

JOE HUBBERT
Original owner, Boar's Butt Restaurant - Winfield, AL

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Date: September 28th, 2006
Location: Mr. Hubbert's home – Winfield, AL
Interviewer: Amy Evans
Length: 1 hour
Project: Southern BBQ Trail - Alabama

[Begin Joe Hubbert]

00:00:00

Amy Evans: This is Amy Evans for the Southern Foodways Alliance on Thursday, September 28th 2006. I'm in Winfield, Alabama, at the home of Mr. Joe Hubbert. Mr. Hubbert, if you wouldn't mind stating your name and also your birth date for the record, please, sir.

00:00:18

Joe Hubbert: Joe Hubbert, H-u-b-b-e-r-t—and my birthday is—an old man. I am sixty-nine years old. Birthday is March 30th [1937].

00:00:36

AE: And [regarding the microphone,] I can just hold this while we're talking; you don't have to worry about it. Now—and I'm in your home here in Winfield, speaking to you about the history of Boar's Butt Barbecue, which you started. But first, if I may ask you, Winfield is your hometown, correct?

00:00:54

JH: Yes, ma'am. I came back here in [nineteen] '73—January 12th, to be exact. I was in Georgia coaching [football], and the superintendent called me and wanted me to come here to my home, and I stayed her and coached for twenty years and a half.

00:01:21

AE: And so where were you in Georgia?

00:01:24

JH: Georgia—Cochran, Georgia—a wonderful place. We were over there about—soon be five weeks ago, and they anointed me and everything and it was wonderful. Wonderful. We had a wonderful week over there and a lot of old friends and they just—it's always been good. Because we had to—my last year—I was only there three years or two-and-a-half years, and I left there like I said, June—January 12th, coming back home. And we had a good football team, a very good football team. We went ten [wins] and two [losses], and that's the farthest they've ever been in playoffs. And I left Mississippi State coaching there, and that's when I went to Cochran, Georgia.

00:02:25

AE: And so how—how did you initially get into coaching? Is that something that you always wanted to do, or was it an accident that you got into it?

00:02:31

JH: I played college football and wrestled at [University of Tennessee at] Chattanooga. It was an endowed school then; now it's—it's a school tied up with the Universities in Tennessee. And it's a good school—good school. And they've got about 10,000 students there. When I was there, we probably didn't have about 3,000 [students], and we beat Tennessee in 1958. And I'll never forget that; I really enjoyed it.

00:03:12

AE: And so when you came back to Winfield, I understand that you started the Boar's Butt Barbecue as a stand initially. Was that kind of a hobby thing that you did on the side?

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JH: We—I had one built. I had never anything to do with it but always thought about doing it, and I borrowed the money to build one on wheels, and they let me park down there next to Wally World [meaning, Wal-Mart]—I call it Wally World—and I stayed there about three years. And a banker offered me a place where the present [location] is right now and it's log—it was a log building. And we stayed, oh, I'd say about three years, and I began to enlarge. So we built a big room adjoining, and then later on we built another room and it was private seating and whatever, and then we built a new kitchen. And everything was going real good and I—like I say, I started in [nineteen] '89 in the building. And it has been good to us and the family—very good.

00:04:48

AE: Now when you started in '89, was that the original building or that's when you expanded?

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JH: That's—that's when I moved into the—I was renting it. I just wanted to see how it would go, and it became where the people were lined up out the doors. And they was standing out there, and the air-conditioning was going out with them too. So anyway, that's when we started in the other building and we left the other—I sold the one that was on wheels.

00:05:24

AE: What year did you start the one on wheels?

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JH: [Nineteen] eighty-seven.

00:05:28

AE: Okay.

00:05:28

JH: I was still coaching. I retired in coaching in [nineteen] '93—spring of '93.

00:05:36

AE: So what came first then, the—the building or the—the barbecue? Were you already making barbecue?

00:05:45

JH: No, I haven't—I had a barbecue pit just before and it's still out here [at my house], and I'm thinking about building a new one. But the bricks is about, you know, all wore out up here behind my house here, and we cooked a lot of good meals with it.

00:06:09

AE: So you were always—you were cooking barbecue a lot before you opened the restaurant, so it—to you, you saw it as a viable way to cook and to make extra money—and you're nodding your head, yes.

00:06:24

JH: Yes, ma'am.

00:06:27

AE: So were you always—when you were still coaching and you opened the barbecue place, were you always making the barbecue yourself?

00:06:36

JH: Yes. Excuse me. [Clears throat.]

00:06:43

AE: Okay, sure. All right, so we were talking about when you worked and made barbecue from a pit here at your house, and that evolved into you wanting to make and sell barbecue to the public. And so the question before we paused was, I think, was were you continuously making the barbecue when you opened the barbecue stand while you were coaching?

00:07:05

JH: Right. With—we had the one on wheels we're talking about now, and I cooked all of the barbecue here at the house in the pit I had here.

00:07:19

AE: Okay. So what kind of schedule would you keep? Were you only open on the weekends or was it a daily—?

