JERRY THOMPSON
St. Ann's Catholic Church - Morganfield, KY
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Interviewer: Lisa Powell
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[Begin Jerry Thompson]

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Lisa Powell: Today is the sixth of August 2009. This is Lisa Powell with the Southern Foodways Alliance, and I'm interviewing Jerry Thompson at his home in Morganfield, Kentucky. Today, Jerry and I are going to talk about Catholic Church barbecues in Western Kentucky. So can you please state your name and your age for the recording?

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Jerry Thompson: I'm—my name is Jerry Thompson. I grew up here in Union County. I've been a native here; I'm a farm boy. And I'm seventy-three years old, and I go to St. Ann's Church.

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LP: And St. Ann's Church is in Morganfield, Kentucky; yes?

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JT: Yeah, St. Ann's is the only Catholic Church in Morganfield. There are five other Catholic churches scattered about in Union County. But I've always been a member of St. Ann's.

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LP: And how long have you been involved with the church barbecues?

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JT: I would guess—golly, Lisa; I'm going to say twenty-five years directly. After St. Ann's—St. Ann's had a barbecue, oh when I was a kid, and I used to chase balls when they had these ball racks and things like that. And so I was what—I guess ten years old. And as the older generation matured or died or whatever, or quit—retired, the—for some reason the younger farmers in this county they—they didn't take up barbecuing like they did in the other counties. As we had become more mechanized and they became—the—the summers became busier, and required more with hay and those types of things, so they—. Barbecuing, we'll get into later—is a—is a very labor-intensive thing, so, but—and lately I've been into it about twenty-five years.

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LP: And so let's talk a little bit about the general history of the church barbecues in this area. Around when did the Catholic churches start having the barbecues?

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JT: They—during when they had—I guess bad times, which I call bad times—during the Depression years, it wasn't any money much. Farmers didn't have any money but they had products. I mean they had—they raised sheep, cattle, hogs, you know, chickens, all that kind of stuff back in those days. We're talking the 25—1925 and 18s and on—and forward. And so the churches of course needed to raise some money, so farmers, they developed a way that they could help the church and contribute of their own way. So they—they had these herds of sheep, and so, you know, maybe two farmers or two or three neighbors, well they would furnish the sheep and the other farmers would furnish the wood, or two or three that they would have storms through the year and they would—they learned to save that wood and stockpile it. And then somebody else would help dig the pits and those kinds of things, and that developed into a—kind of an art in Western Kentucky of most all Catholic churches in Western Kentucky from, say, Owensboro west—maybe a little east of Owensboro, but mostly from Owensboro west. All of them had a summer picnic to raise money to help the church.

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LP: Okay; and could you talk a little bit about how the typical type of schedule for those barbecues back in the day, and you can talk a little bit about how it's different now also?

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JT: Yeah; that—back on those days, farming was—was way different, of course, than it is now and much easier and more casual and—. And so they—they didn't have near the large crops that they do now, and they weren't mechanized. So every—you know people, they had fifty—fifty acres of corn was a whole lot of corn, and they had a lot of—they had cattle, like I mentioned while ago. They had all the livestock, so the summers were kind of—after they got the corn laid by and a little bit of hay put up for their cattle and their horses and mules, then they, you know they were cutting off ditches and those kinds of things, so they had some extra time that they could contribute or could use at a—when they weren't busy. And so they developed this system of—like I said while ago—that different farmers contributed different things. A lot of them were just—just laborers, because it—it takes a lot of laborers. But somebody had to dig the pit and then they had to—had to have firm walls. And then they had to have pipes across this pit, and then pipes—then fencing wire along the length of the pit to support the meat that was over the fire.

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So then that—they put that—burned their wood, bring—the process was, they filled—this pit was about four feet wide and about four feet deep. So it was filled with this lumber or—timber or woods or chunks of wood, I'll say, and mini-logs and maybe they would start that fire on Friday afternoon. Back in those days—oh say noon or so, and it would burn all Friday afternoon and burn down to what we'd call ashes, but it would be a deep bed of red and white ashes, maybe this—this pit was four-feet deep; we'd burn it down until it had about twelve inches of red ash—red burning embers of coals, for not really knowing how else to explain it.

