

BO & SONYA WHITAKER
Garden Gate Vineyards - Mocksville, NC

* * *

Date: August 13, 2008
Location: Garden Gate Vineyards – Mocksville, NC
Interviewer: Amy C. Evans, Southern Foodways Alliance
Transcription: Shelley Chance, ProDocs
Length: 1 hour, 35 minutes
Project: Southern Wine - North Carolina

[Begin Bo and Sonya Whitaker Interview]

00:00:01

Amy Evans: This is Amy Evans on Wednesday, August 13, 2008. I'm in Mocksville, North Carolina, at Garden Gate Winery, and I'm sitting with Bob "Bo" Whitaker. **[Laughs]** And sir, if you wouldn't mind stating your name and also your occupation, please?

00:00:18

Bo Whitaker: Okay. My name is Robert E. Whitaker. Everybody calls me Bo. I was born October 18, 1949, and we got into this as a hobby. I was retired from the power company.

00:00:37

AE: Were you born here in Mocksville or close by?

00:00:39

BW: I was born here. I've been here all my life, except I won a trip to Vietnam in the [nineteen] '60s and other than that, I've been here all my life.

00:00:50

AE: And then tell me if you—if we could start with a little bit about your family—you were talking about your great-grandfather or grandfather and some history in bootlegging.

00:01:01

BW: My—bootlegging, I guess a lot of people says it's bad, but back years ago, it was a living. My grandpa [Charlie Howard] and Robert Glen Johnson, which is Junior Johnson's daddy, they

was like brothers. Well they had their little business, and they did that—as far as I know, it was in my family for over 250 years. And that’s—they—but when they bootlegged, you said you could not make money and not work, so what they did was they built houses, bought land, sawmills, and they made them—everybody—everybody thought that they was legal. And they made a lot of money, and they helped a lot of people and that was—it was just a way of life.

00:01:52

AE: Now tell me about that photograph you have in your tasting room of your grandfather.

00:01:55

BW: That—the photograph in the winery is my grandpa, and everybody called him Uncle Charlie. And he was ninety-six years old when he died and he—he just—he loved to farm, but that was his money right there. But he’s—he come from four generations of bootleggers that was passed down and I guess—I guess that’s about all. I mean I thought the world of him. A lot of people still comes by here, and they’ll tell me that they knew him, and they’ll bring me an old jar and said they bought their first liquor off my grandpa. So that’s kind of a conversation piece.

00:02:47

AE: And tell me—you said inside that the—the white shirt and that hat was a sign of a bootlegger.

00:02:52

BW: When you was a bootlegger, a lot of people didn’t realize this, but years ago bootleggers had their territory. You couldn’t go from one county to another without stepping on somebody’s toes. So if you wanted to go into another county, you had to sit down with like—my grandpa

used to call them the godfather. You'd have to sit down, and if you went in there, you either had to pay them money or buy them out. And he—the trait of a bootlegger, they'd wear a starch-white shirt, starched overalls and a derby and that—about anywhere you could go, you could always tell a bootlegger by that right there. That's the—that was the way they dressed. It was. But every—people will laugh when you tell them—well you could make liquor—you could make liquor anywhere, but if you went into another county and you didn't sit down and have it agreed, you would run into problems. They would shoot your tires down, shoot your cars full of holes. It was—it was a business and—and I guess, really, at one time I can remember they would have meetings, and my grandma would fix like a big dinner, and it was like a reunion. And at one time I can remember—the biggest one I ever remember at my grandpa's house, there was twenty-two bootleggers from twenty-two counties. And I mean, it was just something to listen to; they knew everybody. And what they did to keep people—they always said that if you wanted to keep people as your friends, if there was any—if there was every somebody killed and they had—their wife and kids was left, at Christmas they would make sure that they had Christmas. They would take them money. They would loan people money to like get their crops out; they'd loan people money to buy them cars. And as I got older, I asked, “Why did you do that?” And he said, “In the line of work that I'm in, you can never have too many friends,” you know, and that pretty well takes care of that—that little matter.

00:04:54

AE: And talk to me about the Prohibition story you were telling me inside.

00:04:57

BW: Back during Prohibition, certain people could get licenses to make liquor for the government. My grandpa was lucky enough to get one. Well he decided that he'd make it for the government, but he didn't want to lose his other business, so he started making wine. And the good people, the people that bought a whole lot of liquor, he always said they needed a little Christmas present, so he made blueberry wine—blueberry and Muscadine wine—and he'd always make sure that they got them like a—he'd give them a big crock-pot. It was equal to a five-gallon bottle. And they just thought that was amazing, but that's the reason I like—I wanted to make blueberry wine is the color. If you ever see blueberry wine, it's the most beautiful color that there ever was. And people will come here to get the blueberry wine, and they want to make it. Well, they say it—it won't ferment, and I always tell them, well, blueberry wine, I could always tell my grandpa was going to make it. He'd tell my grandma, he'd say, "Go to the store and buy boxes of raisins," and I knew what was up then. You put raisins in blueberry wine, and it's like a starter and a starter—the raisins will help—started to ferment and then after about two days, when it's fermenting good, then you can dip the raisins out. Well that one—that's the reason I like to make blueberry wine; it just reminds me of being a teenager at home when it was being made there. **[Laughs]**

00:06:17

AE: So what else did you learn from your grandfather about making wine and—and how did he, maybe, factor into you wanting to be in this business after retiring from the—the electric company?

00:06:27

BW: Well they—it was funny, in a way. They was—they had a black man that lived up the road, and any time that they was going to make liquor or wine they'd always go get him. His name was Mr. Nate Moulty, and I never could figure why they had to have him there. Well, he would sit on a wooden stump and when the liquor would start running out, he'd taste it with a dipper, and if it was good, he'd kind of smack his lips and grin, and my grandpa would smile. But my grandpa always said that to make wine and make good liquor, you've got to have a taste for it. If you don't have a taste, nobody will buy it, and he always said that Mr. Nate had the best taste of anybody in his life that he had ever saw for liquor. He said if it weren't good, he'd tell you. And the wine, back when I was a kid, my grandpa would make blackberry wine, and if we had an upset stomach, my grandma would make us drink a glass. And somebody—and I still have people tell me. I said, "Well do you think it worked?" And they said, "Well we got over it." I said, "Well either we got over it, or the wine cured it. I don't know which it was." But back then, wine was used as a—like medicine. It was different things. But I guess all the years that I've been around it, I met people—still have people to come here from probably twenty, twenty-five counties and they always—they see that picture and they'll say, "Do you know Uncle Charlie?" And I'll say, "That was my grandpa." And said it's a—well, what he done, a lot of people didn't think it was right, but it was a living, so that's—I just enjoyed being around it.

00:08:10

AE: Was your father ever a part of the bootlegging business?

00:08:12

BW: No, we—we run a—we run a dairy. In fact, my grandfather had a lot of land, and we run a dairy and, like I say, we had—we diversified. We had cows, chickens, pigs. But my grandpa was

kind of funny. He said—two of my uncles wasn't married, and he said that he didn't want anybody that was married or had kids around it. And he pulled four different times in prison; the last time he was eighty-eight years old when he pulled time. And I said—he just didn't—he just didn't want them get involved. As far as hauling the liquor, yes, all of them hauled it; but as far as making it, he said he could always get them out of it if they got caught hauling it, but he couldn't get them out of it if they got caught making it.

00:09:05

AE: Did you ever haul it for him?

00:09:07

BW: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. In fact, I tell people, I guess I was working and trying to pay for everything I had. You could make—you could pick up \$300 a night hauling liquor and, at the time, I was bringing home about sixty dollars a week. So you see why people hauled it. Everything was going good, and then I met my wife, Sonya, and my uncles told me, they said, “You can't haul no more.” And that was just—that was a going thing in our family. And I said, “Well,” you know, “I need some money.” I said, “I've got to pay for this house.” And I so I just told them, I said, “If I can't haul it for y'all, I'm going to haul it for somebody.” And I said, “Please don't blackball me.” And so I went up in Wilkes [County], and I hauled liquor for some of those bootleggers. And then when my oldest daughter was born, I said, “I need to stop. I didn't want to ever embarrass her,” so that was—that was the end of my dealings with that. And several people have—that I talk to—in fact, down—down in this area, as far as I know, there's not but three of the original bunch still alive that was alive with my grandpa, and Junior Johnson is one of them and there's a Hege guy still alive and there's a Wagner and, other than that, all of

them is passed. And now they have legalized white liquor, and the first one to get his license was Junior Johnson. They sell it in ABC Stores. And there's a winery called Buck Shoals, and they've got their license to make it. But—and somebody asked me why you can't buy it there, and I said, "Well," I said, "because of the alcohol content." We are an unfortified winery, and that means that we can't go over fourteen-percent. Fortified is fourteen and above, and when you start—you can't—in the winery here we cannot have beer or—I guess you'd say bourbon, vodka—you can't have anything like that in the winery, but—. But I just—somebody—somebody asked me, they said, "Don't you feel bad about it?" And I said, "Well I feel—." I look at it this way: If the worst that I ever did in my life was haul a load of liquor, I've done pretty good. And then some people will push you a little bit further and say—and I always come back and I say, "Well my grandpa told me two things you've got to always watch in your life. You've got to be real careful how you open a closet; something will jump out and bite you. And the most important thing—." And I guess I remember that more than anything. A guy come to borrow money one day, and he wouldn't loan it to him. And he was the first person I ever seen my grandpa deny. Well when he left I just asked him, I said, "You don't think it would be wise to loan him some money?" He said, "You can't trust him." And I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Well he broke the most legal papers he ever agreed to in his life and the most sacred vow." And I said, "I'm not following what you're saying." And he said, "Well there will be a time when you'll meet a fine young lady, and you'll want to get married and you—you stand before God and you—you make your pledge. Well, if you don't honor God, you're sure not going to honor me and," he said, "a man that won't honor God, I don't want nothing to do with him." And that's always stuck with me. I mean that's—.

