

Gary Meyer and Becky Meyer
Meyer's Elgin Smokehouse—Elgin, Texas

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&
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The University of Texas at Austin

Group Members:
Marvin Bendele
Andrew Busch

[BEGIN INTERVIEW]

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Marvin Bendele: How is it? Check, check. All right here we go. Hello, this is Marvin Bendele. I'm here at Meyer's Elgin Smokehouse with Andrew Busch, my colleague, and Gary Meyer and Becky Meyer, proprietors of Meyer's Elgin Smokehouse. Today is June—July 17, 2007, Tuesday. Well, Mr. Meyer if I could get you just to say your name, and spell it, and give us your date of birth—just to check the levels real quick.

Gary Meyer: Gary Meyer. G-a-r-y M-e-y-e-r. Eleven, eleven, fifty eight.

MB: And Becky can you do the same?

Becky Meyer: Becky Meyer—my birthday is May 16, 1962.

MB: OK. How does that sound Andrew?

Andrew Busch: Sounds good.

MB: OK. All right well, we usually—we usually try to just kind of start off with a big question. So—what I'd like to just ask now is—since we're focusing on the restaurant today—next week we'll work on the sausage plant, I guess. How did the restaurant get started? When? How did it come about that you guys had it? And you know just—give me what you can.

BM: OK. Well, I'll go ahead and start. The restaurant was originally started by the late James Biggers in 1965. Meyers purchased the business from Dorothy Cartwright, and she was the sister of James Biggers—and reopened as Meyer's Elgin Smokehouse on Friday the thirteenth, actually—February 13, 1998.

MB: These people are in no relation to you guys? Did you guys purchase it later? Or—

GM: Yes. We purchased the restaurant on—and opened it on February 13, 1998 from the Biggers. And they were friends—the previous owner was friends of my father. And in the past he had entertained possibly purchasing it from him—in the past, but just never did anything on that notion, and we were the ones actually, after James passed away, that went ahead and purchased it from his sister.

MB: So, he was running the sausage plant way before this obviously. So, your father—

GM: Correct. Yes, Yes.

MB: So, when you guys bought this in '98, I guess, how long did it take to—well, first off, what do you do here? The restaurant—do you—does it have anything to do with selling the sausage, things like that?

GM: Sure, of course barbecue—that's our big thing here. We sell all of our products. We have a retail market where we sell all of our products that the sausage company manufactures in this particular outlet.

MB: OK. Do you do any of the barbecuing yourself?

GM: Well, I have had to when somebody is not here or what not, but we have, you know, cooks and what not that does all of that—here on a daily basis.

MB: What typically do you serve, I mean, meat-wise?

GM: Well, we serve—our main two items are—of course, the sausage is the biggest item we serve here, and then brisket. And then, after that, would probably be the ribs—ribs, chicken, and then turkey. So—

MB: Turkey—is it barbecued turkey?

GM: Yes. It's barbecued. We do things a little bit different here. We vacuum tumble—not vacuum—yeah, vacuum tumble all of our products except the sausage, and I don't think there are many other places out here that do this—it's a procedure we brought over here from the sausage company that we started doing jerky with to get it to take smoke better, and you know, when you run it through the smokehouse, it just comes out a better product. The season is pulled into the meat because as you're putting it into this machine, you pull a vacuum on it and you mix the

spices with water and the machine tumbles it round and round and the meat falls on itself and it causes it to open up and it absorbs the seasoning into the meat—whereas you get a better penetration of the seasoning than you would with the hand rub. You just can't match it. And that—that's one of the different things we do here from most other places.

MB: So, you said the vacuum tumbler—it allows the meat to hold smoke better?

GM: Yes, it just—we started with our jerky. It allowed the jerky to take smoke better. But here it pulls the seasoning into the meat. It does allow the meat to take smoke a little bit better also.

MB: OK. I guess my question then is—so you smoke it after you do this process?

00:04:57

GM: Yes. This is done before it goes on the barbecue pit. So, everything is run through the tumbler. Then it's—it's in a raw state when it's run through the tumbler. And then it's, of course, cooked.

MB: Do you have the—well, I guess—where do you—one of the questions—the person that was going to be here, Marsha—originally is working on barbecue pits—and one of her questions was—I haven't seen your barbecue pit yet—but where did it come from? Did you guys build it? And if you didn't, who did?

