JERRY SLATER
Director of Restaurants – Seelbach Hilton Hotel – Louisville, KY
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Interviewer: Amy Evans
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Project: Louisville Barroom Culture

[Begin Jerry Slater Interview]

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Amy Evans: This is Amy Evans on Wednesday, January 16, 2008 for the Southern Foodways Alliance. I'm in Louisville, Kentucky. I'm at the Seelbach Hotel in—just outside the Oak Room with Jerry Slater. And Jerry, if you would please state your name and your birth date for the record?

00:00:17

Jerry Slater: Jerry Slater and born on August 17, 1971.

00:00:23

AE: And what is—what is your title here at the Seelbach?

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JS: Director of Restaurants, whatever that means. **[*Laughs*]**

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AE: And if we could talk a little bit about your hometown and your background a little bit and how you got to Louisville, just kind of a condensed version.

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JS: Yeah. Let's—it's round about—we moved a lot as a kid but the family is originally from West Virginia, went to Northwest Indiana for steel mill jobs in [nineteen] '79, which—with my dad—which weren't there anymore. But ended up staying there for quite a while, and I've been

in Louisville for—it will be seven years in May. [Kentucky] Derby Week was my first week here at the Seelbach. Trial by fire. **[*Laughs*]**

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AE: So how did you get into the service industry and—and hone your craft as a mix—mixologist?

00:01:13

JS: I did this to pay the bills through college. I got a degree in English Literature and Philosophy and ended up, by the end of it, as opposed to pursuing a doctorate, wanted to stay. I—I like the aesthetic experience that's—and in college, literature seemed more political anymore than—than aesthetic. And so when I finished my degree, I stayed in the service business. I had been working at a little place in Gary, Indiana, on the beach called the Miller Bakery Café and garnered some awards—kind of a big fish in a small pond in that area—and did that for one year as the GM [Genera Manager] and then went to work for Charlie Trotter [in Chicago] after that so—.

00:02:05

AE: So can you remember and—and try and describe learning about cocktails and mixing drinks and—and kind of the craft of bartending and what attracted it to—what attracted—what you were attracted to in—in that part of the industry?

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JS: Well, you know, when I decided that I was going to stay in this industry, you know, then it becomes learn as much as you can. And I had also worked in a kitchen in an Italian restaurant for

a year, thought about going to be a chef, but by the age I had got to, I still needed to pay the rent, so I decided to just stay in the front of the house. And anything that I wanted to do, I just wanted to explore that deeper and started to realize there was kind of a history of cocktails, especially classic cocktails. So when you get to bourbon country and you have just a plethora of great brown spirits, you know, you want to start to look into it a little bit more: how it's made, why it tastes differently; if it's just one category, like bourbon, why do you know—why do I have sixty of them behind my bar here? You know? But I—we can pick out several differences, nuances, histories, and so, you know, from base spirits, then you start to explore how people used to mix things, and there seems to be a bit of a renaissance right now in America with cocktails. So I started reading you know William Grimes and Dave Wondrich and Tony Abu-Gamin and Dale DeGroff, you know—just started to explore these things and, you know, a lot of trial and error. It's—research and development is fun. **[*Laughs*]** So, yeah. So that's—that's how I got into it a little bit that way.

00:03:50

AE: So is that kind of like passion for the history and approach to research and really kind of trying to find the story behind a drink and behind an ingredient—is that something—an approach you would have in anything and everything that you do, or was there something specific about cocktails that kind of called you in that direction?

00:04:05

JS: Well, I think I would do it about food, as well. Wine is—is another subject. I would do it but, you know, recently, like I said, with this renaissance in cocktails and—and just really enjoy the—you know, there's a couple of things that America has done right, you know: Jazz and we—

we've invented things that—that nobody else has done, and I think the cocktail is one of them, you know. The—the bartenders when Prohibition hit all went to Europe because, just like Jazz musicians, Europeans couldn't simulate what we were doing, and so they, you know, really loved what we were doing. And it's—it's funny because the renaissance, I think, hit London before it hit our shores again, so as we're getting past—way past Prohibition now and everything, I think we're coming back to an understanding and appreciation of a cocktail.

