

JOHN SAUCIER
Saucier's Sausage Kitchen – Mamou, LA

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Date: October 10, 2006
Location: Saucier's Sausage Kitchen – Mamou, LA
Interviewer: Amy Evans
Length: 54 minutes
Project: Southern Boudin Trail - Louisiana

[Begin John Saucier]

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Amy Evans: This is Amy Evans for the Southern Foodways Alliance on Tuesday, October 10th 2006, and I'm at Saucier's Sausage Kitchen and Grocery, which is in a little community between Eunice and Mamou Louisiana—.

John Saucier: Called Lesmeg.

AE: Lesmeg. And Mr. Saucier could you say your name and your birth date if you don't mind for the record, please?

00:00:25

JS: Okay, my name is John Saucier—my birthday?

00:00:29

AE: Yes, sir.

00:00:29

JS: My birthday is June 26th; I'm 65 years old. I've been in the community of Lesmeg for the last twenty years, and so I decided to open a little store down here. I serve sausage and tasso and boudin, crackers, and all that good stuff, and I sell for people all over. And then I got signs—just follow the signs and come down here. And I'm open seven days a week. I go to church Sunday morning a while, an hour in the morning to church, and then we come back and open again, and we're doing really good back here. And me and my wife [Betty Saucier] and my boy [Nick

Saucier]—we all work together, a little co—family thing. And we do a lot of sausage in the winter for the—people from all over Texas and Beaumont [Texas] and their children all over, they come here and they bring a bunch of deer. And like I got one yesterday from—from Port Barre [Louisiana], they brought me a deer. I cut it, and he come pick it up last night about six o'clock. And so I'm waiting for a bunch of other people that are supposed to come in the end of the week, and next week, I believe, she's going to start not this Saturday, next, I believe, with the rifles, I believe. So they going to start coming in here the end of this month kill the deer—kill the deer. And we smoke most every day, like next—tomorrow we'll smoke pork and tasso [*smoked pork*] and pounce [*stuffed pork stomach*] and the deer—the deer for people—the customers. And it's going really good, and we'll—we'll come back—we won't become rich in the country here but we pay our bills and it's really—really—we have a really good time with that.

00:02:06

AE: So where were you and what were you doing before you—you came here?

00:02:09

JS: I was working for the Sheriff's Department—Evangeline Parish Sheriff's Department. I retired there and then I went to school—Mamou high school. I worked there for 18 years; I retired that six months ago. And then I'm here with my wife regularly. Before that I would just help her part-time, you know, before I'd go to school and early in the morning and at night and the weekend. And now I'm here—we're here regularly with her and it's going a lot better you know.

00:02:34

AE: What's your wife's name and your son's name also?

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JS: My wife's name is Betty—Betty Saucier and my name—my son's name is Nick. I got four—four kids but I got the ones that stay with me here. Somebody's here.

00:02:47

AE: A customer, all right. Well we'll pause this so you can tend to them. *[Short pause]* Okay, so you just had a customer. Was she—is she a regular customer?

00:02:58

JS: No, ma'am—the first time she come here. She's from Eunice. She ate some sausage at one of her friend's last week and really liked them so she—she come find the place and she's going to get a box of sausage.

00:03:12

AE: And you all were speaking that Cajun French to each other.

00:03:14

JS: Yes, ma'am. We—she—she talk French and I talk French. Yeah, we was talking French, me and her. And she—she said, “I can't eat too much of smoked but,” she said, “I really like it.” But she said, “I come by to get me a box, and I'm going to eat a bit at a time—and give a little bit to my kids and we'll come—start buying with you because I heard that you're really good.” I said, “Yes, ma'am.” And she's a really nice lady. The first time I see her. But she said she will be back. *[Laughs]*

00:03:42

AE: Well good; I enjoyed listening to y'all talk. It's beautiful.

00:03:47

JS: Yeah, yeah. You want me to talk a little bit of French on there?

00:03:49

AE: Yeah.

00:03:50

JS: Okay. [*Speaks in French for thirty seconds*]

00:04:22

AE: That was more than a little bit. [*Laughs*] Can you paraphrase what you just said?

00:04:27

JS: [*Laughs*] Yeah, yeah. That—that old lady that just left there she—she said she will be back because it's supposed to turn very cold at the end of the week, so she will be back to get some more stuff—sausage and stuff and her and her kids—so she said that I'm sure they going to like it. I said, "Yeah, everybody likes it—says how they like it." And it's good. It's smoked like the old the time with pecan and red oak and—and smoke—there's not nothing else except salt and pepper in my meat and it's all fresh meat, so it got to be good.

00:04:55

AE: Did you say you smoke it with red oak?

00:04:58

JS: Yes, ma'am. I smoke it with red oak and pecan, yeah.

00:05:02

AE: Where do you get the wood?

00:05:03

JS: Well a few—a few—about a month ago, [*inaudible*] company passed here, and he was riding along and somebody tell him and he come back to the store. And he said, “Mr. Saucier,” he said, “I see you ain’t got much wood left.” I said, “No, sir.” I said, “I ain’t got too much left.” He said, “Man,” he said, “I can bring all the wood you—you need.” I said, “Well, sir,” I said, “I just got this thing here. I can’t buy wood the way they sell it—they sell it eighty dollars a cord.” He said, “We don’t—we don’t sell to nobody; we cut it and we throw it in the BFI dumpster.” He said, “If you want some, I’ll just bring it and dump it—dump it in front of your smokehouse for nothing.” I said, “Well, yeah,” I said, “that’s very nice.” I said—then I said, “It’s hard to believe.” [*Laughs*] He said, “I ain’t lying.” He said, “I will bring you some.” I said, “Well if you bring me some,” I said, “I’ll bring—I’m going to give you some sausage for your—your trouble to bring it.” “Well,” he said, “I’m going to bring you two loads.” It was on a Wednesday—when he said that. “I’m going to bring you a load on Thursday and one Friday.” I said, “Okay, sir. I’ll be waiting.” So he brought me one load of pecan Thursday and one load of red oak Friday, so that fixed me up big time. So I said, “Well I’ve got enough for a while.” He said, “Well,” he said, “you better take all I can bring you now because it’s going to start being cold again right after a while.” He said, “I can bring you some more next week.” I said, “Okay.” So he come bring me

another two loads last week—another two loads again. So I'm ready. I got a bunch of wood to smoke all my stuff for—for a good while.

