

DAVID KIDD
The Butcher Block – Pontotoc, Mississippi

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Date: April 12, 2016

Location: Kidd's Hunting & Fishing Supply, Pontotoc, MS

Interviewer: Sara Wood

Transcription: Deborah Mitchum/Technitype

Length: Twenty-eight minutes

Project: A Hamburger by Any Other Name

[00:00:00]

Sara Wood: Today is April 13th, 2016. This is Sara Wood for the Southern Foodways Alliance, and I'm sitting here with Mr. David Kidd, and we're in Kidd's bait shop [Kidd's Hunting & Fishing Supply], and we're next door to the Butcher Block. I'm going to go ahead and first ask you to introduce yourself, say hello, and tell me who you are and where we are.

[00:00:23]

David Kidd: Okay. I'm David Kidd, owner of Butcher Block Restaurant in Pontotoc, also got a hunting and fishing supply store, side by side. But I'm David Kidd.

[00:00:37]

SW: And for the record, Mr. Kidd, will you tell me your birth date?

[00:00:42]

DK: 7/30/55 [July 30, 1955].

[00:00:45]

SW: And can you tell me a little bit about—let's just start with the setup here. How long have you been here? Have you always had the bait shop and the restaurant? Can you tell me a little bit about the history?

[00:00:54]

DK: I've been in business thirty years, hunting and fishing. I've been thirty years. The restaurant, I bought into it about twenty years ago, so it's about a ten-year frame difference. So I've had the restaurant about twenty years, making doughburgers and hamburgers and whatever, you know, but that's how long I've been in business.

[00:01:19]

SW: Now, how did you get started with the restaurant?

[00:01:21]

DK: My father-in-law was in the business, he's the actual originator of it, and him and his daughter was in it for—I don't know, they were probably in it for twenty years. And then I had an opportunity to buy it, so I purchased it. It being here close, I probably couldn't have done it both if they would have been separated, because it's just too kind of time-consuming, but being here together, I took that opportunity to buy it and been here ever since, you know. So that's what I do.

[00:02:01]

SW: And what's your father-in-law's name?

[00:02:03]

DK: Mr. Lamar McCoy.

[00:02:05]

SW: Do you know how he got started in the restaurant business?

[00:02:07]

DK: He was in the meat business for a long—I mean he was in the butchering business, and he sold meat and butchered meat and, really, it just kind of filtered over to a restaurant. It never did—really, he didn't have no family in it, but he just kind of decided to go out on a limb and open up a fast-food restaurant, and that's what he did. And, you know, it's been here ever since, you know, since he opened it, and we've tried to keep it going like kind of it always did, you know. So that's where it stand right now, you know.

[00:02:49]

SW: Do you know, is he from Pontotoc originally?

[00:02:52]

DW: Yes, yes, he's born and raised right down in the south part of the county. That's where he was born and raised, and he lived—they built a house here south of town, just on [Highway] 15 South, that's where he lies. But wife, she died about six, seven years ago, so he's somewhere around ninety-two. Still driving, so. [Laughs] Him and my dad both, I mean, we've [*referring to himself and his wife*] lost our mothers, but fortunate we've still got them, you know, ninety-two years old and still getting out and about. I'm hoping I can get out at ninety-two years old, so. [Laughs]

[00:03:31]

SW: And what was his wife's name? And tell me your parents' names.

[00:03:35]

DK: His wife was name Opal McCoy. And my dad is C.J. Kidd, and my mama was Virginia Kidd. So we sure miss our mothers, but we still fortunate to have our dads to look up to and go to, you know, for questions and stuff. So that's where we're at.

[00:03:57]

SW: Do you know if Mr. McCoy, when he had the butcher shop—I don't know if you know this or not—did he mix up the doughburger?

[00:04:06]

DK: Yeah, yeah, we made—we started from scratch, and we just always—and I got it from him. I mean, I've added some—your secret. You kind of have your own secret thing you use, and he did and I did, but it was just a strictly trial-and-error deal,

you know, till you got where you thought you what you wanted, and that's exactly what we've done. We've just put a kind of recipe together that—and everybody—we sell—people come back every day for them, so we bound to be doing something right, you know, so.

[00:04:42]

SW: We don't ask people to give out secret recipes or anything, but for people who may not be aware, can you explain what a doughburger is?

[00:04:50]

DK: A doughburger is—I call it a fillerburger. Going back in time, my mama made potatoburgers.

