

**Jay Allen**  
**Midway BBQ - Buffalo, SC**

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**[Begin Jay Allen – Midway BBQ]**

**00:00:00**

**Rien Fertel:** All right; this is Rien Fertel with the Southern Foodways Alliance. It is June 12, a Tuesday morning, just after nine a.m., 2012, and I am in Buffalo, South Carolina just outside Union and I'm at Midway BBQ with Mr. Jay Allen and I'm going to have him introduce himself.

**00:00:25**

**Jay Allen:** Hi, my name is Jay Allen, barbecue science engineer. Birth date, April 19, 1967, and I run Midway BBQ and my wife Amy Allen owns it.

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**RF:** So this is our first stop on the South Carolina BBQ Trail that we're starting. I know you have—you have a rich culinary history here. You sell a lot of things, but let's—let's start with the beginning. How old is Midway BBQ?

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**JA:** You know what? We actually don't know but we think 1941. My wife's father was the founder/originator and blood, sweat, and tears in the barbecue business. He started at age thirteen with his first hog behind the old family grocery store. And in Union County there was a rich history in hash and barbecue. So when he started there was probably forty-seven people on the holidays cooking hash and barbecue, and to our knowledge we're the last one left. So he—he stuck it out and he had other ventures, other business deals, but this is what he was good at. And

I think at age forty-five he went whole hog into the barbecue business. And that's when he quit everything else and put all his ducks in barbecue and hash.

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And when—

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**RF:** What was his name? Give us his name.

**00:01:54**

**JA:** Jack O'Dell. Jack O'Dell and we called him the "Hash King" or "Hash and Barbecue Icon," but known—known throughout Union County and the Upstate for his knack of buying hash—or beef and pork on foot at the local livestock markets, and I've had 100 people tell me that when Jack O'Dell walked in the barn you knew the best cows and hogs were going home with him because he only bought the best.

**00:02:25**

**RF:** And so is—was Jack O'Dell or—is he from around here? Is he from Union County?

**00:02:29**

**JA:** Yes, he's actually born and raised in Monarch which is about two miles and that's where the family grocery store was. And then he moved from the grocery store and meat cutting business into the hash and barbecue business. And over the years, when I started here twenty years ago Jack had been doing it a long time, but it started in like a ten by ten building and they cooked everything outside in the heat. And they only sold the meat and that's it. And then they started

with meat and bread and then they started, you know, the barbecue, hash, bread and then like a six and a half ounce Coke. And that was for years and years and then it grew into just a little bit more and a little bit more as they you know went along. But this building is probably 4,000 square feet and then it started at probably 100 square feet and it's been added onto like sixteen—seventeen times.

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And, you know, outside we're constructing again. We're getting ready to do more, so you know we're outgrowing our self every year or two.

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**RF:** But he was always at this site, this location?

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**JA:** Yeah, he actually started in Monarch outside the old grocery store and then he cooked at another location for several years and then he got into this location I think fifty years ago.

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**RF:** What was the name of that family grocery store and is it still around? When did it close if it's not?

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**JA:** It actually burned, probably thirty or forty years ago, and I think it was O'Dell's Grocery.

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**RF:** And it was run by his parents?

**00:04:03**

**JA:** Run—run by his parents and then his brother Bill and then—and Bill had it and it actually burned you know when Bill was running it. And then Bill and his—another one of his brother's Fred worked at Midway when I first started here. Bill was the money man. Fred was the meat market and the barbecue cooker and Jack was the visionary. And I—Jack and Amy both have a great vision. Amy is his daughter, my wife; they have a great vision of what people like and they slow down long enough to listen to the customer where I'm kind of Type A, I kind of run with my hair on fire a lot. But they actually have the vision and then she kind of motivates me to do the work and, you know, expound on you know what she thinks people want. So we're a really good team together.

**00:04:58**

**RF:** Okay; where did—where did you meet your wife?

**00:05:02**

**JA:** Spartanburg. Spartanburg; it was funny. She was a school teacher and I was working for a pharmaceutical company in Greenville. And it was crazy; neither one of us had any idea we'd be in the food business or the barbecue business, and we'd been married about a month. And actually three or four months before we were married, she always worked at Midway on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, their busiest time of year and I was in love, so she asked me if I wanted to come and

help. So I actually came down six months before we were married and worked in the—in the restaurant. And then after we had been married a little bit he—he pulled me to the side and asked me if we wanted to come run his restaurant because he was ready to retire.

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And it was funny; I don't know if he would agree to this but once he hired me it actually increased his enthusiasm if that was possible, because he actually loved it, but I think it made him happy that his daughter was in the business and he started working harder. And he—he probably worked it another seventeen years until his health is—is poor now and he's declining. But he still asks about it all the time, loves it, and he's the reason that Midway is what it is because he absolutely loved food and his taste buds were amazing. He cooked things like he wanted to eat it—not to make money; he didn't care what it cost. He wanted—he wanted people to enjoy what he—what he cooked.

**00:06:25**

**RF:** I want to know a lot more about—about Mr. O'Dell. What year was he born, do you know?

**00:06:32**

**JA:** February 22, 1928—1928. Veteran. Very—very much so a product of the Depression. Trained me in a—in a very unusual way; several of his quotes were: “Don't worry about anything big. Manage the very small things, manage the pennies, and everything else will-fall into place.” And I'll never forget it, I used to ask him how much of this do I have, how much of that do I have, talking about preparing for holidays and he'd always tell me, “Have enough.” That was his famous quote “Have enough.” Never gave me any insight so and—and really truly I

look back on it, that was the best way to train me because I learned on my own. I wasn't spoon fed and when—and when I messed up he scolded me and I'd scold him back and—and just a dynamic—dynamic relationship.

**00:07:27**

He wanted to see the customer happy and he's a perfectionist. No hash pot ever pleased him and we—I mean customers brag and brag and brag on it but not one item in—in the business was he ever pleased with. He might say it was good, but it—there was always room for improvement. And, you know, many people say that but he said, “You're either going forward or backwards” and he did not like going backwards.

**00:07:52**

About Mr. O'Dell, he's the—the best grandparent that I've ever been associated with. He—when his children were growing up he killed himself at work. He worked early in the morning to late at night and never saw him, but as a grandparent, he was there for my kids and all the other grandkids and every grandkid that he had absolutely adored him and just a good person to model yourself after—work ethic, work ethic, you know family man, great person.

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**RF:** How many kids did he have?

**00:08:22**

**JA:** Three. John is the oldest son, Jeannie is the middle daughter, and then my wife Amy is the youngest.

**00:08:27**

**RF:** And did they all work here at some point when they were young or any time in their lives?

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**JA:** Oh—oh yeah, now John—John I don't know all these stories great, but John cooked hash and barbecue for his dad on the weekends. Where a lot of kids are out playing, he was cooking hash and barbecue. That's probably why he's not working in the business because he was worn out. He still did it the old hard way. And then Jeannie and Amy, you know, they worked—they worked here every 4<sup>th</sup> of July for probably all their life. And, you know, they still do.

