

ANGELO MISTILIS

Mistilis Restaurants: The College Inn, Mistilis Restaurant

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Date: July 20, 2004, 11:30 AM

Location: Mr. Mistilis' Home

Interviewer: Amy C. Evans

Length: One hour, twenty-one minutes

Project: Restaurant's of Oxford's Past – Mistilis Restaurants, Oxford, MS

00:00:01

[Recording opens with the sound of ice moving in a glass as Mr. Mistilis takes a drink of iced tea.]

Amy Evans: This is Amy Evans, and it is Tuesday *[short pause]*, July twentieth—is it twentieth or twenty-first? And I’m at the, um, Mistilis home in Oxford, Mississippi, on North 14th Street. And Mr. Miflis—Mistilis, if you wouldn’t mind saying your entire name *[sound of microphone being moved across table]* and your birthdate for the record, if you don’t mind please, sir.

00:00:28

Angelo Mistilis: My full name is Angelo, A-N-G-E-L-O, Mistilis, M-I-S-T-I-L-I-S, and my birthday is seven, twenty-three, thirty-five. [July 23, 1935]

AE: Were you born in Oxford?

AM: In the house on, uh, on what is now Martin Luther King Drive, uh, it was North, uh, North Fourth—North Eighth Street *[Corrected later. The street is actually North Seventh Street]*. But, uh, that’s where I grew up. Went to University High School.

AE: Do you have brothers and sisters?

AM: Uh, yes, I had one sister, deceased, and two brothers.

AE: And what are there names?

AM: Uh, Ben and Steve.

AE: Okay, and your parent's names?

AM: Tom, was the short name. His real name was Athos Nathis Celepas Mistilis [*Mr. Mistilis did not know how to spell his name, so this spelling is a guess*], and he is from a small island in the Mediterranean called Kastellorizo. And, uh, my mother's name is, uh, Georgia Skinner, and they met in, uh, Meridian, Mississippi, and married. But my dad left home—left the island, when he was fifteen and traveled all over Europe and [*sound of door closing in background*], uh—on a steam ship, working to New Orleans first and didn't like it, so he went back to Belgium. I mean, went back to Marseilles, France, and then went to over to Belgium and caught another steamer out and ended up [*sound of Jo Dale Mistilis clearing throat*] in, uh, Boston. Uh, he worked in Boston a little while and ended up in Philadelphia and, uh, worked in the steel mills. And he was living in a—above a little tailor shop. And, uh, this is like nineteen, uh, twenty, twenty-one, twenty-two, and uh, the tailor told him—you know he didn't speak English very well, and he was having to work a lot, so the tailor told him, said, “Tom, you'll die in the steel mills up here. Go South. You'll love it. The weather's better, the people are friendlier, and you'll do well in the South. But don't stay up here.” So he went from there—why, I don't know—to San Angelo, Texas. And he worked in a bus station café there. And he worked his way across the coast to end up with four other Greek boys in Meridian,

Mississippi, in a restaurant called the Cal—the, uh, Palace Sandwich Shop. And one of the dinneries [restaurants] in Jackson, uh, Alex was, uh, one of his partners, and he was partner with another man named Spiro Villatos. And they're ones—Spiro and my dad moved to Oxford. And, uh, I think Spiro came up first and called, and then my dad came up. But they lived on, uh, uh, Martin Luther King Drive, which is Martin Luther—you know where that blue house is over there on the corner?

AE: Yes, sir. That they just renovated?

AM: That's the house I was born in. Yeah.

AE: Really?

AM: Yeah.

AE: Okay.

AM: And, uh, Dad's partner lived next door. I think that house has been torn down. [Clears throat] But they had a—a—a small building on campus, sits right there where the pharmacy building. And in that small building they had, uh, two stories. Upstairs was a, uh, post office where William Faulkner worked, a haberdashery and a barbershop. And underneath—in the basement—was a sandwich shop, and that's what my dad and Spiro had.

AE: Do you know what date this was?

AM: It was in twenty-six—twenty-seven.

AE: They didn't know anybody else in Oxford when they came? Or did they?

AM: No.

AE: Or did they?

AM: No.

AE: Where there any other, um, immigrants really at the time in—

AM: No—

AE: —Oxford?

AM: No. Mm-mmm.

AE: And you have no idea why they picked Oxford?

AM: No.

AE: Hmm.

AM: But they made a—they—they were very successful in that, and then the University, uh, built this first [Student] Union. And they were going to have them run it and give it to them, but then they decided to let the athletic department have it. So, uh, they moved from there the old Star Laundry building [*now Star Package liquor store*], and it was an old fashioned nineteen-thirties restaurant. And, uh, all male waiters. Um, wood burning stoves. Upstairs, a dance hall where the girls came and, uh, went up the lattice and danced and drank bathtub gin. And they had a real big fight one night because one of the boys got thrown out. And he went back to the campus, and they came back and tore the place up. [*Sound of door opening in background*] So they moved up onto the [Oxford] square, and it [*the new café*] was called the College Inn. And they were there during the, uh, Second World War. And then in nineteen, um—nineteen forty-six my dad moved down into the middle building where the *Oxford Eagle* is and then into the two end buildings with the glass—purple glass front? That was his restaurant. [*Sound of Jo Dale rustling through some papers*] And, uh—

AE: What was that called? That was—

AM: Mistilis's.

AE: —Mistilis's?

AM: Mm-hmm.

AE: Well, the place in the—the Star Package building over there, um—you know [by] the [old] depot. What kind of food did they have over there?

AM: Home cooking: roast beef, pot roast, fried chicken, country fried steak, uh, vegetables—a lot of vegetables—uh, ham and eggs. You know, the breakfast fare. The usual stuff.

AE: Did your dad do all the cooking— he and his partner?

00:06:13

AM: Uh, well he's—yeah, he was a—he did most the cooking all the time. Uh, he was, uh, never trained officially, but he spoke eight languages and, um, was a master chef. Back in those days you didn't buy anything prepared.

AE: Right.

AM: If you wanted crab cakes, you made them. If you wanted uh, uh, chicken croquettes, you made them. You did all your—all your seafood. You stuffed all your crabs, uh—stuffed crabs yourself. You peeled and de-veined and fried all your own shrimp. It was all—you make your own doughnuts—you made everything. Th—there

was no such thing. And kit— uh, uh, I used to as a boy—there was a killing farm out, uh, east of town. It was Metts'—named Metts' Farm. And I used to ride out on a pick-up truck with side beds on it, with a friend of my father's, and we would go out and sit on the rail, and he'd pick out his—his, uh, cattle that he was going to cook. And he'd pick it out on the hoof— the cattle and the hogs—and, uh, he would pick those out and that afternoon they would be delivered. And they brought them in on the side of the pick-up truck with these big high wooden sides. No net over 'em [*laughs*]*—no anything. Just right from the—right from the farm to town.*

AE: Um-hmm.

AM: And nobody ever got sick. And chickens. There was no poultry—p—poultry plant, and all of the chickens were kept alive out on the back deck of the restaurant. They had a big loading dock. And they kept chickens alive in crates—they'd have them six, seven crates high full of chickens. And the chef would go out and throw corn to them once in awhile. And when you—they got an order for chicken, you'd—they'd kill the chicken and dip them in boiling water and picked him right there. So that's, uh, fresh food.

AE: I'd say. So, you talked about when people came and—and tore the place up over there by the depot and then your father moved the restaurant downtown—

AM: Uptown to, uh—

AE: Was that because of that incident that they moved?

AM: Uh, yeah, it was torn up, so they just moved up into the middle of town. Yeah.

AE: Okay. And so what—what did that restaurant start out being? How was it different?

AM: That—that restaurant was where the chickens were kept on the back, and we bought the meat. And in those days in the summertime, when the watermelons came in, these big trucks would pull out in front, and they would get a line of guys going, and they would throw the watermelons all the way through—from the street all the way through the restaurant into the coolers in the back. It was really, uh, it was not something you thought about then, but now you think how it was pretty neat. You know, pretty—pretty nice experience. But they had, uh, flat iceboxes. No refrigeration. And all the food and—and stuff were kept iced down, and—and the drinks were all kept iced down. And ice for your drink—drinking water and tea, uh, you chipped it off of a twenty-five to fifty pound block of ice. And they had the bin and everybody—all the waiters had there own personal ice picks. And you didn't use anybody else's ice pick. And they'd ch—everybody had this nice little way of chipping ice, you know, and it was—it was really neat. It was neat.

