

HAP TOWNES

Hap Townes Restaurant - Nashville, TN

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Interviewer: John Egerton

Transcription: Shelley Chance, ProDocs

Length: 1 hour, 30 minutes

Project: Nashville Eats

[Begin Hap Townes]

[Begin 1001]

00:00:00

John Egerton: Hap Townes, James M. Hap Townes.

00:00:07

Hap Townes: B—.

00:00:07

JE: James B. “Hap” Townes, Junior.

00:00:10

HT: Right.

00:00:12

JE: Nashville, Tennessee.

00:00:13

HT: That’s correct.

00:00:13

JE: And here we are on the 18th of July—17th of July, 2006. Well Hap, it's been—it's been 20—25 years or so since you retired.

00:00:30

HT: Twenty-one.

00:00:32

JE: Twenty-one years?

00:00:33

HT: I retired in '85.

00:00:34

JE: In '85; well here we are today at the Nashville Public Library downtown and we're making an oral history tape for the collection of the Nashville Oral History Project and also the Southern Foodways Alliance in Mississippi, based in Mississippi. We're just making a tape so people will know and it's—I'm the—I'm the fun guy because I get to ask you all the good questions and I already know a lot of the answers. **[Laughs]** And I want to hear them again because I get to hear you talk about it. I'd—I would—there are a couple things I'd like to do on the front-end and I'll try to go just sort of chronological here if I can. If I remember correctly you were born in Nashville.

00:01:24

HT: Right; uh-hm.

00:01:24

JE: And your father—where was your father born?

00:01:27

HT: Up at Gladesville.

00:01:30

JE: Gladesville?

00:01:29

HT: Where the big racetrack is down there.

00:01:32

JE: Uh-huh; right up there on the Kentucky border?

00:01:34

HT: No, Gladesville is up—that's going toward Murfreesboro.

00:01:39

JE: Oh yeah, okay.

00:01:40

HT: Gladesville, Tennessee.

00:01:41

JE: Oh up there close to where the speedway track is?

00:01:44

HT: Yeah, right.

00:01:44

JE: Over on the eastern side of it?

00:01:45

HT: Right; that great big track up there—that's Gladesville.

00:01:49

JE: That's Gladesville, and what—what about your mother? Where was she born?

00:01:54

HT: She was born and raised right here in Nashville.

00:01:57

JE: Here in Nashville?

00:01:58

HT: Right.

00:01:58

JE: Do you know where in the City?

00:02:02

HT: I'm pretty—no, not—I'm not really sure.

00:02:06

JE: Do you know what part of town?

00:02:07

HT: Yeah; well see I was born and raised on Lynnwood Avenue.

00:02:11

JE: You were?

00:02:11

HT: Inside the city right off 8th Avenue. My grandmother lived next-door to where my father bought his garden to build a house on. That was in the city and then all those—all those lots there they were 50 by 150.

00:02:31

JE: Right at the foot of the reservoir almost?

00:02:33

HT: Right, yeah; uh-hm.

00:02:35

JE: Real close to the reservoir?

00:02:35

HT: Uh-hm; right. See there's Wedgwood Avenue and then you come on up to Argyle, Calloway, and then—then Lynnwood, and then Lila Avenue is right in—next to where the old women's home used to be there—the old folks' home.

00:02:52

JE: That's right; and what year were you born?

00:02:55

HT: Nineteen twenty-three—April 12th, 1923.

00:02:58

JE: Did you grow up hearing stories about when the reservoir broke?

00:03:01

HT: Oh yeah; in fact it floated the trunks—my grandmother had two trunks in her home and it floated those trunks in the house.

00:03:12

JE: Floated them out the house?

00:03:13

HT: No, it floated them in the house—the water. See when it burst it came right down—some of it went down 8th Avenue and a lot of it came down Lynnwood because that hill is going down at Lynnwood.

00:03:25

JE: Yeah.

00:03:26

HT: So from the corner that would be the third house from the—from 8th Avenue, so see that water was really—really coming strong and like I said I—I remember that story.

00:03:39

JE: And that was—I think that year was about 1918 or something? [The Nashville Reservoir near Eighth Avenue South erupted in 1912, spilling some 25 million gallons of water into the street.]

00:03:43

HT: I'm not—

00:03:45

JE: That's okay but—but it was before you were born.

00:03:49

HT: Right.

00:03:50

JE: Do—your father remembered it?

00:03:52

HT: Well I don't know.

00:03:54

JE: Or your mother?

00:03:54

HT: He wasn't living then—I don't know whether he was living then or not. I don't know just when he built that house there.

00:04:02

JE: Yeah, did the house stay in the family?

00:04:04

HT: The house I was raised in?

00:04:07

JE: That house there on Lynnwood?

00:04:09

HT: No, not now.

00:04:10

JE: No; but I mean did it for a while—did you have some relatives that lived there?

00:04:14

HT: No, no; no, they didn't—no, because see when my father died then later my mother, she went into a retirement home there and she stayed there until she passed away. But the house had sold a couple different times then.

00:04:28

JE: I see.

00:04:29

HT: Now that section is kind of a run-down section of town.

00:04:34

JE: Yeah; now let's pick up the story with your father when he started a pushcart lunch wagon.

Where was that?

00:04:44

HT: Okay; down on Lynnwood where I was born and raised and he built the home there. He built a dog wagon in the backyard—he and his brother, Wyman Townes and of course he was up at Gladesville also. So he and his—

00:05:00

[End 1001; Begin 1002]

00:00:00

HT: —brother built that and it had—I think there was 10 seats in it—five on each side there. I mean it was one of them things—just like an old streetcar more or less.

00:00:12

JE: And you could put the—the sides up?

00:00:15

HT: No.

00:00:15

JE: You sit under it? It wasn't—it was bigger than that?

00:00:18

HT: It was stools in there and the windows—I remember those windows—he had a leather strap about like this; he could grab his leather strap and pull it up and push the button and the window would stay up—stay open there. So anyway, when he went down to the fairgrounds, the entrance of the fairgrounds, Wedgewood Avenue dead-ends into the fairgrounds there so they had to have a turnaround there. So he asked the City if he could pull dog wagon up there you know and sell some sandwiches and what have you? Wanted to know what they would charge me and they said I won't charge you anything; go ahead and pull it up there.

00:00:52

JE: What does the term dog wagon refer to—hotdogs?

00:00:56

HT: Yeah, I guess so—in those days.

00:01:00

JE: Called it a dog wagon?

00:01:00

HT: Yeah, they called it a hotdog—a dog wagon. So actually he was there part of one summer. One of the guys that came in there told him—he said Mr. Townes, he said Vanderbilt University over on 2nd Avenue, he said they've—that's where the Dental School is and he said you've got all those boys over there living in those dormitories and they don't have anything to eat. He said the families have to bring food in during—on the weekend and they take their closet in there to hang your ham up in there, a loaf of bread, and—and mayonnaise and mustard or whatever on the floor there. When they want something to eat they make them a sandwich. So he said you ought to go over there and see about getting one of those lots right across the street; he said it's all vacant land.

00:01:49

JE: Right there on Rutledge Hill up there on 2nd Avenue.

00:01:52

HT: But you know where the fire hall is. But you're coming out of town from there and it would be down in the next block right in front of where Howard High School was built there.

00:02:03

JE: So.

00:02:04

HT: So Dad found the guy that owned a piece of that property and he told him what he wanted to do and asked him could he put his dog wagon on it or what would he charge? And the guy said well I won't charge you anything.

00:02:16

JE: What year was this—'27 or something like that?

00:02:20

HT: Let me see—okay this was in 1921.

00:02:22

JE: Twenty-one?

00:02:25

HT: Twenty-one or twenty-two officially.

00:02:26

JE: That's right, '21.

00:02:29

HT: So then he—he talked to this guy and Dad said no, I want to pay you something. He said okay; he said how about \$7 a month. He said okay; I'll pay you \$7 a month. So he rolled the dog wagon over there and he and his brother—not at the time—he was in there making the sandwiches; he went over and talked to all those boys and they started coming over there eating and after business got good and he started kind of adding on to the place a little bit. Well he told those boys to—if they would come over and work breakfast with him—to help make breakfast he'd buy their breakfast if they'd stay there like an hour—just come for an hour and help us. And then another guy would come for another hour and another guy would come for another hour, so they got their meals free. *[Laughs]*

00:03:19

JE: And did they push that cart over there?

00:03:22

HT: Yeah.

00:03:23

JE: I mean it was—

00:03:24

HT: It was pulled over there. Now I don't know whether somebody—

00:03:26

JE: I mean they wouldn't hitch up a—hitch it up to a car or a truck or—?

00:03:34

HT: Well I don't—to tell you the truth I don't know how they got it on there—

00:03:37

JE: Because it would be kind of heavy wouldn't it?

00:03:36

HT: It was big. Oh yeah, I'm sure it would be.

00:03:39

JE: Take two of them at least to push it.

00:03:41

HT: They didn't push it; I'm sure that they—they got somebody to hook up a horse to it.

00:03:46

JE: A horse to it?

00:03:47

HT: Something over there to take it over there.

00:03:50

JE: And they went back and forth every day?

00:03:52

HT: No, no, they left it standing there.

00:03:55

JE: They set it up there permanently?

00:03:55

HT: They set it up there. Okay; the guy like you said—he agreed with—he didn't want to charge them nothing. He agreed with the \$7—\$7 bucks. Well then once those boys started coming over there for them meals to help him get started, well he began to add onto the place there. So then those boys started coming over in great numbers, so the guy that owned the property saw he was doing a good business there and he come down and he wanted—I forgot what it was—a great sum, you know like \$30 or \$40 a month. So Dad found out who owned the property right next to that and asked the guy if he wanted to sell it and he told him yeah; he'd sell it to him, so Dad bought that so he didn't have to worry about the rent anymore. **[Laughs]**

00:04:41

JE: I see; and so he—he actually owned that last place on 2nd Avenue?