00:06:30

AE: So I—I've heard of people using pecan before and it gives it a good flavor, but what is it about the red oak that you use that?

00:06:36

JS: Well the red oak just makes a pretty sausage; it gets more red. It gets a reddish color. And the pecan gets like a little—little sweeter taste in it. It's—that's something that it will just come from the trees and the smell I guess. And I know because when I'm smoking, when I got that pecan in there and when I open the smokehouse I can smell it. It's got like a little sweet taste coming, you know, in your mouth. If—and actually, I play all day with it, I smoke so I can—feel it in my mouth, you know—the smoke, that pecan is really good.

00:07:11

AE: And where do you get your pork from?

00:07:13

JS: My what?

00:07:14

AE: Your—your meat?

00:07:16

JS: Oh my meat, okay; I get it through a meat company from Opelousas [Louisiana], and I get all my meat from there and my pork bellies and my pigs and the—the Boston butt and every—everything else—pork skins. I get a lot of meat through Eunice Superette, too. I go up there to the store.

00:07:37

AE: And so we were talking before about you worked for the Sheriff's Department and then the High School in Mamou. What did you do at the high school there, did you teach?

00:07:47

JS: No, ma'am; I was the head custodian there. Take care of the school—the school and all, cut the grass and the take care inside the school and clean-up and dust and just making it—maintenance the school you know—me and three other guys, yeah.

00:08:03

AE: Were you born in this area?

00:08:04

JS: No, ma'am; I was born in Plaisance—St. Landry Parish. I'm—I'm—I've been in Mamou area about 40 years now and I really—I like it down here—very nice people and very—and in Evangeline Parish. I was raised in St. Landry Parish. But I'm down here; it's 40 years now. And it's going good; I've got four kids. And the—all my kids are—all the rest of my kids are married except my last one. He's going to school to be a—a nurse at Alexandria—LSUA at Alexandria. And the three others. I've got one that's a schoolteacher in Basile High School. And I got another daughter; she's still in Mamou. She—she's crippled; she can't—she can't work. I've got

another daughter; she works in the hospital at Mamou here. And the youngest, he's going to college.

00:08:57

AE: May I ask what your parents did?

00:09:00

JS: My parents—my parents, he farmed all his life. I was with him 'til I got married. We [were] still in Plaisance. We plant cotton and potato and corn and plant peanuts and plant some—about an acre of field some beans just to eat and okra and watermelon and tomatoes and all that good stuff. We make all our own—grow all our own stuff. And one of us, when it's time to pick-up, we just pick it up, and we clean it up and put it in the deep freeze and we scald it and clean it and put it in the deep freeze like the—the tomatoes and then we pick it up. And my mama has like a little canning. She put it on the stove and she put in some jars and she cans that and put it in the—our extra bedroom for us to eat in the winter. And we raise all our hogs. We had a cow; we had a—we milk the cow twice a day. I helped my daddy. And we had a bunch of hogs; when we need some meat we just grab a big—a fat one, there, shoot the one we want, and we clean it ourselves and make our meats, our own grease and everything. And we had our own cows and we butchered a calf like every six months because it was like five or six kids all in the family together. So we did all our—our own stuff ourselves; we hardly didn't buy nothing; we raised all of our stuff. That's years ago.

00:10:27

AE: What were your parents' names?

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JS: My daddy's name was Johnny Saucier and my mama's name is Lomie. Lomie Saucier, yeah.

00:10:36

AE: Okay. So I'm going to readjust my chair a little bit here one moment and turn towards you a little bit more. So you've done this sort of thing all your life, more or less?

00:10:53

JS: That's it. I work all my life since I was young. My daddy, when he was 39 years old, he had a heart attack and I didn't go back to school. I didn't finish my school; I just went to the fourth grade, so I had to take over. I had four sisters, so I had to take over, and I was the only boy. I had to—a lot of time we were plowing mules and horses in the field, so—and all by hand. We didn't have no tractor or nothing and so I couldn't go to school too much. And my daddy, he had got that heart attack, so he couldn't work hard—hard at all, just a little bit and he started to get worse and worse and he died—he was 56 years old when he had the other heart attack—passed away. So I was the man of the house since I was about twelve, thirteen years old, working real hard in the fields and everything else—milk cows and feed animals and all—all that stuff. But the kids now—if I tell them that they think I'm—I'm lying to them, I guess, because they got it made now. They've got computers and everything else; I didn't have none of that. I had nothing. I had—didn't have no car, didn't have even a bicycle. I had friends—we were out there riding horseback—not even a saddle even. Ride horseback and we invited friends and we'd play games

and marbles and top in front of the house and that's—that's the way it was back in our time. Yes, ma'am; that's it.

00:12:21

AE: So was there anyone when you were growing up, you know families fended for themselves and had gardens and raised their own livestock. Was anyone selling sausage or boudin or anything when you were growing up?

