

BILLY INMAN
Inman's Ranch House Bar-B-Q – Marble Falls, TX

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Interviewers: Melanie Haupt and Carly Kocurek

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Southern Foodways Alliance
in association with the American Studies Department at the
University of Texas, Austin
and
The Central Texas Barbecue Association

[Begin Billy Inman]

Melanie Haupt: Okay, we are recording. So, I am with Billy Inman at Inman's Ranch House in Marble Falls, Texas. Mr. Inman, could you please state your full name and birthdate?

Billy Inman: My Name is Billy Inman, and I am not going to tell you how old I am.

MH: *[Laughs]* Okay, fair enough. Okay, so could you give us a little background on how Inman's got started and just a little bit of insight into the history of the Ranch House.

BI: In 1964 we opened this place up here. At the time my uncle in Llano, Lester Inman, was running Inman's kitchen over there. He was actually running Inman's Exxon gas station and selling barbecue off of a catering wagon out at the edge of the gas station and it got to where the catering wagon was making more money than the gas station was and he put us into business here, him and my dad went in. They were brothers. Then about 1965 or '66 he opened up Inman's kitchen in Llano and it still runs today. Uncle Lester passed away in 1988. And when he passed away I bought out his half here, which made me and my dad partners. And Horace and Myrtle Oestreich bought out the other half of Inman's over there and so we're not affiliated anymore. We're still friends and anything they need they can walk through the door and get it. And anything I need I can walk through their door and get it. We're still friends. As far as being a partnership anymore, it's not a partnership anymore. But we had the opportunity to buy the building and the land here about eight years ago and I bought my dad out then. But he still comes in and he still helps and oversees. We got a real neat working relationship. He's, He's, I don't know how to say it, he's good for business. He likes to make candy and stuff at night and he

gives it away, he doesn't sell any of it. And he doesn't watch TV at night, but he gets in the kitchen and he bakes and cooks and stuff. We opened up in 1964 here. We moved from San Saba to Marble Falls. We had I guess Murry Burnham with the Burnham Brothers calls, game calls, was probably one of our first customers. And he came in and gave us some advice: he said that if you can keep your prices down to where the working man can afford to eat there, you'll stay in business longer.

[2:31]

MH: I did notice that your prices are quite low. When was the last time you had to raise your prices?

BI: Oh, about a year and a half ago.

MH: And how big was the increase?

BI: A dollar a pound on the brisket. Everything went up and we had to go up. As long as we can make a living and keep our prices down to where the working man can afford to eat here, well, that's what we're going to do. Sometimes you feel like you're not making enough money, but you're still in business. And I see lots of barbecue places over the years that have gone and come. So—.

[00:03:10]

MH: So you must be doing something right.

BI: Must be. We try hard everyday.

MH: When we were on the phone last week you told me about the Secret Service searching your barbecue joint every two weeks for LBJ. Could you tell that story for me again?

BI: I'm going to leave that one for my dad to tell.

MH: Okay, fair enough. So is Inman's as an institution, a business, are you fairly active in the Marble Falls community? Is this a hang out for any certain type of people at all?

BI: The working man. I belong to the Masonic Lodge and I've done a lot through the Masons and helping kids and stuff. I'm on the board of directors of our stock show where I help the kids showing livestock and animals and everything. I try to do my part in the community. I've been here a long time and I don't do any advertising anywhere except I help kids. I take my advertising money and I buy kids animals at the stock show or if a child wants to show an animal and they can't afford it, well I'll buy an animal for them. Kids come in here selling raffle tickets or selling Girl Scout cookies or whatever, well that's what I do with it. I don't buy advertising, but I spend it that way. We've been doing that a long time.

[00:04:29]

MH: So do you also rely on word-of-mouth or just your long-standing presence in the community?

BI: Well, forty-two years in business and word-of-mouth are the best advertising that I've got. We've got people that come through that haven't been here in twenty years and they'll stop by

and say, “we’re sure glad y’all are still here. We remember that turkey sausage that y’all make.”
So it’s word-of-mouth and customers that have been through.

[00:04:55]

MH: Now how come the sausage is turkey? Why isn’t it pork?