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AE: Can you talk a little bit about, from a historical perspective, the origins of the cocktail and the importance of a place like Louisville in that context and—and New Orleans and how New Orleans came to Louisville and that kind of connection?

00:05:12

JS: One of the stories I've heard from—from one of the old master distillers here is very interesting about the Louisville-New Orleans connection. They were sending whiskey down in barrels and, you know, down the—down the Ohio [River] into the Mississippi [River] and on to New Orleans. Well, they would get these telegrams back that said, "Send us more red liquor." And they didn't know what they were talking about. They said, "Well, we sent you good clear corn whiskey." And so apparently, in the cleaning of the barrels—the barrels were used for everything: fish heads, hard tack biscuits, nails, whatever—to clean the barrels, you'd char them on the inside or, you know, try to—try to clean the insides with fire. So they would put this clear corn whiskey in those charred barrels, put them in the bottom of a hot boat, rocking around for three months until it got to New Orleans, and they'd have this, you know—it had picked up those esters, and it had gone through, basically, a whole season in three months, like it would be in a

warehouse in—in bourbon country. And so they really got a taste for that. You know, the—it added sugars, it added color, it added characteristics that weren't just in the corn whiskey. So it—it started to be a thing that way, you know, so they—you know our rind, our bourbon, and our spirits provided, you know, the outlet. Originally, you know, Sazerac and those types of cocktails were made from brandy, you know. It's a very French influence in New Orleans and, you know, once wars and tariffs and everything started to happen, that was really replaced by rye whiskey from the east and bourbon from—from here in Kentucky. So there's—yeah, there's a long history.

00:06:53

AE: Uh-hmm, certainly. And then what about the cocktails themselves like, you know, you mentioned the Sazerac. New Orleans has the Sazerac, and Louisville has the Old Fashioned. Can you talk about coming to Louisville and—and being introduced to that kind of mythology and—and history of a single cocktail in a single town?

00:07:08

JS: Yeah, and, in fact, you know, here at the Seelbach, we have the Seelbach Cocktail, which is from like 1917 and so, you know, there's—there's—I think it's wonderful that myths get built up around certain things. It's one thing but it—it's, for some reason, it's stuck, and you know there are 1,000 bartenders a day making 1,000 different fruity drinks that nobody will ever remember, but somebody remembers the Old Fashioned. Somebody remembers the Seelbach Cocktail. I've seen that on the list in—in Brooklyn and Red Hook in San Francisco now; it's sort of entered the lexicon. And, I don't know, I think, you know—you know, there's stories behind these sorts of things. You know, the one I heard about the Seelbach cocktail was down in the Rathskeller, a

gentleman was making two drinks, an Old Fashioned, like you were mentioning, so it's got that element of bitters in it; it's got a dash of triple sec, as well, orange flavored liqueur and the bourbon. Well, then he went to pour a glass of champagne for the lady, and it topped over, you know. The bubbles exploded, and it went into the two drinks. Well, he had to start over and remake the drink but being like a good bartender, he wanted to taste his mistake and—and that's where the Seelbach cocktail was invented. Now whether that's true or not, it doesn't matter; it's—it's a great story and **[*Laughs*]**—and, you know, when you see, you know, historic old rooms like the Rathskeller, you know, you want to drink one of those there. So yeah, I—I think you know the—the story of the Old Fashioned, for instance, you know, created two blocks from us. There's such a mythology about being invented at the Pendennis Club because, you know, the Old Fashioned is really meant to be an old fashioned whiskey cocktail or a whiskey cocktail made—made in an old-fashioned way: bitters, sugar, water, and whatever, you know, booze you were going to have. It was probably rye whiskey before that in it but, you know, a very—probably I guess PR for its time, Colonel Pepper, who owned a distillery, took it to New York and, you know, prodded it around and said, "Hey, look at this. This is the hottest thing from—from my home city." And it caught on and, you know, New Yorkers loved it and it probably entered magazines and everything else, and so suddenly, you know, it's an Old Fashioned with a big "O", as opposed to an old fashioned with a little "o", you know.

00:09:33

AE: Nicely put. Well do you think that, since you were talking about kind of a resurgence of classic cocktail appreciation in the—in the culture—bar culture, do you think there's any—there's a new drink now that kind of has that same staying power?

