

IRENE RICH

Peak Brothers Bar-B-Q – Waverly, KY

* * *

Date: June 12, 2009

Location: Peak Brothers Bar-B-Q – Waverly, KY

Transcription: Shelley Chance, ProDocs

Length: 1 hour, 21 minutes

Project: Southern BBQ Trail - Kentucky

[Begin Irene Rich, Peak Brothers Bar-B-Q]

00:00:00

Lisa Powell: Today is June 12, 2009, and this is Lisa Powell with the Southern Foodways Alliance. And I'm in Waverly, Kentucky, at Peak Brothers Bar-B-Q, talking with Irene Rich. So would—first of all, would you restate your name and state your birthday for the recording?

00:00:22

Irene Rich: My name is Irene Rich; my birthday is November the 15th, 1955.

00:00:28

LP: Thank you. So will you—to start off the interview, will you tell us a little bit about the—just the basic history of Peak Brothers Bar-B-Q. When did—when did it first open?

00:00:40

IR: It opened on July 4, 1948, with my dad Buddy and my Uncle Barker. And they'd just got out of the War and had to have a job, and so they purchased the first building from—I can't remember the guy's name; anyway they purchased the first building and started Peak Brothers. And they started serving barbecue then. It was a small place. It seated I think about twelve people in the bar and—shoot—probably about maybe thirty—maybe more than that in the—in the dining room. But it was—at that time women weren't allowed in the bar, so it was men only. And they had—they had a great time. They had a good business. They pushed the tables out of

the way on Friday and Saturday nights and danced and kids came in sometimes on Friday and Saturday nights and had their little dances. And that's—they just kept going with it.

00:01:46

Barker got out of it. I'm really not sure how long he was in it, but he got out and started a gas station down the road. And daddy took on another partner; his name was Grover Grimmell and they were partners for—for a very long time. Grover had a major heart attack and passed away and the way they had it set up was either/or—whoever passed away got the—they had like insurance policies and they would get the insurance policy and the other person would own the business. So that's how daddy ended up with the sole ownership until myself and brother and sister, Debbie and Eddie, we all three came in to help him and we took over partnership with him in—I think it was 2001.

00:02:45

And then the second fire came along—no; this would be the—yeah, the second fire. This is the third building. So then with the reconstruction of this building, Debbie and Eddie decided to retire. Eddie would have been sixty in 2006, and he said he always planned on retiring, so he wanted to retire. And Debbie had a new life, so to speak, and so she's playing the role of a mom and a wife and loving every minute of it and—so she got out. So here we are and it's still going.

[Laughs] Do I keep going?

00:03:30

LP: Okay; no that's—that was great. That was great. And I'll just ask you a few follow-up questions from that.

00:03:36

IR: Okay.

00:03:38

LP: So when Peak Brothers first opened, was it on this piece of ground where we are now, or was it somewhere else?

00:03:43

IR: No, ma'am; it was right here. Barker and daddy actually rented the property from Anna Claire Rapier. And when she—when they—I think whenever the second place was rebuilt, he—they actually purchased or dad actually purchased the property at that time. And whenever—so it's been in the same location for—well it will be sixty-one years July 4th—different building, same location. **[Laughs]**

00:04:14

The sign, we've got a sign out front that daddy put up on the—when he rebuilt the second time and whenever this place went down, we had to keep the sign. It's been here since—well, 1966 is when he rebuilt. So we kept the sign; that's our part of the—his place you know. So—and we got a few of the bricks, too, but we don't—we don't have them here. They're just personally kept at home. It's been here a long time. **[Laughs]** We do the same style cooking; we have the big pits. It's hands-on most definitely; you don't stoke the fire, walk off, and leave it. You have to stay right there with it because it will catch on fire really, really quick. So you—you use the wood and you turn it, you dip it, and you have to keep a close watch on it.

00:05:04

The pits were rebuilt; we had to take them out because they—the—too much heat from the—from the two fires. We kept them the first time but the second time they—they had to go; they—they had—had too much heat on them. So the guy that had been—he had—Robert Bass had to come in two or three times and replace bricks and re-fix them, and—so before they were taken out he came down and got measurements and basically did them the same way. There's—there's one difference in the doors but other than that it—they're the exact same structure—everything. Same size. So it's—it's a big pit; it's a good-sized job for one man.

00:05:50

And I guess everybody in our family has worked here from forever. We were brought up and my sister—we've got two girls—my sister and I, we didn't get to work here for a long time because daddy didn't figure like it was appropriate for a lady to work here at that time. **[Laughs]**

00:06:12

So the boys all started; they—I mean it's Billy Steve, Eddie, Bobby, Tony, and then Debbie and I ran it—that's our family. And like I said, we all—we all worked here growing up. Debbie and I were probably the latest. I didn't start until I was fifteen and I don't think she started until she was probably seventeen. She went off and went to school and then came back and started. And—but I stayed home. I was in love and had to stay home and go to school at Henderson, so—. **[Laughs]**

00:06:42

Then the other boys, Billy Steve, he went into—he was the Sheriff here for a while, and then he got into be the County Court Clerk. Eddie, of course, he was with—he was actually with Hostess, and then he came down and I guess between the three of us, Debbie, Eddie, and I, we had to **[Laughs]**—I don't know how much of this stuff you're supposed to tell, but anyway;

okay. Dad needed some help, you know the financial end of it and he needed—he needed a break. So we all three came in to help him and we didn't really realize that it was going to be a lifetime venture, but it turned out to be.

00:07:28

Tony has worked in the coalmines pretty much all his life, and Bobby has worked at several different jobs all his life, and that's the gist of the family. **[Laughs]**

Mom, she was the backbone; she—she cooked really, really, really good, and she made more stuff with barbecue than I think you could shake a stick at. She could make a killer beans and ham, and just, you know, she was—she was the backbone. If there was a spat she kept us together. She passed away in—June 28, 1901—*1901, oh Lord!*—2001, and dad just passed away February 21, 2009. And he was 85, so he was a character. If you knew him, you loved him. You couldn't help it; he was a character. And I'd say Debbie has probably got as much character as anybody that daddy had. It was like two—two peas in a pod for most accounts. Some accounts nowhere alike, but **[Laughs]** their dispositions were. You know he was just—he laughed about everything and when he got older you couldn't tell if he was laughing or crying because he—he had to make a joke of everything because, you know, life throws you some pretty bad curves. And he—he took it with stride and kept on going. He was a tough bird; he was. But—and we miss him, but anyway.

00:09:01

The—both of the fires were started from the pits. They have been the salvation and the nightmare. The first place, there was electrical wires that went over top of the—we've got chimneys on our pits, so they were kind of in position, they were—I'm sure they were higher but

over the years they kept getting lower and kept burning, and when we'd burn the pits off—and you have to burn the pits off. Otherwise they will catch on fire. And so they just burned in half one day; it was in August. I can't remember the exact date. But when it caught on, that roof it just—it went up, because with barbecue you have a lot of smoke and you have a lot of grease. And it didn't—she—she was gone pretty quick.