BI: Well, Uncle Lester started the turkey sausage in Llano and it was the cheapest meat that you could make sausage out of at the time. It was cheaper than pork. And he started making sausage and selling it to the deer hunters over there. And it got to where the deer hunters would come back through in the summertime with their families and they’d stop in to the gas station and fill up with gas and want to get a ring of sausage. Well, he only made it during deer season when he first got started. Then he had to pick it up and start making it year-round. And that’s when his business started growing over there. But that’s how the turkey sausage actually got started, was because you could make a cheap product out of something that was good. There are lots of places that make lots of different kinds of sausage and I like to try sausages from other places. The turkey sausage that we make, we make it ourselves. It’s a unique product. I don’t know. We used 26,000 pounds of turkey meat last year. So for a little mom and pops’ store that’s doing pretty good. That’s lots of turkeys.

[00:06:05]

MH: Do you make that on-site, here, or is there a—

BI: I make it right here in the building. I’ve got a little plant set up in the back room. It’s fully enclosed, to where I can close it up. We make it as we need it and we keep it fresh and we try not

to make it and freeze it and then thaw it out and cook it. We try and make it and sell it fresh and kind of do it that way. It does a better job and it keeps your product fresher and better for you.

[6:31]

MH: Where do you get your turkeys and where do you get your brisket?

BI: Well, I buy my briskets from either US Food Service or Ben E. Keith Food Service. And then I buy my turkeys from Ben E. Keith Food Service. They, it, come boneless/skinless and it comes in forty-pound blocks where it's already been USDA inspected and everything. It's safe you know, that way. We, I used to go to Waco and buy it, but when Ben E. Keith came in with the service that they could provide it for me and deliver it to me, then that was a whole lot better than me having to drive to Waco and kill a whole day to run up there and get a thousand pounds or two-thousand pounds of turkey meat. So we started buying it from Ben E. Keith Food Service.

[Francis Inman enters]

[00:07:18]

BI: *[To Francis]* She wants you to tell the story about LBJ's food list and the Secret Service coming in here and inspecting you.

Francis Inman: We had an inspector come in here every three weeks—a state inspector inspecting this place. And he came in for a while and finally one day he said “I guess you want to know the reason why I'm coming in here so much for”. I said, “I sure would. I watch you and you don't stop anywhere else in town”. He said “You're on the list for LBJ to get food from here”. He was a real nice fellow. Shooks was his name. So that's how we got food for the

President. We was on the list of his food. When he came home people stirred around and threwed more barbecues every time he came home.

[00:08:34]

MH: Did you ever meet him?

FI: No. I met his doctor. His doctor came in one time. His doctor came in and he wanted some sausage to take back with him. Well, he came in and I didn't have any. I had to take his address—he worked in D.C.—and mail it to him. I mailed it to him and he sent me a check. And I kept the check in here to show people that he actually bought it here. *[Laughter]* He wasn't going to give me any deal. We've had a good many governors in here. The Governor right now, he's been in here.

[00:09:20]

BI. The first governor, was it Preston Smith?

FI: Preston Smith's been in here. Several. Even Willie Nelson. *[Laughter]*

MH: What did Willie Nelson eat when he came in here?

FI: He gets sausage. He sends me lots of customers, getting sausage barbecue. He sure has.

BI: We had a guy that lives here that would go down and play golf with Willie. And that was part of his green fee to get on the greens, was he had to come by here and get turkey sausages to

take down there with him. He told us that: that he was picking sausage up to go play golf.

[Laughter]

MH: That's an interesting barter system. Can you remember any other notable customers besides governors and entertainers?

FI: When y'all leave, it'll probably come to me.

MH: Isn't that always the way.

[00:10:15]

BI: That Secret Service over at Llano. What was his name?

FI: *[Indiscernible]*

BI: Texas Rangers.

FI: We've had lots of Texas Rangers in here.

BI: Way back when it was cowboy and horse day they'd come in and they'd pull up and it'd be five or six trucks out there with horses and loaded up and they'd pull in here and eat and headed out somewhere to go ride a ranch or do something, you know. When I was real young you'd see lots of that kind of thing. We've had the Railroad Commission meet at the table in there and discuss our railroad system up here. I guess this business is like everybody else's, you've always

had lots of famous people. But I try to treat everybody as they're going to spend the same money in here as the next person is, so whether they're the lowest working man on the totem pole or the tallest one on top of the flagpole, I try to treat them all the same. Because they're all going to spend the same amount of money.

MH: True enough. True enough.

[00:11:15]

MH: Well, let me ask you a little more specific questions about your process here. What time do you start cooking in the mornings?

