

LIZ & IKE KINCHEN
Liz's Bar-B-Q – Henderson, TN

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Date: July 9, 2008
Location: Liz's Bar-B-Q - Henderson, TN
Interviewer: Rien Fertel for the Southern Foodways Alliance
Transcription: Shelley Chance, ProDocs
Length: 48 minutes
Project: Southern Barbecue Trail – Tennessee

[Begin Liz & Ike Kinchen-Liz's Interview-One]

00:00:03

Rien Fertel: Okay; this is Rien Fertel for the Southern Foodways Alliance. It is July 9, 2008, just about 3:30 this afternoon. I'm at Liz's Bar-B-Q in Henderson, Tennessee, 311 South Church Avenue right in the middle of Henderson. I'm here with the owners, Liz and Ike Kinchen, and the cook Troy Smith—if each of you could introduce yourself and say your birth-date please?

00:00:31

Liz Kinchen: Elizabeth Kinchen, May 30, 1939.

00:00:37

Ike Kinchen: WC Kinchen, February in '37—February in '37.

00:00:47

Troy Smith: Troy Smith, February 24, 1953.

00:00:54

RF: Okay; and let's—let's begin with the Kinchen(s) and as I understand you're both from this county and y'all have lived here all your lives?

00:01:05

LK: Born and raised in Chester County.

00:01:07

RF: Okay; let's—let's talk about Chester County. What town specifically were you, Liz, born in?

00:01:13

LK: Chester County right here in Henderson.

00:01:17

RF: Right here in Henderson, and—and what—what did your parents do when—growing up?

00:01:23

LK: My dad was a farmer and my mother was a homemaker.

00:01:25

RF: So you grew up on a farm?

00:01:29

LK: Right.

00:01:28

RF: And what did he farm?

00:01:31

LK: Mostly cotton and corn.

00:01:33

RF: Cotton and corn—did he have animals also?

00:01:34

LK: Very few.

00:01:38

RF: Did—did he or your mother cook?

00:01:41

LK: No, not in a restaurant; no.

00:01:43

RF: What did—well did they barbecue?

00:01:45

LK: No.

00:01:46

RF: Not at home either?

00:01:47

LK: No.

00:01:49

RF: And what—well what—when—when your mother cooked, I’m sure she cooked, what did she cook? What do you remember her cooking and eating at her stove?

00:01:58

LK: Just mostly vegetables and what little meat we could afford at that time.

00:02:06

RF: And sir, you—you were also born here in Henderson?

00:02:08

IK: I sure was at Sweet Lips.

00:02:10

RF: In—say that again.

00:02:12

IK: I was born at Jack’s Creek and raised at Sweet Lips.

00:02:17

RF: It’s called Sweet Lips?

00:02:18

IK: Yeah.

00:02:19

RF: Okay; well I've been to Jack's Creek.

00:02:20

IK: You've been to that town?

00:02:22

RF: No, not there but I've been to Jack's Creek and—

00:02:26

IK: It's just about five miles south of Jack's Creek up there.

00:02:31

RF: Okay, okay; and did you grow up on a farm also?

00:02:34

IK: I sure did.

00:02:35

RF: And was your father a farmer?

00:02:37

IK: Yeah; my mother—all of us were farmers.

00:02:41

RF: Was it many generations of farmers before your father?

00:02:45

IK: Oh yeah; that's the only way they had of making a living.

00:02:48

RF: And what did he farm?

00:02:49

IK: Well we raised cotton, corn, along to make a living. Raised hogs, cattle, and plowed and worked mules.

00:03:03

RF: Were the hogs and cattle mainly for the family or were they to sell also?

00:03:07

IK: Well, they just were for barbecuing for the family and eating—pork year-round. We had meat on the table and I barbecued—we barbecued for special occasions—stuff and had big cookouts. That's the only thing we had to do.

00:03:31

RF: Was—was it for holidays only or special occasions?

00:03:33

IK: No just a special occasion if it come up—or anybody wanted to get together they'd cook a hog and up there at Jack's Creek we cooked—they cooked every weekend. And I was—from the

time I was real little I follered [Note: *followed*] behind them and started—learnt what I know now about cooking hogs.

00:03:57

RF: And would—would all the families get together and—?

00:04:02

IK: The whole country—the neighborhood and all us would gang up and have big cookouts.

00:04:08

RF: And what do you remember about the process of cooking hogs back then? Was is it—was it in the ground or in a container?

00:04:16

IK: Well we had pits—just get out and build a little ole pit and lay the hog up on it, put a stick through it; we didn't have pits like I got in there now.

00:04:26

RF: So you would actually run sticks through the hog? It wasn't on—?

00:04:29

IK: Yeah; we'd lay it up on some [stacks of sticks] and then take and put some more sticks, strap it together and turn it over. Take four men to turn it over.

00:04:39

RF: So and would the pit—excuse me—would the bit pit be made out of bricks?

00:04:44

IK: No; it just—plank—two boards.

