

**Interviewer: Sara Roahen**  
**Interviewee: Katherine & Sandy Whann**  
**Interview Date: July 20, 2006**  
**Location: Leidenheimer Baking Co., Simon Bolivar Ave., New Orleans, LA**

**Southern Foodways Alliance**  
**Project: Guardians of Tradition**

**[Begin Katherine & Sandy Whann]**

00:00:00

**SR:** This is Sara Roahen for the Southern Foodways Alliance. It's July 20<sup>th</sup> 2006 and I'm at the Leidenheimer Baking Company. And if I could get you both to state your name, your date of birth, and what you do for a living.

00:00:17

**KW:** Katherine Whann, September 2<sup>nd</sup> 1966, and I am the Office Manager at Leidenheimer.

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**SW:** My name is Sandy Whann, or Robert J. Whann, IV. I am the President of Leidenheimer Baking Company and I was born May 19<sup>th</sup> of 1964.

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**SR:** Thank you, and can you tell me what your relationship is?

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**SW:** Brother and sister.

00:00:51

**SR:** Okay.

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**KW:** Younger sister. *[Laughs]*

00:00:53

**SR:** *[Laughs]* Why don't we start out by your telling me about your product?

00:01:02

**SW:** Well the product that we produce at Leidenheimer primarily is what we refer to as traditional New Orleans French bread. It is a variation on what most people consider to be the heavier, dough(y) baguette style French bread. Ours is a much lighter version with a crisp crust and a very light airy in some ways cotton candy like interior. Bread like this can be found in France and it--it does resemble many of the long loaves--our--our bread, our most popular loaf is in excess of 32-inches long, usually ranges from 32 to 35 inches and it's used to make the traditional po-boy sandwich here in New Orleans. We also make a variety of sizes using the same formula and we also make a variety of Italian muffaletta bread. Actually recently I've been told to pronounce that "moof-a-letta" [with a long 'u,' instead of a short one]. But so we supply many of the cities sandwich shops, white tablecloth restaurants, hotels, schools, grocery stores--.

00:02:20

**SR:** Who told you to pronounce it "moof-a-letta"?

00:02:23

**SW:** A gentleman by the name of Sal LoGiudice who is the owner of United Bakery and they're one of the oldest, if not the oldest producer of muffaletta bread--moof-a-letta bread--I really have to work on that--in the city. And he told me that muffaletta [short 'u'] is butchering the pronunciation of that word and he thinks it came out because of the Lotta Burger in the 1950s and they changed the pronunciation of it; so he said if he ever hears another person say muffaletta [short 'u'] instead of "moof-a-letta" he's going to go crazy, so I'm trying not to drive him crazy. And he should know 'cause he's--he's--they've been producing muffaletta bread longer than anyone else.

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**SR:** Well that is good to know.

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**SW:** Yeah, there you go.

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**SR:** How long has this company--Leidenheimer been producing bread?

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**SW:** Well our great-grandfather George Leidenheimer came to New Orleans in the 1870s or '80s and began producing bread a few blocks from this location over on Dryades Street--in those days he was producing more of his traditional German--native German breads. He came from Deidesheim, Germany and he founded Leidenheimer Baking Company in 1896; again it was

located on Dryades Street a few blocks away from where we are now and he completed construction of the facility that we currently have in 1905. So that's--and I am the fourth generation in my family to be involved with the company. George Leidenheimer's daughter, Josephine Leidenheimer married my paternal grandfather, Robert J. Whann. And my father Robert J. Whann, III took over from him, and I worked with him for the first 19 years of my career beginning in 1986. He retired in 2005 and hopefully there's more history to be written--or at least recorded.

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**SR:** Do you have other siblings?

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**KW:** No, just the two of us.

00:04:41

**SR:** And when did you start getting involved Katherine? I know--I mean it's always been part of your life I'm sure but as your job?

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**KW:** I started--I moved back to New Orleans three years ago--three years ago this month and started working at the bakery in August of--I don't know--2003, so and my father retired shortly--shortly after that and also the Office Manager that we had--had for 10 years moved away and so

that sort of became my job and some of my father's duties and then Office Manager duties. So it was good timing.

00:05:22

**SR:** And where did you move home from?

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**KW:** I was in Washington, DC for eight and a half years and then working in museums and also in Texas before that working in museums, so it was very different. [*Laughs*] A very different job but it was fortuitous, serendipitous--all the timing--and I came home when I did.

00:05:45

**SR:** And when ya'll were growing up were you being groomed to take over the family business?

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**KW:** He was. [*Laughs*] Thankfully I was not.

00:05:55

**SW:** Well it--it actually--my father claims that he really never wanted me to go into the baking business. He maintains that he did everything in his power to try to steer me away from it but I think he probably knew that all you needed to do as a parent was try to talk a child out of something in order to get them to go right into it. So who knows? But I spent--I spent a good bit of time in my high school years and between summers of college working for a variety of

bakeries both in Louisiana and outside of Louisiana and really struggled with it a little bit while I was away at college as to whether or not I wanted to return but I saw the promise for--for this company and I really saw what I thought was a promise for New Orleans as well. When I returned New Orleans was in--still in a slump of the oil crisis and the World's Fair, so it was really challenging time; it was a very challenging time for the City. We lost a great deal of population and--and jobs and the economy was really in the tank, so I guess the positive thing there was I couldn't do much worse.

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**SR:** And when was that?

00:07:17

**SW:** That was 1986--1986 and of course in the early to mid-'80s was really one of the real dark times for New Orleans.

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**SR:** When ya'll were growing up did you--at what point did you realize that you were--your family was a big part of New Orleans culture and that you were royalty in some way? Did you ever realize that?

00:07:42

**SR:** I'll let my sister answer that question. *[Laughs]*

00:07:46

**KW:** Well--

00:07:46

**SW:** The royalty part anyway.

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**KW:** Well yeah, I don't know.

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**SR:** Well I say that a little tongue and cheek but you know what I mean.

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**SW:** Thank you.

00:07:52

**KW:** Well you know--now usually I really don't think I was--I was always very proud that we made Leidenheimer bread. I mean I always thought it was the best bread, you know even when I was a teenager when I would go to Domilise's with my friends and I was always a little cocky. I was like yeah that's our bread; but I don't think--and again naively--I don't think I realized how much--how integral it was to New Orleans until first the SFA Awards Ceremony which was--just blew me away and then also you know it would have to come up during the storm. The emails that we received from total strangers; they asked us to come and set up our ovens and bake

bread in their garages. I mean truly you know I--I--I think it was then for me that I thought gee everybody else gets it like I do, but I never would have assumed everybody would have said oh well you know; that's--that's the greatest bread ever. But you know people really responded in ways that--I mean it has made me incredibly proud to be any part of it at all and I consider myself a very small part of it because you know my dad was here 38 years toughing it out and my brother has been here for 19 toughing it out and I kind of did my little art thing and swooped in and now I get to have free bread every day you know and do my job but you know certainly I just feel like I have benefited from--from it. But--but it has been a recent discovery for me how much of a part of the city we really are; and I'm very proud of that.