00:12:55

And a lot of people would say, you know, “I heard your grandpa say it.” And I said, “Oh, yeah, he said that the—you could owe a man some money and not pay him, that was bad enough. But, he said, ‘When you go against your wife, something is wrong.’” And that was just a—that was his saying, and it’s always stuck with me. But that’s the only person that I ever knowed that my grandpa would not loan money.

00:13:14

AE: Hmm. Was your grandpa still living when you started the winery?

00:13:17

BW: No, he died in—he died in 19—I graduated in 1968, from high school, and he—he died in 19—1966 and my mom and my dad was scared to death. He always said that—in fact, my uncles told me, said, “When you—when you got out of high school, everything he had he was going to offer to you.” He wanted it carried on. And a lot of people would say, “Boy, your grandpa would be right at home over here.” And I said, well—or your uncles—and I said, “Oh, yeah.” They loved to be around stuff like this. But I really truly and think if, like I say, if I had wanted it, I could have probably got everything. In fact, my uncles told me, said, “If he hadn't died when he did, we'd not got nothing; you'd got it all.” So he—said all the—said, “He had eleven youngins,” and said that, “he really had twelve because he always said that he thought more of you than he did all of us.” And so I thought that as awful good, but in return I wondered how many of my uncles and aunts didn't like that remark. No, I—I admired him. Like I say, I always thought he was fair. He was, like I say, he was a big man and a lot of people describe him as a mean man, but any time he had a problem with somebody he would go straight to them. He wouldn't send

nobody to carry his mail; he'd do it his self. But—but in return, I'd heard them say he was a mean man but he was a fair man, so—. That pretty well sums my grandpa up.

00:15:01

AE: Well, what did I mean to the community where—around he lived and worked when he passed away? With somebody like that who—who supports so many people in a community?

00:15:12

BW: There was a lot of people hurting. In fact, up to the time my uncles died, I don't know how many people my grandpa buried. They just didn't have money back then, and I know once my grandpa died, my uncles took over. They seen that people—there was several people—I'll use you. Like your dad was killed in a car wreck, and your mom had several kids, they made sure that y'all had money to go to school, you had Christmas and it was—it's not funny in a way, but a few years back, a guy that used to work for them, help them make liquor, he died. His sister called over here and said she didn't have the money to bury him. So my wife said, "What are you going to do?" I said, "I don't know." I said, "If my grandpa and my uncles was alive, they'd bury them." And she said, "Well, it's your money." So anyway, she wanted me to bring the money to her house, and I told her she'd have to come over here. Well, she come over, and I loaned her the money, knowing that I'd never see it. Well, I run up with a guy that used to sawmill with my uncles and them, and he said, "You'll never guess what I did last night." And I said, "I don't know, Jerry," I said, "what did you do?" He said, "I loaned money to a woman to bury her brother." And I started laughing. And he said, "No, it's not funny. Really, I did." I said, "I did the same thing." And so now I remark when we see one another, he'd—he'd say, "You got your money back, didn't you?" I said, "Yeah, didn't you, Jerry?" And he'd say, "Oh, yeah." And then

we'd look at one another and say, "It might have been the best money we ever loaned." **[Laughs]**

So I guess tradition was passed down. The deal was in our family, they always said you never had too many friends. If somebody tells you, "Amy is bad," don't judge Amy until you know her; and if she's bad, people would say, "Leave them alone." And my grandpa would say, "Feed them with a spoon." He said, "They're like a copperhead; they'll bite back."

00:17:17

But no, it was—it was something that was brought up. My grandpa was very well missed. In fact, he loaned people money so their kids could go to college. He was a very wealthy man in land and money but—but those days—those days are—I guess they're gone in the wind, is a good way to put it.

00:17:38

AE: What do you think your grandfather would say about you being in the wine business now?

00:17:43

BW: Well, we had some people to come over yesterday that knew him real well, and they said, "Boy, your grandpa would be proud of you, wouldn't he?" And I said, "Well, I don't know." I said, "I hope he would." And, in fact, I had one ATF [Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms] officer to tell me, said that he had heard that my grandpa might have known how to do it, and he said, "Did you ever think about doing it?" And I said, "Well my grandpa always told everybody—now, he said, "Do you want to get into this? There's some money in it, but just remember that bed—that if you ever get caught that bed they send you to, it don't sleep as good as the bed you're in." And I said I—I kind of took my grandpa's word. I kind of liked the bed I was in. And they just laughed. But I—yes, I think he would be real proud. I know my uncles

would be. My mama was alive when we started into this, and she was kind of like my grandma. She said, “You don’t need to go into this.” And I said, “Mama, I really want to do it.” And so she would kind of get upset to me, and she’d always answer and say, “How you doing?” And I said, “Well Mama,” I said, “I don’t mean no disrespect to this”—every listener, but mom was—she was a very strong Baptist, and I told her, I said, “If it weren’t for the Baptist church, I don’t know if I’d make it.” I said, “They’re going to start serving wine every Sunday morning.” And my—my mama would get mad at me and wouldn’t talk to me. **[Laughs]** And my brother would say, “You better quit. You’re going to make her mad.” But no, I think she was proud too, but, like I say, it was—I guess she had seen how many times her daddy or my grandpa had to go pull some time [in prison], and—but like I say, the last time, he was eighty-six years old when he got caught. And they made him a road guard. And they said he was too old to do anything else and they said that he—when he was working on the road, they said more cars would stop. And they’d say, “What you doing up here, Uncle Charlie?” “I’m pulling a little bit of time.” He said, “I’ll be home.” **[Laughs]**

00:19:50

But then it was funny. Well, it wasn’t funny, but when my grandpa got to come home, we was sitting out on the front porch, and he was telling me different people he met from different places. And this car come in, and he said, “I don’t believe I ever saw that car before.” And I said—he said, “Just sit still.” Well they got out, and he got to looking, and he said, “Yeah, I know that man. That’s a good man.” I said, “Who is it?” And he says, “The warden.” **[Laughs]** He had come to maybe get him a little bit of cough medicine. **[Laughs]** My grandpa said, “I know that I’d liked you.” **[Laughs]** But no, he—I think—really and truly, I think I would like to see one of my kids to do it, but the basic fact, it’s been—it’s been in the family all these years,

and now it's legal and I'd just like to see my kids carry it out. Whether they will or not I don't know, but—.

00:20:43

AE: Yeah? Well when you—before you retired from the power company, did you always have a mind that you wanted to do something like this, or did this come after you retired?

00:20:54

BW: No, I always wanted to do something like this, but with the job I had I know(ed) that if I ever got into something like this—I was over a bunch of men and over several counties, and it wouldn't have bothered the people that I worked with but I know somebody would say something, "We can't have somebody working for us that's doing that right there." And so when I retired, they asked me, they said, "What are you going to do?" And I said, you know, I said, "I'm probably going to get my license and," I said, "either build me a pantry and sell beer and wine—or," I said, "I—I—either—," I said, "I might go to making wine." And so one of the guys that was there, he had been there several years, and he couldn't come home when I did and he said—he said, you know, "You ought to started this a long time ago." He said, "The bunch that works here, they'd have supported you if nobody else did." No, but I was lucky enough to get to come home at fifty years old, so I had plenty of time. And we've established the place. We have a lot of people that come here due to the—who my grandpa was and there will be people that come in, and they'll have stories and stuff that happened years ago. Some of their kin people got caught hauling liquor for my grandpa and—but I never know when somebody walks through the door; a lot of people know me that—that I don't remember. But it's good. It's good, real good.

00:22:23

AE: So how did you start, exactly? You mentioned earlier when we were walking through the vineyard that you read all the books that you could get your hands on, but how did you—how did you start?

00:22:33

BW: Well I always said, really, when I retired, I didn't know really what I wanted to do, and I said I might grow rosebushes. My grandma was crazy over rosebushes, and I thought they was beautiful. Well my wife and her girlfriend or best friend, however you want to say it, they was going to the winery, and they wanted me to go one day. So we went to a winery and I—the grapes was hanging down, and I just stopped them and I said, "I'm going to tell you, right yonder is one of the prettiest sights I have ever in my life saw." If you ever get a chance to see a vineyard when the grapes are in—are ripe, hanging there, to me, they're beautiful—more beautiful than roses. And I said right then, I said, "This is a—what I want to do."

00:23:12

So the—the first year that we made wine we were—our vines weren't established and people that I had worked with, helped get power to the farm, and they called me and they said, "Is it true that you're making wine?" And I said, "Yeah." They said, you know, "We've got several vines." So the first year, we got all our grapes off of the different people that I had helped get power to their new homes or kids' homes. There was more than—I guess there was close to 6,000 pounds of grapes. And they wouldn't take a penny, so what I did, everybody that give me grapes when I made wine, I'd give them a case of wine out of their grapes. Well then I run across a young lady, and she's still living and she's Miss Lizzie Reeves. She's ninety-two years old—just had a birthday. But her vineyard is forty years old, and she asked me, would I be interested

in leasing it. So we leased it, and I told her, I said, “Well let’s just do it for a year.” And she said, “Well, I’d really like for you to have it,” said, “I’ve checked you out. I know who you are.” And I said, “Well, I might not do it to suit you.” Well she told me several times, if I hadn’t took the vineyard when I did—her husband died—her vineyard would be history. But she’s a fine lady and, like I say, ninety-two years old. Her mind is ten-times better than mine. She can remember anything. Her yard is like it’s manicured. Her house looks like it’s never been lived in. And I just told her one day, I said, “Miss Lizzie, you have something I’d really like to get.” And she said—she’s got pretty fond of me and she said—and I went to school with her kids—and she said, “Well, I think whatever it is, you can have it.” And I said, “Well don’t commit yourself until you know.” And she said, “Well, I don’t have a whole lot.” And I said, “Miss Lizzie, we just—we’re going to swap minds.” And she said, “No, no, I can’t do that. That’s the only thing I’ve got left that’s good.” And I think, “Well, I’ve got Alzheimer’s, and your mind is perfect.” And she said, “Well, when I leave here, I’ll leave it to you.” **[Laughs]** But that’s—that’s really about how we got started.

