

**Bobby Wendling**  
**Southern Snow Manufacturing – Belle Chasse, LA**

\* \* \*

Date: May 4, 2011

Location: Southern Snow Manufacturing – Belle Chasse, LA

Interviewer: Sara Roahen

Transcription: Shelley Chance, ProDocs

Length: 1 hour, 28 minutes

Project: New Orleans Sno-Balls

**[Begin Southern Snow-Bubby Wendling Interview]**

**00:00:01**

**Sara Roahen:** This is Sara Roahen for the Southern Foodways Alliance. It's Wednesday, May 4, 2011. I'm in Belle Chasse, Louisiana, at Southern Snow with Mr. Bubby Wendling. Could I get you to say your full name for me, please, and your birth date?

**00:00:15**

**Bubby Wendling:** It's Bubby Wendling. January 5, 1947.

**00:00:21**

**SR:** Is Bubby short for anything?

**00:00:24**

**BW:** Yeah, it's short for little sisters and brothers that can't say "brother," you know so it's really a New Orleans name.

**00:00:31**

**SR:** What was your given name?

**00:00:32**

**BW:** Milton.

**00:00:35**

**SR:** Did anybody ever call you that?

**00:00:36**

**BW:** No. *[Laughs]*

**00:00:39**

**SR:** Can you tell me in your own words how you make your living—what your profession is?

**00:00:45**

**BW:** Well we pretty much put people into the sno-ball business. We have--we manufacture shaved ice machines and we import some—import some shaved ice machines for special operations. And we manufacture the flavors, which is our main business which we make most of our income on. And we have over 170 different flavors and we reach the ethnic markets, so we have like the Spanish market, we have guanabana and tamarindo and--and all the ethnic flavors that are big in Southern California, Southern Texas, Southern Florida—whatever one I missed there. And--and then we have all the supplies that anyone would need as far as the bottles and stoppers to put the flavor on the syrup; the tanks to mix up the sugar and water, cups, spoons and straws—and of course the cups, spoons, and straws market is basically local. But we'll ship the other stuff from New Zealand to Alaska and all 50 states.

**00:01:48**

**SR:** How did you get into this business?

**00:01:51**

**BW:** My grandfather had a--had a hand-scraped back around 1929; it was during the Depression and--and they always did--they always did sno-balls. And during the '50s I worked in his stand, and some days they would have—they would sell \$100 of sno-balls with two machines and four people. And that's a nickel sno-ball, so that's just like selling \$1,000 or \$2,000 of sno-balls today when they had a great day, you know. So I didn't forget that. *[Laughs]*

**00:02:26**

And so later on I went to college and I had some jobs, and--and I decided that I wanted to—I wanted to be in the sno-ball supply business. And so I opened up a stand in 1980 and I ran it myself for two years and then we went into the flavor business. The following year we built machines, and--and then the '84 World's Fair hit and we sold quite a bit and we were in the--in the market then. We were a success at that time.

**00:02:53**

**SR:** When you say “we,” who do you mean?

**00:02:57**

**BW:** Basically me, but I had friends helping me. I had—you know a friend I went to college with, which was a flavorist, and I had a guy from England that came over—and that--that was a friend—and pretty much designed the sno-ball machine.

**00:03:10**

**SR:** Tell me where your grandfather's stand was.

**00:03:12**

**BW:** His was in Old Algiers. It was on--it was at 638 Sigmund Street, and back then people had cars; a lot of people had cars but they took the bus everywhere. The car they only took out on the--on the weekends. And they would--they'd think 3,000 miles a year was a lot of miles for their cars. They'd--they'd gas them up on Sunday and—or Saturday morning—and then they would go up there and eat sno-balls. So sometimes they'd buy several sno-balls, eat one, go back and get another one. They were a nickel. And they'd be like—the sno-ball stand was close to a park so there was plenty of parking, so there would be 10--12 cars parked by the park all getting sno-balls.

**00:03:58**

**SR:** People would drive from other parts of the city and—?

**00:04:00**

**BW:** Yeah, that would be a big outing you know. “Let's get in the car and let's go get sno-balls.” And the car would be parked the rest of the week. They would catch the bus to work.

**00:04:10**

**SR:** Did you grow up in Algiers?

**00:04:11**

**BW:** Let's see, I'd guess you'd call it Lower Coast Algiers. And the sno-ball stand would be like in Algiers, you know.

**00:04:19**

**SR:** I don't know what that means, Lower Coast.

**00:04:23**

**BW:** Let's see, well, they had a viaduct in Algiers that kind of divided—it was the Southern Pacific Railroad yard and they put a viaduct over it, this ramp that went over the park. So if you were going in one side you were in Algiers; if you were on the other side of the viaduct you were in Lower Coast.

**00:04:40**

**SR:** Your grandfather, did he have a profession prior to the sno-ball business?

**00:04:46**

**BW:** Nah, he was sort of--he was sort of a carpenter. You know, you want to hold on? [*Phone*

*Interruption*]

**00:04:53**

**SR:** I can pause it. Okay we're back from a little pause. So you were saying that your grandfather was a carpenter prior to the sno-ball business?

**00:05:00**

**BW:** Yeah, he was in carpenter work. That's about all I remember; you know basically he did carpenter work. But they worked in shipyards too. You know back then people didn't have too much specialties. *[Laughs]* So he worked in shipyards and he was a carpenter and he—but the shaved ice was a big deal. You know that's what he did mostly.

**00:05:17**

**SR:** Can you remember what flavors he had back then?

**00:05:22**

**BW:** Back then there might have only been about 10. I'm sure they had strawberry, and probably just nectar was a big deal in New Orleans, but I'm not sure if they had that yet. But they had spearmint for sure and orange and probably a grape, and the other ones I'd be kind of guessing at.

**00:05:39**

**SR:** Did they do any kind of—you know how today it's popular to have ice-cream or cream on top or marshmallow? Was there any--were there any kind of things that—?

**00:05:47**

**BW:** Yeah, they always—yeah, they had evaporated milk, was the main thing. You--you pretty much had to have evaporated milk and condensed milk, both of them.

**00:05:55**

**SR:** So you said that he used the hand-shaver. Did he ever graduate to the machine?

**00:06:00**

**BW:** Yeah. He was--he was one of the first ones to have a machine on the--on the West Bank. You know it was like after the War, is when they got popular. That's when the—they claim the machines were around. Hansen's was around 1934, and then they had something called SnoWizard around 1937 and—but none of these machines became popular until after World War II. That's when they started selling enough that anybody had even seen one. And--and in the '50s they had no less than four manufacturers of shaved ice machines in New Orleans.

**00:06:35**

**SR:** Hmm. Do you know who he bought his from?

**00:06:38**

**BW:** I believe the--I believe the first block-ice shaver he had was from SnoWizard.

**00:06:44**

**SR:** So tell me a little bit about ice. Was it the same? Did he buy it in blocks back then, or make it in blocks, or did—was he buying it in like huge—?

**00:06:56**



**BW:** No, back then--back then he would—he had a bicycle with a big basket on it and he'd go down and get 50-pound or 100-pound blocks and ride back with it. And then he had a guy in an ice truck. The ice trucks were still popular then. And they would put a 300-pound block in—several 300-pound blocks—in the back of their truck to keep it from melting. And the big thing is keeping that—keeping the wind off of it. So they put a canvas over it. And it, just like they did back in the '30s for delivering ice to people with ice boxes, they--they delivered to the sno-ball stands the same way, and it was quite a few guys that was pretty reliable, you know. And so mostly you had your ice delivered.

**00:07:33**

**SR:** What was your grandfather's name?

**00:07:34**

**BW:** Simeon Clement.

**00:07:37**

**SR:** What--what was his heritage then?

**00:07:41**

**BW:** He's French. He was--he was Albert Simeon Clement.

**00:07:45**

**SR:** What was his stand called?

**00:07:46**

**BW:** It was called Clement's Sweet Shop.

**00:07:49**

**SR:** And what about your stand? Where was that located?

**00:07:54**

**BW:** It was at 1615 Monroe Street in Gretna. And it was--it was a house trailer, half of a house trailer because a lot of people start in these little stands and then you find out they got half their stuff at their house. So I was going to stay in this house trailer and I was going to have a sno-ball stand at one end of it and the master bedroom—I cut out all the windows and was selling out the windows and had a porch and a lean-to on top of it and it looked pretty good. You know I had planned it out. But I thought I was going to stay in the trailer, but cups, spoons, and straws and boxes ran me right out of the trailer and I had to go to some other place. And it was a full-time sno-ball stand.

**00:08:28**

**SR:** What years were those?

**00:08:30**

**BW:** Nineteen eighty, nineteen eighty-two, I ran a sno-ball stand and after that the lot was kind of big and we brought in cargo containers and we started manufacturing. We manufactured flavors in the trailer and we also manufactured machines in cargo containers.

**00:08:46**

**SR:** Uh-hm, so you were manufacturing machines way back then.

**00:08:49**

**BW:** Well '82 is the first machine we built.

**00:08:53**

**SR:** Do you think that it was because that your grandfather had a stand that you got so deep into this business?

**00:09:00**

**BW:** Yes, it is. You know I just--I just saw that they—it's kind of strange because we--we did a lot of guesswork. I guess we wasn't really smart. There wasn't a lot of market research done on it because, you know, I'm talking about the retail end. I know they made a killing in the retail end. But I wasn't that good at the retail end because I wanted to make every sno-ball that went out the window. And so I had a line going around the block and I couldn't make them fast enough. I made a great sno-ball but *[Laughs]* you know. So I--I wanted to get in the supply end and I knew the business was growing. I could see other—I really didn't do the kind of research that I needed to do to go into that business, but the first year we built 50 machines and sold all 50. So we were-

-we were rolling. And the next year the World's Fair hit and we sold 184 machines, so we--we were in--in the game then. And that's how you sell flavors, is when you sell a machine.

**00:09:55**

A lot of people were selling just flavor and they couldn't get noticed, you know.

**00:10:00**

**SR:** Now like last year, how many machines did you sell?

**00:10:04**

**BW:** We sell around 200 a year. In the heyday we were doing 300, over 300 you know, and they kind of backed off a little bit. But the flavor--but the flavor business—the flavor and the supplies and all, that keeps growing. And being you're in New Orleans and you're one of the oldest manufacturers, you have all the best prices, the best supplies. It's the place to shop so you're getting in everybody else's shaved ice business with the flavors. It's all the Japanese cube machines, the Japanese spinning machines, the--the snowy in-between machines, the sno-cone machines—all the best stuff is right here in New Orleans at the best price, so we get—so you don't have to depend just on your machines. And yet you can to some extent because the first machines are still out there. It's not like some machine that's going to, about every 10 years it just, you know it's out of commission. We still have parts and service on the first machines we built; some of our very first machines are still out there.

