

FLORA & RON PAYNE
Payne's Bar-B-Q - Memphis, TN

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Interviewer: Rien Fertel for the Southern Foodways Alliance
Transcription: Shelley Chance, ProDocs
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Project: Southern Barbecue Trail – Tennessee

[Begin Flora & Ron Payne-Payne's Interview]

00:00:00

Rien Fertel: This is Rien Fertel with the Southern Foodways Alliance. It is Wednesday, July 30, 2008, just 10 minutes to three in the afternoon. I am at Payne's Bar-B-Q in Memphis Tennessee on the Barbecue Trail. I'm sitting here with Flora Payne and Ron Payne, her son. I'm going to have them introduce themselves and give us their birth dates please.

00:00:25

Flora Payne: Well hello there; I'm Flora Payne—Payne's Bar-B-Q; birthday December 14, 1947—too much information; thank you.

00:00:38

Ron Payne: I'm Ron Payne, Flora's son; my birth date is November 24, 1978.

00:00:45

RF: Okay; let's talk about the—the beginnings of the restaurant. How long has Payne's Bar-B-Q been opened?

00:00:54

FP: Since April of '72.

00:00:59

RF: So April of '72; who founded Payne's Bar-B-Q?

00:01:03

FP: My husband and his mother.

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RF: And what was his name?

00:01:07

FP: Horton Payne.

00:01:09

RF: And his mother's name?

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FP: Emily Payne.

00:01:13

RF: Okay; let's—let's start with—let's start with Emily Payne. Was she in the restaurant business before she opened or helped open this restaurant?

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FP: No; she wasn't.

00:01:23

RF: What did—what did she do before Payne's Bar-B-Q came about?

00:01:29

FP: Memphis Funeral Home; she worked at Memphis Funeral Home.

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RF: And but I'm guessing she was a—a cook at home?

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FP: Hmm?

00:01:38

RF: Did she cook at home for her family?

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FP: Oh yeah; oh of course she did, yeah.

00:01:41

RF: Did she barbecue or what did she cook at home?

00:01:45

FP: Just food. **[Laughs]** No; she didn't do a lot of barbecuing. She was just a good cook.

00:01:53

RF: Was she from Memphis?

00:01:55

FP: She lived in what—what we call the Millington Area—Frasier—out that way, Business Town; uh-huh.

00:02:02

RF: Can you tell us anything else about her—what, maybe what you remember about her?

00:02:08

FP: Of course; she was a very special lady, gracious, very—a giving, kind lady and fun—lot of fun. Everybody should have met her but—and that's it.

00:02:30

RF: And—and Mr. Horton Payne, so he opened Payne's Bar-B-Q.

00:02:33

FP: Yes.

00:02:35

RF: How old was he around at the time?

00:02:37

FP: Twenty-five, he was twenty-five.

00:02:38

RF: So he was a young man?

00:02:38

FP: Oh yeah; uh-huh and he passed at 35.

00:02:42

RF: Passed at 35; what made him want to open up a restaurant so young at—at such a young age?

00:02:49

FP: I—I guess because he just wanted to do his own thing, you know—you know, his own little boss I guess. [*Laughs*]

00:02:58

RF: What—what did he do you know in his early 20s before he opened this restaurant?

00:03:03

FP: He worked at—let me see; where did he work—JC Penney's and that's—that was it.

00:03:10

RF: He never worked—did he work in a kitchen?

00:03:13

FP: No; he was in the Service from '72—no, no, no—from '69 to '70, uh-hm, and then he came out and worked at Penney's and then in '72 that's when he opened the restaurant.

00:03:29

RF: So April of '72 he opens here; barbecue—why did he open barbecue—a barbecue restaurant?

00:03:37

FP: Well his mother which is Emily, her family barbecued back in the—back in you know I guess the old days in the '40s, '50s, '60s—they had restaurants—her family did.

00:03:55

RF: Do you remember the names of the restaurants?

00:03:56

FP: No.

00:03:57

RF: Were they in—

00:03:58

FP: That was before my time.

00:03:57

RF: Were they in Memphis?

00:03:58

FP: Uh-uh; that was in the area where she was in Business Town out in that area, uh-huh.