00:07:24

JH: I was open every day. I had—we had—I had some girls that took care of it every day for me, and when I would get through coaching and whatever late in the afternoon, I would go in and help work every day. And we was open seven days a week.

00:07:41

AE: So what kind of schedule would you keep here at the house of—of smoking meat?

00:07:45

JH: Well it depended on how the meat was moving, you know, but we could cook several pieces of pork, and we usually would do it four or five times a week.

00:08:02

AE: Where were you getting your—your pork during those days?

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JH: Oh, we'd buy it from US Food Services, Sysco, people like that.

00:08:12

AE: And what cuts of pork were you doing? Was it just Boston butts or—?

00:08:16

JH: Butts—we used butts. Sometimes we'd use another piece, but most of the time butts.

00:08:23

AE: So was there ever an occasion where you would do ribs or anything?

00:08:26

JH: Yes, ma'am. In fact, we won second [place] in the State of Alabama. The famous place in Alabama, I guess, you know where that's—it's like Tuscaloosa and Birmingham—I can't even think of the place, but it's real famous.

00:08:42

AE: Dreamland?

00:08:43

JH: Dreamland, right. Excuse me. I'll tell you what happened one time in Dreamland. I was there eating with my son and some other guys in business down there in Tuscaloosa, and the old guy came by and tipped the juice all over my clothes and everything. I never will forget that, and I've never been back. *[Laughs]*

00:09:09

AE: Did you like the barbecue there?

00:09:11

JH: The barbecue is okay, yeah. I haven't been back so—I'm sure a lot of people really like it.

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AE: So if we can talk about when you were doing barbecue at the house, can you describe what kind of working style you have or how you like the meat to look and kind of describe your process a little bit?

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JH: Well I want it to be still a little pink, you know, but I want it done; we didn't want to burn up meat. And it takes sometime really to cook good meat, usually twelve to fifteen hours, something like that.

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AE: And you'd baby-sit it the whole time yourself, would you?

00:09:53

JH: No, I could set it and usually I would—I'd have to put coals on it. That's all we'd do is most of the time just put coals, and it wouldn't burn. It would just smoke the meat, and it was very good.

00:10:10

AE: Now do you use wood coals or do you use charcoal?

00:10:14

JH: We use nothing but hickory.

00:10:16

AE: Where do you get your hickory?

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JH: We bought a lot of hickory wood over at the Boar's Butt, I'll tell you. And the name—one day I was bringing this up, now the name Boar's Butt it just hit me one day. I said, "Boar's Butt, so I'm going to cook butts." And it was a preacher in Guinn, Alabama, that said it was—he didn't like that name *Butt*. Well, you've got tree butts. You've got a lot of different other things called butts, and he took it wrong and we—the newspaper wrote up a story about it, and I mean we never did hear nothing else from that preacher.

00:10:59

AE: Did he ever come and eat with you?

00:11:02

JH: Not to my knowledge.

00:11:03

AE: And so can you describe a little bit the brick pit that you used to have here that you used to work on—what that looked like and how many butts it could hold?

00:11:14

JH: Oh, we probably can—it was all—it was brick and we could put about twenty on at one time.

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AE: And did you build it or have it built?

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JH: Well I had it built; I'm not a bricklayer. I had a guy that did the—the bricklayer.

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AE: Did you have a hand in designing it, then?

00:11:35

JH: Yes. Another friend of mine, he really helped me. I'd go to his house at parties and—he's the one that got me started, and they cooked wonderful food. And we'd go to football games and he did all the chicken halves and this thing. And it was very wonderful.

00:11:53

AE: May I ask his name?

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JH: Mr. Bowman. He's—he is deceased and a wonderful guy—he and his wife. And he was the head man of the big company for children's clothes in Guinn, Alabama.

00:12:09

AE: When you went into the business, what did he think about that, if he was kind of your mentor in barbecue?

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JH: Well before—he had moved and he—he had lost his wife and he moved down in Jackson [Mississippi], where his daughter lived. He was just a wonderful guy, and I was so privileged to be in his home many times.

00:12:38

AE: Was he pleased that you started a restaurant of your own?

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JH: I think he had moved out—I don't remember, really, the date but I—he was pleased that I got me a pit up here.

00:12:53

AE: So he didn't—he wasn't really aware that you had—?

00:12:56

JH: No, he had left here and gone to Jackson, since his wife had passed away.

00:13:03

AE: Okay. And so when you were talking about when you had the small stand on wheels and you had a couple girls helping you out—

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JH: It wasn't a stand—it was a building on wheels.

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AE: How big of a building on wheels?

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JH: Oh, it was probably about fifteen [feet] by eight [feet]. Then we added another portion where we cooked on the outside; it was screened in and all that—had to in the State of Alabama. You got to get—make sure everything is correct. They're pretty strict, and I don't blame them. That's the way it should be.

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AE: What else were you selling in the beginning? Were you selling any sides or anything?