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**SR:** If I take the word *royalty* out of it; if I phrase it a different way did you--when you were growing up did you realize how important this style of French bread was to New Orleans?

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**SW:** No, no, I have to say I didn't spend a whole lot of time--I didn't spend a whole lot of time thinking about it nor was it ever something that--we really weren't the kind of family who discussed business over the dinner table. In fact my father made a concerted effort to really never bring it up.

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**KW:** And I think we took the bread for granted. **[Laughs]** I mean it was there.

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**SW:** We did except that most nights it was burned but--because we'd always forget about it in the oven. So we'd always know that bread was ready for dinner when we smelled it burning in the oven for dinner.

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**KW:** Right; but still--

00:10:23

**SW:** That's why my father always brought home extra. But anyway I really don't think that it--that it was a--that I was cognizant of it during the time that I was growing up. It was always nice and I did feel the glimmers of you know of pride to be able to walk into a po-boy shop and see you know bags of bread there that I knew were ours. In fact, in those days they didn't even have our name on it; it was just a plain brown bag and that's one of the very first things I did when I got here was put our names on the bags so people could know exactly where they're getting their bread. I got tired of asking people in restaurants, you know baiting them of course--where do you get this delicious bread? And they'd say you know I have no idea and that--that didn't make me very happy, so we changed that. But I really think that you know--now that you've asked the question and I--I take a little time to reflect on it, I--I think that you know when I started here 20 years ago there were five or six bakeries operating in New Orleans and this is a difficult business to survive in--in a town that has not seen much population growth and in fact has actually seen some shrinkage in population in the last two decades. It's not a pleasant factor to discuss but it's a reality that pre-Katrina we were losing population every year and when you--when you deal

with something like bread which is a commodity and its consumption is based on the number of mouths that are in the city at any given time it's an unfortunate reality that some of the existing bakers and--and many other industries were affected too--but some of the existing bakers are going to be suffering from that. Well we took the standpoint again in the mid-'80s that we wanted--we were committed to this market for the long term and so we actually began acquiring other bakeries and in the early '90s we acquired our larger competitor Risings Baking Company; they were located on St. Claude Avenue. Risings was actually larger than we were; we purchased them. We completed that acquisition again in the early '90s and we've continued that and recently in the last two years we purchased Angelo Gendusa Baking Company. So what that's really done to answer your question is as there have become fewer bakers in town the mantle of responsibility for carrying on this tradition has grown heavier because instead of having the weight in essence distributed among a half dozen or eight bakeries it grows heavier because by acquisition we've grown in market share, we've grown in size and the options for customers are now fewer and so we have to be all that much better. So for me it's grown exponentially really every year that I've been in this business in terms of understanding what a critical part of the city we are. And as my sister said, when--when you think about the results of Katrina you know I had never really put pen to paper and realized that on a day we don't deliver French bread--it's not--it hasn't happened of course except for you know Katrina outage, but on a day we don't deliver French bread, take the numbers of po-boy shops and their employees who are waiting there, who are expecting paychecks, and you're talking about thousands upon thousands upon thousands of people who are making their living because of our delivering that loaf of bread every day to that po-boy shop. And that did become readily apparent in that we had customers who simply said I'm not opening without your bread. So you tell me when you're opening and that's the day I'm

opening. And that is--it's--(a) it's flattering, but (b) it's an example of this mantle of responsibility that I described earlier.

If you want to talk about pressure, I mean that's pressure. He's got 10 employees; those 10 employees have 20 kids you know among them. I mean it's--it's a huge, huge burden and we feel it every day and we do it with pride. We do it--I mean we're not complaining about it; we're just--it's a--it's something that we take very seriously and we don't--we don't take it for granted I can tell you that. Long answer to your short question.

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**SR:** That was a great answer. It was a great answer. I hadn't even thought--I mean of course after the hurricane I didn't come back for a while permanently and it was a really big deal when people first started to get po-boys again. I mean it was like news.

00:15:19

**KW:** Well even in--in Washington, DC I had friends email me and say you know that Johnny's Half-Shell which is an Ann Cashion enterprise has a sign on our door that says we will not serve po-boys until our bakery Leidenheimer in New Orleans is back up and running. And all--all of my friends in DC kept emailing me and saying do--do you know about the signs? Isn't that great? And I thought wow; you know that's somebody in Washington who is saying that. Multiply that by 10 and that's you know--that's how New Orleans po-boy shops are hopefully feeling but--. You know so that was--and the fact that it was going on somewhere I mean even out of the city was you know just humbling. But your answer--you know my answer to the question was we were flattered by the emails. I feel the pride; his answer is I feel the burden and the

responsibility. That's how you divide--I mean that is the divide between us--is that he does have the burden and the responsibility and my little bit of marketing says oh isn't that great that we're getting all that great press and you know; so--. Thankfully I don't have to feel that--that burden. But I try to soak up the shock a little bit.

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**SW:** It helped fuel the rebuilding though. I mean we were faced with--we were faced with a daunting task as were many local businesses. Ours was maybe you know a little more daunting by the fact that there was no substitute available for our product and we're not a widget--that you just call up a company out of state and order. So when we went down on August 29<sup>th</sup>, certainly for the' you know--and we had been shut down for a day or so in previous years for an evacuation for you know false alarms for whatever reason but even during those times we were servicing customers on a walk-up basis out of the bakery. This in my mind was certainly the first time in--in probably since a Camille or you know Betsy that we--we actually were dark for a period of time and we--we shut down on August 28<sup>th</sup>--that Sunday afternoon and we reopened the plant on Sunday, October 9<sup>th</sup> and that's when we began--excuse me--that's when we began producing--producing product for delivery again. And what happened in that roughly five-week period was we did not get power back until October 3<sup>rd</sup> or maybe the 4<sup>th</sup>; I'm forgetting the date. But when we got power back we were able to start setting--we were able to start setting an opening date--an official date to begin deliveries but prior to that--for the four weeks prior to that we were fighting to get the bakery back in condition for us to be able to produce. We had massive cleanup efforts going on; cleaning up 10,000 pounds of melted yeast is a daunting task. I would put it up against anyone's dirty refrigerator, but anyway--.

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**SR:** Did you flood here?