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And then after they got it—had—had these coals, then they'd stretch the wire over the pit and put the meat on—on the pit and then start cooking it about, oh, 9—10 o'clock and the process would go clear through the night, all night, all day the next day into Saturday. And then they would traditionally serve meat 5—6 o'clock most of the time or 4:30, according to how much—how big the churches were and how many people they thought they'd have and that kind of—how much meat they had. So but traditionally it's always been about 5 o'clock; in this area it's 5 o'clock we're going to go on Saturday afternoon, going—whatever church it was to eat barbecue.

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LP: Okay; and so that's how the process was historically. Could you talk a little bit about what it's like today when they start and what happens all the way through the cooking process?

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JT: It's—it's a little different today. We've—we've become more sophisticated. The pits are—are brick lined. A church or two has firebrick; it's lined and—and so I mean these are pits that we use for years so it—it has a footer in it. The brick—fire brick walls, and—and then it's raised off of the ground to a point where you—men don't have to bend over clear to their feet, so we have a couple concrete blocks to raise it up off of that pit and then put pipe that matches the concrete block on the other side and then stretch this wire the length of the pit and use come-along(s) and those hydraulic jacks and those kinds of things to tighten a fence really tight. And so nowadays, some of them had covers over them in case the—a lot of times they might have a summer storm come up and they had a little bit of tin but then they found out most time that the wind would come along and come the wrong direction and blow the tin off. So they—they had to devise ways of—of holding that tin on a little better.

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We'll talk a little bit more later here about St. Ann's pit is—is a professionally designed and made pit that rains are not that detrimental to us. But I remember back twenty years ago, we had a big rain the night before. And of course the barbecue—the show goes on, and we were wading in dirt—well it was dirt, dry dirt but it—as we walked back and forth up and down each side of the pit that became muddy up to our ankles and so it was quite a mess—a lot of work and—and a mess, so we—but we still it worked out. We got that rain the day before and the next day, of course, typically it's a pretty day. We had the barbecue and all that, but it—it just made it very difficult to get around the pit.

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LP: Okay; and so do they still cook through the night—today, currently?

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JT: Yes; best—the best barbecue is slowly cooked meat over an open pit on—on these—on this bed of coals I was—. Those—some of those ideas and facts are never changed. We have a better pit nowadays. The one we have now at St. Ann's is—is a concrete poured wall that was—it's in the ground about four feet, and it's raised off of the ground. It's a poured wall up about two feet out of the ground, and so now these—. Then we have—we made grills out of angle iron and had—just a minute. And it had—filled with expanded metal, which would support the meat and had—they—they were about four-feet by four-feet sections down through there so you could put meat on these different grills. And then when it came time to turn them, we—. Now we had to turn this meat about every hour to keep it from burning. So—but it still cooked—you still put it on about 10 o'clock at night on Friday; crews—there's crews that come on. There's a putting on crew and a—then another crew comes on about midnight and they take it 'til 6 clock the next morning. And then there's a 6 o'clock crew 'til noon, and then the noon crew 'til it's sold off a pit or got taken and cut up and gotten rid of in the afternoon. And that's always been my—my shift. I know more about the 12 o'clock shift noon to cooking time—finishing time than I do about the others. I've never worked on those, but it takes a lot more time—more work, more laborers to begin with, because we put this meat on a hot fire, on a hot pit, so it becomes hot. They have to keep it cooled down. The flames start generating, and they have to spray it and knock it—knock that flame down. We want to cook with heat; we do not want to cook with fire. And so it's a slow process. And it takes lots of manpower, because now we're talking you know some of these churches cooked as much as 10,000 pounds of mutton or that's what they bought—that—that many pounds of the carcass, which that would cook down to less than a half, a little more than a third in poundage. So they'd have, say, 3,500 pounds of meat to—to sell.

