

RICHARD LOPEZ
Gonzales Market – Gonzales, TX

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[Begin Richard Lopez]

Dave Croke: So, the present business was started by Feliciano, correct? And is he your grandfather?

Richard Lopez: In 1958 my grandfather, Feliciano, and my dad, Pablo, and one of my aunts ventured into this business not knowing what they were getting into. Because, they used to have a business right behind us here on the same block in back of us, and they used to run a beer, pool hall, so they had no idea what to do when they started barbecuing or running a grocery store. And it was just a venture that was very successful. But, they didn't own that, so they took a chance in 1958 and it turned out pretty good; now we have over a million dollars in sales out of this business.

DC: So, who'd they go to learn how to build the pits and how to do it?

RL: Okay, the pits were preexisting, because, they came into this place--the previous owner here before my grandparents and my dad came in here, his name was Tony, and he bought a bigger place, more modern place, and he left this one. So, this was vacated with a barbecue pit already in the back. But, what they didn't know was how to make sausage or barbecue. Now, we give credit to an old man that was my grandfather's friend and his name was Fermin Cantú and he knew about making sausage and barbecuing. Needless to say, he was about sixty eight years old, so he helped my granddaddy and my daddy start this business up in 1958 and my dad ran the grocery business and my granddaddy and the

old man ran the barbecue business, which wasn't very much at that time; it was just a neighborhood little grocery store with a barbecue pit to sell whatever we couldn't sell out of the meat market. You know, we used to have steaks that you couldn't sell, so we'd cook those, make sausage or whatever you could. Very successful, they had a small business and it was pretty good. So, during the years H-E-B came into town, and Super S, and another chain, supermarkets, so we decided to close the grocery business and just take over like a barbecue restaurant. So, even though this—we call it a barbecue restaurant—it looks more like a grocery store when you first walk in; you'll see the grocery items, bread shelves and sodas and beer on the racks, but it compliments our barbecue because those are items that you need to take home with you when you buy some barbecue. And the pits grew from one to three or four pits in the back, and it's been enormous business.

DC: So, when you decided to make the transition, to do the barbecue and eliminate the groceries, were there other barbecue places in town?

RL: In 1960, or between '60 and '65, there was four more prominent businesses barbecuing in Gonzales. We had Smith Meat Market, we had John Davis Barbecue up on the hill by the armory up there, and then we had Brichov. We had Tony's, of course, which was a spin-off from this business here; he ran down the street over here. And there was, I would say, four more businesses in Gonzales. But, through the years they all started closing one by one and we were probably the only ones left running a business, a barbecue business.

DC: So, do you think in general barbecue is vanishing, or it's a lost art, or just in Gonzales?

RL: Well, I think that, if you'll take notice, like me and Brad were talking a while ago, that it's a family business that if the siblings or the sons and daughters don't want to run it anymore, it dies. Even if you have a good product, and I think that happened in Cuero and Victoria, where they had good barbecue in the past years but the families just didn't want to run it anymore, or they couldn't for some reason or other, and it just dies out. Now, what we have here; I myself am third generation running this business and after me, or my brother, if we don't have anybody to run it, this might be the end of this one. We hate to see that, but it happens. So, I would say, barbecue, it depends on the family. If there's people behind the owners or the ones that are running the business today, if there's people behind there that are willing to run it, to sacrifice day in and day out, maybe sixteen to eighteen hour days to run a business, then it'll keep on going.

[00:05:29]

DC: So, how old are your sons now, and do you hope that they take it over? Do you want them to put in that labor of love?

RL: Well, I think every dad wants his son to be successful and have a good career. Right now, both of them have pretty gainful careers. One's a banker, and the other one is working for the State of Texas in Austin, and they have pretty successful careers after graduating from college. So, I kind of, like, frown, saying, "You want to come down here

and run a barbecue business.” But, it belongs to the family. It’s something to do with pride. We don’t work for anybody. It’s a good profitable business, and you meet a lot of people, and you get to love it. You get to love working in a place like this.