00:04:04

RP: It's more north like—

00:04:08

RF: More north, right; okay. So her family had restaurants or cooked in restaurants for a while?

00:04:13

FP: Uh-huh.

00:04:13

RF: And were the recipes—the original recipes here or the—or the cooking process were they—did they carry over from that family?

00:04:22

FP: Yeah; it's basically the same—the same recipes.

00:04:27

RF: And—and Horton's father was he involved at all in the business?

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FP: Not really—not really; no.

00:04:35

RF: So when did you meet your husband?

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FP: High school. [*Laughs*]

00:04:39

RF: You went to high school with him?

00:04:40

FP: Yeah; yeah we—yeah we started dating in our senior year which is—we graduated in '65.

00:04:49

RF: And when did you get married?

00:04:50

FP: Seventy—seventy.

00:04:52

RF: So in '70—so he opened the restaurant after. What was your first thoughts when he said he wanted to open a barbecue restaurant?

00:05:01

FP: It was fine you know. [*Laughs*] It was really fine 'cause I wasn't working and so it really didn't make any difference. So it was—it was fine.

00:05:11

RF: Was he—did he cook at home in those before—?

00:05:13

FP: Yeah.

00:05:15

RF: Before—before the restaurant?

00:05:15

FP: Yeah; he—he liked—what should I say, like Ron, just—

00:05:21

RP: Everything.

00:05:23

RF: Like what—okay; did he barbecue? Did he barbecue at home?

00:05:28

FP: No, no, no; uh-uh he liked trying out, just trying different things that no one else could master. [*Laughs*]

00:05:35

RF: Okay; I mean my favorite question to ask people is—is what would he cook on—like on a Sunday? What—what would he cook?

00:05:41

FP: If he cooked on a Sunday—I doubt if he ever cooked on a Sunday but—. [*Laughs*]

00:05:46

RF: Okay; well on a—on a good day where he had a lot of time to cook?

00:05:49

FP: Horton loved seafood, so he—he—uh-huh, so he would do lobsters and stuff like crabs and you know basically seafood. He—he loved seafood; uh-huh, so it would be some exotic dish you know just experiment on different things.

00:06:08

RF: And so did he open the original location here at 1762 Lamar?

00:06:12

FP: About what a block—two blocks—two blocks away; it was a little—smaller place, so after—after a while I guess it—it got kind of small so we came to a bigger place. [*Laughs*]

00:06:30

RF: And so he moved here; how were those—those first years? Did you—well did you, first I should ask did you help out those first years? Did you work here?

00:06:37

FP: Yeah; a little bit because the year we opened I had my first child, so I didn't do a lot of work the first—the first probably three years. Later on—just showed my face and go home.

00:06:56

RF: Well what was on the original menu? Was it different from today?

00:07:00

FP: It's the same. Nothing has changed.

00:07:02

RF: It's the same?

00:07:05

FP: Nothing has changed—the recipes, the sandwiches, it's all the same.

00:07:09

RF: The cooking style and everything is the same?

00:07:10

FP: The style—the cooking style, everything is the same.

00:07:15

RF: Okay; we'll get to that. How—were the first years tough? Were—was he really busy?

00:07:19

FP: Yeah; the first—I'd say the first year was kind of tough and then like people at the Post Office kind of spread(ed) the word and the Post Office and places like—the light place and places like that so it—it—after a year it picked up really good.

00:07:41

RF: So the blue collared workers came here first?

00:07:45

FP: Yes; yes. [*Laughs*]

00:07:48

RF: And—and you were born six years after they opened, Ron; what do you remember about the early years? I mean I guess did you kind of grow up here?

00:07:59

RP: Yeah; I would say I did. I just you know being dropped off, staying after school [*Laughs*]*—*things like that. I kind of—it wasn't my favorite place to be but I did grow up here I would say.

00:08:11

RF: When—when did you move to this location?

00:08:15

FP: In '76.

00:08:16

RF: Okay; so '76, so you grew up in this building. Did—did they put you to work right away?

00:08:21

RP: No; I liked to stay out of school a lot so I got to wipe tables down and stuff like that when I was in elementary school but I might have did a little cash register or something like that but nah. I really just started working here two years ago, so—.

