

Jackie Hite
Jackie Hite's Bar-B-Q - Leesville, SC

Date: June 13, 2012
Location: Jackie Hite's Bar-B-Q - Leesville, SC
Interviewer: Rien Fertel
Transcription: Shelley Chance, ProDocs
Length: 38 minutes
Project: Southern BBQ Trail - South Carolina

[Begin Jackie Hite — Jackie Hite's Bar-B-Q]

00:00:05

Rien Fertel: All right; this Rien Fertel with the Southern Foodways Alliance. I'm at Jackie Hite's Bar-B-Q at 460 East Railroad Avenue in Batesburg/Leesville, South Carolina, continuing on our South Carolina BBQ Trail and I'm sitting here with Mr. Jackie Hite. I'm going to have him introduce himself. Let me say the date: it is Wednesday June 13, 2012, just before 10:30 in the morning.

00:00:35

Jackie Hite: That's right.

00:00:37

RF: And what's your name please; your name and birth date?

00:00:40

JH: James Lee "Jackie" Hite, 4, 21, 40 [April 21, 1940].

00:00:46

RF: Let me ask you this, when and how did you get the—the name Jackie? Who called you Jackie?

00:00:53

JH: My father's name—nickname was Jack Hite. His whole name was James Olan Hite and his nickname was Jack, so when I was born they started calling me Jackie.

00:01:03

RF: Where did you grow up?

00:01:04

JH: Right in Leesville, South Carolina.

00:01:09

RF: Right here. What did your father do?

00:01:11

JH: My father was a part-time barbecue man, a hardware man, a plumber, and he loved to fish later in life. He and I went in the hardware business in 1968 and we stayed in there until he passed away in '83. And I started this barbecue, it would have been '79, because I had four daughters to go to college and the only way I could send them to college, I had to get them—get some money to help pay for it, so I started this barbecue business along with my hardware store. Me and my father was in fifty-fifty; we were in business together. And he—he stood over there one day and told me, I was in bulk sales only here, and he sit over there and told me, “When I pass away and get rid of this free interest hardware store, where we charge to everybody and nobody doesn't want to have to pay you. Get rid of it and go up yonder. You can afford to do less business and take in less money but if you ain't going to be charging nothing ain't nobody going

to beat you out of nothing. It's all going to be cash or checks." So he give me some good advice.

[Laughs]

00:02:21

So I been here thirty—thirty-three years counting—starting since 1979, May 1979, and it's already June and so I been here going on thirty-four now. I started barbecuing as a little boy helping him in the yard or at the fire station, where the firemen used to have what they called the Firemen's Ball, and he started that thing and cooked four hogs and invited all the—they had blocked off the street and there would be street dancing and square dancing all to raise money for the Fire Department. We started setting up all night long while he'd go get a few hours rest. And that's how I learned how to barbecue hogs from staying around and watching him and doing what he told me to do.

00:03:04

RF: What were—you said he would do four hogs at a time. What sort of pits would he do?

00:03:10

JH: That was a wood-pit cooked barbecue too. It was blackjack, oak, or hickory on there. It was at the Fire Department when I was ten years old, but we'd go cut the wood on the trailer and bring it there and burn it down so we could barbecue chickens and hogs for the Firemen's Ball and cook hash. Everything was cooked with wood.

00:03:30

RF: Where did the pigs come from?

00:03:31

JH: The pigs came from a Saluda Locker; well Saluda Livestock Barn. Mr. Roy Witt, he's been dead, too, a long time and the barn is even tore down. So then I went to Counts Sausage Company in Prosperity, South Carolina and started buying them and then went from there to Saluda, South Carolina, Saluda Locker Company and started buying them and they went out of business and so I'm at Caughman's Meat Plant now in Lexington, South Carolina. So I've stayed with South Carolina.

00:04:03

RF: What's the importance of staying—the importance of staying with South Carolina hogs?