00:09:54

Dad rebuilt and did an excellent job in—in the second; it was—it was good. And—but it was bigger than the first place. So that's the one I guess you could say that Debbie and Eddie and I grew up in. Dad had the first one and then we grew up in the second one. And then November—I think it was November the 2nd, 2006, it caught fire early one morning. Tony, the cook that we've got now, he was burning his pit off, getting the stuff out of the walk-in to start, and another thirty years of grease and smoke and—I mean you can clean these things, but the—you can't get rid of all of it. So the wind has a lot to do with it; it came back down through the chimney the way the wind was blowing that day. And it just [*snaps*] caught that quick. He ran for a fire extinguisher, and it was just really too late. And I got up here—he got up here I guess about 5:00. He called the house and said you know I'm not—he's a jokester, so he—I thought he was just joking; he wasn't. So I live about twenty minutes away so it was about twenty-five or thirty minutes; when I got here she was—she was well on her way. And the fire trucks were all here. They were trying to get it out and daddy had built a firewall between the kitchen and the dining area. And we were here, but you really—I don't think you can think when you're seeing it all happen, so we had firefighters come through the front door, and fire—well, we had a front door entrance and then we had a back bar door entrance. And there was three different trucks here and one group came in the front door and another group came in the back door. And

somebody opened the door up from the kitchen and when they did it just—it blew out the front door. If any of us had been thinking and told them to leave the door shut then it would have been contained just through the kitchen area. And—but we weren't, and it did, and it really took out the bar bad and—or it—it just took the bar out, and took out the front entrance and the—you know the bathrooms and stuff like that. It looked like a—so I mean the insurance company came in; there wasn't anything that could have been done.

00:12:26

The dining room, it just looked like in the movies kind of like a town that's been just ran out of for no reason, shape, fashion, or form. That's what it looked like the in the dining room because you really couldn't see that there was smoke damage, but there was just—where the water sprinklers had come down like parts of the roof were hanging, and—it was just ugly.

[Laughs]

It was just heart-sickening, but anyway it was—it took us a while to—to regroup and this was in November. And we already had people that had been ordering hams for the holidays. So we were on a venture to call them and tell them what had happened and that we couldn't do it. We got a special permit that Christmas to cook at St. Peter's Church. They usually have their annual picnic, their church picnic, and Father definitely told us that we could, you know, use their pits to cook the hams. And so we did, and it was—we set up a little RC Cola box that we worked out of, and we had a semi here that we transported the hams. We had one over here and then one over at the church; one for—to keep the raw meat in so they could cook, and then we'd transport them over to here that were—where they were already cooked, where we could sell them out of the trailer.

00:13:53

And we have a—a—how do you say it—very loyal customers for their—for their Christmas hams, and we could only cook a limited amount. The ones that got them were very, very happy and the ones that didn't were very sad. **[Laughs]** But it's like we told them, we didn't even—we didn't get one for our Christmas dinner that year. We had the mutton that we had done for the family and it—it was okay; it was—it was okay.

00:14:26

So we started—we took about a three-week break, and we started trying to find a construction outfit that could rebuild, because we didn't know anything about rebuilding. And Randy Sheffer, he's from here, and he always got the hams ,and you know we've known him all his life, and he got some really good recommendations. We wanted somebody that knew what they were doing as far as all the paperwork that went along with—oh, special requirements and stuff like that, because we didn't know. And he—he did, so that's one of the main reasons we went with him. We asked him if he could—he was out of Evansville, so we asked him anybody that he could use in this area for whatever, then we asked that he did use them. If we had to buy stuff, you know we asked that he use our county to buy special stuff. We didn't realize at the time that he had his own crew **[Laughs]** so that was kind of like, “okay.”

00:15:44

But we didn't want to hurt anybody's feelings, but at the same time we didn't know what we were doing. And I know it's not an excuse but he did know what he was doing. He did a fantastic job. He took us to several different restaurants to get ideas on different other things. It was very difficult. We had to pick out down to the doorknobs, and it was to the point of, you

know, “just get a door knob, we’ve got to get reopened!” But **[Laughs]** there was a whole lot more to it.

And once you’re—if you ever burn out, there’s a whole lot of issues that come up that weren’t there prior to, like if you were—we were grandfathered in on several things. Once you burn and it’s gone, you lose all that. And that’s a lot to lose. You have to go to new standards; you have to have equipment that you’ve never heard of before. **[Laughs]** And so we had to do a whole lot of research. And everybody kept wanting to know why it took so long, but there’s a whole lot of new things out there that weren’t there when we were in business. It’s all under code; every—there’s more stuff in this place than I could—you could shake a stick at. The kitchen is unbelievable. We didn’t have air-conditioning in the old place. When the summertime—it was hotter than hell; we had the pits in there. And you worked out of the same kitchen where the pit was. And you left; there wasn’t a dry thread on you—nowhere. Cold in the wintertime **[Laughs]**; you know, it was very uncomfortable. This new place is very comfortable for the workers, and the pit room, that’s one reason it’s—looks quite a bit bigger; it is completely separate from the whole rest of the place. If it ever happens again—it should never happen again; it shouldn’t ever—but anyway, if it ever does it will contain its own self.

00:17:50

Got a lot of good loyal customers from all over; they love our barbecue. Our customers have actually nicknamed our ham, “the black peppered ham,” and they will call and order it that way. And we had **[Laughs]**—you might want to break; I don’t know what else to say. Where am I going?

00:18:15

LP: Well I can—I can have some follow-up questions I can ask you. Okay; or if you—do you want a little break for a second?

00:18:21

IR: No; go on—whatever you want to do.

00:18:24

LP: Okay; well just a couple of—just to clarify a couple of details. So the first fire it was in 1966?

00:18:32

IR: Yes, ma'am; uh-huh, 1966. It was in August. I don't remember the exact date but it was in August and everything had to go except the pits. They were okay, and daddy really thought hard about reopening, being the only one. And he always said he wanted to be a car lot dealer, and the same—actually, between the family and the public that's the reason he—that's the reason he rebuilt.

00:19:03

He had the same deal at Christmas [*Laughs*] that we, had so we actually ran out of our home that Christmas. And he even had chipped mutton, because we had to use the kitchen sink to cut it up and, like I said, things were different then, so—but it worked. And then he got—the reopening date, I really don't remember; I was in the old place, but as far as when it reopened,

when he reopened again I really don't remember. But he did it and regrets—I'm sure some days he did, but he stuck with it. **[Laughs]**

00:19:45

LP: And so during that period when you were running out of your home, were you still able to use the pits? He was still able to use the pits here, and then just kind of had to serve it out of the home?

00:19:54

IR: Right; the pits were like a block away—our home is. You can see Peak Brothers from our house—vice versa—and the pits were still standing. It was very, very cold on those guys. It was very cold **[Laughs]**. They didn't have—they didn't have a lean-to; they didn't have anything and this was just for Christmas, also. After that we shut—I mean he didn't do anymore until he got rebuilt. But he was in the same situation we were. He needed—he felt like he needed to have it for them. And we did have a walk-in box down at the house for backup like if—if the walk-in went out up here, he could pack everything up and just take it right down to the house, because that kind of stuff happens. And so that was his little backup and then so he did—it's still there. But yeah; he did that Christmas, and he's like, “uh-um, we're shutting down again, too.”

