

**Anthony Moré, Jr., with Copeland Moré
La Segunda Bakery
Tampa, Florida**

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Date: February 16, 2015
Location: La Segunda Bakery – Tampa, FL
Interviewer: Sara Wood
Transcription: Deborah Mitchum
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Project: Tampa Devil Crabs

START OF INTERVIEW

[*Transcript begins at 00:00:06*]

Sara Wood: It is Monday, February 16, 2015. I'm in Tampa, Florida. This is Sara Wood with the Southern Foodways Alliance and I'm sitting here with Mr. Anthony Moré – Junior?

[00:00:17]

Anthony More: That's correct.

[00:00:18]

SW: And we are at La Segunda Bakery on 15th in Ybor City. Mr. Moré, I'm wondering if you would go ahead and say hello and introduce yourself for the tape.

[00:00:28]

AM: Hi, this is Anthony Moré from La Segunda Bakery, Tampa, Florida.

[00:00:32]

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

[00:00:36]

AM: [*Laughs*] My birth date, 11 – don't laugh, Sheila – 11-29-42.

[00:00:41]

SW: And, Mr. Moré, will you tell me a little bit about where you grew up and what it was like there? [*Phone rings; pause*]

[00:00:52]

AM: Actually I was born and raised in Tampa, Florida, in the section of Tampa called West Tampa, so I've been here basically all my life except when I went off to college in Tallahassee.

[00:01:04]

SW: What was West Tampa like at the time when you were growing up?

[00:01:07]

AM: Oh, real rural, I guess you want to call it. There was, you know, most of the people that lived in that small area were all cigar makers that worked for Garcia & Vega, I think. That's one of the cigar factories that were there. I mean, north of Martin Luther King, there was nothing but woods. Where Tampa Stadium is now was a dairy farm. So, I mean, you know it was really rural. We used to walk to school, which was about three miles. All of us would get together, like five of the neighbors would all walk together to school at Tampa Bay Elementary. So, you know, I don't think you'd want to walk now, but, you know it was a really small, small area.

[00:01:51]

SW: And was your family in the dairy business at all, Mr. Moré?

[00:01:54]

AM: My family what? I'm sorry.

[00:01:56]

SW: Were you involved in the dairy business, your family?

[00:01:58]

AM: No, no, no. That was—. That's a different family. I think—. Yeah, they're no longer in the dairy business.

[00:02:04]

SW: And could you tell me a little bit about the history of this particular bakery here?
How did it start?

[00:02:11]

AM: Yeah, well, my grandfather migrated from Spain, from the Barcelona region of Spain, whatever you want to call that northern region up there. I mean all my grandparents came from Spain. He was the only one that came from the northern part. The story is—. I mean, you know, we hear what our parents tell us and what our uncles tell us. He went—. You know, all of them came through Cuba, so when they got to Cuba they would either migrate to the United States or they would go back. He apparently was a soldier in the Spanish Army. When they lost the Spanish-American War he decided to stay there and come back into Florida. So our understanding is he traveled the west coast of Florida, to St. Augustine – or the east coast – and then come back and ended up in Tampa, where he started a bakery. There were several partners at the time. They started a bakery, of which he was a partner. I think there were three partners. He ended up being the sole owner after a couple of years, and I think the exact date is in question but everybody said it was 1915 when he was by himself.

[00:03:27]

So, that's where the bakery started, and at one time there was three. I think the first one burned down; hence this is why this is the second. So I think we've—. We're not real, real sure but we think the first one was La Primera, which means the first, and then they opened La Segunda, which was the second. When the first one burned down they kept the name and this is where we, you know, we have been. The first one was on 8th Avenue; the second one, or the second bakery, was on 15th Street and 14th Avenue. When the interstate came through there in the '60s they moved over here, which is 15th and 15th, and we've been here ever since.

[00:04:09]

SW: And we're talking about the interstate that's right here next to us.

[00:04:10]

AM: Yeah, right-. That's I-4, Interstate 4, right there. When they came through with Interstate 4, and they came over the bakery, they moved over here. I was looking for a picture but the picture's out front.

[00:04:23]

SW: And, Mr. Moré, I'm wondering, could you tell me grandfather's name for the record?

