not allowed to pack it anymore because it's like one for the customer and one for me so I had to **[Laughs]** get away from that. So my wife said, "You know I think it would be a better idea for me or Lauren or somebody else to pack the caviar because I think you're, you know you're costing us a little bit of money." But yeah I love it. And I try the other caviars too. I mean you know I just like caviar. But what I think is so exciting about our caviar or American caviar in general is it doesn't have to be expensive to be good. So anybody that wants to try caviar this is a great entry level, okay? This will be a lot of fun and you can have a dinner party and have your guests over and that kind of thing. And just be doing the caviar thing with some nice wine and you can do it on a budget and it doesn't have to be real, real expensive. So that's what's great about American caviars.

00:47:30

SW: And this is going to sound like a very dumb question Lewis so I'm very sorry because my knowledge of caviar is very limited. Is it actually cured? Is fresh? I mean how does that work?

00:47:40

LS: It's not a dumb question and there is no dumb question when it comes to the fish and seafood industry 'cause we—it's only fifty years old. I mean because the airplane and flying stuff around as we know it today it's only fifty years old. So yeah. I mean any question is definitely welcomed.

00:47:58

Caviar is harvested from the fish. Once it's harvested then there's a salt-curing process that gets started and that is you got to rinse the caviar, salt it, and then twenty-four hours later rinse it again, salt it, and then twenty-four hours again rinse it and salt it. And then it's refrigerated again overnight with no salt and then packed in two or four-ounce containers. So it is cured—cured by the meaning salted. There's no chemicals or anything used. It's just salt. And that's it. And the caviar can be frozen up to sixty days. It doesn't freeze real, real hard because of the salt content but, you know, a lot of people get concerned you know if they get the caviar and it's going to be two or three weeks or what have you before they can use it you can freeze it. But most people get caviar a week or two prior to, you know, the engagement or the event or whatever it is that they have—that they're going to be doing with the caviar.

00:49:01

SW: And is just the Spoonfish Caviar? You mentioned salmon caviar. I'm just curious is it specific for Shuckman's it's just the Spoonfish Caviar?

00:49:10

LS: That's correct. The only thing we do is the Kentucky Spoonfish Caviar. And everybody goes, "Well you got a Federal trademark on that." Well yeah, because throughout North America it's called everything. It's called—it is paddlefish and that's what it is but we came up with the name Kentucky Spoonfish Caviar because of the confusion with some of the other species' caviars, in other words a lot of people called sturgeon paddlefish and they called paddlefish sturgeon and vice-versa that kind of thing and then you know salmon caviar and trout caviar and white fish caviar a lot of people were getting that kind of confused in that whole ordeal. So we had to come up with something that was creative but also Kentucky. So that's where we came up with Kentucky Spoonfish Caviar and we got a Federal trademark, and we're very honored to have that Federal trademark, and it protects us especially from other countries coming into the United States saying that their black or gray caviar is Kentucky Spoonfish Caviar. So that's the reason we did that and Kentucky pretty well understands you know the commercial fishermen, they know what paddlefish is but some people still call it boneless catfish or they'll call it grayfish caviar. It's got just a bazillion different—but this way we're all on the same page. We know what Kentucky Spoonfish Caviar is.

00:50:36

SW: That makes great sense. Can you talk about some of the other products? What are the fish that you actually—what fish do you use here and why those particular fish in terms of the smoking?

00:50:47

LS: We smoke salmon because that's number one that's the most popular. We do the trout because we do get a lot of our trout from Kentucky when we can. And we named that trout Black Mountain Trout because we have family and friends in Eastern Kentucky which is an area of the state which is probably overlooked by everyone who is an elected official in the State of Kentucky. And it's all coal mines down there and that particular industry comes and goes. And so at one time we—I was going to go put up a mini-processing facility and we were going to use a lot of the coal miners down there and their families and their friends and we were going to actually grow trout using the water coming out of the portal which is where Black Mountain is. And we were—the water comes out of there 2,500 gallons a minute at fifty-five degrees which is perfect, absolutely perfect for growing fish.