[00:04:58]

SW: Can you explain that?

[00:05:00]

DK: A potatoburger was a—because we were poor, I mean, we went back and it was just kind of she'd take potatoes, mashed potatoes, and add to the ground beef to make it go further. That was all that was for, I mean, and basically that's where I originated, and I still make a few every now and then. I call it potatoburger where you just mash your potatoes up with our meat, and, like I say, it would just kind of stretch. But now as a doughburger, they's several things that goes in a doughburger. I mean, you're talking about flour, you're talking about meat, and you get talking about oatmeal and—

[Customer walks into the bait shop and Mr. Kidd pauses the interview to wait on him]

[00:05:39]

SW: Okay, and we're back. So you were explaining how you still make potatoburgers.

[00:05:43]

DK: Yes. Like I say, that goes back a long time when we ate them when we was—I was from eight, ten years old. I mean, my mama, that's the way she made them. Then, really, I don't guess I ever heard of a doughburger till I got out in probably high school and then I started hearing about slugburgers and doughburgers, and really didn't ever think anything about them till I was introduced to them as far as eating them after I got married and my father-in-law had introduced a small business that he made them all the time.

So the doughburgers, like I say, has got several different things in it. I mean, it's got your, like I say, flour and oatmeal and your different seasonings. I say you can't ever go wrong on a doughburger. You can just about put whatever you want for it, make it how you want to make it, you know. So there's really not a bad way of making it.

A slugbuger is pork. Personally, I'm more of a beef man, so I don't prefer the—I prefer the beef over the pork, so that's why I don't do the Slugburger. So that's how I was introduced to them anyway.

[00:07:14]

SW: Can you tell me a little bit about how—you said you were starting to learn about slugburgers when you were in high school. Did you notice—this is something I've been curious about just because everybody always points to Corinth and the Slugburger Festival. Was that something that was becoming a newer thing?

[00:07:31]

DK: It was, and this is something, like I said, we farmed all our life, and we got a chance—my dad, we might get a chance—New Albany is where our town was, and we might get to go to town once every two weeks. I mean, if it does, was a treat. There was a little place up there called Latham's [Hamburger Inn]. You may have heard of it. You probably have. But that's where we started going, and you'd pay twenty-five, fifty cents for a doughburger and a Coke, you know. But that's really when I started eating them, you know, from there through—and like I say, it was just a treat for us just to get to go. But that's really where I was introduced to them, as far as really knowing what was going on with them. But that's, like I say, I was just a youngster then, you know, as far as knowing what they were. But they've come a long way and a lot of people try to serve them. Some people have luck with them and some don't, you know. I mean, I've seen that through the years, you know. But I don't know. I guess it's just they don't have the secret recipes or whatever, you know. But that's the way they originated, so.

[00:08:46]

SW: David, I'm wondering, you told me this off tape, but can you tell me the name of the town you grew up and what it was like growing up there?

[00:08:52]

DK: Well, I was in Ingomar. I went to school in Ingomar. I was growing up in a little community called Lone Star, Lone Star, Mississippi, and went to school at Ingomar, finished high school. I never did go to college. I got married out of high school and went to work. But the little community called Lone Star, I mean, it was just a close-knit community, you know, probably had a hundred people in it, you know. It's about

dwindled out. It was an older—and a lot of the younger people have left there. I mean, my mom and—I mean, my dad and sister, she’s ninety-three and he’s ninety-two, and you could probably count them on one hand what’s left down there. It’s a dying-out community, you know. Most everybody’s leaving that community. But we’ve got a lot of fond memories of it, you know, how we grew up and hard, and you appreciated everything, you know. We didn’t have a whole—you know, you lived off the land back then, you know, whatever you raised, pigs, cows, chickens, and that’s what we did. We was raised on a farm, and we was just basically poor people trying to survive, you know. But thanks to Mom and Dad, you know, they worked hard, whether farmed or he trapped. He trapped fur during the winter and that’s how he provided for us, you know, putting—he loved the outdoors, and he’d sell a mink or a muskrat or a fox or something. I mean, that’s what he did in the winter, you know, when he wasn’t farming, you know.

[00:10:45]

SW: Where did he sell the furs?

[00:10:46]

DK: They was a couple—one in south Mississippi and one in north Mississippi at that time. They were buyers. They just set up, you know. They knew these people. At that time, there was a lot of it going on, and a lot of my family did that, trapped and hunted and whatever. But, like I say, they were actual buyers. They’d set them up once or twice a week, and they know that they were going to bring fur in, and they would go to our houses. They would actually come to our house and buy the fur, you know.

