

**Samuel Jones**  
**Skylight Inn - Ayden, NC**

\* \* \*

Date: November 29, 2011  
Location: Skylight Inn - Ayden, NC  
Interviewer: Rien T. Fertel  
Transcription: Shelley Chance, ProDocs  
Length: 1 hour, 40 minutes  
Project: Southern BBQ Trail - North Carolina

**[Begin Samuel Jones — Skylight Inn]**

**00:00:02**

**Rien Fertel:** All right; this is Rien Fertel with the Southern Foodways Alliance. I'm continuing on the North Carolina BBQ Trail. It is a Tuesday afternoon just about two o'clock, quarter to two, November 29, 2011. I'm at the Skylight Inn in Ayden, North Carolina and I'm sitting here with Samuel Jones. I'm going to have him introduce himself.

**00:00:29**

**Samuel Jones:** Hi; I'm Samuel Jones of Skylight Inn Barbecue.

**00:00:33**

**RF:** And your—your birth date?

**00:00:35**

**SJ:** Twelve, five, '80.

**00:00:37**

**RF:** And what is your role here, what—what title do you claim?

**00:00:40**

**SJ:** I don't hold a specific title. I'm jack—when I say jack of all trades, I do a little bit of everything here. My father and my uncle just kind of look to me to handle the day-to-day

operations of the place, so they can breeze in and out and, you know, do their things. I would be the unofficial spokesperson if you was to ask anybody *[Laughs]*.

**00:01:04**

**RF:** PR man. But you do everything else?

**00:01:06**

**SJ:** Yeah; wherever there's a gap I try to fill it in.

**00:01:10**

**RF:** All right; I want to start this interview a bit differently than I have been. I think I want to ask the hardest question first. Maybe it's the easiest question first. What is barbecue? How do you define barbecue?

**00:01:23**

**SJ:** I'm glad you said—the way you asked that question was perfect because you said, “What is barbecue?” and then you said, “How do I define barbecue?” Barbecue is however any particular individual defines it in their geographic location. You know, I don't think barbecue is a food you can nationally market because of the real small geographic roots it has. So barbecue for me is the way we do it here: it's whole hog cooked over wood, you know, the way, you know, my ancestors and my family did it years and years ago.

**00:01:55**

**RF:** So we're talking about geography and—and ancestors and history. You've gotten a chance, I know, to travel a bit recently and try other barbecue. Do you consider—do you consider that barbecue? Everyone has their own barbecue is what you're saying?

**00:02:15**

**SJ:** And that's exactly what I believe and so, you know, and my grandfather and my dad would be the first to step up and say, you know, that “This is how barbecue is going to be; that's how it ought to be. And if it's anything less than that it isn't barbecue.” And depending on where you go in the country you're right or severely wrong by making that statement. By definition, in the dictionary, barbecue is the whole animal cooked over hardwood coals. And so we take the pig in that respect and make what our family just truly believes is how barbecue ought to be.

**00:02:50**

**RF:** And speaking of regionalism can—do you think North Carolina can claim to have, you know, some roots in barbecue?

**00:02:59**

**SJ:** Yes; and I've heard many, many different theories on, you know, how barbecue was started in America, you know, the—I mean, right on back to the days of, you know, pirates on the sea trading, you know, animals for this and that and the other and being able to, you know, stop on an island and cook a pig and cook this animal and that animal, so, you know, that—I would just be speculating on that. But I think barbecue in North Carolina has a very deep and rich history of

just—period. I mean, if you just take my family and I'm not saying that we're the patriarch of barbecue or nothing but, you know, barbecue goes back in our family to the mid-1800s, you know. And you say North Carolina but I'm talking about right here in this county that—that we're speaking in. Barbecue goes back to the mid-1800s and so that says something in itself for barbecue in North Carolina.

**00:03:58**

**RF:** And just for people who will be reading this or listening what county are we in or is Ayden in?

**00:04:03**

**SJ:** Pitt County.

**00:04:06**

**RF:** And tell me how much do, you know, about those deepest roots going back to the mid-1800s, your family and barbecue and how did you find those out?

**00:04:14**

**SJ:** My—my grandfather's great-great grandfather, his name was Skilten M. Dennis, cooked pigs in the ground at his home and brought them into Ayden, which then was not known as Ayden. There's several—it's a coin toss of what Ayden was called back then. Some would say Otter Town and then there was another speculation of a Carraway man that owned all the property in this area back then, but there was a Baptist College here in Ayden back then known

as Eureka Bible College. And there was some type of a Baptist Convention or something and Skilten Dennis cooked the pigs in the ground at his home and—and brought them, you know—. His form at that particular time, I don't know if it was chopped, pulled pork, or what—but sold it on the—you know, the street or the dirt road or whatever it was, you know, to people that attended that event. And so that was, you know, one of the first times that the general public, you know, got barbecue in this area, you know, on a—everybody can buy it from one man type of deal. And, you know, from that on, his—his stuff kind of gained popularity from cooking it in the country and bringing it into town to actually, you know, a little building being erected in town. He still cooked it out in the country and brought it in and actually had an establishment to serve it out of and then over the years that progressed into two brothers, Emmit Dennis and John Bill Dennis having two restaurants. They were brothers [*Laughs*]—

00:05:55

**RF:** Were they his sons?

00:05:55

**SJ:** They were—they were actually brothers with my grandfather's mother. And she was a Dennis maiden and but they owned restaurants literally one block from one another. And, you know, both of them sold barbecue. They did some country-style cooking. And my grandfather and his brother, one worked with Emmit and one worked with John Bill, and at the age of about fifteen or sixteen my grandfather said he was going to go into business for his self and that he thought he was going to have the best barbecue of all three.

**00:06:28**

And so he took pride in the latter years; he worked with Emmit Dennis and Emmit's wife was still living when *National Geographic* mentioned my grandfather's, you know, barbecue in the late '70s—early '80s in a book, and so he kind of swelled with pride when he took that book to his aunt, you know, who was still—she was in her 90s then to say, you know, “When I was sixteen I said I was going to have the best barbecue. Finally, here's my proof,” you know.

**00:06:59**

**RF:** And I want to ask before we get into your grandfather and his history, are these stories that have been passed down or has someone done research, found any sort of mentions in papers or —?

**00:07:11**

**SJ:** Well, there's been several news organizations, you know, that had their theories on barbecue and our family in the mix of barbecue. You know, that college I was speaking about burned in the late '20s early '30s and, I mean, just essentially burned to the ground and wound up being relocated, which is now what Barton College is in Wilson, North Carolina. And so I'm going to say yes to both of your questions, you know, stories that have been passed down on top of, you know, actual photos and—and things that is documented, obviously not back in the 1800s but, you know, from the early 1900s on up, you know, how barbecue has evolved in our family, so to speak.

**00:08:02**

**RF:** Have you ever seen pictures of—or are there any pictures in the family of the—the Dennis brothers, John Bill and Emmit?

**00:08:09**

**SJ:** I have a photo of Emmit. UNC Press published a book a few years back called *Holy Smoke*, and in the beginning stages of that book they found a photo or archives or whatnot of a man and the caption in the photo just said, “Pigs being cooked, Ayden, North Carolina 1930.” And they called me and wanted to know if I could help identify who this man was. And I said, “Well, if I had to bet it’s got to be some of our,” you know, “relatives.” And so they sent me the picture and at that particular time, you know, some that have passed on now were still living, and I was able to identify that it was Emmit Dennis. And he was cooking, he had three pigs on a—a pit under a shelter, you know, right outside of town here that he was cooking. You know, he was dressed in 1930s era, you know, that hat, overalls, and it was a cool photo to have.

**00:09:04**

**RF:** Was he alone? Was he—was he—did he have help?

**00:09:07**

**SJ:** No; he was alone, just, you know, standing and even his—his daughter was still living at the time and it even took her a little while to identify him just because he was so young in the photo. And but it was neat.

**00:09:17**

**RF:** Hmm; all right, and let's talk about your grandfather now. What was his full name and what did people call him?

**00:09:24**

**SJ:** Walter Bruce Jones, Sr. was his given name by his mother. When he was born he was so small and, you know, and in his growing up was so small that Little Bo Pete was the nickname and Pete got shortened and so Pete was his given name, you know, right onto the day he died. You know, people didn't know Walter Bruce Jones, Sr. but everybody knew who Pete Jones was. *[Laughs]* And so it was always Pete and he was—he was a character within his self.

**00:09:57**

**RF:** And let's talk about that. Well, first let's talk about where he—where he grew up, where exactly—how far away was it where he was born?

**00:10:06**

**SJ:** He was born about 200 yards from where you and I are having this discussion, right across the street. The home is no longer there but the home he lived in was right next door. Then there's a vacant lot right across the road where that home that he was born in and raised was and at that particular time in his growing up, you know, it was tough times everywhere but, you know, especially in the South, and he worked on the farm with his family and when the time come, where we're located right now was built out of I'm going to say necessity almost because they couldn't afford to buy any property and this was our—this was their family farm at the time.

**00:10:51**

And so the restaurant was built because this was the property they had and, you know, of course his mother and father were willing to let him have a little part of it to try his venture, and so here we are now.

**00:11:03**

**RF:** So he grew up on the family farm, and when and why did he open this restaurant?

**00:11:08**

**SJ:** Well, as I mentioned earlier, he worked, you know, with his uncle who did other styles of cooking and country cooking but always had barbecue, did whole hog over wood, and I don't know if there was just a kind of a fire and it burned within at a young age. I heard my grandfather many times, you know, in talking to gentlemen like you or, you know, reporters or whatever, you know, saying at an early age he knew that barbecue was in his blood, you know, or what have you. And to jump out in those economic times at the age of, you know, seventeen, eighteen years old and try to make a go of something—. Now also back then he didn't sell only barbecue. You know, he—back then he sold whatever he could sell to turn a dollar. And, you know, and I would say his middle life, you know, was when he made a transition to strictly barbecue. But, you know, pigs was always his passion, you know, and his restaurant wasn't a job to him. It was just a way of life; it was more of a—his restaurant was more of a—and I try—lost the words when I tried to describe what it meant to him. It was just—it was more—it wasn't coming to work in the mornings; it was something he loved to do. You know, where I may love

to go horseback riding or four-wheeler riding. This was his—also his—his living but it was his outlet as well.