00:04:46

HT: Right, yeah that's right, yeah. He owned that.

00:04:48

JE: Was it called Market Street then or was it called 2nd?

00:04:52

HT: That I don't know; I've always known it as 2nd Avenue.

00:04:53

JE: Second Avenue.

00:04:54

HT: Right

00:04:56

JE: Okay; so did he put a sign up?

00:04:58

HT: Well he had—

00:05:00

[End 1002; Begin 1003]

00:00:00

HT: —he had Hap Townes written on the front of the restaurant there.

00:00:05

JE: On the front of—?

00:00:06

HT: He didn't at first. One of the customers that was eating with him, he said—now he wasn't a student over there. He caught people coming back and forth from Lebanon and Mercersburg going to the market and taking stuff in and on the way out there wasn't but one other place like that in Nashville and that was in behind the—the post office downtown there. And Cohn's I think was the name of it. But they was a bigger dog wagon there and he had been there for sometime. And I understood that—that was the only two dog wagons in town then.

00:00:44

JE: Pie wagons and dog wagons?

00:00:45

HT: And dog—yeah; they called that—was pie wagon and dog wagon. *[Laughs]*

00:00:49

JE: That's wonderful. And of course at the other end of 2nd Avenue down there where the Courthouse was there was the big marketplace then.

00:00:56

HT: Oh yeah.

00:00:57

JE: That was where everybody went to market wasn't it?

00:00:58

HT: Right, yeah—yeah, right. I remember as a child going there in front of the old Courthouse. You had a trough—I'm saying about twice as long as this right here filled with water, so when you'd pull up there and get off your horse or whatever, you'd tie him around the post and let the horse drink there while you went in the Courthouse. Now I don't remember how many but there was several of those around the Courthouse, because you didn't have many cars in those days.

00:01:28

JE: No, there weren't many cars by then.

00:01:31

HT: At that age—but I don't—I was probably maybe 10 years old when I'd go—we'd leave on Lynnwood Avenue on Saturday morning—and of course I didn't go to school on Saturday. We'd go up and catch a streetcar and go downtown to the transfer station. Do you remember the transfer station?

00:01:51

JE: Yeah.

00:01:52

HT: Go in there and then take a trolley going out on 2nd Avenue there to go to work then. And we would leave at like 5 o'clock in the morning and I don't remember how long that trip would take. I'm saying probably 45 minutes or an hour to go by streetcar.

00:02:11

JE: You were born in what year?

00:02:13

HT: April 12th, 1923.

00:02:15

JE: Twenty-three.

00:02:17

HT: Yeah.

00:02:18

JE: Okay, so you're really talking about right at the start of Depression when you were an eight-year-old boy.

00:02:24

HT: Oh yeah—yeah.

00:02:24

JE: I mean this was hard times.

00:02:25

HT: Sure was, yeah.

00:02:27

JE: Did your Dad—was he able to maintain that—?

00:02:30

HT: Well right along then he was feeding all those boys from the Dental School over there and then you had the fire hall down there and then the people that worked in that area became customers as he enlarged the place. So he called his brother in from up at Gladesville to come down and help him run the place. So as it grew, well he got his sisters—some of them that were living there in the country—brought in a couple of them to come down there. Well his brother bought the property right next-door to the house—I mean to the dog wagon and a doctor had built the home there. I don't know whether he passed away or what but Uncle Wy later bought that home there and—

00:03:19

JE: That's another one of your father's brothers?

00:03:21

HT: Yeah, right that was the one that helped him build the dog wagon originally there.

00:03:25

JE: What was his name?

00:03:28

HT: Wyman Townes.

00:03:29

JE: Wyman—W-y-m-a-n?

00:03:31

HT: Yeah, uh-huh. So then after business got good well he went over on 1st Avenue in front of General Hospital and I don't know whether they had that place built or not but he had a big dog wagon there. It was just about as long as this room here, maybe five-foot shorter.

00:03:55

JE: Up on blocks or—?

00:03:57

HT: No, it was on wheels also. It was on wheels also.

00:03:58

JE: Okay.

00:04:00

HT: But it never was moved from there.

00:04:03

JE: It was kind of permanent?

00:04:04

HT: Well the lettuce—pretty green lettuce around from there and he had—it was all stools except at the tall end he had one table there that seated I think six people there. That was kind of a family people. So all those doctors and everything from the hospital and nurses would walk down there to eat; and then on Saturday the reason I went over then was to sweep and clean up and sort the Coca Cola bottles from the Dr. Pepper and Nehi Orange, so when the man would come in he didn't have to do all that. And then when they'd call the nurses or doctors—call up and now they're wanting a bacon and egg sandwich or what have you I would cut across through a house and take it up there to them. So that got to be a pretty good business running back and forth. *[Laughs]*

00:04:58

JE: Yeah; and did you get tips sometimes from that?

00:04:59

HT: No, never—no.

00:05:00

[End 1003; Begin 1004]

00:00:00

JE: Nobody talked about tips did they?

00:00:01

HT: And my brother, which was older than I, well he also worked there too on the weekends.

So that was how he wanted to be a doctor because in those days the emergency room there, they wasn't so strict, so when they'd call for sandwiches or what have you well we'd run them up there and just go in the emergency room there.

00:00:26

JE: In there where they were cutting on somebody?

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HT: Yeah, the table over there and they were working on somebody. So we'd sit it down on this table there. So my brother got to watch them you know operate and what have you and I remember one day he told me, some guy come in and he had a cleaver, you know a butcher cleaver [*Laughs*]*—*somebody at the store had hit this guy with this butcher cleaver in the leg there and they*—*they didn't take it out on account of the bleeding, so they'd take him in there and my brother stood there and watched them take that cleaver out*—*

00:01:03

JE: Did they go ahead and cut his leg off or*—*

00:01:04

HT: *—*and sew him back up. No, I don't remember. I doubt if it was that deep*—*just like sewed him back up.

00:01:11

JE: And your brother became a doctor?

00:01:14

HT: Well when he*—*he came home out of the service just like I, he couldn't get in medical school, so he became a pharmaceutical salesman and worked at that a couple of years waiting to get in*—*in medical school. But the Dental School, and opening came at Memphis at the Dental School there and they said well why don't you take that because the first two years is the same as the*—*being a physician? Well he got in that and got so interested in dentistry that he*—*well he

stayed in that and graduated from Dental School and then he went to I think Birmingham Steel Company and worked for them as a dentist for two years and saved his money because he wanted to go back and be an orthodontist. So he went back to school and got his license to become an orthodontist. And in those days you couldn't go where you wanted to. I think they didn't have that many orthodontists; they kind of said you want to go to Memphis, you want to go to Knoxville or what have you? So he chose Knoxville; so that's where he raised his children and everything.

00:02:23

JE: And so he stayed there afterwards and practiced there?

00:02:26

HT: Yeah, he stayed there until he passed away, yeah about three or four years ago.

00:02:29

JE: I see; did you have any other siblings besides him?

00:02:31

HT: Oh yeah, okay, my youngest brother died of diphtheria at nine years old. Now I remember that because I think I was—I don't know four, five, or six, but the only thing that I remember—I don't remember him but I remember the funeral was at home there. I mean they had the casket in there and all those people there and it was in the summertime, because I went in the bathroom—my mother had a little stool about that high [*Gestures*] with four legs on it. And I was small

enough to take that on the front porch and sit on that thing and kind of wrap myself around it and I remember people sitting in the swing and in the chairs on the porch and then the casket was right—was right there. There was three windows there and it was pushed right up against the window there. And all those people was in the house—all over the house and I remember that.

00:03:26

JE: You must have been a little confused maybe about it?

00:03:28

HT: Yeah, I didn't know, you know—

00:03:29

JE: Well what all was going on, yeah?

00:03:31

HT: —what all was going on see, because I don't remember him but I remember my other brother though.

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JE: You remember who?

00:03:39

HT: My—my other brother, Thomas that became the orthodontist.

00:03:42

JE: Yeah, was he older than you also?

00:03:43

HT: Yeah, right, okay I'm 83. Tom was three years older than I and my other brother was only a year or two past him. Well diphtheria was big back in those days and you couldn't do anything with it; so anyway he died—came down from diphtheria and died from that.

00:04:03

JE: Did you have any sisters?

00:04:05

HT: Yeah, I had one—one sister. Okay after those two brothers then a sister came long, after I; her name was Nancy—Nancy Townes and then a brother come along two or three years later named Bobby Townes—Robert Townes.

00:04:25

JE: Are they still living?

00:04:25

HT: No, all of them are gone.

00:04:26

JE: You're the last of the Mohicans?

00:04:28

HT: Yes; the last of—. [*Laughs*]

00:04:33

JE: Okay; let's go back to that—that dogcart. Do—could you pinpoint the place close to General Hospital where that second one of his—

00:04:46

HT: Oh yeah, uh-hm.

00:04:48

JE: Was it on 1st Avenue?

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HT: Right on 1st Avenue, the street that ran from 2nd Avenue over to 1st Avenue and right on—you just cross right on that and went right on the hospital—

00:05:00

[End 1004; Begin 1005]

00:00:00

HT: —there.

00:00:01

JE: Right.

00:00:02

HT: Okay; there was houses all along there and during those days those were the fine homes, a lot of the doctors and everything lived there, and when you got down to—okay, when you come from 2nd Avenue over to 1st Avenue, okay that—you turned left and went down I’m saying no more than 150-yards and that’s where the other restaurant was. There was a house right on the corner and the guy’s driveway was in the—in behind this house there and that driveway separated another drive—there was two driveways there together and that was the house that was up on that street that was running from 2nd Avenue and 1st Avenue.

00:00:48

JE: So—so this place that—that he put up there was between those driveways?

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HT: No, it was past the second driveway.

00:00:55

JE: I see.

00:00:55

HT: Yeah.