AE: What did the rest of the inside of that place look like?

AM: It was tin ceilings and, uh, old Hunter ceiling fans and—and a lot of mirrors and big tall high-backed mahogany booths that—that was one of my jobs on Sunday was to—my brothers and friends would go in, and we would polish all the booths. They were very intricate, you know. And we would spend all afternoon polishing those with, uh, Old English wax. But it was, uh, it was a neat place. You came in, there was a long counter and, uh, you didn't—you didn't go in and—food came out pretty quick, but it wasn't like—it wasn't like you just ran in a got something, unless it was lunch, you know, that was already prepared food.

AE: Were you open for breakfast? Or was he—

AM: Oh, yeah.

AE: —open for breakfast, lunch and dinner?

AM: From four in the morning until ten, eleven at night.

AE: What was the clientele like during those times?

AM: Uh, always students. They had a lot of Oxford people, of course, ate there. But you got to understand that there weren't that many cars in those days. And, uh, when we moved down [the street] to what is across the Federal Building now—the old Oxford Eagle building—uh, back in the early fifties—then see, not everybody had a car. And

uh, so when they would come up down to Dad's restaurant, there would be like—there was always like six to eight people in the car. You know, riding to town. But, uh, I can remember back in—when they were in the Star Laundry building, uh, Star Package Store building. Back in those days they had a railway express here. And when the kids came in, they came in on trains. And they would bring these big steamer trunks. Because they didn't go home you know. You came in the fall, and you stayed until Christmas break. And then you came back after Christmas break and just stayed until June. So they had these big steamer trucks and—uh, trunks, and they would go down—and they had red caps—and they would load all these on these big—on this big old big T-Model truck and go up to campus. And sometimes they rolled them up. But it was, uh, it was a nice time. A nice time alive. A nice time to be alive.

AE: Um, well at the restaurant was there, uh, like a signature item that was—you would say was specific to your dad—

AM: Uh, always steaks, uh, soups, uh, good hearty basic things, you know. Soups and stews and chili and—and great breakfasts, you know. And food in those days was not—it was natural food. Not—you didn't—you didn't worry about what was in it. You didn't worry about what had been preserved and what had been shot into it and what had brought back the color and the life and the life of the food. It's, uh, this was just natural food, you know. And brown eggs. My—my son tickled me when he got a little older. I used to use, uh, a lot of brown eggs. Do you know the difference?

AE: I know the difference on the outside. [Laughs] That they're brown.

AM: A brown egg is a fertile egg. That's an egg that's, uh, that's met the rooster. The white eggs, they never see a rooster. And these—the white eggs are not fertile. And you get a—you get a paler yolk in—in a white egg.

AE: Hmm.

AM: The brown eggs, they usually have a very rich yellow oak, and they are—yolk—and they are, I think, a better egg.

AE: Hmm.

AM: They call them free-range eggs, barnyard eggs. [*Sound of water running in background*] But I prefer them. But, uh—

00:13:22

AE: Did the rest of the produce and whatnot come from local growers?

AM: Produce was, uh, peddled off of carts, uh, off of farmers markets. But most of your restaurants had people that brought—brought—my dad had people that peddled vegetables to him year-round. And, uh, you know, they did all—they stripped their own turnip greens. It was all—it was all work, you know.

AE: Um-hmm. And the menu would change seasonally according to what was available?

AM: No, uh-uh.

AE: No?

AM: The menu just stayed like it was all the time.

AE: [*Laughing*]

AM: You know, we didn't have all this ethnic stuff going on like, uh, there's a pizza restaurant here, there's a Mexican restaurant here, there's a Thai restaurant here, there's a so-and-so restaurant here. Uh, we didn't have all that specialty stuff. You just had good food and—uh, my dad was a lamb cooker; he loved roast leg of lamb. And that was one of his features on Sunday was roast lamb and dressing. And, uh, uh, things—things that were made, you know, they made all this food.

AE: How about the other restaurants in Oxford around that time? Like the B&B Café was, was—

AM: Well, there weren't that many. There weren't that many. They had some—had your basic small Southern town restaurants. And, uh, they were like two or three. And when

my dad was on the square there was a restaurant called The Mansion. And it was a—it was popular. And there was one called Grundy's, and it was very popular. And then there was a Miller's. And, uh, but there was not—you—you ate out but usually when you ate out [*sound of Jo Dale clearing her throat in the background*] you were either getting breakfast before you went to work. You would get the lunch at lunchtime. But people didn't eat out then like they eat out now.

AE: Um-hmm.

AM: Yeah.

AE: What about—

AM: People ate at home a lot.

AE: What about the, um, do you know anything about the B&B Café that was in the Wiley's [Shoe Shop] building? There on the square, kind of down and across.

AM: Of course. Of course. I grew up right down the street. But, uh, in the back of the restaurant there—in the back of the shoe shop, this was, uh, Boles' Shoe Shop and, uh, uh he was a very wealthy man. He had a shoe shop business, very wealthy man and, uh, the restaurant was back there for years and years and years. Of course that was before integration and, uh, it served a lot of customers. [*Clears throat*] You've got to

understand that on Saturdays back in those days, the Square was—from early morning the Square was packed. [*Sound of Angelo leaning forward and taking a drink of tea*] You couldn't—you could just barely walk down the street. And we only had two policemen. [*Takes another drink. Sound of glass being put down on table near microphone*] And, um, Pat Patterson's, uh, what was it? His grandfather was a policeman. And he was—he was very well known. His name was Garland Kimmons. And, uh, uh, but anyway that—that was a big deal. And where the, uh—when I was growing up where the Oxford Eagle is now, was a—was a lot. Just a parking lot. [*Sound of Jo Dale moving dishes in the kitchen*] Gravel. And, um, people came to town in mules and wagons, and they parked them there and tied them up and—the first time—I never knew a mule would eat wood, but they would eat right through the hitching post. But ,uh, that was—and they used to have boxing matches out there.

AE: In the lot?

AM: Traveling boxing matches. Yeah.

AE: My goodness.

00:16:58

AM: But anyway, uh, people peddled food. Uh, the cooking was basic. My dad fixed a lot of what would probably be called exotic dishes back in those days. But, uh, he did—he did every—all the preparation. Everything, he did. He did all the cooking. They

did—they didn't—they didn't have anything that came in ready. You know. And it was—it was good hearty food and fresh.

AE: Well from the College Inn to Mistilis's, um, when I've heard people speak about that restaurant, they call it a Greek diner. Um, would you say that's—that's not true or—

AM: I don't think that's—I don't think that's an appropriate reference to it. It was Mistilis Café when we were down there. And my dad had split up with his partner and uh, uh, they had a very famous spaghetti dish. Um, I just can't imagine how much we sold.

AE: Was it a traditional—what everybody would consider spaghetti? Or something different?

AM: No, it was my dad's recipe, and today I have people who would buy the—the—the meat sauce by the—by the bottle if I would bottle it for them.

AE: Really.

AM: Yeah. It was, uh—we did our spaghetti a little different. Uh, you cooked your spaghetti, and when it was done—I don't mean al dente like what you have nowadays, where you got to chew your head off. This spaghetti was spaghetti that was cooked just perfect. And then it was run over with cold water to run the starch off. And we didn't use

oil in it, I don't know where that came from. But we would run cold water over it, and it would—you would cover it with water and put it in the walk-in cooler. And we had huge skillets. And when we got an order for spaghetti, we would take it out of the water—your cold water—and we would put melted butter in these big skillets, and we would put that cold spaghetti in, and we would role it in that butter until it was hot and pour it in a long dish and pour the spaghetti sauce on top of it. And it was just—and we grated our own fresh Romano cheese. And it was fantastic.

AE: When did you start working there?