DC: So, you mentioned you also had a successful career working for Albertson’s grocery, a major corporation, and you came back when your dad needed someone. Were you conflicted at all? Were you excited to come back and work for yourself?

RL: Yeah, coming back to Gonzales was something that I wanted to do; it was in the back of my mind all those years that I was in San Antonio working for Albertson’s. I always thought I could do better running a business for ours, that belonged to us, instead of working for somebody else. And at Albertson’s—all these huge corporations—you’re just a number, you know, they can replace you in thirty-five seconds. And there’s no pat on the back saying you’re doing a good job. I mean, if you do your job, you’re okay, but if you don’t, they’ll get rid of you—not saying that’s what we don’t do here, but it’s just personal pride. Working for yourself. Having your own business. Being successful. I don’t regret coming back. I always wanted to, and I love it now. I don’t ever go to lunch, because I don’t want to miss something that goes on here. My days are morning until night and I don’t go golfing, I don’t go fishing, but it’s something that I love to do, barbecuing.

DC: And, how hands-on are you these days with the actual barbecuing? Do you feel like you need to continue barbecuing in the traditional way that’s been passed down, or, I

noticed you said you've been experimenting with pans for the ribs; do you enjoy tinkering and trying to find new ways to cook?

RL: You know, sometimes you don't spend as much time as you should barbecuing, because you're running a business and you have thirteen to fifteen people, hired help, and you're overlooking those jobs, making sure everything is being maintained in the restaurant. I would love to go barbecue chickens and ribs and make my own sausage and experiment with all that kind of cooking. Personally, to me, I don't have the time. I have three cooks that cook for us everyday and they do basically the same thing everyday; we don't change much. I would love to have a different kind of barbecue sauce for the ribs, maybe one for the chicken, one for the sausage, but there's no time to experiment and run these tests and see what you like—this works or it doesn't work. By the time you know it, you're facing fifteen to twenty people deep on the serving line and there are other commitments besides experimenting. So, I should. But I can't.

DC: How long have you had those three cooks and did you train them yourself?

[00:09:40]

RL: Those cooks, when you hire one, the other two train them. When you lose a good cook it hurts the business but they'll eventually catch on to what we have. We have two major portions, or aspects of the business. My brother runs the backside and I run the front side. In other words, he runs the cooks and the sausage production back there—what we need, what we don't need, what we're going to do today. In the front, I run all

the hired help, the clerks and the checkout stands and the credit card machines, and I pay all the bills and make all the payrolls. So, you have two different people running two different parts of the business.

DC: I know you started as a multi-generation family company. Do you have any extended family members working here today, or is it just you and your brother?

RL: Rene Garza, he's very much involved with the business. What happened was, when Grandpa passed away, his portion went to Grandma—in other words, fifty percent. In the original, I mentioned, Grandpa, my dad, and an aunt. Well, the aunt, she was a financial part of the original three, and they paid her off, so she's out of the picture. So, the owners now are my granddaddy and my dad; they're fifty-fifty. So, when Grandpa passed away, his portion of the business, fifty percent, went to my grandmother. During the years, my grandfather passed away in 1983, so seven of her sons and daughters inherited the business. And, my daddy is on the other side with his fifty percent and he willed his to me and my brother Ray, so we are split up in percentages. The whole family is involved in the business in one way or another, and there's nine people that own this business. Out of those nine people, sons and daughters of those nine people have worked here at one point or another in their lives through school or going work or college or what have you; they'll be employed here at one time or another. So, when we say a family business, we mean very well a family business. We have uncles and cousins and nephews and brothers and sisters working from one day to another. It doesn't matter, they all have a job here.

DC: You're famous for your sausages, which were incredible, and you mentioned that you have a little different mix to kind of distinguish yourself from some of the Lockhart places. Do you feel like you're in competition with them, or like you're all a community that attracts barbecue enthusiasts from around the state? What kind of relationship do you have with all the other famous stops along this [U.S. Route] 183?