[00:04:28]

AM: Juan, Juan Moré.

[00:04:30]

SW: And do you know-? You talked about him being from the northern part of Spain. Do you know did he have baking/cooking traditions there that he brought here?

[00:04:39]

AM: We don't think so. We think he learned whatever he learned over there in Cuba, and then when he came over here and became partner that he learned the rest. I think, you know, this is-. Nobody really knows exactly where Cuban bread came from. They say Cuba but you talk to the Cubans and they don't know what it is either. So it's sort of, like the lady from the Columbia Restaurant used to say, "It's just Tampa bread," and I think, you know, it's a hybrid of what they had up there and what they had down here.

[00:05:06]

SW: And so, when the bakery first started with the partners with your grandfather, I'm wondering, do you know the names of some of the other people who were involved?

[00:05:18]

AM: I sure don't.

[00:05:18]

SW: Okay.

[00:05:19]

AM: I don't the names of who they were. My cousin still might remember but I don't. See, my grandfather actually died in '39 [1939], so he died before I was born. There's only one of the cousins that are left-. I mean we're all still here, except one, I think, and she's the oldest. She's eighty-three and she remembers the grandfather, but I think she's the only one.

[00:05:44]

SW: What kind of stories have you heard about him that have been passed down?

[00:05:47]

AM: Well, you know, he spoke-. He didn't speak Spanish. He spoke Catalan, which is what they speak up in that northern region. And he was a pretty hard-driven man. You know, that's what we hear.

[00:06:01]

SW: Do you know, in terms of-? Have you ever heard stories about what it was like to have a bakery here in 1915, about what the neighborhood was like?

[00:06:10]

AM: Yeah, it was pretty, you know, again this was a mixture. In this area there was Italians, Cubans, Spaniards; most of them working, again, in the cigar industry in this area. We understand they used to deliver bread house to house in a horse-driven buggy, and they had a nail on the wall and they'd just hang the bread on the wall. Whether it was wrapped or not, don't

know. You know, there's not the health department rules, [that there are now], that were back in the 1915s. But my cousin, who was my partner up until about six years ago, he remembers delivering with his father, because once my grandfather died my father and his brother took over. There were three brothers: one of them said he wanted nothing to do with the bakery; the other two took over and they stayed here, oh, till mid '70s when my cousin, Raymond, and myself took their part. We worked together till about five years ago, 2010, 2009, and then my son bought his part out, so we're now fourth generation going into this bakery, in a hundred years.

[00:07:29]

SW: What does that mean to you, to be carrying along this tradition for so long?

[00:07:33]

AM: Well, it really is—. It's really overwhelming. I mean we didn't realize it was going to be this big a deal. But, you know, we've had interviews from two or three TV stations; we've had the governor of the state of Florida issue a proclamation about us; we've had, you know, who knows. I mean we're just overwhelmed, and we have the mayor going to give a proclamation April the 15th, I think, and the city council – not the city, the county commissioners – are going to honor us in the beginning of April, so it's a big deal for us.

[00:08:06]

SW: A hundred years, that's a long time.

[00:08:09]

AM: We've been here for a long time. I've been here since early '70s [1970s].

[00:08:14]

SW: And, Mr. Moré, can you tell me a little bit about how you became—? I mean did you intend to be a part of the business?

[00:08:20]

AM: No, not at all. I went to Florida—. I graduated from USF in Tampa with [a] bachelor of arts, and then I went to Florida State and spent five years over there and earned a doctorate degree in chemistry. I worked in industry for a year and then I—. My goal was always to be a teacher, but in a university, not a high school, so I ended up teaching in a high school for awhile and then part-time at the community college. Then my father one day came up to me and said, “I need for you to take over for me,” and I thought, you know, well, do I really want to do this? I mean, you know. He said, “Aw, it’s easy, easy.” It’s a twenty-four-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week job, and, you know, it pays well, much more than I was making as a teacher, so I really can’t complain about that. You know, you have your own—. You’re your own boss so you can pretty much do what you want, but it is a twenty-four-seven.

[00:09:20]

SW: Did your father teach you a lot about—? I mean when you decided to come on, did he teach you a lot?