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But then, okay, you asked about going through the process? Well all right; these guys are turning this meat all night and then about 2 or 3 o'clock the next morning they start putting what we call cooking dip on, which is—that's the flavor. This meat is raw. It's been—when it was first put on, it was covered up in salt. And it makes—and it's gotten—got the meat hot to get the salt clear down into the bone, and then it's—it's dripping all this—this tallow off of it, so I mean all that—it looks like snow, but it all melts off and goes in the pit. So about 3 or 4 o'clock the next morning, and I mean it hadn't had a thing since then. So we go to putting cooking dip on it; we'll dip it with mops about once an hour. And then the second shift comes on about 6 o'clock 'til noon, and then about 7 or 8 o'clock they'll go to—they'll go to dipping it every hour. And then when my crew gets it from noon on, we will turn it and dip it every 30 minutes. You don't want dry meat; you got—it's got to be kept hot. You—you can—if something—if somebody—you've got to be real—got to be careful about not letting it sit there too long, because the longer—as it gets starting to get done, then it's—it's susceptible to burn and of course we don't want burnt meat. So that's why we have to turn it every 30 minutes and we're dipping it more often to try to keep it tender and try to keep it moist.

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Then as the meat is—we check—keep checking the meat there about 4 or 5 o'clock and take the meat off of the pit and then it's—it's taken up to the choppers and they—they cut the meat off of the bone in large hunks just—just stripping—their job is to strip it off of the bone and they're not particular about how big a piece or a little piece. And then they pass it to another crew that are choppers and shredders and those with—. They'll have chopping axes, cleaver(s), knives, and that type of thing, and chop this meat up into small enough pieces you could put it on a sandwich, or you could sell it by the pound, or that type thing. And then about 5 o'clock or so then that process starts, and then we move on into the supper. So that—that gets us through the cooking of the meat up to chopping it off of the bone.

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LP: Thank you. I'm going to ask you just a couple of follow-up questions to that. So back in the old days, they started the fire around noon on Friday. Around when do they start the fire these days?

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JT: Well nowadays we—we won't start the fire 'til probably mid-afternoon. We've—we've learned that first thing, we don't have those logs that they had back then. Those farmers just don't have the time. Nowadays we're in the part of the county—country I'm in here in West Kentucky we have a lot of grain farmers—don't have time to go out in the woods and cut large trees and trim them up and put them in the pit. We, the fire—the wood we use now is slabs, which are trimmings, so to speak, off of logging for—from the Amish that are in this area. And they stockpile that for us starting back in, you know, April, May, and they save that because it's gotten—the slabs have gotten to be very scarce.

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One year there was a hoe-handle guy—place down here and they—that's what he did. He made hoe-handles and we took his extra or no good hoe-handles, which is—was quite a—that was quite an adventure. Those things were round and you could get those under your feet and you could—by like trying to stand on—on golf balls or something, so that—that didn't work out. So we went back to slabs and been with them ever since.

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LP: Thank you and what were those ho-handles made out of?

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JT: Hickory.

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LP: And so talking just a little bit about the dip you were putting on what kind of dip is that?

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JT: Well the proverbial answer; that's a secret you know. It—but it's not a whole lot—whole lot **[*Laughs*]** of secret to it. It's a certain amount of—you know, I don't—I'm not the dip maker, but I mean it's got water, it's got a little lard in it—or butter I guess, maybe, or margarine—and this is all melted and brought to a boil. Vinegar, black pepper, red pepper, and assorted other spices, and put that in a—you know a fifteen-gallon iron kettle and bring it to a boil, and then let's—after you bring—get that all mixed, bring it to a boil and then it's ready to be put on the meat, so—.

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LP: And do you know if the dip gets made up in the church kitchen or—?