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**RF:** And—and tell me about Mrs. O'Dell. Who was his wife, Jack's wife?

**00:09:01**

**JA:** She—she was the glue to everything because he worked all the time. Her name is Louise and—and, you know, she worked here a lot herself but, you know, she pretty much had the house and the kids to raise because he worked. And when I say he worked, I mean nights and nights never going home. And, you know, it's just a tough business especially with lack of refrigeration back then and so hot you had to cook it on time, sell it, and then cook it again, so with no refrigeration it made life a little tougher.

**00:09:32**

**RF:** And so he did all the cooking here and she did all the cooking at home, or would he cook at home? Do you know that?

**00:09:39**

**JA:** You know, I'm not sure, but he's probably like me. I don't cook at home now either because you're worn out here. So I know she did all the cooking at home and—and he pretty—you know, in those crucial years, fifteen—twenty years, he never was home. You know, my wife tells me all the time, she would wake up, you know, nine—ten o'clock at night and he was just now getting home, so she would go get in his lap and love on him a little bit but not a lot of home time because he—he pretty much killed himself with hash and barbecue.

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**RF:** And you told that great story about when Mr. Jack O'Dell walks into a hog or cattle sale he's going to win the best. Have you heard any other stories like that about when he was young or stories from the past?

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**JA:** Oh yeah, tons. I've heard so many stories about that. It's amazing. There was an older man that came in talking about how smart Jack was and how he could pick the best and everything. And Jack tells the story about another man and said that "I've been buying cows and hogs for eighty years and I'm still learning" and—and Jack pretty much, you know, "When I would do weights on cows and you were figuring a yield, he prided himself on yielding a good yield. And that let you know you had evidence that you bought a good one. So if he didn't—if one didn't yield what he thought, "Go check that math again. Go check your math again. Show me—show me that on paper," because he—he wanted to know to the penny what he was doing and he prided himself in that. And when he was buying all the cows and hogs, boy, don't let him run out.

And—and if I tried to tell him don't buy, you know, "Hey, we're getting along. Don't buy." And he said—he said, "It's my job to buy it; it's your job to sell." So he—he was great at what he did but he pushed you to be great also. And he's really the—the backbone into pushing Amy and myself to be better and better.

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And now—and now she's—she's taken his role because she pushes—she pushes everybody at Midway to be better at all we do. She's—she's the backbone to the business.

**00:11:47**

**RF:** And now so we're in Union County. Does Union County have a lot of cattle and hog farmers? Why all this meat?

**00:11:56**

**JA:** For—years ago tons, I mean tons—tons, now not a lot of hog farmers anymore, still a good bit of beef farmers and years ago there was a livestock auction probably four days a week. Now we're down to Tuesdays; they have a live auction in Chester on Tuesday and Chesney on Tuesday, so you only have one day a week to get your—to get what you need. So when you go there you have—you have to be ready to buy and we actually have a—a—one of Jack's best friends, his name is Cowboy, he buys hogs for us because hogs are scarce. So he finds them and he brings them to me every week because I couldn't find enough.

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**RF:** And his name is Cowboy?

**00:12:41**

**JA:** Cowboy; his name is Kenny Coleman but nobody knows his name. The only reason I know his name is because I write him a check, so but Cowboy is his name.

**00:12:48**

**RF:** And where do you get—you get your hogs from him, from Cowboy?

**00:12:52**

**JA:** Yes.

**00:12:52**

**RF:** Where do you get your cows now?

**00:12:54**

**JA:** We buy our cows at the Chester livestock auction every Tuesday—every Tuesday and Cowboy actually buys for us. Jack bought for you know years and years and years and, like I said, I've—I used to buy, Jack trained me to buy, but Kenny—or Cowboy has been buying for fifty years—sixty years; he can—he knows it so much better than I do it's not funny, so he buys for us. He's there every day anyway; he brings us our hogs and he buys our cows. And he does a whole lot better job than I would.

**00:13:25**

**RF:** What do you look for when you go to a livestock auction, like that to buy the right animal for what you need?

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**JA:** Well, you know, you—you're looking for the animal that walks through there that is going to be great on the table. So when—when you go in you're thinking about the rib-eyes, the hamburger, the cubed steak, the stew beef, or the Boston butts and shoulders if you're talking about hogs. We pride our self in our cubed steak and our pork chops so you want the—the freshest not too lean, not too fat, you know, best in the barn. And evidently Jack was good at it because every man that ever came in here, “Man that Jack, he—he bought the best two out there today.” And they—they bragged on him, and I heard that fifty times a month, so I know it's true.

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**RF:** And so not only are you a full restaurant but you're a full butcher shop too. Can you say something about that?

**00:14:22**

**JA:** Oh yeah, and—and you know what? I call it a product of the Depression. And I don't know if it's a product of the Depression or an absolute fantastic businessman. He bought cows and hogs and had them come in and we'd put it in our meat market. And then he'd use that meat to supply the restaurant and so—and he absolutely is a meat man. That's what he loved.

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A funny story: Our—our youngest child was being born and he used to go to the stockyard on Wednesdays. So the doctor told us that Abby, our youngest, was going to be born on Wednesday and he said, “Y'all couldn't do that any other day?” So that's how serious he took that—that cattle-buying. So when we took it in there he prided himself in wasting nothing. Like I

told you earlier, he said, “You manage the small things.” And he didn't want to lose a pound of hamburger or anything. He would give away—he would give away more than he took home every week. He had the biggest heart and—but he could give it away but you better not mismanage it and lose it. Like if we ever had anything spoil, oh, I mean somebody was going to pay for it, hear about it—not in a bad way but to learn from it because absolutely he said, “If it goes in the can or if it goes out the back door you’ve done a poor job.” So and he was a perfectionist on doing jobs well.

**00:15:50**

**RF:** And you mentioned a few products that you sell out of the butcher case. What do you sell?

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**JA:** You know, we sell everything but the oink when it comes to the hog and we’ll give you that if you want it and the same thing with the beef. I mean we sell everything from high-end; rib-eyes is probably our highest end cut and we sell everything to the beef shank. Fresh ground hamburger, stew beef, cubed steak, T-bones, Porterhouse, sirloins, any kind of roast you want and we’ll cut your hash meat just like we cut our hash meat and that’s bone-in with a little bit of fat on it, or we’ll sell you stew beef for your hash meat, you know. Jack always told me, he said, you know, “When a lady comes in here,” and the ladies did most of the cooking, he said, “When a lady comes in here you want her to get what she wants.” And he said he didn't care if that was four ounces or 400 pounds. He wanted every customer to be treated the exact same way regardless of what they bought. Whether it’s one pork chop or fifty pork chops, he wants every customer to feel—feel the same.