RL: The sausage, if you go to Luling or Lockhart or Elgin, it's all different tasting sausage. You get different recipes and they were brought in through the years, and they're all successful because they have their own original taste; they go back years and years, back to the forties and fifties when we first started. Our sausage, the seasoning that we brought together, the seasoning and the way we smoke them, the way we cook them, is a blend that differs from any other because that's the way we try to keep it. Luling, I think, adds a little more pork and they have a little different tasting sausage. New Braunfels adds maybe more seasoning or something and they're not as greasy. You know, there's always a difference in all the places that we go to. Our sausage was started by this old gentleman that I was telling you about that was partnered with my granddad, and this is his recipe and he passed it on to my granddad. What we made in 1958, we're making today. We haven't changed one item on those ingredients. I don't know, the success that we have on our sausage—people come from all over the state of Texas to get this unique sausage—and it's been very successful; the recipe is with us to stay. We have added another version to our sausage; it's a pork and beef, spicy. And then we have our original pork and beef sausage, little links of sausage—good tasting sausage, we all love it.

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DC: We actually just met a customer who drove four and a half hours top get some of your sausage: who do you see as your customers on a daily basis? Are they more locals, or, you've gotten a lot of favorable press coverage; do a lot of people come from far away?

RL: Over the years, you notice that we do have a lot of local business, but by far the business that we depend on for our big sales everyday in and day out is from out of town. Either they're going to have get togethers or parties or weddings or just family get togethers in the backyard, they come and get our sausage. I took a survey, like I was telling you, about where people come from, and on a Saturday, out of twenty people, eighteen of those were from out of town. They'll come and get a load of sausage to take back to wherever they're going. Sometimes, I feel like I don't see how we can keep up with the demand, because during a normal weekday we'll probably sell about three- to four-hundred pounds of sausage, maybe even five hundred, but on a Friday you double that, maybe you sell eight hundred pounds of sausage. On a Saturday, you maybe quadruple that; we'll sell fifteen hundred pounds of sausage, easy, on a Saturday.

DC: And you're making it all fresh, so you have to have the facilities for a Friday, right?

RL: One of the ideal situations that we have is that the sausage that you ate today was made yesterday and smoked this morning. And that's one of the ideal situations that we have. It's not like commercial place where they can make a sausage and two months later

you get it out of the refrigerator or out of a shelf at H-E-B. We don't have that. We don't put hardly any preservatives in the sausage, so it has to be fresh; you have to either use it or freeze it or cook it or smoke it within three days or we're going to lose it. So, that's the uniqueness of it. It's made in small batches and it's preservative free and it's fresh.

DC: Do you think demand for that type of product has gone up recently? Have you noticed any changes in your customers, or who do you think is interested in that kind of product?

RL: You always have the thought that maybe we should commercialize and make that product available, maybe to a person in Houston, Texas, shopping at a local grocery store, but I think that if we went into that kind of business we would lose the quality that we have: the small batch, the hometown operation, the freshness that we have. Because, when you start thinking like that, you've got to commercialize instead of using small batches, you're making giant batches with mechanical ingredients and all this kind of stuff, and you're not smoking it the way you're supposed to, the way we do. And I think we would lose that. We meet the demand that comes to this place. If we were to venture out and market this somewhere else, I don't think we could meet that demand, even though it is a good financial compromise to think like that, venturing into a commercial.

DC: Do you ever worry about health concerns, or that you might lose customers because of increasing awareness of health issues? How much sausage do you eat?

RL: I try it every day. Every morning I cut a sausage and I taste it and it makes me feel good that, if I like it, the business is okay for the day. It's like a quality control test. I'll eat one in the morning and I'll say, this is okay. That makes me happy and we continue with that. It's never going to change. It's just something that I have to do to guarantee my quality control. And, when I first started, I weighed about 200 pounds and now I weigh 275. So, you know, I'm eating a lot of sausage, right?

