BEVERLY GIARDELLI
C. Hebert's Slaughter House – Abbeville, LA

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Interviewer: Sara Roahen, Southern Foodways Alliance
Transcription: Shelley Chance, ProDocs
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Project: Southern Boudin Trail – Louisiana

[Begin Beverly Giardelli Interview]

00:00:02

Sara Roahen: This is Sara Roahen for the Southern Foodways Alliance. It's Monday, August 11, 2008. I am in Abbeville, Louisiana with Miss Beverly—I'm going to let her say her name. **[*Laughs*]** Could you say your name and your birth date and then tell me—describe for me what you do for a living?

00:00:21

Beverly Giardelli: My name is Beverly Giardelli. I was born November 1, 1952. I work at Hebert's Meat Market. I make boudin; I make sausage—just kind of like do a little bit of everything inside the meat market. All workers do that. There's no set job for any certain person.

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SR: Everybody pitches in?

00:00:40

BG: Right, everybody helps out everybody and everybody works together.

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SR: So can you begin by telling me how long you've worked here and what your connection is with this place that brought you here?

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BG: Well the connection of the place is my uncle, that originally opened the place probably about 50 years ago, was probably one of the first meat markets they had around here. When he originally opened up he slaughtered like one calf and put it behind a wagon and—with a horse-driven wagon and go downtown and just sell meat, as he'd kill it. And then it just got bigger and bigger. And then his daughter and her husband was working with him like, probably about 45 years—40 years—they worked together. And his daughter passed away and her husband took over, and I'm sure as soon as Mr. Junior retires—he's got three kids, and I'm sure they're probably going to take over the business. But I lived in Chicago, moved away from here years ago and I came back [to Abbeville] about 14 years [ago]. When I started working [at the meat market] I didn't even know what cut of meat it was. I had no idea what a t-bone looked like, what a sirloin looked like; I had no idea what kind of meat was what. But I just kept watching and learning and finally one day they showed me how to make the boudin and now I make the boudin for them and help them out any way that I can. You know, and I enjoy doing it. You meet a lot of people, meet a lot of strange people, meet a lot of friendly people, but you meet a lot of strange people too. Any time you work with the public I'm sure you're going to meet all types of people, and I enjoy being with the public, so—that's one thing I really enjoy about it.

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SR: So can you tell me what your uncle's name was?

00:02:29

BG: My uncle's name was Clement Hebert **[French pronunciation of both names]**. They would probably say Clement **[American pronunciation, hard *t*]** in New Orleans or up North, and they would probably say Hebert **[American pronunciation, hard *t*]**. And the elderly people would call it either Clem's or Clay-mon's; that was the two nicknames that they had for it because his name was Mr. Clement Hebert, so they would just nickname the place and the elderly people would say it in French. So instead of saying Clement they would say Clay-mon.

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SR: And then Mr. Junior who you mentioned, can you explain to me what his relationship is to you?

00:03:07

BG: Mr. Junior was my first cousin's husband. Miss Margie, his deceased wife, and I were first cousins. Her father and my mother were brother and sister and she really ran the place and she was like the rock of the place. And she caught cancer and passed away and she was only like 51, so it was—it was really a hard thing for everybody here **[*emotional*]** but everybody knows that she would have wanted the place to go on. So everybody just kind of—the same workers are, are still here and everybody—the kids are all here working now, and I'm sure she probably would be proud of what they did. They just kept the place running and kept the place going after all these years.

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SR: Do you know—do you by any chance know what year the place opened?

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BG: Oh I have no idea. If I would have to take a guess I would guess maybe 1959 or '60—maybe, right around there, because I spoke to Mr. Clement's wife. She's—she's sick now; she's elderly and she's sick, and I had spoke to her before she was sick and she told me that they had lost a child when their child was like 12 or 13 years-old, and he [Clement] was severely depressed. So she told him, *Why don't we open a meat market,* and it will keep him occupied. So the business kind of originally started, from what she told me, was to keep his mind occupied so he wouldn't be depressed. And who would have dreamed that now, all these years later, that now it's like one of the few meat markets they have left around here?

00:04:43

SR: Right; and by that you mean like a meat—by meat market, you mean a place that like slaughters animals and has fresh meat?

