

WAYNE SCHEXNAYDER
Schexnayder's Acadian Foods - Hammond, LA

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Date: November 8, 2005
Location: Schexnayder's Acadian Foods – Kenner, LA
Interviewer: Laura Westbrook, University of New Orleans
Length: 59 minutes
Project: Gulf Coast Foodways Renaissance Project/Hurricane Katrina

[Begin Wayne Schexnayder]

0:00:00.0

Laura Westbrook: I am visiting with Chef Wayne Mark Schexnayder at his workplace, where Schexnayder's Acadian Foods are produced. The interviewer is Laura Westbrook and the date is November 8, 2005. Wayne, you were saying that your family has lived in Hahnville for--?

0:00:26.9

WS: Hahnville, in St. Charles Parish, is the Parish seat and in French it's called "Cote des Allemandes," which means the German Coast. My family has been here since the early 1700s.

0:00:41.2

LW: Were they involved with the sugar business?

0:00:45.8

WS: No; they were German farmers that were brought there by the French to farm, to start a colony--a new colony.

0:00:54.1

LW: I see.

0:00:54.7

WS: And it was three original settlements, three German settlements along the river in St. Charles Parish. The Schexnayders were one of the first families in Louisiana.

0:01:11.5

LW: That's something people don't know a whole lot about.

0:01:13.8

WS: I think--I want to say it's the third oldest settlement in the state after New Orleans and Natchitoches.

0:01:25.7

LW: --I've heard some people theorize that the Cajun, the famous Cajun sausage traditions actually came from the German sausage tradition--that Cajuns learned a lot about sausage making from their German neighbors. Have you ever heard people talk about that?

0:01:45.3

WS: Well it in this area it had to be because my family always made andouille, which is more of a German type sausage. And the Cajun coast, which is St. James Parish and going west or southwest, supposedly came in 1765. So they came a whole lot later than my German ancestors.

0:02:15.7

LW: Mmm-hmm. Are there any stories in your family about some of those early settlers and their experiences?

0:02:24.0

WS: Well, I remember some things my grandfather and grandmother told me about; they worked so hard they didn't live long. They died in their mid-50s you know--they worked real hard. The elements--the mosquitoes, the wild animals, the Indians--it was a hard life.

0:02:49.6

LW: It was the frontier for them.

0:02:50.4

WS: Right, right; but in other ways they lived a good life, you know. They raised fresh vegetables. I don't know what year, but they also told me that the German farmers on the German coast kept New Orleans from starving in one period in time because of the fresh produce and the milk and cheeses and that type of thing.

0:03:16.0

LW: Yes; I had heard that too.

0:03:16.5

WS: What year it was I don't know but--.

0:03:21.7

LW: How did you learn to cook, and how did you get interested in it? Was it something that was in your family?

0:03:32.4

WS: [*Sighs*] Well, two reasons--I come from a family that cooks. Everybody in my family cooks, especially my grandmother was a great cook, my mother, my grandmother on my mother's side; but we were born and raised in Hahnville which was my dad's side of the family.

But the way I really started cooking, believe it or not, was I used to be a competitive body-builder--

0:04:05.2

LW: I believe it--the pictures. [*gestures toward wall of memorabilia and family photos*]

0:04:07.3

WS: Years ago when I was on a diet, my mother cooked for the family and everything she cooked I basically couldn't eat. So I kind of started cooking my own meals, so in the off-season when I wasn't competing, when I wanted to eat something good then I started cooking some other dishes and that's basically how I got started. And then I opened up a small catering company on weekends while I worked in the supermarket business, and on weekends I would do small catering jobs. And then I eventually went to work in the French Quarters for eleven years as a chef and I stayed there and then I bought this--this business.

0:04:51.5

LW: Uh-hm; and what was the restaurant where you worked?

0:04:53.8

WS: The French Market Restaurant and Bar on Decatur and St. Philip.

0:04:57.1

LW: That must have been pretty busy.

0:04:57.9

WS: Very busy.

0:05:00.1

LW: What was it like? Was it mostly tourists who came in or--?

0:05:06.3

WS: Pretty much--pretty much a lot of tourists, but we had a lot of repeat business. We had a Cajun Creole menu and we made everything from scratch—etouffee, shrimp Creole, crawfish pies, oysters Bienville, oyster Rockefeller, sweet potato pecan pies, bread pudding--I mean everything was made from scratch.

0:05:29.4

LW: What did you find were the newcomers' expectations of Cajun and Creole cooking?

0:05:40.9

WS: Well, one big fallacy everyone had was that Cajun food was supposed to be so hot that you really couldn't enjoy it, which is really a misconception about Cajun food that I was born and raised on. We never did really cook that hot, you know, where you couldn't enjoy it, but some people just have it in their minds that Cajun food is like having a sticker in your tongue or something.

0:06:11.5

LW: Hmmm.

0:06:14.4

WS: But it's just a misconception.

0:06:15.3

LW: Well where do you think that comes from?

0:06:17.2

WS: Well in the southwestern states they do cook spicier than what we do, but the difference is that when people say seasoning, you know, if you say seasoning where I'm from, people will say onions, bell peppers, celery, you know parsley, green onions, and garlic. If you say seasoning there they're going to say pepper, cayenne pepper, so everyone has their own definition of seasonings, you know. You look at our gumbo and it's just a ton of seasoning floating on top of it; over there it's no seasoning and it's peppered, so--so roux and ingredients, and the filling, whatever it is--chicken or seafood or whatever.