00:09:49

JS: You know, and I've had one made well, I think the Cosmopolitan will do that. It's a great name; it's a little fruity for most people or for the—too fruity for the classics, but I don't know; I think it has some staying power. You know, there are—I think people have been so interested in revamping the older drinks or taking their—that fresh approach again, you know, when we make a whiskey sour here, it's fresh lemon juice, it's simple syrup made from scratch, it's a big long lemon twist. And, you know, we've been concentrating on that. And then there's the other element where people are like Ferran Andria, you know, with the—with the chemicals and additives and—and molecular, you know, you've got an element that's going on that direction, as well, and trying to really push the boundaries. But it's all with a nod, you know. One of the greatest things I'd ever heard about Picasso, you know, in his late years, it was just drawing lines and—but he had to go through—he had to learn the classics. He had to be himself and then, by the time he was eighty he could do lines. You couldn't just do lines and so I think that—that most people who are doing cocktails well have gone through the steps to learn the history and, you know, when they're pushing the boundaries, they know why. There's a gentleman at Bourbon and Branch in San Francisco, and he was making the Negroni. He was doing basically a gin martini and then little caviar spoons on the side full of Campari and sweet vermouth done, you know, with calcium chlorinate and auger and, you know, making little balls, little caviars out of those two liqueurs and you know it's—it's interesting. You know, is it the thing I want to go in and drink everyday? I'm more of a classicist, I think, but it's—at least he knew where he was coming from with it.

00:11:44

AE: Well, what about the classics when you think about the consumer and a bar customer where, like a whiskey sour for example, has been made in a million bars with sour mix and, you know, just that quick and dirty, nasty drink and what Edward [Winfield] made downstairs for me just now is a completely different cocktail? And you think that—that people that you know—that bar customers recognize it as the same thing, that they have an appreciation now for fresher ingredients and that different—that completely different taste?

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JS: I—I think we're—we're trying to help them along with it, and I really think it's a re-education at this point. You know, it's—it's like what's going on in the grocery store when they have to say *real*. You know, why would you have to say *real*; it should be real anyway but, you know, there's a similar story with the—that whiskey sour. A lady came in and ordered a margarita, and then so I cut a lime and I squeezed the two halves into a drink, tequila, shook the whole thing, put it on fresh ice with the triple sec and everything and she—she was watching me and she took a drink and—very cautiously. And, "I said how is it?" She goes, "Well this is really good. I didn't think it would be." And I was sort of wondering, you know, like—and I figured it out as I didn't grab the neon green sour mix, you know, the—in the plastic jug and that's why she didn't understand what I was doing and ended up ordering two more after that but—. You know, I do think, at this point, it's a re-education and it's—it's kind of fun in some ways, you know, that somebody says, you know, you can take a drink like a whiskey sour that, if you put cheap whiskey and that stuff from a jug with corn syrup and food coloring or whatever is in there, if you turn somebody onto it in a completely different way, well, they're going to go tell somebody else how to make it, you know, and then it's catching on.

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AE: So would you say, if you were to kind of assign a timeline to how, you know, cocktails are making a resurgence and they're changing and fresher ingredients and all that, would you say that this is kind of more on the cusp of that explosion, or do you think it's been kind of riding underground steadily here and is—is just kind of—just starting to be noticed?

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JS: You know, I think, like I said, hit London—London and hit New York. There's some great bars there like the Pegu Club that, you know, I really love going to where, you know, we sat and had—Chef Todd Richards and I—a five-minute conversation about the kind of ice they were using, you know. It was square and **[*Laughs*],** you know, it was just fun to just talk about something like ice, you know, in such a serious manner because at—at the end, it does matter, you know, whether—what it's going to do to the drink. So I think it sort of started there, and there has been a lot written about it in magazines and periodicals and I think—I think it's starting to come. You know, I've seen it in Chicago now and—and you know, we're doing it here and I think it's—I think we're still on the upward swing. I don't think it's going to burn out, necessarily. I think, you know, when you get quality, it will linger on and people will try to push it in different directions but I think it's going—I think it's here to stay.