00:04:50

BG: Yeah, we slaughter. We sell fresh meat in the showcase. They buy local animals from a cattle sale and a lot of the farmers that have animals that they raise—they raise pigs, they raise cattle, sheep, and they--they don't have a place to slaughter them. So they bring the animals in here alive and we have a slaughterhouse in the back and they slaughter the animals. And then we also—they let us know how they want to cut and wrap their meat and we cut it and we wrap it to whatever portion size they want. We label everything and they pick it up and it'll be--it'll be--we can freeze it for them if they want.

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00:05:35

SR: Yeah, you were talking about slaughtering animals.

00:05:40

BG: Okay, and they have a butcher that's here. They've been having the same butcher here for pretty near 40 years, and most of the employees that are here have been her—I've only been here like maybe 14 years, but the majority of the workers—Mr. Junior has been here about 45; Miss Lorraine has been here about 35; Mr. Butch that does—slaughters the animals—has been here like, 39 I think he said this morning. But everybody has been here so long everybody kind of knows what to do so it's not like you have to have somebody leaning over your head and telling you, *You have to do this and you have to do that*. So everybody is really close; we're kind of like a big family. Sometimes we fight like a big family, but you know we argue because we're so close to each other and we're here 10 hours a day with each other so it's--it's really like they're your family. You know you go home and you have your real family at home, but these are the people you spend the most of the time with.

00:06:39

SR: So--so do I have this right that you grew up around here?

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BG: Yeah, I grew up in Erath, a little town next to here. But then when I was 23 I got married and I moved away. I lived in New Orleans for about 10 years and then I lived in Chicago for

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about 16—15 or 16 years—and then I moved back home. Once I moved back home my husband was disabled, so I was just kind of looking to do any kind of work and Miss Margie said *Well, I'll hire you part-time*. And that was Mr. Luquette's wife. And then I started working part-time and the first thing you know they said, *Well, you know, we'll let you work full-time*. And now I'm here 56 hours a week, and I just--I just tried to learn everything I could because it was interesting. And I just tried to learn everything I could. So I help out in any way I can. Sometimes they don't think I help but I--I do my best. I try to help out any way I can.

00:07:33

SR: So Giardelli, is that your married name or your maiden name?

00:07:35

BG: It's my married name.

00:07:36

SR: Oh okay, so you married an Italian?

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BG: Yes, I married an Italian. And he was deceased April 1st of this year and, but everybody just supports everybody in this place you know.

00:07:54

SR: Sorry to hear that.

00:07:55

BG: Yeah, everybody supports everybody, so you keep your mind occupied and it's okay.

00:08:02

SR: So I've been watching you all day doing your work and it takes a lot of physical strength. Did you—what kinds of jobs did you do before this? Was it sort of—was it as physical?

00:08:16

BG: Well years ago my husband was a racehorse trainer, so I'd work with the racehorses. I'd work in the barn—in the barn area; I've waited on tables. I've—even in Chicago I've had a little kitchen where—they called it the Jock's Kitchen—where the jockeys would come and eat and I'd cook for them and—. But I guess you just do what you have to do because you just—something needs to be done, and if there's nobody around to do it you just go ahead and do it and finish with it.

00:08:46

SR: I mean one reason I was excited to talk to you was that I haven't—you're the first woman boudin maker that I've found so far on the Boudin Trail. How did you become the one to make the boudin?

00:09:05

BG: Well I just learned how to do it, and it's not really one person that makes boudin. It's kind of like a group that does it because you have to boil the meat and somebody puts the meat to boil; and then you have to take it out and let it cool off; and then you get—you have to take all the bones out of the meat that you just cooked and the meat needs to be ground and you have to add your seasoning to it; and then it has to all be mixed and put in the--in the stuffer. So when they say I make the boudin, I really don't make the boudin by myself. It's a group of people that do it, but I do use the stuffer and there's other people that if they're not real busy they can do it also. But I usually do the majority of it. I usually make the majority of the boudin, so—.

00:09:51

SR: Yeah, you put the seasoning in there too?

00:09:54

BG: Yeah, yeah I kind of put the seasoning in there you know. It's like how do those old Cajun cooks say, *A little bit of this and a little bit of that*. There's no one cup or three cups or—you just throw a big scoop of this and a big scoop of that and that's just the way you measure it, just—. I can kind of like by looking at it see about how much salt and pepper that it needs, so I don't really measure anything. There's not like a quart of something or a quart of something else. I just throw it all in there and wish it well. And then Mr. Junior usually is usually the final tester. We'll go ahead and let him taste it before I put it in the casing, and if he says *Okay it's good*, okay then; we go ahead and stuff it and put it in the casing.