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And he loved the market; he wanted—on Saturday afternoons, we're closed on Sunday so we'd let our market kind of run down, but when the customers come in say, "I'd be happy to cut anything you want." And boy if we didn't have something it would tear his nerves up. He'd go in that meat market and he'd be in there an hour looking for it and trying to find it. He wanted everybody to get what they wanted. And sure this is a business and he wanted to make money but I've never saw Jack concerned about the money and—and I worked with him for about seventeen years. He—he was concerned about the quality of food and giving people exactly what they wanted and that's—that's, you know, whole-hearted.

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**RF:** So you will also—you'll cut anything to order?

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**JA:** Oh yeah. We—we cut steaks on the spot. We grind hamburger on the spot. We'll grind, you know, ground sirloin. My wife is one of them; she loves lean red meat, so we—we grind sirloin for her. We'll grind the extra fat if you want it. We grind pork with no sausage seasoning in it. This week we ground two pounds of brisket. So, you know, anything—anything a customer wants we're here, and like I said, we got it hanging, so we can cut it any way they want it. Cut a three-inch roast, a two-inch roast; we cut it in half. Sometimes we don't know exactly why people want things they want but that's not our business. Our business is to cut what they tell us. So we'll absolutely give them what they want.

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**RF:** Do you get some strange requests nowadays?

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**JA:** We get all kinds of crazy requests. One of the—and you know what? I hope this lady doesn't hear this but we did a birthday party with fried pork chops, three sides, tea, and dessert a couple years ago and it was a birthday party for a German shepherd so, you know, we—we've been pretty much approached with everything. So, you know, they ate good; they ate good. So about fifty people there too; so, you know, they were treating that dog right. I don't know if he got a pork chop or not but they were celebrating.

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**RF:** Let's hope so. [*Laughs*] What—what percentage of the business is butcher and restaurant?

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**JA:** I'll say probably five-percent meat market. We do a huge lunch business, lots of to-go business, and then Saturday we're probably fifty-percent butcher, you know, people cooking out like Friday night and late Saturday, but Monday through Friday huge lunch business and we cater a ton. We cater probably—you know, we're in Atlanta a pretty good bit and that's about a three and a half hour ride. We're in Spartanburg; we're in Clemson; we're in—just, you know, within two hours we're pretty heavy. But within the forty-five minute drive we're very, very busy. So we run—we run three vans and another catering truck and they're busy all the time.

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**RF:** And how many cattle and hogs do you process or buy and process a week?

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**JA:** On a—on a—on one of our slow weeks we're usually around two to three, four cows and about twelve to fifteen hogs. And then if you're in peak time, you know, Memorial Day, 4<sup>th</sup> of July, Labor Day, we go through probably fifteen—twenty cows and hundreds of hogs. So 4<sup>th</sup> of July in Union is a hash and barbecue and Jack always put on the sign, "Union County's Favorite Holiday Foods" and it's the truth. Every holiday we're packed and we work on a normal busy—on a normal week our average employee probably works sixty—seventy hours a week. And they know during the holidays it's—it's our time, so we don't ask off. We actually recruit more help in for the holidays because we're just that busy.

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**RF:** And we're about three weeks away from July 4<sup>th</sup>, three or four weeks away. Do you get to take a vacation after?

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**JA:** You know what? It's crazy. We used to close three weeks after the 4<sup>th</sup> every year. Three or four years we didn't and we just, you know, had everybody take their vacation when they could but last year we didn't close, so this year we are going to close and we're going to do some construction. So we're going to do a little beautification on the outside. Two years ago we put in a new kitchen, a new pit, and another cook room on the back. So this year we're doing some

beautification and then getting ready to expand the dining room. So, like I said, we've been added onto a ton of times, probably seventeen—eighteen times and this is going to be nineteen or twenty this week—this year.

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**RF:** And before we started recording you were telling me, on the subject of holidays, you were telling me about the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays and how busy you are. Can you say something on that?

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**JA:** Oh yeah, Union County has about 27,000 in the population and I would say 28,000 to 30,000 people come to Midway. We sell anywhere from 800 turkeys, probably 5—600 hams, I think last year it was almost 2,000 quarts of dressing, you know 500 quarts of gravy, four pound pans of macaroni and sweet potatoes, green beans—just all we can cook. And the only thing that we don't—this—that's our poorest thing that we do at Midway is we're so busy that day we can't wait on them very fast. So they have to wait in line for about an hour or two and any other time of the year we pride ourselves in getting them out fast. We're working on that process but it's just really hard because of the volume that goes out in that day. But just tons—we've got a—a young lady named Shirley White that Jack hired fifty years ago—forty-five years ago and she still makes the dressing and her daughter has cooked here thirty years maybe and they are just absolutely the best cooks around. Shirley and Susan can cook anything and make it good. Like Jeff Foxworthy said, "You know in the South you can fry cardboard and make it taste good." I think Shirley can because it's absolutely to die for. So that's why people come on Thanksgiving

because Shirley's dressing is absolutely the best. Susan makes the macaroni. And we'll cater, you know, baked chicken or something on a—on a catered event and ninety-nine times out of 100 we hear, "Man that's the best macaroni I ever had." So not only do we—do we take pride in our hash and barbecue, which is known, you know, throughout the Southeast, but our other sides, the man that delivers us chicken says that when he retires he's going to the beach and he's going to have a truck and he's going to sell our slaw to all the fish camps—seafood places down there, the best slaw in the world.

**00:23:18**

Jack told me ten years ago, he said—he said, "We sell more slaw on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July than most barbecue places sell barbecue." And we sell in the tons. So, you know, we—we take pride in everything we do, not just the big hitters.

**00:23:35**

**RF:** And I want to ask about those big hitters in a moment but you were talking about slaw. How would you describe your slaw because it's—I find it's different all over the South? What's yours like?

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**JA:** Sure; ours is a sweet—I would say it's sweet and, you know, we—we grind our cabbage kind of coarse and then we add four or five special ingredients, but it's Duke's Mayonnaise, which is, you know, "Home in the South," and we—we use the Duke's Mayonnaise and then a little bit of sugar and—and season it and, you know, it absolutely—I'm not a slaw eater but people absolutely love it. Probably one quart of slaw goes with every order we sell. So, you

know, people love it; it goes great on the sandwich. I don't eat it on the sandwich but tons of people do and that's, you know, that's tradition at some places, you go ahead and put it on there. But we don't put any on there. We don't put anything on your sandwich unless you ask for it because we want you to get exactly what you want. We don't want to force you into eating any certain way. And that's what Jack always did; he—he wants you to get what you want because it's all about customer service to him.