[00:20:07]

[Short pause]

[00:20:21]

DC: Yea so you were just saying that you do quality control every morning. What kind of things can go wrong, what do you worry about, what are you looking for?

RL: You know, well, we got employees back there that are human beings and, and if you don't put salt, your fair portion of salt in there, if somebody forgets the red pepper or maybe even the garlic, or whatever spices, the sausage is not going to taste the same. And you've ruined about 250 pounds of sausage when you forget one of those items. Um, and dollar wise, that's pretty hard on a small business. Um, if you overcook, let's say, uh, chickens or ribs, you lost. Again everything has to be almost perfect. And, you know one of the hardest challenges we have as a small barbecue business like this: when you walk in at three o'clock in the afternoon, you expect to see some nice fresh stuff, well we had that for lunch, so what happens? So we have to keep on cooking all day long, see? And it's hard to say "we're going to cook fifteen chickens for the night, that's what we're

going to need.” How can you judge that? How can you possibly judge that when we don’t know who’s having a party that needs fifteen chickens? Or twenty? You know, so, it’s a – it’s a challenging business. And you miss a lot of times, and, and, and it’s expected.

[00:21:49]

DC: And where do you get your chicken, your beef? Is it all from the same place?

RL: Uh, no. Everything is different companies. We, we deal with about, maybe, up to about seven or eight different, uh, suppliers. Excel in San Antonio. We have three or four meat companies that deliver to us on different parts of the week. We have a chicken poultry plant that delivers our poultry from Moulton, Texas. All our supplies come out of San Antonio. Sysco, Ben E. Keith, uh, we have suppliers that come in.

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DC: And are these pretty consistent relationships for a long time or are you always looking for someone new or something better?

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RL: Oh, our suppliers have been the same forever. We don’t try to change them because they, we, through the years, they are consistent with their supplies and they’re fresh and

we have, you'll run into occasional problems but nothing to worry about. We, we have pretty good relationships with all our suppliers. They come in quite frequent: Monday mornings, Wednesday mornings, Friday mornings. Everything's fresh.

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DC: Do you ever try barbecue from, identified with other regions? Or, how do you see your barbecue relative to other barbecues you've tried?

[00:23:20]

RL: You know that's interesting, I had a group out of Mexico. Guadalajara. And they were just – what would I say – amazed with the sausage and your ribs, and the, especially our lamb ribs. We have a lamb rib operation that, that we cook it right over mesquite coal, wood and um, they love it. And he told me that he would like to do our barbecuing in Mexico and then we would like to try his out over here. What they do is put giant shish kebabs on top of charcoal. And that's the way they cook their barbecues down there and to me it sounds different and *exciting* that I can do something different. I would love to have the pulled pork from Iowa, or wherever they do pulled pork. I would like to promote that on a tortilla, maybe like a pork fajita taco or something like that. And maybe a brisket taco with pico de gallo. Experimenting, and we get back to the experimenting part and, I think about these things but I never do nothing about them. Maybe I should.

[00:24:41]

DC: Yeah, you mentioned, uh, trying the pulled pork on a fajita and on the kind of exchange with Mexican barbecue traditions. Is your family originally from Mexico, or—

[00:24:53]

RL: My granddaddy and grandmother, uh, were originally from Mexico. They came over when they were young, and, and newly married. Twenties I guess. Twenty – 1923 I guess, something like that. But they became, citizens, and, they are, are from Mexico. Matter of fact, my grandmother didn't know a word of English, up until she died she couldn't talk English. And, Mexican traditions — family, working together and, and eating together at the end of the day and breakfast and you know, those are all part of our heritage.

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DC: So in, in this area do you have a lot of Tejano customers and do they like any different kind of barbecue, or—

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RL: Uh, if you're familiar with barbacoa, uh, you get the—that's a beef head at tacos that you probably get those in any Mexican restaurant you go to and those are pretty popular.