BI: Oh, we try to get here about five-thirty or six. And we try and get everything on. Those pits have fire in them and they run just about twenty-four hours a day. So they're cooking, they're cooking, all the time. It's a pretty good process, but lots of people nowadays they're going to these electric ovens and stuff to where you can load those ovens at night and they automatically come on at three in the morning and about ten o'clock their briskets are all ready to serve. We're still the old original wood fired pit and we don't have all those luxuries of timers and electricity. I might be down here at eight or nine o'clock at night putting more wood on that fire, or whatever it takes to make it all work.

[00:12:20]

MH: What kind of wood do you use?

BI: We use oak wood. We don't use any mesquite or anything else. Just straight oak.

MH: And have you always used oak?

BI: Forever.

MH: And where do you get your wood?

BI: We cut it ourself.

CK: With cooking with oak, what's the flavor that oak gives or how's it different? Why do you use oak?

BI: You want me to put you a slice of bread on there so you can figure it out? Since you're a vegetarian.

CK: No, I just want to hear you explain it.

BI: Well, to me if you use mesquite—you'll see the people that cook with mesquite will have a fire pit out here to where they're burning it. And then they shovel the coals in to cook with. The outside ring on a mesquite log smells like a creosote telephone pole burning to me. And that's what they're burning off out there in their pit. And then they shovel the coals in here. Well, by using oak wood I don't have that and my fire, my wood, is directly under my meat. And I cook with direct heat. I'm not wasting all of that heat that's burning up out there. It's cooking with the oak wood the way we use it here. I like to go when I get into a pasture to haul wood I like to find

an old dead tree that's been dead eight or ten or fifteen years and it's all white and all the bark and limbs have fell off it. That's the kind of oak wood I like to use to cook with. Occasionally we find some that's not that way. But that's the ideal barbecue wood to me, in my opinion. You've got all kinds of different woods and all kinds of different things. We go to New Mexico or somewhere to visit some friends and they want us to barbecue while we're out there, well, we'll take apple wood or something.

FI: *[Banging wood in background]* That's hard wood.

BI: Oak is one of the hardest woods in this country.

[00:14:10]

FI: Mesquite is not hardwood. *[Indiscernible]* you see a chimney with that black smoke running off a house—that's burning mesquite. That's what does that. I don't know how they ever got started.

BI: It's the creosote that's in it, that's cooking out of it. You'll see lots of chimney fires and stuff and lots of pits that get on fire with people cooking with mesquite. Unless they've got a big burn pit over there to where they burn it and then shovel the coals in to where they've burned off all that sap and then it works pretty good. But we've always used oak wood and I hope that we can always continue to get oak so that's what we can use. It's the hardest wood in this country. If I go to New Mexico or somewhere to some of my friends and I barbecue there, well we use apple or whatever the hardest wood is. You know, you go to Missouri or somewhere you use hickory.

That's the hardest wood around. And that's usually what does the best job at doing your barbecueing.

[00:15:07]

FI: We make everything from scratch. We pick and clean our own beans. We make our own barbecue sauce. We make our own slaw dressing. We make our own sausage seasoning. We make everything from scratch. We don't buy nothing ready-made.

[00:15:21]

MH: And whose recipes are those? Are those your recipes?

FI: Our old recipes.

MH: That's impressive. You don't see very many people doing that these days.

BI: No, not these days. They pour beans out of a gallon can and warm them up. Put a little seasoning in them and here you go. We grind our own cabbage and we mix our own slaw dressing. I mean we do it all. It's all made from scratch. There's not many places anymore that make everything from scratch.

[00:15:45]

MH: Who else do you have working here besides yourself and your wife? I'm sorry, I've forgotten her name?

BI: My wife, Sherry. And Donna just comes in and helps part time.

MH: So it's the three of you?

BI: Three family members and one employee.

MH: Wow, that's a lot of work for three people to do.

FI: You've got to. You don't have no choice.

[00:16:12]

MH: Is that how you keep prices low? You use family labor?