**00:24:41**

**RF:** Okay; now heavy hitters. Let's talk about hash, which I think is what you're most famous for. What is hash?

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**JA:** Hash is front quarter beef. We take that front quarter and we cut the whole thing up and put it in the pot and you cook it slow, slow, slow; it's about a twenty-four hour process counting the prep time, the cook time, and then the prep time again and getting it ready. You add butter, onion, salt, and pepper to taste. We've used the same recipe since I've been here and probably twenty years before that. By far—by far our number one seller and we probably sell three, four to one hash to barbecue; it's absolute—Union County is a hash eating county. And Jack absolutely loved his hash. I eat hash every single day that I'm here and that's six days a week. And I think Jack ate—ate hash seven days a week. I think he took it home on Sunday and ate it. And he loved his hash. But absolutely it could always be better and he would try to find—either he didn't buy a good enough cow, which he bought the best in the barn, or either I didn't season well it enough or we cooked it too hard or we didn't cook it long enough or—and every pot he'd call it a “brag

pot.” “Well it must be a brag pot because I’m getting a bunch of compliments.” But it still could be better. But he was shooting for that brag pot every single time that we cooked.

**00:26:12**

And same—same exact thing with everything he did; he wanted to brag on everything he did.

**00:26:20**

**RF:** And tell me why you think hash is so popular here in Union County or what’s the history of hash if you’ve heard anything? Why here?

**00:26:29**

**JA:** You—you know what, I can't answer that question. But since I’ve been here twenty years and the twenty years before they used to—to get in line on July 4<sup>th</sup>, three—four o'clock in the morning because, like I said, there was forty-seven people cooking around the county and everybody ran out. And so I don’t know who invented hash, I absolutely don’t, but I know one thing, Jack O’Dell perfected it. And that’s why he’s the last one left. And he knew cows; he knew work ethic. And absolutely and he had the best taste buds. If something happened and something was a little askew he could say, “Hey, it needs more salt, it needs more butter, you didn't have enough onions, those onions were a little bit bitter,” he could tell it. And that’s absolutely what got him going.

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And he was such a perfectionist and this was his love, hash used to start Memorial Day and used to quit Labor Day and when I say quit, I mean quit—none. So he got hash going twelve

months out of the year in Union County. But it wasn't as popular as enough to sustain him to quit his job so he invented the chicken stew. So chicken stew—and he is, you know, he's like Chick-fil-A: he didn't invent the chicken but he invented the chicken sandwich. Well, he invented the chicken stew and that is a huge seller in Union County, Spartanburg County. Tons of people copy it but, like I've often said before, often imitated but never duplicated. And people that buy it in other places will tell us that, "Oh, I ate it at so and so. It wasn't near—it wasn't near Jack O'Dell's or Midway BBQ's but you know but it was okay."

**00:28:14**

And, like I said, he gives us his recipes and we don't change them.

**00:28:17**

**RF:** And tell me about the chicken stew.

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**JA:** Chicken stew is a milk based product kind of like an oyster stew but instead of oysters—chicken; very, very rich is his recipe and John T. Edge—

**00:28:34**

**RF:** Who is my boss.

**00:28:35**

**JA:** Oh, okay. John T. Edge sums that up the best. Oh now; I wonder if I have that—he has a quote in—and he uses words I don't even understand but anyway he—emulsified something or another, ropey but anyway he said that if he had to have his last meal on this earth it would be a

big chicken stew at Midway BBQ. So I mean if—if that's going to be your last meal on earth that's a pretty—pretty high cotton right there.

**00:29:02**

**RF:** I'd say so. So what do you—do you roast the chickens? How do you—how do you get the chicken stew?

**00:29:06**

**JA:** You boil them. Okay; we—we take them in 100-gallon cast iron black pot and we slow cook them and we slow cook them until they are just melt in your mouth done and then we add all the other ingredients to it. And absolutely—it's kind of like an addiction when it's rainy and cold outside. We've gone through about six doors being ripped off the hinges during the winter, people coming in to get chicken stew because they—we'll go through 120 to 150 gallons a day on a rainy and cold day in Union County.

**00:29:40**

**RF:** Right; and yesterday when we arrived I think I was lucky enough to get some because it was exactly that. It was a rainy and not a very hot day. So chicken stew is really dependent on weather?

**00:29:54**

**JA:** No; we have chicken stew, you know, every day, but hugely dependent on weather. On a normal—on a hot day, eighty degrees, ninety degrees, 100 degrees we might sell, you know, ten

gallons. On a rainy and cold day like I said 120, 150, 200 gallons and when we—when it's in the winter time, forty—fifty degrees outside and the rain comes the first thing we do is put about ninety gallons on in—in a hurry because if you don't you'll be out by two o'clock. When people get off work at 4:00, we close at 6:00; from 4:00 to 6:00 they'll be lined out the door and you better have chicken stew.

**00:30:31**

**RF:** And tell—we're going to pause real quick. All right; so I want to ask a few questions about what goes into making hash. We witnessed a bit of that back in the kitchen about an hour ago. So tell me, how hash is prepared, kind of deeper, and if you don't want to reveal any secrets that's okay, of course.

**00:30:59**

**JA:** Sure; you know what? I revealed our secrets to hash a million times. Hash is such hard work that people won't do it. It's about a twenty-four hour process, from the time you start peeling and cutting your onions and grinding your onions, and you have to cut your beef and we cut it into smaller pieces. And then we put it in a pot and we—we clean that beef and we drain the beef and we soak the beef. And then we turn the beef on and we slow cook it for about twelve to sixteen hours. And then you pull it out of the pot and take all the bone and fat and, you know, gristle out of it and then put it back in. So it is a very laborious process, but the end product is what people absolutely love. And what—what goes—what makes that product, we spare no expense in any of our ingredients from the—from the Styrofoam cups, we buy the best, you know a Dart product to the—the beef, the onions, the pork, the seasoning. We—we don't buy

cheap seasoning. We—we order our seasoning from A.C. Legg’s, which is, you know, one of the best.

**00:32:11**

Thank you, Ms. Parks.

**00:32:12**

**Ms. Parks:** Everything was wonderful.

**00:32:13**

**JA:** Great; you have a great day.

**00:32:15**

**Ms. Parks:** You too.

**00:32:16**

**JA:** So anyway we absolutely; we don’t put anything in our hash that’s not the absolute best.

And Jack trained me on that and he said—he told me that, “You and I will get along great if you don’t change any of my recipes.” And I won’t for sure because they work and they are the best.

And he always put the best in it and we’ll continue.

**00:32:38**

The—the laborious process is probably taking it up out of the pots—we—we—our recipe is 200 gallon pots at a time, so take about eight to ten people to—to get that done, you know, morning to—to early afternoon.