00:04:08

JH: It's—I don't even know if they raise enough not to have to go to North Carolina and buy them. I heard that the industry, they don't want no pig pens in the yard in the country—all out in the country so they—they got places in North Carolina, and I don't know what's the difference, but most of the hogs raised now comes out of North Carolina and Georgia.

00:04:31

RF: What—let's go back to those Firemen's Balls and helping your father. Do you have any early, early memories of that time?

00:04:41

JH: I have all the memories of it. I mean it was one of the biggest events we had during the year in this little town of Leesville. Eventually I became a fireman in 1961; got out of the Army at

Fort Gordon [Georgia] for the National Guard training and became a fireman in '61 and in '66 they elected me Fire Chief and I just kept right on cooking for the Firemen's Balls and then I finally got on the Water Commission, the Leesville Water Commission, and stayed there for two years and then I got on the City Council and stayed there for eight more years. And then I finally got appointed Magistrate and give it back to them and run for County Council and lost about 600 votes county-wide. Ran for Sheriff and lost it. Came back and ran for Mayor on the right end and got 223 and the man got 229; well, he resigned in three months, so I ran for Mayor again and got elected again. And then I got elected again and then I got elected again in '84. And I even got a sewer grant in 1977 or '78 for the Town of Leesville that sewered 200 homes while I was Mayor. So I feel like I've done a lot for this community. I got a grant, it didn't cost nobody anything you know. But I—people are begging me to run for Mayor again. I'm seventy-two years old and I think I'm too old. **[Laughs]** I still got the knowledge though.

00:06:09

RF: What's the importance of—or how does it make you feel to do this community service to—for these elected positions?

00:06:16

JH: It makes me feel great. **[Laughs]** I'll never get politics out of my blood, you know; it's always been that way. My granddaddy was on the City Council and then my father was on the Water Commission. Fishing is my greatest hobby now. I take a lot of kids fishing and used to fish a lot of tournaments all over the Southeastern United States. I been to Little Rock. I been to Florida. I been to Georgia. I been to Cincinnati, Ohio. I been to Kentucky. I been everywhere

fishing—Indiana, but now since I done got older all I do now is take my grandkids fishing mostly and we fish around local lakes in South Carolina.

00:07:03

I'll tell you what I got also done; I got the creel limit lowered in South Carolina because our fish population in our lakes were getting scarce and they're not replenishing them with hatcheries. I went and got a State Senator to lower the creel limit in Lake Murray from thirty to twenty and the size limit to eight inches, so, now, I done created something that is statewide, but effective July the First every lake in South Carolina is going to be a twenty limit and eight-inch size. So that's going to save a third of the population of our fish for our younger generations. It won't help me none but it's going to help everybody else's grandkids and all over the years. And if you think that you are saving a third of what the population that's a lot of fish and a lot of pressure on fishing now. I don't know if y'all know what crappie or croppie; that is—that's what we fish for, and it's going to really help keep fish in these lakes for these kids for a long time.

00:08:03

They can't raise enough fish in hatcheries to do what we just done by getting this law passed and lowering the creel limit to twenty. So I'm just telling you some of the things I've done in life that's really helped the State of South Carolina. I think I helped it. I'm getting credit for it too.

00:08:21

RF: So you've seen the fish populations change dramatically?

00:08:24

JH: Because it's hard to keep—if you don't have beds in you can't catch any fish. I have beds in, that's how I catch a lot of fish. And if you—the Wildlife Department puts beds in too; if they would keep them up people would have a place to fish, if they would keep them up like you're supposed to. But that's something I've done in life along with my barbecue and I just—messing with politics is one of my favorite games. I'm not saying I ain't going to run for Mayor again either. **[Laughs]** People are begging me too and then once you been there you can't get it out of your blood. And I know it's so much stress. The reason I got out—the last time I got out being Mayor, I resigned because I couldn't get along with some of the personnel and I wasn't going to let nobody run over me, and they put me through a grievance hearing for me terminating somebody on insubordination and I said, “You know what? This job for \$100 a month ain't worth me being aggravated with.” And I quit. **[Laughs]**

00:09:30

RF: You mean the restaurant?