**00:10:59**

Some of the old machines built by other manufacturers are still out there and we service them and some of them are 50, 60 years old. All the parts for all the New Orleans-style machines are still available.

**00:11:10**

**SR:** I should say for the record that I had a tour of this facility before we sat down to talk, and you have a machine shop here.

**00:11:20**

**BW:** Right.

**00:11:22**

**SR:** So when you talk about selling your machine, how similar is the Southern Snow Machine now to the one that you were building in the '80s?

**00:11:31**

**BW:** Uh, very similar. Well we improved--we improved on the bearings, the bearing system. And uh, quite a few little things. You know we're sort of like your little Volkswagen. They used to say that—they showed the two Beetles up there and they say they look alike, but there's 29 different changes. But there's not enough changes on it that we don't have all the parts for it—you know, any modification that we made on a new machine will fit on an old one.

**00:11:58**

**SR:** So if Ashley Hansen over at Hansen's had a problem with the machine that her grandfather made in the '30s—I think you said—would you be able to help her?

**00:12:09**

**BW:** That--that would be a problem. **[Laughs]** I haven't--I haven't really opened—even though I have one here, I never really opened up and looked at it, and Ashley says that their blades are a little different, that they never—they don't have to sharpen them. But boy, I mean they got to pull on that handle, too. So I don't know exactly; I think it's a carbide blade but a carbide blade doesn't cut like the others. So I might have to ask her something about that because I don't know what she's doing over there **[Laughs]** to keep that machine running, because our blade—our machines, we change the blades every 2,000 and 10,000 sno-balls, you know depending on what the customer likes; how the customer wants the machine to run and how hard the ice is they're putting in it.

**00:12:50**

**SR:** Can you then sharpen the blades and reuse them, or are they just—?

**00:12:53**

**BW:** Sure, yeah, we can sharpen it. Yeah, we sharpen them.

**00:12:58**

**SR:** So do you have a whole service arm of the company where people go out and exchange the blades and go on-site?

**00:13:04**

**BW:** No, pretty much they have to come here. We have no on-site service but people can phone in from anywhere and we can troubleshoot the machine over the phone and we can overnight parts to them. And the blade-sharpening service, we have it right here in the house. They bring their machine and we sharpen the blades. We'll pull them out and put them back in. And we can fix anything on any machine here.

**00:13:24**

**SR:** Do you have one Southern Snow-style machine, or do you have more than one?

**00:13:30**

**BW:** No, it's just one. It's--every year we just have one machine and we offer three different motors on it. We have a 110, which most people get for their sno-ball stand. We have a 12-volt machine for mobile use, and we have a 220-volt motor for like Australia, New Zealand, and Europe.

**00:13:48**

**SR:** Wow. So you send them that far afield?

**00:13:51**

**BW:** Yeah. It's not a big part of our business, but every year machines leaving town—we must be in about 30 foreign countries and islands, you know.

**00:14:00**

**SR:** You were telling me that you also sell—. About how many other ice-shaving machines do you sell that aren't for the New Orleans-style sno-balls but might be for, you know, California shaved ice?

**00:14:11**

**BW:** We researched that. I researched that pretty good, and I handle two Japanese machines made by the same manufacturer, Hatsuyuki, and from the research I did—we did a lot of research on it and I feel that there's three types of snow out there that's--that's making snow—not chipped ice and not snow cone—and it would be the Southern Snow, the New Orleans-style machine; it would be the Hatsuyuki one that spins a block. They call it Hawaiian ice or the Hawaiian shaved ice machine; and--and this cubed shaver, and it's the best of all the cubed shavers, is this little Hatsuyuki that takes cubes and actually shaves the cubes into snow.

**00:14:51**

**SR:** You sell all those different kinds?

**00:14:53**

**BW:** Yeah, three--three of them. And I went to handle several other different brands and I got them in here and they were so bad I sold them on eBay. I didn't want my name on them.

**[Laughs]**



**00:15:04**

**SR:** Tell me what has changed in the sno-ball culture in New Orleans over the past 30 years, let's say.

**00:15:13**

**BW:** Not much. [*Laughs*] Not much at all. Everybody has got their favorite flavors and it's still usually flavors like chocolate, spearmint, and nectar that you can't give away outside of New Orleans and they're still very popular here.

**00:15:28**

**SR:** Chocolate?

**00:15:30**

**BW:** Yeah, they think that's strange, you know chocolate. Those three flavors are all New Orleans.

**00:15:36**

**SR:** Oh wow. Can you—I'm kind of getting ahead of myself here, but since you mentioned it, could you talk a little bit about nectar—what that is, and why it's special to New Orleans?

**00:15:45**

**BW:** Yeah, nectar is—a lot of people get some strange ideas about it, but it came from the nectar soda made by Katz & Besthoff [K&B], the--the drugstore. And they had a soda, nectar

soda, and then--then the extract company decided to copy that nectar, and it's basically almond and vanilla.

**00:16:05**

**SR:** How old was that? So Katz & Besthoff—I've never heard anybody talk about it that way. So it was the old K&B drugstore's; so before my time. How far back do they go?

**00:16:19**

**BW:** I don't know. Katz & Besthoff goes way back. You know I don't know if you're familiar with Uptown New Orleans people. They never left Uptown. They don't know [*Laughs*]*—they don't even know—they think there's a cow pasture across that bridge over there. And I lived up-*I lived on Napoleon Avenue for three years and they bought everything at Katz & Besthoff. You know [*Laughs*], at this drugstore you bought everything.

**00:16:44**

**SR:** Did they produce that flavor at K&B?

**00:16:48**

**BW:** No, probably somebody made it for them. That's back in the days of every drugstore had a soda fountain where you'd go in and get the floats, you know, and--and maybe a banana split or something or some scoop ice cream. And that's what—that's back in the days of the soda fountains. And--and no telling how far back that goes.

**00:17:04**

**SR:** But it wasn't a flavor that, say, your grandfather had at his stand?

**00:17:08**

**BW:** Maybe not—well, yeah, he had nectar in the '50s when I went— '50s and '60s you know. I used to go in there in the '50s. My mother would--would be working in the stand and I worked in the stand in the early '60s—around '62, '64. Maybe '60 to '64, something like that, I worked in there and they had nectar in there then.

**00:17:29**

**SR:** Does nectar always have cream in it?

**00:17:31**

**BW:** It should. You know that's--that's how it got so popular. If it didn't have cream in it nobody would have ever bought it. It would be the same as almond or vanilla. *[Laughs]* So anything you make a cream flavor out of, you know that's going to sell.

**00:17:44**

**SR:** Where I've had it, it's pink. Is it always pink?

**00:17:50**

**BW:** It comes out pink. Yeah, it should.

**00:17:53**

**SR:** And it's just—would you call that the most iconic flavor for New Orleans?

**00:17:56**

**BW:** Yeah, yeah, the nectar would be, yes. The nectar--nectar cream. They call it Pink Lady and something else. And they got all kinds of names for it.

**00:18:05**

**SR:** They call it Pink Lady here?

**00:18:07**

**BW:** Yeah.

**00:18:09**

**SR:** And do you get anyone else requesting that from other parts of the country or the world?

**00:18:13**

**BW:** Well what happens is people—especially after the hurricane [Katrina], but even before the hurricane, people moving out of town and they're in a new place and they look around and it has no sno-balls. And they're going to open up, you know. And so we send out the top 20 flavors out there, and it's not nectar, and spearmint is not in there. And it's not no telling what some other people in New Orleans are testing them, you know, to see if they really got the stuff from New Orleans [*Laughs*]. And they got to get nectar and spearmint for those guys.

**00:18:36**

**SR:** Earlier when you were giving me the tour, you called New Orleans the sno-ball Mecca.

**00:18:42**

**BW:** Yeah, yeah, all the major manufacturers are here. You know you go on the web and they got about 15 people you can contact, but most likely you're talking to a franchise or somebody that has a machine and buying flavor off from somebody else or vice-versa; or just a dealer or you know a lot of them are franchises. And if you come to New Orleans and--and go to a manufacturer here, you'll learn more in a half hour here than if you visit all 13 of the other guys.

**00:19:14**

**SR:** By “manufacturer,” you mean of extracts?

**00:19:16**

**BW:** Yeah, either a manufacturer of extracts or machines or the combination of the two.

**00:19:21**

**SR:** Why is that New Orleans is the Mecca for that?

**00:19:26**

**BW:** Uh, it's just—like it's just this style machine, the New Orleans style shaver, was developed here and in the '50s they had four different manufacturers of this machine right here

in town, you know. It's kind of unheard-of. And they have some machines made in Baltimore but nobody buys them. They're horrible. **[Laughs]** And then they had a couple of machines made in St. Louis and they wasn't that hot either. And so, and then a lot of people who—in other cities, they didn't have the—the people wasn't smart enough to go to a manufacturer there because there wasn't any around. They didn't know where the machines were coming from, so people would go over there with a New Orleans-style machine and start a franchise, you know. So you'd be dealing with franchised people and not direct with the manufacturer.

**00:20:15**

**SR:** Do you have any idea why people can't get it right in other places?

**00:20:20**

**BW:** Yeah, before the internet it was hard to find. They'd had people who would pay \$700, \$800, \$1,000, \$2,000 to find out where the stuff was coming from and promised not to open up next door to the other guy. **[Laughs]** And but right about—after the internet hit—that went on until at least the private label machines, private label flavors, because nobody knew where it was coming from. You had to find--you had to find out what's coming from New Orleans; you get a New Orleans phone book. And they had people—people would hide where everything was coming from. They'd put tape all over the doors of the machines and hide all the flavors, and I've heard some wild stories you know.

**00:20:59**

They--they had a guy over there who was just tearing them up in Meridian, Mississippi over there. He was doing about \$1,000 a day and he was causing chaos over there. And people—

one day he's in the stand and he's looking around and they got two or three other people in the stand. He didn't lock the back door. **[Laughs]** The people—"Hey Bub, what you doing in here? Y'all need to get out of here." **[Laughs]** He had—one guy came up there to the window with a belt and he says, "I got--I got this off my sno-ball machine. Can you tell me where the sno-ball machine comes from?" Just crazy stories?

**00:21:31**

**SR:** Wow. I guess it all kind of goes back to like in your grandfather's day. Where was your grandfather getting his extracts?

**00:21:41**

**BW:** Back then there was a—Charles Dennery was an old manufacturer that doesn't make it anymore, and also Zatarain's had some flavors too. And then there--there was Eisenmann's in 1932, you know, so there was stuff going on back then. Actually they had an ad in the Sears catalog right around the turn of the century that was selling—they were selling hand-scrapers and bragging about men making \$5 a day with a hand-scrapers you know, and that's back when everybody was making a buck a day in the factory. And at the turn of the century the hand-scrapers were real popular.