0:07:07.5

LW: Yeah; I wonder if that's just popularized by Popeye's, or places that--.

0:07:11.8

WS: It's Paul Prudhomme.

0:07:13.7

LW: You think?

0:07:14.1

WS: Probably; he did it. Blame it on him.

0:07:17.3

LW: [*Laughs*] We'll just say that.

0:07:19.6

WS: Blame it on him.

0:07:22.0

LW: So--so you had a cooking family; what do you remember that your grandmother made?
What were some of your favorite things?

0:07:28.4

WS: Oh God; she would make you hurt yourself when you went to her house. [*Laughs*]
Chicken and andouille gumbo, smothered pork roast, wild game, crème puffs, jelly rolls.

0:07:45.1

LW: Ah, so she cooked traditional foods and she also baked?

0:07:52.2

WS: Oh she did it all; I'm serious. She was a phenomenal cook.

0:07:58.1

LW: Yes?

0:07:58.4

WS: And everybody knew it.

0:08:00.7

LW: Uh-hm; well what were some of the first things that you cooked [*Phone Rings*] when you first--you want to catch that?

0:08:06.2

WS: Mostly wild game you know because we're--you know we're like the--. [*Phone Rings*] If you smell beer it's me.

0:08:44.5

LW: [*Laughs*]

Recording is stopped while Chef Wayne answers the phone.

0:09:10.9

WS: You do look like your dad but--you don't look like your dad.

0:09:15.1

LW: When we first--

0:09:14.6

WS: So I don't know; I never saw your mother.

0:09:17.4

LW: I don't look like her.

0:09:18.6

WS: I mean you have your dad's complexion and hair.

LW: When I was about I don't know--let's see; I was six when we moved into a new neighborhood--.

0:09:38.2

WS: Is your dad and them from here though?

0:09:41.0

LW: No; my dad is from--well his--his family--

0:09:43.0

WS: I mean the family.

0:09:43.1

LW: --is from--his dad is from the Natchitoches area and his mom is from around Florien.

0:09:47.7

WS: Really?

0:09:52.0

LW: Florien, Louisiana; it's not too far from Natchitoches-- about an hour away.

0:09:57.9

WS: Okay; so they--they're like--

0:09:59.1

LW: They're from the Northeast.

0:09:59.7

WS: The Northern part of the state?

0:10:01.2

LW: Yes; and my grandfather--my dad's dad had 12 brothers and sisters, so there are Westbrooks all over the place.

0:10:10.6

WS: Well my grandmother's family is the Champaignes; they're big--like 15 people--15 kids.

0:10:18.3

LW: Yeah; we don't even know all of them 'cause my dad keeps in touch with his parents and the people that are close to them and his brother, but he doesn't keep track of all those people. So when I went to Riverdale High School with a girl named Teresa Westbrook--.

0:10:34.8

WS: You went to Riverdale? That's where you went to school?

0:10:37.8

LW: Uh-hm; and--

0:10:38.2

WS: Was Miss Fricke there when you went there? Nah, she left.

0:10:42.4

LW: It sounds familiar but--

0:10:44.1

WS: You're too young; she was probably gone. She was probably gone.

0:10:46.0

LW: I graduated high school in '79.

0:10:46.7

WS: She was the Music--

0:10:48.8

LW: But I didn't take Music there; so--.

0:10:52.6

WS: No; Miss Fricke was at Hahnville already.

0:10:54.8

LW: Oh okay.

0:10:56.0

WS: She was the Music teacher.

0:10:58.7

LW: Hmm; I didn't take Music.

0:11:00.0

WS: A cappella choir and whatever you want to call it.

0:11:02.1

LW: Mmm-hmmm.

0:11:01.8

WS: She tried to recruit me, but--

0:11:05.5

LW: [*Laughs*] Not a singer?

0:11:06.4

WS: Uh-um.

0:11:06.8

LW: I was in the Chorus for--through junior high and--but then I didn't have the voice really. I was just--I was doing it 'cause I liked it.

0:11:16.4

WS: She wanted me to be baritone or you know, like the--the deep.

0:11:19.3

LW: Yeah; once it got to the point where you had to really have a good voice to go on then I ended up dropping. And my dad is a singer and my mom used to sing with the Opera Chorus.

0:11:32.6

WS: Really?

0:11:33.2

LW: She's really good; and I think that was one of the saddest things for my mom was that she had two daughters--neither of us can sing and we're strictly for the shower or the car and we love to sing, but she doesn't want to hear it.

0:11:47.6

WS: My daughter does too; she has a little waterproof radio that she--in the shower and she's always singing.

0:11:57.2

LW: [*Laughs*] Well it's fun to hear if she doesn't know you're listening I guess. Let's see; while--while the tape recorder is off let me think about what I want to ask you about 'cause I don't want to waste your time. What we're trying to get at is to sort of--to get a picture of what you do, how you got started and why you do what you do, and then also to look at--

0:12:25.4

WS: I don't know why.

0:12:27.2

LW: You don't know why?

0:12:29.2

WS: Right now I don't know why.

0:12:31.0

LW: Yeah; I know--that's--we're all saying that.

0:12:32.0

WS: [*Laughs*] My wife is about to go crazy, you know, because *I'm* about to go crazy because my--my business has totally changed.