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JH: We finally moved up to steaks. We—we'd have steak, rib-eyes—and I never will forget one time, we started it and they were backed up standing everywhere, and I couldn't cook them fast

enough. We'd use ribeyes. We did—got to where we were selling rib-eye sandwiches and that—we did that all the way through. And as far—and right now the Aroma[‘s Café] is doing that too, I'm telling you—where my daughter is working. They sold—we had Mule Day [Festival] this past Saturday, and she told me she cut, I believe, 100-and-something ribeyes. And the meat is usually very, very good. We used Black Angus and the Aroma uses Black Angus right now.

00:14:39

AE: So when the Boar's Butt was in business and you were owner, it went through how many expansions before you retired from the business?

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JH: We had a porch at one time. What we did—we took the porch in first, and then we built a large room onto the log portion. And we—we the next thing—we built another one and that was our major thing for to seat—we could seat approximately 500 people. Then we enlarged the new kitchen—total new kitchen and that—that is it.

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AE: Can you describe what the interior of that log part of the building looked like when you got in it?

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JH: Well the logs—people liked the logs—that portion. And we had pictures. We lost so much when it burned; it's unbelievable. He—the guy that bought it [Joey Froelich], he wanted to let us leave it on the walls and, at the time, I didn't have any other place to put it. And when it burned

the one room—the last room that was built—we did not have any damage to that, so I got everything out that morning when it was burning.

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AE: Now just to back up a little bit, you—you sold the building to—Joey Froelich is the current owner, and it burned after the sale. What year was it that you sold the business?

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JH: January it would be—January 5th.

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AE: Of what year?

00:16:34

JH: January 5th '05. [2005]

00:16:39

AE: Oh, it's that recent that you sold it, okay.

00:16:42

JH: Yeah, this year—January, it will be the second year he's had it.

00:16:48

AE: Okay. And so when you retired from the business what—what brought that on? What made you want to sell it?

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JH: Well, you know, you get kind of tired, seven days a week and hours are—usually I'd be there about 7:30 or 8:00 [in the morning] and most of the time I'd be there 'til 9 or 10 o'clock every night. And that's kind of—gets old. But I—I miss it now. I miss the people. But I don't miss a lot of the other things. Labor is tremendously hard to get, but we were fortunate; we had several real good employees. And then we had to let a lot of times people go, too; I'm sure other people have the same problem.

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AE: How many employees did you have at its peak before you sold it?

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JH: We would use about thirty people at different times on—. Especially Sunday we had a lot of people working—a lot of food runners getting it out.

00:18:06

AE: So Winfield is a pretty small town. Do you know the population of Winfield?

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JH: About 5,000 [people].

00:18:13

AE: So how do you think you were able to build this reputation and sustain this really large restaurant in this small town?

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JH: Well I was—what really got me into it, we had no place that had good food. It was terrible. And we—I just thought, you know, no steaks, no pork. We sold no telling how many tons of chicken breast. We marinated all our chicken breasts. And that was a big one, too. And grilled chicken salads, that was very big. And chicken halves was good too.

00:19:04

AE: So you were just—would you say that you cooked and sold and served the food that you wanted to have yourself?

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JH: Oh, yeah and we—we did fish: grouper, we did catfish. And we did steaks, and we did all kind of food—vegetables and meats at lunch. We didn't do breakfast. It would be ready—getting ready for the lunches every day.

00:19:41

AE: So do you think that people travel from like Guinn and Jasper [Alabama] to—just come to the Boar's Butt?

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JH: We had a lot of people out of Mississippi to come over: Tupelo—just a lot of different places over there that would come. And we'd have a lot of people that would stop in. And we had a lot of people out of Birmingham, Tuscaloosa, just a lot of surrounding places.

00:20:07

AE: They'd just make a special trip just to come by the Boar's Butt?

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JH: That's correct. And a lot of times during this kind of season like it is now [in the fall], a lot of football teams would stop and eat with us. And then the basketball people would stop with us out of Florence [Alabama] and just traveling, and they would call in and set up after the games was over and whatever and a lot of times would eat a pre-game meal with us.

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AE: Was that, do you think, part of who you were as an owner, being a coach also, that—that was kind of a built-in customer base?

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JH: Possibly, because I knew a lot of the coaches, and I guess that's one reason. And we had a lot of coaches meetings there and a lot of superintendents and principals' meetings there. And we had a lot of other meetings there: Lions Club and things of that nature.

00:21:06

AE: Well and in 2003 Alabama Public Television did a documentary—

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JH: Nice people.

00:21:13

AE: Yeah, *A Taste of Hog Heaven* they did and they documented you.

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JH: Yeah, right.

00:21:18

AE: Can you talk about that a little bit?

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JH: I believe they came twice, and we did the ribs and we did pork otherwise, too, and they really liked—I gave them all meat—some meat and they were really thankful and they—they liked it. At least they told me they did. I don't know. **[Laughs]**

00:21:44

AE: Did being a part of that documentary affect your business at all? Do you think it brought new people to the Boar's Butt?