[Laughs] We didn't have enough sense to listen to him or pay attention. We decided the same thing when we burnt. **[Laughs]** But yeah; the same things, same problems—they did, they were very cold.

00:20:59

LP: And so where did your—how did your dad learn to barbecue, or where did he get his recipes and things like that?

00:21:07

IR: I really guess it was him and Barker. That I really don't know. I know it's—I really don't know; I should have asked him. But it was always, you know, you—this—this is our recipe. You don't—you know you don't mess it up. You don't mess with it. This is what it is—it's what it is. And it's still the same recipe today. When you get—the only bad part about it, sometimes when you get two or three different people making it—it's okay; what you need? **[Interruption]**

00:21:38

LP: So we had a little pause there, and we're getting started again. So just talking about how your dad and Barker got into barbecuing, maybe. And how they figured out what to do and what to cook and how to do it.

00:21:53

IR: Well it was probably to be—it was probably a barbecue place. The pits were already here; they did not build them. And like I said, when they got out of the War they had to have something, and I guess—I can't think of the man's name. I'll try to get that; I'll try to get the name **[Laughs]** that had it before. But the recipe may have come with it. I really don't—I really don't know—I should, but at the time you're thinking about stuff, you don't realize you're going to be here all your life. You don't write a lot of stuff down. So **[Laughs]** I'm sure—I'm sure the pits were still here. There was an old garage next door. I do know that that's where he kept—he

used to make the dip in big gallon jars, wide-mouthed gallon jars. That's how we had to make it because we'd take the—get the jars from over there and bring it back to the place, and it was just like a walkway, you know. You just walked over to that, and we filled it up, shook it up, and you didn't make a big pan. You made it by the gallon, and then you cooked it, and then you **[Laughs]**—then you put it back in the gallons and—. So it was—it was fun though.

00:23:06

The old place you had, the first old place, it was a little bitty kitchen. You didn't have to walk—I mean as far as steps, one person could handle that kitchen easily—did. I mean you—on Friday and Saturday nights we always had to have a dishwasher because—to keep up with the dishes but the—everything was just laid out. You—you put the barbecue plate through the dinner—I mean through the little window at the bar, and they picked up, and took it out, and brought the dishes back, slung them up against the wall and it was **[Laughs]** very little—very, very perfect.

00:23:43

And we had—we had a smaller pit that we kept everything warm on, and then we had the bigger pit that we cooked on. And during the Christmas holidays, you—sometimes you used the smaller pit and sometimes you didn't. But that was our warming cabinet. And you had to keep a fire in it, and you had to keep the meat turned and dipped, and if you didn't, you really got fussed at. So it was the same—same procedure; you—you have to keep it that way, because if you don't, it gets dried out. And daddy always said, “if you don't want it yourself, then don't sell it and don't serve it. If it's not good enough for you, it's not good enough for them.” And that was his motto and we try to still do that today. If it's not worth a darned back there, if it's—if it has sat back there and for some reason or other didn't get dipped, uh-um, don't use it. Don't sell that

to that customer, because he's going to be disappointed and he won't be back—he or she won't be back.

That's okay?

00:24:50

LP: So just to follow-up a little bit there about your cooking process, so do y'all—what do y'all, kind of walk me through maybe the process that Tony uses. Do you rub anything on the meat before you start? And then are you—you putting the dip on it the whole time; kind of what's that process like?

00:25:10

IR: Okay; the first thing you've got to do is come in and build your fire. You have to have slabs or small wood to get your fire started.

00:25:20

LP: And what kind of wood?

00:25:23

IR: There's a lot you can use; four or five you cannot use. They will definitely mess your meat up. Down to the—let's say you can't—I know you cannot use—a lot of people do, they use the—the fruit woods now, you know, like the apple or the cherry and stuff like—. We don't use that. No fruit trees. No fir trees. It has to be hardwood, and it has to be pretty big-sized wood, so that

it won't burn up because if you have little wood like you put in a fireplace or a wood burner, stove, or something like that it's going to burn up. It's going to get too hot on you.

00:26:04

Seasoned wood—you need a little bit of seasoned, and you need a little bit of fresh, so that it will kind of keep its constant temperature. You start your fire first. And then you let it cool down and then you start loading. And from the front to the back you start with chickens and ribs. They go to the front because the—the heat is not so hot. And then you start with—you can put—mutton goes at the very front. I'll start there with the ribs and the chickens at the very back. In between is your briskets and your pork and your hams. And we don't use shoulders on the—on the pork. We use the fresh pork ham, which—there's not many people that do. It's got a—a lot of good meat. We don't—we don't pull; we never have. That's something that's come about in the last—well, I really don't know how many years. It's just when the barbecue business started taking off, they got into the pulled, the pulled meat. We slice or chip. We also chip by hand and then we found this—I'm getting off the subject again. **[Laughs]** The chipping by hand will kill you! With the mutton, we sell a whole lot of mutton, a whole lot of chipped mutton. And actually we just got into the chipped pork, the chipped ham, chipped beef probably in the last—probably me, Debbie, and Eddie—or Debbie, Eddie, and I, we—we got into that.

00:27:39

But the mutton in the—the first place, we chipped everything by hand. Starting in the second place, we chipped everything by hand. And Arthur (arthritis) will get you in the long-run of chipping by hand, because you have to use a—a very heavy cleaver and we had a wood chopping block, and you literally just chipped the fire out of it. So we found a machine that would do it, and it took a lot of people a lot of—it actually—probably took some of the flavor

out of it. I don't know why unless it was the wood chips [*Laughs*] that—I know it sounds rough but that was before they came up with the—you know the plastic things that you had to put on cutting—cutting boards. You know they didn't have cutting boards. So it took them some while to get used to the machine. It—it was very consistent most of the time unless somebody forgot to turn it off or shuffle it and fluff it. You have to shuffle and you have to fluff it. That—that means you take your hands in. You turn it off and you flip the meat so that it doesn't turn into mush. And when you get new staff in, if you don't tell them that, then you have mush. Mush is not good. [*Laughs*] It needs to be just chipped. And that was a lifesaver.

00:28:56

But back to the cooking—sorry; part of it I guess—we don't rub it. We don't have a rub. I think that started—I don't know when that started. Maybe in Texas they've always done it—don't know. [*Laughs*] But here we didn't. We used—we've got our—got a cooking dip, and it's different than our barbecue dip that we put on the meat to serve. Basically the same, but just a little bit different. You don't—you know you don't—if you put too much stuff when you're cooking, it's going to actually darken the meat and—how to say it—it's going to give it more of a crusty outside. And it's going to get that anyway but that's going to make it like worse. So you do—you do dip while you're cooking, and you keep your—you need to keep your dip hot so that it will go on evenly, the cold dip; you don't get all the little spicy things in it. So when you're dipping you just—it doesn't go on good.