0:12:43.0

LW: Yes; well, I don't know if you've heard about the other vendors at the Farmers' Market--

0:12:46.8

WS: I'm sure everybody else's has too. I mean that's why I have some guys here that's you know--making sausage because their company was in Chalmette and it totally got wiped out. So I'm letting them--

0:12:57.7

LW: So you're helping them by--?

0:12:59.2

WS: --use my building for a couple days a week.

0:13:02.2

LW: That's--that's wonderful.

0:13:03.1

WS: Because they're under USDA inspection also.

0:13:07.0

Recorder is turned off while Chef Wayne takes a phone call.

0:16:49.4

LW: Okay; I'm going to turn this back on and I'm going to ask you about some of the first things you started cooking and how you got into the repertoire that you developed and then I'll ask you about the storm experiences and how you are noticing things changing and--and then how you would like to see things get rebuilt.

0:17:15.7

WS: Okay.

0:17:19.0

LW: Does that seem okay? All right; okay we're back. So when you first started cooking among a cooking family, what were some of the first things you learned to cook, like when you were a child the first time you were allowed in the kitchen? A lot of people say things like, "The first time I was allowed in the kitchen I could make biscuits and that was all my mother would allow me to touch." What was your experience when you first started learning to cook?

0:17:51.7

WS: Well, we had a lot of different breakfast items that we used to--well that my grandmother and my mother and family used to make and one of them was galette, which was a fried dough. I'm sure you've heard of a galette. Not many people know what a galette is, but it's the official doughnut of St. Charles Parish and it's a fried dough. It's kind of like a French market doughnut but it's not hollow on the inside. It's full, it's heavy, and it's cut in a rectangular shape with a slit in the middle. So it's rolled out, cut in a rectangular shape with a slit in the middle, and then it's fried. And instead of putting--when we grew up didn't put the powdered sugar; we always had cane syrup 'cause we were in the sugar cane area, so we always had cane syrup. So that, and maybe some omelets. But later on in life it was a lot of wild game, roast duck, alligator sauce pecan, shrimp stew, crawfish stew—you know, the staples.

0:19:16.0

LW: In your family, were there certain kinds of cooking that the men did versus the women?

0:19:27.5

WS: Well, we did a lot of the boiling--crab boils, shrimp boils, but my dad and my grandfather always fried catfish that was caught fresh out of Lake Des Allemandes; we had a camp on the District Canal, which was the main canal that went into Lake Des Allemandes, and my dad would get his five days off from Shell and we would spend the five days at the camp and we would hunt and fish.

0:19:57.3

LW: Now, who went to the camp--just the men or--?

0:19:58.5

WS: The whole family.

0:19:59.8

LW: The whole family went?

0:20:00.7

WS: The whole family, relatives; it was a club so the club members went, so it was a pretty big social outing.

0:20:11.1

LW: Mmm-hmm?

0:20:11.6

WS: For the weekend or whenever we went, but we also went with just our family or just me and my dad. We'd go spend a few days--hunt and fish, you know.

0:20:24.4

LW: About what time would ya'll get up in the morning?

0:20:26.2

WS: Early. Three-thirty, four o'clock to go duck hunting. And that's--that's normal.

0:20:35.6

LW: And about how long would your day be? When would you come back?

0:20:38.9

WS: Well we would be back pretty early--maybe ten, ten-thirty in the morning, and then we would maybe cook lunch and maybe do an evening hunt, or go fishing or raise trot lines or whatever--whatever we had on the agenda.

0:20:57.6

LW: When the whole family went, what do you think the women were doing while ya'll were out?

0:21:04.0

WS: Gossiping, peeling potatoes for potato salad maybe, helping in the kitchen--you know, keeping the camp clean.

0:21:17.6

LW: When you would go fishing and there would be a big group of you, how would that work? Would you all bring the fish in and the family would--process them, clean them?

0:21:28.5

WS: The men would normally clean everything.

0:21:32.9

LW: [*Laughs*] And then--well of course ya'll probably went to bed pretty early. Was there music; did people in your family play music at all or--?

0:21:42.4

WS: Oh--

0:21:43.6

LW: Would there be other people around?

0:21:44.6

WS: Oh not really--not really.

0:21:45.9

LW: So it would be kind of a quiet time?

0:21:46.8

WS: Pretty much.

0:21:47.9

LW: Except for all the talking and laughing probably.

0:21:50.6

WS: Right; uh-hm!

0:21:51.7

LW: Are your family big story-tellers or visitors?

0:21:54.7

WS: My great-uncles were on my grandmother's side, my dad's side.

0:22:00.9

LW: Were there particular people--since you did have a big family--did you have particular relatives when you were young that you really looked forward to visiting with? [*Phone Rings*]

0:22:38.1

I had two uncles that both lived at Oak Alley Plantation; so I spent a lot of my childhood days—well, my vacations during the summertime--at Oak Alley Plantation.

0:22:53.9

LW: How did they manage to do that?

0:22:56.1

WS: Well, my Uncle Paul was the manager and my Uncle Camille--who was my great-uncle, my grandmother's brother--he was the groundskeeper, and they both lived on the grounds of the Plantation, so I visited many, many times. I spent my summers there sometimes; they raised Santa Gertrudis cattle and they had a big cane-field plantation.

0:23:30.0

LW: And what was it about them that made you really look forward to spending time with them?