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JT: No; we make it on the spot. We have—we have a fire there under this fifteen-gallon kettle right there on the spot, and there's a dip maker. I mean that's—that—it's generally that guy or his sons have been doing that for years, and that's his job, and they—he doesn't do anything else. But he—he makes up a dip and—and of course he gets—. There's a different guy early, because it don't take much dip. Like I said there a while ago; but as— as we get into the day shift when we start using more, then this dip maker comes—because right at the very end, he'll—he'll go make what he calls his finishing dip, which is a little—little heavier spiced, most generally with red pepper and vinegar and black pepper and—. But he—that's—the finishing dip is his recipe and you know I guess a fellow could stand around there and watch him and figure it out, but it—it's—it goes from generation to generation.

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LP: Okay; and so at St. Ann's, the—the pits are down a little ways away down a hill from the parish hall where the meat is served. So how do you get it from down the hill up to the top of the hill?

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JT: Well nowadays, everybody has got these—got these little motorized trucks, John Deere and everybody makes one of some kind, and it's a little truck, little mini—many people have them on their farm. And these farmers bring theirs in and we put them in clean cans, lard cans, and those type—maybe they'll be cardboard boxes lined with new paper, and take these big—what we call joints, these—they'll be shoulders and there will be ham joints. After they get—put them in that and then they'll put a top on that and transport that oh about—I guess that's going to be 300 yards or so and take it up to the back of the church and school at our place, and they'll process it. They'll—where the boning guys and the chopping guys do their work.

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LP: And so the first group, the people who get it off the bone what do they use to take it off the bone?

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JT: Traditionally that's been knives. It takes, you know most of these guys—I mean that's—whoever—you get a job and it's unless you die or get sick, this is your job the rest of your life it seems like [***Laughs***]. And you get proficient at that. They all bring their own knives, and it's amazing to watch these guys how they can get a—a ham bone, or this—I'm talking about a mutton ham bone now—they can get that off and do very well. There will be very little meat left. In the first place, the meat is cooked, like I said, slowly, and it's cooked all the way to the bone. And they put on rubber gloves to protect their hands and give it a twist, and it'll slip off of that bone. It is just—it comes away from the bone very easily.

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LP: All righty; thank you. So could you talk a little bit more about what kind of wood, what variety of wood you all are using and why that's particularly good?

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JT: The wood—in a broad—broad purpose or broad use would be hardwoods, but we like the flavoring woods of hickory, walnut, pecan. Pecan is the favorite wood, the one of choice if you had—if you could get plenty of pecan, that's what most—ideally the very best barbecuing wood is apple, believe it or not. But you know ,you don't find a lot of apple wood around unless somebody has cleaned out a [***Laughs***]—or had a big storm and cleaned out an orchard or something, so—. But there are still some pecan trees around in people's fields and ditches and fencerows and things.

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So it's—it's hardwood; it'll be hickory, you know ash, and a mix of those but try to get as much hickory as possible.

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LP: Thank you. So I saw the—the wood down by the pit this afternoon. How does the wood get from the Amish stockpile to the place where—to the pit where you're going to cook it?

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JT: They—like I said, they save that—that wood for us, and they band it with—they've got a machine there that's got metal bands on each end. This wood is about, oh, probably four to six feet long. And they'll have a—a stack of it; it's probably 300 or 400 pounds, something you can handle with a forklift. And they band it together and put it on a pallet, and then our men will take a gooseneck trailer, and—which a gooseneck will hold about, oh, probably eight—probably pallets. And we'll make a couple trips to this place and get enough wood that we think that—. It's a lot of guesswork, but it takes a certain amount of wood to cook it, and then you have to have a certain amount to keep it hot, because you don't want mutton to get hot—or get cold. So you have to keep it coming along, and as the fire—as it cooks, that—those coals play out, and so you have to keep adding just a little bit to keep the fire hot.

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LP: Thank you. And so you've mentioned the type of meat that you cook a few times. Could you explain what the main type of meat you cook is and where it comes from?