00:32:56

**RF:** So those giant black pots, those are 100-gallon pots?

00:33:00

**JA:** Yes, sir; and we—we—two—we actually have three in our cook room but we cook in two and then as soon as we take it out, you know, you got your onions cooking and you got everything rolling at one time so it's—it's a hot hard process, but, you know, what—that's what we're famous for and that's what—that's what we stick with.

00:33:17

We just shipped—we just shipped some to Utah yesterday and Oklahoma City last week. So very—you know, people love it and they pay for it. And, you know, what we pride our self in is keeping the price down. So we—we try our best to give our customers the best value they can get even though it is hard work.

00:33:37

**RF:** Did Mr. O'Dell ever say—about where he came up with these recipes, the chicken stew and the hash?

00:33:43

**JA:** The chicken stew recipe is hilarious—him talking about that; it was so hot when he first made it, it was burning people up, I mean just hot, hot, hot.

00:33:52

**RF:** Like spicy?

**00:33:53**

**JA:** Oh yeah; he—you know—you know, as you're younger you like hotter. So it was super, super hot and he—the—the gentleman that bought the first two quarts still comes in often and he said, "Hey, I was the first person that ever bought chicken stew" and he—you know, he just came up with it on his own. So he needed something to sustain him through the winter, you know, because like I said hash and barbecue was Memorial Day to Labor Day and he had nothing. So what he did is he—he started putting in chicken stew for the winter and then he started doing—I'm telling you he loved food. He loved gravy. He loved meat. So he started with country-style steak and pork chops and hired Ms. Shirley who cooks the dressing and, like I said, she can make anything taste good, so just, I gave you a copy of that menu but a huge diverse menu, about eight or ten meats every day and probably about twenty sides.

**00:34:49**

And when we came here my wife and I it was probably two or three meats and about five sides and—and I'm telling you, my wife, she—she loves to do it, so we've gone from like seven meats to about twenty sides. So, it's a huge menu now to choose from.

**00:35:02**

**RF:** So that's twenty sides that you can pick from each—?

**00:35:06**

**JA:** Oh yeah; you get—we either do a meat-n-three, tea, and dessert and right now that price is \$5.50 and it comes with a hot roll and a piece of cornbread, a piece of fried-brown fatback which is kind of our tradition and just—just giving you a ton of food for the money.

**00:35:24**

**RF:** And yesterday when we were here, I want to ask you to do something, yesterday when we were here you told us you had to go out for a moment and you had to do a radio spot, because you said every day you're on the radio. I want to ask if you would do that for the microphone because I think that would be really cool? And—and tell us first a bit about what that radio spot is and how that came about.

**00:35:45**

**JA:** Every day at 11:05 [a.m.] some people call it advertising, but I don't; I call it community service—at 11:05 every day the radio calls me and we're live on the air. And I give our menu for the day. And Mike Stevens right now which is the radio personality of the morning show, he and I kind of banter back and forth with—with the menu. So, I'll say, "What we're having like today is country style steak." He said, "Oh, I love that with," you know, "rice and gravy." And then we go back and forth and make it—make it a show other than just a menu.

**00:36:18**

So like we'll have this huge menu here and—and we just go through the menu together like I'll say, "Okay, today on the meats we have country style steak." And then he'll usually pop something back and I'll say, "Pork chop and gravy." And then when I say, "When it comes to chicken we got it any way you want it. Today we have the baked chicken leg quarter, the baked chicken breast, chopped barbecue chickens, and chicken-n-dumplings." And he'll say something like, "When she comes, when she comes," and just put a little flair to it. And then, "Today we have rice and gravy, macaroni and cheese pie," which is by far the—the best you've ever had, "black-eyed peas, steamed cabbage, green beans, broccoli casserole. Mr. Wilson was fussing at

me yesterday because I didn't have broccoli casserole every day five days a week.” We only do that on Tuesday and Thursdays. “We do fried okra, baked beans, stewed potatoes, the world’s best slaw, homemade potato salad,” we still have a potato peeler, “macaroni salad” and then we do a ton of specialty items. We do a sandwich, a side, and a drink for \$4.00. We do a grilled chicken salad for people on the lighter side and that’s \$5.75; we just started that. And then we do something; we call it a “Lean-n-mean.” We’ve never done a New Year’s Resolution but this year with a lot of health conscious people we did a grilled chicken salad, a baked potato, and a side salad and we call it the Lean-n-Mean. And you would be amazed how popular that is, so they absolutely have taken to that a ton. A lot of people are on diets and just trying to be healthy and whatever, so—then we’re going to start a salad with some chopped barbecue on it, lean—real soon also.

**00:37:53**

So we kind of go back and forth on the radio and then I usually hit the meat market up and tell any kind of deals we’ve got there and then—but we usually don’t run a deal because it’s all deal. We usually are about half price of everybody else. And you can't get it any fresher. “Gorgeous meat counters anywhere from rib-eyes to fresh ground hamburger, cubed steak, stew beef, center cut chops. We do a homemade chicken salad, a homemade pimento cheese, a homemade liver mush, and our number one seller in the meat market is fatback,” unbelievable you know. A lot of people don’t even know what fatback is but it’s by far our number one seller, probably 400 to 500 pounds a week. And we slice it and it’s also chunked, so you can get it any way you want it.

**00:38:31**

**RF:** So what is fatback for the people listening who don't know and—and what do people do with it?

**00:38:35**

**JA:** Fatback is the belly of the hog. And it's either all white fat or it's streak o' lean, it has the lean in it, which is bacon but without the cure on it. So we take it and we salt it and some people actually slice it and fry it and eat it, but most people use it to fry it out and use the grease to season vegetables. So—and you know what; it was crazy. An eighty-nine year old lady came in and said, “My doctor told me I shouldn't be eating any more fatback.” And she said, “I'm eighty-nine and it hadn't hurt me yet, so I'm keeping on eating it.” So, you know, you hear a lot of people say about animal fat and this, that, and the other. I—I'm not a—I'm not an MD, but I do know one thing; I think all natural is your best bet. And so that's what we do at my house. We like real butter and real things and not artificial flavors and preservatives so we try to do all natural, and all natural and modern medicine you can live a long time for sure.

**00:39:39**

**RF:** And let's talk about the vegetables; you said—you were talking about them earlier. You were listening in the—kind of the radio spot that we did. First what is the radio's call letters?

**00:39:52**

**JA:** WBCU, AM 1460 and they've just added an FM, which is 103.5.

**00:39:59**

**RF:** Okay; all right so we got the call letters. You were talking about the vegetables. Who makes those vegetables every day?