**00:12:45**

**RF:** So he started Skylight in 1947, is that right, when he was seventeen, eighteen years old.

Why did he call it what he called it?

**00:12:55**

**SJ:** We get asked that almost every time. Back then right next door here was an air strip, and when I say air strip it was nothing fancy about it. Just some guys that had their pilot's license; my grandfather had his pilot's license at a, you know, real young age. And just a single-engine aircraft, you know, for recreation and when my granddad was in the process of building our original building, you know, a lot of the—the actual legwork he did his self, you know, from laying the blocks to, you know, whatever he could do to cut back on the cost of building this little building. And it was nothing fancy mind you. And they were sheeting the roof of the place, you know, with plywood or whatever it was, and one of the guys was coming in to land their plane. And when they landed he told Pete; he said Pete, he said, "I was telling one of the boys when I landed that you could see the skylight. You weren't quite through," or something like that. And he said, "As a matter of fact, that's what you ought to call this place: Skylight."

**00:13:53**

And he took it for whatever reason and as my father said many times, "I think he could have done a little better but that's what we got." *[Laughs]*

00:14:02

**RF:** So he called it Skylight Inn from—from there on?

00:14:04

**SJ:** That's it; I mean, it's been that since—I mean, that was—always been the official business name. And, you know, but the locals, you know—know what—if you ask for Skylight Inn you might get a funny look and then if you say barbecue, “Oh, you're talking about Pete Jones' place,” you know.

00:14:19

**RF:** So did your grandfather ever tell you about any stories about the early—the early years of Pete Jones' place? I mean, he was such a young guy running a restaurant. How was that?

00:14:30

**SJ:** Well, and you imagine somebody seventeen years old now being in charge of any establishment. And I think the same thing happened back then. You got a seventeen year old running it—well say, eighteen at the time he opened and he's running an establishment back then. You know, he sold hamburgers, hotdogs, obviously barbecue, and it was a hangout for young people. You know, obviously if I had a friend that's my age and he's got a place that I can go to that my parents aren't there, you know, let's go hang out with him. And so, you know, as he progressed on it got to be a—it was almost a little party hub for a while. And I've heard stories of his mother, which, you know, she was passed on when I came to be but being kind of a tough old bird, and I've heard some stories of her shutting the place down [*Laughs*], you know, with the

strong arm at nighttime and, you know, I've heard my father tell stories of, you know, people parking behind the place when he was young and, you know, stuff like that, you know, because my dad was born pretty young in my grandfather's and grandmother's marriage. And, you know, so when my dad was young, my grandfather was still in his early twenties and yeah; I've heard my dad say—said, "Your granddaddy told me if anybody came in and asked for their husband or their wife, were they out here today, just say you hadn't seen them," you know. **[Laughs]**

**00:15:56**

And so, you know, so some funny stories; at the same time you think, you know, "How did this place evolve to what it is now from that origination?" And but it's been when I say neat and I've heard stories of fights and all kind of stuff that happened back when it was a bunch of young people hanging out—out here.

**00:16:16**

**RF:** What was the original building, his original building? What shape was it? Is it still here; has it just been built on?

**00:16:25**

**SJ:** Yes; our front—our main front dining room where the front counter is was the original building. The window where the—the chopping blocks are, you know, one block is where it's chopped on and prepared and then pushed across to be served—that was the back door. And so that will give you a little idea of how small, you know, if—if I remember right it would seat eighteen people. And that's including the bar stools at the counter.

00:16:51

The two—it had no front door. The two side doors that go in our side dining rooms now were the entrances. There was no air-condition, no central heat, and, I mean, it was just the pits. You know, and when he started getting some recognition for his food and the quality of his food there was a fellow from New Bern who came in one day and, you know, New Bern is a—about a forty-mile drive from here. And he said Pete, he said, “I’m going to tell you. You—you got”—and the way he put it was he said, “You got the best damn barbecue I ever eat in my life.” He said, “But you got to sweat to eat it.” *[Laughs]*

00:17:26

And so then there was talk of, you know, let’s—let’s do something. You know, business was picking up. And as I said, after that *National Geographic* book came out and kind of put him on the map, you know, about three or four years after that was when they remodeled in the mid ’80s and, you know, actually had some climate control. *[Laughs]*

00:17:45

**RF:** And you said he—he really got focused on whole hogs. I mean he was always doing them but he got focused in the ’60s or ’70s, you said?

00:17:54

**SJ:** Yeah; and, you know, my dad can probably firm up when they actually went to just barbecue. If I had to guess it—when I say it wasn’t anything to do with his passion for it as opposed to the finances. You know, was the demand enough, you know, to go all barbecue early on he would have done it. But, you know, at the time it was whatever is going to pay my bills,

you know, because they farmed back then. There was a stretch in there of about six years that their crops drowned, six consecutive years in a row. And this was before the days of crop insurance and you're going to get paid regardless of what happens to your crop and in that same time my dad was ran over twice.

**00:18:44**

**RF:** What do you mean?

**00:18:45**

**SJ:** The first time he actually fell out of a farm truck as a young child and was run over by the back legs hauling grain. And, you know, spent a long time in the hospital. Three or four years later was walking across the street, him and my Uncle Jeff, to go to work and a car hit—just struck him, this used to be the main highway in front of our restaurant, and struck him and knocked him probably 100—150 feet down the road. And I mean they didn't think that he was going to live. Back then, you know, the—the hearse was what carried you to the hospital, and in the middle hours of the night my grandfather noticed the undertaker sitting in the waiting room at the hospital and they knew one another. And my grandfather said, “Jimmy, there's no need in you sitting over here all night.” You know, he said—and Mr. Jimmy just looked at him and said, “Pete, I don't want to have to make two trips,” you know, because it was that bad. And so for all those years my grandfather had to go to everybody he did business with and say, “Look, I can't pay you, but if you'll work with me I'll pay my debt.” And, you know, so if you think now about how quick people are to file for bankruptcy and such as that—that tells you what kind of

character my grandfather had to go all them years eyeball-to-eyeball with people and say, “Hey,” you know, “I know I told you last year I couldn’t pay you but stick with me and I will.”

**00:20:05**

And so, you know, he did and I know I got off topic there but that—you know, back then he was focused on providing for his family and so once that was taken care of then it freed him up to do his personal interest. You know, I’ve heard my dad say that his whole growing up they never went on vacation, you know, to all his friends. Some of them went on vacation, some of them were just as poor as they were and that when he asked my granddaddy about it when he was a teenager he said “Well, I don’t think it’s right for us to go on vacation when I owe such and such this money and I owe such and such this money.” You know, he said, “That wouldn’t be right. That’s like me taking his money and spending it on us.”

**00:20:43**

And, you know, so he—he was just a very-grounded, level-headed guy, you know, that his integrity was greater than most.

**00:20:55**

**RF:** And these were—these kinds of—these debts, what he was paying for this was both farm and restaurant?

**00:21:00**

**SJ:** Well, you got to figure, you know, back in those days and I mean even for the farmers that operate now you—they didn’t pay their debts until the crops come in. You know, so when they sold tobacco at the market and got paid from the buyers then immediately your first item of

business was to pay all your debts. So that's for tobacco plants, to fertilizer, all the clothes for your children for the year, my gas; you know, I mean everything got paid when the crops got sold. And so you take the crops being sold out of that equation and you got nothing. You know, you were in the hole for the whole year of charging. And six—seven years in a row, you know, that's a tough pill to swallow.

**00:21:41**

**RF:** And did he ever describe what the first pits looked like?

**00:21:46**

**SJ:** The first pits here, the—the house itself is still here. There's no pits in it anymore. They've done away with them, when I was young, just to have somewhere to, you know, store stuff. And now, you know, we don't even use the house. It's got more junk in it than anything but it was just like what we have now. The photo I mentioned, you know, of Emmitt Dennis cooking in the '30s is just like what we cook on today; we just got a building built around them. You know, that's the only difference. Where he had a shelter in his yard, we have to have a full, you know, roof system because of Health Department requirements and stuff like that. That's the only difference.

**00:22:28**

**RF:** How many children did your grandfather have?

**00:22:32**

**SJ:** Two.

00:22:33

**RF:** Two boys?

00:22:34

**SJ:** Nah; it was a boy and a girl.

00:22:36

**RF:** And what was your grandmother's name?

00:22:38

**SJ:** Amy Lou.

00:22:39

**RF:** How did they meet, do you know?

00:22:42

**SJ:** How they met I'm not for sure. I've never heard that story. I know that my grandmother was fifteen when her and my grandfather got married. And they got married, they got in the car and his mother and her mother were in the backseat. And they wanted to get married. And because of her age, her mother had to consent and they drove to the preacher's house and when they pulled in the preacher's yard he was working in his flower beds in his front yard. And my granddaddy called him by his name and he—when he walked up to the car he said, "Me and Lou want to get married." And the preacher said, "Well—well at least let me go inside and put my tie on." And so the preacher puts his tie on thinking, you know, that everybody is going to get out of the car and

follow him to the house and he stops about halfway, you know, from going to put his tie on and said, “Well,” he said “Are y'all going to get out of the car?” And my granddaddy said, “We’re fine sitting right here.” So they got married sitting in the front seat of that car with their mothers sitting in the backseat **[Laughs]** and their whole life, they were married for fifty-four or fifty-five years and never had wedding bands, you know. And I mean obviously they could afford it later on; they couldn’t early but, you know, that meant nothing to them. You know, they were—if he left the house in the morning and walked across the street to come to work and didn't kiss my grandmother good-bye she would call the restaurant and whoever answered the phone would say, “Tell Pete to step back across the street. He forgot something this morning.” And as soon as, you know, somebody would tell him, it wasn’t that he did it on purpose; he was just in a hurry—he’d stop what he was doing and he’d walk back over across the street and give my grandmother a proper “I’ll see you later,” you know, and kiss her good-bye. **[Laughs]**

**00:24:27**

**RF:** Tell me how—on the subject of—of what kind of man your grandfather was tell me—tell me how you remember him, what he looked like, what he sounded like.