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JH: Well probably it helped. Anything like that would—could help bring people in. We had—we had a lot of people come out of Alabama. We had—their cheerleaders was going to Oxford one night and they stopped in and ate—several of the cheerleaders, too. **[Laughs]** And we've had some of the—when they come out of Oxford, they would stop there and eat. And by the way, the cheerleaders from Oxford, when they'd be traveling with the basketball and football teams, the cheerleaders would always come in on Sunday and eat with us. And they'd give us the pictures and there—their guy would send us pictures.

00:22:37

AE: Of the cheerleading squad?

00:22:40

JH: Yes.

00:22:41

AE: And would you decorate with pictures like that?

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JH: Oh, we—we had hundreds and hundreds of pictures. When we get through here, maybe I can show you some of them.

00:22:52

AE: Yeah, I would definitely love to see them.

00:22:53

JH: We can stop in town, and I can show you some more that didn't burn. We had a lot of college coaches that just burned and are gone; we had a big tractor sign there that was 19—about 1946 and it was hung up in the ceiling in the first compartment there, and it was a very neat thing and it burned. Everything like that up front went under, and we had a lot of things I could never gather back.

00:23:33

AE: Now you were telling me earlier that you haven't been back to the Boar's Butt since you left it.

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JH: No, ma'am.

00:23:42

AE: Would you hear or know if things are pretty much the same—if the food is the same or some of the employees are the same?

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JH: I really don't want to talk about that food.

00:23:56

AE: Okay.

00:23:57

JH: I don't have the business anymore.

[Short pause]

00:24:03

AE: **[Laughs]** Thank you.

JH: We had—in Memphis, for example, they had school up there. The people all over the world would come, and they'd do some kind of deal with teaching them how to get cotton—take care of it and all this stuff, and I will never forget that. And sometimes they'd bring two busloads. And we had a cotton mill here at that time. And they would always eat with us. And we'd have traveling people buses that would stop here. And it's good, you know, to have that, too. That really helped.

00:24:49

AE: So what is one of your fondest memories or a couple of them of—of your days in the—the business?

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JH: Well just being around people. I like to be with people [**short pause**] if they're the right kind of people. And it just—. We would take Alabama coaches and stuff, they'd come by and stuff, and Coach Wimp Sanderson would be stopping in and out and it was always fun. Some Auburn coaches would be there recruiting and whatever. And even Mississippi State—we had Bart Hyche that played down at Mississippi State—basketball—very good. And we had a big football player that played down there for Mississippi State and there's just—it's just a going-on thing. And just hold up a minute.

[Short pause]

00:26:10

AE: Okay, so we were talking about some famous football players that came through.

00:26:14

JH: Leroy Jordan, he was All American—great football player for Coach Bryant [at the University of Alabama], and his two sons visited with us and ate with us. And I never will forget what his son—we walked outside and he says, “Coach, that chicken sandwich that y'all prepared for us,” he said, “that's the best thing I've ever seen.” Said, “Out in Texas they don't know how to cook anything.” And said, “Other than burning it up.” And I've always remembered that.

Leroy was a very, very wonderful guy, and he was a businessperson and he still is in business in Texas and in south Alabama, too.

00:27:07

AE: So what would you—how would you describe the connection between barbecue and football, especially being a coach who owns a barbecue restaurant—or did?

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JH: Well you think about a lot of people, when they're going to games, they do a lot of cooking. It may be ribeyes, or it may be pork. And a lot of people do that, and I guess you're aware of that being in Oxford now. And it's wonderful; people love it eating outside like that and, of course, the excitement of the game.

00:27:46

AE: Did you do a lot of catering ever?

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JH: Yes, we did. We traveled. A lot of time—I could tell you one example at Jasper [Alabama]. The railroad people were meeting there and I don't know—probably had 150 people. I started on Monday; I'd carry their breakfast to them and all kinds of soft drinks. I'd get back here and get the lunch and carry it to them, and that went on for five days. And they were always wonderful people; we had a lot of railroad meetings here. And the—we would carry food to a lot of doctors' offices—Jasper. We carried it to a lot of doctors over there in the offices and also in Winfield. And we went—Hackelburg, we went to Hamilton, and all the doctors probably just ordered food.

The doctors wasn't ordering but the salesmen selling medicine, and that's where that was coming from.

00:28:58

AE: Well do you think—well that makes me think, with all this business management that is associated with owning a restaurant, if you would say that your coaching influenced your management style?

00:29:09

JH: I don't know about that. [*Laughs*] I don't know; I don't really know. The big thing is make sure you've got good, clean people in the kitchen and get along with each one and it's—you got to be there every day nearly to keep it rolling. Sometimes I'd leave, and it wasn't good.

00:29:39

AE: When the cat is away, as they say? [*Laughs*] So—

00:29:43

JH: When my daughter came aboard, it really helped and she—it took her some time to learn what to do when she came on. Now she's like this.

00:29:53

AE: And what's your daughter's name that worked with you?