00:09:34

JH: I stuck with my business you know what I mean. And I just messed with politics, now you know helping other people get elected.

00:09:39

RF: So what is more stressful the restaurant business or the politics?

00:09:44

JH: Restaurant business has been pretty stressful too. I had open heart surgery five years ago. I'm not able to do what I used to do but I'm able to supervise. And cooking with wood is just like being a plumber. It's the hardest work you can ever do. And I'm not kidding you because you got to clean your pits out. We clean our pits out every Thursday—every Wednesday where there will be new dirt in there, new sand, and we sterilize them on Thursday real good with heat before we sweep them off and cook with them. But you can't take all the taste off the rack; it wouldn't taste like good barbecue if you put something new every week up.

00:10:23

So that's the reason we got the name of having the best barbecue in South Carolina and if you look on the internet it says *Top 100*—it's worth driving 100 miles to get my barbecue. I don't know if y'all saw that or not; that's what they done proved. But we got real stuff. Every Friday on my buffet I lay a pig up there—every Friday from lunch from 11:00 to 2:00. I let people eat all they want off the pig pickings. That's what I really love to do on Friday. I like to see people—lawyers and a bunch of people coming up from Lexington drive twenty—thirty miles, from Augusta to eat with me, you know. I'm not a big place. I don't do any catering. If somebody wants food catered we'll get it ready; they can come pick it up. We don't—we quit catering years ago. We're just not able to do it.

00:11:18

And I don't know no other business I could be in that I'd be more happier than the barbecue business. I mean unless I was elected to politics again and that would be so stressful I don't whether I can handle it or not. **[Laughs]** You don't have to use all this stuff if you don't want to. **[Laughs]**

00:11:36

RF: Well what sort of barbecue do you do? How do you define your barbecue?

00:11:40

JH: I define my barbecue—what you mean?

00:11:43

RF: Well what is it? Is it wood? Is it whole hog?

00:11:46

JH: Wood; the wood and I learned—we used to cook whole hog. It hurts your hand to turn them when they got ready. Now I got them sending me whole hogs split down the middle, cut the ham off, save that middle and cut the shoulder off. Cut the ham off, save that middle; cut that off. So we bring them in—in boxes; we put them back together and they look like whole hogs on the pit.

00:12:14

One man—this was—this was my doing and it helps everybody, it used to be we had to have two people all the time when you're doing this. Now if you just want to do it you don't have to—one man can take them out of the box, one man can cut them up, one man can put them on, one man can turn them, and one man can take them off. So I cut out one man; we don't have to have two people back there during the process. At night I have two people because I think it's really unsafe to have one person at night with what we got going on in the United States and everywhere with crime. So I really got one person back there always sitting watch and I got one person just to keep so they'll be safe. You never know who would come around to try to hurt somebody and I been doing this so many years I don't want nobody hurt. I been here thirty-three

years; I've always been open at night. Three—four weeks ago my wife and I are getting so we'd just decided we'd just have a daytime barbecue, so we're not open at night anymore. I changed my hours and I got them on the front of the building: Open until 2:00 on Wednesday, 2:00 on Thursday; that's buffet and takeout. Open on Friday until 3:00 on the buffet and 6:00 on the takeout, because I process on Fridays and people come buy fresh stuff until six o'clock. Some people get off work early. On Saturday we close the buffet and the takeout at 3:00. On Sunday we close the—the buffet at two o'clock and the takeouts. I kind of narrowed it—I knocked ten hours off our business but we really wasn't that busy at night and having to pay for labor, having to pay for heat, having—I mean electricity for the steam table, the electricity for air-conditioning, plus get shot.