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**SW:** No, we--well I say that, let me clarify it. We--our maintenance area is the only portion of our plant that is not elevated--is not what we call dock height. And our maintenance area did get some water in it but none of our production facility did--thank goodness. We did have some roof damage and we had some leaks from the ceiling but we did not have any rising water or standing water which was--which also enabled us to get back up and going faster than some. We--we came in and really unfortunately were chased off again by Rita only a couple of weeks after beginning the cleanup effort because everything went--you know kind of went south on us again. But once the threat of Rita passed we were able to figure out a way to get our managers into the plant on a daily basis and we began removing debris from around the plant and of course getting rid of all of our ingredients that were stored and getting rid of everything that was even remotely perishable in the plant and then beginning to you know--beginning the cleanup effort just as you would any house or structure that hadn't been lived in--in four or five weeks. You have to clean it up and that's what we did; we did a lot of it internally. We did a lot of by hiring contractors from outside. But the really daunting task was we had to do it without electricity and so you know it was--it was a--it was an interesting task. So when we got electricity back on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October we were able to really kick the cleanup into high gear and we worked at it pretty much non-stop 24 hours a day for seven straight days; the only problem there was we still did not have potable water. Is it potable [short 'o'] or "pote-able?"

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**KW:** "Pote-able."

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**SW:** "Pote-able?" Is that what we were thinking? We didn't have potable water. So I had to make arrangements with Abita Springs to actually bring in an unbelievable number of five-gallon plastic containers--I mean thousands of them for us to be able to make bread with. So I had all this arranged with Abita Springs and they were planning a delivery for you know two days from then and the Sewage and Water Board in the city came out and said the water is safe. So literally on the day they announced it the next day we made bread with our regular city water and made it according to our age-old process and tradition and we haven't stopped since the 9<sup>th</sup> of October and it's been a very interesting ride.

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**SR:** And how did that go making it with the--the just-approved city water? Was it the same bread?

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**SW:** Yeah, it really was.

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**SR:** What about your employees? Was it--did--did you have employees at that point or--?

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**SW:** Well we--we--

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**SR:** How did that go?

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**SW:** You know we were very, very fortunate through Katrina in that we enjoyed some very, very long tenure with our employees. Our average employee on the operation side and on the sales side was here for probably an average of 12 years that they've been here and--and that's very enviable in any business and especially bakeries. And Katrina of course did a number on that and it--it really sent people scurrying all over the place and--and created a sense of great uncertainty in all of them. And when we got back up and going we had a few hardy souls who you know were--were already back, you know were pioneers but--but in the early days it was really our managers who were running the show. They were--they were mixing; they were shaping, baking, delivering--doing everything and it--it--they really bore the brunt of the--the burden. But we also set up a--in the early days we had a carpool service in Baton Rouge that would go around to the shelters and pick up our employees who were either in shelters or in apartments up there and bring them back in, you know. We--we tried to get as creative as we needed to be in order to get employees in and there were many nights in that first month where we were one employee away from not being able to make bread the next day and it was--it was--we had some--some interesting moments.

To date I would say that just for--you know just rough numbers, we had--we have about 50-percent--55-percent of our employees back, which again is pretty good post-Katrina and I--I--you know only time will tell whether that number increases. My sense is it's pretty well where it's going to be going forward. I think the people that have not--with very few exceptions the people that returned to New Orleans came back to us. There's some exceptions to that but not many. The majority who did not return--who did not come back to us did not return to the State of Louisiana or they did not return to New Orleans.

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**SR:** Uh-hm, and what about your production now, the--the demand and the production--how is that compared to pre-Katrina?

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**SW:** It's reduced; it's reduced--I mean the--the restaurants are--it is--what's interesting is that you talk to some people and they say oh the restaurants are all packed. You know this must be great for your business. Well it's--it's geographic. I mean the--the restaurants that are--that are really busy tend to be the ones in neighborhoods that weren't damaged who had the most people return to them in the shortest amount of time and those restaurants have been very busy. But the--the restaurants--the economic engine of the New Orleans restaurant industry is the French Quarter and the central business district. I mean that's the highest concentration of restaurants around and it's no secret or surprise to anyone that we have no visitors in New Orleans. We only have residents and workers and that is--that's proven to be very challenging for our customer-base and of course for us. So we--we really looked at 2006 as a rebuilding year as I think many

restaurateurs have, and we're looking forward to the fall of 2006 where we are anticipating a return of conventions and visitors and looking to a--a more normal 2007. So that's--that's--that's sort of how I describe our sales condition and I think you have to be positive about it; I think its'-

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**KW:** If you're here you have to--

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**SW:** Yeah, it's--it's--

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**SR:** Yeah.

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**KW:** There's no place for--for negativity here right now.

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**SW:** That's a good point. You--you drown in it.

00:25:25

**KW:** And it is hard; it's hard to go down to the French Quarter--I went to have lunch down there yesterday with a friend and we said you know we need to--when we go to lunch we need to

go--go down to the Quarter because they are hurting. Uptown is doing great; parts of Metairie are doing wonderfully but you know the fact that I can go and park on the street on Dauphine Street without a problem that's you know--that's a sign right there. So it's--it's hard to see that and him and I were saying earlier that just--you know sometimes driving down Magazine Street at 10 o'clock at night and it's just--it's just too empty for me. But you--you just have to believe that it's--it's going to get better; it just can't stay that way.

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**SR:** Well who are--who--pre-Katrina and post-Katrina if there's a difference, can you tell us who are some of your major clients?

00:26:16

**SW:** Well you know we--we were fortunate in that our customer base isn't varied by restaurant type. You know we're fortunate to have all of the Brennan family restaurants which are such an important part of the restaurant culture; we have you know many of the fine dining establishments from Antoine's and Galatoire's and--

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**KW:** Arnaud's.

00:26:45

**SW:** Arnaud's and--and gosh you know just--so many--almost as many as you can think of; we also have many of the City's famous po-boy shops from Domilise's and Parasol's to Johnny's

Po-Boys and Parkway Bakery and Magazine Po-boy and Elizabeth's and on and on. So most of those places--most of those are back up and operating with some notable exceptions like for instance the famous Mandina's on Canal Street, you know just an absolute part of the restaurant fabric is just not open yet. Their outpost in Baton Rouge is open and it's doing very well but they experienced a great deal of damage and you know they're--they're still in the rebuilding process. Commander's Palace is not reopened yet at this point; although we expect them to open in the near future. Mr. B's is not reopened yet; Felix's Oyster House in the French Quarter is not reopened yet. So you--you have--you have a lot of places that were--that were either neighborhood fixtures or very, very important in terms of the French Quarter operations and--and there are a few more there but I just bring up those just as an example. Of course, when you ask about you know important clients--goodness knows they're all important to us everyday and we've--we've tried to--to work with--with each of them to try to see how we can help them rebuild their business and they almost without exception have been incredibly with us you know as we strive to rebuild ours and--and that's why I always say that's one of the great joys of being in the business that I'm in is that working with restaurant people is just an incredibly special thing because they are so passionate about what they do and their passion really helps fuel ours, so it makes it--it makes it a very nice relationship.