How times have changed, I don’t even know if you can sell fur anymore, to be honest with you. Don’t even know if anybody would buy it, to be honest with you. But

fur got to be—it wasn't nothing to get seventy-five to eighty-five, to a hundred dollars for a bobcat or fox, you know, thirty or forty dollars for a mink, you know. It was a good way of supporting your family, you know, if you didn't mind getting out. And it was hard work, you know. They'd come in after dark and then they had to skin their fur, you know, and have to do that till ten or eleven clock at night. So that's how we lived, you know. That's just part of our life, you know.

[00:12:05]

SW: David, this is just sort of a quick question I was thinking about, because you have this bait shop, this hunting and bait shop. Did you go hunting with your father? Did he teach you?

[00:12:14]

DK: Oh, we did. We hunted. I mean, like I say, that's something else we lived on, whether it was squirrels, rabbits, quail. We were big-time quail hunters. We loved quail hunting. We used to have bird dogs. It was some fun times. There were quail back then. There ain't no quail now. But we'd go with my dad, and he started me at twelve years old. He bought me my first shotgun twelve years old, so we got to start. That's when I started bird hunting.

But it's just something, we lived off the land. We didn't kill it unless we was going to eat it. We wasn't going to take game for fun, so whether it be deer or squirrel or rabbit or an ivy [phonetic] raccoon. Most people don't know. [Laughs] Raccoon's good. Coons is about like roast beef, but if a coon's fixed good, I mean, fix it just like a roast, put it in the oven, taters and carrots and onions around it, you know. You can't beat them. Now, possum's a different story. Possum's, it's like going back to the

Slugburgers, too greasy for me. Possum's all greasy, but I never did get into possum.

I've tried them, but I just didn't like them. But coon I like. I did.

[00:13:30]

SW: Have you ever put it in the Crock-Pot or anything like that?

[00:13:33]

DK: I did. We didn't back then. A coon'd be just like a roast, I mean, it'd be good. I mean, you can't—a good fat coon is good, and a good fat—he'll cook off just like a roast, you know, and it'd be fine put him in a Crock-Pot. But we didn't have Crock-Pots back then, so we just had to stick them in the ovens, you know. [Laughs] Put a few potatoes around them. But that's just how we done them. But they ain't nothing wrong with them, sure ain't. But we coon-hunted all the time, so that's another thing. You know, you done things to provide meat, you know, so whether it was killing a pig or killing a coon or whatever, you know, that's what we done for—you know, that's how we survived, you know.

[00:14:22]

SW: So I'm wondering when you said after you graduated high school, you went to work. Where did you work?

[00:14:28]

DK: Brookwood is where I started. It's a furniture factory here for—they've been gone for several years now. But Brookwood, my mom worked there at the time, and she got me on just out of high school. I told everybody I worked in the furniture market for one time at least to see, because it's hard work. And I worked there probably two, three years before I moved to a gas company. I worked for P_____ Butane Gas Company for

ten years, and after those ten years, I started business in '85 [1985], and I left there and came here. So that was my—other than picking cotton. [Laughs] Picking cotton, other than corn, you know, that was what we did growing up, but that was my first jobs after I got out on my own, you know, so I didn't do a whole other than, like I say, worked the furniture and then worked for the gas company. I worked there ten years, so then I come here, and I been here ever since, so.

[00:15:37]

SW: So you were at the bait shop before the restaurant?

[00:15:39]

DK: Yes, yes, probably ten years before, yes.

[00:15:43]

SW: So you started the bait shop?

[00:15:46]

DK: Yes.

[00:15:47]

SW: Why did you decide to do that?

[00:15:49]

DK: It was just something—you know, I was with the gas company, and I just decided, you know, I kind of wanted to try something on my own, you know. I wanted to get out and step out and didn't have a clue what—you know, I mean, I knew something about this as far as because I was raised doing it, hunting and fishing, you know, and it's just something—and that's what I encourage everybody. I always thought you need to know a little something about what you're doing, I mean, you know, and you cared about

it as far as you—and not everybody gets to do that. But I was fortunate enough to get to open it up, and it was just something I enjoyed being around, and that's what I did. I don't know everything about it now.