GM: Well, actually, the older pit we have here is a rotisserie that James Bigger, the previous owner—he had it built. Yeah, he had seen another pit somewhere else—a rotisserie and, kind of,

had a friend that was a super good machinist, and he built this pit for him. And we purchased another pit—actually, it's a Southern Pride Rotisserie and installed it probably a year after we opened the place. And so, we have two pits. And—the Southern Pride capacity—it's supposed to hold 1600 pounds of brisket. And the old pit probably 800 to 1000 it should hold. But it's kind of hard to stuff them that full. We try not to do that, you know, stuff them that full. In an emergency you could, but we run them a little bit less than that.

MB: The Southern Pride is the rotisserie?

GM: They're both rotisseries. They're both rotisseries, yes.

MB: Well, I guess one question we could ask you is—just to kind of stay with preparing—is where do you get the meat from that you barbecue here?

GM: Well, we buy from different suppliers. It's—we usually use—we use IBP, Blues, and just whichever suppliers is coming up with the product we need at the time, at the price we need. And of course all the sausage comes from Meyer's Sausage Company. And, that's pretty much it for the two suppliers.

[Recording pauses to replace batteries.]

MB: OK. Sorry about that. We're back from the battery replacement now. Let's see—where were we? Well, let me—let's just ask you—you know, obviously we're not asking for special

recipes or anything like that, but we kind of want to get that idea of who taught you barbecue. Where did you learn, kind of, you know, what do you do? When do you get up in the morning? When do you get up here? I know you're not cooking all the time, but who also cooks? Things like that. So—

GM: Well, we try to use pretty much the recipes from my father. He was a big time barbecuer and that's where we got most of our recipes. And the stuff that we didn't get from him, my brother Gregg Meyer—he is the R&D person. He comes up with all kinds of stuff. And it's usually good, what he comes up with. So, he's the person that comes up with the rest of the stuff. As far as getting up in the morning, it—we have no set times. It depends on what's going on. I might be up at two in the morning. I might be up at six. It just depends on the day and what's going on. Of course, I don't get up and come in here and start cooking. I might be at the sausage company or I might be here. You just never know. So, we have cooks that are here every day, and they usually arrive—they get here at about five o'clock in the morning and get things going—and getting ready for the day.

MB: Do you have one guy, like a pit master, that pretty much oversees everything outside around the pits?

GM: Well, we don't have—we have one main guy, *per se*. And then he has another one who is under him. And on his days off, the other cook handles the duties. But we have one guy that—oh, when we bought the restaurant, he was here and he was cooking for James and I believe he'd cooked for James for ten years before we bought the restaurant. So, he's—he's quite good—has

been doing this a long time. And he is very familiar with the pits. He was probably here when they installed that original old pit of James's. So, he's very familiar with what he's doing back there. He's good.

00:09:13

MB: Well, when you say that your father was the barbecue guy *[Laughs]*—when your father was the barbecue guy, did he just cook in back yard type thing?

GM: Yeah. Anywhere and everywhere. The fire departments would have these big feeds. He would cook. He would cook for people's weddings and stuff—not commercially, just to help and do it. And he loved to do it. They would get around and just—no telling what they'd be cooking. He'd always cook different things from mutton, to brisket, to sausage, to, you know, anything he might cook. And he just loved to do that. They would drink beer and cook, and just have a good old time.

BM: And actually, I just want to add, he cooked for our wedding. And, um, we got married in January 16 of 1982, and it was a freezing, cold, sleeting day and they were out there having to hold—

GM: Tarps

BM: Tarps. So, you know, the fire—I wasn't out there, you were telling me about it.

GM: Yeah. It was to keep the pits hot. They had to put tarps around it. The wind chill was zero, actually. And they were trying to cook at the SPJST [Slovanska Podporujici Jednota Statu Texas (Slavonic Benevolent Order of the State of Texas)] here in Elgin and it was zero and he—my mother actually told me, as much cooking as he had done, you know, over his lifetime, he was so nervous that this was not going to turn out because it was the first wedding of the family he had actually cooked for. And it's not like he hadn't done this a thousand times, but he was scared to death that everything was going to be burned up because of the wind—and run out of food and what not. And everything turned out great.

MB: Well, given the situation and the elements, it sounds like it was a pretty pressure-packed situation anyways. Well, so, do you pretty much carry on that tradition? Do you barbecue around town for people too? Or is that your brother that does that?

GM: Well, we don't have time to do that *[Laughs]*.

BM: We let the restaurant do the cooking *[Laughs]*.

GM: We've gotten spoiled actually. At Thanksgiving and what not now, we even cook our turkeys on the pit here and take them with us. It's just—we just don't have the actual time to do it. You know, when we're away from the restaurant, we're kind of away from the whole thing.