**00:40:03**

**JA:** That's—that's Ms. Shirley and Susan and we have a huge staff —Put, you know, introduced you to Put.

**00:40:11**

**RF:** Tell me more about him because we met him back there and you said he's been here a while and—.

**00:40:13**

**JA:** Yeah; before I worked here I used to go to the Y and work out in the mornings. So anyway I met Put there and just—just a great man and he can actually turn out the work. Like I said, we used to run and lift weights and all that together. Well anyway, he was out of a job and I said—I said, “Hey, come to work at Midway until you find something and get it—.” Well anyway, best— one of the best things that ever happened to us. He's been here sixteen—seventeen years and he can absolutely do it—takes pride in what he does and that's the key to Midway is having people that really take pride in what they do. Susan and Shirley do most of the vegetables. Put does some of them and we actually cross-trained with those three and they—they are absolutely— absolutely great at what they do. And then I've got the hardest job here. When I come in—in the morning I'm the official taste tester and I—I taste—take one bite of everything on the line and

then that helps us just in case they over it—you know a little more salt or not enough salt or too much pepper or not enough pepper and then I catch anything, you know, that—that I think might need a little more.

**00:41:16**

**RF:** And how do you spell Put? How does he spell his name?

**00:41:18**

**JA:** P-u-t.

**00:41:19**

**RF:** P-u-t?

**00:41:20**

**JA:** P-u-t—Put Temmerath and he's as fine as they come. Like I said, I used to pride myself in being fast and he's beat every record I ever had. So he can turn it out; he's in great shape. Put is probably about fifty years old now and he—there's no eighteen to twenty year old here that can keep up with him.

**00:41:40**

**RF:** And where is he from?

**00:41:41**

**JA:** He's from Laos, so he can—he's absolutely—absolutely a great employee and a good face for Midway.

**00:41:50**

**RF:** And you told us, before we started recording, you told us, about Put and his onion record. Can you tell that again? That was very, very good.

**00:41:58**

**JA:** We're prepping for some hash and hilarious, I'm in the back with him the other day, and anyway he starts fist-pumping like he just won a game winning shot in the NBA playoffs. Yes, yes; eight bags of onions under one hour. So and he's been here sixteen years and he's still excited like that. So he sets the bar pretty high for all of us. And he gets frustrated with a lot of the—a lot of the people that come because they can't keep up with him. Why I don't know anybody that can keep up with him, so he—he's disappointed with nobody being able to keep up with him. So, but in a few years he'll start aging a little bit and some of us will catch him.

**[Laughs]**

**00:42:33**

**RF:** All right; let's talk about—let's talk about barbecue. So this is the BBQ Trail. Tell us how—how you would describe your barbecue here.

**00:42:43**

**JA:** A hundred-percent hickory smoked, absolute on the money; like I said, Jack took pride in everything he did. We—we cooked like we said the pork that comes in on foot, so we take hams and shoulders and we generally—we like the shoulders better than the hams but we will cook some hams. The shoulders are really, really slow cooked at about 210 degrees and we've tried some rubs but we typically like just a little bit of salt, cooked really slow, and then when we pull them off you just—you just spread them and, you know, just pick them.

**00:43:22**

We had some earlier today. I absolutely love it. We have three different kinds of sauce. Midway Famous Sauce is the tomato-base and that's been exactly what Jack has prided himself for—for years and years and years. We've added a mustard based sauce in the last three or four years and also a vinegar-pepper. Three—four months ago we started doing a no-sauce for the eat-in customers and we have all three sauces on the table. And it's amazing, ninety-nine percent of everything bought at the counter is the original sauce, the tomato based sauce, but probably ninety percent of the sauce used on the table is the vinegar-pepper. The Eastern North Carolina is what people will call that. But, you know, what; it doesn't matter to us what sauce they like or if they use a sauce at all as long as they get what they want. But that no-sauce off the barbecue or straight off the pit is just an absolutely homerun, and we've learned how to heat it and reheat it, so we give you reheating instructions and it's crazy but I think the best way to do that is a Glad bag in the microwave.

**00:44:26**

You know, when you take it home you're not going to get that straight off the pit flavor by the time you put it in your car and carry it and, you know—you know, keep it off heat for a

couple hours until you have to reheat it. You put that in a Glad bag and put it in the microwave for forty-five seconds that's a homerun right there.

**00:44:45**

**RF:** Do you call your barbecue anything? Do you call it South Carolina barbecue or Carolina barbecue? Do you have a name for it or is just what you do?

**00:44:54**

**JA:** Midway BBQ, yeah; that's—that's the—that's what we've called it and Midway BBQ is that original red sauce. And if somebody comes in—I'll never forget; we try to give everybody what they want so when—when they come in and we were saying, you know, “Hey, would you like some no-sauce,” you know, “or some sauce on the side?” “I want what I've always got.” You know, “I want the—I want the original. I want you know give me that red sauce.” So like there were several gentlemen—you know, with your customers some people won't talk to you so you kind of got to read them. There was one guy that came in and he got a mixed plate all the time, so we did a no-sauce for him and he was highly disappointed that we didn't put that red sauce on his plate. So I asked him; I could see it in his face and I said—I said, “Hey,” you know—. He said, “I don't know what you did different to my barbecue but I like it the,” you know, “the original way.” So I learned him real quick, put that red-sauce barbecue on his plate and that's what he wants and that's what he gets every time. And so, you know, we—you have to ask the right questions and, you know, when it's not broke don't fix it. You know, you try to appeal to a lot of people and you want to make everybody happy but, you know, when people have been

getting something for fifty years you better keep it consistent. And that's what we try to do and that's what Jack told me, you know, "You don't change any of recipes and you'll be fine."

**00:46:09**

**RF:** How much of your customer base is repeat customers or those that come—?

**00:46:13**

**JA:** I would say 100-percent; I would say 100-percent because there's a lot of people that eat here six days a week, four days a week, five days a week and the diverse menu helps a lot but definitely for sure, holidays, you know, tons of repeat business. And it was funny, we—like I told you earlier, we cater a ton and if—if we cater you once, ninety-nine percent we're going to cater you again. We give a great product at a great value and we pride ourselves in not overcharging. And we—if—if I lose a catering it's usually because people don't believe the price could be that cheap and be good. And—and I know that sounds crazy and that sounds like I'm pulling your leg, but it's the absolute truth. It's the absolute truth. When we—when we bid things—I'll be five and six dollars cheaper than most people. We don't have a lot of overhead and we're in business for the long haul, not to get it one time. We want—we want repeat business and that's what—that's what we're here for. We want you to like us for a long time.

**00:47:21**

**RF:** And what—well, let's talk about where you're from. We haven't got to that because you're not from Union County. Where—where are you from?

**00:47:30**

**JA:** I'm not; I'm from Atlanta, so born and raised in Atlanta and went to Georgia Tech and it's crazy. A lot of my friends laugh and say, "You go to Georgia Tech and you end up cooking barbecue." And, but I've absolutely loved it. I have a ball doing it. Jack says that I'm one of the best PR men that he's ever met and, you know, I don't know if that's a compliment. I don't know if he's saying I'm not a very good meat man or barbecue man, but he says I'm the best PR man he ever met. And I think—I think that was—he was kind of digging at me a little bit and having some fun but we, my wife and I, are a great team. And she—she's great on the food and she's great on the vision. And then we have a ball working it together.