**00:24:38**

**SJ:** My grandfather was a—not a very affectionate man, especially in my younger growing up years, you know, obviously that’s the way he was raised. He loved to smoke cigarettes and I say that because when I say loved him, he had one in his hand all the time. And so he was about my build, you know, about five-seven, that neighborhood, slender man. But he didn’t—he was as good as gold. If he knew somebody had a need he did what he could to meet the need. At the

same time, I wouldn't have crossed him the day he passed away and that was his most feeble, you know, that he was my whole knowing him and but he was just a man that he didn't put up with a lot of crap.

**00:25:28**

And he worked every day. He'd work me and you under the table. I mean even—he didn't stop working in here until he was seventy-five years old. And he would come over here at eight o'clock in the morning, work until two. He'd go home and eat his fish dinner that he ate—you know, he ate fish to control his blood pressure and such but he would come back at three, work until seven. He would go home at night and I—when I say work I'm talking about standing up on these terrazzo floors all day long and never hear him whine. The only thing he whined about was everything everybody else wasn't doing. You know, he'd go to the house and eat his supper and then out of habit would stand up and watch TV until like eleven o'clock at night just propped up in his kitchen.

**00:26:11**

**RF:** Because he was standing all day at work?

**00:26:12**

**SJ:** Yeah; I mean it was almost habit. You know, and so he'd stand there and smoke his cigarettes and watch TV the rest of the night and, you know, to look at my grandfather, you know, he wore clothes that were twenty years old. You know, I mean he always—he's always going to wear a collared shirt, dress pants; I never saw him wear denim a day in my life. He always wore dress pants, you know, work shoes; he had the old-style two-clip wallet, you know,

that he kept his large bills in, you know, as everybody—older people do. And he was just extremely old-school. He was sharp to how business has to happen, you know, in his latter years but at the same time his principles were still rooted back to how he came up.

**00:27:03**

**RF:** And would he work all the jobs here, all the positions throughout the day?

**00:27:07**

**SJ:** His—his main thing was the front counter. And our clientele will tell you, I mean people still come in and my grandfather hadn't worked in here since 2004, and but people still come in and say, “Man, it just don't seem right without seeing Pete standing behind the counter.” And, which is funny because when he worked the counter it was business. He didn't want to talk about the weather. He didn't want to talk about how your day has been. “What size plate do you need—small, medium, or large?” You know, now if it weren't busy and he stepped around the counter then, “Let's talk about hunting and fishing” and whatever. But as long as there was a line of people at the counter he wasn't concerned with how your day is going. He was—he was concerned with what you needed. “You step out of the way and let me wait on the next person.” And I mean people knew that and respected it. It's what was so weird about it. You know, to where now I feel like I have to say, “Well how are you doing today?” you know, you know, and make small talk with the customer. People knew how he was and respected him for it and said, “Well, you know what if I don't get to speak to him today, next time I'm in maybe it won't be so busy.” *[Laughs]*

00:28:09

**RF:** And you were telling me right before we—we started recording and this is—I don't think this gets printed a lot is he had a bunch of other hobbies, and bunch of interests. Can you tell me about those?

00:28:21

**SJ:** Yeah; I swear he could trip over a stick and there be \$100 bill under it. You know, as I told you earlier before we started, he said "Never have a hobby that you don't turn a buck on." And he had a tropical fish business that, you know, started as almost on a whim and wound up, you know, doing very well, you know, supplying pet stores with these, you know, weird strands of—well, breeds of fish. And he had chickens that he, you know, sold and traded. He had dogs that competed in field trials. He had racehorses, you know, that raced at all your Rosecroft Raceway and all these racetracks up north, yet he was always behind the counter in the barbecue place. You know, he had those racehorses for probably twenty years, twenty-five years, and I think maybe he went three times to actually see one of them race.

00:29:20

Now he loved when one, you know, was getting ready to have a colt or whatever to go down there, you know, and see the—the horse be born and take its first steps. That was his favorite part but as far as the let's ride for four hours and see my horse race, he didn't care about that. He just cared about what—"What did it place," you know? "What's the purse going to be when it comes back?" And so he was just—I reckon and I try to orient myself; I say orient myself—well look at—look at the world through his glasses. You know, where he came from actually as a—a child, I've heard people saying that he actually used to sell flowers on the side

of the road. You know, him and his brother would sell flowers on the road and get rides to Greenville and, you know, the Funeral Director would actually buy all the flowers from him just to help him out, you know, because they knew that—that money was going back to the family.

**00:30:16**

And so to go from that to having a restaurant, and when I say, you know, a barbecue place is bare-bones. You know, you walk in a barbecue place you're not expecting elaborate décor, you know, as you did not receive here when you came; you know, it's bare-bones. It's all about the product. And so I'm not saying he built this great empire, but, you know, to come from like extremely humble beginnings and to have what he had, built what he built, you know, it makes us—me and my dad and my uncle take some pride in what we're doing with it now because you definitely don't want to—you don't want to tarnish the reputation he spent all them years establishing not only for our restaurant but for the name of our family, you know. What that means when you say, "My name is Samuel Jones" and, you know, well, "Who was your family?" "My grandfather was Pete." Well that right there carries a little bit of what type of person you should be, you know, to that person you're talking to. And so we want to make sure that we always one, keep up history's tradition and our family's tradition of, you know, whole-hog barbecue the way it started, the way it's always been in our family; we will never change that. Not long as the Lord will let me breathe air we won't never change that and we also want to maintain the integrity of our family name that's associated with that.

**00:31:41**

**RF:** So it's about keeping the tradition alive. How much do you—I mean I think you grew up here in this restaurant a bit. How much do you keep—you witnessed how your grandfather ran

this place and then how your dad has run this place and worked this place; how much have you kept from what they've taught you kind of their style of interacting with customers and employees and working and how much have you kind of recreated or brought, you know, from yourself?

**00:32:14**

**SJ:** My grandfather, when I say wasn't a teacher it was more of an apprenticeship. You know, he didn't never really—I don't remember but a couple times him actually sitting me down and telling me some things. And one of those times was actually three months before he had his heart attack and, you know, his mind was never right until the day he died after that—and from whatever, you know, complication happened.

**00:32:40**

And, you know, so I learned—all of my business skills came from my grandfather, the way I—and I say—when I say I, you know, my father and my uncle rely on me to kind of handle the day-to-day things here. And so, you know, in my purchasing and, you know, the people we deal with, we still buy pigs from the same people that my granddaddy dealt with for forty years, you know. The only difference is now it's me and I'm talking with that guy's son. You know, the principles are the same; the product is the same. You know, it's just different faces operating it. And, you know, so I learned a lot from my grandfather in, you know, how he handled his self. You know, I never thought him—and sometimes my dad [*Laughs*] isn't the best with the public, you know, as far as their interaction with the customers. They're a little quick to, you know, get a little irritated or whatever the word—you know, I go the extra—I try to go the extra mile to make sure everybody is happy and there's some people you just can't satisfy and I know that too. But I

try to take—my dad had a—my dad’s personality is a lot different than my grandfather’s was. His principles are the same; but my dad’s personality is on one hand just like my grandfather’s and on the other hand completely opposite. My dad likes to cut up and joke and have a good time, but my grandfather thought if you were laughing and joking you weren't working. My grandfather thought it wasn’t possible to have a good time and work and be productive.

**00:34:10**

And so me and my dad, you know, when I say our relationship is different than his and his father’s was because even from a small child, you know, me and my dad just joked on one another. You know, I made fun of him; he made fun of me. And now I’m thirty years old and he’s sixty and we still do that on a daily basis. You know, I’ll make fun about the shirt he wears or whatever, you know, and he’ll make fun of about how I comb my hair, and you get what I’m saying? And so it makes the day go by a lot faster when you’re laughing and joking. You know, obviously we’re here for a common reason and I mean one, we make our living out of here but both of us care, you know, and Uncle Jeff as well. We all care about what happens, what goes—what comes in the back door and goes out the front. You know, and there’s—there’s a pride associated with—with what we do.

**00:35:02**

**RF:** Well how old was your father when he started working here?

**00:35:06**

**SJ:** Nine years old.

**00:35:08**

**RF:** He was nine years old and he—what did he start doing?

**00:35:11**

**SJ:** You know, back then they were still doing some of everything and back then they stayed open until eleven o'clock at night. And I remember my dad talk about, you know, after about seven or eight o'clock all he did was carry Pepsis to old men playing checkers. You know, and so, you know, Dad would go to school and when he got out of school then come to the store and walk until eleven o'clock at night when they shut down, you know. And at the same time, you know, they would get up in the mornings. They would go help John Bill and Emmit put their pigs on—you know, their uncles that they worked for—put their pigs on and then go take out a barn of tobacco. You know, because you had to empty a barn to be able to fill one up. And so I mean, their mornings started at like three in the morning, and so, you know, they—they were burning the candle at both ends.

**00:36:07**

**RF:** How often does your dad still come in and work?

**00:36:09**

**SJ:** Every day.

**00:36:10**

**RF:** And as I understand he has another occupation too?

**00:36:14**

**SJ:** Yeah; he's a Baptist preacher and so his—it's kind of neat the way everybody's things work out here, you know, with Dad and Uncle Jeff and myself. Uncle Jeff pulls the early morning shift. You know, he comes in at like six in the morning and makes sure the fires get built, you know, the pigs are ready to be turned at a certain time, and makes sure we have our product ready to serve at opening, you know.