MB: Well, continuing in that vein of questioning, you know, most people, when they come into the restaurant, they get the outside—sit in the nice area out there and get the food. What goes on

behind the scenes, especially for you guys? I know it's a lot of the business part of it, but what are you guys doing here most of the day?

BM: Well, I'm the one that's here, you know, on the day-to-day basis. And basically, my job is bookkeeping and, you know, accounts receivable, accounts payable, you know, just everything. I'm just the one girl office deal, and—when I'm not in here, I'm, you know, monitoring the people out there and making sure, you know, that the customers are happy, that the managers are doing what they're supposed to be doing, and, uh, I mean, it's just—it's a job *[Laughs]*.

MB: You're here by yourself most of the day? Or do you have somebody answering the phone and things like that? Or are you just taking care of pretty much everything?

BM: Well as far as—well, we've got floor managers, you know. And basically I'm over the floor managers. So, you know, we give them the directions that, you know, they need to follow, and as far as answering the phone, I catch the phone during lunch. I do not leave at lunchtime because that's our time. Every day I'm here probably from, you know, eight something until five something. And other than going out and doing the bank, the post office, and all that, I'm here.

MB: So, you're pretty much the person that gets to answer all the big questions and solve all the problems day-to-day here.

BM: Yeah. The employee problems, you know, we rarely get complaints, but all the complaints come through me. I handle them. You know, I field them all because, you know, I tell the guys,

you know, when I need you, you better come, and you better come fast *[Laughs]*. And they're really good. I mean, they're primarily up at the sausage company because that takes, you know, a lot of their time. And so, I'm really the family member that is here every day, you know. And so, I try to handle, you know—and we get calls for catering and things like that. And a lot of people, they don't know, you know, because they're doing a wedding, and they don't know, you know, what all is involved in catering. So, I kind of just, you know, take the time—

GM: Figure out what they actually want. Because a lot of people don't know what they want...

BM: Yeah, what they want. I listen to them and take that extra time, you know, with them that the managers—the floor managers don't have because they're, you know, feeding the people as they come in, you know. You know, they're busy with the floor. So, I try to take that—I try to be the telephone voice.

MB: I noticed you guys open at ten in the morning. I didn't notice when you guys close. When is that?

00:14:49

BM: Well, Sunday is our early night. We close at seven. And Friday and Saturday we close at nine. And Monday through Thursday we close at eight.

MB: So, you're here pretty much all of those days?

BM: Monday through Friday, hopefully. On the weekends we do our own—we are the catering team, you know. So, myself and my husband Gary and our kids, you know, normally go out and we share that responsibility with Gregg, and his wife, and their kids.

MB: Well, cater—how much catering—how big is the catering business for you guys? Do you do it every weekend? And also, where do you do it? Just here in Elgin? Or into Austin?

BM: Well, May is our big time for catering, and you know we've got a lot of, you know, graduations and things like that. So, May is our pretty big month for catering. And so, normally we're kind of running, you know, with our tongues hanging out in May. And then it may bleed over a little bit to June, you know. And then, like in December, it's a lot of pickups—a lot of people coming into the restaurant to pick up food to take out to offices parties or things like that. And, um, we go all over—Austin, and just Temple, and I don't know what the radius is.

MB: This is for—people in Temple are asking you guys to cater parties there?

BM: Yes.

MB: That's a nice long way to go.

GM: *[Indiscernible]* We had one that actually called from Waco, and we were planning to go, but I don't know what happened with that job. We do quite a few—as you can see our board there, that's our catering jobs. And it's—you know, some months are bigger than others like

Becky was saying, but it's pretty much all out through the year that you have catering. A lot of the cold months and stuff it kind of slacks off a little, but when the weather's nice, people tend to have more parties and what not. And we'll do them. Our largest one to this day—we've served a thousand people in forty-five minutes.

BM: That was Grace Covenant—Grace Covenant Church in Austin.

GM: We—we've got quite a bit of practice at it. We've got pretty good at it. It's just, you know, once you get out to the job, the majority of the work is done because it's done behind the scenes at the restaurant, and everything is prepped here. Then you get out there, and the amount of food it takes for that many people is—it takes a lot. I mean to feed that many—and we do our catering basically self-serve so people can take however much they want. But we have to figure it so we don't run out. That's taken some time and adjustment on poundages to get that. But actually we found out on our catering—on the larger catering jobs of several hundred people, you come out better letting people try to serve themselves than you do trying to serve them the exact amount each. You'll probably wind up using less food if they serve themselves than if you put the same exact amount on each person's place that's going to—may waste half a plate. You know, it works out.