00:00:56

JE: But it was right on the street?

00:00:57

HT: Right on the street, yeah, uh-hm.

00:01:00

JE: Uh-huh; and across the street from the hospital or on the same side?

00:01:03

HT: No, it was across the street from the hospital. There was homes there all along there and the house right in front of us was where—what was the guy that—Red O’Donnell that wrote for—okay, he lived in that house right across the street.

00:01:21

JE: Was that right—Red O’Donnell?

00:01:22

HT: When he was writing for *The Banner* there. Well I'd cut through his yard when I was going up to General Hospital to deliver sandwiches there. There was only I think two more houses from there to the corner to where you went in General Hospital there and when you went in the parking lot kind of spread out which they'd have a big parking area and that's where the emergency room was. So when the ambulances would come in, well they'd go right up to the—right up to the emergency room door and then when they would come out they had to you know make a turn in that wide parking lot and you could almost come into those houses because they was there on 1st Avenue there.

00:02:07

JE: Did you go into the emergency room like your brother did sometimes?

00:02:10

HT: Oh yeah, yeah; I did.

00:02:12

JE: You'd see people laying up there all hurt and everything?

00:02:14

HT: Yeah.

00:02:15

JE: And—and you'd say I just brought your sandwiches up and they'd hand you the money?

00:02:20

HT: Well I'd lay them there; well a lot of times they'd just say tell your Daddy you know we'll pay him when we come down. **[Laughs]** Tell him to put that on the ticket or whatever. **[Laughs]**

00:02:28

JE: Put that on the ticket, yeah; put it on the ticket.

00:02:32

HT: Oh Lord.

00:02:33

JE: Did your—did your Dad do all the cooking or—or fixing?

00:02:38

HT: Well—

00:02:39

JE: Because what I'm getting at is did—did he start cooking hot food down there?

00:02:43

HT: Well okay, on 1st Avenue—on 1st Avenue it started off strictly—it was a hamburger place there and then later you know they added—as they added onto the place they added the meat and

three there pretty much, and the same way on 2nd Avenue. Now he cooked but we still did a lot of short orders over there because he was open—he was open 24-hours a day there for a long time then.

00:03:08

JE: Really?

00:03:09

HT: Yeah, he had his—the man that married his sister worked the night shift—he and another guy, just the two of them was at nighttime. Dad would leave like 5 o'clock in the afternoon and Uncle Les and this other guy would come in and run it all night. They finally cut it back I think during the Depression to like 11 or 12 o'clock at night there.

00:03:36

JE: So now days they call that 24/7; that's a popular expression—24/7, 365. [*Laughs*]

00:03:43

HT: Yeah.

00:03:44

JE: Do you—was it open every day?

00:03:45

HT: Seven days a week, yeah; all of them was open seven days a week, yeah.

00:03:49

JE: Holidays and everything they'd be there?

00:03:53

HT: Well I don't remember—

00:03:54

JE: Do you—do you remember that?

00:03:55

HT: I don't remember him closing much because he never did want to close down when we was on Chestnut Street. [*Laughs*]

00:04:02

JE: I remember that.

00:04:03

HT: Maybe Christmas Day.

00:04:04

JE: I remember your Dad being down there and sitting—sitting back there.

00:04:06

HT: Yeah.

00:04:08

JE: And he—he wanted to be there all the time though.

00:04:10

HT: That's right, yeah wanted to be there all the time. But you was asking about the Depression; okay, when business—when I was, of course, real, real small I remember him talking to my mother when we was at the kitchen table. He said—he said if something don't happen he said I'm going to have to close that—that restaurant on 2nd Avenue. He said we took in like a dollar and a quarter last night. Okay; hamburgers was a nickel, cold drinks was a nickel; everything was a nickel see, so you had a few customers you know spending a nickel, but—

00:04:44

JE: And that was it?

00:04:45

HT: —sadly when the—when the War broke out and I went in the service and he went in the service, well he sold that to one of the customers that ate over there.

00:04:56

JE: Sold that property there on 1st?

00:04:59

HT: Yeah, uh-hm.

[End 1005; Begin 1006]

00:00:00

HT: And Perry Steiner that owned Steiner [Inaudible] down on the foot of—oh the foot of 1st Avenue there—I don't remember whether you remember they made those batteries and everything.

00:00:16

JE: Perry Steiner, yeah, yeah.

00:00:17

HT: [Inaudible] and all that stuff, so they were real, real well to do people.

00:00:21

JE: And then across the river is Steiner-Liff?

00:00:22

HT: Right, right.

00:00:24

JE: That was the same family?

00:00:25

HT: The same family. Well anyway things got so bad that Perry Steiner was a good—got to be a good friend of my father's then. So Dad told him, he said Perry; he said I'm going to fold up everything. He said I need to borrow I think \$600 or \$700. He said now when I can pay you back I don't know. But anyway he let him have it.

00:00:45

JE: He did?

00:00:47

HT: Yeah; and he paid him back later. So Perry Steiner later, he married a girl from Chicago that her father was the—in the racehorse business up there; he was a big multi-millionaire guy. So anyway when Perry left Steiner-[Inaudible] down there he and his wife, they moved to California because he was Jewish and Dinah Shore—he and Dinah Shore was friends and he lived next door to Dinah Shore. But when Dinah Shore used to come in the restaurant and I don't—I vaguely remember that our doctor—Doctor Whitfield, his son dated Dinah Shore a few times and brought her in the restaurant.

00:01:40

JE: Into the 1st Avenue place or—?

00:01:42

HT: First Avenue place there because Doctor Whitfield lived right in the second house up from the restaurant there going in [Inaudible] or whatever the name of the street was there.

00:01:53

JE: Yeah; and—and as long as it was over there on 1st Avenue your father and your uncle they did all the cooking and they did all the food preparation?

00:02:03

HT: No, Uncle Wy stayed over there on 1st Avenue—on 2nd Avenue.

00:02:07

JE: So you had two places going?

00:02:09

HT: And he brought in—yeah; he brought in his sister's boy over there. The first thing he did, all three of them were working there and they lived in this house that he—Uncle Wy had bought. They lived in the house over there with he and Uncle Wy—this pretty good-sized house and it had a great big basement there. So they had slicing machines and everything over there and did—

00:02:30

JE: They had a little kitchen going.

00:02:31

HT: —did a lot of the cooking over there and just brought it into the restaurant.

00:02:35

JE: I see.

00:02:35

HT: Yeah; but now the hamburgers and short orders was all cooked right there, cooked in big old cast iron skillet with hog lard about that deep. When you ordered a hamburger with your sandwich you just put it in there and then when you got done you picked it out and they had towels laying there and you laid the hamburger on it and kind of mashed some of the grease out of it and put it on the—on the bun and put your lettuce and tomato—. But now those hamburgers taste good. [*Laughs*]

00:03:05

JE: I bet they did; I'm sure. Oh mercy; before—I want to just ask one more thing and then we—we'll move into the next phase of this. You were born in '23; you were 18 years old when the War broke out.

00:03:27

HT: Right, yeah.

00:03:28

JE: And—

00:03:28

HT: I went in when I was 19.

00:03:31

JE: You went in the next year?

00:03:32

HT: Right; uh-hm.

00:03:34

JE: At the time you left your father and your uncle—those two places were still going?

00:03:39

HT: Yeah, right; they was still—

00:03:40

JE: And were they doing vegetables and hot meats and hot bread by then?

00:03:44

HT: Yeah, right, yeah.

00:03:45

JE: So it had become like meat and three type—

00:03:48

HT: Meat and three, yeah; uh-hm.

00:03:49

JE: Didn't use that term; they just called it dinner.

00:03:51

HT: Yeah, that's right—plate lunch.

00:03:53

JE: Yeah, plate lunch.

00:03:53

HT: Plate lunch back in those days, yeah.

00:03:56

JE: Yeah, okay so you went in the Army in '42?

00:04:01

HT: Right; uh-hm.

00:04:02

JE: Were you drafted?

00:04:02

HT: The last—no, I volunteered.

00:04:05

JE: You volunteered; you went to Europe?

00:04:09

HT: Well first I went to—I went to Drew Field. I went into the Signal Corps. But I first—before I got out of high school I went to work for the Corps of Engineers and they had a teletype machine where we got all the teletypes coming in for the Water Department in the Corps of Engineers and what have you. So I ran the Teletype machine and I also knew how to use the radio and use the typewriter. So the Recruiting Station was down on the first floor and I hadn't been there any time hardly; so they kept coming up there and talking to me and all the other guys that worked in there and said look; said if you guys don't sign up, he said we're going to—you're going to get drafted and you're going to end up on—

00:05:00

[End 1006; Begin 1007]

00:00:00

HT: —the frontline; they said being you can do this work, he said you should volunteer and said I can get you in the Signal Corps being you can—you know use the typewriter and use this—these machines. So finally I got to thinking about that and finally one day he come up there and he talked to this other guy and I into volunteering. Well he lied to me; he told me—he said if you volunteer, he said I'll get you a—a—

00:00:30

JE: Tech Sergeant or something?

00:00:32

HT: —Tech Sergeant rating I believe if you go in. I said okay, I'll sign up. Well okay, I went down and went into Signal Corps and started doing—going all through the schooling and everything. So then I asked about after oh, four or five months, about my rating. When am I supposed to get that? Who promised you that? I said the Recruiting Sergeant there in Nashville, Sergeant so and so—so and so, and well do you have any paperwork on that? No, I don't have any paperwork. He just told me what he was going to do. *[Laughs]*

00:01:08

JE: Just had his word for it.

00:01:11

HT: He said well—roped you in. [*Laughs*] He said you can't go—those guys, they'll do anything to get you to sign up.

00:01:19

JE: You were a Buck Private?

00:01:19

HT: That's right I was a Buck Private.

00:01:20

JE: And they sent you to Europe?