AM: Oh [*Short pause*] too young to remember. I really don't know. I don't—I just—it was family all the way. You were in the family and you worked. So it was, uh, no questions asked. [*Laughs*] You know, but uh—

AE: And your father taught you how to cook?

AM: Yeah. And how to cut meat. We cut all our own beef. There wasn't a piece of meat that came into that place that was already cut. You know, we used to buy it by the side and uh, I learned to butcher and we—we made everything. We didn't have all these little machines to do all that stuff. We—we just did it, you know.

AE: Did your mother cook at home?

AM: Oh, yeah. My mom was a fantastic cook. She's gone now, but she was a great cook.

AE: What kind of things would she cook at home?

AM: Oh, I—my favorite was a—was a dessert pizza. It was an apple pizza, and it was just unbelievable. And of course, she made the traditional baklava and stuff like that—Greek stuff. And she made absolutely marvelous wine. Clear as it could be. And she made a white wine out of green tomatoes, and it was fantastic.

AE: That's the first I've heard of that.

AM: Oh, she's—she—she was beautiful. Of course, she learned all that through my dad, you know. They—in the islands over there, they drink a lot of table wine. That's just a very—it's a very light wine. And, uh, they do that because the water's so bad. [*Coughs*] So they make the wine, and it kills the taste, you know. [*Sound of ice in glass as Angelo takes another drink of tea*]

AE: [*Short laugh*] Did she have a role in the restaurants as well?

AM: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Uh, yeah, she's—she just—she was a wife and a manager and a—just everything. She was the whole ball of wax. You know, they worked very well together. Fished together. It was, uh—it was a great growing up time. No pressures. No

computers. Uh, I can remember we didn't have television. We used to—Saturday morning was a great time for the kids in the neighborhood. We would all gather around this old looking radio and listen to programs like “Let's Pretend” and “The Green Hornet” and—and, uh, uh, [the] little boy—whatever his name was and his shoe. I can't think of his name. [Buster Brown] But, um, great rodeo—radio programs. And, uh, you—you made up a lot of things. You didn't have to watch it on TV and get all these crazy things on the Internet and all that. You made—you made fun. We used to make our toys out of wooden boxes that apples came in, and we made our own carts out of old lawn mower wheels. Yeah, it was a good time.

AE: A lot has changed.

AM: Yeah.

AE: Well , um, the Mistilis restaurant, um, what were the—what would you say the years were that that was in operation? After the war through—

AM: Uh, I don't know. They called it the College Inn, but it was still known as the Mistilis, you know. But, uh, Tom and Spiro's. I guess it started the Mistilis era when, uh, when the Second World War was over, and we moved down into those buildings. Those five buildings were owned by a politician and, uh, my dad ended up buying the two end ones that have the glass on them. [*Clears throat*] But the hotel next door was—was operational, and it was a lot of fun. A lot of people over there and a lot of—and when

they made movies here, a lot of them stayed over there, cut-up and had a good time.

[Takes a drink of tea]

AE: Well, what about—if we can touch on for a minute, um, the integration of Ole Miss and what was going on—

AM: Oh, let's don't get to that too soon.

AE: Okay.

AM: Um, I know you want to know about the food.

AE: Oh, yeah.

00:23:26

AM: And I think that probably the—some of Dad's favorite dishes that people liked were, uh, Shrimp Creole, uh, chicken croquettes he sold by the thousands. And he put them on a French cream sauce, and they were just really—just really smacking good, you know. That, and, uh, breaded veal cutlets on cream sauce and, uh, of course steaks and uh, *[Clears throat]* he made a—something that I've always regretted. I used to go up and make donuts with him early in the morning, and we only made donuts like, maybe one a week or once every two weeks. And he made a cake donut that was really big. Like about a four-inch cake—four or five-inch—and—real heavy cake donut. And we would make about *[Clears throat]* maybe, fifteen-twenty dozen. *[Clears throat again]* And

they would be gone—they were a nickel a piece- and you know, they just went out of there just like that [*snaps fingers*]. But the cake donut was really good. And I loved his—his stuffed crab dressing. Um, and of course the roast leg of lamb. But, um, a lot of—a lot of things like that, they were just—*every* kind of food. Now you could get lobster there too. And I think if you wanted lobster—Maine lobster, we could get that too. So it was—ice cream—everything in one restaurant that you wanted. Fresh homemade pies.

AE: Do you remember some of the prices of the entrees—the lobster and things—from those days?

AM: Uh, I can remember, uh, more about when we moved down into the Mistilis restaurant across from the, uh, school—elementary school. Um, the war was just over. We had a lot of guys coming back on the GI plan, and I can remember Dad would cut like, uh, a hundred and fifty club steaks and put them on pans right—and we cooked on the front. And they were—a club steak with a salad and a drink and potatoes was a dollar and five cents. And spaghetti was fifty cents. A bowl of soup, thirty. A hamburger, twenty—fifteen, twenty cents. A plate lunch, thirty-eight cents—forty cents. That's a meat and three vegetables. Quite a difference.

AE: Quite. I'd say.

AM: *[Laughs]* And I mean, you know, the size hasn't changed, the meat hasn't changed. And—here's a formula that—that you may not be able to live with in this day, but my dad, his formula for money—for profit—was if it cost—if the cost was fifty cents, you got a dollar for it. So if you—you've got a dollar for a—in a piece of meat, or a dollar in the meal, then you charge two dollars for it. But nowadays, you see, they—everybody figures on triple. See. If it cost you a dollar, you got to get four for it. And that's—
[short pause] I'm sorry, I think that's bologna. *[Sound of Angelo's hand hitting the side of the couch]* I—because I, you know, uh—and that's just the way it is done now, and I—I don't totally agree with it. I don't totally disagree with it, uh, because a lot of people said “Angelo, you'd be sitting in the Bahamas somewhere right now if you'd have charged what your food was worth.” But I used to serve a—in my place out there *[on College Hill]* I used to serve—my—my main object—main meal was a hamburger steak covered with cheese and onions and homemade French fries and, uh—two dollars and fifty cents—two forty. And, you know, hamburger meat doesn't cost but fifteen cents more a pound now than it did then. *[Sound of door opening]* So you see the difference. Ahh. *[Frustrated. Takes a drink of tea]* but *[sighs]* things have changed, and sometimes I think I'm out of the loop. And—well sometimes I know I'm out of the loop. *[Laughs]* I don't just think I am, I know I am. But I've got such marvelous remembrances and—uh, integration started. Uh, we had four children. And when they decided to integrate, uh, we kept our kids—we kept our kids in the public school. There were big movements for private school. But there was a black administrator in the junior high that, uh, I thought a great deal of, and I had confidence in him that my children would be taken care of and treated right. And I think, uh, *[sound of car horn in background]* that they have all—

knock on wood [*knocks on coffee table*]*—they have all done very well. And the restaurant, uh, uh, I had just opened [hear Jo Dale clearing her throat in the other room] a restaurant where the Cedars used to be and now it's, uh, Aden's. [Shouts over to Joe to ask question] What is the name of the restaurant over there, Jo, in our old building?*

Jo Dale: [*Yelling from other room*] Aden's Grill. A-D-E-N.

AM: Aden's Grill. My brother and I built that and, uh, it was—had all kind of names: Steve and Angelo's, uh, uh, Mistilis, later The Bait Shop. My dad had a little block building down on Old Sardis Road. A little block building, seated—it had three—three booths, a little round booth, and a table, and a small table up front. Little-bitty building. Just as big as this room [*his living room where we're sitting, which is about twelve by twenty feet*]. And the kids would get out of their cars and run to get in there. It was unbelievable. I—he just—he had a knack with people and food. He used to serve a veal—you know what veal is.

AE: Yes, sir.

00:30:11

AM: He would serve a veal round steak that hung over the plate. It was thin [*short laugh*], but it hung over the plate. And nowhere else in the world could you get away—took it out of the freezer in front of everybody. [*Laughs*] The freezer was right by the tables—took it out of the freezer and put it right on the grill.

AE: When did he have that place out there?

AM: [*Sighs and smacks lips to think*] He had that in [*short pause and taps fingers on side of couch*] the [1960s] sixties, late fifties. Uh, late fifties up through, uh, I guess, seventy?