**00:36:39**

Dad because of his—his, you know, his ministry kind of takes his mornings to do his hospital visitations and stuff like that because obviously, you know, that needs to be his priority. You know, it's his calling in life. And—and I fill the gap. You know, I come in anywhere between eight-thirty to ten o'clock in the morning on a given day and, you know, Uncle Jeff cuts out around lunch or a little after that and, you know, if Dad's day is going like he wants it to go, he'll be here by 1:00 or 2:00 and you know it might give me a little time to ease out to take—you know, run an errand or two and then dad might have to cut out depending on what day of the week it is to go to a church meeting or actually go to church itself. And so, you know, one of the three of us are always here. And, you know, if the other one needs one to fill in it's just a matter of picking up the telephone.

**00:37:37**

**RF:** Speaking on the way your grandfather was with customers and how your dad was with customers it reminds me of something the—the gentleman told me in the kitchen today was the—the—the older guy wearing the World War II Vet hat. I forget—I didn't get his name; I forget his name but he told me [*Laughs*], he said—he said, whenever there's funerals in town that y'all

load up the family of the deceased with barbecue, which kind of speaks to your father's connection to, you know, I guess as a minister but also as part of the community and your grandfather's. Can you say anything on that?

**00:38:19**

**SJ:** That's something as long as I can remember, my grandfather made sure—when I say made sure—my grandmother was a big part of that because she kept up with local news and she'd read the paper and if she knew that, you know, she'd read the obituaries and if there was somebody there that either we knew by some connection or somebody in their family traded with us or, you know, ate in our restaurant then she'd call and say, "Hey, you need to get some food sent over to," you know, "such and such's house; their mother passed away or whatever." And I mean I've been—I've rode two and three hours before to deliver food to—to families that had a death in their family, you know. And we do that—never kept up with how much we do that; you know, my—I heard him say it 100 times, "I feel like it'll come back to us ten times." And I mean, you really don't know; you know, I've had some—some close deaths to where, you know, you remember the people that stop by your house and you know, say, "Hey, sorry about your loss. But if—honestly, if we can do something for you don't hesitate to call," and, you know, we do that. And I try personally myself to be the one that carries the barbecue now. You know, because it's nice to send something but I think it even adds a little more personal touch when it's, you know, one of the—the actual family members that took time out of their day, you know, to come over and say, "Hey," you know, "Sorry. Sorry—honest, sincerely sorry of your loss and," you know, "at least we can help this way." You know, and we get thank you cards all the time.

**00:39:54**

Sometimes the thank you cards come in and I have to, you know, re-orient myself on who actually passed away and which family it's coming from. You know, and I'm not bragging to say we do a whole, whole lot of it but when we know of a—a death in a family, you know, I mean—we carried—I carried barbecue to two different families this past weekend, you know, that we learned of deaths in the family. When I came into work this morning, the first thing out of Uncle Jeff's mouth was "Mr. Williamson passed away early this morning, so if you would make sure we get some barbecue to that family this afternoon," you know.

**00:40:29**

**RF:** Yeah.

**00:40:30**

**SJ:** And so it's something I think it's something very, very small on our part that shows up very big on the other end, you know.

**00:40:41**

**RF:** Is it something about the barbecue itself? Does barbecue—do you think barbecue comforts people and makes people happy in times of need?

**00:40:49**

**SJ:** In my mind it's got absolutely nothing to do with the food. It's the fact that you took time out of your day and a little bit of money out of your pocket, you know, whatever that barbecue costs the restaurant to carry it over there and say that you're sorry about the circumstances that

they're dealing with right now and, you know—. And that's a Southern thing. I don't think— well, I know for a fact, it don't happen like that all over the country. That's a Southern thing of, you know, when there's a death carrying food to the home where the family don't have to prepare meals. You know, and I'm sure it was more—it was a bigger deal early on when a family might have to feed fifteen people. You know, but even now you got relatives coming in and it's a tradition, but it's such a good thing, you know, to do and it's something that I'm sure it was done way before I came here and hopefully it'll be done when I'm gone.

**00:41:41**

**RF:** And—and continuing on, what do you think—I mean Skylight—Skylight Inn has been around for sixty-four years now, right? What do you think this establishment means to the community whether that's Ayden or a larger, you know, surrounding area?

**00:42:01**

**SJ:** We like to think that it—when I said it gives everybody something to be proud of, you know, Ayden's population is right around 5,000—maybe a little less. And so, that's a small town; you know, I'm sure we're not the smallest in the world but that's a small town. And so any time our restaurant and we've been very fortunate, you know, to be featured in a lot of publications and, you know, television shows and different things—and I tell every time the newspaper calls that we got featured in something national for instance—recently we were featured in something national when our paper called from Greenville, you know, and wanted to cover the story. You know, and I was telling the lady, I said, “One point that I want to try to drive home is that every time we're featured in something we never get the—a case of the swollen head.” You know, our

family is super humbled every time we get a call from one of the networks that says, “Hey, we want to include y'all in this barbecue show we're doing” or, you know, “we're writing this article.” That truly humbles us because as I told you before, you know, where it started, you know, how humble the beginning was. And so we've never over the years throwed our chest out and said, you know, “We're big shots or we're this or we're that.” I mean every time it's really—it blows my mind to think, you know, a little old place that sells barbecue gets all this publicity, you know, or gets all this recognition or, you know—when all we're doing is what we really wanted to do, you know, what my grandfather wanted to do early on.

**00:43:35**

And so, you know, when—when that lady wrote that article right here recently she talked about how proud Pitt County should be or how proud Pitt County is and Greenville and surrounding areas, and our customers have come in and saw that particular show we were on —”Man, it was so good to see y'all on there,” you know. “It's nice to see familiar faces. We're proud of y'all.” It was almost like your customers are rooting you on, you know, like, “Go get them, glad y'all are you know doing this, glad you're being recognized.” And so, you know, I think that it gives everybody a little pride in our community when, you know, our place is talked about or just the fact that we maintain a certain standard, you know. When you hear—when I say standards, you know, back in other times in history, you know, a standard was a flag or a—a color displayed on the battlefield, you know. And so if that thing falls and somebody else picks it up and they maintain the standard, you know, it's carried. And so you can actually look at this place the same way. You know, it's almost like a torch or a baton being passed from my granddaddy, Uncle Jeff, me—we try to maintain that standard. You know, and I hope that it'll go on for as long as people want to come buy barbecue.

**00:44:52**

**RF:** Yeah; and you said earlier that if you were—if whole-hog barbecue was ever taken away from you because of health authority reasons you would just quit. But—right; you said that?

**00:45:06**

**SJ:** Well, I said that because I don't—we don't know what else to do. You know, we're—we're limited; pig cooking is about all we're good at. *[Laughs]*

**00:45:14**

**RF:** So what does whole—what does whole hog mean to the community? You've spoken to what your establishment and you and your family do. What does—what does whole hog mean? If whole hog was taken away from the people in this area—what would happen?

**00:45:28**

**SJ:** Some people would keep eating it and never think the less of it. And I say—and I don't mean to be ugly when I say this: the uneducated pork eaters, you know.

**00:45:38**

**RF:** They'd keep eating like pork shoulders or pieces?

**00:45:40**

**SJ:** Absolutely, because they don't know the difference. You know, and there—there can be an educational process for people, you know, because barbecue for whatever reason in the last ten or fifteen years been a real popular, fanatical food, you know, that people are just crazy

passionate about. You know, we get people all the time that have driven 500 miles to come here and eat barbecue, you know. Well I wouldn't walk 500 yards to eat nobody else's food. You know what I'm saying? I'm not that passionate about it, maybe because I work in it every day, you know, but there's people that are just fanatical.

**00:46:18**

I had people in here two weeks ago; this fellow and his wife, she had brought him to North Carolina from Southern California for two days for his birthday to eat barbecue.

**00:46:29**

**RF:** What do you think about those people? Are they—are they crazy or are they—are they on the right track?

**00:46:35**

**SJ:** I mean, I think it's wonderful. I mean I think it's—when I say it's great, you know, I'm just saying, you know, that isn't my cup of tea, but I think it's so cool that people are that passionate about it. Maybe it says that barbecue is not going to disappear. And I know, when I say “Barbecue is not going to disappear,” whole hog barbecue is not going to disappear because I think with every year and decade that passes, with every restaurant that passes from one generation to the next that does whole hog you run a severe risk of losing it—maybe not the restaurant but the value—the tradition that it was built on, you know. Whole hog is not—you could probably cook different cuts of the pig and make more money off of it. I have no doubt about that because you're looking on a whole hog, you're looking at about a forty-six-percent yield, forty-eight-percent yield on tag weight, you know, and so I'm sure we could do a few

different things to be more profitable, but on the same token we would be pulling away from every sermon that got preached about how if it ain't whole hog cooked over wood it ain't barbecue. My granddaddy and my dad preached to the customers, I mean you get what I'm saying? It would be like a preacher standing in a church preaching every Sunday and then doing the exact opposite of what he preached all them years.

**00:47:52**

And so I don't want to be the guy that changed that. You know, I'm going to keep—as long as I'm here I'm going to make sure there is a whole pig to put on that grill and there's wood coals to put underneath of it.

**00:48:04**

**RF:** How often, if ever, does a fear creep in that whole hog will disappear whether because of some health reasons, which is, you know, some governmental reasons, which is what I hear sometimes right that they're outlying whole hog or they're outlying pit barbecue, or for whatever social reasons because we can count just on one or two hands the number of places in the country, right, that are doing whole hog pit wood barbecue? Does it ever creep in—the fear?