00:14:15

It's dangerous at night out here and we really wasn't that busy. My wife's had thyroid problems. She has begged me; a month ago we got in a fuss in the house because we couldn't find the right people to bring it in and help her. And she said, "If you'll do me one favor?" I said, "What?" She said, "If you'll just stop opening at night?" I said, "You ain't got to go no further. If that's all it takes—we just won't open at night no more." We advertised with local people and we do local business here and a lot of transient business doesn't come here. If Shealy[']s Bar-B-Que] gets overload if they come here. Most people ain't even know where my place is. And I'll tell you what; the local people don't want a lot of people here because they said it would be too crowded. *[Laughs]* That's true.

00:15:00

My neighbors across the street told me to quit getting all this publicity because we want a place we can go sit down where it ain't crowded. You know I mean it's—it's people in here but it's not a whole pile of people.

00:15:14

RF: Let me ask you; what's the importance of doing hardwood, smoke hog?

00:15:22

JH: It's still—

00:15:23

RF: Not many people do it anymore.

00:15:24

JH: That's just how I was taught. I mean I don't know—I don't know how to do it no other way. I got a friend that's in the gas business. He's got two or three trailers and I can cook some shoulders and hams on there, all pig, and I run into a mess over the years. He's loaned me the trailer because you can put them on and leave them on if you run into a mess, you know. And just one night—you know, one night out of five years and just leave them on and they'll cook themselves all night but it still don't taste like hickory-cooked barbecue. That's why everybody likes my barbecue.

00:16:00

South Carolina, from Midland to this area is much the base as what everybody is used to. And when you go down to Orangeburg, fifty miles, man they use mayonnaise and ketchup for the sauce. And I don't like it. We have four sauces on Friday. We have vinegar and red pepper, we have my regular mustard sauce—we're fiddling, the jar is clean, we have—that's on my pig pull. We have vinegar and red pepper and we have a sauce we make the chickens up. I got four sauces they can put on there or they can eat it with nothing. If you're here to eat that pig pull on Friday you don't have to put nothing on it because it's already cooked on the pit.

00:16:40

Like those hogs you see on the wall, that picture; that's how we do them after we turn them, before we take them off we sprinkle our mustard on them and let it cook in that meat and that's what gives it a good taste.

00:16:50

RF: So you sprinkle mustard sauce or mustard—?

00:16:55

JH: It's made with just mustard and vinegar and pepper. I don't have to tell you what degree to put in there but I mean that's—that's how we make it but it's what I've always done since I was a little ol' boy.

00:17:10

RF: Can you give me a bit of the process of how you cook a hog here?

00:17:14

JH: How you cook one? You start firing your pits and you put them on and you fire about every twenty—twenty-five minutes. But you have to take a flashlight and keep looking under your pits and look under the hole to see if it's—to see the grease dropping out of them. But if you don't hear them chirping you know like [*Chirps*] and you put coals on there you know it ain't cooking right so you got to add a little bit more heat. And that's—that coal you put on there when that grease falls and hits that coal it shoots it right back up to that meat and that's why you call it barbecue. That's how you get the taste of hickory wood from that coal. That's the only way you can get it.

00:17:59

If you cook with gas you can't get that because it don't hit it. See what I'm talking about? That's real barbecue we cook by. But I mean we ain't no big outfit but we got a lot of good customers who buy bulk sale and take it home every weekend. That's that sign over yonder, "Bulk Sales."

00:18:19

When we is about fourteen years old my daddy would take us take us and we'd cut a load of wood every Wednesday; that—we went—Wednesday was our day to go cut wood. We hated like the devil to see that. That was a lot of damn work-toting blackjack wood and cutting it down with axes, you know, and get enough to cook uptown. We had a little place uptown where we barbecued and cooked three pigs up there, little pigs and—and hash and all up there. And we just done that on Friday night and sold it on Saturday morning, one day a week. That's really how we started barbecuing and around the Fire Department.

00:18:55

When I was nineteen years old me and a man started a place called Smokey Bear the Barbecue and I stayed there two or three years and I got tired of doing all the work and him working at the Bum plant and wasn't making him no money. Hell, I said, "I'm going to finish," I said—I was a plumber back then too. I said, "I'm going to let him have this place." I sold out to him for \$175 just to get out. **[Laughs]** And I let him have it for about ten—twelve years and then I decided to go back in it in 1979.