Now that's, that's kind of like—barbacoa and barbecues almost sound like the same thing but they're really different. Uh, barbecuing, uh, it's kind of like cooking briskets, uh, and chickens and ribs over a wood fire for a long period of time until they get smoked flavor and tender and, and then you have grilling, which is directly over the charcoal and we have two or three different ways that we cook back there. We have a beef rib that we put on pans and we keep away from the fire and it's kind of like a baking process. Beef ribs, you put about fifteen or twenty pounds of beef ribs in a pan and put it away from the fire and you have a baking process. Our steaks and our chops and our chicken and our pork ribs we put directly over the charcoal, over the wood coals and it's kind of like a direct cooking. Now our briskets and our sausage, we cook indirect, where the fire's way off on one side of the pit and the brisket and the sausage is on the other side, slow cooked. So, we threw all of these, uh, cooking systems and we call it barbecue. It's all barbecue. One way or another, you're still cooking with wood and there's no gas, there's no electricity back there, it's just wood. It's all wood smoked.

[00:27:31]

DC: So for you the essence of barbecue, what makes it barbecue is that it's being smoked by wood.

[00:27:37]

RL: I've been to barbecue places where they have a rotisserie with a gas-fired oven, and they use one log throughout the whole day and call it barbecue. Uh, that to me is kind of like, uh, mis-advertising or, and that's not barbecue. Barbecue, if you don't have no smoke, you ain't got no barbecue.

[00:28:01]

DC: So we noticed out back you have uh, catering facilities and, what kind of events do you typically get hired for?

[00:28:10]

RL: Company parties, company picnics, weddings. We have a catering coming up this month. We're going to go to San Antonio and do a wedding. And those people come down here to eat every opportunity they get and they want to serve the barbecue and the sausage just like the plates you guys had today. They want to serve that to their friends that attend their wedding, and to us it's an honor and a privilege to go over there and barbecue and give them the same thing that y'all ate today, and they're going to feed that to their guests on their wedding day, which is really special.

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DC: And do you ever participate in any of these kind of barbecue festivals that they in the state?

RL: One thing I don't partake in is competition because one day, you're going to cook a good brisket or a chicken or a rib and the next day you're not. Something went wrong, so to get a prize for cooking something is meaningless to me. I have, I will not participate in a competition for barbecuing. Uh, I have something unique here to offer. If you come in here and eat and you like it and you come back, I'm a winner. The business is a winner. If you didn't like it, and um, you don't come back, then I didn't do my job to make you come back—to make you *want to* come back. So those competitive things, I don't look forward to them, I don't, I don't. I don't participate in those.

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DC: So you value the relationship with the customers—

RL: —exactly—

DC: —and the people in the community more—

RL: —exactly—

DC: —that would invite you to a wedding.

[00:29:50]

RL: Exactly. Judges, they'll probably never come to our place to eat and I could give a hoot less what they care about my barbecue.

[00:30:01]

DC: And I noticed you also have a mail-order business. When did you start that?

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RL: I don't know if too many people are aware of this but the health department came down on their last visit and kind of like instructed us that we could no longer have a mail out program because we have the wrong type of license. We have a retail, on-the-premises only type of license. And to get into the mail order, we would have to have a manufacturers shipping license, which is totally different. And there's nothing wrong with that and we, we, we accepted that because now we have to take another step and get a bigger license, where you have a USDA inspector in the back and make sure all your temperatures in the water are correct when you wash dishes, when you, when you do your floors, your ceilings, your, your temperatures on your cooking, how you cook, when you take it out, how you cool it down. Your cooler sanitation process, that's all involved in the wholesale license and we're willing to do that. Only thing, it's going to cost us

some money to renovate and we're kind of like, put it on hold for a while. But yeah, we did a lot of that shipping before we got our hand spanked and we been shipping sausage, maybe since Jesus Christ was the little boy, back in the fifties and they never said anything. But then all of a sudden, here they come and said, "you can't do that no more." So, we accept it.