AB: Some people don't like to eat certain things.

GM: Sure, yeah. You might have a person come by and get a whole plate full of just potato salad [*Laughter*]. And you do have vegetarians that will come through and ask, “Do you have

anything besides meat?" Well, you know—you know, you have to pick the bacon out of the beans, you have bread, you have barbecue sauce, and potato salad, and that's about it. And actually we had—we did a catering job for a UT [The University of Texas at Austin] professor the other day, and there was some—I guess the guy was Muslim—he couldn't eat—he didn't want—he couldn't eat any pork to his religion. And I said, "Well our sausage is beef, but actually the casing on the sausage is pork casing. So, if you take a piece of sausage," because his friend was telling him he needed to try this sausage, it was so good. And I said, "Well what you need to do, is just take the sausage and peel the casing off of it, and then you can eat it. It's beef and then you won't have any pork with it." I guess, apparently he did that, and I saw him back in the line getting more sausage. And I asked him, "So, um, did you like that? Did you, um, peel the casing off?" He said, "Yeah, I liked it." But he said it's too good—he just ate the whole thing *[Laughter]*. He came back and got more sausage, so I guess he kind of was, um, kind of, just wanted to skip that part of his religion that day *[Laughter]*.

00:19:31

AB: How much meat to you guys cook just for the restaurant in an average day?

BM: Well, in a day—I ran some stats before y'all got here, uh, we—as far as the sausage is concerned—sausage is our main thing here, of course. Elgin is the sausage capital of Texas. We go through, in a week, 4000 pounds of sausage, in a week. And basically our brisket—we go through weekly about 3000 to 3500 pounds a week. And our ribs, 700 to 800 pounds a week.

AB: Wow.

BM: And then, you know, we also have run the chicken, the turkey, the pork steak, you know. But—but sausage is our main thing here.

MB: Does that change throughout the year? Is the summer really the big time for it? Or is it pretty steady?

BM: Summer is big.

GM: December.

BM: December is big.

GM: Yeah. There is some years actually that December is the biggest month of the year. You wouldn't think that, but, you know, you'd think summer is, you know, barbecue time. But we have a lot of Christmas tree farms here in Elgin, and people are coming through here like crazy—out cutting their own—it's a choose and cut—they go out and cut their own trees. And, I guess they're doing a lot of shopping, just out on the road, and it's—like Becky had said earlier, a lot of parties and people picking up stuff, and, you know, it's just extremely busy through the month of December.

MB: Well, so your clientele obviously in December probably could be from a lot of Austin people coming out to get trees or anywhere around I guess. What's the—I guess the clientele is

probably mixed, but what is the typical—do you guys have loyal customers that you guys see every week? And other than that, do you have a lot of people coming through, things like that?

BM: Yeah. We do—we do have loyal customers that we see every week, you know. But, um, a lot of just, you know, highway travelers.

MB: Really?

BM: Uh-huh.

MB: Well, any good stories about any of these loyal customers that we should know about?

BM: Oh *[Laughs]*.

MB: Never had anybody waiting at your door at eight A.M. to open up and get some barbecue *[Laughs]*?

BM: Yeah. They did. Well *[Laughs]*—

MB: Well, let's see, you talked about your dad. You used your dad's recipes. Have you guys tweaked them over the years or are you guys using everything he's done for years past?

GM: Oh, we have had—now, at the sausage company all the recipes are, you know, just the same as he did it. And we've taken his, you know, barbecue recipes and used them here. And my brother tweaks everything *[Laughs]*.

MB: He's research and development.

GM: Yes he is. Like I said, he's very good at it, and—and like our bean seasoning is the way my father did it, but he had—his was a little bit more complicated than ours. You know, to do on a day-to-day basis. We made ours a little bit simpler than his, but it's still very good beans. And so, you know, most everything is taken from him. And the new products, you know, are my brother's concoctions.

MB: What do you guys serve as sides here?

BM: We have, uh, potato salad, beans, coleslaw and creamed corn.

MB: And do you have special things that you serve occasionally? Or is that pretty much standard throughout the year?

BM: No. That's pretty much standard throughout the year. We've tried things like corn on the cob and, you know, things like that. It's just, you know, it's just, you know, they want the beans, potato salad, and coleslaw for sure with the barbecue.