00:01:23

HT: No; then—okay, after staying there I was attached to the 798th Signal Air Force Corps, this 798th and 799th. We—I took training in frontline radar and we practiced landing there on the beaches in Florida there and living in the swamps and like we was going to land on an island or what have you over there. Well one day during the training we fell out one morning and they come out and said all right; from here down you know go to mess duty. From here down you know do this. And from here down you'll go onto work; well in the meantime this Lieutenant come out and told the Sergeant he needed someone who can use a typewriter. So he said anybody in here that can use a typewriter? And I said I could use a typewriter—no I didn't right

then. So nobody stuck their hand up. You mean there's nobody in here who can use a typewriter? He said well—he said I was going to give you a day off to go into town in Chattanooga and my hand went back up. Well here went four or five more. This guy down here was first and he said come on in. Well anyway to make a long story short, they put me in there and I stayed in the office and never had to do anymore training. That outfit was called out and they went to—well the outfit went to Chattanooga—not Chattanooga—Chicago; we went up there for hand-to-hand combat training but I still stayed—the Officer wanted me to work in the office to get all this work done there. And we had been there about a week or two—we supposed to have been there about two weeks and we had been there about a week and I was staying in the orderly room, you know with him. So I got up one morning and got my mess kit and I went back to the barracks to get my mess kit; the damn thing was cleaned out. It was gone. So I got my mess kit and went back up there to the orderly room there and told the Sergeant there and he said well the Captain will be in—in a minute. So anyway I sat around and waited—and he said no, go on and eat breakfast. By the time you eat breakfast, come on back and he'll be here. So when I come back in well I told him and yeah; they shipped out last night about 2 o'clock in the morning; they weren't troop trained and they're going to Camp [Inaudible], Fresno, California. They're going to get about three or four weeks training in hand-to-hand combat training and it's going to take them about three weeks to get out there. He said so I left you here to help me and so what I'm going to do—I'm going to put you on a plane and fly you out there when we get this caught up. And he said you'll be out there in—in a day's time; you won't have to fool with those trains. I said that sounds—sounds good to me. Well anyway those guys landed and didn't get that training; they went right on the boat and went over there and landed on some little old island and they killed half of them and wounded the other half there and I was one of the lead men in the

Platoon. A guy named Dutcher from Chicago—he was tall like me and we went you know from tall on down and when they got off of those boats they had bombed that island oh for three or four days.

00:04:53

JE: Somewhere in the Pacific?

00:04:56

HT: Yeah; somewhere out there in the Pacific there and they did it for about three or four—

[End 1007; Begin 1008]

00:00:00

HT: —days and they thought they had it cleaned out. But when my outfit, the 798th, the 799th hit the beaches there both of those guys came up off of the ground and just mowed them down there. And I—after I got back home I was going to the arcade one day and I met this guy; his name was Yokam there that was in the plumbing business here and he was I my outfit there. You know where the peanut place was there where they give out the peanuts there? Well I was—I got me some peanuts and started toward 5th Avenue and I ran into him there. And he come up to me and said what the hell happened to you? Why didn't you go? And so I told him the story then and then he questioned and talked and he told me that story of what happened there.

00:00:51

JE: He was a Yokam did you say—Y-o-k-a-m? I just thought I would get that in there.

00:00:59

HT: I think it's Yokam; I'll have to think about his name. It's been years since I've seen him. But okay, but anyway he got shot up real bad and he told about Dutcher getting killed and the whole bunch getting shot up real bad. And I told him what happened to me—why I didn't get there.

00:01:16

JE: Which is?

00:01:18

HT: So I stayed there and helped the—the Major and them you know get the paperwork done. But in the meantime he got transferred, so he put me—rather than send me onto California, my outfit had already gone—was already gone; he said I'm going to put you in the 8th Air Force. So he said I'm going to send you from here to New Jersey and you'll go into—I can't think of the name of the outfit right off, but anyway I went into the 8th Air Force there and then we waited till about Christmas time and we got on a boat and went to Europe on it two days after Christmas.

00:02:05

JE: In '42?

00:02:07

HT: Yeah, that was the last—well let me see. I went in—in '42; that was—was that—no.

00:02:15

JE: The same year or the next year?

00:02:19

HT: That was Christmas of '43; I think that's what it was, yeah.

00:02:22

JE: Okay.

00:02:24

HT: Okay; we left a couple days after Christmas and of course crossing that North Atlantic there that time of year that thing is nothing but turmoil there and we was the largest ship to ever leave out of there. We left about 1 o'clock one morning. And the next morning—it wasn't bad then; but they had a dirigible out following us and they followed us—we'd go—four minutes we'd this way and then four minutes we'd go this way because it took those submarines five minutes to set up to shoot a boat down see. And then we had a lot of these little PT boats which was about no longer than this room here and they carried those cans on the back like a trash can and when they'd spot a sub or what have you the dirigible would—that PT boat would go over there and start kicking these cans off and of course they'd wait till we got out of range see and then they'd blow up and you'd see all that water go—.

00:03:28

JE: Were you scared, Hap?

00:03:31

HT: No; 19 years old—I wasn't scared until we got into that rough water and then the dirigible had to go back—the PT boats had to back and there we was—that boat would come out of there and slam [*Gestures*] and we was in—the boat was cut in four different compartments and all of those iron bunks was—was all just a foot or two apart then and when we went down in that night we had to come down the ladder like coming down from that ceiling. It was a great big round thing. Once we got in there and everybody was rested in there, well this guy up there had this big electric closure thing and—all right; all you guys in there now. I hope the torpedo don't hit this boat, you know and he'd—goodnight and slam that down and start screwing it together. All those boys started crying. [*Laughs*] And was right against the wall; my bunk was—was—that wave would hit that boat and—. [*Laughs*] You had to—you had to hold on to stay in the dang thing.

00:04:44

JE: Where did you land there?

00:04:46

HT: We landed in Scotland; we landed—we went into [*Inaudible*] but before we got there—okay that lasted for 16 days to get over. That storm lasted for four days and once we got out of that—

00:05:00

[End 1008; Begin 1009]

00:00:00

HT: —the storm because we didn't eat anything for about four days. They was pitching c-rations around over the boat; it looked like a box of Crackerjacks; it was larger than that—sealed in wax and everything. They just threw those all over the boat, but you couldn't walk for the people being sick all over the boat and you couldn't stand up if you could walk. In fact, one of the ship's lost I think two girls on there, two of the—what did they call them—WACs I think in those days. They fell down the stairwell there and they buried them at sea there. So anyway once we got into smooth water we was about four days out—four or five days out from landing in the [Inaudible]. Well okay, there's this—[inaudible] and it's shaped like this table is here. So they said go this way and that way. Okay, we was the last boat right here—my boat was. Well all of the sudden our motor conked out and the boat—and the thing left us sitting there. Well okay here comes the PT boats out. So they just kept circling us and kept circling us and then they sent a dirigible out from—from I guess somewhere in Scotland or someplace; he came back out and he goes all around with their radar deal. He come right down about 10-foot of the ocean there because—it was real still and listen. And then he'd go back up. Then here come the PT boats over there and started off the ash cans [slang term for depth charges] there. But we sat there for about oh, I think about six or seven miles till they got the motors going there. So we took off doing 90 and we had a PT boat on each side of us and the dirigible was up above us. Because boy you know with us sitting there we was sitting ducks there; so we finally caught up with them, I think just about before nightfall and went in and landed three or four days later there.

00:02:02

JE: Yeah, that would have been in—just at the beginning of '40—?

00:02:07

HT: Three.

00:02:08

JE: Forty-three and how long did you stay over there—till the War was over?

00:02:13

HT: Yeah, oh yeah, uh-hm.

00:02:15

JE: You were there?

00:02:15

HT: Stayed in England and then I did all—I was put in the—the supply section then of the 8th Air Force, BAD Number One; that was the largest base that supplied parts for airplanes and everything that the Air Force needed, including planes with parts all over that area, too, and we had—oh like your watches—Air Force watches, parts of all different types, and when they needed that—the reason the Base was up there—it was safer to be there than it was to be in the Southern part of England, so they'd ship that stuff down by rail by your Army trucks over there.

So after the invasion of—of England well I'm saying oh another two—March or three—three March well then they even pulled me out of the office and had to go down there—pulled several of us out of the office there. But I had a bunch of them to go before me; they kept holding me back for what I knew and sent some of the lesser ones like file clerks or what have you. Before I went some of them had already gone over there and been injured and come back. And you know they come back on the Base and all red-eyed and some of them were shot up and what have you.

00:03:41

JE: You never got injured?

00:03:42

HT: No, never got injured and they asked me—they said how did you make out? I don't know; my name was never called. And they—they had done been over there and got shot up and come back.

00:03:54

JE: Yeah; but you did eventually go to France?

00:03:55

HT: Right; but when—before we left they sent us to Southern England and before we left to go over there the War was over with—no wait a minute; no, we got over there but they was already way up in—in Germany way on up to where we was—

00:04:14

JE: It was calm?