00:51:48

The only problem was we were having issues with the water being run through the aerators and being able to get out of it oxygen into the tanks. So we were trying to get funding and we had several universities involved. And the whole thing just kind of fell apart. But we were going to grow the trout down there and process the trout and sell them to the Kentucky State Parks and so forth and so on. Everybody was excited and everybody was on the same page. It just didn't work out.

00:52:22

So in honor of that whole ordeal we just call our trout was Kentucky Smoked Trout. Well when I got down there and saw what was going on I said, "Hey you know hey we're just going to change the name of it to Kentucky—to Black Mountain Trout." And a lot of people ask what

is Black Mountain? And I explain to them it's from Eastern Kentucky. Anybody that's from Eastern Kentucky in Kentucky [*Finger Snaps*] right now will tell you they know exactly where Black Mountain is. And it's you know involved in that Hatfield and McCoy Trail and all that stuff, so it's very well-known.

00:52:51

And that's where that came about.

00:52:56

We do white fish that comes from the Great Lakes. We sell whole white fish, whole smoked white fish as well as the white fish spread. We do the salmon spread. We do a crab spread, a shrimp and a clam. All those are in eight-ounce units and a lot of people use those for bagels and so forth. Some people just use them for crackers but we have like eight different kinds. And then we also have gone to the next level of, you know, doing the salmon sausage products. We do the salmon burgers. We do a bratwurst and Italian sausage and a country sausage which is indigenous to Kentucky—is country sausage, right? You know, everybody's farmer made it in the back yard and that kind of thing. So we're kind of doing [*Laughs*] the same thing it's just we're doing it with salmon and it's excellent. It's great. It browns just like regular sausage. And then we were doing some custom smoking for a cheese company and that went very, very well. And I had some other people that knew we were doing that and say, "Hey why don't you do this, that, and the other?" So we started doing a blue cheese. And we do a parmesan and a Munster, and a mozzarella all smoked in-house with various woods. And then my wife does the Mimi's line which is the cheese but she makes a beer cheese and a Benedictine which are absolutely outstanding. The name Mimi came from the grandchildren calling my wife Mimi

as their grandmother so we use that to move forward and that's her little deal. And that's how that all came about.

00:54:26

SW: And I'm wondering could I ask you a couple more questions Lewis. Do you have—?

00:54:29

LS: Absolutely.

00:54:30

SW: Could you talk about who your customers are like the different types of customers you have?

00:54:36

LS: We have a lot of customers who—we use the smoked salmon products for either an entrée and/or for an hors d'oeuvre. It just depends on what the application is. As an example, the Garage Bar uses our smoked salmon because they have that Sunday brunch and then we've got like Please and Thank You who is a dynamite bagel shop here in town and she uses our smoked salmon. And other bagel shops and a lot of the other restaurants, and the reason I don't know of all of our customers is because we have a couple of distributors here in town who one of them is Bluefin and the other one is Creation Gardens and they take our product not just here in town but they'll take it to some of the other cities to where they distribute such as Nashville or Cincinnati or Indianapolis or Birmingham. And we do—I go with their salesman and ride in the cars and knock on doors and see customers and so forth and so on and the guys at Creation Gardens they

literally come here with their customers and take them for tours of our facility. And we entertain that idea. We want people to see our plant. And we want people to know how clean and sanitary it is. So we're very honored and excited to have customers come down here for tours.

00:55:50

SW: And you also have restaurants. You have local people from Louisville come in and they'll buy products from you out of the—?

00:55:58

LS: We have have a lot of foodies [*Laughs*] that, you know, they're always experimenting and stuff and they love to come down here. We got people from out of state that come down here, so yeah; we got a little retail store. And then we also you know if somebody has a store in their area that they want to carry our products we ask that they talk to the store and then we'll make arrangements to get products to the store, so you know we try to have it as available as possible to as many places as possible.