AB: Uh-huh. I notice you guys serve breakfast tacos. How long have you been doing that and where did that come from?

BM: That started in, uh, 2002 when we added our drive-through on. And before then, we weren't doing any breakfast. You know, we purchased the place in '98, and, uh, then in 2002 is when we added the drive-through on, and then that is when also we started opening up at breakfast time—opening up the business at six A.M., you know, for the drive-through. And the drive-through is mainly, you know, the breakfast tacos, uh, with the sausage in there, eggs, cheese, potatoes, and, uh, then we also have in the drive-through the brisket and sausage in the morning because there are people—you know, we don't open the front until ten. So, you have people, you know, truck drivers and things like that, you know, we also have a walk-up window that they want to come in—I mean, not come in—but get something for the road. You know, so they can—they can actually drive their eighteen-wheeler through the drive-through *[Laughs]*.

GM: We have had an eighteen-wheeler come through the drive-through, and he had to actually get out of his truck and step down to the window. But, you know, in the past I drove a truck myself. So, I designed a drive-through where you could drive a truck and a trailer through. And he actually tested it. And it worked *[Laughs]*.

00:24:54

MB: Has he been the only one or is—

GM: Well, we have—I guess, as far as actually eighteen-wheelers, he's probably the only one that I've been told of that came through. We have others, you know, and large delivery trucks

and what not come through. But as far as actually an eighteen-wheeler, I think he's the only one. It's *[Laughs]*—it's designed, they can go through.

MB: That's great. Well, speaking of the side of the building, has it—it's a pretty large place, but has it been—is it pretty much the same way it is now as when you bought it, I guess? Or have you changed it a lot over the years, besides, of course, the drive-through?

GM: Yeah, um, actually when we bought the business, the part we're sitting in right now was not even open to the restaurant side. This was—this portion of the building—um, how many square foot is this?—I don't know it's probably 4000 square foot this side—that was—or 5000—that was designed to be a sausage plant. And James Biggers was, um, actually going to start producing his own sausage and selling wholesale to the—to the grocery chains just like my father did with the Meyer's Sausage. And that never panned out for him. He never opened it, but the place was set up as, you know, a sausage manufacturing facility. And there was refrigerator units on the roof that had been sitting there since 1980 that were brand new and never hooked up that we've hooked up and started running and use them as our coolers now. But now we had cut holes, access holes, from this part to the restaurant. And now this is our retail area and the line for the restaurant comes through here and into the restaurant. And as far as changes, yeah the serving line was, you know, just—basically, you had one register and, um, one line going through. And we did a bunch of remodeling on that how long ago? Two years?

BM: Uh-huh.

GM: Two years ago, and it's set up now where you can run up to four registers and have four lines going through it. And, um, just as far as general changes, we've tried to—we took in part of the convenience store that is on the opposite end of the building and added a party room that will seat about seventy or more people because we need the seating. And the drive-through added a bunch of square footage. And just as far as changing the bathrooms and what not. Just general—yeah, general—

MB: How many people does the place house now? I mean, how many people can you have in here at one time?

GM: Oh, probably—we can probably seat—is it two hundred? We could actually, if every seat was full—somewhere around two hundred.

MB: Well, oh—I did want to ask about the staff. How large is the staff here?

BM: We have about twenty-five employees. A lot of those are part-time. You know, high school kids, um, there are seven full-timers and myself counting one of them. You know, everybody else is counted as part-time.

MB: The cook—is he the longest running employee back? Or do you have other people who have been here longer? I guess, obviously he's been here the whole time with you guys.

BM: We have—

GM: He's probably the longest continuous employee here. Adam Cordova was also working here when we purchased the place and had been here—I'm not sure how many years he was here working for James before—

BM: I think he started while in high school.

MB: What does he do?

GM: He's one of our managers. Yeah, he's one of our managers. And also, one of our other managers, Robert Tedford, he just started with us, um, how many—five years ago?

BM: '04.

GM: '04. OK, so three years ago. And actually he had worked here—he had been working for Southside Meat Market, our competitor up the street for—um—ten or twelve years. And he left there and came back here because—and I didn't realize that—he had actually worked here for James for like—I don't know—fifteen years. And then went to Southside. So now he's kind of back where he started, and he's familiar with the place too. He knew how it was in the past and—

MB: Well, how many people does it take to run it daily? I mean, like, at one time, especially during the peak hours of the day.

BM: Oh, gosh. On Saturday—

MB: Approximately.

BM: We run two shifts.