00:19:27

But the deal about Shealy's down here; she worked in the drugstore uptown, Ms. Shealy did and not her son. He's the one who owns it now. But she worked down there for \$35 a week and she followed me out because I was on the lead with City Council and wanted to know what I thought about her buying my brother out. His name was Les Hite. He owned Shealy's place. I said, "I'll tell you what Ms. Shealy, as good a Christian woman as you are and as good a cook as you are and as good a person as you are to people and your attitude and all and a big church worker, there's no way you can't make it." She said, "We can borrow the money. Victor and I don't have no money and we need \$20,000. And we got a man who will loan it to us." I said "Well, do it." And they did. They had to move the refrigerator and their stove out of the house because they didn't have no money to buy nothing with it to help put in that place up there. It was smaller, then; they remodeled it several times since then.

00:20:25

Every time they'd see me, "Hey, come here." Her husband said, "If it wouldn't be for you we wouldn't be rich today." I said, "Why?" He said, "You give us the best advice anybody could ever give anybody." So after I ran for Sheriff in 1976 and I told y'all I had daughters to educate and in '79 I decided I needed to go back—thought I could do some good barbecue in here even

though they were in business and I was told I couldn't do no business here because Shealy was in business. But that wasn't true. I went to their house and sit down with them like I'm talking to y'all. I said "I want—I need to ask y'all a favor and I don't want y'all to get mad with me—tell me yes or no. If you don't I won't do it here. I'll go somewhere else. Do y'all mind if I start back cooking a little barbecue on the weekends?" I didn't know I was going to get this big. "Since I talked y'all into buying my brother out?" "What do you mean? We'll even loan you the money to build you a place; I'll put you a place—if it wouldn't be for you we wouldn't be rich today."

00:21:22

So I've had good relationships with those people all these years and that's the best thing in your life then is to have good public relations with your competitors. You know that? I buy mustard in West Columbia, South Carolina from Wood Brothers. That's where my mustard comes from—mustard Wood brand. Sheila buys hers over there too and they're in the sauce business but they don't buy the sauce over there. When they go to Columbia, if I need a pallet of mustard they'll haul it over here for me for nothing. I mean I pay for it but they—that's how close friends we are. And he's a Fire Chief now too. See, I was Fire Chief for ten years and he's been Fire Chief for probably fifteen. We all are just in a little town and we get along.

00:22:04

RF: You mentioned the mustard; what kind of mustard do you use?

00:22:05

JH: Wood Brothers Holland—they call it Holland mustard made by Wood Brothers in West Columbia, South Carolina. The name of it is Holland, I'm pretty sure. We can go back and look at the jugs. I'm seventy-two years old; I can't remember everything but I'm pretty sure it's got Holland wrote on it. We'll going to look and see anyways.

00:22:29

RF: So and you all—do you always use hickory wood?

00:22:32

JH: Always. Now they mix a little oak in it occasionally sometimes. I don't know nothing about it but I advertise hickory cooked barbecue. I get onto the man sometimes. I say, "That don't look like no hickory." "I run across that red oak or that sweet blackjack and I just stuck it in there." "I said, "Well, I advertise hickory. I don't told you all I don't want nothing but hickory wood. That's what I'm paying you for. I try to live up—promise somebody something your word is supposed to be your bond when you tell people things." And if I wasn't a good fellow with a good attitude toward people I couldn't be in business. Heck Shealy wouldn't let me, but I treat people right. And that's how they got a big business. They cater and I don't cater to anybody. I send people to them if they want to be catered; I send them to there. I don't mess with it.

00:23:24

RF: I've done a bunch of these interviews over the past few years and I've seen a lot of people switch to—to gas cookers, to machines. Has anyone ever approached you in buying a machine?