00:56:26

SW: And I wanted to ask you what is it like working with your family every day? I mean, when you and Vicki got married did she come right into the business or was that a progression?

00:56:36

LS: We got married and she spent several years as an x-ray technician. And you know she enjoyed that. And then it got to the point to where it was the hours were really just all over the board. There was really no schedule and we have children so that was taken into consideration.

So she came and she spent a couple years at the house just taking care of the kids, which is a full-time job. And then she became a teacher at Strathmore Education. And was teaching grade school kids, kindergarten people daycare that kind of thing—fundamentals of being a young child and then after my dad passed away in 2001 I really felt that I needed her here to help me. And by trade she was not a bookkeeper, but she came in here, jumped in. She knew I needed her help and I mean it took me a year to get her to come here. I mean I'd ask her every day you know, "What's it like at school hearing those kids scream?" And that kind of thing and, "Wouldn't you rather be working with your husband?" You know that kind of thing, and finally she just, I guess I wore her down I guess is what happened, but she you know she was ready to do it and that's what it was going to take for her to be prepared to do it and want to do it. And she came in here and you know we got her a new computer and whatnot and we didn't have a computer then. And we got her the computer and she jumped in there hands-on and she's been driving the boat ever since. And you know gosh, I don't know what I'd do without her or my daughter. I mean *[Laughs]* I wouldn't be doing what I'm doing right now that's for sure.

00:58:31

So yeah, it's great. You have to have time to communicate. You know we have meetings and we talk. I am the worst about doing things without saying anything to anybody. So before I do something I try to let folks know I'm going to be doing something. So they know, you know, instead of waiting to the last minute. I've been known to just decide to come up with a new product and wait until the end of the day after they've cleaned all the equipment to go, "Hey I'm going to try and do this or that or the other." And it's probably not a good idea because everybody wants to go home, and when I go out there and do that then they got to clean up and it's a big ordeal. So I don't do that anymore. Now I kind of let everybody know I'm going—what

day I'm going to do it and that kind of thing, so schedules—we do schedules. I never did schedules. I just do what you're going to do but now, you know, every Friday we get things set up for the following week. It doesn't mean we get it all done that way but at least we have some idea of what we're going to be doing the next day instead of just jumping all over the place.

00:59:36

SW: When the girls were little did you imagine that they might become part of this business as the years went on?

00:59:44

LS: I kind of—I guess I was sort of like my dad. You know, you wanted it because it's family but you didn't want to push the issue. And I told all three of them, "Y'all just do whatever it is you want to do." And Whitney she wants to be a teacher. And she works part-time at UPS and she also works at a restaurant but she's going to work more at UPS. She works that third shift which is a lot of work pushing those cans around. And Shannon she's a nurse assistant at one of the nursing homes and she quite enjoys that. And then she has a part-time job at a clothing store. So I've kind of left it all up to them. But I do know that if I really, you know, things went bananas here that I could call them up and go, "Hey I want you to come work with dad." You know and let them make the decision of what they want to do but let them know that I want them here and they would do it.

01:00:46

Both of them would do it, not because they felt they had to but I think they would do it. I think they would do it. But they see what Lauren's doing here and you know she's kind of

getting into her own little deal you know with the production and everything. You know, and I feel comfortable when I walk out of here, you know, if I'm going to go you know see customers or whatnot I don't worry about that or the office. And then I think Lauren is getting ready—been grooming her to get into sales and so forth, so I'd like for her to have some of that under her belt because you need that in order to move forward. But she's great with customers. I mean, you know, on the phone if they want to know anything she tells them 'cause she's right in the middle of it you know. She's all of that. She's operating the smokehouse now and she's running the skinning machine and so forth and so on so she's very capable of tackling anything that comes onboard she can handle it.

01:01:42

SW: And how did she get started in the business?