00:04:15

HT: —pretty much safe. The only thing that happened to us was oh, let me see; oh after we got off and crossed the Rhine River, of course all those bridges and [inaudible] and—all that [inaudible] had been bombed to pieces and the rail lines were sticking straight up in there. They had a makeshift place for us to go eat. We was in there one day eating and they shot up on the hill in the [inaudible] started shooting down into the mess hall. [*Laughs*] So they come out of there doing 90, the MPs did and some of the outfits that had guns with them and took off chasing them up the hills out there. So anyway, they cleared—

00:05:00

[End 1009; Begin 1010]

00:00:00

HT: —us outside of there and put us on the truck and we went further on up there. So before we got to Kassel, Germany the—the War was over with then. So we stayed in Kassel, Germany; they went into a little—right outside of Kassel they had some big apartment houses like we've got here in Nashville now and they pulled up—I think there was four on each side of the street and it was out of—out of town there not far. They pulled all our trucks up and brought in some extra trucks and made all the people like—oh there was women and children, a few real old men;

they had to take everything out and bring it on—what they could take out, the sheets and everything. They couldn't take—they couldn't take the beds out or sewing machines or anything like that; they put them on the truck and that was really sad to see them coming out of there crying and putting them on trucks and hauling them away. As soon as they got them all out they put us in there. Of course we went in with our sleeping bags and put them on the beds. And then we stayed in there just for a—a few weeks until they got a settlement up, put barbed wire all around it and put us in there and we couldn't go into town but we were safer in there because Kassel was just leveled out. There was something around that town that—I was trying to think if it was ball bearings or whatever it was but the Army couldn't operate unless they had this. So that's the reason they bombed that place to death. So finally the kids got to coming up to the fence there and they could speak English. They were wanting chewing gum and candy. So we would take what we got out of our rations that week and go down and take—take chewing gum and the candy—[inaudible] and give it to the kids through the fence. So finally we after oh I don't know a few months there, they got a clearance for us where we could get in the Jeep and go into town there and it wasn't anything there to see except devastation but in going down there one day, well we hadn't got away from our compound, there was three or four houses that were still standing although they were shot up. Well we was going down the street there going towards town and all of the sudden we heard fire there and they were shooting at us. So we turned—we had our carbines around; we turned around because we wasn't far from the Base. We didn't know how many was in that house though so we headed right back to the Base then and told them what was going on. So boy here they come out of there, I mean a drove of them, and went down and went up to that house and started shooting it up and what have you.

00:02:54

JE: Like snipers?

00:02:55

HT: So yeah that's right; I think they got three or four snipers out of there. So anyway a few days later we went out and got further on down the end of town and it was—most of these places—homes were built out of stone or brick, and they were just leveled. There was just a pile here, a pile there and all of the sudden we got—we come into one that was leveled enough to where this old woman was sitting in the middle of where the home was in a rocking chair sewing or knitting or something and over there—there was a vase of flowers over there and over there—four or five different ones there. I couldn't speak any German then, so one of the boys knew a little of it, so he got off the Jeep and walked over there and that was their home and the family was buried there—you know during those bombing raids there. And as we drove around we saw more and more of that—just devastation. So that was the only time we went into town anymore there; we went on back to the Base. And when we got off at the Base, the kids coming up and give us candy; there was three or four homes about oh a block away from our compound. In fact you could see from where we were; we were kind of on the hill there but this kid—this could speak English real good and he was about 14 years old. So he wanted us to come down and—wanted me to come down and meet his mother and father there and I said well I'll have to get permission. So anyway they went down with me; now they couldn't speak any English. So the boy—the reason he chose me—because I gave him all of my candy and all of the chewing gum, so he'd take that home to his mother and father. So when we went down there the conversation—

we did just once—once or maybe twice there and in talking with them he told us—they was for Hitler because—

00:05:00

[End 1010; Begin 1011]

00:00:00

HT: —Hitler come by and he was going to—everybody was going to be two cars in every garaged; there was going to be chicken in every pot; everybody is going to have a home, you know—it wasn't going to be no more of this poor folks like was there then, see. Well boy Heil Hitler, you know eventually went far. And then—I know later during our conversation there he said—then once he got control and got the army up then he'd put the pressure on the people there and if you didn't Heil Hitler you know you could be shot. Or if you didn't have signs in your yard—if you said anything about Hitler you know you was a goner, you know like if I told you John, look I don't like this Hitler guy or you know you go tell her and she goes and tells—well boy they would just come in and haul you off and you're gone yeah. They shot and get rid of you quick.

00:00:56

JE: Gosh.

00:00:58

HT: Yeah; so—

00:01:00

JE: Well let's pause here just for a second. How—how are we—

00:01:01

[End 1011; Begin 1012]

00:00:00

JE: Well Hap when I first met you I—I remember two things about you that—that I remember almost from the time I first met you; one was the story about your father and the push cart wagon, the food wagon, and the other was the story about you starting to collect art when you were in Europe. Tell that story first and then we'll come on back to the States and pick up with the food thing.

00:00:35

HT: Okay; well we got over in England I wasn't a drinker and didn't hang around the—the bars and everything and they had the Red Cross. You'd go to the Red Cross when you got a chance to go out on the weekend there and the Red Cross would have these tours. You can go through the castles or the art galleries or what have you; so I chose to go through the castles and then—and the art galleries. So they'd always have guys explaining things to you so I got interested in you know—in the art over there. And then once I got into—into France and over into Germany you saw more—more of the arts and the music too than what you do in this country because on the weekends right there in Kassel, Germany and four or five guys would just get together if they

could find a vacant spot and all get out and play music. And they had the violins and you name it. So I got interested in you know good music there and also what I left out, I did get to go see the London Philharmonic Orchestra. It was up in Liverpool one weekend and I got to see another one of the big orchestras up there. I didn't want to go but this young lady that I had met, she mentioned you know going and when I got there, the brochure I was looking at showed the songs you know—this one is 20 minutes long and this one is 20—and I thought oh I'll die before I get out of here [**Laughs**]*—*listening to all that stuff. But once they got started, boy I'll tell you what; when you're there live and that conductor is up on the conducting stand there conducting away and falling off, and had to get back up there [**Laughs**], it was real—really entertaining. So I really enjoyed it, and—

00:02:40

JE: Yeah; and you started—you got interested in art?

00:02:44

HT: Right; I got interested over in Europe—I mean in England into going to some of the real, real nice galleries and museums and England. And then after the War was over with I got to go through the Louvre but at that time they didn't have a lot of the—of the masterpieces out that I—I think I got to see Venus De Milo; they had brought her back out but still they had a lot of the stuff stowed away but they had a lot in there, and I got to see a lot of that. So when I got back to the States, well the only thing when I got home—the only thing to go back to was the Parthenon and Cheekwood. So I started going to Parthenon and they started having shows every month; then I was going to Cheekwood, I joined out there and didn't have to join the Parthenon at that

time. So the Director of Parthenon got to eating with me and I had bought a few paintings out of the Parthenon and I had ran into some good artists and I told him about it and he said well—he said have them to be bring me four or five paintings in and I’ll take a look at them and if they look good you know we’ll line up a show for them. It might be a year away but we’ll do it, which I did. So I was at Cheekwood one say and the State of Tennessee had—they had bought all of these paintings and they had them on display at Cheekwood there. Well I thought they were for sale and I spotted this one particular piece that I liked and went to the desk and told the lady about this piece over there. So she comes over and takes a look at it; it was a 24 by 36 and it was a nude painted from the back sitting on the bed with a light playing on her back and her long hair there. And the play of light in it was what I liked and then the wrinkles there in the sheets and everything. Something just—well it was in the paper in that piece there in the paper. So she went back and she said yeah it’s \$200. And I said I’ll tell you what; mark it sold. I’ll take it. So the next day—

00:05:00

[End 1012; Begin 1013]

00:00:00

HT: —which was Monday the Director called out there at the restaurant and told me who he was—I can’t think of his name right off—and he told me that—that collection—explained that to me that it wasn’t for sale. I said well who is that artist? He said these are all Tennessee artists and I said well could you get me his address? I’d like to see some of his work. So he said okay, he lives in Chattanooga. So he gave me his address and everything but didn’t have the phone

number. So I drive to Chattanooga one day to see the artist; his mother lived there and she said he is living down in Georgia. So I said how far is that from here? Oh I think about 80 miles away and I said well I'll go see him. So I went down there to see him [*Laughs*] and anyway, he's working for that golf company in Chattanooga; First Flite I believe was the name of it designing golf ball covers and equipment things. So I told him about Parthenon and about me trying to buy the picture and I told him about the Parthenon. I said if you get me some works—he had a few there and I still—I liked those too, and anyway I said we'll—you'll—I'll let you come up and you can stay up to my home and I'll take you out to Parthenon and introduce you to him. If he likes your work he'll set up a show. We set up a show for a year later and it was the biggest selling show that we had—that the Parthenon had—had.

00:01:41

JE: What was the artist's name, Hap?

00:01:42

HT: His name was Robert Meredith.

00:01:47

JE: Marriott?

00:01:44

HT: Meredith—Robert Meredith.

00:01:47

JE: Meredith?

00:01:48

HT: M-e-r-e-d-i-t-h—okay; the highest painting in there was \$350 and it was a big shotgun laying on a table like this with some decoy ducks and some real shotgun shells laying around and some other things there. Like I said—at those prices and the quality of the work we sold a fool out of them. We didn't have to sell them; they sold themselves, but we wasn't down there to sell them. We was just down there to—to introduce him to the people and said this is the artist and what have you. So anyway to make a long story short he—after he went back home he started painting and started doing real, real well in Georgia there and was getting you know several hundred dollars for his paintings. So he wanted to go big-time and he moved to New Jersey and wanted to get into some galleries up there which he did and I went into visit—visiting before he really got a real good start. He was getting you know \$2,000 or \$3,000 for some of his paintings then there in New York, but he had to change his style because what the people—the people in New York don't want a farm scene or a landscape with a creek going through it and an old barn.

00:03:05

JE: They want an urban scene?

00:03:07

HT: So they wanted something else. So he came up with the idea and he went by a hardware store one day and the window was kind of dirty and some kids had put a—what do you call those—you put the X's and the O's?

00:03:24

JE: Tic-tac-toe?