There's a lot of water run under the bridge since I opened, and there's been some—and, you know, money, and that's what everybody's says is you can't compete with Walmart. And you're not going to compete with Walmart, but it's something you have to go into it with a mindset that I'm going to do my thing and I'm going to try to provide some services that maybe Walmart don't, little special services, whatever, you know. I haven't got rich, but I've made a living, so that's what we've done, you know. So I enjoyed something, doing, coming to work every day.

And that's the restaurant. I've always, as far as the cooking at home and stuff, I don't mind. I like to kind of be experimental, you know, and try stuff like that. You know, way back, I mean, I'd have never dreamed of being in the restaurant business. I just never did—you know. But after, you know, my father-in-law had the business and, you know, I seen that they were fixing to get out of it, I just took that opportunity to step in, and I've been here ever since.

[00:18:00]

SW: Now, did he always have the restaurant next door so it was—

[00:18:03]

DK: Yes.

[00:18:03]

SW: That made sense. That's so cool.

[00:18:05]

DK: Yes. If it would have been separate, I couldn't have done them, because you can't—I mean, you know, running one business is bad enough, but trying to run two is hectic, and I've been able to—you know, and I've had some good help. I mean, you know, I'll have to give that to my help over the years. I've got people that's been with me fifteen, twenty years, so that's saying something in this day and time, you know, because—and I don't have to tell you it's pretty difficult to find workforce anymore. It's just difficult. But I've been fortunate, very fortunate, to have the people I have. That's the reason I'm still in business. If it weren't for them, I couldn't be. You turn a lot of the load over to them, you know. I'm not getting no younger, so. [Laughs] That's where I'm at.

[00:19:00]

SW: David, I just have two more questions for you. Do you have time for two more questions?

[00:19:04]

DK: Yeah, go ahead.

[00:19:05]

SW: One thing I wanted to know is, well, what year did you open?

[00:19:08]

DK: Eighty-five, 1985. I think it's thirty years, close to maybe thirty-one, I don't know, somewhere close there.

[00:19:20]

Unidentified Customer: [unclear].

[00:19:20]

DK: Thirty, thirty-one, thirty-two.

[*Mr. Kidd pause to help a customer at the bait shop.*]

[00:19:31]

SW: Why do you think the doughburger has lasted this long?

[00:19:33]

DK: Doughburger is something that it could be—I guess the one reason, that it's cheaper than anything else and, you know, it's something that you can—but the cheapness don't—people are not going to buy that every day if it's not good. I mean, people are not going to come in and—to me, I mean, that's just personally me, I just don't believe people would buy them if they didn't like them. So there's something about a doughburger. If it's hot and if it's got the mustard, pickle, and onion on it, it's just something that just never goes away with you, you know. It's a food—like I said, I sell some to the same people every day, you know. They come in and buy a doughburger. So they got to be good. And that's all your food. If the food's not good, people are not going to come back. But we've been fortunate to have our repeat customers every day, whether it's a sausage and biscuit or a doughburger, you know, people—that's like a homemade biscuit. I mean, people want homemade biscuits over froze biscuit, you know, and that's why we do them homemade, you know, so. There's nothing compares to it, you know. Good meats makes good biscuits, and good biscuits makes good meats. So there you go.

But go ahead.

[00:21:06]

SW: David, I was going to ask you, because I've been asking people, there's a history of like it being tied to it's a working-class food. When people didn't have a lot, they made something a little bit go a long way. And I'm wondering, just today in thinking about why this food is still here and this tradition is still carried on, do you think that, like, in terms of the economy here, is it still kind of hard on people, do you know?

[00:21:32]

DK: I think so. I mean, that's what I was saying as far as price-wise. I mean, people are watching their money like never before, and I've seen this over the thirty years I've been in business, and probably the last two years, I've never seen any more visual contact with people of trying to save money. And I'm not saying people ain't got a little money, but they're actually—they want to know where it's going. They want to know that they're getting their best, whether it's a doughburger or whether it's a car. They want to know what that money is going toward and feel like they're getting their best buy, you know, for the money. There ain't no question probably it's an economy thing, you know. I think when people can come in and get that size doughburger for two dollars, you know, they're going to jump on it, you know. They going to try it. Then if they like it, they'll come back, you know. So I think that's one of the reasons we sell so many of them, and it's a big seller.

[00:22:43]

SW: And it's filling too.

[00:22:44]

DK: It's filling. It's filling.