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JT: Yeah; you know, you've heard me talk about mutton, but then early on, you heard me talk about these farmers had sheep. Mutton is the mature meat of full-grown sheep. We don't use lamb or lamb quarters or lamb meat or any of that kind of stuff. These are full-grown sheep and they all come in from—from certified killing plants. It's not like they used to be fifty years ago, sixty, where the farmers would just kill them ourselves. These—of course we're using, you know, 7,000—8,000 pounds of meat nowadays where they didn't use all that much back then. So these are all come from—excuse me—tested and certified killing plants and got the seal of somebody there that's inspecting it and it's—you know, it's safe.

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LP: And is mutton particularly prevalent as a type of barbecue meat around here?

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JT: It is in Western Kentucky. There's—you know everybody has barbecue; most—a lot of—most areas have—I mean they—they call it barbecue, but then you know wherever you go then I want to know, what is it? I mean there's beef barbecue; you go down Texas, those people make wonderful, wonderful barbecues out of—out of beef. But in Western Kentucky, when we talk about barbecue, it's mutton—and lots of it. These churches, I mean there's golly, here—here in the Diocese of Owensboro and a Diocese is—is the whole Western Kentucky from Owensboro to the Tennessee Line to the Mississippi River—encompasses a Diocese of Owensboro and there's probably fifty or so Churches in this area, and the large majority of them will have a—have a big barbecue.

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The Fancy Farm in far Western Kentucky is—they had the first one, which they had here about a week or two ago. And that has traditionally been when the Kentucky politicians—the politicians always kickoff their next election year when they go to the Fancy Farm Picnic and all the fuss and—and almost cuss one another—get—get everybody—all get their factions of Democrats and Republicans all riled up. But they use it—they have—that has grown into—they have over 10,000—12,000 pounds of meat, so that's one of the biggest ones in the far Western Kentucky. But some of these churches around Owensboro, they have contests to see, and—and they do it very proudly. They—Owensboro puts on the Owensboro Barbecue Festival, and all these churches come in and cook and have a contest and see who this year makes the best barbecue, who makes the best burgoo and all that stuff, so it's—it's a big deal in Western Kentucky, lots of mutton used.

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Now mutton is not the only thing. We—there's a lot of hogs in Western Kentucky and consequently we barbecue a lot of hams. Traditionally, probably—oh, 15–20 % of the barbecue will be hams. Here at St. Ann's, if we're going to cook 5,000 pounds of mutton, we'll cook maybe 100 hams, and so that's generally about the mix that we'll use.

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LP: Okay; thank you. And so talking a little bit about the specific history of St. Ann's, could you go through when St. Ann's really—when they used to have a barbecue and then when they kind of started up having one again?

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JT: Yeah; I guess you're referring to when I said there while ago I was a youngster, which was—it was during the War, World War II. I was a kid then; I was born in 1936. So it wasn't near as big, because nowadays people from all over the county come to barbecues. And back then, people didn't have the modes of transportation and the roads and that kind of thing to get around. So it was a local church barbecue; that was St. Ann's Barbecue and Picnic. They—and they had, you know, games for kids and stuff like that, ice cream stands and—and games of chance, chuck-a-luck wheel and those kinds of things.

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So that was back—when I started, or when I was watching—or helping then that's probably back in 1945 to '48, in that area. The barbecue—they didn't cook near as much meat as we do now, but it was much more labor-intensive because nowadays we have all this help with forklifts and Gators and stuff to haul this meat around. We've got backhoes to cut—dig pits with and things like that, so back then it was just all physical labor and they had to cut it off and chop it with guys using cleavers and that kind of thing. So that—to chop that big hunk of ham or a big hunk of mutton down fine enough that you can pick it up with a fork, it has to be chopped, chopped, chopped, chopped. Many times—and those chopping tables were made out of heavy four-by-eight-by ten-feet long oak tables, very heavy, must be lifted by tractors and things.