GM: Twelve

BM: Yeah, we run two shifts. Run a morning shift then an afternoon shift.

GM: But at one time you'd probably have around twelve people on the floor, don't you? On the busy—

BM: Yeah. I mean, they all overlap. Like, you know, at the lunchtime and all that, we'll try to have twelve people.

MB: Wow. OK. Well, did you want to add something?

GM: Oh, I'm just—

MB: OK. Let's see here. You mentioned that your kids help you out when you do the catering. Do you think they will continue in the business when you guys retire, things like that? Or are they continuing now? I mean, are they working in it right now, besides the catering?

00:30:34

BM: Well, I don't know if we're ever going to retire *[Laughter]*. That's why we were laughing *[Laughter]*. You know, I don't know, um, you know, we talk about this quite often and, you know, our son right now is twenty-one. He's in college. Our daughter is seventeen. She's in high school. And your brother's kids are seventeen and ten—

GM: Eleven.

BM: Eleven, twelve, something like that. So, you know, we don't know, uh, you know—I read—I say this often to—when I came back to work in the family business, I read an article on, you know, family businesses and what it said was, you know, you have to have the passion to, you know, in yourself to work the business. If you don't have it, then you won't do well for the business, and the business won't, you know, succeed. And so, that's what I tell—that's what I tell our kids. You know, you don't know, you know, I said, "The way you feel when you're twenty is going to change probably when you're forty." *[Laughter]*. So—

MB: From what I remember, it changes from twenty to twenty-one *[Laughter]*

GM: And twenty-two to twenty-three. Correct. Correct.

MB: Well—

BM: There's no place right now that I'd rather be than here. I've worked in Austin and, you know, the fulfillment that, you know—I mean we work harder than we worked, you know, um—you know, for ourselves, we worked harder than we worked for, you know—but, you know, with the hours and everything like that, but, you know it's so rewarding to me.

MB: To have them working here or just working here in the family business yourself.

BM: Myself. Myself working—I'm speaking for myself *[Laughs]*.

MB: Well, I guess then, how is—how important is it to you guys to maybe, not your kids, but somebody in the family continues it later on when you guys are not doing it anymore? Is it that important or—

BM: Well—

GM: I think that's a bridge we'll cross when we get there. We tell our kids to go out and experience things now while you can and—and things change down the road. And, you know, it's hard—like you say from your twenties to forties, you know, your perspective on things change drastically. So, who knows? I mean, you know, the grass always looks greener on the other side of the fence until you're there and then you might want to come back.

BM: Well truly, when we got married, I wanted—I myself wanted to get out of Elgin *[Laughs]*.
And we moved to Austin for a year and then we were right back *[Laughs]*.

MB: And they could move to New York City for twenty years and come back and do this.

GM: Sure, sure.

MB: Well, is your mom still working in the business? Or—

GM: She's not—

MB: Is she retired?

GM: Yeah. She's kind of retired. She's not actively involved. And she's the President of the sausage company, but we're actually the ones that run the place.

AB: I was wondering, uh, if you guys participate in competitions ever? What are other kinds of accolades that the business has gotten?

BM: We, um, any contest that is brought to us, you know, we're going to get into it, you know. And, so, we have been voted, uh, best barbecue in Elgin now. The local newspaper runs a thing they started, I guess maybe three years ago. And, um, "best of the best." So, we hold the title for best barbecue for three consecutive years. And, um—

GM: Byron's. That was the big barbecue battle. Yeah, it was Byron Webber from, uh, yeah, Channel Forty-two. He's the head meteorologist there and I guess he's a big, big connoisseur of barbecue. He came up with this idea to have a—a Byron's—was it Barbecue Battle? I think that's what it was called, right? And yeah, and that was an ordeal there. There was—actually, the viewers of K-VUE would vote for—

00:35:13

MB: K-EYE.

GM: Yeah, K-EYE. I said K-VUE. Yeah, K-EYE. I didn't think that sounded right. K-EYE would vote online and, um—for their favorite barbecue place. And it came down to the end—it was—actually, Rudy's finished first, and we finished second. But it was a squeaker and so—it was really good. I mean, so, they're a lot bigger than us. So, I feel we did very well.

BM: With multiple locations and *[Laughter]*—

MB: Yeah. And in Austin too, I mean—

GM: Oh yeah! Yeah.

MB: There's probably some of those people that have never been here before. So—

GM: Actually, after the contest was over, Rudy's came and took out a whole page ad in Elgin to try to rub it in on us. And then we took out a whole page out congratulating them, being nice, and just trying to show them the way we were. Because we knew *[Laughter]*—

AB: Beat them with kindness.