00:29:54

JH: Kim. And see, we have two grandchildren. Cody is a fifth-grader and a good student, and we have a little girl. She's in seventh grade, and she's top of the bunch.

00:30:13

AE: How—

00:30:13

JH: Both of them have been raised real well.

00:30:16

AE: How long did Kim work at the restaurant with you?

00:30:18

JH: Kim, I really—*[looks to his wife]* what, about six, seven years something like that.

00:30:27

AE: Did she like being part of the restaurant?

00:30:30

JH: Yeah. She likes it now. That's what she's doing [working at Aroma's Café in Winfield].

[Laughs] I've tried to get her to—she could go one year of school and—online and she could have a degree in that. And I don't reckon she wants to do it.

00:30:46

AE: But she's at the Aroma Restaurant in town now. And what is her position there; what does she do?

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JH: She's the head monkey, as far as the kitchen. Yeah, that's—she does that, and she likes it.

00:31:00

AE: So did she learn to cook from you?

00:31:02

JH: Yes, she couldn't do nothing much then. [*Laughs*] Until she's got into that—involved—of course, involves a lot of things. We had so many things on the menu, too. And she had to learn how to dish those things out and the proper—.

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AE: That's a big job, for sure.

00:31:27

JH: Yeah, she was a lot of times doing—creating different things for lunch.

00:31:40

AE: With the—when you built your menu at the Boar's Butt and you evolved to steaks and all these different things, were they your recipes? Were you kind of creating those things as you went along?

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JH: We learned things from other people, and we'd have people with companies who would come out and help Kim and show them different things. It was a very nice guy—some of them

were so nice that would come out and you know—the companies. They wanted to sell the food, that's one reason. But they would come out and teach a day, and that was real good.

00:32:20

AE: Did you ever think that there was one thing at the Boar's Butt on the menu that was the most popular?

00:32:26

JH: Like I mentioned earlier, probably the chicken. It's not as expensive as the other meats. Then those days—and we really just used the chickens, like I said before, grilled chicken salads and they liked the chicken on their vegetables, too. Yeah, they ate more of that. And roast beef was real popular at lunch.

00:33:05

AE: So did those things, did they tend to overshadow the barbecue element a little bit?

00:33:11

JH: Well they would—the chicken would overshadow the barbecue.

00:33:20

AE: But now the Alabama Division of Tourism and—and Travel in last year, 2005, they declared it the *Year of Alabama Food*, and they have a list of all these places throughout the State that are must-visits for certain dishes, you know, and the Boar's Butt is on there for barbecued pork. And so I wonder if it's, you know, it's that popular and the state has

incorporated something from your restaurant into a state kind of tourism initiative, what that means to you?

00:33:55

JH: Well what do you mean what it means to me?

00:33:58

AE: It's obviously flattering to your—something from your restaurant singled out but because it's barbecue, and there's so much barbecue in Alabama. Why do you think yours was singled out?

00:34:12

JH: Well I guess people liked it—the taste of it, I guess. We—a lot of times we had to move a lot of pork at one time. You know, traveling and—out to different hometowns. The atmosphere in our place was unbelievable because of all the pictures that we had on the wall and all the different plaques. I had several plaques on the wall of my son, my daughter; they were athletes. And just a lot of people—lot of people like that. And they would look at the walls—on the wall of the pictures and the things I just mentioned.

00:35:05

AE: So you think the environment that people eat in has a lot to do with their enjoyment of the entire experience?

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JH: I've heard people many times say how awesome the pictures—the way it is in here. They like the atmosphere. And we had big screen TVs, and if it was football and basketball, they liked it—especially football. The rest of it much they don't watch it a lot.

00:35:32

AE: Is there other barbecue in the state that you like or seek out?

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JH: Yeah, there's some places. I can't even think of some of the names, but Tuscaloosa has got two or three places that's pretty nice. And up at Huntsville they've got good barbecue. There's several good barbecue places in the state of Alabama; it's unbelievable. If you start riding the highways, you'll find them.

00:36:04

AE: Well and Winfield today has three barbecue restaurants, from what I know. Maybe there are more.

00:36:09

JH: In Winfield?

00:36:12

AE: Yes, sir. There's CarLot Barbecue down here.

00:36:15

JH: Yes, it is.

00:36:16

AE: And then Spare Rib Barbecue that's on the east side of town.

00:36:22

JH: I don't—I reckon I don't recall the east—. Oh yes, they have a little place there. I'm sorry.
Yes.

00:36:32

AE: So how do you think one little town can support three barbecue places? [*Laughs*]

00:36:37

JH: Well CarLot and I, we never had any problems. They—they probably have been in business now about six or seven years. I don't—I really don't remember when they started.

00:36:55

AE: Do y'all—would you say that you do—

00:36:56

JH: Excuse me. [*Clears throat.*] We were the only steak place—barbecue place in Winfield for years. And then we got to getting these other peoples in, you know, these quick foods. And of course, everybody is going to like a little bit of somebody's else.