00:12:33

JS: No, ma'am. Well nobody would sell that because we do all—our own stuff. We had our own smokehouse at the house. We'd kill our hogs, and we'd kill like eight or ten hogs every-- just day b—just before Christmas—killed a bunch of hogs, a big hog. We'd butcher eight or ten of them. We'd make all our meat, we make our hog—the hog—them hogs and we would make our boudin and make our cracklin's and make our sausage and make tasso; we would make our chevaliers [*omelets*] and we would make grillades [*pan-fried round steaks*] **[Laughs]** We'd make all kind of stuff and pounce [*stuffed pig stomach*] and smoke all that and we had to smoke to them 'til they were just about cooked because we didn't have no icebox, so we had to smoke that to almost cooked. And there's big old clay jars. I had one for the grease and one for the sausage and one for the—all the rest of the stuff, tasso, bacon—all that. We had eight or ten jars—big old clay jars—big jars; each had the stuff in them. My mom would put some white rag on there and she tied that and when she wanted to cook she'd just go down with her fork and the spoon and get a little bit of grease and get—what you wanted—bacon, sausage, tasso, as well as—it was all just about cooked; we smoked it to about cooked because just keeping that grease in the—the cool room. Because in that time it was really cold and not like it is now. In the winter-time man

we had icicles around the house just for months and we had an inch—inch or two of—sometimes a foot of snow around the house, so it was really cold, so that’s when we do our stuff, and we didn’t have icebox.

00:14:14

AE: Do you remember the first time you butchered a hog yourself?

00:14:17

JS: [*Sighs*] Well it was a while back now. I was about thirteen, fourteen years old. My daddy shot—made me shoot at the first hog and I bled it myself. He showed me how to bleed it and how to really [got] a kick out of that and I had to clean it and we scalded the water—we scalded the water outside and boiled the water outside and we scalded the hog in the—in the pot—tub and we—we put it on the table and we scratched, we cut it and cut it up by pieces and ready—ready to eat. And that’s—that’s the way we do it. Didn’t have no icebox.

00:14:55

AE: Did you have a—a favorite part of that process that you looked forward to, like were cracklin’s your favorite or anything like that?

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JS: Well the cracklin’s was number one, but backbone—that was the best of all the rest and the ribs—cooked the ribs and—and had an old woodstove. My mama would cook the ribs in there with the skin so it would crack and it was really good. And she cooked the backbone on the stove—the woodstove and that—that was really delicious. That was—that was our best food to eat after we butchered that hog. Yeah. [*Laughs*]

00:15:30

AE: Were there every community hog killings or things when people in the area would get together like before Mardis Gras or anything like that?

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JS: No, not in my territory. Everybody had their little thing we'd do—and the kids and the family. My old grandpa—I lost my grandma; she was young and my grandpa showed us and so we all do all the things ourselves. My daddy worked—did ours—some neighbor or somebody would just come and give us some meat that would help. But we didn't have much people coming; each—each would do their thing because in that time they had no—no—no fence; everything was loose and the winter time the hogs was everywhere, the cows in the road and everything is loose. So when it comes to—so farming and planting potatoes and all that, everybody had to go and get all the hogs—the different hogs or the cows and everybody had to stop planting their stuff. Had to pin them up because we was going to plant the potatoes and make the potatoes—to plant and plant our potatoes and all that good stuff; you still plant the corn and all that so everybody had to pin up their hogs and the cows and get them out of the road and scattered everywhere. Sometimes the hogs, they—they were—we would ride on our wagons to try to find them, and sometimes it was four or five miles way down the other neighborhood—way over there where we'd have to go in the wagon and pick up a bunch of hogs that were—they were small and at that time when they started the pin to build—the hogs were 200 or 300-pound hogs because they go to—why they eat that corn or potato—all they want. So there was—we had a lot of meat just raised wild—it wasn't wild hog but we didn't have to feed him because he was just loose, you know. They go everywhere and eat good stuff and when it was ready to pin it up

we'd go pick up a bunch of hogs and make a bunch of meat for us to eat. That was our living at that time.

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AE: Do you think that hogs taste—taste different now? Can you taste a difference like in—in meats that you process. The—the hogs—?

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JS: Well yes, ma'am. The—the stuff is not like it used to be because in my—in my time it was, like I said, they had straight corn and like I said—it was raised loose and they would just pick it up and bring him back and we would butcher him, you know, and the meat was—the meat was a lot better than it is now. That's all I can tell you. It's—I guess all that good stuff they eat—corn, potatoes in the field and everything else, you know. When it comes to butcher it was like—plus it was fresh; that's the number one thing. Now you go buy some stuff to the store—that meat has been frozen [*coughs*] been frozen and I don't know how many times. Anyway, and it's still good, but it's not like my time. My time was the real thing. It was fresh. Yeah.

[*Short pause*]

00:18:22

AE: I thought maybe you had another customer. So here today we're sitting on your porch here and there's chickens in the yard and a beautiful garden back there and a smokehouse in front of me here. Have you always done these things even when you were working in town?

00:18:42

JS: Well yes, ma'am. All the time I raise my own stuff. All the time a bunch of chicken and ducks and pigeons. And I used to raise my own hogs, too, here but I started working for the Sheriff and the—the school I didn't have much time to fool with all that and the fee was so high, so I stopped raising my own hogs. When I want some meat now I go to the stockyard and buy me some hogs and bring it to the—the storehouse in Mamou or Eunice. It's better for me, unless I want a little hog, first—butcher with my wife and my kids here, like we do once a year. Once a year we've got a big boucherie here. My son-in-law him, he did once a year—he go to the stockyard, and we buy two or three good hogs about 300 or 400 pounds a piece and bring them here and butcher them and make a big boucherie every year for the kids, you know—for the grandkids and the kids, and we have a ball. And we cook the cracklin's outside on the wood outside in the pots. And cook the backbone outside and—and they good crackin's and the backbone outside—and we'll clean the—the guts and we make some—some—a [*French phrase*]*]*—I don't know how you call that in English. I can't say it. It's the inside of the hog. We take the big guts, we clean out the—the big and the small and we'll put the little—the little guts and the big guts and we—we smoke that and it's—it's really good in the gumbo; you put it in the gumbo, and it's really good. I don't know if you ever ate that, but it's really good. And we'll do all our own stuff like that, you know, and bring the hog on the table and cut it all by hand with a saw. And we make all our own meat and the roasts and all that, and we separate it between us and that—that's the way we operate.