[00:09:27]

AM: Well, not really. I mean I used to come when I was little, when the bakery was actually across the street. I used to come with him all the time in the summer when I was not in school, and I would, you know, learn things from the bakers that were there, learn how the bread was made. At that time they only made bread, nothing else, and then when we came over we opened up the pastry department. So there’s really—. Right now there’s nothing in this bakery that I can’t tackle and do. I mean, you know, you learn it on your own. There’s nobody to teach you. You just go in there and start learning. So, you know, basically if I wanted to

[Unintelligible] again I would do anything I could in here. I mean I can still do most of the stuff; I just can't do it every day anymore.

[00:10:13]

SW: What's a favorite thing for you to do here? What do you love to do the most?

[00:10:17]

AM: I love to make pastry more than anything else. You know, which kind doesn't really matter. Again, pastry is—. To me Cuban bread is a one-dimensional thing. You just do it and do it every day, same thing every day. Pastry, you're moving around and do different things, you know, brownies one day, apple turnovers one day, cakes the next day, so it's something you do something different every day.

[00:10:38]

SW: We don't come to interview people to mine for secrets or recipes or anything, but can you kind of talk about what goes in—? How do you make Cuban bread?

[00:10:47]

AM: Well, basically the recipes are really, really simple, but it's something that's been done the same way since they started. It takes flour and water, salt, sugar, shortening, five ingredients; that's it. Then when it's almost mixed, I mean when it starts to come together, then they put in the actual yeast. And, you know, you have to keep the dough temperature cool, depending on the [kind of weather] out there; the hotter it is out there the colder we got to keep it in here. Like today, when it's kind of, you know, nice out there and cool, they can get away with a hotter dough. But, you know, it's a combination of temperature and time: how fast do you want to work, how slow do you want to work? The dough's got to be kept cool.

[00:11:39]

[*Knock on door; pause*]

[00:11:57]

Anyway, you know, the process is basically the same. They mix it, they let it rest, they scale it, which means they weigh it to whatever size bread we're making that day, whether-. I mean we do it every day, but whether we're making a long loaf or a short loaf. They scale it, and then there's rounded, you know, a round ball, and left to rise for about anywhere from an hour to two hours, depending on which dough it was. Then it's rolled into a loaf that'll rise again, in a steam chamber this time so it grows faster, and then it goes in the oven. I mean it, you know, three rest times in between, so it takes-. A shift usually works in there for six and a half to seven hours a day, depending on how much bread we're making and how many people we have. The more people we have the longer it takes, obviously.

[00:12:49]

SW: And were people working on the bread [**Unintelligible**]?

[00:12:51]

AM: Yeah, the more, you know, like we usually have a five-man shift; they'll be out of here in less than six hours. You got a ten-man shift it takes seven, seven and a half hours.

[00:12:59]

SW: And why is that?

[00:13:00]

AM: Well, because they basically-. Basically it's piecework. I mean no, it's not-. You can't call it piecework anymore, but they make so much bread for every person that's working. Well, we're sort of limited how fast they can work because the oven can only handle

[Unintelligible] loaves of bread every forty-five minutes. So, you know, you got a lot more bread; you got to work a little bit longer. So, you know, we sort of try and help them out, but the other men come in later on a ten-man shift than they do on a five-man shift, and then so they'll be here a little bit longer but they come in a little later. So, you know, it works out.

[00:13:36]

SW: And how many employees do you have here at the bakery today, Mr. Moré?

[00:13:40]

AM: Somewhere around fifty. You know, we have like thirty making Cuban bread; the retail counter has like eight or nine; the packing area has like six or seven people; the pastry shop, two or three; the janitorial staff, you know, five or six, so right around fifty. We're trying to stay below fifty. *[Laughs]*

[00:14:05]

SW: And could you tell me, what year--? You talked about it was bread for so long and then y'all decided to do the pastries. What year was that and why did you decide to do that?