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**SR:** You mentioned earlier that you had talked to the owner of United Bakery. And they have not reopened correct?

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**SW:** No.

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**SR:** So do you know if they're reopening?

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**SW:** I--he has not--he has not indicated to me with any certainty whether or not he plans to. But I know that they experienced horrific damage. And--and his equipment was very, very badly damaged and like many small bakeries he was really a--really a sole operator and didn't have a lot of management depth and--. I talked to him shortly after the storm and I offered whatever assistance I could to him to help him--to make product for him, to help him you know with his customers to feel free to call his customers and have them call us to let us know if we could help them, and he did that, and--

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**SR:** And so are you making the bread for Central Grocery's, muffalettas?

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**SW:** Well pronounced; yes. *[Laughs]* We were actually making it for them before the storm, but we are and we're doing--

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**SR:** I didn't realize that.

00:30:01

**SW:** You know we're doing a few of his accounts and the--Katrina was not--we didn't view it as a way to gain market share but we--we were you know hoping to help out you know the customers and in turn the bakeries and--and--.

00:30:17

**SR:** Well that's how it--I mean that's how it works I think in all areas.

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**SW:** It is--it is.

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**SR:** The businesses in the city.

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**SW:** It is.

00:30:26

**SR:** Let me go back to your youth for a little while. What--can you tell me what some of your earliest food memories are whether they center on bread or otherwise?

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**KW:** Well George Leidenheimer's daughter, my grandmother, Josephine was a fantastic cook. I mean she cooked but every one of her recipes--the few that I have all involve a stick of butter. I mean it was the old way of cooking. And we had--we had Sunday lunch at her house pretty much every Sunday with the table set and iced tea with sugar at the bottom and you know always hot bread and lots of butter. We--we were definitely a food-oriented family. We traveled, which we did--my father was--was very good about--if he had meetings somewhere you know he would--he would take a few days or a week after the meetings and we would go you know to San Francisco or Chicago. We got to go to Germany. And my mother kept a diary of you know what we had seen that day and where we had gone and what each one of us ate; I mean it was in the diary. Well Katherine ate--; Sandy ate; you know and that seemed very normal to me. **[Laughs]** And it wasn't again until I moved to Washington and you know I was having a meal with some friends and I was talking about a meal that I had--had before, a meal that I wanted to have you know in the future, and you know they said what is up with you and food? You're obsessed with food. I said what else--what else do you want me to be obsessed with?

So definitely lots of food memories; always having bread. I mean I remember I went through a phase in high school when I had free lunch my senior year and I would go to the store and get a thing of Boursin cheese and mom would bring home hot bread from the bakery and that's what I would have for my lunch. When we got back from the storm and I was able to have bread again--I normally would not allow butter in the bakery, and so **[Laughs]** I went out and bought a thing of Plugra butter and I decided if I was going to do it I was going to really do it. So I had bread and Plugra butter you know pretty much non-stop for the first couple weeks that I was--and I eat it everyday here. I mean I'll go down and take a loaf off of the--you know when

it's coming out of the oven and people can't believe, you know we can't believe you eat bread everyday, and you know bread is not the enemy; it's what you put on it. So--so yeah definitely--

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**SR:** And your grandmother, did she have any of the German in--wait; was she German?

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**KW:** Yeah, yeah.

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**SR:** So she was second generation German?

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**KW:** Yes.

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**SR:** Did she have any of that influence in her cooking?

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**KW:** She did; we had--we had you know breaded veal which I guess is schnitzel; we had that very often. She always made potato pancakes; she was an excellent baker--sweets--of sweets and--but everything was made from scratch. I mean my father tells the story of her going down to the market and buying fresh turtle meat to make her turtle soup. And when she made crawfish

bisque, she you know took everything out and then we stuffed the heads with you know--which very few people do to this day. And we did it all herself. So she--she was a great cook. I wish that I had spent more time in the kitchen learning from her. I mean I certainly enjoyed all of her--all of her food but I wish that I had cooked with her--and only a little bit when we were older and she used to make--she made the most wonderful oatmeal raisin cookies always at Christmas time and she couldn't stir the batter 'cause it was so thick. She never had a Kitchen Aid mixer and I remember when he and I were home at Christmas and you know we would help her and go and do that but--I do wish I had more time with her in the kitchen.

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**SR:** What neighborhood did ya'll grow up in?

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**SW:** We grew up Uptown.

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**KW:** Uptown.

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**SW:** In the University section near Audubon Park.

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**KW:** And she was right across the street from us.

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**SR:** And did you want to add anything to the food memories?

00:34:44

**SW:** My--my fondest is probably lost bread, you know. That was--that was the thing that you know I didn't--we didn't grow up as so many New Orlean(eans) have memories of taking the heel of the po-boy and filling it with condensed milk. We--we never had that one.

00:34:59

**KW:** No, but Dad did.

00:35:00

**SW:** And my father may have but we didn't do that. And but we do grow up with lost bread and it's still to this day one of my absolute favorites.

00:35:07

**KW:** Pain perdu.

00:35:09

**SW:** One of my absolute favorite things in the world.

00:35:10

**SR:** And can you describe what that is for the record?

00:35:15

**SW:** Lost bread is basically a breakfast version of bread pudding. It may be a little bit lighter but you--

00:35:19

**KW:** It's a little like French toast.

00:35:22

**SW:** You right--like French toast; you basically take a day-old loaf of Leidenheimer French bread--I had to throw that in--and you cut it into slices and you dredge it in egg--

00:35:33

**KW:** And milk.

00:35:33

**SW:** --and milk and then you--

00:35:34

**KW:** A little bit of vanilla--

00:35:37

**SW:** With vanilla and milk and then you fry it in butter and you--

00:35:40

**KW:** In a cast iron skillet.

00:35:40

**SW:** Right; in a cast iron skillet so that you get black and brown on the edges and the crumb of the bread.

00:35:46

**KW:** And then sprinkle it with powdered sugar.

00:35:46

**SW:** And serve it with powdered sugar and/or cinnamon, so it's--it's just--and--and it's--there's the other way to make it is more like a bread pudding where you actually do it in a casserole dish. You do all those things to it and then you can add raisins, grapes, or whatever you want to. But--so those were some of my earliest memories, I just you know—lost bread; it was wonderful. And much like my sister's memories, I mean it's--I guess as a child you really don't understand what an important part of you know your life a food culture really is--but it was something that was very important to my dad. You know he certainly--he certainly stoked those fires in us and I have the pleasure of being married to a nutritionist and--and I'm reminded of my food obsession almost daily but--anyway; so--.