00:25:21

And my wife and them, they had such fun making it and I was telling them—and she’ll tell you, they was asking, “So how—how did y’all—how did y’all mash the grapes?” And I said, “My grandpa would put them in a—a pan and put a—like a heavy cloth over it and he had a maul and he’d mash them like that.” And they laughed, and they said, “He never did stomp them?” And I said, “No.” And I—they said, “Well how did he strain it?” And I said, “Well,” I said, “he’d have my grandma go to the store.” And they used to have a—the hoses—brown stockings and they’d stuff them stockings full of the mash and they just—everybody would walk it down. And they said, “Well, how are we going to do ours?” And I said, “I don’t know, other than use cheesecloth.” “But,” I said, “what I would do,” I said, “but you can do anything you

want to. If I was doing it, I'd go buy a good heavy pair of panty hose." And that's how they made it. And they told everybody the reason it was so good, they squeezed it through panty hose. But that's—and they just had a ball doing it and it was really pretty wine, and they—they wanted to bottle it too soon. And I told them, I said, "No," I said, "you really need to let it sit for about a year and a half." Well, a lot of people will bottle their wine three months to four months, and they'll have problems; it will push the corks out, and it will crack the bottles. And I had a guy that come here not long ago, and I told him, I said, "You're going to do the same thing my wife and her best friend did." He said that the wine was bubbling, and I said, "Buddy, what it is, your wine has turned to champagne. You need to get it out of your bottle." And he said, "Why?" I said, "It will—they explode. It will crack them." And he said, "No." And if you remember, champagne is—is put in a thicker bottle than wine. And he said, "What do I do?" I said, "Put it back—put it back in your bottle and let it start working, and let it work off and your wine is fine." And he didn't believe that, but he called me back, and he said he bottled it too soon. But that's more or less how they—really, when they got into it and I liked the vines, and so we started making wine and started giving it for birthday gifts and Christmas gifts. And then I told her [Sonya], I said, "You know, if you want to do it, that's fine, but I was thinking about getting a pantry store and just getting my beer license and selling beer." Just to—just to meet people, you know. When you work and see people from everywhere and then you come home, it's pretty—pretty hard not to see people. That pretty well sums that up.

00:28:03

AE: So what year was it that you planted your first vine?

00:28:07

BW: We planted our first grapes in—I guess it was 1999 or 2000 was the first year, and then the last—the—the—well, we’ve changed some vines out but the last vineyard—excuse me. [*To customers leaving the tasting room*] *Y’all have a good day and come back. All right. Thank you.*

00:28:31

But no, I guess the last—this is the last vineyard [*the plot adjacent to the patio*], and it was set in—I think this one was did in 2000—I guess in 2005 was when this one was did.

00:28:49

AE: How many acres do you have right here by the house?

00:28:52

BW: We have—all totaled, we have three acres of Muscadine and Scuppernong and Niagras. We have a quarter acre of blackberries; we have a quarter acre of strawberries and then a quarter acre of raspberries. And our blueberries, I tried to raise them, but you got to have about six different kinds to where they’ll cross-pollinate. So a guy come here one day from Wake Forest; he’s a big Wake Forest fan, and he had a blueberry farm, and he said they didn’t spray [their berries]. And said his dad had left it to him and said he at first was going to sell it but said he found out it’s a pretty—pretty productive little business. So he brings us our blueberries; they’ve never been sprayed. They’re handpicked. They’re washed. And so we just—we signed a paper with him, and we’ve been getting them off him for eight years and he’s never went up [in price]. So he’s—I made another good friend, plus a good customer.

00:29:47

AE: And what made you want to produce all those different kinds of fruit wines?

00:29:51

BW: Well, when we started, we was over at Tanglewood one day and one of the—they had—that’s the homecoming; they have all the wineries come to Tanglewood Park. It’s halfway—well it’s over here at Clemens, halfway between here and Winston, and it’s owned by the Reynolds. But anyway, they was all kidding me. They said, “Redneck.” And a couple of them was race car drivers, and I said, “Well I’ll tell you what,” I said, “I wouldn’t call nobody a redneck. Rednecks is what made NASCAR.” And they said, “I was just picking,” which I knew they was. But I told them, I said, “Everybody wants to follow California, Virginia—different states. Every state that makes wine needs to make their own wine. I said, “North Carolina is a fruit state, and that’s the reason we want to do fruit wine.” And the—and the reason we went with the Muscadine and Scuppernong, North Carolina, it’s the state grape. They’re very hardy; you don’t have to spray. They can live hundreds of years and so that’s—that’s the main reason we went with the kind of wine that we did go with.

00:30:56

AE: And what about your customer? Did you want to attract a certain kind of customer with the fruit wines or—?

00:31:00

BW: Well we—we felt like—and that’s a very good question because Richard Childress [*proprietor, Childress Vineyards*] asked me one day, he said, “What made you go with the fruit wines?” And I said, “Richard, you ought to know better anybody with NASCAR.” I said, “Once you cross the Mason-Dixon Line, it’s pretty hard to take sweet iced tea out of a man’s hand.” And I said, “People from the South has a sweet tooth. And I said, “I’m not saying they won't

drink the California wine but,” I said, “people will come in here.” And I don’t know, really, if they drink that much wine. They say they want some sweet Muscadine or sweet Scuppernong like their grandparents made, and we have dry and sweet but really, the sweeter wine has sold better than the drier wine. But that’s—and he looked at me and he told me, he said, “You do have a point.” And the last I heard, he was starting to make a sweeter wine. So yeah, I really think the South, they will—you have a lot of people that likes the real dry wine. But a lot—most of the South, and this is out of respect, are hard-working people. I mean they earn their money and they want—they want something where they can go out and have a good meal and have a good bottle of wine, and they don’t care about what the name is. In fact, I don’t know how many people are drinking the Muscadine wine now because they’re scared to death of—I don’t know if I’m pronouncing the word right, Lipitor®, the pill [**a drug used to treat high cholesterol**]. They’re saying if you take that, you’ve got to be real careful. You’ve got to watch your liver and your kidneys, and the doctors have recommended that. I don’t know if it works, but a lot of people says it does. But a lot of people are drinking wine for health reasons. So I think, really, it will be good for the state of North Carolina—good for any state because there’s so many jobs lost—regardless of if you make dry wine, sweet wine, and so far, all the wineries I don’t—if somebody comes here and they want a real dry wine, we tell them Childress [Vineyards] is across the river, RayLen’s [Vineyards & Winery] is about ten minutes from here, so if people goes there and they want a sweeter wine, they tell them about us. And, really, as long as everybody pulls together, I think it will be good for everybody.

00:33:15

AE: Well, speaking about the antioxidants in Muscadine and the health properties and all, now you mentioned before about people using wine in the old days for medicine. Do you know of any other kind of folk medicine traditions surrounding Muscadine wine?

00:33:30

BW: They—I know people used the—the doctors here in town, if you had like a real bad cold, they'd have you to drink Muscadine wine, brown sugar; they'd have you take Muscadine wine, brown sugar, and something else, and they claim that like a real dry cough, it would take care of it. But really, years ago, wines was used—well just about for colds, flu, upset stomach and—and where that got started, I guess it got started with our grandparents, you know, that—. And another big thing around here years ago was sassafras tea. And I said it was all—all used as herbs and I—and I guess, really, if you think about it, it might have been the closest thing they had to medicine because there wasn't houses everywhere. People was scattered. It was hard to—well there wasn't even money to go to the doctor's. But no, I don't—I don't really know how that got started, other than passed down from generation to generation.

00:34:40

AE: And tell me, too, in your barrel room out there, how you soak the—the hulls and the seeds.

00:34:45

BW: What we do when we make our wine, we run it through the press and the crusher, and then what you do is we put the seeds and the hulls back in the wine. And the reason you want them in there, you leave them in there and when they're—when you get all the resitrol [**resveratrol, a powerful antioxidant found in Muscadine grapes**] or antioxidants out, they'll turn white and

float to the top. But what a lot of people don't understand, where your color comes from in your wine is out of the hulls. And I said—that's the reason we do that, and a lot of people says, well, said, it—you know you really don't have to leave them in there, but what we're trying to do is make it as close to the way it was made years ago. And where you got your supposedly—all your good herbs was out of the hulls and seeds, so we're basically still doing that. And they say, "Well it's hard to get out." They'll float to the top. And, but another thing, we don't try to mass-produce. We don't try to see how *much* wine we can make. And if you was in the business of seeing how much you can make, all of our wines sold here, they said we'd have to sell it in the stores. And I said, "No." By the time you pay shelf space and pay rent you, don't make anything. And they said, "Well what if you don't make it?" I said, "Well, all of our friends will have plenty of wine to drink." And like I say, we've made it just fine. We—we ship wine to what states that we're allowed to ship to. A lot of the states we can't ship, but we tell people the people can—we can't ship, say like to—I don't remember; my wife knows the states better. But we can sell an individual a case of wine, and they can ship it anywhere. That doesn't make a whole lot of sense to me, but, like I say—but no, it's—everything—everything—we try to keep everything here at home, and it's worked that way. My wife does the books because I told her once I come home, I was through with the computer. I wasn't going to do any of that again and—. I'm just happy—I'm happy being able to get up every morning and most time, somebody stops by every day. We have several people that stop by regular to get wine every day, but we have a lot of people stop by that wants to look at the vines. They just like to walk through and look, and I just tell them to make their selves at home. And the next thing I know, I'll see them bring some of their kids back or something, and we get business from just letting people walk around. And everybody says,

“You can't let them walk through the vineyards.” We've never had anything bothered—never, so—. But I guess that's about all I can say on that.