01:01:45

LS: She was going to school. She graduated high school and she was going to college and spending—getting some hours in, kind of like me trying to make a decision. And she had done some other things. She worked in a grocery store for a little while as a cashier and she liked that. And then she worked at a daycare just like her mother did and I think Lauren felt that she needed air to breathe and she needed to be able to move around and that it—she did it. I'm not saying it wasn't for her but I think her goal was to find something where she could be a little bit more in charge.

01:02:27

And being here and then you know moving into that position it worked out real nice. I mean it's been real good. I mean it was a damn good decision on my part to bring her in here as far as the business is concerned, you know?

01:02:42

SW: And Lewis I'm wondering if you could talk a little bit about what do the next five or ten years look like for this place, for the business, for Shuckman's?

01:02:50

LS: We're going to do what we're doing, okay? I think we'll probably get—grow more into distributors, probably grow more into multi-unit accounts, more than one chain type restaurant. A lot of those people are looking for artisan and high-quality products and I think there's an opportunity for us. I definitely see a big growth in our sausage products 'cause they're all made with salmon, the salmon burgers, I see growth and further depth into that category. I think the timing is right for that. Anybody that's health conscious or anyone that's a vegetarian that's looking for opportunities or if they never were, you know if they just within the last few years became a vegetarian and they remember what some of these other proteins tasted like you know that hey salmon burgers and salmon sausage and things like that it's right up their alley.

01:03:52

And as far as the health aspect goes I'm a diabetic. I'm a big boy. I'm overweight. **[Laughs]** I have to watch what I eat and so you know that's what's kind of fun about this is I'm as much in need of some of these products as the customers. So it's sort of like I'm on the same

page. And since we started making this stuff I've been eating whole bunches of it 'cause it's great. It's good for you: it's healthy, it's natural, and you know Omega-3 it's all the good stuff. So yeah. I see us moving into that category.

01:04:29

On the smoking side I definitely see a growth pattern with our cheese products. We'll probably have to get another smokehouse because cheese, dairy and so forth in Kentucky is our fastest growing sector right now with the dairy industry. It's a big boom now with milk and all the different types of milk and all the other dairy products, the cheese and the cottage cheese and butter and everything else, so I see a big growth in that category.

01:04:56

And then the smoking aspect I see the younger generation appreciating the finer qualities of artisan products and smoked fish definitely falls into that category. So I see a lot more younger people, you know, with all these wonderful food shows that are on television they see these things and they get excited. And it helps support buying cookbooks and reading recipes and playing in the kitchen. And you don't have to be, you know, someone that can read fifteen books in two days. It's just it's part of you know the creativity of working in the kitchen. So I see an opportunity there and a lot of the young chefs are getting—that's the new thing again is the smoked fish products. So I see growth in that category. I don't see us getting too far out of those categories, but I see us growing all of those categories like we're doing one now under one roof.

01:05:52

SW: Lewis I don't have any more questions for you but if there are any more stories or memories you want to share from this place? Actually! I lied. You said this is the second location—could you talk about just the evolution of moving from—you were you said your grandfather was on 16th and Kentucky?

01:06:11

LS: Right.

01:06:12

SW: Can you talk about how it moved?

01:06:13

LS: Yeah. My father was running the business back in 1954 and in 1960 they ran out of room. They just had no room 'cause Dad went into the wholesale side of things and got away from the retail you know the grocery side. And at that time interesting thing about the Louisville area was there was a lot of pinball machines in all of these taverns, saloons, and they all served hamburgers. And so with the pinball machines you know they had the beer and everything, and they had to have something to eat so it was either ham or hamburgers. And Dad used to make tons of hamburgers. And in fact he cut chicken at one time and they cut—Dad had the Kentucky Fried Chicken account. And he would cut the chicken for Kentucky Fried Chicken. This was before you know things happened with John Wyatt Brown and all that; this was just when Colonel Sanders had it and had you know six or eight restaurants. And so he—Dad sold them.