00:23:35

JH: I would go out of business if I went to gas. They wouldn't—they wouldn't buy it. It's just that simple. Years ago you only sold barbecue on July the 4th or you know on Labor Day, on the holiday. Now people eat barbecue every day. I don't know whether it's that many more people or people just love barbecue, but barbecue is a luxury. People don't have to buy it. You know what I mean. But if you don't buy it you got to go make pimento cheese or chicken salad or something or go to a fast-food restaurant. I don't think my barbecue is no worse than them fast-food restaurants because when you cook the grease out of it like we do and all it ain't going to hurt you.

00:24:18

The doctors always said don't eat pork. My tenderloin is dry as it can be because it's probably the best thing you could eat in your life. **[Laughs]** Instead of eating a steak with all that fat on it, you know—

00:24:31

RF: At a pig-picking what's your favorite cut from the hog?

00:24:35

JH: Right under the ribs that stringy meat, white stringy meat; that's what they call breakfast bacon meat. That is next to the skin and I like to get a piece of that out of there with a piece of skin and that's the best part on the hog as far as I'm concerned. And the shoulder is good and tender sweet meat too. Ham is a little tough and that's what Piggy Park in Columbia uses; they cook with wood though. Piggy Park, y'all ever heard of them? They cook with wood. Hams—or they say they do. But they don't cook nothing but hams. I'm the only man I know of that cooks

whole hogs, me and Jerry Hite on Railroad and West Columbia, if y'all want to go over there and talk to him. But he only cooks on—he cooks Thursday night and on Friday and Saturday.

00:25:22

RF: So have you eaten this gas-cooked barbecue and what do you think about it?

00:25:24

JH: I've eat it before and I like all kind of barbecue, but I'm just saying in this area if I were to go to gas cooking or any other way than what I'm doing I—my business would fall off drastically. People that go to Shealy's they don't care what it's cooked on. They go there for the fried chicken and that big bulk variety of quality of food—whatever you got—bigger quantities. And like I say, I'm just a small outfit. I done been told by the barbecue judges sitting there with me last Friday if you ever change your recipe or—or you can't go to nothing else, if you ever get out of here and whoever gets this place better stick to wood if you're going to stay in business because bigger—bigger places take note of that. They even got barbecue now at Bojangle's. Now where they're getting it I don't know but they're buying it already processed somewhere. They don't cook it. You know that ain't cooked on no wood.

00:26:21

I was told years ago that Shealy was going to get so big one day they was going to have to hire me to do their cooking because they couldn't cook it. So they did; they did—or they went and put gas pits. And now they don't took all them out and put rotisseries in there. So if you can get by with it, do it; they don't—people don't care what they deal with.

00:26:42

RF: So you just mentioned something that the Barbecue Judges recently said to you where you know who is going to take over next. So what happens; what's the lineage of this place, what's the future?

00:26:55

JH: We just talked in the back about that; I've offered it to him and he don't want it. He said he don't want to take responsibility. It's a job running a business. I'm going to tell you that. My wife has her hands full at the house keeping the books, sending it to a CPA every week, you know; it's a job running a business and nobody don't want to do it. And people just come to work like they do and they don't have no other responsibility and they can get off at five o'clock they—it's a whole lot easier not owning your own business. *[Laughs]*

00:27:25

We was in the hardware business seventeen years and we were plumbers up to then and electricians and built septic tanks and all that stuff. But as far as I know I been here longer than anywhere. I bought this property from the Railroad all the way to Highway 1 in 1962 never dreaming I'd ever be in the restaurant business. When I was in high school I took Family Relations, a quick course just to get out so I could go to college and play football. Guess what happened? That damn woman failed me. Made me go back a whole year for a course on—and now I'm in the business. Ain't that something? *[Laughs]*

00:28:03

RF: So would you encourage another young man or woman to get into the barbecue business?