**00:48:36**

**SJ:** Well, when I say not the fear because in my generation, like I said, I'm going to do everything in my power to keep this place going. You know, I can't speak for the other places that still do whole hog and what their future is going to be but my personal belief, my own theory is, you know, with our—you know, you and I are pretty close in our age. And our generation—things have gotten progressively easier, faster, you know, and there's nothing easier and fast

about cooking whole-hog barbecue with wood. It's slow; it's hard work. You know, you—if you don't bust your own wood you got to buy the wood, which is more expensive. You know, it's not as profitable. A whole-hog barbecue restaurant is not as profitable a restaurant as, you know, a steakhouse or, you know, even another type of barbecue place. It's just not as profitable. But on the same token you got to stick to your tradition but so many times when a restaurant gets passed down to another generation or gets sold the first thing they're going to look at is the bottom line. You know, and that's just being good business; you can't blame them for that. You know, if I was going to buy a business that's what I—that would be my first question: "What's the bottom line," you know, and "How can I change the bottom line?"

**00:49:59**

But you don't need to change your quality for the bottom line. And I think that people that get off of whole hog maybe do it because of the—the bottom line, the fact that it's a little more labor-intensive. You know, you're going to have either have some type of device to handle the whole hog or either it's going to be a two-man operation to put them on the grill, you know, because as hogs have gotten a little more lean over the years, we've increased the size of the pigs that we cook to try to compensate for that. And but I don't know what the—the future of whole hog is. I hope it's bright and sunny that you got to wear shades to look at it, but, you know.

**[Laughs]** I don't know; that's sheer speculation.

**00:50:42**

**RF:** Yeah; would you encourage someone our age to go into the whole-hog business even if it's not a family business? Can you start a whole hog restaurant out of the blue?

**00:50:56**

**SJ:** I think so. And—and when I say I think so, because I know somebody that’s done it. And he’s a friend of mine and I love him to death and he’s doing great things. He—he does barbecue—I don’t know that he does it every day of the week but he does whole-hog barbecue and because of the—his customer base, you know, it’s been a welcomed thing. And so, you know, there’s obviously a desire for it and he cooks it like it ought to be cooked and that’s the main thing.

**00:51:28**

You know, if you—there’s obviously a big difference in cooking a pig with wood as opposed to cooking on a gas cooker or electric cooker. I mean even a smoker for instance, you know, is a little bit of a copout to pit barbecue. You know, you see a sign riding down the interstate that says “Pit Barbecue” nine times out of ten then they’re lying. And when I say they’re lying, in their mind they might think it’s pit barbecue, but, you know, when you think of a pit you think of a hole or a—a cavity or something like that—not a smoker with two doors on it. You get what I’m saying? You know, and so pit barbecue by—you know, by definition is just what I just said. It ain’t not—it’s not a smoker with a big lid or something like that to open in the front of it, you know, it’s a pit whereby to put your wood coals and go to work with it.

**00:52:29**

**RF:** Does it all come down to the taste of the meat, the wood, the wood instead of gas or electricity?

00:52:36

**SJ:** Oh yeah.

00:52:37

**RF:** Pit instead of—?

00:52:38

**SJ:** Well and that's why, you know, and you'll see that we don't have a particular sauce that we brand, you know: "This is our secret sauce, and I'll have to kill you if I tell you what it is." We don't have that and I'm not saying we're right or wrong. It's just, you know, the way we've always done it. We try to put just enough on the meat. Obviously we're in Eastern North Carolina, so we're vinegar based; you know, we don't say that that's the only way it's got to be done. There's different varieties but we try to—what we put on the meat is what we believe in our hearts—best complements the pork. We don't spend sixteen hours cooking them pigs to wrap it up with a sauce where you can't taste the cooking in it. You get what I'm saying? So when people come from out of town or, you know, we're being featured in something I want them to eat the same barbecue our customers eat. But when we walk in that cook-house to do your picture taking or, you know, to do a little interview or whatever I want to take a pair of tongs and pull some meat right off of that hog with absolutely nothing on it and let them taste it, because I think there is a distinct difference if they go to another restaurant that don't cook it that way. I mean I really do. I mean I taste the difference.

00:53:55

You know, if—if I go to a pig-picking for a birthday party or something and a pig is being cooked then, you know, even on a gas cooker, I mean it may be good but that's cooked pork. You know, by definition whole hog over wood coals equals barbecue, you know. **[Laughs]**

00:54:14

**RF:** Right; and everyone I've talked to here today—I've spent all day here—everyone I've talked to you—that's you, that's James Howell, the pit man who has been here twenty years, Mike [Parrott], who chops the meat in the morning—they've all used that word *nothing*. There's *nothing* on it; *nothing* to it. It's simple; they've all used that word. How simple is simple? How nothing is nothing? What—what—talking about the process what do you actually do or not do?

00:54:37

**SJ:** Well, you know, when people come in and like get to go behind the scenes and see what we're doing, you know, to—to them some of them, sometimes it blows their minds, you know—what, like you just said to us is simple but to other people, you know, they look at it as being very complex. When we prep the pigs for putting them on the grill it's just a matter of finish splitting the head on them, where they'll butterfly out on the grill, and we just, you know, moisten up the skin with some water and put a salt rub on it. There's no spices; there's, you know, no secret ingredient, you know. And we just do that to help draw some of the moisture out of the skin. It'll help that skin blister up kind of thick, you know, because the way we space our rods out on the pit it gives room, as my uncle calls it, for the skin to blow. You know, where it'll actually, you know—I'm not sure you've been—in photos and stuff you've had today you should

be able to see where them rods were on those hogs and how that skin has blistered and bubbled out. And if you break a piece of that off it's probably an eighth of an inch or better thick, you know, maybe a little better than that, you know, to where it's—it's—it gives it a—a consistency that's different if you cook it on like a wire mesh grill. And that skin don't have the—the flexibility to, you know, to swell up like that.

**00:56:06**

And that's it. That's absolutely it as far as anything being put on that pig before it comes in and hits that cutting board. And I'm not saying that—that's the only way to do it or that's the right way and everything else is wrong. That's just our style, you know, and it's worked for us over all the years and so why change? You know, my family is so opposed to change, I told my father "I'm surprised my"—I got two sisters; "I'm surprised they don't have the same name," you know. *[Laughs]*

**00:56:40**

**RF:** Right; and so how much is done to the pig after it comes off the pit? Where does it get all its flavor?

**00:56:47**

**SJ:** Well—

**00:56:47**

**RF:** We know the wood; I mean that—

00:56:48

**SJ:** That's the foundation—salt, pepper, vinegar—apple cider vinegar and Texas Pete; you'll notice there isn't many measuring cups in our kitchen and maybe some of your photos will capture that. Everything is a—you know, a handful of this and a sprinkle of that. You know, I can't—I couldn't bring you in today, I mean, if I hired you today to chop barbecue it would take me at least two or three days before you catch on to how much needs to go on a quarter of a pig. We chop a quarter at the time and depending on how much actual edible meat that quarter yields and you spread it out on the thing you really don't know what to put on it. And so I can't tell you, “Hey, man, you need to put sixteen ounces of vinegar on every quarter of a pig,” because you're either going to under—undercut it or overshoot it at some point in time. It's just a—it's a—like an apprenticeship. You just—it's something you learn by feel.

00:57:52

I told—on a show that we were on a while back, I told the host of the show that “cooking pigs was like taking a CPR class.” They teach you to look, listen, and feel, you know. And that's exactly what it is. My granddaddy never told me this is how you cook a pig. My Uncle Jeff, who makes sure our pigs are spot on every day, you know, now he's told me some key things when I ask but there's nothing volunteered. You know, they expect you, you've been here your whole life, you know, hope you had your eyes open because at some point you're going to have to handle it. You know, and, you know, I've asked Uncle Jeff especially after my grandfather got out and I had the business side of this place, but I just wanted to make sure that there wasn't any facet of the business that I couldn't walk to and personally handle it myself if I had to. And so I made sure, after my grandfather got out of here, that if everybody dropped dead at the same time, you know, I could make sure the pigs was ready or I could make sure we had slaw to make, or,

you know, I mean whatever it was—something simple as making sure I could sign the checks.

You know, I wanted to make sure that whatever happened, you know, because when my grandfather got sick that let everybody know that, hey, you know, everybody is getting up a little in age. And so it was a reality check of everybody is going to have to ramp their game up a little bit because my grandfather was like the Mafia Don of the Jones family, you know.

**00:59:18**

He ran the business. He handled the farming and the business side of the farm and, I mean, nothing happened if Pete didn't give the okay for it, you know. That's why I say it was like a Mafia Don and so you take him out of that mix and everybody is just chickens with their heads cut off, you know. And my grandfather used to—to say if something would happen to him the place would close in six months, you know. And I think in his mind he really believed that, you know, because nobody could do nothing to suit him. My dad is the same way.

**00:59:51**

I—I tell my—I tell people all the time and they think it's funny. I said I hadn't never done anything for my grandfather or my daddy that they didn't have somebody that did it cheaper, better, and faster than I did it. You know, because it—regardless of what you do my dad always says “Well, what you should have done was—.” You know, and critiques, just critiques the juice out of what you just told him, and he ain't—in his mind he's not tearing your idea down. He's just trying to tell you what he would have done in his mind to have made it better. You know, and so I just have—since my grandfather got out I've tried to make sure that regardless of what part of the business I could fall into the gap that got left and make things keep functioning, you know, keep it rolling on.

01:00:37

**RF:** Right; I was going to ask if either of them your father or your grandfather pushed you into the business but it sounds like you pushed yourself.

01:00:46

**SJ:** Well—and that’s a good question; that’s a funny thing too. My dad always left it up to us, you know. My grandfather, I don’t know how many times he told me “I would rather y’all go do something else and have this to fall back on.” I mean he—he told me that many times and as the older gentleman you were talking about earlier was making fun of when I was in college and all that stuff earlier today, when I was in college I was able to write a research paper because I hated this place as a teenager. You know, I actually quit for a few years and went to work with a guy that used to be one of my dad’s partners in a gun shop and I worked there until I got ready to graduate high school. And when I was in college I was able to write this research paper—whatever I wanted to write it on, you know. My instructor said, you know, “We’re just giving y’all a free rein to write whatever you want to write.” And so I had—it was twelve—fifteen pages I needed to write. And I thought, “Well shoot; I’m writing it on the barbecue place,” you know. “Plenty of history there to fill up fifteen pages worth” was my thought process.