BI: Sure. You make your money when you buy your groceries. So you want to buy them as cheap as you can buy them. When you start paying too much, well—some of my salesmen think that I jew awful hard on them. But I've got to buy it right in order to make a living at it. And by buying it right I can afford to keep my prices down. Like now I'm getting seven dollars a pound for my brisket. If I was getting ten or twelve like they do in Austin I could afford to give a dollar eighty a pound or two dollars a pound for brisket, like most of them are paying down there. But by me selling it for seven dollars I have to jew on them pretty hard and this week brisket prices were a dollar forty-one. Brisket prices change every week, just like the commodities market. That's the reason I say I either buy from US Foods or buy from Ben E. Keith. If both of them get too high, I might buy from Wal-Mart. There's not but four or five packers in the United States that make all the brisket so the quality of the brisket's not any different. It's just the brand that you buy. You're going to buy one of those four or five brands and it doesn't make any difference if you get it from Wal-Mart or you get it from a food service, it's all the same.

[00:17:33]

MH: So, you have one child?

BI: Yeah, I've got one daughter.

MH: Your daughter. Is she interested in participating in the family business at all?

BI: I hope not. *[Laughter]*

MH: So what is your plan for retirement? What's going to happen to Inman's then?

BI: I have no idea. I'll probably sell it to somebody or I'll close up. One of the two.

MH: So why do you hope that Ashley, Ashley is her name, correct?

BI: I hope that she gets an education and makes some money with her mind instead of her back.

[00:18:04]

MH: That's, well, that's a fair enough reason. So what are the most important steps in making your brisket and sausage?

BI: The fire. Quality control on the fire. Checking your meat and making sure it's tender and you don't overcook it or you don't undercook it. Sometimes it's tough. With the genetics and different genetics in cattle some briskets cook real fast and some of them cook real slow. Some

of them are going to cook out tough. I don't care what you do to them. So you can't say that you can do a good job on all of them. Because I can't do a good job on every brisket. Every once in a while you are going to get one that's so tough that you could grind it up and the hamburger meat would be tough, I think. *[Laughter]*

FI: Cooking brisket is just like cooking at home. You don't get everything cooked just right at home either. *[Laughter]*

[00:18:57]

MH: Especially when I'm cooking.

FI: We don't do it here either. It's the same thing.

MH: How much do you think that you have to throw out in a week from over or under cooking?

BI: Oh, probably ten pounds of brisket and eight or ten pounds of sausage.

[00:19:18]

MH: To me that doesn't sound like a huge amount of waste.

BI: It's not a lot of waste. The majority of my waste is the fat and the scraps and the stuff that we trim off and we throw away. When we slice the brisket, we slice it and we trim it and we get it all ready to go.

[00:19:44]

MH: What's the best way to eat your sausage? Plain, wrapped up in bread, rolled in a tortilla?

BI: Well, I don't sell it rolled up in a tortilla. I sell it by the pound. I sell it on a slice of bread and I call it a sausage wrap. Or I sell it on a sandwich and I slice it and it's a barbecue bun, like I put barbecue sauce on it, like it's on a bun. Or I sell it on a plate. I've got lots of folks who eat it lots of different ways. I've got folks that come in and buy it by the pound and they take it home and get their crock-pot of beans nearly finished and they'll chop the sausage up in little bites and put it in it. It's a unique product. You being a vegetarian, I wish you'd try it because it's—

FI: Both of them are vegetarians?

BI: Yep.

MH: Well, I don't eat beef or pork.

BI: Well, it's turkey.

MH: So I'll try the turkey.

BI: It's pure turkey meat. The only thing pork is the casing that it's stuffed in. But there's no nutritional value there. There's no fillers, there's no by-products. And it is pure turkey meat. A lot of times, we have folks that have been in here and we have a hard time getting them to try it because they've had turkey sausage or something out of the grocery store or out of another place

and they didn't like it. Then when they come in and try this, then it's a different story because it's a unique product.

[00:21:08]

BI: Did you take a picture of my sign out front?

CK: I sure did.

MH: I do have a question about turkey. Because turkey meat is so lean, how do you keep the sausage from drying out?

BI: Don't overcook it.

MH: So how long does it take to cook it?

BI: About two-and-a-half hours.

[00:21:23]

FI: Would you try a piece of that?

MH: Sure, I'll try it.

BI: She don't eat beef, Daddy, she wants to try the sausage.

MH: When I cook meat for my husband I always turn it into shoe leather. I'm always in awe of people who can cook meat correctly.

BI: That fork right there tells me a whole lot. I'll poke the meat with a fork and if the meat turns loose of the fork when I pull it back out then I know it's done and if it turns loose too fast, it's overdone. And I can tell by when I push that fork in and pull it back out how done it is. I guess the way I figured it out to tell somebody one time how to cook perfect meat all the time is to get them a barbecue pit and cook about eight hundred pounds a week for twenty-five or thirty years and they'll figure it out. *[Laughter]*

[00:22:20]

MH: How old were you when you started working for the family business?