00:30:00

A lot of seasoning goes on; actually, on the last go-round when it's about ready to get taken off, then you add seasonings also. And it stays on. You dip it, then you season it, and then you take it off. And it gets—it gets—it's just kind of like a glue-stuck thing. It sticks on there, so

I guess we rub when we're done, I guess—basically. **[Laughs]** And it takes between—from start to finish if you're doing like a pit because the pit cools down, it takes between about eight to ten hours to cook a load. During the Christmas holidays, when you're cooking around the clock, it actually takes about six hours. Because you've already got your fire hot and it you just stoke it up again. And in between—in between times after you take a load off and reload, you burn it off, let it cool back down a little bit, and then you throw everything back on. Otherwise it's about—it's an eight to ten hour process, uh—okay.

00:31:12

LP: Okay; and so when do you all—when does the cooking usually start each morning here?

00:31:20

IR: Anywhere from 4:00 to 5:00 in the morning. That way if you're—you can have ribs and chickens off by noon for the lunch crowd and like I said, you can cook a lot on this so we—today's time you try to have the freshest you can have. So we've got a vacuum-packed machine; this pit is big and it holds a lot of meat. So when we rebuilt, we didn't think about having the little pit back. We weren't going to put it in the kitchen because of the—actually there was whole lots of reasons why not to—maybe should have and that way you could cook a smaller load. But we've got a vacuum-packed machine. And I probably—probably shouldn't be saying all this **[Laughs]** but we like vacuum-pack some of the ribs and some of the chickens to give it longer shelf life, because you can't fire that big pit up to cook just chickens and ribs, or you will go under.

So you—and sometimes the pork; it just all depends on how business is going. Usually every day that he cooks we have fresh, and then we vacuum-pack that evening that has cooled out, put them in the walk in, and then now we've got a—what is that thing called—a—*a Shaam*. It's a—it's a 2000 heating box. **[Laughs]** You keep your meat in there. It's put in every day. We still dip it, turn it; we don't put very much in there at a time, because we have found—this is trial and error through this year—you can't keep it in there because it will lose its flavor. So you put what you think you're going to expect to use that day. You turn it; you dip it. And you know, you don't use it. If you don't use it then you don't—I guess that's the reason we got into the chipped stuff, you know because it still has its flavor that night. It's not used that day then it's chipped that night and the rest of it is vacuum-packed to be fresh and keep the smoke and the—you know the flavor into it. Okay? **[Laughs]**

00:33:44

LP: Um, okay; and so let's—we—you've talked about a lot of the different meats that you have as we were just going through the cooking process. How—how has that changed over the years? So I guess, what did they first start out serving back in 1948? And you—you mentioned that you all kind of introduced the—some of the chipped pork and stuff a little more—I guess we can just kind of go through how the menu has changed over the years.

00:34:15

IR: It hasn't changed a lot. There's always been mutton. There's always been pork, the ham, always—chicken and ribs. The new place, we started getting—this is in 1966—I'm not sure when—when it got started but anyway the beef was introduced, the beef brisket. On the chipped

part, daddy always had chipped mutton—always, always, always and because what you use are the—we get a whole sheep. The mutton hams were for the sliced mutton, the shoulders and ribs and the necks were—we pulled it off the bone and chipped it and that was your chipped mutton.

00:35:03

Somewhere along the line in the—in the 1966 building, we started the chipped pork and the chipped ham also. People liked the chipped mutton, and they were like, you know, “why can't y'all do with this—the pork and the ham?” The ham, we've—we've always made ham salad with the ham, and we chipped it up. But as far as putting dip on it and serving it, just never did. So—probably because mama got all the ham bones, but **[Laughs]** that's a good reason. But I—I really don't know when—when all that came into effect. I don't remember really chipping pork in the—in the very first place. I know we always had chipped mutton but there all—. I mean it's just like a Sloppy Joe-type sandwich, and they're good if you like it hot and spicy. I do; so I like it—you know I like it. I like all of it. I've not tried any of it—but basically every piece of meat he started with is still here. Beef was the only thing that was actually introduced later on. Don't know that you know, back then, that they had beef briskets. I guess they probably did but that was just something that wasn't done. And we do now. **[Laughs]** We didn't change any—oh I'm sorry, okay.

00:36:29

LP: And so what are—along with that maybe kind of talk me through some of the different things that you've done at the restaurant kind of different jobs that you've had in the restaurant, we'll say, since you first started when you were fifteen, right? Is that—yeah; what—what are the

different things you've done to—to help out your dad originally and then now that you're—you're in charge?

00:36:53

IR: Everybody starts washing dishes. I don't care who you are; you start with the dishes, yeah. Started with the dishes, stock person you know; come in and do dishes and put up the stock and then you learn how to slice, and god-forbid, daddy was—. *Oh*, you did not slice that meat wrong. Oh Lord; that was a no-no. And making dip, and then you get to actually start making orders, and putting them out. And just one thing leads to another and it's just a [**Laughs**], you just start—you start at the bottom and you really do work your way up. I mean like I said, that was just—I needed a job, and daddy needed help and started it. And I actually left in—my husband and I, we were going to take off and move to Colorado. We packed up everything and we were gone about three weeks, and ended up coming back. Daddy just—he did not like that. [**Laughs**] So we—we did; we came back and my husband and I actually worked then—both worked here together. That didn't work out too good. It was a—everybody has new ideas. And Debbie, Eddie, and I were at the point that you know if it's not broke why do—you know you don't have to fix it. And there's a lot of truth to that, but at the same time you—you have to be open-minded to try new things. And we weren't, and so Ronnie ended up leaving—getting a different job, and I stayed here.

And we used to do the Union County Fair. We'd take a truck down there and set up for the whole week, and he did help with that a whole lot. We had a whole bunch of different people; well, there's been a whole bunch of different people that have worked here, and—good people.

It's—it's been a—a whole bunch of good people. They outnumber the bad ten to one, and as far as I can tell, most of us all had a good time and worked hard, because the restaurant business is hard. I don't care who you are and who—if you say it's not, you didn't do your job good, whoever they are, **[Laughs]** because it is. It's hard work.

And servers have to have their smiles on whether they—you know whatever is going on at home, they got to leave it, walk in the door, and smile—very difficult to do a whole lot of days. And the good ones can do it. They just—but for the most part, you know it's—it's—it's hard work, but it's fun work. And every day is different. You know you don't have to go in and know you're going to do the same job. It is the same job, but you can have somebody come in and they're having a bad day and make their day, and so you feel better.

00:39:48

It's—as far as where you come, I mean, like starting at fifteen, you learn a whole lot. Whether daddy knew it or not, he taught us a whole lot, he really did. Just, I mean—the way he carried on with the customers, and the way he—from what was going on to the back, to the front, you know, losing it in the back because of something that was—. I saw him—the only time I really ever saw him mad, he walked into the walk-in one day and I don't know what made him mad, but we used to have these great big pans. And we got one that we salvaged out of the fire. But he threw that thing and hit the back of the wall, and I—*whooo*, I had never seen him mad before. He was up—he was upset about something. I don't know if it was something that happened in the walk-in, or the cook, or what happened. But when he walked back out front, it—it was gone, and he was all smiles again. And you got to do it; they don't want to see you upset. They came here to have a good time. They came here to enjoy their self and it really does make a

difference. You got—I mean it really does, so you got to brush it off and—it's hard. Like I said, it's hard to do some days.