**00:22:15**

**SR:** Did you ever eat a hand-scraped sno-ball?

**00:22:18**

**BW:** No. My mother used to make them though. Yeah, my grandpa made them, my mother made them, my uncle made them. I never made one. *[Laughs]*

**00:22:25**

**SR:** But you never had one of your mother's?

**00:22:27**

**BW:** No, not a hand-scraped one.

**00:22:30**

**SR:** You mentioned earlier that when you had your stand you made a really great sno-ball, which was why you weren't very good at the retail part. What, to you, makes a really great sno-ball?

**00:22:44**

**BW:** We just had extra-thick syrup and we went around and got everybody's extract and thought what—picked out what we thought was the best at the time. And, oh well the big thing was I made sure snow was coming out the machine. If the trash came out I threw it on the side, you know. And so I made sure we had good snow coming through the machine, and then I'd fill it up with ice. I'd put the syrup on it; it would collapse. And then I'd put another point on it and put syrup on top of it, so it's a perfect sno-ball. Nobody packed it too much, too little, whatever, and it was—you know and that's what—if you make a two-stage sno-ball, you can't make a



mistake with it, but it takes over a minute to make it. And so the line gets longer and longer and you're not getting the sno-balls out.

**00:23:27**

**SR:** Right, if you just put the shaved ice in the cup and pour syrup on top, it's a lot faster?

**00:23:32**

**BW:** Yeah, and they got people making as good a sno-balls now because we get the ice—excuse me—we get the ice colder and you can pack it a lot and it's still--it's still really soft product.

**00:23:44**

**SR:** Can you talk a little bit about the mechanics of getting snow and not trash, like you just referred to?

**00:23:51**

**BW:** Sure, yeah. You got three variables on the machine. You have this setting—the setting in the sharpness of the blades, and the setting should be the same all the time. So you're dealing with the sharpness of the blades, the temperature of the ice, and the amount of pressure you put on the--on the handle. And how Hansen's makes that real fluffy snow all the time, they get the ice at minus-five, minus-ten degrees, and if you put that ice—if you put that temperature of ice, it's always going to put out the same kind of snow whether the blades are sharp or not.

**00:24:21**

And if you ever notice over at the Hansen's, they get—you know if they hadn't made a sno-ball in a while, which was unheard-of. If the ice doesn't come out the way they want it they'll take that block of ice out of the machine and put it back in the freezer and use it again when it gets back up to temperature. I like the ice a little bit warmer. I think it's even more like snow than what Hansen's has. Hansen has a great product but it's more and more like a slush than it is fresh-fallen snow. But if you have the ice between zero and plus-five degrees, it'll make a powder just like you go skiing on.

**00:24:51**

**SR:** Hansen's doesn't seem like the most technologically advanced place I've ever been.

**[Laughs]** Do you have to have a, you know, state-of-the-art freezer to get it to that temperature?

**00:25:04**

**BW:** No, no, just a regular freezer. Most freezers are--are minus-ten, minus-fifteen, something like that. Actually we set the freezer at almost its warmest setting, which is zero-plus five. That's about--that's about as warm as you can get them.

**00:25:19**

**SR:** And when you say that that's how you set your freezers, are you making sno-balls right now or—?

**00:25:26**

**BW:** Sure, we demo them down there all the time. Yeah, we can demo one before you get out of here. *[Laughs]*

**00:25:30**

**SR:** Who do you demo them for?

**00:25:32**

**BW:** Oh yeah, we demo three times a day [for] people going into the business.

**00:25:37**

**SR:** Do they pay you to come and get a lesson?

**00:25:40**

**BW:** No, it's a sales demo. We got two or three flavors set up there and we run the machine and we do tricks *[Laughs]* like fancy sno-balls. Usually I just—I kind of cut that out. Actually we've just been doing—by the time I do a strawberry, a strawberry cream, an ice cream, they're sold. But I can make a Peter & Paul Mounds that's pretty good.

**00:26:00**

**SR:** What is that?

**00:26:01**

**BW:** It's a coconut with a little evaporated milk and a squirt of straight Hershey's on top. Yeah, it's--it's great. *[Laughs]* And we got our new peanut butter back. I've been wanting to get that; we can make a Reese's Cup with that: a little peanut butter, a little evaporated milk, and squirt straight Hershey's right off the can.

**00:26:18**

**SR:** When I was taking the tour we came upon the--the man who develops the flavors. Can you tell me his name?

**00:26:26**

**BW:** Yes, Carl Brauner.

**00:26:30**

**SR:** And he had just, I guess, re-developed the peanut butter flavor. What--what was going on there?

**00:26:38**

**BW:** With the peanut butter flavor, we very rarely—it's hardly any time the price of any ingredient stops us you know. When I go to flavor houses or people—flavor stuff—you know I hide that I'm doing shaved ice. They think I'm doing snow cones and they want—they go right to the cheap list. *[Laughs]* And I said, "No, we want the best--very best stuff you have to make these flavors with." And peanut butter is one of the two or three we slipped on. They had this company that had a gigantic minimum and we only—we were only selling 10, 15 gallons a year,

so I passed and bought a secondary one. And when we ran out of that I decided now we're going back for the big minimum and get the--get the great one in.

**00:27:23**

**SR:** Now you're sort of the--the last stop. Like you are the place where New Orleans sno-ball makers come to get their flavors. Now it's interesting to me that you go somewhere even further to get stuff to make your flavors. Can you talk about what are you buying?

**00:27:49**

**BW:** Yeah. Who--who in the heck is making these flavors, is what you're asking? Who in the heck is making these flavors?

**00:27:53**

**SR:** Because you kind of are.

**00:27:55**

**BW:** Okay, they got these—they got places called flavor houses and when you--when you go there they're going—. You know you might remember back in high school, you might go down the hall and you smell strawberries or bananas you know. That--that was the chemistry class and they're making something down there. They made a little flavor or they made an essence, you know. So we go to flavor houses and these people are I guess flavorists, chemists and flavorists, and they sit there and they're cooking with chemicals all day and--and they make a flavor called strawberry. So what we do here, we go around to about 26 of the best flavor houses we can find

and we tell them to send us everything they got. You know and we might find—we might find a strawberry that is really strong upfront from one manufacturer and we find another one that's not that strong but it's got a juicy aftertaste—you know real juicy, you know real juicy follow-up.

**00:28:48**

And we'll mix the two together and they might work and they might not work. But we've done that with the strawberry and peach or a bunch of flavors where we—you know they got something really, really strong upfront to get your attention, and--and then these other ones there's not so much but they got this real juicy aftertaste. So we'll put that together and make a--make a strawberry.

**00:29:09**

**SR:** I see.

**00:29:09**

**BW:** And that's pretty much what--what we do here. Now you—now let's talk about those guys. Now they got—if we buy an almond that's a straight chemical, so they're just buying this—. I can't think of the name of it but they're just buying it from another chemical company and reselling it to us. So and then if you go to any sno-ball stand, they can say they make their own flavors, every one of them, and what they're doing, they—you know they're buying from two or three guys like me and putting four ounces of concentrate into sugar water. So everybody is making flavors. *[Laughs]*

**00:29:41**

**SR:** Where are these 26 flavor houses?

**00:29:44**

**BW:** All over the place. They got a couple in Europe but most of them are on—they got some on the West Coast, some in Chicago; most--most of them are smokestacks up in New Jersey.

**00:29:55**

**SR:** Are there any here?

**00:29:57**

**BW:** No.

**00:29:59**

**SR:** Okay, so Carl and you order these flavors and then work with them?

**00:30:08**

**BW:** Okay, yeah, the flavors come in—they're all different strengths and they come in as a clear liquid. And they're all different strengths; some--some are 20 times stronger than the others. And so we have to decide—and when you first get them you throw them in water and they float on top. They--they're an oil; they're like motor oil.

**00:30:27**

So we have to find out how—you know we got a recommendation of where to start but we don't know exactly where. So we need to find out how much of alcohol or propylene glycol

we need to mix with it to go into solution into--into water. Then we have to decide how, you know how much of this flavor we need for 32 gallons of syrup, and then that's how much we put in one gallon of concentrate. Then we have to--then we have to put preservatives in there and we have to put acids to bring out the flavor—the tart flavors. We have to add acids for that and--and color. And then because, you know, we got—if we got 160 flavors, we probably got about 50 different levels. So you couldn't have a sno-ball stand over there putting a half-ounce in one gallon and two ounces in another and four ounces in another one; you know it's got to be uniform. It's got to be four ounces per gallon for a sno-ball stand to handle it. We can't have a recipe on each bottle and a measuring cup for each one and a bunch of kids mixing this mess up, you know.

**00:31:35**

**SR:** Do you have—for example, strawberry you mentioned before. Do you have one strawberry? Do you decide this is what our strawberry tastes like, or do you have a few different ones?

**00:31:46**

**BW:** Well we have--we have one strawberry we--we settled on, and like I said it's got two strawberry flavors. And then I'll tell you we bought the Eisenmann Flavor Snow line, so we make their strawberry, and once in a while somebody will ask for something strange you know and we'll make another strawberry for them if they buy enough of it, but it's rare.

**00:32:06**



**SR:** Like what's something strange might they ask for?

**00:32:09**

**BW:** Well usually it's a color change. Usually I guess somebody might buy a lot of stuff and then say, "Look, it's got to have this color," so we'll change the color for them.

**00:32:18**

**SR:** Like, "We want a strawberry but we want it blue?"

**00:32:22**

**BW:** Yeah. Well we make a blue strawberry, but he just might want his darker or lighter or something like that because we also sell to people with daiquiris and we got too much color in there so we'll make something for them with a lighter color.

**00:32:34**

**SR:** Oh okay. So you also sell the daiquiri shops?

**00:32:38**

**BW:** Yeah.

**00:32:39**

**SR:** I've noticed that some stands will have just clear flavor.

**00:32:42**

**BW:** Yeah.

**00:32:44**

**SR:** They'll have a selection of clear flavors. Now it sounds to me like that would be pretty easily done and they would taste exactly like the non-clear flavors.

**00:32:55**

**BW:** Yes, that's true. We just leave the color out.

**00:32:57**

**SR:** And what's the advantage of having a clear flavor?

**00:33:01**

**BW:** I haven't figured it out yet. But some people I think—there's a lot of kids out there that can't have no color. And we're getting more and more in this allergen statement. You know I got to research every ingredient going in our stuff and then contact the manufacturer of the--of the flavor oils and make sure there's no wheat in it, no corn in it, no—I mean it goes on and on. And--and it's just getting more and more popular, this allergen statement thing. We have one on our website of the ones that we feel have no allergens in it, and I think we have no allergens in—no allergen agents in anything we make. But I can't get information on all of them, so I'll leave those off.