[00:14:15]

AM: Well they were buying pastry from another company for the retail counter. I mean this bakery that you see here was about one third the size [then]; so they didn't have capacity to do any of that so they used to buy pastry from another bakery. When we, my cousin and I, took over we bought another bakery down the street and they had a pastry department so we decided: why don't we just go and make the pastry there and ship it over here? So then, you know, after about six or seven years we realized, you know, we're working in two different places, two different things, the same thing; why don't we just move all our equipment over here and expand it? So we did that, we put a pastry shop here, and it's been going that way ever since.

[00:14:58]

SW: Can you talk about some of the pastries y'all make here?

[00:15:00]

AM: Oh, gosh; we've had like two hundred and some varieties at one time or the other. You know, the favorite pastry in Tampa is the guava turnover.

[00:15:11]

SW: Can you describe the guava turnover?

[00:15:19]

AM: What?

[00:15:20]

SW: Can you describe the guava turnover?

[00:15:21]

AM: Well, it's a puff pastry. You know what puff pastry is, sort of--? Okay. They have puff pastry with a guava -- I mean guava like a guava jelly that we make ourselves -- with a top, baked, and cut in four pieces. But that is the actual favorite. We sell more guava pastry than anything else.

[00:15:41]

SW: Why do you think that is?

[00:15:43]

AM: The area, the culture here, the Cubans and Spanish people. They've always liked guava. You know, it's a tropical fruit.

[00:15:51]

SW: Does it grow in Tampa at all?

[00:15:54]

AM: Not anymore. There used to be, when I was little, you'd have some avocado trees, guava trees; but I guess the weather got colder or whatever, and whatever they call that line moved south. You don't see many guava trees here anymore. It all comes—. I don't know where it comes from. It actually comes probably from Guatemala. We buy it in bulk. But, you know, they make brownies, they're a good seller. Éclairs are good sellers, Napoleons. Those are all good sellers, and obviously there's cake, you know, the cupcakes, the round cakes, the [Unintelligible] cakes, the birthday cakes and, as I said, we—. At one time we had about two hundred and fifty items.

[00:16:39]

SW: Do you want me to pause it?

[00:16:40]

AM: Yeah.

[00:16:40]

[*Break in recording; transcript resumes at 00:16:52*]

SW: So, we've just been joined by Copeland Moré, who is the son of Anthony, and will you introduce yourself for the tape? I'll hold your [Unintelligible]. [*Laughs*]

[00:17:00]

Copeland Moré: Okay, no problem. Yeah, my name is Copeland, fourth generation family owner here at La Segunda Bakery. My great-grandfather was the one who started the business and today my father and I operate it together.

[00:17:12]

SW: And will you tell me your birth date for the record?

[00:17:15]

CM: May 12, 1980.

[00:17:16]

SW: You were born one day before me.

[00:17:18]

CM: Oh, cool.

[00:17:19]

SW: So, anyway – sorry – can you talk about how you became involved in this business?

[00:17:25]

CM: Sure. Before me–. Well, going all the way back was my great-grandfather, Juan. His two sons took over the business and then their two sons took over the business, so their sons were my dad and his cousin, Raymond. About six years ago Raymond came to me, he was ready to retire, and offered his portion of the business to me and so I bought his portion, and that's how my dad and I are here together.

[00:17:50]

SW: What was it like growing up with your dad? Because your dad talked about he was a–. He taught chemistry for a long time and then he took the business over when his father asked him, so what do you remember about growing up with your dad and the business here?

[00:18:01]

CM: It was really great to be a little kid in the bakery. *[Laughs]* I have two daughters now and my three-year-old is just–. She loves–. She thinks coming here is like going to Disney World. But, you know, for holidays we all pack stuff together and we, you know, the whole family comes here to pack cookies or pack bread and to help out. When I was in high school I

delivered bread. When I was in college, when I came home, I would help in the accounting, just basic data entry, and I really never thought I'd get into the business, to be honest with you. I thought that I would do something else, and I think my dad wanted me to do something else, but when the opportunity came up it just felt right, so here I am.

[00:18:45]

SW: So, did you ever imagine that you would be part of the business someday?