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So I mean it's—it's—it's just become an art in a very crude way, but it's served its purpose and so that—that's the kind of way—it just grows—has grown each year. There's—maybe somebody tries a new process. Nowadays we have found that there's been developed an electric—I'm going to say chopper and that's not like a food processor—nothing like that, but it's a—it's an electric chopper that we put meat into it and—and turn it on. It's got a powerful motor and—and it doesn't grind it like a grinder. We're not making hamburger or sausage or that kind of meat out of it but it does slice these—this—you take a big chunk, in other words, and it'll cut it into a couple—maybe two-inch chunks, small enough that you can grab it with a fork and a knife and eat it off a plate.

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LP: Okay; and so there was a little period in the—the history when St. Ann's didn't have a picnic and a barbecue for a few years. Around when and how did it get started again?

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JT: It stopped in the mid-'50s. What—these gentlemen that were doing it then, they—they grew old and retired and—and then Union County became more mechanized—mechanized in our farming and farmers. It was back before they had chemicals, so it was still fairly—fairly labor-intensive to do a corn crop, and they had to be in this crop a little longer, laying by corn and those kinds of things. So now that they have chemicals that make it easier—although more expensive maybe, simpler—they have a little more time in the summer and what really brought it back to St. Ann's as—as you go through the years you change priests, pastors, and we got one sent in here from Owensboro, believe it or not, and he brought that custom with him. That's—I mean Owensboro, to me, in the State of Kentucky and I'll put it anywhere else—it is the barbecue capital of the world as far as I'm concerned. That may be stretching it a little, but it sure is the capital of Kentucky [*barbecue*]. And he grew up; he was a native of Owensboro. And he was a Pastor up there, two or three different churches in Owensboro and they—they did this money-raising projects and so he brought it down, reintroduced it here, and it got here just in time.

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We still had some moderately—well, it wasn't real old guys, but some people who remembered how to make the dip and how to—what the process was like and they—we put these crews together and so we all learned kind of together and started—renewed it again here in Union County.

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LP: And around when was that?

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JT: That was about—let's see; now it's—this is—about twenty-five years ago. I'd say you know '75, '80 somewhere in there.

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LP: Thank you. And so over these past 20—30 years since that time, how has the—the St. Ann's barbecue changed? I know for example that you all now have a place to eat inside. Where did y'all used to eat for the picnic?

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JT: Yeah; that's quite interesting. In the old days, they ate outside. They were temporary tables erected out in a big shade—shade tree lot and everybody stood at these tables and you were served. People—the women of the parish, they—this meat that I was telling you got chopped up then they would put it in large pans and bring it around to you. You stood there and you'd get all the meat you can eat. As long as you can stand there and eat it they'll bring it to you and you know it was all the potatoes—I mean tomatoes, potato salad and onions and pickles and bread and—and drinks and all that stuff. So nowadays—now it has—at St. Ann's we have a wonderful parish hall which will seat about 400 or so and it is fully air-conditioned, so that has been a great joy to us older people and I'm sure the youngers don't mind. But it's—it makes it much more enjoyable for people to come and sit down and—where they used to stand and see their neighbor and shout at them across the table or two, now they can come in and see them and visit with them inside this air-conditioned hall, which we have a very—very nice large kitchen that can prepare all this stuff. And now they've added sweet corn and then they've added another dish or two that makes it much more—pickles and what else—we had pickles. But the cucumbers and onions and those kinds of things, so it's—it's—it's just a little bit better product for what you used to get because it's got these added dishes that's in there.

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LP: Just for the record, are there still some places in Union County where they stand up outside and eat?

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JT: There sure are. One in Waverly, which is the first picnic in Union County in the year: always the last Saturday in June. Ours, St. Ann's is always the first or second Saturday—the second Saturday in—in August and then St. Agnes in Uniontown, they have a lot of shade down there, a wonderful picnic and outdoor pit and all and they stand out and eat outside under the trees. And theirs is the Saturday after Labor Day, so we—all through the summer we can go enjoy barbecue from these Catholic churches.