00:14:54

AE: Well then, how then do you think that this kind of new trend and innovation in cocktails and—and appreciation of fresh ingredients and—and developing new ideas parallels the kind of celebrity chef culture that we're so deep in anymore? Do you think that those things run parallel, or do you think that cocktail culture is kind of trying to catch up to that?

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JS: I think it's there in some ways. I do think it's—you know, I've heard people refer to themselves as bar chefs. You know, I prefer the term mixologist or just plain-old bartender; it's good, you know. There's—I think there's something noble in tending a bar, if you do it—if you do it really well. But you know there's—there's—people are trying to elevate it to that status, and you see it in magazines; you see it on TV and radio and, you know, I've been at 4:00 a.m. behind the Derby, you know, Churchill Downs doing—mixing cocktails for the *Morning Show* on TV and stuff like that so, you know, people are interested in it. And, you know, it's a way for somebody who is not necessarily cooking to try to make a name for themselves, so I don't bemoan it. **[*Laughs*]** But, you know, hopefully it's—it's just not taken, you know—it just seems to be a little bit of a backlash with the celebrity chef thing recently, and people want to just eat again. And so I hope it doesn't take it to that level, you know. So—.

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AE: What about in developing new drinks and—and working to create savory cocktails and pairing cocktails with food and that kind of thing? Can you talk about that?

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JS: Yeah. We—we do that a little bit here and, you know, just saying—being in bourbon country, for instance, and having that many different types of brown spirits, you know. What makes the difference? And—and if you really think about it, you know, take Maker's Mark, for instance. It's made with winter wheat. It's a sweeter bourbon, so we might, you know, hold off until dessert to pair those two together. Whereas like a Woodford or—well, let's take Woodford.

Woodford, for instance, has a lot of rye to it, so it's spicier, so we're going to use that for a cocktail maybe in the middle of the course or—or toward the entrée because, you know, it's got a more savory element to it, as opposed to the sweet, you know. The Van Winkle's, you know, some of those you know, the twenty—twenty-three-year-old—it's so rare you want to sort of almost save it for the end, you know. And it's maybe a piece of chocolate bites in a snifter. At the same time, you take their twelve-year-old—makes delicious cocktails, you know. You take some fresh berries and bitters and smash those together and add the bourbon and shake it—dash of ginger ale or something like that, you know, it's going to make a wonderful cocktail. There is a little bit of orthodox here, I think, about you know, blending or mixing with brown spirits; you're just you know—splash of branch water, you know, that's all you're supposed to do, but **[*Laughs*]** no we sort of push it a little bit sometimes.

00:17:59

AE: Uh-hmm. Well and Janet [a bartender at the Seelbach] was telling me last night about a cocktail that you make with Buffalo Trace [bourbon] that has balsamic vinegar and—and basil in it.

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JS: Yeah, that one is kind of fun. We took that to the [James] Beard House. We did—the Beard House was interesting because that was my third time there cooking, and I went two times with another chef; but when I went with Todd Richards and Duane Nutter, we did cocktails and the—the people at the Beard House were so used to drinking wine that we kind of shook them up a little bit. We paired cocktails with each course, and Todd did versions—really hyped-up versions of classic favorites, comfort foods, what have you, that really weren't classic comfort foods, you

know, **[*Laughs*]** once he gets hold of them. But we did a drink that—called the Bufala Negra, you know, black buffalo. That's sort of somewhere between the fresh flavors of almost an *insalata caprese* [traditional Italian salad of tomatoes, basil, and mozzarella] combined with a Mint Julep and they—they sort of go together. You know, basil is in the mint family, so you know, like a Mint Julep, we'll take basil and a cube of sugar, and we'll start to blend that together. I really love bitters in any kind of drink and so, instead of bitters, you know, we're talking basil and some balsamic [vinegar], which adds a little acidity to it, as well, which was nice, so you got the bitter and the acid. We grind those three things together, muddle them up; we add the bourbon and then top it off with ginger ale and it—all those flavors in the ginger is a little spicy to it, so you've—you've got sweet, spicy, savory—you've got all these elements pulling at you at the same time, so it turned out to be a pretty good drink. People couldn't believe it but—. **[*Laughs*]**

00:19:46

AE: Do you ever make it here? I mean do you—is that something that people can come and ask and that you'll make it for them?