00:37:20

AE: And you have a lot of local people bring their own grapes to come and crush and bottle here?

00:37:26

BW: Yes, we have. In fact, when we got the crusher, we have a lot of people, I'll tell them, if they—like on their strawberries and blackberries, if they want to make pies or cobblers, and I say, “If you run them through the press, you get a whole lot of juice and it's really—it's really a whole lot better.” Well the people will come by, and they say, “I don't know how to use it.” And I say just hook it up. And they get a kick, and they'll wash it down and they'll use it to make their jelly, but it don't hurt a thing. And they always say, “What do I owe you?” And I say, “You don't owe me nothing.” Well a lot of times they'll come back and get wine, so it's just—I guess it's a lot of this right here—in fact, a lot of people says it's like going to a reunion and seeing people you haven't saw in a long time. And I said, “Well that's good.” But when we start making wine, they're all hanging around. It's kind of like years ago when you primed tobacco; you always had a plenty—plenty of good stuff to eat and plenty of people. And—and I know they'll say, “How much longer are you going to be making wine?” And I say, “I hope not a whole lot longer.” They get a kick. They think it's fun. After—after a couple weeks, it's not fun. But no, it's just—I think, like I say, people—anytime, it's hard to go somewhere. There's not many places that you can go and sit down. Like the old country stores are gone. This is just—in fact, I've had an unbelievable amount of people come here in the neighborhood. This used to be the

county home. And what the county home was—they didn't have any rest homes. There was an 8,000 square foot building sitting on this 200 acres. As long as you could cook, sweep the floors, work in the fields, you could stay here. Well they did away with it in 1966; that was the first rest home but—. And people will stop by and they will say, "Boy, I'm glad you done this vineyard." And I say, "Really?" And they say, "Oh, yes. A lot of people comes in. It's a good place we can go sit down and see our friends." And normally out here where we're sitting on the arbor, on Monday this is—I'll be working but this thing will be full, and it will be anything from politics to religion. If these guys was in charge, **[Laughs]** either they would correct the world, or they will destroy the world. **[Laughs]** And I'll start laughing every now and then, and they'll say, "You've heard that said before?" And I said, "I can't remember. I learned a long time ago, I just say, just long as y'all think you're right," I said, "that's—that's fine." And then one day I walked by and I told them, I said, "Boys, if y'all keep on, y'all going to have to have boots to stay out here." And one guy said, "Well, I'm telling the truth. I'm telling it the way it is." And I started laughing but—normally, I'll try to have a watermelon or something on Monday. I have something here where they can bust it open and eat it, but they get a kick on it. A lot of the older people, they don't have anywhere to go. The stores, you know, you can't just go to Wal-Mart and sit down. But they get a lot of good fellowship here, and I enjoy it. And about—really and truly, about every time they come, I learn something. I found out the other day I knew a guy all his life and didn't know he had a brother. And they told me he had a brother. **[Laughs]** So a lot of the stuff you let go in one ear and it will come out the other, but a lot of stuff you need to listen to.

00:40:48

AE: So tell me, going back to the winery and when y'all started, I mean you—y'all—you and your wife have done everything here yourselves. And it's a lot of work, and it's a really beautiful

property here. Can you talk about kind of the evolution of how things have developed over the years and adding on and—?

00:41:05

BW: Well we started out with a twelve by twenty-four [foot] building, and it just got to where the people were super nice—we'd have people lined up out here in the yard. We just didn't have the room. So I told her, I said, "We're going to have to build on." But we didn't want to get no—no bigger. In fact, I guess something I failed to tell you, when I retired, they said they'd pay my insurance until I died, but I lost hers. So our deal was we'd—we'd stay open two days a week and see if she could sell her pottery and sell a bottle or two of wine, and if we could make fifty dollars a week, that would be two hundred dollars a month on paying her insurance. Well, we went from 500 gallons and two days a week—we're probably—we're probably up somewhere in the neighborhood of 10,000 to 15,000 gallons a year, and that's nothing for a big winery, but it is for us, but we're open seven days a week. And then when we got the other room built, people started wanting to have their meetings out here and birthday parties and weddings, so I told Sonya, I said, "Well, I think I found out a way maybe we can survive." So I built the arbor here, and I said, "That way people can sit in here and bring them a picnic lunch, and they can sit in here if we're full in there." Well then we started—it was full in there and full out here, so I said, "We're going to have to do something else." So that's when we built the last room. And it's—I think it's twenty-six by twenty-six [feet]; it will seat thirty-six people and, to be honest, I believe if we had built it double the size, it wouldn't have been big enough, but I'm hoping this is it. I mean that's just—we don't—we don't have any paid employees and we just—we try to keep it just as plain as we can be, but if we—if we get much bigger, we'll have to have somebody to help us. We just can't—can't go on the way we are. But that's basically just each year—well, like

I say, each year we've added something and, in fact, this year we added another—well we added another 600-foot storing space down behind the building. We've added a cold room so, hopefully, we don't have to add—. But the price—really, the price of everything, in my opinion, the price has stayed in line. The only thing it costs us more is shipping and, in fact, we've got—we just go through ordering our—our glasses and they have the dragonfly and our name, but they—the shipping—everybody has did us right. They haven't been up on us, but the fuel has went up; it's—the fuel is starting to hurt people and we have not—we've been the same price—correct me if I'm wrong, Sonya; we haven't had to go up on any of our wine from the time we started until now, and everybody else is going up. When we first started, she priced it at twelve dollars a bottle, and I thought that was a little high, but I don't see we'll have to go up in five years. And that's a lot—another thing people are bragging on, “How come y'all are not going up and everybody else is?” So I guess, really—really, when we started at that price, we did right to begin with.

00:44:22

AE: And y'all are going to be harvesting here in a couple of weeks. Who helps y'all out at harvest time?

00:44:26

BW: Well I'll let Sonya answer that. She's—

00:44:29

AE: You want to come join us, Sonya? She just got finished with some customers inside.

00:44:37

BW: This is where her girlfriends come in.

00:44:39

AE: Could I get you first, please, Sonya, to say your name for the record?

00:44:43

Sonya Whitaker: Sonya Whitaker.

00:44:45

AE: Thank you. And—your eyes are so beautiful. It’s the first time I’ve really seen them close up. Goodness, they’re bright green.

00:44:49

SW: Thank you.

00:44:51

AE: And so we’re talking about harvest.

00:44:52

SW: Well, I get the—my girlfriends from high school and I have a couple sisters that help, and we just pretty much do it all. No money is passed or anything like that; we don’t have paid employees. We just sort of let them eat the grapes and—and whatever.

00:45:11

BW: Feed them breakfast in the morning; feed them dinner.

00:45:13

SW: Yeah, we feed them breakfast and all, and it works out real good like that.

00:45:16

BW: And we have cookouts over here, one a week and invite everybody.

00:45:22

SW: So it works out good. I try to simplify everything because it's just us, and there's so much paperwork when it comes to a winery and all, so I try to simplify everything.

00:45:33

AE: And can you—I wanted to talk a little bit about—giving Bo a break here—but talk a little bit about the bottling room back there and everything is really, you know, small scale, tabletop, low-key production line in there.

00:45:47

SW: It is. We do everything by hand. It's manual. We have a little bottling unit, and it only takes three of us to bottle. We generally bottle about forty gallons at a time, which takes probably about an hour, hour and a half to do. It's just very simple. You know, we don't have any high-tech equipment or anything like that but it—it's manageable for us. That's the big key to us is that it has to be manageable. But that's how we bottle and we put our labels and cork and—and cap all at the same time, so it works out good.

00:46:25

AE: And tell me about the label.

00:46:28

SW: The label is a dragonfly. When we were thinking of the name for our winery, I wanted it to be something to do with garden because we liked flowerbeds, and he loves working with the grapes and everything, so I wanted it Garden Gate. And I thought—this Chinese lady had come to me and had told me that, you know, that there was a saying that if a dragonfly lands on you, you have good luck, and I thought that would be the perfect emblem for our wine because we needed so much luck at this and all. [*Laughs*] But it turned out good. I have found through our customers there are so many people that collect anything dragonfly, you know, and you would not believe how many tattoos I have seen. But that’s how the dragonfly label came about.

00:47:21

AE: And you designed it?

00:47:21

SW: Uh-hmm, I designed it. And we had a place in Winston, All Stick [All Stick Label, LLC], it’s like a generic type label where they do the dragonfly, and then I fill out the information to where—I have a printer that prints out all the information on there and also—I also print all my flyers and my order forms and everything. I try to be as self-sufficient as possible. I learned real quick, especially when you’re doing brochures and that type of thing, they want you to order like 10,000 at a time, and if you make one change, it’s obsolete, you know. You might as well go order another 10,000. So it’s a very hands-on type thing to where I’ve changed my flyer several times. We just use our printers to print them off. Our big way of advertising is through the

welcome centers. I think there's sixteen welcome centers coming into North Carolina, and I supply them with the flyers.