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AE: So the smoked intestines, were you saying that you put the smaller intestine inside the larger one and then smoke just that?

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JS: Yeah. You—you clean the big one and the small one, and you put the small in the big one and then you—you put about five or six small ones in the big one and you tie it with a little string—nylon string and you have like—depends—ten or fifteen of them and you hang it in the smokehouse and you smoke them like a half a day and come out really good—and it makes a good gumbo.

00:20:59

AE: How would you use them in a gumbo?

00:21:01

JS: Well you just—what my mama—what my wife do, she boil them in the water before because—because she's going to have to tell you about that. And just it's all clean still but she boils them before and she drains the water out and then she—then she takes like one or two— [*French phrase*] and she puts—she puts it in a gumbo with the sausage and the chicken and what else, you know. And after it cooks, she gets them and cuts them about two-inch, you know, and everybody can have each a piece. It's really good.

00:21:33

AE: Did your—did your mother make a gumbo when you were growing up?

00:21:37

JS: Oh, yeah. My mama really liked to make a gumbo. She make a gumbo like once a week, and in the wintertime sometimes two or three times a week. She really liked to make gumbo and

cook some sweet potatoes. Oh, it was—she had like sweet potatoes, the gumbo and the backbones stew. That was—that was number one and everybody loved that. Yeah.

00:21:56

AE: Do you remember or know what all goes in a backbone stew?

00:22:00

JS: Well backbone stew, you can put some Irish potatoes or you could put some—some turnips in there too and carrots, and you can put different things and cook all the—I can't name it—some different stuff you can put in there—carrots and turnips and potatoes and you can put it in the stew if you want. But my mama, she liked to put most of the time just some little round potatoes—Irish potatoes in the stew and cook some—another sweet potatoes on the side to eat with that. And that's—that was her favorite and it come out really good.

00:22:36

AE: What would the liquid be? Would it be like a stock of some sort?

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JS: The what?

00:22:41

AE: The—the stock for the stew, the base—liquid base for it?

00:22:44

JS: Oh, she'd—she'd take some flour—white flour and she—she would make her own roux in a black pot and then when it was pretty dark—not too—she'd stir it a half an hour anyway and she—when it was made and she put the water boiling and she'd put that—that roux she made in there, and she'd stir it 'til it started boiling good, and then she'd put her meat in and then it goes. Yeah. We make—we make all our own stuff.

00:23:09

AE: So the gumbo here in this region, would you say that there is a particular style of gumbo that is of this area?

00:23:18

JS: Well the—the gumbo around here is mostly chicken or guinea that I really like a lot—gumbo with guineas and chicken and sausage and tasso and that's—that's number one around here, yeah.

00:23:36

AE: And you won't really find any filé or okra gumbo up here, will you?

00:23:41

JS: Well the filé what they do, my wife buys some and she puts it on the snack bar and not everyone likes filé in our family but some of them like it so I just—they—so I said they put some filé if they want some on their plates, you know. And they—to cook the filé in the gumbo, no she never done that—my wife—neither my mama. She just—she just a little bottle in the side—not everybody like it in there. So it's—the ones that like it well they just put it on their plate.

00:24:09

AE: Would your mother also keep filé around?

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JS: Yeah—oh, yeah. My mama and daddy been gone but in that time, yes, they had a little bottle of filé in the buffet, yeah. Anybody wanted some, well she had it.

00:24:21

AE: Do you know if she got the filé from someone local, or did she dry the sassafras leaves herself?

00:24:28

JS: No, at that time you had to buy it in the store, you know. It's coming in a little jar like red pepper, you know. And especially just you can—you can make that of—not us, we did not make that. You would have to buy it or—in a container.

00:24:44

AE: So your—your business here today, you said you've had this about twenty years?

00:24:48

JS: Well it's—it's twenty years I stay here; but my store it's only ten years we're open. Yeah it's about ten years—we—we're here.

00:24:57

AE: And what made you want to open a store?

00:24:59

JS: Well because all my life, as I told you while ago, [*Laughs*] I played with animals and I really did like to do that, you know. Ad my daddy too, when I was younger we would make our own stuff, you know. So when I retired I said well I'm going buy me a little building, and I'm going to make me this store and sell to the public—to the people a little bit of everything so that was the start.

00:25:24

AE: And have you enjoyed having a store?

00:25:27

JS: Oh, yes, ma'am; I really do enjoy it. We—we—it's not all that busy now days but it's going to get there like next month and on, it will be really busy. We'll be hot—when it's hot, the summer is not—the sausages don't move to fast because it's so hot, you know. People don't eat it. But from now on we're going to be busy, oh, yeah.

00:25:44

AE: And so you make a lot of stuff. You have tasso, bacon, sausages, beef jerky, cracklings, boudin. Are those all things that are easy to do because you have it all here, or are those things that your customers really want?

00:26:04

JS: Well most of it is the customer that wants that—they really like the beef jerky and the crackling and everything else I have. It's all meat I've got to buy and make it. All of what is in my store is all me and my wife and my boy that will make that—it's all homemade, like the old-

time stuff, you know. It's nothing that we buy and come sell it here. I go out and get the meat and I make it fresh and our self, yeah. All homemade.

00:26:28

AE: And do you make it in the same way that your father made things growing up?