00:08:38

RF: Oh okay.

00:08:40

RP: Yeah; so but I was—I grew up here. I mean—

00:08:46

FP: He probably got away with murder, because by the time—you were how old when Horton passed?

00:08:52

RP: Five years old when he passed.

00:08:55

FP: He didn't get a chance to get the really mean treatment. His dad would have had him in here; I'm sure he would have **[Laughs]** but being the mom you know you kind of let—your little son get away with murder.

00:09:08

RP: I did work a little bit. I helped close sometimes. **[Laughs]** I had to close on some Saturdays when she wanted to go out **[Laughs]** as a child you know.

00:09:24

RF: Your husband passed away in what year?

00:09:27

FP: Eighty-four.

00:09:28

RF: Eighty-four and did his mother take over at that point or did you?

00:09:31

FP: We worked together. We—we worked together; uh-huh. We—we really loved each other so it wasn't a problem you know like mother-in-law and daughter—no problem. We never had an argument and people like—people just could never could believe that you know I was one of the only people—people would say that she never said anything out of the way to. **[Laughs]** Now why she—why she did that I don't know 'cause I seen her—I've seen it.

00:10:00

RF: Did you split up the work or did you share everything?

00:10:03

FP: Shared—shared everything; uh-huh it was just like when Horton was living you know.

Nothing—nothing changed, nothing; everything was fair you know.

00:10:10

RF: Well I have to ask; were you born in Memphis?

00:10:14

FP: Yes, right here; uh-huh.

00:10:18

RF: Do you remember before Payne's do you remember eating barbecue at any special places when you were young?

00:10:23

FP: Yeah; it was a place called Joe's in—that was in North Memphis and we had Jeff's—there was several places, but not—not like it is now. You know it's one on every corner now.

[Laughs] It was only—only a few, so I guess that was another reason we made it big in the day you know—back in those days 'cause it wasn't but a few.

00:10:51

RF: Were there any in this area on Lamar?

00:10:54

FP: No, nah; it was—by the time we really got kicked off the other places had closed up you know so we were—other than the big names you know, uh-hm.

00:11:07

RF: So when did—you said it started off with the—kind of the—the worker lunch people would come in, and I mean I've been in a few times now and it seems to be all types of people. There's people from out of town definitely. You have you know just a mixed clientele—all types of people. When did—when did business really change?

00:11:31

FP: In what way?

00:11:31

RF: Well when did it change from being just that—that blue collar crowd from the light industry and from the Post Office to you know people from out of town, people from all over the City come here. I know that.

00:11:46

FP: Oh let me see; I would say by the time we made it down here, uh-huh; so yeah that's when a lot of out of town(ers). You know the word had started really spreading then so we got a few write-ups and so that always helps. And now it's like a big thing you know—food magazines here and there and on the internet, so we're kind of known as *the best*; so everybody is trying—

trying us out and actually since we've been back off of vacation we've had man—we've had quite a few people from out of town, from everywhere. As a matter of fact, we were closed Monday and England—people from—we missed them. **[Laughs]** But they—I think they said they would be back Friday; uh-hm. But we've had people from everywhere so—. And what else?

00:12:47

RF: So you just called your—your barbecue the best and I know a lot of people in Memphis agree. You know I don't think you're bragging too much, you know. What—what makes—

00:12:57

FP: I'm just going by what they said. **[Laughs]**

00:12:58

RF: I hear what they say too.

00:12:59

FP: I won't dare say we had the best you know. **[Laughs]**

00:13:03

RF: Well what makes your barbecue good? What—what do you think makes it good and has made it good for—for 37 years now—36 years?

00:13:10

FP: Thirty—thirty-six years you know; you can perfect something in 36 years—oh pray—I pray over this food. [*Laughs*] Bless it.

00:13:24

RF: Well let's talk—let's talk about the pork. What—what cut of pork do you use?

00:13:30

FP: What kind?

00:13:30

RF: What cut; do you use shoulder or butt?

00:13:32

FP: The shoulder uh-huh; we use shoulder and the ribs, uh-huh.