[00:31:44]

DC: But you are ultimately going to try and get the new license, and, who do you tend to ship to? Customers like the guy we met who drove four and a half hours, or do you want to try and get into new markets where people have never come to the actual restaurant?

[00:32:00]

RL: You know the, the license, when you get a wholesale license, you're qualified to advertise on the Internet, which is a future for all of us. If you can Internet on the—if you can advertise on the Internet, you might have some people try our sausage and we can ship it directly and do the whole thing over the—over the network. People that have lived in this area and move out—we had California, we has a Washington, we had Colorado, we had New Mexico, we had Las Vegas. People just move out and they want that old Texas sausage that they're used to and they call us. "Can you ship me some sausage?" Well, we tried to do whatever we could to get those orders shipped out and it was a pretty good little business while it lasted and—service guys. When you get a—go overseas or

something they call mom and dad and tell, “can you send me some sausage, please?” One guy wanted some in Iraq, and obviously you can’t, it takes too long to get there, they’ll spoil. But the thought of it, and him asking was nice. That was nice.

[00:33:27]

DC: So you do see the, the kind of sausage that you make as representative of Texas in some way?

[00:33:35]

RL: This, this part of Texas, anyway. There’s too much sausage in Texas to, to brag about, you know, or have the rights that this is Texas. I was at the library in San Antonio yesterday and I was reading up on sausage. They got—there’s a million sausages out there. You have all the way from Polish to kielbasa, pork and beef and lamb and chicken and goat and what have you. Venison. All kinds of sausages and we’re just a small part of a great industry.

[00:34:12]

DC: And do you have an, a favorite barbecue restaurant? Do you ever eat barbecue outside of here?

[00:34:18]

RL: When me and my wife go on trips like Houston or—or we go up north and visit parks or whatever, when we have a little time off, I'll stop at every barbecue place I see. And she hates me for that, she hates me because I'm always trying something different to see if I can better *my* restaurant. And, it's like a—it's like a—spying you know? It's just like you're going behind closed doors, you know? You know, I mean and—but it gives me ideas and that improves my business. And, I'm not going to do theirs—they just gave me an idea, which they're welcome to come down here and look at my place and I'm sure they do. You know, all, all barbecuers all over Texas. Always getting – trying to get new ideas. One time I went to Seguin and it was called Smoking Charlie's, and I changed my hat. I put on a regular Astros or a Cowboys hat, sunglasses and I went in there incognito, right? And I was just looking at the place cause it was brand new and one of the guys in the back says, [yells] "Richard. How you doing?" And I said whoa, there goes my cover. I been discovered, right? Needless to say I was embarrassed because he knew I was in there looking around, but I'll always try to get ideas. Even prices you know, you have to be competitive. You – plates. You know? You always try to see what they got. I don't ever call them, I go look at it.

[00:35:46]

DC: So you were recognized, even in disguise in Seguin. Do you know a lot of the other barbecues—barbecue guys in the area?

[00:35:53]

RL: Well Luling, I know all, everybody in Luling and I know anybody in Seguin, but outside that area I don't know that much, yeah. *[Claps hands]* Competition. That's what called competition.

[00:36:08]

DC: So when you were a kid did you spend a lot of time around the shop, did you eat a lot of barbecue or did they have you working in here when you were a kid?

[00:36:16]

RL: Yeah, yeah, you know when we bought the place—when dad and grandpa bought the place I was twelve years old. And when you get out of school you go out and, and you run around the neighborhood. You got things to do. Well not me. I had to come over and bag groceries or sweep the floors or fill up the soda waters or something. So all my life I kind of regretted that cause I didn't have the freedom a child—a kid has after school. My friends used to go shoot pool in high school and “Where's Richard?” “He had to go work at the market.” And those, the pain that I went through at, at, at—to me it was all worth it because those guys are out there, probably, I don't know. I have my own business – very

successful, and I kind of—I'm glad I went through something like that. No I—my childhood was right here in the market. Sweeping, cleaning.