[00:18:50]

CM: Not really. You know, we had conversations about it. My dad always, you know, he—. You know I went to college and I studied finance, and I think he wanted me to do something else. I think that was, you know, in his mind he wanted me to do something else, and so the conversations at home were never about—. You know, it was never like I was being groomed to be part of the business. It was kind of like just not talked about and, you know, he assumed that it would go that way, and never pressured to go either way. My parents never pressured me. So really in my mind I never really thought I'd be part of the business until, you know, Raymond approached me. That was really the first time when I got to look at the financials, and think about the brand and where it's been, and then, you know, obviously this is our hundredth year anniversary so that was approaching and, you know, all those factors when I waded in. I talked to my wife, obviously, for a long time about it – I was in real estate at the time – and so we just made the decision.

[00:19:56]

SW: And what's your wife's name?

[00:19:58]

CM: My wife's named Stephanie.

[00:19:59]

SW: And your daughters' names?

[00:20:00]

CM: Lillian is three and Margaret is five months.

[00:20:03]

SW: And I'm wondering, how did getting involved, or buying the business, how did that change for you? How did that change your life?

[00:20:10]

CM: Well it changed my life considerably. I was not extremely happy doing real estate at the time. At the point when we made the transition is when there was a big financial freeze and so business was tougher then. But coming into this business it was just a whole different environment, you know, mainly because it was high-. It was just a lot of speed, there's a lot of action here that's twenty-four hours a day, but there's just so much going on every day that it keeps you interested and so much different stuff every day that we have to adjust to and learn from, so I just love it here. I've loved it for the six years I've been here just because of, you know, what it is on a daily basis and then also what we're trying to grow it to be and how we keep on evolving and different things that come up, so it's just been real interesting for me.

[00:21:09]

SW: What is some of the best advice that your father gave you about this business when you decided to come aboard?

[00:21:15]

CM: [*Laughs*] Well, I think, you know, he stresses the employees, or how important the employees are to the business, and finding the right employees and doing the right things with

the employees. Most of our employees have been here on average I'd say fifteen, twenty years, so most of them feel as if it's part of their family as well. They see us here every day and so they know that, you know, we put everything into it, and they kind of protect the brand per se because they have their own pride. They feel like it's their bakery too so when they're putting out product or dealing with customers, you know, they have – and we stress that, the family environment, and we want our customers to feel as part of our family as well, and a lot of them do. A lot of them have been coming here since they were, you know, well before I was born they've been coming here, you know, with their grandparents, and seeing the bakery, so it's a big circle of family experience.

[00:22:13]

SW: Mr. Moré, do you want to come in a little closer? Sorry, I don't–. Do you want to sit in this chair?

[00:22:17]

AM: No.

[00:22:19]

SW: I just have two more questions for you guys. I'm wondering, could you talk a little bit about, you know, you talked about bringing in the, just starting to do the pastries and expanding that part of the business. What is the distribution like in terms of–? Do you guys still deliver and can you talk a little bit about how that works here?

[00:22:34]

AM: Well, when I was–. My cousin and I, we were basically a local delivery, Hillsborough County, some Pinellas County, some Pasco County, and some Sarasota County, so it was a pretty small distribution area. Since he took over, it's all over the United States. We got,

you know, we've made a deal with food services: Sysco, the Cheney Brothers, the US Foods.

They pick up the bread and they take care of it. I mean we go everywhere. We even have an account in Alaska. I was surprised when I heard that myself, but it goes from here to Seattle and from Seattle to Alaska. So, it has expanded. We also have many more lines of products, bread products, than we had six years ago.

[00:23:27]

SW: Can you talk about some of them?

[00:23:29]

AM: Yeah. We only used to make the Cuban bread. Now we make what they call a Coca bun, which is really sweet hamburger bun. We make Medianoche, which is bread, traditionally Cuban, I guess. What else? We make a Mexican bread called a torta and we're now working on another bread, for Greek restaurants. Oh, yeah, we make a honey wheat Cuban bread now too for the school system, because I guess either the state of Florida or the federal government said that the bread you have to give to the kids at school must be fifty-one percent whole wheat. That was a challenge, developing that thing, because whole wheat does not work very well in bread. It just doesn't. It doesn't have the power that it needs to have to do that, so it took a little while before we developed it, but we have it.

[00:24:26]

SW: Is it--? I mean it sounds like there's a lot of, you know, demands and taste change and you kind of evolve with that around people.