AE: Did he have that while there was still the Mistilis Café downtown?

AM: Uh-uh.

AE: Okay—

AM: No, this was after—

AE: —he did that after?

AM: —he did that after. He just wanted a bait shop, it just turned—the same thing always happened to him.

AE: [*Laughs*]

AM: No matter what he put in. He—he could put in a clothing store and he'd, you know, be serving food there in the next thirty days.

AE: *[Laughs]*

AM: But, uh, my brother and I had just gone into business on College Hill Road: Steve and Angelo's Drive-In. And *[short pause]* a lot more people had cars. They were beginning to get cars in those days, so the drive-in business was good. And we had just opened in May. And [James] Meredith came that fall [to integrate the University of Mississippi]. And we were just stuck out there and covered up with soldiers. It was just—it happened overnight. And we watched—I was standing on the front of the building, watching when the border patrol plane brought Meredith in, and they had two or three great big dump trucks loaded with federal marshals that escorted them on the campus. Um, my thinking has always been that if they'd have just gone ahead and registered him and let things go, we wouldn't have had all the—the two deaths that were associated with it and all the destruction. And I blame the governor of Mississippi for that. And I blame John F. Kennedy for that, because either one of them could have stopped it. But they brought the wrath on—just those two people—and it was—it was a face-saving thing for both of them. And I believe if they of—they could have handled it a different way, and I wish they had but—uh, the day he [Meredith] came in—that night, the girls began to show up at the restaurant in droves, calling home. The campus was covered with tear-gas and it was getting all in their dorms. And they had come out to use my phone, and I had a line there. I don't know how many people used my phone that night. *[Sound of Jo Dale clearing her throat in the other room]* And from then on until I—I asked them to put it off limits—my restaurant—because they were tearing it up—the soldiers. They didn't have anything to do. They had thirty thousand troops here in this

little old town and nothing to do. You know, had the—the whole airport was covered with tents. You couldn't see the ground. And I brought—my wife was pregnant. Very pregnant. We had to stop at about seven roadblocks every night coming home. Get out and search the car at each one of them. So it was an ordeal. Uh, we—I brought a whole bunch of helicopter pilots home to take a bath. They hadn't had a bath in days, and I told them at the restaurant, I said, "Well, y'all just load up, and we'll go to the house and all clean up and get a shower." And, uh, so I did that a couple times. But the food was—the food at our drive-in was curbside service. We had a—the usual stuff: sandwiches and French fries and whatnot. Inside we had spaghetti and pizza and plate lunches and steaks, and we were doing the same thing. Cutting our own meat and so, uh, it just kept rolling along. And finally I got out of there in [nineteen] eighty-eight. And then turned right around and went right back into the business and—can't get out of it. I don't know, it's something—somebody said to me at Abbeville Catfish the other night, said, "Well Angelo, this much just be in you blood." And I said, "I—I guess so, but I'd had rather it have been banking."

AE: [*Laughs*]

AM: [*Laughs*] Oh, I'd rather.

AE: Well, can we back up a little bit to the—

AM: Absolutely. I'll quit talking, and you just ask me .

AE: No, you're doing—you're giving me everything I need. It's wonderful. Um, but I just wanted to talk maybe a little more about the transition of the cafe downtown—the Mistilis Café there—and your dad, and then you going to College Hill from there and opening your own place.

AM: [*Sighs*]

AE: When—

AM: Well, my dad [*short pause*], um, he had—he was getting tired and—and—of all the hassle and the hustle and stuff, and he had this—got this little place out there, and he just thought, “Well, I’ll just build me a little bait shop there, and I’ll just cool it for the rest of my life and just mess around.” And so they closed the restaurant.

AE: And when was that? Late sixties?

AM: And went with that. Just him. I mean, you know, Mom wasn't involved in that. And uh, he went with that, and all of sudden he had all those students out there. They just crammed the place. And so he was right back into it. I've seen him coming out of there sweating blood, you know. And I had closed my restaurant and gone to work doing construction work. And, uh, then I got back in it. And—when that place closed. And I got back into the restaurant business and been in it since so—uh, the transition was, uh, my

brother and I wanting to open up a place of our own and Dad wanting to get out of that and get into something smaller.

AE: And that all happened in the late sixties?

00:36:30

AM: Uh, early.

AE: Early sixties? Okay.

AM: Yeah. When did we open, Jo? [1962] Sixty-two? [*Yelling to his wife, Jo Dale, who is in the kitchen*]

Jo Dale Mistilis: No, sixty. The year Dina was born.

AE: Oh.

AM: Uh—

JDM: Sixty was the year of the Meredith crisis. Dina was—

AM: No, no, no, no.

JDM: Yes, Angelo. Joey was born in November—

AM: No, sixty-two was—

JDM: No, no.

AM: Am I right? [*To interviewer*]

JDM: No, you're wrong. Listen to me. [*Walks in from the other room*]

AM: No, I'm right, sixty-two.

JDM: No [*Now standing right next to Angelo*], no. The restaurant was started—

AM: Ask this young lady [*interviewer*], she can tell you.

JDM: The restaurant—the restaurant was opened the year Dina was born and everybody in the restaurant sent me flowers to Brooks—to Oxford—Bramlett Hospital—

AM: Not Steve and Angelo's, it was some—from the other one.

JDM: It was Steve and Angelo's. We opened in nineteen sixty—

AM: You know Jo, you're so smart—

JDM: —two years later Joey was born in November and integration took place in September and—

AM: Integration—

JDM: And we already had been open two years and—

AM: I'm not going to argue with you because you're wrong—

JDM: He is entirely wrong, Amy. I'm sorry, he is *entirely* wrong.

AE: [*Laughing*]

AM: We opened—we opened our restaurant—

JDM: Our first daughter was born the year we opened—

AM: —just, just—

JDM: —and she will be forty-four years old in August.

AM: Jo Dale, honey, I'm so sorry that we—that—you—

JDM: That was Steve and Angelo's restaurant in nineteen sixty! Joey was born in nineteen sixty-two, the year of integration. When they tore up our restaurant by the way, and came in and tore the toilets off the wall—

AM: She was so busy having a baby, she's forgotten what year it was.

AE: *[Laughs]*

JDM: Uh-uh, he doesn't remember. We were married in [nineteen] fifty-eight, two years later we opened—

AM: We had—Meredith came here the first year we were open.

JDM: No, he did not. He came in [nineteen] sixty-two.

AM: We opened in May—we opened in May of [nineteen] sixty-two.

JDM: This is all wrong, I'm sorry. This is wrong, Amy. We o—we were married in [nineteen] fifty-eight, we opened two years later in nineteen sixty.

AM: No. *[Laughs]*

JDM: Our daughter was born that year and everybody—

AM: [*Laughing loudly*] You know what is so funny about this?

JDM: —sent us flowers.

AM: I'm right for a change.

[*Everybody laughs*]

JDM: He—I'll—I'll get some documents and—[*Jo Dale exits the living room*]

AM: Forty-six, forty-six years— [*Laughing*]

AE: Okay. [*Laughing*]

AM: —and I'm right for the first time! [*Laughing*]

AE: Well, your right on tape too. [*Laughing*]

AM: This is a—this is a milestone, I'm telling you.

AE: [*Laughing*] Oh, my!

AM: [*Takes a drink. Sound of glass hitting the table as he puts it back down*] Anyway, now that we got that out of the way.

AE: [*Short laugh*]

AM: So, let's go from there.

AE: Okay, so your dad had the bait shop place—café—and you had—

AM: It—it was a bait shop.

AE: —Steve and Angelo's.

AM: In fact—in fact [*short pause*] I worked there for a while.

AE: Okay.

AM: And, the highway was going to blacktop and they said that, “Hey, your buildings on the right-of-way,” so they tore it down. It was ten feet on the right-of-way. And my dad had died, and mom went around the world with my cousin who is a doctor in, uh, Sydney, Australia. And [*Jo Dale Is heard clearing her throat in the background*] he met

her in New York with his wife, and they went around the world for several months. He was on a lecture tour to all these con—countries.

AE: Hmm.

AM: And so they had a wonderful time.