GM: Yeah. There you go.

MB: Well, do you guys take your barbecue—your meat to cook-offs around the state?

GM: No, we don't. We don't do that. We have sometimes, you know, some teams that will get meat from us to take and cook and take our sausage and what not. But as far as us competing in the barbecue cook-offs, no we do not actually do that.

MB: So mostly just any types of competitions around the area that come up.

GM: Yes.

BM: There are local teams that—that do that in Elgin. And so—

MB: Do you—oh, local teams that have competitions here.

BM: Yeah. Yeah, local groups—local men that they, you know—

GM: *[Indiscernible]* go to the barbecue cook-offs and do that.

MB: Do you guys—I know that they have annual celebrations at Elgin, as do most small towns. Do you guys provide meat for that, or things like that? I don't know, do they have a Fourth of July festival, or something like that? No, they have some kind of Elgin—uh—pork, hog—

GM: Yeah. They have a Hogeye festival. Well, we don't actually—if we provide meat for those, it would be like different organizations selling sausage wraps and what not, and, you know, raising money for different things, and, you know, we'll provide them sausage and what not for that. And it's mainly, um, you know, just different non-profit organizations raising money for different items, you know, or different things. And we provide the meat for that.

MB: Are you guys involved in other aspects of the community like the schools and things like that? I guess that might fall under fund raisers, probably.

BM: Well, I'm involved—we're trying—we try to be as involved with our children as we can. You know, and, you know, do things with them. You know, the business takes—the businesses take so much of our time, uh, and I, um—I feel like if I—if I can't—as far as sitting on boards and things like that, we don't. I—I don't, um, because I don't have the time to—uh—to devote to that, you know. But—

GM: The barbecue association.

BM: Well, yeah. I'm on the board of directors of the Central Texas Barbecue Association, and, um, but—

MB: Well, I guess what I mean—not specifically you guys—I mean that Meyer's Elgin Smokehouse. I mean, does it—do you guys do things for the school, things like that? Like parties, I don't know.

GM: Fundraisers and what not.

BM: Well, um, we—of course, we donate. And we try to support both of our kids. Both of our kids were in band, so we try to support that. We offer—we—as far as donations are concerned, we—I get asked for donation probably a couple of times a week. So, what we try to do is, um—this is something that I came up with. We try to help everyone that asks. You know, we simply cannot donate to everything. So, what we do is we offer our sausage at a discounted price. We have a fundraising price, you know. So, um—and that tends to, you know, help a lot of—of people that, you know, that are trying to fundraise for whatever reason.

00:39:47

MB: Well, um, kind of going with the—I noticed you guys have shirts—Meyer's shirts and hats. Do you guys—you sell it here obviously in the store. But do you have an online store now?

BM: Uh-huh. Yes, it's www.meyerselginsausage.com, and you can go on there and I think they're reworking it now, but you can get our sausage, brisket—uh—shirts, hats, all that.

MB: So you can get the food also? Um—

BM: Yes, you can order it online.

MB: Really?

BM: Yes.

MB: And is it cooked and ready to eat and shipped to you that way. Or how—how does that work?

BM: The briskets are smoked; the sausage is the smoked sausage—um—

GM: Everything, um, our brisket, you know, is—is cooked—is fully smoked and cooked that you can get. Everything that's shipped comes from the sausage company because it's a federally inspected plant. You cannot ship out of an uninspected facility, um, like the restaurant, you know. They're just under the health department regulations. So, the—and to ship across state lines you have to be federally inspected, not just state inspected. So, the sausage company is federally inspected and can do that. We can ship pretty much anywhere. Um, and the sausage—we do not ship any of our raw sausage unless it would be a special—special request because it will not survive well. It has to be totally frozen and it would have to be next day delivery and that gets quite expensive to do that and—but most of our other products are all smoked and they

handle—can handle the shipping well. Actually the best times of year, is during the cooler months and Christmas is our a big time for shipping anyways.

MB: Do you ship out of the state often?

GM: Oh, yeah. We ship all over the United States. Yeah, right.

MB: Do you—I guess, do you have any people that *[Laughs]* have moved out of the area and just are jonesing for some Meyers barbecue?

GM: Oh yeah! Yeah, you have that all the time, you know, people that have, um, lived here and moved off to California or New York or wherever it may be, and—or have actually just happened to pass through here and eat it and decided they really liked it. And—and, you know, it works both ways.