00:13:36

RF: And do you—do you spice them before they go on the fire?

00:13:39

FP: Oh no; you put—you don't put anything on them before you put them in the pit—burn up fast.

00:13:46

RF: Can you—can you describe the pit, Ron?

00:13:48

RP: Let's see; about how many feet is it? [*Laughs*] I know it's a pit; it's like three shelves in it—.

00:14:00

RF: And is it built—built in the wall?

00:14:01

RP: It's built in the wall. I would say the first shelf is probably about what three feet up where we place everything or cook everything and I guess it's—yeah smokes out of there and it's a little ventilation down under but that's about it.

00:14:24

RF: And what type of fuel do you use; what type of wood or—?

00:14:29

RP: No wood, just charcoal.

00:14:30

RF: Is it hickory charcoal?

00:14:32

RP: It's a mix yeah; hickory and something else—yeah hickory and charcoal. Oak and hickory I think that's what it says; yeah.

00:14:42

RF: And tell me a bit about the cooking process. When do the shoulders go on and how long do they cook for?

00:14:49

FP: The first thing in the morning. We get here about let's just say 9 o'clock and they cook all day. A shoulder—you cook it on the fire all you know—oh from the time we get here and then the next day you—that's for the next day, so naturally we put it up in the air to get the smoke the next day.

00:15:13

RF: And now I've seen people cook shoulders in pans and in foil. Do y'all do that or is it just on the—?

00:15:19

FP: We barbecue. [*Emphasis Added*] [*Laughs*] No; we don't foil anything. We let it get all the smoke it can. So that's what you call barbecue; you don't take any of the flavor away from it.

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RF: And so the fat drips on the fire—on the coals?

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FP: On the—yeah, yeah.

00:15:35

RF: And what does that do?

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FP: That helps the fire. [*Laughs*] It keeps the fire going for one thing and the fat off the shoulders. The—the ribs don't have that much fat on it, so I would say the shoulders—once you kind of poke holes in them so and drip—and let it drip and that keeps the fire hot.

00:15:59

RF: Okay; and—and tell me about the sauces. Are they—they're still the same sauces you said?

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FP: The same.

00:16:05

RF: Who—who invented them? Who was the one that mixed them?

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FP: We get our smokes from Feinberg; it's a packing house.

00:16:13

RF: Sauce.

00:16:14

FP: Sauce.

00:16:15

RF: I mean who made the original recipe; was it—was it your husband or was it her—his mother?

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FP: His mother uh-huh; yeah uh-huh.

00:16:23

RF: And how many sauces do you have?

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FP: How many sauces—two, one hot—actually we make a mild and then make a hot and if the customers want somewhere in between we mix the two, uh-hm; and it's—that's really being popular now—mixed. That's what I'm—I recommend the—the mixed sauce so you get a little—by the time you think you're over the mild the heat—the hot hits you. *[Laughs]*

00:16:49

RF: How would you describe your sauce without giving any recipe away?

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FP: It's—it's a sweet tangy sauce, yeah; that's—I think that's what people like about it you know. It's kind of a vinegar(y), something like that uh-huh.

00:17:04

RF: Now you do—you do something and—and anyone who orders their sandwich here can see that where you have a pot of sauce on the stove. I've visited dozens of barbecue places; I've never seen that. Why do you do that? Is—is—is the flame on the whole time?

00:17:23

FP: Yeah; we do it 'cause it's cute. [*Laughs*]

00:17:25

RF: 'Cause it's cute?

00:17:26

FP: Actually that's the mild sauce, uh-huh and it's for sandwiches and not the smoked sausages or the hotdogs. It's just for the sandwiches. Okay; you can't boil a hot—the hot sauce 'cause it would probably make you sneeze all day. [*Laughs*]

00:17:43

RF: Make it too hot.

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FP: Yeah; the pepper and stuff in there—in the hot sauce, so—.

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RF: So is it simmering all day—the sauce?

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FP: Yeah; it simmers, you know kind of keep it warm, yeah.

00:17:56

RF: And you—your mother-in-law always did it that way?