00:26:34

JS: Yes, ma'am. There's probably I'm doing the same thing because he showed me since I was about twelve or thirteen years old. I started messing with all and everything else, so I kept almost the same recipe you know. Like some guy came a while back and he begged me to buy my recipe. I said, "Not for sale." I said, "My daddy give me that forty years ago." I said, "I won't sell it." He said, "I'll give you a lot of money." I said, "Well I'm sorry. I'm a poor man." I said, "My daddy give it to me, and the only one that is going to have it is one of my boys—my kids. Nobody else—not for sale." He said, "Man, just let me have the recipe for the beef jerky, man. I love the beef jerky." I said, "Yeah, I said, "well," I said, "you can buy some, if you want some. I ain't selling you no recipe." *[Laughs]* So he left. Yeah.

00:27:24

AE: Okay, will you tell me about your boudin?

00:27:27

JS: Oh, the boudin—okay, the boudin well, we make that like once a week—just made a bunch last week, last Friday. Today's Tuesday, yeah. Okay; well the boudin we've got to use the hog jaw—of the hog, the belly, the meat and the liver and the heart, the kidney—we put all that in there, all the good stuff and you grind all that and you get—put the rice with that and the green

parsley, green onions, and the head of onions, and we put all that in that boudin and we stir all that. That's the only way we make our boudin. Yeah.

00:28:10

AE: Could you describe your boudin like the—the consistency of it and the spice in it?

00:28:16

JS: Well we—some people don't like it too hot. They like some people's older here, they just want some salt—no pepper—nothing, because they—I guess they're sick and they can't have nothing else. So we make some order specials that way—some without no pepper at all, just salt you know. It's just kind of like sausage; the sausage, the tasso—some people just want it with salt—no pepper, no nothing. And we mostly do it—we specialize with that but some people want it you know more hot and some want as much. We do it—orders as they ask, you know. But most of the time it's salt and pepper and some people and then sometimes they want black pepper in it. Some people say will you put—what you want, you know. We've got a stove, you know we got—.

00:29:04

AE: So if—if someone wanted some extra spicy boudin they could call ahead and ask for that?

00:29:09

JS: Yes, ma'am. If they want it real hot I can make it hot. I got—that cayenne pepper, I guarantee you it's going to be hot if they want it hot, oh yeah. *[Laughs]*

00:29:18

AE: Is the spice in things like boudin is something that has kind of changed over the years, do you think?

00:29:26

JS: Well it got more popular last few years, yeah, than it was, you know. It was a time—all the time kind of popular but it's more than ever now. Especially the wintertime, you know from this—this point on, start moving it a lot more; yeah because it's going to be cold and they want that hot boudin, you know. And yeah, it's going to move a lot more.

00:29:49

AE: Now are your customers, are they of all ages?

00:29:54

JS: Oh yeah, they're all ages. They've got some young people come here, old people and mostly the young they want pepper—most of them, not all—all of them, but mostly they want it hot. But the old people a lot of them don't want it—don't want it too hot because it hurt them, you know, to get old and they sick and they want different stuff in it and we've got to fix it like—like they want. That's our job.

00:30:16

AE: Well I wonder like the woman who came by earlier to get the sausage, she seemed of your generation. I wonder if there's some—some folks of your generation in the area that like your product because you do it the old way.

00:30:28

JS: Oh yes, ma'am. They got some people in there that don't like it that—that way because they like it like the—the other way of years ago and they don't like it that—the old way, some young generational people you know they—the real young ones, some don't like it the way we do it because they don't like all that smoke and all that and they said—they just don't like that when it's cooking. Well me, I smoke it but I don't smoke it all that much, but I smoke it like the old-time stuff. And we got some people that—that don't care too much about that—that old-time way that we do it now. They like it like the—the new kind of way that people do it in Lafayette and other places. It's not smoked liked my stuff. It's all made like a—they put the smoke some way and they got some kind of blower and they blow it, and it's very light smoke in there. Sausage don't taste right because it's not like I do it. I do like the—the old-time and smoke like the old time. It make a big difference.

00:31:35

AE: So can you describe how you smoke and—and what your scenario is there in your smokehouse right there?

00:31:41

JS: Well I smoke it like the old-time. I got a barrel, and I make my smoke in it, and I hang my stuff in the smokehouse way up there—some pipes and got my smoke outside when it's ready. I hang all my stuff and I dry—I got a little wagon and I drive my wagon right there, and I got to put the heat to it. I got to let the heat get like 150—160-degrees 'til they dry up whatever and I got pounce and I got sausage—and what else is in there? I got to dry them first and then when they dry I just close my—my—my—container—my container there and I got some cracks in it and just let the smoke—let the smoke—smoke it; there's no heat. And—excuse me—it all

depends about the weather. If the weather is kind of moist and wet it takes longer to smoke—it takes longer; it takes five—four-and-a-half—five hours. If the weather is real dry and a lot of wind and dry and said—and you know not moisture, three-and-a-half—four hours to smoke. But if it's wet and it's kind of a messy and that then, you know, hot and stuff it's going to take the time four-and-a-half—five hours and sometimes six hours. It all depends about the weather. That's—that's the way it goes.

00:33:00

AE: Do you smoke your boudin sometimes also?

00:33:04

JS: Well the only way I smoke boudin is if somebody orders boudin. Because there's some spoil real easy—boudin. It is not nothing to play with; the only way I do that is—is they order that—I smoke—just what they want because myself to sell it in the store, I tried that—it don't move too fast, smoked boudin. A little bit but they like—they like it the regular way. They don't like it too much smoked.

00:33:30

AE: So what, in your opinion, makes a good boudin?

00:33:34

JS: Well you got to—you got to put the right thing in it. You got to put the fresh hog. You don't put no old meat in there like some people do—. I'm not cutting down nobody, but some places they tell me boudin is not good—don't taste good because they put all kinds of meat in there and it's got some old meat that's going to get old and dark and all that. Me, I don't do stuff like that.