[00:24:35]

AM: Yeah. We have evolved. You know, we try to; that's what we're working on right now, a new kind of product. You know we have to make sure it's easy enough for us to make

that we can afford, you know, we don't want to sit there, make two hundred loaves a day, and have three people doing it and taking all day long to do it. It's a pretty simple process for the bread.

[00:24:58]

SW: I wanted to ask you, because everyone talks about the leaf on the loaf, do y'all still do that? Can one of you explain?

[00:25:04]

AM: The palmetto leaf?

[00:25:05]

SW: Mm hmm.

[00:25:06]

AM: Yeah. That's a traditional thing in Cuban bread. What it really does-. Everybody thinks it's something for flavor or this; it's not. It's something that keeps that area underneath the palmetto leaf wet where everything else is dry, so when it goes into the oven and the gases start to escape very rapidly that's where they break across. It's just, you know, you've seen bread that had scores on it with a razor blade or whatever they use. Same process, same thing: a weak spot in the bread, so when it starts to rise the gas can escape. If it doesn't do that then bread that long will twist and turn and give you all kinds of things.

[00:25:44]

SW: And is that something that your ancestors, your grandfather, learned from the Cuban bakers?

[00:25:52]

AM: We think so. Again, we're not-. I didn't meet my grandfather. My father and my uncles said they did. He learned-. I don't know what they used over there. I don't think it was palmetto but maybe it was, but it was something similar to that. You know, on a thirty-six-inch loaf of bread, which is what that is, you can't score it. It's impossible, especially with bread that's baked on a hearth. If it was in a pan you might be able to get away with it, slice it and put it in there and not touch it, but not something that's that long and handled by hand and put on the hearth.

[00:26:25]

SW: I just have one more question, and I want to ask you both this. You guys, it's a hundred-year anniversary this year; what are the challenges that you have now with the bakery, and what's your favorite part of it?

[00:26:38]

CM: Well our main challenge is growing, you know, how do we grow and where do you find more customers, more restaurants that use the Cuban sandwich, because they are limited in the country but we try to find as many as we can. Then, you know, our biggest challenge up front is just improving our processes, serving our customers faster, giving them better food, giving them a better family experience, and changing up the menu a little bit, which we're doing right now, to cater to more people, you know, what they want up there, and that's salads. You know, I've had people ask for salads and specialty beverages and, you know, the segment that we're in, that's a growing segment in restaurants is fast casual, so we're trying to accommodate our customers in a very fast, with a very quick speed, but still high quality, fresh ingredients. That's what they want so we're trying to adjust to that demand.

[00:27:44]

SW: Mr. Moré, do you want to add anything to that?

[00:27:48]

AM: He's got that covered pretty well.

[00:27:49]

SW: I know that you guys have a meeting so I don't want to take anymore time, and I would like to get a portrait of the two of you outside, if that's okay?

[00:27:57]

AM: Yep.

[00:27:58]

SW: Is there anything else that either of you want to add that you think is important about the history of this business or the business today that I didn't ask you?

[00:28:06]

CM: I think you got it covered.

[00:28:07]

AM: I think you got it covered.

[00:28:08]

SW: Okay.

[00:28:09]

AM: Yeah.

[00:28:10]

SW: Do people still use y'all's bread to make devil crabs, because I came here to talk about devil crabs but—

[00:28:14]

AM: Oh, yeah. Yeah, the bread that is returned from grocery stores or something like that, or what we call a cripple, which is not perfect and is just dumped in a bin, they come and get it and, you know, basically if they're our customers and buy regular, good Cuban bread and pay for it, then we donate whatever they want to make the devil crabs with.

[00:28:35]

SW: Do y'all make them here? I saw them on the menu.

[00:28:37]

AM: No, no. We don't make them. Whoever makes it – some of the restaurants down in Ybor City make devil crabs – they come get the hard bread, what they call hard-. It's hard bread. It has to be hard. It's the stale bread that we use. We give it to them.

[00:28:51]

SW: Well, thank you for your time.

[00:28:53]

AM: You're welcome.

[00:28:56]

END OF INTERVIEW