00:17:59

FP: Yeah; yeah that's—that's how I was taught. I didn't know a thing about barbecuing so I had to kind of learn. And I'm really—after all these years because since she passed away and—well she stopped working actually about five years ago and I'm just really learning how to cook right now 'cause she did the cooking. My husband did it and then she did it after he passed away and—and I'm learning.

00:18:31

RF: So you're still learning every day?

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FP: Of course I am. [*Laughs*]

00:18:34

RF: How—how were those first days; when—when she left I guess, she retired—?

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FP: Oh no; she didn't retire. She was sick.

00:18:42

RF: She was sick; how—how hard on you was it?

00:18:45

FP: It was—it was you know—it really wasn't that hard you know. I paid a lot of attention you know and that's a long time to be working in one place so you kind of pay attention you know and it will come naturally—won't it Ron? *[Laughs]*

00:19:01

RF: I mean what's the—what's the learning curve on cooking barbecue? Is it hard or is it easy to learn the process of here?

00:19:05

FP: What do you think?

00:19:06

RF: Yeah; maybe I should ask you because you've been here two years. So how—how have the past two years been? I mean I have you learned everyone; one—I should ask that first.

00:19:15

RP: I haven't learned everything but I think like she said—just watching the routine of it you kind of learn just by observing how it's done every day, so—. I'm not sure if I can actually cook—I think that if I actually get in the pit every day I think I—I just—I will probably catch on just like she said. It is something that you can catch on to.

00:19:34

RF: Do the shoulders have to be turned and moved?

00:19:36

FP: Yeah; of course it's not as easy as it looks. It's not that easy at all. But yeah; you turn the shoulders. You kind of like just every once in a while with a sharp knife just kind of like stick them and you turn them and you—you don't turn them a lot. That's one thing I've learned. If—if you don't have a—a really high fire, blaze or whatever you can let it kind of rest on one side for maybe an hour and then—then turn it, uh-hm. Then you can't let it stay on one side too long; it'll tear up.

00:20:17

RF: Right; oh it will actually just fall apart?

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FP: Yeah; it'll fall apart, uh-hm.

00:20:20

RF: You said it's—it's much harder than people think. What do you think customers don't—or will never understand about how hard it is?

00:20:28

FP: Shew good [*Laughs*]*—*cooking is—is—is—it's really kind of—. It's not—

00:20:38

RP: The pit is hot so you got to go in and out of a hot pit and turn things around and you know—those are hot temperatures. And just paying attention to the fire or—this just wound me up just watching what she does and what part of it is not easy—how to know when to turn it, how the fire is you know supposed to be; it takes some attention so I guess that would probably be the biggest thing. It's not something you just you know start a fire, throw some meat on it, and close the pit, so—. So I think that would be—I think the time that it takes and the attention is what most people probably don't realize, but then again they might 'cause they keep coming back. And if you say you know you love something, you know it's going to take some attention for it. And if you're going in the restaurant you could tell the restaurant takes the time out and it's a consistent thing, so I guess that's the main thing.

00:21:45

RF: And I—I think one of the best things that y'all serve here is the slaw. Can we talk about the slaw?

00:21:57

FP: Like what?

00:21:59

RF: Well I don't—I know you're not going to tell me the recipe but can you describe—it's—it's a color like no other slaw. Can you describe the color and maybe not what goes into it but what it is?

00:22:12

FP: It's good. [*Laughs*]

00:22:13

RF: It's really unique.

00:22:16

FP: It's a mustard base—it's mustard based and probably you've tasted a little kind of like tickling that's—mustard. [*Laughs*]

00:22:30

RF: Really yes; it has a tickle you're right. [*Phone Rings*]

00:22:34

FP: Uh-huh; especially on the days that I make it perfect. Actually I've been—my mother-in-law told me how to make it. Actually I've been making it forever. That was one thing I could do but it's that tangy sweet taste; that's what people like about it, uh-huh.

00:22:55

RF: Do you—and it's—it's like a very bright, bright green color.

00:23:00

FP: Okay; the green is actually cabbage, the leaves off the cabbage.

00:23:04

RF: Fresh cabbage?

00:23:04

FP: Uh-huh; yeah I ground my—my cabbage up every day uh-hm, uh-hm.