00:03:25

HT: Tic-tac-toe on there and on the window sill there somebody laid a cigarette and it had burned all the way into that window sill there. So Bob got the idea, why don't I do—make a painting of this and put some items in there—old toys and things like that and boy it sold just like that. And the guy that bought it owned the—Pfeiffer [subject probably means Pfizer] or one of the big plumbing hardware parts where they make sinks—sink parts and all that stuff. So he asked the person that he bought it from in that gallery you know about this artist, so he wanted to see him. So that Christmas he got him to do—he said I want you to do me this big painting of my store window but I want my parts that I sell in that. But I want it behind this glass like you've got it there. Well anyway he did him a small one of that and he liked it real, real well and he talked to the gallery owner about doing a big one for him. So anyway—he said yeah, well I'm going to come up in price and he said you know the artist did; they get so much [inaudible] and the size he wants is \$25,000. So Bob said \$25,000? So anyway but the gallery got 40-percent of that; so anyway he did the painting for him—

00:05:00

[End 1013; Begin 1014]

00:00:00

HT: —and then the next year he wanted to do one for his brother-in-law or his brother one, so he did another one, so he got \$25,000 for two—two paintings up there. [*Laughs*]

00:00:12

JE: That's something else.

00:00:13

HT: So then he stayed there for a while living there and got to doing different scenes around the Park Avenue there and they sold real, real well but his three children have gotten up to you know eight, nine, ten, twelve, thirteen years-old and he was living in New Jersey right across the— from what—the Hudson River there, and it only took him about 20 minutes to get into town then. But this section there where he went to church, it was a nice—the neighborhood was pretty nice but they had to build a fence—a barbed wire fence around his church that he went to there because they would come in there and steal stuff out of the cars when you went to church. So that's why they had to put barbed wire on the top of it and if you was a church member there you had—two guys had to pull duty there day-time and night-time of standing in there. If you saw kids coming up on the—cutting through the fence and rob the cars you ran them off there. So he didn't want to bring them up in a neighborhood like this so he moved—sold his house and moved back to—to Georgia, right outside of Atlanta there—Powder Springs, Georgia close to where he was raised there. So he's still doing art.

00:01:38

JE: Is he still there?

00:01:39

HT: Oh yeah, still doing, doing real, real good.

00:01:41

JE: Robert Meredith?

00:01:42

HT: Yeah, Robert Meredith.

00:01:43

JE: I'll be.

00:01:44

HT: I've got a lot of stuff about him at home.

00:01:45

JE: Well I thought you did. Now Hap, since our time is going to get short—

00:01:51

HT: Okay.

00:01:52

JE: —I want us to get back to Nashville and to food, so you came back out of the War. Had your father—was he still operating the place on 1st Avenue?

00:02:02

HT: No, on 2nd Avenue, right, uh-hmm, yeah.

00:02:03

JE: On 2nd?

00:02:03

HT: Yeah, uh-hm.

00:02:05

JE: And he—he wanted to build a new place.

00:02:10

HT: Uh-hm.

00:02:10

JE: And he found a piece of property out on Humphreys?

00:02:13

HT: Right; uh-hm.

00:02:13

JE: So pick up the story there.

00:02:15

HT: Okay.

00:02:16

JE: I'll get you a drink of water.

00:02:18

HT: I'm getting dry.

00:02:21

JE: Yeah; South Nashville right off of 8th Avenue, not all that far from the reservoir actually where you—you—

00:02:30

HT: Right; right down from Fall School there.

00:02:33

JE: Yeah.

00:02:35

HT: Well okay, we bought that lot there. Mr. Hagey that we bought the property from, his family—his family was raised right next door and he was raised there next door to it and that piece of property was his father’s garden there. So he sold that to Dad then and we built that place there.

00:02:57

JE: And that would have been about 1940?

00:03:00

HT: The last of '45.

00:03:02

JE: Forty-five and forty-six—

00:03:02

HT: Right, yeah, uh-hm.

00:03:03

JE: —when y'all moved in there.

00:03:04

HT: Right; uh-hm.

00:03:07

JE: So you—you and your Dad operated that place for almost 40 years?

00:03:09

HT: Forty years, yeah; uh-hm just like a few days.

00:03:13

JE: When I got to know you in the '60s you—you were doing most of the work by then.

00:03:21

HT: Right.

00:03:22

JE: Your Dad was still there; he was always—

00:03:24

HT: Yeah, he'd come down and sit around and he would come back after lunch and hang out and shoot the breeze with the customer till about 2 o'clock.

00:03:34

JE: Was your mother still living at that time?

00:03:35

HT: Yeah, uh-hm.

00:03:36

JE: And did she ever—

00:03:37

HT: She was working there too.

00:03:38

JE: She did?

00:03:38

HT: Yeah, and my neighbor across the street, Miss Hobbs, she was one of the waitresses. They were like 75 years old at that time. And then another lady there in the neighborhood, they worked there as waitresses, too.

00:03:53

JE: You went straight into that business when you came back from the War didn't you with your Dad?

00:03:56

HT: Not immediately; I went to the—went back to the Corps of Engineers for like two months—something like that but all the time I was overseas I got a raise; I'd get letters where I got a raise and promotion and each time the other employees got a raise there I got one too. But so anyway, Dad wanted me to go in business with him and so that's what we did. So I resigned from the Corps of Engineers and went to work—

00:04:27

JE: At that point in your life did you know how to cook?

00:04:29

HT: Oh yeah because I come up in the—in the restaurant.

00:04:34

JE: And so you always—you—you grew up knowing how—

00:04:36

HT: I grew up yeah; I grew up cooking hamburgers and frying wieners and what have you and waiting on the tables and I thought it was great because when we was on 1st—1st Avenue over

there and the big dog wagon, when he'd bring me over, well okay here comes these doctors and nurses down and Dad would fix the breakfast that—

00:05:00

[End 1014; Begin 1015]

00:00:00

HT: —take that back there to Doctor so and so; he's the fourth one down there. I don't want to take that dang thing; I don't know him. Then I was you know 10 years old; well I'll go back there with you. So he'd take me back there; Doctor Whitfield this is my son Beverly you know so and so. Well hi, nice to meet you.

00:00:21

JE: He called you Beverly?

00:00:22

HT: Yeah, right—

00:00:24

JE: James Beverly “Hap” Townes—

00:00:25

HT: Bev.

00:00:26

JE: Bev?

00:00:26

HT: Yeah; so everybody—the customers they knew me as Bev and a lot of them would hear Dad calling me Bev and they thought he was saying Bill, so some of the customers called me Bill. [*Laughs*]

00:00:38

JE: Yeah, but he—he was already Hap wasn't he?

00:00:40

HT: Yeah, right; yeah, right.

00:00:42

JE: He was Hap from when he was a young person?

00:00:43

HT: Right; down on—over there on 1st Avenue—2nd Avenue rather. One of the customers named him that. He said you're always so happy—always so happy; he said I'm going to start calling you Hap. So he did and that name caught on there.

00:00:57

JE: And when did it kind of transfer over to you?

00:01:01

HT: Oh well when I was just a child working in the restaurant people didn't know my name. They knew I was Hap's son they'd go "Little Hap."

00:01:09

JE: Little Hap?

00:01:10

HT: They'd say "hey Little Hap; come here and go get me a Coca Cola or go get me this" is what they did. So I went through that but like I said I learned to meet people there. I got—the first thing I knew—take this back to the nurse over there. Well I'd go back there and once I met a lot of the nurses and a lot of the doctors well I got where I could talk with them, and then going up to the hospital so I got to talk with them up there, so I got you know to meet people there.

00:01:41

JE: Uh-hm.

00:01:43

HT: So I thought that was—I thought that was one of the best educations that I had there.

00:01:48

JE: And that new place over there on Humphreys Street, it only had about—

00:01:54

HT: It was 50 people.

00:01:55

JE: Fifty—it could seat 50 people.

00:01:56

HT: Yeah, right.

00:01:57

JE: And it was a tiny little place wasn't it?

00:02:00

HT: Yeah, right, uh-hm.

00:02:01

JE: And it was—it had—had stools along the back wall.

00:02:09

HT: Right, yeah we had about 10 or 12 stools there.

00:02:12

JE: And then maybe one or two up at the front?

00:02:15

HT: No.

00:02:16

JE: Not seats up there?

00:02:17

HT: No, they went from the wall to the steam table on down.

00:02:20

JE: Yeah, all the way to the end of the wall?

00:02:23

HT: As soon as—we'll go ahead.

00:02:24

JE: And then little tables?

00:02:26

HT: They had one—one little table that only seated two as you come in the front door sitting right there on the left there.

00:02:30

JE: Right there on the right there, uh-huh.

00:02:32

HT: Yeah, the rest of them seated four people.

00:02:35

JE: Fifty people?

00:02:35

HT: Yeah.

00:02:36

JE: And y'all on a good day you would serve over 200 lunches there?

00:02:40

HT: Oh easy, yeah.

00:02:40

JE: Yeah.

00:02:43

HT: Two hundred—I'd say we'd stay around 250.

00:02:48

JE: Golly.

00:02:48

HT: From 200 to 250 and then with write-ups well that would go to 300 and over. I think that would go 318, 320 several different times. And then they was walking away; I'd see them lined up out the door from—I'd be looking out the window and I couldn't see the end of the line there.

00:03:09

JE: That's turning around six times Hap.

00:03:12

HT: I know it; they wasn't in there any time.

00:03:13

JE: That's amazing; how could you turn around six—six seats six times at lunch? That's incredible.

00:03:19

HT: People were coming in and like where am I going to sit when I get my plate?

00:03:24

JE: Yeah.

00:03:26

HT: Well—another customer go oh something will open up before you get back to the table, but it would. They wouldn't stand there two minutes and somebody would get out and leave.

00:03:34

JE: That makes me want to ask a question. Rachel who was here with us earlier told me that she used to go in there and have lunch and she would notice that if you were standing up there serving and you looked out and saw that the room was full and the line was out the door that you would step out back and have a sip of iced-tea and wait for it—

00:04:00

HT: No, no; I never did that.

00:04:02

JE: —to kind of open up.

00:04:03

00:04:03

HT: No.

00:04:04

JE: That wasn't true?

00:04:03

HT: What I would do—when the place was packed and jammed and four or five standing there waist deep, I'd say let me get some more—John, let me get some butter beans in if you don't mind and [inaudible] was in line. So I would take that pot off—take it off the stove and take my pan and fill it back up; let me put a few more potatoes in there and just kind of restock the thing and slow it down there for five minutes and—

00:04:30

JE: You had to control that line a little bit.