I go by my hog at the stockyards; I bring it to the slaughterhouse. I have it butchered and I come here and it's all fresh meat and I cut it up and all my pieces, boil it in some pot on my burner and everything is fresh and everything, so I stir that together and that's the way I make my boudin—nothing old—nothing. It's all—it's really meat.

00:34:18

AE: Do you eat all of your own stuff that you make?

00:34:23

JS: Yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am—I eat all the stuff we make. I don't buy much meat. The only time we—I tell you the meat we buy is maybe Popeye's Chicken or Pizza Inn every once in a while. The rest we got everything here. I got to buy my rice and my cooking oil because my wife don't want to use the whole lard no more. She say it's not good for us. But anyway, I mean raising the hogs, though, and I'm 65 and still here. But you know we're getting to that age, and I have high blood pressure. So we don't—we don't use whole lard. We got some people that come by and they fry that fish in there and that chicken and all that stuff in that, but us, we don't use it no more. My wife says it's not good for us because we got high blood pressure, so we don't use it no more.

00:35:09

AE: How about these chickens here in your yard? Are they pets or are they livestock?

00:35:14

JS: Well they—we raising—no, there are no pets. We're raising to butcher. When we want one I go in my backyard and I got a pen back there and I throw some rice in there and feed and they

get in there and I got a little net and I catch him and I twist his neck like the old time and heat my water up I pluck him and I bring him to my store, I cut him and bring him in the house and my wife cooks it in stew or fried or sauce piquant or in the oven. That's good.

00:35:43

AE: I saw in your garden over there it looks like you have an awful lot of peppers.

00:35:46

JS: Yes, ma'am. I got a bunch—I got a garden right now—I got a bunch of tomatoes. A lot of people come to the store and they can't understand why I got some tomatoes this time of the year. But my tomatoes, I got some that's big like a chicken egg now. And I got a bunch of tomatoes. I've got about eight—eight stalks in my row and they're hanging. And I got a bunch of mustard and I got peppers and I got cucumbers and I got cantaloupe. I got radish and I got turnips. I got a little bit of everything—parsley, onions—I got all that in there, yeah. We raise all our own stuff to eat.

00:36:21

AE: So how long do you think you're going to be in this business?

00:36:25

JS: [*Sighs*] As long—as long as I can make it, you know, I can walk—God lets me walk. I can turn my legs now but it's—I still can do what I've got to do so far. As long as he is going to let me do what I can do, I'm going to do it. I could retire but what I'm going to do—sit down and look at the road? That's going to finish with me. I got two gardens; I got one right here and got another one in back of the house. I still build my garden and I might still be doing that—pass my

time with that and I love it, you know, and I did it all my life, so I know I can walk—now when I can't walk I'm going to have to retire. I'm going to have to leave it alone.

00:37:09

AE: Well do you think your son will take it over?

00:37:11

JS: Well all my kids is not like I was raised you know. I raised them—they helped me a lot but they're all—they're all going to college for nursing and some to school—teachers and some in the hospital and I don't believe [*Laughs*]
—I don't believe, the after I'm—let that go, I don't believe they're going to fool with that at all. I don't believe—they might make a boucherie, I guess—I said after I can't do that no more they might keep on with that—that boucherie. But like the garden, I don't believe they going to fool with that because I'm the one that do all that and my wife come help me a very little bit. She don't like to mess too much with that—very big. She come help me pick up that stuff—got tomatoes and cucumbers and she'll come—peppers—she going to come pick that up but the rest of the stuff I'm going—I'm going to do all that. And I've been doing it for years. Because I like it, you know, and it's good food. But like I was saying, when I—when I can't do it no more [*Laughs*] I believe it's all going to go. Them kids, they ain't going to fool with that. They don't have time.

00:38:17

AE: Can you talk about how—what is your way of life and how you were brought up and how now it's a way to earn money? Can you talk about that a little bit?

00:38:27

JS: Well my time—all we had to do is, like I say, I farmed—I farmed all my life ‘til 30 years now I quit. I worked for the Sheriff and the school and got the store now. Anyway, when I was young, we grew up, we—we would do all our stuff in the field you know and we’d have to sell the cotton, pick up cotton and we’d sell it to—to the cotton gin by bales to make our living and the sweet potato, we would dig it and the truck would come like once a week and pick up a big load potatoes and they’d pay us and the—the—all the rest of the stuff extra we’d sell it—we had a bunch of extra stuff in the field. We would sell the corn to the people would—some wanted some and we’d sell like a bushel of corn or like a bushel of okra and make us extra money to help the living, you know. And that—that’s the way we make our living in—in the old time, you know. We didn’t have nothing like now. You had to scrape for everything, and that—that is the way we had to live.

00:39:27

AE: Can you tell me about the Mardi Gras that goes on here every year, the—the Cajun Mardi Gras?

00:39:33

JS: Oh, yeah! Mardi Gras. Oh, the Mardi Gras in Mamou here and Lesmeg, here I make a lot of boudin here for the Mardis Gras here. And they have a ball. And I give them a chicken in the road—give them chicken or duck and they chase that and they get all wet, and they have a ball with that. And Mamou the same thing too. This—the Mardis Gras around here is really popular, really popular. Especially in Mamou. In Lesmeg it’s great, too, but it’s a little country thing. It’s not like in Mamou. Mamou is a little town and more people and they got bands and they dancing and all kind of stuff. But in Lesmeg here they got everything here, they got a little place back

outside of Lesmeg they call Girard and they got about an acre that they—they go back down and make up their gumbo and they sell a bunch of gumbo and they—they grease some hogs and let the hog go, and they want to catch the hogs for ham and all that good stuff. They have a ball with that, and they have a really good time. Yes, ma'am.