00:04:49

RF: Okay.

00:04:51

IK: With a stake, cover it up with an old piece of tin and tarp—tarp over it to hold the heat in as much as you could.

00:05:02

RF: And would you—would there be a sauce, a barbecue sauce with the pig back then?

00:05:06

IK: Yeah; they'd make a special barbecue sauce. Of course, they'd make—they'd make a different sauce you know and whatever they liked the best that's just what we'd all eat, like we do now.

00:05:22

RF: And—and what other—when you would have these weekend you know to—get-togethers with the pig what else would you eat? Would you eat side items; would—would all the women make something?

00:05:31

IK: Stuff like that there, what—whatever some of them made a lemon icebox pie or coconut cake or something. We'd eat this old-timey way.

00:05:46

RF: Would every family or every woman cook something different?

00:05:49

IK: They'd all bring something you know to eat and have a big get-together on Sunday or go to church and have a big outfit for the church and the preacher and all would eat and it would just be a family get-together.

00:06:07

RF: Okay; and in what year did y'all meet, Miss Liz?

00:06:12

LK: Oh Lord, '70?

00:06:21

RF: In 1970.

00:06:22

LK: Yeah; we knew each other before that but in '70.

00:06:26

RF: Okay; and were you—were you—what were you doing then?

00:06:30

LK: Working in a restaurant down the road.

00:06:32

RF: What restaurant?

00:06:33

LK: M&M Truck Stop.

00:06:36

RF: Okay; were—were you a cook there?

00:06:39

LK: Waitress.

00:06:39

RF: Did you have any experience in the kitchen at that time?

00:06:42

LK: Oh yes; I did.

00:06:44

RF: You worked at a bunch of other restaurants?

00:06:46

LK: Yeah; I worked at Granny's Kitchen and I worked at Fred's Barbecue Pit out on 100 toward Chickasaw High. I worked at Chickasaw Restaurant. I worked at the Skylark here.

00:06:59

RF: Let's talk about Fred's Barbecue; what do you remember about that restaurant? Who was Fred?

00:07:05

LK: Fred and Ruth Schneider ran it and I worked for them. What do I remember about it more than anything? Working with Doris Riley.

00:07:17

RF: Who is Doris Riley?

00:07:18

LK: She just was Doris Riley.

00:07:21

RF: Was she a waitress or a cook?

00:07:21

LK: Yeah; she was.

00:07:24

RF: And they would only pork barbecue; would they do—?

00:07:26

LK: Yeah; shoulders.

00:07:27

RF: So they didn't do whole hog?

00:07:28

LK: No, no; they did shoulders.

00:07:32

RF: Okay; and what were you doing in—when you met your wife?

00:07:36

IK: I worked construction work for about 50 years off and on and cooked a little along—back in '70—no; it wasn't—'97 we started in—in the barbecue place, cooked, and about what—three months in '98 we started here and five years we've been—except what—what about a year, I was out sick. The rest of the time we've been in the barbecue business.

00:08:15

RF: Okay; so you started the barbecue in 1997? And what was the name of it then?

00:08:20

LK: Friendship's Barbecue.

00:08:21

RF: And why was it called Friendship? I believe there's a town called Friendship, Tennessee?

00:08:25

LK: There was a community and that's where we were at.

00:08:28

RF: In Friendship, Tennessee?

00:08:30

LK: No; the Friendship community out northeast of—. [*Door Opens*]

00:08:34

RF: Is—is that a neighborhood?

00:08:37

LK: Yeah; it's a just a community. [*Interruption*] You want me to sign for that? I know what it is. And we called it Friendship's.

00:08:54

RF: And where is Friendship community; how far is it from here?

00:08:56

LK: It's about five miles northeast of Henderson.

00:09:02

RF: Okay; so that was the original restaurant in 1997 and what would you serve there?

00:09:04

LK: We did barbecue only.

00:09:06

RF: Oh, was it a whole hog barbecue only?

00:09:08

LK: Yes; it was.

00:09:11

RF: And so why cook whole hog? Let's get in the whole hog; you know it's—I believe it's traditional here?

00:09:20

LK: Everybody loves it 'cause it's moist(er).

00:09:26

IK: Have you ever eat any barbecue that this one cooked and the other one cooked and everything else, you can find meat that you like the best and the whole hog you can get any part of the meat you want.

00:10:05

RF: Okay; we're back. We had to take a break for a customer, to serve a customer. We were talking about whole hog barbecue and why you decided to do whole hog rather than just shoulders and hams and ribs.

00:10:17

LK: Most people request whole hog. They don't like just shoulders and hams. And the reason we got into it is, one holiday weekend everything was out or didn't have nothing or closed and my son said, "mama, it's time you start doing barbecue."

00:10:35

RF: And that's why you opened Friendship Barbecue?

00:10:37

LK: We went and rented the building and opened.

00:10:40

RF: And that was the first restaurant that y'all owned?

00:10:44

LK: Right; that was the first one.