**00:33:37**

**SR:** Wow. Do you have to supply a list of ingredients to your clients?

**00:33:45**

**BW:** It's pretty much on the label. But you know this thing that comes in, the label is going to say "artificial flavor" and it's not a whole lot of artificial flavor in there. It's mostly acids, gums, and--and other things in there. But the--the flavor—no telling what's in that. You know you may have to list 20 different things for the flavor, so the labeling people are satisfied with--with "artificial flavor" and it's--it's accepted.

**00:34:15**

**SR:** So you don't get a list of ingredients when you receive the flavors?

**00:34:19**

**BW:** No, no, all we get is banana flavor number 2022; you know, batch number this.

**00:34:28**

**SR:** I don't really understand. If there's artificial flavor in there, what that would be. What would be an artificial ingredient?

**00:34:37**

**BW:** Okay, well the way I understand it came about—I am not a chemist, but the way it came about as I understand [is] that the first flavors I think came from Spain, and what they did was

they would squeeze the peeling of an orange or a lemon and found out it was very potent—this-- this oil came out. It wouldn't even go in a solution and water; you know they'd have to mix alcohol or something to get it to go into a solution. And they might be, let's say 100 different— when you analyze it, it might be 100 different ingredients in there, probably—. Look, this is a very layman thing I'm telling you. I'm sure--I'm sure some chemist will say I'm full of it, you know. But from--from that, you might have maybe ten—ten or three—things in there giving it the flavor, and then they would go ahead and buy drums, 55-gallon drums of this stuff, and blend it and maybe even to make the flavor stronger and definitely more stable and--and long-lasting. So something like that is what happened.

**00:35:37**

**SR:** Okay.

**00:35:39**

**BW:** And that's what artificial flavor is, as opposed to a natural flavor, because we have some natural flavors in here and they're all clear liquids and they all look alike. *[Laughs]* And I just—I bet you--I bet you what the general public thinks are natural flavors and artificial flavors is totally wrong.

**00:35:57**

**SR:** What are some of the natural flavors you have?

**00:36:00**

**BW:** Not many. We got a natural blueberry and a natural--natural strawberry in here because we found a pretty good one and a guy kind of demanded that, you know.

**00:36:10**

**SR:** How many different clients do you have?

**00:36:12**

**BW:** I would guess maybe 2,000, I would guess; it's hard to say.

**00:36:17**

**SR:** And of that, what percentage would you say are local New Orleans?

**00:36:22**

**BW:** Oh New Orleans. I think the State of Louisiana is still about a third of our sales. Or let's say--let's say 25-percent, maybe the whole State of Louisiana. And the rest of it--the rest of it is going from New Zealand to Alaska and all 50 states.

**00:36:40**

**SR:** You must have to do a lot of cultural exchange-type conversations, or not?

**00:36:47**

**BW:** Or not. [*Laughs*] Not doing too much of that.

**00:36:51**

**SR:** Talk to me a little bit about that room where there was a woman bottling the flavor.

**00:36:59**

**BW:** Yeah, we have a little bottling machine. She's really good at it. You know if--if we're in a jam, they can bottle 750 gallons a day, if everything goes right. Most of the time it's less.

**00:37:10**

**SR:** And were they—so she's bottling it from this big tub where it's mixed?

**00:37:15**

**BW:** Yeah, yeah, it's our big tanks. We've got a couple--several big tanks and they do 150 gallons, and after they do it—they're on wheels. They roll them to a lift. We got a gravity feed and it's a siphon-filler, which is one of the most simplest fillers there is. And it works fine for the size batches we make and the--and the amount of clean-up between batches. The little machine works good for us.

**00:37:41**

**SR:** What was her name, your bottle filler?

**00:37:42**

**BW:** Crystal.

**00:37:44**

**SR:** And you were telling me that she's really good at--at bottling?

**00:37:45**

**BW:** Yeah, boy she can bottle. I mean she moves those bottles. It's pretty incredible.

**00:37:52**

**SR:** I was going to ask you what it means to be good at bottling—it's speed?

**00:37:55**

**BW:** Yeah, speed. It's, you know, ambidextrous, [*Laughs*] like I said, or multi-tasking—it's bottles, labels—because the bottles fill up. They do stop, but you don't want them to stop long you know.

**00:38:14**

**SR:** Right. Has she been with you for a long time?

**00:38:16**

**BW:** Yeah, she's been here about five years.

**00:38:19**

**SR:** Found her calling in the sno-ball flavorings.

**00:38:21**

**BW:** Yeah, I think she did. [*Laughs*]

**00:38:23**

**SR:** You were also telling me you basically sell the flavorings per gallon.

**00:38:29**

**BW:** Or quarts.

**00:38:31**

**SR:** And how many sno-balls come out of there?

**00:38:33**

**BW:** Uh, a gallon--a gallon of concentrate, we sell it for \$27 a gallon, and it would make 32 gallons of syrup or 1,000 12-ounce sno-balls. And I think one sno-ball could color a whole swimming pool. It's a lot of color in it.

**00:38:54**

**SR:** You told me that every flavor costs the same.

**00:39:01**

**BW:** Yeah, they're \$27. We have 170 different flavors and it is \$27 a gallon, or \$9 a quart, and a quart does 250 12-ounce sno-balls.



**00:39:12**

**SR:** Do some of them cost more to make than others?

**00:39:15**

**BW:** Yeah, some--some are more than others but it's not—you know some of them might cost twice as much as others but it--it all works out.

**00:39:25**

**SR:** Do you know offhand what one of the more expensive ones would be?

**00:39:28**

**BW:** Not really; maybe strawberry is a little on the expensive side. We'd have a medium, and you know some of the clearer flavors would be less because there's no color in it, and then some—kind of hard to pick out. Strawberry would cost a little--would cost a little bit. But it's not a whole lot of variance. I might have one or two that--that really cost me, you know, but they don't sell a lot so I don't care.

**00:39:56**

**SR:** What are--what are your top three sellers, just overall?

**00:40:03**

**BW:** I'd say strawberry, bubblegum, and then cherry.

**00:40:08**

**SR:** And do you send—like when you work with people in Australia, for example, are those flavors popular there too?

**00:40:15**

**BW:** Yeah, yeah they usually—usually we have a hard time selling flavors. We sell them the initial order and then they--they're afraid to get so--so expensive on that stuff, so they usually piddle around and try and flavor it with something else, you know something from the soda pop guy down there or something like that. But yeah, we still--we still do ship flavors everywhere, but we lose a lot of it. You know they--they usually end up with a lot of homegrown stuff.

**00:40:39**

**SR:** Talk to me a little bit about some of your less popular flavors that you keep around because there's just enough demand.

**00:40:47**

**BW:** Maple might be the slowest mover of the whole bunch. It tastes just like maple syrup, but nobody is happy about maple syrup. They think of pancakes with that. And we got a pistachio that tastes great but we don't sell much of it, and a couple of--couple other ones that probably are the slowest movers. You know we got—I think cherry limeade it doesn't sell too much.

**00:41:12**

**SR:** The maple, is that a local flavor?

**00:41:17**

**BW:** Hmm, no. It's--it's just a sno-ball flavor. You know if it's in the bottom one-fifty, it's not any kind of flavor.

**00:41:27**

**SR:** I had a couple sno-ball--sno-ball stand owners tell me that—I asked them what flavors have fallen off over the years, and two of them mentioned anisette.

**00:41:40**

**BW:** Oh yeah, definitely yeah. It's definitely—they're right. *[Laughs]*

**00:41:43**

**SR:** Do you still make it?

**00:41:45**

**BW:** Yeah. Yes, we do.

**00:41:47**

**SR:** And is that a flavor that people outside New Orleans buy?

**00:41:52**

**BW:** Nobody is buying it. That's another one that might be right there with maple: nine gallons a year, you know.

**00:41:59**

**SR:** That's funny. I really like that. What is your favorite flavor?

**00:42:03**

**BW:** It's hard to tell. I'm kind of stuck on coconut right now.

**00:42:08**

**SR:** You're not sick of sno-balls yet?

**00:42:10**

**BW:** No. *[Laughs]* No, not yet.

**00:42:12**

**SR:** How many employees do you have here?

**00:42:14**

**BW:** We keep about 12 all year round; we might have 20 in the summer.

**00:42:18**

**SR:** And what are the different—can you kind of go through and tell me what the different jobs are?

**00:42:23**

**BW:** Yeah. We got two people in the machine shop and we got maybe one assembling with some help, and we might have six or seven on—well we got one, two, three, about maybe five—maybe four—on the phone and doing the front counter. And the rest might be packaging or--or shipping—either shipping out motor freight or packaging for UPS.

**00:42:45**

**SR:** And then you have the--the flavorist and the bottler?

**00:42:49**

**BW:** Oh yeah, I forgot about them. Yeah, we got the flavorist and the bottler, and we might have four in there—as many as four people in the summer—and in the winter we'll have maybe two or three. I think we keep three—we keep three people all year for that, and then they get a little help in the summer.

**00:43:03**

**SR:** Do you have delivery people or do locals have to come here and get the product?

**00:43:07**

**BW:** Mostly they come here but we do a little delivering. We just deliver one day a week.

**00:43:13**

**SR:** I--I talked to a couple—a couple sno-ball stand owners that I talked to told me that they-- they prefer to come and pick up their stuff.

**00:43:22**

**BW:** Well that's good. [*Laughs*] Yeah, with the price of gas out there and running all over the place, yeah.

**00:43:27**

**SR:** Right. Do you have to deal a lot with the politics of competition between sno-ball stand owners here?

**00:43:35**

**BW:** No, I haven't had too much trouble with that.

**00:43:39**

**SR:** They don't ask you for each other's secrets?

**00:43:40**

**BW:** No, uh-uh.

**00:43:43**

**SR:** Could you tell me anything about the business end? I mean I don't want to ask you anything that's too personal or private, but what--what is your biggest—what are you making profit on?

**00:43:57**

**BW:** That's easy: flavor. [*Laughs*] Everything else around here, we'd go bankrupt in a--in a minute, you know, but we manufacture the flavor here. Actually our philosophy out there is, we--we actually lose money on the sno-ball machines. And I might break even on the Japanese machines and all the bottles and cups, spoons, and straws, and all the other stuff you see in the building. But half of our business is flavor. And so we're--we're pretty much going to do anything to get the sno-ball stand rolling to sell them flavor.