00:36:36

**SR:** That's interesting.

00:36:38

**SW:** Yeah; so--

00:36:39

**SR:** What--what--where did you--oh go ahead.

00:36:41

**SW:** I'm sorry; you were going to--you were asking about where we grew up.

00:36:44

**SR:** Yeah; and I was going to ask where you ate po-boys.

00:36:47

**KW:** All over.

00:36:49

**SW:** Yeah; all over the place but I remember the ones in the neighborhood--Audubon Tavern was a--sort of a little bar and it had a full grill and they had wonderful po-boys on Magazine Street. We used to eat a lot at the old Campagno's which was on State and Magazine, which was-

-

00:37:08

**KW:** And what was the one out on--

00:37:10

**SW:** --the greatest--the greatest roast beef po-boy in the world. We had Norby's which only recently closed but we used to go there all the time, and then of course Domilise's, Parasol's-- Parasol's --

00:37:21

**KW:** Mandina's.

00:37:24

**SW:** Oh yeah; sure absolutely--that was the old Bright Star Restaurant on Panola and Burdette.

00:37:30

**KW:** Those are the Riccobono's--Bright Star.

00:37:34

**SW:** Which may have had one of the finest shrimp po-boys.

00:37:36

**KW:** Where now the—Plum and Panola--where the other Bluebird is.

00:37:40

**SR:** Right, so they still own that. It was just called something else?

00:37:44

**KW:** I think it was Riccobono's, Bright Star--

00:37:47

**SW:** College Inn was always a--

00:37:48

**KW:** College Inn--we were there all the time.

00:37:53

**SW:** So those were--yeah; those were the spots. Those were the old spots.

00:37:56

**SR:** And did you spend any time here?

00:37:59

**SW:** I did; I mean I--

00:38:01

**KW:** I did too.

00:38:03

**SW:** I mean I remember going down and half-heartedly helping the ladies pack bread you know when I was young and I think my father would--I'm pretty sure he gave me a few quarters a day just to stay out of everybody's hair when I was down here in the office and he'd have me do something like stamp letterheads for other people like that, but--. Anyway it seeps into your blood; they say that--they say that the problem with ever getting out of the bakery business is once flour gets in your blood you never get it out, and I guess it started getting in my blood in those early days; so--.

00:38:33

**KW:** I used to come down with mom in the summer and I definitely remember we had a huge ice-maker--crushed ice and we had a great aunt who worked here and she used to order Coke in green bottles by the cases, and so that was the hugest treat to go get a Styrofoam cup with crushed ice and have a Coke. And we also--you know sometime in the late '70s--when did we have the little bakery shop downstairs on the corner?

00:38:59

**SW:** Still had a retail shop down there.

00:39:01

**KW:** And we sold in our addition to our products we sold you know--we--that we didn't make but donuts and sweet rolls and so when I was--when I would come down here in the summer 'cause my mother worked here until--I think until my brother started working and he let her retire. So I'd come down here with her in the summers and I would always have my Coke with my crushed ice and my donut and they gave me a little order pad. We had carbon--we used to have carbon order pads and I would pretend like I was taking orders from Miss Dot and pretend to answer the phone and--.

00:39:36

**SW:** We had two--I think two memories I have of being here as a young person; one was in those early days in the--in the '70s--we used to get our flour in bags and it would come in on pallets and there might be 50 bags on a pallet; those were 100-pound bags of flour. And the baker--the mixers would manually remove the bag from the pallet, open it, and dump it into the mixer. And we had a big storage area behind the office space; it was just filled with these pallets of flour. It was everywhere and it was a big welded kind of airy room with wooden floors, wooden ceilings, and I remember as a kid that I used to just play on those flour sacks jumping from one to the other. I'm sure I put holes in them and the mixers were never pretty--never very happy with, but I'd--I'd use them as my personal playground. And I can remember falling asleep on them and I can remember you know using them as Jungle Gyms. And the other thing that my sister reminded me of when--when she was saying about my great aunt is my great aunt when I would be down here would always order po-boys for lunch. And we'd order them from a little old place down the street called Fiorella's Grocery. Fiorella's has since moved down to the French Quarter, but in those days Fiorella's was a local meat market, sandwich shop; it was only

a couple blocks away from the bakery. And the po-boy that we would most often order was a pork chop po-boy. And the pork chop po-boy would come and it was pretty simple. It was a baked pork chop or done in a skillet on French bread and you could either have it of course dressed or not dressed.

00:41:26

**KW:** With a bone or without.

00:41:26

**SW:** As is typical--that's the thing that made it interesting; it had the bone in, so when you'd eat the sandwich you--you were a little--it was a little animalistic because you'd bite into it and the first four or five bites were fine, but then you had to remember that bone and you had to eat around the bone and--and it was just a--

00:41:46

**KW:** Yeah, I was eating donuts. I don't remember pork chop po-boy. *[Laughs]*

00:41:50

**SW:** You had to think about it and--so anyway you got to be an expert at eating around the bone of the pork chop po-boy from Fiorella's but definitely a fond memory. I haven't had one of those in a long time; I might have to fix one this weekend--maybe--maybe bone out.

00:42:02

**SR:** That's a good story. Did you--when you were growing up did everyone call it PO-boy or "poor?"

00:42:11

**SW:** I always remembered it as po-boy. I don't remember--very few people ever you know pronounce it fully as the vernacular to New Orleans, I think we--any opportunity to shorten something we do.

00:42:24

**SR:** And what--how does your flour come now if it doesn't come in bags like that?

00:42:28

**SW:** Well it comes in a lot larger quantities, so now it comes in big tanker trucks. Instead of having it in bags we store it in 60,000-pound stainless silos.

00:42:42

**SR:** That are here?

00:42:43

**SW:** Yes.

00:42:44

**SR:** Is there--I don't want--I don't want to ask you to give away any family secrets [**Laughs**]

00:42:51

**SW:** Don't worry, I won't.

00:42:52

**SR:** But is--can you tell me--go through the process a little bit of--of baking the bread?

00:42:58

**SW:** Sure; you know I'm often asked what makes--what makes our process different from--from others and two things typically come to mind--at least one that--that is a--that a lot of people hold near and dear and that is that our French bread can't--the reason that our French bread is so special is because we use city water.

00:43:22

**KW:** That's what I--that's the first thing I was thinking when you were asking--when you asked about the potable water. I thought some people say that's the key actually.