00:28:09

JH: Sure I would. But if they go in the wood business I mean it's hard work and try to get people to help you. I pick up part-time people; I don't got many on the staff around here. These are part-time people most of them. We're not a big outfit, but if you got real big you can't hire enough people to cook with wood. They ain't going to do that kind of hard work. I'm lucky, lucky, lucky on July the 4th; I got people been helping me for a couple hours, you know, along or something. I don't have full-time because I couldn't afford to pay it. **[Laughs]** When you got all this insurance mess now and all and I do have workman's comp you know and all to take care of people if they get hurt. But I got food covered on my products and everything; I'm—I'm in good shape but nobody never had done this—don't know what it is until they start it. Y'all boys go back home and go in the barbecue business where you're living and if you start cooking with wood and whoever is down there cooking I guarantee your business will—they'd start coming to your business. It's just got a different taste.

00:29:18

RF: So what is it about the taste that people love so much?

00:29:23

JH: I don't really know. It's just that wood taste, that hickory taste. I have people come here sometimes and they take—wanting a piece of my hickory wood to take home and take an axe and cut chips off to put in their charcoal at home to cook their steaks or whatever they cook. I don't know what it is but you can even buy things—bags of hickory chips, you know, to go on all that and we just never done nothing but what we're doing and that's why it's so hard. That's why it's hard to do.

00:29:55

RF: So maybe just one or two questions before you open for lunch. What—what does barbecue mean to this part of South Carolina?

00:30:04

JH: This part of South Carolina barbecue is an old tradition. It's a Southern tradition and it's—there will always be barbecue here, but I don't know if anybody is going to ever keep doing what we're doing or not, because if you want the real thing you got to do what I do.

00:30:23

RF: Do you think—?

00:30:24

JH: I've been in a Blue Ribbon Contest and I told them judges, "You don't have to Mr. Hite. You're good enough and people will come to you. They won't never say nothing." [*Laughs*]

00:30:33

RF: Well if you could look into the future do you think twenty—thirty years from now there will be real barbecue—hickory wood?

00:30:40

JH: Well that little boy that stuck his head in that door helps—helps me and he's ten years old, my grand-boy and he's learning just like I did.

00:30:47

RF: Does he love to work the pits and—?

00:30:47

JH: A black man helps me one night a week. He's sixty-two or sixty-three years old and he started helping me at Smokey Bear, when he was eleven years old and learned how to barbecue down there, and he's still—he's holding down a job. He's helping me that one night a week; you got to have somebody with knowledge there to know when to fire them. I got another black man that don't know when to fire them and when not to fire them. You got to tell him, you know. This fellow, if you get the knowledge it's just like a college education. My football coach told me I had twenty full scholarships to go to college, I was such a good football player in high school, a running back. He'd been worried about me all these years. He just told me this a while back in this place.

00:31:28

He said, "You know what? You're better off than the people I sent to college. You've been fishing all your life. You've been the Mayor of the town. You run your own business. You do anything you want to. You're independent." He said, "What better life could a man live?" And that's about right ain't it? **[Laughs]** I mean I didn't go—I went to Wingate College. I just—I just wasn't good on the books. But I might could have even went to the pros in high school. I've had

people come in and tell me I was as good a running back as the Dallas Cowboys. **[Laughs]** I could run a football.

00:32:02

And I told my wife and them the other day—and I hope you don't put this on there or my daughter will give me the devil, but I hug women and flirt with them all the time but people like me. I'm—I got—I'm a good popular person. I could run for office and win whatever I want to run for I think. I said, "I wish y'all would do me one favor. I've been married to you forty-eight years and y'all stay on me all the time. I'm seventy-two years old and just get off of my back and let me do what I want to do." I said, "I had twenty girlfriends when I was playing high school football in this town, this community. All of them wanted me to marry them and I didn't. I dropped every damn one of them for you and I went to Pee Dee and drove twenty-two miles and got you and brought you and I been with you forty-eight years. Why do y'all want to say anything to me? I could have chose a lot of women." **[Laughs]** That's pretty good ain't it? And that's a damn good true story thought.