00:23:11

RF: Okay.

00:23:12

FP: So and people think it's peppers but it's not pepper—no, no, uh-huh 'cause sometimes they say I know you put pepper in it because it's hot. Well it's not hot; it's the sauce. They'll say give me some hot slaw and you tell them it's not the slaw; it's the sauce, you know a combination of the two based on each other I guess.

00:23:30

RF: Do you think you make your slaw or your sauces as good as your mother-in-law?

00:23:38

FP: Yes. [*Laughs*] I made it longer than she did; I mean she actually told me about it and then she did it probably for after the first year she didn't do it again, uh-huh. So I've been making this forever and ever and ever.

00:23:53

RF: And—and Ron can you make the sauces and slaw?

00:23:56

RP: Yeah. [*Laughs*]

00:23:59

RF: The recipe has been shared.

00:24:00

RP: They have to taste mine [*Laughs*]—.

00:24:03

FP: Ron—Ron thinks he's the connoisseur. He think he's the connoisseur. He—he can do—he can make everything taste better, you know. He can tell me if it's missing and what it—needs a little dash more of this and a little dash more of that. Now he's good at—on taste. Yeah; he's a food lover. [*Laughs*]

00:24:23

RF: All right; well let's take a pause. All right; we had to take a short break to serve a customer. I'm going to ask a few questions to Ron; you—you were just telling me that you—you just spent some time in Nashville going to school?

00:24:38

RP: Yes, yes; well I've—I've been out of school for seven years now.

00:24:42

RF: Okay; you went to college in Nashville?

00:24:43

RP: Yeah, yeah; at Tennessee State.

00:24:44

RF: And you—did you study business or anything like that?

00:24:51

RP: Well Business Information Systems but yeah, so it was a Business Degree with a concentration in IT, Information Technology; yes.

00:25:00

RF: So did you ever think you'd be at the family restaurant?

00:25:04

RP: You know, hmm, deep down inside I did but you know it was other things that I wanted to focus on like moving out of the city and not going back home and things of that nature you know things I wanted to do on my own. But yeah; so I mean deep down I—you know I didn't think it would be as soon as it has been but I kind of thought I would be led back to the restaurant; yes.

00:25:33

RF: Did your mother ask you to come back or did you ask to come back?

00:25:39

RP: No; she didn't ask. It was—you know when you grow up in a house where you never hear anybody complain about work or bosses, working for someone else for you know five years or so after school it's just—is I guess was the culture of my family not to—you didn't hear complaints about work. So—so one day I was—I called my mom and told her I was putting in my two weeks notice and you know could I get paid X-amount of money and—and it was on from there. I was here you know; that was two weeks after, so and it's been—I mean just—it's been an easy process. It's been a really easy process. And I'm much more comfortable here than I was you know probably taking a pay cut—with taking a pay cut, I mean but I'm happier here than you know I've been in other jobs, so it's been cool, yeah.

00:26:42

RF: What's the best part of working in the restaurant or in this restaurant?

00:26:48

RP: Well I'm like my mom said, I'm a—I'm a big eater and I don't eat barbecue that much but I could probably tell you about every restaurant in Memphis so it's—it's the—it's exciting to me because I see other people enjoy something. I know how I enjoy food and going out and what places make me happy so I guess that's the most enjoyable thing about it, and working with my mom you know, being here and so I would say that—that's about the best thing and then having—working for something that's been built by you know my dad and my mom and my grandmother. It makes it a little more enjoyable.

00:27:33

RF: Does—did your mom cook at home or does she cook at home?

00:27:37

RP: She does; I mean she did. [*Laughs*] She wasn't a big cooker. My grandmother cooked a lot and—.

00:27:44

RF: Do you remember what she used to cook?

00:27:47

RP: My grandmother? Yeah; basically soul food, some of my favorite meals are still you know dressing, macaroni, yams and like green beans. That's like one of my favorite meals—meals, yeah; those are one of her big things. She actually did like a vinegar rib at home that—that was one of my favorite things. It was different from barbecue; it was—I mean it was the same type of rib but she had like a vinegar something she did. I don't know; it almost tasted like neck bones if you ever had neck bones. That was one of my favorite things.