00:48:21

AE: Yeah? And Bo was saying before that y'all don't have any of those highway—those fancy [state] highway signs or anything to get people here?

00:48:26

SW: No, no, that's a problem with me because I think—because I don't even ask for the signs with the name. All I would be interested in the state furnishing is the grape emblem with mileage and an arrow because, to me, it's tourism and bottom line is if we sell more, they get more through the taxes and everything. But it's a big dilemma for the smaller wineries, especially because people are—they look for that sign with the grapes.

00:48:57

BW: And once they come here—that's what I don't understand through the state. The first thing they [the tourists] ask is, “Where can we go get a good meal?” We'll send them to the local restaurants, and we don't send anybody anywhere that we wouldn't go. A bed and breakfast. So what I'm saying, I think the state messes up. They don't see—forget about the money that they get off the sales of the wine, but look at what they gain through the businesses, people stopping and get gas. I mean it's just—. I know every one—each one of us sees things different in our minds and in our eyes, but if the state would open their eyes, there's been so much—furniture stores have closed, or factories. Burlington Mills, which is textile mills, they've closed. Wine—

wine has been a drawing card to North Carolina, but I think they fail to give the wineries any credit, so—.

00:49:49

And then another thing, I don't know—and this is a good question, and I'll probably have you to answer it after this interview—we had forty farmers come here from Ephesus [?], Virginia, it's on the eastern coast, interested in doing vineyards. We have people come here every day—well not every day but probably once—I'd say we have two to three people like yourself come here, and they'll say, "We've been to the Community College to take a wine course and," they say, "you've got to have \$5,000,000 to \$10,000,000 to do a winery." And I say, "No." I really—I guess what I'm trying to say, I just ask them, "How much do you want to do yourself? How big do you want to get? How much show and tell do you want?" And when I say show and tell, this is—I mean my hat is off to anybody that makes a buck. With us, you saw our winery and you saw everything; we're not big, we're just plain but you can—you can spend as much money as you want on bottlers, corkers, these great big stainless steel tanks, all this stuff, but I just try to tell people, with us here, we did everything ourselves. It just depends on how much you want to do yourself and how much you want to spend. And I think a lot of the places, they scare people off. And a lot—up in Yadkin County, a lot of the farmers—tobacco is over, and a lot of them has converted to wineries. Well there's—farmers are hard workers, and if my dad or my grandpa had to go through what we had to go through to get licensed through the county—not through the state and federal. State and federal are wonderful. But if it hadn't been for the state and federal, I don't know if we'd got our license. The county—they're not prepared, all right. The remark that we got—and I understand this—the remark we got, there won't be any wineries in Davie County. Well there's two with another one fixing to open, so they didn't want to send anybody to get information to pass onto the people. And it's pretty hard if I come to you

with questions and you can't answer them. I'm at a dead-end stop, and I'm not going off on the county, the state, or anything, but what I'm saying, from sixteen wineries from the time we started, to nearly eighty and twenty more fixing to open, there needs to be somebody that can sit down with these individuals. And I tell them when they come here, "There's been changes. I don't want to tell you something, and it's wrong but," I said. And I don't know—I don't know whether NC State, they come up here regular. I'm proud. I guess they think that what we're doing is right, but I'm proud that they do that but still, I often wonder, just like when you called, I wonder what draws people to us.

00:52:43

AE: Well, I think I *will* answer that. It's that it is small, and it's not just this corporate, you know, behemoth that is a lot of—lot of PR and a lot of, you know, bells and whistles, and it's just people making wine, you know. And I think, too, here, that it—you know, what y'all are doing really speaks to the tradition of wine making in North Carolina that has been here so long and—and that you're keeping something going.

00:53:06

BW: Well we want people, when they come here just like yourself, we want you to feel like you're at home, just like you walked out of your house and you stepped back in your house. And you've got to treat everybody the same. I don't care whether they're in a fine Mercedes or they're in an old—we have people that come here that's just come out of the fields from working to buy a bottle of wine. They're not intimidated. I mean we have—we've had people from forty-two states, probably eleven foreign countries, we just—we just plain and you know everybody—when they leave, you know, they said—. We have people, we have doctors, lawyers, pilots—

they love to just come up here and they said it's quiet; they can get away from everything and sit down. It's not like—it's not so commercial. And I always just come back and say, "Well it's just—just a house and some land." And they say, "No, it's different." But Sonya will tell you, in fact—I'll tell her to tell you—last week, she calls it the international week, and I'll let her tell where all they was from last week.

00:54:04

SW: We had—to me, one of the best things about being a winery, whether you're small or large, is all the different people you meet. Just like, he retired, and if he had not gone into this, we would have seen maybe just a handful of people that we know every week. This way, we meet all kinds of people from different trades in life and different countries. Last week we had people from Peru, from London, from Paraguay, Israel—it was just amazing—and Germany, all in the matter of a week, which was just awesome. I was just blown away, and it's good to just sit down and just talk to them. They—they tell us about their lives, and we tell them about ours and it's just very, very interesting.

00:54:53

AE: Now how many of the people who come through here are actually familiar with Muscadine wine?

00:54:59

SW: I would say probably half are. Just like our customers right then were from Canada, and they had never heard of Muscadine but, you know, they liked it. They—they thought it was a very unique taste and it's—it's fun telling them about the grape and all.

00:55:18

BW: Tell them about the doctor. The doctors is the ones really pushing people to us.

00:55:22

SW: Right. The Muscadine grape has—it's very beneficial for lowering cholesterol and for high blood pressure. They're doing a lot of research on it. They're coming out with the seed pills and, hopefully, it will be a breakthrough in medicine, I'm hoping.

00:55:40

BW: The extract from the seeds, that is very bitter. I tried to drink it and what it is—is they somehow they take the seeds when they—when they're first picked and they mash the juice out and if—they're saying it's putting certain types of cancer in remission so—.

00:55:58

SW: I hope it's true. I hope they'll find out it's a breakthrough for the cancer research and for all kinds of medical benefits.

00:56:10

AE: Now what do you hear some of your customers say about your wines—the Muscadine and the fruit wines?

00:56:13

SW: They like—most of our customers like the taste of the Scuppernong and the Muscadine. They're two—they're the same—they're both Muscadine, but they have very different flavors. I

think the Scuppernong is a little fruitier. We have both the semi-sweet and the sweet. It's amazing that some people—customers come and they're just learning to drink wines. And they want the very sweetest they can get, so, of course, they—they go more for the sweet Muscadine and sweet Scuppernong; but, you know, gradually as they keep drinking, they'll go to the semi-sweet and eventually, probably, even a drier wine and all. But it's—it's fun watching them come back, and they'll try the little bit of drier wine, you know, and they're either at that point or go back to the sweet wines.

00:57:09

AE: Which is your dry Muscadine wine?

00:57:12

SW: It's a semi-sweet but compared to the sweet, it is much drier. [*Laughs*]

00:57:17

AE: And what's your best seller?

00:57:20

SW: I would say probably our strawberry. We make a fantastic Sangria from our strawberry, where we add pineapple, orange, lemon, and lime juice. It makes a nice wine punch for the summer, and we're also making a summer drink called Bentley's Buzz from our raspberry with cranberry juice, and it's doing real well, too.

00:57:38

AE: And then what are the old folks coming in and buying? You were talking earlier about growing grapes that the old folks like.

00:57:44

BW: They liked—they liked the sweet Muscadine, sweet Scuppernong, sweet blackberry, and most of them, I always tell them, I said, “You need to try the blueberry.” And I guess I push it because it’s a very deceiving wine. You can’t taste the alcohol, and it’s very smooth, and they’ll taste it. And they say, “You know, we never liked blueberries, but this is good.” And then it’s funny how people from up north, they’ll taste it and they’ll say, “You—you know what this would be perfect for?” I say, “Well, I don’t know.” They said, “Put it on vanilla ice cream.” And—well sweet raspberry, it’s a very good seller. People—they said, “Well how do you—how do you do it?” And I said, “It’s out of pure raspberries.” Everything that we have, and I think what our best thing is about all our wines, you can taste the fruit that’s in it. And, like I told you when we was down there [walking the property], we don’t put water back in our wine when we filter it; we put wine to wine. And the—the more—the more fruit you use—in fact, I guess we might put too much fruit in our wine, but we try to keep it to where you’re drinking what you’re asking for. You’re not just—and a lot of them, you know, there’s recipes of all kinds, but I told her, we have plenty of grapes, we have plenty of strawberries, plenty of blueberries; let’s put them in, so we get the good color and the good taste.

00:59:03

AE: And tell me again—I reminded myself talking about the old folks—the grapes that you named in the vineyard there that are the varieties.