[00:22:46]

SW: Do you still get customers who come in who've never had one and [unclear]?

[00:22:49]

DK: Every day. We get a lot of—I mean, this bypass [*referring to Highway 15*], you'll come in, you'll get people, I mean, just stopping in the for the first time, you know, and people from where you at, I mean, actually probably a lot of them never heard of it. I mean, I don't know, may have, but they probably haven't. But I ask people. I mean, people from all parts of other states will stop by and they have never heard of it, and I'll give them samples. I always try to make it a point to give them one or sample one before they leave, see how it's like.

So we even—my father-in-law, he developed a Chiwappaburger. Now, this was a doughburger but we've souped it up. It was a souped-up doughburger, and we called them Chiwappa. That's where he—Chiwappa Bottom, that's where he was from. So we just kind of nicknamed it Chiwappa, and it was named after the Indians, for sure. But it was a souped-up everything, you know, bar none on it, you know. [Laughs] So that's where the Chiwappaburger come from.

[00:24:04]

SW: I don't want to ask you the secret, but how would it taste different from that doughburger?

[00:24:09]

DK: A Chiwappaburger? It's not going to taste any—other than all your—where you got mostly pickle and onion, you got bacon, you got cheese, you've got everything. It's loaded out, you know, anything people wanted on it, jalapeno peppers. So it's a loaded-up—so the burger will be the same except your basic dressing. So I prefer the plain, I mean, I'm just, you know, mustard, pickle, onion. I love just a plain doughburger, you know. And I also like my mama's potatoburgers too. [laughs]

[00:24:47]

SW: Do you still make them?

[00:24:48]

DK: I do occasionally. I make some up here just for us to eat. I don't really sell them, but I'll make some for my employees, and they'll always want one. We still eat them on, so.

[00:25:03]

SW: Do you ever still make a Chiwappaburger at all?

[00:25:08]

DK: Oh, yeah. We have people coming in. I mean, we don't sell a great deal of them, but they's still people coming in. That's what they remember, and that's what they called it. I mean, it's called a Chiwappaburger, and we don't sell a great number of them because people just don't want them loaded out to that extreme, but we do. We do sell some, sure do.

[00:25:26]

SW: Is it true—I think somebody told me—my friend lives here in Pontotoc and she says—do you all sell the doughburger meat mix to people or just—

[00:25:35]

DK: No.

[00:25:36]

SW: Okay, I wasn't sure.

[00:25:37]

DK: No, we don't do that here. Now, there's a place up north here that sells the— now, I know they sell the slugburger mix, but I don't.

[00:25:45]

SW: Is it Rittman's or Suitor's?

[00:25:46]

DK: Suitor's.

[00:25:47]

SW: Suitor's, yeah, those are the two places.

[00:25:49]

DK: Yes, yes. I know—I think they do. Now, I don't know of any other place.

[Mr. Kidd pauses the interview to help a customer]

[00:26:04]

SW: In terms of like what industries, you mentioned the furniture factory you worked in, but what is this county, this area known for in terms of like what industries were here and what's here now?

[00:26:16]

DK: It mostly was all furniture, you know, thirty years ago. It was strictly furniture, you know. But now we got some water plants and we got automobile, which has helped some, and springs, coil springs that goes on cars. We got that, but it's still—but we've got our furniture back some. I mean, they was three or four factories here that shut down for—the buildings stayed closed for twenty and thirty years.

[00:26:50]

SW: Do you remember the names of them?

[00:26:51]

DK: One of them was DeVille and one of them was Brookwood. But since then, we've managed to get factories back, so that was two of the oldest furniture factories here, the Brookwood and DeVille.

[00:27:02]

SW: So there are furniture factories here now?

[00:27:05]

DK: Oh, yeah, we got—

SW: Where did they [unclear]?

[00:27:07]

DK: We got Ashley and we got Motion. We got—I don't know off the top of my head. Got Kerns, you know, American. I mean, there's more than that, but, I mean, that's your three or four biggest ones, you know. But we've still got a good—it's come back, and it's still, you know—farming has kind of went by the wayside and still people

farm, but it's not the main—you know, I would say the furniture in this town was really what was the makes-it-going thing, you know.

[00:27:49]

SW: David, is there anything else you want to add?

[00:27:53]

DK: No, that's as far as I know.

[00:27:55]

SW: Thank you for doing this.

[00:27:57]

DK: Appreciate the interview.

END INTERVIEW