BI: I was four years old when we moved here and opened this up. I worked throughout school. I'd come in to work here. And then when I got out of school I decided this wasn't what I wanted to do and I went to welding school and majored in welding. And I got out and I welded for lots of rock quarries and gravel quarries and stuff around here and I welded for myself a little bit. Dad said "I'm going to close that place up if you're not interested in it," and I got to thinking you know in the summertime you've got a roof and fan and in wintertime you've got a roof over your head and a heater and it's a whole lot better than sitting out there burning up and freezing up. So I came in and started working for him in about 1986—again. The next time around. Then about '88, 1988, Uncle Lester passed away and then I went in as a partner.

[00:23:20]

MH: What's the furthest someone has come to try your barbecue? That you know of?

BI: Overseas. I don't know that they just came here just for that, but I've had customers—I collect paper money, and I've got paper money from my customers and I've got some from South Africa. I've got some from China. I've got some from Holland. England. This is where the customers have come in and gave it to me, you know. I've shipped it. We've shipped it from California to New York to Florida. I don't really like to ship it.

[00:24:10]

MH: Do you have an online presence? How do people know how to contact you? Do they contact you over the phone?

BI: Over the phone. I don't do any online. I don't do any advertising. I don't even think that online they know how to get a hold of me. *[Laughter]*

MH: Do you cater?

BI: I cater a little. Not much. I do a whole lot of “I fix it up, you come pick it up and take it and serve it yourself.” Those little bitty thirty, forty, fifty person parties—there are a ton of them in the summertime around here. People, grandmas and grandpas, having people come to their house, having a family reunion. And I do it a whole lot cheaper for them that way. They come pick it up and serve it themselves and they can do it at their convenience and if it gets cold it's their fault. You know, it works better for me that way. They don't fuss. I don't get the griping and the bitching that way. *[Laughter]*

[00:25:00]

BI: It works out better for me with the system that I've got going. I fix everything up and I send on my pans and my serving utensils and everything out with them. And all I ask is they wash it and bring it back and I rewash it once they get back and put it back up in the storage. We do a lot of that in the summertime. I do cater a little bit. I've got one coming up in July that the fellow called me and we've done his daughter's wedding and we're fixing to do his son's wedding now. Somewhere between five-and-seven hundred people. But I think with the daughter's wedding *[To Francis]* how many was there?

FI: Twelve hundred, I think.

BI: Twelve hundred was there then. That was a neat deal. They own a rock quarry up here and they took part of a derrick and laid it down they put tin all the way around and we built a pit out of the frame of a derrick. We had a pit from here to the road out there. And we built everything up there at their show barn. They had a barn up there on the highway, a real nice cutting-horse barn. They fixed it all up nice and that was, I enjoyed doing that. That was a—cooked a lot of goats and a lot of brisket and cooked one pig whole and put the apple in his mouth. *[Laughter]*

[00:26:26]

CK: How long did it take y'all, like, mean twelve hundred people—how long does that take to get ready for?

BI: A long time.

MH: How many pounds of brisket and sausage is that?

BI: Well, let me give you my formula and I'll let you figure it up. It takes twenty pounds of sausage and twenty-five pounds of briskets cooked, sliced and trimmed to feed a hundred people.

MH: Okay. I'm an English major.

CK: Like five hundred pounds.

BI: So figure, it takes twenty-five pounds of brisket and twenty pounds of sausage to feed a hundred people. I like to tell people that formula so when they're going somewhere else and they're shopping and getting prices and they're bidding against me, we're all on the same playing field that way. They know how much meat it's going to take to feed 100 people. And they can go price it out somewhere else and they always come back.

[00:27:14]

MH: Who's your biggest competition, barbecue-wise, in the area?

BI: There's another barbecue place, Peete Mesquite. As far as being competition, I don't consider him competition. He does a lot of things like cooking the pork and chicken, and other things I don't do here. He sells brisket and sausage too, but he doesn't sell the turkey sausage. So I don't really look at him as a competitor, he's just in the business with me. As far as having competition, there's nothing in town that, that's—there lots of barbecue places that have come and gone and there's lots of barbecue places in the area that serve good barbecue. But as far as seeing them as competition, I don't see them as competition. We're a unique place, to where we make everything from scratch and we do everything from scratch. We make our own sausage,

we cook our own brisket, we make our own sauce. When you're doing it that way, nobody wants to do it the old-school way.