[00:37:14]

DC: And did you have your sons working here before they went off to college?

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RL: Well, see, the twenty-five years I was in San Antonio, they grew up in San Antonio and, and from there they went off to college. But both of them have been here working during the summer to make—for gas money and to get a little bit of spending money and you have to work just like everybody else so I can pay you. So, yeah, they have been. As a matter of fact, I've, I've had some thoughts about opening a second business in Seguin or San Antonio and they told me that if it looks pretty good, if the restaurant looks pretty enterprising, they'll probably jump on board. I—I don't know. That's just something in the future.

[00:37:58]

DC: But you're excited about that prospect?

[00:38:02]

RL: You know anytime you can better your, your life and, and buying another business or getting into another business and it's all family operated and your sons are—it's something that you're working on. And it, it's a, a payoff in life. I don't know. Maybe it's more headaches and more hours, you know, everybody's working harder. I don't know whether I'm doing good or bad. But I see it as a good thing, you know? To better yourself.

[00:38:45]

DC: Yeah, what does barbecue mean to you?

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RL: Well you know, you can go to the back yard and put on a barbecue pit and either put some charcoal in there or, or—but it's, it's a way of cooking that goes back to the cave people, I guess. You know when you cook over a fire, it's just something beautiful about that. You—you smell the smoke, you know, and it smells good. You're cooking and your doing it outside the house. You're not depending on the old—on the wife, the old lady to cook it for you. You're cooking it yourself and you get pleasure out of that. And barbecue, smoking over a fire—the smoke flavor and the, the outcome is the—it's something that everybody just can't, they can't do it. I mean one guy told me, "I tried to cook a chicken and every time it's either raw on the inside or overcooked on the outside

or what have you,” and I says “Well, it takes—it takes a little practice and, and you’ll eventually get it if you’re in there long enough and, and—” We been here 48 years so all of those things come easy to us. And, and it tastes good and people *love* barbecue. I don’t know how to explain barbecue. It’s just different way of cooking that people love. And we love to make it, and we love to have the people come in and try it and come back over and over and over, like that gentleman that you saw coming from Edinburg. He said he was here, what? The last time he was in, pretty close to Gonzales, he came and got a load of sausage and now he’s coming back—another opportunity to get some sausage. And that, to me, is satisfaction. It’s barbecuing because people love it.

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DC: That’s great. Anything else special about this business we need to know?

[00:40:57]

RL: You know this, this business, it’s run by a lot of people. And the success that we have is all these people uniting and working together day in and day out, sacrificing over the years. And we don’t have hours like other normal people, eight to five. Our hours are whenever we’re needed, we’re here. And however long it takes, we’re here. And all I want to do is just pay tribute to those people that were here for years and years, and they’re gone now. They’re—they’re—they’ve lived their—they made their forty—twenty or thirty or forty years and some of them have left this life, but those are the people that

really contribute this business. And—long hours. A lot of sacrifices. And to us, we have everything because of those people. So we carry on a tradition that’s, that’s been here for a while—for long times—it’s unique, it’s different, and we love it.

[00:42:08]

[End Richard Lopez]

INTERVIEWERS NOTE:

In a phone conversation a week after the interview, Richard Lopez wanted to mention how deeply thankful he is for the other people who run the business with him. He wanted to recognize that he is by no means the main person, and that he doesn’t do things alone. He “can’t emphasize enough the contributions made by Elisa and Emily Lopez, my Daddy’s sisters, my Daddy, Pablo G. Lopez. Also, my granddaddy, Feliciano. And now today, we have people that I can’t emphasize their contributions enough. Ray Lopez, my brother and my partner, Rene Garza a worker here, and Diana Lopez, my wonderful wife. Without these people, the tradition and the success would never have happened.”