00:40:38

AE: You need to get that—okay. **[Interruption]** Okay. It looks like rain, yes. So we were talking about the Mardi Gras. Was there a Mardis Gras like that when you were growing up?

00:40:54

JS: Yes, ma'am. In my time that's about—well I—I was raised Plaisance. In my time we were—we were riding horseback, and they didn't have nothing like they have now in—in my country because everyplace else we didn't have no big thing. There was a little country thing, where we'd catch a bunch of chickens and we had a place—after Mardi Gras we would go to the big old house that had a big pasture. We'd cook that and clean the chicken and drink a few beers and we would have some—some music, some old guy would play by hand—had no electric in that time; they would play all by hand—accordion and all that. And some would hit some little drums and we would dance, and then we would have a ball in that time. We don't have anything like that now, you know. But it was really nice in my time. Yeah.

00:41:43

AE: Do you play any instruments or did you grow up playing any Cajun music?

00:41:53

JS: Well the only thing I played a bit is the harmonica. I have one; I play a little bit but not much. I can't play much, but I play a little bit of that. I play a bit. I never play no accordion or nothing like that.

00:42:05

AE: So tell me a little bit more about where we are in your home here because we're on Saucier Road, actually. It's named after your family?

00:42:13

JS: Yes, ma'am. Because I'm the first one on this road here. I bought that land here. I bought two acres, and I was the first on the road here so they—they named the road after me. And I've been here in this—place here twenty years and they named the road after—after me.

00:42:35

AE: What does it—it mean to you or can you describe who you are because of where you grew up in this area?

00:42:42

JS: Well I don't know how I can say that. I—I just—the people just like me and all the time work, and I raised my family the best I could and everything turned out good you know. And thank God about that. And I was raised in Plaisance but my wife was raised here in Lesmeg, so that's why she wanted to come back here, so I—I really enjoy it here. It's all nice people—good people and everything is going fine.

00:43:14

AE: Has it changed a lot like in town in Mamou and—and Eunice?

00:43:18

JS: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. When I first moved here I was—had three houses down here—coming here. That’s all they had—twenty—after I moved here they had all the houses—trailer houses and build brick house. We got almost a little town here, and when I came at twenty years ago, they had two or three houses. And I said, “Oh, they got a lot now.”

00:43:39

AE: And now your sign, I found you because of your sign that’s out on—is it Highway 13 and it’s—you have to be dedicated to make all those switches and turns to come back here.

00:43:50

JS: Yes, ma’am [*Laughs*]. You have to—some people get personal with that and I say well I said it’s the only place I could put it. I had to put it on—on 13—that’s Lesmeg Road—that road is Lesmeg all the way—right here. And then they got Nolan Park Road going straight here and Mamou and Saucier. And yeah, I had to put signs all over down here and they’re kind of—put the sign—but they come from all over. They see my sign and they come here.

00:44:16

AE: Uh-hmm. Have you ever taken your products in town to sell at all or you’ve always just had people come here?

00:44:20

JS: No; I can't sell in town. I ain't got no license for that. They've got to come buy here, yeah—they got to come buy here. [*To his son, Nick*] Come see, son.

AE: [*To Nick*] Hey.

JS: Go say something to that lady. She come from Texas.

00:44:35

AE: How are you. I'll pause this again. [*Short pause*] All right. We were just talking to your son, Nick. And your wife just drove up so unless and until she comes over and joins us, is there anything that you would like for people to know about what you do and—and your life here that they may not know?

00:44:54

JS: Well the—the—well what we do is all the time most of the same thing I've been doing for years and—and we are—we really like to do what we do—. [*To his wife*] Mama! Oh, she went in. She'll come back. Yeah; and we've been doing that for years and we try to keep it up as we can and that's my wife and the kids you know. And that's about it. [*Laughs*]

00:45:24

AE: But you were telling me earlier you—you know you were talking about how people come from all over to get your product and someone came was it from Texas, you said, for like eight pounds of cracklings?

00:45:35

JS: Yeah, I had a guy came last—he comes like once a month and he buys a bunch of cracklings and boudin and sausage and a little bit of everything and he comes—I got a feeling he’s going to come sometime this week. Next week he’ll come, and I’ll take a bunch of orders and bring that over there. Because they can't get that—they can't have that. And he’s a really—really good customer. The man, he said they’re getting none of that stuff, because they can't get that you know. Like that. Yeah.

00:46:08

AE: Do you feel like what you do here is—is maintaining a tradition of—of how you came up in this area?

00:46:15

JS: Yes, ma’am It’s like the old time thing. I just keep doing it like I was raised on and—because I like to do that and most of the people around here that’s—that’s the way they was raised, you know, and—and they eat some good stuff and sell some good stuff to the people you know. And have some good stuff for them to buy.

00:46:38

AE: Do you feel like some of that’s being lost or will eventually be lost?

00:46:44

JS: Been what?

00:46:45

AE: That some of that tradition is fading away.

00:46:48

JS: Well some places, yeah, because they—they—in Lafayette or that—it's not like us here. It's not like the old-time stuff. They—they go by a different routine and it's not made like I'm doing it. It's steam, and it's not smoked like I'm doing it. It's different stuff—not the same thing; it's not as good either. It's all right but you can't beat the old-time stuff. You can't beat it.

00:47:16

AE: Well we can wind this up, and you can greet your wife. I just—I really appreciate you taking the time.

JS: Okay

[Short pause]

00:47:29

AE: All right; I'm here now with Mr. Saucier's wife, Mrs. Saucier. Would you mind saying your name and I—I ask all my interviewees their birth date if you don't mind stating that as well.