00:59:11

BW: Okay, we have—what we have, a lot of people—in fact, I think it surprised Miss Connie Fisk down at NC State. We have the Hunts, the Jameses, the Trumps, the Magnolias; and those is grapes that was here, I'd say fifty to seventy-five years ago, and a lot of places you can't even buy them anymore. I mean, and what it was, everybody wanted to go to the—they wanted a huge grape about the size of a golf ball. And the reason of it is, you know, it's kind of like, you know, if you go to the store and I got an apple and yours was real red, "Look at how red mine is," and they can—these big grapes, like the Fryes and the Supremes and Isons, you can probably pick a gallon bucket in probably three minutes. I mean it's just unreal how big they are. But—but like I say, the only grapes we have here, you can eat them, you can make juice, you can make jelly, you can make wine; we didn't want something that was just strictly for wine. We wanted it where—and I don't know how many people comes—and I don't—I'd hate to say how much jelly has been made off our vineyard. I'd hate to say how much juice has been made off our vineyard. But—and then people will come and I'd hate to know how many people come—and I'll say when these grapes get ripe, we'll sell some of our customers—I wouldn't—it wouldn't be surprising if they didn't get thirty-five to fifty gallons just to eat. I mean it's—. So it's good and—and we hadn't went up on our price. Everybody else—well, like our blackberries. We sold them for eight dollars this time and everybody is what, twelve dollars? We—we picked up a tremendous amount of customers last year. They was wanting eighteen to twenty-two dollars a gallon for Muscadine and Scuppernong, and everybody said you can't do it. Well, we can do it. We still sell ours five dollars a gallon, so I mean—and that's a five gallon—a gallon of fruit is a—about between five and six pounds and, you know, if you look at it, that's roughly a dollar a pound. To me, that's plenty high, but everybody says, "Yeah, but," said, "everybody else—."

And a lot of the people that come last year said that people was starting to try to hoodoo them, and so they weren't going back to them. They was coming back to us. It's coming up, but like I told you once before and Sonya will tell you, they come to pick fruit. And we always say, "Would you like to taste the wine?" We've had—well, we had some people to come from Charlotte last year, and they picked over \$500 worth of fruit and ended up buying, what was it, four to five cases of wine at the same time. So selling the fruit is a drawing card to get people in to taste the wine.

01:01:52

AE: Sonya, do you ever make jams or jellies or grape hull pie?

01:01:55

SW: No, I really just don't have time. [*Laughs*]

01:01:59

AE: Well let's talk about what takes your time, it's all this creative stuff you've done around here. Tell me about some of the—the products around here and then also, of course, your ceramics.

01:02:08

SW: Well one of—whenever we were thinking about doing this, we knew we were going to be very small and I wanted it to be—be unique, too, so I came up with the idea for the ceilings using the Styrofoam and making it look like grapevines with angels and grapes for marbles and everything, and that's been a real unique part of our winery and all. We may be small but, you

know, it's very different when you walk in, especially looking for the outside in, but—. And my pottery, I've been doing pottery probably for fifteen—

01:02:52

BW: You started in 19—1984.

01:02:53

SW: It's been a long time, a long time, [*Laughs*] but I—I enjoy doing the pottery. I don't have as much time to do it now, since we did the winery, but I try to get on it. My pottery is more decorative than functional. I don't do that many coffee cups and casseroles. Mine is more decorative, and I like a lot of leaf work where I press the clay and—the leaves in the clay and that type of thing. But it's a lot of fun for me, and I enjoy it and it seems like the public likes coming in and looking at it and buying it. They're all very unique pieces; there's no two alike, but—.

01:03:34

AE: And you do some wine-themed pieces like grape leaves and things like that?

01:03:40

SW: Right. I do wine chillers with the grapes on it. I just—I just try to—my way of—of doing things is whatever hits me. I've had people who want me to do certain colors in the clay and do certain things, and it just kills me. I just cannot do it because it just kills my creativity when I know I have to do it, so it works out good for me to just go in the basement. And I call it my dungeon because it's so dark and everything, but it's like I'm in my own little world and I just work in there and fire and spin on the wheel. But I enjoy it. It's a lot of fun.

01:04:21

AE: Did you have a retail outlet for your work before y'all had the winery?

01:04:25

SW: There was a couple of stores at Blowing Rock that I put my pottery in, and I sold percentage-wise on that, which was not very profitable, so that's one reason why he—my husband said that whenever we opened the winery, we'd have the pottery in there too, and it's worked out very well.

01:04:49

AE: Yeah, I imagine that it's—it's a big draw that people probably go home with quite a lot of it when they come through here.

01:04:54

SW: Yeah, they really do. But I enjoy doing it.

01:04:59

AE: And so how do y'all—what's the division of labor here with the Whitaker family and the winery?

01:05:05

SW: Well he does all the hard work, and I do all the easy work. But he does—

01:05:09

BW: It's all hard.

01:05:11

SW: He does all the hard work; he does all the outdoor work. I do help pick, but I do most all the paperwork. I have to do the inventory monthly and that type of thing to where we're both very busy. You know, it's not like one does more than the other, it's just a different kind of work, but it works out very well for us. But we've been married thirty-eight years. It must be because he has his thing, and I have my thing. *[Laughs]*

01:05:39

AE: May I ask how y'all met?

01:05:42

SW: We met in high school. Yeah, we were high school sweethearts, that type of thing.

01:05:47

AE: Did y'all see—did you see a vineyard in your future?

01:05:52

SW: No. No, you could have blown me over with a feather if somebody had told me, you know, we would have ended up in this but no. It's just—well, things just sort of fall in your lap.

01:06:06

AE: Did you grow up knowing about a winemaking—a home winemaking tradition in the area?

01:06:10

SW: No, not really. His family, more or less, had the—the alcohol type—. [*Laughs*] I don't know what you'd call that but no, mine didn't but, you know—didn't have anything like that going on. [*Laughs*]

01:06:25

AE: Have y'all been learning more about people still making wine at home when they come to get your grapes? Has that been a surprise to hear how many people might still be doing that?

01:06:32

BW: We've tasted—in fact, we—we've—people, they like to bring their wine back and want us to taste it. And I—some of it is very good wine. And then we have an older man, he's ninety, ninety-four years old—

01:06:51

SW: Uh-hmm.

01:06:51

BW: —and he milked cows all his life. Well, he decided he wanted a golf course. Well, then when he did that, he got into wine, and he brings wine over here and he's very knowledgeable.

01:07:04

SW: Mr. Wade Gross.

01:07:04

BW: Yeah, Mr. Wade Gross. And in fact I always—the write-ups we have in the paper, I always call him Einstein of Winemaking, and he always likes that. But he brought some wine over here one day, and he wanted me to taste it. And I guess we're his guinea pigs. So he said, "What do you think?" I said, "I don't know." He said, "Go ahead and say it." I said, "I don't know, Mr. Wade." He says, "It's the worst tasting wine there has ever been, isn't it?" I said, "What's it out of?" He said, "Tomatoes." And I said, "Why didn't you use red ones?" He said, "I did and it went back to green." Well anyway, he said, "It's not good. I'm going to throw it away." So then he said, "I'll be back, though." Well he come back and he brought me some wine, and it looked just like the tomato wine or like Scuppernong. And he said, "Taste this." And I tasted it, and I said, "Mr. Wade, this is good." "Well what do you think it's out of?" And I said, "I don't know." And it was out of turnips. So then he come back one day and he made wine—made Muscadine wine out of the—

01:07:54

SW: The stems.

01:07:54

BW: —the stems.

01:07:55

SW: No grapes.

01:07:56

BW: No grapes whatsoever. And, you know, you could taste the Muscadine in it and, you know—and I asked him, I was kidding him one day, and he said, "Boy, I wished I was your

age.” And I said, “Yeah?” And I said, “If you was my age instead of milking 100 cows a day, you’d milk 300.” Well I won’t tell you the words he used. He said, “I’d have me a vineyard.”

[Laughs] So but, you know, it’s—the people that comes and makes their wine—. And I’ll tell you another going thing, there will be like six couples that like to go out together. Well what they do, they make wine and then when it levels and they bottle it, they won’t put no labels on it, and they have a cookout and they get prizes and they—they judge their wine like that. And like Sonya, she’ll tell you; most of the wine that we’ve tasted are—is very good wine—very good wine. But no, it’s just—I guess everybody thinks that—. And it amazes me; they call and ask us questions and I told her—**[Laughs]**. In fact, the most funniest thing is they call us and wanted us to teach wine making at a community college. And I said, you know, “We can’t do that.” I said, you know, “We’re self-taught.” “Well, you know, I think it would be real good.” And I said, “No,” you know, “you need people there to be able to answer every question.” And I said—they said, “Well there’s not many that you can’t.” I said, “Well most of our answers comes from trial and error, but—.” You know, I’m honored for people to think that, you know, we know everything, but we sure don’t know everything. We learn every day and, you know, that’s another thing my grandpa told me: When you get too old to learn, it’s time to die. And I mean that’s not a good saying but still. You know, you—I guess my wife has a saying, if you don’t—what? If you don’t use it, you lose it. And the only thing and I’m sure and—and I’d like to ask you this. I don’t think you’d take it if you found it, but I lost my mind. If you see it laying out here anywhere, I know I’ve got Alzheimer’s, please bring it back. I just can’t remember. I can—you could tell me who you was when I was working, and I don’t care what I was doing, I could remember your name. Everybody told me I had the best knowledge of names they had ever saw. Well now that I’ve retired, people will come in here and they’ll say, “You remember coming to

my house?” And I’ll say, “I remember the face.” If they tell me what road they live on, then I can call you by your name. So I told her, I said, “Something is going wrong here.” I said—but I really and truly I think I’m getting Alzheimer’s.

01:10:31

AE: You’re just running out of room up there to remember stuff. You need room for the new stuff you’re learning. Well what would y’all say is the future of Garden Gate Winery here?