00:41:01

That—I don't know how—I really don't know how it came from washing dishes to today. It was just a—it was just a lifetime, that's all. You learn by the—you learn by what he teaches—what he taught us, and that's me, Debbie, and Eddie. And the customers will tell you, you know what—what's wrong with you today? **[Laughs]** And slowly but surely, as far as the changes that we made that—that he didn't make they're probably wasn't that many. I mean the Health Department, you know, rules change, so you have to go along with stuff like that.

And you know, people's tastes change, so you have to add more to your menu, because you can't eat barbecue every day. And when you're in a small area, you have to have something else to offer them, which daddy always did. And—because well you know even—even me, I don't care for seafood. So if I go to a seafood restaurant because my husband loves it, then they offer me something else. It might not be as good as what's down the road that just solely does that, but it works, you know. **[Laughs]**

00:42:23

So our—our top thing is the barbecue. We've got a wide variety of different other stuff to offer people. We've always had country ham. It's just a good old-fashioned ham, not the barbecue ham—totally two different things; it's salty. Ours sometimes is, but I think that goes along with the curing process, because they are cured hams that we cook. And fresh pork is a green ham; a lot of people don't know that. That's the difference between the two; they—a lot of people don't understand. One is fresh, which is, back then—was called a green ham. It's white

meat, like pork chops. Barbecued ham is a cured ham, which is red meat. It's been cured. Ours that we get are salt and sugar-cured. The country ham is totally salt-cured. **[Laughs]** Excuse me.

00:43:20

LP: And—oh no; it's—you may need to take a breath. **[Laughs]**

00:43:28

IR: Damn; I'm about ready for a beer! **[Laughs]**

00:43:31

LP: If you need to get any water or anything we can—we can take a little break.

00:43:34

IR: Do you want something?

00:43:35

LP: I'm fine, but—

00:43:37

IR: Okay; okay.

00:43:37

LP: —but really it’s totally fine. I know that sometimes it helps me a drink of water or something, so—.

00:43:42

IR: I can do coffee or beer; I ain't too much on water. **[Laughs]** And it ain't beer-thirty yet, so— I'm smoking those cigarettes. Shew, Lord have mercy. **[Laughs]** Okie-dokie; what else are you going to get into, or do you know? **[Laughs]**

00:43:57

LP: Yeah; well I'm going to ask you just a little bit about—more about the cured—the curing process. Is that—that's something I didn't know that I want to hear a little more about and—

00:44:07

IR: Well we don't cure them here.

00:44:08

LP: Right; yeah.

00:44:09

IR: Okay; okay.

00:44:09

LP: So I'll just ask you a little bit about that and then definitely, we haven't talked about the sort of reopening process yet for the new—this—the year anniversary that was yesterday. So we can talk a little bit about that and I want to—since I took a picture of that Barbecue Sunday and stuff yesterday I want to ask you, you know about how you came up with that idea and stuff.

00:44:31

IR: Okay. [*Laughs*]

00:44:36

LP: Oh okay; but I had accidentally turned it back on. That's okay. [*Laughs*] Okay; so we had a little break there where we took a pause [*Laughs*] and we're going to get restarted with the official interview right now.

00:44:58

Okay; so we were talking about the difference between a country ham which is a big—a big thing here in Union County but then—and then the difference between the—the pork that you use for your chipped pork, for example, and then the curing of the hams. So, about how long do those hams cure before you all get them and—and barbecue them?

00:45:26

IR: That I don't know. We've always used—we purchase them from a supplier, and they're just—it's called a cured ham. What we use is an eighteen to twenty-two-pound cured ham, bone-in; it has a—in our opinion, everybody has got one, but just think it has a much better flavor/taste with the bone than the boneless or semi-boneless. It keeps it more compact, and they're a bigger

ham. We have to skin them, and we have to skin the fresh pork, but as far as the curing process itself it's just—it's like an Emge Ham. That's basically what you can—you know everybody knows an Emge Ham so we just take them and cook them and we have people that bring their hams. We do custom cooking, and they'll bring their hams in. We have tried the smaller hams just for convenience sake. We—we used to just sell whole hams all the time, and Joe Hagan—which was Hagan's Market back in the day—at Christmas time if somebody wanted them sliced, then we'd take them down there and he would slice them for us, and he would go through the bone.

00:46:53

Well a lot of people didn't like that, so we came up with deboning and it's a process where you have to go around the bone and take the meat literally off of it and then slice it on a slicer that, you know, it's just a regular slicer, you know. You just debone it and then you put the bone—god forbid if you don't put that bone on the side, because they want it for their beans. And when they get a whole ham sliced, we just debone it, slice it, put their bone in it and put the meat on top of it, and actually use beer boxes wrapped in aluminum foil. And then we have our signature bag that we place them in, and that's the way we sell the whole ham sliced.

00:47:39

If you get a whole ham, then we just literally put it in the bag, wrap it up, and then they take it with them. We've been doing this for—the bagged hams they've been going—they've been here sixty years. And the slicing, I guess, I'm not—probably started somewhere in the—probably in the '80s, I'm guessing. The deboning and the slicing—that was a chore. We butchered a few hams on that deal trying to figure out how to exactly debone them after they were cooked. If they're warm—oh, it's a piece of cake. If they're cold, it is *hard*. It's—it's not

hard; it's just—yeah, it is hard to try to get that bone out of that ham and keep all the meat intact but get it off the bone at the same time.

00:48:24

That's just—it's—it's a good—it's a good product. It's a very good product. We—we were shipping—let's see; we got shut down on that in uh, it was '91 or '92, and this was just ignorance on our part. We didn't know that you had to be federally inspected to ship. And we had some—some of the Federal Inspectors come down asking us, you know, “are y'all shipping hams?” And we were—“yeah; we are.” And “no; you can't.” And we fought them, but again the Grandfather's Act came into play, and the Grandfather's Act—someone in—don't—we don't have a clue who did, but someone actually turned us in. And the Grandfather's Act had been taken away. We could no longer be doing it one month prior to them coming and shutting us down. So they had done it two months prior to, then we could have gotten in under the Grandfather's Act. But we couldn't because it was—you know, didn't know anything about it.

00:49:32

We are working on it, trying to figure out a way where we can ship again, because a lot of people want the product. The only way that we can do it is if they literally come and pick it up or if they know someone in the area that can come and actually pick one up and ship it themselves to them. And there's not a lot of people out there that can do that, and we have a lot of clients that come down from—well, from all over. And they will actually pick up twenty to fifty to sixty hams to take back to their clients. And then their clients want to get one shipped to them, and they can't do it. *[Laughs]*

So we are—hopefully we’ll come up with something; it’s just—it’s very difficult to try to get—to try to keep the business running, and we’ve always—which goes back to daddy—you have hands-on contact with your customers. You don’t—you play a part in that, so you don’t just—you—you know what you’re doing. You’ve got to work in the—you’ve got to know from A to B—or A to B—A to Z what’s going on in the restaurant. You have to know how to cook it; you got to know how to serve it; you got to know what it tastes like, and to put one more item in there, there’s only twenty-four hours in a day, and **[Laughs]** it will get done, but it’s going to take a—a little while. **[Laughs]**

00:51:04

And it’s—I think it can be done. I checked into it or actually we did—Debbie and Eddie and I, we checked into it after we burnt, because it was one thing that we did want to do. And according to the—all the work that we did, it was about the pits. We have tried stainless steel cookers so that we could do it. They—our product does not come out the same. You know, they said, you—you’re doing this wrong or that wrong with the stainless steel cookers. We have tried three different types and kept them for like a week at a time and have cooked different things on it—always a ham, and can’t get the same flavor. It just—it just doesn’t happen. So actually my son started working on it, because after we—we got reopened, he saw that I wasn’t going to be able to and he started working on some of the paperwork and some of the legwork, and now he’s had a—a baby, and that was a little surprise for him and his wife, but they did **[Laughs]** and that kind of got backed off.