01:07:15

And then when McDonald's got started in the Louisville area Dad started selling McDonald's hamburgers. So and they'd order them every day and they'd deliver it to the restaurant and they only had at that time McDonald's had like two or three in Louisville and that was it. And then they grew from there, so that was all part of it.

01:07:33

And then I think, you know, just kind of watching what was going on and how Dad handled things. In other words, Dad, you know, he had other things thrown at him, you know big jumbo super-duper things and he just kind of knew that it was probably something that wasn't going to work out so he kind of stayed away from it. And he was conservative in that respect, and I think I learned a lot from that. And you know all that taught me a lot.

01:08:01

And then my grandfather, what I learned from him was just be patient; just do your thing and once you get started with something don't change it. You know what I mean; always be quality-oriented. He always bought the best equipment, the best of everything 'cause he only wanted to buy it one time. As we say, he'd buy a car he'd buy the best car. He'd say, "I don't want to buy another one, not for a long time."

01:08:23

So I learned that and I think I've stayed along with that pretty good. So I've got both from my dad and my grandfather and also my grandfather from you know my mother's side. I

never met him 'cause he passed away before that but I have a lot of his qualities too so yeah I feel **[Laughs]**—I feel like I'm well-rounded, as much as possible anyway. **[Laughs]**

01:08:48

SW: And so how long has the business been at this location here?

01:08:51

LS: We've been here since 1969. Dad moved here when we ran out of—I said '60; it was 1969 he moved out here. And then he added onto this building so we've been here since 1969. We've remodeled it probably five times since then.

01:09:09

And the way it's designed and when we take people for a tour they're overwhelmed at the way the coolers and the freezers are and the production area is in the middle. So we've got it set up where things come in the back door, they're processed and they go out the back door, so it's not running all around the place. It's a pretty well-controlled environment. And as far as the working spaces we have plenty of room. Nobody is tripping and stumbling over each other so that's the reason we can get the production done the way we get it done is because everybody has got enough room to do it. And if we need to grow we can. We have plenty of room in the back of the building. Like I said, we've been in West Louisville since 1919. We love the area. All the expressways are here. We see West Louisville growing. We see a lot of new opportunities with new industry coming here, property is affordable, the State of Kentucky is working with new businesses coming here, the City of Louisville is working with people. They're helping them with taxes, they're helping them with the training of employees, helping them get employees. So

there's a lot of opportunity where we're at right now and—and that's why we're really excited about being here.

01:10:18

SW: Well Lewis is there anything else you want to add about Shuckman's in terms of the family or the business or both that I didn't ask you about that you think is important?

01:10:30

LS: Just that, you know, family is important, okay? And to have family in the business is important because we're all working together and we're all striving and we're all on the same page. And I feel honored that family is in the business and I feel honored that I was part of what my dad and my grandfather started, you know so and I feel good that I'm passing it on. So you know sort of like history is repeating itself. It's just that I've made a lot more mistakes [*Laughs*] and I'm trying to keep from passing my mistakes on down the road. But that's it. It's just family. I think it's important and I think it's important for family to know who your customers are, to be able work with the customers, and we want our customers to go, "Hey you know I need to grab something and I'm going to run down to Shuckman's real quick and grab it." Of course when they get here they don't get out real quick 'cause they end up going for a tour and trying some smoked salmon, and a little of this and a little of that. But it's all part of a day's work and you know when you enjoy what you're doing it sure does make it a lot more fun. And that's really you know that's about the only thing I'd want to add.

01:11:42

SW: Well Lewis I've taken up a nice chunk of your time this morning, so thank you for sitting down with us and doing this.

01:11:47

LS: You're welcome and it was exciting to have you here. We love to have people who have never seen a smokery before come and see how we do what we do. So yeah. Thanks for coming by. We appreciate that. That's great. We like having people here.

01:11:59

SW: Thanks Lewis.

01:12:01

[End Lewis Shuckman 021714 Interview]