00:37:23

AE: Was there a barbecue place here in Winfield when you were growing up?

00:37:26

JH: I don't remember. Yes, I do—when I was in high school. That's been years ago, lady.

[Laughs] They had a big pit, and there was a lady that operated—it's Porky's. They had milkshakes and everything and they—they had a pretty good business.

00:37:51

AE: Were they around for a long time, would you say?

00:37:54

JH: I don't really remember. I think it left there while I was off to college. They closed it down; I think they sold the property too. The Alabama Power Company Office is there now.

00:38:11

AE: So how would you say your—your barbecue when you had Boar's Butt was different from other barbecue?

00:38:18

JH: Well I thought it was better. It's good.

00:38:23

AE: You said—you mentioned earlier on that you won second place in—in some competition.

00:38:27

JH: Rib contest. And I mentioned the team that beat us. And really, what happened to that, I think they had a—Coach Bryant all those people, you know, and then people would come in and

was going to call the game—be on TV, they—they would all go out and eat at the place in Tuscaloosa[, Dreamland Bar-B-Que].

00:38:57

AE: Did you enter a lot of contests like that?

00:39:00

JH: That's—that's the only one we entered. It was a—put on by Channel 13 in Birmingham. I think that's correct. They would fly out with a helicopter and set it down at the Wally World [meaning, Wal-Mart].

00:39:17

AE: I don't understand what you mean.

00:39:20

JH: They—they wouldn't travel in vehicles; they'd travel in a helicopter. And they'd fly out here to check our meat; that's how they graded us.

00:39:34

AE: Okay. So you drove the meat out to the Wal-Mart and delivered it to them in the helicopter.

00:39:37

JH: That's where my place was.

00:39:40

AE: Okay.

00:39:41

JH: That's when I had the place on wheels; that's when it happened.

00:39:46

AE: Got it.

00:39:47

JH: Yeah.

00:39:48

AE: So are the—the signs along the highway and now in front of where the Boar's Butt is now, are those original to when you had it?

00:39:54

JH: Yes, it is—both signs—I put them both up.

00:39:59

AE: And that—the saying on the bottom, "Back in the Woods"—what is it?

00:40:03

JH: That's not—that's—the guy misunderstood me; that shouldn't have been on there.

00:40:08

AE: Okay, so that's nothing that you did then?

00:40:11

JH: Oh, the sign was but he added that on: “Back in the pines or woods.” That shouldn’t have been on there, but it didn’t really bother me.

00:40:21

AE: He did that—took artistic license with the sign?

00:40:24

JH: I guess it is. I don’t know what it—but the big sign, see, didn’t have that.

00:40:31

AE: But was it something in Winfield, when people were talking about going to the Boar’s Butt or telling people where it is, would they say, “It’s back in the woods”? Was that something—?

00:40:39

JH: No, no, that was a name of the restaurant that was—started there. See it was already built—the log cabin when we moved in—and it had failed. It went under.

00:40:55

AE: What was the name of it?

00:40:58

JH: Back in the Woods, I think it was.

00:41:00

AE: Well that explains that. Okay, then. [*Laughs*]

00:41:04

JH: Yeah.

00:41:05

AE: So how—what are you doing now that you've retired from the restaurant business?

00:41:08

JH: Whatever my wife tells me to do.

00:41:12

Mrs. Hubbert: He's enjoying the grandchildren and spending time with them.

00:41:17

AE: Grandchildren can take a lot of energy, too.

00:41:20

JH: I love football, basketball, baseball. And we got a grandson, and he's all the time wanting to go with Pop-Pop. And we go to a lot of those. I don't go to college anymore. I haven't been to a college game now since probably in [nineteen]'98 that I remember.

00:41:42

AE: Do you still cook?

00:41:44

JH: Oh yeah, I love it. I like cooking for people. We've—nearly every good football game that Alabama has, we will have this room full of people.

00:42:01

AE: And you have a pit in the back still, I think you mentioned.

00:42:05

JH: Yeah, but I've got a—I forget what it is—not like—. It's an egg. But right now it's torn up. But you've heard about the eggs and things. This is—fair simmers [?] is what they call the egg, and I like to cook on it.

00:42:21

AE: Say that again. Is that a brand name of it?

00:42:24

JH: That is another—this is off of this right here. This—the peoples that used to work for that company that built the egg—they called it an egg. But now I forget the name of this one. Ours is—but it's blew up on me, and they were supposed to send us some parts. This is—this is a nice piece of equipment.

00:42:49

AE: Can we go out and see it later?

00:42:50

JH: Sure.

00:42:50

AE: I've never seen an egg. *[Laughs]* Well is there anything that I haven't asked you about the Boar's Butt and your time in the business that you'd like to add or talk about?

00:43:02

JH: Hmm, I really don't—I really enjoyed it. It keeps you busy and we—we had some good people, and I thanked them for working for us. And sometimes it's tough. It's—sometimes it gets busy, busy, busy working and getting the food out at the right time, the right kind of food. And I don't know how it's going over there now. I have no idea. They have a lot of cars at times—a lot of cars. But we're not involved in that anymore, and I couldn't speak for anything.