00:52:09

Well he’s—he’s ready to start back on and try to figure out how we can do this. And I hope we get to, because I really think it would be a—it would—it would—I’ve wanted to do that

since I was twenty years old. **[Laughs]** I remember coming in and you know, “we need to do this.” And then we—like I said, we started doing it and then we got shut down, so it’s back to page one, and we—we’ll get it accomplished. It’s just going to take a year or two. And—yeah; we will. **[Laughs]**

00:52:41

LP: And do you have any rough idea maybe of how many hams y’all do cook in—in some amount of time, I don’t know a year? Or—or the month of December? Or a week? Or—or how many you serve—serve at Christmas, any sort of rough idea on any of those kinds of numbers?

00:52:59

IR: In a year’s time I would—I couldn’t have a clue. But the computer, we can maybe have an idea. We’re—we’re still doing hand-work. Excuse me. The computer is being taught to me now, which really wigs me out because I should have been born 100 years ago. But it will be able to keep track of things like that and that’s a good thing instead of trying to—I keep my records on—in, just on paper, you know paper notebooks, and go back to them from time to time, but that’s the way we’ve always done it.

00:53:36

Thanksgiving through Christmas is our busiest time—and—wow; hmm, I’d say probably between 2,000 and 3,000 hams go out during that—that space. It could be less, it could be more; that’s not an actual *count* count, but there’s a lot. And we have very few people that are dissatisfied. Most of them are just—just tickled to death to get one. And like I said, the—the clients that we have gotten, then they have turned around and they will come through the year to

get one. You know, if they're having a special meeting or a gathering, then they'll come down and pick some up and you know use it for that. We do sell quite a few during Easter and Mother's Day and Father's Day but the—the big daddy is—is Christmas, and that's because you don't—I mean you don't have to do anything to it. You just have to slice it and eat it; it's done. If you want it heated, just get you a little dip and pour it on it and serve it hot, but it's good so many different ways.

00:54:51

We've come up with some [*Laughs*] off-the-wall stuff. Some things have failed with—because you do have—I'm getting off the subject again, but yeah; we—we sell a lot of hams.

[*Laughs*]

00:55:07

LP: It's fine to get off the subject.

00:55:08

IR: Oh okay. With a lot of people, I mean they're—which I don't blame them you know. Barbecue is expensive. Ours is; when you—when you've got a—a—a pit that size and you have to you know—when we reopened this last time, wood—everything—everything had gone—God!; it was unbelievable. And I remember one gentleman coming in. He said y'all picked—excuse my language—but he said, Y'all picked a hell of a time to reopen, didn't you?" He said, "Everything has quadrupled since y'all burnt down." It was like yeah; well we didn't know—you know didn't know that was going to happen. And but so with—with a ham that size you have quite a bit of waste that people really don't want to pay the price for; you know, they want the

premium cut and that's what we try to give them. But you've got a lot of good meat that needs to be utilized in something.

00:56:09

So, and you can only—like again, it's—it goes back to, you know, eating barbecue seven days a week. So we came up with—this was actually my own little family, my daughter and son and his wife and [my] husband. We were—it wasn't this past ice storm; it was the ice storm before that in—this is 2009, so it was 2008. Their electricity was off, so they came to our house and we had, like I said—we kept barbecue in the freezer from what we had when we burnt—not from when we burnt but when we had been cooking. My son got married, so he had cooked on a little pit for his wedding because Peak Brothers wasn't back in business yet. He's a good cook. He's—he cooks ham. But the whole—if you got Peak blood in you, you've cooked hams. That's just part of it; you just have **[Laughs]** because Christmas time, we need our cooks, you know. Tony's son, Josh, he is a hell of a cook. He is a good cook. Byron is a good cook; that's my son.

00:57:14

But anyway, off that subject and back on—. We—I had some chipped ham and sliced mutton and chipped mutton in the freezer. And we were barbecue hungry, so we got it out and we decided we was going to play. We was going—we was going to play with all kinds of ideas and recipes, and we did, and it was a barrel of fun. But we came up with a barbecue nacho, and that's what we—we use today in the restaurant. But we had—shoot—nachos, the chips, you know, just the plain old nacho chips. And we played with sour cream and jalapenos and onions. We had—that kitchen was a wreck, but it was a ball. And we finally came up with—with the barbecued nachos that we serve here at the place, and they have gone over really good. It's big; I mean if you're going to get that then it's—it's in the appetizers, but you better have two or three

people that will help eat it, or it's going to be your meal, because it's pretty big and it's going to fill you up. **[Laughs]** But that was fun; just—I don't know how—I rattle on a lot. So I don't know where I came from that but that's where that came from. **[Laughs]**

00:58:27

LP: It's great. So let's talk—so today is June 12th and yesterday was June 11th, a special day **[Laughs]** here at the new Peak Brothers. So and you had some special menu items for yesterday, but maybe just talk a little bit about what yesterday was and—and what you did to celebrate.

00:58:47

IR: Yesterday was—we tried to open June 11, 2008. It was supposed to be called a quiet opening for the place after we burned. Our original day to open is July—was July the 4th, but we have never done this before, so we decided that you know everybody—everybody—I'm saying that a few of the people that have been through it said, "You need to have a quiet opening." That means that you have everything that you're supposed to have, and you have enough to get started, but you know, you keep cooking and everything for the July 4th to have your grand opening.

00:59:24

We opened the doors. We had a new computer system that we had worked on for a couple of weeks. We had not actually used it on anybody. We had a whole bunch of people that had not actually served anybody. They had served at other places, but not at Peak Brothers. They knew basically what the meat was; I mean we went through this for two weeks, and—but we—Lord have mercy; that was a nightmare from Hell. Lord! We got bombarded. We had people

driving through the drive-thru that were waiting for two hours. Every place—every seat in this place—and this is a big place now—were sitting down and waiting an hour for a chipped mutton sandwich. The guy—or people that put in the computer system, they kept telling us, you know, “Don’t worry about it. Everything will run smooth. We’ll help you with the computer. It’s just going to—you know it’s a soft opening; you know don’t worry about it.”