[00:28:19]

MH: I have to say, I tried a piece of the sausage and it's really rich. Like it's richer-tasting than I thought a turkey sausage would.

BI: It's not a bland, mushy type sausage. And that's—

FI: Pure turkey meat, too.

BI: We get six dollars for it. You can buy lots of turkey sausage for three dollars a pound, but it tastes like three-dollar sausage.

MH: And it's not dry?

BI: Nope. You tryin' it? Try it. *[Indiscernible]* It's not real spicy, it's not greasy.

CK: That's really nice.

MH: I think my son would like it. He's nineteenth months old and he loves turkey.

FI: How old?

MH: Nineteenth months.

FI: He'd eat it.

BI: I'd peel it, take the peeling off of it, and it'll crumble up real nice with pretty good-size crumbles, and young kids'll do a real good job eating it. I could tell stories on friends of mine's kids come in here. I had one friend of mine came in and he said, "Oh, no no no, don't feed him anything. My wife says he has to have nothing but baby food!" And I went ahead and put a bite of that sausage in his mouth and his little old eyes lit up. Well, the next time the little fellow came in, Grandma and Mom was with him and Grandma was holding the baby. And I gave Grandma that piece of sausage and she got to feeding him, so we got around Mom that way.

[Laughter]

MH: It's always Mom that you have to get past.

BI: Yup, yup. Once those little kids like that get a taste of real food, they're not going back to that old bland baby food.

[00:30:00]

MH: That is true. And then it gets a lot worse. *[Laughter]* So how has your kind of clientele changed as Marble Falls has changed?

BI: I would probably say now, when we feed the working man, we'll have a contractor come in and he'll say, I've got ten guys. I need brisket and sausage and sauce and pickles and onions and

bread for ten people. And we'll fix up a big order like that, where twenty-five years ago, the man that was pouring cement had one other guy with him and they'd knock off for lunch and come to town and get a plate lunch or something. Now then, everything's the hustle and the bustle and we don't want them to leave, we want them to stay on the job and work. So the contractor runs to town while everybody else is pouring the cement and he gets lunch for them and when they're waiting on it to set up, well then they stop and eat lunch. The framing contractors and stuff, a lot of them do the same thing. A lot of the builders, when they get pretty close to finishing a home, they'll invite all of the subs and everybody in to a meal and they'll come in. We'll fix for twenty or twenty-five and they'll come pick it up and take it out to the job site. There's a whole lot of pick up and go like that. *[Short Pause]* With the people in a bigger hurry today than what they used to be, I'd probably say I sell more sandwiches today than I used to. Versus I used to sell more plates because the working man would come in and sit down and eat, and then get up and go back to work. Nowadays they're getting a sandwich and they're going on the road and running back to the job to go back to work. I'd have to say that's probably the difference.

MH: I did notice that there's some new construction when we came in on [Highway] 281, there are some kind of big houses being built. You're smirking. I'm guessing you're not a fan.

BI: Well, I think it's going to be good for the economy. We've got lots of development going on in the area. They're supposed to build a new subdivision out here at the [Highways] 71 and 281 intersection that's gonna to be like fourteen hundred acres. It's gonna have big box stores and the whole deal in it. They'll put a hospital, an eighty-bed hospital out there, they're looking at. When they get all that done, you know, we're gonna bust at the seams. We're busting at the seams

already, but it's gonna be lots of room for expansion. There's lots of big subdivisions and stuff that are growing and taking off, so—

[00:32:22]

MH: What's your favorite part of running Inman's Ranch House?

BI: Being my own boss. I've worked for other people and it's just easier to be my own boss. I guess meeting all the people and visiting with everybody that I see that comes in, you know. And I've got lots of friends that come in and visit. One of them will come in and get a sandwich and sit back here and talk while he eats. That's probably the best thing about owning your own business, is your friends and the folks that come through. And the new folks that comes through that you get to meet and make friends out of.

[00:33:02]

MH: Do you ever get to go on vacation? *[Sound of recorder hitting the floor.]* Uh-oh. Hang on. Good job, dropping that piece of equipment. *[Laughter]* Hello. Okay, sorry.