01:01:55

And the more I, you know, would talk to my grandfather and write and I got thinking, you know, there ain't no Joneses left to pick up where he left off. You know, and this was in '99 or 2000—2001. And see, everybody was healthy and happy then, but I was thinking, you know, he’s worked this place his whole life and not looking at it like a job. I looked at it like I had to be here at such and such in the morning. I had to be here until that time at night. And, you know, so

I started looking at it through a different set of spectacles as to what it was, what it meant to the family, and how not me to be a—not like I’m doing something spectacular but I could be one spoke in the wheel of making it roll another mile down the road. You get what I’m saying? So not—not saying that I’m going to take it and make it this great thing that nobody else was able to but I can help carry it that much further because of my age as opposed to my dad’s; you know, the good Lord is not going to let him live but so long and when that time ends then somebody, whether it’s me or somebody else, is going to take it and run with it whether it be sold or whatever.

**01:03:15**

And so I looked at it as, you know, well I can step in that role, you know, and take that spot and hopefully I can do just as good—at minimum do just as good as they did.

**01:03:28**

**RF:** And so you came in—after writing that paper and thinking about it in a way you started caring more I guess.

**01:03:34**

**SJ:** Yeah; well, you know, when I say caring more just you look at it different, you know, where everybody should take pride in their job regardless of what you do for a living. If you are a mechanic or if you’re a firefighter or police officer, take pride in what you do because it’ll reflect—your work will reflect that. But look at it; take some—I looked at it as taking a little ownership. You know, even though I don’t own a thing here right now, you know, in the future I will and so I need to be looking at the place like I already do. You know, if I can pinch a penny

buying sugar next week I need to do that. You know, or, you know, because I mean don't get me wrong; they look after me and so my pay reflects what the place does. But at the same time that shouldn't be my total motivation behind it. You know, yeah; you want to make a good living. Everybody wants to make as much as they can make but at the same time, you know, it just needs to—I don't even know how I want to put that. I know this is a—getting to a terrible part of the interview and I'm sucking but, you know, I'm trying to think of the best way to put that. I just think you ought to care. You know, have some—some give-a-crap is the way I would put it, you know, frankly. **[Laughs]**

**01:04:53**

**RF:** Do you think you surprised your father and grandfather at that point when you came in? Did they ever say anything? Did you kind of shock them?

**01:05:02**

**SJ:** I don't think I surprised them then. I think I might have raised their eyebrows when my grandfather had to get out and there again, you know, I'm not a whistle blower and don't toot my own whistle or nothing but when my grandfather had his heart attack, when we were standing in the Emergency Room he was barking out orders at what I needed to do the next day because I honestly was the only person he had ever told certain things about how things worked, you know, and which my dad is a very smart—he's an educated man. It wasn't like he couldn't figure it out. But back to my other point, Pete said, "I want you to do such and such." So that meant that was—that was law that all right, Samuel is handling that.

**01:05:49**

And so from that point on, you know, and then finally my grandfather, you know, turned his part over to my dad and completely got out. And but I was already into the driver's seat on the business side of things. And so that's kind of where I've been sitting ever since, you know, and then Uncle Jeff had full support of that, you know, not like it's a hostile takeover or nothing. But, you know, and I think—my dad is kind of like my grandfather. I think my—my grandfather told my dad one time in all those years that he did a good job.

**01:06:26**

Now I'm sure he believed it in his mind and in his heart but, just like anybody else, it's nice to hear it on the ears too. And my dad tries to do a little better job with me than that. I pick on him that he doesn't, but, you know, my daddy ever now and then will, you know, when I'm leaving to go to a food show or something, you know, save some bucks or, you know—or leave to go somewhere where I'm doing something that's going to promote Skylight Barbecue, you know, that dad knows that I'm not going to a particular venue or an event because I want to go goof off. Even though I might be goofing off while I'm there my—my goal for being there is at some point that I'm going to be promoting our place, you know, in whatever arena it may be in and so there's been a bunch of times, you know, that I've come back in from wherever and he'd be like, "Well it was nice to come back from vacation" or something like that. You know, we make a big joke about it and then he actually gets serious and says, "I'm real proud of everything you do for the place." You know, and I'd rather have that than ten million, you know. I mean anybody wants their parents' approval but one, for, you know, your moral approval that, you know—you turn out to be a decent person, but then the—you can have that and then on top of that say, "I like where you are in the family business and I think you're doing a good job at it."

You know, and he didn't go into all those words but I know in his mind that “I’m proud of you” meant, you know, all of the above or, you know. *[Laughs]*

**01:07:59**

**RF:** Right; and I think that also shows because I mean your grandfather didn't do that so much.

**01:08:05**

**SJ:** Yeah; and I—you know, and maybe Dad because you know my dad tried to be a lot more affectionate with me and my sisters coming up as opposed to how his father was and, you know, like I say I still pick on him about his lack of being able to tell you, you did a good job without critiquing you but I think that’s—that comes with any father. And, you know, if y'all—if you and your friend spend any time here at all you’ll see that me and my dad are constantly at one another. And I don’t say that in a bad way, you know, we’re just constantly ragging on one another and making jokes and, I mean, every now and then me and him will have a terrible horn lock, you know, where one of the two of us needs to just go home for the rest of the day. But that’s going to be in any family business, I think.

**01:08:46**

**RF:** I was reading everything on the walls today, all the—and there’s one article from— it’s got to be over twenty-five years ago and it’s called “The King of Barbecue” and it declares your grandfather the King of Barbecue and Ayden as the Capital of Barbecue. And you appear in the last paragraph in the paper and it says: “Samuel Jones, age four, says he wants to be the Prince of

Barbecue and a trash man.” Can you—can you say—I mean we’ve been talking about that for the past twenty minutes. **[Laughs]** Can you—do you want to say something on—on that?

**01:09:23**

**SJ:** Man that was so funny **[Laughs]** and my dad still picks on me that the only time I show up for work is when a news camera is here or somebody is here to do an article, kind of like the older gentleman you were talking about earlier. You know, they busted my chops. Well that article and I don’t remember; they were in some type of magazine and a newspaper wanted to do a story about it. And I was in here and my cousin was in here and when I was a child I thought the coolest thing was those guys riding on the back of those trucks. And I didn’t have—you know, in my mind it had nothing—I didn’t even think about the—the stench of riding in the back of that trash truck or whatever. I just thought it was—man that’s cool to ride on the tailgate of a truck like that. You know, and so when that lady said, “What do you want to do when you grow up?” My—you know, here is my granddaddy, here’s the King of Barbecue or whatever and my dad always made reference to, you know, me or him one was going to be the Barbecue Prince or whatever. And I looked at her just as boldfaced as I could be and said “Well, I’m going to be—I’m going to be the Prince of Barbecue and a trash man,” you know, thinking that one just held the other one’s hand, you know. Here I can work at a barbecue place and ride on the back of these trucks and have a ball all day.

**01:10:38**

At the end of that article, if you’ll go back and read it, there’s something about how I’m not in there all the time. I just kind of breeze in and breeze out and my dad said he ain’t—you’re thirty years old and nothing has changed. **[Laughs]**

**01:10:53**

**RF:** Well what—and I want to—I want to ask you a question about change. This might be kind of changing subjects a bit. We know that pigs have changed over the past couple decades, and I don't need to ask if they've changed because we know they've changed—that they have less fat. And you've appeared in an article recently in a magazine and you were on a—on a barbecue competition team kind of this all-star team I guess. And people who were reading this can go find that article.

**01:11:26**

But you cooked a heritage breed pig—hog called a Mangalitsa and which are rare and expensive. And my question is would a whole-hog establishment like this, like the one you run, ever be able to go whole-hog heritage breed pigs, Mangalitsa if the price became comparative to these farmed pigs we have today?

**01:11:59**

**SJ:** You just kind of answered your own question by saying that. That's—that—the Mangalitsa that we cook that you were just talking about was some of the best pork I've ever eaten straight off of a grill. And we cook that pig just like we cook pigs here every day. But the price is what just, you know, shoots you in the head, you know, because you can walk in our place and, you know, you were talking about the guys on that crew that cooked. You know, and they were joking on me talking about how cheap our prices were as opposed to the restaurants they operate and all. You know, and I said, "Well, man I don't understand how it could go up. Every time we go up a quarter, you know, our customers are acting like I'm just holding a gun on them," you know, because that's the way all—we haven't increased our prices a whole, whole lot over the years

outside of what we actually had to, you know, for the market going up and down with the price of pork and stuff like that.

**01:12:55**

But, you know, the Mangalitsa, the way the price is on it right now I can't afford to buy it and my customers daggone sure, I can't pass it along to them. See what I'm saying? I mean, I could cook it maybe like once every now and then but, you know, is—is your clientele going recognize the difference of the quality? Are you going to be able to educate your clientele to taste the difference where they're willing to pay the difference? You know, and so one of the things hopefully that might come out of cooking that Mangalitsa where we cooked it and, you know, I don't know the future of that organization that I'm a part of but, you know, maybe it'll bring the demand up and the price down, you know, which may make it affordable for your children to walk in somewhere and be able to get a barbecue sandwich just off of a Mangalitsa.

**01:13:52**

**RF:** Right; but if you could sell a Mangalitsa sandwich for under five bucks would customers eat it? Do you think the—the kind of average—I mean average taste but just, you know, your customer would they enjoy a fatty pig again or are people's taste buds so far gone from how they were forty years ago when we had fatty pigs?