00:43:28

**SW:** Yeah; and as I said we've--you know we--we haven't tried to make it outside of New Orleans too many times, so we're--we're banking that maybe is the secret, so we're going to let that little bit of myth remain. But the other thing is--is really an adherence to a very traditional process and what--what happened was that as our culture became more industrialized--when you think about George Leidenheimer in the 18--late 1890s everything was done by hand. You still

had--you still had restaurants producing a lot of their own you know food. They would roast their meats, they would just--a lot of it--lot of the product they used you know were organic in terms of you know they're being produced by the owners. The same thing with--with families; when you think about the types of you know--a loaf of bread, an entire po-boy or a large loaf of what we call French bread was the shorter fatter loaf was purchased for daily consumption by a family of four or five in those days which was probably more accurately reflected in the average an they would sit at a family meal every night and consume that loaf of French bread. Well as the decades went by those dynamics of course began to change; you--you got into the 1950s where you saw a huge change in terms of the family unit and family traditions began to change. You know as you got into the '60s and '70s you started having fewer--fewer family dinners. You had grocery stores instead of the corner markets where people would go to buy their specialties; you had larger suburban shopping centers that were anchored by large grocery stores, so everything started to become somewhat homogeneous and bakeries were no different. You could never find a loaf of batter-whipped white sliced bread in New Orleans in the 1930s but in the 1950s suddenly it became the norm. And while watching all that happen it was never something that we did; it was never something that we adapted. We continued to make our product really in--in an old-time traditional process. That's not to say that we did not benefit and adapt modern technology as it became available but we only did it in such a way that we felt that it would not violate the integrity of the product. So yes, it makes a lot of sense to get your flour in--in 25,000 pound loads instead of 100-pound bags because it makes things a lot quicker, but it does absolutely nothing to the quality of the product, so those were easy decisions in those days.

The main thing about our process is first off of course we buy the finest ingredients that are available. We buy very high-quality flour that--that is--has a very strong protein level; those are very, very important to us.

00:46:47

**SR:** Because of the structure that it gives the bread?

00:46:49

**SW:** Yes, yes; the strength--it allows us to mix the dough the way we need to mix it. The most important part of our process is what we call the fermentation process and really it's a fancy name for the fact that we age our dough. We do a pre-mix and then we do a final mix and when we pre-mix what we make we refer to as a sponge, and of course with the renewed interest in artisan and artisan(al) baking in the last few years the buzz word is always *ferment*, *pre-ferment*, and you know of course all the fancy Italian and French words for those thing that make everything sounds so nice. We've been doing that for 110 years and never stopped, and so we find it a little amusing that what goes around comes around; we were never looking for our process to be justified because our customers justify it every day but it is interesting to us that suddenly the world, you know the country has kind of awakened and said ah, you know natural fermentation really is the way to go. Well we never left it and--and so if there is one thing about our product that makes it special it's the fact that we give our dough time to age and that our flavor is created naturally as opposed to trying to take steps out of the process and make it faster.

00:48:13

**SR:** How long a--about do you age it? I mean is it minutes--hours--days?

00:48:20

**SW:** It's hours--it's hours and it varies depending on--depending on the time of the year and the weather.

00:48:27

**SR:** And like for example today is really hot--

00:48:31

**SW:** Yeah.

00:48:32

**SR:** --and pretty humid; would that--would you have to ferment longer or shorter?

00:48:36

**SW:** We might ferment shorter; we might ferment shorter because the day--the sponge is going to rise more rapidly in warmer conditions.

00:48:45

**SR:** Oh okay; and from there you talked about a mixing machine--what about the forming of the loaves; how does that happen?

00:48:54

**SW:** Yeah; I mean that's one of the things that has changed. In terms of technology it's probably the one thing that's changed the most. You know in the--in the early 1900s all--almost all of the shaping was done by human hands. There was some--the shaping was done, the bread would be put away for a time, and then there would be--then you would go back to the same loaf and shape it again. Really the--the story of making quality French bread is about working the dough and then resting it, working it and resting it, and working it and resting it. If you work it without those--without those natural resting periods you damage the interior structure of the loaf and it's not going to have that sort of random--random cell structure as we call the interior--that cotton candy interior that we talked about. If you machine the dough too much you get a very tight--very uniform cell structure; it almost looks like it--it you know came out of a machine and that's not what we want. It's what people who make hotdog and hamburger buns and white sliced bread want because that's--they want a very close grain. That's not what we want; so it's--our process is different but in the early days of course you know that was all done manually and we adopted--you know really beginning in the 1960s and '70s we started to adopt much of the technology that's being developed in--in Germany and in France for the more automated production of very high quality breads and so the vast majority of our equipment today is--is German or French and they're the leaders in technology for--for baking and have been for many, many years. And of course, they still provide most of the equipment and the technology for variety breads, which is really the category that we fall in since we don't make white sliced bread, hamburger and hotdog buns. Those are referred to as conventional breads versus variety breads.

00:51:02

**SR:** And what about your ovens; have they changed since you came on?

00:51:08

**SW:** They've changed.

00:51:09

**SR:** You must have much larger capacity than when you were growing up I'm sure.

00:51:13

**SW:** Yeah, yeah; they've changed. I mean you know in the early days of course we had you know coal-fired and wood-fired--you know wood-fired ovens that were loaded manually and then those ovens became natural gas.

00:51:24

**SR:** Oh there's pictures of the old bakery.

00:51:27

**SW:** Yeah; you can see the photos of them removing the bread manually with long peel boards in order to get the bread way in the back of the oven. So really what--what is interesting is that the--the--the primary oven that we have today is made by the same German manufacturer of the ovens we had in the 1900s--early 1900s.

00:51:49

**SR:** That is interesting.

00:51:51

**SW:** Called Werner and Pfleiderer from Germany and then the balance of our ovens are--they are Swedish and they come from a company called Sveba-Dahlén and they're rotary rack ovens. Everything we make we need to be able to control the steam in addition to all of the other time and temperature issues. So again the technology you know--you can't change technology too much when it comes to baking because it really is all about hot moist air; there are only so many ways to create that, so--you know naturally it's--it's--the ovens have become a little more user-friendly but in terms of the technology they've gotten bigger, they've gotten--they've taken some of the effort out of the loading and unloading of the ovens, but the oven itself you know they're not much different except for being larger. And we don't feed them wood anymore--natural gas.

00:52:48

**SR:** Good thing huh?

00:52:49

**SW:** Yeah; that's a very good thing. That's a very good thing.

00:52:52

**SR:** Well there a couple things I want to get to before we run out of time, and one--well one, let me ask you what; what do you call this neighborhood?