01:10:41

BW: It has—it has a very good future. In fact, like I told you earlier, I’d like for our kids to do it. If—if we, you know—a lot of people, you have to be careful because people will think you’re bragging or rubbing it in, but I don’t know of any business that we could have ever went into that gets better, and I mean that’s—and a guy told me one time, and I’m beginning to believe that’s true, he said, “When there’s no money to pay your bills, there’s money for recreation and drinking.” And I really and truly believe that. I used to think that was just something, but with gas the way it is, our business it hadn’t slowed down a bit. We—it seems like we do a little bit better all the time, so we’ve had several people that want to buy our business. And I had some very good offers, and I just told them, I said, “Well, I don’t know if you have kids, but that—when you start something, you know, it’s nice to see it carried on.” But I had a good friend to tell me something one time, and I’ve thought about that a whole lot, he said, “Remember—” In fact he used to say—he said, “Of all the crazy things that you ever wanted to do in your life,” **[Laughs]** he said, “you have turned something into gold.” And I said, “Well I don’t know about that.” “But,” he said, “just remember it this way,” said, “you might sell it to me, and I’d let it go

to nothing.” So, I mean, you know, once you turn loose, you’ve got to remember it’s no longer yours, so I don’t know what we’d do.

01:12:13

AE: How many children do y’all have?

01:12:16

SW: We have three children and four grandchildren.

01:12:20

AE: I know you have at least one daughter because you mentioned her. What are—?

01:12:23

SW: Two daughters and a son.

01:12:25

AE: Okay. May I ask their names?

01:12:27

SW: Hannah is the youngest, Caleb is the middle child, and then Angela is the oldest child.

01:12:34

AE: Do they all still live in the area?

01:12:36

SW: It’s—within probably—

01:12:38

BW: Fifteen minutes of here.

01:12:39

SW: —fifteen minutes of us and it works out real good. We try to fix lunch on Sundays, and we have a pool and the grandkids come and swim and all, and it works out good.

01:12:48

AE: And do they show an interest in the—in the winery already or—or what do you think?

01:12:53

SW: They're beginning to, more so, now. To begin with, it was something, you know, that—it was they thought of it as our hobby to do and all, but now they can see it's turned into a growing business and they're getting more interested—all three of them.

01:13:07

AE: And do they have green thumbs and creative minds?

01:13:10

SW: Well most of—most all three of them can—can do anything they put their mind to and that's a—a blessing, I think. But I don't think any of them would admit they couldn't do something; they would try until—until they found out.

01:13:27

AE: And so, well, actually, I'm just reminded, too, that y'all were talking about maybe putting a bed and breakfast on the property.

01:13:35

SW: Right. When we started, this was our dilemma. He got an early retirement, and he didn't know exactly what he wanted to do. He was good at carpentry, and he had a friend that did carpentry work, so he thought well he'd—he'd help him out when he needed it. But a couple months into it, he found out that he didn't want to do that all the time and all. And that was one reason why we decided to do the vineyard. We had to have an option where we could not lose because we're not rich people, and we had to make sure that whatever we invested wouldn't have a—a—money-wise, come back to us, so we decided, well, we'd plant the grapes, and we'd try the winery. And if the winery didn't work, then we would just sell grapes. And if that didn't work, we would make a bed and breakfast—where we had three options to go by to where surely one of them would be profitable. So the winery has paid off. It's—it's—it's all-consuming, I will say that because, you know, we work every day in it; it's not like you get a vacation. That's—to me, that's the only drawback on it. You really have to be here every day and—but other than that, I think it's worked out real good for us. It keeps us busy. Hopefully, we'll stay healthy a lot longer and all by being busy but—.

01:14:56

AE: Well, you were saying earlier that you don't have any paid employees, but is that something that maybe you'd like to work up to, so that you have somebody that can take over and y'all can get away every once in a while?

01:15:08

SW: Well, I don't know. I'd rather have—let my kids take over and not pay them. **[Laughs]**

01:15:14

AE: Uh-oh. **[Laughs]**

01:15:16

SW: But I just don't like the paperwork. You know, there's so much paperwork involved in any kind of business to where, if we can get by with not paying employees and that kind of thing, I'd rather keep it like that and, you know, just—

01:15:34

BW: And something, too, our kids are very fortunate; they all have good jobs. They can come home in twenty years, and there's money to be made here. But I told them, I said, "You have insurance and retirement and anymore, that's something hard to find." And when you've got insurance and retirement and you can come home in twenty years—it's like with our son. Caleb is twenty—?

01:15:58

SW: Twenty-eight.

01:15:59

BW: Caleb can come home when he's forty years old. Hannah can come home when she's probably mid-forties. Angie, you know—and I just told them, "That's—that's too good to be true." I mean and you—you probably realize things are not like they used to be, as far as going

somewhere and being set for your life. I think what happened to companies—used to it was Amy; now it's a number. You went from Amy to like 3401 and things—things are not good for young people, and I hate to see that. I mean, before I retired, I had to pull teeth to hire some young people, and they said, “Well what—what if it don't work out?” These was good people. And I come back, and I said, “Well, look—look how old we was when we took over.” And you know, I don't know what it is; I don't know whether people my age are, maybe, jealous of people—I feel like you're a very young lady. Maybe they're jealous that you're going to get—take over or something but I don't know. It's just a—maybe you have better words. It's just too many—too many me, me, me(s) in this world. And everybody gets a start from somebody opening the door, and a lot of people, they could have did just as well as we did, but somebody has to open the door. And if you fit in, I don't care what you do in life, you will—you will do good. Then I was—we'd have ice storms and everybody would be out of power, and I always, you know—around here it's—it was—it's still a very good area to live. And the people would come in and they'd bring ham, biscuits, cakes, and that, you know, was a way of showing thanks for getting the power back on. And I always set them in the back. And they said, “Why don't we go back there?” And I said, “My men makes me, yeah, but,” I said, “no, I just tell them where to go. They go out there and they bust their hiney and they get your power on.” So I mean I think now there's not enough credit given—. You've got—you've got to take a young person or, this is my opinion, just like if we brought somebody in here young, you've got to give them responsibilities. If they don't get responsibilities, they're going to feel like they're not part of the program, “Well I'm going to move on.” And it used to that was the way the system worked but now it's—it's I don't know what happened. I just—but I'd like to see our kids take it but there might be a time—well we've—we've had some pretty good offers, and I don't know what we'll

want to do. I mean, you know, that's—it feels extra good to be able to know that you can get up every morning and do what you want to do. Now that's—I think that's—everybody says, “Well, you did good here.” I said, “Well the pay-off is like, we can get up and we can work out here.” And, in fact, people think—wouldn't believe this but we—we went and ate breakfast for the first time in probably six months. In fact, a lot of people say, “I thought you all died. We haven't saw you in a while.”

01:19:16

SW: We pretty much stay here. [*Laughs*]

01:19:18

AE: Well at least they know where to find you when they need you.

01:19:20

SW: That's true.

01:19:21

AE: So what, you know, talking about how, you know, things have changed and—and all, it takes me back to your comment, Bo, earlier about a lot of people turning their tobacco fields into vineyards. So what do you think that the industry, in general, has meant to North Carolina and especially right now?

01:19:37

BW: We saw in a book here not long ago, well, how much—she might have to—she might remember. How much did the wineries give the state on revenues?

01:19:47

SW: I don't remember.

01:19:47

BW: It was up close to a billion dollars, and I'm thinking that's good for—I mean North Carolina is green, as far as wineries, and I think you're going to start seeing bed and breakfasts. You're going to start—

01:19:57

SW: I think that's going to be the next big thing in North Carolina.

01:20:01

BW: You're starting to see things open up, as far as the wineries. And I'm not saying they're the reason but they give—they're giving people incentives to locate here and do stuff. And the restaurants that don't—you know, a lot of people get mad. I know up in Yadkin County they have fought, clawed; it's a dry county. I mean all these restaurants, and they couldn't sell their wine in it. Well they finally passed that, and I saw—Ashburn finally passed it the other day and—and when they tried it here in Davie County the—the county is dry, but the city limits is wet. Well the first thing you hear—and, you know, and I mean everybody has their point of view, but the old people said, “Oh, there will be blood running in the streets,” you know. “There will be drunks everywhere.” And I—you know, and you have to be real careful when you say this. To me, when—when I was growing up, I loved a cold beer. I loved a mixed drink. With wine, it's—I don't care if the guy is dressed real nice, if he's dressed in working clothes, a different class of people drinks wine than they do beer or a mixed drink. You don't see any

problems with wine. I'm not saying there hasn't been problems, but if you will notice, you'll never see—you don't see people getting out of the way with wine, and I think that's what's really opened the door for some of these places to go wet where they've been dry. I don't—what do you think?

01:21:37

SW: I don't know. [*Laughs*]

01:21:42

BW: But it's hard. I mean and you know, you have a lot of people, maybe they've had—and I don't know how you'd say it, but maybe they've had a bad experience with alcohol in their family, and maybe they had an uncle or dad or mother that was—but you know, you can't judge everybody that way. And I look at it this way right here, if you—if I come to your house and you offer me a drink, I can either take it or leave it. I don't have to have it, you know. But I hate to see somebody that can't be that way, so—and if we said if anybody ever come here, all right we've been in business going on eight years with license, all right. If—we've had one couple and—just be like if, say—if you and your friend brung another boy and girl and the girl had—had too much to drink.

01:22:36

SW: Before she got here.

01:22:38

BW: Before she got here, so I wouldn't serve her. Well you was—you was pushing her, “Drink some more.” And they used to come regular, and they don't come no more, and I really think it

embarrassed them. She got sick in our bathroom; she tore the bathroom up, and I just told them, you know, no more. I said, “Because if she’d go down the road and—.” She wasn’t driving, but if the couple she was with was to hit somebody, where was the last place she was at? And—and I’m thinking—I told Sonya when they left, I don’t want a friend like that. I mean, to me, if I—if I’m with you and I think you’ve had too much, I’ll say, “Amy, I think maybe you need to stop.” I can’t make you, but I’m going to sure encourage you. But that’s the only couple—and I really don’t think we made them mad. I think they got embarrassed because they realized what they had—they kept pushing—. In fact, I really think they—they called us from another vineyard and wanted to know if we was still open, and I really think they got run off at that vineyard for doing the same thing but—. No, it—I think the future is great for wine. My honest opinion. How about you? I mean you’re in this as deep as I am.