0:23:34.3

WS: Well, they were a lot of fun and they were good to me and just--good people, you know.

0:23:43.2

LW: You said you had a couple uncles who were really good story-tellers. Were--was it them?

0:23:50.3

WS: One of them; uh-hm.

0:23:50.8

LW: One of them.

0:23:54.5

WS: And we would--the Creole Queen would come there and--is it--yeah; the Creole Queen.

0:23:59.5

LW: The Creole Queen, the paddle wheeler?

0:24:01.1

WS: The paddle wheeler would dock on a Sunday and we would go on a boat and we would go
crawfishing in a swamp in the back and ride horses in the arena--.

0:24:14.9

LW: That sounds wonderful.

0:24:16.9

WS: As a matter of fact, this is [*pointing out photograph*]--this is my Uncle Paul.

0:24:29.9

LW: He looks like a cowboy in a movie.

0:24:32.9

WS: Definitely. I wish I could show you--. I'm going to try and find one.

0:24:47.4

LW: You know I may ask you later if it would be possible to make copies of some of these for the exhibit if it will include things like this--I'll make a note that you have these.

0:24:59.1

WS: This is some baby--baby horses, but I'm trying to find one that--that has plantation in the background when it was old.

0:25:09.7

LW: Is this you that you can see part of?

0:25:14.2

WS: No. They had beautiful horses--I mean beautiful.

0:25:17.4

LW: And did--your uncle raised horses?

0:25:20.3

WS: Yeah; uh-hm.

0:25:21.4

LW: [*looking at pictures of Wayne's uncles with horses at the plantation*] Oh my goodness.

0:25:23.1

WS: Yeah; he raised quarter horses and thoroughbreds. I'm trying to find one that has the plantation house and now that I want it--they've got some good ones in here. This is the arena; that's the arena that we used to have to cut the horses to.

0:25:52.9

LW: Uh-hm; that's a really nice shot.

0:26:01.8

WS: And I had a picture of Mrs. Stewart, the lady who owned Oak Alley, but I had it reproduced because it was in pretty bad shape--this is the big house; you can see part of it, not--not the one I'm looking for, but--.

0:26:20.5

LW: And is this you?

0:26:21.1

WS: Yeah; see the plantation in the background?

0:26:23.2

LW: Yeah; you can see the distinctive color and the columns in this one. It's a really nice picture.

0:26:31.5

WS: Uh-hm; well this is before it was fixed up.

0:26:35.6

LW: I like it.

0:26:36.6

WS: Yeah, I like it; this is where the Visitor Center is now--if you go to Oak Alley now this house is where you would check in and pay.

0:26:54.2

LW: Yes; before you go in?

0:26:54.2

WS: Right; uh-hm. But I'm trying to find--

0:27:04.5

LW: And what was it used for at--at this time?

0:27:08.9

WS: The plantation?

0:27:10.7

LW: This building?

0:27:13.6

WS: This was a residence for both of my uncles. Have you ever been there lately?

0:27:27.3

LW: Not within the last three years.

0:27:29.5

WS: Okay. Well, my uncle lived where the gift shop is now, so that was where I used to stay.

0:27:36.9

LW: So when you park and you go in it's--

0:27:40.6

WS: You know, when you come around, it's totally different now. [*Pointing out photograph*]
You'd see big cane reeds on both sides of the road; I mean it looked like an exotic garden when you would come through and the turn was so tight that you'd have to blow your horn to make sure somebody else wasn't coming in or going--you know, if you were coming in and they were going out. We used to swim in the swimming pool; they had a swimming pool. I had a blast; I tell you--.

0:28:12.3

LW: It must have been really special to have--

0:28:12.9

WS: It was.

0:28:13.6

LW: --access to that place and it was kind of secret; it wasn't fixed up yet so it looked really--.

0:28:19.2

WS: Well, and Mrs. Stewart loved my sister, Sheila, and my sister Sheila would go spend the weekend with her at the big house. They used to call it "the big house" and she'd stay in the East Room. She had a special room.

0:28:37.4

LW: How many brothers and sisters do you have?

0:28:40.3

WS: I have--well my sister was killed in an automobile accident four years ago but I have--I have two brothers, so we have four.

0:28:50.5

LW: Uh-hm; yes.

0:28:54.3

WS: This--I cannot find these pictures that I'm looking for--there's two hundred of them, so you can imagine trying to find them.

0:29:07.9

LW: Was 4-H--were those sorts of things big around here that kids would participate in?

0:29:13.5

WS: Well, in Hahnville--yeah; it still is.

0:29:16.0

LW: Uh-hm; were you active with them with the horses and livestock?

0:29:20.3

WS: When we were younger, oh yeah!

0:29:21.7

LW: How did you participate?

0:29:22.9

WS: I was born basically on a farm, you know. We had cattle, we had milk cows, we had chickens, we raised quarter horses and thoroughbreds. My grandpa had a big, big garden; we grew our own corn; we had our own mill.

0:29:43.8

LW: Did you have jobs that you had to do related to that?

0:29:45.9

WS: Oh yeah; we fed the animals in the morning. [*Finding photo*] This is one of his famous horses that he raised from the Super Charger Stud which was a running quarter horse and it was really, really popular in those days.

0:30:10.8

LW: That's a beautiful animal.

0:30:12.1

WS: Well they--he was beautiful, I mean beautiful. See how pretty he is?