00:53:00

**KW:** The bakery neighborhood. [*Laughs*]

00:53:04

**SW:** Central City.

00:53:05

**KW:** Central City.

00:53:06

**SR:** I liked that.

00:53:07

**KW:** It's always been the bakery neighborhood.

00:53:11

**SR:** And then I'd like to talk about your trucks because they have a very distinctive look.

00:53:16

**SW:** Right.

00:53:16

**SR:** They're hard to miss.

00:53:17

**SW:** We like it that way.

00:53:19

**SR:** *[Laughs]* Can you describe for the record what your--what the look of your trucks--?

00:53:26

**SW:** Well we turned 100 years old in 1996 and my father and I had been discussing a suitable event to mark that 100 year anniversary and I had been thinking about different things, and I saw an article--saw an article one day written by my friend Bunny Matthews in the *Times Picayune*, and it was an article on--it was a survey of po-boy shops and he went through I think four or five of them and they all happened to be our customers and in each one they mentioned that they got their bread from Leidenheimer and it was really sort of a dream article for--you know for me and--and on the cover Vic and Nat'ly Broussard who were his two ageless, timeless characters that represent really the traditional New Orleans character and I guess originally 9<sup>th</sup> Ward denizens and--and really aficionados of all that is great about New Orleans including--including the Saints and--and eating the po-boys--

00:54:43

**KW:** Food and bars.

00:54:45

**SW:** --yeah; eating po-boys in your neighborhood bar, so I started thinking to myself well who better to you know proclaim our 100<sup>th</sup> year anniversary than Vic and Nat'ly who really represent New Orleans to me? I've always loved the cartoon and I've really loved everything they represent because I do think that they are--they--they're a product of what makes New Orleans so unique. I think we have more characters per square block than any other city in America. And--and so I contacted Bunny and I said okay, here's what I want to do. I think I want to put Vic and Nat'ly on my trucks. And he said wow. I think he came over so quickly because he saw the opportunity to get free bread whenever he wanted it but--which he did and does--but he probably came over too quickly because even to this day he probably--he probably regrets ever having--ever having drawn the artwork for me because now he's known as *you're the guy that did the bread trucks?*

00:55:48

**KW:** Right.

00:55:48

**SW:** So he's reminded me of that on a few occasions, but anyway--. I do think it was a--I'd have to admit giving myself a little pat on the back, I thought it was a pretty good idea when I had it but I didn't realize that you know--

00:56:03

**KW:** That's funny 'cause I thought it was partly my idea.

00:56:06

**SW:** No.

00:56:07

**KW:** Yeah; I remember saying you have to do something with Bunny Matthews. He is New Orleans.

00:56:11

**SW:** You see that's how time changes things.

00:56:13

**KW:** Oh yeah; uh-huh.

00:56:16

**SW:** And I never--never have been bashful about poaching an idea; but I did not realize at the time that you know our--our salesmen would be stopped on a regular basis by German, French, Canadian tourists asking to have their pictures taken in front of it.

00:56:27

**KW:** In front of the truck; it's hilarious.

00:56:30

**SW:** Nor did I think it would be you know a centerfold in *Southern Living Magazine* you know.

It's just you know people have responded to it but I do think they respond to them because if you really understand what New Orleans is about you understand what Vic and Nat'ly represent and what they say about the city. They're sort of the--the every man and every woman of New Orleans and I think they're--I think they're the ultimate New Orleans staple.

00:56:57

**SR:** And what are they saying on the side of your truck?

00:57:02

**KW:** "Sink ya teeth into a piece a New Orleans cultcha, a Leidenheimer po-boy!"--that's in accent by the way.

00:57:12

**SR:** You can almost hear I think when you--

00:57:13

**KW:** Sink ya teeth--

00:57:15

**SR:** Sink ya teeth--

00:57:16

**KW:** Yeah; and the gravy is dripping out of a po-boy--even though they have shrimp on them they must have put some roast beef gravy on the po-boy. Bunny took artistic liberties 'cause you can see the drips of juice.

00:57:25

**SW:** That's mynez--m-y-n-e-z--that's not juice.

00:57:30

**KW:** No; I think there's some--I think there's some roast beef gravy coming off of that. It's the lettuce, the shredded lettuce coming out of the side and Nat'ly's big old bosom, and--.

00:57:38

**SW:** I think one of the greatest things about the--about that artwork is the fact that--that Vic Broussard has on a specially designed Leidenheimer logo(ed) Jazz Fest shirt. And many people don't realize that but it is a series of silk-screened heart logos all over the shirt and one day when I have time I think I'm going to start producing that as a sample.

00:58:02

**SR:** I hadn't noticed that.

00:58:05

**SW:** See; you learn something every day but it's a--I was very specific in how culture should be spelled, so--it was certainly not going to be spelled correctly.

00:58:15

**KW:** And we do--on our website--we haven't--do we still have that--the New Orleans--?

00:58:19

**KW:** We have a glossary of New Orleans terms on our website and our--I do remember consulting on that and how to get the spellings right for mynez and zink is where you rinse your plates and you know--all of the--all of the terminology that's very important to New Orleans--the New Orleans food culture.

00:58:38

**SW:** It's just important to us that--that culture never--never goes away and I think it's--I think the great thing about New Orleans is that we have a fine dining culture and we have a neighborhood dining culture and I don't think either one would be as special without the other and I think that you know when--when--I'll never forget when they interviewed Emeril after his you know star had started to rise and I think *Food and Wine Magazine* asked him what his favorite place to eat in New Orleans was and it wasn't one of the fancy white tablecloth restaurants. It was Uglesich's and here's this you know dive that served wonderful food in a working class neighborhood that most visitors would never go in. And of course it too took off like immediately.

00:59:29

**KW:** Then the stretch limos started showing up outside of Uglesich and--

00:59:34

**SW:** That's when--that's when my employees stopped being able to afford po-boys from there.

00:59:39

**SR:** Well you all started a Po-Boy Preservation Society. Can you talk about that a little before we wrap up?

00:59:50

**KW:** We did; well that was--that was something that Sandy had been thinking about for a long time and when I started working here I had the time to focus on it and basically you know without throwing mud we were very dismayed at the fact that national chains serving subs and--subs, subs, and more subs were--were poaching on our market here and whereas you know when we were in high school those didn't exist. I mean you went to po-boy shops and there were always the McDonald's and the Burger Kings but those never competed with po-boy shops. But all of the sudden you had the national chains--the Subway(s) and the Quizno's of the world and you know we were just alarmed that young people--I mean my brother has you know a 12 year-old and a 9 year-old and some of their friends carry punch--punch cards from Subway and yet we were worried that they you know had never--certainly his children have but you know that they've never been down to Johnny's Po-boys or out to the Parkway or out to Short Stop or you know any other part of the city that had--you know Lakeview, I'm blanking on the name. So we started thinking you know this--this--certainly there is the generation who is always going to eat po-boys and then there's--which I think is the generation above both of us and then there's our