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SR: So today he said, *Okay, it's good*. Does he ever say, *Oh no, that needs more salt* or—?

00:10:42

BG: Yes, quite a few times he would say, *Oh no salt, add some salt*. So then whenever he does say that, well I usually sneak behind him and I go ask everybody else, *Here taste this, taste this, and do you think this it's okay?* And if they say, *Oh there's enough salt*, well I'll say *Okay, I'll just put a little bit more salt.* But if they say, *Oh it needs a lot of salt,* well then I'll just go ahead and get a big scoop and pour the salt in. I said he usually gives the final say, but we usually go behind his back and let everybody test it to see how it is and make sure everybody kind of has the same opinion on how good it is or--or if it needs more seasoning to it.

00:11:18

SR: So are you—I mean I know you don't measure anything, but is the sort of general recipe the same? Has it stayed the same since you started working here?

00:11:27

BG: Yes, it's probably been the same before I started working here, because I still boil all the same ingredients that they've always boiled and--and put in there, and they still put the same rice, and it's all still the basic [recipe] from years ago when they used to do it. When they originally started doing it. Just now we do more—we make a lot more now, but I'm sure it's all the same ingredients that goes into the boudin making process.

00:11:56

SR: So when you say you know a lot of places only use, like pork shoulder for example, places that aren't real meat markets, can you tell me just for the record what parts of the pig that you put in the boudin?

00:12:13

BG: Well we use all the pork debris; we use that. Some people don't know but there is pork liver in it. We use the—like the trimmings of the--of the pork meat. Whenever you want to make a pretty cut of meat you have to take some of the gritty meat or the fatty meat off and you take that out and you put that in boudin. They have the pork shank—that's the bottom of the pig's leg. And there's the shank bone in there. So whenever you do boil the boudin it makes like a thick broth and there's pork debris and pretty much mostly—well, it is all pork but different things, like you know it might sound kind of funny but they use hog heads. Now I'm not talking about the eyeballs and the teeth and the ears and all that stuff, but they--they do have a lot of meat on a hog head so they cut that up in pieces and boil that. And they take the things out—and I'm not talking about the brain either, so I don't want people to think, *Oh my God*; they look at a pig and they see his nose and his teeth and everything and they say, *Oh my God, I'm eating that*. No, that's not how it is. It's all clean meat, and they take the teeth out and the nose out and the ears off and it's just the inside of the hog head where they have meat in it.

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SR: Can you describe for me what debris is?

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BG: The debris is usually, well it is the insides of a pig. On the insides of a pig they have the heart, they have the liver, they have the spleen—they call it the melt. They have kidneys, they have intestines, but we don't use that. It's against the law for us to keep that or for us to try to sell the pork intestines. Now we can sell the calf intestines, but there has to be a meat inspector there to make sure that we can only sell the--the good product, the clean product. That is the debris; that consists of the debris. That's the insides of a pig. And then we use, like, ribs; they'll put in pork ribs sometimes with the skin on it, and so [boudin is] mostly meat and rice, with the mixture of the broth and the texture. You just kind of like have to go by whatever you feel is the right texture, you know.

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SR: What about—we were talking earlier about your rice. Can you tell me for the record where you get the rice and what kind you get, the grain?

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BG: Okay. We--we were getting the medium-grain rice, but they said they couldn't get any. I think I prefer the medium-grain rice because the long-grain rice kind of like falls—goes—separates and everything. And we get our rice from a Planter's Rice Mill in Abbeville. We buy them by 50-pound sacks, and we get like 1,500 pounds at a time. We cook the rice the old-fashioned way; we don't have a rice cooker. I'll cook the rice and I don't use a rice cooker or pre-measured things; I just scoop the rice in the great big Magnalite pots and I just wash it up real good and I just fill it up and somehow or another it always comes out okay, but sometimes I burn

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it when I get too busy and I forget about it. Yeah, I do smell up the place a little bit sometimes but the majority of the time the rice is okay.

00:15:35

SR: And so you grew up around here for the most part. Is this—was this sort of your gold standard for boudin, this place here?