0:30:20.4

LW: So before you went to school--

0:30:21.1

WS: That's him; that's the same.

0:30:22.3

LW: --in the morning you would get up and--?

0:30:24.0

WS: We used to have to get up and feed the horses.

0:30:30.1

LW: Uh-hm; and did you mind that when you were school-aged?

0:30:34.9

WS: No, no; we loved it. That's his--that's his sons, my Uncle Richard and my Uncle Joe.

0:30:46.2

LW: And--and the three children? [*Laughs*] Horses seem to be such good parents.

0:31:03.6

WS: Well they are. I still want one; I still want a farm.

0:31:11.8

LW: Uh-hm; do you--do you think you might go back to that one day?

0:31:16.7

WS: Well, maybe.

0:31:17.9

LW: If you had your druthers?

0:31:19.9

WS: Well, I have 10 acres in Covington. I have a beautiful piece of property in Covington and I always wanted to have a farm with animals and a garden or a greenhouse. I like the Farmers Market concept but I just don't have time for it. I mean the vegetable part of it.

0:31:39.8

LW: Mmm-hmm.

0:31:40.4

WS: Like I wanted to do a mushroom greenhouse; well it's a different type. It's a--you know they're grown in the dark.

0:31:51.4

LW: Yes.

0:31:52.8

WS: But the greenhouse is about ninety thousand dollars to grow mushrooms.

0:31:59.6

LW: You'd have to sell a lot of mushrooms to turn a profit with that.

0:32:02.6

WS: Yeah; the whole program is about ninety thousand dollars.

0:32:07.9

LW: I could ask you so much about farming that I may have to come back and talk to you again another time.

0:32:17.4

WS: Okay.

0:32:18.9

LW: Let me ask you a little bit about your business as you developed it here. We had talked about how you ended up being--

0:32:34.8

WS: How did I start?

0:32:36.4

LW: --a chef in the French Quarter, and that you decided that maybe having your own business would be something you would be more interested in than working in the Quarter? [*Both laugh*]
How did that happen?

0:32:52.7

WS: Well I just got tired of making money for everybody. I just said, well, I need to make some for myself, so that's basically how it happened.

0:33:00.3

LW: And how did you find this place?

0:33:02.9

WS: A friend of mine told me about it, and I came and talked to the owner and he wanted to get out. At first he wanted way too much money for it and then I kind of waited and he--I don't think he really found anybody that was interested in it--and then I came back a few months later and we struck a deal.

0:33:27.3

LW: That was quite an investment for you, though, to leave something established where you were really well known, and to invest in all this equipment and hiring people on your own.

0:33:43.5

WS: It was a big gamble.

0:33:44.0

LW: That must have been--

0:33:45.1

WS: I took a gamble and everybody thought I was crazy.

0:33:47.4

LW: Really?

0:33:48.1

WS: And I think everybody really still thinks I'm crazy, but so far I've been successful--until the storm hit. [*Laughs*]

0:33:56.6

LW: How have things changed? When you heard the news about the storm, how did you prepare for it?

0:34:06.4

WS: There is no way to prepare for it.

0:34:08.6

LW: So what did you do?

0:34:09.0

WS: Mentally, you know, if you--[*sighs*]--it's a big mess; I'll tell you. I lost about ninety percent of my business.

0:34:23.2

LW: Oh are there--were there preparations? Because we've had big storms before, not huge like this one--

0:34:29.6

WS: Right; but we've always been able to come back in two or three days.

0:34:31.9

LW: What do you normally do in your business before a storm? Are there special ways that you take care of the equipment or do you have storm doors that you can close?

0:34:46.0

WS: Here, really nothing, because we don't have windows and we have one loading door but there's no windows in the plant so there's nothing really you can do. The only thing you can wish for is that the power stays on. I lost about six thousand pounds of product out of my coolers and freezers that I had to throw away. So I mean it was a big mess; it wasn't as bad as

some other people 'cause I got in quick and we got everything out, and everything that I had was vacuum-packed so it didn't drip, and I didn't have a big physical mess.

0:35:23.6

LW: So you didn't have the smelly refrigerator syndrome that other people had?

0:35:26.6

WS: No--no way. And I started moving closer; I was in Houston and I came back and then I went to Denham Springs and I kept moving, you know, so when I got a chance to get in, I got in and took care of my--you know what I had--.

0:35:42.0

LW: When did you all leave?

0:35:42.4

WS: The Saturday before--I had a catering job that morning and they closed where we were having the catering job, Lafreniere Park, so I had to bring all of the food and load it in this lady's van so she could take it to Belle Chasse. She was from Belle Chasse and they had already evacuated Belle Chasse that Saturday morning, so once I got her taken care of--

0:36:11.1

LW: You did the hand-off?

0:36:12.7

WS: Right; I did the hand-off and then finished cleaning up and doing what I had to do here, and then we left. We left around four o'clock Saturday evening.

0:36:22.0

LW: Uh-hm; and you went to Houston?

0:36:23.3

WS: I went to Houston--yeah.

0:36:24.3

LW: And how long were you in Houston?

0:36:28.9

WS: I was in Houston for four days, and then I was in Beaumont for two days, and I was in Denham Springs for a week.

0:36:42.5

LW: Was your whole family with you?

0:36:43.7

WS: Uh-hm; my wife and two kids.