AB: Yeah. I was wondering if you guys know when your families came to the area. And sort of what attachments you have to Elgin and Central Texas.

[Indiscernible]

MB: Approximately.

GM: Yeah.

BM: I don't know the year, um, Henry Meyer immigrated from Germany. And, um, brought the recipe, you know, for the sausage with him. I'm not sure—I don't have that down as the—

GM: Gregg is the—Gregg is the history person. He's got all the—Gregg and my mother have got all the exact dates and times. And my mother can tell you about every brother, sister, cousin, and *[Laughs]*.

AB: So this would be better to do next week then?

GM: Yeah, she's really the history person there.

MB: Well, we'll definitely get that next—now, is Henry—is that your dad or is that?

GM: No. That's a great-grandfather, yes.

MB: Well, let's see what else we have here. Oh, I've got a good question for you. And you may not have anything on this, but a lot of people have rituals for eating barbecue. Is there any certain things that, uh, not like praying over it or any—well, some people might do that, actually—in fact, there's a church in Huntsville that one of our—

00:43:23

GM: Church of the Holy Smoke, yeah *[Laughter]*.

MB: That's called. But, uh—

BM: *[Indiscernible]*.

MB: Well, uh, so is there any special way people are supposed to eat your barbecue or have you noticed any quirky things that people do here when they're doing it?

GM: No, you just see—you just—you just see the amounts of barbecue that people consume that's, you know, it's kind of hard to believe. I never really pay much attention to how they're eating that, but just the fact that they can eat that much *[Laughter]*.

MB: Well, what about—what about sauce? Do you—do you put sauce on the barbecue here or do you provide it for people?

GM: Yeah, we provide sauce here. We have, um—our barbecue sauce that we have here is actually my grandmother's recipe and we sell it, um, all over Texas. And it's shipped online too. You can order our barbecue sauce. And it's in, um, it's in all the HEBs [a regional grocery chain] in central Texas—well, statewide actually.

MB: Well, so—so it's cooked—the meat is cooked in kind of a dry rub type—

GM: Yeah, well, the meat is cooked, um, like I explained previously with the tumbler. Our seasoning is yeah—it's put on through the vacuum tumbler, and then the sauce is just—uh, we

don't put the sauce on our meat when we're cooking it. Although, a little bit of our sauce is probably in our chicken, uh, seasoning that my brother came up with that we tumble it with. There's all kinds of stuff from lemon juice, to chicken, to, I mean, to barbecue sauce, to I don't know what all. He's got a lot of different things in there.

MB: How long does it take to—to, I guess for a brisket—regular size brisket—how long does it take to cook?

GM: Well, we put—we put the briskets on in the evening, uh, five to five thirty in the evening. And a normal size brisket will probably be ready in the morning from probably around eight o'clock. And you might have some that will go until ten that, you know, a little bit larger. And they're left to cook all night long. They cook slow all night long. And so, you got to make sure to have enough for the day because if you run out there's no catching up on the brisket. You're just out.

MB: Do you put everything else on in the morning when you get here or is there other things that go on all night?

GM: No, the brisket is the only thing that cooks all night long because it takes so long to cook it. I mean most other sausage, you know, is cooked in about an hour. And your ribs and chicken and stuff, you know, turkey two hours to three hours on some of the other items. But, you know, there's no way on the brisket. It has to cook, probably, fifteen hours.

MB: Right, right. Do you have anybody that—that is here overnight or is it on its own?

GM: It's kind of on its own overnight. It's just our pits are—we take very good care of our pits, you know, to keep it from—because, you know, the horror, of course, of barbecue places is a fire. And, you know, that's why we maintain our pits so well that, um, you know, I hate to say this but we haven't had one yet *[Knocks on wood]*. Um, you know, it's always a possibility.

MB: Right. And it's on a rotisserie so it's spinning the whole time.

GM: Right. Yes, it's on a rotisserie with wood smoking all night.

MB: Wow. We'll let's see here, um—(to Andrew) Do you have any other questions? Well, um, do you have any other things on your notes there Becky that you want to add? It—so, well, I guess—I'm not sure I have any other questions at the moment. I'm sure I'll think of something by next week and follow up on anything? But if you have any stories or anything—No? All right, well, I guess that will be it. Thank you guys. We really appreciate your time here. And I guess—will I see either one of you next week?

BM: Probably not.

MB: Probably not? OK.

GM: You'll see the other half *[Laughter]*.

MB: All right, sounds great. Well, thank you very much.

[END]

00:47:20