00:04:31

HT: Yeah; so then you know others were getting up and leaving but a lot of the people they wasn't—they was in there and they'd eat and a lot of them didn't get their drinks before they was gone because they was—I got to go get a haircut and I've got to go to so and so. I didn't have a drink because it didn't get to me. Like I said sit 20 minutes and then they was gone. **[Laughs]** So I had a big turnover there.

00:04:54

JE: Yeah, did you think of—as you think back on—on—

00:05:00

[End 1015; Begin 1016]

00:00:00

JE: —that phenomenon, here you were coming back from World War II and really when you left to go most people ate dinner at home and they called it dinner; it was the middle of the day.

00:00:14

HT: Right; uh-hm.

00:00:15

JE: And people who could—went to work they had to have somewhere to eat if they lived too far to go home for lunch.

00:00:22

HT: Yeah.

00:00:24

JE: But as time changed and—and as we still are in that situation now people were busier, they were moving faster, there were more cars, there was less cooking at some point because people didn't have time to go home and eat, and so they needed places like your place.

00:00:44

HT: Yeah.

00:00:47

JE: And so it just continued to—to prosper didn't it and to thrive?

00:00:50

HT: Yeah, it got bigger and bigger and bigger.

00:00:53

JE: For at least 20—

00:00:53

HT: I was going to enlarge it—

00:00:56

JE: For 25 years or more after—after you came back from the War.

00:00:59

HT: I was going to enlarge it and make it larger but in talking with so many of the customers they was against it. Oh my God, don't do that to the place. I passed 15 restaurants on the way over here—pretty nice looking places; I like to come over here. I feel at home over here. You go messing with it and you're going to run your customers off. So I said well okay; I didn't mess—I quit messing with it. I just saw all those customers leaving every day.

00:01:27

JE: Did your dad ever want you to enlarge it? Did he think that would have been a good idea?

00:01:34

HT: Well he—he really didn't want to fool with the enlargement. I mean I talked to him but he would have if I had wanted to and I already had the plans drawn up and everything and the contractor was going to do it but finally like I said, so many customers said don't do it and I just didn't do it and left it like it was.

00:01:57

JE: And all the way to the end, all the way until you sold the business and retired, you would come in at 4—4 or 5 o'clock in the morning?

00:02:06

HT: Four o'clock.

00:02:08

JE: Four o'clock.

00:02:08

HT: I was there no later than four. I got up at quarter of three every morning. When I pulled up in front of the place there as a rule the milk man would be there, the donut man, and somebody else you know another one of the suppliers or what have you—Tillman would—might be there. There'd always be at least one truck there when I pulled up there, so I felt safe you know in doing that.

00:02:37

JE: And you served breakfast in those days didn't you?

00:02:38

HT: Yeah, right; yeah, uh-hm.

00:02:39

JE: A lot of—did you have a fairly good breakfast turnover?

00:02:41

HT: Yeah, I had a real good breakfast. Yes, in fact the breakfast business got so good it was running into the lunch business. I had people coming in at 10:00—10:15; I started serving at 11:00. They said okay Hap, I'm going to sit down and read the paper now and we're not rushing anybody. I said well okay; we're working on it and as soon as I get it ready I'll let you know. So

it got where I'd have 10—15 people in there at 10:30 waiting on lunch and here five or six guys come in—truckers and what have you and they wanted breakfast. Well boy that really threw a monkey wrench in the thing because I—it takes time to fix—you want ham and eggs, you want steak and eggs, you want home fries; they want this and that, so finally just—I just cut it out there because the lunch business was all we could do to get that plate lunch ready by—I'd always try to have it ready by 10:30. And as soon as I got it ready I opened the door but already I had them in there anyway so I just took the sign down open at 11 o'clock. I go out there and take it down as soon as we—I started serving there.

00:03:55

JE: And by 2:30 or 3 o'clock you're out of food and everybody is gone and it's time to clean up and get ready for the next day?

00:04:04

HT: Well at 2:00—so—so many times I'd have the music people would be over there. They'd call over there like 2:30 and they'd say Hap, we're in session now. We're going to finish up here in about 10 minutes. Have you got anything left? Said—I said yeah; I said well you know pretty much—the meat is pretty much gone—beef but I can fry you some pork chop. Well can you go ahead and do it and we'll be there in about—we'll be there in 20 or 30 minutes at the most. So I'd wait on them and they'd come in there and—and sit around and talk business or what have you.

00:04:41

JE: People like Chet Atkins and—

00:04:43

HT: Yeah, yeah, we had a bunch over there.

00:04:45

JE: George Jones and—

00:04:47

HT: Yeah, they'd just sit and come in and sit.

00:04:49

JE: Bradley Brothers and all those people.

00:04:50

HT: Yeah, all those people and—who was the guy that did that—oh *Wings of the Dove*? I know he came over there.

00:05:00

[End 1016; Begin 1017]

00:00:00

HT: He and a couple of girls just like—. But they'd sit there till about 5 o'clock. *[Laughs]* I couldn't get out of there.

00:00:07

JE: Yeah, what can you do if you had to get up and leave?

00:00:11

HT: Yeah, that's right I was sweeping the floor and everything trying to get out. *[Laughs]*

00:00:15

JE: Huh, and you'd meet yourself coming back because if you're getting up at quarter till three in the morning.

00:00:23

HT: Yeah, quarter to three, uh-hm.

00:00:24

JE: Wow.

00:00:26

HT: And then a bunch of times they'd break into the place at maybe Midnight and I'd have to go down there—get up and go down there and—and get the place closed back up, go home, and get maybe an hour or two more rest, get right back up, and back down there at 4 o'clock.

00:00:46

JE: Golly.

00:00:47

HT: I had that happen several times.

00:00:50

JE: Let's just talk about the food for a minute. You—it—it sort of evolved into this meat and three kind of thing. You—you would always have at least three kinds of meat and—and six or seven vegetables.

00:01:06

HT: Vegetables right.

00:01:07

JE: And iced-tea and soft drinks.

00:01:10

HT: Yeah, right.

00:01:11

JE: And hot bread—always hot bread.

00:01:13

HT: Yeah, fried—fried cornbread, right.

00:01:15

JE: And dessert?

00:01:16

HT: Oh yeah, homemade peach cobbler and homemade banana pudding.

00:01:21

JE: Yeah.

00:01:22

HT: That got to be that's the only two that we ended up—that was so popular we cut out the pies. We used to make pies years ago; we cut all that out.

00:01:32

JE: Yeah, it takes too long?

00:01:33

HT: Yeah, it takes too long and like I said we cut out breakfast—the lunch business got so good.

00:01:40

JE: Uh-huh; so what—what would be—if you—if you were just right now it was—you imagined that you were back at work and you're in there and it's 5 o'clock in the morning and you're thinking about the lunch you're going to serve that day let's just talk about what—what would be a typical day of what you would prepare for—?

00:02:06

HT: What I would do, okay, when I came in at 4 o'clock the first thing I would do was make coffee then. And then I'd put my roasts on and then I'd put the beans on and I'd get that stove pretty much cleared off to where when the cook come in at—at 6 o'clock well she could start frying and they could start making the slaw and the cottage cheese salad and getting those things ready. I had so many people that wanted to know—Hap, when do you cook all this food here? I'd point at that little stove, regular coal oil stove—we had to cook it right here on this stove.

[Laughs]

00:02:50

JE: Golly, and just having people back there in—behind the counter with you, you would have sometimes maybe four or five people at once.

00:02:59

HT: Yeah, right; yes.

00:03:00

JE: And it was tiny. It was—

00:03:01

HT: That's right; it wasn't big at all in there.

00:03:03

JE: Uh-um.

00:03:03

HT: See and the over was there so we'd fix the peach cobbler and we'd fix the steaks and everything—the country-fried steaks, well I'd always steam those for another hour after we fried them, but steam those and take them out. We'd make the gravy for that and then they'd put the peach cobbler in there and that had to cook for about 45 minutes to an hour and then of course the—the banana pudding. Let me see; I'm trying to think. I didn't make any—I didn't make those two items.

00:03:39

JE: One of your cooks would do that?

00:03:40

HT: Yeah, that's right the cooks was making those.

00:03:42

JE: Yeah, but you—you made the stewed tomatoes and you made the—?

00:03:47

HT: Yeah; and sometimes I made them and sometimes the girls made them, just according to who was there that day and—and—

00:03:56

JE: Real potatoes—had to peel those potatoes?

00:03:58

HT: Yeah, that's right. We peeled those potatoes and did that for years.

00:04:02

JE: Fresh green beans?

00:04:04

HT: Right, that took up so much time that I started buying the potatoes already peeled. Of course it cost twice as much but it—it—it took more time to devote to something else in the cooking and of course the people liked the—liked those real mashed potatoes and so many places—I didn't know it but so many places was going to instant potatoes that—oh Lord, if you wasn't a regular customer and come up to me and I'd tell you what we had there and they'd

say—like we’ve got some good tender roast beef today and this is country-fried steak, these are real mashed potatoes, fresh cooked green beans, butter beans, stewed tomatoes and—

00:04:47

JE: Turnip greens?

00:04:47

HT: Had turnip greens.

00:04:48

JE: Washed those turnip greens.

00:04:50

HT: And then we got cabbage over here on stove and I got stewed raisins up in the pot. They’d say those potatoes you said is real—real mashed—with real potatoes?

00:05:00

[End 1017; Begin 1018]

00:00:00

HT: I said yeah; I mashed potatoes myself with a big hand masher. Well okay, I’ll give them a try. And then a lot of them wouldn’t try them or they’d pass up the potatoes. I’d take a little saucer and I’d take out a couple of spoons full and put a little touch of gravy on there and I said

this is on the house. **[Laughs]** So—so then when they'd come in after that they'd order them.