0:36:46.0

LW: So you all went to hotels and just--just transferred around?

0:36:49.6

WS: Right; uh-hm.

0:36:51.8

LW: And when you got back, you said, it wasn't too bad in terms of the clean-up you had to do.

0:37:03.0

WS: Well it was a lot of work but, I mean, it wasn't as bad as some other people. I mean I know some people that really couldn't even open because their coolers and freezers were having maggots and it was just a big--big mess. So that's why I came in early--as soon as possible.

0:37:19.8

LW: Because you--you knew?

0:37:22.5

WS: Oh, I knew.

0:37:24.1

LW: Now, you did lose a lot--you lost everything that was here?

0:37:29.2

WS: Everything--everything that I had processed, yeah.

0:37:31.7

LW: Yes?

0:37:31.9

WS: Yeah; about six thousand pounds.

0:37:34.2

LW: But that was just the beginning of--.

0:37:39.4

WS: That was the beginning of the horror. [*Laughs*] The horror of reality--. I'm laughing so I don't cry.

0:37:47.5

LW: What have you been seeing in terms of how the market is changed now?

0:37:59.3

WS: Well, there is no market. Or a very limited market.

0:38:04.8

LW: Before the storm you were supplying stores, you were doing catering and also processing products to sell?

0:38:12.4

WS: Right; and we sold--you know we sold to the city, we sold to the inner city; we didn't ourselves, but our--our other, you know--[*Sighs*]*--our other delivery people that bought from us.*

0:38:27.0

LW: And who were your buyers? Who would buy from Schexnayder's?

0:38:32.9

WS: Well, we had independent people that worked for themselves that bought from us that sold in the city and to outlying areas and then I had, and still do, our out of state accounts.

0:38:48.7

LW: Uh-hm; so markets would buy from ya'll?

0:38:53.0

WS: You mean like supermarkets?

0:38:56.3

LW: You said independent folks would buy from you. You mean for themselves or--?

0:39:03.5

WS: No; other distributors would buy and resell.

0:39:08.5

LW: So you'd sell to distributors and then they would sell to markets and individuals?

0:39:11.6

WS: Right; supermarkets and the corner grocery stores and the smaller people. [*Phone Rings*]

And then I had a driver who took care of the big supermarkets, you know, like Save-A-Center and Winn Dixie.

0:39:30.1

*[Phone Conversation: Schexnayder's. Where y'at, Brian? **How you doing?** Oh I guess okay, I guess--just--just hanging in there you know; what you doing? Looking for some more product? The best one we ever had. **Really?** Yeah. They slammed us for four days straight. And I needed it, too--so. [Laughs] What--what you looking for? Okay; so like 300 total? **Yeah.** Okay, all right; 50 pounds of andouille. Good. All right; well, let me see what I can get made for you. Okay; that sounds good. Oh yeah; uh-hm. Right now especially [Laughs]--but yeah; I don't have a gigantic freezer but I have a freezer that's 20 by 20, you know, about 400 square feet and eight feet high, so I could put a--I usually put a truckload of meat in it and that's--that's about 720 cases. So you know it's 60-pound boxes too, but yeah, I could put a good bit in it. I mean it's totally full but--. Yeah; and then you could get--you could get--right; you could get a refrigerated truck to pick it up--one pallet. Definitely; yeah, you would probably save--well I don't know what it is now. It's normally what about 12-cents? It's probably a little more now; it's probably--yeah--18--20-cents yeah. But I'll get this as soon as I can to you. Thank you, man; bye.]*

0:42:05.8

WS: Speaking of out of state accounts.

0:42:07.2

LW: Good.

0:42:07.9

WS: Omaha, Nebraska.

0:42:10.6

LW: All right.

0:42:11.8

WS: It's one of my out of state accounts that buys andouille from me.

0:42:15.4

LW: Do you notice that the out of state accounts like to purchase different things than the ones closer to home?

0:42:23.9

WS: Well, the only thing that I sell out of state is the andouille. I mean, I sell my spices and all but not a whole lot, but mostly andouille 'cause I'm under the USDA inspection, so I can sell out of state.

0:42:38.8

LW: Have any of the folks that you were doing business with locally--people that were also affected, have they been calling you and checking in, letting you know what's going on with them and whether they're going to reopen?

0:42:55.7

WS: Yeah; they're starting to call. Like last week I had one of the Brennan's Restaurants call me, Dickey Brennan's Restaurant, you know--we supply to. Some of the people are coming back or reopening, you know.

0:43:13.8

LW: They're wanting to kind of give you a heads-up?

0:43:16.0

WS: Yeah; I think what's happening is everybody is just waiting to see where they're going to get their help from--are the insurance companies going to pay them--like me. I mean I'm still waiting on my insurance company to pay me for everything I lost, which they said they're not going to pay me; so I mean we--we're battling it out, you know. So it's a big mess. **[Laughs]**

0:43:40.8

LW: So the--the issues that you're looking at now just span everything from rebuilding--

0:43:49.3

WS: Everything.

0:43:50.1

LW: --the business to whether insurance does everything you wish they would do; then there's the question of who will buy your products--?

0:43:56.5

WS: And more. **[Laughs]**

0:43:56.8

LW: Yes. [*Laughs*] So--

0:44:00.0

WS: It's--it's just like a big battle, I guess. You know, just trying to stay on top of things and trying to do whatever it takes to, you know--to make ends meet.