01:23:51

SW: I think North Carolina is a—is going to really grow in the wine industry. I think it’s amazing how fast it’s grown already and, to me, every winery is very unique in its own, from the teeny tiniest to the largest, and we get customers a lot that says they’ve been to a lot of the larger wineries. They enjoy going, but they’re doing the smaller wineries because they get more one-on-one. They can sit down and they can talk—.

01:24:22

BW: They get to see the owners.

01:24:24

SW: Right. And that is wonderful, but it's just like I tell him, you know, we can do that now because we're very small and not a lot of people know about us but if—if we started getting an influx of a lot of people, we couldn't spend the time with the customer the same way as the larger winery. But for right now, it's worked out good. We get to—we have stools in our winery, and there's a reason for that. It's to sit down and relax and—and get to know each other and—and that type of thing. But we have had groups where there was not enough stools to where you couldn't do that, so I understand the larger wineries, whenever, you know, they get busloads of—of people coming in and everything. They can't spend the time on their customers like they—the customers want.

01:25:13

AE: What about the future of Muscadine wine?

01:25:17

SW: Well that—my own opinion is, I hope the Muscadine wine blows North Carolina off the map for the—for all the benefits it—medically, that it will do and plus, for the uniqueness of the grape.

01:25:33

AE: What about you, Bo?

01:25:34

BW: I think so, too. In fact, you know, I think—I think the Muscadine grape has showed what it can do, as far as the durability of the vines, the grapes, how long it's been here, and I think it would be wonderful if it could get the recognition that it deserves.

01:25:52

SW: That it deserves.

01:25:55

BW: And not only in North Carolina, like—like I say, I know Alabama, Georgia—it’s—it’s, I guess you’d say, a legacy. It’s—it’s been here, and I think you said in Mississippi, it’s—it’s a Southern grape that they said that when Sir Walter Raleigh come to North Carolina and discovered it, it was here. But if you read in the books—and I believe they said the Spanish. They think the Spanish is the one that brought the—the original Muscadine and Scuppernong and said they brought the tobacco over. So I mean, you know, it’s hard telling how long it has been here but never got the recognition it should have got but—.

01:26:33

AE: Well what do you say to the people who (a) don’t really know that there’s a wine industry in North Carolina and (b) if and when they hear about Muscadine wine, they just think it’s just some, you know, trash sweet wine or something and look down their nose at it?

01:26:46

BW: Well, I think about the wineries, but more and more people is finding out, and I tell people, you know, when they come here, I always thank them for coming because I know they didn’t have to stop. And they say, “Oh, no, it’s an honor to come.” But the thing that I think the winemaking is going to do for every state, especially North Carolina, when you come to a winery, you’re going to pass like a—a state park. They’re—it’s going to open people’s eyes to what all is offered in the state of North Carolina. And as far as—you’ve got people when

they've—I guess it's been so long out in California they're just used to the—what is it, the Rezing and all that?

01:27:31

SW: Riesling.

01:27:31

BW: Yeah, Riesling. I cannot even pronounce half of the—what is it—Piata? And—they ask me—yeah, they said, “Are you a wine connoisseur?” And then they—that's when they open up, and I said, “No, I either like it or I dislike it.” And they said, you know, “We are, too.” So no, I think—I think the Muscadine grape will finally get the recognition that it deserves, but in return I think the wineries is going to open North Carolina—it's going to open the eyes to so many people to see what we have here to offer because now there's wineries from the coast all the way to the mountains. And—and now there's so many—well, really, in a given day, you could probably—well you could probably get twelve or fifteen easily. And I'll tell you another thing—

01:28:19

SW: I wouldn't recommend it. *[Laughs]*

01:28:19

BW: No, no. But another thing, that's opened a business on, you'd be surprised how many people have got limousines and, like, buses, where they do tours. And it's just—it's so many things. In fact, you know, when people start saying, “Wineries are good,” I start coming back and saying, you know, it's helped people create a business in the limousine service, it's—it's helped the restaurants, it's—I think it's helped everything. I mean my own opinion. And—and

when I say that I don't want people to think, well, you know, it's all due to the vineyards. It's not. I mean and most of the people when they see a vineyard, I've yet to see anybody say—when they see a vineyard, they think it's beautiful. And I think it is, too. So it's opening people's eyes to look around and see what's here that you drove by, and never knowed that it was here, but—. But like I say, each to their own, but that's just—that's just my opinion.

01:29:17

AE: So what do you—what would you say to somebody who has never had Muscadine wine before?

01:29:21

BW: Well, just like what we tell them in there. That's a good—good question. When we started going to the wineries—well, her and her girlfriend started going first. Well, they got me to go. Well I'd taste wine. If it was in wood, I didn't want it. So I told them—when people comes in here, and I tell them what we've got and I tell them, you know, Muscadine and Scuppernong, North Carolina State grape, we have a little cup and when you go in you'll see it. I said, "Try—you're welcome to pick and choose. Try them all. If you taste something that you don't like, put it in the cup. It won't hurt our feelings. We'll find you something that you do like." And it's funny, people who has never tasted it, maybe—maybe the woman doesn't like a certain wine and the guy will say—most of the time they'll say, "Well we don't drink." Well, when—when a friend or girlfriend or wife starts pouring it, "Give it here. I'll drink it." So and they said in a book here not long ago, it's been less than a month ago that women—women would—women bought eighty percent of the wine in the state of North Carolina. I don't know where they come up with them figures, but now that was in a book.

01:30:37

AE: Do you have a lot of people who come through here and are surprised that they have a taste for Muscadine wine they didn't know?

01:30:43

BW: I think so. In fact, we had some people here this morning from, what was it, Vermont? No, New Hampshire, wasn't it?

01:30:53

SW: I think it was New Hampshire.

01:30:54

BW: And they love it, and they've been taking it back and giving it to their friends. And now their friends is wanting to—so many states we can't ship into, so they're buying it and shipping it to their friends. We have a—a doctor that buys it regular from Texas for his kids. I guess we ship about—

01:31:13

SW: We don't ship much.

01:31:15

BW: We don't ship that much, but we sell it to people and they—.

01:31:18

SW: We tell them they can ship it because with us, it's just too much red tape and—and hassle for us to ship the wines, so we tell the—the customer they're welcome to ship. With us, though, it's a limited to how many states you can legally ship to, so we just don't ship.

01:31:41

AE: And, Bo, I want to ask you about kind of carrying on this family legacy and—it's not only like a family legacy, but a North Carolina legacy with—with Muscadine being native to the state and—and winemaking being such a long-standing tradition here and how you feel like you fit into all that?

01:32:00

BW: Well, I can say if my kids didn't want it, I don't think I'd want to sell to somebody, unless they wanted to continue doing it the way we're doing. And we had a guy—we checked—a guy made us a pretty good offer and so we—we done some talking to our accountant and he said—and I understand the guy asked me, he said, "If I buy, I want you to sign a paper stating that you won't make wine for ten years." Well that was good, but then our accountant told us, said, "Well maybe you could get him to sign a paper, well, you wouldn't make wine in Davie County, but you could move to a surrounding county." And he said, "I don't know if I'd sell my name. I might sell the business, but I wouldn't sell the name." No, I wouldn't want to—I really and truly think, all right, if you'll notice, when it first started, there wasn't but a hand few of us that made Muscadine wine. Now more people are going into Muscadine wine for the basic reason, you don't have to spray, less maintenance, they're very hardy grapes. And I think a lot of people jumped into the *vinifera* [***vitis vinifera*, grape vines native to Europe and the Mediterranean**] because, you know, it's California wine, and they're bringing their wine makers down. But in

return from everything I've read and asked, the *vinifera* grape cannot stand humidity and cold. Well this area right here is blessed with it, so I really and truly think—well Childress Vineyards is starting a—now they have all kinds of grapes, but they're starting to go to Muscadine and Scuppernong. And I told Sonya, it's like before, a few of us had a land-lock on it; now others are seeing, I guess you'd go back and say and—and this is in joking and fun—rednecks are buying more wine than high society. So more vineyards you see that are opening up are Muscadine and Scuppernong, up in Yadkin County especially. Up in—well down east and I really—I really think—I think in the next five years it will surprise you how many there will be. And if you lined twenty wineries up, and every one of them made Muscadine and Scuppernong wine, every one of them will have a different taste. And I've heard old people sum that up better than anything: the taste comes from the dirt. If it's good dirt, like they'll say—we had a guy come up from Florida and wanted to buy our fruit, and he said North Carolina was killing Florida. He said the soil is no good down there; the soil gives the fruit a better taste. Well, I said—it comes right back, North Carolina is a fruit State. I mean it's—but no, I think—I think Muscadine is here to stay, not only in wine but in the pill, in the juice, I just—I think the doors is wide open. I think they're making jelly now.

01:34:59

It's—it's diversified. I mean, what I'm saying, anything that's diversified, you can do anything with it. But I—no, I think it's here—it's here—it will be here when I'm gone.

01:35:13

AE: All right. Well that might be a good note to end on. We've been here for a long time, and I appreciate you sitting with me here so long. Is there anything that we didn't talk about that you want to make sure to say?

01:35:22

BW: I think—I think you pretty well went through everything that—that we know. We don't know a whole lot, but we told you what we did know.

01:35:30

AE: All right. Well I've enjoyed visiting with you both. Thanks so much.

01:35:33

SW: You're welcome.

01:35:34

[End Bo and Sonya Whitaker Interview]