**00:44:25**

**SR:** So that's why you stay in like the machine manufacturing business even though it's not that profitable?

**00:44:31**

**BW:** Yeah, yeah, nobody is making any money on sno-ball machines. That's—it's a loss leader.

**00:44:37**

**SR:** Why don't you charge more?

**00:44:39**

**BW:** Competition. We have a couple of—we got this outfit called Gold Medal and they make a—  
-they make a copy of all three machines that I sell, and they're all horrible. [*Laughs*] I mean it's  
junk, but you know people go on the web and they look like the same. So I got to stay in line  
with them you know. They all—you know I've got to be competitive with them.

**00:45:01**

**SR:** I see. Are they local?

**00:45:03**

**BW:** No, they're out of Cincinnati, but they're—it's a huge outfit. Their main market is selling  
to traveling carnivals, and they--they're big on popcorn machines and they have a sheet metal—  
their own sheet metal shop, so they make everything out of sheet metal. So they made a sheet  
metal version of this machine, and it's—I don't know. The machine is very poor and it doesn't  
have any certifications and it doesn't come apart properly, so you have to completely take it off  
the wall. In fact, I'm getting ready to make a website and I'm explaining all the differences on it  
because it's just, people are really getting burnt on this thing. You know you go to--you go to  
change the blades in it and they rock on the surface and you can't set the blades and it's--it's  
something else.

**00:45:50**

We had one that came in here and we tried—we were in here three hours trying to get  
something that should have taken 15 minutes, and we fooled with it for three hours. We don't  
work on them anymore.



**00:45:58**

**SR:** Hmm. Are there other local machine manufacturers?

**00:46:02**

**BW:** Uh, in New Orleans right now it's just Southern Snow and SnoWizard.

**00:46:08**

**SR:** How has your business changed since Katrina or has it?

**00:46:14**

**BW:** It grew [*Laughs*]. Yeah, actually those little trailers out there that we saw, I--I was selling about 10 to 18 a year and they were going coast to coast. After Katrina, the first year we sold 50 of them and 25 of them stayed between here and Baton Rouge. The next year we sold 50 of them and 25 of them stayed here between--between New Orleans and Baton Rouge. So I thought--I thought, "Who was going to buy a trailer in New Orleans where there's all these little sno-ball stands?" They did great with the hurricane; they were parking everywhere. They went out to—they'd be out in New Orleans East; you could shoot a cannon down the street and not hit anybody, you know, but--but if you parked that little trailer in some deserted [spot], half hour later you had the telephone company, power and light, insurance adjustors—everybody was there because it wasn't much. You know, that's all they had.

**00:47:10**

**SR:** You said that it's increased. Has it stayed bigger, the business?

**00:47:18**

**BW:** Yeah, it's just been growing because—and then the other thing is all these people that moved out of town, they got out of town and they went looking for a sno-ball and didn't have one. And so I mean they—it's so many people that relocated that--that opened up a sno-ball stand. It's just you know, phenomenal amount.

**00:47:34**

**SR:** And what kinds of places? Can you think of any examples?

**00:47:37**

**BW:** Well a bunch in Texas of course, just because it's a big state. We sell a lot of stuff in Texas, but of course it's the size of five states. If you split it in five states it might not be so much, you know, but yeah, Texas—Texas a lot.

**00:47:53**

**SR:** Those trailers that you're talking about—can you tell me what they are? I mean I took pictures, but how you outfit them when you sell them?

**00:48:00**

**BW:** Yeah, they--they're ready to go. We give certain little options on it. Every one I got sitting here is, you know you look at the sticker on it and you pay that and there's nothing extra on it because it's loaded. It's got--it's already got the sno-ball machine in it, chase lights, air

conditioning, everything. And so the way the little—the way it works, it kind of has gotten man where no man has gone, because it has a 12-volt system in it and a 110-volt system in it.

**00:48:28**

So what you do is, on your way home you pick up ice. Then you plug the trailer in. When you do that it runs your 110-volt freezer, your 110-volt hot water heater, charges your sno-ball machine battery. The next day you unplug it. And use the freezer like an ice chest all day long. You got two gallons of red hot water in the thermos for the Board of Health to see in all four sinks; battery is charged; you've got 1,000 12-ounce sno-balls and one battery charge. Go back home and do the whole thing over again. And you can do it in the middle of a blackout. You don't need no power. But the only trick is every trailer does have an air-conditioner. To run the air-conditioner you need to pull it with a pickup trailer with a little generator in the back big enough to run your air-condition.

**00:49:08**

**SR:** But if you didn't want air-conditioning?

**00:49:09**

**BW:** You don't want the air-condition, you're independent.

**00:49:13**

**SR:** Oh, how much does one of those run?

**00:49:15**

**BW:** Right now the current price on them is between, I'd say \$17,600 and \$21,600.

**00:49:23**

**SR:** How many sno-balls would you have to sell to pay that off?

**00:49:25**

**BW:** A bunch. *[Laughs]* I don't know. Some people have paid them off in two months. You know, you never know; you can get a swinging hot spot. Some people sell \$500--\$600 a day out of those things. It's ridiculous. And--and you know, it just depends. I got some people--I got some people selling \$100 a day and they got their kids running it in their front yard some kind of way and they just love it. And then I got other people making, you know, \$500--\$600 a day because it's just aggressive, getting a good location. It's sort of a nuisance when—if you don't—. You got to kind of have a personality for it because wherever you go to buy your occupational license, as soon as you walk in and say, "I got a trailer and I want to sell anything,"—"Oh you can't do that here." You got to get past that you know.

**00:50:09**

**SR:** Uh-hm. Why do you think that the sno-ball business boomed here after Katrina when there were actually less people here?

**00:50:19**

**BW:** Well actually it probably boomed with people moving out of town you know. Yeah, the stands out of town did more.

**00:50:27**

**SR:** I see, okay.

**00:50:27**

**BW:** And plus they had—it's like there wasn't a whole lot of treats around. With all these— with the additional 25 trailers going out around town, they were selling stuff to power and light and stuff like that. I don't have the real breakdown on what happened locally and out of town, but it kept growing.

**00:50:46**

**SR:** I guess it was a business that could start up pretty easily when other places were struggling to rebuild.

**00:50:52**

**BW:** Sure. If you go into business, this is like the cheapest thing to get into. You know if you--if you wanted to open up in a flea market, the whole kit is like \$2,400 and you got everything.

**00:51:05**

**SR:** How do you feel about the range of quality of sno-balls here in New Orleans? Does it bother you when there are bad ones?

**00:51:16**

**BW:** Well it doesn't really bother me but they make some lousy sno-balls and they make some great sno-balls, and you can make lousy sno-balls at a--at a good location but around—when it comes August—. People actually sell more sno-balls in a cool April than you do in a blazing hot September. And so a lot of people will start off in April and they're selling like crazy and making a crummy sno-ball but they want to know why they can't sell any in August. And then in August just the people making good sno-balls are selling the sno-balls and they're getting ready to close up.

**00:51:46**

**SR:** Well I didn't totally understand that. Why do you sell more in April?

**00:51:52**

**BW:** Okay, the April part is like you know when April is coming they're thinking of Annette and Frankie out at the beach. It's a mindset. They hadn't had sno-balls all year. They can't--they can't wait to get sno-balls, you know. Then August comes around and they say, "You know I'm gaining too much weight eating these things." These things aren't diet balls you know. And then by the time September gets there everybody has got their mind on school. Once they've got their school books and stuff they forget about the sno-balls no matter how hot it is. It doesn't mean you can't sell any, but the best months are—are—a cool April is better than a blazing hot September.

**00:52:24**

**SR:** I notice a lot of difference between the syrup flavors, and I imagine that there's a big difference in the syrup flavors even when the people are only buying flavors from you. What can go wrong once they get the flavor from you?

**00:52:43**

**BW:** Oh a bunch. I kind of like putting an extra pound of sugar in it, six pounds of sugar instead of five to a gallon. And they got this—what I really find strange is they—all the other manufacturers give out this circus recipe. And when they preserve their--when they preserve their syrup they put benzoic soda in and citric acid in it. So I tell people just to put benzoic soda in it, okay, so it's doing nothing until it comes in contact with something tart like strawberry, grape, cherry. And so the sugar water has a tendency to go bad faster. So there's—the circus recipe is, okay, you just put your benzoic soda in it and put one-quarter citric acid in there and that'll change the PH in it and make the benzoic soda start working and last a lot longer.

**00:53:30**

That's just fine, but you're going to taste that in your ice cream, your coconut, your bubblegum, your bananas; it tastes like somebody squeezed a little lemon on it, you know. You know if somebody had a great line of flavors they just ruin it when they--when they preserve it with that citric acid. They just got to step up to the plate and--and make those flavors more often. They got a whole week on it, you know. But they—some people look at this as they got their kids in there and they don't want to be bothered with it.

**00:53:58**

**SR:** So when you say they have a whole week on it—without the citric acid a syrup will last a week?

**00:54:04**

**BW:** It'll last a week you know.

**00:54:06**

**SR:** Okay. There are a couple people who have told me we don't put any artificial—"We don't put any preservatives in our syrups." Is that what they mean, that they're not putting the citric acid in or—?

**00:54:18**

**BW:** Well that's okay. If they—they might not be putting the benzoic soda in it. I have no problem with the benzoic soda. It's in every soda pop; it's just a mild salt of some kind; you know it's not like BHT or none of that stuff. So any time I make syrup around here for my demos we put just the benzoic-soda in it and we leave the citric acid out. And we let it sit around; you know, we keep it cool and it--it usually lasts us a couple of weeks.

**00:54:42**

And then once the strawberry—we make strawberry out of it. You know for our demos upfront it might last months because then the citric acid changes the PH and the benzoic soda is working. But it's doing nothing in the bubblegum and the--and the ice cream, and that might only last a week.



**00:55:00**

**SR:** Some people, I've noticed, don't refrigerate their syrups even overnight. Will they last a week that way?

**00:55:06**

**BW:** I think that's a good—well, okay. They say it's better not to refrigerate them. Okay, let's say it's for home use, or somebody is doing every other week, you know. Let's say they're just going to do some kind of event. They're better off putting the syrup in there all week and then letting it cool. But I find putting syrup in and out of the refrigerator every day—you know, I agree with them. I think that--that doesn't do anything to preserve them.

**00:55:35**

**SR:** Hmm.

**00:55:36**

**BW:** You know you can make a cream flavor, and if you put it in the refrigerator overnight you got to get it back up to room temperature the next day so it will penetrate the ice.