0:44:17.4

LW: You're in touch with other folks who do similar work and you're allowing them to work in your shop for a while since they've been wiped out.

0:44:31.4

WS: Uh-hm.

0:44:32.0

LW: The Gericas told me that they've also received offers for help from Alaska and Seattle, from fisherpeople there saying, "You know let us know what the fishermen in Louisiana need."

0:44:44.7

WS: Oh okay.

0:44:45.7

LW: And then you're doing the same thing; you're offering help even though you were hit really hard. You still offer help to other people.

0:44:51.1

WS: Yeah; well I still have a building. I still have a building, yeah--not really much of a *business*, but I still have a building. And [**Laughs**] I just don't think--I'm really always optimistic, you know. I always look at a glass as halfway full and not half empty, but I don't think it's going to come back as soon as everybody thinks it is because it's not many people coming back--so far. And as for the city. . . [**Sighs**] The way I look at it is, how can you get these people to come back--whatever you tell them, or whatever you promise them, or whatever you give them--until the levee system is fixed? I mean, what's going to happen next year or--or just when they have a southeasterly wind at twenty-five miles an hour for four or five days? Lake Borgne is going to flood--it's not a good situation. I talked to a friend of mine that works for the Corps of Engineers and he says the best they can do is three feet a year, so if you want the levee ten, twelve feet high, I mean, you're looking at three to four years. So what do you do? The City is just not going to be the same.

0:46:26.9

LW: If you had input into the rebuilding process, think in terms of your business before the storm, things that you would like to have seen addressed that would have made business easier for you--keeping that in mind and looking at where we are now when the city is trying to rebuild.

0:46:56.2

WS: Talk is cheap. [*Laughs*]

0:46:58.7

LW: --what would you want people to do? How would you want the rebuilding to go? What would make it easier for you to come back in your business?

0:47:11.4

WS: Well I think that part of the city is going to come back first which is the French Quarter. The outlying areas--whatever they decide, I think they should try to stick with the authentic architecture of the city and just make it look as--as normal as possible, you know, even if they have to build shotgun houses again--whatever. I mean, you have to make it look like it's supposed to look. I mean that's what people come to the city of New Orleans for--the architecture, the culture, the food, the music, the entertainment, whatever you want to call it.

0:48:02.7

LW: We haven't thought much about that--the danger of the rebuilding.

0:48:06.8

WS: Well, they're going to wipe everything out.

0:48:08.6

LW: Looking more like generic--

0:48:11.5

WS: Like a new city but a modern city instead of an old city that's three hundred years old.

0:48:18.5

LW: Yes.

0:48:20.4

WS: So I don't know; it's going to be interesting to see what happens. And then it just depends on how much money they want to throw at us. So it's going to take a punch.

0:48:30.1

LW: It is. In terms of what you're hoping to do--

0:48:46.3

WS: In the future?

0:48:45.9

LW: What would be a good—well, you can't even ask that. You can't ask what would be a good outcome.

0:48:56.3

WS: I am normally a person that has set goals and I do it, and right now I can honestly say I am so mixed up, I don't know what to do.

0:49:09.1

LW: Yes.

0:49:10.0

WS: I'm serious.

0:49:10.9

LW: So you're focusing on the catering; it's coming back a little bit--?

0:49:17.6

WS: Well next week I have the Destrehan Fall Fest this coming weekend.

0:49:21.9

LW: Yeah; it sounds like you're really busy right now.

0:49:26.8

WS: Yeah; you know we have venison season and we do venison sausage and all that stuff but we have the Fall Fest coming up at Destrehan Plantation this coming weekend that we're doing. And then next weekend, next Friday we're doing a big catering job in Vicksburg, Mississippi for

a thousand people at one of the shipyards. We're feeding one of the shipyards for a customer, you know. So then the German Coast Farmers Market is going to start up on the 19th and then Sunday we have a catering job that we have to prepare some food for. So that's just normal stuff, you know. I've had plenty of people cancel, too, like Sunday. Normally we do a party at this guy's plantation house in Albany for 250 people every year around this time, the first and second weekend in November, and he cancelled it and I prepared a few pans of food for the immediate family and they picked it up. So you know that was a good bit of money that I lost out on because they didn't do the full party. Am I getting you to think?

0:51:04.7

LW: I'm putting myself in your place and it's--

0:51:06.7

WS: It's--I'm telling you; it is--

0:51:07.4

LW: --a tough seat to be in.

0:51:09.2

WS: --a mess, I'm telling you; it is a mess.

0:51:13.8

LW: So--

0:51:16.3

WS: Phone? [*Interruption*]

0:51:20.1

[*Phone Conversation: Hello? Hello? Hey mom; how you doing? Fine. Oh really? Yeah. Oh okay. You want to work tomorrow? What time? About 7:00. Okay. Okay; I'll see you tomorrow. Bye.*]

0:51:42.8

[*Phone Rings*]

0:51:59.1

LW: Well it looks like you're getting really busy so I'm going to let--

0:52:00.5

WS: Oh, that's okay.

0:52:01.5

LW: --you go but [*Sighs*] I was talking to Frances Chauvin and she was saying that--

0:52:18.5

WS: Frances Chauvin?

0:52:18.8

LW: The pie lady?

0:52:20.0

WS: Oh yeah, yeah; she's got some good stuff--the--the old lady, right?