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BG: Well this was kind of the standard for everybody. Everybody would get boudin here years ago because they didn't have any other slaughterhouses, you know, and meat markets. So this was like the original place around Vermillion Parish that would sell boudin and cracklin'. They had a couple of slaughterhouses but they wouldn't sell the meat and make boudin like they do over here. But Mr. Hebert was the original years ago, used to have—he had the first slaughterhouse around here, and God willing it's still opened, and I'm sure they're going to keep it open as long as they can, you know—as long as they have the business. I'm sure they're going to keep open even--even for the local people because these local people have a lot of animals that they raise. They have cattle farms and they have pig farms and some people raise sheep, and if this place wouldn't be open there might be one or two other places where they could get them slaughtered, but we do a lot of custom slaughters. So we slaughter a lot of animals from the area for the local farmers and people around here. So I don't know. If this place is going to close down, I really don't know what they would do, you know, unless they just get their—do their animals in the backyard, or maybe have to go to a little bit further than Abbeville to get it done, or--or maybe another slaughterhouse would open up. They have another couple of

slaughterhouses but they don't slaughter as much as we do because we're--we've been here for years.

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SR: In an average day how many animals will be slaughtered here?

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BG: It varies. It varies. It all depends if the farmers bring them in. We've done so much as eight calves and ten pigs a day to where we've done maybe just two sheep and two calves a day. For the slaughterhouse, we kill them as we need them; we don't stock up a whole bunch of meat and let it go bad. If we need to slaughter calves they'll slaughter two or three calves one day, and the in a couple days if they see they're running short on meat they'll slaughter some more. So they don't slaughter like 25 calves and 20 pigs every week. They--they kill them and slaughter them as we need the meat, because if you would just slaughter a whole bunch of them at one time then they would go bad. So it's always fresh meat that they sell. And you can come in and if there's something you don't see they can cut it for you, and if it's the wrong thickness that's in the showcase you can ask them and they'll be more than glad to cut the thickness of meat you want. So it's kind of like a custom meat market; you know, you come in here and order what you want and they'll cut it for you.

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SR: Well we paused earlier so that you could talk to a customer who wanted a custom job on some sausage.

00:18:33

BG: Right, right. You have people call. They might say they want to order like 10 pounds of boudin with no pepper, a little bit of salt, so we do that too. And this one customer called and he wanted—he wants 20 pounds of sausage but he doesn't want any black pepper, just a little bit of salt and vinegar. He wants a lot of vinegar in it, so he called and ordered that. So whenever they need a special order—like some people can't eat pepper—they'll call up and order it and I'll be glad to make it for them. I mean we make it for them if they special order something—they want the seasoning different than what we sell.

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SR: Have you tried that vinegar sausage?

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BG: Yeah, it's okay. I mean yeah, it's not bad. It--it has like a little tangy taste to it but it's not bad. It's really not that bad.

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SR: And so when you were growing up, your mom worked here a little bit?

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BG: Yeah my mother worked here years ago, and I think it was comments like, *Oh I used to make $25 a week,* so you can about imagine how long ago this was. I was probably a child

myself. I'm sure at one time or another Mr. Clement probably hired most of his brothers and sisters—worked here along the line through the years. The majority of them probably did, and--and then they'd work here a little while or they'd get another job or they'd move on or they'd get too old to work and they'd just move on. So this meat market has employed a lot of people through all the years that they've had it open. I mean there was family, there were friends, there was people that just needed work; so now we're about—we're not too many workers, but I'm sure through the years they've employed easily maybe over 200 different people through the years. Maybe even more than that. I don't know because I wasn't here. I've only been here like 14 years, but I hear people come in and say, *Oh hey, you remember me? I used to work here, you know, like 25 years ago?* And I'm like, *My God, they still remember the place*, you know, so—.

00:20:36

SR: So you are the third generation?

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BG: No, I'm not the third generation.

00:20:47

SR: Well not directly but of the family—are you the second? Okay, because your mom—yeah that's true because your mom was—.

00:20:55

BG: Now Mr. Clement's daughter—Mr. Clement is in here, and then his daughter that's deceased and her husband was in here, and now his son and his kids are working in here, so they're the third generation. And believe it or not, these—their kids come in here and they're like nine and ten and seven, and they'll come in here and they'll bag cracklin' or they'll--. He's got—Mr. Lucas has got a little grandson and I think he's 12 and he comes in here and he debones meat and he helps us get stuff for the showcase, so it's like really they're kids, but that's how their parents got started. When they were younger their mother brought them in here and now they're bringing their kids in here, so they're kind of like—the little grandkids kind of like run the roost, you know. They—you ask them to go get something for you and they all know what it is; they all understand what they're going to get, so it's not a new thing for them.

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SR: So there is a clear—this place isn't going to go anywhere anytime soon?

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BG: Well hopefully not, hopefully not.