00:28:27

RF: Did she do them in the oven or on the grill?

00:28:31

RP: No; that was actually in the oven, yeah.

00:28:33

RF: Can you—we just had a customer call—call your grandmother *a character*. Can you—can you describe your grandmother to us—what you remember, or—or maybe how the customers might remember her?

00:28:43

RP: Yeah; she was definitely feisty. She didn't hold her tongue about anything, you know. It's amazing; you know some of the customers act like they enjoyed being told off. It was just you know her nature. I mean she—she was really sweet at heart but sometimes the outside could be a little scary. But I think that brought a lot of people back. But like my mom said, she never—I think she never—she never fussed at me or anything. Me and my mom or my sister, I think we're the only people that really got away with—we can't—the three of us can't say a day where she had disagreement with us or you know told us off, so—. I mean but I saw her—she could be—she was really feisty. She was a ton of fun though. She was like five-feet tall. **[Laughs]**

00:29:42

RF: Did she ever have to chase anyone out of—out of here?

00:29:45

RP: I would imagine so. I never saw her but I would think that she probably did. **[Laughs]**

Yeah; I would imagine so. She was a very sweet lady—very feisty but a sweet—. **[Laughs]**

00:29:58

RF: You told me that she—that you know the restaurants here in Memphis and that you eat a lot. Would you consider this place Memphis-style barbecue or what is Memphis-style barbecue?

00:30:13

RP: When I hear people say Memphis-style I'm not sure what they mean by that. I mean that's just kind of like—I think that's just a term that someone phrased and then kind of went you know—everybody's barbecue tastes different to me. I don't think that—I would say the smoked taste maybe; I don't—I hear people in other cities boil barbecue so I'm—maybe that's the thing, the smoked taste of it. And but I've been places here where it tastes like it could be boiled to me, so I'm not quite sure how we pan that Memphis-style thing but it's just a style to me. I think—.

00:30:55

RF: How do you eat your—your barbecue or your sandwich here?

00:30:58

RP: I—

00:30:59

RF: Do you eat it one way or—or—?

00:31:03

RP: Yeah; I would say mixed—mixed sauce or yeah mixed sauce. I like the sliced better—outside, dark meat, preferably—I'd probably do it on bread instead of bun. I grew up on it so it's been a very long time since I've had a barbecue sandwich. But I—I do a rib a time or two or I eat bologna more. If I have to eat something it's probably bologna; yeah.

00:31:30

RF: So you don't eat pork every day?

00:31:34

RP: No, no; [*Laughs*] especially—especially not at work here. It's been quite some time since I've actually had a barbecue sandwich, yeah.

00:31:47

RF: Do you remember—I mean when you were—when you were a kid—when you were you know younger than 10 do you remember eating it a lot or every day—especially being here after school?

00:31:55

RP: Yeah; I would say. You know one way that I liked my sandwich growing up was the skins—we would fry those; take them off the shoulder and fry them and crunch them up in the sandwich. Now that's one way that I do like them.

00:32:07

RF: Did—can—can you still do that? Do you save the skins for that?

00:32:11

RP: Yeah; well people—we give them away. We don't—but if we have some off a shoulder we just give them a way. And certain—some customers want it that way; you know crunch—it's

more of a family thing. People—everybody in the family kind of—you know about the crunching of the skins in the sandwich; yeah.

00:32:32

RF: You—you told me you—if you eat here, if you have to eat here you eat the bologna. Can—can you tell me just a bit about the cooking process?

00:32:40

RP: On the bologna?

00:32:41

RF: Yeah; I mean do you—do you barbecue it—then fry it?

00:32:43

RP: We eat it—most of the time you just serve it smoked. It's a request thing if you want it fried.

00:32:53

RF: Because I saw that done last week you know and I was wondering. But that's—what do people ask for when they ask for that?

00:33:00

RP: Deep fried, deep fried, but normally it's just straight off the pit; yeah. And I would do straight off the pit; I probably wouldn't do the fried. I mean that's my preference. I wouldn't

yeah. But a lot of people like it fried, you know that takes the smoke taste out of it I would say but—. That's probably cool; I mean—so.