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JS: Yes. I actually had someone in the other day, and they were in the night before—I was off and apparently they couldn't find basil in the kitchen, you know. It's—we're sitting here in January so I—apparently were out of fresh basil for the day. So the gentleman comes back the next day with his own package of fresh basil from the store and wants—wants to see me and wants the drink made. So I guess he had read about it in a magazine somewhere **[*Laughs*]**; so—so yeah, I was more than happy to oblige.

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AE: Well tell me about some of the other cocktails that you've developed over the years.

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JS: Well, we do one called a Black and Blue and we take blueberries and blackberries and we—mostly blueberries. We muddle those together with a little bit of simple syrup and Peychaud bitters and we add Jim Black Label, like an eight year-old Jim Beam, and we top it off with a little soda water and you get—what sounds like somewhat of a foo-foo drink. It is actually quite savory, at the same time, and, you know, it's served in a tall glass, and it's a very cool refreshing summer drink. And again, you know, taking an eight-year-old bourbon and mixing it with fruit and bitters and, you know, really, it goes against that whole orthodoxy but, you know, it turns out to be lovely.

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AE: So how would you say that you developed your palate in—in bartending and your—your taste for—for liquors and combinations in developing new drinks?

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JS: Oh, lots of drinking, actually. **[*Laughs*]** Research and development, that goes without saying. No, I—you know, I take the nuance. I have a memory for—for trivial stuff, you know, and—and people will call me and wonder, you know, who sang that song in 1978 or whatever all the time. So I guess my brain works in trivial ways but, for instance, they were doing a seminar on vodka at the Pendennis Club of all places. Dale DeGroff and—and Tony Abu-Gamin were doing it. And there were six vodkas and they said, "Well write down which ones you think they

are, just blind—out of the clear blue." We hadn't really been talking about them. And, you know, they gave you which six they could be and just which ones, you know, you picked, you put those together. And I think I got four out of six; I just kind of mixed up two, and I don't drink vodka—that's the other thing. And so, but I know that this one has a profile of wheat, this one has a profile of grapes, for instance, this one has a profile, so you can sort of pick it out after a while and you know talking so—and having such a good relationship with the chefs that, you know, I can taste their food all the time. I go back and taste their ingredients just to kind of refresh my palate, so constantly thinking in combinations. And, you know, when you're working with partners like Todd and Duane, you know their combinations—white chocolate and spaghetti squash together is—is a puree on one of our dishes right now, you know, so it's—they're pushing it so I, you know, I have to push it, as well. **[*Laughs*]**

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AE: Uh-hmm. So you take cues from them then in—in some of the cocktails that you make especially—specifically talking about the Beard House dinner and that—. Do they ever take cues from you in—in integrating some liquors into what they're cooking in the kitchen?

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JS: Yeah, I—I definitely think so. You know, we get things, you know—we got a new gin about a year ago—well it's been around for a while. But like Hendricks, for instance. It has elements of cucumber and rose hips and stuff, you know, so we might take that and make a dish out of it. Or I made a version of a cocktail for Audrey Saunders, the woman who started the Pegu Club. She did an Earl Gray Martini and, you know, it's done with egg whites and—and Earl Gray tea, lemon. So they took that and did a variation because they loved the texture of it, and we would

pour it tableside over a dish that we were serving with scallops, for instance. **[*Laughs*]** So yeah, we kind of play off each other that way.

00:23:51

AE: Nice. So could you imagine that you would have an opportunity to have that kind of expression and collaboration in a place in—in—being in this industry?

00:24:00

JS: I don't think I could be here, if I didn't. You know, I've had good relationships with chefs in the past, but I think you know the—the combination with Todd and I—we were born about eight days apart. He's originally from Chicago; I grew up in Chicago. You know, we never knew each other but, you know, there's—there's something that just clicked, you know, so it's—it works pretty well and—and you know, I left here, actually, for two years and then came back. I've been back to the Seelbach for about a year and where I'm going, he's going, or vice versa so—. **[*Laughs*]**

00:24:40

AE: So do you intend to not go anywhere for a while and—and you both stay here at the Seelbach for some time?