00:21:59

SR: When you were growing up, what place did boudin have in your family's eating habits? Did you eat it much?

00:22:11

BG: You know I don't know. I don't--I don't remember eating too much boudin. I don't know what—I know as I got older I remember eating boudin. I remember going to parties and having parties at school and stuff and there was boudin there, and it was probably from this place but I didn't even know it. But like I say, I moved away from here. I was gone for quite a few years, and believe me, in New Orleans and Chicago they don't have boudin. And I just—when I did come over here and I started working, you know I just thought it was the greatest thing since apple pie. And I would eat it because I could eat it anytime I wanted, and I just started eating and I gained like 30 pounds, and I finally realized it was the boudin and cracklin' that was doing it. So then I had to kind of cut back on that a little bit. But I really found out how good it was when I moved back home. **[*Laughs*]**

00:23:03

SR: What about—can you tell me a little bit about the red boudin, because you're one of a few places that still makes that?

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BG: The red boudin is made with blood, okay. We use the real blood; we try to fool some of these people that come in here and they say, *Oh what is that made of?* And we say, *Oh food coloring. Why don't you taste it?* You know, and after they got a mouthful they'll say, *Oh it's pretty good*, and then we say, *Oh it's blood,* and they're like *Oh my God, I just ate blood.* But it's not red; it's not like eating raw blood or anything. We still use the—it's either the calf or the pig blood that they will use. It has to go through a stainless steel process whenever they--they get the blood from the animals. The meat inspector has to be there watching. Everything is done under

sterile conditions so there's no need to be worried about, *Oh the blood is contaminated,* or whatever. They add a little salt into it while it's fresh and warm, so it stops it from clabbering, because if you wouldn't the blood would just turn to clabber. And they keep it in the cooler and we use--use it as needed. Now the blood sausage, the blood boudin is the same thing as the white except we take the white boudin and we just mix it with blood and add more seasoning to it to make it a little bit more—it's got a tangier taste to it with the red. But people say we're one of the few places that still make it; that's what they tell us. I don't know. But I think a lot of it has to do—you can't buy the blood, so if you don't have your own slaughterhouse you can't get the blood to make the red boudin. And they have a rumor going around: they had people saying, *Oh I heard it was against the law to make red boudin*. It's not against the law, but you have to have the meat inspector here and it has to be done under sanitary conditions and stuff, so—.

00:24:45

SR: And tell me what it was like the first time you made that.

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BG: Oh my God, I don't know if I was terrified or if I was nauseated. I was sick. Just the thought of me mixing my hand up in some blood, you know, and then--. I got over it though, but I mean the first week or so it was like, *I can't believe I'm doing this. I can't believe I'm doing this.* But after you kind of make up your mind you know and say, *Look, this is not going to hurt you; this is nothing bad or anything,* you know. You're fixing food and you kind of adjust to it. But when I first saw it I was—I couldn't believe I was ever going to be able to do that. But it's okay now; it's all right now.

00:25:27

SR: It's interesting to me that you moved away—. I mean it seems like your family is really tight to this area, so you were maybe a little bit unusual moving away for that long. But now that you've moved back you're like really steeped in your—in the culture here. It's not like you moved back and went to work at a bank. Do you think about that, like maintaining your own—your native culture while you're working here?

00:25:53

BG: Not really, I just look at it as a job. You know I--I don't look at it as anything being cultural or like that. I'm sure now that you mention it, I'm sure it is. But you know, like when I was in Chicago and had that little--little kitchen that I cooked in and I was just cooking normal food like over here and they were like, *Wow! This is Cajun stuff.* Like rice dressing or crawfish etouffee or jambalaya, and this was all stuff that I'm like, *Wow, I can't believe they're freaking out over this kind of food.* And I'm like, *I cook this all the time*. So yeah, it—now when I look back at it, yeah, it is a cultural thing around here like the type of food we eat and the way we cook and it is pretty cultural. You know I even made a joke one time, I said, *You know us Cajuns are--are pretty—us Cajuns are pretty special. We have our own little language and cook our own little food and we have our own little routines that we do that nobody else in the country does, so I guess we are kind of special*.

00:27:02

SR: So can you describe the difference in taste between the white boudin and the red boudin?