**00:55:48**

**SR:** Oh, if the syrup is too cold it won't—?

**00:55:49**

**BW:** Yes, it will roll right off the top of the ice. You want—it's got to be room temperature to go through the ice.

**00:55:54**

**SR:** Interesting. You mentioned earlier about how, when you make syrups you like—or when you were making the great sno-balls out of your stand—you made a thicker syrup. Is that what you mean by using six—?

**00:56:08**

**BW:** Yeah, using six pounds of sugar instead of five. Yeah.

**00:56:11**

**SR:** Wow, okay. Do you think many people do that?

**00:56:13**

**BW:** Yeah, I've been giving the recipe out a lot you know. People come in and demo and I say, "Look, you know you're going to sell--you're going to sell \$60 on a gallon of syrup. What's another pound of sugar at 60-cents? You might end up putting less syrup on it anyway.

**00:56:28**

**SR:** It seems like from what you're telling me, and also a phone call I overheard, that you spend a lot of your time giving advice.

**00:56:34**

**BW:** Oh yeah, yeah. You know Greg takes all the calls on the trailers. And I take all the calls for new people going in business, ice-block maker problems, sno-ball machine problems, and selecting machines. Yeah, it--it's pretty much anything general.

**00:56:56**

**SR:** Do you sell ice-block makers?

**00:56:57**

**BW:** Yes, we sell ice-block makers here.

**00:56:59**

**SR:** Can you tell me what that is?

**00:57:00**

**BW:** Yeah, it's--it's a machine; it works pretty much like putting ice cubes in the freezer. The only thing is that it's a can; it's a 12-and-a-half-pound can. You know it's five-and-a-half by five-and-a-half; about 14--16 inches long. You fill it up with water. And instead of putting it in an air freezer, it submerges with a liquid circulating around the outside of the can, and that's the ice-block maker. Right now they currently run around \$4,100 to \$10,000.

**00:57:31**

**SR:** Do you just make one at a time?

**00:57:33**

**BW:** No, the little machine will make nine blocks. The smallest machine, every day at noon you lift the lid and you're going to have nine blocks of ice there. It's enough to do 180 12-ounce snoballs. So if you sell them at \$2 apiece, that's \$360 of sales.

**00:57:48**

**SR:** Would you say that most people in this area use the ice-block makers?

**00:57:54**

**BW:** No, in New Orleans it's too easy to get ice, so most--there's not a whole lot. I'd say probably only 5-percent or 10-percent would—in New Orleans—would have an ice-block maker.

**00:58:06**

**SR:** Is it less expensive to get ice like from an icehouse than to have your ice-block maker?

**00:58:13**

**BW:** No, it's a lot cheaper. I don't really understand some of these people. You know, I would have a block ice maker. You can make ice for 20-cents a block and everybody around town is selling them for a buck and a half--\$2. It's not that big a deal. It takes you about—if you have the 20-block machine it would take you about 30 minutes to harvest it. You know, dump the ice out and fill it up, and they got people that just don't want to do that. They're making enough on it;

they're selling, let's see—20—they're selling \$40 of sno-balls on a block of ice, so they don't care if they've made it for 20-cents or if they're paid a buck and a half for it.

**00:58:51**

**SR:** Well do you think there's also an element of nostalgia, going and getting it the old-fashioned way?

**00:58:56**

**BW:** No, it's an element of laziness. [*Laughs*]

**00:59:00**

**SR:** Is there a difference in the block-ice and getting your ice from an ice-house?

**00:59:07**

**BW:** Yes, the--the sno-block ice is better. It's perfectly square and it doesn't jump around in the machine; always goes through; you never have to hit it with an ice pick to get it through the door. And it's better ice. But I can make great sno-balls with the old ice too, you know.

**00:59:23**

**SR:** Can you tell me a little bit about your sno-ball machine museum?

**00:59:30**

**BW:** Yeah. How I got the machines and that?

**00:59:34**

**SR:** How you got the machines and why you want them.

**00:59:38**

**BW:** Okay, well I got the—you know just show that all these different manufacturers they had in New Orleans, and I--I ended up with a Hansen's original by accident. These people in the Harahan Fire Department had it out there and they were describing this machine and wanted the blades changed in it. And I said, "Well, bring the thing in," and the machine came in. And I said, "Oh, look at this; a Hansen's original here." And there wasn't no way I was getting those blades out of there. They had been in there forever. And I said, "Look, how about I swap you a really good running machine and I'll have this one in my museum?" Because the machine really—it's priceless to me but it's not worth—you know you couldn't get \$200 for it in a pawn shop.

**[Laughs]**

**01:00:13**

And then this other one popped up because when we went to make our sno-ball machine, we went around to foundries in New Orleans, and there was always somebody trying to make a sno-ball machine around New Orleans. And so we saw this belt guard that said Whirlwind Snow Drift. A pretty pretentious name, Whirlwind Snow Drift. And it stuck in my head. And 10 years later they got some stand in the Florida Keys buying flavor, and I'm sending it to this stand called the Whirlwind Snow Drift. So I phoned them up and I said, "Hey, how did you get the name of this sno-ball stand?" "Well it's on our sno-ball machine." And I said, "How did you ever get the blades changed and that thing fixed—anything?" And I said, "How did you get that

machine?” They said, “Well we had a camp in New Orleans.” So they take this antique out of the camp and go down to Key Largo and open up a sno-ball stand with this antique. So I said, “Look, how about me swapping you a machine that you can get service on and the blades serviced and get it sharpened and--and fixed?” And I just swapped them for that machine and put it in the museum.

**01:01:10**

And the other machine, I—they keep popping up. It’s a Prechter. It was made in Uptown New Orleans also.

**01:01:16**

**SR:** What’s it called?

**01:01:17**

**BW:** It’s called a Summer Snow Machine. It was made by a guy by the name of Prechter. It’s on Fern Street in Uptown New Orleans in some garage. And he made a bunch of them, and so—and there were a lot of them that had been showing up for some reason and they’re still around, you know, and you still see one every once in a while. And so I bought that one for \$400, and I got another one a guy gave me down here that—for use at another little museum we’re going to make. And they’re not too hard to find. If you hunt around for one you can find one of those.

**01:01:48**

**SR:** You’re going to make another little museum, you said?

**01:01:50**

**BW:** Okay, well there's talk about—there's this thing called the Beverage Museum at the end—. They're talking about doing something on sno-balls and I'm collecting some machines to drag down there. You know I'm not in there yet. They're just talking about it.

**01:02:04**

**SR:** What about, I've heard the name of George Ortolano thrown around a lot.

**01:02:10**

**BW:** Yeah, well he's--he's the inventor or the creator of the SnowWizard machine. He did that in 1937.

**01:02:18**

**SR:** And those—is that the other manufacturer?

**01:02:21**

**BW:** That's the other current manufacturer in New Orleans.

**01:02:25**

**SR:** Did you know Ernest Hansen?

**01:02:27**



**BW:** No. I met him. You know I met him in a few seconds but I didn't really know him, and I met Mrs. Hansen. When I first started selling concentrates I went over there and said, “Well, they’re not going to buy anything from me but they’re the oldest and biggest. I got to go over there.” And I gave them samples and stuff and they were very nice people, you know, and they explained to me they wasn’t changing anything they did for the last 30 to 60 years, and I understood. *[Laughs]*

**01:02:50**

**SR:** How did you know that that was his machine?

**01:02:53**

**BW:** They described it, and when it rolled in I knew. It’s kind of hard to see their machine, but they had pictures in the paper and—. But actually at the bottom of the snow spout, they got Hansen stamped on it. It’s in the casting.

**01:03:06**

**SR:** How did that fire department get a hold of that?

**01:03:08**

**BW:** I don’t know; it’s ridiculous. I don’t know. I’d like to find out how many machines they made. I’d like to ask Ashley how many of those machines they made because I think—the way I understand it, he got in the sno-ball business and he had this booming sno-ball business with the

first sno-ball machine and so he starts making machines for other people opening up right next door to him. So he stopped selling them. **[Laughs]** I think that's the story.

**01:03:32**

**SR:** Huh.

**01:03:32**

**BW:** You'll have to check with Ashley on that.

**01:03:35**

**SR:** From what I understand he didn't make that many.

**01:03:36**

**BW:** I don't think he made many at all. I thought maybe, I'm guessing 40, but I don't think he made that. You got any idea? Because Ashley said she's got another one that—.

**01:03:47**

**SR:** I would say more like four.

**01:03:49**

**BW:** Wow.

**01:03:49**

**SR:** I don't know. We'll have to ask her, but very few.

**01:03:51**

**BW:** I need to know. The next time she comes I got to ask if she knows.

**01:03:56**

**SR:** I believe she has a pretty good idea. We'll have to find out.

**01:03:58**

**BW:** Wow, that is big—he only made four of them. *[Laughs]*

**01:04:01**

**SR:** Yeah, I mean it's big—

**01:04:02**

**BW:** I thought it might be 40 out there, you know.

**01:04:05**

**SR:** Maybe. I don't--I don't know. I don't know.

**01:04:08**

**BW:** That I got to find out.

**01:04:08**

**SR:** We'll have to find out, but I think it's pretty special that you have one.

**01:04:12**

**BW:** Oh yeah, I've never seen another one or heard of another one.

**01:04:15**

**SR:** What about the one that you got from Southeast Asia? Where did you get that?

**01:04:18**

**BW:** I was in—we were making dive trips every year and I went diving some turtles and stuff and we were walking, backpacking, through one of these towns over there in Malaysia and darned if they didn't have that thing right in front of a hardware store in a box. It was \$115 bucks, so we hauled it all the way back.

**01:04:40**

**SR:** Did you use it?

**01:04:41**

**BW:** No, I never did use it. It's--it's the Asian-style machine because I've seen them on the web over here for like \$700--\$800, but that's somebody importing them direct from Taiwan, you know.

**01:04:51**

**SR:** When you travel, do you try lots of shaved ice-type treats?

**01:04:55**

**BW:** Oh yeah, if I find something. I went to Costa Rica and I bought a little scraper down there, and I bought one from the US Virgin Islands, and I just went to Hawaii for the first—I've been to Hawaii a dozen, at least a dozen times for three hours at a pop on a plane going some other place, so finally I went to Hawaii last year and I went to Kawaii, and--and I went and visited every shaved-ice stand I could find. And it looks like I'm going to go back this year and do Maui and Honolulu and just visit every one of them just to see what they're doing. Being as I sell this style shaver, I want to learn more about it. And I did learn a lot about the operation of it while I was there.

**01:05:30**

But even though our flavors are superior to what they have, they don't want to change anything you know because it—the guy is making stuff right on the island.