00:43:55

AE: When you were in the business did you have a special sauce that you made for your barbecue or something—an opinion about that?

00:44:03

JH: Well at one time we did and then we finally—we started using Cattleman's [brand]—several different kinds of Cattleman's.

00:44:14

AE: And when you say different kinds, are there different spices, different—?

00:44:17

JH: Yes, they have different—several different kinds—Cattleman's.

00:44:19

AE: Well then when you—but when you first started doing the barbecue place were you making the sauce yourself?

00:44:26

JH: Yes, we were making it.

00:44:27

AE: Can you talk about how you made the sauce a little bit?

00:44:31

JH: I don't think—I don't think I could even remember what—we cooked it. I remember we cooked it, and I went to Missouri and bought some sauce, and I don't even remember—I could get back up there, but I don't remember the name of it. And we used—sometimes we used what they called Wickers, I believe it—the name of it, wasn't it?

Mrs. Hubbert: Yeah.

00:45:05

JH: Wickers—it's a real vinegar mix and it was—it was pretty good. I liked it.

00:45:14

AE: Now if, if memory serves, I could be wrong, but the Cattleman sauce is pretty thick—tomatoey, is that right?

00:45:19

JH: Yeah.

00:45:21

AE: So is—is that an issue to you to kind of maintain a sauce that's more vinegary or more tomatoey—is sauce special to people here who eat your barbecue?

00:45:33

JH: A lot of people would not probably like Wickers, but people that like the vinegar thing would but it—you could go probably—North Carolina, they would probably eat the Wickers—use it.

00:45:50

AE: And do y'all have the white sauce down here?

00:45:54

JH: Yes, but personally, I do not like the white sauce, period. I just don't like the taste of it. And we used to get calls for it, you know, and then we got to making it. And we didn't sell a lot of it. Some of them—some—some would like it but why I just—I just didn't like it.

00:46:20

AE: Were you bottling it, or you just wouldn't sell it with the meals?

00:46:24

JH: We just—we made it; we made—we had to—we made it ourselves, just like they do up at Huntsville and whatever. See, they sell theirs in bottles right now.

00:46:42

AE: Are you talking about Big Bob Gibson's in Decatur?

00:46:45

JH: Right, they sell a lot of meat—a lot of meat. They got it really rolling. And they use a lot of white meat, I guess, but I don't like his white meat either.

00:47:02

AE: Why not?

00:47:03

JH: I'd rather have the red. [*Laughs*]

00:47:04

AE: The red sauce?

00:47:07

JH: Yes.

00:47:09

AE: Well is there anything that I haven't asked that you'd like to talk about?

00:47:14

JH: [*To his wife*] Can you think of anything?

00:47:22

Mrs. Hubbert: There are a couple of things that I'd like to add, and that's how he and I were high school sweethearts. And we kept a scrapbook because he was a high school football player and then a college football player. And then when he started coaching, we would—the reporters knew I liked—we liked pictures, so they would send us all of the negatives of the publications that they had in the local newspaper. So I would make prints of the negatives, and I had a lot of them and kept them at home, and then we had some of them on the wall when the children were teenagers because they liked to have their friends over. And, of course, he coached ours on, and a lot of the players would spend a lot of time at our house, so we decorated the walls with football pictures. And then when anything would come out in the paper regarding them, we would make a picture of it and put it on the wall, and this was kind of an incentive to enjoy the game and the sport. So we had a lot of pictures. And then when he decided to get the restaurant, I said, "Would that not be a good place to have all of these pictures?" Because they were kind of getting—taking control of the house? And he said, "Okay." So our daughter went over and started the picture collection. Well the reporters from all of the papers kept sending the negatives, and we kept developing them and framing them and putting them up in the restaurant. And then eventually people would come by and say, "Well Coach [Hubbert], I remember I have a picture of so and so. Can I bring it, and would you put it in the restaurant?" And he would say, "Of course." So a lot of people brought a lot of pictures in addition to the ones we had collected over the years. And one thing I thought was real unusual, when he added on the back room, which they called the lodge, there was a back entrance to it, and a lot of times some famous bands would call. They had heard of the restaurant and say, "We understand that there is a back room where we could

come and eat and enjoy the food and have some privacy.” And the first one that I can think of was REO Speedwagon, and they came. And when they got through eating, they would get a—a picture of the band, and they would all sign it and then give it to him. And, of course, we would have it framed and put in the restaurant. So he had a lot of famous bands that would come through that people never saw and didn’t know about. Their touring bus would come around to the back, and they would be thankful for a meal in privacy and then get to go onto their next destination. So that used to thrill my daughter when she would find out about that because she would get to see a lot of members of the band.

00:49:56

AE: [*To Mr. Hubbert*] Do you remember some of those famous folks that would stop by?

00:50:00

JH: Oh yeah, a lot of folks.

00:50:04

AE: Anyone stand out?