**01:14:17**

**SJ:** Well, and that's such a good question. You know, because that generation of people is leaving us, you know, rapidly. And everything is, you know—and when I say my—the older gentleman that was standing in our kitchen earlier today, he'll be ninety-one years old in three

weeks. You know, I'm sure when he was raised he got up every morning and ate bacon and ham and, you know, he's ninety-one years old. So I understand the—the push of today's society of, you know, eat rabbit tracks and live under a clothesline, you know, and eat grass clippings and whatever to stay healthy but at the same time it didn't kill everybody, you know, to eat pig fat. To make good barbecue you got to have some fat on it.

**01:15:09**

Now I had one guy tell me, “You shouldn't say pig fat, Sam; you should say the pig's natural juices.”

**01:15:15**

**RF:** Who was that guy? Was—

**01:15:16**

**SJ:** You would know his name if I called it, so I'm not.

**01:15:18**

**RF:** Oh okay. [*Laughs*]

**01:15:19**

**SJ:** But, you know, that wouldn't be Samuel Jones if I said “the pig's natural juices.” Samuel Jones says “Pig fat.” You know, [*Laughs*] I don't try to portray myself to anybody else what I wouldn't to anybody that—that's my friends. I don't want—never want somebody that really knows me to hear me talking on—on anything and say well God, that—he sure ain't acting like himself, you know. I want to be myself everywhere I go or wherever if my—if a—a clip of us

talking proceeds me somewhere when I arrive, I want them to say hey that guy was just like he was on that video I saw or that clip or whatever.

**01:15:59**

And back to the Mangalitsa thing, I just don't know—it's—it's got a big question mark hanging there of—when I say that—when you mention the fat aspect of it, you know, because—and I had never in my life seen fat render like it did on that Mangalitsa, you know. Now I'm sure because I've heard my dad and my granddad talk about—and I've seen a change in pigs in my lifetime, but they really saw a change. And so I think I was able to see—and I actually told one of the judges at that competition that this is the way the good Lord intended pigs to be. You know, and because I believe that; I think that pig was just like maybe the pigs my grandfather grew up with, you know, as far as the way they were raised and the content of fat on them, you know, and that complements the meat whether you want to admit it or not. You know, it's going to add another element to the flavor of that pork. You know, just the—like the ham on that hog being encased in fat, you know. Even if you take all that fat off, that meat has still be affected by it, you know, and it's just drips from Heaven, you know, coming off of that pig.

**01:17:17**

And yeah; I could just eat myself in the ground; you know, just bury my face in that pig *[Laughs]* when it was done.

**01:17:26**

**RF:** Talking on generation and taste changes, running this business do you see children eat whole hog barbecue? Do you have young customers come in?

**01:17:39**

**SJ:** Yes; and when I say, you know, like the college kids, barbecue is becoming popular when certain TV shows feature barbecue. You know, so if a—if a popular food show or whatever features barbecue well then that reminds some of the college kids, “Dang,” you know, “we ain't had no good barbecue in a while.” Not that they don't like it because especially, you know, like some of my friends that have children come in here as a tradition. And I say that because they remember—I got a good friend of mine. He's got a three year-old little boy. Brought him in here for the first time, Saturday was two weeks ago and as soon as I sit down to the table because, you know, Saturday is my day that—I won't say I don't do a whole lot but, you know, I mean if we're busy I'm working but Saturday is my day that I walk around and I talk to the customers and I sit down with, you know, I can expect, you know, Mr. Bill Smith and his wife, which you don't know—they come every Saturday. And that's part of my day.

**01:18:42**

**RF:** Where's he? He's not Bill Smith from Chapel Hill?

**01:18:46**

**SJ:** No; he's Bill Smith. He's a retired tax collector. But what I'm saying is Saturday is my day to walk around and I talk to the customers because it's, you know, a lot of the same faces coming back. And when he was in this week, I said “Man,” I said, “I remember when I was young working in here you and your daddy and your granddaddy because they farmed coming in and eating and then carrying like thirty—thirty trays home to feed the farmhands.” You know, and so it was cool for him and me too to see him bringing his son in here but it's—it's—it was almost to

him like carrying his son to the barber shop. That was something his dad and him did. Okay; just like coming here with something his dad and his granddad did and him and his dad did coming up and say, it was like, you know, they ate barbecue on this day of the week at the Skylight—well Pete’s as they called it, you know, on a weekly basis or semi-weekly basis. And so I think you will always have those people, you know, that have a little—it’s almost like going back to their home church. You know, yeah; maybe they moved away or whatever but every year there’s a homecoming. And when they come back they feel like, you know, they’re right back—like they never left.

**01:19:57**

And so I think you’ll always have those people. But, you know, barbecue still can appeal to, you know, all generations and demographics and everything. Now our restaurant is a little different because we don’t offer a whole lot of extras, you know. I mean when you walk in the door it’s not what you want. It’s how much of it. You know, **[Laughs]** it’s not—and I have some of my friends pick on me. If I’ll be somewhere I say, “Well man I got to get out of here and go back to work.” And they’re like, “What do y’all have today?” And I say, “Well, today is Tuesday so barbecue is our special today.” **[Laughs]**

**01:20:36**

**RF:** So but that four year-old boy, did he eat the barbecue?

**01:20:42**

**SJ:** He did; with his—I mean, you know, with his hands just by the mouthful. And, you know, and there’s some people now that probably wouldn’t want their little child to eat pork or

whatever, you know, because some people think pork is bad or whatever. My dad is a preacher, and we served a catering one time and this fellow come through the line and was real adamant about he didn't eat pork. And my dad said well, said “Sir, do you ever read the Bible, by chance?” And, you know, obviously this—we're in the South, he said, “Of course.” Daddy said, “Well, remember the story of Abram?” And the fellow said, “Yeah.” And Daddy said, “Well, if you remember, he didn't amount to nothing until God put a ham on his name.” You know, **[Laughs]** and he moved on about his business, you know.

**01:21:32**

And, you know, so **[Phone Rings]** I—you know, I hope—well especially I hope because I got bills to pay but, you know, I hope barbecue will be—like our style of barbecue will be kind of—I don't want it to be one of them things where you read about it in the history books. I want it to be one of them things where you can go get it and taste it and see it. You know, where you don't have to imagine it; you can experience it. You know, that's what I want it to be. So I just hope that the good Lord will continue to bless us to do that, you know, and we'll have customers that want it.

**01:22:05**

As far as a way to promote it, you know, I'm not the smartest guy in the world. I'm doing my part, what I think will help and, you know, we're very fortunate to be blessed with the customers we have.

**01:22:19**

**RF:** I just have a couple more questions. What do you think about the stigmatism against whole-hog barbecue which I personally heard a lot in the Western parts of this State? “Whole-hog

barbecue is filled with this and that,” right—you’ve heard this with all the parts of the pig that you might not want to eat.

**01:22:37**

**SJ:** Can I smoke a cigarette while we ponder that thought? I mean we ain't got to keep recording if you don't want to. It's up to you.

**01:22:47**

**RF:** We'll finish up and just wrap up in a minute.

**01:22:47**

**SJ:** That's fine.

**01:22:50**

**RF:** I mean we're running out of tape, too.

**01:22:51**

**SJ:** Oh okay; I'm sorry.

**01:22:54**

**RF:** But we can—oh if you want to take, a real break, sure. Oh let's do that; oh okay, sure. Okay; we had to take a short break. I was asking about the stigmatism against whole hogs and off-recording during a break we were talking about the East/West rivalry. We agreed that it's kind of overblown. So maybe if you could speak on what people—people say harmful things about

eating the whole pig that you should eat pig—you know, a different way or a certain way. What do you think about that stigmatism against what you do?

**01:23:27**

**SJ:** My first reply to Eastern North Carolina versus Western North Carolina barbecue, I immediately have to be pro-Eastern and say everybody has got a right to be wrong. You don't have to cook whole hog; you can be wrong. **[Laughs]** And so, I say that jokingly.

**01:23:48**

You know, as I told you when we were just talking in conversation, everybody expects for all the Eastern North Carolina barbecue people and the Western North Carolina barbecue people to draw their line on Interstate 95 and let's just start fist-fighting about it. You know, and sometimes I think that that's what the general public and people that love barbecue would love to see because they love the rivalry. It's—you know, they love—people love to go on vacation because they heard about say Lexington No. 1 and Skylight and so they like to go Lexington No. 1 to eat it because, you know, they've heard about it and then cross that boundary line, that big culvert, the great divide of Interstate 95 into the Eastern realm of barbecue and try our style and say, "Well dang. Their style was pretty good and their style is pretty good." So why kick dirt on one another, you know?

**01:24:42**

So in my mind, yeah; why kick dirt on one another? At the same time you got all this history of having a rivalry, so we got to continue the rivalry, you know, just for the sake of having a rivalry, you know. I think it's just like say two families that were mad at one another 100 years ago and their ancestors are still mad at the other people's ancestors. They probably

don't even know why. They just know that they got to be mad at them. And so, you know, it's kind of—when East versus West, you know, if I run a place in the Western part of the State then I reckon I'm—it's just part of the criteria that I got to be mad at the Eastern people and, you know, I ain't going to say being mad. But, you know, you got the—I reckon throw off on them, could they do different or whatever but there's no different—the only big deal about East and West North—Eastern and Western North Carolina barbecue is the—that it's in the same State.

**01:25:37**

Normally you got to cross a state line to have a big change in barbecue. And in North Carolina that ain't the case. North Carolina, it's a three-hour drive from Ayden to Greensboro and you're in a different world barbecue-wise. And as far as throwing off on the whole hog, everybody has got a right to be wrong. You know, we do whole hog and that's the way we think it ought to be done. Our justification behind that is your ham is the driest part of the pig. Your shoulder and the belly, you know, hold a lot of the fat and stuff in the pig. And so when we chop our barbecue up we chop it a quarter at a time. If we chop a shoulder then the next piece we're going to bring in is the ham and we'll blend it together. And so it gives it kind of an even keel—you got to—your whole pig is—is moist rather than eating this part that's real dry and this part that's real fatty. You know, and I'm sure those guys that cook just shoulders or just hams has got their way to—to turn their product out the way their customers expect it.