**01:05:39**

**SR:** Why are the flavors here superior?

**01:05:41**

**BW:** Well it's just so much more research and--and development done on it. It's 70 years here. And you know it's very competitive, and every year we will--we will come up with three new flavors or review three or four old flavors. We'll pick out something and try to improve it, something we think we got a shot at improving or something we thought we tasted some other place. so we--we're on top of this flavor thing. That's where--that's where all the money is at.

**01:06:10**

When--when somebody buys something from Southern Snow I want them to say, "Well, it tastes just like it's supposed to taste," and I get a lot of that. And so if they go buy something like peanut butter and it tastes like peanut butter, or pistachio and it tastes just like a pistachio nut, they're sold on everything else we have.

**01:06:27**

**SR:** Can you tell me what some of the newer flavors are from last year, or from this year?

**01:06:32**

**BW:** Uh, let's see last year. Well we made a pomegranate-cranberry because pomegranate is such a big deal. We made that; we--we also made a cherimoya this year because a couple other people made it, and we actually made a lot better one than they made. It's called a custard—it's a

custard apple from the south of Spain, so when they saw “custard,” I think they made it out of vanilla. But this thing has a real fruit flavor to it. So we got a really good one of those.

**01:06:59**

And let’s see. Last--last year we made something called—we made a cinnamon bubblegum. And I can't think of the other ones; they get so many of them. You know a couple of years ago we made kiwi, which was a big deal. It tastes just like a kiwi. But I get the current ones mixed up with the not-so-current ones.

**01:07:21**

**SR:** When you said about making the cherimoya, could you order a cherimoya flavor from one of the flavor houses?

**01:07:27**

**BW:** Yeah. We went to a bunch of flavor houses and we said, “Send us anything you got.” Some of them would send two cherimoyas, three cherimoyas, three versions of the cherimoya, and--and some of them tasted like absolutely nothing you know. And in this flavor business, all of a sudden some guy comes in and you buy something from this flavor house, you see, and it’s phenomenal. And you say, “Boy, we found the guys here. And we’re going--we’re going to start testing all their stuff.” And the next three--four things they send is nothing. And you kind of

find—because these flavor houses, they’ve built their reputation on one or two flavors you see. And then when somebody thinks they’re great, they’ll buy everything from them, so you know you got--you really got to shop around.

**01:08:05**

And price has nothing to do with it. I’ve seen stuff on there that costs 10 times as much as another one and not be nowhere near as good as the cheapest one, and vice-versa.

**01:08:15**

**SR:** Well how do they determine price of these things?

**01:08:18**

**BW:** I don’t know. You would not believe; I got stuff--I got stuff in there that’s \$6 a quart and I got stuff in there that’s \$300 a quart. *[Laughs]* You know, but some is a lot stronger than others. Some require more--more chemicals to get it to work.

**01:08:37**

**SR:** I see, right. It might be more difficult to make, even--even though it doesn’t maybe taste as good?



**01:08:42**

**BW:** Yeah, it's incredible. You know sometime one might be 10 times stronger than the other. One might require more--more chemicals to get it into solution. I mean the flavors are really all over the place. When that little clear liquid comes in, you don't know what it is.

**01:08:59**

**SR:** When I walked into this building it was like I walked into a wall of aroma. How--how would you describe that smell?

**01:09:11**

**BW:** Well I don't smell it anymore. That's how I'd describe that. [*Laughs*] But it's—you know it's actually flavor escaping from 1,000 bottles. That's what you're smelling. [*Laughs*]

**01:09:22**

**SR:** It's intense. Do you not even smell it when you walk in in the morning?

**01:09:25**

**BW:** No, I don't smell it anymore.

**01:09:27**

**SR:** And can you eat lunch in here and taste your lunch?

**01:09:29**

**BW:** Oh yeah.

**01:09:30**

**SR:** It's very overwhelming and good. But--but huge; it's a huge smell. So this is a really big building here. It's sort of, when you took me on the tour it was very—it was very much a labyrinth. At what point did you move into this building?

**01:09:46**

**BW:** We moved in here in 1984 at the very end of the year. So let's say 1985 is when we really started. I mean we had half the building and about 10 years later we got the other half.

**01:09:57**

**SR:** What was in the other half before?

**01:09:58**

**BW:** Radiator shop, so we got them out of here. *[Laughs]*

**01:10:02**

**SR:** And you do the machine work and the flavor work really close together actually.

**01:10:07**

**BW:** Yeah, for--for having two things under a roof, one roof, they are pretty close.

**01:10:12**

**SR:** Yeah. What is your favorite part of your job, of this business?

**01:10:19**

**BW:** That's a good point. I guess--I guess like sometimes you're putting somebody in business and you're like a big hero to them. You know some people come in here and it's like, okay, it's all about a dollar. I'm going down the street. You know—what's so special about this? And they're really going to buy it here but they're kicking tires all day trying to get the price. And then some people come in here and they realize that this doesn't cost nothing to get into and they want a long-term relationship. They're going out in town; they know they're going to make a killing with this stuff. And they get--they get excited. You get excited. You know, I got excited when a lot of people bought trailers out of here and went out after the storm, up to New Orleans East on the lakefront and made a killing with those things. **[Laughs]** It was great; you know they came in here—you could see them. When they came here to buy supplies, they're sky high. **[Laughs]** They like walked into Disneyland again. I really like that part of the business. They're people that had never made any money in their whole life and all of a sudden they're making five times what they made, you know.

**01:11:20**

**SR:** That's great. And I guess you have really long-lasting relationships.

**01:11:25**

**BW:** Oh yeah, some of them really go a long—. And then I got people—I got one of my--one of my stories is in the 19—well we were still on Monroe Street. In 1984, these people, they had some people in Broken Bow, Oklahoma; they were making a killing with sno-balls. They were coming down here every week buying a machine and a pallet of flavor. And I mean we just, our eyes were wide open. “Man, what are these guys doing,” you know? So then we got a call from **Ida Belle** down the street. You know, and you could tell this lady had phoned up everybody in the world trying to find out where this stuff came from because nobody could find nothing back in the days. There was no web. You had to have a New Orleans phone book to find anything. And you didn't know where it came from. And she started describing it and said—as soon as she started, I said, “Yes, you found it.” “Yes, you found it.” Well and she kept [saying] “This is it. This is it.” You know, you have found it. **[Laughs]** Bingo! And so they come down here and they--they see it and it's the same stuff [as] in Broken Bow, and they get back--back up there. And these clowns, they're out there selling--selling like \$300--\$400 a day out in front of—off a pasture, you know. It was on the side of the road. They had a barn in the background. And they were—they called this Snow Fun, and they were Mr. and Mrs. Snow Fun and they became heroes in their town. And they—when they'd see them in the supermarket, and they were--they were selling a ton of sno-balls, and then three years later I don't hear from them no more. They forgot what they did the other three years, you know. **[Laughs]** How can that happen? Maybe they got a divorce or something.

**01:12:52**

**SR:** You never heard from them again?

**01:12:53**

**BW:** No, uh-uh, and they were just smoking hot. I could see the concentrate going out there and selling 1,000 sno-balls a gallon; they're rolling, and after three years look at what they did. They went one summer, one winter, they forgot what they did the year before. And that's not an uncommon story.

**01:13:08**

Sometimes I have--I have people that—I got a guy out in New Orleans East that made a ton of money in sno-balls and he hit it big on Hibernia stocks and I never heard from him anymore. He was in a boat going around out there in the Mediterranean for six months, but he—the money from sno-balls he invested in stocks and he made a killing on Hibernia Bank and he was fixed for life.

**01:13:31**

**SR:** Well I have seen that it can be hard work.

**01:13:35**

**BW:** Yeah, that's the most disappointing thing people find with it. That is the number one—they think this thing, it isn't like—. I tell everybody when they come in—like you know especially the people that have been in the restaurant business or something, they come in there and I do my demo and I put the ice back in the freezer. And they said, “Well what do we got to do now?” And I said, “Nothing; you just put the ice back in the freezer and see you tomorrow.” This isn't like Popeye's where you're going to be scraping grease off the ceiling until 3 o'clock in the morning. But you do have to mix up syrup, you know, and harvest ice, and they make a big deal out of that. And then it's labor-intensive, making the sno-ball. You just—you know it's not that hard, but you got to pay attention to what you're doing. You got to fill up the cup with a certain amount of ice, put a certain amount of topping, pack it a certain amount, put a certain amount of syrup on, and you get really good at it. But I don't know; you know it gets old.

**[Laughs]**

**01:14:27**

**SR:** You're also dealing with the public and standing on your feet I guess.

**01:14:29**

**BW:** Dealing with the public, yeah. It depends on what neighborhood you're in, too, you know. If you're out in New Orleans East and they—and nowadays you know sometimes—I can't pick on New Orleans East because I haven't been out there, but you know if you're in a bad

neighborhood there might be fights and all kinds of stuff. I had a guy years ago that had—he didn't have a sno-ball stand. He had a malt—these standup malt trucks, you know. It's a step van with a malt machine in it, and you get any kind of ice cream you want it. You know it's like a rolling Dairy Queen.

**01:14:58**

And he—and the big thing was to go into the projects. And back then \$300 was a lot of money and he'd go out there and sell \$300 a day and every third day he got robbed. [*Laughs*]

**01:15:08**

**SR:** Where was that? What town?

**01:15:10**

**BW:** That was—that would be early-mid-'70s, early '70s.

**01:15:17**

**SR:** I guess it's maybe less work if you have a trailer than if you have a shop where there's a lot more space to be cleaned and you have to deal with more employees and—.



**01:15:28**

**BW:** It's hard to say. It's sort of a toss-up on that, you know.

**01:15:31**

**SR:** Yeah. What is your second-biggest market, besides New Orleans?

**01:15:36**

**BW:** I think--I think Texas, you know, but you're talking about a whole state. But we sell a lot up in the Baltimore area, and--and Oklahoma City we sell a lot.

**01:15:51**

**SR:** Why do you think Baltimore?

**01:15:53**

**BW:** Well Baltimore is the other sno-ball capital up there. They think they're the sno-ball capital and they got a couple of machines made up there. And they are junk, you know, but the-- the people up there, they do use them. They're quite popular, but they can't sell them anyplace else. They're just for Baltimore, and they got a few things they do. They got this flavor, egg custard, and everybody thinks that's a big deal. And so we made an egg custard flavor because I get a lot of people from New York; all--all the East Coast, New York, New Jersey and those places—a lot of them get their sno-balls from Baltimore. And egg custard is the big flavor. Why? Because they add evaporated milk to it, you know.

**01:16:41**

And so you know I get a lot of stands that I open up, you know from Florida and the Carolinas, and, “Oh, what's this egg custard? We got to get it.” And it's really a Baltimore flavor.