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JS: Where is this going to be recorded? **[*Laughs*]** You know, I think we're both entrepreneurial men at this point, and I think we're eventually, you know, would like to run the ship—had enough experiences and—and think we can go out there and do it, you know. It's a—it's the hardest working industry. You know the—the guys who—the lawyer or doctor, well, you know,

"I cook at home; I think I could do this." Don't. **[*Laughs*]** But we know what we're getting into so—. Sounds like an alarm.

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AE: Well tell me about being here at the Seelbach and the—and the history that comes with the job and—and kind of nodding to that and also looking in your own direction.

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JS: Well, you know, the history is—is one of the things that attracted me to here. We got a break at—I was working at Charlie Trotter's at the time, and we came down to explore the city as we would—my partner and I, we traveled to—my folks now live in the other side of Atlanta in Georgia and they—as we traveled to see them, the cities that looked most interesting, Louisville had this sort of historic appeal as you're flying down I-65, so we took a weekend to come down and explore, and I think you always kind of want to know what you're worth. So I sent a resume to a gentleman that was doing my job now, Director of Restaurants, here and offered me a job that was somewhat comparable in pay. But you know, Louisville is much better in the cost of living **[*Laughs*]** and really, it was fun to explore a city that, excuse me, had as many interesting things going on as Chicago but on a much smaller scale. And you know, it—it is kind of the big fish, small pond, but the historic aspects are one of the things that definitely drew me here. Like I said, the first week I was here was Derby Week, and this is in 2001, and Tony Bennett was here. He had done the Derby poster that year, and he was staying on the second floor here above us. And Wolfgang Puck was coming in, and we had taken him around to some of the distilleries and just really had a good time. In fact, that's one of the funny things, talking about the history; I had sort of soaked it up really fast. Some of the elements of the lobby

and the Rathskeller, and this is where F. Scott Fitzgerald used to come and get thrown out of here when he was in the military so—it's the setting of Tom and Daisy Buchanan's wedding in the *Great Gatsby*. All of these things helped, you know. We needed Wolfgang Puck's table to turn on Derby night, and he was coming in and so, you know, I offered a historic tour to these folks and then desserts in the—in the Ante Room where we're sitting here now afterward outside of the room and—and these folks went for it and they seemed very happy. And I—you know, went on about a twenty-minute historic tour of telling them all about it. And then we immediately brought out dessert out to them here, and what it did is it really got the table moved and got the VIP to where he was supposed to be. **[*Laughs*]** And at the end the lady said, "You needed my table, didn't you?" I said, "Yes, ma'am, I did." **[*Laughs*]**

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AE: What a glamorous way to—to make the table turn?

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JS: Yeah, it—it helped.

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AE: So do you think cocktails and food taste different in a setting like this?

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JS: I—I think so; I think it helps. I think there is, you know—like when you walk into a church, there's a reason that it's really high ceilings and stained glass windows. It tries to set you in the mood. And I think, if the mood is for cocktails, I think it's nothing better to be surrounded by all this rich wood and marble. And, you know, the Oak Room itself was a gentlemen's billiards

room and, you know, there's these chandeliers hanging where each pool cue would have been. All my French red wine is stored in the original bar, you know, which supposedly could spin around at one point, you know, because of Prohibition. There is a room in there that we use as—as a private room; it seats about ten or twelve people. It's known to locals as the Al Capone Room and it's—you know, there is—of course every—Al Capone was everywhere, from there to Florida, you know, to Chicago but supposedly—and—and there is—I've seen the stairs because in the café below us there's a little trap—what I'm getting at is, there's a little trap door in there and it had a spiral staircase that you could go to, basically, underground. And I talked to the local Louisville Gas and Electric guy; you can still walk from here to the Brown [Hotel] underground if you wanted to—the Brown Hotel, which is two blocks away. And I've actually seen the staircase coming out of the bottom of there when they were doing a repair in the café kitchen below us and so, you know, it's marble and steel and they—they said there was a Prohibition wine cellar in there where things were kept. You know, it's the curse of Geraldo [Rivera]: nothing was in there. **[*Laughs*]** But, you know, there's—there's these cool elements that, you know, if you know the stories and you walk in and—and you see all this great marble and wood, you want to have something more classic, I think.