generation and we still know what po-boys are we still eat those but you know we started worrying about the--the younger generations and were they really going to know what a po-boy was. And so we started contacting--and you know it was very easy because we had this big list of customers that we had access to, so we started contacting people and saying you know look; are you as concerned as we are that people are you know slowly but surely taking your business away but more importantly taking away something that is quintessentially New Orleans and that always needs to be a part of this City? And you know here there are articles in the *Chicago Times* and the *New York Times* and the Washington Post and all of these journalists who come down here and wax poetic about the po-boys that they've eaten and yet we were worried that you know locals just weren't--maybe locals were taking it for granted, like I said I took French bread for granted when I was a kid because they were always there. But anyway we decided to try to do something about it and we--we called up not only our customers; we called up you know the people who thought were sort of the biggest--the biggest [*Sighs*] in the market who you know could--could afford time and money to this cause and--but it was very tricky because it--it also required vision and a lot of people said you know well I don't have to worry about that. I don't have to worry about them. And you know we did--we did some numbers and ran some numbers and said you know everybody has to worry about them, and--and you know if we want--if we don't want to see--. And--and I think we--and I can't--I used to know the numbers by heart but we did--you know five years ago to now how many Subway stores were in and--and we did it by zip code of their neighborhood and that was--that was the most jarring, you know. There--there is an average of 12 Subway stores in your zip code; did you know that? And you know their eyes just sort of bugged out and by the way Quizno's is coming up with you know seven or eight more in your neighborhood in the next five years. So--so we got people together and the

response was you know just really, really good except that most of these people were owner-operators and they didn't have a lot of time really to you know--to organize their efforts, so we kind of took on the administrative part of that and we were--we were coming along really well and we were just about to start saying okay, let's talk about dues. What is everybody going to pay to be a part of the Po-boy Society--the Po-boy Preservation Society because we were going to do it like the LRA and have a seal on the door of your restaurant you know saying you know approved by--you know official Louisiana--New Orleans--New Orleans Po-boy Preservation Society member and so we were just going to start getting to the fund-raising part 'cause our goal was to do a Po-Boy Festival. Again you know we were like--why does the Creole Tomato get a festival and not the po-boy? I love Creole Tomatoes but I--you know I wanted a Po-Boy Festival too. So we were really in--you know going--going toward that goal and then the hurricane happened. And unfortunately we're not in a position right now to spend a lot of time to--to expend that kind of administrative time that I was able to before and I don't think that our customers are in a position financially right now to--and it wasn't going to be a huge financial commitment but enough of one that I think people might have--might have a hard time committing to that right now. So it's not--it certainly has not died; we don't want it to die. We want to you know--we do want to have a Po-Boy Festival one day. I think it's just prudent to let it--to let it sit for a while and let everybody get back on their feet and--and get to a better place financially where we can say hey everybody; we're ready to do this again and put our efforts into that again; so--.

01:05:47

**SR:** Well I don't know--there might--a silver lining might be that it seems to me there are less national chains operating now post-K maybe than before--in my neighborhood anyway.

01:06:02

**KW:** Well and also--

01:06:03

**SR:** I don't know if you've noticed that.

01:06:04

**KW:** Also you know we were talking about it before; the civic pride is--is at--is the highest it's probably ever--again for the people who are here and who are committed to being here, I think there is a lot of civic pride. And so I think that--again once people feel a little bit better and a little more comfortable financially after we get through 2006 let's--you know as Sandy said it's really going to be a rebuilding year for everybody. You know then we can talk about Po-Boy Preservation again. I mean you know again we--it's definitely a part of this culture as we've found out--not the way we wanted to find out but certainly you know the response has--has been amazing. So but I still think it's important to educate the younger generation and--and we had talked about doing some nutritional testing and--and you know trying to get nutritional facts up in--in certain sandwich shops and you know how to build a better po-boy. If you want to be healthy have turkey with Creole mustard and lettuce and tomato and don't put mayonnaise and you know that's more healthy than a chicken salad sandwich that's loaded with mayonnaise; so--

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01:07:14

**SW:** Mynez.

01:07:15

**KW:** Mynez--so we--so you know I--I think that--I think we'd love to you know to--to work toward that Po-Boy Festival goal again but it's--it's going to be a little bit 'til we can do that.

01:07:30

**SW:** I think--I think Brett Anderson's article in the *Times Picayune* shortly after the storm was very appropriate where he did a review of the po-boy shops in his neighborhood and outside of his neighborhood that were open and to paraphrase that I think he said you know the--before the storm I can remember coming and relegating the po-boy to a little bit of a second-class citizen. There were burritos and Mexican food and pita and all sorts of you know different things that--that--out there to try and he said--he said but upon returning to New Orleans--he said you know I just realized what an important part of this city that po-boy is and that po-boy shop and how he promised never to--ever to relegate them to second-class status again. So I thought that was very appropriate and very nice. And we'd like all of New Orleans to do that; you know it's--it's--these locally owner-operators need everybody's--need everybody's support and assistance and that was really our desire in setting up the New Orleans Po-Boy Preservation Society--it was really to point out as I'm sure my sister has alluded to that you know this is not a part of the culture that can be allowed to wither on the vine. And you know some of it's been the industry's own fault; I mean we've been very frank about that with--with--with some of our folks in the industry.

01:08:51

**KW:** Yeah; quality issues.

01:08:53

**SW:** You know you--you can't expect--you can't expect to compete with a national chain on the price. They're always going to win. The only way you can compete with them is the quality and if your product is more expensive but the quality is there people are going to find you and you know we--we've tried to reiterate that time and time again--that the way to battle a national chain is through the quality you know--instead of buying the same roast beef they do, go back to cooking your own.

01:09:19

**KW:** Cook your own.

01:09:20

**SW:** You know beat them on quality; they can't respond to you. They can out-market you; they can out-advertise you; they can--they can purchase more efficiently than you but the one thing they can't do is they can't add the necessary steps to gain that quality that you can add, and if there's one thing that the New Orleans Preservation--the New Orleans Po-Boy Preservation Society says is that--that is what makes a great po-boy shop and that's what's going to keep that po-boy shop in front of the public for a long, long time. It's a proven formula; you can't argue with it.

01:09:55

**SR:** I wouldn't try.

01:09:56

**SW:** *[Laughs]*

01:09:58

**SR:** Well I think I really appreciate the amount of time ya'll have given us. And I'm ready to wrap up unless you feel like there's something I haven't asked that's--.

01:10:12

**SW:** No; I don't have anymore witty comments, but--.

01:10:13

**[End Katherine & Sandy Whann Interview]**