00:27:14

BG: Not too much because I don't really eat the red boudin but people tell me it's a little bit tangier. It's got like a little--I know it's spicier than the white; the red is spicier than the white. Some people love the red; they won't get the white at all. Some people don't--won't even try it; just the idea that it's got blood in it. But you'd probably have to ask somebody that likes the red boudin to answer that question for you because I don't eat the red boudin. I know it sounds terrible; I make it but I don't eat it but I just--I'm--I used to eat it when I was younger but I don't acquire--I haven't acquired a taste for it.

00:27:52

SR: And I was asking earlier, I don't--I don't know if I got a specific answer: is there a typical blood boudin customer?

00:28:02

BG: Oh they have—everybody eats it, you know. They have kids that eat it; they have the elderly people that eat it. I mean there's no certain [rule] like 40 to 50 year-olds eat it only, you know. No. They even have young kids that eat it, so I think it's all according to what they like and how it tastes. If they like the taste of it they'll eat it. I don't think there's no age group or anything like that that would make one person more—a certain type of person eat it more than another.

00:28:34

SR: So Mr. Junior was telling me that he and you are the only two people working here who speak French still. Is that--is that true? Do you speak French?

00:28:45

BG: Yeah, I do speak French, yeah.

00:28:48

SR: And so you didn't lose that when you moved away, huh?

00:28:51

BG: No, I didn't because I spoke it. My grandmother spoke it to me fluently and I understand every word of it. Every once in a while I kind of say a word crooked or something but the majority of the time I can--I can speak French fluently, yeah.

00:29:05

SR: And do you get to **[*Laughs*]**—oh, you're afraid I'm going to ask you to do it?

00:29:11

BG: Right.

00:29:11

SR: Well that would be great, but do you get to practice that a lot in here at your job?

00:29:17

BG: Sometimes if they have like elderly people that come in here and they won't speak English and **[*Laughs*]** and they'll ask for something in French and everybody will turn around and look at me and say, *What did she say; what did he say?* And I'll just translate it for them. But yeah, I do speak—. Or if I see some elderly people in here that you can tell they--they speak French and they're trying to speak English, then I'll go up to them and ask them in French, you know, *What do you want?* Or *Can I help you with something?* Or I'll kind of like speak French to them.

00:29:48

SR: Your mother is still alive. So ya'll speak French to each other?

00:29:52

BG: Sometimes when we don't want our kids to know—my kids to know what we're saying, you know, but he--he got a little smart on that. He's 25 now and he learned—took French in high school so he can kind of read between the lines. But yeah, we say it sometimes if we don't want the little kids to know what we're saying. **[*Laughs*]**

00:30:10

SR: Does your son live in the area too?

00:30:13

BG: Yeah, my son lives in the area.

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00:30:14

SR: So your mom—so I was asking you about your mom. The last time I was here she came in and hung out and had coffee with her brother, I think.

00:30:29

BG: Correct.

00:30:29

SR: Can you tell me about how old they are and about how often they come in?

00:30:33

BG: My mother is 75; she usually passes every afternoon around 2:30-3:00, but she hasn't been feeling well so she's not here yet. But she'll come by and speak to Mr. Junior and they'll just--just talk the breeze. *How ya feeling?* You know, what you did last weekend; what you did yesterday, you know. And they'll just—she'll come over and get a cup of coffee and her husband will come, or a lot of the elderly local people come right here. It's really not a strictly enforced [rule] like customers stay on the other side of the counter and we on this side, you know. It's more like a big family, small community, and some of these customers have been coming here since the place opened, so you know they got to be pretty—they're elderly too. And then their kids come and their grandkids come and so on down the generation[s]. They know there's no preservatives in the meat. We don't add preservatives in the meat. What you see is what you get. We slaughter on the floor; this is where we slaughter our animals. They leave from the slaughter floor and go straight into the cooler. They leave from the cooler to the saw and into the

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showcase, so there's no preservatives added into--into the meat. It's all fresh calf meat. It's not heavy beef and it's not aged meat. It's all fresh.

00:31:48

SR: Shew, where was I going to go from there? I can see that that would be something really special to have in your community. Oh I know what I was going to say; I was going to say that I saw a customer today I think just coming—packed his own bag of crackling. Does that happen—I mean that just reinforces what you were saying that it's a community place.

00:32:09

BG: Yeah, we don't--we don't usually let them do that unless they wear gloves, so if you saw somebody do that he better have had a glove on or I didn't see him.

00:32:17

SR: He had a glove on.

00:32:18

BG: Okay, because I didn't see him but yeah, they'll come back here sometimes and get their own, but they definitely have to wear gloves before they touch anything.