BI: My daughter shows registered Boer goats, and we take our vacation every year and we go to Louisiana to the national boar goat show. And we go down there, stay a week and we really have a good time down there. She gets to show and compete. We had a buck last year that was eighth at the nationals. Eighth place is not Grand Champion, but you know, that's not bad, either.

MH: What's the prize for eighth place?

BI: A ribbon. *[Laughter]*

MH: So not even gas money?

BI: Oh, no. A ribbon and a pat on the back, thank you very much for coming.

[00:34:01]

MH: So what's the division of labor between you and your wife? What's your wife's name?

BI: Sherry.

MH: Sherry. So, what's the division of labor here between you and your wife?

BI: I don't understand your question.

MH: You do the cooking, does she do front of the house? Does she ever do the cooking?

BI: That's her compartment in there *[points to kitchen/order area]*, and this is mine back here.

MH: So she's the pretty face.

BI: The wall right there, that's where we draw the line.

Sherry Inman: Well, and the office, I do the bookwork.

BI: Yeah, she does the bookwork, too.

[00:34:32]

MH: Ok. And, Mr. Inman, what was it like when you were the main—

BI: When you and mom run this place?

FI: Me and my wife run this for several years, that was back in the fifties and sixties and seventies, and there weren't much population here, though. We didn't have that much business, though. She run in there, and I run this. We wasn't that busy. There wasn't that much business in the whole area, though. We run this for several years.

BI: What would you say in a slow day y'all took in back in the sixties?

FI: Oh, I don't know. We make one sale now—We make one sale now as much as whole day back then.

BI: Sixty dollars?

FI: Yeah, something like that.

MH: That was on a slow day? And what do you take in on a slow day here today?

BI: Oh, six hundred probably.

MH: That's not that slow.

BI: Yeah, that's slow.

MH: Is that pretty slow?

BI: Yeah.

MH: Do you do dinner service?

BI: No.

MH: So you're just lunch?

BI: Just lunch. We close at five o'clock. Ten hours is about all I want. We run one shift and that's enough.

[00:35:43]

MH: Uh huh. Uh huh. And what are your slowest days?

BI: Oh. Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday. Weekend. Weekend traffic. We're a big tourist area, and we've got lots of grandmas and grandpas that live on the lakes in the summertime and when they're that, then we have all the grandkids coming to see grandma and grandpa on the weekends

or they come to spend a week in the summertime, you know, but it's always, the Friday, Saturday, and Sunday is always the best times. We close at two o'clock on Saturday, and most of the time we've sold out of everything we've got cooked up.

MH: So you close when you, either when it hits five o'clock or when you sell out?

BI: Yeah, we close at two on Saturday and one on Sunday and five o'clock the rest of the week, and—.

FI: We go to work then.

BI: Yeah, then that's when you go to work. You try to, you try to have it to where you're just about going to run out about that time of day. Sometimes it's hard to second guess and sometimes you'll run out at three o'clock or four o'clock in the afternoon but—.

FI: Haul our own wood, too. Haul our own wood, we do everything. Don't hire to get anything done. Do everything.

MH: So what does that mean when that's when the work begins, when you when you close?

That's when you start doing your prep work?

BI: Well, you do your prep work, you do your maintenance, you do your hauling the wood, you do the clean out the pit. You know, all the—

FI: *[Indiscernible]*

BI: When that brisket drips out, well we put sand in the bottom of it to soak up the grease, and then once a week every Monday morning here and when we're closed and we take all the grills out and we shovel all the sand out and we put all new sand in and get ready to go again for the next week. It's a seven day a week continuous job, but—.

FI: That shouldn't be bragging, because that's how it happens. We've been here how many years since sixty-four?

MH: Forty-three?

FI: Forty-two?

FI: In forty-three years we've never one time had to call the fire department.

BI: Forty-three years we've never had to call the fire department.

FI: Not one time.

MH: Wow.

BI: That's staying on top of your fire.

MH: Yeah, that is staying on top of your. Well, y'all heard about that place in Austin that just burned down.

BI: Yeah.

CK: Yeah, they said they, people in the neighborhood kept trying to call the fire department and they said, "well that's when they smoke."

BI: Yeah, they was smoking all right.

FI: You've got to be on top of it, you can't go off and play dominoes.

MH: Let's see—.

CK: Is this the original pit?

BI: That's the original pit. You can see the new bricks that's in it where we've had to do a little work on it. Actually, this part down here is the original pit.

CK: Do you know how old this building is, or when the building is from? Was it a house before?