00:37:23

LP: Okay; and so in the last few years, there's been a new addition to St. Ann's in terms of the pit. And so could you tell us about this new pit and when you got it and kind of the—the process by which it came to be?

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JT: This priest I was telling you about that came from Owensboro, he reinstituted barbecuing here, and we had to go borrow another—borrow/rent/use, I guess is the word—another parish's pit that was still kind of in existence. Had to clean it out and refurbish it—right smart and did that a year or two or three and that—you know that—that wasn't quite fair to everybody. We were using their pit and so—and some of their workers and labor. And so we decided—St. Ann's decided they—we got another—another pastor came in, and he'd heard some grumbling about the meat coming from the other—out having to borrow a pit and all that, so he said, "Why don't we build our own pit?"

And so we did; we—it was a committee who got together and decided, we went to the bishop and got permission from the bishop, the Priest Council and all that. So this is a very modern pit; it's the kind of—kind of making, I was looking at it while ago, it's—it's a concrete pit poured in the ground and then poured out of the ground, still four-by-four but this one has steel posts erected. It has concrete—remember that mud I told you about that rain we had? **[*Laughs*]** We don't worry about rain anymore. Around the edges of it it's gravel, pretty good-sized gravel yard around this pit and then just at the edge of it itself we have a concrete sidewalk about four feet around this pit, sticks out from the pit that we walk on.

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Above that on steel posts and steel frame is a painted metal roof, which is—oh, I'm going to guess it's ten or twelve feet in the air and then has a large vent down the ridge center of it to let out the heat and the smoke, a very, very nice pit. It's in the shape of a cross, which was quite—kind of unique. All the pits before that had been mostly southeast, northwest kind of where they were laid out to—so when you put the meat on the pit the smoke rolls, and you could get on either side where the wind blows. That still is able to do that but we don't have to worry about rain. If it rains we're right there—unless it's a blowing rain, we're under the dry and it doesn't affect the meat. They used to have to—it was a pain to try to protect the meat and keep it from getting wet and putting the fire out. I remember St. Vincent's, a parish that's—it doesn't do any cooking anymore, they put—it rained so hard it put the fire out. So that kind of stuff was a mess. But anyway we don't have to worry about that anymore. It's a—been told that it's one of the best in this area and maybe one of the best in the state.

00:41:06

LP: Thank you. And so now since you're eating inside at St. Ann's, do people still get served, or do they go through a line to get their food?

00:41:22

JT: They go through the buffet line now, and it—they go down two sides. I mean it's a double line. They go down both sides and get served, and they quickly get their plateful of whatever they want. They still get to pick and then they—there's a—a specified place that they—there's a return line that does not interfere—interfere with the serving line. So after you come in and sit down and you're kind of assigned tables, we've got ushers that take—make sure that all the tables and chairs are full. And then after you get through, then if you want to go—we have a return line that's not anything affiliated or no—it doesn't interfere with the incoming line and you can go back and get some more mutton if you want it. You can get ham if you want it—whatever it is you want. And there's school children coming around bringing you drinks, so it's—it's a good—they got a good system. It's working very well.

00:42:22

LP: And you mentioned a few of the things that they used to have also going on at the picnic in terms of games and other things to eat. What kinds of things are there today?

00:42:35

JT: You know, many of those traditions are hard to break. Still have the chuck-a-luck wheel and Bingo. Of course, you can't go—Catholics can't do anything without a Bingo. Cake walks—cake wheels nowadays instead of the old-style where they had cake walks, which were disks, numbered and painted disks out and they had numbers on them and played a little music much like musical chairs, and—so—and fish ponds. You know, and after you eat for the adults, everything else is geared pretty much for children—ice cream, hotdogs, you know, cake—and fish ponds and those kinds of games.

00:43:18

LP: And so in terms of the other sides and the—the corn you were talking about and the potato salad that go along with the meat, how do those get made and—and brought to the table?