AE: What year did your dad pass?

AM: Uh, [*long pause*] I—I'm ashamed to tell you that I can't remember, [*short pause*] and so I'm not even going to start.

AE: Had he ever—

AM: It had to be—oh, I know when he passed away. For heaven sakes. Maybe I'm getting a little skippy. He passed away in nineteen sixty-nine. And that's so stupid not to remember that because he was born in nineteen hundred. And he was sixty-nine years old when he died, so the math says he was, uh, died in nineteen sixty-nine.

AE: Had he ever traveled back to his homeland?

AM: Yes he did. He went one time. Uh, my grandfather died. And he went back. And that was in about nineteen thirty—thirty or thirty-four, just before I was born. And he

never went back because he said that he'd been all over the world and there was no place like Oxford anywhere.

AE: Hmm.

AM: And there was no reason to ever leave. That this was it. And, uh, he—it stayed that way. Uh, my grandmother, uh, after the Civil War—they were having Civil War in Greece after the second World War, communist had taken over—so they left the island with my two uncles, Basil and Angelo. And she left and they went to Australia and, uh, that's where she passed away. [*Jo Dale coughs in the background.*] My uncle Basil went to Perth, and my Uncle Angelo went to Sidney. And they all did very well.

AE: Do you think your father was proud that you followed in his footsteps in the restaurant business?

AM: Uh, he—I think he was proud because all of his children had—had not embarrassed him. Had, uh, never been in serious trouble. We had done our stint in the military. We had all served honorably. And I think he was very proud of us, yeah. We were a tight family. We hunted and fished all the time, you know. My father was an excellent shot. And um, we've always been sports-minded. Always. But, uh, [*sound of Angelo tapping his fingers on the arm of the couch he is sitting in*] my oldest brother lives in Cordova, Tennessee. And my youngest brother lives here in my mom's house. And my sister's deceased, so there are three of us left. [*Angelo is still thinking about the discussion of*

when they opened the restaurant on College Hill and playfully turns to whisper in Jo Dale's direction] Nineteen sixty-two, Jo Dale.

AE: [*Laughs*] So when is it that you started your stint, um, at the jailhouse around the way, working in the kitchen there?

AM: Well, it was eleven years ago. Uh, I had worked at a—at a crook's restaurant out on the lake out here at Hurricane Landing [called Louisiana Seafood Junction]. That guy was a bonafide crook, conman. And his credentials looked good, but he was—he was bogus. And it was a great place—a great business. And I learned a lot about, uh, a lot about seafood cooking, uh, Cajun-style, from a man named Wayne Levy. Uh, he's from Hammond, Louisiana, and he's a—he's a really good chef. And he taught me so much. Thing like—, you wouldn't have thought—but things like how to bone out a whole flounder, you know with stuffing. A baked flounder and dressing. And, uh, I made all the, uh, uh, crab meat dressing out there. We had crab patties as appetizers and, uh, you get a crab patty on a seafood platter. And, of course, the stuffed crab. But uh, I learned an awful lot about seafood out there from—from Wayne. And, uh, then I was, uh—I quit out there because the guy was a crook. And, uh, my wife said one day, “Well there's an ad in the paper for a manager of food service.” And so I called the number and met a guy at the Holiday Inn and, uh, uh, he said, “I'll get back to you.” They had just built the new jail. Hadn't really opened it yet. And—and the company had gotten the contract with the food service there. ABL is the name of the company. And so, three days went by, and he didn't call me and so I—I just called him back, and I said, “Fred, you're going to tell me

one way or another, come on now. I've got to find something else to do." He said, "Oh, you're hired. You're starting tomorrow." And I said, "Yeah, well thanks." So I was in—with them eleven years, and over there we cooked, uh, right out of the army cookbook. It's all institutional food. And it's good, hearty food. But if you're looking for a lot of variety, you're not going to find it. And who cares. That's not an ugly thing to say, I just—you're cooking for rapist and killers and—and bad check artist and dopers and I mean, uh, anything other than just basic grocery items, I don't feel like cooking for them. I don't think they deserve it, and I don't think I need to do that. So when—

AE: So what kept you there for eleven years?

00:45:30

AM: [*Sighs*] Not having to work on weekends like I had all my life. Uh, I had an assistant manager that did the weekends. It was—it was a—I did forty, fifty hours but, you know, I was management, so they don't count the hours.

AE: Um-hmm.

AM: But I—I—I had pretty good hours. Uh, they were long sometimes. I got there at four in the morning and didn't get off until six at night. But that was only two days a week, Monday and Tuesday. Then I worked half days for three days. But, uh, it's—it's a beans and potato—processed meat. Uh, it's—it's good, wholesome, nourishing food with all the—they're—they're up to thirty-five hundred calories now on the menu. I don't know how they do that. I mean, to me that— serving that much more potatoes and beans

and stuff is not healthy. But what they're interested in [is] keeping them full so they won't complain.

AE: Um-hmm. Hmm.

AM: So.

AE: And so, what made you leave there after—?

AM: Uh, I got tired of pushing buttons to go from one room to the next. It's all electronic. And you got to push the damn button—excuse my French—uh, you got to push a button for every—everywhere you go. Except my kitchen, I had keys. But I—I still couldn't get from the back to the front. Still had two doors in there with electric locks. And I'd get tired of it. And I ran a commissary three days a week. And it was unbelievable. Can you believe that those guys over there is a hundred—usually about one hundred twenty, thirty in there, and three days a week, uh, um, [*short pause*] twenty-six, twenty-seven hundred dollars in cash. Peanut—peanut butter and potato chips and, uh, noodles. Ramen noodles that they can heat in the water. The water's so hot over there they can make their noodles right out of the tap. And, uh, cokes and candy bars and, uh, hygiene items and, uh, soap, toothbrushes, deodorant, whatever.

AE: Hmm.

AM: Spent a lot of money. They got a lot of money. I've seen guys with four, five thousand dollars cash in their pocket over there. Drug people. See you can't take their money away from them. When they bring them in there and search them, they got five thousand dollars cash on them, it goes in their bag. [*Sound of Angelo's hand hitting the arm of the couch*]

AE: Hmm.

AM: [*Sound of Angelo's hand hitting the arm of the couch again*] Some of them got plenty of money. And I've seen every kind of dope in the world come in there. They had to quit packages and—quit letting them get packages. Because they would—when they'd take the cardboard off—you know, it's corrugated—and they'd be sticking rock cocaine down in there in those cracks and stuff like that.

AE: Wow.

AM: Putting hits of acid on the back of stamps. They'd take the stamp off and [*make licking sound*] they'd lick it, and they got a hit of acid. Little bags of weed in the bottom of shampoo bottles and—and uh, hand lotion bottles.

AE: Well, you had a whole different experience there I'd say.

AM: Oh, God. I've started a book. I've got about—I haven't written in it in a long time, but I've got about probably four chapters written. Four or five.

AE: Of just your experience there?

AM: Yeah.

AE: Huh. Interesting.

AM: It's—it's so much. And if I sit down and talk to somebody like I'm talking to you, stuff will start coming back.

AE: Yeah.

AM: Yeah.

AE: Hmm.

AM: I can remember [*short pause*] the "F" pod was right next to "G," and "G" is where the girls are kept. That's the women's pod, and it's downstairs. And "F" was supposed to be for federal prisoners who were, uh, maybe coming back there to stay two, three months before they got out. But it turned into, uh, a trustee pod. So they had this—right before it was a trustee pod, they had this real skinny little white guy. Tall but skinny.

[Angelo leans forward and gestures over the coffee table] And the construction in a building that big you got, uh, solid columns they called pilasters. And a pilaster column is the main column, and it's holding everything up. So, when those pilaster columns—sometimes when they lay the blocks—concrete blocks—they'll use a putty for expansion. So if the building expands it won't crack the block. So, this kid took his spoons and stuff, dug the putty out, took out one concrete block, and he went through that into the girl's pod and stayed for a week before they knew.

AE: Oh my goodness. *[Laughs]*

AM: *[Laughs]*

AE: That's amazing.

AM: It's uh, you'd—

AE: He was inspired!