00:33:23

RF: And you have some very interesting pies on the counter. And—and when I was here last week the—the pie maker was here. Can you tell me about her?

00:33:36

RP: Miss Jessi, she—she's—she's up in age; I think she's probably close to 80 if not over. I won't tell her age like that but she—she makes them every morning. She's a really sweet lady you know and however her and my mom got to the agreement it's just like one day I think she asked my mom could she do it and in a jokingly way my mom was like yeah. And I think it just became a—another staple thing at—at Payne's.

00:34:09

RF: And what flavors does she make?

00:34:11

RP: Peach and apple—peach and apple, so yeah; she makes them every day. So I think she gets up at like 4:00 in the morning or something like that, but—but yeah when I get here they're usually you know pretty warm and fresh, so she's a really good lady—she is.

00:34:33

RF: How—how would you—well let's take a break. We'll take another break and we'll ask a few more questions. Okay; we're back. So Mrs. Payne what is—I mean I've—I've been to a lot of places in Memphis and so many of them have—have changed over the past few years. What is the future of—of Payne's Bar-B-Q or what do you want the future to be?

00:34:57

FP: The future is that Ron is going to take over and he's not going to change a thing. Everything is going to remain the same and I mean that. **[Laughs]** Yeah; I'm just kidding but hopefully that you know the young man—minds have different things, so if it was left up to Ron, he will—he will change some things and I already know because he tried to make me change things. But if it worked for me in the past it's going to work for me until I leave her. Okay.

00:35:25

RF: Can you tell me what he tried to change?

00:35:26

FP: Let me see; what did Ron want to do? He wanted—you know how you have a lot of different things on your menu. I'm going like we barely can keep up with what we have, so he wanted to bring in maybe a couple of different things which is good for change, but—. Maybe—kind of tired; **[Laughs]** so it—and I probably will. I will probably put eventually—I wanted to do it this year—put chicken on the menu; that would be a big seller and I know it. And chicken would too, but right now I'm just not looking for the extra work, uh-hm. So that's why I always say that he—he and his sister probably will do a little bit different; uh-hm.

00:36:12

RF: What is your daughter's name?

00:36:15

FP: Candice.

00:36:16

RF: And she works here throughout the week too?

00:36:18

FP: Uh-huh; she's—she teaches school so she's here two days out of a week.

00:36:24

RF: Just—just one or two more questions; what do you think your—I mean when this restaurant opened you—you didn't—you weren't working here full-time. What—what do you think your husband would say or think knowing that you're running his restaurant?

00:36:39

FP: He would love it. **[Laughs]** He would think like wow; not her. She's—I can't believe it. **[Laughs]** It would be quite a—I don't know; I don't even know the word but it would make him happy. I'm sure it would. I'm sure it would you know that—that I had stuck with it first of all through the years you know. Yeah; he would be quite proud of me, like I am. **[Laughs]** Yeah; it's—it's been up and down you know but I always say about a grace—I'm still here, so—. It's been a blast. Oh don't let me say it like that; that sounds sad and scary. **[Laughs]** It's been fun;

it's been really fun, you know. I guess—I guess the reason I can really do it, I'm a people person, so people help me make it through you know. I haven't had that many rude customers in 36 years that you know I don't think I've had probably two good arguments maybe, so that's—that's saying a lot, you know, so—. It's been fun; the customers like—like my friend over there, you know they're sweet people, easy to get along with you know [*Laughs*] I guess 'cause I don't know. I love people I guess—good atmosphere.

00:38:10

RF: And they love your barbecue.

00:38:14

FP: And they love the barbecue. [*Laughs*] And no doubt about it; no doubt about it—it's—it's been real good, uh-hm.

00:38:22

RF: Okay; well I want to thank you. This was—this was fun and informative, so I want to thank you.

00:38:27

FP: Yeah; it was really fun. I've been waiting to do this with you, okay and I finally got a chance to do it; okay. It's been fun.

00:38:36

RF: Okay; well thank you very much.

00:38:38

FP: Okay; thank you for having us, okay.

00:38:42

[End Flora & Ron Payne-Payne's Interview]