00:50:05

JH: Well politics—we’d get nearly all of the people—governors, just all those people that like. I was talking about Senator Gordon over to your place [in Mississippi]. What’s the name of the town they live in, Senator Gordon? Oh, it’s—I’m going—going to go upstairs in a minute and get that—. I’m going to show you what—.

00:50:42

AE: Okay.

00:50:43

Mrs. Hubbert: I think one reason the people liked the grilled chicken breast because they would marinate them in a special sauce that they made at the restaurant, and it was a timeframe that it had to stay and there was a particular moist sweetness to it.

00:51:03

AE: All right. We've spent a good hour talking about barbecue and Boar's Butt and your history here. Is there anything else that you'd like to add?

00:51:12

JH: Well one thing I will mention to—I've had the football team, pre-game—before always at the Boar's Butt and those kids liked that, and I thought that probably helped because of the atmosphere. And we had good kids here, and Winfield is a wonderful school, and we're usually ranked in the top five in academics in the state of Alabama and we have good facilities. I will add that in and we have three schools. You've got your K[indergarten] up 'til—through four and then you've got from five through—through eight and then go to the high school. We've got a new high school, I might say; it's been there about three years. And we've got a very nice elementary school, and then we've got the middle school. And then we—we kind of bond one another here in this community, I think. And we had a lot of times teachers that have—like me, they don't—not teaching anymore but they would have their meetings over there and that pleased me. And a lot of—lot of coaches and that was a good—when we had coaches meetings, I enjoyed those. And also the principals. And you'd talk with a lot of the principals and

superintendents when they were there. And it just—it's just—if you've never worked in a place like that it's—it's wonderful to meet people. And I think a lot of—I can think of all the names right now—. The colored man, he sells—I'll think of it in a minute—but—insurance, anyway, in Birmingham. He played quarterback, and he went pro quarterback; he'd come out quite often—very nice guy and he does the color [commentary] for Auburn [football games] today. And just a lot of different things like that—that happened and people just drop in and just want to talk or say hello.

00:53:59

AE: In all your years of coaching and then all your years of owning a restaurant, is there one that's more satisfying or was—has been more satisfying to you or would you rank them the same?

00:54:10

JH: Talk about comparing athletics? I would say the athletic program, really. I miss the kids. But I don't miss the rest of it, but the kids, you know, you're there to help them. I used to tell them, I'd say, "I'll tell you what fellows," I said, "I'm here to help you." I said, "You might not like my ways or I'm too tough or whatever, but I'm trying to train you to go up and be a man." I've got doctors—excuse me—I've got several doctors, I've got preachers, I've got people in politics—just all phases of life over the years. It's unbelievable—unbelievable.

00:55:07

AE: That's a wonderful legacy, to have had an impact on—on a kid.

00:55:11

JH: Yes, it's—I don't know how many really listened, but we were going over to Georgia where I coached over there at Cochran—I mentioned before—and I had a lot of—I had two tackles assigned to South Carolina; I had Bob Harris, a running back, to go to Albany; I had another running back to go to Kansas. Oh, it seemed like there was another kid—oh, Dennis Roland. Right now I'm worried about him. He's got cancer. He—I had a Coach and AD down in southeastern Louisiana where I sent two boys from Winfield down there, and they got them full scholarships, but he's in the hospital now. He's got cancer. But I hope he overcomes it. **[Sighs]** Let's see. And I enjoyed my stay down at Mississippi State. We beat Ole Miss; I never will forget it. **[Laughs]** We beat them 58 to 6, and that was when you could play a freshman. See, the freshman couldn't play when I was down at Mississippi State. And I—I got a lot of friends down there. But Lou Holtz, I mentioned him; he—he came and spoke to one of our banquets. I asked him to, and he is a wonderful guy. He's a fun guy too. And me and my wife went to Florence here at this college up there—they had him up there last year and he spoke, and I never will forget it. It was very interesting and when he finished and the President stood up to talk a while, and he says, 'Mr. President, could I have the floor again just a moment?' He said, 'After I've seen everything here'—oh, it was packed where it was—and he says, 'What I want to do—I'm going to give you a check of \$5,000 for the college.' He's Catholic; this is Church of Christ people. And he said, 'I'm inspired by it.' And he said, 'I want to leave this for you.' And we usually—at our banquets at school we usually had college coaches and people [speak], when I was doing it. Now they don't have them anymore—the school. I guess the old coach don't like them, I don't know. **[Laughs]**

00:58:19

AE: Well I—

00:58:22

JH: I never will forget Lou Holtz. He says, “Joe, why don’t you—you get Coach Bryant or Coach Jarret.” And I said, “I don’t want them; I want you.” **[Laughs]** So he said, “Just send me a ticket.” And he jumped on a plane and here he came.

00:58:41

AE: Well I appreciate you sitting with me and visiting and telling me all this history.

00:58:53

JH: I’ll show you some of these pictures, if you want to see them.

00:58:56

AE: Okay.

[End Joe Hubbert]