01:00:23

At the end of that week they was ready to pull their hair out, because everything that could have gone wrong with that computer, it was—we were trying to put too much into it too fast, which it was supposed to handle a soft opening [*Laughs*] but it—but they said they had never seen an opening like that before in their life. So—and they put in a bunch of people’s computers. It was—it was—it was not good. I really don’t remember the first two weeks we opened, because it was complete chaos. The people were getting—there were so many that had—I mean there were just a lot of people that were waiting, and we did not advertise. We didn’t put a sign up. We didn’t do anything. All we did was open the front door. And once two or three figured out that the door was open—because they had been pulling on this door for a while now—and when they figured out it was open, they came in like, “You open?” Yeah; well the cell phones started, and good Lord. We ran out of everything. So it was just a—and they were—which they didn’t know; they expected us to be ready, you know, and we—we—we thought we were, but we weren’t ready for the crowd that came. And for the most part, they were very sympathetic and they were very reassuring, but there was—there’s probably still some out there that came that first two weeks and they haven’t been back, [*Laughs*] I would say to venture.

01:01:49

But yesterday was—was the year, and over the last couple of months we've been trying to come up with some different type of little recipes to try on people. You know, you just try new things; people are skeptical. We had—we've got a few more that we're going to try. One—one that we tried yesterday or two of them, on the day shift we tried the—the Barbecue Sundae. That was actually in a magazine that I had seen probably six or seven years ago. And there's a lot of things you want to try, but there has to be a complete wholeness about it, you know. Everybody has to agree on it. Well, I finally got it through my head this year that if I want to try it, I'm going to try it. And so that was one of the things I've been wanting to try. It's a Mason jar and the—the book had it flip-flopped like what it is—it's a barbecue and then some beans and then some coleslaw and it's in a Mason jar. It's very pretty and it just—it looks good; you know, it looks appetizing but you have to take a spoon and get all the way to the bottom to get the full effect of it. Otherwise you're going to be eating one thing at a time. That's not the idea; you want to get the whole full flavor of all of it in your mouth.

01:03:20

But they had in—in the magazine they were having—I think it was like the—the beans on the bottom and then the slaw and then the barbecue on top but theirs was dry. I like our meat better—I like our dip, and I like our barbecue in the dip. If I'm going to eat it dry then I want—well, I just preferred it dipped. So I flipped it, and you get the chipped barbecue on the bottom, and then the baked beans in the middle, and the coleslaw on top. And it went over pretty good. If you—if you wanted to try it, the ones that tried it loved it. And you could get the chipped pig—chipped pig—*[Laughs]*—chipped mutton, chipped pork, or chipped ham. That's the—that's the three main items that we keep in the sauce all the time. And we sold several of all three, and I

have had all—I’ve had the chipped mutton and the chipped pork. I hadn’t had the chipped ham yet, but we sold more of the chipped ham yesterday than we did the other three—other two.

01:04:23

And then when the second shift rolled around, we have a—Thursdays is called Thirsty Thursdays, so we drop the prices on the beer and the mixed drinks. We have a full bar now, which we didn’t have in the old place, but from 2 o’clock to 10 o’clock is our happy hour. So we tried a barbecued pizza. And like I said, once again for those that were gutsy enough to try it, and wanted to play, then they played and they loved it. So every Thursday from—we’re going to try—we’ve got—we have tried these things at home playing, and then last Monday we had the staff come in. We had a meeting first, and then they got to get in the kitchen and they got to make whatever kind of pizza they wanted. And they had fun; we had fun. Everybody ate, and it was like “Oh no; we can’t do that—that’s not good, that’s not good,” or, “This is really good and that’s not really good.” So it was—it was fun.

01:05:24

But we tried some—some barbecued wraps, and we’ve had the—we played with mushrooms, you know, like the little mushrooms, and then the Portobellos. The Portobellos are to die for with barbecue. *They are awesome.* [***Emphasis Added***]. That’s going to be probably next week’s Thursday little appetizer. We’re going to try to—we want the people to try them, and then if they like them then we’re going to probably put them on the menu for Thursdays. Once the menu is made—I know it should be made, it’s been a year, but there’s been a lot of chaos this year, so the menu, per se, is not done yet. So once we get the menu done is what we’re going to keep, what’s going to get—you know it’s kind of like the *Gong Show*. You know this is a keeper; gong that one out; that one needs to go.

01:06:20

Pizza and pickles don't go good together; that's a gong. **[Laughs]** Dill pickles and—and barbecue don't—I mean they don't go good on a pizza. It does not mix well. But that and then — oh heck—. We've tried—like we have a daily special and we have tried a few things on the daily special, the—the taco—not the taco; yeah the soft shells, or the wraps. You know I don't—I really don't know the difference between the two. I'm supposing there is. Maybe it's a different type of bread; I don't know. But we've tried those and those are good and they go over pretty good on a special every now and then.

01:06:55

But whether to keep them on the menu, you've got—when you've got a kitchen, and the kitchen is big, but you can get so much that it kind of overwhelms them, so the pizza thing will probably be just on Thirsty Thursdays. That way it keeps everything fresh, everything good, and it doesn't bombard the kitchen. Like we have just—we have fish just on Fridays—catfish fiddlers and fillets. We didn't have fillets in the old place. We brought them into the new place. We have a fried seafood bar on Friday nights. It's got a lot of the little—like the clams, clam strips and mini crab cakes, shrimp—stuff like that. It's going okay. But you have to have—there's a lot of places to eat, and barbecue has come—everybody cooks. You know you've got the grill shows, and everybody has got their way of doing this, that, or the other. So you have to have a few *[unintelligible]*. Maybe you don't; your product has got to be good all the time. At the same time you need to have some little kickers on the side that makes it fun. So yesterday was fun. And Thursdays are going to be fun. The ones that we keep and we have all the time, they're going to be something that the kitchen can handle without throwing them into a tither with everything else and it's—it's going—it's going to be something to look forward to. **[Laughs]**

01:08:27

LP: And do you think the Barbecue Sundae is going to stay around?

01:08:32

IR: I think so. If—they still don't know, you know—they're like, "Well, what is it?" But like I said, the ones that tried it, they—they—they liked it. One guy, he was—he said I didn't know whether to try it or not. He said, "But I like it." He said, "It really tastes good. He said, "And the concept is just fun. [*Laughs*] I said "Yeah; it's just fun." It needs to be fun, you know so we'll try that and then—.

01:09:00

When you got that many different kinds of meat, you can come up with a few different extras, you know. We got good steaks. We got good chicken, grilled chickens, and, you know, stuff like that for those that don't like barbecue. But barbecue is our mainstay, and we're going to play with it, and we're going to keep coming up with different stuff that would make you want to come in and just give it a try. [*Laughs*]

01:09:25

LP: And so you said that your—your son had been helping you with the—thinking about the shipping end of your business and your daughter is working today, so are they planning on continuing the Peak Brothers tradition? Are they planning on keeping working with the restaurant?

01:09:43

IR: Oh yeah; they've—I guess, I don't know of any—any of our family members truly that have not worked here at some time or other. That's talking like my nieces and nephews and my kids but I'm pretty darned sure all of them have worked here either through their college years—you know they'd come home in the summertime and then they would help us out through the summer, 'cause you always need more help in the summertime. And every one of them work hard. They know what they're doing and they've gone onto their careers.