00:32:26

SR: Yeah. Tell me about, you were saying you had a kitchen in Chicago. Did you have like a commercial kitchen or were you just talking about your own kitchen?

00:32:34

BG: No, it was like a little—it was at a racetrack. It was Jock's Kitchen. If you know anything about the racehorses, the jockeys have to stay in this one area and they can't associate with the public so many hours before they ride a horse. And well, they're there all--all day and all afternoon so they need a place to eat, so that's what I would do. I would cook for them.

00:32:54

SR: Okay, and were they Louisiana jockeys? Not necessarily, huh?

00:33:00

BG: They had—yeah, they had quite a few Louisiana jockeys that were there so the cooking to them was like, *Oh boy we've got some Cajun cooking for a change,* because you know you can get it in Chicago but it's not like the original Cajun cooking, like what we cook over here.

00:33:13

SR: Yeah. Can you just describe for me a little bit the connection between horse racing and this place [meaning the slaughterhouse], because while I'm spending time here it comes up—that topic comes up constantly with everyone?

00:33:29

BG: Okay, Mr. Clement--Mr. Clement's father years and years and years ago had what they called a bush track. It was a little racetrack where they'd just run horses. They--they had a gate.

They opened them up, opened the gate and the horse would take off running. Sometimes they had beer cans with rocks on their backs and sometimes they had chickens on their backs and this was an old, old tradition. My mother was a little girl when--when her daddy used to do it. And then Mr. Clement did it, took it over for a while, and then his son took it over. His son is Doris Hebert and he trains racehorses now; he's known locally in Louisiana all over. And then one thing led to another. It was getting—the insurance premiums was going to be sky-high, and it was—they just decided to shut it down. So, but a lot of the local riders like Randy Romera, Eddie Delahoussaye, some of the well known riders got started over here and they just kind of kept it in the family because Mr. Luquette—Mr. Junior has horses and his son has horses, and Doris' son that works here also, Mr. Junior's nephew, he has horses. So it's kind of like a third, fourth generation thing where the racehorses was kind of evolved. That's why you hear them talking about the race horses around here.

00:34:47

SR: Huh, and so is there still a track anywhere in the area?

00:34:50

BG: No, they don't have a bush track. They called that a bush track. There was no legalized gambling. You had to holler and scream at each other: *I'll take $5 on this horse and you take $2 on that*, you know. But there was—it wasn't like a gambling thing like you'd go to mutual betting and make a bet—pari-mutuel betting and stuff. But that's all, that's all gone now. It's a shame because a lot of kids would go there when they were younger and it was like a family-oriented place where people could go with their kids, but that will no longer—there's no longer

that you know. It's a shame because the younger generation won't see what--what they had years ago. It's kind of like a dying thing because there's no more bush tracks.

00:35:34

SR: And that—is that what took you up to Chicago?

00:35:38

BG: Yeah, my husband trained racehorses and that's how we ended up over there. I have a sister that's still—her and her husband still train racehorses in Chicago. She's still involved with the horse races, so—.

00:35:53

SR: Did you get homesick for--for any of the local food while you were gone?

00:35:57

BG: No, because I cook it myself.

00:36:02

SR: That helps.

00:36:02

BG: Yeah, that helps—when you know how to cook it you cook it for yourself, so that's not too bad, yeah.

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00:36:08

SR: Let me just backtrack a minute because I don't think I asked you this about the boudin. Can you tell me a little bit more about the seasoning that you put in there, unless it's a secret—vegetables and stuff?

00:36:21

BG: We put onions, lots of salt, red pepper, and black pepper and we'll just leave it at that. We'll just leave it at that.

00:36:31

SR: It seems like also when you use all the different parts of the animal and then the water that that's cooked in, that could add a lot more flavor than, say, if you just used pork shoulder.

00:36:46

BG: Sure, sure definitely—definitely. It gives it a different taste.

00:36:50

SR: I wanted to ask you, did you—do you, or did your mom ever when you were growing up, cook with boudin at home?

00:36:58

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BG: No, not that I can recall. No, because my mother—my mother's brother had a meat market so any time we wanted boudin she'd just come over here and get it, so it wasn't like she had to make it at home for us or anything.

00:37:07

SR: No, but I mean you would just eat it in links—?

00:37:09

BG: Right.

00:37:09

SR: It wouldn't go into a dish or anything?

00:37:10

BG: Right, it wouldn't go in the dish. No, just eat it in links, yeah.