00:43:33

JT: Traditionally they were made by the parishon—by the women of the parish. They still do some of that but not as—not nearly as much. Nowadays local—I mean our local farmers bring in tomatoes, green peppers, cucumbers, and those kinds of things, so—. And there is a kitchen crew—force—crew, I guess, that the night before they are very busy making this—tomatoes and doing all that, preparing the cucumbers. But it's got to be such an ordeal that now the tomatoes—the potato salad is bought commercially, much easier to handle. It's all the same; everybody used to make—years ago they made potato salad and every—every—bless their heart, every wife had a different recipe, a little bit. So now it's all the same and it's commercially brought—made and kept cool in the coolers and things and—and very safe and much, much more efficient.

00:44:44

LP: And what kind of bread do people eat with their barbecue, or just—any kind? **[*Laughs*]**

00:44:49

JT: Well it's—a loaf of bread; they've got white bread, wheat, a little bit of wheat there, but it's mostly white bread. And they bring it in—Lordy—by the stacks, so it's everybody gets two pieces of bread. So it's—it's just a regular loaf of bread.

00:45:09

LP: Thank you. Well, is there anything else that you'd like to talk about regarding the church barbecue?

00:45:18

JT: Yeah; I think you and I have pretty well **[*Laughs*]** covered it, Lisa. We've—we've gone way back before I knew anything about barbecuing, before I was born and—and what I remember as a child, and enjoyed all those. They had a doll rack; they—I mean it's amazing how things have—have progressed. They used to have little pieces of wood on a pipe across a rack and the doll faces painted on it. I remember, I got to be very good back when I was about twelve, fourteen years [old], I could—and the middle doll had a ten-dollar bill on it—or was it a five? I guess it was a five, and I got where I could—I'd spend maybe—I'm going to say it's a five-dollar bill, because I'd spend four dollars, and before my money would run out I'd hit that, and so I played all night and never did spend any more money. But I never did win anything.

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So it was fun, enjoyable and my friends, we'd all have a competition amongst us who could spin it—make the doll turn over the most times and those—or who could hit the doll with the dollar on it and those kinds of things. But then the—the women, they kind of migrated to the Bingo(s) and they'd get to sit down and rest and let the kids do their thing at the fish bowl—fish ponds and—and those kinds of things, ice-cream and cake and get that all over them. It's a fun day; everybody enjoys themselves. It's generally hot, and—well it's almost always hot. It's the middle of summer, so you know it's very hot, and in August it's very humid. So it—you know you don't do a whole lot of activity. You're ready to sit down and relax and drink lemonade or tea and—and have fun and it's—it's been—. That's what it is; it's about families.

00:47:25

Most all the families will come and participate in one way or another. There will be—the ladies are asked to make a cake or two and you know they use that and—and ice-cream and cake and then they sell cakes. And then they have cake wheels and all that kind of stuff; you put down, you know there's—what is it? I think seventy-five or eighty numbers and everybody puts down a quarter or something and so it's—. But then you got eighty, so you got a chance out of eighty. Well, I mean they sell cakes that way because the people want the cakes, and it's a cheap cake if your number hits. So **[*Laughs*]** if that doesn't happen—and then there's—some people are more lucky than others, and I'm sure you're one of them 'cause I never have been able to do that. But anyway it's always—they're geared to families. These picnics are. And it's just been a fun time. It's a lot of work for somebody, and then there's a cleanup time of course, but the next day or that night before everybody goes home, but you know everybody has been used to doing it. Everybody has got their job and it's cooperation of families and churches and that—you know doing it for the Lord anyway. So it's a good deal.

00:48:40

LP: Okay; well if you don't have anything else to add, we'll wrap up. So this has been Lisa Powell talking with Jerry Thompson about church barbecues in Western Kentucky on the 6th of August 2009 and this weekend, this Saturday, so the 8th of August is the St. Ann's Church barbecue when all this process will be happening this year. The end.

00:49:11

[End Jerry Thompson Interview]