01:10:25

Candice, my daughter, she—she just—she likes it, and she's a big help. You know, she wants to learn more. She can learn—she can do the computer thing a whole lot faster than I can—whole lot quicker. I'm still baby-stepping and—well, I mean youf know when you're—she's 26 now and she knows the computer world to say, and I'm still old-school and there's a whole lot of old-school things I don't want to give up, and should because it would be faster, quicker, and that—that you know breaks open free time. But Byron, she's—now Candice has got—she's got a one year-old son. And that takes up a lot of her time. And I've been there, done that, and I don't want her to lose her time with her kid—her child. It's too special. And they're just too much fun to mess up—I mean not mess up but to—to miss out on you know. So we try to work together in running Peak Brothers. We've got a very good staff. They help out. If—if you've gone one that calls in sick you can pretty much bank on calling one of them and they'll come in on their day off. They just—we've got a good staff. They work hard; most of them do.

01:12:01

When we started last year we had—God bless America!—I don't know how many employees we had. It seemed like a bunch. And we have got—it was a bunch. I don't know how

many it was; I can't remember. I could look it up but we have from the people that came back from the old place that—that came back to work here in the new place and plus the new staff that we hired that stayed, I think there's a total of—how many is there? I just counted them the other day because **[Laughs]**—I think there's—there's either—there's 12. I'm pretty sure there's 12 that have survived this year and like I said, it's been a chaotic year. It's—it's been a chaotic year. That's all I can say about that. There's been a lot of changes and—but yeah.

01:13:00

Byron and Candice, they'll be here. Sash, she's my daughter-in-law; she is a gift. Jolie and Ken, that's the grandkids; they—they're just special gifts. Byron has—he's—he has just—he started in the last two months. He's starting to come in on Sundays because he is a—he's a Junior Probation Officer. That's his—that's what he went to school for and that's what he does. So Sundays he's been coming up and helping. And he wants to be a part of it. It's—it's a little more difficult for him because he's got a full-time job. And Sasha is—she wants to help, but right now she's still wanting to be Jolie's mom first—nothing wrong with that. Jolie is five months-old, or she will—she's four and a half months-old, so but she said I'll help on Sundays, too. And then it's like ah, not yet. **[Laughs]** I still—I still want to stay home and she has her full-time job at—at the high school. So they want to help, and they will help, and I've got two—one of my nephews and one of my nieces, they—they want to help. We have—July 4th we have a grand opening again—or we're going to have a birthday party again. And last July 4th every one of them, the nieces and nephews were here; it was a blast.

01:14:27

They—we had a *[unintelligible; sounds like "beer stoop"]*. They all walked outside together. And they just—they just had such a good time. It was work but it was play because

it's—it's not the same thing as working every day in it; you know, it's fun. And dad, he came, and bless his heart, he had his walker and he was coming through there and they gave him a standing ovation. And he—he just kind of looked around at everybody like, “Well my gosh, what the hell is going on?” **[Laughs]** It was special. We didn't think he was going to make it, but he did.

And so this year, we've got another birthday party planned. And the—the kids, the nieces and nephews and all that, they've already said that they—this is in-laws, out-laws, nieces and nephews, they want to come back up and they want to help with the [*unintelligible; sounds like “beer stoop”*]. again. And one of them can't; she's pregnant. She's—she's due in August. That's Jaycee, and she had a ball last year. **[Laughs]** She's like, “Darn!; I'm not going to get to do it this year.” But her husband is; he's going to be here. So we're looking forward to that again, and we—I just really want to keep the family involved in it. They're just—they're—they're a special group; they really are. And I love each and every one of them. But you know it's just—I don't know; maybe get one or two of them in here to—like I said, Robbie and Tony and Michelle, they—they were kind of wanting to come in. It's just hard to work a full-time job and then turn around and come and help out, you know. I think it would be, because they've got their lives, too.

01:16:09

So that's going to be time that they give up, and when you've been through it you don't know that you really—because you can get wrapped up in this. You really can, and if you don't have somebody kind of pulling you back saying “Whoa, you know, slow down just a little bit. You need to—you need to stop and focus again on what's really important here,” then you do

lose, it you know. You just—time goes by too fast, and this has been the fastest year of my life. Literally. I swanny. It seems like—some days it seems like it was yesterday that we opened and some days it seems like it was five years ago. It was just a very, very, very fast year, and—
Ready for another one—for sure? **[Laughs]**

01:16:53

LP: Great; one thing I hadn't asked you about earlier when we were talking about the history and I think I remember some pictures on the wall. Have any kind of famous people or politicians or anybody come through Waverly and eaten at Peak's over the years or anything like that?

01:17:13

IR: Yeah; we've actually got a letter from Ladybird Johnson, Texas lady, boy—you talk about hitting home—that did. She did not come here to eat, but at this time, Earl C. Clemens was governor, and he lived in Union County. And he actually took them a ham from Peak Brothers, and she sent us a letter and it was in the—in the very first building. It survived both the fires, barely survived the last one, but we're very proud of it because she is claiming that Peak Brothers is as good—*almost* as good as Texas barbecue. And I thought that was just great, you know, **[Laughs]** because people from Texas, they're proud. They—nobody's barbecue is as good as theirs. I don't care where you're from and—but you know, so it was—it—it is very, very special to us.

01:18:10

We've had some—we've had some pretty—you know we've had several of the UK players have been down. This has been—now this has been a few years back. They have—we

asked if—if we know that you're special—not—I don't mean to say special by no means, but if you're famous, more to say, then we ask you to sign the menu and then we hang it on the wall. And gosh darn it; we had an up and rising star come in the other day. Wait a minute; I swear the older you get the more stuff you get jumbled up in your head, and this is a jumbled up head. I've got to think of his dag-gone name. We got a picture of him and we had him sign a menu. He is from Henderson County, and he is in Hollywood now, and at this time he is shooting a film with Kris Kristofferson. I remember him because there was like three—I can't remember; darn it. I should have wrote everything down but that's again—my fault.

01:19:18

Darn; I'll get his name before we leave. But yeah; we have—to answer your question, we have had several—. The county brings in some important people from time to time. We've had the Governor of Kentucky—turn that thing off a minute. **[Laughs]**

01:19:44

LP: We had a little pause and we're—we're coming back. We were—lots of—lots of politicians and both famous and up and coming famous folks have eaten at Peak Brothers. **[Laughs]** We'll leave it at that; yes. So I guess we're—we're getting to about the end of—of most of the questions I had. And is there just anything else that you want to talk about that we haven't covered?

01:20:10

IR: I think we've covered a whole lot. It's—the place is bigger. It should survive the 2000(s). It will definitely survive me. **[Laughs]** But barbecue is—it's a very good—barbecue is just fun. It's

like having a picnic every day. You know if you don't have time to—to fix it yourself then you—if you've got good barbecue, then you're always going to have customers to come in and join you. And it's a fast-pace we live in now. And sometimes you just need to take time to take a break and join other people and 'cue is a good way to do it with. **[Laughs]** That's all I've got to say. And thank you; I appreciate it very much.

01:21:03

LP: Well thank you very much. And so this is the end of our interview and this has been Lisa Powell interviewing Irene Rich at Peak Brothers Barbecue in Waverly, Kentucky on Highway 60, so—and it's June 12, 2009.

01:21:20

[End Irene Rich, Peak Brothers Barbecue]