**01:26:49**

Here, you know, that's the way our customers expect it. That's the way we expect it from our employees to turn it out, you know. When we chop that pig up every now and then pigs might be fat enough to have a little grease running out of them, you know, when we put it on the chopping block, you know. That's very rare these days. That makes great barbecue; once that

grease runs and renders out of it that is fabulous barbecue. It doesn't happen a lot anymore but it gives you that even—you don't want eat your barbecue sandwich and, while you're eating your sandwiches, pork is just falling out of the bottom out of it where it's dry as a bone. You know, every now and then when we're making—I'll be making a sandwich at the counter and it's hard to keep the barbecue on the bun—that's not great barbecue to me.

**01:27:38**

You know, and sometimes it's out of our control because of, you know, the fat content in a pig. But at the same time I'm not going to put a bunch of sauce on it just to make it moist because then we've stepped away from what we've done for all these years. So, you know, I think whole-hog barbecue is the only barbecue. Now that might be closed-minded or I have my blinders on or whatever but, you know, when you're from the South you—you reserve that right. You know, and so the people that cook in the Western part of the State got their style; we got our style. We don't have to co-mingle the two, you know, and try to do whatever, you know. I mean I could go to Wayne Monk's place [Lexington No. 1] tomorrow and walk in and introduce myself and I'm sure they're going to give me, you know, the royal treatment, you know, and treat me just like one of their own because I do the same thing for them, but we don't have to sit there and argue all afternoon about why I should be cooking shoulders and he should be cooking whole hog, you know. **[Laughs]**

**01:28:43**

**RF:** We were talking about when you decided to kind of really enter the business whether you were pushed or pulled into the business. You're married and you said you want to have kids.

How do you decide whether to push a child, a son into this business or not? Where do you start?

How—how do you start it even?

**01:29:08**

**SJ:** My dad said that he used to put barbecue grease in my milk bottle to make sure I had it in my blood. That way it wouldn't be a matter of him having to pull me into it—that I'd be drawn, you know. And, you know, and I don't have any kids, so it's hard for me to say what I am or will or will not do, but I would hope at some point if the Lord blesses me with, you know, especially a son that he would see, you know, the rich history, the tradition, the pride that our families took in this place. You know, I mean it's a lot of work; just like any other job, there's times that you're sick to death of it. You know, and you're glad to be able to lock that door and go home and not think about it until the next day.

**01:29:49**

But in the—in the big picture, the grand scheme of things it's—it's something to be proud of, you know, and I would hope that, you know, my children if the Lord blesses me with some will take that on, you know, tuck that under their arm and—and say, “Well, you know, I got something to—to be proud of. I got,” you know, “this baton has been passed to me to carry the torch,” you know, like a marathon runner. The baton gets passed. That guy is going to run just as hard as he can run to get back to the line [*Phone Rings*] to pass it off. And so, you know, I hope that—I hope I do—I hope I run my part of the race to where that baton is there that, you know, the torch is just as bright as it was when it was handed to me and that my children will be proud enough to—you know they'll take it and run just as hard as everybody else has run, you know, to keep this place running.

**01:30:41**

**RF:** What does this country lose and what—what does history lose and culture lose when a whole-hog place disappears, when, you know, you—you mentioned, you know, a torch is passed and sometimes it extinguishes—sometimes the new generation just lets it fall apart? What's lost when that happens?

**01:31:05**

**SJ:** And that's a very hard question to answer and I say that out of my eyes because I take whole hog for granted and when I say that's a bad thing, I can't help but do that because I've grown up, you know—I've always been around whole-hog barbecue. You know, so I know no other way of life than to have whole-hog barbecue in it.

**01:31:32**

And so, you know, that question would probably be better answered from somebody from the outside looking in. I—it would only be a hypothesis, you know, for me to say what somebody would think about it. In my mind, I mean it would be—be almost biblical, you know, for whole hog not to exist, you know, in the food chain or whatever. You know, it ought to be its own food group, you know. But, you know, and I've never—never sit down and researched how many places still do whole hog over wood. I know it's got to be dwindling rapidly. And when I say rapidly, you know, if you look at it from say forty years ago to now the percentage of places that's left as opposed to what it was then it's got to be a—you know, it's got to have just decreased big time. And—and I know why it is; it's because of the, you know, the—the increased costs, the increased labor, you know, and tight economic times doesn't help either.

**01:32:42**

And, like I say, I keep sounding like a broken record but I hope the good Lord will bless us. We will never back away from—from whole hog and doing it how our family has been doing it for all these years. And I hope I did not sound like a politician like evading your question but, you know, I tried to answer it as best as I could but I don't, you know—I take it for granted.

**01:33:09**

**RF:** No; I think you did answer my question that whole hog is so exceptional that it should be its own food group.

**01:33:16**

**SJ:** Yeah; and I mean, it's like we talked about the Mangalitsas earlier how rare they are is what makes them so special and, you know, expensive; expensive in our society makes it special. You know, obviously a car that costs \$100,000 is special because it's so far out of what normal cars cost. Well, that's the way we discussed the Mangalitsa. Well, whole hog if it isn't already there will be there at some point, not maybe because of how much it costs or whatever but it'll be so rare that when people see it or get the experience that it'll be super-special.

**01:33:53**

Now is that great? I can't say yes or no. It might be a bad thing that it gets to that point that it's so rare that people, you know, have to drive or fly to actually get it. You know, whereas a food that is almost extinct to an extent, you know, which—some people will say “Whole-hog barbecue ain't no different than no other barbecue.” Well then that's the person I say everybody has a right to be wrong because they just made an uneducated, you know, opinion because whole

hog if you've had it is so different than—than something else. You know, if you ever went to a pig-pickin' somewhere, you know, and we do chopped pork but it's the same principle, you know, being able, you know—one if you do it pulled—to choose which portion of pig you want or in our method of blending the entire pig where you get the best of all of it, you know, you're getting the—you're getting your—your flavors from different parts of the pig all in one heavenly bite in your mouth, you know. Even in our case the skin bits being chopped up, you know, chopped up in it. I don't know; I just hope it don't ever—don't ever go away especially not in my generation because I'd have to be a trash man again I guess. *[Laughs]*

**01:35:18**

**RF:** All right; that might be a good place to end but I have one more question that just came to me. How much is too much barbecue? Do you get tired of barbecue—get tired of talking about barbecue? I mean we—we sat for a long time and talked about barbecue? Is it—

**01:35:34**

**SJ:** That is almost like you asking me do I get tired of talking about my wife.

**01:35:38**

**RF:** All right; good.

**01:35:38**

**SJ:** That's almost the same question. You know: "Do you get tired of being with your wife?" I would never answer that question. But in barbecue it's the same—it's the same but different, you

know. It's just as much—barbecue is just as much a part of my life as my wife is. You know, this business is like a marriage. You know, there's rough patches, the good patches, we're just as much joined, you know, as you were in the beginning. And maybe I answered it and maybe I didn't. It's—you might have found me lost for words on that one. As a matter of fact, I even forgot what we were talking about just for a moment.

**01:36:21**

**RF:** Just—is—just do you get bored with barbecue or is—is talking—is barbecue too much barbecue?

**01:36:32**

**SJ:** No; I don't think there's—matter of fact I don't even know that there's such a thing.

**01:36:36**

**RF:** Right; I mean you gave the best answer. [*Laughs*]

**01:36:39**

**SJ:** It's too much barbecue, only a doctor would say that that's too much barbecue. My—my—I mean just talking about eating it, my dad eats barbecue every day. He eats our barbecue every day. Now I'm not quite that fanatical. I mean I eat it once or twice a week but I never get tired of talking about it. You know, especially when you throw my family in that mix, you know, because of the—and I, you know, sound like a broken record, the history and the heritage—history and heritage but, you know, when—when you throw—if you say barbecue you automatically think of

my granddad. You know, if you say Pete Jones I automatically think of our restaurant because one is the other.

01:37:26

It's just like me thinking about my grandfather and not thinking about my grandmother. You know, they were married for fifty-five years. Well he ran this place for fifty-seven years. You know, and so it is a marriage. It's—one is the other, you know, and so it's—it's a way of life more than anything for our family. You know, I mean because there's nobody in our family—even the ones that doesn't work it, who if we got in a tight—wouldn't come work it. You know, my wife, she runs a hair salon, but there's time when I'll get in a tight and I'll be like “Hey, honey you mind helping me with a catering job next weekend?” “No”; you know, because everybody does their own things but at some point in their life this place was their bread and butter. And so they still feel a little obligation—even though, you know, that we're going to pay them to help us, they still feel a little family obligation to say, you know, I got to go pitch in because they're in a tight—. You know, Christmastime when this place is just hopping and people carrying it out ten and twenty pounds at the time, you know—my cousins and all—everybody will throw in—in the kitchen to help, you know. If you go chopping up twenty-five pigs that weigh 175 pound a piece by hand, you know, that's not a small undertaking at all. You know, y'all were here today and y'all saw maybe two and a half or three pigs get chopped up. Well, you know, you put a line out to that highway, everybody wanting ten pounds a-piece, some meat cleavers got to be swung, you know, to turn that out. And those—they'll come right in and do whatever they got to do. You know, eight hours of swinging cleavers you got to love somebody to do that. **[Laughs]**

**01:39:10**

**RF:** All right; so barbecue is life. I think we should end on that.

**01:39:14**

**SJ:** And life is good. [*Laughs*]

**01:39:18**

**RF:** Good; I want to thank you so much. This was a wonderful interview.

**01:39:19**

**SJ:** Well good deal; thanks man.

**01:39:21**

**RF:** All right; thank you very much.

**01:39:25**

**[End Samuel Jones — Skylight Inn]**