00:10:44

RF: And so were a lot of those other restaurants that your son was talking about that sold of barbecue, were they also doing whole hog at the time?

00:10:55

LK: Yeah; they were but they weren't doing enough whole hog.

00:10:59

RF: I see; so you wanted to kind of fill the spot.

00:11:03

LK: Right.

00:11:03

RF: Was—was those first few months of running a restaurant—was it really difficult?

00:11:07

LK: No; it wasn't any different than anything else.

00:11:09

RF: It was—you had enough experience?

00:11:12

LK: Yeah; I had enough experience to do it, plus the fact being with people—they kept you occupied. There's nothing to it.

00:11:19

RF: So how long was the restaurant in Friendship?

00:11:21

LK: We were out there about six months and the guy wouldn't fix the building and keep it from leaking when it rained and everything and we left there. And then I kept hunting me a place and found the building that we're in now from Miss Gertrude and we fixed it, opened it up, and ran it for five years to the day.

00:11:45

RF: And what—what was the name of that restaurant?

00:11:47

LK: It was Friendship's too.

00:11:47

RF: It was also called Friendship?

00:11:48

LK: Uh-huh.

00:11:50

RF: And who was Miss Gertrude? Did she run a restaurant here?

00:11:53

LK: No; she owned the building we rent from.

00:11:55

RF: Okay; was this a barbecue restaurant before you—?

00:11:57

LK: No; it was not. It was [inaudible] house.

00:12:00

RF: Uh-hm; and so you continued to the whole hog barbecue at—at Friendship?

00:12:06

LK: Yeah; we continued it.

00:12:08

RF: And did you have to build where the—the hogs—I took some pictures where they're—
where they're barbecued? Did you have to build that or is that the garage?

00:12:18

LK: That was part of the garage and we built the pits in it.

00:12:21

RF: And how many pits are in there that you can—?

00:12:25

IK: There's four—there's four pits.

00:12:27

RF: And how many pigs can that cook at a time?

00:12:28

IK: That will cook four.

00:12:32

RF: So you cook four.

00:12:34

IK: Whatever—two off, but I've been at it all my life, just you know I've cooked and fooled with it and I've cooked a little of everything—goats. I've even cooked goat and possums and everything else; I've tried to barbecue it.

00:12:54

RF: Is that at home you're talking about or here at the restaurant?

00:12:57

IK: At home and when I started this here, it all come natural.

00:13:03

RF: So you barbecued on weekends during your whole life?

00:13:06

IK: Oh yeah then out through the week or whenever.

00:13:10

RF: Would you make your own sauce at home?

00:13:13

IK: Yeah; I'd make my sauce and she makes all the sauce now—in fact it's the same sauce.

00:13:21

RF: And you do all the cooking now?

00:13:24

IK: I still do part of it what I'm able to do.

00:13:28

RF: Okay; so who—you ran your restaurant for five years and then you decided to—to close it down?

00:13:34

IK: No; I got sick.

00:13:38

RF: Okay; so you got sick and you were out for a year?

00:13:41

IK: Yeah; I got down—couldn't go hardly.

00:13:44

RF: Okay; and so you—so the restaurant kind of closed. You sold it to someone else?

00:13:51

LK: Yes; we did.

00:13:52

RF: Okay; and then they ran the restaurant for a very short period and you reopened. And when did you reopen?

00:14:00

LK: We reopened in May of 2004 up on Main Street across from Auto Zone.

00:14:08

RF: Okay; and—

00:14:10

LK: We was up there until December of 2006 and rented this building and come back down here.

00:14:15

RF: In December of 2006 you moved back here?

00:14:19

LK: Opened up in February of 2007.

00:14:22

RF: Okay; and the one on Main Street was that also called Friendship?

00:14:25

LK: No; that was Liz's Bar-B-Q on Main Street.

00:14:28

RF: So it became Liz's and that name has carried off—carried over to the—the second original location which is on South Church Avenue? So let's talk about cooking; how do you—you—do you spice the whole hogs before you put them on the pit?

00:14:48

IK: No, put him on there just like he comes from the slaughterhouse.

00:14:53

RF: And you put them skin side up?

00:14:56

IK: That's right.

00:14:56

RF: And how much do these pigs weigh?

00:14:58

IK: Well they weigh from 200 to 350—400 pounds.

00:15:06

RF: So it's—it's a two-man job to put—to lift them?

00:15:08

IK: Yeah; you just cook whatever the hog weighs.

00:15:11

RF: Okay; and—and what sort of fuel do you use to—to burn?

00:15:16

IK: Hickory wood.

00:15:17

RF: One hundred-percent?

00:15:19

IK: Most of the time it's all 100-percent.

00:15:23

RF: Is it you buy chips of hickory wood or logs?

00:15:25

IK: It comes off of hammer handles—all kinds of handles, wood—saw the handles out.

00:15:34

RF: Okay; those are hammer handles. So—so how long do—do you put the pigs on in the morning, each morning?