AM: Nobody else—he's the only one skinny enough to get through the hole.

AE: *[Laughing]* Oh, my goodness.

AM: Oh.

AE: Well, um, um, I don't know how to segue from that into—back into the restaurants but, um, now your working out at Abbeville Catfish, correct? With Pat Patterson? Can you, um, speak to how that developed?

AM: [*Sighs*] Just, uh, my wife and I helped Pat open Oxford Steak Company. And then he sold it to Palmer Adams. But—but we—we went in with Pat. He's an old time friend. And Pat has a knack of opening new businesses, and he always finds people who were successful before to come in with him and help. And that's part of his success with his businesses. But we helped him open that and stayed with him, and I even stayed on with that with Palmer. I cut all his meat over there for him. And stood around and talked to customers about the bull. But uh, I told Pat, I said, "I'm getting tired of going in and out these buzzers. It's just killing me." And, uh, he said, "Well, when you decide your going to quit—for sure. Don't just tell me you're going to quit—well, we'll do something." So I—I called him and said. "Well I'm—I'm going to get out of there." He said, "Well I'm going to buy"—thing about the Abbeville Catfish, it was closed at the time. I told him, I said, "Well—He said, "Will you come up and help me." And I said, "Sure. But, I don't want to do the buffet." That's what they had, and it was nasty. I said, "I don't want to do the buffet." So Jo Dale and I went up and helped him. And Martha Starnes, which you asked me about, Martha Starnes and her husband had a place—catfish place—and you don't remember—I know you don't know anything about the old Starnes [Catfish Place]. But they made hushpuppies that everybody liked and what they called a Dago salad at the time but you—some people frown on that now, so they call it an onion and

tomato salad. And—uh, the hushpuppies, Dago salad, and coleslaw. And so, those are the—you get those things on the table, plus a bowl of *real* turnip greens. Not chopped up with the roots. [*Sound of door closing*] Real turnip greens. You get all four of those things on the table before you get your meal. And it's good. And those come—are Martha's recipes.

AE: Yeah?

AM: And so she just kind of floats around on the front. Jo Dale bakes the—the, uh, desserts. And, uh, helps run the place on Friday nights. And, uh, she and Martha are out front most the time and, uh, I'm back and forth between the kitchen and out front and, um, just cruising. Trying not to work too hard.

AE: [*Laughs*] What kind of desserts—

AM: It doesn't always end that way.

AE: —what kind of desserts does Jo Dale make?

AM: She makes, uh, a really good fudge pie—chocolate fudge pie—and, um, can't keep her caramel cake. They—they—people like that a lot.

AE: How long have you all been open over there?

AM: Uh, not really too long. About a couple months now, so—

AE: What kind of hours are you open?

AM: Uh, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday from five to about nine, nine thirty. It's, um, it's—it's big. I mean it's going real good. Real good.

AE: Do you enjoy being in that part of the restaurant business again?

AM: [*Sighs*] I must be. Or else I'm stupid or crazy or something.

AE: [*Laughing*]

AM: Maybe I'm stupid and don't know sixty from sixty-two. But, uh, I just I don't know. But, um, uh, I just, uh, it's just—it's kind of like a disease. And you get—you know carpenters and people who are handymen, they get—they like wrenches and pliers and tubes and pipes and—and light switches and commode handles and all this handyman stuff, you know. And they—they like it because they—they—they're into tools like that. And I'm into butcher knives and steaks and making stuff, you know.

AE: Sure.

AM: So, I did some, uh, [*leans forward*] I'm trying to do some—work up some specials.

[*Takes a drink of iced tea*]

AE: Yeah?

AM: Have you been to Wal-Mart's seafood section?

AE: Yes, I have.

AM: You ever seen those great big shrimp they've got in there?

AE: Um-hmm.

AM: I took some of those the other night and put four of them with two skewers with the vegetables and stuff between it and grilled them and, uh, put seasoning on them, and I served them on a—a big old thing of rice about that big [*gestures his hands together to illustrate the size of a dinner plate*], with grilled onions on there and did that on top of it. And a baked potato and a couple slices of tomatoes that had been grilled. And it's—

AE: Yum!

AM: Yeah. Yeah, it was good. [*Laughs*]

AE: It sounds like you're having fun out there.

AM: Uh, you can't do it if you're not.

AE: Yeah.

00:56:27

AM: Because if you hate it, it gets worse by the day.

AE: Yeah.

AM: You're usually not there too long. So—

AE: Do you think you'll stick with it for a while more now?

AM: I don't know. I'm getting old, honey!

AE: [*Laughs*]

AM: Got a birthday this week.

AE: Oh! Well, happy birthday.

AM: [*Turns to ask Jo Dale*] Is my birthday this week or next?

JDM: Friday.

AE: [*Laughs*]

AM: This Friday.

AE: [*Continues laughing*]

JDM: Lord. Amy, he's going to—his head is spinning.

AM: [*To interviewer*] I'm teasing her.

AE: Um, are any of your kids in any—in the restaurant businesses or anything?

AM: [*Shakes head, no*]

AE: No? Stops with you, huh?

AM: Uh, start with the oldest, uh, Dina. She's got a thriving events business in Atlanta called Events Café. [*Coughs*] She was an associate with Mark Panza, who is a very

famous events planner. And, uh, they even did some tables for the White House for guests and dignitaries. They did the tables decorations and such. But, uh, she broke off with Mark because he was a drunk, and she got tired of taking care of him. And, uh, she's got her family. Cute girls. And her husband's a graphics design artist. [He] graduated from, uh, Georgia Tech. And I just found out that they're going to bring the kids. We're going to meet them and pick them up. Uh, her business is thriving, and he has, according to my wife, he's been offered a job in China to help them set up their websites. So I don't know whether he'll go or not. And then my, uh, second was a boy, and his name is Joey. And uh, Joseph Angelo Mistilis, call him Joey. Uh, he runs a, uh, generic drug company out west of town here for a company in Pine Bluff, Arkansas. They own, uh, Super D Drugs and all that kind of stuff. And it's a telemarket, so he's been doing that for a long time. Got a great family. Uh, my grandson was invited to, uh, go to England just last year—Oxford, England—to do math. He's just in ninth grade.

AE: Wow.

AM: So he's a pretty bright kid.

AE: I'd say.

AM: He's an athlete too. He's—he's a good kid. All my kid—all grandkids are just fabulous. And that's my second—boy. My third is a girl. And she fell in love with a boy that's in law school. And he graduated law school, and she graduated undergraduate the

same time. They got married, and he is, uh, a tax lawyer. And right now he is—runs tax law in the Atlanta City Gas and Power Company. So he works with the City of Atlanta. They live up in Norcross, and my daughter lives in a fantastic downtown area. Oh, it's—it's just like an old—old city, and you can walk everywhere, and it's just wonderful. Down—it's close to Piedmont Park. And, uh, uh, my youngest boy [John] couldn't find himself. And he went to Ole Miss and [*short laugh*] dropped out his senior year and did all sorts of things. Very successful in all sorts of things, but he finally decided he wanted to be a teacher so—he's married to a teacher. And he went back to school, so he's teaching senior English. Yeah.

JDM: [*Jo Dale has re-entered the living room*] And he was nominated for the Walt Disney teacher of the year, his first year—

AE: Oh, my goodness.

AM: Yeah.

JDM: He didn't win, but he was nominated. [*Jo Dale leaves the living room*]

AE: Wow!

AM: Yeah. He's, uh, he went to his first year in Coldwater, and it's a country school with a—small town with mostly black students. And he showed up here one day, at an

Ole Miss base—uh, bask—uh, Ole Miss football game with a black kid that stayed with him and went to the game. And we found out later that this kid is breaking all kinds of track records. And he's—*[turns to ask Jo Dale]* Is he in Europe this summer?