BI: It was a duplex apartment.

MH: Oh.

BI: There's a whole other side over there.

[00:38:35]

SI: When we bought the building, Miss Trussell said it was a month, a month shy of them owning it for fifty years, and I don't know how long they lived in it before.

FI: What now?

BI: Miss Trussel sold us the building, that they lacked a month of them owning it 50 years.

FI: Oh, they owned it yeah.

MH: So you guys rented this space?

BI: We rented this space, it lacked two months of being thirty-five years.

MH: Wow.

BI: From the same landlord. Landlord never had a key. Didn't have a key to it. We done all the maintenance. We done I fixed all the problems. Paid our rent every month.

FI: No contract.

BI: No contract.

FI: No paper at all.

BI: No month-by-month contract, no nothing.

MH: So, why did you buy it after 35 years? Why didn't you buy it before?

BI: She wouldn't sell it.

MH: Oh, well, that makes sense. Wow. That's really interesting.

[00:39:30]

BI: Since, since we've bought it, well it's kind of our 401k plan. You know the more real estate value goes up, the more I hope to have to be able to have to retire on. Unless my daughter comes in and wants it, then there goes my retirement.

MH: So push that college degree.

BI: Yeah, the more I can push that college degree, the faster I'm going to get to retire.

MH: Great, well, I'm—.

CK: I think we're done.

MH: Yeah, ok, well, unless you have any other amazing stories that you'd like to tell us from the history of Inman's, I think we're able to wrap up.

FI: I rented for *[Indiscernible]*. When he bought this, he paid, he paid less—I paid more rent than he did for buying the place. *[Laughter]*

BI: He paid more rent in thirty-five years than I paid buying the whole land.

MH: That's why they say you should buy instead of rent. Now, your, Billy tells me that at night you make candy and you like to bake. What kind of candy do you make?

FI: Well I make all kinds of candy. Are you allergic to candy?

MH: No.

FI: I never heard anybody that come here for barbecue that don't eat meat. I don't know how to take this.

BI: He, he, helps my daughter and they cook together at night. And at our county stock show, we have a food show. This year she had three entries in the food show. She had a chocolate chip pecan pie, she had truffles, and she had a pineapple cake. She was first place in the candies division with her truffles, she was first place in her pie division with her pie, and she was fourth place in the cake division. And, and she went on to have grand champion baked goods with her truffles.

MH: She is a talented gal.

MH: These are fabulous.

CK: Yeah, they are. Thank you.

MH: Did you grow these strawberries yourself?

BI: H-E-B.

MH: Oh.

BI: But, we do have a strawberry farm out by our house. Sweet Berry Farms, and if you've never been out there, you need to go.

MH: Is that kind of a pick-it-yourself kind of place?

BI: Yeah, yep, you go in and they sell you a little old box, and then you go pick it yourself and when you get back up there, they've got the scales tallied for the weight of the box, and they just set the box up there and weigh it out and you buy them by the pound, but they raise some really, really, really good strawberries. And around Thanksgiving time they haul in truckloads of pumpkins and they do all the pumpkins and the face painting and all the stuff for kids, and it's a— like for the strawberry deal they got wagons and stuff, you put the kid in the wagon and drag him down the strawberry row.

MH: Oh, when does that start? Soon, right?

BI: Oh, it'll start pretty quick. They say mid March, so we'll see.

MH: So, that makes two business interests you have? The berry farm and—

BI: No, I don't own Sweet Berry Farms.

MH: Oh, that's not yours it's near your house.

BI: Yeah, it's just near my house, and some friends of mine own it, Dan and Gretchen Copeland. Dan's dad was the Baptist preacher here forever, forty-seven years, I guess. He was my preacher baptized me, married me, and just a—we been friends for a long time. Me and all the kids grew up together. So, it's, it's a neat deal.

FI: *[Indiscernible]*

BI: 4-H deal up here, and I made divinity. And the day I took it up there it was real cloudy, and the lady was questioning me. She said, “You sure you made this? I said, ‘yes ma'am, I made that.’” She said, “Well how'd you make that on a day like this, it's cloudy and we're having real heavy moisture.” I said “Oh, no ma'am, I made it yesterday while the sun was shining.” She didn't ask any more questions. But I got second or third place with it, and it brought sixty dollars at the auction, so.

MH: We're in the wrong business, Carly. Alright, well, so is that our. Okay, great.

[00:43:45]

[End Billy Inman]