**00:48:12**

**RF:** So what were you doing before you met your wife? You said you were—you met her in Spartanburg.

**00:48:17**

**JA:** Right.

**00:48:18**

**RF:** What were you doing?

**00:48:18**

**JA:** I was working for a company called Perrigo Company and they did generic pharmaceuticals and store-brand stuff for Walmart, Kmart, and stuff. And I was actually working in the vitamin warehouse so and I was actually a plant scheduler. So I love my job, you know, not working very

hard, and I came here and worked really long and really hard. But very worthwhile and we love it.

**00:48:48**

Union County is a great county; it's called the "City of Hospitality" and absolutely the truth. The people are wonderful and you know I don't think there's ever need in the county that's not addressed. People really reach out and—and help a lot. It's been a blessing to be a part of the county and it's a great place to raise a family and we're absolutely tickled to be here.

**00:49:10**

**RF:** And had you ever worked in a restaurant before?

**00:49:13**

**JA:** I said I worked for Frito-Lay straight out of college and when I left Frito-Lay I said, "I will never work anything with a shelf life of less than forty-five days." And here I am in the restaurant and the shelf life is forty-eight hours. So you know what? I realized then you never say what you're going to do and what you're not going to do. So this has been a blessing for us and I hope we do it for a long time. And like I said, we keep—we keep expanding and moving and you know Jack always told me, "You're either moving forwards or backwards" and we want to continue to move forward.

**00:49:45**

**RF:** What were—like you were telling me a bit about those first days; can you say something about that or what was it like working with Jack or not working with Mr. O'Dell?

00:49:54

**JA:** You know what; you had to work until the work was done. And when I first started here I had no experience. So it was a lot harder for me and I kind of had to learn off the cuff, and so I worked a lot—a lot of twenty hour days, eighteen hour days, sixteen hour days, and Jack used to have a little funning with me and said, you know, “You can work half a day,” you know, “every day,” you know “and pick any twelve hours you want.” So, you know, and that was the truth. So we worked six and seven days a week for those first three or four years and long and hard and now we’re fortunate enough to have *great staff*, so I don’t have to work that long now. I probably work, you know, nine—ten hours a day barring holidays. Holidays are—I’d say you pretty much work cane to cane and that’s just the nature of the business. You—too much volume, too much time, so everybody—everybody has to, you know, ratchet it up during the holidays and work long and hard.

00:50:56

**RF:** And so Mr. O’Dell is—is still around, still alive, and tell me about him. You said he’s a bit sick but that he used to come in. Tell me how he is or—.

00:51:09

**JA:** Oh yeah; now, in his heyday Jack was here forever, but I mean, you know, early in the morning and late in the afternoon. Over the last couple years he started—he lost his hearing and that’s pretty much is what got him out of work because he used to run the counter and but he couldn’t hear the customers. So it was so frustrating to him because he—you know, he just couldn’t hear, so and that was pretty much what got him out of work.

**00:51:34**

Most people are looking for retirement and the absolute truth Jack was looking to work. It crushed him when he couldn't work. That's what he—where people have hobbies, his hobby was work; his life was work. He wanted to work. That's all he wanted to do. He didn't want to go run races or play ball or whatever; he wanted to work. And when he couldn't work it hurt his feelings and—and that's what slowed him down. So, right now he's not able to work and not able to stand on his feet a lot but he still—he still talks about it and still loves it. You know, his—his appetite is not what it once was. He could eat a quart of hash and a quart of stew and—and that was a snack. And he could take a whole pie and devour it, I mean devour it, so absolutely—absolutely as good as it comes. And if he was able he'd be here right now.

**00:52:27**

**RF:** Do you still bring him hash or stew?

**00:52:30**

**JA:** Oh yeah; you know, he still—he still likes to eat, so he, you know, Amy—Amy still cooks for him all the time, so she takes care of him. Anything he wants he gets.

**00:52:41**

**RF:** And did you think—so those—those first year—when did you start here? When—how long ago was that?

**00:52:45**

**JA:** 1994.

**00:52:46**

**RF:** Okay; so you're here in '94. Did you think you'd be here twenty years later, almost twenty years later?

**00:52:53**

**JA:** You know, that was the plan or I wouldn't have given up what I had. So, it was a long-term vision from the start, because the position I was in where I was for me to move up I was going to have to move to Allegan, Michigan. So it was either move to Michigan or come to Midway. My wife said "Allegan, Michigan" and I said, "Let's go to Midway." So [*Laughs*] that's one of the few times I've won out in that partnership, but yeah, we—we absolutely love it. And I would say the first five or ten years, I don't know if my wife will agree to this, but she didn't have as much heart and soul into it. I think she was apprehensive, but her dad was still the man here. But once he started going out, she 110-percent in and then she's really pushed the business further. She's really pushed—she pushes us to be better, diversifies the menu, and she's on the register every day so she hears what people want or what they might be a little dissatisfied with and she makes changes in a hurry.

**00:54:00**

**RF:** So what was it about this place that made you dedicate the next two decades and maybe the rest of your life to it?

**00:54:10**

**JA:** When it came down to it, it was a quality of life for my children. And we work more now than we ever would where we were. She was a school teacher and she was off in the summers and I was only working like thirty-two hours a week. But we just thought that it would be a better environment for our kids and if they ever needed anything we could be there for them. And—and I don't know if any of that was true because we're probably away from them a lot more than we ever would have been, but it's been a blessing. It's been a blessing. We've been blessed every day that we've been here. And there's something—working in family is tough but you know what better people to work beside than the people you love and—and your family?

**00:54:53**

And, at one point back in the heyday we had like eleven family members here on the holidays and now it's only four or five. But, you know, two or three uncles, granddaddies, grandchildren, I mean pretty thrilling to think, you know, you got eleven family members in here in one day.

**00:55:11**

**RF:** Yeah; that's really great. And do—do any of your children work here? Are they old enough to work here?

**00:55:17**

**JA:** Oh yeah; my—my girls are old, twenty-six and seventeen and one is getting married. And she worked here a ton. My youngest one, I guess she's a little more spoiled. She plays a lot of

sports, so as long as she's playing sports she doesn't have to work here. So she doesn't work here as much but she—she knows the drill for sure.