00:37:14

SR: And so there are a lot of other really interesting cuts of meat here that aren't really found in places where they don't slaughter their animals. Seven steak is one of them that can be sort of hard to find, and I was asking you and Mr. Junior about cooking seven steaks. Can you just describe for me what that is and why it's good?

00:37:37

BG: The seven steak comes off the shoulder of a calf and you can buy them in the grocery stores but usually they'll have boneless sevens and they're huge pieces of meat with no bone. All the seven steaks over here have bone. Just about every cut of meat over here has bones in it except we have a boneless beef roast. But other than that, everything has bones it, so you won't come here and find boneless pork loin and all that. We don't do that. Everything has got the bones in it.

00:38:10

SR: And that's where a lot of the flavor comes from for gravy, I bet.

00:38:13

BG: Right, right, right.

00:38:14

SR: I know you have to go. I just want to ask you one or two more questions. I didn't ask at the beginning, what is your heritage? I guess on your mother's side it would be French-Cajun?

00:38:24

BG: Yeah, Cajun French, yeah, yeah.

00:38:28

SR: Do you know how far back your family was here?

00:38:32

BG: Oh God, years. Because my mother is 75 and they had pictures of her great-grandparents that were farmers. They--they were cotton farmers years ago. They didn't have no plantation or nothing; they just had their own cotton farms and they'd plant corn, they'd raise chickens and they'd plant corn to feed the chickens, and I remember that kind of stuff when I was younger.

00:38:57

SR: Yeah, and then what about your dad's side?

00:39:00

BG: My dad's side was the same thing, the same type of origin. My dad was a Trahan, or they say Tray-han up North or in New Orleans. And the same type of thing, the same heritage; they were farmers, they were local farmers.

00:39:17

SR: And so do you consider yourself Cajun?

00:39:19

BG: Oh definitely. I mean you can move [away] as long as you want but you're still going—you're always going to be a Cajun. Once a Cajun you're always going to be a Cajun no matter what.

00:39:30

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SR: True. Let me just make sure I don't forget anything crucial. I guess since I took some pictures of the cracklin' I'll ask you again what I was asking out there about the shape. I really like the shape of your cracklin; they're long rather than just like the little nuggets.

00:39:47

BG: Well the reason why they're made like that—they're shaped like that—is once they're cooked, if you want you can break them and make them smaller. But we cook in such large quantities that it would virtually take two or three people just to cut them in little squares so we cut them on the electric saw and they cut them in strips and that's why they're kind of like in strips instead of the little-bitty old-fashioned little chunks. Because there's no way. The amount of cracklin' that we cook over here, there's no way we could cut them all in little-bitty chunks.

00:40:16

SR: And sometimes you--you use the skin, or the belly I guess, from the pigs that are slaughtered here right?

00:40:25

BG: Yes, we use—we slaughter our own animals and they take the skin off and that's what they use to make the cracklin'.

00:40:35

SR: And there are also bags of just like crumbs, cracklin' crumbs that you can buy. What do people use—what do they cook with those?

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00:40:42

BG: I don't cook with them because if I'm going to use anything I'm going to use the real cracklin', but they say they put them in bread. They'll take a bread dough and they'll put some of the crumbs in the bread dough and make it like a cracklin' bread. Or they'll take it and they'll put it in a cornbread mixture and then have like a cracklin' cornbread, you know. So different people, I mean these Cajun people will find something to do with something. Believe me, there's no waste.

00:41:08

SR: If you cook with just regular cracklin', what do you make?

00:41:11

BG: I just eat the cracklin'. I won't cook it with anything. I'll eat that and a big piece of boudin and that's it.

00:41:17

SR: Okay, one more question: what is it that you like most about your current job?

00:41:24

BG: I think mostly working with the general public. I love working with the public because you see all types of people and I really enjoy working with the general public. And it's kind of a laid back place, like the boss isn't blowing down your neck all the time and it's—everybody has been

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here for so long and we're like a big family. So you're kind of like, you have your family at work and then you have your family at home. So I think that's--that's the main thing, you know. I enjoy working here because—it's hard work, now. Don't let me kid you. **[*Laughs*]** It's not easy but it's--it's a good place to work. It really is.

00:42:04

SR: Well thank you. I know it's hard work because I've been watching all day long and I'm tired just from watching. Thank you for talking to me. I appreciate it.

00:42:11

BG: Okay, okay thank you. All right, bye-bye.

00:42:16

[End Beverly Giardelli Interview]

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