00:47:41

Betty Saucier: Betty Saucier, February 12th 1943.

00:47:44

AE: And your husband said that you grew up in this area originally from—?

00:47:47

BS: Yeah, I grew up in this area—sure did.

00:47:50

AE: What was it like growing up here?

00:47:52

BS: It was a—a tight-knitted community. Everybody was related and visited a lot and helped each other. Back in those days things weren't like today, you know. We didn't have the convenience we have. We were one of the first—my dad was one of the first in this neighborhood to have a television set. So all the neighbors would take turns every night and one would come to watch TV with us, so it was neat.

00:48:21

AE: What is your maiden name?

BS: Veillon. Veillon.

00:48:25

AE: And so your husband said too that it was important for you to come back here when y'all moved here—.

00:48:30

BS: Yeah, yeah. Because all my relatives are—are—and the ones that are not related we—I was raised with them you know so everybody knows everybody over here. And it's a quiet community, no—no troublemakers.

00:48:43

AE: Did your family farm as well?

00:48:45

BS: My daddy was a sharecropper farmer, yeah. He—he farmed all his life and then after he stopped farming he went and worked for a rice farmer and he worked for years and years for a rice farmer. He passed away two years ago. He was living with us. Yeah.

00:49:03

AE: And your mother is still living. You just came from visiting her?

00:49:05

BS: Yes, she's in a nursing home. She had both legs amputated. But she's still—she's 83 years old.

00:49:12

AE: So when you were growing up did you grow up similar to your husband where you kept a garden and the livestock and all that?

00:49:19

BS: Oh, yeah—oh, yeah the same thing, just different places but the same thing. In those days everybody pretty much lived the same way, you know. Yeah. And we just—we just—I just had one brother. He was younger than me. I lost him five years ago with cancer so—. We're a little family.

00:49:42

AE: So are you glad that—that you and your husband are—are doing this business now with the smokehouse? Is that something that is important to you to keep going?

00:49:49

BS: Yes, because it keeps the tradition going, you know. And every year I have four—I have four children—two boys and two girls. And I have a son-in-law that's very interested in this because he was raised in town, so every year for Christmas he buys a big hog and makes an old-time boucherie and everybody comes even the neighbors and relatives, and they have a ball with that. And they think it's fun, but to me, it's work. **[Laughs]** It's real work; it's a lot of work. But we love it.

00:50:21

AE: So and—and in addition to everything that is made from the pig at the boucherie are you—what else are you cooking around that time?

00:50:28

BS: On the boucherie? Sweet potatoes and potato salad, green salad—that's about it. We make a stew—a backbone stew and we cook—we cook a rib roast and that's about—. We take the—the intestines of the hog, and they clean it and they put it one inside of another one and it's called *zandouille*. It's—it's a kind of a sausage that you put in gumbo that's very, very traditional you know—that's an old thing. Nobody makes that no more.

00:51:03

AE: Well that's what I was going to ask if anybody is—is doing that?

00:51:08

BS: Yeah, we do that every year. When we kill a hog we do that. We can't do it for the store because it's against the law, but we do it for—you're able to do it for your own but not to sell. So we do it every year.

00:51:20

AE: Are there many people in this community that still smoke their own meat and keep gardens and livestock and all that?

00:51:27

BS: No, no. No, it's gone away because all the young ones and they don't have time for that. They're too busy. They're too busy.

00:51:36

AE: I was asking your husband if he thought maybe some of the people of your generation like coming to you because you do things the old way.

00:51:43

BS: Yeah. Oh, yeah [*Laughs*] especially our Sunday dinners. All the kids come every Sunday—grandkids and kids. And to them, it's something that they always done, you know, so you have to come over here. [*Laughs*] But we have a good time. We have two great-grandkids, a little girl and a little boy, so they're learning the tradition too. And they have fun. They have real—they have a lot of fun doing it. And the little boy that's—he's four and he loves cracklings and he

calls it in French *grattons*. When he gets here we have to go to the store and put him some in a little bag and he has to eat his cracklings. **[Laughs]**

00:52:24

AE: And I just met your son Nick and I was asking your husband if Nick spoke any French. Do any of your kids speak French?

00:52:30

BS: Oh, yeah. My son—he's a schoolteacher. He speaks French. My oldest daughter speaks French and my other daughter speaks French; she works for New Horizon in Mamou and she—she translates for the doctor, and they were amazed that she could understand and translate, but she was raised all her life with French-speaking. My—my parents didn't speak English, so that's why they're learned. But Nick will understand but he—he don't try to speak it but he understands it.

00:53:07

AE: Do most people—young people would you say that they—they don't speak French?

00:53:12

BS: Most of them around here speaks French—most of them does and the ones that don't speak can understand it, but they—just about everybody knows how to speak French around here.

00:53:23

AE: And since—since I'm here really to document boudin, but we've talked about a million other things, do you have an opinion about boudin and the kind that you make here that you'd like to share?

00:53:34

BS: Well everybody has a different way of making it, you know, but it's basically the same thing. But everybody thinks they have their own recipe but to me, it's all the same thing, you know. I—I don't know why they think it's different because it really isn't different. I think what makes the difference is your seasoning and the meat—what kind of meat you use. Some—some of them use a lot of fat; we don't use a lot of fat and we—we like to season a lot; so that's my boudin. *[Laughs]*

00:54:09

AE: Is there anything that you'd like to add to the record that you'd like for people to know about Saucier's Sausage and Kitchen?

00:54:15

BS: No, not really—we just—we sell to people all over, not just around here—people from Lake Charles, Texas—all over comes. When they come visit they come and stock up on their sausage and tasso and boudin. That's about it.

00:54:31

AE: Well I'll let you drink your coffee now. *[Laughs]* Thank you very, much ma'am.

00:54:35

[End John Saucier]