00:15:50

IK: That's right; you put them—put them on in the morning and it normally takes about 18 to 24 hours to cook.

00:15:58

RF: Eighteen to twenty-four hours and are they fed fuel that whole time or is there a rest period?

00:16:02

IK: There ain't no rest to it; they just cook.

00:16:05

RF: So—so I mean Mr. Smith, Troy Smith is here all night long for 24 hours sometimes?

00:16:09

IK: No; but he's—he's just helping me now.

00:16:14

LK: He's here all day until about 8:00 or 9 o'clock and we fire the hogs the last time, cover them up, and they cook—finish cooking and we go home.

00:16:25

RF: And you—

00:16:25

LK: Nobody stays all night.

00:16:29

RF: Right; and—and then you—you open the next day with a fresh hog right?

00:16:36

LK: Right.

00:16:36

RF: What—what time do you start serving barbecue?

00:16:39

LK: I can start serving it as early as 6 o'clock every morning.

00:16:43

RF: Wow.

00:16:43

LK: AM.

00:16:46

RF: Okay; and let's talk about the different parts of a pig. I hear that different customers will—
will specifically order parts of the pig.

00:16:57

LK: They order shoulder; they want ham; they want tenderloin or they want the middlin' out
from under the ribs and they'll tell you which rib to pull it under.

00:17:07

RF: Really? How do they specify which rib?

00:17:09

LK: They just got this habit of saying third rib on the right side or the fourth rib on the left side.

00:17:16

RF: Do you—

00:17:16

LK: You'd be surprised what you hear here.

00:17:18

RF: Do you think it matters—third rib on the right, fourth rib on the left?

00:17:22

LK: No; it doesn't matter. It's just all under the ribs.

00:17:24

RF: So—so you just think they're full of it?

00:17:28

LK: They're just full of it.

00:17:29

RF: And so tell me more about middlin'. Why is it called middlin'?

00:17:32

LK: Because it's middlin' meat, like you buy in the grocery store; it's like the bacon. It's the middlin' meat.

00:17:41

RF: Okay; and it comes off in like long strings?

00:17:43

LK: Right, real long strings.

00:17:46

RF: Do you enjoy eating middlin'?

00:17:48

LK: If I'm hungry.

00:17:51

RF: If you're [*Laughs*]—

00:17:52

LK: When you've been barbecue all day every day, you're not really that hungry for barbecue.

00:17:57

RF: Okay; but when you are hungry which—which part of the pig will you pick out first to eat?

00:18:02

LK: It really doesn't matter to me.

00:18:04

RF: Okay; when—when a customer—when a customer comes in and let's say they come in a little late in the day and they're a middlin' person and all the middlin' is gone, do you have people that like—like that will just turn around and leave if their favorite part of the pig is sold out?

00:18:21

LK: Ordinarily they will not. They will tell you the next best choice.

00:18:27

RF: Are there any other funny nicknames for parts of the pig or—?

00:18:31

LK: Yeah; they'll call it belly lean.

00:18:34

RF: They'll call it belly lean?

00:18:35

LK: Yeah; that's out—out of the middlin'.

00:18:38

RF: And what—what about some other parts of the anatomy of the pig? Are there any other nicknames or funny orders?

00:18:43

LK: The tenderloin, they'll ask for that.

00:18:45

IK: The tenderloin or ham or the shoulder and they all are a different cut of meat.

00:18:52

RF: And—and—

00:18:56

IK: Tenderloin it's a white meat, coarse—coarser meat and it's not as—it's got the fat on it, like—like your middlin' or your shoulder has got fat on it and your ham is drier. It ain't got fat on it like the other has but it's white meat too. There's two—white meat and dark meat and all of your dark meat comes out of your shoulders. And your white meat all comes from your shoulder back. Part of your middlin' it's got a lot of fat on it but it's a white stringy meat. Ham it's a coarser grain and it's white.

00:19:40

RF: Is—is middlin' better on a sandwich or—or just on its own on a plate?

00:19:45

LK: It really doesn't matter. It really doesn't matter.

00:19:49

RF: Okay; well tell me about the sauces you make. Do you make your own sauces here?

00:19:54

LK: I make my own sauces; I make my own slaw and I do my own potato salad and I do my own baked beans. Nothing is store bought.

00:20:02

RF: And how many types—and do you have a hot and a mild sauce?

00:20:05

LK: No; I just have one kind.

00:20:07

RF: And how would you describe it without giving away anything?

00:20:12

LK: It's pretty—it's pretty warm to some people. A lot of people says it's not hot enough but all they got to do is add more.

00:20:19

RF: Right; and is it—is it tomato or molasses or sugary or vinegary?

00:20:24

LK: No; it's sugary and hot.

00:20:25

RF: Sugary and hot okay; and—and how about your beans? How are your beans? Most—do you make them from scratch?

00:20:35

LK: With—with sugar and hot sauce and barbecue.

00:20:39

RF: Okay; okay and—

00:20:43

LK: I don't make mine like anybody else.