[Laughs]

00:00:26

JE: This is something I quoted you saying and you—you can say this right this minute and I'd know it was you. How's it going brother? Haven't seen you in a long time; we've got some good country-fried steak today and pork tenderloin and some good old roast beef. We've got some white beans, turnip greens, and baked squash. Or, how about some stewed tomatoes or some good old stewed raisins? Got mashed potatoes, too—steak and potatoes, all right, sir, coming right up. Want a little touch of gravy on those potatoes? And here's your turnip greens and your tomatoes and here's a nice hot corn cake right off the griddle. Good to see you brother; hope you enjoy your lunch.

00:01:04

HT: Yeah.

00:01:05

JE: Wonder how many times you ever said that.

00:01:05

HT: Over and over and over. **[Laughs]**

00:01:09

JE: How many even in one day? If you're serving between 200 and 300 lunches a day in a 50-seat restaurant that's incredible.

00:01:20

HT: Well some of those went out and I'd get calls for—

00:01:23

JE: For carryout?

00:01:24

HT: —fifteen plate lunches to go, twenty plate lunches to go, twenty-one, twenty-four.

00:01:29

JE: Would they typically say to you just put it in just—put in anything or would each one be a different order?

00:01:35

HT: Well sometimes—on the large orders they would say mix it up. You know I'd do five plate lunches this way and five you know with white beans and the other five with cooked green beans; I'd put cabbage on one plate and turnip greens on another and that way they could—when they'd get back to the office the girls could open them all up on the table and they could decide which ones that they wanted. But I'd always have like about five—that's on large orders; if you

had 10 plates and they just said fix them and kind of mix them and I'd do two or three of this and maybe a couple of this one, maybe one of that one.

00:02:18

JE: And they're always happy with it.

00:02:19

HT: Yeah, that's right they was always happy and always came back. [*Laughs*]

00:02:23

JE: Did you always eat lunch there yourself?

00:02:26

HT: I didn't eat—I didn't have time to eat lunch. [*Laughs*]

00:02:28

JE: You never ate there did you?

00:02:30

HT: Very seldom.

00:02:31

JE: You went home and Anne had your—had your supper ready?

00:02:33

HT: Right, that's right, yeah.

00:02:35

JE: What did you have for supper?

00:02:37

HT: Well she normally would you know cook pretty much the same thing I was—I had been cooking or she'd cook vegetables and what have you. Most of the time—

00:02:44

JE: And bread.

00:02:45

HT: —vegetables yeah and some bread, yeah.

00:02:46

JE: And cornbread or biscuits?

00:02:48

HT: My mother taught her how to cook.

00:02:51

JE: Your mother taught her?

00:02:52

HT: Yeah, she taught her.

00:02:53

JE: Where did Anne grow up?

00:02:54

HT: Cedar Bluff, Alabama.

00:02:56

JE: Huh.

00:02:56

HT: Halfway between Rome, Georgia—real close to the Alabama line.

00:03:01

JE: How did you meet her?

00:03:03

HT: I met her—she was the Valedictorian of her class and—wait, Salutatorian. What do you call—?

00:03:11

JE: Yeah, uh-hm.

00:03:12

HT: Well anyway, yeah; well anyway she got that to come to Nashville to go to business college here and they put her up in the Y and paid her expenses and everything and they had a dance at the Y there on Saturday night and I think on one other night—mostly about Tuesday night and Saturday night. So I met her one night there at the dance.

00:03:38

JE: At the dance.

00:03:39

HT: I'd always go up there to Nashville on Saturday night there.

00:03:43

JE: When do y'all get married?

00:03:45

HT: Oh Lord, we—okay when I met her—we married in '50—'55.

00:03:53

JE: Fifty-five?

00:03:53

HT: Yeah, uh-hm. I was 32. She was four years younger than I. But she—her brother got killed in Korea and she went home and stayed home for—for about three years and she'd come you know back and forth to Nashville or I'd go down there.

00:04:10

JE: Yeah.

00:04:12

HT: And so finally when we decided to get married well one of the guys that was—two of the guys that—that was eating with me, Batson and Melvin were building homes in the Crieve Hall section and he told me—he said Hap you don't have a home yet; he said you better get you one before this GI Bill runs out. I said well how is that going to help me? He said well you can get it at four-percent. I said well I'm not even married. And he said now we're building homes out there that are \$12,000 and \$15,000 and he said we'll build you one on—on Briarwood Drive; it's \$15,000 and I got a nice lot right next to me that could become a corner lot if we get the property behind us. So—

00:05:00

[End 1018; Begin 1019]

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HT: —come over there he said and take a look and let me show you; this place is almost finished. So I did but the note was going to be \$96 a month for 30 years. I said man I can't fight that; I hate to fight that. I said if I can get a duplex, I wouldn't mind doing it because I could rent out half of it and that would help pay the rent, and that's what I got. He built me a duplex there for \$15,000.

00:00:23

JE: I'll be.

00:00:25

HT: And—the guy that came in to run, Harry Stone—that used to be in Nashville, came back here to open up Channel 2 or—

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JE: Channel 2.

00:00:36

HT: Channel 2; okay he saw my ad in the paper and he came over to the restaurant. And I said well Lord that thing—it's just about halfway finished. I said I don't believe you can tell that much about it. Some of the walls are up in there. He said well I'll go out and take a look at it. So

he—I told him where it was and he went and went out and took a look at it; about an hour later he come down and he gave me \$75—I mean \$75 cold cash. I never lost a day’s rent after that. And he lived there until he moved onto New Orleans I believe it was.

00:01:17

JE: Uh-hm; do you still that way, Hap?

00:01:20

HT: Uh-hm.

00:01:20

JE: And still cook that way?

00:01:21

HT: My wife cooks that way.

00:01:22

JE: Do you cook any at home now?

00:01:23

HT: No, she does all the cooking.

00:01:26

JE: You don't do any?

00:01:27

HT: No, I eat a big breakfast and for lunch I might eat a banana, apple, can of salmon or sardines—something like that—light because I don't want no big—two meals. [*Laughs*]

00:01:38

JE: And she cooks—she cooks supper?

00:01:40

HT: So we eat 5 o'clock every night, a meat and three.

00:01:43

JE: A meat and three at home. [*Laughs*]

00:01:45

HT: [*Laughs*]

00:01:44

JE: Hap, it's been wonderful to talk to you.

00:01:47

HT: You know she was asking me about that meat and three.

00:01:50

JE: Yeah.

00:01:51

HT: So many people said that—that originated over at the restaurant.

00:01:55

JE: I think—I wouldn't be at all surprised.

00:01:57

HT: I know a lot of the people would come in and say that you've got the best meat and three in town.

00:02:02

JE: Yeah.

00:02:04

HT: I don't know how many that I heard and then said well now that originated—but they—

00:02:09

JE: I'll tell you; I've traveled around all over the South eating in a whole lot of places and Nashville is the best meat and three town in the South. And you had the best meat and three in Nashville.

00:02:22

HT: Yeah, that's what a lot of them was telling me. And it boiled down to—a lot of my customers said Hap, I hope you don't never close this place. They said it's only about four or five decent meat and three(s) left in Nashville. They're all going out of business.

00:02:37

JE: Yeah.

00:02:40

HT: It's such a job to cook and get all this stuff ready I told them; that's the reason they're going out. So you just cook hamburgers and what have you. The garbage can breaks up a lot of these places; that's the reason they're going out of business.

00:02:52

JE: Uh-hm.

00:02:54

HT: I just hate to see it—I had five different people that said when I got ready to sell that place that—to let them know and I had their cards and everything. And I called the first one that I had

his card that said he wanted to buy it, and I—and he and his—he came over that afternoon and told me he wanted to buy it and we went over it and went over it and finally a few weeks later we settled and they bought it.

00:03:23

JE: What year was it?

00:03:25

HT: Eighty-five.

00:03:26

JE: Eighty-five?

00:03:27

HT: Yeah, 1985—'55 to '85, so he bought it and put his young son in there.

00:03:35

JE: You mean '45 to '85?

00:03:36

HT: Right, yeah '45 to '85, right. He put his young son in there and I didn't know it at this time. I thought you know he and his wife was going to run it. And of course I told him, I said now I can't see a boy that young coming in here—I come here at 4 o'clock every morning and spin like

a top all day long and I said that's what's wrong with my health now. I said when I come here I weighed almost 190-pounds; I'm down to 150 now. And I said I didn't have time to eat. And I just snacked along, maybe a bite here and a bite there during the day as I was preparing and what have you. But anyway when the boy came in well he finally turned most of the work over to the help and those girls started leaving one by one.

00:04:31

JE: They did the best they could but they couldn't sustain that.

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HT: Yeah, they did the best they could.

00:04:35

JE: I mean they loved working for you, Hap.

00:04:36

HT: Yeah, I know it.

00:04:37

JE: That's what the difference was.

00:04:39

HT: That's right.

00:04:40

JE: And there was no way anybody could do that.

00:04:41

HT: Yeah; so he just turned it pretty much over to them and Sue that had worked for me so long, she was the last one to leave and the Internal Revenue—[inaudible] with me and they called me and told me said, Hap, we're going to close that place up if—if they don't come up and pay us some taxes. And I said well I will—

00:05:00

[End 1019; Begin 1020]

00:00:00

HT: talk to his mother and father and him also, which I did. And anyway about three months later they went out there at lunchtime one day and Sue called me on the phone and said Hap, they just slapped a big red sign on the door, put a padlock on there, and come out the back door and went up to the cash register and what few customers were in there—when they checked out they put every penny in that bag and that place was officially closed until they auctioned everything off and that was the end of it.

00:00:31

JE: Yeah.

00:00:34

[End 1020; Begin 1021]

00:00:00

HT: It was heart-breaking I'll tell you.

00:00:05

[End 1020; Begin 1021]

00:00:00

[End Hap Townes Interview]