**00:55:37**

**RF:** And will you encourage them to work here more or—?

**00:55:41**

**JA:** My oldest one is a nurse, so she has her hands full. She works twelve hour shifts, so I encourage her to work here less, you know, for her—for her wellbeing. And then my youngest one, she says she's going to be a nurse also, so we'll just have to kind of see where that goes. And then the future of Midway, I don't know where it will go. You know, I hope one of my children might want it but if they don't we've got three or four people here that have a huge vested interest in it, that Midway is going to be here for a long time. We have two managers that are young guys that I mean we just couldn't do without them, probably thirty and twenty-six; one of them, you know—they—they can run it probably better than we can and they know it. So we got great staff. *[Emphasis Added]*

**00:56:31**

Most places talk about staff and turnover and whatever; but, you know, you've heard me talk, sixteen years—our manager has been here probably twelve—fourteen years, Shirley fifty years, Susan thirty years, you know, I've been almost twenty years, my wife forty years, you know, the—when people come to Midway they stay a long time. So we're blessed with no turnover.

**00:56:57**

**RF:** What does Midway mean to the community, to Union County, to Union and Buffalo?

**00:57:04**

**JA:** Um, you know, what; that's a tough question to ask me. You know, but I know we mean a lot. Tons of people—I absolutely kill myself when it's a holiday and we close because people are coming home to visit mama or visit grandma; they want Midway. So when I close at six o'clock and we're worn out after thirteen, fifteen, eighteen hours that day it kills me to close the door because there's people coming in. You know if you don't live here you don't really know the hours. They want to come at eight o'clock at night and get hash or barbecue or chicken stew. You know, that's what they—that's their memories when they come home.

**00:57:43**

And when they come home nine out of ten of them take a cooler back. You know, that is their tradition for their family. You know, that's what they want. So holidays that's what we're here for. So that's what's tough on me, so I try to publicize on the radio spot that we do, on the newspapers and then on my signs, you know, put tons of signs up of what our hours are so they can catch us and we don't disappoint people. The week we close I publicize it a ton but it pains me, because every time we close for a week and I come back, "Oh, we came by and we missed you." And it's not the money; it's the fact that they were on vacation and they were coming to see mama and they didn't get what they wanted. So but—but you know what? We—we try to be great in the community. We—we try to support all we can and we like to be here and I think our biggest testimony is we try to give you the best value. You can eat here every day for six dollars and that's a huge meal and a drink for six bucks. That—we don't allow a tip; we don't want tips

on the tables. We pay our staff. You don't have to tip them and we pay the tax. We pay the South Carolina tax, so when you come in it's six bucks. You give us a six dollar bill, that's a meat-n-three, roll, cornbread, fatback, and a drink—six dollars. So, you know, we—and we've been that way for a long time.

**00:59:03**

The last five years the economy has taken a turn and we fought that and we've had one fifty-cent increase in the last eight years. So we—we fight it hard and we're going—we're going to give you the best value we can so we love to give back all we can.

**00:59:20**

**RF:** And what does—maybe I want to end on this question and wrap it up—but what does Mr. Jack O'Dell, what does he say? What does he express to you and your wife, his daughter about this place? I mean it's been going on such a long time and he's been out of it for a little while, right; when did he—let me ask, when did he kind of leave or retire?

**00:59:43**

**JA:** Probably two—probably two or three years ago when his health started really declining. I would say in a—in summing him up over the last fifteen years he pushed me hard to get trained in a hurry because I think he always thought that he was going to die. He told me he was—he wouldn't make it three more years when he hired me eighteen years ago, so he pushed me hard to get trained and he didn't train me—he didn't sugarcoat it or candy coat it. He pushed me hard to get trained in a hurry. And I think that was because he was—he thought he was going to die.

**01:00:15**

So and then once we'd been here a while and—and we knew it I think he was scared that we wouldn't make it and he used to tell me, "If you don't make it, run!" "Don't try to hang on." Because he was scared of, you know, going bankrupt and not making it. He had several early businesses that struggled and put his family through turmoil and he didn't want—that was his baby that was taking over this business and he didn't want us to struggle and have to work like he did. You know, and I think that's the love of every father for their children, so he didn't want us to have to struggle and—and work so hard which is crazy because he killed himself doing it. You know, he didn't want us to do it but he had done it his whole life. And—and now he wasn't one for tons of accolades or brags. You know, he always gave you what you needed to work on but now he brags and says you're doing a good job and—and encourages. He's more of an encourager now than—than a bull by the horns like he was years ago because he—he was a cowboy. He was a hash cowboy in his day and he was wild and tough and he pushed hard. He wanted to be the best. He wanted to be the best. He—whether you're a ball player or a runner or whatever you wanted to be—be the best and finish first and he wanted to finish first in hash and barbecue and his legacy, he did finish first with his legacy.

**01:01:40**

**RF:** So one last question; what does hash mean to this community? If this place doesn't have hash what happens?

**01:01:48**

**JA:** Without hash we're done. We're closed. You know, Midway is hash and I think Midway BBQ is what people name us and what we've been going by for years, but it really should be Midway Hash. Mid—you know, Union County is a hash-eating county and when I go cater I take three to one hash to barbecue. People love the hash and when people come in and take it to go, you can't get hash like this anywhere else. In South Carolina, which is a hash eating county—but anywhere, it is truly one of a kind along with the chicken stew. You—like you're going to do your trip around South Carolina. If you find anything else like it I would love to see it because I don't—I don't think you will. It's absolutely the best kind; like ours it's different from everybody else's and our sales support that statement. We sell tons of hash.

**01:02:50**

So and we sell tons of cows that go into it, so, you know, people absolutely love it and I kind of sound—kind of—I don't like to brag and it kind of makes me funny saying that a little bit but the sales support it, you know, and Jack, I'll never forget it. Jack used to sit back there and we weren't keeping his hash perfect like he wanted it and he would say, “Hey, this is what sends my kids to school. This is what pays your salary.” And he would be adamant and furious if you didn't treat his hash like gold. And to see somebody get that fired up, you know, that's what you're founded on and that's what—you know, that—that is where your bread is buttered and that's—you know, that's—. So tons of pride in what he served, but—but he's the—he's the Hash King that's for sure. And he calls this place—when people ask the address for Midway, “811 Hash Boulevard.”

**01:03:49**

**RF:** Wait; he calls it Hash Boulevard?

**01:03:50**

**JA:** Oh yeah, “811 Hash Boulevard” and that’s what we tell them, “Hey put that in your GPS, 811 Hash Boulevard” and on the vans, “Hash and chicken stew capital of the world.” He’s—he’s claimed that crown for—for years and years and that’s the statement that’s on our vans: “Hash and chicken stew capital of the world.” And it’s the truth; so nobody sells hash and chicken stew like Midway. And often imitated, but never duplicated; for sure, for sure.

**01:04:19**

**RF:** Well I think that’s a—that’s a good place to end. I want to thank you.

**01:04:20**

**JA:** That sounds great. It’s my pleasure; any time.

**01:04:22**

**RF:** Thanks so much.

**01:04:26**

**[End Jay Allen — Midway BBQ]**