00:20:46

RF: So you mean they're very good?

00:20:49

LK: Well there's people all over town that can distinguish where the beans come from. They know my beans. They know my potato salad and they know my slaw.

00:21:00

RF: Okay; well let's talk about the—your customers in this area. You have—you've moved you know several times and do you have people that have followed you through the whole—the entire time?

00:21:13

LK: Yes; I do.

00:21:16

RF: Were—were people—

00:21:17

LK: Most definitely and I didn't have to call them.

00:21:20

RF: So they knew when you reopened?

00:21:23

LK: They knew 'cause I would tell them in advance when I was going to be reopening and where and they were here.

00:21:31

RF: How—how upset were people or were people upset when you had to close during certain periods?

00:21:36

LK: Well they just had to do without their barbecue. It didn't upset them that bad; they just did without.

00:21:42

RF: Did they—

00:21:42

LK: Until I reopened.

00:21:43

RF: Did they go somewhere else or did they stop eating barbecue?

00:21:46

LK: Now I don't know. I didn't ask. That I didn't ask them; I know they didn't go certain places.

00:21:56

RF: They didn't go certain places.

00:21:58

LK: Right; they'll tell you they don't.

00:22:02

RF: Well—well tell—is there anything you'd like to add about this—about this county 'cause a customer just told me that you're—you're an expert historian on this—this part of town. Do you know anything about the barbecue history here?

00:22:19

LK: The barbecue history here? It's always been barbecue in Chester County. Now they have the Barbecue Festival here every year in September.

00:22:28

RF: Do you participate in the Barbecue Festival?

00:22:31

LK: No; I keep my place of business open.

00:22:33

RF: And does it get busier during the Barbecue Festival or do a lot of people from out—?

00:22:37

LK: It does not hurt me.

00:22:39

RF: So it doesn't hurt you; so—.

00:22:41

LK: No; it does not hurt me.

00:22:41

RF: So people still want barbecue—the real thing from a restaurant?

00:22:46

LK: Mainly the slaw and baked beans.

00:22:50

RF: Well tell me about your slaw. Is it—is it—is it a—is it a vinegary slaw? Is it creamy?

00:22:55

LK: No; it's ketchup based.

00:22:57

RF: Oh it's ketchup based so it comes out red?

00:22:59

LK: Yes; it's red.

00:23:01

RF: Okay; and—

00:23:05

IK: Normally—we normally say they carry barbecue from here to about near every State in the Union. They carry it; ship it; freeze it; carry it with them and it's—they've carried it to California, Texas, all—Atlanta. We've got one feller that comes in here and he buys four or five or six pounds, goes to Memphis, catches a plane, goes to Atlanta to his daughter's—they have barbecue from here, so right there I think that there is a pretty good plus.

00:23:46

RF: Well and—and the 4th of July was just a few days ago. Can you tell me how much busier does it get during the 4th of July in—in a barbecue restaurant in—in West Tennessee?

00:23:57

LK: That one day in itself, the 4th of July, compared to any other day and this past 4th of July sales tripled.

00:24:07

RF: So how many hogs did you sell this 4th of July?

00:24:10

IK: We cooked seven.

00:24:17

RF: Seven—seven whole hogs.

00:24:18

LK: The week of 4th of July.

00:24:22

RF: Wow; and—

00:24:24

LK: And you would have thought 4th of July was on a Tuesday here too.

00:24:29

RF: Why do—why do you say that?

00:24:31

LK: Because there was a lot of people going out of town, and they were taking barbecue with them out of town.

00:24:37

RF: So people weren't cooking it for themselves you're saying?

00:24:40

LK: See it was the people that was going out and was going to be gone for the 4th and they were taking barbecue with them, so they'd have it when they got there.

00:24:48

RF: Oh so they'd make extra big orders to last them through the week?

00:24:51

LK: Yeah; and it would—and it was a lot of it that left on Tuesday before the 4th on Friday.

00:24:57

RF: And—and what else do you cook here? Do you do chicken and ribs?

00:25:03

LK: I do chicken and ribs on Thursday, plate lunches during the week at lunch.

00:25:10

RF: And do you do breakfast also?

00:25:12

LK: Breakfast Tuesday through Saturday—6:00 to 9:00.

00:25:17

RF: And what do you cook for breakfast?

00:25:19

LK: Sausage, bacon, tenderloin, bologna if they ask for it.

00:25:26

RF: And—

00:25:28

LK: Homemade biscuits.

00:25:31

RF: Oh you make biscuits from scratch?

00:25:32

LK: Yes; I do. Eggs like they want them; they're not precooked eggs. Eggs are not cooked until they ask for them. Jelly and gravies—

00:25:47

RF: Well tell me a bit about—about Henderson; how has Henderson changed since you opened Friendship you know those years ago?

00:25:56

LK: Oh they're going to put the new jail across the street from us; that's going to be a plus for me. [*Laughs*]

00:26:02

RF: [*Laughs*] Why—why will—why will that be a plus?