00:32:59

When you're toting a football and in high school and everybody jumps up and hollers when you score a touchdown and you run for sixty yards or eighty yards, I should have been in a big college. I mean the University of Miami offered me a scholarship to go play football and knew my grades was bad. They said, "We don't care if you can read or write; we want you to run tail-back." And I could have had a free education right there and I wouldn't go, and I wouldn't go to Citadel because I didn't like the Military. They told me the same thing, but I didn't want to go in no eight years, so—. **[Laughs]** So I mean I can't say in life—I've had a real good life. The Lord spared my life five years ago for some reason. And a black man told me the Lord wasn't

going to never take me away from here because I was too good to people. He said, “You treat people right” and that’s the way I’ve always done. If your word ain't your bond there ain't nothing to you—always remember that. When you tell somebody something it better concrete. But if you promise somebody something don’t break the promise. If you do then your word ain't your bond. Just don’t tell them you’ll do it; tell them you’ll think about it. Ain't that right?

00:34:09

RF: Sure makes sense.

00:34:11

JH: I’m pretty educated and I ain't never been to college but I had enough knocks and bruises and I know—the Sheriff made me an Honorary Deputy and the Solicitor made me an Honorary Prosecutor. I mean, I’ve had all kind of things give to me.

00:34:30

RF: I just want to ask one more question. Is there a connection between helping people through politics and helping community and feeding people and feeding the community?

00:34:38

JH: Well it is but we don’t get into that no more. I feed the football team, used to all the time.

00:34:45

RF: Oh, but just feeding people, just anyone, any—just not—just feeding a customer who walks in?

00:34:53

JH: I love—I come talk to everybody; that's why I got a business. People like that. If you got—if you can they'd like to speak—they like to see the man that owns the place. You can't—you don't hide from them people. **[Laughs]** You got to be around. If I don't even come over in here on Friday—we're so darned busy. I'll come behind the counter and start hollering at people and waving at people, but they want to see you. I don't know what else to tell y'all. I done about told you all I know. I have four daughters. There's one of them; that's the oldest one going right there. **[Laughs]** And I got three of them educated through South Carolina, so—I done pretty good and I got three great son-in-laws. They're good providers and they're not wife-beaters. I got me six grandkids. So, I'm doing good. I think the Lord blessed me well.

00:35:44

And let us have this little business here he blessed me with because I was told when I opened this up that Shealy wasn't going to let me operate. I said well, "We'll see." So I been here thirty-three years so I must be doing something right. **[Laughs]**

00:35:57

RF: All right; well I want to thank you and I want to congratulate you for being successful in everything.

00:36:03

JH: My fishing, I take other kids fishing all the time; I mean I don't just take mine. I take anybody's kids fishing. I have fish fries and I just—I just help people. I mean there ain't nothing wrong with that is it? I don't take no money for it. I got jobs for people years ago when I was a

plumber and they added onto a mill up here in Batesburg and I told a man to try to use our local contractor because I was on the City Council or I was the Mayor, one; I done forgot. He said, “Can they do it?” I said, “They got the license.” They saved them \$300,000 or \$400,000 by using these people local and the local people came to me after they got through with the building and said, “How much do we owe you for helping us to get the job?” I said, “You don’t owe me nothing. Y'all bought some stuff from us at the hardware, concrete mix, and I done the plumbing and all.” And I said, “Y'all don’t owe me anything.” I said, “All I wanted you all to do was help build that and they did.”

00:37:12

And they said, “Well, we—we don’t mind giving you whatever you say you want.” They made \$145,000 clear profit but I didn't know that and it didn't make no difference. I wasn't in it for the money. I just—I done it for helping the community. **[Laughs]** So a lot of people wouldn't have done that; they'd have wanted some money, right. But I might have been stupid for not taking some money but I didn't take nothing.

00:37:43

RF: Well, I want to thank you very much.

00:37:44

JH: You're welcome. I'm glad to do it for y'all. I hope this helps y'all too. I ain't no crook.

[Laughs]

00:37:54

[End Jackie Hite — Jackie Hite's Bar-B-Q]