0:52:24.0

LW: Yes.

0:52:26.8

WS: Now see that--but that business is a little different.

0:52:30.3

LW: It's totally different. I mean nobody relies on her--

0:52:31.9

WS: Because it's an impulse item; it's something that's sweet that--not everybody wants you know something homemade or--

0:52:40.8

LW: Yeah; she's one person and it's not--she does it for fun. I mean she's not supporting herself or a family; so--.

0:52:46.8

WS: Well yeah; like I--I have kids in college. My--my son--my daughter goes to Ridgewood Private School and it's expensive.

0:52:51.9

LW: My sister went to Ridgewood.

0:52:54.2

WS: I mean, it's like, how am I going to do this? *[Laughs]*

0:52:58.4

LW: Well yes; and she said that--she sells at the Farmers Market and that's how I heard about her. But she's actually financially doing better. Now she likes the Farmers Market because she likes all the people there and she's going to keep going there when they open again, but now she's going to Baton Rouge and it's a bigger market, it's better attended, and she said she sells out immediately every time--.

0:53:29.0

WS: Oh no question about it; the Baton Rouge market--I thought about going. The problem is that we do the Saturday Market in Destrehan and now they have a--they have the Gretna Farmers Market on Saturday which is going to be--I think it's going to be good--real good.

0:53:48.7

LW: Yes; um--.

0:53:50.1

WS: Because there's no other market in the city and there's no other market on the West Bank.

0:53:55.9

LW: Yes; who--

0:53:56.9

WS: I mean in the--in the immediate area.

0:53:57.4

LW: Who was it--some of the other people I talked to have said that they're going to be going to the Gretna Farmers Market as well--that hadn't been there yet, and I'm trying to think of who that was. I think it was Henry Amato, who does the wine. He's in Independence and they have Amato's Winery; so I think he's going to go.

0:54:19.8

WS: Oh okay; now, I never did meet him, I don't think, because he did the Saturday market.

0:54:22.6

LW: You'd like him.

0:54:22.8

WS: Right; didn't he do the Saturday market?

0:54:24.5

LW: I think so.

0:54:27.0

WS: On Magazine Street?

0:54:28.9

LW: Yeah; I think he did.

0:54:30.4

WS: Well, see, I never did do that one because we were always in Destrehan. Did he sell sausage? He sold one type of sausage or smoked sausage?

0:54:38.3

LW: Yes--they do sell sausage.

0:54:39.2

WS: That's why they wouldn't let me in because he was selling smoked sausage and wine.

0:54:44.2

LW: It's different though; it's Italian sausage. It's a totally different thing.

0:54:46.5

WS: Really? Okay.

0:54:48.3

LW: I think so; I mean Italian sausage is different from Cajun sausage and--

0:54:53.1

WS: Well, I sell Italian too, you know.

0:54:57.0

LW: You have all different kinds.

0:54:57.8

WS: Well, I did. [*Laughs*]

0:55:18.2

LW: So this is--this is a large--

0:55:27.1

WS: Oh yeah; I mean--

0:55:28.8

LW: --list here, so under country sausage you've got Creole--?

0:55:32.2

WS: Country--country sausages--

0:55:33.4

LW: --jalapeno mozzarella sausage, sun-dried tomato, Mardi Gras--.

0:55:36.7

WS: The basil parmesan--yeah; it's the purple--with green and gold bell peppers.

0:55:42.2

LW: That's great--and bacon cheddar sausage, country sausage, and then alligator, duck, farm-raised venison; I'll be those were popular.

0:55:52.7

WS: Uh-hm.

0:55:54.9

LW: Seafood sausage, shrimp and pork, crawfish and pork. [*Phone Rings*]

0:56:01.4

[Phone Conversation - Schexnayder's. Yes? Hey; how you doing, Nancy? Oh okay--okay, right. Yeah; it's like we sold at the--at the Home and Garden whatever. Okay; well I--I--. Now mine are kind of big you know; I don't know if the other person makes the little small, you know little cocktail type or whatever, but mine is kind of like a five-inch pie with a top on it. But I mean I could [sighs] I'm trying to think of how I could--or maybe just do something else. Yeah, yeah; well I don't want a conflict with anybody either. I have enough conflict in my life right now; I don't need any more. [laughs] Well, maybe we can do shrimp instead of crawfish If, you know--I mean we were going to make them Thursday, so we didn't make them yet. Okay; sounds good. Thank you.]

0:58:32.6

LW: Flying by the seat of your pants, huh?

0:58:33.4

WS: It must be because you're here.

0:58:36.6

LW: That it's so busy? Well good; you want me to come back tomorrow?

0:58:40.4

WS: Yeah.

0:58:40.5

LW: [*Laughs*] I'll just sit here.

0:58:43.4

WS: That's the lady from the Fall Fest saying that we duplicated an item with somebody else.

Well, I mean, we told her what we were making and she didn't say anything; so.

0:58:54.8

LW: Yeah; I would say that's on her--not you.

0:58:58.1

WS: [*Sighs*] It's always something.

0:59:00.4

LW: Can we walk around? Can I get some pictures of you in your factory?

0:59:12.1

WS: Well you can get some pictures of the plant.

0:59:13.7

LW: If you happen to walk into a shot, well, I can't help that.

0:59:16.7

WS: Yeah; I can show you around.

[End Wayne Schexnayder]