00:26:06

LK: I can go over and sleep at night and come over here and work in the daytime.

00:26:12

RF: Do you—do you—can you rent out a cot in the jail is that what you're saying?

00:26:17

LK: I won't—I won't have to go home; I won't have far to go. That's the joke of the town.

00:26:22

RF: That's—that's your joke or other people are saying that joke?

00:26:24

LK: Me and the Sheriff and the Judge gets—gets along real good. Even the Judge said he'd outdo that; he'd get me a shuttle bus.

00:26:32

RF: So—so does the Sheriff and the Judge of Henderson, Tennessee, they—they eat her often?

00:26:36

LK: Every week.

00:26:39

RF: Every—?

00:26:40

LK: They sure do.

00:26:42

RF: And who else eats here? How would you describe your clientele?

00:26:44

LK: Well the people that just left are from Somerville, Tennessee. You never know. You never know. I had customers yesterday from Texas and Virginia—wasn't it—in here building a new factory. They came down and ate with me.

00:27:11

RF: Okay; and—and I was talking to another one of your customers and he—he mentioned and then you showed me a picture of your great-uncle. Would you like to talk about him?

00:27:20

LK: My great-uncle, Eddy Arnold—died May 8th.

00:27:24

RF: Can you say his name again?

00:27:26

LK: Eddy Arnold.

00:27:28

RF: And Eddy Arnold he was a famous—?

00:27:32

LK: Singer.

00:27:31

RF: He was a country singer in Nashville?

00:27:34

LK: Right; he was highly known for the cattle cow.

00:27:37

RF: And—and do you remember—did you—did you grow up with him? Did you know him?

00:27:44

LK: Yes; he lived with us. He was living with us when he left to go to Nashville.

00:27:49

RF: And was—was he—before he went to Nashville, I'm—I'm sure he sang a lot for the family?

00:27:53

LK: Oh all the time.

00:27:55

RF: Do you remember what he sang, what kind of old songs?

00:27:57

LK: Yes; *Candy Kisses*.

00:27:59

RF: And—and so he was—he was a young guy then. Did—did he—did he ever come back and eat your barbecue?

00:28:08

LK: No.

00:28:09

RF: He was—I mean he was always in Nashville.

00:28:13

LK: He was in Nashville.

00:28:13

RF: So—okay; and so we've been joined by Troy Smith.

00:28:21

TS: It's—it's been about five years.

00:28:26

RF: Since you started barbecuing?

00:28:29

TS: Started down here when they had Friendship Barbecue. Eight years—eight years—been doing it for eight years.

00:28:40

RF: And what do you think about whole hog barbecue? Is it hard work?

00:28:43

TS: It's not too hard; just hot.

00:28:49

RF: It's hot in the summer. Where—where are you from originally?

00:28:51

TS: Louisville, Mississippi.

00:28:53

RF: Okay; and is that—is that in the Delta?

00:28:56

TS: Sort of yeah; I would say so.

00:29:05

RF: Did you eat barbecue there as a youngster?

00:29:07

TS: No.

00:29:09

RF: What—what—do you remember what you ate?

00:29:12

TS: We ate beef, pork, chicken, the usual.

00:29:23

RF: But no barbecue—not even—no?

00:29:25

TS: No barbecue. And I started with her and him and went from there.

00:29:37

RF: Can you describe, just kind of shortly describe, a day cooking whole hog barbecue here—
what time you start in the morning and what you do to start and then how it—how it goes?

00:29:52

TS: Well we usually start getting prepared about 7 o'clock, getting the fire and everything started. Then whatever time he gets back with the hogs we prepare it and put them on. Most of the time it will be around about 8:30 or 9:00 and we'll cook them 'til—'til about 8:00 and then we'll turn them and then we'll let them cook all night. That's basically about it.

00:30:27

RF: All right; let me ask you again—have y'all—have you tasted other barbecue in the—in the region?

00:30:35

LK: Yes; I have.

00:30:35

RF: And what do you think about restaurants that cook whole hog versus restaurants that don't cook whole hog? Is there—is there a difference?

00:30:44

LK: Yeah; you can tell the difference too.

00:30:47

RF: Right; not just in the quality of the meat but in the—in the—in how the restaurant operates. Do different people go to whole hog places?

00:30:57

LK: Now that I can't answer 'cause see I'm not where I can see who goes to the others, so that I can't answer.

00:31:03

RF: Do you ever have to order extra shoulders or hams to fulfill an order?

00:31:08

LK: Yes; I do a lot of times.

00:31:11

RF: And—and do you think that meat turns out differently? Are you unhappy with it or is it just happy but not as good?

00:31:17

LK: No; I do it for a reason whenever they request it.

00:31:21

RF: Oh for a special party or—?

00:31:22

LK: Yeah; like the 4th of July we did several shoulders. Troy cooked shoulders for the 4th of July for us.

00:31:35

RF: Have—have you ever—I hear that whole hog cooking is—can be dangerous at times for fire and other things. Would you like to talk about that?