JDM: *[Yelling from the other room]* He was trying out for the Olympics in Athens, and he's on an Olympic team, but I don't know the details, Amy. The—

AM: He's a sprinter. And he trained by pulling a tire in a parking lot. They didn't have a track up there. Tied a tire behind him— around his waste and trained pulling that tire around. But he's a very polite young man. And, um, but very dumb. He's just—they offered him a scholarship to [Mississippi] State, but they'll pass him through and some way or another he will—he'll be just as dumb as he was when he went in but he— evidently he was raised with some good values other than school. Politeness and, uh— but, um, that was, uh—John is now teaching in Water Valley. He's trying to get up, he's trying to get up here. What was that? *[There was a noise over in the corner of the living room]* Something on the side? *[Angelo thought it might be something outside on the side of the house]*

AE: I don't know.

AM: We had an experience with that. Every time I hear a little something like that.

[Laughs]

AE: [*Laughs*]

AM: Uh, this is uh—this is off the subject. But, uh, we had a fireplace and the squirrels kept coming down the chimney. So my wife got aggravated with it, and so she had a guy come cap the top off. And we—we thought we ran every thing out of there.

AE: Uh-oh. [*Laughs*]

AM: And then one night, shortly after she capped it up, we were—I was watching television, and she was reading in the bed. And all of a sudden—it was Christmas time, and she had everything decorated up beautiful. She just is so good. And we heard this crash. And she said, “What was that?” And I said, “I don’t know.” [She said] “Go see what it was!” and I said, “No, you go see what it was!” [*Laughing*]

AE: [*Laughing*]

AM: So, finally got it—I got up and came in here. And there was a raccoon in here. He had gotten trapped in that chimney.

AE: Oh, no.

AM: And he was trying to get out, and he busted through that glass, pushed it open. And when I stepped in the door, he hit the couches, and we had white covers on them, and he had been with that soot in the kitchen.

AE: [*Laughs*]

AM: And he had wiped little coon tracks, and they went over the chairs, up that wall over there. And we've had the room painted since then, but he left his footprints there.

AE: [*Laughing*]

AM: And down—and knocked everything off of her mantle. And she was standing in the door by then, and this coon was running laps in here. And she said—she said—she hollered, “Call the police!” [*Laughing*] So I—about that time that coon had went in between her legs in the door.

AE: [*Laughing*]

AM: [*Laughing*] And ran down the hall, got in the kitchen, and got on the valance over the sink and tore everything down. I finally opened enough doors to run him out of here. He went out the front door, but it was so funny.

AE: [*Laughing*]

AM: But that's not what you're here to talk about so—

AE: Well, as long as there's not a raccoon breaking into that window over there.

AM: I hear you.

AE: Well, and what's this I hear about, um, Jo Deal—Jo Dale putting together a cookbook? John T [Edge] mentioned something about it.

AM: Already done it.

AE: Yeah?

AM: And the man who she was in—she did the work, and he—he wanted to get the book done. And—but he's got the book now to—he thinks he's got someone that's going to publish it. He's not sure, so it's not here right now.

AE: What kind of recipes are in it?

AM: It's cooking with buttermilk.

AE: The whole thing?

AM: Well, I think most of it, yeah.

AE: Oh, wow.

AM: I—that—look, she's a writer.

AE: Yeah.

AM: She's done—she's done so many interviews. She used to go—she used to fly to California. And she represented, uh, *Satellite Dish Magazine* [corrected later: *Satellite TV Opportunities Magazine*]. And she's—she's a great interviewer. She really is. She—she does what you do.

AE: Yeah?

AM: And, uh, she hadn't done it in a while, but she's a writer and uh—

AE: What made her want to do a cookbook?

AM: —poet, you know. She's—she's good at all that. [*Sound of Jo Dale getting ice from the refrigerator*]

AE: Yeah.

AM: She's a smart girl. But she doesn't know sixty from sixty-two.

AE: [*Laughs*] Uh-oh.

AM: She was never good at math.

AE: Well, do you have any, um, other thoughts about growing up in Oxford in the restaurant business and—?

AM: Uh, no. I—I just, you know, you just get so attached to your customers. And Jo Dale and I can't go anywhere. I swear, anywhere we go we run into somebody we've fed over all those years. You know, we fed an awful lot of students.

AE: Yeah.

00:65:40

AM: And it was kind of like—one little girl summed it up one day. She came in and she said, “I—we cooked out in the front in my restaurant out on College Hill, so we were, you might say, out amongst them. And, uh, this little girl—cute little coed—she said, “You know why I like to come in here?” I said, “I can't imagine.” She said, “I feel it's like I'm going to my momma's kitchen.” And she said, “That's exactly how comfortable I feel in here.” And so, you know. But anyway, we—we've fed a lot of people, and we

never get away from them. I took my boys to, uh, the Little Red River in Heber Springs, Arkansas. And we were staying at the uh, uh, this boat dock place. Uh, I can't think of the name of it. But, um, it had—it had a floating pier on the river, with an office and boat docks and boats and slips and boats and whatever. And we were messing around. We'd been out fishing all morning and messing around on the p—on the dock and, uh, I was on one side, and I heard my son say something about “Go Rebels.” And I turned around and looked, and there were two boys sitting in the boat and one of them's wife and the other one's wife was standing right behind me, and she turned around and looked and I turned around, and she looked at me and she said, “Are you Angelo Mistilis?” And I said, “Yeah.” She said—turned around to her husband and she said, “See, I told you.” And they both had eaten with me in college. I don't know how long ago. And they remembered what they ate, “Hamburger steak all-the-way, cheese and onions, sunshine.”

[Laughs]

AE: [Laughs] Small world.

AM: You know, we're just doing—we—we have fed—and we don't realize how many students we've fed until we go somewhere.

AE: Yeah.

AM: And we're constantly running into them. My daughter was in Atlanta—the oldest—when she first went over there she worked for a tour company. And she rode in

front of this van and—with a mic and explained all this stuff when she drove through all of these neighborhoods and stuff. And she was getting off, uh—they were unloading, and this real elderly man got off. And he said, “Honey, what’d you say your name was?” And she said, “Dina Mistilis Moore,” I mean, no, no, it wasn’t Moore then. Uh, Stevens. “Deanna Mistilis Stevens.” And he said, “Mistilis,” he said, “Was your granddaddy Tom Mistilis?” And she said, “Yeah.” He said, “We went to school together. I went to school at Ole Miss in [nineteen] twenty-seven.” He said, “He was out there then.”

AE: Isn’t that something. Oh my goodness.

AM: I mean, you just—

AE: Wow.

AM: It just goes on and on and on and on. But it’s kind of fun, too, you know.

AE: Sure, yeah. It’s a great connection to make with people, feeding them.

AM: Yeah. Food is, uh, some people you’re never going to satisfy. I don’t care what you do. You can just absolutely bend over backwards, and the last time I ran into something like that, the food was not bad, it was—was—was a broil—a nine ounce piece of broiled fish—and it was done with asparagus tips and—and, uh, grilled tomatoes and baked potato and seasoning, and it was really good. But this lady, she was a complainer.

She's always got something to say. And I didn't know what to tell her, I just told her that we'd try to fix her special and uh, uh because she was unhappy with it, I was going immediately to the kitchen and kill the cook. *[Laughs]*

AE: *[Laughs]*

AM: So she left me alone.

AE: *[Laughing]*

AM: I think she embarrasses her husband every time they go somewhere.

AE: *[Laughing]* You enjoy that interaction with the customers?

AM: *[Answers as he's about to take a drink]* Oh, yeah.

AE: Yeah?

AM: I, uh, the second weekend we were up there [at Abbeville], there were two—two couples came in. And when I was making my rounds around the tables, and I spoke to them and, um, said “Where you guys from?” They were from Holly Springs. I said, “Well, I used to go to Holly Springs a lot.” Because we were right close to the town. And

I said, “I used to know a fella up there that was an outstanding football player. His name was Nub Strickland.” And this guy’s kid looks up at me and says, “That’s my daddy.”

AE: [*Laughs*]

AM: [*Laughs*] You know? Yeah.

AE: It doesn’t take long.

AM: Yeah, and in the café. Yeah, that’s—you’re going to—you’re going to see people. It’s just—and that was—honey, that was fifty years ago.

AE: Wow.

AM: That’s a long time ago! God, I couldn’t believe it. But anyway—

AE: Well and—besides students, do you have any memories of people that came through the cafes downtown that, um, are memorable?