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AE: So, being Director of Restaurants, do you get much opportunity to actually be in a bar and—and serve cocktails?

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JS: You know, I almost force myself. It's sort of the fun part, you know. I could sit in front of a computer and forecast and schedule and all the stuff that makes me want to pull my hair out but, you know, like today I was re-cataloging—we have about 1,200 different selections on our wine list so I've been—and we just had a sommelier leave, so I've been doing that and that—my mind sort of works that way sometimes. You know, I want to organize; I want to just get my hands on it, you know. It's dusty and dirty, and I'm not wearing a tie today. But the same thing with the bar, you know, sometimes I just want to get back there and—and see the accomplishment of making something or making somebody happy or talking about it you know—giving a tour of the hotel that ends in a bourbon tasting of five different bourbons, you know, for instance so—.

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AE: So do you have one or two things that, in your opinion, make a good bartender?

00:31:00

JS: You know, I think cleanliness and organization, I think, definitely help. I think, you know, a sense of moderation, being able to try everything but not—not get lost in it, **[*Laughs*]** per se. You know, I've seen people get into trouble, you know, that way, but there's some folks who can just do it and—and stay restrained until—at which time they're able to let loose, you know. I think that's a good element of it. You know, the fresh ingredients is—is one of the things I have to go back to, you know. A sense of history and a sense of propriety means, you know, using things fresh. So I think those are about the three or four things that I would definitely mention.

00:31:50

AE: And then if you had to kind of project into the future of cocktails, is there any one thing you see or something that you want to do that hasn't been done?

00:32:01

JS: Hmm. Well, I want to take it to a bigger scale. I want more people to understand, you know, what we're doing, as opposed to, you know, people are constantly—say, liquor vendors are constantly trying to buy you things that are newest, the hippest, you know, of every kind of flavored vodka. You don't need to flavor vodka; vodka is a neutral spirit, and you flavor it with fresh ingredients like a pear, you know. You don't need a pear vodka. So, you know, I would like to see great base spirits turn people on that, you know, other bartenders were taking to a new level with interesting ingredients, you know. Ginger syrup, you know—something—lemongrass, something that's going to interest me, I would like to see more of that. There is probably less than a handful of people I can think of in the city doing that currently. So, you know, the future—I want to see it on a bigger scale.

00:33:04

AE: Well and what do you drink when you go out in—in Louisville?

00:33:07

JS: That's a good one. It just depends. You know, at the end of the night, say I've been concentrating on wine all day, the first thing I want is a glass of beer. **[*Laughs*]** I just want a cold refreshing—probably something real hoppy. But if I'm going to have cocktails, like I said, not a lot of people are doing what I would want them to do, and they're not necessarily going to let me jump behind the bar so a Negroni is a great one. It's pretty simple, even if you have to explain it

to the bartender. You know, it's just equal amounts of Campari, gin, and sweet vermouth. So that one—that one—even a bad bartender can make a good—good Negroni so—. **[*Laughs*]** I think that might be one I'd do.

00:33:54

AE: All right. Well is there anything that I haven't touched on that you would like to make sure to share with the people about the industry and the craft and—and the technique or anything along those lines?

00:34:09

JS: No, just I think it's encouraging that—that people are thinking about it and that I see a whole crop of, you know, even younger folks coming up that are just on fire about it and, you know, those are the places I want to go spend my money. So, hopefully, it keeps coming.

00:34:29

AE: Well and—and that just made me think about printing some of these drink recipes; do you have any intentions to maybe do a cocktail book or anything along those lines?

00:34:39

JS: We definitely thought about it. My partner, Cassandra, and I, she's—just amazes me with her palate all the time and we had, at one point, kicked around the idea of doing this, so yeah, eventually, I'd love to do one, yeah.

00:34:54

AE: All right. Well, Jerry, thank you for sitting with me.

00:34:57

JS: Oh, thank you.

00:34:57

AE: Let's have a cocktail. **[*Laughs*]**

00:35:00

[End Jerry Slater Interview]