00:31:46

IK: It's about like setting kerosene or gas on fire. It—it's three things that will put it out and I ain't going to say what they are but they'll—it'll put—put it out if you catch it in time. And you can beat yourself to death and still not get it out.

00:32:10

RF: And—and those three things, why won't you say those? Are they a secret?

00:32:15

IK: Well yeah in a way they are.

00:32:18

RF: Have you ever had a big flare-up?

00:32:21

IK: Well just a little one—no I never have but I've—I've seen them—burnt up.

00:32:29

LK: Not a big one.

00:32:32

TS: I haven't had no—no great big one. I have had them flare up with me though. But most time you—you can smother it out. And a lot of time it'll flare up you just shut the door and it'll go out itself. That's about it.

00:32:55

RF: So you shut the door to the garage and it will?

00:32:59

LK: It cuts the draft off. Closing the door closes the draft off. You got to have a draft to burn.

00:33:07

RF: I see; I see. Are you talking the door of the pit or the door of the garage?

00:33:08

LK: The door of the pit. It has to have air to burn.

00:33:15

RF: Okay; so how long—how long do you want to barbecue for? How long do you want to keep the restaurant open?

00:33:23

LK: As long as I'm able.

00:33:25

RF: As long as you're able. Do you—you have three sons, correct; do they have any desire to be in the barbecue business?

00:33:32

LK: No; all three of them have got real, real good jobs and they would never take over the barbecue pit.

00:33:38

RF: I mean and they had jobs before because they're older; they had jobs before you even opened your first restaurant?

00:33:43

LK: Right; yeah.

00:33:44

IK: But they all three can cook.

00:33:48

LK: If they had to they would run it for me but—.

00:33:54

RF: Okay; well I've traveled a bit in this region over the past two weeks and I've noticed that there is less restaurants doing whole hog, less barbecue restaurants than there were five and ten years ago. Could—would you—do you know why? Do you want to say anything about that?

00:34:12

IK: Well the hogs are—if you buy now—

00:34:20

RF: You—you talk first—no, well you should say that.

00:34:24

IK: There are people that got lazy. It's work to cooking the whole hog and the other you can just put it in the electric cooker and cook it overnight and don't have to smell all the smoke or breathe it and everything else.

00:34:42

RF: Would you like to say something?

00:34:43

LK: That's what I was just going to tell you.

00:34:46

RF: Well say it. [*Laughs*]

00:34:47

LK: The people have gotten lazier and they'd rather put a shoulder or the hams in an electric cooker, close the cap on it, and cook it and go on about their business. Anybody can cook a shoulder or a ham or a tenderloin in the oven at home; it would be no different.

00:35:09

RF: And have you eaten this electric cooker barbecue?

00:35:13

LK: I have.

00:35:14

RF: And what did you—what do you think about it? You don't look happy.

00:35:17

LK: I could have done just as good to put it in a cooker of water and boiled it at the house.

00:35:23

RF: Ah, so you don't—you—what—what do you think, you know, gives the pig its flavor? Is it the smoke—?

00:35:28

LK: The hickory wood.

00:35:31

RF: It's the hickory wood?

00:35:31

LK: The hickory wood—the smoke from the hickory wood. That makes it taste good. You can tell the difference.

00:35:40

RF: Okay; and I mean you were saying besides you know the laziness of people, you were saying maybe something about economics. Pigs are scarcer or—?

00:35:48

IK: Well it's just easier; you just put it in there, turn it on, go back and look at it two hours later. With this other you don't do it that way for you're liable to go back and it not be there two hours later. It'll be burnt up.

00:36:02

RF: Right; but as—I mean you grew up with pigs on your family farm and—and I think if I was to drive and visit a bunch of family farms within 10 miles of here many wouldn't have pigs. Do you think there's less farmers growing and selling pigs to a slaughterhouse?

00:36:20

IK: Oh yeah you—you used to everybody had a hog you might say. Now then you might go 100 miles and not even find one. It's that way now days.

00:36:33

RF: And why do you think that is?

00:36:35

IK: Well the onliest way I can figure it out is they got lazier. And they don't want to fool with them. There's work to raising hogs too. You got to feed them, see after them, fix fences, keep them out of everything and they're going to get into everything. But you see a hog he's got it on his mind; they're rooting and getting into something.

00:37:08

RF: Well it—a couple more questions; if—let's say I was born in this area and I loved barbecue and I wanted to open a barbecue restaurant. I've—I've worked you know as a cook in other barbecue restaurants would you suggest me going into whole hog? Would you—would you suggest it; is it—is it worth the effort? From what you're saying it's not that hard. Other people—everyone can do it is what you're saying?

00:37:37

IK: Not everybody can cook.

00:37:39

LK: No, not everybody can't do it; but everybody could if they wanted to.

00:37:41

RF: If they tried hard enough?

00:37:43

LK: If they wanted to.

00:37:45

RF: So it's not a—some people have suggested that it's a young person's thing that only you know—.