AM: Famous people?

AE: Famous people or local people or—

JDM: [*Yelling from the other room*] Stubby Kaye, Germaine Greer—

AE: [*Short laugh*]

AM: Yeah, Germaine Greer was a—she signed my—my menu board for me. Do you know who we're talking about?

JDM: You know, she—she was one of the founders of the feminist movement. She wrote *The Female Eunuch*, and it—

AM: Germaine Greer.

JDM: —and it was a best—worldwide best seller.

AM: Germaine Greer.

AE: Wow. [*Laughs*]

AM: And, uh—

JDM: And Stubby Kaye was in—on Broadway in *Guys and Dolls* for a long, long time.

And, uh, we had a lot of famous athletes there too.

AE: Yeah.

AM: Archie [Manning] used to hide in the back.

JDM: He had Sunday lunch with us every week.

AM: The girls wouldn't leave him alone.

AE: He had Sunday lunch?

AM: he would—he would—he would hide with, uh, his now wife in Daddy's old place too, down the road. Yeah, because the girls would just—wouldn't let him alone, you know.

AE: Yeah.

AM: But, uh, oh we had the normal amount of senators and—and, uh, representatives and whatever. And, uh [*short pause*] how—I don't know—I wasn't really all that impressed with all that, you know. I put a sign on my door when Meredith came and—because we were brand new. And we had white naugahyde booths. They were gorgeous. And red curtains. And they would come in with their Army stuff on, and they sliced up the seats, you know. So I put a notice on the door: "Either check your guns on the outside or don't

come in.” And they thought that was funny. And it was, uh—I think they listened though. I think it got in *Time Magazine*. I think a picture of my front door was in *Time Magazine*.

AE: Really?

AM: I—I think it was. I—somebody told me it was. That that sign on our front door—of course the—the French, uh, journalist that got killed, he—he ate with me. Along with, uh, a lot of federal marshals, who took pictures in their motel room, and guess what their bedcover was? [*Short pause*] A giant confederate flag. [*Short pause*] So. My youngest brother was a—a neighborhood friend of mine growing up together called me from New Jersey, and she said, “Angelo, what is going on? All this on the television? And I saw your brother [*unintelligible phrase*] in the middle of the grove [on the University of Mississippi campus] taking down the flag and putting a confederate flag up. What is going on?” My brother’s picture, it was in—she saw it tube—on the tube. And that was on Wednesday. Sunday night he was standing in front of the Lyceum in his National Guard uniform, being hit by every kind of damn brick and bottle and bullet coming through there. So he went from raising the confederate flag into being activated and put in front of the marshals in the front of the buildings so—that’s—that’s going to extremes, isn’t it?

AE: Uh-huh.

AM: And the kid that got—one of the boys that got killed—there were two killed, I think. Was a—was a French, uh, uh, fellow from some French newspaper or from a radio station, I'm not sure which. He was in the media. And the kid that got killed was the kid that changed my records on my record player. You know, he bel—he worked for the company that had the record player and put the records on—changed—kept them changed all the time.

00:74:58

AE: Like in a jukebox?

AM: On a jukebox, yeah.

AE: In your restaurant?

AM: Um-hmm. And, uh, he was out there in all that crowd and, uh, couldn't see, so he stood up on a concrete block. Shot him right in the head. If his—if he hadn't stood up—of course we all know that if a frog had wings, he wouldn't bump his tail all the time he jumped so—hits or skiffs. We all go boat riding. But I—I—you know, I could sit here and tell tales of, uh—I have a friend that's a judge now. Dear friend of mine. And I got to be really good friends with five or six law students. And they just—they used to come over here and treated Jo Dale like a mother and just—it was kind of home. And he hurt his knee. This is—it was so funny. You have to know, my hamburger steak is—is this big [holds hand out about a ten inches apart], and it's covered with piles of onions and

cheese and French fries. And he had had a cast put on his leg right there [points to his leg where the leg of his shorts stops about mid-thigh] down to here [motions to his ankle], and it was—it had gotten old enough on his leg [that] it was kind of loose. And he was wearing shorts one day, and he came down to the restaurant in the middle of the afternoon. And he was talking, and I had just served him his hamburger steak. And he turned around, and he took his fork, and he pulled the whole thing off in his—and it went right down that—[*laughs*] it went right down that cast. Boom! In his leg. And of course it was hot. And, uh—do you remember that, Jo Dale?

JDM: What?

AM: Remember when we took a hose and ran down Hollis's cast on his leg.

AM: That's not—Amy, is all that on the tape recorder?

AE: [*Laughs*] Yes, ma'am.

AM: That hamburger steak went right down that cast, and we had to go out in the yard and take a hose and—and stick in there to keep it from getting burnt.

AE: [*Laughing*]

AM: It was—

AE: *[Laughing]*

AM: Lot of things. Gosh, we can just [short pause] uh, lot of—lot of good memories. And we have a—we had a ton of photographs. Uh, I had a picture of my great-great-grandmother. She was a full-blooded Choctaw. And, uh, she was a beautiful woman. And the picture had been torn up. It was about like this [*holds up his hands to illustrate a photograph of about five by seven inches*], and it had been torn up, and we had put it back together. She was a very attractive lady. But that was on my mother's side. But anyway—

AE: Well—

AM: That's business. I don't know why I helped you any at all.

AE: You sure did.

AM: I probably didn't.

AE: Yeah, that's a lot of good stories. And I certainly appreciate it. Um, and I think—I think we could probably end there, unless you have something you want to add. Or Jo Dale, if you want to add something.

JDM: Is it off?

AE: [*Shakes head “no”*]

AM: Uh, I don't—I don't know. I just, you know, there's so many things that Dad cooked. He, uh, we served tons of lemon icebox pie. He *really* made a wonderful lemon icebox pie. And—with all fresh ingredients. Hand squeezed lemon, the whole bit. But he didn't make it in a round pie pan. He made it in a sheet pan this big [*holds hands apart to illustrate a sheet pan about nine by thirteen inches*], and it was forty slices—forty pieces of pie. They were square. You know, when he cut them, he cut them square.

AE: Uh-huh.

AM: And gosh, I can't tell you how much of that we served.

AE: Yeah?

AM: Tons of it.

AE: Do you still make that ever?

AM: Uh, I still know how and I—I don't—I—Jo Dale does most of the baking. She does all the baking. She's really good. She's a—she—you know, our kids ate—our kids ate meals. You know? They didn't eat peanut butter sandwiches.

AE: Yeah.

AM: My kids ate—made—Jo Dale cooked. She—they had hot breakfasts every morning, you know. They had good meals at night—good supper meals—and, uh, I—I think it's, uh, a wonderful thing that they—they were able to grow up that way. You know, she—she'd cook for me. We were married a long time before she ever had a—a dryer or anything like that. A washer, you know. We—we went to the washerette [washateria] for a long time and—and, uh, she used to hang our clothes. First thing she did when we moved, she'd fixed a clothesline, you know. But, uh, she's a good mom. A good mom. We went to high school together.

AE: Yeah?

AM: Never dated. I was a meathead, and she was an intellectual.

AE: *[Laughs]*

AM: I guess that, uh, opposites attract.

AE: Opposites do attract. Yes, sir.

AM: But we never did date in high school. And, uh, our high school graduation was always held at, uh, Fulton Chapel on [the University of Mississippi] campus. And so the night we graduated, I had on a brand new pair of white wingtip shoes—cordovan shoes. They were so great! But they were slick. And I came across the stage, got my diploma, shook hands—what do you do? Throw the tassel over—walked across the Fulton Chapel stage, and when I hit the steps, I went all the way to the floor.

AE: [*Short laugh*] Oh, no.

AM: I mean, and I just went right out into the [*laughs*]—right out into the auditorium and fell all the way through. That was embarrassing, but I regained my seat and, uh, then when it was over, we went back into the back room to turn our gowns in, and this cute little thing was standing in the doorway, and I said, “Wow.” So I just got me a little kiss on the way out the door and [*short pause*] that was forty-six years ago.

AE: And the rest is history as they say, huh?

AM: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Just wonder[ful].

00:80:48

[END OF INTERVIEW]