**01:16:54**

**SR:** Hmm, it's funny because that's not a very warm climate. Like here it kind of makes sense that people would be eating a lot of ice.

**01:17:01**

**BW:** You know I don't know how they got their foothold into that but they've built a couple machines there.

**01:17:08**

**SR:** Do you ever travel to visit your clients?

**01:17:12**

**BW:** Uh, yeah, a little bit. Mostly I go around visiting other systems. I did a lot of traveling and I'll be looking for, you know, some sno-ball stuff. And--and every Latin country has got some kind of hand-scraper or some kind of little thing on wheels with two flavors—red and green.

**01:17:32**

**SR:** Yeah. Where have you had comparable flavors that are high-quality?

**01:17:38**

**BW:** Well the ones in Hawaii—they also have something called--called lousy-tasting flavors. And so I went to Hawaii and all their flavors are pleasant, but none of them are really good. You

know they're more--they're more yellow and red than they are banana and strawberry. But they're just very weak; they're very weak.

**01:17:59**

**SR:** But is there a place where they aren't weak?

**01:18:02**

**BW:** Um, no, I haven't found anything like—you know the flavors that come out of New Orleans are the strongest.

**01:18:11**

**SR:** Uh-hm. Do you have children?

**01:18:13**

**BW:** No.

**01:18:15**

**SR:** Do you have any family members involved in the business?

**01:18:17**

**BW:** Yeah, my nephew will probably take this place over. He's been here about five years, and my mother was in here up until last year. [*Laughs*] And she finally retired. She's coming in to make the deposits and—.

**01:18:31**

**SR:** What is your nephew's name?

**01:18:33**

**BW:** Greg.

**01:18:36**

**SR:** Last name?

**01:18:35**

**BW:** Darling, Greg Darling.

**01:18:39**

**SR:** Oh okay. I might have seen him out there.

**01:18:42**

**BW:** Yeah.

**01:18:43**

**SR:** So this place has a future?

**01:18:45**

**BW:** Yeah. Yeah, he's a light at the end of the tunnel. [*Laughs*]

**01:18:51**

**SR:** How old is he?

**01:18:52**

**BW:** He's 30-something, 32—33-years-old or something like that. He'll be here. **[Laughs]**

**01:18:57**

**SR:** Was it always clear that he would end up here?

**01:19:00**

**BW:** No, oh no. He--he worked here when he was in high school. He had a good time over here. And he worked here when he was in high school and—but he went to school. He graduated from LSU in mathematics and he's in prosthetics. He went to school in California for that. He can install Darth Vader arms. **[Laughs]** You know, and--and make wooden legs and all that stuff. I call them wooden legs. But he--he makes all—he can do all that stuff. He's really good at it. He went to UAB in Birmingham and he was out-grossing everybody. He was selling more stuff and he had big, big sales figures up there. And but--that market got goofy after--you know the medical market is getting to be a mess. And so they got so competitive that—I'm telling his story now. It got so competitive in--in the prosthetics market that you had to make house calls, and then once you made house calls, every time they had a little problem with it—you know

everybody is dissatisfied with their first wooden leg. And it's, "Let's call him out there." And then after the storm their clients were from Florida to Houma, and so it's get in the car to go see what this guy is complaining about and then they started making house calls. And then the physical therapists started thinking they were more important than the prosthetics guy and giving advice against them. And he said, "What a mess this is."

**01:20:16**

And he likes the sno-ball stuff. The sno-ball stuff is pretty cool and it—. And then he'll-- and then he'll have his own business, too.

**01:20:25**

**SR:** But it doesn't sound like you're looking to retire any time soon.

**01:20:29**

**BW:** I'd like--I'd like to cut my hours. I'm still seven days a week [*Laughs*] in the summertime—seven days a week. The last three weeks I've been here like seven days, you know. So I'm trying to cut that out because I actually enjoy the place when I'm not exhausted.

[*Laughs*]

**01:20:45**



**SR:** Yeah. Most of the sno-ball stand owners have an off-season and can take off—leave.

**01:20:53**

**BW:** Yeah, for the last—since '87 we go to Cozumel for the first two weeks in November, every year, and we were knocking out the top 20 dive shops and dive spots in the world. You know we did everything: Red Sea, Galapagos, Palau Truk, Isopodan, places you never even heard of. We got to all these big dive resorts, and we do that just for two weeks in January. But after that it's the big grind all year. *[Laughs]*

**01:21:21**

**SR:** I wanted to ask you: What did you get a degree in when you went to college?

**01:21:25**

**BW:** I got a masters in business from Southeastern. I had a couple sales jobs where I wasn't going anywhere. *[Laughs]*

**01:21:33**

**SR:** And you said that you started this with a couple college friends.

**01:21:37**

**BW:** Just Carl. I got it cranked up and the first person I got—his name was Carl, that I went to school with, and it was just amazing. He--he had a little background in chemistry, which was really, really important, but his taste buds were incredible. And you know I got my mother and my sister in here and we were all tasting stuff. And here's Carl doing a great job. You know, "How did this happen?" He worked in a bakery and he's got a degree in industrial technology and--and he doesn't know anything about that. *[Laughs]* You know he doesn't know anything about that.

**01:22:07**

**SR:** So you didn't know before you got him involved that he was such a good taster?

**01:22:10**

**BW:** No. We're big buddies, big buddies, and he turns out to be this big taste bud guy. I said, "Look at this," you know. He's the brewmaster. It's a shocker.

**01:22:19**

**SR:** So he's been involved since the beginning?

**01:22:21**

**BW:** Yeah, the beginning, yeah.

**01:22:22**

**SR:** And has his—it would be interesting to talk to him, but has his taste level maintained?

**01:22:29**

**BW:** Sure. I mean we top everything. You know other people make flavors; we got to make them. We call everybody's everything in. And he's really good with the color, too. You know we--we were the first ones to have pink and turquoise cotton candy, and not red and blue, you know. He comes up with all these shades, and there's not too much else he can do. **[Laughs]** You know he's got a degree in industrial technology and if we—I mean you know, he doesn't come up with any ideas to improve the lab. But as far as color and flavor, he's as good as they get.

**01:23:05**

**SR:** So if he comes up with something, wants to change something or comes up with something new, he runs it by you. Are there other people?

**01:23:12**

**BW:** Basically Carl now, you know. I'm going to come in and check it right before it goes out. And I'm going—you know if they got several things on the table I'll compare it, but I'm nowhere near finding the stuff like he is. And no, I'm not—I just check the final product and see if it's acceptable.

**01:23:32**

**SR:** That's fascinating to me that he—that's where he found his calling.

**01:23:35**

**BW:** Yeah, he gets his degree in industrial technology and goes to work in bakeries you know.

**[Laughs]**

**01:23:41**

**SR:** I think we've really covered a lot here. Is there anything that—? Oh I wanted to ask you—  
So I've seen in so many of the rooms in this building, paper, files, envelopes, labeled boxes.

**01:23:59**

**BW:** Yeah, it's a paper factory.

**01:24:02**

**SR:** Do you use the computerized bookkeeping?

**01:24:05**

**BW:** We just got—yeah. No, like let's see if we can find a box. I just put all my boxes away. I'll  
show you one right here. This is Southern Snow 2010.

**01:24:27**

**SR:** That box right there is Southern Snow 2010.

**01:24:29**

**BW:** But actually we—it's not all the invoices. We went on computer with the invoices in the middle of last year, in the middle of 2009, so now all the invoices are computerized. It's--it's almost like a little mail-order place down in there. We have a web—we've spent a bunch of money with a computer guy and now we're just like a small, a really small what is it? LL Bean, you know. People phone in. We got three people on computers there and we got three people that answer the phone. And they look, they put you in; if you're a new customer they put you in the computer. We--we're linked with UPS; we send--we send out 100--150 boxes a day. We can run your credit card and tell you the cost of the shipping before you're off the phone. That's all new in the last year-and-a-half and we have an online store that some people are using.

**01:25:13**

Basically when you phone in here they're placing your order on the online store for you. That way your credit card—that way you know the credit card is run and you know your shipping before the thing gets off; you know before you get off the phone. And that's the big difference because everybody is so concerned about shipping and we're on the phone so long worrying about shipping. And then if we process an order and then the credit card is no good, then we got to look through 150 boxes and pull the stuff back out. So this has really been good. So that's where Greg handles it; I don't have nothing to do with that. **[Laughs]**

**01:25:44**

**SR:** That's a—that's a lot to deal with.

**01:25:47**

**BW:** Yeah, that's something—you know a business should hire some—what do they call those guys? They got a name for them people now, office administrator or something like—I can't think of the name of it. But they--they're the guys that just come in and they run the office and the computers as a position. I know what it is; I just can't think of it.

**01:26:06**

**SR:** You don't have one?

**01:26:07**

**BW:** No; I don't have one.

**01:26:09**

**SR:** I think like a lot of the sno-ball stands I've seen, this place is still kind of old-school.

**01:26:15**

**BW:** Oh yeah. Yeah, it's one of the last places you can find a bunch of kids running around and stuff. You know it's—and the family running it and some kid in the playpen over in the corner or something like that. *[Laughs]*

**01:26:25**

**SR:** Yeah.

**01:26:26**

**BW:** It's still one of the cheapest businesses to go in. And the other thing, this thing is going to be here forever. The next--the next 100 years from now there's still going to be somebody that knows that he can go out there and make--make a good living with—it's a hustle, you know. You can't let the first guy—the first guy at City Hall will tell you, “You can't go in that business,” you know. You got to find a spot, but you're always going to be able to crush this ice up. There's never going to be an icee or a yogurt that's going to be like this. You know you got to take the ice. You got to manually shave it. It's a simple machine. And it--you know forever, it's been like that since 1900 and it's still going the same way. It's such an inexpensive treat.



You make it for a quarter, you know. The recession hits, it takes the people right out of—right out of the ice cream shops and into the sno-ball stand, you know.

**01:27:12**

**SR:** Hmm, well I think that that's a great way to wrap up on a positive note unless—. I mean you've given me so much of your time and I really appreciate it. Unless there's anything else that you can think of that I haven't asked you—.

**01:27:26**

**BW:** I think you've covered everything. I don't think you missed anything. You're pretty good—you're pretty good at this.

**01:27:30**

**SR:** Well it's fascinating. I'm a sno-ball enthusiast.

**01:27:35**

**BW:** Well you're pretty good. You didn't miss nothing.

**01:27:37**

**SR:** Well I'm thrilled to talk to somebody this deep into the business.

**01:27:41**

**BW:** Yeah, we're deep.

**01:27:41**

**SR:** You're deep. Thank you so much.

**01:27:43**

**BW:** Thank you.

**01:27:46**

**[End Southern Snow-Bubby Wendling Interview]**