00:37:48

LK: Oh no, no, no; no it's for anybody that wants to work.

00:37:52

RF: To—to cook a pig at a time?

00:37:55

LK: Right; right.

00:37:58

IK: But it takes years—it takes years to learn it.

00:38:00

LK: And if some of the younger generation don't come along and want to pick up the whole hog barbecue and carry it on as the tradition of it being hickory cooked there will be no barbecue other than what you can get out of these electric cookers.

00:38:17

RF: Okay; well can—can I ask you for—for a prognosis? Do you think in 10—20 years that we'll have more whole hog barbecue, less, the same? There's only a few places around now and y'all are one of them.

00:38:28

LK: Probably none.

00:38:30

RF: You really think?

00:38:30

LK: Because there's not anybody going to get out and—and hunt it up and cook it.

00:38:36

RF: And do you think that customers will stop eating barbecue then?

00:38:44

LK: More than likely or fix it at home their self.

00:38:47

RF: Do you think people will go back to cooking pigs at home for—for even maybe just once a year for a holiday?

00:38:52

LK: Yeah; I really do because people doesn't like this electric and gas cooked meat. People drive all the way here from Milan, Tennessee way north of Jackson on a regular basis to get it because it's cooked over hickory wood. They can't get it nowhere else up in there, nowhere else around here; and I've got regular customers. I know when they walk in that door where they came from. And I know what they want when they walk in that door.

00:39:29

RF: Like the—the cut of meat that they want?

00:39:30

LK: Yes; I know exactly what they want. I can look at them and tell how many buns they're going to buy. I'm not kidding you. I know my customers. And I know where they come from and I know what they want.

00:39:50

RF: Do—do you have—do some of these people come three, four, five times a week?

00:39:54

LK: They're weekly customers. Matter—well I got one that's here—been here every day this week so I don't know.

00:40:04

RF: Okay; well is there anything else you'd like to add?

00:40:06

LK: No; not that I know anything about.

00:40:08

RF: Sir?

00:40:10

IK: Not that I know of.

00:40:14

RF: Okay; well I want to thank y'all and thank you for talking to me.

00:40:17

LK: And that will be on what?

00:40:19

RF: Oh it will be on the internet and we will send you a copy of this transcript.

00:40:24

IK: You're welcome to come any time you want to.

00:40:28

LK: Did you go down to Bill's?

00:40:32

RF: To where?

00:40:35

LK: There's another barbecue.

00:40:37

RF: Oh yeah.

00:40:38

[End Liz & Ike Kinchen-Liz's Interview-1]

[Begin Liz & Ike Kinchen-Liz's Interview-Two]

00:00:05

Rien Fertel: Okay; this Rien Fertel. We're still at Liz's Bar-B-Q and we've been talking, so we just—without the recorder recording. So just one or two other things we'd like to add.

00:00:16

Liz Kinchen: The reason that we had—had come back in the business—we didn't have to but we did—was to satisfy the people. We couldn't go shopping and we couldn't go to the funeral homes—nowhere where people weren't begging us to come back in the barbecue business; they wanted whole hog cooked right barbecue to eat, 'cause Ike had gotten home sick and we went home. We were home for a year and two months and came back in the business. And that's the very reason we did it; it was miserable. You couldn't go nowhere.

00:00:55

RF: And do you remember what these people would say to you exactly?

00:00:58

LK: There's no barbecue in town Liz. Get back over here and cook it for us. This was in the funeral home, grocery store, Dollar Store—anywhere I went. It was no barbecue. Everything was electric cooked.

00:01:17

RF: Did you—did you want to reopen or were you—were they just bothering you?

00:01:22

LK: Well I wasn't going to reopen that quick but then after we got a chance to do we did.

00:01:31

RF: And those people still come around all the time?

00:01:34

LK: Yes, yes; definitely.

00:01:36

RF: And so they're happy again?

00:01:38

LK: And I can call them by name. I could give you a list a mile long—sure could.

00:01:43

RF: So it's—but I'm guessing it's most of Henderson, Tennessee.

00:01:46

LK: No; they're out of town people too.

00:01:49

RF: Oh.

00:01:51

LK: Out of town people, too; yes. But there's a lot of Henderson people.

00:01:59

RF: All right; well thank you.

00:02:00

Ike Kinchen: But there's lots and lots of the people that wants tenderloin and they want ham, white meat, and belly lean and that way you don't get it down from these other places that's cooking shoulders. You have to cook the whole hog to get that kind of meat. And they won't buy none—no other kind but that. They come in here and I can be out of it and they say well if you'll have some tomorrow or the next day one, I'll just wait.

00:02:36

RF: So you're doing a big service for the—for the region?

00:02:41

IK: Yeah; for the people. They—they want it.

00:02:44

RF: All right; would you like to add anything else?

00:02:46

LK: No, not that I can think of.

00:02:49

RF: Okay; thank you.

00:02:50

[End Liz & Ike Kinchen-Liz's Interview-2]

[END]